

WOMEN IN THE
BIBLE
RUTH &
ESTHER

2020
5
SESSION

WOMEN IN THE
BIBLE
RUTH &
ESTHER

PART 2

The book of
Esther



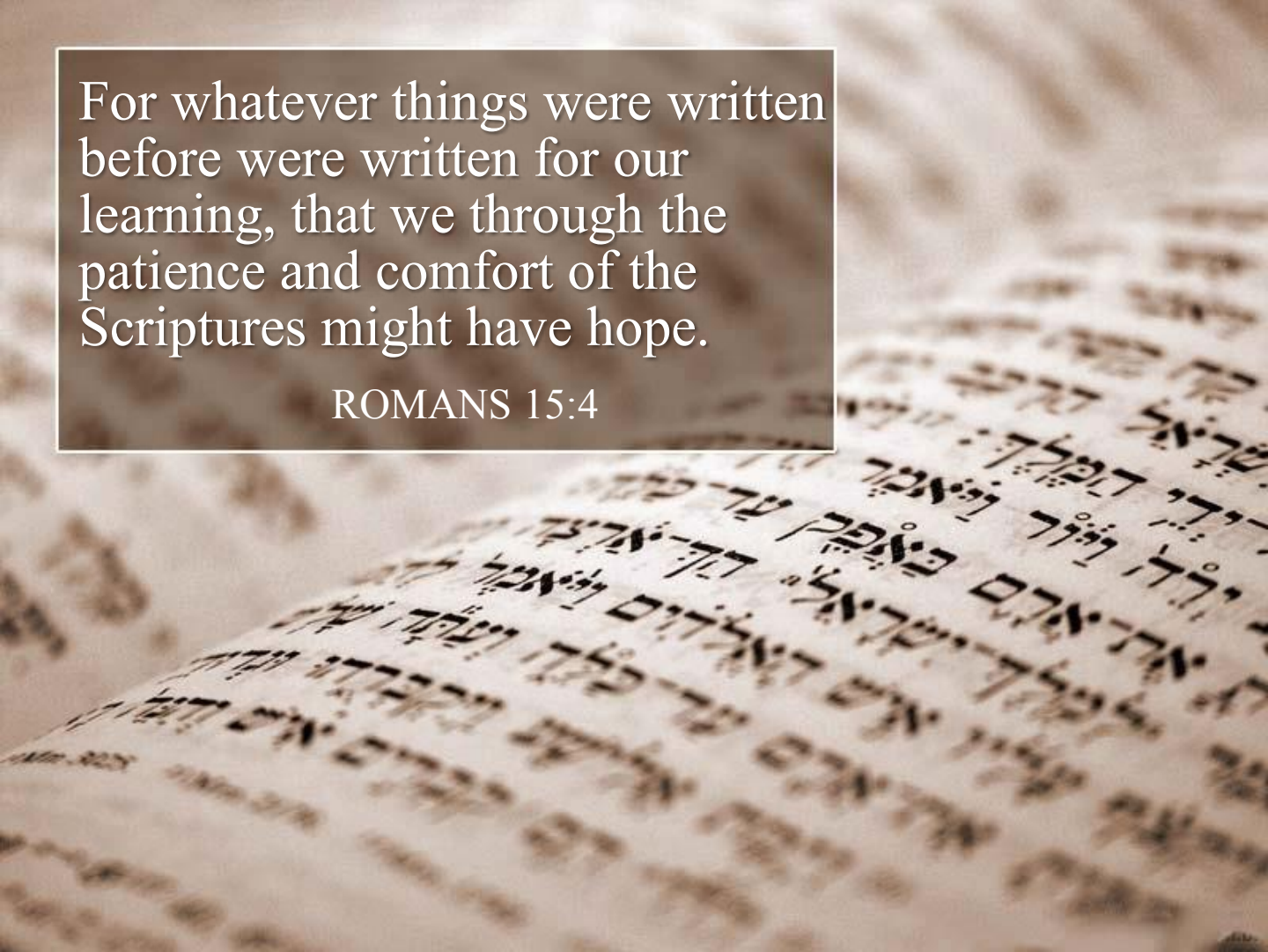
2 TIMOTHY 3:16

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

17 that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped

For whatever things were written
before were written for our
learning, that we through the
patience and comfort of the
Scriptures might have hope.

ROMANS 15:4



Both are historical narratives



Both are central to a major feast



Both are about people



Ruth and Esther both...

- were foreigners living in a land other than their own.
- found favor in the eyes of those who saw them.
- were taken into the homes of relatives.
- had relatives who were a blessing to others.



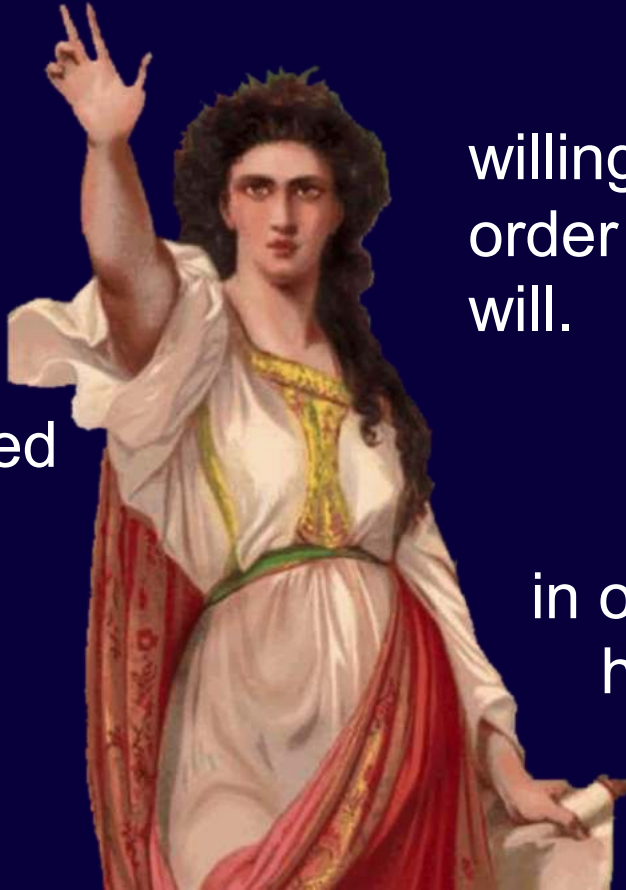
Both were women of integrity

Both were
submissive

willing to die in
order to do God's
will.

Each dressed
in special
garments

in order to make
her request.



Both brought joy to Humankind

God redeemed Ruth to
perpetuate the line of the
Redeemer, the Lord
Jesus Christ.

God saved Esther to
protect the nation
and the People
through whom
the Saviour
would be born.



Ruth & Esther

לֹא קָטַף וְשָׂרִים אִין לָהּ מִדִּנְעִישָׁה לֹא חָטְאָה בְּיוֹם שִׁדְמֶיהָ
 בָּהּ: אִם-חֻסָּהּ הָיָה נִכְסָה עֲלֶיהָ טִירַת כֶּסֶף וְאַסְדִּילָתָהּ הָיָה
 אֶד עֲלֶיהָ יוֹם אֶרֶץ: אִין הִיא וְשָׂרִי כְּמִנְדָּוֹת אִין הָיוּ
 עֵינֶיהָ כְּמִנְדָּאָת שְׁלוֹם: כִּדְם הָיָה שְׁלֵמָה כְּבִלָּה דְמֹן נָתַן
 לְהִכְרֵם לְנִשְׁרִים אִישׁ יָבֵא בְּפִרְיוֹ אֶלֶף כֶּסֶף: כִּדְמוֹ שְׁלִי
 אִין הָאֶלֶף לָהּ שְׁלֵמָה וּמִאֲמִים לְנִשְׁרִים אִתְּדִרְיוֹ: הָיוּסְבַת
 אִים תְּבָרִים מְקֻשְׁבִּים לְקִלְלָהּ הַשְׁמִיעֵנִי: בְּרַח הוֹדִי וְדַמְדִּי
 לְעֵבִי אִין לְשִׁפְרָה הָאֵלִים עַל חַיִּי בְּשָׁמִים:



