

# ESTHER 2

# Timeline of Events (estimated)

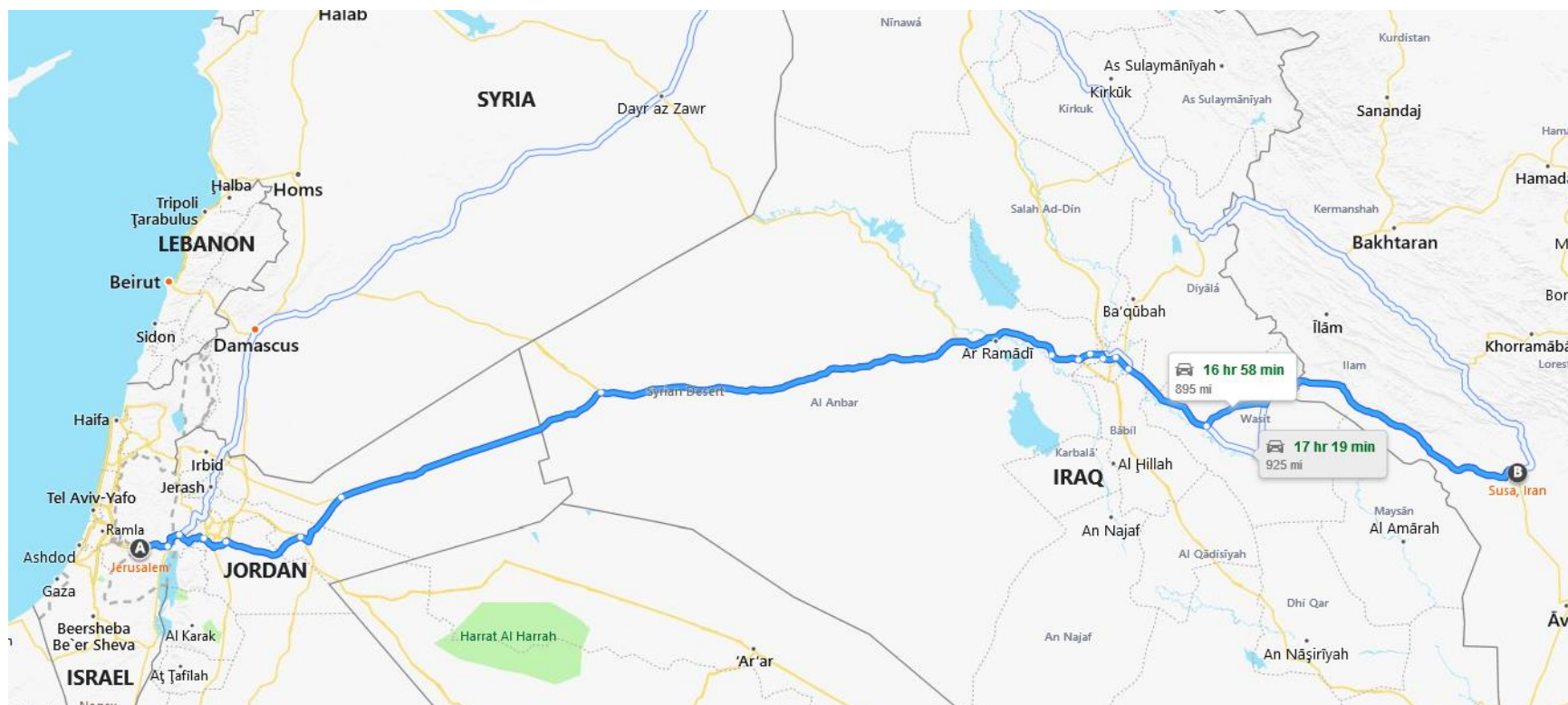
- 605 B.C. First Jews led captive to Babylon
- 597 B.C. Babylonians capture Jerusalem
- 586 B.C. Temple and Jerusalem walls destroyed
- 539 B.C. Medes/Persians conquer Babylon
- 538 B.C. Zerubbabel leads return to Jerusalem
- 516 B.C. Temple is completed
- 486 B.C. Xerxes assumes the throne
- 483 – 472 B.C. events of Esther account
- 464 B.C. Xerxes assassinated
- 458 - 445 B.C. Ezra's ministry (his writings cover more time)
- 445 B.C. Nehemiah rebuilds the walls
- 425 B.C. Nehemiah's term as governor ends

# Persian Empire



Includes (but not limited to): modern day Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, other parts near Russia and Africa, and advancing toward Greece

# Jerusalem to Susa (Iran): 895mi



# Persian Kings noted in scripture

NAME	Date B.C.	Persian Name	Bible Name	Bible Background
Cyrus	539-530	Koorush	Cyrus	Isaiah 45, Daniel, Ezra 1-3
Cambysses	530-521	Cambujieh	Ahasruerus	Ezra 4-6
Pseudo Smerdis	521	Berooyeh Doroughi	Artaxerxes	Ezra 4:7-23
Darius the Great	521-486	Darryoosh	Darius	Ezra 5,6
Xerxes	486-465	Khashayarshah	Ahasurerus	Esther 1-10
Artaxerxes I	464-423	Ardeshier Deraz Dast	Artaxerxes	Nehemiah 1 - 13, Ezra 7-10



# Tombs of Persian Kings



# Esther 1 Review

- His father (Darius) had died shortly after his failed attempt to expand the Persian empire into Greece
- The king hosts a 6 month feast to garner support for an upcoming invasion into Greece
- Queen Vashti refuses the king's summons to appear before his guests

# Esther 1 Review

- The king's advisors convince him to banish Vashti and replace her with one more worthy
- The king's emotions drive him to make the decree
- *Xerxes* means “ruler of heroes (men)”, yet he could not rule his own emotions



# Esther 2:1

1 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.

