ORY AMITAY

ALEXANDER THE GREAT IN JERUSALEM

Myth & History

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Attempts to receive the texts, images, and material culture of ancient Greece and Rome inevitably run the risk of appropriating the past in order to authenticate the present. Exploring the ways in which the classical past has been mapped over the centuries allows us to trace the avowal and disavowal of values and identities, old and new. Classical Presences brings the latest scholarship to bear on the contexts, theory, and practice of such use, and abuse, of the classical past.

Alexander the Great in Jerusalem

Myth and History

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In memory of my father, Aharon (Ronny) Amitay,
who encouraged me to become an academic.

To my Doktorvater*, Erich S. Gruen, who taught me how to be one.*

Foreword

This book has been long in the making. The seed that brought it fourth was sown at the close of the previous millennium, on an otherwise mundane day in Berkeley, when I sat for my oral exam in the Graduate Group in Ancient History and Mediterranean Archeology. At the end of a grueling afternoon it was finally Erich Gruen's turn. His first question was about my impression from Josephus' Alexander in Jerusalem story. The truth of the matter was that I had not, up to that time, given the question much thought. The easiest way out was to remain within the limits of Gruen's own ideas in his then recently published *Heritage and Hellenism* (1998). Instead, I replied that while Josephus' highly developed drama surely was unhistorical, Alexander probably did in fact visit Jerusalem. The visit was left unmentioned in the sources, I said, simply because nothing of consequence actually happened. Without me realizing it, a research project stretching over more than two decades was born.

I picked up the theme shortly thereafter, during work on the last stage of my dissertation. By that stage, my opinions started to move in a more positivistic direction. I began to be convinced that something could, after all, be learned from the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition about Alexander's history, and that Josephus' story did contain some historical data that could be coaxed out of their mythical casing. Throughout the first decade of the first millennium I started—with the much appreciated support of the Israeli Science Foundation (ISF)—to pursue the issue in a number of articles. By the end of the decade I was thoroughly convinced that the silence of the ancient sources could be put aside, and that a deeper probe into the finer details of the tradition as a whole—that is, including the other three stories discussed in this book—would finally yield a coherent historical story about Alexander in Jerusalem.

In the following decade the tide turned. The more I studied the epsilon recension of the *Alexander Romance* (chapter 1), the more I became convinced that it preserved the earliest story of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition; but this story had no Samaritans in it, and given their central role both in Josephus' story (chapter 4), in that of Simon the Just (chapter 3), and their mention by Curtius Rufus (chapter 5), they were necessary for any historical reconstruction. My doubts increased further as I kept reading and rereading the seminal paper by Schwartz (1990). His sharp analysis of Josephus' story over against the biblical and papyrological evidence, as well as his illuminating remarks about the story of Simon the Just, stood consistently in the way of any attempt I made to reach a convincing reconstruction. Thus it happened that the more I progressed with my

studies, the more I returned to the position I took when I first considered the question. It is now one of the main conclusions in this book (chapter 5). At the end of the day, I also came back to Gruen's basic question: not what actually happened, but why people told stories of what happened exactly as they did.

This book deals with the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition down to Josephus. Needless to say, it continued long after him, to this very day. To be sure, there is still plenty to learn from the reception of the story in the writings of the Church Fathers; in Syriac literature; in Byzantine chronicles; in the Medieval Hebrew versions of the *Alexander Romance*; in Samaritan chronicles; in the European vernacular versions of the *Romance*; or on the bronze medallion of Pope Paul III, showing Alexander kneeling before the Judean high priest, and declaring: OMNES REGES SERVIENT EI—all kings serve him.[1] Even the history of the story's modern scholarship is worthy of study unto itself. All this must remain a future endeavor, for two reasons. The first is practical: the sheer number of texts, languages, and historical contexts to be covered in a study of the entire tradition renders such a project virtually impracticable for any single scholar. The second reason is thematic: until now, the story of Josephus was most commonly perceived as the font, or first surviving witness of the tradition. A main innovation of this book is that Josephus' version is actually the culmination of a long process, whose various stages I recognize and explain. The decision to end this study of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition with Josephus thus represents one of the study's main finds.

All translations in this book, unless noted otherwise, are my own.

It is a distinct pleasure to thank those people who aided and benefitted the project along the way. Firstly, the Israeli Science Foundation, which funded part of the research at an early stage. Kai Trampedach of the Ruprecht Karl Universität Heidelberg hosted me during an extended sabbatical, and shared many enlightening conversations. I am also thankful to the hospitality of the Heidelberg Hochschule für Jüdische Studien. Yaron Ben-Ami, Moti Karniel, and Steve Mason gave valuable help along the way. Corinne Jouanno, Vered Noam, and Erich Gruen read individual chapters and provided thoughtful advice and criticism. The rigorous anonymous readers did the same for the manuscript as a whole. Any mistakes, infelicities, and faulty reasonings that remain are my sole responsibility. Finally, I thank Yamit Hagar, who made sure that I kept on writing through times of pestilence, political *stasis*, and outright war.

[1] The medallion is marked G3,PMAE4.9 in the British Museum collection; Modesti 2002, II 118, No. 313.

Contents

Introduction

This is a book about a story, or more precisely about four different ways to tell the story of the encounter between Alexander the Great and the people of Judea. This is by no means a history of Alexander. The discussion of Alexander *historicus* is limited to the fifth and final chapter, which asks whatever may have transpired when Judea reverted to his control at the end of the 330s BCE. A first of many spoilers in the Introduction—the answer is: nothing much, or, at least, nothing of enough importance to merit mention in the Greek and Latin historical sources about Alexander. The main part of the book is devoted to how generations of Judean storytellers imagined what might have happened, and how the different ways of telling the story reflect on the times, circumstances, concerns, and motivations of those storytellers. Taken together, I call these stories the "Alexander in Jerusalem" (AIJ) tradition.

The Alexander in Jerusalem tradition survives in four stories, which derive from three very different literary contexts. The first is a largely overlooked recension of the Greek *Alexander Romance* (AR for short), the so-called epsilon recension. The second is rabbinic literature: the Babylonian Talmud, Bereshit Raba, and, most crucially, the twin manuscript traditions of *Megillat Ta'anit*—all these preserve not one but two distinct versions of the AIJ tradition. And then, of course, there is Josephus. Scholarly interest in the story has been immense, but it focuses first and foremost on the latter. This book addresses this imbalance, and treats all four stories on equal footing. The results are surprising, and amount to a paradigm shift in our understanding of the tradition as a whole. This shift is based first and foremost on new datings and historical contexts offered for all three non-Josephan stories. Josephus' story, in return, reappears in new light, not as first witness but rather as an endpoint of a long and rich process.

The methodological approach of this book relies for the most part on twin pillars: philology and contextualization. In philology I take on the whole a conservative approach, judging each case on its own merits. The notion of contextualization, much less formal in nature, requires a few words of explanation. The main premise is that our historical legends, exactly because they are ahistorical, demand explication. This explication relies on the assumption that each story came "to do some work, which, if uncovered, may reveal the challenges facing the authors of these stories and the tensions within which they saw themselves as

operating".[1] The first step is therefore to identify in each story some outstanding traits, which stand starkly outside the historical context of Alexander, and then to connect them with particular instances in actual history, where a possible context suggests itself. The next step is to interpret the story in terms of its suggested context of origin. My conclusion in this regard is that the main tension dealt with by the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition was produced time and again by dramatic transitions in the identity and status of foreign imperial powers. I now proceed to introduce the stories, each in its own chapter, in the chronological order suggested by my findings.

Chapter 1: The Greek *Alexander Romance* (epsilon) discusses what I argue is the earliest surviving version of the AIJ tradition. The original story derives from the era of the Seleukid monarch Antiochos III, and from his attempts, in the last generation of the third and beginning of the second centuries BCE, to wrest control over the southern Levant (Judea included) from Ptolemaic Egypt. It is preserved in the so-called epsilon recension of the *Alexander Romance* (AR).

Since this vast, multifaceted, and plurilingual literary phenomenon lies well outside the trodden path of Classics, the chapter begins with a short introduction to the core of AR studies. The discussion soon leads to the particular AR recension of interest—epsilon—a ninth-century Byzantine literary work that contains the pertinent Alexander in Jerusalem story. The chapter proceeds to survey and discuss previous scholarship, to respond to it with a detailed philological analysis, and then to conclude that the attempts to locate the story in a late antique Christian context are based on untenable evidence and argumentation, as are the claims concerning a first- or early second-century CE Alexandrian source.

The key to the story in epsilon is its staunch pro-Seleukid tendency, which is remarkable in view of the indubitable Egyptian and particularly Ptolemaic predisposition of the mainstream AR on the one hand, and the general irrelevancy of the Seleukids in contemporary Byzantine society on the other. This Seleukid slant is expressed in a wide variety of ways, most strongly in the central role of one Seleukos and one Antiochos in the story. Notably, these essential names of Seleukid royal nomenclature play an exiguous to non-existent role in both the Alexander histories and the mainstream AR.

A second major factor derives from the legendary geography of the AR Alexander. The mainstream AR tradition presents him as a Pharaoh, marching from Egypt against Asia. Epsilon, on the other hand, depicts Alexander as a king of Makedonia *and* Persia, marching as such on the Levant and on Egypt. Once again, the Seleukid point of view is evident. Many other signs of Seleukid interest pepper the text, from the foundation of new cities in Asia Minor to a highly literary identity switch between Alexander and Antiochos, on the road to meet

[1] Schremer 2021, 268.

Kandake in Ethiopia. Since there is no discernible Byzantine context wherein such a strong Seleukid interest seems likely, the conclusion is that at the heart of epsilon lies a now-lost, heretofore unrecognized work from the Seleukid realm, reworked and integrated into the AR tradition by the composer of epsilon. This lost work, I argue, was inspired by the events of the Fourth and Fifth Syrian Wars, when the Levant was indeed conquered by the Seleukids from the Ptolemies by Antiochos III "the Great".

Keeping an eye on the subject of the book, I do not venture too far in trying to reconstruct the world-view and the agenda of the Seleukid *Romance* (which is what I call it in the text), or in analyzing the epsilon recension as a whole—both efforts are worthwhile but must remain a future endeavor. I do explain in some detail how the Seleukid characters become ciphers for Alexander, laying the groundwork for the entire tradition of using Alexander as a code name for a foreign ruler or regime coming to rule over Judea. Furthermore, I show how the author of the Seleukid *Romance* not only aims to forge a sacred bond between the Judean priesthood and Makedonian-Seleukid monarchy, but also displays a vision of the latter growing closer to, and even embracing, the Judean deity, and even the monotheistic principle.

An appendix to this chapter postulates that the ninth-century Byzantine reworking of the Seleukid *Romance* can be understood as an all too rare piece of commentary by a Byzantine author on the Judaization of the Khazars.

Chapter 2: Alexander and Gviha Ben-Psisa takes us to a very different literary context, that of rabbinic literature. The chapter begins with a general introduction to the relevant rabbinic sources for this episode (and to rabbinic literature in general), and then continues with a translation of the text, accompanied by a philological apparatus. Thence I move to analyze the four different literary contexts where the story appears, with the conclusion that the longest version (Oxford ms of *Megillat Ta'anit* on Sivan 25th) is not only the fullest, but also closest to the original.

This story has two distinct parts. In the first, Alexander sits as judge in a plea against Judean interests brought by three different groups—Phoenicians (identified in the story as "Canaanites" or "Africans"), Ishmaelites, and Egyptians. Remarkably, the arguments are all Torahic in nature, with claimants on both sides arguing their respective cases on the basis of biblical prooftexts. The collective legal efforts of the hostile gentiles are thwarted by the sentinel of the Jerusalem temple, Gviha Ben-Psisa, who not surprisingly proves his superiority in biblical scholarship. The second part of the plot moves to Jerusalem, where Alexander, incited to curiosity by unnamed conniving Samaritans, requests and then demands entry into the temple's inner sanctum. The direct confrontation between the Makedonian king and the Judean functionary evolves into a dangerous comedy, and ends with a sharp ominous tone.

A contextual analysis leads me to suggest that the story reflects the deep anxieties caused by the dramatic contraction of Hasmonean power with the arrival on the scene of Roman arms and politics. Alexander in the story thus stands for Pompey, who himself famously emulated the Makedonian monarch, to the point of adopting the agnomen *Magnus*—yet another "Great". The first part of the story represents the claims made by non-Judean denizens of the land against Hasmonean imperialism, garbed as they are in Judean lore and law. The point of the story is not only that Judean claims are more just and more in accordance with Judean holy writ, but also that the Torah is the proper source of authority on the basis of which such arguments should be made in the first place. The second part of the story represents the armed conflict around the Jerusalem temple, which resulted in death, destruction, and a precedential profanation of the holy of holies by Pompey. This is an important shift in the tradition, making Alexander represent not Makedon but rather Rome. My contextualization is supported by the identification of the Judean protagonist, Gviha, with a historical ancestor of Flavius Josephus, whose own chronology fits nicely within the story's time frame.

Chapter 3: Alexander and Simon the Just remains in the same literary milieu as chapter 2—rabbinic literature in general and *Megillat Ta'anit* in particular. This story presents a considerable methodological challenge, in that it is preserved in a relatively large number of manuscripts, with a wide variety of readings. In the text, the story is presented in three parallel translations (the absolute minimum required to do justice to the manuscriptal complexity), complete with extensive philological notes. An appendix to this chapter provides a full tabular transcription of the manuscript witnesses, for the benefit of Hebrew readers.

This story focuses on an element that is absent from the AR version and plays a small role in the Gviha story—Samaritans (alias Kutim). At the beginning of the story some Samaritans make an attempt against the Jerusalem temple (meaning either to destroy or to take it over), which receives Alexander's assent. The Judean high priest Simon the Just, a mythological figure based on two historical characters of the third century BCE, sets out to reverse Alexander's verdict, and a meeting takes place one dawn at Antipatris. Upon sight, Alexander bows down before the high priest, claiming to the astounded viewers that a spitting image of the priest is somehow responsible for the king's victories in battle. A terrible punishment is then meted out to the Samaritans, who also lose their temple on Mt. Gerizim (modern Nablus), which is destroyed and converted to agricultural use.

A detailed contextual discussion first places the story's naissance in the period between the foundation of Antipatris by Herod in the last generation of the first century BCE and the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. Within that time frame, about a century long, the focus lands on the only known incident of direct Samaritan action against the Jerusalem temple, during Passover of 8 or 9 CE. I further argue that the storyteller harnessed the memory of the Samaritan temple's

destruction by John Hyrkanos I, as well as his destruction of the city Samaria (end of second century BCE), to express Judean ill-feeling towards Jerusalem's northern Israelite neighbors. At the same time, on the basis on philological argumentation, I argue that the story serves as a foundation myth of sorts for the new security arrangements in the Jerusalem temple, instituted in response to the Samaritan attack (as attested by Josephus).

According to the interpretative line of the previous chapter, I suggest that Alexander in the story is a referent for Roman power. Thus, beside its anti-Samaritan agenda, the story may also be seen as mediating the new reality of direct Roman rule in Judea, which replaced the client kingship of the Herodians. As in the AR story discussed in chapter 1, the foreign power is presented as ultimately inferior to the Judean deity. A development from the Seleukid story is that here the story focuses on the deity's principal earthly representative—the Jerusalemite high priest.

Chapter 4: Josephus presents a triple irony in view of previous research into the AIJ tradition. Being the earliest of the actual texts to preserve the story (*Antiquities* 11), it has always been assumed that Josephus' story is also the earliest surviving telling. As is by now clear, I argue that it is actually the latest. Secondly, despite the many efforts of scholars to break Josephus' story down into its component sources, none of the suggested reconstructions resembles the earlier versions of the story identified in the previous chapters. Thirdly, while the historicity of Josephus' version has so far stood at the heart of the discussion, the new chronological arrangement of the tellings presents him as heir to a longstanding mythistorical tradition, relying to varying extent on his literary predecessors.

An initial conclusion concerning Josephus' story is that the backbone of his plotline may be described as a synthesis of two earlier versions: the Seleukid *Romance* (chapter 1) and the story of Simon the Just (chapter 3). Nevertheless, Josephus made a number of independent and important contributions. His skill as a writer is evident not only in producing the most polished of the four surviving strands of the tradition, but also in his pioneering, if erroneous, effort to sort out the later history of Persian period Judea.

The methodological point raised above is true also for Josephus: he certainly had his own agenda. To begin with, Josephus' take on the story is in line with my interpretation of the previous versions, in that it tackles yet another dramatic change in the long history of Judea. The generation following the so-called Great Revolt saw Judea turn into a full Roman province, and—for the first time since the restorations of Cyrus and Darius in the sixth century BCE—it is without a temple at its heart. Alexander, a precursor and a possible role model for future Roman attitudes, is presented distinctly as the source of authority for temple-building. My conclusions support those earlier scholars, who saw in Josephus' story an exhortation to restore the Jerusalem temple yet again.

Josephus is also the first to introduce the book of Daniel into the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition. Looked at against the background of the *Antiquities*, the introduction of Daniel into the Alexander story serves as a coda to the wider hermeneutic move of reinterpreting the Fourth Kingdom as Rome rather than Makedon. By interweaving his Alexander story into his Danielic scheme, and by stressing that this scheme of history is not yet finished, Josephus can be read as suggesting a bright future, in which Alexander would serve Rome as a source of positive inspiration in treating Judea. At the same time, his story reasserts the basic premise of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition, advocating the divinely ordained superiority of Judea and of its temple.

Chapter 5: From Myth to History addresses the question of historicity: what did transpire between Alexander and the Judeans when he conquered the land? The answer, set out at the beginning of the Introduction, is that nothing of note happened. Whatever did happen, and there is absolutely no reason to assume that the Judeans of all people escaped altogether the attention of the rising Makedonian empire, was not significant enough to be included in any of the surviving Greek and Latin Alexander histories. The question of historicity—did Alexander visit Jerusalem or didn't he?—is quite useless for the actual history of Alexander, and is of consequence only for the discussion of the tradition's development.

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1
The Greek *Alexander Romance* (Epsilon)

1.1 The Text

Our study of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition starts in the unlikeliest of places, a single manuscript of a little-read version of the Greek *Alexander Romance* (henceforth AR, or *Romance*), which goes under the name of the epsilon recension (henceforth epsilon). For the uninitiated in AR studies, this requires some unpacking. The literary phenomenon we now call the *Alexander Romance* has a long and unusual history. Unlike the majority of literary works from Greco-Roman antiquity, the *Romance* did not come down to us with the name of its author, nor has it ever stopped evolving.[1] There is thus no definitive text or version of the *Romance*, and each of the versions, usually called "recensions" in modern research, ought to be considered both in comparison with earlier and parallel recensions and against the background of its own time and place.

In terms of surviving texts, the initial point of reference belongs to an anonymous composer in Alexandria, active sometime between the mid-third and early fourth centuries CE, author of the so-called alpha recension.[2] This recension, the earliest in our hands today, is in itself a pastiche of different, sometimes competing, semi-historical to downright legendary stories about Alexander. Some of this material derives from early Hellenistic times, making the anonymous author of alpha the heir of a literary tradition already half a millennium in the making.[3] The extent to which the anonymous author of alpha added his own material to what he had found in his various sources is still a matter of debate, and a definitive answer is not yet in sight. What is certain is that this text is the stem of most of the mainstream AR tradition as it now stands. Alpha was soon translated into

[1] On the AR as an "open text" see Konstan 1998.

[2] The Alexandrian origins of the AR are unmistakable, and are endorsed by a complete and consistent consensus in modern scholarship: Budge 1889, xxxv–li; Ausfeld 1907, 234–7; Kroll 1919, 1713; Kroll 1926, xv; Braun 1938, 35–42; Pfister 1946/1977, 35–52; Merkelbach 1954, 59; Barns 1956, 33; Perry 1966, 327–33; Fraser 1972, 1.4, 677, 680, 2.946 n. 12; Berg 1973, 381–7 (with wise words of caution, that not all material in alpha is of Egyptian-Alexandrian origin); Merkelbach and Trumpf 1977, 46–7, 79–91; Pacella 1985, 103; Hägg 1991, 127; Stoneman 1992, 110; Fraser 1996, 221; Jasnow 1997, 97; Jouanno 2002, 26–8, 57–125; Stoneman 2011, 6–7; Nawotka 2017, 3–4, 25–7; Ladynin 2018; Garstad 2018, 149, 156.

[3] For the various indications of early Hellenistic material in the AR see Braun 1938, 39–41; Berg 1973; Aerts 1994, 31–2; Jasnow 1997, 101–2; Stoneman and Gargiulo 2007, xxvii–xxxii; Nawotka 2017, 25–7; Ladynin 2018. Even Merkelbach and Trumpf (1977, 46–7), who focus on the late imperial context of alpha, concede that important features of the work do go back to Hellenistic times.

both Latin and Armenian, and received a further Greek edition, the influential beta. Thence grew a giant tree of recensions (identified by their respective Greek and Latin letters), complex manuscripts, and translations-cum-adaptations to an astonishing variety of languages from western Europe to southeast Asia.[4]

The recension of the *Romance* under discussion here, epsilon, appears in a single thirteenth-century manuscript, now in the Bodleian library in Oxford (Baroccianus 17), styled Q in the *editio princeps*.[5] In terms of genre it clearly belongs to the tradition as a whole, detaching the historical figure of Alexander from its historical circumstances and planting his literary character in a work of fiction. Its debt to the mainstream tradition is evident also in various plot segments, especially in the opening chapters, which like alpha and its derivatives present the exiled Egyptian Pharaoh Nektanebo as Alexander's real father. On the other hand, while epsilon clearly builds upon and engages with the material of earlier "mainstream" recensions alpha and beta, it also follows its own plan and contains much that is unique.[6] In addition, epsilon also contains some distinct features that it does not share with the mainstream tradition, which are at the center of attention in this chapter.

As any reader of classical and koine Greek will easily see, despite its literary aspirations and its obvious linguistic inspiration by classical Greek literature, as well as the by the Old and the New Testaments, epsilon's grammar, syntax, and diction are all clearly medieval Byzantine.[7] In addition to the philological argument, the scholarly consensus has given two more reasons to support and refine this rather rough dating. The first is the mention in chapter 39 of the Bersiloi, a historical trans-Caucasian nation mentioned in Byzantine sources from the late eighth or early ninth centuries CE.[8] The second reason for an eighth-century or

[4] For a comprehensive treatment of the various Greek recensions of the AR see Jouanno 2002. For a useful précis see Stoneman 2011, 3–10. Alpha has survived in Greek in a single manuscript (academic edition by Kroll 1926), and is represented also by surviving translations into Armenian (Wolohojian 1969) and Latin (Kübler 1888). For more information and further discussion, including the history of the AR preceding the alpha recension, see also Ausfeld 1907; Merkelbach 1954; and Stoneman and Gargiulo 2007, xvii–lxxxviii. For an introduction to the multifarious world of AR translations see Cary 1956; Zuwiyya 2011; and Stoneman, Erickson, and Netton 2012.

[5] The first, and so far only, academic edition of epsilon is Trumpf 1974. While Q is the sole complete manuscript of the epsilon recension, some portions of it have been reproduced in particular manuscripts of both beta and lambda (Trumpf 1974, iii–xiii). In addition, some episodes from epsilon have been grafted onto the main tradition to create recension gamma. Oddly, of all the recensions of the *Romance* it was gamma that first received a print edition (by Karl Müller in 1846), engendering an occasionally counterintuitive chapter reckoning system in all later modern editions of the various recensions. More importantly for this study, the lack of awareness of the uniqueness and originality of epsilon had severely skewed the pre-1974 discussion of the episodes treated in this chapter.

[6] The independent narrative structure compelled Trumpf (1974, xv section 5) to institute a new chapter division, which is independent from Müller's system. It is quite telling that Müller's system, although created originally for a very late recension, can be usefully retrojected to the earlier recensions, yet is quite useless when applied to epsilon.

[7] Jouanno 2002, 400–3.

[8] Trumpf 1971, 326; Jouanno 2002, 339. The significance of the Bersiloi in epsilon, and its possible key role for identifying the text's *terminus post quem*, are discussed in the appendix to this chapter.

later dating is the story, in the same chapter, relating Alexander's construction of his gates between the Breasts of the North, and his shutting out of the impure nations of the north, including Gog and Magog! This motif, it has been argued, was borrowed from the Greek translation of the *Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodius*, a literary work deriving from the realm of Syriac literature, whose subsequent Greek and Latin translations exerted an immense influence on eschatological contemplation and speculation in medieval Christendom. Since the original Syriac *Apocalypse* is dated to around 692 CE, and given that the Greek translation was done soon thereafter, the origin of epsilon is usually dated to an unspecified time at the very beginning of the eighth century.[9] The *terminus ante quem* for epsilon is estimated to be the late ninth century CE, based on the fascination of the work with chariot races. In later periods Byzantine society finally fell out of love with this form of entertainment.[10]

Among its original contributions to the *Romance* tradition, epsilon contains three episodes which display a strong monotheistic tendency:

a) Alexander's dealings with the Judeans and his visit to their city (ch. 20);
b) the foundation of a city by Alexander in Egypt (not mentioned by name, but clearly Alexandria), and his declaration of faith made from a tower in that city (ch. 24);
c) the exclusion of the impure nations beyond the so-called Breasts of the North (ch. 39).

The first two chapters have been studied together from the very beginning. This is hardly surprising, given their common theological slant, as well as their obvious narrative connection: the arrival of Alexander and his army in Judea is presented as the initial step in his campaign against Egypt.[11] The third episode, on the other hand, appears in a later part of the work and in a very different context, and unlike the first two episodes it is reproduced in the AR lambda recension, and has a clear parallel in the *Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodius*. It would be best,

[9] For the date of Ps.-Methodius: Brock 1976, 34; Lolos 1976, 20–2; Reinink 1992, 181–5 (the decisive argument for the date given in the text); Aerts and Kortekaas 1998, I, 16; Garstad 2012, vii–ix. For the reliance of epsilon thereon: Trumpf 1971 and 1974, xvii–xviii; Jouanno 2002, 339; Stoneman 2011, 8–9; Garstad 2012, xii. At section 1.5 and in the appendix, I shall argue that Ps.-Methodius is considerably less important to the *terminus post quem* of epsilon than is usually assumed, and that it should probably be pushed down to the early ninth century CE. Either way, the difference between the two datings is of lesser importance in the present context.

[10] Jouanno 2002, 339. In personal correspondence Jouanno (who draws in turn on her own personal correspondence with Trumpf) remarked that the *terminus ante quem* can be dated exactly to the year 883 CE, based on the chronological information supplied by the scribe of ms K (*Mosquensis* 436, thirteenth century), a hybrid version of the AR that makes use of passages from epsilon. I have not seen the manuscript myself, and await eagerly the publication of these data.

[11] 20.2: *Ἀλέξανδρος…τὴν κατ᾽ Αἴγυπτον ἐποιεῖτο πορείαν. καὶ καταλαμβάνει τὴν Ἰουδαίαν γῆν…* (see translation in text). This section, comprising chapters 20–4 in epsilon, is reproduced as one unit in gamma 2.23–8.

therefore, to open the discussion with chapters 20 and 24, reserving the treatment of the third episode to a later stage. But first, the text.

(20.1) After these events Alexander commanded Seleukos the *archon* to gather together all of the Persian army. And after the people were gathered together with much haste, they were found [to number] two thousand thousand cavalrymen, and a thousand thousand infantrymen; the rest of the crowd was destroyed in the wars.

(2) Taking them in hand together with all of the Makedonian army, he made the march against Egypt. And [as] he lays hold of the Judean land, those who thought to stand against him send scouts, as if they were ambassadors. Nonetheless this did not escape Alexander, and he commands some exceedingly noble-minded[12] young men from the Makedonian phalanx to leap into a ravine which was there. And they fulfilled the order in all haste, for the Makedonian force was quick to [obey] the things ordered by Alexander. He turned to those who would be scouts, and said: "You see, ambassadors of the Judean *ethnos*, that for the army of the Makedonians death is worth nothing. Begone, therefore, and do what is in your interest. And I shall come to you tomorrow, and I shall do what is acceptable to providence."[13]

(3) And having gone away they said among their rulers:[14] it is necessary to yield to Alexander and be saved. "For there is no hope of salvation for us, for the army of the Makedonians is beyond the nature of humans. For as death is fearful for us, it is not so for the Makedonians, and it is all too easily despised by them. This is what I think: they treat dying as a competition; one might say that they depart as if towards some inexorable necessity. For they amazed us in the great ravine, when these children and so very young Makedonians plunged themselves underwater. As soon as Alexander ordered, so soon was the deed completed. And it was not so much their daring to die that terrified us, as [the realization] that although they knew they had nothing to gain, they still dared to die so indifferently; and should they hope to gain [anything], no one would be able to withstand them! Well then, we told you what we have seen; let there be a decision by you before Alexander arrives, and let our entire plan be put aside." Thus therefore they heard these things, and they decided to give in to Alexander.

(4) And the priests, having donned their priestly robes, come out to meet Alexander with their entire multitude. And when Alexander saw them he became

[12] The word translated here is γενναιοτάτους. It may also possibly denote the young men's high social status. The translation is focused on their attitude in obeying Alexander's ultimate command so loyally, especially in comparison with the uses of γενναίως in 6.2, 28.3, 36.4, referring in all three cases to personal conduct in time of conflict.

[13] The word translated is προνοία. It occurs frequently in epsilon to denote a kind of impersonal, metaphysical presence, which influences the course of events.

[14] Greek: τοῖς ἄρχουσιν.

afraid of their form,[15] and ordered them to come no closer to him, but rather to turn back into the city. And having summoned one of the priests, he tells him: "How godlike is your form! Do tell me also, which god do you worship, who is attended upon with such form. For I have not seen such good arrangement among the priests of the gods among us." And he replied: "We are the servants of one god, who has made the sky and the earth and all of the things seen and unseen. No human has been able to interpret him." To this Alexander said in reply: "As worthy worshippers of a truly great god, go therefore in peace, go! For your god shall be a god of mine, and my peace [is] with you and let me not pass through you like in the other nations, because you have been serving the living god."

(5) And taking money in gold and silver they brought it to Alexander. But he did not want to take it, and said: "Let these, and the tax I am foregoing, be my gifts to Lord the god,[16] and I shall take nothing from them."

(24.1) After spending some time there [in Egypt], he [Alexander] takes it in hand to edify the city. He decorated it with many columns, fortified the walls with tall, high-reaching towers, and built on the eastern gate one tower taller than all the rest. And having made his own statue[17] on it, he set around[18] those of Seleukos, Antiochos, and Philippos the physician. That of Seleukos he made with a horn, to celebrate his manliness and fierceness in battle; that of Philippos he made with the attributes of a physician and a soldier; Antiochus was displayed holding a spear.

(2) And after everything had been completed, and the city had become the most beautiful to the eye of all people, Alexander ascends the tower, and expressed contempt to the gods of the earth, and to those in Olympus and of the sea, and he heralded a single god as unfathomable, invisible, and inscrutable, borne upon the Seraphim and extolled by the thrice-holy utterance. And standing on it, Alexander prayed: "O! God of gods, creator of things seen and unseen, appear to me as a helper in the things I still intend to do."

(3) And coming down from the tower he went to the palace. And he appointed Seleukos as commander to be the leader of the Persians, Philippos of the Egyptians,[19] while Alexander set himself over the Makedonians.

[15] *τοῦ σχήματος*. The word is repeated thrice in as many sentences. "How godlike is your form" (*τὸ σχῆμα*); "attended upon with such form" (*τοιῷδε ἐξυπηρετεῖται σχήματι*). This motif will be revisited in the story of Simon the Just (chapter 3) and in Josephus' version (chapter 4).

[16] Greek *κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ*.

[17] Greek *στήλη*. In the classical sense, this word would denote a block of stone, probably with a commemorative inscription and possibly also with a pictorial element. In later Greek, however, *στήλη* can also mean a statue (*PGL* s.v.). This also seems to be the meaning of the word elsewhere in epsilon (29.1, 30.5, 34.4, 46.6).

[18] It is not quite clear from the Greek whether "around" refers to Alexander's own statue or to the tower generally.

[19] Trumpf (1974, 88) added here "and Antiochos of the Assyrians," on the basis of the more elaborate division of empire in chapter 46, at the end of Alexander's life.

