

BOOK OF ESTHER

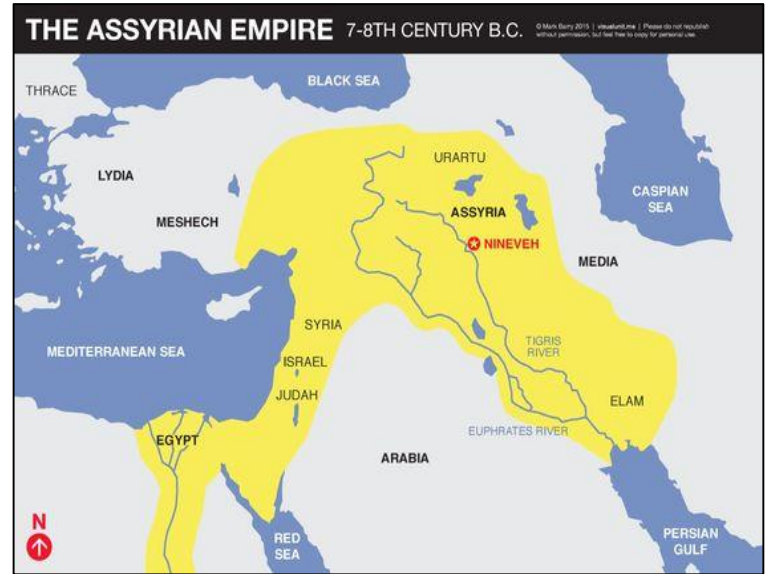
Chapters 1-2

HISTORY OF THE EXILE



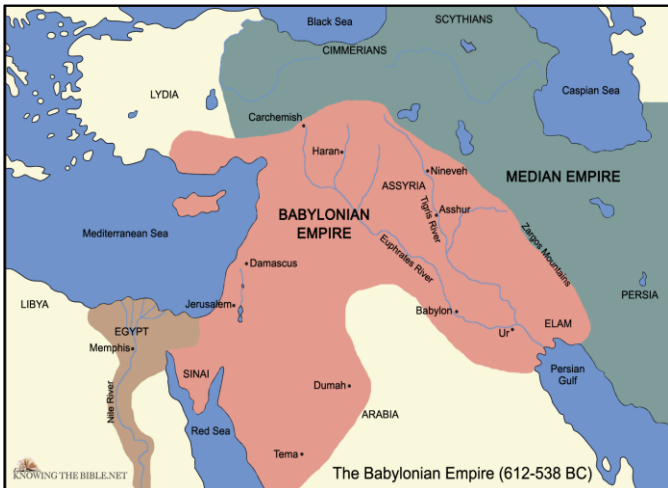
- Solomon dies; Kingdom Splits
- 10 Northern Tribes
- 2 Southern Tribes

930 BC

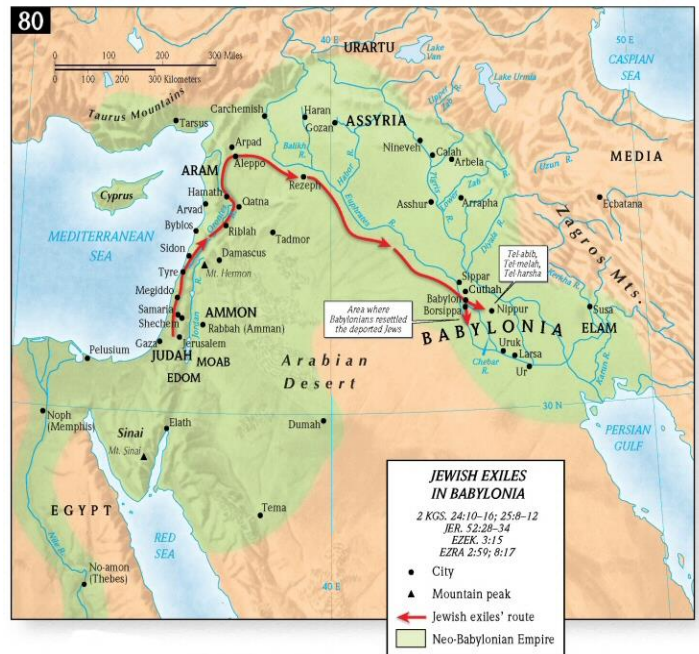


- Assyria occupies most of known world.
- Northern 10 tribes lost forever
- Southern (Judah) hangs on.

700s BC



- Babylonians defeat Assyrians
- Early 600s BC



- Babylonians (Nebuchadnezzar) deport Judah to Babylon.
- 70 yr exile begins.

THE MEDO-PERSIAN EMPIRE 4-6TH CENTURY B.C.

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- The Medes & Persians merge
- Medo-Persian Empire defeats Babylonians.
- Cyrus-the-Great releases Jews back to Jerusalem.
- 50,000 Jews return.
- Most Jews stay in Babylon, then move to province of Susa.

