

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

THE 'LUCIANIC' TEXT OF THE CANONICAL AND APOCRYPHAL SECTIONS OF ESTHER: A REWRITTEN BIBLICAL BOOK

The so-called Lucianic (L) text of Esther is contained in manuscripts 19 (Brooke-McLean: b'), 93 (e₂), 108 (b), 319 (y), and part of 392 (see Hanhart, *Esther*, 15–16). In other biblical books the Lucianic text is joined by manuscripts 82, 127, 129. In Esther this group is traditionally called 'Lucianic' because in most other books it represents a 'Lucianic' text, even though the 'Lucianic' text of Esther and that of the other books have little in common in either vocabulary or translation technique.¹ The same terminology is used here (the L text). Some scholars call this text A, as distinct from B which designates the LXX.²

Brooke-McLean³ and Hanhart, *Esther* print the LXX and L separately, just as Rahlfs, *Septuaginta* (1935) provided separate texts of A and B in Judges.

Despite the separation between L and the LXX in these editions, the unique character of L in Esther was not sufficiently noted, possibly because Rahlfs, *Septuaginta* does not include any of its readings. Also HR

¹ Scholars attempted in vain to detect the characteristic features of LXX^{Luc} in Esther as well. For example, the Lucianic text is known for substituting words of the LXX with synonymous words, and a similar technique has been detected in Esther by Cook, "A Text," 369–370. However, this criterion does not provide sufficient proof for labeling the L text of Esther 'Lucianic,' since the use of synonymous Greek words can be expected to occur in any two Greek translations of the same Hebrew text. Furthermore, the tendency of Atticism, which is characteristic of the Lucianic recension, has been recognized by Hanhart, *Esther*, 89 also in the L text, of Esther but the evidence is not strong. For other characteristics of the L text, see Hanhart, *Esther*, 87–95.

² Thus Moore, "Greek Witness" and Cook, "A Text" on the basis of earlier editions. In his commentaries on Esther and the "Additions," Moore employs the abbreviation AT (A Text).

³ In distinction from the principles used elsewhere in the Cambridge Septuagint, the edition of the L text of Esther is eclectic, reproducing P.A. de Lagarde, *Librorum Veteris Testamenti canonicorum pars prior graece* (Göttingen 1883). The L text of Esther has been printed as a separate text ever since the edition of Esther by Usserius (London 1655).

does not quote the readings of L in Esther, since it includes only A, B, S, and the Sixtine edition.⁴

The L text differs greatly from MT in omissions, additions, and content. An analysis of its nature is of importance for understanding the Greek translation(s) of Esther and possibly also for the textual and recensional history of the Hebrew text. Three explanations suggest themselves: (1) L reflects an early recensionally different text of the book of which the Greek translation is a reliable, though not a literal, translation;⁵ (2) L is an inner-Greek rewriting of the biblical story. (3) L is a Greek translation of a Hebrew (or Aramaic) rewriting of the story as in MT. By implication, the assumption of a recensionally different book (1) bears on our understanding of the literary history of the biblical book of Esther, while (2) and (3) bear only on the history of its interpretation. Although the original language of L cannot be determined easily, possibilities (2) and/or (3) are to be preferred.

I. *The dependence of L upon the LXX*

L is closely connected with the LXX of Esther and even depends upon it as shown by idiosyncratic common renderings and errors in L depending on the LXX. While Hanhart, *Esther*, 88 demonstrated the close relationship between the two texts with examples from Additions C and E, we turn to the canonical sections of Esther.

Examples of renderings common to L and the LXX:

1:20	למגדולי ועד קטן
LXX	ἀπὸ πτωχοῦ ἕως πλουσίου
L	ἀπὸ πτωχῶν ἕως πλουσίων
9:3	מנשאים את היהודים
LXX	ἐτίμων τοὺς Ἰουδαίους
L	ἐτίμων τοὺς Ἰουδαίους

⁴ Hanhart, *Esther*, 90, n. 1, mentions a hand-written concordance of L (without Hebrew equivalents) by P.H. Daking Gooderham (1957).

⁵ Thus Moore, "Greek Witness," Cook, "A Text", C.B. Paton, *Esther* (ICC; Edinburgh 1908) 38, and C.C. Torrey, "The Older Books of Esther," *HTR* 37 (1944) 1–40. Torrey described in detail the importance of the two Greek versions of Esther that, in his view, reflect Greek translations of the original Aramaic text of Esther, from which MT was translated and adapted.

