**Additions- “Greek Esther”**

Greek Esther includes religious references about God’s sovereignty and Torah observance, with 6 large blocks not contained in the MT. The result is *Greek Esther*, with its references to the One God, dietary restrictions, and long prayers is a much more religious book, and has a more Jewish flavor than the Hebrew version.

Jerome’s Vulgate treated *Esther* differently from the Greek LXX (Greek Septuagint. Jerome translated Esther from the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT), whichhad only 10 chapters. He then included additional portions from the Greek text (LXX) at the end of the book and numbered them Chapters 11-16, with notes on where to insert the Additions into the story.

Inconsistencies between Hebrew (MT) and Greek (LXX) versions include:

* MT= Mordecai sat at the king’s gate (where he overheard the plot to kill the king); he was not promoted until after Haman’s death; LXX= Mordecai was prominent and served in the king’s court from the outset.
* MT= Haman was an Amalekite (the Jews’ great enemy); LXX = he was a Macedonian (Alexander the Great was Persia’s enemy).
* MT= The king could not sleep and started to read historical records/edicts;

LXX = God prevented the king from sleeping and led him to read the right

edict to learn Mordecai should have been honored but was not.

* MT= In the 2nd edict, Jews were authorized to defend themselves; LXX =

added Jews were permitted to observe their laws.

Luther, who displayed strong anti-Semitic tendencies, hated *Esther* and wanted it removed from the Canon. He is reputed to have said, “I am so hostile to this book (2 Maccabees) and Esther that I could wish they did not exist at all; for they Judaize too greatly and have much pagan impurity.”

Jews loved the book; indeed, many copies of *Greek Esther* have been found from the Middle Ages. Many modern translations include *Greek Esther* with the corresponding parts of the story added. *Greek Esther’s* 6 major Additions include:

A: Mordecai’s apocalyptic dream (LXX= 1:1-18; Vulgate=11:2-12:6) Mordecai was a courtier in Ahasuerus’ court who was taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar 100+ years earlier. Mordecai’s apocalyptic dream, which he understood to be a revelation, was of 2 dragons preparing to fight one another. [The dream reflected regular OT themes: a) The gods of the kingdoms fought the wars of their peoples, and the strongest god won. In I Sam., wars between Jews and their enemies often were framed in terms of YHWH defeating the neighbors’ idols/gods. b) The lowly were exalted; the high-placed were devastated, e.g., God chose David, the youngest, to be king and to defeat Goliath.]

This Addition also revealed Mordecai’s discovery of a plot to kill the king by 2 palace eunuchs. Mordecai disclosed the plot to the king and saved his life. The eunuchs confessed and were executed.

B: 1st Edict (LXX 4:14-18; Vulgate= 13:1-7) This is the purportedly a verbatim text of the fictitious 1st edict (Haman’s), which only was summarized in the MT. The original was written by a Greek and differed greatly from other Persian letters in the Bible. The style was more like that of an Egyptian Jew. It wrongfully referred to King Artaxerxes. [The king here was Ahasuerus/Xerxes.)

Haman drafted the edict and used the king’s seal to authorize it. The king seemed benevolent, but the edict called for a genocide of all Jews. The edict began with flattering statements about the king, saying he was a great king. It continued by declaring Haman, the person second to the king, was a wise counselor. The edict purported to seek unity and peace in the kingdom. Then, it criticized one nation, the Jews, whose laws were not merely different, they required Jews to separate and alienate themselves from others, creating suspicion among the populous. (anti-Semitic propaganda). The edict concluded with an order that all Jews- every man, woman, and child- must be exterminated in one day, the 14th of *Adar*.

C: Prayers of Mordecai & Esther (LXX= 5:12-17; Vulgate 12:8-18 & 14:1-

14). Mordecai’s appropriate short prayer begging God to save Israel, was filled with the theme of God’s sovereignty and attachment to Israel. Mordecai declared he did not refuse to bow to Haman out of pride, but Haman only was a man. Mordecai would not worship anyone but God. Other Jews joined in the prayer

Esther’s prayer was twice as long as Mordecai’s, but she was in greater danger at that moment. Esther prayed and fasted 3 days before going unbidden before the king. [Her prayer resembled Daniel 9 and Judith 9.] She prayed first for the people and then for herself. She revealed her strong religious scruples and spoke of YHWH’s omnipotence, righteousness, and mercy. He was the Creator and only True God, Who chose Israel for Himself, redeemed Israel from Egypt, punished sin, and always was ready to help those in need. God wanted His followers to be humble, to delight only in Him, and to refuse to eat non-kosher food. (The typical view of an orthodox Jew in the IT Period.) Then, she fervently asked God to deliver His people so He, not idols, would be glorified. Only God could save. Esther acknowledged God’s justice in handing Israel over to a foreign power, but she also spoke of God’s election of Israel. She urged God to deliver Israel, so it would be clear He was superior to all idols and only He could save His people. She also expressed her loathing for her uncircumcised Gentile husband and implied she would prefer to maintain Jewish dietary laws rather than follow Persian eating and drinking habits. [The efficacy of the prayers of Mordecai and Esther underscored a key theological development of the IT Period= an individual believer’s personal prayers.]

D: Esther’s unbidden audience with the king (LXX= 6:1-12; Vulgate 15:4-19 replaces 2 verses with 15) This is a dramatic expansion of Esther’s intrusion into the king’s throne room. It is the climactic moment in *Greek Esther*. After prayer and fasting, Esther dressed in her finest, most alluring clothes and jewels and prepared herself for the test. Then she went unbidden before the king. She was gorgeous, but when the king looked at her fiercely, she fainted (like Peter sank when he went out on the water toward Jesus). But God was sufficient. He changed the king’s heart to gentleness and brought Esther victory from defeat. The king descended from the throne, picked her up; took her in his arms, comforted her; and asked what she wanted. God’s power, not Esther’s courage and charm, prevailed.

 E: 2nd Edict (LXX= 8:22-32; Vulgate 16:1-24). This purports to be the full text 2nd edict- the original probably was in Greek by the author of Addition B because no Persian would give such praise to a non-Persian. The edict would have appealed more to Jews in the Diaspora than to those in Palestine because it spoke more to their situation living under a foreign ruler.

The edict intended to neutralize the first. It was primarily a scathing attack on Haman and gave the Jews permission to defend themselves against their enemies. It referred to Haman as a Macedonian (not an Amalekite) who was trying to seize control of the country for Macedonia. (This occurred with Alexander the Great.) The king admitted he should have been more careful about allowing Haman so much power and implied the Jews’ well-being was connected to the country’s good.

1. Interpretation of Mordecai’s dream. (LXX 8:53-58; Vulgate= 10:4-11:1)

This Addition closed the book and was linked to Addition A, interpreting Mordecai’s dream as an eternal cosmic conflict between Jews and non-Jews. It framed all Gentiles as enemies, especially those inside Palestine. (The Jew/ Gentile conflict remained strong throughout the IT Period and the NT. Paul contended with it.) This Addition also discussed the Feast of Purim (“lots”).