ESTHER REVISITED AGAIN:
A Further Examination of Certain
Esther Studies of the Past Ten Years

by

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Sometimes the author of a biblical commentary no sooner publishes his book then he discovers a useful article that he had not used in his research. And almost always he will find, with the passing of years, books and articles that build upon his work, take issue with this or that particular aspect of it, or take an entirely new and different tack from the one he had taken. Since the appearance of my Doubleday Anchor Bible commentaries, *Esther* (1971) and *Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah: The Additions* (1977), I have had two separate occasions to comment on a number of more recent books and articles dealing with various aspects of the Book of Esther (Moore, 1982,[1] and Moore, 1984). However, new articles on Esther have appeared since then and certain recent works require still further comment.

As is well known, during the past ten years Professor R. Gordis has produced two very basic and thought-provoking articles on Esther (Gordis, 1976 and 1981).[2] In the earlier one, he offered, among other things, a most ingenious and comforting explanation for what has been—at least from a moral and ethical point of view—a most troublesome passage in Esther, namely, Mordecai's granting, in the king's name, permission for the Jews "to wipe out, slaughter, and annihilate every armed force of any people or province that was hostile to them, *along with their children and women* [italics added], and to plunder their personal property" (Esth 8:11). In his article of 1981, Gordis offered a radically new hypothesis for solving many of the religious and literary problems of the Book of Esther by sug-

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1. See especially pp. xix–lxxv, where I discuss various aspects of each of the thirty-seven articles in the anthology.

2. Actually, Gordis produced three important works on Esther during this period, the third being one of a more devotional and popular character (see Gordis, 1974).

gesting that "A Jewish author undertook to write his book in the form of
a chronicle of the Persian court, *written by a Gentile scribe* [italics added]"
(p. 375). Inasmuch as I have discussed these two articles elsewhere,' there
is no need to comment further on them here except to say that in each of
them Professor Gordis has offered a major hypothesis which will be re-
ceived with great seriousness and enthusiasm by many scholars and lay-
men in the years to come.

Contributions from Archaeological Discoveries

Recent archaeological discoveries or the new interpretation of artifacts
discovered earlier continue to illuminate the text and background—but
not the historicity!—of the events in the Book of Esther. An example of a
new interpretation of old evidence is to be found in W. F. Albright's article
(1974), where he convincingly showed that what were previously identified
by archaeologists as "incense burners" sometimes are, as in the case of the
Lachish burner, cosmetic burners in which women used to burn various
kinds of aromatic substances (Heb *bśmym*) so as to "fumigate" their bod-
ies, thus making themselves sweet-smelling and more alluring to the male.
It would appear that the author of Esther had some such process in mind
when in Esth 2:12 he alluded to the elaborate beauty preparations by those
maidens seeking to succeed Vashti.

Very recently, W. Hallo (1983), in a fascinating article with a somewhat
misleading title,⁴ has illustrated the kind of lot (*pūru*) and underlying tech-
nique the author of Esth 3:7 may have had in mind when he wrote, "In the
first month, which is the month of Nisan, of the twelfth year of King
Xerxes, the *pur* (that is, the lot [Heb *gôral*]) was cast in Haman's presence
to determine the day and the month; and the lot indicated the thirteenth
day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar" (cf. also 9:26). Hal-
lo's article also includes splendid photographs of the lot of Iahali as well
as various kinds of dice used in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Hallo rightly regards the Book of Esther as "essentially belletristic, not
historical" (p. 24) and as "a diaspora-novelle" (p. 25). He evidently (and
rightly, in my judgment⁵) has reservations about agreeing with A. Mein-

3. For Gordis's article of 1976, see Moore (1982, pp. lvi–vii and 1984) and for his 1981
article, see Moore (1984).
4. The word "first" in his "The First Purim" refers not to the original events of Purim,
but rather to Hallo's discussion of *the oldest* inscribed cuboid *pūru* 'lot' of that kind,
namely, the *pūru* of Iahali (ca. 824 B.C.E.).
5. See Moore (1982, p. xliv).

hold's thesis (1975 and 1976) that Esther's dependence on the Joseph story in Genesis extends to very much larger literary and thematic units (*Gattungsformular*) than ever suggested by L. A. Rosenthal (1895 and 1897) or even by M. Gan (1961-62). Hallo also, quite rightly, takes issue with the occasional charge that the Book of Esther is mysogynistic,* a charge to which I myself may have unwittingly contributed when I wrote, "Between Mordecai and Esther the greater hero in the Hebrew is Mordecai, who supplied the brains while Esther simply followed his directions" (Moore, 1971, p. lii). Taking a clue perhaps from B. W. Jones (1977, pp. 172-77),[7] Hallo rightly views Queen Esther as developing

> by stages from mere beauty queen to veritable sage in her own right, outwitting Haman and outstripping even Mordecai, until in the end it is she who dominates the story. (p. 24.)

