

# Esther 1:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,

## Analysis

**On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,** The phrase "when the heart of the king was merry with wine" (k'tov lev-hamelekh b'yayin, כִּטּוֹב לִב־הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּיַּיִן) euphemistically describes drunkenness. The idiom "heart was merry" suggests impaired judgment, lowered inhibitions, and compromised reasoning—conditions for poor decisions. The timing on the "seventh day" indicates sustained excessive drinking throughout the feast, cumulating in this drunken command.

The narrative names seven eunuch chamberlains (sarisim, סָרִיסִים), emphasizing the formality and official nature of the summons. These names—Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas—are Persian, demonstrating the author's knowledge of court life. The specific number seven reflects Persian administrative structure: Esther 1:14 mentions seven princes who "saw the king's face," and Persian administrative texts document seven-member councils. Each eunuch likely held specific responsibilities in the royal household.

The designation "chamberlains that served in the presence of the king"

(hameshartim et-p'nei hamelekh, הַמְשָׁרְתִּים אֶת־פְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ) indicates trusted personal attendants with access to both the king and the queen's quarters. Using multiple officials for this summons emphasizes its formal, official character—not a casual request but a royal command. This detail heightens the seriousness of Vashti's refusal: she rejected not merely a drunken husband's whim but an official royal decree delivered by seven witnesses.

## Historical Context

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Court eunuchs held crucial positions in ancient Near Eastern royal households, particularly in Persia. Castration created dependence on royal favor (no family dynasty to pursue) and allowed access to women's quarters without sexual risk. Greek sources describe Persian court eunuchs wielding significant power, sometimes acting as king-makers during succession crises. The Bible mentions eunuchs in various contexts (2 Kings 20:18; Isaiah 39:7; Daniel 1:3), reflecting their prominence in ancient court systems.

The specific number seven resonates with Persian administrative practices. Herodotus describes seven Persian nobles who overthrew the usurper Smerdis and elevated Darius I. These "seven families" of Persia maintained privileged status, including automatic access to the king (Esther 1:14). The number seven carried symbolic significance in Persian culture, reflected in administrative structures. The use of seven eunuchs for this summons paralleled the seven noble counselors who later advised the king (v. 14).

Wine's role in precipitating poor royal decisions appears throughout ancient literature. Biblical examples include Noah (Genesis 9:21), Lot (Genesis 19:33), and Belshazzar (Daniel 5). The pattern of excessive drinking leading to moral compromise and political crisis recurs across cultures and eras. Persian kings' legendary drinking, described by Greek historians, created vulnerability to manipulation and poor judgment, as demonstrated here.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. What does this passage teach about alcohol's effects on judgment, self-control, and moral reasoning?
2. How should believers distinguish between legitimate authority that deserves submission and illegitimate demands that require resistance?
3. What principles guide Christian response when procedurally correct authority makes morally wrong demands?

## Interlinear Text

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בַּיּוֹם	הַשְּׁבִיעִי	כָּטוּב	לֵב	הֶמֶל לֶךְ	בִּי יַיִן	
day	On the seventh	was merry	when the heart	of the king	with wine	
H3117	H7637	H2896	H3820	H4428	H3196	
אָמַר	לְמְהוּמָן	בִּזְתָּה	חַרְבוֹנָה	בִּגְתָּה	וְאַבְגְּתָה	זֶתָר
he commanded	Mehuman	Biztha	Harbona	Bigtha	and Abagtha	Zethar
H559	H4104	H968	H2726	H903	H5	H2242
וְכָרְס	שִׁבְעָה	הַסָּרִיסִים	הַמְּשָׁרְתִּים	אֶת	פְּנֵי	
and Carcas	the seven	chamberlains	that served	H854	in the presence	
H3752	H7651	H5631	H8334		H6440	
הֶמֶל לֶךְ	אַחַשְׁוֵרֹשׁ					
of the king	of Ahasuerus					
H4428	H325					

## Additional Cross-References

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**Judges 16:25** (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.

**Esther 7:9** (Kingdom): And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon.

**Proverbs 20:1** (Parallel theme): Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

**2 Samuel 13:28** (Parallel theme): Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon; then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? be courageous, and be valiant.