



# THE REAL STORY OF ESTHER

by John R. Ecob DD  
FOR THE HERALD OF HOPE



# THE BIG PICTURE OF BIBLE PROPHECY

*"Study to shew thyself approved unto God,  
a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,*

## RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

2Tim.2:15

*"Give none offence, neither to the JEWS, nor to the GENTILES, nor to the CHURCH OF GOD"*  
1Cor.10:32.

**Messiah**  
**“cut off”**  
**Dan. 9:26**

**AD70 Israel  
scattered by  
the Romans**  
Dan.9:26

445BC AD32  
Israel's 69 "weeks"  
69x7=483 years

Neh.21:1-9

Luke 19:38-42

79719

## Assyrian Empire

536BC

Kingdom of Judah	Babylonian Empire

Persian

**Grecian  
Empire**

## Roman Empire Imperial - Papal - EU

## Antichrist's Kingdom

**Israel, the natural olive branch is plucked off**  
Rom. 11:17-24

**GREAT  
TRIBULATION**

Dan.9:27

**Rapture**

Eph.3:1-6.

## Pentecost to Rapture

## Age from

## The “Mystery” Church

1260 days

Israel repents	Israel protected
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10th "week"  
7 years  
Dan.9:27

## Resurrection of the Unsaved to the Great White Throne - Rev.20

## The New Heaven and New Earth

## The Lake of Fire

# The Real Story of Esther

*The Hebrew Bible states that queen Esther was born of Jewish parents and given the name Hadassah (“Myrtle”). Her name was changed to Esther to hide her Jewish identity and upon becoming queen of Persia, King Ahasuarus was unaware he married a Jewess. The three letter root of Esther in **Hebrew** means “hide, conceal”. The passive infinitive is, “to be hidden”. As “Myrtle” she was used by the angels of God to bring peace in her time (Zech.1:8-11). The name Esther can also be derived from an **Old Persian** word meaning “star” (Wikipedia Encyclopedia). She was also a bright shining light to the Jews during the dark days at the beginning of the Persian Empire.*

by

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for

Herald of Hope  
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## Introduction

**T**he story of Esther in the Bible has fascinated people but the impact of the story has been reduced due to a wrong understanding of the history of the time. When interpreting any passage of scripture it is vital that we get the **context right** and the Book of Esther needs to be put in the right historical context. Literal interpretation comes before application.

Unfortunately the general view, expressed by *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, *Bible Commentaries*, *Encyclopedias* and the *Greek Septuagint* is that Esther lived at a time of great peace and prosperity in the Persian Empire when Xerxes, perhaps the wealthiest of all the Persian kings, reigned. This is false.

Some interpret the story of Esther as fictional while others claim that Mordecai, the foster father of Esther was really Marduka, a Persian official during King Xerxes' early reign. Some scholars consider the name Marduka to be identical to the name Mordecai.

After 73 years of almost daily reading, preaching and teaching the scriptures and producing many books expounding the Bible, I have a firm conviction that there are no mistakes in the Bible. If we believe the words of Scripture literally we cannot go wrong and where scholars differ with the Bible they are to be corrected by the Bible. This is the case with the Book of Esther.

The history of the time of Esther was anything but peaceful and her time as Queen is firmly fixed **in the reign of Ahasuerus**. When we get the historical context right it will give new meaning to the message of the book.

The Kings of Persia mentioned in the Bible were as follows:

- Cyrus (559 BC to 530BC).
- **Ahasuerus** (Cambyses II) co-regent with Cyrus (539BC to 523BC).
- Artaxerxes (Smerdis) a usurper appointed by the Median Magi (523BC).
- Darius the Great appointed by 7 princes (522BC to 486BC).
- Xerxes the son of Darius (486BC to 465BC) (Dan.11:2).
- Artaxerxes I the third son of Xerxes (465BC to 423).

This book will show conclusively that Esther could not have married Xerxes who reigned 486BC to 465BC but that she married Ahasuerus (Cambyses). She was crowned in 532/531BC in the 7th year of Ahasuerus and may only have been Queen for seven years. Our sources are first and foremost what the Bible itself says in the Books of Esther and Ezra and what the Greek historian Herodotus (450BC) wrote along with what Josephus the Jewish historian wrote in his *Antiquities of the Jews* in the first century of the Christian era.

## Chapter 1 - The Story Told

**I**t is important to be familiar with the narrative of the Book before we discuss the history of the times. The narrative of the Book of Esther goes as follows:

In 597BC Mordecai was a little boy among the captives taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. Mordecai grew up in captivity and was sent to Shushan in Elam which was a part of the Babylonian Empire at the time. We first hear of him when about 70 years of age.

In captivity the Jews were permitted to marry and work and many reached high positions within the Babylonian Empire. At 70 years of age Mordecai must have been regarded as an official for he sat daily in the gate of the palace at Shushan.

Mordecai had an uncle in Babylon who died and his wife died also. They left a young daughter named Hadassa who Mordecai and his wife adopted.

The Babylonian Empire was overthrown and Cyrus became the King of Media and Persia which became known as the Persian Empire. His eldest son was Ahasuerus (Cambyses II) and he reigned with his father, Cyrus, while Cyrus was establishing the kingdom on the battlefield.

Ahasuerus set up his throne at Shushan which was the capital of Persia in his day. In the last days of the Babylonian Empire, Nabonidus reigned with Belshazzar his son as co-regent. Belshazzar reigned in Babylon and Nabonidus spent much of his time at Shushan in Persia which shows the importance of Shushan.

In the 3rd year of Ahasuerus he gathered all the princes and governors from the 127 provinces of the Empire to Shushan for a 180-day "feast" to show all the treasures and no doubt to get to know them for administrative purposes. It was like a training seminar to acquaint all the governors with how the Persian empire was run and what was expected of them.

On the last 7 days of the training program a 7-day feast was held to celebrate completion of the course. When King Ahasuerus was merry with drink he called for Vashti the Queen to appear but she refused. We know that Ahasuerus married one of his sisters and Vashti probably was his sister. Vashti's example angered the 7 princes of Persia who advised Ahasuerus to divorce Vashti and seek a virgin to be selected from all of the provinces. It took several years to get the message to all the provinces, select suitable virgins and have them brought to Shushan. When they

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arrived in Shushan they underwent a 12 month preparation before being presented to the King. These virgins would need to learn royal protocol and a new language to be able to communicate with the King.

In Shushan, Mordecai put Hadassa forward as a prospective Queen and changed her name to Esther to conceal her Jewish identity. The name Esther in Hebrew means “hidden”.

It wasn't until the 10th month of the 7th year of Ahasuerus' reign that Esther was presented to the King and chosen to be Queen.

About this time Mordecai had heard whisperings at the gate of the palace that two of the King's chamberlains were planning to kill the King. He immediately reported the matter and both conspirators were hanged. After this there was a security shake up in which Haman the Amalekite was appointed as the King's Chief-of-Staff.

The new authority given to Haman meant that all people were to bow before him and as he drove his chariot through the palace gate each day he expected all the elders to bow but Mordecai, being a faithful Jew, could not bow before any man or image. Haman was seething with anger and when some of the elders asked Mordecai why he refused to bow he told them it was because he was a Jew and worshipped only the God of heaven.

Haman would have known that the Jews were favoured with the King for the King was with his father Cyrus when the Decree to restore the Temple was issued. So when Haman presented a request to slay every Jew in the Empire he concealed the fact that it was the Jews and described them as a *“certain people ... ; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws...”* (Esther 3:8).

Believing there was another security problem, the king agreed and even let Haman keep the 10,000 talents of silver he offered the King.

Haman engaged in divination and cast lots as to the best day to destroy the Jews. The lot (*“pur”*) fell on the 13th day of the 12th month which gave him almost one year to organize. The scribes copied the decree and messengers carried the edict to the furthestest province. With regal authority, people of all lands could attack the Jews on this day, slay every last Jew and take their possessions.

When Mordecai heard the decree he tore his clothes, covered himself in dust and ashes and mourned loudly. In the palace Esther heard of Mordecai's behaviour and sent a change of clothes for him but he refused to take them. Esther then sent a messenger to enquire why it was that Mordecai was so

distressed. Mordecai told the messenger about the 10,000 talents of silver that Haman had offered the King in order to kill the Jews and gave the messenger a copy of Haman's decree to give to Esther. He urged Esther to go to the King and appeal to him on behalf of her people.

Security was very tight in the palace and any person who dared to enter the throne room without being called could lose their life. Only if the King held out his golden sceptre would that person's life be spared.

Esther had not been called into the throne room for a month and feared for her life if she entered without being called but Mordecai urged her to go and she agreed saying, *"If I perish, I perish!"*

Mordecai believed that God would deliver His people whether through Esther or someone else but he gave Esther the opportunity to be God's instrument of deliverance.

First, Esther got her handmaids to join her in prayer and fasting then she devised a plan - she would organize a feast on two days and invite the King and Haman then at that feast she would present her request to the King. She knew that Haman would have to be exposed for what he was and that the King would have to choose between her and Haman. It could cost her her life but she went into the throne room unannounced and the King held out the sceptre. When asked for her request she gave the invitation to attend the feast she had prepared. The King accepted the invitation and the three feasted.

Haman was elated that he had been honoured to have a feast with just the King and Queen and went home to boast to his wife and friends. His excitement was only exceeded by his hatred for the Jews and for Mordecai so he decided to build a gallows and the next day, before the second feast, he would seek royal consent to hang Mordecai.

