

The Book of Esther: Beauty Queen of Susa

A Study of the Book of Esther| by Jade Lee

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The Book of Esther is a very vivid and dramatic presentation of the LOVE of GOD for His Chosen People. As in the Book of Ruth, His LOVE is display in Genuine Affection and Great Detail. This is every little girl's dream world and story line. An arrogant, yet beautiful queen is dethroned due to her disrespect for her husband, lack of wisdom and pride, only to find the main character, Esther, the beautiful unexpected everyday girl...by an act of Divine Intervention gaining the opportunity to become the next queen. And it all occurs after a year's worth of the most expensive spa in the nation- beauty treatments and cosmetics constantly being applied to Esther...All for her One Night with the King Aheuserus.

I. The Introduction

Read Esther Chapter 1

The Book of Esther begins with a very elaborate and extravagant setting. We are immediately invited into the palace of the King of Susa. The king's name is Xerxes in the Persian tongue and **Ahasuerus** in the Hebrew language. His kingdom was very extensive, from India to Ethiopia. This king decided to have a six month extravaganza, a huge party displaying all of his wealth and influence. This party was with the express purpose of showing off the beauty of his kingdom.



At the very end of this extravaganza, the king had a one week party. It was open to the public- everyone living in Susa was invited to the Party at the Palace. The whole nation was having a good time at the event of a lifetime. You didn't want to miss it and all eyes were on the king of Susa and his extensive kingdom.

Interior decorators were in an uproar about the beautiful displays in the king's courtyards. Imagine being officially invited to the king's palace. You begin to look around in delight and

The Book of Esther: Beauty Queen of Susa

A Study of the Book of Esther| by Jade Lee

amazement, wondering how you have found yourself at such an elegant, extravagant occasion. You pinch yourself to see if you are dreaming or if you are really living in real time!

Then you begin to take note of the glory of your surroundings. As you walk through the palace gates and into a courtyard, you are immediately struck by the quality of everything around you- the beauty of the curtains (can you even call them that)- hanging from the highest ceilings you have ever seen in your life. Then you notice the vivid pigments of the beautiful blue dye contrasting the ultra-pure white curtains, hanging from the upright marble columns- like pillars marking a monumental moment this nation would never forget.

As a ray of sunlight seems to gaze along with you in likeminded wonder, the silver rings so graciously tying vivid, purple tassel-cords to the upright marble columns glisten back at you in elated delight. The day has finally arrived for the week long celebration of all the king's accomplishments and you are invited in the most elaborate extravaganza known to the nation!

Your heart begins to pound with joy and excitement. Will you somehow get to sit near the king, or better yet meet him? Will you meet his beautiful wife or be greeted by a member of the royal family? All the stories you've heard about them are starting to come to life! You are in the midst of royalty.

As your loved one calls your name for the third time in a row, you snap out of your day-dreamy gaze brushing up against the softest material you have ever touched. What kind of cotton was this? You had never experienced such tenderness in the manner of material. You then notice that you have brushed against the material on royal couches. But these were not typical couches, instead they were made of pure silver and gold!

You touch it in amazement of the luxury before you, looking down only to notice the art-work mosaic called the floor! The floor beneath your feet was literally a type of mosaic art work made of marble- a mixture of red marble, blue marble, white marble, mother-of-pearl and many different colored precious stones of all types. This was the most expensive and beautiful floor you had ever seen- you were walking on a jewelry store!

Then beautiful women dressed in designer gowns began to come towards you with gold goblets full of royal wine. But even the cups were elaborately made, not one being the same as the other! Every single cup was particularly and uniquely constructed out of pure gold.

How much money could this one king have? The wine kept coming and coming and coming, as much as you wanted...you could drink your heart happy!

Before your cup was empty, you would turn and it would be refilled at your command. Indeed, this was a very benevolent king.

There was even a separate party held by the queen herself, Queen Vashti, for all of the women of Susa to attend! Everyone dressed in their finest, the most beautiful women of the entire kingdom were adorned in extravagant pieces with jewelry flowing from their head down to their neck. Even their gowns seemed to glisten with precious pieces of the finest jewelry.

The Book of Esther: Beauty Queen of Susa

A Study of the Book of Esther| by Jade Lee

But once your eyes beheld Queen Vashti up close, you finally saw what all of the fuss was about, for she was a true beauty. You almost had to stop yourself from taking looks at her over and over again because her features were so appealing and striking to behold.

Not only you, but others were enamored by her beauty. All the women were talking about her and everyone wished to be as fine as her, dressing like her, wearing their hair like her and even trying to talk like her.

