

Esther 2:1-18

The original beauty contest



The cold light of day

Later when the anger of King Xerxes had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what he had decreed about her.

The time scale

Esther was taken to King in the seventh year of his reign - 4 years after he had got rid of Vashti.



Not a lot of choice or opportunity knocks?

Then the king's personal attendants proposed, "Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king. Let the king appoint commissioners in every province of his realm to bring all these beautiful girls into the harem at the citadel of Susa.



Let them be placed under the care of Hegai, the king`s eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let beauty treatments be given to them.

Top quality treatment? Fashion victims?



The simple plan

Then let the girl who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti."



This advice appealed to the king, and he followed it.

Sure!

Do we seek advice from those who tell
us what we want to hear?



Introducing Mordecai

Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin king of Judah.



His ancestry makes him related to King Saul – a significant point later.

Quite a while before, his family had been brought captive to Babylon in 597 BC (the time of Esther was 483 BC)

A tragedy in the family - an orphan girl

Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother.

Hadassah was her original Hebrew name
She was adopted by Mordecai – He accepted his family responsibilities



Good DNA!

This girl, who was also known as Esther, was lovely in form and features, and Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.

Esther – Persian name = star , after the ‘goddess’ Ishtar

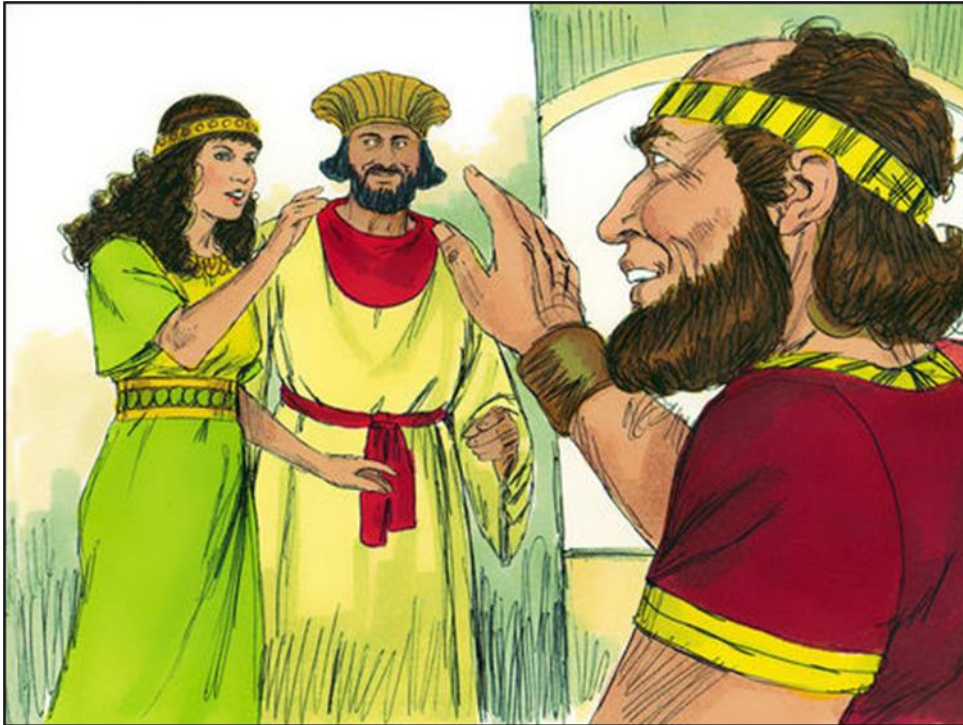
She was a really beautiful girl thanks to her genes.

She was well cared for too.



Chosen

When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many girls were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem.



Who spotted her and brought her in?

God's secret purposes!

The girl pleased him and won his favour.

He spotted her potential!

But I wasn't just her good looks
that persuaded him – character counts too



Nothing but the best

Immediately he provided her with her beauty treatments and special food. He assigned to her seven maids selected from the king's palace and moved her and her maids into the best place in the harem.

- ***** Beauty products
- ***** Good food
- ***** Special care
 - in training for royal role
- ***** Best place
 - getting used to 'luxury'.



Schh....! She is Jewish

Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so.

A vital piece in the story
(nobody else knows this - yet)

But Mordecai is still influencing her –
Why does he think should she not say?

Possibly to avoid the concubine
families' dangerous politics to gain
influence.. Keep out of it!



What news ?

Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her.

Mordecai is keeping in touch

- He was concerned for her

He is only allowed 'near'

- no men are allowed in!

How did they communicate ?

- messengers?



The original beauty contest routine:-

Before a girl's turn came to go in to King Xerxes, she had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments prescribed for the women, six months with oil of myrrh and six with perfumes and cosmetics.

A whole year's treatment!

This would also ensure that any babies born would be the king's children and not somebody else's.

Look good - smell good

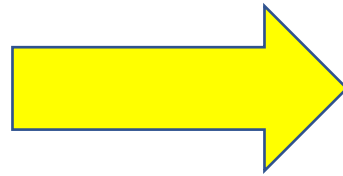


Plus a personal option for each woman

And this is how she would go to the king.. Anything she wanted was given her to take with her from the harem to the king`s palace. In the evening she would go there and in the morning return to another part of the harem to the care of Shaashgaz, the king`s eunuch who was in charge of the concubines.



