

Esther 2:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.

Analysis

In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name. This verse describes the permanent consequence of that single night with the king. Each maiden "went in the evening" and "on the morrow"—the next morning—"returned into the second house," permanently reassigned to Shaashgaz's custody as a concubine. The phrase "she came in unto the king no more" emphasizes finality: one night determined her entire future. Unless the king specifically "delighted in her" and "called by name," she would spend the rest of her life in virtual widowhood—technically the king's wife but never seeing him again. This demonstrates the exploitative nature of the system: hundreds of young women conscripted, used once, then permanently sequestered. God's providence operated within and despite this unjust system.

Historical Context

The "second house of the women" distinguished concubines (who had been with the king once) from virgins (awaiting their turn). Shaashgaz managed the

concubines' quarters—a separate administrative structure from Hegai's virgin quarters. Archaeological evidence confirms Persian palaces had multiple women's facilities accommodating different categories and statuses. Being called "by name" signified personal recognition and favor. Most concubines would never be summoned again, living in comfortable but restricted circumstances—provided for materially but denied freedom, future marriage, or meaningful purpose. The system benefited the king's pleasure while discarding hundreds of lives. This background makes Esther's selection as queen even more significant—she escaped permanent concubinage.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How should believers respond when God's providence operates within deeply unjust systems—neither endorsing the injustice nor denying God's sovereignty?
2. What does this passage teach about the permanent consequences of single moments and the importance of wisdom in critical opportunities?

Interlinear Text

אֶל	שָׁבָה הִיא	הִיא יָא	תָּבֹא וְ	בִּבְקֹר	תָּבֹא וְ	בַּעַר רָבָא
H413	H1931	H1931	H935	H1242	H1931	H6153
she returned	and on the morrow	she came in	In the evening			
שְׁעֵשְׁגַּז ז	לְ	שֵׁנִי י	הַנָּשִׁים	בֵּית		
H8190	H413	H8145	H802	H1004		
of Shaashgaz	to the custody	into the second	house	of the women		
לֹא	הַפִּילְגָשִׁים	שִׁמְרָה	הֵמָּה לָךְ	סָרִיס		
H3808	H6370	H8104	H4428	H5631		
the concubines	which kept	no more except the king	chamberlain			
בָּהּ הִיא	חִפְּיָא	אִם כִּי	הֵמָּה לָךְ	אֶל עוֹד	תָּבֹא וְ	
H0	H2654	H518	H3588	H413	H5750	H935
delighted	no more except the king	she came in	she came in	no more except the king	no more except the king	
בְּשֵׁם:	וְנִקְרָא הִיא	הֵמָּה לָךְ				
H8034	H7121	H4428				
by name	in her and that she were called	no more except the king				

Additional Cross-References

Esther 4:11 (Kingdom): All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.
