

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, חֶמֶת חֶמֶת אַחֲרָנָה), 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

Psalm 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

רָא | בָּתְּה | כִּי | אֵלֶּה | מְרֹכֶב | כִּי | עָבֹד |
saw And when Haman H3588 H369 that Mordecai bowed
H7200 H2001 H4782 H3766

הַמְשִׁפְתֵּן | לֹא | תָּפַל | בָּתְּה | כִּי | חֹמֶה:
not nor did him reverence H0 full And when Haman of wrath
H7812 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 Abednego: 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 scion 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 reverenced Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.

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