

Esther 1

Verses 1- 4

Now it happened in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Cush over 127 provinces, ² in those days as King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne which was at the citadel in Susa, ³ in the third year of his reign he held a banquet for all his officials and attendants, the army *officers* of Persia and Media, the nobles and the officials of his provinces, in his presence. ⁴ At that time he displayed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor of his great majesty for many days, 180 days. ⁵ When these days were finished, the king held a banquet lasting seven days for all the people who were present at the citadel in Susa, from the greatest to the least, in the courtyard of the garden of the king's palace.

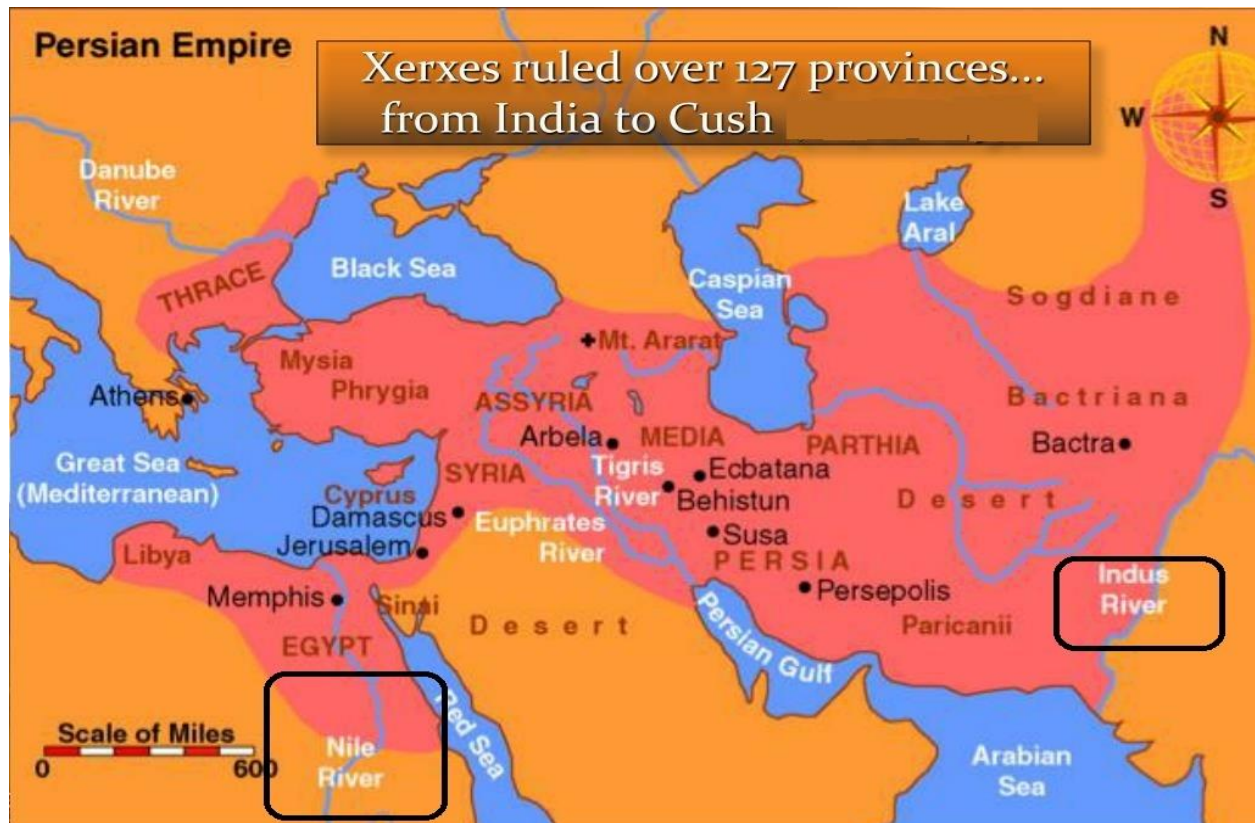
Now it happened in the days of Ahasuerus, who reigned from India to Cush over 127 provinces,