The possibility that L reflects a recensionally different text of Esther can be supported by the omission in L of several elements which are problematic in MT (for example, see some of the minus elements of L described on pp. 540–541). In that case, L reflects a stage of the development of the book that preceded the expanded text of MT. However, this view cannot be supported by the other minus elements in L, nor by the known features of that text. Therefore, the alternative explanations are preferred.

9:3		ועשי המלכה אשר למלך
	LXX	οἱ βασιλικοὶ γραμματεῖς
	L	οἱ βασιλικοὶ γραμματεῖς
10:3		כי מרדכי היהודי משנה למלך אחשוורוש
	LXX	ὁ δὲ Μαρδοχαῖος διεδέχετο τὸν βασιλέα Ἀρταξέρξην
	L	ὁ δὲ Μαρδοχαῖος διεδέχετο τὸν βασιλέα Ἀσσυήρον (for a similar rendering, see 2 Chr 31:12).

Corruption in L shows its dependence on the LXX text:

9:7–10		... ואה פרשנדתא ואה דלפון .. עשרת בני המן
	LXX	τόν τε Φαρσαννεστειν καὶ Δελφῶν ... τοὺς δέκα υἱοὺς Ἀμαν
	L	καὶ τὸν Φαρσαν καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ... καὶ τοὺς δέκα υἱοὺς Ἀμαν

The name of Haman's son, Δελφῶν, was corrupted in L to τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ (i.e., Farsan's brother). This reading makes little sense because all the men listed were brothers. The corruption must have occurred at an early stage because subsequently the Greek context has been changed: since the list starts by mentioning 'Farsan and his brother,' it could not any more have the summary line, 'the ten sons of Haman.' Therefore, by the addition of καὶ which is necessarily secondary since it depends on the corruption of Δελφῶν to ἀδελφόν, the six names⁶ were separated from the next phrase —'and the ten sons of Haman.'

8:17		ורבים מעמי הארץ מתייהדים
	LXX	καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν ἔθνῶν περιετέμοντο
	L	καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν Ἰουδαίων περιετέμοντο

The most simple explanation of מתייהדים would be that the Gentiles 'became Jews' out of fear of Mordecai. It was thus understood by the LXX and L: 'they were circumcised.' According to the LXX, this refers to the Gentiles (ἔθνη); according to L, to the Jews, but the latter makes little sense. L's dependence on the LXX shows in the verb περιετέμοντο ('were circumcised') which derives from the LXX; τῶν Ἰουδαίων probably reflects a second rendering of מתייהדים (γ' מעמי הארץ) of MT is not represented in L).

4:8	LXX +	... διότι Ἀμαν ὁ δευτερεύων τῷ βασιλεῖ ἐλάλησεν ...
	L +	... ὅτι Ἀμαν ὁ δευτερεύων λελάληκε τῷ βασιλεῖ ...

The separation between the translation of the two elements of the phrase משנה למלך (cf. MT 10:3 [not in LXX or L]) in L is secondary. In 4:8, the Greek phrase

⁶ L mentions only five sons of Haman as well as 'Farsan's brother.'

which has no counterpart in MT refers to Haman, while in the MT of 10:3 it refers to Mordecai.

The few instances adduced here and the data *apud* Hanhart, *Esther*, 88 and B. Jacob, “Das Buch Esther bei den LXX,” *ZAW* 10 (1890) 261, demonstrate L’s dependence upon the LXX.⁷ The exact relationship between L and the LXX (and MT) is discussed in the next section.

II. The relationship between L and the LXX

Taking into consideration significant agreements and disagreements between L and the LXX, we cannot avoid the conclusion that L reflects a revision of the LXX, as was suggested by most scholars. We focus, however, on the many differences between L and MT.

Since L is based on the LXX, the many deviations of L from MT must have resulted either from the translator’s free attitude to his Hebrew and/or Greek *Vorlage* or from a different *Vorlage*. Prior to this analysis it should be examined whether L had independent access to a Hebrew text different from MT. That this was the case is evident from the many syntactic Hebraisms in short additions to MT. Here are some examples of such additions in L, tentatively retroverted into Hebrew:

3:5 + καὶ ἐζήτει ἀνελεῖν τὸν Μαρδοχαῖον καὶ πάντα τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἡμέρα μιᾷ
 = ויבקש להרג את מרדכי ו(את) כל עמו ביום אחד

Cf. 2:21 LXX καὶ ἐζήτουν ἀποκτεῖναι = (במלך) יד ויבקשו לשלוח יד and further 1:12 (below).