That was just the first night! Six more evening to come back and enjoy yourself to the max, because you never knew if you would receive a personal invitation to any part of the palace again.

All was well and everyone was enjoying themselves until the final night when something strange occurred.

King Ahasuerus was once again partying, getting drunk off of wine when he began to look for his beautiful queen, Vashti. He wanted to display her beauty for all to see, but apparently this was not a good time for her. Remember, she was having her very own party aside from the kings.

She did not want to be interrupted by anyone, no matter how great or how small. The king called for her in front of the entire nation and to his utter dismay she refused to come. He literally sent 7 of his finest men- all castrated eunuchs- to get his beauty queen, with orders for her to come wearing her royal crown. The servants he sent were Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas. But Queen Vashti was not having that; she refused to come!

This set the king off in a tumultuous fit of anger; his pride was struck in front of the entire nation on the final night- the conclusion of his grand party! This was absolutely not acceptable and an unwise move on Queen Vashti's part. He immediately goes into action to resolve this problem, calling in his highest officials and lawyers. The closest to him were the 7 eunuchs he sent for Vashti. The king wanted to know what the legal ramifications were for the queen not coming at his command.

The king was then told by Memucan that this example set by Queen Vashti would spread like wild-fire throughout the entire kingdom of Susa (Persia). Who would listen to their husbands if the queen herself was defiant?

Memucan then advised a solution to the problem that would be clear to the entire nation- ban Vashti from coming back into the king's presence interminably. It would be then and only then that honor would be restored to the man's role in the household. The king should then replace the disrespectful queen with a woman that would be lovingly submitted to him, honoring his authority and role in her life.

King Xerxes thought this fitting and set it in order along with a letter going out to every household in his kingdom, making it clear that every man should be honored in his household by his wife.

And this is the story of Esther Chapter 1.

The Book of Esther: Beauty Queen of Susa

A Study of the Book of Esther | by Jade Lee

Life Reflections:

A. As a woman, what can you learn from the actions and decisions of Queen Vashti? Why do you think she refused to come to the king's party? :

B. Read Prov. 31:10-15. How could Queen Vashti's actions communicated a lack of security and level of disrespect to her husband, King Ahasuerus?

C. What did you think about King Xerxes response? In your opinion, was Queen Vashti's actions wise or unwise? Write down the definition of wisdom and the insight you receive after reading 1 Peter 3:1-6.

The Book of Esther: Beauty Queen of Susa

A Study of the Book of Esther| by Jade Lee

II. The Character of Esther

Read Esther Chapter 2.

Have you ever made a rash decision in the midst of heated emotion or stress only to find yourself regretting your conclusion a day or two later? Sometimes it doesn't even take that much time to question the decisions we made and realize we could have handled the situation in a more mature manner.

Unfortunately for King Ahasuerus, he found himself in this very human-like position of second guessing himself after making a rushed, life changing decision. His wife, Queen Vashti had been put away from him indefinitely and now he was wondering how he could fix the situation. How could he make things better? How could he reverse the process?

The decree (law) was already released and this was an impossible situation. He would have to live with what he had done that night at one of the most grand celebrations he had ever hosted; it started so beautifully, how could it have ended on such a sour note?

His anger had gotten the best of him but now his senses had come back to him; it was too late.

This must have been agitating him to the point of noticeability because his servants began to create a solution for the king's sorrow and loneliness.

They suggested that he simply create a nation-wide beauty pageant, similar to a reality tv show, like the Bachelor, of our day. He would have all these ladies, all virgins, gather to the palace and try them out one-by-one until he discovered Vashti's replacement. This idea sounded good for the king and it would actually be a fun process, something to forget the old queen and his former determination.

Upon the king's agreement to this arrangement, all of the virgins throughout his entire kingdom were gathered together to Shushan (the palace) and housed there; they were then given beauty treatments in preparation to their kingly visit. The king would then call each one of the women to him only once, unless his interest was particularly kindled by one of the ladies. He would then call her back to his quarters.

Esther was one of the virgins living in his kingdom, but her Jewish name was Hadassah, meaning myrtle. The name Esther was her Babylonian name taken after the goddess Ishtar. She would have received this name whereas her people had been carried away from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

Esther's name Hadassah actually reflects her identity and purpose throughout her lifetime. Not only was Esther like a myrtle, sweet smelling or righteous, to the Jewish people but she was like a myrtle, bitter or judgment to her enemies (Haman). She was a hidden jewel to the Jewish

The Book of Esther: Beauty Queen of Susa

A Study of the Book of Esther | by Jade Lee

people; her identity was unknown in the midst of unrighteousness she glistened as a righteous jewel.¹

Esther was able to keep a secret, using great restraint, discretion and wisdom. She did not reveal her true identity or religion to the government or people of Persia. She was under much duress and had to conceal her true self in a completely unfamiliar and truly uncomfortable environment all for the sake of her people and life-purpose.² She also displayed great honor and obedience to her legal guardian, her cousin Mordecai, in obeying his direction to withhold her identity from the Persian people. She waited for years until the appropriate timing for her to disclose who she really was to the king of Persia.

