

3 Maccabees and Esther: Parallels, Intertextuality, and Diaspora Identity

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This article reconsiders the as-yet-unresolved issue of literary dependence between 3 Maccabees and Esther—both the Hebrew and the Greek versions. An early-twentieth-century treatment appeared in the context of Hugo Willrich's attempt to identify the historical kernel of 3 Maccabees; a century later, this question is still under exploration, for example, in Philip Alexander's article titled "3 Maccabees, Hanukkah and Purim."¹ Scholarly opinions range from the contention that 3 Maccabees was written after Greek Esther,² to the opposing position

Previous versions of this paper were presented at the Jonas C. Greenfield Scholars' Seminar, the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, Jerusalem, March 2004; and at the Fourteenth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, August 2005. I thank the participants on these two occasions for their helpful comments. I thank also Prof. Daniel R. Schwartz and Dr. Michael Segal who read previous versions of this paper, and Ms. Dena Ordan who translated it from Hebrew. The preparation of this paper was supported by a post-doctoral grant of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Unless otherwise indicated, the NJPS was used for citations from MT Esther and the NRSV for Greek Esther and 3 Maccabees.

¹ Hugo Willrich, "Der historische Kern des III Makkabäerbuches," *Hermes* 39 (1904): 244–58; Philip S. Alexander, "3 Maccabees, Hanukkah and Purim," in *Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Texts: Essays in Memory of Michael P. Weitzman* (ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert and Gillian Greenberg; JSOTSup 333; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 321–39.

² Victor A. Tcherikover, "The Third Book of Maccabees as a Historical Source of Augustus' Time," *ScrHier* 7 (1961): 22 n. 45; André Barucq, *Judith, Esther* (Paris: Cerf, 1959), 84; Michales Z. Kopidakes, *Το Γ' Μακκαβαίων και ο Αισχυλός: Αισχυλείες μνημές στο λεκτικό και στη θεματολογία του Γ' Μακκαβαίων* (Herakleion: Bikelaia bibliothekē, 1987), 22; Fausto Parente, "The Third Book of Maccabees as Ideological Document and Historical Source," *Henoch* 10 (1988): 168–69 and n. 79; Dov Gera, *Judaea and Mediterranean Politics, 219 to 161 B.C.E.* (Brill's Series in Jewish Studies 8; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 15; John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000),

that Greek Esther postdates 3 Maccabees.³ Yet a third viewpoint distinguishes between the Greek translation of the MT and the Greek Additions to Esther, dating 3 Maccabees earlier than the Greek Additions, in whole, or in part.⁴ Almost every introduction to 3 Maccabees addresses this question,⁵ as do introductions or commentaries to the Greek Additions to Esther.⁶

Taking as its starting point the many thematic-structural parallels noted in the scholarly treatments of this issue, in the first part of the discussion I argue that the comparative methodology identifying parallels between the texts fails to establish direct literary dependence between these two works. In the second part I suggest that the application of philological-linguistic methodology makes a decisive

123 n. 57; Ulrike Mittmann-Richert, *Historische und legendarische Erzählungen* (JSRZ 6.1, 1; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2000), 68–69.

³ Bacchisio Motzo, “Il rifacimento greco del ‘Ester’ e il ‘III Macc,’” in *Saggi di storia e letteratura giudeo-ellenistica* (Florence: F. Le Monnier, 1924), 272–90 [= *Ricerche sulla letteratura e la storia giudaico-ellenistica* (ed. Fausto Parente; Rome: Centro editoriale internazionale, 1977), 281–309]; Jakob Cohen, *Judaica et Aegyptiaca: De Maccabaeorum libro III Quaestiones historicae* (Groningen: M. de Waal, 1941), 21; George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 175 (but later he voiced reservations; see idem, “The Bible Rewritten and Expanded,” in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* [ed. Michael E. Stone; CRINT 2, 2; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984], 137); Sara R. Johnson, *Historical Fictions and Hellenistic Jewish Identity: Third Maccabees in Its Cultural Context* (Hellenistic Culture and Society; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 137, 141.

⁴ Carey A. Moore, “On the Origins of the LXX Additions to the Book of Esther,” *JBL* 92 (1973): 383–86; idem, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: The Additions; A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 44; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 198–99; André Paul, “Le Troisième livre des Macchabées,” *ANRW* 2.20.1 (1987): 322–23; Alexander, “3 Maccabees, Hanukkah and Purim,” 333–39. From a different perspective, Moses Hadas finds no direct connection between Greek Esther and 3 Maccabees, but assumes that “III Maccabees, like the Septuagint Esther, is a corrective of the Hebrew Esther” (*The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees* [Jewish Apocryphal Literature; New York: Harper, 1953], 6–8). Hugh Anderson finds no evidence for a “direct line of connection between the Hebrew Esther and 3 Maccabees” (“3 Maccabees,” *OTP* 2:515 and n. 19). N. Clayton Croy follows Anderson’s view (3 Maccabees [Septuagint Commentary Series; Leiden: Brill, 2006], xvi).

⁵ See, e.g., Hadas, *Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees*, 6–8; Anna Passoni Dell’Acqua, “Terzo libro dei Maccabei,” in *Apocrifi dell’Antico Testamento* 4 (ed. Paolo Sacchi; Biblica, Testi e studi 8; Brescia: Paideia, 2000), 595–96.

⁶ Moore, “LXX Additions to the Book of Esther”; idem, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 195–99, 237; David J. A. Clines, *The Esther Scroll: The Story of the Story* (JSOTSup 30; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 173; Jon D. Levenson, *Esther: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 75; Sidnie W. Crawford, “The Additions to Esther: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” *NIB* 3:953, 967. Oddly, some studies do not relate to 3 Maccabees; see, e.g., Michael V. Fox, *The Redaction of the Books of Esther: On Reading Composite Texts* (SBLMS 40; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991); idem, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

contribution to this question. The unique linguistic, as opposed to the thematic-structural, parallels between the texts allow determination, in my opinion, of direct literary dependence: in this instance, between two units from the Greek Additions to Esther and 3 Maccabees.

I. THEMATIC-STRUCTURAL PARALLELS

The oft-cited correspondences between Esther and 3 Maccabees relate primarily to thematic and structural features. Some of these sweeping parallels—their similar story lines, for example—can even be considered striking: in both works, the king promulgates an edict to destroy the Jews, which is then rescinded; the Jews are saved and a holiday established to commemorate their rescue. Another fundamental aspect shared by these stories of rescue is that they take place in a Diaspora setting.

But scholars identify other, more specific affinities. These include many feasts;⁷ a Jew foiling a plot to assassinate the king;⁸ a false accusation regarding Jewish lack of loyalty to the state;⁹ and ascription of responsibility for the unfortunate episode of persecution of the Jews not to the king himself but to royal officials.¹⁰ A further corresponding detail relates to the identical number of people reportedly killed: in Esther the Jews of Shushan kill three hundred of their enemies on the second day (9:15); in 3 Maccabees the rescued Jews kill three hundred renegades whom they encounter on their way home (7:14–15).¹¹

Other parallels have been suggested. Esther distinguishes between Shushan and the other provinces under Ahasuerus's rule (9:15–18), and 3 Maccabees differentiates between the Jews of Alexandria, at first not included in the death edict, and the remaining Jews of Egypt, who were decreed to destruction from the start (4:12–13).¹² Female characters also figure in both: in Esther the royal female char-

⁷ Esther 1:3–4, 5–12; 2:18; 3:15; 5:4–8; 6:14–7:8; 8:17; 9:17, 18, 19, 22; 3 Macc 4:1, 16; 5:3, 15–17, 36–39; 6:30–31, 33, 35–36, 40; 7:(15), 18, 19–20.

