

RELIGIOUS AND COMMUNAL PRACTICES IN THREE TRADITIONS OF
ESTHER: PRACTICES IN TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

By

Kelly A. Whitcomb

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the

Graduate School of Vanderbilt University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Religion

May 2013

Nashville, TN

Approved:

Douglas A. Knight

Annalisa Azzoni

Ted A. Smith

Kathy L. Gaca

Herbert Marbury

Jack M. Sasson

Copyright © Kelly A. Whitcomb
All Rights Reserved

To my late grandparents, Beverly D. Stewart, George T. Stewart,
Edith L. Whitcomb and Wilson F. Whitcomb,
who were unable to see me obtain my Ph.D.
but who taught me life's most important lessons—
Love one another and let kids be kids.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|--|------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | vi |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS..... | viii |
| Chapter | |
| I. INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Judeans and Jews | 3 |
| Narrative Contexts and Socio-historical Contexts..... | 11 |
| Methods and Approaches in This Study | 13 |
| Historical Criticism: Redaction and Textual Criticism of Esther | 19 |
| Literary Criticism..... | 33 |
| Issues of Genre..... | 35 |
| The Masoretic Text..... | 35 |
| The Greek versions | 38 |
| Genre in MT, LXX and AT | 38 |
| Social Theory..... | 43 |
| Gender..... | 51 |
| Ideology | 53 |
| Practice..... | 61 |
| Outline of the Study | 65 |
| Conclusion | 67 |
| II. TO FAST OR NOT TO FAST: THREE PERSPECTIVES ON FASTING IN ESTHER | 69 |
| Introduction..... | 69 |
| Fasting and Feasting | 70 |
| Fasting in Antiquity | 70 |
| Conclusions..... | 78 |
| Feasting in Esther..... | 82 |
| Fasting in Esther | 88 |
| Esther 4:3 (AT 4:1)..... | 90 |
| Redaction and textual criticism..... | 90 |
| Literary and ideological matters | 94 |
| Esther 4:16 (AT 4:11)..... | 95 |
| Redaction and textual criticism..... | 95 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Literary and ideological matters | 99 |
| Esther 9:31 (LXX 9:30) | 104 |
| Source, redaction and textual criticism | 104 |
| Literary and ideological matters | 110 |
| Fasting and Gender | 111 |
| Dietary Matters in Esther | 114 |
| Conclusions..... | 120 |
| | |
| III. BESEECHING GOD AND KING: THE ROLES OF PRAYER IN THE JUDEAN DIASPORA..... | 124 |
| | |
| Introduction..... | 124 |
| Bourdieu and Prayer as Capital..... | 125 |
| MT and Prayer | 126 |
| The Greek Versions and Prayer | 133 |
| Biblical Scholarship on Addition C | 140 |
| LXX and AT and Prayer | 144 |
| Prayer and Gender..... | 157 |
| Conclusions..... | 160 |
| | |
| IV. CAPITAL AND CIRCUMCISION: DEFINING JUDEANS AND JEWS IN THE MIDST OF EMPIRE..... | 167 |
| | |
| Introduction..... | 167 |
| Circumcision in Antiquity..... | 168 |
| Observations about MT Esther | 171 |
| Observations about LXX Esther | 186 |
| Observations about AT Esther | 193 |
| Circumcision and Gender | 204 |
| Conclusions..... | 206 |
| | |
| V. CONCLUSION..... | 212 |
| | |
| Historical and Ideological Matters in Review | 213 |
| Fasting, Prayer and Circumcision Revisited..... | 217 |
| Implications for Biblical Interpretation and Application..... | 223 |
| Possibilities for Further Study | 229 |
| Conclusion | 231 |
| Afterword..... | 231 |
| | |
| Appendix | |
| | |
| A. SOME SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES TO FASTING IN THE HEBREW BIBLE AND APOCRYPHA/PSEUDEPIGRAPHA | 236 |
| | |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 237 |

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my dissertation committee for their input and support. Professor Douglas A. Knight has offered encouragement and advice every step of the way concerning the struggles of writing a dissertation. Professor Annalisa Azzoni's engagement of questions of gender and identity in antiquity have shaped my approach to the texts in question. Professor Ted A. Smith's knowledge of social theory and passion for biblical texts have helped me to nuance how I understand biblical texts in antiquity with the aid of theory. Professor Kathy L. Gaca's engagement of social issues such as justice with regard to ancient texts has also formed my understanding of the types of questions I bring to the biblical texts. I would also like to thank Professor Jack M. Sasson for his detailed response and his insight from a Jewish perspective, a necessity when a Christian attempts to make claims about Judaism in any era. Finally, Professor Herbert Marbury also provided helpful feedback from the perspective of a biblical scholar attempting to engage the ancient texts with social theory.

I would also like to thank my master's degree professors whose encouragement and support assisted me in preparing for doctoral studies and whose own scholarship and teaching have formed me in ways that have influenced this project as well. Professors Greg Carey and Julia O'Brien at Lancaster Theological Seminary, as well as Professor John Endres from the Jesuit School of Theology and Professor Kah-Jin Jeffrey Kuan of Drew University have all provided invaluable support and wisdom.

Finally, I wish to thank my family and friends, without whom I would not be the person I am and without whose support this work would have been very lonely. My parents Kenneth and Beverly Whitcomb and my sister Carol Freet have provided

encouragement and laughter along the way. My friends at Lancaster Theological Seminary, the Graduate Theological Union and Vanderbilt University have also been a source of strength in various ways. To list all of these people would require another chapter, but it is my hope that in leaving them unnamed I do not leave them forgotten because their inspiration and input has been invaluable.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 1QpHab | Pesher Habakkuk |
| 4Q226 | Pseudo-Jubilees |
| 4Q265 | Serek Damascus Document |
| 4Q266 | Damascus Document from Qumran |
| 4Q513 | Ordinances |
| 4Q525 | Beatitudes |
| Ab Zar | Abodah Zara |
| Add. | Addition (A-F in the Greek versions of Esther) |
| AP 30 | Aramaic Papyrus 30 from Elephantine |
| AT | Alpha Text |
| B | Codex Vaticanus |
| Bar | Baruch |
| Ber. | Berakot |
| CD | Damascus Document from the Cairo Geniza |
| DJD | Discoveries in the Judean Desert |
| E | Esther Source |
| Gen. Rab. | Genesis Rabbah |
| ICC | International Critical Commentary |
| JPS | Jewish Publication Society |
| JSOT | Journal for the Study of the Old Testament |
| Jub | Jubilees |
| LXX | Septuagint |

| | |
|--------|--------------------------------|
| M | Mordecai Source |
| Macc | Maccabees |
| MT | Masoretic Text |
| OL | Old Latin |
| S | Codex Sinaiticus |
| Šabb. | Shabbat |
| SBL | Society of Biblical Literature |
| Tg. | Targum |
| Tob | Tobit |
| V | LXX Uncial Vatican 2106 |
| Vulg. | Vulgate |
| Yebam. | Yebamot |

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

My Lord YHWH of Hosts called on that day for weeping, for lamentation, for mourning and for girding with sackcloth. Look, though! Joy and jubilation, feasting on cattle and slaughtering of sheep, eating meat and drinking wine. Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die (Isa 22:12-13).¹

This passage from Isaiah juxtaposes lamentation with celebration, weeping and mourning with eating and drinking. The familiar words, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die,” impart a particular connection between celebration and death, a connection which is scorned by the text as it calls for mourning in the face of death. In a similar way, the story of Esther juxtaposes lamentation with celebration, fasting with feasting. In this case, the Judeans fast and lament their imminent annihilation in the midst of a story of feasting, feasting and more feasting. Only at the end, when they are able to survive, do the Judeans collectively join in the on-going feasting in the story. At times Esther participates in feasting, but each time her participation points to her key role in delivering her people from Haman’s decree. Overall though, on the brink of death, the Judeans mourn and fast. In contrast, Haman participates in the feasting rather than the lamentation. Even when he nears the point of his own death, he enjoys two royal feasts, thus unwittingly enacting the words of Isa 22:13, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die,” even as he unintentionally has his own gallows erected.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

Reading the Esther story in any of its versions invites the reader to see the irony of the events which are so intricately connected to celebration and lamentation. From a literary perspective, feasting and mourning are devices which build the plot and help to bring about the denouement and resolution of the conflict between Haman and the Judeans. Feasting and mourning also indicate the status of the characters, which sometimes shifts as the events of the plot unfold. Who is feasting and who is mourning thus become questions central to the Esther story in all of its versions. A literary analysis of the feasting/fasting motif in each version would yield similar answers with regard to the questions of who is involved at any point in the narrative.

Yet, each version of the story is different in a number of ways. The Masoretic Text includes a number of references to fasting and at least two fasts, while the Septuagint only includes one fast and any explicit fast is absent in the Alpha Text. How did these versions develop differently and how do they read differently as a result? Can these differences tell us anything about the socio-historical circumstances in which the texts developed or about the ideologies associated with the texts?

These are questions worth investigating further, not only with regard to fasting and feasting, but also with regard to other practices, especially prayer and circumcision. In this study, a number of approaches to the biblical texts will inform how the differences among the versions of Esther developed. The approaches of Pierre Bourdieu and other social theorists will help to nuance the relationship of the differences in the versions to their ancient social contexts, to the ideologies of the scribes and to notions of Judean identity in the Second Temple period. These approaches will clarify that the differences concerning the specific practices of fasting, prayer and circumcision reflect different

socio-historical circumstances and, thus, different ideologies and concepts of Judean identity.

Judeans and Jews

Due to the paucity of extra-biblical material and the difficulties interpreting the extant material, it is problematic to draw conclusions concerning issues of Israelite/Jewish identity in antiquity with certainty. However, some broad observations have been made, with the biblical material as a key witness. In dialogue with the social sciences, scholarship on Israelite and Jewish identity has pointed out that identity is fluid rather than static, but there is some stability to group identity in general.² Because external factors impact major shifts in group identity, political factors tend to play a key role in scholarly discussions as they influenced the *longue durée* in measurable ways. Thus, the monarchy, exile and postexilic period saw shifts in Israelite/Jewish self-understanding as these groups encountered others in changing ways.

Since the postexilic period is the focus of this study, especially the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the concern for this discussion will lie with identity in this time frame, with the understanding that any shifts that occurred in identity developed from understandings of Israelite identity in earlier periods. The empires and the diaspora played key roles in Israelite/Jewish self-identity from the exile onward, with the Persian period being of key interest to biblical scholars because of the rebuilding of the Temple and the return of Judean leaders to Yehud and Jerusalem. Mark Hamilton proposes that

² Lee I. Levine, "Jewish Identities in Antiquity: An Introductory Essay," in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern* (ed. Lee I. Levine and Daniel R. Schwartz; Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 130; ed. Peter Schäfer, et al; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 12-13.

during the Persian period, Judean/Jewish identity shifted from being primarily sociopolitical to being primarily religious.³ Shaye Cohen sees a similar shift but locates it later in the Hellenistic period.⁴ Jon Berquist perhaps offers a middle ground by noting that it is better to consider multiple forces such as politics and religion at work simultaneously.⁵

Lee Levine has argued that religious institutions always played a role in Israelite and Jewish identity, but what changed over time was the ways in which religion was practiced and the influences it had. The presence or absence of the Temple, later replaced by synagogues, and the transformation of holy days from primarily agricultural to historical, ethical and didactic institutions were important factors in Israelite/Jewish identity. Likewise, the leadership changed from judges, kings, high priests and prophets to sages, patriarchs, exilarchs and priests.⁶ One result of such changes is that the terminology changed in conjunction with shifts in self-definition.⁷ As Levine notes, Israelite/Jewish leadership instituted certain changes in the wake of the exile, and the

³ Mark W. Hamilton, "Who Was a Jew? Jewish Ethnicity During the Achaemenid Period," *Restoration Quarterly* 37,2 (1995):103.

⁴ Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Hellenistic Culture and Society XXXI; ed. Anthony W. Bulloch, et al; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 98-99.

⁵ Jon L. Berquist, "Constructions of Identity in Postcolonial Yehud," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 63.

⁶ Levine, 14-15.

⁷ *Ibid*, 14.

Hasmonean dynasty brought about further changes to Jewish society.⁸ Thus, there were certain periods in history when major political factors influenced Israelite/Jewish identity.

In addition to political periods, geography also influenced how Israelites/Jews identified themselves and were viewed by others because interaction with other groups would have varied in villages, towns and cities as well as in different imperial provinces.⁹ Recently, Douglas Knight has examined variations in how power functioned among ancient Israelites in rural and urban settings, pointing out that although most of the population throughout the first millennium B.C.E. lived in rural areas, the cities were the places from which people were able to exert the most influence on others.¹⁰ Such power differentials affected how Israelites/Judeans in cities viewed and interacted with those in rural areas, but there were also distinct groups within the cities who wielded different amounts and types of power in different spheres.¹¹ Evidence from biblical and extra-biblical material from different places has challenged scholarship to consider the complexities of Judean/Jewish interaction with one another and other groups in the diaspora. Materials from Elephantine indicate that Judean identity was complex and fluid during the Persian period. The use of the terms "Judean" and "Aramean" to designate individuals in the garrison at Elephantine, as well as the use of Yahwistic and non-

⁸ Ibid, 21.

⁹ As Douglas Edwards points out, it is often difficult to know how people responded at the local level. Douglas Edwards, "Constructing Kings—from the Ptolemies to the Herodians: The Archaeological Evidence," in *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers* (ed. Tessa Rajak, et al; Hellenistic Culture and Society 50; ed. Anthony W. Bulloch, et al; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 284.

¹⁰ Douglas A. Knight, *Law, Power, and Justice in Ancient Israel* (Library of Ancient Israel; ed. Douglas A. Knight; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 157.

¹¹ Ibid, 172-73, 177-79, 222-24.

Yahwistic names, suggests that in such a multicultural environment, Judean identity was multifaceted and fluid.¹² Considering Judeans in Yehud in the same time period further complexifies Judean identity where genealogy and associations with the land seem to have played a larger role.¹³

In addition, matters in the Hellenistic period remained diverse. Erich Gruen has proposed asking how Jews adapted to Hellenism while reasserting their own tradition. Hellenistic culture was not necessarily at war with Jewish culture, but instead Jews constantly negotiated and adapted in creative ways.¹⁴ The period of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Maccabean Revolt have been viewed as major turning points with regard to Judaism in the Hellenistic period, with the Hasmoneans reasserting Jewish culture and identity. Yet, it should not be assumed that the political conflict and the influences of the Hasmoneans reached all Jewish groups in the same ways. At the same time, Susan Sherwin-White has proposed that the Seleucids did promote Greek culture among non-Greeks while also allowing local communities to retain local languages.¹⁵

¹² See Hamilton, 106-109.

¹³ *Ibid*, 114.

¹⁴ Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Hellenistic Culture and Society 30; ed. Anthony W. Bulloch, et al; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), xiv, xvi.

¹⁵ Susan Sherwin-White, "Seleucid Babylonia: A Case-Study for the Installation and Development of Greek Rule," in *Hellenism in the East: The Interaction of Greek and Non-Greek Civilizations from Syria to Central Asia after Alexander* (ed. Amélie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 2, 30.

Furthermore, Greek perspectives of Persian rulers as weak and debauched influenced Jewish depictions of Persian rulers as well.¹⁶ However, it is not a simple case of Greek influence on Jewish ideas. Instead, Greeks and Jews already shared certain aspects of their political ideas, particularly with regard to problems of absolute monarchies. Jewish ideas differed in that for Jews royal power is ascribed by God, while for Greeks absolute monarchies are problematic because they encroach on individual liberties. The response for both cultures is the same though—rebellion against tyranny.¹⁷ Hence, the dynamics between the empire and its subjects in the Hellenistic period was complex, with Jews experiencing the exertion of Hellenistic culture with more or less force at different times and in different places.

Philip Alexander and Loveday Alexander have proposed that 3 Maccabees provides a window into the diversity and disagreement among Jewish groups in the Hasmonean period. They read 3 Macc as a response to 2 Macc and LXX Esther, which were crafted in Jerusalem in the second century B.C.E. to promote Hannukah and Purim observance among Egyptian Jews. 3 Macc offers an example of resistance to Hasmonean pressure and an assertion of Egyptian Jewish customs as equally valid.¹⁸ Jonathan

¹⁶ Amélie Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East c. 3000-330 BC*, (2 vols.; Routledge History of the Ancient World; ed. Fergus Millar; London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 648; Philip Alexander and Loveday Alexander, "The Image of the Oriental Monarch in the Third Book of Maccabees," in *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers* (ed. Tessa Rajak, et al; Hellenistic Culture and Society 50; ed. Anthony W. Bulloch, et al; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 99-101.

¹⁷ Alexander and Alexander, 100-104.

¹⁸ Ibid, 93, 99. See also John Collins who understands LXX Esther as an assertion of Hasmonean Judaism on Egyptian Jews. John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 112.

Grossman has proposed a similar conflict between Palestinian and Babylonian Jews in MT Esther, suggesting that this text reflects Palestinian Jewish critique of Babylonian Jewish life.¹⁹ Thus, Jewish identity experienced distinct developments in different parts of the empire.

Up to this point the focus has been on chronological and geographic matters in a broad framework, but terminology is a central issue with regard to Israelite/Jewish identity, as it pertains both to terminology utilized in ancient sources and to scholarly terminology. Names such as "Israel" (יִשְׂרָאֵל, Ἰσραήλ) and "Israelite" (יִשְׂרָאֵלִי, Ἰσραηλίτης), "Hebrew" (עִבְרָיִ, Ἑβραῖος), "Judah" (יְהוּדָה, Ἰουδαία) and "Judean/Jew" (יְהוּדָי, Ἰουδαῖος) and "Aramean" (אַרְמֵי, Ἀραμῆ)²⁰ all appear in the materials under investigation. To a certain extent, chronology plays a role since "Israel" appears much more in materials set in preexilic periods, while "Judean/Jew" does not appear until after the exile. However, other factors are also involved, and some texts utilize more than one name to designate the same group. Thus, the matter is complex. As John Kessler warns, "Although the terms *Judeans* or *Jews* were frequently used in the ancient world and are current in modern discussions, they run the risk of homogenizing the disparate

¹⁹ Grossman establishes the probable authorship of Esther in the Persian period, but dating Esther to a later time does not necessarily eradicate the possibility of the text reflecting conflict among different Jewish groups of the same period. Jonathan Grossman, *Esther: The Outer Narrative and the Hidden Meaning* (Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures 6; ed. Stephen B. Chapman, Tremper Longmann, III and Nathan MacDonald; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 25-25.

²⁰ "Aramean" (אַרְמֵי) is translated as "Syrian" (Σύρος) or "Syria" (Συρία) in parallel LXX passages.

groups or anachronistically reading later understandings of Judaism back into them."²¹ In the same discussion, Kessler points out that Yahwistic groups existed simultaneously in Egypt, Palestine and Babylon, and over time the geographic distribution and development made each group distinct.²²

Furthermore, as both Jon Berquist and Shaye Cohen have noted, terms such as "Judah" and "Judean" may have geographical and/or political associations.²³ Shaye Cohen proposes that the Hebrew and Greek terms יהודי and Ἰουδαίος could carry ethnic, geographic and religious connotations and that there were nuances of understanding depending on time and place. Cohen translates "Judean" when there is an ethnic or geographic association with Judea, and he translates "Jew" when the meaning of the term is related especially to religion. Thus, when the terms refer to somebody living in Judea or in some way associated with Judea, they should be translated "Judean." Furthermore, prior to the second century B.C.E., the terms should always be translated "Judean."²⁴ However, a shift occurred in the Hellenistic period so that these terms came to indicate somebody who observed Mosaic Torah. Such a person did not invariably need ethnic or political associations with Judea to be called by these terms, and in such

²¹ John Kessler, "Persia's Loyal Yahwists: Power Identity and Ethnicity in Achaemenid Yehud," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 96.

²² Ibid, 96.

²³ Jon L. Berquist, "Constructions of Identity in Postcolonial Yehud," 53; Cohen, 70, 78-81.

²⁴ Cohen, 70.

cases when there were no associations with Judea the term should be translated “Jew.”²⁵

In the Hellenistic period, most Judeans were Jews, practicing Torah, but not all Jews were Judeans, associated with Judea in some way.²⁶

David Goodblatt has examined texts from the period of 1 Maccabees and proposed that the terms "Israel" and "Judah" and "Israelite" and "Judean" do not carry any clear distinctions in meaning. When a text prefers one term to another, the preference was dictated by language rather than any particular associations. Thus, Judah and Judean appear especially in Judean/Jewish Aramaic texts, while Judean/Jewish authors seemed to prefer "Israel" when writing in Hebrew.²⁷ In Greek texts of the period, both Jews and non-Jews used the term Ἰουδαίος. The term "Israel" is only used twice by non-Jewish authors prior to Christianity, and "Israel" is used by Jewish authors primarily in prayers.²⁸ This is probably an effect of Hellenism because the plural gentile Ἰουδαῖοι is preferable to the collective singular Ἰσραήλ or Ἰουδαία in Greek.²⁹ Such delineations are not entirely definitive though. Yet, Goodblatt's observation is helpful in

²⁵ Ibid, 91.

²⁶ See also Michael Bird who understands Judaism as having a religious dimension, along with social and political affiliations. Michael F. Bird, *Crossing over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 23-24.

²⁷ David Goodblatt, "'The Israelites Who Reside in Judah' (Judith 4:1): On the Conflicted Identities of the Hasmonean State," in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern* (ed. Lee I. Levine and Daniel R. Schwartz; Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 130; ed. Peter Schäfer, et al.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 76-78.

²⁸ Ibid, 78-79.

²⁹ Ibid, 82-83.

calling attention to a general pattern so that when a text does not conform to the pattern, interpreters may question more closely the scribal choices.

For this study it is difficult to choose a general English translation that is always suitable for the Hebrew and Greek words. To be precise and to bring integrity to each version of Esther, each text should be considered individually with regard to its use of these terms, a task undertaken in chapter four and the conclusion to this study. For now, “Judean” will serve as a general term since, as Cohen points out, in most of the Hellenistic period when these texts should be dated, the majority of Judeans were Jews, so Judean is probably a better term to use in speaking more generally about all three versions of Esther or more broadly about the Second Temple period. In addition, “Judean” carries the linguistic associations with Judah and Judea which are present in the Hebrew and Greek words but lost in the English term “Jew,” so Judean is perhaps a better general choice since it linguistically allows for the possibility of geographic and genealogical associations. There are certainly nuances to be considered, but for now this translation will serve with the understanding that part of the purpose of this study is to attempt to grasp the meaning of these Hebrew and Greek terms in each of the versions of Esther as one portion of the task of understanding how these texts are related to Judean identity.

Narrative Contexts and Socio-historical Contexts

For years scholarship has addressed questions concerning the development of three distinct but related versions of Esther. How are the Hebrew and Greek versions related? Can we establish a *Vorlage* to the Septuagint or Alpha Text or even for the

Masoretic Text? How does the Alpha Text relate to the Septuagint or Masoretic Text? This study centers around questions about the similarities and differences among the Masoretic Text (MT), the Septuagint (LXX) and the Alpha Text (AT) specifically with regard to certain practices associated with Judaism in the Second Temple period. Why, for example, does fasting occur in chapter four of MT and LXX when the Judeans themselves come to learn of the decree against them and respond to the calamity, yet it is not specifically mentioned in AT? Furthermore, why does LXX agree with MT with regard to fasting in 4:16 but not in 4:3 or 9:31? Not only are historical-critical questions potentially answered by redaction and textual criticism relevant, but so are questions of ideology and the social-sciences. Underlying this study are presuppositions that language and writing are closely related to culture and, therefore, that differences in language and writing may reflect or be reflected by differences in culture. Extant texts from the Second Temple period point to diversity among the Judeans of the imperial diaspora, and it is assumed that the versions of Esther provide further evidence of such diversity.

To state the issue of this project so succinctly may suggest that the problem is clear-cut and easily resolved, though the length of the study perhaps indicates otherwise. The issue is in fact far from clear, but an attempt to ask such questions can provide insight into the relationship of the texts to their ancient social worlds, as well as the relationship of the texts to one another. For example, if AT was heavily influenced by LXX, yet AT disagrees with both MT and LXX with regard to fasting, what might this indicate concerning AT's development both in conjunction with MT and LXX and in conjunction with its social world in antiquity? Historical criticism can provide some answers to these questions, but questions of ideology and the social sciences can also

enrich our understanding of how these texts developed and functioned for Judeans in the imperial diaspora.

Methods and Approaches in this Study

Before outlining the primary methods which will shed light on the issue at hand, this study's presuppositions concerning textuality and the relationship of texts to culture. First, every text has an inherent integrity to it simply because it exists and functions in some way for its readers. It is not, for example, the work of this study to problematize the versions of Esther by pointing out the “errors” of the scribes in copying texts, as textual criticism has often done. Nor is it the work of this study to suggest that scribes were careless in editing texts, as redaction criticism has sometimes done. Instead, such differences are often related to ideology and culture. In this case, the ideology and culture in question may most closely relate to the scribes themselves, but the scribes too were part of a larger culture which included fellow Judeans, as well as other subjected peoples of the empires and the imperial officials themselves.

Second, as already implied, language is closely related to culture. In fact, there is a dialogical relationship between language and culture, so that culture shapes language but language also influences culture. This relationship functions at all levels of language and culture, so that both individuals and whole groups, as well as both written and spoken language are involved. For example, an important term such as “Israel” has evoked different ideas for different individuals and groups over the millennia. At times it has referred to a political entity, with positive or negative associations depending on one’s relationship to that entity, while at other times it may have had more genealogical

associations. Moreover, for some it may evoke both political and genealogical associations, whether positive or negative. All of this is to say that it is always important to consider a text's choice of words, whether through omission or inclusion. It is not necessarily enough to say that LXX agrees with MT in a particular instance. It may also be informative to ask why LXX agrees and whether or not the scribes of LXX understood the words in the same way as MT scribes. Likewise, it may not be enough to observe that AT's phrasing agrees with LXX, but it is also important to ask whether the phrase may have meant the same thing for the scribes of both texts.

Furthermore, this particular presupposition shapes the understanding of what text critics have called "free translation." Often this phrase has been used to explain variants in the translated versions such as LXX or the Vulgate. Scholars will sometimes label a variant "free translation" or "exegetical expansion" with no further explanation.³⁰

However, if language and culture are closely related, then it is once again important to ask why the translators chose such phrasing. Is it simply a matter of word variation or does the translation choice reflect the scribes' cultural milieu in some way? It is of course possible to over-analyze and read too much into such details of the text, but it is important to at least entertain such questions in order to bring integrity to the work of the scribes and the function of the texts.

³⁰ Explanations of the inclusion of circumcision in LXX 8:17 and AT 7:41 as one relevant example which will be discussed in detail in chapter four. See Hanna Kahana, *Esther: Juxtaposition of the Septuagint Translation with the Hebrew Text* (Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005), 356; Carey A. Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: The Additions* (Anchor Bible Commentary 44; ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 239 (fn. a); Emanuel Tov, "The 'Lucianic' Text of the Canonical and Apocryphal Sections of Esther: A Rewritten Biblical Book," in *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint* (Vetus Testamentum Supp. LXXII; ed. H.M. Barstad, et al; Boston: Brill, 1999), 537.

Finally, texts are dialogically related to culture, but this relationship is complex, and any attempt to historicize the texts must be cautious with regard to how various aspects of the text are related to various aspects of culture. Since Esther is narrative, it may have a different relationship to culture than legal material, epistles or psalms. Although Esther could be labeled “historical narrative,” it was probably not intended as a precise account of historical events. That is to say, it is not necessary to believe that the scribes were certain of the story's historicity. In this regard, Robert Alter is correct in claiming:

This postexilic story, which presents itself as a piece of political history affecting the main diaspora community, is in fact a kind of fairytale—the lovely damsel, guided by a wise godfather, is made queen and saves her people—richly embellished with satiric invention; its comic art departs from historical verisimilitude in ways that pre-exilic Hebrew narrative seldom does, and the story demonstrates God’s providential power in history with a schematic neatness unlike that of earlier historicized fiction in the Bible.³¹

Alter thus considers Esther to be presented as political history as a means of imparting a larger message concerning God’s power in history. While Alter is correct concerning the historicity of the narrative’s main events and the purpose of the narrative, it is also important to consider how the text reflects the social world in which it was produced.

To this end, Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of narrative as imaginary is helpful. As Bourdieu points out, literary narrative is not equated with social realities: “Only in imaginary experience (in the folk tale, for example), which neutralizes the sense of social realities, does the social world take the form of a universe of possibles equally possible

³¹ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 34.

for any possible subject.”³² Hence, Bourdieu claims that imaginary experience such as that created by the stories of Esther makes possible in narrative what is impossible for an individual in real life. For example, historically there is no evidence that a Judean ever attained or could have attained Persian queenship because non-biblical evidence of the period indicates that the queen had to be from among one of the seven noble Persian families.³³ In addition, there are a number of literary events which move the story forward in order to situate Esther, Mordecai and the Judeans in positions of fortune and power but which are rather imaginative, such as Vashti’s refusal and excommunication. As Jack Sasson has noted, Esther is literarily similar to other Jewish narratives from the Hellenistic period which exaggerate and distort customs of other peoples.³⁴ Similarly, Sara Raup Johnson has labeled narratives such as Esther, Judith, Daniel and 3 Maccabees "historical fiction," claiming that this genre of Jewish writing exhibits a desire to reshape Israelite/Jewish history and to make certain claims about Jewish identity.³⁵ For Johnson,

³² Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (trans. Richard Nice; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), 64.

³³ Even if the story is speaking of later empires, it is still quite difficult to suggest that a Jewish woman, an orphan no less, could have held a high position in the empire. See Sidnie White Crawford, “The Book of Esther,” in *New Interpreter's Bible III* (ed. Leander E. Keck, et al; Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 859; Carey A. Moore, *Esther* (Anchor Bible Commentary 7B; ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), XLV.

³⁴ Jack M. Sasson, "Esther," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 335.

³⁵ Sara Raup Johnson, *Historical Fictions and Hellenistic Jewish Identity: Third Maccabees in Its Cultural Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 5.

there are elements of both entertainment and education in such stories, and the fantastic and even anachronistic details serve the writers' purposes.³⁶ Of Esther Johnson writes:

The author of Esther resorts to a fictional history in order to demonstrate that the Jews hold an important and valued place at the court of foreign kings and that persecution is ephemeral and will be triumphantly overcome, so long as the Jews remain faithful to their tribe (as the Hebrew Esther sees it) and their God (as the Greek Esther hastens to add).³⁷

With Bourdieu's narrative imaginary in mind, it is necessary to read the story not as history which attempts to tell it like it was, as things really happened at least according to three Judean perspectives (MT, LXX, AT). Instead, there is another message, one regarding the identity of Judeans in the imperial diaspora and how they came to celebrate Purim. At the same time, if the question of Judean identity and practices are important to Esther, then these questions must have had some socio-historical basis and although we cannot know the exact circumstances, we can at least claim that certain fundamental social structures were in place both in the social realities and in the texts.

As anthropologists such as Geertz have argued, language is rooted in social reality.³⁸ This means that although there is a certain amount of fantasy involved in the narrative, there is also a certain amount of social reality, albeit presented from a particular ideological perspective. Structures involving empire and patriarchy, for example, although exaggerated in Esther, were social realities for the Judeans and are social structures which formed the texts and which can be seen in the text operating in fields

³⁶ Ibid, 33.

³⁷ Ibid, 42.

³⁸ Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 210.

where power is at stake. Although Vashti's refusal to appear before the king may serve as a literary device and may represent no particular historical event, the power of the king over his subjects and of men over women in the Second Temple period was a social reality which appears in the story as one of a number of forces which the characters must navigate. Thus, the texts may at times attempt to imagine that certain aspects of social reality could be different, but the texts do not attempt to eradicate social structures.

Nor do the texts attempt to break from the ideologies in place although they may at times attempt to reinterpret certain aspects of the tradition due to changes in the world around them.³⁹ In the Second Temple period there is much evidence for reinterpretations of biblical texts and biblical history, and with the study of the non-biblical texts from Qumran, scholars have coined a phrase for some of these texts—"rewritten scripture." As James Vanderkam and Peter Flint have pointed out, these texts are "re-presentations" of scriptural material which rework certain parts of scripture, especially the Pentateuch.⁴⁰ In addition, a number of texts from the Second Temple period included among the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha are also reworkings of scripture either as a retelling of scriptural narrative, as in the case of Jubilees, or as additions to scriptural texts, as with the Additions to Daniel. Such works testify to a tradition of retelling and revising the Israelite/Judean narrative. Therefore, it is not surprising that Esther was rewritten and reinterpreted a number of times as well. These reinterpretations represent differing ideologies, which would have developed slowly over time in the context of changing

³⁹ The section on social theory will define ideology.

⁴⁰ James Vanderkam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Significance for Understanding the Bible, Judaism, Jesus, and Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2002), 225.

social realities (political, geographic and the like). Thus, the versions of Esther represent different imaginary experiences, which are grounded in ideologies rooted in social reality.

Finally, if there are “imaginary experiences” in the texts but the texts also reflect certain historically real social structures, then it is important to examine more closely the relationship between the real and the imaginary. The imaginary in the texts serves not simply as a form of escapist literature, but instead the texts at times perpetuate and at times subvert the social structures, both textual and historical, often through the literary devices of exaggeration, irony and juxtaposition.

The social theorists who are most relevant to this work will be discussed in more detail later after engaging traditional historical-critical and literary approaches. Although numerous methods and approaches can provide insight into Esther, the primary historical-critical methods for this study are redaction and textual criticism. Along with these, a certain amount of literary criticism is also necessary to understand the development and transmission of Esther.

Historical Criticism: Redaction and Textual Criticism of Esther

Redaction and textual criticism are difficult to differentiate because at times it is impossible to determine whether scribes consciously made changes to a text or whether changes occurred unintentionally as the text was being copied or translated. Furthermore, with texts such as Esther, questions arise concerning the Second Temple period as to whether and when any given version was considered to be finalized or whether each version continued to develop with a certain amount of consciousness on the part of the

scribes. To a certain extent for this study, the consciousness of the scribes does not matter because language is based in culture, so there could have been certain scribal tendencies which were also based in culture. Of course, there were times when errors occurred, such as when scribes accidentally omitted or duplicated words and phrases and even whole sections of texts because of *homoioateleuton* or *homoioarcton*. However, other translation choices and editorial choices, whether conscious or unconscious, can provide insight into the social world of the scribes. Why does MT Esth 8:17 read that many of the peoples were “Judaizing,” while LXX reads that many of the peoples were circumcising themselves and “Judaizing,” but AT reads that many of the Judeans were circumcising themselves? Is this simply a matter of translation choices in the Greek versions? Whether this is labeled a redaction or text-critical issue, the differences are rooted in culture and ideology.

Thus, redaction and textual criticism are necessary to determine whether scribal error may be at play, but social theory can push these approaches to further consider the social forces behind the variants and editorial differences, while literary criticism and social theory can inform how the meaning of the texts differ, particularly with regard to practices and Judean identity. Before outlining social theory as it relates to this study, it is important to consider historical-critical scholarship's contributions to understanding the versions of Esther.

As David Clines has pointed out, there is enough common material among the three major versions in question here to argue for an original Esther narrative.⁴¹ Precisely

⁴¹ David J.A. Clines, *The Esther Scroll: The Story of the Story* (JSOT Supp. 30; ed. David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davies; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 139ff.

what this narrative looked like and whether it began with oral or written tradition is difficult to say. For this study, what matters most is the understanding that the three versions are related in complex ways. They do not simply share some narrative kernel about Mordecai and Esther, but there is evidence in their shared and differentiating components that all three developed independently but also with a certain amount of mutual influence.

A clear-cut family tree for the Esther versions is hypothetical at best. Clines argues that we can speak of something akin to “Pre-Masoretic Esther,” which for him is a Hebrew version of the narrative that pre-dates the Alpha Text and the later “Proto-Masoretic” version of Esther. According to Clines, if the six major Additions (A-F) which AT shares with LXX are removed, along with a few additions to the main part of the story, AT is the shortest version and in fact reflects the earliest extant version of Esther. In particular, he argues that in AT there is evidence of a Pre-Masoretic version of Esther which was then expanded to create Proto-MT (still in Hebrew), from which the Masoretic Text and the LXX translation developed.⁴² Clines also believes that AT, LXX and MT initially share the same basic narrative trajectory, so that we can speak of a Pre-Masoretic Esther which was the basis for what he calls Proto-AT, a Greek version of the story which was later expanded into AT.

Pre-Masoretic Esther thus had two trajectories, Proto-MT in Hebrew and Proto-AT in Greek, from which the three extant versions in question developed. Hence, a kind

⁴² Ibid; see also Karen Jobes who agrees that AT reflects the earliest written version. Karen H., Jobes *The Alpha-Text of Esther: Its Character and Relationship to the Masoretic Text* (SBL Dissertation Series 153; ed. Michael Fox; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 14-16.

of family tree develops, with Pre-Masoretic Esther as the parent of the whole tradition. At some point, Proto-MT and Proto-AT developed on different trajectories so that the basic narrative, minus the six Additions, developed in two forms.⁴³ LXX shares the Proto-MT tradition because most of its material is the same as MT, minus the Additions.⁴⁴ In contrast, AT represents a different branch of the story's development even though it later adopted the Additions and other modifications from LXX and thus shares certain traits with LXX.

Within this framework of a shared narrative tradition, David Clines and Karen Jobes are correct to conclude that AT Esther often reflects an earlier version of the story than LXX or MT. Jobes has proposed that AT represents the first Greek translation of Esther. This translation was made from a Semitic source that did not include the six Additions, and the translation may have been prepared in Ptolemaic Egypt.⁴⁵ Yet, Jobes allows for the possibility that emendations were made to the text later, including adding the six major additions and making changes to the body of the text.⁴⁶ For Jobes, there is enough commonality among MT, LXX and AT to argue that LXX and AT were independent translations of the same Hebrew *Vorlage*, and the differences between the Greek versions can be accounted for by later editors.⁴⁷

⁴³ Throughout this study, "Addition" will be capitalized when referring to the six major Additions (A-F) to distinguish from other additions to the versions of Esther.

⁴⁴ Clines, *The Esther Scroll*, 168ff.

⁴⁵ Jobes, 5.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 16.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 154.

In addition, as Emanuel Tov and Kristen de Troyer have pointed out, AT reflects late editing influenced by LXX, which explains why LXX and AT share the six Additions located in the same basic places in the story. For Tov and de Troyer, AT is actually a recension in the sense of a reworking of the story. Tov argues that AT is the result of a reworking of LXX towards a Hebrew or Aramaic version which differed from MT.⁴⁸ Similarly, de Troyer labels AT the “second Greek text” and claims that it is a reworking of LXX.⁴⁹ Along the same lines, Robert Hanhart argues that AT displays numerous examples of dependence on LXX.⁵⁰ Hanhart does not call AT a recension, but he does describe it as “a new development of the Greek Esther tradition which is based in large part on the *o'* text.”⁵¹ For Hanhart, AT and LXX are closely related and share a common base text (*Grundtext*), and when they display variants, AT is shown to be dependent on LXX.⁵² Their perspectives on AT Esther do not concur with Clines and Jobes that AT reflects the earliest version of the story. Instead, in many ways AT reflects the latest version of the story, representing a revision of LXX. Although it is true that AT is influenced by LXX in a number of ways, Clines and Jobes are also correct that in some

⁴⁸ Emanuel Tov, “The ‘Lucianic’ Text of the Canonical and Apocryphal Sections of Esther,” 539.

⁴⁹ Kristin de Troyer, “A Rewritten Greek Biblical Text: The Final Chapter of AT Esther,” in *Rewriting the Sacred Text* (SBL Text-Critical Studies 4; ed. James R. Adair, Jr.; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 60; see also Kristin de Troyer, “A Rewritten Hebrew Biblical Text: On the Help of God in the Old Greek of Esther,” in *Rewriting the Sacred Text* (SBL Text-Critical Studies 4; ed. James R. Adair, Jr.; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 28.

⁵⁰ Robert Hanhart, ed., *Esther* (Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum III,3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1966), 88.

⁵¹ Hanhart refers to the translation located in LXX witnesses as *o'*. Ibid, 87.

instances AT probably reflects the earliest extant version of the story. Individual cases will be assessed in the body of this study, but for now it is important to understand that AT's development is complex, defying a straightforward relationship to MT, LXX or the shared tradition.

As this discussion of the relationship of the versions to each other reveals, historical-critical matters concerning Esther are inconclusive. For the purposes of this study, it is important to keep in mind several things. First, all of the extant manuscripts post-date the Second Temple period, but the Second Temple period is the time in which the story developed into the versions at hand. To a certain extent this poses a problem for situating the texts socio-historically in the Second Temple period using manuscripts which post-date this period. However, when the difference of time and socio-historical circumstances may be at play, the issues will be addressed on an individual basis. Second, the versions under consideration clearly did not develop entirely apart from each other. Instead, they influenced one another's development in various ways. This means that a certain amount of intertextuality was at play and should thus be considered with regard to the differences and similarities among the versions. Third, due to the complex development and relationships involved, it is difficult to date the authorship of any "Pre-Masoretic" story or of any of the versions individually. Thus, any suggested dates are clearly open to challenges, but a relatively broad late Second Temple date is generally enough for establishing or at least proposing the socio-historical circumstances behind the texts.

Finally, the complexities of both the textual development of Esther and of the socio-historical matters related to imperial society resist precise dates for the versions as

a whole and for particular changes to any given version. However, precise chronology is not as important as cultural tendencies, such as the tendency to add rather than remove literary and linguistic units from a text, the tendency to translate more literally or more idiomatically or the tendency to perpetuate the attitudes and practices of one's culture. In addition, although the circumstances fluctuated with regard to power and attitudes throughout the Second Temple period, with Judean/Jewish leaders experiencing more or less pressure from the empire depending on an individual ruler's or a new empire's policies, diaspora life always meant that the Judeans/Jews had less say with regard to both the larger imperial culture and their own culture than they would have in during tribal or monarchic times.

Concerning the Persian Empire, Pierre Briant notes that Darius I both worked within the established imperial structures and made significant changes through his campaigns and building projects.⁵³ In addition, under Alexander the Great, there was some continuity with the Persian Empire as some of his satraps adopted political, ideological and cultural attitudes and practices from the former Persian satraps.⁵⁴ As Fergus Millar points out, "The culture of Judaea and Jerusalem thus exhibits both a profound continuity with the pre-Greek past and an equally undeniable absorption of Greek elements."⁵⁵ Millar interprets the evidence of urban development, inscriptions,

⁵³ Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire* (trans. Peter T. Daniels; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 138.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 876.

⁵⁵ Fergus Millar, "The Problem of Hellenistic Syria," in *Hellenism in the East* (ed. Amélie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 110.

literary texts and other evidence as suggestive that towns and cities absorbed elements of Greek culture while maintaining local traditions.⁵⁶ The retention of local culture under imperial satraps was also a characteristic of the Persian Empire, evidencing continuity from one empire to another along with some changes in culture and politics.

This is important to keep in mind because the fluctuation of imperial power could have shifted attitudes to empire from time to time, making it difficult to pinpoint a particular imperial period in which a certain text was produced. For example, although Antiochus IV Epiphanes is particularly infamous among Judean/Jewish authors for desecrating the Temple, not all texts with negative attitudes toward imperial rulers were necessarily authored during or shortly after his reign. Likewise, although scholarship suggests that there was relative freedom during the Persian period for different peoples to author their own local traditions and laws, not all Judeans in the Persian period necessarily exhibited a positive attitude toward empire. Thus, it is better to propose that certain changes were made to Esther in the midst of a trend such as harsher taxation or pressure to assimilate than during a particular reign. Not only that, at times the texts may exhibit more criticism of fellow Judeans/Jews than of imperial officials or imperial culture, or the texts may criticize both.

Furthermore, because change tends to take place slowly over time, as will be discussed with regard to Pierre Bourdieu and habitus later in this chapter, it may be problematic to assume that a response to a particular political event or social trend such as the rebuilding of the Temple happened immediately. Instead, shifts in attitude to

⁵⁶ Ibid, 132.

empires, religious ideas and other social events may have taken time to develop. Hence, general chronologies and attention to cultural trends are more helpful than specific dates.

That having been said, Esther in general should be dated to the Greco-Roman period, with an early Hellenistic date for the first development of an Esther story.⁵⁷ A late Persian period date for the story is not entirely inarguable, but the appearance of Persian loan words and the Babylonian geographical setting are insufficient evidence for such a date, especially since even the Hebrew version displays affinities associated with Hellenistic culture.⁵⁸ Such literary devices as Persian loan words and a Babylonian setting could have served later scribes as a means of authenticating the story and its setting. Furthermore, as Michael Fox points out, the historical inaccuracies concerning the Persian Empire suggest a date removed from the empire itself.⁵⁹ A late fifth or early fourth century B.C.E. date is possible, but it seems more probable that the story experienced its nascence in the early Hellenistic period.

Each of the versions in question probably reflects later forms of the story, and due to the complex development of the versions, establishing single dates for the versions is fruitless. Instead, it is probably more accurate to claim that AT reflects a version which began in the late fourth or third century B.C.E. and was more or less finalized in the first

⁵⁷ See Fox for an early Hellenistic date. Michael V. Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 139-140. See also Anselm C. Hagedorn, "The Absent Presence: Cultural Responses to Persian Presence in the Eastern Mediterranean," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period* (ed. Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 49.

⁵⁸ See Moore, *Esther*, lx; see also Crawford, "The Book of Esther," 856; Jon Levenson, *Esther: A Commentary* (Old Testament Library; ed. James L. Mays, Carol A. Newsom and David L. Petersen; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 25-26.

⁵⁹ Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 139.

century C.E. The translation of the body of the narrative occurred perhaps in the second or first century B.C.E. and the Additions would have been translated in the late first century B.C.E. or the early first century C.E. Similarly, MT probably comes from a tradition scholars call Proto-MT which developed distinctly from AT beginning in the fourth or third century B.C.E. and was more or less finalized quite late (perhaps after 70 C.E.). LXX reflects the same basic trajectory as MT until its translation, which probably occurred in the late second or early first century B.C.E.

In dating LXX scholars have pointed out the colophon at the end of LXX Addition F which mentions king Ptolemy and Cleopatra and locates the translation as having been produced in Jerusalem and then brought to Egypt in the fourth year of Ptolemy and Cleopatra. The most this can do is establish a *terminus post quem* since king Ptolemy and Cleopatra would not have been mentioned prior to their reign. However, scholars debate about precisely which rulers the colophon refers to. Although most scholars understand the colophon as referring either to Ptolemy XII Auletos (ca. 73 B.C.E.) or Ptolemy VIII Soter II (ca. 114 B.C.E.), the Ptolemaic dynasty lasted from approximately 305 to 30 B.C.E., and a Cleopatra reigned with several Ptolemies in the mid-first century B.C.E.⁶⁰ If this is the Cleopatra mentioned in the colophon, then a mid-first century B.C.E. date might be accurate for LXX, assuming that the translation was completed at this time. However, the possibility that the translation pre-dates this colophon should also be considered. It is possible that the translation already existed and was sent to Alexandria with the colophon some time after its genesis. Likewise, it is

⁶⁰ Ibid; Michael V. Fox, *The Redaction of the Books of Esther* (SBL Monograph Series 40; ed. Adela Yarbro and E.F. Campbell; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 37.

possible that the colophon was added at a later time to authenticate the translation. Thus, a precise date is still difficult despite the colophon. What is perhaps more telling is the fact that Haman is called a Macedonian in both Greek versions, suggesting a Roman date since it would have been more problematic to connect the primary antagonist of the story with the reigning empire, especially since he is a flat character who remains wicked and is hanged.⁶¹ Such a date would not disagree with the colophon, which could allow for a first century B.C.E. date near the end of the Ptolemaic Dynasty.