The gallows were quickly erected, 80 feet high, and next morning Haman went to the palace to obtain permission to hang Mordecai. But that night the King could not sleep. He walked into the library to read and saw in the records that no reward had been given to Mordecai who had been responsible for saving his life from two conspirators. So when Haman turned up at the palace the next morning the King asked, *"What shall be done unto the man that the King delighteth to honour?"*

Haman assumed it was he who was to be honoured and suggested that he be placed on the King's horse, crowned with the King's crown, clothed with royal





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garb, and marched through the streets of Shushan. To his shock and surprise the King said, *"Make haste ... and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the King's gate!"* Haman immediately shelved his plan to seek permission to hang Mordecai and instead led the royal steed through the streets of Shushan while the crowds cheered!



When the steed was back in the stable Haman went home to his wife a dejected man. His wife said, *"If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews...thou... shalt surely fall before him."*

Just then there was a knock on the door and the King's chamberlains were there to take Haman to the second day of Esther's feast. They saw the gallows and knew why it had been built.

At the feast the King again asked Esther for her request and promised to grant it. This was the moment she had planned. She pleaded for the life of her people and for her own life to be spared. She warned the King that if they perished it would have even greater consequences for the King. She saw Haman as a threat to the King.



King Ahasuerus was shocked and asked, Who would dare to do such a thing? Esther



pointed at Haman and said, *"The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!"* Both men sprang to their feet. The King walked slowly out into the courtyard to gather his thoughts while Haman fell to the floor before Esther pleading for his life. When the King returned he exclaimed, *"Will he force the queen also before me in the house?"*

One of the guards immediately stepped forward and put a cloth over Haman's face and a chamberlain pointed toward Haman's house saying, *"Behold also, the gallows...which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king."* The King said, *"Hang him thereon!"* and took the royal ring from Haman's finger. Haman was hanged and Esther revealed to the King that Mordecai was her foster father. Immediately, Mordecai was called before the King, appointed as the new Chief-of-Staff and given the royal ring. Esther was given all the possessions of the house of Haman.

But there was still a problem. The law of the Medes and Persians *"changeth not"*. The decree of Haman must be neutralized. Another decree must be issued to grant the Jews the right to destroy their enemies and for the Governors to support the Jews. This Esther did and on the 13th day of the 12th month, instead of the Jews being slaughtered, 75,000 of their enemies perished. In Shushan 800 perished over two days.

Unrest still continued during the reign of Ahasuerus but by the second year of Darius the angel told the prophet Zechariah, *"all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest"* (Zech.1:11) thanks to Esther (*"myrtle"*).

Finally Queen Esther issued another decree that the Jews should keep an annual Feast called the **Feast of Purim** on the 14th and 15th day of the month Adar; the 12th month on the lunar calendar. This feast is still kept today by the Jews worldwide.

## Chapter 2 - Historical Background to Esther

**T**he nation of Israel had been taken captive in two major captivities; firstly the ten northern tribes were scattered by the Assyrians in 721BC after several incursions by the Assyrians: Tiglathpileser, Pul, Shalmaneser, Sargon and Sennacherib. The southern kingdom of Judah had miraculously escaped in the days of King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah. When Sennacherib threatened Jerusalem, God heard his proud boast and in one night 185,000 Assyrians were slain by the angel of the Lord. This was about 711BC.

The Assyrian Empire crumbled and its capital, Nineveh, was destroyed by the Babylonians and Medes in 612BC. Nebuchadnezzar led the Babylonian army; he was a young General in the army of his father; Nabopolassar King of Babylon.

When the Egyptian army of Pharaoh-necho contested the Assyrian Empire he was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish on the Euphrates River in 606BC as described by Jeremiah (Jer.46). In the same year Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem in the first of three captivities after pursuing the Egyptians to their border. While at Jerusalem Nebuchadnezzar received news that his father Nabopolassar had died and he hastened to Babylon to be crowned king.

Jeremiah had prophesied that God would send the Babylonians to carry Judah away to Babylon because of their idolatry and wickedness. He prophesied that they would **serve** the King of Babylon 70 years and that the city of Jerusalem would be **desolate** 70 years (Jer.25:11-12). Both of these prophecies were fulfilled.

In **606BC**, Daniel and the first of the Jews were taken captive to Babylon. King Jehoiakim became a vassal king and the *Times of the Gentiles* began.

In **597BC**, the Babylonians returned and Jeconiah the young 18-years-old king was taken to Babylon. **Ezekiel and Modcai were taken at this time.**

In **586BC**, Nebuchadnezzar came for the third time. Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed and the Jews taken captive to Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar's final campaign was against Egypt in 570BC in the time of Pharaoh-hophra who was in the midst of a civil war against his General; Amasis. After desolating Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon having finally become the undisputed ruler of the world but when he boasted, he was struck insane for seven years after which he his understanding returned and he said:

*"I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever,*

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*whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation... Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (Dan.4:34-37).*

The Egyptians were scattered among the nations and the land left desolate for 40 years until 530BC in fulfilment of Ezekiel's prophecy (Ezek.29:12).

The Jews **served the Kings of Babylon** 70 years and in 536BC Cyrus the Persian king wrote a decree encouraging the Jews to return and rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem.

The reconstruction of the Temple was not completed until the 6th year of Darius the Great, King of Persia, in 516BC, which completed the **70 years of desolation** prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer.25:11).

### *Cyrus the Great*

Cyrus was a remarkable man. His story is intriguing because Isaiah the prophet prophesied about 140 years **before the Temple had even been destroyed** that Cyrus would issue a decree for the Temple foundations to be laid down! Not only so, but Isaiah prophesied in great detail how Cyrus would overthrow the mighty city of Babylon. It is all recorded in Isaiah chapter 44:27-28; 45:1-4 and through to Isaiah ch.48.

When Cyrus was shown the prophecy of Isaiah in 536BC, he believed it and eagerly wrote a decree that the Jews could return and rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem (*Antiquities* Book 11, ch.1, para 2).

Cyrus II, (the Great) was the son of Cambyses I, king of Anshan in Persia, and he was grandson to Cyrus I also king of Anshan. Cyrus II (the Great) came from a royal Persian family.

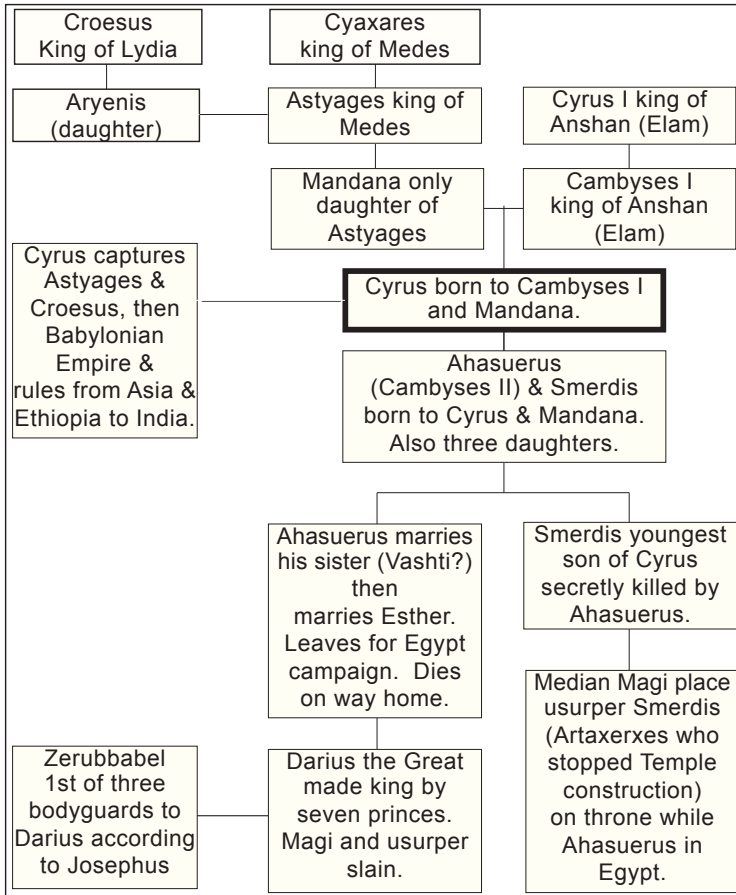


The story of the childhood of Cyrus II is told by Herodotus the Greek historian about 450BC. Astyages, the king of the Medes ruled over the Persians at this time and gave his daughter Mandana in marriage to a Persian prince named Cambyses. From this marriage Cyrus II was born.

Astyages king of the Medes, had a dream that his daughter's baby would grow up to overthrow him



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and he ordered baby Cyrus slain. Unknown to Astyages, his General gave the baby to a shepherd, whose wife had just had a still-born baby, and the still-born baby was disposed of as Cyrus. When Cyrus was 10 years old, his outstanding qualities were discovered by Astyages, who, in spite of the dream, allowed the boy to live.

When Cyrus reached manhood in Persia, became king in Anshan 559BC, revolted against Astyages, king of the Medes, and the General of Astyages' army agreed to surrender the Median army to him in 550BC. Astyages was taken captive and Cyrus made king of the Medes and Persians.

Cyrus first consolidated his power over Iranian tribes on the Iranian Plateau before expanding to the west. He marched west against Lydia and Sardis and the Lydian capital was captured in 547 or 546BC. Croesus their king was taken prisoner and well treated. The Ionian Greek cities on

the Aegean Sea coast, which had been vassals of the Lydian king, now became subject to Cyrus.

Next, Cyrus turned to Babylonia where Nabonidus, the father of Belshazzar reigned. Nabonidus had spent much of his time at Susa (Shushan) in Elam which had been part of the Babylonian

Empire. He took many of the Babylonian gods there with treasures of Babylon thus offending the priests of Marduk, the national deity of Babylon. In October 539BC Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians and Belshazzar was slain.



