
TITLE "A Study in Esther and Judith: Their Structures,
Literary Styles and Theologies Analyzed, Decoded
and Considered in Their Historical Context"

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A STUDY IN ESTHER AND JUDITH:
THEIR STRUCTURES, LITERARY STYLES AND THEOLOGIES ANALYZED,
DECODED AND CONSIDERED IN THEIR HISTORICAL CONTEXT

by
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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination

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DEDICATION

I dedicated my undergraduate thesis to the memory of my father, Eugene Berman. I never thought I would be able to dedicate a second work to a second father, but life's blessings truly are manifold. It is with love and joy then, that I dedicate this work to my father, Larry Lichtman, who has brought love and joy into the life of my mother once again and has, therefore, made my world so much more complete.

And to my mother, Marilyn Berman, and my sister, Janet. I am still searching for the words, but today I know the feelings and believe that that is the greatest gift I shall ever know.

How joyous we are for our portion is goodly and our fate blessed.

DIGEST

This thesis contains two independent investigations: firstly, there are analyses of the Books of Esther (as accepted in the Hebrew and Protestant canons) and Judith (as it appears in Protestant collections of the Apocrypha). These analyses are of each book's literary, structural and thematic components. The second part of this work is an evaluation of the above. We present this in terms of contrastive and comparative studies of Esther and Judith as well as an application of our initial findings into areas of more purely historical import.

We have concluded that Esther and Judith are contemporaneous works, written in the first century of the common era. Further, their structural and literary similarity points to a common authorship; at least a common milieu of authorial activity. The didactic points we have enumerated illuminate the true nature of each of these books which was, we assert, propagandastic. As such, we believe these works to have been penned as specifically anti-Roman tracts by pre-destruction (neo-) Pharisees. Finally, this assertion implicitly devalues many previous explanations of the process of the canonization of the third section of the Bible: The writings. We conclude with a new explanation of this undertaking we believe to be more plausible than others previously offered.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At a time such as this, it is always easier to begin with the obvious. Thus, I would like to plainly state that without the help, advice, guidance and trust of my advisor, Rabbi David Weisberg, this thesis would still be a proposal - if that. Of course, our sages said it better than I ever could, so I would like to quote them: "Jose ben Joezer of Zeredah and Jose ben Jochanan of Jerusalem received the tradition from them. Jose ben Joezer said, 'Let thy house be a meeting-house for the wise, and sit amidst the dust of their feet and drink in their words with thirst'." (Avot 1:4) Whether or not I be wise, he has opened his house and home to me; I have attempted to sit still at his feet and learn from his wisdom and, often, my thirst has been quenched. I am grateful.

Two special friends also inspired my academic interest in this thesis and nurtured my soul with their love and care. The Talmud teaches: *אדם צריך אהבה*. I have two, and thus feel doubly blessed. To David and Larry, may this in some way reflect the love.

The list could go on for pages because I have been given more than I could ever merit. My friends and family, even when they did not understand the topic or agree with the conclusions, always believed in me. This work is only one part of the training I needed and still need in order to be a rabbi. Because I have been so wonderfully and freely helped and supported herein, I have gained also

much peace of soul and heart; the other two parts of my
being. We are commanded:

Simply said, the people in my life have made it a joy
to work toward fulfilling that commandment one day at
a time.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: STATEMENT OF METHOD AND PURPOSE

When one forays into Biblical scholarship, and particularly into the investigation of the origins of specific books of Scripture, there is the immediate question of, "Why another work?" The field, some argue, is already flooded. For nearly two hundred years "definitive" accounts, answering all the questions of the origins of the Bible and its constituent parts have been published.

Yet, neither academics nor ecclesiastics can even agree on the contents of Holy Scripture, much less its origins. Nor has this great debate been an energy efficient one: much more heat than light has been generated. It is in the hopes of lessening that deficiency that this thesis is presented.

The books of Esther and Judith, as evidenced by the numerous tomes dedicated to their study, have fascinated scholars for years. Though much has been written about them, it is remarkable that they are rarely compared. Even a cursory reading of these two stories reveals great similarities. Structurally, they are organized around chiasmic underpinnings. Thematically, the motif of the besieged Jewish people aided by the sympathetic Gentile¹ which is not common in either Jewish Biblical or Apocryphal literature, is present here. As history these two books

do not compare well with modern standards of factuality and documentation. The function of names and place-names in each work, various motifs, the dates of composition of these books, the intent of their authors in writing them, and questions of theology² have always been addressed in studies of Esther and Judith. Yet, the perplexities raised by these issues have not been considered together.

The purpose of this work, then, is to examine these two both in conjunction with one another, with an eye toward discovering their origins and reasons for composition. We shall attempt to prove that Esther and Judith are contemporaneous works, dating from the first century of the Common Era. This assertion, if correct, would tumble much of the scholarly infrastructure constructed to explain the process of canonization. An appropriate, new, explanation will be provided in our conclusion.³ It is our belief that all difficulties - textual, theological, structural, or other - perceived in earlier works on the subject must be addressed only in regard to this total picture: questions surrounding authorship cannot be divorced from those of theological and historical motivations. Other researches have not completely unravelled the puzzles of Esther and Judith precisely because such an integrated approach combining historical,

literary and theological investigation has not been utilized. We are, nevertheless, indebted to all previous scholars and their work for so accurately perceiving and stating the problems inherent in these texts. Further, this thesis shall undertake to demonstrate that these issues are also essential keys to understanding the Jews and Judaism of the so-called "intertestamental" period.

Methodologically, this topic will be approached in two main sections. The first will be analytical in nature. We shall analyze the (Scriptural) Book of Esther and (the apocryphal) Book of Judith. Their structures will be outlined and explored. Following, we shall move to a discussion of specific motifs and themes. Through such a form analysis, we may yet discover a basic message in these complex books. This will help us answer questions of orthographic and onomastic complexities. A review of the traditional presentation concerning these issues, as well as our own preliminary conclusions will be presented. When this has been elaborated, the true fruits of our research will be apparent. A ready comparison, we believe, will emerge between Esther and Judith and, through this, answers to many questions previously left to stand.

In our conclusion, we will begin to apply our initial findings to the more ultimate problem of canonization.

The process of finalizing the contents of Scripture is one as yet shrouded in uncertainty. One of the basic problems is that books deemed Scriptural by the Rabbis of the Talmud have often been considered of higher value than apocryphal works as sources for historians of the early common era. We cannot accept this. Just as we do not accept the Rabbinic explanation of Esther's historicity and dating,⁴ we must be consistent and assert that the outcome of the debates on canonization⁵ reflect theological perceptions and platforms much more accurately than historical sensibilities and values. Those who formulated the final table of contents to the Tanach rejected Judith and, thus, implicitly relegated it to an inferior status than that given to Esther. We do not view Judith to be among the ⁶ since that term carries with it a negative value judgment.

Judith is part of a larger corpus of Jewish literature written during the "intertestamental" era.⁷ As such, it is as potentially valuable as any other contemporaneous work of its genre (including Esther) in providing us with insight into ancient Jewish life and thought. Rather than being a question of why one work was considered to have been inspired by ⁸ and the other not, we must ask other questions. For instance, why was Esther

preserved as Scripture at all? Why was Judith not canonized? These, we believe are typical of the questions which will bear fruitful findings for historians.

We believe that the dilemmas of historical fact finding in this era of investigation are intimately tied up with the literary field of document decoding.⁹ Our discussion will, of necessity, touch on the fields of ancient "histories," literary development, structural analysis and linguistic theory. We will conclude with an overview of the first century world, focusing on the question, "Is the term 'intertestamental' an appropriate one or not?" The information gleaned from these studies will allow us, finally, to offer an outline designed to better analyze the sources and describe the situation as we perceive it to have been.

This introduction has been much concerned with methodology. This is for good reason. We believe proper methodological research will serve the needs of thorough investigation and serve to best analyze and synthesize the complexity of material and evidence left us from this era.

ENDNOTES

¹Stories of besieged Jews: Abraham, Saul, Deborah and Jeremiah spring to mind, abound. Yet, stories of an isolated population of Jews being besieged is rare in the Bible. (In Jeremiah, it is the entire people.) Further, while we do see Ahimelech, Balaam or Hiram of Tyre as sympathetic Gentiles, they do not serve the same crucial role as do either Achior or Harbona and Hatach in bringing both messages of hope and cooperation to the Jews.

²It is fashionable to claim that (the Scriptural book of) Esther has no theology either in it or behind it. This is too pat a conclusion. As will be shown, there are great, non-coincidental similarities between the Esther and Joseph narratives. Each, along with Judith, displays a "neo-Deuteronomic" bent toward theology and history and specifically embraces a mode of thinking that equates history with theology. Please see Chapter 4, p. 142.

³Our conclusion will serve to highlight our problems with proposed theories of canonization and offer tentative proposals for a new theory. See Appendix #6 for a proposed outline dedicated to a fuller investigation.

⁴In B. Megillah we find the standard Rabbinic explanation of Esther. Chapter three is especially concerned with identifying the book's characters with known historical figures and placing the events in a familiar time frame. For reasons of necessity (and conviction) the Rabbis date Esther's composition to the Persian era which it purportedly describes. The necessity arises here because they claimed that no work written after the age of prophecy (which ended with Daniel) could be incorporated into canon. cf. Chapter 5, page 154ff.

⁵For the rabbinic discussions of the contents of canon, see B. Batra 13b; B. Megillah 7a; M. Yadayim 2:13, 3:5ff, 4:6; B. Sanhedrin 11a; Tosefta Sotah 13:2; T. Shabbath 13:5; and Eduyyoth 5:3. Leviticus Rabbah 28:1; Megillah 7a and Shabbath 30b deal with the canonical status of Ecclesiastes. Yadayim 3:5c-end discusses Song of Songs. Megillah 7a, B Yoma 29a, and B. Sanhedrin 100a all contain rabbinic discussions of Esther's status in canon and place in the festive calendar.

⁶There are varied opinions as to the exact meaning of this term. Herein, I am operating under the assumption that are any books that were not accepted into the Rabbinic canon. For variant opinions, please refer to the following:

Moore, G.F., "The Definition of the Jewish Canon and the Repudiation of Christian Scriptures," Essays in Modern Theology and Related Subjects: A Testimonial to C.A. Briggs (New York: Scribner's, 1911): 99-125.

Ginzberg, L., "Some Observations on the Attitude of the Synagogue towards the Apocalyptic-Eschatological Writings," Journal of Biblical Literature 41 (1922): 115-136.

Zeitlin, S., "An Historical Study of the Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures," Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research 3 (1931-1932): 121-158.

Bloch, J., "Outside Books," Mordechai M. Kaplan Jubilee Volume (New York, 1953): 87-108.

Saldarini, A.J., "Apocalyptic and Rabbinic Literature," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 37 (1975): 348-358.

Lewis, J.P., "What do we mean by Jabneh?" Journal of Bible and Religion 32 (1964): 125-132.

Host, L., Judaism Outside the Hebrew Canon: An Introduction to the Documents, trans. D.E. Green (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976): pp. 21-51.

⁷In this thesis, we use the term "intertestamental" in quotes because we believe it to be a misnomer. This will be proven, *infra*. In the meantime, we accept the standard scholarly designation of this era as lasting from 200 B.C.E. to 100 C.E.

⁸The is discussed in B. Megillah 7a in regard to Esther's composition. Verses 2:15, 2:22, 6:6, 8:10 and 9:27 are all cited as proof that Esther was composed under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

⁹As we have said, we reject the notion that events as portrayed in these books are accurate accounts of history. This will be proven, *infra*, chapter 3, pp. 93ff. Our theory of decoding is taken from Leo Strauss, et al. See, *infra*, chapter 4, pp. 143ff. We believe that we are yet improving on Strauss' theory in that we are providing a plausible setting and background for both Esther and Judith which stands up to historical scrutiny as well as investigations of scholars in the fields of literary theory, structuralism, linguistics and theology.

CHAPTER #2 - ANALYSIS OF ESTHER

OUTLINE

- I. Outline
- II. Themes and Motifs
 - A. Theme: Inviolability and Reversal
 - 1. reward and punishment
 - 2. loyalty and ultimate law
 - 3. fate and predestination
 - B. Motif: Obedience and Disobedience
 - 1. didactic points
- III. Structural Analysis
 - A. Opposing Doublets
 - B. Chiasmus
 - 1. presentation
 - 2. analysis
 - C. Literary Considerations
 - 1. devices
 - 2. repetitions - parallelisms
 - a) words
 - b) phrases
 - c) summary
 - 3. Onomasticon
 - a) orthographics and phonetics
 - b) spelling and textual transmission
 - c) implications
 - D. Conclusions
 - 1. textual
 - 2. date of Esther
- IV. Historicity
 - A. Historical Data
 - 1. contradictions
 - 2. decoding places, names and events
 - 3. summary
- V. Literary Antecedents and Parallels - Form Criticism
 - A. Proposed plan of action
 - B. Homer and the Classic Prose Narrative
 - C. History and Historical Writing in the Greek World
 - D. Summary #1
 - 1. Esther and Greek literature
 - E. Folk/Hero Tales
 - 1. Biblical use
 - a) heroes
 - b) wisdom literature
 - (1) prototypes
 - (2) form
 - (a) wise courtier motif

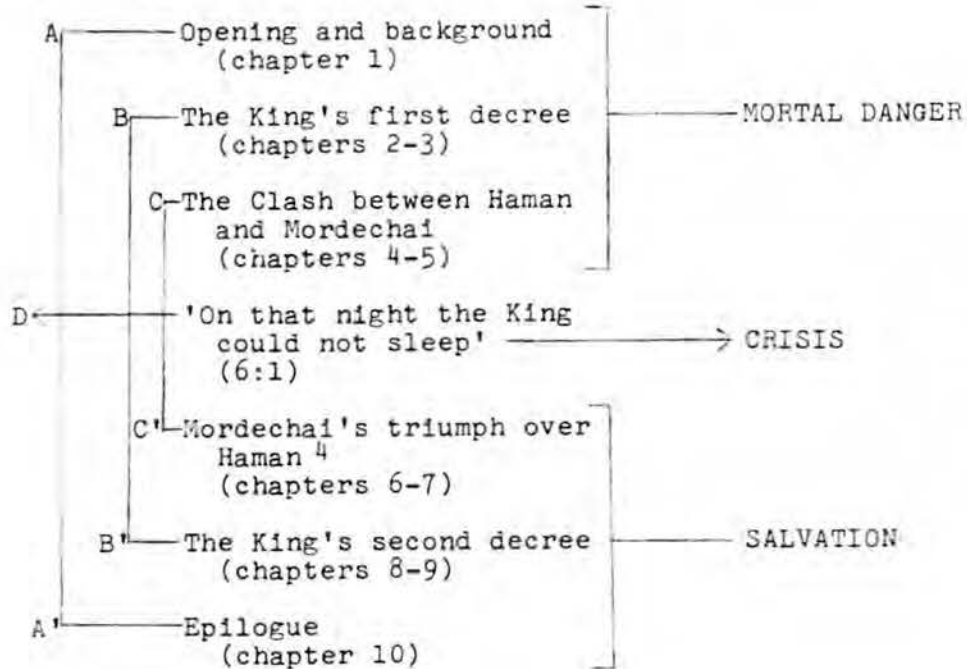
- VI. Summary
 - A. Content
 - 1. stock figures
 - B. Covert Writing
 - 1. intent/message
 - 2. medium
- VII. What was the author's motivation for writing this book?
 - A. Author's Environment and Evidence for it
 - B. Author's Concerns
 - 1. evidence - Roman world
 - 2. reason for writing - date of composition
 - C. Defense of Proposed Dating
 - 1. Gordis
 - 2. Theology
 - a) other Jewish literature
 - b) Purim

CHAPTER #2 - THE BOOK OF ESTHER

- I. Outline
 - The story presented in Esther may be outlined as follows:¹
- I. The Setting and Introduction of Characters
 - A. Setting
 - 1. physical splendor
 - 2. King Ahasherus and the Persian court
 - 3. feast marking Ahasherus' consolidation of power
 - B. Introduction of Other Characters
 - 1. Vashti
 - a) summoning
 - b) refusal
 - c) disposal
 - d) courtiers' advice
 - 2. Mordechai
 - a) Ish Yehudi
 - 3. Esther
 - a) description
 - b) relationship with Mordechai - genealogy
 - c) Esther wins king's favor
 - [Insertion, see below]
 - 4. Haman
 - a) the Aggagite
 - b) assumption of power
- II. The Die is Cast
 - A. [Mordechai discovers a plot and fends off disaster]
(from above)²
 - B. Mordechai refuses to pay Haman homage
 - C. Casting of lots against the Jews
 - 1. Mordechai's mourning
 - 2. Charge to Esther
 - D. Esther's Intercession
 - 1. an invitation to a feast
 - 2. Haman deceived and happy
- III. The Beginning of the End
 - A. King's Insomnia
 - 1. reading of the records
 - B. Mordechai's Delayed Reward
 - 1. Haman's compliance
 - C. The Second Feast Given by Esther
 - 1. accusation
 - 2. discovery
 - 3. Haman hanged
 - 4. Mordechai elevated

- IV. Evening the Score
 - A. Jews Get Their Revenge
 - 1. no plunder is taken
 - B. Justification of Purim
 - 1. Shushan Purim
 - C. Summary
 - 1. tie in with introduction

Another chart, detailing the chiastic structure of Esther, may be derived from the preceding outline³:



II. Themes and Motifs

A. Inviolability and Reversal

This chiastic arrangement of A-B-C-D-C'-B'-A' can be analyzed in many ways. Structurally, it is evidence of the high degree of technical skill possessed by the author. Of immediate import to us are the themes⁵ this chiasmus highlights. The first is that of inviolability and reversal.⁶

This theme is present in Parts A and A' of the chiasm. Great Ahasherus' dominion is laid out before us - most resplendant in all the world! And yet, our epilogue

(especially 9:1-20) turns this lovely picture on its head. Ahasherus' dominion is given over to war and despoilation, factional fighting and the spectre of higher taxation. The very nature of the kingdom undergoes a complete turn-around.

Further, it is evident from our text that the dicta of Persian kings had the force of law (1:19, 8:8). This explains the "backhanded" manner in which Haman's decree against the Jews (sealed with the king's signet) had to be revoked (8:5ff).⁷ Such legal fiction serves to undermine our belief in the proposed royal inviolability of Ahasherus. In fact, Ahasherus seems rather foppish.

1. Reward and Punishment

The theme of reward and punishment is closely related to this theme. Taken with the above, it forms one of the four component parts of the first major motif of Esther. No action in this book goes, ultimately, unnoticed. Every good deed - Mordechai's uncovering of the plot against Ahasherus, his care of Esther, Esther's courage before the king, and Hatach and Harbona's aid to Esther - is rewarded. And every evil deed is punished. No stone is left unturned. Haman's ten sons are specifically named as if to prove to us that Haman's wickedness is fully revenged. He who had abused his status, we are told, paid tenfold. For each character, there is but one rule:

2. Loyalty and Ultimate Law

All this brings questions of loyalty and ultimate law to the fore. Each person is moved by loyalty to ideas. Each deed - good or evil - is acted upon out of one's feelings of loyalty. For example, Hatach and Harbona respond to Esther out of their sense of duty to her. Further, there is a double stress on loyalty for the Jews in this book. Jews must be loyal both to the king and to the Jewish people.

Mordechai acted against Bigthan and Teresh out of his loyalty to Ahasherus. Esther, too, served the king. Yet, Mordechai so poignantly reminds us (twice) that he had even a higher loyalty: to his Judaism. For reasons we do not understand, Mordechai refused to pay obeisance to Haman.⁹ Perhaps it was his loyalty to an ultimate law. This concept is, actually, what finally moves Esther to action (4:14ff). She is seemingly unencumbered by Judaism's ritual demands. But Esther is deeply moved when Mordechai warns her that the fate of the Jewish people rests upon her. She responds to an ultimate value. This is true, as well, of the Jews of Ahasherus' realm who obey Esther and Mordechai's pronouncements of restraint.

3. Fate and Predestination

Fate, also, is a pivotal and related theme. As Moshe Gan points out, Esther and Mordechai are:

7

¹⁰ This, he claims,

is their fate. Indeed, he feels that they were set on a predetermined course. Yet, the explicit absence of God from this book may pose a stumbling block to this assertion.

Many claim that God's absence from Esther serves as a pointedly contrastive element in the working out of this theme.¹¹ We believe, however, that such a clear-cut distinction is a false one. When their final elevation is postponed, both contextually and psychologically, until their fate had become firmly tied up with, and equal to, that of their people, we see that the emphasis here is actually upon the "predestined" nature of that fate. God thus becomes the hidden actor.¹²

B. Motif: Obedience and Disobedience

These opposing doublets of inviolability and reversal, reward and punishment, loyalty and ultimate law, fate and predestination compromise this book's major motif: that of obedience and disobedience.

As a dominant motif, obedience and disobedience, "governs Esther's plot and recurs at crucial points of the narrative."¹³ For her disobedience, Vashti lost her crown. Esther is afraid of the penalties incumbent upon acts of disobedience and hesitates to appear before the king unsummoned. For his disobedience, Mordechai nearly caused the Jews' destruction. And Haman is obedient even unto parading Mordechai through Shushan in full, royal regalia.

More than just advancing the plot, however, this motif and its themes transmit the message of the book. For instance, Ahasherus is made to be, at best, a weak-minded ruler. This is in contrast to the picture of his absolute authority presented in chapters one and two. Why, then, is this so prominent in his description? There seems to be another message here.

1. Didactic points

The characters in this story all value royal inviolability. Except for Esther and Mordechai who have made loyalty to the Jewish community their highest value, all other characters fall in their devaluation of loyalty. The author seems to be saying that this course of action is wrong. Human beings are fallible. Only God is truly inviolable.

Another didactic point is found in this book's emphasis on fate. The Goral, Esther and Mordechai's being in the right place at the right time, and the chance sleeplessness of the king are all fateful events. As Abraham Cohen explains, this emphasis on fate conveys the religious significance of Esther. He states,

God acts behind the veil of causality and chance, on behalf of the people of Israel. It is specifically to accentuate this point that the name of God is not mentioned in the Megillah, while all the events are "cast" to give the appearance of chance occurrences, of purim.¹⁴

The presentation of reward and punishment also contains a theologic statement: The wicked are punished in this life! Here, a definite stand in the Biblical debate on this question has been assumed. It is similar to that taken in Deuteronomy.¹⁵

In summary, we believe that obedience and disobedience is the major motif of Esther. As such, it comes to teach us of the author's intentions. This is not simply a story for fun or one written in order to justify observance of a new holiday (i.e., Purim). A statement is being made through these themes and this motif. The doublets we have discussed here more than serve to advance the plot, they impart the book's meaning to us. We believe that meaning is also to be found within the theologic statement made. Yet, before we arrive at a formulation of that statement, we must undertake a further analysis of Esther.¹⁶

III. Structural Analysis

A. Opposing Doublets

A high degree of structural fine tuning is evidenced in Esther by the obvious pairing of themes and motifs. As mentioned in regard to the theme of reward and punishment, each action in Esther has an equal and opposite reaction: no deed goes unpunished. So, too, it is with themes and motifs. No theme is without its opposite number. For instance, fate is presented as a theme only with its

counterbalance of predestination also presented. Never is only one side of the story presented nor one motif left uncoupled.

B. Chiasmus

The pairing of themes and motifs in Esther is further underscored by the presence of chiasmus throughout the book. The following table presents a graphic view of the importance of linguistic repetitions and parallelisms in Esther.¹⁷

3:1	גדל חמלך אחשורוש אח-המן בן-המדחא האנגי וינשאהו וישם את כסאו מעל כל השרים אשר אתו	10:3	כי מרדכי היהודי משנה למלך אחשורוש וגדל ליהודים (מנשאים אה היהודים) (cf. 9:3)
3:7	הפיל פור הוא הגורל	9:24	והפיל פור הוא הגורל
3:8	ולמלך אין-שרה להניחם	7:4	כי אין הצר שרה בנזק המלך
3:10	ויסר המלך את טבעתו מעל ידו ויתנה להמן בן-המדחא האנגי צרר היהודים	8:2a	ויסר המלך את טבעתו אשר העביר מהמן ויתנה למרדכי
3:11b	והעם לעשות בו כטוב בעיניך	8:8a	ואתם כתבו על היהודים כטוב בעיניכם
3:12-13	ויקראו ספרי המלך בחדש הראשון בשלושה עשר יום בו ויכתב ככל- אשר צוה המן אל אחשדרפני- המלך ואל-הפחות אשר על-	8:9-11	ויקראו ספרי המלך . . . בחדש השלישי הוא-חדש סיון בשלושה ועשרים בו ויכתב ככל- אשר-צוה מרדכי אל-היהודים ואל האחשדרפנים-והפחות ושרי

- המדינות אשר מהדו ועד-כום
שבע ועשרים ומאה מדינה
מדינה ומדינה ככתבה
ועם ועם כלשנו ואל-
היהודים ככתבם וכלל:נם:
ויכתב בשם המלך אחשורש
ויחתם בטבעת המלך וישלח
ספרים ביד הרצים . . . אשר נתן
המלך ליהודים אשר בכל-עיר
ועיר להקהל ולעמד על-נפשם
להשמיר ולהרנ ולאבר את-כל-
חיל עם ומדינה הצרים אתם טפ
ונשים ושללם לברז (cf. 8:12)
- פתשגן הכתב להנתן דת בכל- 8:13
מדינה ומדינה גלוי לכל
העמים ולהיות היהודיים
עתודים ליום הזה
- הרצים רכבי הרכש 8:14-15b
האחשתרנים יצאו מבהלים
ודחופים בדבר המלך והדת
נחנה בשושן הבירה:
. . . והעיר שושן צהלה ושמחה
(ויבא המלך והמן (cf. 7:1)
לשתות)
- ובכל מדינה ומדינה ובכל 8:17a
עיר ועיר מקום אשר דבר
המלך ודחו מגיע שמחה
וששון ליהודים משתה
ויום טוב
- מדינה ומדינה ואל-שרי
עם ועם מדינה ומדינה
ככתבה ועם ועם כלשנו
בעם המלך אחשורש נכתב
ונחתם בטבעת המלך:
ונשלוח ספרים ביד הרצים
אל-כל-מדינות המלך להשמיד
להרנ ולאבד את-כל-היהודים
מנער ועד-זקן טף
ונשים ביום אחד
בשלושה עשר לחדש
שנים-עשר הוא-חדש אדר
ושללם לברז
- 3:14 פתשגן הכתב להנתן דת
בכל-מדינה ומדינה גלוי
לכל-העמים להיות
עתודים ליום הזה
- 3:15 הרצים יצאו דחופים
בדבר המלך וחדת נחנה
בשושן הגירה והמלך
והמן ישבו לשתות והעיר
שושן נבוכה
- 4:3 ובכל מדינה ומדינה מקום
אשר דבר המלך ודחו מגיע
אבל גדול ליהודים וצום
ובכי ומספד שק ואפר
יצע לרבים

2. Analysis

The thematic and motival doublets mentioned above are contained within these phrases and verses. Each element of structure as detailed on page two is represented in this chart. But what is of greater import is the fact that such chiasmus runs through the book on, we can now see, all levels: literary, structural and thematic. And the beauty of the book is that one chiasmus does not overshadow the other. Rather, they each work to reinforce our sense of the other two. We see the thematic chiasmus as clearly as we do precisely because the literary and structural parallels are as informative as they are.

C. Literary considerations

1. Devices

And just as Esther resembles a well-made play in these characteristics, it is a carefully sculpted book in its inner structure as well.

Characteristic literary devices in Esther include frequent use of emphatic word order, repetition of words and phrases, synonyms, emphatic particles, the use of direct address and short, to-the-point sentences. The author of Esther also delighted in the more formal aspects of writing, i.e., in such embellishments as alliteration, assonance, paranomsia, metonymy and chiasmus.¹⁸

2. Repetitions

All these devices, which will be detailed in their proper sections, again reinforce the reader's impression of a highly structured and skillfully crafted book.

