



Esther 2:19-23, 3:1-6

Mordecai & Haman

When the virgins were assembled a second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. But Esther had kept secret her family background and nationality just as Mordecai had told her to do, for she continued to follow Mordecai's instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up. During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were hanged on a gallows. All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king.



After these events, King Xerxes honoured Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, elevating him and giving him a seat of honour higher than that of all the other nobles. All the royal officials at the king`s gate knelt down and paid honour to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honour. Then the royal officials at the king`s gate asked Mordecai, "Why do you disobey the king`s command?" Day after day they spoke to him but he refused to comply. Therefore they told Haman about it to see whether Mordecai`s behaviour would be tolerated, for he had told them he was a Jew. When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honour, he was enraged. Yet having learned who Mordecai`s people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai`s people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.

When the virgins were assembled a second time,

It appears that Xerxes decided that another batch of girls should be brought to him. He was reputed to have had 400 concubines!



When the virgins were assembled a second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king`s gate. But Esther had kept secret her family background and nationality just as Mordecai had told her to do, for she continued to follow Mordecai`s instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up.

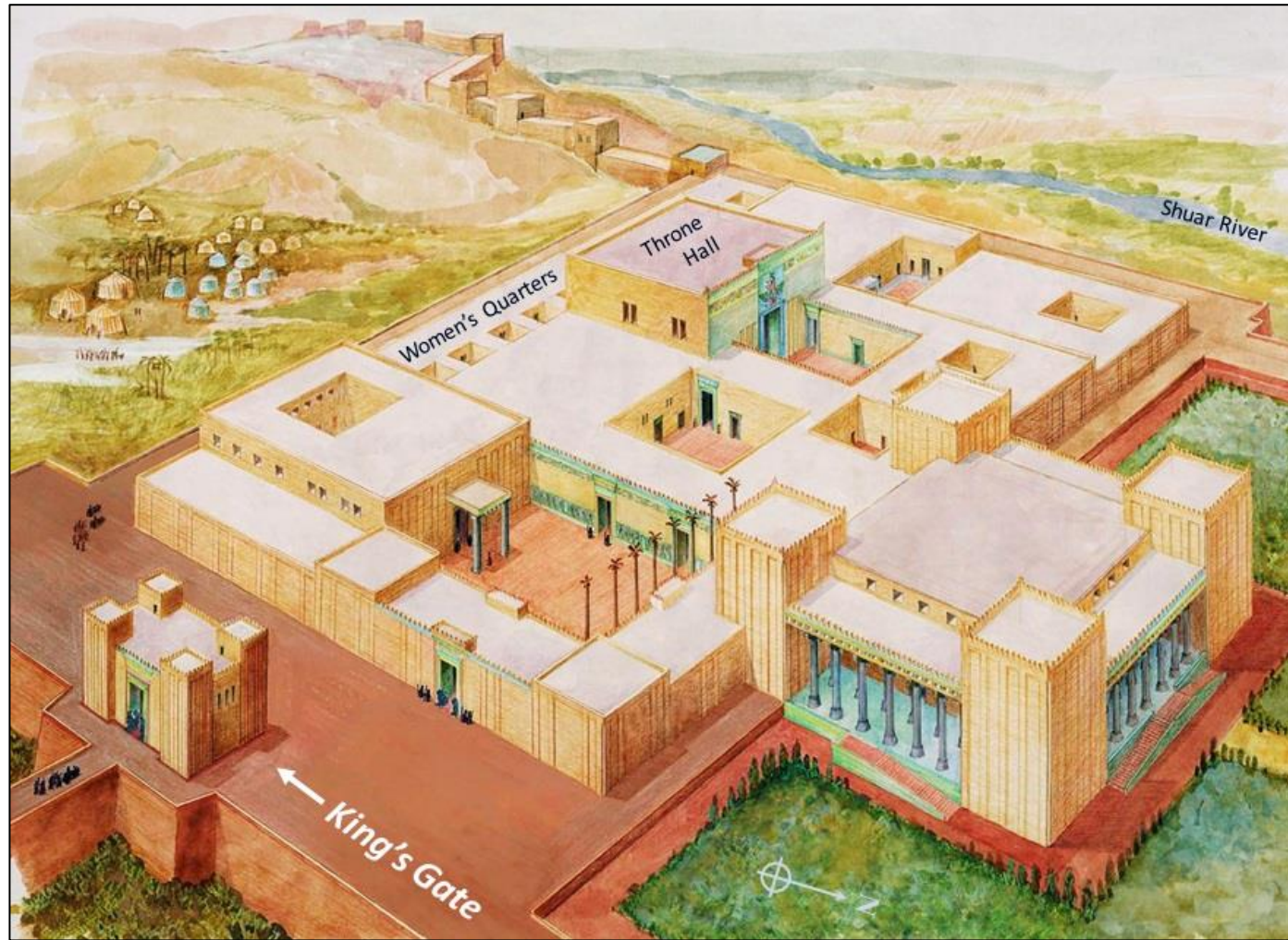
She still continued to value Mordecai`s wise godly counsel.