It was who Esther was, her identity, that was a concealed treasure of righteousness to the Persians and salvation to the Jews. Esther had to be extremely confident in her identity not to boast or feel the need to share it with the world around her; instead she confidently hid her identity with no shame or condemnation. She did what was uncomfortable for herself but heroic for her people. Esther's attributes as a hidden Hadassah were a sweet smelling fragrance to GOD and a beautiful display of sacrificial love for her people. This was Esther's calling. In the midst of great pressure and danger, Esther stood her ground and lived out her life purpose without compromise.

Esther kept the secret of her identity until the appropriate timing of GOD.

Esther did not have everything easy in life either, whereas both of Esther's parents were deceased and as a child she was raised by her cousin, Mordecai. But one attribute Esther did have was that she was particularly striking, noted for her physical beauty and appealing figure.

Esther was simply another woman in the bunch of many, many girls brought into the palace to possibly be chosen as the new queen of Persia.

A man named Hegai, a eunuch of the king, was given responsibility for all of the virgins brought to the palace, including Esther and she quickly won his heart. She pleased

HIDDEN BEAUTY

Did you know that Esther's real name was Hadassah, meaning myrtle?

Myrtles are beautiful and sweet smelling, but they are bitter to the taste. Myrtles are also referenced in the Bible as connoting righteousness or righteous people that GOD walks amongst (Zechariah 1:8, 10-11).

The leaves of myrtle trees create a fragrant oil and the flowers are shaped like stars with five petals. The fruit are blue-black berries, although sometimes they are a yellow-amber red color.

Esther was sweet smelling like a myrtle but when bitten by her enemies she was bitter to the taste.

GOD designed her according to her purpose and she was used by the LORD to free her people by her beauty.

But she hid her identity appearing as Esther, a Babylonian name referring to the goddess Ishtar.

It was not sin that Esther did not declare her GOD verbally; it was instead a Hidden Beauty and Wisdom released for the perfect timing.

¹ www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1769366/jewish/What-Does-the-Nan

² www.torah.org/features/holydays/esther.html

The Book of Esther: Beauty Queen of Susa

A Study of the Book of Esther| by Jade Lee

Hegai, apparently making him happy; Esther was pleasant for him to be around and knew how to develop appropriate, respectful relationships with authority figures while still having fun and enjoying herself.

This was a young lady who was both smart *and* beautiful! She was full of wisdom and had great communication-people skills. She knew who she was and had a wonderful relationship with her guardian, Mordecai and her GOD, the GOD of the Jews.

Esther fit right in, being content with an unfamiliar environment and situation; she made the most of her new palace life.

In fact, she fit in so well that it was easy for Hegai to “adopt” her as one of his favorite women in the palace. He was kind to Esther, quickly giving her beauty treatments, her own special allotment of food, and seven handmaids (female servants). He elevated her to a leadership position and even gave her the best housing in the palace, in which she and her handmaids could live.

Esther was so witty and obviously able to deter questions that she did not want to answer because she did not reveal her family, racial or religious background to anyone out of obedience to Mordecai’s instructions.

This would have surely been a challenge with a palace full of women chatting about whatever they could find as a topic of discussion and it would have been impossible *not* to notice the sudden favor Esther was receiving in the harem.

One by one, each young lady would come in to King Xerxes after a year’s worth of beauty treatments. They would receive six months of myrrh oil treatments. Then they would receive another six months of perfumes and various types of cosmetics. Whatever the ladies desired were given to them for their nightly appearance before the king.

When it was her turn, she would leave the house of the women (the harem) and go to the house of the king. She would stay there for the night and the next morning she would return to the second house of the women whom also already saw the king. She would then be considered a concubine of the king and would never be called back to see the king again unless the king really liked her and she was beckoned by name.

The time had come for Esther to have her one night with the king. Her twelve months of spa and beauty treatments had come to an end and she could choose whatever she wanted from the harem for this special night. This was her one spare chance to become queen.

