CHRISTIAN STANDARD BIBLE®





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ABOUT THE BIBLE

Every Christian woman is called to live confidently in her identity—known, free, and loved in Christ.

Designed to assist women of any age as they study God's Word, the CSB Lifeway Women's Bible will inspire you to laugh, grow, and worship alongside your community. It includes an in-depth collection of inspirational articles, devotional commentary, study tools, and other Bible reading helps from prominent voices in the Lifeway Women community. As you explore God's Word, your life will be changed, inevitably affecting those around you, impacting lives one woman at a time.

CSBLifewayWomensBible.com

FFATURES

Including Bible study and devotional content from Lauren Chandler, Gloria Furman, Lisa Harper, Mary Kassian, Kelly King, Kelly Minter, Trillia Newbell, Jackie Hill Perry, Angel Thomas Pharr, Jennifer Rothschild, Mary Jo Sharp, Priscilla Shirer, Angie Smith, and other Lifeway Women.

- Over 100 articles placed alongside the corresponding biblical text to foster deep reflection on Bible passages and topics focused on the life needs of women
- Nearly 100 short devotional thoughts placed throughout the Bible
- Bible genre introductions with a short overview and reading plan highlighting key passages in that section
- 66 book-focused introductions providing a concise overview with book-specific timelines
- Over 40 character profiles of key women in the Bible with questions for application
- More than 35 reflection questions to help women engage more deeply with the Bible
- Nearly 100 brief inspirational quotes on the Bible

- Over 25 word studies on individual words or phrases detailing meaning and significance
- 30 plus charts, tables, and maps
- Distinctive full-color design elements to foster an immersive reading experience for women of all ages
- Two-column text layout
- Black-letter text for easy readability
- Easy-to-read 9.5-point type size
- Durable Smyth-sewn lay-flat binding
- Ribbon marker for easy referencing between pages
- Concordance
- Presentation page for gift-giving
- Full-color maps

The CSB Lifeway Women's Bible features the highly readable, highly reliable text of the Christian Standard Bible® (CSB). The CSB captures the Bible's original meaning without sacrificing clarity, making it easier to engage with Scripture's life-transforming message and to share it with others.



"For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

HEBREWS 4:12

We are Lifeway Women.

We are daughters, first and foremost—children of the King. We bear the image of our Father. We are sisters, too, part of the family of God, the Bride of Christ.

We have been called out of the darkness and into His marvelous light. God has placed us here for such a time as this.

We pray alone and in community, believing God hears and cares for His children. We laugh, grow, and worship alongside our fellow image bearers. We make disciples and teach them to observe the commands of Christ.

We study the Bible—the inspired Word of God—faithfully. We believe God's Word is profitable for teaching and training in righteousness. We believe it is living and active.

The Bible you are holding came about because we believe the experience of reading God's Word is enriched by the company of fellow believers who provide insight and perspective. Over the years, we've learned from the teaching of our fellow sisters, growing together toward Christlikeness. We've listened and we've read from these pages of Scripture.

We wanted to share some of those teachings with you in an easy-to-access format. Throughout this Bible, you'll see word studies, articles, reflection questions, book introductions, and biographies. We hope that each feature enhances your reading of the Bible.

You'll read from Bible teachers, scholars, and women just like you, sisters in Christ seeking to know God more through the reading of His Word. We are sinful, broken writers and speakers. We're moms trying to figure out what's for dinner, businesswomen navigating meetings and leadership, Sunday School teachers cramming to read this week's lesson before class, and human beings who are trying to live out the fruit of the Spirit in a fallen world.

We never want our words to be elevated to the place of His. We hope these features instead point you to the inerrant Word of God, that they help provide understanding as you read Scripture, and that they help provide knowledge of God. Our prayer for this Bible is that it serves as a catalyst in your walk with Christ. We pray our insufficient words highlight His sufficiency. We pray you'll find life—abundant life, eternal life—in these pages.

Thank you for reading and studying Scripture. We feel enormously privileged to learn alongside you.

Lifeway Women believes in the power of God's Word to change the world. We strive to work together in our mission to help women thrive, today and in the future. We design experiences that fuel ministry and simplify the path to spiritual growth. We provide resources and events for churches and women as they make disciples.

THE CSB WAS CREATED TO HELP MORE PEOPLE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE WORD OF GOD.



ACCURATE, READABLE, SHAREABLE,

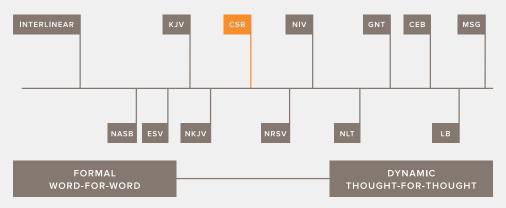
The Christian Standard Bible presents the truth of God's Word with accuracy and clarity for today's readers, equipping them for lifelong discipleship. It's a Bible you can teach from with confidence and a Bible you can share with your neighbor who is hearing God's Word for the very first time.

OPTIMAL EQUIVALENCE

The CSB was created using Optimal Equivalence, a translation philosophy that pursues both linguistic precision to the original languages and readability in contemporary English.

In the many places throughout Scripture where a word-for-word rendering is clearly understandable, a literal translation is used. When a word-for-word rendering might obscure the meaning for a modern audience, a more dynamic translation is used. This process assures that both the words and thoughts contained in the original text are conveyed as accurately as possible for today's readers.