However, Michael Fox points out that LXX Esther changes the month names from Adar to Dystros and from Nisan to Xandikos, which would suggest a date in the first century C.E. because prior to 15/16 C.E. Adar corresponded to Xandikos and Nisan to Artesimos.⁶² Whether the Macedonian month names reflect translation choices made by the initial LXX translators or whether they reflect later changes is difficult to say. A first century C.E. date would not be in discord with Haman as Macedonian, but it could problematize the colophon. Two primary explanations seem possible. First, the colophon was added in the first century C.E. or later with a reference to Ptolemaic rulers in order to lend authenticity and authority to the translation. Second, the names of the months reflect changes made after the initial LXX translation. Since the initial LXX translation should be dated to the late second or, more probably, the first century B.C.E., the months are probably a later change to the translation.

⁶¹ LXX Add. E:10; 9:24; AT Add. A:17. This study follows the Hanhart edition for both text and verse numbering unless otherwise noted. Robert Hanhart, ed., *Esther* (Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum III,3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1966).

⁶² Fox, *The Redaction of the Books of Esther*, 37.

The six Additions (A-F) are another important historical-critical matter which scholars debate. The primary questions scholarship has addressed regard the provenance and purpose of the Additions. When, where and why were they written? Who wrote them and what were the original languages? When were they added to Esther and why? The only extant evidence to these Additions are the two Greek versions, Josephus and the Old Latin, with Josephus representing the earliest extant witness since the copies of LXX and AT date at the earliest to the second century C.E. However, scholars have proposed that some of the Additions may have Semitic originals which date as far back as the second century B.C.E.⁶³ It is difficult to ascertain with any certainty information concerning the provenance of these Additions. Although the Greek of Additions A, C, D and F shares many characteristics with Greek translated from Hebrew and Aramaic originals, this does not prove anything concerning the original languages because it is possible that the authors of the Additions attempted to imitate translated Greek. In addition, although Additions B and E share many linguistic qualities with 3 Maccabees, this does not point to any particularities concerning date or authorship of these Additions.⁶⁴

Unfortunately, the most that can be said with certainty on these matters is that all six Additions are attested in both LXX and AT, all but A, C:17-23 and F are attested in Josephus and all but A:12-17 is in the Old Latin. Carey Moore proposes that these portions are missing in Josephus and OL because they were lacking in the Greek texts

⁶³ See Carey A. Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 165-67.

⁶⁴ See Jobes, 172.

corresponding to these witnesses.⁶⁵ This is certainly a matter to consider and one which will be important for this study particularly in chapter three on prayer. At this point, what matters most for this study is the question of why these Additions were incorporated into the Greek versions and, to the extent that it is possible to determine, when did this take place? If all but A, F and a portion C are attested in Josephus, then it can be stated that for the most part the six Additions, minus A and F, were incorporated into the story by the late first century C.E. The *terminus ante quem* for B, C, D and E would be 93-94 C.E. according to Moore.⁶⁶ However, the possibility should not be ruled out that Josephus used a Greek version which differed from LXX and AT.

Therefore, at this point, this study's conclusions concerning the Additions which are important to note are as follows. First, each Addition should be considered individually as to historical, literary and ideological traits. Second, at the same time, the Additions are part of a larger narrative (LXX or AT) in which their roles should also be considered with regard to historical, literary and theological characteristics. Third, although Josephus and OL lack portions of the Additions, the provenance of the Additions individually and their incorporation into the Greek narratives collectively should be dated to the late Second Temple period.

To summarize the development of the versions, Clines is correct that some version of Esther similar to AT without the Additions existed from which AT, MT and LXX all eventually developed. This written story was in Hebrew and probably came about in the early Hellenistic period (Pre-Masoretic Esther according to Clines). Then at

⁶⁵ Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 166.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

some point, a version of the story developed from this, still in Hebrew, which eventually led to LXX and MT (Proto-Masoretic Esther according to Clines). Though the terminology is problematic, Proto-MT is a convenient term since Clines and others use it to speak of a parent tradition for the later MT and LXX. In this study, the label MT is used in general discussions of textual analysis with the understanding that in the Second Temple period an earlier version of this tradition existed which scholars call Proto-MT. This tradition continued to develop and be transmitted in Hebrew beyond the Second Temple period, and the primary witness to this tradition is MT.⁶⁷ Proto-MT was also translated into the Greek with the six Additions in the late second or early first century B.C.E., producing LXX. Developing from the same Pre-Masoretic story, another Hebrew version of the story developed along its own trajectory, and it was translated into Greek in the Hellenistic period (Proto-AT).⁶⁸ A precise date for this translation is difficult since we have no extant copies. Later, under the influence of LXX, certain changes were made to this translation, probably in the late first century B.C.E. or in the first century C.E. This is the version we call AT.

Finally, all of these dates are tenuous and essentially profit from the fact that there are no extant manuscripts to Esther which pre-date the fourth century C.E. Given the fact

⁶⁷ MT is used throughout this study partly for clarity because Proto-MT is used by scholars to refer to the shared tradition of MT and LXX in the Second Temple period and partly because this study contends that MT represents changes to Proto-MT in Hebrew which did not take place in the Greek LXX developing from Proto-MT. All of these labels are problematic, but they are necessary, and rather than creating a new label such as "Pre-MT" to talk about the textual tradition which eventually became MT, this study will use MT with the understanding that it is in fact a family of manuscripts from the Medieval period rather than a group of Second Temple manuscripts.

⁶⁸ For Clines, Pre-Masoretic Esther served as the Hebrew *Vorlage* to the Greek translation AT. Clines, *The Esther Scroll*, 93ff.

that the versions continued to develop beyond the Second Temple period, it is difficult to make claims concerning the texts' relationships to that period with any certainty. However, as numerous textual critics have pointed out, the dating of manuscripts does not necessarily correspond directly to the dating of a particular version. In other words, a very late manuscript can attest to a very early version, while the earliest extant manuscript may reflect a version with many emendations. Furthermore, it is also true that there are other texts from this period which align with the versions of Esther with regard to the practices under consideration. Such texts will be addressed in discussions of particular topics and versions of Esther as evidence that certain viewpoints concerning practices and Judean identity existed in the Second Temple period, all the while acknowledging that a direct connection between the Esther texts and any particular text, time period, location or group is probably impossible to argue. Succinctly stated, though the extant manuscripts of Esther date well into the first millennium C.E. and beyond, there is evidence that the ideas in each of the versions existed at least as early as the late Second Temple period.

Literary Criticism

To a certain extent, literary criticism is necessary for any approach to the Hebrew Bible. Historical critics have utilized literary criticism to understand a text's "genre" and function, as well as to understand how and why the biblical texts and versions were edited and developed in the way they were. In more recent years, some scholars have attempted to move away from historical-critical readings of the texts by focusing more on the texts' literary qualities. For some such as Robert Alter, these literary readings are

then situated in antiquity, thus continuing to acknowledge the importance of certain historical approaches to the texts.⁶⁹ For others, the focus has moved entirely away from historical questions to focus on the texts' relationships with contemporary readers. Though each approach is valid, this study of Esther corresponds more to those approaches that engage both historical and literary questions in order to situate the versions in particular socio-historical circumstances.

Scholarship has already engaged such literary and historical approaches regarding the versions of Esther. As Jill Middlemas has pointed out, some redaction and text-critical scholars such as Karen Jobes have attempted to establish the provenance and socio-historical context of the versions of Esther. After lengthy linguistic analysis, Jobes draws conclusions concerning the geographical locations of the Greek versions.⁷⁰ Others such as de Troyer have drawn socio-historical conclusions about particular aspects of the versions, such as the claims concerning circumcision.⁷¹ Any claims about such particular details which are relevant will be addressed in the upcoming chapters. Generally, this approach probably most aligns with de Troyer in her consideration of historical, literary and ideological aspects of both the versions as a whole and their individual variants. Yet,

⁶⁹ Alter, 20ff.

⁷⁰ Jill Middlemas, "The Greek Esthers and the Search for History: Some Preliminary Observations," in *Between Evidence and Ideology: Essays on the History of Ancient Israel Read at the Joint Meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study and the Oud Testamentisch Werkgezelschap, Lincoln, July 2009* (ed. Bob Becking and Lester L. Grabbe; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 148; see also Jobes, 228.

⁷¹ Kristin de Troyer, *The End of the Alpha Text of Esther: Translation and Narrative Technique in MT 8:1-17, LXX 8:1-17 and AT 7:14-41* (trans. Brian Doyle; rev. and updated; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 337-38.

there is another dimension to the analysis here which engages social theory to better understand the texts' relationship to ancient societies.

Issues of Genre

The question of genre is important for understanding the roles the texts played in their Second Temple contexts.⁷² Each of the three versions of Esther may be considered narrative, but within such a category, there are nuances to each version's use of narrative. The Greek versions, for example, contain Additions A and F which frame the story with apocalyptic traits, thus altering the way certain features of the narrative would have been understood. A brief comparison of the three versions with regard to genre is thus essential to understanding how both the larger narratives and the individual features under consideration would have functioned in the Second Temple period.

The Masoretic Text

Scholars have labeled the Masoretic version of Esther a novella, historical fiction and a Purim etiology, to name a few. Each of these possibilities is worth considering, and the fact that scholars do not agree on the genre of MT indicates the complexity of the text, as well as the issues involved in assigning genre to ancient texts. At a basic level, one function is that of festival etiology since it explains the institution of Purim.⁷³

⁷² "Genre" is a modern term, so any attempt to classify ancient texts with this concept will always fall short, but there is evidence of different types of composition in antiquity, both oral and written, so although terms such as letter, epistle, narrative, myth, saga and law code are problematic, they are helpful for understanding that different types of writing existed with different audiences and different purposes.

⁷³ See Charles V. Dorothy, *The Books of Esther: Structure, Genre and Textual Integrity* (JSOT Supp. 187; ed. David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davies; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 315; Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 151-152; Fox, *The Redaction of the Books of Esther*, 119; Adele Berlin, *Esther*

However, Esther is too complex to solely function as a Purim etiology. Sara Raup Johnson also notes the affinity with court narrative, and she argues that diaspora stories such as Esther, Daniel, Judith and 3 Macc were shaped by Jewish authors as a way of writing Jewish history and identity in the Hellenistic period. For Johnson, these stories have similarities with regard to literary traits, but they each have different goals and different genres and should be treated individually.⁷⁴

Recently André LaCocque has concurred with those who call Esther a novella, further nuancing his understanding of Esther as a Carnavalesque novella with the aid of Mikhail Bakhtin.⁷⁵ Because there is a reversal of fortunes, and because this reversal at the same time is fantastic and overturns the everyday social world for the lower classes, in this case the Judean imperial subjects, MT Esther has Carnavalesque qualities.⁷⁶ As Kenneth Craig points out, Bakhtin's Carnavalesque includes both ironic reversals and the pairing of opposites involved in such reversals, such as male/female, king/fool and

(JPS Bible Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2001), xlv-xlix; Moore, *Esther*, LIII.

⁷⁴ Sara Raup Johnson, 5, 9. See also Lawrence Wills who relates Esther to the court legend, attributing its additional complexities to layers of redaction. Lawrence M. Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King* (Harvard Dissertations in Religion 26; ed. Margaret R. Miles and Bernadette J. Brooten; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 152; see also pages 185-191 for a synopsis of the genres of the various sources.

⁷⁵ André LaCocque, *Esther Regina: A Bakhtinian Reading* (Rethinking Theory; ed. Gary Saul Morson; Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 5. See also Arndt Meinhold, Michael Fox and Lawrence Wills for additional nuanced discussions of Esther as novella. Arndt Meinhold, *Das Buch Esther* (Zürcher Bibelkommentare AT 13; ed. Hans Heinrich Schmid and Siegfried Schulz; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1993), 14-17; Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 146; Wills, 191.

⁷⁶ LaCocque, 5-6.

crowning/uncrowning.⁷⁷ For Bakhtin, such reversals serve both to entertain and to comment on society because at the level of literature, they are exaggerated for comedic effect, as when Mordecai is paraded through the city in the king's garb at the suggestion of Haman his mortal enemy. Yet, the reversals also overturn the social structures momentarily, as when Mordecai the servant is treated like a king or the lowest people in the empire become the most feared to the point of others imitating or joining them in some way (8:17). Thus, MT Esther is a novella of sorts, but Bakhtin's Carnavalesque may help to understand some of the nuances of the plot. The reversals serve to resolve some of the conflict, while simultaneously providing entertainment and critique of society.⁷⁸

Yet, the real socio-historical context of MT Esther is probably not the Persian Empire but the Hellenistic period, so although the literary court setting is Ahasuerus' reign, the Carnavalesque elements of the story point to a commentary of the social world of the Hellenistic period. The details of such critique are the subject of this study and will be further considered later. For now, what matters is that MT Esther is complex with regard to genre, so that it operates with traits of court legend, historical narrative, Carnavalesque novella and festival etiology, the amalgam of which allows it to connect Israelite history with Judean present and future and to address a number issues of concern to its scribes and, presumably, its audience.

⁷⁷ Kenneth M. Craig, Jr., *Reading Esther: A Case for the Literary Carnavalesque* (Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation; ed. Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 31-32.

⁷⁸ See also Adele Berlin who notes the comedic qualities of Esther and calls it a farce. Berlin, xvi-xix.

The Greek versions

Because the Greek versions share some material with MT, there is also some congruence with the versions concerning genre. However, the Greek versions represent distinct stories; therefore, the question of genre in the Greek versions must be dealt with both together and separately. A brief note concerning the shared qualities with MT will be useful, followed by a discussion of genre specific to the Greek versions.

Genre in MT, LXX and AT

All three versions represent a novella of sorts in that there is a beginning, middle and end to the plot with resolution of most of the major conflicts. In addition, all three include references to Purim at the end of the story, though MT and LXX contain longer explanations of the relationship of Purim to the celebration of Judean/Jewish victory over their enemies (9:26-32; AT 8:49). Thus, all three are narratives of conflicts between Judeans/Jews in the imperial diaspora which include an etiology of Purim. This is where the clear parallels end because both the major Additions and other editorial changes/translation choices alter the purpose and include additional genres.

For one thing, Additions A and F frame the Greek versions with apocalyptic qualities because Mordecai has a highly symbolic dream in Add. A which is interpreted in Add. F after all of the events of the story, and each symbol turns out to represent one of the key figures in the story. The interpretation of visions and dreams is certainly not confined to apocalyptic literature, for prophetic literature also includes visions and dreams (Isa 6; Ezek 1-5:4; Ezek 37), and texts such as Daniel contain both prophetic and apocalyptic traits. Furthermore, the parallels among Mordecai, Daniel and Joseph suggest that Israelite interpretation of dreams while living in the midst of foreigners was

an important motif in a number of genres. Hence, the appearance of dream interpretation does not automatically indicate that the Greek versions of Esther were understood as prophetic or apocalyptic. The insertion of dream interpretation into the story could have occurred because of the influence of a court narrative tradition exhibited by the Joseph and Daniel narratives. Yet, the pairing of the court narrative in Daniel with apocalyptic visions also challenges scholarship to consider the possibility that the Additions to Esther include apocalyptic elements that distinguish the Greek narratives somewhat from Joseph by aligning them in certain ways with apocalyptic literature.

Even with Additions A and F, the Greek versions do not contain many apocalyptic traits, which is probably why most discussions of apocalyptic literature do not include Esther or at best make brief references to the Greek versions. In Add. A there is a symbolic dream, and after the unfolding of certain historical events, the dream is interpreted in Add. F. Two primary literary elements suggest the dream is apocalyptic. The first is the appearance of dragons, which tend to represent evil in apocalyptic literature. However, in Esther, both Haman and Mordecai are represented as dragons, while Mordecai becomes the primary hero of the story in the Greek versions. The dragon symbolism is therefore ambiguous. After the reference to the two dragons, there is a shift to battles between peoples (ἐθνη) in A:6-8 (AT A:5-6), in particular a battle between the just people and all the other peoples. At once, the battle is couched in a symbolic dream, established as a battle of good versus evil which is no longer localized.

All of these qualities are shared with apocalyptic literature, suggesting Additions A and F frame the story with apocalyptic elements. However, whether the Greek versions should be labeled apocalyptic is debatable. Frederick Murphy proposes a

distinction between apocalyptic to describe a true apocalypse such as Revelation and a text which shares attributes with an apocalypse.⁷⁹ With such a distinction, the Greek versions of Esther are apocalyptic in that they share traits with apocalypses, but they are not apocalypses themselves.⁸⁰

Therefore, a shift occurs in the Greek versions. MT contains qualities which connect the story both to Israelite history and to the divine realm by naming characters after Mesopotamian deities, and although the Greek versions retain some of these qualities, an apocalyptic layer is added to the story. What does this indicate for interpretive purposes? There is a distinction between apocalyptic as a genre and apocalyptic as a framework for viewing the world. Jon Berquist has proposed that apocalyptic is not only a literary genre, but also a religious worldview and a form of social expression, and any discussion of apocalyptic must consider all three components, though only the literary aspects are directly accessible to contemporary interpreters and historians. As a worldview, apocalyptic maintains that some knowledge is esoteric, possessed by God and shared only with a select few.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Frederick J. Murphy, "Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature," in *New Interpreter's Bible* VII (ed. Leander E. Keck, et al; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 1.

⁸⁰ See also Klaus Baltzer who understands Add. D as a throne room scene akin to those in 1 Enoch and Revelation, thus adding to the apocalyptic traits of the text. Chapter three will discuss this possibility further. Klaus Baltzer, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108* (Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; ed. Frank Moore Cross, et al; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 256.

⁸¹ Jon L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1995), 179-180.

This suggests that for the Greek versions of Esther, an understanding of the events of the story is possessed by a select group. Who this group included is difficult to know, but further investigation through the course of this study will shed some light on the issue. For now it is important to understand that the apocalyptic traits of the Greek versions suggest a more explicit exclusivity with regard to the true meaning of the story and its events.⁸² Furthermore, God's involvement is clear because the just people cry out to God, and a great river appears from a small spring (A:9-10; AT A:6-7), and the river turns out to be Esther (F:3; AT 8:53). Through the symbolic nature of Mordecai's dream which utilizes elements of nature to represent characters in the story, the Greek versions establish the apocalyptic vision as representing recent historical conflict in which God is clearly involved.

Thus, the Greek versions of Esther have apocalyptic traits. They interpret the story as a tale of Judeans/Jews vs. other peoples with an apocalyptic framework that is absent in MT's presentation of the conflict of Israelites vs. Amalekites. At the same time, all three versions are narratives of Judeans/Jews interacting with kings and their courts. They are not stories of every day life for Judeans/Jews in the Second Temple period because the focus is on individuals who attain high political positions. These positions then allow them to improve the situation for all of their fellow Judeans/Jews.

⁸² Both John Collins and Philip Davies have claimed that apocalyptic texts should be associated with elite scribes. John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 39-40; Philip R. Davies, "The Social World of Apocalyptic Writings," in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives* (ed. R.E. Clements; Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 263.

Other complexities with regard to genre will be dealt with on an individual basis as they pertain to this study, including the insertion of Additions related to other genres such as letters and legal material (Additions B and E) and prayers (Add. C), as well as the inclusion of genealogies at various points in the stories. What matters most at this point is that there are similarities and differences with regard to genre among each of the versions, and the particulars will be included in the discussions in chapters two through four as they relate to the topics at hand.

In addition to the similarities between the Greek versions discussed thus far, there are distinctions to consider with regard to genre. LXX is unique in that it contains a colophon which can help not only to date the translation but also to understand its purpose. The colophon reads as follows:

In the fourth years of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheos, who was said to be a priest and Levite, and Ptolemy his son brought the preceding letter of Purim which was said to be, and Lysimachus, son of Ptolemy among those in Jerusalem, translated it (F:11).

The text itself, in the colophon, claims to be a Purim message or command (ἐπιστολὴν τῶν Φρουραῖ), suggesting that the purpose is to inform and even command its audience concerning Purim. This of course leaves much to interpretation, as the specific audience is not mentioned, and even the precise meaning of ἐπιστολή is not clear. Since genre is a contemporary term, it is problematic to assume that the author of the colophon was defining the text's genre, which is why purpose may be a better way of thinking about ἐπιστολή. Nevertheless, these words provide more information about the text's purpose external to the narrative itself than either MT or AT does. In some way, a text which combines traits of historical narrative, apocalyptic literature, etiology, prayer and legal material was understood as a message or even command concerning Purim for its

audience in Egypt. This purpose must be kept in mind in any discussion about practices in LXX.

The absence of such a label for MT or AT does not necessarily preclude any role in providing a message about Purim for their audiences, but LXX's emphasis on this particular purpose calls into question not only what the importance of other possible purposes for LXX may have been, but also whether it is possible to discern the primary purpose of MT or AT. Such matters will be discussed in more detail throughout this study. For now, it is important to remember that despite shared literary qualities and even shared characteristics related to genre, each version has distinct traits which challenge contemporary readers to consider the versions individually with regard to genre and purpose.

Social Theory

This study utilizes social theory as a lens for deeper understanding of ancient cultures and the texts they produced. Of course, a primary problem with the use of such theory is that it has generally developed as a result of studying contemporary societies. With the move to postmodernism, the issue of universality with regard to cultures has been challenged with good reason. It is problematic to assume that ancient cultures functioned the same way as contemporary cultures or even that all ancient cultures functioned in the same way. Nevertheless, it is possible to detect certain trends among cultures, and, if done cautiously, to consider the potential for deeper understanding of ancient cultures with the aid of modern studies. Furthermore, given the fact that the evidence about ancient cultures such as Judaism in the Second Temple period is limited

to texts and artifacts which are often difficult to interpret, the social sciences can be a helpful tool for filling in gaps cautiously and for problematizing assumptions we may have about the evidence about Judaism in antiquity. This section will provide a general background on important components of Judaism in the Second Temple period read in conjunction with social theory, with special treatment of Pierre Bourdieu and his theory of practice. Along the way important terminology will be defined as socio-historical backgrounds for the texts are established.

Due to distance of time, place, culture and language, a clear understanding of ancient societies is highly tenuous and thus has been the topic of debate in scholarship on ancient Israel and biblical historiography. With some arguing that all attempts to study history inevitably impose the scholar's lens on the object of study and others arguing that we are able to reconstruct the biblical history accurately if we do so with proper caution, there is a perpetual issue concerning our ability as contemporary scholars to understand texts such as Esther and the historical conditions under which they were produced. One response to this debate has been reader-response criticism which focuses on the relationship between the contemporary reader and the text, assuming that it is impossible to know ancient authors and their audiences.

Another response has been social-scientific criticism, which utilizes theory on contemporary societies in order to understand ancient societies. Social-scientific approaches assume a certain amount of universality to human societies and thus claim that these universalities can help us to better understand ancient societies by comparing them to contemporary ones. It is in alignment with this approach that this study reads Esther in dialogue with Pierre Bourdieu and other contemporary social theory. There are

certain social forces that affect how individuals and groups think and act. These forces may manifest and operate differently in different social conditions, but there is still an extent to which these forces and the conditions in which they operate have limits.

In recent years, biblical scholarship has begun to utilize social theory to better understand a number of aspects of ancient Israelite and Judean society and religion. Anthropological work on cultures of shame and honor has been adapted to understand ancient Israel and its texts, especially in conjunction with gender studies since patriarchal shame-honor cultures tend to attribute honor to males and shame to females. Such a lens has been implemented to understand the relationship of God and human in the lament psalms as a patron-client relationship, the relationship of the two lovers in the Song of Songs and various relationships in Esther.⁸³ Lillian Klein, for example, has examined the male and female characters in Esther in order to understand the story as a tool for undermining the shame-honor system in which it was produced because the characters act in ways that use the system to their own advantage.⁸⁴ In a monograph on Esther, Timothy Laniak also reads the Hebrew narrative with the lens of shame-honor, examining the narrative in large sections and focusing especially on visible signs of shame and honor and the social empowerment and disempowerment which accompany

⁸³ See W. Dennis Tucker, Jr., "Is Shame a Matter of Patronage in the Lament Psalms?" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 31,4 (June 2007): 465-480; see also Dianne Bergant, "'My Beloved is Mine and I am His' (Song 2:16): The Song of Songs and Honor and Shame," *Semeia* 68 (1994): 23-40.

⁸⁴ Lillian R. Klein, "Honor and Shame in Esther," in *The Feminist Companion to the Bible* 7 (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 149ff.

such signs.⁸⁵ Thus, biblical studies has begun to realize the value of social theory for understanding how societies operate and how texts reflect the social structures of the cultures in which they are produced.

Before advancing to a discussion of the theory engaged in this study, it is important to point out that this study does not attempt to expound a new theory on ancient societies, in particular those associated with Second Temple Judean texts. Instead, social theory here will add nuance to understanding first how the texts relate to historical ideologies and second what the texts are saying about particular practices. First a number of concepts will be outlined which are used throughout the study. Then the theory's implications for understanding of the Second Temple social world of the texts and how the texts functioned in that world will be discussed. Finally, with these understandings as presuppositions, the practices in the texts will be examined.

Pierre Bourdieu writes as if describing forces which operate in all societies, and the fundamental component to any society for Bourdieu is habitus.⁸⁶ Concerning habitus, Bourdieu writes:

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of

⁸⁵ Timothy S. Laniak, *Shame and Honor in the Book of Esther* (SBL Diss. Series 165; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 174ff.

⁸⁶ Throughout his work, Bourdieu uses the form habitus as both the singular and plural forms. This study will do the same for consistency.

the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor.⁸⁷

It is the structures of an environment which produce habitus, so habitus is particular to an environment. At the same time, habitus is durable and transposable, so it transfers across both time and space, as individuals go from place to place and as time passes. In addition, habitus is the product of a particular environment, but it also generative; it reproduces the structures of its environment in the form of dispositions, which are schemes of perception and thought,⁸⁸ and practices, which are actions or series of actions produced as a response to other actions.⁸⁹ Both disposition and practice will be discussed more later in this section. For now what is important to understand is that for Bourdieu there is a certain amount of culturally specific logic to what people think, say and do, and this logic is explained by habitus, which is an underlying generative principle that both shapes and is shaped by its environment.

The habitus is the underlying structure which orients and produces dispositions and practices. The habitus both structures and is structured by a culture. It is an invisible and for the most part unconscious mode of operation or function which affects how individuals think and act. The habitus is transferable in that individuals can go from social field to social field and take their habitus with them. Yet, at the same time they will encounter other habitus as they move from context to context, say from home to school or from home to work. As a result, they may think and act differently in one

⁸⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (trans. Richard Nice; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 72.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 15.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 8-9.

locale than in another because different habitus are operating. Yet, they do not leave one habitus at the door when they enters a different social locale, but instead the habitus of home stays with them at work or school, sometimes causing conflict. As Bourdieu notes:

Thus, for example, the habitus acquired in the family underlies the structuring of school experiences (in particular the reception and assimilation of the specifically pedagogic message), and the habitus transformed by schooling, itself diversified, in turn underlies the structuring of all subsequent experiences (e.g. the reception and assimilation of the messages of the culture industry or work experiences), and so on, from restructuring to restructuring.⁹⁰

Here Bourdieu makes two important claims. First, habitus of one environment (i.e., the family) influences habitus of another environment (i.e., school), so that habitus of family shapes how an individual perceives school, but the habitus of school also affects habitus of other environments. This is what he means when he writes “from restructuring to restructuring.” Habitus is constantly operating to shape one’s experiences as one encounters different habitus. Second, family is typically the primary habitus operating for an individual because it is this habitus which one encounters in the most formative years of one’s life. School, for those with formal education, is secondary to family, and family habitus shapes one’s experiences in school. However, school habitus still influences other experiences which one encounters later in life. Hence, habitus is specific to an environment and a group, but it also transfers across time and space, affecting an individual’s experiences as she encounters and acquires other habitus throughout her life.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Ibid, 87.

⁹¹ See Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 60-61.

Related to the habitus is the social field, a space where individuals and groups compete for economic, cultural, symbolic and social capital, anything deemed by the society or some segment of the society as valuable and thus useful in attaining power. Habitus operates within a field, affecting how those involved view different kinds of capital and act within the field. For Bourdieu, capital is related to power. The amount of economic and cultural capital that one possesses in large part determines one's opportunities and relationships to others in the same field. Not only does this position in a social field affect an individual's opportunities, but the dispositions, the ways of viewing the world which arise out of habitus, condition one's acceptance of the situation. As Bourdieu notes, those of the same social class, those with shared habitus, are conditioned by similar situations and experiences:

Through the always convergent experiences that give a social environment its physiognomy, with its 'closed doors', 'dead ends' and 'limited prospects', the objective structures that sociology apprehends in the form of probabilities of access to goods, services and powers, inculcate the 'art of assessing likelihoods', as Leibniz put it, of anticipating the objective future, in short, the 'sense of reality', or realities, which is perhaps the best-concealed principle of their efficacy.⁹²

Thus, those lacking the capital to effect change and to exert power tend to accept this situation of lack. Because habitus operates in large part by perpetuating its social structures and disposition, those without certain capital often view their situation as normal, perpetuating the distribution of power.

On the other hand, those in a position to seize opportunities are able to do so because they have been conditioned by the habitus, its dispositions and the capital available. The habitus tends to repeat rather than transform the social conditions and the

⁹² Ibid, 60.

individuals it shapes.⁹³ Yet an individual may encounter more than one habitus. Hence, we learn to adapt to different habitus as we go about our daily lives, unaware most of the time of this adaptation. The choices that we make are conditioned by the habitus that shape us and by the capital (and thus the power) that we hold. The result is that one's position in a field affects how one views the world and how one acts because habitus and capital are closely related to this position. An individual's location in large part determines which habitus shape her. There is habitus operating within her family, but her education (if she is in a position to benefit from education outside the home) brings other habitus, which also affect how she views the world. For Bourdieu, there is a direct relationship between social position in a field and thought and action. Habitus, which is shared by a group but transfers across fields, produces a person's thoughts and actions.

In addition, individuals' position in a field conditions what capital they have access to and how they view that capital, which in turn affects how they act in a given social field and how they view their social position and all that it entails. Bourdieu distinguishes among a number of different types of capital operating in any society: economic, cultural, social and symbolic. Accruing each type can allow an individual to gain access to power in a field where the capital is acknowledged. Economic capital is that which is directly expressed in monetary forms, and it is institutionalized as property rights, stocks, bonds, etc. Cultural capital is knowledge and skills, and it is institutionalized as educational qualifications and technical skills. As D.F. Pilario notes, it is more concealed than economic capital, so it is more likely to act as symbolic capital,

⁹³ Ibid, 63-64.

which is a disguised form of economic capital.⁹⁴ Social capital is also more opaque. It is the social connections which make one part of the “in” group with a collective, shared capital. Capital is always field specific, so one’s position can shift from one field to another if different types of capital operate in these different fields. For example, academic credentials may offer a person substantial power in a university setting, but if that person moves to a different field such as a hospital, she may find that she holds very little valuable capital and thus has little power in that field. On the other hand, if that person has connections with those in power at the hospital, her social capital may offer her power in a field where her cultural capital is worth little.

Gender

Although gender is not the primary focus of this study, it is an important social construct which is a component of identity. Therefore, a few words on gender and social theory are in order to provide a framework for examining practices in Esther. Bourdieu frames gender in terms of habitus, field and capital. In studying Kabyle culture, Bourdieu has noted the oppositions of male and female as associated with public and private spheres of society. The two genders meet at the threshold, so the threshold becomes a place where inversion occurs and males enter or leave the private sphere of females and females do likewise. Furthermore, the meaning of male and female change depending on perspective. One's location within the social structures affects meaning,

⁹⁴ D.F. Pilario, *Back to the Rough Grounds of Praxis: Exploring Theological Method with Pierre Bourdieu* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 145.

but so do gender, perspective and bodily position.⁹⁵ For Bourdieu, bodily hexis is the primary cause of gender distinction.⁹⁶ As he states in *The Logic of Practice*:

The opposition between male and female is realized in posture, in the gestures and movements of the body, in the form of the opposition between the straight and the bent, between firmness, uprightness and directness (a man faces forward, looking and striking directly at his adversary), and restraint, reserve and flexibility.⁹⁷

Although the particulars of Kabyle culture do not necessarily apply to ancient cultures, the notion that gender difference is expressed in both visible and invisible ways is helpful. Bodily hexis is one's way of standing and moving as well as thinking and feeling. Like habitus, it is durable since it is a product of habitus. In fact, Bourdieu calls it a permanent disposition.⁹⁸ In Bourdieu's study of French culture, he determined that the dominant segments of society always conceive of their relationships to other segments in terms of the oppositions male/female, serious/frivolous, responsible/irresponsible and useful/futile.⁹⁹ This suggests that gender is a primary way of ordering society both in Kabyle and French cultures. It also suggests that the masculine is given hierarchical primacy in both cultures.

Since the Persian and Greco-Roman cultures were patriarchal, similar dispositions to gender and culture can be assumed to have operated, though it is necessary to be cautious about distinctions between ancient and contemporary cultures and among

⁹⁵ Jeremy F. Lane, *Pierre Bourdieu: A Critical Introduction* (Modern European Thinkers; ed. Keith Reader, et al; London; Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2000), 96-97.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 99-100.

⁹⁷ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 70.

⁹⁸ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 93; *The Logic of Practice*, 69-70.

⁹⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (trans. Richard Nice; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 93-94.

various ancient cultures. The precise ways in which gender affected individuals' body, thoughts, feelings and actions would have differed. Nevertheless, Bourdieu's work establishes a framework for thinking about how gender operates with regard to practices and identity. One's gender inevitably influences how one relates to others in any given field. Males and females think and act differently in public than in private spheres, in single gender groups and in mixed gender groups. Likewise, if capital is related to power and the dominant gender shifts from one field to another (public to private), the types of capital operating in a given field and who possesses it are important to consider. The specifics of such aspects of gender with regard to fasting, prayer and circumcision will be considered individually in the following chapters. For now what matters most is that Bourdieu's understanding of culture posits that gender affects one's position in any given social field, but even more than that, it affects one's cognition and physicality. Gender is part and parcel to everything an individual thinks, feels and does.

Ideology

Related to the concepts of habitus, disposition, field and capital is the notion of ideology. There is a repetitive nature to habitus, capital, dispositions and fields of power because the habitus is durable; it tends to repeat and to change only slowly over time. Likewise, the positions of power related to capital in a given social field tend to reproduce.¹⁰⁰ This theory illuminates the relationship of a person's position and worldview which only change slowly but which are affected by the social structures and forces operating around her (structures and forces which also change slowly). Bourdieu does not expound much on ideology, but other theorists such as Clifford Geertz for

¹⁰⁰ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 183-84.

defining ideology and examining its functions with regard to texts and practices. Like habitus and disposition, an ideology is durable and conditioned by one's social location, by the amount and types of capital one has access to.

In addition, Bourdieu's concept of doxa is also related to ideology. For Bourdieu, doxa is a perspective shared among all members of a group despite occupying different positions in a common social field. What is important to understand about doxa is that it is the knowledge and beliefs which are unexpressed and which exist at an unconscious level.¹⁰¹ As Jacques Berlinerblau points out in his critique of biblical scholarship on ideology, for Bourdieu there are competing ideas and perspectives in any field, some of which are orthodox and some of which are heterodox.¹⁰² Orthodoxy is the perspective or ideas imposed by a dominant class on the dominated. Bourdieu defines orthodox discourse as "the official way of speaking and thinking in the world."¹⁰³ Yet, there are always competing discourses in any social field, and those which are not orthodox are heterodox.¹⁰⁴ Underlying these competing points of view is doxa, which is common to all participants.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, as Loïc Wacquant has noted, these unstated ideas and beliefs govern practices and representations. Yet, doxa must remain unstated, so it is

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 167-68.

¹⁰² Jacques Berlinerblau, "Ideology, Pierre Bourdieu's *Doxa*, and the Hebrew Bible" *Semeia* 87 (1999): 201.

¹⁰³ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 169.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 169.

¹⁰⁵ Berlinerblau, 201.

only implicit in these practices and representations.¹⁰⁶ What this means for a textual study involving ideology is that doxa is never that which is explicitly stated by a text. Instead, it is the underlying presuppositions that author, editor, translator and audience all share. Although doxa does not equate with ideology, it is helpful for understanding ideology because there may also be something unexpressed regarding ideology. As Berlinerblau has pointed out, this is not typical to biblical scholarship's understanding of ideology which tends to view it as something which authors and others in dominant leadership positions attempt to impose on others.¹⁰⁷ At times, this may be the case, and Berlinerblau notes that for Bourdieu a dominant group's ideas may become doxa for all in a given social field over time, but the group does not necessarily consciously impose their point of view on others. It is entirely possible for such a process to happen at an unconscious level for all involved.¹⁰⁸ Thus, there is an aspect of the way an individual and a group view the world which remains implicit, a notion which will reappear shortly in defining ideology.

Similar to Bourdieu, Charles Taylor does not discuss ideology much in *Modern Social Imaginaries*, but his claim that social imaginaries in antiquity could differ greatly from one “class” to another is helpful for understanding the gap that would have existed between those in power and their subjects and among the various peoples who lived in close geographic and sometimes spatial proximity. Taylor’s concept of a social imaginary

¹⁰⁶ Loïc Wacquant, "Towards an Archeology of Academe: A Critical Appreciation of Fritz Ringer's 'Fields of Knowledge,'" *Acta Sociologica* 38,2 (1995): 185.

¹⁰⁷ Berlinerblau, 198.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 202.

is that of a kind of framework which shapes how individuals and groups view their world and their shared practices.¹⁰⁹ Like the habitus, the social imaginary is durable. It only changes slowly over time, and even when it does change, there is never a complete break from tradition, but instead what happens is that the older tradition is reinterpreted in a new situation.¹¹⁰ Taylor is careful to note that a social imaginary is not equated with an ideology as he defines it, but for the purposes of this study, the characteristics of the social imaginary help point to the intricate relationship of social imaginary, habitus and ideology.¹¹¹

Ideology is an individual's and group's framework for understanding themselves and the world around them. At once this ideology provides a lens for interpreting their relationship to one another, to other groups and to the larger social structures. Thus, ideology is closely related to the contemporary concept of identity which is a complex term attempting to encompass how an individual or group both differentiates from and relates to other individuals and groups.¹¹² Terry Eagleton has noted that contemporary scholarship on ideology has essentially divided into two major perspectives. On the one hand, the epistemological strand associated with Hegel and Marx tends to define ideology as something belonging to the dominant group in a society, and more specifically as

¹⁰⁹ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 23-25.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 30, 153.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 183.

¹¹² Despite being a contemporary term, it is important to address identity since an underlying question of this study is how practices and texts might have been related to particular groups of Jews in the Second Temple period, a question discussed in more detail throughout this study.

something associated with illusion, distortion and hegemony. On the other hand, the sociological strand of scholarship associates ideology with the function of ideas in a society.¹¹³

It is with this second strand of ideology that this study's definition aligns. As Geertz argues, everyone possesses ideology as a means of making sense of the world. For Geertz, ideology is based in language which is rooted in social reality, so ideology has the ability to communicate reality.¹¹⁴ In addition, since ideology is based in language and texts are linguistic, texts themselves are ideological. That is to say, they convey an ideology associated with the groups which produce them. Since this notion of ideology is not aligned with Marxism, the texts are not always an attempt to impose a dominant ideology on subjects. Although this may at times be true and there is evidence for such imperial propaganda in the Second Temple period, the role of ideology which informs this study is that of a framework for understanding society which is enduring, established in tradition and often unconscious. The scribes of the texts did not always seek to consciously impose imperial propaganda concerning the Greco-Roman empire or religious propaganda concerning the religion and power of the Judean leaders. Rather, the texts exhibit both conscious and unconscious aspects of Judean ways of understanding themselves and the imperial world in which they lived.¹¹⁵ The texts at once

¹¹³ Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London; New York: Verso, 1991), 3.

¹¹⁴ Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," 210.

¹¹⁵ As Geertz notes, ideology may play a role "in defining (or obscuring) social categories, stabilizing (or upsetting) social expectations, maintaining (or undermining) social norms, strengthening (or weakening) social consensus, relieving (or exacerbating) social tensions." Hence, it is possible for ideologies to have a negative impact on society

imagine another world in which certain aspects of the social world are different and at the same time maintain some structures of the social world of the scribes. They may both perpetuate and subvert the social structures of the culture through literary devices which allow the scribes to both create an imaginary world and recreate their own social world.

Within this framework of ideology, Bourdieu's theory of practice can be helpful to understanding Esther and the social world of the Second Temple period. In the story of Esther as well as in the Greco-Roman imperial world in which the story was transmitted, Judeans generally held little capital acknowledged by empire in so far as most would not have been literate or held official positions within the empires.¹¹⁶ There is evidence that Judeans performed various kinds of labor, which suggests that collectively they had a number of different skills. There is also evidence that they were engaged in the commerce of the empire. Thus, to some extent individuals were able to obtain a certain amount of economic and cultural capital.¹¹⁷ The Judean leaders would

or certain segments of society, but they are not always a conscious exertion of power by the dominant group. It is this distinction which aligns this study's definition of ideology primarily with Geertz rather than Marx. See Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," 203.

¹¹⁶ There are of course exceptions to this generalization, and Jewish priests are an interesting case. On the one hand, the extent of their influence over their people beyond the geographic vicinity of the temples is questionable. In addition, they did not hold as much status and power as the officials appointed by the empires (satraps, governors, etc.). Yet, they were in dialogue with the imperial officials and the Jerusalem Temple in particular was an influential spatial locale given that it was situated in a place of imperial commerce.

¹¹⁷ See Ran Zadok who examines the Babylonian texts from Nippur in the Persian period and determines that Jews in the rural areas of Nippur generally worked in agriculture as holders and tenants of estates. Ran Zadok, *The Jews in Babylonia During the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods: According to the Babylonian Sources* (Haifa: University of Haifa, 1979), 86-88. More recently Laurie Pearce has examined texts from al-Yahudu Nashar and other places in Babylonia which evidence Judeans interacting with

have had more capital available to them than the average Judean due to their literacy and the social connections they would have had with both fellow Judeans and imperial leaders. However, their power was still limited by the empire.

The interest in this study is with the Judean scribes authoring/translating Esther because they would have had the most clear connection with the text. This study is interested in how the texts functioned for them, and in order to investigate this, Bourdieu's cultural, social and symbolic capital are probably the most useful of the forms of capital to consider. Given that less than one percent of the population would have been literate in antiquity, scribal literacy could have served as a means to power in certain social fields. According to Bourdieu, literacy and writing are powerful means of accruing cultural capital and monopolizing a society's symbolic resources. What literacy and writing allow is the accumulation of collective memory and the accumulation of cultural capital, thus providing those involved with control of symbolic resources such as religion, philosophy, art and science. Because the literate have the means of appropriating such symbolic capital via writing and reading, they gain control of this capital.¹¹⁸ Hence, because the Judean scribes were literate they were able to appropriate their religion. Yet, it should be remembered that they existed in liminal spaces in the empire, and their control may have fluctuated depending on the policies of the imperial authorities. They

Babylonians in agricultural and economic activity. Laurie E. Pearce, "New Evidence for Judeans in Babylonia," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 401, 408; Laurie E. Pearce, "'Judean': A Special Status in Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Babylonia?" in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context* (ed. Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 274-73.

¹¹⁸ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 125.

would have had to exercise caution with regard to the claims they made about themselves and about the empire, and the amount of caution could have shifted according to time and place.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, as the proliferation of texts indicates, they were not entirely voiceless despite being imperial subjects. Their literacy and their adaptability allowed them to exert some influence, probably more directly on their fellow Judeans who served as audiences. It is primarily their perspective which is in the texts and which results from their negotiation of their own habitus with those of the surrounding cultures.¹²⁰

Thus, there were a number of social fields in which power and capital operated in the Second Temple period. For most Judeans, the household and immediate village community would have been the primary places of social engagement. In cities such as Jerusalem and Alexandria, some individuals would have encountered more social fields and more opportunities for exerting capital. Whether they themselves held and used such

¹¹⁹ There is some evidence, for example, that the Persians tended to be more tolerant of difference provided their subjects paid their taxes. Local laws were enacted, and the peoples were generally under the control of the provincial governors, so the amount of power the Jewish “elite” had would have varied according to their geographic location. In contrast, if the texts are any indication, the Judeans seem to have struggled more in the Hellenistic period both among themselves and with the imperial forces as the Hellenistic Empire and certain Judeans made stronger attempts at cultural and religious homogeneity.

¹²⁰ For instance, Martin Hengel points out that after the Maccabean Revolt, political-religious identity for the Jews was stronger despite the ever-present force of Hellenization. Martin Hengel, “Judaism and Hellenism Revisited,” in *Hellenism in the Land of Israel* (ed. John J. Collins and Gregory E. Sterling; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 24. See also Berquist who discusses the imperial-colonial motives of the Persian Empire with regard to the production of the texts of the Hebrew Bible from this period. Berquist also points out the particular social location of the Jews involved in creating these texts under imperial authorization. They were at once subjected to and authorized by the empire, and they were in charge of their people’s ideology through codification of text but at the same time their literary resources came from this same group. Hence, they held an in-between location. Jon L. Berquist, “Postcolonialism and Imperial Motives for Canonization,” *Semeia* 75 (1996): 22-30.

capital or whether they were in a position to have it exerted on them was due in large part to their individual positions. Few Judeans, however, held much capital and exerted much influence beyond their own family, and this would have been even more augmented for women who felt the influence of not only imperial but also patriarchal subjugation.

Practice

If there were a number of social fields and habitus or social imaginaries operating for Judeans, then it is important to consider not only the fields and habitus but also the relationship of these social forces to practices. For Bourdieu, practice is something unconscious which is produced by habitus. It is something repetitious which is reproduced in certain social conditions. Understanding habitus can make it possible to understand the relationship of practices to social situations. Since habitus can shift from one social field to another, practices and their meaning can shift also. The habitus is also durable, a product of history, so in order to understand practices, it is necessary to observe both the durable habitus which produces the practices and the social conditions in which they are produced. Of practices he claims:

Because they tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the conditions in which their generative principle was produced while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures that constitute the *habitus*, practices cannot be deduced either from the present conditions which may seem to have provoked them or from the past conditions which have produced the *habitus*, the durable principle of their production. They can therefore only be accounted for by relating the social conditions in which the *habitus* that generated them was constituted, to the social conditions in which it is implemented, that is, through the scientific work of performing the interrelationship of these two states of the social world that the *habitus* performs, while concealing it, in and through practice.¹²¹

¹²¹ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 56.

What is helpful in Bourdieu's definition of practices is the understanding that both habitus and social conditions affect practices. On the one hand, practices are the product of habitus, which is durable, so practices themselves are durable. On the other hand, practices are also produced in specific social situations. Certain practices may not be produced in certain situations, or they may shift meaning in different fields. A practice which could bring about capital gain in one social arena could be entirely meaningless or take on another meaning in another arena.¹²² Therefore, it is important to consider the social conditions when attempting to understand practices.

