

Haman's Plot

Esther 3

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Xerxes promoted one of his officials beyond all the others. This man, Haman, now wielded more power than anyone except the king. All the other officials bowed to Haman in a show of respect – all but Mordecai.

Haman was a descendant of the Amalekites, enemies of the Jews since their exodus from Egypt. Mordecai was a descendant of King Saul, who had attempted to wipe out the Amalekites. Mordecai refused to bow to this traditional enemy.

Haman was infuriated. Instead of taking out his anger on this one man, he decided to annihilate the entirety of the Jewish people. He cast lots, called purim, to determine the best date for carrying out his plan. He said to Xerxes, "There is a certain race of people scattered throughout the empire; their laws are different from those of any other people; and they do not obey your laws. It's not in your best interest to tolerate these people. If it please the king, issue a decree to have them destroyed." Haman followed this suggestion with the offer of a huge bribe. Xerxes accepted.

Haman dictated the decree in the name of King Xerxes. It ordered that every Jew – young and old, men, women, and children – must be killed. The decree stipulated a particular date this mass execution was to take place and granted the property of the Jews to those who killed them. Copies of the decree were sent to every province in the empire. It was proclaimed everywhere.

While the city of Susa was thrown into confusion, the king and Haman sat down to a banquet and drank together.