

An investigation of the theologically explicit insertions
in the Greek translations of the Hebrew version of
Esther

by

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Preamble

The theological ‘discomfort’ experienced by some ‘modern’ scholars with regard to the *Hebrew* text of Esther (hereafter MTE) was shared by the translators of the Septuagint (hereafter LXX) and Josephus (hereafter J) texts. The discomfort is firstly due to the fact that no reference is made to God in the *Hebrew* text in any way; and secondly there is no mention of ‘religious specific’ practices. It is thus clear that the Esther narrative distinguishes itself from other Old Testament (hereafter OT) documents because of its unique, seemingly non-theological character. This theological character has been altered by the translators of both the *Septuagint* and *Josephus* texts because of certain theological perceptions that existed at that time. Some of these perceptions persist until today. The theological interpretations made by the translators of the *Septuagint* and *Josephus* hold implications not only for the Esther narrative itself, but also for modern readers of the *Hebrew* text. These implications need to be accounted for and that is the reason for and the objective of this proposed research.

Abbreviations

AB	The Anchor Bible
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>BI</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>The Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>ET</i>	<i>The Expository Times</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBQ</i>	<i>Jewish Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>The Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the study of the Old Testament</i>
JSNTSup	<i>Journal for the study of the New Testament, Supplement Series</i>
JSOTSup	<i>Journal for the study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series</i>
<i>JT</i>	<i>Journal of Translation</i>
<i>Jud</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman period</i>
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
MTE	Masoretic Text of Esther
NAV27	Nestle-Aland 27 th edition of the Novum Testamentum Graece
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Southwestern Journal of Theology</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
<i>TR</i>	<i>Teologische Rundschau</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

Notes

The name Mordecai is the English translation of his Hebrew name, and Mardocheus in turn is the English translation of its Greek counterpart. Both these names will be used in this study. Two types of Greek fonts were used in this study. First is ‘Odyssea’¹ which corresponds, in terms of Greek accent symbols, to a great extent to the NAV27, whereas the second type of font called ‘Palatino Linotype’² corresponds with the Septuagint text presented by Robert Hanhart. Two types of Hebrew fonts were used, ‘Ezra SIL’ and ‘Hebraica II’. The latter type was implemented when reference is made to Hebrew words used by scholars (particularly in pages 73-77), whereas the former is applied when the biblical text is quoted.

¹ The NAV27 was used as controlling mechanism when the Greek text was typed using this font.

² This font is the default Greek font supplied by Libronix Digital Library (Silver Edition), which is based on the Septuagint text prepared by Alfred Rahlfs.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. FIELD OF RESEARCH

When one reads the LXX and J³ renditions of the biblical book of Esther, one is instantly struck by its theological interpretations. These renditions not only added terms like θεός or κύριος to the biblical book of Esther, but they also implemented religious ideas, practices and concepts to ‘save’ or ‘rectify’ the theological character of the MTE. One could also argue that the LXX and J texts have contextualized the Esther narrative for a different audience, and therefore one would expect variations between the texts. If one accepts that the biblical book of Esther is placed in the late early fifth, late fourth century BCE, the LXX version in the second century, followed by Josephus in the first century CE, then an argument based on contextualization is indeed plausible. The problem with such an argument is that it cannot account for the similarities between these versions of the text referred to. Therefore, it is assumed here that the biblical book of Esther is the earliest and the Josephus text the latest, but that the variations between these texts are due to theological interpretations to make what is implicit in the MTE, explicit.

Some passages from the MTE tend to be more open to theological re-interpretation than others. Passages⁴ with such a possibility are Es 2.20; Es 4.8, 14; Es 6.1, 13; Es 7.10 (especially because God, as active agent, is explicitly mentioned in these passages by the translators of the LXX and J texts). These passages will therefore be the main focus of this study. Although the above-mentioned passages and their parallels will be the primary focus, reference will also be made to other sections in the LXX and J texts that show signs of theological reworking, particularly the so-called additions taken up in the LXX. A re-investigation into these passages individually and as a whole is indeed necessary, because on the one hand many ‘modern’ scholars, as will be seen later in this study, dealt with some of these passages only in its Hebrew form and on the other hand, other scholars dealt with the Greek versions of the Esther narrative in general.

Esther 2.20; 4.8, 14; 6.1, 13; 7.10 and its parallels in the LXX and J texts, as well as the ‘theological’ additions made by the LXX, will be the field of research.

³ Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (37 CE – 100 CE).

⁴ The passages under investigation were identified studying the expositions by scholars and the Greek versions of Esther.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The MTE⁵ avoids the ‘traditional’ names for God found throughout the OT. The religious language frequently used in the OT is also absent from the MTE. Furthermore, the Esther scroll is also the only OT document of which copies were not found in the caves of Qumran.⁶ If one takes into account that the Esther narrative was among the last books to be accepted as part of the canon,⁷ it becomes quite clear why the translators of the LXX and J texts felt discomfort with the MTE. Thematically there is very little doubt that the Esther narrative is about deliverance in some way or another. It is therefore noteworthy that נָצַל [deliver] or יָשַׁע [save] is not once used in the whole narrative. From a theological or religious point of view this is quite significant, because of the theological weight carried by the above-mentioned terms in the OT.

From the above, one can deduce the very nature of the problem at hand, namely the theological character and integrity of the MTE. Two questions can be formulated which define the core of the problem. They are: *How did the translators of the LXX and J texts alter the MTE in terms of references to God? What is the theological significance of these alterations for the understanding of the Esther narrative?* Two examples will briefly be presented to demonstrate the dynamics of the problem. The examples (Es 2.20 and 6.1) will be presented in the form of a table beginning with Es 2.20.

Es 2.20

MTE	Translation	LXX	Translation
כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה עָלֶיהָ מֶרְדֳּכָי וְאֶת־מְאָמַר מֶרְדֳּכָי אֶסְתֵּר עָשָׂה כַּאֲשֶׁר הִיָּתָה בְּאִמְנָה אֵתוֹ	as Mordecai ordered her not to say, Esther has done as when she was with Mordecai	οὕτως γὰρ ἐνετείλατο αὐτῇ Μαρδοχαῖος φοβεῖσθαι τὸν θεὸν	Because Mordagaios ordered her <i>to</i> <i>fear God</i>

⁵ The constructed Masoretic text used in this study is taken from the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (3rd improved edition 1987).

⁶ See R. Gordis, “Religion, Wisdom and History in the Book of Esther – A New Solution to an Ancient Crux,” *JBL* 100 (1981), pp. 359-388.

⁷ See B. W. Anderson, “The Place of the Book of Esther in the Christian Bible,” *JR* 30 (1950), pp. 32-43; W. L. Humphreys, “A Life-Style for Diaspora: A Study of the Tales of Esther and Daniel,” *JBL* 92 (1973), pp. 211-223; Gordis, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

In 2.20 it is clear from the MTE that Mordecai ordered Esther not to say *that she is a Jew*. This is an important aspect in the plot of the Esther narrative. In the LXX it reads that Mordecai is ordering Esther *to fear God*. The alteration made by the LXX has the implication that the plot of the Esther narrative is being jeopardized for the sake of theological perceptions or explicitness. The line between theological interpretation and narrative effect has been crossed and the implication is that the plot has lost its dramatic tension. It is my opinion that the theological understanding of the MTE is taken up in the tension of the plot.

Es 6.1

MTE	Translation	LXX	Translation	J	Translation
בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא נִדְרָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ	In that night the king's sleep fled	Ὁ δὲ κύριος ἀπέστησεν τὸν ὕπνον ἀπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως τὴν νύκτα ἐκείνην,	but the Lord took away the king's sleep that night	ὁ δὲ θεός κατεγέλα τῆς 'Αμάνου πονηρᾶς ἐλπίδος.....τοῦ γὰρ βασιλέως διὰ νυκτός ἐκείνης ἀφαιρεῖται τὸν ὕπνον	But God mocked wicked hopes....because that night he took the sleep away from the king

In 6.1 the active agent is not mentioned in the MTE, but the LXX added κύριος as the agent responsible for the sleep that was taken away from the king. Josephus goes even further by adding ὁ δὲ θεός κατεγέλα τῆς Ἀμάνου πονηρᾶς ἐλπίδος.....του as a causal clause for that which is to happen. God is not only made the subject of the events, but J also states the reason behind God's action. Each of these variations presents a different theological meaning. It also alters the narrative to such an extent that the reader's participation is limited in a way. The problem and its implications are clear and need to be dealt with. The proposed research will thus focus on this very issue at hand.

The problem statement in short is:

How do the theological alterations made to the MTE, in terms of the references to God, influence the theological understanding of the Esther narrative?

1.3. HISTORY OF RESEARCH⁸

The above formulated problem has not yet been dealt with satisfactorily. Day⁹ did an almost similar study as is pursued here. She did a comparative study between the MTE and the Greek texts A and B. She used the comparison to indicate how Esther as a character was portrayed in each account. Various articles and essays appeared dealing with the theological character of the MTE, and they will be looked into first. In an article written by Morris and Lampeter,¹⁰ they tried to formulate a purpose for the Esther narrative. According to them, the purpose of the Esther narrative was misunderstood by later readers, and therefore the ‘theology’ of the MTE was misunderstood.¹¹ Anderson in turn is of the opinion that the Esther narrative is an emphatically Jewish book with the purpose of authorizing and regulating a purely Jewish festival called Purim.¹² Talmon provided a different, and one might add valuable, approach to the problem of the theological integrity of the MTE.¹³ After discussing whether the MTE is the original and only form of the story,¹⁴ Talmon proposes to define the MTE as a *historicized wisdom-tale*.¹⁵ He then suggests that the recognition of the wisdom-nucleus of the Esther narrative may assist one in understanding the more salient features of this canonical book, and thus also the lack of Jewish religiosity.¹⁶

Humphreys in turn wrote an essay with the main objective to indicate that the books of Esther and Daniel are tales of a particular type and that they developed a particular theological emphasis addressed to the emerging Jewish communities of the Persian and Hellenistic Diaspora.¹⁷ This ‘new’ style of life for the Jews calls for a new theological self-understanding.¹⁸ Cohen, again, is determined to save the spiritual dethronement and demise of the MTE. He attempts this by establishing the unmistakable Judaic religious character of the MTE by suggesting that one should interpret the MTE as referring to God who acts behind the

⁸ See H. M. Wahl, “Esther-Forschung,” *TR* 66 (2001), pp. 103-130, for a detailed account of research done on Esther over the past twenty years.

⁹ L. Day, *Three faces of a queen: characterization in the books of Esther* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

¹⁰ A. E. Morris and M. A. Lampeter, “The purpose of the book of Esther,” *ET* 42 (1930-31), pp. 124-128.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹² Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

¹³ S. Talmon, “‘Wisdom’ in the Book of Esther,” *VT* 13 (1963), pp. 419-455.

¹⁴ *Loc. cit.*, pp. 424-426.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 426.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 427.

¹⁷ Humphreys, *loc. cit.*, pp. 211-223. Humphreys is also of the opinion that Joseph, Esther and Mordecai, Daniel with his companions, as well as the tale of Ahiqar, when compared, have a common literary type which he names: the tale of the courtier, p. 217.

¹⁸ Humphreys, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

veil of causality and chance on behalf of the people of Israel.¹⁹ He bases the latter interpretation on the assumption that *pur* is the lot and the symbol of chance-fate.²⁰

Littman approaches the MTE from the perspective of Xerxes' religious policy in his (Littman's) return to the search of the historical material.²¹ Littman deduces from Lewy's theory that the followers of Marduk and Ishtar were persecuted according to the MTE, and this occurred in the reign of Xerxes I.²² Thus Littman states that the narrative, as it is presented in the MTE, was all about Xerxes' hostility towards Marduk and his followers and not about the Persians against the Jews.²³ He therefore argues that the latter is the reason why there is no reference to a Jewish 'specific' religious language in the MTE.

Meinhold in turn states that there is a dominating Jewish consciousness to be found in the *Hauptpersonen* Mordecai/Esther, which serves as an indicator of the existence of the Jews in the Diaspora.²⁴ Loader tries to solve the 'theological problem' of the MTE by presenting a 'different level of meaning' system.²⁵ He calls the deeper level of meaning a 'chiastic thought pattern' or 'x-pattern'.²⁶ When Loader makes a comparison between Mordecai-Haman's x-pattern with the song of the sea (Ex 15), and the song or prayer of Hannah (1 Sam 2.1-10), it is clear to him that it indicates that God is responsible for the reversing of threatening situations.²⁷ Loader thus deduces that God's intention is suggested and it is veiled at the same time.²⁸ God thus intervenes in a concealed manner.²⁹

Miller elaborates on the levels of meaning proposed by Loader.³⁰ He points out that the theological or religious suggestions, such as are found in Es 4.13-14, are good examples of conventional understanding of symbols as metaphor in a pre-critical 'first level thought' and that the chiastic pattern would demonstrate divine intervention. This shows that God is active in a rather anthropomorphic manner.³¹ Miller concludes by stating that the intervention of God in the MTE is veiled, as it is experienced in reality.³²

¹⁹ A. D. Cohen, "'Hu Ha-goral": The Religious Significance of Esther," *Jud* 23 (1974), pp. 87-94. He mentions that the understanding of the book's religious character demands alternative explanations to some of the faulty historical and literary perspectives which have achieved wide acceptance in the modern study of Esther, p. 88.

²⁰ *Idem*.

²¹ R. J. Littman, "The Religious Policy of Xerxes and the Book of Esther," *JQR* 65 (1974-1975), pp. 145-155.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 152.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

²⁴ A. Meinhold, "Theologische Erwägungen zum Buch Esther," *TZ* 34 (1978), pp. 321-333.

²⁵ J. A. Loader, "Esther as a Novel with Different Levels of Meaning," *ZAW* 90 (1978), pp. 417-421.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 419.

²⁷ Loader, "Levels of Meaning," p. 419.

²⁸ Loader, "Levels of Meaning," p. 419

²⁹ *Idem*.

³⁰ C. H. Miller, "Esther's Levels of Meaning," *ZAW* 92 (1980), pp. 145-148.

³¹ Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

³² *Idem*.

Berg in turn mentions that the Zion-orientated view, a view associated with restoration, posed two theological problems for some post-exilic Jews.³³ First, not all the Jews wanted to return to ‘Zion’, and second, the promise of divine grace did not materialize.³⁴ Gordis³⁵ is of the opinion that the miracle of God’s deliverance of his people need not be spelled out for the reader or take the form of interference with the normal processes of nature or history.³⁶ Even without any reference to God, the Guardian of Israel does not let his people perish.³⁷ Wiebe mentions that the reader will detect a veiled reference to God’s providence working behind the scenes with the question posed in Es 4.14.³⁸

Goldman presents a fresh approach to the narrative of Esther and the problem surrounding its theological integrity. He does this by illuminating ethical ironies in the MTE.³⁹ For him, the ultimate irony is that Haman’s attempted genocide brings about a Persian religious conversion.⁴⁰ Thus, irony is implemented by Goldman to better understand the purpose of the MTE as an ironic exploration of Jewish-Gentile relationships and to illuminate various aspects in the text that could be related to ‘chance’ or ‘divine intervention’.⁴¹

Huey agrees with Goldman that irony is the key to understanding the Book of Esther.⁴² He is of the opinion that the absence of God’s name in the Book of Esther may be intended to show disapproval of the acts of the Jews. Segal, in turn, focuses his attention on human anger and divine intervention in Esther.⁴³

Segal writes, “...underlying the author’s symmetrical construction of the events stands a firm theological conviction that God, while generally allowing the events to take a natural course, is also assumed to be tweaking at the strings at strategic moments...”.⁴⁴ Hel concludes by stating that the issue of anger in the Esther narrative, in comparison to the Joseph story, clearly indicates that God is at work behind the scenes.⁴⁵

³³ S. B. Berg, “After the Exile: God and History in the Books of Chronicles and Esther,” in *The Divine Helmsman – Studies on God’s Control of Human Events, Presented to Lou H. Silberman*, (ed. J. L. Crenshaw and S. Sandmel; New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1980), pp. 107-127.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

³⁵ Gordis, *op. cit.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 364.

³⁷ *Idem.*

³⁸ J. M. Wiebe, “Will Relief and Deliverance Arise for the Jews from another Place?,” *CBQ* 53 (1991), pp. 409-415.

³⁹ S. Goldman, “Narrative and Ethical Ironies in Esther,” *JSOT* 47 (1990), pp. 15-31.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴² F. B. Huey, “Irony as the key to Understanding the Book of Esther,” *SJT* 32 (1990), pp. 36-39.

⁴³ E. Segal, “Human Anger and Divine Intervention in Esther,” *Prooftexts* 9 (1989), pp. 247-256.

⁴⁴ Segal, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

⁴⁵ *Idem.*

Snyman⁴⁶ mentions that the impression one gets from the Esther narrative is that God is also concealed in real life, and that belief in God is the preferred option.⁴⁷ It is also clear that Fox is well aware of the problem concerning theological integrity presented by the MTE.⁴⁸ He provides the reader with four types of evidence adduced to demonstrate God's presence and activity in the Esther story, namely: *Allusions, Coincidence, Reversal* and *Themes*.⁴⁹ Fox then says that the religious attitude of the book of Esther is an optical illusion that shifts orientation as you stare at it.⁵⁰ The 'religious' hints in the book are not enough to strip away the veil concealing God.⁵¹ The narrator of the MTE is thus not certain about God's role in history, and he teaches a theology of possibilities.⁵² Van den Eynde poses the question that if God is truly king; will the kind of injustice as is immanent in the Esther narrative (and in the rest of the OT) persist?⁵³ She suggests that God is also present in the replacement of Vashti with Esther as queen,⁵⁴ as He was in the replacement of Saul with David as king.⁵⁵ Van den Eynde is further of the opinion that the fasting of the people is a religious activity which can be interpreted as a cry to God for help.⁵⁶

In two articles written by Wahl, he zooms in on the very core of the 'theological-religious' problem surrounding the MTE. In his first article⁵⁷ on this matter he poses the question: "Jahwe, wo bist du?" which triggers three problems and how the MTE dealt with these problems, "Theologisch nach der literarischen Epiphanie Jahwes, anthropologisch nach dem antwortenden Glauben und (religions) soziologisch nach der jüdischen Gemeinde der Diaspora."⁵⁸

The goal of his study is thus clear; to show that the author of the Esther narrative simultaneously reflected God and faith against the background of the Jewish community.⁵⁹ Wahl writes in his second article⁶⁰ in this regard, "Jahwe, der Gott Israels, erscheint in Esther

⁴⁶ G. Snyman, "Bybellees en wederstrewigheid – leersreaksie op God en Ester," *Koers* 61 (1996), pp. 37-55.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁴⁸ M. V. Fox, "The Religion of the Book of Esther," *Jud* 39 (1990:135), pp. 135-147; cf. M. V. Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 235-247.

⁴⁹ Fox, "Religion," pp. 139-144.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁵¹ *Idem.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁵³ Sabine M. L. van den Eynde, "If Esther Had Not Been That Beautiful," *BTB* 31 (2001), pp. 145-150.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁵⁵ *Idem.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁵⁷ H. M. Wahl, "'Jahwe, wo bist Du?' Gott, Glaube und Gemeinde in Esther," *Jud* 31 (2001), pp. 1-22.

⁵⁸ Wahl, "Jahwe, Wo Bist Du?," p. 2

⁵⁹ *Idem.*

⁶⁰ H. M. Wahl, "'Glaube ohne Gott?," Zur Rede vom Gott Israel im hebräischen Buch Esther," *BZ* 45 (2001), pp. 37-54.

hinter dichtem Schleier, aber er erscheint.”⁶¹ Because of the *er erscheint*, Wahl tries to indicate the presence of *Yahweh* in the Esther narrative by discussing the *religiöse Praxis, Anspielungen auf religiöse Phänomene, wichtige Motive* and *Begriffe und Topoi religiöser Rede* in the Esther narrative.⁶²

The history of the research presented above is but one side of the perspective on the theological integrity of the MTE. Over the past fifteen years, the emphasis of research of Esther has shifted to the reconstruction of possible sources and redactional processes. The first to be mentioned is the work of Clines⁶³ in which he tries to reconstruct a pre-Masoretic text. He also deals with the Septuagint translation as well as the Alpha text. Fox⁶⁴ in turn focuses on the redactional process of the *Masoretic* and Alpha texts. Dorothy⁶⁵ pursued a detailed structural analysis of the Greek and Hebrew versions of the Esther narrative and De Troyer⁶⁶ tries to account for a possible original ending of the Esther narrative by comparing the *Masoretic* text with its parallels. Kossmann’s⁶⁷ extensive study on the redaction history of the Esther narrative and the traditions structuring the narrative indicates to the reader the smaller building blocks of the Esther narrative and how they were put together.

In a fresh and necessary approach, Baird looked at the Esther narrative from a socio-historical perspective.⁶⁸ The last fifty years or so, the research shifted towards other versions, especially the Greek versions, of the Esther narrative. It seems that the research done so far on the MTE and that was discussed here, opens a vacuum. This vacuum exists because of the focus of scholars on the theological integrity of the MTE, on the one hand, and on constructing the Greek versions of the MTE, on the other hand. One could call this vacuum the theological implications of the interpretations of the LXX and J texts and the proposed study is an attempt to fill this vacuum.

⁶¹ Wahl, “Glaube ohne Gott?,” p. 40.

⁶² *Idem*.

⁶³ J. A. Clines, *The Esther Scroll – The Story of the Story* (JSNTSup 30; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987).

⁶⁴ M. V. Fox, *The Redaction of the Books of Esther* (SBL – Monograph Series; Georgia: Scholars Press, 1991).

⁶⁵ C. V. Dorothy, *The Books of Esther – Structure, Genre and Textual Integrity* (JSOTSup 187; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

⁶⁶ K. de Troyer, *LXX – The End of the Alpha Text of Esther – Translation and Narrative Technique in MT 8:1-17, LXX 8:1-17, and AT 7:14-41* (SBL – Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000).

⁶⁷ R. Kossmann, *Die Esthernovelle vom Erzählten zur Erzählung – Studien zur Traditions- und Redaktionsgeschichte des Esterbuches* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2000).

⁶⁸ C.A. Baird, “n Sosiaal-Wetenskaplike Analise van die Boek Ester,” (Unpublished M.A. mini-dissertation, University of Pretoria: Pretoria, 2004).

1.4. PROPOSED SOLUTION

Various solutions to the theological integrity of the MTE have been raised. Furthermore, the integrity of the text was also investigated in an attempt to understand the Esther narrative and to account for its peculiarities. The question being investigated here is how the alterations made to the MTE influence the theological understanding of the Esther narrative. By comparing key passages, those frequently employed by scholars in the past, from the MTE with the LXX and J texts, the alterations made to the text and the implications for how it has been interpreted with a specific theological framework in mind can be described. Many other versions of the Esther narrative are available and could be similarly discussed, but the focus here will be on the LXX and J texts. The next step would be to really look into the theological significance of the interpretations reflected in the translations. Thus, the solution proposed here is merely to provide a textual base through the key passages to evaluate and test the theological re-interpretations and their implications.

1.5. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to establish and define the theological alterations made to the MTE by the LXX and J texts with the focus on the explicit references made to God or Lord inserted in these texts. Some theological implications for the understanding of the Esther narrative will be deduced from the latter.

1.6. OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the study could be refined further by means of listing a few objectives:

- a. comparison of key passages from the MTE with the LXX and J texts;
- b. indicating the differences and similarities between the various accounts; and
- c. inferring some theological implications.

1.7. METHOD OF RESEARCH⁶⁹

It should be mentioned that because this is a study concerned with the comparison of texts, there are various levels on which the differences in the texts can be dealt with. First, one could deal with the changes from a stylistic-linguistic point of view. Second, differences could be compared from a text-critical perspective, and finally from a theological or interpretive stance. This study's objective is to look into the theological or interpretive alterations made to the MTE by the LXX and J texts. This process of comparing text versions and their theological content has a *hermeneutical-theological* intention. Thus the method that will be implemented is explained by the term *cognitive reception theory*.⁷⁰ The latter approach is intended as a bridge between hermeneutical text analysis (text comparison between the MTE, LXX and J texts) and reception aesthetics (the typical art of the narrative) on the one hand, and cognitive (mental thoughts triggered by the theological reworking) and empirical (the actual inserted phrases) approaches on the other.

The hermeneutical text analysis as an approach could also be called a synchronic-thematic⁷¹ approach, an attempt to understand those phrases added to the MTE that contain a reference to God. A further approach will also be used as guideline, and that is the *constructivist* approach.⁷² The latter approach is to assist the reader to be sensitive to his own subjectiveness, and to make him aware that the translators of the LXX and J texts were also influenced by their own subjectiveness when they *constructed the text by means of cognitive constructivist concepts*. The thesis of the latter approach reads: "the subject creates its own reality".⁷³

To summarize the method and its approaches:

The *cognitive reception theory* will provide the methodological framework from where a *synchronic-thematic* and *constructivist* approach will be followed.

⁶⁹ Also refer to H. M. Wahl, "Das Buch Esther als methodisches Problem und hermeneutische Herausforderung, eine Skizze," *BI* 9 (2001), pp. 25-40.

⁷⁰ The reader-orientated theory, the Constance School of Reception Aesthetics (*Rezeptionsästhetik*) has dominated the scene since the 1970's. Since then some German scholars (notably J. Schmidt and Norbert Groeben) demanded an 'empiricisation' of literary studies. The aim was to increase the verifiability and empirical testability of literary interpretation. See <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/CoRecT> for more information on this approach.