6:4 (2) + εἰς παραφυλακὴν τῆς ψυχῆς μου = למשמרת נפשי
 6:4 (2) + διότι αὐτὸς ἐποίησέ με ζῆν ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν
 = כי הוא החיני עד עתה/הלם

Note the representation of the *hiph’il* by ποιέω + inf., frequently found elsewhere in the LXX; see Tov, “*Hiph’il*”.

6:5 (3) + ἐνέκειτο γὰρ φόβος Αμαν ἐν τοῖς σπλάγχνοις αὐτῶν
 = כי נפל פחד המן בקרבם
 cf. 9:3 כי נפל פחד מרדכי עליהם

Note the different renderings in L and LXX.

⁷ The relationship between L and the LXX is more complex than is implied here, but our remarks are limited to the canonical sections. It has been recognized (e.g., Cook, “A Text,” 371) that in the sections which have been translated from a Semitic *Vorlage* (the canonical sections as well as some of the Additions), the LXX and L reflect two different translations (see below), whereas the sections which have been composed in Greek (at least Additions B and E) relate to each other as two recensions of one Greek text.

- 6:13 (10) + (ὡς δὲ ἔγνω Αμαν ὅτι οὐκ ἦν αὐτὸς ὁ δοξαζόμενος ἀλλ' ὅτι Μαρδοχαῖος) συνετρίβη ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ σφόδρα (καὶ μετέβαλε τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐκλύσει)
 = נשברה לבו מאד⁸
- 6:17 (11) + ... καὶ ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸν κύριον = 'ה לבו אל
 7:2 +... (καὶ ἠγωνίασεν Εσθηρ ἐν τῷ ἀπαγγέλλειν ὅτι ὁ ἀντίδικος) ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτῆς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἔδωκεν αὐτῇ θάρσος ἐν τῷ αὐτὴν ἐπικαλεῖσθαι αὐτόν
 = בעניניה ואלהים נתן לה כח בקראה אליו⁹

The assumption that L is based on a Hebrew text may be supported by renderings which represent MT more faithfully than the LXX:

- | | | |
|------|-----|--|
| 1:3 | | ושרי המדינות לפניו ... |
| | LXX | ... καὶ τοῖς ἄρχουσιν τῶν σατραπῶν |
| | L | ... καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες τῶν χωρῶν κατὰ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ |
| 1:12 | | ויצף המלך מאד וחמתו בערה בו |
| | LXX | καὶ ἐλυπήθη ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ ὠργίσθη |
| | L | ἐλυπήθη σφόδρα καὶ ὀργὴ ἐξεκαύθη ἐν αὐτῷ |
| 1:14 | | ראי פני המלך |
| | LXX | οἱ ἐγγὺς τοῦ βασιλέως |
| | L | καὶ οἱ ὄρωντες τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ βασιλέως |
| 2:7 | | יפת האר ושובת מראה |
| | LXX | καλὸν τῷ εἶδει |
| | L | καλὴ τῷ εἶδει σφόδρα καὶ ὠραία τῇ ὄψει |
| 3:1 | | אחר הדברים האלה גדל |
| | LXX | μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα ἐδόξαξεν |
| | L | καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τοὺς λόγους τούτους ἐμεγάλυνεν ... |
| 3:1 | | וישמ אה כסאו מעל כל השרים |
| | LXX | καὶ ἐπρωτοβάθρει πάντων τῶν φίλων αὐτοῦ |
| | L | καὶ ἔθηκε τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ ὑπεράνω τῶν φίλων αὐτοῦ ¹⁰ |

⁸ This phrase is known only from biblical contexts. See LSJ, s.v.

⁹ For further examples, see Moore, "Greek Witness," 355–58.

¹⁰ For further examples, see C.A. Moore, *The Greek Text of Esther*, unpubl. diss., John Hopkins University 1965, 51; Cook, "A Text," 375.

