

Esther 1-2 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

Click to Enlarge Timeline
[Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission
[Swindoll's Intro and Overview Chart](#)
[Van Dine's Analysis of Esther](#)
[MacArthur's Intro to Esther](#)

CHRONOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP OF EZRA-NEHEMIAH-ESTHER				
538-515 BC	483-473 BC	457 BC	13 Year Gap	444-425 BC
Ezra 1-6	Book of Esther	Ezra 7-10		Book of Nehemiah
First Return of Jews from Babylonian Exile	58 Year Gap	Second Return of Jews from Babylonian Exile		Third Return of Jews from Babylonian Exile

ESTHER: THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Esther 1	Esther 2	Esther 3	Esther 4	Esther 5	Esther 6	Esther 7	Esther 8	Esther 9	Esther 10
Es 1:1-22	Es 2:1-23	Es 3:1-15	Es 4:1-17	Es 5:1-14	Es 6:1-14	Es 7:1-10	Es 8:1-17	Es 9:1-32	Es 10:1-3
Esther's Exaltation		Haman's Cunning Plot		Haman's Humiliation			Mordecai's Exaltation		
Feast of Ashasuerus		Fast of Mordecai		Feast of Esther			Feast of Purim		
Exaltation		Persecution		Preservations			Commenoration		
Jewish Existence Threatened			Jews Spared						
Gentile Setting	Jewess Elevated	Threat to Jews	Influence of a Jewess				Deliverance of Jews		A Jew Exalted
Feast of Ahasuerus				Feast of Esther and Purim					

Location of Events:
Persian

10 Years
(483-473BC)

[Timeline of Ezra-Nehemiah-Esther-See page 38](#)

[Timeline of Esther related to Ezra & Nehemiah - Parallel lines for Medo-Persian Kings & Daniel, Zechariah, Haggai and Malachi - see page 15](#)

Key Passages: Esther 4:14, 16, Esther 8:17, Esther 9:26, 31

Key Words: See list under "Precept Ministries Inductive Study on Esther"

The Book of Esther is unusual - God's Name is not mentioned once, yet God's "Hand" is clearly present and active throughout the book, to the extent that many see the book of Esther as a veritable "treatise" on the doctrine of Divine Providence (see separate study)

- [Purim Music Video - Purim with a beat. Give it a listen as you ponder "For such a time as this!"](#)
- Marty Goetz and Misha's song - [For Such A Time As This \(Esther's Song\)](#)

PARTIES IN ESTHER	
Esther 1:3 Esther 1:5	Two Parties -Host- Ahasuerus, first for official, Second party for all in Susa
Esther 1:9	Host-Queen Vashti for palace women
Esther 2:18	Honor of Esther as new queen
Esther 3:15	After Haman receives permission to destroy Jews
Esther 5:4-8 Esther 7:2-6	Host-Esther For Ahasuerus and Haman
Esther 8:17	Celebration of Second Edict allowing Jews to fight
Esther 9:17 Esther 9:18-19	Two parties - Celebration of Jewish Deliverance

Esther 1:1 Now it took place in the days of [Ahasuerus](#), the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces,

- **Ahasuerus:** Ezra 6:14. Ezra 4:6 Da 9:1
- **from India:** Esther 8:9 Isa 18:1 37:9
- **127 provinces:** Da 6:1
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

ESTHER: A RECORD OF WONDERS WITHOUT A MIRACLE!

Related Resources:

- The Providence of God
- [Esther - The Movie](#)
- Marty and Misha's song - [For Such A Time As This \(Esther's Song\)](#)

G Campbell Morgan on the Book of Esther - There is no situation in human life or experience for which a message of God cannot be found through the Book. I do not care whether it be a personal, social, national, or international situation. And about the future, this Book has no hesitation. There is much it does not reveal, but the reality of it is insisted upon from beginning to end. The great fundamental things that we need to know in this preparatory life are all here in this Book.

Spurgeon comments that "THE Lord intended by the narrative of Esther's history to set before us a wonderful instance of His **providence**, that when we had viewed it with interest and pleasure, we might praise His name, and then go on to acquire the habit of observing His hand in other histories, and especially in our own lives. Well does Flavel say,

**that he who observes providence
will never be long without a providence to observe.**

The man who can walk through the world and see no God, is said upon inspired authority to be a fool; **but the wise man's eyes are in his head, he sees with an inner sight, and discovers God everywhere at work.** It is his joy to perceive that the Lord is working according to His will in heaven, and earth, and in all deep places. It has been well said that the Book of Esther is **a record of wonders without a miracle**, and therefore, though equally revealing the glory of the Lord, it sets it forth in another fashion from that which is displayed in the overthrow of Pharaoh by miraculous power (Ed: e.g., Red Sea, etc). ([A Good Start A Book for Young Men and Women](#))

YOU are probably aware that some persons have denied the inspiration of the Book of Esther because the name of God does not occur in it. They might with equal justice deny the inspiration of a great number of chapters in the Bible, and of a far greater number of verses. Although the name of God does not occur in the

Book of Esther, the Lord himself is there most conspicuously in every incident which it relates. I have seen portraits bearing the names of persons for whom they were intended, and they certainly needed them, but we have all seen others which required no name, because they were such striking likenesses that the moment you looked upon them you knew them. In the Book of Esther, as much as in any other part of the word of God, and I had almost committed myself by saying — more than anywhere else, the hand of Providence is manifestly to be seen...

The wonderful destruction of Pharaoh and his armies at the Red Sea was a burst of light, which startled the midnight of the world by giving proof to mankind that the Lord lived, and could accomplish his purposes by suspending the laws of nature and working miracles. The marvelous drama enacted at Shushan, the capital of Persia, was intended to be another manifestation of the being and glory of God, working not as formerly, by a miracle, but in the usual methods of His providence, and yet accomplishing all His designs. ([Esther 9:1-Providence - As Seen in the Book of Esther](#))

DIVINE PROVIDENTIAL WITHOUT THE MIRACULOUS

J Sidlow Baxter writes that...

Esther is a crisis book. It is a drama - not of fiction, however, but of genuine fact. It is set on the stage of real history, and gathers round actual personages. Five figures move before us **Ahasuerus**, the Persian monarch; **Vashti**, the deposed queen; **Haman**, the Jew-hater; **Mordecai**, the Jewish leader; and **Esther**, the Jewish girl who became queen. In the background are the royal palace, the Persian capital, and the several millions of Jews scattered throughout the emperor's domains. Esther is the crucial figure in the drama inasmuch as everything turns upon her elevation to the throne and her influence as queen. The book, therefore, is fittingly called after the name of Esther. It describes events which took place at Susa, the principal Persian capital, and covers a period of some twelve years.

The purpose of the book is to demonstrate the providential care of God over His people. It is vital to see this, for herein lies the living significance and permanent value of the book. The great thing here is the fact of providential preservation - "**providential**" as distinct from what we call the "**miraculous**." We are meant to see providential overruling as distinct from supernatural intervening.

That word "providence" comes from the Latin *provideo*, which means that I see a thing beforehand (pro = before; video = I see); so that the root meaning of providence is foresight. Inasmuch, however, as foresight always occasions activity in relation to that which is foreseen, providence comes to have the acquired meaning of activity arising from foresight. Strictly speaking, there is only One who has foresight, and He alone, therefore, is able to act on the basis of foreknowledge. Providence, then, in its one absolute sense, is the Divine foreknowledge and the Divine activity which arises there from; and such providence implies that God wields absolute power over all the works of His hands. It is this which we see demonstrated in the Book of Esther. The crisis about which the book is written is **providentially anticipated** and then **providentially overruled** just at the crucial moment. No miraculous intervention is resorted to. All the happenings recorded are the outworking of circumstances in their natural sequence. Yet while there is no miracle recorded, the whole thing, in its ultimate meaning, is a mighty miracle - the mighty miracle whereby a sovereign Deity so manipulates all non-miraculous events as to bring about a predetermined outcome; and this miracle is all the more miraculous just because it achieves the predetermined outcome without the need for using miracles! Truly, this mysterious reality which we call providence, this sovereign manipulation of all the ordinary, non-miraculous doings which make up the ordinary ongoing of human affairs, so as to bring about, by natural processes, those results which are Divinely predetermined, is the mightiest of all miracles; and it is this, we repeat, which is strikingly demonstrated in this Book of Esther. (Explore the Book)

Robert F Ingram writes that...in God's providential care of the cosmos He governs in precise detail all that He has created. He is the God who sees, but also the God who exercises sovereign control over the means and the end. By His sustaining and redeeming activity every thought, intention, and action (of both the animate and inanimate realms) throughout history have been orchestrated for the purpose of bringing glory to His Son and the establishment of His kingdom. (Tabletalk Magazine: March 1990; Ligonier Ministries)

Now it took place in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces- [Ahasuerus](#) was better known as Xerxes.

David Guzik - This king **Ahasuerus** is well known to history, though more commonly under the name Xerxes. He inherited the vast

Persian Empire from his father, Darius I (who is mentioned in passages such as Ezra 4:24, 5:5-7, 6:1-15; Daniel 6:1 and 6:25; Haggai 1:15 and 2:10). The fact of the existence of this king and circumstance is extremely well attested; archaeologists have discovered the ruins of the very palace where these events happened. At this time (approximately 483 b.c.), Ahasuerus was planning for a doomed invasion of Greece, which would take place several years later. At this time the city of Athens was in its classical glory and in Greece they were celebrating the 79th Olympic games. At this time, the Persian Empire was the largest the world had ever seen. It covered what we call today Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel; and also parts of modern day Egypt, Sudan, Libya, and Arabia. Also at this time Ezra had returned to Jerusalem after it had been conquered by the Babylonians. The temple had been rebuilt some 30 years before, although more simply and without the glory of Solomon's temple.. In 40 years, under the successor of Ahasuerus (Artaxerxes I), Nehemiah would return to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the previously conquered city.

Historical Background: After Israel was divided into 10 northern tribes, usually referred to as Israel, and two southern tribes comprising the nation of Judah, both nations succumbed to idolatry. The 10 northern tribes were defeated by and exiled in Assyria in 722BC. The southern nation of Judah (Judah and Benjamin) were taken into exile into Babylon in three waves. In 605BC Nebuchadnezzar took Daniel and his friends (among others) into exile. Then in 597BC Ezekiel and 10, 000 were taken into exile. Finally in 586BC Jerusalem and the Temple were sacked and the third group of exiles was taken to Babylon. In this final siege...

Those who had escaped from the sword (Nebuchadnezzar) carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete. (2Chr 36:20-21).

Comment: And so for 490 years prior Judah had failed to let the land rest every seventh year. But this passage also indicates that Judah would be freed from Babylonian exile after the 70 years.

In fact over 150 years prior to Judah's return from Babylonian exile, Isaiah records an incredible prophecy in which God promises that the Jewish exiles in Babylon will be released and return and rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple...

Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, "I, the LORD, am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself And spreading out the earth all alone, 25 causing the omens of boasters to fail, Making fools out of diviners, Causing wise men to draw back And turning their knowledge into foolishness, 26 Confirming the word of His servant And performing the purpose of His messengers. It is I Who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited!' And of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built.' And I will raise up her ruins again. (**Note** that this prophecy is given over a century before Jerusalem was destroyed and here God says He will rebuild it!) 27 "It is I Who says to the depth of the sea, 'Be dried up!' And I will make your rivers dry. 28 "It is I Who says of **Cyrus**, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the temple, "Your foundation will be laid." (**Note** that King Cyrus of Persia will not even be born for another 150 years! God "plans ahead" for His people Israel and beloved He does the same for your life and mine!) 45:1 Thus says the LORD to Cyrus His anointed, Whom I have taken by the right hand, To subdue nations before him And to loose the loins of kings; To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: (**Note** this might refer to the iron gates of the impregnable fortress of Babylon which Cyrus entered with relative ease because after diverting the river and entering through the river bed into the city, they found the iron gates unlocked making the capture of city relatively easy.) 2 "I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars. 3 "I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden wealth of secret places, So that you may know that it is I, The LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name. (Note that God wanted King Cyrus to understand it was He alone Who had raised up the king.) 4 "For the sake of Jacob My servant, And Israel My chosen one, I have also called you by your name; I have given you a title of honor Though you have not known Me (**Note** that Cyrus was used by the God even though he did not have a personal relationship with Him!, cf Pr 21:1). 5 "I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; 6 That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other (**Note** that this is one of the great aims of fulfilled prophecy - that there is no god but Jehovah!), 7 The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these. (**Note** that God is sovereign over life and death.) (Isaiah 44:24-45:7)

And so Esther opens some 60 years after the first return of Jewish exiles to Jerusalem and after the Temple was rebuilt. In Biblical chronology, the events in Esther take place between Ezra 1-6 and Ezra 7-10, a book which chronicles the first and second return of the Jews from Babylonian exile.

Donald Curtis has some interesting remarks...

You cannot read Esther without asking questions. Why is there no reference to God or religious activities? Why does Esther hide her Jewish identity? Why is there no reference to the Feast of Passover even though the date for that feast may be inferred? Why did Vashti not appear before the king? Why did Mordecai refuse to bow to Haman, and why does Haman react so out of proportion? Did Ahasuerus ever have an original thought? Did anyone ever eat at the banquets or only drink? Why did Esther not just come out and accuse Haman instead of doing the two banquets?

You can see that Esther is a deeper book than meets the eye, but what purpose do these literary devices serve? The answer is that they underpin the central message in this book, which is **the providential care of God for His people**. Both Mordecai and Esther are non-practicing Jews. Even more so, Mordecai's behavior places all Jews in Persia under a death sentence. In the telling of the history, the central characters do not appeal to their God; they do not make the connection between Passover and the crisis crashing on them. Mordecai and Esther seek a human solution with a foreign king. By highlighting the paired events, ironic reversals, and puzzles, the author of Esther begs us to see God behind the scenes. We see that God rescued His people because He cares for them. We are also challenged to see the hand of God in the events surrounding our lives...

The Lord still works today. I would hope that, after this study of Esther, you would look at events in your life from the perspective that "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). Behind friends, families, enemies, leaders, events, and so forth, He moves and directs to bring about His purposes on the earth. The interesting thing about Esther is that it offers the hope that every once in awhile, we may be able to see His hidden hand. ([Esther - Irony and Providence](#))

Ray Stedman calls **Esther** a strange book for the Bible - For many this little book is a puzzle, for it seems to be out of place in the Bible. There is no mention in it of the name of God; there is no reference to worship or to faith; there is no prediction of the Messiah; there is no mention of heaven or hell—in short, there is nothing religious about it, at least on the surface. It is a gripping tale, but one might rather expect to find it in the pages of the Reader's Digest than the Bible.

Swindoll writes "Though God may at times seem distant, and though He is invisible to us, He is always invincible. This is the main lesson of the Book of Esther. Though absent by name from the pages of this particular book of Jewish history, God is present in every scene and in the movement of every event, until He ultimately and finally brings everything to a marvelous climax as He proves Himself Lord of His people, the Jews. (Esther: a woman of strength and dignity)

Paul Ferguson writes that...

Most commentators, however, believe that the primary reason the Name of God is not directly mentioned is to give a graphic and a classic illustration of the hidden workings of God in providence. This book is like an unsigned painting that makes us search for clues by thinking even more deeply about the artistic style of the artist...

The Book of Esther practically challenges us in our own lives to actively decide and acknowledge the hand of God in our circumstances in life or alternatively dismiss those things as merely coincidence. It calls us to a life of walking by faith not by sight. God can use the lowliest and most insignificant person and by providence control the circumstances around them to allow them to be a mighty instrument of His salvation. There are no blind impersonal forces at work in human history. We must see God in the foreground of every single detail of our life from the time, place and family we were born into and even till the time and place of our death (Rom. 8:28-39). The micro as well as the macro details of our life are subject to His purpose. Therefore, there is true meaning and purpose to every aspect of your life. All of this needs to be submitted to God's will. (God in the Shadows)

Comment: It follows that as we read and study Esther, we seek not for great miraculous movement of God, but carefully observe His orchestration of events seemingly behind the scenes, but always in complete control. This truth should encourage each of us that the "invisible" but invincible God of the Book of Esther is the same God in our lives, working in the seemingly mundane, humdrum circumstances of our lives, whether they be good or bad.

John MacArthur explains that "What you have in Esther is not a whole lot of miracles. There is nothing like the Red Sea opening up and them walking across, or the walls of Jericho fall down, you don't have any of that. You just have all kinds of interwoven

circumstances as God works His will. He can do it through miracle or through providence. I do believe in miracles, but I believe in miracles in terms of Scripture. Today, I believe in the providence of God. I believe we are living in the day when God is doing things through His providence. I don't see great, sweeping, supernatural invasions, but I see God's providence accomplishing His will.

Sidlow Baxter adds that "if the story had specifically explained, in so many words, that it was God who was bringing about all those happenings which are recorded, the dramatic force and moral impact of the story would have been reduced; for above all, we are meant to see, in the natural outworking of events, how without violating human free will, and without interrupting the ordinary ongoing of human affairs, a hidden Power unsuspectedly but infallibly controls all things.

Michael G. Wechsler - wrote an interesting article [Shadow and Fulfillment in the Book of Esther \(Bibliotheca Sacra - 154:615, July 1997\)](#) and has the following chart in The Moody Bible Commentary.

SHADOW	SUBSTANCE
Esther was prepared as the mediator of deliverance before the need for it (i.e., before Haman's promotion and ensuing decree) had arisen (Est 2:17-18).	Jesus was prepared as the mediator of salvation before the need for it (i.e., before man's creation and ensuing sin) had arisen (Rev 13:8).
Esther's three-day period of fasting began during the daylight hours of Nisan 14, the first day of Passover (Est 3:12).	Jesus' three-day period of physical death, initiated on the cross, is identified in Scripture as the period of His "humiliation" or "affliction" (Php 2:8).
Fasting in general—and thus Esther's fast—is identified in Scripture with "humiliation" or "affliction," and since mourning was involved, the fast may also be viewed as representing a temporary "state of death" (Lv 23:27-29).	Jesus' three-day period of physical death, initiated on the cross, is identified in Scripture as the period of His "humiliation" or "affliction" (Php 2:8).
Esther's period of "affliction" ended on the third day, Nisan 16 (Est 5:1).	Jesus' period of "affliction" ended on the third day, Nisan 16 (Ac 10:40; 1Co 15:4).
At the end of her fast (i.e., after "arising" from her symbolic state of death), but before presenting herself before the king, Esther was clothed in royalty (Est 5:1; LXX: "glory").	At the end of His three-day period of death, but before presenting Himself before God the Father in heaven, Jesus was resurrected in royal "glory" (1Co 15:20, 43).
On the basis of her fast, Esther entered the king's presence in "the inner court of the king's palace" and was accepted into his presence with favor (Est 4:16; 5:2).	On the basis of His atoning self-sacrifice, Jesus entered the Father's presence in the true holy of holies in heaven and was accepted into His presence to sit "at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 2:9-10, 14; 9:12, 24; 10:12; 12:2).
The result of Esther's acceptance by the king was the salvation of her people Israel, with the further result that many among the Gentiles turned in faith to the true God and became one with the people of God (Est 8:17).	The result of Jesus' acceptance by the Father was the salvation of His people Israel ("the lost sheep of the house of Israel"; Mt 15:24), with the further result that many among the Gentiles turned (and are turning) in faith to the true God to become one with the people of God (Rom 2:28-29; Eph 2:14-15; Col 2:11; Ac 2:10-11; 11:18; Gal 3:8).

**God is able to use ordinary events
to produce extraordinary results!**

Now it took place in the days of - Barry Davis notes that "The Hebrew begins with wayhî bîmê (and it came to pass in the days of) (The other four occurrences are in Ge 14:1; Ruth 1:1; Isa. 7:1; and Jer. 1:3)—words which, without exception, in all five occurrences in Scripture, introduce impending catastrophe or doom. Yet, on all five occasions the ending to each story is happy, but before that happy ending is realized, much grief occurs. The grief of the Book of Esther is not only that the people of Israel are in captivity but also that they are at the brink of extinction at the hands of their captors (Esther 3:1–15). (Ruth & Esther: God Behind the Seen)

Comment: I love Davis' title "God Behind the Seen!"

The Ahasuerus who reigned - NET says "I am referring to that Ahasuerus who used to rule over... ". The NIV substitutes Xerxes for Ahasuerus. He is one of 5 main characters in the book of Esther through which God (always the "main Character") works invisibly to carry out His will - King Ahasuerus, Queen Vashti, Mordecai, Esther and Haman.

Ahasuerus - He appears either by name or in a reference in every chapter of Esther except chapter four. The name Ahasuerus is the Hebrew form (Hebrew transliteration) of the Persian name "**Khshayarsha**," also thought by most scholars to be **Xerxes I**, his Greek name. He reigned as king over Persia 486-464 BC. Ahasuerus' father was Darius the Great, or his grandfather, Cyrus the Great. Davis adds that "This was the king who, because a storm destroyed a bridge that he had commanded be built across the Hellespont (Dardanelles), ordered that three hundred lashes be given to the Hellespont and that the heads of the bridge-building engineers be cut off." (Ibid)

Reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces - King Ahasuerus was clearly a potent potentate, the most powerful ruler of his day! Just as the prophetic interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar had predicted, the mighty Kingdom of Babylon would be followed by the Kingdom of Medo-Persia and the Persians would be the dominant member. Indeed, Ahasuerus' kingdom was considerably larger than that of Nebuchadnezzar. This king clearly had everything the world had to offer but he did not have God, the greatest prize any human can obtain. Indeed, when one has God, he is far richer than all the kings of all the nations combined! How often we forget how rich we really are when we as believers have Christ "in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col 2:3).

India - Literally "Cush" which was the name of a son of Ham and then of a nation situated south of Egypt with differing boundaries at different periods of history. The Hebrew word Cush has been traditionally translated Ethiopia, following the Septuagint, or earliest Greek translation, but Cush was not identical with Ethiopia as presently known.

Matthew Henry wrote...But, though the name of God be not in it [Esther], the finger of God is directing many minute events for the bringing about of his people's deliverance."

God Moves In A Mysterious Way

by William Cowper

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

[Play Vocal version by Gary Brumley](#)

Prayer and Providence - in Johnson was serving his men as chaplain on an island in the South Pacific. He prepared to go on a bombing raid on Jap-occupied islands several hundred miles away. The mission was a complete success. On the homeward course the plane began to lose altitude and the engines seemed to fade out. But God had provided an island, and a safe landing was

made. Later they learned that the enemy was just one –half mile in each direction, yet their landing had not been discovered. The staff sergeant came and said, “Chaplain, you have been telling us for months of the need of praying and believing God to answer in time of trouble, and that He does it right away. Now it is your chance to prove what you have been preaching. We’re out of gas, base several hundred miles away ... and almost surrounded by japs.” Johnson began to pray and lay hold of the promises and believed that God would work a miracle. All afternoon he was on his knees. Night came and the crew slept on the ground. Johnson continues to pray. About 2 a.m. the staff sergeant was strangely around and walking to the water’s edge, discovered a metal float, which had drifted up on the beach – a barge on which was fifty barrels of high octane gasoline. In a few hours the crew reached their home base safely. An investigation revealed that the skipper of a U. S. tanker, finding his ship in sub infested waters, had his gasoline cargo removed so as to minimize the danger of a torpedo hit. Barrels were placed on barges and put adrift 600 miles from where Johnson and the plane crew were forced down. God had navigated one of these barges through wind and current and beached it fifty steps from the stranded men.

