

## 09C8 Week 2 – Esther Chapters 3-4

### ***Esther 3:1-15 – Genocide Decreed Against Jews***

- Xerxes honors Haman, the Agagite, for no apparent reason and all the officials kneel before Haman to show honor following the king's command, except Mordecai.
- The royal officials try to get Mordecai to follow the king's command, but he continues to refuse
- Haman becomes angry about Mordecai's rebellion and sees an opportunity to have all Jews killed, throughout the kingdom
- In the month of the Jewish Passover feast, Haman casts a lot to determine the date of the genocide, which falls in the twelfth month. (11 months away)
- Haman exaggerates the issue to the king saying that the Jews everywhere have different customs and don't obey the laws of the land
- Haman offers 10000 talents of silver to carry out the genocide plan, the king agrees to the plan but refuses the money
- The edict is dispersed throughout the kingdom declaring the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar the day to "...destroy, kill, annihilate all the Jews...plunder their goods."
- The king and Haman sit down to drink while the city is "bewildered"
- Esther Addition B:1-7 – Copy of the Letter

### ***Esther 4:1-17 Esther accepts her role to intercede with the King***

- When Mordecai learns of the edict he begins public mourning, as do all Jews in every province.
- When Esther learns of Mordecai's mourning she sends Hathach to find out why.
- Mordecai sends a copy of the edict to Esther along with an explanation of Haman's offer to pay the costs and urges Esther to go to the king to plead for mercy for "her people."
- Esther is hesitant about going before the king because it was against the law under threat of immediate death.
- Mordecai reminds Esther of three things: (1) that she will also be killed by the edict, (2) that God will find a way to give relief to his people, (3) perhaps this is the reason she was in the royal position
- Esther accepts her role, instructs Mordecai to assemble all the Jews in Susa to fast for three days before she goes to the King.
- Esther "C:1-30" – Prayers of the Hereos

### ***The Stories behind the Story***

#### **Joseph**

- Joseph is one of the twelve sons of Jacob and is sold into slavery by his older brothers.
- He finds favor in the eyes his masters but is subsequently falsely accused of sexual impropriety with the king's wife and sent to prison.
- In prison, Joseph is recognized for his wisdom and ability to interpret dreams. When the king's cupbearer is released Joseph asks the cupbearer to **remember** him when he is released.
- Joseph interprets the king's dreams and is elevated to second in command over all Egypt.
- From his position of power, he saves Egypt and his Father's family as well.
- In the end, Joseph's sale into slavery is reversed into a means of salvation for Jacob and his sons and thus the promise to Abraham advances another generation through the imaginative sovereignty of God.

## The Ancient Story of Israel vs. Amalekites

- **Ex 17:8f** – Joshua / Moses defeat Amalekites by keeping Moses arms raised. The Lord tells Moses, “Writes this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.”
- **Num 13:29f** – Israelites arrive on the edge of the Promised land and send 12 spies into the land. The spies are fearful of the people there (Amalekites, Amorites, Sons of Anak) and convince the people to turn back, “because of the Amalekites and Amorites” and wanders in desert for 40 years.
- **Num 21-24** – Israel is returning after 40 years to reenter the promised land. They defeat the Amorites (Num 21) and are facing Balak king of Moab. Balak summons a prophet, Balaam, to curse them. But the Lord intervenes using Balaam’s donkey to tell Balaam to bless Israel instead which he does in 4 oracles saying, “*Their king (Israel’s) will be greater than Agag; their kingdom will be exalted*” and “*Amalek was first among the nations, but he will come to ruin at last*”
- **Deut 25:17f** – As Moses makes his final instructions to Israel before they enter the Promised Land without him he reminds them of the promise concerning the Amalekites saying,  
*“<sup>17</sup> Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt.  
<sup>18</sup> When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and cut off all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God. <sup>19</sup> When the LORD your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!”*
- **Judges 3 & 6** – The Amalekites along with Moab and Amorites repeatedly attack and harass Israel. Ehud, Deborah, and Gideon all fight and defeat them
- **1 Sam 14:48-15:32** – Saul is anointed king over Israel and sets out to defeat their enemies including the Philistines and Amalekites. God tells Saul,  
*“I am the one the LORD sent to anoint you king over his people Israel; so listen now to the message from the LORD. <sup>2</sup> This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. <sup>3</sup> Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy<sup>a</sup> everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.’ ”*  
Saul defeats the Amalekites, but spares their king Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle which angers God. Samuel rebukes Saul and kills Agag. Here’s what the text says just before Agag is killed, “Agag came to him (Samuel) confidently, thinking, ‘Surely the bitterness of death is past.’ (1 Sam 15:32)
- **1 Samuel 30** – While David is running from Saul he settles in Ziklag among the Philistines and raids the Amalekites. The Amalekites raid Ziklag and capture the wives and children and David chases them down saving all of the wives and children, defeating the Amalekites once again.
- **2 Sam 1:1-15** – While Saul is out fighting the Philistines he is wounded in battle. A wandering Amalekite finds Saul injured and Saul asks the man to kill him, so he does. This man then runs and tells David the “news” about Saul’s death and David kills him because he did not honor the “Lord’s anointed.” The son of Agag kills Saul and is killed by David...it is all a matter of promise and honor.
- **Ps 83**

## Thematic Tensions

- God’s Promise to Israel - Ancient battle between the peoples who lived in the land the Lord gave to Israel. Who will trust God to defeat the enemy.

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<sup>a</sup>The Hebrew term refers to the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to the LORD, often by totally destroying them; also in verses 8, 9, 15, 18, 20 and 21.