III. *The Hebrew text underlying L*

L had independent access to a Hebrew (or Aramaic) text which differed from MT and it probably revised the LXX towards that text. The nature of this underlying text is investigated here by turning to the so-called apocryphal Additions to Esther. The two Greek versions of Esther contain six major additions, traditionally named A–F, besides many minor additions. The location of Additions A–F at the end of the canonical sections by Jerome led to misleading conclusions because scholars usually did not ascribe these Additions to the translator himself. Although the ‘canonical’ and ‘non-canonical’ components were mostly studied separately, the combined investigation improves the understanding of both the LXX and L.

L differs from MT not only with regard to large expansions, but also with regard to extensive omissions, inversions, and changes. The question of the original language of the Additions bears on the issues under investigation. If they were translated from Hebrew or Aramaic, their fate is closely connected with that of the canonical sections; however, if some were originally in Greek, they could have been composed by the translator himself. In this case, the fate of these additions is closely connected with the Greek version. Scholars believe that the original language of Expansions A, C, D, F was Hebrew or Aramaic, and that of Expansions B and E was Greek.¹¹

We submit that the translation of the canonical sections in L and the so-called Expansions should be regarded as one organic unit (thus also Langen, “Esther,” 255):

1. The canonical sections in L contain several references to the Expansions. For example, in 1:1, καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τοὺς λόγους τούτους (= וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה) was added after Addition A had been prefixed to chapter 1. καὶ δεήθητε τοῦ θεοῦ (4:11[15]) and ὡς ἐπαύσατο Εσθηρ προσευχομένη (5:1) both refer to Expansion C (similar connections with the Expansions are found in the LXX to these verses, and in 2:20; 4:8).

2. When the Expansions were attached to the canonical sections, there resulted a certain redundancy which still shows in the LXX. In L this redundancy was avoided by omitting some components of the canonical text. Presumably, the author of the Hebrew (or Aramaic) *Vorlage* of L

¹¹ See Langen, “Esther,” 264–266; A. Scholz, *Commentar über das Buch “Esther” mit seinen “Zusätzen” und über “Susanna”* (Würzburg 1892) xxi–xxiii; C.A. Moore, “On the Origins of the LXX Additions to the Book of Esther,” *JBL* 92 (1973) 382–393; R.A. Martin, “Syntax Criticism of the LXX Additions to the Book of Esther,” *JBL* 94 (1975) 65–72.

was responsible for these omissions, just as he was responsible for other omissions and additions. Since both the minor additions (for examples, see section 5 below) and the large Expansions A, C, D, F were originally composed in Hebrew (or Aramaic), also the omissions vis-à-vis MT derived from that Hebrew (or Aramaic) text, rather than from the Greek translator. Three examples follow:

2:6 om L. The content of this verse (genealogy and background of Mordecai) is given in Expansion A 2(3).

2:21–23 om L. This section tells of Mordecai's discovery of a plot against the king which he subsequently foiled. In the canonical book this section is of major importance; in L it was omitted, probably because the matter had already been mentioned in Expansion A 9 (11)–17.

5:1–2 om L (also in the LXX). Expansion D elaborates on 5:1–2 of the canonical text; hence, the parallel verses in MT were omitted.

Two other omissions concern expansions originally written in Greek:

3:12 om L. The content of this verse is covered by Expansion B.

8:7–13 om L. The greater part of these verses were omitted because they are covered by Expansion E which contains the decree which allowed the Jews to take revenge on their enemies.

3. In a few cases, the expansions share vocabulary with the canonical sections, e.g.:

A 18 L: καὶ ἐζήτει ὁ Ἀμαν κακοποιῆσαι τὸν Μαρδοχαῖον (similar to the LXX); cf. 3:5 L καὶ ἐζήτει ἀνελεῖν τὸν Μαρδοχαῖον (different from MT); cf. also 2:21 LXX and E 3, L and LXX.

A 14 L: καὶ ὁμολογήσαντες οἱ εὐνοῦχοι ἀπήχθησαν (similar to the LXX); cf. the use of this verb in 7:11 ἀπαχθήτω Ἀμαν καὶ μὴ ζήτω (different from MT).

The 'canonical' and 'apocryphal' sections of L should be considered as one unit, although the translation of the latter does not depend on the former. An illustration is 2:6 which is quoted in A 3 in a wording which is closer to MT than to the LXX and L of 2:6. A 3 mentions 'Jechoniah king of Judah,' as does MT of 2:6, whereas the Greek versions (or their *Vorlage*) omitted the words between עַם הַגִּלָּה and אֲשֶׁר הַגִּלָּה, possibly due to *homoioteleuton* (resulting in the strange construction of the LXX).