This is similar to Taylor's notion of the social imaginary which he claims also affects practices.¹²³ However, although Taylor admits that probably more often people are unaware of much of what they do, he does allow for more conscious awareness of practices. Taylor also allows for several ways in which practices may change over time. In line with Bourdieu, he notes that they may change slowly over time as their contexts change. Yet, he also suggests that at times an elite group may propose changes which are then accepted by the larger group.¹²⁴ For both Bourdieu and Taylor, practices have meaning which is related to social conditions. However, Taylor is more willing to consider an awareness of meaning on the part of the practitioners. This is particularly important when considering how texts relate to practices because written texts are a conscious cultural production. Bourdieu claims that those who are literate are able to exert authority over religious traditions by means of symbolic capital. While literacy

¹²² Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 94, 101; see also *The Logic of Practice*, 56, 63.

¹²³ Taylor, 23.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 30.

involves texts, which are a different component of culture than practices, both texts and practices are produced by the same culture, and at times a text may provide representations of particular practices of the culture in which it is produced.

In this study, a practice is an action which is repeated in certain social situations with certain purposes and which has some shared understanding of purpose for a particular group. Along with Taylor, this study understands that practices can change in form and function slowly over time but that it is also possible for a particular group to consciously affect the meaning. Just as the related context of the social imaginary does not break from previous tradition, so the reinterpretation of the practice does not break from tradition. Instead, it attempts to adapt or apply the practice for the new social situation. In the context of the Second Temple period, there is evidence that certain Judean practices were reinterpreted in particular ways or that the parameters defining them were reinterpreted or made explicit in response to the changing social world. For example, scholars have debated whether circumcision was always practiced by all the Israelites throughout their history or whether it became prominent during the exile among uncircumcised peoples in Mesopotamia.¹²⁵ Furthermore, there is evidence that other peoples besides Israelites and Judeans circumcised, so it was not a practice of the Israelites/Judeans alone.¹²⁶ However, it is clear that there were debates concerning circumcision in the Second Temple period, with some arguing that it was not necessary

¹²⁵ David Bernat provides a brief, current summary of several views on circumcision in Ancient Israel. David A. Bernat, *Sign of the Covenant: Circumcision in the Priestly Tradition* (ed. Benjamin D. Sommer; Ancient Israel and its Literature 3; ed. Steven L. McKenzie, et al; Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 115-116.

¹²⁶ Cohen, 45.

for all Judean males to be circumcised and others arguing that it was imperative. These two viewpoints probably represent the extremes on either side, but they also represent different ideologies concerning Judean identity and circumcision's role in this identity. In conjunction with the theory outlined here, this suggests that different groups perhaps with different social positions had developed different ideologies on identity and practices. Circumcision will be the focus of chapter four, but for now it can serve as an example of how the texts reflect ideologies and practices in the social world in which they were produced and how the theory outlined here can help to strengthen our understanding of how practices functioned for Judeans.

Finally, Sian Jones has argued the value of anthropological views on ethnicity and identity for interpreting archaeological evidence to construct a model for Judean identity in antiquity. Pointing out the problem of knowing which cultural products were expressions of ethnicity, he cites Bourdieu's habitus and dispositions for constructing ethnic identity: "Rather, drawing on Bourdieu's theory of practice, it can be argued that the construction of ethnic identity is grounded in the shared subliminal dispositions of the habitus which shape, and are shaped, by commonalities of practice."¹²⁷ For Jones, Bourdieu's theory of practice aids in understanding the relationship between human consciousness of ethnicity and social context. Shared habitus produces mutual identification with members of a group. Furthermore, cultural products such as artifacts and texts are not arbitrary but are products of the durable habitus. Jones determines that

¹²⁷ Sian Jones, "Identities in Practice: Towards an Archaeological Perspective on Jewish Identity in Antiquity," in *Jewish Local Patriotism and Self-Identification in the Graeco-Roman Period* (JSOT Supp 31; ed. Sian Jones and Sarah Pearce; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 43.

although people are not always conscious of their ethnicity, when they encounter people with different cultural traditions such ethnic consciousness emerges.¹²⁸

Outline of the Study

This study examines particular practices in the versions of Esther, compares how they are represented and investigates the relationship of both the practices and texts to Judean identity in the Second Temple period. Each chapter centers around a particular practice or a set of related practices which are represented differently in the three versions of Esther. Within each chapter, I historical-critical methods help to understand how the versions may have evolved through various types of textual transmission in antiquity. Then literary criticism elucidates the narrative contexts of each of the versions and how these contexts relate to the specific differences in practices among the versions. Finally, social theory is a means of understanding how the differences in the texts are related to historical ideologies and notions of Judean identity in the Second Temple period. Theory therefore pushes historical-critical work beyond the questions of the general relationships of the versions to one another. Beyond such questions as which versions might be earlier and later and how the versions might have been influenced by each other in their development, the versions are viewed as having developed out of specific social contexts and thus as reflecting particular social structures and ideologies.

Chapter two examines fasting and feasting. Scholars have shed much light on the role of the banquets in Esther and the juxtaposition of fasting with feasting in the story. However, there are a number of interesting differences among the versions which are

¹²⁸ Ibid, 42-43.

worth considering from historical-critical and social-scientific perspectives. Why might MT include more instances of fasting than LXX, and why is there no specific mention of fasting in AT? How do the versions read differently as narratives? What relationship, if any, might these differences have to ideology and identity in the Second Temple period? In addition, more specifically in Addition C, the Greek versions include references to Esther maintaining a special diet akin to kashrut, a claim which is absent in MT. Within the larger context of feasting and fasting, what role do these claims play? Furthermore, what relationship do these claims have to ideology and identity? These are the questions addressed in chapter two on fasting.

Chapter three investigates the role of prayer, which appears only in the Greek versions. Scholars have addressed the prayers in Addition C, which is the primary location of prayer in the Greek versions. However, it is not the only place where the Greek versions diverge from MT with regard to prayer. What insight can historical-criticism provide concerning the addition of prayer to LXX and AT? How do the Greek versions read differently with prayer? What ideological claims do these additions make, and how are these claims related to Judean identity? There is more than just a particular notion of Judean righteousness or religiosity involved in the addition of prayer. Instead, prayer adds a number of claims to the story, including but not limited to interests in Torah and the relationship of God to earthly affairs and realms. A reconsideration of the prayers in dialogue with social theory challenges contemporary readers to reassess the role of prayer in the versions and the relationship of the texts to their social worlds.

Chapter four examines circumcision, which appears only in the Greek versions as well. Circumcision is particularly interesting for a number of reasons. First, the Greek

versions not only differ from MT in this case, but they also differ from each other in their claims of who circumcises. Second, circumcision appears at a key place in the story. In MT 8:17 when the decree is sent out that the Judeans may defend themselves against their enemies, there is celebration, and many of the peoples of the land “Judaize.” This is a highly ambiguous *hapax* in Hebrew, and its counterpart in LXX claims that many of the peoples circumcise and “Judaize.” In AT, the Judeans are said to circumcise, with no verbal counterpart to “Judaize” and no participation of the peoples. How did these differences arise? What insight can text criticism provide? How do the narratives read differently? What ideological claims are made, and how do they relate to identity? This verse is crucial to the entire study, which attempts to understand not only individual practices in the texts but also the larger narrative and socio-historical contexts as they relate to practices, ideologies and identities. Final conclusions to this study will be possible only after determining what 8:17 is claiming in each of the versions.

Conclusion

The three versions of Esther under investigation here have been the topic of much debate among historical critics, as the section on historical criticism indicates. In recent years there has been more interest in ideological and social-scientific readings of Esther, though comparative studies such as this one which engage both historical-critical and postmodern approaches are still infrequent. One exception is André LaCocque who engages historical criticism with a Bakhtinian reading.¹²⁹ The benefit of this dissertation for biblical studies is not so much that it provides a completely innovative approach but

¹²⁹ See especially chapter seven of *Esther Regina* where LaCocque examines the Greek translations in their socio-historical contexts. LaCocque, 103-115.

that it offers an alternative focus. Rather than examining one version with a particular theme or lens or looking at all three versions on a larger scale, this study centers on practices. In this way, the subject of practices becomes a means for better understanding the relationship of texts to social world, ideology and identity in antiquity. The work of previous studies of Esther become the foundations and dialogue partners for different portions of this study, but each step of the way social theory offers nuances to our understanding of the roles of these texts and their relationships to each other and to their ancient social contexts.

Who is feasting and who is mourning? What is the status of each character in the story? The answer to the first question may be similar for each of the three versions, but is the answer to the second question similar as well? Through the rest of this study, an examination of the three versions with regard to fasting, prayer and circumcision will provide the basis for answering this and other relevant questions with the aid of historical and postmodern critics. Let us each drink a glass of wine or put on sackcloth as we see fit.

CHAPTER II

TO FAST OR NOT TO FAST: THREE PERSPECTIVES ON FASTING IN ESTHER

Introduction

Concerning fasting in MT Esther, Jon Levenson comments that the mention of mourning rites, fasting and sackcloth is “as close to traditional religious practice as the book of Esther ever gets.”¹³⁰ This statement has of course been debated by scholars, but it raises the question of the meaning and relationship of fasting to other practices in Esther. This chapter will focus especially on fasting as it relates to feasting and general practices and dispositions of mourning, arguing that fasting functions differently in the three versions because the ideological perspectives of the scribes of each version differed. After briefly discussing fasting in antiquity, historical-critical, literary and ideological lenses will help to examine the verses where fasting occurs in order to consider the relationship of fasting to Judean identity in the Second Temple period through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu. Once these goals have been accomplished, a brief examination of Esther's dietary claim in Addition C will be considered within the larger framework of fasting and feasting.

¹³⁰ Levenson, 78.

Fasting and Feasting

Fasting in Antiquity

Biblical scholarship has addressed fasting in the Bible and antiquity from a number of angles. Historical approaches have addressed the origin and development of fasting in the Bible and ancient Israel. Thomas Podella has examined the Bible in the larger context of the Ancient Near East, pointing out that the root **צום**, the primary root associated with fasting in the Hebrew Bible, appears first in Hebrew and Aramaic and later in Arabic, but it is absent in Ugaritic, Phoenician and Mesopotamian languages. Thus, the question arises as to whether fasting as a ritual occurs in Ancient Near Eastern literature other than the Hebrew Bible.¹³¹ Noting that fasting rarely occurs alone but in conjunction with other mourning rituals and that crying and mourning are well attested in the Ancient Near East, he concludes that the root **צום** developed from a Semitic notion of death and mourning rituals common in Israel, Syria and Mesopotamia.¹³² Hence, his survey of mourning rituals is helpful for understanding the Hebrew Bible in its larger cultural context. Adele Berlin has even proposed that fasting should not be viewed as a specifically Judean practice, but instead it was a common practice throughout the Ancient Near East.¹³³

¹³¹ Thomas Podella, *Šôm-Fasten: Kollektive Trauer um den verborgenen Gott im Alten Testament* (Kevelaer: Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989), 1.

¹³² Podella, 2-3; see also H.A. Brongers, "Fasting in Israel in Biblical and Post-Biblical Times," (pages 1-21 in *Oudtestamentische Studiën*; ed. A.S. van der Woude; Leiden: Brill, 1977), 3.

¹³³ Berlin, 46.

Podella and others have also proposed a development of fasting in the Hebrew Bible, and these developments relate to both chronology and context. Podella has suggested that fasting occurred either at the Temple or in the presence of YHWH.¹³⁴ Similarly, John Muddiman claims that in the pre-exilic period fasting seems to have been associated with penance, mourning and supplication. The Yom Kippur fast and other such liturgical fasts also existed at that time.¹³⁵ In the postexilic period there were more public fasts, and fasting may have been used for divination or divine revelation. Also in the Second Temple period, asceticism increased in Judaism and became a customary reaction to disaster.¹³⁶ Along similar lines, Veronika Grimm has pointed out that fasting tends to become longer in the apocryphal texts, but the emphasis is still on mourning and supplication as in the Hebrew Bible.¹³⁷

In post-biblical Judaism fasting became an alternative to sacrifice as a means of sanctification according to Podella.¹³⁸ In addition, David Lambert claims that a particular context—that of penitence—seems to have increased over time, and penitential fasting appears in post-biblical Judaism but not in the Hebrew Bible.¹³⁹ In the later rabbinic

¹³⁴ Podella, 266-67.

¹³⁵ John Muddiman, "Fast, Fasting," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 2 (ed. David Noel Freedman, et al; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 773-74; James A. Montgomery, "Ascetic Strains in Early Judaism," *JBL* 51 (1932): 187-88.

¹³⁶ Muddiman, 774.

¹³⁷ Veronika E. Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting, the Evolution of a Sin: Attitudes to Food in Late Antiquity* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 23-24.

¹³⁸ Podella, 25.

¹³⁹ David Lambert, "Fasting as a Penitential Rite: A Biblical Phenomenon?" *Harvard Theological Review* 96,4 (Oct. 2003): 509-511.

material there is less emphasis on fasting as a component of mourning, apart from mourning the destruction of the Temple.¹⁴⁰ Thus, a number of historically-oriented scholars have proposed that fasting developed over time, and this development is noticeable in the Hebrew Bible and later Jewish material.

In addition, Montgomery has pointed out that during the postexilic period prayer and fasting became linked, and prolonged communal fasts became common.¹⁴¹

Similarly, Philip Thuruthimattan adds that fasting was intended to aid the purpose of prayer.¹⁴² Likewise, Grimm points out that in rabbinic literature both communal and individual fasts are mentioned as a means of strengthening prayer.¹⁴³ Furthermore, Montgomery observes that refraining from natural activity (עֲצָרָה) during a time of consecration was and still is a common Semitic practice,¹⁴⁴ leading to such acts as sexual abstinence and fasting.¹⁴⁵ Hence, a number of scholars have noted the conjunction of fasting with other mourning and lamentation practices.

While these historical analyses are all helpful in one or more ways for understanding fasting in the Hebrew Bible and related texts such as LXX and AT Esther, it is problematic to establish such clear chronological associations with fasting and its

¹⁴⁰ Grimm, 23-24.

¹⁴¹ Montgomery, 188-89.

¹⁴² Philip Thuruthimattam, "Fasting: A Sacramental," *Journal of Dharma* 9 (1984): 281.

¹⁴³ Grimm, 26.

¹⁴⁴ Montgomery, 195.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 198.

functions in the biblical material or the ancient social world. Due to the complexity of the development of the biblical material pointed out by redaction criticism, such specific claims such as a connection of prayer and fasting developing only in the Second Temple period are problematic. Along these lines, Lambert stands out against Montgomery by claiming that fasting rarely occurs apart from prayer except in mourning the dead, and it usually serves as preparation for appeal to God.¹⁴⁶ He makes no claims concerning the conjunction of fasting and prayer in the postexilic period. Similarly, rather than providing a chronology of development of fasting, what the diversity of the texts tell us is that fasting served a number of functions in a number of contexts into the Second Temple period. At times, different groups may have differed as to when it was appropriate to fast. Such complexities continued into late antiquity as the rabbinic material indicates.

In the Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, there are a number of references to fasting beyond the biblical scrolls. The Hebrew root *ענה*, which refers to fasting in the Hebrew Bible in Ezra 8:21 in conjunction with *צום* and in Lev 23:32 in reference to Yom Kippur, does not appear in this sense in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and there are no references to fasting in the Aramaic or Greek materials from Qumran. However, the Hebrew root *צום* appears six times in non-biblical scrolls. Some are too fragmentary to establish a context clearly, but four of the texts provide at least some clues to a general context.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Lambert, 480.

¹⁴⁷ 4Q513 (4QOrdinances) contains *צום* in frag. 5, line one, but there are no other surrounding words to provide a context. 4Q226 (4QPseudo-Jubilees) 7,7 provides a few more textual clues in preceding lines, establishing a context of references to Abraham's faithfulness and YHWH's blessing, as well as Abraham's offspring, but scholars disagree on the reconstruction as to where to place *צום*. It is thus difficult to establish much more concerning context. See Maurice Baillet, *Qumran Grotte 4, III*

Several scrolls reference fasting in the context of atonement or repentance. A reference to a communal fast appears in Peshar Habakkuk (1QpHab XI, 7-8).¹⁴⁸ In this case, the root נָזַם appears in the context of Yom Kippur. Two Damascus Document (CD) scrolls reference fasting. CDA and CDB do not contain parallel passages, but a general sense of context is available. 4QSerek Damascus Document (4Q265 7,4) mentions fasting in the context of one or more references to Sabbath (7,2), a reference to Aaron's offspring not sprinkling something (7, 3) and a reference to atonement for the land (7,9),¹⁴⁹ and a fast on a day is mentioned in 7,4, though this is fragmentary so the specific day is absent.¹⁵⁰ 4QDamascus Document (4Q266 11,5) is a bit clearer with regard to context. With a reference to Joel 2:12-13 (11,5), it proclaims that anyone who does not have these statutes which are found in Mosaic Torah in his mouth will not be regarded among the sons of truth because his being loathes the teachings of justice (7, 6-7). Fasting as a form of repentance (returning to God) is prescribed by Mosaic Torah and is associated with justice. All three texts reference fasting in passages which refer to atonement (1QpHab XI, 7-8; 4Q265 7,9) or repentance (4Q266 11,5), suggesting that fasting has a function in a context of restoring a right relationship with God in both of

(4Q482-4Q520) (DJD VII; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 290; Harold Attridge, et al, *Qumran Cave 4, VIII: Parabiblical Texts, Part 1* (DJD XIII; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 165-166; Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (2 vols.; Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 1998), 1040-1041.

¹⁴⁸ In this case feasting and fasting are juxtaposed, with drinking associated with the Wicked Priest who tries to make the righteous stumble on their fast day.

¹⁴⁹ Martínez and Tigchelaar, 549.

¹⁵⁰ Martínez and Tigchelaar reconstruct as the day of the Sabbath. Ibid, 549.

these passages.¹⁵¹ Thus, fasting is related to proper relationship with God in two non-biblical texts.

The above references to fasting in the DSS suggest fasting was practiced in certain contexts, but the final reference to fasting in the non-biblical scrolls in 4QBeatitudes (4Q525 15,7) indicates a negative attitude to fasting. In this case, after quite a few sections similar to instructions in proverbs which provides teachings to the blessed concerning what they should and should not do, the tone shifts and a burning serpent will be raised.¹⁵² There will be eternal curses and the serpent's foundation is darkness and flames of sulphur (15, 3-6). Then a fragment of line seven reads, "his [doors] are taunting insults, his bolts are fasts of a pit."¹⁵³ Émile Puech has noted that there are no ancient parallels to the expressions "taunting insults" and "fasts of a pit,"¹⁵⁴ so the meaning is ambiguous, but fasting is associated with negative actions. The text seems to suggest that certain fasts are a kind of trap to avoid. What these fasts look like or in what contexts they might be practiced is difficult to say, but overall, in the larger context, the DSS seem to exemplify fasts associated with right relationship with God, whether on Yom Kippur or perhaps more generally, but they also suggest that there are certain fasts which can lead to trouble.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 597.

¹⁵² Benedict T. Viviano, "Beatitudes," in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* 1 (2 vols.; ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 89.

¹⁵³ Martínez and Tigchelaar, 1058-1059.

¹⁵⁴ Émile Puech, *Qumran Grotte 4, XVIII: Textes Hébreux (4Q521-4Q528, 4Q576-4Q579)* (DJD XXV; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 153.

To further complexify fasting in the Second Temple period, the material from Elephantine provides another instance of the practice. In this case, in correspondence with Jerusalem in AP 30, the Elephantine leaders claim when the temple to YHW at Elephantine was destroyed, "We, with the women and children, were dressed in sackcloth, fasting and praying to YHW, the Lord of the Heavens" (AP 30:15).¹⁵⁵ What is most important for this study is the reference to fasting in a letter to Jerusalem. The letter itself provides information on the context, allowing for some conclusions concerning the purpose and context of fasting in a historical event experienced by a group of Judeans.¹⁵⁶ In this case, fasting occurs in response to the destruction of the Elephantine temple, indicating its function in response to crisis. Furthermore, as is often the case with the biblical material, fasting occurs with prayer and sackcloth. Thus, the Elephantine correspondence lends credence to the biblical material indicating, to a certain extent, the actual practice of fasting among Israelites/Judeans in a particular context.

These two examples are by no means exhaustive, but they have been highlighted them for several reasons.¹⁵⁷ First, the materials were produced by two distinct Judean communities in the Second Temple period, so they provide some insight into the variety

¹⁵⁵ James M. Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters* (2nd ed.; ed. Kent Harold Richards; Writings from the Ancient World 14; ed. Theodore J. Lewis; Atlanta, SBL, 2003), 72-75.

¹⁵⁶ In this case, Cohen's schemata for Judean/Jew calls for the Elephantine community to be labeled "Judean" in English because the correspondence is dated to the early Second Temple period (AP 30 is dated to the end of the fifth century B.C.E.) and because the community has a particular relationship to Judea and Jerusalem, invoking geographic and political associations along with religious ones. See Cohen, 82-84.

¹⁵⁷ For a list of scriptural references to fasting and a variety of contexts in the Hebrew Bible and LXX, see Appendix A.

of Judean communities and their thoughts and practices. Second, both communities provide texts of a number of genres which differ from the biblical material, so perspectives on fasting are accounted for in different social and literary contexts. Along with the Hebrew Bible and LXX, the DSS and AP30 provide instances of fasting in such genres as narratives, psalms, commentaries, oracles and letters. Such diversity, along with a diversity of communities and contexts, helps to nuance our understanding of fasting among Judeans in the Second Temple period.

Finally, Veronika Grimm has examined the role of fasting within the larger context of the Greco-Roman world, pointing out that the Greeks and Romans did not typically practice fasting. In general, fasting was associated with mysterious cults instead of the official religion.¹⁵⁸ In fact, a number of Greco-Roman authors identify fasting as a Judean/Jewish practice, along with Sabbath and circumcision.¹⁵⁹ Based on Judean/Jewish, Christian and Greco-Roman sources, she concludes that fasting was a conspicuous Judean/Jewish practice by the time of the Roman Empire.¹⁶⁰ This is not to say that no other groups engaged in fasting or circumcision, for there is evidence that other groups participated in both practices. Some Greco-Roman philosophers practiced starvation as a way to end a long life, as a way to protest injustice and as a consequence of shame.¹⁶¹ Grimm's analysis helps to understand non-Judean/Jewish attitudes to fasting

¹⁵⁸ Grimm, 40-42.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 28.

¹⁶⁰ Veronika Grimm, "Fasting Women in Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity," in *Food in Antiquity* (ed. John Wilkins, David Harvey and Mike Dobson; foreword Alan Davidson; Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), 226.

¹⁶¹ Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting*, 57.

in the Greco-Roman world, which are also complex. Furthermore, although both Judean/Jewish and Greco-Roman texts suggest that fasting was practiced by Jews in antiquity, not all Jews encouraged the practice, and there is evidence of strong objections to the practice in Jewish texts from Philo of Alexandria to the Talmud.¹⁶² What is most important for this study is the idea that fasting was sometimes considered a Judean/Jewish practice by non-Jews, but within this perspective some non-Jews practiced fasting at times as well. Yet, at the same time, there were varying perspectives on fasting among Judeans/Jews themselves. Thus, as with circumcision, fasting was viewed and practiced (or refrained from) in a number of ways by a number of different Judean/Jewish and non-Jewish groups.

Conclusions

Before moving on to an analysis of the texts in question, it may be helpful to summarize the observations on fasting in antiquity. First, fasting functioned in a number of different situations associated with lamentation, including death and personal or communal crisis, and it seems to have served as a way of petitioning God since it often accompanied prayer. The restrictions and prescriptions on fasting, whether official as stated through religious leadership or unofficial and even unconscious as a product of habitus (i.e., doxa), could have changed over time or from one social field to another. Both official and unofficial restrictions and prescriptions may be evidenced in the texts, though caution is necessary in making specific claims about fasting among Judeans.

This leads to the second important point, namely, that the various perspectives on fasting may at times represent a difference in chronological time, as some scholars have

¹⁶² Grimm, "Fasting Women in Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity," 228.

proposed, but these perspectives may also represent different groups of Judeans in different social fields or in different positions in the same social field. Mercedes L. Garcia Bachmann's reading of Isa 58 points to such a possibility. Examining fasting in Isaiah 58 with a postcolonial lens, Bachmann points out the difference in status between the oppressor and the oppressed in the text. The oppressed who are often poor sometimes have no dietary choices, while the affluent oppressors may fast either on behalf of the poor or to serve their own agendas. In the case of Isa 58, the ruling class fasts on their own behalf, and the oppressed are called on to fast for them.¹⁶³ The oracle condemns such fasting, pointing out that YHWH calls for fasting which does away with injustice and frees the oppressed (vv. 6-7).

Thus, two perspectives on fasting emerge from an examination of Isa 58. On the one hand, the elite consider fasting as a means of petitioning God for their own benefit, and as leaders they may impose a fast on the people. On the other hand, the text presents a negative view of such fasting, calling instead for fasting on behalf of the poor. Isa 58 may exemplify the problem of chronologies with regard to fasting because it exhibits two perspectives on fasting and two functions of fasting in one text. Of course, the prophetic perspective dominates in this text, but it also points to another perspective, one in which leaders call communal fasts for their own benefit. Thus, although chronology may at times explain the perspective(s) on fasting in a certain text, in other cases a different social field (such as the Jerusalem and Elephantine temples or pre-exilic and postexilic Judah/Judea) or a different position in the same social field (such as prophets and priests

¹⁶³ Mercedes L. Garcia Bachmann, "True Fasting and Unwilling Hunger (Isaiah 58)," in *The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation* (ed. Alejandro F. Botta and Pablo R. Andinach; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 130.

in Jerusalem) may be an underlying reason for different perspectives on fasting in the texts.

Finally, related to habitus and social field is the notion of capital touched on briefly in the discussion of Laniak's analysis of fasting. Capital in large part determines one's position in a social field, but capital is also field specific so that what is valuable in one field may be less valuable in another. Ability to read and write in Aramaic, for example, could have been more valuable cultural capital for Judeans when it was a lingua franca in the Ancient Near East than when it was replaced by Greek and Latin because it operated in more social fields when it was the lingua franca. Yet, according to Bourdieu, the ability to read and write allow one to control symbolic capital associated with religion. The texts then are a means of power because they allow the authors to influence the audiences. Judean leaders could thus utilize their literacy and the texts to convey their perspectives on fasting and feasting.

Furthermore, habitus is also field specific, though it can transfer across fields. Since habitus produces practices, it is important to consider the role of habitus and social field in an analysis of practices such as fasting. Although fasting itself is probably produced more consciously than other every day practices as defined by Bourdieu, it is still a practice conditioned by its environment. This has several ramifications relevant to this study. First, since habitus is durable but may change slowly over time, it is possible for the practices it produces to also change slowly over time. Thus, chronology may be a factor to consider if fasting is represented differently in different texts because a group's habitus both structures and is structured by its environment, and as the environment changes (also slowly), the habitus and its dispositions and practices may change. The

result is that the practice of fasting and the dispositions associated with it may change as a result of time. However, different social fields and different positions within the same social field may also affect the dispositions and practices of habitus. For example, those of the Qumran community may have had less power in Jerusalem than they did in their own community along the Dead Sea. As a result, they may have been able to think and act in ways that were constrained in Jerusalem because the Temple leadership were in positions of power over the Qumran leaders. Likewise, the Elephantine leaders may have emphasized fasting and their relationship to YHW in communication with the Jerusalem leaders in ways that they might not have in their own community. This is not to say that the Elephantine priests lied, and everything is of course speculation concerning ancient texts and communities, but Bourdieu's theory of practice suggests that humans think and act differently in different social situations, so such propositions are not entirely implausible even if they are not provable.

It may be possible to say then that fasting and prayer to YHW functioned closely with capital for the Judeans at Elephantine. Such practices and claims about them probably had less impact with imperial officials, but in the case of the AP30 correspondence, it was the Judean Jerusalem leaders who were able to help the Elephantine community. In this case, the Elephantine priests utilized writing, mentioning practices acknowledged by the Judean leaders in Jerusalem, to gain help from the Judeans with the means to aid them. The mention of the practice of fasting then may have been a way to implore the Judean leaders in the same way the practice itself was meant to implore God.

On one level a text like AP30 points to the actual practice of fasting in a particular context, the destruction of the temple. On another level, because of rhetoric and the power of writing as a means of cultural capital, the letter also indicates what is valuable for the audience since the audience in this case may have more power than the author in the particular social field of Judean leaders. This power dynamic is different than other genres such as narrative in which the authors may be in positions of more power than the audiences. Thus, the rhetorical function of fasting in AP30 may be different than in MT Esther written by a Judean authority for a Judean audience. Likewise, the function may be different again in the Greek versions of Esther where the authors, audiences and social positions may change again.

In conclusion, fasting as represented in the ancient texts in question is by no means straightforward, as the texts and the social world in which the texts were produced are complex. Therefore, each text should be considered individually for its theological claims and its relationship to authors, audiences and the social world in which it functioned. With these matters in mind, a closer look at fasting and feasting in Esther is in order.

Feasting in Esther

In order to understand the role of fasting, it is important to compare feasting with fasting because feasting is an important motif in the story, and fasting and feasting are juxtaposed literarily.¹⁶⁴ All of the versions include the literary motif of banquets as a

¹⁶⁴ Sandra Beth Berg, *The Book of Esther: Motifs, Themes and Structure* (SBL Dissertation series 44; ed. Howard C. Kee and Douglas A. Knight; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1979), 37, 96-98; Berlin, xxv; Crawford, "The Book of Esther," 856-858;

means of establishing prestige and cultural capital. In chapter one, the king throws two banquets to display his power and honor, and Vashti also throws a banquet, suggesting that she is someone of importance, though perhaps of less importance than the king since few words are used to describe her banquet, and the text is not interested in her wealth and riches because it says nothing of her displaying anything to her guests. Her status in relation to the king is further revealed when the king summons her to show her off to his guests. Timothy Laniak has observed that Vashti is one of the many objects which display the king's honor.¹⁶⁵ Thus, although she is a person of importance since she throws a banquet, she is not as powerful as the king. Nevertheless, she refuses to come when summoned, and a power play ensues which results in a law establishing husbands as the heads of the households. The narrative in chapter one reveals, through the banquets and the events that ensue from them, a certain hierarchy of men and women, which is at once fundamental to the social world of the text and subject to challenge. This notion will become important later in consideration of the Judean feasts because the Judeans and the women in the text have parallel roles as subjects of men and the empire.¹⁶⁶ Chapter one then establishes both the literary and social setting of the narrative, with the banquets becoming an important motif in the first ten verses and struggle for status becoming an important power dynamic.

The banquet motif is a technique which moves the story forward, with feasting

Levenson, 6; Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 156-158; Clines, *The Esther Scroll*, 36-37.

¹⁶⁵ Laniak, 46.

¹⁶⁶ Timothy Beal, *The Book of Hiding: Gender, Ethnicity, Annihilation and Esther* (New York; London: Routledge, 1997), 13-14.

occurring at key points in the narrative: in chapter one to set up the narrative and establish a path for Esther to become queen; in chapter two to celebrate Esther's marriage to the king; in chapters 5-7 when Esther invites the king and Haman in order to reveal Haman's plot and save her people; and in chapters 8-9 when the Judeans celebrate their survival and establish Purim. Sandra Beth Berg has provided the most extensive discussion of the motif of feasting, noting a structural pattern to the feasts, with certain feasts juxtaposed to one another in order not only to establish a literary structure but also to compare and contrast who is in and who is out and to highlight the plot reversals which take place.¹⁶⁷

If feasting is a means of establishing capital and prestige in the text, then it is important to note who feasts and what they gain or maintain as a result. Who is in and who is out relates to prestige and honor. Those with the economic capital to host the feasts (the king, Vashti, Esther) hold the most honor, but those invited to the feasts also have a certain amount of social capital as insiders with a special relationship to the hosts. They thus have a certain amount of access to the hosts in special positions of power. Furthermore, within the social field of the palace, not all of those involved have equal status. In the case of Esther for example, she becomes queen and hosts two banquets at a crucial point in the narrative, but she must still take care not to upset the king, who could write her out with a law (if Haman's law does not do this first). As Laniak points out, Esther becomes the recipient of honor and grace, but in order to keep her honor (a type of symbolic capital in the world of the text), she has to respect the king's honor.¹⁶⁸ Thus,

¹⁶⁷ Berg, 31-35.

¹⁶⁸ Laniak, 65.

although she is the one who has attained a new position and has new cards to play, she must take care not to offend the only named character in the story whose position does not seem to change much, the king. In Bourdieu's terms, she has attained more social capital through her new relationship with the king and those in the palace, as well as more economic capital (she was an orphan) and symbolic capital, but her position in the social field of the palace is not as powerful as that of the king. Thus, Esther's position and power change several times, and the banquets play an important role in advancing her position.

The final banquets occur when the Judeans attain salvation. They celebrate their victory on the thirteenth and fourteenth of Adar (or fourteenth and fifteenth outside Susa). The status of the Judeans has changed, despite being a subjected people in an empire. They are now able to hold their own feasts. These banquets are different than previous ones in a number of important ways. First, they are established as an annual celebration for Judeans throughout the empire, whereas the previous banquets were one-time occasions with different objectives than a memorial/celebratory festival. As Kenneth Craig points out, the Purim feasts parallel the banquets in chapter one, but they are celebrated by an unofficial group, while the banquets in chapter one are official, royal feasts.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, the Purim feasts are more enduring. While the Judeans only feast for one day and the king feasts for 180 and another seven in chapter one, the king's feast are one-time occasions, not a festival for future generations.¹⁷⁰ Thus, on the one hand,

¹⁶⁹ Craig, 68.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

the Judeans official status within the empire has changed because they are able to feast rather than mourn. On the other hand, their status compared to the king is still lower.

Finally, the parallel between women and Judeans is important. In chapter one, power struggles between the king and queen resulted in a law establishing men having power over women because, according the king's advisor Memucan, if Vashti's disobedience served as an example to the women, chaos would ensue in the empire. In a parallel but distinct manner, Judeans are to be controlled and even annihilated according to the king's next advisor, Haman. Yet, in an ironic twist, Haman's law against the Judeans creates chaos which must be taken care of with another law because Persian law is irrevocable in the world of MT and LXX. This law also creates disorder because it allows the Judeans to defend themselves against anyone taking Haman's law to heart, and only after the blood bath which declares the Judeans victorious over their enemies do problems between Judeans and their enemies return to order. In this context, the Judeans write one final law declaring the annual Purim celebration in which they send food to one another.

The themes of men versus women and enemies versus Judeans are two parallel sets of conflicts in the narrative, but they are also distinct. Both Memucan's and Haman's laws are absurd because they develop out of a certain amount of paranoia on the part of their authors. Problems that do not actually exist on an imperial scale become subjects of imperial law. Insolent individuals come to represent entire groups in the minds of the offended characters (the king, Memucan and Haman), so both women and Judeans are stereotyped as insolent and in need of legal control. These are some of the commonalities between the two themes. Yet, no law is written to reverse Memucan's law. Instead, it

remains intact, and the women must continue to negotiate the patriarchal world of the text. In this way, the text, despite its absurdity in legal matters, reflects the social world in which it was produced and transmitted. Patriarchy did not go away, and at different times and in different social fields, some women may have gained more power and status, but in general men still had power over women and the women had to negotiate their positions in a social field with the capital they had. Thus, these two themes are parallel and they point to an important social aspect of both the text and the imperial world in which it was produced. Both women and Judeans were subjected to men and empire, but their experiences were distinct from each other, just as the two literary conflicts are distinct.

Banquets thus not only move the story forward, but they indicate one's position in a field of power established by patriarchal and imperial structures.¹⁷¹ Within these structures, a subjugated Judean girl attains a similar status to the king's closest male advisors, and a subjugated people could be said to attain more capital than other subjugated peoples as they are the only ones explicitly given the legal right to defend themselves. Furthermore, their status among other subjugated peoples seems to increase when other peoples "Judaize" in 8:17. The meaning of this word will be discussed in chapter four, but it certainly indicates a desire to associate with Judeans in some way, something which they would have avoided when the Judeans were due to be annihilated.

Hence, on a structural and literary level, there is a reversal of fortunes and of power because those who are powerless at the beginning of the story attain more power

¹⁷¹ The king may in theory still have more power than the Judeans at the end of the story, but Esther is certainly able to influence the king to her people's advantage.

by the end, so the banquets are important with regard to power and status.¹⁷² Those involved in the banquets have symbolic capital and social capital which they can sometimes utilize to obtain more power, while those who are outsiders do not generally attain such capital. Esther and Mordecai are the exceptions of course, an important aspect of the subversiveness of the narrative. Esther and the Judeans, through the motif of banquets, move from outsiders to insiders in the empire. How does fasting relate to this literary, structural and cultural motif?

Fasting in Esther

Fasting and feasting are juxtaposed in Esther.¹⁷³ Fasting occurs at a key moment in the MT and LXX narratives. Upon hearing of Haman's decree to annihilate the Judeans, Mordecai pleads with Esther to go before the king on her people's behalf. At first she is reluctant because a law states that she could be killed for approaching the king without being summoned. She then agrees, and Esther, her maidservants, Mordecai and the Judeans in Susa fast for Esther (4:16-17). This Judean fast is clearly juxtaposed to all the Persian feasting, especially since Haman and the king sit down to drink while the rest of Susa is in confusion after Haman's decree is sent out (3:15). Fasting therefore plays a crucial literary role in MT and LXX. As Kenneth Craig notes, the fasting is part of an instrument of change in the text which moves from Judean fast to Judean feast.¹⁷⁴

Fasting not only serves to juxtapose Judeans and non-Judeans. It also plays a role in the

¹⁷² Berg, 96-98.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 37; Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 66; Laniak, 87.

¹⁷⁴ Craig, 65.

reversal of fortunes for the Judeans through juxtaposition of Judean fasting and feasting.

Laniak has also noted its sociological significance because it is a means of accepting one's status of shame by intentionally shaming oneself publicly. Whether fasting in Esther indicates Judean acceptance of their status is questionable given Mordecai's exhortation to Esther and the risk she takes to plead for her people, but the fast in 4:16 does symbolically associate the Judeans with death in contrast to the (over-)nourishment in the Persian feasts. Whether the association is with Esther's possible death or the death of the whole community is a question left unanswered by the text though.

All of this is to say that fasting carries numerous literary and social connotations in 4:16. Yet, there is disagreement among the versions concerning fasting, and this is the current topic of further investigation. For one thing, AT lacks any specific mention of fasting in 4:16, disagreeing with both MT and LXX in this key moment in the plot. Furthermore, MT includes two additional references to fasting which are absent in both LXX and AT (4:3 and 9:31). If fasting is so crucial to the narrative, why do the versions disagree and how does the story change in meaning in each of the versions concerning fasting? These are the questions to be addressed now, first from a historical-critical perspective and then from a social-scientific perspective in conjunction with a consideration of the role of each version for its authors and audiences.

For the most part, scholarly studies of fasting in Esther have focused on MT.¹⁷⁵ While a focus on MT Esther is a fruitful endeavor, there are textual and thus contextual differences among the versions which lead to different readings of fasting and feasting.

¹⁷⁵ Even Michael Fox, who examines ideology and characterizes the three versions in question here, only gives a brief and general treatment of the motif of feasting in Esther. See Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 156-58.

Historical criticism will aid in examining the three instances of fasting in MT and in comparing these verses to LXX and AT. At the same time, it will be important to keep in mind the questions of ideology and Judean identity in the imperial diaspora.

Esther 4:3 (AT 4:1)¹⁷⁶

Redaction and textual criticism

The first instance where the versions differ with regard to fasting is in 4:3 (AT 4:1) when there is a response to Haman's decree against the Judeans. Each of the versions reads as follows:

MT

In every province, any place where the king's word and his law extended, there was great mourning among the Judeans, fasting, weeping and lamentation; sackcloth and ashes were spread out for multitudes.

וּבְכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דְּבַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ מְגִיעַ אֲבָל גְּדוֹל
לְיִהוּדִים וְצוֹם וּבְכִי וּמִסָּפֵד שֶׁק וְאָפֶר יָצַע לְרַבִּים :

LXX

In every region where the documents were published, there was shouting, mourning and extreme grief for the Judeans; they spread sackcloth and ashes on themselves.

καὶ ἐν πάσῃ χώρᾳ, οὗ ἐξετίθετο τὰ γράμματα, κραυγὴ καὶ κοπετὸς καὶ πένθος μέγα τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις, σάκκον καὶ σποδὸν ἔστρωσαν ἑαυτοῖς.¹⁷⁷

AT (4:1)

Now Mordecai came to know everything that had happened, and the city of Susa was in tumult over the things that had come about, and there was extreme grief and bitterness for the sake of the Judeans in every city.

Ὁ δὲ Μαρδοχαῖος ἐπέγνω πάντα τὰ γεγονότα, καὶ ἡ πόλις Σοῦσα ἐταράσσετο ἐπὶ τοῖς γεγενημένοις, καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ἦν πένθος μέγα καὶ πικρὸν ἐν

¹⁷⁶ For LXX and AT, the chapter and verse divisions follow Hanhart.

¹⁷⁷ For both LXX and AT, accents follow Hanhart's reconstruction.

παση πόλει.

Fasting is only explicitly mentioned in MT, though other acts of lamentation occur in all three versions in response to the decree with AT exhibiting the most brief mention of grief and bitterness. In each version, Mordecai responds with lamentation (4:1; AT 4:2), and the city of Susa does likewise (4:3; AT 4:1). There are two key differences among the versions worth considering for this study. AT's brevity is not surprising given that it often represents the shortest version, but the fact that LXX generally follows MT here but does not include fasting is worth considering.¹⁷⁸ There are two possible textual explanations for this. MT could represent the earlier reading, in which case fasting was intentionally or accidentally omitted in LXX and AT. The other possibility is that AT and LXX represent the earlier readings, and fasting was added to MT at some point. A case can be made for MT representing the earlier reading if the phrase **וַיִּצְוֶם** dropped out in Hebrew due to *homoioteleuton* with the preceding phrase **לְיְהוּדֵי יִם**. This is a possibility worth entertaining, especially since *homioarcton* could also have played a role because **וַיִּצְוֶם** is the first of three noun phrases linked with a vav conjunction (**וַיִּצְוֶם וַיִּבְכֶּי וַיִּמְסָפֵר**). If this is the case, fasting could have dropped out entirely accidentally, or the scribes could have intentionally omitted it. Given that there are different perspectives on fasting in Second Temple Judean texts, it is possible that fasting was omitted in the Greek versions because it was only practiced at certain times or by

¹⁷⁸ To say that LXX does not include fasting in 4:3 means that a majority of the witnesses do not mention it. *νηστεία* is included in two miniscule manuscripts (58 and 93). As for AT, none of the manuscripts mentions fasting here, including 93 which includes both LXX and AT texts. See Hanhart, 9.

certain groups. In other words, the habitus of certain social fields may not have produced this practice as frequently, or the scribes in a different social field may have had a different disposition to fasting.

André LaCocque has proposed concerning AT that it was a text revised to suit a Gentile audience. Along with the Letter of Aristeas, he argues, AT should be considered an apology written to a Gentile audience. He points out a number of omissions, additions and other differences in AT which would have been offensive or uninteresting to such an audience. For example, the king and the Persians are depicted in a better light, while Haman is an enemy of the king and the only truly evil character.¹⁷⁹ For LaCocque, the Judean problem is refocused to suit a Gentile perspective which would ask whether Judeans are people to be trusted. The answer AT provides is that Esther and Mordecai are trustworthy. This takes place in the context of conflict between two courtiers, one who is loyal to the throne and one who is not, rather than in the context of an age-old Judean problem with the Amalekites as MT shapes the story.¹⁸⁰ There are places where LaCocque's evidence may be problematic, but he raises the question of social context. If AT is a narrative for a Gentile audience, it is possible that fasting was removed because it was not an important practice for most Greco-Roman audiences, as Veronika Grimm has noted. In this case, AT functions in similar ways to AP30 in that AT scribes sought to convince a particular audience of their perspective and in this case fasting would not have aided the cause. This is a possibility worth entertaining in considering the impetus for the

¹⁷⁹ LaCocque, *Esther Regina*, 104-105.

¹⁸⁰ André LaCocque, "The Different Versions of Esther," *Biblical Interpretation* 7,3 (July 1999): 319.

variations among the versions. The question that remains though is how to explain the lack of fasting in LXX 4:3. LaCocque does not suggest LXX was produced for a Gentile audience. Other than *homoioteleuton*, the only explanation for the absence of fasting in LXX 4:3 is either that the scribes removed it because fasting was not as popular for them or their Judean audience or because, rather than representing the earlier version in this case, MT actually represents the more developed version and fasting was not a part of the story in 4:3 when LXX was translated.

For now it is important to point out that MT includes three references to fasting, compared to one in LXX (4:16) and none in AT. Either fasting was removed prior to or during translation of the Greek versions, or fasting was added to MT. Final conclusions on this verse will be drawn after discussing 4:16 and 9:31. For now it is important to note that apart from proposing a redactive move of 4:3 between 3:15 and 4:1, most commentaries do not treat v. 3 historically-critically, so a comparison of the versions is absent.¹⁸¹ One exception is Sandra Beth Berg, who proposes that fasting in 9:31 may be a later addition, not drawing this conclusion about 4:3 and thus suggesting she views fasting as original to the story in this verse.¹⁸² Additionally, Moore responds to those who propose moving the verse, asserting that the verse is best in its current position for its literary purpose.¹⁸³ Overall, however, most scholars are interested in this verse primarily from literary and theological perspectives.

¹⁸¹ Helmer Ringgren, "Das Buch Esther," in *Das Alte Testament Deutsch* 16,1 (ed. Otto Kaiser and Lothar Perlitt; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1980), 406.

¹⁸² Berg, 37.

¹⁸³ Moore, *Esther*, 47.

Literary and ideological matters

The addition of fasting to MT 4:3 establishes a more explicit literary frame that is not quite *inclusio* but which moves the events of chapter four from lamentation and fasting in response to Haman's decree, to a dialogue between Mordecai and Esther and finally to another instance of fasting which is related to another decree which requires Esther to risk her life if she is to appear before the king. In a narrative that already juxtaposes the Judeans and the Persians through fasting and feasting, this relationship is heightened as the Judeans fast just as Haman and the king are drinking. Thus, 4:3 in MT sets up the chapter as one which not only focuses on the Judeans in the face of the decree against them, but which also presents the Judeans as responding appropriately to the catastrophe and is a subtle barb at the king. Haman is a known enemy and the clear antagonist of the story, but the king has been presented more as a gullible character who will take advice from anyone who pleases him. Rather than being upset that an entire group of people is about to be annihilated, the king does what does best—he drinks. Precisely when fasting was added to MT is difficult to say, but it presents more than a simple claim that it is appropriate to fast in the face of disaster. Fasting also distinguishes the Judeans from those in power, and adding fasting to 4:3 intensifies both the difference as well as the overall reaction of mourning to the decree.

