



IN  
OUT®

*English Standard Version*

# *Esther*

A MAN AND  
A WOMAN FOR  
SUCH A TIME  
AS THIS

IN & OUT<sup>®</sup>

*English Standard Version*

ESTHER

A MAN AND A WOMAN FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

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## Feasts, Edicts, Anger, and Queens

If you want a good story, you'll find it in the book of Esther.

It's a book you don't want to put down—especially if you are reading it for the first time. Because it is short and fast-moving, you're eager to see how it all turns out. You are eager to know:

**What will happen to the hero and heroine?**

**The people?**

**The villain?**

**Will the king be deceived—a pawn of those who serve him?**

**Who will live? Who will die?**

### TAKING IT IN

While Esther has all the ingredients for a good story, what makes it even more fascinating is that it is a book of the Bible, which means it is a book “breathed” by God—inspired, recorded, and preserved for eternity. A divine work ordained by the one and only true God.

And because of that, Esther has a purpose beyond being simply a fascinating story in a quick read. God has a reason for including this book among the sixty-six that comprise the Bible. According to the book of Romans, the book of Esther, like the other portions of the Old Testament, was written for your instruction—so that you might have encouragement and hope for your life (Romans 15:4).

1. When you study God's words, seek divine insight. So begin with prayer, talking with the Author and seeking His purpose for including Esther in the Bible. As you pray, you might want to remind God of His promise to lead you and guide you into all truth. You might also ask Him to keep you on track so that you see and understand what He wants you to know.

Be careful that you don't bring any presuppositions into your study that would keep you from rightly handling God's Word. Remember, we are not to add to His words; He tells us everything we need to know, and if He doesn't tell us, we don't need to know it!



2. Now let's observe Esther 1.
- a. Cut out the Key Word Bookmark on the back cover of your workbook. On the blank side, list the following key words and how you will mark them.

On the reverse side of your bookmark, you'll see marking suggestions for some words often used in the Bible. An asterisk [\*] shows these in this workbook.

- 1) geographical locations\* and time references\*
- 2) *Ahasuerus*
- 3) *Vashti*
- 4) *feast*
- 5) *anger, wrath*

- b. Now as you read Esther 1, mark the key words.
- c. What is the purpose of identifying and marking people? It's to help you see where they are mentioned and what God wants you to know about them. Therefore, after you mark you make a list! On "The Main Characters in the Book of Esther," in the Appendix, list in brief what you learn about Ahasuerus and Vashti. Leave space to add to your lists as you study each chapter.

There are lessons to be learned from observing the lives of others—things to imitate and sometimes things to avoid, so look for these and think about them. These are real people, not fictional characters created by man's imaginations.

- d. On your Observation Worksheet you probably noticed that some of the verse numbers are bold. This indicates where a new paragraph begins.

A paragraph consists usually of one or more sentences that are connected by a common thought or subject. When studying a book of the Bible, it is very helpful to summarize the main thought, event, or teaching of each paragraph. This is called the *theme* of the paragraph. So let's do that now.


Read your Observation Worksheet again. As you do, write the main theme of each paragraph in the left margin or below.

