

There's a depth to Scripture that we don't see on the surface. If we study, and make connections between books, we'll see threads that weave over centuries and validates Scripture and shows it couldn't have been written by man.

This is when the story of Esther begins and the story of Saul being commanded to wipe out the Amalekites. What I want to invite you to see is that the conflict that takes place between Mordecai and Haman, or between the Jews and Agagites or Amalekites began in Rebekah's womb hundreds of years earlier.

Just to let you know I'm going to be looking at a number of different verses that will lay the foundation.

We'll start with **Genesis 25:20**...

20 Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian. 21 Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she *was* barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. 22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If *all is well*, why *am I like* this?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.

It's important to understand this struggle in the womb prefigured the struggle and conflict that would exist not just between these two brothers, but more importantly between their descendants. We know when they were born, there was a conflict between them, but this moves way past that to the conflict that exists between the nations that came from them.

**23 And the LORD said to her:
"Two nations *are* in your womb,
Two peoples shall be separated from your body;
One people shall be stronger than the other,
And the older shall serve the younger."**

Make sure you notice God said these two children also represented two different nations.

God also points out one nation – Israel – would be stronger, or would prevail over the other nation. And the other nation – Edom – would serve Israel. This is how the conflict takes place: when you have one nation that's stronger than another and you have one nation that has to serve the other, you're going to have problems!

**24 So when her days were fulfilled *for her* to give birth, indeed *there were* twins in her womb. 25 And the first came out red. *He was like a hairy garment all over* (this is the ugliest baby in history); so they called his name Esau (meaning "hairy"). 26 Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob (meaning "supplanter). *Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.*
27 So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents.**

This largely describes their descendants too:

- Esau and his people were wilder and violent: think of Doeg the Edomite, the chief herdsman of Saul (probably a herdsman b/c Esau's people were hunters and herdsmen).
- Jacob was milder, lived in tents, and this largely characterized his people.

28 And Isaac loved Esau because he ate *of his* game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

This parental favoritism also contributed to the conflict between the brothers. The same thing took place w/ Joseph and his brothers. When parents have favorites they're setting their children up for conflict.

29 Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he *was* weary. 30 And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red *stew*, for I *am* weary." Therefore his name was called Edom (meaning "red").

Notice Esau's name was changed to Edom. The people that came from him were known as the Edomites.

While Jacob is a believer – and his descendants are believers – Esau is an unbeliever, and his descendants are unbelievers. He had no regard for his spiritual birthright, and the NT confirms his unbelief...

Heb 12:14-17...

14 Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; 16 lest there *be* any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. 17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

So when the author of Hebrews discusses unholy, profane people, he chooses Esau as an example, and this is very much what the descendants from him are like.

Now we need to look at **Genesis 36**, which contains the family or genealogy of Esau. These are the people, including some nations, that came from Esau.

12 Now Timna was the concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son, and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These *were* the sons of Adah, Esau's wife.

So Esau had a son named Eliphaz, and Eliphaz had a son named Amalek. So Amalek is Esau's grandson, and the Amalekites came from this man.

Now there's nothing about the Amalekites until **Exo 17:8-15**. This is when the Amalekites sealed their fate by attacking Israel when they left Egypt. The battle is well-known b/c Moses stood on a cliff overlooking the fighting while Joshua lead the troops. When Moses' arms were raised Israel prevailed and when they dropped, Israel started to lose. Exodus 17:12 says Aaron and Hur held up Moses' arms **until the going down of the sun**.

After the battle God tells Moses what he thinks about the Amalekites attacking His people, and He says what will happen to them as a result.

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this *for* a memorial in the book and recount *it* in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." 15 And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-LORD-Is-My-Banner (YHWH Nissi); 16 for he said, "Because the LORD has sworn: the LORD *will have* war with Amalek from generation to generation."

Deut 25:17-19 contains another section where God discusses the destruction of the Amalekites and it contains a few details not revealed in Exodus...

17 "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, 18a how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you *were* tired and weary;

It wasn't just that Amalek attacked Israel, it was THE WAY they attacked Israel:

- Amalek wasn't provoked; they attacked for no reason.
- They ambushed Israel.
- They cut off those who were "lagging behind." The Amalekites literally singled out and attacked the sick, and the women, and the children and the elderly.