- ✓ Xerxes returns from Greece in defeat 4 years after the account in Chapter 1 to an “empty home”
- ✓ Although the king possibly had a harem of hundreds of women, the queen’s throne was empty

# Esther 2:1

- ✓ We might feel sympathetic to Xerxes at times within this account, but his emotional state is often in question
- ✓ During the invasion into Greece, Xerxes ordered a pontoon bridge be built across the Hellespont River
- ✓ When a storm destroyed the bridge, he executed dozens of engineers and had the river “beaten” with whips
- ✓ The Persian navy would suffer great losses and the army would retreat back toward Persian lands

# Esther 2:2-4

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.

# Esther 2:2-4

- ✓ An empire-wide search would be made for the next queen
- ✓ Young, beautiful virgins from all the territories would be stripped from their homes and families and brought to the king's harem for a year's worth of beauty treatments and etiquette training
- ✓ Once again, the king's advisors seem to direct his actions by appealing to his emotions, desires, or arrogance

## Esther 2:5-6

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.

# Esther 2:5-6

- ✓ Mordecai means “little man” in Persian and was a Jew of the dispersion that had been born after his family had been captured by the Babylonians generations before (100+ years)
- ✓ Previous to the events in Esther, devout Jews had returned to the destroyed city of Jerusalem to begin rebuilding the temple under the leadership of Jerubbabel and, some thirty years before this time, Ezra records the completion of the temple



# Jeremiah 29:10

*10 “For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.*

- ✓ Years before, Daniel had realized the 70 year period of captivity would be drawing to a close based off the prophecy of Jeremiah
- ✓ In Daniel’s writing, the king called Ahasuerus refers to Cyaxares II that preceded Cyrus who would give the command to rebuild the temple
- ✓ This had set in motion the first return of Jewish exiles

# Esther 2:5-6

- ✓ One might question how devout Mordecai's family to be as they still willingly dwell in Susa while their Jewish brethren are trying to rebuild the city of their fathers
- ✓ Mordecai's tribal roots to the tribe of Benjamin will play a significance later
- ✓ Esther will also be able to hide her Jewish heritage while in the palace
- ✓ Jewish practices would visibly set them apart in Persian culture as it did with Daniel and other captives in Babylon

# Esther 2:7

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.

- ✓ *Hadassah* means “myrtle” (flower) in Hebrew
- ✓ *Esther* means “star” (probably a reference to Venus) in Persian and is fitting as Venus would outshine the other morning stars in intensity and longevity in the dawning hours

## Esther 2:8-9

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.

## Esther 2:8-9

- ✓ Esther immediately gains favor with the head eunuch and he would advance her standing above the other candidates in the king's harem
- ✓ For an account that does not mention God, He is apparently at work in the story
- ✓ NOTE: God is at work long before the great conflict of this account is presented to us

# Esther 2:10-11

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.

- ✓ Mordecai seems to conduct his business near the palace gates and may have been some type of lower level official in the court
- ✓ This allowed him to have limited access to information for and from Esther



# Esther 2:12-14

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.

# Esther 2:12-14

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.

- ✓ A year of preparation for one night with the king
- ✓ This period of time also ensured no candidate was pregnant with another man's child upon entering the harem

# Esther 2:12-14

- ✓ There would be one contestant chosen and all others were transferred into the king's second harem of concubines to remain single and secluded unless summoned again
- ✓ The life of many young girls would be very different than they imagined after these events
- ✓ Later we will learn that even the queen must be summoned to enter into the king's presence

# Esther 2:15

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.

- ✓ Esther is wise enough to take the advice of Hegai when she prepares her evening with the king

## Esther 2:16-17

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.

# Esther 2:16-17

- ✓ *Love* is often used to describe many emotions that do not display a God-given affection for a single, permanent spouse with whom you would enter a covenant relationship
- ✓ Despite this, Esther wins favor with the king and becomes his queen
- ✓ Did God place Esther in a contest to win the king's heart through physical relations? No, but a sovereign God would use a situation devised by sensual, carnal, and sinful men to position a person in the exact place he or she needs to be to accomplish His will



# Esther 2:18-19

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.

- ✓ Small statements often give great insight into the character of men and women
- ✓ Esther is the new queen and “loved” by her king, yet he still gathers a second round of new virgins for his harem
- ✓ This is the fourth feast mentioned

# Esther 2:20

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.

- ✓ What leads Mordecai to instruct his adoptive daughter to conceal her nationality? Possibly, we would hear God speak if we would only listen
- ✓ Most royal marriages occurred between families of nobility, yet Esther is an orphaned refugee

# Esther 2:21-23

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.

# Esther 2:21-23

- ✓ Doing the right thing is not always instantly rewarded and, sometimes, not rewarded at all on this side of heaven
- ✓ From the wording of scripture, this knowledge was not overheard by Mordecai, but was somehow communicated to him
- ✓ Monarchs were often very suspicious by nature because of this very circumstance
- ✓ Eunuchs, cupbearers, chamberlains, and other servants close to the king were some of the most trusted in the kingdom, however, with this access to the king would often come temptation

# Esther 2:21-23

Some may attribute many things to coincidence, but let us review the events so far:

1. A king attempts to gain the support and respect of his nobles, yet cannot get his wife to appear before them and she is removed from the throne
2. A Jewish family is removed from their homeland generations before and relocates to the capital city of Susa
3. A Jewish orphan girl wins the favor of the king out of an entire empire and becomes queen
4. An assassination plot is brought to the attention of a low level official of the king's court and the offenders are punished, but the hero goes unrewarded