

Outline Studies
in
Biblical Chronology

**A Continuous Chronology
from
Creation to the Cross**

**Chapter 8
The Place of Esther
in the
Post-Exilic Period**

Overturing Common Chronological Misconceptions



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Date: 2nd Edition March 2024

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Ch. 8: The Place of Esther in the Post–Exilic Period Overturning Common Chronological Misconceptions

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The Place of Esther in the Post-Exilic Period

The place of Esther in the history of the Jewish exile is, seemingly, quite well fixed according to modern scholarship. It is (essentially) uniformly accepted as occurring during the reign of the Persian monarch Xerxes (485-464 BCN), although a few argue for some related events to have occurred even later, during the reign of Xerxes' successor, Artaxerxes Longimanus (464-423 BCN). However, when some explicitly stated chronological markers appearing in the Book of Esther are properly correlated and scrutinized, it becomes evident that the accepted chronological placing of the book needs a wholesale reassessment. These notes are directed toward providing a closer examination, as determined entirely by immovable Biblical sign-posts, of the "true" place of Esther in the post-exilic period of Jewish history.

Primary Chronological Markers in the Book of Esther

❖ Statement of the identity of Mordecai:

"Now there was a Jew in Susa the capital whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite, who had been taken into exile from Jerusalem with the captives who had been exiled with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had exiled." Esther 2:5-6

Key Questions:

- When was Mordecai taken, along with the Jewish king Jeconiah, into exile in Babylon?
- What was the longevity of man at this time in history?

❖ Statement of the identity of Ahasuerus:

"Now it took place in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces." Esther 1:1

Key Questions:

- Which of the several Persian monarchs is in view?
- Which monarch ruled the Medo-Persian Empire at its zenith, accomplishing a consolidation of the empire extending from India to Ethiopia?

Related chronological markers regarding Ahasuerus appearing in the Book of Esther:

- "in the 3rd year of his [Ahasuerus'] reign" (Esther 1:3)
- "So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus to his royal palace in the 10th month which is the month Tebeth, in the 7th year of his reign" (Esther 2:16)
- "In the 1st month, which is the month Nisan, in the 12th year of King Ahasuerus, Pur, that is the lot, was cast before Haman ... And letters were sent ... to all the king's provinces to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the Jews," (Esther 3:7, 13)

Pertinent Chronological Markers in Scripture

❖ The Babylonian Exile: Invasions of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar

Invasion #1. Nominal Date: 605 BCN

"In the 3rd year of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besiege it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand," Dan. 1:1-2

"And the word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the 4th year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the 1st year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon)," Jer. 25:1

Key Chronological Markers:

- 4th year of Jehoiakim [accession year + 3rd year]
- 1st year of Nebuchadnezzar

Comment: The synchronization of these two dates, the latter regarding Nebuchadnezzar and the rise of the Babylonian empire, and being the earliest event identifiable in non-Biblical writing, allows a linkage of the whole of the previous millennia of Biblical history from creation onward with “so called” secular history to follow.

Invasion #2. Nominal Date: 597 BCN

[605 – 8 = 597]

“And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, ... So the king of Babylon took him captive in the 8th year of his reign. ... So he led Jehoiachin away into exile to Babylon;” II Kings 24:12, 15

Conclusion: Mordecai was taken into exile in 597 BCN. However, we have no data from which to discern his age at the time of his exile. He may have been taken as a very young child along with his parents, or he may have been taken as a young adult.

Invasion #3. Nominal Date: 586 BCN

[605 – 19 = 586]

“Now on the 10th day of the 5th month, which is the 19th year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard, who was in the service of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. And he burned the house of the LORD, the king’s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; even every large house he burned with fire.” Jer. 52:12-13

See also II Kings 25:8-12.
Note: The difference in date (10th day vs. 7th day) has reference likely to different events during Nebuzaradan’s siege.