BIBLE TRANSLATION CONTINUUM



Bible translations shown in the top half of the chart are original translations directly from ancient languages to English. Versions shown below the line began with the English text of another Bible translation.



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Jeatures OVERVIEW

- Bible genre introductions with a short overview and reading plan highlighting key passages in that section
- Nearly 100 brief, inspirational quotes on the Bible
- · More than 25 word studies on individual words or phrases detailing meaning and
- 30 plus charts, tables, and maps

God Keeps His Promises Priscilla Shirer After telling the Israelites about the call and promises of God, Joshua reminded them how God protects and brings to pass His own promises. Consider the progression of Joshua 24:4–12: He protected the seed of Abraham so as to preserve the lineage and inheritance of Jacob (v. 4). He protected the seed of Jacob even while in the captivity of Pharaoh, and He delivered them out of his hand (v. 5). He conlinued protecting the children of Jacob/Israel by dividing the Red Sea when the angry Egyptians pursued the The very waters that were Israel's guard became E (vv. 6-7).

He turned the curse of Balaam into a blessing and from Balaam's hand (vv. 9–10).

He sent the hornet before the army of Israel into the Amorites to drive out the kings and conquer

The list of how God protects His promises goes on and a His promises in spite of our sin, our complaints, and the put up. He is faithful to perform that which He has prom

(v. 12).

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· Over 100 articles placed alongside the corresponding biblical text to foster deep reflection on Bible passages and topics focused on the life needs of women

David is mentioned in the titles of seventy-three psalms.
Twelve psalms are ascribed to Asaph and ten to "the sons of Korah." Other named authors are Moses, Solomon, Heman, and Ethan. Fifty psalms are anonymous, although Jewish tradition assigns some of these to Ezra.

The oldest psalm, Psalm go, is that of Moses (1400s BC). The largest group was composed during the Davidic era (1010-970 BC). The final compilation probably occurred during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (4,58-430 BC). Psalm 137 may have been the last psalm composed.

Big Picture

God, the true and glorious King, is worthy of all praise, thanks-giving, and confidence—whatever the occasion in personal or community life.

The book of Psalms is subdivided into five smaller books— The book of Paulms is subdivided in -69. Paulms 19-20 pau and look to the New Testament for their fulfillment in the life and death of Jesus. Padin 1 sets the tone for the whole Pedier by presenting two ways of life and the outcome of each. Pedier by presenting two ways of life and the outcome of each. Pedie and presents the LORO as the Shepherd whost provides, guides, and cares for list sheep. Peding is a populm of forgiveness dictionaring other folling into six. In Psalm 198, the longest padin, although experience contains a reference in God's Word.

Key Verses
Psalm 23:1
"The LORD is my shepherd; I have what I need."
Psalm 150:06
"Let everything that breathes praise the LORD.
Hallelujah!"

of the Greek gods. 700 nidas invade the southern gdom on three occasions. time Judeans are taken to on as axiles. 605, 597, 586 nus's decree allows return of Jews from exite 538. Latest of the psalms are osed, including Psalm 137. These reflect Israel's swite and restoration. 400

· 66 book-focused introductions providing a concise overview with book-specific timelines Over 40 character profiles of key women in the Bible with questions for application

ials and the people.

"This is what the LORD says: About midnight pt, 5 and every firstborn male in the land o irstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne vant girl who is at the grindstones, as well a estock. ⁶Then there will be a great cry of a d of Egypt such as never was before or ever t all the Israelites, whether people or anim.

n Egypt and Israel. All these officials of yours and bow before me, saying: Get out, you and all the you." After that, I will get out." And he went out

sence fiercely angry.
o Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that my ultiplied in the land of Egypt." 'o Moses and Aaron rs before Pharaoh, but the Lord hardened Pharaoh's d not let the Israelites go out of his land.

ns for the Passover

d to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 2 "This be the beginning of months for you; it is the first r. ³ Tell the whole community of Israel that on the onth they must each select an animal of the flock achers' families, one animal per family. 4 If the houseor a whole animal, that person and the neighbor are to select one based on the combined number of apportion the animal according to what each will e an unblemished animal, a year-old male; you may the sheep or the goats. § You are to keep it until the his month; then the whole assembly of the commulaughter the animals at twilight. 7 They must take and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the eat them. 8 They are to eat the meat that night; they ed over the fire along with unleavened bread and ot eat any of it raw or cooked in boiling" water, but ire - its head as well as its legs and inner organs. we any of it until morning; any part of it left until

these events. His heart died and he became a stone, 38 About ten days later, the LORD struck Nabal dead.

"25:25 Lit for as is his name is, so he is "25:25 Lit and foolishness is with him '25:28 Or trouble "25:29 Lit bundle "25:34 Lit had anyone urinating against a wall" 25:36 Lit Nabal's heart was good on him "25:36 Lit anything at all "25:37 Lit when the wine had gone out of Nabal" 25:37 Lit Then his heart died

CHARACTER PROFILE · ABIGAIL · (1 Samuel 25)

The prophet Samuel had just died, Saul is still king of Israel, but it was widely known David was the heir apparent. Abigail—described as beauliful, discerning, and wise—was married to Nabal, known for his foolishness and hardness of heart. In a probable arranged marriage, Abigail re-mained faithful despite Nabal's poor decisions that led to her story of intervention. Nabal refused mained tainthul despiral sport decisions that let to the story or infervention. Nobal refused to show hospitality and kinders so David and its army. Abiguid e-escalated David's anger, impending conflict, and bloodshed with segences gift of food as well as by assuming life unit for Nobal's mistry heart. Her alloquent speech in verses 24-31 is the langest given by a woman in the Old Testament and resulted in a display of abagiant londifier tesolution. Following the dark Nobal, shortly drifter her actions. David married has despiral to an must have borne a striking resemblance to David, as Chileab (25m 3.3) means "the perfection of the father." Abigail's character and model or David, and chileab (25m 3.3) means "the perfection of the father." Abigail's character and model or bard in the middle of the chileab (25m 1.5) is the chileab (25m 1.5) in the chileab (25m 1.5) is the chileab (25m 1.5) in the chileab (25m one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus" (1Tm 2:5).

