

Week 50, Lecture 158.¹ Introduction to Esther: Overview of Ancient Bibles.

Synoptic Chart of Versions of the Old Testament

| The Hebrew Bible | The Greek OT | The Latin Vulgate OT |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Torah Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus Numbers, Deuteronomy</p> <p>Former Prophets Joshua, Judges</p> <p>1-2 Samuel 1-2 Kings</p> <p>Latter Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah</p> <p>Ezekiel</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“The Twelve”</p> <p>Hosea, Joel, Amos Obadiah, Jonah, Micah Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi</p> <p>The Writings Psalms (150), Proverbs, Job The Song of Songs Ruth Lamentations Ecclesiastes Esther Daniel (12 chapters) Ezra, Nehemiah, 1-2 Chronicles</p> | <p>The Law Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus Numbers, Deuteronomy</p> <p>Historical Books Joshua, Judges Ruth 1-2 Kingdoms 3-4 Kingdoms 1-2 Paralipomenon 1 Ezra (1-2 Esdras) 2 Ezra (Ezra), Nehemiah Tobit, Judith, Esther 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees 3 Maccabees, [4 Maccabees]</p> <p>Wisdom Books Psalms (151), Job, Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs Wisdom of Solomon Wisdom of Sirach</p> <p>Prophetic Books</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“The Twelve”</p> <p>Hosea, Amos, Micah Joel, Obadiah, Jonah Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi</p> <p>Isaiah, Jeremiah Baruch Lamentations of Jeremiah Epistle of Jeremiah Ezekiel, Daniel (14 chapters)</p> | <p>The Law Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus Numbers, Deuteronomy</p> <p>Historical Books Joshua, Judges Ruth 1-2 Samuel 1-2 Kings 1-2 Chronicles Ezra, Nehemiah Tobit, Judith, Esther</p> <p>Wisdom Books Psalms (150), Job, Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs Wisdom of Solomon Wisdom of Sirach</p> <p>Prophetic Books Isaiah, Jeremiah Lamentations Baruch (w. Epistle of Jeremiah) Ezekiel, Daniel (14 chapters) “The Twelve” Hosea, Amos, Micah Joel, Obadiah, Jonah Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi</p> <p>1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees</p> |

¹ Lectures numbered consecutively. This is this week's 1st lecture, but its number reflects its place in the **total** sequence.

Global Remarks on the Synoptic Chart. You can list in the front of various study bibles. My list is an attempt to show correspondences.

I had to add considerable blank space to “line things up” as much as possible.

Item in a blue font are not in the Hebrew Bible.

Items highlighted in yellow are Hebrew “Writings” considered “Historical Books” by Christians.

Items highlighted in grey are Hebrew “Writings” considered as “Prophetic Books” by Christians.

Items highlighted in blue are Hebrew “Writings” considered as “Wisdom Books” by Christians.

Structure of the Jewish Bible

Torah

Prophets

Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings

Latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, “The Twelve”

Writings

Psalms (150), Proverbs, Job

5 Scrolls: **The Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther.**

Daniel (12 chapters), Ezra, Nehemiah, 1-2 Chronicles

Implications of Jewish Structure

The Torah of Moses comes first. It is in the place of honor.

The Gospels were not were not the first Christian writings. That honor belongs to the letters of Paul.

The NT places the Gospels first because they have the greatest impact on Christian spirituality.

The Prophets are seen as “commentary” on the Torah

Most scholars think that much of “The Prophets” was actually written **before** the Torah.

Much of the NT was written before the Gospels

The Writings are considered the least important part of the Jewish Scriptures.

Structure of Christian OT

The Law

Historical Books

Wisdom Books

Prophetic Books

Implications of Christian Structure. Christians see the prophets not as “commentary on the Torah.”

Rather, we see them as preparation for the Gospel.

Putting the prophets as the last part of the OT makes them a “lead in” to the Gospels.

The earliest Greek version of the OT is called the “Septuagint”

According to Jewish legend, the translation was made in Alexandria Egypt by **70** scholars. This was about 200 B.C.

The Latin word *septuaginta* means “**seventy**.” The Roman numeral for **70** is **LXX** (50 + 10 + 10)

Often “Septuagint” is abbreviated: **LXX**. Later Greek translations were made by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion

The Christian Structure is reflected in the Greek Bible

All of the books in the Septuagint were written by Jews for Jews.