The King's Gate

During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate

Archaeologists only discovered the King's Gate in 1970. It is located about 260 feet to the east of the palace. The gate was set at the edge of a moat that separated the palace complex from the royal city.



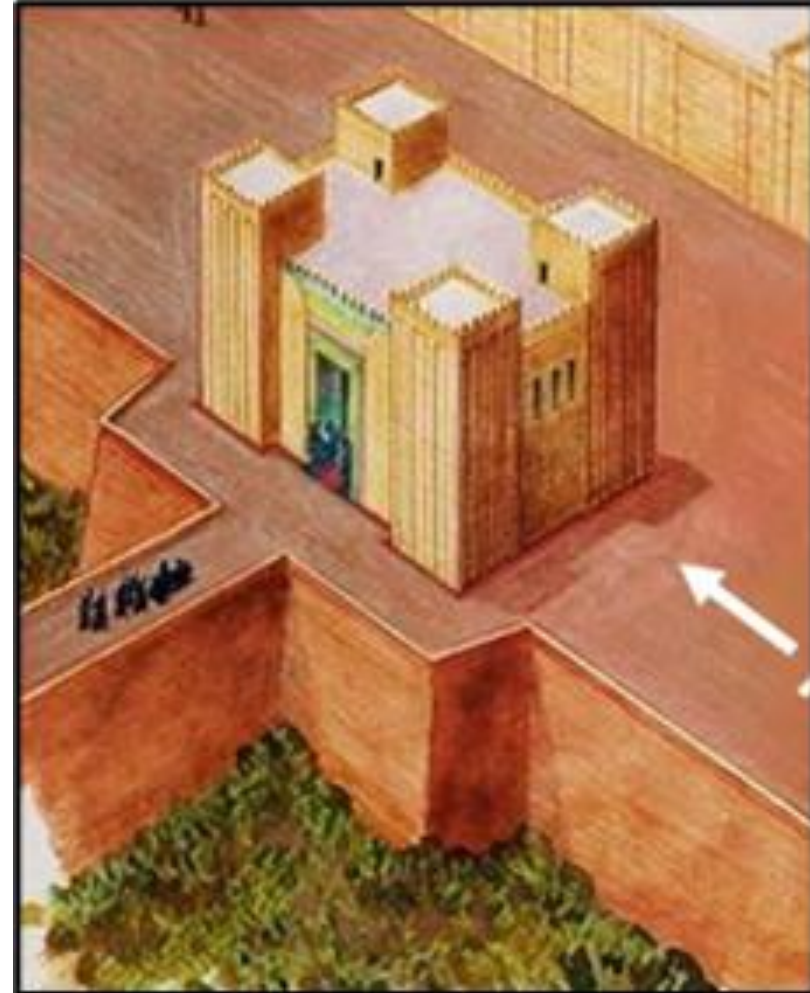
Mordecai's place of work?