⁷¹ The text will be dealt with synchronically guided by the term κύριος and θεός and other terms that could be translated with 'God' or 'Lord'.

⁷² One can draw a distinction between "cognitive constructivism" and "social constructivism". The former is about how the individual learner, or reader for that matter, understands things, while the latter emphasizes how meanings and understandings grow out of social encounters.

⁷³ Cf. P. Lampe, "The Language of Equality in Early Christian House Churches: A Constructivist Approach," in *Early Christian Families in Context* (ed. D. L. Balch and C. Osiek; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003:74), pp. 73-83.

Chapter Two

Literary comparison between the MTE, LXX and J texts

2.1. Introduction

The literary comparison between the various accounts of the Esther narrative will be focusing on the passages listed earlier in this study. To recap, they are Es 2.20; 4.8, 14; 6.1, 6.13, and 7.10. Those passages in the LXX that are referred to as additional to the MTE and that show characteristics of theological reworking will also be dealt with. One could deduce in comparing these passages that the author/s, translators or redactors deliberately made changes to the text to fit their theological frameworks. The reason for the ‘theological’ differences could also be assigned to different manuscripts available to the author/s or translators. The focus here is to account for the alterations made on a theological interpretive level (specifically those insertions making reference to God).

The comparison will basically be done in three forms. The first type of comparison will be the use of tables and paragraphs. The primary texts will be presented in table form and a discussion thereof will be done in paragraph form. It will include a translation of the text as well as the primary text. The second type will be a combination of text groups and paragraphs. The text groups will contain the primary text with a translation beneath it printed in bold. A discussion of the variations between the texts (MTE, LXX and J) will then be presented in paragraph form. Finally, 10.3 and its additions will be categorized (MTE/LXX/J) and the discussion on each category will take place followed by the next category.

What can the reader expect from this chapter? As a starting point an excursion will be made into the reconstruction of the Esther text. This will be followed by the text comparisons that will be introduced by the text-critical notes on each passage followed by the discussion on the similarities and differences between the text versions of the Esther narrative. The text comparisons will also be divided into two groups; canonical insertions (2.20; 4.8, 14; 6.1, 13; and 7.10), and non-canonical additions (add. A, C, D and E). The chapter will be concluded with a summary of the key theological insertions made to the MTE by the LXX and J texts.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ The text-critical apparatus and considerations produced by the BHS (Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, 3rd improved edition, 1987), and the apparatus and the text-critical consideration produced by R. Hanhart, (ed.) 1983, *Septuaginta Vetus Testamentum Graecum, Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Göttingensis editum* (vol. VIII, 3), *Esther*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, will be used in this part of the study.

Before the investigation commences, it should be noted that a translation is neither static nor final; it is constantly in motion due to the readers' interpretation. In a comparative study between the MTE and LXX (6.13), De Troyer⁷⁵ asks the question whether the extra sentences were literary additions made by the translator, or whether they represent an interpretation of the Hebrew text.⁷⁶ She then states that the translator's function is to render a text in another language and to make it understandable. Therefore a good translator is also an interpreter.⁷⁷ De Troyer also draws a distinction between translation, interpretation and actualization of a text.⁷⁸ The insight of De Troyer is of value for the study, and therefore her insights with regard to translation and interpretation, with which I agree, will be used as a 'behind the scenes guideline' throughout chapter two.

2.2. The MTE and its parallels

2.2.a Excursion into the re-construction of the Esther narrative

It is possible that the difference between the MTE, LXX and J texts could be due to the availability and use of various manuscripts. A short excursion into some aspects of the reconstruction process of the text will be used as an introduction to the comparison between the MTE, LXX and J texts. This excursion is in no way presenting the complexity of the issues involved with the reconstruction of the Esther narrative, but it is merely an attempt to be conscious of the text and the reconstruction thereof.

Moore⁷⁹ was aware of the dynamics involved when reconstructing a text when he referred to Jerome to point out that there were three recensions with regard to the reading of the Septuagint, namely; the Hesychian, the Lucianic and the Origenic.⁸⁰ One of the Greek versions of Esther has been identified as a Lucianic recension and is referred to by scholars as the Lucianic text, symbolized with the letter L for some and for others it is symbolized by the letter A (also called the Alpha text). Furthermore, a text referred to by the letter B (hereafter called the B-text) which closely resembles the LXX text has also been identified.

⁷⁵ K. de Troyer, "Translation or Interpretation? A Sample from the Books of Esther," in *10th Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies* (ed. Bernard A. Taylor; SBL: Atlanta, 1998), pp. 343-353.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

⁷⁸ *Idem.*

⁷⁹ C. A. Moore, "A Greek Witness to a Different Hebrew Text of Esther," *ZAW* 79 (1967), pp. 351-358.

⁸⁰ Moore, "Greek Witness," p. 351.

Moore also took note of the finer nuances and its complexities of the text when he dealt with the possibility for the existence of a Hebrew *Vorlage* different from the MTE.⁸¹ He indicates that the arguments for such a text are fuelled by the additions, omissions, and abbreviations when one compares the AT (Alpha text) with the LXX and MTE.⁸²

Cook followed a similar course as Moore when he attempted to reconstruct the relationship between the AT and the B-text.⁸³ For Tov⁸⁴ there is little doubt that L is closely connected with the LXX of Esther and depends on it.⁸⁵ He further states that L might be a revision of the LXX towards a Hebrew or Aramaic *Vorlage*.⁸⁶ Fried also attempted to reconstruct a possible *Ur-text* of the Esther narrative,⁸⁷ through which she established the relationship between the A-text (another designation for the Alpha text), B-text and the MT, and constructed a possible Proto-A which was independent of both the B and the MT.⁸⁸ Clines also tried to reconstruct possible Esther sources or texts to account for the additions, omissions and other alterations made to the text of Esther.⁸⁹ He came to the conclusion that there was a Pre-MT without expansions or additions, from which the proto-MT and the proto-AT originated. The latter two texts gave rise to the MT and the AT respectively; the LXX (without additions) was translated from the MT, and the AT (without additions) was translated from the proto-AT. Semitic and Greek additions were then made to both the LXX and AT texts.⁹⁰ By focusing on the redaction of the AT and the MT of Esther, Fox proposes that the AT is composed of two levels – the proto-AT and a redactional level, and that the latter comprises mostly of supplementary material taken from the LXX.⁹¹ Furthermore, he also suggests that the proto-AT is a translation from a Hebrew *Vorlage* independent of the MT.⁹² In dealing with the various redactional processes he states that 2.19-23 have been omitted by the AT.⁹³

The complexity of the relationship between the various text traditions in terms of the structure of the text has been worked out in detail by Dorothy.⁹⁴ His attempt to reconstruct these traditions resulted in establishing various phases of the LXX, o' (LXX), Proto-o', Pre-Hebrew

⁸¹ Moore, "Greek Witness," pp. 355-357.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 355.

⁸³ H. J. Cook, "The A Text of the Greek Version of the Book of Esther," *ZAW* 81 (1969), pp. 369-376.

⁸⁴ E. Tov, "The Lucianic Text of the Canonical and Apocryphal Sections of Esther: A Rewritten Biblical Book," *Textus* 10 (1982), pp. 1-25.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸⁷ L. S. Fried, "Towards the Ur-Text of Esther," *JSOT* 88 (2000), pp. 49-57.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁸⁹ Clines, *op. cit.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁹¹ Fox, *Redactions*, p. 17.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁹⁴ Dorothy, *op. cit.*

(+A & F) and Pre-Hebrew.⁹⁵ De Troyer in turn tried to work out the end of the Alpha Text of the Esther narrative.⁹⁶ In her extensive study she looked at the translation and narrative techniques in MT 8.1-17, LXX 8.1-17, and AT 7.14-41. In doing so she also related the various texts to one another and how they came to be constructed the way they were. Kossmann again focused on the tradition and redaction history of the Esther narrative.⁹⁷ In her study she constructed various independent stories or traditions that eventually made up the Esther narrative as we have it in the MTE. These stories are the Vashti-story,⁹⁸ Haman-Mordecai story;⁹⁹ Haman-Mordecai-King story¹⁰⁰ and then the construction and development of a pre-Esther version.¹⁰¹ Interestingly Kossmann then deals with fragments found at the caves of Qumran to reconstruct a possible proto-Esther text.¹⁰²

The short excursion above into the text of the Esther narrative is surely an over- simplification of a very complex process. Once again it should be noted that the intention of the excursion was merely to provide a broad literary-conscious framework of the Esther narrative, and to indicate that the author of this paper is well aware of the fact that the difference between the MTE, LXX and J texts on a theological level, might be due to the use of a particular source or text tradition. Nevertheless, whether there were a pre-MT or pre-AT, and which tradition (the Vashti or Haman-Mordecai story), should be placed first, the fact remains that insertions and alterations were made to the LXX and J texts and that they hold theological implications. Thus, the assumption here is that the insertions, in particular, and the omission in general are due to a theological interpretation of the Esther narrative in its Hebrew form.¹⁰³

⁹⁵ Dorothy, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

⁹⁶ De Troyer, *The End*.

⁹⁷ Kossmann, *op. cit.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁰⁰ *Idem.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 257.

¹⁰³ The position held here with regard to the terms translation and interpretation is that one could not translate without interpreting, and one could not interpret without translating in one way or another.

2.2.1. Text comparisons (Es 2.20)

2.2.1.1. Text-critical considerations¹⁰⁴

MTE

According to the text-critical apparatus on 2.20a [מְרַדְּכִי], the Septuagint adds φοβεῖσθαι τὸν θεόν. With regard to the text-critical note on 2.20b [בְּאִמְנָה] a proposal has been made for ׀ and the Septuagint and Vulgate are witnesses to that. No further text-critical notes are made on this particular verse.

LXX

The text-critical notes indicate that φοβεῖσθαι is characterized as opposing the tradition that omits it, and the same is true for τὸν θεόν. Furthermore, the original hand of manuscript 46 of recension *b* inserted αὐτην and the two Latin editions (those preserved in Paris and Lyon), as well as recension *a* reads τὸν κύριον. It is thus clear from the above text-critical notes that an overwhelming amount of manuscripts inserted the phrase φοβεῖσθαι τὸν θεόν, although there are some variations. One could thus assume that the inserted phrase is not so much a translation into a different language, but it is due to a theological interpretation of the MTE.

Table 1

MTE	LXX	J (203)
אֵין אֶסְתֵּר מְגִדַּת מוֹלְדֶּתָּהּ וְאֶת־עַמָּהּ	ἡ δὲ Εσθηρ οὐχ ὑπέδειξεν τὴν πατρίδα αὐτῆς,	μη ποιήσασα φανερόν αὐτῷ τὸ ἔθνος ἐξ οὐπερ εἶη τυγχάνουσα
כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוְּהָ עֲלֶיהָ מְרַדְּכִי	οὕτως γὰρ ἐνετείλατο αὐτῇ Μαρδοχαῖος <u>φοβεῖσθαι τὸν θεόν</u>	
וְאֶת־מַאֲמַר מְרַדְּכִי אֶסְתֵּר עָשָׂה	καὶ ποιεῖν τὰ προστάγματα αὐτοῦ,	
כְּאֲשֶׁר הִיָּתְהָ בְּאִמְנָה אִתּוֹ	καθὼς ἦν μετ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ Εσθηρ οὐ μετήλλαξεν τὴν ἀγωγὴν αὐτῆς.	

¹⁰⁴ Cf. the text-critical notes on 2.20 presented by L. B. Paton, *The Book of Esther* (ICC – A Critical and Exegetical Commentary; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1904), p. 192; as well as the text-critical remarks by G. Gerleman, *Esther* (BKAT, Band XXI, Neukirchener Verlag Des Erziehungsvereins Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1973), pp. 72-73 and C. A. Moore, *Esther – Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB; Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971), pp. 29-30.

The scene narrated in 2.19-23 is about Mordecai's discovery of a plot to kill the king. He told Esther about it, and she in turn told the king, who gave instructions for it to be written in the annals. As with the other passages that will be dealt with, 2.20 is a key element not just in this particular scene, but also in the broader framework of the narrative and the underlying tension of the plot. Grammatically the MTE employs a hif'il participle, מְגִדֶּת 'that which is to be announced', pi'el perfect, צִוְּהָ 'it is ordered' and a qal participle, עֹשֶׂה 'that which is to be done'. In turn the LXX implements the aorist, indicative, ὑπέδειξεν 'she has revealed' (active voice) and ἐνετείλατο 'he ordered' (middle voice). Gerleman is of the opinion that 2.20 (LXX) is a rather loose translation of its MT counterpart.¹⁰⁵ All three accounts project a text (line 1) with a similar meaning; Esther not revealing her identity. The concept of Esther keeping her true identity a secret was taken over by the LXX and J texts. A further difference is that the MT reads that Esther did not reveal 'her descent' [מְוֹלָדֶיהָ] and 'her people' [וְאֶת־עַמָּהּ]. In the LXX it is only 'the homeland' [τὴν πατρίδα] that Esther did not reveal. The comparative sentence reflected in line 2 is omitted by J, as well as the contents of the rest of the verse, while the LXX inserted φοβεῖσθαι τὸν θεὸν 'to fear God' (line 3). The latter insertion is a typical subjective sentence introduced by οὕτως γὰρ. In turn the MTE implements a temporal participial (line 4) and a subjective phrase עֲשֶׂה אֲסִתֵּר followed again by a comparative phrase (line 5).

On the other hand, the LXX presents a subjective sentence (line 3), followed by another comparative sentence made up of an infinitive and a participle (line 4). Like the MTE, the latter phrase is followed by another comparative sentence (line 5). In addition to that the LXX also inserted the indicative phrase καὶ Ἐσθηρ οὐ μετήλλαξεν τὴν ἀγωγὴν αὐτῆς 'Esther did not change her way of life'¹⁰⁶ (line 5). The meaning of the phrase in line 1 is quite obvious; Esther did not reveal her nationality/where she came from/her people/her Jewish roots. The concealment of Esther's identity is to be found in all three text versions. The MTE and the LXX, but not J, also agrees on the reason why Esther did not reveal her nationality. It was because Mordecai instructed her not to do so (line 2). The LXX in turn alters the meaning of the phrase by inserting φοβεῖσθαι τὸν θεὸν. It is not just any instruction given by Mordecai, but it was an instruction to fear God, which means to respect him, or to be conscious of him when one acts.

¹⁰⁵ Gerleman, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

¹⁰⁶ Some scholars would argue that the additions might be due to a Greek or Hebrew *Vorlage* independent of the MTE.

The meaning of the phrase in line 4 could be that Mordecai had authority over Esther and he used it here. The obedience of Esther when she lived with Mordecai is called to mind by him, and he wanted to motivate her to assume the same attitude. The comparative sentence in line 4 emphasizes the meaning of motivating through the authoritative-submissive relationship between Mordecai and Esther. The insertion of the phrase listed in line 5 could mean that Esther obeyed Mordecai once more, even though she was queen, or the phrase *καὶ Εσθηρ οὐ μετήλλαξεν τὴν ἀγωγὴν αὐτῆς* could also be interpreted as stating that Esther's religious existence, her Jewish religious lifestyle, did not change. The phrase could also be understood as a combination of Esther's obedience and the Jewish-religious nature that persisted throughout the narrative. Nevertheless, it becomes clear that the LXX gives an explicit theological meaning to the events, whereas the MTE projects a more anthropological-social meaning of the scene surrounding maintaining the secret of Esther's nationality.

2.2.2. Text comparison (Es 4.8)

2.2.2.1. Text-critical considerations¹⁰⁷

MTE

The text-critical apparatus on the MTE contained in the BHS shows no text-critical notes on Es 4.8, and the note on 4.14a merely states that fragment codexes (Hebrew) from Cairo Geniza do not contain **פְּנִי**.

LXX

The text-critical notes on the text prepared by Hanhart is quite extensive with regard to 4.8, but the focus will only fall on those notes that shed light on the theological insertion *ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον* made by the LXX. The word *ἐπικάλεσαι* is omitted in the final redactions of the text reading 71 and 249. Furthermore, it is noted that insertion of *ἐπικάλεσαι* is opposing the tradition that omits *ἐπικάλεσαι*, the same is also true for *τὸν κύριον*. Recension *a* inserted *οὖν* (the Latin parallel for *οὖν* also appears in the Latin version), while *τοιγύν* was inserted by the text reading 58 (the Aramaic parallel for *τοιγύν* also appears in the Aramaic version). The definite particle *τὸν* of *τὸν κύριον* was omitted by the *hexaplarische* recensions *O* and *A'*, except for reading 93, and by recension *a*. The term *θεόν* is again inserted by the *hexaplarische* recension *O*, except once again for the text

¹⁰⁷ Also see text-critical remarks made by Gerleman, *op. cit.*, p. 102; and Moore, *Esther*, pp. 45-46.

reading 93, and by the Egyptian and Aramaic traditions. The Latin version (in the Vulgate part of the apocrypha) reads *deum*.

It is very clear that from a very early stage in the transmission of the Greek version of the MTE, and other versions, the phrase ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον was part of the text. Furthermore it also became clear from the notes above, that the phrase τὸν κύριον was ‘replaced’ in some manuscripts or just inserted into the text the translators had at hand. As with the previous insertion in 2.20, this insertion also portrays a unique theological interpretation of the MTE by the Greek translators.

Table 2

MTE	LXX	J (225)
וְאֶת־פְּתוּשָׁן כְּתָב־הַדָּת אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן בְּשׁוּשָׁן לְהַשְׁמִידֵם	καὶ τὸ ἀντίγραφον τὸ ἐν Σούσοις ἐκτεθὲν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀπολέσθαι αὐτούς	καὶ τὸ ἀντιγραφον τὸ τῶν ἐν Σούσοις προτεθέντων
נָתַן לוֹ	ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ	δοὺς δὲ αὐτῷ ¹⁰⁸
לְהַרְאוֹת אֶת־אֶסְתֵּר וּלְהַגִּיד לָהּ	δειξαι τῇ Εσθηρ	κομίσαι τῇ Ἑσθήρι
וּלְצַוֹת עָלֶיהָ לְבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ	καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ἐντείλασθαι αὐτῇ εἰσελθούση παραιτήσασθαι τὸν βασιλέα	περὶ τούτων δεηθῆναι τοῦ βασιλέως ἐνετέλλετο
לְהַתְּחַנֵּן־לוֹ וּלְבַקֵּשׁ מִן־לִפְנָיו עַל־עַמּוּהָ	καὶ ἀξιῶσαι αὐτὸν περὶ τοῦ λαοῦ	καὶ σωτηρίας ἕνεκα τοῦ ἔθνους
		μη ἀδοξῆσαι λαβεῖν σχῆμα ταπεινόν,
		ὃ παραιτήσεται τοὺς Ἰουδαίους κινδυνεύοντας ἀπολέσθαι
	μνησθεῖσα ἡμερῶν ταπεινώσεώς σου ὡς ἐτρόφης ἐν χειρὶ μου,	
	διότι Ἀμαν ὁ δευτερεύων τῷ βασιλεῖ ἐλάλησεν καθ’ ἡμῶν εἰς θάνατον,	
	<u>ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον</u>	
	καὶ λάλησον τῷ βασιλεῖ περὶ ἡμῶν καὶ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἐκ θανάτου.	

¹⁰⁸ This phrase is placed in the original text before the *καὶ* of the preceding phrase. The sequence has been changed to emphasize the comparison between the texts.

Es 4.8 is part of an important scene narrated in 4.1-17. This scene is dominated by Mordecai and Esther as primary characters attempting to stop the destruction of the Jews. The primary subject responsible for the deliverance of the Jews and the very heart of the theological discussion on the book of Esther is brought to the fore by 4.14. Verse 8 is about the copy of the written law that was distributed in Susa stating that the Jews had to be destroyed.

In comparison between the MTE, LXX and J texts the phrases presented in lines 1-3 agree with one another to a great extent. Although different Greek terms, δειξαι (LXX) and κομίσαι (J), are used with similar meanings ‘to teach/display’ and ‘to introduce/to be carried to’ respectively; and some grammatical differences appear, the meaning of the phrases listed in lines 1-3 remains unchanged. With regard to Esther going to the king, there is a slight difference between the text versions. The MTE reads that ‘she was ordered to go into the presence of the king’ [וַיִּצְוֶהָ לָבוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ], whereas the LXX reads ‘He was told to order her to go into the presence of the king and beg him’ [καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ἐντείλασθαι αὐτῇ εἰσελθούσῃ παραιτήσασθαι τὸν βασιλέα]. J in turn reads ‘to order her to ask the king about these things’ [περὶ τούτων δεηθῆναι τοῦ βασιλέως ἐνετέλλετο]. The phrase ‘ask him for mercy to seek from him on behalf of her people’ [וְלִבְקֹשׁ מִלְּפָנָיו לְהַתְחַנֵּן-לוֹ עַל-עַמּוֹ] has been taken over by both the LXX and J texts. The LXX reads ‘to be worthy of Him for the people’ [καὶ ἀξιῶσαι αὐτὸν περὶ τοῦ λαοῦ] and J states ‘for the sake of the people’s salvation’ [καὶ σωτηρίας ἕνεκα τοῦ ἔθνους].

The LXX and J texts elaborate on the above-mentioned phrase by inserting the following phrases: J inserted μη ἄδοξῆσαι λαβεῖν σχῆμα ταπεινόν – ‘not to hold in any esteem to put down outward humbleness’ (line 6). Esther is not just ordered to go to the king, but she is also told not to view this action of hers to be below her dignity to intercede for the Jews that were in danger. The author established the latter by inserting ὃ παραιτήσεται τοὺς Ἰουδαίους κινδυνεύοντας ἀπολέσθαι (line 7). The LXX does not contain the latter two phrases added by J, but again inserts other phrases that do not appear in either the MTE or J. The first is μνησθεῖσα ἡμερῶν ταπεινώσεώς σου ὡς ἐτράφης ἐν χειρὶ μου – ‘remember the days of low estate, how you were raised by my hand’ [line 8]. The second phrase inserted is διότι Ἀμαν ὁ δευτερεύων τῷ βασιλεῖ ἐλάλησεν καθ’ ἡμῶν εἰς θάνατον which repeats the fact that Haman, the second in command, was given the power to decide on the death of the Jews (line 9).

The third phrase ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον is of special concern because of its religious nature. Esther is commanded to call upon the Lord [ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον] and to speak to the king for their salvation. The meaning of the phrases (MTE/LXX/J) listed up until line 5, is basically the same. The grammatical or stylistic differences between the text versions do not change the meaning at all. In lines 6-7, J portrays his unique interpretation and understanding of events by inserting phrases from an ethical perspective, especially the phrases listed in line 6. The insertions made by the LXX also portray an ethical perspective, but with the insertion of ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον the theological perception and framework of the translators become visible. This theological framework and reworking of the MTE will become more apparent, especially in 4.14 that will be dealt with next.

2.2.3. Text comparison (Es 4.13, 14)

2.2.3.1. Text-critical considerations¹⁰⁹

The text-critical notes on this particular verse of both the BHS and Hanhart are of little use with regard to theological reworking of the text. The reason, of course, is the lack of theological interpretation of this verse by the Greek translators. Thus the authoritative voice of the text traditions used to construct the LXX or ο' texts give one no reason to suspect any irregularities in terms of theological reworking of the LXX. The importance and use of the text-critical notes would thus be for changes on a grammatical or stylistic level. The J text in turn does provide a theological reworking of the MTE, but the text taken from the Loeb library and translated by Ralph Marcus does not present any text-critical notes on section 227 (4.14). One can thus deduce that J theologically interpreted 4.14 and specifically with reference to God as the one providing alternative assistance.

¹⁰⁹ For text-critical notes on 4.14 (MTE) see note on 4.8. Also take into consideration the text-critical remarks of Paton, *op. cit.*, p. 224; Gerleman, *op. cit.*, p. 102; and Moore, *Esther*, pp. 29-30.

