

## Esther 2:11-23

Esther 2:11-23 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. (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. (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 favour in the sight of all who saw her. (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 favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. (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. (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.

### Questions On The Text

#### What did Mordecai do each day?

Verse 11: Just because Esther was now in the king's custody, did not mean that Mordecai was no longer concerned for her welfare. His love and care for her were such that he paced in front of the court of the women's quarters every day in the hope of hearing some news as to how she was doing.

#### How long was the beautifying process?

Verse 12: The beautifying process took a full twelve months before the women were permitted to go in to the king. To "go in to" the king refers to their sexual encounter. (See Genesis 29:23,30; 28:18.)

#### What happened to the young women?

Verses 13-14: Each young woman, suitably prepared by the beautifying process, then had to wait her turn for the opportunity to spend a night with the king. Each one was permitted to take with her something from the women's quarters. Having been with the king overnight, the young woman was transferred from Hegai's custody to the custody of Shaashgaz.

Along with all the other concubines, she would never again be allowed to be with the king unless she pleased him enough (no doubt with her sexual performance) for him to remember her name and call for her.

### **What happened when Esther went in to the king?**

Verses 15-18: Four years have now passed since Vashti was banished, and Esther's turn to go to the king has arrived. We are not told what she took with her, but that she had the wisdom to take Hegai's advice. She greatly impressed Ahasuerus who promptly made her queen.

He threw a feast in her honour and gave gifts so that others could share the festivities with him. The word translated "holiday" is literally "rest, remission" and could also mean that there was a remission of taxes.

### **What was Mordecai doing?**

Verses 19-20: Not satisfied with probably hundreds of young women who had become his concubines, or even with the beautiful Queen Esther, there was a second intake of virgins to satisfy the king's lust. At this time, Mordecai sat within the king's gate. To sit in the gate is not merely an indication of his posture, but implies a position of authority, such as a magistrate. (See Proverbs 31:23; 2 Samuel 15:2-3.) Even though she was now queen, Esther still submitted to Mordecai's authority and did not reveal the identity of her family or people.

### **What did Mordecai discover?**

Verses 21-23: Being in the king's gate, Mordecai was in a prime position to know what was going on in the palace. Discovering a plot by two of the king's eunuchs to assassinate the king, he reported it to Esther who then told the king. Esther's humility is evident as she was careful to give the credit for the discovery to Mordecai.

An inquiry was made into the matter which ascertained the truth of it. The offenders were hanged and the incident recorded in the chronicles of the Persian court. No reward was given to Mordecai for potentially saving the life of Ahasuerus.

### **Further Questions For Discussion:**

How did Mordecai demonstrate his concern for Esther?

For whose benefit was the long beautifying process?

How do you think women of the time felt about spending one night with the king and possibly never seeing him again? Try not to look through the lens of modern cultural expectations.

Do you think Esther might have been happy or disappointed at being selected as queen?

Why did Queen Esther continue to submit to Mordecai's authority?

In reporting the plot against the king, what does that tell us about Mordecai's character?