❖ The Decree of Cyrus the Persian – the end of the Babylonian Captivity:

“ ‘Then it will be when 70 years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,’ declares the LORD, ‘for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; ...’ ” Jer. 25:12

“For this says the LORD, ‘When 70 years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.’ ” Jer. 29:10

“Now in the 1st year of Cyrus king of Persia – in order to fulfill the word of LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah – the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!’ ” ” II Chron. 36:22-23

Nominal Date of Cyrus’ Decree: 536 BCN

[605 – 70 = 536 (inclusive reckoning)]

Comment: The pivotal significance of this decree of Cyrus in the ordering of events in the history of Israel is given special weight in Holy Scripture. This is clear from the fact that it is both a prophetically decreed event (Isa. 44:28-45:13) and a twice-listed event in the historical record (II Chron. 36:12-13 & Ezra 1:1-4).

Comment: The Babylonian empire fell under the dominion of the Medes and the Persians in 538 BCN. The climactic event of the fall of Babylon occurred when Darius the Mede entered the walled city of Babylon on the night of infamy when Belshazzar saw the handwriting on the wall, informing him that his kingdom was divided and given over to “the Medes and Persians”. (cf., Dan. 5, esp. vs. 25-28)

Relevant Correlations of Events and People

- ❖ Mordecai, along with Nehemiah, is among the first group of exiles to return, under Zerubbabel's leadership, to Jerusalem in 536 BCN following the issuing of Cyrus' decree.

"Now these are the people of the province who ... returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his city. These came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, MIspar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah." Ezra 2:1-2

"Then I found the book of the genealogy of these who came up first in which I found the following record: These are the people of the province who ... returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his city, who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah (Seraiah), Raamiah (Reelaiah), Mordecai, Bilshan, MIspereth (Milspar), Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah." Neh. 7:6-7

Conclusion:

- Mordecai and Nehemiah were contemporaries, albeit Mordecai was quite surely somewhat senior to Nehemiah.
 - Mordecai was now 61 years older than when he was exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon. That is, he was at least 61 years old in 536 BCN.
- ❖ Nehemiah served as governor of Judah from the 20th to the 32nd year of King Artaxerxes reign in Persia.

"Moreover, from the day that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the 20th to the 32nd year of King Artaxerxes, for 12 years, neither I nor my kinsmen have eaten the governor's food allowance." Neh. 5:14

"But during this time I was not in Jerusalem, for in the 32nd year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had gone to the king. After some time, however, I asked leave from the king, and I came to Jerusalem and learned about the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, ..." Neh. 13:6-7

Point of Note: The Artaxerxes in view here cannot be the Persian monarch Xerxes (485-464 BCN) because Xerxes only reigned for 21 years – not for a period of 32 years or greater. On the other hand, Darius Hystaspes did reign for more than 32 years (actually reigning for a total of 36 years). It is true that another Persian monarch, Artaxerxes Longimanus, who succeeded Xerxes, also reigned for a period in excess of 32 years (actually for 41 years according to nominal, secular chronology), but the 32nd year of Artaxerxes Longimanus' reign occurred 104 years following Cyrus' decree. Hence, Nehemiah would be 104 years older in the 32nd year of Artaxerxes Longimanus than he was when he travelled to Jerusalem with the first group of exiles in 536 BCN.

Conclusion:

- The Artaxerxes under whom Nehemiah served must have been none other than the Persian monarch Darius Hystaspes (alt., Darius the Great).
- ❖ The text in Ezra 6 seems to corroborate the fact that the Artaxerxes in view in both Ezra and Nehemiah was none other than Darius Hystaspes.

"Then King Darius issued a decree, ... And the elders of the Jews were building and succeeding through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished building according to the command of the God of Israel and the decree of Cyrus, Darius, [even] Artaxerxes king of Persia." Ezra 6:1, 14

"And this temple was completed on the 3rd day of the month Adar; it was the 6th year of the reign of King Darius." Ezra 6:15

Conclusion:

- Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries, serving during the reign of King Artaxerxes, the king identified explicitly as Darius – who must be none other than Darius Hystaspes.

Textual Comment:

Most translations present the last phrase of Ezra 6:14 as:
“... the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.”

However, the Hebraic (conjunctive) term “vav” can be translated either as “and” or “even”. The verse immediately following, Ezra 6:15, stands in strong support of the use of the meaning “even” – emphasizing the fact that it was none other than Darius Hystaspes who is in view.