Also buttressing this belief is the vocabulary of Esther. While Moore feels "the Hebrew vocabulary is scarcely what might be called 'rich' . . .,"¹⁹ we do not feel that that need be a negative judgment. He computed the frequency of Hebrew roots from which the following table is drawn:

<u>Root</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
ש	250 times
ל	87 times
י	40 times
ה	40 times
ו	35 times

Moore claims that this is evidence of the author's paucity of skill and rigidity of style. He is overlooking an important point here. Esther, as a highly structured work, may intentionally contain such blatant repetition! We believe that this repetitiveness reinforces the highly formalized nature of Esther as well as serving to emphasize the chiastic underpinning of this book's themes and motifs. It is, in our judgment, a positive factor.²⁰

Further, just as we have shown how various structural motifs in Esther carry within themselves units of meaning, so, too, do individual words. While recognising that word-frequency lists are a tool of dubious value in higher

critical studies²¹, we find it remarkable that the base word appears FIFTY-TWO TIMES in Esther (occurring more often than ... or ...)! It certainly is not a common Biblical word: we find it only thirty-six other times in the Bible.²² This important word, then, in its different forms seems to be used intentionally in Esther; it reiterates the message that this book is intimately concerned with Jews. Just as the concepts of loyalty and obedience discussed above stress this point, so does this word. This again testifies to our author's skill and intentions.

Further, the author had little hesitation in using stock phrases in such a repetitive manner. Some of these phrases are:

<u>Phrase</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
	10 times
	5 times
	4 times
	3 times
	3 times

Far from being artificial, these words and phrases serve to give the book an internal rhythm, punctuated by subtle repetition and gently advancing movement.

3. Onomasticon

The use of words such as *shen* make the onomasticon presented us both more confusing and more important. Many attempts have been made to interpret the thirty-eight personal names given in Esther. Some researchers see the lists as Persian in origin²³, others find Akkadian antecedents.²⁴ While foreign names are not unknown in the Bible²⁵, there rarely is such a large concentration of such names within one book.

Many attempts have been made, in fact, to prove the historicity of Esther by analysis of its place and personal names. Some scholars point to the mention of a Mordechai among the returned exiles in Ezra 2:2 and Nehemiah 7:6 as a way of identifying the Mordechai of our story. This cannot, however, be reconciled with the chronology given us in Esther itself. Cyrus' decree of return was issued in 538 B.C.E. Even if we identify Ahasherus with Xerxes, there would not only be a minimum time lapse of fifty-two years, but the question of Mordechai's return (from Judah) to Persia would be even more perplexing. Further, there is little evidence from within the book to lend credence to an assertion that Ahasherus is Xerxes. Their characters do not match, nor do their actions correspond in any way.²⁶

But back to the onomasticon. Let us try to simplify the problem a bit. The plethora of names given in Esther

is, at best, confusing in the original language and downright baffling as we make our way through the many ancient manuscripts and translations. Yet the situation need not be viewed as being so contorted. We have a complicated list of names; perhaps with coded references to various enemies, copyists' errors, or purposeful additions.²⁷

Let us begin with the two lists of seven ministers in 1:10 and 1:14.²⁸

<u>Gehman's</u> <u>Translation</u>	<u>1:10</u>	<u>1:14</u>	<u>Gehman's</u> <u>Translation</u>
Eunuch			Ploughman
Double gift			Dweller
Bald Man			The Land
Gift of God			(Place name)
			Forgetful One
Smiter			
			Magian

Orthographically and phonetically, some of these names are obviously related. C.A. Moore claims, for instance, that and are versional divergencies of the same name. As such, they cast doubt on the total reliability of the transmission of these names. He assumes that there existed an authoritative text which was later bastardized.

This, Cross argues, is an anachronistic assumption:

Indeed, neither in Palestinian Greek witnesses nor in the citations of Jewish works composed in this era is there any evidence earlier than the time of Hillel that the recensional activities had begun which would ultimately establish an authoritative text.²⁹

The "mistakes" in spelling³⁰ which many scholars allege are actually, some argue, correct according to earlier usage and pronunciation. If, indeed, the Massoretic Text is based on Phoenician consonantal orthography, there was a tremendous time lapse between any text's first and final versions. Esther, being a late text, was therefore even more prone to confluents of pronunciation and spelling.³¹

Yet, this reasoning can be dangerous. It may lead us into a trap. It would be overly simplistic to conclude here that Esther is a late text, one (mis)handled by redactors for many years before achieving its current form. This is the traditional explanation.

We believe that the evidence is not so clearly decisive. Yes, Esther is a late text. Orthographic evidence is one element in a confirmation of this evaluation. But it is not clear that we indeed have an edited text. Just because recensional versions of texts began appearing during Hillel's time does not mean that all texts after that time underwent such a process.

The richness of language in Esther, the variety of linguistic traditions drawn upon and blurring of orthographic distinctions can also indicate that Esther was written in a milieu which favored such diversity.³² Further, we have already made the point that Esther is an intentionally structured literary work. It should not surprise us that a book about events at an international court would contain such a list of international names in international languages.

Let us now relieve at least some of the confusion posed by this text by proposing the following reductions:

- 1) Bigtan (2:21), who is also called Bigtana, is orthographically allied with Bigta (6:2), Abagta and Bizzeta (1:10). They all share a similar original meaning.
- 2) Zêtar (1:10) and Sêtar (1:14) fall into the category of orthographic variants.
- 3) Teres (2:2) - Tarsis (1:14)/Meres (1:14) - Medes (1:14) - Marsena (1:14) all seem to be variations on a central Semitic root (r-s-s?) with different vowels and affixations.

Furthermore, they may each be considered as local variants on two place names, Tarsis and Medea.

- 4) Carcas (1:10) and Carsena (1:14) are orthographically close enough to be considered dittographic material.³³ They are also both insignificant enough as characters in this book to be ignored.

There is another similarity among the names of Esther's major characters which bears investigation. This is the matter of theophoric names. The following has been proposed:^{34, 35}

Esther - Mashti - Ishtar (Babylonian)

Vashti - Mashti (Elamite)

Haman - Hamun (Elamite)

Mordechai - Marduk (Babylonian)

D. Conclusions

These explanations propose many possible conclusions. As to #1, we must ask why four names meaning, basically, the same thing, are present in these two verses. Some might argue that they represent four different people, just as it is possible to have a Susan and a Susie in one classroom. Our inclination is, however, not to be swayed by such argumentation. Taken with the evidence of repetitious similarity presented in points 2,3 and 4, we feel that there is an intentionality here on the part of the author.

The number seven is, obviously, an artificial one. Perhaps it harks back to the seven days of Genesis 1.³⁶ Nevertheless, what is of greatest importance to us is the fact that in the LXX there are not seven, but three, ministers mentioned in 1:14 and, in 1:16, a new name is introduced.³⁷ Further, the AT lists no names in 1:14 at all.³⁸ Thus, despite the originality of the lists, they were not treated with any degree of sacredness.³⁹ This would never happen to a text considered canonical.

So, what then is the meaning of these lists?⁴⁰ Following the theory of this book as an example of esoteric writing, we propose that:

- 1) Bigta and names of that ilk contain within them theophoric hints.
- 2) The place references are not coded in the traditional sense, for we are able to identify the locations of Persia, Susa and Medea. They do clue us in, however, to the author's intentions because they stand for locales important to the author and the author's time.
- 3) Since the name [redacted] means Magian, we wonder if this is not an important clue toward solving the riddle of when this book was written.
- 4) Speculating further, perhaps [redacted] was the author's name; or [redacted] and [redacted] descriptions of either the king or the author.

We do not claim these explanations to be definitive ones. Rather, they are both plausible and attractive and, moreover, begin to make sense of the text where none existed before.

1. Textual

With the presentation of this evidence, the question of its import is now at the fore. What does all this mean? We have discovered that the Book of Esther is a highly structured text, carefully crafted from the inside out. Its author built upon a chiasmic structure involving words, phrases and characters as well as motifs and themes. The names mentioned in the book are only confusing at first glance. With a close reading, it seems that the text may be treated as almost Dickensian in nature: if we can discover what the names mean and to whom they are referring, we will find clues toward solving the puzzle of this work's original setting and intent.

Thus, the first conclusion drawn from this evidence is that the Book of Esther, while perhaps being based on ancient legends or tales, is an original and unitary creation. It is original in this form. The precise sculpting of the book forbids us from considering the suggestion that our text is a redacted end product. Furthermore, Esther is a unitary creation. There are no structural or literary seams capable of being unstitched and separated from the main of

the story. This conclusion need not completely refute the work of such scholars as Bickermann, who posits Esther to be a double-plotted book, born of ingenious interweaving and editing. There very well may have been two distinct stories of Esther and Mordechai, but their combination was not for the purpose of performing an editor's job.

2. Date

This last assertion is validated by our considerations of the date of composition of Esther. This entire discussion is of a piece. The concern's of Esther's author as expressed in the motifs and themes chosen must serve as a clue to the author's intent in writing this book. The structural analysis gives an impression of authorial sophistication in a milieu of literacy and literary output. We believe that these evidences support a late date⁴¹ for Esther.

What they specifically indicate cannot yet be determined. What we shall now set out to do is to determine the date of composition for Esther. We have certain boundaries within which we are already working.⁴² We need, obviously, to narrow this down. To accomplish this, it is necessary to now examine the book on its own terms - is it what it claims to be? An historical account of an event in Jewish history? If this is so, our investigation is finished. We need only discover how long after the happenings described it was written. If it is not a true account of history, then

we must find out just what the book is describing and why it is not written as a straightforward recounting of history.⁴³

IV. Historicity

A. Historical Data

We have already begun our discussion of why we think that Esther is not an historical work⁴⁴ (see p. 16f.). While there exists "evidence for the author's familiarity with Persian history, customs and vocabulary,"⁴⁵ they do not establish the essential historicity of his entire story . . .⁴⁶ The book is patently non-historical. In fact, it was never meant to be taken as history. Let it be stated further, that this author believes that any attempt to "prove" the historicity of Esther is an exercise in futility. This will be discussed further when we investigate the nature of Greek histories and find their parallels in Hebrew literature. We can only begin to piece together all the clues.

1. Contradictions

A few problems immediately come to mind. Mordechai's genealogy does not correspond with the chronology of this story. Further, the historical question of Ahasuerus' identity is indecipherable.⁴⁷ Yet another glaring contradiction within the book itself is the fact that "Haman obtains an edict to destroy the Jews, because Mordechai the Jew will not do obeisance to him (3⁶), but Haman's friends and family are ignorant of his race (6¹³)."⁴⁸

Paton explicitly details more of these problems which make the book's self-claim of historicity suspect:

(7) The book contains a number of inconsistencies with itself. In 2⁵ Mordecai is one of the captives carried away with Jehoiachin in 596 B.C., but in 378² he becomes prime minister in the 12th year of Xerxes, 474 B.C., i.e., 122 years later, and apparently enjoys his office for a considerable time after this (102-3). In 32.4 41 Mordecai parades the fact that he is a Jew, but in 21⁰ he forbids Esther to make her kindred known. Esther successfully conceals the fact that she is a Jewess from the King, Haman, and everybody else (21⁰ 20 73f.), and yet Mordecai, who is well known to be a Jew, is her uncle and comes to the palace every day to inquire after her (211), and all the Jews in Susa fast for her before she ventures to go to the King (41⁶). Haman obtains an edict to destroy the Jews, because Mordecai the Jew will not do obeisance to him (3⁶), but Haman's friends and family are ignorant of Mordecai's race (61³). Xerxes delivers the Jews to destruction (31¹), yet heaps honours upon Mordecai (61^{0f.}). Xerxes authorizes the act of Haman (31¹), yet he is much surprised at the information Esther gives him of Haman's plot (76f.).

(8) The book contains a number of statements which cannot be proved to be untrue, but which are so intrinsically improbable that one has difficulty in believing that they are historical. Such are the gathering of nobles from all the provinces from India to Ethiopia for a feast of 180 days (11-3); Vashti's refusal to come at the King's command (11²); the council of princes to determine what should be done to Vashti (113-15); the decision that her conduct endangered the authority of husbands throughout the empire, and the decree sent out to all the provinces that wives must obey their husbands (116-22); the gathering of droves of fair maidens out of all the provinces (21-4); the 12 months' rubbing-down with perfumes required of each maiden before she was brought to the King (21²); the four years that Esther had to wait before her turn came (21⁶); Haman a descendant of Agag, King of the Amalekites, the earliest enemies of Israel (Ex. 17⁰ Nu. 24⁷ I S. 15⁸); and Mordecai a descendant of Saul who overthrew Agag (31 25);

the failure to reward Mordecai when he discovers the plot, but the writing of his deed in the royal annals (2²³); the long toleration of Mordecai by Haman (3⁶); the 10,000 talents offered the King by Haman for the destruction of the Jews, based apparently upon a calculation of a mina each for the 600,000 males of Nu. 26⁵¹ (3⁹, cf. 1 - nu 2 a.1.); the edict for the universal destruction of the Jews and the promulgation of it a year in advance (3⁸⁻¹⁵); the sorrow of the city of Susa over the edict (3¹⁵); Esther's failure to ask for the life of her people when the King is favourable toward her (5⁴), and again at the banquet (5⁷); the gallows 83 feet high (5¹⁴); the King's reading in the chronicles at night (6¹); Haman's coming at night to ask that Mordecai may be hanged (6⁴); Haman's failure to plead ignorance of Esther's race (7⁶); the way in which the King is brought to condemn him (7⁸); the edict allowing the Jews to kill the Persians and take their property (8¹¹); and the non-resistance of the Persians (9^{2f.}); the second day of slaughter (9^{13f.}).

The account of the origin of Purim given by this book is also historically improbable. It represents this feast as instituted by Esther and Mordecai and as adopted by the Jews in commemoration of their deliverance from the destruction planned by Haman; but Purim is not a Heb. word, and it is not natural that a Jewish national commemoration should be called by a foreign name. In 3⁷ 9²⁶ it is said that the feast is so called because "Haman cast pur, that is, the lot"; but it is unlikely that this trivial circumstance of the way in which Haman determined the day of destruction should give its name to the day of deliverance. The author also does not explain why the plural Purim is used. Moreover, there is no Pers. word pur with the meaning 'lot.' If Purim had originated in the time of Xerxes, as Est. represents, and had been enjoined upon all the Jews in all provinces of the empire (9²⁰), and had been accepted by the Jews for themselves and their posterity (9²⁷), there is no reason why it should not have been included in the Priestly Code as promulgated by Ezra. That code contains other late institutions, such as the Day of Atonement and Feast of Trumpets, that are unknown to the early codes. The oft-repeated argument, that the existence of the feast of Purim is a witness to the historical character of the Book of

Est., since institutions do not come into existence without a reason, has no value. Purim, of course, must have had an origin, but it is not necessary that it should have been the origin recorded by Est. Religious tales are often a secondary invention designed to explain already existing religious institutions.⁴⁹

These objections are, certainly, numerous. They do not, however, mean that Esther is fantasy and, as such, useless for the purpose of discovering historical verities.⁵⁰ Esther is of a particular genre of literature and can only be appreciated fully when analyzed as such.

2. Decoding places, names, and events

The vast majority of scholars⁵¹ believe that Esther is not an accurate historical account. With this, we have no quarrel. Nor do we disagree with the validity of their quest to connect the story with actual historical events. The problem arises with the identifications offered by these authors.

The "standard" theory put forth is that Ahasherus is supposed to represent Xerxes, ruling in the early fifth century B.C.E. Yet, this does not carry through. For instance, there

are certain statements in Esther which seem to contradict extrabiblical sources whose basic accuracy in the matter is not suspect. Some of these discrepancies or "contradictions" are quite minor, such as the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces in the empire mentioned in 1:1, in contrast to Herodotus, who said there were twenty satrapies; Esther's arrival at the court of Susa in 480 B.C. (1:16), a time when,

according to Herodotus, Xerxes would still have been away fighting in Greece; and Mordecai as part of Nebuchadnezzar's deportation of 597 B.C. (ii 6), which would make him, and especially Esther, far too old to have accomplished everything attributed to them. Other contradictions are of a much more serious nature: according to ii 16 and iii 7, Esther was queen between the seventh and twelfth years of Xerxes' reign, but according to Herodotus, Amestris was queen then; moreover, again according to Herodotus (III. 84), Persian queens had to come from one of seven noble Persian families, a custom which would have automatically ruled out an insignificant Jewess.⁵²

Thus, while implicitly adapting a theory, Moore rejects its very viability.

A new identification system is obviously needed.

We cannot rest on facile theories which do not explain all facets of this story. Names, places and events must be analyzed thoroughly. When this task is done, we propose that we shall then be able to identify both the context and pretext of this book.

V. Literary Antecedents and Parallels - Form Criticism
A. Proposed plan of action

Above, we have used the tools of structural criticism. Such devices as chiasmus, repetition, and parallelism have been examined in their relationship to the structure of the Book of Esther. Having analyzed the structure and contents of Esther, we are ready to describe the genre of literature to which it belongs. According to Gene M. Tucker,⁵³ this is the second in four steps of form analysis and criticism.

From there, we shall move to define this book's setting (C) and then summarize and describe what we believe to have been its author's original purpose in writing this book. We shall also try to discover its meaning to the contemporary audience (D).

We will refer to our exploration of motifs, the basic elements of content, in describing and defining the specific genres of literature. For proper categorization of Esther, we will have to demonstrate that there exists "an ordering, a specific patterning of motifs which is shared by [Esther and] several [other] works."⁵⁴

What must be remembered is that literary categories are only functional insofar as their definitions are precise. One accepted definition of a narrative is a story in verse form.⁵⁵ "The term novella [further] refers to a short prose narrative."⁵⁶ Using both syntactic and stylistic criteria we can now define the literary category into which Esther fits.

B. Homer and the Classic Prose Narrative

Let us begin inductively. The locus classicus for prose narratives, when discussing both novels and novellas, of the ancient world is Homer.⁵⁷ Erich Auerbach describes the classic narrative and makes three points relevant to our study:⁵⁸

1. The prose narrative arose from "a need for and

externalization of phenomena in terms perceptible to the senses."⁵⁹

1A. Particularly true of later Biblical works is this feature of Homeric narrative: "To represent phenomena in a fully externalized form, useable and palpable in all their parts, and completely fixed in their spatial and temporal relations."⁶⁰

2. In antiquity, direct discourse served "to manifest, to externalize thoughts . . ."⁶¹

3. In the Homeric narrative, the spatial placement of people and events "prevent the reader from concentrating exclusively in a present crisis; even when the most terrible things are occurring, they prevent the establishment of an overwhelming suspense."⁶²

C. History and Historical Writing in the Greek World

Another major influence on ancient narrative also originated in the Greek world. With the increasing prominence of Greek civilization, there arose a desire for knowledge of its roots. Thus, the study of history arose as an academic discipline. The first narrative accounts of history were etiological, ethno- and geographic: "designed to perpetuate a tradition."⁶³

If we were to subject Greek histories to the rigors of modern historiographic criticism (see appendix #1), we would be appalled at the results. As judged by contemporary

standards, they make for very poor history. Histories were often blatantly polemical in nature,⁶⁴ sometimes outright forgeries,⁶⁵ and "facts" were often little more than rumors.⁶⁶

This does not mean, however, that Greek histories are worthless. On the contrary! Not only are they the first accounts of ancient happenings we possess in written form, they are also the forerunners of the historical narrative form which is, of course, of vital interest to any student of Bible. Without the "freedom" of Ctesias, Herodotus, Xenophon and others, history may never have evolved from legend into narrative form: "In openly manipulating the facts of history to serve his purpose, Xenophon helped to create the historical novel."⁶⁷

D. Summary #1

Thus we can see that there are two strands of the classic prose narrative germane to our study. They are 1) its form and 2) its interest in history. The Book of Esther is, we feel, a prose narrative which shares with the Homeric narrative many of the characteristics described above. Leaving aside point #1 for later discussion, we feel that the above outline also categorizes our narrative.

In form, there is the obvious reliance in Esther on direct discourse as a method of advancing the story. Little is internalized by our characters. Mordechai speaks

and acts; he does not ponder his course of action. The same is true for all the characters in Esther. Also to be remembered is the highly structured form of this book which shows the crafting and detail common of Homeric and other Greek works of antiquity. As for Esther in comparison to contemporaneous history writings, this shall be discussed *infra*.

E. Folk/hero tales

First of all, we need to further define the form of our material. "Prose narrative" is too indefinite a phrase to have any more than superficial meaning. Folk/hero tales are a subcategory of prose narratives. "Originally a brief, isolated story that describes a particular event,"⁶⁸ the folk tale, as it developed, characteristically had "a realistic conception of man and his acts, presenting living human beings in situations possessing a human and moral significance, and creating as a product of all this, a vision of human life."⁶⁹

These tales were immensely popular in the ancient world. Part of that popularity is attributable to the hero's impulse to action and absence of idealization in character portrayals. Achilles and Oedipus, perhaps the greatest of all Greek heroes, had their (fatal) flaws along with the rest of us.

1. Biblical use

Biblically, this form became a vehicle of expression

for the Jewish national spirit. From post-exilic times, this spirit was conceived of as emanating from the common historical experience of the Jewish people. Its expression was through recitation of historical landmarks and shared experiences. Thus it is natural that hero tales and anecdotes not only make up much of Biblical literature but also serve as the dominant mode form for historical writing in the Bible. From Greek exemplars, we can see how Biblical history became novelistic and anecdotal in style and form.

Not surprisingly, a typecast Biblical hero emerged from such writing. This hero's personality was, paradigmatically, revealed through action, not description. These heroes were tremendously human in their actions and motives, but, like its Greek exemplars, Biblical literature also retained its religious flavor. This does not mean that Biblical heroes are necessarily vocally pious people. That would not be in keeping with the prototypical folk hero. Yet, the religious spirit is pervasive. As especially manifest in the Joseph and Esther stories, "the religious spirit emerges precisely because the stories are . . . human in the extreme."^{70,71} God becomes the hidden hero and it is through action, more than devotion, that religious belief is affirmed.

The growth of this typology continued throughout the Biblical period. It was used extensively in the specialized genre of Biblical narrative known as wisdom literature.

We especially see the characteristic wise man as a prototype. In later Biblical writing, he becomes the chief protagonist of many Biblical tales and a hero figure for Jews.⁷²

Wisdom is defined by form as well as content. Surrounding this wise man/hero, a number of conventions arose. This man was often adopted, or himself adopts another person.⁷³ He is frequently found at a royal court.⁷⁴ And this hero is often coupled with an opposing number in the literature.⁷⁵ This opposite is used, in many cases, to clearly contrast good and bad behaviors.⁷⁶ Further, motifs are often expressed through a coupled arrangement of characters and verses.⁷⁷

In a further description of form, it is to be noted that wisdom is not divine speech. It's stance is anthropocentric for its goal is to make sense of the course of human events. As such, it is didactic both in tone and intent. Hayes claims that scribal wisdom aimed to provide "education for everyone, a stance that is dogmatico-religious . . . using a dialogico-admonitory method."⁷⁸

Obviously, Esther's extreme anthropocentrism and typological characters place it in this category of literature. Further, other elements present in Esther firmly and positively associate it with wisdom literature. We see the clear contrast between good and evil, the characteristic use of a witless dupe as a foil (Ahasuerus), the righteous wise man (Mordechai), and the conniving schemer (Haman). Also common in wisdom literature is the somewhat "flat"

picture of our heroine. From examples of Greek romances, we can understand the nondelineation of Esther's character and thoughts in this book as typical. What does stand out is the eroticism of the royal court which, at once, threatens and attracts our heroine. This element is also present in the Daniel, Joseph, Ahikar, Deborah and Judith stories.

In fact, what we are really presented with in Esther is a twist on the "wise courtier" motif basic to all such historicized wisdom and folktale narratives. The twist comes here with the fact that both Esther and Mordechai serve that role in this book.⁷⁹ Regardless of the implications of such a conflation of characters (discussed *passim*), it is obvious that the wise courtier in this book follows the basic pattern of all wise courtiers in Biblical literature.⁸⁰ First, there is the event of early notice which is followed by a fall into obscurity. Then, there is a period of elaborate preparation and training; personal endangerment; dealing against "irrevocable" laws; feasting; and, finally, triumph accompanied by lasting elevation. Niditch and Doran summarize thusly:

Event does follow event with a preconditioned regularity. The existence of a problem necessarily leads to a search for solver; the search leads to the person of lower status and he will necessarily be the only one who has a solution. There is a direct movement from the problem to solution of a problem, a true unity of plot.⁸¹

VI. Summary

It is thus apparent that Esther is an historicized wisdom⁸² folktale in narrative form. This is an important first step in the process of dating the date of composition of Esther. It is only a first step because this type of classification is insufficient in and of itself. It cannot help us uncover the reasons why Esther was written in the first place. Its form is a reflection of the contemporary literary milieu and allows us, through identification, to place the book within a rough time framework. Yet, it is the content - what is expressed behind and through the form - which will allow us to determine the reasons and time of Esther's composition.

A. Content

In our investigation of content, we might ask ourselves why this book is so filled with stock figures such as those portrayed by Mordechai, Esther, Haman and Ahasherus. In Rabbinic literature, the archetypal Greek is referred to as "הַיִּשְׁמְרִי" (the Greek). In the New Testament, "Pharisees" is a code word for wickedness and corruption. The names had become symbols to contemporary readers. We propose that this situation exists, too, in Esther.

B. Covert Writing

J.H. Hayes asserts, "this type of [novelistic] history writing . . . always derives from an awakened political

consciousness."⁸³ If he is correct, then we must ask what type of situation in which "an awakened political consciousness" was present would produce a literature using stock figures. It seems obvious that the environment in which such writing would occur was perceived to be a threatening one. This is due to the fact that stock figures, representing other than who they purport to represent, are a technique used in covert writing. This type of writing "generally reflects an environment of persecution and perhaps even of political martyrdom."⁸⁴

Such an environment "gives rise to a peculiar technique and therewith a peculiar type of literature, in which the truth about all crucial things is presented exclusively between the lines."⁸⁵ Such purely esoteric writing is rare. Any literature that is totally unintelligible to the majority of its readers would never survive. Exoteric literature, however, is common. Use of devices such as code words, paradigmatic figures, literary allusions and even grammatic plays allow an exoteric book to have both "a popular teaching of an edifying character, which is in the foreground; and a philosophic teaching concerning the most important subject, which is indicated only between the lines."⁸⁶ Such a situation exists in Esther. We shall attempt to prove this as we turn now to a discussion of the message of this book.

1. Intent/Message

We have seen that Esther is a non-historical book, with the original story having gone through numerous revisions and expansions. In it, feasting seems to be a normal part of court life. That court was populated with foreigners and presided over by a weak monarch who relied on these foreigners for advice. He not only granted them citizenship rights, he appointed them to positions of high and important status (Haman and Mordechai were both non-Persians).

The picture painted of the Jewish community is one in which the Jews' loyalty to their people is more important than their ritual observance. This may have been true for all the peoples in Ahasherus' domain. We may conclude thusly because we see no one religious system dominating the others. This indicates an environment of both toleration and a degree of assimilation.⁸⁷

Religion itself seems to have been a politically useful tool, if nothing else. The conversion of the peoples at the end of Esther, as well as the readiness of the general population to pay Haman obeisance evidence this conclusion and speak strongly for an atmosphere in which national loyalty superceded religious piety. Further, religious systems were not, seemingly, rigidly dogmatic. Even the Jewish community, which one imagines to have been more

dogmatic than other, pagan, religions, was not so fixed as to exclude the introduction and justification of a new holy day.

What can be made of all this? The book parodies a weak and foppish king. It seems comedic that Ahasherus first allows the casting of lots to determine royal policy and then permits that decree to be overturned in a flash. And, if this is not enough, Ahasherus then turns around yet again and sanctions a new Jewish festival!

Feasts-with much drinking - are a central mode of enjoyment and a place of political dealings. (This is especially true of Ahasherus' feast in honor of Esther and Esther's feast during which Haman falls from power.) The court is filled with intrigues and power struggles; perhaps motivated by competing religio-national claims.

Even using a simplified list of names, it appears to have been a very cosmopolitan court. The abundance of names may also reflect a time during which courtiers had two names: one official and one personal.⁸⁸

VII. What was the author's motivation for writing this book?

A. Author's environment and evidence for it

Literacy was, in Hellenistic times, a mass phenomenon. Surely, illiteracy was common, but literacy seems to, at least, have been the rule among city dwellers. One of the ways "to penetrate the citizen-class . . . was to obtain

an education in the gymnasium." ⁸⁹ This was true for Jews as well as for pagans. Jewish communal life, especially in the Diaspora, was modelled on Hellenistic institutions which necessitated literate bureaucrats and patrons in order to function. These facts, while not negating the oral traditions underlying the tale of Esther, allows us to state that this book was finally composed when there existed a literate public to receive it. Thus, one of the concerns of the author had to have been conveying his message.

