

以斯帖 (Esther)

犹太裔波斯皇后的两个名字之一。哈大沙（希伯来文意为“桃金娘”）显然是她的犹太名字（斯二7），以斯帖（波斯文意为“星星”）则是她作波斯皇后时的名号。由于被流放的犹太人偶而被起异教名字（参但一7），有些学者推测这个名字和巴比伦女神伊施他尔有关连。

以斯帖是便雅悯支派的一名孤女，和犹太流放之民一起住在波斯。她由堂兄末底改抚育，末底改是政府初级公务员，和波斯王国京城书珊犹太社区半公开的领袖（斯三5、6）。前皇后瓦实提由于不遵王命出席宴会，被亚哈随鲁废掉后，以斯帖被选为皇后（斯一11、12）。

以斯帖加冕后，将弑王的阴谋密告波斯王，赢得他的信任（斯二21-23）。她赢得国王的欢心，使她有能力拯救她的家人和同胞，免遭国王的高官哈曼屠杀。

普珥日的制定，就是为了庆祝神藉着以斯帖和末底改拯救祂的子民。直到今天，犹太人每年仍然守此节日。

One of two names borne by the Jewish queen of Persia. Hadassah (Hebrew “Myrtle”) apparently was her Jewish name (Esther 2:7) and Esther (Persian “Star”) her name as queen of Persia. Some scholars speculate a connection with the Babylonian goddess Ishtar, since exiled Jews were occasionally given pagan names (see Daniel 1:7).

Esther was an orphan from the tribe of Benjamin who lived with the Jewish exiles in Persia. She was reared by her cousin Mordecai, a minor government official and covert leader of the Jewish community (see Esther 3:5-6) in Susa, capital of the Persian kingdom. Esther became queen after King Ahasuerus (Xeres) became displeased with Queen Vashti when she refused to obey his command to attend a festival (Esther 1:11-12).

After Esther’s coronation she discreetly won Xeres’ confidence by informing him of an assassination plot (Esther 2:21-23). The favor she won in the king’s eyes enabled her to deliver her family and her people from a massacre by Haman, a high official to the king.

The feast of Purim was instituted to celebrate God’s deliverance of his people through Esther and Mordecai. This festival is still observed annually by the Jews.