- How can you show wisdom in the midst of handling conflict between others.
- How can your words and generosity defuse a contentious circumstance?

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Priscilla Shirer

The children of Israel exhibited faith and received divine protection as a result. Answer the following questions after reading Exodus 11:4–7 and 12:5–7,13, which told them what they were

- How were the people to demonstrate confidence in God?
- 2. How would they be otected as a result of
- 3 Is there an instance 3. Is there an instance from your own experience in which you felt specifically protected by God as a result of having acted in faith? If so, explain.

· More than 35 reflection questions to help women engage more deeply with the Bible

:1 Or go, it will be finished— '11:3 Or had given at '11:3 Or in the eyes of '11:7 Lit point its tongue ur feet "12:9 Or or boiled at all in

battle formation against Israel, and as the battle intensified, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who struck down about four thousand men on the battlefield.

"3:11 Lit about it, his two ears will tingle; Hb obscure
"3:13 LXX, Old Lat, MT reads them "3:19 Lit he let none of his words fall to the
ground "4:11 LX reads In those days the Philistines gathered together to fight
against Israel, and Israel went out to engage them in battle. They

A CLOSER LOOK AT 1 SAMUEL 3:1-10

Priscilla Shirer

When the prophet Samuel was only a boy, he worked in the tabernacle of God in Shiloh alongside Eli the priest. Once, in the dead of night, while Samuel was still in bed, he heard a voice calling out to him. The truths here make my heart pound in gratitude to the Lord for His patience and persistence. Samuel lived during an era when hearing God was a "rare" occurrence (1Sm 3:1). He would not have been accustomed to the sound of God's voice. In fact, he may very well have never heard it before in his life. He was, after all, only a boy. Still, God spoke again and again, accommodating Samuel's immaturity and lack of experience. And God, being "rich in mercy" (Eph 2:4) and knowing our weaknesses, will often pursue us again. And again. And again. He'll graciously give us continued opportunity to detect and discern what He is saying and respond in obedience.

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More than 90 short devotional thoughts placed throughout the Bible

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Lisa-Jo Baker: pp. 622, 1370, 1726 Angela Thomas Pharr: pp. 9, 779, 857, 1103, 1210, Whitney Capps: p. 1823 1225, 1449, 1722 Lauren Chandler: pp. 86, 257, 700, 1335, 1337, Jackie Hill Perry: pp. 382, 1525, 1816 Jennifer Rothschild: pp. 304, 740, 762, 766, 864, 892, 1581, 1663 Jeannie Cunnion: pp. 1585, 1707 951, 971, 1358, 1467, 1526, 1810 Jen Schmidt: pp. 1700, 1713, 1824, 1828 Tiffany Francis: p. 255 Gloria Furman: pp. 248, 1589, 1701, 1755 Gretchen Saffles: p. 1513 Lisa Harper: pp. 545, 854, 1833 Colleen Searcy: p. 1727 Mary Kassian: pp. 1053, 1293, 1746, 1750, Mary Jo Sharp: pp. 913, 1402, 1594, 1617, 1795 Priscilla Shirer: pp. 6, 8, 94, 98, 124, 216, 229, 360, 417, 1451, 1695, 1768 Kelly D. King: pp. 302, 418, 1721, 1753 Kelly Minter: pp. 102, 307, 894, 1407, 1751, Angie Smith: pp. 439, 1448, 1609, 1652, 1742, 1814 1808 Lysa TerKeurst: p. 404 Trillia Newbell: pp. 890, 950, 1591, 1769 Whitley Tracy: p. 408 Mary Margaret West: p. 1744

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Introduction to



Author

This book is named for Esther, the leading character. The author is unknown, but Jewish tradition identifies Mordecai as the writer.

Date

Esther was written around 465 BC, and the events in Esther occurred in Persia between the events of Ezra 6 and 7, during the years 485 BC to 465 BC.

Big Picture

Esther, a Jewish beauty selected by the Persian king Ahasuerus (Xerxes I) to become his new queen, saved the Jews from Haman's wicked plot, so her relative Mordecai established the yearly Jewish Festival of Purim.

Summary

The story centers in Susa (Shushan), the winter resort of Persian kings. Esther, a beautiful young Jewish woman, was selected to replace the queen. She was related to Mordecai, who earlier had uncovered a plot to kill King Ahasuerus. Haman, prime minister of Persia, was infuriated by Mordecai's refusal to bow to him. So Haman began to plot against Mordecai and all the Jews. Haman had the Persian monarch sign a decree for the destruction of the Jews. Mordecai called on Esther to approach the king. He told Esther that God had placed her in her position for such a time as this. Esther risked her life and exposed Haman's plot to the king. Haman was executed, and the king issued an edict that the Jews could defend themselves against those hostile to them—which they did. An annual feast called Purim was established to commemorate and celebrate the lews' deliverance.

Key Verses

Esther 4:14 "Who knows, perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a time as this."