- 1) 1:1-4



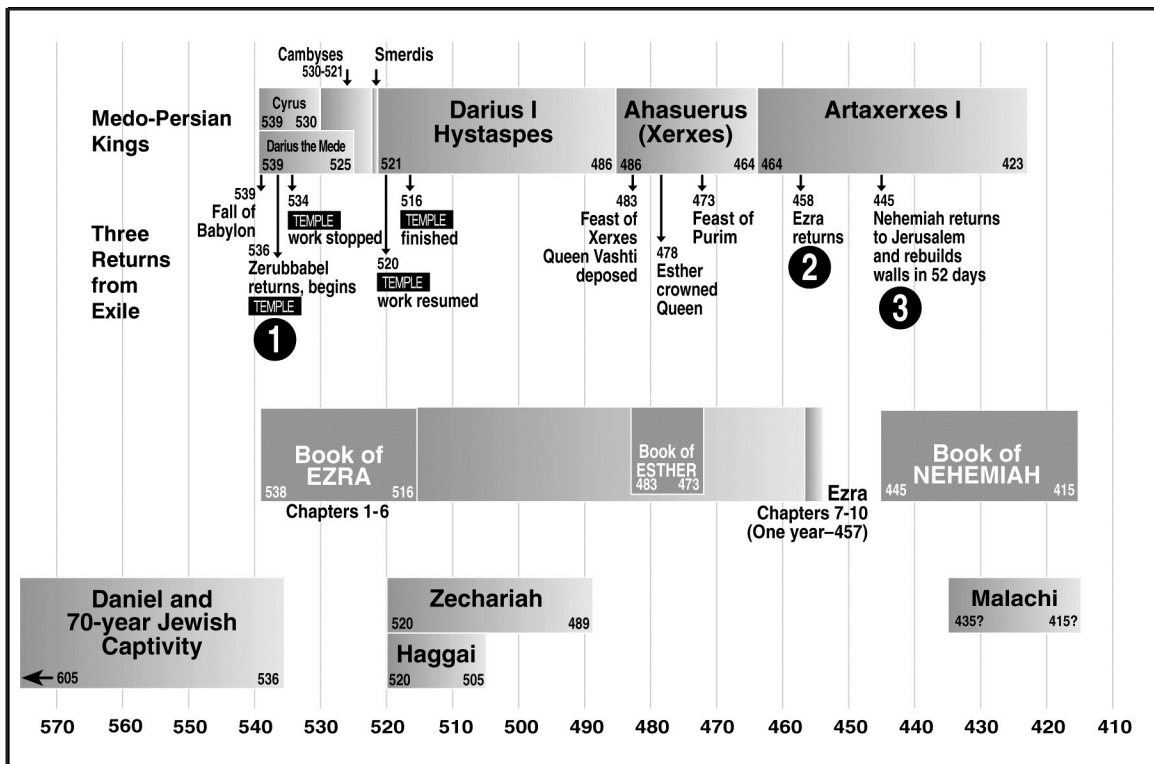
- 2) 1:5-9
  - 3) 1:10-12
  - 4) 1:13-20
  - 5) 1:21-22
- e. Now you have the themes of the paragraphs, so what is the theme, the main subject or event, covered in Esther 1? If you wanted to remember what this chapter is all about, how would you summarize it?
- 1) Write it out in as few words as possible. It is best to use words from the text as it will help you better remember the content of the chapter. For example: you could use the theme “A King and Queen Throw 3 Celebrations” or “Ahasuerus Gives a Feast, Queen Vashti Refuses to Come.” While the first theme is true, the latter uses terms from the text (*feast* rather than *celebration*) and is more specific, noting names of the key people and the problem at the second feast.
  - 2) You will find an “Esther at a Glance” chart in the Appendix of this book. Record a theme for Esther 1 on the chart.
3. Next let’s observe Esther 2.
- a. Mark the words on your Key Word Bookmark. Also mark the following and add them to your bookmark:
    - 1) *Esther*
    - 2) *Mordecai*
    - 3) *favor*
  - b. Read Esther 2 again. This time look for the paragraph divisions (bold verse numbers), and in the margin of your worksheet, record the main event of each paragraph.



- c. Add a theme for Esther 2 to “Esther at a Glance” in the Appendix.
- 4. Now briefly list what you learn about Esther and Mordecai on “The Main Characters in the Book of Esther.”
- 5. When you marked Esther, Mordecai, and the king, you learned that the king married a Jew but didn’t know it. You also saw references to *her people*—which obviously would be Jews. Devise a way to mark references to Jews and put it on your bookmark. Some use a blue star of David like this: 

When you finish, list below what you learn from chapter 2 about the Jews, or if you want, you can put this on “The Main Characters in the Book of Esther.”

- 6. Finally, using the time chart, answer the questions on the next page.







- a. Look at the center line. When does the book of Esther take place?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. What empire is ruling at this time? (Look at the top line) \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. What is another name for Ahasuerus? \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. According to this timeline, what had already happened in Jewish history prior to the events in Esther? (Don't miss looking at the bottom line where it mentions Daniel.) List the events in the order in which they occur. "Temple" is a reference to the Jews' temple in Jerusalem.
  - e. The main theme of Ezra is rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem, while the main theme of Nehemiah is rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem. Where does Esther fit chronologically into the events of these two books?
7. Read Ezra 4:1-6. Why might Mordecai have told Esther not to reveal her people?



LIVING  
IT OUT

As you studied this week, you made lists on Vashti and Esther. When you compare the lists:

1. What lessons for your life can you draw from similarities and/or differences between these two women?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. As you look at the two women, can you see anything that validates the concern of the wise men in chapter 1? From a biblical perspective is this a valid concern? Give the reason for your answer.

