

Read Esther 2:1-9

1 But after Xerxes' anger had subsided, he began thinking about Vashti and what she had done and the decree/law he had made.

2 So his personal attendants suggested, "Let us search the empire to find beautiful young women ~~virgins~~ for the king.

3 Let the king appoint agents in each province to bring these beautiful young women into the royal harem (*defined below*) at the city of Susa. Hegai, the king's eunuch in charge of the King's harem, will see that they are all given beauty treatments.

4 After that, the young woman who most pleases the king will be made queen instead of Vashti." This advice was very appealing to the king, so he put the plan into effect.

5 At that time there was a Jewish man in the city of Susa whose name was Mordecai. He was from the tribe of Benjamin. **6** His family had been exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar.

7 This man had a very beautiful and lovely young cousin, Hadassah, who was also called Esther. When her father and mother died, Mordecai adopted her into his family and raised her as his own daughter.

8 As a result of the king's decree, Esther, along with many other young women, was brought to join the king's harem at the city of Susa and placed in Hegai's care.

9 Hegai was very impressed with Esther and treated her kindly. He quickly ordered a special menu for her and provided her with beauty treatments. He also assigned her seven maids specially chosen from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maids into the best place in the harem.

What was the King thinking after he wasn't mad at Vashti any more (v. 1)? He had second thoughts and realized that maybe he had been foolish in the way he had treated Vashti.

What did his attendants recommend (v. 2)? Let's look everywhere to find beautiful women so the King can pick a new Queen.

What was the plan to find the new Queen (v. 3)? Special people would be sent to each country in the kingdom to find beautiful women. Then they would be brought to the harem in the city and be given special beauty treatments.

What's a harem? A gathering of the King's wives and other women who might become one of his wives. They all lived together. **Who was in charge of the women?** Hegai

How would they decide who would be the new Queen (v. 4)? The King would pick the one he liked the most.

Who else was living in the city (v. 5)? A Jewish man whose name was Mordecai **What do we know about Mordecai's cousin (v. 7)?** Her name was Esther and Mordecai had adopted her and raised her when her parents died. And she was beautiful and lovely.

What happened to Esther (v. 8)? She was brought to the city to join the King's harem and placed in Hegai's care. **Can you see God starting to work to get Esther to where He wants her? But he had to get rid of Vashti first.**

What did Hegai think about Esther (v. 9)? Hegai was very impressed with Esther. He treated her better than the other beautiful women. He got her special food and a better place to stay. And servants! She was his favorite. **Why do you think Esther was his favorite?**