When thinking about Queen Esther, students of the Bible may also be reminded of other strong female protagonists, such as Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, or Judith; but cuneiformist Hallo points his readers to extra-biblical heroines of stature, notably, the mother of King Nabonidus; the daughter of the king of Uruk (ca. 1800 B.C.E.); and Sargon of Akkad's daughter, Enheduanna, "the very first identifiable author in history—male or female" (p. 25).* As if to underscore the pro-feminist attitude of the Book of Esther, Hallo writes

> so far from being a woman-hater, the author of Esther could, for all we know, have been a woman! The author was not, at any rate, a male chauvinist. (p. 25.)

Hallo sees the story of Mordecai as exemplifying the genre described by W. L. Humphreys (1973) as "a life style for the diaspora", or, more specifically, what S. Nidith and R. Doran (1977) view as "the success story of the wise courtier."

On the Personal Names in Esther

Scholarly interest in establishing the origin and meaning of the foreign personal names in the Book of Esther, an enterprise that has fascinated

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6. So L. Scanzoni and N. Hardesty (1974, especially p. 93); see also L. Chandler (1898, Part II, pp. 85-91).

7. The article is reprinted in Moore (1982) and is briefly commented on in the Prolegomenon, p. lxii.

8. Sargon of Akkad, often called "The First Emperor of the World", ruled ca. 2360 B.C.E.

students of the book for almost a century,[9] has continued since the ap-
pearance of my Esther commentary. In fact, as A. R. Millard (1977) has
himself noted, he was prompted to write his article on the basis of his un-
derstanding of the position I took there (Moore, 1971, pp. xli–iv) and in a
later article (Moore, 1975a, pp. 77–78). Specifically, Millard quotes from
my article two passages with which he would take issue, namely:

> In the Old Testament, when the Hebrew spelling of non-Jewish name
> differs from the Greek spelling in either its consonants or vocalization,
> scholars can not automatically assume, as they once did, that the Hebrew
> has preserved more accurately the non-Jewish name. From their studies of
> Babylonian, Assyrian, and Egyptian inscriptions, scholars know for an in-
> contestable fact that sometimes the rendering of the non-Hebrew name has
> been more accurately preserved in the Greek version—the Septuagint—
> than in the Masoretic text. (p. 77.)

and

> The nub of the problem in Esther, then, is that we are not always very
> confident about the accuracy, or essential correctness, of the Hebrew spell-
> ing of many of the non-Hebrew personal names. Consider for example, the
> names of our hero and heroine. While agreeing that the Hebrew word *Mor-
> dākay* represents a more corrupt spelling of *Marduka* than does the Greek
> *Mardochaios*, scholars do not agree on whether the Hebrew *'str*, "Esther,"
> derives from the Persian *stara*, "star," or from the Babylonian Ishtar, the
> goddess of love. (p. 77.)

As Millard quite rightly pointed out (1977, p. 484) "The accuracy of the
Hebrew *'str* is not affected by the proposed etymologies, neither need be
right."

Speaking in general about foreign names in the Hebrew Bible, Millard
maintains that "Where no originals are available to compare with the He-
brew, we can rely confidently upon the Hebrew forms, and not treat them
with unjustified scepticism simply because the versions differ" (p. 487).
Apart perhaps from some reservations about the use of the very strong
word "confidently," everyone must agree with Millard: by definition, what
scholar would want to exhibit "unjustified scepticism"? More to the point,
however, Millard is correct in insisting that great variations within or
among the versions are not, *ipso facto*, justification for questioning the
essential accuracy of a Hebrew form of a foreign personal name. As a
splendid case in point, Millard cites the MT's *pršndt'*, one of Haman's sons

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9. See, for example, P. Haupt (1907-8, pp. 107 *et passim*) L. B. Paton (1908), H. S. Geh-
man (1924) J. Duchesne-Guillemin (1953), and R. Stiehl (1956).

mentioned in Esth. 9:7. It is rendered *Pharsannestain* in LXX^{x}, as *Pharsanestain* in LXX^, and as two separate names in LXX^{B}: *Pharsan* and *Nestain*. Yet the authenticity of the name as preserved in the MT is confirmed by the discovery of the name *Pršndt*, occuring in Aramaic script on a 5th century B.C.E. cylinder seal with typical Achaemenid designs (Millard, p. 484). I find Millard's example here quite persuasive even though, as he himself freely concedes, the final *aleph* of the MT form is not represented in the name on the seal. Elsewhere Millard (1982, p. 152) has published a photograph of the seal and its impression, actual size.