1.2 Previous Scholarship

The scholarly discussion of this story has been relatively limited. The first to treat the story was Pfister, who was also one of the earliest scholars to have paid serious attention to the *Alexander Romance* in general. Some of Pfister's arguments have been undermined by the fact that he only knew the story as part of the wider scope of the late, rambling gamma recension, rather than as part of the much shorter and much more coherent epsilon. However, the basic tenet of his interpretation—that the visit to Jerusalem is to be read alongside the foundation story of Alexandria in Egypt, and that this last story is a response to the Alexandrian foundation story in alpha—remains valid. Pfister noted also that both stories echoed the language of the Septuagint, and remarked on their pro-Judean standpoint. Taking all this into account, Pfister concluded that the story was the literary product of the struggles and uncertainties concerning the political status of the Judean population in Alexandria in the first century CE, that it was independent of and slightly later than the famous Alexander story of Josephus, and that both versions ultimately derived from the same origins.[20] A very different approach was taken by Simon, and then followed by Merkelbach and Trumpf. This approach uses philological argumentation to conclude that the Judean segments in epsilon are a product of a Christian author, deeply influenced by the language of the Byzantine church.[21] Goldstein, relying on contextual argumentation alone, proposed a dating somewhat similar to that of Pfister.[22] For the sake of convenience I shall divide the discussion of previous scholarship into two parts: the philological and the contextual.

Turning first to philology, it is important to recognize both its advantages and its limitations as a means for dating texts. As stated above, even without the argument that the story in chapter 39 relies on the Greek translation of Ps.-Methodius, it is safe to say that epsilon is, at the earliest, a very late antique text.[23] Progressing beyond this point, however, is no easy task. Pfister, who recognized a strong influence of Septuagint Greek in the text, and Delling, who added also many parallels to Philo, used their findings to argue for an original first-century CE composition. However, these sources of linguistic influence—biblical Greek in particular—were widely and readily familiar to all learned writers in the Byzantine cultural sphere. How can one determine whether this or that echo of the

[20] Pfister 1914, esp. 6–10, 17–19, 25. The basic premises are reiterated in Pfister 1956. This position was accepted without question by Marcus 1937, 513–16 (the highly influential Loeb edition of Josephus 11). It was adopted also by Delling 1981, who expanded it with a meticulous philological analysis, and compared the language of chapters 20, 24 not only with the Septuagint but also with Philo and with various extracanonical Judean works from the second temple period.

[21] Simon 1941/1962. See also in the same vein Merkelbach and Trumpf 1977. Their conclusions about the epsilon story are adopted by Pacella 1982.

[22] Goldstein 1993. His reasoning, different than that of Pfister, is treated below.

[23] See note 9 above. Jouanno 2002, 400–3.

Septuagint (or of any other second temple text) in epsilon is due to its author's use of an earlier source about Alexander, whose own language was akin to it, or merely to the author's familiarity with Judeo-Hellenistic literary style? The observations of Pfister and Delling, albeit highly useful for the interpretation of the epsilon stories, cannot be used to determine their time of origin.

A different line of argumentation has been employed by Simon, as well as by Merkelbach and Trumpf, who tried to demonstrate that in writing the monotheizing chapters the author of epsilon used a language that belongs distinctly to a Christian milieu, and which is altogether lacking from Judeo-Hellenistic contexts. This would be a much sounder argument, and it is worthwhile to go over their examples in detail.

Beginning with Simon, he claimed to detect a clear instance of Christian influence in the response of the Jerusalem priests to Alexander's inquiry about their god: *θεὸν ἡμεῖς ἕνα δουλεύομεν, ὃς ἐποίησεν οὐρανὸν καὶ γῆν καὶ πάντα τὰ ὁράμενά τε καὶ ἀόρατα· οὐδεὶς δὲ αὐτὸν ἑρμηνεῦσαι ἀνθρώπων δεδύνηται* (we serve one god, who made heaven and earth and all things that are both seen and unseen; not one person has been able to interpret him).[24] The words of the priests, argued Simon, "recall with great precision" the words of St. Paul to the Athenians in *Acts* 17:23–4: *ὃ οὖν ἀγνοοῦντες εὐσεβεῖτε, τοῦτο ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν. Ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας τὸν κόσμον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ, οὗτος οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ὑπάρχων κύριος…* (what, therefore, you worship without knowledge, *that* I proclaim to you. The god who made the world and all things in it, he is master and ruler of heaven and earth). According to Simon, this comparison proves without doubt that the episode in the *Romance*, at least in its present form, is Christian.

The content of the two passages cited above is clearly similar. Indeed, one finds it very easy to accept that the Judean priests in epsilon and St. Paul in Athens speak about the same divinity. But is this affinity in content sufficient to prove without doubt the dependence of epsilon on *Acts*? Consider, in comparison, the Septuagint version of Genesis 2:1–3: *καὶ συνετελέσθησαν ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ καὶ πᾶς ὁ κόσμος αὐτῶν…καὶ ηὐλόγησεν ὁ θεὸς τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ἑβδόμην καὶ ἡγίασεν αὐτήν, ὅτι ἐν αὐτῇ κατέπαυσεν ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ, ὧν ἤρξατο ὁ θεὸς ποιῆσαι* (and heaven and earth and all their world were completed…And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, for on it he ceased from all his works, which he had begun to do). Any points of similarity between epsilon and Simon's

[24] Simon 1941/1962, 132–3; Gamma 2.24. Like Pfister, Simon was writing before the publication of epsilon. In his paper, the first three words of the quotation are given as *θεῷ ἡμεῖς ἑνὶ*. Given that it was published (and possibly written) during the early years of the Second World War, Simon may have had limited library access, and could be citing the text from memory or from hastily prepared notes. In any case, the text is nearly identical with the version of epsilon: *θεὸν ἡμεῖς ἕνα δεδουλεύκαμεν, ὃς ἐποίησε τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ πάντα τὰ ὁρώμενά τε καὶ ἀόρατα. οὐδεὶς δὲ αὐτὸν ἑρμηνεῦσαι ἀνθρώπων δεδύνηται.*

excerpt from Acts can be derived just as easily directly from Genesis.[25] On the other hand, the notion of God's inexplicability as expressed in epsilon (*οὐδεὶς αὐτὸν ἑρμηνεῦσαι ἀνθρώπων δεδύνηται*) is typical of neither the Old Testament nor the New.[26] To sum up, this comparison amounts to much less than proof beyond doubt.[27]

Again according to Simon, the Christian authorship of the story of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem is proven also by its clear resonance of a formula deriving from early church liturgy, namely the *Apostolic Constitutions*. Simon focuses on Alexander's response to the explanation of the priests discussed in the previous paragraph: *ὡς ἀληθινοῦ θεοῦ ἄξιοι θεραπευταὶ ἄπιτε ἐν εἰρήνῃ, ἄπιτε* (as worthy servants of a true god depart in peace, depart; epsilon 20.4, gamma 2.24). This seemed to him to be a copy of the liturgical formula *Προέλθετε, οἱ κατηχούμενοι, ἐν εἰρήνῃ* (proceed in peace, those who are instructed).[28] Now, it is easy to understand how an ear attuned to church liturgy might detect here a familiar timbre. Yet the only elements in both proclamations that can possibly be called a copy are *ἐν εἰρήνῃ* (in peace) and an accompanying verb of movement in the imperative mood—a very far cry from proving any kind of connection between the texts, let alone qualifying as an act of copying. Consider for example the Septuagint translation of 2 Samuel 27:15 (שֻׁבָה הָעִיר בְּשָׁלוֹם; *σὺ ἐπιστρέφεις εἰς τὴν πόλιν ἐν εἰρήνῃ*; go back to the city in peace), which could be cited as a source for the expression with equal justification.[29] An even closer parallel is adduced by Delling from *Paraleipomena Jeremiou* 7:7, 35: *ἄπελθε ἐν εἰρήνῃ* (go in peace!). The verb used in epsilon and gamma, *ἄπιτε*, is probably the most natural way in Greek to order people to depart. It is how Thucydides (2.46.2) has Perikles end his famous

[25] Alternatively, consider Strabo's (16.2.35) phrasing of the theology of Moses: *εἷς γὰρ ἓν τοῦτο μόνον θεὸς τὸ περιέχον ἡμᾶς ἅπαντας καὶ γῆν καὶ θάλατταν, ὃ καλοῦμεν οὐρανὸν καὶ κόσμον καὶ τὴν τῶν ὄντων φύσιν* (for, according to him, God is the one thing alone that encompasses us all and encompasses land and sea—the thing which we call heaven, or universe, or the nature of all that exists; trans. H. L. Jones, Loeb). Strabo was certainly not Judean, and was born too early to be Christian, yet his words land quite on point.

[26] A TLG lemma search for *ἑρμηνεύω* yielded three examples in each: 2 Ezra 4:7 (= Masoretic Ezra); Esther 10:31; Job 42:17; John 1:42 and 9:7; Hebrews 7:2. See also Delling (1981, 17–18), who cites Philonic parallels to the notion of god's incomprehensibility, using different terminology.

[27] For the idea of God as creator of things both seen and unseen one might adduce Colossians 1:16 as a direct source: *ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ* (sc. *θεῷ*) *ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα*. On the other hand, the same idea could once again be obtained directly from the source (Genesis 1:1–2): *Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν. Ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος*.

[28] Apost. Const. 8.6 ad fin. (see also 8.37, 39); Simon 1941/1962, 133: "il ne fait que copier la formule liturgique."

[29] A TLG search for *εν, ειρηνη* yielded no less than forty-eight occurrences of *ἐν εἰρήνῃ* in the Septuagint alone. The example from 2 Samuel is particularly fitting, as it is expressed by King David to Zadok, the high priest of Jerusalem. Zadok was, according to tradition, the forefather of all Jerusalem high priests down to Hasmonean times; King David has been likened, not least in the *Romance*, to Alexander (Amitay 2010a, 151–3; Jouanno 2013, 74).

funeral oration. In short, this example, too, can in no way count as indication of Christian authorship.[30]

Moving on to Merkelbach and Trumpf, in addition to relying on the earlier conclusions of Simon, they argued that the expression used in Alexander's monotheizing proclamation of faith in Egypt, *μόνον θεὸν…ἐπὶ τῶν Σεραφὶμ ἐποχούμενον καὶ τρισαγίᾳ φωνῇ δοξαζόμενον* (a single god, borne upon the Seraphim and extolled by the thrice-holy utterance; epsilon 24.2), cannot be earlier than the fifth century CE, since exact parallels for this formula cannot be found before the Byzantine *Trishagion* prayer.[31] Now, it is a fact that the formula of the prayer which became known as the *Trishagion* was indeed included in the protocol of the first session of the council of Chalkedon (October 8, 451 CE), the earliest written attestation to this prayer in Greek.[32] However, this fact hardly supports the assertion of a fifth-century date by Merkelbach and Trumpf. To begin with, the notion of a "thrice-holy god" goes back clearly to the Seraphic call in Isaiah 6:3—*ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος* (Holy! Holy! Holy!)—as observed already by Pfister.[33] Given that compound adjectives with the prefix *τρισ-* are rather common in Greek (attested as early as Homer; e.g., *Odyssey* 6.154), anyone familiar with Isaiah 6:3, as the author of our story obviously was, could easily have come up with the expression *τρισαγία φωνῇ* without recourse to any intervening text. Secondly, the phrasing used by our author—*ἐπὶ τῶν Σεραφὶμ ἐποχούμενον καὶ τρισαγίᾳ φωνῇ δοξαζόμενον*—is not used in the Acts of the Chalkedonian council at all; the formula of the prayer there is: *Ἅγιος ὁ Θεός, Ἅγιος ἰσχυρός, Ἅγιος ἀθάνατος, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς* (holy God, holy powerful one, holy undying one, have mercy on us). In fact, the specific form of address by Alexander to a god "borne on the Seraphim and extolled by the thrice-holy utterance" appears to be unique to the author of epsilon (and was copied by the editor of gamma).[34] Finally, while the use of the expressions *τρισαγία φωνῇ* and *τρισάγιος ὕμνος* is indeed typical of

[30] Simon attempted to establish a firmer case by creating a wider semantic network for the term *εἰρήνη*, but without success. His argument is belied by his own reference to the notion of peace in the famous Ithyphallic Hymn composed by the Athenians in honor of Demetrios Poliorketes (reported by Douris of Samos, *FGrH* 76 F 13; preserved by Athenaios 7.253 d–f). When such a distant use of *εἰρήνη τοῦ κυρίου* or *pax Domini* is brought into the discussion, it only serves to demonstrate its wide popularity, and nullifies any particular reason to draw a sphere of influence comprising the New Testament, church liturgy, and the *Romance*.

[31] Merkelbach and Trumpf 1977, 137. This is the second edition of Merkelbach's 1954 work by the same title. The second edition included Trumpf as a contributor, and was occasioned at least in part by the latter's 1974 publication of epsilon. The authors point to Pfister 1914, 7 n. 2, who indeed referred to the similarity of the phrase in the *Romance* to the prayer. Pfister, however, did not make any argument on the basis of this similarity.

[32] Schwartz 1933, 195, no. 1071 (English edition: Price and Gaddis 2005, 364). The origins of this prayer as part of Christian liturgy were disputed already in late antiquity. It probably became popular initially in or around Syrian Antioch in the fourth century, gained a wider audience in the fifth, and had become a permanent part of the service by the sixth.

[33] Pfister 1914, 6–7, 26.

[34] A TLG search for the combinations *σεραφ, τρισαγ, ἐποχούμεν* and *τρισαγ, σεραφ, δοξαζομεν* yielded no other results except these two occurrences in the *Romance*.

church literature in the Byzantine period, it is attested much earlier in a first-century CE Judean work, the *Testament of Abraham*: *οἱ ἄγγελοι…ψάλλοντες τὸν τρισάγιον ὕμνον τῷ δεσπότῃ τῶν ὅλων θεῷ* (the angels…were singing the thrice-holy hymn to God the master of all things; recension A, ch. 20), as well as in the second-century CE *Apocryphal Apocalypse of John*: *Τὸ τρισάγιον ψάλλουσιν τὰ Χερουβίμ καὶ ἀποκρίνονται τὰ Σεραφὶμ* (the Cherubim sing the thrice-holy psalm and the Seraphim answer in reply; *versio altera* ch. 37). On the whole, therefore, the argument adduced by Merkelbach and Trumpf, that the stories in chapters 20 and 24 in epsilon cannot be earlier than the fifth century, cannot be defended.

The inescapable conclusion of the philological discussion thus far is that while the grammar, diction, and general spirit of epsilon as a whole give good reason to view it as deriving from the Byzantine period, nothing in the language of the monotheizing stories compels us to ascribe them in particular to late antique Christian authorship.

A different approach to the dating of chapters 20 and 24 has been attempted by addressing the stories' contents. As stated briefly above, in his seminal study of this topic Pfister argued that the two episodes in question—Alexander's visit to Judea and his proclamation of faith from the high tower of his newly founded city—comprised a discreet unit within the wider scope of the gamma recension and originated from the same source. Pfister focused his attention on the foundation story, owing perhaps to the strong Alexandrian and Egyptian influence on the *Romance* tradition in general.[35]

True to his own focus on the Egyptian episode, and considering its common theological agenda with the Judean episode, Pfister argued that this literary unit derived from a Judean "foundation story" (*Gründungsgeschichte*) of Alexandria. The aim of this foundation story, he argued further, was to demonstrate the positive relation of Alexander to Judeans in general, and in particular to employ it to bolster the cause of the Judean community in Alexandria during the political struggles of the first century CE.[36] Pfister's argument is based on a number of premises. First, that both in the mainstream of the *Romance* and in gamma 2.28 (i.e., epsilon 24) the city foundation is connected with the benevolence and supervision of an all-powerful divinity. In the mainstream tradition this divinity is Serapis; in the monotheizing version it is the god borne by the Seraphim. The equivalence of the role played by either divinity is reflected also in the phonetic

[35] In that respect, it is crucial that Pfister knew these episodes only from the gamma recension, where they were integrated into and dominated by the mainstream tradition of the *Romance*. One wonders what conclusions he might have reached had he read epsilon alongside gamma.

[36] Pfister 1914, 17–19. His opinion is accepted by Delling (1981, 24–5), who points specifically to the troubled years of the late 30s and early 40s, reflected in the contemporary testimonies of Philo's political treatises, in Josephus and in Claudius' famous letter to the Alexandrians. The general attribution of the Jerusalem episode to Alexandrian Jewry is argued also by Pacella 1982 and accepted by Jouanno 2002, 378. For recent comprehensive treatments of the turbulent history of Alexandrian Jewry in the first century CE see Gambetti 2009; Ritter 2015, 113–83.

similarity of their appellations, while the explicit mention of "Seraphim" and of the *τρισαγία φωνῆ* provide a clear indication that the divinity in gamma is the god of the Bible.[37]

Yet how can we be sure whether the god of the Bible represents a Judean or a Christian interest? Pfister's answer comes from an interpretation of a peculiar detail in the story: when building his city, Alexander adorned and fortified it with numerous towers. However, for the site of his declaration of faith he chose a particular tower, the highest, located at the city's eastern gate, in proximity to the royal quarter.[38] Pfister is right to insist that the tower's specific localization requires a symbolic interpretation, as this detail does not help to advance the plot in any way, nor is epsilon otherwise particularly interested in urban topography. Pfister interpreted this detail as intimating the major Jewish quarter of Alexandria, which was indeed located in the eastern part of the city, in the neighborhood of the royal palaces.[39] Considering the clear monotheizing tendency of Alexander's statement, together with the twin episode about the visit to Jerusalem (with clear verbal echoes of the Alexandrian story), and the obvious reference to Isaiah, Pfister concluded that this foundation story of Alexandria came from the Judean community there.[40]

On the basis of this conclusion Pfister attempted also to date the origin of the story.[41] In so doing, he based his argument on two questionable assumptions. The first is that the story necessarily reflects the struggles over the political status of the Alexandrian Judean community, which formed so dominant a part of its history in the first century CE. This is indeed the best attested and thus most familiar chapter in this community's history, thanks to the literary efforts of Philo and Josephus and to the lucky survival of Claudius' famous letter. But it hardly follows that any undated piece of evidence related to Alexandrian Jewry belongs to this context. The second assumption is that since Josephus did not refer in any way to this foundation story of Alexandria, despite the extensive use he could have made of it, it must have been composed after his time. This claim is patently false, not only because we cannot assume that Josephus was familiar with every earlier literary piece that is available to us today (for example, he does not seem to have used 2 Maccabees), but also because the same argument could be made regarding the author of the story in the *Romance*, who could equally be expected to make

[37] Pfister 1914, 5–7. For accounts of Alexander's installation of Serapis during the foundation of Alexandria see also Suda, s.v. *Σάραπις* and Malalas 8.1 (ed. Thurn 2000, 146). The identification of the biblical god receives further support through the demonstrated influence of the Septuagint on the text (Pfister 1914, 7–9).

[38] Gamma 2.28: *ἐν δὲ τῇ κατὰ ἀνατολὴν* (*ἀνατολῶν*, epsilon 24) *πύλῃ… κατιὼν δὲ τοῦ πύργου εἰς τὰ βασίλεια ᾤχετο*.

[39] Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.33, 36; with Schürer et al. 1973–86, 43–4; Fraser 1972, 1.35; Barclay 2007, 186–7.

[40] Pfister's conclusions as to the origin of the story, as well as to its dating, have been accepted in full by Marcus 1937, 513–14.

[41] Pfister 1914, 18–19.

use of Josephus' supposedly earlier version of the story. The inherent difficulties in Pfister's reconstruction are manifest also in the phrasing of his conclusion. On the one hand, the connection with the struggles for political rights calls for an early first-century CE date—which is indeed asserted—while on the other hand the time frame between the publication of Josephus' *Antiquities* and the destruction of the Alexandrian Jewish community in the Diaspora Revolt yields a dating in the generation at the turn of the first and second centuries CE.

More recently, Goldstein reached a rather similar dating, but through very different reasoning. Goldstein's approach is different from that of Pfister in two main characteristics: first, it hardly engages in any kind of philological analysis; second, it takes the visit to Jerusalem, not the foundation of Alexandria (which is hardly mentioned), as the focus of inquiry. The most striking characteristic in the story according to Goldstein relates to the Jewish attitude towards violence and death: "The legend teaches a surprising lesson…not Jews but Macedonians are fanatics, absolutely unafraid of death."[42] Acknowledging the Alexandrian connection of the *Romance* Jerusalem story, and taking the conscious reworking of the mainstream story (remarked on by Pfister) as a sign that the author had a gentile audience in mind, Goldstein sought to identify a time when "it was urgent tor Jews in Alexandria to demonstrate to their non-Jewish neighbors that, far from being such fanatics, they were a sensible nation honored by Alexander the Great, who also declared his belief in their God." This time, argues Goldstein, falls between the aftermath of the Great Revolt in Judea, when Egypt was flooded by zealot refugees who threatened to drive the local Jewish community to violent action against Roman rule, and the actualization of that threat in the Diaspora Revolt in the early 110s CE. Very different reasoning thus led both Pfister and Goldstein to very similar conclusions.

At first glance, the fact that two scholars from such different times and backgrounds, approaching the same topic from different angles and using widely disparate lines of argumentation, should reach almost exactly the same conclusions about the provenance and dating of the two stories in question would seem to make a strong argument indeed for the acceptance of their opinions. All the more so, given that their different outlooks are not contradictory, and can easily be combined in a single set of arguments. Upon closer inspection, however, the explanation of the twin stories as an expression of Judeo-Alexandrian civic identity and peaceful attitude is beset by serious difficulties.

To begin with, if the story of Alexandria's foundation had meant to emphasize the political standing and status of its Judean community, we might expect a clearer reference to both city and community. For example, we might expect the story actually to mention the city by name, and to display an unequivocal and

[42] Goldstein (1993, 98–101), working already with epsilon. This and the following quotation appear on pages 98 and 100 respectively.

emphatic sign of Judean presence. Of course, there can hardly be any doubt as to the city's identity; after all, Alexandria was the only city founded by Alexander in Egypt and surely his most illustrious foundation anywhere. However, in comparison with the alpha recension, where Alexandrian local patriotism is clearly manifest and the city's size and reputation are openly and expressly celebrated, the message of epsilon is rather elliptical and vague.[43]

The same logic applies also to the literary link with the Judean community itself. Pfister's argument that the localization of the highest tower near the city's eastern gate, coupled with the monotheistic message of Alexander's prayer, implies a connection with the Judean community in Alexandria is convincing and may well reflect the author's intention. This connection, however, could doubtless have been expressed more directly. Compare, for example, the language of Josephus in his reference to Alexander's establishment of the Judean community in Alexandria (*War* 2.487). Josephus declares clearly and explicitly that as a reward for support rendered against Egyptian opposition the Makedonian kings bestowed on the Judeans the right to reside in the city together with the Greeks on equal footing. Remarkably, like Josephus (but quite unlike all other Alexander historians and the mainstream *Romance*) epsilon does in fact tell a story of Egyptian armed resistance to Alexander (chs. 21–2). Nevertheless, unlike Josephus, the author of epsilon makes no mention of any Judean aid to Alexander during this campaign. In yet another Alexandrian foundation story, which displays an unmistakable Judean interest, Alexander brings into the city the remains of the prophet Jeremiah in a successful attempt to rid the city of harmful reptiles.[44] Here too both the city's name and a clear Judean context are evident. This is hardly the case, however, in epsilon 24. One wonders, then, why the author should have expressed himself in such a roundabout way.

1.3 The Seleukid Factor

The discussion above has ruled out, therefore, both the interpretation that sees the origins of our story in the first or very early second centuries CE, and its explanation as a product of Christian Byzantine authorship. A different answer to this question is offered by a feature of epsilon, which has so far attracted very little attention, and consequently now requires a detailed discussion: the prominence

[43] The treatment of Alexandria's foundation in alpha (1.31–3) is both detailed and contains some valuable historical information (a rare occurrence in the *Romance*). See Fraser 1972, 4 on its value and limitations for the historical reconstruction of the city's foundation.

[44] For the story see *Vitae Prophetarum*, Jeremiah (Schermann 1907, 44–5, 71–2); *Chronikon Paschale* p. 293 (ed. Dindorf 1832); Suda s.v. *ἀργόλαι* (ed. Adler 1967); Ps.-Zonaras s.v. *ἀργόλαι* (ed. Tittmann 1808). See also Pfister 1914, 20–2; Simon 1962, 134–7 (who sees here, as with the epsilon stories, a Christian context); Fraser 1996, 19; Satran 1995, 111–12 (following Simon); Klęczar 2014.

in the text of two characters by the names of Seleukos and Antiochos. In a study of Alexander's friends in the *Romance* Jouanno remarks that in comparison with the mainstream recensions of the *Romance*, the treatment of the friendship motif in epsilon has been profoundly transformed and significantly amplified. The considerable troupe of Alexander's friends who appear in the mainstream recensions is replaced in epsilon by a team of four: Philippos the physician, Philon, Seleukos, and Antiochos. Jouanno intriguingly suggests that the literary decision to focus on a quartet of friends (rather than any other number) is inspired by the vision in Daniel 8:8, where Alexander—represented by a one-horned he goat—is followed by four horns that inherit his place.[45] Now, whereas Philippos and Philon are present also in the earlier recensions, Seleukos and Antiochos are practically unique to epsilon (and gamma).[46] In an attempt to explain their presence Jouanno tentatively suggests that "they may have been borrowed by the ϵ redactor from the account of a Byzantine chronicler dealing with Alexander's successors." While this suggestion is not impossible, it nevertheless lacks evidential support, and leaves two unavoidable questions unanswered. The first question regards the identity of this alleged source. Given that there is at the moment no candidate text to have served as the source of inspiration for the prominent roles assigned by the composer of epsilon to Seleukos and Antiochos, this explanation must remain putative.

The second and more important question is whether we can contextualize convincingly such lionization of Seleukos and Antiochos in eighth- or ninth-century Byzantium. Byzantine political thought did of course take a distinctly historical view, but the Seleukid empire does not seem to have occupied an important place in it. And for good reason, too: Byzantine vistas on the past included on the one hand imperial Rome—the very power which both broke the might of the Seleukid kingdom in the second century BCE and put an end to its very existence in the first—while on the other hand it harked back to Alexander the Great, whose glory and success the Seleukids were never quite successful in emulating. Two late antique authors, who might also be termed early Byzantine, are outstanding in that respect: Libanios in the fourth century CE and John Malalas in the sixth. Not surprisingly, both hailed from Antioch, the erstwhile center of Seleukid powers. In the works of either author one finds preserved not only the Antiochene perspective, but also a vivid and sometimes legendary memory of its early glory under the Seleukids. This is nowhere more evident than in their reports of the career of Seleukos I Nikator, founder of the Seleukid empire

[45] Jouanno (2013, 71–2), with examples for the significance and influence of the exegesis on this verse from Daniel. The quotation below is from p. 71 n. 21.

[46] Seleukos appears once in alpha 3.33.15 in the description of the division of empire after Alexander's death, where he receives Babylon and the surrounding areas. In fact, Seleukos I Nikator first became associated with Babylon in the dispensation of Triparadeisos, after the elimination of Perdikkas (Diodorus 18.39.6).

and of the two authors' native city.[47] Yet the testimony of these two authors only serves to accentuate the subsequent silence of later Byzantine authors on all matters Seleukid. Small wonder, since the grand city of Antioch was lost to the Byzantine empire in 639 CE, along with many other former possessions of the Roman empire that now came under the rule of the Arab-Islamic caliphate. Following these earth-shaking events Antioch lost its role as a major urban center of the ancient Mediterranean world and quickly deteriorated into a minor borderland town. In other words, Antioch and its Seleukid lore became irrelevant to the Byzantine world at least a century before the composition of epsilon.

In light of the general irrelevance of the Seleukids in the Byzantine context from the Arab conquest onwards, how can we explain the Seleukid presence and prominence in epsilon? In order to answer this last question, it is necessary first to look more closely at the roles played by Seleukos and Antiochos in the text. An appropriate starting point for this discussion is 24.1, the clearest and most obvious connection between the Seleukid emphasis and the monotheizing tendency in epsilon. As we have seen, when Alexander founded his city in Egypt, he took care to furnish it with many towers. The highest tower at the eastern gate, which served him as the platform for his monotheistic declaration, was adorned with his own statue, but also with those of Seleukos, Antiochos, and Philippos the physician. It would be worthwhile to revisit the text in full: "And having made his own statue on it, he fixed around himself those of Seleukos, Antiochos, and Philippos the physician. And the statue of Seleukos he made with a horn,[48] to celebrate his manliness and fierceness in battle; the image of Philippos he made with the attributes of a physician and a soldier; Antiochos was displayed holding a spear."[49] The appearance of Philippos is clear for narrative reasons: the author of epsilon included the famous story of Alexander's healing by Philippos in his depiction of the Egyptian campaign, and the successful and loyal physician is rewarded by the erection of his statue on the lofty tower in company with those of

[47] Libanios, *Oratio* 11.77–105 (so-called *Antiochikos*; Downey 1959); Malalas, *Chronographia* 8.10–20. Some of the material was already known to Strabo 16.2.5. We can be sure that both authors not only grew up on local tales, but also had access to many written sources now lost to us.

[48] Seleukos' horn may possibly refer to the story, preserved by Appian *Syr.* 57 and Suda s.v. *Σέλευκος*, about an incident that supposedly took place during Alexander's lifetime: on its way to ritual slaughter, a bull broke loose and was then restrained by the bare-handed Seleukos. Both sources claim that Seleukos' statues were adorned with horns in memory of this episode (noticed already by Pfister 1914, 12). Interestingly, this story appears to have made a big impression on the compiler(s) of the Suda, where the entry on Seleukos includes beside it only the famous story of his son Antiochos' infatuation and subsequent marriage with Queen Stratonike. However, Seleukos' statue in epsilon 24 has a single horn, not horns in plural as in Appian and the Suda. Following the conjecture of Jouanno (2013, 71–2), this slight change might possibly be interpreted as a reference to the single-horned he goat of Daniel 8:5, creating a parallelism between Alexander and Seleukos. For the horn symbolism on Seleukos' coins and in his legend see Ogden 2017, 58–63, 274–5.

[49] 24.1: *ἐν αὐτῷ δὲ τὴν αὑτοῦ στήλην ποιήσας ἵδρασε περὶ αὐτὸν δὲ Σελεύκου καὶ Ἀντιόχου καὶ Φιλίππου τοῦ ἰατροῦ. καὶ τὴν μὲν Σελεύκου κέρας ἔχουσαν γνωρίζεσθαι πεποίηκε διὰ δὲ τὸ ἀνδρεῖον καὶ δυσμάχητον, Φίλιππον δὲ σχῆμα ἔχειν ἰατρικὸν καὶ στρατιωτικόν, Ἀντίοχον δὲ δορυφόρον ἐμφαίνεσθαι.*

the king and his closest friends.[50] The appearance of the two Seleukids is much more striking. On the narrative level there is no compelling reason for their mention here. Indeed, Seleukos is mentioned at the beginning of this narrative unit as the high commander of the Persian army, while Antiochos takes Parmenion's place in reporting the suspicion of Philippos' betrayal to Alexander. However, Seleukos and his Persian troops do not distinguish themselves in particular during the fighting, whereas the suspicion reported by Antiochos turns out to be misjudged, jeopardizing both the loyal friend Philippos and, more crucially, Alexander's own life. Apparently, the inclusion of the two Seleukids at this point is not due to their roles in the Egyptian campaign or in the foundation of Alexandria, but rather to their importance and significance in the text as a whole.

The description of Antiochos' statue as a spear-bearer (*δορυφόρος*) is surely a reference to his role in chapter 10, which is also the first appearance of either of the Seleukids in epsilon. Following Alexander's initial successes among the Skythians and following the death of Philippos at the hands of the traitorous tyrant of Thessalonike, Darius sends ambassadors to Makedon to demand payment of the annual taxes and the expression of formal allegiance by "bowing down in servile fashion before the Persian letters as if to the king of the Persians."[51] Unlike his father, who presumably succumbed to similar earlier demands, Alexander chooses to resist them. Appointing Antiochos as his spear-bearer, Alexander assigns to him the task of dealing with Darius' ambassadors. Alexander's great trust in Antiochos is emphasized by the statement that the latter is only about thirteen years old. Undeterred by regular diplomatic protocol, Antiochos issues a severe response to the Persian embassy, demanding that its members prostrate themselves before Alexander's spear (which he himself carries to the meeting), or be killed. Perplexed and afraid, the Persian ambassadors submit and bow down at the feet of Antiochos, in what is understood as a gesture presaging the outcome of the impending war.[52] Two elements in this story require our attention, as they occur time and again throughout the text: the expression of submission and allegiance through prostration—*proskynesis*—and the role of either Antiochos or Seleukos as surrogates for Alexander.