Esther 4:16 "I will go to the king even if it is against the law.
If I perish, I perish."

Timeline

Cyrus's decree allows return of Jews from exile 538 Cyrus is killed in a campaign against the Massagetae of central Asia and his son Cambyses is crowned king of Persia. 530 Events in Esther 486-465 Ahasuerus's 180-day feast: Vashti is deposed. 483 Esther becomes queen of Persia. 479 Golden Age of Greek art 477-431 At Haman's request, a royal decree is issued for the annihilation of the Jews in the Persian Empire. 474 Esther intercedes with Ahasuerus for her people. 474 First celebration of Purim 473 Events in Malachi 460 Ezra goes to Jerusalem. 458 Events in Nehemiah 445–430 Jerusalem's walls are rebuilt under Nehemiah's leadership, 445 Athens is defeated by Sparta, second Peloponnesian War 431-404

Vashti Angers the King

These events took place during the days of Ahasuerus, who ruled 127 provinces from India to Cush. ²In those days King Ahasuerus reigned from his royal throne in the fortress at Susa. ³He held a feast in the third year of his reign for all his officials and staff, the army of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the officials from the provinces. ⁴He displayed the glorious wealth of his kingdom and the magnificent splendor of his greatness for a total of 180 days.

⁵ At the end of this time, the king held a week-long banquet in the garden courtyard of the royal palace for all the people, from the greatest to the least, who were present in the fortress of Susa. ⁶ White and blue linen hangings were fastened with fine white and purple linen cords to silver rods on marble[^] columns. Gold and silver couches were arranged on a mosaic pavement of red feldspar, ⁸ marble, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones.

⁷Drinks were served in an array of gold goblets, each with a different design. Royal wine flowed freely, according to the king's bounty. ⁸The drinking was according to royal decree: "There are no restrictions." The king had ordered every wine steward in his household to serve whatever each person wanted. ⁹Queen Vashti also gave a feast for the women of King Ahasuerus's palace.

On the seventh day, when the king was feeling good from the wine, Ahasuerus commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carkas — the seven eunuchs who personally served him — ¹¹to bring Queen Vashti before him with her royal crown. He wanted to show off her beauty to the people and the officials, because she was very beautiful. ¹² But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command that was delivered by his eunuchs. The king became furious and his anger burned within him.

The King's Decree

¹³ The king consulted the wise men who understood the times, ^c for it was his normal procedure to confer with experts in law and justice. ¹⁴ The most trusted ones ^b were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan. They were the seven officials of Persia and Media who had personal access to the king and occupied the highest positions in the kingdom. ¹⁵ The king asked, "According to the law, what should be done with Queen Vashti, since she refused to obey King Ahasuerus's command that was delivered by the eunuchs?"

¹⁶ Memucan said in the presence of the king and his officials, "Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king, but all the officials and the peoples who are in every one of King Ahasuerus's provinces. ¹⁷ For the queen's action will become public knowledge to all the women and cause them to despise their husbands and say, 'King Ahasuerus or dered Queen Vashti brought before him, but she did not come.' ¹⁸ Before this day is over, the noble women of Persia and Media who hear about the queen's act will say the same thing to all the king's officials, resulting in more contempt and fury.

¹⁹ "If it meets the king's approval, he should personally issue a royal decree. Let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it cannot be revoked: Vashti is not to enter King Ahasuerus's presence, and her royal position is to be given to another woman who

is more worthy than she. ²⁰The decree the king issues will be heard throughout his vast kingdom, so all women will honor their husbands, from the greatest to the least."

²¹The king and his counselors approved the proposal, and he followed Memucan's advice. ²²He sent letters to all the royal provinces, to each province in its own script and to each ethnic group in its own language, that every man should be master of his own house and speak in the language of his own people.

The Search for a New Queen

2 Some time later, when King Ahasuerus's rage had cooled down, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what was decided against her. ² The king's personal attendants suggested, "Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king. ³ Let the king appoint commissioners in each province of his kingdom, so that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to the harem at the fortress of Susa. Put them under the supervision of Hegai, the king's eunuch, keeper of the women, and give them the required beauty treatments. ⁴ Then the young woman who pleases the king will become queen instead of Vashti." This suggestion pleased the king, and he did accordingly.

⁵ In the fortress of Susa, there was a Jewish man named Mordecai son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjaminite. ⁶ Kish^a had been taken into exile from Jerusalem with the other captives when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took King Jeconiah of Judah into exile. ⁷ Mordecai was the legal guardian of his cousin ⁸ Hadassah (that is, Esther), because she had no father or mother. The young woman had a beautiful figure and was extremely good-looking. When her father and mother died, Mordecai had adopted her as his own daughter.

⁸ When the king's command and edict became public knowledge and when many young women were gathered at the fortress of Susa under Hegai's supervision, Esther was taken to the palace, into the supervision of Hegai, keeper of the women. ⁹ The young woman pleased him and gained his favor so that he accelerated the process of the beauty treatments and the special diet that she received. He assigned seven hand-picked female servants to her from the palace and transferred her and her servants to the harem's best quarters.

[^]2:6 Lit He [^]2:7 Lit uncle's daughter

CHARACTER PROFILE · ESTHER · (Esther 1–10)

Michelle Hicks

Esther's story is a powerful reminder that God can bring about new life, redemption, and freedom even when it seems impossible. Esther was also called Hadassah. Mordecai, her cousin, was her legal guardian after her parents' death (2:5–7). Due to the Babylonian exile, Esther lived in Persia during the reign of King Ahasuerus (486–465 BC). She was young and beautiful.