During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate

The gate was a place of access to the palace and a place where officials met to conduct city business.

How did he come to have an 'official' position like this?

Did Queen Esther's influence have a part in it?



Bigthana and Teresh,
two of the king`s officers who guarded the doorway,

Theirs was a very strategic position
There were 'bed-time' guards,
protecting the king while he slept.

(Later, Xerxes was actually murdered
by another of his guards)



They became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.

What upset them ?

Was it the 2nd collection of beautiful young girls – after Esther had been made Queen?

There would have been objections from some of the families. – there would be no position for a new queen then.

A proposed solution? Assassinate!



But Mordecai found out about the plot

How did he find out?
- who, if any, had they
talked to?

Here again we see God's
providential over-ruling.



A good citizen – in a pagan world.

and *he* told Queen Esther,

Their communication system is working.
This was secret/dangerous information to pass on

PASS
IT ON!

Esther in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai.

She told the king, giving credit to Mordecai for having discovered it.

**Giving Credit Where
Credit is Due**



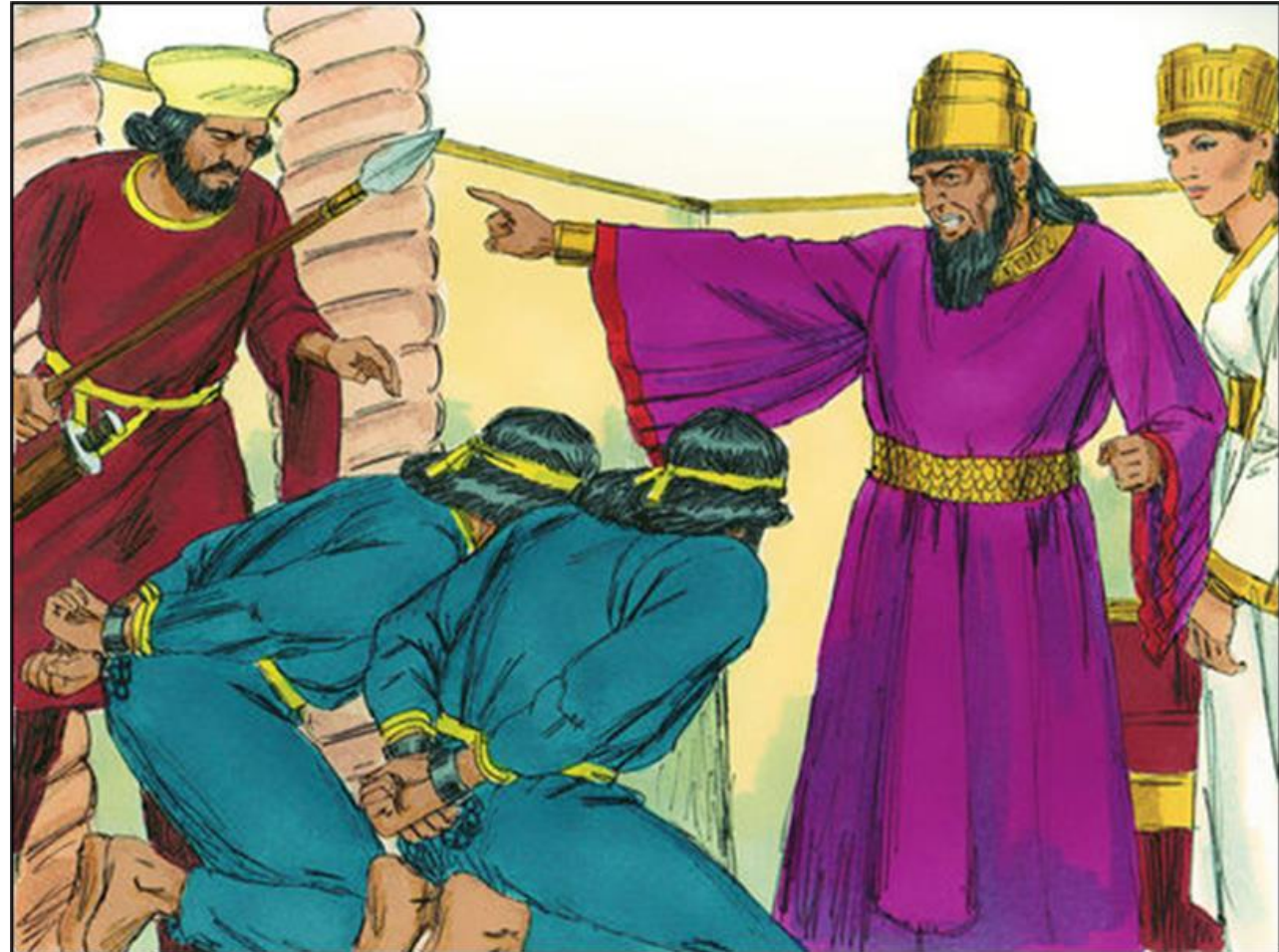
How many people would take the 'credit' for their own benefit?