The notion and practice of *proskynesis* played an important role in the history of Alexander, who famously demanded it from his officers and staff, to the

[50] Philippos of Akarnania is a historical character, and so apparently is the story of Alexander's illness after bathing in a cold spring, and of Philippos' administration of an experimental potion to cure him. However, the original episode took place in Kilikia, not Egypt. For the story, including the claim that Alexander received notice that Philippos was actually trying to poison him (delivered in the main tradition by Parmenion), see: Diodorus 17.31.4–6; Valerius Maximus 3.8.6; Plutarch, *Alex.* 19; Curtius Rufus 3.5–6; Seneca, *de Ira* 2.23.2; Arrian, *Anabasis* 2.4.7–11; Justin 11.8.3–9; *Alexander Romance* (alpha) 2.8; Berve 1926, ii. 388–9 no. 788; Heckel 2006, 213–14.

[51] 10.1: *δουλικῶς τοῖς Περσικοῖς γράμμασι προσκυνεῖν ὡς αὐτὸν τὸν βασιλέα Περσῶν.*

[52] 10.1: Antiochos' reply: *πεσόντες προσκυνήσατε τὸ Ἀλεξάνδρου δόρυ*; the Persian response: *προσκυνοῦσι τὸ δόρυ Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ ἀσπάζονται τοὺς πόδας Ἀντιόχου.*

pleasure of some and to the outrage of others. The exact character and purpose of Alexander's demand were a matter of debate already in antiquity, and it is still far from being decided. His original purpose was either to display his adoption of at least part of the Persian court protocol, to initiate the process of his own divinization, or possibly a combination of both purposes at once.[53] Be that as it may, *proskynesis* had become an integral part of the literary traditions about Alexander, both regarding his meeting with the Jewish high priest (as we shall see in chapters 3 and 4) and in the epsilon version.

The Persian demand in 10.1 is not the first mention of *proskynesis* in our text. Even before Philippos' death, an encounter of Alexander with Skythian forces ended with the total surrender of the latter, and with complete acceptance of Alexander's sovereignty: "We are your slaves—O Master!—and we shall be your slaves forever and ever, if you please," and bowing down they performed *proskynesis* to him.[54] Following Philippos' death, when the period of mourning had passed, a Skythian embassy arrived at Alexander's court and sought an interview. Alexander sent the ambassadors back with a forceful request for military reinforcements. In response to Alexander's request "the Skythians prostrate themselves and proclaim Alexander to be a god"![55] Thus, in the two Skythian episodes we get clear glimpses of the author's familiarity with both sides of the coin. The gestures ascribed by epsilon to the Skythians indicate clearly that he was fully aware of both possible meanings of this gesture: military and political submission on the one hand, recognition of divinity on the other.

It is with this double significance in mind that we read about the *proskynesis* before Antiochos in chapter 10. As spear-bearer and representative of Alexander Antiochos receives from the ambassadors both political and religious recognition, which establishes him on a level close to Alexander himself. That is not to say, of course, that Antiochos quite reaches Alexander's level. Indeed, when Darius' messengers set their eyes for the first time on Alexander's person, he appears to them as some god (a specific statement not made concerning their earlier prostration), and they once again fall down and prostrate themselves before him.[56] Antiochos, though he was honored in the same way, nevertheless did not inspire exactly the same kind of awe.[57]

[53] For *proskynesis* in the history of Alexander see Curtius 8.5.5–24; Plutarch Alex. 54; Arrian 4.9.9–12.5; Justin 12.7.1–3. For a discussion of the central issues and surveys of earlier scholarship see Bosworth 1995, 68–90. My own interpretation: Amitay 2010a, 37–8.

[54] 7.4: *δοῦλοί σού ἐσμεν, δέσποτα, καὶ δουλεύσομέν σοι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα…, κἂν ὑμῖν δοκεῖ. καὶ πεσόντες προσκυνοῦσιν αὐτόν.*

[55] 9.1: *Σκύθαι προσκυνοῦσιν Ἀλέξανδρον καὶ θεὸν αὐτὸν ἀναγορεύουσιν.*

[56] 10.2: *ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον κατέλαβον καὶ ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἀποστείλαντες, ἔδοξαν θεόν τινα θεωρῆσαι. πεσόντες δὲ προσκυνοῦσιν Ἀλέξανδρον.*

[57] Another instance of *proskynesis* appears in 13.1: upon Alexander's arrival in Rome, he receives *proskynesis* from the representatives of an array of peoples, who flock there to do him homage.

Yet another occurrence of the *proskynesis* element appears in 17.7, during the narrative that deals with the final confrontation of Alexander with Darius, the *Romance*'s equivalent of the battle of Gaugamela.[58] As part of the wider story we hear of scouts of the Indian king Poros, who had been sent in response to Darius' solicitations for help. Having captured the Indian scouts Alexander decides to display before them the size and might of his phalanx, and gives an order to set them free, so that they may report what they had seen and thus demoralize their sender and expedite his surrender (Alexander uses the same *modus operandi* with the Judean scouts in chapter 20). Upon their release Poros' scouts perform *proskynesis* before Antiochos—oddly, given that this is his first appearance in this particular episode—and thank him as the savior of their lives. As in the Skythian episodes, we see here the double significance of *proskynesis*. Earlier in the episode, when Alexander allowed some Persian troops to flee rather than be slaughtered, they bowed to him and prostrated themselves as before a god.[59] When the Indian scouts bow down before Antiochos, they do so once again without such open recognition of divinity. It is hard to determine the exact nature of Antiochos' appearance in this episode. Not only does he appear all of a sudden (presumably as the officer in charge of diplomacy vis-à-vis the Indian representatives, but this is nowhere explicitly stated), but the ending of chapter 17 contains some very obscure phrasing (marked by Trumpf with *cruces*), and otherwise looks garbled or lacunose. It is thus possible that a section of the text that explained Antiochos' role has been lost. Nevertheless, the text as it stands does give the impression that Antiochos is acting in some way as a substitute for Alexander, receiving in person an honor that should belong to his king. This is also the second recurring element evident already in chapter 10, to which we now turn.

A phenomenon familiar to any reader of the Alexander histories, and even more so of the Alexander *Romance*, is the persistent focus on the figure of Alexander himself. In this regard, it is especially striking that in epsilon we see a repeated effort to present the two Seleukids as proxies for Alexander. We have already seen Antiochos represented twice in this manner: in the reception of Darius' ambassadors (ch. 10) and in the treatment of Poros' scouts (ch. 17). A similar representation, this time of Seleukos, appears in chapter 18, still within the wider framework of the final armed confrontation with Darius. After the rout of the Persian army and following the treacherous and eventually mortal attack on Darius by Bessos and Ariobarzas (18.3), Alexander arrests the melee, and offers the enemy army a chance to surrender. This offer is accepted, whereupon Alexander assigns to Seleukos the task of disarming the Indian soldiers and sending them on their way, and of establishing control over the remaining Persian army (18.5). Having been separated from the Indians (who leave the scene and

[58] On this battle in the AR tradition see Nawotka 2018.
[59] 17.3: *πεσόντες οἷα θεῷ προσκυνοῦσιν αὐτῷ.*

return home), the Persian army falls in a body before Seleukos, instead of Alexander, and kisses him. In response to this display of submission Seleukos openly acknowledges his authority and rule over the Persians.[60] Once again, the two elements of obeisance and substitution are combined. Although the technical term *proskynesis* is not used here, the practice is clear enough from the use of προσπεσόντες (falling forward) and from the act of kissing—the same treatment accorded by the Persian ambassadors to Antiochos in 10.1. The role of Seleukos as a surrogate for Alexander is expressed explicitly (ἀντ' Ἀλεξάνδρου).[61]

Returning to Antiochos, we find him once again as a stand-in for Alexander in 30.3. In this scene, the king sets out to investigate a mysterious island, which upon inspection turns out to be inhabited by gymnosophists—one of the famous episodes in both historical and legendary accounts of Alexander. Significantly for the case at hand, before setting out he leaves Antiochos behind to command the army in his place (ἀντ' αὐτοῦ). This pattern reaches its zenith in chapters 40–3, epsilon's rendition of Alexander's meeting with Queen Kandake. The underlying premise of the story is that Alexander goes on this particular adventure—exploring the ins and outs of a wondrous kingdom ruled by a super-intelligent queen—incognito. For this purpose Alexander trades identities with Antiochos, the king assuming that of his general and friend, and vice versa.[62] The plotline and details of the story, both interesting and entertaining in their own right, do not play a role in our discussion. The point is, once again, that Antiochos assumes the role of Alexander, this time not merely as a diplomatic delegate or military lieutenant, but rather as his alter ego. While the king is out and about in Antiochos' name, the latter sits on Alexander's throne and assumes his identity.

A third element in epsilon which emphasizes the importance of Alexander's two Seleukid friends is city foundation. The historical Alexander was, of course, a famous city founder—an activity that found an expression also in the less realistic world of the *Romance*.[63] In the realm of history the foundation of cities was the distinct privilege of Alexander himself. The Alexander histories do not report a

[60] 18.5: *Χωρισθέντος τοῦ Περσικοῦ στρατεύματος προσπεσόντες Σέλευκον ἀντ' Ἀλεξάνδρου κατησπάζοντο. Σέλευκος δὲ εἶπεν· Ἀρχὴ Περσῶν ἀναδείκνυμι.*

[61] Seleukos' reply to the Persian army (*Ἀρχὴ Περσῶν ἀναδείκνυμι*) is rather strange. It would certainly make better sense grammatically if the verb were in the middle rather than the active voice, requiring merely the addition of a penultimate alpha. Nevertheless, the general gist of Seleukos' message seems clear, expressing his position as chief of the Persians. Indeed, in 20.1, just before the inauguration of the Egyptian campaign and the initial contact with the Judeans, Seleukos is appointed by Alexander as the commander of the entire reconstituted Persian army (*προστάσσει Ἀλέξανδρος Σελεύκῳ τῷ ἄρχοντι ἅπαν τὸ Περσικὸν ἐπισυνάξαι στράτευμα*). This position is confirmed at the conclusion of the Egyptian campaign (24.3) and reaffirmed in Alexander's division of his empire on his deathbed (46.1).

[62] In the same context in alpha, Alexander assumes the name Antigonos, and the friend who replaces him is none other than Ptolemy Soter! Epsilon not only changed the names, but reverted the story from Ptolemaic to Seleukid orientation.

[63] On the historical city foundations, and on the uses of the *Romance* as a source, see Fraser 1996, 1–46.

single case in which any other member of his entourage was honored with the independent foundation of a city. This is also the case in the mainstream recensions of the *Romance*. In epsilon, on the other hand, the situation is altogether different.

In chapter 14 we find a number of city foundations. In 14.1 Alexander, Seleukos (styled "supreme commander"; *ἀρχιστράτηγος*) and Antiochos conduct independent campaigns, unaware of the presence of the other two, respectively, in the same area. As part of their activities, each of them founds a city and calls it after his own name (*ἐπὶ τῷ ἰδίῳ ὀνόματι*).[64] In 14.2 the king and his two generals once again join forces, gathering their armies in one place. This event is celebrated by the foundation of yet another city, symbolically called Homonade ("meeting place").[65] The next stages of the campaign in Asia Minor are marked by further foundation activity (14.3): Antiochos founds an Antiocheia in Pamphylia; Seleukos founds the city of Pessinous, named after a young lover by the same name; Alexander founds a Nikoleia, having dreamt there about a woman who went by that name—a sign interpreted as portending his future victories. In 14.4 Alexander, Seleukos, and Antiochos again found together a city in "Asia" called Tripolis.[66] Opposite this Tripolis Seleukos founds a Nikatoria, alias Laodikaia (possibly by settling there some *apomachoi*—veterans unfit for further military campaigning), while Antiochos founds an Antiochia in the same area. Eventually the foundation activities become so intense that Alexander has to chide his two generals: they were out on a military expedition, and could not expend all their energy and personnel on founding cities! The aspect of the story most important for our purpose is that all three characters are put here on an almost equal footing. All three command armies, and found cities individually in their own names and seemingly on equal terms. All the more so, as long as this activity continues, Seleukos and Antiochos actually outstrip Alexander in their zeal and energy. Alexander's superiority is reasserted only in his curtailment of their foundation drive.

The strong Seleukid slant is discernible in epsilon also when we compare its version of the route of Alexander's expedition with that of the mainstream *Romance*. However, in order to explain the argument fully, some preliminary remarks about the *Romance*'s geographical outlook are in order. The general outline of Alexander's historical campaign is clear and well known, and need only be described in very general terms: having finished his affairs in the Balkans he

[64] The epsilon manuscript twice locates this activity in Lykia (*Λυκίαν*); Trumpf (1974, 51) emended the name place to Kilikia (*<Κι>λικίαν*).

[65] This name is probably to be associated with the Homonadeis, a relatively obscure ethnic group of southern Asia Minor, mentioned by Strabo (12.6.3, 5; 12.7.1; 14.5.1, 24) and by Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* 5.23/94, calling them Omanades and their citadel Omana), as well as by Tacitus, *Annales* 3.48.

[66] This is most likely Tripolis on the Maiandros (for an overview of the scholarship see Cohen 1995, 199–201).

crossed over to Asia at the Hellespont, marching for the most part along the coast except for the famous detour to Gordion, at the heartland of Asia Minor (not far from modern Ankara). Following the victory at Issos he continued along the Levantine coast to Egypt, and thence once again through the Levant to north-eastern Syria and northern Iraq; after the victory at Gaugamela he descended on Babylon and then carried the campaign east into Persia; he then turned into northern Iran, Afghanistan, and the southern reaches of present day Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan; thence he marched again over the Hindu Kush and down the Indus valley all the way to the Indian ocean; having reaching it he turned west again, ending his life's journey back in Babylon. Given the familiarity of ancient historians with this route, it is remarkable that it has not been followed by any recension of the *Romance*. While a full study of the geographical aspects of the *Romance* cannot be engaged with here, let us outline Alexander's march in the mainstream *Romance* in contradistinction to that of epsilon.[67]

Alexander's itinerary in alpha (1.26.3) begins with an especially confused set of directions. Having collected an army of mostly Balkan troops (but curiously also including some Paphlagonians), Alexander boards ship and crosses from Makedonia over the Thermodon river (in Paphlagonia, i.e., central-northern Asia Minor, pouring into the Black Sea) to hither Thrace to raise more cash, and thence proceeds to Lykaonia (roughly at the center of Asia Minor). This description makes no geographical sense, and raises a suspicion that the text before us is corrupt, or else that its author had little to no knowledge of the geography of the Balkans and of Asia Minor.[68] Things get stranger still in the next paragraph: Alexander boards ship again and sails from landlocked Lykaonia to Sicily! From thence he crosses over to Italy and encounters an embassy from Rome. After crossing over to Africa and visiting Carthage Alexander continues through Libya to the oracle of Ammon, where he obtains encouragement and instructions for the foundation of Alexandria (1.30–3). In 1.34 Alexander marches with his army to Egypt and arrives at Memphis, where he is crowned as Pharaoh.[69] From Egypt Alexander proceeds to Syria and especially Tyre (1.35), which, as in the historical accounts, is unwilling to capitulate. Moving on we find Alexander encamped near the Pinaros river in 1.40.1, and in the next chapter he meets Darius in the battle of Issos.

Following Alexander's victory and Darius' flight we reach a strange turning point in the narrative. In reality Alexander made at this point one of the most celebrated decisions in military history: suffering from lack of a navy and wishing

[67] As a starting point for future discussion see Garstad 2018; Amitay 2023.

[68] This state of affairs confounded both the Armenian translator and the modern editors of alpha, as is evident from Kroll's critical apparatus *ad loc.* (1926, 26).

[69] This incident in alpha has been viewed by some modern scholars as historical. For the opposite opinion (and earlier scholarship) see Burstein 1991.

at the same time both to subsume the Phoenician sea power and to cut off Persian access to the Mediterranean, he famously relinquished the chase after Darius and continued south along the Levantine coast, all the way to Egypt. This decision made him the master of the entire eastern basin of the Mediterranean, but at the same time allowed the Persian king some breathing space in which to gather an even grander army with which to oppose the Makedonian invasion. However, as we have seen, in alpha Alexander had already conquered Egypt and the Levant (in that order), and there was no sense in sending him back there once again. Remaining faithful to the narrative need to disengage Alexander from Darius after Issos and before Gaugamela, the compiler of alpha redirected the Makedonian king not southward to the Levant and to Egypt but rather—to the utter surprise of the historically informed reader—back west into Asia Minor, all the way to the eastern Aegean coast, to European Greece, to the Black Sea, and even to Akragas in Sicily![70] However, whereas the historical campaign into the Levant and Egypt made solid strategic sense, these new escapades introduced at this point in alpha make no sense whatsoever. It is possible that the compiler, realizing that he needed to create a space in his narrative in which Darius could regroup, and that he had used up the option provided by the historical accounts, inserted at this point some stories taken from a different source (or group of sources), which may not have formed part of his main source for the events narrated earlier in book 1. The quasi-historical framework is resumed at 2.7, where the focus shifts to Darius and to his preparations for the final confrontation, followed by a prolonged description of events before, during, and after the battle, which take up the rest of book 2.[71]

The beta recension follows the same general geographic scheme of alpha, and is colored distinctly by its typical historicizing tendency.[72] Thus in 1.28 Alexander crosses over from Thrace to Asia through the Hellespont, fights a battle at the Granikos (which is completely absent from alpha), and continues his march through Ionia, Karia, Lydia, Sardis, Phrygia, Lykia, and Pamphylia. Here, in the transition between chapters 28 and 29, we see even more clearly than in alpha the interruption of the quasi-historical narrative with an interpolation from a different source: whereas in chapter 28 Pamphylia is the location of the *paradoxon* whereby the sea receded before Alexander's land army, which suffered from the lack of seagoing vessels and was therefore compelled to wade through dangerously high water, in the next chapter Alexander boards his entire army onto his previously non-existent ships and sets sail to Sicily.[73] As in alpha, Alexander sails

[70] 1.45.1. This part of the expedition begins in 1.42.4 and continues through the end of 2.6.

[71] In book 3 Alexander continues his war against the Indian king Poros, who had been Darius' ally, and proceeds to the land of miracles and wonders. This section does not concern us here.

[72] Jouanno 2002, 261–5.

[73] A paradox indeed, but not the same as intended by beta's compiler (or was he joking discreetly here at the expense of his inconsistent sources?). For the use of *παράδοξον* in this context see also Plutarch, *Alex.* 17.3; Josephus, *AJ* 2.347.

over from Sicily to Italy, where he comes in contact with the Romans. In chapters 1.30–5 he follows the same route as in alpha, sailing first to Africa, then marching through Libya to the land of Ammon; founding Alexandria and continuing to Memphis; and thence to Syria and to Tyre. Beta then has Alexander cross the Kilikian Taurus so that he may retrace his historical march en route to the battle of Issos (1.41). At this point, as in alpha, Alexander turns back west, marches through Asia Minor to European Greece, and returns back to Kilikia only in 2.6.

The geography of Alexander's campaigns in epsilon, on the other hand, presents a decidedly different picture. Alexander's first arrival in Rome takes place already in his childhood, when he travels there to compete in a chariot race (ch. 5).[74] Returning to Makedon he campaigns among the Skythians, still as his father's deputy (ch. 7). Following Philippos' murder Alexander receives the messengers of Darius in the manner discussed above (10). In response, the Persian monarch starts to prepare for a war against Alexander, yet the latter, after avenging his father's murder, subduing the rebellious Greeks, and meeting the philosopher Diogenes (11–12), heads out not to the east, but rather to the west! Alexander first revisits Rome, where he receives a glorious reception and collects troops for his army. He continues in a westward direction, meeting and dominating all kinds of unnatural creatures (humans with two heads or none at all, with serpent legs, etc.), until he reaches the Ocean (13). Traversing strange lands to both north and south he conquers all of the west, and then mysteriously arrives again in Asia Minor, where he meets up with Seleukos and Antiochos (14).[75] Skipping the battle of Issos altogether, epsilon has Alexander exchange hostile letters with Darius and then appear suddenly beyond the Euphrates near the river Arsinoe, the equivalent of the river Stranga in the main tradition (15–16). The final showdown with Darius, its aftermath, and Alexander's marriage with Roxane are recounted in chapters 17–19, and it is only at this point, when Alexander had already become king of Persia and husband of the dead Persian king's daughter, that he finally reaches Judea (20) and Egypt (21–4).

Now, even if we disregard Alexander's wanderings in Wonderland, which for the most part are too outlandish to be compared in any meaningful way with the geography of his historical campaign, we cannot escape the impression that the sense of direction applied in both strands of the *Romance* is both confused and unorthodox, and obviously calls for interpretation. In order not to stray too far from the focus of the present study, I shall limit the discussion to the most pertinent point: Alexander's approach to Judea and Egypt.[76] In this regard, the mainstream AR tradition offers what appears to be the most extravagant deviation

[74] This is a parallel to the episode of Alexander in the Olympic games, on which see Meyer 2016.

[75] Alexander's itinerary in Asia Minor seems to retain the notion of the reverse motion familiar from the mainstream tradition, especially in 14.6, where he reaches Ilion after having travelled already much further to the east.

[76] A full and detailed study of the different geographical orientations in the different strands of the *Romance* might yield some interesting results, which could possibly teach us much both about the

from Alexander's actual route. After leading Alexander on a relatively historical course from European Greece through Asia Minor to Kilikia the narrative makes a sharp westward break, and directs the campaign in such a way that it eventually reaches Egypt from the west, not from the northeast as actually happened. In this way, Alexander reaches Egypt before he arrives in Judea (and more generally in the Levant), contrary to the historical account. In addition, the omission of the battle on the Granikos from the garbled narrative of alpha serves to portray the initial military engagement between Alexander and Darius not as a confrontation between the king of Asia and a European invader, but rather as a clash between the king of Persia and the king of Egypt. In that regard, Alexander becomes true heir of his true father according to the *Romance*—Nektanebo, the last king of pre-Persian Egypt.[77] It is as Pharaoh that Alexander sets out to exact Egypt's revenge from the Persians, and it is as a Greek Pharaoh that he becomes a clear antecedent of the house of Ptolemy. The original route ascribed to Alexander in the mainstream *Romance* may thus be interpreted as yet another sign of this work's Ptolemaic and Alexandrian background.

Epsilon, on the other hand, appears to give a diametrically opposed picture. The early western campaign of Alexander is detached from the rest of the narrative and loses much of its significance vis-à-vis the rest of the work. Furthermore, while retaining the notion that Alexander's first move ought to be directed westward, epsilon avoids the geographical inversion and the ensuing political effect of making Alexander arrive in Egypt before his eastern campaign. Here, on the contrary, Alexander does not march against greater Asia as Pharaoh, but rather descends on Egypt as both *de facto* and *de jure* king of Persia. Thus, if alpha and the derivative mainstream tradition seem to reflect a Ptolemaic standpoint, epsilon appears to see things from the opposing, Seleukid, point of view. The conclusion derived from this analysis of the changing routes of Alexander's journeys is thus highly congruent with other aspects of Seleukid presence and prominence so evident in epsilon. Alexander's story in epsilon, so it seems, appears to us through Seleukid eyes.

1.4 The Judean Seleukid *Romance*

What therefore can we learn from its Seleukid tendency about the origins of the epsilon version in general, and of the Judean and Egyptian episodes in particular?

origins of its various constituent narratives as well as about the original composition of alpha. For some initial thoughts see Amitay 2023.

[77] This portrayal is relevant to the strong emphasis of the *Romance* on the Egyptian world-conqueror Sesonchosis (alpha 1.33.6, 1.34.2, 3.17.17, 3.24, 3.34.4–6; epsilon 27.2–3, 34.5, 42.3), who functions in the narrative as a predecessor of Alexander. On Alexander and Sesonchosis see further Ladynin 2018; Trnka-Amrhein 2020.

As explained in detail in section 1.2, the philological argumentation that the monotheizing chapters of epsilon cannot have originated before the fifth century CE rests on shaky and insufficient ground. Nor is there any obvious reason to assume that the prominent parts of Seleukos and Antiochos in the narrative, the focus on their high positions in Alexander's army, their extensive activities as city founders, their occasional assumption of Alexander's role and even of his identity, and the Seleukid slant of the narrative's geographical orientation all derive in any way from the accepted circumstances of epsilon's production, sometime in the eighth- or ninth-century Byzantine empire, when no particular interest in the Seleukids is otherwise evident.

On the other hand, the claim that the origins of the monotheizing elements lie in late first- or early second-century CE Alexandria is now even harder to accept. As we have seen, Pfister and Delling believed that the monotheizing chapters were intended to play a part in the political life of the Judean community in Alexandria during that time. Both scholars emphasized the narrative focus on Alexander's recognition of and preference for the god of the Judeans, but neither explained in any detail how this literary fiction would have functioned on the ground. Goldstein does take a step in that direction, suggesting that the purpose of the Judean episode was to counteract the suspiciously seditious zealotry associated with Judean refugees in the aftermath of the Great Revolt. However, the Seleukid emphasis does not support either of these suggestions. Firstly, it is hard to see why the Seleukids should play a role in Alexandrian politics at such late a period. By the time when the trouble erupted at Alexandria under Caligula and Flaccus, the Seleukid kingdom had not been in existence for a whole century and had not been a power to reckon with for even longer. Nothing in our sources hints that it might have played such an important posthumous role in the politics of Roman era Alexandria. Secondly, it is hard to see what positive role the Seleukid angle could have played in Alexandrian politics. If we envision the story as intended to fortify Judean political claims in the city, what would have been the purpose of assigning such a central and positive role to the erstwhile archenemies of the Ptolemies? In a polemical context such rhetoric would have made no sense, inasmuch as Seleukid power had long been defeated and deleted. In an apologetic context the Seleukid emphasis would have been quite useless and could only have caused further aggravation in an already volatile situation. In either case, the celebration of Antiochos and Seleukos in first- or early second-century CE Alexandria would be self-defeating. It appears, therefore, that a new context ought to be sought for the origins of our stories.

Based on the arguments and conclusions set out in the previous section (1.3), the logical context for the source of epsilon ought to be Seleukid. I suggest that the author of epsilon had recourse to a literary work with Alexander as its main hero, deriving from the Seleukid sphere of influence, and retelling the story of the famous Makedonian in a way that reflected Seleukid realities and aspirations.

In other words, where in the story we read "Alexander," we should understand the Seleukid empire, its monarch, and its interests.

But what of the Judean-monotheizing material? Does it arrive from the same source as the so tendentially Seleukid, or may it have been incorporated from elsewhere? In principle, it is arguable that the option of a single source is intrinsically preferable, inasmuch as it is more economical. The introduction into the discussion of heretofore unrecognized sources should surely be kept to a minimum. However, as pleasing as the use of Occam's razor may be from the purely logical standpoint, it is nevertheless insufficient to settle the question by itself. A fuller answer must be sought at the meeting points of the Seleukid and the Judean materials. The most immediately observable fact in that regard is that the Seleukid references far outnumber the obviously Judean ones. Conversely, Seleukos and Antiochos are present in one way or another in all the major Judean-monotheizing episodes.[78]

The first Seleukid appearance in a Judean context comes at 20.1, when Seleukos receives the mandate to command the Persian contingent in Alexander's joint Makedonian-Persian army. This mention comes as part of the preparation for the campaign to Egypt, which brings Alexander also to Judea. Seleukos' command is then reaffirmed at the very end of the Judean-Egyptian narrative unit.[79] These two references thus frame in symmetrical fashion the literary unit containing the Judean and the Egyptian-Alexandrian stories, which in turn comprises two thirds of the monotheizing material in epsilon.

In the present context, the highlight of this unit is of course the visit to Jerusalem, which leaves center stage for Alexander and his Judean hosts. It is the first meeting of the Makedonian monarch with the Judean divinity and its temple, a meeting which initiates a process of alignment and adoption between King and God. The Seleukid connection is brought into full effect in chapter 24, in the episode of Alexander's tower in Alexandria, discussed in detail in the previous section. Seleukos and Antiochos appear at the beginning of the chapter (24.1), where they are honored by the erection of their own statues next to those of Alexander and Philippos. Seleukos, as we have just seen, appears again at the end of the unit (24.3). Sandwiched between these two distinct Seleukid references is Alexander's declaration of faith in the thrice-holy god, borne on the Seraphim.

[78] Jouanno (2002, 380) notes two possible exceptions. First, the reference to a person or entity called Phineës (*Φινεές*) in 16.2, which may well be equivalent with the Hebrew name Phineas (פנחס). Together with Ammon this Phineës appears to Alexander in dreams (simultaneously or on different occasions? The text does not clarify), and both exhort him to visit Darius' camp incognito before their final battle. Unlike Ammon, who appears again in 16.3, Phineës does not reappear after his initial enigmatic introduction. The second exception is that the river Stranga, which separates Alexander's camp from that of Darius in the prelude to the final confrontation between the two kings, is somewhat reminiscent of the Sambation stream (Jouanno 2002, 351). Both person and river seem to play a minor role in epsilon.

[79] 20.1: *προστάσσει Ἀλέξανδρος Σελεύκῳ τῷ ἄρχοντι ἅπαν τὸ Περσικὸν ἐπισυνάξαι στράτευμα*; 24.3: *ἄρχων τῶν Περσῶν*.

Alexander's confession is thus supported narratively on either side by Seleukid connotations, just as his statue is displayed in the story as part of a group dominated by his two Seleukid-named friends. The use of the tower, with its implied association with the major Judean quarter of the city, as the platform used both for Alexander's declaration and for the statues honoring Seleukos and Antiochos, creates a strong link between the Seleukids and the Judean-monotheizing interests.

Seleukos appears also in chapter 39, in the episode of the campaign against the Bersiloi and the fortification of the Breasts of the North. Here, too, Seleukos is pronounced by Alexander as the commander of the army in view of the upcoming battle with the enormous forces of Eurymithras, archon of the Bersiloi (39.1). Furthermore, Seleukos is singled out as the leader of the successful charge that scatters the enemy forces. Most frustratingly, the manuscript of epsilon breaks off at this point and the rest of Seleukos' actions are swallowed by a lacuna. When the text resumes, the focus is already back on Alexander, who proceeds to build his fortification against the northern barbarians, and dedicates it with the most fervent of his monotheistic declarations throughout the entire work. Once again, a Seleukid is present and highly active in a poignantly monotheistic episode, complete with the clear biblical allusion to Gog and Magog. In this episode, too, Seleukid and Judean interests go hand in hand.

A more tentative link of the Seleukid royal house, particularly Antiochos III, with Judean interests may be detected also in chapter 14, dealing with the foundation activities in Asia Minor. In the discussion above I have used the foundation story to demonstrate the existence of a Seleukid interest in epsilon. In addition, it may also be used to throw further light on the Judeo-Seleukid connection, and at the same time to explain the text's interest in the foundations, which on the whole are quite unrelated to epsilon's general literary scheme (nowhere else in the work does Alexander, or any of his officers, engage in this kind of activity).

In his description of the relations between Antiochos III and the Judeans Josephus (*Antiquities* 12.147–53) recounts that while the king was conducting business in the upper satrapies, he heard of a rebellion in the area around Phrygia and Lydia. He therefore organized the transfer of two thousand households of Judeans from Mesopotamia and Babylonia to the area, with the aim of employing them as guards against the rebellious elements there. Zeuxis, the king's man in Asia Minor and thus the one entrusted by Antiochos with the task, had earlier served in Mesopotamia,[80] and may well have been acquainted with elements of Judean society there. Strikingly, it is exactly in this area—the borderlands of Phrygia and Lydia—that we find the three cities founded by Alexander, Seleukos, and Antiochos in 14.4: Tripolis by the three men together (hence the city's name);

[80] Polybius 5.45.3–4.