In fulfilment of prophecy, Cyrus freed the Jewish captives throughout his kingdom and allowed them to return to Judah (Ezra 1:1–4). Cyrus had several capitals. One was **Ecbatana** in Media, another was **Susa** (Shushan) in Elam and **Babylon** was a winter capital. These were the “three ribs” in the mouth of the bear which Daniel prophesied would tell him to “*Arise, devour much flesh*” (Dan.7:5).

When Cyrus defeated Astyages he inherited Median possessions in eastern Iran and when he captured Babylon he inherited all the Babylonian territories including the land of Egypt which had not recovered after Nebuchadnezzar’s final campaign in 570BC. However he had to engage in much warfare to consolidate his rule in the region of Iran. Herodotus tells of his campaign against nomads living east of the Caspian Sea. At first he was successful in defeating the Massagetai but was later defeated and killed. His body was recovered and buried at Pasargadae in Iran.

### *Cyrus’ Family*

Cyrus had two sons and three daughters. The eldest son was Cambyses II (*Ahasuerus*, Ezra 4:6) who succeeded him. The younger son was Bardiya (called Smerdis by the Greeks) who was secretly put to death on orders of Cambyses II. **Cambyses II married one of his sisters** and this is an important point to note as we consider the story of Esther.

Persia was ruled by the princes of seven families and their names are mentioned in Esther 1:14:

*“And the next unto him (Ahasuerus) was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha,*

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*Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the **seven princes of Persia** and Media, which saw the king's face, and which sat the first in the kingdom;).*"

After the Egyptians were allowed to return from captivity in the reign of Cyrus about 530BC they rebelled and Cambyses II fought a long campaign about 525/524BC. Having subdued the Egyptians, he was returning from his campaign in Egypt when he was informed that the usurper, Smerdis (*Artaxerxes*, Ezra 4:7), had been placed on the throne by the Magi from Media. Cambyses II (Ahasuerus) faced an uprising and while at Damascus committed suicide. Another report said he died of an injury when he fell from his horse.

The Magi (Wisemen) from Media had claimed that Smerdis, the youngest son of Cyrus was still alive and put a usurper from the priestly line on the throne who was also named Smerdis. He reigned for only 7 months.

In the Book of Ezra this usurper is named Artaxerxes (Ezra 4:7-24) and it was during his 7-month reign that the Samaritans wrote a letter which caused construction of the Temple at Jerusalem to cease. The Bible says they wrote to both Ahasuerus (Cambyses II) and Artaxerxes (Smerdis) but **the Bible does not record any answer from Ahasuerus. The Bible only records the answer to the letter from Artaxerxes (Smerdis)** (Ezra 4:17-23). There was opposition from the Samaritans during the reigns of Cyrus and Ahasuerus but work on the Temple **ceased** during the short reign of Artaxerxes because we read:

*"In the reign of Ahasuerus (Cambyses II), in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. And in the days of Artaxerxes (Smerdis) wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue. Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes (Smerdis) the king in this sort" (Ezra:4:6-8).*

Josephus does not even mention the usurper Smerdis but states that there had been a "slaughter of the Magi" (*Antiquities* Book 11, ch.3) which we know took place when Smerdis was killed. Josephus attributes the reply of Artaxerxes to Ahasuerus (Cambyses) (*Antiquities*, Book 11, Ch. 2). However scripture is very explicit that **it was Artaxerxes** (Smerdis) who replied. We read:

*"This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king" (Ezra 4:11).*

When the king's reply was read to the Jews we read:

*"Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and **made them to cease by force and power. Then ceased the work** of the house of God which is at Jerusalem" (Ezra4:23-24).*



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A comparison of the reply of Artaxerxes given in scripture, with the reply quoted by Josephus which he attributes to Ahasuerus, indicates that it is virtually the **same document** and therefore we conclude that although a complaint was lodged by the Samaritans in the time of Ahasuerus (Cambyses II) **he failed to reply** and when we consider the events occurring at the time it is understandable, for Ahasuerus the son of Cyrus would have known about the decree of Cyrus!

Why would he cause the work on the Jewish Temple to cease when he knew his father had decreed that the vessels of the Temple be restored?

Ahasuerus would have been fully aware of his father, Cyrus' decree for the Jews to return to build the Temple because **he reigned as co-regent with his father**. Cyrus spent most of his reign establishing the kingdom while Ahasuerus was at home running the Government, at first from Babylon. We know this because in Esther 3:7 we read about the **12th year** of King Ahasuerus which indicates that he must have been co-regent with Cyrus before 530BC when Cyrus died:

*"In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the **twelfth year of king Ahasuerus**, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar"* (Esther3:7).

For Ahasuerus to be reigning 12 years and to die in 524BC he must have been a co-regent before Cyrus died. Cyrus died in 530BC and Darius the Great began to reign in 522BC. There was a year before Darius reigned (523BC) when the usurper, Artaxerxes (Smerdis), took over the kingdom after the suicide of Ahasuerus. Josephus does not mention the usurper, Smerdis, but the Bible says the Samaritans wrote to him and his reply is recorded in scripture!

Therefore Ahasuerus (Cambyses) could only have **reigned as sole ruler** of Persia from 530BC to 524BC or about 6 years at the most and Josephus confirms this:

*"Cambyses **reigned** six years, and within that time overthrew Egypt, and when he was come back, he died at Damascus"* (*Antiquites*, Book11 ch.2).

We know that Ahasuerus (Cambyses) had a **long campaign** in Egypt which began some time in 525BC.

### *Who Then was Artaxerxes (Smerdis) the Usurper?*

Fortunately we have a great deal of information about Artaxerxes (Smerdis) the usurper in the *Histories* of Herodotus who wrote about 450BC. He tells us that Artaxerxes had the **same name** as Cyrus' younger son, Smerdis, whom Ahasuerus had secretly had murdered. Smerdis the usurper was a member of the Magi who were Zoroastrian priests

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following the teaching of Zoroaster. They studied the heavens and used astrology to interpret signs of coming events.

Herodotus tells us that the usurper Smerdis (Artaxerxes) had married the daughter of a leading Persian named Otanes and that Otanes was the first to suspect that Artaxerxes, his son-in-law, was not Smerdis the son of Cyrus but Smerdis the Magi. He suspected it was an attempt to bring the Persian Empire under the Medes.

Smerdis the Magi, had committed a crime in the days of Cyrus and as punishment, had his ears cut off so Otanes asked his daughter to wait until Smerdis slept and then to feel if he had any ears. When she did so she discovered he had no ears and she reported it to her father.

Otanes took six of the leading men of Persia, including Darius, into his confidence and they went to the palace and slew the impostor. They then selected Darius to be king in the following way: Next morning they each rode their horse outside the city and agreed that the first one whose horse neighed after the sun rose would be the King. Darius' horse neighed first.

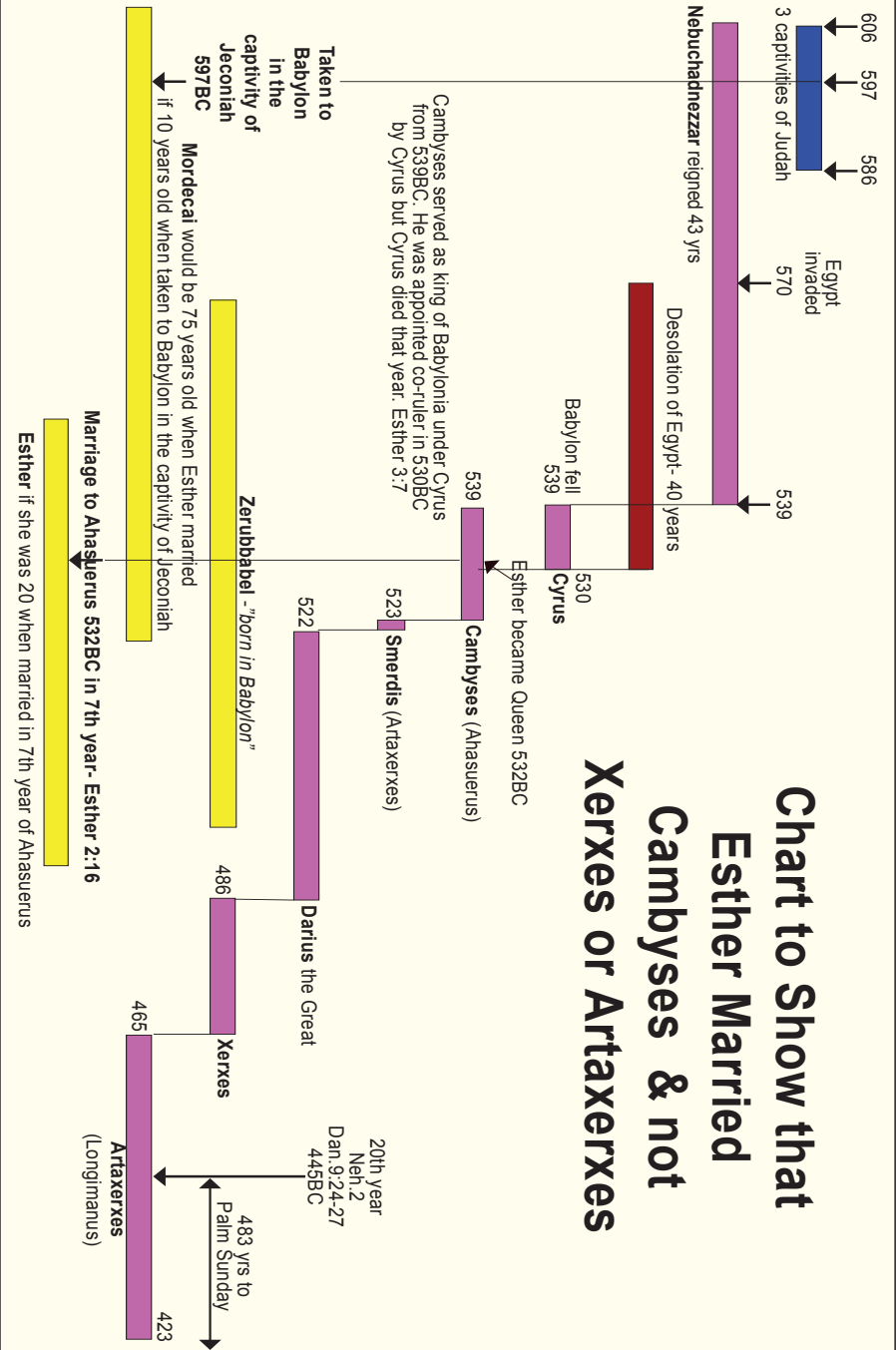
### *Why didn't the Jews write to the King of Persia?*

It may seem surprising that the Jews did not write in defence of their actions to rebuild the Temple. Cyrus, who had given the decree, was dead but the law of the Medes and Persians never changed. Was it because they were confident that the decree of Cyrus would be discovered and that Ahasuerus would overrule the complaint of the Samaritans? Or was it that they knew that Artaxerxes was opposed to the Jews and would not give them a sympathetic hearing?

