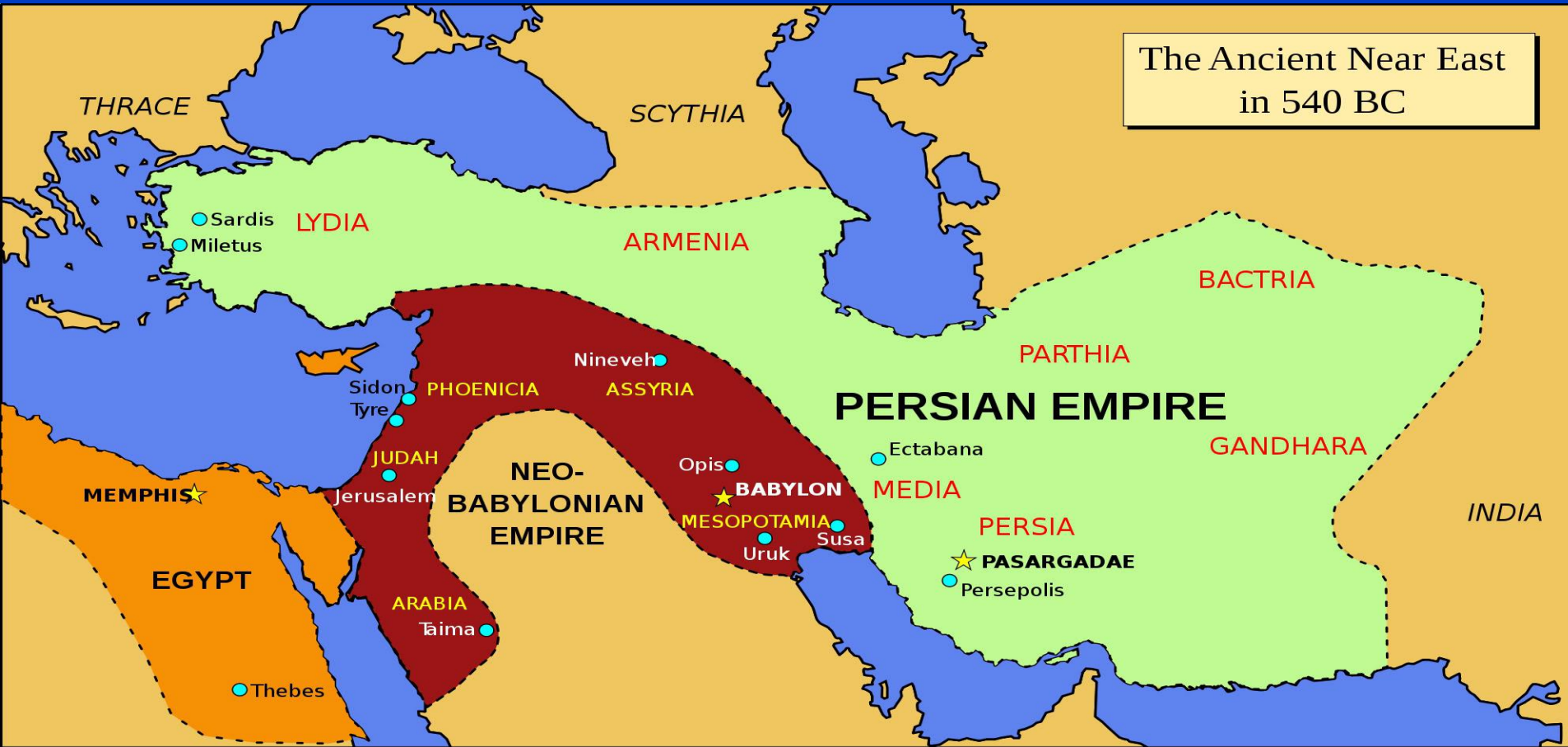


The Ancient Near East
in 540 BC



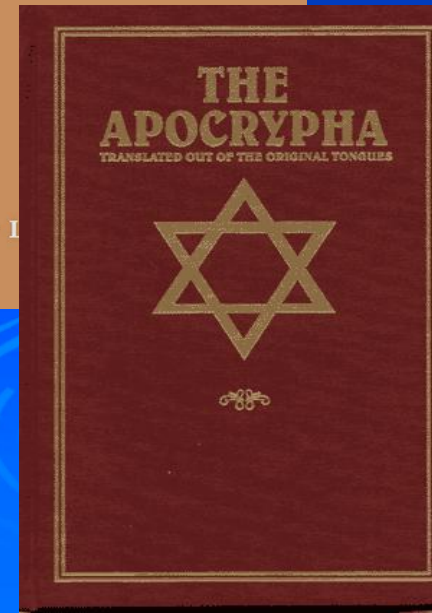
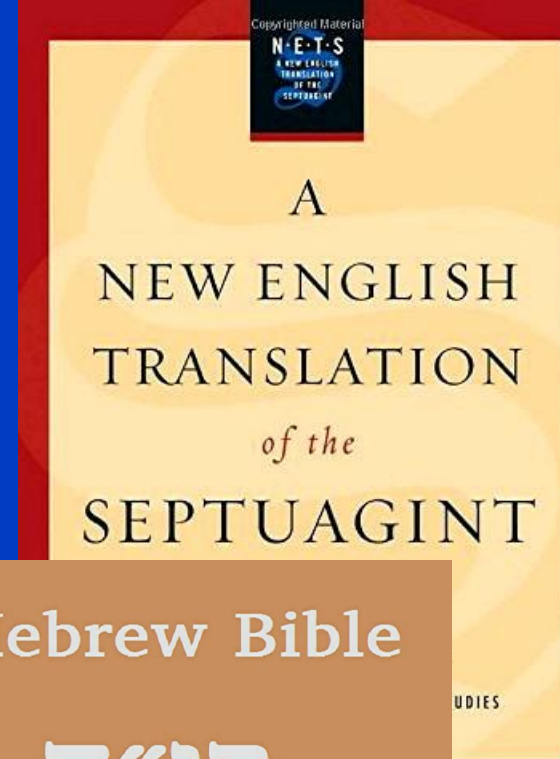
- Persian royal court mostly concerned with personal wealth, image, status, and egos
- New Persian Empire only about 50 years old
- Empires changed hands when a new ethnic government took control, usually by conquest



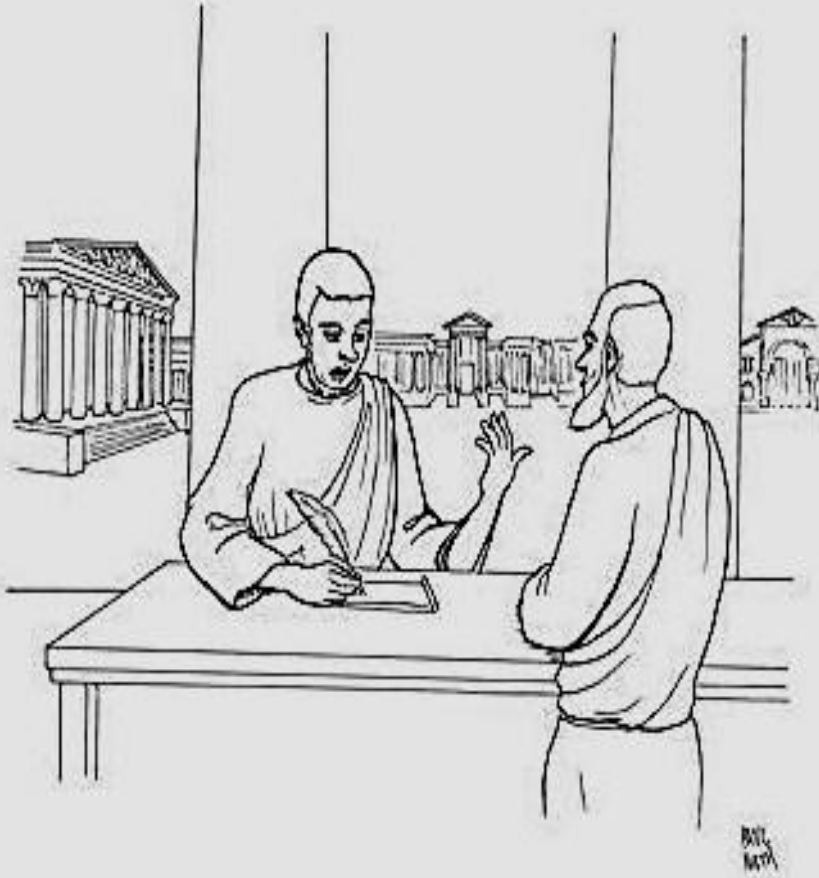
- Coalition of Media and Persia conquered Babylon
- King Cyrus the 1st king of Persia was less interested in more territory, more interested in consolidating his power
- The king in the Esther story was the 4th king of the Media-Persian Empire, in some ways not unlike King Solomon
- Inherited a stable empire, great wealth, and spent his time living in luxury, wanting more land and enjoyed spending his money