Originally these books were a library on separate scrolls.

All of the copies of the Septuagint we possess were made by Christians for Christians.

This is why Jews usually consider the Septuagint to be a Christian Book.

Some Details of Structure of the Greek Bible

“The Twelve” in Greek Bibles generally precede the longer prophetic books

Books attributed to Jeremiah placed after Jeremiah in the Greek Bible

Often Christians call “Lamentations” “The Lamentations of Jeremiah”

This book is in the Hebrew “Writings,” not next to Jeremiah in the “Prophets”

Baruch was the scribe of Jeremiah.

His book does not appear in the Hebrew Tanak.

The **Epistle of Jeremiah** is another book placed near Jeremiah in the Greek OT.

Greek Christians regard this as a separate book. Latin Christians include it as part of the book of **Baruch**.

The Books of Maccabees. In contrast to the Greek, these were included at the very end of the Latin OT! This means in the Latin OT, Esther comes after Judith and before Job. The Douay followed this order. Modern Catholic Bibles place 1 & 2 Maccabees immediately after Esther.² This is closer to the Greek order.

The Book of Daniel is OT book closest to the book of Revelation.

That is one reason Christians consider Daniel as a “prophetic book.”

Remember, Jews do not include Daniel among their “prophets.” He belongs in their “Writings.”

Greek Christians consider the stories of Susanna and Bel and the Dragon as part of Daniel.

Chapter 3 of Greek Bibles is 100 verses long.

Week 50, Lecture 159. Introduction to Esther: Overview of Modern Bibles, Part 1.

Post Lecture note: This lecture when over 40 minutes. I have therefore divided it into two lectures.

Introductory Remarks. Gory details about the Bibles that we buy in bookstores. Some “show and tell” I am not sure if I can reproduce the “show and tell” for my on-line students.

The effect of printing. In the ancient world all Bibles were hand-written. No two were exactly alike. They all contained spelling errors, and common scribal errors

Dittography (writing a word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph twice).

Haplography (leaving out a word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph).

Which books were contained in hand-written codices (pl. of codex, a bound volume) often varied.

E.g. Codex Sinaiticus contains 1 & 3 Maccabees, but not 2 Maccabees.

The **order of books** also frequently varied from bible to bible.

So the “order” I gave in the previous lecture is the order of modern printed versions of ancient Bibles.

This printed order reflects the most common ancient order -- but there were often exceptions!

Some Details of the Names of Biblical Books

What Jews call 1 & 2 Samuel, Greeks call 1 & 2 Kingdoms. Douay Bible refers to these as 1 & 2 Kings

What Jews call 1 & 2 Kings, Greeks call 3 & 4 Kingdoms. In the Douay Bible these were 3 & 4 Kings

What Jews call 1-2 Chronicles, Greeks call 1-2 Paralipomenon. In the Douay Bible 1 & 2 Paralipomenon

The Greek word *paralipomenon* means “left-over-stuff.” The plural is *paralipomena*

The Names of the prophets.

Isaias, Jeremias, Zecharias are close enough to Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah not to cause problems.

Osee and Sophonias might not be so obvious -- Hosea and Zephaniah.

BHS, Critical Edition. This is the “critical edition” of the Hebrew bible used by most translators.

Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia is published in Stuttgart by the German Bible Society.

It is based on the Leningrad Codex, the oldest complete manuscript of the entire OT.³

² NAB, NABRE, JB (Jerusalem Bible), New JB.

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leningrad_Codex

Until 1948 the Aleppo Codex held this honor, but it was damaged in anti-Jewish writings.

BHS is a “diplomatic edition.” This means it reproduces even uncorrected errors in spelling, etc.

All “corrective material” is placed in footnotes.

Material from other medieval Hebrew manuscripts; from Qumran, from ancient translations, scholarly guesses.

By contrast, most printed editions of the **NT are “eclectic,”** they **select** the best text from various manuscripts.

They try to put all of the **mistakes** in footnotes, and get the text on the page as close to original as possible.

BUT -- this wonderful text has never been actually used by a single worshipping community!