In
to the palace
with her choice



In
to bed
with the
king



Out
to
the concubine`s
quarters

The end!

She would not return to the king
unless he was pleased with her and summoned her by name.



Unless she was called again -
Did he even know their names?

The contemporary Greek
historian Herodotus tells us the
Xerxes had 400 concubines!

Esther's turn

When the turn came for Esther (the girl Mordecai had adopted, the daughter of his uncle Abihail) to go to the king, she asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the harem, suggested.

Esther relied on Hegai's inside information and follows his advice.

What was it she asked for?



And Esther won the favour of everyone who saw her.

This is a general summary of events so far.

So far – so good. A promise for the future.



She was taken to King Xerxes in the royal residence in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.



It's mid-winter - December-January 479 BC

This contest has been going on for 4 years.
(see Chapter 1:3)

After the lost war with Greece
– It's back to personal matters.

Now the king was attracted to Esther



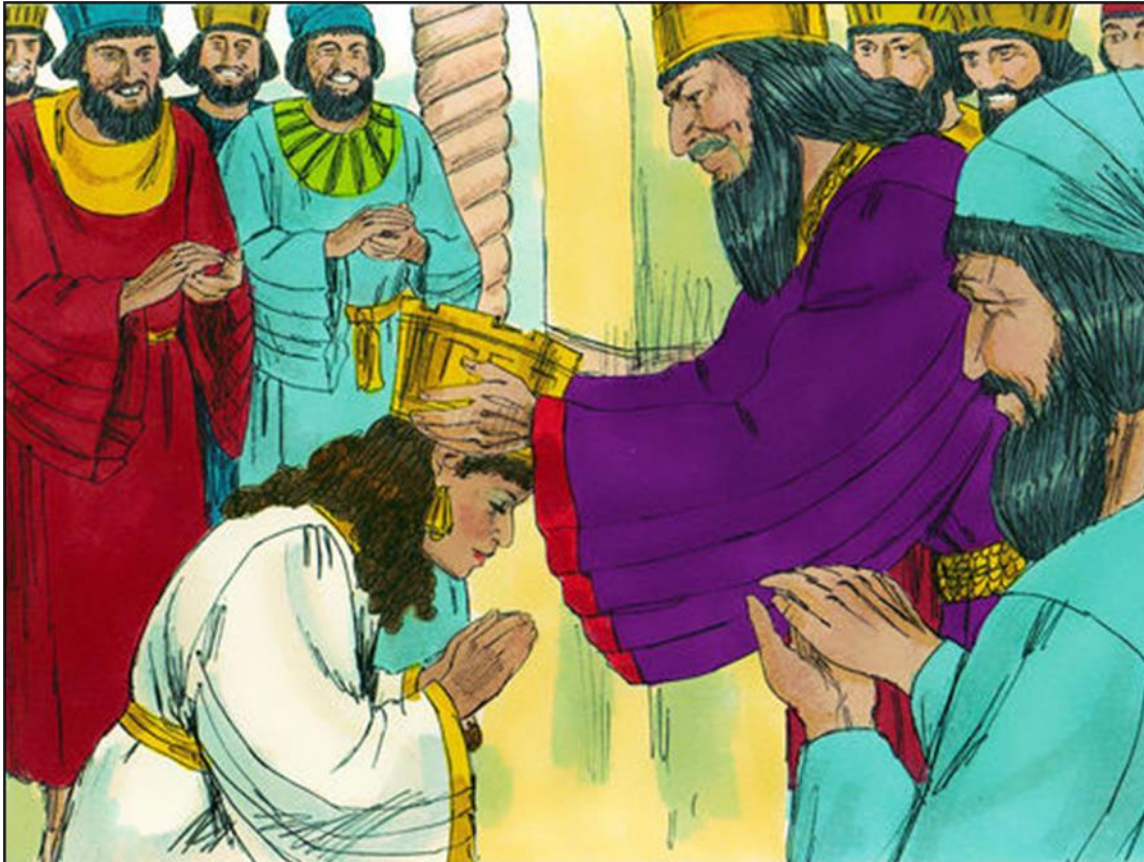
She was good! But also what made the king more attracted to her than the others? Some people's choices may not be the same as yours.
His personality – her personality – God's work of preparation

Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favour and approval more than any of the other virgins.



The New Queen's Coronation

So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. And the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his nobles and officials. He proclaimed a holiday throughout the provinces and distributed gifts with royal liberality.



Coronation and party time
to show off Esther !

The Celebration
is making a point too

The next piece of the plan is now in place.
The right person (Esther) is in the right place (in favour with the king)



Things to consider:-

Beauty – is part of God's creation

Genesis 2:9 And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.



Things to consider:-

But Beauty can be involved with good as in Esther or bad ...

Genesis 12:11 When Abram was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, "I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance."

2 Kings 9:30 When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it. And she painted her eyes and adorned her head and looked out of the window.

2 Samuel 14:25 Now in all Israel there was no one so much to be praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.

Things to consider:-

Time can be spent on appearance (the outside person)

Cf. Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees

Matthew 23:27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.



Things to consider:-

To the exclusion of Time spent working on the inside:-

1 Peter 3:3-4 Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewellery, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.



God's beautiful people!



2 Peter 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.
Amen.