



PRECEPT
UPON
PRECEPT®

English Standard Version

Esther

A MAN AND
A WOMAN FOR
SUCH A TIME
AS THIS

PRECEPT UPON PRECEPT

English Standard Version

ESTHER

A MAN AND A WOMAN FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

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HELPFUL STUDY TOOLS

ARTHUR, KAY; ARTHUR, DAVID; DE LACY, PETE

How to Study Your Bible

Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1994/2010

The New Inductive Study Bible—English Standard Version

Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2013

Hebrew Word Study Tools

RECOMMENDED COMMENTARIES

GAEBELEIN, FRANK E.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 4, 1, 2 Kings, 1, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Esther, Esther, Job

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishers, 1992

WALVOORD, JOHN F., ZUCK, ROY B., EDS.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures

Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1983-c1985

CARSON, D. A.

The New Bible Commentary

Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994

KEIL, C. F., DELITZSCH, F.

Commentary on the Old Testament

Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2002

RECOMMENDED SOFTWARE

Logos Bible Software

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LESSON ONE

Chapters One and Two

THIS LESSON INCORPORATES The following located in the Appendix:
Observation Worksheets of Esther 1–2
“From India to Ethiopia” map
“The Main Characters in the Book of Esther”
“Feasts in the Book of Esther”
“Esther at a Glance”
“The Times of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther”
Cross-references

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?

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).

It is for this reason that we are going to ask you to restrain yourself and move with us through this book chapter by chapter, letting its story unfold over these



next four weeks. We are going to ask you not to read ahead until; Esther didn't happen in a day—so let's read and study it a segment at a time.

We long to have you discover the truths of Esther for yourself, to have a divine encounter with God Himself, to give Him the opportunity to be your primary and principal teacher. If you'll do this, you'll never forget His message and His purpose for including Esther in His book.

We're confident God will use the message and story of the book of Esther to prepare you for the days ahead—days that are leading us rapidly to the end of the ages.

DAY ONE

1. When you study God's words, you want divine insight, nothing veiled. 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 handling God's Word accurately. 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. When you study a book of the Bible, it is important to identify the type of literature you are reading as it helps you determine how to interpret it correctly. In the Appendix of this workbook, you will find a printout of the whole book of Esther. Read the first chapter of Esther. When you finish, think about the type of literature you just read. Does it sound like history, poetry, wisdom literature, or prophecy?
3. As you read a historical narrative—an account of what happens in time and place to people, you want to begin by getting the facts. Like any good journalist, you need to ask the **5 Ws** and **H**: **who, what, when, where, why**, and **how**. Of the 5—the two easiest to see in a historical account are the **who** and the **what**: people and events.

So let's begin there. Read chapter 1 again and list your observations on the chart on the next page.

- a. **Who** are the main characters of Esther chapter 1?
- b. **What** is happening? In other words, what is the main event—or main events?



Who

What is happening

Where

When

4. Now does the narrative tell you *where* chapter 1 is happening? If so, double underline the place on your Observation Worksheet in green. Then write it under the heading **Where** as you did with the **who** and the **what**. This will help you put the book in its geographical context. There is a map in the Appendix. Locate the place on the map. Also, note the extent of King Ahasuerus’s kingdom.
5. Now, one last thing for today. Is there any reference that tells us when the event(s) is taking place? Any reference to time? If so, put a green circle around all time references and then note the time on the chart above under **When**.

That’s a good start! The story has begun . . . and lest you think, “And what does an event that happened millenniums ago mean to me, besides maybe being a little entertaining?” why don’t you ask God to show you?

We guarantee He will—in His time! Be patient.

DAY
TWO

Have you ever read the Bible and then within the same day forgotten what you read? If so, that can change. Yesterday you began to learn the technique of asking 5 W and H questions in order to discover truth for yourself. The second technique is marking certain words in the text. These two techniques work together to slow you down as you read and help you see clearly what the author is saying.

If you are new to Precept but have met others who are not, undoubtedly you’ll hear or have heard the difference marking the text makes as you study; so please jump into the water of God’s Word in good old cannonball style.

And for those of you who are Precept veterans, take the opportunity to help new students in your class see how these techniques work and how they unlock the meaning of the text. It will sharpen your discipleship skills.

1. Read Esther 1 again and color-code the main characters:
 - a. Ahasuerus
 - b. Vashti



By color-coding, we simply mean choose a color for each one and then mark references to that person in the color of your choice. As you do, also color all related pronouns and synonyms.

