

HELLENIZATIONS IN JOSEPHUS' VERSION OF ESTHER

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In his retelling of the Biblical book of Esther, Josephus has made a number of changes which would render his work more attractive to his Greek readers and which would defend the Jewish people against anti-Semitic propaganda. In many of these additions and deletions Josephus departs from the Greek versions¹ and from midrashic

¹ The question as to the Greek text that Josephus had before him for the narrative of Esther is extremely complex. H. Bloch, *Die Quellen des Flavius Josephus* (Leipzig 1879) 78–79, concludes that Josephus was following the Septuagint; but while it is true that at times Josephus agrees with the Septuagint, at other times he agrees with the Old Latin, and at still other times with the Lucianic version, as noted by B. R. Motzo, "Il testo di Ester in Giuseppe," *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 4 (1928) 84–105. G. Hölscher, *Die Quellen des Josephus für die Zeit vom Exil bis zum jüdischen Kriege* (Leipzig 1904) 52, seeking a single source to explain the many deviations of Josephus from all the known sources, declares that it is very probable that for the Book of Esther Josephus' sole source was the work of Alexander Polyhistor *On the Jews*; but inasmuch as among the fragments of his work that have survived in Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius not a single one deals with any aspect of the Esther story, this suggestion is difficult to accept. E. J. Bickerman, "Notes on the Greek Book of Esther," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 20 (1951) 104, concludes that Josephus was following a particular recension of the Greek Esther, namely the one that was popular among the Jews in Rome, where Josephus wrote his *Antiquities*, but that this version is now lost. I. Lévy, "La Repudiation de Vasti," *Actes du XXI^e Congrès International des Orientalistes* [1948] (Paris 1949) 114, goes so far as to postulate that the Book of Esther was originally composed in Greek in substantially the form that it appears in Josephus, and that our Hebrew text is an extract from it. R. M. Seyberlich, "Esther in der Septuaginta und bei Flavius Josephus," *Neue Beiträge zur Geschichte der Alten Welt* (ed. E. C. Welskopf) 1 (1964) 363–66, remarking that the second edict of King Ahasuerus is found only in Josephus (*Ant.* 11.273–83) and in the Aramaic *Targum Sheni* 8.12, considers the possibility that Josephus' source may have been an Aramaic Targum-like paraphrase, but he dismisses this by noting that since Josephus, at the time of the completion of the *Antiquities*, had spent twenty years in Rome, it is improbable that he used an Aramaic Targum, but that he had instead recalled some details of Pharisaic midrashim that he had heard in his earlier years. But the text of the edict in Josephus is actually a close paraphrase of Addition E of the Septuagint version; and in view of the continuing

tradition, although he is generally well aware of them, thus indicating the deliberate nature of these changes.

Martin Braun, in his detailed analysis of Josephus' rehandling of the episode of Joseph and Potiphar's wife,² shows how a Biblical narrative has become a Hellenistic romance. This relationship between historiography and romance had already been stressed by Schwartz,³ who had argued that the Greek romances had their origin in the fusion of Alexandrian love elegies and Hellenistic historiography. In view of the parallels between the stories of Joseph and Esther,⁴ notably in

contacts between the Jewish communities of Palestine and Rome throughout this period, it seems likely that Josephus would have access to an Aramaic Targum. Again, the most careful study of Josephus' use of Scripture has been made by H. St. J. Thackeray; and his conclusion, in *Josephus the Man and the Historian* (New York 1929; reprinted 1967) 81, is that Josephus in his paraphrase of the Bible in the *Antiquities* employed at least two texts, one in a Semitic language (either Hebrew or Aramaic), the other in Greek. The fact that when, as Thackeray and J. A. Montgomery (*The Book of Kings* [*International Critical Commentary*, ed. H. S. Gehman; New York 1951] 18), S. Jellicoe (*The Septuagint and Modern Study* [Oxford 1968] 288), and others have demonstrated, the Septuagint and the Hebrew original were available to him, he preferred at times a Lucianic, or rather proto-Lucianic, text or a Targumic paraphrase or a midrashic tradition indicates that he attempted to remold the Biblical text into a specific pattern; and the Hellenizations described in this paper will, it is hoped, help to define that pattern. The recent work by R. J. H. Shutt, *Studies in Josephus* (London 1961) 79–109, investigating Josephus' indebtedness to various classical authors, concludes that Josephus sometimes deliberately imitates them, but that he is, on the whole, quite independent in his use of them; the same, to judge from Josephus' paraphrase of the *Letter of Aristaeas* (*Ant.* 12.12–118) and of I Maccabees (*Ant.* 12.240–13.212) is probably true of his Biblical paraphrases as well.

² M. Braun, *Griechischer Roman und Hellenistische Geschichtsschreibung* (Frankfurt am Main 1934). For other examples of Josephus' rewriting of the Bible see my "Hellenizations in Josephus' Portrayal of Man's Decline," in J. Neusner, ed., *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough* (Leiden 1968) 336–53; and my "Abraham the Greek Philosopher in Josephus," *TAPA* 99 (1968) 143–56.

³ E. Schwartz, *Fünf Vorträge über den griechischen Roman* (Berlin 1896) 154. On the emotional qualities, so characteristic of the novels, that mark Hellenistic historiography, see P. Scheller, *De Hellenistica Historiae Conscribendae Arte* (Leipzig 1911) 79 ff. Some of the motifs in the romances, such as travel and adventure, though not love, are found in Egyptian narratives and may have their origin there. See G. Giangrande, "On the Origins of the Greek Romance," *Eranos* 60 (1962) 143, n. 1. To judge from the story of Gyges in Herodotus and Plato and from Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* some motifs may well have arisen in the Near East.

⁴ See L. A. Rosenthal, "Die Josephsgeschichte, mit den Büchern Ester und Daniel verglichen," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 15 (1895) 278–84, and "Nochmals der Vergleich Ester, Joseph-Daniel," *ibid.* 17 (1897) 125–28; P. Riessler, "Zu Rosenthal's Aufsatz, Bd. XV, S. 278 ff.," *ibid.* 16 (1896) 182; and M. Gan, "The Book of Esther in the Light of the Story of Joseph in Egypt" [in Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 31 (1961–62)

presenting Israelites who through their beauty and high position in a foreign royal court rescue their people from misfortune; and in view of similar parallels with the story of Judith in the Apocrypha,⁵ which Wilamowitz⁶ calls a typical Hellenistic novel, with its heroine-savior and its erotic aspect, one should not be surprised to discover that Josephus has added a number of Hellenizations to his version of the Esther narrative,⁷ including several touches characteristic of Hellenistic novels.⁸ While it is true, despite Hoschander,⁹ that several of Josephus' additions are also paralleled in rabbinic midrashim, most of them are not to be found, despite Paton,¹⁰ in the Talmudic literature; and even those that do appear seem deliberately to have been selected by Josephus because they served his purpose.

The heroine in Greek novels is usually portrayed as being of lofty, often royal, ancestry, though this ancestry is not revealed in many cases until late in the story. Similarly, Josephus starts his narrative of

144-49. Gan notes more precise parallels: in both stories there are two attendants who sin against the king, and in both the heroes remain forgotten despite the confirmation of their discoveries. Moreover, Gan points to a number of parallel expressions and figures of speech restricted to the stories of Joseph and Esther. S. Talmon, "'Wisdom' in the Book of Esther," *Vetus Testamentum* 13 (1963) 454-55, describes both stories as "historicized wisdom tales."

⁵ See R. Stiehl, "Das Buch Esther," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 53 (1956) 4-22; and H. Bardtke, *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*³ 3 (1958) 703-8.

⁶ U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Die Griechische und Lateinische Literatur und Sprache*³ (Leipzig 1912) 189.

⁷ The Book of Esther is classified as a historical novel by H. Gunkel, *Esther* (Tübingen 1916) 75-76; O. Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*² (Tübingen 1956) 628-29; A. Bentzen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*⁴ (Copenhagen 1958) 2.192-95; and Y. Kaufmann, *Toledoth Ha'emunah Ha-Yisre'elith*³ (Tel Aviv 1963) 4.1.439-48. But H. Cazelles, "Note sur la Composition du Rouleau d'Esther," *Festschrift für H. Junker* (Trier 1961) 20, has rightly challenged this classification, since the marriage of Esther is not the center of interest of the work and since the description has little of the sentimental in it, this incident being merely the preamble to the deliverance of the Jews. It is Josephus who by his changes gives the narrative much more of the appearance of an historical novel.

⁸ Despite the fact that the earliest complete extant Greek novel probably dates from the second century, a period somewhat later than Josephus, the discovery of the fragmentary Ninus romance, dating from no later than the first century C.E. and perhaps a hundred years earlier, shows that the typical motifs of these novels must go back to an earlier period. See B. E. Perry, *The Ancient Romances* (Berkeley 1967) 153-54.