Related Resources:

- [Book of Esther - Bible Survey](#)
- [Who was Hadassah in the Bible?](#)
- [Why doesn't the book of Esther mention God?](#)
- [Who was Mordecai in the Bible?](#)
- [Who was Xerxes in the Bible?](#)
- [Who was Esther in the Bible?](#)
- [Who was Xerxes in the Bible?](#)
- [What is the Feast of Purim?](#)
- [Who was Vashti in the Bible?](#)
- [What is the longest verse in the Bible?](#)

Esther 1:2 in those days as King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne which was at the citadel in Susa

- **sat** 2Sa 7:1 1Ki 1:46 Da 4:4
- **Shushan:** Es 2:3 3:15 4:16 9:12-15 Ne 1:1 Da 8:2
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

[Susa](#) ([see map](#)) is located in the southwestern region of modern Iran approximately 150 miles north of the head of the Persian Gulf and about 200 miles east of the city of **Babylon**. Susa was the city in which Nehemiah served as King Artaxerxes' cupbearer in Neh 1:1. Susa (or Shushan) was described by Daniel as the site of one of his visions...

And I looked in the vision, and it came about while I was looking, that I was in **the citadel of Susa**, which is in the province of Elam; and I looked in the vision, and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal. (Da 8:2)

Comment: Note that Daniel was translated in his vision to Susa, the capital of Persia, **even before** the Persians (ram in Da 8:3-4 = Bear of Da 7:5 = the Silver of Da 2:32, Da 2:39) had conquered Babylon. In addition, Daniel's vision prophesied the eventual defeat of Persia by Greece (Da 8:5-8 prophesied of the Medo-Persian empires defeat by Greece, Da 8:21, led by Alexander the Great who himself quickly rose and fell resulting in 4 divisions of the Grecian empire, Da 8:8), as well as the still more distant break-up of the Grecian empire. It is not surprising that those who deny supernatural divine inspiration must try to assign the book of Daniel to a later period.

Davis adds that...Susa itself was considered to be a garden paradise, a capital truly fit for a king. It abounded in fruits and flowers and was particularly famous for a specific kind of lily from which the city received its name. This fortified city was surrounded by streams and mountains that added to its beauty and attraction as a royal citadel during the cooler months of the year (Susa was intolerably hot during the summer). Furthermore, the term *bīyrā(h)* (often translated “capital”) is best understood to mean “acropolis,” which in the Persian culture indicated an elevated palace complex within a city that was designed both to suggest the majestic grandeur of the king and to provide for his protection. (Ibid)

Mattoon writes that...He had great power and control. There was one thing, however, he could not control and that was himself. As we will see, he was proud, greedy, impulsive, prone to temper tantrums, easily flattered and swayed. Traditionally he was considered a weak king controlled by eunuchs. He was noted for his insane attack on European Greece... Persian kings were known to flaunt their wealth as Xerxes does here. Kings would even wear jewels in their beards. Jewels were a sign of rank among Persian men. Soldiers also wore great amounts of gold and jewels into battle. The Immortals were the famous bodyguard troops of

the king. Their number was never allowed to go under 10,000. Substitutes were always ready when there was sickness or death. They were clad in gold decked raiment.

Esther 1:3 in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his princes and attendants, the army officers of Persia and Media, the nobles and the princes of his provinces being in his presence.

- A.M. 3542, B.C. 462
- **he gave a banquet:** Es 2:18 Ge 40:20 1Ki 3:15 Da 5:1 Mk 6:21
- **of Persia:** Es 1:14 Ezr 1:2 Isa 21:2 Jer 51:11 Da 5:28 8:20
- **the nobles:** Da 3:2,3 6:1,6,7
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

IT'S PARTY TIME!

The third year of his reign - From historical records we can determine that **Ashasuerus** reigned from 486-464BC, so the third year would be approximately 483BC. Compare this with the date given in Esther 2:7, "**the seventh year of his reign.**"

Banquet (04960) (mishteh) is derived from a word referring to drink and refers to a feast. Used 43x in the OT (Note repetition in Esther) - Gen 19:3; 21:8; 26:30; 29:22; 40:20; Jdg 14:10, 12, 17; 1 Sam 25:36; 2 Sam 3:20; 1Kgs 3:15; Ezra 3:7; Esther 1:3, 5, 9; 2:18; 5:4, 5, 6, 5:8, 12, 14; 6:14; 7:2, 7f; 8:17; 9:17, 18, 19, 22; Job 1:4f; Pr 15:15; Eccl 7:2; Isa 5:12; 25:6; Jer 16:8; 51:39; Dan 1:5, 8, 10, 16

Persia and Media (Esther 1:3, 14, 18, 19) - Note the reversal of the the order compared to Daniel (Da 5:28, 6:8, 12, 15, 8:20). During the first years of the Medio-Persian alliance, Media was the dominant force, but when Cyrus rose to power in 559 BC the seat of power shifted to the Persians. It is fascinating how even the word order of God's Word is meant to convey truth!

Esther 1:4 And he displayed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor of his great majesty for many days, 180 days

- **And he displayed** Isa 39:2 Eze 28:5 Da 4:30
- **the riches:** Ps 76:1-4 145:5,12,13 Da 2:37-44 7:9-14 Mt 4:8 6:13 Ro 9:23 Eph 1:18 Col 1:27 Rev 4:11
- **splendor of his great majesty:** 1Ch 29:11,12,25 Job 40:10 Ps 21:5 45:3 93:1 Da 4:36 5:18 2Pe 1:16,17
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

HOW TO HAVE A LONG PARTY!

Riches of his royal glory... splendor of his great majesty - This is almost redundant but serves to emphasize his wealth and prestige. In short Ashasuerus was incredibly wealthy! This will make his acceptance later of a orphaned Jewish girl to be his queen that much more incredible!

180 days - Why so long? We cannot state with certainty but from history we know that Xerxes would invade Greece in 482BC (it is 483BC at the time of the banquet) and it has been postulated that this was a military planning session or calculated to convince any doubters that he was wealthy enough to carry out a campaign against Greece.

Swindoll writes that...

Archaeologists excavating at Susa have unearthed inscriptions in which this king refers to himself as, "The great king. The king of kings. The king of the lands occupied by many races. The king of this great earth." Old Ahaseurus didn't struggle with an inferiority complex! (Esther: a woman of strength and dignity)

Esther 1:5 When these days were completed, the king gave a banquet lasting seven days for all the people who were present at the citadel in Susa, from the greatest to the least, in the court of the garden of the king's palace.

- **seven days:** 2Ch 7:8,9 30:21-25
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

The Banquet of Ahasuerus

PARTYING FOR SEVEN DAYS STRAIGHT!

Banquet - This is the same Hebrew word used in Esther 1:3, but different Greek words are used by the Septuagint to translate these two uses. The Greek word in Esther 1:3 is **dochē** (a feast) and here in Esther 1:5 is **potos** which signifies a drinking party or a carousing, which fits perfectly with the description in Esther 1:8.

All the people - This is almost inconceivable that the entire city would be at this carousing but **Davis** writes...Lest we worry that a banquet (i.e., drinking bout) that included everyone in the city would be beyond reason and beyond the managerial capacity of even a Persian king, we need only be reminded that “according to Ctesias, the court physician to Artaxerxes Mnemon (405–359 B.C.), no less than 15,000 feasted at the table of the Persian kings ... and ... Assurnasirpal had a ten-day celebration for **69,574 guests.**” (Ibid)

Esther 1:6 There were hangings of fine white and violet linen held by cords of fine purple linen on silver rings and marble columns, and couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and precious stones.

- **white:** Ex 26:1,31,32,36,37
- **violet,** Es 8:15
- **the beds:** Es 7:8 Eze 23:41 Am 2:8 6:4
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Davis comments "There is no mistaking the fact that the author desires his readers to be impressed by the possessions of the king. Yet the author establishes Ahasuerus' greatness only to show how it pales in comparison to the providence of God. (Ibid)

Esther 1:7 Drinks were served in golden vessels of various kinds, and the royal wine was plentiful according to the king's bounty.

- **vessels of gold:** 1Ki 10:21 2Ch 9:20 Da 5:2-4
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Royal wine - Not just common wine but as the Septuagint translates it "wine which the king himself used to drink."

Plentiful according to the king's bounty - A seemingly endless supply of the best wine!

No Bad News - The unwillingness to listen to bad news has been blamed for everything from space shuttle disasters to corporate collapses to the spread of terrorism. Lengthy studies aren't needed to determine why this happens. Bad news reveals problems; problems require solutions; solutions cost time, money, and energy we would rather spend celebrating past successes.

This isn't new to our century. In the 5th century BC, King Ahasuerus of Persia refused to allow mourners to enter his gates (Esther 4:1-2). One commentator suggests that he preferred to surround himself with people who were awed by his wealth and were eager to attend his lavish parties (1:4). His reluctance to be bothered by bad news nearly resulted in the annihilation of the Jewish people.

Contrast the leadership of Ahasuerus with that of Jesus, who said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Ahasuerus ruled his kingdom by allowing only happy people to enter his presence. Jesus builds His kingdom by welcoming the burdened and sorrowful into His presence. What's more, Jesus not only invites us to tell Him our bad news, He has the willingness and the power to turn our most troubling circumstances into a celebration of praise.— by Julie Ackerman Link

I walked life's path with worry,
Disturbed and quite unblest,

Until I trusted Jesus;
Now faith has giv'n me rest.
—Bosch

The Gospel is bad news to those who reject it and good news to those who receive it.

Esther 1:8 The drinking was done according to the law, there was no compulsion, for so the king had given orders to each official of his household that he should do according to the desires of each person.

Esther 1:8 and no restraint was placed on the drinking. The king had ordered every wine steward in his household to serve as much as each person wanted. (HCSB)

Esther 1:8 And drinking was according to this edict: "There is no compulsion." For the king had given orders to all the staff of his palace to do as each man desired. (ESV)

Esther 1:8 By the king's command each guest was allowed to drink in his own way, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished. (NIV)

Esther 1:8 The royal edict did not, however, make drinking obligatory, the king having instructed the officials of his household to treat each guest according to the guest's own wishes. (NJB)

Esther 1:8 By edict of the king, no limits were placed on the drinking, for the king had instructed all his palace officials to serve each man as much as he wanted. (NLT)

- **there was no compulsion** Jer 35:8 51:7 Hab 2:15,16
- **to each official** Joh 2:8
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Law - This is not the Hebrew word "**torah**" but the word **dath/dat** ([01881](#)) which occurs primarily in the book of Esther means decree, edict or law. **Dath/dat** describes either a permanent law that governed a nation (Esther 1:13, 15) or an edict sent out under the king's authority (Esther 1:19, 2:8, 3:8, 3:14, 15). Apparently the law in place was that when the king drank, everyone else would follow suit, but this verse suggests this law was temporarily set aside.

Esther 1:9 Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the palace which belonged to King Ahasuerus

- **the queen:** Es 5:4,8
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Queen Vashti ("desired one") - Some (Herodotus 7:61 = "*Their commander was Otanes, son of Amestris and father of Xerxes' wife.*") identify her with Amestris (Greek name = "friend" or "companion"), daughter of Otanes, who is the only wife of Ahasuerus known to secular sources.