Remember a **synonym** is a word that means the same as another, such as *king* for Ahasuerus and *queen* for Vashti. **Pronouns** are words like *I, me, my, he, she, you*, etc. You remember, don't you? Pronouns are stand-ins for the person.

2. Now 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.

3. Usually when you reread the text and make your lists about people, you discover words or phrases that are repeated. They are repeated because they are important. Remember, in biblical times people didn't have their own copies of the Word of God; therefore, the Word was read to them. When they heard something over and over, it helped them get the point—and remember it.

Did you notice the word *feast* being repeated several times?

- a. Read Esther chapter 1, and in your own distinctive way or color, mark references to *feast*.
 - b. When you finish, list the various feasts on the page in the Appendix titled, "Feasts in the Book of Esther." As you do, note who gives the feast, who attends, how long it lasts, and basically what happens at each. Be brief in what you record. Just the facts. You don't need to rewrite the text.
4. Now let's pause and think about what you have seen *for yourself* these past two days. You have discovered the **who** (the king and the queen) and the details about them including **how** the king reacts to the queen's refusal, the **what** (feasts), the **when** these things are taking place and the **where**. And you have marked each one. This is a great beginning.

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.

a. 1:1-9

b. 1:10-12

c. 1:13-20

d. 1:21-22

5. Now you have the themes of the paragraphs, so what is the theme, the main subject or event, covered in Esther chapter 1? If you wanted to remember what this chapter is all about, how would you summarize it?
 - a. 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 the names of the key people and the problem at the second feast.
 - b. You will find an “Esther at a Glance” chart in the Appendix of this book. Record a theme for Esther 1 on the chart.

Summarizing each chapter of a book as you study is great tool for helping you remember what the chapter is about. If you have a New Inductive Study Bible (NISB) you'll find an At a Glance chart at the end of each book of the Bible. You might want to record the themes of Esther there. We suggest you use a pencil to begin with in case you want to change or refine a theme.

DAY THREE

1. As we begin observing Esther chapter 2 today, once again you'll want to talk to the Author. Ask Him to help you handle His Word accurately as 2 Timothy 2:15 says—not adding to it or taking away from it, but simply hanging on His every word and treating it in accordance with Whose it is!
2. Read your Observation Worksheet of Esther 2. As you do, note the main characters in this chapter. Jot down their names below.



3. Add pertinent information to “Feasts in the Book of Esther.”
4. Now that you have an overview of this chapter, let’s prepare to observe the text more closely so that we can see exactly what is happening.

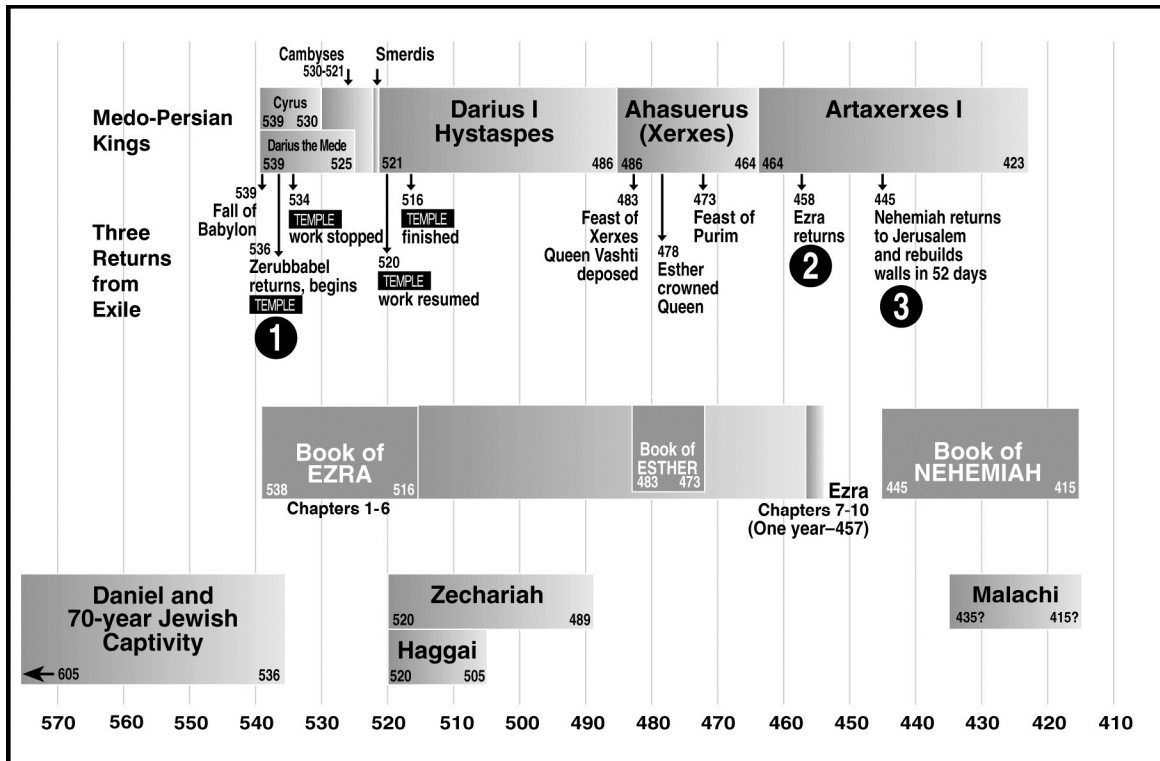
On the back cover of this workbook there is a **Key Word Bookmark** that serves two purposes.

