



The book of Esther

DID YOU KNOW?

1. Esther is the last book of the historical section of the Old Testament; it tells of events in Persia when the Jews were captives there. An Israelite girl, Esther - a name that means star - became queen of Persia, and God used her to prevent the massacre of her people. King Xerxes, called Ahasuerus in this book, reigned from 486 to 463 B.C.
2. Queen Vashti's disobedience to the king was, according to the Persian princes, an affront that challenged the authority of husbands over their wives. In this sense, they had quickly advised the king to destitute her by a decree. (Est. 1:19-20)
3. The Greek historian Herodotus wrote that the Persians: « love wine and drink it in great quantities...It is also a common practice among them to decide important matters in a state of drunkenness. Although they are often lucid at the beginning of deliberations, they always end their sittings drunk with wine. »
4. Four years had passed between the rejection of Vashti (chapter 1) and the choice of Esther as the new queen. Why had Ahasuerus waited so long? Historians report that he was at war during these years, trying in vain to conquer Greece.
5. The process leading to the choice of Esther as the new queen takes about a year. The steps are : a) selection of a group of young virgins from which an even smaller number is chosen, b) preparation of the virgins for their introduction to the king, c) the king chooses some of them to become his concubines, d) only one will be designated as the queen to replace Vashti, e) the king holds a great feast for the queen he chooses.
6. God kept the king awake and made him remember that Mordecai had saved his life (Est. 6). So, the king wanted to honor him. All this was planned by God to save his people from Haman's criminal plan.
7. God's name is not mentioned in the book of Esther. However, when one reads these pages, one sees compelling evidence of God's providential care for his people, from the disobedience of Vashti to the rise of Mordecai as a powerful Jew alongside the king of Persia.