Esther is found between Lamentations and Daniel. **Pass around BHS.**

Jewish Study Bible, JPS Tanakh Translation

When I was a seminarian, I was never exposed to a Jewish Bible (Tanak / Tanakh) in English

Hebrew Books in Jewish Order

Esther is part of “The Writings,” the final section, between Lamentations and Daniel.

In the *JSB* it is found on pages 1623-1639 (of 1825 pages). **Pass around JSB.**

Remarks on “Holding Hard Copy” in One’s Hand.

Alas, I have not found a way to duplicate this “show-and-tell” experience for my online students!

The Greek Bible. Pass around the UBS LXX.

Septuaginta, Rahlfs, based on 3 important manuscripts. Published by the United Bible Societies.

This is the basis of the Greek OT that appears in most bible software programs

Göttingen Septuagint -- compares hundreds of manuscripts

An ongoing project. Currently 67 volumes. Cost: thousands of dollars.

An electronic version is now available -- only \$699.99 from Logos! **Pass around the UBS LXX.**

English Translations of the Septuagint

When I was a seminarian, the only English LXX translation was the 19th century work by **Sir Lancelot Brenton.**⁴

I stumbled on it in the library, and bought myself a copy. Most guys didn’t know it existed.

Most seminarians -- then and now -- have never seen an English translation of a Greek Bible.

Pass around a copy of Brenton’s translation.

Now we have two modern translations

NETS (New English Translation of the Septuagint)

A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title. Edited by Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright. Oxford University Press, 2007.

It is available **for free** online: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/>

There are **two** Greek versions of Esther, and NETS prints them both.

SAAS (St. Athanasius Academy Septuagint.), the NT is from the NKJV.⁵

Pass around NETS & Orthodox Study Bible. (Break here: 21:14 before edits)

I divided the lecture here to keep downloading time acceptable for those with slow connections.

Please continue with the next lecture.

⁴ Sir Lancelot Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*, Zondervan, 1982 reprint of 1851 original published by Samuel Bagster & Sons of London.

⁵ *The Orthodox Study Bible*, prepared by St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology, Thomas Nelson, 2008. The NT of this Bible is from the New KJV.

Week 50, Lecture 160. Introduction to Esther: Overview of Modern Bibles, Part 2.

The previous lecture was too long, so I divided it at this point.

Where is Esther in the Greek Bible? It appears among the “Historical Books,” after **2 Esdras** and before **Judith**. **1 & 2 Esdras** come after 1-2 Paralipomenon / 1-2 Supplements [NETS] (= 1-2 Chronicles)

After **Judith** comes: **Tobit**, then **1, 2, & 3 Maccabees**. Then comes **Psalms**.

A Protestant will be in “unfamiliar territory” in one of these Septuagint translations!

Catholic Bibles do not contain **1 & 2 Esdras** or **3 Maccabees** either, so we can also easily “get lost” around Judith.

The Latin Bible. The earliest Latin Bible is called “Old Latin” (O.L.), or the Vetus Latina (V.L.)

This translation was made **from the Greek** Septuagint.

The Latin Vulgate was translated by St. Jerome in the late 4th century. Jerome translated **from the Hebrew**.

The project was commissioned by Pope Damasus I in 382. ⁶

Douay-Rheims Bible is named for the 2 cities in France where it was translated.

The NT was translated at Rheims (Reims) in 1582. The OT at Douay (Douai) in 1609-1610.

The Douay Bible is a literal translation of what Jerome wrote. (It is a good “pony!”)

Order of the Latin Bible

In general, the Latin Bible follows the order of the Greek Bible. This order affects both Catholic & Protestant Bibles. Modern Catholic Bibles place Esther after **Judith** and before **1 Maccabees**.

However in the Vulgate, Esther comes immediately before Job, and 1 & 2 Maccabees are the very last books --

Even after the Prophets! Thus “messing up” the “Christian Structure” found in the LXX.

To this day, the Nova Vulgata, the “official Bible” of the Catholic Church, places 1&2 Maccabees at end of OT.⁷

Perhaps this is why the NAB, NABRE, JB and NJB place 1 & 2 Maccabees after Esther, in the Greek order.