Unfortunately, Millard's evidence for the accuracy of the MT's rendering of the other presumably Iranian names in Esther is not as solid as in the above case. He does offer several new suggestions for certain names; for example, Hammedatha in Esth 3:1 represents '*mdt* or *ha-ma-da-da*, going back to the Old Persian form *amadāta*, 'strongly made' (1977, p. 484); and *Karshena* in Esth 1:14 may, on the basis of Sogdian *kršn*, mean '(beautiful) form' (so R. Zadok [1976, p. 246]). For Millard's brief discussion of the form and meaning of Muhuman (1:10), Karkas (1:10), Marsena (1:14), and Shethar (1:14), see Millard (1977, p. 485). His use of the auxiliary verb "may" in connection with several of his discussions of Persian etymologies should underscore for the reader the tentativeness and difficulties involved in establishing the meaning of these names. In any event, Millard is unquestionably correct in observing that "To identify the originals of the Persian names in Esther is not to prove the historicity of the story" (1977, p. 485).

While the disagreement between Millard and myself on the accuracy of the Hebrew renderings of foreign names is, I believe, only one of a few degrees, I still maintain what I said in my commentary, namely, "Short of being arbitrary and dogmatic, one cannot assume that where the Greek and the MT disagree, the MT *necessarily* [italics added] preserves the better spelling" (1971, p. xliv); and in the first instance where Millard quotes me (see p. 172 of the present article), I would also italicize the adverb "automatically."

On the Possible Influence of Exodus 1–12 on Esther

The major German commentary on Esther to appear within the last decade is that of G. Gerleman (1970-73).[10] The controlling theme of this commentary (namely, that the details of the Book of Esther as well as the

10. For my general review of it, see Moore (1975b, pp. 293-96).

main features of its plot had been consciously patterned after the Exodus
narrative of Exodus 1-12) had been foreshadowed by an article of his in
1966.[11] "All the essential features of the Esther narrative," wrote Gerleman
in his commentary, "are already there in Exodus 1-12: the foreign court,
the mortal threat, the deliverance, the revenge, the triumph, and the estab-
lishment of a festival" (p. 11). This dependence of Esther upon Exodus 1-
12 is not confined to general plot but extends, argues Gerleman, to the
most minute details of "fact." Thus, Esther *had to be* an adopted child
because Moses had been one (Esth 2:7 and Exod 2:9); Esther's ethnic
origins *had to be* kept a secret from the king because Moses's had been
unknown to Pharaoh (Esth 2:10 and Exod 2:6-10); the villain Haman was
an Amalekite[12] because Moses had been opposed by the Amalekites (Exod
17:8-16). Just as Moses had Aaron as his "spokesman," so Mordecai used
Esther (Esth 4:8 and Exod 4:10-16); initially, Esther was reluctant to in-
tercede with the king on behalf of her people because, earlier, Moses had
been unwilling to do so (Esth 4:11-16 and Exod 3:11; 4:1, 10); Esther *had
to appear* before the king several times before rescuing her people because,
earlier, Moses had had to do so;[13] and thousands of enemies of the Jews
had to die as the results of Esther's efforts because thousands of Egyptians
had died, thanks to the efforts of Moses.[14] These are, by no means, the only
details of "fact" of the Esther story that Gerleman saw as having been de-
liberately patterned or determined by the narrative of Exodus 1-12, but
they well illustrate his major thesis.

However, there is, noted Gerleman, one striking difference between the
Esther and Exodus narratives, namely, Esther represents the deliberate de-
sacralization and de-theologizing of a central *heilsgeschichtlich* tradition
(p. 23). Gerleman speculated that the author of Esther had written his ac-
count in the hope that Purim, an already established festival in the Eastern
Diaspora, would replace Passover as the central cultic celebration of the
Jews of the Diaspora.

Now a decade later, Gerleman's fascinating thesis does not seem to
have received enthusiastic acceptance by scholars, the one exception that
I know of being M. E. Andrews (1975), and even his support is not without

11. A reprint of that article, together with some of my remarks on it, may be found in
Moore (1982, pp. xlvi-xlix and 308-42).

