

---

ESTHER 2: 1 After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus was pacified, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.

---

The counsellors advise that a selection of virgins should be made throughout the empire, out of whom the king should choose one to be queen in place of Vashti, Est 2:1-4. Account of Mordecai and his cousin Esther, Est 2:5-7. She is chosen among the young women, and is placed under the care of Hegai, the king's chamberlain, to go through a year's purification, Est 2:8-11. The manner in which these young women were introduced to the king, and how those were disposed of who were not called again to the king's bed, Est 2:12-14. Esther pleases the king, and is set above all the women; and he makes her queen in the place of Vashti, and does her great honor, Est 2:15-20. Mordecai, sitting at the king's gate, discovers a conspiracy formed against the king's life by two of his chamberlains; he informs the king, the matter is investigated, they are found guilty and hanged, and the transaction is recorded, Est 2:21-23.

---

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

---

#### Verse 2

Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king - This was the usual way in which the harem or seraglio was furnished: the finest women in the land, whether of high or low birth, were sought out, and brought to the harem. They all became the king's concubines: but one was raised, as chief wife or sultana, to the throne; and her issue was specially entitled to inherit.

---

ESTHER 2: 3 Let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the beautiful young virgins to the citadel of Susa, to the women's house, to the custody of Hegai the king's eunuch, keeper of the women. Let cosmetics be given them;

---

#### Verse 3

Hege the king's chamberlain - הגא סריס המלך Hege seris hammelech, "Hege, the king's eunuch;" so the Septuagint, Vulgate, Targum, and Syriac. In the Eastern countries the women are intrusted to the care of the eunuchs only.

Let their things for purification be given them - תמרקיהן tamrukeyhen, their cosmetics. What these were we are told in Est 2:12; oil of myrrh, and sweet odours. The myrrh was employed for six months, and the odours for six months more, after which the person was brought to the king. This space was sufficient to show whether the young woman had been chaste; whether she were with child or not, that the king might not be imposed on, and be obliged to father a spurious offspring, which might have been the case had not this precaution been used.

Instead of the oil or myrrh, the Targum says it was the oil of unripe olives which caused the hair to fall off, and rendered the skin delicate.

---

ESTHER 2: 4 and let the maiden who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." The thing pleased the king, and he did so.

ESTHER 2: 5 There was a certain Jew in the citadel of Susa, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite,

---

#### Verse 5

Whose name was Mordecai - The Targum says, "He was the son of Jair, the son of Shimea, the son of Gera, the son of Kish." And "this was the same Shimea that cursed David; and whom David forbade Joab to slay because he saw, in the spirit of prophecy, that he was to be the predecessor of Esther and Mordecai; but when he became old, and incapable of having children, David ordered Solomon to put him to death.

---

ESTHER 2: 6 who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

ESTHER 2: 7 He brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter; for she had neither father nor mother. The maiden was fair and beautiful; and when her father and mother were dead, Mordecai took her for his own daughter.

---

#### Verse 7

He brought up Hadassah - הדסה hadassah signifies a myrtle in Chaldee: this was probably her first or Babylonish name. When she came to the Persian court, she was called Esther, aster, or sitara, which signifies a star in Persian: the name is undoubtedly Persian. Esther was the daughter of Abihail, the uncle of Mordecai, and therefore must have been Mordecai's cousin, though the Vulgate and Josephus make her Mordecai's niece: but it is safest here to follow the Hebrew.

---

ESTHER 2: 8 So, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together to the citadel of Susa, to the custody of Hegai, Esther was taken into the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.

ESTHER 2: 9 The maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness from him. He quickly gave her cosmetics and her portions of food, and the seven choice maidens who were to be given her out of the king's house. He moved her and her maidens to the best place in the women's house.

---

#### Verse 9

The maiden pleased him - He conceived a partiality for her above the rest, probably because of the propriety of her deportment, and her engaging though unassuming manners.

Seven maidens - These were to attend her to the bath, to anoint and adorn her, and be her servants in general.

---

ESTHER 2: 10 Esther had not made known her people nor her relatives, because Mordecai had instructed her that she should not make it known.

---

Verse 10

Esther had not showed her people - This might have prejudiced her with the king; for it was certainly no credit at the Persian court to be a Jew; and we shall find from the sequel that those who were in the Persian dominions were far from being reputable, or in a safe state. Besides, had her lineage been known, envy might have prevented her from ever having access to the king.

---

ESTHER 2: 11 Mordecai walked every day in front of the court of the women's house, to find out how Esther was doing, and what would become of her.

ESTHER 2: 12 Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after her purification for twelve months (for so were the days of their purification accomplished, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet fragrances and with preparations for beautifying women).

---

Verse 12

Six months with oil of myrrh - See on Est 2:3 (note). The reason of this purification seems not to be apprehended by any writer I have seen. The most beautiful of all the young virgins of all the provinces of Babylon were to be selected; and these were taken out of all classes of the people, indiscriminately; consequently there must have been many who were brought up in low life. Now we know that those who feed on coarse strong food, which is not easily digested, have generally a copious perspiration, which is strongly odorous; and in many, though in every respect amiable, and even beautiful, this odour is far from being pleasant. Pure, wholesome, easily digested, and nourishing aliment, with the frequent use of the hot bath, continued for twelve months, the body frequently rubbed with olive oil, will in almost every case remove all that is disagreeable of this kind. This treatment will give a healthy action to all the subcutaneous vessels, and in every respect promote health and comfort.

