

**A PERSONAL
VERSE-BY-VERSE COMENTARY**

ESTHER

Sharon Cravens

Esther 1:1 ¶ Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:)

This book opens with a time marker referencing a king referred to as Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus that reigned over 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. The implication is that there is more than one Ahasuerus. I read through several commentaries, and I liked Ray Stedman's thoughts.

"The name of this king is never given to us. Ahasuerus is not his name, it is his title, like the word "Czar" or "Shah" or "Pharaoh." There are several men identified in Scripture as Ahasuerus, not all the same man, because this is a common title. It means "The Venerable Father" and was an apt title for the king. **Secular history identifies this man as possibly being Xerxes the Great**, the one who attacked the power of Greece in the fourth century B.C., but it's much more likely, I think, that this man is Astyages, the son of Cyrus the First, who is the one called in the book of Daniel, "Darius the Mede," the man who took the kingdom from Belshazzar during the great drunken orgy in the city of Babylon on the night that Babylon fell. **However, this is somewhat beside the point, for the fact that the name is never given to us here indicates that it is not too important.**"

Guzik notes that the kingdom of Ahasuerus included the area of today's "Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel; and also parts of modern day Egypt, Sudan, Libya, and Arabia."

I found more than one reference that places these events between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra.

Chuck Smith offers this observation: "Ezra records the first return from the captivity. Some forty years later Esther came on the scene, and some forty years after that Nehemiah came on the scene. So the book of Esther fits about halfway between the rebuilding of the temple (the decree given by Cyrus) and the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem (the decree given by Artaxerxes to Nehemiah)."

Esther 1:2 That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace,

It is noted that this ruler has established his throne in Shushan, not in Babylon.

Esther 1:3 In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him:

Time marker = 3rd year of this king's reign

The king hosted a great feast for all his princes and servants, the military leaders (from the Hebrew for "power") of Persia and Media.

Esther 1:4 When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour

of his excellent majesty many days, *even* an hundred and fourscore days.

The king is a man of great pride since the purpose of his feast is to show off the riches of his kingdom. This feast lasted for 180 days.

Esther 1:5 And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace;

At the end of the first feast, the king made a feast for all the people (great and small, nobility and commoner) that lived in Shushan. This feast was held in the garden court of the palace.

This ancient palace has been discovered. Consider this quote from the Jerusalem Post dated March 14, 2017: "Originally, explorer Jacques de Morgan cleared much of the area and his colleague Roland de Mecquenem excavated the palace of Darius and Xerxes (Esther's consort Ahasuerus) with its many courtyards, royal apartments and gardens, while his work was continued by the archaeologist Roman Grishman from 1946 to 1967. They all dug great trenches across the mounds and revealed its ancient secrets. The 90 years of French work rescued many exquisite pieces of pottery and statuary, that are now in the Louvre Museum in Paris, but also produced a detailed plan of the palace, which confirms and supplements the original descriptions in the Book of Esther."

Esther 1:6 *Where were white, green, and blue, hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble.*

The decorations were beautiful! They were a striking blend of white, green, blue and purple. The couches provided to accommodate the guests were made of gold and silver. The flooring was of red, blue, white and black marble.

Esther 1:7 And they gave *them* drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king.

Esther 1:8 And the drinking *was* according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure.

The guests were served their drinks in gold cups, each one unique in design. Royal wine was available in abundance, but no one was forced to drink more than he wanted. The king had commanded that they should serve the guests according to individual pleasure.

The implication is that there were times when men were forced to imbibe.

Esther 1:9 Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women *in* the royal house which *belonged* to king Ahasuerus.

Queen Vashti hosted a separate feast in the palace for the women.

Esther 1:10 ¶ On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,

Esther 1:11 To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she *was* fair to look on.

Esther 1:12 But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by *his* chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.

On the last day of the feast, the king was drunk. He decided to send for the queen to present herself adorned with the royal crown to show off her beauty before his guests. He sent the seven chamberlains that served him to bring the queen to him, but she refused to come despite his command. This made the king very angry; his pride had been hurt and he felt publicly humiliated.

The chamberlains were eunuchs according to the Hebrew. These were the men that took care of the king's women.

I have heard some teach, based on the Jewish Targum, that the king wanted Vashti to appear wearing only her crown. That would certainly provide a good reason for her to refuse the request of a drunken king, but I don't think you can make that case just from reading the text.

John Gill offers this explanation: "...it was contrary to the law of the Persians, as not only Josephus¹⁷, but Plutarch¹⁸ observes, which suffered not women to be seen in public; and particularly did not allow their wives to be with them at feasts, only their concubines and harlots, with whom they could behave with more indecency; as for their wives, they were kept out of sight, at home¹⁹; and therefore Vashti might think it an indignity to be treated as an harlot or concubine...."

Esther 1:13 Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so *was* the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment:

Esther 1:14 And the next unto him *was* Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, 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;)

Esther 1:15 What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains?

The king conferred with the top lawyers in the kingdom—Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memucan—to determine how he could and should punish Queen Vashti for disobeying his command.

"saw the king's face" – Other translations clarify that these men were the king's

closest advisers and had special access to the king.

Esther 1:16 And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that *are* in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus.

Esther 1:17 For *this* deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not.

Esther 1:18 Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus *shall there arise* too much contempt and wrath.

Memucan was the spokesman for the lawyers. He pointed out that the queen's actions affected more than just the king. It was likely that the women of the kingdom would follow her example and show disrespect to their own husbands. This would end up causing great disrespect and strife in the homes of the kingdom.

Esther 1:19 If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she.

Esther 1:20 And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small.

Memucan went on to suggest that the king issue a royal command to make a law among the Persians and Medes that Vashti no longer be allowed in the presence of the king. This law would become permanent and inalterable. He then suggested that a better woman be chosen to replace Vashti. The law was to specifically declare that all wives were to honor their husbands.

The prophet Daniel made note of the strength of the law of the Medes and Persians. Daniel's enemies made use of this truth to get Daniel thrown into the den of lions.

Daniel 6:8 "Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not."

Esther 1:21 And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan:

Esther 1:22 For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that *it* should be published according to the language of every people.

The king liked the proposed solution and did accordingly. He sent letters to every province, providing translations for every language represented by the people of his kingdom.