

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	page xiii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xiv
I An Introduction	I
I The Story of Esther	1
II Esther, Jews, and Christians	1
III Challenges and Purposes	3
IV Sources and Approach	4
V State of Research	5
VI Outline	9
PART I ESTHER: STORY AND HISTORY, LITERARY FEATURES, AND THEOLOGY	13
2 Esther's Story: Composition, Literary Unity, Textual Development, and Noble Characters	15
I The Story of Esther	15
II Place and Time of Composition	16
III Structure and Literary Unity	19
1 Esther 9:20–28 – The First Purim Letter	20
2 Esther 9:29–32 – The Second Purim Letter	22
3 Esther 10:1–3 – The Closing Chapter of the Book	23
IV Textual Development: The Hebrew and Greek Versions	24
1 B-Text, A-Text, and MT	24
2 The Six Major Greek Additions and the Colophon	25
3 Which Text Is Closest to the <i>Urtext</i> ?	27
4 Provisional Summary	28
V Noble Characters	28
1 Vashti: A Queen with Dignity and Self-Respect	29
2 Esther: Beauty, Courage, and Wisdom	30
3 Mordecai: “Seeking the Welfare of His People”	34
A The Major Persona of the Book	34
B A Courtier at the King's Gate	35
C The Clash between Mordecai and Haman	36
VI Conclusion	40

3	Virtuosity, Literary Style, and Features	42
	I Virtuosity	42
	II The Secular Feature of the Book	43
	III Repetitive Style and Other Literary Elements	43
	IV Mosaic Style	45
	V Synonyms and Series of Synonymous Words	50
	VI Inner Interpretations and Identifications	51
	VII <i>Inclusio</i> , Chiasmus, and Chiastic in Parallel	55
	1 <i>Inclusio</i> and Chiasmus	55
	2 Chiasmus in Parallel	58
	VIII Antithesis	58
	IX Structures of Reversal Destiny and <i>Talionis</i>	59
	X Overstatement, Hyperbole, and Typological Numbers	61
	XI Satirical and Humorous Descriptions	62
	XII Conclusion	63
4	The Central Message of Esther within Biblical and Ancient Near East Contexts	65
	I The Fear of Complete Annihilation	66
	II Esther's Response to the Fear of Complete Annihilation	70
	III Theology without Mentioning <i>Theos</i>	72
	IV The Theological Message of Esther	77
	V Is the Presumed Theological Concept of Esther Innovative?	80
	VI Conclusion	82
5	Historical Setting and Historicity	84
	I The Historicity of the Esther Story	84
	1 Esther as a Completely Reliable Story	84
	2 Esther as a Completely Unreliable Story	86
	A The Esther Story and Purim Are Echoes of Ancient Myth	86
	B Esther as a Nonhistorical Story	91
	II Historical Setting and Historicity	92
	1 The Empire	93
	A Borders and Provinces	93
	B מדינה, "satrapy," and <i>dabiyu</i>	96
	C "One Hundred Twenty-Seven"	97
	2 The Emperor: Ahasuerus/Xerxes	98
	3 The Queen and Harem	104
	A The Queen: Vashti, Esther, and Amestris	104
	B The Harem	106
	4 The Imperial Hierarchy	108
	5 The Geographical Setting: Susa, Persepolis, and Their Palaces	113
	A Susa and Its Palace	113
	B Susa <i>versus</i> Persepolis	115
	6 Achaemenid Royal Annals and Imperial Archives	116

<i>Contents</i>		ix
7	The Royal Postal Delivery System	118
8	The Persian Legal System	119
9	Tolerance toward Others	121
10	Conspiracy and Murder in the Royal Court	124
11	Annihilation of the Imperial Jews	126
III	Conclusion: Esther as Novelistic History	129
IV	Appendix: Persia and Persians in the Hebrew Bible	131
6	Ancient Parallels to Haman's Accusations	134
I	Haman and His Accusations	134
II	The Opponents of Daniel	136
1	Daniel in the Lions' Den	136
2	Is Daniel's Story Shaped According to Esther's Story?	137
III	The Counselors of Antiochus VII Sidetes/Euergetes	138
IV	Apollonius Molon	141
V	Apion of Alexandria	143
VI	The Roman Governor Flaccus	145
VII	The Roman Historian Tacitus	147
VIII	The Greek Scholar Lucius Flavius Philostratus	149
IX	Conclusion	149
PART II "OH, HOW MUCH THEY LOVE THE BOOK OF ESTHER!": ESTHER AMONG THE JEWS		153
7	Esther, Torah's Law, and the Dead Sea Scrolls' Community	155
I	Introduction	155
II	Why Is the Book of Esther Absent from the Dead Sea Scrolls?	156
III	Esther's Marriage to Ahasuerus	158
IV	Boaz's Marriage to Ruth the Moabitess	160
V	"Fast for Me"	161
VI	Conclusion	162
8	Esther in Jewish Canon, Tradition, Culture, and Thought	164
I	The Book's Name	164
II	The Place in the Canon	165
III	Esther through the Generations	166
IV	The Story of Esther and the Talmudic Rabbis	170
1	Fill in Gaps and Intertextual Allusions	172
2	Anachronism	173
3	Divine Interference	174
4	Theodicy	174
A	The Traumatic Experience of the Jews	174
B	The Case of Vashti	175

