

Messianic Rabbi: Why the Book of Esther Should Never Have Been in the Bible

Every year in early spring, Jewish people all around the world gather together to celebrate the miraculous victory of the Jewish people over the evil Haman. Without a doubt, the story of Esther is one of the most exciting narratives in the Bible.

But, should the book of Esther even be in the Bible? Now, before you click away angrily and reject what is said, please consider reading the whole article.

To begin, let me say that over the years many people have questioned if the book of Esther should be included in the canon of the Bible. One reason for questioning the inclusion is that Esther is the only book in the Bible that doesn't include G-D in the text. Other modern discussions relate to the fact that the book of Esther was not found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. However, neither of those is the reason I am saying the book of Esther should never have been included in the Bible.

To lay the groundwork for my statement, we must look in the book of Esther itself. In Esther 3:1 (TLV), we read these words:

"Sometime later King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, son of Hammedatha the Agagite, elevating him and setting his chair above all the officials who were with him."

With these words, we are introduced to the villain Haman. But, as you read these introductory words, we are informed that Haman was an Agagite, our first clue that this book should not have been in the Bible. In order to understand what I am talking about, we must look back and find out who the Agagites

were. So, let's read from the book of 1 Samuel 15:

Then Samuel said to Saul, "Adonai sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, listen to the voice of the words of Adonai! Thus says Adonai-Tzva'ot: 'I remember what Amalek did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt. Now go and strike down Amalek and put all he has under the ban of destruction—so have no pity on him; but kill both men and women, children and nursing infants, oxen and sheep, camels and donkeys'" (vv. 1-3).

Notice that Saul was instructed by G-D to utterly destroy Amalek. However, if we read on in 1 Samuel 15:

"He captured King Agag of Amalek alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag as well as the best of the sheep, the cattle, even the fatlings and the lambs, and all that was good, since they were not willing to utterly destroy them; everything that was worthless and feeble, they destroyed completely" (vv. 8-9).

As you read these verses, notice the name of the king of Amalek, Agag. Saul chose to disobey G-D's direct command and instead spared Agag's life. Although Samuel does kill Agag later in the chapter, it is because Saul didn't obey G-D that the line of Agag survived. So, in Esther we read about Haman the Agagite, a descendant of Amalek, trying to exterminate the Jews.

Another other thing to consider as we read Esther is that because Saul refused to completely exterminate Amalek, the enemy of Israel, Amalek attempted to completely exterminate the Jews. If Saul had obeyed G-D and destroyed Amalek as he was commanded to, the book of Esther would never have been in the Bible; hence the book of Esther should never have been in the Bible.

Two closing thoughts: First, if you read closely, you will note in 1 Samuel 10 that Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, and if you read in Esther 2, Esther is also from the tribe of Benjamin. Isn't it interesting that G-D used Esther from the tribe of Benjamin to save the Jewish people from the failure of Saul from the tribe of Benjamin?

Second, while the book of Esther should never have been in the Bible, it is in the Bible. The book exists to not just show the power of G-D, but to show the *redemptive* power of G-D. Each of us has failed G-D in one way or another and, when our life's book is written, there will be many chapters that should never have been included in our life's story.

Many of us get all caught up and weighted down by our failures. But, just as the Bible includes the book of Esther, our life's book also included the story of G-D's redemptive and restorative work. Each year as we gather together to celebrate Purim, the Feast of Esther, we should also take the time to recognize and celebrate the times that G-D turned around our failures and made them victories. {eo}

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