⁸ Motzo notes that, according to some manuscripts of Greek Esther, the name of one of the potential assassins of Ahasuerus is θεοδευτος or θεοδοτος, which apparently reflects the influence of 3 Maccabees' θεόδοτος ("Il rifacimento greco del 'Ester' e il 'III Macc,'" 274).

⁹ Esther 3:8; 3 Macc 3:2–7, 16–26. This undergoes significant expansion in the Greek Additions to Esther, in Haman's first letter. As we shall see below, there are linguistic parallels between this letter and 3 Maccabees.

¹⁰ Esther 7:6, 8:3–8; 3 Macc 6:24–28; 7:3–7. On the distinction between Esther, in which Haman instigates the plot to persecute the Jews, and 3 Maccabees, in which the king is the instigator, see below.

¹¹ Kopidakes, *To Γ' Μακκαβαίων και ο Αισχυλος*, 22; Alexander, "3 Maccabees, Hanukkah and Purim," 333 n. 16.

¹² Alexander, "3 Maccabees, Hanukkah and Purim," 333 n. 16.

acter plays a focal role in the story; it is she who is responsible for saving the Jews. In 3 Maccabees Arsinoë, the king's wife, plays a central role at the battle of Raphia; it is largely due to her intervention that the Ptolemies achieve victory in this battle (1:4–5).¹³

Various studies go on to identify additional parallels between the two works. One concerns the king's sleep. Esther states: "that night, sleep deserted the king" (6:1); in 3 Maccabees God sends Philopator sweet and deep sleep (5:11–12) to ensure that he would miss the hour designated for executing the Jews. Note that the LXX of Esther attributes the king's sleeplessness to divine intervention: "That night the Lord took sleep from the king" (6:1); accordingly, in both works God saves the Jews by manipulating the king's sleep.¹⁴ Another matter mentioned as a thematic parallel between the two works relates to the enemy's "face" in confrontation with the king. In Esther, confronted by the king's allegation of an attempt to ravish the queen in the palace, Haman's face "falls" (7:8). And, in 3 Maccabees, when the king berates the elephant handler Hermon and threatens him with death after one of the failed attempts to kill the Jews, Hermon's "face fell" (5:31–33).¹⁵

The two works also exhibit structural similarities, in particular, their shaping as stories of reversal. That Esther is structured as a story of dramatic reversal is well known: the Jews who were to be killed are saved; those who sought their death are killed instead. The motif of reversal receives explicit emphasis in the scroll: "the opposite happened, and the Jews got their enemies in their power" (9:1); "the same month which had been transformed for them from one of grief and mourning to one of festive joy" (v. 22). There are also many contrasting parallels between the scroll's beginning and end; for example, the mourning among the Jews when the king's command was issued (4:3) as opposed to the "gladness and joy among the Jews, a feast and a holiday" (8:17) when it was overturned. Third Maccabees as well is a story of reversal: the Jews slated for death were saved, and the renegade Jews were killed. This reversal is reflected both in the language of the story and in the many contrasting parallels between its beginning and end.¹⁶ Thus, the king commands the Jews to celebrate their rescue in the hippodrome, the very place they were to be executed (3 Macc 6:30–31); in addition, the king's wrath is converted to tears (v. 22). Another inversion inheres in how the enemies of the Jews who rejoiced in their expected death brought ignominy upon themselves (v. 34).

The foregoing discussion has focused primarily on the MT of Esther. Comparison of the Greek translation of Esther, with the Additions, to 3 Maccabees elicits its additional similarities: the prayers and royal letters found in each. Addition C

¹³ Ibid., 333.

¹⁴ Motzo, "Il rifacimento greco del 'Ester' e il 'III Macc,'" 281.

¹⁵ Ibid.; and Kopidakes, *To Γ' Μακκαβαίων και ο Αισχυλός*, 21.

¹⁶ On this aspect of 3 Maccabees, see recently J. R. C. Cousland, "Reversal, Recidivism and Reward in 3 Maccabees: Structure and Purpose," *JSJ* 31 (2003): 39–51.

contains two prayers: that of Mordecai and that of Esther. 3 Maccabees also has two prayers: that of the high priest Simon (2:2–20) and that of Eleazar, one of the priests in Egypt (6:2–15). Both stories also incorporate two royal letters: one a royal edict concerning the eradication of the Jews (3 Macc 3:12–29; Esth, Addition B), and the second, a royal decree canceling the first (3 Macc 7:1–9; Esth, Addition E). The above-cited parallels by no means comprise the totality of parallels between Esther and 3 Maccabees, but they are the most prominent and representative.¹⁷

To return to the question of dependence between Esther and 3 Maccabees posed in the opening: what conclusions can be reached on the basis of the numerous thematic-structural parallels outlined above? Let me preface the discussion by stating that, in my opinion, a responsible answer would be: almost nothing. That is, the above-mentioned parallels assist our understanding of the nature and components of each of these narratives but do not testify to a direct intertextual link—of agreement, rewriting, or polemic—between these two works. Indeed, some of these parallels are far from unique; moreover, marked differences are discernible within the above-cited parallels themselves. For example, what I noted as perhaps the most striking correspondence, their similar story lines—an attempt to eradicate or to harm the Jews, their rescue, and the mandating of a holiday to commemorate this event—is not unique to these two works and appears elsewhere in Second Temple Jewish literature, including 1 and 2 Maccabees.¹⁸ Nor is the appearance of feasts exclusive to the two works in question. As Philip Alexander notes, feasts are a common literary motif;¹⁹ therefore their presence cannot provide a link between Esther and 3 Maccabees. In addition, the distinct difference between Dositheus, the apostate Jew who saves the king (3 Macc 1:2–3), and Mordecai, the Jew who foils the plot of Bigthan and Teresh (Esth 2:21–23), undermines the argument that the two books share the theme of the king's rescue from assassination. Weaker still are the parallels between Esther and Arsinoë: the former is a Jewish queen who delivers her people from their enemies; the latter, a queen who assists her countrymen in battle. With regard to the Jews avenging themselves on their enemies in 3 Maccabees, as opposed to Esther, their foes are not those who wish to kill the Jews. I argue that, notwithstanding the apparent similarities between the books, we must take note of these and other, more fundamental differences.

More differences between the two narratives of destruction and rescue can be cited. Missing from 3 Maccabees are any echoes of Esther's tale of court intrigue involving Mordecai and Haman, or of bringing Vashti before the king. Further, the identity of the person persecuting the Jews—a king or a high official—differs in

¹⁷ On these and other thematic parallels, see Motzo, "Il rifacimento greco del 'Ester' e il 'III Macc,'" 274–85.

¹⁸ These themes also appear separately in several other books, such as Judith.

