



Bigthan and Teresh and the Reason Gentiles Hate Jews

Noah Hacham*

Hebrew University of Jerusalem

noabh@mscc.huji.ac.il

Abstract

The account of Bigthan's and Teresh's conspiracy against the king (*Esth* 2:21-23) was transposed in the Septuagint to Addition A, which opens the book, while an additional story regarding a conspiracy to kill the king was introduced, in its stead, at the end of chapter 2 of this translation. These moves are part of Greek Esther's reworking of the story in order to depict Mordechai as faithful to the king, and Haman as the king's adversary who seeks his downfall, and to suggest that this contrast explains Haman's animosity toward Mordechai, and the Jews, who are loyal to the throne. This tendency, to accentuate the Jews' allegiance to the gentile monarch while understating the contrasts between Jews and gentiles, is widely manifested throughout Greek Esther. Its objective is to assert that gentile hatred of the Jews derives from their loyalty and reflects, in effect, hatred of the king. The historical backdrop to Esther, reworked in this manner, is most probably Egypt at the beginning of the first century BCE, when the extent of Jewish involvement within the Ptolemaic court and military was considerable.

Keywords

LXX Esther, Bigthan and Teresh, Haman, Mordechai, loyalty, anti-Semitism, Jewish diaspora in Ptolemaic Egypt

I. Introduction

The Septuagint to Esther contains six or seven large additions to the MT,¹ alongside many modifications and small adaptations. The large additions as well as the small modifications include several that wholly transform the

*) I thank Prof. Isaiah M. Gafni and Prof. Daniel R. Schwartz who read previous versions of this paper.

¹) As is the case with the translation in its entirety, two main variants of these additions are known to us: the Septuagint and the Alpha Text. The division into six or seven depends on the question of whether Mordechai's supplication and Esther's supplication are considered one addition or two.

character of the book's plot or introduce a new facet. The large additions include the king's two epistles, the first promulgating the destruction of the Jews and the second providing the Jews dispensation to defend themselves, Mordechai and Esther's supplications that furnish religious depth to the story, and a dramatic depiction of Esther's entry to the king on the third day. Moreover, two further additions, Mordechai's dream and its interpretation, at the beginning of the book and at its conclusion, serve as an *inclusio* of the entire story. These additions are incorporated, in the Greek version, within the narrative itself, though Jerome placed them at the end of his Latin translation, choosing not to integrate them into the story line.

In this article, I will examine the second half of the first addition, which includes the reworked story of Bigthan and Teresh's conspiracy to assassinate the king. In the first part of the article I will discuss the relationship between this story and the story of Bigthan and Teresh's conspiracy that appears at the end of the second chapter in the MT and the LXX, and the affinity between these two accounts in the LXX and an additional reference to Bigthan and Teresh at the beginning of chapter 6 as it appears in that Greek translation. I will reconstruct, in light of this examination, the creation of the duplicate regicidal stories in the LXX, and in the second part of the paper I will elucidate the author's motivation. In the third part of the article I will attempt to uncover further manifestations of this viewpoint and similar tendencies elsewhere in LXX Esther. Further along in the article, I will suggest that these additions and modifications were undertaken to explicate hatred of the Jews as deriving not from their alleged separatism but rather from the Jews' allegiance to the regime, and to construct a proper relationship between Jews and Gentiles. At this point a survey of the various contentions against Jews in antiquity as well as the Jewish responses to them is needed, in order to characterize the significance of the editorial slant of LXX Esther and to consequently attempt, in the final section, to pinpoint the historical context within which the redaction of LXX Esther was undertaken. The implications of our premise that LXX Esther was redacted during the first twenty years of the first century BCE bear on the dating of other compositions and provide a more profound understanding of the situation of diasporan Jewry in Ptolemaic Egypt within the specific conditions that obtained during those years.

II. The Conspiracy of Bigthan and Teresh

The first LXX addition to Esther is set in the second year of Artaxerxes' reign, antecedent, in effect, the beginning of the narrative in the Hebrew Book of

Esther, which commences in “the third year of his reign” (1:3). This addition comprises two parts: the first (vs. 1-11) recounts Mordechai’s dream,² while the second (vs. 12-17) describes the conspiracy of Gabatha and Thara (A 12: Γαβαθα καὶ Θαρρα) identified, apparently, with Bigthan and Teresh (Esth. 2:21), and its foiling by Mordechai. The division of the addition into two parts is obvious and Jerome, who appended the additions to the end of the Vulgate, divided it into two separate chapters. Similarly the Old Latin text of Esther contains only the dream story and does not include the conspiracy in the addition.³ The verses of the addition dealing with the foiling of the Gabatha and Thara conspiracy relate that while Mordechai was lying in the king’s court along with Gabatha and Thara, the court guards, he overheard the pair discussing their regicidal conspiracy and divulged it to the king. After the king investigated the matter and the two confessed their intended plot, they were arrested or executed. Both the king and Mordechai recorded the affair in memoriam; the king appointed Mordechai to a position at court and endowed him with gifts in acknowledgment of his actions whilst Haman, an esteemed courtier, sought to harm (ἐζήτησεν κακοποιῆσαι) Mordechai and his nation on account of the fate that had befallen the two royal eunuchs (ὑπὲρ τῶν δύο εὐνούχων τοῦ βασιλέως).⁴

This story raises certain difficulties, most obviously: Why did the author or the redactor of the addition move the Bigthan and Teresh story up to the second year of Artaxerxes’ reign instead of leaving it in place, during Ahasuerus’ seventh year (or later), as it appears in the Hebrew version (2:21-23)?⁵

² C. A. Moore, “On the Origins of the LXX Additions to the Book of Esther”, *JBL* 92 (1973), p. 386, divides the first part into 2 sections: a prelude to the dream (1-3); the dream itself (4-10). According to Moore v. 10 concludes the section of the dream. Nevertheless, it seems that v. 11, which relates Mordechai’s confusion in the wake of the dream, still pertains to the dream narrative. In the second part, vv. 12-17, the dream is totally absent. V. 11 is the final verse of the first section in the Vulgate too.

³ J.-Cl. Haelewyck, (ed.), *Hester* (Vetus Latina: die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel 7/3; Freiburg, 2003-2008), pp. 77; 101-116 (I thank Prof. Isaiah M. Gafni who helped me obtain a copy of this book); J.-Cl. Haelewyck, “The Relevance of the Old Latin Version for the Septuagint, with Special Emphasis on the Book of Esther”, *JThS* 57 (2006), pp. 458-459.

⁴ R. Hanhart (ed.), *Esther* (Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum, VIII/3; Göttingen, 1966), pp. 133-135. For the LXX and the AT I follow the enumeration of verses in this edition.

⁵ It should not be assumed that the account in Chapter 2 is an addition and that the conspiracy story of the addition is the original. Were this the case then there would have been no need to reintroduce Mordechai in Esth. 2:5-6 since he was already known and familiar for his involvement in the beginning of the book (see C. A. Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: The Additions* [AB 44; Garden City, NY, 1977], p. 175). There is, therefore, no reason to assume that the

That the narrative of the attempted regicide and the king's deliverance by Mordechai is mentioned once again in the LXX version of Esther at the end of chapter 2 is even more perplexing. Was the story left here by mistake, the result of inattention to its appearance at the onset of the book, or is the redundancy intentional? If the latter, what is its objective? Moreover, according to the narrative before us, Mordechai was rewarded for his loyalty to the king and for saving his life. How, then, does this correspond with the pivotal story of chapter 6, according to which "nothing was done" (6:3), no honor or tribute bestowed on Mordechai as reward for saving the king, resulting in Haman's disgrace and Mordechai being accorded the honor of being led by Haman, on horseback, through the city streets?

These questions have been the topic of many studies and recent discussions,⁶ though discourse has centered, for the most part, on the issue of the interrelationship between the various versions of the narrative, i.e., the relationship between the two Greek translations and between them and the Hebrew text, in an attempt to discern the original text.⁷ The question of the exegetic, literary and ideological motivation of the stories' authors or redactors has been less thoroughly addressed. This study seeks to deal primarily with LXX, in and of itself, to expose its objective, and only then will examine, if requisite, the implications of this discussion for the corresponding texts. While this method is compatible with textual research per se, it is particularly appropriate in such

version of the addition is the original and consequently to ask why the Hebrew version postponed the conspiracy to the seventh year.

⁶ See the detailed study of S. Frolov, "Two Eunuchs, Two Conspiracies, and One Loyal Jew: The Narrative of Botched Regicide in Esther as Text- and Redaction-Critical Test Case", *VT* 52 (2002), pp. 304-325.

⁷ On these questions see B. Jacob, "Das Buch Esther bei den LXX", *ZAW* 10 (1890), pp. 296-298; E. J. Bickerman, "Notes on the Greek Book of Esther", *PAAJR* 20 (1950), pp. 121-123; J. H. Tigay, "Conflation as a Redactional Technique", in Idem (ed.), *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 57-61; R. Kossmann, *Die Esthernovelle: vom erzählten zur Erzählung: Studien zur Traditions- und Redaktionsgeschichte des Estherbuches* (SVT 79; Leiden, 2000), pp. 76-104; K. De Troyer, "Esther in Text- and Literary-Critical Paradise", in S. W. Crawford & L. J. Greenspoon (eds.), *The Book of Esther in Modern Research* (JSOT Sup 380; London & New York, 2003), pp. 31-49; E. Tov, "Three Strange Books of the LXX: 1 Kings, Esther, and Daniel Compared with Similar Rewritten Compositions from Qumran and Elsewhere", in M. Karrer & W. Kraus (eds.), *Die Septuaginta—Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten* (WUNT 219; Tübingen, 2008), pp. 369-393; idem, "The LXX Translation of Esther: A Paraphrastic Translation of MT or a Free Translation of a Rewritten Version?", in A. Houtman et al. (eds.), *Empsychoi Logoi: Religious Innovations in Antiquity, Studies in Honour of Pieter Willem van der Horst* (Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 73; Leiden, 2008), pp. 507-526. I thank Prof. Tov for allowing me to read these two pieces before their publication.

cases as the one before us, characterized by the marked lack of scholarly consensus regarding the nature of the affinity between the different versions.

It would seem that a study comparing the LXX version of the conspiracy story at the end of chapter 2 and the story of Mordechai's compensation at the start of chapter 6, with those found in Addition A and in the Hebrew text, should constitute the first step in attempting to solve these issues. Indeed, an examination of the relevant verses reveals that the translator or redactor of LXX Esther was well aware of the addition of the conspiracy at the book's beginning and that he altered certain essential details in the said chapters to harmonize between the continuation of the story and this addition.

The LXX version of 2:21-23 reads as follows:

The two eunuchs who were the king's chief bodyguards were irritated because Mardochoaios was promoted, and they sought to kill Artaxerxes the king. But the matter became known to Mardechoaios, and he alerted Esther, and she explained to the king the details of the plot. So the king interrogated the two eunuchs and hung them. Then the king ordered to make an entry as a memorial in the royal archive in lauding of Mardochoaios's goodwill.⁸

Juxtaposition of LXX Esth. 2:21-23 with the Hebrew text and with Addition A reveals discrepancies regarding several details, which have been added or omitted.

First—the names of the eunuchs are absent, in contrast to the Hebrew text, which mentions Bigthan and Teresh, and to Addition A 12 which mentions Gabatha and Thara.⁹

Second—they differ in relation to their designation: according to the Hebrew text they are “the king's eunuchs of the guardians of the threshold” (הַסְרִיסִי הַמְלֶכֶךְ מִשְׁמַרְי הַסֵּה), and similarly in Addition A 12 τῶν δύο εὐνούχων τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν φυλασσόντων τὴν αὐλήν, while in LXX 2:21 they are presented as “the king's eunuchs, the chief bodyguards”, οἱ δύο εὐνούχοι τοῦ βασιλέως οἱ ἀρχισωματοφύλακες.¹⁰

Third—LXX (2:21), as opposed to the Hebrew text, omits the opening phrase of the verse “in those days when Mordechai sat at the King's gate”

⁸ LXX Esth. 2:21-23; NETS except for the words ἐγκώμιον (NETS: “commendation”) and εὐνοία (NETS: “loyalty”) which has to be translated here and in LXX Esth. 6:3 as “goodwill”.

