

Esther 2:1 ¶ After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.

Esther 2:2 Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king:

Esther 2:3 And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given *them*:

Esther 2:4 And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.

As I read through this section, the implication seems to be that once the king had recovered his senses from his drunken rage, he began to regret the decree against Vashti. His servants recognized that they needed to get someone to replace her in the king's heart, so they suggested that he appoint officers in all 127 provinces of his kingdom to identify the most beautiful young virgins and bring them to the palace in Shushan. They would then be placed under the supervision of Hege, the chamberlain responsible for taking care of the king's women, and would undergo the process of purification. The king could then choose the one among them that he liked the best to become his queen.

The king liked the suggestion and put the plan into action.

Esther 2:5 *Now* in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name *was* Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite;

Esther 2:6 Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

Esther 2:7 And he brought up Hadassah, that *is*, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid *was* fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.

Living in Shushan was a certain Jew named Mordecai, a Benjamite from the descent of Kish. My first thought was that this was identifying Mordecai with the family of King Saul. Considering these events occur many years after the Babylonian captivity, that cannot be the case. I think Kish must be the name of Mordecai's kinsman that was taken captive to Babylon during the second deportation along with Jeconiah the king. Like King Saul, Mordecai was a Benjamite.

Mordecai had assumed custody of Hadassah, called Esther, his uncle's daughter, after the death of her parents. It is noted that she was fair and beautiful and Mordecai treated her like his own daughter.

Hadassah = Hebrew name meaning myrtle (a beautiful, fragrant tree), joy
Esther = Persian name, meaning star, secret, hidden

Esther 2:8 So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.

Esther 2:9 And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, *which were* meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best *place* of the house of the women.

Esther 2:10 Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew *it*.

As a result of the king's decree, many young girls were brought to the palace and placed in the custody of Hegai, the keeper of the women; and Esther was among those chosen. She pleased Hegai, so he was kind to her. He quickly saw to it that she was given all she needed for purification, including the services of seven maidens and the best accommodations available.

It is noted that Esther had not revealed her heritage because Mordecai had commanded her to keep it secret.

Esther 2:11 And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.

Mordecai went every day to the area before the court of the women to get news of how Esther was doing. He must have had some connections on the inside, possibly due to his position (v19).

Esther 2:12 Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, *to wit*, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with *other* things for the purifying of the women;)

Esther 2:13 Then thus came *every* maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house.

Esther 2:14 In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.

Every girl went through a 12-month process of purification before going in to the king. This process included six months of using oil of myrrh to treat her skin followed by six months of treatment with sweet perfumes and the other things considered necessary to prepare her for her night with the king. When the time came for a girl's encounter with the king, she was given whatever she wanted with which to adorn herself. After her night with the king, she was given into the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain that supervised the king's

concubines. She would not see the king again unless he called for her by name because she so pleased him.

Guzik offered this observation: "One reason for the lengthy time of preparation was to tell if the women had been pregnant upon coming into the harem, so that the king would not be charged with fathering a child that was not his."

Esther 2:15 Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.

Esther 2:16 So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which *is* the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

Esther 2:17 And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Esther 2:18 Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, *even* Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king.

Eventually, it was Esther's turn to go in to the king. She asked for nothing beyond what Hegai chose for her. Was this because she did not care because she did not want to be there, or was it because she trusted completely that Hegai knew best? Everyone that saw her admired her. Her night with the king was in the tenth month of Tebeth (December/January), in the 7th year of his reign. This is four years after the banishment of Vashti.

There is nothing in the scripture narrative so far that indicates in any way how Esther or Mordecai felt about her situation. It is obvious that Mordecai was concerned for her well-being. In many ways I think her situation was similar to Joseph's. She lost her freedom and her family and became a prisoner before emerging in a position of power that brought deliverance to her people.

We are told that the king loved Esther above all the other women, and he chose her to replace Vashti as his queen. To celebrate, he hosted a great feast for all his princes and servants; it was called Esther's feast. He also declared a holiday throughout the kingdom and distributed generous gifts.

Gill states that the release was "of taxes and tribute due to him, as was the custom of the kings of Persia when they came to the throne, as Herodotus relates...and Grotius says kings used to do it at their marriage, but gives no instance of it...."

Esther 2:19 And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate.

Esther 2:20 Esther had not *yet* shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.

I have no clue about the first part of verse 19, and most commentators ignore it.

It seems that Mordecai had some sort of position in the palace. According to the NIV Commentary: "Men who 'sat at the gate' were frequently elders and leading men, respected citizens who settled disputes that were brought to them."

Esther continued to keep her ethnicity a secret in accordance with Mordecai's command just as she had obeyed him since childhood.

Esther 2:21 ¶ In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

Esther 2:22 And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told *it* unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king *thereof* in Mordecai's name.

Esther 2:23 And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.

During those days, Bigthan and Terest, two of the king's security officers, became angry with the king and planned to kill him. In some way, Mordecai found out about the plan and told Esther; she then told the king and made sure he knew that Mordecai was her source of information. An investigation was conducted and the report affirmed. The two schemers were hung on a tree, and it was recorded in the historical record in the king's presence.

"hanged on a tree" – Guzik uses this quote from Clarke: "A pointed stake is set upright in the ground, and the culprit is taken, placed on the sharp point, and then pulled down by his legs till the stake that went in at the fundament passes up through the body and comes out through the neck. A most dreadful species of punishment, in which revenge and cruelty may glut the utmost of their malice. The culprit lives a considerable time in excruciating agonies."