¹⁹ Alexander, "3 Maccabees, Hanukkah and Purim," 333–34.

the two stories. Moreover, 3 Maccabees has an entire scene unparalleled in Esther: the attempt to enter the sanctuary.²⁰

Even the fact that both stories contain prayers has no bearing on our question. The two prayers in Greek Esther are recited in a single time frame, during the three-day fast, before Esther makes her unbidden approach to Ahasuerus. In 3 Maccabees each prayer is recited on a different occasion, and the first prayer belongs to the attempt to desecrate the temple and not to the one to kill the Jews. Besides, 3 Maccabees (5:7–9, 13, 25, 35) refers to other prayers whose texts are not cited; Esther mentions in addition only the cries of the Israelites in the verse linking the two prayers (Addition C 11). Furthermore, as a pervasive theme in Second Temple and in Hellenistic Jewish literature, prayer cannot be considered a unique motif linking these texts.²¹

The argument specifically citing the wording of the prayers in 3 Maccabees and the prayers of Mordecai and Esther in Greek Esther as proof of mutual dependence is also unfounded. The vocative κύριε κύριε found in the opening of both Mordecai's prayer (Addition C 2)²² and Simon's prayer (3 Macc 2:2) is not exceptional and makes its appearance in the Greek translations of a number of biblical and apocryphal prayers.²³ Nor is the salutation βασιλεῦ appended to the phrase κύριε κύριε in 3 Maccabees and Esther indicative of either direct dependence or of mutual influence between these prayers. A similar combination appears in the LXX of Deut 9:26; moreover, in each occurrence, this word is followed by a different object under divine dominion. Nor are other claims submitted regarding the affinity between the two prayers convincing.²⁴

²⁰ See also Motzo, "Il rifacimento greco del 'Ester' e il 'III Macc,'" 283.

²¹ E.g., Dan 9:4–19; the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men; Ezra 9:6–15; Neh 1:5–11; 9:5–37; Judith 9; 16:1–18; Tob 3:2–6, 11–15; 2 Macc 1:24–29; 8:2–4, 14–15.

²² Some witnesses have θεέ instead of the second occurrence of κύριε. See Robert Hanhart, ed., *Esther* (Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum, VIII/3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 162. However, the preferred variant is the above-cited one, also because the doubling of the word is not common.

²³ Deuteronomy 3:24; 9:26; Judg 6:22; 16:28; 1 Kgs 8:53; Pss 69 (68):7; 109 (108):21; 140 (139):8; 141 (140):8; 2 Macc 1:24.

²⁴ For a more comprehensive discussion, see Noah Hacham, "The Third Book of Maccabees: Literature, History and Ideology" (in Hebrew; Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2002), 229 n. 124. Motzo ("Il rifacimento greco del 'Ester' e il 'III Macc,'" 278–80) and Nickelsburg (*Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah*, 174) put forth a different argument for the affinity between 3 Maccabees and Esther. They note Esther's remarks in her prayer (C 20) that the Gentiles wish to extinguish the glory of the divine house and its altar (καὶ σβέσαι δόξαν οἴκου σου καὶ θυσιαστήριόν σου). They assume that this verse was influenced by the story of Philopator's attempt to penetrate the temple, and they see it as proof that 3 Maccabees was composed before Greek Esther. Because of the temple's importance as a Jewish symbol, appropriate in the context of proposed harm to the Jews, this hypothesis is unfounded. As Moore notes, works by Diaspora Jews reflect their concern for the temple and the altar (*Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 211).

Another point raised in the attempts to establish a relationship between the texts is Esther's omission from the precedents cited in Eleazar's prayer (3 Macc 6:4–8) for the rescue of the Jewish people or individual Jews. Mentioned there are the exodus; Jerusalem's deliverance from Sennacherib; Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; Daniel; and Jonah. Based on the assumption that 3 Maccabees was familiar with the story of Esther, some scholars perceive its absence as a thundering silence, interpreting it as 3 Maccabees' protest against, or polemic concerning, the Esther story.²⁵ But this argument is problematic as well. Consideration of the list of examples from Eleazar's prayer shows it to be a microcosm of the story of 3 Maccabees as a whole, from the conflict in Jerusalem to the deliverance of the Jews in Egypt.²⁶ Its purpose is not to delineate all the past deliverances of the Israelites but rather to build a list that parallels the construction of the narrative. In this case any addition would be detrimental; Esther's absence from this catalogue accordingly makes no contribution to the determination of intertextuality between 3 Maccabees and Esther.

A final point concerns the nature of the holiday established to commemorate the deliverance in 3 Maccabees: "They established . . . a festival, not for drinking and gluttony" (6:36). Some scholars regard this statement as proof that 3 Maccabees was familiar with the Purim celebration and tried to fashion "an ersatz Alexandrian Purim."²⁷ But Philo's use of similar phrasing with reference to the Passover celebration (*Spec.* 2.148) and Josephus's comparable style (*C. Ap.* 2.195–96) make extrapolation of a reference to Purim from this verse impossible. More likely is that this wording reflects a polemic against the idolatrous feasts of the king mentioned earlier in 3 Maccabees, in the framework of its author's struggle against the Dionysian cult.²⁸

In sum, the parallels listed here between these two works enable neither deduction of familiarity between them nor determination of its direction. Furthermore, the inability to establish direct dependence undermines the historical hypotheses constructed on the basis of the thematic-structural parallels between 3 Maccabees and Esther.²⁹ More pertinently, the reference to Mordecai's day in connection with Nicanor's day in 2 Maccabees (15:36) suggests that the story of

²⁵ See, e.g., Alexander, "3 Maccabees, Hanukkah and Purim," 334–35. Others view this as testifying to the lateness of the translation of Esther as compared to 3 Maccabees. See Motzo, "Il rifacimento greco del 'Ester' e il 'III Macc,'" 278; Cohen, *Judaica et Aegyptiaca*, 21; see also Hadas, *Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees*, 8.

²⁶ See Anna Passoni Dell'Acqua, "Le preghiere del III libro dei Maccabei: genere letterario e tematica," *RivB* 43 (1995): 159–64; Hacham, "Third Book of Maccabees," 124–29.

²⁷ See Joshua E. Burns, "The Special Purim and the Reception of the Book of Esther in the Hellenistic and Early Roman Eras," *JSJ* 37 (2006): 19–21.

²⁸ See Noah Hacham, "3 Maccabees: An Anti-Dionysian Polemic," in *Ancient Fiction: The Matrix of Early Christian and Jewish Narrative* (ed. Jo-Ann A. Brant, C. W. Hedrick, and C. Shea; SBLSymS 32; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 167–83, esp. 180 and n. 55.

²⁹ E.g., by Motzo ("Il rifacimento greco del 'Ester' e il 'III Macc'") and Alexander ("3 Maccabees, Hanukkah and Purim"), among others.

Esther was known in Egypt prior to the arrival of the Greek translation. But this by no means implies knowledge of a Greek version, or that such a version aroused a reaction, or that 3 Maccabees was this response. In addition, we cannot overlook the possibility that, in creating their own holiday of deliverance in 3 Maccabees, the Jews of Egypt utilized the familiar and beloved pattern of the Purim story, irrespective of their acquaintance with a Greek translation of Esther.

II. INTERTEXTUALITY NONETHELESS

Having demonstrated the inconclusive nature of the thematic-structural parallels discussed above, I now turn to a comparative linguistic methodology. This methodology makes possible a more exact determination of the nature of the relationship between the works in question and discloses noteworthy links between 3 Maccabees and Greek Esther.

Various lists of the linguistic similarities between these two texts have been formulated in the past, and they indeed show close affinities.³⁰ Yet, to my mind, the discussion requires greater precision. As opposed to previous lists, which do not always distinguish between features shared only by these works and words that appear elsewhere in the LXX and sometimes provide thematic, rather than linguistic, examples, the tables below are restricted to words and phrases in the LXX that are unique to Esther and 3 Maccabees. From a methodological viewpoint, only unique linguistic parallels can definitively establish intertextual affinity and deliberate use of one work by the other. In actuality, Greek Esther and 3 Maccabees share nine words that occur nowhere else in the LXX; of these, seven appear in the royal letters, Additions B and E to the Greek version of Esther. A number of additional phrases exhibit shared language; in all, there are some twenty linguistic correspondences between Greek Esther and 3 Maccabees, again, concentrated mainly in the royal letters.

