



**MORDECAI THE JEW
AND THE ESTHER THE GREEK**
מרדכי היהודי ואסתר היוונית

Dr. Aaron Koller

Professor of Talmud

aakoller@jtsa.edu

TENETS OF EARLY SECOND TEMPLE “COMMON JUDAISM”

- Dynasty of King David
- Endogamy
- A new Exodus
- Who is a Jew?
- Jerusalem
- God



A COMPARISON:

TENETS OF EARLY SECOND TEMPLE "COMMON JUDAISM"

- Dynasty of King David
- Endogamy
- A new Exodus
- Who is a Jew?
- Jerusalem
- God

vs Megillat Esther

- Heroes are from Benjamin, tribe of Saul
- Esther is intermarried
- The redemption takes place *on* Pesach, "we are still slaves of Ahasuerus"!
- "Mordecai the *yehudi*" – no connection to *yehudah*
- The fortress (*birahasuS* fo (
- No God; "the terror of the Jews/Mordecai fell upon them"

COMPARISON OF ESTHER WITH KING SAUL

Saul

Introduction of the main character

וַיְהִי־אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי־מִינַיִן וְשֵׁמוֹ קִישׁ בֶּן־אַבְיָאל בֶּן־צֶרֶר
בֶּן־בְּכוֹרֹת בֶּן־אַפְיָח בֶּן־אִישׁ יְמִינֵי גִבּוֹר חָיִל וְלוֹ־
הָיָה בֶן וְשֵׁמוֹ שָׂאוּל בַּחֹר וְטוֹב.

There was a man of **Benjamin** whose name was **Kish** son of Abiel son of Zeror son of Becorath son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of substance (1 Samuel 9:1)

Esther

Introduction of the main character

ה אִישׁ יְהוּדִי הָיָה בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבֵּירָה וְשֵׁמוֹ מְרַדְכַי בֶּן
יָאִיר בֶּן־שִׁמְעִי בֶּן־קִישׁ אִישׁ יְמִינֵי ... ז וַיְהִי אִמּוֹן
אֶת־הַדָּסָה הִיא אֶסְתֵּר

There was a Jewish man in the fortress of Susa, whose name was Mordecai son of Yair son of Shimei son of **Kish, a Benjaminite** (2:5-7she is Esther (Esther – hassadaH

COMPARISON OF ESTHER WITH KING SAUL

Saul

Does not reveal

וְאֵת־דְּבַר הַמְּלוּכָה לֹא־הִגִּיד לוֹ
(שמואל א י, טז)

But the matter of the kingship he did not tell him (I Samuel 10:16)

Esther

Does not reveal

אֵין אֶסְתֵּר מְגַדֶּת מוֹלְדוֹתָהּ וְאֵת־עַמָּהּ
(ב, כ)

But Esther did not reveal her kin (2:20) or her people

COMPARISON OF ESTHER WITH KING SAUL

Saul

Esther

Agag/Amalek

Saul loses his kingship for failing to destroy Agag, king of the Amalekites (I Samuel 15).

Remaining silent

One of Saul's early mistakes was his failure to act decisively when faced with challenges to his authority at the beginning of his reign. Instead, "he remained silent" (מחריש)."

Mordecai and Esther succeed by defeating Haman "the Agagite."

To succeed, Mordecai tells Esther, she "must not remain silent" (תחרישי) (4:14).

COMPARISON OF ESTHER WITH KING SAUL

Saul

Esther

The “father’s house”

Samuel told Saul: “Who does the entire Israel desire? You – and your father’s house!” (וְלָמִי כָּל-חֲמֹדֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל הַלּוֹא) (Samuel 9:20).
 וְלָמִי כָּל-חֲמֹדֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל הַלּוֹא – 1

In concluding his plea for action, Mordecai tells Esther that what she must bring is רוח והצלה.

The banquets

In 1 Samuel 20, Saul hosts a feast on one day, and then another feast the next day (v. 27). Whereas the first one passes uneventfully, at the second the host, Saul, becomes enraged at one guest, Jonathan, for betraying him and protecting David. Jonathan concludes that [Saul] definitely intends evil” (v. 7) and rises angrily from the feast (v. 34: וַיִּקָּם יְהוֹנָתָן מֵעַם הַשְּׁלִיחַן בְּחָרִי-אָף).

In the battles at the end the Jews “do not touch the spoils” (9:15) – although in 8:11, they were given permission to plunder!

COMPARISON OF ESTHER WITH KING SAUL

Saul

Esther

רָחוּץ
"relief"

Saul found "relief" (רָחוּץ) only by relying on David: "David would take the lyre and play by hand, and bring relief (רָחוּץ) Saul so that he had it good, and the evil spirit would depart from him."