The absence of fasting in the Greek versions in this verse may not speak so much to a particular desire to keep fasting out of the narrative here as it does to the historical-critical issue of fasting being added to the Hebrew after the Greek versions, especially LXX, were established. LXX certainly exhibits no aversion to fasting, and given the general trend of distinguishing the Judeans/Jews from those around them as much as

possible in the Greek, it is interesting that fasting did not make it into these versions in 4:3. Thus, there is probably less to say about the literary and ideological characteristics of the Greek than there is to say about MT in this verse. The scribes of the Hebrew tradition which became MT at some point added fasting because it was part of their habitus to respond to disaster with fasting and because the literary qualities of the narrative tended in that direction as well. Why not intensify the events of a decisive chapter with regard to Judean life?

Esther 4:16 (AT 4:11)

Redaction and textual criticism

Concerning fasting in Esther, 4:16 (AT 4:11) is a key verse. It is in this verse that both MT and LXX explicitly include a fast, while AT stands apart with no specific mention of fasting. Each of the versions of this verse reads as follows:

MT

16a “Go, gather all the Jews who are found in Susa and fast for me, and do not eat and do not drink for three days, night and day. I and my maidservants will also fast in this way

לְךָ כְּנוּס אֶת-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים הַנִּמְצְאִים בְּשׁוּשַׁן וְצוּמוּ עִלַּי
וְאֶל-תֹּאכְלוּ וְאֶל-תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשַׁת יָמִים לַיְלָה וַיּוֹם גַּם-אֲנִי וְנַעֲרֹתַי אֲצוּם כֵּן

LXX

16a “Proceed to assemble the Jews who are in Susa and fast for me, and do not eat or drink for three days, night and day, and both I and my maidservants will fast.”

Βαδίσας ἐκκλησίασον τοὺς Ἰουδαίους τοὺς ἐν Σούσοις καὶ νηστεύσατε ἐπ’ ἐμοὶ καὶ μὴ φάγητε μηδὲ πίητε ἐπὶ ἡμέρας τρεῖς νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν καὶ γὰρ δὲ καὶ αἱ ἄβραι μου ἀσιτήσομεν

AT

11b-c “Call an assembly and beseech God intensely. Both I and my maidservants will do likewise.”

Παραγγείλατε θεραπείαν καὶ δεήθητε τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκτενῶς· καὶ γὰρ καὶ τὰ
κοράσιά μου ποιήσομεν οὕτως

As in 4:3, LXX agrees with MT nearly word for word, but AT reads differently, though it does carry the same basic idea of a communal response to the situation which includes Esther and her maidservants. As Carey Moore notes, AT retains the "deeper implications of intent" in the Hebrew.¹⁸⁴ Is this a case of paraphrasing on the part of AT in which the scribes intentionally omitted fasting, or do MT and LXX represent an addition to the narrative? AT differs so significantly here that a text-critical analysis for such phenomena as *homoioteleuton*, *homoioarcton*, metathesis and the like is difficult to pursue. Furthermore, there is no textual evidence from a comparison of the various Hebrew and Greek witnesses which would suggest that something was omitted from AT, MT or LXX due to *homoioteleuton* or *homoioarcton*, and no scholars have suggested this with regard to this verse. Instead, the focus has been on the purpose of fasting in the verse either for its literary qualities or as an etiology of the Purim fast.¹⁸⁵

A consideration of the larger narrative contexts and the general qualities of the versions, as well as the larger social contexts may aid in understanding how the versions differ here. First, however, it is important to point out that fasting is mentioned twice in both MT and LXX 4:16, but LXX provides two different Greek words for fasting

¹⁸⁴ On fasting's literary purpose see Levenson, 81; Beal, "Esther," in *Ruth and Esther* (Berit Olam; ed. David W. Cotter, Jerome T. Walsh and Chris Franke; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 67; Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 157; Crawford, "The Book of Esther," 905; Clines, *The Esther Scroll*, 36-37; on fasting as an etiology see Moore, *Esther*, 51; Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 202; Hans Bardtke, "Das Buch Esther," in *Kommentar zum Alten Testament XVII*, 4-5 (ed. Wilhelm Rudolph, Karl Elliger and Franz Hesse; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1963), 334.

¹⁸⁵ Ringgren and Bardtke both understand it as an etiology. Ringgren, 407; Bardtke, 334-335.

(νηστεύω and ἀσιτέω) in place of MT's one Hebrew word (צָוַם). In this case, LXX represents a case of stylistic translation choice, pointing to a fundamental difference between Hebrew and Greek literary style rather than a different LXX *Vorlage*. Whereas in Hebrew repetition of the same word or root is a common literary trait, such repetition could be perceived as unnecessary redundancy in Greek.¹⁸⁶ There are numerous instances where LXX Esther displays preferences for Greek phraseology and syntax over Hebraisms, including the use of the Greek proper nouns such as Xerxes and the use of participial phrases instead of finite verbs.¹⁸⁷ An example of the use of a participle instead of a finite verb occurs in this verse in the choice of Βαδίσας to represent the imperative צָוַם. Therefore, the Greek translators probably chose two different verbs for fasting in order to avoid this perceived problem.¹⁸⁸

Beyond this minor difference, LXX and MT are in agreement in this verse. None of the scholars who address the larger question of redaction with regard to MT, LXX and AT discuss at any length fasting specifically in 4:16 (AT 4:11), and AT's variant is rarely discussed in the commentaries. There is no textual evidence from a comparison of the various Hebrew and Greek manuscripts which would suggest that something was omitted

¹⁸⁶ Alter, 92-95.

¹⁸⁷ Moore gives a brief treatment of LXX's syntax and provides a few examples of the style. Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 162-163; Karen Jobes notes that although syntax indicates nothing substantial about the origin of the six Additions, there is a tendency in both LXX and AT to revise them toward more compositional Greek, suggesting that translators/editors of both versions preferred more compositional Greek than translators/editors of the Pentateuch, Samuel and Kings. Jobes, 28.

¹⁸⁸ See Hanna Kahana who notes that ἀσιτέω can occasionally mean “to lack appetite” but proposes that stylistic variation is the most probable reason for this rare verb for fasting in LXX 4:16. Kahana, 210.

from AT, MT or LXX due to *homoioteleuton* or *homioarcton*, and no scholars have suggested this with regard to this verse. When commentators address it, they usually call it a free translation, but if AT at times represents an earlier version of Esther, then fasting may have been added to Proto-MT here.¹⁸⁹

In this case, in the larger context of the three versions, especially MT, the most probable scenario is that fasting developed in the Proto-MT tradition and continued to develop more in the Hebrew even after LXX was translated. If, for example, one purpose of the fast in 4:16 is etiological, this could explain the addition of the fast to the Proto-Masoretic tradition. However, the problem with this idea is that if it appeared in Proto-MT by the time of the LXX translation (first century B.C.E. at the latest), then this suggests that the Purim fast, which is typically dated to the Talmudic period based on a Purim fast day in *Ta'anit Esther*, was practiced by at least some Judeans in the Second Temple period. The fact that a fast appears here in Josephus further bolsters the notion that the fast in 4:16 appeared in Proto-MT by the end of the Second Temple period. However, there is no fast mentioned in the parallel passage in Josephus for 9:31 in the context of Purim, so it is difficult to claim with certainty that Judeans were fasting on Purim by the end of the first century, C.E. Given that there were different dispositions to fasting in the Second Temple period, it is possible that some Judeans were already fasting on Purim.

¹⁸⁹ See Anton Scholz who claims that AT's rendering *θεραπείαν* connotes a fast in conjunction with fasting and solemn assembly in Joel (1:14; 2:15). Anton Scholz, *Commentar über das Buch "Esther" mit seinen "Zusätzen" und über "Susanna"* (Würzburg: Leo Woerl, 1892), 60.

However, without any clearer textual evidence for a Purim fast, it is better to understand the fast in 4:16 as a literary and ideological development in Proto-MT which resulted from a desire to juxtapose more clearly the Judeans and the empire and/or a particular disposition to fasting in the midst of crisis. In other words, the scribes of Proto-MT operated with habitus and in a social field that tended to produce the practice of fasting in times of crisis, while the scribes of AT may have had a different disposition to the practice. There was no need, even under the influence of LXX when AT was revised to include fasting in AT 4:11. Prayer was enough. The result is that AT has no instances of fasting, while LXX has one and MT has three.

Literary and ideological matters

In MT and LXX the fast in 4:16 is a pivotal moment which is the impetus for the reversal of fortunes that takes place through the rest of the story. Esther won the king over with her beauty in chapter two, and in chapter five she attempts to win the king's favor after fasting for three days. The miraculous nature of the fast in chapter four and the winning of the king's favor in chapter five is heightened in the context of the beauty contest of chapter two. Despite being physically weak, Esther won the king's favor. Furthermore, the Judean fast in 4:16 juxtaposes the Judeans with the Persians who feast, literarily distinguishing the Judeans from the Persians. Is this aspect of the story absent from AT?¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ In the absence of this miraculous fast, the efficacy of prayer is heightened in AT. The next chapter will examine the role of prayer more closely. For now it should also be noted that the phrase "beseech God intensely" was probably added to AT as a transition to the prayers which follow, and the pairing of the ceremonial assembly with prayer before Esther appears before the king intensifies the efficacy of communal assembly and prayer.

Despite the absence of words for fasting in AT, there is a ceremonial assembly and prayer. The Greek for “ceremonial assembly” is *θεραπεία*, a word which appears in Joel 1:14 and 2:15 in conjunction with fasting. In both instances in Joel, the audience is commanded: “Sanctify a fast and proclaim a solemn assembly.”¹⁹¹ These are contexts of lamentation in which the audience is told to prepare for the day of YHWH. In particular, in 2:12 YHWH says, “Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping and lamenting.” Forms of lamentation, including fasting, weeping and a ceremonial gathering, take on the connotation of turning back to God, often in association with the Hebrew root *שׁוּב*. In both 1:14 and 2:15, *θεραπεία* is the equivalent of *הִרְצַעַ*, which includes the idea of restraint, and since it is found alongside *נִצְוָה/νηστεία* the parallelism suggests similar though not necessarily identical semantic meaning to fasting. Unfortunately, this is the only instance in LXX where *הִרְצַעַ* is translated as *θεραπεία*, so any conclusions concerning the meaning of the Greek word for Greek-speaking Judeans is sketchy at best. However, the possibility that *θεραπεία* carried the connotation of restraint should not be dismissed.¹⁹² AT leaves open for interpretation what *θεραπεία* looks like in 4:11.

In addition, it should be noted that in Addition D:1, after finishing her prayer, Esther takes off the garments of her *θεραπεία* and puts on the garments of honor

¹⁹¹ MT *הִרְצַעַ קְרָא וְצוּם קָרְא*; LXX *ἀγιάσατε νηστείαν, κηρύξατε θεραπείαν*

¹⁹² See Horst Seebass who proposes that the Hebrew root *רָצַע* connotes restraint and that *הִרְצַעַ* is a ceremonial restraint which could include refraining from a number of different practices, especially in time of war. Horst Seebass, “Tradition und Interpretation bei Jehu ben Chanani und Ahia von Silo,” *Vetus Testamentum* 25 (1975): 182.

(δόξα).¹⁹³ This sentence may have been intended in part to transition from the prayers in Addition C to the scene in chapter five where Esther seeks an audience with the king. Alternatively, since it agrees with LXX, it may have served as a transition from chapter four to chapter five prior to the addition of the prayers. Regardless of any editorial intention of transition, the use of the word *θεραπεία* serves to juxtapose the scene in chapter four and Addition C with the following scenes. A transition is about to take place with regard to Esther's status, and this change is linguistically linked to the prayer and assembly in the preceding scene through the use of the double entendre with *θεραπεία*.¹⁹⁴ Whether refraining from food or drink was understood as part of *θεραπεία* in chapter four is uncertain, though any Judean with Joel in mind could have understood this. Nevertheless, communal assembly and prayer are juxtaposed to honor in AT.

Perhaps to a certain extent the juxtaposition is less graphic than in MT and LXX which explicitly prohibit eating and drinking in 4:16 in contrast to the numerous feasts. Yet, AT maintains its own play on words, and there is contingency involved in *θεραπεία* which can mean service/servitude as much as a communal assembly.¹⁹⁵ Esther's servitude is juxtaposed with her honor, and the efficacy of communal response to disaster is heightened by the double entendre. Such interest in her dual identity as

¹⁹³ ὡς ἐπαύσατο Εσθηρ προσευχομένη, ἐξεδύσατο τὰ ἱμάτια τῆς θεραπείας καὶ περιεβάλετο τὰ ἱμάτια τῆς δόξης

¹⁹⁴ This double entendre may have been borrowed from LXX when AT was edited to add the additions. Whether this is the case and what AT looked like previously is unprovable, but in its extant form it does juxtapose the events of chapter four and Addition C with those of Addition D and following.

¹⁹⁵ The king's servants are called *θεραπεία* in AT 5:12 and Mordecai is said to serve the king in AT Addition A:16 (*θεραπεύειν*).

royal and humble is heightened in the Greek versions in a number of ways which will be discussed further in chapter three. Both AT and LXX further intensify this duality through the use of *θεραπεία*. However, only AT plays on the meaning of the word in the contexts of service to God and service to the king.

LXX therefore shares MT's communal fast at a turning point in the story. However, LXX also shares certain characteristics with AT which are important in a discussion of fasting and feasting. For one thing, LXX also claims in Add. D:1 that Esther took of the garments of her servitude (*θεραπεία*) and put on the garments of her honor (*δόξα*) to appear before the king. This may be due to AT adopting Add. D under the influence of LXX. The result in AT is a clear reference to communal assembly in 4:16 (AT 4:11), as well as a play on the meaning of *θεραπεία*. In LXX, a reference to chapter four is perhaps less clear because this word does not appear in any form in LXX chapter 4 or Add. C. It does appear a few other times in LXX in reference to service to the king (A:1; 2:19; D:16; 6:10), and in reference to Esther's preparation in the beauty contest (2:12). Thus, a juxtaposition of servitude and honor is clear in LXX, but the word does not appear in contexts of service to God.

In addition, the reference to garments of servitude and honor could signify the previous scenes since fasting is associated with sackcloth and ashes and Esther takes off the garments of honor and puts on the garments of distress to pray to the LORD (C:13/AT 4:18). The same word for honor is used in both verses in LXX and AT (*δόξα*), so a reference to her physical state at the end of chapter four is clear in both versions even if the reference to the communal fast in LXX is not as clear as AT's reference to the communal assembly. In any case, LXX and AT both juxtapose servitude and honor,

heightening Esther's turmoil as a royal, honorable queen who is about to break the law and risk her life.

MT is the most developed of the three versions with regard to fasting. Since there was on-going development of fasting in MT given that LXX agrees in 4:16 but not 4:3 and 9:31, the notion that 4:16 is an etiology for a Purim fast is unlikely. Another possibility is that fasting was added in Proto-MT 4:16 to heighten the intensity of the situation. Refraining from eating and drinking for three days would increase the reaction to the situation and it would make Esther all the more vulnerable as she went before the king, especially since it is her beauty that pleases him and a three-day fast would compromise her appearance. It should also be noted that the three-day fast would create a stronger contrast between the Jews' fasting and the Persian's feasting, especially since the story begins with a 180-day banquet. There are 180-day and seven-day Persian banquets in chapter one, a three-day fast in chapter four, and Esther throws two one-day banquets in chapters 5-7. Then the Judeans celebrate Purim for two days after their victory. Thus, Persian lavishness in displaying honor is contrasted to Judean humility and honor through fasting and feasting. Finally, the three-day fast would more clearly contrast Esther's situation in chapter four with her situation in chapter two where she receives a twelve-month beauty treatment before appearing before the king. Hence, there seem to be more literary motivations for adding fasting in general and the three-day fast in particular to MT.

In any case, the two instances of fasting in MT chapter four add nuance to the narrative by framing the events of this crucial chapter with two fasts. The first occurs throughout the empire and probably among the various peoples, and the second occurs in

Susa, primarily among the Judeans. MT depicts non-Judeans as sympathetic to Judeans, but it also claims that at times it is important for Judeans fast on behalf of their own. In contrast, the Greek versions display no interest in non-Judeans participating in the mourning activities of chapter four. Thus, fasting and mourning add nuances to the story in different ways among the versions.

Esther 9:31 (LXX 9:30)

Source, redaction and textual criticism

Among historical-critical scholars, the occurrence of fasting in MT 9:31 has received the most attention because of its relationship to Purim and redaction questions concerning when chapter nine developed in relation to the rest of the narrative. After addressing these issues, some general conclusions concerning fasting in the versions of Esther will be drawn. In MT 9:31 fasting is mentioned along with feasting in the context of the establishment of Purim. Concerning the establishment of Purim, MT 9:31-32 and LXX 9:30-31 read as follows:

MT

31 To establish these days of Purim at their appointed times just as Mordecai the Judean and Esther the queen established concerning them and just as they established for themselves and for their offspring the matters of the fasts and their outcry. 32 So Esther's command established the matters of Purim, and it was written in the document.

31 לְקַיֵּם אֶת־יְמֵי הַפְּרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּזִמְנֵיהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר קָיִם עֲלֵיהֶם מֶרְדֵּכַי הַיְּהוּדִי
וְאֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וְכַאֲשֶׁר קִיְּמוּ עַל־נַפְשָׁם וְעַל־זְרַעָם דְּבַר־י הַצְּמוֹת
וְזַעֲקָתָם: 32 וּמֵאִמֵּר אֶסְתֵּר קָיִם דְּבַר־י הַפְּרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְנִכְתָּב בַּסֵּפֶר:

LXX

30 Mordecai and Esther the queen established for themselves among their own, and then having established their will for the sake of their safety, 31 Esther established it by law for eternity, and it was written in a memorandum.

30 καὶ Μαρδοχαῖος καὶ Εσθηρ ἡ βασίλισσα ἔστησαν ἑαυτοῖς καθ' ἑαυτῶν καὶ τότε στήσαντες κατὰ τῆς ὑγιείας ἑαυτῶν καὶ τὴν βουλήν αὐτῶν· 31 καὶ Εσθηρ λόγῳ ἔστησεν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, καὶ ἐγράφη εἰς μνημόσυνον.

AT is not included here because it lacks parallel verses. Purim is mentioned in AT 8:49 where it parallels MT and LXX 9:26 in explaining the name Purim and its association with the lots Haman cast against the Judeans. However, AT has no text paralleling MT 9:27-32/LXX 9:27-31. As a result of this and a number of other issues, scholars have raised questions concerning the development of chapter nine. For those who consider AT to represent an earlier, less developed version of the story, chapter nine is usually viewed as added to the Proto-Masoretic tradition at a later time. In contrast, for those who consider AT to be a revision and the latest of the versions, the absence of portions of chapter nine which appear in MT and LXX are usually thought to have been avoided by AT's editors for some reason. First these arguments concerning chapter nine in general will be addressed, then questions concerning fasting in MT 9:31 in particular will be considered.

Scholarship can be divided into two basic historical-critical views on these verses, with a number of nuances to each perspective. On the one hand, a minority of scholars have argued that these verses are integral to the plot and thus were part of the original Esther story before a number of versions developed.¹⁹⁶ Recently, Michael Fox has joined these scholars by arguing that the redundancy of Esther's letter after Mordecai's is in fact the point. Furthermore, Fox believes a later scribe would have had less motivation to add

¹⁹⁶ Jobes, 134-135; Bardtke, 398-401; see also Lewis Paton who considers 9:20-10:3 to have been borrowed by the author of Esther from the chronicle source named in 10:2; Lewis Bayles Paton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Esther* (ICC 13; ed. Samuel Rolles Driver, Alfred Plummer and Charles Augustus Briggs; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908), 60.

a letter by Esther because Mordecai became the religious leader and for later generations his authority would have been enough.¹⁹⁷

In addition, from a source critical perspective, Henri Cazelles has argued that the two letters in chapter nine are from two different sources. The letter by Mordecai in vv. 20-28 is from the Mordecai (M) source, while the letter from Esther in vv. 29-32 is from the Esther (E) source. The two separate stories were then woven together, and this explains the seeming redundancy which has been in question among scholars.¹⁹⁸ Carey Moore has noted that the source hypothesis is difficult to prove, and he finds it more probable that these verses were added at a later time, reflecting what is probably the majority opinion among scholars today. However, while some have argued for excising it from the narrative in an attempt to establish an *Urtext* or a Pre-Masoretic Esther,¹⁹⁹ others have argued that the verses have their own integrity even if they are a later addition.²⁰⁰

Important to this analysis is the absence of vv. 29-32 in AT and the Old Latin (OL), as well as the difference in phrasing in LXX for vv. 31-32 (LXX 30-31). Some scholars who view AT as representing a text closer to the original version of the story (Pre-Masoretic Esther) argue that the absence of these verses in AT and OL point to their

¹⁹⁷ Fox, *The Redaction of the Books of Esther*, 107.

¹⁹⁸ Moore, *Esther*, L-LI; Henri Cazelles, "Note sur la composition du rouleau d'Esther," in *Lex tua Veritas* (Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1961), 17-29.

¹⁹⁹ Clines, *The Esther Scroll*, 63.

²⁰⁰ LaCocque, "The Different Versions of Esther," 312-313.

secondary status in MT and LXX.²⁰¹ However, others argue their absence in AT and OL indicates their secondary nature. Clines especially argues that all of chapter nine is secondary and that vv. 26b-28 were added prior to the addition of vv. 29-32.²⁰² Others who argue that it is a later addition include Ringgren, Meinhold and Samuel Loewenstamm.²⁰³

Along these lines, though Jobes believes AT represents an earlier Greek translation than LXX, she argues that the editors of AT made many revisions, and one of them was the eradication of Esther's letter. Concerning this omission in AT, she writes:

Clearly this [is] a *Tendenz* that intends to emphasize Mordecai's role in Jewish history and minimizing (if not eliminating) Esther's. Because this same *Tendenz* is present in some of the major additions (as discussed in chapter 4), the omission of material involving Esther in chapters 8 and 9 was probably made when certain of the additions were included.²⁰⁴

De Troyer similarly argues that the authors/translators of AT in the first century C.E. had minimal interest in Esther's role and tended to downplay it.²⁰⁵ Noting that it is possible that the letter was already lacking in AT's *Vorlage*, she points out evidence of an emphasis on Mordecai in the Hellenistic period, including the reference to the Day of

²⁰¹ Moore, *Esther*, 95; Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 243; Clines, *The Esther Scroll*, 55-56; Samuel E. Loewenstamm, "Esther 9:29-32: The Genesis of a Late Addition" *Hebrew Union College Annual* 42 (1971): 117; Meinhold, 93.

²⁰² Clines, *The Esther Scroll*, 55.

²⁰³ Ringgren, 419; Meinhold, 93; Loewenstamm, 124.

²⁰⁴ Jobes, 134-135.

²⁰⁵ De Troyer, "A Rewritten Greek Biblical Text," 70.

Mordecai in 2 Macc 15:36, thus suggesting that Esther's letter was removed from AT rather than added to MT and LXX.²⁰⁶

Jobes' analysis is helpful because it attempts to situate the question of redaction in chapter nine in a socio-historical context. In Bourdieu's terms, Jobes argues that the editors of AT had a particular disposition to Mordecai and Esther, and perhaps underlying this is a particular disposition to men and women as leaders. For the authors of the Hebrew story, habitus operated which perhaps permitted women more leadership roles in the community. Whether this is because the Hebrew version was written in Babylonia where Judeans lived somewhat differently than in Judea or Egypt or whether it is because the Hebrew version was produced by a group in Judea which allowed women more leadership is difficult to say, but Jobes' argument raises pertinent questions for this study.

Esther was composed in the Hellenistic period, so it is debatable whether AT's editors reduced Esther's role or whether the Proto-Masoretic tradition increased it. Rather than a particular time period, what is at play here is once again different habitus, dispositions and social fields which may have existed fairly coterminously (i.e., within the Hellenistic period). If AT was edited by scribes who operated in a social field in which women had less capital and power than the scribes of Proto-MT, then perhaps 29-32 were added to Proto-MT later (by the time of LXX's translation), but AT editors chose not to include the letter because they were downplaying Esther's role generally to coincide with their ideology. Thus, 29-32 was probably added to Proto-MT by the first century B.C.E. since for the most part it appears in LXX. Instead of being removed by

²⁰⁶ Jobes, 135.

AT's editors as Jobes has argued, it is absent in AT because it was added to Proto-MT, and in the final revisions, AT editors chose to keep it out.

Historical-critical scholarship has focused on vv. 29-32 from the lenses of source and redaction criticism, but another important issue in v. 31 concerns the phrase "the matters of the fasts and their outcry" in MT. AT lacks any corresponding verse, and LXX lacks this particular phrase. Thus, questions arise concerning the relationship of the versions to each other. Since most scholars view vv. 29-32 as a later addition, this phrase is also considered a later addition after the translation of LXX.²⁰⁷ However, the possibility exists that the phrase dropped out of LXX due to *homoioteleuton*. The consecutive phrases **עַל-נַפְשָׁם וְעַל-וִרְעָם** and **הַזְמִינָה וְזַעֲקָתָם** all end with possessive **ם**, so haplography is possible. However, in the larger context of 4:3 and textual comparison with AT which includes no mention of fasting, scribal omission of fasting in LXX seems less likely. Although errors did happen, the chances of omitting the same concept twice accidentally seems unlikely. Rather, it was either intentionally omitted from the Greek or intentionally added to MT in 4:3 and 9:31 (LXX 9:30).

Furthermore, although it is possible that AT editors intentionally omitted fasting to serve their purpose, the fact that LXX agrees with MT in 4:16 but disagrees in 4:3 and 9:31 (LXX 9:30) seems to indicate that fasting developed as a literary and ideological nuance to the story, more so in MT than LXX, so that there was a certain amount of fluidity to the Proto-Masoretic tradition which continued to develop even after LXX was translated. Thus, after the LXX translation, LXX and Proto-MT continued on different trajectories in social fields with different groups, habitus and dispositions. With this in

²⁰⁷ Moore, *Esther*, 96-97.

mind, the function of fasting and the possible relationship of the texts to their socio-historical contexts will be considered.

Literary and ideological matters

In 9:29-31 Esther and Mordecai write a letter establishing Purim which includes a reference to fasting and lamentation absent in the Greek versions. MT has more interest in fasting than the Greek versions, and in chapter nine fasting and mourning are juxtaposed to feasting and celebration, except this time the Judeans are associated with both. In earlier chapters Judeans were generally excluded from feasting, with the exception of Esther once she enters the palace. Esther has a marriage banquet held in her honor and she proceeds to throw two banquets herself for the king and Haman. Otherwise, Judeans are not explicitly said to be included in the feasts which display honor and power. They are only able to participate in the fasts which display humility and mourning. The reversal is complete in chapter nine though. The Judeans' grief is turned to joy and their mourning to goodness (9:22). The events of chapter four are thus reversed in chapter nine. This reversal occurs in the Greek versions as well (LXX 9:22; AT 8:47). However, with a particular interest in fasting, MT is sure to mention the fasts along with the crying out, reminding the audience that fasting played a key role in the reversal of fortunes and salvation of the Judeans. More than in the Greek versions, in MT fasting is an important practice. Whether the fasting and lamentation in 9:31 refers to calendrical fasts or occasional fasts declared in the midst of crisis as in chapter four, MT Esther claims fasting as vital among the acts of lamentation.

It was no accident that fasting continued to develop in MT. Instead, the habitus associated with MT's tradition produced a particular disposition to crisis, and in the midst

of crisis, fasting was one of a number of mourning practices which were common. Of course, this is not to say that the groups associated with LXX and AT necessarily refrained from fasting entirely. Instead, MT displays particular tendencies to think about and even practice fasting, while such tendencies are weaker in LXX and AT. Otherwise, LXX and AT would have added them as well despite the versions having different trajectories.

Fasting and Gender

In some ways, fasting is a practice which minimizes cultural distinctions such as socio-economics and gender. When a group fasts, certain physical distinctions with regard to clothing or eating habits are eradicated as everyone puts on sackcloth and abstains from eating. Laniak points out that fasting is a form of self-degradation, so one's status of honor or shame becomes lowered before the community.²⁰⁸ One's outer garments are torn, and sometimes shoes and headdresses are removed, as in Ezekiel 24:15-24.²⁰⁹ As a result, many physical indications of status are torn or removed, suggesting that everyone may be identified by a similar status of humility. In contrast, Bachmann has problematized ritual fasting which is imposed by leaders in comfortable situations on the masses who may have less economic stability and therefore less certainty about their nutrition. This suggests that although there may be a physical way in which distinction is obliterated in the practice of fasting, the distinctions nevertheless continue to operate in other ways. One's bodily hexis may resemble that of others in the group insofar as all are wearing sackcloth and ashes, sitting in the dust and abstaining

²⁰⁸ Laniak, 94-95.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 94 (fn. 87).

from eating. However, how one responds in thought and feeling, two other important components of hevis, may differ depending on whether one imposes the fast or has the fast imposed or depending on whether one expects any benefits from the fast and even what types of benefits one expects.

In Esther, the text itself mentions gender in conjunction with fasting only in 4:16 (MT and LXX). In this verse, Esther tells Mordecai to gather all the Judeans in Susa and fast for her, and she and her maidservants will do the same prior to her risking her life by going before the king. Previously in 4:3 there were no particular indications of any gender distinctions. Although Mordecai appears to lament in vv. 1-2, the fasting and lamentation are association with the Judeans and the multitudes, signified by masculine plural participles. There is no particular indication of scribal intention to distinguish according to gender, indicating that Laniak is correct to argue that fasting minimizes certain cultural distinctions. Likewise, in MT 9:31, fasting and lamentation are mentioned collectively with a masculine plural possessive suffix with lamentation (דְּבַרְיָהּ הַצְּמוֹת וְיַעֲקֹתָם), suggesting no intention of creating any particular gender distinction. Is this the case in 4:16 as well?

In 4:16, it is Esther's command which initiates the fast. In one way at least, Laniak is correct that fasting minimizes cultural distinctions because the Queen, her maidservants and all the Judeans in Susa will fast. From the weakest to the most powerful, all the Judeans participate in the fast. On the surface, fasting does seem to equalize everyone. However, other factors are important to consider as well. The Queen has proclaimed that all the Judeans in Susa fast for her (וְצִוְנוּ עָלֶיהָ), suggesting that the masses are commanded to fast for the benefit of the Queen. Esther joins in the fast, but

her status as queen with the ability to command others remains. Not only that, Esther's maidservants will fast with her. While it may be argued that the Judeans are to benefit from the fast as well provided that Esther is successful, the position of the maidservants is more ambiguous. Are they to benefit from a successful fast? Given the transient nature of queenship in the story, one must wonder whether they expected any lasting benefit to helping their queen with her predicament.

Thus, on the one hand fasting brings together people from different social spheres, both male and female, in physical unity as they all abstain from eating and drinking while wearing sackcloth and ashes. Yet, the dynamics of the fast suggest that there are still distinctions with regard to social position and gender. The queen, in a position of comfort, aligns herself with the rest of the Judeans, but she also commands them regardless of gender and position to fast for her benefit. In addition, the maidservants provide another issue. Like Mordecai and the Judeans, they are commanded by Esther to fast for her. However, their potential benefit from the fast is different than the Judeans', as their lives are presumably not at stake either in the immediate or distant future.

The gender distinctions are subtle with regard to fasting. Although there is no indication of gender distinction with regard to attire or other physical aspects of the practice, it would not have obliterated gender distinction entirely, especially if body hair such as beards and hair length distinguished the genders. Furthermore, although both males and females participated in the practice, an individual's cognitive response to the fast would have differed depending on social position, which was affected by gender. It is difficult to know about all of the elements of bodily hexis since there are a lot of gaps to fill in concerning ancient cultures, and Hebrew narrative prefers not to provide much

information about individuals' thoughts and feelings. However, Bachmann challenges readers to consider the power dynamics of fasting, and Bourdieu's theory of practice helps to nuance somewhat our understanding of the relationship of social position and gender to practice. It should not be assumed that all Judeans in the text or in antiquity had the same perception of fasting in any given situation. Nor should it be assumed that all benefited equally at all times, for each participant's social position influenced her bodily hexis, resulting in different physical and cognitive reactions.

Dietary Matters in Esther

One final but relevant matter with regard to fasting and feasting in Esther regards Esther's dietary practices, as compared to the occasional feasts and fasts in which she participates. Esther's diet is juxtaposed with the feasting of the king in Addition C (LXX C:28). In her prayer to God, she claims, "And your servant did not eat at Haman's table, and I did not honor the king's drink fest or drink libation wine." AT similarly reads, "And your servant did not eat together at their table, and I did not honor the king's drink fest of drink libation wine" (4:27-28). There is a clear concern in these lines to distinguish between Esther's diet and the Persian leaders' diet as Esther separates herself from the Persian leaders and their eating and drinking activities. In the context of an apocalyptic text attempting to distinguish Judeans from the other peoples, this claim intensifies the distinction in a way similar to Daniel 1 where Daniel does not eat the king's rations because he do not want to be defiled (1:8). Neither Esther or Daniel explicitly mentions Torah or kashrut or even God's commandments in this dietary matter,

but there is a distinction in both stories between the diet of Judeans and the diet of non-Judeans.

Furthermore, in a story so concerned with feasting and social status, to claim a separation from the banquets of honor, where simply being a participant can improve one's social and symbolic capital, is to claim a position of low social status within the imperial world of the text. Thus, in a way parallel to but distinct from fasting, Esther's dietary claim attempts to set her apart from those in positions of honor in the story. She does not ascribe a Persian version of honor to herself, but instead she attributes Judean qualities which require her to refrain from certain kinds of food and drink. Esther, and by association her people, are further distinguished from the Persians who feast because not only does she feast less frequently, she also maintains a distinct diet. In fact, Daniel L. Smith-Christopher points out that in postbiblical texts, feasting becomes a symbol not just of wealth and power but of foreign oppression, so to refrain from such excesses was to reject dependence on such forces.²¹⁰

Furthermore, Jean Soler points out that in general the purity restrictions in Torah are intended to distinguish the Israelites from other peoples.²¹¹ In a story like Esther where there is a lot of eating and drinking, a claim to not eating with the Persians or drinking the libation wine further distinguishes Esther. Despite a direct reference to Torah or kashrut in Esther, there is a similar disposition to Torah concerning dietary

²¹⁰ Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel," in *New Interpreter's Bible* VII (12 vols.; ed. Leander E. Keck, et al; Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 40-42.

²¹¹ Jean Soler, "The Semiotics of Food in the Bible," in *Food and Drink in History: Selections from the Annales Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 5 (ed. Robert Forster and Orest Ranum; trans. Elborg Forster and Patricia M. Ranum; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 129.

habits as a means of distinguishing Israelites/Judeans from other peoples. In this way, LXX delineates the Judeans and the non-Judeans most clearly with regard to eating habits. Like MT, in LXX Judeans fast in contrast to all the feasting. Like AT, in LXX Esther observes a special diet.

Both of these versions are apocalyptic, and AT may have adopted these traits from the influence of LXX some time in the first century of the Common Era. The apocalyptic framework generally establishes the entire story as of cosmic importance in both Greek versions. Furthermore, in Add. A the just/righteous people are distinguished from the other peoples in Mordecai's dream (Add. A:6-8 LXX; A:6 AT). In Add. F which provides the interpretation, the just/righteous people are the Judeans (vv. 5-8 LXX; vv. 54-56). Thus, the Judeans are distinguished on a cosmic level from the other peoples in LXX and AT. In this context, Esther's claim about her diet further distinguishes her and her people. What happens at a cosmic level also happens on a daily basis on earth in the form of dietary practices.

Bourdieu points out that dietary habits are related to class and social position. In addition, social identity is defined through difference, and it organizes practices and perceptions of practices.²¹² He discusses taste, which is manifested preference. Taste is itself habitus, and it affirms differences. When different tastes encounter each other, they justify themselves by negating the other's preferences. As Bourdieu notes, "Aversion to different life-styles is perhaps one of the strongest barriers between the classes; class endogamy is evidence of this."²¹³ Esther's refusal to eat and drink Persian food and wine

²¹² Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 172.

²¹³ *Ibid*, 56.

could be understood as a taste which she developed growing up under Mordecai's care and which she carried with her to the palace. The dietary practice which results from her tastes distinguishes her from the Persians. Of course, for Bourdieu all of this would have occurred primarily at an unconscious level, a notion which is problematic in this instance in part because the Greek versions seem to exhibit conscious attempts to make claims about Esther's diet distinguishing her from the Persians she mingles with in the palace. In this case, it is better to understand that Esther's claim of distinction represents a clash of cultures which she (and the scribes) were well aware of and which the scribes intended to support as a valid and viable part of Judean/Jewish identity in the midst of Greco-Roman culture.

This dietary distinction does not appear in MT because it is only found in Addition C of the Greek versions, so MT makes no claims about Esther's daily dietary practices. The only claims concerning her food intake are the fast in which she participates in 4:16, the feasts she prepares in chapters 6-7 and the Purim feast she authorizes in 9:29-32. In fact, because Mordecai tells Esther to keep her identity hidden (2:10, 20), the text suggests that there is nothing visible which would reveal her to be Judean. Even without the Greek versions for comparison, it is curious that there are no attempts to distinguish the Judeans with regard to diet other than by juxtaposing their fasts with the Persian feasts. In a narrative which makes no mention of Torah or God, Judean adaptation seems to be assumed. It is perhaps *doxa* that what makes one Judean is not the way one dresses or what one eats; instead what matters is one's associations, one's social capital, including genealogy (2:5-6) and imperial ties. With this ideological perspective, even an orphan can attain a position of power and prestige. In contrast, for

LXX and AT these associations are not enough. In addition, or perhaps first and foremost, one must have a proper relationship with God, which includes a special diet.

Cohen's delineation of Judeans and Jews in the Second Temple period is helpful for understanding the differences among the versions here. He points out that in the first century B.C.E. and C.E., for the most part, Judeans could go about their business in the empire without being recognized as Judean because they were not distinguished by clothing, jobs, speech or anything else that was visible.²¹⁴ Yet, it was in this time period that religion above all else became the identifying feature of Judaism. Because of the diaspora and less association with Judea for many Jews, religion was what made one Jewish. Religion, unlike the land, was portable. This contrasts with the early Second Temple period when there was still a stronger association with the land.²¹⁵ The distinctions are of course more intricate, and Cohen devotes many pages to understanding the ethnic, geographic, political and religious associations which made one Judean/Jewish. What Cohen's analysis does above all else is point to the intricacies of Judean/Jewish identity and the many aspects which could make up this identity. Furthermore, identity is not static, and it could therefore have fluctuated from time to time and place to place. Thus, it is not surprising that three versions of Esther have three perspectives on Judean/Jewish identity, with one making no claims about any visible behavior or sign indicating one's Judean identity and two claiming observance of a special diet as an important Judean practice.

It is not the goal of this study to establish certain dates for each of the versions,

²¹⁴ Cohen, 28.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 70.

and Bourdieu's notion of culture resists such particulars because culture changes slowly, so to say that Add. C must have been authored during the Hasmonean period is problematic because it assumes an immediate change to the textual tradition in response to the political situation. This is of course possible, but the political fluctuation in the Second Temple period and the vastness and regional diversity that remained suggest that it is better to understand these differences as part of larger cultural trends rather than immediate responses to certain political changes. Granted, the Jewish scribes in Judea probably felt more freedom during the Hasmonean period to reclaim their religio-cultural identity, but this is not the only time and place where such claims could have been made.

Thus, it is better to understand that the groups involved in authoring and inserting Add. C into the Greek versions probably all came from Judean/Jewish groups which generally felt strongly about diet as an important component of their identity, whereas the scribes of MT were from a group which did not need to assert such a practice, at least not in the midst of other cultures. Of course, in their own homes and larger Judean/Jewish circles, they may well have practiced dietary regulations, but the text presents a world in which Judeans are not explicitly concerned with such matters in the midst of the Persians. This could represent a group that felt a particular need to keep to themselves because of pressure from their surroundings, as some Jews experienced at times such as the reign of Antiochus IV Epihanes and again in the first century C.E. However, it could also represent a group that simply adapted to the multi-cultural world of the diaspora to the extent that the practice of dietary restrictions were observed in their own spheres but not in multi-cultural situations. This could have occurred in various times and places of the diaspora, and it is better to leave the possibilities open.

Conclusions

If a banquet is a means of displaying one's honor in Esther, then it can be said that those in power in the story display their honor frequently. Not only are the feasts a frequent activity, but in each of the versions the feasts in chapter one are particularly exaggerated in a number of ways. Scholars have noted the caricature of the Persian king portrayed especially in chapter one with the length of the banquets and the overreaction to Vashti's refusal to appear. The world of the story is imaginary. The audience is not expected to believe that everything really happened as the story narrates. Yet, the Judeans lived in an imperial society where wealth and power were certainly heavily weighted to the benefit of the empires. Power would have emanated from the king and his officials, and in a patriarchal society, men would have held more status and power than women. Thus, although certainly exaggerated, the world of the story is not entirely made-up. The Judeans were dispersed throughout the empires, and they were generally among the powerless peoples. At the same time, the power and influence the Judean leaders could exercise, especially among their fellow Judeans, fluctuated from place to place and time to time as different imperial policies were enacted and enforced. Despite general stability of imperial forces, the Judeans faced changing circumstances from time to time.

Bourdieu's examinations of how societies operate suggest that there are certain social structures which affect how people think and act. Within the structures of a given society, certain things provide the society's members with more or fewer opportunities, and thus, with more or less economic and/or cultural capital. As a conquered, dispersed people, Judeans would have had fewer opportunities to attain positions of power and

prestige than the people associated with the empire in power (Persian, Hellenistic, Roman). Thus, they would not have participated in, let alone thrown, many “banquets,” so to speak.²¹⁶ The story of Esther may be an imaginary experience, but the banquet motif could have signified historically real opportunities for empires to remind everyone who was in charge, sometimes in lavish ways. Such opportunities were probably intensified for the Judeans at certain times, as when the Elephantine temple was destroyed, when the Greek altar was established on the Jerusalem altar and when the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed again in 70 C.E.

Throughout the Hebrew Bible and other Second Temple literature, a popular response to such situations is mourning, lamentation and prayer. Imperial celebration and displays of power bring about a Judean response of humility. In Esther, there is mourning, weeping and lamentation, and in the Greek versions there is prayer. In particular, there are communal responses in all the versions. In MT and LXX there is communal mourning and fasting, and in AT there is communal mourning and prayer. On one level, all the versions of Esther juxtapose imperial celebration with communal Judean mourning rituals. These mourning rituals bring about a reversal of fortunes for the Judeans, suggesting that Judean survival in the imperial diaspora requires a communal response to threats to Judean life. The Judeans have very little capital according to

²¹⁶ Within such a framework, Esther’s and the Judeans’ feasts could have signified opportunities for the Judeans to seize a bit of capital valued by the empire, perhaps by writing their own literature or by attaining in-between positions as priests.

imperial social structures, but what they do have is each other and their communal practices, and in the Greek versions they specifically have God.²¹⁷

Communal mourning rituals thus become linked with social capital in the versions of Esther. In an “imaginary” world where the king hosts 180-day feasts, the power of a communal fast or assembly to bring about a reversal of fortune reveals the story to be subversive to empire despite maintaining imperial structures in the story. Judean authors would have had to take care in making claims about themselves and the empire. Under the thumb of imperial officials, the authors of the versions of Esther found ways to portray the Judeans as good subjects, while at the same time calling the Judeans to respond to imperial threats to their identity and life.

Within this framework, each of the versions provides slightly different responses to the question of Judean identity and survival in an imperial diaspora. AT is particularly interested in contrasting imperial feasting with kosher diet and communal assembly. In an apocalyptic text which attempts from the outset to distinguish between the Judeans and the other peoples, Judeans are set apart by their association with God and by their diet, in contrast to the imperial officials who feast and drink libation wine. LXX shares this interest with a kosher diet and is also an apocalyptic text with the same distinguishing framework. Yet, LXX also includes fasting, heightening the distinction between Judeans and the imperial officials in the text by not only establishing a separate diet but also calling Judeans to avoid eating and drinking entirely in times of imperial “feasting.” Finally, MT claims no concern for a kosher diet, but instead juxtaposes

²¹⁷ That is not to say that MT would have been read as “Godless” but rather the Greek versions take care to mention God as the one in charge, something discussed further in the next chapter.

fasting with feasting, intensifying the contrast with several additional fasts. As will become clear in chapter four, it is the empire which is distinguished from the Judeans in MT more so than the various other dispersed peoples.

In conclusion, few Judeans would have felt powerful in the Second Temple period. If they held any capital, any status, it was probably within their own communities. In the larger context of the empire, they held relatively little capital and thus had very little opportunity to truly overturn imperial structures. In Esther, there is an extraordinary reversal of fortunes brought about by communal responses to imperial threats to Judean life, a reversal which is achieved structurally by the fasting-feasting motif. Yet, the reversal itself does not destroy the social structures, but instead works within the structures of the story to bring about the reversal. Pleasing the king and writing laws are means to enact change and to thus exert capital in the story, and Esther works within such structures, pleasing the king so that she can write a new law that allows her people to live. The events may be exaggerated, but the underlying message is not: work within the social structures, responding communally and non-threateningly when Judean lives and lifestyles are threatened.

CHAPTER III

BESEECHING GOD AND KING: THE ROLES OF PRAYER IN THE JUDEAN DIASPORA

Introduction

“Lifting his face, ablaze with glory at the point of anger, he looked up, and the queen fell and her color changed in faintness, and she bent down on the head of the maidservant who went before her.” (Esth D:7 LXX) This scene from Add. D of the LXX version of Esther compares to Victorian notions of feminine weakness, thus causing contemporary scholars to understand the Greek character of Esther as weaker than her Hebrew counterpart.²¹⁸ In the few short years that I have been studying Esther, I have felt ambivalence toward the Greek versions of the story, agreeing for the most part with those who see the Greek translators as weakening Esther, consciously or unconsciously. Yet, a part of me has desired to redeem this woman from the confines of a text which seems to exalt, more so than its Hebrew counterpart, Mordecai, the king and God, all figures with masculine gender. Is it possible to read the LXX translation as doing something positive for the female heroine? This is a question to return to after examining more closely the addition of prayer to LXX Esther because Additions C and D are vital to understanding who Esther is as a woman, a Jew and a queen.

²¹⁸ Sidnie White Crawford, "The Additions to Esther," in *New Interpreter's Bible* III (ed. Leander E. Keck, et al; Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 962; Linda Day, *Three Faces of a Queen: Characterization in the Books of Esther* (JSOT Supp. 186; ed. David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davies; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 170-77; Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 272.

On one level, Add. C and D and the prayers of Esther and Mordecai can be understood as one attempt among others to incorporate God in a story which otherwise appears to exclude the Judean deity. However, a number of important claims about Judean identity in the diaspora and about practices related to this identity are also established by these additions. An understanding of the social structures of the narratives and the imperial world behind the narratives can bring insight to the literary-ideological role of the prayers in the texts and in their historical contexts, especially as the prayers relate to Judean identity in the imperial diaspora. In this chapter, Bourdieu will aid in understanding the claims to identity which each version makes with regard to differences concerning prayer.