Nikatoria-Laodikaia opposite Tripolis by Seleukos; and Antiocheia "in Asia" by Antiochos. Admittedly, the information and the stories in chapter 14 do not portray signs of Judean presence or ideology. Nor does the putative connection with Josephus' account help to explain the other foundations described in chapter 14. Nevertheless, given the impression that these foundation stories are highly uncharacteristic of epsilon as a whole, as well as Josephus' historical notice on the transfer of Judean population and its settlement in Phrygia and Lydia, it stands to reason that epsilon's story and Josephus' reflect the same events, albeit from very different angles.

In addition to all these demonstrations of the close connection between the Seleukid and the Judean elements in the story, supported as they are by the logic of *lex parsimoniae*, we must return once again to the core argument: that the Seleukids per se commanded no particular respect and aroused no special interest in eighth- and ninth-century Byzantium, the birthplace of epsilon. If the Seleukid material had been preserved in a distinct Seleukid source, completely independent from the Judean-monotheizing material, there would be no reason for the compiler of epsilon to include it in the first place. As it stands, and for all its Seleukid tendencies, epsilon as a whole still shows an awareness and even owes a debt to the mainstream *Alexander Romance* and to its obvious Egyptian origins. This is nowhere as evident as at the very beginning of epsilon, which closely imitates the beginning of the mainstream alpha recension, and proceeds to trace Alexander's story from his "real" father, Pharaoh Nektanebo.[81] The inclusion of the Seleukid material, which runs in the face of the Egyptianizing mainstream AR, required a very good reason. The best reason would be that it appeared in the same source as, and narratively intertwined with, Alexander's self-confessed monotheism, so dear to Christian minds. It thus seems to me best to accept a single source behind the Judeo-Seleukid sections in epsilon, which I shall henceforth call the Seleukid *Romance*.[82]

Who, then, wrote the Seleukid *Romance*, and when? The only thing that can be said of the author with a comfortable degree of probability is that he was most

[81] Compare the opening words of alpha, *Οἱ σοφώτατοι Αἰγύπτιοι, θεῶν ἀπόγονοι* (the most learned Egyptians, descendants of the gods), with those of epsilon, *οἱ σοφοὶ τῶν Ἑλλήνων, θεῶν ὄντες ἀπόγονοι* (the learned among the Hellenes, being descendants of the gods). Epsilon clearly replaces the Egyptians with Greeks. Further examination of the relation between alpha, beta, and epsilon holds much promise for a better understanding of both the method and tastes of epsilon and of the original Seleukid *Romance*, as well as of alpha and its early origins.

[82] If Stoneman (Stoneman and Gargiulo 2007, xxv–xxxiv) is right in his suggestion, that the mainstream *Romance* developed in Alexandria already in the early Ptolemaic period, epsilon's source could possibly be seen as an attempt by its author to create a Seleukid alternative to compete with the Alexandrian work. It has been suggested to me by Dr. Alexandra Trachsel that this reconstruction would fit nicely in the context of cultural and literary competition between large centers of culture in Hellenistic age—Alexandria, Pergamon, Athens, and Antioch. The relation of the Seleukid *Romance* to the early strata of the mainstream AR requires a much fuller discussion, which must for now remain a future endeavor.

likely a Judean by religion. The respect paid by Alexander to the Judean priesthood, his monotheistic declarations, the references to the biblically specific Seraphim as well as to Gog and Magog all point that way. Beyond this simple statement we are immediately reduced to speculation. To be sure, he could be a Judean from Judea, well enough versed in Greek, whose life circumstances (or at least whose aspirations) brought him into contact with the Seleukid court.[83] But the author may not have been from Judea at all. An illuminating comparandum is Iason of Kyrene, the author of a five-book work that served as the main source for 2 Maccabees (2:23). It is generally agreed that Iason was a contemporary of Judas Maccabee, and one might assume that he was on hand to witness some of the events he wrote about, or at least had close communication with people who were.[84] Yet in terms of geographical and cultural origins he was certainly not characteristic of the people he was writing about. Like Iason, the author of the Seleukid *Romance* could have come from anywhere in the Judean Hellenistic diaspora.

Another useful comparandum is Nikolaos of Antioch, a proselyte to Judaism who became one of the Seven Deacons, an appointment he received in order to look after the interests of the Hellenistic (i.e., Greek-speaking) members of the Church in its earliest days (Acts 6:1–6). Nikolaos is not presented in Acts as a writer, but coming as he did from the outside—both geographically and in terms of faith—he evidently took his new religious identity very seriously indeed, so much so as to become a prominent figure at the cutting edge of Judean sectarianism.[85] Yet Nikolaos is instructive not only as an illustration for the possibility of a proselyte author, but also as a reminder of the Judean community in the Syrian capital of the Seleukid empire—a viable source of influence on the Seleukid *Romance*.

According to Josephus, the origins of the Judean community in Antioch were as early as the city itself, its first members having received citizen status already from the city's founder, Alexander's erstwhile officer and one of the most successful among the Successors, Seleukos I Nikator.[86] Now Josephus is notoriously occupied with the attempt to establish the earliest possible dating for Judean civic rights across the Hellenistic diaspora. In another place (*War* 7.43) he seems to contradict the previous statement by dating the definitive settlement of Judean rights to the successors of Antiochos IV Epiphanes. What seems to lie beyond doubt, however, is the very existence of a significant Judean community in the

[83] I assume here that the Seleukid *Romance* was originally written in Greek. The alternative, that the author of epsilon had before him a text in Aramaic or Hebrew and reworked it into seemingly Jewish-Hellenistic Greek, or that a Semitic text was translated at some point into Greek, strikes me as highly improbable.

[84] Habicht 1976, 175–6 with n. 45; Schwartz 2008, 15 n. 34.

[85] See also Josephus, *War* 7.45 for the continuing habit of Antiochene Judeans to attract and embrace Greek believers and worshippers.

[86] *Antiquities* 12.119; *Against Apion* 2.39.

city from very early on in its history.[87] This community gradually grew in numbers and strength. By the middle of Epiphanes' reign (*c.*170 BCE), the Judean high priest Onias III chose this city in particular as a place of refuge from the troubles in Jerusalem.[88] His enemy Menelaos, the extreme Hellenist now at the head of the Jerusalem sacral and political institutions, took advantage of the king's absence to secure Onias' death through bribery and treachery. Yet when Antiochos returned, "he was petitioned by the Jews of the city—joined by the Greeks out of hatred for evil—concerning the unreasonable murder."[89] The lesson here is double: firstly, that the Judean community in Antioch was confident and powerful enough to petition the king for justice; secondly, that it enjoyed a significant amount of sympathy from a considerable number of Antiochene "Greeks." Thus, when we try to identify the locale of our author we must consider the view not only from Jerusalem, but also from Antioch.

When was the Seleukid *Romance* composed? The answer to this question lies in the contextualization of this literary-imaginary history of Alexander within the framework of Seleukid history, and there are some indications that may give us a good general picture. The key to this contextualization is the by now familiar portrayal of Alexander's campaigns in Judea and Egypt in the Seleukid *Romance*. As is well known, following the death of Alexander *historicus*, Ptolemy I Soter took advantage of the breakup of the empire and the series of wars that ensued not only to secure Egypt as his own dynastic realm, but also to brush aside the claims of Seleukos Nikator to Koile Syria and to seize control of the area (Judea included) for himself. This remained the status quo throughout the third century BCE, creating for ancient Egypt a final heyday of imperial glory. However, towards the end of the century the tide started to turn.[90] The change came under the energetic leadership of the young Seleukid king Antiochos III. Early on in his long and eventful reign he temporarily gained control of all of the Levant, during the Fourth Syrian War (219–217 BCE). This was the also the first point of direct contact between Judea and the Seleukid empire. Following the war's conclusion in the dramatic battle of Raphia, the Ptolemies managed to recover most lost territory, but not for long. A short generation thereafter Antiochos marched once again against the Ptolemaic holdings in Koile Syria and conquered them all in the Fifth Syrian War (202–198 BCE). This time the land would remain under Seleukid suzerainty, while Egypt would not regain control of the Levant until medieval times. Therefore the interpretative principle of identifying Alexander as literary

[87] The best gateway to the study of the Judean community in Antioch is still Kraeling 1932. See also Kasher 1982; Barclay 1998, 244–5; Gruen 2002, 128–9.

[88] For this episode see 2 Macc. 4:30–8.

[89] 2 Macc. 4:36; trans. Schwartz 2008, 209.

[90] For a recent and detailed discussion of the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Syrian Wars and for much of the events in Antioch, Alexandria, and other important centers of the eastern Mediterranean during the relevant period, see Grainger 2010, 195–308.

representative of the Seleukids directs our attention first of all to the Seleukid takeover of Judea in the time of Antiochos III.[91]

This contextualization is supported by another aspect of Alexander's campaign in the story, which has already served us above. Alexander's itinerary in epsilon is remarkably different from the one taken in actual history. In epsilon Alexander arrives at the Levant only after he had defeated Darius' forces and taken the reigns of the Persian empire. The Persian army, in recognition of his sovereignty, hails him as *kosmokrator*—ruler of the world.[92] This Makedonian-style military acclamation is followed up by Alexander's marriage to Darius' daughter, which puts an end to Makedonian-Persian enmity, and replaces it with concord and brotherly feeling between the two nations.[93] The two armies are indeed combined, in preparation for the next campaign—through Judea to Egypt (20.1). In addition, epsilon's Seleukos and Antiochos are present and highly active in these episodes, including an unequivocal display of superiority over an Indian contingent that had come to Darius' aid (17.4–7). The entire situation thus corresponds nicely with the illustrious campaign of Antiochos III to Iran, which took him also to the borders of India and won him the Alexander-like title "the Great." Significantly, it is Seleukos who is put in charge of the Persian units in Alexander's army during the run-up to the Egyptian campaign, emphasizing yet again the Seleukid reality hiding under the Alexandresque veneer. A *terminus post quem* for the Seleukid *Romance* can thus be postulated with relative confidence to the period after Antiochos III's *anabasis*.

Can we push the *terminus post quem* even further, and assume that Alexander's occupation of Judea is an echo of Antiochos' victory in the Fifth Syrian War? This seems to be an obvious assumption to make, but it is not an automatic one. The Alexander story need not reflect actual history at every turn—it may also express future hopes and designs. Conceivably, the Seleukid *Romance* could have been written after Antiochos' return from his *anabasis* and before the renewed attack on Koile Syria, perhaps as a way to raise the spirits in view of the next showdown with Ptolemaic power, or even as an attempt to encourage the adoption of such a policy. This kind of literary lobbying would be extremely dangerous to practice in Ptolemaic-controlled Jerusalem; it is much more easily imagined in Antioch.

[91] Indeed, from the early days of research into the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition the Seleukid conquest of Judea has been suggested as its original context: Krochmal 1860, 20–1; Zeitlin 1924/5, 138; Moore 1927, 357–8; Purvis 1968, 125–6; and, in more detail, Goldstein 1993, 91–6. See also Delling (1981, 11), who remarked on the similarity between Alexander's remission of taxes in chapter 20 and the parallel action by Antiochos III in Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.142. We shall return to this context presently.

[92] 18.7: *Ἀλέξανδρος βασιλεὺς κοσμοκράτωρ ὑπὸ Περσῶν ἀνηγόρευται*. This recognition followed the death of Darius and Alexander's decision to take Roxane (in the story she is Darius' daughter) for his wife.

[93] 19.2: *Ὁ οὖν Ἀλέξανδρος τὴν θυγατέρα Δαρείου ἠγάγετο εἰς γυναῖκα. ὡς δὲ τοῦτο ἠκούσθη ἐν πάσῃ Περσίδι εἰς ὁμόνοιαν ἔρχονται Πέρσαι τοῖς Μακεδόσιν ὡς ἀδελφικῶς πρὸς ἀλλήλους διακεῖσθαι*.

An additional factor, which does seem to push for a *terminus post quem* after the Fifth Syrian War, is that Alexander's campaign makes him the master not only of Judea, but of Egypt as well. And while it would be possible, following the Fourth Syrian War, to envision a future successful campaign in the Levant, the vivid vision of a dominant Seleukid presence in Alexandria (remember the statues on the tower!) would be extremely far-fetched before Antiochos III's huge success at the turn of the century. As a matter of fact, a few years after his victory Antiochos reached an entente with Ptolemaic Alexandria, and wedded his daughter Kleopatra to Ptolemy V Epiphanes (194/3 BCE).[94] The new order negotiated through this marriage alliance between the two royal houses provides a possible context, or could even be a source of inspiration, for literary musings about a future Seleukid prominence in Alexandria.[95] If this is indeed what the author of the Seleukid *Romance* had in mind, it may also explain why neither Seleukid friend of Alexander is mentioned as playing a role in military aspects of the Egyptian campaign. In this case, the Seleukids would come to be revered in Alexandria not through violent conquest, but rather through dynastic diplomacy—*tu felix Antiochia nube*! A *terminus post quem* in the years after the Fifth Syrian War and around the royal wedding is therefore reasonable.

That is, however, not the end of the story. The marriage of Kleopatra and Ptolemy involved the Seleukids deeply in Ptolemaic dynastic politics, an involvement which eventually supplied Antiochos IV, Antiochos III's younger son, with an excuse for his own intervention in Egyptian affairs. This time, the intervention was direct and military. In the early 160s BCE Antiochos IV Epiphanes invaded Egypt twice, reached the outskirts of Alexandria, and according to some sources was even crowned as king of Egypt for a brief time.[96] That Egypt never came under Seleukid suzerainty is due to the famous Day of Eleusis, when a Roman delegation delivered Epiphanes with an ultimatum that demanded his withdrawal from Egypt (a demand that the Seleukid monarch had no stomach to refuse), but probably also to the impracticality of trying to control Alexandria and Egypt

[94] For this episode see Kaye and Amitay 2015. The powerful association of the name 'Kleopatra' with the Ptolemaic dynasty begins with this marriage.

[95] That was indeed the interpretation offered by Jerome: *Volens Antiochus…in Aegyptum quoque regnum suum extendere* (Antiochos willing…to extend his reign also to Egypt; *Commentary on Daniel* 11:17; Stern 1976–84, 2.461–2, no. 464l).

[96] According to Porphyrios, Antiochos IV accepted the kingship Egyptian-style (*ex more Aegypti regnum accipiens*; Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel* 11:21; Stern 1976–84, 2.463–5, no. 464n). For the literary, papyrological, and numismatic evidence on Antiochos IV in Egypt see: Ray 1976, 127; Mooren 1979, 78–86; Grainger 2010, 306. Seleukid interest in Egypt is evident also in the issue of Seleukid mints during the late 170s and early 160s. For these 'Egyptianizing' coins, minted in Antioch on the Orontes and in Byblos, and displaying a panoply of Egyptian images (Isis, Osiris, Harpokrates on a lotus blossom, bull with Isiac headdress), see Mørkholm 1963, 20–3; *SC* part 2, 1412–15, 1442, 1445–7; Grainger 2010, 292. On the vision and vigor of Antiochos IV at the head of the Seleukid empire see Strootman 2019.

from Antioch.[97] The effect of the Day of Eleusis on the remainder of Seleukid history may not have been as dramatic as has often been perceived in modern historiography.[98] But in hindsight it symbolically marks the last effective Seleukid attempt against Egypt proper. Thenceforward the Seleukids directed their attention mostly to the east, facing the rising Parthian threat, and then descended into a spiral of self-destructing dynastic wars. In any case, the Seleukids were never again in a position to intervene so closely in Egypt, let alone conquer it. Therefore, the Seleukid angle seems to locate the composition of the Seleukid *Romance* either around the Fifth or the Sixth Syrian War, and in any case during the first third of the second century BCE.

Looking at both possible contexts from the viewpoint of Judean history, the later of the two appears substantially less likely. Firstly, because the Seleukid *Romance* shows a glowingly positive attitude to the Seleukids, whereas in history the decade leading to the Sixth Syrian War witnessed a dramatic deterioration in Seleukid-Judean relations. The main source of information for this process is 2 Maccabees. In the (admittedly hyperbolic) words of its author, in the beginning of the period under Seleukid rule "the holy city was settled in complete peace and the laws were most beautifully observed" (3:1). But this idyllic picture is soon disturbed through the royal attack on the temple treasuries, or in other words, during or shortly after the tax reforms of Seleukos IV in 178 BCE.[99] Things deteriorated further in the reign of Antiochos IV. Political machinations in Jerusalem led to an escalation of internal violence, and by the late 170s Judea was embroiled in civil war, which then erupted into an outright revolt against the Seleukid king. During this time Jerusalem had been sacked, and its new regime posed an existential threat to many Judean believers. The huge impression made by this complete breakdown of relations with the Seleukids has left such a deep mark on Judean society and culture that it is still celebrated annually today. The names of Seleukos and Antiochos, shining brightly in the Seleukid *Romance*, are almost completely missing from later (surviving) Eretz-Israeli Judean nomenclature.[100]

[97] On the Roman embassy, the "Day of Eleusis," and an appraisal of the situation on behalf of Antiochos IV, see Morgan 1990 (with list of ancient sources on p. 37 n.1); Grainger 2010, 306–8.

[98] Strootman 2019.

[99] The date is established through the important inscription from Maresha published by Cotton and Wörrle 2007, pertaining to the matter at hand but sadly lacking in detail regarding the actual arrangements to be carried out by the Seleukid officials on the ground. For a careful analysis of Seleukid administration in Judea during these fateful years see Eckhardt 2016. On the taxation reforms of Seleukos IV and their profound contribution to the worsening of Judeo-Seleukid relations see the detailed work of Honigman 2014. While I do not accept as it stands Honigman's opinion, that the religious persecution of the mid-160s was merely a literary invention representing the military repression of the Judean rebellion according to contemporary cultural norms of expression, her basic argument that the taxation reform of Seleukos IV played a crucial role in the escalation into violence, both internally in Judean society and externally against the Seleukids, is very solidly based.

[100] Ilan 2002, 264, 306. Ilan notes one unclear reading, σελυκ, which may not even be a name but rather a geographic moniker, and one Antiochos who was clearly born before the persecutions (1 Macc. 12:16; Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.169). A second Antiochos (Josephus, *War* 7.47–53) was a son

Importantly, the most vicious parts of the conflict took place in the years immediately following Antiochos IV's Egyptian campaigns—that is, exactly around the time of the story's suggested lower dating. To be sure, even in the midst of the Antiochene Persecution there were circles in Judea who were appreciative both of Antiochos' rule and of his program.[101] Yet the author of the Seleukid *Romance* appears to be completely faithful to the god of Israel and to the traditional priestly order in Jerusalem. As far as we can see from epsilon's adaptation of his work, Alexander's respect towards the Jerusalem priesthood, and his acceptance and reverence of the god of the Judeans, stand in stark opposition to the attitudes of Antiochos IV. It is therefore highly unlikely that the Seleukid *Romance* came from the circles of the extreme Hellenizers and their sympathizers, who continued to collaborate with Antiochos Epiphanes throughout the persecution.

Alternatively, it is even harder to imagine that anyone in Judea who had suffered from the persecution would display such a positive attitude towards the Seleukids.[102] Contemporary evidence supports this. The book of Daniel, which strongly reflects the horrors and anxieties of the Antiochene Persecution, shows a negative attitude not only to the Seleukid king but also to Alexander.[103] The connection between Alexander and his evil Seleukid successors is emphasized in particular in the historical vision narrated in chapter 11, through the use of the expression "and he did as he pleased."[104] This expression is used three times, in relation to three different kings: Alexander, Antiochos the Great, and Epiphanes. This expression of omnipotence and hubris ties the three together and presents them in a highly negative light. The same approach is evident also in the opening verses of 1 Maccabees (1:1–10), where Alexander is presented as violent and hubristic, as well as a direct predecessor of Epiphanes. The glowing image of Alexander and the Seleukids seems absolutely out of place not only in the immediate aftermath of the persecutions but also a good two or three generations later.[105]

of Antioch, born into a prominent local family, and politically active at the time of the Great Revolt. His name is likely a sign of diasporic local patriotism. Ironically and symbolically, he appears in history as a persecutor of his coreligionists.

[101] 1 Macc. 1:43, 52; 2:16. For further examples see Babota 2014, 63.

[102] The view from Antioch was surely different. Indeed, John Malalas (8.22–3, ed. Thurn; 23–4, ed. Jeffreys et al.) preserved a highly idiosyncratic telling of events from Antiochos' war on Egypt down to the temple's restoration by Judas Maccabee, which goes a long way to preserve the good name of the Seleukid dynasty, and contains much that appears to derive from local Antiochene tradition. Nevertheless, the rapprochement between Antioch and Jerusalem is placed only in the time of Demetri(an)os, the son of Seleukos IV. At that time it would take the staunchest of optimists to imagine a future Seleukid who would both conquer Egypt and display such a positive attitude to Jerusalem and to monotheism—even in Antioch.

[103] Rappaport 1993.

[104] 11:3, 16, 36 (MT): ועשׂה כרצונו. Montgomery 1927, 462; Jeffery 1956, 534; Hartman and DiLella 1978, 301; Goldingay 1989, 304; Collins and Collins 1993, 380; Smith-Christopher 1996, 139, 146; Lucas 2002, 280, 289; Newsom 2014, 339, 344, 354.

[105] Momigliano (1979, 443–5), although he considers the epsilon story to be a derivative of Josephus, concludes that the original story of Alexander's friendship with the Judeans "should be

Yet another reason why the later contextualization makes less sense relates to the story's attitude towards death and dying. Let us return for a moment to the speech of the Judean spies before the council of the leaders:

> There is no hope of salvation for us…for as death is fearful for us, it is not so for the Makedonians, and it is all too easily despised by them…they treat dying as a competition; one might say that they depart as if towards some inexorable necessity…and it was not so much their daring to die that terrified us, as [the realization] that although they knew they had nothing to gain, they still dared to die so indifferently; and should they hope to gain [anything], no one would be able to withstand them![106]

As we have seen, Goldstein argued on the basis of this sentiment that the purpose of epsilon's story was to prove "that Jews are not death-defying fanatics," and that it was in the period after the Great Revolt that it became urgent for Alexandrian Judeans to demonstrate their gentler nature to their gentile neighbors.[107] These putative apologists would have had their work cut out for them, as this message stands in stark contradiction to the impression given by Judean fighters during the revolt. Our main witness for these events, Josephus, gives a plethora of examples for Judean warriors who defy death just as wholeheartedly as Alexander's noble spirited Makedonian youths. Consider, for example, the words of Titus' friends, who warned him to retreat from before a sortie and not risk his own person in fighting the "death desiring Judeans."[108] Another interesting testimony to the same impression—and a highly significant one inasmuch as it comes from a Latin source—is supplied by Tacitus. A younger contemporary of Josephus, who was himself a young man during the Judean rebellion and will have had ample opportunity to hear first-hand recollections of its veterans, Tacitus wrote that the Judeans "think that the souls of those who had died in battle or in execution are eternal, hence their contempt of death."[109] This remark goes an important step beyond Josephus. According to Tacitus, it is not merely bravery on the battlefield, or love of freedom, which bring the Judeans to contemn death; it is also their attitude towards the fate of the souls of those who die properly.

dated either before the Maccabaean rebellion or much later…when the Macedonian name was less odious to the Jews."

[106] One wonders whether this cruel command of Alexander may have been inspired by scenes from the historical siege of Tyre, when some of the Makedonian soldiers who attempted to scale the walls from ladders stationed on seaborne vessels fell to their deaths in the sea. This option is explored in chapter 5.

[107] Goldstein 1993, 100.

[108] *War* 5.88: *θανατῶσιν Ἰουδαίοις*. For more examples in the same vain see 3.204; 5.315–16, 365, 458; 6.14, 42; 7.350.

[109] *Hist.* 5.5.3: *animosque proelio aut suppliciis peremptorum aeternos putant: hinc…moriendi contemptus.*

This notion, that a proper death is crucial for one's fate in the afterlife, echoes powerfully that dramatic watershed episode, not only in Seleukid-Jewish relations, but also in the history of Judaism in general—the Antiochene Persecution. A connection between the troubles under Antiochos Epiphanes and a belief in the resurrection of the dead is evident already in the book of Daniel (12:2), written during, or at least very close to, the events themselves. A much clearer and more gruesome enunciation of this principle appears in the martyrdom stories in the second book of Maccabees, our main source for the persecution.[110] According to this story, during the persecution a widow and her seven sons were urged, allegedly by the king himself, to eat pork. Refusing to do so, they were put to death in terrible torturous ways. The second of the sons, after being whipped and scalped, says with his dying breath: "You, O Avenger, free us from the present life, but the King of the *kosmos* will raise us up, since we have died for His laws, to eternal resurrection unto life."[111] This is not the place, of course, to discuss the factuality of this ghastly story, nor to comment on its literary role in 2 Maccabees as a whole. It is strongly indicative, however, of the beliefs and expectations of its author and its intended audience, at some time during the second half of the second century BCE.[112] It testifies, most importantly, to an attitude towards death that is diametrically opposed to that expressed in the Seleukid *Romance*.

The wide contrast between the approach of these two literary texts to death and the afterlife is representative of a much larger question in the history of second temple Judaism. According to the modern scholarly consensus, the belief in resurrection is not known to have played a part in pre-exilic Israelite and Judean society. As far as we can judge from the surviving second temple literature, this belief gradually infiltrated the theological and social landscape of Judea only in the Persian and early Hellenistic periods, showing concrete signs only as late as the third and second centuries BCE.[113] Of course, this faith was never accepted by the entire Judean populace in the second temple period. According to Josephus the influential sect of the Sadducees still did not entertain any kind of faith in the immortality of the soul two centuries and more after the Antiochene Persecution.[114] Nevertheless, in comparison with the stories of the martyrs that came to define the conflict of Antiochos IV and the Judeans, the cowardly character of the Judean authorities in the Seleukid *Romance* would probably have been derided and despised.

[110] 2 Macc. 6–7. See also 4 Maccabees, which is devoted entirely to these stories, with literary, philosophical, and theological elaboration.

[111] 2 Macc. 7:9. Translation and commentary: Schwartz 2008, 296–319.

[112] I accept the unorthodox opinion of Schwartz (2008, 11–14), who dates 2 Macc. to around 142 BCE. A somewhat later date is of course also possible, and would not substantially change my argument.

[113] For a description, discussion, and survey of modern scholarship on this controversial and much-discussed topic see Elledge 2011.

[114] *War* 2.165; *Antiquities* 18.16.

All this brings us back to the earlier dating, correlating Alexander the Great with Antiochos the Great, and centering on the Seleukid takeover of Judea during the Fifth Syrian War and the consequent betrothal and wedding of Kleopatra and Ptolemy V Epiphanes. To be sure, the conquest, reconquest, and consequent retention of Koile Syria by Antiochos III created a crisis for local elites in Judea and elsewhere throughout the land. The situation was complicated immensely by the fact that in the Fourth and especially in the Fifth Syrian Wars the fortunes of war were reversed more than once, leaving the leaders of each community to fend their way the best they could in face of the vicissitudes of fate. Josephus (*Antiquities* 12.129–30) likened this atmosphere of uncertainty and peril to the situation of a ship at sea during a winter storm.

An early demonstration appears in Polybios' description of the aftermath of the battle of Raphia (217 BCE). After the withdrawal of Antiochos, Ptolemy moved to regain control of the lost territory, and Polybios recounts how "all the communities now vied with their neighbors about the restoration and about switching back to his side," so that "there was no extravagance of adulation to which they did not proceed, honoring Ptolemy with crowns, sacrifices, altars dedicated to him and every distinction of the kind."[115] 3 Maccabees 1:6–7 shows a mirror image, whereby Ptolemy toured the land and made contributions to various temples in order to encourage his subjects and lift their spirits. These two accounts, conflicting about who courted whom, nevertheless reflect the general nervousness on either side. The situation is encapsulated nicely in Polybios' remark that while "possibly all men at such times are more or less disposed to adapt themselves to the needs of the hour, the natives of these parts are naturally more prone than others to bestow their affections at the bidding of circumstances" (5.86.9).

The question of allegiance became prominent, indeed inevitable, with the bold move of Theodotos the Aitolian. This Ptolemaic governor of Koile Syria, who had been instrumental in thwarting Antiochos' initial attack in 221, feeling contempt for his king and finding his position and even his life in danger due to excessive intrigue in the Alexandrian court, turned secretly to Antiochos and offered to switch sides and deliver the country over to him, backing his offer with the capture of Ptolemais-Ake and Tyre.[116] This defection could not but bring the question of allegiance to the table in each and every community in the land. Indeed, this must have been the case in those towns, unfortunately left unspecified by Polybios, whose surrender and cooperation were soon demanded by Antiochos (5.62.5–6). Descending on the southern Levant, Antiochos soon took Philoteria (on the southwestern shore of the Lake of Galilee), Skythopolis, and Mt. Tabor (Polybios 5.70.3–9). This move promoted the defection of two more Ptolemaic

[115] 5.86.8–11. §8: *πάντων τῶν πολιτευμάτων ἁμιλλωμένων ὑπὲρ τοῦ φθάσαι τοὺς πέλας περὶ τὴν ἀποκατάστασιν καὶ μετάθεσιν τὴν πρὸς αὐτόν*. (Trans. Paton, Loeb.)

[116] Polybios 5.40.1–3, 46.3–5, 61.3–5, 62.2.

commanders, who were soon stationed in Samaria with no less than five thousand men (5.70.10–11, 71.11). The successful Seleukid thrust into Transjordan convinced considerable numbers of Arabs to join Antiochos (5.71.1); they fought under his command in Raphia (5.81.12).

In all this, it is extremely hard to imagine that Judea and Jerusalem could remain ignorant and aloof. Polybios does not mention either in this context. Since both city and people did make an appearance in his now-lost account of the Fifth Syrian War (more on that presently), we may possibly argue from his silence that Judea was lucky enough to be overlooked, and that its leaders were wise enough not to intervene. We may be certain, however, that during the tense winter of 218/17, when the Ptolemaic and Seleukid governments negotiated vainly and prepared for battle, the question of allegiance and its consequences kept the Jerusalem government both busy and anxious. And despite the Ptolemaic victory at Raphia, which drove the Seleukid armies back north, the prudent among the Jerusalem magnates surely realized that, sooner or later, they would be faced once again with the same dilemma.[117]

Sure enough, the opportunity arose again a short generation later. It is frustratingly ironic that we are relatively well informed about the Fourth Syrian War and are rather in the dark concerning the Fifth, the real turning point both in the development of the Ptolemaic-Seleukid conflict and in the subsequent histories of Koile Syria in general and of Judea and Judaism in particular. The main reason is the sorry state of Polybios' narrative for that period (book 16 has survived in mere fragments; book 17 is completely lost). Yet what we do know is instructive in more ways than one. To begin with, unlike in the previous war, Antiochos managed this time to break through the Ptolemaic lines of defense with little to no opposition, and to advance without hindrance all the way to Gaza. This was probably due to the preoccupation of the Ptolemaic government (King Ptolemy V Epiphanes was still a child of about nine) with a local-led secession of Upper Egypt, with the systematic attacks of Philippos V of Makedon on Ptolemaic outposts in the Aegean, but most importantly with the defection of Ptolemy son of Thraseas, governor of Koile Syria, who turned the land over to Antiochos.[118] According to Josephus (*Antiquities* 12.131), the situation after the initial Seleukid onslaught forced the Ptolemaic general Skopas to march against the people of Koile Syria and to capture many of their cities, the Judean people included. It is significant that this counter-attack is said to be directed not against the Seleukid

[117] If we can trust the evidence of 3 Maccabees (1:8–2:24) that Ptolemy included Jerusalem in his post-war tour, we might also suspect that he had good reason for uncertainty as to Judea's support. This story, while focusing on Ptolemy's desire to enter the holy of holies (εἰς τὸν ναὸν 1:10) and not on the war, may nonetheless echo the severe stress that accompanied the post-Raphia proceedings. The motif of the desecration of the holy of holies by a foreign conqueror stands at the heart of the story discussed in chapter 2.