The most significant parallel between Greek Esther and 3 Maccabees relates to a phrase found in ancient Greek literature only in these two works. Ahasuerus's second letter (E 24) commands that any place failing to fulfill the instructions in the letter be destroyed in wrath by "spear and fire" (δόρατι καὶ πυρὶ). A similar combination, but in reversed order, appears in 3 Macc 5:43, where the king announces in his anger at the Jews that he will level Judah with "fire and spear" (πυρὶ καὶ δόρατι). There are further similarities between these two verses. Both contain the verb καθίστημι accompanied by the temporal expression εἰς τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον. In Esther, the king announces that that place will be "hateful . . . for all time"; in 3 Maccabees, the king boasts that he will burn down the sanctuary, mak-

³⁰ Motzo, "Il rifacimento greco del 'Ester' e il 'III Macc,'" 275–78, 280–82; Kopidakes, *To Γ' Μακκαβαίων και ο Αισχυλος*, 19–22.

ing it inaccessible forever. The two verses share another word: ἄβατος. In Esther, that place will be inaccessible to people; in 3 Maccabees, the temple is described as inaccessible to the king.³¹

Additional examples of words and expressions unique in the LXX further support the assumption of dependence between the two works. The closest correspondences are summarized below.

TABLE 1
WORDS UNIQUE TO GREEK ESTHER AND 3 MACCABEES IN THE LXX

Word	Esther	3 Maccabees	Notes
παραπέμπω	B 4	1:26	
διηνεκῶς	B 4	3:11, 22; 4:16	
δυσμενής	B 4, 7	3:2, 7, 25	See n. 34
δυσνοέω	B 5	3:24	
ὑπερχαρής	5:9	7:20	
μηχανάομαι	E 3	5:5, 22, 28; 6:22, ³² 24	
κόμπος	E 4	6:5	
ὀλεθρία	E 21	4:2; 5:5	
κώθων	8:17	6:31	

As seen from the table, there are nine words unique to 3 Maccabees and Esther. The first three words all occur in Esth B 4. The verb παραπέμπω appears only twice in the LXX,³³ and the adverb διηνεκῶς, which modifies παραπέμπω in Addition B 4, appears elsewhere in the LXX only in 3 Maccabees, as indicated above.³⁴ The verb δυσνοέω, which appears in the first royal letter in the Additions

³¹ The Alpha Text (AT) also has the combination δόρατι καὶ πυρί and the word ἄβατος, but not the other parallels mentioned.

³² See the variants in Robert Hanhart, ed., *Maccabaeorum liber III* (Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum, IX/3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 64.

³³ This verb is not unknown in ancient literature, and in writings close to the LXX it appears in a similar meaning in *Let. Aris.* 258.

³⁴ These two words appear also in the AT of B 4. In this verse in the Additions to Esther (and B 7 below) the word δυσμενής also appears, found elsewhere in the LXX only in 3 Macc 3:2, 7, 25. However, as its gerund δυσμένεια appears in 2 (and 3) Maccabees, and its adverbial form δυσμενῶς is found in 2 Maccabees, it is difficult to consider this word as one shared solely by 3 Maccabees and Esther.

to Esther and in 3 Maccabees, is considered a neologism in the LXX.³⁵ Similarly, ὀλεθρία, found in the LXX only in the second royal letter in the Additions to Esther,³⁶ and twice in 3 Maccabees, is also a neologism.³⁷ In addition, the verse containing this word in the Additions to Esther contrasts destruction and joy (ἀντ' ὀλεθρίας . . . ἐποίησεν αὐτοῖς εὐφροσύνην), and a similar contrast using almost identical language appears in 3 Macc 6:30 (ἐν ᾧ τόπω . . . ὀλεθρον ἀναλαμβάνειν ἐν τούτῳ ἐν εὐφροσύνῃ πάσῃ σωτήρια ἄγειν). The verb μηχανάομαι appears in this form in the LXX only in 3 Maccabees (five times) and in the second royal letter in Esther (E 3).³⁸ The words ὑπερχαρής and κώθων³⁹ appear only twice in the LXX: in 3 Maccabees and in Greek Esther, and the word κόμπος appears only twice in the LXX: in 3 Maccabees and in the Additions to Esther, as indicated above.⁴⁰

Additional linguistic affinities between the texts take the form of phrases or expressions as summarized in the table on the next page.

The use of the verb ἀφανίζω in a temporal expression with μία ἡμέρα, only here in the LXX, is striking, but (owing to the different phrasing)⁴¹ not as impressive as is the unique collocation—in the first royal letter of Esther and twice in 3 Maccabees—of the verb ἐπαίρω with θράσος in the dative.⁴² The Ptolemaic

³⁵ See Johan Lust et al., *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (rev. ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 164; LSJ, s.v. δυσνοέω, p. 459; Robert Helbing, *Die Kasussyntax der Verba bei den Septuaginta: Ein Beitrag zur Hebraismenfrage und zur Syntax der Κοινή* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1928), 213. The word also appears in the AT.

³⁶ Moore suggests that vv. 21–23 are not original to the letter but rather are a later addition (*Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 237). If that is the case, this word's appearance does not prove a connection between the original version of the letter and 3 Maccabees, but see below.

³⁷ Peter Walters comments that the usual form of the word is ὀλεθρος or ὀλέθριος. With the appearance of the verbs ὀλεθρεύω and ἐξὀλεθρεύω various nouns were created. In his opinion, the form ὀλεθρία was also influenced by this verb and “it may be sound to bring the noun into closer relation to –εύω by spelling it –εία” (*The Text of the Septuagint: Its Corruptions and Their Emendations* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973], 42). Nonetheless, in all three occurrences of this word in Esther and 3 Maccabees its suffix is identical—–ία—not Walters's suggested emendation. This perhaps indicates the close relationship between the two works. Josephus, *Ant.* 11.282 uses the same word in citing this letter from Esther. This word is missing from the AT.

³⁸ A slightly different form of the verb, μηχανεύομαι, appears in the LXX of 2 Chr 26:15, and, according to some manuscripts, in 3 Macc 6:22. All the parallels cited for this verse appear in the AT.

³⁹ Even though the word κώθων appears in the LXX only in 3 Macc 6:31 and Esth 8:17, because the verb κωθωνίζω appears elsewhere in the LXX this parallel carries less weight.

⁴⁰ Of the final three words, only ὑπερχαρής does not appear in the AT, which has no translation of this verse.

⁴¹ Esther 3:13: ἀφανίσαι . . . ἐν ἡμέρᾳ μιᾷ; 3 Macc 4:14: ἀφανίσαι μιᾷς ὑπὸ καιρὸν ἡμέρας (as also in 2 Macc 7:20).

⁴² Also found in the AT.

