

## Esther Chapters 5-7:3 (Greek) / 3-4:3 (Hebrew)

### Greek Esther 5:1-6 (Hebrew 3:1-6) – Mordecai’s Defiance

What is Mordecai’s response to the king’s servants asking him why he wouldn’t bow to Haman?

*Tells them he’s Jewish/Ignores their questioning.*

Compare his response to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s in Daniel 3:16-18:

*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”*

Unlike in Daniel, Mordecai was not commanded to bow to an inanimate object, but a person of

authority. However, Mordecai still saw this as *idolatry* because it was not about

bowing out of honor or respect but *obedience*.

Verse 6 tells us that Haman didn’t just look to destroy Mordecai, but his people, the Jews, as well. What are two reasons Haman would have done this?

- 1. Haman knew that killing his people would cause Mordecai even more pain.*
- 2. Haman was an Agagite, a descendant of Amalekite king Agag, who (the Amalekites) feuded with the Israelites for generations. This was a chance for vengeance for his people.*

Compare this with Daniel 3:8-12:

*Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”*

Idolatry was often a weapon used against the Israelites, regardless of whether or not those using it actually believed.

### Greek Esther 5:7-13 (Hebrew 3:7-13) – Haman’s Plot

Why does Haman send for diviners to cast lots before telling his plan to the king?

*The king can be unstable, and has been know to destroy those who bother him on a whim. Haman needed to know a safe day to approach the king, and a good day to set on the decree.*

While Haman's words are carefully crafted to not divulge too much information about who the rebellious people are, what is the most important part (to the king) of Haman's request?

*Haman bribed the king with silver.*

What dangerous action did that important part cause the king to take?

*He gave Haman his ring, meaning Haman had full authority of the king, with little oversight.*

Verse 12 shows just how much power Ahasuerus gave to Haman. Haman had authority over everyone.

Why was the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar chosen as the best time to destroy the Jews?

*There were no Jewish holidays in Adar. This meant it was less likely for the king to show any kind of mercy.*

### **Greek Esther 6:1-8 (Hebrew Esther 3:14) – Addition 2: The Decree**

What important detail is missing from the decree?

*Who the people were to destroy: the Jews.*

There are two possible reasons for that absence:

*1. Only a part of the letter was recovered for the Greek addition. 6:6 may indicate a second letter, as this current letter is written by "king Ahasuerus... I", and 6:6 states something written by Haman.*

*2. The Jews were infamous in their practices, so the description of a rebellious people would be enough for everyone to know who was meant.*

Why would people go along with such a horrible decree (killing families without mercy or pity)?

*Fear of punishment if they didn't, hatred for the Jews (as many nations warred with them previously), free excuse for violence, perhaps they would get a reward, etc. The fact that Haman left it open allows each person to create their own reasons.*

Why would the city of Susa be confused by the decree?

*Susa was one of the few Persian cities that housed large Jewish populations. While most of the king's land had Jews as insignificant minorities, cities like Susa, Babylon, and Persepolis had larger Jewish exile populations, to the point that it would be much more normalized. Jews were friends and neighbors in the large Persian cities.*

### **Greek Esther 7:1-3 (Hebrew 4:1-3) – The Result of the Decree**

In response to the decree, Haman and Jews around the Persian kingdom put on sackcloth and ashes. What was the significance of this in Jewish culture?

*1. Ash represented death and sackcloth represented humility. These were signs of empathy to mourn with one another, often at the death of a loved one.*

*2. Ash also represented God's wrath and destruction and alongside the humble garb they were used as an outfit of repentance.*

So the Jewish people were both ready to die together and hoped that God would have mercy.

This is supported by Mordecai's dream, verses 6-8 of chapter 1. In the midst of turmoil, the righteous nation cried out to God because they believed it was their own evil that had placed them there, likely the same evil that brought them into captivity in the first place.

Up to this point Esther has played little part in the story. Beginning at 7:4 (Hebrew 4:4), the story shifts from Mordecai to Esther.