The reason for a separate banquet is simply not known and it is best to avoid speculation. **Davis** gives us good advice in this regard writing that...Going beyond this immediate passage to discover and develop principles for life in relation to the truth may appear to be more profitable than sticking to the passage at hand. Yet we must be careful not to engage in what is called eisegesis, that is, reading truths gained from other sources into this passage where those truths do not exist. (Ibid)

Esther 1:10 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus,

- **the heart:** Ge 43:34 Judges 16:25 1Sa 25:36,37 2Sa 13:28 Pr 20:1 Ec 7:2-4 Ec 10:19 Eph 5:18,19
- **Harbona:** Es 7:9
- **eunuchs,** Da 1:3-5,18,19
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE KING'S DRUNK DEMAND

Despite the King's great political power and incredible material wealth, we now discover that the King's palace is not a "heaven on earth." This section shows that you can have everything your heart desires and still not be happy!

When the heart of the king was merry with wine - In a word the king was "smashed." He was under the control of wine, which prompted his request for Queen Vashti's appearance.

As an aside Herodotus tells us that the Persians actually believed that intoxication took them closer to the spiritual world! They would have liked Paul's words in Ephesians which speak of effects of being filled with wine and filled with the Spirit...

And **do not get drunk** ([present imperative with a negative](#)) with wine, for that is dissipation, but **be filled** ([present imperative](#)) with the Spirit, (Ephesians 5:18+)

THOUGHT - What is one of the best ways to discern if a man is drunk? Listen to them speak! The king gave a drunken request. Notice he did not give it on the first day, but on the seventh by which time he was probably maximally dissipated! There is an important principle in Paul's two commands (negative then positive), but you need to read the next word in the Greek text to see it. The first word in Ephesians 5:19+ is speaking (*lalountes*), indicating that the first member of the body which is under the control of the Holy Spirit is our tongue! How can you tell if a man is drunk or under control of "spirits"? Listen to him speak. How can you tell a man is under the control of the Holy Spirit? Listen to him speak! And notice that speaking is in the [present tense](#) which depicts one's continual speech pattern. In context of Ephesians 5:19+ you can see this speech is God honoring ("in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"). **Husbands, listen up!** If you want to control your tongue around your wife (e.g., obey Paul's command in Eph 4:29+), give the control of your tongue to the control of the Holy Spirit. He is the only One Who has the supernatural power necessary to truly control our tongues. **James** makes this very clear writing

"So also the **tongue** is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! 6 And the **tongue** is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the **tongue** is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. 7 For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. 8 But **no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.** (James 3:5-8+)

Could it be stated more clearly? The point is that the only way we can truly control our speech is by daily surrendering to the filling (control) of the Holy Spirit. There is simply no other way to control our tongue! This begs the question - Do you begin each day seeking the filling of the Spirit? If not you are vulnerable to falling into sin, not only with your tongue with with other members of your body as well!

Related Resources:

- [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) or How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!
- [Make Disciples 2 - Begins study of Five Most Important Passages for Believers](#) - and Ephesians 5:18 is at the top of the list!
- [Make Disciples 3 - Chart comparing Filled with the Spirit and the Word](#)

Eunuchs - Men who had been castrated, thus made incapable of reproduction. They would have no desire for women. [What is a eunuch in the Bible? What does the Bible say about eunuchs?](#)

Esther 1:11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown in order to display her beauty to the people and the princes, for she was beautiful.

- [Queen Vashti](#) Pr 16:9 23:29-33 Mk 6:21,22
- **for she was beautiful.**, 1Sa 25:3 2Sa 14:25 Pr 31:30
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Display her beauty - Xerxes was a proud man. Instead of protecting his wife [Queen Vashti](#), he sought to proudly promote her. In 1

Corinthians 13:7+ Paul writes that "love bears all things." The verb for "bears" is [stego](#) which is derived from stego which describes a thatch or covering of a building. Stego then means to protect by covering or concealing. Love hides the faults of others or covers them. Husbands, how are you doing? Are you more like King Ashasuerus or like Paul's description of love? And remember the only way to truly carry out this genre of love (that bears all things) is by dependence on the enabling power of the Holy Spirit (being filled with the Spirit Eph 5:18, walking by the Spirit Gal 5:16).

Esther 1:12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. Then the king became very angry and his wrath burned within him.

- **refused:** Ge 3:16 Eph 5:22,24 1Pe 3:1
- **Then the king** Pr 19:12 20:2 Da 2:12 3:13,19 Na 1:6 Rev 6:16,17
- **his wrath burned within him.:** Ex 32:19,22 De 29:20 Ps 74:1 79:5
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Vashti Refuses the King!

POSE OR BE DEPOSED!

The king controlled 127 provinces but could not coerce his own queen. So in spite of his political prowess and material excesses, he could not control his own heart. He was not just "angry" but was very angry, which is further amplified by the figurative language of burning wrath! Can you picture his face? Beet red, nostrils flaring, breathing deeply. This was certainly not the happy ending one would expect for a ca chapter having three banquets! The world thinks weekend and thinks "p-a-r-t-y" crying let's "party hard!" One could hardly imagine out partying King Ahasuerus and look at the end result. And there was even more to come as the subsequent passages reveal!

TSK - This refusal of Vashti's, to expose herself to the view of such a group of drunken Bacchanalians, was highly praiseworthy, and became the dignity of her rank and the modesty of her sex.

Ferguson writes...

The description of grandeur and power in these verses brings the careful reader to consider who is really in charge in this world? In this incident we are confronted with the shallow nature of man's power and pomp. One woman at a party refused a request and the whole Persian Empire was rocked to the core. Despite the boastings of man, he is such a fragile creature. A tiny virus we cannot even see can destroy the strongest and healthiest in a few hours. Only an involuntary heartbeat or brainwave separates us from eternity.

The lust of Ahasuerus provoked by alcohol quickly leads to another unbridled passion of anger. Instead of humility at this demonstration of the limit of his power, his deflated pride leads to his famed fits of anger. Indeed, often a person under the influence of alcohol can go from drunken happiness to intense anger in just a few seconds. All the superficial fun and frivolity of the six-month feast is abruptly brought to a halt by the disobedience of his queen. This is a great humiliation as here is the king seeking to show off his power and he cannot even get his wife to obey him.

The reality is that the material benefits and power of such an empire can ultimately never satisfy the heart of man. Only God can bring true contentment and satisfaction in the heart of a man. The ultimate irony of human vanity is that the absolute monarch of the great Persian Empire is not able to govern himself. We may put a man on the moon, split the atom, use the latest gadget technology, but after 6,000 years man still cannot master his passions.

The question of whether Vashti was right or wrong to refuse her husband's request is hotly debated over. Some say she was right to protect her modesty and others that she should have submitted to her husband.

At this point we can simply conclude that the Bible does not give us enough information to make a definitive judgment on the issue. We should not seek to deduce lessons from Scripture that it does not definitively adjudicate on. **The key application from this incident is the providential workings of God amidst the wrong actions and behaviour of sinful men and women.** (Ibid)

The historian **Herodotus** had the following story of King Ahasuerus' propensity to uncontrollable anger...

They then began to build bridges across the Hellespont from Abydos to that headland between Sestus and

Madytus, the Phoenicians building one of ropes made from flax, and the Egyptians building a second one out of papyrus. From Abydos to the opposite shore it is a distance of almost two-thirds of a mile. But no sooner had the strait been bridged than a great storm came on and cut apart and scattered all their work. Xerxes flew into a rage at this, and he commanded that the Hellespont be struck with three hundred strokes of the whip and that a pair of foot-chains be thrown into the sea. It's even been said that he sent off a rank of branders along with the rest to the Hellespont! He also commanded the scourgers to speak outlandish and arrogant words: "You hateful water, our master lays his judgement on you thus, for you have unjustly punished him even though he's done you no wrong! Xerxes the king will pass over you, whether you wish it or not! It is fitting that no man offer you sacrifices, for you're a muddy and salty river!" In these ways he commanded that the sea be punished and also that the heads be severed from all those who directed the bridging of the Hellespont.

Esther 1:13 Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times--for it was the custom of the king so to speak before all who knew law and justice.

- **the wise:** Jer 10:7 Da 2:2,12,27 4:6,7 5:7 Mt 2:1
- **Understood:** 1Ch 12:32 Mt 16:3
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Then - **Then** is a time sensitive" word (cf expressions of time) - often marks sequence or next in order of time and thus it should arrest our attention to observe **what** is occurring next (**Why?**, etc). Here, "then" marks a major paradigm shift in the way the kingdom is to be ordered or run in regard to husbands and wives!

Understood the times - This phrase is also a found in a great description of the men of the tribe of Issachar, one of the sons of Jacob...

1 Chr 12:32 And of the sons of Issachar, men who **understood the times**, with knowledge of what Israel should do, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their kinsmen were at their command.

In short, these **wise men** could have been experienced counselors like the sons of Issachar or they may also have been more "religiously" oriented (occult, eg, astrologers, diviners) as was common in the superstitious ancient orient (See Isa 44:25, Da 5:15).

For (Note this is a term of explanation - ask what is being explained!) **it was the custom of the king so to speak before all who knew law and justice** - In other words the king was expected to consult others before he made a major decision.

Esther 1:14 and were close to him: Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media who had access to the king's presence and sat in the first place in the kingdom--

- **the seven:** Ezr 7:14
- **who had access to the king's presence:** 2Ki 25:19 Mt 18:10 Rev 22:4
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Who had access to the king's presence - Literally in Hebrew " seers of the face of the king" NLT = "They met with the king regularly and held the highest positions in the empire."

Esther 1:15 "According to law, what is to be done with Queen Vashti, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus delivered by the eunuchs?"

- **what is to be done** - Esther 6:6
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

NLT Esther 1:15 "What must be done to Queen Vashti?" the king demanded. "What penalty does the law provide for a queen who refuses to obey the king's orders, properly sent through his eunuchs?"

Esther 1:16 In the presence of the king and the princes, Memucan said, "Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but also all the princes and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.

- **has wronged:** Ac 18:14 25:10 1Co 6:7,8
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Esther 1:17 "For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women causing them to look with contempt on their husbands by saying, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in to his presence, but she did not come.'

- **Look with contempt:** 2Sa 6:16 Eph 5:33
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

For - This **term of explanation** explains what? Re-read the preceding passage(s).

Look (in their eyes KJV) ([05869](#)) ('**ayin**) - The eye is a good barometer of the inner thoughts of man. It speaks of character, attitude, inclination, opinion, passion, response. The Hebrew word 'ayin was used figuratively with regard to the outer reflection of an inner attitude (see Ps 18:27; Pr 6:17; Isa 2:11).

Contempt ([059](#)) (**bazah**) is a primary root which means to accord little worth, to despise, to disdain, to hold in contempt. **Todespise** means to look down on one with contempt or aversion; regard as negligible, worthless, or distasteful and may suggest an emotional response ranging from strong dislike to loathing. **Contempt** describes the state of mind of one who despises and shows lack of respect or reverence for something or someone and can include a willful disobedience to or open disrespect.

In Ps 51:7 David says God will not "**despise**" a "broken and contrite heart." (Ps 51:7)

It is interesting that in the NT Paul explains that in marriage "the wife (is to) see to it that she **respect** (Greek = phobeo) her husband." (Eph 5:33-note)

Esther 1:18 "This day the ladies of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's conduct will speak in the same way to all the king's princes, and there will be plenty of contempt and anger.

- **ladies:** Judges 5:29 1Ki 11:3
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Behind the Throne - (Daniel 2:21) During my lifetime I have seen evil men rise to political and military power, make colossal blunders, and pass off the scene. Even good leaders leave a record that includes mistakes and weaknesses.

The first chapter of Esther shows us the pride of King Ahasuerus, head of the mighty Persian Empire. He hosted an elaborate festival designed to display his riches and splendor. After 7 days of partying, the king gave orders to his servants to bring Vashti, his queen, before the revelers so they could see her great beauty. But Queen Vashti refused to come, humiliating the great king of Persia (vv.12-18).

Ahasuerus was furious and sought counsel from the wise men of his kingdom. They advised him to remove Vashti as queen and "give her royal position to another who is better than she" (v.19). God used these unusual events to place a Jewish girl in a strategic position to preserve His people from destruction.

