

MORDECAI, THE INSIGNIFICANT JEW WHO BECAME A BIG MAN
MORDECAI, THE INSIGNIFICANT JEW WHO BECAME A BIG MAN

"Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai" (Esther 2:5).

Probably one of the most celebrated Jews mentioned in the Bible was Mordecai who sat in the gateway of Shushan, the capital city of the Persian empire. The writings of David describe many warriors who became famous because of their military exploits. The Bible also tells of Solomon and other notabilities whose wisdom was recognized internationally. Nehemiah and Ezra were patriots whose fervor inspired the returning captives to build the walls of their ransacked city. Samson took the jaw bone of an ass and overwhelmed a host of Philistines. The heroes of Israel were innumerable, but it is extremely doubtful whether any of them surpassed the Jew who every day sat in the gateway of Shushan. His fortitude was outstanding; he was a man who kept his head by using it!

Love Overcoming Loneliness

"And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter" (Esther 2:7). On three different occasions Jews were taken as prisoners to Babylon, and at some time during that difficult period the parents of Mordecai's cousin died, leaving their child an orphan. Her age was not revealed, but it seems she was much younger than the man who welcomed her to his heart and home. Mordecai was himself a captive, but it appears he had gained favor with his captors for he "sat in the gate." That term was used to describe citizens who occupied a prominent place where people could seek their counsel. When Mordecai became aware of the plight of his cousin, he decided to adopt her into his family. Self interests were forgotten; his love for the defenseless orphan overcame any reluctance to add her to his family. That was the greatest thing he ever did. People who care for others are not forgotten either by God or men.

Help Overcoming Hatred

Mordecai was a captive from Jerusalem; one whom Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had carried away (see Esther 2:6).

91

"Two of the king's chamberlains.., sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen" (Esther 2:21-22). Although a new king had begun to reign after the defeat of Nebuchadnezzar, Mordecai could have been bitter. He had lost his home and country. It is difficult to forget injustice, and the chance to gloat over the discomfiture of enemies is hard to ignore. The plot against the king had become known, and sitting at the gate, Mordecai listened to whispers concerning the insurrection. Many men would have remained silent, believing the king deserved to die. Why should a Jew protect a man who delighted in enslaving human beings? Mordecai had no ulterior motive when he spoke of the conspiracy. He resembled the Savior who taught it was wise and good to love enemies.

Faith Overcoming Fear

"And all the king's servants that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning

MORDECAI, THE INSIGNIFICANT JEW WHO BECAME A BIG MAN

him, But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence" (Esther 3:2). The refusal of the Jew to obey the royal command increased the animosity of the offended nobleman, but nothing could have persuaded Mordecai to change his behavior. He revered only God, and to bow in adoration before a man would have been sacrilege. Mordecai may have been little of stature, but in the sight of Jehovah he was as tall as a giant!

God was never mentioned in the book of Esther, but His handiwork is seen throughout the account. His presence is never far from a soul whose integrity remains unsullied. That wonderful Hebrew was surrounded by formidable enemies, but he despised their strength. Happy and wise are all people who learn from his example. When the three young men in Babylon refused to bow before the king's idol and were thrown into the fiery furnace, they discovered the Son of God was already there awaiting their arrival. Life at times may be complex and the outlook forbidding and bleak, but always, somewhere in the shadows stands the Lord.

Trust Overcoming Terror

"When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry" (Esther 4:1). Although religion appears to be absent from the book of Esther, it is

92

worthy of attention that the wearing of sackcloth and ashes was a sign of grief and repentance; that an offender sought mercy from God or some person with great authority.

After Israel conquered the armies of Syria, "Benhadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner chamber. And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings; let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life" (1 Kings 20:30-31).

It was evident that Mordecai never sought forgiveness from the king, and since the Persians were hostile, no effort was made to placate them. The wearing of sackcloth and ashes was meant to attract the attention of the Almighty, the Jews' only hope of survival. This man would have been less than human had he not been afraid, but beyond the problems, he saw the Lord for whom no task was impossible. The immediate future appeared to be threatening, but deep within the soul of this indomitable leader was an unshakable faith in the God of his fathers. He was a wise man

Praise Overcoming Prejudice

"And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honor. And in every province and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them" (Esther 8:15-17). The far-reaching conquest of the Jewish people was unmistakable, but it should be remembered the times in which these things happened were different from today. Survival was a necessity, and the threatened Hebrews were determined their problems would not be renewed. The slaughter of the Persians may seem to be merciless and regrettable, but it is interesting to note the victors never touched either money or property which belonged to their enemies. When

MORDECAI, THE INSIGNIFICANT JEW WHO BECAME A BIG MAN
the book of Esther was written, its author emphasized the fact the Jews were not religious mercenaries who fought to increase their wealth. They struggled for the right to exist, and that probably explains the importance of the Feast of Purim which is celebrated annually by the modern Israelis.

93

The fear of their conquerors fell upon the Persians, "and many of the people of the land became Jews." Even their inherent prejudices were overcome; they desired to be associated with the Hebrews, for it was evident they were a nation destined to become great.

Humility Overcoming Haughtiness

"For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed" (Esther 10:3).

The road which led from captivity to conquest, from poverty to power was long and had many turns. When Mordecai became a prisoner of Nebuchadnezzar, his outlook was desolate. It might have been easy to believe Jehovah had forgotten to be gracious. Yet even in the darkest hour God was arranging that preservation and happiness would be possible not only for Mordecai but also for the people he represented. Some men are more faithful to God when they are in trouble. Few can overcome the temptation of being great. A bestowal of power may lead to arrogance, insensitivity, and dominating dictatorial oppression. Hitler was a little man who became important, and the world suffered because of his continuing lust for superiority. Mordecai was a different kind of man. His greatness promoted humility.

This dedicated Jew lived to increase the happiness of other people, worked for their prosperity, and cared nothing for personal gain. In spite of the destruction of his enemies he delighted in "speaking peace to all his seed" (Esther 10:3). It is not difficult to understand why the Almighty used him to be the Savior of his people. The Lord said, "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matt. 20:26-27).

94□

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.