There are those who postulate that the original language of Esther was Aramaic, ⁹⁰ yet their evidence is scanty. Semetic word order in the Greek translations does not rule out Hebrew as the original language. The fact that "the Greek versions supply and fill in notable lacks in the narrative" ⁹¹ does not mean that the longer version is older. It might satisfy our desires for a more "complete" text, but such assumptions do not square with the facts.

Rather, the Hebrew of our Massoretic Text is so highly stylized, the foreign words so carefully used and the narrative so closely adhering to its own, internal logic, that we cannot see any other language than Hebrew to be the original one. Further, if our author were concerned (as we believe the case to be) with reaching Jewish readers, the use of Hebrew lent a seal of authenticity to this story which, on face value, was an accurate account of events.

To draw conclusions from this distillation of Esther's plot, we need realize one thing: this book, as with all literary works, necessarily reflects its author's concerns and environment. We do not know, however, the exact degree of truth this statement carries with reference to this work. We can begin to approximate this. As concerns the author's environment, we agree with Bickermann that

A Hebrew-reading Jew of Greek culture found everything he could desire in the Book of Esther. Here the people whom God saved were no longer the uncouth patriarchs and the wild prophets but men of polite society who could have held office at the Hellenistic court. The king who, as a rabbi later said, sacrificed his (first) wife to a friend and then his friend to his (second) wife, who could grant any request (5:3), and who would refuse money offered him (3:11) looked like a double of a Seleucid, a Ptolemy, or a Parthian ruler. The reader was happy to find in a Hebrew book motifs familiar from the Greek school.⁹²

Also informative is the fact that this tale of comfort was an immensely popular one. It is as if Esther "proves" that Greek and Hebraic cultures are compatible, not only in the form but in the content as well. Greek Jews longing to hear this message were surely heartened by Esther. In this, we agree with Bickermann. Yet, another point is being missed here. Undoubtedly, the author's environment was one in which this exoteric teaching would be well received. But there is also an esoteric meaning to Esther which is conveyed between the lines, behind the message of comfort.

Finally, we believe that this message - if we can properly decipher the text - will reveal the author's ultimate concerns to us.

B. Author's Concerns

1. evidence - Roman World
2. reason for writing - date of composition

This brings us to a fascinating dichotomy. Esther could be, and evidently was, enjoyed as popular literature. As shown above, it has all the elements of popular tales: heroes, kings, courts, intrigues, battles and an edifying conclusion.⁹³ Yet, it is also an esoteric text. For a Hellenized Jew, Esther reflected a popular strain of philosophy in Jewish garb. The fact that there is no mention of deity in the book and no immediate connection between God and this world could be seen, by one so inclined, as a point of equality between Judaic and Hellenic thought.⁹⁴ In fact, reflections of current philosophical teachings, coupled with its covert message would allow for a wide cross section of Jewry to be its reading audience. If this be the case, Esther's author had succeeded in presenting his concerns to the best audience possible.

Such facts force the question of dating to the fore. From our discussions above, we can begin to set the limits of possible compositional dates:

1. There was a literate and educated reading public.
2. The form of this book implies an author versed in contemporary culture.
3. Its content, vocabulary, and specific mode of

literary expression necessitates the author to have had "excellent familiarity with Persian law, custom, and language in the Achaemenid period."⁹⁵

4. This type of literature was most likely produced in, or as a result of, an environment of widespread political awareness and popular involvement.

5. The book describes a far-ranging and well-established Jewish diaspora.

6. Jews serving foreign rulers in important positions of power seems not to have been an unusual occurrence. At least, it is not commented on as being out of the ordinary.

7. The royal court was a cosmopolitan one.

8. Judaism was neither a cult nor land centered religion.

9. Conversions were common.

10. The Book of Esther justifies the holiday observance of Purim. With the parallels of Yom Mordechai, Nicanor's Day and the Babylonian Akitu festival, it seems clear that Purim was being celebrated - probably outside the Temple - before Esther was finally written. Yet, the holiday was probably not sanctioned until after the book's canonicity was affirmed.⁹⁶ As Talmon shows, there was "an initial independence of Purim from the Esther story."⁹⁷ This helps us in dating the Book of Esther. Further, we must assume that the intentional mention and justification of Purim

are some indications of the author's concerns and may well have been one of many motivating forces behind the composition of this book.⁹⁸

11. That our author was comfortable in the Greek and Jewish worlds is obvious. This world shows how "Scripture spurred certain Jews to Grecian literary compositions whose content and form derived from Scripture."⁹⁹

As all this evidence is collated, we may tentatively assign a date to the composition of Esther between the years 100 B.C.E. and 60 C.E. These are only the outer limits. In the most general way, this begins to account for the imperial power struggles¹⁰⁰ of the time and the book's apparent lack of concern over danger in, and the fate of, Palestine itself. Furthermore, this era is the best one in which to place Esther if we are to understand this book's (missing) status at Qumran and in other (contemporary and later) lists of canon.¹⁰¹

Our intent is, now, to pinpoint further the time of composition. Let us, then, return to another matter. If we could "decode" Esther - that is, discover what was hidden behind its exoteric teaching - we shall be better able to date its composition.

We have already been confronted by evidence which raises questions of the inclusion in this story of:

1. women saviors (chs. 5, 6ff)
2. minutae of court life (ch. 1f.)
3. governmental control (chs. 2, 6, passim)
4. mass revolts (9:1ff.)
5. the existence of a free diasporic Jewry (ch. 9)
6. foreigners in positions of high governmental authority (3:1ff., 8:7ff.)
7. The institution of new holidays in the Jewish calendar (9:20ff.) and
8. Mass conversion to Judaism (8:17).

As Willis points out,

Biblical authors . . . did not preserve historical data simply in the interest of relating historical facts, but in order to cast certain (well-known?) historical events in a particular theological light. Historical event and theological interpretation go hand in hand in the Bible.¹⁰²

But, before our investigation of the theological import and message of Esther, we must uncover the actual historic situation described.

We believe that this can best be done with an investigation into the reign of Herod the Great (40 B.C.E. - 4 B.C.E.). We shall do this by paralleling his career with events described in Esther. Only here, we claim, can all the above phenomena be adequately accounted for.¹⁰³

HEROD'S REIGN

- Jewish revolt against Aristobulus (57/6 B.C.E.) and Parthians (55, 53 B.C.E. et al)
- Herod appointed King
- Three year delay in his reaching Jerusalem
- Herod marries granddaughter of the High Priest, John Hyrcanus, Mariamme
- Banquet for Herod given by Antonius given upon Herod's arrival in Jerusalem (37 B.C.E.)
- Herod surrounds himself with Greek advisors¹⁰⁴
- Herod engaged in magnificent building enterprises - including cities and palaces
- Has an ethnically varied, cosmopolitan court
- Character emerges
By nature he was wild, passionate, hard and unyielding. Finer feelings and tenderness was foreign to him . . . Hard and relentless towards all those in his power, he was nevertheless meek and pliable towards his superiors.¹⁰⁵
- Executed Mariamme I
- Constantly fought domestic problems, especially after executing Mariamme
- Famine in 25 B.C.E. from Nisan to Nisan
- "imposed a political surveillance which made Judea a police state"¹⁰⁶
- Kept a palace harem

ESTHER

- 9:1ff
- 1:1
- 1:3
- 1:9
- 1:3ff
- 1:10, 1:14, 1:21
- 1:6-7
- 1:22, 2:5
- 1:17-22, 2:21-3
- 1:19
- 3:5ff (disobedience of subjects)
- 3:7 (perhaps)
- 2:21-3, 3:8-15
- 2:6ff

HEROD'S REIGN

- Mariamme II "praised for her great beauty" 107
- Elevated Mariamme's father, Simon b. Boethus, to the position of High Priest
- 20/19 B.C.E. - remits 1/3 of taxes
- 5 B.C.E. - Herod learns of Antipater's conspiracy against him and has Antipater put in irons
- 4 B.C.E. - Antipater executed and Herod changes his will, naming Archelaus as successor
- "It should be mentioned that Herod applied his influence with his Roman masters to securing Jews in the Diaspora against oppression and impairment of their rights on the part of the non-Jewish world." 108

ESTHER

2:7 (see previous comment on Esther and Vashti's names)

6:10-end

2:18

7:6ff

8:2

8:3ff

Such resemblances and agreements of fact are astonishing. They are not, however, accidental. It is clear that Esther was written, in true hellenistic form, as a history of the Herodian age. A brief recall of the climate of that era as regards political freedom shows the clear need for the esoteric methodology used by the author.

To our knowledge, this theory has never been proposed before nor the obvious facts collected and analyzed in this manner. But, it is not the end of the matter. We have yet to answer the question of why, or when, Esther was written. As stated above, such literature is the product of heightened political (and historical) consciousness. Esther seems especially to have been written with such care and detailed encoding that we must see that it was so written in response to a specifically perceived need. We must discover the motivating factors behind its composition in order to determine the date of composition.

First of all, we are convinced that Esther was not written during the Herodian age itself. Obviously, this is so because the book described events up to the very end of that era. But moreover, there are evidences, traces if you will, of the author's contemporary milieu in this book which are not accounted for in the preceding table. Theories of historiography point to the truth that no work arises in a vacuum.¹⁰⁹ That is to say that no

literature can ever be completely free of the environment in which it was produced. While the degree of influence will vary from work to work, it is always present. We believe that these "traces" in Esther positively date this book to the time of Agrippa I.

Gaius Caligula reigned as emperor in Rome from March 16, 37 to January 24, 41. While he was in power, Herod Agrippa (called Herod in the New Testament Gospels) ruled in Palestine. Caligula succeeded his uncle, Claudius, who was well liked by his subjects. Claudius had pursued popular programs and attempted to stabilize the oft-warring factions in his vast empire (2:21, 3:5ff, Ch. 9 passim). Upon his ascension, Caligula was perceived as being willing to follow in his uncle's footsteps. This hope proved illusory.

When he claimed to be a god,¹¹⁰ on equal footing with Zeus, he ordered statues of himself erected in temple and so to be worshipped throughout his realm. So heinous was this to the Jews that no one less than Philo journeyed to Rome to plead their case to Caligula. Finally, it was the popular Agrippa¹¹¹ who succeeded, by also going to Rome, in averting erection of Gaius' statue in the Jerusalem temple. This happened in the early autumn of 40 C.E. Upon his return, Agrippa relieved the people of nearly one-fourth of their tax burden.¹¹²

What is of primary importance to keep in mind, however, is that Esther was written after Herod's reign. Only then could it have been safe to do so.¹¹³ The atmosphere of political repression had eased a bit. This analysis relieves two incipient problems. It explains Haman's behavior (ch. 3) and Ahasherus' tax abatements in 2:18 in that it gives each a proper historical context and antecedents. Further, we see a contextual parity between the Herodian persecutions and the near repeat in Agrippa's time. It is clear, now, that the proximate cause of the composition of the Book of Esther was the evocation of fear caused by Caligula's threats. The old wound had barely healed and the opportunity to forestall the enemy was present once again. The fear of repeated persecution forced the Jewish leadership into action. Esther is, thus, a propaganda tract written to urge resistance.¹¹⁴

C. Defense of proposed dating

Gordis believes that the author was a Jew, living in the Eastern diaspora who used his great literary skill to mimic the style of an official court chronicler.¹¹⁵ Further, he accounts for the constant use of the third person by asserting that the author had need to hide his Jewish identity, so wrote as a non-Jew.¹¹⁶ As this agrees with our theory of such a literature arising from persecution, we see value in this assertion. Yet, Gordis disclaims any theologic import in this work.

We do not agree. As has been stated, there is a vividly pronounced theologic viewpoint here. It is so evident that we cannot but conclude that our author also had a religious axe to grind. This "axe" contained in the response this book is opposed to both Caligula and, over the long view, to Hellenism. It is peculiarly Pharisaic in its point.

It is a unique mixture of politics and piety we are presented with in Esther. Obviously, the political interests stand to the fore. Yet, the specific form of wisdom literature this book embodies betrays a deeply religious bent. It is a non-national ideology which permeates this work. Neither Temple nor land are mentioned in Esther.¹¹⁷ Nor is God explicitly referred to.

These facts will lead many to exclaim that they stand as direct refutations of our assertion of Pharasaic authorship. Let us not confuse post 70 C.E. Rabbinic Judaism with pre-destruction Pharisaism.¹¹⁸ The main concern of pre 70 C.E. Pharisaism seems to have been geared toward political influence in Palestine in order to promulgate a specific religious program. The use of historic, theologic or religious motifs had only one purpose, as Ellis Rivkin has so astutely pointed out:

The Pharisees thus had no interest in history, even when they used historical personages and events. The critical concern was salvation . . . not the land and the cult, since salvation was

an individual concern, attainable through the internalized Law, one did not need the land of Israel at all!¹¹⁹

Pharisaism is also reflected in the style of this book. Both in structure and thought content, Pharisaism was, as Neusner and Smith demonstrate, part of "a common, international cultural 'style' known as Hellenism."¹²⁰ This book represents a Jewish response to Hellenism. It does not negate Hellenism. Rather, it encompasses it. Such doctrines of philosophical Hellenism as could be compatible with Judaism have been incorporated. The absence of God, prayer, cult or Land is necessarily original.¹²¹ If M.E. Andrew is correct in seeing a deliberate parallel to Exodus 1-12¹²² in Esther, then the detheologization of that story is all the more understandable.

Further, we know of the strife among the various religious sects which existed in first century (C.E.) Palestine. A propagandistic work such as this should not surprise us. The lack of theophoric specificity, too, may have been propagandistic. For, counter to the over-anthropomorphization of deity current among some Jewish sectarians, Pharisees came to the point of employing only circumlocutions when talking of God. Farmer even wonders if Mordechai is not a character mirroring extreme Pharisaism as embodied in the teachings of the "Fourth Philosophy." Mordechai, it will be remembered, "refused to . . . call any man lord."¹²³

Written between 40-45 C.E., during what Schürer sees as the "golden days again for Pharisaism, a revival of the age of Alexandra . . .,"¹²⁴ we know that literature was then a powerful tool of propaganda. This book was used by Jews to fight antisemitism¹²⁵ and to stir their own people to action and hope.¹²⁶ Zimmerman sums up well:

The Jewish writer composed this historical novel from the vantage point of what was important to him. He stressed: 1) The deliverance of Jews from annihilation. 2) How this was accomplished by Esther and Mordechai. 3) How Purim was established as a celebration of this event.¹²⁷

A final note on this point: Berg outrightly asserts that the purpose of Esther was the justification of Purim.¹²⁸ So controversial was the nature of this feast among the theological leadership of the time that Bowman claims¹²⁹ it had to be left unnamed in John 5:1. This author cannot accept such simplistic claims.

The concerns and fears of the Jewish world were manifold during the "intertestamental period." The problems of diaspora and governance have been alluded to. There were also sectarian threats, assimilationist pressures and the lessening of cultic importance among the people as challenges to be faced. Esther is the product of a complex and very alive society. Surely, it provides Purim with its raison d'être. But it also provided a diaspora Jewish community with positive Jewish role models and a way in which

to defuse the present crisis. This agenda seems to us to be the more important of the two and was probably so to the author of Esther as well.

Since Caligula's persecution never did materialize, the Book of Esther seems, in a way, to have accomplished its purpose.

Secondly, the ancient Jewish world was a fragmented one. Our judgment of this situation is irrelevant. However, contemporary Pharisees saw it as dangerous. Thus, Esther takes on import as a plea for unity and concerted action - a program of resistance propounded by a party fearing extermination.

ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

¹In this presentation, I rely heavily on Sandra Beth Berg's doctoral dissertation, The Book of Esther: Motifs, Themes and Structure, SBL Dissertation Series no. 44 (Ann Arbor: Scholars' Press, 1979).

²By placing this incident in square brackets, we do not intend to engage in form criticism here. We are merely attempting to make logical order out of the events in Esther.

³Berg, Esther, p. 108.

⁴Such impressions of parallelism are buttressed further by the repetition of key words such as honor (2:1, 7:10) within the chiasmic subsection.

⁵In literary criticism, and for our purposes, a theme is a component of a motif. A motif is a unit of didactic import within a written work. Further, a motif "contributes also to the dynamism of the stories and plays an important role in the organizational arrangement of the entire cycle." (John G. Gammie, "Theological Interpretation By Way of Literary and Tradition Analysis: Genesis 25 - 36," in Martin J. Buss, ed., Encounter with the Text: Form and History in the Hebrew Bible [Philadelphia: Fortress Press and Missoula, MT: Scholars' Press, 1979], p. 120 is quoted here.) A motif will underscore a character's actions and motivations while a theme may only be a component among others which all contribute toward a better understanding of the dominant motifs.

⁶By inviolability and reversal, we refer to its connection with divinity. Ancient, as well as Hellenistic, monarchs often had power and/or prestige equal to that of the gods. In the Greek and Roman worlds, etiological birth legends arose to explain this connection. With this ascription came the doctrine of royal infallibility. What is presented to us in Esther makes a mockery of this. For the origins of this connection in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, see Henri Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948).

⁷From Mesopotamian times, personalized cylinder seals were used as imprimaturs of legality. As they developed, these seals became dynastic and individual signet rings evolved which served in lieu of an official signature. Thus, in Esther, it is clear that whoever possessed Ahasherus' ring held the equivalent of his authority. For further clarification, see H. Frankfort, Cylinder Seals (London: MacMillan and Co., 1939).

⁹No one knows why Mordechai refused to bow down to Haman. His religion is assumed to be the reason. Yet, there is nothing in Jewish teaching which forbids kneeling before a ruler. Hence, in their comments to Esther 3:2, Rashi claims that Haman, like Antiochus IV Epiphanes in a later time, deified himself. Ibn Ezra asserts that Haman had idolatrous images sewn into his clothing and stamped on his forehead. In either case, it is clear that they believed Mordechai refused to kneel before Haman in an effort to avoid transgressing the prohibition in Judaism against idol worship. Bickermann suggests, "For Mordechai to pay this respect to Haman would be to 'lose face' and acknowledge the new rank of his rival." In Elias Bickermann, Four Strange Books of The Bible: Jonah/Daniel/Kohleth/Esther (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), p. 180.

¹⁰Gan, "Megillat Ester . . .," p. 144.

¹¹What must be stressed is that the absence of God does not make this a non-religious work. Ibn Ezra and Rashi, in their comments (see especially 2:5-3:5), stress that the hand of Divine Providence is clearly evident throughout this book. They cite the fact that Mordechai was serving the king prior to Esther's accession as evidence of this. The fact that Esther was taken to Ahasuerus in the tenth month is also seen as Providential by Ibn Ezra, for he notes that God ordained it so because it was a cold time, and Esther could thus be all the more beloved.

¹²This absence of God has, however, bothered many scholars who fix on it as proof of a lack of theology in Esther. Yet, as Nickelsburg has proven, there is a "tendency . . . [in later Jewish literature toward] the flattening, or complete expunging, of the specific theological functions of certain elements in the tradition." (George W.E. Nickelsburg, Jr., Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism, Harvard Theological Studies XXVI [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972], p. 174.) Esther is, in this respect, more conservative than later, pseudepigraphic works in which one is hard pressed to find any theologic connection to earlier Jewish works. Also, we shall forthwith demonstrate that the lack of specific mention of God does not mean that there is no theological underpinning of this book.

¹³Berg, Esther, p. 62.

¹⁴Abraham D. Cohen, "Hu Ha-Goral: The Religious Significance of Esther," in Carey A. Moore, ed., Studies in the Book of Esther (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1982), p. 124.

¹⁵For a complete discussion of Deuteronomic theology, see E.W. Nicholson, Deuteronomy & Tradition, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967). What concerns us here is that part of this theology which talks of reward and punishment. The Biblical debate falls on both sides of the question of when is reward given and punishment meted out? Deuteronomic sources in Tanach and other prophets like Habakkuk consistently take the position that the wicked are punished in this life, not in the world to come. This is consistent with the position seemingly held up in Esther. For further discussion, see, *infra*, p. 4, 143ff.

For a fuller explanation and investigation of the Deuteronomic History Theory, please refer to Judges, Samuel and Kings; then to the analysis presented in Bernard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), esp. pp. 136-200, 231-271, 280-300, 318-372, 384-403, 416-441, and 471-474.

¹⁶We must note here that Berg asserts that feasting, not obedience and disobedience, is the major motif in the Book of Esther. Berg, Esther, pp. 31-59. In a form-critical sense, her assertion has merit: this work begins and ends with a feast; there are two more in the middle. At each of these feasts, we do see a dramatic shift in the plot: first, Vashti is deposed; secondly, Esther sets the stage for Haman's downfall; during the third feast, Esther takes on the responsibility concomitant with her position and Haman falls from power; finally, Purim is validated. Each of these serve to advance the plot and intensify the drama, as a motif should do. But, these feasts serve only that purpose. Not only do they have no theological import, they do nothing to compliment the infrastructure of this book (chiasmus, repetitions, etc.) which is, in and of itself, a vehicle for carrying the book's message.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 106-7.

¹⁸Carey A. Moore, ed., Studies in the Book of Esther, The Library of Biblical Studies (NY: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1982), p. LV.

¹⁹Carey A. Moore, Esther, The Anchor Bible #7B (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971), pp. LIV-LV.

²⁰Moore's findings seem tendentious, further, for it could be asserted that the root occurs fifty-two times in Esther. What does that mean? Perhaps, only that it was a popular root! Source: (Yehuda T. Radday and Giora M. Leb, An Analytical Linguistic Key-Word-In-Context Concordance to Esther, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations The Computer Bible, vol. XVI., J. Arthur Baird and David Noel Freedman, eds. [Bible Research Associates, Inc., 1978]).

²¹Word frequency lists have been used, even abused, by those intent on refining the Graf-Wellhausen theory of the origins of the Hexateuch. These scholars often focus in on theophoric names, insisting that specific names were used by specific (schools of) writers. In theory, this carries with it a degree of possibility, but has been abused as words cannot convey units of thought which are vital to determining meaning and original sources.

²²From the Even-Shoshan concordance, we find that occurs in Jeremiah thirteen times, eight times in Nehemiah (chs. 2,3,5 and 6), five times in Ezra, four times in Second Kings, twice in Daniel (3:8, 12), and once each in Isaiah (36:11), Zechariah (8:23), First Chronicles (4:18), and Second Chronicles (32:18).

²³Henry S. Gehman, "Notes on the Persian Words in the Book of Esther," Moore, Studies, pp. 235-43.

²⁴David B. Weisberg, "Some Observations on Late Babylonian Texts and Rabbinic Literature," Hebrew Union College Annual, v. 39 (1968), pp. 71-81.

²⁵For example: Zaphenathpaaneath in Gen. 41:45, is clearly an Egyptian name.

²⁶ This question will be discussed, *infra*. (See also chapter 3, pp. 93-95 and Appendix 3 in regard to the question of the historical problems raised by previous attempts to dovetail the setting of Judith with current historical knowledge.)

²⁷ The number of ministers listed, seven, is of particular interest to us. We know from ancient sources (i.e., Ezra 7:14), that Artaxerxes had seven advisors. Herodotus, Xenophon and Josephus also speak of seven personal ministers to the king in the Roman court. (Source: Moore, *Esther*, p. 10.) We believe that the number seven is intentionally used here to add both a touch of realism to the picture of Ahasherus' Persian court as well as to clue readers in to the true reference in this book, that of the contemporary Roman court.

²⁸ Gehman, "Notes . . .," pp. 323-325.

²⁹ Frank Moore Cross, "The Contribution of the Qumran Discoveries to the Study of the Biblical Text," in F.M. Cross and Shemaryahu Talmon, eds., *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 278-293. Page 288 is cited here.

³⁰ There are four Q'r /Ktib variants noted in the Babylonian Talmud that appear in the Massoretic Text. The three of import to us and related to the orthographic difficulties of our text are:

Esther 1:16 - Babylonian Talmud (BT) reads:

BHS reads:

Q'r is:

Esther 9:19 - BT reads:

BHS reads:

Q'r is:

Esther 10:1 - BT reads:

BHS reads:

Q'r is:

³¹ David Noel Freedman, "The Massoretic Text and the Qumran Scrolls; A Study in Orthography," in Cross and Talmon, *Qumran*, pp. 196-212, states: "it is too much to expect that the Hebrew scribes could have maintained a formal, i.e., orthographic distinction for any length of time or with consistency when the phonemic support for the distinction had been lost." (p. 204) Since this is true for the earlier period Freedman is discussing, how much the more so for our period!

³²Such diversity is reflected in the text itself. See 1:22 and passim.

³³Some may argue that ס and ש cannot be dittographic because of the sin in ש and samech in ס. We discount the importance of the difference. The sin/samech distinction is a late one, historically. In some DSS manuscripts, the two seem to be used interchangeably. (cf. Cross and Talmon, Qumran, passim.) Apparent "confusions" between these two letters are also present in Amoraic texts.

³⁴Some scholars point to the true origin of Esther in "the mythical battle between the gods of Elam and the Gods of Babylon. In the end, the Babylonian gods triumphed. Marduk and Ishtar are important and related members of the Babylonian pantheon who vanquished Humman and Mashti who were Elamite gods. In time, this victory was instituted as a cultic celebration. This festive day was the New Year festival of Babylon. On this day, the gods determined the fate of men by lot, which in Babylonian is 'puru.'" (From an unpublished paper, "Bigthan and Teresh are Dead," by Avi Schulman [Los Angeles: April, 1981], p. 5.)

³⁵One of the most interesting variants we find in this book is on the name Ishtar, the Babylonian goddess. It is commonly recognized that Esther is a simple variation on that name. Yet, it goes further than that. If we look at the Authorized Translation (AT) of Esther, we see that Vashti is translated as Aste and Astin in the LXX. We have here not only a translation, but also, perhaps, a reflection of a more ancient tradition concerning Mashti and Ishtar either in conflict or cooperation. While we cannot be certain that Vashti and Esther were intended as one character or two people with the same name, this certainly may answer the many perplexing problems posed by Vashti's disappearance from our book. Esther may simply have been a pick-up on Vashti, both orthographically and contextually. (Such telescoping of characters, though rare, has contemporary Biblical precedent. Paul and Saul (Acts 13:9), Hannaniah and Shadrach, Michael and Meshach, Azariah and Abednego (Daniel 1:7), may each be two people telescoped into one through the device of name changes.)

³⁶See endnote #27.

³⁷The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament with English Translation and with Various Readings and Critical Notes (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1879), pp. 651-2.

³⁸Moore, Esther, p. 2, n. "m-m."

³⁹One can only speculate here on the implications of this fact. We feel it is strong evidence against the early canonicity of Esther.

⁴⁰

Leo Strauss, in Persecution and the Art of Writing (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1952) elaborates this theory of covert writing. This will be discussed infra, p. 143 and passim in greater detail. We believe that lists such as found in 1:10 and 1:14 are not mere chance compilations. Rather, they carry in themselves encoded messages.

⁴¹By later, we are proposing a date later than other scholars have heretofore proposed; at least after the second century before the common era. This will be refined and redefined as our investigation continues. And additional evidence for this is orthographic. "Hasmonean and Herodian exemplars of the Palestinian family [of texts to which Esther belongs] often exhibits a plene style of orthography [e.g., in 2:6, is written plene which occurs only four times in Tanach,] far fuller than we are accustomed to in the MT. The introduction of this new style began sporadically in the Maccabaeal era and reached its most extreme form in the Hasmonean age. The extreme, or baroque phase of this style is often associated with archaizing or, most often, pseudo-archaic grammatical forms." (F.M. Cross in Cross and Talmon, Qumran, p. 286.)

⁴²For our reasoning as regards the terminus ad quo, please see notes #97 and 41. Determination of the terminus ad quem for Esther is really a much simpler matter. Esther is, seemingly, totally divorced from both land and cult. It would defy both common sense and historical reality (in regard to both the situation of the Jewish community and the rabbinic criteria for canonization) to suppose this could reflect a post-70 C.E. date of composition.

⁴³This analysis assumes that history may be written for its own sake and thus be true to that purpose. "False" histories, therefore, have a motive as well. It is here that the motive is hidden. Cf. Strauss, Persecution, and Bruce Diamond, Some First Century Events as Reflected in Our Massoretic Book of Nehemiah (Cincinnati: Spring, 1978). For later exemplars of such encoded writing, see Joseph D. Amusin, "The Reflection of Historical Events of the First Century B.C. in Qumran Commentaries 4Q161; 4Q169; 4Q166,"

HUCA, Vol. XLVIII (1977), pp. 123-152. Please refer also to Appendix #5 for a modern example of this phenomena.