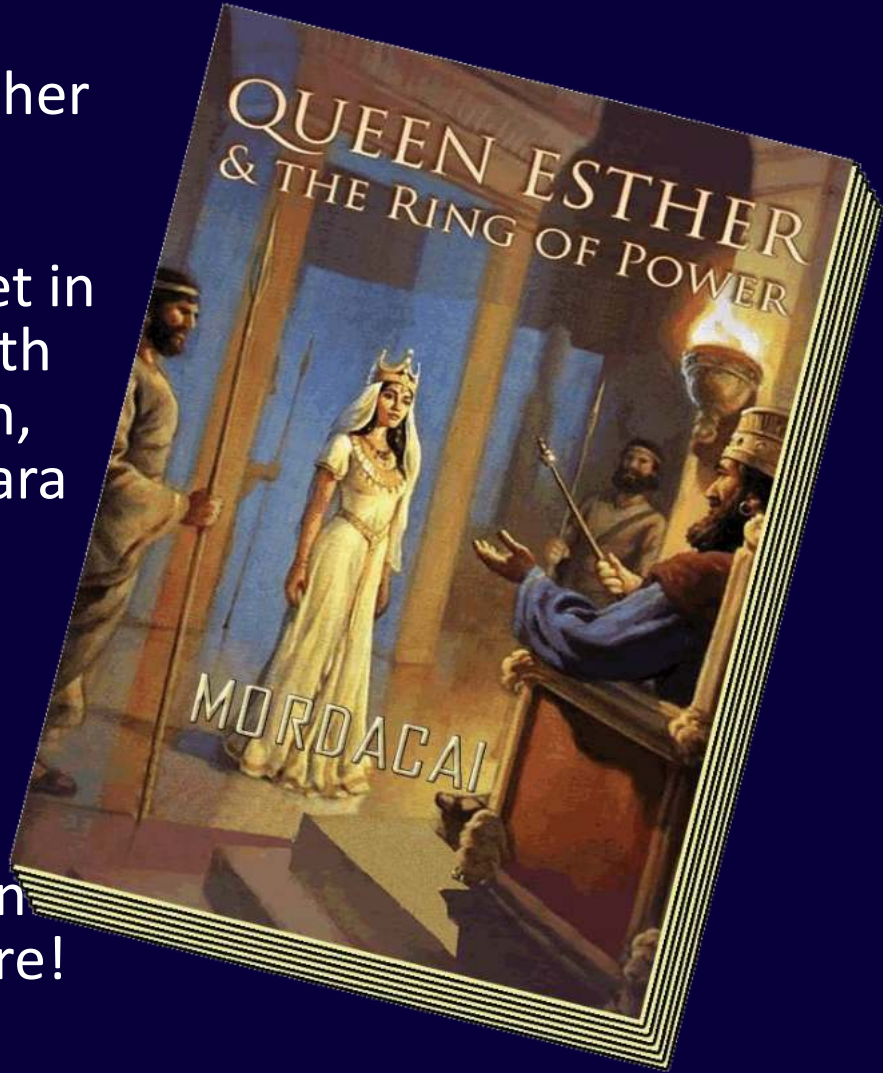
The book of

Esther

Introduction

- One of only two Bible books named for women, many including Luther and Calvin have questioned why this book is in the Bible.
- After all:
 - It doesn't mention God
 - It doesn't predict the Messiah
 - It doesn't mention faith or worship
 - It doesn't mention anything "religious"
 - There's no uplifting "moral of the story"

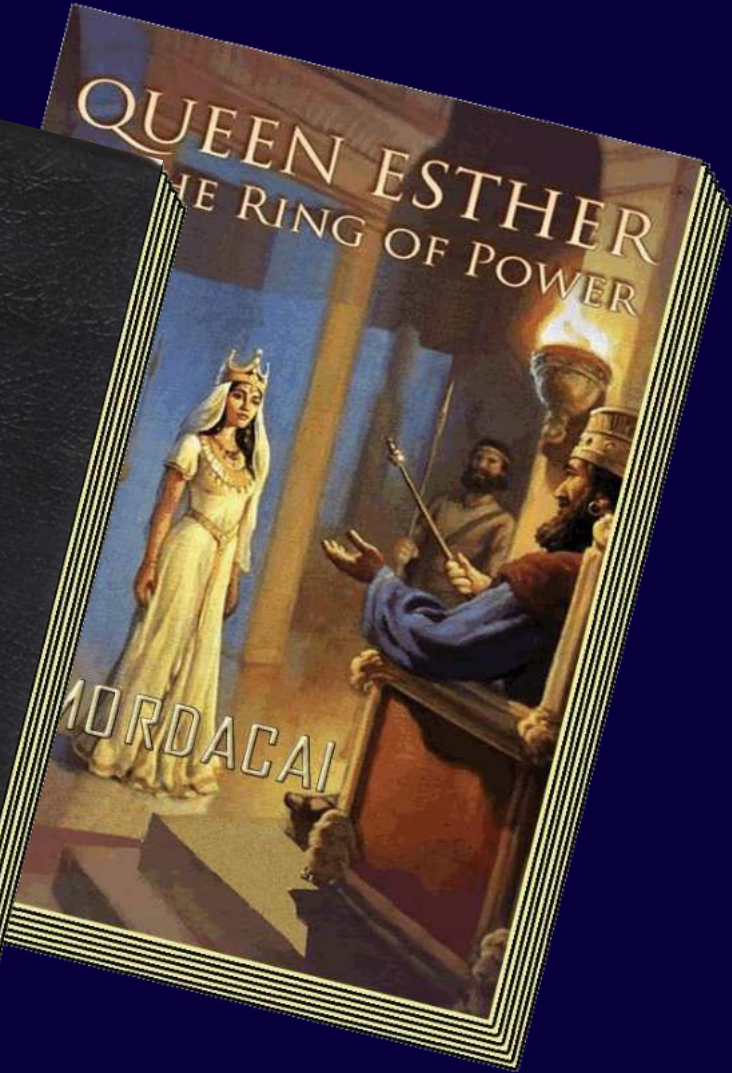
- Is the book of Esther just a love story wrapped inside a palace intrigue set in ancient times, with murder thrown in, suitable for Barbara Cartland fans.
- That's true as far as it goes, but as with everything in this book of something hidden there's much more!



HOLY
BIBLE

QUEEN ESTHER
THE RING OF POWER

MORDACAI



DARIUS
THE MEDE;
CYRUS THE
GREAT

TRANS-EUPHRATES

CYRUS
CAMBYSES

DARIUS II

ESTHER

XERXES

ARTAXERXES

Hey, they
can't do
that!

*projectus
interruptus*

foreign
wives

Death
to Jews!

Haggai Zechariah

ZERUBBABEL

Ezra 1-6

537 BC

ESTHER

Esther 1-12

483-471

EZRA

Ezra 7-10

458 BC

NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah 1-13

444 BC

BUILT IN
52 DAYS

Esther takes place during the reign of King Xerxes I, the fourth King of Kings of the Achaemenid (Persian) Empire, who ruled from 486 to 465 BC.



He is called by his title Ahasuerus in English bibles, taken from the Hebrew אֶחָשְׁוֶרֶשׁ ('Achashverowsh).

Cast of Characters

ESTHER



A young Jewish virgin

A poor orphan girl raised by her cousin Mordecai, willing to risk her own life to save her people. A Jewess of the Tribe of Benjamin.

XERXES



**King of Persia
486-465 BC**

Mighty king ruling the Persian Empire that included almost all of the known world (darn those nasty Greeks).

HAMAN



Grand Vizier (P.M.)

An Amalekite who is the ruthless and powerful grand vizier of Persia; seeks more wealth and power and loathes Mordecai with ancient hatred.

MORDECAI



**Local Jewish leader
and public servant**

Mid-range but influential public servant in Persia; cousin and legal guardian of Esther. A Jew of the Tribe of Benjamin.

What we know

- **Fact.** Babylon fell to the Medo-Persians in 539 BC.
- **Fact.** Ahasuerus Xerxes ruled Persia from 485-465 BC.
- **Fact.** Historian Herodotus (486-425 BC) wrote Xerxes planned to invade Europe (*The History*, Bk VII, sec. 8).
- **Fact.** The Persians were hard drinkers and often drank to excess (*Herodotus* 1:133; *Xenophon 'Cyrop.'* 8:8, § 11).
- **Fact.** Xerxes was a showoff. (*Herodotus*, many references).
- **Fact.** Invasion of 480 BC was defeated in 479 BC.
- **Fact.** Shushan was a major palace of Persian kings.
- **Fact.** Shushan's ruins were found in 1836; excavation begun by French archaeologists in 1851 continue.
- **Fact.** Jews celebrate the events in Esther each year.

Purim (Casting Lots)



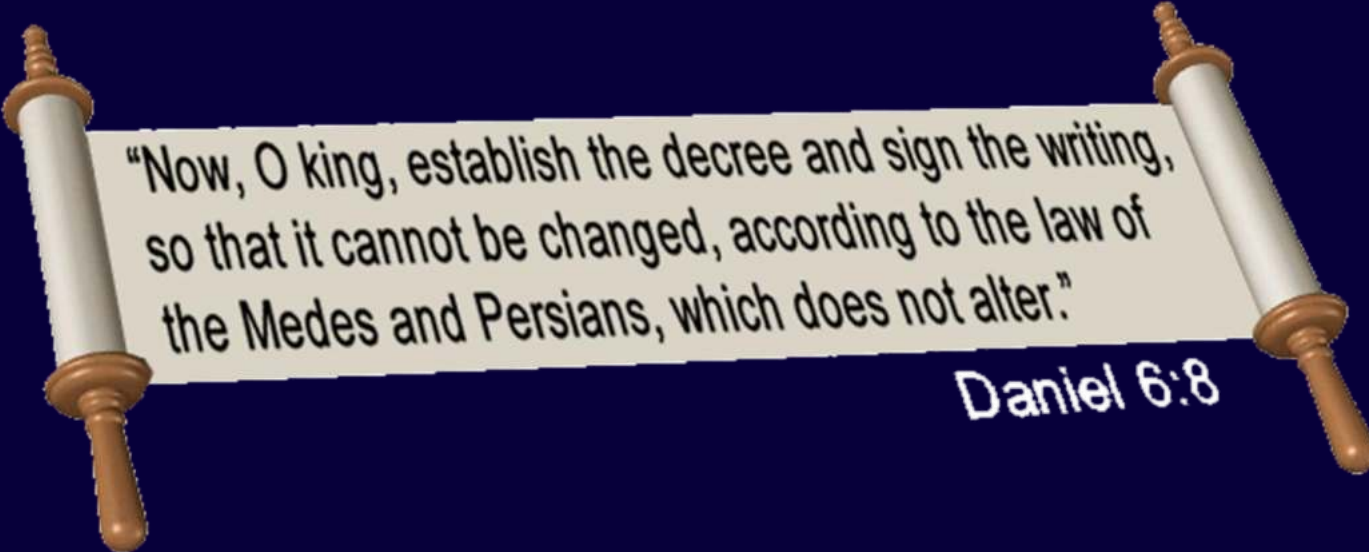
- Westerners throwing dice call on “Lady Luck.”
- The Israelites believed that God controls the outcome when lots *or* dice are cast:

The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD. (Pro. 16:33)

Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat. (Leviticus 16:8)

And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles. (Acts 1:26)

The Law of the Medes and the Persians

A scroll with a light beige background and a dark blue border, unrolled to reveal text. The scroll is held by two wooden rollers with a turned design. The text is written in a black, serif font.

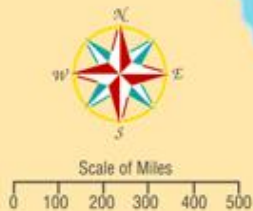
"Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing,
so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of
the Medes and Persians, which does not alter."