TABLE 2
PHRASES OR EXPRESSIONS EXCLUSIVE TO GREEK ESTHER AND 3 MACCABEES

<i>Phrase or Expression</i>	<i>Esther</i>	<i>3 Maccabees</i>	<i>Notes</i>
ἀφανίζω + μία ἡμέρα	3:13	4:14	See n. 41
ἐπαίρω + θράσος (dat.)	B 2	2:21; 6:4	
ἀποδείκνυμι + βεβαία πίστις	B 3	5:31	
ὁ τεταγμένος ἐπὶ (τῶν) πραγμάτων	B 6	7:1	
παρέχω + εὐστάθεια (or εὐσταθές) + τὰ πράγματα	B 7	6:28	
εὐστάθεια (or εὐσταθές) + τὰ πράγματα + χρόνος + τελ-	B 7	3:26	See n. 44
ἐπιχειρέω + εὐεργέτης in proximity to the verb μηχανάομαι	E 3	6:24	
καθίστημι + μετόχους (pl.)	E 5	3:21	
+ πιστεύω + πράγματα	E 5	3:21	
+ κακοήθεια	E 6	3:22	
τῆς ἀρχῆς . . . καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος	E 12	6:24	
ἀφανισμός + Ἰουδαῖοι	E 15	5:20, 38	See n. 50
κατευθύνω + μέγιστος θεός (μέγας θεός) + ἡ βασιλεία (τὰ πράγματα)	E 16	7:2	See n. 45
καθάπερ (καθὼς) προαιρούμεθα	E 16	7:2	See n. 46
Contrast of ὀλεθρία or ὀλεθρος to εὐφροσύνη	E 21	6:30	
πυρὶ καὶ δόρατι καθίστημι + εἰς τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον ἄβατος	E 24	5:43	

honorific ὁ τεταγμένος ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων appears in the LXX only in this Addition and 3 Maccabees.⁴³ The verb παρέχω followed by the object εὐστάθεια or εὐσταθές with reference to the regime (called τὰ πράγματα) also is found only once in 3 Maccabees and once in the Additions to Esther. Like Esth B 7, 3 Macc 3:26 contains the following words: εὐστάθεια (or εὐσταθές), τὰ πράγματα, χρόνος, and a word with the root τελ- (3 Macc: τελείως; Esth: διὰ τέλους).⁴⁴ Where the verb κατευθύνω appears in 3 Maccabees and in Esther Addition E the supreme god is the subject of the sentence (3 Macc: ὁ μέγας θεός; Esth: ὁ μέγιστος θεός) and the object relates to the regime (3 Macc: τὰ πράγματα; Esth: ἡ βασιλεία).⁴⁵ According to the version appearing in a recently published papyrus, we must add to the affinity between the verses another similar, and unique, combination: καθάπερ προαιρούμεθα (E 16); καθὼς προαιρούμεθα (3 Macc 7:2).⁴⁶ In addition to μηχανάομαι, the verse from Addition E 3 discussed above shares two other words with 3 Macc 6:24: the verb-object combination ἐπιχειρέω and εὐεργέτης, which is unique in the LXX, as well as the thematic parallel of a plan to assassinate the king who has shown benevolence to them. Another expression in the LXX that appears in the same verse (6:24) in 3 Maccabees and in a different verse in the same royal letter is: τῆς ἀρχῆς . . . καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος (Esth E 12).⁴⁷ In addition, the positive attitude of the “good guys” to the regime has lin-

⁴³ In 3 Maccabees without τῶν. On this parallel, see Kopidakes, *To Γ' Μακκαβαίων καὶ ο Αισχυλός*, 20; Anna Passoni Dell'Acqua, “The Liberation Decree of ‘Addition’ E in Esther LXX: Some Lexical Observations Starting from a New Papyrus [POxy LXVI, 4443]; New Evidence for the ‘Egyptian Flavour’ of this ‘Addition,’” *Adamantius* 10 (2004): 80.

⁴⁴ These words occur naturally in the semantic field relating to the kingdom's stability; accordingly, it is difficult to view them as proof of dependence between the two works. For the occurrence of *some* of these words in the LXX, see 3 Macc 3:26; 7:4; 2 Macc 14:6; Esth B 5. For their occurrence in other sources, see, e.g., *OGIS* 56:19, 669:4. As F.-M. Abel notes, there is great lexical similarity between 2 Macc 14:6 and Esth B 5 (*Les livres des Maccabées* [EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1949], 459). Nonetheless, these words would be expected in this context, and do not establish literary dependence, as opposed to Daniel R. Schwartz's opinion (*The Second Book of Maccabees: Introduction, Hebrew Translation, and Commentary* [in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2004], 261). See also Motzo, “Il rifacimento greco del ‘Ester’ e il ‘III Macc,’” 275–76; Kopidakes, *To Γ' Μακκαβαίων καὶ ο Αισχυλός*, 20.

⁴⁵ See Motzo, “Il rifacimento greco del ‘Ester’ e il ‘III Macc,’” 276. This combination is natural in Hellenistic Jewish literature and does not provide strong evidence of a link between 3 Maccabees and Esther. See, e.g., *Let. Aris.* 216 (but note the variants there).

⁴⁶ P.Oxy. 4443 l. 4. This is not absolute proof of dependence between the works because, as Passoni Dell'Acqua shows (“Liberation Decree of ‘Addition’ E in Esther LXX,” 79), this verb is found in correspondence from the Ptolemaic milieu. For similar wording, see *Let. Aris.* 45. Moreover, this version is not documented in other witnesses of Addition E and may be secondary. Nonetheless, the similarity between the verses assists the overall picture of a link and dependence by the royal letters in the Additions to Esther on 3 Maccabees, to be discussed below.

⁴⁷ See Motzo, “Il rifacimento greco del ‘Ester’ e il ‘III Macc,’” 276. The AT also shares the verb μεθίστημι, but in a different form.

guistic parallels in both texts. The verb ἀποδείκνυμι combined with the direct or indirect object βεβαία πίστις is found in the LXX only in 3 Maccabees and Esther Addition B.⁴⁸ Two adjacent verses in each book that deal with loyalty to the regime also exhibit linguistic similarities: the combination of the verb καθίστημι with the plural direct object μετόχους, and the combination of the verb πιστεύω with the word πράγματα appears in each,⁴⁹ with the word κακοήθεια in the following verse. The word ἀφρανισμός in relation to Ἰουδαῖοι appears twice in 3 Maccabees and once in Addition E to Esther.⁵⁰ The king's philanthropy to individuals and nations is also portrayed in similar language in 3 Macc 3:18 and Esth E 11.⁵¹ The opposition of ὀλεθρία and εὐφροσύνη, as well as the unique phrase πυρὶ καὶ δόρατι, was discussed above. To all this we may perhaps add the use of the word σωτηρία in both books (3 Macc 6:33; Esth E 23) to describe what happened to the king.

In addition to the above-mentioned words and expressions found exclusively in the LXX in 3 Maccabees and Greek Esther, there are a number of words that appear in these two works and one other book in the LXX.⁵² In this case as well, many of these words are clustered in the two royal letters in the Additions to Esther.

What conclusions can be drawn from the comparisons listed here? After all, as noted, they comprise only some twenty examples, by no means a substantial number of words or expressions common to both books. Nonetheless, I contend that these data make a decisive contribution to the determination of the relationship between the two works. First, several of these examples pertain to words whose earliest occurrence is attested in the LXX, and to a unique expression that appears

⁴⁸ See Kopidakes, *To Γ' Μακκαβαίων και ο Αισχυλος*, 20. The verb does not appear in the AT. The combination of this verb with the object πίστις is attested also in an inscription dated to ca. 157 B.C.E. See C. Bradford Welles, *Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period: A Study in Greek Epigraphy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), 256, lines 8–9.

⁴⁹ The syntactic structure of the combination of the verb πιστεύω with πράγματα differs in the two occurrences. The corresponding verse in the AT has no affinity to 3 Maccabees.

⁵⁰ Motzo, “Il rifacimento greco del ‘Ester’ e il ‘III Macc,’” 276. As the syntax of the sentences differs totally, this parallel is not definitive.