Darius Hystaspes simply issued a decree that reiterated what Cyrus had ordered originally; namely, that the returning exiles were afforded full right to rebuild the city of Jerusalem ... and, of course, the temple also.

Summary Comment:

Since all reasonable analyses of the accounts in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah (convincingly) suggest that it was Darius Hystaspes who was the Persian monarch that reiterated the right of the Jews to rebuild the temple, per the authority granted originally by Cyrus, and not Artaxerxes Longimanus some decades later as virtually all modern scholarship attests, it is powerfully evident that Cyrus’ decree is the pivotal event that serves as the initiating chronological marker upon which all prophetic dating relating to the post-exilic period must be anchored.

Further Comment:

Since Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries of Mordecai, we conclude that the Book of Esther properly belongs to the earlier decades of the post-exilic period, the same period in view in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Nominal (Ptolemaic) Chronology of the Persian Era

	Darius the Mede (Co-Rex with Cyrus)	538 BCN
	Cyrus (sole King)	536 BCN
	Cambyses Pseudo-Smerdis (7 mos.)	529 BCN
36 yrs. {	Darius Hystaspes (Darius I)	521 BCN
21 yrs. {	Xerxes Artabanus (7 mos.)	485 BCN
41 yrs. {	Artaxerxes Longimanus Xerxes II (2 mos.) Sogdianus (7 mos.)	464 BCN 423 BCN
	Darius Nothus	

Darius II, Nothus	423 BCN
Artaxerxes II, Mnemon	404 BCN
Artaxerxes III, Ochus	358 BCN
Arogus (alt., Arses)	337 BCN
Darius III (Codomannus)	335 BCN
Alexander the Great	331 BCN

Note:

The last five Persian monarchs are not listed by Josephus in his accounting of the succession of Persian kings.

Fact: Inconsistent deletions exist in the list of monarchs compiled by other chronologists also.

Author's Perspective

The interpretation that distinguishes Ahasuerus (often identified as Xerxes) and Artaxerxes (often assumed to be Artaxerxes Longimanus) as distinctly different individuals is misguided.

The thesis advanced in these notes is that both the Ahasuerus in the book of Esther and the Artaxerxes in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah refer to only one individual – Darius Hystaspes, the Persian monarch who reigned for 36 years.

The following notes are offered in support of this thesis which stands particularly in critical opposition to the predominant nominal view of the chronological underpinning of the book of Esther.

Note: Layouts of the post-exilic period with this understanding of the identity of Darius Hystaspes as the dominant Persian monarch in view in the post-exilic books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther is elaborated in the Appendix.

"Now it took place in the days of Ahasueras, the Ahasueras who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces,"
Esther 1:1

"Now King Ahasueras laid a tribute on the land and on the coastlands of the sea."
Esther 10:1

Darius Hystaspes conquered India in 506 BCN, and Herodotus writes that he "established 20 governments of the kind the Persians call Satrapies, assigning to each its governor, and fixing the tribute which is to be paid to him by several nations."

Herodotus, Thucydides and Plato all write that Darius Hystaspes subdued and reigned over the islands of the Aegean Sea. And later, Diodorus Siculus writes that these islands were all lost to Persian rule by the 12th year of Xerxes' reign (*i.e.*, by 474 BCN).

These facts argue strongly in favor of identifying the Ahasueras of Esther as being none other than Darius Hystaspes, and they seem to contradict any attempt to "late-date" Ahasueras as Xerxes, and especially as Artaxerxes Longimanus.

Note also that the text of Esther 1:1 (see above), where the insertion of the phrase "the Ahasueras who ..." appears, seems to strongly suggest that the term "Ahasueras" is simply an identifying title – one that applies to the present ruling monarch, whoever he may be ... such as Premier or President.

A comment regarding Neh. 2:6.

The phrase "Then the king [Artaxerxes] said to me, *the queen sitting beside him*", is a quite curious statement. It seems to imply a connection that links Nehemiah to the queen in some distinctive way that is relevant to his request of the king.

Ques. Could this queen be none other than Esther?

