

ESTHER (GREEK) 11.2–11.6

The additions provide their authors with an opportunity to express their own particular theological views. Additions A and F introduce apocalyptic motifs to emphasize God's providential care for the people Israel in a universally hostile world. Addition C attests to the efficacy of prayer and expresses Queen Esther's abhorrence at being married to a Gentile, her loathing of all things worldly and courtly, and her strict observance of Jewish dietary laws—none of which is so much as hinted at in the Hebrew. Thanks largely to Addition D, the climax of the Greek version is reached when God miraculously changes to gentleness the king's "fierce anger" at Esther's unannounced entrance. Taken together, the six additions deemphasize the establishment of Purim and express a deep distrust of Gentiles.

Besides giving the story a more explicitly religious character, the additions create new emphases. A and F, which frame the story, graft onto it a new apocalyptic perspective of cosmic struggle between good and evil. The juxtaposition of C's extensive praise of God, with similar terms and phrases applied to Ahasuerus in D, makes explicit the Greek version's intent to contrast the capricious earthly king with God the trustworthy heavenly king. Similarly, the royal decrees in B and E highlight the theme of human commandments versus the law of Moses to which Esther also alludes when she prays in C.

Originally, A, C, D, and F were probably composed in either Hebrew or Aramaic (both Semitic languages) and, if so, were already part of that particular Semitic text used by the Greek translator. The florid rhetorical phraseology of B and E indicates that they must originally have been composed in Greek, perhaps in Alexandria, a sophisticated Greek-Jewish center.

The additions were not composed at the same time. The latest possible date for B, C, D, and E is 93 CE, when the historian Josephus paraphrased them in his *Jewish Antiquities*. The colophon's location (11.1) immediately after F suggests that A as well as F were part of the Semitic text at the time that Lysimachus made his Greek translation in the late second or first century BCE.

ADDITION A

11^a In the second year of the reign of Artaxerxes the Great, on the first day of Nisan, Mordecai son of Jair son of Shim-ei^b son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, had a dream. ³He was a Jew living in the city of Susa, a great man, serving in the court of the king. ⁴He was one of the captives

whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had brought from Jerusalem with King Jeconiah of Judea. And this was his dream: ⁵Noises^c and confusion, thunders and earthquake, tumult on the earth! ⁶Then two great dragons came forward, both

^a Chapters 11.2–12.6 correspond to chapter A 1-17 in some translations. ^b Gk *Semeios* ^c Or *Voices*

11.2–12: Mordecai's prophetic dream of impending danger to the Jews. **2:** *Artaxerxes*, a mistranslation of the Heb "Ahasuerus," that is, Xerxes I (486–465 BCE); the *second year* would be 485. *Nisan*, March-April, the first month of the new year. Thus, the dream comes on New Year's Day. All the month names in Esther are Babylonian. *Mordecai's* name derives from the name of the Babylonian god, Marduk. His genealogy connecting him with King Saul (1 Sam 9.1; 2 Sam 16.5–18) is repeated in 2.5. **3:** *Jew* (Heb "yehudi"), originally meaning someone from the kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 16.6), is used here in its usual later sense of an adherent to Judaism. *Susa*, westernmost of the three capital cities of the Achaemenid Persian Empire in northwestern Iran. In contrast to Hebrew Esther, Mordecai is already an important royal official. **4:** Mordecai would be well over 100 years old by 484 BCE if he, along with Judah's last king Jeconiah (Jehoiachin), had been exiled by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 (2 Kings 24). **5–11:** Persecution and the subsequent salvation of the Jews, described in apocalyptic terms. **5:** The language of cosmic chaos is typical of apocalyptic texts (see Isa 24.17–20; Dan 12.1,4). **6:** *Two great dragons*, Mordecai and Haman (see 10.7). God defeated the chaos dragon (a sea monster) at the time of creation (Ps 74.13; 89.10; Isa

ESTHER (GREEK) 11.7–1.5

ready to fight, and they roared terribly. ⁷At their roaring every nation prepared for war, to fight against the righteous nation. ⁸It was a day of darkness and gloom, of tribulation and distress, affliction and great tumult on the earth! ⁹And the whole righteous nation was troubled; they feared the evils that threatened them,^a and were ready to perish. ¹⁰Then they cried out to God; and at their outcry, as though from a tiny spring, there came a great river, with abundant water; ¹¹light came, and the sun rose, and the lowly were exalted and de- voured 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.