ESTHER CHAPTER 1

- Greek Septuagint version of Esther is 50% longer than the Hebrew version
- Rabbis debated if Esther should be considered Holy Scripture
- Greek additions seemed to satisfy them
- Early churches either accepted the additions entirely, or some discarded them entirely, or some made them part of the Apocrypha
- The Jerusalem Bible put the additions in italics



CALENDAR ISSUES



“There I go—still writing ‘B.C.’ on my checks.”

- 3rd year of king’s reign
- Around 484 B.C.
- Tricky to align reigns of kings with modern calendar
- NO universal calendar in the Bible era
- Year a king was crowned became “Year 1”
- So calendar reverted to year 1 each time a new king came to power
- Result: Different year with each kingdom



- Susa = Shushan
- 4 "capital" cities: Susa, Ecbatana, Babylon, Persepolis
- King Ahasueras (Persian) = Xerxes (Greek) = Achashverosh (Hebrew)
- Esther takes place in Susa
- Xerxes is the son of Darius I
- This is a different Darius than the one in Daniel, a Mede

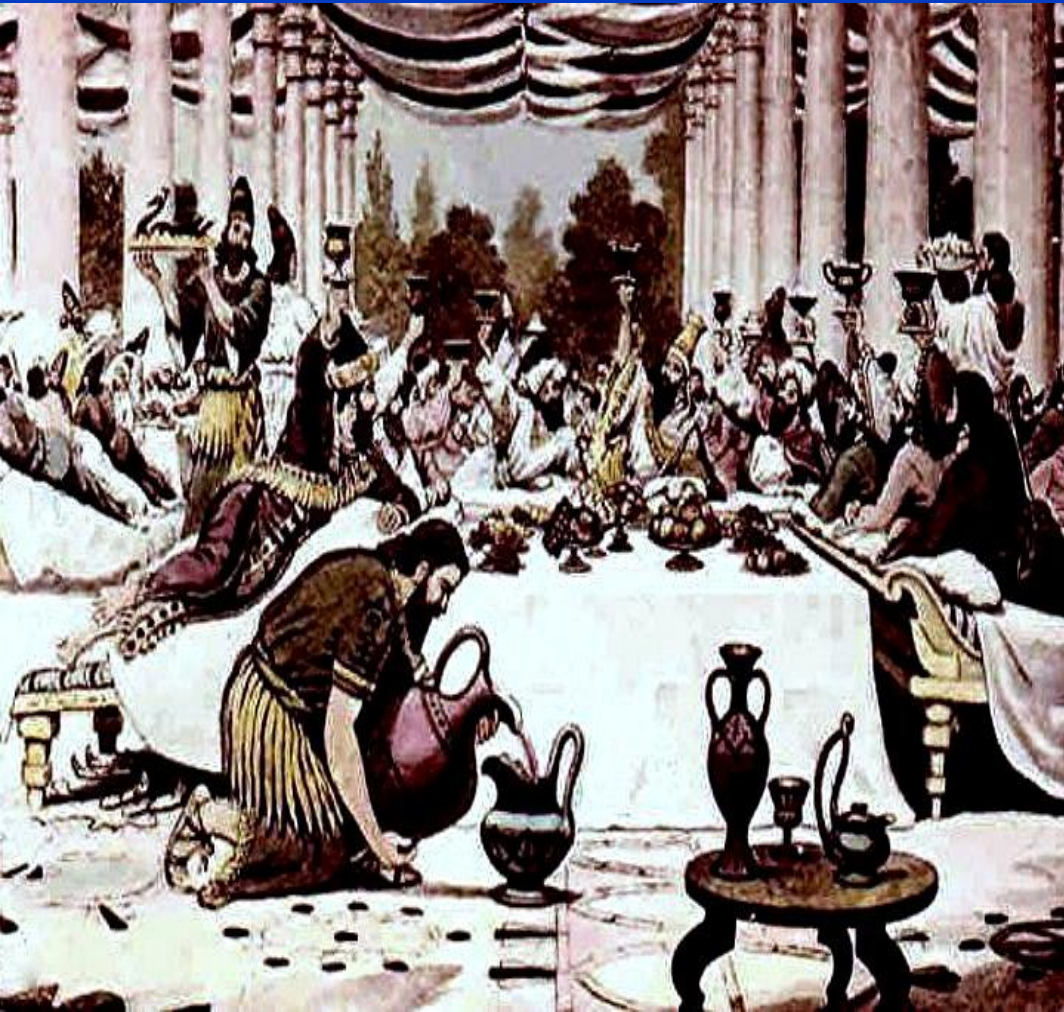


The Persian Royal Mail

How did one control the world's largest empire without modern communications? With the help of a system which was part express delivery, part communications, and part intelligence network.

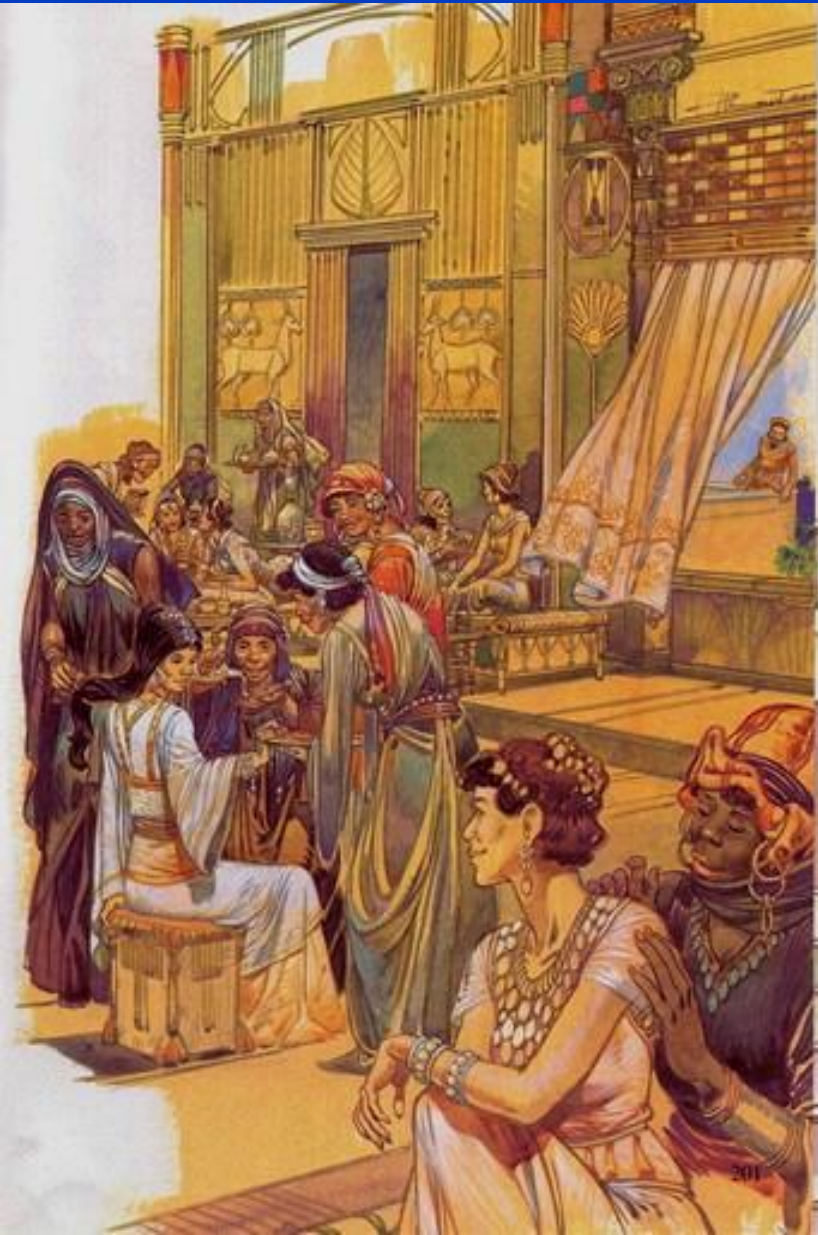
- Cyrus > Cambyses > Darius I > Xerxes
- 127 districts (*medinah*)
- Empire extended from modern day Pakistan to modern day North Sudan
- The districts were smaller kingdoms and city-states conquered by Persia