Spoils of war

In 1 Samuel 15, the Israelites, in direct violation of religious orders, brought back spoils of war from Amalek.

In concluding his plea for action, Mordecai tells Esther that what she must bring is רוח והצלה.

In the battles at the end the Jews "do not touch the spoils" (9:15) – although in 8:11, they were given permission to plunder!

EXPECTATIONS FOR A “NEW EXODUS”

JEREMIAH 16:14-15

Assuredly, a time is coming— declares GOD —when it shall no more be said, “As GOD lives who brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt,” but rather, “As GOD lives who brought the Israelites out of the northland, and out of all the lands to which they had been banished.” For I will bring them back to their land, which I gave to their ancestors.

לְכֹן הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם ה' וְלֹא
יֵאמַר עוֹד חַי ה' אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלָה אֶת
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:
כִּי אִם חַי ה' אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלָה אֶת בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ צִפּוֹן וּמְכֹל הָאָרְצוֹת
אֲשֶׁר הִדִּיחָם שָׁמָּה וְהִשְׁבִּיתִים עַל
אֲדָמָתָם אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְאֲבוֹתָם:

EXPECTATIONS FOR A “NEW EXODUS”

EZEKIEL 20:30-42

As I live – declares the Lord God – I will reign over you with **a strong hand, with an outstretched arm, with outpoured fury!** I will take you out of the nations, and gather you from the lands in which you are scattered, with **a strong hand, with an outstretched arm, with outpoured fury.** I will bring you to the **desert** of the nations, and there I will enter into judgment with you, face to face. ***Just as I entered into judgment with your ancestors in the desert of the land of Egypt, so will I enter into judgment with you!*** – thus speaks the Lord God. ‘I will pass you under the staff and I will bring you under the bond of the covenant. ...when I take you out from the nations and gather you from the lands in which you are scattered, and I will be sanctified there in the eyes of the nations. You will know that I am the Lord when I bring you to the land of Israel, to the land which I swore to give to your ancestors.

לג חי-אני נאם אדני ה' אם-לא ביד חזקה
ובזרוע נטויה ובחמה שפוכה אמלוך עליכם. לד
והוצאתי אתכם מן-העמים וקבצתי אתכם מן-
הארצות אשר נפוצתם בם ביד חזקה ובזרוע
נטויה ובחמה שפוכה. לה והבאתי אתכם אל-
מדבר העמים ונשפטתי אתכם שם פנים אל-
פנים. לו כאשר נשפטתי את-אבותיכם במדבר
ארץ מצרים כן אשפט אתכם נאם אדני ה'. לז
והעברתי אתכם תחת השבט והבאתי אתכם
במסרת הברית.... בהוציאי אתכם מן-העמים
וקבצתי אתכם מן-הארצות אשר נפצתם בם
ונקדשתי בכם לעיני הגוים. מב וידעתם כי-אני
ה' בהביאי אתכם אל-אדמת ישראל אל-הארץ
אשר נשאתי את-ידי לתת אותה לאבותיכם.

EXPECTATIONS FOR A “NEW EXODUS”

ISAIAH 51:9-11

Awake, awake, garb yourself in strength, O arm of the Lord! Awake as in days of old, generations long gone. Was it not You who hacked Rahab into pieces, who pierced the Dragon? Was it not You who dried up the sea, the waters of the Great Deep, who made the depths of the sea a path for redeemed ones to pass through? So let those liberated by the Lord return, and come to Zion with shouting, eternal joy on their head. Let them attain happiness and joy, since agony and groaning have fled.

ט עוֹרֵי עוֹרֵי לְבָשִׁי-עֵז זְרוּעַ ה' עוֹרֵי
כִּימֵי קֶדֶם דְּרוֹת עוֹלָמִים הֲלוֹא אֶת-הָיָא
הַמְּחַצֶּבֶת רָהַב מְחוֹלְלֵת תַּנִּין. י הֲלוֹא
אֶת-הָיָא הַמְּחַרְבֶּת יָם מִי תְהוֹם רַבָּה
הַשָּׁמָה מֵעַמְקֵי-יָם דְּרָךְ לַעֲבֹר גְּאוּלָּיִם.
יָא וּפְדוּיֵי ה' יִשׁוּבוּן וּבָאוּ צִיּוֹן בְּרִנָּה
וְשִׂמְחַת עוֹלָם עַל-רֵאשִׁים שְׁשׁוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה
יִשְׁיִגּוּן נָסוּ יִגּוֹן וְאֲנָחָה.

