

# Esther 1:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace;

## Analysis

**And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace;** Following the 180-day display for imperial officials, Ahasuerus hosts a second feast for Shushan's residents, democratizing the celebration. The inclusion of "both great and small" (migadol ve'ad qatan, מִגָּדוֹל וְעַד־קָטָן) emphasizes social inclusivity—an unusual gesture reflecting either genuine magnanimity or calculated political theater to secure popular support.

The seven-day duration connects to biblical patterns of completeness while remaining more modest than the preceding 180 days. The location shift to "the court of the garden of the king's palace" (ginnat bitan hamelekh, גִּנַּת בֵּיתֵן הַמֶּלֶךְ) suggests outdoor celebration in elaborate palace gardens, accommodating larger crowds than indoor halls could hold. Persian royal gardens were renowned for their beauty, size, and sophisticated irrigation—early examples of the paradise garden concept that influenced Islamic and Western landscape design.

This second feast creates the context for Vashti's refusal. The king's drinking "when the heart of the king was merry with wine" (v. 10) occurs during this more public, less formal celebration. The detail that this feast included Shushan's

residents proves crucial: Vashti's refusal becomes public humiliation rather than merely private embarrassment, explaining the severity of royal response.

## Historical Context

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Persian royal gardens (paradises, from Old Persian pairi-daeza, "walled enclosure") were legendary architectural achievements. Xenophon describes Cyrus the Younger showing Lysander elaborate gardens with geometric design, exotic plants, and sophisticated irrigation. Archaeological remains at Pasargadae and Susa reveal extensive garden complexes with stone water channels, pavilions, and planted areas. These gardens demonstrated mastery over nature and symbolized cosmic order—the king as creator of paradise on earth.

The practice of hosting public feasts alongside elite gatherings reflects Persian royal ideology's dual aspects: the king as supreme autocrat above all subjects, yet also as beneficent father providing for his people. Cuneiform texts describe similar royal feasts where common people received food and wine. This calculated generosity secured popular loyalty while demonstrating royal resources. The seven-day duration for a public feast represented extraordinary expenditure—most royal banquets for common people lasted only one or two days.

The social mixing of "great and small" at royal feasts contrasted with strict hierarchical protocols governing normal Persian court life. This temporary suspension of social barriers served political purposes, creating feelings of obligation and loyalty to the generous king. The setting in palace gardens rather than formal halls relaxed normal protocols, contributing to the drinking and revelry that precipitated the crisis with Vashti.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

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

## Study Questions

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1. How can believers distinguish between genuine generosity and calculated giving designed to enhance reputation or secure loyalty?
2. What does the temporary social mixing at this feast teach about the difference between superficial inclusivity and genuine community?
3. How should Christians evaluate charitable acts motivated by political calculation or desire for public approval?

## Interlinear Text

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וּבְמָל וְאֵתִן	יָמֵי יָמִים	הָיָה לָהּ	עָשָׂה הָ	הַמֶּלֶךְ:	לְכָל
were expired	And when these days	H428	made	of the king's	H3605
H4390	H3117		H6213	H4428	
הָעָם	הַנִּמְצְאִים	בְּשׁוּשַׁן	הַבֵּיכָה	לְמַגְדֹּל	וְעַד
unto all the people	that were present	in Shushan	the palace	both unto great	H5704
H5971	H4672	H7800	H1002	H1419	
קָטָן	מִשְׁתֵּה	שִׁבְעַת	יָמֵי יָמִים	בְּחִצְרֵי	גִּן תְּ
and small	a feast	seven	And when these days	in the court	of the garden
H6996	H4960	H7651	H3117	H2691	H1594
בֵּית	הַמֶּלֶךְ:				
palace	of the king's				
H1055	H4428				