

# LESSON 27

## A Few More Comments About Haman

If you ask most Egyptologists today, they will tell you that the Exodus is a myth. Perhaps the best known Egyptologist today is Zahi Hawass, and he has said that there is no archeological evidence for the Exodus; it is pure myth.

Two questions: (1) How should we respond to those charges? And, (2) what does any of this have to do with the book of Esther?

Let's start with the second question first.

Recall that when we first met Haman, we said that the most important thing about Haman was his nationality. Haman was an Agagite, which was the reason for his conflict with Mordecai.

The Agagites were the Amalekites, with the name Agagite coming from the name of the two most famous Amalekite kings - the first and the last both being named Agag. And the Amalekites met up with the Israelites as they were leaving Egypt in the Exodus.

The ancient animosity between the Jews and the Amalekites is the backdrop for the entire book of Esther, with the not so subtle message that if King Saul had obeyed God and destroyed all of the Amalekites centuries earlier, then the near destruction of God's people in Esther's day would not have occurred.

So, back to our second question - what does modern skepticism about the Exodus have to do with the book of Esther? To answer that question, we need to ask another question, one that we briefly considered earlier but that I want us to look at now in more detail - who were the Amalekites?

The most common answer to that question that you will hear today is that the Amalekites were an ancient band of bedouin robbers that, along with a few other similar groups, caused some trouble for the Israelites after the Exodus.

But does that view agree with what the Bible says about the Amalekites? Let's take a look. The Bible has quite a bit to say about the Amalekites.

The Israelites of the Exodus met the Amalekites before they reached Mt. Sinai, which was the beginning of a very long conflict.

**Exodus 17:8** - Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim.

**Exodus 17:16** - "A hand upon the throne of the LORD! The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

Later the Israelites found the southern approach to Canaan blocked by the Amalekites.

**Numbers 13:29** - The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb.

The Amalekites were a cause of the 40 year wilderness wandering of the Israelites.

**Numbers 14:25** - Now, since the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valleys, turn tomorrow and set out for the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea.

When the Israelites tried to enter the promised land early, the Amalekites defeated them.

**Numbers 14:42-45** - Do not go up, for the LORD is not among you, lest you be struck down before your enemies. For there the Amalekites and the Canaanites are facing you, and you shall fall by the sword. Because you have turned back from following the LORD, the LORD will not be with you." But they presumed to go up to the heights of the hill country, although neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses departed out of the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and defeated them and pursued them, even to Hormah.

Balaam mentions an early Amalekite king, Agog.

**Numbers 24:7** - Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters; his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.

And Balaam describes the Amalekites themselves.

**Numbers 24:20** - Then he looked on Amalek and took up his discourse and said, "Amalek was the first among the nations, but its end is utter destruction."

Does that description of the Amalekites and their king, Agag, sound like an unimportant band of robbers?

The Amalekites are mentioned frequently in the 400 year period of Joshua and Judges.

Saul later defeated the Amalekites and their King Agag (a later Agag than the one mentioned by Balaam), but Saul allowed some to escape.

**1 Samuel 15:7-9** - And Saul defeated the Amalekites from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt. And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive and devoted to destruction all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction.

David also fought the Amalekites after they kidnapped two of his wives, but David also allowed some to escape.

**1 Samuel 30:17** - And David struck them down from twilight until the evening of the next day, and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men, who mounted camels and fled.

So what have we seen?

The Amalekites were a formidable and long-lived force that fought God's people for over 400 years, from the time of the Exodus until the days of King Saul and King David.

Now, here is the million dollar question - what was Egypt doing during this same time period?

The standard answer to that question is that Egypt was in the middle of their powerful New Kingdom period during this entire time. If so, that would mean that Palestine was dominated by Egypt during the entire 400 years of Joshua and Judges.

But is that what we see in the Bible? In a word, no. That is not at all what we see in the Bible.

When we read the book of Joshua, we do not find Egypt doing anything. Likewise, when we read the book of Judges, we don't find Egypt doing anything. We hear nothing from Egypt until we read of Solomon's marriage alliance with Egypt.

**1 Kings 3:1** - Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt. He took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into the city of David until he had finished building his own house and the house of the LORD and the wall around Jerusalem.

