

### Ahasuerus Displays His Power and Glory for 180 Days (October 4, 483–April 2, 482 BC)

Esther 1:1–4

1 Now it took place in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces,  
 2 in those days as King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne which *was* at the citadel in Susa,  
 3 in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his princes and attendants, the army *officers* of Persia and Media, the nobles and the princes of his provinces being in his presence.  
 4 And he displayed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor of his great majesty for many days, 180 days.

### The Seven Day Banquet in Susa (April 3–9, 482 BC)

Esther 1:5–9

5 When these days were completed, the king gave a banquet lasting seven days for all the people who were present at the citadel in Susa, from the greatest to the least, in the court of the garden of the king's palace.  
 6 *There were hangings* of fine white and violet linen held by cords of fine purple linen on silver rings and marble columns, *and couches* of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and precious stones.  
 7 Drinks were served in golden vessels of various kinds, and the royal wine was plentiful according to the king's bounty.  
 8 The drinking *was done* according to the law, there was no compulsion, for so the king had given orders to each official of his household that he should do according to the desires of each person.  
 9 Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the palace which belonged to King Ahasuerus.

### Vashti Defies Ahasuerus (April 9, 482 BC)

Esther 1:10–22

10 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, 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 display her beauty to the people and the princes, for she was beautiful.  
 12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. Then the king became very angry and his wrath burned within him.  
 13 Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times—for it was the custom of the king so *to speak* before all who knew law and justice  
 14 and were close to him: Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media who had access to the king's presence and sat in the first place in the kingdom—  
 15 "According to law, what is to be done with Queen Vashti, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus *delivered* by the eunuchs?"  
 16 In the presence of the king and the princes, Memucan said, "Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but *also* all the princes and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.  
 17 For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women causing them to look with contempt on their husbands by saying, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in to his presence, but she did not come.'  
 18 This day the ladies of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's conduct will speak in *the same* way to all the king's princes, and there will be plenty of contempt and anger.

19 If it pleases the king, let a royal edict be issued by him and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media so that it cannot be repealed, that Vashti may no longer come into the presence of King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal position to another who is more worthy than she.

20 When the king's edict which he will make is heard throughout all his kingdom, great as it is, then all women will give honor to their husbands, great and small."

21 *This* word pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Memucan proposed.

22 So he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province according to its script and to every people according to their language, that every man should be the master in his own house and the one who speaks in the language of his own people.

### Ahasuerus Searches for a New Queen (c. 482–480 BC)

Esther 2:1–9

1 After these things when the anger of King Ahasuerus had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her.

2 Then the king's attendants, who served him, said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king.

3 Let the king appoint overseers in all the provinces of his kingdom that they may gather every beautiful young virgin to the citadel of Susa, to the harem, into the custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let their cosmetics be given *them*.

4 Then let the young lady who pleases the king be queen in place of Vashti." And the matter pleased the king, and he did accordingly.

5 Now there was at the citadel in Susa a Jew whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite,

6 who had been taken into exile from Jerusalem with the captives who had been exiled with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had exiled.

7 He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had no father or mother. Now the young lady was beautiful of form and face, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.

8 So it came about when the command and decree of the king were heard and many young ladies were gathered to the citadel of Susa into the custody of Hegai, that Esther was taken to the king's palace into the custody of Hegai, who was in charge of the women.

9 Now the young lady pleased him and found favor with him. So he quickly provided her with her cosmetics and food, gave her seven choice maids from the king's palace and transferred her and her maids to the best place in the harem.

### Esther's Twelve Month Beauty Treatment (February–December 479 BC)

Esther 2:10–14

10 Esther did not make known her people or her kindred, for Mordecai had instructed her that she should not make *them* known.

11 Every day Mordecai walked back and forth in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and how she fared.

12 Now when the turn of each young lady came to go in to King Ahasuerus, after the end of her twelve months under the regulations for the women—for the days of their beautification were completed as follows: six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and the cosmetics for women—

13 the young lady would go in to the king in this way: anything that she desired was given her 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, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not again go in to the king unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name.

### Ahasuerus Chooses Esther as the New Queen of Persia (December 479/January 478 BC)

Esther 2:15–18

15 Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai who had taken her as his daughter, came to go in to the king, she did not request anything except what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the women, advised. And Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her.

16 So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus to his royal palace in the tenth month which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

17 The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him 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 banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his princes and his servants; he also made a holiday for the provinces and gave gifts according to the king's bounty.

### Mordecai Discovers a Plot Against Ahasuerus (c. 478–475 BC)

Esther 2:19–23

19 When the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate.

20 Esther had not yet made known her kindred or her people, even as Mordecai had commanded her; for Esther did what Mordecai told her as she had done when under his care.