474 BCE PERSIA IN SUSA

13 Adar

אסתר ג, יב: וַיִּקְרְאוּ סֹפְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּשְׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם בּוֹ וַיִּכְתְּבוּ
כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה הָמֶן אֶל אַחֲשֵׁדְרָפְנֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶל-הַפְּחוֹת ...

Esther 3:12: The royal scribes were called in the first month on the thirteenth day, and all that Haman commanded was written to the royal satraps and the governors ...

13-15 Adar?

אסתר ד, טו-יז: וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְהָשִׁיב אֵל-מְרֹדֶכַי. לֶךְ כְּנוּס אֶת-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים
הַנִּמְצְאִים בְּשׁוֹשַׁן וְצוּמוּ עָלַי וְאֶל-תֹּאכְלוּ וְאֶל-תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לַיְלָה וַיּוֹם....

Esther 4:15-16: Esther said to reply to Mordecai: Go gather all the Jews found in the fortress of Susa, and fast for me – don't eat and don't drink for three days, night and day....

15 Adar
(possibly 16
Adar)

אסתר ה, א: וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וַתִּלְבַּשׁ אֶסְתֵּר מְלָכוּת וַתַּעֲמֵד בַּחֲצַר בֵּית-הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּנִימִית נֹכַח בֵּית
הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב עַל-כִּסֵּא מְלָכוּתוֹ בְּבֵית הַמְּלָכוּת נֹכַח פֶּתַח הַבַּיִת.

Esther 5:1: On the third day, Esther wore royalty, and she stood in the inner courtyard of the royal palace, facing the royal palace, while the king was sitting on his royal throne, in the palace, facing the doorway of the house.



ESTHER 2:5-6

In the fortress Shushan lived a Jew by the name of Mordecai, son of Jair son of Shimei son of Kish, a Benjaminite.

[Kish] had been exiled from Jerusalem in the group that was carried into exile along with King Jeconiah of Judah, which had been driven into exile by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

אִישׁ יְהוּדִי הָיָה בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה
וְשֵׁמוֹ מֶרְדֳּכַי בֶּן יָאִיר בֶּן שִׁמְעִי
בֶּן-קִישׁ אִישׁ יְמִינִי

וְאֲשֶׁר הִגְלָה מִירוּשָׁלַיִם עִם
הַגְּלָה אֲשֶׁר הִגְלְתָה עִם יְכַנְיָה
מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָה
נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל.

ESTHER 1:6

[There were hangings of] white cotton and blue wool, caught up by cords of fine linen and purple wool to silver rods and alabaster columns; and there were couches of gold and silver on a pavement of marble, alabaster, mother-of-pearl, and mosaics.

חֹר כְּרִפָּס וּתְכֵלֶת אָחוּז
בְּחַבְלֵי בּוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן עַל גְּלִילֵי
כֶּסֶף וְעִמּוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ מְטוֹת זָהָב
וְכֶסֶף עַל רְצֻפֹת בַּהֵט וְשֵׁשׁ
וְדָר וְסַחָרֹת

COMMENTARY ON ESTHER 1:6

A

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL
COMMENTARY

ON

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

BY

LEWIS BAYLES PATON, PH.D., D.D.

EDINBURGH

T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET

1908

of [G Jos. + gold and] *silver*]. These rods formed a trellis to which the white and violet awnings were tied by the cords. The author has in mind the structure of the Tabernacle in Ex. 26–27, but there is no hint that he means this to be an allegory of the Messianic feast that God will make for his people (Scho.).—*And* [U¹ + round

THE FEAR OF... GOD?

Exodus 15:16

There fell upon them dread and anguish; before your arm's great [power] they grew dumb like stone.

תִּפֹּל עֲלֵיהֶם אֵימָתָה וּפְחַד בְּגֹדֶל
זְרוּעֶךָ יִדְמוּ כְּאֲבָן (שמות טו, טז)

I Samuel 11:7

The terror of the Lord fell upon the people, and they came out as one man .

וַיִּפֹּל פַּחַד ה' עַל הָעָם וַיֵּצְאוּ
כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד (שמואל א יא, ז)

"NORMAL" BIBLICAL BOOKS: "THE TERROR OF THE LORD"

II CHRONICLES

14:13: All the cities in the vicinity of Gerar were ravaged, for a **terror of the LORD** seized them...

17:10: **A terror of the LORD** seized all the kingdoms of the lands around Judah, and they did not go to war with Jehoshaphat.

19:7: Now let the **dread of the LORD** be upon you....

20:29: **The terror of God** seized all the kingdoms of the lands when they heard that the LORD had fought the enemies of Israel.