⁴⁴See supra, p. 23ff.

⁴⁵cf. 1:3, 6:9
8:10
8:9

⁴⁶Moore, Esther, p. XLI.

⁴⁷Berg, Esther, p. 2 states "information gathered from sources contemporaneous with the event contradict the story. Scholars who uphold the historicity of the tale are often forced to reidentification of its central figures and a resetting of the events into new historical contexts." This undoubtedly is the main source of scholarly confusion over the true identification of Esther's main characters. Yet, Berg disparages the attempt at identification and we feel that she is wrong to do so. She feels the setting is genuinely Persian - we believe it to be Roman. Through our schema, we will solve the various "contradictions" without getting caught up in the traps that she and others like Moore and Paton (infra) do.

⁴⁸Lewis Bayles Paton, A Critical & Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Esther, The International Critical Commentary (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), p. 71.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 73.

⁵⁰See infra, p. 123 and Jacob Neusner's observation thereon.

⁵¹In this category we include C.A. Moore and L.B. Paton, among others. The glaring exception is Jacob Hoschander, The Book of Esther in the Light of History (Philadelphia: The Dropsie College, 1923) who claims that Esther is perfectly consonant with historical fact.

⁵²Moore, Esther, pp. XLV-XLVI. (Author's footnotes are not included.)

⁵³Gene M. Tucker, Form Criticism and the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

⁵⁴Susan Niditch and Robert Doran, "The Wise Courtier: A Formal Approach," Journal of Biblical Literature 96 #2 (June, 1974), pp. 179-193. Page 179 is cited here.

⁵⁵Earl Beckson and Arthur Ganz, A Reader's Guide to Literary Terms (NY: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1960), p. 132.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁵⁷While we are concentrating on the Greek precursors and forms of first century Jewish historiography, it would be well to note that Arnaldo Momigliano (Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization [London, Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1975] esp. pp. 90ff.) argues for a Persian influence as well.

⁵⁸Erich Auerbach, "The Greek Epic and Biblical Literature: A Study in Contrast." Dimension #1 (Fall, 1966), pp. 6-10. Even though Auerbach presents a contrastive picture and we are more inclined to agree with Cyrus Gordon, Before the Bible: The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilisations (NY, Evanston & London: Harper & Row, 1962), in his conclusions of similarity between the Greek epic and Biblical literature, we shall use Auerbach's model for its completeness and methodological soundness.

⁵⁹Auerbach, "The Greek Epic . . .," p. 7.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶³Robert Drews, The Greek Accounts of Eastern History (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Hellenic Studies, 1973), p. 43. On ethnographic and etiologic history, see pp. 8-10.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 60ff. for discussion of Herodotus.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 97f.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 106-7 re: Ctesias' account of Xerxes' reign.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 120-1.

⁶⁸ Zvi Adar, The Biblical Narrative (Jerusalem: Department of Education and Culture of the World Zionist Organization 1959) Misha Louvish, trans., p. 7.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 50.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 260.

⁷¹ On wisdom typologies, cf. Nickelsburg, Resurrection, pp. 48-131; Moses Gaster, ed., Studies and Texts in Folklore, Magic, Medieval Romance, Hebrew Apocrypha and Samaritan Archaeology (NY: KTAV Publishing House, 1971) who gives numerous contemporary examples and parallels in vol. I of his work; and Jack Sasson, Ruth, a new translation with a philological commentary (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1979).

⁷² Here, we are brought to speculate on the need for a hero figure of a wise man as opposed to, say, a military leader. Again, we feel that this is indicative of a contemporary milieu which mitigated against Jewish military might. Even in Judith which, we feel, was written contemporaneously with Esther, the Jews do not militarily conquer their enemies. These examples stand in sharp contrast to the scriptural books of the Hasmonean era (such as Maccabees and Daniel) which were fraught with physically strong and courageous heroes.

⁷³ We see this in Esther as Mordechai adopts Esther as a daughter. In the Joseph story, Joseph is adopted by Pharaoh, as is Moses.

⁷⁴ Obviously, we can see this not only in Esther, but also in the Joseph tales, Judith, Ahiqar and Daniel.

⁷⁵ Joseph's opposite was Pharaoh, as was the case, later, with Moses. Daniel is paired against Nebuchadnezzar; wisdom (in Proverbs) against folly; Ahiqar and Judith stand opposite Nebuchadnezzar and Holofernes; and, of course, Mordechai and Esther are coupled with Haman and Ahasherus.

⁷⁶ Again, the pairs of opposites we see serve to highlight one another in contrast.

⁷⁷S. Talmon, in "Wisdom in the Book of Esther," Vetus Testamentum XIII (1963), pp. 419-456. Page 440 is cited here, and restates this point explicitly in reference to Esther.

⁷⁸John H. Hayes, ed., Old Testament Form Criticism (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1974), p. 227.

⁷⁹cf. Bickermann, Four Strange Books of the Bible (NY: Schocken Books, 1967). Re: his theory of Esther as a double-plotted book. And, as Berg (Esther, p. 4) points out, "A new line of inquiry was initiated by Henri Cazelles [("Note sur la composition du rouleau d'Esther," Lex tua Veritas [Festschrift Hubert Junker], ed., Heinrich Grass and Franz Mussner; Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1961, 17-30)], who argued that Esther represents a conflation of two independent texts."

⁸⁰The locus classicus study of the wise courtier motif in Biblical literature is W. Lee Humphreys, "The Motif of the Wise Courtier in the Old Testament," (Th.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 1970). Other familiar examples of wise courtiers are Daniel, Joseph and Ahiqar. We believe Mordechai belongs to this category. For further explanation, cf. appendix #4.

⁸¹Niditch and Doran, "The Wise Courtier . . .," p. 186.

⁸²cf. Wolfgang Roth, "The Recovery of a Dimension: 'Space' in Gerhard von Rad's Interpretation of Wisdom in Israel. A Review Article," (1978, unpublished). In this article, Roth characterizes wisdom as "roaming spirituality" (p. 8). We feel that this precisely pinpoints Esther's theologic merit and basis and adds a much needed dimension to the study of Israel's wisdom literature.

⁸³Hayes, Old Testament, p. 76.

⁸⁴Diamond, Some First Century Events, p. 19.

⁸⁵Strauss, Persecution, p. 52.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 36.

⁸⁷ This was not uncommon in the pagan world where a pantheon of gods was accepted and it was often the case that subjugation of a people meant subjugation of their gods. This is unusual in a Jewish setting as monotheism, by definition, is intolerant of other deitcal claims.

⁸⁸ This practice was common in Hellenistic Judea among members of the collaborationist parties. For further elucidation and discussion, see (Victor Tcherikover, Hellenistic Civilisation and the Jews NY: Atheneum Press, 1975, p. 346f.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 350.

⁹⁰ Frank Zimmermann, Biblical Books Translated from the Aramaic (NY: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1975) and C.C. Torrey, "The Older Book of Esther," Harvard Theological Review vol. XXXVII, No. 1 (Jan., 1944).

⁹¹ Zimmermann, Biblical Books, p. 84.

⁹² Bickermann, Four Strange Books, pp. 205-6.

⁹³ The description of Ahasuerus' dominion in 1:6 serves to intensify the fairy tale-like feeling of Esther. Parallels to Greek culture are elaborated in Saul Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Literary Transmission, Beliefs and Manners of Palestine in the I Century B.C.E. - IV Century CE 2nd improved ed. (NY: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962.)

⁹⁴ "This philosophical to on, by virtue of being viewed as the ultimate reality, was susceptible of alignment with what is ultimate in Judaism, its God." Samuel Sandmel, "Hellenism and Judaism," Great Confrontations in Jewish History, Stanley Wagner and Allen D. Breck, eds. (Denver: The University of Denver, 1977), pp. 21-39. Page 27 is quoted here.

⁹⁵ Robert Gordis, "Studies in the Esther Narrative," JBL 95 #1 (March, 1976), pp. 43-58, p. 44.

⁹⁶ Solomon Zeitlin, "The Books of Esther and Judith," pp. 1-38, (in Morton S. Enslin, The Book of Judith Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972), pp. 1-38.

97 Talmon, "Wisdom," p. 423. Further, if we can discover when Purim was first celebrated, we may establish a terminus ad quem for Esther's composition. From II Maccabees (15:36), we know of Yom Mordechai. This work can be assumed to have been composed ca. 100 B.C.E. (II Maccabees 1:7 refers to 143 B.C.E.; 1:9 refers to 124 B.C.E.; 6:12-17 indicates that there had been some relief from the persecutions, but not until after there had been martyrdom; 15:37-39 indicates that Jerusalem was still in Jewish hands [prior to 63 B.C.E.]; it is later than I Maccabees because this author knew of priestly corruption [re: Onias, death of Menelaus, etc.]; and this work is less historically accurate than I Maccabees, allowing us to assume a later date [than 110 B.C.E. and following].) Esther must be later than this. We cannot date any Purim celebration, in that name, before the second half of the first century C.E., if not until after Yavneh. (Op. Cit., Bickermann, p. 100.)

98 Berg is among those who claim that the author's main intention in writing Esther was to furnish a justification for the celebration of Purim within the framework of Jewish law. We shall further refute this, *infra*, p. 60f.

99 Sandmel, "Hellenism," p. 36.

100 These power struggles are exemplified in the changing foci of power as portrayed throughout this book, in 3:10 and 8:2 for example. The role of the signet ring (8:8, *passim*) is a crucial one here. It was the visible symbol of authority: whoever had this ring had the power.

101 John T. Willis, "Redaction Criticism and Historical Reconstruction," in Martin J. Buss, ed., Encounter with the Text: Form and History in the Hebrew Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press and Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979), pp. 83-91. Page 87 is cited here.

102 Due to the circumstantial nature of this evidence, it shall not be pursued farther. Suffice to say that four main theories have been advanced to explain this phenomenon: that Esther was rejected by the Qumran sect (see H.L. Ginsberg, Israel: Its Role in Civilization, Moshe Davis, 1956, p. 52), that it existed but was unknown to them, that it was written after their manuscripts or that it is mere chance that we have not discovered a text. For elaboration, please refer to

I. H. Eybers, "Some Light on the Canon of the Qumran Sect," Sid Z. Leiman, ed., The Canon and Masorah of the Hebrew Bible, The Library of Biblical Studies, ed. by Harry M. Orlinsky (NY: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1974), pp. 23-36. See, especially, pp. 27ff. Also, Robert Gordis, "Religion, Wisdom and History in the Book of Esther - A New Solution," JBL 100 #3 (Sept., 1981), pp. 359-388. There are others as well.

Contrary to one line of argumentation, there are many other examples of books with contradicting theological stances that have been found at Qumran such as Lamentations and Song of Songs. We believe, and will attempt to prove, that Esther was written too late to have been known to the Qumran sectarians.

¹⁰³ Amusin, "Reflection of Historical Events . . .," most effectively proves this point: late texts, especially, can only be properly understood after they have been decoded. Strauss, Persecution, provides the rationale for the encoding of these texts.

¹⁰⁴ Emil Schurer, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C. - A.D. 135), rev. and ed. by Geza Vermes and Fergus Millar (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, Ltd., 1973), p. 310.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 295.

¹⁰⁶ Solomon Zeitlin, The Rise and Fall of the Judean State vol. II. 37 BCE-66CE (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1967), p. 35.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁰⁸ Op. Cit., Schurer, p. 319.

¹⁰⁹ See Appendix I re: Beard. Also, Drews, Greek Accounts, pp. 98ff. on the development of historiography and relevant parallels.

¹¹⁰ Do we see an echo of Haman's behavior here?

¹¹¹ Agrippa, upon arrival in Jerusalem, "feasted the people, who received him with enthusiasm." (Zeitlin, Rise and Fall . . . , p. 53. Cf. Esther 1:3ff

¹¹²Ibid., p. 54ff. and cf. Esther 2:18.

¹¹³In a police state, as existed under Herod, propaganda was tightly controlled within the state and censorship was strict.

¹¹⁴It is now clear that this theory holds many far-reaching implications. This era has, heretofore, been mislabelled as being "intertestamental" in nature. Supposedly, there was a hiatus in literary activity and no scriptural writing at all. Yet, not only were the Synoptic Gospels, the writings of Paul, Mishnaic teachings, sectarian works and secular writings obviously being composed at this time, Jewish Biblical works were also being written. As we only have these works to point to, we can only guess at the amount of literature lost to posterity. Further on, appendix #6 will give a detailed outline of a proposed second half to this thesis which would further investigate this question and its implications for understanding the process of the canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures.

¹¹⁵Robert Gordis, "Religion, Wisdom and History in the Book of Esther - A New Solution to an Ancient Crux," Journal of Biblical Literature 100 #3 (September, 1981), pp. 359-388.

¹¹⁶Perhaps our author's insistent use of "he" is a way of disguise. This keeps the action away from the author and in the third person. Further, we can only speculate on the meaning of "he". Perhaps it is also a veiled reference to the author's need for secrecy.

¹¹⁷If the Temple were not standing in Jerusalem, we would expect at least a passing reference to this fact, considering the devastating impact it had on world Jewry when the Romans destroyed it. See supra, p. 58ff.

¹¹⁸In this we agree with Neusner whose theory of the development of Pharisaic into Rabbinic Judaism is brilliantly put forth in his From Politics to Piety, The Emergence of Rabbinic Judaism (NY: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1979).

¹¹⁹Ellis Rivkin, The Shaping of Jewish History (NY: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1971), pp. 61,85.

¹²⁰Neusner, From Politics . . ., p. 9. His entire chapter, "The Problem of the Historical Pharisees," pp. 1-13, is particularly germane here.

¹²¹As regards the inclusion of God, prayer and land in the Greek colophon to the LXX Esther, we need not worry. It is - in our opinion - a forged work. The scholarly literature is wide on this subject, but beyond the purview of this paper. Moore, Esther, Bickermann, Four Strange Books, and Paton, Esther, all give the subject adequate and detailed attention.

¹²²M.E. Andrew, "Esther, Exodus and Peoples," Australian Biblical Review Oct. 1975 Vol. XXIII, pp. 25-9.

¹²³Op. Cit., Farmer, pp. 13-4.

¹²⁴Op. Cit., Schürer, p. 446.

¹²⁵Op. Cit., Tcherikover, p. 351.

¹²⁶Farmer, Maccabees . . ., acknowledges the importance of propaganda in the Roman world and wisely states, "In some ways the continuous battle to win approval of public opinion was as important for securing of world domination as was any campaign carried out by the Roman legions.", p. 16. There is every reason to assume the Jews would use the same tactics to fight their battles against antisemitism and persecution.

¹²⁷Zimmermann, Books Translated, p. 92f.

¹²⁸Berg, Esther, pp. 39-47.

¹²⁹John Bowman, The Fourth Gospel and the Jews: A Study in Rabbi Akiba, Esther and the Gospel of John, Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series #8 (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1975).

CHAPTER #3
ANALYSIS OF JUDITH

OUTLINE

- I. Outline
- II. Themes and Motifs
 - A. Part 1 (Chapters 1-7)
 - 1. Themes
 - a) war
 - b) fear
 - 2. Motif
 - a) power
 - B. Part 2 (Chapters 8-16)
 - 1. Themes
 - a) deliverance
 - b) beauty
 - 2. Motif
 - a) righteousness
 - C. The Book as a Whole
 - 1. Themes
 - a) Judaism vs. paganism
 - b) religious fidelity vs. materialism
 - 2. Motif
 - a) deity
- III. Structural Analysis
 - A. Opposing Doublets
 - B. Chiasmus
 - 1. Parallelisms
 - a) plot
 - (1) complementary resolution structure of parts 1 and 2
 - b) characters - dramatis personae
 - (1) dramatic tension
- IV. Historicity
 - A. Contradictions
 - B. Composite Nature of Judith (qua book)
 - C. Decoding places, names and events
 - 1. Is our text corrupt?
 - a) evidence for a Hebrew original
 - (1) linguistic
 - (2) textual traditions
 - (3) grammar and style as buttresses to above-noted parallelisms and chiasmus
 - (a) vocabulary
 - D. Summary

V. Literary Antecedents and Parallels - Form Criticism

- A. Greek and Biblical Exemplars
 - 1. Ancient histories
 - 2. Novellas
 - 3. Folk/hero tales
 - 4. Wisdom literature
 - a) distinct Jewish nature
 - (1) Hebrew short story

VI. Summary

VII. What was the author's motivation for writing this book?

- A. Subplots
 - 1. Patriotism
 - 2. Woman as savior
 - 3. Theology
 - a) wisdom
- B. Summary
 - 1. Review of the Evidence
 - a) most commonly accepted decoding
 - b) proposed new decoding
 - (1) Achior
 - (2) Judith
 - (3) Bethulia
 - (4) other characters
 - c) proposed new dating of Judith
 - (1) events described
 - (2) problems solved
 - d) purpose of Judith

CHAPTER #3
THE BOOK OF JUDITH

OUTLINE

- I. Outline
The Book of Judith¹, may be outlined thusly:
- I. Setting and Introduction
 - A. Royal Introduction
 - 1. Nebuchadnezzar, King of the Assyrians
 - a) history
 - b) warfare and preparations
 - B. Holofernes, Chief General
 - 1. Charge to Holofernes
 - 2. March westward
 - C. Israel
 - 1. Preparations for resistance
 - a) Joakim, High Priest
 - b) orders to the Israelites
 - c) Senate of Israel in Jerusalem
 - 2. Prayer and supplication before God
 - D. Achior, Commander of the Ammonites
 - 1. History of Israel
 - 2. Advice to Holofernes and rebuke
 - 3. Achior thrown out by Holofernes and taken to Bethulia
 - E. Holofernes, with Ammonites, attacks
 - F. Israel told by Uzziah to forebear
- II. Judith
 - A. Genealogy
 - B. Description of Life and Piety
 - C. Rebuke of Israelites in Bethulia
 - D. Counsel to Uzziah and the Israelites
 - E. Prayer
 - F. Preparations
 - 1. Maid
 - 2. Details of dress
 - 3. Food and ritual observances
 - G. Escort of Holofernes
 - H. Deception of Holofernes
 - 1. Double-entendre
 - 2. Wisdom
- III. Feasting
 - A. Judith's Acceptance of Holofernes' Invitation
 - B. Judith's Refusal to Eat the Food Presented Her
 - C. Holofernes gets Drunk
 - D. Beheading the General

- IV. Return to Israelite Camp
 - A. Presentation of Holofernes' Head
 - B. Judith Praised by Uzziah
 - C. Achior Identifies Holofernes' Head
 - D. Judith's Description of Events
 - E. Assyrians Scatter at Discovery of Defeat
 - F. Joakim Praises Judith
 - G. Plunder of Assyrian Camp
 - H. Rejoicing
- V. Judith's Hymn of Thanks to God
 - A. Fame of Judith Pronounced and Renowned

II. Themes and Motifs

The Book of Judith seems to be a rather simple one: a war story where the only twist in plot occurs when the underdog is saved by a woman. It certainly is a common plot throughout world literature: the twist of fate that insures the victory of the righteous over the mighty. Yet, this is only a veneer. Judith is actually a complicated and carefully structured text and is a simple story only on the surface.

In order that we may better understand this, let us study this book in its two constituent parts: chapters 1-7 and 8-16. All our following discussion will be based on this division. The following two tables will enable us to better understand the book's themes and motifs² as well as the structure of each section.³

Chapters 1-7

1. Introduction to Nebuchadnezzar and his campaign against Arphaxad (1:1-1:6)
2. Nebuchadnezzar commissions Holofernes to take vengeance on the disobedient vassal nations (2:1-13)
3. Development
 - A. The campaign against the disobedient nations; the people surrender (2:14-3:10)
 - B. Israel hears and is "greatly terrified"; Joakim orders war preparations (4:1-15)
 - C. Holofernes talks with Achior; Achior is expelled from the Assyrian camp (5:1-6:11)
 - C'. Achior is received into Bethulia; he talks with the people of Israel (6:12-21)
 - B'. Holofernes orders war preparations; Israel sees and is "greatly terrified." (7:1-5)
 - A'. The campaign against Bethulia; the people want to surrender (7:6-32).⁴

Chapters 8-16

- A. Introduction to Judith (8:1-8)
- B. Judith plans to save Israel (8:9-10:8)
- C. Judith and her maid leave Bethulia (10:9-10)
- D. Judith overcomes Holofernes (10:11-13:10a)
- C'. Judith and her maid return to Bethulia (13:10b-11)
- B'. Judith plans the destruction of Israel's enemy (13:12-16:20)
- A'. Conclusion about Judith⁵

As is obvious, the two parts of this work are thematically distinct. Yet, this book is also a unity. We shall demonstrate the validity of this assertion by finding motifs which are unique to each section as well as others, common to both.

- A. Part 1 (Chapters 1-7)
 - 1. Themes
 - a) War
 - b) Fear

In chapters one through seven, war is the first major theme. As such, war is used as a literary device in advancing the plot of Judith and providing modus operandi for the actions of the characters in this book. It is not a motif of Judith because it serves only as a backdrop to action: the real battles are fought herein off the war-grounds. In other words, the story of Judith is concerned with war, but the message of this book stands independent of the story.

Fear, or its denial, is actually the more important of the two themes of this section. Whether our narrative

centers on the Assyrians or the Israelites, it is fear which motivates them to action. Achior and Joakim (and even Holofernes, in a different way) take courageous risks (actions) and it is through these actions that the story line is advanced. Without their denial (or suppression) of (personal) fear, the Book of Judith would bog down in inaction.

Similarly, the fear of the Israelites when confronted with imminent invasion by Holofernes is what motivates them to seek a solution. And it is only fear which finally defeats the Assyrian and Ammonite armies. Nowhere in Judith is it stated that the Israelites could have won a military victory after Judith beheads Holofernes. On the contrary, the Israelites were saved because their opponents became scared and ran.

2. Motif
 - a) Power

Power is the main motif of this section. Both war and fear are portrayed in terms of their effect on international, and internal, balances of power. Judith, Holofernes, Joakim, Nebuchadnezzar and all the other major characters act out of a desire to preserve (or enhance) national and/or personal power. Yet, it is a negative comment on power which is being communicated to the reader. We are being told that the possession of power is not a desirable end. Whoever has power in this book: Nebuchadnezzar and Holofernes,

in particular, finds that power "turns on all who exercise it." The positive model presented us is that of Judith, Uzziah, Joakim and Achior who acknowledge that their power is, indeed, not their own, but God's.

B. Part 2 (Chapters 8-16)

1. Themes
 - a) Deliverance
 - b) Beauty

Corresponding to the themes of war and fear in Part 1, we find that deliverance and beauty are the two most important themes of the second section of Judith. Chapters eight through sixteen stress Judith as the deliverer of her people. She delivers them not only from war and its consequences, but also from spiritual misguidedness (in Judith 8:11-17); the message is: don't test, don't war against, God.

Her prayers and supplications have long been regarded as exemplary forms of piety. In distinction to the Jewish mob which petitions God in an inappropriate manner, Judith's prayers are answered. Though she saved her people from a military threat, it is her spiritual example which is held up as worthy of emulation (note the prominence given her hymns in the book). She is so worthy that she merits the honor of delivering her people.

Both opposing and complementing the theme of fear in Part 1 of Judith is that of beauty in Part 2. Each of these traits "undoes" those who abuse it. Holofernes'

attempt at exploiting Judith's beauty (through, by the way, misuse of power) is the proximate cause of his death. Yet, Judith's appreciation of the source of her beauty and use of it for acceptable ends insures her, and Israel's, success.

2. Motif
a) Righteousness

In manifold ways, section 2 serves, in Judith, as the antithesis of section 1. Power, as we have shown, is the major motif of section 1. The message behind this motif is one which warns against the misuse of power. It is not surprising, therefore, that we find righteousness to be the major motif in this second section of Judith. Righteousness, aside from being its own reward, is the reward of those who do not abuse the power given them by God.

Further, Judith is, obviously, the heroine of this book. She is the model of virtue to be emulated. An implicit message here is that; if she is emulated, the one who emulates her must also be righteous and, if so, will be rewarded with the rewards of righteousness.

C. The Book as a Whole
1. Themes
a) Judaism vs. Paganism
b) Religious fidelity vs. materialism

Just as there are distinct themes and motifs for the two individual sections of Judith, there are also two themes

which are basic to both parts of this book. The first of these themes is that of "the vital conflict between Hebraism and paganism."⁶ Throughout this book, Jewish modes of action and behavior are constantly set against those of the pagans:

1) Fasting, a Jewish mode of piety, is placed in contradistinction to feasting, a pagan abomination.

2) "Jewish" values: piety, prayer, chastity, and faith in God are, throughout the book, presented as positive exemplars. These are juxtaposed against such pagan values as the seeking of power for its own sake, demagogery, and sexual wantonness.

Further, this theme not only underlies both sections, it serves to highlight the contrastive, or antithetical, nature of section 2 as against section 1.

The second theme joining sections 1 and 2 of Judith is communicated explicitly in 5:5-21 and 9:11. We are told that it is only righteousness, not military might which saves Israel. The central importance of this is underscored by the fact that these words are spoken by Achior, a non-Israelite. He states that Israel will either win or lose depending on its adherence to its religious precepts. Implied is the criticism that pagan dependence on material means, such as arms, cannot avail. Further, Israel's being Israel is not enough; it is fidelity to the divine commandments

which insures either victory or defeat. Religious living is stressed as the only form of proper living.

2. Motif
a) Deity

There is one motif which underscores both parts of Judith. Though it is never explicitly stated, as such, this is the motif of deity. It is loyalty to deity that motivates all our characters. Holofernes acts on loyalty to his God, Nebuchadnezzar. Judith's loyalty is to the God of Israel. It is Achior, the proselyte, who, by moving from one camp to the other, emphasizes the actual importance of this motif. Though he switches his affiliation and loyalty, the question of the importance of having such a loyalty is never raised. As Nickelsburg states, the fundamental tension in Judith is "Who is God? Yahweh or Nebuchadnezzar?"⁷

III. Structural Analysis
A. Opposing Doublets

It should now be obvious that the themes and motifs of this book: war and deliverance, fear and beauty, power and righteousness, Judaism vs. Paganism, and religious fidelity vs. materialism fall into contrasting couplets. Each positive virtue is presented with its negative counterpart. What is also true is that each thematic and motivational pair is developed as part and parcel of all the others. This is the beauty of this work for not only are there

contrasting doublets presented, each one is woven in and through the others.

Judith is, obviously, a dramatic work. As such, the exposition of each theme adds to the building of dramatic tension and helps to sustain the action of the story. For example, military power is the prime motif in Part 1 and is balanced by the stress on its contextual opposite in Part 2, Judith's righteousness.

B. Chiasmus

1. Parallelisms

a) plot

(1) complementary resolution structure of parts 1 and 2

b) characters - dramatis personae

(1) dramatic tension

The basic structure for Judith we are proposing is, obviously, chiasmic. Not only do scenes oppose one another as demonstrated above, so do motifs, themes and characters. Also important are the following parallels which join the two parts of Judith. Craven maps them out in this manner:

1. A prose introduction to the leading character opens each section: 1:1-6 describes Nebuchadnezzar; 8:1-8 describes Judith.
2. The first act of the leading character is to send for others: Nebuchadnezzar "sent" (ἀπέστειλεν) to all who lived in Persia (1:7); Judith "sent" (ἀπέστειλεν) her maid to summon the magistrates (8:10).
3. The leading character claims to have a "plan": Nebuchadnezzar has a "secret plan" (τὸ μυστήριον τῆς βουλῆς) which he recounts fully (2:2); Judith has a "plan" (τοῦτο) /28/ which she keeps secret (9:34).

4. Both claim to execute the plan through their own hand (ἐν χειρὶ μου): Nebuchadnezzar says, "What I have spoken my hand will execute" (2:12); Judith, "The Lord will deliver Israel by my hand" (8:33).
5. There is a concern with who is God: "Who is God except Nebuchadnezzar?" asks Holofernes (6:2); "Who are you that you have put God to the test this day, and are setting yourselves up in the place of God?" says Judith (8:12).
6. Those carrying out the plan make food preparations: Holofernes provides for his army in 2:18; Judith for herself and her maid in 10:5.
7. After a three day period, the plan is enacted: Holofernes marches for three days before he starts his purge of the nations (2:21); Judith remains in the Assyrian camp for three days before she murders Holofernes (12:7).
8. The major motif of the plan unfolds through social contact: social terror spreads (2:28, 4:2, 7:4); news of Judith's marvelous beauty travels (8:7; 10:4, 7, 14, 19, 23; 12:13; 16:7).
9. The life of Achior, the Ammonite, is radically altered because of his belief in the power of the God of Israel: in Part 1 he is exiled to Bethulia (6:5ff); in Part 2 he is converted to Yahwism (14:10).
10. Holofernes is told the "truth": Achior says, "I will tell you the truth about this people" (5:5); Judith says, "I will tell nothing false to my lord this night." (11:5).
11. "Feasts" (μέσση) are held to honor guests: Uzziah entertains Achior (4:21); Holofernes entertains Judith (11:18).
12. A thirty-four day period is significant: the Assyrians surround Bethulia for thirty-four days (7:11ff); Judith spends a total of four days in the Assyrian camp (12:10) after which the Israelites plunder the camp for thirty days (15:11).⁸

This chart further proves our contention that Part 2 of Judith serves to resolve, dramatically speaking, Part 1 of the book.