Cf. Acts 23:27

A proper investigation?

And when the report was investigated and found to be true,

Is there some rule of law?
'investigated' may mean
'tortured'



the two officials were hanged on a gallows.

A mild term for what really happened.
The Persian method was to impale the
victim on a sharpened post.

The death penalty for treason.



Official records

All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king.

Official records were kept of daily proceedings/ significant events

‘In his presence’ may mean ‘on his behalf’



This normal procedure comes to play an important part in God's purposes.
(a good lesson for us)

After these events,

Time moves on – back to normal - things get forgotten.
Chapter 3:7 refers to the 12th year i.e. 5 years later.



His ancestry is important

After these events, King Xerxes honoured Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite,

There was an age-old hostility to the Jews in his family line – he is of Amalekite descent.

Exodus 17:16 The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

1 Samuel 15:20 And Saul said to Samuel, “I have obeyed the voice of the LORD. I have gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me. I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction.

People can change – by repentance – But if not



Promotion for Haman

After these events, King Xerxes honoured Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite,

We are not told how he came to be favoured, what skills or abilities he had, but we can know that somewhere in it all, Satan was at work too.



The king was elevating him and giving him a seat of honour higher than that of all the other nobles.

Somebody needs to be there as an administrator but ...

High places can cause dizziness!

How would we handle such 'glory'?



Respect!

All the royal officials at the king`s gate **knelt down** and paid honour to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him.

He really is honoured – they are to pay respect to those in authority – as the king`s representative.

Besides – it`s the king`s orders!

What would you do if you met a member of the royal family?



Why not?

But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honour.

Is he being disrespectful?

Perhaps he knew things about Haman's life that were dishonourable.

Perhaps he saw it as a command to virtually worship Haman?

Subtle distinctions can be vital distinctions in matters of conscience.

This would take real faith and courage – to be the odd one out.



Why not?

Then the royal officials at the king`s gate asked Mordecai,
"Why do you disobey the king`s command?"