Once again, Esther’s wisdom shines forth, emanating in beauty. Esther was not greedy or self-conscious. Contrarily, Esther was also not prideful or too self-confident. Instead, she knew when to rely on the advice of others. Instead of choosing for herself what she should bring before the king, what she should wear and how she should adorn herself she asked someone who would have known the king personally. Hegai was one of the king’s attendants. Surely, he would know how Esther should adorn herself and what the king would like most...he would

The Book of Esther: Beauty Queen of Susa

A Study of the Book of Esther| by Jade Lee

know the king's favorite colors, style and type of women. He had probably watched to king for years and that was his job, he was over all of the king's women!

Esther asked Hegai what she should should bring to the king's courts. She took nothing more and nothing less. Now was *not* the time for Esther to get googly-eyed over all of the options she had to choose in this palace's department store! This was not about her or her desires. It was not about what she would like personally. It was about the king and what he enjoyed the most; she put aside her personal tastes to meet the needs and desires of the king. This selfless and mature move was a smart decision of humble self-control on Esther's part.

Esther was favored by every single person that looked at her; everyone liked her and was amazed by her.

She was then taken to the King, King Xerxes to the Persians and Ahasuerus to the Jews. He was now king for seven years, the Jewish number of perfection and completion.

When the king spent time with Esther he instantly favored her more than all of the other women that came before him. He was in love with Esther. She was not the typical woman, star struck and desperately excited to be a queen. She had what it took in both outward beauty and wisdom, to be a queenly-wife.

King Xerxes placed the royal crown on Esther's head and Queen Vashti's title was transferred to her instead. She was now the Queen of Persia.

Mordecai's heart was probably full of joy whereas he was checking on her every single day to hear of her welfare; now he would hear she was the chosen one as the Queen of all of Persia.

King Xerxes loved Esther so much that he had a beautiful feast for her, the Feast of Esther, to celebrate his new found wife and lover. The desire of his heart to show forth his wife's beauty was finally found in Esther, while Queen Vashti refused to come, wanting her own glory.

Becoming a sort of reverse Delilah, Esther kept her secret identity within her heart even in the midst of all this world-wide glory and fame. No one knew her nationality and she kept her loyalty to Mordecai, even as a married wife to the king.

Esther's heart was submitted and committed to the direction of those GOD placed over her life in loving authority. It was in her humble obedience that she was protected, favored, blessed and exalted.

Already as queen, Esther was beginning to be used to help the king and her people. While Mordecai was sitting in the king's gate he was told of how two of the king's enemies (doorkeepers) plotting to kill the king. Mordecai shared what he heard with Esther and she shared with the king, mentioning Mordecai's name. The king still did not know that Mordecai and Esther were related; she simply shared what was necessary to honor Mordecai. Consequently, both of the men were hanged on a tree and it was written in the king's chronicles!

And this is the conclusion of Esther Chapter 2.

The Book of Esther: Beauty Queen of Susa

A Study of the Book of Esther | by Jade Lee

Life Reflections:

A. As a woman, what can you learn about Esther's characteristics of humility, obedience, submission, wisdom, and discretion?

B. Esther's name, Hadassah, was reflective of her calling. How did Esther display her life calling through the meaning of her name? What does your name mean and how can you display your life calling through your name?

C. Compare and contrast Queen Esther to Queen Vashti. How did Queen Esther's character differ from the character and mentality of Queen Vashti? How did Esther's decision to do what seemed write to her authority figures out of an obedient heart benefit Esther in the long run? How did Queen Vashti's decision to do what seemed right to her own her destroy her queen-ship? (Proverbs 14:12)

The Book of Esther: Beauty Queen of Susa

A Study of the Book of Esther| by Jade Lee

III. The Plot Thickens

Read Esther Chapter 3.

Have you ever had something amazing happen to you only to find shortly thereafter that this blessing did not come without its share of challenges? Every blessing we are given in this lifetime will end well and is good, but Jesus promised that in this world (lifetime) we would have challenges (John 16:33). But He also encourages us to not be discouraged because He has already overcome this world.

The challenges we face in this world will only make us stronger and GOD will not put more on us than we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). He will not allow us to be tempted with more than we can handle. This is a very encouraging truth when you really think about it; the intimacy of GOD relating to each one of us individually is revealed in this Scripture.

Esther had just received an entire kingdom. She was the queen of the world power of her day, Persia. In history this kingdom is now known as the Persian or the Achaemenid Empire (539-330 BC). It was founded by Cyrus the Great (who is also mentioned in the Bible, 2 Chronicles 36:22-23). This was the largest, most expansive kingdom to ever exist by Esther's time. She was now married to King Xerxes I (486-465 B.C.), the fourth king of this empire³.

