

## VI. The Petulance of Haman, 5:9-14

### A. Depression

TEXT: 5:9-13

- 9 Then went Haman forth that day joyful and glad of heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up nor moved for him, he was filled with wrath against Mordecai.
- 10 Nevertheless Haman refrained himself, and went home; and he sent and fetched his friends and Zeresh his wife.
- 11 And Haman recounted unto them the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king.
- 12 Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to-morrow also am I invited by her together with the king.
- 13 Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

### Today's English Version, 5:9-13

When Haman left the banquet he was happy and in a good mood. But then he saw Mordecai at the entrance of the palace, and when Mordecai did not rise or show any sign of respect as he passed, Haman was furious with him. But he controlled himself and went on home. Then he invited his friends to his house and asked his wife Zeresh to join them. He boasted to them about how rich he was, how many sons he had, how the king had promoted him to high office, and how much more important he was than any of the king's other officials. "What is more," Haman went on, "Queen Esther gave a banquet for no one but the king and me, and we are invited back tomorrow. But none of this means a thing to me as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the entrance of the palace."

v. 9-10 *Disregarded*: The Hebrew text says Haman left Esther's banquet *samecha veytov lev*, i.e., *joyful and good of heart*. He was exhilarated that he had been singled out by the queen for special favor this day and tomorrow also. The Jewish Haggadah also theorizes that Haman thought Esther prepared the banquet in his honor, little realizing that she had set a trap for him. According to the Haggadah, Esther's motive in inviting Haman to the banquet was that he should not discover that she was Jewish, and that the Jews should not say, "We have a sister in the king's palace," and so neglect to pray for God's mercy. Furthermore, says Jewish tradition, Esther thought that by being friendly to Haman she would arouse the king's jealousy to such an extent that he would kill both of them.

But when Haman came out of the queen's chambers he evidently went directly past Mordecai at the "king's gate." Mordecai made no move whatever to acknowledge Haman. Remaining in either a sitting or squatting position, Mordecai ignored the presence of the second most important man in the entire kingdom of Persia. "There is nothing more galling than such utter contempt shown openly in the presence of others" (*Pulpit Commentary*). The Hebrew word translated *wrath* is *chemah* and is more accurately *fury*. Anger raged within Haman's heart. The interesting thing to observe here is Haman's physical restraint. He must have recognized some danger in precipitous and public revenge or he would have seized Mordecai and executed him on the spot. He dared not do anything to jeopardize his new promotion to such high rank. He cunningly held his fury in check until he was on surer grounds. Then he would be prepared to fulfill his hidden wrath on this Jew, Mordecai. Rage, wounded pride and desire for revenge is psychological dynamite. It must explode—either internally or externally. All that is needed is a spark of self-justification and that is often supplied by sympathetic friends or "Yes" men. That is where Haman went. He called in his "friends" and his wife for supportive rationalizations to justify what he had already made up his mind to do.

v. 11-13 *Discontentment*: There is nothing more boring than to have to attend a party given by a man who uses the evening to brag

and boast about all that he has. Of course, if the braggart has the power Haman had, attendance is compulsory.

To be the father of many sons was counted an honor by the Persians (Herodotus 1:136) as with most cultures of the ancient world. We know already that Haman was rich enough to offer to Xerxes an amount of money equal to one year's tax revenue for the whole Persian empire (cf. 3:9). Haman also had been promoted to "chief of all princes." He probably went into great detail as he recounted all these honors. The more he embellished them the more he was sure of his own self-importance. To put the icing on the cake, Haman was even convinced that the queen herself was impressed with his importance. He alone had been invited to accompany the emperor to a place of honor at the queen's banquet. Not once, but twice had the queen invited him.

But Haman was bitter. He could not enjoy any of this. The Hebrew word translated *availeth* is *shoveh* and means *satisfy* or *suffice*. In other words, all the fame and fortune Haman had was not sufficient to satisfy his soul so long as there was one Jewish gate-keeper who ignored his importance! Today we would say Haman had "an identity problem." He suffered from a poor self-image. No matter how much he bragged about his own importance, he really didn't feel important so long as there was one person who did not agree with his own estimate of himself. Haman just could not handle that. It destroyed him. He did not understand that self-respect and respect from others does not accrue from titles but from character! One would come centuries after Haman and teach that the "greatest among men would be the servant of all."

## B. Depravity

TEXT: 5:14

14 Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made fifty cubits high, and in the morning speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then

go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made.

### Today's English Version, 5:14

So his wife and all his friends suggested, "Why don't you have a gallows built, seventy-five feet tall? Tomorrow morning you can ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it, and then you can go to the banquet happy."

Haman thought this was a good idea, so he had the gallows built.

### COMMENTS

v. 14 The name *Zeresh* (Haman's wife) according to *BDB Lexicon* is comparable to the name for an Elamite goddess *Kirisa*. One commentator says the name *Zeresh* is probably connected with the Zend word *zara* which means *gold*. Another Hebrew lexicon indicates *poor* as the meaning of *Zeresh*. The Hebrew phrase *Ya'asu* — 'etz means literally, *make a wooden tree*, and is translated, *let a gallows be made*. But the suggestion is not for a gallows upon which a person is hanged by a rope because hanging was not a Persian form of execution. What is meant is either crucifixion or impalement. Fifty cubits high for the impaling stake or cross seems excessive to us. If the cubit is 18 inches, it would make the "tree" 75 feet high; if the cubit is 21 inches it would be 88 feet high. These were not real friends to Haman—they were mere "Yes" people indulging him because of his position. How depraved the heart of those who would suggest taking a life to satisfy the lust for pride and recognition. It is serious enough to consider the taking of human life when a capital crime has been committed, but what reasoning is able to justify Haman's counselors! Lest we think such depravity applies only to those without access to the word of God, let us remember Joseph's brethren, Ahab who allowed Naboth to be slain for a vineyard, David who allowed Uriah to be slain for a woman, and many others who,

even in the name of Christ and His Church, have murdered thousands for pride and pleasure.

There seems to be no doubt in the minds of Haman's friends and wife that Xerxes will grant the petition for the execution of Mordecai. They may have expected Haman to present the petition on the pretense of some accusation of sedition or political rebellion by Mordecai. He might plead with the emperor that such open contempt for his "prime minister" could only lead to contempt for the emperor himself.

Except for the providential insomnia of Xerxes that night and his attempt to put himself to sleep by reading the dry and dusty official state records (6:1) Mordecai would probably have been executed the next day.

*We may learn the following lessons from this chapter:*

1. We should not be impressed when others do us some honor lest we are tempted to believe everyone should do us the same honor.
2. Respect from one's peers is a result of character, not title or position.
3. Human glory is a hunger that can never be satisfied.
4. Real friends will not suggest actions that are unjust or immoral.

## CHAPTER 5:9-14

### REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did Haman leave the queen's banquet with a glad heart?
2. Why do you think Haman refrained from having Mordecai slain or arrested on the spot when Mordecai refused to acknowledge him?
3. What is your opinion of a man who would invite you to his home and then tell you how important he is?
4. If he told you the story Haman told and asked your advice, what would you advise?
5. What was the "gallows" Haman built?