

# Esther

## Who wrote it?

The author of Esther has chosen to remain anonymous.

However his familiarity with the Persian court and its traditions suggests he was familiar with it and lived at around the same period (Xerxes = 486-465BC).

## Who was it for?

The book presents itself as being for Jewish readers to explain to them the origin and significance of their feast of Purim (9:30-32).

## When does the action take place?

The book is all set within a 10 year period from the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Xerxes reign (1:3, 483BC) to the 13<sup>th</sup> year (3:7, 3:12, 473BC).

## Where did it happen?

The book is set in and around the citadel of Suza, but reference is made to the whole of Xerxes extensive empire.





Artists' Impression of Ancient Susa

## How does the book fit together?

Esther is, essentially, a single short story, which can be understood as having an introduction (1:1-2:23), main body (3:1-9:19) and conclusion or epilogue (9:20-10:3).

A more detailed breakdown would be:

1:1-22          Banquet 1: The Queen's Disobedience and Removal

2:1-18          Introduction 2: Esther introduced, the beauty contest and coronation

2:19-23        Interlude: Mordecai saves the King's Life

3:1-15          Crisis introduced: Haman plots to destroy the Jews

4:1-15          Esther's 'conversion'

5:1-8            Banquet 2: Esther gains the King's favour

5:9-14          Haman's obsession

6:1-14 Mordecai honoured

7:1-10 Banquet 3: Haman destroyed

8:1-17 Crisis averted: Esther undoes Haman's plot to destroy the Jews

9:1-19 Banquet 4: Purim celebrated

9:20-10:3 Epilogue: The Jews saved, Purim instituted, Esther and Mordecai honoured

## The Contribution of Esther

### 1 A book with many Proverbs type themes

Ambition

Banqueting

Pleasing the king

### 2 A book about unfinished business

### 3 A book about the rescue of God's people

**4 A book about reversal of fortunes**

**5 A book with surprising rescuers**

**6 A rescue underscored by the unseen hand of God**

**7 A rescue responded to with ongoing joy**