*O Beloved . . . doesn't this cause you to stand in awe of God and make you want to know God's Word inside out?!? Remember, it is the bread by which we live! It shows us how to live and how to view the world in which we live.*



## ESTHER 1

### Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme \_\_\_\_\_

- NOW** in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces,
- 2 in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa, the citadel,
  - 3 in the third year of his reign he gave a feast for all his officials and servants. The army of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces were before him,
  - 4 while he showed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his greatness for many days, 180 days.
  - 5 And when these days were completed, the king gave for all the people present in Susa the citadel, both great and small, a feast lasting for seven days in the court of the garden of the king's palace.
  - 6 There were white cotton curtains and violet hangings fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rods and marble pillars, and also 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, vessels of different kinds, and the royal wine was lavished according to the bounty of the king.
  - 8 And drinking was according to this edict: "There is no compulsion." For the king had given orders to all the staff of his palace to do as each man desired.
  - 9 Queen Vashti also gave a feast for the women in the palace that belonged to King Ahasuerus.
  - 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 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 show the peoples and the princes her beauty, for she was lovely to look at.
- 12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. At this the king became enraged, and his anger burned within him.
- 13 Then the king said to the wise men who knew the times (for this was the king's procedure toward all who were versed in law and judgment, 14 the men next to him being Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who saw the king's face, and sat first in the kingdom):
- 15 "According to the law, what is to be done to Queen Vashti, because she has not performed the command of King Ahasuerus delivered by the eunuchs?"
- 16 Then Memucan said in the presence of the king and the officials, "Not only against the king has Queen Vashti done wrong, but also against all the officials and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.
- 17 "For the queen's behavior will be made known to all women, causing them to look at their husbands with contempt, since they will say, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, and she did not come.'
- 18 "This very day the noble women of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's behavior will say the same to all the king's officials, and there will be contempt and wrath in plenty.
- 19 "If it please the king, let a royal order go out from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be repealed, that Vashti is never again to come before King Ahasuerus. And let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she.



- 20 “So when the decree made by the king is proclaimed throughout all his kingdom, for it is vast, all women will give honor to their husbands, high and low alike.”
- 21 This advice pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Memucan proposed.
- 22 He sent letters to all the royal provinces, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language, that every man be master in his own household and speak according to the language of his people.





## ESTHER 2

### Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme \_\_\_\_\_

**AFTER** these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had abated, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her.

- 2 Then the king's young men who attended him said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought out for the king.
- 3 "And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom to gather all the beautiful young virgins to the harem in Susa the citadel, under custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women. Let their cosmetics be given them.
- 4 "And let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This pleased the king, and he did so.
- 5 Now there was a Jew in Susa the citadel whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjaminite,
- 6 who had been carried away from Jerusalem among the captives carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away.
- 7 He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.
- 8 So when the king's order and his edict were proclaimed, and when many young women were gathered in Susa the citadel in custody of Hegai, Esther also was taken into the king's palace and put in custody of Hegai, who had charge of the women.



- 9 And the young woman pleased him and won his favor. And he quickly provided her with her cosmetics and her portion of food, and with seven chosen young women from the king's palace, and advanced her and her young women to the best place in the harem.
- 10 Esther had not made known her people or kindred, for Mordecai had commanded her not to make it known.
- 11 And every day Mordecai walked in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and what was happening to her.
- 12 Now when the turn came for each young woman to go in to King Ahasuerus, after being twelve months under the regulations for the women, since this was the regular period of their beautifying, six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and ointments for women—
- 13 when the young woman went in to the king in this way, she was given whatever she desired 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 in custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch, who was in charge of the concubines. She would not go in to the king again, unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name.
- 15 When the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his own daughter, to go in to the king, she asked for nothing except what Hegai the king's eunuch, who had charge of the women, advised. Now Esther was winning favor in the eyes of all who saw her.
- 16 And when Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign,
- 17 the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.



