

Esther 2

Verses 1- 4

After these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done, and what had been decided regarding her. ² Then the king's attendants, who served him, said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king. ³ And may the king appoint overseers in all the provinces of his kingdom, and have them bring every beautiful young virgin to the citadel of Susa, to the harem, into the custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let their cosmetics be given *to them*. ⁴ Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen in place of Vashti." And the suggestion pleased the king, and he did accordingly.

After these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done, and what had been decided regarding her.

The war with Greece which lasted about one year(480 - 479) had been a disaster and it took the King some time to remember what Vashti had done and what decision he had made concerning her.

³ And may the king appoint overseers in all the provinces of his kingdom, and have them bring every beautiful young virgin to the citadel of Susa, to the harem, into the custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let their cosmetics be given *to them*.

Being in a harem was not the kind of life style that most women would desire and one has to wonder if these young girls had a choice in the matter. It's true that one would be picked to be his queen but the life of all the others was much less glamorous including the following.

1. Many of the women were concubines.
2. Many women in the harem were servants and slaves performing menial tasks.
3. The higher-ranking women in the harem were often the king's female relatives, such as his mother, sisters, and unmarried daughters.

Verses 5 - 7

⁵ There was a Jew at the citadel in Susa whose name was **Mordecai**, the son of **Jair**, the son of **Shimei**, the son of **Kish**, a Benjaminite, ⁶ who had been taken from Jerusalem with the exiles who had been deported with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had deported. ⁷ He was the guardian to Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had no father or mother. Now the young woman was beautiful of form and face, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.

Kish and other Jews were deported when Jeconiah king of Judah was deported to Babylon in 597 BC.

See chart 205

Kings of the South					
	King		Began	Ended	Years
7	Joash	Son of Ahaziah	834	795	40
8	Amaziah	Son	795	766	29
9	Azariah or Uzziah	Son	766	748	52
10	Jotham	Son	748	732	16
11	Ahaz	Son	732	716	16
12	Hezekiah	Son	716	687	29
13	Manasseh	Son	696	641	55
14	Amon	Son	641	639	2
15	Josiah	Son	639	608	31
16	Jehoahaz	Son of Josiah	608	608	3 months
17	Jehoiakim	Son of Josiah	608	597	11
18	Jehoiachin	Son	597	597	3 months
19	Zedekiah	Son of Josiah	597	586	11

Mordecai was the great-grandson of Kish. So far these four generations span 120 years from 597 BC till 478 BC.

We find out right away that Esther was adopted by Mordecai when her father and mother died. We also are told that she was beautiful of form and face so the only question we yet have to discover is she a woman of character.

Verses 8 - 11

⁸ So it came about, when the command and decree of the king were heard and many young ladies were gathered to the citadel of Susa into the custody of Hegai, that Esther was taken to the king's palace into the custody of Hegai, who was in charge of the women. ⁹ Now the young lady pleased him and found favor with him. So he quickly provided her with her cosmetics and food, gave her seven choice female attendants from the king's palace, and transferred her and her attendants to the best place in the harem. ¹⁰ Esther did not reveal her people or her kindred, because Mordecai had instructed her that she was not to reveal *them*. ¹¹ And every day Mordecai walked back and forth in front of the courtyard of the harem to learn how Esther was and what was happening to her.

⁸ So it came about, when the command and decree of the king were heard and many young ladies were gathered to the citadel of Susa into the custody of Hegai, that Esther was taken to the king's palace into the custody of Hegai, who was in charge of the women.

Kings often had many wives and concubines but only one attained the position of Queen.

⁹ Now the young lady pleased him and found favor with him. So he quickly provided her with her cosmetics and food, gave her seven choice female attendants from the king's palace, and transferred her and her attendants to the best place in the harem.

Each of the virgins may have been given seven maids to attend them, but Esther's seven were selected with special care, and they were given the best place in the harem.

¹⁰ Esther did not reveal her people or her kindred, because Mordecai had instructed her that she was not to reveal *them*.

Babylon had deported many peoples during their military victories so it was likely that the women were from numerous nations. We are not told why being a Jew might be an issue but it seems Mordecai was concerned that it could be a problem.

¹¹ And every day Mordecai walked back and forth in front of the courtyard of the harem to learn how Esther was and what was happening to her.

The next paragraph explains why Mordecai was so concerned.

Verses 12 - 14

¹² Now when the turn came for each young woman to go in to King Ahasuerus, after the end of her twelve months under the regulations for the women—for the days of their beauty treatment were completed as follows: six months with oil of myrrh and six months with balsam oil and the cosmetics for women—¹³ the young woman would go in to the king in this way: anything that she desired was given her to take with her from the harem to the king's palace. ¹⁴In the evening she would enter and in the morning she would return to the second harem, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not go in to the king again, unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name.