וַיִּכּוּ אֶת כָּל הָעָרִים סְבִיבוֹת גְּרָר
כִּי הָיָה פַחַד ה' עֲלֵיהֶם (יד, יג)

וַיְהִי פַחַד ה' עַל כָּל מַמְלָכוֹת
הָאָרְצוֹת אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבוֹת יְהוּדָה
(יז, י)

וַעֲתָה יְהִי פַחַד ה' עֲלֵיכֶם (יט, ז)
וַיְהִי פַחַד אֱ-

לֵהִים עַל כָּל מַמְלָכוֹת
הָאָרְצוֹת בְּשִׁמְעָם כִּי נִלְחַם
ה' עִם אוֹיְבֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (כ, כט)

BUT IN ESTHER: THE TERROR OF THE *JEW*S

8:17 And in every province and in every city, when the king's command and decree arrived, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a feast and a holiday . And many of the people of the land professed to be Jews, for the fear of the Jews had fallen upon them

9:2-3 Throughout the provinces of King Ahasuerus, the Jews mustered in their cities to attack those who sought their hurt ; and no one could withstand them, for the fear of them had fallen upon all the people s. Indeed, all the officials of the provinces — the satraps, the governors, and the king's stewards— showed deference to the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai had fallen upon them.

ח, יז: וּבְכָל מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וּבְכָל עִיר וְעִיר מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וּדְתוֹ מֵגִיעַ שְׂמֵחָה וּשְׂשׂוֹן לַיהוּדִים מִשְׂתָּה וַיּוֹם טוֹב וְרַבִּים מֵעַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ מִתִּיהָדִים כִּי נָפַל פַּחַד הַיְהוּדִים עֲלֵיהֶם

ט, ב-ג: נִקְהָלוּ הַיְהוּדִים בְּעָרֵיהֶם בְּכָל מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֹׁרוֹשׁ לְשַׁלַּח יָד בַּמְּבַקְשֵׁי רַעְתָם וְאִישׁ לֹא עָמַד לִפְנֵיהֶם כִּי נָפַל פַּחַדָם עַל כָּל הָעַמִּים. וְכָל שָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינוֹת וְהָאֲחֻשְׁדָּרְפָּנִים וְהַפְּחוֹת וְעֹשֵׂי הַמְּלָאכָה אֲשֶׁר לַמֶּלֶךְ מִנְּשָׂאִים אֶת הַיְהוּדִים כִּי נָפַל פַּחַד מִרְדֵּכָי עֲלֵיהֶם.

17/2-34

שני מועדים

529,55

יא' אדר - סמל היהדות הטחודשת

||

פורים - סמל היהדות הגלותית

בעריכת

ישראל אפשטיין



הוצאת נציבות בית"ר בפולניה

ורשה, אדר תרצ"ז * 1937

S38A749
933.643

חברת דורשי האוניברסיטה
העברית בירושלים. ורשת.

י"א אדר – חג היהדות המחודשת

3	—	—	—	—	—	אל מפקדי ומנהלי הקננים
5	—	—	—	—	—	כרוז ראש-בית"ר לבית-ימים
6	—	—	—	—	—	ז. ז'בוטינסקי – בין שני לאחד-עשר
10	—	—	—	—	—	מיומנו של יוסף תרומפלדור

ביי דער חלוציאנישער אַרבעט
(דער סך-הכל פון לעצטן יאָר אין די פלוגות הגיוס -

11	—	—	—	—	—	אין גליל) – „בשרות”
19-26	—	—	—	—	—	שני דורות ...
19	—	—	—	—	—	א. דור אחרון לשעבוד
23	—	—	—	—	—	ב. דור ראשון לגאולה

פורים חג היהדות הגלותית

27	—	—	—	—	—	פתח דבר
29	—	—	—	—	—	„פורים” חג היהדות הגלותית

- א. מוימת המן להשמיד את היהודים
- ב. הגבת היהודים על מוימת המן
- ג. אשה מפירה ביפיה את מוימת המן
- ד. „החילות לנפול נפול תפול”
- ה. יועשו נקמה בגוים
- ו. יום טוב של שמחה ומשתה
- ז. שאלות

„פורים קטן” בקורות היהודים

31	—	—	—	—	—	(החגים השונים לזכר המאורעות והצרות, שנתבטלו בזמנים שונים) –
34	—	—	—	—	—	המן הנצחי (אגדה ישנה-חדישה, מוקדשת לעדת הנשרים) –
38	—	—	—	—	—	הנבור - ר. הרט (הצגה בעלילה אחת) –
44	—	—	—	—	—	הלכות פורים (ע"פ „קצור שלחן ערוך”) –
47	—	—	—	—	—	חידת פורים –
47	—	—	—	—	—	שירים לדיקלום:

יעקב כהן – לא נזו
המנון עם
שאלו טשרניחובסקי – אני מאמין.