Daniel 6:8

A Royal Decree once issued cannot be altered,
even by the ruler who issued it.



The Medo-Persian Empire



The literary structure



The book of Esther



The book of

Esther

Chapter 1

Esther Chapter 1



Following three years of preparation topped off with a six-month long planning conference, King Ahasuerus gave a week-long feast for all his generals and officials.



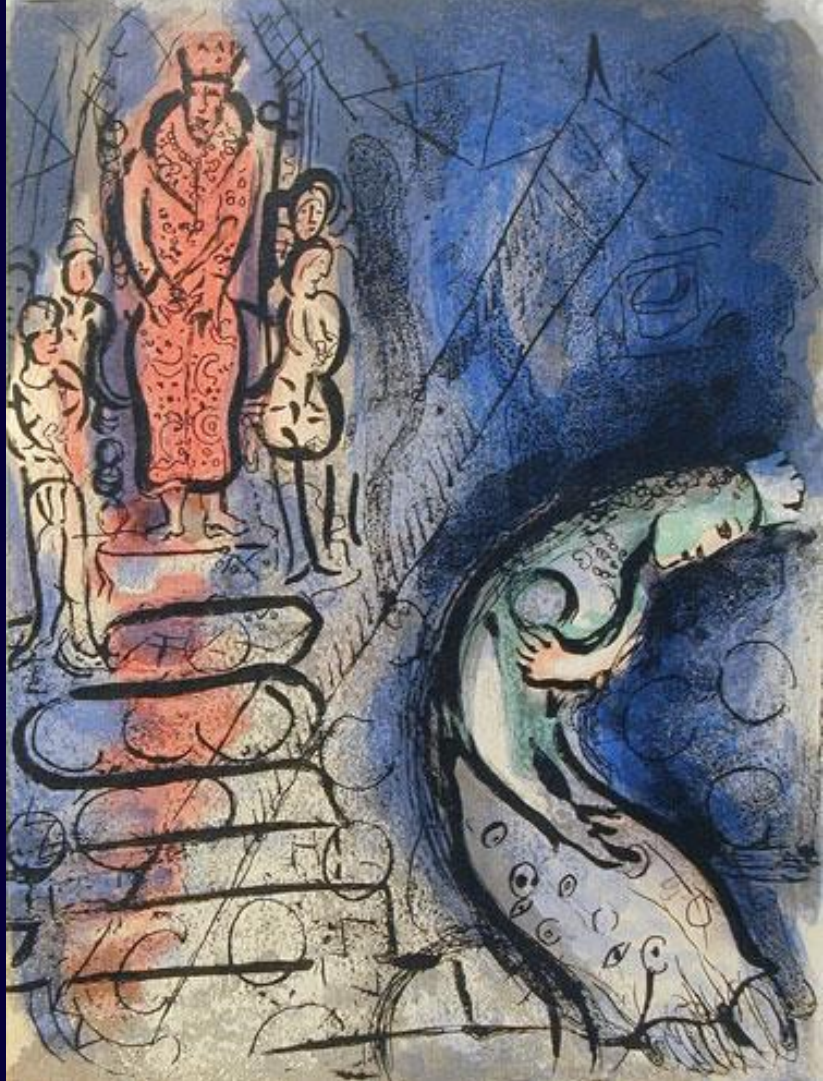
He ordered Queen Vashti to show off her beauty, but she refused, so his counselors advised him to replace her.



"Queen Vashti deposed" by Ernest Normand, 1890.

“... let it be recorded
in the laws of the
Persians and the
Medes, so that it will
not be altered, that
Vashti shall come no
more before King
Ahasuerus...”

“Ahaseurus Banishes Vashti –
Assérus Chasse Vashti”
Marc Chagall, 1960.



"When the king's decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout all his empire (for it is great), all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small."

²¹ And the reply pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan.

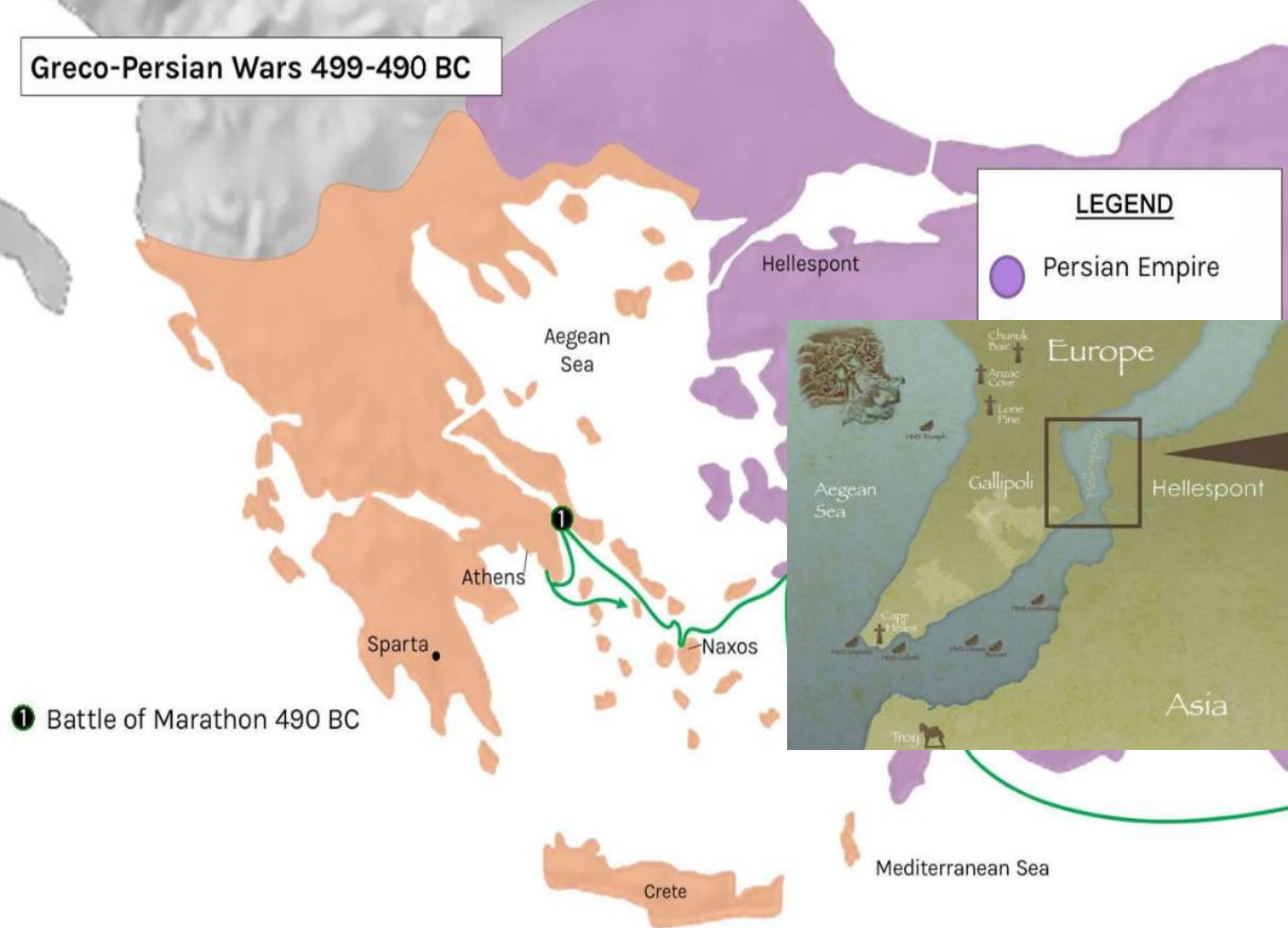
²² Then he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province in its own script, and to every people in their own language, that each man should be master in his own house, and speak in the language of his own people.



Interlude between Chaps. 1 and 2

- Remember Michael's prophecy about the fourth king, Xerxes, becoming strong through his riches and stirring up all against the kingdom of Greece?
- Xerxes wanted to avenge his daddy's Darius's defeat at Marathon in 490 BC, and invested three years in preparation. He raised an army of over 1,000,000 and a huge navy. He built a boat bridge over the Hellesport.
- The six months "party" involved detailed planning with all of his generals and senior officers.
- With that done, they let off steam for one week.
- This was all about conquering the rest of the known world!

Greco-Persian Wars 499-490 BC



Greek troops rushing forward at the Battle of Marathon, Georges Rochegrosse, 1859.





"Pheidippides giving word of victory" by Luc-Olivier Merson, 1869.



A Witness Account

- Herodotus claims that Ahasuerus planned to invade all of Europe and “reduce the whole earth into one empire”: “My intent is to throw a bridge over the Hellespont and march an army through Europe against Greece, that thereby I may obtain vengeance from the Athenians for the wrongs committed by them against the Persians and against my father.”

[Herodotus, *The History*, Book VII, section 8.]

- The king’s uncle, Artabanus, strongly opposed the plan, but the king persisted and convinced the princes and officers to follow him.
- it took the first four years of Xerxes’ reign to get ready for the invasion he launched in 481 B.C. No doubt the 180 days involved planning sessions in which all the provinces’ leaders were being prepared for the war effort.

