

Haman's Plot

The wicked Haman, enraged by Mordecai's refusal to bow, plots to destroy all the Jews throughout the Persian Empire.

Esther 3:1-15

CHARACTERS: Haman, Mordecai, King Ahasuerus, The Jews

THEMES: Evil schemes, Pride, Hatred, Persecution, God's hidden hand

AFTER THESE THINGS, King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the Agagite above all the princes, setting his seat above all who were with him. The king commanded that all servants at the gate should bow and reverence Haman. Every day they bowed—except one man. Mordecai the Jew refused to bow or pay homage.

The servants questioned Mordecai: 'Why do you transgress the king's commandment?' Day after day they asked, but Mordecai would not comply. He had told them he was a Jew, and Jews bowed to God alone. When they told Haman, he came to see for himself.

Haman's fury burned when he saw Mordecai standing tall while all others prostrated themselves. But when he learned Mordecai was a Jew, killing one man seemed insufficient revenge. Haman sought to destroy all the Jews throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—all of Mordecai's people.

In the first month, Haman cast Pur (that is, the lot) before him from day to day and month to month, seeking the most auspicious time for his genocide. The lot fell on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar—eleven months away.

Haman approached King Ahasuerus with cunning words: 'There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from all other people, and they do not keep the king's laws. It is not profitable for the king to tolerate them. If it please the king, let it be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the king's treasuries.'

The king, perhaps distracted or unconcerned, took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman. 'The silver is given to you,' the king said, 'the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you.' With the king's seal, Haman's decree would be irrevocable.

Haman called the king's scribes. They wrote according to all that Haman commanded—to the king's lieutenants, governors, and rulers of every province in their own script and language. It was written in King Ahasuerus's name and sealed with his ring. Letters went by couriers into all the provinces to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day—on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month—and to take their possessions as plunder.

The decree was published in Shushan the palace. The king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed. An entire people—innocent men, women, and children—had been condemned to death. Yet God's name is never mentioned in the book of Esther. His hand worked in the shadows, unseen but not absent.