**There was no reply to the first letter to Ahasuerus** or at least there is no record in Scripture.

We can understand why Ahasuerus (Cambyses) would **not** reply. He would have known about the decree of Cyrus and ignored the Samaritan's request. But the usurper, Artaxerxes was of the Magi and therefore a bitter opponent of the God of Israel and of the Jews. Daniel was hated by the princes in Babylon and was thrown into the lion's den when they found occasion against him "*concerning the law of his God*" (Dan.6:5). When these evil magicians could not interpret the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel did and was honoured.

The decree of Cyrus was made at Babylon but when Darius later found it, it was at Achmetha (Echbatania) the capital of Media. Perhaps Artaxerxes removed it from Babylon to the capital of the Medes for Herodotus says that the Magi wanted to bring the Persian Empire under the Medes.





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### *Ahasuerus Faced Opposition to His Reign*

There is no doubt that Ahasuerus faced an undercurrent in the Empire. According the Book of Esther, two of his chamberlains plotted to kill him. Mordecai became aware of the plot and both men were hanged. It is unlikely that these were the only ones involved in the plot.

The fact that Cambyses had his younger brother secretly murdered indicates he was suspicious of his brother and that the younger brother was plotting to take the throne. Herodotus gives the following account of the murder of Smerdis the brother of Ahasuerus. When Ahasuerus went on his campaign against Egypt he took his second sister as wife after he had disposed of the other sister who may have been Vashti, and he took his younger brother Smerdis also. While in Egypt, Ahasuerus had a dream that his brother Smerdis would replace him as King so he ordered him to return to Persia and then sent his trusted friend to secretly arrange his murder.

The fact that the Magi were able to place a usurper on the throne and give him the name of Smerdis indicates that they were privy to what Ahasuerus (Cambyses) had done in murdering his brother. But because it had been done in secret the people could be deceived into thinking Smerdis was still alive. So while Ahasuerus (Cambyses) was away in Egypt the Magi made the move and crowned one of the priests whose name also was Smerdis.

Then there was Vashti his sister whom he married first. There obviously was family hatred and this could explain why Vashti refused to appear at the feast in his 3rd year when called by Ahasuerus (Cambyses).

It is true that it was the seventh day of a feast at the conclusion of 180-day (six month) seminar for all the *"nobles and princes of the provinces"* and *"the heart of the king was merry with wine"* (Esther 1:10). But Ahasuerus had intended to honour the Queen, not embarrass her. The seven princes however interpreted Vashti's action as **contempt** for the King.

After Vashti refused the command of the King there was a lengthy process to select young virgins and bring them to Shushan from distant provinces, to undergo a 12 month preparation before being presented to the King for his choice. The virgins would need to learn the Persian language and **four years** passed between the fall of Vashti and the crowning of Esther.

*"In those days"* there was an attempt to assassinate Ahasuerus. The plot was uncovered by Mordecai and two of the King's chamberlains were hanged. It is unlikely they were acting alone and *"after these things"* Haman was appointed as the new Chief-of-Staff. Possibly a security shake up. For four years Haman had operated and so built up

## Historical Background

the confidence of the King so that when he asked permission to kill all Jews in the Persian Empire he didn't even tell the King who it was he was going to wipe out; he just said it was "*a certain people*". The King thought it was just another attempt by lawless people to overthrow him.

Haman "cast lots" in the month Nisan of the 12th year (the 1st month) and determined that the 12th month Adar was the "lucky" month. This suggests he was using magic and may indicate he was in league with the Magi. So he sent out his decree that on the 12th month and on the 13th day of that month there would be Pogroms permitted when the people of all nations would cause to

*"destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey."*  
(Esther 3:13).

When Mordecai read the decree issued by Haman with the King's approval he realized the seriousness of the situation. He had instructed Esther not to reveal that she was Jewish. Everybody thought she was a local Persian girl from Shushan but someone would "spill the beans" and the Queen, with all her nation, could perish.

There were many loyal Jews in Shushan and these were threatened by Haman. Obviously Ahasuerus was reigning at a time when there was a great deal of unrest and the throne was threatened.

### *Darius the Great*

After the death of Ahasuerus (Cambyses II), Artaxerxes (the usurper Smerdis) and his Magi supporters were put to death and the heads of the seven families that ruled Persia (Esther 1:14) chose Darius to be king and stability returned to the empire. It was then that the Samaritans wrote to Darius but Darius confirmed the decree of Cyrus and their attempt to stop construction of the Temple failed.

Why didn't the Jews write to Darius? They didn't need to because they knew they had a friend at court who would fairly hear their case. The Samaritans wrote to Artaxerxes (Smerdis) because they knew he was against the Jews.

## Chapter 3 - The Jews in the Persian Empire

In the first year that Cyrus gained control he issued an amazing edict recorded in 2 Chronicles 36:23 and more fully in Ezra 1:2-4:

*"The LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, **The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem**" (Ezra 1:1-4).*

Cyrus obviously was favourable to Jews. When Babylonia fell to Cyrus, Daniel was placed over the three Presidents and Ahasuerus his son, would have had close contact with godly Daniel. It would be impossible for Ahasuerus not to have known about the decree of Cyrus and of the prophecies of Isaiah 44 and 45. Jews were highly esteemed in the Persian Empire.

According to Josephus the Jewish historian, Zerubbabel who led the Jews back to rebuild the Temple, was a personal friend of Darius the Great before he became king, and it would appear that Darius knew about the Lord and was at least very favourable to the God of Israel. Josephus writes of Darius:

*"Now he, while he was a private man, had made a vow to God, that **if he came to be king**, he would send all the vessels of God that were in Babylon to the Temple at Jerusalem. Now it so fell out, that about this time Zerubbabel, who had been made governor of the Jews that had been in captivity, came to Darius from Jerusalem; for there had been an **old friendship** between him and the king. He was also, with two others, thought worthy to be the guard of the King's body; and obtained honour which he hoped for" (Antiquities Book 11, Chapter 3).*

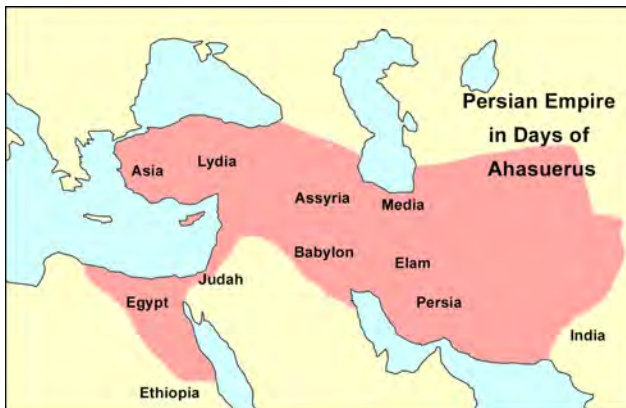
After work on the Temple ceased due to the edict of Artaxerxes, Darius became King and in the 2nd year of his reign the prophets Haggai and Zechariah urged the Jews at Jerusalem to continue building the Temple. Again the Samaritans objected and sent a complaint to Darius who made search and uncovered the decree of Cyrus. Darius then ordered that work on the Temple resume.

According to Josephus, **Zerubbabel** was the **first** of three bodyguards to Darius and was given the status of "cousin" with the right to sit with him

on the throne. The time line on page 15 will show that Zerubbabel lived at the same time as Darius and therefore the record of Josephus is feasible.

Later, in the reign of Artaxerxes (Longimanus) (465BC to 423BC) we find **Nehemiah** was

appointed as the King's cupbearer and in 445BC was granted the right to return to Jerusalem and rebuild **the city** (Neh.chs. 1 and 2).



### *Mordecai an Elder at Shushan*

Scripture states that **Mordecai**, the foster-father of Esther, “*sat in the king’s gate*”. This was where the elders and counsellors of the city sat so we may conclude that Mordecai was highly esteemed in the palace at Shushan. At this time he would have been about 70 years of age in the third year of Ahasuerus’ reign.

Due to Antisemitism it was common practice for Jews to hide their nationality by changing their name and this explains why Esther was given her name which means, “hidden”.

When Mordecai became aware that two of the King’s chamberlains were planning to assassinate Ahasuerus he reported the matter and the plotters were hanged (Esther 2:21-23). Mordecai’s meritorious deed was recorded and great honour bestowed on him by the King.

Jews were located throughout the Persian Empire due to the many captivities by Assyria and Babylon. The ten northern tribes had been scattered among the cities of the Medes by the Assyrians and Media had become part of the Persian Empire. Nebuchadnezzar had taken three lots of captives to Babylon.