Structure of Jerome’s Translation

Saint Jerome had such respect for the Hebrew, that he translated the 10 Hebrew chapters just as he found them.

He put all of the Greek materials (see below) as an appendix, chapters 11-16. **Esther is 16 chapters in the Vulgate.**

In critical editions of the Latin Bible, every one of these verses is marked with an obelus.

This is ancient scribal shorthand for “I am not sure if this verse is genuine.”

Catholic translations do **not** print these obeli! **Pass around Vulgate with ribbon for Esther (Hester in Latin)**

Hebrew Esther vs. Greek Esther

We will see that the book of Esther never mentions the name of God.

We will see that there was an argument among rabbis as to whether or not this book was canonical.

Pious scribes inserted materials into the book to make it more “religious.”

Perhaps some of this was written in Hebrew??? If so, it survives only in Greek.

Greek Bibles and the “Extra” Material

Versification was done on the Latin Bible. The ancient manuscripts were made before verses were invented.

The Latin Vulgate and the “Extra” Material. We have seen that Jerome added them as an appendix.

However, because these materials had been **inserted** into the Greek, Jerome had to **excerpt them** for his appendix.

So now these verse were included, but **not** in Greek order. Douay has this 16-chapter format. **Pass around Douay.**

The Location of Esther in English Bibles. Protestant Bibles -- found between Nehemiah and Job. **Pass around KJV.**

Greek Orthodox Bibles: we have seen these. Catholic Bibles: we have seen these

⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vulgate>

⁷ http://www.vatican.va/archive/bible/nova_vulgata/documents/nova-vulgata_vetus-testamentum_lt.html

“Catholic Editions” of Ecumenical Translations. E.g., RSV, Catholic Edition, NRSV, CE. Same as Catholic Bibles.

Ecumenical Translation, Protestant Bible, “with Apocrypha.” There will **two copies** of Esther. One will be called “Esther,” and will be found in the usual place for Protestant Bibles. The other will be called “Greek Esther,” and will be found wherever the “Apocrypha” is located. For some Bibles, this will be **between** the OT and the NT; in others it will be **after** the NT. Sometimes **only** the Greek additions are reproduced.

RSV with Apocrypha (Greek Esther has only the Greek additions, with references, such as: Esther 1:1-3:13 follows here in the Greek.

Others (e.g., NEB w. Apocrypha, and the NRSV w. Apocrypha)

Versification Alternatives in Esther in English Bibles

Chapter-Verse Order of Esther in NAB / NABRE:

Chapter A, Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 3:1-13, Chapter B, Chapter 3:14-15, Chapter 4, Chapter C, Chapter D, etc. The **letter chapters** represent **Greek material**; the **number chapters** represent **Hebrew Material**.

Chapter-Verse Order of Esther in the Jerusalem Bible.

Before verse 1:1 comes: 1:1a, 1:1b, 1:1c, 1:1d . . . to 1:1r. Then comes verse 1:1, 1:2, 1:3, etc.

Chapter-Verse Order of Esther in the New English Bible. (Using the chapter numbers from Jerome’s “appendix.”)

Chapter 11, Chapter 12, then Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 3:1-13, Chapter 13, etc.

Final Observations. Some bibles **combine these systems**, using more than one of them at the same time! AND, good bible software will line up verse of different translations, no matter what system they use. But then you miss all the fun of finding out their location in “hard copy!”

The following alternatives are illustrated in the chart on the final page.

I did not have the chart ready for the class. I might do this part of the lecture over next week.

Week 50 , Lecture 161. Introduction to Esther, Concluded.

Review. In the last lecture I made a mess of versification in Esther. Let's try that again!

Don't go through the chart in detail during the lecture. Give a brief summary.