12 Now Mordecai took his rest in the courtyard with Gabatha and Tharra, the two eunuchs of the king who kept watch in the courtyard. ²He overheard their conversation and inquired into their purposes, and learned that they were preparing to lay hands on King Artaxerxes; and he informed the king concerning them. ³Then the king examined the two eunuchs, and after they had confessed it, they were led away to execution. ⁴The king made a permanent record of these things, and Mor-

decai wrote an account of them. ⁵And the king ordered Mordecai to serve in the court, and rewarded him for these things. ⁶But Haman son of Hammedatha, a Bougean, who was in great honor with the king, determined to injure Mordecai and his people because of the two eunuchs of the king.

END OF ADDITION A

1 It was after this that the following things happened in the days of Artaxerxes, the same Artaxerxes who ruled over one hundred twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia.^b ²In those days, when King Artaxerxes was enthroned in the city of Susa, ³in the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for his Friends and other persons of various nations, the Persians and Median nobles, and the governors of the provinces. ⁴After this, when he had displayed to them the riches of his kingdom and the splendor of his bountiful celebration during the course of one hundred eighty days, ⁵at the end of the festivity^c the king gave a drinking party for the

^a Gk *their own evils* ^b Other ancient authorities lack to Ethiopia ^c Gk *marriage feast*

27.1; 51.9–10; Job 26.12–13); imagery from this primordial battle reappears in apocalyptic literature (Dan 7; Rev 12.3; 13.2; 20.2). Two dragons (see 2 Esd 6.49–52), one good, one evil, are unusual and may reflect Persian influence. **7:** *Righteous nation*, the Jews (see Dan 7.27). Unlike the Heb, Gk Esther perceives the entire Gentile (non-Jewish) world as a danger to the Jews. **10:** *Cried out*, Ex 3.7; Jdt 3.9; 4.3; 6.6. *Tiny spring* and *great river* refer to Esther (10.6). **11:** *Light* and morning, symbolizing joy, salvation, and new life (Ps 30.5; 46.5; 112.4; Isa 33.2). *Lowly were exalted*, 1 Sam 2.4–9. *One held in honor* is Haman (12.6). **12:** In contrast to the Heb, all the events in Gk Esther are foreordained by God, although Mordecai does not yet fully understand the dream's symbolism (10.4–9).

12.1–6: Mordecai saves the king's life. It is unclear whether this conspiracy is the same as the one in Esth 2.19–23 of the Heb text or an earlier one. **5:** The king *rewarded* Mordecai immediately (in contrast to 6.1–3). **6:** The Gk text suggests (in contrast to the Heb) that Haman took part in the eunuchs' foiled plot and thus provides a motivation for both Mordecai's and Haman's subsequent actions. *Bougean*, in 3.1 "Bougean" is an attempt to translate the Heb word "Agagite" which connects Haman to the Amalekite king, Agag, Saul's vanquished enemy (see 1 Sam 15.8). Mordecai and Haman share an ancestral enmity (Ex 17.8–16; Num 24.7).

1.1–12: Artaxerxes's banquet. **1:** *Ethiopia* (Heb "Cush"), in the Bible this term refers to the territory of modern Sudan and modern Ethiopia. **3:** Greek writers mention fabulous feasts given by Persian kings. Ahasuerus's *banquet* is the first of numerous banquets that occur at key points in the story (1.5,9; 2.18; 3.15; 5.7; 7.1; 9.17,19,22). *Friends*, a special class of courtiers. **5:** *Festivity*, or *marriage feast* (see note c), which would clarify the behavior of the king and Vashti (see 1.11). *Six days*, 1.10 (and Heb 1.5,10)

ESTHER (GREEK) 13.7-4.14

our second father, shall all—wives and children included—be utterly destroyed by the swords of their enemies, without pity or restraint, on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, of this present year, ⁷so that those who have long been hostile and remain so may in a single day go down in violence to Hades, and leave our government completely secure and untroubled hereafter.”

END OF ADDITION B

3 ¹⁴Copies of the document were posted in every province, and all the nations were ordered to be prepared for that day. ¹⁵The matter was expedited also in Susa. And while the king and Haman caroused together, the city of Susa^a was thrown into confusion.