[118] Gera 1987; Grainger 2010, 250–1; Heinrichs 2018, 273.

main forces, now in winter quarters, but against local communities. Indeed, according to Polybios, the Gazans stood out in this war among the other Koile Syrians both in their unison and in their faith to Ptolemy.[119] Polybios' enthusiasm and admiration for the faith and fighting spirit of the Gazans is a strong indication that things were quite different elsewhere. All this may represent the reality behind the comment by the author of Daniel 11:14a: "and in those times many shall rise up against the King of the South."[120]

Unlike in the previous war, when Judea remained outside the storyline, things were certainly different this time around. The earliest source with clear information about Judean involvement in the war is a fragment from Polybios' sixteenth book, preserved by Josephus: "and Ptolemy's general Skopas set out to the upper places and subjugated in the winter the ethnos of the Judeans."[121] We further learn from Josephus that Skopas had left a garrison at the Jerusalem Akra—the Judean forces gladly participated in the siege of this garrison following Skopas' defeat at Panion and his retreat to Sidon, and the approach of the Seleukid forces to Jerusalem.[122] The decision to leave even a small portion of his forces in Jerusalem on the way to the major battle ahead is proof of Skopas' appraisal that Jerusalem could not be trusted. The relative strategic insignificance of Jerusalem in the general picture of the campaign provides further indication of the city's lack of enthusiasm for the Ptolemaic cause.

We should not, however, assume a united front in Jerusalem regarding this question. Returning to Polybios and the Gazans, he found them remarkable not only for their faith to their Ptolemaic overlord, but also for acting in unison. Indeed, according to Jerome's commentary on Daniel 11:14b Judea was rent by internal faction, aligned along the lines of the major international conflict: "When Antiochos the Great and the generals of Ptolemy were fighting it out among themselves, Judea, positioned in the middle, was rent apart by conflicting interests, some favoring Antiochos and others Ptolemy."[123] From the heart of this

[119] 16.22a.3: *ἐν κοινωνίᾳ πραγμάτων καὶ τῷ τηρεῖν τὴν πίστιν*.

[120] ובעתים ההם רבים יעמדו על מלך הנגב (MT). The interpretation of this verse as referring to a widespread rebellion of Ptolemaic subjects goes back to Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, on 11:13–14; also Hartman and Di Lella 1978, 291; Newsom 2014, 343. Jeffery 1956, 521; Collins and Collins (1993, 379) stress the native rebellion in Egypt as well as the Seleukid-Makedonian alliance, whereby Antiochos III and Philippos V both aimed to take advantage of the young Ptolemy V.

[121] Polybios 16.39.1–2; Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.135. For *κατεστρέψατο* I prefer "subjugated" over Paton's (Loeb) "destroyed," due to the use of the middle voice (cf. *LSJ καταστρέφω* A.II.2).

[122] Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.133.

[123] *Pugnantibus contra se Magno Antiocho et ducibus Ptolemaei, in medio Judaea posita in contraria studia scindebatur: aliis Antiocho aliis Ptolemaeo faventibus*. At the end of his commentary on 11:13–14 Jerome (probably following Porphyrios) adds that after his capture of Judea, Skopas "returned to Egypt, abducting with him those of the party of Ptolemy." Given that such a move would be strategically inconceivable—why remove his supporters from the city rather than leave them to reinforce the garrison?—there is very good reason to accept the suggestion of Gera (1987) that the Ptolemy in question is not the Pharaoh but rather his erstwhile governor, the son of Thraseas. If so, this further demonstrates the latter's crucial role in turning Jerusalem (and other communities) over to the Seleukid side.

turmoil in Jerusalem comes the cryptic note of Daniel 11:14b: ובני פריצי עמך ינשׂאו להעמיד חזון ונכשלו (and the sons of the violent of your people will rise up to fulfill a vision; and they shall fail). Completing the first part of the verse, which comments on the strong and widespread opposition to Ptolemy, this appears to be Daniel's comment on the pro-Seleukid party in Jerusalem.[124] These, in other words, would be the political circles around the author of the Seleukid *Romance*.

That is not to say, of course, that the Seleukid *Romance* was written exactly at this time (winter of 201/0). As I argued above from the Seleukid perspective, a likelier time of composition comes a few years later, after the conclusion of the war, and around or following the betrothal and marriage of Ptolemy V and Kleopatra I, when a Seleukid dominance in Alexandria already seemed like a viable prospect. This view of the royal marriage was shared also by Daniel (11:17).[125] Daniel's remark that this strategic move should fail—"but it shall not stand and shall not be" (ולא תעמד ולא לו תהיה)—relies of course on hindsight. It is the same hindsight that allows Daniel to decry the failure of the pro-Seleukid vision in Judea (11:14b).[126] From his own standpoint amidst the tribulations and terror of the Antiochene Persecution, the vision of benign Seleukid rule appeared cruelly misguided. Yet for a time, it must have seemed like a very good idea.[127]

1.5 Intention and Interpretation

What then did the vision of the Seleukid *Romance* include, and at whom was it aimed? If my suggested dating is indeed correct, the Seleukid *Romance* ought to be envisioned as both a product of and a contributor to the optimistic times in

[124] Bevan 1892, 180–1; Meyer 1921, 127; Jeffery 1956, 520; Lacocque 1976, 224; Hartman and Di Lella 1978, 291–2; Collins and Collins 1993, 380 n. 101. The tentative suggestion by Bevan, elaborated at length by Taeubler 1946, that the time of crisis gave rise to a Judean messianic attempt to gain political independence, is not supported by any evidence (and see further reservations in Collins and Collins 1993, 380).

[125] Montgomery 1927, 441–2; Jeffery 1956, 521–2; Lacocque 1976, 225; Hartman and Di Lella 1978, 292; Goldingay 1989, 298; Collins and Collins 1993, 381; Smith-Christopher 1996, 141; Lucas 2002, 282; Newsom 2014, 338, 345.

[126] This failure has sometimes been interpreted as referring to the suffering of Judea, Jerusalem, and the pro-Seleukid party at the hands of Skopas (Meyer 1921, 127; Jeffery 1956, 520; Hartman and Di Lella 1978, 291–2; Collins and Collins 1993, 380 n. 101). Yet this setback was only temporary, and quite insignificant in view of the consequent Seleukid success (Goldingay 1989, 296; Lucas 2002, 281–2; Newsom 2014, 344). This remark makes better sense as an overall appraisal of the pro-Seleukid gamble and the evils suffered under the sons of Antiochos the Great.

[127] Honigman (2021) recognizes another possible reflection of the positive encounter between the Judeans and Antiochos the Great. According to her analysis of Antiochos' decrees in favor of Jerusalem (Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.138–44), they served as an inspiration for the Hasmonean-period scribes, who were responsible for the present redaction of books in the Ezra-Nehemiah tradition. Her position is endorsed by Eckhardt (2023, 62). If accepted, this reconstruction might in theory be used to propose a Hasmonean date for the Seleukid *Romance*. However, the absence from the story of both resurrection-based martyrdom and of the defiant fighting spirit of the Maccabees decides the case in favor of the earlier date.

the years following the Fifth Syrian War. According to Josephus (*Antiquities* 12.134–46), the Judean support for Antiochos was recognized and warmly rewarded. The material in the Seleukid *Romance* as it now appears in epsilon chapter 20 may be seen as addressing the same transitional situation, with the same purpose as Antiochos' benefactions. These efforts were not superfluous. Judean society, long accustomed to Ptolemaic rule, had to redefine its position in view of the new regime. Many in Judea were still connected in any number of ways with Ptolemaic Egypt, and would remain so given the treaty accompanying the royal wedding, which meant that tax money would continue to flow from Judea to Alexandria. A significant part of the Seleukid *Romance*'s agenda will have been to help the process of adjustment.

Consider the role inversion of the story's main character: whereas on the narrative level the pair of archetypal Seleukids act time and again as representatives or proxies for Alexander, on the allegorical-historical level it is Alexander who represents Antiochos III. In the story, despite a strong hesitation in Jerusalem as to the coming of the conquering monarch, the Judean authorities eventually decide to come over to his side. Alexander, who is spared the military effort of besieging and conquering Jerusalem, repays this wise choice by establishing peaceful relations, showing his deference to the Judean god and to his temple, and by making military and monetary concessions. In history, the Seleukid *Romance* was intended to promote the same spirit of security and benefaction. This message would thus be directed simultaneously at Judeans who were unhappy with the regime change, and at the regime that aroused these unhappy feelings.

From the new regime's point of view, there can be no doubt that this message would be heartily welcomed at the Seleukid court.[128] To begin with, the very form of the Seleukid *Romance*'s literary presentation was quite flattering. The close connection drawn between Alexander and his two Seleukid companions, their key roles in war and diplomacy, their status as city founders in Asia Minor, the frequent *proskynesis* paid to them, their designation as semi-independent, and

[128] As it happens, this literary outburst from Judea (or, at least, from a Judean author) falls nicely into place within the wider scope of the Seleukid attempts to glorify their own dynasty. As the thorough study by Ogden (2017) shows, the rise of Seleukos I Nikator and the establishment of his dynasty served as a rich field for political mythmaking. Addressing and refining Fraser's thesis (1996, 36–7) of an original "Seleucus Romance" about Seleukos I, Ogden's careful analysis (in particular pp. 270–325) shows how a body of mythological symbols used on Seleukos Nikator's coins, famous episodes from his actual life story, a number of narrative and symbolic elements borrowed from ancient Near Eastern mythologies, and a healthy dose of imagination and creativity all coalesced to form a colorful bricolage, which Ogden calls the "Legend" (singular) of Seleukos. Intriguingly, his analysis also points to the court of Antiochos III as "a hothouse of production in the field of the Seleucid tradition" (p. 302). It must remain for now an open question to what degree the Legend of Seleukos and the Seleukid *Romance* communicated with one another. A clear difference between the two stories is that while the Seleukid version focused on the actual person of Nikator, the Judean one focused on Alexander, as a cipher for the contemporary Antiochos III.

most poignantly their narrative depictions as "alternative Alexanders"—indeed, the very idea to use Alexander as a cipher for the Seleukid monarch—would all cause immediate gratification with anyone invested in the Seleukid dynasty. The same positive reaction can be assumed to the glorifying reference to Antiochos III's *anabasis*, and in particular to the projected ascendency over Egypt.

The Seleukid opinion on the particularly Judean contents of the Seleukid *Romance* will have been more complex. Unsurprisingly, the main interface between the imperial Seleukid government and the local Judean one was the Jerusalem temple.[129] Looking at the long list of tax rebates and exemptions provided by Antiochos (Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.140–4), the prominence accorded to the temple and its personnel is immediately obvious. The Seleukid *Romance*, too, focuses on the temple and its accoutrements as means of communication between the foreign king and the local elite. Thus, at the beginning of the story, when resistance to Alexander is still the preferred course of action, the Judean authorities are called "those who wished to resist" and "the rulers" (*archontes*). However, once the decision to yield to Alexander is reached, the text forsakes these terms and proceeds to refer to them as priests, an identifier that is then retained until the end of the episode.[130] This terminological shift creates a connection between the military-political decision (to side with Alexander, that is, Antiochos) and the assumption of priestly status.[131]

The transition between "*archontes*" and "priests" is emphasized by an explicit action: the donning of the priestly robes. It is only after they remove from themselves the unwise idea of resisting Alexander that they are made by the author to put on their holy attire and retain their proper titles. The significance of the sacerdotal vestments is realized immediately, when the priests come out of the city in a great throng to meet Alexander. Unlike many other such meetings in epsilon, where Skythians, Persians, or Indians are awestruck by Alexander's person (or even, as we have seen, by Seleukos and Antiochos), the result in this case is the reverse—now it is Alexander who is filled with fear at the sight of the priests! The text is explicit that it is the form (*σχῆμα*) of the priests that achieves the startling effect. The author goes out of his way to stress this point, making Alexander

[129] On the role of local temples and priestly dynasties in the Seleukid state see Chrubasik 2021 (particularly p.165 for Jerusalem and Antiochos III).

[130] 20.2: *οἵτινες ἀντιστῆναι βουληθέντες*; 20.3: *τοῖς ἄρχουσιν*; 20.4: *ὡς οὖν ταῦτα πάντα ἤκουσαν Ἀλεξάνδρῳ ὑπείκειν βουλεύονται. Καὶ τὰς ἱερατικὰς ἐσθῆτας ἱερεῖς ἐνδυσάμενοι.* Cf. the four groups indicated in Antiochos III's letter (*Antiquities* 12.142) as free from the poll tax: Gerousia, priests, temple scribes, and holy choir. Three out of four are part of the temple personnel.

[131] One wonders to what degree this shift represents also a major change in the priestly cadre. Politically, such a change certainly seems in place, pushing out Ptolemaic supporters and opening the resources and benefits of Antiochos to rising pro-Seleukids. Jerome, or perhaps Porphyrios, connected these events with the migration of the priestly Onias to Egypt and the foundation of a temple there. The contextualization is of course mistaken (Gruen 1997), but one wonders whether it derived from historical awareness of an actual event—a significant pro-Seleukid personnel change in the temple during in early days of Seleukid Judea.

declare that the form of the priests is godlike (θεοειδὲς) and ask which god it is that is attended upon with such form. The point is driven home by Alexander's declaration that he had never seen anything so impressive among "our" priests.[132] It is a remarkable feature of the story that the surprising twist in the plot is achieved merely through the visual effect, created by the priestly "good order" (εὐταξία). As we shall see, this narrative feature is replicated also in the stories discussed in chapters 3 and 4.

Another remarkable feature of the story, directly related to the collective presentation of Judean priestly authorities, is the absence of any focus on the high priest himself. The presiding high priest throughout the dramatic struggles of the Fourth and Fifth Syrian Wars was probably Simon II, son of Onias II and a main contributor to the formation of the mythical figure of "Simon the Just."[133] That his name was omitted from the Seleukid *Romance* is reasonable enough—the story is projected back to the time of Alexander, and naming the high priest presiding at the time of writing would unhinge the delicate interplay between historical romance and present-day reality. As we shall see in chapter 3, the history of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition would do historical justice with Simon at a later date.

It is less obvious why the story does not even refer to the very existence of the position of high priest, let alone mention the presiding officer by his name. Naturally, an omission is always harder to explain than an inclusion, yet a possible answer may nevertheless be gleaned from the mechanism of the Seleukid regime. We have already met Ptolemy son of Thraseas, the Ptolemaic governor of Koile Syria who defected to the side of Antiochos III and helped to effect his victory in the Fifth Syrian War. According to Josephus (*Antiquities* 12.138) Ptolemy was the recipient of the letter from Antiochos that ensured the privileges of Jerusalem. According to the Hefzibah inscription, his official title within the newly installed Seleukid regime was general and high priest (στρατηγὸς καὶ ἀρχιερεύς).[134] Thus, the important political standing of this high priesthood in the framework of Seleukid provincial government could "lead to a marginalization of the Judean high priest, who became, for official purposes, a mere priest among others."[135] If this suggestion is accepted, it further serves to accentuate the

[132] 20.4: *τούτους δὲ Ἀλέξανδρος ἰδὼν ἐδεδίει τοῦ σχήματος…προσκαλεσάμενος δὲ ἕνα τῶν ἱερέων λέγει αὐτῷ· ὡς θεοειδὲς ὑμῶν τὸ σχῆμα, φράσον δή μοι, καὶ τίνα ὑμεῖς σέβεσθε θεὸν, ὃς τοιῷδε ἐξυπηρετεῖται σχήματι. οὐ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς παρ᾽ ἡμῖν θεοῖς τοιαύτην εὐταξίαν εἶδον ἱερέων.*

[133] The outline of the high priestly dynasty during these times appears in Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.157, 224. The chronological coordination in book 12 is quite awkward and much too complex to discuss here. For the location of Simon II around and during the transition from Ptolemaic to Seleukid rule see VanderKam 2004, 181–8; Amitay 2007; Eckhardt 2016, 62.

[134] For the original publication of this inscription see Landau 1966. The identification of the inscription's Ptolemy with the Ptolemaic-turned-Seleukid general, and with the recipient of the letter in Josephus, is widely and justly accepted: Landau 1966, 66; Gera 1987, 67; Piejko 1991, 255; Eckhardt 2016, 59–63; Heinrichs 2018, 286.

[135] Eckhardt 2016, 63. For the political importance of Seleukid ἀρχιερεῖς see also Chrubasik 2019.

attentiveness of the author of the Seleukid *Romance* to the nuances of the Seleukid regime.

To recap, the literary scheme identifying the Seleukids with Alexander, the exhortation to accept Seleukid rule, and the celebration of the Judean temple as the agreed and revered meeting point of foreign and local rule will all have been very much to the liking of the Seleukid government. The monotheizing aspects of the Seleukid *Romance* might be another matter. To begin with, Alexander's increasing monotheism could very well offend any among the audience who cultivated a true faith in the ancient Greek and Near Eastern divinities. From the standpoint of state religion, Alexander's position in the Seleukid *Romance* could also run foul of the royal ruler cult—a religious-political institution that Antiochos the Great took pride in promoting.[136] Did the positive effects of the work outweigh, from the non-Judean standpoint, its outrage against the old gods and the new? Could its offensive ideas be brushed aside with a frown, or perhaps with a joking dismissal of Judean quirkiness? However we may answer these questions, it is probably safe to assume that the Seleukid *Romance* was aimed mostly at a Judean audience, and that for Seleukid government circles—to the degree that they were exposed to it—the author trusted that the positive glow of the Seleukids would outshine any faith-based offense.

The actual Seleukid reaction to our text cannot be evinced, or even conjectured, due to a complete lack of evidence. There is, however, contemporary evidence that allows us at least to consider the possibility that the author of the Seleukid *Romance* may have been writing in earnest, however preposterous the idea might sound with the benefit of hindsight, when he envisioned a Seleukid monarch who would at some point adopt Judaism, or at least a hierarchical theological system with the God of Israel at its head. A prime comparandum appears in the various court stories of Daniel and his friends. At the end of the story of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he recognizes Daniel's intelligence, bows down before him, and declares: "In sooth, your god is the god of gods, the master of kings and the discloser of secrets!" (2:47). At the conclusion of the story of the golden statue and the three friends Nebuchadnezzar calls the god of Israel "the highest god" (אלהא עליא; 3:26) and issues dire warnings against anyone who might speak wrong against him (3:29). The Babylonian king's education is completed in the third story, beginning with his dream about the cosmic tree and his banishment from his throne and from his senses. After regaining both, he blesses the highest god and recognizes his cosmic rule (4:31–4). In the story of Darius the Mede (Daniel in the lion's den) the king, clearly appreciative of both the Judean minister and his

[136] As has been argued and demonstrated by Gruen 1999 and Erickson 2018, Antiochos III was probably not the first Seleukid monarch to promote and enjoy a cult as divine king. It may well be, however, that this phenomenon increased during his time, and even more so in the time of Antiochos IV, so-called Epiphanes.

deity, calls upon "the living god" and continues to write to all his kingdom with the order "to tremble and revere the god of Daniel, a living god who exists for ever, whose kingdom shall suffer no harm and whose rule (is) till the end (of time)."[137] The notion of the living god stands also at the heart of the deuterocanonical story of Daniel and the Dragon (14.23–42), where the serpentine creature is juxtaposed as truly living over against the idols made of stone, metal, or wood. These writings, we must remember, had immense influence during the time in question. The depiction of Alexander in the Seleukid *Romance* can be conceived as a new and more advanced stage in this imaginary process of the foreign kings' growing acceptance of and preference for the Judean deity.[138]

It is against this background that we should read the Seleukid *Romance*'s expression of Alexander's admiration to the Judean god. Won over by the astounding priestly attire, Alexander inquires as to the identity of the deity so finely revered. The priests reply that they worship one god, maker of heaven and earth, and all things seen and unseen, a god no one has been able to explain. Alexander's response is remarkable (20.4): he calls the divinity "a truly great god" (*ἀληθῶς μεγάλου θεοῦ*), proclaims that "your god shall be my god" (*θεὸς ὑμῶν ἔσται μου θεός*), styles the divinity, crucially, as "a living god" (*τῷ ζῶντι θεῷ*) and finally uses the familiar biblical expression "Lord, the God" (*κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ*). These expressions of admiration by Alexander seem to set him on a direct path towards a new faith. The proclamation that "your god shall be my god" is strongly reminiscent of the words by Ruth the Moabite (Ruth 1:16), the archetypal convert to Judaism in the Hebrew Bible, and a co-founder of the royal Davidic messianic house. The use of the phrase "Lord, the God"—familiar from both canonical and extra-canonical literature—has Alexander taking after at least one habit of his newly adopted faith.[139]

Yet the Jewish faith requires not only an adherence to the God of Israel, but also abnegation of all other gods. In the Judean episode this tendency is still implicit: by styling the Judean god as "a living god" Alexander drops a hint that other gods are not living, and thus irrelevant, or at least greatly inferior. According to Delling, the principle of monotheism is manifest also in the expression "great god," as in Psalm 86:10: "For you are great and work wonders, you are god alone."[140] This interpretation, however, requires some refinement.

[137] 6:21 MT: אלהא חיא; 6:27 MT: להון זאעין [זיעין] ודחלין מן קדם אלהה די דניאל די הוא אלהא חיא וקים לעלמין ומלכותה די לא תתחבל ושלטנה עד סופא.

[138] The full effect of this process is evident in 2 Maccabees, where Antiochos IV is envisioned on his deathbed as promising that "he would become a Jew and, visiting all inhabited places, would proclaim the power of God"! (9:17, trans. Schwartz 2008, 350). The words of 2 Maccabees are openly sarcastic. The king would die, as his evil hubris is beyond redemption. We may perhaps see in this episode a bitter reply to the Seleukid *Romance*'s unbridled optimism.

[139] For further analysis of these expressions see Delling 1981, 9–10.

[140] Delling 1981, 8; כי גדול אתה ועשׂה נפלאות אתה אלהים לבדך. In the LXX (= 94.10): *ὅτι μέγας εἶ σὺ καὶ ποιῶν θαυμάσια, σὺ εἶ ὁ θεὸς μόνος ὁ μέγας.*

In Exodus 18:11, also cited by Delling, we read: "Now I know that Yhwh is greater than all gods."[141] From this declaration of faith it is clear that God is great not because he alone exists, but because he is greater than other, existing divinities (this is particularly evident in the LXX translation). The other gods are thus not abnegated, they are merely superseded. Such is also the impression in other cases where the term "great" (גדול) is used in relation to God.[142] An alternative interpretation, which is possibly better suited to Alexander's attitude at this stage of the story, is offered through comparison with, for example, Psalms 99:2–3: "Yhwh in Zion is great and superior over all nations; they will admit your name—great, awesome and holy."[143] The result of Alexander's initial meeting with the Judean priests and their divinity is thus not yet a wholesale acceptance of Judaism and of the monotheistic principle, but rather a recognition of God's superiority and friendship with his followers.

Alexander does, however, make another step towards monotheism, following his conquest of Egypt. It is not explicitly clear from the story as we have it why this should be so. True, Alexander escaped death after bathing in the cold river. Yet he was not saved by any sort of divine intervention, or even by Judean hands, but rather by the expertise of Philippos the physician. Nevertheless, it is in his proclamation atop the high tower that Alexander demonstrates a change in his religious outlook.[144] To begin with (and still in indirect speech), Alexander makes a negative pronouncement concerning the gods of the land, of Olympos, and of the sea. The verb used here, *ἐξουθένωσε*, is especially intriguing. Normally, it means "to despise." However, in Judges 9:38 it translates the Hebrew מאסתה, signifying new-found contempt for an erstwhile favorite. If this is the meaning intended here, it demonstrates all the more clearly Alexander's abandonment of polytheism. This is stated in even clearer terms with the next few words: "and he proclaimed a single god" (*καὶ μόνον θεὸν ἀνεκήρυξεν*).

Another point which deserves renewed attention in Alexander's proclamation is the reference to God as "borne upon the Seraphim and extolled by the thrice-holy utterance" (*ἐπὶ τῶν Σεραφὶμ ἐποχούμενον καὶ τρισαγίᾳ φωνῇ δοξαζόμενον*).

[141] Exodus 18:11: עתה ידעתי כי גדול יהוה מכל האלהים; LXX: *νῦν ἔγνων ὅτι μέγας κύριος παρὰ πάντας τοὺς θεούς*.

[142] Psalms 95:3, 96:4, 135:5; 1 Chronicles 16:25; 2 Chronicles 2:4. For neutral uses in this regard see Deuteronomy 7:21; Jeremiah 10:6; Psalms 145:3, 147:5.

[143] יהוה בציון גדול ורם הוא על כל העמים. יודו שמך גדול ונורא קדוש הוא. LXX: *κύριος ἐν Σιων μέγας, καὶ ὑψηλός ἐστιν ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς λαούς*· See a similar approach in Malachi 1:14; Psalms 47:3, 77:14.

[144] A possible conjecture that could explain the Seleukid *Romance*'s literary choice is that the alliance between the Seleukid dynasty and the Judean priestly leadership might hold the promise of a further combination of interests, one that would include also the Judean community in Alexandria. With his daughter Kleopatra already planted in the royal palace, Antiochos might have hoped for the support of the Judean neighborhood nearby. If that was indeed the case, it was a vain hope. No other source provides information that might support this conjecture, but it is worth noting Josephus, *War* 2.487, the only other source I know to claim that Alexander needed military assistance against the Egyptians. Since it is made apropos the role of Judeans in the foundation of Alexandria and of their civic status there, it may possibly be an echo of this part in the Seleukid *Romance*.

As we have seen (section 1.2), it was this expression in particular that caught Pfister's attention, and led him to identify the Egyptian episode as belonging to a Judean context. Pfister already recognized that the mention of the Seraphim here is hardly coincidental, and is meant to echo, and simultaneously to replace, the role played by the quintessentially Hellenistic-Egyptian deity Serapis. It is less clear, however, what message the author of the Seleukid *Romance* may have intended to convey with this reference. The most obvious interpretative option would be to follow the line of argument created by Alexander's gradual adoption of monotheism, and to postulate this reference as yet another jibe against polytheism. Thus, while other deities are generally contemned by Alexander, Serapis is singled out particularly as subservient to the god of the Bible.[145] This interpretation is congruent with the unusual expression used by Alexander (this time in direct speech): *ὦ θεὲ θεῶν*, god of gods. While it is hardly represents pure monotheism, in that it recognizes a plurality of gods, it creates a clear hierarchy, in which the god of the Bible reigns supreme.

Nevertheless, the implicit reference to Serapis and the connection created thereby between the syncretistic Ptolemaic deity and the biblical Seraphim may indicate a wider, more complex conceptual context. The basic premise of such an interpretation is that Hellenistic Judaism could in many cases be open to positive cultural exchanges with the non-monotheistic, Greek-speaking world.[146] An excellent example comes from the *Letter of Aristeas*, a Greek treatise written by an anonymous Judean author, who probably lived in the second century BCE in Alexandria (or elsewhere in Hellenistic Egypt), and famously provides the earliest and fullest story of the Torah's translation into Greek.[147] At one point the author of *Aristeas* makes a Greek-Alexandrian interlocutor claim that like everybody else the Judeans worship a god who is the overseer and founder of all things, whom "we" call Zen and Zeus.[148] The anonymous author, a faithful Judean strongly invested in the Torah and in making it accessible to a wide Greek-reading audience, thus had no qualms about equating the god of Israel and the supreme deity of the Greek pantheon. This open and accommodating attitude is particularly relevant because Zeus, in turn, could be and was commonly identified with Serapis.[149] The most striking (if rather late) example for this kind of open and accommodating approach comes from Asturica Augusta (modern Astorga in northeastern Spain) in the third century CE, where an anonymous worshipper openly proclaimed in writing: *ΕΙΣ ΖΕΥΣ ΣΕΡΑΠΙΣ ΙΑΩ*—Zeus, Serapis,

[145] Literally *ἐποχούμενον* means "borne" or "riding," but the same word also signifies belonging to a higher order of magnitude or potency (*LSJ* s.v. 3).

[146] For extensive introductions to this notion see Hengel 1974; Gruen 1998a.

[147] Hadas 1951, 3–73; Kahana 1951–6, II, 3–6; Honigman 2003, 128–30; Rajak 2009, 24–63, esp. 34; Paget 2014, 106–11; Wright 2015, 16–30.

[148] Ch. 16: *Τὸν γὰρ πάντων ἐπόπτην καὶ κτίστην θεὸν οὗτοι σέβονται, ὃν καὶ πάντες, ἡμεῖς δέ, βασιλεῦ, προσονομάζοντες ἑτέρως Ζῆνα καὶ Δία.*

[149] For extensive documentation see Merkelbach 2001.

Iao (are) one![150] Of course, none of this can be ascribed to the author of the Seleukid *Romance*. Yet it is at least possible that, unlike all other deities of earth, heaven, and sea openly despised by Alexander, Serapis has been somehow co-opted and incorporated into the Seleukid *Romance*'s monotheistic framework.[151]

A final issue, whose discussion I have postponed so far, is the third monotheizing episode in epsilon: Alexander's seclusion of the impure nations—headed by Gog and Magog—beyond the Breasts of the North. This part of the story (which I shall call "the northern episode") takes up all of chapter 39, and is too long for a full translation to be given here. It would be worthwhile, however, to supply a short summary before we proceed to examine it.

The northern episode takes place towards the end of Alexander's story, after the final defeat of the Indian king Poros (ch. 37) and an encounter with the Amazons (ch. 38). It begins with Alexander's decision to wage war on Eurymithras, the ruler of the Bersiloi, because the latter would not yield and bow down before the Makedonian army. Eurymithras learns of Alexander's intentions, and the two leaders embark on a complex series of maneuvers, including the deployment of intelligence units, surprising night marches, and finally a full-scale battle. As usual, the Makedonian forces gain the upper hand and defeat their enemies. Seleukos, as ever at Alexander's side, plays a prominent role in various parts of the action (39.1–3).

Following this victory Alexander continues to pursue the defeated peoples of the North for two hundred days, until he reaches two grand mountains in the unseen, or hidden, world (ἐν τῷ ἀφανεῖ κόσμῳ), which he styles "Breasts of the North" (§4). Thinking that they might be useful in creating an impassable barrier to shut out the fleeing northerners, he stands up and prays (§5):

> O! God of gods and master of all creation,[152] [you] who with your word have created all things (δημιουργήσας τὰ σύμπαντα)—heaven and earth—there is nothing of which you are incapable. For all things are as slaves that obey the word of your commandment. For you say, and immediately they are created; you command, and they come into being. You alone are eternal, without a beginning,[153] unseen, a sole god, and there is none except you. For it is in your name and in your will that I did the things I did, and you have put in my hand the entire world. Therefore I call on your many-hymned name: fulfill my

[150] *CIL* II suppl. 5665; Dunand 1975, 170.

[151] For further attempts to "Judaize" Serapis see Mussies 1979. How any of this ought to be read against the Seleukid interest in Ptolemaic Egypt following the Fifth Syrian War, and the inter-dynastic wedding of Ptolemy V Epiphanes and Kleopatra I (Antiochos III's daughter and sister of Antiochos IV Epiphanes), is anyone's guess.

[152] In Greek: κύριε πάσης κτίσεως. For similar use in apocryphal Jewish-Hellenistic literature see, e.g., Judith 9:12: βασιλεῦ πάσης κτίσεώς; 3 Maccabees 2:2: δέσποτα πάσης κτίσεως.

[153] In Greek: ἄναρχος, which can also mean "not ruled by any other." It is possible that both meanings are implied here.

> entreaty and will these two mountains to come together even as I ask it; do not overlook me, a struggling suppliant before you, speaking these bold words. For I know your solicitude and high goodness toward me.

Alexander's prayer is granted (§6), and the two mountains come together, until they are only twelve cubits distant from one another. Alexander again praises God, and builds a bronze gate to block the remaining passage. He then proceeds to treat the construction with a special material, so as to render it resistant to both fire and iron. By so doing Alexander shuts out twenty-two kings, complete with the nations under their rule, beyond what he now calls the Breasts of the North and the Caspian Gates (§7). The list of the secluded nations is provided, headed by Gog and Magog.[154] The text goes on to explain (§8) that Alexander shut out the twenty-two nations behind the gates because of their impurity (*ἀκαθαρσία*, focusing for the most part on their uncivilized eating habits), and wishing that they not pollute the lands of civilization. Returning thence to the inhabited world (*οἰκουμένη*), Alexander continues with his final adventures, dominated by the long story of his dealings with Queen Kandake.