You can start seeing how evil they were as a people.

18b and he did not fear God.

Attacking Israel like they did showed a disregard for Israel's God: it showed they had no **fear [of] God**.

In **Gen 12:3** God said, "I will curse him who curses [Israel]", so...

19 Therefore it shall be, when the LORD your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess *as* an inheritance, *that* YOU WILL BLOT OUT THE REMEMBRANCE OF AMALEK FROM UNDER HEAVEN. You shall not forget.

Balaam also prophesied of Amalek's destruction...

Num 24:20 Then he looked on Amalek, and he took up his oracle and said:

**“Amalek was first among the nations,
But *shall be* last until he perishes.”**

This will take 400 years until Saul’s day, when God calls him to wipe out the Amalekites...

1 Sam 15:2 This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt.

Even when Saul is told to wipe out the Amalekites, God mentions the way they attacked Israel when they left Egypt. 400 years later that was still the cause.

We know the story that Saul spared the best of what belonged to the Amalekites, and it looked like he only spared their king, but he also spared enough of the people that they were later able to raid Ziklag when David was living there w/ his men in **1 Sam 27**. The Amalekites, in typical ruthless, evil fashion burned the town and kidnapped all the women and children.

While this was going on Saul was dying on the battlefield against the Philistines and an Amalekite – of all people stole Saul’s crown. This was somewhat significant in terms of what it pictured:

- Saul lost the throne – or his crown – b/c he didn’t destroy all the Amalekites, now an Amalekite steals his crown.
- The Amalekite brings the crown to David, the man replacing Saul...the man receiving his crown or throne.

The end of 1 Chr 4 records that some of the tribe of Simeon wiped out the remaining Amalekites...

42 Now *some* of them, five hundred men of the sons of Simeon, went to Mount Seir, having as their captains Pelatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel, the sons of Ishi. 43 And they defeated the rest of the Amalekites who had escaped. They have dwelt there to this day.

This is the end of the history of the Amalekites, but they continued on through other descendants. You can think of it like this...

- Amalek came from Esau or Edom, which means the Amalekites came from the Edomites.
- Agag came from Amalek, which means the Agagites came from the Amalekites...who came from The Edomites.
- So you could say there was Esau, and from him came the Edomites, and from the Edomites came the Amalekites, and from the Amalekites came the Agagites.

TRANSITION TO BOOK OF ESTHER

Now we’re ready to look at the Book of Esther and connect the dots. Esther takes place 550 years after the death of Agag, but despite the passing of that much time, Haman the Agagite and Mordecai the Benjamite haven’t forgotten the tribal feud that existed between the Amalekites and Israelites. These two hate each other, so when you read Esther you’re actually looking at a very LOOONG family feud.

Let's start w/ **Esther 2:5**...

Est 2:5 In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite.

This is an important verse. Does anyone recognize Kish? Kish is Saul's father. So Mordecai wasn't just a Benjamite, he was also the great grandson of Kish, Saul's father.

Mordecai, another Benjamite, is going to finish what Saul failed to do. He's going to have a victory in Esther 9 that parallels 1 Samuel 15, but shows Mordecai being victorious where Saul failed. You can almost look at it like God called another Benjamite, a greater descendant of Kish to do what Saul didn't do...along w/ the help of Esther, another Benjamite.

Now look at **Est 3:1**...

1 After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who were with him.

So Haman is an Agagite, a descendant of Agag, the king of the Amalekites. Samuel killed Agag, but apparently some of his Amalekite descendants continued as a people known as the Agagites.

It seems to be Saul's failure to wipe out all the Amalekites that allowed Haman to appear in the Book of Esther. Had Saul actually destroyed all the Amalekites – like he was supposed to – then it's possible the Agagites would never have been a people, and would never have gotten this close to destroying the Jews.

Also, when you see that it's a descendant of the Amalekites that gets so close to destroying the Jews, you appreciate God's wisdom and foresight in wanting to see these evil people removed.

2 And all the king's servants who were within the king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage. 3 Then the king's servants who were within the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?" 4 Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told it to Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew.

