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Haman was Honored More than all the Other Nobles,
But Mordecai would not Kneel Down or Pay Him Honor
3: 1-6

Haman was honored more than all the other nobles, but Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor DIG: Who comes on now as the star? Why not Mordecai? Why won't Mordecai kneel? Why is Haman intent on killing all of the Jews? Is this a clash of priorities? Of personalities? Of perception? Of peoples?

REFLECT: As a fellow Jew, would you have urged Mordecai to kneel down and pay Haman honor (see my commentary on **Genesis, to see link click Jv – Joseph as Prime Minister**) **rather than risk the lives of everyone else? Why?**

At this point, a new character is introduced into the story: **Haman the Agagite**. The author places the promotion of **Haman** just where the original readers would have expected to see **Mordecai**. This forms an unexpected twist in the plot. **After these events, King Ahasuerus honored Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite (3:1a). Haman** is introduced as **the Agagite**, an intentional reference to the tension between the Israelites and the Amalekites. The Septuagint, or the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, translates **the Agagite** as *the bully*, interpreting the text freely for the Greek readers. Saul's ancient conquest of **Agag** and his army is part of Isra'el's tradition, which always lurks behind the scenes of the book. **The rabbis teach that Haman was a descendant of Agag.**

In Hebrew narrative the characteristic described when a character is first introduced is key to understanding his or her role in the story. When **Mordecai** is introduced in **2:5**. **He** is identified not as a wise man or as an official of the court, but as **a Jew** of the tribe of Benjamin. When **Haman** is introduced, **he** is identified as an **Agagite**. The author implies that the personal relationship of enmity between **the Jews** and the Amalekites is mirrored in the personal relationship between **Mordecai** and

Haman. The original readers would expect the relationship to be characterized by conflict and aggression.[36]

King Ahasuerus elevated him and gave him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles (3:1b). Although **the king** owed his life to **Mordecai**, the promotion went to **Haman. He** became the prime minister of Persia, second only to **the king** himself. We are not told why **Haman** was honored in such a way. But we do know that in this book that others manipulated **the king** too easily.

All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down, prostrating themselves, and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him (3:2a). It may seem odd to have so many people **at the king's gate.** If compared to the gate at Persepolis, the City of the Persians where Darius built the Apadana Palace, it was guarded by huge lion-like figures, and the entrance measured 30 by 60 meters. This would be enough for **all the royal officials** and others besides in the recesses of **the king's** palace at Susa. All who were officially appointed by **the king** had to stay within **the gate** of **the royal** palace. In their culture it was customary **to bow down** before one's superiors. The fact that **the king** had to make a **royal command** for people to do so points to a general lack of respect for **Haman**.[37]



But Mordecai would not bow down or pay him honor (3:2). This develops as a subtheme of the book. **Mordecai's** refusal to **bow down** was not an act of worship, such as that commanded of **Daniel** and his three friends **(Daniel 3:8-15)**. But the Persians saw bowing as an act of reverence that bordered on recognizing the official as divine. Needless to say, **Mordecai** had both political and religious reasons for refusing to **bow down to Haman**.[38] **One of the Targums says that no self-respecting Benjamite would show reverence to a descendant of the Amalekites.** Therefore, **Mordecai**, knowing full well the ancient Amalekite belief

that "might makes right" (see **Aq – Haman the Agagite: The Enemy of the Jews**), wasn't going to stand for it, or should I say, **bow** to it. As **a Jew**, **he** surely wasn't going to **bow down** to an Amalekite!

Dear Heavenly Father, Praise your great Sovereignty for someday every knee will bow before you, in heaven and on earth. ***God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Yeshua every knee should bow, in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and every tongue profess that Yeshua the Messiah is Lord—to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9b-11).*** *It is comforting to know that not only are You the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe, but You also are our wise and loving daddy. Praise You for making as Your children, all who choose to love, worship and trust you as their Lord and Savior.* ***But whoever did receive Him, those trusting in His name, to these He gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12). See how glorious a love the Father has given us, that we should be called God's children – and so we are (First John 3:1)!***

There is only one true God who is creator of the world by his Word and who will judge the world in righteousness. How foolish that people bow before worthless idols who cannot forgive them nor help them enter heaven. There is much absolute proof that Yeshua is the only true God. Yeshua many mighty miracles are absolute proof of his divinity for they are miracles that only God could do–healing the blind, the deaf, the lame, and raising people from the dead. These all prove that Yeshua has power that only God has ***(Isaiah 35:5-6).*** *Also, Yeshua proclaimed forgiveness of sins* ***(Mark 2:1-12)*** *which only God can do. Another supreme proof of Yeshua being God, is his dying on the cross for our sins and then rising from the dead 3 days later as he prophesied* ***(Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24*** *and* ***John 20)****. Over 500 people saw Yeshua after he arose, providing excellent eye witness resurrection proof* ***(First Corinthians 15:6).*** *Praise you for the privilege you have given those who love you to be your children (John 1:12). Your children love you and delight in serving and worshipping you! In Yeshua's holy name and power of resurrection. Amen*

Then the royal officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, "Why do you disobey the king's command?" (3:3) Day after day they spoke to him but he refused to comply. Mordecai's determined stubbornness was calculated to provoke a reaction. At first **Haman** did not notice that **Mordecai** acted differently from the other officials. But some of the other **officials** apparently reported his behavior to **Haman** to see if **he** was an exception to **the king's** command.

Therefore, they told Haman about it to see whether Mordecai's behavior would be tolerated, for he had told them he was a Jew (3:4). This seems to indicate some tension between Jews and Gentiles in the court of **the king**. **When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged (3:5).**

Haman became so obsessed with hatred for his nemesis, even the death of **Mordecai** couldn't quench his thirst for revenge. **Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Haman**, his pride stung by **Mordecai's** disrespect, becomes so angry and vengeful that he decides to kill all **the Jews**. **Instead, Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus (3:6).** This is another link from **Hama**n to Amalek, who **did not fear God (Deuteronomy 25:18).** The attack of the Amalekites upon the Israelites leaving Egypt was an act of defiance, predicted on the denial of the existence of ADONAI and the assumption that chance rules the universe . . . and so was **Haman** a thousand years later when **he** cast the *pur* **(3:7)**. It was no coincidence that **Mordecai**, like Saul, was a descendent of Kish who also confronted **the Agagite.**

Here the principle plot of the book is introduced: the attempt to destroy the Jewish **people**. **Haman's** name sounds something like the Hebrew word for *wrath*, an apt description of his temperament and role in the book. Once he knew that **Mordecai** was **a Jew**, **Haman's** pride-driven *wrath* was turned against **all the Jews** in the empire. Although unspoken, the only plausible explanation would be the anti-Semitism that started with the ancient conflict between Amalek and Isra'el.[39] Thus, **Haman** became the prototype of all the anti-Semitic leaders who wanted to destroy the Jewish **people**.

Now the story begins to fall into place. Esther had been brought to a position of power for purposes not known until now. The threat of genocide against the Jews of Persia was then a reality. **Mordecai** refused to honor **Haman** for both political and religious reasons. **He** identified himself as **a Jew**. Because of the ancient defeat and execution of his ancestor **Agag** by the prophet Samuel, **Haman** hates the Jews. Therefore, hatred and bitterness were at the root of **Haman's** quest for power. For **him**, power rested in the complete destruction of **the Jews**. But **Haman** had not yet encountered the power of their God.[40]