12. Actually, Haman is identified in Esth 3:1 as an "Agagite," i.e., a descendant of Agag
the Amalekite (see 1 Sam 15:32). Not all the Amalekites were wiped out by Saul (see 1 Chr
4:42f).

13. Esth 5:2; 7:2; 8:3 and Exod 7:14-12:28.

14. Esth 9:6, 15-16 and Exod 12:29-30; 14:6-7, 23-28.

reservation. Andrews is correct in noting that not all of Gerleman's "parallels" are exact or persuasive. For instance, whereas Esther (and Mordecai) succeeded by working *within* the foreign court system, Moses succeeded by working *against* it.[15] Moses's adopted parent, the Egyptian princess, played no active role in the deliverance of the Hebrews, whereas Esther's adopted parent, Mordecai, played a major role.[16] Then too, as Andrews rightly points out, Gerleman wanted to have it "both ways" sometimes by citing as "parallels" details which were actually opposites to one another; for example, because the eating of the Passover lamb was *confined to one's house* (Exod 12:46), Gerleman argued that the Purim portions of food had to be sent and *consumed outside the home* (Esth 9:19, 22). Finally, it is at least ironic that whereas God played the dominant role in Moses's deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt, in the Book of Esther God is not even mentioned.[17]

The difficulty with Gerleman's explanation (namely, that the Book of Esther is a conscious and consistent de-theologization and desacralization of a central tradition of salvation history) is that it is not so much an explanation as an assertion or a description, although Gerleman does speculate that Esther represents a polemical attempt to displace Passover with Purim as the festival of the Jews of the Diaspora. Andrews also might have noted that whereas Moses had Aaron as his eloquent spokesman or "mouthpiece," Esther herself (according to Gerleman) was the spokesman for Mordecai, all of which destroys this particular "parallel" between the two narratives. Along the same vein, while the fleeing Hebrews despoiled the Egyptians (Exod 12:35–36), the author of Esther is most emphatic in saying that the Jews did not plunder (Esth 9:10, 15, and 16).

In sum, while Andrews seems somewhat persuaded by Gerleman's general thesis that the Book of Esther is patterned after Exodus 1–12, I am not. Even though there may well be some influence of the Exodus story on the Book of Esther—what ancient Jewish writer could have escaped *all* conscious or unconscious influences from it!—I do not see that influence as either controlling or overrriding. Rather, like many other scholars, including H. Bardtke (1963) and J. C. H. Lebram (1972), I regard the

15. For the persuasive view that the Book of Esther provides a model for a general lifestyle, or mode of life, for Jews living in a pagan environment, see Humphreys (1973). The Book of Esther, argued Humphreys, shows "both the possibility of a rewarding a creative life in a foreign court and in the same moment of the possibility of service and devoted loyalty to one's people and religious identity" (p. 216).

16. Esth 4:8; 8:2; 9:3; 10:3.

17. Humphreys (1973, p. 216, n. 17) makes the same criticism of Gerleman.

"events" and details of "fact" in Esther as revolving around two foci:
(1) different sources available to the ancient author, and (2) literary con-
siderations.

On the Origins of Esth 9:20–10:3

The question of whether Esth 9:20–10:3 is an original part of the book
or a later addition has been a source of heated debate for some time. Schol-
ars like L. B. Paton (1908, pp. 57–60) and O. Eissfeldt (1963, pp. 397–401)
regarded it as an addition, while other specialists, such as Bardtke (1963,
pp. 397–401) and W. Dommershausen (1968, p. 133), have regarded it as a
part of the original scroll.

During the past decade, several scholars, proceeding along quite differ-
ent lines, have provided additional support for the view that Esth 9:20–
10:3 is, *essentially*, an original part of the book. I emphasize the word
"essentially" because certain parts of Esth 9:20–10:3 may very well be
later.[18] S. E. Loewenstamm (1971), for instance, has done a persuasive job
of showing that 9:29–32 is a later addition to 9:20–10:3, and that it is the
result of a gradual and very complex process in which various words and
phrases developed from still later additions—and from misconceptions.
More specifically, Loewenstamm argues that what is now vs. 32 originally
followed vs. 28 and then proceeded to influence what later became vss. 29–
31. While his argument may seem at times convoluted, if not labyrinthian,
it nonetheless has merit. In any event, recent support for the authenticity
of Esth 9:20–10:3 is to be found in the work of Jones (1978), S. B. Berg
(1979), and Lebram (1972).