And we finally see Egypt's military again with regard to that marriage.

**1 Kings 9:16** - Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burned it with fire, and had killed the Canaanites who lived in the city, and had given it as dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife.

After the time of the Exodus, we do not see Egypt making any military move against the Israelites until the days of King Rehoboam, over 400 years after the Exodus.

**1 Kings 14:25** - In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem.

How can this be explained if the standard chronology of Egypt is correct?

The answer is that it cannot be explained - unless the standard Egyptian chronology is wrong. And I think the Bible proves that the standard Egyptian chronology must be wrong.

But how wrong is it? How many years off is it? Let's look at the clues.

If the standard view is wrong, and the Exodus did not occur in Egypt's New Kingdom period, then when did the Exodus occur? Perhaps the reason why the Egyptologists can find no evidence of the Exodus is because they are looking for it in the wrong time period.

What should we look for in Egyptian history to locate the time of the Exodus? I think we can use two things to locate it - the plagues and the Amalekites.

As for the plagues, they must have left Egypt very badly damaged. We sometimes think of the plagues in terms of the popular movie, but they were much worse than that.

**Exodus 9:6** - All the livestock of the Egyptians died.

**Exodus 9:24-25** - There was hail and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very heavy hail, such as had never been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. The hail struck

down everything that was in the field in all the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And the hail struck down every plant of the field and broke every tree of the field.

**Exodus 10:14-15** - The locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled on the whole country of Egypt, such a dense swarm of locusts as had never been before, nor ever will be again. They covered the face of the whole land, so that the land was darkened, and they ate all the plants in the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Not a green thing remained, neither tree nor plant of the field, through all the land of Egypt.

Exodus 12:29 - At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock.

So, it shouldn't surprise us if the Egyptian society was at a very low point after the Israelites left. The plagues must have left Egypt very much weakened.

But things would soon be much worse for Egypt. Why? Because the Amalekites were heading south when the Jews passed them on their own exodus out of Egypt.

And I don't think this was a coincidence. God did not want the Egyptians to follow the Jews, attacking them and trying to drag them back to Egypt. And so God gave the Egyptians something else to keep them busy - the Amalekites.

Can we find a period like that in Egyptian history? Yes, we can.

The end of the Middle Kingdom was just such a time, and the invading force that ended the Middle Kingdom and that controlled Egypt during the period between the Middle and the New Kingdom were the Hyksos.

I think, based on what we read in the Bible, that the Exodus occurred at the end of the Middle Kingdom, and that the Hyksos and the Amalekites are one and the same people.

Is there any evidence outside the Bible for that identification? Yes.

For example, in Egyptian texts, the Hyksos are called the Amu (similar to Amalekites), and the Hyksos king is called Apop (similar to Agog). In fact, the Egyptian sources tell us that there were two famous Hyksos kings called Apop, one at the first and one at the end (just as the Bible tells us about Agog of

the Amalekites). And those same sources tell us that the Hyksos were eventually expelled by a foreign power, which would be King Saul if the Hyksos and the Amalekites are the same group.

So, back then to our earlier question. If the Hyksos and the Amalekites are the same group, then how far off is the standard chronology of Egypt? About 600 years. An Egyptologist would tell you that the Hyksos were expelled around 1600 BC. I think the Bible tells us that event occurred around 1000 BC.

Who were the Hyksos? One historian says that with that question the entire structure of ancient history hangs in the balance. I think the Bible answers that question, and I think the Egyptian chronology is off by six centuries, which explains why they can find no evidence for the events described in the Bible. They are looking for that evidence in the wrong time.

And as for the book of Esther, the evil Haman was an Amalekite. Each time we see the Jews battling the Amalekites, we are told that some of the Amalekites escaped, so it should not surprise us to find one centuries later in the days of Queen Esther.

And if we are correct, then Haman was a Hyksos, a group of warriors described as being “imbued to the core with a spirit of destruction.” And that description fits well with what the Bible tells us about Haman.

## Back to Esther 7:8-10

Some commentators argue that Esther should have interceded for Haman, telling the king that he was not actually attacking her. One writes that Esther’s “character would have been more attractive if she had shown pity toward a fallen foe.”