Who was King Xerxes I?

King Xerxes I was part of a royal family, one of the most famous men to ever exist:

“the grandson of Cyrus and the son of Darius. Like them an Achaemenid, Xerxes I or Xerxes the Great was king of the Persian Empire. This is the Greek transliteration of his name. In Old Persian, his name is Khshayarsha and in Hebrew, this is transliterated as Ahashwerosh [where the initial A indicates a loan word]. When the Greeks transliterated the Hebrew version of the name, they came up with the Septuagint's Ahasueros (see “Linguistics and the Teaching of Classical History and Culture,” by Robert J. Littman; *The Classical World*, Vol. 100, No. 2 (Winter 2007), pp. 143-150).”⁴

Remember that King Xerxes just conducted a tremendous party to display his great kingdom, which extended from India to Ethiopia (see map below) and covered over 127 provinces (Esther 1:1).

Would you like to know more about Esther's husband, King Xerxes I? He was not a perfect man by any stretch of the imagination and he was mentioned in other passages of the Bible, but he was definitely used by the LORD in the part of his reign mentioned in the Book of Esther. Read through this passage of the Jewish Encyclopedia detailing more on King Xerxes' (Ahasueros') life:

³ www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xerxes_I

⁴ www.ancienthistory.about.com/od/xerxes.g.Xerxes.htm

The Book of Esther: Beauty Queen of Susa

A Study of the Book of Esther| by Jade Lee

Ahasuerus, the Persian king of the Book of Esther, being identified by the rabbis with the one mentioned in Dan. ix. 1 as father of Darius, king of Media, and with the one mentioned in Ezra, iv. 6, is counted as one of the three kings of Biblical history who ruled over the entire globe, the other two being Ahab and Nebuchadnezzar (Meg. 11*a*; Targ. Sheni on Esth. i. 2 has four, counting also Solomon among them; see Meg. 11*b*). He was wicked from the beginning to the end of his reign. Upon the slanderous report of the Samaritans he stopped the work, begun under Cyrus, of the rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra, iv. 6; Esther R. intro.). Whether he was a wise ruler or a foolish one is a matter of dispute between Rab and Samuel (Meg. 12*a*). According to R. Gamaliel II., he was simply whimsical and vacillating (*ib.* 12*b*); according to another tradition which was handed down by Abba Gorion, he was so unstable that he sacrificed his wife to his friend, and his friend to his wife (Mid. Abba Gorion i. 1), probably meaning the emperor Domitian, of whom this statement was true (compare Bacher, "Ag. Tan." i. 96 *et seq.*). In his ambition Ahasuerus wanted to sit on King Solomon's wonderful throne, described in the Midrash and the Targum to Esther, but he could not. His "showing the riches of his glorious kingdom" to his princes (Esth. i. 4) was especially sinful, as he had all the sacred vessels from the sanctuary taken out of his royal treasure-house to the banquet in order to boast of these possessions, thus committing an offense against God and the Jews. He heaped up great treasures and in his miserliness hid them. Cyrus, his successor, found them, and offered them to the Jews in order that they might rebuild the Temple therewith. These are "the treasures of darkness" promised to Cyrus in Isa. xlv. 3 (Esther R. i. 4). The restlessness of Ahasuerus on that night which decided the fate of the Jews was caused by the archangel Michael (Gabriel), who knocked him to the ground 366 times, and then brought before him a company of butchers, bakers, and butlers, to whom the king in his anger said: "You have poisoned me!" They replied: "See whether Esther and Haman, who ate and drank with you, are poisoned." When Ahasuerus found that they were well he sent for the book of the chronicles, and there learned of Mordecai's unrewarded act (Midr. Abba Gorion).

PirḲe Rabbi Eliezer, xi., in accordance with Targ. Sheni on Esther, at the beginning, counts ten kings as rulers over the entire globe: God, Nimrod, Joseph, Solomon, Ahab, Ahasuerus, Nebuchadnezzar, and Alexander the Great; then, as the ninth, the Messiah; and last, God Himself again. It is also said there that Ahasuerus was the wealthiest of all the kings of Persia and Media; that he is mentioned in Daniel (xi. 2), where it is said: "The fourth shall be far richer than they all"; and also that he set up couches of gold and silver in the thoroughfare of his capital to show all the world his riches; all the dishes and vessels he used were of gold, while the pavement of his palace was entirely of precious stones and pearls.⁵

