

Esther Becomes Queen

Esther 1 – 2

by Don Falkos

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King Xerxes of Persia held a great banquet at his palace in the fortress of Susa. On the seventh day of feasting, Xerxes, drunk out of his mind, demanded the presence of the queen. She was to be dressed in her royal finery and adorned with her crown – he wanted to show off her beauty. But Queen Vashti refused to appear. In fear that women across the empire would follow the queen's example and begin treating their husbands with contempt, Xerxes deposed Queen Vashti and forever banished her from his presence.

While Xerxes was away suffering a devastating military defeat in Greece, the king's aides searched the empire for its most beautiful young women – potential replacements for Queen Vashti. Each received a full year of beauty treatments before being presented to the king. He would spend the night with her, and then she would return to the harem, never again to come to the king unless he requested her by name.

One of the young women brought into the king's harem was a Jew named Esther, the adopted daughter of her much older cousin Mordecai, who serviced as a palace official. Finally it was Esther's turn to go to the king's bed. She pleased him more than any of the others, and Xerxes made her his queen.

One day while on duty at the palace gate, Mordecai overheard two men plotting to kill Xerxes. He told Queen Esther, who passed the information on to the king. The two men were executed – impaled on a stake. The story of Mordecai's assistance to the king was recorded in the official records.