4 When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and sprinkled himself with ashes; then he rushed through the street of the city, shouting loudly: “An innocent nation is being destroyed!” ²He got as far as the king’s gate, and there he stopped, because no one was allowed to enter the courtyard clothed in sackcloth and ashes. ³And in every province where the king’s proclamation had been posted there was a loud cry of mourning and lamentation among the Jews, and they put on sackcloth and ashes. ⁴When the queen’s^b maids and eunuchs came and told her, she was deeply troubled by what she heard had happened, and sent some clothes to Mordecai to put on instead of sackcloth; but he would not consent. ⁵Then Esther summoned Hachtrathus, the eunuch who attended her, and

ordered him to get accurate information for her from Mordecai.^c

⁷ So Mordecai told him what had happened and how Haman had promised to pay ten thousand talents into the royal treasury to bring about the destruction of the Jews. ⁸He also gave him a copy of what had been posted in Susa for their destruction, to show to Esther; and he told him to charge her to go in to the king and plead for his favor in behalf of the people. “Remember,” he said, “the days when you were an ordinary person, being brought up under my care—for Haman, who stands next to the king, has spoken against us and demands our death. Call upon the Lord; then speak to the king in our behalf, and save us from death.”

⁹ Hachtrathus went in and told Esther all these things. ¹⁰And she said to him, “Go to Mordecai and say, ¹¹‘All nations of the empire know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is no escape for that person. Only the one to whom the king stretches out the golden scepter is safe—and it is now thirty days since I was called to go to the king.’”

¹² When Hachtrathus delivered her entire message to Mordecai, ¹³Mordecai told him to go back and say to her, “Esther, do not say to yourself that you alone among all the Jews will escape alive. ¹⁴For if you keep quiet at such a time as this, help and protection will come to the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s

^a Gk the city ^b Gk When her ^c Other ancient witnesses add *So Hachtrathus went out to Mordecai in the street of the city opposite the city gate.*

“thirteenth”; see (Heb) 3.13; 8.12; 9.1; (Gk) 16.20; 8.12. *Adar*, February-March. *7: Hades*, the underworld (Heb “Sheol”).

3.14-15: Haman and the king celebrate the publication of the decree.

4.1-17: Mordecai persuades Queen Esther to risk her life and save her people. **1:** *Sackcloth and ashes* and torn clothing were traditional signs of mourning and repentance (2 Sam 3.31; Job 42.6; Dan 9.3; Jon 3.6). **2:** No one rendered ritually unclean by mourning could *enter the courtyard*. **4:** Esther has kept her Jewish identity a secret (see 2.10n., 20n.) and is unaware of the edict. **11:** Like other biblical heroes called upon to save their people (Ex 3.11; 4.10; 10.28; Judg 6.15; Jer 1.6), Esther initially objects. **14:** *From another quarter*, divine providence (see 10.4-5). *Who knows?* often precedes an expression of hope for divine mercy (2 Sam 12.22; Joel 2.14; Jon 3.9). **16-17:** Resolving to act *contrary to the law* (see 4.11)

ESTHER (GREEK) 4.15-14.8

family will perish. Yet, who knows whether it was not for such a time as this that you were made queen?” ¹⁵Then Esther gave the messenger this answer to take back to Mordecai: ¹⁶“Go and gather all the Jews who are in Susa and fast on my behalf; for three days and nights do not eat or drink, and my maids and I will also go without food. After that I will go to the king, contrary to the law, even if I must die.” ¹⁷So Mordecai went away and did what Esther had told him to do.

ADDITION C

13 ^{8a}Then Mordecai^a 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, ¹⁰for you have made heaven and earth and every wonderful thing under heaven. ¹¹You are Lord of all, and there is no one who can resist you, the Lord. ¹²You 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; ¹³for I would have been willing to kiss the soles of his feet to save Israel! ¹⁴But 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. ¹⁵And now, O Lord God and King, God of Abraham, spare your people; for the eyes of our

foes are upon us^a to annihilate us, and they desire to destroy the inheritance that has been yours from the beginning. ¹⁶Do not neglect your portion, which you redeemed for yourself out of the land of Egypt. ¹⁷Hear my prayer, and have mercy upon your inheritance; turn our mourning into feasting that we may live and sing praise to your name, O Lord; do not destroy the lips^d of those who praise you.”

¹⁸ And all Israel cried out mightily, for their death was before their eyes.

14 Then Queen Esther, seized with deadly anxiety, fled to the Lord. ²She 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. ³She 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, ⁴for my danger is in my hand. ⁵Ever 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. ⁶And now we have sinned before you, and you have handed us over to our enemies ⁷because we glorified their gods. You are righteous, O Lord! ⁸And now they are not sat-

^a Chapters 13.8-15.16 correspond to chapters C 1-30 and D 1-16 in some translations. ^b Gk he ^c Gk for they are eying us ^d Gk mouth

on behalf of her people (see 1.19n.), Esther takes charge. Communal or individual fasting was a rite of repentance believed to influence the deity (Lev 16.29-31; Judg 20.26; 2 Sam 12.16; 1 Kings 21.27; Jon 3.5,8; Ezra 8.21-23; Joel 1.14; 2.12,15; 1 Macc 3.47).