Table 3

MTE	LXX	J (227)
וַיֹּאמֶר מֶרְדֳּכָי לְהֵשִׁיב אֶל־אֶסְתֵּר	καὶ εἶπεν Μαρδοχαῖος πρὸς Ἀχραθαῖον Πορεύθητι	Μαρδοχαῖος δὲ τούτους κομίσαντος αὐτῷ τοῦ εὐνούχου
		παρὰ τῆς Ἐσθῆρος τοὺς λόγους ἀπαγγέλλειν
אֶל־תְּדַמֵּי בְּנַפְשְׁךָ לְהַמְלִיט בֵּית־הַמְּלָךְ מִכָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים	καὶ εἶπὸν αὐτῇ Εσθηρ, μὴ εἴπησ σεαυτῇ ὅτι σωθήσῃ μόνῃ ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ παρὰ πάντα τοὺς Ἰουδαίους	ἐκέλευσεν αὐτῇ μὴ τὴν ἴδιαν οὕτω σκοπεῖν σωτηρίαν ἀλλὰ τὴν κοινὴν τοῦ ἔθνους
כִּי אִם־תִּחְרַשׁ תַּחֲרִישִׁי בְּעַתָּה	ὥς ὅτι ἐὰν παρακούσῃς ἐν τούτῳ τῷ καιρῷ,	εἰ γὰρ ἀμελήσειε τούτου νῦν,
הַזֹּאת רַחֵם וְהַצְּלֵה יַעֲמֹד לְיְהוּדִים מִמְּקוֹם אֲחֵר־	ἄλλοθεν βοήθεια καὶ σκέπη ἔσται τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις	ἔσεσθαι μὲν αὐτῷ βοήθειαν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πάντως,
וְאֵת וּבֵית־אָבִיךָ תֵּאבְדוּ	σὺ δὲ καὶ ὁ οἶκος τοῦ πατρός σου ἀπολειῖσθε,	αὐτὴν δὲ καὶ τὸν πατρῶον οἶκον αὐτῆς ὑπὸ τῶν ὀλιγορηθέντων διαφθαρῆσεσθαι
וּמִי יוֹדַע אִם־לָעֵת כָּזֹאת הַנֶּעֱשֶׂה לְמַלְכוּת	καὶ τίς οἶδεν εἰ εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον ἐβασίλευσας	

All three accounts (MTE, LXX and J) mention that Mordecai is the subject that is sending a message to Esther (line 1). The LXX and J also include the agent that is sent, namely Ἀχραθαῖον and τοῦ εὐνούχου respectively. In addition to the latter, J also inserts an adjectival phrase that elaborates on τοῦ εὐνούχου, and it also provides the reader with a reason why this specific messenger was used (line 2) – ‘(who) delivered the message from Esther’ [παρὰ τῆς Ἐσθῆρος τοὺς λόγους ἀπαγγέλλειν]. The phrases in line 3 are about Esther who should not just consider the saving of her own life, but that of all the Jews. The latter phrase is followed by a conditional clause (line 4) introduced by כִּי אִם (MTE), ὥς ὅτι ἐὰν (LXX), and εἰ γὰρ (J); and the condition is that if Esther neglects her people at this time, then there will be consequences, which are presented in line 5.

The consequences if Esther does not go into the presence of the king, according to the MTE, are that ‘this relief and deliverance shall come, for the Jews, from another place’ [רַחֵם וְהַצְּלֵה יַעֲמֹד לְיְהוּדִים מִמְּקוֹם אֲחֵר־] (line 5). The LXX states a similar result that reads ‘support and shelter, for the Jews, will come from another place’ [ἄλλοθεν βοήθεια καὶ σκέπη ἔσται τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις]. J in turn interprets the help from ‘another place’ as alluding

to God – ‘help will come for them all from God’ [ἔσσεθαι μὲν αὐτῷ βοήθειαν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πάντως]. A further consequence, presented in all three accounts, is that the house of her (Esther’s) father will also perish (line 6), while J also adds ὑπὸ τῶν ὀλιγωρηθέντων διαφθαρήσεσθαι ‘as well as those that were neglected.’ On the other hand, J also omitted the last phrase of verse 14, but it was taken up by the LXX as ‘who knows, if it is for a time like this that you became queen’ [καὶ τίς οἶδεν εἰ εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον ἐβασίλευσας]. The MTE similarly reads ‘who knows if it is for a time like this that you became queen’ [עִיִּי אִם־לְעַתָּה קִזְאֵת הַנְּעֻתָ לְמַלְכוּת]. J’s explicit reference to God as the ‘alternative’ agent of deliverance is of importance here, and the impact of this interpretation will be dealt with later on in this study. Strangely enough, the Greek translators of the MTE did not take the opportunity provided by 4.14 to theologically interpret the events. Modern scholars on the other hand rummaged 4.14 to ‘recover’ the theological integrity of the Esther narrative, but in this case the LXX followed its Hebrew counterpart down to the last consonant. J in turn took the opportunity by clearly stating that ‘help from another place’ refers to the one and only God. The LXX’s lack of theological reworking might suggest that the theological inserted phrases dealt with up until now, are taken from manuscripts different from the MTE. As was mentioned above, that is still a possibility, but for now the assumption still is that the LXX and J texts theologically interpreted the MTE.

2.2.4. Text comparison (Es 6.1)

2.2.4.1. Text-critical considerations¹¹⁰

MTE

The text-critical note on 6.1a-a contains interesting information. The Septuagint text reads ὁ δὲ κύριος ἀπέστησεν τὸν ὕπνον ἀπό, reference is also made to compare two fragment codexes from the Cairo Geniza.

LXX

According to the text-critical notes supplied by Hanhart on 6.1, the text traditions B A S V, *hexaplarische* recension O, and recension a and b were used to construct the text, and in this case provide no alternative readings for the insertion ὁ δὲ κύριος. Minor differences with regard to ἀπέστησεν, ἀπο, τὴν νύκτα ἐκείνην are furnished, but the latter does not give any indication that one should consider the insertion of ὁ δὲ κύριος to be anything else than a theological interpretation of its Hebrew counterpart.

¹¹⁰ See text-critical notes of Paton, *op. cit.*, p. 246; Gerleman, *op. cit.*, p. 114; and Moore, *Esther*, p. 62.

Table 4

MTE	LXX	J (247-248)
		ὁ δὲ θεὸς κατεγέλα τῆς Ἀμάνου πονηρᾶς ἐλπίδος
		Καὶ τὸ συμβησόμενον εἰδὼς
		ἐτέρπετο τῷ γενησομένῳ
בְּלַיְלָה הַהוּא נִדְרָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ	Ὁ δὲ κύριος ἀπέστησεν τὸν ὕπνον ἀπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως τὴν νύκτα ἐκείνην	τοῦ γὰρ βασιλέως διὰ νυκτός ἐκείνης ἀφαιρεῖται τὸν ὕπνον
		ὁ δ' οὐ βουλόμενος ἀργῶς ἀπολέσαι τὴν ἀγρυπνίαν
		ἀλλ' εἷς τι τῶν τῆ βασιλείᾳ διαφερόντων αὐτὴν ἀναλῶσαι,
וַיֹּאמֶר לְהַבְיֵא אֶת־סֵפֶר הַזְּכוֹרֹנוֹת דְּבַרְי הַיָּמִים	καὶ εἶπεν τῷ διδασκάλῳ αὐτοῦ εἰσφέρειν γράμματα μνημόσυνα τῶν ἡμερῶν	τὸν γραμματέα κομίσαντα καὶ τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ βασιλέων τὰ ὑπομνήματα καὶ τῶν ἰδίων πράξεων
וַיְהִי וַיִּקְרָאִים לְפָנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ	ἀναγινώσκειν αὐτῷ	ἀναγινώσκειν αὐτῷ προσέταξεν

The events described in 6.1-13 are also very significant with regard to the plot of the Esther narrative. Within this scene the king loses his sleep, Mordecai is honoured and Haman's wife and friends advise him. The first noteworthy difference between the text versions is introduced by J (lines 1-3). He inserted that 'God mocked the wicked hopes of Haman' [ὁ δὲ θεὸς κατεγέλα τῆς Ἀμάνου πονηρᾶς ἐλπίδος]. Furthermore he also mentions that 'God knew what was going to happen' [Καὶ τὸ συμβησόμενον εἰδὼς] and God 'rejoiced at this event' [ἐτέρπετο τῷ γενησομένῳ]. The latter phrase is adjectival in nature to the extent that J even goes as far as to explain the feelings of God.

The alterations made to the next phrase (line 4) by the LXX- and J text are also of theological importance. The MTE merely states 'that night the king's sleep went away' [בְּלַיְלָה הַהוּא נִדְרָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ]. No reason is given why or how and what might have been responsible. For the translators of the LXX, the Lord is responsible for the sleeplessness of the king: 'the Lord took away the king's sleep that night.' [Ὁ δὲ κύριος ἀπέστησεν τὸν ὕπνον ἀπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως τὴν νύκτα ἐκείνην], and J also agrees that God is responsible 'God took away the king's sleep that night' [τοῦ γὰρ βασιλέως διὰ νυκτός ἐκείνης ἀφαιρεῖται τὸν ὕπνον]. An important difference between the LXX- and J is the terms they use to refer to God. The LXX uses κύριος and J implements θεός. The latter is indeed an important issue,

but the complexity of the variation, and the focus of this study does not allow us to deal with this issue. The assumption is therefore made that both κύριος and θεός refer to the God of Israel.

Table 4 lines 5-6 are further witness to the insertions made by J. These insertions provide the reason why the king asked for the annals to be read to him. It says: ‘because (the king) did not wish for the sleeplessness to lay to waste’ [ὁ δ’ οὐ βουλόμενος ἀργῶς ἀπολέσαι τὴν ἀγρυπνίαν]. There is also a second reason: ‘but to put that to use to perfect the kingdom’ [ἀλλ’ εἰς τι τῶν τῆ βασιλεία διαφερόντων αὐτὴν ἀναλῶσαι]. The MTE and the LXX have nothing of this kind; the MTE merely carries on where it left of, his sleep left ‘and ordered that the annals be brought to him, so that they could be read to him’ [וַיִּצְוֶה לְהָבִיא וַיִּשְׂמְרוּ אֵת סֵפֶר הַזְּכוֹרֹנוֹת דְּבַרְי הַיָּמִים]. The LXX and J texts agree with the MTE in terms of the reading of the annuals. Grammatically they vary a little, but it holds no real theological significance. They both say who the king is speaking to: τῷ διδασκάλῳ - ‘the teacher’ (LXX), and τὸν γραμματέα - ‘the scribe’ (J).

J omits הַיָּמִים, he also distinguishes between the exploits of kings of the past, and the present king’s own personal deeds. Despite this difference, J corresponds in substance to the MTE and LXX. The difference in the last phrase of 6.1 (line 8) is that the MTE used לְפָנַי הַמֶּלֶךְ as receiving subject, whereas the LXX and J texts implemented the third person personal pronoun αὐτῷ. Finally, J inserted προσέταξεν to place ἀναγινώσκειν in perspective. These differences between the text versions are clear and from a theological perspective they will have an impact on the theological understanding of Esther, and in particular how a reader theologically interprets 6.1. But before we deal with the implications of these insertions, there are more ‘theological’ alterations made to the MTE that need to be observed, 6.13 is one such passage.

2.2.5. Text comparison (Es 6.13)

2.2.5.1. Text-critical considerations¹¹¹

MTE

The revised Greek text of Lucian omits οἱ φίλοι (6.13a), and the Origen revision, which agrees with the Syrian witness, reads οἱ φίλοι αὐτου. The Septuagint adds ὅτι θεὸς ζῶν μετ' αὐτοῦ (6.13b).

LXX

With regard to the theological significant alteration made to 6.13 by the LXX, the text-critical notes do indeed indicate variations. It is pointed out that the term θεὸς ζῶν is characterized as opposing the tradition that omits it. Readings 55 and 122 have ὁ θεὸς ζῶν and A reads ὁ θεὸς ὁ ζῶν. Text witness 311 reads ὁ θεὸς and the Latin parallel for the Ethiopian text reads: *dominus*. The Latin parallel of the Aramaic and the Latin versions in turn reads: *dominus deus* (Reading 55 of the Aramaic text, in its Latin parallel, reads: *eius*).

Table 5

MTE	LXX	J (259)
וַיְסַפֵּר הָמָן לְזָרָשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ וּלְכָל־אֶהְיָוִי אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר קָרָהוּ	καὶ διηγήσατο Αμαν τὰ συμβεβηκότα αὐτῷ Ζωσαρα τῇ γυναικί αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῖς φίλοις	καὶ μετὰ δακρῶν τῇ γυναικί καὶ τοῖς φίλοις τὰ συμβεβηκότα διηγεῖτο
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ חֲכָמָיו וַזָּרָשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ	καὶ εἶπαν πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ φίλοι καὶ ἡ γυνή	
אִם מִנְרַע הִיהוּדָיִם מְרַדְּכָי	Εἰ ἐκ γένους Ἰουδαίων Μαρδοχαῖος	
אֲשֶׁר הִחְלוֹתָ לַנָּפֶל לְפָנָיו	ἤρξαι ταπεινοῦσθαι ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, πεσὼν πεσῆ	
לֹא־תִכְבֵּל לוֹ	οὐ μὴ δύνη αὐτὸν ἀμύνασθαι	οἱ δ' οὐκέτ' ἀμύνασθαι τὸν Μαρδοχαῖον ἔλεγον δυνήσεσθαι
כִּי־נָפֹל תִּפּוֹל תִּפּוֹל לְפָנָיו	ὅτι θεὸς ζῶν μετ' αὐτοῦ.	τὸν γὰρ θεὸν εἶναι σὺν αὐτῷ

Once again J's account of 6.13 is much shorter than its MTE and LXX counterparts. On a grammatical-stylistic level the MTE and the LXX do indeed differ, but the extent of the variations is not on their own enough to alter the meaning of the verse [lines 1-5]. All three text versions state that Haman shared what had happened with his wife and friends [line 1].

¹¹¹ Cf. Paton, *op. cit.*, p. 252; Gerleman, *op. cit.*, p. 115; and Moore, *Esther*, p. 63.

J omits the phrase viewed in line 2, and in turn the MTE reads **וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ חֲכָמָיו וְנִשְׂאָתוֹ** ‘his wise men and wife told him’, and the LXX has **καὶ εἶπαν πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ φίλοι καὶ ἡ γυνή** – ‘his wife and friends told him’, **חֲכָמָיו** is thus changed to **οἱ φίλοι**. In J’s shorter versions he further omits phrases listed in lines 3-4, which indicate two events: the reaction of Haman’s wife and friends, and the content thereof.

The MTE and the LXX are in agreement with regard to the conditional clause and the indicative part of that clause (lines 3-6). With regard to the MT, De Troyer indicates that one finds in 6.13 a supposition given in the protasis, “if M is of the Jewish people.” An apodosis follows asyndetically, “you will not prevail against him.”¹¹² She also notes that the condition is introduced by **אִם** and that the author regarded this condition as a realis.¹¹³ The LXX (6.13) in turn is built up out of two sentences: a conditional clause formed by a protasis and a double apodosis, and a causal clause.¹¹⁴ De Troyer then concludes with a comparison between the MT and the LXX (6.13) where the Hebrew text has a single protasis and apodosis, and the LXX text has turned it into a double apodosis, followed by a causal clause.¹¹⁵ De Troyer goes further in pointing out the differences between the MT and LXX (6.13).¹¹⁶

The main concern in terms of alteration is that which has taken place in the phrase to be viewed in line 6. As it is mentioned above, the conditional clauses and the indicative part of the clause is presented in both the MTE and LXX (with the second part of the indicative taken up by J), and all three accounts (MTE, LXX and J) introduce a causal clause as the last phrase. The MTE confirms his fall (Haman’s) will be certain **כִּי־נִפְּוֹל הַפּוֹל לְפָנָיו**, while the LXX states that - ὅτι θεὸς ζῶν μετ’ αὐτοῦ and the J text - τὸν γὰρ θεὸν εἶναι σὺν αὐτῷ presents a causal clause not confirming what is to take place, but to introduce the agent responsible for the ‘strength’ of Mordecai. The reason for Mordecai’s strength according to the LXX is because ‘the living God is with him.’ [ὅτι θεὸς ζῶν μετ’ αὐτοῦ], and J also relates that Mordecai’s ability is ‘because God is with him.’ [τὸν γὰρ θεὸν εἶναι σὺν αὐτῷ].

Mordecai as active agent and primary subject, as well as his nationality, are emphasized in 6.13 (MTE), whereas in the LXX and J texts it is God who takes centre stage. God becomes the active agent, taking over the role as primary subject from Mordecai.

¹¹² De Troyer, “Translation and Interpretation,” p. 347.

¹¹³ *Idem*.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

¹¹⁶ *Loc. cit.*, pp. 350-352.

No matter how the translators of the LXX or the author of J got to the conclusion stimulated by protasis, apodosis, conditional and causal clauses, the fact remains that by inserting ὅτι θεὸς ζῶν μετ' αὐτοῦ (LXX), and τὸν γὰρ θεὸν εἶναι σὺν αὐτῷ (J), the theological impact of the Esther narrative was altered and therefore it holds significance for the theological interpretation of the narrative as a whole. Before the so-called 'additions' to the MTE, taken up in the LXX, are dealt with in brief, a final comparison between the MTE and J is necessary due to a theological significant insertion made by the J text (268/7.10).

2.2.6. Text comparison (Es 7.10)

2.2.6.1. Text-critical considerations

Due to the fact that there is no theological significant insertion made by the LXX, the text-critical notes on both the MTE and LXX are of little use here. There are also no text-critical remarks on the text of J. Therefore, one has to deal with the text at hand.

Table 6

MTE	LXX	J (268)
וַיִּתְּלֵן אֶת־הַמֶּן עַל־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר־הִכִּין לְמַרְדֳּכָי וַחֲמַת הַמֶּלֶךְ שָׂכְכָה	καὶ ἐκρεμάσθη Ἀμαν ἐπὶ τοῦ ξύλου, ὃ ἠτοίμασεν Μαρδοχαίω. καὶ τότε ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐκόπασεν τοῦ θυμοῦ.	ὄθεν ἐπέρχεται μοι τὸ θεῖον θαυμάζειν καὶ τὴν σοφίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ δικαιοσύνην...

Es 7.10 is part of the second banquet scene initiated by Esther (7.1-10). In this scene the death of Haman also takes place and verse 10 is witness to that. The MTE and the LXX are on par; they agree in meaning and to a great extent on a stylistic level. J interprets the events surrounding the death of Haman by mentioning that 'he is moved to marvel at the deity' [ὄθεν ἐπέρχεται μοι τὸ θεῖον θαυμάζειν]. He also gives the reasons for this; the deity has shown wisdom [σοφίαν] and justice [δικαιοσύνην]. J then goes further by elaborating why this deity has wisdom and why he showed justice. In a footnote, to the J text, it is observed that this is a typical example of Josephus' moralizing. The latter is clear; the moralizing nature of J's account is determined by the insertion of both σοφίαν and δικαιοσύνην, and more so by the term θεῖον. The problem, of course, is why J used the latter term and not θεός? The answer to this question is important, but we cannot attempt to answer it here. One has to limit the observation and the implications thereof to the 'theologically' loaded terms inserted.

One could characterize the so-called additions contained in the LXX as religious. This becomes apparent when reading the apocalyptic vision of Mordecai (add. A) and the prayers of Mordecai and Esther (add. C). The comparison between the additions and their parallels in the MTE are not the primary focus of this study, but excluding the additions from a theological discussion would be irresponsible. Due to the length of the additions they cannot be dealt with in detail here, therefore only key theological elements (particularly those phrases making reference to God) within the various additions were identified and will be more closely scrutinized.

2.3. Additions to the MTE taken up by the LXX

2.3.1. Addition A (additions to Es 1.1)

The introduction of the MTE is all about Ahasuerosh and the lavish banquet held in his palace. The name ‘Ahasuerosh’ appears nine times in ch.1 (MTE) and the term ‘king’ appears twenty-nine times, all referring to Ahasuerosh. Clearly he dominates this scene, and scenes to come, and the banquet is in the limelight because of him. Chapter one thus sets the stage for the whole narrative and has a specific function in the story of Esther. In turn the LXX¹¹⁷ makes sure to alter this focus by presenting an ‘apocalyptic’ vision. This apocalyptic vision has a theological or religious function, and the identified theological phrases within this vision are presented in the table below.

Table 6

Addition A (1-17)	Translation
καὶ ἐταράχθη δίκαιον πᾶν ἔθνος φοβούμενοι τὰ ἑαυτῶν κακὰ	And every righteous nation became distressed, while fearing the worst for themselves
καὶ ἠτοιμάσθησαν ἀπολέσθαι	they prepared to die
καὶ ἐβόησαν πρὸς τὸν θεόν	And they called upon God
καὶ διεγερθεὶς Μαρδοχαῖος ὁ ἑωρακῶς τὸ ἐνύπνιον τοῦτο καὶ τί ὁ θεὸς βεβούλευται ποιῆσαι	When Mardocheaus woke up from the vision in his dreams about these things, and what God wants to do....

As is mentioned above, the introduction to the MTE focuses on Ahasuerosh and the lavish banquet; in turn the LXX’s focus is on the apocalyptic vision and God. In the MTE the king is the primary agent orchestrating the events. In the opening scene the king is the primary role player using a banquet to display his power and wealth. He is at the very centre of events, and so is queen Vashti (MTE). The apocalyptic vision in turn portrays people in distress and how they called upon God for help [ἐβόησαν πρὸς τὸν θεόν]. It is the opposite of a banquet or

¹¹⁷ The addition to ch.1 is called A by most scholars.

feast. In the MTE (1.1-22) the guests are welcomed to the comfort of the king's palace and pampered according to their desires. The guests feast at the king's goodwill and by doing so his power and majesty are manifested to the multitudes.

The LXX in turn introduces the Esther narrative with an apocalyptic vision. This vision is the direct opposite of the lavish banquet or feast. It is a vision stating that all the righteous nations are distressed [καὶ ἐταράχθη δίκαιον πᾶν ἔθνος φοβούμενοι τὰ ἑαυτῶν κακὰ]. So much so, that they are preparing to die [καὶ ἠτοιμάσθησαν ἀπολέσθαι]. Clearly the Greek translators or redactors wanted to introduce the narrative from the perspective of the suffering Jews. They go further by also stating that 'they (righteous nations) called upon God for help' [ἐβόησαν πρὸς τὸν θεόν]. In opposition to the king, the redactors also inserted καὶ διεγερθεὶς Μαρδοχαῖος ὁ ἑωρακῶς τὸ ἐνύπνιον τοῦτο καὶ τί ὁ θεὸς βεβούλευται ποιῆσαι 'When Mardochaeus woke up from the vision in his dreams about these things, and what God wants to do....', which places God in the centre of events, and therefore God's power and majesty will be portrayed in the events to follow. The events to be presented in the Esther narrative are not controlled by the king, but under the control of God. The phrase θεὸς βεβούλευται ποιῆσαι is witness to the latter.

2.3.2. *Addition C (additions to Es 4.17) and J, 228*

The scene in the MTE merely states that Esther ordered Mordecai to gather the Jews to fast for three days, as she will be doing with her maids. The addition that follows in 4.17 contains two prayers; one of Mardochaeus and one of Esther. The fasting of Mardochaeus, the Jews and Esther was taken up by the LXX and J texts but it was theologically reworked to present two prayers that project the theological framework of the translators and author. This section will be introduced by 4.15-16 (MTE) and a translation, followed by key theological elements of the prayers in the LXX and J texts with an accompanying translation.

Table 7

MTE	Translation
וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְהַשִּׁיב אֶל־מֶרְדֵּכַי	Esther told him to answer to Mordecai
לֵךְ כְּנוֹס אֶת־כָּל־הַיְהוּדִים הַנִּמְצְאִים בְּשׁוּשַׁן	Go and gather all the Jews that can be found in Susa
וְצוּמוּ עָלַי	Fast for me
וְאַל־תֹּאכְלוּ	You are not allowed to eat
וְאַל־תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לַיְלָה וַיּוֹם	And you are not allowed to drink for three days and three nights
גַּם־אֲנִי וְנַעֲרֹתַי אֲצוּמִים כֵּן	More still, I will fast, like you, with my servants.
וּבִכִּי אֵבֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ	And so I will go in to the king
אֲשֶׁר לֹא־כִדָּת וְכֹאֲשֶׁר אֶבְרָתִי אֶבְרָתִי	Which is not according the law, but if I should perish, let I perish.

Table 8

Addition 4.17a (LXX)	Translation
^{17a} καὶ ἐδεήθη κυρίου μνημονεύων πάντα τὰ ἔργα κυρίου	He binded himself to the Lord, while remembering all the works of the Lord
καὶ εἶπεν ^{17b} Κύριε κύριε βασιλεῦ πάντων κρατῶν, ὅτι ἐν ἐξουσίᾳ σου τὸ πᾶν ἐστίν, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ ἀντιδοξῶν σοι ἐν τῷ θέλειν σε σῶσαι τὸν Ἰσραηλ, ^{17c} ὅτι σὺ ἐποίησας τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ πᾶν θαυμαζόμενον ἐν τῇ ὑπ' οὐρανὸν καὶ κύριος εἶ πάντων, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὃς ἀντιτάσσεται σοι τῷ κυρίῳ. σὺ πάντα γινώσκεις, σὺ οἶδας, κύριε	And he said: “Lord, Lord, king ruling over all, and your power is above all, and there is no one opposing your will to save Israel, because you made the heaven and the earth, and the wonderful things in heaven and on earth, and you are Lord over all, and no one shall resist you Lord. You know everything, you know, Lord.”
Addition 4.17f (LXX)	Translation
καὶ νῦν, κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς ὁ θεὸς Ἀβρααμ, φεῖσαι τοῦ λαοῦ σου	And now Lord, God, the King, the God of Abraham, spare your people.
Addition 4.17i (LXX)	Translation
¹⁷ⁱ Κύριέ μου ὁ βασιλεὺς ἡμῶν, σὺ εἶ μόνος,	My Lord, our king, you are the only one,
βοήθησόν μοι τῇ μόνη καὶ μὴ ἐχούση βοηθὸν εἰ μὴ σέ, ὅτι κίνδυνός μου ἐν χειρὶ μου.	Help me in loneliness; I have no helper than you, for my danger is at hand.