⁹ Tigay, “Conflation as a Redactional Technique,” pp. 57-60; C. V. Dorothy, *The Books of Esther: Structure, Genre and Textual Integrity* (JSOTS 187; Sheffield, 1997), pp. 60, 302; Kossmann, *Esthernoelle*, p. 87.

¹⁰ De Troyer, “Text- and Literary-Critical”, pp. 43-44; Frolov, “Two Eunuchs”, p. 311.

though it does include an explanation for the eunuchs' displeasure—Mordechai's promotion—missing from the Hebrew text.¹¹ It is possible that this detail, of Mordechai's sitting at the king's gate, was transposed in the Greek translation from the beginning of the verse where it served as a temporal clause, to the continuation of the verse where—in a very full sense—it serves to elucidate the cause of the eunuchs' plot.¹² In A 12 however, Mordechai is described as lying in the court alongside Gabatha and Thara.

Fourth—the translation of the Hebrew expression “to send their hand” (2:21 ידו שלח) is ἀποκτείνειν, to kill. Addition A 13, however, offers a literal translation of this expression, τὰς χεῖρας ἐπιβαλεῖν.¹³

Fifth—as in the Hebrew version, Mordechai transmits the information to Esther who conveys it to the king. This contrasts with the narrative in Addition A, according to which Mordechai himself—necessarily, as Esther was not yet queen—conveys the information to the king.¹⁴

Sixth—while according to the Hebrew text and LXX (2:23) the eunuchs were hung, A 14 states that they were led away (ἀπήχθησαν), which may be interpreted either as arrested or as executed.¹⁵

Seventh—all variants claim that the facts were recorded in memoriam. Yet LXX 2:23 adds that a praise (ἐγκώμιον) of Mordechai's good will (εὐνοία) was composed while A 15 recounts only that the facts were recorded in memoriam (also by Mordechai). An additional essential difference manifests in that according to A 16 Mordechai is compensated for his loyalty, serves in the king's court and is endowed with gifts, while in chapter 2—in both Hebrew and LXX—Mordechai is not rewarded.¹⁶

A table summarizing the relationship between the three texts would be valuable.

¹¹ De Troyer, “Text- and Literary-Critical”, p. 44; Dorothy, *Books of Esther*, p. 60 (on these two differences); Frolov, “Two Eunuchs”, p. 311.

¹² On this see *infra* n. 42.

¹³ Kossmann, *Esthernovelle*, p. 87; De Troyer, “Text- and Literary-Critical”, p. 42; Frolov, “Two Eunuchs”, p. 315.

¹⁴ This point too was noted by Tigay, “Conflation as a Redactional Technique”, p. 57; Dorothy, *Books of Esther*, pp. 60, 302.

¹⁵ The verb ἀπάγω means “arrest”, “carry off to prison” (LSJ s.v.) as Haelewyck, “The Relevance of the Old Latin Version”, pp. 461-462 translates, or “carry off to execution” (LSJ Sup. s.v.) as Moore, *The Additions*, pp. 174, 178 translates.

¹⁶ Tigay, “Conflation as a Redactional Technique”, p. 57.

Table 1. The Assassination according to Addition A, MT and LXX Esther 2:21-23

Addition A	Hebrew Text of Esther 2:21-23	LXX Esther 2:21-23
Gabatha and Thara	Bigthan and Teresh	no names
the kings eunuchs of the guardians of the threshold	the kings eunuchs of the guardians of the threshold	two eunuchs who were the king's chief bodyguards
assassination without a reason	in those days when Mordechai sat at the King's gate	Mordechai's promotion as a reason for the assassination
to lay their hand (τὰς χεῖρας ἐπιβαλεῖν)	to lay their hand (וַיַּחֲזִקוּ)	to kill (ἀποκτεῖναι)
Mordechai reports the information directly to the king	Mordechai conveys the information to Esther who informs the king	Mordechai conveys the information to Esther who informs the king
the assassins are arrested or executed	the assassins were hung on a tree	the assassins were hung on a tree
the events were recorded by the king in memoriam. Mordechai also recorded the events	the events were recorded in the annals of the king	the events were recorded in memoriam in the kingdom's records and an ode to Mordechai's goodwill was composed
Mordechai was rewarded	no mention of a reward for Mordechai	no mention of a reward for Mordechai

The conclusion is clear. According to LXX Esther, there were two separate regicidal conspiracies.¹⁷ Though in both Mordechai was the main actor in the king's deliverance, most of the details illustrating the assassination attempts, aside from this one, differ in the two cases. In one, Gabatha and Thara, court

¹⁷ Tigay, "Conflation as a Redactional Technique", pp. 57-61; De Troyer, "Text- and Literary-Critical", p. 44; Frolov, "Two Eunuchs", pp. 311, 322. Dorothy, *Books of Esther*, p. 302 sees this conclusion as a possibility.

guardians, are the protagonists; their motive is unknown yet they seek to murder the king; Mordechai reports this directly to the king and is duly compensated while the two are arrested or executed in some unstated manner. The second concerns two anonymous eunuchs, chief guardians who, angry with the king for his promotion of Mordechai, seek to kill him. Mordechai reports them to the king through Esther and his deed is recorded in the book though he is not rewarded; the two are hung.

It is therefore clear that the author or redactor of LXX Esther sought to incorporate two different regicidal accounts and went to great lengths to invent and to heighten the distinctions between the two.

The description at the beginning of LXX Esther chapter 6 bolsters this assertion while possibly assisting the reconstruction of the stories' evolution.

The text reads as follows:

But the Lord kept sleep from the king that night, and he told his teacher to bring the written daily annals to read to him. And he found the entries written concerning Mardochoaios, how he informed the king about two of the king's eunuchs, while they were on guard and sought to lay hands on Artaxerxes. Then the king said, 'What honor or distinction have we bestowed on Mardochoaios?' The king's servants said, 'You have done nothing for him.' While the king was inquiring about Mardochoaios' goodwill...¹⁸

A considerable affinity between LXX Esth. 6:1-4 and the events of the preceding regicidal attempts is apparent. Is it possible to determine to which of the two these verses pertain?

Primarily and most importantly—as in LXX Esth. 2:21-23, the names of the eunuchs here too are absent, in contrast with both Addition A and the Hebrew version. In other words—chapter 6 relates to the second assassination attempt.

Second—according to the text in chapter 6, nothing was done for Mordechai, which contradicts Addition A but which accords with what is stated in LXX 2:21-23.¹⁹

Third—Mordechai's good will (εὐνοια) is mentioned in LXX 2:23 and in 6:4—in both places representing an elaboration on the literal translation, yet in Addition A it is not mentioned.²⁰

¹⁸ LXX Esth. 6:1-4, NETS.

¹⁹ Frolov, "Two Eunuchs", p. 311.

²⁰ See De Troyer, "Text- and Literary-Critical", p. 43.

Fourth—the verb “seek”, ζητέω, in the depiction of the acts of the two eunuchs appears here (6:2) and in LXX 2:21 though not in Addition A (the verb appears there in the description of Haman’s intentions, A 17). It should be stressed that although this is not a distinctive verb, its use does construct an affinity between LXX chapters 2 and 6.

Fifth—in dissonance with this, the words “memory” μνημόσυνον / μνημόσυνος (A 15; LXX Esth. 2:23; 6:1), and the phrase “two royal eunuchs of the king” (οἱ δύο εὐνοῦχοι τοῦ βασιλέως) appear in all three LXX descriptions (A 12; LXX Esth. 2:21; 6:2).

Sixth—A connection between chapter 6 and Addition A can also be attributed to the use of the verb “guard” (φυλάσσω), that appears only twice in LXX Esther; in 6:2 and in A 12. Though the verb is alluded to in 2:21, through use of the word ἀρχισωματοφύλακες, it seems that overt use of the verb itself attests to a stronger affinity.²¹ This is also true of the phrase “to lay their hand” (ἐπιβαλεῖν τὰς χεῖρας), appearing specifically in A 13 and in 6:2 but not in 2:21-23 where, instead of this phrase that translates the Hebrew words **וַיַּחַדְוּ** literally, the verb ἀποκτείνειν appears.²² Specifically because the phrase ἐπιβαλεῖν τὰς χεῖρας is not unique,²³ its absence from LXX 2:21-23 is notable and emphasizes the affinity between chapter 6 and Addition A.

A table would be helpful to sum up all these details:

Table 2. Between LXX Esth. 6:1-4 and the Botched Regicide Stories

Addition A	LXX 2:21-23	LXX 6:1-4
Gabatha and Thara	no names	no names
Mordechai was rewarded	nothing was done with Mordechai	nothing was done with Mordechai
—	εὐνοια	εὐνοια
ἐτοιμάζω	ζητέω	ζητέω

²¹ See De Troyer, “Text- and Literary-Critical”, pp. 43-44.

²² Frolov, “Two Eunuchs”, p. 315 does not mention 6:2 while discussing these words.

²³ As Prof. Devorah Gera kindly remarked. I am grateful for her questions, comments and disagreement when I submitted these ideas in a lecture at Scholion Interdisciplinary Center for Jewish Studies, the Hebrew University, Spring 2009. See just several examples of the use of the phrase: Polybius 5,16,3; 18,51,8; Luke 20:19. It should be noted that the phrase does not always connote killing. In any case it is clear that the phrase is also found in the Greek world, and it is not—pace Frolov (“Two Eunuchs”, p. 315) “an indisputable Hebraism mirroring **וַיַּחַדְוּ**”.

Table 2. (cont.)

Addition A	LXX 2:21-23	LXX 6:1-4
οἱ δύο εὐνοῦχοι τοῦ βασιλέως	οἱ δύο εὐνοῦχοι τοῦ βασιλέως	οἱ δύο εὐνοῦχοι τοῦ βασιλέως
μνημόσυνον	μνημόσυνον	μνημόσυνος
φυλάσσω	ἀρχισωματοφύλακες	φυλάσσω
ἐπιβαλεῖν τὰς χεῖρας	ἀποκτεῖναι	ἐπιβαλεῖν τὰς χεῖρας

What shall we conclude from all these details?

It seems that the fact that linguistic affinities exist between chapter 6 and the depictions of the two regicidal attempts, provides a lead as to the evolutionary process of these narratives. Seemingly, one would expect chapter 6 to relate exclusively to chapter 2 according to which, after all, Mordechai was not rewarded for his good deed, in contrast with Addition A. Indeed, the first four points, of commonality between chapters 6 and 2, are in consonance with this assumption. Yet on the other hand, a clear linguistic affinity with Addition A does exist, expressed in the depiction of the assassins' function (as it appears in MT, *משמרי הסף* "guardians of the threshold") and in the use of the verb describing their intentions, which literally translates the MT version *יָרְוּ לְשׁוֹן*. In the text's current state, however, this affinity with Addition A is not viable since according to Addition A Mordechai received compensation for his deed—which nullifies the basis for the existence of the story of chapter 6!

Apparently then, we have been supplied an aperture into the evolutionary process of the double assassination account. My assertion is that the Hebrew version of Bigthan and Teresh's regicide attempt, similar to the MT version, is the original version, translated first, more or less literally, into Greek. Thus Bigthan and Teresh, or Gabatha and Thara appear, depicted as guardians of the threshold seeking to lay their hand on their sovereign, and Mordechai, who uncovers their plot, receives no reward from the king. At a later stage, for reasons we will discuss later, this story was transferred to the beginning of the book. Additions and explanations were then contrived to attain the author's objective. The original story in chapter 2 was likewise revised to avoid redundancy. Thus two stories were produced: the story of Gabatha and Thara who sought to lay their hand on Artaxerxes, and Mordechai who exposed them and was rewarded as such; and a second story in chapter 2, from which the names of Bigthan and Teresh were excised, and which was redacted so as to appear to be a separate incident rather than a repetition of the one with which the book

opens. This redaction may well have included a change of the formulation of the eunuchs' objective—to kill instead of laying their hands—and addition of words praising Mordechai: the laudatory ode recorded in the book as well as the reference to Mordechai's goodwill towards the kingdom. To avoid contradictions and tensions between the addition and the edited account in chapter 2 on the one hand and the continuation of the storyline on the other, the beginning of chapter 6, corresponding to the original story of chapter 2, required concomitant redactional treatment. Indeed, here too, the names of Bigthan and Teresh were deleted and an allusion to Mordechai's goodwill, mentioned in LXX 2:23 but not in the Hebrew version, was inserted.²⁴ Yet several of the original affinities with the Bigthan and Teresh story—the verb *φυλάσσω* and the literal translation of “lay a hand” were retained in the account in chapter 6 since they did not directly contradict the narrative in chapter 2. These elements, however, were transferred from the account in chapter 2 to Addition A, and thus elements of similarity between Addition A and 6:1-4 are evident. These neutral affinities to Addition A alongside the obvious affinity with the second assassination story are what assist us in uncovering the process of the formation of the double account of the attempt on Artaxerxes's life.²⁵

²⁴ It is worth noting that the word *εὐνοία* is characteristic to the Hellenistic world and does not appear in the Septuagint as a translation of a Hebrew word (except 1 Macc. 11:53 which seems to be a literary response to Demetrius' letter [ibid., 33]). Thus, it seems that this editing process of chapters 2 and 6 was carried out in Greek, but not in the Hebrew stage of the texts' existence. On this question see more hereinafter.