According to Jones (1978), there are three strong reasons for our re-
garding the present Hebrew text as a unity. First, there is an elaborate
system of *inclusio* which involves 9:20–10:3. For instance, just as the first
chapter of Esther begins by references to the wealth and power of King
Ahasuerus, so the final chapter extolls the king's power and might. This
rhetorical device, Jones emphasizes, is only an "approximate" *inclusio*,[19]
for a much more important *inclusio*, a chiastic one, is to be found in Esth.
10:2, where the usual "Persia and Media" (so Esth 1:3, 14, 18, 19) is ren-
dered as "Media and Persia." Jones recognizes that in 10:2 the reference is
to a chronicle entitled *The Annals of the Kings of Media and Persia*, but

18. Dommershausen (1968, p. 125) has shown that Esth 9:24–26 is a brief doublet to
Esther 3–8.
19. This term is taken from M. Kessler (1978), who distinguishes between *inclusio in
sensu stricto* and various kinds of approximate *inclusio*.

he evidently believes more in the intentional rhetorical character of the phrase than in the actual existence of such a book, for he writes:

> We should observe that the so-called chronicles contain not only a record of Ahaseuerus's power, but also an account of the honor given to Mordecai. The last verse in the book emphasizes Mordecai's position and his respect, so that the book ends not with the king's greatness but with Mordecai's. There has been a shift of focus from the Persian empire to the Jews. Words and themes are repeated, but the content of the beginning and the end are quite different. (p. 37.)

The second reason Jones offers for the genuineness of Esth 9:20-10:3 is "the linear progress which culminates in these verses" (p. 36). For instance, the theme of eating and banqueting, which runs throughout the book,[20] begins with *only Persian royalty* feasting but ends with *all Jews* feasting, from the least to the greatest (9:22). Thirdly, Jones notes a similar transformation in 9:27, where the irreversibility of the law of the Medes and Persians in 1:19 (*wl' y'bwr*) has become the Jews' unalterable obligation (*wl' y'bwr*) to celebrate Purim. Thus, according to Jones:

> We have, then, literary developments of three themes: (1) honor and greatness, (2) eating and drinking, and (3) the irreversibility of·the law. In each case, the development is used for ironic effect.[21] The themes which were originally associated with the Persian masters are ultimately applied to the subject Jews. It should be noted that in each case the literary development is not complete until 9:20-10:3. There is a linear progression *which is consummated only in the so-called appendix* [italics added]. (p. 38.)

While there are admittedly a number of words in Esth 9:20-10:3 which occur there and nowhere else in Esther,[22] thereby persuading some scholars that the passage is an addition, Jones maintains there are several words there which represent a 'synthetic linear progression,' "That is, a variety of key words that appear throughout the book are brought together—synthesized—in 9:20-10:3" (p. 38). For example, the Jewish mourning (*'bl*) mentioned in 4:3 and 6:12 has been transformed in 9:22: "from mourning (*'bl*) to a holiday." The *prša* 'the exact amount' of money Haman paid for the destruction of the Jews (4:7) has become in 10:2 'an exact account' of Mordecai's influence and success throughout the empire. *Gdwlt* 'greatness',

20. Esth 1:1-9; 2:18; 5:4-14; 6:14; 7:1-10; 8:17; 9:17-19, 22.

21. For more on irony in the Book of Esther, see Moore (1971, p. lvi).

22. See list in Paton (1908, pp. 59f.). With such rare words as *'grt* 'letter' (Esth 9:26, 29) *zmn* 'appointed time' (9:27, 31) and *tqp* 'strength' (9:29; 10:2), Jones thinks "that the author is only dazzling us with a little fanfare in his finale" (p. 42), just as he did perhaps in his opening chapter, notably in 1:6.

which is used to describe the Persian king in 1:4 and 6:3, is applied to Mordecai in 10:2. "The reference to the *pur* in 3:7 is an integral part of the story, but its significance is not clear without 9:26 where the explanation of the name Purim is given. . . . Without that ending, the first reference to the *pur* makes no sense and the book would have lost one of its reasons for being" (p. 39). Haman's name, in a variety of forms, occurs over fifty times in the book, with the longer appellation calling attention, notes Jones, to "decisive moments."[23] But the *fullest* designations occur in the first chapter mentioning him ("Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews" [3:10]) and in the final mentioning of him by name ("Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews" [9:24]). Thus, argues Jones, the fullest description of Haman is not given until 9:24, part of the so-called appendix. Jones regards it as no coincidence that Esther's mentor is called "Mordecai the Jew" exactly seven times (including three times in the so-called appendix: 9:29, 31; 10:3): "I suggest, tentatively, that the phrase is deliberately used seven times because seven often represents completeness in the Bible" (p. 41). According to Jones, the word *m'mr* "commandment," which occurs in the MT only in Esther (1:15, 2:20; 9:32), "thematically . . . calls attention to the important shift of power. . . . Now at the end of the book [i.e., in the so-called appendix] it is the royal and powerful Esther who issues the *m'mr* to confirm the observance of Purim" (p. 41). Finally, Esther is first identified by her Jewish parentage ("Esther, the daughter of Abihail") in 2:15 when, as a contender for the queenship, she sleeps with the king for the first time, and is not so identified again until 9:29: "Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail . . . wrote with full authority."