V	Esther and Mordecai	176
1	Esther	177
2	Mordecai	179
VI	Purim and the Remembrance of Amalek	180
VII	Haman, Agag, and Amalek	180
VIII	Reading of the Megillah	181
IX	The Story of Esther in Jewish Thought	183
X	The Esther Story in Art, Play, Music, and Film	185
XI	Some Other Jewish Voices	190
1	Claude G. Montefiore	191
2	Samuel Sandmel	192
3	Schalom Ben-Chorin	192
4	Jonathan D. Magonet	194
5	Overall Assessment	194
XII	Conclusion	195
9	Identification of Jew-Haters with Haman: New “Hamans,” “Purims,” and “Megillot”	198
I	Creative Expounding of the Book of Esther	199
1	The Greek Esther: Haman as a Macedonian	199
2	Josephus’ Rephrasing of Haman’s Charges	200
3	Targum Sheni to Esther	201
4	Midrash Esther Rabbah	204
5	Saba’s Commentary on Esther in Setting of Expulsions	204
6	Christians as Edom and Haman	208
7	Leopold Zunz and the German Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm IV	209
II	Forming New “Purims” and “Megillot”	210
1	Purim Shmuel haNagid	211
2	Purim Narbonne	213
3	Purim Castile	215
4	Purim Saragossa	215
5	Megillat Mizrayim	216
6	Purim Mizrayim	217
7	“Second Purims” in Other Mediterranean Lands	218
8	Purim Frankfurt or the Vintz-Purim	219
9	<i>Megillat ha’Atzmaut</i>	221
10	Haman, Amalek, Purim, and the Muslim/Arab–Israeli Conflict	221
III	The Esther Story, Purim, and the Nazi Germans	221
1	“The Murder Feast”	222
2	“A Second Triumphant Purim”	224
3	“We Read <i>Haman</i> the People Heard <i>Hitler</i> ”	225
4	“Purim Hitler” of Casablanca and Other Holocaust Survivors	226
IV	Conclusion	226
V	Appendix: Esther’s Theological Message <i>versus</i> Historical Reality	227
1	The Historical Reality	228
2	Theology, History, and Us: A Post-Shoah Reading of Esther	229

Contents

xi

PART III	DIVINE OR DEMON? ESTHER AMONG THE CHRISTIANS	233
10	Esther in the Christian Canon, Interpretation, Tradition, and Culture	235
	I The Christian “Book of Esther” <i>versus</i> the Jewish “Megillat Esther”	235
	II Anti-Jewish Trends in Esther’s Greek Translations	237
	III Authority, Place, and Names of Esther in the Christian Canon	239
	IV Esther in Christian Interpretation, Tradition, and Culture	241
	1 Quotation and Interpretation of Esther	241
	2 Rabanus Maurus’ Commentary	242
	3 Martin Luther’s Translation and Negation of the Book	247
	4 Esther in Christian Liturgy, Theology, Art, and Music	247
	V Conclusion	249
11	Esther, the Jews, and Martin Luther	251
	I The Place of Luther’s Approach in Christian Reception	251
	II Luther and the Figures of Esther and Mordecai: Positive Characterizations	252
	III Luther and the Book of Esther: Negative Characterizations	254
	IV An Understanding of Luther’s Conflicting Attitudes toward Esther	257
	V Luther’s Attitude toward Esther against the Background of His Approach to the Old Testament	258
	VI Luther’s Attitude toward Esther against the Background of His Approaches to Judaism and Jews	263
	1 Luther and Judaism	264
	2 Luther’s Friendly Approach toward Jews	265
	3 Luther’s Hostile Approach toward Jews	269
	VII Luther, the Book of Esther, and the “Ethnic Character” of the Jews	278
	VIII Haman, Antiochus Epiphanes, and Martin Luther	284
	IX Conclusion	286
12	Christian Anti-Esther and Judeophobic Interpretation	289
	I Christian Repudiations of Esther, Jews, and Judaism	290
	II Political Background and Parallels to These Anti-Jewish Accusations	306
	1 Johann Gottlieb Fichte	307
	2 Friedrich Rühs	308
	3 Jakob Friedrich Fries	309
	III An “Antisemite Pogrom of the Jews” or Legitimate Self-Defense?	311
	1 How Many Enemies Were Killed?	312
	2 Who Was Killed and Why?	314
	3 Self-Defense or Revenge?	315
	4 Killing and Hanging of Haman’s Sons	318
	5 Purim Feast: Celebration of Deliverance	320
	IV Conclusion	322

xii	<i>Contents</i>	
13	Christian Pro-Esther Interpretation	325
	I Before the Holocaust	325
	1 The Case of Wilhelm Eduard Vischer	330
	II After the Holocaust	332
	III Conclusion	333
14	Synthesis and Conclusion	335
	I The Book of Esther	335
	II Esther and the Jews	337
	III Esther and the Christians	340
	<i>Bibliography</i>	344
	<i>Indexes</i>	
	<i>Authors Index</i>	373
	<i>Names and Subjects Index</i>	380
	<i>Sources Index</i>	396
	<i>Terms and Expressions Index</i>	410