⁵¹ The similar words are ἔχομεν πρὸς, φιλανθρωπία, and πᾶν ἔθνος (Esth); ἅπαντας ἀνθρώπους (3 Macc); see Motzo, “Il rifacimento greco del ‘Ester’ e il ‘III Macc,’” 276. However, these ideas and words are widespread in Hellenistic works on kingship and in royal documents. See, e.g., 2 Macc 14:9; *Let. Aris.* 290; Welles, *Royal Correspondence*, 141, lines 16–17. In 3 Macc 7:6 we find a similar combination in which ἐπιείκεια appears instead of φιλανθρωπία.

⁵² κακοήθεια (3 Macc 3:22; 7:3; 4 Macc 1:4; 3:4 [twice]; Esth E 6); εὐνοέω (3 Macc 7:11; Dan 2:43; Esth E 23); εὐωχία (3 Macc 4:1, 8; 5:3, 17; 6:30, 35; 1 Esd 3:20; Esth C 10; E 22); σύνολος (3 Macc 3:29; 4:3, 11; 7:8, 9, 21; Sir 9:9; Esth E 24); μετέπειτα (3 Macc 3:24; Jdt 9:5; Esth B 7); ἀνήκεστος (3 Macc 3:25; 4:2 [according to some mss]; 2 Macc 9:5; Esth E 5); πυκνότερον (3 Macc 4:12; 7:3; 2 Macc 8:8; Esth E 2). These words are also rare in the Pseudepigrapha. See Albert-Marie Denis, *Concordance Grecque des Pseudépigraphes d'ancien Testament* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, Université Catholique de Louvain, 1987). In addition, note that these words do not belong only to the semantic field of royal correspondence.

nowhere else in ancient literature. Second, a majority of the examples of linguistic affinity between 3 Maccabees and Esther are concentrated in two of the Additions to Greek Esther: the royal letters. This is noteworthy. If we examine the unique linguistic links between 3 Maccabees and other books in the LXX, we find a range of fourteen shared words with Wisdom of Solomon, nine with Sirach, six with 4 Maccabees, and five with 1 Esdras. In all of these instances, the shared words are scattered throughout the books in question and are not concentrated in a defined literary unit. The unique verbal parallels between 2 and 3 Maccabees are larger in number, but, again, these are not restricted to a specific part of 2 Maccabees.⁵³ Thus, the clustering of words and combinations shared by 3 Maccabees and Esther in the royal letters in the Additions to Esther indicates close affinity between these letters and 3 Maccabees. Notably, the shared language does not come from the semantic field of royal correspondence; that is, this literary closeness cannot be attributed to genre. Third, backing this affinity are the previous lists of parallels between 3 Maccabees and Esther by Motzo, Moore, and Kopidakes. Even if not all definitive, most of the parallels cited there are concentrated in the royal letters. Fourth, some thirty years ago, based on the similarities in structure and content between the first letter in the Additions to Esther and the first edict of Ptolemy Philopator in 3 Maccabees (3:12–29), Moore postulated that the direction of influence was from the first edict in 3 Maccabees to the Additions to Esther. On the basis of their stylistic similarity, he concluded that both the first and second letters in the Additions were composed by a single author, in Greek, and after the composition of 3 Maccabees.⁵⁴ Despite Moore's convincing presentation of the data, not all scholars accept this conclusion.⁵⁵

We now come to the heart of this exploration of the issue of literary dependence between the Additions to Esther and 3 Maccabees. Based on Moore's conclusions regarding the authorship and language of the Additions, and the data presented here, I propose to take Moore's argument one step further. The concentration of the linguistic affinities between 3 Maccabees and Esther in the two royal

⁵³ For lists of the words and phrases found in both works that occur nowhere else in the LXX, see Cyril W. Emmet, "The Third Book of Maccabees," *APOT* 1:156; Hacham, "Third Book of Maccabees," 104–6.

⁵⁴ Moore, "LXX Additions to the Book of Esther," 384–85; idem, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 197–98. For a similar viewpoint on the relationship between the letters in these books, see Paul, "Le Troisième livre des Macchabées," 322–23. That Greek is the original language of the two letters in Esther is generally accepted; see R. A. Martin, "Syntax Criticism of the LXX Additions to the Book of Esther," *JBL* 94 (1975): 65–72; Emanuel Tov, "The 'Lucianic' Text of the Canonical and Apocryphal Sections of Esther: A Rewritten Biblical Book," *Textus* 10 (1982): 11 and n. 13.

⁵⁵ See the recent statement by Anna Passoni Dell'Acqua: "It is hard to say whether they were actually respectively drawn from the two parallel edicts of 3 Macc" ("Liberation Decree of 'Addition' E in Esther LXX," 76).

letters in the Greek Additions and the absence of linguistic or structural kinship between 3 Maccabees and the remainder of Greek Esther back my contention that these two letters specifically were composed *after*, and influenced *by*, 3 Maccabees in its entirety. If this were not the case, we would expect to find linguistic links between 3 Maccabees and the other parts of Greek Esther. This contradicts John J. Collins's observation,⁵⁶ based on the "verbal parallels between 3 Maccabees and Greek Esther, which are so close as to require us to assume literary influence," that "[i]t is significant that the parallels are not confined to the Greek additions to Esther, as we might expect if 3 Maccabees were prior."⁵⁷

The existence of another Greek version of Esther—the Alpha Text—does not influence the conclusions presented here. The scholarly consensus tends overwhelmingly to the view that the Additions to Esther appearing in the AT are a later reworking of the ones found in the LXX.⁵⁸ Accordingly, the definitive kinship between Additions B and E and 3 Maccabees was somewhat blurred in their transfer to the AT; as noted, most, but not all, of the linguistic parallels appear also in the AT.⁵⁹ Karen H. Jobes takes a different position, arguing that the AT contains the more original version of the Additions, with the possible exception of Additions B and E.⁶⁰ The close affinity between 3 Maccabees and Additions B and E, and the assumed direction of influence from 3 Maccabees to the letters in the Greek Additions to Esther, rule out the possibility that the AT was earlier than the LXX with regard to these letters.⁶¹

The proposition that 3 Maccabees influenced the letters in the Additions to Esther perhaps helps resolve a difficult passage in the second royal letter. In Addition E 21–23, the king announces that God has turned the thirteenth of Adar into a day of rejoicing, whose observance is obligatory. This is impossible: earlier, the same edict grants the Jews permission to defend themselves on the thirteenth of

⁵⁶ For a similar critique, see Johnson, *Historical Fictions and Hellenistic Jewish Identity*, 137 n. 35.

⁵⁷ Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 123 and n. 57.

⁵⁸ For a summary of the various opinions, see Kristin De Troyer, "The Letter of the King and the Letter of Mordecai," *Textus* 21 (2002): 176–87, based on her *The End of the Alpha Text of Esther: Translation and Narrative Technique in MT 8:1–17, LXX 8:1–17, and AT 7:14–41* (SBLSCS 48; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 351–63. See also Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 254–55, 257.

⁵⁹ On the other hand, not even a single word is shared *only* by 3 Maccabees and the two letters in the AT.

⁶⁰ Karen H. Jobes, *The Alpha-Text of Esther: Its Character and Relationship to the Masoretic Text* (SBLDS 153; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 232. She takes a more definitive position in the detailed discussion: "additions B and E in the AT more closely reflect the form of the additions when they were copied than does the LXX text of these additions . . . the AT preserves the earlier form of additions B and E" (p. 174).

⁶¹ For another critique of Jobes, see De Troyer, *Alpha Text of Esther*, 361.