After being taken to the palace as part of the king's harem (2:8), she became queen. Esther didn't have much say about how her life unfolded, but she was brave and a woman of character. She risked execution in order to protect her people—God's people, the Jewish nation. What Mordecai asked her to do could have been her end (4:14), but she rested in God's providence. God used someone who, due to gender, culture, and circumstance, was invisible and powerless, and God made her an instrument of His redemptive love at work in spite of the sins of humanity. As a result, God's people were saved, and the Festival of Purim continues to celebrate His saving power recorded in the book of Esther (Est 9).

- What are some ways God has invited you to join Him in His work?
- How will you look for opportunities to serve Him today?

¹⁰ Esther did not reveal her ethnicity or her family background, because Mordecai had ordered her not to make them known. ¹¹ Every day Mordecai took a walk in front of the harem's courtyard to learn how Esther was doing and to see what was happening to her.

¹² During the year before each young woman's turn to go to King Ahasuerus, the harem regulation required her to receive beauty treatments with oil of myrrh for six months and then with perfumes and cosmetics for another six months. ¹³ When the young woman would go to the king, she was given whatever she requested to take with her from the harem to the palace. ¹⁴ She would go in the evening, and in the morning she would return to a second harem under the supervision of the king's eunuch Shaashgaz, keeper of the concubines. She never went to the king again, unless he desired her and summoned her by name.

Esther Becomes Queen

¹⁵ Esther was the daughter of Abihail, the uncle of Mordecai who had adopted her as his own daughter. When her turn came to go to the king, she did not ask for anything except what Hegai, the king's eunuch, keeper of the women, suggested. Esther gained favor in the eyes of everyone who saw her.

¹⁶ She was taken to King Ahasuerus in the palace in the tenth month, the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. ¹⁷ The king loved Esther more than all the other women. She won more favor and approval from him than did any of the other virgins. He placed the royal crown on her head and made her queen in place of Vashti. ¹⁸ The king held a great banquet for all his officials and staff. It was Esther's banquet. He freed his provinces from tax payments and gave gifts worthy of the king's bounty.

Mordecai Saves the King

¹⁹ When the virgins were gathered a second time, Mordecai was sitting at the King's Gate. ²⁰ Esther still did not reveal her family background or her ethnicity, as Mordecai had directed. She obeyed Mordecai's orders, as she always had while he raised her.

²¹During those days while Mordecai was sitting at the King's Gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who guarded the entrance, became infuriated and planned to assassinate^A King Ahasuerus. ²²When Mordecai learned of the plot, he reported it to Queen Esther, and she told the king on Mordecai's behalf. ²³When the report was investigated and verified, both men were hanged on the gallows. This event was recorded in the Historical Record in the king's presence.

Haman's Plan to Kill the Jews

3 After all this took place, King Ahasuerus honored Haman, son of Hammedatha the Agagite. He promoted him in rank and gave him a higher position than all the other officials. ² The entire royal staff at the King's Gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman, because the king had commanded this to be done for him. But Mordecai would not bow down or pay homage. ³ The members of the royal staff at the King's Gate asked Mordecai, "Why are you disobeying the king's command?" ⁴ When they had warned him day after day and he still would not listen to them, they told Haman in order to see if Mordecai's actions would be tolerated, since he had told them he was a Jew.

[^]2:21 Lit and they sought to stretch out a hand against

⁵When Haman saw that Mordecai was not bowing down or paying him homage, he was filled with rage. ⁶ And when he learned of Mordecai's ethnic identity, it seemed repugnant to Haman to do away with [^] Mordecai alone. He planned to destroy all of Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout Ahasuerus's kingdom.

⁷In the first month, the month of Nisan, in King Ahasuerus's twelfth year, the *pur*—that is, the lot—was cast before Haman for each day in each month, and it fell on the twelfth month, the month Adar. ⁸Then Haman informed King Ahasuerus, "There is one ethnic group, scattered throughout the peoples in every province of your kingdom, keeping themselves separate. Their laws are different from everyone else's and they do not obey the king's laws. It is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. ⁹If the king approves, let an order be drawn up authorizing their destruction, and I will pay 375 tons of silver to ⁸ the officials for deposit in the royal treasury."

¹⁰ The king removed his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. ¹¹ Then the king told Haman, "The money and people are given to you to do with as you see fit."

¹² The royal scribes were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and the order was written exactly as Haman commanded. It was intended for the royal satraps, the governors of each of the provinces, and the officials of each ethnic group and written for each province in its own script and to each ethnic group in its own language. It was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the royal signet ring. ¹³ Letters were sent by couriers to each of the royal provinces telling the officials to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the Jewish people—young and old, women and children—and plunder their possessions on a single day, the thirteenth day of Adar, the twelfth month.^c

¹⁴ A copy of the text, issued as law throughout every province, was distributed to all the peoples so that they might get ready for that day.
¹⁵ The couriers left, spurred on by royal command, and the law was issued in the fortress of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink, while the city of Susa was in confusion.