13.8-14.19: The prayers of Mordecai and Esther give the book an explicitly religious tone. Both contain themes common to national laments (Neh 9; Dan 9). **12-14:** Mordecai justifies his refusal to bow to Haman (3.2) on religious grounds (see Dan 3.12,16-18; 6.10-13; 2 Macc 7.2), disclaiming any pride on his own part (see 14.15-18). **16:** Mordecai is confident in the God who liberated the Israelites, God’s *portion* (Deut 32.9) from enslavement in *Egypt* (Ex 1-14).

14.1-19: Esther humbly petitions God. Her prayer (see especially Jdt 9) resembles Mordecai’s in its sincere, if conventional, piety and its concern for religious self-justification. **2:** *Humble garments*, filth, and disarray are appropriate to penitential prayer (2 Kings 19.1; Neh 1.4; Dan 9.3-4; Jdt 9.1). **8:** *Bitter slavery* interprets the exile and Diaspora in terms evocative of the bondage in Egypt (Ex 1-15). **9:** *Your*

ESTHER (GREEK) 14.9–15.7

ified that we are in bitter slavery, but they have covenanted with their idols⁹ 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.

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!”

END OF ADDITION C

ADDITION D

15 On the third day, when she ended her prayer, she took off the garments in which she had worshiped, and arrayed herself in splendid attire.² Then, majestically adorned, after invoking the aid of the all-seeing God and Savior, she took two maids with her;³ on one she leaned gently for support,⁴ while the other followed, carrying her train.⁵ She was radiant with perfect beauty, and she looked happy, as if beloved, but her heart was frozen with fear.⁶ When she had gone through all the doors, she stood before the king. He was seated on his royal throne, clothed in the full array of his majesty, all covered with gold and precious stones. He was most terrifying.

7 Lifting his face, flushed with splendor, he looked at her in fierce anger. The queen faltered, and turned pale and faint, and collapsed on the head of the maid who went in

altar and your house refer to the ruined Temple in Jerusalem (2 Macc 14.33; 3 Macc 5.43), a subject ignored in the Heb. 13: *Eloquent speech*, in 15.5 it is her beauty on which she initially relies. *Lion*, Ahasuerus. God will begin the process of turning the king’s heart by changing the king’s wrathful spirit to gentleness (15.7–8) when Esther approaches him. 15: *Abhor the bed of the uncircumcised*, the Jewish prohibition of mixed marriage (Deut 7.3–4; Ezra 10.2; Neh 13.23–27). *Wicked, uncircumcised, alien, non-Jews*. Unlike the Heb, Gk Esther takes a negative view of Gentiles. 16: The sign upon Esther’s head is the crown which she abhors as a filthy rag (literally, a rag soaked in menstrual blood; see Lev 15.19–24; Isa 64.6). Contrast Deut 6.9. 17: Esther observes the Jewish dietary laws (Lev 11; see Jdt 12.1–2).

15.1–16: Esther approaches the king. This chapter expands upon 5.1–2 in the Heb, heightening the suspense with added details and, consistent with the Gk version’s theological perspective, crediting God’s intervention for Esther’s success. 1: Like an epic hero arming for battle (see *Iliad* 19.338–9; 360–391; 1 Sam 17.5–7,38–39) Esther adorns herself (see Jdt. 10.3; 12.15) for her “assault” on the king (see 4.11). 7: Esther’s appearance infuriates the king (see 4.11). Esther, terrified and weakened by fasting, cannot withstand his wrath (see 1.12; 7.7,10; Prov 19.12; 20.2) and collapses (see 7.8). This episode, absent in the Heb, portrays an Esther undone by feminine weakness and incapable of fulfilling her mission on her own (see 4.15). The narrative assigns the credit for the salvation of the Jews primarily to God (see v. 8).

front of her.⁸ Then God changed the spirit of the king to gentleness, and in alarm he sprang from his throne and took her in his arms until she came to herself. He comforted her with soothing words, and said to her,⁹ “What is it, Esther? I am your husband.” Take courage;¹⁰ You shall not die, for our law applies only to our subjects.⁹ Come near.”