Bourdieu and Prayer as Capital

Bourdieu's concepts of cultural, social and symbolic capital can bring insight to the prayers in Esther. To a certain extent, prayer functions in a similar way to fasting in that both practices are associated with a lack of power and thus a lack of capital, at least according to the imperial world behind the texts. Although there is evidence of religious tolerance in the imperial diaspora, there is little evidence to suggest that the imperial authorities considered Judean practices to have any particular efficacy above any other religion in antiquity. In fact, if they had, they may have been more likely to restrict or even prohibit them.²¹⁹ Hence, both fasting and prayer to YHWH hold no social value for

²¹⁹ Religious tolerance in the Second Temple period is of course debatable and the term itself is ambiguous and even dubious. What was allowed could have varied from time to time and place to place, depending on the relations between the Judeans and those around them, including both the imperial authorities and the other imperial subjects. The destruction of the temples at Elephantine and Jerusalem, for example, suggest that at

the imperial authorities, but they are given value by the texts and by the Judeans associated with the texts. This claim raises a number of important questions which will be addressed in turn. First, what does this mean for MT which lacks explicit prayer to YHWH? Second, how is efficacy attributed to prayer literarily and ideologically in the Greek texts? Third, what other claims to Judean identity are made by these prayers and why is prayer the chosen format for making such claims?

MT and Prayer

Scholars have debated the “religious” role and nature of MT Esther in large part because there is no mention of God, and, according to Jon Levenson, the only remotely religious practice in the story is fasting.²²⁰ Within this debate, some have claimed that the “other place” from which the Judeans will receive help according to Mordecai is in fact God (4:14).²²¹ Others, such as Sidnie White Crawford, have pointed out that another place may refer to another person.²²² Kristen de Troyer has noted that the reference to

particular times tolerance subsided. In addition, the presence or absence of tolerance could have varied depending on the individual or group interpreting the events that took place. The Greeks could have understood the placing of a Greek altar in the Jerusalem temple as a sign of tolerance since they did not destroy the Judean religious complex; however, the Judean texts indicate that those authoring the texts understood this as religious persecution. Hence, it is difficult to make strong claims about religious tolerance except to say that the textual evidence suggests that at times certain Judeans wanted to claim that there was religious tolerance, while at other times claims of persecution were made.

²²⁰ Levenson, 78.

²²¹ Moore, *Esther*, 50; Paton, 222; Ringgren, 407; Meinhold, 55; Grossman, 117.

²²² Crawford, "The Book of Esther," 904-905; Day, 56; David J.A. Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther: Based on the Revised New Standard Version* (New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 302; Clines, *The Esther Scroll*, 42-43.

deliverance in 4:14 is the only instance of the root נצל in noun form in the Hebrew Bible, and the verb can sometimes refer to God, but she concludes that it is still possible that the text is not referring to God.²²³ Jon Levenson also allows for "another place" to refer to God or Esther's successor, but he leans toward God as the intended deliverer, pointing out that the phrase "who knows" in other portions of the Hebrew Bible appear in the context of hope that penitence will convince God to relent.²²⁴ Timothy Beal similarly does not rule out the possible reference to God, but he suggests the narrative allows for the phrase "another place" to refer to a "socio-political location," such as another group of marginal characters who might bring deliverance. He also responds to Levenson's suggestion, noting that Haman, not God, is the cause of the crisis.²²⁵

In fact, the narrative of MT Esther supports reading human agency in Mordecai's claim. For one thing, Esther has the option to risk her life to help her people or to remain silent on the matter. In addition, it is possible that Mordecai is suggesting another person or group of people will get the job done if Esther does not. At the same time, he is speaking with rhetoric meant to implore her to risk her life because she is the one with the best chance to save the Judeans. Whether Mordecai's claim is read as a prophetic statement or a rhetorical device to convince Esther (or some combination of the two), and whether he alludes to God or another human, some human agency must be attributed to MT Esther, and in comparison to the Greek versions which incorporate prayer and divine

²²³ De Troyer, "A Rewritten Hebrew Biblical Text," 20.

²²⁴ Levenson, 81.

²²⁵ Beal, "Esther," 67-68.

agency to the events (cf. D:8), MT assigns more human agency in the struggle for survival in the imperial diaspora.

Furthermore, it is not only a comparison of the story with and without Addition C which points to human agency in MT Esther. In 4:8 Mordecai tells Hatach to command Esther to go to the king and beseech him and to request an audience with him concerning her people. The verb “beseech” here is the Hebrew נָסַח in the Hitpael, which generally means to show someone grace or favor in the Qal, and in the Hitpael it means to implore grace or favor. Thus, there is a field of power indicated by this verb, whereby the subject of a Qal verb is in a position of power. This situation is reversed in the Hitpael, so that the subject of the verb holds less capital than the person being implored. Mordecai thus acknowledges in 4:8 that Esther (and her people) are in a weaker position of power in the social field, and the king is the one with the power to change the situation in their favor. Yet, Esther also has more capital than any other Judean in the social field of the palace.²²⁶ In particular, she has the social capital of her connections with the king, and she has the symbolic capital of beauty and graces which the text established as valuable in chapters 1-2. As a result, the use of the Hitpael here, in the larger context of the narrative world of Esther, indicates the nuances of the characters' relationships to each other.

Interestingly, this verbal root only occurs twice in Esther, both times as a Hitpael, and in both instances Esther implores the king. In 8:3 Esther bows before the king,

²²⁶ This situation could have shifted outside the palace where it is clear from chapters two and four that at least at home and more generally in Judean circles Mordecai has some power over Esther as her uncle and adopted father. He may also have wielded some authority within the Judean community, though the text does not provide such details. Within the palace though, what is valued changes. For example, lineage, while important for Judeans according to the narrator, is detrimental in Persian spheres because Haman, their historical enemy, has attained the power to annihilate them.

weeps and implores him to remove Haman's evil and his plot against the Judeans. In this case Esther has already gained the king's favor because he has extended the golden scepter and offered her anything up to half the kingdom. The narrator continues to acknowledge that Esther is still in a weaker power position though through the use of the same verb. The result of her bowing, weeping and beseeching is that she is able to write a law for her people's defense, thus saving her people from annihilation.

Hence, in both instances, the beseeching which Esther does before the king becomes a means of attaining power. It gives her more social capital as it allows her to shift the power dynamics so that the king now wants to do her bidding. In the narrative, the king's favor and the ability to please the king are vital to survival, as the reader learns from chapter one when Vashti is ousted for displeasing the king. This literary theme continues throughout the story, so that Memucan's speech pleases the king and brings the results Memucan desires (1:19-21); Esther is the most pleasing virgin and thus becomes queen (2:17); and finally Esther gains the king's favor with her beauty and exhortation, allowing her to acquire more power through the king's favor (5:2-3; 8:5-8).

An intriguing parallel arises between the events of chapter four and the events of chapters 5-8. In 4:3, there is fasting, weeping and lamentation among the Judeans when Haman's decree is publicized, and in 4:16, Esther, her maidservants and the Judeans in Susa fast before she risks her life. Mordecai commands Esther to beseech the king, and Esther commands Mordecai to proclaim a fast for her. Scholars have noted the role shift which occurs as Esther becomes the one to command Mordecai in 4:16-17.²²⁷ Despite

²²⁷ Crawford, "The Book of Esther," 905; Berlin, 50; Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 64; Beal, "Esther," 66.

being subjected to the king's will, she still holds the most capital of any of the Judeans, so she has a position of power over Mordecai. Once she enters the king's presence, she is again the one with less power, so she must beseech him.

However, in 8:3 she not only beseeches him, but she also weeps, an act which may be understood as a feminine wile meant to persuade the king in 8:3 but which also occurs in 4:3 in the context of mourning. The acts of lamentation performed in 4:3 are often intended to persuade a deity to have pity on mourners, so God is not explicitly mentioned in MT Esther even in the context of lamentation, but the king is characterized like a deity. As Michael Fox notes, the verb in the Hitpa'el often refers to supplication to God, and it occurs with weeping in Esth 8:3 and Hos 12:5.²²⁸ Similarly, Thomas Podella considers the lamentation rituals in Esth 4 to have a secular context despite the parallels to lamentation in other portions of the Hebrew Bible and in Ancient Near Eastern literature, so that Mordecai cries out to the king rather than to God.²²⁹ This does not mean the authors of MT Esther viewed human kings as deities, but there is evidence that even in the Second Temple period foreign kings were considered to be instruments of God by some Judeans, as Isa 45 indicates. What 8:3 suggests is not that MT Esther's authors wished to deify imperial rulers but that they were aware of the power these rulers had, so Esther behaves in ways which please the king in order to persuade him.²³⁰

²²⁸ Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 92 (fn. 56).

²²⁹ Podella, 190.

²³⁰ Concerning the phrase “if it pleases the king” which Esther uses several times, including 8:5 (see also 5:4, 7:3), Erhard Gerstenberger labels this a “patronage formula” (*die Gunstformel*), pointing out that the phrase occurs in petitionary speeches and prayers. His association of the formula with patronage also indicates a hierarchical power relationship in which the king is the patron and Esther is the client. Erhard S.

Thus, at a literary level MT Esther both acknowledges and repeats the social structures of empire which attribute power and authority to the imperial leaders, especially the king. MT makes no claims at dethroning the king or overthrowing the empire, but instead Queen Esther works within the system, using the imperially acknowledged means of attaining power. Further supporting the notion that Judeans uphold rather than revolt against the empire is Mordecai's uncovering of the eunuchs' plot to kill the king in 2:21-23, which later brings him more social capital through closer connections to the king as well (6:1-3,10-11; 8:1-2, 7-9; 9:3-4, 20-23). There are two exceptions to this. One is Mordecai's refusal to bow before Haman, but MT establishes this insolence as a result of the long-standing animosity between Mordecai's people and Haman's people, not as animosity toward the empire.²³¹ The other is Esther's appearance before the king without being summoned, but the king extends the golden scepter, and in MT he does not display any signs of anger at her apparent breaking of the law. Thus, the text generally maintains the social structures of empire.

Of course, there is exaggeration involved in the portrayal of the king and the empire, especially with regard to the law, how it comes about and what its effects are. The two laws which drive the plot forward early in the story are Memucan's law that the women must honor their husbands and Haman's law that the Judeans be annihilated. Both of these laws are the result of a certain amount of paranoia on the part of their authors. Memucan blows Vashti's disobedience out of proportion, claiming that all the

Gerstenberger, *Der bittende Mensch: Bitritual und Klagelied des Einzelnen im Alten Testament* (Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 51; ed. Ferdinand Hahn and Odil Hannes Steck; Neukirchen Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 34 (fn 43).

²³¹ LaCocque, *Esther Regina*, 66-67.

women will dishonor their husbands if a law is not written forcing the women to honor the men. Similarly, Haman's law to annihilate all the Judeans is the result of one Judean's refusal to bow to him. Claiming that all Judeans are insolent because he is angry with Mordecai, Haman convinces (bribes) the king to let him write a law for Judean annihilation. Not only are both of these laws the result of stereotyping (one person's actions are attributed to all in that group), but in both cases the laws are in fact ineffective. There is no follow up with regard to Memucan's law and the wives, and in fact Esther disobeys the king's law but attains even more power by doing so. In addition, not only do the Judeans not get killed, but they in fact kill Haman and his sons. Thus, law is made a show of in the story, but it does not appear to be a true means to power. Instead, true access to social capital and power lies in pleasing the king.

MT's silence with regard to God's role in the midst of a major Judean crisis is intriguing. Some have argued that the original story included references to God, but they were removed from MT.²³² The references to God in the Greek versions are probably additions.²³³ Kristin de Troyer has pointed out that not only do the Greek versions include numerous references to the Judean/Jewish God, but the image of God in AT is different than in LXX.²³⁴ Hence, the most plausible explanation is that the Greek versions added God, while in the MT tradition, similar to the Song of Songs, the author

²³² Levenson, 33; Clines, *The Esther Scroll*, 112.

²³³ Crawford, "The Additions to Esther," 945; Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 157-159; de Troyer, "A Rewritten Hebrew Biblical Text," 11; Fox, *The Redaction of the Books of Esther*, 120-121.

²³⁴ Kristin de Troyer, "Is God Absent or Present in the Book of Esther? An Old Problem Revisited," in *The Presence and Absence of God: Claremont Studies in the Philosophy of Religion, Conference 2008* (ed. Ingolf U. Dalferth; Religion in Philosophy and Theology 42; ed. Ingolf U. Dalferth, et al; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 38.

was not compelled to mention God. Whether this is because the relationship of the deity to human events was assumed or whether it is because the social circumstances required silence on the matter is unclear. At times in the Second Temple period Judeans seemed to have more freedom with regard to religious observance. Likewise, the diaspora was not homogenous for Judeans. Furthermore, because these texts are representations of the authors'/translators' social milieu, it should be noted that it is entirely possible that the author of MT Esther was a highly-educated Judean who had assimilated within the empire. This matter will be further discussed after investigating circumcision, but perhaps living in a liminal space in the empire led the author to be cautious about identity as a Judean. If this is the case, then the beseeching of the king instead of God could suggest that the author understood that there were particular ways to maneuver through the empire which involved particular relationships with the empire and which required imperial subjects to be cautious about their identities. Prayer to God was not in the forefront of the author's mind and thus was not foregrounded in the narrative. Instead, MT Esther focuses on the Judeans' interactions with the empire.

The Greek Versions and Prayer

In contrast to MT which structurally establishes the king, his advisors and the law as the authorities, the Greek versions contain two prayers in Addition C. Although it is uncertain when and where these prayers were written, they play an important role in the narrative and they alter the hierarchical structures of the text by placing the Judean God in a position of power. Historical-critical scholarship on the prayers has asked questions

of source and redaction criticisms to understand when, where and how the prayers developed, as well as what the original languages were.

In recent years there has been growing interest in prayer in the Second Temple period. Continuing the tradition of Gunkel and Mowinckel, the scholarship has focused primarily on form-critical approaches to prayer. It could be said that form criticism has experienced a renaissance thanks in large part to the non-biblical Dead Sea Scrolls, a number of which appear to contain prayers similar to those in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. The result is that scholarship has examined the prayers in these two major corpora in an attempt to understand the formal characteristics of prayer in the Second Temple period. Beginning especially with Claus Westermann, recent scholarship on Second Temple prayer has compared the prayers of this period with the psalms of the Hebrew Bible, seeking both continuity in form and signs of development in the “post-biblical” period.²³⁵

Such studies have determined that there is continuity between the prayers of the Hebrew Bible and those of other related corpora. In particular, the form of the lament psalms and that of what scholars have labeled “petitionary prayers” such as those in Add. C share a number of formal qualities, including the invocation of the deity, a description of the present calamity and a reminder of the individual’s or community’s relationship

²³⁵ A number of scholars working on these prayers have labeled the texts of the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha and Dead Sea Scrolls “post-biblical.” However, this is problematic in a number of ways. First, some of these texts were written and redacted in the same time period as the latest Hebrew Bible texts. Second, to label anything biblical or post-biblical in the Second Temple period is problematic in part because no canon had been established for either Jews or Christians and in part because texts which did not receive canonical status were clearly authoritative for certain communities in this period. Hence, the terms “biblical” and “post-biblical” are misnomers.

with YHWH. Arguing for these formal parallels is not unwarranted, and even the petitionary function of both the prayers and the lament psalms deserves attention. In the early 1980's, Erhard Gerstenberger labeled the individual laments petitionary (*Bittrede*), determining that they express individual complaints to provide the petitioners with what they need.²³⁶ He contributed to form-critical study of the individual laments by engaging sociology to propose not simply a *Sitz im Leben* for the laments but also ritual behavior which accompanied them as well.²³⁷ With the aid of Babylonian laments, he attempted to situate the individual laments in the context of a family or clan ritual.²³⁸

Such work is important for scholars investigating the development of prayer from exilic to postexilic times because a number of similarities and differences between the biblical laments and Second Temple prayer texts have been examined. Furthermore, although Gerstenberger deals with different social and political contexts for the laments than those of the exilic and postexilic prayers, the interest in establishing a relationship between text and ritual challenges scholarship on prayer to understand more than the literary and socio-historical contexts of the prayers. It is also important to ask whether such prayers were associated with particular behaviors and attitudes. Do the prayers simply serve a literary purpose, or do they reflect ways in which Judeans were oriented to the cultures in which they lived? Recent scholarship has focused more on the formal characteristics of the prayers and their literary contexts than on questions about dispositions and practices.

²³⁶ Gerstenberger, 18-19.

²³⁷ Ibid, 168-169.

²³⁸ Ibid, 10, 164.

One of the primary changes in the formal characteristics of such pleas in the Second Temple period is that a confession of sin occurs which is generally absent from the lament psalms. In addition, there is frequently a praise of God before the lament of the situation in the late prayers which is often absent in the psalms. Westermann has noted that this form of praise-lament is found in Babylonian psalms and thus this characteristic must have developed during the exilic and postexilic periods under Babylonian influence.²³⁹

Others have also proposed that the changes in the form are a result of exilic developments. Judith Newman, for example, considers the exilic period a turning point for what she calls the “scripturalization of prayer.”²⁴⁰ For Newman, this term refers to the dependence on scripture itself in the formation of prayers, so that echoes and citations of both the scriptural texts themselves as well as their language, ideas and content shape the composition of later prayers.²⁴¹ Thus, scholarship has detailed both the ways in which Second Temple prayers are in continuity with earlier prayers and psalms and the ways in which they differ.²⁴²

²³⁹ Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (trans. Keith R Crim and Richard N. Soulen; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 204-205. Compare to Gerstenberger’s comparison of Hebrew and Babylonian individual laments which finds in both the function of removing a threat from the petitioner’s life. Gerstenberger, 17-18, 24.

²⁴⁰ Judith H. Newman, *Praying by the Book: The Scripturalization of Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (Early Judaism and Its Literature 14; ed. John C. Reeves. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 38.

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, 12-13.

²⁴² There is of course debate concerning the terminology. On the one hand, the biblical psalms are considered to be their own form, but on the other hand they exhibit formal characteristics in line with similar texts which are designated prayers. Judith

Such work is helpful for understanding more deeply the tradition of prayer in ancient Israel and early Judaism. Finding continuity among such texts can aid in establishing the meaning of the language and the purpose of such texts. Unfortunately, however, much of the scholarship fails to ask questions of an ideological or theological nature. Some scholars have even taken a rather deterministic approach in claiming that the authors of the Second Temple prayers were bound to the form of petitionary prayer which developed out of the lament psalm tradition and incorporated a confession of sin.²⁴³ Judith Newman and Rodney Werline have admittedly been more generous concerning the freedom of the authors to work within the established tradition while creatively authoring a new prayer for the textual context of the prayer (i.e., the book of Judith, the Hodayot, etc.).²⁴⁴

More recent work on a form known as penitential prayer in Second Temple texts has also determined that such prayers are characterized more by content than a fixed

Newman provides an account of this debate and the problems involved in the terminology. For the purposes of this study, a prayer is any language which invokes the deity either directly or indirectly whether by an individual or community. Thus the psalms can be understood as types of prayers, an understanding supported by the shared formal characteristics with other texts labeled as prayers. Ibid, 5-7.

²⁴³ Richard Bautch claims that the intertextuality of penitential prayers does not exhibit the scribal awareness most scholars attribute to it until the second or first century B.C.E. Prior to this, scribes primarily operated unconsciously based on certain underlying principles. Richard Bautch, *Developments in Genre between Post-Exilic Penitential Prayers and the Psalms of Communal Lament* (Academia Biblical 7; ed. Saul M. Olyan; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 18-20.

²⁴⁴ For example, see Newman who attributes creativity to the prayer authors who altered the language while working with the formal characteristics of the tradition. Newman, 9-10. See also Rodney Alan Werline, *Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism: The Development of a Religious Institution* (Early Judaism and Its Literature 13; ed. John C. Reeves; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 4.

structure. That is to say, the content of penitential prayers includes divine sovereignty, mercy and justice and a confession of sin and contrition.²⁴⁵ Such work has asked questions of the theology of such prayers in comparison to the prayers and psalms of the Hebrew Bible. For example, William Morrow points out the shift in responsibility from God to humans between the lament psalms and the petitionary prayers of the Second Temple period.²⁴⁶ In line with Karl Jaspers, he argues that this shift is a result of the Axial Age in which the deity became more transcendent and there was a more binary and disjunctive relationship between the earthly and cosmic realms.²⁴⁷ Dalit Rom-Shiloni has also attempted to situate penitential prayers in a particular socio-historical setting associated with orthodox groups, contrasting these prayers to the communal laments which purport a different view of divine-human relationships associated with non-orthodox circles. For Rom-Shiloni, the petitionary prayers were intentionally constructed as a counter response to communal laments.²⁴⁸ Hence, there is interest in both the forces behind the changes in scriptural prayers as well as the ideological qualities of such changes.

²⁴⁵ William Morrow, "The Affirmation of Divine Righteousness in Early Penitential Prayers: A Sign of Judaism's Entry into the Axial Age," in *Seeking the Favor of God 1* (3 vols.; ed. Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk and Rodney A. Werline; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 101.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 105.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 106.

²⁴⁸ Dalit Rom-Shiloni. "Socio-Ideological *Setting* or *Settings* for Penitential Prayers?" in *Seeking the Favor of God 1* (3 vols.; ed. Mark Boda, Daniel K. Falk and Rodney A. Werline; Atlanta: SVL, 2006), 65-68.

A recent contribution is Michael Matlock's study of Second Temple and rabbinic period prayers. Matlock includes a section on the ideology of individual prayers after examining the structural characteristics.²⁴⁹ Working with the assumption that these prayers provide information about the author's perspective, he examines what he calls non-psalms prayers in the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple corpora such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha and Philo and Josephus, as well as the targumim. Concerning these prayers he writes, "A prayer text reveals to those reading the prayer a great deal about an author's ideas either in regard to the story and how this author views the character or regarding his or her theology and image of God."²⁵⁰ Matlock is interested not only in structural characteristics and content, but also socio-historical context and ideology. He concludes that generally such prayers examine, emphasize or clarify the issues of the main narratives in which they are embedded,²⁵¹ but there is no way to argue for a clear linear development of prayer from the Hebrew Bible to the rabbinic material.²⁵²

This scholarship provides a background insofar as this study is interested in both the literary and socio-historical contexts for the prayers in Esther. The ancient authors were working with the forms and ideas of their tradition, a tradition which was long-standing in many ways but also changed slowly over time. As with *habitus*, much of

²⁴⁹ See sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 on the prayers in LXX Esther. Michael D. Matlock, *Discovering the Traditions of Prose Prayers in Early Jewish Literature* (Library of Second Temple Studies 18; ed. Lester L. Grabbe; London: T&T Clark, 2012), 92-99.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 6.

²⁵¹ *Ibid*, 138.

²⁵² *Ibid*, 196.

what they produced happened unconsciously, but that does not mean that everything they did was unconscious, particularly since it involved writing and influencing their religion. Furthermore, while it is certainly true that their language and thought was structured by society so that much of their work was determined by their socio-historical context, it is also necessary to consider the location of such authors within society. Such factors as habitus, position and social field could affect the scribes' ideology and the texts they produced.

The scribes were working within the tradition to produce texts which suited the tradition both formally and ideologically. The formal qualities of the prayers in Addition C were not new inventions for their authors; nor is the ideology entirely different from all other Judean texts, but instead it aligns with a number of texts concerning God, empire and human-divine relationships. Thus, the prayers in Esther and the disagreements they exhibit both internally and in conjunction with the rest of the book are interesting with regard to historical ideology and socio-historical criticism.

Biblical Scholarship on Addition C

Similar to biblical scholarship on prayer in the Second Temple period, scholarship on Addition C has focused primarily on historical-critical questions. The dominant questions on Add. C have considered its provenance with regard to authorship and language and, to a lesser extent, its role in the Greek versions of Esther, especially LXX. For a full discussion of the origin of this addition, Carey Moore is still considered the most comprehensive resource, but Jon Levenson also provides a more recent discussion

of the matter.²⁵³ Although these debates are interesting, there is no consensus concerning the additions to Esther in general. While the Additions generally exhibit linguistic qualities akin to Hebrew and Aramaic, it is possible that the authors were deliberately imitating such language in continuity with similar texts of the Hellenistic period such as Judith.²⁵⁴ Although most scholars on Esther understand Add. C to be a translation of a Semitic *Vorlage*, D. Flusser claims it was composed in Greek.²⁵⁵ For this study, ascertaining the language of composition for Add. C is not as important as the ideas conveyed by the prayers in their extant form and the fact that redactors decided to add these prayers at this point in the narrative. With no Hebrew or Aramaic version to provide any comparison, it is sufficient to examine the Addition in its Greek versions.

Furthermore, it is even more difficult to ascertain when and where such additions were authored. It seems most likely that collectively they were authored separately from each other since they exhibit different interests, and more than the other Additions, Add. C seems to exhibit interests in the Temple and Torah, but this does not clearly establish a time or location for Add. C or any of the other Additions, though some have argued it was authored in Judea shortly after Antiochus IV Epiphanes.²⁵⁶ Michael Matlock dates

²⁵³ Moore, *Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah*, 153ff; Levenson, 29ff.

²⁵⁴ Most scholars still argue that Judith was translated from a Semitic *Vorlage*. Lawrence M. Wills, "The Book of Judith," in *New Interpreter's Bible* III (ed. Leander E. Keck, et al; Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 1075. See, however, Toni Craven who now views it as compositional Greek. Toni Craven, "Judith," in *The Harper Collins Study Bible* (ed. Wayne A. Meeks, et al; New York: Harper Collins, 1989), 1459.

²⁵⁵ D. Flusser, "Psalms, Hymns and Prayers," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (ed. Michael E. Stone; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 552.

²⁵⁶ Levenson, 31-32.

Add. C more generally to the Hasmonean period.²⁵⁷ In contrast, Moore argues that the ideas put forth by Esther's prayer are so firmly rooted in the Hebrew Bible that finding the specific source of the ideas is a fruitless endeavor. However, Moore then proposes that the Maccabean period is the most probable date because of the text's similarities in spirit to Daniel and other Hellenistic Jewish texts.²⁵⁸ This is possible, but, more importantly, the prayers continued to have importance for some Judean audiences as AT and Josephus indicate by their inclusion of Add. C. What is important for this study which seeks to understand the function of prayer in the text is more fundamentally that prayers have been inserted into the Greek narrative of Esther. The location of these prayers in the narrative as well as their content can provide important information about the intentions of the scribes.

Another important contribution of historical-critical scholarship has regarded the discrepancies among the various additions themselves and between individual additions and the narrative shared with MT. Addition A, for example, has been labeled not only apocalyptic but also secondary due to its repetition of information introduced once again in later chapters in the Greek. Mordecai's genealogy and a plot to kill the king appear twice in the Greek, and their appearance in Add. A has led scholars to view this as a late addition which scribes did not fully work into the narrative. Rather than removing later and more original references to the genealogy and plot, the repetition was maintained in the layers of redaction, indicating that Add. A is secondary. Similarly, there is incongruence between 2:20 and Add. C:28. In 2:20 Esther does not reveal her relations

²⁵⁷ Matlock, 96, 139.

²⁵⁸ Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 213.

or her people because Mordecai tells her not to. In MT this concealment is maintained until Esther reveals her relations at the second banquet. However, in Add. C:28 she prays that she has not eaten from Haman's table or glorified the king's banquets or drunk libation wine, a reference to Judean dietary practices. The textual conflict that scholars have pointed out concerns how Esther could both keep her relations secret and maintain her special Judean diet. One answer to this question has been to regard the disagreement as a result of redaction which brought together a prayer with a more Priestly ideology and a narrative from another perspective.

This is a viable explanation insofar as it allows the text to provide information about the history of the development of LXX Esther. However, this is not the only disagreement Add. C exhibits in the literary context of LXX and AT Esther. The variance will be the focus of the next section, but for now it is important to note that this study diverges from historical-critical scholarship at this point by seeking other historical explanations for the disagreement apart from the source and redaction history of the text. Instead, some of these tensions reflect conflict the Judean leaders experienced. Furthermore, as those in liminal spaces in the empire, the Judean leaders had particular views concerning their texts in general and concerning the function of the prayers in particular. Texts and prayers alike could have been a means of authorizing both Judean identity and lifestyle as well as imperial society. A closer look at Add. C in conjunction with Bourdieu can shed light on these issues.

LXX and AT and Prayer

The primary focus on prayer in LXX Esther has been with the study of Add. C, but another place in LXX and AT mentions prayer.²⁵⁹ In 4:8 Mordecai tells the eunuch to command Esther “To call upon the Lord and speak to the king concerning us and save us from death” (ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον, καὶ λάλησον τῷ βασιλεῖ περὶ ἡμῶν καὶ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἐκ θανάτου). Here MT reads, “To go in to the king to beseech him and to seek an audience with him for the sake of her people” (וּבֹא לְאַלְהֵי מְלָכָהּ לְהִתְחַנֵּן לִּי לְבָנֵי עַמִּי). There are a number of differences between MT and LXX here, so that it is difficult to claim with certainty that something dropped out of MT accidentally. AT reads similarly to LXX here: “Therefore, having beseeched God, speak concerning us to the king and save us from death” (ἐπικαλεσαμένη οὖν τὸν θεὸν λάλησον περὶ ἡμῶν τῷ βασιλεῖ, καὶ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἐκ θανάτου). LXX and AT are clearly aligned here despite the variant verb forms for καλέω and the inclusion of οὖν in AT. In these cases, the AT editor/translator could have been attempting to conform more to the syntax of compositional Greek with the inclusion of a postpositive adverb and a participle in place of a finite verb. The question at hand then is whether LXX and AT represent an earlier or later reading than MT. A closer examination of 4:8 (AT 5:4b-5) in each of the versions will help to understand how and why the versions differ.

MT

The copy of the written law which was proclaimed in Susa to destroy them he gave him to show to Esther and to report to her and to commission her to go in to the king to beseech him and to seek an audience with him for the sake of her people.

²⁵⁹ In addition to 4:8 and Add. C, AT alone also mentions prayer in 5:11 (MT/LXX 4:16) when Esther tells Mordecai to proclaim an assembly and beseech God, an issue addressed in chapter two.

וְאֵת־פְּתֻשָׁן כְּתַב־תְּרַת אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן בְּשׂוֹשַׁן לְהַשְׁמִידֵם נָתַן לוֹ
לְהַרְאוֹת אֶת־אֲסָתָר וּלְהַגִּיד לָהּ וּלְצַוֹת עָלֶיהָ לְבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ
לְהַתְּנֶנָּה לוֹ וּלְבַקֵּשׁ מִלְּפָנָיו עַל־עַמָּהּ :

LXX

The copy which was publicized in Susa concerning their destruction he gave to him to show to Esther, and he told him to command her to go in to beseech the king and to make a request to him concerning the people, "Remember the days of your humility when you were fed with my hand, because Haman, the one who is second to the king, spoke against us for our death. Beseech the Lord and speak to the king concerning us and deliver us from death."

καὶ τὸ ἀντίγραφον τὸ ἐν Σούσοις ἐκτεθὲν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀπολέσθαι αὐτοὺς ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ δεῖξαι τῇ Εσθηρ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ἐντείλασθαι αὐτῇ εἰσελθούσῃ παραιτήσασθαι τὸν βασιλέα καὶ ἀξίωσαι αὐτὸν περὶ τοῦ λαοῦ μνησθεῖσα ἡμερῶν ταπεινώσεώς σου ὡς ἐτράφης ἐν χειρὶ μου, διότι Ἀμαν ὁ δευτερεύων τῷ βασιλεῖ ἐλάλησεν καθ' ἡμῶν εἰς θάνατον· ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον, καὶ λάλησον τῷ βασιλεῖ περὶ ἡμῶν καὶ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἐκ θανάτου.

AT

But he said, "Thus you will say to her, 'You must not turn away from going to the king and him personally for the sake of me and the people, remembering the days of your humility when you were fed with my hand, because Haman, the one who is second to the king, has spoken to the king against us for our death. Therefore, after beseeching God, speak to the king for our sake, and deliver us from death.

ἀλλ' εἶπεν Οὕτως ἐρεῖτε αὐτῇ Μὴ ἀποστρέψῃς τοῦ εἰσελθεῖν πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα καὶ κολακεῦσαι τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ καὶ τοῦ λαοῦ μνησθεῖσα ἡμερῶν ταπεινώσεώς σου ὧν ἐτράφης ἐν τῇ χειρὶ μου, ὅτι Ἀμαν ὁ δευτερεύων λελάληκε τῷ βασιλεῖ καθ' ἡμῶν εἰς θάνατον. ἐπικαλεσαμένη οὖν τὸν θεὸν λάλησον περὶ ἡμῶν τῷ βασιλεῖ, καὶ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἐκ θανάτου.

Concerning the stability of LXX and AT in this verse, the manuscript witnesses contain numerous variants, the majority of which do not problematize the overall content of the texts in question here. Two LXX manuscripts omit the final three commands (ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον, καὶ λάλησον τῷ βασιλεῖ περὶ ἡμῶν καὶ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς

ἐκ θανάτου). However, these are Medieval miniscule manuscripts.²⁶⁰ The most likely explanations for the omission are correction toward MT or haplography due to *homoioteleuton* since the preceding clause ends with εἰς θάνατον and the omitted chain ends with ἐκ θανάτου.

AT does not include the first clause concerning the passing on of the decree from Haman to Esther via the eunuch. *Homoioteleuton* or *homoioarcton* do not seem to be at play resulting in haplography in AT. Therefore, either Proto-MT added the clause prior to the LXX translation, or AT's editors intentionally omitted it. Given the fact that AT includes Additions B and E and therefore exhibits an interest in the decree, the addition of this clause to Proto-MT seems most likely. Beyond this, LXX follows MT to the end of the shorter MT version of the verse. Differences in verb forms, such as Greek participles for Hebrew infinitives, may be explained by translation technique in LXX rather than a difference in LXX's *Vorlage*. However, LXX continues Mordecai's command, with additional information concerning Esther's time in his care, reminding her again about Haman's decree for their destruction, and finally telling her to beseech God and king. *Homoioarcton* could explain haplography in MT because MT contains a sequence of infinitive constructs with prefixed הַ and at times a prefixed הַ, so a portion of the command could have been accidentally omitted at some point in the Hebrew.

Before drawing this conclusion though, the emphasis on Esther's humility in the Greek versions is important to consider. In Add. C, her royal status is juxtaposed explicitly with her humility when she takes off her royal garments and puts on garments

²⁶⁰ Ms. 71 dates to the thirteenth century, and ms. 249 dates to the twelfth century. See Hanhart, 9-10. See also de Troyer who notes another verse where Hanhart thinks 71 seems to align with the Hebrew against other LXX manuscripts. De Troyer, "A Rewritten Hebrew Biblical Text," 13.

of distress and mourning (C:13) and when she reminds God that she despises the symbol of her royal status (C:27), all the while calling herself God's servant (C:29). This juxtaposition is continued in Add. D when Esther takes off the garments of her servitude and puts on her royal clothing (D:1). Scholars have also noted that the Greek versions, perhaps especially AT, tend to downplay Esther's role while enhancing Mordecai's status as the true hero of the story.²⁶¹ Thus, a number of factors may have influenced the development of 4:8 in LXX and AT. Linda Day has noted that Esther has more authority in MT 4:8 because there is no reminder of her previous status, and there is no reliance on God as in the Greek.²⁶² Esther's status as queen and her humble upbringing are juxtaposed in this verse, and Mordecai's role in her development is emphasized. In other words, because of him, she has attained the position she has. These claims are all congruous with both Greek versions, so 4:8 seems to have developed within the literary structures of the Greek versions, a claim which the majority of scholars agree on with regard to the differences among the versions.²⁶³ AT's translation differs from LXX in a number of places here, but many of the differences, other than the absence of the decree, are stylistics of translation which convey the same ideas. Thus, both Greek versions include an added juxtaposition of Esther's current and previous status which is lacking in MT because it was not part of the original story.

²⁶¹ Jobes, 134-135; de Troyer, "A Rewritten Greek Biblical Text," 70; de Troyer, "Is God Absent or Present in the Book of Esther?" 39.

²⁶² Day, 53.

²⁶³ Moore, *Esther*, 48; Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 202; Crawford, "The Book of Esther," 904; Clines, *The Esther Scroll*, 107.

Within the process of the development of the Greek translations, prayer was also added to the Greek versions. Again, *homoioarcton* could have played a role in scribal omission in MT 4:8, but the larger context of the Greek versions indicates this was also an addition to LXX and AT. Given that both the Greek texts contain the prayers to God, the most logical explanation would be that they exhibit further instances of additions of prayer to God which are absent in MT. Operating with the notion that Esther prays, the scribes of LXX added a command by Mordecai to pray in 4:8, making Esther more humble and obedient to Mordecai who raised her. Once again Esther's ambiguous position of authority and humility is highlighted by the Greek. On the one hand, she must beseech God, and in the context of Add. C which depicts her as God's servant and which claims that God can deliver Esther and her people (C:30), her dependence on God is emphasized. In addition, she is to speak to the king for her people, indicating she is at once subject to the king and in a better position of authority than the rest of the Judeans, including Mordecai. On the other hand, she is the one with the social and symbolic capital to influence the king, so she is in a position of power. She is also apparently able to deliver her people from death, as Mordecai's last command indicates. Thus, she has an ambiguous status, and her royal and humble associations are juxtaposed once again.

In addition to an interest in Esther's status, the Greek versions have paired God/Lord and king. In both versions Esther is to beseech the deity and speak to the king. Literarily pairing the two establishes both of them as authorities in the legal situation the Judeans face (legal because a royal decree has been issued for their death). Esther must address both her deity and her king in order to save her people. Placing God/Lord first may also indicate that the deity is to be understood as the more important of the two

authorities although this is a subtle structural hierarchy.²⁶⁴ Michael Matlock notes that only God is described as sovereign and omnipotent (C:23,30), whereas the earthly king, probably a Ptolemy, is mortal (C:21), indicating that God is more powerful than the earthly king.²⁶⁵ AT highlights the chronological sequence of these events with the use of an aorist participle for beseeching God (ἐπικαλεσαμένη) and an imperative for speaking to the king (λάλησον), in comparison to LXX's two imperatives (ἐπικάλεσαι and λάλησον). Whether the authors/translators were fully conscious of what they were doing is difficult to know, but the prayers in Add. C also establish God/Lord as the most powerful.

In C:2-4 Mordecai prays, “Lord, Lord, King Almighty, because everything is in your authority, and there is no one who is opposed to you when you want to save Israel. Because you made heaven and earth and every marvelous thing in it under heaven and you are Lord of all, and there is not one who can resist you, the Lord.” Likewise, Esther prays in C:22, “Do not hand over, Lord, your scepter to those who are non-existent, and may they not feed on our poverty, but turn their will upon them; so make an example of the one ruling over us.” Both of these prayers use language and imagery applied to kings to describe God. Such language is particularly interesting in a narrative whose Hebrew counterpart makes no such comparisons but instead situates the king and his advisors alone in the authority positions.

²⁶⁴ Another possibility is to read this pair as an instance of metonymy, in which case God/Lord and king could represent two opposites whose pairing refers to all who have the power to change the situation. The plausibility of this reading for a Second Temple Judean is uncertain though.

²⁶⁵ Matlock, 98.

Kristin de Troyer has pointed out that the Greek versions contain different images of God. LXX depicts God in terms of the king, whereas AT diminishes this portrayal in favor of God as judge (AT 7:28, 54).²⁶⁶ In addition, LXX refers to the living God (6:13; E:16), but AT does not use this phrase.²⁶⁷ After outlining a number of differences concerning references to God, de Troyer concludes that AT reflects an adapted view of God, and this is as result of a change in perspective about the king.²⁶⁸ She does not delve any deeper into the relationship of LXX or AT to their socio-historical contexts, but she establishes a foundation for discussions of ideology and socio-historical context through her text-critical and redactive work. The translators and editors of the Greek versions revised the versions under the influence of socio-historical context, disposition and ideology. The ways in which they viewed their social worlds affected how they viewed God. What is the specific role of prayer with regard to issues of God and empire?

Concerning prayer, there are numerous Second Temple texts which indicate that prayer played an important role narratively in situations of crisis for the Judeans.²⁶⁹ Rodney Werline has proposed that these prayers served an ideological function for their authors and that despite repetition of particular language across the texts, even these words and phrases could have meant something different for each author/translator.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ De Troyer, "Is God Absent or Present in the Book of Esther?" 40.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 39.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 40.

²⁶⁹ See Judith 9 where Judith prays when Holofernes' army is about to attack and 3 Macc 2 where Simon the High Priest prays when the Temple is desecrated.

²⁷⁰ Werline, 4.

Thus, to call God king, despite a long tradition of such language, could have still had import for the authors/translators of the prayers. Werline suggests that the author/translator of Add. C was influenced by the prayer of Simon the High Priest in 3 Macc. 2. Simon and Esther both extol God as the only king, a claim similar to one made by Mordecai in C:2 where he calls the Lord “King of all rulers” (βασιλεῦ πάντων κρατῶν). Likewise, both Simon’s and Esther’s prayers reference threats to the Temple (3 Macc 2:14-18 ; Esth C:20).²⁷¹

Referring to God as not simply king but the only king or the king of all rulers is particularly forceful in texts that exhibit narrative threats to Judeans from those in power. In the case of Esther, this threat is the decree from Haman, while in 3 Macc the threat is from Ptolemy who is intent on entering the Holy of Holies himself.²⁷² In each case, to establish God as the ultimate king is not simply a formulaic response to impending danger produced by the structures of prayer. Instead, the narrative and socio-historical contexts inform the scribes’ understanding of the divine epithets. Placing God above any earthly ruler makes an ideological move. In the texts themselves, the prayers are efficacious. Esther wins the king’s favor and her people are saved in the end.

Is the text making a claim about God through prayer, or is it making a claim about prayer itself or perhaps both? Before exploring this issue further, it is important to point out the discord that exists in the Greek versions between Add. C and Add. D concerning

²⁷¹ Ibid, 183-84.

²⁷² Matlock establishes the socio-historical context of LXX Esther as generally the Hasmonean period when there was relative freedom for the Jews in Palestine and the context of 3 Macc as the oppressive rule of Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-205 BCE). Despite the differing contexts, Matlock notes that the prayers in LXX Esther and Simon’s prayer in 3 Macc 2:1-22 all expound on God’s sovereignty by describing God as omnipotent and omniscient. Matlock, 122, 139.

the relationship of God and the king. Add. C on some level establishes God as the most powerful, and 4:8 (AT 4:5) further supports this claim by establishing God/Lord as the one Esther beseeches before speaking to the king. Yet, in Add. D the king takes on qualities which are divine-like, in a sense countering the royal qualities attributed to God in Add. C. Attributing divine characteristics to kings was common in the Ancient Near East. Likewise, deities were anthropomorphized with kingly qualities at times (Isa 6:1). Nevertheless, the fact that these attributes have been added to the Greek versions with Add. D and the fact that, as de Troyer has pointed out, LXX Esther is especially interested in associating God with royal attributes makes the divine-royal connections particularly interesting.²⁷³ It is also important to remember that conventions may take on new meanings in new contexts, so it is worthwhile to consider the role of the associations with God and king in the Greek versions.

In Add. D, Esther is afraid in the presence of the king, and the king is described as sitting on his royal throne clothed in his royal robe. His face is also burning with glory, an image which resonates particularly with divinity. Furthermore, in 8:3 Esther performs several activities before the king which are narrated with Greek vocabulary often associated with human behavior before God in Second Temple Jewish and New Testament texts, including falling at the king's feet (καὶ προσέπεσεν πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ) and asking him to remove Haman's evil (καὶ ἤξιον ἀφελεῖν τὴν Ἀμαν κακίαν). The verb ἄξιόω can mean to ask or request, but it also carries the connotation of honoring the object, so it parallels the Hebrew קָרַב in connoting a particular power relationship between subject and object. AT lacks any parallel verse

²⁷³ De Troyer, "Is God Absent or Present in the Book of Esther?" 40.

here, so LXX stands out among the three versions as the one which contains the most parallels of the king to God.²⁷⁴

In addition, Esther's fear of the king in conjunction with the description of his face in Add. D suggests particular divine attributes which are absent in MT. These qualities are juxtaposed to Add. C which establishes God as the ultimate king. In fact, Klaus Baltzer has likened the scene to a throne-room vision similar to those of 1 Enoch 14 and Revelation 4.²⁷⁵ Since Additions A and F frame the narrative as apocalyptic, this analogy is intriguing. In 1 Enoch and Revelation, royal imagery is used to describe the divine or heavenly, while in Esther the divine attributes associated with throne room visions now associate the king with the divine. Furthermore, in D:8, Esther says, "I saw you, lord, as an angel of God, and my heart was shaken from fear of your glory." These attributes create a certain amount of tension with Add. C which establishes God as the ultimate king and calls God Lord. Why do the likening of God to a king and a king to God occur in the same narrative, especially since the likening of God to king is absent in MT?

On the one hand, this disagreement can be attributed to source criticism and layers of redaction. If Add. C and Add. D were written by different authors and then compiled into the same narrative later, the discord could be a result of redaction of earlier sources. Yet, the tension is not accidental. Even if the LXX and AT translators were not fully conscious of everything concerning the text, to create a text with such conflict could still

²⁷⁴ As noted earlier, de Troyer has pointed out that LXX Esther describes God in terms of king, while AT does not. *Ibid*, 40.

²⁷⁵ Baltzer, 256.

have significant connections to the tradition and the socio-historical context within which the texts were produced.

First of all, it is not unusual for Hebrew Bible texts to exhibit such variance, whether due to redaction or other linguistic or social factors. Within such a tradition, the translators may have thought nothing of the tension created by pairing Add. C and D, but not because they were unaware or careless. Instead, this was part and parcel of the tradition, so they did not consider it problematic as modern interpreters often do. Second, because the scribes existed in liminal spaces in the empire where they had to negotiate their religion and tradition with the authority of the empire, a text which exhibits disagreement concerning the roles of God and king on another level structurally reflects the context in which it was produced. Thus, the discord in the Greek versions which literarily results from the textual additions and redaction is not simply the result of source and redaction history, but instead it also indicates the influence of both the literary tradition itself and the socio-historical context of the Judean scribes.

This conflict is also exhibited in 2:20 and Add. C with regard to Esther's identity. In 2:20 Mordecai tells her not to reveal her relations or her people, but in C:28 she claims that she has not eaten from Haman's table nor glorified the king's banquets nor drunk libation wine. If Esther observes practices similar to Daniel whereby she avoids food and drink prohibited by a kosher diet, how can she hide her relations and her people? To simply claim that this issue is a result of redaction is unsatisfying given the clear references to kosher diet and circumcision in Esther's prayer which establish her as keeping Judean practices. Add. C is clear enough on the matter of such practices since no

questions are raised by the text itself concerning her ability to keep these observances. Yet, in conjunction with 2:20 there is discord in the narrative established by C:28.