Mordecai Appeals to Esther

When Mordecai learned all that had occurred, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, went into the middle of the city, and cried loudly and bitterly. ²He went only as far as the King's Gate, since the law prohibited anyone wearing sackcloth from entering the King's Gate. ³There was great mourning among the Jewish people in every province where the king's command and edict reached. They fasted, wept, and lamented, and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

⁴Esther's female servants and her eunuchs came and reported the news to her, and the queen was overcome with fear. She sent clothes for Mordecai to wear so that he would take off his sackcloth, but he did not accept them. ⁵Esther summoned Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs who attended her, and dispatched him to Mordecai to learn what he was doing and why. ⁵ So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square in front of the King's Gate. ⁷Mordecai told him everything

^{*3:6} Lit to stretch out a hand against *3:9 Lit will weigh 10,000 silver talents on the hands of *3:13 LXX adds the text of Ahasuerus's letter here. *4:5 Lit what is this and why is this

that had happened as well as the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay the royal treasury for the slaughter of the Jews.

⁸ Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa ordering their destruction, so that Hathach might show it to Esther, explain it to her, and command her to approach the king, implore his favor, and plead with him personally for her people. ⁹ Hathach came and repeated Mordecai's response to Esther.

¹⁰ Esther spoke to Hathach and commanded him to tell Mordecai, ¹¹ "All the royal officials and the people of the royal provinces know that one law applies to every man or woman who approaches the king in the inner courtyard and who has not been summoned — the death penalty — unless the king extends the gold scepter, allowing that person to live. I have not been summoned to appear before the king for the last^ thirty days." ¹² Esther's response was reported to Mordecai.

¹³ Mordecai told the messenger to reply to Esther, "Don't think that you will escape the fate of all the Jews because you are in the king's palace. ¹⁴ If you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will come to the Jewish people from another place, but you and your father's family will be destroyed. Who knows, perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a time as this."

15 Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 16 "Go and assemble all the Jews who can be found in Susa and fast for me. Don't eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my female servants will also fast in the same way. After that, I will go to the king even if it is against the law. If I perish, I perish." 17 So Mordecai went and did everything Esther had commanded him.

Esther Approaches the King

5 On the third day, Esther dressed in her royal clothing and stood in the inner courtyard of the palace facing it. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the royal courtroom, ⁸ facing its entrance. ² As soon as the king saw Queen Esther standing in the courtyard, she gained favor with him. The king extended the gold scepter in his hand toward Esther, and she approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

³ "What is it, Queen Esther?" the king asked her. "Whatever you want, even to half the kingdom, will be given to you."

4 "If it pleases the king," Esther replied, "may the king and Haman come today to the banquet I have prepared for them."

⁵The king said, "Hurry, and get Haman so we can do as Esther has requested." So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared.

⁶ While drinking the ^c wine, the king asked Esther, "Whatever you ask will be given to you. Whatever you want, even to half the kingdom, will be done."

⁷Esther answered, "This is my petition and my request: ⁸ If I have found favor in the eyes of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and perform my request, may the king and Haman come to the banquet I will prepare for them. Tomorrow I will do what the king has asked."

⁹ That day Haman left full of joy and in good spirits. ⁰ But when Haman saw Mordecai at the King's Gate, and Mordecai didn't rise or tremble in fear at his presence, Haman was filled with rage toward Mordecai. ¹⁰ Yet Haman controlled himself and went home. He sent for

his friends and his wife Zeresh to join him. ¹¹Then Haman described for them his glorious wealth and his many sons. He told them all how the king had honored him and promoted him in rank over the other officials and the royal staff. ¹² "What's more," Haman added, "Queen Esther invited no one but me to join the king at the banquet she had prepared. I am invited again tomorrow to join her with the king. ¹³ Still, none of this satisfies me since I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's Gate all the time."

¹⁴ His wife Zeresh and all his friends told him, "Have them build a gallows seventy-five feet[^] tall. Ask the king in the morning to hang Mordecai on it. Then go to the banquet with the king and enjoy yourself." The advice pleased Haman, so he had the gallows constructed.

Mordecai Honored by the King

That night sleep escaped the king, so he ordered the book recording daily events to be brought and read to the king. ²They found the written report of how Mordecai had informed on Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who guarded the entrance, when they planned to assassinate King Ahasuerus. ³The king inquired, "What honor and special recognition have been given to Mordecai for this act?"

The king's personal attendants replied, "Nothing has been done for him."

⁴The king asked, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman was just entering the outer court of the palace to ask the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows he had prepared for him.

⁵ The king's attendants answered him, "Haman is there, standing in the court."

"Have him enter," the king ordered. ⁶ Haman entered, and the king asked him, "What should be done for the man the king wants to honor?"

Haman thought to himself, "Who is it the king would want to honor more than me?" ⁷ Haman told the king, "For the man the king wants to honor: ⁸ Have them bring a royal garment that the king himself has worn and a horse the king himself has ridden, which has a royal crown on its head. ⁹ Put the garment and the horse under the charge of one of the king's most noble officials. Have them clothe the man the king wants to honor, parade him on the horse through the city square, and call out before him, "This is what is done for the man the king wants to honor."

¹⁰ The king told Haman, "Hurry, and do just as you proposed. Take a garment and a horse for Mordecai the Jew, who is sitting at the King's Gate. Do not leave out anything you have suggested."

¹¹ So Haman took the garment and the horse. He clothed Mordecai and paraded him through the city square, calling out before him, "This is what is done for the man the king wants to honor."

¹² Then Mordecai returned to the King's Gate, but Haman hurried off for home, mournful and with his head covered. ¹³ Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened. His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, "Since Mordecai is Jewish, and you have begun to fall before him, you won't overcome him, because your downfall is certain." ¹⁴ While they were still speaking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and rushed Haman to the banquet Esther had prepared.