The dramatic tension of Judith is heightened by many factors. The story itself provides the basis for the tension. But there is also a chiastic underpinning of each section which advances this theory. In chapters 1-7, the movements from camp to camp alternate within this chiasm (see page 2):

A: Assyrian	A': Israelite
B: Israelite	B': Assyrian
C: Assyrian	C': Israelite

This also provides us with yet another example of opposing doublets.

Likewise, in chapters 8-16, "A and A' open with specific indications of time (8:1 and 16:21) . . . B and B' begin with ¹¹א - plus the verb "to hear" (8:9 and 13:12); . . . C and C' with ¹¹א - plus the verb "to go out" (10:6 and 13:10b) . . ."⁹

Through these examples, we can see how the chiasm is worked through the entire book and, again, how chapters 8-16 serve to resolve problems posed in chapters one through seven.

And yet another instance of chiasmus is also operative here and bears the need for elucidation. All but one of the dramatis personae in Judith have their chiastic opposite

within this story:

Nebuchadnezzar	-	Ozias
Holofernes	-	Judith
Bagoas	-	Judah
Court	-	Bethulia

What can be noticed here is that this leaves Achior without a counterpart. This is no accident. Achior is the one figure in the book of Judith who freely moves between the two groups. Thus, he not only serves as the main link between the two sections, Achior's character is developed through the exposition of all the themes and motifs of this book. In other words, we can locate the author's approval of one-half of a thematic pair based on whether Achior possesses that value as a character trait or not.

In summary,

Judith is a story of dramatic reversals.
A woman -- not a man -- delivers Israel.
Beauty -- not military power -- defeats an
enemy. Deliverance is decided apart from
the priesthood and the numinous presence of
the Jerusalem Temple. The bold trust of an
Israelite woman preserves the life of the
people: a widow is the mother of faith.¹⁰

It is obvious that what Craven is terming "dramatic reversals," we are calling opposing doublets. Further, she is also picturing this structure as one operating within the chiasm. Another way of describing this structure is through the example of the well-made play.¹¹

- A. Introduction 1:1-4:15
- B. Escalation of Drama 5:1-12:9
- C. Critical turning point 12:20-13:10a
- B'. Denouement 13:10b-16:20
- A'. Summary wherein "cantic replaces action, and celebration invades the narrative"¹² 16:21-25.

Not only does the drama reach its climax in 10:10-23, we see in this passage a microcosm of the entire book.

This, like many another passage in the book, reveals a remarkably high standard in the art of storytelling; no detail is without point, the course of the narrative is here and there held up with the purpose of whetting the reader's appetite . . . and the denouement does not disappoint.¹³

IV. Historicity

- A. Contradictions
- B. Composite Nature of Judith (qua book)

Judith purports to be an historical account, yet even a cursory reading of this book belies that claim. Nebuchadnezzar (605/4-562 B.C.E.) is portrayed as making his advances on Jerusalem after the exile.¹⁴ Further, he never ruled over the Assyrians (1:1) as the book claims. That empire collapsed in 605 B.C.E. with the fall of Carchemish. Even if we assume Nebuchadnezzar to be that Nebuchadnezzar who ruled during Zedekiah's reign (and thus attempt to harmonize all the information given to us), we can only date him as late as 593-570 B.C.E.

Then, we are told that Joakim was the High Priest in Jerusalem. The only Joakim we may safely identify is Joakim b. Jeshua b. Jozadak who reigned under Artaxerxes I

in 464 B.C.E.¹⁵ Yet, this does not solve any of the contradictions raised.

Dancy points out that there, in fact, lived a Cappadocian prince named Holofernes who fought against the Phoenicians and Egyptians under Artaxerxes III (359-338 B.C.E.) Ochus in 351 B.C.E.¹⁶ Interestingly enough, ancient records place a certain Bagoas (12:11) there with him.

What we see before us, then, seems to be an amalgam of names, dates, and places drawn from various parts and parts of ancient history. Even if we were to identify Bagoas with Bigvai in Ezra 2:2, we solve no contradictions raised by the a-historicity of this supposedly historical book.¹⁷ There is, at the least, a confusion of the various Artaxerxes who ruled Persia and Media and the inclusion of Arphaxad, a Mede, is all the more perplexing since we cannot identify him historically.

Judith's detailed family tree gives us no other help in unravelling this mystery. If we use any of the names listed as landmarks, we come up with (and here we need to reverse the order of the information given to us) Ahitub who lived during King Saul's reign (ca. 1040-1000 B.C.E.) as Elijah's father and Elijah (ca. 850 B.C.E.) being the father of Hilkiah the High Priest who served in King Josiah's reign (621 B.C.E.)!¹⁸

Further, the only other in Biblical literature is cited as Esau's wife and was a Hittite (Gen. 26:34), not even an Israelite.¹⁹ It is most reasonable, in the face of all this evidence, to assume that this genealogy is a compendium of famous names from Israel's past. Dancy correctly asserts that, "the author set his scene in [not] one period of history, but in a mixture of at least three, covering a span of 400 years."²⁰

C. Decoding Places, Names and Events

1. Is our text corrupt?
 - a) evidence for a Hebrew original
 - (1) linguistic
 - (2) textual traditions
 - (3) grammar and style as buttresses to the above-noted parallelisms and chiasmus
 - (a) vocabulary

As far as place names in this work, Jones has, perhaps, the best suggestion: "At the time this book was written, the word 'Babylon' had become a term to represent all kinds of tyrannies and pagan powers."²¹ We cannot take the names of any localities given us at face value. Bethulia, a walled city, has never been located by archaeologists or historians. It is sound reasoning, we feel, that will lead us to interpret this name, in particular, and all "historic" references in Judith generally as metaphors.

Bethulia is not even among the list of walled cities in which must be celebrated. Yet, the name is

reminiscent of the Hebrew word, *virgin*. Ancient Jewish literature is replete with references to Jerusalem, also a walled city, as the virgin city (laid waste by despoilers - cf. Lamentations 1:1ff.). Further, as will be later demonstrated, this book was written when Jerusalem stood alone as the only, the virgin, city which had not fallen under the Roman attack. Historically, it was the last fortress of defense against total destruction in Judea.

Perhaps all these problems are so evident to us because we are reading a corrupted text of Judith. We have no extant Hebrew original of the book. Jerome, as is well known, is the first witness to its existence. Origen, however, lived prior to Jerome and did not leave any indication that he had a Hebrew text of Judith. Our textus receptus is based on both a Greek and the Old Latin translation.²² Morgenstern hints at this convoluted textual history being the basis for textual corruption and textual corruption being the reason for the differing names and numbers present in the many versions and also for the unidentifiable names and place names and genealogies.

Firstly, evidence is found for a Hebrew original by Dubarle who cites the use of parataxis in his argument. We may posit that, if our text is a literal rendition of the original, the following Hebrew retranslations would support this claim.²³

2:2 he finished

2:12 as I live

2:13

(cf. Num. 14:21,28 and
Judith 12:14)

3:10

16:5 to kill in the sword

The phrase, "God of Israel," is the one most frequently used in Judith when referring to deity. Also common are the Hebraisms God and Lord which are necessarily different words in the Hebrew, but not so in Greek.²⁴

Some scholars make much of the fact that Biblical quotes in Judith seem to have been taken directly from the Septuagint.²⁵ They claim that this proves that Judith was originally written in Greek. We wonder if this "proof" is not an instance of justifying a predetermined conclusion. The argument is faulty because one must then argue that any modern research which translates Genesis 1:1 as "In the beginning . . ." proves that the original text of Genesis is the Revised Standard Version. Use of the RSV (or LXX), thusly, does not mean that that text was the original version.

Positing a Hebrew original allows us to see how the author of Judith used grammar and style to buttress the parallelisms noted earlier.²⁶ This also underscores the fact that this book is not intended to be read as history,²⁷

but as a literary creation. The repetition of the phrase "greatly terrified" in 4:2 and 7:4 serves to delineate subsections of plot and emphasis action. So, too, is the case with the word κύριος, Lord. It is only among passages leading up to the entrance of, and directly concerned with, Judith that κύριος has the meaning of deity and not of human master. Again, we see the temporal and sacral distinction brought into sharp contrast.²⁸ Yet, it must be noted that:

The author (translator?) seems to prefer where possible synonyms or similar words to bare repetition. In consequence there are many common words which occur but once or twice in his pages. For a short book there is a surprisingly long index verborum.²⁹

V. Literary Antecedents and Parallels

A. Greek and Biblical Exemplars

1. Ancient histories
2. Novellas
3. Folk/hero tales
4. Wisdom literature
 - a) distinct Jewish nature
 - (1) Hebrew short story

We have already discussed Greek³⁰ and Biblical exemplars of ancient histories, novellas, hero tales and wisdom literature.³¹ There is no need for repetition of this analysis. What we shall add is our description of the Book of Judith along these lines. Like Esther, we classify Judith as an historicized wisdom folk tale. In respect to shared linguistic characteristics, certainly Numbers 1-3³² (cf. p. 37, section 2) describe Judith as well as Esther.

Especially true is #2. In Judith, direct discourse serves an ironic function: Double-entendre permeates all Judith's dealings with Holofernes. In other words, what he thinks Judith is saying and what we know she is saying are two different things entirely. Through such discourses are her thoughts made manifest. Further, it is to the great credit of our author that this is done so well.

As we have shown, Judith is not an accurate historical account (at least not in the modern understanding of that term). We see that Judith actually shares with other ancient tales of "history" based on Greek models more than only the characteristic of a-historicity. Judith is also marked by its typical emphases. For instance:

Of great importance was the Greek's fascination with rulers of Eastern kingdoms. These individuals, whose wealth and power surpassed anything which the Greeks had hitherto experienced or even imagined, became the subject of stories which long survived the rulers themselves.¹

Thus, it probably was not of great import where Nebuchadnezzar had his capital, ancient readers were interested in Nebuchadnezzar himself; not his actual setting.

Judith, as we have said, is also a wisdom tale. As we elaborated in our previous discussions of late Biblical wisdom tales and their characteristics (see above, pp. 39-43) chapter 2), they are typified by the very same structural and contextual concerns as are present in Judith: chiastic

underpinnings, anthropocentric view of the world, and prototypical, two-dimensional, characters. Thematically, we also find familiar landmarks in Judith: the struggle of good vs. evil, the triumph of right over might, the personification of wisdom, and so forth.

As a folk/hero tale, Judith is also typical.³⁴

While some denigrate the story for its warlike spirit or seeming endorsement of Judith's seductive ways, these features serve Judith well as they make her (and this book) seem more realistic. It seems that, in order to make Judith all the more believable, the author took great care to see that the "romantic situations [were] well worked out."³⁵ This also carries through in the portraits of other characters. That is, each person represents a personification of either a virtue or a vice and it is immediately clear to the reader who the heroes and who the villains will be at the end of the story.

Interestingly enough, many contend that all these features serve to separate Judith from the mainstream of Hebrew literature:

Strongly Jewish as the writer is in his tendency and thought, his presentation is markedly affected by Hellenistic style and motifs. Extensive speeches, prayers, a vehicle for conveying religious lessons and exhortation, alternate with narrative sections. This stylistic device, common in Hellenistic literature . . . The Book of Judith has been called "a typical Hellenistic novel . . ."³⁶

Yet, there is more to Judith than this. Winter misses a very basic point: the Book of Judith stands firmly within the Hebrew literary tradition.³⁷ While its form does derive from Greek antecedents more than from Hebrew literature, the Book of Judith typifies the Hebrew short story. In fact, all of the elements discussed above combine to comprise this form.

As Campbell outlines,³⁸ the Hebrew short story is exemplified by:

- 1) a quite distinctive literary style, employing an artistic and elevated prose containing rhythmic elements which are poetic . . .
- 2) an interest in rather typical people, even if they are important people [combined] with an interest in mundane affairs, even when these affairs turn out to be significant on a national scale.
- 3) . . . [a] design both entertaining and instructive.³⁹

Clearly, this is a fine description of Judith. Yet, these identifying characteristics, it might be argued, are common to novellas, folk tales and wisdom literature as well. Is this separate, generic category of short story a justifiable one or merely another academic invention? Again, with Campbell, we think it is wholly justifiable. Judith, and stories like it, (i.e., Tobit, Daniel, Esther, and, earlier, Ruth)

came into being under changing circumstances, in that they were involved with interpreting what has happily been called the Yahwist revolution, and were designed to portray the radical effect of a new and great commitment upon the part of

a new people who were once not a people. The purpose of these stories was not simple edification, indeed instruction, in the meaning of the new faith-commitment. The literary form⁴⁰ was new, the people were new, the purpose was new.

And, in the form, again, there is no effort at distinguishing history from fiction. A work such as Judith need only be a "plausible story." The author has crafted a tale which "reflected accurately and knowingly such circumstances as those which would"⁴¹ create the proximate cause for Holofernes', Judith's, Achior's and Israel's actions.

In summary, we feel that Judith is most definitely an historicized wisdom folk tale in short story form. As such, it stands within the bounds of Hebrew literature, despite its manifold Hellenistic characteristics and influences. For further proof of this contention, we cite the following facts and authorities:

A. Rost⁴² sees a unity in Judith which stems from the fact that it is a single, complete narrative with a logical structure; he calls it an "organic unity."⁴³

B. Adar feels that all Biblical narratives contain a basic unit of a short, individual story describing one particular occurrence.⁴⁴ This certainly is the case with Judith.

C. There are, in Judith, motifs similar to those found in other "late" Biblical books (i.e., in Hasmonean

times and thereafter). For instance: there is the wise courtier motif so prominent in Daniel, the presence of Israelites at a foreign court as in both Daniel and Esther, women saviors and feasting as literary themes as in Esther, and other pervasive motifs, themes and devices taken from the wisdom schools.

VI. Summary

It is not necessary here, we believe, to summarize all our evidence to date. It should be self-evident. The challenge which is now before us is to synthesize this evidence. What does it all mean? Taken as individual bits and pieces, we can see no emergent conclusions. To claim that Judith is patterned on, or a response to, Esther, is an assumption unsupported by fact.⁴⁵ To describe origins or set a date for composition of Judith based on literary parallels alone is to engage in "parallelomania."⁴⁶ Yet, the information is not worthless. We can now ask ourselves why the author combines such elements as historical romance, political machinations, feasting, martyrdom, and a female savior in one book. What point is being made? What should we be learning from this information? What does all this mean in determining Judith's origins?

VII. Investigation of Authorial Motivation

A. Subplots

1. Patriotism
2. Woman as savior
3. Theology
 - a) Wisdom

Three prominent subplots of Judith⁴⁷ invite our attention. The first is that which describes and glorifies Judith's patriotism. The portrait of her ardor and passionate zeal for Israel is so overdrawn that we must conclude it to be meant as a didactic point. As such, the Book of Judith carries a message which attempts to "instruct the people and to inflame the Judaeans' patriotism."⁴⁸

Judith herself stands out calmly against a tumultuous backdrop and, as such, is presented as a model worthy of emulation. Thus, we are taught that patriotic fervor is a valuable asset, indeed necessary to the nation's survival. Yet, we are warned against fanaticism and irrationalism which characterize the characters in this book presented as negative examples.

This example of strength and serenity amidst weakness and chaos is used by Eissfeldt to prove that the anti-Jewish persecutions of Hellenistic and Roman Judea were the background for this book. Further, he demonstrates that these persecutions "produced a new type of legend, or at any rate elaborated it and gave it a significance it had not formerly had, the martyr-legend, where the word 'martyr' is to be understood in its original sense of 'witness, confessor.'"⁴⁹

Judith's concern is, of course, to witness to, and deliver, the entire people. This is in contrast to earlier hero tales of Hebrew origin wherein the martyr was concerned

only with personal or tribal deliverance. This new development is in support of a late date for this book.

This is further supported when we see that the idea of nation had gained a new psychic importance hitherto unknown. We sense the real danger being addressed here is that surrounding the fear of national extermination. The "mob scenes" convey to us images of tremendous fear and even pandemonium. No longer is the enemy threatening to deport the captives (as was the case in Jeremiah's time) or to war against one tribe, it is the entire nation (living both in and out of Palestine) which is in danger.

This danger reflects, we believe, an historical reality. What is often marveled at is the fact that Israel's savior is a woman. Keeping to our assertion of a late date of composition for this book (first century C.E.), this is no longer so surprising. During times of overbearing emergency and especially "in patriarchal societies where male and female roles are sharply distinguished [i.e., first century Judea⁵⁰] and women have a passive role, that in fantasy produce myths of a female savior." ^{51,52}

That the danger was great is clear. Not even Deborah is as militant as Judith; neither Ruth nor Esther is so outrightly seductive. Our author is certainly not presenting Judith's actions as ones necessarily worthy of commendation. The message, rather, seems to be that, in extreme circumstances,

we must take extreme measures. "Traditional" modes of action are, at times, insufficient or inappropriate. This point is underscored beautifully by the choice of a heroine for this story rather than a hero.

Such indications point to Judith being, like Esther, a product of "heightened political awareness," written in response to, or as a result of, a national political crisis. That our author and characters are anonymous to us intensifies this perception of crisis. Instead of ascribing authorship of this book to an otherwise-known figure (i.e., as was the case with a book like The Assumption of Moses), this author chose anonymity. This, combined with the savior herein being a woman, fortifies our belief that it was written in an atmosphere of crisis with the concomitant need to hide behind a veil of anonymity.

The third subplot in this book relevant to our investigation is concerned with the theology in Judith. "Judith's speech at the heart of the book [in itself a clear statement of theology] suggests that that work had a didactic and exhortatory function."⁵³ This function is found in the teaching of theology. It is a twofold theology which is found in Judith in that the view of God and the universe put forth centers on the exaltation and personification of wisdom.⁵⁴

Wisdom is held up as the road to take for understanding of God. But it is more than a mere didactic point as such. Wisdom is the preferred theologic mode. Wisdom is found through the evocation of ordinary events. These are portrayed as the stage for God's (subtle) providential activity. Through self-revelation, it is God's attributes of righteousness and justice which are stressed (cf. 7:28) in Judith. Also manifest is God's revelation of character through historical happenings (16:3).⁵⁵ These points are instructive of God's nature. But, more than that, they form the core of the author's theologic statement. Through wisdom, we learn of God and, thus, of God's workings in the world.

The theologic stance taken in Judith is similar to, and often identical with, the theology of much of Torah: especially that position taken by the Deuteronomist. More than being just interesting in and of itself:

The form critics have shown that theological conceptions are often carried within particular forms and traditions, whose histories can be determined. Moreover, the function of the form helps in understanding the function of the particular theological conception.⁵⁶

More than the didactic and theologic points concerning God in relation to the workings of the world, we can see that the author's choice of form can be helpful in determining Judith's date of composition and origin. As regards this form, we have, of course, identified Judith as a wisdom tale.

B. Summary

1. Review of the evidence
 - a) Most commonly accepted decoding
 - b) Proposed new decoding
 - (1) Achior
 - (2) Judith
 - (3) Bethulia
 - (4) other characters
 - c) Proposed new dating of Judith
 - (1) events described
 - (2) problems solved
 - d) Purpose of Judith

As we set out to review the Book of Judith, we must state that, first of all, we reject any assertion that Judith is a simple history book, written without any esoteric intent or meaning.⁵⁷ The numerous didactic points elaborated above negate that assertion. Further, neither can we take a piecemeal approach to the historical problems presented. This has been done since the time of Augustine who merely reidentified the main characters,⁵⁸ but never asked why those personalities were disguised in the first place.⁵⁹ We believe that the entire story must be systematically investigated. This is so because discovering the esoteric teachings in Judith is vital not only to a proper understanding of this book, but also toward identifying the time in which it was written.

Any attempt to discover Judith's true teaching is, however, fraught with difficulty.⁶⁰ If we can identify one, or a cluster, of factors which served as impetus to writing, we might be better able to discover both the esoteric teaching and date of composition. Traditionally,

this has been made short work of. Scholars have tried to identify the main characters of Judith with various historical personalities, but have gone no further in their investigations. Thus, the "traditional" decoding of Judith is as follows:

Nebuchadnezzar//Antiochus IV Epiphanes
 Holofernes//Nicanor
 Judith//Judah HaMaccabee
 Bethulia//Schechem
 Joakim//Alcimus
 Nineveh//Antioch
 Achior//

While this solves the problem of putting all the characters and places into one consistent time frame, it does not harmonize the story in Judith with events we know to have taken place in the lives of these people and places. There are always loose ends which defy tying here precisely because a Maccabean date of composition is being advocated for this book.⁶¹

The majority of scholarly reasoning holds that Bethulia was indeed intended to represent Schechem. The conclusion is arrived at through the reasoning laid down in Appendix #3. We disagree with this and arrive at that conclusion through the following steps: 1) Any scholar who supports a Maccabean date for Judith accepts that the stress on halachic detail is reflective of the Pharisaic platform, such as it was, in that period of time. They argue that 2) such a stress arose in response to the persecution of the Pharisees by Alexander Jannaeus (104-78).⁶²

It was the only weapon with which the Pharisees could counter Janneus. 3) The conclusion reached is that the Book of Judith was a Pharisaic propaganda statement aimed at Janneus after their split. It is this logic which allows the victory at Bethulia to be identified with Janneus' defeat at Schechem.

And herein lies the problem. This theory does not account for the favorable mention of the High Priest in this book. Historically, it will be remembered,⁶³ the High Priest was in league with Janneus (especially after 95 B.C.E.).⁶⁴ This fact is well known. And further, this dating obviates the chronological freedom of identifying Holofernes and Nicanor.⁶⁵ These two points have not, we believe, been considered before. All that is happening here is that scholars have been shifting a few pieces within the puzzle without noticing the weakness of the framework itself. It is as if a Maccabean date has been deemed a fact and researchers have since been trying to fit all the evidence to the proof. Dating Judith to either the second or first century before the common era cannot satisfactorily account for all the information of this book.

To date Judith earlier than the second century would, however, deprive us of any basis for metaphor. The cast of characters could find attribution to real figures, but

we cannot locate historical events either similar enough in nature or intent to comfortably assert that they were indeed the ones being disguised. Let us propose the following:

Judith//Judea
 Bethulia = Jerusalem
 Nebuchadnezzar is the current Roman emperor
 Holofernes represents a conglomeration of Roman generals
 Achior is all the former Judean enemies (such as the Samaritans) who were now also engaged against the Romans⁶⁶

Since these proposals are out of the mainstream of Biblical criticism, we shall explain further. Taking the name Achior first, we posit the Hebrew spelling as: אַחִיּוֹר. Dividing this into two words, we may translate it as "my brother [who has seen the] light."

Further, the justification for seeing Judith as Judah HaMaccabee's female counterpart is based on both etymologic and "historic" considerations. While her military victory may have evoked images of Judah's, we feel Judith is more consonantly symbolic of the entire nation of Judah. Her trials and tribulations reflect those of her people. Furthermore, her victory is not at all a military one. The enemy is only finally beaten back because of their own fear. And lastly, Judah participated in the national cultic life after his victory. This was the point of his entire fight. In Judith, the cultic life allowed her was only a

private one that was adhered to regardless of military standing in battle.

Bethulia - as is well known - is a fictional place-name. Many scholars feel that it is a code name for Schechem. As shown above, we cannot find firm historic basis for this assertion. Further, we can discover no reason the author would have had to cloak the city of Schechem under an assumed name in this book.⁶⁷ Other cities in the book are given their familiar titles. Jerusalem is the one Jewish site that has regularly been given various circumlocutory names: the City of Gold, the Lonely City, and so forth.

Descriptively, Bethulia is very similar to Jerusalem. It is on a hill (10:10), near a spring (6:11), surrounded by mountains (6:10-12) and not far from Dothaim (4:6,7; 3:18; 8:3). Bethulia seems to be an apt code name for Jerusalem. It can be translated as "the virgin [city] of the Eternal." Further, the military invasion of the valley of Salem described in chapters 2-3 paints a picture of successive towns falling before Holofernes' advance. Only one stronghold remains: Bethulia. This situation was repeated again and again from the time of David and Hezekiah onward. Whoever controlled Jerusalem, controlled Judah.

We have translated Achior as "my brother who has seen the light." What significance could this name carry? Agreeing with Alonso-Schoekel that Judith was "addressed to a divided community,"⁶⁸ this name seems to be an appeal for unity. Looking at the events of 6 C.E. when Jews and Samaritans joined together to protest Archelaus' oppressive rule, we find historical meaning not only in this name, but in all the events described in Judith. Achior was an appeal to Jews to work together, for once, to defeat a common enemy.

Thus, we propose that the Book of Judith was written as a reflection of the historical situation in post-Herodian Judea. Having suffered Herod's reign and an increasingly threatening Roman military presence,⁶⁹ the reign of Archelaus finally forced Jews and Samaritans to band together - despite their past histories of mutual hatred and divisiveness - in protest.⁷⁰ Thus, Achior represents a former enemy, from within the camp, who was needed to fight a common oppressor.

Chapter 8:1-8, in connecting Israel and Judith is also an appeal to unity (keeping in mind that Judith represents Judea, not Judah HaMaccabee). Historically, we know that "the late 20's and the two decades of growing anarchy which [followed them] culminated in the revolt of 66."⁷¹ This is reflected in Judith. The chaotic

environment is clearly portrayed in the opening scenes on confrontation between the Israelite populace and their leadership. The appeals for unity are now apparent to us as well. And the threat is, of course, very real. It is obvious that the immediate cause behind the writing of this book was the Roman threat to Judean independence. So great was this threat that the people actually feared extermination. Judith is, thus, an appeal to the people of the land - all of the Jews - to present a unified front against the Romans under the "Pharisaic" flag (such as it was).

In this vein, 11:12-18 must be seen as a denunciation of the collaborationist party (Sadducees). In the late 50's and into the 60's of the common era, the Pharisees, as they gained ascendancy, were increasingly desirous of national unity and of being the national unifiers. Through the character of Achior and this book, the Pharisees issued a call to the Samaritan "remnant"⁷² and others in the land (the Idumeans, perhaps?) to join their cause. Likewise, there are other names and places which can now be decoded:

Holofernes is probably a general term representing a Greek ascendancy, just as "Antiochus" was a general term to represent the power of Assyria, "Ptolemy" that of Egypt, "Caesar" that of Rome, and "Czar" that of Russia.⁷³

We date Judith's composition between the years 50 and 66 C.E. Since Judith describes a protracted period of time,

we need not identify each character and place with pinpoint accuracy. This book represents a conglomeration of people, typified through prototypes.⁷⁴ This dating sheds light on the perplexity raised by the fact that "Judith overcame her opponent with the very strategy he was using to overcome her (and her people)."⁷⁵ This was indeed the stance the Pharisees took against Rome.

To date Judith any later would be to misrepresent Pharisaic teachings. For, as Neusner shows, the Pharisaic position of political intervention underwent revision, especially in the 60's, and moved toward a belief in the strength and necessity of internal resistance. This is reflected in the lately developed doctrines of resurrection, angelology and immortality of the soul, all of which are absent in this book.⁷⁶

Judith also represents an appeal for reform. The Jewish mob in chapter seven is not pictured at all favorably and are rightly rebuked for their "popular" Judaism which, it is inferred, has little to do with true (i.e., Pharisaic) Judaism and how it should be lived. The Pharisees were not only exhorting the people to unify behind them; they were also issuing a theological directive calling for repentance. Without this repentance, Achior knows (and the Pharisees would counsel), there is no hope for victory.⁷⁷

Finally, we believe that Judith was addressed to the entire Jewish people in an attempt "to arouse the spirit of nationalism and patriotism in a time of great national calamity."⁷⁸ As such, we can classify Judith as a document of "domestic propaganda."⁷⁹ There are many other documents extant from this same time period which fall into this category, both from Jewish and non-Jewish pens. What is specifically of import to us is the coded and theologic nature of this document.⁸⁰

In closing, we must be careful not to confuse purpose with later interpretation. We have already mentioned some literary problems with this book. Scholars debate the originality of chapter 16 and other passages. This is not, however, relevant to our discussion. Both Esther and Judith, as we now have them, are redacted works. We hold that this redaction was done over a short period of time, that although there may have been oral and literary precedents for these two books, they are both creations of a specific period and from a definite need. These facts are not contradictory: we believe that the final products before us were written in the first century of the common era and received by a community under threat by foreign powers and divided within itself. We are only interested in these final products as received in their contemporary settings. This is the only way to properly investigate

the intent of these books as we now have them, the question of the earlier redactions is an interesting one, but not here. From this point, we shall now move to a more detailed comparison and contrast of these two books.