⁹ J. Hoschander, *The Book of Esther in the Light of History* (Philadelphia 1923) 7, n. 11.

¹⁰ L. B. Paton, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Esther* (New York 1908) 39.

Esther by describing her (*Ant.* 11.185) as being of royal family (τοῦ γένους . . . τοῦ βασιλικοῦ). To be sure, in the Bible itself, Mordecai, her uncle (or cousin), is described (Esther 2.5) as being a descendant of Shimei, the son of Kish; and rabbinic tradition¹¹ identified this Kish as the father of King Saul. But if Mordecai's royal ancestry is here being referred to, it would seem more reasonable to refer to King Saul and not to Saul's father. The fact that Josephus follows the rabbinic tradition¹² in ascribing royal ancestry to Mordecai (and consequently to Esther) seems deliberate and gives his heroine one of the characteristic features found in Hellenistic novels.¹³ Josephus stresses Mordecai's prominence by noting (*Ant.* 11.198) that not only was he, as the Bible (Esther 2.5) says, of the tribe of Benjamin, but that he was one of the chief men among the Jews (τῶν δὲ πρώτων παρὰ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις).¹⁴

It is characteristic of the Hellenistic novel to build up the stature of the hero and of the heroine. This is true of Josephus' narrative also, for he exalts the character of Esther and Mordecai. In reading the Biblical narrative, one might conclude that Hegai, the eunuch in charge of the king's harem, showed special favoritism to Esther, since we read (Esther 2.9) that "he advanced her and her maidens to the best place in the house of the women." Josephus is careful to avoid this charge of special treatment by omitting this statement and by saying merely that she received every attention. He likewise avoids the possible charge of undue favoritism shown by Hegai to Esther by omitting mention of Esther's refusal to take anything when she goes to see Ahasuerus except what Hegai recommends. A possible implication in the Biblical narrative is that Esther relied upon Hegai

¹¹ See L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia 1909-38) 4.381 ff. and 6.458; and S. Rappaport, *Agada und Exegese bei Flavius Josephus* (Vienna 1930) 68, no. 282, and 134, n. 277. Cf. Babylonian Talmud, *Megillah* 13a.

¹² Mordecai is spoken of by the rabbis as being as prominent among his contemporaries as Moses was among his. See Rappaport (above, note 9) 68, no. 283, and 135, n. 278, for citations.

¹³ See T. R. Goethals, *The Aethiopica of Heliodorus: A Critical Study* (diss., Columbia Univ. 1959) 1 ff.

¹⁴ Similarly, to give stature to his heroes, Josephus adds the extra-Biblical details (*Ant.* 5.213 and 5.276) that Gideon's father and Samson's father were among the foremost (ἐν ὀλίγοις ἄριστος) among the tribes of Manasseh and Dan respectively. Similar details are found with regard to Joseph (*Ant.* 2.9), Jephthah (5.257), Kish (6.45), and Gedaliah (10.155).

because of the favoritism that he had shown her; Josephus avoids this completely. The question of Esther's relationship with Ahasuerus before their marriage (Esther 2.16) is avoided by Josephus (*Ant.* 11.202) by having him make her his wife lawfully (*νομίμως*) immediately after falling in love with her.

In the Biblical narrative Esther is completely subordinated, at least at the beginning of the tale, to Mordecai. But Josephus wants to focus attention on Esther, and so he omits (*Ant.* 11.203) such a statement as (Esther 2.20) "Esther did the command of Mordecai, just as when she was brought up by him."

Esther's stature would likewise be decreased if Josephus had inserted the second gathering of the virgins that is mentioned in the Bible (Esther 2.19). The implication of this gathering is that Ahasuerus, even after making Esther his queen, was not content with her but sought new concubines. Josephus, like the Septuagint, avoids such an implication by omitting the episode completely (*Ant.* 11.204).

Esther's courage is exalted by Josephus' added remark (*Ant.* 11.205) that around King Ahasuerus' throne stood men with axes to punish those who approached the throne without being summoned. Hence, when Esther later decides to approach Ahasuerus on behalf of her people, even though she has not been summoned for a month, we see that she displays great courage. The drama is built up by Mordecai's stern injunction to Esther (*Ant.* 11.225), amplifying the simple Biblical statement (Esther 4.8) that she should petition the king on behalf of her people, that she should not consider it beneath her dignity (*ἀδοξῆσαι*) to put on humble dress and to intercede for the Jews.

As co-hero of the narrative, Mordecai must not have anything unbecoming associated with him. In the Biblical account (Esther 2.19) we read: "And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, and Mordecai sat in the king's gate." As Paton¹⁵ remarks, the connection of Mordecai's sitting in the king's gate with the gathering of the virgins is not clear. To suppose, as do the older versions and many commentators, that Mordecai was a royal official who had charge of the reception of the virgins would be to ascribe

¹⁵ Paton (above, note 10) 188.

something unbecoming to Mordecai; Josephus avoids this by omitting mention of the gathering of the virgins (*Ant.* 11.204).¹⁶

Mordecai's relationship with the king, even in the early days of Esther's reign, is made closer by Josephus. Thus after Mordecai saves Ahasuerus' life by revealing the conspiracy of Bigthan and Teresh, whereas the Bible (*Esther* 2.23) merely records that the deed was noted in the royal book of chronicles, Josephus (*Ant.* 11.208) adds that the king ordered that he remain in the palace as a very close (*ἀναγκαιότατον*) friend (*φίλον*) of the king.

One might well question why Mordecai did not prostrate himself before Haman. The Bible (*Esther* 3.2) does not give an explanation but merely states the fact. Josephus, however (*Ant.* 11.210), does explain that Mordecai did so because of his wisdom (*σοφίαν*)¹⁷ and his native law (*τὸν οἰκοθεν αὐτοῦ νόμον*), which forbade such prostration before any man. There is no such Jewish law, as Bickerman¹⁸ has noted, but this explanation would make a particular appeal to a Greek audience, which might well recall, for example, the refusal of the Spartan ambassadors to prostrate themselves before Xerxes (*Herodotus* 7.136) as violating their notion of freedom. Mordecai's refusal to bow down is made more dramatic by Josephus' omission of the initial attempt (*Esther* 3.3-4) of the king's servants to get Mordecai to agree to prostrate himself; in Josephus (*Ant.* 11.210) Haman himself observes this directly and inquires from what people he comes.

Another characteristic of Josephus' novelistic treatment is his concern with the beauty of women. Josephus exaggerates the beauty of a number of women in his *Antiquities*—Rachel (*Ant.* 1.288), Samson's mother (5.276), Bath-sheba (7.130), and David's daughter Tamar (7.162). Similarly, Vashti, who in the Bible (*Esther* 1.11) is

¹⁶ On questions connected with Mordecai's lingering before the palace each day see Hoschander (above, note 7) 20-21, who finds no difficulty in accepting the Biblical account.

¹⁷ Mordecai's knowledge is also stressed by the rabbis (see Ginzberg [above, note 11] 4.382), who remark that as a member of the Sanhedrin, he knew seventy languages, which knowledge enabled him to understand the conversation of Bigthan and Teresh when they were plotting against the king, and that he maintained an academy (Ginzberg [above, note 11] 4.383), but the compliment of calling Mordecai wise for not bowing down before Haman is unique with Josephus.

¹⁸ E. J. Bickerman, *Four Strange Books of the Bible: Jonah, Daniel, Koheleth, Esther* (New York 1968) 179.

described merely as "fair to look on," is spoken of by Josephus (*Ant.* 11.190) as one who "surpassed all women in beauty" (*κάλλει τὰς γυναικας ἀπάσας ὑπερβάλλουσιν*). Again, Ahasuerus' search for fair young virgins (2.3) to be gathered together by his officers from all the provinces of his kingdom becomes a world-wide beauty contest, extended to the entire habitable (*οἰκουμένην*) world. Furthermore, whereas the rabbis¹⁹ remark that Esther was not a real beauty but rather was a seventy-five-year-old woman who captivated those whom she met by her grace and charm, Josephus departs from the rabbis and remains true to the tradition of the Hellenistic novels²⁰ by depicting her as another Vashti, surpassing (*Ant.* 11.199) all women in beauty (*πασῶν . . . τῷ κάλλει*), though he follows the rabbis in noting that the grace of her countenance (*τὴν χάριν τοῦ προσώπου*) greatly attracted (*μᾶλλον ἐπάγεσθαι*) the eyes of those who beheld her (*τὰς ὄψεις τῶν θεωμένων*). It is significant, too, that Josephus, who generally follows the Septuagint's version of the additions to Esther rather closely, departs from this in his adherence to novelistic elements. Thus in his version of Addition C, which contains Esther's prayer to G-d before she goes to King Ahasuerus to plead for her people, Josephus (*Ant.* 11.232) says that Esther prays for two things, for eloquence and for greater beauty than she had ever had before, so that she may by both these means turn aside the king's anger; the Septuagint omits the request for additional beauty and mentions merely her desire for eloquence. Finally, whereas the Apocryphal Addition (D 5) describes Esther as radiant in the perfection of her beauty and with happy and lovely countenance, Josephus' Esther is warmer and more picturesque, her face covered with blushes, adorned with a sweet (*προσηγνές*, "soft," "gentle," "soothing") and dignified (*σεμνόν*, "solemn," "august," "stately," "majestic") beauty (*κάλλος*).