It wasn't wrong for Jews to bow before officials or even before one another. It was actually very common for Jews to bow before others. So when you see Mordecai's response you have to wonder why, and the reason is the Amalekites were the ancient enemy of the Jews, Mordecai hated them, and Agag was one of them, so there's no way he would bow to him!

5 When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath. 6 But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people

of Mordecai (Haman learned Mordecai was a Jew). **Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai.**

Notice something important in these two verses...

Haman was furious Mordecai wouldn't bow down to him, but when Haman learned Mordecai was a Jew, then he wanted to destroy all the Jews. Why would Haman be mad at an entire people group and want to exterminate all of them? He wants to destroy all the Jews like they tried to destroy all his people.

John MacArthur said, *“Because of Haman’s lineage from Agag [and the Amalekites], he carried deep hostility toward the Jews.”*

So notice two things: there's no real explanation in Esther why:

- Mordecai won't bow to Haman...
- And why Haman wants to wipe out all the Jews.

It only makes sense if you understand the background between the Jews and Amalekites.

Now look at **verse 10**...

10 So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews.

I wanted you to see this verse b/c it calls Haman **the enemy of the Jews**. This is his title 5 times in Esther: 3:10, 7:6, 8:1, 9:10 and 9:24, and he was the enemy of the Jews, b/c he was an Amalekite.

Now please look at **verse 13**...

13 And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions.

This verse should look similar to God's command to Saul in 1 Sam 15:3 regarding wiping out all the Amalekites. Agag is trying to do to Mordecai's people, the Jews, what Mordecai's ancestor, Saul, tried to do to his people.

Now let me show you some verses in **Esther 9**.

Despite Haman's best efforts, the Jews were able to defend themselves and they defeated their enemies. That's what takes place in this chapter.

I've told you a number of times before that when God is repetitive it's for a reason: He wants to make sure we don't miss anything. When the Jews defend themselves in this chapter and defeat Haman and his enemies, it's repeated three times that the Jews didn't take any of their plunder.

6 And in Shushan the citadel the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men.**7** Also Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, **8** Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, **9** Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vajezatha— **10** the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews—they killed; **BUT THEY DID NOT LAY A HAND ON THE PLUNDER.**
11 On that day the number of those who were killed in Shushan the citadel was brought to the king. **12** And the king said to Queen Esther, “The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the citadel, and the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces? Now what *is* your petition? It shall be granted to you. Or what *is* your further request? It shall be done.”
13 Then Esther said, “If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews who *are* in Shushan to do again tomorrow according to today’s decree, and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged on the gallows.”

This request, which Xerxes allowed, shows even a pagan king serving the cause of utterly blotting out the Amalekites. This is in accord with God’s original decree, by allowing a second day of killing in Shushan to eliminate all enemies of the Jews.

14 So the king commanded this to be done; the decree was issued in Shushan, and they hanged Haman’s ten sons.

Haman’s sons were already dead, so this was done simply to display them publicly.

Esther has received criticism for this desire to see Haman’s sons killed in that it showed a lack of love for her enemies, but it’s probably more appropriate to understand she viewed their existence as a threat to the Jews in the future. As a result, it was understandable for her to want to see Haman’s line come to and so the Jews wouldn’t face a similar situation in the future with one of his sons:

- To some extent she is like Joshua, not wanting to settle for anything less than total victory over the enemies of God’s people.
- And this also makes Esther look like the opposite of Saul who didn’t have this sort of ruthlessness.

15 And the Jews who *were* in Shushan gathered together again on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed three hundred men at Shushan; **BUT THEY DID NOT LAY A HAND ON THE PLUNDER.**

16 The remainder of the Jews in the king’s provinces gathered together and protected their lives, had rest from their enemies, and killed seventy-five thousand of their enemies; **BUT THEY DID NOT LAY A HAND ON THE PLUNDER.** **17** *This was* on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. And on the fourteenth of *the month* they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

Now these verses present a real contrast w/ 1 Samuel 15...