- a. *First*, it lists key words which appear throughout the Bible and gives you suggested ways of marking them so that you can be consistent throughout the Word of God. A **key word** is a repeated word that helps unlock the meaning of the text. Please note, the markings on the bookmark are merely suggestions—there is no right or wrong way to mark. Do what suits you.
 - 1) On that side of the card you will also find a suggested way to mark references to time—words that tell you *when* something happens or indicate *timing* such as *then*, *when*, *after*, etc. When you observed Esther 1, you put a green circle over the reference to “the third year of his reign”—marking the *when* of this chapter.
 - 2) It also suggests a way to mark geographical locations—*where* something occurs. Remember when you marked the where of Esther 1—the citadel of Susa? We suggested you double underline it in green.
 - b. *Second*, on the other side of the bookmark you will find space to list key words used in Esther as you go. Mark or color them as you will do on your Observation Worksheet. Then you can use this as a reminder of the words you want to mark.
5. Do your observations of Esther chapter 2. Remember as you read to question the text with the 5 Ws and H: *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*.
 - a. Mark references to *when* and *where*.
 - b. Mark *King Ahasuerus* and *Vashti* as you did before. Put the king on your bookmark.
 - c. Add *Esther* and *Mordecai* to your Key Word Bookmark and mark each in a distinctive color or way.
 - d. Mark *feast* as you marked it in chapter 1. Make sure it is on your Key Word Bookmark.
 - e. Add *favor* to your bookmark as it will be a repeated word throughout the book.
 6. 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. Then add a theme for Esther 2 to “Esther at a Glance” in the Appendix.
 7. Now briefly list what you learn about Esther and Mordecai on “The Main Characters in the Book of Esther.”



DAY
FOUR

1. Why don't you begin your study today by asking the Spirit of God to lead you into all truth and to use His Word to help you know Him better and to understand His ways. Daniel 11:32b tells us that the people who know their God will be able to stand firm and take action.
2. Previously you made lists on Vashti and Esther. When you compare the lists:
 - a. Do you see any similarities and/or differences between these two women?
 - b. Any lessons you can learn from them as a woman or as a man?
 - c. 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.
3. Read Esther 2 again and see where you marked King Ahasuerus and Vashti. Then list on "The Main Characters in the Book of Esther" any new insights from this chapter about the king.
4. When you made your list, did you notice that it mentions the *anger* of the king? Have you seen that anger before? Look at 1:12, 18. *Anger, angry, wrath* is going to appear intermittently so let's consider it a key word. Put it on your bookmark and mark it in chapter 1.



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?

8. Read Ezra 4:1-6. Why might Mordecai have told Esther not to reveal her people?

Good work. It is really going to pay off tomorrow, and we think you will be excited at the truths you have discovered for yourself simply through the skills of observation.



- 3) How long would the time in captivity last and how would it end?

3. Since the captivity came under the Babylonians, one question that might come to your mind is, “Where do the Medes and the Persians come into the picture?”
 - a. Read Daniel 5 to answer the question. Check “The Times of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther” in the Appendix to find the kings mentioned.

 - b. Now look at your timeline to see who reigned with Darius the Mede.

4. In the last few verses of 2 Chronicles 36, you read that it was Cyrus who decreed that the Jews could return to Jerusalem to build the Lord’s house there. Read Isaiah 44:24–45:7 to see what Isaiah prophesied more than one hundred years before Cyrus was born.
 - a. List what you learn from the passage about God.