The Hellenistic novels also tend to elaborate the descriptions of palaces and royal banquets. Here, too, Josephus adds a number of details not found in the Hebrew original or in the Septuagint. Thus we are given (*Ant.* 11.187) a detail not found in the Bible (Esther 1.6), that the pavilion where Ahasuerus' banquet was held was so large that many tens of thousands could recline there at the tables. Again,

¹⁹ Ginzberg (above, note 11) 4.384.

²⁰ See Goethals (above, note 13) 134 ff.

though Josephus does omit (*Ant.* 11.187) a few details (*Esther* 1.6) concerning the banquet-couches and the pavement upon which they were set, he adds, following the Septuagint, as against the Hebrew text, that the bowls from which they were served were made not only of gold (*Esther* 1.7) but also of precious stones (*Ant.* 11.188). The gala nature of the king's celebration is magnified by Josephus' addition, for which there are no rabbinic parallels,²¹ that the king sent messengers throughout his realm to proclaim that they might rest from their work and celebrate for many days in honor of his reign. Later, when Ahasuerus makes a feast to celebrate his wedding with Esther (2.18), Josephus adds to its scope by stating (11.203) that the king dispatched messengers called *angaroi* to every nation, inviting them to join in the celebration.

The novels tend to eliminate the enumeration of too many difficult and exotic names, since these would be difficult for the reader to pronounce. Josephus also omits lists of names because of their difficulty; thus he deliberately omits for this reason the names of Jacob's seventy descendants that entered Egypt (*Ant.* 2.176), as well as the names of the families that returned to Jerusalem (11.68) from the Babylonian captivity or the names of the Jews who put away their foreign wives at the behest of Ezra (11.152) or the names of the seventy elders sent by Eleazar to translate the Torah (12.57). He likewise omits (11.190 and 192), presumably for the same reason, the names of King Ahasuerus' seven chamberlains (*Esther* 1.10) and of his seven counsellors (*Esther* 1.14), as well as (*Ant.* 11.289) the names of Haman's ten sons (*Esther* 9.7-9).

Josephus adds a number of details to enhance the romance and the drama of his narrative. Thus the story of Queen Vashti's refusal to come at the behest of her husband is developed further, so that in Josephus (as in the Lucianic Septuagint) Ahasuerus gives the orders not once but repeatedly (*πολλάκις*) that Vashti appear (*Ant.* 11.191). And Vashti, in her turn, we are told (*Ant.* 11.191), persisted (*ἐνέμεινε*) in her refusal. To build up the erotic aspect, Josephus adds to Scripture (*Esther* 1.12) by giving (*Ant.* 11.191) a reason for Vashti's refusal, namely, that the Persians' laws forbade wives from being viewed

²¹ So Ginzberg (above, note 11) 6.455, n. 26.

by strangers. As Paton²² has remarked, both Herodotus (5.18 and 9.110) and the Bible itself (Esther 5.4 ff. and Nehemiah 2.6) make it clear that the queen could be present at banquets; hence Josephus' addition seems calculated solely to increase the erotic interest, a motif so prominent in the Greek romances.²³ Again, the dramatic interest of the narrative is increased by Josephus' description of the king's reaction when Vashti refuses to come to the banquet. The Bible (Esther 1.12) says merely that "the king was very wroth, and his anger burned in him." Josephus' Ahasuerus is more dramatic in his acts; he breaks up (*λῦσαι*) the banquet. There is likewise a greater build-up of suspense toward the climax of Esther's selection as successor in Josephus' further elaboration (11.195) of the feeling of remorse that Ahasuerus feels after he has deposed Vashti. The Bible (Esther 2.1) reports that Ahasuerus "remembered Vashti, and what she had done and what was decreed against her." Josephus adds that the king was in love with her and could not bear the separation, yet, because of the law, could not be reconciled to her (*Ant.* 11.175). A similar motif is to be found in the Greek romances.²⁴ Indeed, there is in Josephus a shift of emphasis from Ahasuerus the ruler of a great empire to Ahasuerus the lover, so characteristic of the Greek romances.²⁵ Josephus further adds an element of grief, noting that Ahasuerus continued (*διετέλει*) to grieve (*λυπούμενος*) at not being able to obtain his desire. In the Bible, the advice to seek a beautiful young replacement for the deposed queen is presented (Esther 2.2) as a political decision, coming from the king's servants that ministered to him. In Josephus (*Ant.* 11.195), as in the Greek plays and novels, the love-tormented one who has lost his sweetheart is advised by confidants or friends (*φίλοι*), who, seeing him in so unhappy a station (*οὕτως ἔχοντα χαλεπῶς*), command him to cast out his memory of his wife and his love (*ἔρωτα*) for her, which was doing him no good (*μηδὲν*

²² Paton (above, note 10) 149-50.

²³ See Goethals (above, note 13) 89. H. R. Moehring, *Novelistic Elements in the Writings of Flavius Josephus* (diss., Chicago 1957), has noted the novelistic-erotic elements in several passages from Josephus' account of the Hellenistic period, namely, the life of Herod the Great, the relations between Herod and Mariamme, the death of Herod, the four sects of the Jews, and the account of the persecution of the Jews in Rome in 19 C.E.

²⁴ Cf., e.g., Parthenius 8.

²⁵ See Perry (above, note 8) 149-53.

ὠφελούμενον), and to seek a beautiful virgin to replace her. They give (*Ant.* 11.196) the standard advice of confidants to lovers, not paralleled in the Bible (Esther 2.4), namely, that the fire of his tender love (φιλόστοργον, "passion," "affection") for Vashti would be quenched (σβέννυσθαι) by replacing her with another, and that thereby his affection (εὐνον) for her would be gradually (κατὰ μικρόν) diverted to her successor. The erotic motif is found even in Josephus' portrayal of Mordecai, for he remarks, in an extra-Biblical detail (*Ant.* 11.295) that Mordecai shared the royal power with the king, "at the same time also enjoying the companionship of the queen" (ἀπολαύων ἅμα καὶ τῆς κοινωνίας τοῦ βίου τῇ βασιλίσση).

The Hellenistic novels are much interested in the cosmetics and unguents with which women adorn themselves. The Bible (Esther 2.9) says that Hegai, the keeper of Ahasuerus' harem, speedily supplied Esther with ointments and food; Josephus elaborates (*Ant.* 11.200), remarking that Esther was anointed with an abundance of spices and costly unguents such as women's bodies need. The novels likewise are addicted to giving exact details about erotic matters; here too Josephus adds (*Ant.* 11.200) to the Biblical account (Esther 2.9) by giving the exact number of maidens in Ahasuerus' harem, namely 400, an addition the source of which Benno Jacob²⁶ finds difficult to explain. Again, Josephus, unlike the Hebrew text (Esther 2.18), gives the exact length of time during which Ahasuerus entertained his guests in honor of his marriage; the Septuagint says that he did so for seven days, but Josephus increases this to a full month. In addition, as in the Hellenistic novels, Josephus is more explicit in his references to sexual intercourse. The Bible (Esther 2.12) speaks of the turn of every maiden in the king's harem to go in to the king and says (Esther 2.14) that in the evening a maiden went and returned the following day into the second house for the women. Josephus (*Ant.* 11.201) remarks that when the virgins had received sufficient care and were now deemed fit by the eunuch in charge to come into the king's bed, the eunuch would send one every day to lie with the king, who, after having intercourse with her, sent her back at once to the eunuch. The

²⁶ B. Jacob, "Esther bei den LXX," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 10 (1890) 296.

picture thus presented is similar to that in Herodotus (3.69), where the wives of the false Smerdis visit him in turn.²⁷

The soul of the narrative art of the Hellenistic romance is love. The romantic element in Josephus is often emphasized, as we see in Josephus' expanded treatment of the Egyptians' frenzy for women in connection with the story of Sarah and Abraham in Egypt (1.162), Dinah's seduction (1.327), the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife (2.53), Moses' marriage to the Ethiopian princess Tharbis (2.252-53), the seduction of the Israelite youths by the Midianite women (4.134), the affair of the Levite concubine (5.136-37), the seizure of the women of Shiloh by the Benjaminites (5.172-73), Manoh's mad love for his wife (5.277), the love affair of David and Michal (6.196 and 215), etc. Romance is likewise heightened by Josephus' revision of the Bible's statement (Esther 2.17) that "the king loved Esther above all the women" to having him actually fall in love with the maiden (*πεσὼν τῆς κόρης εἰς ἔρωτα*). One is reminded of Josephus' portrayal, with extra-Biblical color, of Jacob's falling in love with Rachel at first sight (1.288).²⁸

Suspense is the hallmark of the Greek romances. The extent of Mordecai's devotion to Esther is increased by having the statement that Mordecai took Esther for his own daughter transferred from the beginning of the narrative about Esther (Esther 2.7) to the point (2.11) where Esther is separated from him and is in the king's palace as his queen; at that point (*Ant.* 11.204) there is an increase in suspense, for Mordecai lingers about the palace inquiring about Esther, "for he loved her as his own daughter."