Adar, the day of their intended destruction. How, then, could this day be designated a holiday prior to the deliverance? Moore argues that these verses are secondary, and he sets them off parenthetically in his translation.⁶² However, the assumption that a later redactor added these problematic verses to an ostensibly coherent text is difficult. One possibility, of course, is to view this as “simply the work of a careless redactor,”⁶³ similar to other inconsistencies and contradictions in this Addition.⁶⁴ Even if these verses are the result of carelessness, the assumption of influence by 3 Maccabees on this letter provides a clue to their inclusion. These verses treat topics found in 3 Maccabees: the celebration of the holiday on the day of deliverance, the transformation of destruction to joy, and the fact that, with the deliverance of the Jews, the king was saved as well. Moreover, these very verses contain some of the words shared only by 3 Maccabees and Esther. I suggest that the Addition’s author, who was influenced by 3 Maccabees and its terminology, incorporated matters drawn from 3 Maccabees in the conclusion of the letter, in line with his overall approach shaping the letter in accord with this work, as discussed below.

Based on the direct linguistic affinity demonstrated through the philological analysis of the vocabulary of the letters and 3 Maccabees, also taking into account their structural-contextual similarities, and perhaps the suggested higher criticism of the ending of the second letter, I conclude that the two royal letters added to the LXX of Esther were composed after 3 Maccabees and display its influence. This has no bearing on the question of the relationship between the remainder of Greek Esther and 3 Maccabees, nor on the issue of the date of composition of 3 Maccabees or of the Additions to Esther. It is possible that the Greek translation of Esther (without the letters) preceded 3 Maccabees and that the latter felt no need either to use the language of the translation or to respond to it in any way. Another possibility is that only the translation of the Hebrew of Esther preceded 3 Maccabees and that the Additions came after the composition of the latter work—and without its influence. Nor can we rule out a scenario in which 3 Maccabees was composed prior to the Greek translation of Esther, but that 3 Maccabees had no impact on Greek Esther. Only one definitive conclusion arises from the discussion here: the royal letters added to Greek Esther were written after 3 Maccabees and manifest its influence, for, if this were not the case, we would expect to find verbal links between 3 Maccabees and the remaining sections of Greek Esther.

⁶² Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 234–35, 237. Note that Moore’s arguments differ from mine; see *ibid.*, 237.

⁶³ Crawford, “Additions to Esther,” 967.

⁶⁴ Such as noting the fact that the members of Haman’s family were hanged together with him in the gates of Shushan (E 18).

III. DIASPORA JEWISH IDENTITY

The question of what the author of the royal letters in Esther hoped to achieve by creating affinity with 3 Maccabees belongs to the broader one of the purpose of the Additions. Opinions vary. Moore attributes the Additions to an attempt to add dramatic depth to this work and to lend greater plausibility to what is related there.⁶⁵ It is difficult, however, to understand how a letter referring to Haman as a Macedonian lends credence to the story, or how the addition of official royal edicts enriches its dramatic dimension. Erich Gruen represents another viewpoint. This scholar, who often notes the presence of humor in Hellenistic Jewish literature, finds a similar function for the humor in the Additions to Esther and in 3 Maccabees: to make a laughingstock of the great king who is convinced of his all-encompassing dominion yet fails to distinguish between supporter and opponent.⁶⁶ This explanation perhaps further elucidates the use of 3 Maccabees by the author of the Additions to Esther—after all, 3 Maccabees profoundly ridicules the king, his governorship, and his attitude toward the Jews.⁶⁷ But, as Gruen nowhere provides an explanation for what motivates this “irony and dark humor,” in and of itself, this observation is inadequate. Moreover, his suggestion that “the anachronistic allegation that Haman was a Macedonian . . . may be a sly hint to readers that nothing in the royal edicts should be taken seriously” ignores the implications of the epithet “Macedonian” in the Ptolemaic world. I prefer Sara Johnson’s approach, which views the incorporation of the royal edicts as an attempt to produce a supposedly genuine history, with allusions to the author’s present. According to Johnson, historical fiction serves to reinforce ideology, and the historical style of the decrees has “simply been coopted to lend the legend verisimilitude.”⁶⁸ Indeed, over forty years ago Victor Tcherikover explained the second royal edict’s ascription of Macedonian ancestry to Haman as the shaping of the Esther story by using actual terms from the translator’s day. According to Tcherikover, against the background of escalating anti-Semitism in the Ptolemaic kingdom—in light of the Jews’ success and integration into the army and the royal administration—Haman was fashioned as

⁶⁵ Moore, “LXX Additions to the Book of Esther,” 383–84; see also David A. DeSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 119.

⁶⁶ Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Hellenistic Culture and Society 30; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 181, 186.

⁶⁷ For a comprehensive discussion, see Hacham, “Third Book of Maccabees,” 147–57, 169–71.

⁶⁸ Johnson, *Historical Fictions and Hellenistic Jewish Identity*, 43–44 (on the second decree in Esther), 201–2, 209–15 (on the official decrees in 3 Maccabees).

a Macedonian minister who threatened the kingdom's stability, as opposed to the loyal minister, Mordecai the Jew.⁶⁹

In my opinion, the motivation for what I have identified as the reliance on 3 Maccabees by the author of the royal edicts in the Additions to Esther inheres in the latter's perception of Jewish existence in the Diaspora. Although both texts are Diaspora works, each paints an intrinsically different picture with respect to the essential nature of this existence. Esther's portrayal places the relationship between the king and the Jews in a generally favorable light. Disturbing the idyll is not the king, but his vizier, who is revealed as a traitor to the monarchy. What sparks the crisis is a regrettable mistake, which the king attempts to rectify upon its discovery. Within the kingdom, the Jews constitute a loyal sector; Jews save the king's life and play an active role at court. Nor do the Jews have any innate interest in harming non-Jews; only in the absence of an alternative, when confronted by a non-Jewish attempt to murder them, do the Jews retaliate. Moreover, despite being granted permission to do so, "they did not lay hands on the spoil" (Esth 9:16). In some respects, in Esther the enemy of the Jews is a lone individual and his family. Indeed, the story relates that, prompted by their fear of Mordecai, many non-Jews converted to Judaism.

The crisis between the Jews and the regime is resolved in 3 Maccabees as well. Here, however, the king, not a dastardly individual from his retinue, generates the crisis, and throughout the book the king is explicitly and consistently portrayed as the knave responsible for persecuting the Jews. The king's attribution of the crisis to his advisors and courtiers in his second letter must be viewed simply as self-justification. In contrast to Esther, 3 Maccabees portrays the crisis not as a regrettable mistake but rather as a manifestation of profound Jewish-Gentile tension. Thus, 3 Maccabees nowhere describes Jewish involvement at court, and the person who saves the king's life is an apostate Jew (1:3). At the same time, in 3 Maccabees the Jews do not seek to harm non-Jews, and it is the hand of God that brings injury to the soldiers marching behind the elephants. At the story's conclusion, fear prevents the enemies of the Jews from doing them harm, and they even return Jewish property (7:21-22).⁷⁰

This brief discussion discloses the distinct, underlying attitudes of these texts toward the relationship of the Jews to the regime: in Esther the Jews display confidence in Diaspora life, in the foreign regime, and in the king, whereas reservations and apprehension characterize the Jewish view of these facets in 3 Maccabees. Another contrast relates to Jews killing non-Jews: Esther freely recounts that Jews kill non-Jews. The Persian Jewish author felt secure enough in his environment to

⁶⁹ Victor A. Tcherikover, "Prolegomena," *CPJ* 1:24.

