

Esther Chapters 1-2 (Greek) / 1 (Hebrew)

Greek Esther 1:1-2:6

These chapters happen before the story actually begins and are broken down into three sections:

1. 1:1-3, where details from Hebrew Esther 1:1-3 are expanded upon.
2. 1:11-2:6, where details from Hebrew Esther 2:21-23 are expanded upon.
3. 1:4-10, where Mordecai has a dream with the following details:
 - A) The story begins with trouble already brewing.
 - B) There will be two sides fighting.
 - C) A day of tumult and darkness will occur.
 - D) Fearing for their lives, the righteous nation will repent and turn to God.
 - E) God will have mercy on them and raise them above their enemy.

The third part of Addition 1 is what drives Mordecai to pay attention, knowing that God has a plan for what's about to happen and he needs to be ready to participate in it.

Compare this dream with Joseph's dream in Genesis 37:5-6, 9 and Pharaoh's dream in Genesis 41:1-7a:

Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.

After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows, attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And Pharaoh awoke. And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears.

Notice the similarities in metaphors:

Cows = Years – Dragons = Nations
Moon and Stars = Joseph's family – Light and Sun = God's People
Cows and Grain Consuming = God bringing a famine – Rivers Flowing = God bringing salvation

Similarities in prophetic dreams increase credibility that they were given by the same God.

Hebrew Esther 1:1-9

These verses set the following context for the story:

Location: Susa, capital of Persia

King: Ahasuerus

Time Frame: Third Year of Rule, near the peak of Persian power.

The Greek version adds the following details:

Season: Early to Mid-March (Nisan = March-April)

Time Frame: After the Babylonian Captivity

Bonus: Mordecai was from the Tribe of Benjamin

The story starts with a feast, detailing a type of feast that often came after conquering a nation or people, using excess plunder to celebrate. Here Ahasuerus invited both noblemen and servants so that he could boast in his wealth.

But Ahasuerus wasn't the only one having a feast; Vashti also gave a feast for the women.

Why did Vashti have her own feast? What does this tell us about Persian culture?

1. Women were considered inferior to men.
2. Even noble women lacked authority.

This detail is significant for two reasons:

1. It leads to Vashti's downfall.
2. It shows Esther will be fighting an uphill battle.

Hebrew Esther 1:10-22

On the 7th day (out of 180), why did Ahasuerus demanded Vashti's presence?

To parade her around as a trophy wife.

And why did her refusal infuriate the king?

It would be embarrassing to show lack of authority over his wife before his honored guests.

As a result, the king gathered his advisers so he could save face.

The advisers saw a much greater threat: Vashti's actions could set an example for other women.

So the advisers chose a punishment with that in mind. Instead of Vashti setting the example, she would be made an example of. Vashti was stripped of her title and power, and a decree was given that men will hold power in their households, with the implication that if the women disobeyed, they would find themselves facing the same consequences.

Overview of Greek 1 & 2 and Hebrew 1

The scene is now set for the story of Esther. Between the two versions, a detailed context of time, location, and culture can be seen.

We also see that the first part of Mordecai's prophetic dream is underway: Vashti's refusal of King Aharuerus's command has created a tumult in the land, a decree that would create enmity within households.

It is in (and because of) this tumult that Esther's story would begin.