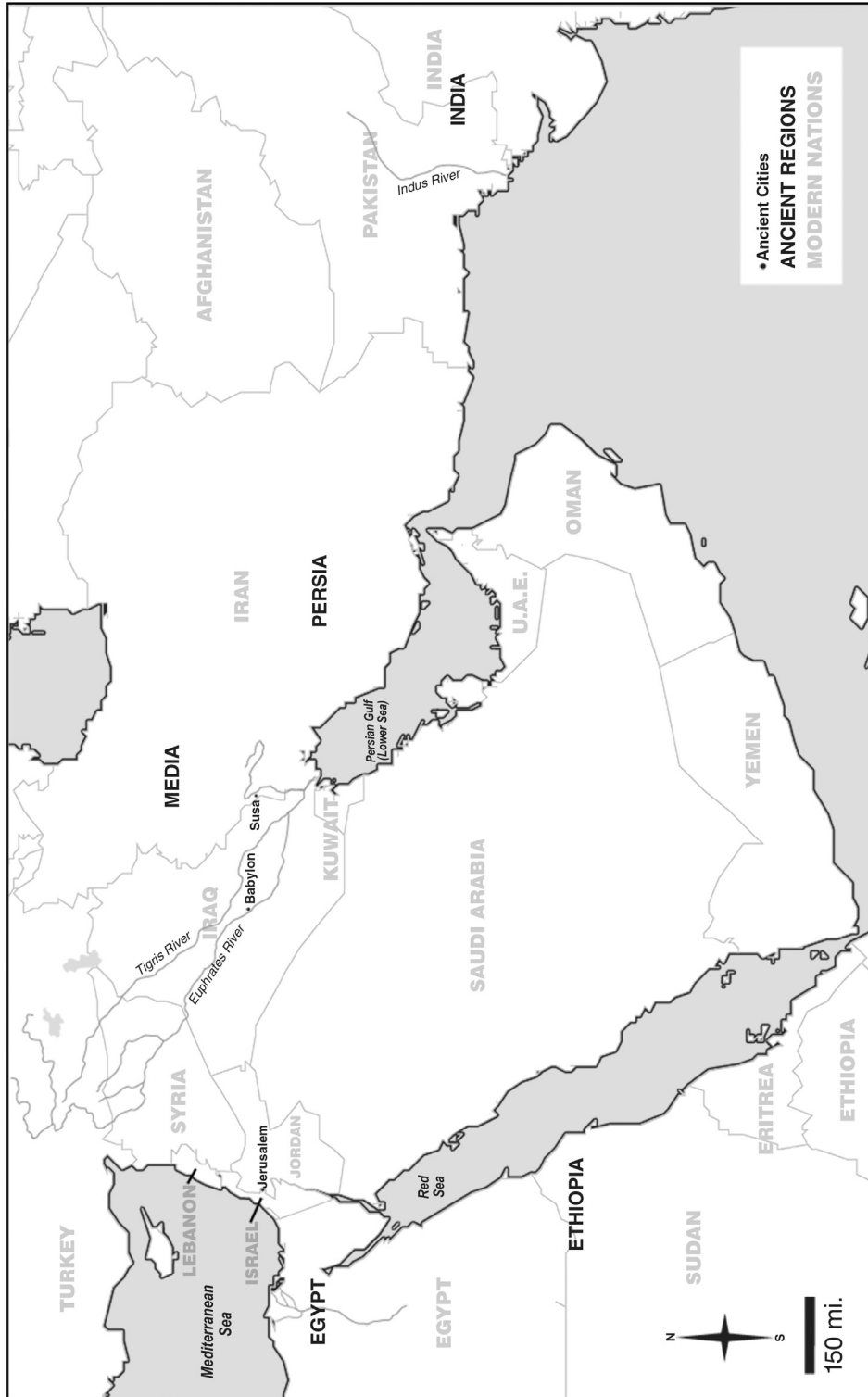


- 18 Then the king gave a great feast for all his officials and servants; it was Esther's feast. He also granted a remission of taxes to the provinces and gave gifts with royal generosity.
- 19 Now when the virgins were gathered together the second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate.
- 20 Esther had not made known her kindred or her people, as Mordecai had commanded her, for Esther obeyed Mordecai just as when she was brought up by him.
- 21 In those days, as Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.
- 22 And this came to the knowledge of Mordecai, and he told it to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai.
- 23 When the affair was investigated and found to be so, the men were both hanged on the gallows. And it was recorded in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.





**FROM INDIA TO ETHIOPIA**







## THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER



## THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER



## ESTHER AT A GLANCE

**Book Theme:**

|                | <b>Segment Divisions</b> | <b>Chapter Themes</b> |
|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Author:</b> |                          | <b>1</b>              |
|                |                          | <b>2</b>              |
|                |                          | <b>3</b>              |
|                | <b>Date:</b>             | <b>4</b>              |
|                | <b>Purpose:</b>          | <b>5</b>              |
|                |                          | <b>6</b>              |
|                | <b>Key Words:</b>        | <b>7</b>              |
|                |                          | <b>8</b>              |
|                |                          | <b>9</b>              |
|                |                          | <b>10</b>             |







# THE TIMES OF EZRA, NEHEMIAH, AND ESTHER