CAMPAIGN PREPARATION 483-480BC

EUROPE

LEGEND

- Persian Empire
- Greek States

ASIA

Hellespont

Athos

Aegean
Sea

• Sardis

Athens

• Miletus

Naxos

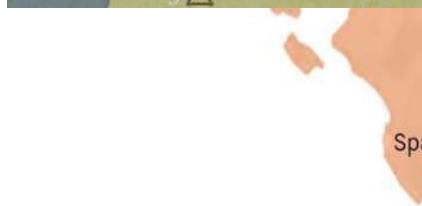
Sparta

Mediterranean Sea

Crete

A Hellespont Pontoon Bridge

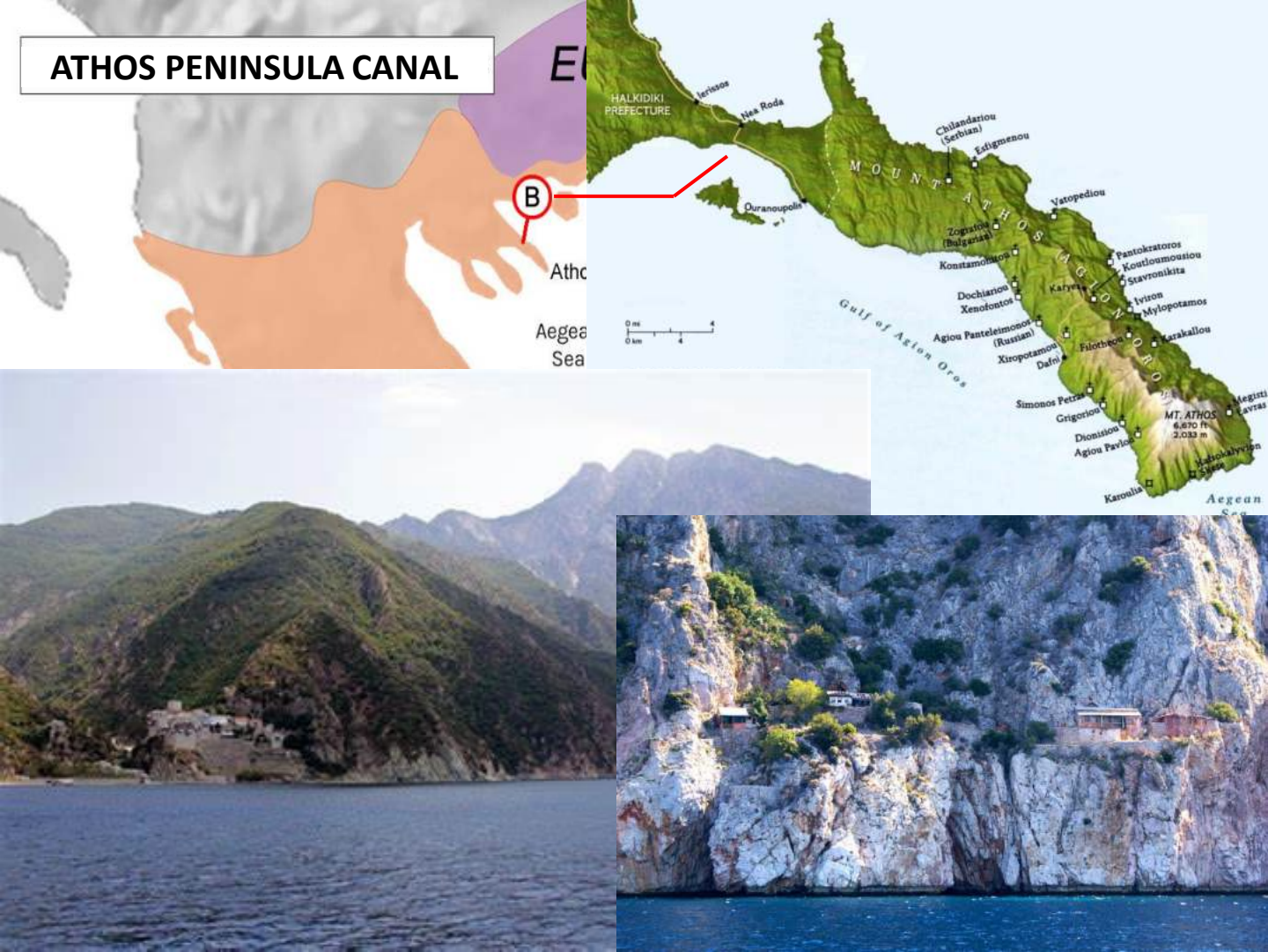
B Athos Peninsula Canal



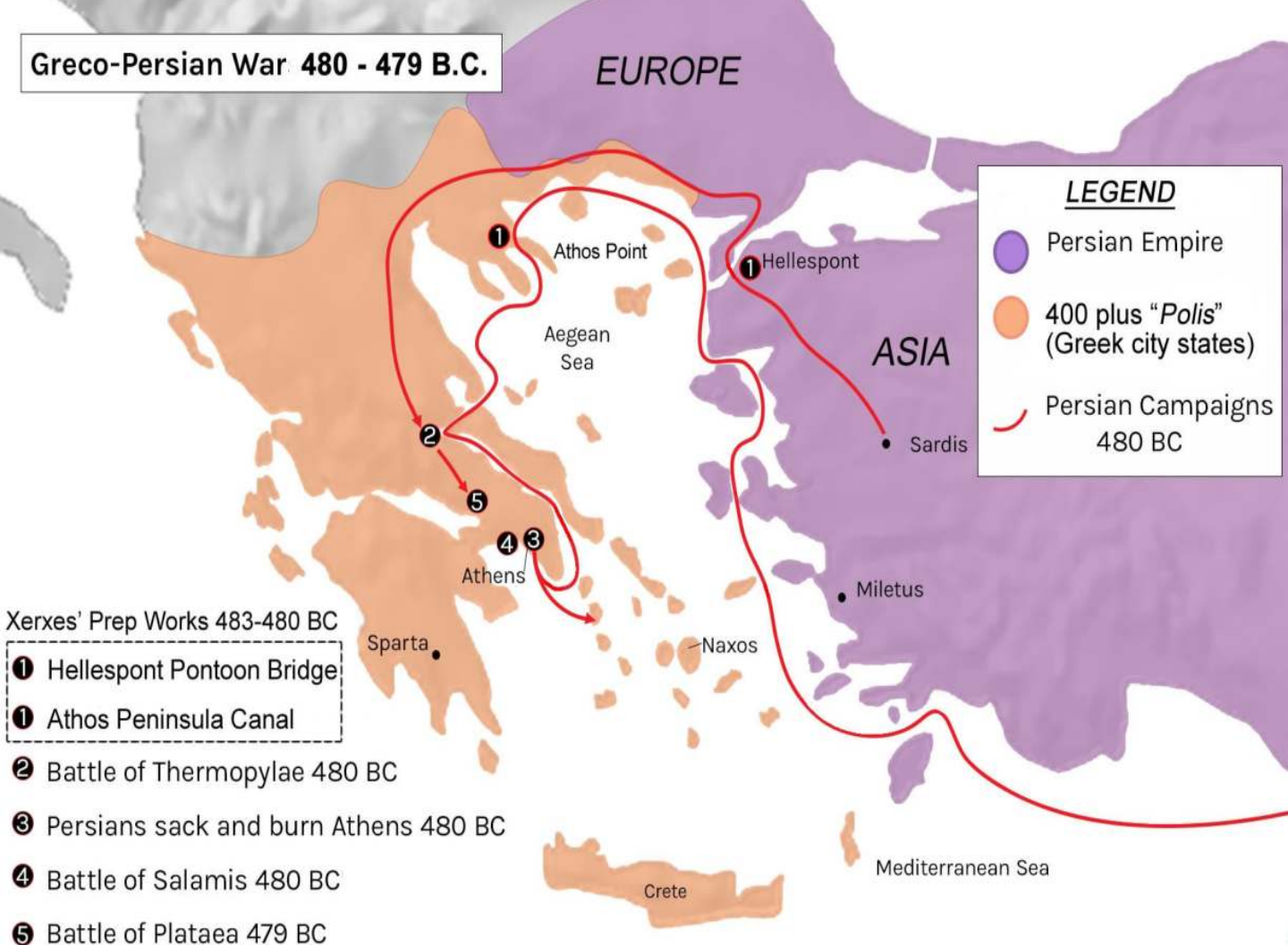
- A Hellespont Pontoon Bridge
- B Athos Peninsula Canal



ATHOS PENINSULA CANAL



Greco-Persian War 480 - 479 B.C.