God's name is not mentioned in the entire book of Esther, but the message in chapter 1 comes through loud and clear: God can bring good out of everything, even when flawed and mistake-prone humans are involved. He is the real power behind the throne.—Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We comprehend Him not,
Yet earth and heaven tell,
God sits as sovereign on the throne,
And ruleth all things well.
—Gerhardt

Esther 1:19 "If it pleases the king, let a royal edict be issued by him and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media so that it cannot be repealed, that Vashti may no longer come into the presence of King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal position to another who is more worthy than she.

- **it pleases the king:** Es 1:21 3:9 8:5
- **so that it cannot be repealed** Heb. it pass not away, Es 8:8 Da 6:8-15,17
- **to another who is more worthy than she.** 1Sa 15:28 1Ki 3:28
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

If it pleases the king - "If upon the king it is good"; " Deferential language was common in ancient Near Eastern court language addressing a despot; it occurs often in Esther." (NET)

Edict (01697) (**dabar**) literally is a word, that which is said. The qualifier royal makes "edict" an excellent translation. In English an **edict** is a proclamation having the force of law. This word is found 8 times in Esther (Esther 1:19, 1:20, 3:14, 4:8, 8:13, 9:1, 9:13, 9:14).

So that - Note this is a **term of conclusion**. **Why here?** The logical conclusion of a law or edict issued by Persian king could**not be repealed** or overturned or reversed. We see a similar scene in Daniel during the time of the Medo-Persian kingdom...

Daniel 6:8+ "Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked." 9 Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction.

Cannot be repealed - This rule was typical of Persian decrees (see Esther 8:8, Da 6:8) and plays an important role in the chain of events in this drama. "Let it be inserted among the permanent laws, and be made a part of the constitution of the empire. The Persians seem to have affected such a degree of wisdom in the construction of their laws, that they never could be amended, and should never be repealed; and this formed the ground of the saying, "The laws of the Medes and Persians that change not."" (TSK)

Henry Morris adds "The Persians considered their laws to be so perfect--an opinion probably justified in most cases--that once enacted, they could be neither repealed nor revised. Vashti thus lost her position as queen, but was presumably still in the harem (Daniel 6:13+)."

Vashti - Notice she is now mentioned without the title of **'queen**." in contrast to her title in Esther 1:9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17.

Come into the presence - As we shall see later in the drama, access to the king's presence was highly desirable as it gave them the potential to secure royal favors.

Let the king give her royal position to another - Vashti is deposed. There is no evidence that she was killed.

Who is more worthy than she - Hebrew = "who is better than she."

Swindoll...This is the wonder of God's sovereignty. Working behind the scenes, He is moving and pushing and rearranging events and changing minds until **He brings out of even the most carnal and secular of settings a decision that will set His perfect plan in place**. We see that here, and we'll see it throughout the story of Esther. Don't fall into the trap of thinking that God is asleep when it comes to nations, or that He is out of touch when it comes to carnal banquets, or that He sits in heaven wringing His hands when it comes to godless rulers (and foolish presidents!) who make unfair, rash, or stupid decisions. Mark it down in permanent ink: God is always at work. But His ways are so different from ours, we quickly jump to fallacious conclusions and either react rashly or get paralyzed in panic. Take a deep breath right now as you read the timeless reminder of Isaiah. (Read Isaiah 55:8-11)

Esther 1:20 "When the king's edict which he will make is heard throughout all his kingdom, great as it is, then all women will give honor to their husbands, great and small."

- **then all women will give honor to their husbands:** De 17:13 21:21
- **then all women will give honor to their husbands:** Eph 5:33 Col 3:18 1Pe 3:1-7
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Then all women will give honor to their husbands- The biblical principle of the husband's headship and the wife's submission in the home is the law of God as well as of Ahasuerus and the Persians (cf. Ge 2:15-18; 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).

Esther 1:21 This word pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Memucan proposed

- **pleased the king:** Heb. was good in the eyes of the king, Es 1:19 2:4 Ge 41:37
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Joyce Baldwin notes...There are several ironical nuances, but the most obvious is the contrast between King Ahasuerus at the beginning of the chapter, when he is the world's greatest monarch, rich and powerful, aloof yet generous, and that same king by the end of the chapter, attempting to maintain his dignity despite the defiance of his wife. This law-maker of the Persians and Medes, whose law could not be altered, was prepared to pass an edict framed in a moment of pique, when he was not even sober. The counselors represented by Memucan were clever but hardly wise; the decree promulgated according to their advice made the king look a fool in the eyes of his subjects, and he may even have regretted the banishment of Vashti in his better moments (Esther 2:1). Is this the measure of the king who reigned over the world, and had the future of all in his power? (Esther: An Introduction and Commentary Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984)

Esther 1:22 So he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province according to its script and to every people according to their language, that every man should be the master in his own house and the one who speaks in the language of his own people.

- **to all the king's provinces:** Es 3:12 8:9 Da 3:29 4:1
- **that every man:** Eph 5:22-24 1Ti 2:12 Tit 2:4,5
- **speaks in the language of his own people:** Lu 16:8 Ac 2:5-11 1Co 14:19,20
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Sent letters - How? By the world renowned Persian postal system. Historical reports tell us that there was a supply station every 20 miles. The American Pony Express in the mid-1800's also had supply posts from 7-20 miles apart to allow riders to cover almost 1800 miles in 10-12 days!

Ryrie - The king solemnly decreed (how could it ever have been enforced!) that every man was to rule his own household and that his (not her) native language was to be spoken in that home (the meaning of the last part of the verse). (RSB)

Ferguson nicely summarizes the providential workings of God in Chapter 1 and applies it practically to our personal lives...

Despite the actions and plots of evil, we need to see how the plan of providence is quietly reached. A vacancy now arises for a queen the first step is taken for the ultimate purpose, which this book commemorates. **The drunken party, the refusal of Vashti, and the reaction of Ahasuerus are all being used by providence for the glory of God.** While men drink and forget God, they cannot escape the activity of providence in human life. However, we need to note what Campbell Morgan points out,

God did not make Ahasuerus drunk, and God did not put into his heart the unholy desire that Vashti should be presented to his drunken lords; but God is in the shadow while Ahasuerus and his crowd of lords indulge in their carousal, while Vashti declines to yield to the whim of the king; and He uses Esther for the deliverance.

Doubtless, the Jews living and prospering in Persia were oblivious to the significance of Vashti's removal would have for their very existence. Sometimes the pieces of the jigsaw of life may seem insignificant to us now, as we know not what God is ultimately doing through them. The greatest events in human history have been generally produced by apparently insignificant causes. God's providential work may appear hidden, but we should never make the error in thinking He is doing nothing. During the long time of the bondage in Egypt God seemed silent and anonymous, but He both saw and heard the cries of His people. Throughout it all God was executing a wise divine plan.

In this book of Esther we see our story behind the story, as this Persian drama reveals God working the same anonymous parallel manner in our lives (1 Cor. 10:11). Although we may not always see God, we can be sure that He never loses sight of us. What catches us by surprise never has the same effect on God, as He knows

the end from the beginning.

When it seems that God is not active in human affairs, He may be most at work. He can bring great results out of small beginnings. When we face the unanswerable questions and difficult dilemmas of life we must simply stand on the rock of God Word and trust the God with the unknown future. This book of Esther should comfort us, enhance our worship, and strengthen our trust in our all wise and all loving God.

ESTHER 2

Esther 2:1 After these things when the anger of King Ahasuerus had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her.

- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Esther 2:1-4

King Calls for Virgins to be Gathered to Replace Queen Vashti

Ferguson introduces this chapter with these sage comments...

Remarkably the providence of God delivers His people in a most wonderful way without a single miracle. We see this throughout the Old Testament. This truth would have been a great encouragement for Jews living in this uncertain time, as it is for believers today. As one writer put it,

One would suppose that many of the dramas of the Old Testament were planned on very purpose to show how intimately things secular and things sacred, as we call them, are connected together; how entirely the minutest events are controlled by God, and at the same time how thoroughly the freedom of man is preserved. The meeting of two convicts in an Egyptian prison is a vital link in the chain of events that makes Joseph governor of Egypt; a young lady coming to bathe in the river preserves the life of Moses, and secures the escape of the Israelites; the thoughtful regard of a father for the comfort of his sons in the army brings David into contact with Goliath, and prepares the way for his elevation to the throne; the beauty of a Hebrew girl fascinating a Persian king saves the whole Hebrew race from massacre and extermination.

All of the lives in this book have been recorded for our edification and instruction. This is not so we can hide behind their sins, but so we can be warned about them. The greatness of this book is that it explains for us what God is doing when He is silent. Doubtless, God gave it to us to build our faith amidst the confusion of life. When we face the trials of life the silence of God should now make sense. We can all understand the implications of history but none of us can make sense of the future now as,

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through **patience** and **comfort** of the scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4).

HISTORICAL INTERLUDE

After these things - What things? Esther 1 and Vashti's removal as queen. Comparing Esther 1:3 (third year), Esther 2:12 (end of 12 months), and Esther 2:16 this chapter would begin in the sixth year of the reign of Ashasuerus, more than 3 years after Vashti had been deposed as queen. Esther 2:16 would be about 4 years after the events of chapter 1 because of the 12 month preparation period in Esther 2:12.

Although the text does not tell us what transpired between Vashti's removal and the pivotal events of Esther 2, history records that the Persian forces (reported as numbering 100,000 or more) under Ashasuerus (Xerxes I) were held off for seven days by only approximately 7000 Greek soldiers, before the Grecian rear-guard was annihilated in one of history's most famous last stands. (See [Battle of Thermopylae](#)) As noted below, during this same time period, Ahasuerus' navy suffered a major defeat at the [Battle of Salamis](#).

Henry Morris comments...The succeeding account was probably at least two years "after these things," (**Ed**: See preceding regarding timing of the events in this chapter) for the king and all his officers embarked on their projected invasion of Greece immediately following the great assemblage. As history shows, however, the great fleet of King Xerxes (Ahasuerus) suffered bitter

defeats at the naval battles of **Thermopylae** (Actually the Persians won the [Battle of Thermopylae](#) that transpired Sept/Aug, 480BC which would have been after the time of Vashti's deposing and before the events of Esther 2) and **Salamis** (See the [Battle of Salamis](#) where the Greek navy defeated the Persian navy in late 480BC), and returned home sadder and wiser. According to the Greek historian Herodotus, the king went back to comfort himself with his harem. At this time, he "remembered Vashti" and proceeded with his comforting mission of examining many "young virgins" (Esther 2:2) from all parts of his kingdom to find a new queen.

DETAILS, DETAILS!

Remembered - Three things (1) Vashti (her beauty), (2) Vashti's refusal to obey and (3) His **decree** against her banishing her from his presence, a **decree** which was irreversible. Now, as to the providential workings of God behind the scenes, let me ask a hypothetical question - What if the decree was not irreversible? The way the text reads certainly suggests that Ahasuerus would have "re-crowned" Vashti, for he **remembered** her (especially her great beauty). But then he also remembered her disobedience and his indissoluble decree! (see that "little detail" in Esther 1:19) If the decree could have been reversed, the events of the rest of chapter 2 would not have transpired! Esther a Jew would not have been exalted to a position of prominence and influence by the greatest ruler of the day! Details, details! Oh, how big are the little details in the hands of our marvelous, omniscient, omnipotent Divine Director!

THOUGHT - What little details or circumstances are or are not transpiring in your life that might have a significant impact on your future? The point is that God is the God of details and is sovereign over every circumstance of our lives which should give us cause for an inner sense of calm and peace in knowing that the One Who holds all things together, holds the events of our life in His hand and is able to bring about good not only from evil but from the seemingly meaningless events of our life!