Since the northern episode belongs to a much later part of epsilon than the literary unit comprising Judean and Egypt, it raises once again the question of its relation to the Seleukid *Romance*. Furthermore, at least part of the northern episode shares some close similarities with the Greek translation of the chapter dealing with Alexander the Great in the late seventh-century CE Syriac-Christian *Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodius*. As we have seen at the very beginning of this chapter, this fact underlies much of the consensus concerning epsilon's *terminus post quem*. Additionally, this episode appears also in the so-called lambda recension of the *Romance* (an eighth-century elaboration of the beta recension), which is also the first to contain two very famous episodes of the *Romance* tradition—Alexander's flying apparatus and the diving bell.[155] Lambda does not, however, contain the Judean and the Egyptian episodes. One must therefore consider the possibility that the northern episode, including the tantalizing mention of Gog and Magog, may not have appeared in the Seleukid *Romance*, and is thus not directly relevant to the tradition of Alexander in Jerusalem.

To answer this question we turn first to the similarities and the differences in Ps.-Methodius and in epsilon. The similarities in the general outline of the story—in the Breasts of the North toponym, in the reference to Gog and Magog,

[154] The manuscript of epsilon actually reads *Γώθ*, *Μαγώθ*, but Gog and Magog are clearly meant here. The first surviving author to identify Gog with Goth is Ambrose of Milan, writing in the shadow of the disastrous defeat suffered by the Eastern Roman emperor Valens to Gothic forces in the battle of Adrianople (378 CE); Humphries 2010. For the much-discussed and difficult topic of Alexander's gates and the seclusion of Gog and Magog the most useful starting point is still Anderson 1928 and 1932; more recently Schmidt 2008.

[155] Van Thiel 1959 (academic edition); Jouanno 2002, 305–38; Stoneman 2011, 7–8.

and in many of the names on the list of shut out nations—are unmistakable. It cannot be disputed, therefore, that there is some connection between the two texts, especially between Ps.-Methodius §8 and epsilon 39.6–8. On the other hand, there are also very remarkable differences. To begin with, the material that does appear in both versions is nevertheless presented in a different order. Secondly and more importantly, the entire section of the story beginning with the campaign against Eurymithras and continuing all the way to Alexander's petition to God in the first person (39.1–5) is unique to epsilon, and thus cannot have been drawn from any version of Ps.-Methodius. This fact was noticed already by Delling, who demonstrated at length and in compelling fashion that sections 39.4–5 are independent of the material deriving from Ps.-Methodius, and that they have distinct Judeo-Hellenistic literary characteristics. Delling concludes that this story, like the Judean-Egyptian unit, goes back to the Greek-speaking Judean diaspora, but remains uncertain whether it comes from the same source as chapters 20 and 24.[156] All this seems to leave us with three options regarding the material in §§1–5: (a) that it comes from an independent, heretofore unrecognized source, which may possibly have served as a source, directly or indirectly, for Ps.-Methodius as well; (b) that it is an original contribution by epsilon; and (c) that it derives from the same source as the Judean and Egyptian episodes, that is, from the Seleukid *Romance*. Obviously, if either of the first two options is correct, the northern episode, fascinating as it surely is, is not relevant to the discussion of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition.

There is, however, good reason to think that the third option is the right one. That is, once again, the Seleukid connection. The material that is unique to epsilon includes both an important role for Seleukos and a resoundingly monotheistic declaration by Alexander. Thus, in order for the first option be correct, we must conjure a source that included both interests: the Seleukid and the monotheistic. The introduction of yet another such source into the discussion at this point seems quite unwarranted, especially given the by now familiar tenor of Alexander's confessions of faith, perfectly in line with his earlier style in chapters 20 and 24. The possibility that the unique material in epsilon is an original contribution by epsilon, who adopted and adapted the story of Ps.-Methodius, and added to it a Seleukos mention and a heart-rending prayer by Alexander, inspired by, but not derived from, the same source as the previous monotheizing episodes, appears to be extremely unlikely. The likeliest option by far is that the reference to Seleukos, Alexander's monotheistic monologue, Gog and Magog, and the Breasts of the North were all derived by epsilon, like so much else, from the Seleukid *Romance*.

[156] Delling 1981, 26–50, esp. 47 for the last point.

In this case, what does the northern episode add to our understanding of the Seleukid *Romance*? The most obvious detail is the inclusion of Gog and Magog. Besides providing us with the earliest mention of the two names together—unlike Ezekiel 38:2, where Gog is still one person, the king of the land Magog, and earlier by some three centuries than John's Revelation (20:8)—it puts us squarely at the heart of the biblical eschatological tradition. In that respect, the "vision" (חזון) of Daniel 11:14, which I see as a reference to the agenda (if not necessarily the text) of the Seleukid *Romance*, is emphatically complete. The order envisioned here is of the Seleukids as real-life defenders against the ultimate enemy, and also as an embodiment of what appears to be the last chapter in human history, leading to The End.[157]

Turning to Alexander's prayer, it clearly demonstrates another step by the Makedonian king in the direction of a more clearly defined monotheism. Whereas in his proclamation from the tower in Alexandria Alexander contemned all other gods (with the possible, though uncertain, exception of Serapis), here we already have a complete negation of any other divinities: you are "a sole god, and there is none except you."[158] The developments that occupy the time between these two episodes do not provide a reason for this deepening of Alexander's monotheism. True, in the meantime Alexander successfully engaged and defeated Poros, but this was achieved without any obvious sign of divine intervention, and in any case is not inherently different from Alexander's victory over Darius, which had been achieved before his first encounter with the Judean god. However, this small yet significant shift can perhaps be interpreted in light of its context and of Alexander's request. So far, all of Alexander's feats and successes have been accomplished within the realm of natural possibility. In this instance Alexander prays for a miracle.[159] This unusual entreaty explains the strong emphasis both on God's role as creator and on the subjection of all physical creation to his will.[160]

The fulfillment of Alexander's request by God is highly significant. The main occurrence in the story—God's direct intervention in the reshaping of physical reality at the direct request of a human actor—is rather rare in biblical and early Jewish literature. An obvious parallel to this episode appears in the story of

[157] For the role of Alexander as the usherer and symbol of the penultimate period in history, as envisioned in Judean sources, see Amitay 2010a, 104–22. These pages include an earlier, more naïve treatment of the material treated here.

[158] 39.5: *σὺ εἶ…θεὸς μόνος, καὶ οὐκ ἔστι πλὴν σοῦ.*

[159] In *War* 7.244–51 Josephus relates an Alan invasion of Media, through the mountain pass formerly shut by Alexander with iron gates. In this story, hitherto the earliest known reference to such gates, no miracles are recorded.

[160] Compare with AR alpha 1.33 (esp. §10). In this story, taking place in Egypt, the god Serapis appears to Alexander in his dream, and promises that his name can never be removed from his newly founded Alexandria by any other king, just like Alexander could not move a certain high mountain from its place. In the version dedicated to the god of Israel, even this impossible feat becomes possible. If the author of epsilon, or of the Seleukid *Romance*, wrote in awareness of the Alexandrian version of alpha, this may be understood as a jibe against Serapis, presented as inferior to the Judean god.

Joshua's war against the coalition of the five Amorite kings. From the very beginning God fights on Israel's side, casting terrible hailstones at the Amorites and killing more enemy soldiers than the swords of the Israelites. However, as the battle continues for a long while, Joshua addresses God and requests that the sun stop in its track and continue to cast light, until the Israelite host has exacted revenge to the fullest. God indulges, and leaves the sun to stand still in mid-sky. "And there was nothing like that day before or after, that YHWH listened to a man."[161] This last statement by the biblical author is somewhat exaggerated. One remembers, for example, the judge Gideon-Jerubbaal, at whose request the dew fell specifically on but not around, and then around but not on, his fleece; or the prophet Elijah, who successfully summoned heavenly fire to descend on God's soaking altar on Mt. Carmel; or even of the post-biblical Honi the Circler, who according to rabbinic legend could induce God to bring down rain, and exactly the required amount at that.[162] Nevertheless, the inclusion of Alexander in this small elite group of personages who commanded God's attention and goodwill to such an extent sends a powerful message.

As with the previous monotheizing episodes, the message cut both ways. To a Judean audience it indicated that both Alexander and the Seleukids were not merely "kosher" but that they may truly be the favorites of the Almighty. To a Seleukid audience it indicated not only that the god of the Judeans was the real force behind Alexander's successes, but also that there were no limits to the Judean god's beneficence, and that this beneficence was available also to faithful monarchs of non-Judean extraction. To both audiences as one the northern episode—complementing the visit to Judea and the proclamation in Alexandria—at least hinted that God's favor and beneficence could lead a foreign ruler into the fold of monotheistic faith.

1.6 Conclusion

The main conclusion of this chapter is that there once existed a literary work, called here the Seleukid *Romance*. This work served as a main source, but clearly not the only one, for the composition of AR epsilon. The Seleukid *Romance* supplied epsilon with its unique take on the geography of Alexander's campaign, with the prominent roles allotted to Seleukos and Antiochos, and with three distinctly monotheizing episodes that create a firm bond of faith and trust between Alexander and the god of Judea. This combination of interests leads to the

[161] Joshua 10:8–14. The quotation comes from verse 14: ולא היה כיום ההוא לפניו ואחריו לשמוע יהוה בקול איש.

[162] Gideon: Judges 6:36–40. Elijah: 1 Kings 18:36–8. Honi: Josephus, *AJ* 14.22; *Mishnah Ta'anit* 3.8; *Yerushalmi Ta'anit* 3.9 (Vilna) 66d (Venice); *Bavli Ta'anit* 23a; *Megillat Ta'anit* Parma ms. on 20th Adar (Noam 2003, 123–8, 309–11).

conclusion that the Seleukid *Romance* was written by a Judean author, acting in the context of the Seleukid realm.

The main literary premise of this putative work is that the fictional Alexander is a symbol for the Seleukid realm in general, and for Antiochos III the Great in particular. The Seleukid symbolism is achieved through the various uses made of Seleukos and Antiochos as proxies for Alexander. The particular identification of Antiochos III comes both from the similarity of Alexander's fictional route to his own history from the *anabasis* to the Fifth Syrian War, and from the fact that it was he, of all the Seleukid kings, who managed at long last to reclaim the lands grabbed by the house of Ptolemy from the house of Seleukos a century earlier. Our story deals with this dramatic shift of overlordship from the Judean point of view.[163] This notion, as I shall argue in the next chapters, is essential to the tradition as a whole.

In political terms, the most immediate conclusion is that the Seleukid *Romance* is a strong supporter of Judean acceptance of and cooperation with Seleukid rule. The initial hesitation of the Judean leaders, whether they could even keep their options open, is perfectly natural given the violent vicissitudes of the Fifth Syrian War. However, they are dispelled first by Alexander's display of ferociousness, and then by his intuitive recognition of God's greatness. Like the books of Daniel and Esther, the Seleukid *Romance* engages with the quintessential question of Judea's relations with foreign empires. The answer it provides is double. First, that sometimes resistance is futile. Second, that Judea has much to offer to any foreign overlord who might be inclined to listen. We have no way to discern the personal opinion of Antiochos III on Judaism, but his treatment of the newly acquired Judea, I argue, encouraged the worldview presented in the Seleukid *Romance*.

In literary terms, our discussion is limited severely by the inaccessibility of the work itself. The author of epsilon both mixed the original material of the Seleukid *Romance* with more mainstream AR material (Nektanebo's fatherhood of Alexander is the most obvious example), and overlayed it with a thick layer of Byzantine Greek. The literary quality or even the tenor of the Seleukid *Romance* appear to be beyond the reach of our knowledge. However, in terms of literary history the Seleukid *Romance* now stands as an important early stage in the evolution of the *Alexander Romance* as a whole. Its relation to the putative Ptolemaic origins of the mainstream AR merits further discussion, and is sure to generate further insight into the tradition as a whole.[164]

[163] For the influence of these events on apocalyptic writing in Judea see Honigman 2022, 503. In general, Honigman rightly points to a variety of cultural sources of influence available to the literati of the Jerusalem temple. Her observation is true, in my mind, also for the Seleukid *Romance*.

[164] For arguments concerning the Ptolemaic origins of the AR see Braun 1938, 39–41; Berg 1973; Aerts 1994, 31–2; Fraser 1996, 42–6; Jasnow 1997, 101–2; Stoneman and Gargiulo 2007: xxvii–xxxii; Ladynin 2018; Nawotka 2017: 25–7; Amitay 2023.

As for the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition, the story first told by the Seleukid *Romance* and then reproduced in epsilon (and later in gamma) now stands as its earliest manifestation. As we shall see in chapter 4, it also made a major contribution to the most famous of the Alexander in Jerusalem stories, that of Josephus. The role of this story in the tradition will be discussed also in chapter 5 and in the Conclusion.

Appendix A

Gog and Magog, the Khazar Question, and the Dating of Epsilon

In 1971, surely as part of the work on the academic edition of epsilon, Trumpf published a short note in the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* on "Alexander, the Bersiloi and the Breasts of the North." In it he made two points. The first concerns the proper name of Alexander's enemies in the northern episode. Gamma, which before epsilon's publication was the only version known to scholarship, gives the name as Belsyroi. Trumpf argued for the originality of epsilon's rendering of the name—Bersiloi. The switch between the two liquid consonants (r, l) is easily understood. But there is much more to it than an auditory or scribal mistake. Unlike the mysterious Belsyroi, the Bersiloi were a historical people. "The land of Berzilia or Bersilia was the homeland of the Khazars," wrote Trumpf.[165] He identified the Bersiloi with the *Βαρσηλτ*, mentioned by the Byzantine historian Theophylaktos Simokattes, a brief moment before the onset of Islam, in the attempt to explain who was who among the Huns at the time of Justinian.[166] This connection, together with the identification of the tradition of the Breasts of the North with Ps.-Methodius' *Apocalypse*, underlay Trumpf's argument that the origins of the northern episode should not be sought in Hellenistic Judaism, for it cannot be earlier than the end of the seventh century CE.[167]

This dating of epsilon, already familiar to the readers of this very long chapter, is accepted by Jouanno, who adds the testimony of two later Byzantine writers: Nikephoros the Patriarch (758–828) and Theophanes the Confessor (*c.*760–818). According to Nikephoros, following the dispersal of a Hunnic family-based confederation, "the tribe of the Khazars, issuing from the interior of the country called Bersilia, where they had lived next to the Sarmatians, invaded with complete impunity all the places that are beyond the Euxine sea."[168] Theophanes, in his account of the eleventh year of the emperor Constantine IV (678/9), writes that after the collapse of the Hunnic confederacy "the great nation of the Khazars issued forth from the inner depths of Berzilia, that is from the First Sarmatia, and conquered all the country beyond the sea as far as the Sea of Pontos…"[169] Despite the

[165] Trumpf 1971, 326.

[166] P. 258 l.19 in the edition of de Boor and Wirth 1887. Note that *Βαρσηλτ* and *Βέρσιλοι* are close, but not similar, and that some of the manuscripts give *Σαρσηλτ*. The identification is thus less than certain. Moravcsik (1958, II, 59) gives this identification of *Βαρσηλτ* along with a few other suggestions, and does not indicate which, if indeed any, is preferable.

[167] Trumpf 1971, 327–8.

[168] Nikephoros, *Breviarum Historicum* 35 (trans. Mango 1990, 89).

[169] *Chronographia* 358 (trans. Mango and Scott 1997, 498).

rather thin body of available evidence, the rise of the Khazars to the position of regional hegemony has been dated convincingly to the 660s.[170]

The identification of Bersilia/Berzilia as the original homeland of the Khazars, combined with the mention of the Bersiloi, are thus sufficient to place epsilon's origin in the context of early medieval Byzantium, even without reliance on the alleged borrowing from Ps.-Methodius. This, however, does not necessarily entail that the entire northern episode, let alone all of the monotheizing elements in epsilon, must belong to that period as well. Based on the arguments and conclusions in this chapter, the easiest explanation for the mention of the Bersiloi would be that the author of epsilon interpolated into the story he had found in the Seleukid *Romance* a name familiar to his own audience, in order to add some contemporary spice to an already exciting and theologically laden story. Yet there is reason to think that he did more than that. The reason is that the Khazars were much more than just another steppe nation, appearing for the first time on the stage of history. Rather, by the time in question they had started building a powerful empire in modern southern Russia and the Ukraine, and most importantly, its ruling elite at some point adopted Judaism!

An unmistakable connection between the Judaization of the Khazars and Alexander's northern episode appears in the commentary on Matthew (the *Liber Generationis*) by the Latin exegete and educator Christianus of Stavelot, writing in the 860s or 870s in present-day Belgium.[171] Christianus first mentions Alexander apropos Matthew 21:21.[172] The scene takes place on the day after Jesus' dramatic entrance to Jerusalem and the cleansing of the temple. On the morning after, already on his way back to Jerusalem, the hungry Jesus comes upon a fig tree that unfortunately has no fruit. Jesus curses the tree, which withers immediately. When the disciples are amazed by Jesus' performative powers, he promises that if they keep strong in their faith, "not only will you do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea!' it will be done!" (21:21 NRSV). The mountain, Christianus explains according to Revelation 8:8 and Jeremiah 51:25, is clearly the devil. Yet should anyone none the less desire to take the Lord's word literally, and ask whether any of the saints had ever moved a mountain, Christianus reminds the readers that they should also remember that God successfully created all hills in convenient places, and that there is no reason to move them about; but also that Gregorios Nazianzenos had nevertheless once done it,

> And we also read about King Alexander, that in order to block Gog and Magog, who are now called Gazares, formerly a nation of the Huns, when he could not destroy them in war, he turned to God and prayed, and God augmented the mountain to block them, and as for what remained he himself blockaded with his own people, and stationed bronze gates under the very mountain.

A second mention of Alexander comes in the exegesis on Matthew 24:14. Asked by his disciples about his own present coming and about the coming of The End, Jesus retorts with a grim prediction of war and persecution. Yet at last, "the Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then The End will come" (NRSV). To this last part of the verse, Christianus offers the following commentary:[173]

[170] Zuckerman 2007, endorsed by Howard-Johnston 2007, 163.
[171] Chekin 1997; Huygens 2008, 7–11.
[172] *Liber Generationis* 17 (Huygens 2008, 335).
[173] *Liber Generationis* 24 (Huygens 2008, 436).

> Already we do not know of any nation under heaven, in which Christians are not present. For even in Gog and Magog, who are nations of the Huns—who are called by them Gazari—there is already one nation, which was the stronger among those whom Alexander led away, that has circumcised and observes all of Judaism. But the Bulgarii, who are also themselves a part of those seven nations, are being baptized daily.

The concatenation of these two stories indicates that, even if Christianus did not read epsilon himself, he was certainly exposed to the worldview represented in the northern episode.[174] And while he could conceivably derive the story of Alexander against Gog and Magog from Ps.-Methodius, directly or indirectly, the connection of Alexander with the Khazars is surely due to epsilon's own introduction of the Khazars into the story, under the name "Bersiloi." In other words, Christianus' explicit statement that the Khazars were dwellers of Gog and Magog is an interpretation not only of Matthew's Gospel but also of epsilon's more implicit reference.

The Alexander references in the *Liber Generationis* are all the more tantalizing in that Christianus also happens to be the earliest literary witness to the Judaization of the Khazars.[175] The evidence for the Khazar conversion is meager, contradictory, and confusing. Yet while there is still no consensus about the exact date of the official adoption of Judaism by the Khazar court (nor about the practical ramifications of such a decision), there is a more general agreement that this moment, important and dramatic as it surely was, can also be viewed as the culmination of a deeper process, which gathered momentum and came to fruition during the first two thirds of the ninth century CE.[176] This was a time of vigorous competition between the three monotheistic religions for the hearts and minds of the leadership, and population, in the three major empires of Anatolia, the Fertile Crescent, and Transcaucasia. Given the importance and power of the Khazar empire in the ninth century, as well as the ideological threat presented by its Judaization, it is remarkable, even astonishing, that "none of the contemporary sources emanating from their immediate neighbors make direct mention of the Khazar conversion."[177] Furthermore, while the deep involvement of the Byzantine empire with the Khazars might reasonably lead one "to look to Byzantine sources for a steady flow of information about the Khazars, throughout the three centuries of the khaganate's existence… bitter disappointment awaits

[174] According to Chekin (1997, 16, 22–4) Christianus possibly knew Greek and very likely had a connection to Byzantine culture, including a fellow Greek scholar by name of Eufemius. See also Shepard (1998, 15–16), who mentions the Greek informant and adds that he "or other Greeks inhabiting or visiting Francia would have been able to brief Christian directly on recent events in the east." According to Chekin (ibid.) the use of the spelling Gazari/Gazares, rather than *Χαζαροι*/Khazars, may indicate also an Italian connection, or at least influence. His conjectured date for Christian in the 860s or 870s relies on possible references to events in contemporary Benevento and Rome.

[175] Zuckerman 1995, 245; Chekin 1997; Golden 2007, 139.

[176] Zuckerman (1995) and Shepard (1998) point to a date shortly after 861—the year of the famous debate when a Jewish interlocutor managed to defeat an anonymous Muslim adversary and the illustrious St. Kyril, the Apostle to the Slavs. Golden (2007) and Brook (2018, 77–108) prefer a date before 837/8, when a special issue of Khazar coinage, based on the caliphate dirham standard, celebrated Moses as Allah's messenger in the place of Muhammad on the model Muslim coin (Kovalev 2004, 112–14). These coins need not, however, necessarily be interpreted as a sign of full conversion. The Khazar state was extremely heterogenic, with many Jews, both new converts and old-time religionists, in positions of power. The mint responsible for the mere five "Moses coins" that have survived may well have been influenced by Jewish ideas even before the full conversion argued for in the 860s. These coins do surely testify to the deep influence of Judaism in Khazaria in the decades leading up to the official conversion.

[177] Golden 2007, 139.

the historian. Very little is reported of the khaganate and the odd titbits of information supplied are entirely disconnected from one another."[178] This situation of the sources concerning the Khazar question lends further importance to epsilon's Bersilian-Khazar reference in the northern episode.

The key point is the decision by the author of epsilon to include the Bersiloi as Alexander's archenemy in the north, the victory over whom allowed for the shutting out of the impure nations. Epsilon deliberately put the Khazars not only outside the geographical and mental borders of the *oikoumenē*, but also on the wrong side of sacred history. Alexander, who by this stage of his religious development has already become a fully fledged monotheist, represents all that is culturally and theologically good. The Bersiloi-Khazars, on the other hand, are banded together with the enemy at the end of days, beyond the pale in any possible manner. This is a very strong statement, that may encapsulate much more than the anonymous author's personal racial and cultural prejudices.

In order to contextualize epsilon's Khazar reference, we ought to look to the history of Byzantine-Khazar relations and, in particular, to the role played therein by the Khazar adoption of Judaism. On the whole, this history suffers from a severe shortage of evidence. As the detailed studies of Noonan and Howard-Johnston have shown, the bits of information that we do possess, especially for the earlier two centuries of these relations, are few and far between.[179] Nevertheless, the general impression seems to indicate a long-term shift. If in earlier days the relationship ranged between an entente and an alliance, relations appear to have been exacerbated during the ninth century, and then escalated into a heated and violent rivalry. This long-term shift derived in the first place from the demands of *Realpolitik*. Yet the dramatic adoption of Judaism by the leadership of the Khazar state cannot but have played a role in the story. It must have caused considerable displeasure, annoyance, and apprehension in the Byzantine government and church. Considering the efforts exerted by the Byzantine military in constructing defense works for the Khazar army on the lower Don in the early 840s, and the continued efforts of the Byzantine church to spread Christianity in Khazaria, "the Khazars' adoption of Judaism in the early 860s would have been disappointing and humiliating for senior churchmen and statesmen in Byzantium."[180]

How does the history of Byzantine-Khazar relations bear on the dating of epsilon? While it cannot be denied that the conversion had a negative impact on the relationship, and thus provided an impetus for planting the Khazars among the ultimate enemies of biblical mythology, it cannot be ruled out that the mention of the Bersiloi might precede that event. The nations shut out by Alexander are presented as utterly barbarous, a sorry state that conversion to a biblical religion might seem at first glance to alleviate. Yet it is arguably the very adoption of Judaism, complete with a venerable cultural background and a sizeable population of coreligionists spread far and wide, that seemed alarming and dangerous to Byzantine eyes. As late as the 920s, the Byzantine patriarch Nicholas Mysticus, who still harbored hopes that the Khazars could be brought over to Christianity, nevertheless showed an "awareness that the Khazars as a 'nation' were now in a different, opposed religious camp to that of the Byzantines and were to that extent more alien than

[178] Howard-Johnston 2007, 165.

[179] Noonan 1990; Howard-Johnston 2007 (esp. 168–76).

[180] Shepard 1998, 20. See also Golden (2007, 161), who speaks of a "foreign policy defeat and undoubtedly the source of some resentment in Constantinople." Zuckerman saw the Jewish victory in the competition of faiths as "the origin of a lasting animosity between Khazaria and Byzantium" (1995, 242), describing the moment as a "watershed in the relations between the two countries" as well as "a slap in the face" and a theological challenge (2007, 400).

they had been before."[181] If, as indeed seems likelier to me, the barbed dart aimed by epsilon at the Khazars came apropos their conversion, it follows that the date of the conversion is also epsilon's *terminus post quem*, placing the work in either generation around the middle of the ninth century. It also follows that this uncommon Byzantine reference to the Khazars may precede Christian of Stavelot as at least the first literary hint of the conversion.

Returning to the Seleukid *Romance*, the significance of these admittedly tentative conclusions is that they leave much room for creativity on behalf of epsilon's writer. One can certainly interpret the northern episode as inventive storytelling by epsilon's author, whereby he enlisted an ancient and little-read text he had found about Alexander and enhanced it in order to express his own chagrin at the Khazar conversion to Judaism. In such a case, the Breasts of the North might indeed be a borrowing from Ps.-Methodius, and Alexander's prayer might be epsilon's private *pièce de résistance*, inspired by the material, tone, and style of Alexander's monotheizing addresses in chapters 20 and 24 and executed to perfection. If so, we must disconnect the northern episode from the discussion of the Seleukid *Romance*, and leave it entirely to the care of experts in Khazar and Byzantine studies. Yet, as stated above, the easier and likelier explanation is still that the author of epsilon merely inserted the name of the Bersiloi into an already existing story. Their name alone would be enough to convey the exact same message. A further study of epsilon in its Byzantine context may lead to a more conclusive answer.

Alexander the Great in Jerusalem: Myth and History. Ory Amitay, Oxford University Press. © Ory Amitay 2025.
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[181] Shepard 1998, 29. Note also the development of the enclosed nations myth, which replaces Gog and Magog with the Lost Tribes of Israel (Anderson 1932, 58–86). This new stage of the story relinquishes the Magogian connotation and emphasizes the otherness of the Israelites.

2
Alexander and Gviha Ben-Psisa

2.1 The Text

The second leg of our journey in the footsteps of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition leads to a very different philological, literary, and disciplinary landscape. To begin with, it takes us from Hellenistic and Byzantine Greek to rabbinic Hebrew. Secondly, unlike the version of the Seleukid *Romance*, which is based entirely on the indirect transmission of the story by a single text that has been preserved in a single manuscript, the story of Alexander's meetings and confrontation with Gviha Ben-Psisa is told and retold in no less than four literary contexts, each with its own distinct manuscript situation and tradition. These are tractate *Sanhedrin* 91a in the Babylonian Talmud (BT), the early influential midrashic collection *Bereshit Raba* (BR) 61.7, and the two scholia on *Megillat Ta'anit* (MTT) on the 25th of Sivan, each preserved in a single manuscript—Oxford (O_o) and Parma (P).[1]

Of these four literary contexts, the Babylonian Talmud is of course too well known to require a detailed general introduction. This enormous intra- and intertextual compilation stands as the greatest literary achievement of eastern rabbinic Judaism in late antiquity, and can be said without exaggeration to have been one of the most influential texts that shaped Judaism over the last two and a half millennia.[2] More particularly, tractate *Sanhedrin* is dedicated almost entirely to various and often technical aspects of Torahic law. One outstanding chapter (numbered eleven in the BT; ten in the Mishnah) deals with a different topic: life after death, and in particular with those who deserve a good afterlife. It is called chapter *Heleq* (חלק), meaning "part," in reference to those who do, or do not, have a part in the next world. As we shall see presently, it is exactly in this context that Gviha and Alexander appear in the text.

Less famous is the midrashic collection devoted to the first book of the Pentateuch: *Bereshit Raba*. It is generally agreed that BR is among the earliest of the surviving exegetic midrashic compilations, and that in its current form it is the product of the Judean community in Eretz-Israel of the fifth century CE,

[1] For the Hebrew texts of the *Megillat Ta'anit* versions, complete with critical apparatus and discussion, see Noam 2003, 70–7, 198–205. For a general introduction to MTT in English see Noam 2006.

[2] It ranks easily with the Torah, the *Siddur* prayer book, the halakhic compendium *Shulkhan 'Arukh*, and the Passover *Haggadah*.

roughly the same time and place as the Palestinian Talmud (the *Yerushalmi*).[3] The structure of this work follows the biblical text of Genesis, appending a rich collection of distinct literary units, which are offered as explanation and interpretation to each verse in turn. Like the Talmud, this kind of midrash does not pretend to present a consistent narrative sequence. Rather, it relies on a stratum of the earlier, more authoritative text, that is the book of Genesis, as its compositional backbone. That is not to say, of course, that the compilers did not express their own opinions and agendas in their editing choices. An example of such practice will be evident in the discussion of the contexts of the Gviha stories in the respective works.

Last but not least, we come to *Megillat Ta'anit* (MTT), a crucial text for the understanding of early rabbinic literature (and one that plays a major role in this and the next chapter), which is nevertheless still so little known outside the circles of rabbinic scholarship that it requires a somewhat longer introduction. MTT is a short list, written in Aramaic, of days when fasting, lamentation,[4] or both are forbidden. The reason for these stipulations, which considerable parts of Judean society in the late second temple and early rabbinic Judaism regarded as halakhicly binding, was an annual commemoration of positive, sometimes miraculous occurrences from the Persian to the Roman periods. Within this time span, the most strongly represented period is the Hasmonean. *Megillat Ta'anit* thus enjoys a unique position, as the only extra-biblical second temple Judean composition adopted and treated as halakha by rabbinic circles.[5]

The original stratum of *Megillat Ta'anit* contains the list of dates, mostly accompanied by a highly laconic explanation of the event they commemorate. However, with the passage of time and the dissolution of living memory of the events, these briefest of headlines became obscure and gave rise to the following question: why is it that eulogies and fasting were forbidden on this or that day on the list? The answer to this question appears in a form of historiographical exegesis often employed in rabbinic works: historical legends (*aggada*). Through a process whose inner workings are still unclear, these historical legends were compiled into the so-called scholion, a term coined by Heinrich Graetz—the first modern scholar of MTT—and commonly accepted by modern scholars.[6]

[3] Strack and Stemberger 1991, 279–80; Lerner 2006, 149.

[4] In Aramaic מספד. Noam (2006) translates this term as "eulogizing the dead."

[5] Noam 2003, 11, *et passim*. Noam treats the list as a "Pharisaic" document. However, it is unclear exactly when the compilation of the list actually began, and since it contains a small number of dates that go back as far as the Persian period, it is not impossible that MTT, or at least the ritual practices which comprise its raison d'être, originated in pre-Pharisaic times. See also Noam (2006) for a short English introduction, including a full translation of the scroll (but, unfortunately, not of the scholion). For the recognition of MTT as a binding body of halakha, see Mishnah *Ta'anit* 2.8.

[6] Graetz devoted an appendix to *Megillat Ta'anit* in the third volume of his epoch-making *Geschichte der Juden* (1853–75). He was also the first to distinguish between the scroll itself and the scholion (Noam 2006, 345).

This scholion is the single most important literary composition to preserve the evidence for the rabbinic side of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition.

In previous generations MTT had been familiar to the scholarly community almost solely through the German edition of Lichtenstein (1931–2).[7] On the whole, it received considerably less scholarly attention in both academic and rabbinic circles than other, more mainstream rabbinic works. This state of affairs changed dramatically with the publication of a new critical edition by Noam (2003). Along with its admirably clear presentation of the texts, comprehensive survey of previous scholarship, and thorough discussion not only of the dates on the list and their explanations in the scholion, but also of the literary history of the tradition and its parallels in other rabbinic works, Noam's edition has revolutionized our understanding of the scholion to *Megillat Ta'anit* in particular and of the study of antique rabbinic literature in general.