²⁵ The creation of these versions, including the Alpha text, has occupied many scholars; see the summary of the views in Frolov, “Two Eunuchs”, pp. 304-7. De Troyer, “Text- and Literary-Critical”, pp. 48-9 believes that MT is the original and the translator appended Addition A; however she does not explain the affinity of the version of chapter 6 to the other versions. Dorothy, *Books of Esther*, p. 302 suggests too, based on different considerations, that the original story of chapter 2 was duplicated; however, he does not enumerate most of the details that appear here. Frolov himself presumes that AT is a translation of a different Hebrew text, a rewritten text of MT, and the LXX versions are a translation of both Hebrew versions: MT and the Hebrew vorlage of AT. Our analysis differs sharply from Frolov's. Haelewyck, *Hester*, pp. 88-89, and idem, “The Relevance of the Old Latin Version”, pp. 458-462, presumes that the discrepancies between the different versions of Esther largely “reflect a work of literary reconstruction” (458). In relation to the eunuch's plots he believes that the author has harmonized two versions of the story, and has articulated both stories by specifying the different punishments inflicted on the eunuchs: arrest in A 14 (but see n. 15 above) and execution in 2:23 (462). However, since the two stories each deal with different eunuchs, as we have seen, there is no imperative for the author to create distinct penalties, and the entire issue must be interpreted

Support for this reconstructive proposal rests plausibly within the “Lucianic” Greek translation of Esther, the Alpha Text (AT). This version includes a variant of Addition A—the assassination attempt after which Mordechai is rewarded, but does not include a translation of the assassination attempt of 2:21-23. AT 6:4 does not refrain from noting that the king had not rewarded Mordechai in any way (καὶ οὐκ ἐποίησα αὐτῷ οὐθέν), in complete contrast with AT Addition A. Moreover, AT 6:5 revises the story in a singular and curious fashion, relating that the king’s lackeys did not respond to his question—“what shall we do with Mordechai?”—due to their fear of Haman. It is clear that the absence of the assassination account in AT chapter 2 attests to AT’s attempt to prevent duplication of the assassination story with which the book opens.²⁶ Conceivably the contradiction between chapter 6 and Addition A in relation to the reward of Mordechai exposes a nascent stage of the redaction of this Greek translation or an attempt to integrate various editions of the translation.²⁷ The expansions characterizing the beginning of chapter 6 attest to the redactor/translator’s difficulty with this segment and to some sort of motivation compelling him to incorporate Haman into the narrative prior to the latter’s entry into the king’s court. These processes are also plausibly connected with the integration of the assassination account at the beginning of the book.²⁸ In any case, the LXX version testifies thorough and meticulous

differently. I thank Prof. Jan Joosten for the reference to Haelewyck’s article. For other discussions on this issue see further n. 7 above.

²⁶ E. Tov, “The ‘Lucianic’ Text of the Canonical and the Apocryphal Sections of Esther: a Rewritten Biblical Book”, *Textus* 10 (1982), p. 12; Tigay, “Conflation as a Redactional Technique”, p. 61; M. V. Fox, *The Redaction of the Books of Esther: On Reading Composite Texts* (SBL Monograph Series 40; Atlanta, 1991), p. 60. D. J. A. Clines, *The Esther Scroll: The Story of the Story* (JSOTS 30; Sheffield, 1984), pp. 105-106, does not accept this hypothesis; According to K. H. Jobs, *The Alpha-Text of Esther: Its Character and Relationship to the Masoretic Text* (SBL Dissertation Series 153; Atlanta, 1996), p. 130, the story is missing in chapter 2 because it was relocated in Addition A. See also De Troyer’s summary (“Text—and Literary-Critical”, p. 38) of the opinions regarding this question.

²⁷ Dorothy, *Books of Esther*, pp. 301-302 claims that AT Addition A says nothing regarding personal reward, while AT 6:4 may relate to the personal element. However AT 6:4 does not differentiate between “personal” and “administrative” actions; clearly Mordechai’s appointment in AT Addition A is a reward. Furthermore, if indeed AT chapter 6 does relate to the assassination of Addition A, why doesn’t it mention the names of the eunuchs?

²⁸ Clines, *Esther Scroll*, pp. 106-107 suggests that the revision of AT chapter 6 stems from a mistaken reading of Esth. 6:3 נעשה (shall we do) instead of עשה (was done), thus translates: τὶ ποιήσομεν. Yet aside from the contrived nature of his explanations, one cannot ignore the fact that in both Greek translations that contain the added assassination attempt in Addition A, revisions and modifications were created at the end of chapter 2 and at the beginning of chapter 6,

redaction that successfully camouflages nearly all remnants of previous versions of the accounts of attempts on Artaxerxes's life.

The conclusion is that the conspiracy story that opens LXX Esther originated as another version of the original Hebrew assassination story (MT 2:21-23); having done that, the LXX editor(s) created a second version in chapter 2. This means that LXX Addition A, rather than being considered one addition, should be regarded as two additions: A1—Mordechai's dream and A2—the foiling of Gabatha and Thara's conspiracy. It should be noted that as far back as forty years ago, Carey Moore pointed out the distinction between the various segments of the first addition to LXX Esther, claiming that based on the style of the Greek employed in the conspiracy story which is superior to the Greek of the account of Mordechai's dream, we have before us two separate units that were conflated.²⁹ Our hypothesis is thus consistent with Moore's.

III. The Recensional Objective

What then was the purpose of the redactional activity performed regarding LXX Esther? Why did the redactor add the foiling of a second conspiracy to the Esther story not recorded in the original Hebrew version of the book?

First for consideration are the exegetical benefits arising from this narrative, enumerated as follows: First—how Mordechai came to sit at the king's gate, in other words, to serve at the royal court. According to the LXX account the king himself appointed Mordechai in consideration of his deeds (A 16). Furthermore—how Mordechai gained knowledge of the pair's conspiracy. According to the MT "the matter became known to Mordechai" (Esth. 2:22) and no further details are provided. Conceivably the author sought to impart this interesting detail by recounting Mordechai's shared sleeping accommodations with Gabatha and Thara at the king's court (A 12).³⁰ One can probably

where analogies or continuations to the assassination story appear. Additionally, the fact that according to AT chapter 6 Haman is perceived as threatening to anyone who acts favorably towards Mordechai in the context of Mordechai's loyalty to the king in correspondence with what is related regarding Haman's hatred of Mordechai in Addition A, reinforces the assumption of a real affinity between the revision of chapter 6 and Addition A.

²⁹ Moore, "On the Origins", pp. 386-388.

³⁰ This interpretive motivation is Frolov's main explanation, "Two Eunuchs", pp. 319-321 for the creation of a broader different Hebrew (so Frolov) version of this episode.

discover herein an explanation for the eunuchs' discontent in Esth. 2:21, which remains unexplained in the MT version.

However, the inadequacy of this is obvious. Mordechai's sitting at the king's court is already noted at the beginning of Addition A (2) when he is introduced as a highly regarded personage, obviating the need to invent convoluted stories to elucidate this detail. And in regard to Mordechai's sleeping next to Gabatha and Thara—this could have been incorporated into the original account in 2:21, substituting “while Mordechai was *sitting* (ישב) at the King's gate” with “while Mordechai was *sleeping* (ישן) at the king's gate”,³¹ eliminating the need for duplicating the account. Obvious too is that the explanation for the eunuchs' resentment (LXX 2:21) is not a reason for the duplication of the entire story. It seems then, that a different rationale for this intricate redaction must be sought.

A different approach is suggested by Charles Dorothy. He notes that AT (A 11) states that the significance of Mordechai's dream (AT A 3-8) became clear to Mordechai on the day he slept at the king's court alongside the eunuchs. In other words—the exposure of the eunuchs' conspiracy provides a decipherment of the dream. This is also possibly alluded to in LXX in that Mordechai is disturbed by the dream's significance (A 11) and during the very same night he reveals the eunuchs' conspiracy.³² From this Dorothy concludes that the appearance of the frustration of Gabatha and Thara's plot at the onset of the book was intended to demonstrate the realization of Mordechai's prophetic dream.³³ Dorothy finds a clue to this in the fact that Flavius Josephus (*Ant.* 11.184 ff.) and the Hebrew text do not record the conspiracy story at the beginning of the book, which jibes with the fact that the dream is not featured in these two versions, which obviates the need to append its solution.³⁴

Yet it is problematic in my view to assume the need for prophetic interpretation of the dream as the driving motive behind the transposition of the eunuchs' conspiracy to the beginning of the book. First, no substantive resolution to the dream is presented here: no attempt is made to explain the details featured in the dream as undertaken by Addition F, which treats and attempts to elucidate nearly all the dream's details. Nor does the recorded conspiracy

³¹ As indeed AT changed this verse (A:12):... ἡς ὑπνώσει Μαρδοχάϊος ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ.

³² But see Jobs, *Alpha-Text of Esther*, p. 191 that “only the AT links the interpretation of Mordechai's dream to this event”.

³³ Dorothy, *Books of Esther*, pp. 51, 54, 300-302. He concludes that “at the same time the dream first framed EG [= Greek Esther]” the story of the assassination was placed at the end of Addition A.

³⁴ Dorothy, *Books of Esther*, p. 301.

itself in any way intimate that the plot is connected with the dream.³⁵ Furthermore, even if the actions of Gabatha and Thara function to illuminate the dream, it is unclear how A 17 which pertains to Haman's hatred of Mordechai relates to this and what purpose it serves.³⁶ Moreover, the hint that Dorothy discovers in the absence of the dream and conspiracy stories from the MT version and Flavius Josephus is also contestable as the *Vetus Latina* does include Mordechai's dream but not the conspiracy plot at the beginning of the book.³⁷

It seems that the key to unlocking the redactor's objective can be found in the last verse of Addition A (17), which reads: καὶ ἦν Ἀμαν Ἀμαδάθου Βουγαῖος ἔνδοξος ἐνώπιον τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ ἐζήτησεν κακοποιῆσαι τὸν Μαρδοχαῖον καὶ τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ὑπὲρ τῶν δύο εὐνούχων τοῦ βασιλέως ("But Haman son of Hammedatha, a Bougaion, enjoyed great favor with the king, and he sought to harm Mordechai and his people because of the two eunuchs of the king").

The change in the book's entire conception, deriving from this sentence is radical.³⁸ Taking the Book of Esther at face value, Haman's hatred of Mordechai and the Jews stems from his rage at Mordechai's refusal to pay him obeisance, contrary to the king's commands (Esth. 3:2-6). This act has indeed baffled commentators; why did Mordechai, as occupant of a highly regarded position at the king's gate, deem it appropriate, openly and on his own, to defy the king's commands? Is not Mordechai accountable for his people's troubles brought upon them by his haughtiness and audacity? Indeed, early readers of Esther have proposed various approaches to explain Mordechai's motives. Flavius Josephus, a diasporan Jew living in Rome, asserts "But Mordechai because of his wisdom and his native law would not prostrate himself before any man" (*Ant.* 11.210) while Haman sought to eradicate all the Jews and not to punish Mordechai alone "for he naturally hated the Jews because his own race, the Amalekites, had been destroyed by them" (*ibid.*, 211). In Addition C, Mordechai's prayer, Mordechai justifies his

³⁵ Jobs, *Alpha-Text of Esther*, p. 191 notes too the differences between the dream and the conspiracy.

³⁶ Dorothy, *Books of Esther*, p. 301, notes: "It is necessary at this spot, not primarily to present the reason for Aman's hatred (which also could be explained later)".

