

Esther 3:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. Haman's response to Mordecai's refusal was rage—"full of wrath" (male Haman chemah, חֵמָה מְלֵאָה), literally "Haman was filled with rage." This intense emotional response to one man's defiance reveals Haman's pride and insecurity. A truly secure leader wouldn't be devastated by one person's refusal to bow. Haman's rage demonstrates the fragility of ego-based authority—it requires constant reinforcement through visible submission. This fury will drive disproportionate vengeance: not just punishing Mordecai but attempting genocide against all Jews (v. 6). Pride, when wounded, becomes murderous. Proverbs 16:18 warns: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall"—perfectly fulfilled in Haman's arc from promotion to hanging.

Historical Context

Ancient honor-shame cultures made public disrespect devastating to social standing. Haman's rage stemmed partly from legitimate cultural offense but more from wounded pride. Public defiance undermined his authority and honor before other officials. Ancient Near Eastern officials sometimes responded to perceived insults with extreme violence—Haman's genocidal plot, though monstrous, fits patterns of disproportionate vengeance found throughout ancient history. The narrative presents Haman's rage as both culturally understandable and morally reprehensible—human pride inflamed by perceived slight leads to monstrous injustice.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does Haman's rage at personal slight illustrate pride's destructive power and insatiable need for validation?
2. What does this teach about how wounded pride escalates from personal offense to disproportionate, even murderous, revenge?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּרְא	וְהָמָן	כִּי	אֵין	מִרְדֵּכָה	כָּרַע
saw	And when Haman			that Mordecai	bowed
H7200	H2001	H3588	H369	H4782	H3766
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וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִיָּה	לֹא	וְהָמָן	מִלְּפָנָיו	וְהָמָן	חֵמָה:
not nor did him reverence		full	And when Haman		of wrath
H7812	H0	H4390	H2001		H2534

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 3:19 (Parallel theme): Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

Esther 5:9 (Parallel theme): Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.

Proverbs 21:24 (Judgment): Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath.

Esther 3:2 (Parallel theme): 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.

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