⁵ www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/967-ahasuerus

The Book of Esther: Beauty Queen of Susa

A Study of the Book of Esther| by Jade Lee

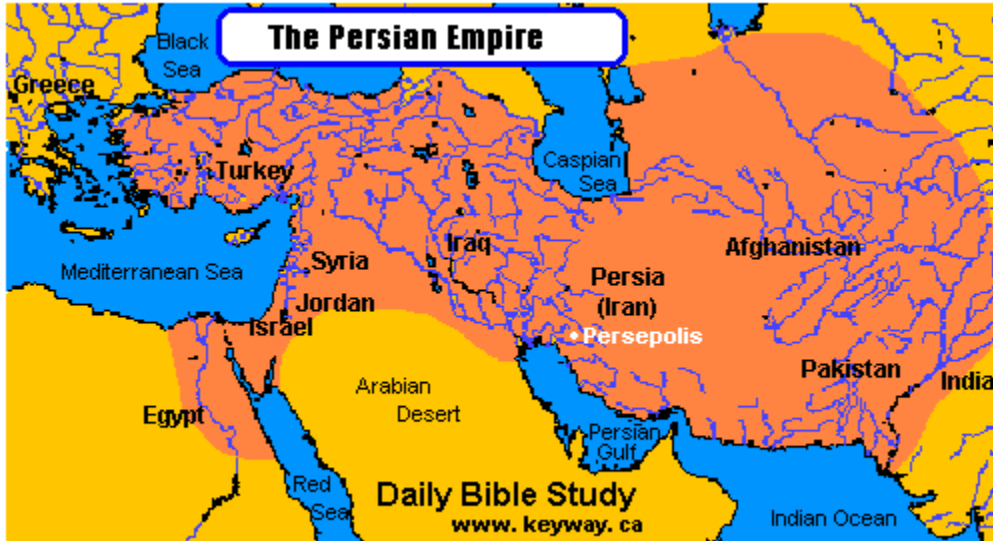


Figure 1 The Persian Empire during Xerxes I Reign.

Although King Xerxes was an imperfect man, GOD uses imperfect people to orchestrate His will on the earth. King Xerxes (Ahasuerus) was one of the ten kings mentioned above that would rule the entire earth-

1. GOD
2. Nimrod
3. Joseph
4. Solomon
5. Ahab
6. Ahasuerus
7. Nebuchadnezzar
8. Alexander the Great
9. The Messiah and
10. GOD.⁶

This was a very powerful man to have been married to and was probably almost every girl's dream in the world! But only one woman could be the queen. GOD had chosen to replace a disobedient woman, Queen Vashti, with a woman that embodied His Spirit, Queen Esther. What an honor to receive as a normal orphan Jewish girl.

Esther was now seated on the throne of this splendid empire, no matter how idolatrous or wicked the empire itself was or the leaders of the empire.

⁶ www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/967-ahasuerus

The Book of Esther: Beauty Queen of Susa

A Study of the Book of Esther| by Jade Lee

Susa or Shushan was the place of residence for not only Esther, but also Nehemiah and Daniel. All three of them would have lived in Susa, a glorious palace residence of Babylon and Persia.

All three of these people would have been significant leaders living in the Shushan palace around the same time period.

Nehemiah lived in Susa when he was the king's cupbearer (Daniel 1:1, 11) and received government donations to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Daniel lived in Susa when he received a vision by the riverside (Daniel 8:2).⁷