There is increased drama also in Josephus' addition (*Ant.* 11.237) to Apocryphal Addition D 8, that when Esther faints in the presence of the king, he fears that she has suffered serious injury.²⁹ There is greater warmth and added romance also in Josephus' supplement to

²⁷ Talmon (above, note 4) 450 has noted that the stories of Esther and of Judith and Herodotus' account of the Magi (3.68-70) are all set in the Persian era and that all have the common theme of a courageous woman who rids or helps to rid her people of a tyrant.

²⁸ The theme of love at first sight is common in the Greek romances: see Parthenius 1.1, Chariton 1.1.6-7, Xenophon of Ephesus 1.3.12, Achilles Tatius 1.4.2-5, and Heliodorus 3.5.4-5.

²⁹ For swooning as an expression of awe cf., e.g., Chariton 3.6.4 and 4.9.1, as noted by Bickerman (above, note 1) 117.

Addition D 8, noting that after Ahasuerus had brought Esther back to consciousness, he embraced (*κατασπαζόμενος*) her and spoke to her endearingly (*προσομιλῶν ἡδέως*). There is greater drama also in Josephus' version of the scene found in Apocryphal Addition D 15, which states that while Esther was speaking she fell swooning, and that the king was troubled. In Josephus' account (*Ant.* 11.241) Esther speaks with difficulty (*μόλις*) and weakly (*μετὰ ἀσθενείας*), while anguish (*ἀγωνία*) and alarm (*ταραχὴ*) seize Ahasuerus.

The intensity of Ahasuerus' reaction is likewise increased in Josephus' version of what happens after Esther has told him that Haman plans to kill her people. In the Bible (Esther 7.7) the king arises in his wrath from the banquet and goes into the palace garden. In Josephus (*Ant.* 11.265) the king in his perturbation (*ταραχθέντος*) leaps up (*ἀναπηδήσαντος*) from the banquet-hall into the garden.³⁰ His anger at Haman is exaggerated in his exclamation (*Ant.* 11.265) upon his return, "O basest of all men." Whereas the Hebrew (Esther 7.8) is silent as to Haman's reaction when the king thus accuses him of trying to violate his wife, Josephus attains a greater feeling of drama by noting Haman's inability to utter any further sound (*Ant.* 11.266).³¹

One of the most characteristic features of the Hellenistic novel, undoubtedly due to the influence of Greek tragedy, is a heightened irony.³² This is one of the characteristics also of Josephus' version of the Esther story. Thus in the Hebrew version (Esther 5.9), after Haman receives his invitation to Esther's second banquet, he is described as going forth in joy and in gladness of heart, but the reason for his joy is only implied in terms of the events that have preceded. It is characteristic of Greek tragedy that just before the *περιπέτεια* there is a moment of falsely increased rejoicing, which in effect heightens the

³⁰ Similarly Josephus adds excitement to his narrative of Ahab (*Ant.* 8.360) by having him leap up (*ἀναπηδήσας*) from his bed when informed by Jezebel that Naboth has been killed and that he can take possession of his vineyard without paying for it. Again, Josephus emphasizes Solomon's eagerness to do obeisance to G-d by having him leap up (*ἀνεπηδήσειν*) from his bed when he has heard G-d's promise to preserve his kingdom.

³¹ The Septuagint likewise notes Haman's reaction ("his face changed": *διετράπη τῷ προσώπῳ*), but this is hardly as effective as Josephus' description of Haman's speechlessness.

³² Cf., e.g., Achilles Tatius 5.11, 6.11-12; Heliodorus 1.18, 1.28-31, 6.15, 8.17, and 9.2. See S. L. Wolff, *The Greek Romances in Elizabethan Prose Fiction* (New York 1912) 213-17.

reversal that is to follow. This is particularly true in Josephus' version of the Esther story. Josephus is explicit in giving as the reason for Haman's joy the fact that he alone had been deemed worthy to dine with the king at Esther's palace; and the irony of Haman's imminent fall is increased by Haman's addition that no one had obtained a similar honor from any of the kings before Ahasuerus. The irony of Haman's fall through the efforts of Esther is accented by Josephus' omission (*Ant.* 11.245) of Haman's boasting of his riches and of the multitude of his children (Esther 5.11) and his concentration on the honor shown him by the queen, who on the following day is to point him out to the king as the villain who seeks to destroy her people.

At the highest moment in Haman's fortunes, when he has received the exclusive invitation to join Esther and Ahasuerus a second time at her banquet and when he has built the gallows to hang his arch-enemy Mordecai, Josephus typically, just before the *περιπέτεια*, introduces G-d's ironic laughter at these events (*Ant.* 11.247): "But G-d mocked (*κατεγέλα*) Haman's wicked hopes, and, knowing what was to happen, rejoiced (*ἐτέρπητο*) at the event."

The reversal of fortunes of Mordecai, and consequently of Haman, is heightened by Josephus' version (*Ant.* 11.249) of Ahasuerus' sleepless night. According to the Bible and Septuagint (Esther 6.1-2), Ahasuerus asks to have the chronicles read, and it was found written that Mordecai had saved the king's life. More dramatic is Josephus' account, according to which the readers first tell of the land, the name of which was also written, awarded a certain man for his bravery. Then, after mentioning the gift awarded to another for his loyalty, they come to the story of how Mordecai had saved the king from the plot of Bigthan and Teresh. There is increased drama because the scribe merely states the fact, ever so briefly, of Mordecai's rescue of the king and is already passing on to another incident when the king stops him and asks what reward had been given Mordecai (*Ant.* 11.250).³³ That the reading had gone on for some time is clear from the additional remark in Josephus (*Ant.* 11.250-51) that the king told the scribes to

³³ Josephus' statement (*Ant.* 11.250) that the reader is ready to pass on to another incident may well be in accord with rabbinic tradition, according to which the office of reader was being filled by one of Haman's sons. See Ginzberg (above, note 11) 4.434 and 6.476, n. 168.

stop and inquired of his attendants what hour of the night it was. When told that it is already morning, he asks to have announced to him any of his friends who might be waiting before the court. Josephus, following the Lucianic version, adds to the irony by noting (*Ant.* 11.251) that Haman had come that day before the usual hour, and it is against this background that the scene between Ahasuerus and Haman takes place. Haman's anticipation that it is he whom the king wishes to honor is heightened because, whereas in the Bible (Esther 6.6) Ahasuerus asks Haman what should be done for the man whom the king wishes to honor, Josephus' Ahasuerus seeks advice as to how to honor, in a manner worthy of his magnanimity (*μεγαλοφροσύνης*), a man who was greatly cherished (*στεργόμενον*: frequently used with reference to the mutual love of parents and children) by him (*Ant.* 11.252). Moreover, Ahasuerus introduces his question by adding the remark (11.252), particularly ironic in its context, that he knows that Haman is the only friend loyal (*εὖνουν*, "well-disposed," "kindly," "friendly") to him. It is natural, in such circumstances, for Haman to deduce that he is the person intended by the king, and here too Josephus adds to the irony by stating (*Ant.* 11.253) that Haman thought that he was the only one loved (*φιλεῖσθαι*, implying affection) by the king. The notion that Haman thinks of himself as loved by the king is continued with a third additional reference in Josephus (and with a third different word for love). "If you wish to cover with glory the man whom you say you love (*ἀγαπᾶν*, implying regard), let him ride on horseback," says Haman (*Ant.* 11.254); the Hebrew speaks merely of "the man whom the king delighteth to honor." The word "love" is again introduced with ironic effect in Josephus' version (*Ant.* 11.258) of the words later spoken by Haman in leading about Mordecai. In the Bible (Esther 6.11) these words are: "Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor." Josephus' Haman proclaims that this is the reward given by the king "to him whom he cherished (*στέργει*) and held worthy of honor."