There were also many Jews in the land of Egypt. Solomon married Pharaoh’s daughter and engaged in trade with the Egyptians. We know that Jeroboam, the first king of the ten tribes of Israel spent years in Egypt and Isaiah rebuked the Jews for looking to Egypt for assistance against the Assyrians. When Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah, many Jews fled to Egypt (Jer.44:1).

## Chapter 4 - Why Xerxes Could Not Be Esther's Husband

*"Now in **Shushan** the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity **which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah**, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away" (Esther 2:5-6).*

**C**ommentaries tell us that the husband of Esther was **Xerxes the Great**, the son of Darius the Great, who reigned over the Persian Empire from 486 to 465BC.

Josephus tells us that Esther married King Artaxerxes (Longimanus) who reigned from 465BC to 423BC. Both of these claims are inconsistent with **internal evidence** from the Book of Esther and from secular history.

*Encyclopedia Wikipedia* states:

*"Xerxes is identified with the king Ahasuerus in the Biblical Book of Esther...**There is nothing close to a consensus**, however, as to what historical event provided the basis for the story."*

Of course there cannot be consensus about the historical event because it is impossible to believe Esther was the wife of Xerxes once you accept the Biblical record. The Bible says Esther's husband was called Ahasuerus, not Xerxes or Artaxerxes. Ahasuerus is clearly identified in the book of Ezra as the son of Cyrus, the first king of Persia who reigned as King of Babylonia from 539BC as co-regent with Cyrus. Cyrus was absent establishing the empire and was killed in 530BC. Ahasuerus reigned until he suicided at Damascus on his way home from his Egyptian campaign about 524/523BC.

Cyrus was the first King of Persia and he ruled from the Hellespont in the west to the Indus River in the east and to the border of Ethiopia in the south. *"All the kingdoms of the earth"* (Ezra1:2). Cyrus the Great created the largest empire the world had ever seen.

*Encyclopedia Britannica* accepts the theory that Esther married Xerxes but admits that **"the Purim festival could date to the Babylonian exile (6th century bce)."**

How could the Purim feast date from the 6th century BC when Ahasuerus reigned, if the events it commemorates hadn't occurred till the 5th century BC when Xerxes reigned? It doesn't make sense.



# Why Xerxes Could Not Be Esther's Husband

Cyrus overthrew the Median empire in 550BC and Babylon in 539BC. Lydia and Asia were captured between these dates. His son Cambyses (Ahasuerus) ruled Babylon till 530BC when Cyrus died

Capture of Babylon followed by the Decree of Cyrus

550BC

**Cyrus**

530BC

539BC

**Ahasuerus (Cambyses)**

524/523BC

526BC

**NOTE:**  
There are two calendars shown. The Jewish Lunar/Solar calendar with 1st month Nisan & last month Adar and the BC dates that are according to the Gregorian Solar calendar

Since Ahasuerus (Cambyses) was King of **Babylonia** after 539BC he would have known about the decree of Cyrus for the Jews to rebuild the Temple. This is why Ahasuerus did not order the Temple work to cease. He would also have seen the "cylinder of Cyrus" that spelt out his father's policy.

(Josephus ignores the usurper Artaxerxes (Smerdis) and attributes his reply to Ahasuerus.

**Egyptians return in 530BC after 40 years (Ezek.29:12) of desolation but then revolt. Cambyses puts down rebellion in 525/523BC**

Haman appointed "after these things"  
Haman hanged & Mordecai given Kings ring in 3rd month of 12th year (Esther 8:9)

13th day of the 12th month of 12th year was Purim 526BC

Long Egyptian campaign 525/523BC. Ahasuerus suicides at Damascus on way home from Egypt

7 months

**Artaxerxes (Smerdis)** Smerdis and the Magi slaughtered by Darius

Work on Temple ceased Ezra 4:24

Temple completed in the 6th year of Darius 516BC

**Darius the Great**

Darius the Great reigned until 486BC followed by his son Xerxes 486 - 465BC and Artaxerxes (Longimanus) 465 - 424BC

## The Real Story of Esther

### *Ahasuerus Ruled the 127 Provinces from India to Ethiopia*

The Bible says Ahasuerus married Esther and “reigned from India even unto Ethiopia” (Esther 1:1) but since Cyrus did not invade Egypt, it is assumed by many that there could not have been princes from 127 provinces at Shushan in the third year of Ahasuerus’ reign. But Cyrus **did not need to invade Egypt** because Egypt had been invaded by Nebuchadnezzar in 570BC and left desolate for 40 years. It was a part of the Babylonian Empire that fell to Cyrus in 539BC. There were some places Cyrus did not need to conquer. The land of Judah and the land of Egypt were two of those places for they were previously part of the Babylonian Empire.

The 127 provinces are mentioned three times in the Book of Esther. Ahasuerus reigned over them (Esther 1:1), decrees were sent to them by Mordecai (Esther 8:9) and also by Esther (Esther 9:30).

It is because Ahasuerus did not conquer Egypt until 525/523BC that some assume there could not be 127 provinces in the third year of his reign but the commentators have missed an important historical fact. **Egypt was a part of the lands conquered by Cyrus.** It was part of the Babylonian Empire after Nebuchadnezzar had taken the Egyptians away captive in 570BC. Under Cyrus’ rule the land of Egypt was re-established and the Egyptians returned from captivity about 530BC.

The last campaign conducted by Nebuchadnezzar in 570BC was an invasion of Egypt. This was foretold by Jeremiah and by Ezekiel in great detail (Ezek.29 and Jer.46:13-26). Therefore when Cyrus and “*Darius the Mede*” (Dan.5:31) captured the city of Babylon, **all of the Babylonian territories fell into Cyrus’ hands** just as all of the land of Israel became a part of the Persian Empire in 586BC. The same thing happened when Cyrus defeated Croesus King of Lydia. All of the Greek cities in Asia Minor that had been controlled by Croesus surrendered to Cyrus.

The famous clay “cylinder of Cyrus” tells how it was the **policy of Cyrus** to allow **captive peoples** to return to their lands. The “cylinder of Cyrus” reads: “From...Ashur and Susa, Agade, Ashnannak, Zamban, Meturnu, Deri, with the territory of the land of Gutium, the cities on the other side of the Tigris, whose sites were of ancient found - the gods who dwell in them, I brought back to their places and caused them to dwell in a habitation for all time. **All their inhabitants I collected and restored them to their dwelling places...**may all the gods whom I brought into their cities pray daily before Bel and nabu for long life for me.”

It is clear from this inscription that Cyrus was the great liberator of captive peoples and that is one reason why he was so welcomed. **Egypt**

was **no exception** and the Egyptians would have been permitted to return after the devastation caused by Nebuchadnezzar in 570BC. By the year 530BC the Egyptians were fully established in their own land having completed the **40 years of captivity** foretold



by Ezekiel (Ezek.29:12) and thus five years later when they revolted against Ahasuerus he had to take the Persian army into Egypt to subdue the rebellion. The Persian Empire certainly extended from Ethiopia to India from the time of Cyrus!

### *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Prophecy about Egypt*

After Jerusalem was destroyed in 586BC Nebuchadnezzar permitted Jeremiah to remain in the land of Israel but renegade Jews took him by force into the land of Egypt. When in Egypt, Jeremiah prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would come into the land of Egypt (Jer.43:8-13), that the renegade Jews would die and Pharaoh-hophra would perish (Jer.46:13-28).

Ezekiel prophesied from the land of Babylon in even greater detail that Nebuchadnezzar would desolate the land of Egypt, and that the Egyptians would be scattered among the nations. God would "*disperse them through the countries*" for 40 years (Ezek.29:12). God said:

*"At the **end of 40 years** will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered: and will bring again the captivity of Egypt" (Ezek.29:13-14).*

The desolation of Egypt would be so great that Ezekiel stated:

*"It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; **neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations**: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations" (Ezek.29:15).*

The 40 years of desolations of Egypt were from 570 to 530BC. Egypt was therefore re-established by the end of the reign of Cyrus (530BC) and the beginning of the reign of Ahasuerus.

At the beginning of the reign of Cyrus, he issued a decree for the Jews to return to Judea and the *Cylinder of Cyrus* indicates he did the same for other nations at some time. When Ahasuerus began to rule, the land of Egypt would be re-established in provinces in keeping with Persian policy of allowing subject peoples to rule themselves. This would

## The Real Story of Esther

explain why, at the beginning of Ahasuerus' reign he called the princes of the provinces to Shushan to establish his authority and management. Apparently the Egyptians decided to revolt and that is why Ahasuerus invaded the land in 525BC to **reassert Persian authority**. He suicided at Damascus on the way home from Egypt.

Darius the Great did not become Emperor until 522BC but this delay was caused by an attempt by **a usurper named Artaxerxes** in Ezra 4:7, who the Magi from Media promoted as **Smerdis** the younger brother of Ahasuerus. Smerdis had been secretly put to death by Ahasuerus during his Egyptian campaign and the Magi probably thought they could deceive the people into thinking the younger brother was still alive.

The seven princes over the seven families that ruled Persia (Esther 1:14), stepped in and after Smerdis had reigned only 7 months, they appointed Darius as King. The Magi with their usurper were all slain.

### *Xerxes' Capital was at Persepolis; Ahasuerus' at Shushan*

Another reason why Esther's husband was Ahasuerus and not Xerxes is because **Ahasuerus made Shushan the capital** of his kingdom but Xerxes' famous palace was located at Persepolis. Esther was not at Persepolis.

The scripture indicates that **Ahasuerus had his palace at Shushan** and the entire story of Esther is about events taking place **at Shushan**.