First, you notice that three times – in **verses 10, 15, and 16** – it says **they did not lay a hand on the plunder.**

Back in **8:11** the Jews were actually given permission TO plunder their enemies: **By these letters the king permitted the Jews who *were* in every city to gather together and protect their lives—to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, *both* little children and women, AND TO PLUNDER THEIR POSSESSIONS.**

This is significant b/c it contrasts the faithfulness of the Jews with the unfaithfulness of Saul:

- Although Saul was unfaithful in taking the plunder from the Amalekites, the Jews focused only on the mission God had for them.
- Saul was forbidden from taking the plunder, but he took it anyway. The king's edict (8:11) permitted the Jews to take the plunder, but they refrained from doing so.

Second, although Saul failed to destroy all the Amalekites, these Jews were exhaustive in wiping out even Haman's sons, the descendants of Agag whom Saul had left.

Thousands of the enemies of the Jews were killed, and part of this is the fulfillment of the prophecy from centuries earlier in **Exo 17:14** **Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write this *for* a memorial in the book and recount *it* in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.”**

And you could say it goes back even further than that to **Gen 12:3** where God promised to curse those who cursed Abraham's descendants and we see that being fulfilled here.

So we see that God's promise to extinguish the Amalekites (Ex 17:14, Deut 25:17-19) and His promise to preserve the Jews (Gen 17:1-8) prevail over Satan's attempts through Haman.

Now we'll look at a few verses discussing Purim...

18 But the Jews who *were* at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth *day*, as well as on the fourteenth; and on the fifteenth of *the month* they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. 19 Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwalled towns celebrated the fourteenth day of the month of Adar *with* gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and for sending presents to one another.

Verses 18 and 19 explain why the Jews celebrate Purim for two days instead of one. Purim is discussed and explained in verses 20 through 32. We don't need to read all about it, but here are a few things I learned about Purim...

First, Purim is significant b/c it is the only biblically revealed festival with perpetual significance that was not commanded by the Law.

Second, every year **Deut 25:17-19** is read in the synagogue on the Sabbath preceding Purim, and the story of Saul and Agag in 1 Samuel 15 is read as the Haftarah, or Scripture reading.”

Deu 25:17 “Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, 18a how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you *were* tired and weary; and he did not fear God. 19 Therefore it shall be, when the LORD your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, *that* you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget.

So what’s interesting is Purim is the celebration of what took place in the Book of Esther and it’s so closely related to the Amalekites and Agag, that they quote Deut 25:17-19 and read 1 Samuel 15 in honor of it.

Now let me briefly summarize...

God had called for the extermination of the Amalekites in 1 Sam 15 and he wanted Saul a Benjamite to do it. Saul failed, allowing some Amalekites like Agag and his sons to live on; however, God’s command was ultimately fulfilled later when a different Benjamite finished God’s commanded judgment.

So I’d also say while I think you can appreciate the Book of Esther w/o having any other background or familiarity w/ the Amalekites, I don’t think you can fully understand what’s taking place between Haman and Mordecai or between Haman and the Jews, w/o understanding the history between the Jews and the Amalekites.

Also, I think the only way to understand Samuel’s treatment of Agag (cutting him into pieces) is to understand the animosity that existed between the Amalekites and the Israelites.

Finally, considering a descendant of the Amalekites almost wiped out the Jews in Esther’s day, God knows what He’s doing when He tells people to do things. Saul’s partial obedience in this chapter could’ve been absolutely devastating for Israel and the world if not for God’s intervention in Esther’s day.

Finally, there’s one other situation that’s worth mentioning...

One other time you have that’s very close between the Benjamites and the Amalekites also takes place w/ Saul. Saul’s chief herdsman was a man named Doeg. He was an Edomite, another descendant of Esau. Why Saul would have an Edomite – another enemy of the Jews – as a herdsman? This is one more thing that makes Saul look bad.

As evil as Doeg’s actions were though, they fulfilled part of the curse God put on the house of Eli that none of his descendants would live to old age. Ahimelech was one of those descendants.

1 Sam 22:22 So David said to Abiathar, “I knew that day, when Doeg the Edomite *was* there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have caused *the death* of all the persons of your father’s house.

Doeg was an Edomite, a descendant of Esau.

David recognized Doeg, he knew he was an evil man, and he knew he would tell Saul.