---

ESTHER 2: 13 The young woman then came to the king like this: whatever she desired was given her to go with her out of the women's house to the king's house.

---

Verse 13

Whatsoever she desired - When any of the young women were called to go to the king, it appears that it was an ordinance that whatever kind of dress stuff, color, jewels, etc., they thought best to set off their persons, and render them more engaging, should be given them.

ESTHER 2: 14 In the evening she went, and on the next day she returned into the second women's house, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch, who kept the concubines. She came in to the king no more, unless the king delighted in her, and she was called by name.

---

#### Verse 14

She returned into the second house - This was the place where the king's concubines were kept. They went out no more, and were never given in marriage to any man, and saw the king's face no more unless specially called.

Custody of Shaashgaz - This is probably another Persian name; sheshkhunj, beardless, a proper epithet of a eunuch; or sestgunj, weak loins, for the same reason. Names of this kind at once show the reason of their imposition, by describing the state of the person.

---

ESTHER 2: 15 Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, came to go in to the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the keeper of the women, advised. Esther obtained favour in the sight of all those who looked at her.

---

#### Verse 15

She required nothing - She left this entirely to her friend Hege, who seems to have been intent on her success. She therefore left her decorations to his judgment alone, and went in that dress and in those ornaments which he deemed most suitable.

---

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

---

#### Verse 16

The tenth month - Tebeth - Answering to part of our December and January.

---

ESTHER 2: 17 The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she obtained favour and kindness in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown on her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

---

#### Verse 17

Set the royal crown upon her head - Made her what is now called in the East the Sultana, the queen. She was the mistress of all the rest of the wives, all of whom were obliged to pay her the most profound respect.

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

---

#### Verse 18

Made a release to the provinces - Remitted some kind of tribute or impost, in honor of Esther, at her coronation, as our kings generally do when they are crowned, ordering a discharge from prison of many who are confined for minor offenses. As it was the custom of the Persian kings to give their queens something like what is called with us the aurum reginae, "queen gold," which was a tenth of all fines, etc., above what was given to the king; (for they gave them such a city to buy them clothes, another for their hair, a third for their necklaces, a fourth for their pearls, etc.); it is probable that, on this occasion, Esther so wishing, he relieved those cities and provinces which had before paid this queen gold from all these expenses; and this would tend greatly to make the queen popular.

---

ESTHER 2: 19 When the virgins were gathered together the second time, Mordecai was sitting in the king's gate.

ESTHER 2: 20 Esther had not yet made known her relatives nor her people, as Mordecai had commanded her; for Esther obeyed Mordecai, like she did when she was brought up by him.

ESTHER 2: 21 In those days, while Mordecai was sitting in the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, who were doorkeepers, were angry, and sought to lay hands on the King Ahasuerus.

---

#### Verse 21

Mordecai sat in the kings gate - Mordecai might have been one of the officers of the king, as the gate was the place where such usually attended to await the king's call. It is not likely that he was the porter; had he been only such, Haman could have removed him at once.

Two of the king's chamberlains - Eunuchs. Why they conspired against the life of the king, we are not informed. The Targum says that they found out that Esther had intended to use her influence with the king to get them removed from their office, and Mordecai put in their place; therefore they determined to poison Esther, and slay the king in his bedchamber. It is very likely that they were creatures of Haman, who probably affected the kingdom, and perhaps were employed by him to remove the king, and so make his way open to the throne.

---

ESTHER 2: 22 This thing became known to Mordecai, who informed Esther the queen; and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name.

---

#### Verse 22

Was known to Mordecai - Josephus says that a Jew, named Barnabasus, overheard the plot, told it to Mordecai, Mordecai to Esther, and Esther to the king, in Mordecai's name; and he was registered as the discoverer.

---

ESTHER 2: 23 When this matter was investigated, and it was found to be so, they were both hanged on a tree; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the king's presence.

---

#### Verse 23

It was found out - It was proved against them, in consequence of which they were hanged. Perhaps the words *על עץ ויתלו* *vaiyittalu al ets*, they were hung upon wood or a tree, may refer to their being impaled. A pointed stake is set upright in the ground, and the culprit is taken, placed on the sharp point, and then pulled down by his legs till the stake that went in at the fundament passes up through the body and comes out by the side of the neck. A most dreadful species of punishment, in which revenge and cruelty may glut the utmost of their malice. The culprit lives a considerable time in excruciating agonies.

It has been observed that the name of God does not once occur in this book. This is true of the Hebrew text, and all translations from it; but in the Septuagint we find the following words, in Est 2:20, after, Esther had not showed her kindred: *Οὕτως γὰρ ἐνετειλάτο αὐτῇ Μαρδοχαιος, φοβεισθαι τὸν Θεον, καὶ ποιειν τὰ προστάγματα αὐτου, καθως ἦν μετ' αὐτου;* "For so Mordecai had charged her to fear God, and to keep his commandments, as she did when with him." This, as far as the Septuagint is concerned, takes away the strange reproach from this book. It must be owned that it was not because there were not many fair opportunities that the sacred name has not been introduced.