Table 9

Supplication of Mardocheaus in J (229)	Translation
Καὶ Μαρδοχαῖος μὲν κατὰ τὰς τῆς Ἑσθῆρος ἐντολὰς τὸν τε λαὸν ἐποίησε νηστεῦσαι	And Mardocheaus, according to Esther's instruction, made the people to fast
καὶ τὸν θεὸν αὐτὸς ἰκέτευσε μὴδὲ νῦν ὑπεριδεῖν αὐτοῦ τὸ ἔθνος ἀπολλύμενον	And himself, supplicated to God, not to turn away from the destruction of his people
ἀλλ' ὡς καὶ πρότερον αὐτοῦ πολλάκις προενόησε	But to provide like many times before
J (230)	Translation
“ὅτι μὴ προσεκύνησα μὴδ' ἦν σοί, δέσποτα” φησὶν “τιμὴν παρεῖχον ταύτην	“Because I did not prostrate myself before him, as before you, O Lord, “this honour I have also passed
ἐκείνῳ παρασχεῖν ὑπέμενον,	that produced to stand firm,
ὀργισθεὶς ταῦτα κατὰ τῶν μὴ παραβαινόντων τοὺς σοὺς νόμους ἐμηχανήσατο”	This made him angry against those not standing beside your law which was put together by him”.
Similar cry of the nation by J (231)	Translation
τὰς δ' αὐτὰς ἠφίει καὶ τὸ πλῆθος φωνάσας, παρακαλοῦν προνοῆσαι τὸν θεὸν τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν	And the same cry went out from the multitude, who called upon God to provide for their deliverance
Supplication of Esther by J (231-232)	Translation
ἰκετευε δὲ καὶ Ἑσθῆρ τὸν θεὸν τῷ πατρῷ νόμῳ, ῥίψασα κατὰ τῆς γῆς ἑαυτήν	And Esther approached God according to the nation's custom, by throwing herself on the ground
καὶ πενθικὴν ἐσθῆτα περιθεμένη, καὶ τροφῆ καὶ ποτῶ καὶ τοῖς ἡδέεσιν ἀποταξαμένη,	While putting on a mourner's dress, setting aside food, drink and pleasures.
τρὶς ἡμέρας ἤγειρε τὸν θεὸν ἐλεηθῆναι μὲν αὐτήν, δόξα δ' ὀφθεῖσαν τῷ βασιλεῖ...	for three days she begged God to show mercy, to honour when seeing the king

The sequence of events in 4.15-16 can be deduced from table 7, and they are:

- Esther instructs Mardocheaus to call all the Jews in Susa to fast with her (lines 1-4);
- She and her servants will also fast (line 5);
- Esther must go into the presence of the king and it is against the law (line 6).

The basic elements of the events presented in the MTE were taken over by both the LXX (4.15, 16) and J (228), but the comparison is not between the MTE of 4.15-16 and the parallels in the LXX and J texts, but between 4.15-16 (MTE) and the addition made to 4.17. If the fasting could be interpreted as a 'religious' event, then the translators of the LXX went to

the extreme by presenting two extensive prayers of Mardocheaus and Esther. The first part of Mardocheaus' prayer reads 'he binded himself to the Lord and remembered the works of the Lord' [καὶ ἐδέηθη κυρίου μνημονεύων πάντα τὰ ἔργα κυρίου], (table 8, line 1). Mardocheaus is not just instructed to fast with the Jews (4.15-16), but he supplicates to the Lord, binding himself to focus on what the Lord has done in the past. J follows along similar lines 'And he himself supplicated to God not to turn away from the destruction of his people, but to provide like many times before' [καὶ τὸν θεὸν αὐτὸς ἰκέτευσε μὴδὲ νῦν ὑπεριδεῖν αὐτοῦ τὸ ἔθνος ἀπολλύμενον ἀλλ' ὡς καὶ πρότερον αὐτοῦ πολλακίς προενόησε], (lines 2-3).

The LXX continues with a glorification of the Lord, typical of a lamentation in the OT. And he said:

“Lord, Lord, king ruling over all,
 and your power is above all,
 and there is no one opposing your will to save Israel,
 because you made the heaven and the earth,
 and the wonderful things in heaven and on earth,
 and you are Lord over all, and no one shall resist you Lord.
 You know everything, you know, Lord.” (table 8, line 2)

The LXX builds up to a climax presented by the words 'And now Lord, God, the King, the God of Abraham, spare your people' [καὶ νῦν, κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς ὁ θεὸς Ἀβρααμ, φεῖσαι τοῦ λαοῦ σου], (table 8, line 3); followed by 'My Lord, our king, you are the only one' [Κύριέ μου ὁ βασιλεὺς ἡμῶν, σὺ εἶ μόνος], (table 8, line 4). J omits most of the exaltation presented in the LXX. His point of view is more interpretive in nature when he states the reason why God should help: 'Because I did not prostrate myself before him, as before you O Lord, this honour I have also passed' [ὅτι μὴ προσεκύνησα μὴδ' ἦν σοί, δέσποτα” φησὶν “τιμὴν παρεῖχον ταύτην], (table 9, line 4).

J also portrayed Esther's supplication as more dramatic; she throws herself on the ground while praying, begging God for three days to take pity on her when she appears before the king [τρισὶν ἡμέραις ἤτει τὸν θεὸν ἐλεηθῆναι μὲν αὐτήν, δόξαι δ' ὀφθεῖσαν τῷ βασιλεῖ], (lines 8-10). The phrases listed in lines 8-10 make the interpretation of the three days of fasting more imminent. The theme of God having dominion over all and being ruler

of all the nations is repeated in the prayer of Esther. The content of these prayers ensures that God is the primary agent in the deliverance of the Jews from their enemies. The three days fasting (4.16 MTE) called out by Esther is transformed into two extensive prayers on the glory, dominion and power of the Lord. J, as with the LXX, places God at the very core of the salvation act bestowed on the Jews.

The prayers almost take the shape of a lamentation in J, whereas the prayers in the LXX are moulded into a song of glorification. Both the LXX and J have one thing in common: to portray God as the one responsible and capable of delivering his people from certain death. The focus in the MTE (4.15-16) is much more towards Esther and the important and difficult task that needs to be accomplished. Although these prayers are prayed by Mordecai and Esther, through which their pious natures are introduced, the objective is weaved into the content of the prayer. God is glorified, praised and magnified, his actions in history are recalled, and the hope that He will deliver his people again is ensured.

2.3.3. Addition D (additions to Es 5.1, 2) and J, 234(9), 237

Es 5.1-8 (MTE) deals with Esther's request for a banquet which results in another request for a second banquet. The scene is introduced by Esther entering into the king's domain although it was forbidden by law. This scene should also be understood against the background of the law (1.19, 4.16) made by the king that one cannot enter his domain without being summoned. The king's action in terms of this law when he sees Esther is not only taken over by the LXX and J texts, but it is re-interpreted from a particular theological framework. The following comparison will be presented in block form. The primary texts will be arranged beginning with the MTE, then the LXX followed by J.

Group A

וַיְהִי בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וַתִּלְבַּשׁ אֶסְתֵּר מַלְכוּתָא (MTE).

‘It was on the third day that Esther put on a royal dress.’

Καὶ ἐγενήθη ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ, ὡς ἐπαύσατο προσευχομένη, ἐξεδύσατο τὰ ἱμάτια τῆς θεραπείας καὶ περιεβάλετο τὴν δόξαν αὐτῆς (LXX).

‘It was on the third day, when she ceased praying; she took off her service dress and put around her glorious apparel.’

Ταῦθ’ ἱκετεύουσα τὸν θεὸν ἐπὶ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἀποδύεται μὲν τὴν ἐσθῆτα ἐκείνην καὶ τὸ σχῆμα μεταβάλλει, κοσμησαμένη δ’ ὡς ἐχρῆν τὴν βασίλισσαν συν δυσὶν (J, 234(9)).

‘When she had supplicated to God for three days she took off that dress and changed her outward appearance, she arranged to be pampered as queen with her two maids.’

Group B

καὶ γενηθεῖσα ἐπιφανῆς ἐπικαλεσαμένη τὸν πάντων ἐπόπτην θεὸν καὶ σωτῆρα παρέλαβεν τὰς δύο ἄβρας καὶ τῇ μὲν μιᾷ ἐπηρείδετο ὡς τρυφερευομένη, ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα ἐπηκολούθει κουφίζουσα τὴν ἔνδυσιν αὐτῆς (LXX).

‘She was filled with light after she called upon God, the overseer and saviour of all. She took two favorite maids and leaned upon the one like a fastidious woman, and the other followed afterwards carrying part of her dress.’

Group C

וַתַּעֲמֹד בַּחֲצַר בַּיִת־הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּנִימִית נֹכַח בַּיִת הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא מַלְכוּתוֹ בְּבַיִת הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּנִימִית (MTE).

‘And she stood in the courtyard of the king’s house in the inner court of the king’s house, and the king sat on his royal throne in his royal house right opposite the courtyard of the house.’

καὶ μετέβαλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ βασιλέως εἰς πραΰτητα, καὶ ἀγωνιάσας ἀνεπήδησεν ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνέλαβεν αὐτὴν ἐπὶ τὰς ἀγκάλας αὐτοῦ, μέχρις οὗ κατέστη, καὶ παρεκάλει αὐτὴν λόγοις εἰρηνικοῖς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ Τί ἐστίν, Εσθηρ (LXX).

‘God changed the spirit of the king into gentleness, and he leaped up from his throne, while being distressed, picked her up into his arms, until she recovered, and he told her words of comfort and asked her: “What is it Esther?”’

ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς κατὰ βούλησιν οἶμαι τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν διάνοιαν μετέβαλε καὶ δείσας περὶ τῆς γυναικί, μὴ καὶ πάθῃ τι τῶν χειρόνων ὑπὸ τοῦ φόβου, ἀνεπήδησεν ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου, καὶ ταῖς ἀγκάλαις αὐτὴν ὑπολαβὼν ἀνεκτάτο, κατασπαζόμενός τε (J, 237; 238).

‘The king, because of God’s will, I believe, changed his mind and not wanting misfortune surrounding his wife, and fearing that something serious has happened, he got up from his throne, he brought her back to consciousness, while embracing and speaking to her.’

The scene depicted in Es 5.1-8 follows the submission of Esther and Mordecai to God. In the MT Esther gains favour in the eyes of the king, probably because of her beauty. The first notable difference between the text versions is that J introduced this scene by emphasizing that Esther was supplicating to God for three days [Γαῦθ’ ἱκετεύουσα τὸν θεὸν ἐπὶ τρεῖς ἡμέρας], so does the LXX [ὡς ἐπαύσατο προσευχομένη], (Group A). Both the LXX and J texts clearly attempt to indicate that Esther dressed herself with a royal gown. On the other hand, the MTE’s focus is on the royal dress put on by Esther [וַתִּלְבַּשׁ אֶשְׁתֵּר מְלָכוֹת], (Group A). The LXX also asserts that Esther is the one bearing light after calling upon God [καὶ γεννηθεῖσα ἐπιφανῆς ἐπικαλεσαμένη τὸν πάντων ἐπόπτην θεὸν], (Group B), after which they assign the epithets ἐπόπτην ‘overseer’ and σωτήρα ‘saviour’ to God.

The comparisons in Group C are of great theological value. The MTE (5.2) merely states that ‘she gained favour in his eyes’ [וַתִּשְׁפָּרַח בְּעֵינָיו]. The reason thus for the king’s action, according to the author of the MTE, is because of Esther’s outward appearance, and nothing more than that. The LXX is of the opinion that the king acts the way he does because God changed his spirit into gentleness [καὶ μετέβαλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ βασιλέως εἰς πραΰτητα], (Group C). J in turn assigns the king’s action to God’s will; and J also makes it no secret that it is how he believed it happened [ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς κατὰ βούλησιν οἶμαι τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν διάνοιαν μετέβαλε]. The theological reworking of the MTE could not be clearer than the two phrases inserted by the LXX and J texts viewed in Group C, and the addition made to 5.2 will only confirm the translators’, redactors’ and authors of the LXX and J texts’ theological perceptions. The comparison of 5.2 is also provided in tabular form.

Table 11

MTE	LXX	J (239)
	^{2a} καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Εἶδόν σε, κύριε, ὡς ἄγγελον θεοῦ, καὶ ἐταράχθη ἡ καρδία μου ἀπὸ φόβου τῆς δόξης σου, ὅτι θαυμαστός εἶ, κύριε, καὶ τὸ πρόσωπόν σου χαρίτων μεστόν.	
וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה עֹמֶדֶת בַּחֲצַר		
וַיִּשָּׂא חֵן בְּעֵינָיו		
וַיִּוָּשֶׁט הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאֶסְתֵּר אֶת־שֵׁרֶבֶיט הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ וַתִּקְרַב אֶסְתֵּר וַתִּנָּע בְּרֹאשׁ הַשֵּׁרֶבֶיט	καὶ ἄρας τὴν χρυσοῦν ῥάβδον ἐπέθηκεν ἐπὶ τὸν τράχηλον αὐτῆς καὶ ἠσπάσατο αὐτήν καὶ εἶπεν Λάλησόν μοι.	ταῦτα λέγων τὸ σκῆπτρον αὐτῆς ἐνετίθει τῇ χειρὶ καὶ τὴν ῥάβδον ἐξέτεινεν ἐπὶ τὸν αὐχένα αὐτῆς διὰ τὸν νόμον, εὐλαβείας αὐτήν ἀπολύων

The scene in 5.2 (MTE) takes place in the inner space of the king's palace. Esther is entering into the palace where the king is sitting on his throne (5.1). The king sees Esther, the queen, standing in the courtyard [וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה עֹמֶדֶת בַּחֲצַר]. She gains favour in his eyes [וַיִּשָּׂא חֵן בְּעֵינָיו]; and the king extends to Esther the golden sceptre which is in his hand [וַיִּוָּשֶׁט הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאֶסְתֵּר אֶת־שֵׁרֶבֶיט הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ]. Esther approaches him and he places the sceptre on her head [וַתִּקְרַב אֶסְתֵּר וַתִּנָּע בְּרֹאשׁ הַשֵּׁרֶבֶיט]. A very different account is presented by the LXX since the inserted phrase καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Εἶδόν σε, κύριε, ὡς ἄγγελον θεοῦ makes the king an active agent to fulfil God's will (LXX, 5:1). The phrase θαυμαστός εἶ, κύριε, καὶ τὸ πρόσωπόν σου χαρίτων μεστόν is also inserted stating that the king is wonderful; his face is full of grace (line 1).

The phrases in lines 2-3 (MTE) are omitted by the LXX. This is also significant, because the focus of these two phrases is to emphasize the beauty of Esther, and how it influenced the king's decisions, whereas the LXX wants to portray God as the primary agent, responsible for the events as they occur. The extending of the golden rod as an act of acceptance and salvation is presented by the MTE, LXX and J texts. Finally, J omits all the phrases listed in lines 1-4.

2.3.4. Addition F (additions to Es 10.3), and J, 295-296

Es 10.3 is part of the concluding scene taken up in 10.1-3. Although the ‘original’ ending of the Esther narrative is disputed,¹¹⁸ it is interesting to compare the MT ending with its counterparts.

Es 10.3 (MTE)

כִּי מֶרְדֵּכַי הַיְהוּדִי מְשֻׁנָּה לְמַלְךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ וְגָדוֹל לַיְהוּדִים וְרָצוּי לְרַב אֶחָיו דָּרַשׁ טוֹב לְעַמּוֹ
 וְדָבַר שְׁלוֹם לְכָל־זֶרְעוֹ

The MTE’s ending to the Esther narrative places Mordecai in the centre. The phrases implemented by the author/s of the MTE are witness to that. Mordecai, the Jew, is the second in command to the great king Ahasuerosh [כִּי מֶרְדֵּכַי הַיְהוּדִי מְשֻׁנָּה לְמַלְךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ וְגָדוֹל]; and that he is great among the Jews and was favoured among many of his kindred [לַיְהוּדִים וְרָצוּי לְרַב אֶחָיו]. The reason is that he sought the good for his people and spoke peace for all his descendants [דָּרַשׁ טוֹב לְעַמּוֹ וְדָבַר שְׁלוֹם לְכָל־זֶרְעוֹ]. In turn the LXX shifts the focus a bit towards a more ‘acceptable’ theological interpretation.

Addition to Es 10.3a and b (LXX)

^{3a} Καὶ εἶπεν Μαρδοχαῖος Παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγένετο ταῦτα, ^{3b} ἐμνήσθην γὰρ περὶ τοῦ ἐνυπνίου, οὗ εἶδον περὶ τῶν λόγων τούτων, οὐδὲ γὰρ παρηλθεν ἀπ’ αὐτῶν λόγος.

The LXX shifts the focus from Mordecai as the national hero to God as the universal and national saviour. Mardocheaus spoke about those things God had done [Καὶ εἶπεν Μαρδοχαῖος Παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγένετο ταῦτα], because he remembered the dream that he had,¹¹⁹ where he saw those things [οὗ εἶδον περὶ τῶν λόγων τούτων], and none of the words had gone by [οὐδὲ γὰρ παρηλθεν ἀπ’ αὐτῶν λόγος].

The LXX further elaborates by emphasizing how God delivered his people in the past [^{3f} τὸ δὲ ἔθνος τὸ ἐμόν, οὗτός ἐστιν Ἰσραηλ οἱ βοήσαντες πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ σωθέντες, καὶ ἔσωσεν κύριος τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐρρύσατο κύριος ἡμᾶς ἐκ πάντων τῶν κακῶν τούτων, καὶ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ σημεῖα καὶ τὰ τέρατα τὰ μεγάλα, ἃ οὐ γέγονεν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν]. The Lord delivered his people, He rescued them. God also performed great signs and wonders.

¹¹⁸ See De Troyer, *The End*.

¹¹⁹ See addition A to the LXX.

J (295)

ὁ δὲ Μαρδοχαῖος μέγας τε ἦν καὶ λαμπρὸς παρὰ τῷ βασιλεῖ καὶ συνδιεῖπεν αὐτῷ τὴν ἀρχήν, ἀπολαύων ἅμα καὶ τῆς κοινωνίας τοῦ βίου τῆ βασιλισσῆς.

J ends the story of Esther by saying that Mardochaeus was a great and illustrious man according to the king [ὁ δὲ Μαρδοχαῖος μέγας τε ἦν καὶ λαμπρὸς παρὰ τῷ βασιλεῖ], and that Mordechaios was also assigned shared leadership [καὶ συνδιεῖπεν αὐτῷ τὴν ἀρχήν, ἀπολαύων ἅμα], while having companionship with the queen [καὶ τῆς κοινωνίας τοῦ βίου τῆ βασιλισσῆς]. As part of the preceding phrases (295), J inserts the following: παρατήρησουσιν αὐτὰς εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ θεῷ ‘they would observe closely when bringing thanks to God.’ Agreeing to a large extent with the meaning of the ending of the MTE, J confirms that thanks were given to God, which implies that there is no one else who is responsible for the deliverance of the Jews. This bringing of thanks would ultimately be formalized in the feast called Purim.

2.4. Conclusion

What can one deduce from the above comparison between the MTE, LXX and J texts? First of all, phrases are compared that agree with one another on grammatical, stylistic and theological levels, while the opposite is also true. In some cases one finds a paraphrastic translation of the MTE, and at other the Hebrew and Greek texts agree on grammatical and stylistic levels. Secondly, the J text in a few cases agrees with either the MTE or the LXX on a grammatical level. The word order and terms applied by J are unique in comparison with the MTE and LXX texts. Thirdly, specific alterations were made by both the LXX and J texts to fit their theological frameworks.

In one or two cases, one could assign the specific theological references made in the text to a manuscript other than that of the MTE. Finally, the insertions, additions and alterations made by the LXX and J texts on a theological level have implications which will be dealt with in the chapter to follow. Before these implications are dealt with, a summary of the theological inserted phrases are listed below.

2.4.1. Canonical additions

- Es 2.20** φοβεῖσθαι τὸν θεὸν (LXX)
- Es 4.8** ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον (LXX)
- Es 4.14/227** ἔσεσθαι μὲν αὐτῷ βοήθειαν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πάντως (J)
- Es 6.1/247** Ὁ δὲ κύριος ἀπέστησεν τὸν ὕπνον ἀπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως τὴν νύκτα ἐκείνην (LXX)
ὁ δὲ θεὸς κατεγέλα τῆς Ἀμάνου πονηρᾶς ἐλπίδος (J)
- Es 6.13/259** οὐ μὴ δύνη αὐτὸν ἀμύνασθαι, ὅτι θεὸς ζῶν μετ' αὐτοῦ (LXX)
οἱ δ' οὐκέτ' ἀμύνασθαι τὸν Μαρδοχαῖον ἔλεγον δυνήσεσθαι τὸν γὰρ θεὸν εἶναι σὺν αὐτῷ (J)
- Es 7.10/268** ὅθεν ἐπέρχεταιί μοι τὸ θεῖον θαυμάζειν καὶ τὴν σοφίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ δικαιοσύνην... (J).

2.4.2. Non-canonical additions

Addition A (addition to Es 1.1)

The Vision

Addition C (addition to Es 4.17); J, 229-232

The prayers

Addition D (additions to Es 5.1 and 2); J, 237; 234(9)

Es 5.1

καὶ μετέβαλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ βασιλέως εἰς πραῦτητα (LXX)

ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς κατὰ βούλησιν οἶμαι τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν διάνοιαν μετέβαλε (J, 237)

Es 5.2

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Εἶδόν σε, κύριε, ὡς ἄγγελον θεοῦ [LXX]

Ταῦθ' ἱκετεύουσα τὸν θεὸν ἐπὶ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἀποδύεται μὲν τὴν ἐσθῆτα ἐκείνην (J, 234(9))

Addition F (additions to Es 10.3); J, 294-296

Καὶ εἶπεν Μαρδοχαῖος Παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγένετο ταῦτα, ^{3b} ἐμνήσθη γὰρ περὶ τοῦ ἐνυπνίου, οὐ εἶδον περὶ τῶν λόγων τούτων, οὐδὲ γὰρ παρήλθεν ἀπ' αὐτῶν λόγος (LXX)

ὁ δὲ Μαρδοχαῖος μέγας τε ἦν καὶ λαμπρὸς παρὰ τῷ βασιλεῖ καὶ συνδιεῖπεν αὐτῷ τὴν ἀρχὴν, ἀπολαύων ἅμα καὶ τῆς κοινωνίας τοῦ βίου τῇ βασιλισσῇ (J, 295)

Chapter Three

The implications for the theological understanding of the MTE

3.1. Introduction

The theological integrity of the MTE, and the ‘recovery’ thereof, has been the focus of many translators, authors and scholars since the time when translation began until the ‘modern’ era. The interpretations of the MTE, by both modern and ancient readers, were and are attempts to ‘recover’ the theological integrity of the MTE. Their ‘theological’ interpretations not only influenced the readers of the Esther narrative, but also have implications for how God and his involvement in human history are viewed and understood through this narrative. The theological significance of the Esther narrative is therefore undermined.

First of all, the theological alterations made by the LXX and J texts would have an impact on the Esther narrative. The Esther narrative is a story captured in written form, and any changes to this will have implications for the narrative; and because the Esther narrative, in both Hebrew and Greek according to some traditions,¹²⁰ is part of Scripture being used by faith communities, it will also affect the theological interpretation and understanding of the narrative. Secondly, the ‘theological’ insertion made by the LXX and J texts will have an impact on the individual reader. The insertions will trigger cognitive, emotional, hermeneutical and theological processes in readers that will affect how they take part in the narrative, and how they view God as part of the narrative. Finally, the theological reworking of the LXX and J texts could have an impact on the theology of the Old Testament in general and how theologians present their theological understanding of the Old Testament God. There are indeed more implications than are listed above, but this study has limited itself to the first two in particular, with a brief discussion of the third.

The objective of this chapter is to indicate what the possible theological implications of the inserted phrases (by the LXX and J texts) might be on the theological understanding of the Esther narrative. The reader can expect to find two main sections in this chapter: 3.2. *The theological implications of the additions and insertions made by the LXX and J texts*, and 3.3. *Theological considerations by ‘modern’ interpreters of the MTE*. The first section is further divided into two sub-sections: 3.2.1. *Insertions made to the canonical passages (2.20; 4.8, 14;*

¹²⁰ Although the Hebrew form of the Esther narrative is available and being used by most faith communities and Church traditions, the Greek version and other literature, like the apocrypha, are becoming more and more popular as they are translated into different languages (for example, take the recent publication by J.G. van der Watt & F. Tolmie, *Apokriewe Ou en Nuwe Testament – Verlore boeke uit die Bybelse tyd* (Vanderbijlpark: CUM, 2002), that contains, among other things, translations of all the apocryphal documents into Afrikaans).

6.1, 14; 7.10), and 3.2.2. *Additions to the canonical material* (A, C, D, E) contained in the LXX.

The first sub-section of section one will be structured as follows:

- The phrase and the text versions;
- Discussion of the verse within its *Masoretic* context;
- A short summary on the comparison between the text versions of the verse and particular phrases;
- A discussion of the theological implications on the theology of the Esther narrative; and
- Concluding remarks.

No particular structure will be followed with the second sub-section of section one. Finally, the reader can expect a broad overview on how ‘modern’ scholars tried to account for the biblical book of Esther’s ‘lack’ of religious language in the second section of this chapter.