מחלקת התרבות

כבוד

כל מפקדי הקננים ופלוגות הפירוים

באדיבה, תל-חי!

בימים קשים ומכריעים ליהדות בכלל ולציונות בפרט אנו מסיימים את שנת השלש-עשרה למלחמתנו. כל שנות קיומנו הן שנות מלחמה מתמדת לשנוי הערכין ביהדות וקרב תדיר להגשמת חזון המליונים הנענים והגורפים – הרות מדינית ורוחנית במדינתנו המשוחררת.

אמנם, בדאבון לב, עלינו לציין, שהקהל היהודי לא ידע במשך הזמן להעריך את עבודתנו ולרוב נקט עמדה שלילית למלחמתנו אנו או שהיה אדיש לנמר, דרכנו לא היתה סוגה בשושנים. – אחינו בני ישראל, אשר מלחמתנו - מלחמתם ונצחוננו - נצחונם, עמדו מרחוק והיו עדי-ראיה לכל העול והגול הנעשה לבית-י"ר בשל אמונתה ביעודו של העם העברי, שישתחרר מהעבדות הרוחנית והכלכלית אך ורק ע"י הקמת מדינה עברית בארץ-ישראל. לא כאן המקום לפרט את פרשת הענויים והסבל של הבית-י"ר במשך שנות קיומה. לא כדאי גם להתערב על היחס המחפיר של הצבור העברי לנוער הלאומי, הדוגל ברעיון שחרור האומה הישראלית.

אנו נזכור את זה, אבל גם נספח להם! והיום, כשהרי הגעש פורצים ומעלים את חיי היהודים בתמרות עשן, כשהאנטישמיות הוואלווגית שולטת בכל התבל ומחניקה את האוירה ליהודים, משפילה את כבודנו בריבים – קום יקום לקרב אותו הדור, אודותיו חולס ראש-בית"ר, קריאות העזרה של ההמונים, העומדים בפני ירכתי האבדון, מניעות לבית-י"רים לתפוצותיהם. אותם היהודים, אשר בעטו בנו בשעת „הפרוספיריטי” מחכים כעת לעזרתנו. אנו נשכח את העבר ונחיש להם בעזרתנו. אחריות יוצאת מהכלל מסילה עלינו המציאות המרה. שוב הפעם נצטרך בשנים הבאות להבחין באם נדע נאה לקיים את אשר נאה דרשנו בעבודתנו היום-יומית.

אחינו, בחוית הארצישראלית הוכיחו לעיני כל התבל על נאמנותם לתורת יוסף הגלילי ולהנוכח של ראש-בית"ר בהגינם על חיי הישוב ובעבודתם החלוצית-כיבושית בפלוגות הגיוס. רבים המה החלוצים הבית-י"רים, אשר בפניהם מרכינה-ראש כל היהדות לזרמיה השונים. ועוד יותר מנה רב הוא מספרם של הבית-י"רים המוכנים להגנת העם וכבוש המולדה. אבל בשנת הבר-מצוה לקיומה של הבית-י"ר דלהי הארץ נעולות בפניהם. אולם גם זה יחלוף. בפני חלוצי העם והמולדת אי-אפשר לסגור את שערי מולדתם.

ובשנה זו נוכיר ב"א אדר את תרומפלדור וחללי המולדת ברטט של קרושה מיוחדת ונכריו לכל התבל על נצחיותו של העם העברי, כי הנוער שלו מוכן להגין על כבודו ולהלחם לעתידו. תשובה זאת נתנה לראש-בית"ר

GREEK VERSION OF ESTHER

The colophon:

In the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheus – who said he was a priest and a Levite – and his son Ptolemy brought the above letter about Purim (*phrouai*), which they said was authentic.

Lysimachus son of Ptolemy, of Jerusalem, translated it.



WHEN WAS THAT?

- Ptolemy (XII) and Cleopatra (V)
- Fourth year = 77/76 BCE

- What is happening in Jerusalem?



WHEN WAS THAT?

- Ptolemy (XII) and Cleopatra (V)
- Fourth year = 77/76 BCE

- What is happening in Jerusalem?
- Alexander Jannaeus / אלכסנדר ינאי: 103-76 BCE
- Salome Alexandra / שלומציון המלכה: 76-67 BCE



2 MACCABEES 2

16 Since we are about to celebrate the Festival of Rededication (חנוכה), we are writing to you, advising you to celebrate it as well. 17 God has saved all his people and has restored to all of us our holy land, the kingship, the priesthood, and the Temple services, 18 just as he promised in his Law. He has rescued us from terrible evils and has purified the Temple, and we are confident that in his mercy he will soon gather us to his holy Temple from every nation under the sun.