After one night with the king, each woman became one of his concubines and they would not see him again, unless she was summoned by name. This is why Mordecai was so concerned about his daughter. Only one woman would become his queen and the rest were relegated to the second harem.

Some might think that it is better to live as a servant to the king than be subject to the difficulties one might experience in the real world but that kind of life would probably only appeal to a small segment of the female population.

Verses 15 - 18

¹⁵ Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai who had taken her as his daughter, came to go in to the king, she did not request anything except what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the women, advised. And Esther was finding favor in the eyes of all who saw her. ¹⁶ So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus in his royal palace in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. ¹⁷ The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal turban on her head and made her queen in place of Vashti. ¹⁸ Then the king held a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his officials and his servants; he also made a holiday for the provinces and gave gifts in proportion to the king's bounty.

¹⁶ So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus in his royal palace in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

See chart 210

Esther Time Line			
Chapter	Events		Year
	Cyrus releases Jews	1st Return	538
	Second temple dedicated		516
	Book of Esther		483 - 469
	Reforms of Ezra	2nd return	458
1	King Ahasuerus	486-465	483
1	Queen Vashti deposed		483/482
	War with Greece	about 1 year	480 - 479
2	Mordecai the guardian of Esther		479
2	Esther becomes Queen	7th year	478
3	Haman's plot against the Jews	12th year	471
3	Letters sent to all the provinces	1st month	470

¹⁷ The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal turban on her head and made her queen in place of Vashti.

This orphan girl, dependent on her cousin Mordecai for her existence, became the queen of the most powerful living monarch on earth. His empire spanned half the world of that time.

God had done similar things in the past to save the chosen people

1. He sent Joseph to Egypt making him second only to the King.
2. He brought up Moses in the palace of Pharaoh.
3. He made Daniel a ruler in the Babylonian kingdom.
4. Nehemiah was the cupbearer of Artaxerxes.

¹⁸ Then the king held a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his officials and his servants; he also made a holiday for the provinces and gave gifts in proportion to the king's bounty.

The banquet was held to honor and celebrate Esther's new status as the Queen of King Ahasuerus.

Verses 19 - 23

¹⁹ Now when the virgins were gathered together for the second time, then Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. ²⁰ Esther *still* had not revealed her relatives or her people, just as Mordecai had instructed her; for Esther did what Mordecai told her just as she had when under his care. ²¹ In those days, while Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's officials from those who guarded the door, became angry and sought to attack King Ahasuerus. ²² But the plot became known to Mordecai and he informed Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in Mordecai's name. ²³ Then when the plot was investigated and found *to be so*, they were both hanged on a wooden gallows; and it was written in the Book of the Chronicles in the king's presence.

²⁰ Esther *still* had not revealed her relatives or her people, just as Mordecai had instructed her; for Esther did what Mordecai told her just as she had when under his care.

Does it seem odd that the king knew so little about Esther? Given his role as king and the system used to select a new queen this was predictable for the following reasons:

1. Their time together was somewhat limited by his job (Him being the king).
2. He selected a queen by spending one night with a number of beautiful young women.
3. He loved her more than all the other woman but their marriage was somewhat crowded (he had many wives and concubines).
4. Esther did not volunteer any family details to the king.

We like to think that our decision to marry is based on true love but both partners are selective in what they choose to reveal or share with each other until a later time in the marriage.

²¹ **In those days, while Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's officials from those who guarded the door, became angry and sought to attack King Ahasuerus. ²² But the plot became known to Mordecai and he informed Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in Mordecai's name.**

The plot discovered by Mordecai became critical in saving his people from the wrath of Haman. This was not a coincidence but rather God working in the history of mankind to bring about the savior.

²³ **Then when the plot was investigated and found to be so, they were both hanged on a wooden gallows; and it was written in the Book of the Chronicles in the king's presence.**

This will become important later in the story.

This is also important because this shows that the details of a king's reign were recorded as was mentioned in Nehemiah 12 about "the public annals of the Jewish nation". The following has been replicated for your convenience.

See Nehemiah 12:23

Verse 23

²³ **The sons of Levi, the heads of fathers' households, were registered in the Book of the Chronicles up to the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib. ²⁴ And the heads of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers opposite them, to praise *and* give thanks, as prescribed by David the man of God, division corresponding to division.**

The days of Jonathan began in 410 BC (see chart 1210 above). Since the Book of 2nd Chronicles ends with the rise of Cyrus in 537 BC we know Nehemiah must be talking about a source other than the two Books of Chronicles in the Bible. The book of Chronicles mentioned here is "the public annals of the Jewish nation".