3.2. The theological implications of the additions and insertions made by the LXX and J texts

3.2.1. Insertions made to the canonical passages

3.2.1.1. φοβεῖσθαι τὸν θεὸν (*Es* 2.20)

Through this verse, the author of the MTE is once again assuring the reader (see 2.10) that Esther has not yet revealed her nationality.¹²¹ The significance of the latter is also emphasized by Levenson¹²² and discussed by Bush¹²³ on how the two references fit into the textual structure. Bush also indicates that Esther did not reveal her identity when the young women were gathered, and when Mordecai was sitting at the gate.¹²⁴ The reason for Esther not revealing her nationality is also given; Mordecai has instructed her not to do so. Although Esther is in an authoritative position, she still is his foster-child and that is why she obeys his instructions.¹²⁵

¹²¹ See Gerleman, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

¹²² J. D. Levenson, *Esther – A Commentary* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1997), p. 61.

¹²³ F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC, volume 9; Dallas: Word Books, 1996).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 372.

¹²⁵ Gerleman, *op. cit.*, p. 83, cf. Paton, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

Berg¹²⁶ notes that the obedience of Esther (2.20) has a certain function within the narrative; it is to contrast her (Esther) with Vasthi, and it further prepares the audience for Esther's response to Mordecai in 4.16.¹²⁷

The fact that Mordecai instructed Esther twice (2.10, 20) not to reveal her identity; shows that it is important for the narrator.¹²⁸ Her silence is required as a plot device.¹²⁹ Mordecai is also portrayed as sitting at the gate (2.21-23) where he has the opportunity to unravel a plot to kill the king. Fox¹³⁰ identifies 2.20 as bearing on character or ideology.¹³¹ He mentions that the passive role of Esther can still be seen in 2.20b.¹³² The author also structured section 1.1-2.20 in accordance with the principle of chiasmic-reversal; and the idea of the reversal of the destiny and fortunes of characters in the story. Esther and Mordecai are the primary role players in this scene and their actions determine and strengthen the plot of the narrative. The interaction between these two characters, as human agents, determines the sequence of events and through them the reader becomes a part of the story. Thus, the fact that Esther kept her heritage a secret is not only a key element supporting the plot of the story, but it is also a literary device to draw the reader into the text, and by doing so Esther's secret becomes the reader's secret.

The MTE and the LXX agree in that they both mention that Esther did not reveal her identity. The MTE and the LXX further agree in terms of Mordecai's instruction for Esther not to reveal her identity.¹³³ The insertion φοβεῖσθαι τὸν θεὸν 'to fear God' describes the content of the instruction. The infinitive is used as object which receives the action of the predicate (main verb). The object of the MTE is introduced by עָשָׂה 'to do' followed by כְּאִשֶּׁר הָיְתָה כְּאִשֶּׁר הָיְתָה אִתּוֹ 'like when she was with him.' The only object in the MTE is the latter, whereas the object in the LXX is the phrase mentioned above in addition to ποιεῖν τὰ προστάγματα αὐτοῦ, καθὼς ἦν μετ' αὐτοῦ. Thus, the difference, from a literary point of view, is clear.

In 2.20 (MTE) the independence of human actions is emphasized. Esther's action as human agent is influenced by another human agent, namely Mordecai. They are both primary characters interacting with one another to determine the tension of the plot. Esther's silence

¹²⁶ S. B. Berg, *The Book of Esther* (SBL Dissertation Series 44; Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹²⁸ Berg, *Book of Esther*, p. 82.

¹²⁹ *Idem.*

¹³⁰ Fox, *Character and Ideology*.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 197.

¹³³ Cf. Day, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

about her descent is a literary device to make the reader a part of the plot.¹³⁴ There is no implicit divine intervention, it is merely two characters; Mordecai the foster father and Esther the foster child acting out their roles as Jews in the narrative.¹³⁵ They both show their loyalty; Esther to Mordecai and Mordecai to the king (2.21-23). With the insertion of φοβεῖσθαι τὸν θεὸν, Mordecai's instruction, and ultimately Esther's action, has been given an implicit theological character.

The term φοβέω 'to fear', when used in relationship with God, holds the meaning 'to have respect' or 'to have reverence'.¹³⁶ Through the phrase φοβεῖσθαι τὸν θεὸν, Esther is not only motivated to act because of her loyalty toward Mordecai, but she is also 'forced'¹³⁷ to do it out of respect for God. The obedience of Esther in the MTE is due to socio-cultural factors.¹³⁸ For Moore,¹³⁹ Esther undeniably follows Mordecai's instruction by not concealing her identity, and according to him the insertion made by the LXX is piously done.¹⁴⁰ Day mentions that the ambiguity in the inserted phrases must be highlighted. According to her it is not clear from the text whether Esther continues to follow the commands of Mordecai or God.¹⁴¹ Day is of the opinion that one could interpret the third person masculine singular pronoun αὐτοῦ in καὶ ποιεῖν τὰ προστάγματα αὐτοῦ to mean when she was with God or Mordecai.¹⁴²

By inserting φοβεῖσθαι τὸν θεὸν, Mordecai's instruction אֶתְּךָ כְּאִמְנָה אֶתּוֹ עֲשֵׂה כְּאִשְׁרַךְ הָיִיתָ 'to do like when she was with him' which could only mean how she obeyed him as foster-child, causes confusion. On a theological level (if one would analyze this phrase in isolation) to respect God when doing something, is a positive virtue no matter how you look at it; but because it is a deliberate insertion by interpreters into a literary context where a human agent (Mordecai) orders another human agent (Esther) to act in this way, the implications are much

¹³⁴ Cf. Berg, *Book of Esther*, p. 73.

¹³⁵ The role Mordecai plays could be seen as parallel to a person called a *go'el* in the Israelite tradition. Esther was not really adopted, but Mordecai took the role as Foster-father, because of his responsibility as *go'el*. See R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel – Its Life and Institutions* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), pp. 21-23.

¹³⁶ See W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Second ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), S. v. φοβέω.

¹³⁷ The intended meaning assigned to the word 'forced' is not as negative as it sounds. With 'forced' the research means 'limited or deliberate options'. Esther is not necessarily forced by something or someone else, but she is forced by her religious conscientiousness.

¹³⁸ Baird, *Book of Esther*, p. 67.

¹³⁹ Moore, *Esther*.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁴¹ Day, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

¹⁴² *Idem*.

more complicated.¹⁴³ Furthermore, if the motive of the one agent (Mordecai) is to make sure the other agent (Esther) is doing what she is supposed to do by using the words φοβεῖσθαι τὸν θεὸν, it becomes a manipulative tool.

The individual reader engaged with the text (LXX), will also experience some theological-hermeneutical thoughts, and certain emotions which drive him/her to act in a certain way, as with Esther. The implication is that the reader loses track of the narrative. A further point of impact is that it becomes more difficult to identify with Esther as character because Esther's actions become more abstract, or unnatural.¹⁴⁴ The tension of the plot as a function to grip the audience is slackened because the characters and their actions are not primarily nurturing the plot of the narrative. The phrase translated with 'to fear God' or 'to serve God' sparks a whole sequence of events in the memory of the reader while the focus on the narrative and the 'reality' of the story are shifted to a different dimension of reality. Esther's actions are not something responsive or reflexive due to a family relationship as in the MTE; in the LXX there is a different dimension to be reckoned with. Something, in this case fear or respect for God, which is probably unconscious for the reader and for Esther as character, is now forced into consciousness. Esther as character is made conscious of how she should act in relationship to God.¹⁴⁵

The theological framework or perceptions of the translators are not criticized as a whole, nor are their virtues and ethical intentions questioned; but in this case adding φοβεῖσθαι τὸν θεὸν to the instruction of Mordecai as one of the things Esther should do, gives one the idea that the translators are not just using their theological framework to try and 'rectify' the theological character of the MTE, but they are also using a theological loaded phrase that becomes a manipulative tool that forces both Esther's action and the outcome of the narrative. The depth and uncertainty of the mystery of God's involvement in human history and the Esther narrative has been brought to the surface. The reader has difficulty to wonder, to guess whether Esther will still obey Mordecai, because another element has been inserted; she has to do it out of respect for God, and whether she will obey, is made obvious. The narrative effect of surprise and expectation has become obvious. For the reader Esther's options have been

¹⁴³ For J. Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology – Israel's Gospel* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2003), p. 783, the story of Esther is a story of deliverance like the exodus story but with a difference. The survival of the Jews in a foreign country is a result of their own actions.

¹⁴⁴ The terms 'abstract' and 'unnatural' might not be the best suited words to use in this case, but it reflects something of the post-modern nature of the researcher. For one it might be abstract or unnatural, but for another it could be concrete and natural. The terms should be interpreted from a narratological point of view, therefore abstract and natural with regard to the story, plot, and sequence of events.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Goldingay, *op. cit.*, p. 40, in terms of the following of Jewish legal traditions or the responsibilities of Mordecai's household.

attenuated to one possibility; to respect God and to act accordingly. The tension of the plot has been slackened and the magnetic force to involve the reader, lost. It is not necessarily that which is implicit in the MTE that is made explicit, but the spirit of understanding or interpreting in the LXX and J texts is being made implicit through the insertion. Vanhoozer¹⁴⁶ will say that such an interpretation (like that of the LXX and J texts) is theological because it is based on the belief that there is something that “transcends” the play of language in literature.¹⁴⁷

The theological implicitness¹⁴⁸ of the MTE is a fundamentally important factor to make the reader a part of the ‘religiousness’ of the Esther narrative. The theological reworking of the translators has taken the ability and the adventure of the hermeneutical-interpretive process away from the reader. The cognate-constructivist and creative process of the reader has been limited, because the reader cannot just react by identifying with the character or story and how the plot unfolds, but has to deliberately dissolve God’s involvement in this scene. Obedience of a human agent is not discovered through a socio-cultural, and therefore through ethical practices, but it is theologically forced.

3.2.1.2. ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον (Es 4.8)

The MTE simply states that the copy of the law circulated in Susa has been given to Esther and she is ordered to go into the presence of the king and beg for mercy for her people. This event is part of a larger scene (4.1-17) describing the consultation between Mordecai and Esther about the law passed in Susa and Esther’s role in this matter. Hatach is given the copy of the law by Mordecai who instructs him to give it to Esther and to instruct her in turn. This scene is dominated by the interaction of characters and the objective of this interaction is for Esther to go into the presence of the king, and to make sure the Jews are not destroyed.¹⁴⁹ Gerleman notes that the instruction of Esther reminds one of Moses who is instructed to go to Pharaoh (Ex 7.1ff) to free the Israelites.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ K. J. Vanhoozer, *God, Scripture & Hermeneutics – First Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2002).

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

¹⁴⁸ See B. C. Birch (et al.), *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), pp. 443-444, in which they emphasize that Esther’s implicit theological dimension (p. 32) is part of the continuity of the diverse theological voices of the Old Testament. For them, Esther serves as an authoritative voice to legitimize the Purim feast that originated in a foreign land.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Gerleman, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

¹⁵⁰ *Idem.*

Bush in turn elaborates on the interaction between the characters by explaining the use of the various infinitives.¹⁵¹ Levenson, when referring to Ex 7.1-5, comments that Moses and Aaron failed in their quest, because of God's predetermination; but Mordecai and Esther succeeds through their own wit and courage.¹⁵² Levenson then notes that the latter might reflect divine action.¹⁵³

Berg in turn comments that the initial exchange between Mordecai and Esther is relatively simple through a third-person narration.¹⁵⁴ Fox notes that in the MTE Mordecai is not at all manipulating. According to him, Mordecai is dangerously blunt and gives her direct instructions.¹⁵⁵ Esther is instructed to go into the presence of the king and her motivation might be out of respect and loyalty to Mordecai.¹⁵⁶ Finally, Fox also comments that Mordecai is not merely giving an instruction to Esther, but he is also using argumentation as motivation.¹⁵⁷

The inserted phrase ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον is implemented here in exactly the same way as φοβεῖσθαι τὸν θεὸν in 2.20 (LXX). Here the infinitive is also used as an object which receives the action of the predicate (main verb). The main verb or predicate in Es 4.8 (MTE) is וַיִּצְוֶה which is followed by a few infinitive verbs; one building on the other. The infinitives preceding וַיִּצְוֶה 'to instruct' are לָבוֹא 'to go into', לְהִתְחַנֵּן-לּוֹ 'to plea for grace' and לְבַקֵּשׁ 'to seek'. Thus the latter three infinitives become the objects of וַיִּצְוֶה, which is then technically the main verb. According to the LXX, Esther is also ordered to go into the presence of the king [εἰσελθούση], to beg [παραιτήσασθαι], to make worthy [ἀξιῶσαι], while remembering [μνησθεῖσα], and of course to call [ἐπικάλεσαι].¹⁵⁸

The main verb εἶπεν appears in the phrase καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ 'he told him' and then the infinitives follow. The content of his (Mordecai's) instruction is made clear by the infinitives following ἐντείλασθαι. Esther should not go to the king, before she has consulted the Lord. One has to note that the translators used τὸν θεὸν in 2.20 and τὸν κύριον in 4.8. The reason for the variation could be because of numerous factors, especially text variants. It is assumed

¹⁵¹ Bush, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

¹⁵² Levenson, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

¹⁵³ *Idem.*

¹⁵⁴ Berg, *Book of Esther*, p. 75.

¹⁵⁵ Fox, *Character and Ideology*, p. 188.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Fox, *Character and Ideology*, p. 189.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Dorothy, *op. cit.*, p. 108, who detects a dual command (call on the Lord) and (speak to the king) with the result to save her people.

here, for the time being, that τὸν θεὸν and τὸν κύριον are two terms used as designations for the God of Israel.¹⁵⁹

Once again the theological motif of the translators is noticeable with the insertion of ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον. Although the term inserted here and the one added in 2.20 are technically the same, they differ in impact due to the location of the insertion.

One of the meanings of ἐπικαλέω is to call out to a divinity, and it has been used in such a way since the time of Herodotus (fifth century BCE).¹⁶⁰ In 2.20 Esther's action includes respecting God; in the case of 4.8 something similar is expected, only more intense. Esther needs to call out to God for help. Fox writes the following with regard to the latter:

The task of Jewish protagonists demands proper attitude no less than appropriate action. Thus they turn to God in prayer, in which they must justify their motivations and behaviour as well as asking for divine help (4.8b: Additions C-D). National existence even at the moment of crisis is not truly in jeopardy, for Israel's deliverance is written into the cosmic script.¹⁶¹

Day is of the opinion that in the MTE (4.8) Esther's action is more independent and autonomous compared to the LXX.¹⁶² The intensity of the scene could be ascribed to two factors; one being that the life of her (Esther's) people is at stake. Secondly, she has to go to the king, and the law forbids anyone going to the king without being summoned. According to Fox, victory is the Lord's doing (although human actors are involved).¹⁶³ The relative importance of their roles shifts against the backdrop of the cosmic drama.¹⁶⁴ Day again comments that by the grammatical structure of the LXX, Esther's action of delivering the people through her actions of calling upon God and speaking to the king is stressed.¹⁶⁵ To meet the objective of what is specified by the finite verb, it is made possible by 'calling upon God' and 'going into the presence of the king'.¹⁶⁶ Thus the translators possibly inserted ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον to shift the reader's focus to a cosmic drama in which God is the primary actor.

¹⁵⁹ Although the assumption is made here, I am well aware that there are various designations for God and linking them without considerations is not 'theologically' correct. Therefore a short excursion will be made nearer to the end of chapter three to deliberate on this matter.

¹⁶⁰ Bauer, *op. cit.*, S. v. ἐπικαλέω.

¹⁶¹ Fox, *Character and Ideology*, p. 271.

¹⁶² Day, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁶⁴ *Idem.*

¹⁶⁵ Day, *op. cit.*, p. 54

¹⁶⁶ *Idem.*

Esther should not just go to the king to achieve the primary objective (saving her people from certain death), but she also has to call upon the Lord. Thus, the interaction between the trio (Mordecai, Esther and the king) is altered to form a foursome: Mordecai (instructing), Esther (going to the king), the king (implied actor), and the Lord (through submission to the Lord), who will make deliverance possible as he has done in the past. The ability of the characters to achieve the objective has been limited. Mordecai's instruction is only effective because it contains a command to call upon the Lord. Esther's action of going into the presence of the king to speak about her people will only be effective if she has called upon the Lord.

The theological core of the inserted phrase could be nothing else but a pious virtue that holds empowering prospects for Esther and for the reader, but the ability of the plot to empower the characters and the readers fall short due to the theological mental processes the insertion triggers.¹⁶⁷

Furthermore, the insertion made diminishes the reader's empathy and sympathy for the protagonist. Her fear and uncertainty, when instructed to plea for the life of her people from a king who made a law that anyone who enters into his presence without being summoned will be killed, is put into the hands of the Lord; and one cannot help but to lose track of the character and the inner emotions she is experiencing. The events to follow in 4.9-17 are dependent on what is to happen in verse 8. If Esther is to call upon the Lord, then the sequence of events leading up to verse 17 is merely a formality. Thus the flow of the narrative is influenced. The tension of the plot is relaxed and put to ease and therefore the reader is left with a deliberate divine mindset while losing touch with the characters and the events through which a divine being might be working (as is also implicitly possible with the MTE).

The phrase ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον demands from the reader a cognitive and emotional shift away from the reality of the narrative. The theological effect it has on the reader is to inflict deliberate divine consciousness. It should once again be noted that the critique is not against divine consciousness, but against the deliberateness of an explicit theological interpretation. Therefore, the inserted phrase is not only an interpretive tool that is implicit or explicit, but by inserting such a phrase in this particular place in the narrative, it becomes a manipulative tool.¹⁶⁸ Clines is of the opinion that the effect of the explicit ascription of events

¹⁶⁷ That *Yahweh* is viewed in the OT as the responsible subject is no secret. H. D. Preuß, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Band 1, JHWHs erwählendes und verpflichtendes Handeln; Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1991), pp. 158-283 is witness to this.

¹⁶⁸ I. L. Seeligmann, "Menschliches Heldentum und göttliche Hilfe – Die doppelte Kausalität im alttestamentliche Geschichtsdenken," *TZ* 6 (1963), pp. 385-411, presents a causality that includes both God and humans, but in the Esther narrative humans are the explicit cause of events. The consciousness of the latter is made implicit by the LXX and J texts to ensure that God is also viewed (in the MTE) as the one causing the nature of events. One has

to God (as he refers to 4.8 and others) is not to inject a previously lacking dimension into the book, but to draw out explicitly what lay implicitly in it and in so doing makes it more like the other post-exilic histories.¹⁶⁹

3.2.1.3. ἔσσεσθαι μὲν αὐτῷ βοήθειαν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πάντως (J, 227; 4.14)

Es 4.14 is a text about which more was written than any other verse when it comes to the theology or religiosity of the Esther narrative.¹⁷⁰ It is part of a larger textual unit (4.1-17) dealing with the imminent destruction of the Jews and Esther's role in saving them. In the attempt to save her people, Esther is motivated to reveal her destiny; to disobey the king's law – putting her life in danger.¹⁷¹ According to the author she was destined to be queen in that time [כִּי אִם־הִתְחַרַּשׁ תִּחְרִישִׁי בְּעַת הַזֹּאת]; because of the latter she is able to stand in for her people and plea with the king for their deliverance [וְהִצִּילָה יַעֲמֹד לִיהוּדִים מִמְּקוֹם אַחֵר]. Esther takes centre stage. She is the primary subject, the key to the deliverance of the Jews.

Paton notes that the author goes out of his way to avoid mentioning God in 4.14, and although God is not mentioned, there is little doubt that the author thinks of the ancient promise that Israel shall never perish.¹⁷² Morris and Lampeter comment that most scholars see in 4.14 a reversed expression of religious faith, and that it might be a touch of Sadducean fatalism.¹⁷³ Mordecai is confident that his people's salvation will come from some other source. It is therefore plausible that the term put into Mordecai's mouth מִמְּקוֹם אַחֵר is a substitute for the divine name.¹⁷⁴ According to Moore, the fact that Esther asked the Jewish community to fast on her behalf, clearly indicates that divine help was being sought here.¹⁷⁵ For Gerleman it is hard to dispute that Mordecai's words 'from another place' reveals God's control over the situation.¹⁷⁶ From a perspective of different levels of meaning, Loader states that the religious motifs, as are found in 4.14, are introduced; but they are made to function in such a way that any theological significance is immediately veiled.¹⁷⁷ Meinhold agrees that 'from another

to remember that *doppelte Kausalität* does not require the explicit mention of the parties involved, as it is clear with the MTE.

¹⁶⁹ Clines, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Moore, *Esther*, p. 50.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Gerleman, *op. cit.*, 106; Loader, *Esther*, p. 69.

¹⁷² Paton, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

¹⁷³ Morris and Lampeter, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

¹⁷⁴ Talmon, *op. cit.*, p. 429; cf. Moore, *Esther*, p. 50.

¹⁷⁵ Moore, *Esther*, p. 50.

¹⁷⁶ Gerleman, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

¹⁷⁷ Loader, "Different Levels," p. 418; cf. Loader, *Esther*, p. 70.

place’ means that God will make salvation possible, and God’s function is to look after the continued existence of the Jews.¹⁷⁸

In turn Berg notes that 4.14 hint at Esther’s power.¹⁷⁹ She also indicates that the theme, “inviolability” of the Jewish people, is present in 4.14. No matter the source, Mordecai knows that assistance will come for the Jews.¹⁸⁰ Crenshaw¹⁸¹ does not think that ‘from another place’ conceals an allusion to God, because such an interpretation would suggest that rescue might come through the intervention of a deity other than *Yahweh*.¹⁸² The latter is so because מִמְקוֹם came to be used as surrogate for ‘deity’, but the adjective אֲחֵר seems to rule that out.¹⁸³ Meinhold¹⁸⁴ perceives the obedience of Esther towards Mordecai and help from another place as a portrayal of Jewish integrity.¹⁸⁵ For Fox the allusion to God in 4.14 is in the assurance of Mordecai that help will come, and not so much from the phrase ‘from another place’.¹⁸⁶

In another monograph, Fox also argues that if ‘from another place’ is an allusion to God, then Esther is a ‘place’ which places Esther and God on par, and therefore ‘another place’ must simply be another human as a source of deliverance.¹⁸⁷ Wahl again sees in 4.14 a theological motif.¹⁸⁸ For the narrator God is the king of kings, he is the deliverer of his people.¹⁸⁹ Levenson interprets 4.14 from a different angle by stating that with the phrase ‘from another place’ Mordecai meant that he will devise another stratagem.¹⁹⁰ He further points out that ‘who knows’ in the last part of 4.14 could be an allusion to the hope that God will indeed come to the rescue of the Jews, as he had done in the past.¹⁹¹ Kossmann argues that from a thematical perspective and the meaning of terms, it is difficult not to assume that deliverance in biblical terms includes *Yahweh*.¹⁹² Berman also views 4.14 from a fresh perspective.¹⁹³ He writes that Mordecai will understand that Esther will be able to embrace the challenges he sets before her only if she engages in the task of restructuring her sense of personal history.¹⁹⁴

¹⁷⁸ Meinhold, “Theologische Erwägungen,” p. 324.

¹⁷⁹ Berg, *Book of Esther*, p. 60.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁸¹ J. L. Crenshaw, “‘The Expression ‘MI YODEA’ in the Hebrew Bible,’” *VT* 36 (1986), pp. 274-288.

¹⁸² Crenshaw, *op. cit.*, p. 276; cf. Bush, *op. cit.*, p. 396; Fox, “Religion,” p. 139; Wiebe, *op. cit.*, p. 411; contra. N. S. Fox, “In the Spirit of Purim – The Hidden Hand of God,” *JBQ* 18 (1990), pp. 183-187.

¹⁸³ Crenshaw, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

¹⁸⁴ A. Meinhold, “Zur Aufbau und Mitte des Estherbuches,” *VT* 33 (1983), pp. 435-445.

¹⁸⁵ *Loc. cit.*, pp. 440-441.

¹⁸⁶ Fox, *Redaction*, p. 131.

¹⁸⁷ Fox, *Character and Ideology*, p. 63.

¹⁸⁸ Wahl, “Jahwe, Wo Bist Du?,” pp. 6-7.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁹⁰ Levenson, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

¹⁹¹ *Idem.*

¹⁹² Kossmann, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

¹⁹³ J. A. Berman, “Hadassah Bat Abihail: The Evolution from Object to Subject in the Character of Esther,” *JBL* 120 (2001), pp. 647-669.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 654.

In comparison, 4.14 in the LXX does not portray any differences that hold theological significance in terms of the name used for God, but with the phrase from J as is shown above and identified in chapter two, the scenario is somewhat different. Es 4.14 (MTE) states that **לְיְהוּדִים מִמְּקוֹם אֲחֵר** ‘deliverance will come for the Jews from another place’ which has been interpreted quite extensively, as is noted above. The LXX agrees with the MTE by simply noting that *ἄλλοθεν βοήθεια καὶ σκέπη ἔσται τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις* ‘help will come for the Jews from another place’. With J’s theological rendering of this phrase reading *ἔσεσθαι μὲν αὐτῷ βοήθειαν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πάντως* ‘on the one hand help for them will be from God’, he implies a certain theological perspective forced onto the Esther narrative, and thereby ensures a theological impact on the narrative itself.

As it is clear from the above discussion on 4.14, modern scholars, in some way or another, tried to make God who is implicitly present in 4.14 explicit in various ways and from different perspectives. J also saw an allusion to God in 4.14 and made it explicit through the insertion of *ἔσεσθαι μὲν αὐτῷ βοήθειαν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πάντως*, deliverance for the Jews is made possible by God. According to Paton, the J text, among others, supplies the religious deficiency by inserting the name of God.¹⁹⁵ Moore agrees with J, and other text versions of Esther, in seeing a veiled allusion to God.¹⁹⁶ Thus, it is plausible to deduce from the latter that this particular insertion by J unveiled the allusion to God.¹⁹⁷ It might also be possible in this case that J was influenced by the source he used. The so-called reconstructed L-text reads *ἀλλ’ ὁ θεός ἐσταῖ αὐτοῖς βοήθος καὶ σωτηρία* (L-text 5.9).¹⁹⁸ The textual evidence is clear, an alternative reading to the LXX makes reference to God, but if one compares the phrase from the L-text with that of J, it is difficult to argue for a dependence of J on the L-text.