IV. *The nature of the Expansions in L*

If the canonical and non-canonical sections of L (with the probable exclusion of Expansions B and E)¹² indeed formed one unit, we should now turn to a characterization of the L text as a whole.

1. The additions *in toto* and in many details are secondary when compared with MT. The contradictions in content between the expansions and the canonical text of Esther have been amply illustrated by Paton, *Esther* (see n. 5) 43; Moore, *Additions*, 179.

2. In its revision of the LXX, L often follows the *Vorlage* closely, and at times represents it more faithfully than the LXX (see section II). At the same time, the revision often deviated from its Hebrew and Greek *Vorlagen* as is shown by a comparison of the three texts in the following instances:

- 1:4 יקר תפארת גדולתו
LXX καὶ τὴν δόξαν τῆς εὐφροσύνης τοῦ πλούτου αὐτοῦ
L καὶ τὴν τιμὴν τῆς καυχίσεως αὐτοῦ
- 3:2 וכל עבדי המלך אשר בשער המלך כרעים ומשתחיים להמן כי כן
זוה לו המלך ומרדכי לא יכרע ולא ישתחוה
LXX καὶ πάντες οἱ ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ προσεκύνουν αὐτῷ. οὕτως
γὰρ προσέταξεν ὁ βασιλεὺς ποιῆσαι. ὁ δὲ Μαρδοχαῖος
οὐ προσεκύνει αὐτῷ
L πάντων οὖν προσκυνούντων αὐτῶν κατὰ τὸ πρόσταγμα
τοῦ βασιλέως Μαρδοχαῖος οὐ προσεκύνει αὐτῷ
- 5:13 וכל זה איננו שוה לי בכל עת אשר אני ראה את מרדכי היהודי יושב
בשער המלך
LXX καὶ ταῦτά μοι οὐκ ἀρέσκει ὅταν ἴδω Μαρδοχαῖον τὸν
Ἰουδαῖον ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ
L τοῦτο δὲ λυπεῖ με μόνον ὅταν ἴδω τὸν Μαρδοχαῖον τὸν
Ἰουδαῖον ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ μὴ προσκυνεῖ με

It seems impossible to conciliate the literal and the free elements in L. Moreover, the LXX reflects renderings of both types throughout the canon. Accordingly, their juxtaposition in the L text of Esther is not surprising. Furthermore, one should pay attention to the proportions. The non-literal elements in L seem to be dominant. Finally, the literal elements are found more frequently in the former than in the latter part of the book (see below).

¹² At least Expansion E was added secondarily. A short version of the original text of the letter is found after 8:35 in L (before 8:15 of MT), while an expanded version of that letter (Expansion E) is found after 8:12.

3. The author of the text which underlies L (or simply L, as he will be called in the following discussion) felt free to rewrite the biblical story. He added, omitted and rewrote many details. Approximately half of the biblical book was omitted in L. While in chapters 1–7 L followed at least the framework of the biblical text, little was left of chapters 8–10. The editor appears to have been more interested in the first two thirds than in the last third of the biblical story. It is of interest to note here that in *Midrash Abba Gurion*,¹³ chapters 8–10 are not represented, and in *b. Meg.* 10b–17a (a running commentary on Esther), they are commented upon very briefly. Possibly the account of the Jews' revengeful killing of their enemies was not to the liking of the authors of L and of these midrashic collections.

4. The introduction (Expansion A) and subscription (Expansion F) provide the framework into which the author integrated the rewritten story. One of the main features of the text behind the LXX and L is the emphasis on the role of God behind the events.¹⁴ God informs Mordecai in a dream (A 4–10) what he plans to do. The meaning of the cryptic dream is clarified in the postscript (Expansion F).¹⁵ In the biblical story, Esther is not concerned about dietary laws when she dines with the king, but in Expansion C 27–28, she is extremely concerned about this issue. D 8 mentions God's intervention (καὶ μετέβαλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ βασιλέως [then God changed the spirit of the king]) and C 20 refers to the temple (σβέσαι δόξαν οἴκου σου καὶ θυσιαστήριόν σου [to quench the glory of your house and your altar]).

