

Esther 2:1-10

Esther 2:1-10 After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her. (2) Then the king's servants who attended him said: "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king; (3) and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the citadel, into the women's quarters, under the custody of Hegai the king's eunuch, custodian of the women. And let beauty preparations be given them. (4) Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This thing pleased the king, and he did so. (5) In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. (6) Kish had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. (7) And Mordecai had brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman was lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter. (8) So it was, when the king's command and decree were heard, and when many young women were gathered at Shushan the citadel, under the custody of Hegai, that Esther also was taken to the king's palace, into the care of Hegai the custodian of the women. (9) Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favour; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance. Then seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maidservants to the best place in the house of the women. (10) Esther had not revealed her people or family, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal it.

Questions On The Text

What happened to Ahasuerus' anger?

Verse 1: The king's anger at some stage subsided and he began to think about Vashti. Possibly, minus the alcohol and the anger, Ahasuerus may have felt regretful and maybe even a bit foolish. But it was too late. The decree had gone out and was unalterable.

What did the king's servants advise?

Verses 2-4: Ahasuerus' servants had a plan to comfort the king in his self-inflicted loss. Beautiful young women of marriageable age were to be sought, brought into the king's harem for beauty preparations, and the one that pleased him was to be made queen in place of Vashti.

This was no half-hearted search either. The entire kingdom was to be systematically scoured, each province to have persons appointed who were specifically responsible for the search in their own area. Not surprisingly, a plan that appealed to the king's self-interest, and more specifically to his lust and the enticing prospect of "auditioning" a number of beautiful young women, found immediate favour with the king. The plan was put into action.

Who was Mordecai?

Verses 5-6: Mordecai was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin and living in Shushan. Ancestors named in this passage seem to relate him to King Saul. This is made more likely by the fact that he was one of those deported to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 597BC along with Jeconiah king of Judah.

As one of those deportees, he must have been a member of the nobility since the common people were not deported till ten years later. The Hebrew makes it sound like Mordecai himself was one of those deported, but that would make him 120 years old. This is not impossible and might explain why he had not already married

his beautiful cousin Esther. However, it is also possible that one of his ancestors was the deportee as indicated in our English text.

Who was Esther?

Verse 7: Esther was Mordecai's cousin. Since her parents had died, Mordecai had taken her in and raised her as his own daughter. The English text says that she was "lovely and beautiful," but the Hebrew indicates that she was "beautiful in form and lovely to look at."

What happened to Esther?

Verses 8-9: Beauty can provide otherwise unobtainable advantages to a woman, but in Esther's case, it drew the probably unwanted attentions of the king. Nevertheless, no matter what Esther's personal experience may have been, or the king's personal motives, her beauty was part of the overriding purpose of God and resulted in the saving of the Jewish nation.

Consequently, Esther was one of many rounded up, taken to Ahasuerus' palace, and placed in the custody of Hegai the custodian of the women. It appears that right from the start there was something special about Esther beyond her physical beauty. Hegai was certainly impressed with her, and as a result, gave her extra beauty preparations, seven choice maidservants, as well as the best living quarters in the harem.

What was Esther's secret?

Verse 10: Under Mordecai's direction, Esther did not disclose her Jewish identity or even her family relations. The reason for this is not given, but the fact that she heeded Mordecai's advice marks her as a woman of wisdom. (See Proverbs 13:1; 21:23.)

Further Questions For Discussion:

When the king's anger had subsided, he thought again about Vashti. What does that teach us about acting in anger?

Was there much chance that advice suggesting that the king scour the land for beautiful young women to replace Vashti would be knocked back? Give reasons for your answer.

How were Esther and Mordecai related?

How do you think God used Esther's beauty for His purposes?

Why did Mordecai instruct Esther not to reveal her Jewish identity?