

Esther 3:1 ¶ After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

Esther 3:2 And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did *him* reverence.

Sometime later, King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, an Agagite, to a position as his top advisor. All the king's servants that served in the king's gate bowed before Haman as ordered by the king except Mordecai.

John Gill explains that this acknowledgement of Haman must have been more than just an act of acknowledgement of his position. He thinks that the king "gave him divine honours, as to a deity; for such were given to the kings of Persia, and might be given to their favourites, and seems to be the case....it was not mere civil honour and respect, for that in course would have been given him as the king's favourite and prime minister by all his servants, without an express order for it; this, therefore, must be something uncommon and extraordinary....nor can it be thought that Mordecai would refuse to give it from pride and sullenness, and thereby risk the king's displeasure, the loss of his office, and the ruin of his nation; but it was such kind of reverence to a man, and worship of him, which was contrary to his conscience, and the law of his God."

Of significance in this story is the fact that Haman is an Agagite, a descendant of Agag, king of the Amalekites. This must be the case or Haman would just have been identified as an Amalekite. These were the people that Saul had been instructed to destroy ever so many years earlier.

1 Samuel 15:1–3 "Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

Sad to say, Saul did not obey the LORD; he spared the king.

1 Samuel 15:8–9 "And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag...."

It was this sin that caused the LORD to reject Saul as king.

1 Samuel 15:28 "And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou."

Eventually, the prophet Samuel killed Agag.

1 Samuel 15:32–33 "Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the

Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal."

It seems that at least one Agag's children survived, one from whom this wicked Haman was descended. I'm sure he had been raised to despise the Jews—much like the Palestinian children and other Muslim children today.

Esther 3:3 Then the king's servants, which *were* in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?

Esther 3:4 Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he *was* a Jew.

Esther 3:5 And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

Esther 3:6 And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that *were* throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, *even* the people of Mordecai.

The other servants that sat in the gate with Mordecai asked him why he disobeyed the king's command. After he refused to answer them for several days, they informed on Mordecai to Haman to see what would happen. It seems that Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew thinking that would be answer enough for them.

When Haman saw that Mordecai refused to bow before him, he became very angry. He wasn't content to destroy Mordecai, he decided to destroy all the Jews throughout the kingdom.

Esther 3:7 ¶ In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar.

The NIV translation is a bit clearer: *"In the twelfth year of King Xerxes, in the first month, the month of Nisan, they cast the pur (that is, the lot) in the presence of Haman to select a day and month. And the lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar."*

In other words, they cast lots to determine when would be the best time to achieve his revenge.

JFB notes: "Haman acted as the kings and nobles of Persia have always done, never engaging in any enterprise without consulting the astrologers, and being satisfied as to the lucky hour."

Note the time marker; this is the 12th year of the king's reign, a little over four years after Esther was made queen.

Esther 3:8 And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws *are* diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it *is* not for the king's profit to suffer them.

Esther 3:9 If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring *it* into the king's treasuries.

Haman proceeded to present his plan to the king. He told Ahasuerus that there was a specific group of people throughout the kingdom that lived according to a unique set of laws; they did not keep the king's laws, and that was not to the king's benefit. He proposed that a decree be written to destroy these people. He even offered to provide 10,000 talents of silver to the king's treasuries to pay those hired to kill these people.

According to the NIV Commentary this was about 375 tons of silver.

Esther 3:10 And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy.

Esther 3:11 And the king said unto Haman, The silver *is* given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.

The king took off his signet ring and gave it to Haman, the enemy of the Jews. He basically told Haman to keep his money; he would supply the money and as many men as needed to do as he proposed. The king didn't even bother to ask who these people were or verify the truth of Haman's allegations. Even had he asked, he still did not know that Esther was a Jew.

Esther 3:12 Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that *were* over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and *to* every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring.

Esther 3:13 And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, *even* upon the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and *to take* the spoil of them for a prey.

Esther 3:14 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day.

Esther 3:15 The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.

The king's scribes were called on the 13th day of the first month to write the decree according to Haman's command. It was addressed to the rulers of every province in the language of the people of that province in the name of the king and sealed with his ring. The letters were sent by post to all 127 provinces

authorizing the destruction of all Jews, young and old, including women and children, on the 13th day of the 12th month of Adar. After killing the Jews, they were to take possession of what they left behind. The decree was made known to all the people, so they could prepare. Delivery was expedited according to the king's command.

It seems odd to me that the decree would be published so far in advance; the day schedule for this mass genocide was eleven months later. Why such a rush to get the edict delivered?

When the decree was made known in Shushan, the people were puzzled; they didn't understand the reason for it. Obviously, there were no problems in the city as implied by Haman's complaint to the king. The king and Haman were oblivious to the response of the people.