These commentators remind of those neighbors who brag about how they always re-locate snakes that they find. I also re-locate snakes – I re-locate them to the next life! The only non-poisonous snakes are the snakes that are far away from me.

We have a similar situation here in Esther. Haman was not at this time a **fallen** foe – Haman was a **falling** foe. He could yet do much damage while he remained alive.

And are they really asking Esther to follow the example of King Saul, who years earlier had spared the life of another Agagite against God’s explicit command?

Esther had finally succeeded where Saul had failed – and Esther, like Saul, was acting with royal authority. In fact, what had Mordecai said to her in 4:14? “Who knoweth whether thou art come **to the kingdom** for such a time as this?” As Queen of Persia, Esther was now Queen of the Jews, and Esther as Queen was carrying out a royal sentence on this great enemy of God’s people.

Showing pity to Haman would have been wrong, just as King Saul’s pity toward Haman’s ancestor was wrong and disqualified Saul from being king. Esther killed Haman with her cleverness just as Saul **should** have killed Agag with his sword. What was at stake here was God’s plan of redemption! There was only one way for Haman to exit, and Esther made sure that was how Haman left!

Haman died in his own trap.

**Proverbs 11:6** - The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but the treacherous are taken captive by their lust.

And the same is true today. Many are caught in a trap of wickedness and deceit, and for many that trap is their own creation. They thought they could control it and use it on others, but in the end they were the ones captured by it. Haman was not the first nor the last to die on his own gallows!

Although one might expect the book of Esther to end with Chapter 7, a very serious problem still remains. How can Esther revoke an irrevocable law?

Although Haman is dead, Haman’s edict against the Jews lives on. The death of Haman is **not** the climax of the book.

**Revelation 14:13** – Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

Sadly, the opposite is also true. The works of the evil follow them as well. And we are about to see how the evil works of Haman followed him after his death.

What other lessons for today can we learn from this confrontation between Esther and Haman in Chapter 7. I have a commentary from 1898 that suggested we can learn the following three lessons.

First, we can learn something about how Esther accused Haman, and particularly how Esther did not accuse Haman. She could have started a rumor campaign against him, but she did not. She could have tried to poison the king’s mind against his top advisor, but she did not. We have no record that Esther

said anything critical of Haman prior to the accusation she made in front of the king. When the time came for Esther to confront Haman, she did it face to face. If Haman had any defense, Esther was giving him his chance to make it and defend himself.

Second, we can learn the lesson of Galatians 6:7 - "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap." I'm not sure we can find a much better example of that verse than that provided by Haman. He sowed a gallows for Mordecai, and he then reaped that same gallows for himself!

Third, we can learn a lesson about how rapidly the wheel of fortune revolves. Here is how that 1898 described this lesson:

Of all the fickle things under the sun, Fortune is the most fickle. She is more so than the wind. Between the rising and setting of every sun she changes her mind. In the morning she smiles, in the evening she frowns. With one breath she shouts your praise, with the next she blights your hopes. She cheers when you go up, she mocks when you come down. Oh, let us not worship at the shrine of a goddess so fickle and so false. Let us anchor our souls in God. Then, come sorrow or gladness, success or failure, riches or poverty, honor or shame, health or sickness, life or death, time or eternity, all is ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

One reason I particularly like that third lesson is that it provides a reminder of the key theme of this book - reversal! This book is full of reversals, and so are our own lives today. How do we deal with reversals in our life? How do we weather that storm? As with the events in Esther, we need to look for the hand of God, and we need to obey God and we need to trust in the arm of God rather than the arm of man whatever our surrounding circumstances.

So where are we at the end of Chapter 7? Haman has left the building, but his irrevocable decree has not. Also, a vacancy has opened up on the king's staff.

## Esther 8:1-2

On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was unto her. 2 And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.



Herodotus tells us that in the Persian Empire the goods and property of condemned criminals were taken over by the king. That appears to have happened here. The Hebrew word translated “house” may have also included Haman’s family.

The king gives Haman’s house to Queen Esther, likely either to compensate her for her grief or just to demonstrate his royal favor on her.

In verse 1, Mordecai appears before the king for the first time in this book.