See chart 105

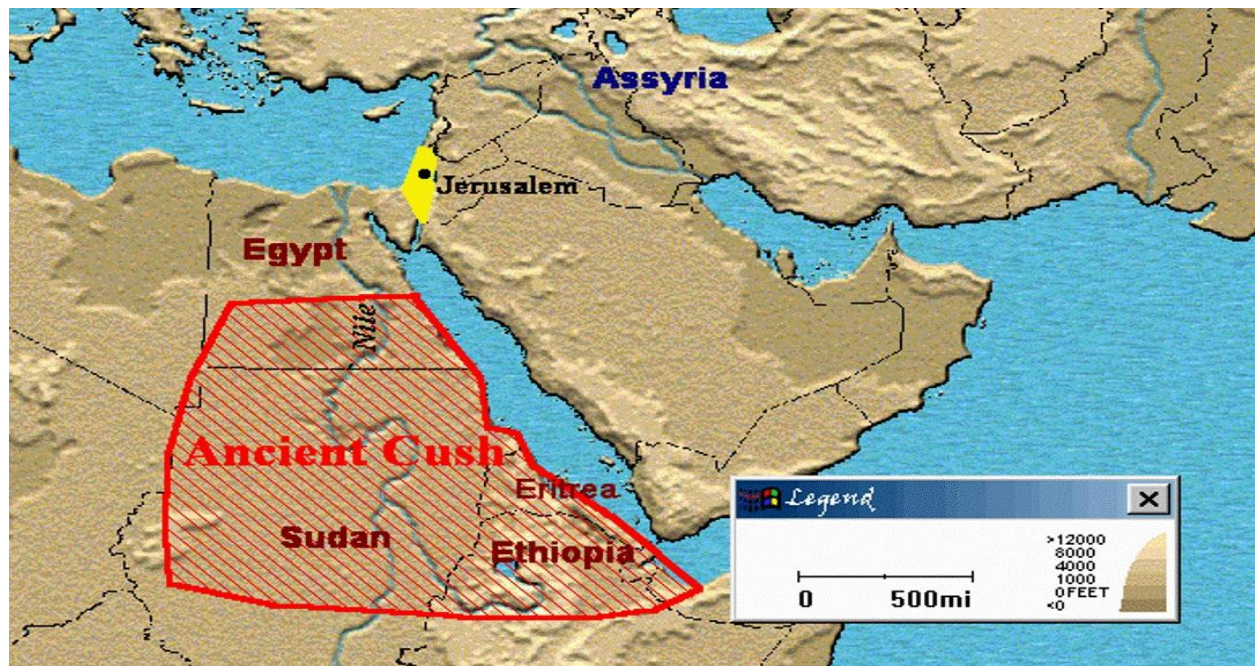
Kings of Persia 559 to 330 BC			
King	Reign (BC)	Biblical Events	Year
Darius	539 - 537		
Cyrus	537-529	Cyrus releases the Jews	537
		Foundation of temple completed	537 - 536
		Work on temple stopped	536
Cambyses	529-522		
Smerdis (Bardiya)	522		
Darius I (Hystaspes)	521-486	Work on temple begins	521
		Temple completed	516
Xerxes I (Ahasuerus)	485-465		
Artaxerxes (Longimanus)	465-424		
	Ezra 4:12	Work on the wall began	465 - 460
	Ezra 4:23	Work on the wall stopped shortly after it began	
		Nehemiah rebuilds the wall	445
Xerxes II	424		

King Ahasuerus reigned from 485 to 465 from India to Cush.

See map 110 and 115



The Cush referred to here was Ancient Cush



His kingdom had 127 provinces which were racial or national units in the empire. We learned from Ezra and Nehemiah that there were 27 satraps in the Persian Empire. The satraps were taxation districts.

² in those days as King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne which was at the citadel in Susa, ³ in the third year of his reign he held a banquet for all his officials and attendants, the army *officers* of Persia and Media, the nobles and the officials of his provinces, in his presence.

See map 120



A citadel was a stronghold into which people could go for shelter during a battle.

In the third year of his reign (483 BC) he held a banquet for all his officials.

⁴ At that time he displayed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor of his great majesty for many days, 180 days. ⁵ When these days were finished, the king held a banquet lasting seven days for all the people who were present at the citadel in Susa, from the greatest to the least, in the courtyard of the garden of the king's palace.

Scholars believe he showed off his great wealth because he wanted to convince his princes of his ability to conquer Greece. However, he did not wage war with Greece until 480 BC and it only lasted for about a year. The text does not mention this so we cannot know this with certainty but we do have the writings of Herodotus who wrote about the wars between the Greeks and Persians from 485 to 425 BC.

In any case, after the 180 days ended the king held a big banquet that lasted a week.

It was common for Oriental palaces to have a park or garden connected with them which were adorned with trees and fountains. Considering the number of people that were probably present for this banquet the size of this courtyard must have been enormous.

Verses 6 - 8

⁶ *There were curtains of fine white and violet linen held by cords of fine purple linen on silver rings and marble columns, and couches of gold and silver on a mosaic floor of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and mineral stones.* ⁷ Drinks were served in golden vessels of various kinds, and the royal wine was plentiful in proportion to the king's bounty. ⁸ But the drinking was *done* according to the *royal law*; there was no compulsion, for so the king had given orders to each official of his household, that he was to do as each person pleased.