Xerxes' father, Darius the Great, built **a palace at Persepolis**, and Xerxes built a much grander palace next to it as indicated in the photo below. Initially there were three capitals in the Persian Empire - **Shushan** in Persia, **Ecbatan** in

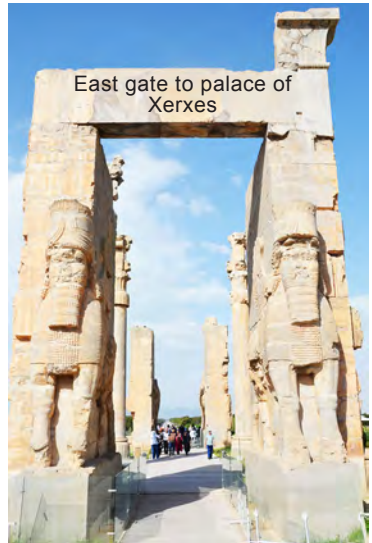


## Why Xerxes Could Not Be Esther's Husband

Media and **Babylon** in Babylonia. Persepolis was a treasure city and became the capital of Persia during the reign of Darius the Great, the father of Xerxes. Prior to Darius, the capital of Persia was at Shushan and this dates Esther before Darius i.e. before 522BC.

### *Mordecai was About 75 Years Old in Third Year of Ahasuerus*

The Bible says that there was a “*certain Jew*” named Mordecai at Shushan who had been brought from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar **when Jeconiah the King in Jerusalem surrendered in 597BC (Esther 2:6)**. Mordecai later adopted Esther, his niece, whose parents had died in captivity and left her orphaned.



Nebuchadnezzar made it the practice in his time to take tradesmen and the **young** as slaves to work in Babylon. He did it to all nations that he conquered. Daniel and his three friends were all very young men when they were taken in the first captivity in 606BC. King Jeconiah was only 18 years old when he and his family were taken to Babylon in the second captivity in 597BC along with a youthful Ezekiel who became the prophet of the exile.

It is reasonable therefore to assume that Mordecai was **just a lad** when he was taken to Babylon in 597BC - in the captivity of Jeconiah. This fits into the timeframe of Ahasuerus.

The Persian king, Xerxes, reigned from 486 to 465BC and Esther, Mordecai's niece, became Queen in the 7th year of the King's reign. So if the 7th year of Xerxes was 479BC then **Mordecai would have to be about 130 years old** at that time - too feeble to do what he did when Esther was made Queen! For this reason alone we can rule out any possibility of Xerxes being the husband of Esther.

### *Xerxes Didn't Divorce His Wife*

But there are other reasons. Historical records indicate that Xerxes had only **one wife** whose name was Amestris whom he married in the third year of his reign and she was his wife until his death. **She was never put away as was Vashti**. One commentator seeks to explain this error by saying that Vashti must have been put away **only temporarily** and then reinstated later. If that was the case then Esther would have to be deposed!



## The Real Story of Esther

### *Esther Made Queen at a Time of Insurrection*

Yet another reason for suggesting that Esther married Ahasuerus is that Xerxes reigned for 20 years at a time when the Persian Empire was **very prosperous** but Ahasuerus reigned at a time when the kingdom was wracked with insurrection.

Historical records say that Ahasuerus **died childless** and so the seven heads of the leading families chose Darius. When Darius became the next king his own wife would have been the new Queen.

There was about **eight years** from the marriage of Esther to Ahasuerus till his death and if she had a child it could only be 6 or 7 years old at the time of Ahasuerus' death. Too young to reign.

The reasons given above make it imperative that we look for another king of Persia, other than Xerxes, to be the husband of Esther and there is only one that fits all the criteria and it is Ahasuerus known as Cambyses II.

It is true that some ancient kings were known by more than one name and this can be explained by the fact that some names may be Persian or a Greek equivalent. Greek historians may give a Greek name to a Persian king but there is no need to change the name of Ahasuerus to Xerxes - from the one given to him in Esther 1:1.

## Chapter 5 - The Fall of Vashti

**I**n the third year of the reign of Ahasuerus an 180-day training seminar for princes from the 127 provinces of the Persian Empire was held. At the end of the 180 days, King Ahasuerus celebrated with a seven-day feast to which everybody in Shushan was invited. Everybody was in high spirits and on the last day, Queen Vashti was asked to appear but she refused and Ahasuerus (Cambyses) was greatly embarrassed. To disobey the King was a very serious matter and a bad example before the guests and subject princes. The princes over the seven families that ruled Persia advised the King to divorce Vashti and seek another wife. Search was to be made for a suitable virgin in all the provinces.

We know very little from the Scripture about Vashti but we learn from ancient historical records that Ahasuerus married his sister and being a member of the family, it is possible she knew that Smerdis her younger brother had planned to take the throne. Perhaps this was behind her refusal to attend the feast on the final day.

Some have suggested that Vashti refused to attend because Ahasuerus was drunk but the fact that Cambyses was “merry” after drinking wine at the end of a seven-day feast does not necessarily indicate that he was blind drunk. A different Hebrew word is used for drunkenness when Noah was “*drunk*” after the Flood. In fact at Cambyses’ feast “*drinking was according to the law; none did compel*” (Esther 1:8). Guests were free to refuse the wine so it seems it was not a wild drunken party. At the same time that Cambyses was having his feast, Vashti was also having a feast with “*the women in the royal house*” (Esther 1:9) and there is no suggestion that she was drunk.

The princes from the 127 provinces in attendance at the King’s feast had come from far-off regions to be introduced to Cyrus’s son who had been appointed king of Babylonia after the capture of Babylon. Cyrus spent much of his time fighting wars and so administration fell largely on Ahasuerus. It seems he was reigning more like a co-regent. With the fall of Babylon all empires had been conquered and the princes of all the provinces were brought to Shushan to meet their new ruler; to be instructed on the Persian administration. Their countries had surrendered to Persia but had been given considerable liberty as vassal states. The training course had been completed and all participants relaxed for the final seven days with a feast provided by the King.

## Chapter 6 - The Decree of Haman

**I**t was “*after these things*” i.e. after Mordecai had discovered the plot to kill King Ahasuerus that Haman was appointed “*above all the princes that were with him*” (Esther 3:1). Somebody must have been deposed to make way for Haman. Perhaps this was a security shakeup?

Haman was certainly trusted by King Ahasuerus but he must have concealed his hatred for the Jews. He was given the King’s ring which allowed him to act with the King’s authority yet he hated the Jews and when Mordecai refused to bow to him at the gate of the palace he built a gallows about 80 feet high with the intention of seeking the King’s approval to hang Mordecai.

But Haman was not content to just kill Mordecai; he hated **all Jews** even though the Jews were loyal subjects of King Ahasuerus which suggests that Haman may have been aligned with the King’s enemies. By eliminating all Jews it would make an attempt to overthrow King Ahasuerus much easier. When Haman sought permission from King Ahasuerus to kill all the Jews in the entire Persian Empire he **did not tell** the King **who** it was he intended to kill. He simply said:

*“There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king’s laws: therefore it is not for the king’s profit to suffer them”* (Esther 3:8).

Haman offered to pay the King 10,000 talents of silver if his plan was approved and no doubt Haman thought he could take the silver from the slaughtered Jews. With the memory of an attempted assassination still fresh in the King’s memory, he quickly approved the plan and even told Haman that he could keep the 10,000 talents of silver!

The most favourable day to wipe out the Jews was determined by **casting lots** and the lot fell on the 12th month, Adar, and the 13th day of the month in the 12th year of the King’s reign. This gave ample time to plan the entire operation and ensure that no hitches could occur. The palace scribes wrote the royal decree and copies were sent out to all the provinces. This decree was issued in the first month of the Jewish year, Nisan, in the 12th year of the reign of Ahasuerus: about 526BC.

The practice of casting lots (“*pur*”) to determine the most favourable time to wipe out the Jews suggests that Haman was acting in league with the Magi who were astrologers because the Magi occupied the throne after the death of Ahasuerus until Darius and the heads of families slew them.

What Haman did not know was that the Jew whom he hated so much was the foster-father of the Queen. Mordecai had instructed Esther not to reveal that she was a Jewess. Unbeknown to Haman, his edict, directed at the Jews, was also directed at the Queen and if the King's loyal supporters were wiped out Esther would also be threatened.

### *The Moment of Truth*

Once Haman's edict was made known Mordecai became greatly distressed. He wore sackcloth and put ashes on his head. He sent a copy of the edict to Esther with an urgent message to seek an audience with the King and to intercede for her people. Two months had passed and something had to be done quickly to reverse the edict. It was now the third month and it took months for an edict to be delivered to the distant provinces. The Jews would need time to prepare to defend themselves.

At first Esther replied that she couldn't just walk into the King's presence. Even the Queen must be called for by the King. To enter uninvited could be fatal unless the King extended his golden sceptre so Esther called for days of prayer and fasting with her maids and then went into the King's presence saying, *"If I perish, I perish!"* With fear and trembling Esther entered unannounced in the throne room and the king extended his sceptre - she touched it and was safe.

Esther asked that she have the company of the King and Haman to a feast over two days and orders were given for Haman to attend. Haman had not the slightest idea why he was called. He could only think that it was to honour him but Esther was setting a trap. He arrived in a joyful spirit on the first day and, filled with his own importance, went home elated that he had been honoured to feast with the King and Queen. His joy was marred however by that Jew, Mordecai, for as he left the Palace, Mordecai refused to bow before him.

Haman's family gathered around to hear his glowing report of an exclusive feast with the King and Queen. Why was he so honoured?

Haman gave a glowing report and spoke of the great wealth the king had bestowed upon him a few weeks before when he offer to destroy the Jews. Instead of paying the King 10,000 talents of silver to dispose of the Jews the King had given him the silver! But then Haman's countenance changed. He became depressed and exclaimed,

*"Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate"* (Esther 5:13).