³⁷ See above, n. 3.

³⁸ On the importance and meaning of this verse see inter alia: A. Berlin, *Esther* (The JPS Bible Commentary; Philadelphia, 2001), p. 31; Clines, *Esther Scroll*, p. 141; Frolov, "Two Eunuchs", pp. 321-322; Jobs, *Alpha-Text of Esther*, pp. 126-128; J. D. Levenson, *Esther: A Commentary* (Old Testament Library; London, 1997), pp. 41-42.

actions, saying it was not his arrogance that prevented him from bowing to Haman but “in order to avoid positing man’s honor above that of God, and I will not bow down before anyone but you, God” (C 7). Rabbinic literature, in several places, suggests that Haman had established himself as a deity and that explains Mordechai’s refusal to prostrate himself before him.³⁹

The common denominator linking the aforementioned sources is the attempt to absolve Mordechai of responsibility for the conflict with Haman, attributing it to the latter instead, and demonstrating the groundlessness of Haman’s treatment of Mordechai and the Jews. Hostility and defiance towards the king are not the cause of Mordechai’s behavior; it stems instead from his intelligence and religious beliefs, or even conversely: from Haman’s provocation expressed as self deification. In any case, Haman’s hatred of Mordechai and the Jews is unwarranted; it either derives from misconceptions regarding the Jewish religion or from intolerance towards it. Mordechai’s demeanor and Haman’s misinterpretation of it form the focal point of the conflict. Pursuant to this, a well-intentioned gentile would be expected to understand and justify Mordechai’s comportment without viewing him and the Jews as hostile to the state or as problematic. Haman is wicked though his wickedness is manifested exclusively in relation to his perception of the Jews, without affecting other areas of his behavior. And in Josephus’ view, profound, obscured accounts are concealed herein, independent of Mordechai’s behavior, deriving alternatively from a genetic code or historic heritage innate to Haman. According to this view too, a person lacking such baggage would be expected to understand the Jews and not engage them in conflict.

It seems that A 17 contends with similar problems and preempts the issue before it arises. Even before we are made amply aware of Haman’s status within the king’s court and of Mordechai’s refusal to bow down to him, we are already acquainted with the two characters; the one—loyal to the king, having delivered him from dangerous assassins, court guardians; and the other—although respected before the king, was in actuality undermining him and allied with those conspiring against him. Perhaps, indeed, readers are meant to suspect that Haman himself had dispatched the assassins to secure

³⁹ See *b. Meg.* 19a; *Tg. Esth. I* 3:2,4; *Tg. Esth. II* 6:1 and a divergent position in the poem “Esther and Mordechai, Their Hearts Melted” (“אסתר ומרדכי לבם נתך”), in E. Hachohen, “Studies in the Dialogue-Format of Early Eretz Israel *Piyyutim* and their Sources, in Light of Purim Expansion-*Piyyutim*”, *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature*, XX (Jerusalem 2006), pp. 120-121 (Hebrew). On the conception that Haman was Mordechai’s slave and therefore Mordechai would not pay him obeisance, see N. Hacham, “Haman Mordechai’s Slave”, *ZAW* 122(2010), pp. 96-101.

the throne for himself,⁴⁰ and they will in any case infer, from Haman's detestation of Mordechai, that he supports the conspirators. In other words, Haman hates Mordechai on account of his loyalty to the king as well as his people who, it follows, are also completely loyal subjects. Before us then is the proposition that hatred of the Jews derives from their loyalty to their sovereign and that the gentiles as well as the senior officials who detest the Jews are in effect undermining the throne. Even if one is to assume that this detestation does not sufficiently explain Mordechai's refusal to honor Haman, since it is greatly doubtful that he was aware of any involvement of Haman in the attempted attack on Artaxerxes, it is obvious to the reader that Mordechai's actions are but a pretext for Haman's hatred of the Jews, and that the real reason for this hatred is of a completely different nature.

The redactor's view of the regicidal accounts is apparent in both other units discussed previously. The discontent of the eunuchs in 2:21-23 and their desire to murder Artaxerxes is explained by Mordechai's promotion (ὅτι προήχθη Μαρδοχαῖος; LXX Esth. 2:21),⁴¹ an explanation entirely missing from the Hebrew version.⁴² Indeed, the reason for Mordechai's promotion—the rescue of the king from his would-be assassins—is given at the end of Addition A, in other words his loyalty to the king. The two chief guardians' resentment over Mordechai's promotion is thus an expression of disdain towards the king and it is therefore unsurprising that they attempt to harm him. Thus, once again, hatred of the Jews derives—the author insists—from

⁴⁰ Josippon, a medieval Jewish work (953 CE), states explicitly that the two assassins were Haman's advisers and that this was the reason for Haman's fury. This work mentions Josephus' point that Haman was Amalekite too; see D. Flusser, *The Josippon (Josephus Gorionides)* (Jerusalem, 1981), vol. 1, pp. 48-49 (Hebrew).

⁴¹ As De Troyer, "Text- and Literary-Critical", p. 44 notes, the mention of Mordechai's promotion in 2:21 "can be explained only on the basis that the LXX knew Addition A". The probable thematic allusion to Haman's near promotion (Esth. 3:1), which she mentions, can be seen as another mistake of the king who fails to distinguish between his supporters and his enemies.

⁴² The phrase *בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וּמַרְדֵּכַי יוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ* (Esth. 2:21) are not translated in the LXX. The words "because Mordechai was promoted" can be understood as the LXX translation of that Hebrew sentence and according to this suggestion, they describe the motivation behind the assassination attempt, beyond the timing and Mordechai's ability to reveal the plot. Yet even according to this possibility, it is clear that the LXX emphasizes what is at most hinted at by the Hebrew version. For a parallel tradition on Mordechai's promotion as the eunuchs' motivation (depending only on the Hebrew text) see *Esth. Rab.* 6:13: "in those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh... were wroth'—Why were they enraged? Because he (=the king) has dismissed two and put one in their place: he has dismissed two קלטריון (Coele-Syrians?) which are the gate's guards and appointed this barbarian (instead)".

hatred of the king; hatred of the king i.e., the attempt to harm him, is both the cause and the result of hatred of Mordechai and the Jews; and it is the Jews who are the loyal subjects of the king, which merits them an eminent position in his court.

Also noteworthy is the fact that the narrative involves the chief guardians in the conspiracy, a point which greatly enhances Mordechai's loyalty, as it demonstrates the unreliability of even those most senior officers. Indeed, Addition A has already informed us that he who is esteemed by the king, and who will be appointed later on (3:1) above all the king's friends (φίλοι), is disloyal, whereas Mordechai the Jew is the sole trustworthy character.

The final phrase of this unit also underscores the loyalty of the Jews to the regime. The MT version states: "It was recorded in the book of chronicles in the king's presence" (2:23 ויכתב בספר דברי הימים לפני המלך). LXX adds to this and elaborates the contents recorded as well as its style: a laudatory ode to Mordechai's goodwill (εὐνοια) towards the king. There is no obvious exegetic motivation for this detail and it seems that the redactor sought to stress Mordechai's faithfulness to the regime once again as well as the emphatic and unambiguous royal regard for this loyalty, demonstrated by the paean to Mordechai's *goodwill* that extended well beyond simple chronography in "the book of chronicles".⁴³

As noted above, this word—εὐνοια—appears again in LXX Esth. 6:4, in the context of the king's insomnia and here too its appearance is not dependent on the translation of any Hebrew text. It reads as follows: ἐν δὲ τῷ πυνθάνεσθαι τὸν βασιλέα περὶ τῆς εὐνοίας Μαρδοχαίου ἰδοὺ Ἀμαν ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ. εἶπεν δὲ ὁ βασιλεύς Τίς ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ, ὁ δὲ Ἀμαν εἰσηλθεν εἰπεῖν τῷ βασιλεῖ κρεμάσαι τὸν Μαρδοχαῖον ἐπὶ τῷ ξύλῳ... ("while the king was inquiring about Mordechai's goodwill... Haman was in the courtyard. And the king said: who is in the courtyard? Now Haman had just entered to speak to the king to hang Mordechai on the pole...").

True, this elaboration derives from a plain reading of the Hebrew text that brings the court conflict between Haman and Mordechai to the inevitable flashpoint when, simultaneous with the king's desire to favor Mordechai, his rival Haman seeks to have him hung, revealing, as such, the latter's true face

⁴³ On the other hand the addition of the words τὰ τῆς ἐπιβουλῆς (LXX Esth. 2:22), which "is not characteristic of the translator's style" (H. Kahana, *Esther: Juxtaposition of the Septuagint Translation with the Hebrew Text* [Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology 40; Leuven, 2005], p. 122), probably underscores the ill will and malevolent intentions of the eunuchs, in contrast to Mordechai.

of hostility to the king. Moreover, according to the MT version we are not aware that anyone had entered the king's court and this gap is filled by the LXX. Yet the fact that the redactor of LXX expands specifically on the issue of Mordechai's goodwill, using the same word that appears in the rewritten paragraph of LXX Esth. 2:23, demonstrates that this expansion that stresses Mordechai's loyalty and accentuates the contrast between him and Haman, his conniving and rebellious rival, also fulfills the same objective observed above: creating an impression of identification between hatred of the Jews and hatred of the king and implying that it is specifically the Jews who are truly loyal subjects while the king's Jew hating officers are in effect traitors to the throne.⁴⁴

Thus, through the duplication, rewriting and editing of the Bigthan and Teresh story, the redactor of LXX Esther portrays his conception of the relationship between the Jews and the authorities and of the reasons for hatred of the Jews.

IV. Consistency

It seems that the translator/redactor of the LXX introduced his conceptions regarding the Jews' loyalty to the authorities and the reasons for the gentiles' hatred of the Jews elsewhere in the narrative, aside from the Bigthan and Teresh story. In various places throughout LXX Esther one finds the rewritten Greek version vis-à-vis the Hebrew version stemming from a similar objective. Esth. 3:4 version states: "They told Haman to see whether Mordechai's words would prevail; for he had told them that he was a Jew" (ויגידו להמן לראות)

⁴⁴ The contrast between Mordechai and Haman regarding the issue of loyalty to the king that, as stated, emerges from a surface reading of the text at the beginning of chapter 6, was developed and accentuated by the Aramaic translations. *Tg. Esth. II* 6:1 says that the archangel Michael drew the king's attention to Haman's hostility towards him and to the latter's regicidal intentions in contrast with Mordechai's loyalty. *Tg. Esth. I* 7:6 also records Haman's attempt to assassinate the king and contrasts it with Mordechai's actions. Moreover, the hostility of the king's court to Jews is also apparent in *Tg. Esth. I* 6:1 that reports the attempt by the king's scribe, Shimshai, to omit the account of the king's rescue by Mordechai. The fundamental viewpoint is therefore the same though it is processed differently by the Greek and Aramaic translations. However the Aramaic translations seemingly lack consistency regarding the good will towards the king—he is blatantly referred to as "stupid" several times, and portrayed as one who intentionally opposes the Jewish interest of reconstructing the Temple, while the Greek translation is more consistent in portraying the generally cooperative and amicable relationship between the king and the Jews.

יהודי (היעמדו דברי מרדכי כי הגיד להם אשר הוא יהודי), and in 3:6: “However, it seemed contemptible to him to send (his) hand against Mordechai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordechai” (יבזו בעיניו לשלוח יד במרדכי) (לבדו כי הגידו לו את עם מרדכי). Presumably, what the king’s servants told Haman included the information that Mordechai was a Jew and that this was directly related to Mordechai’s actions. The LXX translates as follows (3:4): “and they informed Haman that Mordechai was opposing the King’s words and Mordechai informed them he was a Jew” (καὶ ὑπέδειξαν τῷ Ἀμαν Μαρδοχαῖον τοῖς τοῦ βασιλέως λόγοις ἀντιτασσόμενον, καὶ ὑπέδειξεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Μαρδοχαῖος ὅτι Ἰουδαῖός ἐστιν). Hanna Kahana notes that in this verse, in contrast with the Greek translation’s practice of excising the names of characters active in the story, the name of Mordechai was interpolated into the sentence.⁴⁵ Further noteworthy is that the translation in this instance is not literal and instead of the provocative Hebrew sentence “to see whether Mordechai’s words would prevail”, the sentence appearing in LXX is somewhat milder: “that Mordechai was opposing to the king’s words”.⁴⁶ Moreover, LXX undoes the subordination between the sentences, rendering Mordechai’s Jewish affinity somewhat unremarkable; a fact mentioned by Mordechai to the occupants of the court and not part of the message of the court occupants to Haman. There is, therefore, no fundamental relationship—not even in the mouth of villains—between Mordechai’s opposition to the king’s orders and his being Jewish; Mordechai’s failure to accede to the king’s command is not mandated by his Judaism. Though even according to LXX, this statement by Mordechai was apparently made in response to the courtiers’ words in order to elucidate Mordechai’s behavior to them, despite this, this sentence is not contiguous with the king’s servants’ question (3:2). In this manner, the notion that Judaism precludes the upholding of the king’s commands is not rendered glaringly evident or is at least, in some measure, mellowed.