I think **Swindoll** is correct in his depiction of King Ahasuerus' state after his defeat by Greece...Ahasuerus enters the tall, gilded palace doors, weary from battle, dispirited by defeat. He longs for someone to greet him with arms outstretched, someone who will offer words of comfort and understanding. Not just a servant or one of his officers eager to please the king, but someone who truly cares for him and his feelings. Perhaps for the first time this monarch knows true defeat and loneliness. With all the things that have been happening, his anger against Vashti is long since forgotten. He remembers only her beauty, the warmth of her arms, and the comfort of her understanding. With his spirits at this low ebb, he goes into a period of depression. Apparently those closest to him recognize what has happened and seek to remedy it. (Ibid)

George Lawson writes...He thought upon the happy days he had enjoyed in her society; upon the proofs she had formerly given him of her affection and obedience; upon the folly of his own conduct, which had tempted her, for once, to dispute his orders; upon the cruel punishment inflicted on her; upon the impracticability of reversing the sentence passed against her; upon a thousand circumstances which added to the disgust of his mind. Remorse now punished him almost as severely as his imperious device had punished the unhappy queen. ([Esther 2:1-11 Discourses on the Whole Book of Esther. 1809](#))

Esther 2:2 Then the king's attendants, who served him, said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king.

- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Then - In light of his personal plight of remembering Vashti but being unable to see her because of his decree, we see the attendant's make a suggestion.

The king's attendants - If these were in attendance at the time of Queen Vashti's reign, they would be eager to make sure the king did not seek to re-instate her or their necks might be at risk.

Beautiful - A key word in the first two chapters (Esther 1:11, 2:2, 2:3, 2:7, 2:12).

Virgin (01330) [bethulah](#) means marriage aged maidens, not necessarily virgins in the sense that they had never had sexual relations. However in Ge 24:16 the word is used of Rebekah and the text adds that she had never had relations with a man (cp Jdg 21:12)

Lawson comments that...the queen's beauty was so highly admired by the king, that he is not likely to forgive the advisers of the divorce, unless he can find a wife equal in beauty. For this reason, his servants (among whom his great counselors were the chief) advised him, by means of proper officers, to collect all the fairest virgins in the various provinces of his dominions... This advice appears to us very strange, and very barbarous. Must the king engross all the beauty of his dominions, by taking to himself, as his queen or concubines, all the beautiful young women that could be found in all his provinces? Are women born for nothing else, but

to be the property of any man that can purchase them by his money, or tyrannize over them by his power? Are author of the most beautiful women to become the property and the prisoners of one man? If the king is so fond of female beauty, he should remember that other men feel the same desires, and claim the same right to gratification with himself. The king's behaviour, however, was such as might have been expected in a country where men thought they had a right to multiply wives to themselves, if they had the means of procuring and supporting them. Where no regard is paid to equity and purity of conduct amongst a people, their prince will naturally think, that his power and affluence entitle him to superiority in the inordinate gratification of his sensual appetites. Where reason and the law of God do not set limits to the desires of men, they will be carried beyond all bounds. How much are we indebted to the Bible for present as well as expected happiness! We learn from it, that God has created one man for one woman. We could not value its discoveries too highly, were it only for the accounts that it gives us of creation, and of the great law of marriage resulting from it. The knowledge of the divine authority of this law, that a man ought to have only one wife, is equally essential to the happiness of both sexes of our race. ([Esther 2:1-11 Discourses on the Whole Book of Esther, 1809](#))

Esther 2:3 "Let the king appoint overseers in all the provinces of his kingdom that they may gather 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 them."

- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

In all the provinces - Recall there were 127 provinces! The overseers were to gather them. There is no mention that the parents assent or refuse.

That they may gather every beautiful young virgin to the citadel of Susa - This would theoretically be a large number of virgins! Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us there were as many as 400 women involved in this rather remarkable Persian beauty pageant!

Note the three criteria of the queen "candidates" - beauty, youth, virginity.

Cosmetics - Swindoll writes "C. F. Keil, of the Keil and Delitzsch commentaries helps us understand that these words mean "to rub, to polish, signifies purification and adornment with all kind of precious ointments." In other words, they spent a year preparing these women, polishing up their outward appearance, to enhance their physical beauty. Interesting, isn't it? In a relatively short period of time one's outer beauty can be enhanced, but the cultivation of beauty within—there's no short cut. Suddenly, while the harem is cosmetic city and the king is thinking about the "Miss Persia" beauty pageant, an incredible chain of events begins to transpire, introduced by another of those little transitional phrases we could easily overlook: "Now there was a Jew in Susa." (Ibid)

Esther 2:4 "Then let the young lady who pleases the king be queen in place of Vashti." And the matter pleased the king, and he did accordingly.

- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Queen in place of Vashti - The suggestion was made to have in essence a "Miss Persia" beauty contest of which the King would be judge and appoint the winner to be his queen based on one night with him!

And the matter pleased the king, and he did accordingly - Repeatedly we see the king taking the advice of others.

Paul S Ferguson comments...This Miss Persia contest proposal appealed to the sensual desire and ego of Ahasuerus, who alone would conduct this pageant by being the judge and the winner! We are told, The thing pleased the king, and he did so. That was the sum total of the moral judgment by Ahasuerus he did what suited him. The plan involved this man to simply spend a night with each of them and then select the one that pleased him best. It is ironic that after removing Vashti for disobedience and claiming that her estate should be given to one better than she (Est. 1:19) that the only requirement for a new Queen was beauty, youth, and virginity. This is no heart-warming romantic Cinderella or Beauty and the Beast story. Each woman would allow this lustful king to take advantage of her for one night in the forlorn hope he would favor her. If they failed, they would be doomed to a life forgotten in Ahasuerus's harem without hope of a loving husband and family forever. The carnal self-indulgence and selfishness of Ahasuerus should also be noted, especially as he was so interested in family values in the first chapter! (Ibid)

Esther 2:5-7

Mordecai the Jew & his "Step" Daughter Esther

Esther 2:5 Now there was at the citadel in Susa a Jew whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite,

- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

AN UNKNOWN OLD MAN AND AN ORPHANED YOUNG WOMAN

Subtitle from Swindoll

Susa - Mordecai was a Jew who just happened to be in the same city as the King.

Jew - Up to this point the focus has been entirely on the Persian Gentiles.

Jew (03064) (**yehudi**) originally referred to Israelites remaining in Judah (or from the tribe of Judah) during and after the Babylonian exile (2Ki 16:6; 25:25). Yehudi eventually described all post-exilic Israelites in contrast to the Gentiles. And thus yehudi appears frequently with this post-exilic meaning in Ezra, Esther, Jeremiah, and to a lesser degree in Daniel (03062 - yehudain = Aramaic) and Zechariah. Esther, Mordecai, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are prominent individuals identified explicitly as Jews in the OT

Gilbrant - This word occurs both as a people name and as a personal name. Used as an adjective, it most specifically refers to the people whose national origin was the nation of Judah, and it could be translated "Judeans." At a later time in history, however, these people came to be called Jews, and the English translations use this term, although it is anachronistic. In Jer. 34:9, this term occurs as a synonym for "a Hebrew." The primary use of the word as a term of distinction from the other pagan peoples, occurs in the books of the OT which report the time of the Babylonian and Persian Empires. Second Kings 16:6 is the only place the term occurs prior to the Babylonian invasion. In this passage, the Syrians drive out the Judeans from Elath in southern Israel, and the Edomites move into the vacated city.

This distinction is particularly prominent in the Book of Esther, where the word appears fifty-seven times. Mordecai is identified as a Jew eight times, and Haman is identified as the enemy of the Jews four times. Mordecai would not bow to Haman because he was a Jew (Est. 3:4), and Haman described the Jews as a people whose customs were different from everyone else and who did not obey the king's laws (3:8ff). The Book of Esther tells the story of the origin of Purim, the celebration of the time when the Jews found relief from the oppression of their enemies (9:22). This is a message of the enduring nature of the Jewish people. Mordecai told Esther that if she did not help her people, deliverance would certainly come from another source, but her family would not survive (4:14). The story also indicates the extent of the dispersion of the Jewish people during the time of the exile. There were Jews found throughout all 127 provinces of the Persian Empire (9:29ff).

During the time of the Babylonian invasions, some Jews fled to Babylonia while others fled to Moab, Ammon, Edom and other surrounding countries (Jer. 38:19; 40:11f). Nebuchadnezzar implemented three primary deportations of Jews to Babylon. In 605 B.C., he deported 3023 Jews, including Daniel and his three friends. In 597 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar deported 832 Jews, including Ezekiel, and in 586 B.C., he destroyed Jerusalem and took 745 Jews to Babylon (Jer. 52:28ff). He removed the king and set up Gedaliah as governor over the province of Judah. Eleven men killed Gedaliah and the Judeans who were with him (2 Ki. 25:25). Many of the Jews then fled to Egypt, accompanied by Jeremiah, who warned them that the Jews who fled to Egypt for safety would perish, while the remnant who remained in Judah would survive (Jer. 44:1).

In the post-exilic period, Nehemiah dealt with three primary issues. He confronted the people on their lack of Sabbath observance and their enslaving fellow Jews through indebtedness. It was wrong for Jews to be freed from the Gentiles only to be enslaved by one another (Neh. 5:1-8). He also confronted the Jewish men for marrying foreign women, pointing out that this was the very sin that led Solomon away from God (Neh. 13:23, 26).

The final triumph of the Jews is seen in the Millennial Kingdom. Realizing that God is with the Jewish people, ten men will take hold of one Jew and desire to go with him to Jerusalem (Zech. 8:23). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

Yehudi - 69v in OT (22x in Esther) - 2Ki 16:6; 25:25; Neh 1:2; 2:16; 4:1, 2, 12; 5:1, 8, 17; 6:6; 13:23; Esther 2:5; 3:4, 6, 10, 13; 4:3, 7, 13, 14, 16; 5:13; 6:10, 13; 8:1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 16, 17; 9:1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29; 10:3; Jer 32:12; 34:9; 38:19; 40:11, 12; 41:3; 43:9; 44:1; 52:28, 30; Zech 8:23

MacArthur notes that...After Babylon fell to Medo-Persia (ca. 539 b.c.), **Jews** were moved to other parts of the new kingdom.

Comment: As discussed below Mordecai's presence in Susa was not an accident.

Mordecai - One of the leading characters of this drama.

NET Bible Note...Mordecai is a pagan name that reflects the name of the Babylonian deity Marduk. Probably many Jews of the period had two names, one for secular use and the other for use especially within the Jewish community. Mordecai's Jewish name is not recorded in the biblical text. (Net Bible Note)

The **ESV Study Bible** notes that...The name Mordecai occurs in Persian treasury records of the period as the name of a government official, but whether he was this Mordecai is not known.

As an aside why do you think Mordecai did not return to Jerusalem even in the face of a rebuilt Temple? Ezra gives us a clue...

Ezra 1:1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, 2 "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 'Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem. 4 'And every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.'" 5 Then the heads of fathers' households of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites arose, **even everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem.** (Ezra 1:1-5)

Comment: It would appear that Mordecai's spirit had not been stirred up to go up and as we shall soon see God had other plans for this Jewish man who had adopted an orphaned Jewish girl!

Esther 2:6 who had been taken into exile from Jerusalem with the captives who had been exiled with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had exiled.

