The book of Esther intrigues positively, too, one reason being its containing rationale for the celebration of the feast of Purim, the popularity of which “can be accounted for in part by the fact that it constitutes the only worldly holiday in the Jewish calendar for the expression of the light-hearted side of life” (Harrison 1095-1096). His love of wine and his general insensitivity is demonstrated by his drinking with Haman shortly after having the first genocide edict published, although the city of Susa was troubled (Jones 179). Although the minor character in the story, Vashti is nevertheless intriguing. “We are simply given a picture of a proud woman who refused to be manipulated by a man, even by a king.” The book of Esther is one of only two books in the entire Bible named for women. The other is the book of Ruth. The Story of Esther. Then risking her own life, brave young Esther approached the king with a plan. She invited Xerxes and Haman to a banquet where eventually she revealed her Jewish heritage to the king, as well as Haman’s diabolical plot to have her and her people killed. In a rage, the king ordered Haman to be hung on the gallows—the very same gallows Haman had built for Mordecai. Mordecai was promoted to Haman’s high position and Jews were granted protection throughout the land.

Drunk and disorderly: a Bakhtinian reading of the banquet scenes in the book of Esther.

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Date
2009-04-01

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Abstract
This dissertation advocates a reading of the book of Esther through the lens of Mikhail Bakhtin’s literary concepts dialogism, chronotope, and carnival. The specific focus of the dialogical interactions in the book of Esther is the banquet scenes. The term התׁשמ appears 24 times in the book of Esther and only 26 times in the rest of the Hebrew Bible. Because nearly half of the occurrences of the term appear in the book of Esther, this frequency demands greater examination. The project analyzes each of the ten banquet scenes and suggests they function like characters that dialogue. Biblical scholars have examined the role of carnival as it relates to the book of Esther, but they have not explored the specific role of banquet scenes as participants in the narrative’s dialogic conversation and in particular the implications of being Judahite in the Diaspora. The banquet scenes, interpreted in Bakhtinian categories, reflect the social and political interests of Judahites living in the Diaspora. The banquet scenes reveal a carefully crafted narrative that ridicules a foreign empire and king but nevertheless illustrates and encapsulates how Jews can successfully maneuver life in the Diaspora. Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism provides a framework by which to explore how the banquet scenes, with their carnivalesque implications, interact dialogically with the other components of the narrative and so offer a vision of life in the Diaspora based on joy, not fear. The chronotopic ideology concretized in the banquet scenes suggests the existence of an alternative ideology for faithful Judahites living in Diaspora apart from Jebucentrism, Yahwehcentrism, Natocentrism, and Torahcentrism. The book of Esther reframes a vision of life in the Diaspora by accentuating human initiative, survival as a virtue, the possibility of achievement among gentiles, and deconstruction of the status quo.

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