11 Then he raised the golden scepter and touched her neck with it;¹² he embraced her, and said, “Speak to me.”¹³ She said to him, “I saw you, my lord, like an angel of God, and my heart was shaken with fear at your glory.¹⁴ For you are wonderful, my lord, and your countenance is full of grace.”¹⁵ And while she was speaking, she fainted and fell.¹⁶ Then the king was agitated, and all his servants tried to comfort her.

END OF ADDITION D

5³ The king said to her, “What do you wish, Esther? What is your request? It shall be given you, even to half of my kingdom.”⁴ And Esther said, “Today is a special day for me. If it pleases the king, let him and Haman come to the dinner that I shall prepare today.”⁵ Then the king said, “Bring Haman quickly, so that we may do as Esther desires.” So they both came to the dinner that Esther had spoken about.⁶ While they were drinking wine, the king said to Esther, “What is it, Queen Esther? It

ESTHER (GREEK) 15.8–6.1

shall be granted you.”⁷ She said, “My petition and request is:⁸ if I have found favor in the sight of the king, let the king and Haman come to the dinner that I shall prepare them, and tomorrow I will do as I have done today.”

9 So Haman went out from the king joyful and glad of heart. But when he saw Mordecai the Jew in the courtyard, he was filled with anger.¹⁰ Nevertheless, he went home and summoned his friends and his wife Zosara.¹¹ And he told them about his riches and the honor that the king had bestowed on him, and how he had advanced him to be the first in the kingdom.¹² And Haman said, “The queen did not invite anyone to the dinner with the king except me; and I am invited again tomorrow.¹³ But these things give me no pleasure as long as I see Mordecai the Jew in the courtyard.”¹⁴ His wife Zosara and his friends said to him, “Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, and in the morning tell the king to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then, go merrily with the king to the dinner.” This advice pleased Haman, and so the gallows was prepared.

6 That night the Lord took sleep from the king, so he gave orders to his secretary to bring the book of daily records,

a Gk brother b Meaning of Gk uncertain
c In Greek, Chapter D replaces verses 1 and 2 in Hebrew.

8: The dramatic climax of Gk Esther. *God changed the spirit of the king*, see v. 7n.; the human king must yield to the divine king. 9: Husband, Gk “brother,” a metaphorical expression of endearment found in Egyptian and Israelite love poetry (see “sister” in Song 4.9–10; 5.1–2). 13: *Like an angel of God*, see 2 Sam 14.17,20. The phrase (not present in the Heb) implies wisdom and absence of evil intent (1 Sam 29.9; 2 Sam 19.27). 15: See v. 7n.

5.3–8: Esther invites the king and Haman to dinner. 3: *Half of my kingdom* is customary hyperbole (7.2). 4: Esther frames her request in the most self-effacing terms. *Dinner*, see 1.3n. Food is a frequent motif in stories of women confronting powerful men (Judg 5.25; Jdt 10.5; 12.1,17–20).

5.9–14: Haman’s happiness is spoiled. 11–12: Haman’s boasting sets him up as an arrogant fool ripe for catastrophe (Prov 11.28; 13.3; 16.5,18; 27.1; 29.20). 14: *Zosara* is an exemplary son-bearing wife (9.7–10) whose loyal advice her husband follows. *Gallows*, (also 9.13–14) see 2.23n. *Fifty cubits*, ca. 22m (72 ft), an exaggerated height. *Only the king can order an execution*.

6.1–13: Mordecai’s triumph. The episode is a masterpiece of ironic narrative. 1: *The Lord took sleep from the king*, unlike the Heb, the Gk explains events of the story in terms of divine intention (11.1–12; 10.4–12; 4.14n.) and intervention (15.1–16). The sleepless king is a traditional folktale motif (Dan 6.18; 3 Esdras 3.3). 3: Herodotus (8.85,90) notes that Persian kings kept records of courtiers’ noble deeds. *You*

ESTHER (GREEK) 16.1–16.18

ADDITION E

16^c The following is a copy of this letter:

“The Great King, Artaxerxes, to the governors of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred twenty-seven provinces, and to those who are loyal to our government, greetings.

2 “Many people, the more they are honored with the most generous kindness of their benefactors, the more proud do they become,³ and not only seek to injure our subjects, but in their inability to stand prosperity, they even undertake to scheme against their own benefactors. 4 They not only take away thankfulness from others, but, carried away by the boasts of those who know nothing of goodness, they even assume that they will escape the evil-hating justice of God, who always sees everything. 5 And often many of those who are set in places of authority have been made in part responsible for the shedding of innocent blood, and have been involved in irremediable calamities, by the persuasion of friends who have been entrusted with the administration of public affairs, 6 when these persons by the false trickery of their evil natures beguile the sincere goodwill of their sovereigns.

