

F. MURRAY ABRAHAM

The Bible
ESTHER



INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER

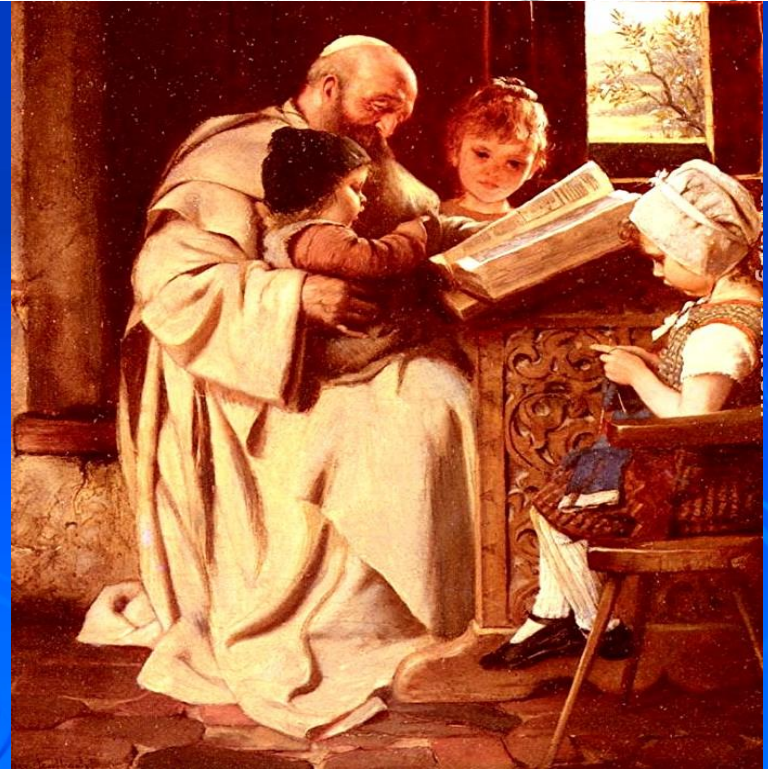
- Esther chronologically follows Daniel
- New Persian Empire = Media-Persian Empire
- 550 B.C. to 330 B.C., begins with King Cyrus
- Persia is the 2nd of the 4 prophesied gentile world empires
- Silver arms and chest = Bear
beast = Ram with 2 horns



- Esther occurred in a 25 yr. window 485 BC – 460 BC
- Early Rabbis and Christians not sure whether Esther belonged in the Bible
- Many controversies surrounding Esther as with Daniel
- Jewish folklore? A historical novel? An encouragement to Diaspora Jews? A way to explain the origination of Purim?

ESTHER TOLD AS A STORY

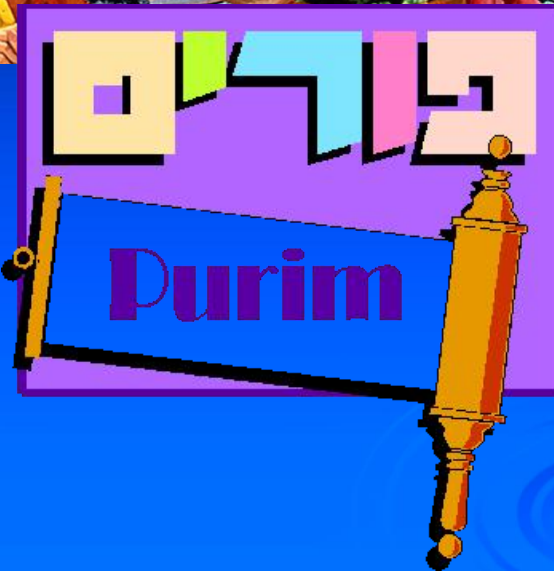
- Bible consists of many kinds of literature
- Lots of twists and turns
- No prophetic warnings, no instructions from God
- Bible made for ordinary people to understand
- But in our era, too often people find the Bible too boring, too hard or too much information
- Esther is fast moving, funny, dramatic, and ENJOYABLE!!





WHAT IS ESTHER A STORY OF ??

