

Esther 3:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. The king commanded all officials to bow and reverence Haman, and everyone complied—except Mordecai. His refusal to bow (kara, כָּרַע) or show reverence (shachah, שָׁחָה, the word also meaning "worship") was principled, not merely stubborn. The Hebrew shachah often describes religious worship, suggesting Mordecai viewed this homage as idolatrous or theologically compromising. Given Haman's Agagite/Amalekite descent, Mordecai's refusal likely stemmed from God's command to utterly destroy Amalek (Exodus 17:14-16; Deuteronomy 25:19). Bowing to Israel's ancient enemy would betray covenant loyalty. Mordecai's stand demonstrates that civil obedience has limits when commands violate God's law. His costly faithfulness precipitates the crisis but ultimately enables deliverance.

Historical Context

Persian court protocol required elaborate shows of respect to superiors, including prostration before high officials and the king. The Greek historian Herodotus describes Persian proskynesis (prostration) as standard practice. Mordecai's refusal would have been shockingly conspicuous and culturally offensive. His

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