7 “What has been wickedly accomplished through the pestilent behavior of those who exercise authority unworthily can be seen, not so much from the more ancient records that we hand on, as from investigation of matters close at hand.^b 8 In the future we will take care to render our kingdom quiet and peaceable for all, 9 by changing our methods and always judging what comes before our eyes with more eq-

uitable consideration. 10 For Haman son of Hammedatha, a Macedonian (really an alien to the Persian blood, and quite devoid of our kindness), having become our guest, 11 enjoyed so fully the goodwill that we have for every nation that he was called our father and was continually bowed down to by all as the person second to the royal throne. 12 But, unable to restrain his arrogance, he undertook to deprive us of our kingdom and our life,^c 13 and with intricate craft and deceit asked for the destruction of Mordecai, our savior and perpetual benefactor, and of Esther, the blameless partner of our kingdom, together with their whole nation. 14 He thought that by these methods he would catch us undefended and would transfer the kingdom of the Persians to the Macedonians.

15 “But we find that the Jews, who were consigned to annihilation by this thrice-accursed man, are not evildoers, but are governed by most righteous laws 16 and are children of the living God, most high, most mighty,^d who has directed the kingdom both for us and for our ancestors in the most excellent order.

17 “You will therefore do well not to put in execution the letters sent by Haman son of Hammedatha, 18 since he, the one who did these things, has been hanged at the gate of Susa with all his household—for God, who rules over all things, has speedily inflicted on him the punishment that he deserved.

a Chapter 16.1–24 corresponds to chapter E 1–24 in some translations. b Gk matters beside (your) feet c Gk our spirit d Gk greatest

16.1–24: The king’s second letter denounces Haman, praises Mordecai and Esther, and directs his subjects to help the Jews. This addition to the Gk version of Esther is a counterpoint to 13.1–7. Both were composed in Gk probably by the same author. The Gentile king refers in the most positive terms to the Jews and their God (Ex 9.27; 18.10–11; Num 22–24; 2 Kings 5.15; Dan 2.47; 3.29; 4.1–3, 34–37; 6.26–27; Jdt 5.5–21). 2: *Benefactors*, a reference to Ahasuerus. 10: Haman is actually a Macedonian scheming to overthrow Persian rule (v. 14; see 12.6), a plot twist not found in the Heb. This may be an allusion to the conquest of Persia by the Macedonian Alexander the Great in 333 BCE. 11: *Our father*, 13.6. *Second to the royal throne*, 13.3 (2 Chr 28.7; 1 Esd 3.7). 15–16: The king commends the Jews and their laws (Torah) and confesses his indebtedness to their God (see Ezra 1.2; 7.23–28). 17: See 8.5n. 18: The edict’s reference to the death of Haman’s family contradicts 7.9 and 9.7–10, 13–14. 19: *Their own*

ESTHER (GREEK) 16.19–9.13

every city and province wherever the decree was published; wherever the proclamation was made, the Jews had joy and gladness, a banquet and a holiday. And many of the Gentiles were circumcised and became Jews out of fear of the Jews.

9 Now on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is Adar, the decree written by the king arrived. 2 On that same day the enemies of the Jews perished; no one resisted, because they feared them. 3 The chief provincial governors, the princes, and the royal secretaries were paying honor to the Jews, because fear of Mordecai weighed upon them. 4 The king’s decree required that Mordecai’s name be held in honor throughout the kingdom.^b 6 Now in the city of Susa the Jews killed five hundred people, 7 including Pharsannestain, Delphon, Phasga, 8 Pharadatha, Barea, Sarchacha, 9 Marmasima, Aruphaeus, Arsaeus, Zabutheus, 10 the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the Bougean, the enemy of the Jews—and they indulged^c themselves in plunder.

11 That very day the number of those killed in Susa was reported to the king. 12 The king said to Esther, “In Susa, the capital, the Jews have destroyed five hundred people. What do you suppose they have done in the surrounding countryside? Whatever more you ask will be done for you.” 13 And Esther said to the king, “Let

a Other ancient authorities read for us b Meaning of Gk uncertain. Some ancient authorities add verse 5. So the Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did as they pleased to those who hated them. c Other ancient authorities read did not indulge

19 “Therefore post a copy of this letter publicly in every place, and permit the Jews to live under their own laws. 20 And give them reinforcements, so that on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, on that very day, they may defend themselves against those who attack them at the time of oppression. 21 For God, who rules over all things, has made this day to be a joy for his chosen people instead of a day of destruction for them.