- Jeconiah: 2Ki 24:6,14,15 2Ch 36:9,10,20,
- Jeboiachin, Jer 22:24,28, Coniah, Jer 24:1
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Who had been taken into exile - Recall that there were 3 exiles of the Jews - 605, 597, 586BC. **Jeconiah** was taken in the second exile in 597BC. **The question is who does "who" refer to in this passage? Mordecai?** If so he would be over 110 years old! (See also ESV Study Bible note below) Notice the nearest antecedent refers to Mordecai's great-grandfather **Kish a Benjamite who was taken into exile** to Babylon. **How did his great grandson end up in Susa the capital city of Persia some 120 miles east of Babylon? Was this sheer coincidence or chance?** Of course not! The sovereign God had been moving behind the scenes (behind what was "seen") and somehow Mordecai had arrived at Susa, the site of the major events in Esther. **Indeed God is always behind the SEEN!** May God's Spirit give us the eyes to see Him moving, the spiritual vision that Paul alluded to when he wrote that...

we look not at the things which are **seen**, but at the things which are **not seen**; for the things which are seen are **temporal**, but the things which are not seen are **eternal**. (2Cor 4:18)

THOUGHT: Are you seeing some temporal circumstance that is causing you great consternation, disturbing your inner peace, making it difficult to rest in Jesus? May God use the truth of this little book of Esther to allow you to see the temporal with eternal vision, with eyes fixed ultimately on Jesus the Author and Perfector of our faith.

Jeconiah king of Judah (2Ki 24:8-16, 2Chr 36:9-10) - He is also known as **Jehoiachin** ("Jehovah establishes", "Yahweh will Uphold") and **Coniah** (Jer 24:1, 1Chr 3:16). He succeeded his father Jehoiakin in 599BC at age 8 and ruled in Jerusalem for only three months and ten days (2Chr 36:9)

The **ESV Study Bible** agrees that "Jeconiah, also known as Jehoiachin (1Chr 3:16), was the second-to-last king of Judah. He was deported to Babylon in 597BC (2Kings 24:10-17), 114 years before the present events. Therefore, the clause **who had been carried away from Jerusalem** cannot refer to **Mordecai** (it would make him about 120 years old). Rather, the clause must refer to "**Kish, a Benjaminite**" (the last-mentioned person in Esther 2:5), Mordecai's ancestor (v. 5).

ISBE adds that "In the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's successor, perhaps by testamentary edict of Nebuchadnezzar himself, a strange thing occurred. **Jehoiachin**, who seems to have been a kind of hostage prisoner for his people, was released from prison, honored above all the other kings in similar case, and thenceforth to the end of his life had his portion at the royal table (2Ki 25:27-30; Jer 52:31-34).

Esther 2:7 He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had no father or mother. Now the young lady was beautiful of form and face, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter. (Ge 48:5 2Co 6:18 1Jn 3:1)

- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

GOD USES AN ORPHANED JEWISH GIRL

Bringing up (0539) (**aman**) means in some of its contexts (such as this verse) to support or rear, to be one's guardian (2Ki 10:5, Isa 49:23, cp Isa 60:4)

Hadassah - The Hebrew word means myrtle. This is the name of "The Women's Zionist Organization of America." God is preparing to move the heart of King Ahasuerus like a channel of water! (Pr 21:1)

Esther - Her Persian name meant **star** and to be sure she is one of the major stars of this incredible drama. It is felt that her Gentile name was derived from the name of the pagan goddess Ishtar.

Her uncle's daughter - In Esther 2:15 we learn that she was "the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai."

She had no father or mother - They were no longer alive. The author goes to great lengths to emphasize Esther's plight as an orphan and the provision of parental care by Mordecai.

As **Swindoll** says...

There is a beautiful message here for anyone who has ever experienced brokenness, for anyone who has ever been crushed by life, for anyone who has ever felt that his past is so discolored, so disjointed, **so fractured that there is no way in the world God can make reason and meaning out of it.** We are going to learn some unforgettable lessons from Esther. Here was a little girl who must have cried her heart out at the death of her parents, bereft and orphaned, yet who years later would become key to the very survival of her people, the Jews. God and God alone can do such things— He, in fact, does do such things, working silently and invisibly behind the events of history...

God's plans are not hindered when the events of this world are carnal or secular. His presence penetrates, regardless, even the godless banquet halls of ancient Persia. He is not limited to working in the Christian family. He is as much at work in the Oval Office as He is in your pastor's study. He is as much at work in other countries of the world, like Iran or China or the Middle East, as He is in America. To doubt that is to draw boundaries around His sovereign control. When we do that, we can easily stop caring about our involvement in the larger events of life outside our comfort zone and familiar territory; and when that happens, we stop becoming salt and light to the world. God is at work. He's moving. He's touching lives. He's shaping kingdoms. He's never surprised by what humanity may do. Just because actions or motives happen to be secular or carnal or unfair, it doesn't mean He's not present. Those involved may not be glorifying Him, but never doubt it, He's present. He's at work...

God's hand is not so short that it cannot save, nor is His ear so heavy that He cannot hear. Whether you see Him or not, He is at work in your life this very moment. God specializes in turning the mundane into the

meaningful. God not only moves in unusual ways, He also moves on uneventful days. He is just as involved in the mundane events as He is in the miraculous. (Ibid)

Mordecai took her as his own daughter - Repeated in Esther 2:15. So what do we learn of Mordecai's heart? He is unselfish, kind, willing to reach out to a little orphan girl in need (cf Job 29:12, Ex 22:22-24, Dt 10:18 and Ps 68:15 both describe God's heart for the orphan, See also James 1:27-note).

Ray Stedman has this note on Esther stating that King Xerxes "*married a young Jewish girl named Esther, a captive taken from the city of Jerusalem.*" I love Ray Stedman's writings and mention this quote only to call attention to the importance of doing your own observations on the Scripture BEFORE you consult commentaries, even those written by the most trusted expositors like Stedman. Recall that the year of the events in **Esther 2** is approximately **479BC** which would be more than 100 years after the last wave of Jewish exiles had arrived from Jerusalem! So clearly Esther was NOT "*a captive taken from the city of Jerusalem*" (**Related Resource: inductive Bible study**)

Lawson writes that **Mordecai**

performed a kind and laudable action to this poor orphan; and was well rewarded for it by the gratitude of Esther, and **by the liberality of divine providence.** (Ibid)

Esther 2:8 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.

- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Esther 2:8-11

Esther Finds Favor with Hegai & Conceals Lineage

New Jerusalem Bible...

On the promulgation of the royal command and edict a great number of girls were brought to the citadel of Susa where they were entrusted to Hegai. Esther, too, was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, the custodian of the women.

The command and decree of the king - (Lxx = prostagma = an official directive, ordinance, command) While there is much speculation about whether Esther willingly submitted herself to this pagan ritual or whether Mordecai gave approval. The fact that it was a royal command and edict however implies that there was not much choice. After all Esther was very beautiful and would surely be identified as a potential royal consort by the overseers. However one cannot be dogmatic.

Were heard - Had been proclaimed, became public knowledge.

Esther was taken - (Lxx = sunago/synago = aorist passive = to cause to be gathered together but can have the nuance "to be invited" - Mt 25:35, 38, 43) This description may also suggest Esther had no choice in the matter but we cannot be dogmatic. Ultimately the reason she was taken is because God had made her and formed in the womb to be **beautiful of form and face** and because He had ordained a part for her to play in this divine drama. Once again we encounter God behind the seen!

Ferguson notes...The Scriptures clearly taught that a Jew could not marry a pagan uncircumcised Gentile (Deut. 7:1-4), have a sexual relationship with a man who was not her husband (Ex 20:14), and eat unclean food (Lev. 11:46 47). Esther did all three. In fact, it was impossible to think of a worse candidate for a husband than that of Ahasuerus, whose foul temper and womanizing was legendary. (Ibid)

Spurgeon...We cannot commend Mordecai for putting his adopted daughter in competition for the monarch's choice -- it was contrary to the Law of God and dangerous to her soul in the highest degree. It would have been better for Esther to have been the wife of the poorest man of the house of Israel than to have gone into the den of the Persian despot. The Scripture does not excuse, much less commend, the wrong doing of Esther and Mordecai in thus acting, but simply tells us **how Divine Wisdom brought good out of evil, even as the chemist distills healing drugs from poisonous plants.** The high position of Esther, though gained contrary to the wisest of laws, was overruled for the best interests of her people.

Esther 2:9 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 maids from the king's palace and transferred her and her maids to the best place in the harem.

- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

HCSB paraphrases it

Esther 2:9 The young woman pleased him and gained his favor so that he accelerated the process of the beauty treatments and the special diet that she received. He assigned seven hand-picked female servants to her from the palace and transferred her and her servants to the harem's best quarters.

The young lady pleased him (Hegai) - (Lxx = aresko = to give pleasure or satisfaction; frequently used in honorary documents to express interest in accommodating others by meeting their needs or carrying out important obligations) More literally this reads "the young woman is good in his eyes" The **NLT** paraphrases it "Hegai was very impressed with Esther."

Favor - Hebrew hesed (Lxx = charis, the NT word for grace), speaks of kindness and is used many times of God's lovingkindness. Literally the sentence can be read "She lifted up grace before his face."

Hegai was the eunuch in charge of the beauty pageant and showed favor to Esther which may have helped her to become the queen. Ultimately the favor was another small marker of the unseen hand of the Divine Director.

In the book of Daniel we read that as a young captive in Babylon when confronted with the King's choice food, Daniel would not defile himself and sought permission to not eat these foods...

Now God granted Daniel **favor** (hesed) and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials (Da 1:9-note)

So - A strategic **term of conclusion**. **What was the result of Esther finding favor?** Provision of cosmetics, food, maids and best place in the harem. **Is this a coincidence?** As alluded to earlier, clearly God is behind the seen/scene providentially orchestrating the events of this great drama. After all it was the Creator Who had formed Esther in her mother's womb and made her **beautiful of form and face** (Esther 2:7).

Harem (bet hannasim) - This is more literally "the house of the women" which in context refers to the King's **sharem**. The Septuagint supports this translation by rendering it with the single Greek word gunaikon (gynaikon) which means "women's apartments" or "harem" (gynaikon translates all 5 mentions of **harem** in the Bible, all of which are found here in Esther 2 - Esther 2:3, 9, 11, 13, 14).

Esther 2:10 Esther did not make known her people or her kindred, for Mordecai had instructed her that she should not make them known.

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For - A strategic **term of explanation**. explaining why Esther was a "stealth" Jewess. The text does not however specifically state why Mordecai had instructed Esther to not disclose her ethnic lineage.

Did not make known her people (her ethnic background, her nationality, her race) - (Lxx = hupodeiknumi = to show by placing under one's eyes, i.e., before one's eyes; to direct one's attention to something) Her Jewish lineage.

Her kindred (her family background, her parentage, her family, her lineage) - Her relationship to Mordecai as we will find out in Esther 3 did explain that he was Jewish (cf Esther 3:3-4).

Why did Mordecai not want Esther to make known her Jewish ancestry? The text does not state the reason. However, there may be a clue in **Ezra 4:1-6**, which recounts the anti-Semitic attitude and acts against the Jews seeking to rebuild the Temple, the construction of which was halted in 534BC, began again in 534BC and finally completed in 516BC.

Now when the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the people of the exile were building a temple to the LORD God of Israel, 2 they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' households, and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we, like you, seek your God; and we have been sacrificing to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here."

3 But [Zerubbabel](#) (**Ed**: He led the first group of Jewish exiles back to Jerusalem) and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of fathers' households of Israel said to them, "You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God; but we ourselves will together build to the LORD God of Israel, as [King Cyrus](#), the king of Persia (Prophesied by Isaiah >150 years before Cyrus was born, before the Temple had been destroyed! See Isaiah 44:24-48 and Isaiah 45:1-7) has commanded us." (See 1Chr 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-5 - note why the Jews returned in Ezra 1:5!) **4** Then the people of the land **discouraged** the people of Judah, and **frightened** them from building, **5** and hired counselors against them to frustrate their counsel all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. **6** Now in the reign of **Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign**, (486BC) they wrote an accusation (see note below on Hebrew word) against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

Comment: In Ezra 4:5-6 we see a chronological succession of kings, from **Cyrus** (539-530BC) to **Darius** (521-486BC, Cambyses is not mentioned but he reigned from 530-521) to **Ahasuerus**. Clearly in these passages the writer is presenting us with a chronological overview summarizing the fact that **all during this time** (Over 50 years = 539-486BC) the Jews were opposed by **anti-Semitic** influences. And even though they were able to complete the Temple in Jerusalem (516BC - work had begun in 536BC and was temporarily halted in 534BC), the anti-Semitic persecution persisted even until the beginning of the reign of **Ahasuerus**. And it is certainly possible that Mordecai was aware of the **accusation** that had been sent to **Ahasuerus** at the beginning of his reign and feared reprisals from the King if he were to discover Esther was Jewish.