| Versification Alternatives in Esther in English Bibles | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| #1 | #2 | #3 | #4 | #5 | #6 | #7 |
| KJV | Douay | NABRE | NEB w. Apoc. Greek Esther | NRSV w. Apoc. Greek Esther | SAAS | JB |
| | | Chapter A A:1-17 | 11:2-11:12 12:1-6 | Addition A 11:2-12 12:1-6 End of A | 1:1a-1l 1:1m-1r | 1a, 11:2 - 1l, 11:12 1m, 12:1 - 1r 12:6 |
| 1:1-22 2:1-23 3:1-13 | 1:1-22 2:1-23 3:1-13 | 1:1-22 2:1-23 3:1-13 | 1:1-22 2:1-23 3:1-13 | 1:1-22 2:1-23 3:1-13 | 1:1-22 2:1-23 3:1-13 | 1:1-22 2:1-23 3:1-13 |
| | | Chapter B B:1-7 | | Addition B 13:1-7 End of B | 3:13a-13g | |
| 3:14-15 4:1-17 | 3:14-15 4:1-17 | 3:14-15 4:1-17 | 3:14-15 4:1-17 | 3:14-15 4:1-17 | 3:14-15 4:1-17 | 3:14-15 4:1-17 |
| | | Chapter C C:1-30 | 13:8-18 14:1-19 | Addition C 13:8-18 14:1-19 End of C | 4:17a-17i 4:17j-17x | 4:17a, 13:8 - 17i, 13:18 4:17k, 14:1 - 17z, 14:19 |
| | | Chapter D D:1-16 | 15:1-16 | Addition D 15:1-16 End of D | 5:1a-1f, 2a-2b | 5:1 (Heb.) 5:1a, 15:4 - 5:1f, 15:13 5:2 (Heb.) 15:14-15 5:2a, 15:16 - 2b, 15:19 |
| 5:1-14 6:1-14 7:1-10 8:1-12 | 5:1-14 6:1-14 7:1-10 8:1-12 | 5:1-14 6:1-14 7:1-10 8:1-12 | 5:1-14 6:1-14 7:1-10 8:1-12 | 5:1-14 6:1-14 7:1-10 8:1-12 | 5:1-14 6:1-14 7:1-10 8:1-12 | 5:3-14 6:1-14 7:1-10 8:1-12 |
| | | Chapter E E:1-24 | 16:1-24 | Addition E 16:1-24 End of E | 8:12a-12u | 8:12a, 16:1 - 8:12v, 16:24 |
| 8:13-17 9:1-32 10:1-3 | 8:13-17 9:1-32 10:1-3 | 8:13-17 9:1-32 10:1-3 | 8:13-17 9:1-32 10:1-3 | 8:13-17 9:1-32 10:1-3 | 8:13-17 9:1-32 10:1-3 | 8:13-17 9:1-32 10:1-3 |
| | | Chapter F F:1-10 | 10:4-13 11:1 | Addition F 10:4-13 11:1 End of F | 10:3a-3j 10:3k | 10:3a, 10:4 - 10:3k, 10:13 10:3l, 11:1 |
| | 10:4-13 | | | | | |
| | 11:1-12 | | | | | |
| | 12:1-6 | | | | | |
| | 13:1-18 | | | | | |
| | 14:1-19 | | | | | |
| | 15:1-19 | | | | | |
| | 16:1-24 | | | | | |

Brief Summary of Main Points illustrated by the Chart.

There are several versification alternatives of Esther in English Bibles that include the verses of Greek Esther.

Ones is illustrated by the NAB & NABRE:

Chapter A, Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 3:1-13, Chapter B, Chapter 3:14-15, Chapter 4, Chapter C, Chapter D, etc. The **letter chapters** represent **Greek material**; the **number chapters** represent **Hebrew Material**.

A second option is illustrated by the Jerusalem Bible.

Before verse 1:1 comes: 1:1a, 1:1b, 1:1c, 1:1d . . . to 1:1r. Then comes verse 1:1, 1:2, 1:3, etc.

A third option is illustrated by the New English Bible.

This method uses the chapter & verse numbers from Jerome's "appendix."
Chapter 11, Chapter 12, then Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 3:1-13, Chapter 13, etc.

Finally, some bibles **combine** these systems, using more than one of them at the same time! **End of Summary.**

Detailed information, relating to the chart. Do not include this in the lecture.

Alternative 1. Examples: **Tanakh, KJV, RSV, NRSV, NIV, NET**, and many others. In fact, **all Jewish and all Protestant Bibles** fit into this column. This is the simplest version: these Bibles simply reproduce the Hebrew version of Esther without the Greek additions.