A conspicuous feature of the biblical story is the absence of the name of God.¹⁶ However, in the LXX and L God is mentioned often, both in the Additions and in the canonical sections.¹⁷ Thus, in a free rendering of the Hebrew (2:20) of Mordecai's instructions to Esther, the LXX adds: φοβεῖσθαι τὸν θεὸν καὶ ποιεῖν τὰ προστάγματα αὐτοῦ (to fear God and execute His commands). A similar addition is made in another instruction of Mordecai to Esther (4:8): ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον (to invoke the Lord). An addition of κύριος (the Lord) is found in 6:1, but the textual status of this verse is unclear. Likewise, in L, Mordecai says to Esther in 4:14 (9) ἀλλ' ὁ θεὸς ἔσται αὐτοῖς βοηθός (but God will help them). There are similar additions in L of θεός (God) in 4:16 (11) and in

¹³ S. Buber, *Sammlung Agadischer Commentare zum Buche Esther* (Wilna 1886) 1–42.

¹⁴ See Moore, *Additions*, 158–159; W.H. Brownlee, "Le livre grec d'Esther et la royauté divine—corrections orthodoxes au livre d'Esther," *RB* 73 (1966) 161–85.

¹⁵ See E. Erlich, "Der Traum des Mardochai," *ZRGG* 7 (1955) 69–74.

¹⁶ For the background of this and related issues, see S. Talmon, "'Wisdom' in the Book of Esther," *VT* 13 (1963) 419–55.

¹⁷ See Brownlee (n. 14).

7:2: καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἔδωκεν αὐτῇ θάρσος (and God gave her courage). Noteworthy is the translation of אַחַר מִמְּקוֹם אֲחֵר (from another quarter) in 4:14 as ὁ θεός and the mention of God in connection with the reference to fasting in 4:16. For the text of 7:2, see section II above.

5. L embellished the story as he saw fit. The subjective nature of these embellishments precludes any consistency. Such expansions are found in Expansion D (the appearance of Esther before the king, parallel to 5:1–2 of MT), Expansion B (the first letter of the king, after 3:13 of MT) and Expansion E (the second letter of the king, after 8:12).

The canonical sections contain many expansions of MT, e.g.:

1:12 + ὅτι ἠκύρωσεν Οὐαστιν τὴν βουλήν αὐτοῦ
= כִּי הִפְרָה וְשָׂתִי אֶת עֲצָתוֹ

cf. 1:16 + ὅτι ἠκύρωσε τὸ πρόσταγμα τοῦ βασιλέως
= כִּי הִפְרָה אֶת עֲצַת הַמֶּלֶךְ

ἀκυρόω does not occur in the canonical books of the LXX. It is known from Aquila's revision where it frequently equals הִפְרָה. Hence, it is plausible to retrovert here the phrase הִפְרָה עֲצָה which occurs often in the Bible.

4:8 Contains a long addition which is partly based on the LXX. The mention of פִּתְשֵׁן הַכְּתָב in MT probably prompted L to dwell on its assumed contents.

5:14 + ἐπεὶ συγκεχώρηκέ σε ὁ βασιλεὺς ἀφανίσει τοὺς Ἰουδαίους καὶ ἔδωκάν σοι οἱ θεοὶ εἰς ἐκδίκησιν αὐτῶν ἡμέραν ὀλέθριον

6:2–3 Long addition. The king stresses that nothing was done for Mordecai. His servants hesitate to answer him because they envy Mordecai. L draws a parallel between Mordecai's and Haman's fear (for the text, see p. 538).

6:10 Short expansion, see p. 539.

6:11 Long expansion, see p. 539.

7:2 Long expansion, see p. 539.

7:5 Long expansion. Esther pities the king, soothes him and asks him not to be angry. The king makes Esther swear to tell him who is the evildoer. The addition adds much dramatic effect to the story.

6. In the rewriting of the biblical story, the author was guided by his understanding of its major points, so that details were often omitted. Again, no consistency should be expected. It could be argued, e.g., that the genealogy of Mordecai and the historical background as depicted in MT (2:6, not in L) fit the religious tendencies of L, and therefore should

have been retained. However, L may have omitted the verse because he considered it of little importance for the main thread of the story,¹⁸ like many other seemingly less relevant or unnecessary details. Further examples follow:

1:3 בשנת שלוש

In L the symposium is not dated.