The irony in Josephus' account is emphasized by Josephus' repetition (*Ant.* 11.255), not found in the Hebrew text (Esther 6.10), of the statement that Haman gave his advice in the belief that the king would reward him. There is added irony in the implied equation of Mordecai and Joseph,³⁴ for whereas Scripture (Esther 6.8) speaks of the royal

crown to be placed upon the horse that Mordecai rides, Josephus, perhaps because this seemed awkward or incongruous, has substituted (*Ant.* 11.254) a necklace of gold to be placed on Mordecai. In the account of Pharaoh's elevation of Joseph (Genesis 41.42), we likewise read that Pharaoh put a gold chain about his neck (to be sure omitted in Josephus' paraphrase of the passage, *Ant.* 2.90).³⁵ There is further irony in Josephus' remark (*Ant.* 11.255) that Ahasuerus was pleased (*ἡσθεῖς*) with Haman's counsel; the Biblical text (Esther 6.10) does not record the king's reaction to Haman's advice. The irony is all the greater when Ahasuerus tells Haman to do to Mordecai what he has advised. In the Hebrew text (Esther 6.10) Ahasuerus says merely, "Let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken." In Josephus the ironical effect is all the sharper, for Ahasuerus adds the reason why he has chosen Haman to carry out what he ironically calls Haman's "good counsel," "since you are my close friend." The word which Ahasuerus uses here (*Ant.* 11.253) for "close friend" (*ἀναγκαῖος*) is the same word as the one used by Haman in his advice (*Ant.* 11.254) that one of the king's close friends should precede the man whom he proposes to honor; and the irony is consequently heightened.

Again, whereas the Bible (Esther 6.11) does not give any description of Haman's state of mind after he has been told to lead Mordecai about, and merely records that he took the apparel and the horse, Josephus (*Ant.* 11.256) notes first of all that the king's words were contrary to all of Haman's expectations, that is, the very essence of irony, and that Haman was consequently oppressed (*συνεσχήθη*) in spirit and stricken (*πληγείς*) with helplessness (*ἀμηχανίας*).³⁶ The irony of having the great and powerful Haman lead Mordecai is increased in Josephus' version; for whereas the Bible (Esther 6.11) reports merely that

³⁴ The Midrash likewise compares the story of Esther with that of Joseph in several respects: thus we are told that not even Joseph could vie with Esther in grace (Ginzberg [above, note 11] 4.385). Hegai (Ginzberg, 4.386) loads Esther with jewels just as Joseph loaded Benjamin her ancestor. The agreement between Ahasuerus and Haman to destroy the Jews is a punishment for the sale of Joseph (Ginzberg, 4.413). On the comparison between Esther and Joseph see Rosenthal and Gan (above, note 4).

³⁵ Later in the narrative (*Ant.* 11.284) Josephus adds to the Biblical account (Esther 8.15) by noting that Mordecai put on the royal necklace when he assumed the position of the king's prime minister.

³⁶ So also the Lucianic version. The rabbis likewise (Ginzberg [above, note 11] 4.436-37) elaborate on his feeling of disappointment.

Haman took the apparel and the horse and arrayed Mordecai, Josephus (*Ant.* 11.256) dwells on the contrast between Mordecai in his sackcloth, in which state Haman finds him, and the new garments which he is now told by Haman to put on instead. Dramatic suspense is increased by Josephus' additional detail, found in the Lucianic version but not in the Hebrew or in the standard Septuagint, that Mordecai at first was suspicious of Haman's intentions and, thinking that he was being mocked (*χλευάζεσθαι*), bitterly remarked (*Ant.* 11.257): "Ο basest of all men, is this the way you make sport (*ἐπεγγελαῖς*) of our misfortunes?" It is only after he is convinced that Haman is sincere that he puts on the robes offered him by Haman.³⁷ The *περιπέτεια* in Haman's fortunes is magnified in that Haman leads Mordecai not merely (Esther 6.11) through the streets of the city but completely around the city (*ἐκπεριῆλθον*, *Ant.* 11.259).

There is likewise a heightening of dramatic suspense in Josephus' introduction of Harbonah at an earlier point than he appears in the Biblical narrative. In the Bible it is not until Haman has been pointed out by Esther as the one who sought to destroy her people that Harbonah remarks (Esther 7.9) that Haman had also built gallows for Mordecai, and the king thereupon orders Haman to be hanged thereon. In Josephus (*Ant.* 11.261) Harbonah, one of Esther's eunuchs sent to hasten Haman's coming to the banquet, notices the gallows, learns that they ironically have been prepared for the queen's uncle Mordecai, and for the time being holds his peace. As an instrument of story-telling such a detail builds up suspense, and Harbonah's later revelation is therefore all the more effective.

Josephus makes a special point of commenting (*Ant.* 11.268) on the supreme irony that Haman himself should have been hung on the gallows that he had prepared for his enemy Mordecai and marvels at G-d's wisdom and justice in so doing. Esther heightens this drama in Josephus' account (*Ant.* 11.270) by actually showing him the letter that Haman had sent throughout the country to destroy the Jews.

Josephus adds a dramatic dimension to the hatred of Haman for the Jews by remarking (*Ant.* 11.209) that he was of Amalekite

³⁷ For rabbinic parallels see Babylonian Talmud, *Megillah* 16a, and Ginzberg (above, note 11) 4.437 ff. and 6.476, n. 170.

descent³⁸ (Esther 3.1 says only that he was an "Agagite"), and hence an ancestral enemy of the Jews.³⁹ Ironically, like the Jews themselves, he is described (*Ant.* 11.277) as "an alien among those of Persian blood." Josephus specifically remarks (*Ant.* 11.211), in a detail not found in Scripture (Esther 3.6), that Haman decided to exterminate Mordecai's whole nation, "for he naturally hated the Jews because the race of the Amalekites, from whom he was descended, had been destroyed by them." Josephus, moreover, takes pains to explain Haman's enmity for Mordecai by being more explicit than the Biblical narrative, which says (Esther 3.2) that all the king's *servants* who were in the king's gate used to bow down and prostrate themselves before Haman; Josephus says specifically (*Ant.* 11.209) that both the foreigners and Persians prostrated themselves before him.⁴⁰ This helps in the dramatic build-up of Haman's anger and of his anti-Semitism, for he contrasts Mordecai's refusal (*Ant.* 11.211) with the acquiescence of the free-born Persians. Haman's hatred for the Jews is built up to a fever-pitch with his statement (*Ant.* 11.213), amplifying Scripture (Esther 3.9), urging Ahasuerus to order the Jews to be destroyed "root and branch (*πρόρριζον*) and leave not a remnant of them to be kept

³⁸ The Septuagint (Apocryphal Addition E 10 and Esther 9.24) speaks of Haman as a Macedonian, that is, in terms of Hellenistic history, an enemy of both the Persians and the Jews. Likewise in the Latin Josephus (*Ant.* 11.277) Haman is termed *Macedo*, though this is, as Niese, *praef.*, vol. 3, p. xxxix, notes, an obvious correction on the basis of the Septuagint.

³⁹ Presumably Josephus derives the notion of Haman's Amalekite descent from the fact that Agag was king of the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15.8). The rabbis (see Megillah 13a; Rappaport [above, note 11] 135, n. 281 and 282; and Ginzberg [above, note 11] 6.464, n. 104) likewise speak of Haman as an Amalekite. The Septuagint, however, knows of no tradition of Haman as an Amalekite. See Jacob (above, note 26) 291. Jacob 262, is not justified in his contention that Josephus used the Septuagint to the exclusion of the Hebrew, though there are cases where this is so: e.g., in *Ant.* 11.219, Josephus follows the LXX in stating that the Jews were to be massacred on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month, whereas the Hebrew text (Esther 3.13) gives the date as the thirteenth day of the twelfth month. Likewise C. C. Torrey, "The Older Book of Esther," *HTR* 37 (1944) 38, is not justified in postulating that Josephus used only the Aramaic version in a Greek translation and that he gives no evidence of acquaintance with the Hebrew. Hoschander (above, note 9) 6-7 cites evidence that Josephus also used the Hebrew version. Likewise, while there is a resemblance between the Lucianic text and Josephus, there are too many differences (so Jacob [above, note 26] 259 and 262) to suppose that he used this text to the exclusion of all others. Hoschander (above, note 9) 21-29, claims that there is no basis for the statement that Haman was an Agagite.