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.



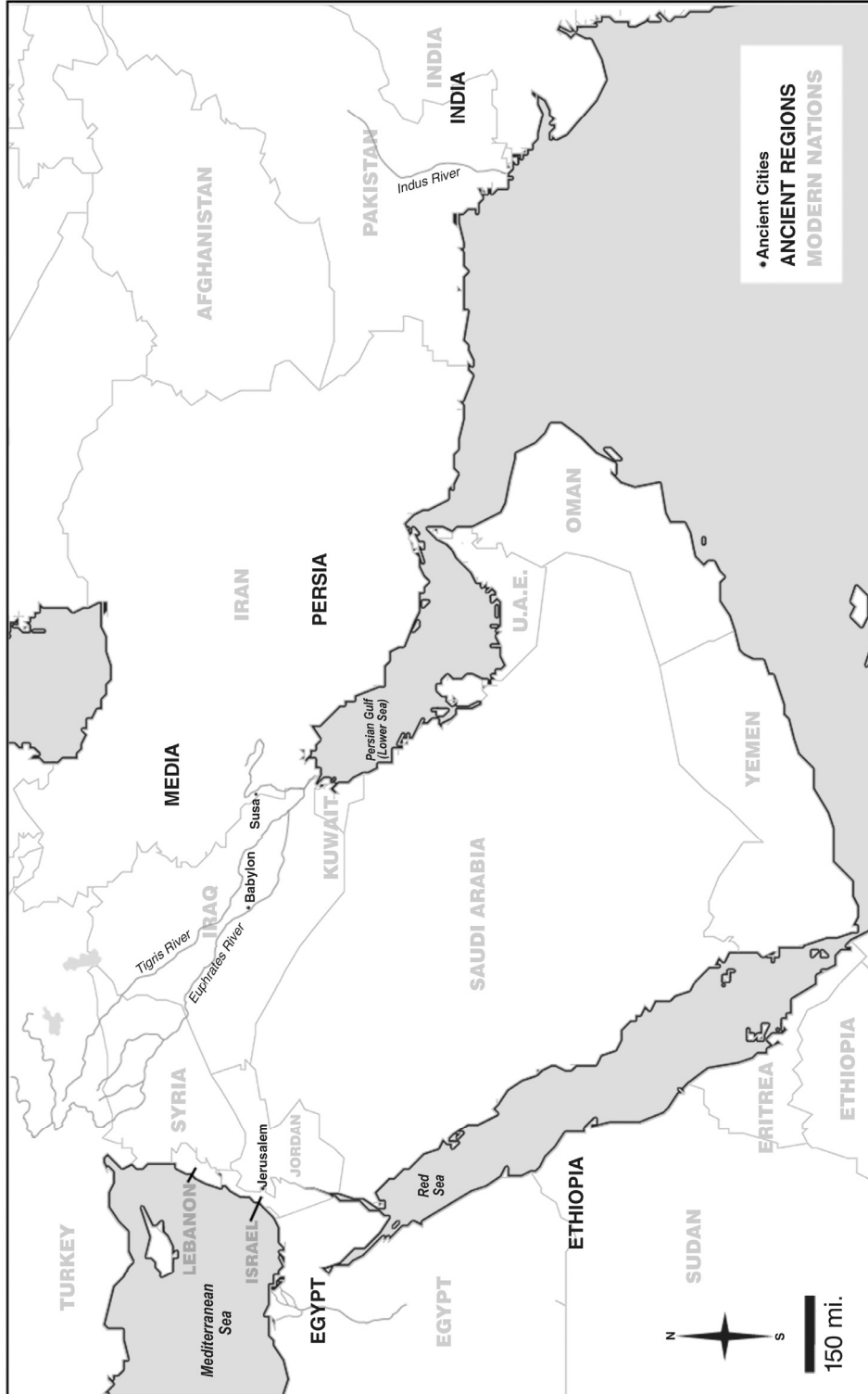
- 9 And the young woman pleased him and won his favor. And he quickly provided her with her cosmetics and her portion of food, and with seven chosen young women from the king's palace, and advanced her and her young women to the best place in the harem.
- 10 Esther had not made known her people or kindred, 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



FEASTS IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER



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Esther

Feasts in the Book of Esther

FEASTS IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER



ESTHER AT A GLANCE

Book Theme:

	Segment Divisions	Chapter Themes
Author: Date: Purpose: Key Words:		1
		2
		3
		4
		5
		6
		7
		8
		9
		10

