

Book Study on Esther
Ahasuerus Calls for the Queen
Esther 1:10-15

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Introduction

The last time we met we studied an overview of the book of Esther. We looked at the first 9 verses of the book and studied the historical and cultural setting that the story unfolds in.

- The King made a feast of celebration for all the people of power and wealth. Vs. 3
- Celebrated his greatness, showed off his wealth, for 180 days
- Then had a huge 7 day feast for all the people of shushan

Lets pick up here in verse 10

Bible

Est 1:10 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,

- As the feast days advanced, the drinking was more freely indulged in, so that the close was usually marked by great excesses of revelry.¹
- According to the Megillah – (Hebrew scrolls) they say... And so it was at the banquet of Ahasuerus, where an argument erupted among the men. Some said: “The Median women are the fairest,” while others claimed: “Persian women are the fairest.” Ahasuerus replied to them: “The vessel that I use [that is, his wife] is neither Mede nor Persian, but Chaldean (= Babylonian)—do you want to see her?” They told him, “Yes, but only if she is naked.” This demand is derived from Esth. 1:11: “to bring Queen Vashti before the king wearing a royal diadem”—wearing only a royal diadem, without any other clothes on her body (BT Megillah 12b).²
- These were the eunuchs who had charge of the royal harem.
- Remember the name **Bigtha**, you will see it again.

Est 1:11 To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on.

- Who is Vashti 2 traditional views - One midrash tradition conveys that Vashti was the orphaned daughter of Belshazzar; God was her help and kept her alive and she was wed to the emperor of Persia and Media, even though she was a Chaldean (= Babylonian) (Esth. Rabbah 3:5). In the midrashic account of these events, on the night that Belshazzar was killed, Cyrus the Persian and Darius the Mede were guests at his table. The candelabrum fell and dashed out Belshazzar’s brains. Darius was crowned in his stead and sat in Belshazzar’s customary place. The death of Belshazzar caused total pandemonium in the palace. Some killed, while others engaged in looting. Vashti, Belshazzar’s daughter, was a young girl. She saw the tumult in the castle and ran among the guests. Thinking that her father was still alive, she mistakenly sat in Darius’s lap, in the belief that he was her father. Darius took pity on her and married her to his son Ahasuerus. (Midrash Panim Aherim [ed. Buber], version B, para. 1).

According to **another midrashic tradition**, Vashti was a princess and Ahasuerus was her father’s steward, in charge of the royal stables. He acquired regal status by marrying her (Esth. Rabbah 3:14; BT Megillah 12b).²

- This command, though contrary to Persian customs, is not out of harmony with the character of Xerxes; and is evidently related as something strange and unusual. Otherwise, the queen would not have refused to come.

¹ Jamieson, Fausset & Brown :: Commentary on Esther 1

² <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/vashti-midrash-and-aggadah>

Est 1:12 But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by *his* chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.

- The refusal of Vashti to obey an order which required her to make an indecent exposure of herself before a company of drunken revelers, was becoming both the modesty of her sex and her rank as queen; for, according to Persian customs, the queen, even more than the wives of other men, was secluded from the public gaze. Had not the king's blood been heated with wine, or his reason overpowered by force of offended pride, he would have perceived that his own honor, as well as hers, was consulted by her dignified conduct.¹
- The difference in their stations was reflected in Ahasuerus's behavior at the banquet, when he summoned Vashti to appear before the men at their revelry. Esth. 1:10 attests: "on the seventh day, when the king was merry with wine," from which the Rabbis understood that the king was intoxicated. The midrash relates that Vashti sent a messenger to her husband with the message: (The Talmud ³) You were Father's steward. My father Belshazzar would drink wine in the measure of one thousand men and would not be inebriated, while you act the fool from the wine of a single man! She thereby hinted to him that she was the daughter of royalty, while he was a simple person who had reached his exalted status thanks to her (BT Megillah loc. cit.).²

Est 1:13 Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so *was* the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment:

Est 1:14 And the next unto him *was* Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, *and* Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, *and* which sat the first in the kingdom;)

- *Ezr 7:14 "Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand;"*
- That sat next to the king, and was the chief in dignity and authority under him:⁴
- "prines of Persia = which custom of having seven counsellors with the kings of Persia arose from the seven princes that slew Smerdis the pretender, and made Darius Hystaspis king, the father of Xerxes:³
- There were seven families of the first rank in Persia, from which alone the king could take his wives. Their chiefs were entitled to have free access to the monarch's person.⁵

Est 1:15 What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains?

- Vashti knew the risk of disobeying the king.
- Remember Vashti had more of a Royal bloodline than the king
- She just belittled and disrespected the king in front at least the princes of the 127 provinces of the kingdom.

What shall we do with her? You will have to come next time to find out!

³ <https://www.aish.com/h/pur/t/dt/48951881.html>

⁴ Gill, John. "Commentary on Esther 1:14". "The New John Gill Exposition of the Entire Bible". <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/geb/esther-1.html>. 1999.

⁵ <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/esther/1.htm>