THE 180 DAY FESTIVAL



- NOT 180 day banquet
- Xerxes wanted to show off his wealth and resources
- Purpose: To gain support for the attempted conquest of Greece (Macedonia)
- ***Dat*** = rule, law, tradition, custom
- Guests were allowed to drink as little or as much as they wanted

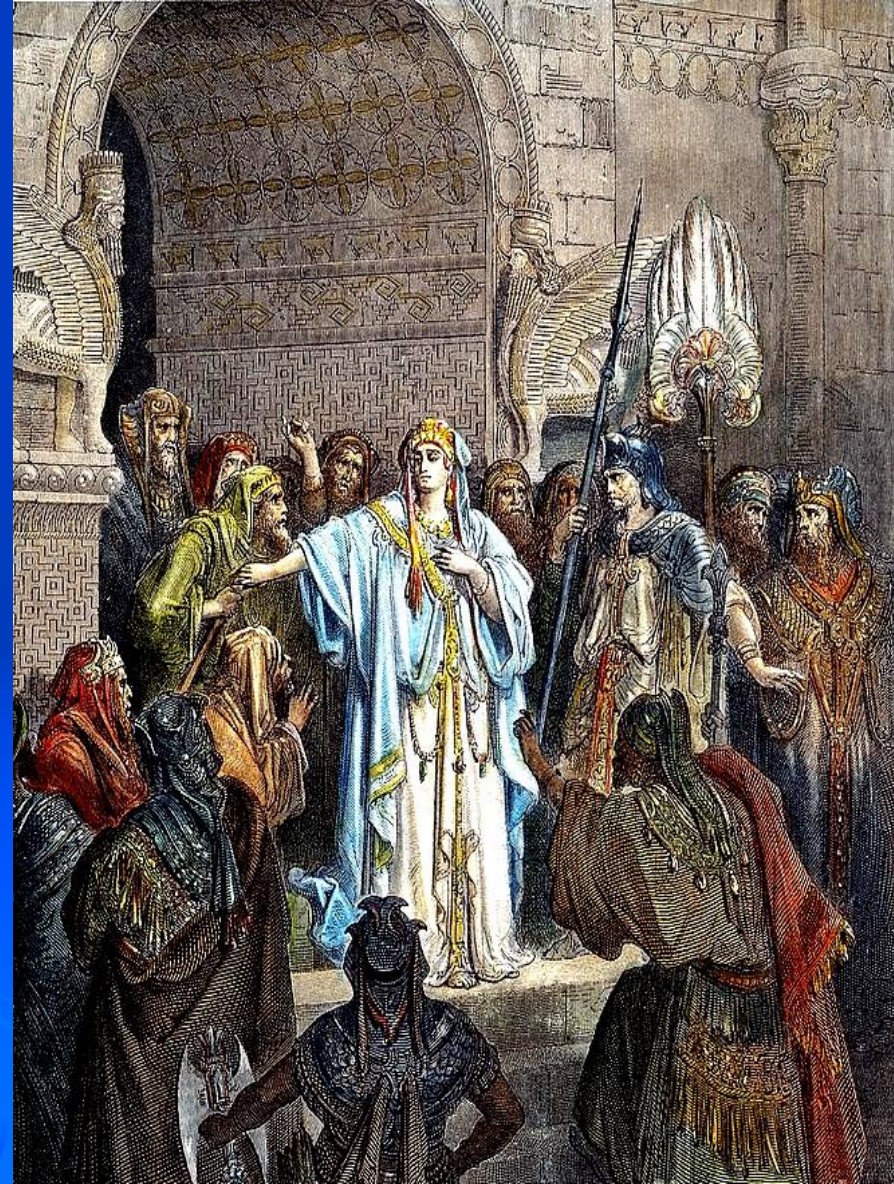
QUEEN VASHTI'S BANQUET



- Wives and female escorts of the government officials went to Queen Vashti's banquet
- Persian men stayed quite separate from the women, especially when partying and drinking
- Partly concerned the modesty of women
- On the 7th day of the 7-day banquet of the king, he orders Vashti to come to him immediately
- The king and all his male guests were drunk

QUEEN VASHTI REFUSES !

- 7 royal courtiers go to Vashti with kings command
- No reason is given
- Rabbis say she was to appear naked (not true)
- Some say she was arrogant and had her own prerogative to come or not
- I think this was an issue of modesty and honor
- King calls for 7 “wise men” (*chakam*) for council on the problem
- Wise men who knew the “Times”
- Times = *eth* means time as we think of it today
- Matt. 2:1, 2