If so, then the decree referenced in Neh. 2:8 could not possibly be late-dated as one issued in the 20th year of Artaxerxes Longimanus (*i.e.*, in 445 BCN). Furthermore, combining this possible linkage with more definitive information presented in other text boxes under this note, the author of the decree in Neh. 2:8 would (almost certainly and most logically) be none other than Darius Hystaspes. Such an identification stands in complete opposition to any "late-date decree" view that is at the core of the nominal, adapted chronology of Daniel's prophecy – the chronology that forms the prevailing view in most commentaries and study Bibles published in recent centuries and extant today.

"The Greek Antiquities are full of poetic fictions,"
(Sir Isaac Newton)

"Newton ... has certainly destroyed the possibility of regarding the chronology of the Greeks as a stable foundation for any system of chronology that can be used as a standard by which to judge, and correct, the testimony of the OT."
(M. Anstey)

"The chronology of the Persian period is amply authenticated down to the end of the reign of Darius Hystaspes, but beyond this the monumental evidence of the cuneiform inscriptions does not go."

"... the testimony of Ptolemy's Canon is contradicted at various points by many competent witnesses."
(M. Anstey)

Corrected Chronology of the Exilic and Post-Exilic Periods: Pt.2*

The OT Period of Gentile Dominion: the Captivity until Christ

The 70 Years of Jeremiah *and* The 483 Years of Daniel

<u>Year</u> <u>An. Hom.</u>	<u>Year BCN</u> <u>Ptolemaic Date</u>	<u>Events & Comments</u>	<u>Year BCC</u> <u>Before Christ Corrected</u>
3520	605	1 st invasion of Jerusalem by Babylon Daniel taken captive Beginning of the 70 year exile in Babylon	523 BCC
•	•		
3528	597	2 nd invasion of Jerusalem by Babylon 8 th year of Nebuchadnezzar Ezekiel & Mordecai (and Jehoiachin) taken captive	515 BCC
•	•		
3539	586	3 rd invasion of Jerusalem by Babylon 19 th year of Nebuchadnezzar	504 BCC
•	•		
•	•		
•	•		
3587	538	Babylon conquered by Medo-Persia Darius the Mede begins to reign in Babylon	
•	•		
		Cyrus – sole monarch of Medo-Persian Empire Cyrus issues decree – exiles released	
3589	536	70 th year of captivity 1 st year of Daniel's 70 weeks	454 BCC
•	•		
	519	Queen Vashti deposed	
	515	Queen Esther selected	
	???	Haman promoted	
	510	Haman plots DKA Day for the Jews**	
	509	Mordecai promoted	
•	•		
3637	488	End of the first 7 weeks (49 years) of Daniel's 70 weeks End of Malachi's prophecy	406 BCC
•	•		
	473	12 th yr. of Xerxes	
•	•		
•	•		
•	•		
4038	87	Jesus born (later in 5 BCN)	5 BCC
•	•		
4042	83		1 BCC
4043	82		1 AD
•	•		
		End of the first 69 weeks (483 years) of Daniel An. Hom.: 4071 – 3589 = 483 years (inclusive reckoning) BCN: 536 – 54 = 483 years (inclusive reckoning)	
4071	54	Messiah "cut off" (Passover 30 AD)	29 AD 30 AD

* Pt. 1 appears in Ch. 6.

Note: Years BCC = Years BCN – 83 when Years BCN > 331

**DKA Day – Destroy, Kill & Annihilate Day (*Esther. 3:13*)

Appendix

A Correlation of Events Noted in the Post-Exilic Books during the Reign of Darius

