

Season 3, Episode 4: Haman's Rise (Chapter 3)

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Sarah: Welcome to Two sisters and a cup of tea. My name is Sarah and I live in the UK. And this is my sister Felicity and she lives in the US.

Felicity: Hello, everyone. Hello. How are we today, Sarah? All right.

Sarah: I'm well. What's been you today?

Felicity: I've resorted back to the classic Yorkshire Gray.

Sarah: Are you going to branch out on.

Felicity: Your no, I know, but, you know, I have a thing at the moment that I can't drive anywhere, so the tea shop is without out of reach. So we're back to my own blend. I'm not sure the Tshirt would recognize.

Sarah: Yorkshire Gray and maybe you should advocate it as the thing to sell the pick. Good.

Felicity: I have also got a very American biscuit, and it's a biscuit because it does have a snap, but it's called a double stuffed oreo. Stuffed with well, it's stuffed with the same thing. I was expecting it to be fat with, like, more stuffing. It doesn't look any different, but it tastes about ten times more sugary.

Sarah: So what's is it actually in the middle?

Felicity: Well, it's just kind of cream like oreo style cream.

Sarah: Like a normal oreo?

Felicity: Yeah. Well, it does actually taste quite different, I think probably because there's more cream in there. It's kind of jam packed in there. Not jam. I wouldn't like jamming it, to be honest. I've taken one bite and I think that's enough sugar for the next hour or two.

Sarah: And is it a bigger sized oreo then?

Felicity: Really not.

Sarah: What's your order of oreo preference? What would come tops?

Felicity: Well, I did really enjoy the golden oreo from a couple of weeks ago, probably because it was just a bit less sweet. Do you like a normal Oreo? I was expecting this to blow my mind because I do like Oreos generally, but I'm just not enjoying it that.

Sarah: Much to hear that.

Felicity: What about you?

Sarah: Got any biscuit? I actually really enjoyed my lemon and ginger from last week. I was really quite surprised, enjoying a herbal tea, so I've gone back for a second.

Felicity: Wow, okay.

Sarah: Interesting.

Felicity: I've never known you to herbal.

Sarah: I know, I'm branching out. I think it might be different to, like, the ones which just pretend to be squash. Like a black currant tea.

Felicity: Yeah. That smell amazing, but don't actually taste.

Sarah: Yeah, I wouldn't naturally go and buy a lemon and ginger juice or squash. That's just not what you do, isn't it? Anyway, last week we touched on a big topic of suffering as we saw Esther being taken into this sinister kingdom, and essentially traffic, wasn't she? Into this palace to perform? And Please King took us through how we think about this.

Felicity: Classic tea and biscuit chat. What do you do with suffering? Good question. And I think that's what we're saying is that we've kind of brought it up, the narrator, and Esther has presented a scene where suffering is a reality, and we're going to see in our chapter this week it's even more of a reality. And so what do we do with that? Because the natural and actually probably a right question is, what is God doing? Why is there suffering in the world? And we just want to acknowledge that that is a big question, and it is a right question. It's a good question, Esther. I don't think he's going to answer it fully. But what we are going to see all the way through is that God is at work even in the suffering, even amidst the suffering, and that doesn't diminish the suffering. But we do need to be looking for his hand at work here. Does that help? Is he going to get on the right path?

Sarah: Let's cut on chapter three. I think that's just because we just want to put that out there. We're aware that this is hard topics to be thinking about, and we just want to avoid that, and we're going to read on and see what happens. Absolutely.

Felicity: I'm going to read it. Okay, so we're at chapter go for it. Three. After these events, king Zerkse honored Hayman, son of Hamadafa. The aggregate elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles. All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman. So the king had commanded this concerning him, but Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor. 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. They refused to comply. Therefore, they told Hayman about it to see whether Mordecai's behavior would be tolerated, for he had told them he was a Jew. When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged. Yet, having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead, Hayman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Zerksis, in the 12th year of King Xerxes, in the first month, the month of Nissan the poor that is, the lot was cast in the presence of Haman to select a day and month. And the lot fell on the 12th months, the month of Ada. Then Hayman said to King's Axis, there's a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king's laws. It is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let is a creepy issue to destroy them, and I will give 100 talents of silver to the king's administrators for the royal treasury. So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Hayman, son of a Hammadafa, the agaguite, the enemy of the Jews. Keep the money, the king said to Hayman, and do with the people as you please. Then on the 13th day of the first month, the royal secretaries were summoned. They wrote out in the script of each province and in the language of each people all Haman's orders to the king's satraps the governors of the various provinces and the nobles of the various peoples. These were written in the name of King Zerkshis himself and sealed with his own ring. Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the Jews, young and old, women and children on a single day, the 13th day of the 12th months, the month of Ada. And to plunder their goods, a copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so that they would be ready for that day. The couriers went out, spurred on by the king's command, and the Egypt was issued in the citadel of Sousa. The king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Sousa was bewildered.

Sarah: Thank you so much for see.