The above examples are by no means the only ones that Jones offers as "tie-ins" between Esther and its so-called appendix; but they are, I believe, the more persuasive or possible ones. Jones uses two quite helpful analogies for illustrating what he perceives to be the relationship between "the appendix" and what precedes it: Esth 9:20–10:3 may be compared to a coda[24] or a funnel.[25] Both analogies have merit; and while none of the lines of Jones's argument or the particular examples supporting them prove to me, decisively, that the so-called appendix was actually an original part of

23. Esth 3:1, 10; 8:1, 3, 5; 9:10, 24.

24. "As in a musical composition, some themes are stated at the beginning. Other themes are introduced during the composition, and then the ending of the piece draws them together in a kind of coda" (p. 36).

25. "The concluding portion of Esther is not only a summary of what has preceded, it is also a sort of 'funnel' that concentrates many of the previous literary features" (p. 41).

the book. I find the evidence accumulated by Jones favoring such a con-
clusion.

One of the most insightful studies on the Book of Esther during the
past decade is Berg's monograph (1979), in which she offers a rhetorical
analysis. Even though I have discussed her book elsewhere (Moore, 1984),
I must note here that Berg has, in my judgment, successfully demonstrated
that feasting (and its auxiliary motif of fasting) is the primary motif of
Esther[26] and is found throughout the entire book: there are two separate
banquets at the beginning of the story (1:5, 9), two in the middle (5:5; 7:1)
and two at the end (9:17-18, 20-22); and fasting is enjoined upon the Jews,
both early (4:16) and late (9:31). The elimination of Esth 9:20-10:3, Berg
maintains, would certainly destroy Esther's balanced treatment of feasting
and fasting.

Berg also offers, I believe, a convincing case for there being four themes
in Esther: the Theme of Power (pp. 96-98), the Theme of Loyalty to God
and Israel (pp. 98-103), and the themes of the Inviolability of the Jewish
people and Reversal, or peripety (pp. 103-21).[27] Needless to say, all four
themes require the so-called "appendix" to be part of the present text of
Esther. I find Berg's arguments for the authenticity of Esth 9:20-10:3 per-
suasive but in no way conclusive. Afterall, there is no reason why an an-
cient author or editor could not have taken what is now Esth 1:1-9:19,
perceived its rhetorical shortcomings, and then proceeded to improve
upon it by adding an appendix.

A brief word should be said here about the article of Lebram (1972),
who maintained, among other things, that some of the difficulties and
problems scholars have noted in Esth 9:20-28 are the direct result of the
author of Esther trying to combine, with less than total success, what were
originally two distinct and separate traditions: (1) the older Persian Esther
legend about a girl who saved her people; and (2) the more recent Pales-
tinian story, featuring Mordecai and Haman. The end result of this union
is, according to Lebram, that all references to Mordecai in the Esther story
are contrived and secondary; and all references to Esther in the Mordecai

26. Berg distinguishes carefully between a 'motif' and a 'theme.' "Dominant motifs," she
maintains, "help to unify the Book of Esther . . . . [and] also appear interdependent and
provide a balance between the beginning, middle and conclusion of the story" (p. 95). A
'theme', she explains, "is reserved for the message or ideas which the author conveyed by his
use of motifs . . . . [Themes are] the central, dominant ideas which underlie the narrator's
use of motifs, and to which those motifs point" (p. 17).

27. 'Peripety', or the unexpected reversal of affairs, is central to the analysis by M. Fox
(in press; Professor Fox kindly let me read a draft of his article).

story are awkward and loose, especially in 9:20-28. While there is some merit to Lebram's argument, I have some reservations about it; for elsewhere in Esther its ancient author had done, at least in my judgment, an excellent job of combining two (and probably three[28]) separate and independent narratives into an integrated and fascinating story.

In conclusion, the recent work of Jones (1978), Berg (1979), and Lebram (1972) increase, in my opinion, the likelihood that Esth 9:20-10:3 is, essentially, an original part of the Book of Esther.