The insertion made by J is thus more than a mere translation in the static sense of the word. J is theologically interpreting 4.14, and particularly **לְיְהוּדִים מִמְּקוֹם אֲחֵר**. The subjectiveness of J becomes apparent through his interpretation. As a reader of the MTE, J is making himself visible to other readers, and thereby he shifts the focus from Esther as the primary agent responsible for the deliverance of the Jews, towards the reader’s perception of how God is involved in an act of salvation.

¹⁹⁵ Paton, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

¹⁹⁶ Moore, *Esther*, p. 50.

¹⁹⁷ Birch, *op. cit.*, p. 443, interprets this allusion to God as pointing to God’s providence.

¹⁹⁸ Hanhart, *op. cit.*, p. 160. Also see Fox, *Redaction*, p. 160; Clines, *op. cit.*, p. 226; Day, *loc. cit.*, pp. 47- 57; Kossmann, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

The narrator of the MTE's theological 'objectiveness' (a more appropriate term might be 'openness') through human subjectiveness, in terms of deliverance, is replaced with theological subjectiveness made possible by the narrator's theological 'objectiveness'. To make it more concrete, the theological adventure to discover God's role in human deliverance from a threatening situation becomes a solution on a silver platter. Although an allusion to God is almost obvious in 4.14, it is the opinion held here, that the reader needs to go through the necessary cognitive and constructive processes to determine and discover God's involvement in delivering his people to ensure a deepened relationship, in times of struggle, between the reader and God.¹⁹⁹ This was made possible by the narrator of the MTE. He made room and created space within the narrative of Esther that enabled the reader to discover God's involvement.

3.2.1.4. Ὁ δὲ κύριος ἀπέστησεν τὸν ὕπνον ἀπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως τὴν νύκτα ἐκείνην (LXX, 6.1) and ὁ δὲ θεὸς κατεγέλα τῆς Ἀμάνου πονηρᾶς ἐλπίδος (J, 247)

This verse introduced the section of the narrative dealing with the honouring of Mordecai [6.1-13], and of course the dishonouring of Haman. The king's sleep fled [בְּלִילָהּ הַהוּא נִדְרָהּ], and he asked that the book of days be read to him [וַיֹּאמֶר לְהֵבִיא אֶת־סֵפֶר שְׁנַת הַמַּלְאָךְ], and he asked that the book of days be read to him [וַיֹּאמֶר לְהֵבִיא אֶת־סֵפֶר שְׁנַת הַמַּלְאָךְ]. The order was adhered to and it was read to the king [נִקְרְאוּ]. Typical to the open-endedness of the MTE, the reason why the king could not sleep is not revealed by the narrator of the MTE. The narrator is deliberately to the point, stating that the king could not sleep; he asked for the book of days to be read to him, and it was done. As with 2.10, 20; 4.8, 14; 6.1, further indications are made that every character is implemented to nurture the tension of the plot. According to Paton, the narrator once again goes out of his way to avoid mentioning God, and that this was indeed a strange way for the king to pass a sleepless night.²⁰⁰

Moore notes that the sleeplessness of kings is not an uncommon theme in literature.²⁰¹ He refers to Driver who suggests that the term 'fled' according to his translation "the sleep of the king has fled" should be read as containing the abbreviation for YHWH, "Lord".²⁰² As Moore also notes, the latter is unconvincing.

¹⁹⁹ See Goldingay, *op. cit.*, p. 784, who says that the narrator is pushing the reader, not informing him/her, to see God behind Esther's story, and behind their own, but that the reader has the option to choose whether to do so or not.

²⁰⁰ Paton, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

²⁰¹ Moore, *Esther*, p. 63.

²⁰² *Idem.*

Although Moore says that the cause of the sleeplessness is not mentioned in 6.1 (MTE), Gerleman is of the opinion that the various causes of this state could be found in wisdom literature.²⁰³ Berg presents the theory of Radday that 6.1 is the turning point of the narrative,²⁰⁴ but rejects this by stating that 4.13-14 should rather be seen as the turning point.²⁰⁵ Goldman sees the king's lack of sleep as rhetorical irony.²⁰⁶ Fox is absolutely sure of God's involvement in taking away the king's sleep.²⁰⁷ Fox rhetorically calls the events in 6.1 coincidences.²⁰⁸ Levenson is of the opinion that these coincidences are the very core of the theology of Esther.²⁰⁹

The MTE reads that the sleep of the king fled that night [בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא נִדְרָה שְׁנַת הַמְּלָכָה]. No human agent seems to be involved that caused the sleep to flee. The LXX again reads: 'Ο δὲ κύριος ἀπέστησεν τὸν ὕπνον ἀπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως τὴν νύκτα ἐκείνην 'the Lord took away the king's sleep that night'. Clearly the Lord is inserted here as the responsible agent of this event. He is responsible for taking away the king's sleep. J in turn presents an interesting twist. J not only inserts that God is responsible for the sleeplessness of the king, but he also provides the reason why God is taking away the king's sleep. J mentions that God mocked [κατεγέλα] Haman's wicked hopes [τῆς Ἀμάνου πονηρᾶς ἐλπίδος] and that is the reason why God took away the king's sleep [νυκτὸς ἐκείνης ἀφαιρεῖται τὸν ὕπνον]. Thus, 6.1 (MTE) only presents what took place, while the LXX mentions what took place and who is responsible, followed by J who clearly states what happened, but he also provides the reason for it, as well as the agent responsible.

It is indeed the case that most 'modern' scholars would interpret 6.1 (MTE) as containing theological significance, and the translators of the LXX and J would agree with them. Paton says that the LXX and J corrected the defect that God was not mentioned.²¹⁰ Moore notes that all the ancient versions except the Vulgate state that God prevented the king from sleeping.²¹¹ Clines says that the coincidence such as is found in 6.1 is the workings of providence.²¹² For any religious believer, such as the translators of the LXX were, 'chance' is a name for God.²¹³

²⁰³ Gerleman, *op. cit.*, p. 115. cf. Loader, *Esther*, p. 91.

²⁰⁴ Berg, *Book of Esther*, p. 108.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

²⁰⁶ Goldman, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

²⁰⁷ Fox, "Spirit of Purim," p. 185.

²⁰⁸ Fox, *Character and Ideology*, pp. 75-76.

²⁰⁹ Levenson, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

²¹⁰ Paton, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

²¹¹ Moore, *Esther*, p. 63.

²¹² Clines, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

²¹³ *Idem.*

For Fox the general impact of the theological insertions made by the LXX is to show that God controls history.²¹⁴ He also mentions that God sometimes works quietly, because we are told by the LXX that it was he who gave the king insomnia.²¹⁵

In comparison to 2.20, 4.8 and 14; 6.1 is different in the sense that the human agency responsible for the events is replaced by a divine being in 2.20, 4:8 and 14. In 6.1 in turn, a divine subject does not replace a human subject as the primary role player. One could say that the king himself is responsible for the fact that he could not sleep, because he is worried about what Esther will request at the next banquet. Any attempt to reconstruct the possible cause of the king's sleeplessness is mere speculation, but for the translators of the LXX and J texts it is very clear: God was responsible. As a reader of the MTE, one starts guessing, wondering why the king's sleep was disturbed at such a crucial point in the Esther narrative. The uncertainty draws one into the story. The possibility that God could be involved, without the reader being certain, is effective in that one wants to keep track of the events to find out how the story turns out.

The insertion Ὁ δὲ κύριος ἀπέστησεν τὸν ὕπνον ἀπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως τὴν νύκτα ἐκείνην places God once again in the centre of the events. He is the one that 'put away' [ἀπέστησεν] the king's sleep. The explicitness of Ὁ κύριος once again shifts the focus of the reader to numerous other concepts and thoughts linked to God. The suspense and adventure in discovering God through the outcome of the story is neutralized and made obvious by the theological insertions made by the translators. Their theological understanding of how the king's sleep was taken away is influencing the reader's understanding of the events, how one reflects on it, and also how God is involved in 'modern' human history.

If the crisis at hand is the complete destruction of the Jews, then the readers of the MTE would find comfort not in the explicit involvement of God, but in the process of discovering that God is still in control. The reason for their comfort in the process is because they are involved; Esther's story becomes their story. They become a character of this narrative and they have the opportunity, like Mordegai and Esther, to discover God's involvement in their situation to make sense of their situation.²¹⁶ The latter could also be true for the modern reader; the theology of 6.1 is a theology of open-endedness. It is a theology of creating space in which the reader can participate and also choose how he/she wants to interpret the events.

²¹⁴ Fox, *Character and Ideology*, p. 270.

²¹⁵ *Idem*.

²¹⁶ Cf. D. P. Senekal, "Die funksionering van Bybel inhoude in 'n narratief-pastorale gesprek," (Unpublished Ph. D dissertation; University of Pretoria: Pretoria, 2005), p. 66.

The content of 6.1 (MTE) could also be called a theology of opportunities and possibilities in which the reader can discover how God is involved. By veiling God in 6.1, the narrator is empowering the reader to construct his/her own spiritual reality. The latter could also be called a constructivist theology (MTE, 6.1) which is then replaced by a responsive theology (LXX, 6.1).

J in turn introduced a theology of ethics with the insertion *ὁ δὲ θεὸς κατεγέλα τῆς Ἀμάνου πονηρᾶς ἐλπίδος*. Readers are not only forced to respond to God as the primary agent of the event, but J also forces the readers to ponder whether their actions are moral; if not, God will act in a certain manner. God does not judge the king's actions, but according to J God is 'mocking' [κατεγέλα] them. Because of Haman's wicked hopes [Ἀμάνου πονηρᾶς ἐλπίδος] God used the king to alter those wicked hopes to ensure a positive outcome for the Jews. The ethical dimension of this insertion confines the theological borders even further. The main impact in terms of the Esther narrative is the fact that the theology of the plot: the adventure to discover God as the architect of the plot through the sequence of events is changed to a theology of response and ethical reflection. In turn it influences the very impact the theology of the narrative would have on the reader.

3.2.1.5. *οὐ μὴ δύνῃ αὐτὸν ἀμύνασθαι, ὅτι θεὸς ζῶν μετ' αὐτοῦ (LXX, 6.13); οἱ δ' οὐκέτ' ἀμύνασθαι τὸν Μαρδοχαῖον ἔλεγον δυνήσεσθαι τὸν γὰρ θεὸν εἶναι σὺν αὐτῷ (J, 259)*

Es 6.13 concludes the section 6.1-13 that deals, as was mentioned above, with the honouring of Mordecai. Haman told his wife Zeresh and his advisors what had happened and their conclusion was that Haman's fall is certain if Mordecai is a Jew.²¹⁷ The wise men are counsellors, like those of the king.²¹⁸ Paton suggests that the author intended Haman to know and recall what the God of Israel had done in the past with nations opposing the Jews.²¹⁹ Anderson is of the opinion, referring to 6.13, that the book of Esther presupposes the theme of Israel's election, although it is not clearly expressed.²²⁰ Moore says that the narrator does not offer explicit theological explanations, but he allows the events to speak for themselves.²²¹ For Gerleman, Haman's unpleasant experience is put into an ethical perspective of the "Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang".²²² It is all about the conflict between Haman and Mordecai, undergirded by the nationalities they represent.²²³ The 'nationalistic' thought portrayed in this

²¹⁷ Cf. Loader, *Esther*, p. 97; Berg, *Book of Esther*, p. 103.

²¹⁸ Paton, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

²²⁰ Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

²²¹ Moore, *Esther*, p. 66.

²²² Gerleman, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

²²³ *Idem.*

verse is typical of post-exilic times.²²⁴ The fall of Haman is genetically determined, because it is the Jews who are the master race.²²⁵

Berg views 6.13 as the clearest statement revealing the theme of inviolability and reversal.²²⁶ Bush suggests that the “if” does not introduce a real condition, since Haman has already told his wife and his friends that Mordecai is a Jew (5.13).²²⁷ The clause is thus causal in meaning.²²⁸ Goldman is of the opinion that the events presented in 6.1-13 and particularly the event that takes place in verse 13, is (as he calls it) ‘irony of characterization’.²²⁹ Fox comments that Haman’s fall is a movement with its own dynamic, a trajectory propelled by a force they (the friends and wife of Haman) do not identify with.²³⁰ Fox also regards 6.13, with 4.14, as alluding to God.²³¹ Levenson gives a slightly different perspective on the matter when he says that if the advisors of Haman had astrological skills, they would view the events in 6.1-13 as an omen of things to come.²³² The fact then that Haman will not stand against Mordecai the Jew, is because they read this event in terms of that which is to happen in the future. Wahl calls the latter “*der Beistand und das heilsgeschichtliche Wirken Jahwes*”.²³³

The history of contact between Israel and the Ammonites could assist one in interpreting the reason why Haman would not be able to stand against Mordecai the Jew. On the other hand, it could also be due to the collective realization that the God of Israel has never let them down. Haman’s fall is expressed in no uncertain terms in 6.13. The rhetorical causality is due to the fact that Mordecai is a Jew [אִם מִזֵּרַע הַיְהוּדִים מֶרְדֵּכָי]. Haman’s advisors and wife saw that if he paid respect to Mordecai as he did, then there is no turning back. The reason, as provided above, for the certainty of the fall could merely be due to the nature of the events that have already taken place. For the Greek translators of the MTE Haman’s fall is due to the opinion that the living God is with Mordecai [ὅτι θεὸς ζῶν μετ’ αὐτοῦ]. J differs slightly when he interprets the reason for the certain fall of Haman as γὰρ θεὸν εἶναι σὺν αὐτῷ ‘because God is with him’.

²²⁴ Gerleman, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

²²⁵ Clines, *op. cit.*, p. 14, and p. 43.

²²⁶ Berg, *Book of Esther*, p. 103.

²²⁷ Bush, *op. cit.*, p. 416. Fox, *Character and Ideology*, p. 79, calls it rhetorical conditional.

²²⁸ Bush, *loc. cit.*, pp. 416-417.

²²⁹ Goldman, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

²³⁰ Fox, *Character and Ideology*, p. 80.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

²³² Levenson, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

²³³ Wahl, “Glaube ohne Gott?,” p. 48.

The MTE opens more possibilities whereas the LXX and J texts confine the probability to God. He is the primary agent at work, the key role player in the events.

A whole new paradigm is introduced by the LXX's insertion. The active agent is none other than the 'living God'. J is a bit milder when assigning the reason to 'God' without the epithet. Nevertheless, they both introduce the one true subject that is making the salvation of Israel possible. Clines assign the reference made to God in 6.13 to the original AT.²³⁴ In a comparative study between 6.13 (MTE) and 6.13 (LXX) De Troyer comes to the conclusion that the MTE has a single protasis, followed by an apodosis. The conditional clause is introduced by $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota\varsigma$ and regarded by the author as a *realis*.²³⁵ The protasis is further characterised by: "Mordecai before whom your downfall has begun."²³⁶ In turn the LXX version has a conditional clause, formed by a protasis and a double apodosis, and a causal clause.²³⁷ With regard to 6.13 the Greek translators used all the elements of the Hebrew text. At first sight, the change in the construction is purely a translation technique, but according to De Troyer a narrative technique is also at work.²³⁸

For De Troyer the element that is really added is $\theta\epsilon\delta\omicron\varsigma\ \zeta\omega\nu$.²³⁹ She then explains that the latter insertion is due to the interpretation of the verb לָבַד .²⁴⁰ She thus concludes that 6.13 (LXX) is an interpretation of 6.13 (MTE).²⁴¹ The translators of the LXX are indeed interpreting the MTE and it has an effect on the theology of the Esther narrative and the reader. Es 6.13 (MTE) holds forth a traditional theology and with 'traditional' is meant 'historical'.²⁴² God's involvement in delivering the Jewish nation is veiled and is only visible through what the nation has accomplished in the past. The Esther narrative is all about the Jewish nation, in crisis, being delivered through a sequence of unforeseen events made possible by a human agent, most of them Jews. Those human actors that are not Jews, act or react due to the Jewishness, or the veiling thereof, of the protagonists (Esther and Mordecai). Thus, the theology being played out in the Esther narrative (MTE) is a nationalistic theology, a theology of race. The reader can identify with the characters, events and the latter theology that provides the undertone for the narrative and specifically for the events in 6.13.

²³⁴ Clines, *loc. cit.*, pp. 111-112.

²³⁵ De Troyer, "Translation and Interpretation," p. 347.

²³⁶ *Idem*.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

²³⁹ De Troyer, "Translation and Interpretation," p. 351.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

²⁴² A 'historical' or 'traditional' understanding of God, is a reflection on God's involvement within the history of ancient Israel, and therefore the Jewish race, and to embed this reflection into the present, to ensure a clear projection of God's involvement in the future.

The identification process is easy; because theology and the understanding of God are always influenced by one's race, nationality and cultural setting.

The LXX introduces a theology of transcendence, and of omnipotence; a theology that portrays God as the almighty warrior that can defeat any nation contesting Him. The patriotic, nationalistic and realistic way of experiencing the events in 6.13 is drawn heavenwards; one almost gets an apocalyptic sense of the interpretation. The "human-levelled" theology in 6.13 (MTE) is altered to a "divine-levelled" theology. The creative, constructive response of the reader through the identification with Mordecai as Jew, and of his people, is limited to a one-dimensional understanding because the Greek translators made their theological interpretation explicit. The same is true of J. He also presents his theological understanding of 6.13 through his interpretation of the event.

3.2.1.6 ὄθεν ἐπέρχεται μοι τὸ θεῖον θαυμάζειν καὶ τὴν σοφίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ δικαιοσύνην... (MTE, 7.10; J, 268)

Once again the honesty and theological framework of J is made explicit with the insertion of this phrase. The implication of this insertion is not so much pious or pietistic as one would expect, but it presents a theology of faith. Through J's subjectiveness the reader is again pulled into the story being told. One is once again gripped by the openness of J's belief. The opposite is true for the narrator of the MTE. Through his 'objectiveness' the reader is taking part in the narrative. He opens various theological possibilities and therefore he creates space for the subjectiveness of the reader, both modern and ancient, and J is a perfect example of the latter. The 'hiddenness' and the 'veiling' of God, as well as the 'behind the scenes' activity of God which is not explicit in the MTE, are made explicit by the theological interpretation of both the LXX and J texts. The insertions made to the canonical material are much more subtle than the 'theological' additions contained in the LXX. These additions are theologically deliberate and if they are taken into account (and they should be) when dealing with the Esther narrative, they pose an enormous impact on the theological understanding of the narrative, and therefore they need to be attended to.

3.2.2. Additions to the canonical material

3.2.2.1. Addition made to Es 1.1 (Addition A – Dream of Mordecai)

The Esther narrative (MTE) is introduced by a lavish banquet held by king Ahasueros for the sole purpose of showing off his power and wealth. This introduction is a secular event that places the Persian king Ahasueros in the centre. He is the primary agent, and the scene and the sequence of events will take place in a certain manner because of him. The ‘secular’ introduction to the MTE is countered by the addition made by the translators of the LXX. They opposed the introduction by presenting an apocalyptic vision. For Moore,²⁴³ addition A underscores the religious character of the Esther story, hinting at the directions the story will take and it makes vaguely explicit what is implicit in the Hebrew version, viz., God’s rule or providence in the events narrated in Esther.²⁴⁴ The impact of the inserted dream of Mordecai is that the story of Esther is not just about a long-standing ethnic rivalry between Jews and Amalekites, but it is a religious conflict; a cosmic and apocalyptic conflict between the Jews and the rest of the world.²⁴⁵

Clines calls the content of add. A a divinely sent dream that frames the whole story the fulfilment of which gives rise to a kind of speech in praise (Addition F).²⁴⁶ The function of the dream is to emphasize that no historical disasters or dangers facing the readers of the book could catch God by surprise.²⁴⁷ A further implication put to the fore by Clines, is that it sets the narrative of the Esther scroll in a broader interpretive framework.²⁴⁸ Dorothy notes that add. A requires the reader to sympathize with Mordecai, perhaps to applaud him for attaining such a position under difficult circumstances.²⁴⁹ Mordecai’s Jewishness is emphasized as foreshadowing the events yet to unfold, and to increase the reader’s anticipation of the plot against the Jews.²⁵⁰ According to Levenson, add. A is noteworthy for its lack of direct mention of Esther.²⁵¹ The effect of Mordecai’s dream A: 4-9 and its interpretation in F: 1-6 is to bracket the book of Esther within the structure of prophecy and fulfilment.²⁵²

²⁴³ C. A. Moore, “On the Origins of the LXX Additions to the Book of Esther,” *JBL* 92 (1973), pp. 382-393.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

²⁴⁵ *Idem.*

²⁴⁶ Clines, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

²⁴⁸ *Idem.*

²⁴⁹ Dorothy, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

²⁵⁰ *Idem.*

²⁵¹ Levenson, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 40.

The uninhibited attribution of the deliverance of the Jewish people to God conforms not only to the general biblical pattern, but also to the way in which the Jewish tradition have historically interpreted Esther.²⁵³ The key phrases in add. A regarding the reference made to God, is of course καὶ ἐβόησαν πρὸς τὸν θεόν ‘they called upon God’ and καὶ διεγερθεὶς Μαρδοχαῖος ὁ ἑωρακὼς τὸ ἐνύπνιον τοῦτο καὶ τί ὁ θεὸς βεβούλευται ποιῆσαι ‘And when Mardocheaus awoke from the dream, and what God planned to do.’ Apart from the very nature of add. A as an apocalyptic dream, the above-mentioned phrases are significant due to their theological characteristics, and particularly because they refer to God.

The phrase translated with ‘they called upon God’ recalls the prayers of Mordecai and Esther (add. C), as well as the insertion made in Es 4.8 ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον. The dependence of the human agents on God is emphasized by this phrase. The outcome of the crisis is clearly determined by God. The first action that a human agent like Mordecai, Esther or the Jews must take is to call upon the Lord (LXX). One could call the latter a theology of dependence or submission. Further implications of this dream from add. A, through the lens of this insertion, is that the independence of the characters, such as Esther and the Jews, are altered to be characters that are dependent upon God. The phrase ἐβόησαν πρὸς τὸν θεόν places God at the heart of the Jewish crisis and their deliverance from a hopeless situation. This phrase is the filter through which the reader will view the crisis and deliverance of the Jews.

3.2.2.2. Additions made to Es 4.17 (Addition C - Prayers of Mordecai and Esther), and J, 229-231²⁵⁴

The fasting called out by Esther in 4.16 is elaborated in two prayers; one by Mordecai and one by Esther. The length of the two prayers, and their theological significance as a whole, cannot be dealt with in full within the confines of this study. Nevertheless, it is indeed necessary to establish the implications of these two prayers on the theology of the Esther narrative. The focus here will fall on the introductory phrases of each prayer. Moore says that the effect the two prayers has on the Esther story is two-fold.²⁵⁵ It increases the story’s interest and drama by making both Mordecai and Esther more flesh and blood characters, and it strengthens the religious elements of the Greek Esther by allowing its author to give full expression to his own theological beliefs.²⁵⁶

²⁵³ Levenson, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

²⁵⁴ Cf. Paton, *loc. cit.*, pp. 227-229.

²⁵⁵ Moore, “Additions,” p. 391.

²⁵⁶ *Idem.*

For Levenson the effect of these prayers is to make a theologically ambiguous story into a clear and unequivocal example of the power of conventional piety.²⁵⁷ Clines see the primary function of the prayers as presenting the piety of distressed Jews.²⁵⁸ They assist in remoulding the book into the form of an exemplary tale – which does not only record divine deliverance or divine-human co-operation but also gives one advice on how a Jew should behave religiously in a foreign environment or a situation of crisis.²⁵⁹

When turning to the introductory phrase of the prayers, the reader is introduced to *καὶ ἐδεήθη κυρίου μνημονεύων πάντα τὰ ἔργα κυρίου*, which can be translated as ‘and he binded to the Lord remembering all the works of the Lord’. A theology of history is presented; the submission to the Lord is part and parcel of what God has done in the past. It is a theology grounded in memory of how God acted in the past. The importance is not so much on what the present situation might be, but what is important, is how God acted in the past. The involvement of God in past events is recalled in the prayer, and that is how one is prepared for the present and future events, and how God is pulled into the crisis at hand. It is a theology of recollection. The content and theology of this type of submission is open-ended. The extent of the open-endedness of the fasting presented in the MTE, allows the reader to construct his/her own way of submission; it also provides the opportunity for the plot to intensify, because the reader is not clear about the nature of the fasting. One could make assumptions, as modern scholars do, that fasting means to submit to God, but it is not as clear-cut as one would hope for. The theology of the MTE is a theology of opportunities. The post-modern reader might find it easier to identify with Esther in the MT, because Esther is not sure what is going to happen. She merely asks Mordecai to tell the Jews to fast with her, which means that they must really participate in her struggle, by resisting having anything to drink or eat. The latter is very different from submitting in prayer to God.