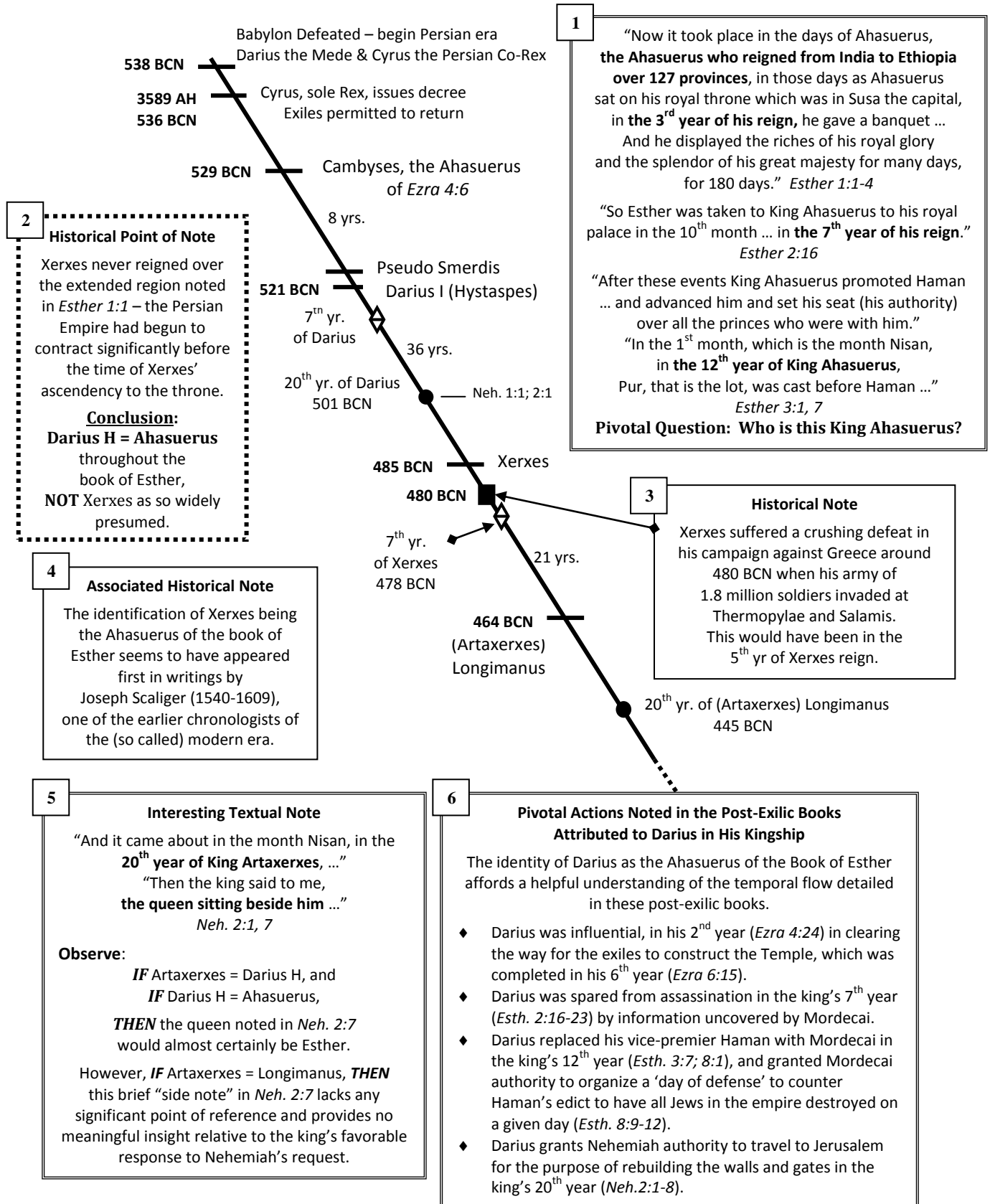
Note: This following chronology considers the Artaxerxes of *Ezra* 7 and the *Book of Nehemiah* and the Ahasuerus of the *Book of Esther* to be Darius

Comment: The following chart is adapted from Anstey (p. 250)

