

Book Study on Esther
The Other Characters in the Story - Esther

Esther 2:8-11

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Introduction

- Review books of the Bible: Gen – Esther
- Esther is 40 years after Ezra and 40 years before Nehemiah
- The story setting in Shushan the capital city in Ahasuerus' Persian kingdom
- Vashti, the Chaldean Queen, refused to present herself to the king and the 127 princes of the land.
- Disastrous military campaign that leaves the king depressed, counselors suggest looking for a new queen.
- The last time we studied the book of Esther we studied about Mordecai who he is, where he came from and the historical information about his background and how he ended up in Shushan at the Palace
- Introduction to Hadassah aka Esther.

Let's pick up here in chapter 2 and verse 8

Bible

Est 2:8 So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.

Est 2:9 And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women.

Est 2:10 Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it.

Est 2:11 And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.

Lets look a little deeper into these verses:

Est 2:8 So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.

"and when many maidens were gathered together"

- Josephus says, there were gathered to the number of four hundred:¹
 - The detail of 400 concubines is not from the Bible; however, Josephus' contemporary Plutarch wrote that Artaxerxes II had "three hundred and sixty concubines, all women of the highest beauty" (Moore, p. 21).¹
- ...taken, and that by force, as that word oft signifies. So great was the power and tyranny of the Persian kings, that they could and did take what persons they liked to their own use.²

"to the custody of Hegai,"

- Hegai is Persian in origin and it's meaning is eunuch.³
 - Eunuch – a castrated man placed in charge of a harem or employed as a chamberlain in a palace⁴
- keeper of the women – The eunuch employed by Xerxes as keeper of the women in the king's harem⁵

¹ <http://www.josephus.org/Esther.htm#harem>

² Poole, Matthew, "Commentary on Esther 2:8". Matthew Poole's English Annotations on the Holy Bible.

<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/mpc/esther-2.html>. 1685.

³ <http://www.biblical-baby-names.com/meaning-of-hegai.html>

⁴ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/eunuch>

⁵ <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/hegai>

Est 2:9 And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women.

- *"And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him;"* - "she obtained favour"⁶
- *"and he speedily gave her her things for purification"* - by which is probably meant her daily allowance of food⁶
- *"with such things as belonged to her,"* –
- *"and seven maidens,"* – It is implied that each virgin had seven female attendants assigned to her.⁶
- *"which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house"* – Women who know the king's expectations and could teach them to prepare the future wife.
- *"and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women."* - It was in this point that the "favour" or "kindness of Hegel was shown. He selected for her use the most suitable of the attendants.⁶ she also revived the best place (room) in the house.

Est 2:10 Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it.

- *"Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred"* –
 - 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.⁷
 - To have confessed that she was a Jewess would probably have roused a prejudice against her, or at any rate have prevented her from being received with special favour. Mordecai, knowing this, had instructed her to say nothing to Hegel on the subject, and no one else, it would seem, had enlightened him.⁸
 - Under Jewish law, if one's life is in danger, there are allowances for being able to break Jewish law. Yet Esther ensured that she keep not only the spirit of the law in her circumstances, but the letter of the law as well.⁹
- *"for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it."* - She was directed to this course by her cousin and foster-father as a matter of politic prudence, lest her attachment to her race and religion should prejudice her interests with the officers of the harem.¹⁰

Est 2:11 And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.

- *"And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house,"*
 - Gill - Being one of the court, and in an high post, as Aben Ezra thinks, he might walk there without being examined, and called to an account for it:¹¹
 - Benson - He might walk there without being suspected, because he belonged to the court, and was a man of some rank; for those that were carried away in Jeconiah's captivity (as his ancestors were, Esther 2:6) were of the better sort, 2 Kings 24:14, &c.; Daniel 1:4. And Esther might find means, by some of those that attended her, to acquaint him with the state of her health and affairs.¹²
 - Exell - [Mordecai ... before the court of the women's house] This leads us to suppose that he was an eunuch. It is not probable that he would, otherwise, have such access to the house of the women as it appears he had. It is the opinion of many that he was a royal porter having charge of one of the principal gates.¹³
 - From the hope on Mordecai's part that she might pass for a native Persian, and that her Jewish birth should be no hindrance to her advancement. The king does not learn his wife's nation till some time afterwards (Esther 7:4).¹⁴

⁶ The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2010 by BibleSoft, inc., Used by permission Bible Hub

⁷ Clarke, Adam. "Commentary on Esther 2:10". "The Adam Clarke Commentary". <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/acc/esther-2.html>. 1832.

⁸ The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2010 by BibleSoft, inc., Used by permission Bible Hub
⁹ https://www.chabad.org/theJewishWoman/article_cdo/aid/367185/jewish/Esther-Hidden-Beauty.htm - Zohar II:162b.

¹⁰ Whedon, Daniel. "Commentary on Esther 2:10". "Whedon's Commentary on the Bible". <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/whe/esther-2.html>. 1874-1909.

¹¹ Gill, John. "Commentary on Esther 2:11". "The New John Gill Exposition of the Entire Bible". <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/geb/esther-2.html>. 1999.

¹² Benson, Joseph. "Commentary on Esther 2:11". Joseph Benson's Commentary. <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/rbc/esther-2.html>. 1857.

¹³ Exell, Joseph S. "Commentary on Esther 2:11". Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary. <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/phc/esther-2.html>. Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1892.

¹⁴ Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

- “to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.”
 - J.F.B. - The harem is an inviolable sanctuary, and what is transacted within its walls is as much a secret to those without as if they were thousands of miles away. But hints were given him through the eunuchs.¹⁵
 - TRAPP - He had taken her for his child, and was curious of her welfare, though she were now grown up, and preferred at court. The court, he knew, was an ill air for godliness to breathe in. His care was, therefore, that she might have Gaius's prosperity, even *mentem sanam in corpore sano*, a sound mind in a sound body. And although he trusted God with his niece, yet he knew that an honest care of her might well stand with faith in God's providence. God must be trusted, but not tempted, by the neglect of lawful means, Matthew 4:7.¹⁶

¹⁵ Jamieson, Robert, D.D.; Fausset, A. R.; Brown, David. "Commentary on Esther 2:11". "Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible". <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jfb/esther-2.html>. 1871-8.

¹⁶ Trapp, John. "Commentary on Esther 2:11". John Trapp Complete Commentary. <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jtc/esther-2.html>. 1865-1868.