Verse 1 tells us that Esther had told the king what Mordecai was to her, which likely means that she told the king more than just that they were related, but also that Mordecai was her advisor and her protector. It seems that, at last, the king finally knows that Esther is a Jew and that his edict had been against Esther’s people.

Some commentators find it unbelievable that the king did not already know the relation between Esther and Mordecai. In response, I would ask – have they not been paying attention?

By the time we reach Chapter 9, can anyone be surprised about the cluelessness of this king? Also, Esther and Mordecai had gone to great lengths to keep their relationship secret, using a eunuch to pass messages back and forth. Even devious Haman had not known about the relation between the two.

Mordecai’s relation to Esther further increases his status in the eyes of the king. In verse 2, Mordecai takes over the position recently vacated by Haman, making Mordecai second in command to the king.

Esther also sets Mordecai over the house of Haman. This action really shows us how Esther has changed. When she was introduced to us, she was an orphan, taken in by Mordecai. Now, she is Mordecai’s benefactor. In a book of reversals, perhaps the greatest reversal is the dramatic change we see in Esther herself and in the relation between Esther and Mordecai.

Should Esther have given Haman’s property to Mordecai, and should Mordecai have accepted it?

If Mordecai’s motivation in creating this huge problem had been to right the wrong that King Saul caused in disobeying God’s commands about the Amalekites, then one might have expected Mordecai himself to obey the command.

1 Samuel 15:3 – Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare

them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

Saul did not obey that command.

**1 Samuel 15:9** - Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

Here in Esther, it again seems that a part of that command is obeyed and a part is not obeyed. But once again we should ask whether that was a command intended for Mordecai in the first place? Did God want Mordecai to disobey King Xerxes because of what had happened hundreds of years earlier back in 1 Samuel 15?

If so, how can we reconcile that with the much more recent command in Jeremiah?

Jeremiah 29:7 – And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

Hadn't all of the trouble here started after Mordecai disobeyed that explicit command in Jeremiah 29 that was made to all of the exiles, including himself? Was Mordecai seeking the peace of the city when he stubbornly refused to honor Haman? Is Mordecai an example of obedience or disobedience?

Why is Mordecai promoted to Haman's vacant office?

One possibility is that Mordecai's advancement is meant to compensate Esther for the grief she suffered because of Haman's decree. In that case, it is Esther who is being compensated, not Mordecai.

Another possibility goes back to our earlier theory that one reason (perhaps one of several reasons) why Mordecai refused to bow down before Haman was because he felt Haman had received the promotion unjustly, and that it should have been his for saving the king's life. In that case, Xerxes' elevation of Mordecai would simply be righting the wrong that had led to all the unpleasantness in the first place.

But if Mordecai's promotion is simply a reward for his deliverance of the king from the assassination plot, does that seem overly generous? Overhearing a conversation would not necessarily make one qualified to be a chief administrator. But, according to Herodotus, Xenagoras was made governor of

all Cilicia as a reward for saving the life of the king's brother during a brawl. Here the reward was for saving the life of the king himself – a policy the king certainly wanted to encourage!

The transfer of the signet ring is somewhat different here than in the case of Haman. Haman had not received the ring when installed in office, but only when the king commissioned him to write the edict concerning the Jews in 3:10. But here the signet ring is transferred as a sign of office. All the power **eventually** granted to Haman with the signet ring is **immediately** given to Mordecai, empowering him to do whatever can be done to overturn Haman's edict.

Although there are certainly some key differences, I think the text is inviting us to compare Mordecai with Joseph.

- Both Mordecai and Joseph received a signet ring from the king (Genesis 41:42).
- Both Mordecai and Joseph were Israelites residing in a foreign land as exiles.
- Both Mordecai and Joseph were threatened by the authorities.
- Both Mordecai and Joseph were promoted to second-in-command.
- Both Mordecai and Joseph used their authority to secure the salvation of their people.

Earlier we also looked at some similarities between Esther and Joseph. Why are these connections to Joseph important? Because God is not mentioned in this book. To the careful student of the Bible, these similarities with Joseph are an unmistakable sign that God is acting behind the scenes here.

Haman had sought to publicly humiliate and kill Mordecai, but now ironically – and in a great reversal – Haman is dead and Mordecai has taken his place both in the palace and in Haman's own home. What comes around goes around!

#ezra-esther