Along with the issue of God and king, this disagreement can also be understood as reflecting the socio-historical contexts in which the translations were produced. This time, the conflict may have existed among different Judean groups with a certain amount of authority. It is clear from the Second Temple texts that there were different perspectives on a number of issues in this period, including when to fast, the importance of circumcision and the importance of the Temple. On one level, MT and the Greek versions of Esther may reflect different viewpoints concerning such issues, but on another level there may be such inter-group conflict reflected in a single version. While 2:20 reflects continuity with MT in part because it is a translation of MT, in conjunction with Add. C it also could reflect the disagreement between those who thought it vital to observe a kosher diet and those who did not. Perhaps the translators thought that including Add. C established that Esther was able to maintain Judean practices and that this was enough. That is to say, they understood Add. C as providing the final word with regard to Judean identity and practices. Michael Matlock has proposed that the purpose of both Mordecai's and Esther's prayers is to remind God of the covenant with Israel in order to persuade God to deliver the Jews from their crisis.²⁷⁶ Within this framework, the practices that are mentioned in the prayers, including circumcision and observing dietary

²⁷⁶ Matlock, 96, 99.

restrictions, are part of the covenant, so that the prayers may function to remind Jews that if they expect God to protect them, they must observe the covenant.²⁷⁷

It is also possible that they intended the variance to reflect the historical conflict concerning Judean practices in the Greco-Roman period while at the same time establishing that despite such conflict it was still possible and important to observe such practices. Although the biblical texts do not say much concerning Judeans who do not circumcise, Josh 5:2-9 suggests that there were some Israelites who circumcised and some who did not because Joshua must circumcise the male Israelites prior to celebrating Passover and entering the Promised Land.²⁷⁸ In addition, Jubilees divides between the circumcised and the uncircumcised, with the circumcised receiving blessings and the uncircumcised living in the realm of evil (1:23-25; 30). Furthermore, the biblical texts are also not generally explicit about Judeans who do not observe kashrut, but 1 Kings 17:2-7 states that Elijah was fed by ravens according to YHWH's command. Since ravens feed on carrion, the food they provided would not have been kosher, suggesting a perspective in which kashrut was not as absolute as the Priestly material prescribes it. Furthermore, in vv. 8-16 Elijah is fed by a widow in Zarephath, a Phoenician city,

²⁷⁷ Matlock has proposed that LXX Esther's prayers reflect a time of relative freedom for the Jews, probably the Hasmonean period, because the prayers stress the innocence of the Jews and do not exhibit any guilt. Such a claim is debatable, given Esther's reference to her people having sinned (C:18). Mordecai seems to claim his innocence in the conflict with Haman (C:5-7), but it should not be assumed that this indicates relative freedom for the Jews as a context for the prayers. It is also possible that such a claim reflected Jewish innocence in the midst of a current conflict. Ibid, 139.

²⁷⁸ See Cornelis den Hertog who argues that this passage in LXX is speaking to the Judeans in the Hellenistic period who did not circumcise. Cornelis G. den Hertog, "Jos 5,4-6 in der griechischen Übersetzung," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 110 (1998): 604.

indicating that he lived and ate with a non-Israelite. These passages suggest that, at least in times of intense crisis if not generally, some Israelites/Judeans had no problem with eating Gentile food.²⁷⁹ Hence, the variance in the Greek versions of Esther is more than just an accident of redaction. Whether the translators were conscious of the effects or not, the Greek versions nonetheless structurally parallel social conflict among Judeans in the Greco-Roman period.

Thus, the Greek versions of Esther exhibit disagreement with regard to the roles of God and king and keeping a kosher diet with the addition of Add. C. While source and redaction criticism can explain the resulting variance on one level, it is also informative to understand these disagreements as reflecting the structures of the literary tradition and socio-historical contexts of the scribes. There is a long tradition of such tension in the Hebrew Bible, so it is entirely possible that scribes in the Second Temple period did not always take issue with such discord not because they were careless but because it was an acceptable part of the tradition. Furthermore, with real social disagreements resulting from the Greco-Roman period and the liminal spaces the scribes occupied, the conflict in the text can be seen to reflect such conflict experienced by the scribes.

Prayer and Gender

As noted in the textual analysis in this chapter, there are ways in which the Greek versions put Esther in a particular position of humility by emphasizing her dependence on Mordecai, the king and God. This could be due to an interest in prioritizing Mordecai, in

²⁷⁹ See Choon-Leong Seow, "The First and Second Books of Kings," in *New Interpreter's Bible* III (12 vols.; ed. Leander E. Keck, et al; Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 128.

which case the mention of Mordecai beginning with Add. A and the placement of Mordecai's prayer before Esther's in Add. C may serve to establish Mordecai the male Jewish figure as hierarchically superior. Yet, Esther's status is more nuanced than simply being inferior to Mordecai, God and the king, as is the role of gender as it relates to prayer in Esther.

Mordecai is able to interpret dreams, a capacity which had certain value in antiquity. It was a type of cultural capital which carried a certain amount of value in numerous Ancient Near Eastern cultures and which is associated both with prophets and with court figures in the Hebrew Bible.²⁸⁰ Mordecai's dream interpretation aligns him especially with Joseph and Daniel, two Israelite/Judean figures who rise to prominence in foreign courts. Mordecai also has access to particular knowledge despite his marginalized position at the king's gate, and sharing the knowledge of the eunuchs' assassination plot allows him to advance to the king's adviser by the end of the story. He also has sway over Esther, who advances to a prominent position. Particularly in the Greek versions where he is dream interpreter, he seems to be favored by the scribes, and he is sure to remind her of his role as her caretaker in the Greek versions when he implores her to go to the king (LXX 4:8; AT 4:4).

Yet, Esther's status and relationship to Mordecai are not clear-cut once she enters the palace. The reader knows from chapter one that beauty is vital for attaining the position of queen, and soon enough it is revealed that Esther is beautiful. This is

²⁸⁰ See J.F. Bourghouts, "Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination in Ancient Egypt," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East III* (ed. Jack M. Sasson; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 1783; Jean-Michel de Tarragon, "Witchcraft, Magic and Divination in Canaan and Ancient Israel" in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East III* (ed. Jack M. Sasson; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 2073.

obviously not enough for retaining the position though, so despite the fact that beauty is a physical attribute only explicitly associated with females in the story, beauty is not their only attribute.²⁸¹ Esther must find other ways to survive, and in chapter four and Add. C, the practices of fasting and prayer in LXX (or prayer and solemn assembly in AT) indicate a relationship with God that will serve her well because God changes the countenance of the king in Add. D:8 (AT 5:7).

As noted earlier, Esther is in a particular position with her ambiguous status in the Greek versions. At once Jewish and queen, she has the social capital of the palace necessary to save her people. While Mordecai may be the favorite in certain ways, Esther's position as Jewish Queen of Persia provides her with the social capital necessary to influence both God and king, the ones in power in the story. Although this dynamic still retains the patriarchal structures of the culture, it does attribute a certain amount of power to Esther which is not attributed to Mordecai. Esther's gender plays a role in her status and power, and the concept of bodily hexis nuances an understanding of her gender. Part of her gender status is physical. As a female, she has the potential to be queen, but in addition she must be beautiful, and she undergoes extensive beauty treatments in preparation to meet the king. Furthermore, there are certain physical manifestations related to prayer and beseeching the king which are exhibited when she changes into humble clothing and royal clothing for prayer and begging the audience of the king respectively.

In addition, part of her ability to retain her status and influence is associated with cognition. Unlike Vashti, Esther is able to get what she wants while keeping the king

²⁸¹ In fact, nothing is said of Zeresh's appearance, but it becomes clear that she has some prophetic ability which her husband lacks.

happy. The interplay of Esther and the king in which she teases him by inviting him to one of his favorite activities twice in chapters 5-7 suggests that she has acquired something she did not acquire in her Judean upbringing—knowledge of how the palace operates and how to keep the king happy. Her disposition, which the Greek versions explicitly indicate is a result of both her Jewish upbringing and her formative time in the palace, is different than Vashti's and Mordecai's. Both of the latter figures made refusals which got entire groups of people in trouble, while Esther is able to resist what is already law and not only avoid further trouble but solve her people's dilemma as well.

Thus, the prayers and the events surrounding them in the Greek versions to a certain extent suggest scribal intent to weaken Esther and strengthen Mordecai in comparison to MT. However, Esther's status is more nuanced than simply being submissive to Mordecai, God and king. Understanding the type of capital she has acquired and how her gender plays a role in her understanding of the situation and how she should act makes her a more complex character. Both Mordecai and Esther pray to God in the midst of crisis, but only Esther possesses the bodily hexis and social capital to beseech and please both God and king, both of whom play vital roles in the Jews' salvation.

Conclusions

The lens of Bourdieu and capital nuances the questions raised about these texts. It is important to keep in mind that the practices which I focus on in this study held no value for the empire itself, but instead their only value was that imbued by the Judean authorities, and consequently by the Judeans in general and by the tradition handed down

to them. Such a framework enhances the answers to the questions about prayer and Esther raised at the beginning of the chapter. What does it mean that MT lacks explicit prayer to YHWH? How is efficacy attributed to prayer literarily and ideologically in the Greek texts? What other claims to Judean identity are made by the prayers and why is prayer the chosen format for such claims?

Concerning the absence of prayer in MT, this version reflects an imperial world where more power is attributed to the imperial officials. It is only the king who is beseeched, and although the Judeans in Susa fast prior to Esther's appearance before the king, the Greek versions are much more explicit in their claims about the power of God in Judeans' interactions with the empire. In a time of crisis, the Judeans in MT fast; in LXX they fast and pray; in AT they pray. Each version presents different narrative responses to the Judeans' situation. In all cases, the imperial authorities are forces to be reckoned with, but the Greek versions claim that it is necessary to pray to God, observe dietary restrictions and circumcise. Without these practices presented in Add. C, there is a sense that the narrative as it is constructed in the Greek versions would not turn out in favor of the Judeans. In contrast, it is lamentation and fasting without explicit concern for prayer, kashrut or circumcision which are the impetus for Judean survival in MT. MT attributes more human agency to the events, at once fully acknowledging the power of the empire and imagining the power of subjected Judeans who understand the social world in which they live. Esther's ability to properly persuade the king with her beauty and savvy are what finally bring about the necessary reversal for the Judeans.

As pointed out in this chapter, efficacy is attributed to prayer literarily through its location in the Greek versions. The fact that prayer is inserted at a crucial point in the

narrative—when the decree against the Judeans has been proclaimed and Esther must risk her life to save her people—indicates from both the viewpoints of redaction and literary criticism that the authors/redactors of the LXX and AT attributed efficacy to prayer to God in times of crisis. Of course, the simple but profound fact that Esther and the Judeans survive also contributes to the texts' claims to the efficacy of prayer. Furthermore, the pairing of God and king as the two figures Esther is to beseech also attributes efficacy to prayer. First Esther (and Mordecai) beseeches God, then she beseeches the king. Considering that the second action is a risk in and of itself, one could argue that the Greek texts claim that the prayers to God serve as protection for Esther herself, which in turn allows her to convince the king to save her people.

An underlying claim of the sequence of events is that even when one is subjected to human authority, divine authority still plays an important role. Without prayer to God and God's response to such prayers, questioning human authority can be dangerous. If Esther and Mordecai had not prayed, would she have survived her unauthorized appearance before the king? The text makes no explicit claim on this matter, but the sequence of events indicates she would not have. Thus, a practice which held no particular value for the empires is vital to the lives of the Judeans.

This is precisely how the prayers make ideological claims—through their location in the narrative sequence and literary devices. As noted in the previous paragraph, the sequence of events suggests that the text is making claims about the efficacy of prayer to God as a vital component of Judean interaction with the empire. The power of the imperial authorities, in this case the king and his advisors, is undermined by the prayers. Haman's law to annihilate the Judeans is overturned as a result of a series of events

which begins with lamentation at the beginning of chapter four and Esther and Mordecai's prayers at the end of the chapter. The Greek versions thus claim that prayer is a necessary practice for the Judeans, perhaps especially for the leaders since it is Esther and Mordecai who pray.

Reading with Bourdieu, the Greek versions establish prayer as a means to social capital within Judean culture, and, more specifically, as a means for dealing with the empire and its leaders. Within the social context and social location of the Judean scribes, the notion that if Judeans pray, God will intervene in their struggles with the imperial authorities is a strong ideological claim about the power of Judean prayer which at once accepts the authority and fields of power established by the empire and subverts these imperial forces. The imperial structures are acknowledged, but prayer to God is a means for Judeans to attain more power within those structures.

In terms of social capital, there are two authorities worthy of association because they are the most powerful according to the Greek versions: God and the king. Within this framework, Mordecai certainly has the genealogy and the required practices to identify as a Jew associated with God. Haman has connections with the king, but he is not Jewish. As de Troyer notes, AT goes so far as to claim that Haman is associated with other gods, a claim which is not made in LXX Esther (AT 3:7; 5:23).²⁸² In this narrative world, Esther becomes the most powerful and prestigious of all the characters because she alone has access to both God, who is described as king of all kings and the one who can deliver her people, and to the king, who has divine attributes and the power to have

²⁸² De Troyer, "Is God Absent or Present in the Book of Esther?" 39-40.

her and her people killed.²⁸³ Is it possible that the LXX authors/translators, perhaps unwittingly, made LXX Esther more powerful through the addition of prayer? Given the imperial patriarchal world in which the texts were produced, this aspect of the narrative is certainly imaginary, but if the purpose of the carnivalesque is to overturn oppressive social structures, albeit momentarily, this raising up of a Judean heroine as not only the most powerful Judean but also the most powerful character in the story may be understood in carnivalesque terms. It provides momentary relief in the midst of a text which deals with very difficult and real social issues. God and empire are powerful and can threaten Judean identity and life, but even a Judean woman can attain the power necessary to effect change.

Concerning other claims about kashrut and circumcision, it is interesting to note that Esther's claims about these Judean practices in Add. C conflict with Mordecai's command that she keep her relations a secret in 2:20. Circumcision in Esther is the focus of the next chapter, but for now it is important to note that the prayers become a means not only of claiming that prayer to God is a means to social capital for the Judeans, but they also link these prayers with the Judean God and the practices of kashrut and circumcision. Once again, the text begs the question as to whether Esther's prayer would have been efficacious, and consequently her plea to the king, if she had not observed kashrut and abhorred the bed of the uncircumcised.

²⁸³ As Jacob Wright points out, it is Esther's and Mordecai's favor with the king as well as their intercession with God which brought about their deliverance. Jacob L. Wright, *Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah-Memoir and Its Earliest Readers* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 348; ed. John Barton, et al. Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 13-14.

Considering that MT makes no claims about either kashrut or circumcision, the Greek versions resonate rather clearly with regard to the importance of observing these practices. At least from the perspective of the scribes involved in the Greek versions (and the Semitic source underlying Add. C), kashrut and circumcision were important practices for Judeans. Furthermore, the discord with 2:20 remains, perhaps as a reflection of the social situation some Judeans experienced living in the imperial diaspora and attempting to observe Judean practices.

In conclusion, while it is improbable that Mordecai's and Esther's prayers reflect prayers actually prayed in antiquity, texts do reflect the structures of the social contexts in which they are produced. It may not be possible to claim with certainty anything more than that Add. C reflects Judean practices to the extent that Judeans prayed to God in times of crisis. What is more clear is that the prayers in Esther serve to purport particular ideological notions. One of these is the idea of God as the ultimate king, and the other is the importance of maintaining Judean practices such as kashrut and circumcision. Both the question of the authority of religion and empire and that of kashrut and circumcision are closely related issues in Second Temple Judaism. With more imperial authority and control in the diaspora came more disagreement concerning Judean practices and identity. For some Judean authorities, such practices were the real means to survival in the empire, while for others assimilation was acceptable and perhaps necessary, as Esth. 2:20 suggests. The written texts served as a means of purporting the ideologies of the Judean leaders, but they also existed as products of their social circumstances, and so they reflect the conflict experienced by the Judean leaders in the Second Temple period. Within this

framework, the prayers in chapter four and Addition C reveal both the viewpoints and struggles of the Judean leaders, as does the absence of these prayers in MT.

CHAPTER IV

CAPITAL AND CIRCUMCISION: DEFINING JUDEANS AND JEWS IN THE MIDST OF EMPIRE

Introduction

But when I saw that they were not being upright toward the truth of the gospel, I spoke to Kephas before everyone: "If you, a Jew, are living like the peoples and not like the Jews, how can you force the peoples to live like the Jews?" (Gal 2:14)

These words of Paul to the Galatians appear in the context of a letter which contends that Gentile followers of Jesus do not have to obey certain portions of the Abrahamic Covenant and Mosaic Torah. In contrast, as the letter indicates, some of the Jewish followers of Jesus were imposing all of the Torah on the Galatians, including the practice of circumcision (Gal 2:12). This passage contrasts Judaism with the cultures of other peoples, but it also suggests that the boundaries are permeable because Peter is a Jew who lives like other peoples, but other peoples are also living like Jews. Thus, there is something distinctive about being Jewish, yet it is possible for others to live in the same manner, and in this case, circumcision is explicitly mentioned as a part of Judaism. Such dialogues concerning Judaism and identity did not only occur among early followers of Jesus but also among Judeans/Jews themselves. What do the versions of Esther say about Judaism, and how does circumcision relate to their perspectives? This chapter examines claims concerning Judeans and other peoples in Add. C and 8:17 (AT 7:41) in order to establish how the texts may have influenced each others' development and in order to understand how they may reflect different understandings of Judean identity in the

imperial diaspora. Bourdieu's theory nuances the argument that claims to identity and circumcision are related to particular positions in social fields and particular relationships to empire and its peoples.

Circumcision in Antiquity

The Hebrew Bible presents circumcision as a condition of the Abrahamic covenant with YHWH, but circumcision was not unique to the Israelites/Judeans. There is no evidence of circumcision in Mesopotamia,²⁸⁴ but evidence exists that males were circumcised in ancient Egypt and Syria. As early as the third millennium B.C.E., circumcision was known in Syria,²⁸⁵ and there is evidence from as early as the Old Kingdom in Egypt.²⁸⁶ Whether circumcision was practiced among all males at all times is debatable. In Egypt circumcision was required for priests as a means of purity, but whether this was always the case is difficult to know.²⁸⁷ What is evident from both Syria and Egypt is that circumcision was performed on adolescent males rather than on infants

²⁸⁴ Robert D. Biggs, "Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health in Mesopotamia," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East III* (4 vols.; ed. Jack M. Sasson; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 1922.

²⁸⁵ Jack M. Sasson, "Circumcision in the Ancient Near East," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85 (1966): 476.

²⁸⁶ Kent R. Weeks, "Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health in Ancient Egypt," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East III* (4 vols.; ed. Jack M. Sasson; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 1793.

²⁸⁷ Geraldine Pinch, "Private Life in Ancient Egypt," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East I* (4 vols.; ed. Jack M. Sasson; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 378.

as the Abrahamic covenant and Priestly traditions require.²⁸⁸ These circumcisions may have been associated with marriage rituals, and Nick Wyatt has proposed that there are traces of such rituals in the circumcisions of Ishmael (Gen 17), Shechem (Gen 34) and the bloody bride-groom (Exod 4).²⁸⁹ Even in the Second Temple period when the reigning empires did not practice circumcision there is evidence that other peoples besides the Judeans circumcised. Shaye Cohen notes that in this period there is evidence that Egyptian priests still circumcised, and Philo notes that Egyptians, Arabs and Ethiopians circumcised.²⁹⁰ In addition, Idumeans and Itureans seem to have practiced circumcision.²⁹¹

Thus, although circumcision on the eighth day was unique to the Israelites/Jews, the practice was not wholly unique to them. It is presented as a sign of the covenant with YHWH which is unique to the Israelites/Judeans, and even Greco-Roman authors sometimes attribute the practice specifically to Judeans. Cohen points out that some but not all Roman authors consider circumcision a Judean practice, and he concludes that in the eyes of the empire, a person who was circumcised was Judean.²⁹² Therefore, despite the fact that other peoples circumcised there is evidence in the Second Temple period that both Judeans and non-Judeans considered circumcision a Judean practice.

²⁸⁸ Pinch, 378; Nick Wyatt, "Circumcision and Circumstance: Male Genital Mutilation in Ancient Israel and Ugarit," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33 (2009): 421-422.

²⁸⁹ Wyatt, 412-418.

²⁹⁰ Cohen, 45.

²⁹¹ *Ibid*, 116-117.

²⁹² *Ibid*, 39-43.

At the same time, there is evidence that not all Israelite/Judean males were circumcised at all times and places. Some scholars have argued that circumcision became democratized among the Israelites during the exile when they would have encountered peoples in Mesopotamia who did not circumcise.²⁹³ Prior to this, circumcision may have been practiced primarily by Israelite leaders and their households.²⁹⁴ Evidence for such a hypothesis is scant because the texts reflect layers of redaction. What seems more defensible is the idea that during the Greco-Roman period there was contention among different groups of Judeans because some thought it imperative to the covenant and Judean identity, while others did not practice circumcision or restored the foreskin because of the possibility of being shunned, especially during participation in gymnasium.²⁹⁵ There is even evidence that Antiochus IV Epiphanes and Hadrian outlawed circumcision.²⁹⁶ Furthermore, circumcision of Judeans in the eastern diaspora is a question which Bernat raises. Concerning the exile, there is no evidence for Judean religious practices in Babylonia in the exilic period, but Akkadian evidence suggests the Judeans were not forced to abandon their own practices.²⁹⁷ Thus, it is difficult to know to what extent circumcision was practiced among Judeans in Babylonia in the Second Temple period.

²⁹³ See Bernat, 340-342.

²⁹⁴ George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, "Covenant," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 1 (ed. David Noel Freedman, et al; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1189.

²⁹⁵ Robert G. Hall, "Circumcision," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 1 (ed. David Noel Freeman, et al; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1027, 1029.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 1028.

²⁹⁷ Bernat, 120.

There are many gaps in the evidence of circumcision concerning matters such as how democratized the practice was and how important it was for covenantal identity among Judeans in different places throughout the empire. However, there is evidence both from Judean and non-Judean texts that circumcision was a mark of Judean identity for males, and there is evidence of contention among Judeans concerning the practice. With this framework in mind, a consideration of the circumcision in the versions of Esther is in order.

Observations about MT Esther

Circumcision is absent in MT Esther in that it is never mentioned, while in both Greek versions it is present in several places, including the prayers in Add. C and 8:17 (AT 7:41). In MT 8:17 the participle **מִתְיַהֲרִים** appears, a *hapax legomenon* in the Hebrew Bible, to describe how many of the peoples of the land reacted to the royal decree that the Judeans should defend themselves if anyone tried to attack. Precisely what this participle means is debated and will be discussed further after examining more closely the general context in which it appears.

In a number of ways, the tables have turned in chapter eight. They have been gradually turning since the end of chapter four when Esther decided to go before the king on behalf of her people. The threat of annihilation which Haman initiated in chapter three has been unraveling and winding around Haman himself. In 3:7 a lot is cast before Haman (**הַפִּיל פּוּר הוּא הַגּוּרָל לְפָנָי הָמָן**) to determine on which day and month the Jews would be killed, but in 6:13 Haman's wife and advisors predict that he will certainly fall before Mordecai (**כִּי־נִפּוֹל תִּפּוֹל לְפָנָיו**). The same verb and preposition are used in these

two chapters with different results. In chapter three the Judeans are in a position of not just subjugation but annihilation at the hand of Haman and his machinations, but in 6:13 the situation is changing. Haman will not cause the fall, but instead he himself will fall before Mordecai.²⁹⁸ Not only does he fall before Mordecai in the sense that Mordecai takes his place as the king's first advisor and Haman and his family are killed rather than Mordecai and his people, but Haman also literally falls before Esther in 7:8 to beg her to save his life (וְהָמֵן נָפַל עַל-הַמֶּלֶכֶת אֲשֶׁר אֶסְתֵּר עָלֶיהָ).

Thus, the situation has already reversed in a number of ways so that those who were decreed to die have survived, and those who had attained high positions early in the story have fallen and even died.²⁹⁹ 8:17 continues the chain of reversals, and it has a special connection to chapter four. At the beginning of chapter four, Mordecai finds out about Haman's decree and he goes through the city lamenting, crying out and wearing sackcloth and ashes. 4:3 describes the response to Haman's decree throughout the empire: "In every single province, every place where the word of the king and his law reached, there was great mourning among the Judeans, as well as fasting and weeping and lamentation. Sackcloth and ashes were spread out for the multitudes." Now in 8:17

²⁹⁸ Note also that Haman's wrath against Mordecai and the Judeans is the result of Mordecai's refusal to bow or prostrate himself before Haman in 3:2 (וּמִרְדֵּכַי לֹא יִכְרַע) (וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה). The verbs in 3:2 (כָּרַע; שָׁחָה) are from different roots than that in 3:7 and 6:13 (נָפַל), but there is still a notion of physical and symbolic lowering.

²⁹⁹ Berlin, 72; Levenson, 117; Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 214; Paton, 280.

the situation is reversed, with a number of linguistic parallels to 4:3 to convey structurally both the parallel situations and the changes that have occurred.³⁰⁰

4:3

וּבְכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה מִקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דִּבְרַתְהֶמְלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ מָגִיעַ
אֲבָל גָּדוֹל לַיהוּדִים וְצוֹם וּבְכִי וּמִסְפָּד שֶׁק וְאַפָּר יֵצֵעַ לְרַבִּים:

In every single province, any place where the king's word and his law reached, there was great mourning among the Judeans, fasting and weeping and lamentation; sackcloth and ashes were spread out for the multitudes.

8:17

וּבְכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וּבְכָל-עִיר וְעִיר מִקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דִּבְרַתְהֶמְלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ מָגִיעַ
שִׂמְחָה וְשִׂשׂוֹן לַיהוּדִים מִשָּׂתָה יוֹם טוֹב וְרַבִּים מֵעַמֵי הָאָרֶץ מִתְיַהֲדִים
כִּי-נָפַל פַּחַד-הַיְהוּדִים עֲלֵיהֶם:

In every single province and in every single city, any place where the king's word and his law reached, there were rejoicing and jubilation among the Judeans, a banquet and a day of being merry, and multitudes from the peoples of the land were associating with Judeans because the fear of the Judeans had fallen upon them.

The first part of 8:17 particularly resonates with the beginning of 4:3 concerning the geographic and legal extent of the situation, but once this has been established, 8:17 diverges first in the particular types of responses to the events. Whereas in 4:3 there are words for lamentation, in 8:17 there are words for celebration. Yet, once again these things happen among the Judeans (לַיהוּדִים). In addition, 8:17 repeats the word רַבִּים. In 4:3, sackcloth and ashes were spread out for the multitudes, suggesting extensive communal mourning. In 8:17, multitudes from the peoples of the land are aligning with the Judeans (מִתְיַהֲדִים) because the fear of the Judeans has fallen upon them. The linguistic parallels indicate a close relationship between the verses, in this case

³⁰⁰ Moore, *Esther*, 82; Levenson, 117; Berg, 52; Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 106; Paton, 281.

concerning the participants, while the differences point to a reversal of fortunes from lamentation to celebration.

A number of questions and observations concerning the phrase “multitudes from the peoples of the land were associating with Judeans” are important here, but the primary issue for this study is the meaning of the participle **מְיִהְדִּים**. What exactly are these multitudes doing? The root itself is connected to the gentilic adjective Judean (**יְהוּדִי**) and the proper noun Judah (**יְהוּדָה**). Thus, there is linguistic connection with the genealogy of the tribes of Judah and with the geographic region of Judah and Judea/Yehud. Does the participle mean that these multitudes were claiming a connection to Judah or Judea? Chapter two provides Mordecai’s genealogy and his relations the Benjaminites, so there is some interest in tribal connection in MT Esther. Could these multitudes have been claiming an association with the imperial province of Yehud? Generally MT Esther has no explicit orientation to Yehud apart from the appearance of this participle and the label “Judeans” for the protagonists of the story. However, chapter two mentions that Mordecai’s ancestors were exiled along with Jeconiah, king of Judah (2:5-6). Thus, MT Esther displays an interest not only in the tribes but also in the political entity of Judah. Although it is not clear precisely what “Judean” means and how much it includes and excludes, MT Esther does suggest tribal and historico-political associations. Mordecai was Judean, specifically a Benjaminite (2:5), and his ancestors were exiled from the political and geographic entity of Judah during the Babylonian exile (2:6).

Therefore, the implications of the other words from the same root as the participle in MT Esther suggest that the root in Esther has some tribal and political-geographic

connections. The multitudes may have been claiming some of these tribal and/or politico-geographic associations as well, but in what ways?³⁰¹ The participle is in the Hitpa'el stem which may suggest something habitual (iterative). This would make sense with the continuous aspect of the participle which could imply that that this action was on-going. That is to say, the multitudes adopted certain behaviors which could associate them with the Judeans and with Judah and Judea. What would these behaviors have been? MT Esther does not make explicit claims about the Judeans behaving in distinctive ways other than the reference to Purim and fasting and lamentation in 9:30-31. In fact, Mordecai tells Esther to hide her relations and her people (2:20), and she appears to do so easily inside the palace. Whether she did so by abandoning behaviors which distinguished her as Judean is unclear, for the text is silent on this matter. Perhaps the only behaviors explicitly associated with Judeans in MT Esther are fasting and mourning (4:3, 4:16) and fasting, festivals and Purim (8:17; 9:31).³⁰² Thus, the reader must fill in the gaps in MT with regard to any particularly distinctive Judean behavior.³⁰³ If the participle does mean that the multitudes adopted Judean behaviors, then MT Esther provides little clarity on this matter.

³⁰¹ For interpretations of this participle as primarily connoting genealogical or ethnic associations, see Crawford, "The Book of Esther," 927; Berlin, 80.

³⁰² 9:31 is not explicit concerning which festivals, apart from Purim, are observed, but it is important to note that the festivals play an important role as part of Judean freedom at the end of the narrative.

³⁰³ See de Troyer who notes that there is no clear distinction between the peoples and the Judeans in MT because both respond negatively to Haman's decree, and both celebrate together. De Troyer, *The End of the Alpha Text of Esther*, 172.

However, the Hitpael participle could also suggest reflexivity. One OL witness contains a reflexive translation of this participle (*iudaizabant se*).³⁰⁴ Were the multitudes making themselves Judean, and if so how were they doing this? Crawford suggests intermarriage as a possibility.³⁰⁵ Intermarriage is clearly not a problem in MT Esther since the female protagonist marries a Persian and there is no explicit resistance to this marriage on the part of Esther or Mordecai. Were the multitudes marrying into the Judean “tribes”? Were they more simply aligning themselves with the Judeans because they were afraid to be viewed as enemies?³⁰⁶ Given the nature of participles, it is also possible that the multitudes were doing this specifically at the time of the celebrations. In this case, the participle could simply mean that the multitudes were celebrating with the Judeans in the moment. However, the problem with this reading is that it does not account for the particular choice of verbal root for the participle. Why the associations with Judah-Judea-Judeans, especially given that this root is not attested as a verb elsewhere in Hebrew?

Although it is by no means clear what this participle indicates about the multitudes, in MT Esther this reveals an alignment with the Judeans and their associations. To claim particular behavioral or religious associations in MT reads too

³⁰⁴ F is attested in manuscript 109, and Jean-Claude Haelewyck considers it a revision of an OL text, dating the revision to the fourth century C.E. Jean-Claud Haelewyck, ed., *Hester* (Vetus Latina 7/3, pt. 1; ed. Petrus Sabatier, et al; Freiburg: Herder, 2004), 61-64. For the purposes of this section, it is enough to point out that Haelewyck notes the equivalence with MT here in the reflexive form; Haelwyck, *Hester* (VL 7/3, pt. 5; ed. Petrus Sabatier, et al; Freiburg: Herder, 2004), 401.

³⁰⁵ She also proposes the claim may be simply ironic. Crawford, "The Book of Esther," 927.

³⁰⁶ Berlin, 80; Levenson, 117.

much into the narrative although some scholars have understood the verse in these ways.³⁰⁷ Timothy Beal perhaps makes the best case for such a reading in MT when he points out the interest in languages and scripts, suggesting that it was possible to act Judean by speaking and writing a certain way. Yet, even Beal notes the difficulty in attributing certain behaviors to the Judeans, concluding that the phrase could just mean the multitudes called themselves Judeans.³⁰⁸ As Crawford notes, MT Esther has a "non-practicing atmosphere."³⁰⁹ Thus, to attribute certain practices or behaviors to the choice of **מְתַיְהָדִים** is somewhat problematic unless read in conjunction with observance of Purim and the fasts in 9:30-31.

Of course, different communities could and would have understood this verse differently, as the versions and the two targums indicate. As discussed in the next section, the Greek versions both understand that there was circumcision in 8:17 (AT 7:41). Targum Rishon and Sheni are a bit more complex. Both read **מְתַגְיִירִין**, a parallel participle from the root **גַּר** which can mean to live as a resident alien in the Pael stem, similar to the Hebrew root **גַּר**. In Aramaic, the Piel stem means to initiate someone into Judaism, and the Hitpael then has a passive/reflexive sense of being converted/converting oneself to Judaism.³¹⁰ In this Aramaic root, there is an intentional intermixing of Judeans and "others," with the D stems connoting joining Judaism. Texts attesting to the notion

³⁰⁷ Ringgren, 416; Clines, *The Esther Scroll*, 40-41.

³⁰⁸ Beal, "Esther," 105-106.

³⁰⁹ Crawford, "The Book of Esther," 927.

³¹⁰ Since the Aramaic texts referenced here are generally post-70 C.E., it is probably better to speak of conversion to Judaism rather than Judean religion.

of conversion are late (generally post-Second Temple), so it is problematic to propose that this understanding of the Hebrew was always associated with 8:17.³¹¹ Shaye Cohen points out that no Hebrew Bible texts speak specifically of conversion of non-Israelites: "The tribal structure, the myth of the common descent from a single set of ancestors, and the link between God, people, and land all conspired to prevent the growth of an ideology of conversion."³¹² The first clear instances of the notion of conversion appear in the Hasmonean period in texts such as 2 Macc and Judith.³¹³ For scholars who date the original story of Esther to the late Persian or early Hellenistic period, an argument that the authors intended to claim a conversion in 8:17 is difficult to maintain. 2 Macc and Judith are in some ways problematic for making a clear case for the meaning of 8:17, in part because MT Esther 8:17 may predate these texts and in part because מְתִיבֵהֶרִים is a *hapax*.

However, Exodus 12:43-49 on Passover observance provides further insight. In this passage, the male resident alien (גֵר) may participate in Passover if he and all of his males are circumcised, indicating that non-Israelites are permitted to observe an Israelite festival under condition of circumcision. Yet, David Bernat points out that despite the permission granted for participation in the festival, the status of the resident alien does not change. He does not become an Israelite but remains a resident alien who may

³¹¹ See Ber. 57; Yebam. 47; Ab Zar 3 for examples of the Hitpael. See Gen. Rab. s 39. Sabb. 31 for examples of the Piel.

³¹² Cohen, 131.

³¹³ Ibid, 131-132.

observe an Israelite festival.³¹⁴ The parallel passage in Numbers 9:10-14 makes a similar claim about the same rules applying to Israelites and resident aliens concerning Passover, but in this case circumcision is not explicitly prescribed. Instead, Numbers is interested in purity and Passover sacrifice. In both instances though, natives of the land (אֲרָמִי וְעַדְוָתָא) are paired with resident aliens (גֵּר), and both of these groups must obey the same laws concerning Passover. At the same time, although the resident alien becomes like the native (Exod 12:48), he does not become a native. Thus, there is evidence in Torah which was finalized in the Second Temple period that non-Israelites/non-Judeans could participate in certain practices along with the Israelites/Judeans, but a notion of conversion does not appear clearly until at least the Hasmonean period.³¹⁵ It is therefore possible that over time, the participle מְתִיבֵיהֶם came to be understood, at least among some Jews, as indicating conversion, but there is little evidence in the Second Temple period other than LXX Esther that it indicated anything more than an association of some kind, perhaps through festival observance.

Likewise, the Vulgate understands that the peoples were joining in Jewish practices.³¹⁶ The Vulgate for 8:17 reads:

Among all populations, cities and provinces where the royal law was sent out, were great exultation, food as well as communal feasting and a festival day, so great that many other nations and ways of life joined in religious respect and in reverence. Indeed great fear of the name of the Jews entered into all.

³¹⁴ Bernat, 48.

³¹⁵ See Matt 23:15; Acts 2:11; 6:5; 13:43.

³¹⁶ As with the targums, because the Vulgate is post-70 C.E., it is better to speak of Judaism.

Vulg. does not specifically mention conversion, but there is a sense that other peoples are participating in the celebrations. Whether it was just at this particular time or whether they began to celebrate other Jewish festivals as well is unclear.

What is interesting about the Vulgate is that circumcision is not specifically mentioned. This suggests that it was absent in the Hebrew manuscript(s) which Jerome (et al) consulted. Given that the Vulgate is dated to the late fourth century C.E., it is important to consider whether both the Vulgate and MT represent a later omission of circumcision in the Hebrew version of Esther. Considering that LXX reads that the peoples were "Judaizing"³¹⁷ and circumcising, there is a possibility that circumcision was omitted either intentionally or accidentally from the Hebrew. LXX reads as follows:

κατὰ πόλιν καὶ χώραν, οὗ ἂν ἐξετέθη τὸ πρόσταγμα, οὗ ἂν ἐξετέθη τὸ ἔκθεμα, χαρὰ καὶ εὐφροσύνη τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις, κώθων καὶ εὐφροσύνη. καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν περιετέμοντο, καὶ ἰουδαίζον διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

According to city and region where the decree was sent out, where the proclamation was sent out, rejoicing and jubilation with the Judeans, a feast and jubilation, and many of the peoples circumcised themselves and lived like Judeans because of the fear of the Judeans.

Compare this to MT:

וּבְכָל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וּבְכָל־עִיר וְעִיר מִקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דְּבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ מָגִיעַ
שְׂמֵחָה וְשִׂשׂוֹן לַיהוּדִים מִשְׂתָּה וַיּוֹם טוֹב
וְרַבִּים מֵעַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ מִתְיַהְדִּים כִּי־נָפַל פַּחַד־הַיְהוּדִים עֲלֵיהֶם:

In every single province and in every single city, every place where the word of the king and his law reached, there were rejoicing and jubilation for the Judeans, a banquet and a day of being merry, and multitudes from the peoples of the land were behaving like Judeans because the fear of the Judeans had fallen upon them.

³¹⁷ This term is used for convenience as a reference to the Hebrew and Greek **יהודאים/ἰουδαίζον**, with the understanding that the terms are ambiguous and mean something different in each version.

The primary section in question for LXX is “many of the peoples circumcised themselves and lived like Judeans.” Retroversion to Hebrew could result in the following:

καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν ἔθνῶν περιετέμοντο, καὶ ἰουδαίζον (LXX)

וּרְבִים מֵעַמֵי הָאָרֶץ נִמְלִים וּמִתְיַהֲדִים (LXX *Vorlage*)³¹⁸

וּרְבִים מֵעַמֵי הָאָרֶץ מִתְיַהֲדִים (MT)

Considering a retroversion alongside MT raises the possibility that circumcision dropped out at some point in the Hebrew due to *homoioteleuton*. This may be more probable if circumcising were the second participle, but it should not be completely excluded as a possibility. However, scholars such as Tov and Kahana view circumcision as an addition to LXX, identifying it either as a double translation of the Hebrew participle or as translation (ἰουδαίζον) and exegesis (περιετέμοντο) of the Hebrew.³¹⁹

In addition, AT Esther attests to circumcision but not "Judaizing," which further problematizes the issue. On the one hand, it is possible that AT represents the earliest of the extant readings in 8:17 (AT 7:41). In this case, "Judaizing" was added later so that a tradition existed which included both circumcising and Judaizing (attested by LXX).

³¹⁸ Frequently ἔθνος is the equivalent of גוֹי in LXX, but there is no clear evidence that the LXX translators were working with a Hebrew text which read גוֹי instead of עַם as is found in MT. As mentioned previously, Esther is not among the more literal translations in LXX, so it is important to be extremely careful about proposing a different Hebrew *Vorlage*. Also, the Niphal participle of מוּל is proposed here because the Greek verb is in the middle voice, suggesting reflexivity which is conveyed by the Niphal. See Gen 17:10-11 where Abraham is commanded in the Niphal to circumcise himself and all the males. See de Troyer who notes that ἔθνος is frequently the equivalent of עַם in LXX Esther; de Troyer, *The End of the Alpha Text of Esther*, 267-268.

³¹⁹ Tov and Kahana both call circumcision an exegetical expansion here, thus explaining the meaning of the obscure Hebrew participle. Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2nd rev. ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 124ff; Tov, "The 'Lucianic' Text of Esther," 536; Kahana, 355-56.

Later, circumcising dropped out, so that a tradition came about which read only Judaizing (MT, Tg. Rishon, Tg. Shenì, Vulg.). However, it is important to note that AT is influenced by LXX as de Troyer and Tov have noted. Therefore, it is possible that AT understood the two verbs in LXX to be synonymous and chose to omit Judaizing which would have presented problems since AT claims that it was the Judeans who circumcised themselves (καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν Ἰουδαίων περιετέμνοντο). Yet, it is also possible that AT transmitters simply reworked this verse because they wanted to claim that many Judeans circumcised themselves. In that case, AT does not represent the earliest of the extant versions, and MT may in fact retain a quite early reading reworked by LXX and AT.

The Old Latin is also worth considering because its witnesses testify to circumcision and Judaizing, with variations in verb forms which are interesting but not as crucial for this study as the presence of these verbs in general. OL generally agrees with LXX, with the exception of ms. 150 which provides a reflexive form of "Judaize" in agreement with MT (*iudaizabant se*). This contrasts with Vulg. which agrees with MT as it lacks circumcision. As de Troyer notes, instances where OL agrees with Origen and MT probably indicate influence of MT on OL, but there are also instances where OL seems to follow AT's revision.³²⁰ However, OL is also an important witness for LXX.³²¹ In the case of 8:17, OL indicates general agreement with LXX but also some influence from MT. What this suggests is that the reading attested in LXX and OL of the peoples circumcising and Judaizing appeared quite early. OL could also support the hypothesis

³²⁰ De Troyer, "A Rewritten Greek Biblical Text," 80-81.

³²¹ *Ibid*, 66.

that circumcision was omitted due to haplography in MT, but it is more likely that OL is generally following the LXX tradition in this case since MT generally contains no claims about Judeans associated with certain practices while LXX is interested in covenantal practices.

Considered together, all of these versions attest to the ambiguity of the Hebrew participle. The difficulty arises not as much in explaining the variant versions as in ascertaining what the Hebrews scribes may have intended in the first place. The multitudes were in some way aligning themselves with the Judeans, but the particulars of this alignment are ambiguous and were understood differently by different communities. A number of scholars have noted Esther's calendrical associations with Passover despite the lack of any explicit references to the festival, but any particular associations with the Passover passages in Torah are difficult to maintain in MT 8:17 because the Judeans have received legal authorization to defend themselves, but they do not celebrate Purim until the end of chapter nine. The text suggests that there is something distinctive about the Judeans, but it intentionally leaves many of the particulars to the reader to interpret. It is of course possible that circumcision was one of a number of practices which the participle could signify, but it is intriguing that the scribes chose not only to coin a new term, but also to do so in a literary context that provides no clear indication of the term.

There may even be an ironic intent behind the choice of participle given the impossibility of being Judean except by birth or perhaps marriage outside of Judah where most of the multitudes would have lived.³²² In other words, in a carnivalesque ending of

³²² See Crawford who proposes this. Crawford, "The Book of Esther," 927.

the story, things become so ludicrous that people actually try to be Judean.³²³ The reversal is complete, so that although it was once dangerous to be Judean, it is now so dangerous not to be that many peoples are claiming to be exactly that. It was once safer for Esther to hide her identity, but now other people are in such awe of the Judeans that they assert to be Judean as well.

Such a reversal should be understood in the context of the Benjaminite versus Amalekite conflict. It is no accident that Mordecai's genealogy shares the same root as the participle מְתִיבֵהֶרִים. The age-old conflict involving the tribes is resolved in Esther because the Judeans do not lay hands on their enemies' property (9:10, 15-16), unlike Saul who took the best of Amalek's possessions. Some have argued that Judean versus Agagite is rectified in Esth 9-10 when Esther and Mordecai become the king's favorites, Haman and his sons are hanged and the Judeans are victorious over their enemies but do not keep any of the enemies' possessions. Yet, Mordecai receives Haman's property, so there is less interest in holy war and the practice of devotion to God through total destruction (חַרָּם). Within this context, the reversal that takes place in 8:17 is part of the Benjaminite/Amalekite conflict. LaCocque has proposed that this conflict represents an on-going battle of the Judeans and their enemies because in every time and place there is always somebody opposing them.³²⁴ The absence of complete חַרָּם may point to the fact that the Judeans must always face enemies. With the juxtaposition of Judeans with their enemies, מְתִיבֵהֶרִים indicates that many of the peoples aligned themselves with the

³²³ See Berlin who points out the carnivalesque ending and Clines who calls the ending surreal. Berlin, 81; Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, 318.

³²⁴ LaCocque, *Esther Regina*, 67.

Judeans. In other words, they chose good over evil, the Judeans over Haman. The problem of enemies is not eradicated for perpetuity, especially since Haman's law is still in effect, but a partial reversal has occurred which has resulted in the Judeans having fewer enemies.³²⁵

With an imaginary world that hearkens back to bygone tribal days in order to resolve a conflict which is at once very specific (Saul vs. Agag) and very general (Judeans vs. enemies/good vs. evil), it is difficult to locate the text very specifically with regard to any socio-historical context for its authorship. What can be said is that for MT the resolution to the conflict comes as a result of the Judeans establishing better connections with the proper people than their enemies did. Esther and Mordecai both know how to please the king, and this is more important than pleasing Haman because the king, despite his gullibility, still has more power than anyone else. It is the task of others to establish good relations with the king, thus accruing more social capital and more power. The Judeans' position of power invokes fear among the peoples, causing them to align themselves with the Judeans. In a narrative about an age-old conflict, genealogy establishes one's side if one is Judean or Agagite, but others may still choose sides. The situation has reversed completely, and many have sided with the Judeans.

³²⁵ The development of the apocalyptic Additions to Esther may indicate an attempt to retain something of the historical aspect of the conflict while setting the theme Judean vs. enemy in a more current context of Judean vs. Macedonian. Esther alludes to divine conflict through its use of Babylonian divine names for the main characters. MT establishes the conflict as both cosmic and human through its allusions to the Saul vs. Agag narrative. The Greek versions similarly establish a cosmic aspect of the conflict through the apocalyptic Additions and the allusion to recent conflict by calling Haman Macedonian. The reinterpretations of Esther in Greek thus already point to the on-going conflict of Judeans vs. enemies.

Such an imaginary world could have been created at any time and in any place that Judeans felt their identity threatened.

Observations about LXX Esther

Overall the extant LXX witnesses translate the participle מְתִיבֵיהֶם but also claim that the peoples were circumcising. LXX reads:

καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν ἔθνῶν περιετέμοντο καὶ ἰουδαίζον διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων

“And many of the peoples circumcised themselves and aligned with the Judeans because of the fear of the Judeans.”

There are several variant forms of the verb περιτέμνειν, but in general the LXX witnesses testify to circumcision.³²⁶ Likewise, there are several variant translations of מְתִיבֵיהֶם, but the witnesses generally testify to the translation of this participle in LXX.³²⁷ This section will therefore discuss the individual LXX variants as they are

³²⁶ The major codices all testify to circumcision in LXX. A number of miniscule manuscripts also attest to this reading. B, S*, V and some miniscules read περιετέμοντο, while other manuscripts read περιετέμνοντο. Thus, the earliest extant witnesses to this reading in LXX are fourth century C.E. Precisely when circumcision appeared in the LXX tradition, whether upon Esther’s initial translation or later, is not ascertainable, but this does not preclude a discussion of the extant tradition which makes different claims than the MT and AT traditions in this verse.