Year of Darius	mo. / day	Ezra	Nehemiah	Esther	Haggai	Zechariah	Event or Occasion
2 nd	6 th / 1 st				Hag. 1:1		Exiles called to Build Temple
2 nd	6 th / 24 th				Hag. 1:15		Zerubbabel responds
2 nd	7 th / 21 st				Hag. 2:1		Temple glory compared
2 nd	8 th / ?					Zech. 1:1	Zechariah issues call for repentance
2 nd	9 th / 24 th				Hag. 2:10		Foundation of Temple laid
2 nd	11 th / 24 th					Zech. 1:7	End of 70-year indignation
3 rd	? / ?			Esth. 1:1-5			King's 'glory feast'; Vashti deposed
4 th	9 th / 4 th					Zech. 7:1	End of 70 year period of fasts
6 th	? / ?			Esth. 2:8-?			Esther enters "queen contest"
6 th	12 th / 3 rd	Ezra 6:15					Temple completed
? 6 th or 7 th ?	1 st / 14 th	Ezra 6:19					1 st Passover celebrated
7 th	1 st / 1 st	Ezra 7:9					Ezra departs for Jerusalem
7 th	1 st / 9 th	Ezra 8:15-21					Ezra pauses for a 3-day fast at Ahava
7 th	1 st / 12 th	Ezra 8:31					Ezra resumes journey
7 th	5 th / 1 st	Ezra 7:9					Ezra arrives at Jerusalem
7 th	5 th / 4 th	Ezra 8:33					Temple vessels weighed
??	9 th / 20 th	Ezra 10:9					Assembly day
7 th	10 th / ?			Esth. 2:16-18			Esther's marriage
12 th	1 st / ?			Esth. 3:7			Haman casts lots for massacre day
? 12 th ?	? 1 st / 13 th ?			Esth. 3:12-15			Haman publicizes his edict for massacre
? 12 th ?	? 1 st / 15 th ?			Esth. 5:1-8			Esther comes before the King
? 12 th ?	? 1 st / 16 th ?			Esth. 5:8			Esther's banquet
? 12 th ?	? 3 rd / 23 rd ?			Esth. 8:9-14			Mordecai's fast
? 12 th ?	? 12 th / 13 th ?			Esth. 9:1-12			"Death day" arrives
? 12 th ?	? 12 th / 14 th ?			Esth. 9:15-27			14 th Adar, 1 st Purim
? 12 th ?	? 12 th / 15 th ?			Esth. 9:18-27			15 th Adar, 2 nd Purim
20 th	9 th / ?		Neh. 1:1				Hanani's report
20 th	1 st / ?		Neh. 2:1				Nehemiah sent to Jerusalem
? 20 th ?	6 th / 25 th		Neh. 6:15				Wall finished
? 20 th ?	7 th / 1 st		Neh. 8:2				Ezra reads the Law
? 20 th ?	7 th / 15 th		Neh. 8: 14				1 st of Feast of Booths
? 20 th ?	7 th / 21 st		Neh. 8:18				7 th of Feast of Booths
? 20 th ?	7 th / 22 nd		Neh. 8:18				Solemn Assembly
? 20 th ?	7 th / 24 th		Neh. 9:1-2				Heathen wives put away
32 nd			Neh. 5:14 Neh. 13:6				Nehemiah. returns to Babylon
? 34 th ?	?? / ??		Neh. 13:6-7				Nehemiah to Jerusalem; implements reforms

End of OT era — End of first 7 weeks of years (49 years) of Daniel → "seal up vision and prophet" (*Dan. 9:24*)

The Received Persian Chronology and the Place of Esther in the Post-Exilic Period



Revised Chronological Layout Relevant to the Post-Exilic Books

"Thus says Yahweh, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, 'I, Yahweh, am the maker of all things, stretching out the heavens by Myself, and spreading out the earth all alone,' ... **'It is I who says of Cyrus,**
 "He is My shepherd! And He will perform all My desire."
 And he declares of **Jerusalem, "She will be built,"** and of the **temple, "Your foundation will be laid.'** ... I have aroused him in righteousness, and I will make all his ways smooth;
he will build My city, and will let My exiles go free, without any payment of reward,' says Yahweh."
Isa. 44:24-28 & 45:13

"Seventy weeks (sevens) have been decreed for your people and your holy city, ...
 So you are to know and discern **from the issuing of a decree** to restore and rebuild Jerusalem **until Messiah the Prince** there will be **7 sevens and 62 sevens**, it will be built again, with plaza (or streets) and moat, even in times of distress.
 Then **after the 62 sevens the Messiah will be cut off ...**" *Dan. 9:24- 26a*