⁷⁰ This view of 3 Maccabees is widespread; see, e.g., John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE-117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 192. For the opposite view and a critique of it, see the literature in n. 75 below.

portray Jews killing their non-Jewish enemies. This is not the case in 3 Maccabees, where the Jews kill only renegade Jews (7:14–15) but no non-Jews.

Further, the threat against the Jews in each work differs in nature. The edict calling for the eradication of the Jews in Esther is the result of Mordecai's refusal to bow to Haman and is incontrovertible. In contrast, in 3 Maccabees the persecution is grounded in Jewish refusal to participate in the Dionysian rites, but those who join the cult are not subject to the decree. In the reversal at the story's conclusion the Jews kill the renegades who participated in the pagan rites in accord with the royal decree. In other words, in Esther the decree is directed against the Jews; in 3 Maccabees, against Judaism.

Support for this understanding of the accentuation of the religious element in 3 Maccabees comes from a comparison of the feasts in the texts. If in Esther the feasts are a manifestation of the non-Jews' stupidity and materialism, in 3 Maccabees they also, and perhaps primarily, symbolize idolatry. Witness the statement in 3 Macc 4:16 that the king was "organizing feasts in honor of all his idols."⁷¹ In 3 Maccabees the king and the Jews do not sit together to drink, whereas in Esther the feast held for Ahasuerus and Haman, hosted by the Jewish queen, is a crucial turning point in the deliverance of the Jews.

In summation, although the thematic-structural comparisons outlined in the first part of the article fail to reveal intertextuality in the form of a direct polemical relationship between the two texts, they do shed light on each work's definition of the Diaspora Jewish stance with respect to several issues: the degree of trust in the regime's goodwill toward Jews, the appropriate response to non-Jewish hostility, and identification of the main threat to Diaspora Jewish existence. The gap between the positions represented by the texts inheres in each one's apperception of Diaspora reality: the author of 3 Maccabees perceives a threatening alienation and strives to conciliate both the regime and the non-Jews, while retaining his strong adherence to Judaism. In contrast, the author of the book of Esther apparently experiences greater security in Diaspora existence and places trust in the Jewish representatives in government. In the absence of verifiable detail, however, it is nearly impossible to suggest a precise historical identification for the threatening circumstances reflected in 3 Maccabees.

It is in the view of the Diaspora in 3 Maccabees that we must seek the rationale for the incorporation of the royal letters in Greek Esther. These Additions, which voice the difficulty of Jewish life in the Diaspora, are in dissonance with the viewpoint emerging from the Hebrew. By rewriting the viewpoint of Hebrew Esther, these Additions introduce a new, hostile attitude to the book. As David DeSilva recently noted, the Additions reflect "the tension and animosity between Jew and Gentile," and Addition E, the second royal edict, represents

⁷¹ συμπόσια ἐπὶ πάντων τῶν ἰδῶλων συνιστάμενος. Croy translates, "organized banquets at the sites of all his idols" (3 Maccabees, 17).

a different model for Jewish–Gentile relations in which the Gentile authorities acknowledge the positive contributions that Jews make. . . . This Addition gives voice to the hope of the Diaspora Jew that the blamelessness of their conduct . . . would be recognized and valued, rather than . . . their differentness. . . . The simple hope of the author, like that of many Jews, was that their neighbors would “permit the Jews to live under their own laws” . . . without let or hindrance.⁷²

By relying on 3 Maccabees, the author of the royal edicts in Greek Esther underscores and strengthens these principles. I think this author found in 3 Maccabees a work compatible with his notions regarding Jewish–Gentile relations in the Diaspora, which he subsequently integrated in his Additions to Esther. One focal concept is basic Gentile hostility toward Jews, which then shifts and culminates in royal recognition of the Jewish contribution—and loyalty—to the kingdom. According to both 3 Maccabees and the Additions, this loyalty is sincere and unwavering; doubts are directed to the permanence of the king’s favorable attitude toward the Jews, voiced also by means of ironic ridicule of the king.⁷³ The joint celebration by the king and the Jews in both works expresses their authors’ hope for the preservation of this positive attitude on the part of the regime. By incorporating these elements in the letters in the Additions to Esther, their author reflects his view of the reality of his day; at the same time, by endowing these notions with historical backing, implying that this was also the case in the past, the author implants in the readers—familiar either with 3 Maccabees or the current situation—the sense that Jewish existence in the Diaspora, and Jewish–Gentile tension especially, was not a Ptolemaic–Egyptian innovation but part of a spectrum of similar events. The hope embedded in the analogy between these situations also emerges: just as the Jews were saved in Esther’s day and achieved ongoing recognition of their religious rights, such an outcome was feasible in the author’s day.

A final point: the intertextual affinity identified here between the letters in the Additions to Esther and 3 Maccabees may also work in the opposite direction and enhance our understanding of 3 Maccabees. Several verses there create the impression that, as opposed to most Gentiles, the Greeks had a positive attitude toward Jews (3 Macc 3:6–9). This determination is, however, contradicted elsewhere in the account with respect to the royal retinue, who must have been mainly Greeks (e.g., 2:26; 4:1, 4; 5:3, 21–22, 44; and 6:34). If we accept the assertion that the

⁷² DeSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha*, 110, 123–25. See also Motzo, “Il rifacimento greco del ‘Ester’ e il ‘III Macc,’” 287. Clines provides a slightly different explanation, that the two documentary additions are to be seen “as a testimony to the impact of the truth of the Jewish religion upon outsiders, neighbours and overlords.” However, he is not sure if these Additions “were made to meet such a particular need in their own time” (*Esther Scroll*, 173–74).

⁷³ If the king mistakenly failed to recognize Haman’s hostility, he could perhaps also fail to recognize Jewish loyalty. Accordingly, the irony may reflect the author’s unconscious confession that, in actuality, the foreign king was not partial to Jews. For a similar phenomenon in 3 Maccabees, see Hacham, “Third Book of Maccabees,” 147–62, esp. 155 n. 30, 169–73.

author of the royal edicts shaped them in accordance with the viewpoint of 3 Maccabees, this then discloses his interpretation of the nature of Greek–Jewish relations in 3 Maccabees: profound enmity. In contrast to Gruen and Johnson, I contend that 3 Maccabees attributes dislike of Jews to Greeks as well. At the same time, because of the author’s aspiration, in telling of the kingdom in which he lived,⁷⁴ not to exacerbate the relationship between Jews and Greeks to outright conflict, 3 Maccabees downplays this position to some extent at the beginning of ch. 3.⁷⁵ Not bound by such constraints because his story relates to the Persian kingdom, the author of the royal letters in the Additions to Esther was able to articulate explicitly his notion—in all probability drawn from 3 Maccabees, as were many details found in the letters—that the Macedonian minister was the foremost Jew hater. The contribution of this intertextual tie between the two works is therefore mutual: in elucidating the reasons for the creation of this affinity, and in disclosing the author’s understanding of the text from which the parallels were drawn.

⁷⁴ Various considerations strongly support the premise that 3 Maccabees was composed during the Ptolemaic period, in the first century B.C.E. See, recently, Johnson, *Historical Fictions and Hellenistic Jewish Identity*, 129–41, esp. 141; Passoni Dell’Acqua, “Terzo libro dei Maccabei,” 605–13.

⁷⁵ For their positions, see Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism*, 231–34; Johnson, *Historical Fictions and Hellenistic Jewish Identity*, 157–59. For a detailed discussion of this matter and the notion that there is both a public and a hidden transcript here, see Hacham, “Third Book of Maccabees,” 157–62, 169–73.