

# WE DON'T KNOW!

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

After these things King Achashveros promoted Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and he set his seat above all the officers who were with him. All the King's servants at the King's gate would bow down and prostrate themselves before Haman, for this is what the King had commanded concerning him, but Mordechai would not bow down nor prostrate himself. So the King's servants at the King's gate said to Mordechai, "Why do you disobey the King's command?" Finally, when they said this to him day after day and he did not heed them, they told Haman to see whether Mordechai's words would avail; because he told them that he was a Jew (Yehudi). When aman Haman

Haman himself saw that Mordechai did not bow down and prostrate himself before him then Haman was filled with rage. However it seemed contemptible to him to lay hands on Mordechai alone, for they had made known to him the people of Mordechai. So Haman sought to destroy all the Jews (Yehudim) who were throughout the kingdom of Achashveros the people of Mordechai. (Megillas Esther 3: 1-6)

Anyone who denies the validity of idolatry is called a (Jew) Yehudi. (Talmud Megilla)

Any matter which appears to man as a controlling factor independent of G- d's will and able to do good or evil is included in idolatry (Talmud Sanhedrin)

It's amazing to consider that Mordechai is the hero and all-time protagonist of the Purim story. Just as Esther is the probably the most famous lady to be emulated by the little girls, so Mordechai is still the most popular costume for many a Jewish boy on Purim. Why is it amazing?

Picture this! A certain person is pictured on the front page of all the local newspapers receiving the key to the city by the mayor. He is being touted as a hero. The by-line tells of the heroism he displayed by jumping into icy waters to save a fellow citizen who found himself in one instant fallen off the deck of the Circle Line cruise. When we read the story inside on page 3 we find out that the alleged hero was the one who pushed the man off the boat in the first place. How can we be blind to the first part of the story and declare than man a hero?

It looks like Mordechai instigated Haman. On the surface he seems to have caused the problem he was later to solve. Why does he remain the hero? Perhaps he could have made himself absent or invisible when Haman passed by. Why did he have to confront him and inspire his rage?

Mordechai made a well calculated risk here. What was there to lose? Haman was from the seed of Amalek that carried on through King Agag that Shaul faltered in executing. The children of Israel have an old track record with Amalek. When one is up the other is down. Amalek attacked by Refidim when the question was asked, "Is HASHEM within our midst or not?" Then Amalek came, at the moment of weakness. When Jewish belief is high as the hands of Moses are raised Amalek is being vanquished. When we are spiritually weak the forces of Amalek feed on our doubts and gain increasing strength.

If Haman is nothing more than a lucky politician with a last name like "Agag" then Mordechai would be risking not more than his own life by standing in open defiance. However, Haman was not satisfied to go against Mordechai alone. He saw not only that Mordechai did not bow down but that he would never bow down. As a Yehudi he stands forever ideologically opposed.

The Jew understands, "There's nothing other than HASHEM". The universe is densely packed with meaning. Haman believes that the world is a random place where the roll of dice might determine a nation's fate. In the end Haman's hatred unified the Jewish people at the core and perversely he was the catalyst of our dramatic change of heart.

Who then was the real hero of the story? With a few extra sips of wine on Purim we may be fit to submit that there's so much more going on that we don't know!

---

Text Copyright &copy 2004 Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org)