Early 500s BC

PERSIAN KINGS	KNOWN FOR
CYRUS THE GREAT (559-529 BC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founder of Medo-Persian Empire • Defeating Babylonians • Releasing Jews; foretold by Isaiah
CAMBYSES II (530-522 BC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded Persian Empire to Egypt
DARIUS I (521-486 BC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrator: created provinces, infrastructure, coinage • Good king; funded & protected Jews long-distance in Jerusalem • Defeated in major campaign against Greece
XERXES (AHASUERUS) (486-465 BC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persian King in book of Esther • Ruthless leader; quelled rebellions • Ambitions for Greece • Great displays of wealth
ARTAXERXES I (464 – 425 BC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerant to Jews • Cupbearer was Nehemiah



BOOK OF ESTHER

- **Timeframe:** about 50 years after Jews were released (actually written much later)
- **Events are happening in Susa**—while the Temple rebuilding is happening in Jerusalem.
- **Story spans** about 10 years
- **Author unknown:** had to be a Jew & intimate with Persian culture and intra-palace politics/process
- **Jews** hold it in enormous esteem:
 - TODAY: Feast of Purim is celebrated every year (late winter/early Spring) Purim 2019 was 3/20/19

The King's Banquets

1 Now in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces, ²in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa, the citadel, ³in the third year of his reign he gave a feast for all his officials and servants. The army of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces were before him, ⁴while he showed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his greatness for many days, 180 days. ⁵And when these days were completed, the king gave for all the people present in Susa the citadel, both great and small, a feast lasting for seven days in the court of the garden of the king's palace. ⁶There were white cotton curtains and violet hangings fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rods and marble pillars, and also couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones. ⁷Drinks were served in golden vessels, vessels of different kinds, and the royal wine was lavished according to the bounty of the king. ⁸And drinking was according to this edict: "There is no compulsion." For the king had given orders to all the staff of his palace to do as each man desired. ⁹Queen Vashti also gave a feast for the women in the palace that belonged to King Ahasuerus.

Queen Vashti's Refusal

¹⁰ On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha and Abagtha, Zethar and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, ¹¹ to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown, in order to show the peoples and the princes her beauty, for she was lovely to look at. ¹² But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. At this the king became enraged, and his anger burned within him.

¹³ Then the king said to the wise men who knew the times (for this was the king's procedure toward all who were versed in law and judgment, ¹⁴ the men next to him being Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who saw the king's face, and sat first in the kingdom): ¹⁵ "According to the law, what is to be done to Queen Vashti, because she has not performed the command of King Ahasuerus delivered by the eunuchs?" ¹⁶ Then Memucan said in the presence of the king and the officials, "Not only against the king has Queen Vashti done wrong, but also against all the officials and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. ¹⁷ For the queen's behavior will be made known to all

women, causing them to look at their husbands with contempt, since they will say, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, and she did not come.'¹⁸ This very day the noble women of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's behavior will say the same to all the king's officials, and there will be contempt and wrath in plenty.¹⁹ If it please the king, let a royal order go out from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be repealed, that Vashti is never again to come before King Ahasuerus. And let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she.²⁰ So when the decree made by the king is proclaimed throughout all his kingdom, for it is vast, all women will give honor to their husbands, high and low alike."²¹ This advice pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Memucan proposed.²² He sent letters to all the royal provinces, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language, that every man be master in his own household and speak according to the language of his people.

CHAPTER 2

- 4 years have passed
- Ahasuerus has been gone in war

From ancient historian, Herodotus:

"The army was, indeed, greater than any other in recorded history. There was not a nation in Asia that he did not take with him against Greece; save for the great rivers, there was not a stream his army drank from that was not drunk dry. Some nations provided ships, others formed infantry units; from some, cavalry was requisitioned, from others, horse-transport and crews; from others, again, warships for floating bridges, or provisions and naval craft of various kinds."

Esther Chosen Queen

2 After these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had abated, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her.² Then the king's young men who attended him said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought out for the king.³ And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom to gather all the beautiful young virgins to the harem in Susa the citadel, under custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women. Let their cosmetics be given them.⁴ And let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This pleased the king, and he did so.

⁵ Now there was a Jew in Susa the citadel whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjaminite,⁶ who had been carried away from Jerusalem among the captives carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away.⁷ He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.⁸ So

when the king's order and his edict were proclaimed, and when many young women were gathered in Susa the citadel in custody of Hegai, Esther also was taken into the king's palace and put in custody of Hegai, who had charge of the women. ⁹ And the young woman pleased him and won his favor. And he quickly provided her with her cosmetics and her portion of food, and with seven chosen young women from the king's palace, and advanced her and her young women to the best place in the harem. ¹⁰ Esther had not made known her people or kindred, for Mordecai had commanded her not to make it known. ¹¹ And every day Mordecai walked in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and what was happening to her.

¹² Now when the turn came for each young woman to go in to King Ahasuerus, after being twelve months under the regulations for the women, since this was the regular period of their beautifying, six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and ointments for women— ¹³ when the young woman went in to the king in this way, she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the harem to the king's palace. ¹⁴ In the evening she would go in, and in the morning she would return to the second harem in custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch, who was in charge of the concubines. She would not go in to the king again, unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name.

¹⁵ When the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his own daughter, to go in to the king, she asked for nothing except what Hegai the king's eunuch, who had charge of the women, advised. Now Esther was winning favor in the eyes of all who saw her. ¹⁶ And when Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign, ¹⁷ the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. ¹⁸ Then the king gave a great feast for all his officials and servants; it was Esther's feast. He also granted a remission of taxes to the provinces and gave gifts with royal generosity.

Proverbs 21:1

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD;
he turns it wherever he will.