The second phrase *Κύριε κύριε βασιλεῦ πάντων κρατῶν, ὅτι ἐν ἐξουσίᾳ σου τὸ πᾶν ἐστίν*, is typical of the Psalms. The translators are dubbing the Lord as the ruler of all.

²⁵⁷ Levenson, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

²⁵⁸ Clines, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

²⁵⁹ *Idem.*, cf. Fox, *Character and Ideology*, p. 272.

The exaltation of the Lord continues in the phrases that follow *καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ ἀντιδοξῶν σοι ἐν τῷ θέλειν σε σῶσαι τὸν Ἰσραηλ,*^{17c} ὅτι σὺ ἐποίησας τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ πᾶν θαυμαζόμενον ἐν τῇ ὑπὸ οὐρανὸν καὶ κύριος εἶ πάντων, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὃς ἀντιτάξεταί σοι τῷ κυρίῳ.^{17d} σὺ πάντα γινώσκεις, σὺ οἶδας, κύριε ‘and there is no power that will resist you in your will to save Israel, because you have made the heaven and the earth and every wonderful thing in the world under heaven, you are Lord over all, and no one is resisting you, you know all things, you know Lord.’ The style, structure and theological content are typical of OT prayers (see Ex 15.1- 19; 1 Sam 2.1-10; Hab 3.1-15 and the Psalms). God’s favour is being sought for the person praying, or for the cause he/she is praying for. The prayer has a very specific objective it wants to achieve. That which is to take place in the rest of the Esther narrative is not something the reader needs to wonder about; the translators of the MTE into Greek ensure that the reader, through the prayers, is prepared for the act of deliverance made possible by God.

First God is glorified, exalted and then the request is presented: *καὶ νῦν, κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς ὁ θεὸς Ἀβραάμ, φείσαι τοῦ λαοῦ σου.* The objective of the prayer is for God to deliver his people. The last phrase is a summary of just that: ‘And now, Lord, God, King, God of Abraham, save your people’. It would be difficult for the reader to expect anything less than the deliverance of the Jews after perusing these prayers. The pietistic nature of these prayers and the pious theology underlying these submissions have a dramatic impact on the Esther narrative and the theology thereof. The reader’s adventure, creativity, and constructive nature have been guided into a very specific theological way of thinking, and this does not just limit one’s ability to interpret the narrative as it is experienced, but it also limits, in a sense, God’s ability to work through the narrator of the MTE. The conflict in attempting to determine how God will assist Esther in 4.17, when she goes into the king’s presence to plea for the deliverance of her people, is lost. The narrative technique used by the narrator in 4.16-17 (MTE) could be called a theology of mystery, or better yet, a theology of expectation within uncertainty. The shift from a request to fasting (MTE, 4.16), to two pious prayers (add. C), changes the theological viewpoint from a theology of mystery to a theology of certainty.

Although J’s account of the prayers is shorter, he has also taken up the prayers into his account of the events and the impact thereof is very similar to that of the LXX insertion. The difference is that J’s presentation of the prayers is not as elaborate as the LXX prayers. The exaltation part of the prayer is omitted, but the history of God’s salvation is recalled by J.

His account is much more ethically oriented; especially towards Mordecai and Esther as the primary characters in the MTE. After God’s works of deliverance in the past has been noted

in a manner that God should not turn away from his people, J puts the reason into the mouth of Mordecai who says: “ὅτι μὴ προσεκύνησα μηδ’ ἦν σοί, δέσποτα” φησὶν “τιμὴν παρεῖχον ταύτην ἐκείνῳ παρασχεῖν ὑπέμενον” ‘because I have not prostrated myself before him (Haman) as I did before you.’ Clearly the latter has a more ethical ring to it. The fact that God should deliver his people is justified by what Mordecai has done. In the Hebrew Esther narrative, neither Mordecai nor Esther could justify God’s deliverance through their actions. Through the artistic hand of the narrator they did not expect deliverance from a divine source (cf. 4.14), but relied on whom they were and the opportunities they had at that time. J thus introduces a theology of ethics, while MTE (4.16) had a theology of struggle in mind.

3.2.2.3. Additions made to Es 5.1 and 2 (Addition D), and J, 237²⁶⁰

The phrases added by the LXX to the MTE (5.1-2) which are of importance here, are καὶ γενηθεῖσα ἐπιφανῆς ἐπικαλεσαμένη τὸν πάντων ἐπόπτην θεὸν and καὶ μετέβαλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ βασιλέως εἰς πραῦτητα. The phrase inserted by J also needs attention, ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς κατὰ βούλησιν οἶμαι τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν διάνοιαν μετέβαλε. In 5.1-2 (MTE) Esther changed her robe and went to the king without being called. When he sees her, he is taken by her beauty and she wins his favour; thereafter he extends his sceptre to her as a sign that he accepts her presence and that she is pardoned by him. The additions made to these verses make the events presented above a bit more complicated and involved.

Levenson comments that add. D heightens, in baroque fashion, the drama of Esther’s uninvited approach to the king.²⁶¹ For him, the effect of this addition is again two-fold. First, it puts the *megillah* into an explicit theistic framework, ascribing to God events that are therein never explicitly interpreted in theological fashion.²⁶² Second, it enhances the image of Esther herself by concentrating on the magnitude of the challenge she faces.²⁶³ In connection with what Levenson said, it should be noted that the translators inserted καὶ γενηθεῖσα ἐπιφανῆς ἐπικαλεσαμένη τὸν πάντων ἐπόπτην θεὸν to cognitively link what Esther is about to do with her prayer.

²⁶⁰ Cf. Paton, *loc. cit.*, pp. 230-233.

²⁶¹ Levenson, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

²⁶² *Idem.*

²⁶³ *Idem.*

Through this phrase God is once again exalted; and then, what nearly seemed impossible in the hands of Esther (MTE, 4.17 – 5.1-2), has been altered to be made possible because μετέβαλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ βασιλέως εἰς πραΰτητα ‘God changed the spirit of the king into gentleness.’ Once again the reason why the events occur as they do is being assigned to God. He is the active agent, and in a sense he is replacing Esther as the primary active agent. She only becomes an extension of what God is going to accomplish.

The insertion is not different (from the other insertions discussed above). It limits the reader’s options of theological interpreting these events to one possibility. It further strengthens the possibility that the reader and Esther, as active agents, will only be effective, if activeness means to call upon the Lord. A theology of human agents being actively involved in events and crises is altered by the LXX to be a theology of human agents being static within God’s activeness. Whether God could have changed the spirit of the king, is not actually a question to be asked with regard to 5.1-2. Therefore, it is not functional to implicitly state that God was responsible for that. The narrator of the MTE made sure that the reader will experience and discover how God is involved, through narrative techniques, devices to intensify the plot, and characters to carry the plot from scene to scene.

J adds an interesting twist to the theological significance of 5.1-2. He inserts the phrase ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς κατὰ βούλησιν οἶμαι τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν διάνοιαν μετέβαλε ‘but the king’s feeling was changed by the will of God, I believe.’ This particular phrase portrays the very spirit of the translators of the LXX and J himself. They are interpreting the MTE to fit their own theological perceptions and framework. J is of the opinion that it was the will of God to change the spirit of the king, because it was of course necessary for Esther to go to the king for the deliverance of the Jews. The subjectiveness of J is also honestly portrayed here. He clearly states what he believes is the case. The effect of the insertion, because of J’s honesty, is different from that of the LXX. The reader’s theological creativeness and possibilities are still intact with J, and the implication still is that it might not be the case, but one can merely believe it was so. The reader could take part in discovering the theological possibility posed by J without being forced, as with the LXX translators, to do so. The above-mentioned insertion made by J features a dichotomy, because faith has a subjective face, and at the same time it has an objective dimension. These additions made by J poses the possibility of a theology of faith, and thus open the discussion concerning a dialectic theology.

3.2.2.4. Additions made to Es 10.3 (Addition F)

It must firstly be mentioned that one cannot deal with add. F without making reference to add. A; the reason will become apparent soon enough. The set of phrases inserted by the LXX that is of importance, is: Καὶ εἶπεν Μαρδοχαῖος Παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγένετο ταῦτα,^{3b} ἐμνήσθην γὰρ περὶ τοῦ ἐνυπνίου, οὗ εἶδον περὶ τῶν λόγων τούτων, and οὐδὲ γὰρ παρῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτῶν λόγος.

The first phrase is: Καὶ εἶπεν Μαρδοχαῖος Παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγένετο ταῦτα ‘and Mordecai said that these things happened because of God.’ It makes one think of τί ὁ θεὸς βεβούλευται ποιῆσαι (add. A), ‘what God planned to do.’ Additions A and F place the Esther narrative in a chiastic theism not known to the narrator of the MTE.²⁶⁴ This is further confirmed when the words ἐμνήσθην γὰρ περὶ τοῦ ἐνυπνίου are ascribed to Mordecai, namely ‘I remembered the dream.’ That which God has said through the dream in add. A has been made true, and add. F is a witness to that. The rest of the insertion just confirms that God has delivered his people. He remembered his people and saved them from the nations [τὸ δὲ ἔθνος τὸ ἐμόν, οὗτός ἐστιν Ἰσραηλ οἱ βοήσαντες πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ σωθέντες, καὶ ἔσωσεν κύριος τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐρρύσατο κύριος ἡμᾶς ἐκ πάντων τῶν κακῶν τούτων, καὶ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ σημεῖα καὶ τὰ τέρατα τὰ μεγάλα, ἃ οὐ γέγονεν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν.]

J inserts, among others, παρατηρησουσιν αυτας ευχαριστουντες τω θεω ‘they will observe closely and give thanks to God.’ This passage justifies the connection made with the theological nature of the Purim feast. According to Moore, the dream (add. A) and the interpretation thereof (add. F) alter the impression gained from the MTE by de-emphasizing the Purim festival and by shifting the emphasis from the cultic to the religious, from the harem intrigue to an apocalyptic setting, and from an ethnic and nationalistic rivalry to universal antagonism.²⁶⁵ For Clines, the LXX makes a distinctive contribution because the translators are using themes from the orbit in which the book of Daniel moves.²⁶⁶ The story is incorporated into a grand ‘plan of ages’, portraying God who does more than deliver distressed Israel, Esther and Mordecai, God deals in cosmic coinage, with an end-like day of gloom and darkness.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ Cf. Clines, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

²⁶⁵ Moore, “Additions,” p. 390.

²⁶⁶ Clines, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

²⁶⁷ Moore, “Additions.”

Fox in turn views add. A as a symbolic preview of the earthly drama to be played out and add. F as decoding the cosmic drama by mapping its terms against earthly events.²⁶⁸ Dorothy comments that the dream/interpretation becomes a prophetic deliverance dream, and it also functions to imbue Mordecai with prophetic power.²⁶⁹ Addition A can be described as belonging to a ‘festal etiology’ genre, and mentioning God lends a certain element of sanctity to these events.²⁷⁰ Levenson calls it a presentation of the decoding process of Mordecai’s dream (add. A).²⁷¹ The LXX interprets the deliverance eschatologically.²⁷² Mordecai is portrayed as the hero of the drama in 10.1-3 (MTE), but through addition F, God is made the cosmic hero, who planned to deliver his people and who implemented and followed his divine plan through. The humanistic and nationalistic nature of 10.1-3 (MTE) is altered by the LXX, which gives it a cosmic-eschatological and apocalyptic character where God is the dominating figure who controls the sequence of events throughout the Esther narrative.

3.3. Theological considerations by ‘modern’ interpreters of the MTE

This section of the chapter will be used to briefly discuss ‘modern’ theological interpretations of the Esther narrative and the possible implications thereof. The point has been made on a number of occasions in this study that, because of the attempts to ‘recover’ the theological integrity of the MTE, authors interpreted the Esther narrative with a particular theological framework in mind and also substantiated their interpretations from the text. These interpretations, to the opinion held here, hold theological implications not only for the Esther narrative but also for the reader of the various versions of the narrative. Because it has an impact on the reader, who is also the interpreter in some way or another, it will also have an impact on OT theology.

From a very early stage, readers/interpreters attempted to account for the ‘lack’ of a theological and religious specific language in the MTE; and Zimmern²⁷³ is one modern example from the eighteenth-century. Although it was not the sole purpose of Zimmern to deal with the ‘theological’ stance of the MTE, his investigation into the origin of the Purim festival would eventually converge with this very issue: the theological significance of the Esther narrative.

²⁶⁸ Fox, *Character and Ideology*, p. 270.

²⁶⁹ Dorothy, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

²⁷¹ Levenson, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

²⁷² Wahl, “Methodische Problem,” p. 30.

²⁷³ H. Zimmern, “Zur Frage nach dem Ursprunge des Purimfestes,” *ZAW* 11 (1891), pp. 157-169.

This is because the nature of the Purim feast was a religious feast, from the very beginning, that was taken over²⁷⁴ by the Jews;²⁷⁵ so much so that Paton comments that the purpose of the book of Esther is to commend the observance of the feast of Purim through an account of the way in which this feast originated.²⁷⁶

For Morris and Lampeter²⁷⁷ it is simpler and more satisfactory to regard the Greek additions as filling up gaps in the Hebrew story and giving the book a religious tone. They also do not find any religious undertones for the argument why an Israelite should not bow to a Gentile (3.2), and furthermore think that 4.14 may also be interpreted as a touch of Sadducean fatalism opposed to a reserved expression of religious faith.²⁷⁸ Morris and Lampeter also accept Kuenen's view who dates the narrative to 135 BCE, a time when religious enthusiasm, for many, had weakened into a more worldly feeling and when Jewish national feeling had adopted a rigorously exclusive attitude against everything non-Jewish.²⁷⁹ They also suggest, "that the Book of Esther embodies the attempt of the Hellenizers to convert their countrymen to their views. There is the same 'Sadducee' tone as in the Book of Ecclesiastes; the same air of fatalism; the same 'grey and chilly' religion."²⁸⁰

Anderson in turn would assert that God is implicitly at work in the MTE. He says that the religiosity of the MTE is all about Israel's election; whoever eliminates the book of Esther from the Bible denies that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ plays any part in the Jewish question and its solution.²⁸¹ He presents a possible solution to the 'lack' of religious language in the MTE by stating that it is in itself a problem for the Jews (those who were created and set apart by God) to exist among others in the world.²⁸² One could then deduce that he suggests a covenant theology at work in the Esther narrative. Talmon is of the opinion that the theology of the Esther narrative is to be found in a wisdom theology. He is of the opinion that it is the typical wisdom characteristics contained in the MTE which opens the possibilities of limiting religious language; placing the 'wise' characters like Mordecai and Esther in the centre.²⁸³ Therefore Talmon proposes to define the Esther narrative as a '*historicized wisdom-tale*' (italics are his).²⁸⁴

²⁷⁴ The Jews took over the religious context of the early Purim festival, as well as some practices linked to this festival.

²⁷⁵ Contra Morris and Lampeter, *op. cit.*, p. 124; cf. Anderson, *loc. cit.*, pp. 35-36.

²⁷⁶ Paton, *op. cit.*, p. 54. See also Fox, "Spirit of Purim," pp. 183-187.

²⁷⁷ Morris and Lampeter, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

²⁸¹ Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²⁸³ Talmon, *op. cit.*, p. 433.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 426.

It is a salient feature of the essentially cosmopolitan nature of wisdom thought which aims at applicability to any human situation.²⁸⁵ Humphreys says that Esther and Daniel are tales of a particular type that developed a particular theological emphasis for the Jewish communities of the Persian and Hellenistic Diaspora.²⁸⁶ For Humphreys this latter theological self-understanding is linked to the Jewish feast of Purim.²⁸⁷ He is also of the opinion that popularity of such a Jewish tale is due to its didactic and theological basis.²⁸⁸

Loader tries to prove that God's intervention is present in the Esther narrative, but that it is veiled.²⁸⁹ He does so by observing that the narrative has various levels of meaning and that by analyzing the deeper structure of the narrative, one would find a chiasmic structure or x-pattern, as he calls it.²⁹⁰ In other examples within the OT it is always God (see Ex 15; 1 Sam 2) who inverts the relations. God's intervention becomes visible through the events that reverse a situation (4.14, 6.13), and then it is veiled again.²⁹¹ Humans only appear as the saviours, but it is God that intervenes beneath the surface.²⁹² Cohen suggests that the only accurate reading, in terms of religiosity, is that God acts behind the veil of causality and chance on behalf of the people of Israel.²⁹³ For the enemies of the Jews and to an alien system of thought, Purim is a symbol that refers to the universal power of chance-fate, whereas for the Jew it becomes an anti-chance symbol because God is in control.²⁹⁴ The Esther narrative thus, according to Cohen, presents the very struggle between chance-fate and God as the power who is in control in the world; and the theological reactions toward it.²⁹⁵

Littman is of the opinion that the religious policy of Xerxes at that time is the dominating 'religious' factor in the Esther narrative.²⁹⁶ Relying heavily on the work of Lewy, Littman notes that the story of Esther is not about the destruction of the Jews, but of the followers of Marduk.²⁹⁷ He presents Lewy's theory and I quote, "the absence of the name of Yahweh in the book, the praise of the goddess *Ištar šarrat* [אִסְתָּר הַמַּלְכָּה], the reference to עַם מַרְדּוּכִי, the

²⁸⁵ Talmon, *op. cit.*, p. 430.

²⁸⁶ Humphreys, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

²⁸⁹ Loader, "Different levels of Meaning," p. 418. cf. Miller, "Level of Meaning."

²⁹⁰ Loader, "Different levels of Meaning," p. 419. cf. Clines, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

²⁹¹ Loader, "Different levels of Meaning," p. 419.

²⁹² Clines, *op. cit.*, p. 420.

²⁹³ Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

²⁹⁵ See Clines, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

²⁹⁶ Littman, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 150

very fact that it is the race of Esther and Mordecai who are to be prosecuted, indicates that it is the followers of Marduk, not the Jews who were persecuted in the original story.”²⁹⁸

The religious policy of Xerxes was to liberate Susa from the worship of Marduk and Ishtar to a more orthodox variety of Zoroastrianism.²⁹⁹ This very policy, according to Littman, is thus the reason for the ‘absence’ of God in the Esther narrative.

Berg argues that God is present in the Esther narrative through his hiddenness.³⁰⁰ Because God’s control over history is not overt nor easily discernable in everyday events, the determination of the shape and direction of history shifts to human beings.³⁰¹ Berg³⁰² notes elsewhere that the biblical literature from the Persian period reflects the theological importance of the restoration and the centrality of Zion.³⁰³ She then attempts to show how the Esther narrative and Chronicles dealt with this theology. Berg thinks that a Jewish audience would certainly see God as the agency responsible for the events in 4.14 and that the reversal motif is to be ascribed to God.³⁰⁴ The focus thus is on human agents who are responsible for the outcome of events, while God’s control over history is hidden.³⁰⁵ Berg concludes by stating that the Esther narrative presents a dialectic theology.³⁰⁶ For Jones³⁰⁷ the objectionable features, such as the religiosity of the book, are deliberate absurdities which the author has used skilfully.³⁰⁸ The narrator is laughing at the Persian court and therefore God can be found in the humour of the events. Jones says at the very end of his article, “Pity the theologians who were offended because they could not laugh.”³⁰⁹

Meinhold notes that the salvation of the Jews in Diaspora is due to human subjects.³¹⁰ Humans, namely Mordecai and Esther, are placed in the centre of events, they are the acting agents.³¹¹ For Meinhold the Esther narrative portrays an anthologizing and anthropologizing characteristic, but with anthologizing is meant “Judaisierung”.³¹²

²⁹⁸ Littman, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

³⁰⁰ Berg, *Book of Esther*, p. 178.

³⁰¹ *Idem.*

³⁰² Berg, “After the Exile.”

³⁰³ Berg, *loc. cit.*, pp. 107-108.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

³⁰⁵ Berg, “After the Exile,” p. 118.

³⁰⁶ *Idem.*

³⁰⁷ B. W. Jones, “Two Misconceptions about the Book of Esther,” *CBQ* 39 (1977), pp. 171-181.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

³¹⁰ Meinhold, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

³¹¹ *Idem.*

³¹² *Ibid.*, p. 326.

The catastrophic situation of the period after 587 BCE forced the Jews to try and preserve their identity, an identity which is shaped by its religion, by re-thinking their and God's involvement in human history.³¹³ He goes further and says: "...dieses jüdisch-menschliche Buch im Alten Testament weist auf die freie Gnade Jahwes hin."³¹⁴ He concludes: "...so weist das Estherbuch exemplarisch auf eine Brechung in Wertigkeit und Richtung des göttlichen Handelns mit der Welt hin."³¹⁵ For Gordis the basic concept of post-biblical Judaism became part of the spiritual world of the Jews.³¹⁶ Like Meinhold, Gordis views the narrator's philosophy as anthropocentric.³¹⁷ He also comments that the MTE belongs to a unique literary genre which was not hitherto recognized, and states that the non-historical character of Esther and the absence of specific religious colouration in it are the consequences of its character as a wisdom book.³¹⁸ He then proposes that the MTE should be viewed as a Persian Chronicle written by a Persian or non-Jew and therefore no reference is made to the God of Israel, or any other religious practises and beliefs.³¹⁹

Clines comments that by eliminating all explicitly religious terminology, the narrator was moving in sympathy with the course of the plot, to remain silent about the causality of its constitutive coincidences.³²⁰ This elimination does not conceal the divine causality, if the holes that are left are God-shaped, because for the believer 'chance' is a name for God.³²¹ The story's own internal logic can account for the lack of religious language, and for that lack alone one cannot necessarily label the narrator an atheist.³²² Noteworthy indeed, is the suggestion by Clines that the narrator of the proto-MT is responsible for the omissions of religious language of the pre-MT,³²³ and that not all the religious references in the AT are to be ascribed to its *Vorlage*, the pre-MT.³²⁴

Segal in turn argues that anger plays an important role in the Esther narrative in determining the outcome of the plot.³²⁵ The factor of 'fear' in Esther is placed at crucial turning points in the plot of the narrative (1.2, 2.21, 3.5, 5.9).³²⁶ It indicates that the narrator deliberately implemented two Hebrew words, *המה* and *קצף*, as signs of supernatural manipulation of

³¹³ Meinhold, *Loc. cit.*, pp. 328-329.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

³¹⁶ Gordis, *op. cit.*, p. 364.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 366.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 368.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 375.

³²⁰ Clines, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

³²¹ *Idem.*

³²² *Idem.*

³²³ *Ibid.*, p. 152

³²⁴ *Idem.*

³²⁵ Segal, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

³²⁶ *Loc. cit.*, pp. 248-249.

events.³²⁷ Segal further thinks that a firm theological undertone is to be identified in the narrator's symmetrical construction of the events.³²⁸ For him it is God who is inciting the wrath of various characters which leads to the deliverance of the Jews.³²⁹ Fox mentions four types of evidence used by scholars to demonstrate God's presence in the MTE;³³⁰ they are: allusions (4.14, 6.13), coincidences, reversals (3.10-8.2), and themes.³³¹ Fox then states that Mordecai's confidence in 4.14 usually derives from, and expresses, a belief in God's covenantal care for Israel.³³² He also sees in the conversation between Haman, his wife and friends (6.1-13) an implication that there is some history underlying their view of Mordecai's strength, some law, natural or divine.³³³ Fox concludes that the religious attitude of the book is like an optical illusion that shifts orientation as you peruse it. The author is also not sure of God's role in the events and for Fox the narrator is teaching a theology of possibilities.³³⁴ Day says that the Esther of the MT, in comparison with the A and B texts, lived in a secular world.³³⁵ She is further of the opinion that two places in the MTE suggest a religious trait to Esther's character (4.16; 9.29-32).³³⁶

Snyman views the Bible text as one of many voices in a religious discussion. He proposes an esthetical approach³³⁷ to the Esther narrative made up of three levels of experience.³³⁸ According to him, Esther was adaptable as well as practical and realistic with regard to her chances.³³⁹ As queen her Jewish identity and religion took a secondary role.³⁴⁰ Snyman also refers to Helberg who states that he has no difficulty in reconciling God and Esther in the fact that the so-called 'silence' of God shows his (God's) glorious reign.³⁴¹ Snyman does not agree with the latter reading,³⁴² and suggests that through Esther's wisdom, Haman's plans were turned around and therefore one could assume that God was on her side.³⁴³ The Esther narrative is a Persian chronicle, not mentioning the Jewish God *Yahweh*,³⁴⁴ and because of the Persian rule, the Jewish God was not mentioned in their literature.³⁴⁵ In conclusion, Snyman

³²⁷ Segal, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

³²⁹ Segal, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

³³⁰ Fox, "Religion," See also Fox, *Character and Ideology*, pp. 235-247.

³³¹ Fox, "Religion," pp. 139-144.

³³² Fox, "Religion," p. 144.

³³³ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

³³⁴ *Loc. cit.*, pp. 146-147.