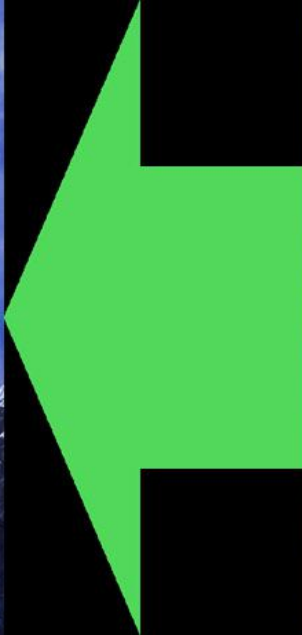


7

A SERIES OF SEVENS



- 7 day banquet
- 7th day of the 7 day banquet'
- 7 advisors to tell Vashti to come
- 7 wise men consulted when Vashti refuses to come
- The 7's tell us that God is acting to bring about His will
- The King was in a pickle!
- Kings don't EVER make mistakes, and being drunk doesn't change that
- **Memucan** finds the solution by broadening the issue to affect every husband and wife in the empire



- Is there REALLY grave danger to every marriage in the empire because of what Vashti did ???
- It is an absurd notion
- From here forward the prefix of “Queen” is removed when speaking of Vashti
- Law approved by the king is irrevocable.....except it can be made meaningless by another law

MULTI-CULTURAL PERSIA



- Decree to banish Vashti included a law that said wives **MUST** honor their husbands
- Sent in all languages of the 127 districts
- Diversity welcome, along with diverse languages
- Greeks thought Persians stupid for language tolerance
- The new law was that if a man married a woman of another ethnicity, it was the man's culture and language that should be spoken in the home