³²⁷ Once again, the major codices testify to the translation ἰουδαίζον. S* translates ἐνιουδαίζον, which could suggest a status verb (they were becoming Judeans) or a verb of manner (they were acting in Judean ways). A status meaning would coincide with the targums, while both meanings could coincide with the Vulgate. This reading provides a bit more clarity (though admittedly not much) to the more general translation ἰουδαίζον, so it is possible that S* represents an exegetical change. However, although both verbs are rare, ἐνιουδαίζον is the more rare, so it is also possible that S* represents the earlier reading within the LXX tradition. In either case, it is clear that in general LXX translates the Hebrew participle as some form of the verb ἰουδαίζω. A discussion of when the Hebrew participle and the Greek verb might have appeared in Esther 8:17 will

relevant to this project, but an underlying presupposition will be that the connection of circumcision with an alignment with the Judeans is a part of the LXX tradition. Why would circumcision have developed in this Greek tradition? There is more to the matter than simple exegesis of $\text{מִי־יִתְּיָדָיו־לְיִשְׂרָאֵל} / \text{ἰουδαίζων}$ as some have claimed.³²⁸

On the one hand, circumcision could be understood as an exegetical addition to LXX intended to explain $\text{מִי־יִתְּיָדָיו־לְיִשְׂרָאֵל} / \text{ἰουδαίζων}$. As noted in the previous section, MT Esther 8:17 is the only known extant instance of the root יָדָה acting as a verb. Elsewhere it primarily functions as proper nouns and adjectives. Similarly, the verb ἰουδαίζω is rare in Greek. In LXX it occurs only in Esther 8:17, and in the New Testament it appears in Galatians 2:14 where Paul speaks of the behavior of his fellow Jews who force Gentiles to "Judaize" (ἰουδαίζω). Even if there were other instances of this verb in Hebrew or Greek which are lost to us, it is still clear that its usage was rare and thus would have been likely to require explanations. Therefore, the addition of circumcision in LXX 8:17 is probably an attempt to explain, at least in part, what $\text{מִי־יִתְּיָדָיו־לְיִשְׂרָאֵל} / \text{ἰουδαίζων}$ means.³²⁹

On the other hand, further consideration of circumcision in this verse may point to underlying ideological claims in LXX Esther which are absent in MT. That is not to say that circumcision was of no importance to any tradents or communities associated with

follow in the section on AT. For now it is enough to note that there are sufficient witnesses to discuss LXX essentially as testified by B and reconstructed by Hahnhart.

³²⁸ See Moore, *Esther*, 81-82; Kahana, 356.

³²⁹ As de Troyer notes, ἰουδαίζω is a hapax in LXX and may be considered a counterpart to ἑλληνίζω which signifies speaking and becoming Greek. De Troyer, *The End of the Alpha Text of Esther*, 268.

the MT tradition either in the Second Temple period or the rabbinic period, but there is an interest in LXX with explicitly claiming circumcision as part of the peoples' response to Judean victory and celebration. Why is circumcision in particular the exegetical choice here? Why did the translators/tradents not clarify that the peoples were participating in the Judean festivities or that they were worshipping YHWH in some way? There are other texts which make such claims concerning worship of, prayer to or loyalty to the Israelite/Judean deity by non-Israelites/non-Judeans, so LXX's choice of circumcision is worth considering.³³⁰

In part, the answer to this question probably involves the ideological viewpoint of the translators/tradents of LXX. Both the Hebrew and Greek in 8:17 allow for the possibility that others besides the Judeans participated in the celebration. Later in 9:18-19 when the dates of Purim are explained, only the Judeans are said to have celebrated after their victory and to have continued to observe this celebration. The LXX translators/tradents could have had these verses in mind in their explanation of מְתִיבֵיהֶם / Ἰουδαίῳ. In that case, to claim that the Hebrew or Greek means to participate in Judean festivals might have been problematic within the narrative. However, chapter nine introduces a different celebration than 8:17. In 8:17 the celebrations happen after the decree is written for the Judeans to defend themselves, but in chapter nine, the celebrations occur after the actual days of military defense and victory against those attacking the Judeans.

³³⁰ See Jonah 1:14; 3:5-9; Josh 2:8-13; Ruth 1:16-17; Dan 2:47; 3:28-29; 2 Macc 3:35-40; 9:16-17; 13:23.

Therefore, it is possible that chapter nine influenced the translators'/tradents' understanding of מְהַרְהֵרֵם/ιουδαίζον, and this could clarify why the verb is not explained as a participation in Judean celebration. Nevertheless, it is still necessary to ask why circumcision is the exegetical choice. There must be an ideological issue or claim underlying this particular translation.³³¹ This is not the first time a claim about circumcision has been made in LXX Esther which is absent in MT. In Add. C:26 (AT 4:25), Esther prays that she hated the glory of the lawless and abhors the bed of those who are uncircumcised and of every stranger (ὅτι ἐμίσησα δόξαν ἀνόμων καὶ βδελύσσομαι κοίτην ἀπεριτμητῶν καὶ παντὸς ἀλλοτρίου).³³² This is followed by the claim that she has not eaten from Haman's table or drunk libation wine. Thus, there are claims to particular Judean practices in Esther's prayer which are absent in MT, in part because MT lacks Add. C but also because MT is not particularly concerned with these matters. Circumcision functions as a means of identity in the prayer—Esther associates with those who circumcise and hence abhors uncircumcision. Her claims serve as a reminder to God that she is associated with these practices of circumcision and kashrut. Thus, circumcision is already established as an important distinction between Esther and her people and those who are “strangers.” Not only that, but it appears to

³³¹ As was begun in the previous section and will be concluded in the next section, it seems more likely from both text-critical and socio-historical evidence that circumcision was added to LXX Esther rather than omitted from MT.

³³² AT's reading is a bit different, but the claim to hating uncircumcision remains: "I abhor an uncircumcised man's bed, and I hated the glory of a lawless man and of everyone with different ancestry" (ὅτι βδελύσσομαι κοίτην ἀπεριτμητοῦ καὶ ἐμίσησα δόξαν ἀνόμου καὶ παντὸς ἀλλογενοῦς). The section on AT will discuss the implications of ἀλλογενοῦς.

have efficacy with regard to obtaining God's help since Esther succeeds in winning the king's favor and the Judeans are victorious.

Add. C:26 establishes a precedent for circumcision in Esther. By specifically mentioning this practice, Add. C provides the claim that circumcision is important for a relationship with the Judean God and perhaps also in order to survive. Thus, circumcision may have been added to LXX Esther not simply to explain the verb ἰουδαίζον, but also to establish the necessity of circumcision for participation in Judean activities. Circumcision is hence vital both for Judeans and for those who wish to associate with them.

One final issue must be addressed concerning this matter. This regards the marriage of Esther to Xerxes, a non-Judean. In Add. C:26, Esther reminds God that she abhors the bed of the uncircumcised. She is married to an uncircumcised man and there is no claim in LXX that the king ever becomes circumcised, even in 8:17. Whether he is one of the many in 8:17 is unclear, but the text makes no attempt to resolve the issue. Thus, a Judean woman is married to an uncircumcised man. To a certain extent this is in disagreement with 8:17 which claims an association of Judeans with circumcision. However, this is not the only conflict established by Esther's prayer as the examination of dietary matters has shown. Because the prayer occurs in the midst of crisis when the fate of the Judeans is yet undecided, Esther's claims in Add. C function slightly differently than the narrator's claim in 8:17 when the tables have turned and the situation has almost fully reversed. The contradiction concerning Esther's claims of dietary observance and circumcision are problematic in Add. C and reflect conflict both for Esther as Judean-Persian queen and for Judeans in the Greco-Roman world. In 8:17, the tension has

almost been resolved, so rather than pointing to an ideological or textual conflict between Add. C and 8:17, what the two references indicate is that the reversal is almost complete. Previously Esther had to deal with non-Judean habitus and practices while attempting to hide her own identity and yet retain the influence of the habitus of her childhood which predisposed her to certain dispositions and practices such as kashrut and male circumcision. Now the Judeans are powerful, having attained the symbolic capital of imperial authorization, so other peoples are associating with them and even observing their practices.

To conclude this section it will be helpful to review the fundamental points. First, LXX Esther mentions circumcision twice (Add C:26; 8:17). Both instances are additions to LXX which are absent in MT but present in AT as the next section points out. Furthermore, both instances are related to claims about Judean identity. In Add. C circumcision appears with kashrut as a means of associating Esther with the Judeans. This claim is found in the midst of a prayer to God to help Esther as she goes before the king to plead for her people. In the end, the association with circumcision is efficacious because Esther wins the king's favor and the Judeans prevail. In 8:17 the meaning of circumcision is more ambiguous. If read as a way for the Judeans' allies to further align with them, then circumcision may be a means of including non-Judeans in the Judean community. Such an understanding of the participle **קִטְּרָה** appears in Tg. Rishon and Tg. Sheni as **בְּמִתְגִּירֵינָא**, although without circumcision. In the imperial diaspora, certain forms of capital were established by the empires as means of maneuvering and attaining positions of power, but circumcision, prayer and fasting were not among these. In fact, at times circumcision seems to have caused problems in the public sphere for Judeans in the

Greco-Roman period. Yet, the text claims that circumcision is an important sign of power for Judeans as it accompanies a fear of the Judeans and is followed by freedom to legalize their festivals. The symbolic capital of fear brings about the practice of circumcision among non-Judeans. Along with fasting, prayer and kashrut, it is an effective means of victory and survival. This is true also for AT, but, as the next section points out, AT makes a different claim concerning circumcision.

Finally, as with MT, LXX Esther should be considered carnivalesque insofar as it overturns everyday structures and is characterized by reversals, irony and the blurring of boundaries. Within this framework, the claim in 8:17 is ironic and functions as part of the reversals which are completed in chapter eight. At a literary level then, the circumcision and behaving like Judeans in LXX plays a similar role to **מִתְיַקְרִים** in MT because it reverses the situation from chapters 3-4 where it was dangerous to be Judean so that it is now dangerous not to be. However, literature is often rooted in social reality, so the specific addition of circumcision of non-Judeans in LXX points to the social world in which the text was produced. Practices in LXX are an important part of Judean identity, so the claim that the peoples were circumcising and behaving like Judeans is not entirely surprising within the framework of the narrative and within the larger context of society. In an imaginary narrative, what is real is the importance of circumcision to Judean identity and the threats to this identity experienced by Judeans in the Second Temple period. What is imagined is the ironic, carnivalesque reversal which finds the situation so much improved that rather than being shunned, the Judean way of life is now aspired to. Such an imaginary narrative could have been produced at a number of times and places in the Second Temple period because influence from the empires and

interactions with different peoples would have produced varying experiences for the Judeans. If the translation occurred in the late second or early first century C.E. in Jerusalem, as the colophon suggests, then LXX may represent a situation in which the scribes experienced relative freedom after the Maccabean Revolt when the Hasmoneans were in power. The reference to Haman as Macedonian suggests an early Roman date, and it may situate the conflict in the recent period of Antiochus IV. The Judean leaders' access to more symbolic and social capital could have given them the freedom to reassert the importance of the covenant, imagining a world in which Judeans had so much freedom that other peoples wanted to convert and circumcise.

Observations about AT Esther

In a number of places LXX Esther seems to expand on a tradition closely related to MT. In the case of 8:17, for example, both versions say something about the peoples associating with Judeans. Due to differences in time, location and, therefore, culture, the meaning of the words and the narrative could have shifted, but both reflect this notion of the peoples participating in the rare verb מִתְיַהֲדִים /τοσδάζον. In both cases, many from the peoples do this, and in LXX there is the additional verb about circumcising. LXX also includes a reference to circumcision in Add. C, suggesting that circumcision was added to LXX with particular purposes in mind.

Where does AT Esther fit into this picture? First of all, it is important to remember that AT does not always align well with either version. Whether this is due to a practice similar to paraphrasing which would have created a recension in the sense of a conscious reworking of a text is debated, but the perspective operating here is that AT's

transmission history is long and complex. At times it may reflect a reading which is earlier than MT or LXX, and at other times it may represent the most revision. In the case of 8:17 (AT 7:41), it shares several words with LXX, but most of its phrasing differs from both MT and LXX. A comparison of vv. 16-17 (AT 7:40b-41) reveals the complexity of the shared and variant pieces. In v. 16 (AT 7:40b) all three versions vary. A phrase “for the Judeans” appears in each, followed by a finite form of the verb “to be.” However, MT lists four things (light, rejoicing, jubilation and honor) which came about for the Judeans, while LXX only lists equivalents for the first two of MT’s words (light and rejoicing), and AT agrees with the first word (light) but includes two words which do not appear in MT or LXX here but instead appear in 8:17 (drinking, feasting). AT then appears to skip much of 8:17, picking up with the final part of the verse which is the focus of this chapter.³³³ Nothing is said about the decree in AT 7:41, and it does not include the repetition of rejoicing and celebration which appears in MT and LXX. Finally, the section of the text primarily in question here also differs from MT and LXX. In AT it is many of the Judeans who circumcise themselves, and nobody rises against them because they fear them. AT’s witnesses contain a number of minor variants here, but none of them change the meaning of the text for the purposes of this study. In agreement with LXX, ms. 93 contains the imperfect participle for circumcising (περιετέμοντο) instead of the aorist participle (περιετέμνοντο), but this is not surprising since 93 contains both LXX and AT texts, and it does not fundamentally change the meaning of the narrative. Thus, AT includes circumcision which is in LXX,

³³³ See de Troyer who argues that AT made one sentence out of two in revising LXX. De Troyer, *The End of the Alpha Text of Esther*, 336.

but it is not the peoples who are doing this. Instead, nobody is preventing the Judeans from circumcising themselves.

At a text-critical level it could be asked whether AT omitted a large section of 8:16-17 accidentally or whether MT and LXX represent later expansion. Both 8:16 and the section missing in AT end with the same word in LXX (εὐφοροσύνη). There is no evidence to suggest that anything dropped out of AT's *Vorlage* due to haplography. Did AT's translators/tradents accidentally skip over a large section of 8:17 in LXX? This assumes that AT is influenced by LXX, which a number of scholars have proposed. The problem with the notion of omission due to repetition of the same word is that in this case AT does not include εὐφοροσύνη in these verses. Therefore, it is more likely that LXX and MT represent expansion or that AT represents intentional omissions due to repetition. Both scenarios are possible, since there is evidence of expansion in MT and LXX, as well as “paraphrasing” in AT.

Before determining how AT relates historically-critically to MT and LXX in 8:17 (AT 7:41), it is important to consider Add. C (AT 4:12b-29). As with LXX, Esther prays that she abhors the bed of the uncircumcised, an addition which AT's scribes accepted along with Esther's prayer under the influence of LXX. AT puts the nouns which Esther hates in the singular, while LXX uses the plural, perhaps suggesting a reference to a particular uncircumcised male from another people in AT, an interpretation which is supported by the general emphasis on Haman himself as the primary enemy in AT and the conflict as Mordecai vs. Haman. In addition, AT uses the term "other ancestries" in 4:25 (ἀλλογενούς). In AT Esther claims that she abhors an uncircumcised man's bed and she hated the glory of a lawless person and every person from another ancestry (ὅτι βδελύσσομαι κοίτην ἀπεριτμήτου καὶ ἐμίσησα δόξαν ἀνόμου καὶ παντὸς

ἀλλογενοῦς). Here LXX uses ἀλλοτρίου, a more general adjective which connotes distinction ("another"), but the particular type of distinction may vary from simply another individual to a person or group of people unknown or unfamiliar. In contrast, AT's ἀλλογενοῦς specifically distinguishes by genealogy and familial relations. In AT, Esther's list of people she despises includes those who engage in different practices as well as those who are from different relations. Thus, in Esther's prayer AT makes the claim that both circumcision and genealogy are important. That is not to say that genealogy makes no difference in LXX, for LXX also includes Mordecai's genealogy in Add. A:1-2 (AT A:1) and 2:5 as well as a number of instances of γένος to describe the Judeans. Yet, AT's explicit pairing of circumcision and genealogy is unique among the versions of Esther in question. Circumcision and observance of the law are important in Esther's prayer, but so is genealogy. Hence, both practices and associations matter.

Add. C is also especially interesting because it includes an additional reference to circumcision which is absent in LXX. In AT 4:15 (LXX Add. C:5), Mordecai prays, "Neither in insolence nor in love of glory did I not bow to the uncircumcised Haman" (καὶ οὐχ ὅτι ἐν ὕβρει οὐδὲ ἐν φιλοδοξίᾳ ἐποίησα τοῦ μὴ προσκυνεῖν τὸν ἀπερίτμητον Ἀμαν). LXX reads similarly here, but Mordecai calls Haman arrogant rather than uncircumcised: "Neither in insolence nor in arrogance did I do this, not bowing to the arrogant Haman" (ὅτι οὐκ ἐν ὕβρει οὐδὲ ἐν ὑπερηφανίᾳ οὐδὲ ἐν φιλοδοξίᾳ ἐποίησα τοῦτο, τὸ μὴ προσκυνεῖν τὸν ὑπερήφανον Ἀμαν). In this case, most OL witnesses are lacking this portion of the verse. One witness (F), agrees with AT, calling Haman *incircumcisum*. In contrast, the Vulg. agrees with LXX, calling him *superbissimum* (extremely arrogant). Since OL's translation is earlier than Vulg., it

is possible that AT and OL reflect the earlier reading here. However, it is also possible that OL preferred AT's reading since it sometimes agrees with AT, in which case LXX could still represent the earlier reading. Given that AT adopted Add. C from LXX with tendencies to revise in general, it is more likely that LXX reflects the earlier reading, so one must ask why AT revised the verse.

Both versions juxtapose Mordecai and Haman, but in LXX the juxtaposition is more explicit, with Mordecai claiming that he was not behaving arrogantly when he did not bow to the arrogant Haman. The juxtaposition of the two concerns their character, as well as their status within the empire since Mordecai is expected to bow to Haman. However, in AT the juxtaposition concerns their status as circumcised or uncircumcised, in addition to their status within the empire as servant and king's advisor. The ideological connotations of these claims will be considered later. At this point, what matters most is that AT includes an additional reference to circumcision which is lacking in MT and LXX, and this reference, along with Esther's pairing of uncircumcision and genealogy in her prayer, heighten the contrast between Judeans and uncircumcised people, in particular Haman. AT thus has more interest in the distinction between Judeans and non-Judeans with regard to this practice, and in Add. C (AT 4:15), it is explicitly the Judeans' primary enemy who is not circumcised. AT establishes Haman as uncircumcised, whereas MT makes no claims about circumcision, and LXX alludes to the fact that the king and others are not circumcised. To a certain extent, AT's additional claim may have to do with the heightened conflict between Mordecai and Haman which AT establishes by focusing on Mordecai as the primary hero and Haman as the primary enemy. Yet, it is intriguing that AT chooses to juxtapose them with regard to circumcision rather than character here. In

the larger context with 8:17 (AT 7:41), AT can be said to revise the narrative so that Judeans and non-Judeans are generally more explicitly contrasted with regard to circumcision because only Judeans are said to be circumcised. In contrast, LXX makes less distinction with regard to circumcision because no claim is made explicitly about Haman's status, and in 8:17 many peoples circumcise. Hence, on one level, AT's revisions may be a result of its interest in Mordecai as the exemplary Judean in contrast to Haman the ultimate enemy. Yet, the choice of circumcision as a point of contrast is worth considering ideologically since it is absent in MT and less forceful in LXX.

Kristin de Troyer believes that AT is a revision of the Old Greek reflected in the LXX witnesses, and she dates this revision to the first century C.E. In fact, she specifically dates AT to 40-41 C.E. when Philo attempted to convince Agrippa to allow the Jews in Alexandria to live by their own laws, a possibility that will be returned to after considering what others have claimed about the divergence of the three versions in 8:17 with regard to circumcision and "Judaizing."³³⁴ Tov has claimed that AT reflects a misinterpretation of מְחַמְצֵי הָאֲרָצִים in conjunction with a revision of LXX.³³⁵ “Many of the Judeans were circumcising themselves” thus reflects a misreading of the participle as a noun in conjunction with the addition of circumcision according to LXX.³³⁶

³³⁴ De Troyer, *Rewriting the Sacred Text*, 89; *The End of the Alpha Text of Esther*, 50-52.

³³⁵ Jobs makes no reference to the participle in conjunction with AT's reference to the Judeans, but instead considers this reference a narrowing of the Hebrew phrase “from the peoples of the land” (מִן־עַמֵּי הָאֲרָצִים).

²⁶⁴ Tov, “The ‘Lucianic’ Text of Esther,” 537.

Clines, who disagrees with the notion of a misreading of **גִּתְיָהָרִים**, has proposed that AT reflects an erroneous reading of LXX with regard to the Judeans circumcising themselves, but he concedes that the claim that there was no resistance suits a second-century B.C.E. context.³³⁷ On the one hand, Clines sees AT as misinterpreting the circumcision, but on the other hand he concedes a socio-historical context for lack of resistance. If there was a Second Temple context for the Judeans not facing resistance, why is it problematic to claim that they were circumcising themselves?³³⁸

De Troyer reads AT's statement in 7:41 as a reflection of the structure of its reworked narrative. Rather than first seeking a socio-historical context for uncircumcised Judeans/Jews, de Troyer begins with the events of the narrative itself, proposing a socio-historical context after a literary and historical-critical analysis. The Judeans are given permission to live according to their own laws (AT 7:29), and Mordecai is recognized as the king's advisor, which represents a change in attitude toward the Judeans and their laws. The Judeans have had to hide their identity throughout most of the narrative, but now they are free to openly observe their own laws. Hence, the narrative itself dictates the logic of the Judeans circumcising in 7:41.³³⁹ De Troyer is correct in seeking an inner logic to the narrative structure. Rather than creating an erroneous or illogical interpretation of LXX or a Hebrew *Vorlage*, the translators/tradents of AT worked hard to create a coherent narrative, and the statement that many Judeans circumcised themselves

³³⁷ Clines, *The Esther Scroll*, 87.

³³⁸ See Fox who instead concludes that the claim would have made sense in the Greco-Roman period when some Hellenizing Jews avoided circumcision and those who practiced it could face persecution. Fox, *The Redaction of the Books of Esther*, (79).

³³⁹ De Troyer, *The End of the Alpha Text of Esther*, 337-38.

is suitable within the narrative structure of AT. What socio-historical circumstances might have compelled the scribes to change AT to claim that it was the Jews themselves who were circumcising?

There are texts from the period which more openly speak out against non-Judean circumcision. In addition to Paul's polemic against circumcision of Gentile followers of Jesus, the strongly Torah-oriented Jubilees indicates that circumcision is only for Judeans. Perhaps AT aligns ideologically with Jubilees 15 and 30 in this case.³⁴⁰ Both are interested in adherence to the Judean law, but both are particularly interested in claiming circumcision as a solely Judean practice. Furthermore, Michael Segal proposes that Jub 15 claims that only circumcision on the eighth day is valid for participation in the covenant, which raises another possibility for understanding AT's issue with the circumcision in LXX since there is no claim concerning eighth-day circumcision.³⁴¹ This does not suggest that AT and Jubilees represent the same group of Judeans, but there is precedent for a desire to point out that only Judeans should circumcise, or, in the case of Jubilees, that only circumcision on the eighth day is valid for participation in the covenant.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ See Michael Segal who argues that Jubilees 15 establishes Sabbath and circumcision as defining Israel's relationship with God and contrasts those who are part of God's covenant with those who are not because Jubilees purports a dualistic worldview of good and evil. Michael Segal, *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology and Theology* (Journal for the Study of Judaism Supp. 117; ed. John J. Collins and Florentino García Martínez; Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 240-241.

³⁴¹ Ibid, 242-243.

³⁴² The issue with eighth-day circumcision could also explain the problem with the Shechemites in Gen 34 and Jub 30 since many of the males were circumcised as adults just like Ishmael.

A number of scholars have attempted to establish a socio-historical context and purpose for the claim that the Judeans circumcise themselves with no opposition. LaCocque has claimed that AT removed the Gentile circumcision from LXX here because it would have shocked a Gentile audience.³⁴³ Fox has also pointed out the edict of Antoninus Pius ca. 140 C.E. which exacted severe penalties for Jews who circumcised non-Jews.³⁴⁴ Similarly, Jobes reads the Judean circumcision as an indication that God is extending the covenant to Judeans in the diaspora in the Hellenistic period, and circumcision is a part of that covenant.³⁴⁵ In addition, de Troyer and LaCocque have both determined that AT was written for a Gentile audience with a particular aim for Judean support from Gentiles. Although this makes sense, it does not explain the use of transliterated proper names such as Assueros where LXX reads Artaxerxes. Why would a Greco-Roman audience prefer the transliterated name to the more familiar Greek name? LaCocque points out one place where AT uses the name Xerxes (AT 7:52), determining that this reveals the influence of LXX, but this evidence further problematizes the Gentile audience hypothesis.³⁴⁶ Why did AT not follow LXX throughout in this matter if the audience was Gentile? Furthermore, concerning de Troyer's analysis because if the audience was not only Roman but also royal, why did the scribes not rework Add. C in order to tone down the claims about circumcision, especially Esther's claim which could easily be understood as the king? A better explanation is that the audience was Judean

³⁴³ LaCocque, *Esther Regina*, 105.

³⁴⁴ Fox, *The Redaction of the Books of Esther*, 79.

³⁴⁵ Jobes, 179.

³⁴⁶ LaCocque, *Esther Regina*, 105; "The Different Versions of Esther," 417.

but the scribes had to exercise caution in their claims about empire. If AT was revised at a time and place where Judeans were not always circumcising, perhaps because of pressure from the empire, this would explain both the need to portray Haman as the sole enemy of the Judeans and the claim that Judeans circumcised. With pressure from the surrounding culture and powers, Judeans had to be careful in their practices and claims, but at the same time circumcision was an important practice prescribed by Torah.

In fact, it is the socio-historical context, in conjunction with the textual evidence in the versions of Esther, which informs the appearance of circumcision in the Greek versions. In AT the claim that the Judeans were circumcising themselves could be a polemical statement against those Judeans who did not circumcise in the Greco-Roman period. In AT 4:25 (LXX Add. C:26), Esther claims, “I abhor an uncircumcised man’s bed and I hated the glory of the lawless and of every stranger.” If the circumcision in chapter eight is read in conjunction with this claim, then AT Esther may be proposing that circumcision is something that every law-obeying Judean practices. Fox allows for a Second Temple context for AT as well, pointing out that the text could be speaking about non-circumcising Judeans in the Greco-Roman period. He also concludes that AT could reflect a desire to avoid speaking of Jewish proselytism which was frequently problematic to support in the face of Gentile opposition.³⁴⁷ Fox does not press the matter to a resolution, but he does support a Greco-Roman context as a strong possibility for AT’s claim that Judean’s circumcised themselves.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁷ Fox, *The Redaction of the Books of Esther*, 78-79.

³⁴⁸ For another brief discussion of 7:41 in a Greco-Roman context, see Fox, *The Redaction of the Books of Esther*, 38.

Hence, AT could be said to read more exclusively than both MT and LXX in Add. C and chapter eight. MT and LXX both allow for the peoples to participate in Judean activity, while AT makes no such claim. In addition, LXX allows for non-Judeans to circumcise, while MT makes no particular claim and AT only states that Judeans circumcised. Thus, LXX is most inclusive concerning circumcision, while AT is most explicitly exclusive and MT is silent on the matter. Furthermore, AT juxtaposes Mordecai and Haman with circumcision rather than arrogance, suggesting circumcision and covenant are important distinguishing factors between the two. In conjunction with the fact that AT only has Judeans circumcising in 7:41, this version reads more exclusively than LXX and MT. Likewise, Esther's use of *אֲחֵרִים* to describe the other in her prayer suggests AT is more exclusive as well because genealogy is foregrounded as a distinction as well. Circumcision is an important component of Judean identity in the Greek versions, but the extent to which this means of capital and to whom it is available shifts from LXX to AT. In LXX circumcision and inclusion with the Judeans is available to non-Judeans, while in AT these are only available to Judeans. A desire to maintain a distinction between the Judeans and other peoples may have arisen at a time when Judeans felt their identity to be especially threatened. In that case, a time such as the ones de Troyer and Fox propose may be correct. Whether AT is specifically an apologetic text for a Gentile audience as de Troyer and LaCocque propose is questionable though. AT may just as easily represent a revised narrative for a Judean audience in order to encourage or exhort them to take heart and maintain the covenant even in the midst of persecution and oppression. The Judeans in Esther experienced deliverance and relief because of their perseverance, and so should AT's Judean audiences.

Circumcision and Gender

The role of gender with regard to circumcision on the surface is clear since only Israelite/Jewish males are to be circumcised according to Torah. However, the relationship of gender to circumcision is more complex than association with males. For one thing, the exclusion of females from the sign of the Abrahamic covenant indicates a different status for males than for females. Males are physically marked as belonging to God, and in the Greek versions of Esther, belonging to God is an explicit concern. Because of this, it is not surprising that circumcision comes into play in the Greek Esther with regard to being Judean/Jewish.

Not only is it not necessary for Esther to be circumcised, but she also does not have to be married to a circumcised male in order to maintain her Jewish status and right relationship with God. She states that she abhors the bed of the uncircumcised in C:26 (AT 4:25), suggesting that if she had had a choice, she would have married a Jew. However, her gender releases her from the obligation of circumcision.³⁴⁹ Likewise, the king's Persian status releases him from such an obligation, aligning Esther more with the king than with Mordecai in this regard. In this respect, Add. C and its references to circumcision may be another instance of scribal attempts to weaken Esther in the Greek, in this case with regard to her relationship to God and Torah in comparison to Mordecai. As a female, she is unable to receive the sign of the Abrahamic covenant, suggesting she is inferior to Jewish males. Nevertheless, as noted in the discussion of gender in chapter

³⁴⁹ The notable exception would be the circumcision of any male offspring she might have, though the text is not interested in her offspring. Whether this is because she is married to a Persian is difficult to say, but it is a possibility worth considering.

three, Esther's status is still ambiguous, and the role of circumcision in the Greek versions further obscures her status.

The role of circumcision obfuscates the participation of females in the celebrations in LXX 8:17 (AT 7:41). In LXX many of the peoples of the land circumcised themselves and were "Judaizing." While the masculine plural participles here can generally be gender-inclusive, the appearance of the verb for circumcision delineates male and female roles in ways that "Judaizing" does not. The males circumcised themselves according to the aorist middle indicative verb περιετέμνοντο. Not only were they being marked with the sign of the Abrahamic covenant, but they were doing it themselves, suggesting the exclusion of the females except perhaps as endorsers of the activity. Males from the other peoples may physically become like Mordecai, but females are unable to do so. In AT it is the Jews themselves who circumcise (περιετέμνοντο). Once again the plural verb form is collective, but the activity itself excludes the women.

Unlike MT which only claims that many of the peoples were "Judaizing" and may be inclusive of males and females, both Greek versions differentiate male and female participation in the Abrahamic covenant. There is a physical mark received by males which females do not experience. Yet, the gender distinction goes beyond physicality, so that according to bodily hexis males and females would have been oriented toward Judaism differently both physically in ways which the texts and other evidence do not necessarily indicate such as posture, dress and movement, as well as in invisible ways such as thoughts and feelings. Hence, despite the lack of differentiation concerning male and female participation in MT 8:17, distinctions with regard to gender must be assumed.

Whether, along with the Greek versions, this distinction specifically included circumcision in 8:17 is difficult to say, but there would have been physical and cognitive differences. Circumcision explicitly distinguishes between the genders to the exclusion of female participation, but other distinctions surely existed as well.

Conclusions

The notion of circumcision as a practice related to Judean identity in Esther must be considered within the context of empire and diaspora, for regardless of when and where the versions in question developed, perhaps the one universal claim which can be made about them is that they all developed within the imperial diaspora.³⁵⁰ Throughout the Second Temple period both geographically and chronologically, circumcision was not a practice associated with the empires in power. Other peoples besides the Judeans may have circumcised, but it was not a practice associated with empires. Furthermore, at times the Judeans were persecuted for circumcision. Yet, for the Judeans it was a practice that became associated with the covenant with YHWH, so it was a means to a particular form of social capital associated with YHWH and the Judeans. Furthermore, the practice was a requirement for participation not only in the covenant, but also in Passover both for Judeans and for non-Judeans.

³⁵⁰ Even if these texts were written and/or transmitted within the region of Jerusalem and Judea, a diasporic ethos still existed, in part because many Judeans lived outside the region and in part because claims to the land, to the Temple and its law and to other aspects associated with Judean identity would always be effected by the exile and the ramifications the leaders especially felt with regard to loss of power. To a large extent, the politico-social forces of empire (broadly defined) and diaspora cannot be dissociated for Jews beginning with the exilic period.

At the same time, not all Judeans considered it essential to circumcise, and some in fact did not, causing disagreement among Judeans in the Greco-Roman period. In addition, a number of texts from the Hebrew Bible and related Second Temple literature suggest that it was not possible for non-Judeans to become Judean. The notion of conversion does not seem to appear until the Hasmonean period, but even then not all Judeans agreed as to whether non-Judeans could convert. Furthermore, precisely how such conversion was understood is difficult to know. Paul uses the same verb as LXX to speak of non-Judeans living like Judeans, suggesting that there was a notion that conversion had to do with lifestyle. The texts from the period indicate such activities as circumcision and worship of YHWH. Furthermore, outside of gymnasium, it may have been possible to visibly assimilate among the various peoples of the empire, suggesting permeable identity boundaries. At once, it was possible for non-Judeans to live like Judeans, but it was also possible for Judeans to blend in among the peoples of the empire.

In MT, there are no references to any explicitly Judean practices other than the festivals and fasts in 9:31. This does not mean that the scribes and their audiences associated no practices with their Judean identity. Many, if not all, of them may have observed covenantal practices. Worship of YHWH probably occurred regularly other than at the festival times. However, MT remains elusive concerning explicit claims of Judean identity beyond loyalty to each other and the empire and observance of festivals. In this context, other peoples align with the Judeans. In a narrative of reversals, to do so indicates not so much converting to a Judean lifestyle as supporting the Judeans in their struggles to survive in the face of their enemy. In a narrative which juxtaposes Judean with Amalekite, genealogy is related to the conflict insofar as Mordecai's genealogy, in

conjunction with his refusal to bow before Haman, is the impetus for the law against the Judeans, both because of a historical conflict between Saul and Agag and because of Haman's stereotyping of the Judeans based on Mordecai's behavior and relations.

Relations can thus get one into trouble in MT. However, they can also get one out of trouble, as Esther's alliance with both the king and the Judeans indicates. In MT Esther, social capital with the empire matters, so much so that the Judeans, through Esther, attain a strong enough relationship with the empire to instill fear in other peoples so that they align with the Judeans. MT Esther is thus a story of proper relations, not only with God who is elusively hidden, but also with the empire itself. In social fields which required Judeans to interact with other peoples and submit to imperial authorities, MT Esther's scribes and audiences understood their positions as ones of constant negotiation in order to live as Judeans.

In LXX, there is more emphasis on God's covenant and the practices it entails, including kashrut and circumcision. Within this context, the reversal in 8:17 suggests that the peoples do more than just align with the Judeans. They actually live a Judean lifestyle which includes circumcision. Furthermore, Esther reminds God that she abhors the bed of uncircumcised men, indicating a conflict with regard to her marriage to a non-Judean. LXX is not exclusive with regard to Judean identity, but instead the boundaries are permeable. Judeans may marry non-Judeans as long as the covenant with God is observed. In addition, in an imaginary world in which the discrimination and oppression that the Judeans face is entirely reversed, this reversal includes many peoples living a Judean lifestyle and even circumcising, a practice they could have been persecuted for. LXX is also a story of proper relations, but explicit in this narrative are claims concerning

proper relationship with God in addition to proper relationship with the empire. Esther's marriage to the king brings her more symbolic and social capital so that she can help the Judeans survive and live in covenant with God, but her relationship with God is also vital. If she hadn't obeyed the covenant, it is entirely possible that God would not have changed the heart of the king and reversed the situation for the Judeans. LXX's scribes and audience also understood their position as one of negotiation with the empire, but perhaps because of closer relations with Jerusalem or because of more freedom to influence their religion, practices are more important in LXX. Within this literary and cultural context, circumcision becomes the indicator of true freedom from oppression for the Judeans as even non-Judeans circumcise in the midst of Judean power. At the end of LXX Esther, nobody is hiding, perhaps reflecting the relative freedom of Jews in the Hasmonean period.

In contrast, although AT is also interested in the covenant and its practices, AT is more exclusive in its claims as to who may participate in the covenant. Both Mordecai and Esther mention circumcision in their prayers. Esther's claim associates uncircumcision with those of other genealogies, while Mordecai's prayer juxtaposes him and Haman through circumcision. In both cases, circumcision is distinctively Judean, but Esther's prayer more closely associates genealogy with Judean identity and practices as well. In this context, 7:41 reads more clearly as a claim that Judeans alone may participate in the covenant. Deviating from both MT and LXX which include the peoples, AT only states that many Judeans circumcise with no opposition. Such a statement may reflect an ideology which attempts to establish more clear boundaries between Judeans and others. Yet, in AT Judeans still permeate these boundaries because

Esther marries a non-Judean, which again benefits the Judeans. Thus, although more exclusive, AT acknowledges the benefit of symbolic and social capital associated with the empire through proper relations. These relations may bring about more freedom to observe the covenant and live as Judeans. At the end of AT Esther, if anyone hides it is non-Judeans because the Judeans are openly observing God's covenant and circumcising with no opposition.

The versions of Esther each make different claims with regard to Judean identity and practices. These claims reflect different ideologies which arose out of different positions in different social fields in the empire. Precise location of the scribes and their audiences is difficult if not impossible, but Bourdieu's theory of practice aids in understanding how position in a social field and habitus affect one's perspective. When scribes had more authority, they were more able to shape the symbolic capital of their religion, which could affect the claims they made about their religion in the texts they authored. Furthermore, the influence of the empire fluctuated from time to time and place to place, so that the freedom the scribes and the Judeans in general experienced would have also fluctuated. Yet, ideology and habitus change slowly, so the scribes and their audiences would have experienced different amounts of conflict and need for negotiation as they moved from field to field and as the influence of the empire fluctuated. The result is that the same story of Judean survival in the imperial diaspora was understood differently by different groups of Judeans. For some, loyalty to one another and a proper relationship with the empire were what mattered most for survival. For others, covenantal practices were vital, but who was able to participate and thus be

Judean varied. Although it was always possible and sometimes necessary for Judeans to blend in to survive, the extent of this blending and how acceptable it was varied greatly.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The term "practice" has been used in contemporary English to describe both secular and non-secular individuals with regard to their associations. A person may study the law or medicine but not practice; a person may be Catholic but not a practicing Catholic. Such claims attempt to distinguish between theoretical and practical matters. One may be associated with a certain group or discipline without practicing it. Such distinctions are far from clear both in antiquity and postmodernity. Was Esther a practicing Jew? This question has been raised of MT, perhaps especially by Christian scholars, with varying answers. This study has challenged those who attempt to understand Esther as a non-practicing Jew in MT. Instead of drawing clear boundaries between theoretical and practical associations, it has been argued that ideologies and practices may vary according to time, place and position in a social field. Rather than understanding Esther as a practicing Jew in the Greek versions and a non-practicing Jew in MT, it is better to consider that different socio-historical circumstances produced different emphases concerning Judean identity in the imperial diaspora. Whether or not Esther observed the covenant as outlined in the Torah is not as central in MT as in LXX and AT, for in MT it is her social and symbolic capital established by her relations with both the Judeans and the empire which are foregrounded. Practices matter in all of the versions, but the emphases vary.

Can one study law and not in some way practice it if education instills a certain habitus which results in particular dispositions and practices? Must one hold a professional, legal position in society to practice law? (Here I am not referring to any "illegal" attempt to practice law without a license.) Attempting to divide students of the law into practicing and non-practicing is as problematic as differentiating between a practicing or non-practicing Catholic or a practicing or non-practicing Judean. Esther is no less Judean in MT than LXX or AT, for her upbringing would have instilled in her a Judean habitus, which would have varied in different parts of the diaspora but which would have associated her in thought and practice with other Judeans. The following pages will outline the conclusions concerning Esther and matters of identity and practice then propose several implications of this study for biblical interpretation.

Historical and Ideological Matters in Review

Throughout, this study has presupposed that texts are rooted in the social worlds in which they are produced and interpreted in intricate ways. Written texts reflect the social structures of the cultures in which they develop, but they also imagine a world in which things are different. Whether to establish or justify social order, to convince a particular audience on a certain matter, to entertain or some combination thereof, texts convey social realities and particular ideological perspectives on these realities. Thus, it is no accident that three distinct versions of Esther developed in the diasporic environment of the Second Temple period. How do these texts differ with regard to practices and identity? This study has attempted to make a case for the distinctiveness of each version not only on literary but also on ideological levels.

In many ways MT eludes a definitive socio-historical context. While evading any clear representations of Judean identity other than genealogy, loyalty and festival observance, MT displays diasporic Judaism as intricately involved in imperial matters, both for better and for worse. The Judeans' interactions with other peoples overall suggests constant comingling, in mourning, celebration and political action. Designed around such motifs and themes as feasting, law, reversal, male vs. female and Benjaminite vs. Agagite, MT both parodies the imperial, patriarchal culture in which the Judeans lived and accepts a certain amount of necessary interaction with this culture for the sake of Judean survival. Within this framework, the ultimate reversal is imagined to be the empire and many of the peoples siding with the Judeans against those who wish them ill, with the Judeans experiencing the freedom to participate in Judean life in the empire, including openly associating with Judeans and observing their festivals and fasts.

Precisely when and where such a narrative developed is difficult to pinpoint, especially since MT experienced continuing development, but a focus on social relations and imagining that others would want to align with the Judeans or even be Judean suggests a situation in which Judeans wanted to be defined less by certain covenantal practices than by their associations. Even fasting, which some Greco-Roman authors associate especially with Jews, is not distinctly Judean in MT. Furthermore, the parodic depiction of Persian law as irreversible reflects more an Israelite/Judean ideology of law as eternal than a Persian ideology, so the unnecessarily bloody ending may indicate a critique of the notion of eternal law. Perhaps MT reflects a Judean group which resisted strict adherence to all of the covenant, opting instead for group loyalty and good imperial relations to thrive.

With regard to LXX, some similarities with MT are noticeable since the two versions are part of the same tradition (Proto-MT). LXX shares the same motifs and themes, though the theme Benjaminite vs. Agagite shifts because Haman is called a Macedonian. Rather than focusing on tribal and genealogical conflict, LXX establishes the conflict as Judean vs. imperial enemy. Establishing a Macedonian as the enemy suggests the Roman period, probably during the freedom of the Hasmonean dynasty. LXX thus hearkens back as well, but to a very recent time when Judeans were persecuted and the Jerusalem temple was desecrated by Antiochus IV. Within this context, LXX establishes not only Jewish loyalty to each other and proper relationships with the empire but also observance of God's covenant as vital to Jewish identity. In LXX, the term Ἰουδαῖος should be translated as "Jew" by Cohen's scheme of Judean/Jew, because LXX downplays genealogy and associations with Judea in favor of the covenant and the practices it prescribes. Jews in LXX are loyal to one another and to the empire, but they also remain loyal to God.

Translated in Jerusalem especially for an Egyptian Jewish audience, LXX authorizes Purim as a festival for Egyptian Jews to observe, but along the way it also encourages the audience to remain faithful to the covenant while remaining loyal imperial subjects. Having a positive relationship with the empire in Jerusalem and the authority to influence their religion, the translators/authors of LXX Esther designed a narrative which conveys the possibility of loyalty to God and king because loyalty to God can influence God to influence the king. A good relationship with both figures of power can improve things so much for the Jews that other peoples will see their enhanced situation and want to convert and even circumcise. LXX's imaginary reversal conveys the importance of

adhering to the covenant even in the midst of persecution because it is ultimately loyalty to God which can eradicate this persecution. With relatively little threat to their own identity and religion in Hasmonean Jerusalem, the scribes created a text which aligns with the few from this period purporting the notion of conversion to Judaism. A proper relationship with God and empire can establish Jews and Judaism in good standing both with the empire and the peoples of the empire.

Similar to LXX, AT conveys the importance of the covenant and good standing with the empire. However, some of AT's first-century C.E. revisions also indicate a different ideological perspective with regard to Judean identity. As with LXX, there is interest in religion, and Cohen proposes that by the end of the Second Temple period "Jew" is an appropriate translation of Ἰουδαῖος because there were fewer associations with genealogy, ethnicity and Judea and more associations with religion in this term. However, AT also conveys more interest in genealogy than LXX because it is Mordecai's and Esther's genealogies, along with observance of the covenant, which distinguish them from others in AT. Thus, because of the ethno-genealogical interest in AT, "Jew" is perhaps not the best translation choice because the etymological connection with Judah/Judea is less clear. In addition, given that nobody converts or is explicitly said to align with the Judeans/Jews in AT, genealogy may play a stronger role in AT's identification of Judeans than in LXX. However, religion also plays a clearer role in AT than in MT because both LXX and AT explicitly claim more than just festival observances as important to Judean life. Hence, AT displays an ideology for which genealogy, covenantal practices and imperial relations are important.

When and where did this ideological perspective develop a revision of Esther?

AT's history may be more complex than MT or LXX because it may have originally been translated from a Hebrew *Vorlage* which predates Proto-MT, but the revised extant version may represent a narrative created later than the LXX translation. Yet, with numerous clear revisions of the passages shared with LXX, it is obvious that AT's final editors were aware of much of what the text was saying, even if some of the intentional changes occurred at an unconscious level. Thus, AT's extant form must convey a coherent ideology and message for its intended audience. Such a revision seems to have been created for a Judean audience with some familiarity with Ahasuerus' Hebrew name, but Haman is once again called Macedonian, so the context is Judeans vs. imperial enemies. Since AT claims that many Judeans were circumcising without opposition, the imaginary world of the text suggests that AT's audience faced some opposition, whether from the empire or other peoples who persecuted them. The text could have arisen at the time of Hadrian, but other possible contexts of persecution in the first century C.E. should not be excluded. In such a context, AT tells the Judean audience to take heart and continue to observe the covenant. A proper relationship with God and the right imperial officials will eventually eradicate the persecution.

Fasting, Prayer and Circumcision Revisited

This study has assessed particular practices in the versions of Esther with historical-critical, literary and ideological lenses, arguing that each version is unique in its combination and emphasis of particular practices in a story of Judean survival and identity which provides an etiology of Purim. Because the historical-critical matters are

more complex than simply understanding LXX as a translation of Proto-MT with some additions and AT as an earlier version of the story with later revisions, each case was considered separately as to whether it might represent an addition, omission, translation choice or other revision to the version at hand. Yet, the larger literary context also matters, especially since a number of issues are questions of redaction rather than text-criticism. As de Troyer argues, the literary and ideological context of an individual narrative provides insight into the specific changes the narrative contains.