The emotion of hatred within the heart of Haman was so great that it exceeded the joy of a day alone with the King and Queen and the prospect

## The Real Story of Esther

of a second day on the morrow. A deathly silence fell over the guests and then Zeresh, Haman's wife, suggested:

*"Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high (80 feet), and to morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet"* (Esther 5:14).

Immediately the order was given to build the high gallows for Mordecai. He would go early to the palace the next day and get permission to hang Mordecai. The King would not be told that it was because Mordecai was a Jew. He would charge Mordecai with failure to obey the law.

By the next morning the gallows were complete; 80 feet high; high enough to ensure that Mordecai's neck would be broken.

That night Haman slept peacefully but the King found no sleep. He walked back and forth and into the library of the scribes to do some reading. His eye lighted on the record of the assassination attempt by two of his chamberlains and he read again how Mordecai had uncovered the plot and reported it to the King. No reward had been given to Mordecai and he determined to remedy the matter as soon as Haman appeared for work next morning. So when Haman appeared at the Palace door, to his surprise, King Ahasuerus called him in and before he could open his mouth the King asked:

*"What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honor more than to myself?"*

Remembering that he had an appointment later that day to feast with the King and Queen it seemed obvious that the King wanted to bestow a special honour upon himself. Haman answered the king:

*"Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honor, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor. Then the king said to Haman, **Make haste**, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and **do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate**: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken"* (Esther 6:6-10).

Haman had been given his assignment for the day before he returned for Esther's feast. Nothing could have been more humiliating than to lead the Jew he so despised through the streets of Shushan, mounted on the King's own steed, attired in royal garb with the crown placed firmly on



his head. But then to proclaim to all and sundry, *"This is the man man whom the King delights to honour!"* Nothing could be more degrading but the King had commanded it! This was no time to ask permission to hang Mordecai. The tables were turned and the victor had become the victim.

In obedience to the King's command, Haman led Mordecai through the cheering crowds of Shushan and returned the King's steed to the stall. He went home, a dejected, depressed, human being and when he told Zeresh what had happened she said:

*"If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him"* (Esther 6:13).

Just then, there was a knock at the door; the King's chamberlains had arrived to take Haman to Esther's banquet.

As the banquet of wine proceeded, again the King asked Esther:

*"What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom"* (Esther 7:2).

At this stage the King had not been informed that Esther was a Jewess. Mordecai had told her to conceal the fact; neither did Haman know she was a Jewess; he did not have the slightest suspicion that she had Jewish parents. The atmosphere was charged as Esther pleaded for protection from Haman. She pleaded for her life and the survival of her people, and both the King and Haman realized that she was a Jewess. She said,

*"If I have found favor in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, **let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:** For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, **although the enemy could not countervail (equal) the king's damage**"* (Esther 7:3-4).

This was not only an appeal for the safety of Esther and her people but **it was a warning to the King that he would suffer even greater damage.** If this decree was carried out, the cost to the King could be his kingdom; the Queen would perish; the many trusted Jewish officers in the empire would perish; Mordecai who had saved the King's life and had been honoured that very day would perish. Even Zerubbabel and the Jews who were rebuilding the Temple at Jerusalem as commanded by Cyrus would all perish. If Esther had held her tongue, there would be vast political ramifications for the King and the damage to the King would far outweigh the damage to Esther's people.

Esther's words were a clear inference that **Haman was a traitor** and this decree was ultimately aimed at the King.

## The Real Story of Esther

The blood drained from Haman's face as the enormity of his blunder become apparent. He could not flee. He had come unarmed and could not fight. What could he do? He had just built the gallows for Mordecai and that very day, before coming to the feast with the King and Queen, he had been forced to honour that hated Jew in the streets of Shushan. The words of Zeresh, his wife were ringing in his ears:

*"If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt **surely fall before him**"* (Esther 6:13).

The King sprang to his feet. He was silent, but angry, as the realization of what his chief of staff had done dawned upon him. He slowly walked out into the courtyard to reflect on what he should do.

This man, Haman, whom he had exalted to his right hand had planned to kill all the Jews; his most loyal subjects. He remembered the Jew's Bible. It prophesied that his father, Cyrus, would destroy Babylon and release the Jews to return and rebuild the Temple. His father had written a decree freeing Jews throughout his kingdom to return; granting them special privileges.

When the Samaritans had written asking him to stop construction of the Temple he had ignored their request. Zerubbabel had been held in high esteem by his father but this man had given royal permission for the Samaritans to slaughter Zerubbabel and the 50,000 Jews who returned with him!

The King had been deceived by his chief of staff and had failed to tell him it was the Jews that were to be killed throughout the empire. Could this be part of an uprising against him? He needed the support of the Jews throughout his kingdom. Only hours before, he had ordered that Mordecai the Jew be honoured in the streets of Shushan for saving his life from conspirators. Was Haman a part of that conspiracy?

The King knew what he had to do. Back to the banquet hall he came only to find Esther recoiling on the couch before an emotional Haman who had thrown himself on the floor at Esther's couch pleading with her for mercy. The king stood at the door for a moment and took in the situation before exclaiming:

*"Will he force the queen also before me in the house?"*

Instantly one of the guards attending the feast stepped forward, took a napkin and covered Haman's face to silence him and one of the King's chamberlains, Harbonah, who had brought Haman to the banquet and who had seen the gallows Haman had made *"standing in the house of Haman"*, turned to the King and pointing across the city to Haman's house said:

*"Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for*

## The Decree of Haman

*Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman* (Esther 7:9).

The issues were clear. That very day the King had honoured Mordecai the Jew for exposing his enemies and this man; Haman, wanted to kill him with all the Jews in his kingdom! Haman was not fit to be the Chief-of-staff. The King took the ring off the traitor's finger and, pointing to the gallows, said:

*"Hang him thereon!"* (Esther 7:9).

The palace guards stepped forward. Haman was bound, taken home and hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai.

## Chapter 7 - The Decrees of Mordecai and Esther

Once the plot to destroy the Jews and to overthrow Ahasuerus' kingdom had been exposed King Ahasuerus wasted no time. He needed a new Chief-of-Staff and who better could be chosen than the man who had already spared his life; Mordecai the Jew. It was absolutely clear whom he could trust. The Jews were his friends and Haman had tried to wipe them out. Mordecai the Jew must be appointed to govern in the place of Haman.

That same day Mordecai was called to the Palace and the King's ring was placed on his finger. The chamberlains took him aside and dressed him in blue and white royal apparel, a great crown of gold was placed on his head and a cape of fine linen and purple on his shoulders. Mordecai walked into the palace a lowly Jew and walked out from the King the most powerful man in the Persian Empire.

But there was still some unfinished business. The decree of Haman must be reversed. Nearly three months had passed and in nine months time the enemies of the Jews would be free to slaughter every Jew in the Empire from the youngest to the eldest. The decree of Haman had been posted and it would take months for the far flung provinces to receive the decree. Another decree must be sent to countermand the decree of Haman.

Then king Ahasuerus gave the reason to Esther the Queen and to Mordecai for his action in disposing of Haman:

*"Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, **because he laid his hand upon the Jews**" (Esther 8:7).*

Furthermore Ahasuerus said to Esther:

*"Write ye **also for the Jews, as it liketh you**, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse" (Esther 8:8).*

The scribes were called and Mordecai dictated a letter to all

*"the Jews, and to the **lieutenants**, and the **deputies and rulers of the provinces** which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language" (Esther 8:9).*

All haste was required to get the message out and when it was received in the provinces the Jews rejoiced and many from other races *"became Jews; for fear of the Jews fell upon them"* (Esther 8:17). The Jews rejoiced, not

## The Decrees of Mordecai and Esther

only that they could defend themselves and that the Governors would support them, but now a Jew, a worshipper of the God of Heaven, was the Chief-of-Staff in the palace at Shushan.

Months passed and the fateful date approached. The Jews gathered together in anticipation of an attack. The Persian Governors and their garrisons in all the provinces stood with the Jews and when their enemies came to attack them it was the attackers who were slain. On the 13th of Adar

*“all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because **the fear of Mordecai fell upon them**. For Mordecai was great in the king’s house, and **his fame went out throughout all the provinces**: for this man Mordecai **waxed greater and greater**. Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them”* (Esther 9:3-5).

The number of the enemies of the Jews that were slain on the 13th day of Adar was 75,000 and 500 more in Shushan. Another 300 were slain in Shushan the next day. The numbers that attacked the Jews and were destroyed is some indication of the opposition that King Ahasuerus faced. At this early stage in the Persian Empire there were many reactionary forces that threatened the peace and these had been eliminated in one day.

Haman’s ten sons were all hanged on the gallows that he prepared for Mordecai. Throughout the Empire the Jews rested on the 14th day of the month Adar but in Shushan the palace, they rested on the 15th day of the month Adar. Thus the kingdom was secured and the Jews were spared.

Esther and Mordecai immediately wrote letters to their people in all the provinces commanding them to keep in perpetual memory this historic event when the nation was spared from annihilation.

This celebration is known as the **Feast of Purim** and is held every year throughout the world on the 14th day of the month Adar. In Jerusalem they celebrate for two days on the 14th and 15th day of the month Adar. It is a time of rejoicing when Jews exchange gifts of food and drink, donate charity to the poor, eat a celebratory meal, recite the Scroll of Esther; usually in the synagogue and recite additions to the daily prayers and the grace after meals.

The Feast of Purim falls on different dates on the Gregorian calendar each year. In 2021 it was held from sunset 25th February to sunset 26th February. Only at Jerusalem do the celebrations continue two days to sunset 27th February.