⁴⁰ For rabbinic parallels see Ginzberg (above, note 11) 6.463, n. 100.

either in slavery or in captivity.”⁴¹ Haman’s anti-Semitism is further exaggerated by Josephus’ increase (*Ant.* 11.214), not found in the Hebrew (Esther 3.9) or Septuagint versions, in the amount of the bribe offered by Haman to those who carry out the destruction of the Jews from 10,000 to 40,000 talents of silver.⁴² Josephus adds the plausible explanation (*Ant.* 11.214) that Haman offered this amount to offset the loss in revenue that the king would suffer as a result of the elimination of the Jews. There is a higher pitch of drama in Josephus, for whereas the Bible (Esther 3.14) says that Ahasuerus’ edict was to be published so that all people would be ready to attack the Jews on the given day, Josephus reports (*Ant.* 11.220) that when the decree was brought to the various cities and country districts, the people all actually made themselves ready for the annihilation of the Jews on the appointed day.

It is Josephus’ contention that Haman deserved his fate because, like a classical Greek tragic figure, he did not know how to use his prosperity. Josephus elsewhere (*Ant.* 6.116) generalizes that men are apt to lose control of reason (*λογισμοῦ*) when blessed by good fortune (*εὐτυχήσαντας*), and he likewise notes (*Ant.* 8.251), commenting on Rehoboam’s degeneracy, that it is the very greatness in a man’s affairs (*τὸ τῶν πραγμάτων μέγεθος*) and the improvement in his position that leads to evil and lawlessness (*παρανομίας*). Again, commenting on King Uzziah’s degeneracy, he remarks (*Ant.* 9.222) that it was because of his successes (*εὐπραξίας*), his brilliant good fortune (*ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν λαμπρότης*), and his great power (*τὸ μέγεθος τῶν πραγμάτων*) that he degenerated into sin. Likewise he notes (*Ant.* 5.200) that G-d punishes the insolence of those who are ungrateful to Him. Here too he cites as an example how Haman’s great wealth led to *κόρος*, which in turn led to *ῥβρις*, and in turn brought about his *νέμεσις*. Josephus stresses Haman’s lack of restraint: whereas the Biblical narrative (Esther 5.9–10) notes that when Haman saw that Mordecai did not stand up before him when he returned from Esther’s first banquet, he was filled with wrath but nevertheless restrained himself; in Josephus’ version (*Ant.* 11.244) Haman is highly indignant, and there is

⁴¹ The Midrash also amplifies Haman’s anti-Semitism. See Ginzberg (above, note 11) 4.369, 393, 402, 410, 412, and notes thereon.

⁴² The rabbis also amplify Haman’s wealth. See Ginzberg (above, note 11) 4.393.

no mention of any restraint. Again, whereas the Apocryphal Addition (E 12) remarks that Haman, not bearing his proud position (*ὑπερηφανίαν*, "arrogance"), took counsel to deprive Ahasuerus of his kingdom, Josephus (*Ant.* 11.277) castigates him, in terms of classical Greek tragedy, for not showing moderation in his time of prosperity: he did not bear his good fortune (*εὐτυχίαν*) wisely, and did not husband (*ἐταμίευσεν*)⁴³ the abundance (*μέγεθος*) of his prosperity (*ἀγαθῶν*) with prudence (*σώφρονι*, "moderation") and reason (*λογισμῶ*).⁴⁴ Josephus likewise stresses Nimrod's insolence (*Ant.* 1.113) and Hagar's insolence (1.188–89) in order to justify her expulsion by Abraham.

Josephus justifies Haman's punishment in terms familiar from Greek tragedy, for he adds to the Biblical narrative (Esther 7.10) in remarking (*Ant.* 11.269) that Haman was destroyed through his having used his position of honor immoderately (*ἀμετρήτως*, "indiscreetly," "excessively"). In a paraphrase of an Apocryphal Addition (E 2–4), Josephus (*Ant.* 11.273) stresses Haman's *ὑβρις* toward those who had benefited and honored him and his lack of appreciation (*Ant.* 11.274) of the blessings. He is attacked (*Ant.* 11.274), again in terms of Greek tragedy, for turning his *κόρος* ("satiety," i.e., the consequence of satiety) against those who had benefited him. Josephus attacks Haman particularly because (*Ant.* 11.275), in a supplement to an Apocryphal Addition (E 6), he had acted on the prompting of a private grudge (*μῖσος ἴδιον*).

Josephus takes care to paint Haman in darker colors than he is found in the Apocryphal Addition (E 12–14). There mention is made only of Haman's plot against Ahasuerus' kingdom and against the lives of Mordecai and Esther. Josephus (*Ant.* 11.278) adds to the gravity of the charge by asserting that Haman also plotted against Ahasuerus' very life. By the addition of stronger language, noting that Haman "treacherously and deceitfully" demanded the destruction of Mordecai

⁴³ Marcus, in the Loeb edition *ad loc.*, notes that a similar phrase, "husbanded . . . good fortune" (*ταμιεύεσθαι τὴν τύχην*) is likewise found in Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1.65.

⁴⁴ We may also note that Josephus (*Ant.* 11.246), so as to concentrate attention on Haman and his family, omits the mention of Haman's friends as joining Haman's wife Zeresh in advising him to build a gallows for Mordecai, and instead the advice comes solely from Zeresh.

and of Esther, thus seeking to deprive him of "my loyal friends," Josephus makes it easier to comprehend Ahasuerus' speedy and drastic action in condemning Haman.

Many touches in Josephus' narrative may be explained as attempts to combat anti-Semitic propaganda. Thus, in an effort to promote better relations with non-Jews, Josephus often glosses over the faults of non-Jewish characters in his history, such as Ishmael (*Ant.* 1.190 and 200, as against Genesis 16.12) and Abimelech (*Ant.* 1.208, 212). In particular, whereas in the rabbinic writings Ahasuerus is depicted as a fool in boasting of Vashti's beauty, as fickle, as wanton, as wicked in desecrating the Temple utensils, as immodest in boasting of his wealth which he had plundered from the Temple and in boasting that he was greater than G-d, and as no less anti-Semitic than Haman,⁴⁵ Josephus tries to protect the reputation of the king. Thus he omits (*Ant.* 11.190) the statement (Esther 1.10) that Ahasuerus was drunk when he commanded Vashti to appear at the banquet.

Josephus takes the edge off the charge of fickleness that might be leveled against Ahasuerus for deserting Vashti by emphasizing (*Ant.* 11.192) that he had repeatedly called for her to appear at the banquet and that she had not once obeyed, and that he had thereby been insulted (*ὕβρισθείη*) by her. Vashti is guilty of arrogance (*ὑπερηφανίαν*) toward Ahasuerus (*Ant.* 11.194), and this arrogance is all the greater, since Ahasuerus has power over all men. Thus Vashti is guilty of the crime of *ῥβρις*, which in Greek tragedy is sufficient cause for the downfall of an otherwise heroic figure; and Memucan (*Ant.* 11.194) consequently urges Ahasuerus to inflict a severe penalty on this woman who had so insulted (*ἐνυβρίζουσαν*) him. According to the rabbis,⁴⁶ Vashti is sentenced to death; but this again would raise questions about the justice of Ahasuerus; and it is thus not surprising that there is no such indication in Josephus, and that we are left to assume that Vashti did not lose her life but was merely sent away. Furthermore, we have more sympathy for Ahasuerus because Josephus stresses his feeling of remorse for Vashti (*Ant.* 11.195), remarking that the king continued (*διετέλει*) to grieve at not being able to obtain his desire.

Unlike the Midrashic picture of Ahasuerus as an ineffective king,

⁴⁵ Ginzberg (above, note 11) 4.374, 379-80, 424; 380; 374; 367, 370-71; 370, 372; 413.

⁴⁶ Ginzberg (above, note 11) 6.456-57, n. 42.

Josephus, in the interest of promoting better relations with non-Jews, depicts Ahasuerus (*Ant.* 11.248) as a serious monarch. To this end he adds to the Biblical narrative (Esther 6.1) the fact that when he could not fall asleep, he did not wish to waste his wakeful hours in idleness but decided instead to use them for something of significance to his kingdom, and so he had the scribe read to him from the chronicle.

Ahasuerus is also depicted as a statesmanlike king who, in the last analysis, realizes that he must not in the future repeat the mistake of listening to hearsay such as had misled him and such as tends to influence rulers generally, according to Josephus (*Ant.* 6.267), upon their accession to power. The Apocryphal Addition (E 9) makes this point very briefly; Josephus (*Ant.* 11.276) expands on it. In addition, Ahasuerus is described as a true friend of the Jews, and in a supplement to the Apocryphal Addition (E 17), Josephus (*Ant.* 11.280) has Ahasuerus remark that it is his will that they be shown every honor.