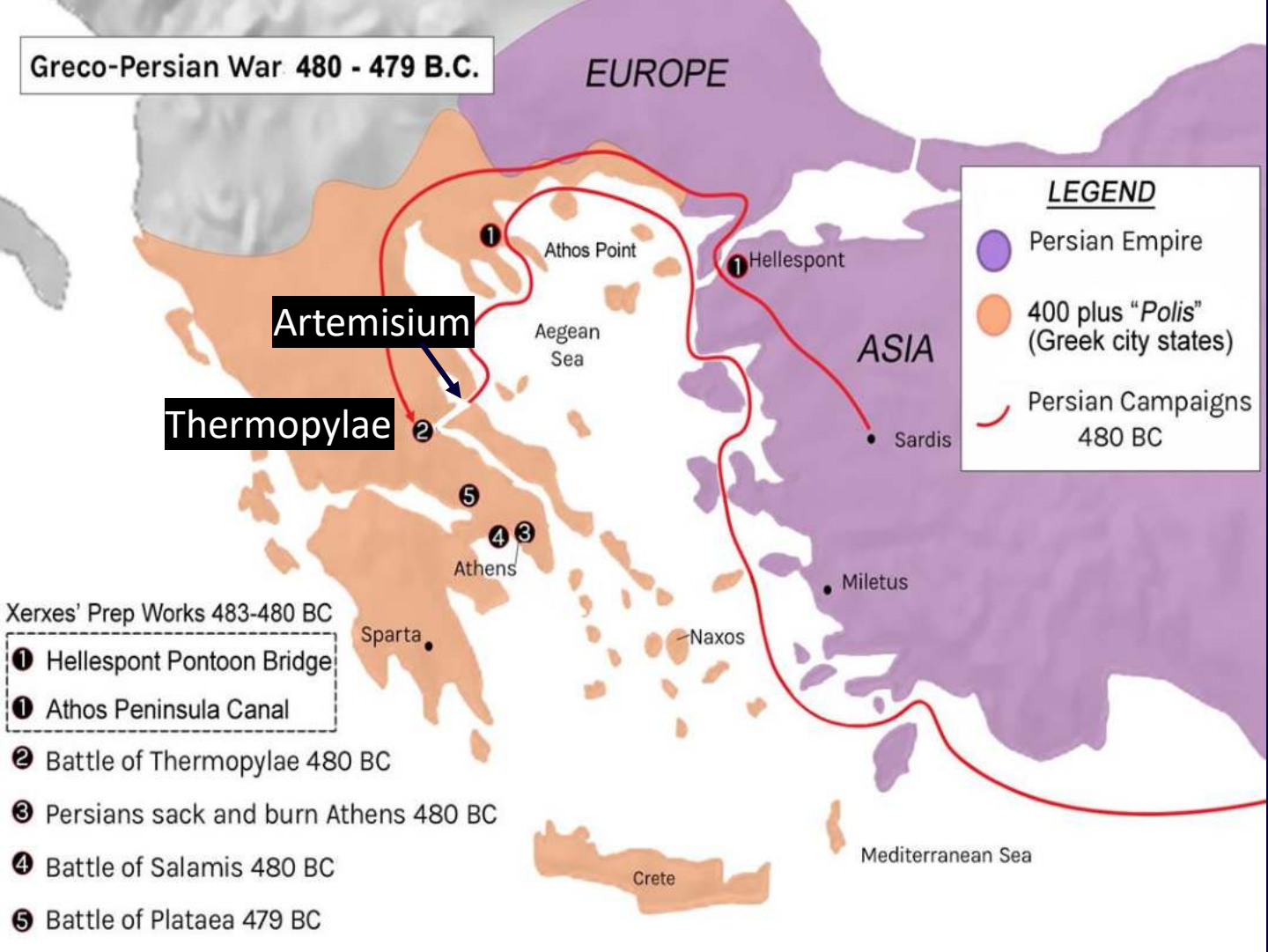








Greco-Persian War 480 - 479 B.C.



LEGEND

-  Persian Empire
-  400 plus "Polis" (Greek city states)
-  Persian Campaigns 480 BC

Artemisium

Thermopylae

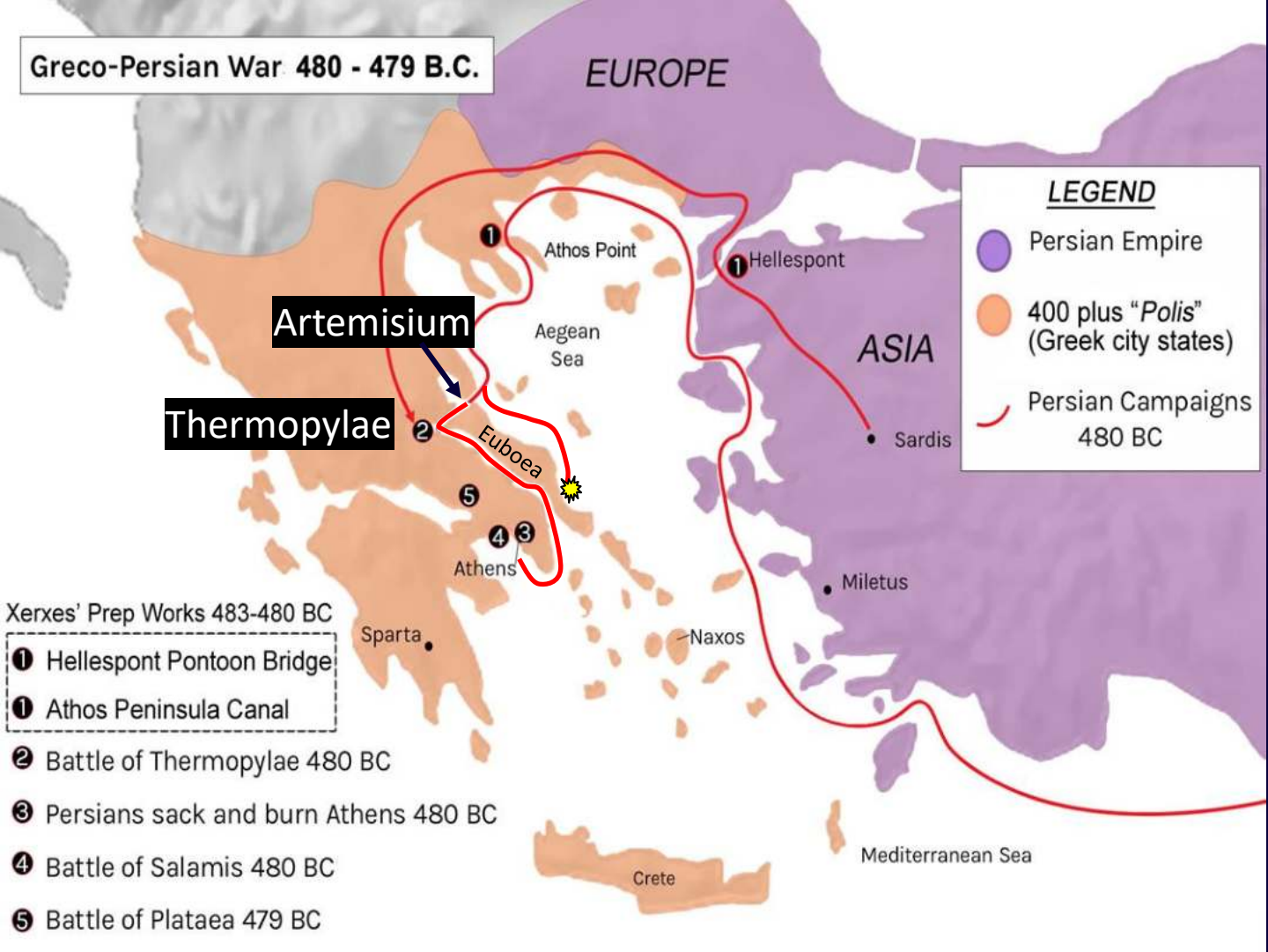
Xerxes' Prep Works 483-480 BC

- 1 Hellespont Pontoon Bridge
- 1 Athos Peninsula Canal

- 2 Battle of Thermopylae 480 BC
- 3 Persians sack and burn Athens 480 BC
- 4 Battle of Salamis 480 BC
- 5 Battle of Plataea 479 BC



Greco-Persian War 480 - 479 B.C.



EUROPE

ASIA

Sardis

Miletus

Naxos

Mediterranean Sea

Crete

Athos Point

Aegean Sea

Athens

Sparta

Euboea

Within weeks, the mighty Persian Army and the still overwhelmingly powerful Persian Navy reached Athens. The defenders were no match for them.

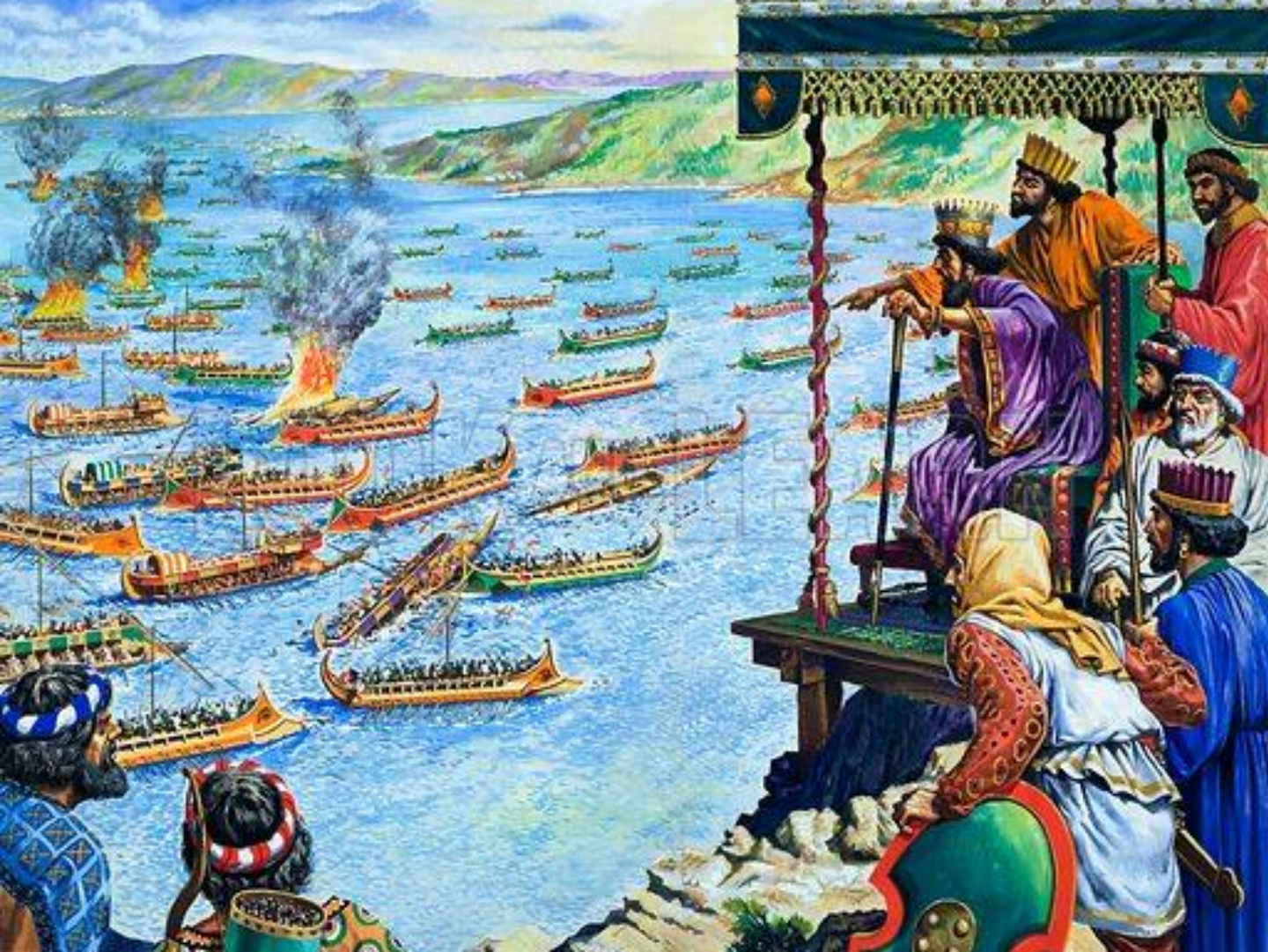


Greco-Persian War 480 - 479 B.C.