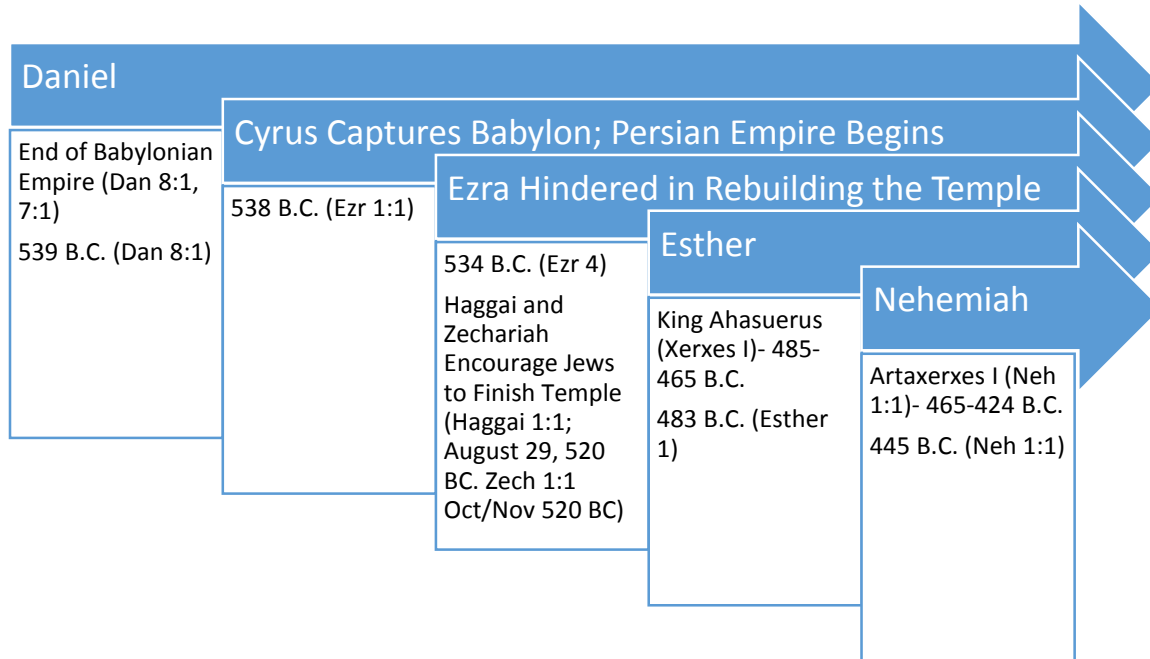


Figure 2 Daniel, Esther and Nehemiah in the Palace Complex of Susa.

Esther was now faced with a particularly unexpected challenge. She was at the climactic moment, the apex of her life as the royal queen. After the partying and the Feast of Esther would come the responsibility of being a queen.

Political shifts began to occur, as they do in any nation, including the promotion of Haman as second only to the king. Haman was given so much authority that all of the king's workers and governmental leaders had to bow down to Haman when in his presence.

But there was one man who would not honor nor bow down to Haman the Agagite. This so happened to be Mordecai, Esther's cousin who had raised her.

Perhaps the people were not bowing down to Haman just because he was Haman but out of fear of the king's response and command. Now Mordecai was standing on dangerous territory. Remember, this is the same king that recently dethroned his own precious wife, Queen Vashti, banishing her from his presence forever.

⁷ Tyndale Bible Dictionary, pg. 1228

The Book of Esther: Beauty Queen of Susa

A Study of the Book of Esther| by Jade Lee

Did Mordecai really want to challenge the King of the entire planet?
Was this the smartest move Mordecai?

Other governmental officials and servants of the king began to ask Mordecai these questions, because it made no sense to them why Mordecai would make such a seemingly foolish decision. Just humble yourself Mordecai and bow down to Haman. A moment later you'll be on with your day and you will at the least have kept your life.

Every single day they would try to warn Mordecai and convince him to honor Haman, but Mordecai was not hearing it; he would not budge from his stance. So they went and told Haman. Haman was so angry that Mordecai, whom they had learned was a Jew, would not honor him. His pride was strongly hit. He was so deeply frustrated with Mordecai that he decided to come after Mordecai's entire people group. He would kill all of the Jews in the Kingdom of Persia.

A Jewish Holocaust was coming and it was all Mordecai's fault! Can you imagine the anger of the Jewish people finding that Mordecai caused them such pain, all for not bowing down to Haman? But there was a Jewish law, in fact one of the Ten Commandments, commanding the Jews not to bow down to anyone other than GOD:

"You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your GOD, am a jealous GOD, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me."
Exodus 20:5 (NIV)

Maybe Mordecai was trying to honor GOD's law, but either way the Jews were in a horrible position now that Haman was so angry. He was determined to rid the land of all Jews.

Did you know this anger against the Jews was embedded in Haman's bloodline? He was an Agagite which means he was the "son" of Agag. He was in Agag's family line.

Who was Agag and what was his relation to the Jewish people group?

Agag is found in 1 Samuel 15. He is in a desperate, conflicting situation with the Jews.

1 Samuel 15 begins with the prophet Samuel coming to give instructions to King Saul. The instructions the LORD gave were for Saul to "utterly destroy" all of the Amalekites possessions, every person (men, women, children and infants), and all of their animals!

BOWING DOWN

Did you know that bowing down to other gods is forbidden in the Bible?

Physically bowing down is a form of worship. The Jews were instructed not to bow down to any gods except Jehovah.

Mordecai's decision not to bow down to Haman was in agreement with Scriptural references in which GOD instructs the Jews to only reverence Him in this way.

Haman mentioned these laws that were "different" than everyone else's law in King Ahasuerus' kingdom.

