

Verses 12-14

Now when the turn came for each young woman to go in to King Ahasuerus, after being twelve months under the regulations for the women, since this was the regular period of their beautifying, six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and ointments for women— 13when the young woman went in to the king in this way, she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the harem to the king's palace. 14In the evening she would go in, and in the morning she would return to the second harem in custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch, who was in charge of the concubines. She would not go in to the king again, unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name.

In these verses, we are told that the women would spend a **year** getting ready to sleep with the king. They then would return to the second harem run by another eunuch named Shaashgaz.

Verse 14 is telling us that these women would spend the **rest** of their lives waiting for the king to ask for them again. In other words, not much of an existence.

Verse 15

When the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his own daughter, to go in to the king, she asked for nothing except what Hegai the king's eunuch, who had charge of the women, advised. Now Esther was winning favor in the eyes of all who saw her.

It was Esther's turn to be with the king. Each girl had a **choice** of what she would take when going to the king. Esther took what Hegai said to take. We do not know what that was but Hegai knew the king and he would **know** what the king would like.

Verse 16

And when Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign,

Esther went to be with the king in 479 BC in the **month** of December-January time period.

Verse 17

the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor 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.

Esther **impressed** the king so much that he made her his queen. When I read this I remember all the kings that God had influenced through the Old Testament to benefit His people; like Joseph with Pharaoh, and Daniel in the court of Nebuchadnezzar- **God** is doing this again.

Verse 18

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.

Xerxes then has a great banquet for Esther

Mordecai discovers a plot

Verses 19-20

Now when the virgins were gathered together the second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. 20Esther had not made known her kindred or her people, as Mordecai had commanded her, for Esther obeyed Mordecai just as when she was brought up by him.

A few things we see in these verses:

1. There was a second gathering of these virgins for the king's harem.
2. It would appear that Mordecai received a **promotion**. Back in those days, the king's gate was like the administration building. Legal, civil, and commercial business was transacted on the king's behalf at this gate. It would appear that Mordecai had been promoted to an **official** at the gate.
 - a. Archeologists have excavated the palace at Susa and found that the king's gate was actually 12,000 square feet in size (two basketball courts). An inscription by Xerxes says his father, Darius built it.
3. Esther kept her family background a **secret**. And Esther still communicated with Mordecai and listened to him.

The plot

Verse 21

In those days, as Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

Mordecai was doing his job when he heard about a plot to **kill** Xerxes. The men who were going to do this guarded the door of the king. Several sources say that these plotters were the last line of **defense** for the king.

Two things that need to be mentioned:

1. Back in those days, conspiracies by government officials were a **common thing**. In fact, in August 465 BC Xerxes would be killed by the captain of his bodyguards.
2. We do not know why these guys were angry at the king or who told Mordecai. Josephus says a servant overheard the plot and told Mordecai.

Verses 22-23

And this came to the knowledge of Mordecai, and he told it to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai. 23When the affair was investigated and found to be so, the men were both hanged on the gallows. And it was recorded in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.

Look at the last part of verse 23- "recorded in the book of chronicles"- this was very uncommon because **Persian** kings usually rewarded people immediately for acts of loyalty. Once again, just at the right time in Chapter 6 God will use this.

Chapter 3

Verse 1

After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, and advanced him and set his throne above all the officials who were with him.

We don't know why Haman is **promoted** by Xerxes to second in command. We are told that Haman was an Agagite. This is a reference to Haman being an Amalekite, who were a people who did not like the Israelites. This enmity goes back to the book of Exodus when Israel fought Amalek in the **wilderness** (Exodus 17:8-16).

In 1 Samuel 15 King Saul, a Benjaminite, son of Kish, was told to destroy the Amalekites but he didn't. He won the war but **spared** the best of the animals and King Agag. Samuel the prophet showed up and killed Agag.

