

# Esther

## **Introduction:**

1. The events of the book of Esther are set in the reign of Xerxes (Ahasuerus). This would be 486-465 BC. This is after the building of the temple and before the building of the wall. The temple was built during Darius I (father of Xerxes) and the wall during Artaxerxes I (son of Xerxes).
2. There is no clear reference to the author.
3. There have been some questions about canonicity. After all, the book is not religious, and it does not mention God. The fact is that the failure to mention God is perhaps central to the point the book makes – the providence of God.

## **Contents:**

**Chapter 1** – Ahasuerus threw a party for his officials. He called for the queen, Vashti, in order to show off her beauty to those present. She refused to comply. In his anger, he removed her as queen.

**Chapter 2** – A search was made for a replacement for Vashti. Esther, reared by her cousin Mordecai, was chosen to be queen. Mordecai discovered a plot to assassinate the king. He told Esther, and Esther passed on the information in Mordecai's name. The plot was foiled and the instigators hanged.

**Chapter 3** – Ahasuerus promoted Haman, and Haman loved the attention and respect he received. Mordecai, however, refused to bow to Haman. This infuriated Haman. So, Haman convinced the king to enact a law that the Jews were to be killed and their belongings plundered.

**Chapter 4** - Mordecai convinced Esther to approach the king to seek relief for the Jews. It was dangerous for her to invite herself in to see the king. She agreed to the plan, however. Verse 14 is especially important for the purpose of this document. Mordecai is sure help will arise from somewhere. This indicates his confidence in God, even though he did not mention God. He also indicates that this might very well be the reason Esther came to the position she occupied. He did not state it as fact, but only as a possibility.

**Chapter 5** – Esther invited Ahasuerus and Haman to a feast. At the feast, she invited them both to a second feast. Haman felt joyful because he was included. But, when Mordecai still refused to bow to him, he was filled with anger. His wife and friends urged him to have Mordecai hung. This pleased him and he made the preparations.

**Chapter 6** – That night, Ahasuerus could not sleep so he had the chronicles brought and read to him. It just so happened that the place where they read included the record of Mordecai's help in saving the king from the plot to kill him. The king discovered that nothing had been done to honor Mordecai for this deed. So, he asked Haman what should be done for the man that the king wished to honor. Haman thought it would be him, so he came up with an elaborate plan of honor. Ahasuerus then told him to do those things for Mordecai.

**Chapter 7** – At the second feast, Esther asked the king for protection, since she and her people had been devoted to destruction. The king, in his anger, asked who was responsible for this. She then told him it was Haman. The king went outside in anger. Haman fell before Esther to beg for mercy. When the king came back in he thought Haman was trying to assault Esther. One of the eunuchs told Ahasuerus about Haman's gallows and plans to hang Mordecai. So, the king had Haman hung on his own gallows.

**Chapter 8** – Mordecai was promoted to Haman's position. Esther then asked Ahasuerus to save the Jews. He allowed Mordecai to craft an edict with the king's authority that would allow the Jews to defend themselves against any attack.

**Chapter 9** – The Jews were able to band together and defend themselves against those who attacked them. The Jews were victorious and killed many of their enemies. Then a yearly reminder of their relief was instituted, called Purim.

**Chapter 10** - Mordecai increased in power, and he was second in rank to Ahasuerus.