



Day 1

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

Esther Selected As Queen

¹ Later when the anger of King Xerxes [Zerk-zees] had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what he had decreed about her.

Q1. Do you think King Xerxes was remorseful (sad or satisfied) about deposing his queen?

 “On recovering from the violent excitement of his revelry and rage, the king was pierced with poignant regret for the unmerited treatment he had given to his beautiful and dignified queen. But, according to the law, which made the word of a Persian king irrevocable, she could not be restored. His counsellors, for their own sake, were solicitous to remove his disquietude, and hastened to recommend the adoption of all suitable means for gratifying their royal master with another consort of equal or superior attractions to those of his divorced queen. In the despotic countries of the East the custom obtains that when an order is sent to a family for a young damsel to repair to the royal palace, the parents, however unwilling, dare not refuse the honor for their daughter; and although they know that when she is once in the royal harem, they will never see her again, they are obliged to yield a silent and passive compliance.” [©1882, *A Commentary, Critical, Practical, and Explanatory on the Old and New Testaments* by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/esther/2-1.htm>]




Lesson 2: Esther 2:1-23

² Then the king's personal attendants proposed, "Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king. ³ Let the king appoint commissioners in every province of his realm to bring all these beautiful girls into the harem at the citadel of Susa [Sue-sah]. Let them be placed under the care of Hegai [Hey-guy], the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let beauty treatments be given to them. ⁴ Then let the girl who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This advice appealed to the king, and he followed it.

- Q2. In verses 1:13-14 (↓) Scripture lists the names of his seven “wise men”. Please speculate. Why in verse 2:2 did the king consult his “personal attendants” versus his seven “wise men”?

Esther 1:13-14 [NIV-1984]


¹³ Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times ¹⁴ and were closest to the king - Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven nobles of Persia and Media who had special access to the king and were highest in the kingdom.

-  “[The king] remembered Vashti; her beauty, and was grieved, as Jarchi [see note ↓] observes, that she was removed from him; and so Josephus [Flavius Josephus: a Jewish historian, b. 37 – d. 100 A.D.] says, that he passionately loved her, and could not bear parting with her, and therefore was grieved that he had brought himself into such difficulties: the Targumists [who are translators/writers or interpreters of the Targums (↓)] carry it further, and say that he was [angry] with those that advised him to [remove her], and ordered them to be put to death, and that they were. What she had done . . . was a trivial thing, and not deserving of such a sentence as he had passed upon her; that it was not done from contempt of him, but from modesty, and a strict regard to the laws of the Persians: and what was decreed against her; that she should come no more before him, but be divorced from him; the thought of which gave him great pain and uneasiness. [©about 1760, *Exposition of the Entire Bible* by John Gill. Text Courtesy of Internet Sacred Texts Archive. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/esther/2-1.htm>]
-  Targum: “(Aramaic: “Translation,” or “Interpretation”), any of several translations of the Hebrew Bible or portions of it into the Aramaic language. The word originally indicated a translation of the Old Testament in any language but later came to refer specifically to an Aramaic translation.” [Source: Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Targum". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 28 Apr. 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Targum>. Accessed 7 August 2023.]
-  Jarchi: “RABBI SOLOMON IZCHAKI, or ISAAKI = BEN-ISAAC, the great Talmudic scholar and commentator, founder of the Germano-French school of Biblical exegesis, and erroneously called Jarchi, was born in 1040 at T'roes, in Champagne. [*The Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*. James Strong and John McClintock; Haper and Brothers; NY; 1880. Website HTML, editorial descriptions, and images ©2023 StudyLamp Software LLC. <https://www.biblicalcyclopedia.com/R/rashi.html>]


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Q3. This was probably the one time a girl, a young woman would not want to be called “pretty”. How would a young woman’s mother and father feel about their daughter’s selection?

Q4. The world looks at the superficial, not a person’s inner beauty or heart. What were the characteristics governing the selection of the next queen?


 In verse 2, emphasis is placed on finding “beautiful young virgins.” How might the king’s officials determine if a young woman was a “virgin”? The people were subject to the king, and he took what he wanted – by force if necessary. There was no modesty; no argument or backtalk was permitted; only expected compliance.

Q5. Did the young woman or her family have any say in the selection process?

