

Joseph Cross, “Different, Not Expanded Endings in MT Esther”

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“MT-Esther developed by localized supplementation and reworking of an earlier form of the story,” (Fox 1991, 99).

“Lot(s) of writing happen(s) in the Book of Esther,” (Bal 1994, 89).

## 1. Major textual tensions in MT Esther 8-9

- Traces of two denouements?
  - 8:15-17a<sup>1</sup>: Mordecai is acclaimed. Not only are all in Susa are glad, with the Judeans in particular experiencing “light, gladness, joy, and honor” (אֹרֶה וְיִקָּר וְשִׂמְחָה וְשָׂשׂוֹן וְיִקָּר), but Judeans across the entire empire celebrated when they heard the king’s decree. This reads like a straightforward, euphoric ending of an exciting story. Though it follows the decree for the Judeans to attack their enemies, it makes no explicit mention of that or of any other reason for the Judeans’ happiness.
  - 9:23-28: A decree of Mordecai causes elation among Judeans. These verses read much differently than 8:15-17a: the narrator summarizes the final events of the story, especially Esther’s request that the king reverse Haman’s decree and punish him. The focus is ultimately on the festival of Purim and on an unsubtle interpretation of the events. No mention is made of the widespread attacks of the Judeans, but only of the annulment of Haman’s decree and on the execution of him and his family as revenge.
- Esther makes two different requests to Ahasuerus in close succession
  - 8:3: The narrator summarizes: Esther “spoke again” (cf. 7:2-6) to the king and asked him to put an end to: 1. “the evil of Haman” (רַעַת הָמָן), and 2. “the plot he devised against the Judeans” (מַחְשְׁבֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר חָשַׁב עַל־הַיְהוּדִים).
  - 8:4: The narrator narrates: Ahasuerus extended his scepter towards Esther (as in 5:2, and explained by Esther in 4:11), and Esther asks him to “reverse the letters of Haman’s devising” (הִפְּרִימ מַחְשְׁבֹת הָמָן). Both 8:3 and 8:4 share the root \*חשב.
  - Note: Ahasuerus only responds in 8:5-6, but to Esther and Mordecai together, and does not respond directly to Esther, but makes a proclamation (part of which summarizes what the reader already knows) that Mordecai and Esther can act as they wish—the reader does not know what they actually do until 8:11! This seems to follow more naturally from 8:1-2: Ahasuerus says that Esther is in control of Haman’s house, which, in 8:2, she put Mordecai in

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<sup>1</sup> The מַחְשְׁבֹת הָמָן and the פְּחַד־הַיְהוּדִים of 8:17b is a complicated case, apparently reflecting the texts in Est 8-9 which treat the attacks of the Judeans.

charge of (cf. Ego 2017, 48). Ahasuerus also mentions the signet ring here, which connects also to 8:2. Note also that Ahasuerus learned about Haman's decree in 7:3-6

- The Judeans attack in two waves
  - 9:1-11: On the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar, when Haman's decree was set to take effect, Judeans throughout the empire (including Susa) attack those who hate them, killing 500 alone in Susa. Among the victims are the ten sons of Haman (9:10). This follows the edict of Mordecai in 8:10-14, which was hastily delivered throughout the empire.
  - 9:15-16: On the 14<sup>th</sup> of Adar, Judeans in Susa kill 300 men, and in the rest of the empire, 75,000. This follows an additional request of Esther to Ahasuerus (9:12-13), who asked that the Judeans in Susa be allowed an additional day of slaughter on 14 Adar. Nevertheless, there are also additional attacks in the provinces on 14 Adar, and not only in Susa (9:16).
  - Note:
    - The attacks by the Judeans in 9:1-11 are not out of self-defense against organized attacks, as the decree of 8:11 states, but are generally directed against their enemies and those who hate them (Clines 1984, 39-40). Furthermore, the only enemy of the Judeans in the entire novella up until this point has been Haman (ibid, 42-43).
    - Esther's request in 9:13 does not explicitly ask for an additional day of slaughter in Susa on 14 Adar: "Let it be granted also tomorrow to the Judeans in Susa to act according to today's decree and hang the ten sons of Haman on the tree," (יִנְתֶנּוּ גַם־מָחָר לַיהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוֹשׁוֹן לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּדָת) הַיּוֹם וְאֵת עֲשָׂרַת בְּנֵי־הָמָן יְתַלּוּ עַל־הָעֵץ.<sup>2</sup>
- Haman's sons are put to death twice
  - First, in 9:10, as part of the Judean slaughter on 13 Adar. The narrator states that the Judeans "killed the ten sons of the Haman, son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Judeans" (עֲשָׂרַת בְּנֵי הָמָן בֶּן־הַמְּדַתָּא צָרַר הַיְהוּדִים הָרְגוּ); cf. 3:10 and 8:1.
  - Second, in 9:14, after Esther requested it from Ahasuerus. The narrator states that they were hanged, using the same verb here and in 9:13 (\*תלה) as with the hanging of Haman (7:9-10).
- Two decrees sent by Mordecai
  - 8:9-12: Ahasuerus allows Esther and Mordecai to issue an official edict in his name to the Judeans. The exact purpose is not given (see above). The narrator says that Mordecai dictates the letter's contents in 8:9, and summarizes it in 8:11: that the Judeans are to gather together across the empire to attack any who attack them.
  - 9:20-22: After the end of the slaughtering, Mordecai wrote to the Judeans about "these things" (אֵת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה), i.e. about the events of 13-15 Adar and the overthrow of Haman, which ends up being a command to remember 14-15

