

Esther 1:13-22

Esther 1:13-22 Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times (for this was the king's manner toward all who knew law and justice, (14) those closest to him being Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who had access to the king's presence, and who ranked highest in the kingdom): (15) "What shall we do to Queen Vashti, according to law, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus brought to her by the eunuchs?" (16) And Memucan answered before the king and the princes: "Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king, but also all the princes, and all the people who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. (17) For the queen's behaviour will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes, when they report, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come.' (18) This very day the noble ladies of Persia and Media will say to all the king's officials that they have heard of the behaviour of the queen. Thus there will be excessive contempt and wrath. (19) If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and 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; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. (20) When the king's decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout all his empire (for it is great), all wives will honour 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.

Questions On The Text

How did the king vent his anger?

Verses 13-15: To his credit, the king did not react immediately to the situation but turned to his wise men for advice. However, the appropriateness of this action has to be offset against the fact that Ahasuerus had surrounded himself with seven advisers (all male) whose own best interests were served best by understanding what the king was likely to want to do and advising him to do just that.

What was Memucan's advice?

Verses 16-20: Memucan's advice was simple and designed to take advantage of the king's power, not only to punish Vashti, but to bolster male authority throughout the empire. Ahasuerus was to publish a decree throughout his domain in which he publicly divorced Vashti. It was hoped that, hearing of the king's action, all the women in the kingdom would think twice about defying their husbands' wishes.

What did Ahasuerus think of Memucan's advice?

Verses 21-22: No doubt still under the influence of alcohol and motivated by self-interest, Ahasuerus was pleased with Memucan's advice, as were the other six advisers who were probably pleased with anything that pleased the king. By unalterable decree, in the various languages of the empire, Vashti was divorced and every man proclaimed to be master in his house.

Probably men were already seen as the masters of their households, so the king's proclamation most likely lowered his subjects' estimation of him as they tried to figure out why the king would have drafted a decree to state the obvious.

Further Questions For Discussion:

Was Ahasuerus' anger a reasonable response to Vashti's disobedience?

Was Vashti a good or a bad role model for women?

How wise was Memucan's advice?

How fair was Memucan's advice?

Why did Ahasuerus like Memucan's advice?