A major purpose of Josephus' *Antiquities*, as it is of the *Contra Apionem*, is to answer the charges of the anti-Semites. Haman, in the Biblical narrative (Esther 3.8), attacks the Jews as a people whose laws are different from those of every other people. Josephus amplifies this charge in terms similar to those used by the Alexandrian anti-Semites whom he answers in his *Contra Apionem*. The Jews, says Haman (*Ant.* 11.212), refuse to mingle with others (*ἄμικτον*—a term used of Centaurs and Cyclopes)⁴⁷ and are unsocial (*ἀσύμφυλον*, "not akin," "incompatible," "unsuitable"). They do not have the same religion (*θρησκείαν*) nor do they practice the same laws as other peoples, but both in customs (*ἔθελαι*) and in practices (*ἐπιτηδεύμασιν*) they are the enemy both of the Persians and indeed of all mankind (*ἅπασιν ἀνθρώποις*). If, then, suggests Haman (*Ant.* 11.213), Ahasuerus wishes to seek the welfare of his subjects, he will order the destruction of this people. Their hatred of monarchy (*Ant.* 11.217) in particular is singled out in Ahasuerus' edict; the Septuagint's Addition B 4 is more mild in stating that the Jews habitually neglect "the ordinances of the kings, so that the consolidation of the kingdom honorably intended by us cannot be brought about."⁴⁸ This is a concise summary of the

⁴⁷ Soph. *Trachiniae* 1095; Eur. *Cyclops* 429.

⁴⁸ On alleged Jewish hostility to the nation see E. J. Bickerman (above, note 1) 127-28.

most frequently recurring charges against the Jews from the time of Hecataeus of Abdera, the first Greek to describe the Jews (*ap.* Diodorus 40.3.5), who terms their way of life *ἀπάνθρωπον* ("misanthropic," "unsocial") and *μισόξενον* ("hostile to strangers").⁴⁹ The charge that the Jews have rites opposed to those of the rest of mankind and that they regard as profane all that other peoples consider sacred and that they permit that which is prohibited by others is repeated by Tacitus (*Histories* 5.4), who likewise accuses them of hatred of all other peoples (*Histories* 5.5). Josephus is throughout his *Antiquities* concerned with refuting these charges. Thus he notes that Abraham is moved with piety for his friends and neighbors the Sodomites (*Ant.* 1.176), that Joseph sells grain to all people and not merely to native Egyptians (2.94 and 101); David, far from being a misanthrope, is described as *φιλόανθρωπος*. Solomon (8.116-17) asks that G-d grant the prayers not only of Jews but also of foreigners.

It is significant that though he generally follows the Apocryphal Addition C, containing Esther's prayer to G-d, rather closely, Josephus omits the abhorrence of foreigners expressed by Esther (C 26-27): "I detest the bed of the uncircumcised and of any alien." Josephus even omits the separatism asserted by Esther in her claim (C 28) that she has not eaten or drunk forbidden food at the king's or Haman's table.

It is likewise significant that though Josephus generally inserts adaptations of the Apocryphal additions, he omits completely Mordecai's dream (Addition A) and its interpretation (Addition F). In the dream, the conflict between Haman and Mordecai is presented not in terms of a personal antagonism of Haman against the Jews but rather in terms of the eternal struggle of Gentile against Jew. Both additions were available to Josephus,⁵⁰ since the statement (*Ant.* 11.208) that the king commanded Mordecai to wait upon him in the palace, as well as

⁴⁹ See J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'Empire romain* (2 vols.; Paris 1913), esp. 1.31 ff.; M. Radin *The Jews among the Greeks and Romans* (Philadelphia 1915) 76-89, 163-256; I. Heine-mann, "Antisemitismus," *RE Suppl.* 5 (1931) 3-43; W. Jaeger, "Greek Records of Jewish Religion," *Journal of Religion* 18 (1938) 127-41; N. W. Goldstein, "Cultivated Pagans and Ancient Anti-Semitism," *Journal of Religion* 19 (1939) 346-64; I. Heine-mann, "The Attitude of the Ancient World toward Judaism," *Review of Religion* 4 (1939-40) 385-400; R. Marcus, "Antisemitism in the Hellenistic-Roman World," in K. S. Pinson, *Essays on Antisemitism*² (New York 1946) 61-78; and S. Davis, *Race-Relations in Ancient Egypt* (New York 1952) 113-23.

⁵⁰ So Motzo (above, note 1) 86-87; and Bickerman (above, note 1) 107, n. 17.

the names of the eunuchs in *Antiquities* 11.207, for example, come from Addition A; but Josephus, for apologetic reasons, seeks to avoid the notion that there are two lots, one for the Jews and the other for the other nations, and that the Jews and Gentiles are by nature at odds with each other.⁵¹

The charge that the Jews were intolerant of other religions is sharply refuted by Josephus in his version of the Book of Esther as elsewhere. Jews are forbidden by the Torah, he says, following the Septuagint (Exodus 22.28), to blaspheme the gods of others (*Ant.* 4.207 and *Contra Apionem* 2.237) out of respect for the very word "god." Josephus is proud of the fact (*Ant.* 1.241) that two of Abraham's sons fought along with Heracles and that the daughter of one of them married Heracles himself. In the interests of tolerance, presumably, he omits (*Ant.* 9.138) the conversion of a Temple of Baal into an outhouse. Thus, though Josephus generally follows the Apocryphal Addition C, containing Esther's prayer to G-d, he omits her bitter attack on the idol-worship of the non-Jews (Addition C 19-22): "And now they [i.e., the enemy of the Jews] have not been satisfied with the bitterness of our captivity, but they have laid their hands (in the hands of their idols), to remove the ordinance of Thy mouth, and to destroy Thine inheritance, and to stop the mouth of them that praise Thee, and to quench the glory of Thy house and Thy altar, and to open the mouth of the nations to give praise to vain idols, and that a king of flesh should be magnified forever. Surrender not, O L-rd, Thy sceptre unto them that be not gods." Similarly Josephus omits the Midrashic tale that Haman fostered idol-worship by having an image of an idol fastened on his clothes so that whenever someone prostrated himself before him he simultaneously worshipped that idol.⁵²

Among the most common charges against the Jewish Scriptures (cf. Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 1.69 ff.) was the contention that they contained contradictions and discrepancies in chronology, as well as other details that would tax a reader's credulity. Josephus as an apologist is consequently concerned with avoiding these whenever possible. Thus, one of the problems in the Hebrew text of Esther is

⁵¹ See also E. J. Bickerman, "The Colophon of the Greek Book of Esther," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 63 (1944) 360-61.

⁵² Citations in Ginzberg (above, note 11) 6.463, n. 100.

the statement (Esther 2.6) that Mordecai was one of the captives who had been carried away by Nebuchadnezzar with Jeconiah the king of Judah (596 B.C.E.).⁵³ Even if Mordecai was then an infant, he would still be 122 years old in the twelfth year of Xerxes' reign (with whom most scholars identify Ahasuerus).⁵⁴ Josephus avoids the problem by omitting the statement that Mordecai had been carried off to Babylon. Esther's age, particularly if she is the daughter of Mordecai's uncle (Esther 2.7), presents a problem, since it seems unlikely that the king would be captivated by so old a woman; but as Mordecai's niece (*Ant.* 11.198) Esther's age is reduced, and the problem consequently lessened. A question of credibility arises also with regard to the long period required to prepare the maidens before they could go in to King Ahasuerus. The Bible (Esther 2.12) puts the length of this period at twelve months; Josephus reduces it to six months (*Ant.* 11.200) and thereby makes the matter more credible.

Another problem that arises⁵⁵ is how Mordecai could gain daily access to the royal harem after Esther had been taken there (Esther 2.11). Josephus avoids the problem by omitting any mention here (*Ant.* 11.201) of Mordecai's visits.

The Bible (Esther 2.22) tells us merely that the conspiracy of two eunuchs Bigthan and Teresh "became known to Mordecai," but it does not tell us how this came about. The rabbis (Babylonian Talmud, *Megillah* 13b) were much concerned to explain how Mordecai obtained his knowledge; and Josephus, likewise concerned with the problem, presents a plausible explanation (*Ant.* 11.207), namely, that a certain Barnabazos,⁵⁶ the servant of one of the eunuchs, who was a Jew by race, discovered the plot and revealed it to his fellow-Jew Mordecai. This explanation is found in no other source; in the Septuagint (Addition A) Mordecai himself overhears the plot.

Another difficulty that faced Josephus is the apparent discrepancy as to the date set for the massacre of the Jews by Haman. The Hebrew and Lucianic texts (Esther 3.10) say that after lots (Hebrew *purim*) had been cast, the date was set for the thirteenth day of Adar, whereas

⁵³ Hebrew usage demands that the relative pronoun in Esther 2.6 refer to Mordecai.