ENDNOTES

¹B.M. Metzger, RSV Oxford Annotated Introduction to the Apocrypha (New York: Oxford, 1957), p. xi.: "by way of summarizing . . ., it may be said that for a Roman Catholic most of the books which Protestants regard as the Apocrypha (but not the Prayer of Manasseh and 1 and 2 Esdras) are held to be authoritative Scripture and are called deutero-canonical. Other books, which neither Protestants nor Roman Catholics regard as inspired or authoritative, are called apocryphal by Catholics and pseudepigraphical by Protestants." On this question of canonical distinctions, see also Ibid., p. 6 and B. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall), pp. 2-3 and II Esdras 14:1-6. See Appendix #2.

²As we stated in the previous chapter, a theme is herein considered as an element of motif. A motif is comprised of recurring, salient themes. The definition of theme is actually a subjective one. We feel that a theme is best defined, literarily, as a dominant idea in a work. The subjective nature of this lies in the fact that identification of theme thus depends on one's interpretation of the meaning and purpose of a work. But it also must fit the definition of motif, for every literary work has at least one theme and motif.

³When speaking of the two sections in this book, we are referring to chapters 1-7 and 8-16. While some scholars have attempted to use this bifurcation as a "proof" of the composite nature of Judith, we believe the book is a thematic and structural unity. This is the presupposition and goal of our analysis.

⁴Toni Craven, "Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith," Semeia 8 (1976/7), pp. 75-101. Page 81 is cited here.

⁵Ibid., p. 88.

⁶Ibid., p. 84.

⁷Norman L. Bentwich, Josephus (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1914), p. 30.

⁸George W.E. Nickelsburg, Jr., Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), p. 105.

⁹Craven, "Artistry . . .," pp. 91-2.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 89-90.

¹¹Ibid., p. 94.

¹²W.E.O. Oesterley, An Introduction to the Books of the Apocrypha (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1935), p. 19.

¹³Luis Alonso-Schoekel, "Narrative Structures in the Book of Judith," Protocol Series of the Colloquies of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 11 (Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union of the University of California, 1974), p. 12.

¹⁴Oesterley, Introduction, p. 22.

¹⁵There are three different Nebuchadnezzars to consider. There is the Nebuchadnezzar of the Bible, known historically as Nebuchadnezzar II. He ruled during the time of Ezekiel the prophet, when Zedekiah was King of Judah. This is, we assume, the Nebuchadnezzar referred to in our text. Neither Nebuchadnezzar III or IV ruled at any time even proximate to the action of this book. Their dates are, respectively: 522 and 521 B.C.E.

¹⁶cf. Nehemiah 12:26 and also Susanna.

¹⁷The primary source for this is Diodorus XVI 47,4. It is also recorded that Jews joined in this revolt, but suffered the fate of the vanquished. cf. also, J.C. Dancy, The Shorter Books of the Apocrypha (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1972), p. 78.

¹⁸For a discussion of the concept of historicity as it was considered in the ancient world, see (Erich Auerbach, "The Greek Epic . . ." and Adar, Biblical Narrative. There is also John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller, eds., Israelite and Judean History [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977].)

¹⁹We believe that we cannot really use this genealogy to any profit at all. There is no scholarly agreement on the meaning of terms such as . . . We do not know if they are used consistently throughout the Bible, let alone within one book.

²⁰Charles C. Torrey, Ezra Studies from The Library of Biblical Studies, Harry M. Orlinsky, ed. (NY: KTAV Publishing House, 1970). See especially p. 91f. for his explanation of the meaning of the word Bethulia. We feel he makes a good point when he transposed Bethulia into 1:6, 8:9, but when he identifies Bethulia as Schechem, he is at a loss to provide any meaning for the proposed transposition he offers.

²¹Dancy, The Shorter Books, p. 68. See also: R.H. Pfeiffer, History of New Testament Times with an Introduction to the Apocrypha (NY: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1949), p. 296 re: the improbability of this book's description of Arphaxad's reign.

²²Jenkin Lloyd Jones, The Blank Leaf Between the Old and New Testaments (Chicago: Unity Publishing Company, 1900), p. 86.

²³Julian Morgenstern, The Historical Background of the Book of Judith (Cincinnati, Spring 1902), pp. 27-30 cf. vv. 1:6, 8:9, 4:5, 8:1, 2:1, and 7:2 as those cited by scholars in support of this assertion.

²⁴For a lucid discussion of the problem of determining the original language in which Judith was written, see Zeitlin in Morton Enslin, The Book of Judith, with a general introduction and appendices by Solomon Zeitlin (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972), pp. 39-42. Herein, Zeitlin reviews and evaluates all the various evidences.

²⁵It would be well to note here that the earliest mention of the Book of Judith outside the book itself is in the writings of the Christian author, Clement of Rome. He wrote at the end of the first century of the common era. (Source: Metzger, An Introduction, p. 53.)

²⁶Lester J. Whitelocke, An Analytical Concordance of the Books of the Apocrypha (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1978), 2 vols. Vol. II, pp. 40-2.

²⁷Please refer to our discussion of onomastic and geographic considerations, *passim*.

²⁸Whitelocke, An Analytical Concordance, pp. 40-2.

²⁹Enslin, The Book of Judith, p. 115, n. 15.

³⁰*Supra*, pp. 35ff, chapter 2.

³¹We will further define wisdom literature, *infra*.

³²cf. Chapter 2, pp.39-43. 1) The "need for externalization of phenomena in terms perceptible to the senses" is filled by the massive detail and background provided in Judith. 2) The craft behind the writing of Judith is evidenced by the fact that her discourse is always direct and clear - and is nevertheless filled with double entendre. 3) The tension builds throughout the Book of Judith, but never to the point of interfering with the progression of the plot.

³³Drews, p. 5.

³⁴Morgenstern, The Historical Background, p. 25.

³⁵cf. Sasson, Ruth for his analyses of the place of the folk/hero tale in Biblical and Apocryphal literature. E.F. Campbell, Jr., in Ruth, the Anchor Bible #7 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975) describes the function of the short story form as well, pp. 5-23. Both of these forms are further explored in our previous chapter on Esther. We shall demonstrate how both books share this form and explain why this is not an accidental occurrence.

³⁶P. Winter, "Judith, Book of," in Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1962), v. 2, p. 1024.

³⁷Two basic reasons for this assertion are the obvious Hebraic and Judaic influences present in the basic thought and theologic tendencies of Judith.

³⁸Campbell, Ruth, pp. 5-23.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴²Leonhard Rost, Judaism Outside the Hebrew Canon, David E. Green, trans. (Nashville: The Abingdon Press, 1976), pp. 52-6.

⁴³Adar, The Biblical Narrative, p. 55.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 7, 49.

⁴⁵ This is asserted by Zeitlin in Enslin, Book of Judith, pp. 13-26.

⁴⁶ For a delightful discussion of parallelomania, see Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," in Samuel Sandmel, Two Living Traditions (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972), pp. 291-305.

⁴⁷ We have previously defined a theme to be a dominant idea of the work and an element of motif. Subplot differs from theme in that it is not at all a dominant idea of the work but rather a side issue which carries part of the author's message but does nothing to advance the plot along.

⁴⁸ Enslin, The Book of Judith, p. 1.

⁴⁹ Otto Eissfeldt, The Old Testament - An Introduction, Peter R. Ackroyd, trans. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), p. 46.

⁵⁰ For a fascinating discussion of this issue, see Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), pp. 92-109. This is only tangentially related to our discussion, but her perspective is a fascinating one, based on philosophical theory, archaeology, anthropology and sociological data.

⁵¹ Mary P. Coote, "Comments on 'Narrative Structures in the Book of Judith'," in Alonso-Schoekel, "Narrative Structures," pp. 21-6. Page 26 is cited here.

Swidler is a bit more sarcastic perhaps when he suggests that the moral of Judith reflects on God's greatness in that God is able to effect salvation from even the "lowliest of instruments, women." (cf. Leonard Swidler, Women in Judaism [Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1976], p. 56 and passim.)

⁵² Morgenstern, The Historical Background, pp. 22-27 in particular represents that school of scholarship whose Victorianism is offended by Judith's actions. We feel he and others of his ilk have not attempted to honestly evaluate the entire setting and situation of this story.

53 George W.E. Nickelsburg, p. 107.

54 cf. Patrick William Skehan, "The Hand of Judith," Catholic Bible Quarterly 25:1 (1963), pp. 94-110 for a fascinating exposition of the personification of wisdom in Judith. Further, wisdom is personified in Judith and, as such, serves as a counterpoint to others' reliance on power. It is thus a didactic point.

55 This trait is commonly emphasized in much of Torah, especially in the Deuteronomic writings. These being the latest strata or writings, are considered by some to be the Torah's most evolved statement of theology. It is thus that Oesterley, in An Introduction states, "the belief in God [in Judith] is identical with that of the Old Testament in its most highly developed form.", p. 74.

56 Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature, p. 10.

57 That the book is patently non-historical is obvious. If the Temple were standing, Nebuchadnezzar II could not be ruling. Also, 1:1ff; 4:13-4, 18-20 all present historical problems. If none of this is convincing, 2:21-22 in which Holofernes' army travels 300 miles in 3 days must convince us of the exaggerations, at least, which permeate Judith.

58 Another important point must be made here. Augustine identified Nebuchadnezzar with Cambyses (529-522) or Xerxes (485-465) and thus implicitly negated the existence of the wisdom motifs we feel so strongly inform this book. These esoteric teachings are vital to a proper understanding of the book and cannot be ignored or wished away with a forced scheme of character identification.

59 We feel that this is the greatest neglect of all this book has suffered. A thousand different combinations of people, places and events have been tried. Yet, they always come up short because the most basic question, what was the need for such secrecy about?, has not been asked.

60 Neusner, From Politics, p. xxii, states succinctly, "No source is historically useless. The problem is always to determine just what it is good for - what place, period

or matter it accurately portrays." With this in mind, we must tread carefully.

⁶¹ Again, we refer here to Morgenstern, Historical Background, for the most thorough review of the various proposals and discussions of the Maccabean theory.

⁶² Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1959), pp. 33-37 describes the conflict and split between Janneus and the Pharisees.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ The Pharisees revolted against the High Priesthood over the issue of compliance with the Hellenizers during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. They finally broke completely with the High Priest Janneus (103-76 B.C.E.), though were again in favor during the reign of his successor, Salome Alexandra.

⁶⁵ Nicanor was defeated in 161 B.C.E. by Judas. See II Maccabees 8-15 and I Maccabees 3-7.

⁶⁶ Torrey, in Ezra Studies, finds the exact importance of the Samaritan split in that it was one of "the chief of those forces which principally shaped Jewish theology . . . in and after the Greek period . . . [and] contributed most to the development of the tendencies which produced the narrower and more exclusive type of Judaism . . ." (p. 322) which is reflected in Pharisaic so-called realism.

⁶⁷ This statement is based on the theory of coded writing laid down by Strauss, Persecution, pp. 7-38 which has been reviewed in the previous chapter. Coded writing is, and was, only used when honesty was impossible. We can find no reason for having to disguise the city of Schechem under an assumed name in any period of Jewish history. The city of Jerusalem, however, is another story. For a modern example of coded writing, see Appendix #5.

⁶⁸ Alonso-Schoekel, "Narrative Structures," p. 2.

⁶⁹ This was especially true after the Roman annexation of Judea in 6 C.E.

⁷⁰Josephus makes it very clear that during this time, the Jewish community was far from being united. See Wars, passim.

⁷¹E. Mary Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), p. 144.

⁷²If Achior indeed represents a Samaritan, we can further see the Pharisaic hand behind this book. No longer is his national status the stumbling block to his conversion. No longer can the reason for Judith's exclusion from canon be based on the claim that Achior's conversion was either incomplete (without both circumcision and immersion) or that it contravened Biblical law (Deut. 23:4). No, now we can see Achior and his conversion as another example of Pharisaic encoding and Biblical exegesis. See especially Torrey, Ezra Studies, for his analysis of the schism and its renewed import in the late Hellenistic and early Roman eras, pp. 332ff.

⁷³Jenkin Lloyd Jones, The Blank Leaf Between the Old and New Testaments (Chicago: Unity Publishing Company, 1900), p. 86.

⁷⁴This is especially true in wisdom literature. cf. our discussion on the previous chapter on prototypes and wisdom literature, pp. 39-43.

⁷⁵Alonso-Schoekel, "Narrative Structures," p. 37.

⁷⁶These doctrines developed, historically, later than other Pharisaic doctrines and may be seen as responses to national, historical and emotional crises suffered under Roman domination.

⁷⁷See Judith, chapter 5, especially verses 19-21.

⁷⁸Raymond F. Surburg, Introduction to the Intertestamental Period (St. Louis, London: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), p. 103.

⁷⁹Eric William Heaton, The Book of Daniel (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1956), p. 38.

⁸⁰ We believe that Judith was written to spread the Pharisaic program of resistance which was justified in theological terms. This justifies the need for encoding.

CHAPTER #4 - ESTHER AND JUDITH:
CONTRASTS AND COMPARISONS

OUTLINE

- I. Contrasts
 - A. Halachah
 - B. Non-Jews
 - C. Literary Concerns
 - D. Theology
 - E. Summary
- II. Comparisons
 - A. Structural
 - B. Literary
 - 1. Wisdom literature and typologies
 - C. Thematic
 - 1. Women
 - 2. Theology
 - D. Other Biblical Literature
 - 1. Structural
 - 2. Literary
 - 3. Theological
 - E. Encoding: Why were these books written?

I. Contrasts

In most previous researches, the apparent differences between Esther and Judith have been emphasized.¹ Most of this has been based on the fact that these two stories just appear to be so different. On the one hand, we have Esther, a passive, complying and complacent woman who - almost through no fault of her own - saves her people from annihilation. Judith is just the opposite type of person. She is active, defiant, and vigorous; she steps firmfootedly onto the stage of history and takes command. No distinction could be more obvious.

When these two works are considered side by side, it is often done only because each book has a woman in the role of protagonist.² Used as the starting point for discussion, further contrasts are drawn. Precisely because this has been the predominant thrust of the literature, it will suffice here to recount these contrastive points only briefly.

A. Halachah

Most scholars note that there are opposite attitudes manifest in these books toward the importance of observing Jewish law. Judith is scrupulous in her fulfillment of religious obligations while Esther flagrantly violates Halachah.³ Further, many note that, concerning the trappings of piety, Esther is the only book of Hebrew Scripture in which neither God⁴ or the Land of Israel is mentioned.⁵ The

Jews in the Book of Esther seem to be oblivious, also, to any typical Jewish forms of religious expression. Judith's speech, in contrast, is devotedly pietistic. For her, prayer is a frequent and natural act. The canonical Book of Esther contains none of this at all.⁶

B. Non-Jews

We also find that our heroines have very different attitudes toward their enemies. Esther is willing to work, as it were, through the system and collaborate with Ahasherus' eunuchs. This is how she achieves her ends. In fact, Esther seems to be so compliant, we are not sure at the beginning of the book whether or not she will identify with the Jews at all, let alone aid them in their distress. Even Mordechai plays an appeasing role when he and Esther use their position and power to restrain the Jews from taking spoil and plundering their enemies' goods at the very moment of Jewish triumph.⁷ Many find the most shocking example of accommodation in this book to be the fact that Esther sleeps with the man who is the very symbol of Jewish oppression, King Ahasherus.

Judith, to the contrary, destroys her enemies. She begins by refusing even to eat a meal with Holofernes, let alone consent to have sex with him. She is portrayed as standing continually outside the enemy's camp; both in thought and deed, if not in physical terms as well.

C. Literary concerns

Stylistically, there are major differences between these books. Firstly, Judith speaks in undefined double-entendre. She knows what she means and Holofernes thinks he knows what she means. Esther, however, is very open with Hatach and Harbona, making them privy to the details of her thoughts and plots. The only time she is not straightforward is when it is a question of disclosing her identity. Yet, when the time comes to do so, she does not hesitate and even does so before the king in a manner which endangers her life. Her duplicity is only temporary and was only understood as temporary throughout this story. Holofernes, in contrast to Haman, never quite knew what happened to him, why his end came when it did.

Speech is important in yet another way. In general tone, the Book of Judith is "more prolix (cf. 4:9-12) and bombastic than the Book of Esther."⁸ This accounts for the difference in bulk between these books, to be sure. But moreover, in Judith we sense that these differences contribute to a distinct difference in the mode of literary presentation which is clearly evident here.⁹ Their structures are very similar;¹⁰ nevertheless, the intangible quality of mood in Esther and Judith is strikingly different.

Zeitlin adds one more fact to the above in his detailing of linguistic contrasts that should be noted here.

In Esther, her people are called "Jews." Judith, however, refers to the "Hebrews" and the "children of Israel." He feels this is a significant difference and uses this to support his conclusion that Judith was a Diasporic book written with intentionally contrastive modes and themes "to offset the Book of Esther."¹¹

D. Theology

Implicit in Zeitlin's conclusion (with which we do not entirely agree) is a use of this linguistic evidence to assert that the theological differences between Esther and Judith are, actually, the main divergence between them. It is claimed that Esther represents a Hellenized philosophy of Judaism because Esther herself was an assimilated Jew. Along these lines, we would have to say that Judith personifies neo-Pharisaic theology. Zeitlin does so argue¹² and adds that Judith's latent Pharisaism was actually an appeal to assimilated Jews. Her victory is supposed to forgo the triumph of religiosity.¹³

From this line of reasoning, Esther is then judged to be a less worthy heroine than Judith because she did not adhere to ritual prescriptions as did Judith. This is an anachronistic judgment.¹⁴ Such a decision is based on the assumption that ritual observance was the acid test of Jewish religiosity and fidelity when these books were written. We cannot assert that a standard of measurement such as this one

existed prior to the fifth century of this era!¹⁵ Because Esther does not pray as did Judith or give voice to her feelings about the Land of Israel is not proof that she was any less "religious" than Judith.¹⁶

E. Summary

This section has presented the main points of divergence between the books of Esther and Judith. This has been, in past researches, the main emphasis of the literature. What is too infrequently discussed is the similarity between these books. These points of positive comparison do not negate the differences, but they do temper their importance. These juncture points of style, structure and purpose support both the dating and authorship claims of this paper as well as the assertion that these books arose from the same school of thought, comprised of people intent on defeating the Roman enemy.

II. Comparisons

A. Structural

As noted, Bickermann has an interesting structural theory. He posits that Esther is actually a double-plotted book.¹⁷ In other words, the story of Esther and the story of Mordechai were initially independent from one another; now being knit together through "the interweaving of narrative and dialogue."¹⁸ He traces the themes of Mordechai's story back to the seventh century B.C.E. story

of Ahikar. Paralleling this, Schoekel sees Achior's functioning in Judith not only to fulfill the role of the typical proselyte in a didactic sense. He is present in order to "interweave his subplot into the main plot"¹⁹ of Judith. Thus, there is a striking comparison between these books in that Achior and Mordechai may actually be the structural links underpinning their respective stories. As such, they seem to be at once both necessary yet essentially superfluous to each book.

Perhaps this feature was common in the ancient world, or even peculiar to one group of writers. We cannot determine which of these statements is the true one. But it is nevertheless fascinating to note such points of similarity. Another in this genre is chiasm. We have fully explored the chiastic bases of both Judith and Esther in this paper. In summary, it is obvious that each book is built around a central episode which is surrounded by ever-widening, but concentric, circles of events and characters. The structure is both intricate and simple. It is intricate in that each part of each chiasm is underlaid with literary, structural and thematic doublets. One could, if so inclined, draw an infinite number of "mini-chiasms" within each element of the major structures outlined previously. We stress this identity between these books for one main reason: we have demonstrated that their intricate nature is not the

result of unplanned literary outpouring. That assertion defies logic. And, just as such structures did not arise spontaneously or haphazardly, this similarity is also not a chance occurrence. The fact, also, that the themes and motifs contained within each chiasm are often identical is yet another buttress to this claim. This shall be explained in greater detail.

B. Literary

1. Wisdom literature and typologies

Having seen the structural similarities, the shared literary features in these books become easier to spot. First of all, we are struck by the relatively long introductions²⁰ in which the heroines are not immediately introduced to us. In place of this, each book has a "chronological" beginning detailing the setting of the story and its auxiliary characters. In Judith, only Achior's speech breaks this time sequence pattern. This is paralleled in Esther by the seemingly early introduction of Mordechai who had been serving the king prior to Ahasherus' beauty contest.²¹ We have also observed how the chiastic structure of each book serves to set up the thesis of the story in the beginning (chapters one through seven in Judith, one to six in Esther), while the dénouement is markedly shorter than the presentation of the tension. The end of each book is similar to the other in that, literarily, "canticle replaces action, and celebration invades the narrative."²²

We notice, also, that the common features of popular literature are present in both books. As Dancy points out, both Esther and Judith typify ancient popular tales²³ in that they each contain elements of love, journey, conflict, reversal of fortune, conspiracy, distinct heroes and heroines, stereotypical characters, irony²⁴, pathos, ahistoricity, vindication and acclamation of the righteous, and a happy ending.²⁵

More explicitly, the "tedious description . . . confusions . . . exaggerations . . . and empty rhetoric . . ." ²⁶ do not necessarily indicate that either author "blundered deliberately to show that his work was fiction."²⁷ Rather, the age in which these works were written was one where there existed "no hard and fast demarcation between . . . historical and biographical writings and fiction."²⁸ These books, as we have shown, are characteristic Jewish adaptations of Hellenistic forms. The prominence of love and adventure in them²⁹ and the use of "the device of reconstructing history in the form of verbatim speeches,"³⁰ as well as such novelistic techniques as delay through description and "observations about human emotions and motivations"³¹ prove this point.³²

These similarities also extend to the specific genre of literature embodied in these books. As discussed, wisdom literature is easily identifiable through, among other

things, its typological characters: the childless wise man (Mordechai, Achior), adopted children (Esther, and Judaism [by Achior]), the witless dupe (Ahasherus, Holofernes), the righteous sage/wise courtier (Mordechai, Judith), and the conniving schemer (Haman, Holofernes). Other landmarks of wisdom literature shared between Esther and Judith are the play between command and prohibition, the heroines' movement from low to high social status, and the clear-cut distinction between good and evil and right and wrong.

So evident are these distinctions that we are able to even find parallels of purpose among the minor characters in these books. For example:

Judith's maid//Esther's eunuchs

Holofernes//Haman

Achior//Harbonah

Nebuchadnezzar//Ahasherus

Judeans//Diaspora Jews

Temple court//Shushan's court

These alignments bring into focus the common characterizations (stereotypes) in Esther and Judith. Achior and Harbonah personify the righteous gentile. Nebuchadnezzar and Ahasherus both issue "threatening but ultimately empty commands"³³ which serve to clue the reader in on the authors' perceptions of power. The presence of the "outside world," i.e., the Jews of Palestine and the Diaspora and the courts

of power in Jerusalem and Persia, is the vehicle used by each author to convey the individual teachings on nationalism and its place in Jewish life.

One final comment need be made on this topic of literary similarity. All these similarities are fascinating in other lights as well as those mentioned. We have just drawn many parallels. Some of them overlap, especially in our portrayal of the characterizations presented. One might ask how, for instance, Holofernes could be both the witless dupe and the conniving schemer in Judith. Is he meant to be like Haman or Ahasherus? We do not sense weakness in plot or fault in the structure of these books because this duplicity exists. On the contrary, it seems to us to be a monument to the skill of the authors that one character may fulfill more than one stereotypical role. The subtlety of this is truly what makes these stories lasting literary contributions, apart from their religious contexts. These are not mere morality plays, they are literary works with literary value.

- C. Thematic
 - 1. Women
 - 2. Theology

Also shared are the themes previously elucidated in our rhetorical outlines of Esther and Judith. Each work touches on the themes and motifs of inviolability and reversal,³⁴ reward and punishment, feasting and fasting,

loyalty and ultimate law, fate and predestination, and obedience and disobedience. War and battle are present as are comments on the drive for power and the hope for deliverance. In each book, the real battle is the one for control and in each book the victor is the one who realizes that only God can have full dominion in human life.³⁵

The theme of loyalty is of particular interest in this comparison of Esther and Judith. While their personal fortunes are played out, so to speak, behind closed doors, the reader becomes aware of the far-reaching import of their actions. This is the dual nature of loyalty for these women who are called to serve both kings and Jews. In fact, though Esther and Judith have been called dissimilar because there exists in Esther little emphasis on the "religious" part of life, we see that her patriotism (loyalty) is her religious expression and her strongly nationalistic impulse is what saves the Jews.³⁶

Thematically, the fact that each of these books centers on a woman is of great import to us. If each story reflects the degree of endangerment perceived by the author on behalf of the contemporary Jewish community, it is reflected, Swidler asserts, by the very fact that it is a woman who saves Israel.³⁷

Firstly, we see "ambivalent models of women"³⁸ in late antiquity in general and in these books in specific. Our heroines are, at once, both strong and weak figures. They "accomplish their ends largely through the stereotypical characteristics [of women] . . . [They] have the stereotypical impact on men . . . - namely, death."³⁹ The subtlety of these otherwise "weak" women is that they use their "weakness" to insure victory. The excessive details of both Esther and Judith's beauty and physical preparations is set in comic distinction against the "work" they do.

Whether the authors' motives were to demonstrate God's greatness as reflected in the ability to deliver Israel through the instrument of a "lowly" woman⁴⁰ or that one must "beware of beautiful women - they will unman you and lead you to death"⁴¹ is fundamentally irrelevant to this inquiry. What is relevant is the common picture of a heroine who saves her people.

We cannot be sure if there is a theological point being made in these books by the use of women as saviors. Too much time and too many polemics have accrued in the interim to accurately uncover this truth. But we do know that Esther and Judith both function as intercessors and counsel the people toward "resistance, not surrender."⁴² This is a definite reflection of a theological attitude.

While God is clearly the protagonist, there is no supernatural intervention evident in daily life. It is the people's leaders who effect change. Thus, people are the mode of effecting divine salvation.

As a sidelight to this, we believe that the easy acceptance of converts in both books (Achior in Judith and the masses in chapter nine of Esther) also mirrors this point. Why accept converts at all, especially if they are to be "a sore on Israel."⁴³ Converts were welcome, it is logically obvious, because they were believed to have something to bring to Judaism. If people were capable of effecting salvation, then all people were worthy of acceptance; indeed, converts were necessary to, perhaps, hasten salvation.

Many claim that there is no unified theological system in these two books and that this refutes our claim of common authorship. We are not bothered by this charge at all. As discussed extensively above, we are hard pressed to find any systematic theological system adhered to by all Jews in late antiquity. The very search for such an orthodoxy is fruitless.⁴⁴ Rather, the common features, structures and theologic modes of Esther and Judith point to origins in a time of flux and complexity. These books are, by no means, identical in any of the aspects discussed above. They are,

however, so similar that we cannot avoid the conclusion that this situation was not an accidental occurrence.

- D. Other Biblical Literature
 - 1. Structural
 - 2. Literary
 - 3. Theological

We cannot know if the similarities between Esther and Judith mean that one book necessarily prompted the writing of the other.⁴⁵ It is our feeling that the likenesses herein result from the fact that they are products of the same milieu. While each book is an independent work, the origins of each one predate the finished stories by centuries. We mean this in only the broadest sense of the word "origins." Nothing arises out of a vacuum. There are many older stories which bear marked similarity to Esther and Judith and may have served, in some way, as prototypes. Biblically, the Joseph tales in Genesis 37ff. are the best example of this.