³³⁵ Day, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

³³⁷ Snyman, *op. cit.*, p. 40

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41, Snyman makes reference to Jauß (1989:39) in this regard.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 44

³⁴⁰ *Idem.*

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45

³⁴² *Idem.*

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 46

³⁴⁴ *Idem.*

³⁴⁵ *Loc. cit.*, pp. 46-47

calls for reader's response; for being playfully involved in the story, for losing oneself in the text, and for finding the 'silent' God in the process.³⁴⁶ He proposes an aesthetical approach by stating, “Die kern van die estetiese benadering is die *Selbstgenuß im Fremdgenuß*. Die lesers, wie se eie vermoëns geaktiveer word in die leesproses, betree ‘n spel met die teks” (The core of the aesthetical approach is the *Selbstgenuß im Fremdgenuß*. The readers' own potential are activated to take part in the playfulness of the text).³⁴⁷

Huey, on the other hand, is of the opinion that God's absence could underline the self-reliance of Mordecai and Esther to work out their problems without turning to God.³⁴⁸ Huey thus concludes that *Yahweh* became a hidden God because his people did not seek help from him.³⁴⁹ Wahl wrote extensively about the theology and religiosity of the Esther narrative. He comments that פֹּרַח “lot” points to the god of Haman.³⁵⁰ Thus, the Jewish feast *Purim* celebrates not only the countering of Haman's plot to destroy the Jews, but it also celebrates the victory of *Yahweh* over the god of Haman.³⁵¹ Wahl is further of the opinion that faith and God in the MTE are made apparent by the example of Mordecai, because for king Ahasueros Mordecai is the “*Retter und beständige Wohltäter (E 13) des persischen Volkes.*”³⁵² Mordecai is not a believing Jew, but he is the right hand of *Yahweh* in the narrative (6.13).³⁵³

Wahl then indicates that the Hebrew word חָהַל “to fall down”, “to bow down deeply” appears in addition with כָּרַע “kneel” in 3.2,5, as well as in Ps 95.2 and 2 Chr 39.39 in which this practice is described as cultic.³⁵⁴ Furthermore, the fact that Mordecai does not bow before Haman, shows a ‘religious’ loyalty towards *Yahweh*.³⁵⁵ In another article, Wahl discussed motifs like exile and diffusion.³⁵⁶ He indicates that Haman said that Israel is פֹּרַח “isolated”, “dispersed” and פָּרַד “separate” (3.8).³⁵⁷ *Yahweh* punished the Israelites with the exile and dispersement, but *Yahweh* saves them and the institutionalization of this is a cultic matter.³⁵⁸ Wahl is of the opinion that the religious context of כָּנַס and קָהַל are obvious.³⁵⁹

³⁴⁶ Snyman, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

³⁴⁷ *Idem.*

³⁴⁸ Huey, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

³⁵⁰ Wahl, “‘Jahwe, Wo Bist Du?’” p. 3.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁵³ *Idem.*

³⁵⁴ *Idem.*

³⁵⁵ Wahl, “‘Glaube ohne Gott?’” p. 41.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³⁵⁷ *Idem.*

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

³⁵⁹ *Idem.*

The Israelites gather and group together for the, “*gewährte Recht auf Verteidigung und Religionsausübung, auf die das gemeinsame Fasten und die gemeinsame Feier hinweisen.*”³⁶⁰ Wahl deduces from יהודים, יהודים, in the Esther narrative, that it refers to *Yahweh*.³⁶¹ The mighty Persian rule is afraid of the Jews, because the motif is grounded in the participation and work of *Yahweh* in the salvation history of Israel.³⁶² In conclusion Wahl comments that the function of the Esther narrative is to show the familiarity with *Yahweh* the God of Israel as the basis for the existence of the Jews, on the one hand, and to recognize and remind one of the ‘Diaspora Feast’ as a happy memory of their deliverance from extinction on the other hand.³⁶³

After dealing with ‘modern’ theological interpretations of the MTE, one easily comes to the conclusion that there is little difference between what ‘modern’ scholars did with the MTE and what the translators of the LXX and J did with it. They interpreted the text from a certain theological framework and perception. Both ancient and modern scholars attempted to make sense of the text at hand, and they tried to ‘theologically’ understand the meaning of the text and explain it to the communities they served. The main difference, of course, between the work done by ‘modern’ scholars and the effort presented through the LXX and J texts, is that the latter two introduced a new text, which could again be interpreted as they had done with the MTE.

After a comparison between the three text versions of the Esther narrative (MTE/LXX/J) has been made; and the theological implications of the insertions that were made by the LXX and J texts, as well as modern scholars’ theological interpretations, were considered, some concluding remarks can be made. These should be remarks that not just summarise what has been done in this study, but they should at least give some guidelines to the readers of the Esther narrative in particular, as well for translators and other interpreters of the biblical text. These guidelines will equip the reader with the necessary theological consciousness to read, enjoy and evaluate the Esther narrative as a story. A further intention of these guidelines is to make translators cautious of their theological perceptions for a ‘reader friendly’ translation or interpretation.

³⁶⁰ Wahl, “‘Glaube ohne Gott?’” p. 46.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

³⁶² *Idem.*

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Chapter Four

Concluding remarks and suggestions

4.1. Introduction

After a study such as has been done above, one could very easily ask the ‘*so what?*’ question. I would think that such a question would be even more relevant in our time than in previous years. The technological-economical driven society of the twenty-first century is not so much interested in the ‘history’ of things; the interest is rather on ‘what can it do for me’ and ‘how can I benefit from it’. The faith communities for whom this study is primarily intended, on the other hand, might also have the ‘*so what?*’ question in mind. It is therefore necessary that this section of the study particularly focuses on the possible value this study might have for faith communities.

Two aspects have been identified from this study that might be of value. The first is a call for a re-evaluation of the MTE’s theological possibilities, opportunities and significance. The second is that awareness, caution and consciousnesses of one’s own theological interpretation of the MTE and the biblical text in general, are called for. It is thus the intention here to briefly reflect on these two aspects as part of the concluding remarks of this study. This will be done by means of three objectives. The first objective is to give a summary of the implications the LXX and J texts’ theological interpretations have for the interpretation of the MTE. The second objective will be to point to the MTE’s theological possibilities, opportunities and significance, and the final objective would be to make some suggestions for both exegetes and translators to be more aware, cautious and conscious of their own theological interpretation and the effect thereof.

The first aspect to be dealt with is a call for a re-evaluation of the MTE’s theological possibilities, opportunities and significance. Before this aspect is discussed, I would like to summarise the implications of the LXX and J texts’ theological reworking.

4.2. Recalculating the implications

The theological alterations made by the LXX and J texts were done in a very subtle, though deliberate, manner. One could rightfully deduce that the subtleness of these changes was due to the integrity of the authors not only as ancient scholars, but as people of faith living within a faith community.

In turn, one could assign their deliberateness to those theological themes from the OT that were not only well-known, but in a sense constituted the very essence of being for a Jewish believer. Themes such as those constructed from the *hexateuch*,³⁶⁴ and others such as ‘the God that preserves’,³⁶⁵ wisdom theology,³⁶⁶ a new theology³⁶⁷ for a shattered nation in a foreign land that finds hope³⁶⁸ and is being restored. J and the Greek translators of the MTE could think of God only as part and parcel of their collective memory of Israelite religion,³⁶⁹ and tried to make that which had been ‘forgotten’³⁷⁰ more explicit.

These theological themes are not at fault, but projecting them onto the MTE without considering the narrative’s own theological integrity is not responsible, even though some of these themes might be implicitly embedded in the text. The LXX and J texts’ theological alterations limit the theological creativeness of the MTE. It is almost as if the depth and strength of the MTE’s theological silence about the activity of God have been removed to make space for a more ‘traditional’ theology. The theological explicitness of both the LXX- and J texts places the theological control in the hands of the translators, whereas the theological implicitness of the MTE imply that the control must be found by the reader through an adventure of discovering endless theological possibilities.

4.2.1. Canonical additions

4.2.1.1. *Es 2.20 (φοβείσθαι τὸν θεὸν), LXX*

To interpret Esther’s silence of her descent because of ‘fear for God’ does not take the relationship between Esther and Mordecai seriously (2.20), nor does it help the reader to connect with Esther as character. The nature of this event is crucial for the tension of the plot and the theological impact of the MTE. Inserting a phrase such as this makes Esther a moral-pietistic character, a character whose actions are directed by God. For any reader without such a moral consciousness, it would be difficult to be taken up into the tension of the plot to discover what decisions Esther makes and how these decisions impact on her actions in a certain situation and what the outcome of those actions might be.

³⁶⁴ See G. Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (Volume One – Study edition; London: SCM Press, 1975). Also see the themes presented by Goldingay, *op. cit.* in terms of the creation story, pp. 42-183, God’s promise, pp. 193-277, the God that delivers, pp. 288-360, and the God that seals, pp. 369-437; cf. Birch, *op. cit.*, 35-174.

³⁶⁵ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pp. 696-779.

³⁶⁶ Birch, *op. cit.*, pp. 373-416.

³⁶⁷ W. Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology – Essay on Structure, Theme, and Text* (Miller, P D (ed.); Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), pp. 183-203.

³⁶⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 319-372.

³⁶⁹ M. S. Smith, “Remembering God: Collective Memory in Israelite Religion,” *CBQ* 64 (2002), pp. 631-651.

³⁷⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 649-650.

4.2.1.2. *Es 4.8 (ἐπικάλεσαι τὸν κύριον), LXX*

The effect of the interpretation of 4.8 is very similar to that of 2.20. Once again, Esther's pietistic character is brought to the fore with this interpretation of the translators. Neither the author nor the reader is considered. The tension of the plot is undermined and the reader loses touch with the character. The growth through the process of struggling with a situation and discovering how God is involved is taken away. To 'call upon the Lord' in a crisis is a valuable virtue, but to explicitly assign such an action to Esther without it being explicitly implied by the author of the MTE, is manipulative for both the growth of Esther as character, and of the reader.

4.2.1.3. *Es 4.14 (ἔσεσθαι μὲν αὐτῷ βοήθειαν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πάντως), J 227*

With the phrase 'deliverance will come for the Jews from another place' (4.14), the author of the MTE further strengthens the tension of the plot. Both the characters and readers are pulled into a pool of intensity. Altering the phrase to read 'help will come for them all from God' surely takes the tension out of the plot and limits the reader's involvement with the narrative. The expectation and uncertainty of who the 'saviour' might be are modified to become certainty whereby the surprise element of the narrative is taken away.

4.2.1.4. *Es 6.1 (Ὁ δὲ κύριος ἀπέστησεν τὸν ὕπνον ἀπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως τὴν νύκτα ἐκείνην), LXX, (ὁ δὲ θεὸς κατεγέλα τῆς Ἀμάνου πονηρᾶς ἐλπίδος), J 247*

It has been noted above that 6.1 (MTE) plays a pivotal role in establishing the tension of the plot. As with 2.20, 4.8 and 4.14; 6.1 is an important scene within the Esther narrative with which the author keeps his readers involved and heightens the tension of the plot. These phrases inserted by both the LXX and J texts did not consider the intention of the author. The excitement and the process of speculation are completely marginalized. The reader is stopped in his/her tracks by these insertions, because now 'the Lord' (LXX) is the one that takes away the king's sleep. J goes even further by providing the reason why God has taken away the king's sleep: 'God mocked the wicked hopes of Haman'. These insertions give the reader no room to participate in these events. The readers are kept at a distance while the translators are interpreting the text.

4.2.1.5. *Es 6.13 (οὐ μὴ δύνῃ αὐτὸν ἀμύνασθαι, ὅτι θεὸς ζῶν μετ' αὐτοῦ), LXX, (οἱ δ' οὐκέτ' ἀμύνασθαι τὸν Μαρδοχαῖον ἔλεγον δυνήσεσθαι τὸν γὰρ θεὸν εἶναι σὺν αὐτῷ), J 259*

The author of the MTE's silence is significant in 6.13. No reason is given as to why Haman's fall before Mordecai is certain. The reader is left confused and uninformed. Haman's wife and his friends know something the readers do not know, and the author intended it to be that way. The LXX and J texts made sure to inform the reader. Haman's fall is certain because 'the living God is with him' (LXX). J in turn says that 'the power of God is with him'. These insertions say to the reader that they should not be confused, nor left uninformed; they should know that the Esther narrative will have a good ending, because 'God' is involved. The adventure of the story is taken away by this insertion because of its nature to end the narrative prematurely. If the reader knows that the power of God is at work, then they would know that nothing could stand in its way. The author of the MTE's intention was for the reader to discover God's power which in turn will empower them.

4.2.1.6. *Es 7.10 (ὄθεν ἐπέροχεται μοι τὸ θεῖον θαυμάζειν καὶ τὴν σοφίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ δικαιοσύνην...), J, 268*

J goes as far as to portray king Artaxerxes as the one that marvels 'at the wisdom and justice of the Deity'. Most of the characters in the Esther narrative undergo a moral refurbishment by J. The humane nature of 7.10 (MTE) is transformed into a pietistic portrait of the king, that does not allow the reader to connect with the character as a human being.

4.2.2. Non-canonical additions

The concluding remarks concerning the impact of these additions will not be dealt with in detail. The concluding remarks on these additions will be made based on a general overview. The additions from the vision (addition to Es 1.1) through to addition F in 10.3 were intended to place the MTE within an 'improved' theological framework. The vision shows that the outcome of the events in the MTE is predestined by God. The prayers of Mordecai and Esther (addition to Es 4.17) introduce both these characters as pietistic human beings from whom the reader can expect the best behaviour and actions. In 5.1 (LXX) Esther sees the king as an Angel from God, whereas J (237) believes that the king lifted his sceptre and placed it on Esther because God changed his feelings. These additions clearly place the 'control' into the hands of the translators of the MTE. They determine the nature and outcome of events on which the reader should merely react. By attempting to put God explicitly in control of events, they have limited the theological impact of the MTE.

4.3. The theological opportunities, possibilities and significance of the MTE

The theological significance of the Esther narrative cannot be underestimated, especially in the context of the twenty-first century. This individualized, creative, relative and cultural-religious sensitive society needs a theology as is being portrayed by the MTE. One could call the theology suggested by the MTE a ‘theology of possibilities’. It could also be referred to as a theology of adventure, through which the reader is taken up into the story of Esther. While the reader encounters the emotions and thoughts the characters are facing, the tension of the plot, and the beauty of every scene, he/she gets the opportunity to discover a ‘hidden’ character. This character is never revealed, but the hope, potential and creativity this character is exploiting within the reader is never forced, nor explicitly suggested. The author portrays this character with a theological tool I refer to as a theology of ‘open-endedness’.

A ‘theology of open-endedness’ invites the reader to discover his/her creative potential that opens numerous possibilities and endless opportunities. Such a theology as is being portrayed by the Esther narrative could be helpful on various levels on which faith communities function; functions such as pastoral care, bible school, involvement and development of lay people, to mention only a few. The Esther narrative and its underlying theologies could also assist with the ecumenical dialogue between churches, as well as with inter-religious and cultural discussions, because the Esther narrative is not exclusive, but inclusive.

4.4. Suggestions for both exegete and translator

When interpreting the biblical text from and for a faith community, it is expected that one would provide a theological interpretation of the text. This is part of the very nature of being an exegete. Lessons from the past have learned that the impact of biblical interpretations are greater than one could possibly grasp. It is therefore important to be aware of the power one has when theologically interpreting a text. One should also be constantly aware of one’s own theological perceptions, concepts and ideas. Through this comparative study it became clear that the type of consciousness an exegete should develop must be both subjective and objective in nature.

The text should be allowed to influence the interpreter, and the interpreter should be conscious of his/her own theological perceptions and the impact it would have on the understanding of the text. Although there is a difference in nuance between an exegete and a translator, much of what has been suggested for an exegete applies to a translator also.³⁷¹

With regard to translating texts, Naude³⁷² makes an important remark when he says that translating the Bible is not different from translating other texts.³⁷³ He goes on to say that the translation process is not merely a linguistic activity, but rather a way of facilitating communication between members of different cultures.³⁷⁴

He (Naude) says,

...a translator has to be very sensitive towards rich points between the groups or subgroups on either side of the language-and-culture barrier, even though it may well be decided to leave the barrier where it is and just try to assist people on either side to peep across and understand the otherness of what is happening over there.³⁷⁵

If one applies this to the translation and interpretation of the Esther narrative, the assistance to peep across and discover the richness of this text, could be of great value. The translators of the biblical text should find a balance between being source-orientated and target-orientated.³⁷⁶ Finding such a balance is not as easy as it might sound, it only emphasizes the complexity of the translation process.³⁷⁷ The complexity of this process is further determined by the activity of decoding and encoding meaning.³⁷⁸ What Van der Watt and Kruger suggest in terms of translating that which is implicit in the text, should be reconsidered in the case of the Esther narrative.³⁷⁹ The implicitness there has a very specific function with the purpose of involving the reader in the communication process.

³⁷¹ Cf. H. Du Plooy, "Listening to the wind in the trees: Meaning, interpretation and literary theory," in *Contemporary translation studies and Bible translation: A South African perspective* (ed. J.G. van der Watt and Y. Kruger; Acta Theologica Supplement 2; Bloemfontein: Publication Office of the University of the Free State, 2002:273), p. 266-279.

³⁷² J. A. Naude, "An overview of recent developments in translation studies with special reference to the implications for Bible translation," in *Contemporary translation studies and Bible translation: A South African perspective* (ed. J.G. van der Watt and Y. Kruger; Acta Theologica Supplement 2; Bloemfontein: Publication Office of the University of the Free State, 2002), pp. 44-69.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

³⁷⁴ Naude, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

³⁷⁵ Naude, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

³⁷⁷ See J. G. van der Watt and Y. Kruger, "Some considerations on Bible translation as complex process," in *Contemporary translation studies and Bible translation: A South African perspective* (ed. J.G. van der Watt and Y. Kruger; Acta Theologica Supplement 2; Bloemfontein: Publication Office of the University of the Free State, 2002), pp. 118-139.

³⁷⁸ *Loc. cit.*, pp. 119-128.

³⁷⁹ *Loc. cit.*, pp. 129-130.

Du Plooy makes a valuable statement on similar lines when he says that within a text there is an open area, blank spaces that need to be filled.³⁸⁰ These open spaces are filled by interpreters, and through the interpretation the meaning of the text is reformulated.³⁸¹ He also says that one should keep in mind the open-ended character of language by accepting that no interpretation can be absolutely correct.³⁸² The latter is of specific significance for the MTE.³⁸³

In an online article,³⁸⁴ Gordon briefly discusses three translation theories. The first one he deals with is the *communication theory*. He says that when the three dimensions (the author, message and audience) of this theory converge, the communication has been efficient.³⁸⁵ Although this theory should be taken seriously by translators and exegetes alike if the *genre*, as a fourth dimension, is not taken into account, then the impact of the communication process will be lost, especially with the MTE. Weber³⁸⁶ in turn indicates that the ‘Code-Model’³⁸⁷ is an inadequate and misleading theory of communication. One such inadequacy is the ‘mechanical’ aspect of such a model.³⁸⁸ The translators of the LXX and J texts are guilty of reading the MTE only as a ‘theological-code’ that is sent embedded into the text, transferred from author to reader to be implicitly interpreted. The tapestry of the text is unweaved and its meaning is painted with a one-coloured brush.

The second theory Gordon deals with is a *formal and dynamic equivalence* theory,³⁸⁹ Weber groups this theory under, what he calls ‘Source-Meaning-Receptor Theories’ (hereafter SMR).³⁹⁰ Gordon argues for a balance between a *formal* and *dynamic equivalence* approach to translation, as is found with the RSV.³⁹¹ Weber again points out the inadequacies of the SMR inherited from the ‘Code-Model’. He says that the SMR-based translations are often more explicit than necessary and/or desirable.³⁹²

³⁸⁰ Du Plooy, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

³⁸¹ *Idem.*

³⁸² Du Plooy, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

³⁸³ Also see B. G. Wright III, “The Septuagint in the Context of Ancient translation activity,” in *Biblical Translation in Context* (ed. Frederick W. Knobloch; Maryland: University Press of Maryland, 2002), pp. 3-18, who critically evaluates ἐρμηνεύς, as a reference to a ‘translator’ or ‘interpreter’ involved in the translation of the Septuagint. G. A. Rensburg, “The literary approach to the Bible and finding a good translation,” in *Biblical Translation in Context* (ed. Frederick W. Knobloch; Maryland: University Press of Maryland, 2002), pp. 179-194, in turn investigates how Hebrew terms have been translated and the effect thereof, after which he calls for a better translation than merely a literal one.

³⁸⁴ T. D. Gordon, “Translation Theory,” <http://www.bible-researcher.com/Gordon.html>, 1985).

³⁸⁵ Gordon, “Translation Theory,” p. 1.

³⁸⁶ David. J. Weber, “A Tale of Two Translation Theories,” *JT* 1 (2005), pp. 35-74.

³⁸⁷ See Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 37, where he presents the core philosophy of the ‘Code-Model’.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³⁸⁹ Gordon, *loc. cit.*, pp. 3-6

³⁹⁰ Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

³⁹¹ Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

³⁹² Weber, *op. cit.*, 44.

A few others could also be mentioned: inadequate account of the context,³⁹³ and less non-literal language.³⁹⁴ These inadequacies can be traced in the LXX and J texts' versions of the MTE. Weber states that there is much more to SMR than that which has been taken over from the 'Code-Model'.

The third and final theory Gordon refers to, is the *semantic theory*. In this regard he states that one should realize and consider the semantic fields of meaning of words.³⁹⁵ Weber's sketch of the so-called 'Relevance theory' demonstrates that interpretation involves a vast amount of implicit information.³⁹⁶ He says that that which is explicit could be made implicit when the following is considered:

- a. That the over-arching principle is relevance: "If we make explicit certain information that the reader does not need, causing the reader to expend more processing effort, then the hearer should seek greater interpretive compensation".³⁹⁷ This certainly applies to the theological insertions of the LXX and J texts. The explicitness of their translation does not cause more processing effort for the reader, but less, whereas the narrative requires more processing effort;
- b. The Relevance theory's distinction between explicature and implicature is also useful. The former is a thought or proposition; it is to assist the reader to compute that which is implicit on a 'form-based' linguistic. This type of assistance is generally acceptable, but caution is necessary when explicating to help the reader to compute implicatures. Added material is likely to trigger all sorts of interference.³⁹⁸

Weber calls for a translation approach that enriches the mutual cognitive environment.³⁹⁹ In the case of the MTE the intention and meaning embedded in a text should not be made explicit by the translators. The translation of the text should give the reader enough information to enrich the cognitive environment of the text, but it should also respect the cognitive environment of the reader.

³⁹³ Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

³⁹⁵ Gordon, *loc. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

³⁹⁶ Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

³⁹⁷ Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

³⁹⁸ *Idem.*

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

In sum, one has to at least except that through the comparison of the MTE, LXX and J text it became clear that the translators of the LXX and J texts underestimated the impact of the theological implicitness of the Esther narrative. Furthermore, one also has to admit that caution should be taken when approaching a biblical text for the purpose of exegesis or translation. The theological nature and value of the MTE is embroidered into the *genre* of the text with more theological potential than has been considered possible in the past.

Summary

The objective of this study was to establish and define the theological alterations made to the Masoretic Text of the biblical book of Esther (MTE) by the translators of the Septuagint (LXX) and the Josephus (J) texts, focusing on the explicit references made to God in these texts. This objective was reached by means of three working objectives:

- a. Comparing key passages from the MTE with the LXX and J texts;
- b. Indicating differences and similarities between the various accounts; and
- c. Making some inferences about the theological implications of these insertions.

The comparison of the texts was introduced by an excursion into the reconstruction of the Esther text. The texts that were compared were divided into two groups, namely canonical insertions (2.20; 4.8, 14; 6.1, 13; and 7.10), and non-canonical additions (add. A, C, D and E). From this comparison, differences and similarities became apparent, and especially those that were theologically explicit were investigated.

The conclusion was reached that the LXX and J texts' theological alterations limit the theological creativeness and open-endedness of the MTE. The depth and strength of the MTE's theological silence about the activity of God have been removed in these translations to make space for a more 'traditional' theology. The investigation serves to caution modern translators of the book of Esther to refrain from translating the book in a way that is theologically more explicit than the source document, since this would damage the communicative potential of the book.

Opsomming

Die doelwit van hierdie studie was om die teologiese verwerkings wat deur die vertalers van die Septuagint (LXX) en die Josephus (J) tekste aan die Masoretiese teks van die bybelse boek Ester (MTE) gemaak is te bepaal en te definieer, deur op die eksplisiete verwysings na God in die tekste te fokus. Hierdie doelwitte is bereik deur middel van drie werkbare doelwitte:

- a. Vergelyk sleuteltekste van die MTE met die LXX en J tekste;
- b. Dui die verskille en ooreenkomste aan tussen die verskillende teksweergawes; en
- c. Maak sekere afleiding aangaande die teologiese implikasies van hierdie byvoegings.

Hierdie vergelyking van die tekste was ingelei deur 'n ekskursie in die reconstruering van die Ester teks. Die tekste wat vergelyk is, was in twee groepe verdeel, naamlik kanoniese byvoegings (2.20; 4.8, 14; 6.1, 13; en 7.10), en nie-kanoniese byvoegings ('add.' A, C, D en E). Vanuit hierdie vergelyking het die verskille en ooreenkomste duidelik geword, en veral daardie teologiese eksplisiete byvoegings is ondersoek.

Die gevolgtrekking wat bereik is, is dat die LXX en J tekste se teologiese verandering die teologiese kreatiwiteit en openheid van die MTE beperk. Die diepte en krag van die MTE se teologiese stilte oor God se betrokkenheid is verwyder in hierdie vertalings om ruimte te maak vir 'n meer 'tradisionele' teologie. Die ondersoek dien as 'n oproep tot omsigtigheid aan moderne vertalers van die Ester boek, om te voorkom dat die boek op 'n manier vertaal word wat meer teologies eksplisiet is as die bron dokument, aangesien dit die kommunikatiewe potensiaal van die boek sal belemmer.

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