22 “Therefore you shall observe this with all good cheer as a notable day among your commemorative festivals, 23 so that both now and hereafter it may represent deliverance for you^a and the loyal Persians, but that it may be a reminder of destruction for those who plot against us.

24 “Every city and country, without exception, that does not act accordingly shall be destroyed in wrath with spear and fire. It shall be made not only impassable for human beings, but also most hateful to wild animals and birds for all time.

END OF ADDITION E

8¹³ “Let copies of the decree be posted conspicuously in all the kingdom, and let all the Jews be ready on that day to fight against their enemies.”

14 So the messengers on horseback set out with all speed to perform what the king had commanded; and the decree was published also in Susa. 15 Mordecai went out dressed in the royal robe and wearing a gold crown and a turban of purple linen. The people in Susa rejoiced on seeing him. 16 And the Jews had light and gladness 17 in

laws (absent in the Heb), see vv. 15–16; 8.11. 21: *Chosen people*, 1 Kings 3.8; 1 Chr 16.13; Ps 105.6; Isa 43.20 (cf. Esth 13.15–17; 14.5). 22–23: These verses, addressed to all the king’s subjects, may hint at the non-Jewish origin of the Purim festival.

8.13–17: Dispatch and posting of the king’s decree. 14: See 3.13n. 17: *Gentiles were circumcised and became Jews*, the Gk here interprets literally the ambiguous wording of the Heb.

9.1–19: The Jews triumph over their enemies. 2: *No one resisted*, contradicts the Heb (“no one could withstand them”), and vv. 11, 16. 10: The death of the ten sons of Haman agrees with the Heb but contradicts 16.18 (see note). *Indulged themselves in plunder*, contradicted by both the Heb and 9.15–16. 12–15: Notice of the extra day for observing the king’s edict is probably included to explain why the Jews of Susa celebrated Purim on the fifteenth of Adar and country Jews on the fourteenth (see 9.18–19). *Plunder*, see v. 10n. 16: *Destroyed fifteen thousand*, Heb “seventy-five thousand.” 18–19: Differences in

ESTHER (GREEK) 9.14–9.32

the Jews be allowed to do the same tomorrow. Also, hang up the bodies of Haman's ten sons." ¹⁴So he permitted this to be done, and handed over to the Jews of the city the bodies of Haman's sons to hang up. ¹⁵The Jews who were in Susa gathered on the fourteenth and killed three hundred people, but took no plunder.

¹⁶Now the other Jews in the kingdom gathered to defend themselves, and got relief from their enemies. They destroyed fifteen thousand of them, but did not engage in plunder. ¹⁷On the fourteenth day they rested and made that same day a day of rest, celebrating it with joy and gladness. ¹⁸The Jews who were in Susa, the capital, came together also on the fourteenth, but did not rest. They celebrated the fifteenth with joy and gladness. ¹⁹On this account then the Jews who are scattered around the country outside Susa keep the fourteenth of Adar as a joyful holiday, and send presents of food to one another, while those who live in the large cities keep the fifteenth day of Adar as their joyful holiday, also sending presents to one another.

²⁰Mordecai recorded these things in a book, and sent it to the Jews in the kingdom of Artaxerxes both near and far, ²¹telling them that they should keep the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar, ²²for on these days the Jews got relief from their enemies. The whole month (namely, Adar), in which their condition had been changed from sorrow into gladness and from a time of distress to a holiday, was to be celebrated as a time for feasting and gladness and for sending presents of food to their friends and to the poor.

²³So the Jews accepted what Mordecai

had written to them ²⁴—how Haman son of Hammedatha, the Macedonian, fought against them, how he made a decree and cast lots to destroy them, ²⁵and how he went in to the king, telling him to hang Mordecai; but the wicked plot he had devised against the Jews came back upon himself, and he and his sons were hanged. ²⁶Therefore these days were called "Purim," because of the lots (for in their language this is the word that means "lots"). And so, because of what was written in this letter, and because of what they had experienced in this affair and what had befallen them, Mordecai established this festival, ²⁷and the Jews took upon themselves, upon their descendants, and upon all who would join them, to observe it without fail. These days of Purim should be a memorial and kept from generation to generation, in every city, family, and country. ²⁸These days of Purim were to be observed for all time, and the commemoration of them was never to cease among their descendants.

