

9 – THE EVIL OF HAMAN (ESTHER 3:1-4:17)

I. Haman & Mordecai (Esther 3:1-7)

A. Haman's Promotion (Esther 3:1)

- After the events of the plot against Xerxes I, Haman the Agagite was promoted by the king.

Historical Note: Haman

Haman was a chief official in the court of Xerxes I. He is described as an Agagite. Haman devises a plan to destroy the Jewish people throughout the Medo-Persian empire because of his hatred toward Mordecai. His plot is exposed by Esther and Haman is hung on the gallows that he himself had built to execute Mordecai. Haman is only mentioned in the Book of Esther. There are three views concerning Haman being an Agagite. (1) From archeological discovery, an inscription was found that refers to a province of Persia known as Agag. Therefore, it is possible that Haman's family came from this Persian province. (2) Haman is an Amalekite. The writer of Esther identifies Haman as an Agagite in order to bring the reader to the conclusion that Haman is an old enemy of Israel. Agagite appears to be used by the writer to reference the Amalekite king named Agag, who was killed by the prophet Samuel (see 1 Samuel 15:32-33). This view appears appropriate considering Mordecai's refusal to pay homage to Haman since the Amalekites were an ancient enemy of Israel. This would also fit with Haman's eagerness to wipe out all Jews in the empire because of one man's disrespect. (3) This view expands upon the second views by holding that Haman is a direct descendant of King Agag. This view provides a personal explanation for his hatred of the Jewish people.

- Haman was given authority over all of the princes within the Medo-Persian Empire.

B. The Insult (Esther 3:2-4)

- All of the king's servants within the king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman.
- This was done in accordance with the command of the King, but Mordecai refused to bow.
- When Mordecai was encouraged to bow by the other servants, he still refused.
- The servants then reported to Haman that Mordecai refused because he was a Jew.

C. Haman's Anger (Esther 3:5-7)

- When Haman saw that Mordecai would not pay homage and bow, he was filled with wrath.
- It was not enough for Haman to deal with Mordecai, he wanted to deal with the Jewish people.
- Haman determined to destroy all of Jews in the empire and set the date for the genocide.

II. Haman's Plot Against the Jews (Esther 3:8-15)

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- Haman goes to Xerxes I and tells him of a people scattered among the peoples of the empire.
- This people do not keep the king's laws and it is not fitting for the king to let them live.
- Haman asks for a king's decree to kill this people and he will personally pay for the expenses.
- The king gave Haman his signet ring and told him do as he pleases with this people.
- Haman then went to the royal scribes to write the royal decree that would be published.
- The letters with this decree were then sent throughout the empire.
- The decree announced that on a certain date, all Jews, young and old, were to be killed.
- The decree also declared that the possessions of the Jews were to be plundered.
- The letters were sent, as the king and Haman drank and the city of Shushan was perplexed.

III. Mordecai's Request of Esther (Esther 4:1-17)

A. The Response of the Jews (Esther 4:1-3)

- When Mordecai learned of the decree, he tore his clothes and sat in sackcloth and ashes.
- He went throughout the city crying out in mourning, but he was not allowed in the palace.
- The Jews throughout the empire, lifted up their voices in mourning as they fasted and wept.

B. Mordecai's Interaction with Esther (Esther 4:4-17)

- Esther was informed about Mordecai and she sent garments to replace the sackcloth.
- Mordecai refused and Esther sent a eunuch to learn what was happening.
- Mordecai informed the eunuch concerning all that happened and gave him the decree.
- Mordecai wanted Esther to go to king and plead for her people.
- Esther sent back word that no one can appear before the king without an invitation.
- Those who appear uninvited are put to death unless the king holds out the golden scepter.
- She also relays to Mordecai that she has not been called by the king in the last thirty days.
- Mordecai tells Esther not to think that she will escape the Jews' fate in the palace.
- If she remains silent, then deliverance will arise from another place and she will perish.

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- Mordecai points out that she may have come to the palace for such a time as this.
- Esther then called for all the Jews to gather in order to fast for three days.
- She states that she will go to the king, which is unlawful.
- She also states that if she must perish, she perishes.