The translator’s/redactor’s handiwork is additionally palpable in the second aforementioned verse, insofar as its entire first section “However it seemed contemptible to him to send (his) hand against Mordechai alone, for they had

⁴⁵ Kahana, *Esther*, p. 137.

⁴⁶ The Greek *λόγος* can literally be translated “command” as K. H. Jobes, *NETS* (*Esther*), p. 429 suggests. In this case, however, it seems preferable to translate “word”, as the common meaning of the word, since in v. 2 the king *προσέταξεν* to bow to Haman, thus this has to be *πρόσταγμα* and not *λόγος*. Moreover, the LXX renders *מצות המלך* (*Esth.* 3:3) with *τοῦ βασιλέως λεγόμενα*, “the saying of the king”, and thus this translation too possibly moderates the severity of Mordechai’s actions; see Kahana, *Esther*, p. 134, but see also LXX *Esth.* 8:14.

told him of the people of Mordechai” (Esth. 3:6), does not exist in the LXX.⁴⁷ It appears that this deletion too derives from the redactor’s tendency to portray the Jews in a positive light and to steer clear of sentences that demean them, even if uttered by those who hate the Jews. According to the Hebrew version, Haman seeks to inflict damage on the Jews since they are a contemptible, base people. The expunging of this sentence from LXX undercuts this conception, while the reader retains only what was explicitly aforementioned in Addition A; that due to Mordechai’s loyalty (to the king), Haman sought to harm his people.

Attempts by the LXX translator/redactor to obscure the negative impression potentially created regarding the Jews’ attitude towards the realm are also evident in LXX Esth. 4:1. This verse relates Mordechai’s reaction to Haman’s edict and the Hebrew text concludes with the words “and cried a loud and bitter cry”. The end of this verse is thus translated in LXX: “and he cried out in a loud voice: ‘an innocent people is being wiped out’” (αἴρεται ἔθνος μηδὲν ἠδικηκός). Kahana explains, “This seems to be an exegetical addition intended to explain Mordechai’s anguish”.⁴⁸ Yet it is obvious that the specific content of Mordechai’s cry is compatible with the LXX redactor’s overall objective, according to which the Jewish people do not constitute a negative entity within the realm, are neither subversive nor seditious and thus no reason exists to regard them as disloyal to the throne.⁴⁹

Esth. 5:9 states: “But when Haman noticed Mordechai in the king’s gate and he did not stand up and did not stir before him, Haman was filled with wrath at Mordechai”. Yet LXX reads: “And when Haman saw Mordechai the Jew in the gate, he was filled with wrath” (ἐν δὲ τῷ ἰδεῖν Ἀμαν Μαρδοχαίου τὸν Ἰουδαίου ἐν τῇ ἀνὰ τῆ ἔθιμώθη σφόδρα), omitting mention of Mordechai’s failure to stand or stir. Indeed, the continuation of the story (Esth. 5:13) relates that Haman tells his cohorts and wife Zeresh “Yet all this is worth nothing to me as long as I see Mordechai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate” without noting that Mordechai “did not stand up and did not stir before him”. Arguably, LXX saw fit to amend 5:9 to correspond with 5:13 for consistency’s sake. Yet this explanation is lacking, since a distinction must be drawn between Haman’s words to his followers, designed to avoid disclosing

⁴⁷ Nor does it appear in AT, but it does appear in some manuscripts of the OL and the Hexapla text; see Hanhart *Esther*, p. 150; Haelewyck, *Hester*, pp. 194-195. A translation of this sentence does appear in the two Aramaic translations of Esther (contra Kahana, *Esther*, p. 139).

⁴⁸ Kahana, *Esther*, p. 176.

⁴⁹ See, in contrast, the cry’s content in the two Aramaic translations which contains Mordechai’s prayer to God and a call for the people of Israel to repent.

his failings and pursuit of honor and those of the omniscient narrator, informing us of Haman's precise feelings. In view of our discussion, however, all this appears straightforward: according to the LXX, Haman is enraged when seeing Mordechai, independent of any provocation on the latter's part. True, the sentence ἐθυμώθη σφόδρα is an exact repetition of the end of 3:6, and attentive readers might connect the two (despite the scores of verses in between) and understand Haman's wrath as deriving from Mordechai refusal to bow down to him as related in 3:6 (ὅτι οὐ προσκυνεῖ αὐτῷ Μαρδοχαίως). Yet the silence regarding Mordechai's conduct and regarding the cause of Haman's wrath might also lead the reader to recall the primary reason for Haman's detestation of Mordechai—the foiling of Gabatha and Thara's conspiracy—and to associate Haman's wrath with this. In any case, Mordechai's refusal to comply with the king's orders is not brought up here, thus obfuscating Mordechai's irregular conduct.

A striking expression of this trend in LXX Esther is found in E 23, the end of the king's second epistle, in which he instructs that the thirteenth of Adar be celebrated as one of the realm's commemorative holidays: “both now and hereafter it may represent deliverance for us and the loyal Persians, but that it may be a reminder of destruction for those who plot against us”. Thus the holiday established was not intended merely as a celebration for the Jews, in commemoration of their salvation; it constituted a Persian national holiday, marking the foiling of a dangerous conspiracy to harm the king, the elimination of the schemers and the salvation of the state. In other words, the attempt to destroy the Jews was nothing short of an attempt to strike at Ahasuerus' regime and in effect to depose him, and the salvation of the Jews, meaning the salvation of the king, was thus an incident of national importance. True, a parallel idea that a strike at the Jews actually constituted a regicidal attempt and that their salvation was effectively that of the king too, appears in 3 Macc. 6:24, 33. Yet this claim in 3 Maccabees is not supported by the narrative details and the assumption that in their absence the reader would have reached this conclusion is farfetched. In LXX Esther, however, the incidents described in the book are condensed within this verse and it indeed reflects the fact that those who attempt (twice) to strike at the king are also those who hate the Jews and persecute them.⁵⁰ Thus, this verse hones the message

⁵⁰ On the affinity between the two royal letters in the Additions to Esther and 3 Maccabees see N. Hacham, “Third Maccabees and Esther: Parallels, Intertextuality, and Diaspora Identity”, *JBL* 126 (2007), pp. 765-785. If my view is correct that the two letters were written after 3 Maccabees and were influenced by it in order to strengthen 3 Maccabees' view on Jewish-Gentile

regarding the hatred of the Jews in that it identifies it with insurgency against the king.

The tendentiousness of LXX Esther is also well evidenced in the moderated descriptions of the strike at the gentiles by the Jews; apparently the moderation bespeaks the redactor's desire to ease tensions between these two population groups. Though this objective strays somewhat from our discussion hitherto—the topic being the Jews attitude towards gentiles rather than their loyalty to the state in contrast with their enemies who would harm it—there is room to present herein the adaptations made by LXX as they clearly point out the sensitivities to these issues and the changes that were accordingly introduced.

The description of the king's permission granted to the Jews to defend themselves in the Hebrew version reads as follows (8:10-13): "... in the name of King Ahasuerus... that the king had given permission... to organize and to defend themselves; to destroy, to slay and to exterminate every armed force of every people or province that threaten them (along with their) children and women... for the Jews to be prepared for that day to avenge themselves on their enemies" (להקהל... אשר נתן המלך ליהודים... להקחם מאיביהם ולעמד על נפשם להשמיד ולהרג ולאבד את כל חיל עם ומדינה הצרים אתם ואתם ונשים... ולהיות היהודים עתידים ליום הזה להנקם מאיביהם). The LXX runs as follows: "and it was written by the king... that he ordered them to live in accordance with their laws in every city both to help themselves, and to treat their antagonists and their enemies as they wished... so that all the Jews be prepared for that day itself to fight their adversaries" (ἔγραψε δὲ διὰ τοῦ βασιλέως... ὡς ἐπέταξεν αὐτοῖς χρῆσθαι τοῖς νόμοις αὐτῶν ἐν πάσῃ πόλει βοηθησαί τε αὐτοῖς καὶ χρῆσθαι τοῖς ἀντιδίκους αὐτῶν καὶ τοῖς ἀντικειμένους αὐτῶν ὡς βούλονται... ἐτοίμους τε εἶναι πάντας τοὺς Ἰουδαίους εἰς ταύτην τὴν ἡμέραν πολεμῆσαι αὐτῶν τοὺς ὑπεναντίους).

It is readily apparent that the Greek text shies away from belligerent terminology and verse 11 makes no reference to bloodshed.⁵¹ In contrast, it is stated that the Jews were granted permission to live according to their laws and to

relations and on the Jews' loyalty to the regime, one should consider this point too in a similar way: 3 Maccabees says that the salvation was for the king; LXX Esther elaborates on this and shows that the Jews' enemies are indeed the king's enemies, and the Jews' salvation is indeed the king's. Does the similar tendency of the letters in Additions B and E and the modified text of LXX Esther (including the second part of Addition A) allude to an identical redactor/author of LXX Esther?

⁵¹ The verses that describe the destruction of the Jews (3:13, 7:4) use three verbs: to destroy, massacre and exterminate (להשמיד, להרוג ולאבד). The LXX produces only one verb in these

help themselves—natural rights by all opinions—and to treat their enemies as they saw fit,⁵² a euphemistic formulation, possibly intended to veil the slaughter of gentiles. Similar formulations that obscure the slaughter of gentiles by the Jews appear in the king's epistle contiguous to these verses. Addition E, composed originally in Greek, countermands the epistle sent by Haman and allows the Jews to defend themselves against their attackers, without detailing the means by which this might be accomplished (E 17, 20). It seems that substituting the phrase “to fight their adversaries” instead of “to take revenge” derives from the same euphemistic trend that strives to conceal the vengeance and to portray it as merely a defensive battle.

The entire opening section of chapter 9 of LXX Esther is designed to correspond with this objective. Particularly notable are LXX's and AT's deletion of 9:5 (“And the Jews struck all their enemies, with the stroke of the sword, slaughtering and annihilating, and they treated their enemies as they pleased”), that omits the totality of the strike by the Jews upon their adversaries as well as the totally free hand which they were accorded.⁵³ Several additional sentences were also excised from the translation, apparently for the sake of the said trend.⁵⁴ Probably, Esther's request of the king in the wake of the first day

verses though it does not refrain from mentioning the destruction. Here, in contrast, the translator completely omits the issue of the slaughter.

⁵² It is unclear whether ὡς βούλονται (“as they wished”) refers to the enemies, thus the Jews can treat the enemies as the enemies wanted to treat the Jews, i.e., to kill them, or relates to the Jews meaning that the Jews were free to decide what to do with their enemies. Either way, the issue is vague. It is possible that this formulation alludes to 9:5 “They treated their enemies as they pleased”, not translated by LXX, of which the above in 8:11 might be vestigial. In any case, the transposition of the sentence to this location blurs its significance.

⁵³ Moore, *The Additions*, p. 241 explains that “possibly because the MT's patent delight in such bloodshed was ethically offensive to the Greek translator”. In my view the problem is not ethical but political or pertaining to the image, and self image of the Jews in the foreign country.