One of Noam's main innovations is the realization that two manuscripts—Parma Palatine De-Rossi 117 (henceforth: P) and Oxford Bodleian Michael 388 Neubauer 867.2 (henceforth: O_o)—not previously considered to be of great consequence in relation to MTT, contained in fact two different branches of the MTT scholion, each representing an independent initiative to create an exegetical corpus to MTT, which then passed through separate lines of transmission. Supporting these claims with numerous examples and close argumentation throughout her voluminous and masterful work, Noam demonstrates that ms P represents a version of the scholion that is close to the vestiges of MTT preserved in the Babylonian Talmud, whereas ms O_o preserves a different tradition, more akin to the tradition of Eretz-Israel (e.g., *Genesis Raba* and the Palestinian/Jerusalem Talmud).[8] Equally important is Noam's demonstration that both branches of the scholion tree preserve very old material, often going back to the second temple period itself, that is, to the era of the scroll's composition. In short, Noam reintroduced into the discussion a heretofore neglected compendium of ancient traditions, and transformed the study of early rabbinic literature as a whole.[9]

[7] Lichtenstein's edition, used among others by Marcus (1937) in his appendix on the Alexander in Jerusalem traditions in the Loeb edition of Josephus, is an artificially reconstructed and misleading text, which gives a false sense of unity and does not in itself reflect any of the ancient lines of tradition (Noam 2006, 361–2).

[8] Significantly, these kinship relations of the two manuscripts are evident also in their geographical routes of tradition: "Scholion O [i.e., O_o] was transferred along the Italian-Ashkenazi route, common to Palestinian traditions, while Scholion P was known in Medieval Spain, heir to the Babylonian tradition" (Noam 2006, 353).

[9] For an evaluation of Noam's achievement see the review article by Kister (2005), much of which is devoted to a point of disagreement with Noam's thesis concerning the extent of the distance between the two scholion traditions. While Noam views them as almost completely independent, Kister points to the possibility that at some early point there may have existed a "proto-scholion," and that the two surviving manuscripts are offshoots thereof. Kister frankly admits, however, that the state of the evidence does not enable us to explain how this putative proto-scholion evolved into two very different branches of tradition. Did it originally include information pertaining only to some dates but

Having introduced the four literary contexts that contain the story of Gviha and Alexander, it is now time to read the story in its fullest version.[10]

On the twenty-fifth of (that month) the *demosionai*[11] were removed from Jerus(alem): That is when the Canaanites[12] came to dispute with Israel before Alexander Makedon, and two more families with them: Egyptians and Ishmaelites.

The Canaanites said: "it is written in the Torah: *the land of Canaan to its borders* (Num 34:2). Let them give us back what is ours. And Gviha Ben-Psisa, warden of the temple, would hear none of it, and he told them: "Does a verdict exist, whereof one part is annulled and another subsists? And if it is written in the Torah *the land of Canaan*, it [is (also written) *cursed is Canaan*], *a slave of slaves will he be to his brothers* (Gen 9:25). And what belongs to a slave, belongs to his master; and let me and you (go) before our lord the king." Straightway they ran off.

Said the Ishmaelites: "It is written in the Torah: *on that day* [*Yhwh made a covenant with Ab*]*ram thus: I gave this land to your progeny*" (Gen 15:18). And we are the progeny of Abraham, for Ishmael was Abraham's son; and let us share (the land) with you!" Gviha Ben-Psisa, warden of the temple, replied to them: "It is written in the Torah: *and to the sons of the mistresses of Abraham, Abraham gave gifts* (Gen 25:6); and it is (also) written: *and Abraham gave all that was his to Isaac*" (Gen 25:5). Off they ran.

Said the Egyptians: "It is written in the Torah: *each woman borrowed from her neighbor and from her tenant utensils of silver and gold* (Exod 3:22). Give us back what is ours!" Gviha replied to them: "for 430 years Israel were your slaves, six hundred thousand footmen! Now give each one 200 *zuz* per year (this adds up to 8,600,000 *minae* for every one!), and we shall give you back what is yours." They all departed in great frustration.

not to others, or had the transmission of the proto-scholion forked at some unknown early juncture, with each branch then shedding and adding different items along the way? (Kister 2005, 473–4 and n. 104). Given that considerable parts of the transmission, especially in its earlier stages, were likely oral (Noam 2006, 356, 359), these two seemingly contradictory positions may be much closer than they appear at first sight.

[10] The translation is that of the version in ms O_o. The text in **bold** represents the actual *Scroll of Fasting* (that is, *Megillat Ta'anit* proper). Text in *italics* stands for scriptural prooftexts. [Square brackets] represent probable emendation; (parentheses) represent additions made to smooth out the English, if only a little. The *loci* do not appear in the original. It is taken for granted that a significant part of the audience of these texts was able to recognize and contextualize them.

[11] This term is commonly held to stand for the Greek word *δημοσιῶναι* ("revenue farmers" or "tax collectors"). In the long process of transmission this word received various spellings: P reads דימוסנאי; O_o reads דמתונאי; the hybrid version of MTT reads דימסנאי; most Talmudic mss read דמסונאי. This variance seems to indicate not only that this term appeared in the original version, but also that version's early date. For details and previous scholarship see Noam 2003, 198–9.

[12] In P and in all mss of BT this party is called "Africans" (lit. sons of Africa). This phenomenon is discussed and explained later on.

Alexander Makedon sought to go up to Jerusalem. The Kutim said to him: "The ministers of Judea will not let you enter the house of the holy of holies."[13] What did Gviha Ben-Psisa do? He made two golden slippers, fifty thousand *minae* each. He said to him: "Sir, [take off] your shoes and I shall put on you these slippers, for the floor is slippery." When he came to the place, beyond which it is forbidden to enter inside, he said to him: "From here on it is forbidden to enter inside." He told him: "I am going in, and when I come out I shall press your humpback back in!"[14] He told him: "If you do so, you shall be called an expert physician and charge high fees!"

They say that they did not move from that spot until a serpent came and bit him.

The sages said to him: "About you scripture says *be wise, my son, and gladden my heart, that I may answer those who curse me*" (Prov 27:11).

2.2 Philological and Literary Analysis

As stated in the introduction to the translated text, this is the fullest telling of the story, of all the four witnesses. Naturally, such a multiplicity of versions raises complex methodological issues that require our attention. The first step is therefore to discuss the ways in which each of the four sources presents the story, and then to address the similarity and divergence displayed in the various strands of the tradition. Our initial concern lies with the context of the story in the different texts. For the two tellings in manuscripts O_o and P the context is clear and straightforward: the story is used as a historiographical explanation for the inclusion of the date, 25th of Sivan (Gregorian June), in *Megillat Ta'anit*.

The situation becomes more complex when we turn to the Talmudic telling. One point of interest is that while the story in tractate *Sanhedrin* is also related as commentary for the day "when the *demosionai* were removed," the actual date

[13] Noam (2003, 204 n. 49) prefers here the reading of R. Yehudah bar-Klonimos: צרי (enemies) instead of שׂרי (ministers). This is taken as a reference to Ezra 4:1, where enemies of Judah and Benjamin are understood to include the Kutim, i.e., the Samaritans. If so, this expression should be read as a description, or qualification, of the Kutim by the authorial voice. The translation given here follows the actual reading, and takes the ministers of Judea (שׂרי יהודה) to be the beginning of the short speech by the Kutim themselves. The Samaritan connection is crucial to the tradition, and will be explored in this and the following chapters.

[14] The name Gviha (גביהא or גביהה) is a pun, based on the interplay of גבוה ("tall") and גב ("back"). The spelling of Gviha's name is inconsistent, sometimes even within the same manuscript. Thus, for example, in ms Firenze Biblioteca Nazionale II.1.8–9 of BT *Sanhedrin* both endings of the name are used, whereas ms Jerusalem Yad haRav Herzog 1 of BT *Sanhedrin* uses three different spellings: גביהא, גביא, and גביעא. As for BR, ms Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica ebr. 30 (third hand) has גביעה בן קיסם, גביעה בן קוסם, גביעה בר קוסם, and plain גביע (for the manuscripts of BR see Sokoloff 2016). The name's spelling cannot therefore usefully serve as a comparandum between the different sources.

given in all three manuscripts is the twenty-fourth of Nissan, earlier by a couple of months.[15] This variance is significant, because the author of ms P clearly relied, to some degree at least, on a text of *Sanhedrin*. This much is clear from the fact that he abandoned the story midway through the encounter with the Ishmaelites (never reaching the Egyptians), and referred his readers to the parallel in BT.[16] The author of P was thus manifestly aware of the Talmudic tradition, but insisted on the date in Sivan.[17] This discrepancy alone is sufficient to rule out the possibility that the author of P merely copied any known version of chapter *Heleq* of tractate *Sanhedrin*.[18]

In addition, despite the fact that the story of Gviha and Alexander derives from a source which contained both the scroll and the scholion of MTT, which are cited as one unit, the general context of the story is rather different. Located at the beginning of chapter *Heleq*, our story appears as an appendage to another story about Gviha, which concerns the main topic under discussion: life after death. In this short anecdote Gviha argues with an anonymous heretic (מין), who says: "Woe to you, wicked men, who say that the dead shall live. For even those who live, die; and how can those who die live again?" Unperturbed, Gviha answers: "Woe to you wicked men, who say that the dead shall *not* live. For those who did not have life, now live; all the more so those who do live!" Said the heretic: "You call me wicked? I shall kick you and remove the hump from your back!" And Gviha answered: "If you can do that, you shall be called an expert physician and charge high fees."[19] The story about Gviha and Alexander is appended to this amusing anecdote because the protagonist in both instances is the same—standard practice in the internal arrangement of the Babylonian Talmud. The mention of Alexander fits nicely also with the appearance of other foreign monarchs in the same context: a certain Caesar, a Kleopatra, and an Antoninus, all of whom converse with various Judean interlocutors about the future resurrection of the dead. Thus, although Alexander is not directly relevant to the matter at hand, his appearance is not jarring, or even out of place.

[15] In a single *genizah* fragment the date is the 25th of Nissan (Noam 2003, 49 n. 5).

[16] כדכתי' בפרק חלק: as is it written in chapter *Heleq*.

[17] The question how the Babylonian Talmud preserves material from *Megillat Ta'anit* is tantalizing, and holds great promise for future research. For an introduction to this topic see Noam 2003, 370–5.

[18] Two more examples support the independence of P from the surviving manuscripts of BT. The first is the time allotted by Alexander for the answer of the "Africans": in all surviving BT manuscripts this is given as three days, whereas in P they are ordered to return the next day. The second is a remark by the authorial voice at the conclusion of the same disputation. In BT we read that the incident took place during (or on the eve of) the sabbatical year, whereas in P it is "at the eve of the Sabbath, at twilight time." Noam (2003, 201) rightly remarks that the author of P was careless here, but also that he displays some affinity to the Yemenite ms Yad haRav Herzog 1.

[19] This story is told in a style that is highly condensed, even according to the laconic standards of rabbinic literature. My rendition, including the sayings given in quotation marks, is more interpretative than literal.

Beside the fact that the two episodes are connected both through the presence of Gviha and through his role as a discussant of a theological-political topic, they also share a punch line ("if you can do that, you shall be called," etc.) at the expense of his physical appearance. However, in the surviving Talmudic manuscripts the episode does not include the part that deals with Alexander's visit to Jerusalem, the very same part of the story where we find the punch line in the fuller versions of O_o and BR. Moreover, while the story of Alexander and Gviha is given in Hebrew in all four tellings, the story of Gviha and the heretic is in Aramaic—except for the punch line, which is again in Hebrew. This gives good reason to think that the punch line originated in the Alexander story, rather than in connection with the argument between Gviha and the heretic. This, in turn, suggests that the Talmudic version did include at some early point also the visit to Jerusalem; or, alternatively, that the redactor(s) of chapter *Heleq* were aware of the fuller story, containing the visit to Jerusalem, but decided for whatever reason not to include it in their work.

The context of the Gviha and Alexander story in *Bereshit Raba* is rather different. The compiler(s) of BR give the story apropos a verse used by Gviha in his disputation with the Ishmaelites: *and to the sons of the mistresses of Abraham, Abraham gave gifts* (Gen 25:6). The editorial decision to connect the story with this particular verse dictated also the internal organization of the three disputations. By its very nature, this part of the story is modular; it hardly matters which of the "three families" appears first before Alexander. Nevertheless, in both manuscripts of MTT, as well as in BT, the order is consistent: Canaanites-Africans, Ishmaelites, Egyptians.[20] In BR, on the other hand, the Ishmaelites appear first, followed by the Canaanites and then the Egyptians. At first glance, this discrepancy might be explained away by the fact that the order of the disputations was dictated by the dependence on the biblical verse. However, Gviha used a verse from Genesis also in his reply to the Canaanite-Africans (Gen 9:25), and that verse could have prompted the story just as easily. The decision to lead the story with the Ishmaelites and to present it apropos Gen 25:6 is thus a conscious one, setting BR as unique in that respect. This sense of uniqueness is sharpened by the fact that, unlike the three other sources, BR does not connect the story in any way to a date in *Megillat Ta'anit*. It seems likely that the compiler of BR was much more interested in Judean-Arab relations than in Canaanites or Egyptians.

[20] As mentioned above, the Egyptians do not appear in P. In ms Munich of BT *Sanhedrin* the Africans come first and the Ishmaelites second, whereas the trial of the Egyptian deputation does not appear in the text itself, but rather on the right margins of the page. Judging from the physical location of this marginalized episode on the page, it is hard to decide whether the scribe intended to locate the Egyptians in second or third place. It is also impossible to know whether the location of this episode in the margins indicates that it did not exist in the text copied by the scribe, or is merely the result of oversight and correction.

Turning from the textual witnesses to the story itself, we begin with the first deputation to appear before Alexander. The most obvious point of disagreement between the sources concerns the identity, or rather the name of the disputants: Canaanites according to BR and O_o, Africans according to BT and P. Of the two variants, the one used by the Eretz-Israeli sources (BR, O_o) is logical enough. The point made by the claimants, as we shall see presently in greater detail, is that the land is called Canaan and thus belongs to the Canaanites. So far, so good. What does call for an explanation, however, is that the Babylonian sources ascribe the same story to "Africans." At first sight, this designation appears odd, if only for the simple reason that the basic argument does not apply to them. If the Canaanite name is the basis for the legal claim, how can it be applied to anyone who is not called "Canaanite"? And what is the connection with Africa?

The answer to these questions passes through another, more traditional ethnic identification, that of the Canaanites with the Phoenicians. The terms "Canaan" and "Canaanites" have a long history in biblical and post-biblical literature. In Genesis 10:19, as part of a chapter laying out the nations of the post-diluvial earth, Canaan represents the lands from Sidon in the north to the Dead Sea and the Negev in the south. That the land of Canaan included not only the coastal strip but also the hilly inland is clear from such *loci* as Genesis 12:6, where Shechem (modern Nablus) is included in Canaan, or Genesis 23:2, which says the same for Hebron (modern Al-Khalil). However, already in the Bible we find a more specific meaning for "Canaanite," referring in particular to the denizens along the Mediterranean coast (e.g., Deut 1:7; Josh 5:1).[21] This identification is maintained also in the Septuagint. Consider, for example, Exodus 6:15, where the term "Phoenician" translates the original "Canaanite" as an ethnic marker; Exodus 16:35, where it refers to the land as a whole; and Joshua 5:1, where it refers specifically to the coastal population. The book of Jubilees (10:33, discussed further below) states that Canaan settled in Lebanon, ranging from Hamath to the entrance to Egypt, simultaneously tracing the limits of Greater Israel in the style of King David and maintaining focus on the Phoenician heartland. In Matthew 15:21–2 Jesus exorcises a *daimon* that had possessed the daughter of a woman living in the area of Tyre and Sidon, who is called a Canaanite (*Χαναναία*). In the parallel in Mark 7:27 she is a "Syro-Phoenician" (*Συροφοινίκισσα*). It is apropos this woman that Augustine made his famous remark on the self-identification of the contemporary rustic Punic population as Canaanites.[22]

The transfer of the name "Canaanites" to Africa is hardly surprising. As is well known, during the early centuries of the first millennium BCE the Phoenicians

[21] According to Quinn 2017, 37 it is in such biblical texts that we find "the first actual equivalence between the two terms," that is Canaanite and Phoenician.

[22] Augustine, *Epistola ad Romanos Inchoata Expositio* 13 (PL Migne xxxv 2096). See further in Lewy 1933, 93; Quinn et al. 2014.

embarked on large-scale westward travel and migration, which eventually carried them all the way to the shores of the Atlantic. Along the way they founded many settlements on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. Their most successful settlement was of course Carthage, and it is around the Carthaginian territory that the name of "Africa" was born.[23] The question remains, however, why BT and P (or their sources) replaced the logically straightforward appellation "Canaanites" with the more obscure "Africans." The answer to this question lies with the intricate web of historical and aggadic, or legendary material, which connected the Phoenician westward migrations with the conquest of Canaan by Joshua Bin-Nun.

A clear connection between the Israelite conquest of Canaan and the emigration to Africa is made in the *Mekhilta deRabbi Ishmael* (*Paskha* 18).[24] In relation to Exodus 13:5—*when Yhwh brings you to the land of the Canaanite*—the following explanation is offered:

> Canaan merited that the land be named after him. And what did he do (to merit it)? Because when Canaan had heard that Israel were coming into the land, he stood up and evacuated (it) from before them. The Sacred One Blessed Be He said to him: You have evacuated (yourself) from before my sons, I too shall name the land after you, and give you a land as beautiful as yours. And what is that land? It is Africa.

This ingenious historiographical notion, which bridges the centuries-long gap between the Israelite conquest and settlement and the Phoenician westward migration,[25] is evident in other rabbinic works, as well as in an impressively diverse group of Christian authors, including Hippolytus of Rome, Moses of Khorene, and John of Antioch, and even in a mysterious (not to say suspicious) Moorish inscription reported by Procopius of Caesarea.[26] Of course, the basic

[23] For a discussion of the origin of the name, its development to include the lands beyond modern Tunisia, and the Judean connection to both, see Amitay 2011/2013.

[24] According to the scholarly consensus (Strack and Stemberger 1991, 253–5; Kahana 2006, 60–2) this text was redacted in Eretz-Israel in the generation around or after the middle of the third century CE. It is written in Mishnaic Hebrew, mentions only pre-Mishnaic sages, and does not use Galilean Aramaic, which is typical of later Palestinian rabbinic works.

[25] According to Josephus (*Against Apion* 2.17–21) the early first-century CE Egyptian historian Apion advanced a similar synchronization between the exodus and arrival of the Israelites in Canaan and the foundation of Carthage by the Phoenicians (read with Kister 2014, 72–3). Josephus himself, however, attacked Apion for his ignorance and negligence, calculating himself a period of more than seven centuries between the exodus and Carthage's foundation.

[26] The most important rabbinic parallels are *Tosefta Shabbat* 7.25 and Palestinian Talmud *Shevi'it* 36.3/6.1. See also Hippolytus' *Liber Generationis* (printed with the *Chronikon Paschale*, ed. Dindorf, Bonn 1832, II 102, 107; and in Frick 1892, 32); Moses of Khorene, *History of the Armenians* 1.19; John of Antioch, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum* (ed. C. Müller), IV 547 frg. 12; Procopius, *Wars* 4.10.13–22 (= *Vandal War* 2.10.13–22). For further *loci* and a discussion of this tradition see Amitay 2011.

claim of this tradition cannot be taken seriously on the historical level. On the other hand, it offers a neat and logical explanation to the equivalence of Canaanites and Africans in our sources.[27] Furthermore, it indicates that the Canaanites in our stories are not any old people of the land; they are particularly Phoenician.

Moving on from the identification of the Canaanites-Africans to the argument they raise before Alexander, we return once more to the distinction between the Eretz-Israeli (BR, O_o) and the Babylonian (BT, P) sources, and to the special position of BR in the overall tradition. O_o, P, and BT all use the same verse as the prooftext for the Canaanite claim: *this is the land that falls to you as inheritance, the land of Canaan in these borders* (Num 34:2). The logic of the argument, as we have just seen, is clear: if even the Torah calls the land "Canaan," then it must surely belong to the Canaanites. The same logic is applied in BR, but without reference to the specific verse. Rather, it stated that the land is called thus "in every place," meaning throughout the Torah (or possibly the entire Bible).

A different grouping of our sources is apparent in the expression of anxiety on the Judean side, lest the insufficient efforts of Gviha lead to a loss in the trial. Gviha assuages the fears of the skeptics by saying that in case of defeat they would be able to disavow him, and to claim that he had no right to represent them in the first place (not the sincerest of attitudes, to be sure, but as it turns out, a convincing one).[28] BR, P, and BT all contain this element in the story, whereas O_o makes do without it. A more detailed analysis of this detail reveals a secondary division. In BR the skeptics, who are left unidentified, spell out their greatest fear from the confrontation: "lest you decide the land of Israel over to them." In reply Gviha phrases his own potential dismissal with the words "Who is that Gviha?" In P and BT the skeptics are clearly defined as "the sages," and their reason for fear is left implicit. The terms of dismissal are "You have defeated a layman from among us."[29] In this case too, therefore, we see BT and P closely connected to one another, whereas BR and O_o display greater independence.[30]

Turning to the disputation with the Ishmaelites, we see an even wider variation in the arguments and verses used by the gentile disputants. In BR the Ishmaelites refer to the law regarding the son of the scorned wife (Deut 21:15–17). According to this law, a man who has two wives—one whom he loves and another

[27] It is interesting to note that the Eretz-Israeli sources (BR and O_o) retain what must be the original reference to Canaanites, whereas the Babylonian sources bring in the African connection. It was the east-west connection between the Judean centers in Babylonia and the communities in North Africa and Spain that played a crucial role in the dissemination of Babylonian rabbinic Judaism during the Middle Ages.

[28] In BR this logically takes place apropos the disputation with the Ishmaelites, which comes at the beginning of the story.

[29] In Hebrew: הדיוט, from the Greek *ἰδιώτης*, meaning layman, a person without official authority.

[30] The close affinity between BT and P is evident here also in the use of the expressions תנו לי רשות (give me permission) and מביאין ראיה (bringing evidence).

whom he scorns—must in bequeathing his property prefer an older son by the scorned wife over any other sons by the beloved one. Since Ishmael was older than Isaac (and certainly older than Jacob-Israel, his nephew), he ought to have been rewarded with a double inheritance according to the Law. O_o takes a different approach, connecting the Ishmaelite argument with Genesis 15:18: *On that day Yhwh made a covenant with Abraham, saying: to your progeny I have given this land*. Naturally, since Ishmael is also the progeny of Abraham, his descendants too have a claim to the land. In P the Ishmaelites make the same point, but use different verses: Genesis 25:12 (*these are the origins of Ishmael, the son of Abraham*) and Genesis 16:16 (*and Avram was eighty-six years old, when Hagar gave birth to Ishmael, son of Avram*). The logic of the argument is apparently the same: since Ishmael is clearly the son of Abraham, he deserves a part in the inheritance. BT also leads with Genesis 25:12, but then proceeds in a different direction, citing verse 19 in the same chapter: *and these are the origins of Isaac, son of Abraham*.[31] The logic of the argument here seems to rely on the repetition of the word "origins" (תולדת),[32] which is used in the same manner for both sons of Abraham, and thus indicates their equal status. This variance displays, once again, the affinity (but not identicalness) of BT and P, and the relative difference and independence of O_o and BR. Interestingly, despite the variety of ways to express the basic notion that as Abraham's son Ishmael has a part in the patriarch's inheritance, all four sources put in Gviha's mouth the exact same reply, relying on Genesis 25:5: *and to the sons of Abraham's concubines Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from his son Isaac already in his own lifetime*.[33] One is left wondering whether this particular literary unit first evolved only with the rebuttal of the Ishmaelite claim, leaving the different transmitters to come up with the original claims on their own.

The story of Gviha's disputation with the Egyptians is more consistent. In all three sources (P does not include this episode) the nature of the Egyptian claim is the same: the Israelites had stolen a good deal of property during the exodus, and should now be made to pay reparations. Gviha's answer is also the same: if anyone should pay reparations it is the Egyptians, who had enslaved the multitude of

[31] Thus in mss Yad haRav Herzog and Firenze; ms Munich is badly preserved at this point and almost unintelligibly concise.

[32] I understand the word תדלות as signifying "origins" rather than "progeny" or "story," following the LXX (γενέσεις) and Rashi on Genesis 25:13.

[33] It is probably in response to "concubines" in plural that two manuscripts of BT (Firenze and Munich) add also the sons of Qeturah as fellow disputants together with the Ishmaelites. Intriguingly, according to the obscure second temple period Judean source Kleodemos Malchos "the Prophet," two sons of Qeturah by Abraham by the names of Apheras and Iaphras had joined Herakles in his Libyan campaign against Antaios, and consequently became eponymous founders of Africa (Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.240–1; Eusebius, *Praeparatio Euangelica* 9.20.2–4). For an analysis of this remarkable story see Amitay 2011/2013. Whether, and how, this story may be connected with the African interests of BT and P must for now remain an open question.

Israelites for a mighty long time.[34] How long? On this point the sources once again disagree. In BR we read 210 years; in O_o 430 years, as in ms Firenze of BT; in ms Yad haRav Herzog it is 400 years; and ms Munich does not specify the length of the enslavement at all.

So far we have surveyed the different versions of the first part of our story, dealing with the disputations between Gviha and the anonymous gentile embassies before Alexander. Now we turn to the second part, about Alexander's visit to Jerusalem and his reception at the temple by Gviha. In addition to the change in the narrative and the geographical setting, the story now changes considerably in regard to the roles assigned to the two principal characters. In the first part of the story Gviha plays a central and active part, first in volunteering to appear in Alexander's court and then in thrice successfully fulfilling his mission. Alexander, on the other hand, plays a very minor one: at the most he presides over the court and oversees the technical procedures (thus in BT and P); at the least he is merely mentioned as the presiding authority, but otherwise remains inactive and silent (O_o). This situation changes radically in the second part of the story, where Alexander assumes a much more active role, and receives an equal share of the action with Gviha.

The dramatic change of scenery and plot line between the two episodes is matched by a widely different manuscript situation: the second part of the story is transmitted only by BR and O_o, whereas BT concludes with the Egyptian episode, and P stops even earlier (referring the readers to the rest of the story in BT). This situation raises a crucial question: do these distinct literary units—the disputations vis-à-vis the visit—comprise two complementary parts of the same story, or are they two different stories which had been combined by a common source (literary or oral) lying behind BR and O_o? As far as I can see, complete certainty in answer to this question cannot be achieved. However, there are two arguments that point, in my mind, toward the former option, of a single original story. The first is that each of our four surviving sources ends the story at a different stage: P toward the end of the Ishmaelite episode; BT at the end of the Egyptian one; BR, already in the temple, with the punch line "If you do so, you shall be called an expert physician and charge high fees!"; O_o with the appearance of the mysterious serpent and an approval of Gviha's conduct by the sages. Now, on the whole, it makes better sense to assume that an original longer story was

[34] The case of the Egyptians has been revived in 2003 by Professor Nabil Hilmi, then dean of the faculty of law in al-Zagazig University in Egypt, in an interview in *Al-Ahram Al-Arabi* (Egypt), August 9, 2003 (English: *Memri* Special Dispatch Series No. 556, August 22, 2003 = <https://www.memri.org/reports/egyptian-jurists-sue-jews-compensation-trillions-tons-gold-allegedly-stolen-during-exodus>, last accessed on July 26, 2023). A latter-day Gviha appeared in the form of American lawyer Alan Dershowitz, who retorted in an interview a week later that he would "be happy to defend the Jews," and that he would countersue over reparations for enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt (in an interview to Max Gross of *The Forward*, August 29, 2003 = <https://forward.com/news/8031/egyptian-scholar-planning-lawsuit-over-exodus-gold/> last accessed on July 26, 2023). I owe the reference to Dershowitz's response to Kister 2014, 104 n. 130.

truncated, for whatever reasons, by the various transmitters, than that an original shorter story underwent a gradual process of addition, each version adding a further section to the original. This is all the more so, given the many differences between the strands of the tradition surveyed in the previous pages, which argue for an independent transmission of a core story.

The second argument relates to Gviha's jesting retort to Alexander. In BR and O_o the joke appears at the end of the long Alexander story. In BT it is absent from this story, but appears at the end of the episode about Gviha and the heretic. Conceivably, one might argue that the source of BR and O_o was familiar with the heretic episode, and imported the joke thence into the Alexander story. However, such a reconstruction seems to me highly implausible. The heretic episode in BT is told in Aramaic, and switches to Hebrew for the punch line. The Alexander story, on the other hand, is told in Hebrew throughout. It is thus much likelier that the Hebrew punch line originally belonged to the Hebrew story, and that the redactors of the version in *Sanhedrin* were aware of it.[35] In addition, in the Alexander story Gviha's deformity is referred to as גביהיתיך (O_o) and גבהותך (BR), which derive from the same root as his name, whereas BT uses עקמומיתך, which is philologically unrelated and thus not nearly as funny. The existence of a postulated original unified story is therefore strongly supported by the significance of the punch line.

The main difference between the tellings of O_o and BR is, as we have just seen, that O_o contains two literary units that are absent from BR. The first is ascribed to an unspecified speaker and introduces the mysterious serpent (more on that in section 2.3 below). The second addition is ascribed to "the sages," and records their approval of Gviha's conduct in the confrontation with Alexander. Otherwise, the differences between the two texts are minimal. In O_o those Judeans who would object to Alexander's entry to the holy of holies are called "ministers of Judea," whereas in BR there is no such specification. The special footgear prepared for Alexander is said in O_o to be golden and to be worth (literally, to contain) fifty thousand *minae*, whereas in BR they are studded with two precious stones and worth twenty thousand in silver. O_o uses the term "to the place beyond which it is forbidden to enter inside" (מקום שאי אפשר ליכנס ממנו ולפנים), whereas BR makes do with "holy of holies." These variances once again testify to the distance between the parallel lines of transmission, but also to their unmistakable common origin.

[35] In a previous treatment of this topic (Amitay 2006, 63 n. 14) I expressed the opinion, rather too unguardedly, that "Rashi's text of *Bavli Sanhedrin* still contained the second part of the story," relying on his interpretation of Gviha's name as referring to his deformity, which in our story comes only near the end of the second part, and which does not appear in any of the surviving manuscripts of BT *Sanhedrin*. However, Rashi could well have made his claim on the basis of the earlier reference to Gviha (discussed above), which also refers to his bent stature. This proposition receives some support from his use of the word עקמומית, which is indeed used by all three surviving BT manuscripts in the first Gviha episode. It is nevertheless still possible that Rashi possessed a fuller version of the Talmudic text.

What can we learn from the discussion so far? The philological survey presented here reveals many differences between the four sources, both major and minor. One obvious and certain conclusion is that the tradition has two main branches: BT and P on the one hand, BR and O_o on the other. The clearest indication of this is the fact that only the latter two contain the second part of the story, about Alexander in Jerusalem. This conclusion is supported also by a great many minor details, wherein the two branches diverge. Within each branch, BT and P stand closely together, whereas BR and O_o appear to be rather more independent from one another. Yet despite these many variances, a stronger impression emerges about the very solid framework of the story as a whole, evident in all four sources. In somewhat ironical fashion, the impression of a robust common tradition is corroborated by the diversity of detail. The many differences accentuate the commitment to the core story, which overrides any minor literary liberties taken along the process of transmission.

2.3 Gviha and Pompey

Having discussed the philological aspects of the story at some length, it is now time to turn to its historical context and interpretation.[36] The most important question in that regard, from which all other questions derive, concerns the origins of the story. When might it have first been told? The external evidence does not leave us much to work with. Obviously, the story cannot have been told before Alexander's own time. Furthermore, on the basis of the philological discussion it seems reasonable to conclude that by the time it reached the rabbinic transmitters, whose works we now possess, the story had already been in circulation long enough for each of the sources to acquire and develop its own quirks and idiosyncrasies. But these general statements still leave us with a centuries-long period in which to look for the story's origins.