- Jews say it represents their struggle anywhere they live
- They do fine for awhile, then distrust, envy, and hate erupts into violence against them
- Many Christians say it is a love story, or a sort of Beauty and the Beast theme
- Rabbis say it is simply the story of Purim
- Since Purim is nowhere else in the Bible, the Book of Esther is needed to account for it's origination



The Dead Sea Scrolls

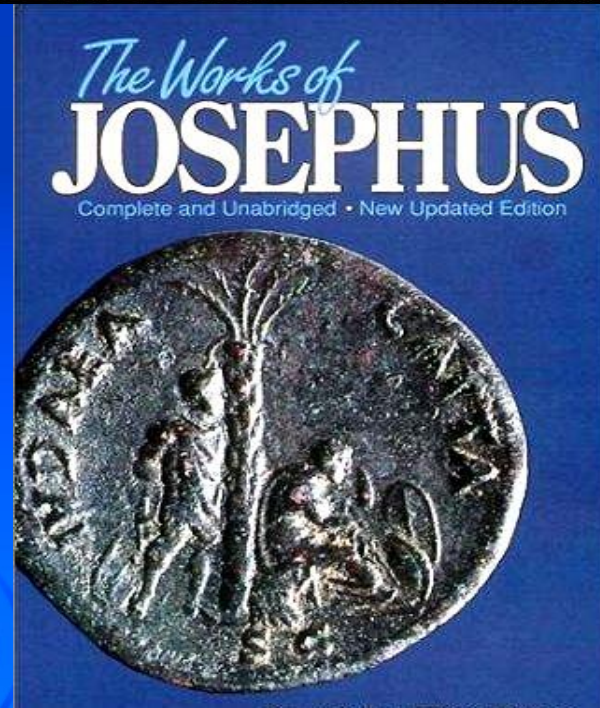
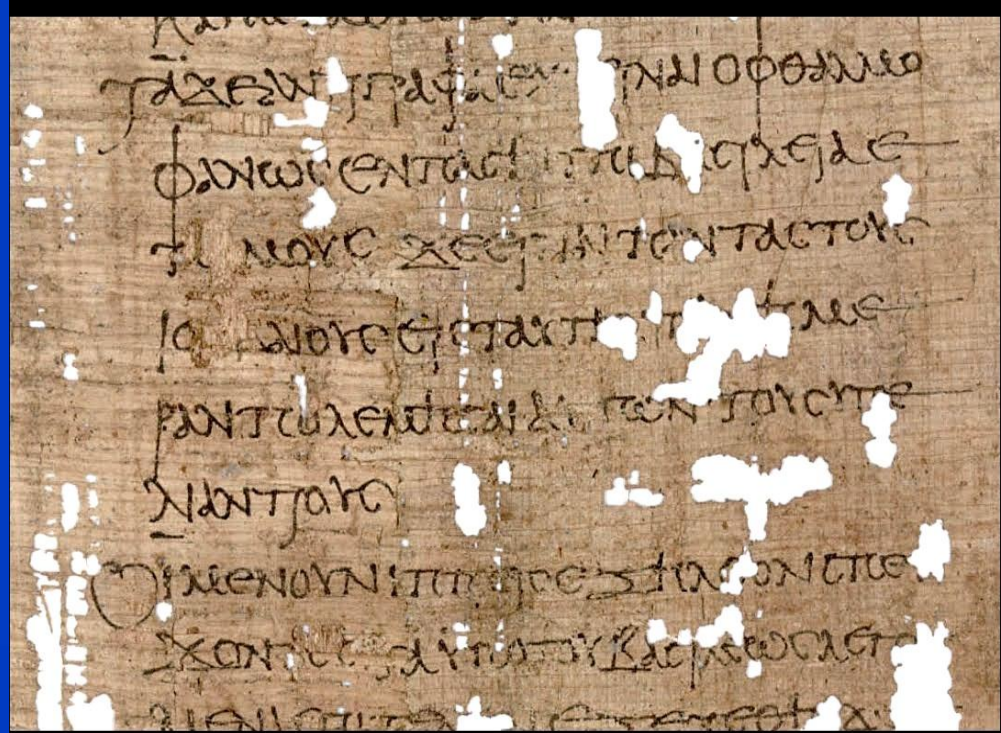
WORDS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD



- Many versions of Esther have survived, but no one “best” version
- Earliest Hebrew version is 11th Cent. A.D.
- Dead Sea Scrolls are 1000 years older (100 B.C.), but the Book of Esther is NOT in the Dead Sea Scrolls
- Esther’s appearance in the Septuagint, created in 250 B.C. proves that it is a very old book

THE GREEK ESTHER

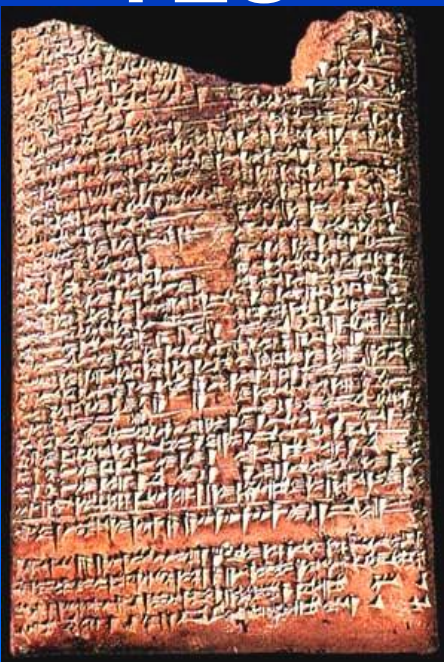
- Early Christian Fathers removed Esther from the Bible, later some put it back in
- Many Greek versions appeared
- Hebrew version 167 vss.
- Greek version 274 vss. !!
- Josephus wrote a version
- Rabbis have their own version (Megillat Esther)
- Greek version adds "God" and prayers to the book that weren't there before





YES

NO!!



SUBJECTIVE PROBABILITY

- Opinions without evidence
- A number is too big, circumstance too absurd, no archeological evidence
- They say addition of spirituality to Bible disqualifies it as reliable
- Yet, all Assyrian & Babylonian documents also included credit/blame on events to their gods
- If archeological evidence was required for historic events we'd have almost no history!!

9 MOST COMMON REASONS SCHOLARS REJECT ESTHER

- 1) Chapter 1 says feast is for 180 days. Too long they say.
- 2) Chapter 2 says virgin girls were anointed with oils, perfumes, and spices for a total of 1 year. Too long they say.
- 3) Chapter 1 says 127 provinces (*medinah*), but Herodotus say 20 *satraps*. They say Herodotus is more authoritative.
- 4) Chapter 1 says Persian King's decree is irrevocable. They say this isn't believable.

9 COMMON REASONS CONT'D

- 5) In Chapter 3 Persians plan a year in advance to kill the Jews. Too unlikely they say.
- 6) Chapter 3 says Haman was an Agagite. They say too coincidental.
- 7) No record of Xerxes wife as Vashti, nor of Esther. Rather records say she is Amestris.
- 8) No record of the name "Mordecai".
- 9) No archeological data confirms the Esther story.

SO, HOW DO WE VIEW ESTHER?

- Characters are real, event happened
- Writer would have needed a number of sources for info
- Viewpoint matters
- Several theological themes are present in Esther
- **GOD'S INVISIBLE PROVIDENCE**
- A series of impossible coincidences show God is guiding history, unseen by Jews or Persians



MORE THEMES IN ESTHER

- God raised up ordinary people for extraordinary purposes
- Saying “Yes” when all we want to do is say “NO” is the key to being used of God
- A pattern of irrational hatred for the Jewish people
- Often it harms a nation to evict or oppress their Jews, but they do it any way
- Why does the USA and Europe think the Jews have TOO MUCH LAND?? It is not rational.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE ACCEPTABLE TO SAVE GOD'S PEOPLE



- Haman hated but one Jew, then decided he should hate them all
- Mordecai defied Haman
- Esther defied her king and his government
- God didn't miraculously save the Jews
- They had to FIGHT and many died in the battle!!
- Prayer first, then ACTION
- Pride destroys Haman