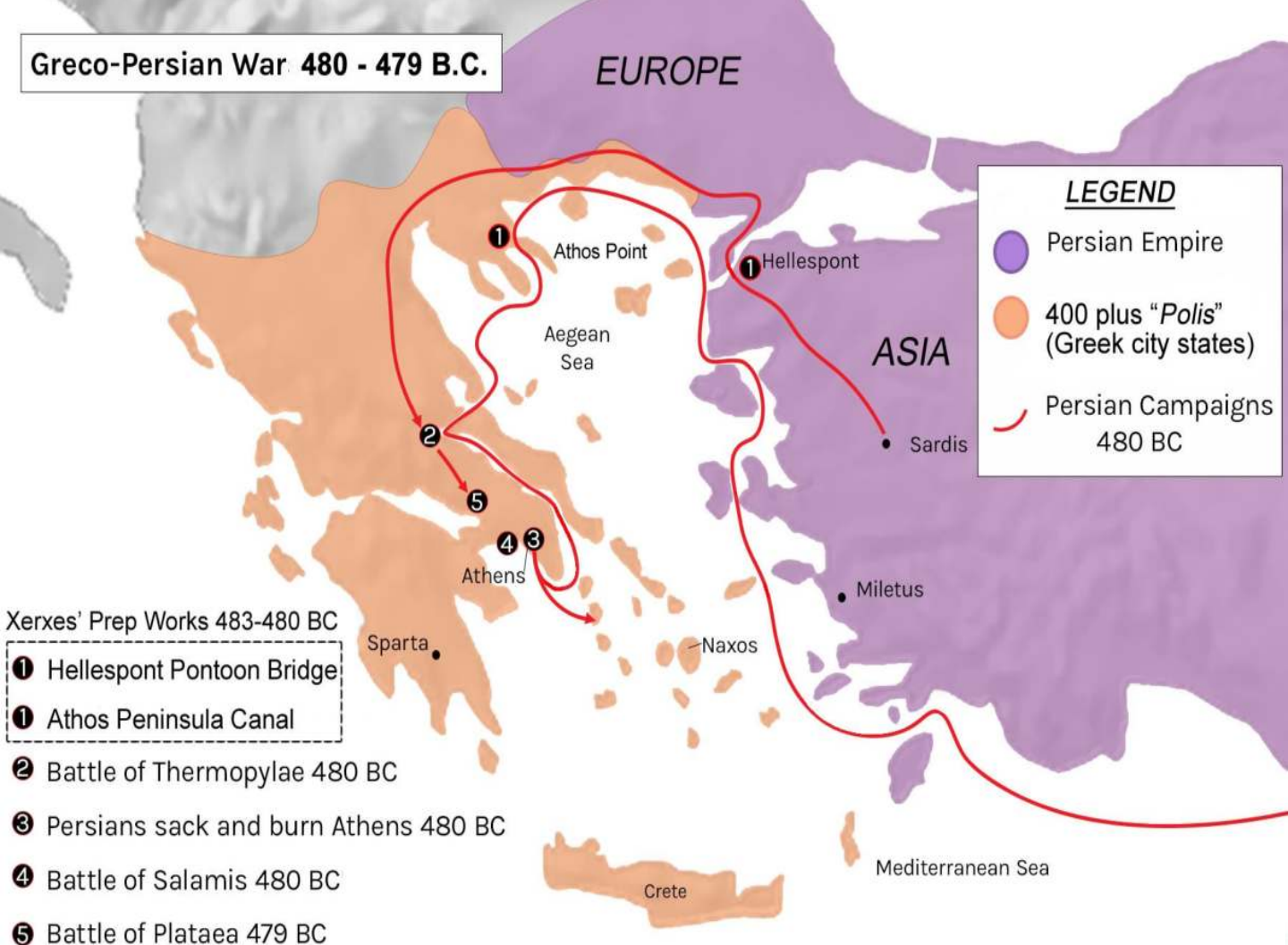




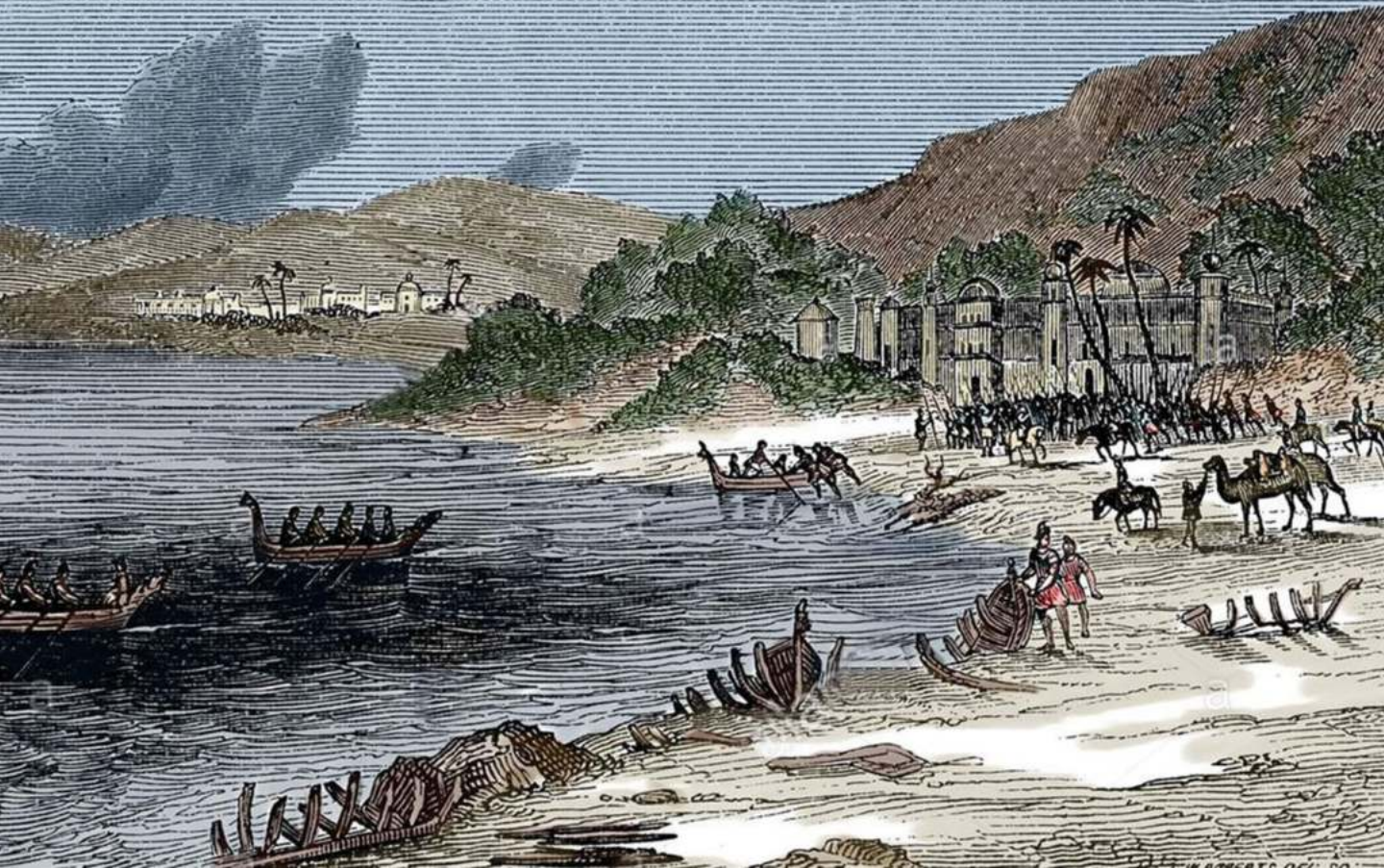
“Battle of Salamis” by Andrew Howat



Greco-Persian War 480 - 479 B.C.









PEREGRUZKA



RESET

Esther 2 - Esther Becomes Queen

¹ After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her.

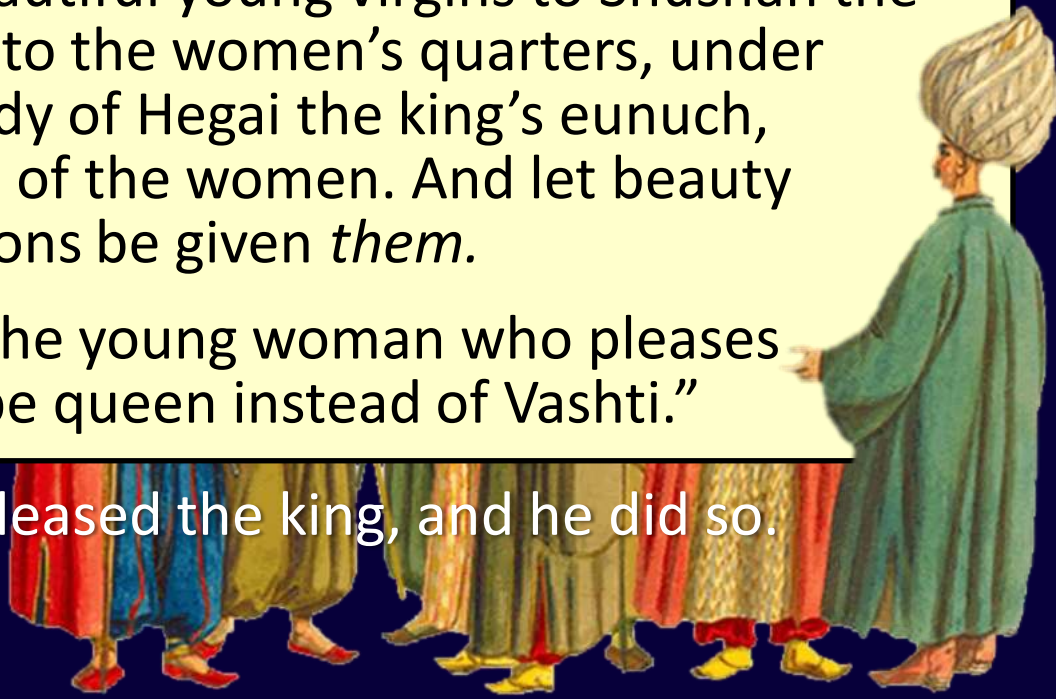


² Then the king's servants who attended him said:

“Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king; ³ and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the citadel, into the women's quarters, under the custody of Hegai the king's eunuch, custodian of the women. And let beauty preparations be given *them*.

