

Esther 2:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite;

Analysis

Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite;

The narrative shifts dramatically from Persian imperial grandeur to introduce "a certain Jew," emphasizing his ethnic identity above all other characteristics. The name Mordecai possibly derives from Marduk, Babylon's chief deity, showing Jewish assimilation to surrounding culture despite maintaining distinct ethnic identity. The genealogy provides crucial context: Kish was Saul's father (1 Samuel 9:1-2), making Mordecai a descendant of Israel's first king from the tribe of Benjamin. This genealogical note carries theological significance: the ancient conflict between Saul and Agag king of the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15) will resurface in the Mordecai-Haman conflict. God's redemptive purposes span generations, and unfinished business from Saul's failure finds resolution through Mordecai's faithfulness. That God chose a Benjamite descended from Saul to accomplish what Saul failed to do demonstrates divine grace overcoming human failure.

Historical Context

Mordecai's presence in Shushan indicates he was among the many Jews who remained in Persia rather than returning to Judah after Cyrus's decree (539 BCE). The Jewish diaspora throughout the Persian Empire faced the challenge of maintaining religious and ethnic identity while fully participating in the dominant

culture. Mordecai's Persian name, position "in the king's gate," and apparent comfort in Shushan demonstrate significant cultural integration, though he maintained Jewish identity and loyalty. The reference to "Shushan the palace" locates Mordecai at the empire's political center. Archaeological excavations at Susa confirm massive gate structures where officials gathered, conducted business, and exercised authority. The genealogical connection to Kish and Benjamin recalls biblical history. Saul's incomplete obedience in destroying the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:1-9), particularly sparing King Agag, resulted in his rejection as king. Haman's identification as "the Agagite" (3:1) signals his Amalekite descent, creating the theological framework for understanding Esther's narrative as continuation of ancient spiritual warfare.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does Mordecai's genealogical connection to Saul and the upcoming conflict with Haman teach about God's faithfulness across generations to accomplish His purposes despite human failure?
2. How should believers navigate the tension between cultural integration and maintaining distinct covenant identity?

Interlinear Text

אֵשׁ	יְהוּדִי	הָהָא	בְּשׁוּשַׁן	הַבַּיִת	וְשֵׁמוֹ		
there was a certain	Jew	H1961	Now in Shushan	the palace	whose name		
H376	H3064		H7800	H1002	H8034		
מֹרְדֳּכַי	בֶּן	יָאֵל	בֶּן	שִׁמְעִי	בֶּן	קִישׁ	אֵשׁ
was Mordecai	the son	of Jair	the son	of Shimei	the son	of Kish	H0
H4782	H1121	H2971	H1121	H8096	H1121	H7027	
יְמִינִי:							
a Benjamite							
H1145							

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 9:1 (Parallel theme): Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power.

2 Samuel 16:5 (Parallel theme): And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came.

Esther 5:1 (Parallel theme): Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house.

Esther 1:2 (Parallel theme): That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace,

Esther 10:3 (Parallel theme): For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.

Esther 2:3 (Parallel theme): And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the

king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them:

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