Alternative 2. Example: **Douay-Rheims**. This version is almost as simple as Alternative 1. It simply follows the 16 chapters of Esther in Jerome's Vulgate. Jerome "excerpted" from his translation the Greek text of all the verse that did not have underlying Hebrew. Then he put each passage that he excerpted in a separate chapter as an "appendix" to his book. [In doing this, he was sampling "excerpting" passages that scribes had "inserted" into Esther.] The problem is, that if one reads the book in this order, the sections after the "happy ending" in 10:3 now have no narrative context in which they make sense.

Jerome included these verses because Pope Damasus, who as paying for the project, insisted that they be included. Jerome reverence for *hebraica veritas* (Hebrew truth) makes him the "patron saint" of the many Protestant translations which do not include these pious additions to the Hebrew text.

Alternative 3. Examples: **NAB, NABRE, NETS**. The Greek additions are given letters A, B, C, D, E, & F.

Alternative 4. Example: **NEB w. Apocrypha, Greek Esther**. "Greek Esther" is included in the section entitled "The New English Bible: The Apocrypha," which is located between the OT and the NT. The introduction states: "The **order followed** is that of the Greek text, but the chapter and **verse numbers** are made to conform to the Authorized Version." That is the verse numbers come ultimately from Jerome's Latin Vulgate.

Alternative 5. Example: **NRSV w. Apocrypha, Greek Esther**. Each addition is given the same letter as in **Alternative 3**, not only at the beginning, but also at the end of each lettered section. However the chapter and verse numbers follow the same system as **Alternative 4**, i.e., they ultimately come from the Latin Vulgate.

Alternative 6. Example: **SAAS**. This follows the practice of the UBS edition of the Septuagint. It gives each Greek verse the same number as the preceding Hebrew verse, but adds a letter to it. So if the preceding Hebrew verse was 3:13, then we will get verses 13a, 13b, 13c, 13d, 13e, 13f, and 13g before we get verse 14.

Alternative 7. Example. **JB, NJB**. This method **combines Alternatives 3 & 4**. The **verse-accompanying letters** from Alternative 6 (e.g., 13a, 13b, etc.) are in regular type. The chapter and verse numbers from Alternative 3 are in *italic type*. Furthermore, in the JB / NJB translations, *all of the verses translated from the Greek are in italic type*.

End of Detailed Description of Chart. Pick up lecture on next page.

Sources for the Rest of the Lecture

Adele Berlin, “Esther,” *The Jewish Study Bible: Tanakh Translation* (Oxford, 2004) 1623-1639.

Demetrius Dumm, “Esther,” *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Prentice Hall, 1990) 568-577.

Leslie J. Hoppe, “Esther,” *The Catholic Study Bible: New American Bible Revised Edition*, Second Edition (Oxford, 2011) Reading Guide, pages 222-226). [“Leslie” is a male scripture scholar, a Catholic priest.]

Mary Joan Winn Leith, “Esther (The Greek Version Containing Additional Chapters),” *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha, An Ecumenical Study Bible* (Oxford, 2010), 1411-1426.

Commentators Comment on Different Versions of Esther. Berlin comments only on the **Hebrew version**.

The comments of Dumm and Hoppe are a **mixture of Hebrew Esther & Greek Esther**.

They comment on the Hebrew version when it is available.

They comment on the Greek version **only** when no Hebrew text is available.

Winn Leith comments on **Greek Esther**, not on the Hebrew text. Such commentaries are **rare**.

Other examples would included the notes to the NETS and the SAAS translations of the LXX.

Date. Everyone dates Esther to the **post-Exilic** period, i.e., after 500 B.C.

It is **possible** that stories about Esther and Mordecai began circulating at this time.

We have **absolutely no evidence** for oral stories at this early date.

There never was a Jewish queen in the Persian Empire.

Berlin (1625) finds the most likely date of the book “sometime between 400-300 B.C.”

This would be toward the end of the “Persian Period.”

The Persians conquered the Babylonians, and allowed the Jews to return from Exile. Hence the name.

Dumm thinks it is more likely the book was composed in the Greek Period, i.e., after 300 B.C.

Alexander the Great, who conquered the Persians, died in 323 B.C.

Date of the Greek Additions (190 B.C. - 93 A.D.)

Some of these additions were possibly originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic.

Some of them were almost certainly composed in Greek. The earliest date I have seen for these is 190 B.C.