 Hegai: “a eunuch whose special charge seems to have been the virgins, while another, named Shaashgaz (Esther 2:14), had the custody of the concubines. The whole verse shows, as conclusively as anything could do, in how degrading . . . Eastern women were, as a whole, viewed. It was reserved for Christianity to indicate the true position of woman, not man’s plaything, but the [partner] for him. . .” [©about 1880, *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, edited by Charles J Ellicott. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/esther/2-3.htm>]

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Day 2

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

⁵ Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai [Mord-ă-cai, 'cai' rhymes with sigh] son of Jair, the son of Shimei [Shĭ-my], the son of Kish, ⁶ who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar [Neb-ŭ-cah-nezz-r] king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin [Gee-hoy-a-chin] king of Judah.


⁷ Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah [Hă-dă-sah], whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This girl, who was also known as Esther, was lovely in form and features, and Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.

⁸ When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many girls were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai [Hey-guy]. Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem. ⁹ The girl pleased him and won his favor. Immediately he provided her with her beauty treatments and special food. He assigned to her seven maids selected from the king's palace and moved her and her maids into the best place in the harem.

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¹⁰ Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. ¹¹ Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her.

Q6. Why did Mordecai forbid Esther to reveal her nationality?


 “[Mordecai] walked every day before the court or enclosure of the women's house, to know the welfare of Esther and what became of her (or what was done to her). Hence, [Mordecai] was in constant communication with Esther. How this communication was effected is not [specifically] stated; probably by means of the maids appointed to wait on her. Jewish expositors are of [the] opinion, that [Mordecai] held high office, and that having consequently free access to the royal palace, he could easily find the means of communicating with his relative.” [©1857-78; *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, by Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch. Text Courtesy of Internet Sacred Texts Archive. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/esther/2-11.htm>]

Lesson 2: Esther 2:1-23

Day 3

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¹² Before a girl's turn came to go in to King Xerxes, she had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments prescribed for the women, six months with oil of myrrh and six with perfumes and cosmetics.

 *'prescribed for the women:'* The treatment for the women was 12-months long, "partly, for their better purification, as it here follows; partly, out of state, as that which became so great a king; and partly, that being so long in safe custody, the king might be sure that [a] child [born from any of the women] was his own. *'With oil of myrrh'*: which is useful both for making the skin exactly clean, and smooth, and solid, and for giving strength and rigour to the body. *'With perfumes and cosmetics'*; which was the more necessary, because the bodies of men and women in those hot countries did of themselves yield very ill scents, if not corrected and qualified by art." [© about 1667, *Commentary on the Holy Bible* by Matthew Poole; Text Courtesy of BibleSupport.com. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/esther/2-12.htm>]

¹³ And this is how she would go to the king: Anything she wanted was given her to take with her from the harem to the king's palace. ¹⁴ In the evening she would go there and in the morning return to another part of the harem to the care of Shaashgaz [Sh-ah-sh-gauze], the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not return to the king unless he was pleased with her and summoned her by name.

Q7. In verse 8, the eunuch Hegai (Hey-guy) is referenced. He manages what group of women for the king?


Q8. In verse 14, the eunuch Shaashgaz [Sh-ah-sh-gauze] is referenced. He manages what group of women for the king?

Q9. For those women, who were not recalled by name – what became of them? Was their life one of loneliness?

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¹⁸ And the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his nobles and officials. He proclaimed a holiday throughout the provinces and distributed gifts with royal liberality.


Day 5

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

Mordecai Uncovers a Conspiracy

^{19a} When the virgins were assembled a second time, ^{19b} Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate.

 While there are some differing opinions among commentators regarding verse 19^a, a consensus interprets this phrase to mean that King Xerxes' lust for the best and prettiest young women in his kingdom was not satisfied. So, even though he named Esther as queen, he wanted more, and a call went out to gather a second round of virgins.

 It appears that – and perhaps Esther had a hand in it – Mordecai had received a promotion, because he was now sitting at the gate and in a position to overhear a critical conversation.

²⁰ But Esther had kept secret her family background and nationality just as Mordecai had told her to do, for she continued to follow Mordecai's instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up.


Q12. Was Esther obedient? To whom was she loyal? (Or did she have a divided loyalty?)

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Q13. Why the secrecy? What did Esther (and Mordecai) fear?

²¹ During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthana [Big-tha-na] and Teresh [Ter-esh], two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. ²² But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. ²³ And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were hanged on a gallows. All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king.

Q14. Why might the consequences of this conspiracy that was developed by the two officers result in their death sentences?

 If the officers even gave a thought to the guy sitting at the gate – who could the guy tell? And who would believe him? They must have been quite surprised when their superiors confronted them and their conspiracy was confirmed.

Day 6

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Q15. Did any question(s) arise in this Study that we failed to discuss? (Please list your question)

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