⁴ Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.”

This thing pleased the king, and he did so.



⁵ In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name *was* Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite.

Mordecai's lineage refers to an infamous incident covered in 2 Samuel 16:5-13; 19:18 and 1 Kings.



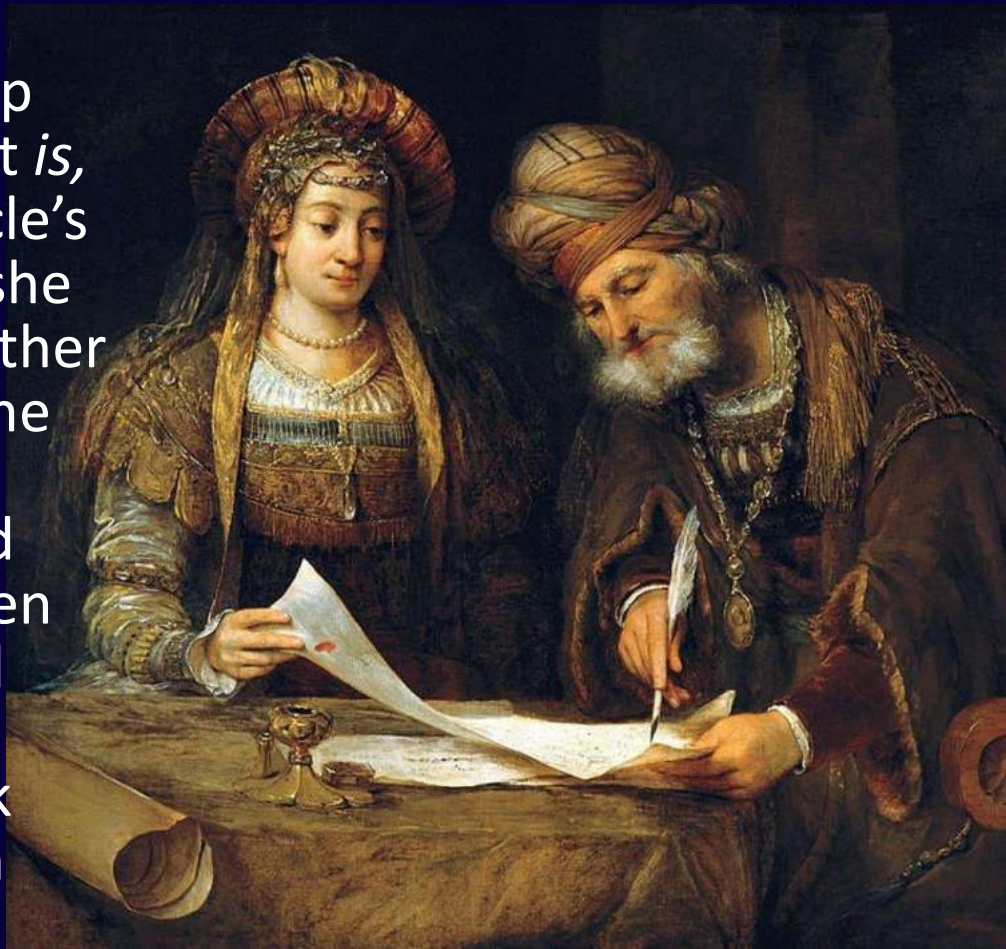
"Shimei curses David,"
Schnorr von Carolsfeld, 1860.

⁶ *Kish* had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

Why is this story important?

- Shimei was a Benjamite. Benjamites were nearly annihilated during Israel's only civil war, and David hanged Saul's sons.
- When David, fleeing Absalom, neared Shimei's house, Shimei ran along the ridge over against the road, cursing and throwing stones and dust at him and his mighty men. Abishai would have "taken off his head" then and there, as a "dead dog" presuming to "curse the king." But David said: "Let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him."
- Shimei wisely was later the "first of the house of Joseph" to meet David on his victorious return over Jordan, bowing and scraping and begging for mercy. Again Abishai would have killed Shimei, but David let him live.
- **Because David spared Shimei, Mordecai was born.**

⁷ And *Mordecai* had brought up Hadassah, that *is*, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman *was* lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.



"Esther and Mordecai" by Aert de Gelder, 1674.

The First House of the Harem

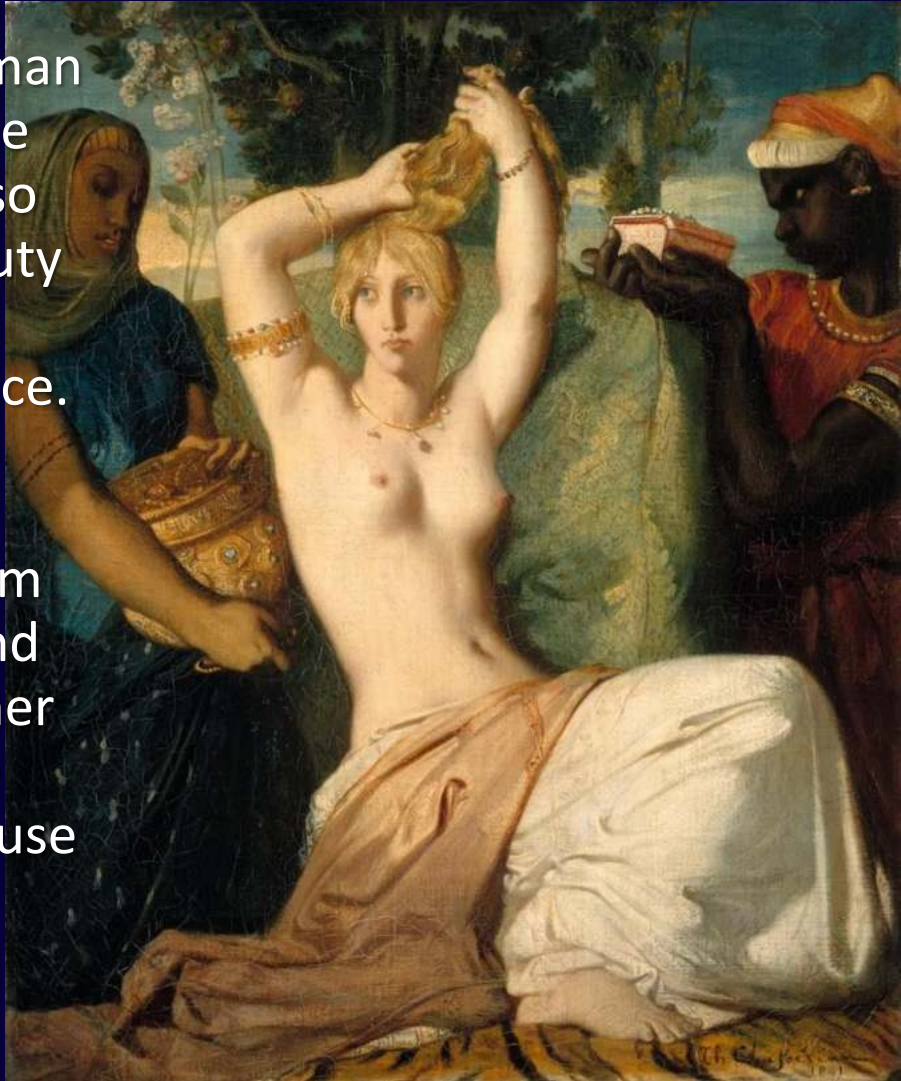
⁸ So it was, when the king's command and decree were heard, and when many young women were gathered at Shushan the citadel, *under* the custody of Hegai, that Esther also was taken to the king's palace, into the care of Hegai the custodian of the women.



"Reception" by Fabio Fabbi, 1873.

⁹ Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favor; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance. Then seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maidservants to the best *place* in the house of the women.

"The Toilette of Esther"
Theodore Chasseriau, 1841.