## Chapter 8 - The Reign of Esther

**H**ow long did Esther reign as Queen of Persia? Scripture indicates she became Queen in the 10th month of the 7th year of Ahasuerus; about 531BC and King Ahasuerus died on receiving news that Smerdis had occupied the throne while he was absent in Egypt and this was in the year 523BC because we know that Darius began to reign in 522BC and Smerdis reigned for just 7 months. So that means that Esther and possibly Mordecai, exercised sovereign power over the Persian Empire for about 7 years.

According to Herodotus, the usurper Smerdis (Artaxerxes) married the daughter of a leading Persian named Otanes so Esther was not the Queen after the death of Ahasuerus. Her reign ceased with the death of Ahasuerus.

Also we know that Mordecai was about 75 years old when Esther was married. Seven years later Mordecai would be 83 years old if he lived that long and we know that Smerdis had another member of the Magi as his Chief-of-Staff. Both Smerdis and his CEO were killed by Darius and the leaders of the families in Persia.

As Queen of Persia for 7 years Esther would have been attended by ladies and chamblains. She would have become rich and after the short reign of the usurper, she would have been held in high esteem during the reign of Darius the Great. The 7-month reign of Smerdis would have been a trying time for her but did she marry Darius?

According to Herodotus, Darius married seven times. He married the following three to whom he was related and had children plus four others:

- **Atossa**, a daughter of Cyrus. She bore Darius four sons: **Xerxes** (his successor), Ariamenes, Achaemenes, and Hystaspes.
- **Artystone**, a younger daughter of Cyrus the Great. They had three children: Arsames, Gobryas, and Artozostre.
- **Parmys** the daughter of Smerdis/Bardiya the younger son of Cyrus. Her son was named Ariomardus.

The seventh queen was named **Ardabama**, who was not known to Herodotus. The *Persepolis Fortification Tablets* which describe payments in silver between 492 and 458BC prove that **Ardabama was the most powerful woman at court**. If Esther took this Persian name and was numbered among Darius' wives then it is possible that after seven years experience managing the empire with Mordecai she continued to serve. She would be about 65 years old when Darius died. Esther would be well equipped to manage the business of the court but we can't be sure it was her.

## Chapter 9 - The Message of the Book of Esther

*“Behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and **will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel**, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land” (Joel 3:1-2).*

**T**he Book of Esther records God’s faithfulness to Abraham and his seed. It shows that whether in the land or scattered among the nations, God’s eye is ever upon the Jews for the blessing of mankind.

The fact that Esther was a Jewess was deliberately hidden from King Ahasuerus until Esther revealed it to him when she pleaded for her life and the lives of her people.

In Esther’s day when these events took place there was strong antisemitism and at such times Jews have taken Gentile names to avoid persecution. Haman could never have issued his decree to kill every Jew in the Persian Empire without general support. Esther, meaning “*hidden*”, was not her given Jewish name. It was Hadassah meaning “*myrtle*”.

Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes the usurper, reigned in turbulent times but after their deaths Darius reigned. It was in his **2nd year that peace came** to the empire and Zechariah was given a vision of a horseman and horses “*among the myrtle (trees)*”. The Hebrew is not “*myrtle trees*” but simply “*myrtle*”. The horseman was the angel of the Lord and he said, “*We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all **the earth sitteth still, and is at rest***” (Zech.1:11).

The Holy Spirit does not waste words. The angels and “*myrtle*” (Hadassah) had brought peace. Mordecai and Esther had held powerful positions in the Kingdom under Ahasuerus. We don’t know what part she played in the politics of Persia after the death of Ahasuerus and during the 7 months of turmoil while the usurper, Smerdis ruled. Nor do we know what position she held in the reign of Darius. We know that in the second year of Darius construction of the Temple resumed after Artaxerxes had stopped it and Darius approved it (Ezra 4:24).

It was 520BC, just **six years** after God had used Esther to rescue her people from their enemies that the Samaritans wrote to Darius to ask him to stop work on the Temple but Darius found the decree of Cyrus and ordered that the Temple be finished. This was in his 2nd year.

Back in Shushan, Esther and elderly Mordecai, if he was still alive at 86 years, would have still had great influence and the Jews had begun to

## The Real Story of Esther

keep the Feast of Purim each year! The years of conflict had ended and it could be said in the 2nd year of Darius that the earth *"sitteth still, and is at rest"*.

The Book of Esther is a grand illustration of the providential dealings of God with His people even when they are scattered among the nations. Down through the centuries of time Jews have been expelled from countries, tortured and killed in Inquisitions, murdered in Pogroms and in the Holocaust and in our day we still have Iran almost daily threatening the extermination of the nation of Israel.

Israel was scattered by Nebuchadnezzar in accordance with the prophecy of Jeremiah and God had used the heathen nations to punish them for their wickedness but the 70 years of servitude in Babylon had finished and 50,000 Jews had returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel in the days of Cyrus.

*"For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for **he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye**" (Zech.2:8).*

Haman found this to be true. The Palestinian Covenant guaranteed Divine protection for repentant Israel. God said that if Israel will

*"return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice... **the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee**" (Deut.30:1-7).*

God will keep His promise to Abraham:

*"I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen.12:3).*

### *Israel in Tribulation*

All that Israel has endured in the past however will pale into insignificance during the coming Great Tribulation. Jerusalem has been trodden down by the Gentiles since the Babylonian captivity of 606BC and after the Rapture, the Russian /Islamic invasion will wipe out 2/3 of the nation before the remnant repent and seek the Lord (Zech.13:9). Once Israel turns to the Lord, God will destroy the armies of the Russians and Islamists on the mountains of Israel. The Antichrist will then move into Jerusalem to sit in the rebuilt Temple; the Jews will flee from Jerusalem and for the final 42 months will be protected by God, fighting for survival (Zech.12:5-8; 14:14).

At the end of the 7 years Antichrist will gather an army from all nations of the world (Rev.19:19) and bring them to the final battle of Armageddon with the express intention of totally destroying the nation. But the Lord will appear in glory with the armies of heaven to rescue His people.

## The Message of the Book of Esther

Antichrist, the last Haman, will be destroyed. Israel will say in that day:  
*"Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation"*  
(Isa.25:9).

### *Persia's Future Foretold*

Jeremiah prophesied the future of Persia (Iran) in 597BC as follows:

*"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might. And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven"*(Jer.49:45-46).

This prophecy was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar captured Elam (Persia).

But then God says:

*"I will set **my throne in Elam**, will destroy from thence the king and the princes, saith the LORD"* (Jer.49:38).

*"From thence, (i.e.from Elam)"*, Cyrus destroyed Babylon. Daniel, Mordecai and Esther also ruled on the throne of Persia. Then the earth *"sitteth still"*.

In the last days Elam (Iran) will turn to the Lord along with other Muslim countries such as Egypt and Iraq (Isa.19:23) and Arabia (Ps.72:10).

*"But it shall come to pass **in the latter days**, that I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the LORD"* (Jer.49:39).

When God shows His power in the destruction of the armies of Russia and her Islamics associates during the first half of the Tribulation the power of Islam will be broken for ever. Iran will turn to the Lord.

### *God's Providential Care for Us*

If God has been, and will be, so faithful to Israel in her dark times of persecution then why would He not be faithful to all His suffering saints in every age. Every believer suffers for Christ's sake at some time in their earthly journey. We wonder why God allows trouble to come our way but He has a purpose and nothing is allowed that is not for our good and his glory.

Though the Book of Esther makes no mention of the name of God yet on every page we can see the hand of God at work. We might think that Esther was left alone but behind the scenes the Almighty was moving to fulfil His plan and bless His people. The enemies of God could not see it but Mordecai and Esther knew they were never alone.

Nearly 200 years beforehand, God had ordained that Cyrus would rule over Persia and would restore Israel to the land that God gave to Abraham and

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his seed for an everlasting possession. It was all in God's plan. Tragically Esther had been orphaned in a foreign land and was cared for by Mordecai. But she would never have been presented to the King if she had not been orphaned. It was all for her ultimate good and the good of her people.

This lonely orphan girl living in a foreign land, went before a king not knowing whether she would survive to tell the tale. In faith she broke the law of the Persian Court. She fasted and prayed and said, "*If I perish, I perish!*" The will of God was done not knowing what the cost might be and God did not fail her. Esther is a shining example to us so that we might be faithful to Christ and leave the consequences to Him. He controls the circumstances and leads His dear children along.

In shady, green pastures, so rich and so sweet,  
God leads His dear children along;  
Where the water's cool flow bathes the weary one's feet,  
God leads His dear children along.

### Chorus

Some through the waters, some through the flood,  
Some through the fire, but all through the blood;  
Some through great sorrow, but God gives a song,  
In the night season and all the day long.

Sometimes on the mount where the sun shines so bright,  
God leads His dear children along;  
Sometimes in the valley, in darkest of night,  
God leads His dear children along.

Though sorrows befall us and Satan oppose,  
God leads His dear children along;  
Through grace we can conquer, defeat all our foes,  
God leads His dear children along.

Away from the mire, and away from the clay,  
God leads His dear children along;  
Away up in glory, eternity's day,  
God leads His dear children along.

*Author: G.A.Young*

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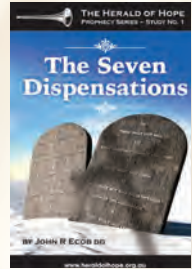
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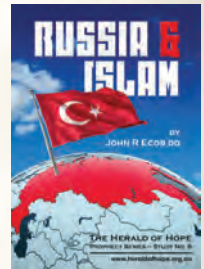
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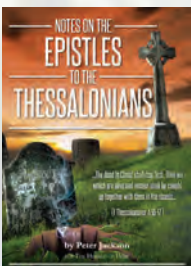
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The Feast of Purim has been held by the Jews annually since the 6th century BC to commemorate the great deliverance the Jews experienced early in the era of the Persian Empire.

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