2 MACCABEES 6

18 There was an elderly and highly respected teacher of the Law by the name of Eleazar, whose mouth was being forced open to make him eat pork. 19-20 But he preferred an honorable death rather than a life of disgrace. So he spit out the meat and went willingly to the place of torture, showing how people should have courage to refuse unclean food, even if it costs them their lives. 21-22 Those in charge of the sacrifice had been friends of Eleazar for a long time, and because of this friendship they told him privately to bring meat that was lawful for him to eat. He need only pretend to eat the pork, they said, and in this way he would not be put to death, 23 But Eleazar made a decision worthy of his gray hair and advanced age. All his life he had lived in perfect obedience to God's holy laws, so he replied,

“Kill me, here and now. 24 Such deception is not worthy of a man of my years.... 27 If I die bravely now, it will show that I deserved my long life. 28 It will also set a good example of the way young people should be willing and glad to die for our sacred and respected laws.”

...

31 So Eleazar died. But his courageous death was remembered as a glorious example, not only by young people, but by the entire nation as well.



2 MACCABEES 7

On another occasion a Jewish mother and her seven sons were arrested. The king was having them beaten to force them to eat pork. 2 Then one of the young men said,

“What do you hope to gain by doing this? We would rather die than abandon the traditions of our ancestors!”

... 7 After the first brother had died in this way, the soldiers started amusing themselves with the second one by tearing the hair and skin from his head. Then they asked him, “Now will you eat this pork, or do you want us to chop off your hands and feet one by one?”

8 He replied in his native language, “I will never eat it!”...
41 Last of all, the mother was put to death.

42 But I have said enough about the Jews being tortured....



SOME OF THE BIG PROBLEMS WITH ESTHER:

- ➔ Absence of God
- ➔ Centrality of the Temple and Jerusalem
- ➔ Lack of resistance in the name of religion



REVISING MORDECAI: GREEK ADDITIONS A AND F

Addition A

² In the second year of the reign of Ahasuerus the Great, on the first day of Nisan, Mordecai son of Jair son of Shimei son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, had a dream. ³ He was a Jew living in the city of Susa, a great man, serving in the court of the king. ⁴ He was one of the captives whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had brought from Jerusalem with King Jeconiah of Judah. And this was his dream: ⁵ Noises and confusion, thunders and earthquake, tumult on the earth! ⁶ Then two great dragons came forward, both ready to fight, and they roared terribly. ⁷ At their roaring every nation prepared for war, to fight against the righteous nation. ⁸ It was a day of darkness and gloom, of tribulation and distress, affliction and great tumult on the earth! ⁹ And the whole righteous nation was troubled; they feared the evils that threatened them, and were ready to perish. ¹⁰ Then they cried out to God; and at their outcry, as though from a tiny spring, there came a great river, with abundant water; ¹¹ light came, and the sun rose, and the lowly were exalted and devoured those held in honor.

¹² Mordecai saw in this dream what God had determined to do, and after he awoke he had it on his mind, seeking all day to understand it in every detail.



REVISING MORDECAI: GREEK ADDITIONS A AND F

Addition F

⁴ And Mordecai said, “These things have come from God; ⁵ for I remember the dream that I had concerning these matters, and none of them has failed to be fulfilled. ⁶ There was the little spring that became a river, and there was light and sun and abundant water—the river is Esther, whom the king married and made queen. ⁷ The two dragons are Haman and myself. ⁸ The nations are those that gathered to destroy the name of the Jews. ⁹ And my nation, this is Israel, who cried out to God and was saved. The Lord has saved his people; the Lord has rescued us from all these evils; God has done great signs and wonders, wonders that have never happened among the nations. ¹⁰ For this purpose he made two lots, one for the people of God and one for all the nations, ¹¹ and these two lots came to the hour and moment and day of decision before God and among all the nations. ¹² And God remembered his people and vindicated his inheritance. ¹³ So they will observe these days in the month of Adar, on the fourteenth and fifteenth of that month, with an assembly and joy and gladness before God, from generation to generation forever among his people Israel.”



REVISING ESTHER: THE PRAYERS IN ADDITION C

8 Then Mordecai prayed to the Lord, calling to remembrance all the works of the Lord. 9 He said, “O Lord, Lord, you rule as King over all things, for the universe is in your power and there is no one who can oppose you when it is your will to save Israel, 10 for you have made heaven and earth and every wonderful thing under heaven. 11 You are Lord of all, and there is no one who can resist you, the Lord. 12 You know all things; you know, O Lord, that it was not in insolence or pride or for any love of glory that I did this, and refused to bow down to this proud Haman; 13 for I would have been willing to kiss the soles of his feet to save Israel! 14 But I did this so that I might not set human glory above the glory of God, and I will not bow down to anyone but you, who are my Lord; and I will not do these things in pride. 15 And now, O Lord God and King, God of Abraham, spare your people....