²⁹Then Queen Esther daughter of Aminadab along with Mordecai the Jew wrote down what they had done, and gave full authority to the letter about Purim. ³¹And Mordecai and Queen Esther established this decision on their own responsibility, pledging their own well-being to the plan. ³²Esther established it by a decree forever, and it was written for a memorial.

a Gk of weddings *b* Other ancient witnesses read the Bougean *c* Gk a lot *d* Gk he established (it) *e* Meaning of Gk uncertain *f* Verse 30 in Heb is lacking in Gk: Letters were sent to all the Jews, to the one hundred twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, in words of peace and truth.

Purim dates are explained (see 9.12–15n.). Jews today continue to observe Purim with feasting and presents of food.

9.20–32: The inauguration of the feast of Purim. The emphasis upon the written word, a particular concern in postexilic Judaism, was probably intended to legitimize a festival not mentioned in the Torah (cf. the origin of Hanukkah: 1 Macc 4.56–59; 2 Macc 1.1–2.28; 10.1–8). **21:** See 9.12–15n. **22:** Purim commemorates not the day of the Jews' military triumph but the day they obtained their relief. *Sorrow into gladness*, see Isa 61.3; Jer 31.13. **24–26:** This plot summary, which does not mention Esther, differs slightly from the book of Esther. The festival came to be called "Purim" for the lot, *pur* (plural, *purim*), which Haman cast (see 3.7n.). **32:** *Esther established it*, Queen Esther is the only woman in the Bible credited with authorizing a religious observance.

ESTHER (GREEK) 10.1–11.1

10 The king levied a tax upon his kingdom both by land and sea. ²And as for his power and bravery, and the wealth and glory of his kingdom, they were recorded in the annals of the kings of the Persians and the Medes. ³Mordecai acted with authority on behalf of King Artaxerxes and was great in the kingdom, as well as honored by the Jews. His way of life was such as to make him beloved to his whole nation.

ADDITION F

⁴And Mordecai said, "These things have come from God; ⁵for I remember the dream that I had concerning these matters, and none of them has failed to be fulfilled. ⁶There 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. ⁷The two dragons are Haman and myself. ⁸The nations are those that gathered to destroy the name of the Jews. ⁹And 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. ¹⁰For this purpose he made two lots, one for the people of God and one for all the nations, ¹¹and these two lots came to the hour and moment and day of decision before God and among all the nations. ¹²And God remembered his people and vindicated his inheritance. ¹³So they will observe these days in the month of Adar, on the fourteenth and fifteenth^b of that month, with an assembly and joy and gladness before God, from generation to generation forever among his people Israel." ¹¹In the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheus, who said that he was a priest and a Levite, and his son Ptolemy brought to Egypt^d the preceding Letter about Purim, which they said was authentic and had been translated by Lysimachus son of Ptolemy, one of the residents of Jerusalem.

END OF ADDITION F

a Chapter 10.4–13 and 11.1 correspond to chapter F 1–11 in some translations. *b* Other ancient authorities lack and *fifteenth* *c* Or *priest*, and *Levitas* *d* Cn: Gk brought in

10.1–3: The greatness of Ahasuerus and Mordecai. **2:** A standard formula for historical reports in Kings and Chronicles (1 Kings 14.19,29; 2 Chr 25.26; 32.32).

10.4–11.1: Epilogue: Mordecai's dream explained. This addition rounds out the Gk version of Esther with an explanation of Mordecai's dream with which the book began (11.2–12n.). **4:** *These things have come from God*, the theme of Gk Esther (11.12; 4.14; 15.8; 6.1,13; 16.4; see Ps 118.23). **6:** *Light and sun*, 11.11n., 8.16. **8:** *Name*, in ancient times, the essence of one's identity resided largely in one's name. **9:** *Cried out*, see 11.10n. **10:** *Two lots*, not mentioned in 11.2–12. This verse may represent an alternative derivation for Purim. It assumes a different context for the "lots" that give Purim its name (9.23; 3.7n.), understanding them as symbols of destiny (Dan 12.13; Isa 17.14; Jer 13.25). A similar concept appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls (*Manual of Discipline* 2.2,5; 3.1–4.26). **13:** See 9.20–22.

11.1: The Colophon to Gk Esther provides a probable date reference for the Gk translation. *Ptolemy and Cleopatra*, because three kings of Egypt named Ptolemy married women named Cleopatra, the *fourth year* could be 114–13, 78–77, or 49–48 BCE. *Dositheus*, a common Hellenistic name (2 Macc 12.19,35; 3 Macc 1.3); presumably a copyist, he affirms the text's authenticity and his own religious authority. *Letter about Purim*, probably the entire book of Esther. *Lysimachus*, a Greek name (cf. 2 Macc 4.29), very likely the translator of Heb Esther into Gk.