

## The “Hamans” of this World

*“There is 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.” — Esther 3:8*

The Jewish holiday of *Purim* celebrates the inspiring story of Queen Esther, who took a bold stand against prejudice and injustice. We admire the courage and bravery of the queen, the wisdom and integrity of Mordecai. We are awed by the orchestrations of God behind the scenes to save His people.

Yet it is also a sobering account of evil, hate, and prejudice in this world, as represented by Haman, the king’s prime minister. Haman was in the top echelon of Persian leaders, and obviously one of the king’s favorites. This allowed Haman to amass a huge amount of wealth and great influence.

So why did Haman want to destroy *all* the Jews just because of one man’s actions? The Bible tells us that Haman was an Amalekite, one of the ancient enemies of the Israelites. Therefore, Haman’s hatred went beyond just Mordecai to all the Jews. As the rabbis teach, Amalek stands for all those who represent evil, not just physical descendants like Haman.

As second-in-command, Haman enjoyed his power and authority and the reverence shown to him. The Jews, however, looked to God as their final authority, not any man, and certainly not Haman. Haman realized that the only way to fulfill his selfish desires was to kill those who disregarded his authority.

Haman, too, is more than just a historical figure — he is as alive today as he was in biblical times. We recognize Haman in Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who issues frequent calls for Israel’s destruction. We feel Haman’s presence when we read in the news of terrorists who execute murderous attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions around the world. We hear Haman in the hateful words of radical Muslim clerics who preach that Jews are the “descendants of apes and pigs.”

One of the messages of *Purim* — a message that applies to Jews and Christians alike — is that in a world with no shortage of “Hamans,” we need more “Esthers” committed to standing humbly before God and seeking to defend His people in the face of all difficulties.