It is interesting that the word for **accusation** in Hebrew is **sitnah** ([07855](#)) which is derived from the Hebrew verb **satan** ([07853](#)) which means to attack, to accuse, to slander, to harbor animosity toward, to be an adversary! The related noun **satan**, ([07854](#)), is used to refer to Satan, as in Job 1:6:7, 2:1, 2, 4, 7), Zechariah (Zech 3:1, 2) and 1Chr 21:1 (cf 2Sa 24:1). The noun generally describes an adversary, one who opposes or one who hinders. **Notice in the preceding passages in Ezra how the "satanic influence" discourages and frightens (Ezra 4:4)! Are not discouragement and fear two of major tactics the enemy still uses to assault the hearts and minds of believers in our day! Spiritual warfare does not change much over the millennia! Remember that the best antidote is still to take up the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God! Faith is from God and the antithesis of fear from the adversary. (Related Resource: Fear, How to Handle It)**

Esther 2:11 Every day Mordecai walked back and forth in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and how she fared.

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Every day - This **time phrase** emphasizes Mordecai's continued love and concern for and watch care over Esther. I'm not sure one can justify the NJB's rendering of "all day and every day." Clearly he loved Esther and felt a strong sense of responsibility for her well-being.

Walked by and forth - This gives us a vivid picture much like a shepherd walking back and forth looking over his sheep to make sure they are safe and sound! The Lxx uses peripateo in the imperfect tense which underscores the fact that this was Mordecai's repeated action each day.

Court of the harem - The court was an enclosure which may have been visible to Mordecai. The NLT however paraphrases it "Every day Mordecai would take a walk near the courtyard of the harem to ask about Esther and to find out what was happening to her." In either case, Mordecai apparently was able to obtain information regarding her well being (shalom).

To learn how Esther was - More literally the Hebrew reads "to know the peace (shalom) of Esther." Young's Literal "the welfare of Esther."

To learn (yada) means to know and is translated in the **Septuagint** with **episkopeo**, a verb used in the NT to denote the responsibilities of church elders (1Pe 5:2). The idea of **episkopeo** is to make a careful inspection and the present tense pictures Mordecai as doing this continually. **Episkopeo** also conveys the sense of accepting responsibility for the care of another, especially of someone entrusted to one's oversight. **Esther** had been "entrusted" to **Mordecai** because her parents were deceased.

Esther 2:12 Now when the turn of each young lady came to go in to King Ahasuerus, after the end of her twelve months under the regulations for the women--for the days of their beautification were completed as follows: six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and the cosmetics for women--

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Esther 2:12-14

Virgins Prepare & Then Go In to King

HCSB paraphrases (eg, there is no Hebrew word for "**harem**" in this verse) this verse making it somewhat easier to understand...

During the year before each young woman's turn to go to King Ahasuerus, the **harem** regulation required her to receive beauty treatments with oil of myrrh for six months and then with perfumes and cosmetics for another six months.

Now when the turn of each young lady came to go in to King Ahasuerus- The NLT bluntly paraphrases it "each young woman was taken to the king's bed."

After the end of her twelve months - Why 12 months? Some reason that this would be sufficient time to ensure she were not pregnant.

Myrrh (04753) (**mor**) according to the **ISBE** is "mentioned as valuable for its perfume (Ps 45:8; Pr 7:17 describes an adulteress; Song 3:6; 4:14), and as one of the constituents of the holy incense (Ex 30:23; see also Song 4:6; 5:1,5,13). The **NET Glossary** adds that myrrh is "a reddish-brown resinous material, the dried sap of the myrrh tree, *Commiphora myrrha* or *Balsamodendron*, an ingredient of perfumes and incense highly prized in ancient times and often worth more than its weight in gold." **Myrrh** was a principal ingredient in the holy anointing oil (Ex. 30:23) and was one the gifts brought by the men from the east who came to worship the infant Jesus (Mt 2:11).

Esther 2:13 the young lady 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.

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Why this detail? Later we see Esther relied on Hegai's advise for what to take, not what she desired to take. We already have been told she **young** and **was beautiful of form and face** (Esther 2:7).

Esther 2:14 In the evening she would go in 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 again go in to the king unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name.

- delighted... summoned: Es 4:11 Ge 34:19 Dt 21:14 Isa 62:4,5
- [Esther 1-2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

In the evening she would go in and in the morning she would return to the second harem- One night with the king! This man is bent on self-gratification, about bringing pleasure to himself. He is not concerned that the young girls could never marry and some might never be called forth from the second harem.

The second harem - The first harem was preparation for a night with the king. The second harem was where each young lady would wait until (or if) she was **summoned by name** by the king. She was consigned to spend the rest of her life essentially living as an unloved woman, for she could never marry anyone else!

Concubine - The Hebrew word is **piyleges** () which is "A concubine was a legitimate wife; however, she was of secondary rank." (Baker: Complete Word Study Dictionary: OT)

Easton's Bible Dictionary has a good discussion of **concubine** noting that in Scripture this word "denotes a female conjugally united to a man, but in a relation inferior to that of a wife. Among the early Jews, from various causes, the difference between a wife

and a concubine was less marked than it would be amongst us. The concubine was a wife of secondary rank. There are various laws recorded providing for their protection (Ex. 21:7; Dt 21:10-14), and setting limits to the relation they sustained to the household to which they belonged (Ge 21:14; 25:6). They had no authority in the family, nor could they share in the household government. The immediate cause of concubinage might be gathered from the conjugal histories of Abraham and Jacob (Ge 16;30). But in process of time the custom of concubinage degenerated, and laws were made to restrain and regulate it (Ex 21:7-9). Christianity has restored the sacred institution of marriage to its original character, and concubinage is ranked with the sins of fornication and adultery (Mt 19:5-9; 1Cor 7:2).

Unless - Here are the "requirements" which made possible a repeat visit to the king's chambers - (1) He delighted in her and (2) Summoned by name.

Esther 2:15 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 found favor in the eyes of all who saw her.

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Esther 2:15-16

Esther Goes Into the King in the Seventh Year

Who had taken her as his daughter - The NIV accurately paraphrases it as "the girl Mordecai had adopted."

What Hegai... advised - This shows her wisdom to trust in the experience of Hegai. What he advised Esther to take into the king is unknown and speculation is futile.

Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her - This again emphasizes Esther's beauty, which is surely a major factor in her being chosen queen.

Esther 2:16 So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus to his royal palace in the tenth month which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

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Tebeth - On the Hebrew calendar this is the tenth month and corresponds to Dec/Jan.

The seventh year of his reign - This would have been in 478BC.

Esther 2:17 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 crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

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Esther 2:17-18

Esther Finds Favor & Is Crowned Queen

This may be the only decision the king may on his own in the book of Esther!

Found favor (chen) ([02580](#)) is derived from chanan/hanan which depicts a heartfelt response by someone who has something to give to one who has a need. This word group generally implies extending "favor" neither expected nor deserved. Chen is the word used in Genesis 6:8 "but Noah found **favor** in the eyes of the LORD." Chen is found 6 times in the book of Esther -

Esther 2:15, 2:17, 5:2, 5:8, 7:3, 8:5.

Proverbs 22:1 extols the virtue of **chen**

"A good name is to be more desired than great riches, **favor** (chen; Lxx = charis - grace) is better than silver

and gold."

So that - This is a **term of conclusion** which should always prompt us to question what is being concluded (and why?, etc) which will force us to observe the context. This discipline will slow us down and give God's Spirit an opportunity to teach us and speak to us! In this context, Esther was crowned queen based on the fact that the king loved her more than the other women and she had found favor and kindness with him. Can you see the hand of our sovereign God moving in the background of these events?

Made her queen instead of Vashti - This implies Vashti although prohibited from the king's presence, was not yet replaced as queen. The year would be about 480BC, roughly 6 years after Ahasuerus had become king of Persia and 5 years after the king's seven day feast that Queen Vashti had refused to attend, thus setting into motion a chain of events.

Esther 2:18 Then the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his princes and his servants; he also made a holiday for the provinces and gave gifts according to the king's bounty.

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The **ESV** reads...Then the king gave a great feast for all his officials and servants; it was Esther's feast. He also granted a remission of taxes to the provinces and gave gifts with royal generosity.

HCSB reads...

Esther 2:18 The king held a great banquet for all his officials and staff. It was Esther's banquet. He freed his provinces from tax payments and gave gifts worthy of the king's bounty.

Made a holiday (literally a giving of rest)- Herodotus records in his history of the Persian Empire that it was customary in royal celebrations to remit taxes. The Lxx supports this idea of remission of taxes for the Greek reads "made a release" where the noun **aphesis** (release) was used for the remission of an obligation or a debt.

Esther 2:19 When the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate

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Esther 2:19-23

Mordecai Reports Plot Which is Written in the Chronicles

When the virgins were gathered a second time - Meaning is uncertain. It could be a second gathering of the virgins described earlier or it could be another gathering to add to his harem.

King's gate - In the ancient orient, the gates of a city were the place where commercial and judicial matters were transacted. Mordecai's presence at the king's gate supports the premise that he held a position of esteem possibly in the judicial system.

Esther 2:20 Esther had not yet made known her kindred or her people, even as Mordecai had commanded her; for Esther did what Mordecai told her as she had done when under his care.

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Esther had not yet made known (cf Esther 2:10) - The way this is stated (not yet) prepares the reading for a time when she will make her Jewish lineage known.

Even as Mordecai had commanded her - She manifests traits of loyalty and submission to authority (obedience).

Esther 2:21 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 lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

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While Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate - Do you see the subtle allusion to providence? What if he had not been seated at the the king's gate on this particular day? He would not have overheard the assassination plot. He would not have saved the king's life. He would not have been recorded in the king's chronicles as the one responsible for saving King Ahasuerus' life. When one has a proper understanding of divine providence as defined by the Scripture, it becomes clear that absolutely nothing happens by chance. God is in the every detail of our life. This truth intertwined with the truth that God is good and seeks good for His children should encourage our faith, and give us perseverance and hope (cf Ro 15:4).

Esther 2:22 But the plot became known to Mordecai and he told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name.

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Told Queen Esther - While uncovering a plot to assassinate the king benefits the king, Esther is also benefited for if he had died, her life would certainly be at risk.

Esther 2:23 Now when the plot was investigated and found to be so, they were both hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the Book of the Chronicles in the king's presence.

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Hanged on a gallows - "the two men were impaled on a sharpened pole." (NLT)

Written in the Book of the Chronicles - Herodotus refers to an official list recorded in the Persian archives naming the king's "benefactors."

Jobes notes that...Acts of loyalty were usually rewarded immediately and generously by Persian kings, but Mordecai's reward was apparently overlooked. Although this attempt on Xerxes' life was foiled, Herodotus reports that a subsequent attempt succeeded when the king was assassinated in his bedroom in 465 B.C. (The NIV Application Commentary)

John Walvoord writes...Rather than being hanged by the neck on a modern-type gallows, the men were probably impaled on a stake or post (cf. Ezra 6:11). This was not an unusual method of execution in the Persian Empire. Darius, Xerxes' father, was known to have once impaled 3,000 men. A record of this assassination attempt was written in the annals, the official royal record (cf. Es. 6:1-2).