

The Greatness of Mordecai

10: 1-3

DIG: For what was Mordecai honored? His character? His behavior? The results? How are those three related? How did Mordecai work for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews? How are you like that in your life? How would you like to be like that? Give concrete examples?

REFLECT: What is the central point of this book? How is God hidden in its pages? Why do you think He is hidden? How were Mordecai and Esther obedient servants for ADONAI? Is that how you see yourself? Why or why not? Illustrate.

This chapter is an appendix or postscript to the book, emphasizing the power of King Ahasuerus and the glory that was thereby reflected on Mordecai as his prime minister. During the twentieth year of his reign, in 465 BC, King Ahasuerus was assassinated. Today, this king is mostly remembered for his queen, Esther, and the one who adopted and raised her, Mordecai.

King Ahasuerus imposed tribute throughout the empire, to its distant shores (10:1). The book ends on a note similar to that of its beginning - the greatness, wealth, and splendor of King Ahasuerus. This example of bracketing is common in Hebrew literature. The author emphasized the great extent of his empire to the distant shores of the Mediterranean area. Having the power to demand obedience from his subjects, he imposed "forced" tribute on them. Possibly, in keeping with one of the themes of the book, the author wanted to show that the king, who saved the Jews from extinction, later prospered. Although Ahasuerus did not receive the 10,000 talents of silver from Haman (3:9), he was enriched by receiving all this tribute.¹³⁹

Nevertheless, it is Mordecai who gets the last word. And all his acts of power and might, together with a full account of the greatness of Mordecai, whom the king had promoted, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Media and Persia (10:2)? All the power and might of King Ahasuerus had been transferred to Mordecai, the prime minister of the Persian Empire, by the end of the book. Because he was second only to the king it would have been inconceivable that his name would not have appeared in the official account of the reign of Ahasuerus. Media and Persia names the two kingdoms in chronological order, suggesting perhaps an account covering several centuries. When the author put Persia before Media earlier in 1:3 and 18, he was accurately reflecting the supremacy of Persia in his day.¹⁴⁰

Some think it unlikely that a Jew such as Mordecai could have held such a high position in the Persian Empire. But the Murashu documents show that in Nippur at least two **Jews** had relatively important positions. And as Joseph had become prime minister of Egypt (see my commentary on **Genesis Jv - Joseph as Prime Minister**), **Mordecai** became prime minister of **Persia**. **Providence!** The other is **Daniel**, close to **Esther** chronologically, who served in an official capacity in the court of Nebuchadnezzar among others (**Daniel 5:29; 6:1-2 and 28**).¹⁴¹

Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews (10:3). When life returned to normal after the crisis, **Mordecai** continued to use his status as prime minister to benefit his people. When Haman had worn **Ahasuerus'** signet ring, he was for all practical purposes, **the king of the enemy of the Jews**. But after **Mordecai** wore the same ring **he was, in reality, king of the Jews**. As the majority of **the Jews** continued to live in lands governed by pagan power, **Mordecai** became the model of a **Jew** who could achieve success in a pagan world and use that achievement for the protection and well-being of **the Jewish people**.¹⁴² **The book ends with a picture of peace, happiness and prosperity of the Jews under the beneficent rule of a Gentile king and the Jewish prime minister.**

As the original **Jewish** readers read this book **they** would have been struck by the way **ADONAI's** sovereignty protected **them**, often when **they** did not even know it. Many of the circumstances in the book were beyond anyone's control except for the **LORD**. **Esther** is filled with irony, with ways in which events turned out unexpectedly and benefiting **God's people**.

There are few books of the **TaNaKh** more relevant to life in a society hostile to the Gospel. Believers are scattered throughout the world waiting for the Lord's return. Although He is present and active now as much as ever, He is usually hidden behind the events of life that He is directing for His own glory and the benefit of his **children**. Although **the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4)**, those who have their Father's eyes are able to recognize His hand at work in the affairs of life. In a world in which hostility to those who love **ADONAI, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exodus 3:16)** seems to grow more extreme every day, **let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised His blessings upon us is faithful (Hebrews 10:23)**.