REVISING ESTHER: THE PRAYERS IN ADDITION C

1 Then Queen Esther, seized with deadly anxiety, fled to the Lord. 2 She took off her splendid apparel and put on the garments of distress and mourning, and instead of costly perfumes she covered her head with ashes and dung, and she utterly humbled her body; every part that she loved to adorn she covered with her tangled hair. 3 She prayed to the Lord God of Israel, and said: “O my Lord, you only are our king; help me, who am alone and have no helper but you, 4 for my danger is in my hand. 5 Ever since I was born I have heard in the tribe of my family that you, O Lord, took Israel out of all the nations, and our ancestors from among all their forebears, for an everlasting inheritance, and that you did for them all that you promised. 6 And now we have sinned before you, and you have handed us over to our enemies 7 because we glorified their gods. You are righteous, O Lord! 8 And now they are not satisfied that we are in bitter slavery, but they have covenanted with their idols 9 to abolish what your mouth has ordained, and to destroy your inheritance, to stop the mouths of those who praise you and to quench your altar and the glory of your house, 10 to open the mouths of the nations for the praise of vain idols, and to magnify forever a mortal king.



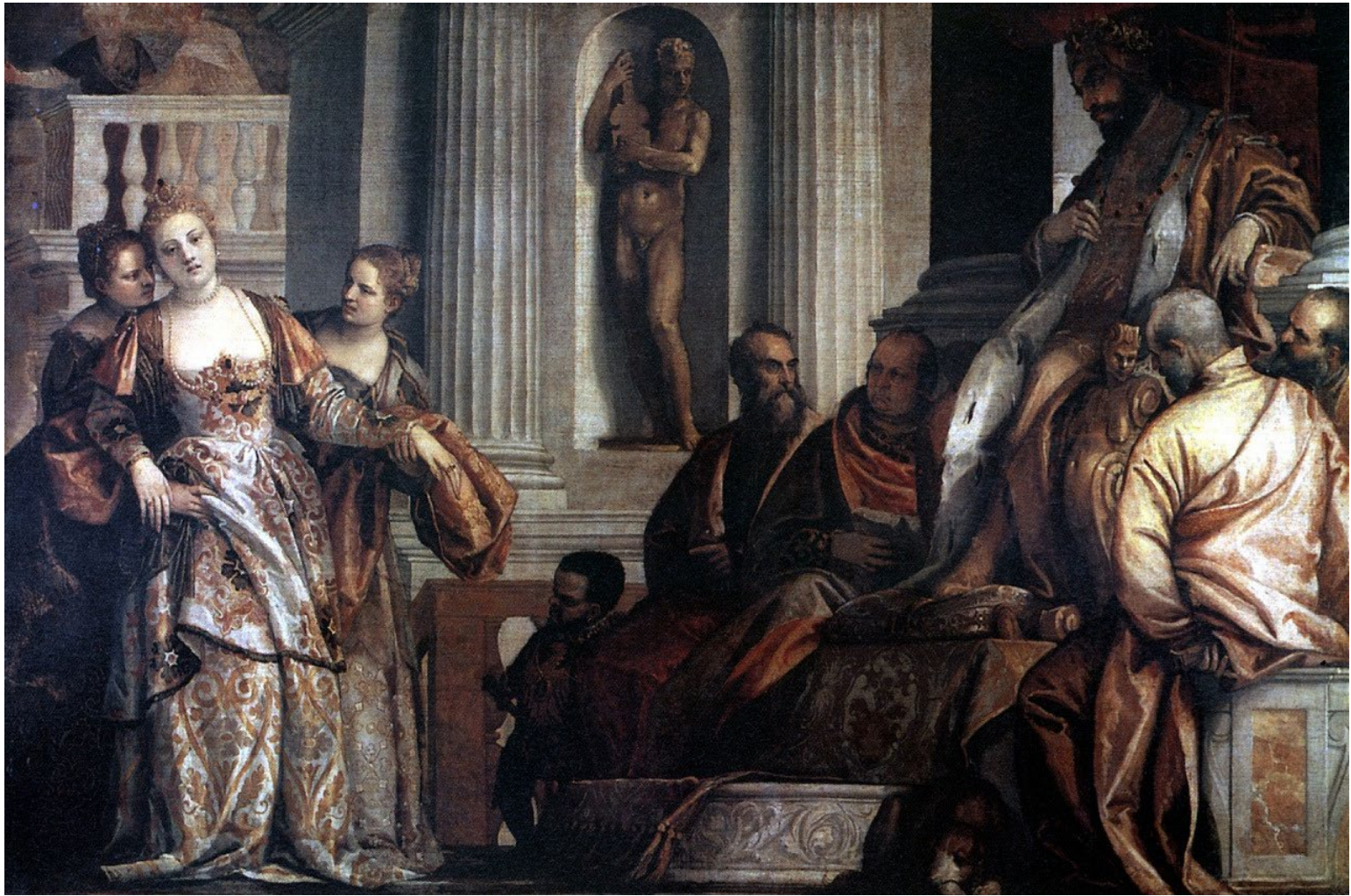
REVISING ESTHER: THE PRAYERS IN ADDITION C