As far back as the time of the Targum Sheni to Esther, a connection between Esther and Joseph has been noted.⁴⁶ Berg comments that, "The general framework of Judith is similar to those of the Joseph and Esther stories: Israelites at a foreign court overcome the obstacles threatening them and their people. This results in the saving of the people of Israel."⁴⁷ And like Esther and Judith, Joseph is also "a didactic wisdom story."⁴⁸

All three tales possess eroticism⁴⁹ and teach "the realization of wisdom precepts in practical life."⁵⁰ The history-like nature of each story in which the author "employs a knowledge of history and geography to heighten the realistic nature of the narratives"⁵¹ further enforces this impression of likeness. In all these stories, as well, the theological point is made with God being the absent hero, working through human beings.⁵²

On this theological note, Alonso-Schoekel views Achior as a direct refutation of the prescription of Deuteronomy 23:4.⁵³ He also notes that Judith, like Deuteronomy, does not furnish us with a Priestly tradition, but with a theological rendering of history similar to that offered in Chronicles, Jeremiah and Habbakuk.

Clearly, the Torah and other Biblical literature were formalized earlier than either of our two books. Yet, the influence is of more than passing note. We disagree with Gan who claims that Esther was merely "inspired" by the Joseph tales.⁵⁴ It is our contention that because these two books were written so relatively late in the history of Jewish Biblical writings, there was a conscious desire to place them firmly within the scope and tradition of earlier literature. We need not investigate any grandiose theories of attribution or refutation to see that the need for legitimization, even on an unconscious level, and the

desire for authenticity as reasons for borrowing or patterning from earlier literature.⁵⁵

E. Encoding: Why were these books written?

Just when these books were written is an open question. A date can only be approximated. We shall not reopen those issues discussed previously. What can be gainsaid from this comparison, however, is further support of our previous assertions: 1) In their emphases, we can see Esther and Judith to be transitional literary forms wherein the author "de-emphasizes, or even expunges, the motifs of the righteous man's exaltation to authority, transforming it into the motifs of vindication (or reward) of the righteous and/or condemnation (and punishment) of the wicked."⁵⁶ 2) The presence of "the fabulous and the fairy-tale elements"⁵⁷ in Esther and Judith also indicate their relatively late date in the developmental history of the Israelite short story and wisdom tale. 3) We have spent much effort here describing just how Esther and Judith typify Hellenistic literature popular in the first century Roman world. This has more than merely categorical interest. "The adoption of Hellenistic standards [the biography, for instance] and the use of Hellenistic forms"⁵⁸ in such a natural manner indicates that the author as well as the reading public both were comfortable with these standards and forms. This cannot be true of any era earlier than late antiquity.

But there is something more than this which is of paramount importance. This survey has attempted to demonstrate two things. First, Esther and Judith share many similarities which obviate their differences. Further, these traits form the major motifs, themes and structures of each work. Secondly, these similarities are present because each book is an example of coded writing. The true message of each work is written in between the lines. What the exact codes are has been discussed. The purpose of such encoding is both to hide and disseminate the message of the story. Both Esther and Judith were, we believe, written to spread propaganda to a Jewish audience. This was done when Roman censors forbade direct methods of passing information deemed antithetical to their aims. It is only this theory which accounts for all the particulars of these books as well as the general evidence concerning form and content presented above. Thus, we conclude that Esther and Judith were written during the first century C.E. for Jewish readers in both Palestine and the Diaspora.

ENDNOTES

¹cf. Enslin, Judith and Robert H. Pfeiffer, History of New Testament Times with an Introduction to the Apocrypha (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1949).

²Though some have argued that Mordechai is really the main character of Esther, we feel that this argument relies too heavily on Bickermann, Four Strange Books and Cazelles, "Note sur la composition . . ." who claim that the Book of Esther was originally two stories, now conflated into one. It is obvious to us that Esther is intended to be the protagonist here; this is emphasized not only in content but also in structure of the story, as detailed, supra, chapter 2, page 12ff.

³Despite attempts of such rabbinic commentators as Rashi and Ibn Ezra to uphold her piety in their comments on Esther 3:2ff., it is clear that Esther violates many basic ritual prescriptions of Jewish law. For instance, her observance of dietary and sabbatical laws is, at best, improbable. As concubine to a gentile king, she directly defies Ezra's proscription concerning intermarriage. For more on this, see (Jacob Moschander, The Book of Esther in the Light of History [Philadelphia: The Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1923], p. 110).

⁴Commentators make much of the passage in Esther (5:4) in which the initial letters of these four words form the tetragrammaton. This is, however, merely a pietistically wishful search for a distinct reference to God in this book.

⁵The word בְּרִיָּא is used only once in Esther (3:6), but without אֶרֶץ accompanying it. This happens rarely in Scripture and seems to indicate that it means only birthplace in this context and not land of birth or, as is often the case, the Land of Israel. Further, where the word occurs in Esther (2:10), it is also used without אֶרֶץ and means people, not birthplace.

⁶The implied contrast here is, of course, with the apocryphal additions to Esther. In both the LXX and A-text versions of these six additions (Mordechai's dream and its interpretation are additions A and F, the king's first and second letters are labelled additions B and E, the prayers of Esther and Mordechai form Addition C and Esther's appearance before King Ahasuerus is Addition D.), we find, in addition to divergencies from and contradictions with the

BT, many explicitly stated religious themes and concerns. As Moore states (Esther, p. LXIII), that these passages "are properly called additions is scarcely debatable." The debate centers on their origins and purpose. Their Hellenistic background is obvious, as is the contention that they were originally composed in Greek. (See Ibid., p. LXIII.) There are many redactional problems manifest by their existence, not the least of which concerns which one of the recensions, LXX or A, is original. Please see Moore, Ibid., and also (Carey A. Moore, Daniel, Esther and Jeremy: The Additions Anchor Bible #44 Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1977, pp. 3-23, 153-255.)

⁷We wonder if this appeasement is not in itself a message of political import for those Jews this book was designed to teach. In accord with Neusner, we see the Pharisaic stance in mid-first century Jewish circles as one which counselled passive political resistance to Roman oppression, not defiance. The Pharisees were moving toward a stance of political noninvolvement and spiritual resistance.

⁸Pfeiffer, History, p. 299.

⁹In this, we refer to Judith's rambling loquaciousness as opposed to Esther's almost spartan terseness. One relaxes with Judith. In contrast, the pace of Esther is quick; the tension becomes palpable.

¹⁰For reference, please refer infra. to the chapters specifically devoted to Esther and Judith, Section #4. This will be discussed further in our conclusion, p. 156ff., supra.

¹¹Solomon Zeitlin, the Apocrypha," Jewish Quarterly Review, vol. XXXVII (Jan., 1947), p. 225.

¹²Zeitlin in Enslin, Judith, pp. 23ff.

¹³Ibid., p. 30. Zeitlin asserts, "To neutralize the book of Esther, he composed a story based on the same plot as the book of Esther but replete with religiosity."

¹⁴cf. Appendix #1 infra, for a discussion of such fallacies as the one of anachronistic judgments described here.

¹⁵Whether or not there existed religious orthodoxy or orthopraxy in the first century of the common era, has been discussed by Lester L. Grabbe, "Orthodoxy in First Century Judaism," Journal for the Study of Judaism Vol. VIII #2 (Oct. 1977), pp. 149-54. He states that common elements of theology or practice do not constitute anything resembling either orthodoxy or orthopraxy. Yet, he does admit that if there existed any type of orthodoxy, it would be found in the cult. Joseph Bonsirven, in Palestinian Judaism in the Time of Jesus Christ (NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964) posits that there was no systematic theodicy in first century Judaism at all and it is therefore illogical to speak of orthodoxy even in the cult. David E. Aune, "Orthodoxy in First Century Judaism? A Response to N.H. McEleney," Journal for the Study of Judaism Vol. II #1 also refutes Grabbe. Our specific objection to any judgment of ritual observance in equation with piety and fidelity is that it is based on standards of rabbinic legislation which were not begun to be formalized before the promulgation, at least, of the Palestinian Talmud in the fifth century of the common era. We cannot assume that pre-Talmudic Jews were bound by the same standards as post-Talmudic Jews were (are).

While not discussing questions of orthodoxy vs. orthopraxy, Louis H. Feldman ("The Orthodoxy of the Jews in Hellenistic Egypt," Jewish Social Studies v. XXI #4 (1960), pp. 215-238) demonstrates the deep penetration of Hellenism into Egyptian Jewish life. He analyzes the effect this permeation had on philosophy, theology and religion as well as on the language and customs of the Jews. His evidence is strongest for the era we are discussing.

¹⁶The only point we wish to again stress here is that of reasonable doubt. While much has been made of these contrasts, the critical reader must ask just how important such pietism was to a first century Jew. Before this, we must ask if we can characterize the first century Jew with any degree of certainty at all. These pitfalls are, we believe, most important in the recognition of their existence; a fact we fear many have ignored.

¹⁷Bickermann, Four Strange Books.

¹⁸Nickelsburg, Resurrection . . ., p. 55.

¹⁹Alonso-Schoekel, Narrative Structures, p. 5.

²⁰Roland E. Murphy, The Forms of the Old Testament vol. XIII: Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), cites these introductions

as examples of "tendentious description." (p. 158). Both of these books' authors were fastidious in their attention to detail. We can learn much about cosmetics, feasts and ministers in the ancient world by reading these books. Further, we agree with Alonso-Schoekel (pp. 36ff.) in regard to his assertion that these details were inserted as deliberate foils, intended to mask the books' true purposes. For comparative purposes, see Adar, Biblical Narrative, Gordon, Before the Bible, and Drews, Ancient Accounts. In addition to the similarity manifest here with Greek literature, this literary style is also typical of wisdom literature. See, especially, von Rad, Wisdom, pp. 46-48 on the didactic wisdom narrative.

²¹Again, this ties in with Bickermann and Cazelle's two source theory for Esther. More importantly, we feel it is precise testimony to the skill of our author in interweaving strands of plot.

²²Alonso-Schoekel, Narrative Structures, p. 12.

²³This has been discussed in the respective chapters on Esther and Judith in relation to the genre of folk tale literature.

²⁴In Esther, we see irony most clearly in the Jewish concern for a head of state even though that very person has signed a decree ordering the Jews' extermination. In Judith, her speech reeks of ironic contempt.

²⁵Dancy, The Shorter Books, p. 127ff.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 68.

²⁷Pfeiffer, History, p. 291

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 107.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 109.

³⁰Gordon, Before the Bible, p. 299.

³¹Nickelsburg, Resurrection, pp. 54-5.

³²The characteristically Jewish stance of these books will be further elaborated in section #4 of this chapter.

³³Craven, "Artistry and Faith," p. 84. In Judith, it is obvious that the struggle is between rulers: God and Nebuchadnezzar. We have discussed this before. Esther 1:10-22 makes clear the same point; we see the struggle over who is master in his own house. Achashverus is here most clearly a foppish character. This is made even more ironic by the phrase in Esther 3:3. Elsewhere, is never treated as anything but an irreversible utterance. Here, Achashverus' commands are often, and easily, reversed.

³⁴As the above note points out, the author is intimately concerned with this theme and makes a clear point as to the ridiculousness of thinking any person could stand in God's stead with regard to inviolability.

³⁵We can only add here our thought that perhaps this struggle, with our author's position in favor of the traditional Jewish response, is a comment on the contemporary Roman situation and the attempts by successive emperors to impose their cult on the Jews.

³⁶cf. Surburg, Intertestamental Period, pp. 104ff. John Bowman, The Fourth Gospel and the Jews: A Study in R. Akiba, Esther and the Gospel of John. Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series #8 (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1975) goes so far as to assert that Esther was so antagonistically nationalistic that the fourth gospel was written expressly to counter its claims and influence. See pp. 233f. (Also, cf. Metzger, Introduction.)

³⁷Leonard Swidler, Biblical Affirmations of Women (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1979), pp. 75-101, *passim*.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁴⁰_____, Women in Judaism (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1976), p. 50.

⁴¹Swidler, Biblical Affirmations, p. 113.

⁴²Coote in Alonso-Schoekel, Narrative Structures, p. 36.

⁴³B. Yevamot 47b.

⁴⁴See endnote 15, supra.

⁴⁵This is in response to Zeitlin who claims that Judith was written to neutralize Esther. Zeitlin, "The Apocrypha."

⁴⁶cf. Targum Sheni to 3:14-15, in Bernard Grossfeld, ed., The Targum to the Five Megilloth (NY: Hermon Press, 1973), pp. 96-101.

⁴⁷Berg, Esther, p. 149.

⁴⁸G. von Rad, "The Joseph Narrative and Ancient Wisdom," in Crenshaw, Studies as cited in Murphy, Forms, p. 3.

⁴⁹Eroticism has a tremendous force in all three of these stories and poses a similar threat in that it is the potential undoing of the villain(ness) each time.

⁵⁰Talmon, "Wisdom . . .," p. 455.

⁵¹Berg, Esther, p. 149.

⁵²Nicholas de Lange, Apocrypha: Jewish Literature of the Hellenistic Age (NY: The Viking Press, 1976), pp. 114-128.

⁵³"No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted into the congregation of the Lord; none of their descendants, even in the tenth generation, shall ever be admitted into the congregation of the Lord." The Torah, (New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962), p. 367.

⁵⁴Gan, "Megillat Ester . . .," p. 144.

⁵⁵Further, Esther and Judith were written pseudographically. This is often done as an attempt to cloak

a work's origin and/or intent. In a politically repressive atmosphere, this might be the only way in which a book could pass the censor's eyes. Further, pseudepigraphic works can carry with them an air of antiquity which, in the ancient world, was equated with legitimacy and authenticity. Since Esther and Judith were relatively late works vis à vis other Biblical books, it was absolutely necessary to cloak them in antiquity not only that they might pass censorship requirements, but also so that they could be familiar enough in form and theme to be acceptable to contemporary Jews. It stands to reason, then, that direct patterning, by these authors, on already accepted (i.e., canonical, in some sense) works would ease the acceptance of these books. This apparently worked. As Torrey asserts, (The Apocrypha, p. 70.) these books were familiar in every Jewish and Jewish-Christian household.

⁵⁶ Nickelsburg, Resurrection, p. 70.

⁵⁷ Edward P. Campbell, Jr., Ruth The Anchor Bible #7 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975), p. 9.

⁵⁸ Bentwich, Josephus, p. 3.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

I. Summary

II. Questions Still to be Answered

A. Canon

1. definition
2. process of canonization
 - a) three stage theory
 - (1) inconsistencies and problems related to this theory - its general unacceptability
3. need for a clear definition of criteria
 - a) proposed list of criteria (historical reconstruction)
 - (1) as reconstructed from Rabbinic sources
 - (2) as perceived by modern scholars


B. The place of the Books of Esther and Judith in the canon of Hebrew Scriptures

1. application of proposed decoding of Esther and Judith to the problem of canonical inclusion

III. Summary

I. Summary

Through the body of this thesis, our inquiry has focused on the textual, theological, literary and structural problems and curiosities of Esther and Judith. It has been through these investigations that we have arrived at answers to questions concerning the date, origin, attribution and audience of these books. The separate conclusions are, in and of themselves, interesting. They are also instructive in fields other than Biblical studies.

One of the most important applications of these conclusions concerns the status of Esther and Judith vis à vis contemporary Jewish literature. We have seen a specific type of characterization used throughout these two works. Here, as in tannaitic literature, "The problem of the historical relationship . . . fades, and the question of the literary function comes to the forefront."¹ Furthermore, we have seen that the fine crafting and advanced use of literary typologies² in both tales are intricately bound up with textual clues, theological sensibilities and didactic points to form two works filled with importance well beyond the  of their words.

As part of the Scriptural corpus, Esther and Judith must be considered in relation, also, to this group of writings. We have compared them structurally to the Joseph and Deborah tales. Theologically, we have found

points of identity with Deuteronomic positions. Textually, orthographic and onomastic clues have lent a similarity to the Qumran Scrolls. Our study has not, however, taken us beyond this level. As we conclude, we raise questions of the implications of our previous points.

II. Questions Still to be Answered

A. Canon

1. definition
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B. The place of the Books of Esther and Judith in the canon of Hebrew Scriptures

1. application of proposed decoding of Esther and Judith to the problem of canonical inclusion

The primary question is of canon and canonicity. With two so seemingly similar books, the difference between their (Jewish and Protestant)³ canonical statuses is glaring. The reasons for this, however, are not easily discernible. In fact, all that we can assuredly assert is the existence of a canon held as authoritative in the late Roman era.⁴ How that body of literature emerged is a process (or for some, an event) shrouded in uncertainty.

Theories abound which describe the emergence of canon. As regards the Pentateuch and the Prophets,

we do possess overwhelming evidence confirming the fact, date and process of canonization.⁵ The third section of Scripture, the Writings, however, is not easily identifiable as a unit until relatively late in ancient history.

There was no definite time, then, when a deliberate collection was made of the books called "canonical." Rather, by their contribution to the record of divine revelation and by their popularity and use in synagogue worship they gradually won for themselves an established position within the body of sacred Scripture.⁶

Scholars have attempted to isolate factors influencing those who formed the third section of canon. The following forces have been postulated (and widely accepted) as contributing criteria for conferring of canonical status on any one book:

1. survival of a text,
2. anonymous authorship,⁷
3. textual stand against apocalyptic sectarianism,⁸
4. acceptability as a religious response to the destruction of the Temple and the failure of the Bar Kokhba insurrection⁹ (i.e., to serve the need for consolation), and
5. use of the book to counter the rise of Christianity and Christian propaganda.¹⁰

The entire process of canonization has been summarized variously with such terms as "Three-Stage Theory,"¹¹ Alexandrian or open canon theory,¹² and the Divine Inspiration theory.¹³ There are problems of consistency and scholarship within each of these fields of investigation.

Due to the often obtuse nature of the documents which serve as evidence in addition to their relative scarcity and our distance (over time and culture) from them, we cannot reconstruct the entire Sitz-im-Leben as well as we might like. Pfeiffer states the dilemma succinctly:

The dogma that certain writings are divinely inspired is based on faith, and its validity is the subject of theological debate, not of historical research.¹⁴

Our historical investigation of Esther and Judith's canonical statuses is thus based on Anderson's assertion that, "It is when a document is accepted as normative for the religious life of a community that the idea of canonicity emerges."¹⁵ This is, we believe, the only reliable measuring rod in our desire for historical reconstruction. None of the other criteria enumerated can serve to explain Judith's exclusion from canon.¹⁶

Further, Judith was written in Hebrew, assumed to be chronologically safe in that it at least (like Esther) describes a time before the end of the age of prophecy, and it does have an independent stature as a book. All these would seem to augur for canonical inclusion. Some argue that Judith is at variance with Pharisaic/Rabbinic halachah and thus was the basis for its exclusion from canon.¹⁷ Yet, a book like Ruth, with its vagaries and variances from Pharisaic/Rabbinic halachah¹⁸ was canonized. We cannot accept this assessment.

Many attach this problem with a discussion of the entire Apocrypha and attempt to identify the Apocrypha with the undefined Rabbinic term, *ḥalutzim*.¹⁹ We believe that this is an exercise in begging the question. For, if there existed a category of "outside books" in the first place, there would then have to be a contemporaneous group of specific "inside books" (i.e., canon). Because the term is used Rabbinically (i.e., late) in discussions of works which were canonized, we reject its validity. The term *ḥalutzim*, is - at best - a later, descriptive, term. Rylaarsdam²⁰ asserts that the Apocrypha was a defined unit of material only later and was "probably the last non-canonical Jewish writings to be placed 'outside'."²¹ Thus, "at some time [these books] were treated as divinely inspired Scripture, but for one reason or another failed to gain general acceptance as canonical."²²

This is the heart of the issue. The scholars' difficulties of recreating the process of canonization lie in the need to also explain why certain books were not canonized. Obvious criteria excluded partial books,²³ yet no one has yet been able to satisfactorily explain both the inclusion of some books and the exclusion of others.²⁴ The failure lies in the very criteria themselves. We shall explain.

If we see canonization as a process, not an event - and not as a solely historical, but also a theological, process - we can see that such "doubtful" books as Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles²⁵ were canonized on not only the bases of linguistic originality, textual unity, theological consonance or chronological safety. In fact,

There can be little doubt that the popularity of works such as Esther, Ecclesiastes and Canticles in connection with Jewish feast days furnished powerful support for their claim to canonicity.²⁶

Applied to the specific books of Esther and Judith, we now have our answer. In Megillah 7a, the phrase *וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָעָם* occurs. As Zeitlin so astutely observes, this saying is a reflection of popular outcry for Esther's canonization.²⁷ It would follow then, that Judith was not canonized due precisely to this lack of public pressure.²⁸

Why this variance in public acceptance existed is easily discernible in light of our proposed decoding of Esther and Judith. Since we attribute the authorship of both books to (loosely constructed) Pharisaic circles, we can also determine that their political leanings were for peace with Rome.²⁹ We are clued in to the existence of the great Pharisean rivalry with the Essenes and Saducees³⁰ from evidence provided in our texts. Since they are works with propagandistic intent, these themes figure prominently in them.

But Esther and Judith are not identical in all aspects. Esther is the tale of an assimilated community which makes its peace with the prevailing rulers (i.e., Rome) through political positioning, apparent compliance with contemporary cultural norms, and acceptance of foreign domination. Judith, on the other hand, wins her victory through militant defiance and principled purity. What is important to remember is that one example herein is not touted as the better of the two.

However, Esther does reflect the ensuing historical reality more accurately than Judith. The Jews were forced to finally seek peace with Rome through acts of compliance, not defiance. This was the great revolution in attitude among the Pharisees after the destruction of the Second Temple. The Pharisees emerged as the peoples' leaders for they advocated inward religiosity and so insured Jewish survival.

Thus, the Book of Esther, not Judith was canonized. Especially following the Bar Kokhba tragedy, the message was clear: If Judaism and Jews were to survive, they could do so only by outwardly accepting foreign political domination. This entailed, too, a degree of ritual laxity (i.e., Hellenization). As later in history, such relaxation of observances could at least serve to not antagonize the Jews' rulers. The Book of Esther is a description of how Jews might live, flourish and, ultimately, triumph in such a foreign atmosphere. The Book of Judith lauds

a type of resistance that became historically untenable. This is, we believe, why Esther was canonized and Judith not.

There is no greater religious value to one book over the other, Judith simply does not reflect historical reality and was, therefore, relegated to the category of apocryphal. The halachic variances in Judith are so much less severe than in Esther that we can not reasonably premise its canonical status on Achior's nationality. Likewise, the Book of Esther's canonicity does not reflect the alleged need of the first century rabbis to control the celebration of Purim. To thus "distinguish between canonical and uncanonical is unscientific . . . and arbitrary."³¹ Such a distinction reflects only a later grouping and naming of material and provides only "an accurate account only of what later generations thought important."³²

III. Summary

We raise this specific point in conclusion for the following reason: We have used the term "intertestamental" in quotes throughout this paper. We can now spell out our belief that this word is a misnomer. Firstly, "the application of the term 'intertestamental' to the Jewish literature of the period presumes the Christian belief that in Jesus there is a new covenant (i.e., testament) which has replaced the Old Covenant."³³ But more than

that, "intertestamental" implies the existence of an interregnum between the close of one canon and the beginning of another. We have shown this to not have been the case. The first century was a time of markedly quantitative literary output. Some of these books have come down to us with labels such as Old Testament, Apocrypha, New Testament or Pseudepigrapha on them. These are later designations only. Finally, the term "intertestamental" connotes a lower status to those books written during that era. We have shown that canonical status and historical value are not necessarily equivalent terms.

In summary, this thesis has studied the books of Esther and Judith on a variety of levels. We have investigated their individual merits, compared them to one another, tried to locate their proper places in the history of Jewish and Christian sacred writings, and then have asked questions of these books with an eye toward unravelling the historical complexities of first century Judaism. This is only a beginning in that there is value not only in this particular study, but also in the methodology employed. It is our hope that further research might be spawned by our first attempts.

ENDNOTES

¹ Diamond, Some First Century Events, p. 20.

² Nickelsburg, Resurrection describes in great detail the development of literary typologies in ancient literature. Gordon, Before the Bible, shows how these typologies were transferred from one culture to another through the medium of literature. Nickelsburg adheres to a developmental approach which asserts that the advanced form of the typologies present in Esther indicate a late date for its composition.

³ See Appendix #2.

⁴ Torrey, Ezra Studies, gives a second century C.E. date for the finalization of canon. He agrees with others, including Segal, "The Promulgation . . ." who also rejects the conference at Jabneh in 90 C.E. as authoritative (p. 37). Zeiltin, "An Historical Study . . ." claims that the contents of canon were fixed at Ousha (ca. 140-170 C.E. - cf. Neusner, From Politics, p. xxi.), in response to the Bar Kokhba tragedy (Moore, Studies, p. xxvi.). See, also, Oesterley, An Introduction and Norman Geisler, "The Extent of the Old Testament Canon," in George F. Hawthorne, ed., Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation: Studies in Honor of Merrill C. Tenney presented by his former students (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), p. 46, for their views. In any event, it is only in the late period that one can assuredly assert the existence of a closed canon.

⁵ A two-fold division of canon is attested to in the following sources: Daniel 9:2, 6, 11; Zechariah 7:12; Nehemiah 9:14, 29-30; 2 Maccabees 15:9; Qumran Manual of Discipline 1:3, 8:15, 9:11; Mark 13:11 (cf. Luke 16:16, 29, 31; Matthew 22:40); Luke 24; Acts 13:15, 24:14, 26:22; and Matthew 5:17, 18 (cf. Romans 1:2). II (IV) Esdras 14 is the earliest statement extant (ca 90 C.E.) of the date of the end of prophecy. The Habbis relied heavily on this calculation for their definition of eligibility for inclusion in canon.

⁶ D.S. Russel, Between the Testaments (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), p. 62.

⁷ R.H. Pfeiffer, "Canon of the Old Testament," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, vol. 1, pp. 509ff. and Metzger, "Literary Forgeries . . ." discuss the need for, and use of pseudonymity in late Biblical writings.

⁸ This assertion is supported by many scholars, including Oesterley, An Introduction, pp. 3-13, 26-41 and 56-74, and Anderson, "Canonical and Non-Canonical," in P.R. Ackroyd and C.F. Evans, eds., The Cambridge History of the Bible, vol. 1, From The Beginnings to Jerome (Cambridge, Eng.: The University Press, 1970), pp. 113-159.

⁹ This is stressed by Anderson, "Canonical and Non-Canonical"; Zeitlin, "The Apocrypha"; and Pfeiffer, "Canon."

¹⁰ Pfeiffer, "Canon" and Anderson, "Canonical and Non-Canonical" and Sanders, Torah, who states, "The same kind of flurry of literary activity which occurred amongst the Christians after A.D. 70, and the destruction of the Second Temple, also occurred among the rabbinic Jews who also had to seek their new identity out of what remained of the old institutions." (p. 94).

For examples pertaining to criteria for exclusion from canon, rabbinic bases are derived from I Kings 14:19, 29; Joshua 10:12-13 (cf. II Samuel 1:18); Numbers 21:13-14; Yadayim 4:6 and 2:13; B. Sanhedrin 11a; T. Shabbath 13:5 and Sanhedrin 10:1.

¹¹ This is the theory which holds to the view that the canonization of Scripture was accomplished in three distinct events. For further information, please refer to the appropriate items in our bibliography, section 6.

¹² See esp. Peter Katz, "The Old Testament Canon in Palestine and Alexandria," Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, 47 (1956), pp. 191-217. He advocates this theory, vs. Geisler, "The Extent," who summarizes and critiques it.

¹³ Clearly, our rabbis held to this criterion. As to its import in the canonization process, cf. Diamond, Some First Century Events, pp. 24ff. for a discussion on the tannaitic conception of inspiration as it related to their own work and the "flexibility" it gave them. He states (and this is particularly relevant to our present discussion as well as our exposition concerning coded writing): "Our great tannaitic minds did in fact regard themselves as teaching, working and living in the Holy Spirit, the one and only Ruah Hagodesh. Armed with this inviolate authority, they acted, as they often put it, lesorekh hasa'ah, in accordance with the pressing needs of their day. If there

was some pressing need to rearrange or even create holy writ, they did so . . . yet, unwilling to condone and encourage other circles who would and did claim a similar authority for themselves, they publicly stated that Huah Hagodesh had departed from mankind after the reign of Darius II . . . This phenomenon of public and private teaching is well attested to by our tannaitic sources. On innumerable occasions the masters tell an 'outsider' one thing, and their own disciples another." (p. 26). For Rabbinic sources, see L. Baba Metzia 59b and Deuteronomy 18:20-22.

¹⁴ Pfeiffer, History, p. 60.

¹⁵ Anderson, "Canonical," p. 117.

