

The Search for A Queen | Esther 2:1-4

- *Chapter 1 serves as historical background.*
 - *The lack of morality is incidental, except to show that Esther was living in a land that was as spiritually as far from her Jewish roots as it could possibly be.*
 - *The book neither condemns nor condones the activity, but rather presents it as a matter-of-fact.*
- Verse 3: **things for purification** - Presumably, cosmetics and oils, as in vv. 9 & 12.

Introducing Esther | Esther 2:5-17

- Verse 5–
 - According to Josephus, Mordecai is Esther's uncle, and was "one of the principal persons among the Jews." (Antiquities 11:198).
 - This is a Babylonian name, not originally a Jewish name (though since this time Jews have used the name). It is a derivative of the Babylonian god Marduk.
 - It is telling that Mordechai was willing to go by his Babylonian name rather than his Jewish name, when the name was honoring a false god, thus breaking the first commandment.
 - What about Daniel & Friends?
 - Daniel did not go by his Babylonian name, Belteshazzar "Baal shall protect"
 - Hananiah did go by his Babylonian name, Shadrach, "the royal scribe."
 - Mishael did go by his Babylonian name, Meshach, "guest of the king."
 - Azariah did go by his Babylonian name, Abed-nego, "Servant of the prophet."
 - Only one of these four Babylonian names clearly violates the Jewish faith.
- Verse 6–
 - It is impossible to tell whether this refers to Mordecai or Kish.
 - If Mordecai, then an earlier date would be essential.
 - The deportation of Jeconiah was in 597BC. It was at this same time that Ezekiel was deported.
 - Xerxes reigned 111 years after this deportation.
- Verse 7–
 - "The Gentile reigns and does according to his will, taking at his pleasure one of the daughters of Benjamin for his wife. Sad condition, indeed, for the people of God!—a position contrary to all divine law, to all faithfulness under other circumstances, but here not leading even to expostulation." (Darby, J. N. *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*)

- **Hadassah** - Hadassah is the Hebrew name of Esther, and means "myrtle."
 - In Judaism, the myrtle tree is a symbol of bounty and blessing.
 - Mordacai had clearly informed Esther of her Hebrew roots. However, she goes by her Persian name, Esther, a form of the Babylonian goddess Ishtar.
- Verse 10–
 - The secrecy of Esther's Judaism is very different from those like Daniel & friends, who openly testify to their lineage and faith.
 - In the book of Esther, we see the Jewish people holding to Judaism only in non-public ways.
- Verse 11 - We do not know what position was held by Mordecai, if any, that allowed him this kind of access.
- Verse 16 - How was she taken? Forcibly or voluntarily? While most interpret that she voluntarily participated in this unethical (and un-Jewish) practice, the Septuagint adds that she was taken forcibly. A normal reading of the Hebrew would not imply force.

Assassination Plot | Esther 2:18-23

- Verse 18 - Take note of the comparisons with chapter 1.
 - Both chapters have a banquet
 - Both chapters focus on a woman
 - Both chapters have a decree to bring in a woman
 - Both chapters have a rebellion (vv. 21ff)
- Verse 21 - This (as in v. 11) implies but does not require that Mordecai had some kind of official position in the Kingdom.

Introducing Haman | Esther 3:1

- Haman is an **Agagite** - This is not insignificant.
 - In Numbers 24:7, the "Oracle of Balaam" says that the Kingdom of Israel shall be "higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted." However, Agag, king of the Amalekites, reigned during the time of Saul, hundreds of years after Balaam. But since the Hebrew word אָגָג [agag] means "I will overtop" (Strong's), Balaam is saying, "His kingdom will be higher than the one who says he is highest."
- Later, Agag becomes King and Saul captures him, yet lets him live, disobeying the instructions of God through Samuel. Agag was King of the Amalekites, and the Amalekites were Nephilim.
- It is possible that Numbers 24:7 is a direct prophecy of Agag the King, mentioned by name hundreds of years before his reign. If so, it would be a direct prophecy of Saul being "taller" than Agag (rather than higher), yet when Saul failed to destroy Agag, he failed to fulfill his legacy and thus was removed from the throne.