11 “O Lord, do not surrender your scepter to what has no being; and do not let them laugh at our downfall; but turn their plan against them, and make an example of him who began this against us. 12 Remember, O Lord; make yourself known in this time of our affliction, and give me courage, O King of the gods and Master of all dominion! 13 Put eloquent speech in my mouth before the lion, and turn his heart to hate the man who is fighting against us, so that there may be an end of him and those who agree with him. 14 But save us by your hand, and help me, who am alone and have no helper but you, O Lord. 15 You have knowledge of all things, and you know that I hate the splendor of the wicked and abhor the bed of the uncircumcised and of any alien. 16 You know my necessity—that I abhor the sign of my proud position, which is upon my head on days when I appear in public. I abhor it like a filthy rag, and I do not wear it on the days when I am at leisure. 17 And your servant has not eaten at Haman’s table, and I have not honored the king’s feast or drunk the wine of libations. 18 Your servant has had no joy since the day that I was brought here until now, except in you, O Lord God of Abraham. 19 O God, whose might is over all, hear the voice of the despairing, and save us from the hands of evildoers. And save me from my fear!”





Tintoretto, 16th century Venice - Royal Collection, UK



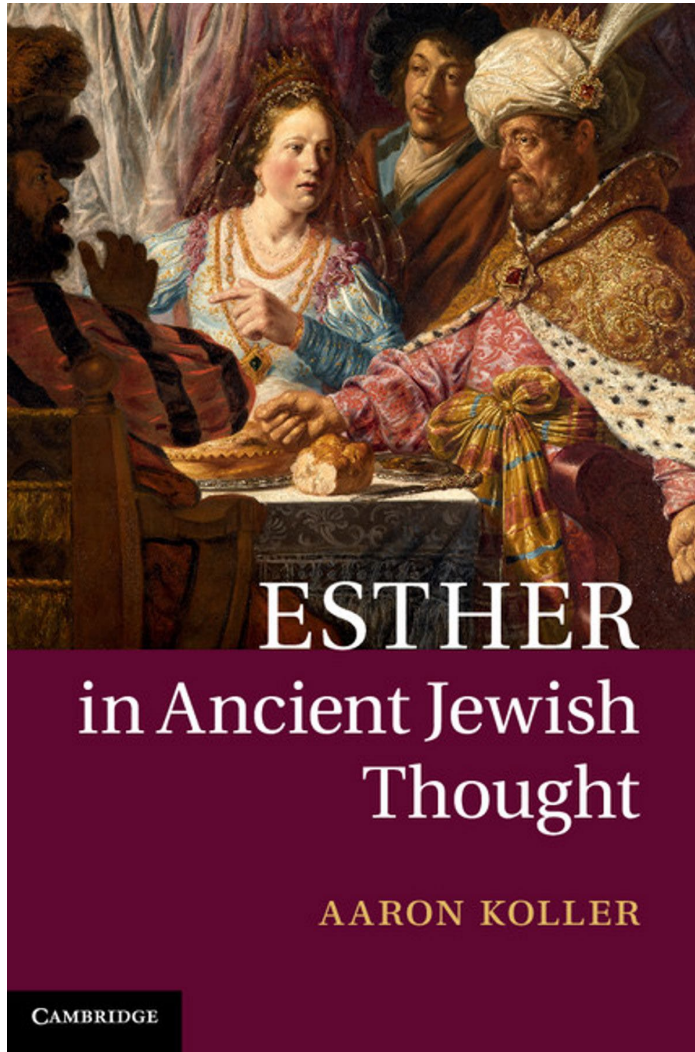
Veronese, Esther Before Ahasuerus (Venice, 16th century)



Guercino, 17th century Rome
Now in the University of Michigan Museum of Art



Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1656), *Esther Before Ahasuerus*,
The Metropolitan Museum of Art



ESTHER 8:17

ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה וששון ויקר

The Jews enjoyed light and gladness, happiness and honor.

כן תהיה לנו ולכל העולם

And so it should be for us and for the whole world.