¹⁶ For a discussion parallel to this one, centering on Nehemiah, but applicable to Judith, see Diamond, Some First Century Events, p. 75f.

¹⁷ cf. endnote #55, chapter 3. Also Yevamot 8:3 re: male Ammonite converts to Judaism and Yadayim 4:4 in reference to the need for immersion in order to effect conversion.

¹⁸ In the Book of Ruth, questions concerning her child's inheritance and his lineage (mother's side/father's side) are not settled from the text itself. This is especially true in the last chapter of that book. For further information, see Campbell, Ruth, introductory sections.

¹⁹ See Zeitlin, "The Apocrypha," and C.C. Torrey, The Apocryphal Literature: A Brief Introduction (Hamden, CT and London: Archon Books, 1963) who support this view. Anderson, "Canonical," refutes it and identifies the "outside books" as those which were deemed heretical, including Homer's works and the Gospels. The Rabbinic sources are Sanhedrin 10:1, T. Yadayim 2:13 and T. Shabbath 13:5. We reject Walters' claim (The Immanence) that the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha were produced by "non-orthodox" Jewish movements alone.

²⁰ J. Coert Rylaarsdam, "The Apocrypha and The Bible," Journal of Bible and Religion 17 (1949), pp. 175-180.

²¹ Ibid., p. 176.

- 22 Torrey, Apocryphal Literature, p. 3.
- 23 Such as the additions to Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah.
- 24 In regard to all the previously enumerated criteria.
- 25 These are the categories most often used by scholars to determine if, a priori, a book might have been eligible for canonization at all.
- 26 R.K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament (London: The Tyndale Press, 1970), pp. 285-6.
- 27 In Enslin, Judith, pp. 22ff.
- 28 Zeitlin, "Jewish Apocryphal Literature," Jewish Quarterly Review XL (Jan., 1950) #3, 223-257 (esp. p. 237). He states most succinctly in An Historical Study (p. 34) the case: "In order to understand why Judith was not included in the Scriptures it is only necessary to recall that the Book of Esther which is quite similar to it, was not included in the Canon until a very late period, for the rabbis had been opposed to the inclusion of the Book of Esther in the Canon. Only through pressure of public opinion was this book finally included, as the Book of Esther had been read for centuries on the festival of Purim. It may be true that the Book of Judith was connected with the festival of Hannukah [see Zunz, Gottesdienstliche Vorträge, p. 131] and may have been read during the days of Hannukah, but the festival of Hannukah itself was not very popular among the Jews during the Second Commonwealth, when the Hasmonean dynasty was overthrown by Herod. Moreover, a statement is found in tannaitic literature that a fast was declared on Hannukah [Yer. Tan. 70d]."
 4180 [Hebrew text in brackets]. We may not agree with his analysis of Purim, but it does not substantially mar the argument.
- 29 Davis, Israel, p. 78 finds support for this view in Josephus.
- 30 Amusin, "The Reflection . . ."
- 31 Oesterley, An Introduction, p. 42.

³² Neusner, From Politics, p. 42.

³³ Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature, p. 3.

HISTORIOGRAPHY: METHOD AND PITFALLS

In research, the historian must constantly, and conscientiously, be aware of even the more mundane pitfalls of bad history. Combining history with Scriptural analysis is a doubly-dangerous proposition. Not only is it easy to succumb to historiographic fallacies, it is perhaps more tempting to descend either into Bibliolatry or anti-Scriptural biases and thereby taint the quality of one's work. Since the Bible has been regarded as Holy Writ, analysis of, and comment on, its contents have raised emotional prejudices on all sides. In our society, it is virtually impossible to be free of such predilections when writing history. It is even doubtful as to the desirability of such an approach.

There are, however, eleven major fallacies of historians' work which should be avoided. They have been divided into three general categories by David Fischer.¹ We shall simply list them here with their subcategories. Suffice to say, we have tried to avoid falling into these pits.

- I. Fallacies of Inquiry²
 - 1. Question Framing
 - 2. Factual Verification
 - 3. Factual Significance
- II. Fallacies of Explanation³
 - 1. Generalization
 - 2. Narration
 - 3. Causation
 - 4. Motivation
 - 5. Composition
 - 6. False Analogy
- III. Fallacies of Argument⁴
 - 1. Semantic Distortion
 - 2. Substantive Distortion

Yet, we must stress that good history is more than merely avoiding some common snares. There abound, as well, theories of history which bear exploration and explanation. Historiography as "the craft of writing history"⁵ is the historians' way of communicating. We will discuss here a few modern theories of historiography, leaving the discussion of the ancient theories for the appropriate sections, *infra*.

The religious (predominantly Christian) philosophy of history lost its preeminent position during the Enlightenment and gave way to the secular approach which was influenced by scientificism and rationalism. History as a scientific pursuit did not flourish, however, until the nineteenth century. Dominating the field was Leopold von Ranke (1795 - 1886) whose ideal for history was to present it as a Grenzbegriff - as it actually happened. Comte (1798 - 1857), though opposed to von Rankean nationalism, also subscribed to this ideal which was best manifest in its emphasis on minutiae. Comte did go further than von Ranke and believed that when history's laws were ascertained, humanity's future could be charted.

Under the influence of both anthropology and industrialism, historiography became specialized. World histories gave way to economic and social studies (Marx), intellectual histories (William E.H. Lecky, 1838 - 1903), archaeological tomes (Mommsen) and the like. Yet, von Ranke's ideal of completeness still predominated.

It has only been in the last two-thirds of this century that the realization of the unattainability of "objective" history has become historiographic theory in its own right. Selection and arrangement of materials is, in itself, prejudicial to complete objectivity. Charles Beard is most frank in admitting the implications of this "historiography as history" school of thought. It is insufficiently honest to admit one's biases and shortcomings, and thereby absolve oneself of guilt. Rather,

The historian's task [Beard] . . . maintained is to understand his relationship to his own culture, and it is his function to read the trend of the times. The historian in the twentieth century has thus, in a sense, reverted to his role in the eighteenth century, as a student and prophet of civilization. Upon him is laid the burden of reading the past as a guidepost to the future . . ."⁶

Whether or not this return is a positive trend can only be judged by the individual. It certainly is a welcome relief from von Rankean impossibilities. Yet, it cannot be used as an excuse for propagandistic, poorly researched or badly written history. Despite Beard, we believe that it is presumptuous of any historian to predict the future. Even in a paper such as this which discusses changing ideas and situations and our ancestors' reactions to them, we can only draw - if we are so inclined - personal conclusions applicable to contemporary life.⁷

ENDNOTES

¹David Hackett Fischer, Historians' Fallacies - Toward A Logic of Historical Thought (NY., Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, 1970).

²As Fischer explains, fallacies of inquiry (pp. 3-103) are most common when an historian either poses a question, selects facts or emphasizes certain facts over others in order to advance a predetermined conclusion.

³It is our opinion that in this category falls the majority of histories labelled as "sloppily researched." On pp. 103-263, Fischer elaborates the listed categories which often crop up in research as the result of laziness. For instance, one fallacy of narration is anachronism, or one example of causation fallacy arises with the reasoning of post hoc, ergo propter hoc. These fallacies are easily avoidable.

⁴Fallacies of argument (pp. 263-307) are caused either semantically by hyperbolic or elliptic statements or substantively when a scholar might resort to such arguments as those derived ad hominem, ad consequentium or ad antiquitatem.

⁵J.H. Hexter, Doing History (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1971), p. 15.

⁶Michael Kroll, "Philosophy of History," Collier's Encyclopedia v. 12 (New York: The Crowell-Collier Publishing Company, 1965), p. 154.

⁷Here, we would like to state our agreement with Arnaldo Momigliano, (Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography [Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1947] esp. pp. 25-37) who asserts that post-exilic Jewish historiography was both a continuation of and break from the past. He argues that our main task is to dissociate our focus from the Greek loci and examine the Persian influence on Jewish writings.

Appendix # 2

THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (HEBREW SCRIPTURES)

	Roman Catholic ^a and Orthodox ^b	Protestant	Jewish Bible ^c
Pentateuch	1. Genesis 2. Exodus 3. Leviticus 4. Numbers 5. Deuteronomy	1. Genesis 2. Exodus 3. Leviticus 4. Numbers 5. Deuteronomy	1. Bereshith 2. Shemoth 3. Wayikra 4. Bemidbar 5. Debarim
Historical Books	6. Joshua 7. Judges 8. Ruth 9-10. I & II Samuel 11-12. I & II Kings 13-14. I & II Chronicles 15-16. Ezra and Nehemiah 17. <u>Tobit</u> 18. <u>Judith</u> 19. <u>Esther</u> ^d	6. Joshua 7. Judges 8. Ruth 9-10. I & II Samuel 11-12. I & II Kings 13-14. I & II Chronicles 15-16. Ezra and Nehemiah Apocryphal (Tobit) Apocryphal 17. Esther	6. Yehoshua 7. Shofetim 18. Ruth 8. Shemuel 9. Melakim 24. Dibre Hayamim 23. Ezra-Nehemyah Noncanonical Noncanonical 21. Esther
Poetry and Wisdom	20. Job 21. Psalms 22. Proverbs	18. Job 19. Psalms 20. Proverbs	16. Iyyob 14. Tehillim 15. Mishle

Appendix #2 (continued)

	Roman Catholic ^a and Orthodox ^b		Protestant	Jewish Bible ^c	
Poetry and Wisdom (continued)	23.	Ecclesiastes	21. Ecclesiastes	20.	Qoheleth
	24.	Song of Solomon	22. Song of Solomon	17.	Shir HaShirim
	25.	Wisdom of Solomon	Apocryphal		Noncanonical
	26.	Ecclesiastus	Apocryphal		Noncanonical
Prophetic Writings	27.	Isaiah	23. Isaiah	10.	Yeshayahu
	28.	Jeremiah	24. Jeremiah	11.	Yirmeyahu
	29.	Lamentations	25. Lamentations	19.	Ekah
	30.	Baruch (incl. "The Letter of Jeremiah" (R.C. only)	Apocryphal		Noncanonical
	31.	Ezekiel	26. Ezekiel	12.	Yehezqel
	32.	Daniel ^d	27. Daniel	22.	Daniel
	33.	Hosea	28. Hosea	13.	Tere Asar
	34.	Joel	29. Joel		" "
	35.	Amos	30. Amos		" "
	36.	Obadiah	31. Obadiah		" "
	37.	Jonah	32. Jonah		" "
	38.	Micah	33. Micah		" "
	39.	Nahum	34. Nahum		" "
	40.	Habakkuk	35. Habakkuk		" "
	41.	Zephaniah	36. Zephaniah		" "
	42.	Haggai	37. Haggai		" "
	43.	Zechariah	38. Zechariah		" "
	44.	Malachi	39. Malachi		" "
	45.	I Maccabees	Apocryphal		Noncanonical
	46.	II Maccabees	Apocryphal		Noncanonical

^aIn this column deuterocanonical books are underlined. The spelling is that of the Common Bible rather than the Douay-Rheims Bible (1609/10) which was based on the Vulgate.

^bNote that item 30 was not included in the Old Testament canon established for Orthodox churches at the Synod of Jerusalem in A.D. 1672.

^cIn this column, numbers indicate the order of books in the Hebrew Bible. In Hebrew, books are often titled by opening or key words.

^dTwo books of the Roman Catholic canon, Esther and Daniel, are larger than their counterparts in the Protestant and Jewish canons. This surplus material is included in the Protestant Apocrypha as Additions to Esther and Additions to Daniel (The Story of Susanna, The Song of the Three Children, and The Story of Bel and the Dragon). The Prayer of Manasseh, also found in the Apocrypha, is not included in the Roman Catholic canon.

Source: Anderson, Understanding, pp. 4-5.

Appendix #3

A SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS AT DATING THE BOOK OF JUDITH

The starting point for many scholars in fixing the date of composition for Judith is the existence of a theology and standard of ritual practice positively comparable to Pharisaic teaching. Up front, we state that we take our clue in dating from this and from Neusner's¹ description of Pharisaic development. We agree that, "Wellhausen's judgment that this 'theocratic action party'; [i.e. the Pharisees] which like the mass orientated its piety politically, put patriotism before the Law, is very interesting."² For us, this indicates clearly that the Pharisaic stance in Judith is a relatively late one: dating from no earlier than the first century before the common era.³

A. Traditional Explanations

Many scholars assign a date in the Hasmonean era to Judith's composition. Some indicators of this, they claim, are the mention of wreaths in 3:7; the hendiadys of "night and day" (11:17) which indicates the use of a luni-solar calendar; and the existence of the High Priesthood in Jerusalem.⁴ Further, positing a date at least this late is the only acceptable explanation for the historical "errors" in chapter one and passim. It is claimed that only a writer living long after the described events would or could make such obvious mistakes.⁵

Most historians, however, date Judith to Maccabean times.⁶ The above-mentioned facts are used also in support of this theory. Added to them are verses 8:17-20, 10:5, 11:10-15, and 12:4 which, clearly demonstrate that the Judeans' main concern was not military weakness. Since military vulnerability was a concern in Hasmonean times, scholars citing this evidence rule out such dating and advance their theory of Maccabean origins. Also in concert with this, these scholars see 3:8 as a reminiscence of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his reign.⁷

Those who hold that Judith was written after the death of Simon, during the time of John Hyrcanus (135-106 B.C.E.)⁸ find specific events in history they attempt to correlate with various mentions in Judith. We believe that this is a positive direction in investigation because it implicitly admits to the possibility of encoding in our text. Yet, as Morgenstern so clearly shows, no one of these theories is without its fatal weakness.⁹

On the other side of the chronologic spectrum, Dubarle represents those who argue for a pre-Maccabean date, though on different evidence from that cited above:

des récits notablement plus courts de la
littérature juive placent l'action pendant
la période Grecque, font de Jérusalem la
ville assiégée et mettent parfois un bien
entre le haut fait de Judith et un autre
fait relatif à la famille des Hasmonéens. 10

And, as previously noted¹¹, Grintz dates Judith to the Persian period. He first sets out to negate a Hasmonean date of composition by recalling the fact that Judith mentions tithes being sent to Jerusalem when, in fact, no tithes were sent to Jerusalem in Hasmonean times.¹² Yet, this objection certainly has no effect on anyone dating the book later than the Hasmonean era when tithes were reinstituted. His strongest evidence is, we feel, no evidence at all. As quoted by Dubarle, he states; "la seule correspondant à la situation sociale, juridique, historique et géographique supposée par les détails du récit."¹³ As we saw with the Book of Esther, knowledge of history could easily explain these corresponding and matching features; the book need not have been written in that era to plausibly evoke it.

All this scholarly disagreement serves only to elicit a greater need for an accurate dating of Judith which will account for these objections and for the total book and its contents.

ENDNOTES

¹Neusner, From Politics . . ., p. 4.

²Farmer, Maccabees. . ., p. 29.

³This will be elucidated further throughout this appendix and the body of the paper itself. The evidence cited *infra* serves, we believe, to undermine the plausibility of other dates previously proposed. This is the beginning of our attempt to lay the foundation for our theory.

⁴Zeitlin, in Enslin, Judith, pp. 26-31.

⁵The main problem with this theory is in its lack of consideration of the possibility of encoding within the Book of Judith itself. The theory implicitly takes the descriptions offered on face value, denying that there is the chance that these words are symbolic of other meanings.

⁶Morgenstern, Historical Background, pp. 59-116. This is the bulk of his thesis, as he reviews previous scholarly attempts at dating Judith.

⁷Prominent among those who advance this dating are Zunz and Grotius. L.H. Brockington, A Critical Introduction to the Apocrypha (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd., 1961) states, "The time of the Maccabean revolt when Antiochus Epiphanes set up the worship of Zeus in the Jewish Temple and forbade the continuation of Jewish worship is the most natural setting in which to place the book." P. 45f. cf. also I Maccabees 1:10-2:26 and II Maccabees chapters 6-7.

⁸This view is held by Reuss and Schürer, as explained by Morgenstern, Historical Background, pp. 80-81 and 73-78, respectively.

⁹Morgenstern's thesis, *Ibid.*, is devoted to the exploration and refutation of these theories. As far as negating a date immediately after the Maccabean era, Oesterley, Introduction to the Books . . ., pp. 177-180, is among those who cite 4:6 and 15:8 wherein the High Priest

is portrayed at the head of the Jewish community to be negating evidence. The fact, it is contended, that Judith is praised by the High Priest Joakim while she observes Pharisaic prescriptions indicates a date prior to the Pharisaic/Sadducean split. We feel that this, again, negates the consideration of the existence of encoded material in Judith.

¹⁰Dubarle, "Les textes . . .," p. 345.

¹¹cf. supra, pp. 108 and passim.

¹²Just one possibility need be mentioned here in order to negate this assertion. We will not argue that tithes were not sent to Jerusalem in Hasmonean times. Yet, a Hasmonean date need not be discarded if the author(s) wanted to encourage the sending of tithes to Jerusalem. All we are trying to do here is prove the implausibility of such an assertion serving as evidence.

¹³Dubarle, "Les textes . . .," p. 345.

Appendix #4

THE WISDOM TALE

The following are expanded outlines of the wisdom form in Biblical literature. They are taken from Nickelsburg, Ressurrection, pp. 49ff. The last entry, pertaining to The Book of Judith is original with this author. It is addended here for purposes of comparison. The structural and contextual similarities are explored further in Chapter 4, pp. 134-137.

1. Joseph and His Brothers - Genesis 37ff.

REASON (37:3-11): Joseph's favoritism (vv. 3f.) and Joseph's dreams (vvs. 5-11) lead to his brothers' jealousy and hatred.

CONSPIRACY (37:18-20): They plot Joseph's death. "Come now, let us kill him . . . and we shall see what will become of his dreams" (v. 20). Thus his death will be a kind of ORDEAL, which will disprove his claims of future domination.²

HELPER (37:21., 26f.) Reuben and Judah advise against killing Joseph, Reuben is intent on rescuing him.

CONDEMNATION (37:28; 39:19f.): a) Joseph, though rescued from death, is sold into slavery. b) He is condemned to prison.

RESCUE (39:2f.; chs. 40-41): a) He is successful in Potiphar's house. b) He is brought out of prison.

EXALTATION (39:4-6; 41:37-45): a) He is appointed Potiphar's steward. b) He is appointed vizier of Egypt. INVESTED with

royal robes (41:42), and ACCLAIMED (41:43).

CONFESSION (42:21f.): The brothers confess to one another their guilt.³

This cycle of stories tells of the persecution of an innocent man and his exaltation to highest rank in the royal court. This exaltation and the events during his brothers' visit to Egypt authenticate his former claims: his brothers bow down before him, as he had said they would. Joseph is not an ordinary man. He is termed "wise" (41:39). The spirit of God is in him (41:38). As an interpreter of dreams, he has insight into divine mysteries and is able to foretell what God is about to do (41:25, 28, 32). For these reasons, he is appointed vizier (41:39f.).

3. The Book of Esther

There appear to be two stages of tradition in the Hebrew version of Esther.⁶ As it stands, the story tells how Esther rescues the Jews from their condemnation to death and how their enemies are destroyed. Parallel to this, and woven into the plot, is the story of the condemnation and rescue of Mordechai, and the destruction of his enemy, Haman. In the present form the story, certain structural elements apply to both plots, while others are duplicated. These duplications and certain parallels to the theme of the Mordechai story (in Ahikar and Daniel 6)⁹ suggest that a story about court rivals has become the nucleus of a story

about the rescue of the Jewish people and the origin of the Feast of Purim.

REASON (3:1-5): Mordechai refuses obeisance to Haman, who is infuriated.

HELPERS (3:2-4): The courtiers warn Mordechai of the consequences of his behavior.¹⁰

CONSPIRACY (3:6; 5:9-14): a) Haman seeks to destroy the Jews, the people of Mordechai. b) Haman and his friends plot Mordechai's death.¹¹

ACCUSATION (3:8f.): Haman accuses the Jews before the king: they obey their law and disobey the king's.

CONDEMNATION (3:10-14): The king issues a decree of death for the Jews.

RESCUE (6:1-3; 8:1-8): a) Mordechai is rescued when the king reads in the chronicles how Mordechai has saved his life. It is a last minute rescue, for Haman is on his way to ask the king's permission to hang Mordechai. b) The rescue of the Jews is a separate matter, effected by the intercession of the Queen.

EXALTATION (6:10f.; 9:4; 10:3): Mordechai is INVESTED with royal robes, led through the city, and ACCLAIMED as the favorite of the king. He is appointed vizier. The story described the REACTIONS of Haman, the king, and the Jews, to the respective situations.

PUNISHMENT (7:10; 9:5ff.): a) Haman is hanged. b) The Jews slaughter their would-be assailants.

Esther is set in a royal court. Both Mordechai and Esther are wise, and the latter's cleverness outwits Haman and saves the Jewish people.¹² Clear religious motifs are conspicuously absent.

Footnotes to Nickelsburg Section:

³Diff. from Wisd. 5:3-8, here the confession precedes the recognition.

⁸On the secondary nature of the Gk. additions to Esther, see Pfeiffer, *History*, pp. 308-10; and W.H. Brownlee, "Le livre grec d'Esther et la royauté divine," *RB* 73 (1966), pp. 161-85.

⁹In Ahikar and Dan. 6, the king is made an unwitting accomplice to the plot. In Dan. 6, the king issues an edict which the enemies intend to use to destroy their rival, and the enemies suffer the death they intended for their rival.

¹⁰This element is not clear in the present story. The courtiers report Mordechai's behavior to Haman. Yet behind 3:3f. appears to be the picture of the courtiers trying, day by day, to convince Mordechai of the folly of his behavior.

¹¹A duplication. The imminent death of the Jews makes the plot against Mordechai extraneous.

¹²S. Talmon, "Wisdom in the Book of Esther," *VT* 13 (1963), pp. 447-51.

Comments on the Nickelsburg Selections:

First of all, it should be noted that Nickelsburg also analyzes The Story of Ahikar and Daniel 3 and 6. Those

analyses are not included here because we have not actually discussed those two stories and need not complicate our presentation at this point. It is sufficient to say that they, too, follow the same patterns.

What we must obviously object to is Nickelsburg's structural analysis of Esther. It is clear that he follows Bickermann in his belief that Esther was originally two stories and our text represents an interweaving and compilation of the two. Our reasons for rejecting this assertion are the very basis of our entire analysis of Esther. Therefore, we shall not repeat them. Yet, it must be said that this does not invalidate Nickelsburg's analysis on another level. Esther is certainly a wisdom tale, and he is perceptive in seeing this so clearly. And Esther, as such, falls into a tradition of literature which, we believe, also includes the Book of Judith. Thus, his analysis is of great use to us.

The Book of Judith

This outline is original with this author and is presented with the intention of further clarifying and illustrating the points of similarity between Esther and Judith on the one hand and among the various representatives of wisdom literature surviving from the late Biblical era.

REASON (3:9-4:15): The threatened destruction of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar and Holofernes.

CONSPIRACY (5:1-24; 10:1-5): In the first instance, Holofernes tries to involve Achior in his plot, but is rebuked. In the second, Judith plots her strategy.

HELPERS (6:14-21; 11:5-23): a) Holofernes denounces Achior and hands him over to the residents of Bethulia. b) Judith's explanation of her flight is actually her accusation against Holofernes.

CONDEMNATION (6:1-9; 13:1-10): a) The specific condemnation Holofernes hurls at Achior is his epithet, "hireling of Ephraim" (6:2). Holofernes believes he is leaving Achior condemned to death. This bears a striking resemblance to the action of Joseph's brothers in Genesis 37. b) Judith beheads Holofernes.

RESCUE (6:14-21; 13:10-20): a) The Jews bring Achior inside the city. b) Through Judith's escape, Israel's rescue is effected. Bethulia's enemies flee.

EXALTATION (15:12-16:25): First, Judith is exalted, then she exalts God.

Mention must be made here of the fact that this analysis, of both Esther and Judith, again supports our contention that the basic structure of these books is chiastic. We see how the instances of helpers, conspiracy, rescue and exaltation (in Esther) all fall into chastic patterns.

Appendix #5

MODERN LITERARY ENCODING

The following article appeared in the December 1982 edition of Hadassah Magazine, p. 9. We shall let it speak for itself as a modern example of the practice of literary encoding.

Facts in Fiction

An Israeli journalist evaded the military censors who had killed his report on a Begin Cabinet debate by turning the facts into historical fiction, according to Associated Press correspondent Marcus Eliason. Amnon Abromowitz of Maariv learned that the Government was considering a new offensive in Lebanon, but the military censors would not let him publish the story.

So Abromowitz concocted a story titled "Another Place (An Imaginary Report)" about a debate that was supposed to have taken place in the Polish Cabinet 60 years ago. In his story, the Polish Cabinet was called into emergency session to discuss a proposal to attack guerrillas operating against Polish units in Russia. The attack was proposed by Marshal Pilsudski with Prime Minister Paderewski's support, but it was defeated in the Cabinet by one vote. "When the meeting ended, the ministers thanked God. By one vote, terrible and unnecessary bloodshed had been averted," Abromowitz wrote.

Sharp readers were able to decipher the code by noting several historical inaccuracies: Paderewski and Pilsudski were not in power in 1922. While Pilsudski's first name was really Joseph, Abromowitz referred to him as Leon, hinting at Defense Minister Ariel Sharon's first name, which means lion.

"A lot of reporters phoned me when they read the story," Abromowitz said, "They wanted to know whether they had understood me correctly All I could say was that I had nothing to add to what I wrote." A week later, censorship was relaxed on the Cabinet debate, and the press reported that on October 4 the Cabinet had defeated by one vote a proposal to attack guerrilla bases in retaliation for an attack which killed six Israeli soldiers.

Appendix #6

OUTLINE OF PROPOSED SECTION ON CANONIZATION

- I. The Canonization Process
 - A. Biblical Evidence
 - B. Rabbinic Testimony
 - 1. Talmudic Source Materials
 - a)
 - b)
 - c) Pharisees
 - (1) impetus to canonization
 - (a) external forces
 - (b) internal forces
 - C. Summary #1
 - D. Church Sources
 - 1. Eusebius
 - 2. Melito
 - 3. Origen
 - 4. Apocrypha
 - E. Modern Scholarship
 - 1. Discussions of the Canonization Process (Overview)
 - 2. Evidences for Fluidity of Canonical Status
 - a) Esther
 - (1) Purim
 - (2) philology
 - (3) additions to Esther
 - (4) DSS, external evidences
 - 3. Theories on why Judith was not canonized
 - 4. New Testament evidence
 - 5. Critiques of:
 - a) Rabbinic sources
 - b) LXX, Alexandrian canon theory
 - F. Areas of Agreement (Summary #2)
 - G. Areas of Disagreement (Summary #3)
 - H. Unresolved Problems
 - 1. Esther
 - a) Circumstantial evidences
 - I. Summary #4
- II. A New Attempt at Solving these Problems
 - A. Why were Esther and Judith written? A review of proposed decoding
 - B. These Books are two of Many
 - 1. Literary products of the first century CE world - examples and discussion
 - 2. Inadequacy of the term "intertestamental"

- a) Review of dating of New Testament material and canonization
 - b) Prominence of the short story
 - c) Pseudepigrapha
 - d) Coded works
 - (1) Qumran and other sectarian writings
 - (2) Gnostic gospels
 - 3. Parochial definition of canon - summary
- III. Proposed New Theory of Canonization Process
- A. Harmonization of Rabbinic Sources with Above Evidence
 - 1. What were the rabbinic concerns?
 - 2. What evidence may be considered historically useful?
 - 3. What evidence sheds light on Judaism in late antiquity?
 - 4. Distillation of sources
 - B. Harmonization of Church Sources with Above Evidence
 - 1. What were the church fathers' concerns?
 - 2. How do they manifest themselves in literature concerning canon of Hebrew Scriptures?
 - a) Origen
 - b) Melito
 - c) Jerome
 - 3. What is the evidence which is historically useful?
 - 4. What evidence sheds light on religious writing during the so-called "intertestamental" era?
 - 5. Distillation of sources and conclusions
 - C. Strains of Modern Scholarship
 - 1. Useful and true evidence brought by previous scholars
 - 2. What is the test of validity?
 - a) multi-dimensional investigation (i.e., historiography, theology, etc.)
 - D. Our Proposal and Summary
- IV. Statement of Theory
- A. General Implications for Canonization (continued)
 - B. Re: Esther
 - 1. Why was Esther canonized?
 - C. Re: Judith
 - 1. Why was Judith not canonized?
 - D. Summary

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