⁵:14 Lit 50 cubits



When God Seems Distant

Priscilla Shirer

Through all of these events of Esther, Yahweh seems oddly disengaged. In fact, His name is not even mentioned in the entire book. And yet to the one who has spiritual vision, His fingerprints and providential guidance are all over it, from the first chapter till the last. One particular portion of this story in Esther 6 illustrates this reality the best.

Look at the thread of "coincidental" happenings woven into the narrative. To the spiritually insensitive eye, all these details are merely fortuitous events. Products of sheer luck. There's no trace of God, His hand, or even His interest in the devastation about to befall Mordecai and the entire lewish people group. And yet,

the king can't sleep.

He looks for something to read.

He comes across a record of Mordecai's past service to him.

Haman shows up, seeking permission to put Mordecai to death.

The king, not knowing this—in fact, seeking counsel on how to honor Mordecai—poses a question that Haman is easily able to misunderstand.

And, in answering it mistakenly, Haman sets a ball rolling that leads to his own demise, the elevation of Mordecai, and the salvation of the lews.

This kind of stuff "just happens"?

Yes—when God is involved in it—just as He's involved with your own story now, right here in the midst of your hurts, fears, and disappointments. Whether or not you perceive Him at work depends largely on whether you're postured to "look, observe, be astonished, and wonder"—whether you are expectantly hopeful and eager for Him, believing He's at work even when He seems distant.

Yes, ask Him your questions. How long, LORD? Why, LORD? But then immediately ask Him for vision to recognize where His providential hand is already at work. Your personal problem (though important, simply because it's yours) is but a small sliver in the grand scope of all God is doing. Broaden your vantage point and prepare to be amazed.

Haman Is Executed

The king and Haman came to feast^ with Esther the queen. 2 Once again, on the second day while drinking wine, the king asked Esther, "Queen Esther, whatever you ask will be given to you. Whatever you seek, even to half the kingdom, will be done."

³ Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor with you, Your Majesty, and if the king is pleased, spare my life; this is my request. And spare my people; this is my desire. ⁴ For my people and I have been sold to destruction, death, and annihilation. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept silent. Indeed, the trouble wouldn't be worth burdening the king."

⁵ King Ahasuerus spoke up and asked Queen Esther, "Who is this, and where is the one who would devise such a scheme?" ⁸

⁶ Esther answered, "The adversary and enemy is this evil Haman."

Haman stood terrified before the king and queen. ⁷ The king arose in anger and went from where they were drinking wine to the palace garden. ⁶ Haman remained to beg Queen Esther for his life because he realized the king was planning something terrible for him. ⁸ Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, ⁹ Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, "Would he actually violate the queen while I am in the house?" As soon as the statement left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

⁹ Harbona, one of the king's eunuchs, said, "There is a gallows seventy-five feet^E tall at Haman's house that he made for Mordecai, who gave the report that saved Ethe king."

The king said, "Hang him on it."

¹⁰ They hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's anger subsided.

Esther Intervenes for the Jews

That same day King Ahasuerus awarded Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. Mordecai entered the king's presence because Esther had revealed her relationship to Mordecai. ²The king removed his signet ring he had recovered from Haman and gave it to Mordecai, and Esther put him in charge of Haman's estate.

³ Then Esther addressed the king again. She fell at his feet, wept, and begged him to revoke the evil of Haman the Agagite and his plot he had devised against the Jews. ⁴ The king extended the gold scepter toward Esther, so she got up and stood before the king.

⁵ She said, "If it pleases the king and I have found favor with him, if the matter seems right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let a royal edict be written. Let it revoke the documents the scheming Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the king's provinces. ⁶ For how could I bear to see the disaster that would come on my people? How could I bear to see the destruction of my relatives?"

⁷King Ahasuerus said to Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, "Look, I have given Haman's estate to Esther, and he was hanged on the gallows because he attacked° the Jews. ⁸Write in the king's name whatever pleases you concerning the Jews, and seal it with the royal signet ring. A document written in the king's name and sealed with the royal signet ring cannot be revoked."

^7:1 Lit drink ⁸7:5 Lit who would fill his heart to do this ⁶7:7 Lit the garden of the house, also in v. 8 ⁸7:8 Or the house of wine ⁸7:9 Lit 50 cubits ⁸7:9 Lit who spoke good for ⁶8:7 Lit stretched out his hand against

⁹ On the twenty-third day of the third month — that is, the month Sivan — the royal scribes were summoned. Everything was written exactly as Mordecai commanded for the Jews, to the satraps, the governors, and the officials of the 127 provinces from India to Cush. The edict was written for each province in its own script, for each ethnic group in its own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language.

¹⁰ Mordecai wrote in King Ahasuerus's name and sealed the edicts with the royal signet ring. He sent the documents by mounted couriers, who rode fast horses bred in the royal stables.

¹¹The king's edict gave the Jews in each and every city the right to assemble and defend themselves, to destroy, kill, and annihilate every ethnic and provincial army hostile to them, including women and children, and to take their possessions as spoils of war. ¹²This would take place on a single day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month Adar.

¹³ A copy of the text, issued as law throughout every province, was distributed to all the peoples so the Jews could be ready to avenge themselves against their enemies on that day. ¹⁴ The couriers rode out in haste on their royal horses at the king's urgent command. The law was also issued in the fortress of Susa.

¹⁵ Mordecai went from the king's presence clothed in royal blue and white, with a great gold crown and a purple robe of fine linen. The city of Susa shouted and rejoiced, ¹⁶ and the Jews celebrated with gladness, joy, and honor. ¹⁷ In every province and every city where the king's command and edict reached, gladness and joy took place among the Jews. There was a celebration and a holiday. ⁸ And many of the ethnic groups of the land professed themselves to be Jews because fear of the Jews had overcome them.