Although it seemed unwise and prideful for Mordecai not to obey the laws of the land, when GOD's law is directly challenged, as the people of GOD we are to obey GOD's law. Man's law is important but it always should come second to the Word of GOD.

The Book of Esther: Beauty Queen of Susa

A Study of the Book of Esther| by Jade Lee

After receiving this word from Samuel Saul gathered together 200,000 soldiers and 10,000 men to wait in the valley for the Amalekites.

Then Saul warned the Kenites to get away from the Amalekites or else he would kill them too. He attacks the Amalekites, but does not kill King Agag. GOD had just instructed him to kill every single person and animal. Instead, Saul took the king alive. He also disobeyed by keeping the best sheep, oxen, fatted calves, lambs and everything else “that was good.” He was not willing to destroy everything that GOD told him to destroy. He only destroyed the things he did not want, the leftovers.

After Saul disobeyed GOD, GOD spoke to Samuel saying, “It repenteth Me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments.” (1 Samuel 15:11).

Saul’s act of disobedience left one of the enemies of GOD (and GOD’s people) alive to come back and torment them years later. Saul lost his kingship and Samuel had to kill King Agag with a sword:

“Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.” (1 Samuel 15:32-33, KJV)

Unfortunately Saul left the people of Agag, the best of the people and animals, alive! This meant that the women, the children and the babies were still able to be a people group.

These people are the forefathers of Haman in the Book of Esther.

Surely GOD would have known these future events would occur. He would have foresaw Haman being born to destroy the Jews, like a Hitler figure of that time. Therefore GOD gave the following instructions to King Saul 554 years earlier (1028 B.C.):

“Samuel also said to Saul, “The LORD sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt. **Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.**” (1 Samuel 15:1-3, NKJV)

GOD told Saul to destroy the men, women, children and animals of the Amalekites. Now, one of the descendants of the Amalekites, Haman, was determined to do the same to the Israelites. GOD was trying to punish the Amalekites once and for all due to their obvious potential to destroy His people group!

Haman’s plan was to “destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai” (Esther 3:6, NKJV).

Haman’s exact decree practically mirrored GOD’s decree against the Amalekites over 500 years earlier:

“And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions.” (Esther 3:13, NKJV)

Saul’s decision not to fully obey GOD would have national repercussions that would affect his people centuries after his death.

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Not only would Saul's decisions affect his people, but if Saul had obeyed GOD fully, the threat of Haman would not have been possible. Now the people of GOD were in a dire emergency. They would need a miracle to be saved from such a strong decree.

This was more than an epidemic or a threat, this was a decree that an entire people group would be wiped out in one day!

It went throughout every single section of the kingdom of King Xerxes.

What was Haman and the king's response?

Haman and the king were able to sit down and have a drink knowing that an entire people group would be diminished! As long as they weren't affected they appeared to be completely at peace.



**SAUL'S DECISION NOT TO FULLY OBEY GOD
WOULD HAVE NATIONAL REPERCUSSIONS
THAT WOULD AFFECT HIS PEOPLE CENTURIES
AFTER HIS DEATH.**

But the
entire

royal city of Shushan was deeply confused and disturbed by the decision of Haman. The king had given Haman his signet ring and said, "The money and the people are given to you, to do with them as seems good to you." (Esther 3:10, NKJV)

This was officially an international anti-Semitism movement led by the world power of Esther's day.

It appeared to be over, completely sealed and there was nothing anyone in the kingdom could do about it now. Or was it?

OBEYING GOD: THE DOMINO AFFECT

Did you know that your obedience level now could affect generations centuries down the line?

Sometimes we do not consider others in our current lives when we are making decisions. But it is important to consider how our decisions will affect everyone from those we currently live with, our closest friends, to generations after we have passed away.

When we do not consider how our decisions will affect others, we are in danger of committing the sin of selfishness. We will also have to give an account to the LORD on our lack of consideration for others.

Obedying GOD in the most detailed areas of our lives and obeying GOD fully is not about following a list of laws. It's truly about **LOVING OTHERS.**

How can you obey GOD more today?

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Life Reflections:

A. When considering Saul's decision not to fully obey GOD, what does this teach you about the importance of obedience in your own life? How can your decisions affect those you currently know and the legacy you will leave for generations to come?

B. What are three areas of your life that you can challenge yourself to be more obedient in when it comes to following GODLY Instruction and Wisdom?

C. What does Esther Chapter 3 teach you about the depth of racism or prejudice and how far it can go if not uprooted in a people group's hearts? How was a prideful elitist mentality causing both Haman and the king to ignore the heart of the people? Read Colossians 3:11 and Galatians 3:28. Write down your thoughts.

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