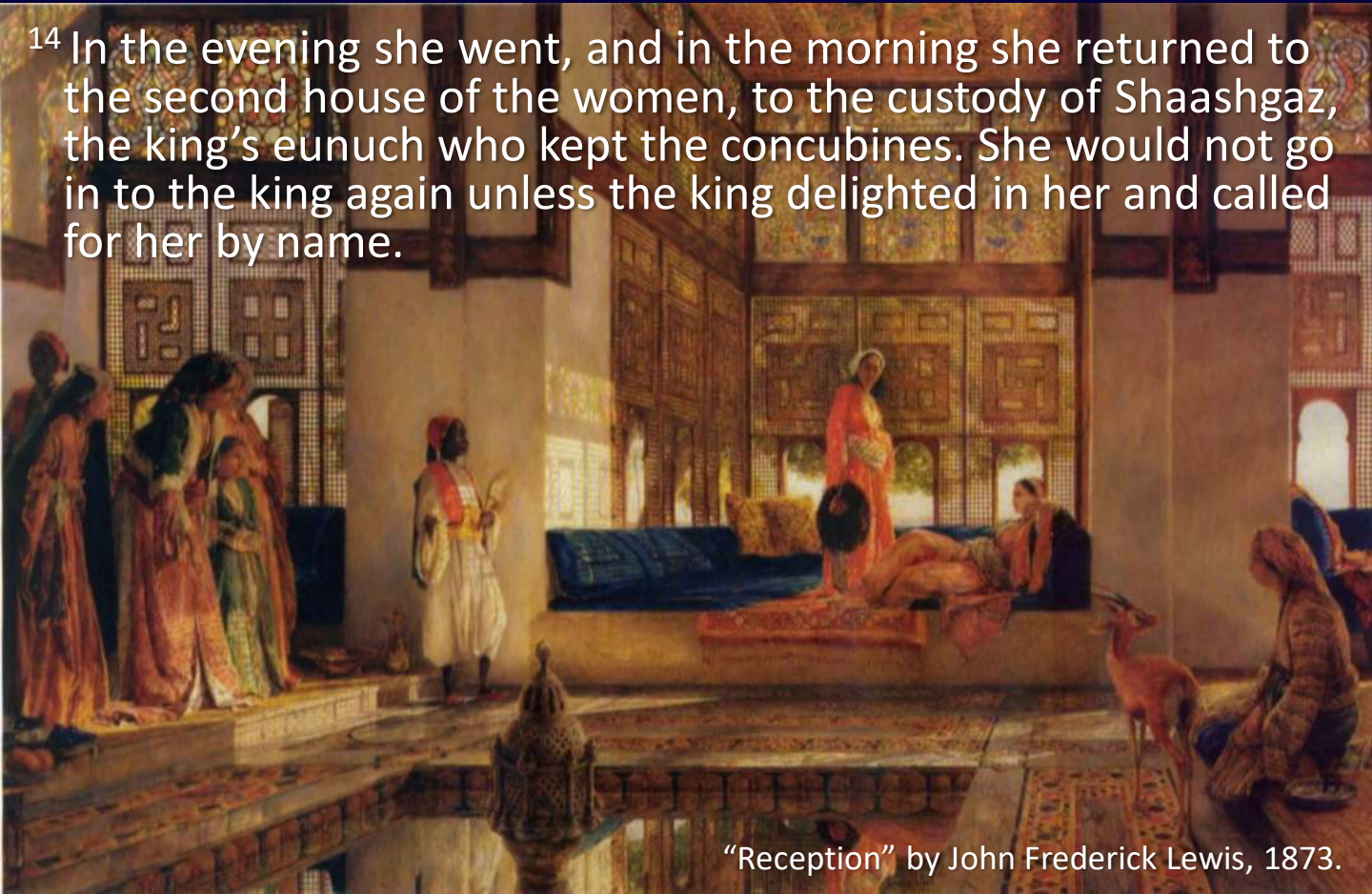
¹⁰ Esther had not revealed her people or family, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal *it*. ¹¹ And every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women's quarters, to learn of Esther's welfare and what was happening to her.

¹² Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women.

¹³ Thus *prepared, each* young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace.

The Second House of the Harem

¹⁴ In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name.



"Reception" by John Frederick Lewis, 1873.

15 Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised.

And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her.



"Esther," Kate Gardiner Hastings, 1884.

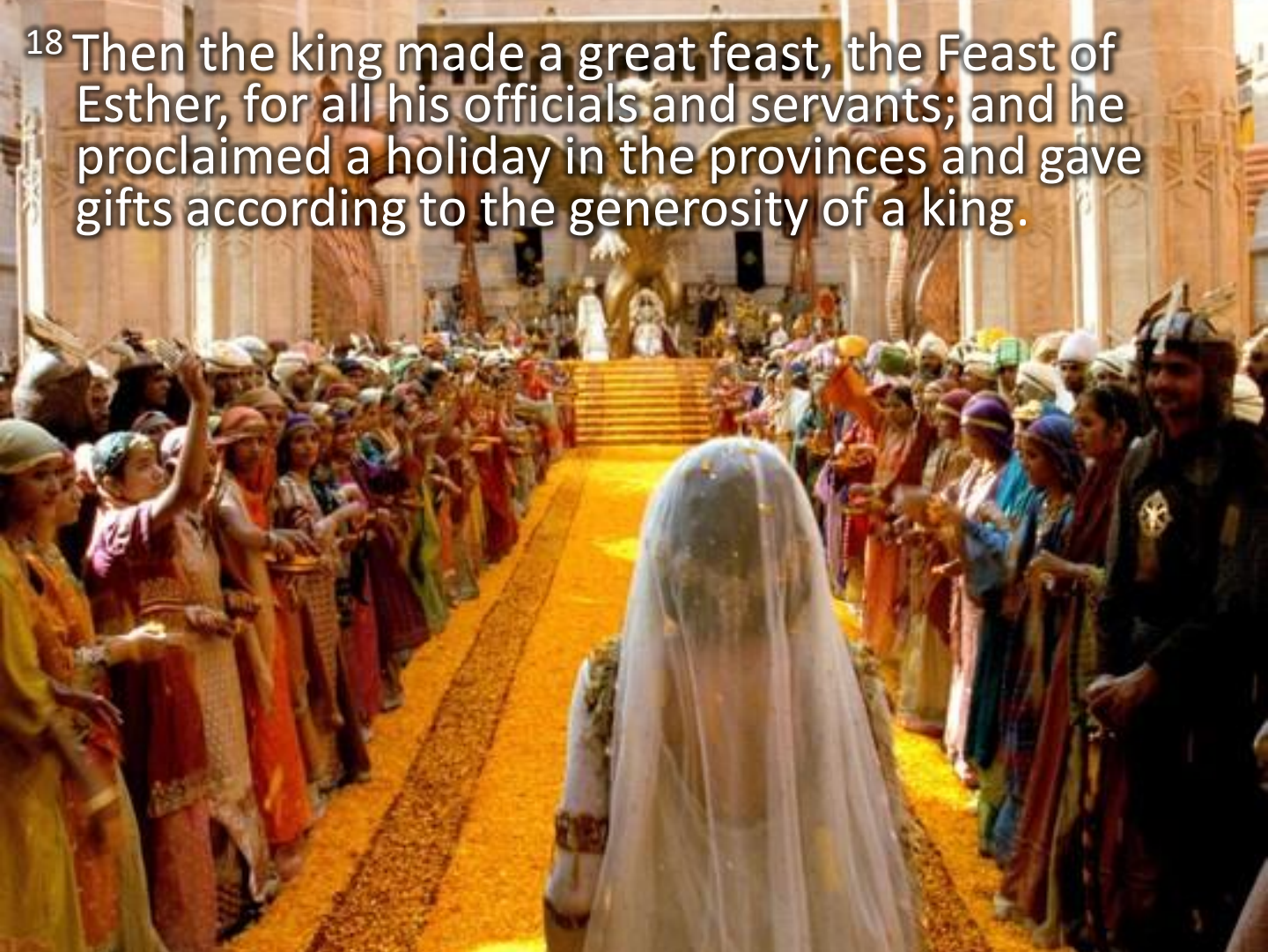
¹⁶ So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which *is* the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

¹⁷ The king loved Esther more than all the *other* women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

“Esther” by Hermann Anschütz, c. 1840.



¹⁸ Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther, for all his officials and servants; and he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts according to the generosity of a king.





¹⁹ When virgins were gathered together a second time, Mordecai sat within the king's gate.

²⁰ Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him.

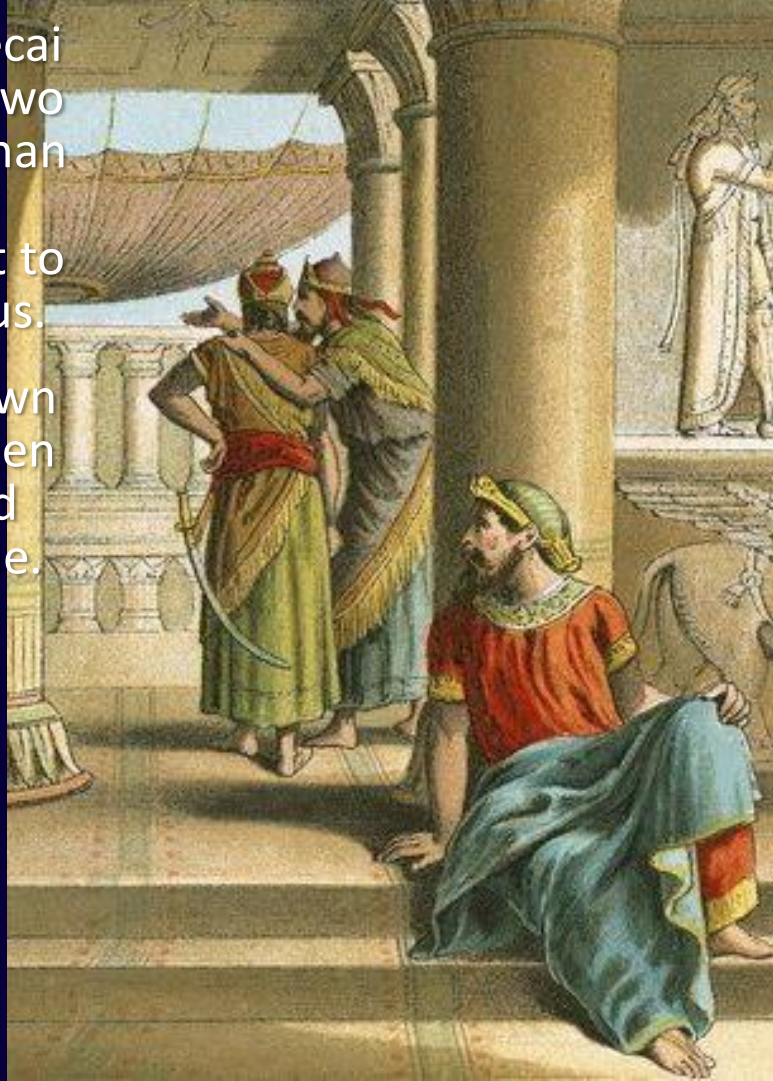
"Esther and Mordecai"

Aert de Gelderm, 1685

21 In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

22 So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name.

23 And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.





Next Week

Esther

Chapter 3