1:10 אמר ל(מהומן בזהא חרבונא בנתא ואבנתא זתר וכרכס שבעת) חסריסים (המשרתים את פני המלך אחשורוש)

The names of the seven eunuchs are not mentioned in L.

1:14 והקרב אליו (כרשנא שתר אדמתא תרשיש מרס מרסנא ממוכן שבעת) שרי פרס ומדי

The names of the seven princes are not mentioned.

1:17–18 om. These verses interrupt the sequence of vv. 16–19.

The suggestion that the rebellion of Vashti could cause other women, especially princesses, to rebel, is a mere afterthought.

1:22 Omitted. V. 22 contains two elements: (1) the king sends a letter to all provinces; (2) the gist of the letter is that every man should rule in his own house and be permitted to talk in his own language. This verse somehow continues vv. 17–18 which are also lacking in L. V. 22a is not needed in the context since v. 21 already mentioned that the king accepted the advice of Memuchan.

2:7 ויהי אמן את (הדסה היא) אסתר בת דדו (כי אין לה אב ואם) והנערה יפת תאר וטובת מראה (ובמות אביה ואמה לקחה מרדכי לו לבת)

The sections in parentheses are missing in L.

2:8–18 L condensed the long and detailed description. A large part of the section is lacking in L: 8a, 9b, 10–13, 14b, 15–16, and small segments of vv. 17–18. As a result, the ceremony of assembling the maidens is missing, as well as details of grooming the maidens for their meeting with the king. L knows that Esther was chosen from among many maidens (v. 17 ὡς δὲ κατεμάθανε ὁ Βασιλεὺς πάσας τὰς παρθένους). In the rewritten text

¹⁸ The verse presents an exegetical problem when compared with 1:1 ff. If Mordecai was deported with the exile of Jehoniah in 597 (2:6), and if Achsheroosh is identified as Xerxes who reigned from 486 until 465 BCE, Mordecai must have been over 100 years old when the events described took place, and his adopted daughter must have been too old for the biblical Esther. Moreover, 2:6 contains the only allusion to the history of the Jewish people. Since the book of Esther lacks a religious background and contains no references to either Palestine, the temple, or Jewish history, L may have omitted this verse on purpose.

(in which vv. 10–13 are lacking), v. 14a **בערב היא באה** **ובבקר היא שבה** refers to Esther (cf. the added phrase $\acute{\omega}\varsigma \delta\grave{\epsilon} \epsilon\acute{\iota}\sigma\acute{\eta}\chi\theta\eta \text{ Εσθηρ πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα}$), rather than to the maidens in general.

2:19–20 Omitted. Exegetes consider these verses as contextually very difficult, especially v. 19a (which is also lacking in the LXX). After Esther has been chosen as queen and the symposium was held (v. 18), there was no need for a second assembling of the virgins (v. 19). For this reason, this section may have been omitted.

4:3 Omitted. This verse describes the situation in the Persian empire. It disturbs the connection between vv. 2 and 4, which concern the personal fate of Mordecai.

4:4–11 The section is much shorter in L. *Inter alia*, vv. 4, 5–7 are lacking. There also is a difference in subject matter; according to MT, Esther sends Hatakh to Mordecai, but in L Hatakh is not mentioned. The section which reports the sending of messengers is condensed in such a way that the initiative seems to come from Mordecai. For further omissions see 4:13b; 5:11, and chapters 8–10, where little of the biblical story is left.

7. The author felt free to make changes and revise whole sections:

1:13–15 In L, v. 13 is followed by v. 15 and then v. 14. The syntax of MT in vv. 13–15 is difficult. L gives the only correct interpretation of this text by connecting the verb of v. 13a with v. 15 (v. 13b as well as v. 14 contain subordinate clauses). The order vv. 15, 14 probably resulted from the syntactical rewriting of the passage.

3:1–5 Much of vv. 1–5 differs in L from MT, but the message of both texts is basically the same. There are several omissions and additions. Note especially the addition in v. 5 (mentioned above, p. 538) which reflects Hebraic diction.

3:6–13 Vv. 6–13 occur in L in the sequence: 6 8 9 11 10 7 13. The most important result of this change vis-à-vis MT is that the choice of the 13th of Adar succeeds Haman's coming to the king. In a way, L's sequence is more logical. Haman would not have chosen the day for the attack on the Jews before permission was granted by the

king. The sequence in MT has caused some exegetes to explain the throwing of lots as referring originally to the choice of the day on which it was most suitable for Haman to come to the king.