On top of that, Mordecai was a Benjaminite and a descendant of Kish and Haman an Agagite. This conflict between them that was centuries old would **play a part** in what was going to happen.

Verse 2

And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage.

There are two keywords in this verse, *bowing* and *paying homage*, when these Hebrew words are combined in the Old Testament they **always** refer to worshiping and reverencing **God**. In other words, Haman wanted people to basically **worship** the ground he walked on.

A faithful Jew would not do that. I believe something changed in Mordecai. Up to this point he had kept his heritage a secret for five years. He told Esther to not tell anyone about her heritage. Mordecai also had no problem having Esther eat food she should not have eaten and her being in a harem. I believe he was running from God but he **changed**, he took a **stand** for his God.

Verses 3-4

Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?" 4And when they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to them, they told Haman, in order to see whether Mordecai's words would stand, for he had told them that he was a Jew.

The king's servants see that Mordecai refuses to **bow** to Haman and they call him on it. They then tell Haman what Mordecai would not do and the explanation Mordecai gave was that he was a **Jew**.

The circumstances are different but what happened to Joseph in Genesis 39 is a **mirror** of what is going on with Mordecai. Both are in the court of a foreign ruler, both must take a stand, both have an outpouring of anger, both are finally honored, and both save their people.

Verses 5-6

And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage to him, Haman was filled with fury. 6But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, as they had made known to him the people of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.

The word *fury* or *rage* is a word that has been used **twice** before, dealing with Xerxes' rage. It is a word that denotes a personal affront and prompts **revenge** of disproportionate size. Haman felt that Mordecai's refusal was an opportunity to not only deal with Mordecai but settle an **old score** once and for all; "the final solution".

Verse 7

In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, they cast lots) before Haman day after day; and they cast it month after month till the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.

As we come to this verse it is important to define a couple of these words that are used:

- **Nisan**- March/April
- **Adar**- Feb/March
- **Pur**- is the word for *stone* in the Persian language.
 - Baked clay, shaped like dice and marked on all six sides.
- **Twelfth year of Xerxes' reign**- about five years since **Esther** had been made queen.

It is believed that it was common to **cast lots** to choose opportune days for important events.

- It should be noted that when the text says “from month to month” it does not mean they rolled the dice every day but rather rolled the dice for **every day** of the year.
- Haman did not personally roll the dice but sat and watched his **magicians** roll the dice to see when Haman was going to execute his plan to destroy the Jews. The day chosen was the 13th of Adar (Es 3:13) which was in about 11 months.
- Haman **forgot** Solomon’s words (Proverbs 16:33).

Verse 8

Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, “There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king’s laws so that it is not to the king’s profit to tolerate them.

Haman comes to the king and mixes a **little truth** with a **little** lie- yes the Jewish people were scattered all over the empire but they were not a threat to the king. But they were different because they lived by God’s law and their customs were different but again, **no threat** to the king or his kingdom.

It is the same with us if we take seriously God’s Word we will be **different** because we have a different authority.

Verse 9

If it please the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king’s business, that they may put it into the king’s treasuries.”

Haman offers a bribe of 10,000 talents which is **400 tons** of silver- worth millions in today’s economy. Haman must have had some money but also he would become even **richer** after he took property and savings from the Jews.

Verses 10-11

So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. 11And the king said to Haman, “The money is given to you, the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you.”

Xerxes accepted Haman’s **plan** and gave him the king’s signet ring. This means Haman had almost ultimate authority and power. In other words, a **wicked man** with a vendetta had the authority and power to kill God’s people.

Verses 12-15

Then the king's scribes were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and an edict, according to all that Haman commanded, was written to the king's satraps and to the governors over all the provinces and to the officials of all the peoples, to every province in its own script and every people in its own language. It was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet ring. 13Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with instruction to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. 14A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province by proclamation to all the peoples to be ready for that day. 15The couriers went out hurriedly by order of the king, and the decree was issued in Susa the citadel. And the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was thrown into confusion.