Victories of the Jews

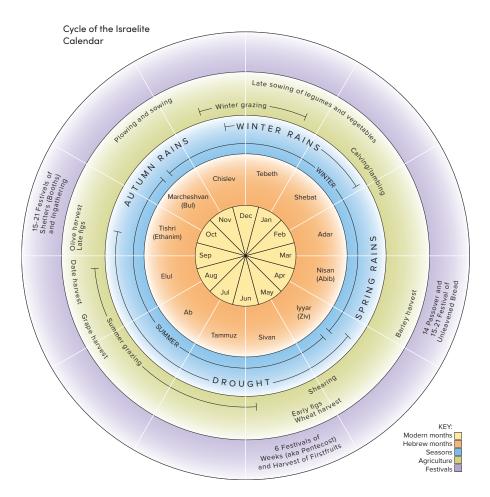
The king's command and law went into effect on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month Adar. On the day when the Jews' enemies had hoped to overpower them, just the opposite happened. The Jews overpowered those who hated them. In each of King Ahasuerus's provinces the Jews assembled in their cities to attack those who intended to harm them. Not a single person could withstand them; fear of them fell on every nationality.

³ All the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and the royal civil administrators^o aided the Jews because they feared Mordecai. ⁴ For Mordecai exercised great power in the palace, and his fame spread throughout the provinces as he became more and more powerful.

⁵The Jews put all their enemies to the sword, killing and destroying them. They did what they pleased to those who hated them. ⁶In the fortress of Susa the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men, ⁷including Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, ⁸Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, ⁹Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha. ¹⁰They killed these ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. However, they did not seize[£] any plunder.

¹¹ On that day the number of people killed in the fortress of Susa was reported to the king. ¹² The king said to Queen Esther, "In the fortress of Susa the Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men, including

*8:16 Lit had light *8:17 Lit good day *9:2 Lit cities to send out a hand against the seekers of their evil *9:3 Lit and those who do the king's work; Est 3:9 *9:10 Lit not put their hands on, also in vv. 15,16



Haman's ten sons. What have they done in the rest of the royal provinces? Whatever you ask will be given to you. Whatever you seek will also be done."

¹³ Esther answered, "If it pleases the king, may the Jews who are in Susa also have tomorrow to carry out today's law, and may the bodies of Haman's ten sons be hung on the gallows." ¹⁴ The king gave the orders for this to be done, so a law was announced in Susa, and they hung the bodies of Haman's ten sons. ¹⁵ The Jews in Susa assembled again on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed three hundred men in Susa, but they did not seize any plunder.

¹⁶ The rest of the Jews in the royal provinces assembled, defended themselves, and gained relief from their enemies. They killed seventy-five thousand of those who hated them, but they did not seize any plunder. ¹⁷ They fought on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar and rested on the fourteenth, and it became a day of feasting and rejoicing.

^a9:16 Some LXX mss read 10,107; other LXX mss read 15,000

¹⁸ But the Jews in Susa had assembled on the thirteenth and the fourteenth days of the month. They rested on the fifteenth day of the month, and it became a day of feasting and rejoicing. ¹⁹ This explains why the rural Jews who live in villages observe the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a time of rejoicing and feasting. It is a holiday when they send gifts to one another.

²⁰ Mordecai recorded these events and sent letters to all the Jews in all of King Ahasuerus's provinces, both near and far. ²¹He ordered them to celebrate the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar every year ²²because during those days the Jews gained relief from their enemies. That was the month when their sorrow was turned into rejoicing and their mourning into a holiday. They were to be days of feasting, rejoicing, and of sending gifts to one another and to the poor.

²³ So the Jews agreed to continue the practice they had begun, as Mordecai had written them to do. 24 For Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them. He cast the pur — that is, the lot — to crush and destroy them. 25 But when the matter was brought before the king, he commanded by letter that the evil plan Haman had devised against the Jews return on his own head and that he should be hanged with his sons on the gallows. ²⁶ For this reason these days are called Purim, from the word pur. Because of all the instructions in this letter as well as what they had witnessed and what had happened to them. 27 the Jews bound themselves, their descendants, and all who joined with them to a commitment that they would not fail to celebrate these two days each and every year according to the written instructions and according to the time appointed. 28 These days are remembered and celebrated by every generation, family, province, and city, so that these days of Purim will not lose their significance in Jewish life^a and their memory will not fade from their descendants.

²⁹ Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote this second letter with full authority to confirm the letter about Purim. ³⁰ He sent letters with assurances of peace and security ⁸ to all the Jews who were in the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, ³¹ in order to confirm these days of Purim at their proper time just as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had established them and just as they had committed themselves and their descendants to the practices of fasting and lamentation. ³² So Esther's command confirmed these customs of Purim, which were then written into the record.

Mordecai's Fame

King Ahasuerus imposed a tax throughout the land even to the farthest shores. ^c ² All of his powerful and magnificent accomplishments and the detailed account of Mordecai's great rank with which the king had honored him, have they not been written in the Book of the Historical Events of the Kings of Media and Persia? ³ Mordecai the Jew was second only to King Ahasuerus. He was famous among the Jews and highly esteemed by many of his relatives. He continued to pursue prosperity for his people and to speak for the well-being of all his descendants.

^9:28 LXX reads will be celebrated into all times *9:30 Or of peace and faithfulness *10:1 Or imposed forced labor on the land and the coasts of the sea