3:15 והעיר שושן נבוכה

These words occur in L after 'and Mordecai knew all that had happened' (4:11).

7:10 om. The idea in MT was expressed differently elsewhere in L: καὶ ἐσφραγίσθη ἐν αὐτῷ ὁ βίος αὐτοῦ (7:13).

8:1 om. L does not explicate that Ahashverosh gave Haman's house to Esther. Instead, he has the king complain to Esther that Haman wanted to kill Mordecai, and adds that the king did not know that Mordecai was Esther's relative (7:14).

8:2 According to MT, Esther gave Haman's house to Mordecai; according to L, the king himself gave him the house (7:15).

8:3–6 om. Instead, L has Mordecai, not Esther, asking the king to annul Haman's edict (7:16).

8. L reflects midrash-type exegesis of the biblical story, adding and stressing elements in a way that resembles techniques of the Targumim, Genesis Apocryphon, and rewritten compositions among the Apocrypha and Qumran compositions. Occasionally L also agrees with actual *midrashim* on Esther in the Targumim and in the collections of *midrashim* (see n. 13). The clearest example is the above-mentioned feature of placing the story in a religious setting. For agreements in details, **unclear** see 4:15 in L and *Targum sheni*, 1:5 σωτήρια in L, and *Yalqut Shimoni ad loc.*: יש אומרים שעמדו עליו איפרכיות והלך לכבשן וכשכבשן בא ועשה משחה; Esther's concern for dietary laws in Expansion C 27–28 is also attested in *b. Meg.* 13a, *Midrash Panim Aherim* II, 63,64, and *Targum sheni* 2:7. In all these sources God is the main agent behind the scene and his existence is felt in all sections of the book.

In 1:16 L equates ממוכן with Βουγαῖος (LXX: Μουχαῖος), the equivalent of 'the Agagite'—Haman (thus 3:1; 9:10; E 10). The equation of ממוכן and המן is found also in *b. Meg.* 12b and *Midrash Abba Gurion* 1.

The words ממקום אחר are taken to refer to God in L, *Targum rishon* and *Targum sheni*.

9. Like L, the LXX is in the nature of a rewritten story, with large-scale deviations from MT.¹⁹ Like L, the LXX contains large expansions, and

¹⁹ See my study **adddd**

also minor additions and omissions. However, on the whole, the LXX does not deviate from MT as much as L (the greater part of chapters 8–10 which is lacking in L, is found in the LXX).

To summarize, L is a translation that is based on the LXX but corrects it towards a Hebrew (or Aramaic)²⁰ text which differs from MT. This text was a midrash-type rewriting of the biblical story. Clines and Fox go one step further since according to them, L reflects a different and pristine text, which helps us to reconstruct the development of the book.²¹ If that view were correct, the L text of Esther would be of major importance for the literary analysis of that book. Clines, for example, believes that the original form of Esther ended at 8:17 (7:17 in the L text). Also Jobs believes that the L text of Esther is based on a Hebrew original, much shorter than MT, but very similar to that text where the two overlap.²² On the other hand, de Troyer believes that L presents an inner-Greek revision not based on a different Hebrew *Vorlage*.²³

²⁰ The issue of the language underlying L must be studied in greater detail. Torrey's arguments (see n. 5) in favor of an Aramaic *Vorlage* are not convincing, but this possibility cannot be discarded. One is struck, e.g., by the sequence of the words in 1:16 καὶ ἐνετείλατο ὁ βασιλεὺς περὶ τοῦ Μαρδοχαίου θεραπεύειν αὐτὸν ... καὶ πᾶσαν θύραν ἐπιφανῶς τηρεῖν; 6:17 καὶ ἐδόκει Μαρδοχαῖος τέρας θεωρεῖν, which is neither Hebrew nor Greek, but Aramaic.

²¹ D.J.A. Clines, *The Esther Scroll—The Story of the Story* (JSOTSup 30; Sheffield, 1984); M.V. Fox, *The Redaction of the Books of Esther* (SBL Monograph Series 40; Atlanta, GA, 1991).

²² K.H. Jobs, *The Alpha-Text of Esther—Its Character and Relationship to the Masoretic Text* (SBLDS 153; Atlanta, GA, 1996).

²³ K. de Troyer, *Het einde van de Alpha-tekst van Ester* (Leuven, 1997).