With this in mind, it has been determined that with regard to fasting AT represents the least developed version, while MT is the most developed. AT includes mourning and prayer, but no explicit instances of fasting, suggesting that fasting was not a part of the earliest versions of Esther. By the time of LXX's translation, there was a communal fast in 4:16 which juxtaposed the Judean fasting with the Persian feasting. In a social field where the Judeans were subject to others in power, fasting was a sign of humility, in contrast to imperial displays of honor. Habitus which tended to produce the practice of fasting in the context of crisis and mourning resulted in a fast in Proto-MT 4:16. Later, after the translation of LXX was established, MT continued to develop with regard to fasting, so that it appeared in 4:3 in the context of other mourning rituals and in 9:31. Both the habitus and the literary context lent MT to add fasting in 4:3 because the habitus tended to produce fasting in the context of lamentation, and the narrative which juxtaposed the empire with its subjects established a context for additional contrast of fasting with feasting.

Furthermore, in 9:31, Purim is authorized as a festival to observe along with other fasts and lamentations, providing another instance of fasting in MT. This verse is

probably chronologically the latest addition of fasting although it could have been added at the same time the fast in 4:3 was added. Either way, this reference to fasting need not indicate the Purim fast which is otherwise not attested until the rabbinic period. Thus, fasting could have been added to 9:31 in the late Second Temple or early rabbinic period. MT 9:31 displays an interest in both establishing Purim as a festival and observing fasts and lamentations. In the context of a reversal of fortunes which brings the Judeans from despair and lamentation to deliverance and celebration, the reference to fasting in 9:31 suggests not only a particular tendency toward fasting in times of crisis but a shared understanding of the proper times for fasting and lamentation as Purim, with its proper time, is compared to the fasts and lamentation. Hence, MT's additional references to fasting not only provide further juxtaposition of the empire with its subjects, but they also indicate a particular habitus which produced fasting in times of crisis and an ideology which understood fasting as a vital response in such times. LXX shares this concern for fasting in times of crisis because fasting already appeared in Proto-MT 4:16, but there is less interest in fasting than in MT, and there is no particular concern for fasting in AT, suggesting different habitus which perhaps tended to produce fasting in fewer situations.

Concerning, prayer, MT has no specific references to prayer, which is not surprising in the narrative context because there are no explicit Judean practices or associations with religion other than fasting and the festivals and fasts in chapter nine. With no references to God, the narrative context does not call for any prayers. Yet, scholars have spilled much ink on this issue, perhaps because the underlying presupposition is that the scribes and audience must have engaged in such religious practices themselves. This study has no argument with the presupposition that MT's

community observed the covenant in some way, but instead it proposes that something in the socio-historical context caused the scribes to emphasize the relationship with the empire in MT Esther. Esther is told to beseech the king (4:8) and does so twice, in chapters five and eight. MT's silence with regard to God in the Judean crisis suggests a context in which social capital mattered. In this case, such social capital is accrued through proper relationships with the empire and through loyalty to fellow Judeans. Esther establishes a good relationship with the king by pleasing him, and she is able to save the Judeans and put them in a better position in the social fields in which they interact with the empire and its subjects. Whether MT makes no reference to God because the scribes wish to convey that it is not enough to wait for God to act is difficult to know, but Song of Songs and to a lesser extent Ruth indicate that references to God are not always necessary in Judean texts. Human agency also matters.

In contrast, although LXX and AT also consider human agency and good relationships with the empire as important, they establish prayer as an important component of Judean survival as well. The prayers have been examined both with regard to the role of God which they establish and with regard to particular claims to covenantal practices and identity which they make. In the Greek versions, Esther beseeches God and king, suggesting that the two figures are powerful, and thus it is necessary to maintain good relationships with both. In addition, the prayers in Add. C claim covenantal practices such as circumcision and kashrut as vital to Judean identity. Esther reminds God of her observance of the covenant so that God will help her and change the heart of the king and deliver her people from Haman's law. In Add. D, God changes the heart of the king after Esther's prayer, indicating both the efficacy of the practice of prayer and

the truth to the claims she made. The Greek versions thus establish relations with both God and king as important to survival in the diaspora, and part of the relationship with God includes observance of the covenant.

The final topic was circumcision, which appears only in the Greek versions. Concerning MT, the absence of circumcision is not surprising since MT generally makes no claims about Torah practices other than perhaps an allusion to calendrical fasts and festivals, an allusion which is debatable. With a focus on the Judeans' relationships with each other and empire rather than with God, MT states that many peoples align with the Judeans out of fear in a reversal of fortunes in 8:16-17, but MT is not explicit about whether the peoples engaged in particular practices. Thus, the alignment with the Judeans indicates participation in the celebration, but not necessarily permanent membership with the Judeans. What MT is most interested in is not covenantal practices which distinguish the Judeans but the events which bring about a reversal of fortunes for the Judeans in the diaspora. These events include participation in practices with both the empire and its subjects, indicating little interest in making claims about Judean distinction or covenantal practices in times of crisis. In the midst of crisis, Judeans mourn with others, and in the midst of deliverance, Judeans celebrate with others.

In contrast, the Greek versions include circumcision in Add. C and 8:17 (AT 7:41). Once again, the general literary and ideological context of the narrative lends itself to including circumcision because both versions are interested in covenantal practices. Yet, they differ significantly in their claims about circumcision. In LXX, Esther abhors the bed of uncircumcised males in her prayer to God, and many of the peoples circumcise and convert. LXX thus indicates an ideological perspective which values circumcision as

a distinctive, covenantal practice but which also allows other peoples to participate in the covenant. Genealogy does not restrict who can participate, but circumcision is an important part of the participation.

On the other hand, AT not only includes an additional reference to circumcision in Mordecai's prayer, but its claim in 7:41 also differs from LXX. In Mordecai's prayer, he contrasts himself with Haman concerning circumcision, which is different from LXX which contrasts the two via the quality of arrogance. Furthermore, in AT, Esther abhors the bed of an uncircumcised male and anyone from a different ancestry, distinguishing Judeans from others both via circumcision and genealogy. In this literary and ideological context, AT claims that many Judeans were circumcising and nobody opposed them in 7:41. AT thus conveys an ideological perspective which not only views circumcision as distinctively Judean but which also has no particular concerns with non-Judeans participating in the covenant. Instead, AT is interested in Judean participation in the covenant.

The initial hypothesis was that each of the versions of Esther differs with regard to practices and Judean identity in the imperial diaspora because they reflect different socio-historical contexts and ideologies with regard to empire and Judean life in the diaspora. With the lens of Pierre Bourdieu, this study has examined several practices associated with Judean identity in order to understand better the relationships of the variants to the socio-historical contexts and to the ideologies of the scribes who produced the texts. Bourdieu's notions of social field and capital are helpful for understanding that one's position in society and the people one interacts with can influence one's ideology and one's power to influence others. The scribes of each of the versions wrote under

different circumstances with different audiences and purposes in mind, and each of these factors, along with the habitus and ideologies of the scribes and their audiences, affected how Esther was written, transmitted, revised and interpreted. Of course, a clear picture of each of these factors can never be drawn, but investigating the texts with Bourdieu's theory has added some insight to our understanding of Judaism and Esther in the Second Temple period.

Implications for Biblical Interpretation and Application

As mentioned in chapter one, a comparative study of the three major versions of Esther is nothing new. Clines' historical-critical monograph *The Esther Scroll* was the first of numerous extensive studies which began to consider the relationship of the three versions to each other using historical-critical, literary and, sometimes, ideological lenses. What does this study offer to contemporary interpreters? The final pages will suggest several important implications for biblical interpretation and application.

In recent years, biblical scholarship has become interested in the relationship of text and empire from a number of angles. Postcolonialism is interested in the relationship of empires and their subjects, which for biblical studies includes an interest in the function of texts in such power relationships. One aspect of such approaches may focus on contemporary societies and ask questions of how contemporary readers understand biblical texts differently from the perspectives of colonizer and colonized, as well as how the rhetoric of the biblical texts aids in perpetuating or changing colonial structures. From another perspective, postcolonialism may inquire as to the ancient imperial contexts in which the texts were produced, transmitted and interpreted. In such cases, sometimes

labeled "empire studies," the same questions are asked but of ancient empires and their subjects. In Hebrew Bible studies, there has been a particular interest in recent years in the Persian Empire since much of the Hebrew Bible was more or less finalized in this period and thus reflects the perspectives of Judeans as imperial subjects. Such work has been helpful for understanding the socio-historical circumstances in which the texts were produced, as well as the ideologies of both empire and subjects.³⁵¹

This study is aligned with such work in a number of ways despite the virtual absence of postcolonial terminology. Bourdieu's concepts of social field, position and capital are heavily influenced by Marxism, which in turn has influenced numerous postcolonial scholars due to the interest in domination and the influence of dominant ideology on the common people. To ask questions concerning the position and capital of scribes and their fellow Judeans in an imperial social world tends to the issue of relationships of empire, subjects and texts. Furthermore, Bourdieu's concept of habitus points to the complexities of human perception and practice. Slow to change, habitus is repetitious, tending to produce the same schemes of perception and the same practices in a particular situation. Habitus also functions at an unconscious level, so that we are often unaware of how we think and act. Such an understanding of culture can be put into dialogue with Homi Bhaba for whom colonial mimicry is an internalized replication of the colonizer's culture. Much like habitus, it is largely unconscious. Texts produced by colonial subjects can often reflect the colonizer's ideology. Bourdieu's notion of doxa

³⁵¹ See for example the recent collection edited by Jon Berquist *Approaching Yehud* which provides a number of historically-oriented approaches to biblical texts in order to understand the complex relationship of the Persian Empire to the Judeans and their texts. Jon L. Berquist, ed., *Approaching Yehud: New Approaches to the Study of the Persian Period* (Semeia Studies 50; ed. Gale A. Yee; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007).

would suggest that the colonizer's discourse and ideology may become doxa—that which is agreed upon unconsciously by all in the same social field, both colonizer and colonized. The issues raised by studying ancient imperial cultures with regard to the relationship of the colonized to the colonizers can deepen postcolonial readings of Esther by providing a deeper understanding of the situations of colonized individuals.

Thus, Bourdieu's theory of practice as a lens for reading biblical texts in general can enhance our understanding of the relationship of Judeans and their texts to the ancient empires. This study has focused especially on the late Second Temple period because the versions of Esther are broadly dated to this era. Considering that habitus is different for different groups and that one's position and capital shift from one social field to another, this study has attempted to understand the nuances of the socio-historical circumstances in which the texts were produced. There has been an effort to guard against the critique of Julia O'Brien concerning biblical studies of the Persian period. O'Brien problematizes those studies which regard empire as monolithic, essentializing the Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and Persian empires.³⁵² The same problem can arise with a general study of the Second Temple period. In outlining the complexities of Judaism through a textual analysis, this analysis has attempted to avoid presenting the empires individually or collectively as monolithic. Although habitus reveals that change is always slow, habitus also varies from field to field, and the evidence suggests that there was constant fluctuation from ruler to ruler and from region to region. There was much continuity between the Persian and Greek empires, but there were also differences, some of which

³⁵² Julia M. O'Brien, "From Exile to Empire: A Response," in *Approaching Yehud* (ed. Jon L. Berquist; Semeia Studies 50; ed. Gale A. Yee; Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 211.

were regional. As social fields and those within the fields changed, the power relationships also changed.

What contributions does this study offer to biblical studies then? With a specific focus on practices and identity in the versions of Esther, it first of all presents a different way of thinking about what have traditionally been regarded as historical-critical matters in Esther. Not satisfied with basic answers of redaction and textual criticism, this study has proposed that differences among the versions are rooted in socio-historical contexts and the ideologies of the groups which produced the texts. At once the value of traditional historical criticism has been maintained while pushing for more nuanced understandings of how the differences developed.

In particular, numerous differences are related to different understandings of Judean identity in empire and diaspora, which arose out of different habitus and different positions in different social fields. Judeans in Babylonia experienced life differently than Judeans in Palestine or Egypt. Despite a certain amount of commonality which was rooted in tradition, they held numerous viewpoints on the empires, on the different peoples and on the Judeans themselves. Such complexities appear not only from one biblical text to another, as scholars have shown such differences as endogamy and exogamy in Ezra-Nehemiah and Ruth respectively. They can also appear in the translations, revisions and copying of a particular biblical text such as Esther. As shown, traditional historical-critical scholarship can aid in pointing out textual differences, and Bourdieu's theory of practice can provide nuance for understanding the relationships of those differences to the socio-historical contexts in which the texts were produced.

In addition, the observations drawn concerning practices in the versions of Esther as they relate to context and identity are a reminder of the complex relationship of practices and identity for a group with a certain amount of shared identity. Esther locates itself in Israelite tradition through Mordecai's genealogy and, especially in MT, the Benjaminite vs. Amalekite conflict, suggesting a certain amount of shared history, tradition and identity for its authors and audiences as for other Judeans identifying with the monarchy and exile. Yet, as the three versions of Esther indicate, the tradition was constantly reinterpreted and each reinterpretation reflects different understandings of how to be Judean in the imperial diaspora. At times certain visible practices are claimed as vital to Judean identity and survival, and at times it is possible to blend in with the rest of the peoples of the empire. Questions of Judean identity with regard to genealogy, imperial relations, group loyalty and covenantal practices prescribed by Torah arose as Esther was translated, transmitted and reinterpreted by different Judean groups in different contexts. Should any of these perspectives take precedent?

This study has strived to consider each version as equally valid with inherent integrity for the purposes of socio-historical and ideological analysis. Yet, for Judaism and Protestantism MT eventually became the authoritative version, while for Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy LXX has remained authoritative. Should the answers to questions concerning identity and practices ultimately come from the version which is authoritative for an individual religious group? The problem with this is at least two-fold. For one thing, this suggests that the answers must be the same for Judaism and Protestantism when both groups are distinct and diverse. Additionally, there may be ways in which Catholic or Eastern Orthodox groups align with groups which read MT

Esther, but such an alignment would be excluded by their reading of LXX Esther. Can we then pick and choose as interpreters, and if so, how do we make such decisions?

Such issues relate to the complexity of canon, and they are issues shared by Jews and Christians because the Hebrew Bible is a diverse corpus with dissonance both within and among its various texts. Thus, this study does not present a new problem with regard to interpretation and application of biblical texts, but it raises the question anew. How do we read and apply Esther in any of its versions with regard to practices and identity? Bourdieu's theory of practice suggests that the answers to this question vary from group to group because of differing habitus, social fields and positions in social fields. Just as each text has inherent integrity, so does each interpretive community. Nevertheless, interpreters must always deal with the problem of competing discourses in a given social field. Not only may one sect of Judaism or Protestantism disagree with fellow Jews or Protestants from another sect, but there is often disagreement among those of the same sect or even the same synagogue or church on different matters. Because people can come to religious communities already formed in the ways they think and act, not only by religion but also by family, education and interaction with other social groups, different understandings of the meaning of practices and texts inevitably cause conflict. Such disagreements in antiquity are not always preserved in the extant materials, but the versions of Esther provide a glimpse into different interpretations of the narrative for different Judeans/Jews. Only one of these versions became canonical for Judaism, but fortunately the others survived as well due to diversity of both Judaism and Christianity in antiquity.

Possibilities for Further Study

A number of interesting issues have been touched on in an attempt to understand certain practices in the versions of Esther. Some of these have been examined along the way, and others have received little or no attention.

One interesting issue involves clothing which is depicted differently in each of the versions. Shaye Cohen notes that in the Second Temple period it was possible for Judeans to interact in the empire without being visibly identified as Judean.³⁵³ Clothing was not necessarily a distinguishing practice between Judeans and others in all times and places. Yet, clothing does distinguish in the versions of Esther. Royal clothing distinguishes those with more symbolic power, and the crown is a particularly important display of status which appears at key points in the narrative. When the king summons Vashti, she is to appear with her crown, and this command and refusal set up the narrative in a number of important ways. Furthermore, in chapter eight, Mordecai is paraded around Susa wearing a royal crown at the recommendation of Haman. This is another key moment because Haman intended to wear the crown himself, but instead he is hanged while Mordecai achieves the position of the king's advisor. Thus, the crown appears again at a moment of reversal. In addition, the Greek versions include other references to royal clothing in Add. C and Add. D which are worth exploring, and the Greek versions especially juxtapose Esther's dual identity as servant and queen in a number of ways, including the change of clothing between her prayer and her appearance before the king. Other interesting clothing concerns include the practice of wearing

³⁵³ Cohen, 30-34.

sackcloth, who wears it and at what points in the narrative. Once again, the versions differ in interesting ways.

Gender has also arisen as an issue at different points, in large part because of the varying status of men and women in the story and in the social world of the Second Temple period. Practices sometimes differ for the men and the women in the story, and at other times they are shared. This study has briefly touched on such issues with the aid of Bourdieu's concept of bodily hexis to understand how practices related to gender, but a deeper examination of gender is necessary to understand more fully how gender operates in the texts and in the social worlds in which they were transmitted. How is gender depicted differently? When do the texts seem to disregard or downplay gender distinctions and why? What ideologies concerning gender do the texts convey? Just as the various Hebrew Bible texts differ with regard to the roles and practices of men and women at times, so do the versions of Esther, suggesting differences among various Judean groups in antiquity. Such intricacies in the text and in the social world of the Second Temple warrant further study with considerations of habitus, social field and capital.

Finally, a major issue touched on briefly in a discussion of reversals is the question of practices associated with stereotyping and discrimination. Both the women and the Judeans are stereotyped, but so are the Persian Empire and the Agagites. What practices are these groups portrayed as doing? What practices distinguish these groups? What practices are shared among them? Which practices are justified and why? What relationship do position and capital have with the stereotypes and the practices? How might considering the practices as related to habitus inform our understanding of the

stereotyping and the discriminatory practices? Such a study could focus on MT, but the versions vary, so a comparative study could yield interesting results.

Conclusion

The issues raised in this study suggest that matters of identity and practice must always be addressed in their particular contexts. Identity is never static, and although habitus and its dispositions and practices change slowly over time, they adapt in response to their changing contexts. Negotiation is always necessary as one goes from field to field and encounters different habitus and competing discourses. Bourdieu's theory of practice challenges us as interpreters and practitioners to pay attention to the power relations involved in the creation and interpretation of religious tradition. Especially for those with access to more capital and more influence over religious tradition, it is necessary to guard against abuse of our positions of influence. Bourdieu also challenges us to search for doxa, the presuppositions shared by all in a given field which may be a starting point for conversation.

Afterword

In Katherine Paterson's *The Day of the Pelican*, an Albanian family is driven from their home in Kosovo by the Serbians under Milosević's regime.³⁵⁴ First the Lleshi's must leave their business and apartment in the city to hide in the mountains. For a brief period they are able to stay at a relative's farmhouse, but the Serbians quickly drive them out, forcing them to walk miles and miles towards Macedonia until they are able to board

³⁵⁴ Katherine Paterson, *The Day of the Pelican* (New York: Clarion Books, 2009).

a train and later a bus, driven like chattel to a refugee camp in Macedonia. Eventually, they are sponsored by a church in the United States, so they move to Vermont and attempt to start over. Not much more than a year later, they find themselves facing discrimination anew in the aftermath of 9/11. Rather than escaping discrimination and death, they encounter it again as outsiders in a new place. The story ends in the bittersweetness of deliverance and intolerance as the family determines to make the United States their home despite the discrimination and oppression.

Although this story is written in the "fictional" genre of the young adult novel, there is much truth to it. Based on a real family with similar experiences in the late 1990's and early 2000's, the novel narrates the events and experiences of a family driven from their home and homeland because of their ethnicity. Along the way, death is constantly lurking as the Serbs senselessly rape and kill Albanian Kosovars. Despite the distance of time and culture, a number of aspects of the story resonate with Esther, including discrimination and oppression rooted in racism which lead to attempts to wipe out an entire ethnic group. Milosević's ethnic cleansing sadly establishes that the truth of Haman's xenophobia still poses a threat. Moreover, the fleeting nature of the reversal of fortunes at the end of Esther is exposed by the experience of the Lleshi family after 9/11. Just as Jews have continued to face persecution throughout the history of the diaspora at various times and places, so the Lleshi family escapes one threat to their existence only to face discrimination and oppression once again in their new home.

The truth of the Esther story is timeless. Its importance in Judaism is attested by not only the numerous reinterpretations in the Second Temple and rabbinic periods, but also by the annual Purim festival. Its popularity seems to have wavered in Christianity,

and its interpretation among Christian biblical scholars has primarily been limited to dominant Western voices. Yet, such scholars more often than not probably resemble Haman or the imperial figures more than they do Esther, Mordecai and their fellow Judeans. Tragedies such as the Holocaust and the Milosević regime are harsh reminders, along with marginalized voices from places such as the African diaspora, that the discrimination and oppression in Esther continue to be perpetuated by those in power around the world. The story of the Judeans' survival is an important story for all involved in discrimination and oppression, whether as the victims or the perpetrators.

At the same time, the Esther story is not free of problems. Interpreters have attempted to deal with the senseless killing at the end of the story only to find no satisfactory answers. Perhaps it was a later addition to the story. What does that say about human thirst for revenge? Writing the ending off as a necessary result of the irrevocability of Persian law only raises questions as to why the law is depicted in this way in MT and LXX because there is no historical evidence that Persian law was in actuality irrevocable. Even if the ending is read as a critique of the notion of eternal law, one must ask why a bloodbath was necessary, for it is not eternal law itself which is the problem but our abuse of the law which often leads to violence.

Resistant readings are another possibility provided we do not escape dealing with the truth of our human desire for vengeance, for although we may choose not to engage in violent acts, violence still occurs and we must deal with it. Much like the structures of the empire in which it was authored, the Esther story evokes ambivalence towards both imperialism and its subjects. As a reader, I at once desire to cheer the Jews on in their victory and cringe at the bloodthirsty ending. I fear that in my own analysis, I have

covered my eyes through most of the ending, just as I would if I were watching a violent film.

Where does bloody revenge fit in a study of practices and identity? Sadly, it too is a product of habitus, and much like the feasting and circumcision at the end of the story, the revenge also indicates the change in the Judeans' status. Once in dire straits, mourning and beseeching (God and) king for their very survival, the Judeans have now imposed Haman's annihilation on their enemies. Ah, but it's only an imaginary world, for a Jewish woman could never have become queen of Persia in the first place. The ludicrousness is evident in chapter one when Vashti is ousted and a law is written to establish men as the heads of their households—in a patriarchal world no less! Isn't it really just a satirical etiology of Purim, intended to entertain at a carnivalesque festival? Why should we take it all so seriously? Because history, including very recent history, has taught us that the story happens again and again, not only to Jews but to numerous peoples who find themselves with less power than those who feel threatened by them. Because a human response when we or people we care about are threatened or harmed is to seek revenge, whether in bloody war or in the auspices of the judicial system. Yet, to what extent are such responses innate, and to what extent do habitus produce such tendencies?

The story of Esther stands as a cautionary tale regarding the dangers of any individual or group attaining too much power. Many groups' habitus seem predisposed to practices of vengeance in the face of threats on an individual's or the group's life and identity, so it is to de-center power, shift our habitus and engage in more peaceful practices. Of what benefit are mourning, fasting, prayer and other covenantal practices if

we continue to engage in violent, vengeful practices as well? Randall Bailey has pointed out that in the Hebrew Bible some violent acts are justified as commanded by God, such as Saul's genocidal acts against Agag and the Jews' revenge in Esther, while other violent acts such as Haman's annihilation of the Jews are unacceptable.³⁵⁵ Such instances are precisely what Derrida cautions against. How often do we justify our own practices with claims of divine will? Removing the irrevocability of Persian law, AT acknowledges the human thirst for revenge when Esther twice asks permission for bloody vengeance, revealing the danger of abuse of newly attained power. MT Esther is also refreshingly honest in this respect, for it makes no explicit claims of divine will or divine intervention. MT portrays humankind, left to our own free will, at our best and our worst, risking our lives to save others one minute and ordering the annihilation of our enemies the next. Some interpreters (Luther!) have found the Hebrew version unpalatable in its lack of religious language, but perhaps it is this very quality which makes it stand out against the religious rhetoric of justification by divine law and divine will which has clouded the written and spoken word and the practices they justify throughout human history. It happened in the days of Ahasuerus, and it is still happening.

³⁵⁵ Randall C. Bailey, "That's Why They Didn't Call the Book Hadassah!: The Interse(ct)/(x)ionality of Race/Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality in the Book of Esther," in *They Were All Together in One Place?: Toward Minority Biblical Criticism* (ed. Randall C. Bailey, Tat-siong Benny Liew and Fernando Segovia; Semeia Studies 57; ed. Gale A. Yee; Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 230-232.

APPENDIX A

SOME SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES TO FASTING IN THE HEBREW BIBLE AND APOCRYPHA/PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

The following lists of scriptural passages are not exhaustive, but they provide an overview of the contexts in which fasting occurs in the Hebrew Bible, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.

Contexts

Military Battle: Judg 20:26; 1 Sam 7:6; 2 Chr 20:3

Individual Battle: 1 Kings 21:27; Ps 109:24

Confession: Neh 9:1

Repentance: 1 Sam 7:6; 1 Kings 21:27; Jonah 3:5, 8

After Death: 1 Sam 31:13; 2 Sam 1:11-12; 1 Chr 10:12

Impending Crisis: 2 Sam 12:16-23; 1 Kings 3:5; 21:9, 12, 27; Jonah 3:5; Ps 35:13 2; Neh 1:4; Macc. 13:12

Prior to a Journey: Ezra 8:21-23

Time of Joy: Zech 8:19

Participants

Individuals: Judg 8:6; 2 Sam 2:11-12; 1 Kings 21:27; ; Ps 35:13; 69:10; 109:24; Neh 1:4; Dan 9:3

Small Groups: 1 Sam 31:13; 1 Kings 21:9,12; Ezra 8:21-23

Communal: Judg 4:9; Jer 14:12; 36:6 ; Zech 7:5; Joel 1:13-14; Jonah 3:5; 2 Chr 20:3; Neh 9:1

Accompanied by Other Rituals

Prayer/Supplication: 1 Sam 7:6; Ps 109:24; Ezra 8:21-23; Dan 9:3; Tob 12:8; Bar 1:5

Tearing Clothes: 2 Sam 1:11-12; 1 Macc. 3:47

Putting on Sackcloth: Jonah 3:5; Joel 1:13-14; Dan 9:3

Spreading Ashes: Judg 4:9; Dan 9:3

Lamentation: 2 Sam 1:11-12; Zech 7:5

Offering Sacrifice: Judg 20:26

Ceremonial Assembly (תַּעֲרִיבָה): Joel 1:13-14; 2:12-15

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abegg, Martin G., Jr., Bowley, James E. and Cook, Edward M. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Concordance*. 3 vols. In consultation with Emanuel Tov. Boston: Brill, 2003.
- Alexander, Philip and Alexander, Loveday. "The Image of the Oriental Monarch in the Third Book of Maccabees." Pages 92-109 in *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers*. Edited by Tessa Rajak, et al. Hellenistic Culture and Society 50. Edited by Anthony W. Bulloch, et al. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic Books, 1981.
- Attridge, Harold, et al. *Qumran Cave 4, VIII: Parabiblical Texts, Part 1*. Discoveries in the Judean Desert XIII. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
- Bachmann, Mercedes L. Garcia. "True Fasting and Unwilling Hunger (Isaiah 58)." Pages 113-131 in *The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation*. Edited by Alejandro F. Botta and Pablo R. Andinach. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009.
- Baille, Maurice. *Qumran Grotte 4, III (4Q482-4Q520)*. Discoveries in the Judean Desert VII. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982.
- Bailey, Randall C. "That's Why They Didn't Call the Book Hadassah!: The Interse(ct)/(x)ionality of Race/Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality in the Book of Esther." Pages 227-250 in *They Were All Together in One Place?: Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*. Edited by Randall C. Bailey, Tat-siong Benny Liew and Fernando Segovia. Semeia Studies 57. Edited by Gale A. Yee. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009.
- Baltzer, Klaus. *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108*. Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. Edited by Frank Moore Cross, et al. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001.
- Bardtke, Hans. "Das Buch Esther." Pages 243-408 in vol. XVII, parts 4-5 of *Kommentar zum Alten Testament*. Edited by Wilhelm Rudolph, Karl Elliger and Franz Hesse. Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1963.
- Bautch, Richard. *Developments in Genre between Post-Exilic Penitential Prayers and the Psalms of Communal Lament*. Academia Biblical 7. Edited by Saul M. Olyan. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.
- Beal, Timothy K. *The Book of Hiding: Gender, Ethnicity, Annihilation, and Esther*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

- _____. "Esther." In *Ruth and Esther*. Berit Olam. Edited by David W. Cotter, Jerome T. Walsh and Chris Franke. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999.
- Berg, Sandra Beth. *The Book of Esther: Motifs, Themes and Structures*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 44. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979.
- Bergant, Dianne. "'My Beloved is Mine and I am His' (Song 2:16): The Song of Songs and Honor and Shame." *Semeia* 68 (1994): 23-40.
- Berlinerblau, Jacques. "Ideology, Pierre Bourdieu's *Doxa*, and the Hebrew Bible." *Semeia* 87 (1999): 193-214.
- Bernat, David A. *Sign of the Covenant: Circumcision in the Priestly Tradition*. Edited by Benjamin D. Sommer. Ancient Israel and Its Literature 3. Edited by Steven L. McKenzie, et al. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009.
- Berquist, Jon L., ed. *Approaching Yehud: New Approaches to the Study of the Persian Period*. Semeia Studies 50. Edited by Gale A. Yee. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007.
- _____. "Constructions of Identity in Postcolonial Yehud." Pages 53-66 in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*. Edited by Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006.
- _____. *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1995.
- _____. "Postcolonialism and Imperial Motives for Canonization." *Semeia* 75 (1996): 15-35.
- Biggs, Robert D. "Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health in Mesopotamia." Pages 1911-1924 in vol. III of *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. 4 vols. Edited by Jack M. Sasson. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995.
- Bird, Michael F. *Crossing over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010.
- Boda, Mark, Daniel K. Falk and Rodney A. Werline, eds. *Seeking the Favor of God*. 3 vols. Atlanta: SBL, 2006-2008.
- Borghouts, J.F. "Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination in Ancient Egypt." Pages 1775-1785 in vol. III of *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East 4 vols*. Edited by Jack M. Sasson, et al. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Translated by

- Richard Nice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- _____. *The Logic of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.
- _____. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Briant, Pierre. *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*. Translated by Peter T. Daniels. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002.
- Brongers, H.A. "Fasting in Israel in Biblical and Post-Biblical Times." Pages 1-21 in vol. 20 of *Oudtestamentische Studiën*. Edited by A.S. van der Woude. Leiden: Brill, 1977.
- Brooke, Alan England, Norman McLean and Henry St. John Thackeray, eds. *Esther, Judith, Tobit*. The Old Testament in Greek III,1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940.
- Hagedorn, Anselm C. "The Absent Presence: Cultural Responses to Persian Presence in the Eastern Mediterranean." Pages 39-66 in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context*. Edited by Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011.
- Cazelles, Henri. "Note sur la composition du rouleau d'Esther." Pages 17-29 in *Lex Tua Veritas: Festschrift für Hubert Junker zu Vollendung des siebzigsten Lebensjahres am 8 August 1961*. Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1961.
- Clines, David J.A. *The Esther Scroll: the Story of the Story*. JSOT Supplement Series 30. Edited by David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davies. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984.
- _____. *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther: Based on the Revised New Standard Version*. New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984.
- Cohen, Shaye J.D. *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*. Hellenistic Culture and Society XXXI. Edited by Anthony W. Bulloch, et al. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1999.
- Collins, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- _____. *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000.

- Collins, John J. and Gregory E. Sterling eds. *Hellenism in the Land of Israel*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001.
- Craig, Kenneth M., Jr. *Reading Esther: A Case for the Literary Carnavalesque*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995.
- Craven, Toni. "Judith." Pages 1459-1461 in *The Harper Collins Study Bible*. Edited by Wayne A. Meeks, et al. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1989.
- Crawford, Sidnie White. "The Additions to Esther: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections." Pages 943-972 in vol. 3 of *New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*. Edited by Leander E. Keck, et al. Nashville: Abingdon, 1999.
- _____. "The Book of Esther: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections." Pages 853-941 in vol. 3 of *New Interpreter's Bible*. Edited by Leander E. Keck, et al. Nashville: Abingdon, 1999.
- Davies, Philip R. "The Social World of Apocalyptic Writings." Pages 251-271 in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives*. Edited by R.E. Clements. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Day, Linda. *Three Faces of a Queen: Characterization in the Books of Esther*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 186. Edited by David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davies. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.
- Dorothy, Charles V. *The Books of Esther: Structure, Genre and Textual Integrity*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supp. 187. Edited by David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davies. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Ideology: An Introduction*. New York: Verso, 1991.
- Edwards, Douglas. "Constructing Kings—from the Ptolemies to the Herodians: The Archaeological Evidence." Pages 283-293 in *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers*. Edited by Tessa Rajak, et al. Hellenistic Culture and Society 50. Edited by Anthony W. Bulloch, et al. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Flusser, D. "Psalms, Hymns and Prayers." Pages 551-577 in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*. Edited by Michael E. Stone. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.
- Fox, Michael V. *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991.
- _____. *The Redaction of the Books of Esther: On Reading Composite Texts*. SBL

Monograph Series 40. Edited by Adelo Yarbro Collins and E.F. Campbell.
Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991.

Gerstenberger, Erhard S. *Der bittende Mensch: Bitritual und Klagelied des Einzelnen im Alten Testament*. Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 51. Edited by Ferdinand Hahn and Odil Hannes Steck. Neukirchen Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980.

Goodblatt, David. "The Israelites Who Reside in Judah' (Judith 4:1): On the Conflicted Identities of the Hasmonean State." Pages 74-89 in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern*. Edited by Lee I. Levine and Daniel R. Schwartz. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 130. Edited by Peter Schäfer, et al. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009.

Grimm, Veronika. "Fasting Women in Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity." Pages 225-240 in *Food in Antiquity*. Edited by John Wilkins, David Harvey and Mike Dobson. Foreword by Alan Davidson. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995.

Grimm, Veronika E. *From Feasting to Fasting, the Evolution of a Sin: Attitudes to Food in Late Antiquity*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Grossman, Jonathan. *Esther: The Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*. Siphrut Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures 6. Edited by Stephen B. Chapman, Tremper Longman, III and Nathan MacDonald. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011.

Gruen, Erich S. *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition*. Hellenistic Culture and Society 30. Edited by Anthony W. Bulloch, et al. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Hall, Robert G. "Circumcision." Pages 1025-1031 in vol. 1 of *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman, et al. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

Hamilton, Mark W. "Who Was a Jew? Jewish Ethnicity During the Achaemenid Period." *Restoration Quarterly* 37,2 (1995): 102-117.

Hanhart, Robert. *Esther*. Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum III,3. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1966.

Harvey, Charles D. *Finding Morality in the Diaspora? Moral Ambiguity and Transformed Morality in the Books of Esther*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 328. Edited by Otto Kaiser. New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003.

- Hengel, Martin. "Judaism and Hellenism Revisited." Pages 6-37 in *Hellenism in the Land of Israel*. Edited by John J. Collins and Gregory E. Sterling. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001.
- Hertog, Cornelis G. den. "Jos 5, 4-6 in der griechischen Übersetzung." *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 110 (1998): 601-606.
- Jobes, Karen H. *The Alpha-Text of Esther: Its Character and Relationship to the Masoretic Text*. SBL Dissertation Series 153. Edited by Michael Fox. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996.
- Johnson, Sara Raup. *Historical Fictions and Hellenistic Jewish Identity: Third Maccabees in Its Cultural Context*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.
- Jones, Sian. "Identities in Practice: Towards an Archaeological Perspective on Jewish Identity In Antiquity." Pages 29-49 in *Jewish Local Patriotism and Self-Identification in the Greco-Roman Period*. Edited by Sian Jones and Sarah Pearce. *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* Supp. 31. Edited by Lester L. Grabbe and James H. Charlesworth. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
- Kahana, Hanna. *Esther: Juxtaposition of the Septuagint Translation with the Hebrew Text*. Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005.
- Kessler, John. "Persia's Loyal Yahwists: Power Identity and Ethnicity in Achaemenid Yehud." Pages 91-122 in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*. Edited by Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006.
- Klein, Lillian R. "Honor and Shame in Esther." Pages 149-175 in *The Feminist Companion to the Bible* 7. Edited by Athalya Brenner. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.
- Knight, Douglas A. *Law, Power, and Justice in Ancient Israel*. Library of Ancient Israel. Edited by Douglas A. Knight. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011.
- Kuhrt, Amélie. *The Ancient Near East c. 3000-330 BC*. 2 vols. Routledge History of the Ancient World. Edited by Fergus Millar. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Kuhrt, Amélie and Susan Sherwin-White, eds. *Hellenism in the East: The Interaction of Greek and Non-Greek Civilizations from Syria to Central Asia after Alexander*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- LaCocque, André. "The Different Versions of Esther." *Biblical Interpretation* 7,3 (July 1999): 301-322.

. *Esther Regina: A Bakhtinian Reading*. Rethinking Theory. Edited by Gary Saul Morso. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008.

Lambert, David. "Fasting as a Penitential Rite: A Biblical Phenomenon?" *Harvard Theological Review* 96,4 (Oct. 2003): 477-512.

Lane, Jeremy F. *Pierre Bourdieu: A Critical Introduction*. Modern European Thinkers. Edited by Keith Reader, et al. Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2000.

Laniak, Timothy S. *Shame and Honor in the Book of Esther*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 165. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998.

Levine, Lee I. "Jewish Identities in Antiquity: An Introductory Essay." Pages 12-40 in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern*. Edited by Lee I. Levine and Daniel R. Schwartz. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 130. Edited by Peter Schäfer, et al. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009.

Levine, Lee I. and Daniel R. Schwartz, eds. *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern*. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 130. Edited by Peter Schäfer, et al. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009.

Levenson, Jon D. *Esther: A Commentary*. Old Testament Library. Edited by James L. Mays, Carol A. Newsome and David L. Petersen. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997.

Lindberger, James M. *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters* 2nd ed. Edited by Kent Harold Richards. Writings from the Ancient World 14. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

Lipschits, Oded, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming, eds. *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011.

Lipschits, Oded and Manfred Oeming, eds. *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006.

Loewenstamm, Samuel E. "Esther 9:29-32: The Genesis of a Late Addition." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 42 (1971): 117-124.

Martínez, Florentino García and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar eds. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* 2 vols. Boston: Brill, 1998.

Matlock, Michael D. *Discovering the Traditions of Prose Prayers in Early Jewish Literature*. Library of Second Temple Studies 18. Edited by Lester L. Grabbe. London: T&T Clark, 2012.

- Meinhold, Arndt. *Das Buch Esther*. Zürcher Bibelkommentare AT 13. Edited by Hans Heinrich Schmid and Siegfried Schulz. Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1993.
- Mendenhall, George E. and Gary A. Herion. "Covenant." Pages 1179-1202 in vol. 1 of *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman, et al. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Millar, Fergus. "The Problem of Hellenistic Syria." Pages 110-133 in *Hellenism in the East: The Interaction of Greek and Non-Greek Civilizations from Syria to Central Asia after Alexander*. Edited by Amélie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Montgomery, James A. "Ascetic Strains in Early Judaism." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 51 (1932): 183-213.
- Moore, Carey A. *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: the Additions*. Vol. 44 of *Anchor Bible*. Edited by William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977.
- _____. *Esther*. Vol. 7B of *Anchor Bible*. Edited by William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman. New York: Doubleday, 1971.
- Morrow, William. "The Affirmation of Divine Righteousness in Early Penitential Prayers: A Sign of Judaism's Entry into the Axial Age." Pages 101-117 in vol. 1 of *Seeking the Favor of God*. 3 vols. Edited by Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk and Rodney A. Werline. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006.
- Murphy, Frederick J. "Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature." Pages 1-16 in vol. VII of *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Edited by Leander E. Keck, et al. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.
- Newman, Judith H. *Praying by the Book: The Scripturalization of Prayer in Second Temple Judaism*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999.
- O'Brien, Julia M. "From Exile to Empire: A Response." in *Approaching Yehud: New Approaches to the Study of the Persian Period*. Edited by Jon L. Berquist. Semeia Studies 50. Edited by Gale A. Yee. Atlanta: SBL, 2007.
- Paterson, Katherine. *The Day of the Pelican*. New York: Clarion Books, 2009.
- Paton, Lewis Bayles. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Esther*. International Critical Commentary 13. Edited by Samuel Rolles Driver, Alfred Plummer and Charles Augustus Briggs. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908.
- Pearce, Laurie E. "'Judean': A Special Status in Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Babylonia?" Pages 267-278 in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period*:

Negotiating Identity in an International Context. Edited by Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011.

_____. "New Evidence for Judeans in Babylonia." Pages 399-411 in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period.* Edited by Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006.

Pinch, Geraldine. "Private Life in Ancient Egypt." Pages 363-381 in vol. I of *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East.* 4 vols. Edited by Jack M. Sasson. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995.

Podella, Thomas. *Šôm-Fasten: Kollektive Trauer um den verborgenen Gott im Alten Testament.* Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989.

Puech, Émile. *Qumran Grotte 4, XVIII: Textes Hébreux (4Q521-4Q528, 4Q576-4Q579).* Discoveries in the Judean Desert XXV. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

Rahlfs, Alfred, and Robert Hanhart, eds. *Septuaginta.* Rev. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006.

Rajak, Tessa, et al, ed. *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers.* Hellenistic Culture and Society 50. Edited by Anthony W. Bulloch, et al. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2007.

Rom-Shiloni, Dalit. "Socio-Ideological *Setting* or *Settings* for Penitential Prayers?" Pages 51-68 in vol. 1 of *Seeking the Favor of God.* 3 vols. Edited by Mark Boda, Daniel K. Falk and Rodney A. Werline. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006.

Ringgren, Helmer. "Das Buch Esther." Pages 387-420 in vol. 16,1 of *Das Alte Testament Deutsch.* Edited by Otto Kaiser and Lothar Perlitt. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1980.

Sasson, Jack M. "Circumcision in the Ancient Near East." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85 (1966): 473-476.

_____. "Esther." Pages 335-342 in *The Literary Guide to the Bible.* Edited by Robert Alter and Frank Kermode. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987.

_____, et al, ed. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East.* 4 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995.

Schiffman, Lawrence H. and James C. VanderKam, eds. *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls.* 2 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Scholz, Anton. *Commentar über das Buch "Esther" mit seinen "Zusätzen" und über*

- "*Susanna*." Würzburg: Leo Woerl, 1892.
- Seebass, Horst. "Tradition und Interpretation bei Jehu ben Chanani und Ahia von Silo." *Vetus Testamentum* 25 (1975): 175-190.
- Segal, Michael. *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology and Theology*. Journal for the Study of Judaism Supp. 117. Edited by John J. Collins and Florentino García Martínez. Boston: Brill, 2007.
- Seow, Choon-Leong. "The First and Second Books of Kings: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections." Pages 3-295 in vol. III of *New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*. 12 vols. Edited by Leander E. Keck, et al. Nashville: Abingdon, 1999.
- Sherwin-White, Susan. "Seleucid Babylonia: A Case-Study for the Installation and Development of Greek Rule." Pages 1-31 in *Hellenism in the East: The Interaction of Greek and non-Greek Civilizations from Syria to Central Asia after Alexander*. Edited by Amélie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Smith-Christopher, Daniel L. "The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections." Pages 17-152 in vol. VII of *New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*. 12 vols. Edited by Leander E. Keck, et al. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.
- Soler, Jean. "The Semiotics of Food in the Bible." Pages 126-138 in vol. 5 of *Food and Drink in History: Selections from the Annales Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*. Edited by Robert Forster and Orest Ranum. Translated by Elborg Forster and Patricia M. Ranum. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.
- Tarragon, Jean-Michel de. "Witchcraft, Magic and Divination in Canaan and Ancient Israel." Pages 2071-2081 in vol. III of *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Edited by Jack M. Sasson, et al. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995.
- Thuruthimattam, Philip. "Fasting: A Sacramental." *Journal of Dharma* 9 (1984): 274-91.
- Tov, Emanuel. "The 'Lucianic' Text of the Canonical and Apocryphal Sections of Esther: A Rewritten Biblical Book." Pages 535-548 in *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint*. *Vetus Testamentum Supplements* 72. Boston: Brill, 1999.
- _____. *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. 2nd rev. ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.
- Troyer, Kristin de. *The End of the Alpha Text of Esther: Translation and Narrative*

Technique in MT 8:1-17, LXX 8:1-17 and AT 7:14-41. Translated by Brian Doyle. Revised and updated translation. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007.

_____. "Is God Absent or Present in the Book of Esther? An Old Problem Revisited." Pages 35-40 in *The Presence and Absence of God: Claremont Studies in the Philosophy of Religion, Conference 2008*. Edited by Ingolf U. Dalferth. Religion in Philosophy and Theology 42. Edited by Ingolf U. Dalferth, et al. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009.

_____. *Rewriting the Sacred Text: What the Old Greek Texts Tell Us about the Literary Growth of the Bible*. Text-Critical Studies 4. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

_____. "A Rewritten Greek Biblical Text: The Final Chapter of AT Esther." Pages 59-90 in *Rewriting the Sacred Text: What the Old Greek Texts Tell Us about the Literary Growth of the Bible*. Text-Critical Studies 4. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

_____. "A Rewritten Hebrew Biblical Text: On the Help of God in the Old Greek of Esther." Pages 9-28 in *Rewriting the Sacred Text: What the Old Greek Texts Tell Us about the Literary Growth of the Bible*. Text-Critical Studies 4. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

Tucker, W. Dennis, Jr. "Is Shame a Matter of Patronage in the Lament Psalms?" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 31,4 (June 2007): 465-480.

Viviano, Benedict T. "Beatitudes." Pages 89-90 in vol. 1 of *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. 2 vols. Edited by Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Waltke, Bruce K. and O'Connor, M. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.

Wacquant, Loïc. "Towards an Archeology of Academe: A Critical Appreciation of Fritz Ringer's 'Fields of Knowledge.'" *Acta Sociologica* 38,2 (1995): 181-186.

Weeks, Kent R. "Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health in Ancient Egypt." Pages 1787-1798 in vol. III of *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. 4 vols. Edited by Jack M. Sasson. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995.

Werline, Rodney Alan. *Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism: The Development of a Religious Institution*. Early Judaism and Its Literature 13. Edited by John C. Reeves. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998.

Westermann, Claus. *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*. Translated by Keith R Crim and

- Richard N. Soulen. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981.
- Wilkins, John, David Harvey and Mike Dobson, eds. *Food in Antiquity*. Foreword by Alan Davidson. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995.
- Wills, Lawrence M. "The Book of Judith: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections." Pages 1073-1183 in vol. III of *New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*. 12 vols. Edited by Leander E. Keck, et al. Nashville: Abingdon, 1999.
- _____. *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King: Ancient Jewish Court Legends*. Harvard Dissertations in Religion 26. Edited by Margaret R. Miles and Bernadette J. Brooten. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990.
- Wright, Jacob L. *Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah-Memoir and Its Earliest Readers*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 348. Edited by John Barton, et al. New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004.
- Wyatt, Nick. "Circumcision and Circumstance: Male Genital Mutilation in Ancient Israel and Ugarit." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33 (2009): 405-431.