

Esther - Outline

Author: The author is unknown but it must have been someone who was familiar with the inner workings of the Persian royal court.¹ It does say in 8:8-9; 9:20, 29; that Mordecai recorded the events (along with Esther) and sent letters to the Jews in the 127 provinces of the Persian kingdom, from India to Ethiopia, which would make sense since he was a scribe. In 9:32 there is mention of a book being written. So it could be likely that Mordecai should be credited as the author, with someone else acting as editor at a later date. A number of references are made to the records of the Persian kingdom (2:23; 6:1; 10:2) that could have been used in the editing process.

Date: The events took place during the reign of Xerxes I or Ahasuerus of Persia, 485-465 BC; however, when the final version of the book was written is not none for certain. Here are a few of the events that we do have some reference when they took place.

- Vashti's refusal to appear at the king's banquet, 3rd year of his reign (1:1-4)
- Hadassah / Esther selected to be the new queen, 7th year of his reign (2:15-18)
- Haman's plot against the Jews, when he cast lots (*pur*)², 12th year of his reign (3:7-10)

590	580	570	560	550	540	530	520	510	500	490	480	470	460	450	440	430
	Kings of Persia →		Cyrus			+	Darius I			Xerxes I		Artaxerxes I				
Joel 609-586 bc	586 bc - Judah to Babylon		Babylon to Persia 539 bc			Cyrus allows Jews to return	- 538 bc			Esther → Queen		Haman's plot				
Jeremiah 626-582 bc	Qbadiah 586 bc				Ezra 1-6					Vashti's Refusal		Esther		Ezra to Judea - 457 bc		
Ezekiel 593-571 bc							Haggai 520 bc							Malachi?		
Daniel 605-535 bc										+ Cambyses 530 to 522 bc						
										+ Bardiya 522 bc						

Occasion: There are no direct references to God but His hand is seen throughout the book as the Jews are called upon to be faithful while living away from Jerusalem and the temple and in the midst of idolatrous people who did not worship God. Clearly God's provision for His people is seen in the events that took place. The Jewish Feast of Purim (9:18-32) finds its roots in this book, as the Akkadian word for "lot" is *pur* (see footnote 2).

Summary: There are basically three parts to the book: 1) The selection of Esther as the new queen; 2) Haman's plot against the Jews and Esther and Mordecai's efforts to thwart his plans; 3) Jews defense of themselves and the resulting celebration.

Group ³	C	V	Description
The Banquets of the King		1-4	Ahasuerus convenes a banquet in the 3 rd year of his reign for 180 days
		5-9	A 7 day banquet for the residents of Susa followed
Queen Vashti's Refusal	1	10-12	Queen Vashti refused to appear at the king's request on the 7 th day
		13-20	Ahasuerus is advised to remove her as queen and to select another
		21-22	The king's edict is sent out
Vashti's Successor Sought	2	1-4	The selection process for a new queen commences
		5-7	Mordecai and Hadassah / Esther are introduced
		8-11	Esther is selected as one of the candidates to be queen
		12-14	Each woman would appear before the king and become part of his harem

¹ (Galan et al. 77-80)

² (Galan et al. 79) Akkadian was the ancient language of the Persian empire.

³ (NASB) "Group" column from the headings in the NASB text.

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Group	C	V	Description
		15-16	The king's eunuch showed favor to Esther, and everyone else
Esther Becomes Queen		17-18	Esther selected and coronation ceremony took place
Mordecai Saves the King		19-23	Mordecai discovers a plot against Ahasuerus and passed the message to the king through Esther
Haman's Plot against the Jews	3	1-6	Haman is promoted but Mordecai refuses to bow or pay homage to him
		7-11	Haman selects a date and convinces the king to allow him to have all the Jews executed
		12-15	A decree is sent out by Haman to all the provinces ordering the execution of the Jews
Esther Learns of Haman's Plot	4	1-3	Mordecai mourns the actions of Haman in the king's gate, as do the Jews everywhere else
		4-8	Esther sends Hathach to Mordecai to inquire about the plot; Mordecai replies by telling her she ask the king to save her people
		9-12	Hathach reports back to Esther that she might be killed by appearing without permission
Esther Plans to Intercede		13-17	Mordecai urges her to do it anyway – "And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?" (v14) So she agrees to go in after 3 days of fasting, asking Mordecai to do the same.
Esther Plans a Banquet	5	1-4	Esther, risking her life, appears before Ahasuerus and is granted permission, and asks the king to come to a banquet with Haman
		5-8	Haman is told of Esther's banquet
Haman's Pride		9-14	Haman's pride get the better of him and he is urged to erect a gallows to hang Mordecai on
The King Plans to Honor Mordecai	6	1-9	Ahasuerus can't sleep, so he has someone read from the royal records, and they read of Mordecai's discovery of the plot against the king, so he plans to honor Mordecai, Haman asked what should be done for him without know it was for Mordecai
Haman Must Honor Mordecai		10-11	Haman is told to go and do all that he said for Mordecai
		12-13	Haman's anger burned all the more against Mordecai and the Jews
		14	Haman is summoned to Esther's banquet
Esther's Plea	7	1-6	Esther reveals identifies her people and identifies Haman as the one who is seeking to annihilate them
Haman Is Hanged		7-10	Ahasuerus orders Haman hanged on the gallows he constructed for Mordecai
Mordecai Promoted	8	1-2	Mordecai is promoted and given Haman's household and position
		3-8	Esther appears again before the king an asks that Haman's decree be revoked

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The King's Decree Avenges the Jews		9-14	Mordecai sends a letter with the king's authority which gives the Jews permission to defend themselves against any who would attack them on the date Haman had selected
		15-17	There was much rejoicing because of Mordecai's proclamation
The Jews Destroy Their Enemies	9	1-10	The Jews defend themselves in every province
		11-15	The Jews in Susa defend themselves and the news is reported to Esther, who asks the king for Haman's sons to be hanged
		16-17	Summary of the Jewish defense
		18-19	Rest after 2 days of fighting, celebration and feasting in the land
The Feast of Purim Instituted		20-22	The Feast of Purim established
		23-28	Summary of why the Feast of Purim was established
		29-32	The royal edict establishing the feast is sent to all the provinces
Mordecai's Greatness	10	1-3	Mordecai's life is recorded among the royal records of Persia

Key Words: Old Testament, History, Esther, Outlines



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Bibliography

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(NASB) New American Standard Bible. La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995. Print.