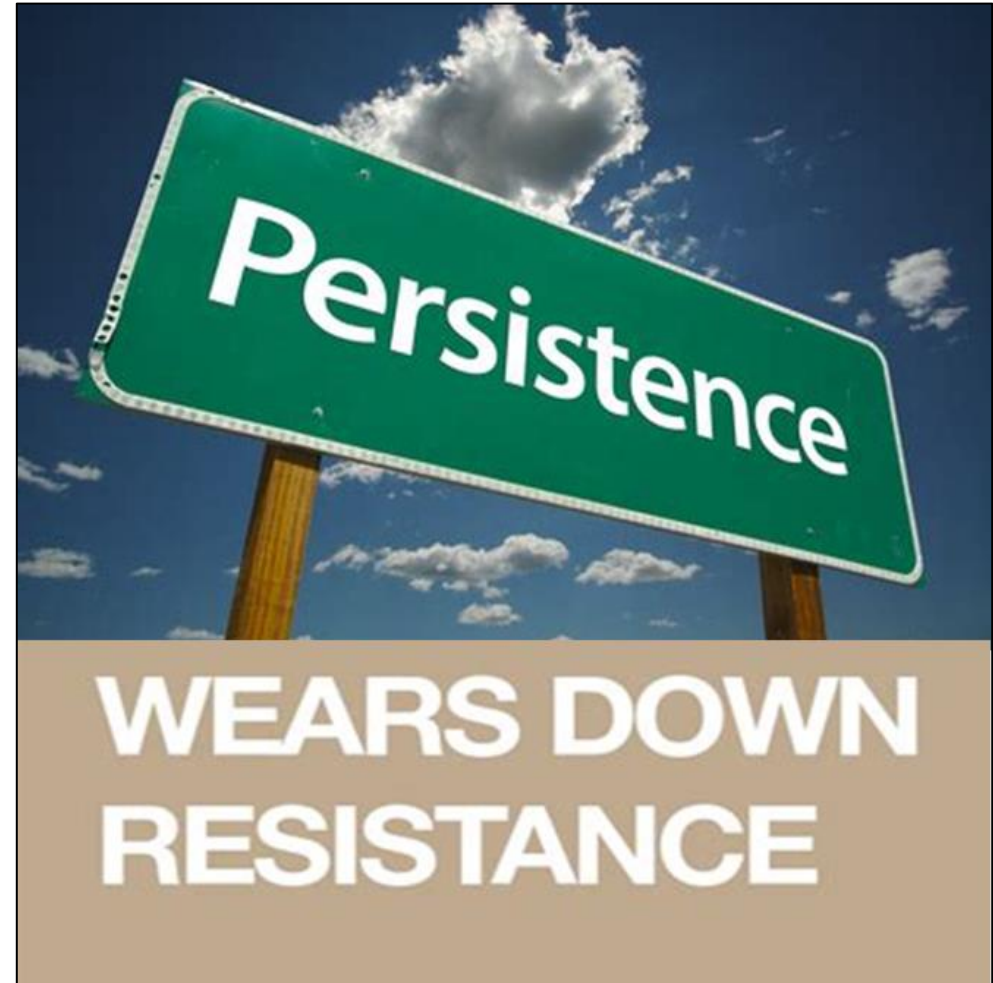
The others there don't see a problem so they want to know why Mordecai should 'get away with it'.



Day after day they spoke to him but he refused to comply.

They keep at it – trying to wear down his resistance.

Courage was needed.
(This is peer pressure)



Malicious intent?

Therefore they told Haman about it
to see whether Mordecai`s behaviour would be tolerated,

Up to this point we can assume that Haman hadn't noticed.

They try to apply more pressure.

Note the sinister sound of 'tolerate'.

They are expecting some reaction from Haman.



Mordecai's explanation

for he had told them he was a Jew.



He wasn't ashamed of his heritage but now he has to reveal it publicly.

As a worshipper of the one true God he couldn't (not simply wilfully 'wouldn't'), he couldn't act as if he was worshipping a man (remember Shadrach etc.).

When Haman **saw** that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honour, he was enraged.

Haman notices now. – How people's comments can poison other's minds!

As he now focuses on Mordecai's actions, his offended pride makes him angry.

How would you respond if someone 'disrespected' you.



Yet having learned who Mordecai`s people were,
he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai.

The Amalekite is beginning to show.

He wants Mordecai dead BUT



The inventiveness of the sinful mind is terrible

Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.

Destroy them all!

(This is Satanic anti-semitism)

And so the first stage of the plot is beginning to take shape.



Psalm 11: What to pray in a time like that.

In the LORD I take refuge.

How then can you say to me.. "Flee like a bird to your mountain.

For look, the wicked bend their bows; they set their arrows against the strings to shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart.

When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne.

He observes the sons of men; his eyes examine them.

The LORD examines the righteous, but the wicked and those who love violence his soul hates.

On the wicked he will rain fiery coals and burning sulphur; a scorching wind will be their lot.

For the LORD is righteous, he loves justice; upright men will see his face.