⁵⁴ The sentence in 9:1 “On the day that the enemies of the Jews expected to prevail over them and it was turned about: The Jews prevailed over their adversaries”, is not translated by the LXX or the AT. Possibly, the translation seeks to avoid the impression that the Jews were in control of the realm. In 9:2 the translator suffices saying that the enemies of the Jews were destroyed (ἀπώλοντο οἱ ἀντικείμενοι τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις) and does not relate the convergences of Jews in all the cities of their dwelling to kill their adversaries and does not even pursue the identities of those who annihilated the Jews' enemies. Note that the word ἀντικείμενοι appears only once more in LXX Esther (8:11), where the king permits the Jews to treat their enemies as they see fit. If the word is used here deliberately, this implies that the destruction of the Jews' enemies was committed in compliance with the royal command. In addition, the end of the verse states that ‘they feared them’, reasonably the enemies of the Jews, while according to the Hebrew version “for fear of them had fallen upon all the peoples”. Esth. 9:3-4 relates Mordechai's powerful

of fighting in Susa is influenced by a similar objective. According to LXX, Esther says (9:13): δοθήτω τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις χρῆσθαι ὡσαύτως τὴν αὔριον, ὥστε τοὺς δέκα υἱοὺς κρεμάσαι Ἀμαν (“Let it be granted to the Jews to do likewise tomorrow, so that they may hang the ten sons of Haman”). As Linda Day comments, the outstanding objective of this sentence is the hanging of the ten sons of Haman while the mass slaughter—if referred to at all—receives minimal mention.⁵⁵ Seemingly then, the translator sought in the context of this verse too, to obscure the hostility of the Jews to the gentiles as well as the harsh treatment they meted out to their opponents throughout the Persian Empire.

It seems that LXX cast doubts on the legitimacy of the slaughter of the Jews through an additional means. It is stated regarding the decree composed by Haman ordering the destruction of the Jews (3:12): “it was written in the name of King Ahasuerus, and it was sealed with the king’s signet ring”. In other words, this was a royal directive, sanctioned as law by the king’s signature. The LXX renders this verse without mentioning the king’s seal. Though two verses earlier the redactor adds to the depiction of the king’s ring being handed to Haman the objective being to sign the decree concerning the Jews, a description of the execution of this signature is absent. This conceivably should not be regarded as an insignificant shortcut by the translator, or as a meaningless change in sentence order, since it is explicitly stated about the second epistle, regarding the Jews being granted the right to self-defense, that this decree was sealed with the King’s ring (8:10: καὶ ἐσφραγίσθη τῷ δακτυλίῳ αὐτοῦ). I would suggest that the absence of the signature from the first epistle should be interpreted as an attempt by the translator/redactor to cloud the legitimacy of the decree calling for the annihilation of the Jews, allowing the reader to recognize that the edict was not properly sanctioned while only its counterpart allowing the Jews to defend themselves was in fact legal.⁵⁶

A further change that possibly derives from similar tendencies is found in Esther’s words to the king (7:4). The end of the verse, “for the adversary is not

position as well as the ministers’ fear of him. The Greek rendering of 9:4 omits Mordechai’s stature in the king’s palace and adds that the king promulgated a decree to publicize Mordechai throughout the kingdom. It seems that this addition is intended to emphasize that all the above was indeed mandated by the king and that the honor and fear referred to, do not constitute insurrection against the kingdom.

⁵⁵ L. Day, *Three Faces of a Queen: Characterization in the Books of Esther* (JSOTS 186; Sheffield, 1995), p. 155.

⁵⁶ Probably it is in line with the diasporic view that the king himself almost never acts against the Jews, and it is the viceroy who is the villain.

worthy of the king's damage" (כי אין הצר שוה בנזק המלך), is obscure and has been interpreted in various ways.⁵⁷ The LXX offers the following sentence: οὐ γὰρ ἄξιος ὁ διάβολος τῆς ἀλλῆς τοῦ βασιλέως ("for the adversary of the royal court is not worthy"). This sentence is obviously not a translation of the MT as there is no connection between the word ἀλλη and "trouble" or "damage" (נזק). It is plausible, of course, that the translator possessed a different Hebrew vorlage,⁵⁸ yet in any case according to this sentence Esther views those responsible for the attempted strike at the Jews as enemies of the king's court,⁵⁹ similar to Haman's motives as presented in Addition A. It should be noted that the word διάβολος appears just once more in LXX Esther (8:1) and there too it refers to Haman. Perhaps then, the use of the word at this juncture reveals the translator/redactor's desire to hint that here too, the subject is Haman. Also possible is that the fact that the words "the enemy of the Jews" (8:1: צרר היהודים), alluding there to Haman, are translated by the word διάβολος, without mentioning the Jews, points to a similar objective according to which Haman is the adversary not only of the Jews but also, and principally, of the realm.

The wide array of modifications and adaptations in LXX Esther vis-a-vis the Hebrew version, aimed at portraying the Jews as faithful to the realm and the strike at the Jews as a strike at the realm, as well as the favorable attitude towards gentiles, reveals that thorough work was conducted by a Hellenistic Jewish translator or redactor who sought to transform the sacred and authoritative Book of Esther into a text that dealt with the delicate and complex issues of the relations between Jews and gentiles and Jews and the realm in a manner consistent with his worldview and the reality of his time, topics to which we shall now turn.

V. Gentile Hatred of the Jews

Several charges against the Jews were prevalent in the Hellenistic-Roman world. The Jewish lifestyle was distinct from the surrounding culture in several ways. Particularly conspicuous were the Jews' refusal to participate in pagan rituals, even the royal or the municipal cult, their observance of the Sabbath

⁵⁷ See e.g. C. A. Moore, *Esther* (AB 10; Garden City, NY, 1971), pp. 70-71; A. Hakham, *Esther* (in: *Hamesh Megilat; Daat Miqra*; Jerusalem, 1973) pp. מוד-מוד (Hebrew); Berlin, *Esther*, pp. 67-68.

⁵⁸ For such suggestions see for instance: Moore, *The Additions*, p. 227; Kahana, *Esther*, p. 281.

⁵⁹ So also Day, *Three Faces of a Queen*, pp. 123-124.

and their refraining from certain foods. On this backdrop, the Jews were accused of ἀθεότης, of separatism, misoxeny, and misanthropy.⁶⁰

Misanthropy, the hatred of gentiles, was highlighted by pagan authors as the Jews' most serious transgression.⁶¹ The most detailed account of the allegations against the Jews appears in Flavius Josephus' book, *Against Apion*, in which he quotes and contends with the charges leveled at the Jews by their detractors. The Jews' misanthropy already appears in sources from the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the third century BCE, in the works of Hecataeus,⁶² the Greek author, and Manetho, the Egyptian priest⁶³ and subsequently in the works of many authors.⁶⁴ While the former addresses the Jews' apartness, the latter elaborates the origins of the Jews in Egypt as insurgents against the legitimate Egyptian regime.⁶⁵ These authors attribute the Jews' misanthropy and insurgency to their expulsion, as lepers and deformed people, from Egypt and their concentration in one outlying area—allowing for the possibility of viewing this as something other than the Jews' own insurrectionist initiative.⁶⁶ Only in the first century CE do we find the explicit

⁶⁰ For a general survey of these accusations see L. H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton, 1993), pp. 84-176, esp. pp. 123-176; P. Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge & London, 1997), pp. 15-118, and recently on the attitude of Greek authors from the Hellenistic period towards Jews see B. Bar-Kochva, *The Image of the Jews in Greek Literature: The Hellenistic Period* (Hellenistic Culture and Society 51; Berkeley, 2010).

⁶¹ Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, p. 125; Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, p. 175.

⁶² Hecataeus' description of the Jews has been handed down to us in the fortieth book of Diodorus Siculus' *Bibliotheca* by the ninth-century Byzantine patriarch Photius. On this source, its authenticity and meaning see D. R. Schwartz, "Diodorus Siculus 40.3—Hecataeus or Pseudo Hecataeus?", in A. Oppenheimer et al. (eds.), *Jews and Gentiles in the Holy Land in the Days of the Second Temple, the Mishnah, and the Talmud* (Jerusalem, 2003), vol. 2, pp. 181-197; Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, pp. 90-136. The assertion that it is a fourth century BCE author accepts Bar-Kochva's view.

⁶³ Manetho, in Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.232-251. On the lengthy debate on the authenticity of these passages and their attribution to Manetho see among many others the discussion and summary of: M. Pucci Ben Zeev, "The Reliability of Josephus Flavius: the Case of Hecataeus' and Manetho's Accounts of the Jews and Judaism: Fifteen Years of Contemporary Research (1974-1990)", *JSJ* 24 (1993), pp. 215-234, esp. pp. 230-234; Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, pp. 17-21.

⁶⁴ For the sources attributing the Jews any kind of misanthropy see Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, pp. 128-129; For the Greek authors from the Hellenistic period accusing the Jews of seclusion see Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, p. 521.

⁶⁵ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.238 ff.; 261. See also the accusations attributed to Chaeremon, *ibid.*, 291

⁶⁶ Yet it is possible that this is an expression of Manetho's struggle against Ptolemy II Philadelphus' sympathetic policy towards the Jews. See A. Kasher, "The Footsteps of 'Counter History' in Manetho's Version of the Exodus", in A. Oppenheimer et al. (eds.), *Jews and Gentiles in the*

charge of disloyalty to the regime, unrelated to counter-reactions against acts of the regime directed at them, leveled against the Jews. Flavius Josephus attributes to Apion the charge of the Jews' disloyalty to the regime and the identification of their cultic isolation as an expression of their political separatism (*Ag. Ap.* 2:65). Another facet of this charge portrays the Jews as rabble-rousers (*ibid.* 2:68). The historical context of these statements is the riots in Alexandria during the reign of Gaius Caligula, and they are not explicitly formulated in earlier periods. Victor Tcherikover, however, sees the dissonance between life in the *polis* alongside adherence to Judaism as the source of the problem of Jewish-Gentile relations during the entire Hellenistic-Roman period and as the cause of anti-Semitism. In his words, "Whoever did not acknowledge the official cult of the city withheld recognition of the city's sanctity and of its independent power as a political unit, and this undermined its autonomy. The Jewish refusal to worship the gods was in Greek eyes a sign of their hatred of the Greeks as a whole".⁶⁷ Tcherikover does not address, in these words, infidelity to a specific regime, but rather a general hatred of the Greeks and their institutions: "Its (anti-Semitism's) growth was not coincidental, but was bound up with the Jews' actual situation outside their homeland".⁶⁸ Thus in effect he differentiates between diasporan Jews and the Jews of the Land of Israel. Indeed, accentuating deficient Jewish allegiance to the regime is characteristic of the historical reality of subordination to foreign rule—Diaspora Jewry or the Jewry of the Land of Israel under Roman rule—and is inappropriate to the reality of the Jewry of the Land of Israel in the Hasmonean period. Therefore it seems that the treatment by gentile sources of hatred of the Greeks or misanthropy evoked by the deeds of the homeland (Hasmonaeon) Jewry in various matters is extraneous to this discussion.⁶⁹

Holy Land in the Days of the Second Temple, the Mishnah, and the Talmud (Jerusalem, 2003), vol. 1, pp. 52-81 esp. pp. 62, 71-72, 77 (Hebrew).

⁶⁷ V. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (trans. S. Applebaum; Philadelphia & Jerusalem, 1959), p. 375.

⁶⁸ Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, p. 376.

⁶⁹ Authors like Lysimachus (see Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, pp. 333-335). On the influence of the Hasmonaeon wars on the Greek authors' perception of the Jews see Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, pp. 520-21, and in many places throughout the book. For a different view see I. Shatzman, "The Hasmonaeans in Greco-Roman Historiography", *Zion* 57 (1992), pp. 50-51 (Hebrew). It is worth noting that even Antiochus Sidetes' friends did not accuse the Jews of disloyalty but merely of misanthropy and hatred of Greeks (see Diodorus 34/35 1-5 in Phot. Bibl. cod. 244 p. 379; Stern, *GLA*, I, 181-3).