On the So-called 'Lucianic' Text of Esther

As is well-known, the Greek Esther occurs in two radically different recensions or, more likely, versions: (1) the traditional B-text, of which many manuscripts have survived, the *Vaticanus* (LXX[B]) being the best example; and (2) the quite rare A-text,[29] of which only four manuscripts are known.[30] Whenever the Greek text of Esther has been translated into English, it was always the B-text that was used. However, an English translation of just the Additions of the A-text is to be found in E. C. Bissel (1880, pp. 217-20); an English translation of the entire A-text is to be found in the forthcoming monograph of Clines (1984, Appendix).

Although F. Field (1875) and P. Lagarde (1883), two nineteenth-century Septuagint giants, regarded the A-text as the 'Lucianic recension,'[31] whatever else the text may be, it is clearly not that.[32] It was, however, C. C. Torrey (1944) who first seriously questioned the characterization of the A-text of Esther as 'Lucianic.' Torrey argued that the A-text as well as the B-text, Josephus's Greek paraphrase of Esther in his *Jewish Antiquities*, and the MT(!) were actually independent translations of four different *Aramaic* texts.

28. I.e., the Vashti story of Esther 1, which is vaguely reminiscent of the well-known story of Candaules, the Lydian king who was so proud of his wife's beauty that he contrived to have his servant Gyges see her naked (Herodotus 1, 8-13). The story of Vashti is not unlike the harem tales of *A Thousand and One Nights*.

29. This is its name in the Larger Cambridge Septuagint. Lagarde called it "a," while still others, like Tov (1982), call it "L."

30. Both texts are printed separately, complete with their *apparatus criticus*, in the Larger Cambridge Septuagint of Esther (1940); the B-text on pp. 1-31, and the A-text on pp. 32-42. Actually, the Cambridge A-text is an eclectic text, accurately created by P. Lagarde (1883) from three A-text manuscripts (see Moore [1965, pp. 129-33]).

31. St. Jerome had noted in his Preface to Chronicles that all Christendom read the Septuagint in one of three recensions: the Hesychian, the Lucianic, and the Origenic.

32. See Moore (1965, pp. 133-39; and 1967, pp. 352-55); Tov (1982, pp. 1-2); and Clines (1984).

Building on a portion of my dissertation (Moore, 1965, pp. 128-73), I later argued (Moore, 1967, pp. 353-58) that the so-called A-text was actually an independent Greek translation of a Hebrew text somewhat different from the MT. H. J. Cook (1969) agreed: "Moore's reasoning and tentative conclusions are in the main correct" (p. 369) and insisted on "the necessity of calling them [i.e., the A-text and the B-text] two different versions rather than recensions" (p. 369). Cook then went on to show that in the canonical portions of Esther (in contrast to the apocryphal Additions[33]) the A-text and the B-text each has its own preferences with regard to the rendering of a number of Hebrew verbs, nouns, and adjectives, again indicating that the two texts are "more than recensional correction or improvement and amount to translators' preferences" (p. 369). By contrast, in the Additions which have no counterpart in the MT,

> there is very close verbal correspondence between the *A* text and B. . . . Since in these longer additions to the book, the preferences of B seem to prevail, it would be reasonable to assume that the author of the *A* text had before him a text of the B type. (p. 369f.)

Certainly there can be little doubt that Add E was not originally a part of the A-text but was borrowed from the B-text; for Add E has a quite different place in the A-text (namely, 8:22-32) and repeats in expanded form the content of 8:35-37 of the A-text, the latter being the A-text's original version of the second royal edict. In any event, Cook maintained that where there was a Hebrew text to be translated, the A-text and the B-text represented two separate translations, and that in the Additions where there was no Hebrew text to be translated the two Greek texts were recensions.[34]

While earlier (1965, pp. 141-146) I had identified three general types of omissions characteristic of the A-text (namely, the omission of repetitious material, personal names, and numbers and dates), Cook isolated a fourth type, namely, the omission of "irrational material" (e.g., 1:17b-18, 20a-22;

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33. The Septuagint of Esther has six extended passages, totalling 107 verses, which have no counterpart in the MT, namely, Add(ition) A: the dream of Mordecai (vss 1-11) and an account of Mordecai's uncovering of a plot against the king (vss 12-17); Adds B and E: supposedly verbatim copies of the royal edicts dictated by Haman and Mordecai, respectively (cf. Esth 3:13 and 8:11-12); Add C: the prayers of Mordecai (vss 1-11) and Esther (vss 12-30); Add D: an expanded and highly dramatic description of Esther's unannounced audience with the king; and Add F: a detailed interpretation of the dream described in Add A (vvs 1-10) and its colophon (vs 11).