Winn Leith (1411) gives the latest possible date as 93 CE (A.D.), when they were used by Josephus.

Esther and Purim. The exact relationship is disputed. Purim -- the only Jewish feast not mentioned in the Torah.

Kind of Jewish Mardi-Gras, complete with “partying, excessive drinking, carnivals, masquerades, and a general sense of frivolity uncharacteristic of Jewish festivals” (Berlin 1623).

Literary Form. Berlin argues that Esther is a type of “low comedy,” full of bawdiness and slapstick humor.

Think of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. I know there must also be examples in Shakespeare.

Berlin comments on the absence of God’s name, and other features of Jewish religion.

The best explanation for their absence, especially the absence of God’s name, is that the story is so comic, at times bordering on lewd, such reticence about things religious is preferable, lest religion be debauched.⁸

Serious Comedy.

The “serious side” of this comedy is that it raises the issues of Anti-Semitism faced by Jews in the diaspora.

Modern analogies to “serious comedies” would be *M.A.S.H.* and *All in the Family*. [I’m dating myself!]

⁸ Adele Berlin, “Esther,” *Jewish Study Bible*, 1624.

Literary Form of Greek Esther

Probably “novella” or “historical fiction” would better categorize the literary genre of Greek Esther.

Hebrew Esther focused on the courage & resourcefulness of Esther and Mordecai.

Greek Esther puts the emphasis on the intervention of God -- who is not even mentioned in the Hebrew.

The result is

. . . not only is the subtlety of the Hebr story lost but the religious emphasis is so overdone as to be somewhat tedious. The introduction of an **apocalyptic** perspective further emphasizes the helplessness of [humans], and because everything is painted in black and white, the subtle colorings of the original are overwhelmed. Finally the Gk sections move away from the broad-mindedness of the original by suggesting narrow ethnic perspectives and by adopting anti-Gentile attitudes.⁹

Apocalyptic: Reminder (from when we did Daniel). Apocalyptic thought in a nutshell

The world is going to hell in a handbasket. There are bad guys and good guys, and the bad guys are definitely winning. The situation is so bad even God cannot fix it. He is going to completely smash the world, and start over.

And by the way, all of this is going to happen **very soon**.

The 20th century Catholic version of Apocalyptic was not “The Rapture.” It was tied to the visionaries of Fatima.

Now we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of Fatima. I’m not sure we want to celebrate Catholic Apocalyptic!

St. Jerome’s “Prologue to Esther.” The Latin original is an introduction in the critical edition of the Vulgate.¹⁰

The Book of Esther, as it stands, has been corrupted by various translators. I have more accurately translated this book drawing word for word on the archives of the Hebrews. The common edition [the “Old Latin”] drags the book hither and yon by knotted ropes of words, adding things which could have been spoken or heard on the spur of the moment [OR according to the occasion]. As is common in scholarly discussions, once a theme has been taken up, there is an investigation concerning which words (the author) who has suffered injury had used, or which words (the translator) who caused the injury had used.

Jerome continues with Remarks to Paula & Eustochium.

As for you, Paula and Eustochium, because you have busied yourselves to enter the libraries of the Hebrews, and have become fully aware of the battles of the interpreters, and are in possession of (a copy of) the Hebrew book of Esther, examine each word of our translation. In this way you will be able to acknowledge that I have added absolutely nothing, but that I have simply and faithfully translated the Hebrew story into the Latin language, exactly as it is found in the Hebrew. We are neither affected by human praise, nor do we fear vituperation. Since we take care to please God, we have no fear of human threats, for God “scatters the bones of those who desire human praise” (Ps 52:6) and, according to the Apostle, people who are like this are “not able to be servants of Christ” (Gal. 1:10). **My translation.**

Comments on the Prologue

I thought I would include this because we have some sisters in our live audience.

Their presence is continuing an ancient Catholic tradition of women who study scripture.

Also, they show us that the great saint and scholar was not enthusiastic about including the Greek.

This can give us Catholics some sympathy for the views of our Protestant brothers and sisters.

⁹ Demetrius Dumm, “Esther,” *NJBC*, 576-577.

¹⁰ *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, edited by Robert Weber, et al. (Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2008) page 712.