Further attestations of the charges of disloyalty leveled at the Jews can be found in several Jewish compositions. 3 Maccabees, a Jewish-Hellenistic work apparently from the first century BCE,⁷⁰ devotes numerous verses to the topic. It states: "...but the differences concerning worship and food they (=the foreigners) repeated over and over, claiming that the [Jewish] people were neither allies of the king nor of the authorities, but were hostile and strongly opposed to their affairs" (3 Macc. 3:7).⁷¹ The end of the book (7:3-4) contains a remark according to which the Jew's adversaries claimed that "our regime will never be stabilized due to the ill will borne by this people towards all nations," until the Jews are punished as insurrectionists. Elsewhere in the book the Ptolemaic king accuses the Jews of being the only people, from amongst all the nations, to demonstrate hostility toward the king, to detest him and to conduct themselves as traitors and barbarous enemies (*ibid.*, 3:19,24). The manner by which the king seeks to deal with the Jews is also defined as being appropriate to traitors or insurgents (*ἐπίβουλος*: 4:10;6:12).⁷²

Jewish responses to these charges are recorded in the aforementioned compositions as well as in other works that present the Jewish positions regarding the assertions against them, many times without explicit mention of the charges themselves.⁷³ Flavius Josephus comprehensively undermines the credibility of the gentile accounts of the exodus, enumerating all the rulers who were both benevolent towards the Jewish people and convinced of their loyalty to their rule. He places great emphasis on this loyalty as having persisted for generations⁷⁴ and attributes responsibility for provoking the riots to the

⁷⁰ On the date of 3 Maccabees see N. Hacham, "The Third Book of Maccabees: Literature, History and Ideology" (Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2002), pp. 221-243 (Hebrew).

⁷¹ τὴν δὲ περὶ τῶν προσκυνήσεων καὶ τροφῶν διάστασιν ἐθρύλουν φάσκοντες μήτε τῷ βασιλεῖ μήτε ταῖς δυνάμεσιν ὁμοσπόνδους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους γίνεσθαι δυσμενεῖς δὲ εἶναι καὶ μέγα τι τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐναντιούμενους.

⁷² A similar charge was made against Judas Maccabeus by Alcimus (2 Macc. 14:6-10). In this occasion the subject was a Jew resisting the Seleucid regime and the basis for the charges against him was not actually his religion. Therefore this source should not be added to the list of sources accusing the Jews with religious rebelliousness. On the other hand, it is clear that according to the diasporan author of 2 Maccabees, this charge is baseless and entirely derived from Alcimus' personal interest—the high priesthood (14:8). Nevertheless it is also possible that the author is reflecting accusations against Jews prevalent in the gentile world.

⁷³ For a survey of the Jewish answers see Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, pp. 131-149.

⁷⁴ In his depictions of the Great Revolt, Josephus strives to highlight the fact that responsibility lay with the limited group that fought the Romans, while the majority of the people and God too did not object to the Romans. In *Jewish Antiquities* too, he makes a point of emphasizing

Egyptian rabble in Alexandria, one of whom was Apion himself (*Ag. Ap.* 2:69-71). These assertions are enormously consequential in Flavius Josephus' specific historical context since they pull the rug out from under the charges—prevalent during the time of the first revolt against Rome and in its wake—regarding the Jews' unremitting rebelliousness.⁷⁵ 3 Maccabees uses similar tactics. This book stresses that only few (ἐνίοι: 3:4) and foreigners (ἀλλόφυλοι; 3:6) felt this way about Jews while “all the people” (ἅπανσιν ἀνθρώποις: 3:5) and the Greeks in the city (κατὰ τὴν πόλιν Ἕλληνες: 3:8) recognized their abiding loyalty (εὐνοια καὶ πίστις ἀδιάστροφος: 3:3) to the regime and their fine reputation. Moreover, the king himself attests to the unwavering and unconstrained loyalty of the Jews to the monarchy (3:21; 5:31; 6:25-26). At the end of the book, the king even accuses his friends of cruelty (7:5) and malignity (κακοήθεια: 7:3) for persecuting the Jews who bear the monarchy steadfast, companionable good will (τὴν τε τοῦ φίλου ἔχουσι βεβαίαν... εὐνοίαν: 7:7). The libel is thus refuted: the Jews are faithful to the realm and worthy of being counted among its friends, while the royal officials who injure the Jews are acting counter to the kingdom's interests.

3 Maccabees operates on yet another front. It counters the assertion that the Jews' separatism in matters of food and ritual reflects deficient loyalty to the kingdom by inverting the charge: specifically those Jews who acceded to the king's command, violating divine injunctions for their stomachs' sake, “will not demonstrate good will towards the king's rule” (μηδέποτε εὐνοήσιν μηδὲ τοῖς τοῦ βασιλέως πράγμασιν: 7:11). The conclusion is that adherence to the Jewish religion which reflects devotion to God, is the ultimate confirmation of loyalty to the king.

Similar apologetic approaches are found in other compositions authored by diasporan Jews. The Letter of Aristeas devotes great effort to elucidating the rationale behind the commandments that distinguish between Jews and others, thus demonstrating that they do not express misanthropy.⁷⁶ In *Antiquities*, Flavius Josephus attempts to demonstrate that the Jewish world is devoid of hostility towards the gentiles and that it engages the latter in an open and

the Jews' virtue and loyalty to the authorities; on this see e.g. among many instances: L. H. Feldman, *Studies in Josephus Rewritten Bible*, (Lieden, 1998), p. 480; and in general: A. Schalit (ed. & trans.), *Flavius Josephus: Kadmoniot Ha-Yehudim*, (3 vols.; Jerusalem, 1944), vol. 1, pp. XVIII-XIX (introduction; Hebrew).

⁷⁵ See e.g. *War* 6.239; 329. It seems to me that the polemic against the rebellious image of the Jews is the meaning and aim of the story of Alexander and the high priest (*Ant.* 11.317-332) too.

⁷⁶ See *Let. Aris.* 130-168. On this meaning of these paragraphs see e.g. N. Hacham, “The Letter of Aristeas: A New Exodus Story?”, *JSJ* 36 (2005), pp. 16-17.

fertile dialogue. Thus, for example, when Abraham traveled to Egypt, he maintained an intellectual relationship with the local wise men, taught them the sciences and would have been open to their theological ideas had they been convincing (*Ant.* 1.161, 165-168). And Philo attempts to disguise Jewish responsibility for the riots in Egypt and the fact that they covertly and illegally possessed weapons.⁷⁷ In this context it is worth noting the LXX translation of the verse “You will not curse God” (Ex. 22:27) as representing a prohibition against striking at the Gods, namely of other peoples. As is generally accepted, this translation expresses the tolerance of Diaspora Jews and their desire to maintain a normal relationship with their surroundings, despite their rejection of the gentile gods.

This type of discourse is typical of many Jewish-Hellenistic sources that discuss Jewish-gentile relations.

VI. LXX Esther: A Unique Reaction

The commonality between the approaches hitherto surveyed is expressed in their apologetic underpinning. No need to state, that the allegorical explanations of the commandments, as well as claims along the lines of “yes . . . but . . .”, in other words, “yes, we observe the commandments that set us apart but they do not express hostility”, “yes, we believe in one God, but we have prevailed in disputations with Egyptian sages”, or “but we do not curse other Gods”, are defensive and apologetic in nature. 3 Maccabees’s line of thought, championing Jewish loyalty and claiming that those who would harm them are in effect harming the kingdom, creates an apologetic impression without actually explaining this assertion in practical terms. Josephus’ argument that “they started” reads as a juvenile response to a childish squabble. Though the “bad guy” in both aforementioned paradigms are the gentiles, it is unclear how this is manifested in actuality (3 Maccabees) or in what manner this diminishes Jewish responsibility for the anti-gentile disturbances.

The aforementioned texts from LXX Esther present a different and unique approach towards the phenomenon of hatred of the Jews. This explanation posits that the origin of hatred of the Jews lies not in their religious self-segregation and in their distinctiveness that set them apart from the nations amongst whom they dwell. That is merely a pretext, that manifests in Haman’s words

⁷⁷ *Flacc.* 86-89. On the debate as to whether or not the Jews had weapons, see P. W. van der Horst, *Philo’s Flaccus: The First Pogrom* (Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series 2; Leiden, 2003), p. 178.

long after the inception of his animosity towards Mordechai and his people. The genuine reason for hatred of the Jews derives from their firm alliance with the lawful regime, and in their constituting the ultimate human shield guarding the throne. The objective of the Jews' enemies is the removal of the king and the seizure of power but this is unattainable as long as the Jews, the loyal defenders of the king, are in the picture. The struggle against the Jews is therefore part and parcel of insurgency against the throne and Haman's aspiration to annihilate all the Jews is really an attempt to remove the king's defenders or to exact vengeance against them for preventing him from implementing his scheme. This also applies to the attempted regicide by the two chief bodyguards who, at LXX Esth. 2:21-23, seek retribution against the king for promoting Mordechai, i.e. for the deliverance of the king.

Obviously, this explanation also portrays the Jews in a favorable light though the method it employs is utterly divergent. There is no partial admission of facts concerning the separatism of the Jews alongside the repudiation of their seditious implications; nor are there generalized apologetic determinations regarding the Jews' enemies' attempts to strike at the throne. Instead, there is an emphatic statement, predicated on actual facts, that the Jews protect the king from those who hate him and who, through their animosity towards the king, would seek to harm them. In other words, the theory put forth in 3 Maccabees is here turned on its head: hatred of the Jews and the desire to harm them are not the reason for striking at the king rather the reverse is true—those who hate the king strike also at the Jews for this very same reason. Therefore the identities of those put to death in both stories vary accordingly: while in 3 Maccabees the Jew haters who seemingly threaten the king were *not* put to death (those killed were actually the apostate Jews who had thus proven their disloyalty to the king [3 Macc. 7:10-11]), Esth. E 23 in LXX Esther states that Purim was to be instituted to commemorate the destruction of those who schemed against the king, implying a botched assassination attempt against the monarch, and that all the conspirators—not Bigthan and Teresh alone, but all the Jews' adversaries, were annihilated.

The Greek translation of Esther's presentation of the story utilizes the oft-used "inversion method", prevalent in such disputes in the ancient world.⁷⁸ This method entails the accused turning the tables and hurling the said charges against his accusers. The use of this technique in this instance is sophisticated: This inversion does not pertain to the story itself—after all, its main kernel

⁷⁸) See A. Kasher, "The Footsteps of 'Counter History'", pp. 52-81 (Hebrew); Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, pp. 331-332.

appears in the Hebrew version of Esther and there is no known other version of the story—but to the essential conclusion that it conveys: in contrast with the pervasive gentile assertion of Jewish disloyalty to the regime, LXX Esther relates that the reverse is actually correct and it is specifically the enemies of the Jews who are traitorous while the Jews themselves are faithful and devoted to the regime, and this is the precise cause of their persecution.

Jewish sources from Antiquity exhibiting this type of response to the charges of disloyalty against the Jews are scarce. In one source Philo argues similarly.⁷⁹ He points out that the Jews constitute a strong support for the emperor and relates the attempt by Sejanus, a conspirator against the emperor, to annihilate the Jews. According to Philo, Sejanus falsely accused the Jews since he knew that for the most part, they alone would protect the emperor, Tiberius, from an attempt on his part to hurt him. Tiberius, Philo continues, acknowledged this following Sejanus's death, and dispatched reassurances to the Jews, stating that they would not be punished collectively; only the culpable few would be punished. Though essentially Philo's words and the assertions of the Greek translation of Esther are identical, several conspicuous differences bear noting: First—in contrast with LXX Esther, in this instance Philo admits that there were a small number of Jews who were indeed guilty; second—Esther avers a concrete precedent for the king's rescue by the Jews while Philo's assertions of Jewish defense of the emperor are unsubstantiated by facts; third—Sejanus died in the context of an insurgency against the emperor which was unassociated with the Jews while according to LXX Esther the link between Haman's attempt to hurt the Jews and his death is inextricable.

It seems that these discrepancies derive from the divergent characters of the compositions and from the differing uses that this contention serves in each. Philo relates to a historical event in his own lifetime and therefore must adhere closely to the facts while the two conspiracies in LXX Esther are in the Midrashic manner, a myth-like literary development, unfettered by factual historical reality. Moreover, while in Esther this assertion regarding the Jews enjoys pivotal status, Philo's argument appears ready made and he incorporates it within his other claims. This assertion is not the centerpiece of Philo's argument, but rather represents part of an entire apologetic endeavor in which he asserts that there was never any infringement of the Jews' right to live according to their ancestral laws, and attempts to explain the reason for the strike against them under Tiberius and buttresses his denouncement of his Alexandrian rivals' false claims regarding the disloyalty of the Jews. In the

⁷⁹) *Legat.* 159-161.

context of these claims, he is in effect stating—as is common in Jewish diasporan literature⁸⁰—that the imperial strike at the Jews under Tiberius was not initiated by the emperor but rather by a Jew-hating courtier, and when the truth was disclosed to the emperor he immediately restored the proper and correct treatment that the Jews deserved. Thus the conclusion is that Philo's words echo the notion that the Jews are persecuted due to their loyalty to the regime though this assertion is not central to his arguments.