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<sup>2</sup> Presumably עץ is definite because it is the same tree that Haman was hanged on.

Adar and to make it a festival. This is latter called by the narrator “this letter of Purim, the second one” (9:29; אגרת הפורים הזאת השנייה).

## 2. Extracts of parallel texts from different editions of the Demotic novella *The Prebend of Amun*

Taking P. Spiegelberg (Spiegelberg 1910) as the base manuscript, significant differences in the Carlsberg texts (Tait 2000) are highlighted (though necessarily in an over-simplified fashion).

### Example 1

#### P. Spiegelberg 10.1-10

The [Great of the East Pe]krur ans[wered him:] “Is what you are doing frenzy? Or is....to take revenge on the shepherds who captured Prince Ankhhor and General Wertepamunniut? The army will not be able to withstand any of them. Do you say, ‘The army of Egypt may prepare against them!’ that the shepherds cause a bloodbath among them? And further, Amun, the great god, is here with us. [It is] not [appropriate] that we do anything without Amun. Let Pharaoh ask before him! If he commands us to fight, we will fight. If it happens to be something different that Amun will command, we will act accordingly.”

#### P. Carlsberg 434, ll.3-9

- (3) ] the Great of the East, Paklul, **the Exceedingly Great**, saying [  
(4) ] **your (attempts at) cleverness are what have let them capture Prince Ankhhor and** [  
(5) ] **their hands and their feet, as they sent them on board** [  
(6) ... the army **of] Egypt** [will not (be able?)] to withstand **him upon the banks of the** [  
(7) ... they (sc. the shepherds)] cause a bloodbath among **[the] army of Egypt** [  
(8) ] with them. It is not appropriate to do anything without **consulting him** (sc. Amun). **Please consult** [  
(9) ] fight, (then) we shall fight. **That which he** (sc. Amun) will com[mand ...

### Example 2

#### P. Spiegelberg 11.8-17

The Great of the East Pekrur said, “If it pleases Pharaoh, may one send for the youths (i.e. Pami and Petechons), that they come to the south! Everything that Pharaoh will want, they will do.” Pharaoh spoke, “By Amun! If I send [north(?)] after them, they will not come because of the insult I did to them when I was traveling south to Thebes without inviting them to the procession of Amun the Great God. My father, Great of the East, Pekrur! It is up to you to send for them. If anyone else sends for them, they will not come south on my command.” The Great of the East, Pekrur said: “The insults you do to the young ones are millions, one after another. You never think of the fighters until you desire them regarding your misfortune!” Pharaoh spoke: “By Amun, the great God! It is not I who insult them: the evil confusions of Djedhor, son of Ankhhor, are they...”

#### P. Carlsberg 433, y+1.3-10

- (3) ] The Great of the East, Paklul [said] ‘... “...**send for them, they will not come.**” If Pharaoh so desires [  
(4) ] come south...**everything required of them.**’ Pharaoh said, ‘**I shall** send for them, they will not come [  
(5) ] **as I have not brought them** south to Thebes. **It falls to you, O my father, Great** [of the East, Paklul] ...  
(6) ] Bulls of Egypt (to) send for them.’ The Great of the East Paklul said, ‘**Nevertheless, they strike(?) at you, these young** [  
(7) ] **disaster.**’ Pharaoh said, ‘As Amun the great god [ lives ...  
(8) ... **as for Djedhor, son of] Ankhhor: it is he who caused me to do it...**’

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