

Haman Convinces King Xerxes to Issue an Evil Decree

Esther 3

Esther 3 - *“After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who were with him. ² And all the king’s servants who were within the king’s gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage.³ Then the king’s servants who were within the king’s gate said to Mordecai, “Why do you transgress the king’s command?” ⁴ Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told it to Haman, to see whether Mordecai’s words would stand; for Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew. ⁵ When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath. ⁶ But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai.⁷ In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, the lot), before Haman to determine the day and the month, until it fell on the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.⁸ Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, “There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people’s, and they do not keep the king’s laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. ⁹ If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring it into the king’s treasuries.”¹⁰ So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. ¹¹ And the king said to Haman, “The money and the people are given to you, to do with them as seems good to you.”¹² Then the king’s scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and a decree was written according to all that Haman commanded—to the king’s satraps, to the governors who were over each province, to the officials of all people, to every province according to its script, and to every people in their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king’s signet ring. ¹³ And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions. ¹⁴ A copy of the document was to be issued as law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day. ¹⁵ The couriers went out, hastened by the king’s command; and the decree was proclaimed in Shushan the citadel. So the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed.”*

Background Notes

If the book of Esther were being acted as a melodrama, chapter 3 would be the point where the audience would hiss and boo, when wicked Haman, the villain and enemy of the Jews, makes his entrance and takes center stage!

Haman was the son of Hammedatha the Agagite. There are a couple of possibilities here. First, there is archaeological evidence that one of the Persian provinces was named Agag, and this may be why Haman was called the Agagite.

The other possibility is that Haman was a descendant of the Amalekites, whose king was Agag. The Amalekites trace back to the line of Esau, and they were a long-time enemy of the Jews. In Exodus 17:16 the Lord said that Israel would have war with Amalek from generation to generation. This possible connection between Haman and the Amalekites is the traditional Jewish interpretation of the fact, so I tend to favor it.

In any case, Haman was promoted to a high position, and everyone was to bow and pay homage to him when he passed through the king's gate. But Mordecai, who sat at the king's gate, would not bow to Haman. In spite of the fact that Haman was a highly placed official, he was still only a man. He was not God! Mordecai's position was "Respect, yes - but not reverence," and he would not bow the knee to Haman.

This infuriated Haman, and when Haman learned that Mordecai was a Jew, he was determined to get rid of all the Jews in a mass execution. His diabolical plan became more than just a wicked and evil wish when he was able to get King Xerxes to issue an edict stating that the Jews were to be eliminated as a supposed threat to the empire. Xerxes was very willing to go along with this evil plan because it meant money for the national treasury. This national treasury had been depleted in his wars with Greece.

If you're wondering where Haman would be able to come up with all the money to pay into the king's treasury, he planned to get it by plundering the Jews (v13).

Notice, by the way, that the timing of this event was more than four years after Esther became queen (compare 3:7 to 2:16).

Doctrinal Points

1. Anti-Semitism is satanic in origin.

In the book of Esther, anti-Semitism is evident - in no uncertain terms. Anti-Semitism did not begin in modern times. Anti-Semitism goes all the way back to the bondage and slavery that the children of Israel experienced in Egypt, where they became a nation.

Anti-Semitism is satanic in its origin. Satan is not omniscient. He only knows what God chooses to reveal. Right from the beginning, Satan knew that the mankind's Redeemer, the One who would crush the serpent's head, would be the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15).

With the coming of Abraham, Satan knew that God's plans for the blessing of mankind are inseparably linked to the Jewish people. The Jewish people are God's chosen people, and they are the people of the Messiah. Satan knew that the Chosen One would be in the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Slavery in Egypt and Pharaoh's attempt to kill off all the Jewish male babies (Exodus 1) was a satanic attempt to erase the line of Abraham.

When God revealed that the coming Messiah would be from the tribe of Judah, and in King David's line, Satan attempted to do away with the Davidic line of the coming Messiah. Wicked Queen Athaliah attempted to kill off all the potential kings of David's line, even murdering of her own grandsons. She almost succeeded, but God foiled her evil plot by preserving little Joash alive. He continued the Davidic line of kings. (See 2 Kings 11 & 2 Chronicles 23.)

In Esther's time we see yet another satanic attempt to do away with the Jewish people, and with the line of the Messiah coming through the tribe of Judah. The Jews that were scattered throughout the Persian Empire were primarily from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi. They were the primary tribes that were taken into captivity, and they were the primary tribes that returned from captivity.

Haman was merely a willing satanic tool. He manipulated King Xerxes to issue the dreadful edict that would eliminate all Jews in the Persian Empire – including the Jews from the tribe of Judah. The edict would eliminate the Jews who still residing in Babylon, as well as the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem, because Judah and Jerusalem were part of the Persian Empire.

The edict that commanded such an atrocity caused the people in Susa to be perplexed and confused. The average person does not understand the real reason and source of anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism is satanic in origin.

2. Anti-Semitism is a sign of the End Times.

In Haman's hatred of the Jews and in his plans to annihilate them, we may have a prophetic picture of the anti-Semitism of the End Times. Anti-Semitism was not erased with the fall of Hitler and the Nazis in World War II. Anti-Semitism is still around today - in fact, there is abundant evidence that it is growing.

Anti-Semitism will be present in the End Times. Zechariah 12:3 says that at the time of the end, *"At that time, all nations of the earth will be gathered against Jerusalem."* The book of Revelation mentions anti-Semitism of the Tribulation period of the last days. In Revelation 12 we see Satan (represented by the dragon) persecuting the woman (who represents Israel) who gave birth to the male child, who is Christ.

In Revelation 13, a notorious world leader known as the Roman beast emerges on the scene. He is empowered by the dragon (the devil). His number is 666 and he persecutes the saints, including the godly remnant of Jewish believers known as "the 144,000." Haman is certainly a prototype of this evil anti-Semite of the last days.

The increasing anti-Semitism of today is a prelude to what's to come tomorrow. Anti-Semitism is a sign of the end times.

Practical Application

Remember, man may roll them but God controls them!

What do people roll that God controls? Answer: dice. *"In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, the lot), before Haman to determine the day and the month, until it fell on the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar"(v7).* Haman was "casting the lot" – that's the ancient way of rolling dice - in order to decide what month to annihilate the Jews.

God controlled the outcome of Haman's "casting of the lot" so that the twelfth month of Adar was chosen. This gave the Jews almost a year to prepare to defend themselves. Haman rolled the dice - **but God controlled the results.**

Proverbs 16:33 says, *"The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord."* Even the way the numbers come up when dice are rolled is not by chance – event that is under God's control! Ephesians 1:11 says that God *"works all things after the counsel of His will."* What's included in "all things?" "All things" includes **all things** - including the numbers that come up when someone rolls dice.

So whether it be your circumstances, or your future, or your physical and mental well-being, or what others (like a Haman) may be doing to affect your life, don't worry! Trust in the Lord, because He controls everything - including the roll of the dice.

Remember, man may roll them but God controls them!