⁵⁴ See, however, Hoschander (above, note 9) 18-19.

⁵⁵ See Paton (above, note 10) 176.

⁵⁶ Jacob (above, note 16) 295 suggests that the name points to a Hellenistic origin.

the Septuagint omits this date. Elsewhere (Esther 3.7 and Addition B) the Septuagint gives the date as the fourteenth day of Adar, and this latter date is adopted by Josephus (*Ant.* 11.219), who omits the mention of the casting of lots altogether, presumably because he regarded such an etymology for the name of the festival, Purim, as unseemly and preferred (11.295) the Septuagint's etymology from *φρουραί*, "guards."⁵⁷

Another apparent difficulty which Josephus removes is the delay of almost a year in the carrying out of Ahasuerus' edict to destroy the Jews. According to the Biblical version (Esther 3.12), the edict was written on the thirteenth day of the first month but was not carried out until the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (Esther 3.13). As Paton,⁵⁸ noting this difficulty, remarks, if the Jews had been warned almost a year in advance, they would probably have found means of escape. Josephus avoids the difficulty by omitting the date of the edict.

For Esther to have abstained from eating and drinking forbidden food at Ahasuerus' and Haman's table while maintaining her origin in secret seems most difficult, as Bickerman⁵⁹ has noted. Hence it is not surprising that Josephus omits (*Ant.* 11.233) mention of this fact, though it is found in the Apocryphal Addition (C 28) which he otherwise follows rather closely.

A good story-teller avoids a *deus ex machina* to explain loose ends. For example, in the Biblical narrative, the question naturally arises as to how Harbonah knew (Esther 7.9) about the gallows that Haman had built for Mordecai. Josephus answers this question (*Ant.* 11.261 and 266) by noting that he had seen the cross when he had gone to summon Haman to Esther's second banquet and had asked one of the servants of Haman's household for whom it was intended.

One of the difficulties in the Hebrew text is that, after the Jews slay Haman's ten sons (Esther 9.7-10), Esther pursues her vengeance to the point (Esther 9.13) of asking to have them hanged also. Josephus avoids this display of extreme vengeance by omitting (*Ant.* 11.288) the first account of the slaying of the sons. Again, apparently needless

⁵⁷ This etymology is favored by B. R. Motzo, *Saggi di Storia e Letteratura Giudeo-Ellenistica* (Florence 1924) 307 ff.

⁵⁸ Paton (above, note 10) 209.

⁵⁹ Bickerman (above, note 1) 125.

repetition is avoided. Thus Esther's and Mordecai's second letter concerning Purim (9.29–32) is omitted by Josephus (*Ant.* 11.295).

Perhaps the greatest difficulty in the Book of Esther, as many commentators have noted, is that there is not a single mention of G-d.⁶⁰ As Torrey⁶¹ has remarked, the Jews were always a religious people, no people more so. Surely the story of Esther signified the regard which G-d had for Israel. The Septuagint and Josephus, for apologetic reasons, attempt to remedy this in many places.⁶² Thus, in an obvious suppression of G-d's name in the Hebrew text (Esther 4.14), Mordecai tells Esther that if she does not speak to the king, "then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews *from another place*."⁶³ The Lucianic version and Josephus (*Ant.* 11.227) specify that this help will come from G-d. Again, Josephus follows the Apocryphal additions in inserting Mordecai's and Esther's prayers to G-d (*Ant.* 11.229 ff.).

But in line with his general tendency (compare his treatment of Samson [*Ant.* 5.276–317], for example) to diminish the role of G-d, Josephus (*Ant.* 11.237) tones down the intervention of G-d; for where the Apocryphal Addition (D 8) says that G-d changed the spirit of Ahasuerus into mildness, Josephus says: "But the king, by the will of G-d, I believe (*οἱμαί*), changed his feeling."

Josephus likewise, as seen in his treatment of the Samson story, tends to omit references to the supernatural, particularly to angels,

⁶⁰ The reason usually given for this omission is that since the celebration of Purim is often rather riotous, the rabbis sought to eliminate the possibility of a desecration of G-d's name. Torrey (above, note 39) 11–12 objects that those who translated the book into Greek knew the nature of the celebration and yet included the name of G-d in many places. But the Greek book may have been intended to be read privately for propagandistic purposes, whereas the Hebrew version was to be read in the synagogue on Purim itself, when the celebration often does get out of hand. In any case, there is a Talmudic dispute (Megillah 18a) as to whether it is permissible for the Purim Megillah (the Book of Esther) to be read in Greek.

⁶¹ Torrey (above, note 39) 1.

⁶² Most commentators assert that the purpose of the Additions to Esther, now contained in the Apocrypha, is to apply the religious atmosphere lacking in the Hebrew. But, as Torrey (above, note 39) 1–2, has noted, only Addition C contributes appreciably toward this end; moreover, as the colophon at the end of the Greek version attests, this version was done in Palestine; and finally, several of the expansions seem plainly to have been translated from Semitic.

⁶³ It is possible, as Talmon (above, note 4) 428–29, suggests, that the term "from another place" is actually a substitute for the divine name.

presumably because his rationalistic readers would have found such details difficult to believe. Thus, whereas the Apocryphal Addition (D 13) reports that Esther, explaining why she had fainted, said that she had seen Ahasuerus as an angel of G-d,⁶⁴ in Josephus (*Ant.* 11.240) she says that she fainted as soon as she saw him "looking so great and handsome and terrible."

G-d, however, is depicted (*Ant.* 11.247) as ironically laughing at Haman's apparent prosperity after he has reached the high point in his fortunes, with his second invitation to Esther's banquet and with the building of a gallows for Mordecai; and whereas the Hebrew text (Esther 6.1) says that on that night the king could not sleep, it is He in Josephus, as in the Septuagint, Who is responsible for depriving the king of sleep (*Ant.* 11.247), thus causing the king to ask for the chronicles to be read, which ultimately brings about the ironic honoring of Mordecai by Haman.

A divine dimension is likewise introduced by Josephus in his version of the statement made to Haman by his friends and wife after he has suffered the disgrace of leading Mordecai about the city. In the Bible (Esther 6.13) they predict that Haman will not prevail against Mordecai but will surely fall before him. Josephus follows the Septuagint in giving a reason (*Ant.* 11.259) why Haman will be unable to avenge himself upon Mordecai, namely, that G-d is with Mordecai.

In a striking addition to the Biblical narrative, Josephus (*Ant.* 11.268) moralizes, after Haman's condemnation to death on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai, marveling at G-d's wisdom and justice in contriving that Haman should fall by the penalty that he had devised against his enemy. That G-d directs the universe, rewarding those who obey Him and punishing those who do not is stated by Josephus himself (*Ant.* 1.14) to be the chief lesson to be learned from his history; and he gives numerous examples of this thesis in his work, notably in his conclusion (*Ant.* 10.277-80) of the story of Daniel, which, he claims, proves how mistaken are the Epicureans in excluding Providence from human life. This same

⁶⁴ Cf. Gregg, *ap.* R. H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in English* (Oxford 1913) 1.679: "The expression ['angel of G-d'] does not accord well with the scrupulosity shown by Esther in Addition C; it comes strangely from a Jew to a heathen. Perhaps this is why it does not appear either in Josephus or the Midrash or Bin-Gorion."

notion that G-d inflicts poetic justice is seen in Josephus' addition to the Biblical narrative that it was Absalom's great beauty that made him more plainly visible so that he was captured (*Ant.* 7.238) and that it was the source of his glory, his hair, that became entangled in a tree (*Ant.* 7.238) as he rode along at full speed.

Finally, the festival of Purim itself is presented not merely as a time for feasting and gladness (Esther 9.22) but also (*Ant.* 11.294) as a time for giving thanks to G-d for delivering the Jews from their enemies.

Sophie Trenker⁶⁵ defines the *novella* as "an imaginary story of limited length, intended to entertain, and describing an event in which the interest arises from the changes in the fortunes of the leading characters or from behaviour characteristic of them; an event concerned with real-life people in a real-life setting." Josephus, of course, did not regard the story of Esther as imaginary, but his narrative comes close to qualifying as a *novella* by this definition. In stressing the royal origins of Esther and her beauty, in adding to the erotic aspect, and in highlighting the irony Josephus has incorporated novelistic motifs and methods. By thus dressing up his narrative he hoped to make his whole work more attractive to his Greek readers, who would find in it many apologetic motifs and replies, explicit and implicit, to anti-Semitic propaganda.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ S. Trenker, *The Greek Novella in the Classical Period* (Cambridge 1958) xiii.

⁶⁶ On Josephus' goals in his rewriting of the Bible in the *Antiquities* see my "Abraham the Greek Philosopher in Josephus" (above, note 2) 143-44.