21 In those days, while Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's officials from those who guarded the door, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

22 But the plot became known to Mordecai and he told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name.

23 Now when the plot was investigated and found *to be so*, they were both hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the Book of the Chronicles in the king's presence.

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## Chronological Notes

### 1) Temporal Notations in Esther.

A) Ahasuerus (Xerxes I) was king of Persia from 485 BC to 465 BC. The book of Esther, which takes place during this time, dates itself in terms of the year of Ahasuerus' reign. The following is a list of the temporal notations within the book:

- 1:1–3 – the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Ahasuerus' reign (483).<sup>1</sup>
- 1:4 – Ahasuerus displays his power for 180 days (October 4, 483 to April 2, 482).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> All Julian dates are based on the computation of Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.–A.D. 75*, BUS 19 (Providence: Brown University Press, 1956): 31. See also the online Babylonian Calendar Converter available at [http://www.staff.science.uu.nl/~gent0113/babylon/babycal\\_converter.htm#converter](http://www.staff.science.uu.nl/~gent0113/babylon/babycal_converter.htm#converter).

<sup>2</sup> "Since inscriptions in Egypt dated to Xerxes began to appear early in 484, his suppression of the Egyptian revolt (which began during Darius I's reign) can be dated to 485. With Egypt under control again, Xerxes was free to direct his attention to the campaign against Greece. With good reason, then, it has been suggested that the 180-day "banquet" in Xerxes' third year was connected with

- 1:5 – Ahasuerus gives a 7 day feast (April 3–9, 482).
- 1:10 – on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the feast, Vashti refuses the king's command (April 9, 482).
- 2:12 – Esther begins 12 months of beauty treatments (February–December 479).<sup>3</sup>
- 2:16 – Esther taken to Ahasuerus during the 10<sup>th</sup> month of the 7<sup>th</sup> year of his reign (December 479 /January 478)
- 3:7 – Haman casts the lot against the Jews in the 1<sup>st</sup> month of the 12<sup>th</sup> year of Ahasuerus' reign (April 5, 474).
- 3:7 – the lot fell in the 12<sup>th</sup> month of that year.
- 3:12 – Haman's scheme made official in the 12<sup>th</sup> year, 1<sup>st</sup> month, 13<sup>th</sup> day (April 17, 474).
- 3:13 – the execution day is set for the 12<sup>th</sup> year, 12<sup>th</sup> month, 13<sup>th</sup> day (April 5, 473).
- 4:16 – Esther's 3 day fast during the 12<sup>th</sup> year (June 22–24, 474).<sup>4</sup>
- 5:1 – on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the fast, Esther approaches Ahasuerus (June 24, 474).
- 5:4 – Ahasuerus and Haman are Esther's guests on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day (June 24, 474).
- 5:8 – Esther invites Haman and the king back for another feast on the 4<sup>th</sup> day (June 24, 474).
- 5:9 – Haman builds Mordecai's gallows (June 24, 474).
- 6:1 – during the night (early morning of the 4<sup>th</sup> day) Ahasuerus can't sleep (June 25, 474).
- 7:2 – Esther reveals Haman's scheme (June 25, 474).
- 8:1 – Ahasuerus gives Esther Haman's estate (June 25, 474).
- 8:9 – Mordecai issues an edict on the 12<sup>th</sup> year, 3<sup>rd</sup> month, 23<sup>rd</sup> day (June 25, 474).
- 9:1 – the Jews defend themselves on the 12<sup>th</sup> year, 12<sup>th</sup> month, 13<sup>th</sup> day (April 5, 473).
- 9:15 – the Jews in Susa kill 300 men on the 14<sup>th</sup> day (April 6, 473).
- 9:17 – Jews in the provinces fight on the 13<sup>th</sup> day and rest on the 14<sup>th</sup> day (April 5–6, 473).
- 9:18 – Jews in Susa fight on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> day and rest on the 15<sup>th</sup> day (April 5–7, 473).
- 9:19 – holiday for Jews in the provinces is on the 14<sup>th</sup> day (April 6, 473).
- 9:21 – holiday officially declared for the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> days (April 6–7, 473).

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laying plans for that Greek campaign. Because of the intense heat at Susa in the summer time, it is possible that this lengthy conference took place in the winter, or from the fall to the spring according to the chronology of Esther. Since it seems reasonable to conclude that these six months from Esther would have ended in the spring, the seven-day celebration that followed it could also fit well with the New Year's festival." For more detail, see William H. Shea, "Esther and History," *AUSS* 14 (1976): 227–246 and Andrew E. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul* (Concordia Publishing House, 2011): 192–195.

<sup>3</sup> Since Esther was presented to Xerxes in the tenth month of the seventh year, she entered into the preparations no later than Shebat (February) of 479.

<sup>4</sup> Esther's fast took place some time between April 17, 474 and June 25, 474. I have chosen to connect the fast with the events of June 25 rather than earlier in April or May.