⁶ *There were curtains of fine white and violet linen held by cords of fine purple linen on silver rings and marble columns, and couches of gold and silver on a mosaic floor of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and mineral stones.*

White and blue, or violet, seem to have been royal colors in Persia.

Mother-of-pearl is the pearly inner layer of certain mollusk shells.

See pic 125



⁷ Drinks were served in golden vessels of various kinds, and the royal wine was plentiful in proportion to the king's bounty. ⁸ But the drinking was *done* according to the *royal* law; there was no compulsion, for so the king had given orders to each official of his household, that he was to do as each person pleased.

The king respected the national habits of each province some of which had strict rules or customs concerning temperance when it came to drinking.

Verses 9 - 12

⁹ Queen Vashti also held a banquet for the women in the palace which belonged to King Ahasuerus. ¹⁰ On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was cheerful with wine, he ordered Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, 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 turban in order to display her beauty to the people and the officials, *for she was beautiful*. ¹² But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's order delivered by the eunuchs. So the king became very angry, and his wrath burned within him.

Saying that the heart of the king was cheerful with wine is a euphemism meaning that the king was drunk.

The king's order wasn't an unreasonable request so it doesn't make sense that Queen Vashti would refuse to appear. Some commentators have suggested that Vashti was pregnant with Artaxerxes I and she did not want to display herself before the king and the princes. That's possible but there is another solution that is more plausible.

It is likely that God hardened her heart so another Queen could be chosen, one of Jewish descent that God could use to save the Jewish nation.

Verses 13 - 15

¹³ Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times—for it was the custom of the king *to speak* this way before all who knew *Persian* law and justice ¹⁴ and were close to him, *namely*, Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven officials of Persia and Media who had access to the king's presence and sat in the first place in the kingdom—¹⁵ “According to law, what is to be done with Queen Vashti, since she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus delivered by the eunuchs?”

It is interesting that the King had seven officials who he sought for advice and he had seven eunuchs who served in the presence. We know this was an important number to the Jews and other ancient cultures. The seven days of creation, a sabbatical year for the land every 7 years, and the Jubilee year being celebrated after seven cycles of seven years, leading to a time of liberation were all a sign of completeness.

Verses 16 - 22

¹⁶ And in the presence of the king and the *other* officials, Memucan said, “Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but *also* all the officials and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.” ¹⁷ For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women so as to make their own husbands despicable in their sight, when they say, ‘King Ahasuerus commanded that Queen Vashti be brought in to his presence, but she did not come.’ ¹⁸ And this day the wives of the officials of Persia and Media who have heard about the queen's conduct will talk *about it* to all the king's officials, and there will be plenty of contempt and anger. ¹⁹ If it pleases the king, let a royal edict be issued by him and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media so that it cannot be repealed, that Vashti may not come into the presence of King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal position to another who is more worthy than she. ²⁰ When the king's edict which he will make is heard throughout his kingdom, great as it is, then all women will give honor to their husbands, great and small.” ²¹ Now *this* word pleased the king and the officials, and the king did as Memucan proposed. ²² So he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province according to its script and to every people according to their language, that every man was to be the ruler in his own house and the one who speaks in the language of his own people.

¹⁶ **And in the presence of the king and the *other* officials, Memucan said, “Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but also all the officials and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.”**

Public figures, like the queen, are subject to scrutiny and what they do or don't do can impact society as a whole.

This is still true 2,500 years later and we all know of things that certain leaders have done that has and will continue to have an impact on our society. Here are two examples, one from each party, to be fair.

1. When Bill Clinton had sex with Monica Lewinski in the White House.
2. When Donald Trump pardoned 1500 criminals that attacked the U.S Capital.

Unfortunately, partisan politics has gotten so divisive that many people can no longer admit that their “guy” has done any wrong so the nation has lost its way because there is no right or wrong for half the nation depending on who is in office.

¹⁷ **For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women so as to make their own husbands despicable in their sight, when they say, ‘King Ahasuerus commanded that Queen Vashti be brought in to his presence, but she did not come.’**

It is amazing how fast gossip travels and this was long before anyone could blame it on cell phones. It was true that the queen's conduct would become known to all the women but it was an exaggeration to assume that “all women” would look on their husbands as being unworthy.

¹⁹ **If it pleases the king, let a royal edict be issued by him and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media so that it cannot be repealed, that Vashti may not come into the presence of King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal position to another who is more worthy than she.**

So far the following events have taken place.

1. The king displayed his glory and riches for 180 days (483 BC)
2. He deposed Queen Vashti (483/482)
3. He went to war against Greece that lasted about 1 year (480 – 479 BC).

²² So he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province according to its script and to every people according to their language, that every man was to be the ruler in his own house and the one who speaks in the language of his own people.

It's interesting that this was a major concern in 483/482 BC because most people in our time assume that the men of that time had total control over their wives.