34. Elsewhere (Moore, 1973), I have shown that Adds A, C, D, and F give clear internal evidence of having a Semitic *Vorlage* while Adds B and E are unquestionably Greek compositions.

2:10-12, 19-20). He was quick to add, however, that "From 8:6 onwards the omissions and additions[35] [in the A-text] are not so clearly rational" (p. 372). The reason for this, according to Cook, is that the A-text originally ended at 8:5, a view essentially advanced first by Torrey (1944), and that the rest of the A-text was added later to make the narrative become the legend of Purim. On the basis of his rapid survey of the phraseology of the A-text and B-text, Cook concluded that

> the phraseology of B is more closely followed by *A* in its summary of 8:6-10:3 than in any other part of the Hebrew book. It would appear, therefore, that the development (b)[36] and (c)[37] came through acquaintance with a Greek text of the B type. There is no conclusive evidence for a different recension of the Hebrew book beyond 8:5" (p. 376.)

Cook's conclusion made perfectly good sense to me.

But then E. Tov (1982) added new fuel to the fascinating debate on the nature of the A-text of Esther by arguing that it

> is a translation *which is based on the LXX* [italics added] but corrects it towards a Hebrew (or Aramaic) text which differed from MT. This text was a midrash-type rewriting of the biblical story. (p. 25.)

Although Tov maintained "There is little doubt that L [= Tov's symbol for the A-text] is closely connected with the LXX of Esth. and depends upon it" (p. 4), the simple truth is that there is ample room for doubt. Instances of agreement between the A-text and the B-text in the canonical portion of the Greek Esther are not all numerous. In fact, of the 163 verses in the canonical portion of the B-text, there are only 45 verses which have even so much as a phrase reproduced verbatim by the A-text;[38] and of those 45 verses, 28 of them consist of phrases of five words or less.[39] Significantly, of the seven passages which Tov cites as proof of the dependency of the A-text upon the B-text (namely, 1:20; 4:8; 9:3 [2x], 7-10 [2x]; and 10:3), all but two of them occur after 8:5, that is, they occur in 8:6-

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35. Cook offered as examples of "rational additions" in 1:1-8:5 such readings as those found in 1:6a, 12; 3:3; 5:14; 6:2-10f; 7:2 and 5.

36. "(b) The translator (or perhaps a subsequent writer) was aware that this story was used as the basis of the legend of Purim, and so added the material which made the book into a 'letter of Purim' " (p. 376).

37. "(c) The major additions A, B, C, D, E, and F were probably added at the same time as (b)" (p. 376).

38. 1:1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14(2x), 20; 2:7, 9; 3:2, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12; 4:14, 16; 5:1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 13, 14; 6:1, 9, 10, 11; 7:2, 4; 8:15, 16; 9:3, 10, 13, 20, 21, 26; 10:1, 2, 3.

39. 1:1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, 20; 2:7, 9, 3:2, 4, 10, 12; 4:16; 5:6, 8, 14; 6:1, 10; 7:2; 8:15, 16; 9:13, 21; 10:1, 2.

10:3 where, according to Cook, the A-text did depend upon the B-text. Moreover, Clines (1984) has shown that in the two remaining readings (namely 1:20 [A-text 2:20] and 4:8 [A-text 5:4]), the A-text is not 'clearly secondary' to the LXX, as Tov had maintained. Finally, as Clines (1984) has also pointed out, R. Hanhart's (1966, p. 88) examples of the A-text's dependence on the B-text (which Tov approvingly alludes to as being of decisive importance for establishing the primacy of the B-text) are very largely drawn from the Additions, which, as we have seen, do have the A-text dependent upon the B-text. In other words, in my judgment, Tov has failed to demonstrate the dependence of the A-text upon the B-text in the canonical portions of Esther; and it is precisely the view that the A-text depends upon the B-text which is *the* foundation of his entire argument.

My mentioning in the preceding paragraph of Cline's excellent monograph is perhaps the best place to end the present discussion of recent works on Esther. Professor Clines kindly sent me a draft of his forthcoming monograph. While I found comfort in the fact that his work confirmed some of my own findings concerning the Hebrew and Greek texts of Esther, I was even more encouraged to see that his monograph, which lack of space prevents me from commenting on here, will contribute substantially in the next ten years to our understanding of a most difficult but fascinating problem: the genesis, growth, and meaning of the Book of Esther.

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