Felicity: I wonder if it's just worth saying, Sarah, that when we're hearing the word Jews, this is not one big anti Semitic thing.

Sarah: When we hear Jews, we should just.

Felicity: Be thinking, God's people.

Sarah: Yeah, that's really helpful. So it's a big surprise of the beginning of this chapter. If we remember back to last time, mordecai had just exposed the plot to kill the king, and it's kind of ramping up for him to be honored. And then after these events, King Zooks is honored, Hayman, and that's just a massive surprise. And we should feel the weight of that surprise. And then we feel why it's such a surprise and why it should be so shocking, because he's the aguda. And that's really significant for us. Why is that significant? Yeah.

Felicity: So I'm not sure that's not the reason why he's honored.

Sarah: No, but that is a big thing.

Felicity: About Hayman, which we need to home in on as the narrator gives us lots of details. So we have this Agagite because the Malachites or the agagites were the first people to attack God's people out of Egypt. So way back in Moses time and in Saul's time, one Samuel 15, saul was told to destroy them all because they are the enemy of God's. People and he didn't obey. And so there's a kind of remnant of the aggregate's and Heyman is a descendant of that remnant. So this kind of rivalry more than rivalry, isn't it, enmity between these two groups of people. And that has been going throughout history. And here we have Mordecai of the son of Kish tribe of Benjamin, and we have Haman of the aggregate's. So the ancient enmity is very much in action here.

Sarah: The narrator is just very aware of that, isn't he? Really wanted to point that out for us. And the big thing about this chapter is that Hayman is honored and then he acts in this very godlike fashion and wants everyone to kneel down and pay honor to worship him. And so he's the king and yet he's not. And yet he's kind of acting like the king. He is coming with this edict and this request that the king can happily accept with me.

Felicity: I know, as ever, the king accepting advice when you're like, what are you doing? He exercises. Come on.

Sarah: What happens is, Mordecai, he doesn't he refuses to bow down and worship payment. And there's a consequence and it's huge, isn't there?

Felicity: Yeah, if you notice him versus five and six. So Haman sees that Mordecai is not honoring him and he says he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. I mean, that in itself gives us a picture of this empire, doesn't it? So for not honoring, death would be the penalty. But he says, no, I'm not just going to kill Mordecai. I'm going to go for the whole people, the whole of God's people I'm going to try and wipe out.

Sarah: And this isn't just in Susan, is it? This is in all the provinces, in all the kingdoms. So essentially what's happening here is that suddenly, again, in a similar way to chapter one, where we got it was very quick escalation, wasn't it, of a kind of domestic situation into kingdom wide situation. Here we've got a similar mordecai has been faithful to the Lord in not bearing down to Hayman. And yet the consequence of that is that Hayman decides he's going to attempt to wipe out the whole people of God in the whole of this empire.

Felicity: I mean, it must have been quite just as Mordecai realized what's going on, he must have thought, no, have I caused that? It's crazy, isn't it, that his one action could then impact a whole people group?

Sarah: Yes. Hayman comes to the king and he puts his request and he even puts money, his own money behind it. That's how for this to happen. And the king says, a bit of money away, it's fine, do what you want with these people. Yes.

Felicity: And it's interesting because Haman doesn't actually name the people, doesn't there is a certain people dispersing people, the king. I'm just so unimpressed with the king. He just seems so detached from any actual kind of people governing. He's just allowing this to happen. And more and more, I think the narrator just hammers the fact that this ancient enmity between God's people and the agagites between Mordecai and Hayman that is being played out here. Because the next thing in verse ten, hayman, the son of Hamadas, the enemy of the Jews. I mean, he's now kind of almost entitled the enemy of the Jews. And I think the terrifying thing is that Hayman is clearly the most powerful person in the kingdom. I mean, he's not the king, but he actually seems to have the king.

Sarah: He's filling all the strings, isn't he?

Felicity: Yeah, exactly. And he is the enemy of the Jews, so he the most powerful of people, is against God's people.

Sarah: A couple of other poignant things to note, I think that might be interesting people to know is one that a lot was cast and when the feed it was going to go out, I don't know. There's a lot about casting lots in Proverbs, particularly I've been reading about that proverbs and I think that's just interesting, that even though Hayman cast a lot, actually the law determines the direction and we're just going to watch out for that. But also that it's on the 13th day of the first month that this convention goes out and that is actually Passover eve. So the kind of poignancy of as God's people across the empire celebrate Passover and celebrate God's deliverance from death, they're actually being delivered this hopeless

and helpless edict of death, death sentence on them. That the utter hopelessness and helplessness that they're in. I think we're meant to feel the weight of that in this timing.

Felicity: Yeah, I think you're right. The shadow of what was back in Exodus when death, if they hadn't done what the Lord said with the Lamb and the Passover instructions, then death is a certain result, wasn't it? So the shadow of that, and that is the thing. Destruction and death is where they're headed at this point, god's people. But then I think then the poignant kind of hope in that as well. It is the eve of Passover, and Passover is the deliverance of God's people. So I feel like we're kind of sitting with them and we should sit with them in this just absolute despair and lament with God's people in this, but then also be just looking out for the possibility of deliverance, the possibility of some sort of rescue from the Lord.

