

AN ANCIENT SOAP OPERA



“This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush: ²At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, ³and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present. ⁴For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty. ⁵When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days, in the enclosed garden of the king’s palace, for all the people from the least to the greatest who were in the citadel of Susa. ⁶The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and other costly stones.

⁷Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king’s liberality. ⁸By the king’s command each guest was allowed to drink with no restrictions, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished.”

- Esther 1:1-8

THE STORY (THE CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

- King Xerxes (Ahasuerus) –
- Vashti – The queen: “beautiful woman”
- Mordecai – Cousin of Esther; “little man”
- Esther – After a Persian god, “Hadassah”: Esther means “hidden”
- Haman – The villain; “magnificent”

Is it a true story?

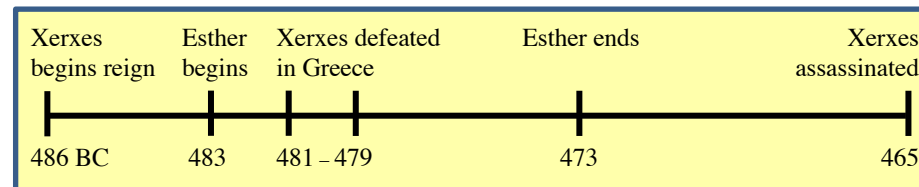
THE KING

- He was a drunken, wicked tyrant, but a fair man in our story.
- His father was Darius (Ezra 4-5) and his son, Artaxerxes (Nehemiah and Ezra 7-10).



- The story begins with this King showing off his wealth
- Shortly thereafter, he is soundly defeated in Greece. (Salamis)

THE TIME



THE WRITER

- No one knows, but the writer had an intimate knowledge of Persia, the Jewish people and the Hebrew language.
- The name of God is not found... in the Greek or English translations, but is found eight times as an acrostic in the Hebrew.
 - Either the writer was afraid of being punished.
 - Or the writer was afraid that the name of God would be stricken.

יְבוּא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמֶן הַיּוֹם

THE LESSONS

1. Even though Esther should have gone home to Israel when the offer was made, God uses her in an incredible way.
2. Xerxes was defeated in a great battle in Greece. Had he been victorious, the Greeks would not have risen to power and the world would not have been “Hellenised”; which is partly what paved the way for the birth of the Messiah.
3. While the Israelites were slaves...
 - In Egypt, a Jew, Joseph, was exalted to second in command.
 - In Babylon, a Jew, Daniel, was twice given the position of second in command of the nation.
 - In Persia, a Jew, Mordecai, was granted the position of second in command. What are the chances?

OUR KEY THOUGHT

- Only God holds in His hands every moment of every life!

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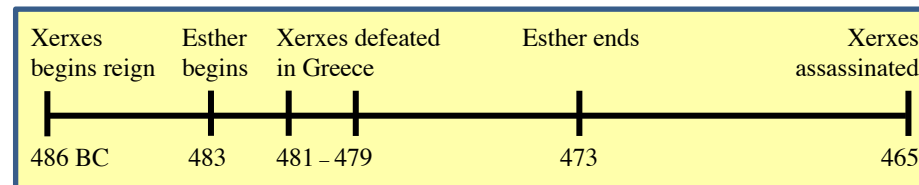
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