In any case, the customary Jewish response is generally defensive and apologetic, addressing the charges themselves and attempting to refute them. At times, the gentiles would be accused of undermining the order of the kingdom, as in 3 Maccabees. However, I am not acquainted with any other ancient source that asserts so clearly and acutely that hatred of the Jews stems from hostility of the Jews' adversaries to the throne. This premise, in my view, indicates self-confidence on the part of the Jews regarding their position within the state. In the absence of Jewish political power, the denunciation of the Jews' enemies as enemies of the throne might prove to be a double-edged sword, endangering the Jews. This is not to say that gentiles reading this composition would be spurred to act against the Jews; I tend, along with many contemporary researchers to the view that postulates a Jewish audience for Jewish Hellenistic literature, including this work.⁸¹ Yet the assimilation of this perception—that hatred of the Jews derives from animosity towards the regime and the state, within this target audience, might undoubtedly have influenced the behavior of the state's Jews towards the gentiles, engendering gentile counter reactions. Only those who believe themselves relatively unthreatened, in other words—those who view their position as sufficiently established and secure—can afford to take this risk.⁸² That said, the robust position of the Jews in the foreign state as portrayed by this assertion does not mandate the conclusion of the permissibility of wholesale harm to be perpetrated against gentiles; on the contrary—the author stresses, as has been demonstrated, the toleration displayed by the Jews in their handling of the gentiles and the fair, benevolent treatment that the Jews are recommended to accord them. The redacted stage of LXX Esther is thus the creation of a Diaspora Jew, faithful to his religion and his people, who views himself as completely loyal

⁸⁰ E.g. Dan. 3; 6; 2 Macc. 3; 14-15.

⁸¹ See V. Tcherikover's basic, well known view, "Jewish Apologetic Literature Reconsidered", *Eos: Commentarii societatis Philologiae Polonorum* 48 (1956), pp. 169-193.

⁸² Or those who have nothing to lose. However, the fact that LXX Esther contains gentile-directed appeasement reveals that the author believed that there was something substantial to lose in a confrontation with the gentiles.

to the regime, in contrast with other gentile court figures around him, and who aspires to maintain normal, even agreeable neighborly relations with the gentile residents of the state.

VII. Date and Historical Context

The worldview of the redactor of LXX Esther seems clear and comprehensible and it appears possible to portray the actual circumstances surrounding the creation of this composition with a high degree of probability. Despite this, the question of dating and concrete historical context remains a thorny one since actual circumstances and worldview—as clear as they might be—are often potentially compatible with a choice of time periods and a number of historical events. In the following discussion I will attempt to put forth the most likely historical circumstances that in my opinion lent to the creation of these trends in the compilation of LXX Esther.

The issue seems straightforward from the standpoint of the location of authorship. LXX Esther's colophon testifies to the fact that the translation was imported to Egypt from Jerusalem in the fourth year of Ptolemy and Cleopatra's reign (F 11). It therefore appears that the redaction of the work was performed in Egypt, most probably in Alexandria, Egypt's leading cultural center.

Dating is a more complex issue. Though the colophon points to the Ptolemaic period,⁸³ our analysis above indicates that the translation brought from Jerusalem was adapted, edited and entire units appended to it after its introduction into Egypt and thus the colophon can only attest to the *terminus post quem*, and nothing beyond that. The orientation of the work and the factual circumstances it contains do not unequivocally testify to the date of its composition and the central question concerns whether the relevant time frame is the Ptolemaic period or whether the text was compiled after Egypt had become a Roman province, after 30 BCE. There are several indications alluding to the Roman period: first, the picture painted is that of conflict between the Jews and Haman the Macedonian (LXX Esth. 9:24; E 10) while the regime is portrayed as a third party, distinct from the aforementioned two. This state of affairs corresponds to the Roman period, during which the regime was not Greek and both population groups—Jews and Greeks—struggled for

⁸³ Ptolemy and Cleopatra (F 11) can correlate with several monarchs (see Moore, *The Additions*, p. 250), thus their fourth year can be dated either 113, 77 or 48 BCE.

their status within the Roman regime in Egypt.⁸⁴ The premise that the Roman period is the one in question solves the enigma and the anachronism of Haman's designation as a "Macedonian" in that he represents an ethnic element not in the government though he aspires to power and is extremely frustrated by the present regime as indeed the Alexandrian Greeks were by Roman rule. Moreover, Egyptian Jewry abetted the attempts of several Roman generals to enter Egypt during the years preceding the Roman conquest of Egypt.⁸⁵ While acts along these lines might, on the one hand, assist Egyptian Jewry in demonstrating their fealty to the regime, they affirm, on the other, the Greek contention of the Jews' unfaithfulness to the regime since they had abetted the Romans against the then legitimate Ptolemaic rule.

Furthermore, the search for an event in Egypt that pitted Jews against Greeks concerning the question of their allegiance to the regime would naturally lead to the riots in Alexandria during the reign of Gaius Caligula. They were, after all, the context both of Apion's contention that the Jews were rebellious and Philo's account of Sejanus. It therefore would be fitting to propose the years of intense struggle between Greeks and Jews in Alexandria during the thirties and forties of the first century CE as the historical context for the redaction of LXX Esther as revealed in our discussion.

Yet besides this correspondence, a few prominent differences bear noting. First, unlike the account in LXX Esther, there was no ongoing Jewish-Greek struggle at court during the reign of Gaius Caligula. Moreover, during these events there was no direct contact between the parties and the emperor, in contrast with Greek Esther's account. Neither Macedonian nor Jew were high officials in the emperor's court. It would seem therefore, that other alternatives need to be considered for the historical context of the Gabatha and Thara story in LXX Esther.

It seems that all the aforementioned assertions might also support the dating of the redaction of LXX Esther to the Ptolemaic period. As is well known, from the middle of the second century BCE, several years after Onias settled in Egypt, the Jews were already deeply involved in the army and the Ptolemaic administration—Jewish support for Cleopatra II and Ptolemy VII (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2:49-56) as well as Chelkias and Ananias, Cleopatra III's commanders of the army (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.287; 349-355) sufficiently illustrate this point.

⁸⁴ D. R. Schwartz, "Antisemitism and Other -ism's in the Greco-Roman World", in R. S. Wistrich (ed.), *Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism and Xenophobia* (Amsterdam, 1999), pp. 76-77.

⁸⁵ See Josephus *J. W.* 1.175, *Ant.* 14.99 (on 55 BCE); *J. W.* 1.190, *Ant.* 14.131-132 (on 48 BCE).

The result of this was increased hatred of the Jews within the Ptolemaic state, especially among the aristocracy, that apparently provoked the charge of disloyalty to the kingdom leveled against them. The existence of this accusation is evidenced by Apion's words quoted or alluded to by Flavius Josephus, concerning Jewish involvement in the internecine struggle within the Ptolemaic court between Cleopatra II and Ptolemy VIII Phiscon (*C. Ap.* 2:50-56). It is reasonable that Ptolemy IX Lathyrus's support of the Samaritans in their war against the Hasmonaeans under John Hyrcanus (*Ant.* 13.278) derives from his hostility to the Jews and the support that the Jewish military leaders, Chelkias and Ananias, lent his mother, Cleopatra III, and his brother Ptolemy X Alexander.⁸⁶ The sources that we have reveal that the Hellenized population of Alexandria was hostile to Ptolemy Alexander who ruled alone in Alexandria after his mother's assassination, from 101 BCE. This Ptolemy Alexander, however, won the support of the Jews and this assistance provoked the loathing of the Alexandrian Greeks against the king and was also the cause of Jewish suffering.⁸⁷

Apparently, the rivals of the Jewish court figures were Greek courtiers, generals and administrators who charged the Jews with disloyalty to the legitimate sovereign. Victor Tcherikover elucidated Haman's Macedonian "lineage" in this chronological context as well as the court conflict between the two officials described in LXX Esther.⁸⁸ Moreover, it seems that only during these years of the Ptolemaic period were the Jews strong and self confident enough as to regard themselves the pivotal supporters of the regime.

Bezalel Bar-Kochva too views this period, marked by a strongly anti-Jewish trend that prevailed amongst the Greek Alexandrian elites, as a turning point in the Jewish-Greek polemic, and he dates several works to this period.⁸⁹ Furthermore, were LXX Esther redacted in the Roman period then the epistles would not refer to the "realm" (B 5: βασιλεία) or to the "throne" (E 11: τοῦ βασιλικοῦ θρόνου). The use of terms relating to monarchic rule suggests that the prevailing reality was not that of Roman rule, with the

⁸⁶ B. Bar-Kochva, "The Battle between Ptolemy Lathyrus and Alexander Jannaeus in the Jordan Valley and the Dating of the Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light", *Cathedra* 93 (1999), pp. 8-9; 54 (Hebrew).

⁸⁷ M. Stern, *Hasmonaean Judaea in the Hellenistic World: Chapters in Political History*, (D. R. Schwartz [ed.]; Jerusalem, 1995), pp. 140-141 (Hebrew); idem, *GLA*, vol. 2, pp. 444-446. On this see also: I. Lévy, "Ptolémée Lathyrus et les Juifs", *HUCA* 23 [part II] (1950-51), pp. 127-136.

⁸⁸ V. A. Tcherikover, "Prolegomena", *CPJ* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), vol. 1, p. 24, and n. 61.

⁸⁹ Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, pp. 335-336.

supreme ruler based in Rome, but rather that the regime was still monarchic, subject to internecine power struggles between factions within the kingdom—in other words, the monarchic Ptolemaic regime. The probability that these were the final years of the Ptolemaic kingdom, during which the Jews abetted the Roman army's incursions into Egypt is low, since in these instances there is no evidence of a clear divide between Greeks and Jews regarding which side of the conflict they supported.⁹⁰

It would seem then that the refurbished redaction of the story of LXX Esther should be interpreted on the backdrop of the tensions that inhered between Greeks and Jews in Egypt at the end of the second century and the beginning of the first century BCE, and on the backdrop of the charges against the Jews prevalent in this environment. The impression potentially created by the story of Hebrew Esther, a version similar to the MT version, with the possible additions of the prayers and Mordechai's dream, might be that the Jews were unfaithful to the regime—after all, their leader, Mordechai's attitude toward the regime representative was provocative and boastful—and that the Jews are vicious in their struggle against their domestic adversaries, inhabitants of their own realm. The unique situation of Egyptian Jewry during this period did not allow for the recounting of the story in this fashion. Adaptations and adjustments were required to paint the Jews in a different light; tolerant and faithful to the regime, and to portray the gentiles—headed by Haman the Macedonian—as subversives. I therefore suggest dating this adaptation and recension of Esther to sometime during the years of conflict and the rule of the two Ptolemaic kings and their mother, in other words between 107 BCE and 81 BCE—tending more toward the later part of this chronological framework—and to view this recension of Esther as an internal Jewish attempt to define the place and status of the Jews in the context of the Ptolemaic kingdom in the face of their Greek detractors' onslaughts.⁹¹

If indeed LXX Esther was redacted at this time, it joins a series of Jewish-Hellenistic works from a proximate period. Aside from the works cited by Bezalel Bar-Kochva, 3 Maccabees, which apparently predates Greek Esther

⁹⁰ Though in 55 BCE a deputation of Alexandrians operated against Ptolemy Auletes in Rome, while the Jews opened the gates of Egypt for the Roman army, there are no attestations that depict these events as tension between Greeks and Jews. It should be added, regarding the year 48 BCE, that according to our sources, Hyrcanus the High Priest himself participated in the incursion into Egypt (*Ant.* 14.138) and the absence of any allusion to this in LXX Esther diminishes the probability that LXX Esther reflects the events occurred in these years.

⁹¹ If this hypothesis is true then the fourth year of Ptolemy and Cleopatra referred to in the LXX Esther's Colophon must be identified with the year 113 BCE. See above, n. 83.

since the epistles included in LXX Esther were apparently influenced by this composition, bears mention.⁹² Apparently then, the enhanced status of the Jews in Hellenistic Egypt in the second half of the second century BCE and the beginning of the first century BCE, was expressed not only in their political status and their integration into the army and the state, but also in their religious and cultural output and in the consolidation and fashioning of a unique identity—a Jewish-Hellenistic diasporan identity.

⁹² See Hacham, “Third Maccabees and Esther”.