Sarah: Yes. And actually that's it, isn't it? That's where this drives the heart in terms of the threat here is huge. The threat here is the promised seed from Abraham's line to deliver the promise anointed one, the Messiah, potentially God's people. And this line is going to be wiped out with this edict that's going out. That's how big the consequences are, that all of God's promises are going to fail in this moment. And so you're right, this kind of double edged feeling, isn't it? Like, Gosh, this is hopeless, but also, in whom do we hope?

Felicity: Yeah, I think that's right. The sort of track record of God for his people, which I guess that.

Sarah: Just prompts us to think, like, as we think about the massive question of suffering, the painful and heart achingly hard question that we all go through with suffering in the big picture, in the small picture, and everything in between, when it's feeling utterly hopeless, who do we turn to? Where do we turn to for our hope? What are we willing to put our hate in at that moment? And does this flesh out that question for us?

Felicity: I don't know.

Sarah: What do you think?

Felicity: Yeah, I think that's right. I think suffering is a win rather than an if, isn't it? We all suffer to a lesser or greater degree in the Western world. We are not experiencing the persecution and the suffering that our brothers and sisters in other countries face, but we just think about Afghanistan at the moment and that kind of place. And it must just be that feeling when you're in the midst of suffering of this feels hopeless. This seems like there's no way out. And without God in the picture, then that is what it is. But then with God in the picture, everything changes. I think, Esther, as a whole book bolsters our view of God. It builds that picture more. And I think as I've been dwelling in the book, it reassured me that God really is big and powerful and sovereign, and his fingerprints are all over the book. And so he is at work even in the suffering. And that's hard to hear, I think, when you're in the midst of suffering. But as we read it now and get that picture of God, so when the suffering comes, we're maybe more likely to believe it. Maybe, yeah.

Sarah: And I guess that's stressed out in the Psalms, isn't it? Stretched out in Job. It's fleshed out even in the assessment as Paul talks about God's working for the good days you live in. But it's in this utter darkness and the darkest crevices and corners of suffering that we're seeing right here. That question is pelted at you, isn't it? And I guess it's like this kind of fleshes out, okay, is my faith resilient enough to hope in the Lord at this moment? And I think this really drives home that question for me in this and the story kind of fleshes that out. Yeah.

Felicity: And I think if you think from our position this side of the cross, so for these guys at the time, they're on the eve of Passover, what they are remembering is the actual Passover back in Exodus, we this side of the cross. We know that God does deliver his people through the cross. And so we have even more kind of tangible hope in that sense. Confidence. Yeah, absolutely. And that's not to diminish the suffering, isn't it? Because this is a lamentable position for ghost people to be in. And it must have been horrifying and terrifying that last line, the city of Sousa was bewildered. I mean, you can just imagine. And we see it in Mordecai's response in the next chapter. So I think it's a combination of sitting with God's people in this and also just taking a little step back and looking at the big picture and our big God and what he is doing, practically.

Sarah: There's a question of how we side with God's people as they're going through this, how we praying for people. And are we just aware that God's people will be persecuted? It

happened through the Old Testament. Jesus tells us it will happen to his followers. It happens to the church now, worldwide. And this just helps us to kind of remember that, doesn't it? And pray. Pray.

Felicity: Yeah. Speaking of which, would you like to pray as we wrap up?

Sarah: I think that is an appropriate response. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you that we can pray. Thank you that we come to you knowing that we don't have so many of the answers here. We are so humbled in our lack of knowledge, our lack of information, our lack of answers, but we pray to the One who does. We pray to the Lord, the everlasting God, the Creator of the end of the earth. We pray to the One who knows all things, whose understanding no one can fathom. And we just thank you so much that in the dark crevices of suffering, we can come to you, we can plead with you, we can cry to you. And we do lift up our brothers and sisters in different countries who are facing extreme forms of persecution at the moment, Lord, and we cry to you for them. We cry that you protect them. Would you have mercy on them? And would you bolster their hope in the Lord Jesus? Whatever happens in this world and on this earth, would you fix their gaze on the King of Heaven? And we pray that you do the same for us as well. Lord, would you continue to grow our view of you as we continue to go through estimate? Amen.

Felicity: Amen. Thank you. So do read on, everybody. Like, make sure you are reading ahead, because as we're primed in this chapter, it will be even more helpful if you were to be looking ahead to see where we can see God's fingerprints all over this narrative. And it's not too late to ask someone else to read along with you. Do you ask in person over text? What's that, whatever it may be? And why not leave a review while you're there as well so that others might just hear about it more? Excellent. See you next week, Sarah.

Sarah: Yeah, see you next time.

Felicity: All right, bye bye, everyone.

Sarah: Bye.

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