Internal evidence, on the other hand, has much more to offer, turning our attention to military and political events from the mid-second to the mid-first century BCE. The starting point for my reconstruction of the story's origins lies in the identification of its dramatic apex—Alexander's visit to Jerusalem and his wish to enter the holy of holies—as an allegorical, or aggadic, reference to a concrete historical event. From the time of Alexander's conquests to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple there were quite a few kings and generals who visited the holy city of Judea, in either amicable or hostile fashion. Yet only once in the historical record do we hear of any such visitor insisting on entering the temple's inner sanctum: following Pompey's conquest of the city. As a matter of fact,

[36] The discussion here relies to a certain extent on Amitay 2006. It is, however, considerably elaborated and nuanced, and replaces my pervious treatment.

Pompey's case became famous—or infamous, depending on one's point of view—exactly for this reason. In the words of Josephus: "of all the calamities of that time none so deeply affected the nation as the exposure to alien eyes of the holy place, hitherto screened from view. Pompey indeed, along with his staff, penetrated to the sanctuary, entry which was permitted to none but the high priest, and beheld what it contained."[37]

Taken beyond its immediate context, the uniqueness and enormity of the event are dwarfed by the events of a century earlier, when the sanctuary was invaded, defiled, and converted to the worship of Hellenic deities in the time of Antiochos IV Epiphanes. It is an even whiter shade of pale in comparison with the devastation and destruction witnessed by Josephus himself in his own lifetime. Nevertheless, the important aspect here is not the dramatic hyperbole of Josephus, but rather the impression made by Pompey. Significantly, this impression was not unique to Judean observers. Cicero, in a private letter written a few years after the event, referred to Pompey as "our man from Jerusalem," a sure sign of the prevalence of stories about the Roman general's conquest of the city.[38] The recensor of the *Periochae* of Livy, who referred to Jerusalem as one big temple, wrote that before Pompey's conquest it had never been violated.[39] Tacitus, who mentions Pompey as the first Roman to have conquered the Judeans, confirmed that he had entered the temple, and added that it was from this point on that the inner sanctum's empty mysteries (*inania arcana*) became famous.[40] Given the strong impression of uniqueness ascribed to the event and its importance in the eyes of commentators both Judean and gentile, it is easy to see why it should have inspired storytelling in general, and why it is a logical locus for the creation of the story about Gviha and Alexander in particular.

Generally speaking, the idea to identify Pompey with Alexander is not alarming, or even surprising. On the contrary, this identification is made independently of our story by non-Judean sources, and goes back to Pompey's actual history. In all probability, it goes back to Pompey himself. According to the Roman historian Sallust, a contemporaneous witness to most of Pompey's career, he had been told by fawning friends from a very young age that he would be similar to King Alexander—and actually came to believe it![41] Plutarch adds that this owed, in part, to a scant resemblance to Alexander's statues. Not surprisingly perhaps,

[37] *War* 1.152 (trans. Thackeray; Loeb). This description is repeated in similar terms in *Antiquities* 14.71–2. Compare the city's conquest by Sosius and Herod in 37 BC, when Herod took special precautions to prevent any foreigners from entering the inner areas of the temple precinct (Josephus, *War* 1.354; *Antiquities* 14.482–3).

[38] *To Atticus* 2.9.1: *noster Hierosolymarius*.

[39] *Periocha* to book 102: *fanum eorum Hierosolyma inviolatum ante id tempus*. We can only regret the loss of Livy's full report. All the more so, since the inclusion of this detail in the extremely short *periocha* indicates an extensive treatment in the original text.

[40] *Histories* 5.9.1. See also Florus, *Epitome* 40.30, who emphasized Pompey's invasion of the temple and the uncovering of its *arcana*.

[41] Sallust, *Histories* 3.84 (ed. McGushin) = 3.88 (ed. Maurenbrecher).

once the identification became common, some people started using it to deride Pompey rather than to flatter him.[42] The comparison took a step forward following Pompey's early successes as a military commander in the Roman civil war of the 80s BCE, fighting and defeating a formidable force of the Marian faction in Africa. Possibly already in the field, and certainly at his return to Rome, he started to be popularly addressed with the cognomen *Magnus*, "the Great," an appellation which connected him even more strongly with the Makedonian monarch. By the time Pompey left to fight Sertorius in Spain a couple of years later, his new cognomen had become so current so that he started using it himself in official correspondence.[43] After his third triumph (61 BCE), in a dedication at the temple of Minerva, Pompey referred to himself as CN. POMPEIUS MAGNUS. Pliny the Elder, who preserved the text of the inscription, took the opportunity to compare Pompey not only with Alexander but also with Hercules and Pater Liber (the common Roman name of Dionysos), two famous role models of the Makedonian.[44] The symbolic connection between the achievements of Alexander and his latter-day Roman emulator may have been stressed by Pompey himself also through his choice of wardrobe. According to Appian, he rode in the triumph wearing a *chlamys* that had once belonged to Alexander.[45] This clothing item had apparently been found among the possessions of Mithridates, and had previously belonged to the people of Kos, who in turn had obtained it from one of the Ptolemaic Kleopatras. Appian is circumspect of the entire story, perhaps rightly. But the cloak's pedigree of ownership, whether factual or fabricated, certainly serve to emphasize the importance of the Alexander-Pompey comparison in the triumph. Finally, the triumph gave rise also to the absurd notion that Pompey celebrated it at the age of thirty-three, the very same age as Alexander at his death; absurd, because Pompey was forty-five at the time.[46] The crucial part of Plutarch's report, however, does not concern Pompey's age, but is rather the statement that there was a group of people who made a special effort to compare him to

[42] Plutarch, *Pompey* 2.1–2. This point, that the comparison with Alexander could be used, and indeed was used, to deride and criticize Pompey as often as it was used to extol and flatter him, is made emphatically by Gruen (1998b, 183–6). The important fact for our case, however, is that it was made at all, and in real time.

[43] Plutarch, *Pompey* 13.3–5. See also Livy 30.45.6; Appian, *Civil War* 2.86. In his speech of 62 BCE (*for Archias* 24) Cicero makes the explicit comparison between the two *magni*. In a his letter *to Atticus* (2.19.3) from three years later Cicero reports how an actor in the theater used Pompey's cognomen as a catchphrase to express harsh political criticism—a gesture recognized and appreciated by the audience. Again according to Plutarch (*Crassus* 7), when Crassus heard Pompey's cognomen being used he simply asked: "how great is he?"

[44] Pliny, *Natural History* 7.26/95–7. On Alexander's relation to Dionysos, and in particular to Herakles, see Amitay 2010a, 9–86.

[45] Appian, *Mithridatic War* 17/117.

[46] Gruen 1998b, 183. Plutarch, *Pompey* 46.1, who criticizes this kind of flattery, also did not get Pompey's age exactly right, saying that he was about forty. Appian, *Mithridatic War* 17/116 reports that Pompey was thirty-five at time of his triumph, showing no awareness of Pompey's actual age, and missing the point of the comparison with Alexander.

Alexander.[47] The original teller behind our story, in other words, was hardly alone in that respect.

The identification of the aggadic Alexander with the historical Pompey may help explain a peculiar detail in the story: the golden slippers given by Gviha to Alexander. For this purpose we ought to introduce to the discussion another, very different Judean text written in response to Pompey's conquest of Jerusalem and his defilement of the temple: *Psalm of Solomon* 2.[48] This dirge, written originally in Hebrew but preserved now only in Greek and Syriac, laments the sins of the "sons of Jerusalem," which were avenged, so says the Psalmist, by a divinely ordained attack on the city conducted by a foreign force. This attack brought the city under siege, and culminated with slaughter, enslavement, and a desecration of the temple. That the person at the head of the foreign army is none other than Pompey is clarified by the reference to his death in Egypt (verse 26). Pompey was the only one of the besiegers of Jerusalem to have found his demise there.[49]

One particular detail in the punishment of the sinful city is that "the nations castigated Jerusalem by trampling"; earlier in the psalm the author is shocked by the trampling of the altar by foreigners "in sandals."[50] The notion that the sacred enclosure ought to be approached only bare-footed may be traced back as early as the story of Moses and the burning bush (Exod 3:5). In relation to the Jerusalem temple this principle is stated explicitly in the Mishnah, and was known even to the Roman satirist Juvenal, a good few decades after the Jerusalem temple had been razed to the ground.[51] This is, most likely, why the teller of our story has Gviha equip Alexander with special footgear (אנפילאות or אנפיליות), designated for indoor use only. The point of this strange detail is that this particular kind of footgear is not considered as standing in the same halakhic category as outdoor footgear, such as shoes or heeled sandals, and may be worn inside the temple precinct under most circumstances.[52] Wishing to avoid any risk of offending Alexander by making strange demands on a religious basis, Gviha not only presents the king with the highly decorated (and expensive) slippers, but also explains that they would better protect the king while he treaded the slippery floor.[53]

[47] Plutarch, *Pompey* 46.1: *οἱ κατὰ πάντα τῷ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ παραβάλλοντες αὐτὸν καὶ προσβιβάζοντες ἀξιοῦσι.*

[48] The *Psalms of Solomon* are dated roughly sometime around the middle of the first century BCE. A more exact dating of specific psalms remains a matter of dispute. For an introduction see Wright 2007, 1–7.

[49] For the identification of Pompey in this psalm see Atkinson 2004, 21–2.

[50] 2:2: *ἐν ὑποδήμασιν*; 2:19: *Ὤνείδισαν γὰρ ἔθνη Ιερουσαλημ ἐν καταπατήσει.*

[51] Mishnah *Berakhot* 9.5: …לא יכנס להר הבית במקלו, ובמנעלו. Juvenal, 6.159: *observant ubi festa mero pede sabbata reges* (where the kings observe Sabbath with bare feet). According to Josephus, *War* 2.314, when the Herodian queen Berenike interrupted her worship to plead before the Roman governor Florus to restrain the violence of his soldiers, she too was barefoot. Later in the war, he was scandalized by the multitude of "robbers" polluting the temple with their filthy feet (*War* 4.150).

[52] BT *Yevamot* 102b.

[53] According to BT *Hagigah* 14b the marble floor in the temple was so brilliantly polished as to create the illusion of water. Gviha may possibly be referring here also to this piece of extravagance, celebrated at the expense of safety.

A second piece of internal evidence that helps us place the story in the context of Pompey's arrival in the Levant is, surprisingly, the identity of Gviha Ben-Psisa. At first glance Gviha's character leaves the impression of an aggadic figure, introduced to the story not only to champion the Judean cause versus the gentile claimants, but also as literary counterbalance to Alexander. At second glance this impression is turned on its head. The key for the identification of Gviha is to be found in a rather unlikely place: Josephus' report about his own family history (*Life* 1.3–5):[54]

> [3] Our patriarch was Simon, who was surnamed Psellos. This man lived in the period when the son of the high priest Simon served as high priest—he was the first of the high priests named Hyrkanos. [4] Simon Psellos had nine children. [One] of these was Matthias, known as "of Epheus." This man took for himself the daughter of the high priest Ionathes—the first of the children of Asamonaios' ancestry to serve as high priest and the brother of Simon the high priest—into marriage. Then in the first year of Hyrkanos' rule, he [Matthias] had a child Matthias, surnamed Kyrtos. [5] From this man came Josephus, in the ninth year of Alexandra's rule; from Josephus, Matthias, in the tenth year of Archelaos' reign; and I from Matthias, in the first year of Gaius Caesar's *imperium*.

Two figures stand out immediately in Josephus' lineage. The first is Matthias Kyrtos, Josephus' great-grandfather according to this family line. The importance of this Matthias is his surname, *Κυρτὸς*, meaning arched, swelling, or simply "Hunchback." In other words, Kyrtos means Gviha. But that is not all. Kyrtos' grandfather, the patriarch of Josephus' clan, was surnamed "the Stutterer," or Psellos (*Ψελλὸς*).[55] Since the similarity in sound between Psisa and Psellos is so distinct, the identification of Kyrtos and Gviha seems to be solidly based.[56]

The most immediate significance of this identification lies not only in turning Gviha into a historical character (albeit still one that is located in an aggadic context),

[54] The translation is by Mason (2001, 7–9) in volume 9 of Brill's Josephus series, with minor orthographical changes.

[55] The term "psellos" is familiar also from rabbinic literature. Of particular relevance is the reference to the prophet Amos in *Pesiqta deRav Kahana* 16 (ed. Mandelbaum), which uses alternately both the term פסילוס (*psellos*) and פסילוסא (*psilosa*; the suffix *aleph* is the Aramaic definite article). This last form therefore means "the Stutterer." It is easy to see how either form will have been shortened or altered to "Psisa."

[56] One should note that while in our story Gviha is "the son of Psisa," in Josephus' lineage Kyrtos is Psellos' grandson. This, however, is no great obstacle for their identification, as the elimination of a generation in such a way is common practice in Hebrew and Judean literature. Comparable cases include Athaliah, the murderous queen of Judea, who was most likely the daughter of King Ahab of Israel (2 Kgs 8:18), but is also called the daughter of Omri, Ahab's father (2 Kgs 8:26; 2 Chr 22:2). See also the lineage of Mordecai (Esth 2:5): son of Yair, son of Shim'i, son of Kish. Shim'i was, in fact, the son of Gera (2 Sam 16:5, 19:17; 1 Kgs 2:8). For his identification with the ancestor of Mordecai see Bavli *Megillah* 12b. (Many thanks to Prof. Dan'el Kahn and to Yair Meller for these two examples.) Consider in this context also the rabbinic maxim from the field of family law: בני בנים הרי הם כבנים (the sons of sons are considered as sons; BT *Yevamot* 62b).

but also in providing a clear indication of his dating. According to Josephus, his great-grandfather was born in the first year of the rule of Hyrkanos I, that is 135/134 BCE. This would make him a seventy-two-year-old veteran at the time of Pompey's conquest of Jerusalem and entrance to the holy of holies.

This dating is not free of difficulties. In the words of one leading scholar: "The chronology is impossible…if the list is genuine, either it is lacunose or Josephus has misunderstood what he excerpted from his documentary source."[57] The point of contention concerns the dates when Joseph and Matthias Kyrtos had fathered their respective sons. According to the dates given by Josephus, Matthias Kyrtos (that is, our Gviha) was born in the first year of the reign of Hyrkanos. In the context of the given pedigree, this must be Hyrkanos I, whose first year as high priest was 135/134 BCE. His son, Joseph, was born in the ninth (and last) year of the reign of Alexandra-Salome—wife of Jannaeus and known in Hebrew as Shlomzion—that is 67 BCE. According to this dating, Kyrtos-Gviha was about sixty-seven years old when he fathered Joseph. Matthias, the son of Joseph (and father of Josephus), was born in the tenth (and last) year of Archelaos, the son of Herod the Great, that is 6 CE. Thus, Joseph fathered his son at about the age of seventy-three. To be sure, these are unusual, even extraordinary numbers. But would we be right to assert that they amount to "piling up improbabilities until the result is a practical impossibility"?[58]

To stress the level of improbability of Josephus' information, the procreative history of his forefathers has been compared with the late fatherhood of the patriarch Abraham, who fathered Ishmael at eighty-six (Gen 16:16) and Isaac at a round hundred (17:17).[59] Of course, given that Abraham was said to have died at the ripe old age of a hundred and seventy-five (25:7), we should treat all these numerical data with utmost suspicion. Yet the comparison bears further reflection. To begin with, when he fathered his first two sons Abraham was, on average, older by a full generation than Matthias-Kyrtos and Joseph. Secondly, it is only in relation to Isaac that Abraham was filled with wonder; in the eyes of the author of Genesis there was a difference between begetting offspring at eighty-six and at a hundred. Nor was that the final limit. Even after Isaac is born Abraham is said to have taken a mistress, Qeturah, and to have fathered even more sons (25:1–2)! The reference to Abraham is thus a powerful rhetorical device, but it does not bear the weight placed on it to discredit Josephus' data. Finally, one may bring as a latter-day counter-example the American novelist Saul Bellow, who did father a child well into his eighties.

Rhetoric aside, it would probably be best to follow a more conservative approach to Josephus' report: "while there are some features which are improbable, there

[57] Cohen 1979, 107–8 n. 33. Other scholars who have expressed a similar opinion include: Radin 1929, 195; Schürer 1973–86, 46 n. 3; Mason 2001, 9 n. 31; Schwartz 2007, 158–61.
[58] Radin 1929, 195. [59] Mason 2001, 9 n. 31; Schwartz 2007, 158.

are none which are impossible; and, as long as what Josephus tells us is *possible*, we have no right to correct it."[60] This salutary approach is corroborated by the acute lack of a better, more plausible alternative. Furthermore, the members of Josephus' pedigree whose dates present a difficulty are his grandfather and great-grandfather. To argue that he missed generations or that he misread some public records is to assume that he was completely ignorant of his immediate family history. On the other hand, all the suggested corrections and emendations—such as saying that Ionathes was not the brother of Judas Maccabee but rather the king Alexander Jannaeus; or that Kyrtos was born in the first year of Hyrkanos II rather than Hyrkanos I—create considerably more problems than they solve.[61] The dating of Matthias-Kyrtos-Gviha and his resulting synchronization with Pompey's conquest of Jerusalem may be allowed to stand.[62]

The contextualization of our story with Pompey's arrival and arrangements in greater Syria makes good sense also in regard to its first part, that is Gviha's legal battles over the land. The basic premise of the story is the notion of embassies coming out to greet the advancing conqueror. This conduct is, of course, natural enough given the circumstances. As a matter of fact, when the historical Alexander first approached the area, he was immediately approached by a throng of local potentates, who promptly surrendered their cities.[63] This was indeed the case also with Pompey upon his arrival in Damascus, when he was approached by various parties who accosted him with gifts, requests, and complaints. Most significantly, according to Dio Cassius Pompey "proceeded against Syria Palaistina, because its inhabitants had ravaged Phoenicia."[64] The identity of these offending Syro-Palaistinians is immediately revealed: "their rulers were two brothers, Hyrkanos and Aristoboulos, who were quarrelling themselves…" This clear reference leaves no doubt: when Pompey arrived in Damascus, he received Phoenician complaints against Judea and its rulers![65] Nor were the Phoenicians alone in

[60] Rajak 1983, 16. See also Bilde (1988, 28–9), who appears to accept Josephus' report of his pedigree at face value.

[61] For a comprehensive summary of the various possibilities, the grave difficulties raised by each of them, and an honest admission that no satisfying alternative reconstruction is available, see Schwartz 2007, 158–61.

[62] Even if one remains doubtful of Josephus' accuracy and reliability in giving his own pedigree, such doubt need not necessarily dispel the synchronization with Pompey. From the perspective of the current discussion the crux of the problem is that there are not enough generations between Kyrtos and Josephus. Yet even if we assume a lacuna in the text (in my opinion, a much likelier premise than the possibility of Josephus not knowing, or willfully eliminating, family generations from his list), and introduce a name or two to fill this putative gap, that would merely make Kyrtos-Gviha a younger man at the time of Pompey's arrival. The aggadic Gviha, like the classic Charlie Chaplin character, does not appear to be of any particular age.

[63] Diodorus 17.40.2; Curtius 4.1.5–6, 1.15, 2.2; Arrian, *Anabasis* 2.13.7–8, 15.6; Justin 11.10.6–7 (*Tunc in Syriam proficiscitur, ubi obuios cum infulis multos Orientis reges habuit*). The realia of Alexander's conquest of the land are discussed in chapter 5.

[64] 37.15.2; trans. Cary; Loeb.

[65] According to Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.43 Hyrkanos blamed his brother for instigating such attacks on the neighbors of Judea on both land and sea. In Diodorus 40.2 we read also of alleged

approaching Pompey. According to Josephus (*Antiquities* 14.34) envoys arrived from all over Syria, as well as from Egypt. The presence of an Egyptian embassy was apparently reported also by Strabo.[66] The situation was complicated further by the aggressive involvement of Aretas, king of the Arab Nabateans, that is Ishmaelites, who had participated shortly beforehand in a siege of Jerusalem, siding with Hyrkanos and in opposition to Aristoboulos, and who was now preparing for a military contest with the Romans.[67] We thus see all three gentile parties represented in the Gviha and Alexander story either present before Pompey in Damascus or deeply embroiled in concomitant local conflicts.

The underlying assumption at the basis of the claim made by two of the three disputations provides further corroboration for the contextualization with Pompey's reorganization of the East. According to the logic of the story, before the arrival of Alexander the Judeans are in the possession of extensive territory. This is demonstrated in the clearest fashion by the claims of the Phoenicians-Canaanites: "Let them give us our land!" in BR and "Let them bring us back our own!" in O_o.[68] The case of the Ishmaelites is not that the Judeans should give any land back, but rather that it should be shared by both nations. In BR, likely due to the fact that the Ishmaelite claim is brought to the fore as the initiating cause, Gviha's Judean comrades warn him, lest he fail to prevail against a judicial royal decision to hand the land over to the gentile disputants. Once again, the assumption is that the Judeans have much land to share, or to lose.

Yet the basic premise that independently held Judean territory was extensive enough to attract the envy and anger of neighboring peoples is quite incongruent with Alexander's time in particular, and with the second temple period in general. When Alexander arrived on the scene Judea was limited to a smallish tract of land, centered around the capital Jerusalem, as it had been throughout the Persian period. And while there is some evidence of Arab interference during Nehemiah's attempt to fortify Jerusalem,[69] it is hard to imagine why any Phoenicians would have reason to claim any Judean-held land. The same state of affairs continued more or less unchanged under Ptolemaic and Seleukid rule. A major change did, however, take place following the Maccabean revolt and the rise of the Hasmonean state. Beginning with Jonathan, younger brother of Judas Maccabee and the first of the family to attain the high priesthood, the Hasmoneans not only

Judean wrongdoings (ἀδικήματα) against the Romans. If not referring to the same acts of piracy, it is unclear what these might be. For the entire episode see Stern 1976–84, I, 187; Bellemore 1999.

[66] Quoted by Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.35–6.

[67] Josephus, *War* 1.123–7, 158; *Antiquities* 14.14–20, 31, 80–1; Appian, *Mithridatic War* 106/498; Dio Cassius 37.15.1. Given that the Ishmaelite demand is not to transfer land ownership, but is rather focused on sharing, one wonders whether their part in the story hints at the price paid by Hyrkanos for Aretas' support, or even an offer by Aretas for joint action against the Romans.

[68] In BT and P, too, there is a controversy over land possessions. The end result is that the Africans (i.e., Phoenicians) have to cede even further territory.

[69] See chapters 2 and 6 in the book of Nehemiah, where a person called Geshem the Arab is mentioned as an important factor in the attempt of neighboring local leaders to thwart Nehemiah's efforts.

gained complete political independence, but also embarked on a persistent process of imperialistic expansion. By the time of the Hasmonean king Alexander Jannaeus, Judea had annexed territory in Samaria, Idumea, Galilee, Transjordania, the Golan, and—most importantly for the case at hand—much of the coast of Eretz-Israel, putting Judean arms and administration in direct conflict with the Phoenician cities. It is precisely during the heyday of Hasmonean imperialism that the claims of the Canaanites fit historical reality. However, the picture presented in the story is hardly one of self-confident superiority. On the contrary, the story displays a deep anxiety, an awareness of dire danger, which is averted only thanks to Gviha's shrewdness. This state of affairs fits nicely with the military and political situation brought about by the arrival on the scene of Roman power under the command of Pompey. It was exactly at this juncture that Judean control of the land faced a challenge comparable to that envisioned in our story. Indeed, Pompey's arrangements considerably contracted the territory under Judean control.[70]

The identification of the aggadic Alexander with the historical Pompey gives us therefore a clear and immediate *terminus post quem* for the story in the year 63 BCE. That is not to say, however, that all four literary units that compose the story were invented at that time. One part of the story that certainly had a life of its own outside the tradition of Gviha and Alexander is the Egyptian complaint regarding the stolen utensils. Decisive evidence to an ongoing discussion about the biblical story, with a clear attempt to justify the so-called despoliation of Egypt, appears in a wide variety of sources, from the book of Jubilees to the Wisdom of Solomon and from the tragedian Ezekiel to the philosopher Philo.[71] This is hardly surprising, given the deep-rooted Judean presence in Egypt during the second temple period, and the immediate relevance of the exodus story cycle to the interactions of gentiles and Judeans in that land.[72] Although we do not possess direct evidence, we can safely assume that the large-scale Judean resettlement in Egypt (and westward in Libya) in the early Ptolemaic period, the production of the Septuagint, as well as the consistent Ptolemaic rule over Judea for more than a century, all gave ample opportunities for this debate to reverberate in Alexandria, Jerusalem, and elsewhere. Today we mostly possess the Judean side of the argument, but judging from the proliferation of anti-Judean literature in the Hellenistic period we ought to take into account the presence of gentile

[70] For Judean territorial losses see Strabo 16.2.46; Josephus, *War* 1.155–7; *Antiquities* 14.74–7. The immense significance of the new order instituted by Pompey is evident from the fact that a number of cities in the area marked the change by initiating a new annual reckoning (Alt 1932).

[71] For a lengthy treatment of this motif (albeit with only marginal reference to Gviha and Alexander) see Allen 2008. For a connection with our story see Kister 2014, 84–5, where all the *loci* are conveniently gathered.

[72] For the crucial influence of Egyptian thought—both native and Hellenized—on anti-Judean feelings in general, and for the continuation of these originally Egyptian ideas in Greco-Roman culture, see Schäfer 1997.

counter-histories, which used the biblical account (or stories derived from it) to attack Judean interlocutors.[73] As a matter of fact, it has been suggested more than a century ago by Lévi that the Egyptian episode was indeed a product of the Judean community of Alexandria, and served to answer such detractors who used the biblical story to challenge Judeans in Egypt. Once the story had been transported to Eretz-Israel, it could serve as a nucleus, attracting "enrichments" in the form of the Canaanite and Ishmaelite causes.[74]

Such a reconstruction of the process of the story's formation may help us explain one of its strangest features: the idea of the Torah serving as a legal code in a court presided over by a complete gentile. In a famous article, which served generations of scholarship as a starting point for the discussion of our story, another Lewy contextualized the story in the geopolitical conditions of the late Hasmonean period down to the time of Pompey.[75] However, Lewy went on to argue that a trial similar to that described in our story did in fact take place, that it was indeed based on the Torah as a binding legal text, and that the entire procedure was initiated by the Hellenizing elites of Phoenicia.[76] Lewy compared this hypothetical case with the usage of the Homeric catalogue of ships as a legal precedent in territorial quarrels between Greek *poleis*, and argued that "the entire land struggle constituted a transferal of Hellenistic legal concepts to the biblical documents."[77] This mesmerizing claim faces some serious difficulties. Firstly, Lewy based his entire case on the argument of the "Africans," establishing brilliantly the Babylonian-African connection, but neglecting to take account of the Ishmaelites and Egyptians, and crucially, of the second part of the story taking place in the Jerusalem temple.[78] This omission led him, in turn, to underappreciate the relevance and importance of Pompey to the historical reconstruction. For if such a case had indeed been tried, it would have been brought before Pompey. Yet the detailed account of Josephus, as well as the shorter notice by Dio Cassius, tell a very different story. A further objection is that it is highly unlikely that any

[73] For the notion of counter-histories see most recently Kister (2014, 79 and 90), where consultation with Judean informants is stressed (rightly, in my opinion) as an alternative channel of information about the exodus story. That the story, once picked up by non-Judean authors, could evolve in new directions, is evident in Pompeius Trogus (through Justin's epitome, 36.2.13), who reported that during his people's flight from Egypt Moses stole Egyptian *sacra*, and that the Egyptian forces sent to retrieve them were held back by storms. This version clearly resonates with the account of Exodus, but also introduces an innovation—the stolen items are sacred objects, rather than mere house utensils, however expensive.

[74] Lévi 1912, esp. 215. Like many of the scholars who have followed him, Lévi did not engage with the story of the visit to Jerusalem.

[75] Lewy 1933, esp. 92–5.

[76] Lewy 1933, 172–80. The second part of this paper was published in a consequent fascicle in the same year.

[77] Lewy 1933, 173: "der ganze Bodenstreit eine Uebertragung hellenistischer Rechtsvorstellungen auf die biblische Urkunde darstellt."

[78] Significantly, despite his awareness of the tellings in *Bereshit Raba* and *Megillat Ta'anit* (p. 89, nn. 1, 5) Lewy did not address in any way the second part of the story about the visit to Jerusalem and the confrontation at the temple.

non-Judean claimants would choose the Torah as a binding source of authority in an international dispute.[79] Whereas Homer did indeed function as cultural common grounds in the Greek world, that was hardly true for the Torah in first-century BCE Phoenicia.

The suggested Egyptian origin of the story, on the other hand, offers us a likelier model as a literary source of influence. In the thirteenth book of the *Antiquities* Josephus recounts a strange story, about the strife of Judean and Samaritan residents in Egypt, at the time of Ptolemy VI Philometor (reigned from the second half of the 180s until 145 BCE). The immediate reason for the confrontation is not clear. It may have been a continuation of Judean-Samaritan conflicts, going back to the time of Ptolemy I Soter, about the proper temple in Eretz-Israel to which donations from Egypt could and should be sent (*Antiquities* 12.10). What is clear is that the dispute comes before the king and his council of friends, and that the Torah is used in the trial as one of a number of authoritative texts. Interestingly, in this episode, too, the superiority of the Judean advocate, Andronikos ben-Meshulam, carries the day. The arguments of the Samaritans are not even heard (at least they are not reported by Josephus), and the two Samaritan speakers are executed. The historicity of this puzzling story has been called into question.[80] Yet even if it does not factually represent the exact events in Alexandria, the existence of the story about the trial is an undisputable historical fact. Furthermore, this story takes for granted that the Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerizim is still an active place of worship, which means that it predates the destruction of that temple by Hyrkanos I, and consequently also the composition of the Gviha story. In other words, it will have been available to serve as a literary model for the deputations before Alexander.[81]

The appearance of the Samaritans in the trial before Philometor brings us to a point which I have hitherto postponed: the role of the Samaritans in the Gviha story. Both in BR and in O_o we find them (under the name of Kutim, as usual in rabbinic literature) in a small but crucial role: it is they who advise Alexander to demand entrance to the holy of holies, thus complicating a situation which should have been festive and harmless. Reading the Gviha story unto itself, the appearance of the Samaritans is striking and unexplained. Unlike the other "three families," the Kutim make no concrete claim, whether based on biblical prooftexts or not. They are there simply to cause mischief. A simple explanation for their presence and role in the story is that they fulfill their classic role in Judean literature, that of informers or *delatores*. Such is also their role in the story of the opposition to the efforts of the returning exiles in the early Persian period, in the story of

[79] It is worth mentioning that even in the case of the estimable Prof. Hilmi (see above, note 34), he never tried to bring his case to court.

[80] Gruen 1998a, 240–3.

[81] Pacella (1982, 1268), casting no doubt on the historicity of the Philometor episode, looked to it as the source of inspiration for the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition as a whole.

Alexander and Simon the Just (see chapter 3), and as late as the Bar-Kochva rebellion.[82] The important role of the Samaritans in the tradition, and the historical reasons leading to it, will be discussed at length in the rest of this book. For now it suffices that the Samaritan connection of the Philometor story could have served as a source of inspiration, perhaps even a literary model, also in this part of the Gviha and Alexander story.[83]

Turning from Egypt to Eretz-Israel, another part of the story that appears to have reused existing material is the trial against the Canaanite-Africans. The crucial element that had certainly been in use before the formulation of our story is the prooftext from Genesis 9:25, cursing Canaan and pronouncing him a slave unto generations to his brothers. This prooftext appears in all four lines of transmission, a fact testifying to its centrality. It did not, however, originate in any of them. As a matter of fact, this verse had already been applied, and for similar purpose, in the book of Jubilees (10:29–34):[84]

> And Canaan saw the land of Lebanon to the river of Egypt, that it was very good, and he went not into the land of his inheritance to the west (that is to) the sea, and he dwelt in the land of Lebanon, eastward and westward from the border of Jordan and from the border of the sea. And Ham, his father, and Cush and Mizraim his brothers said unto him: "Thou hast settled in a land which is not thine, and which did not fall to us by lot: do not do so; for if thou dost do so, thou and thy sons will fall in the land and (be) accursed through sedition; for by sedition ye have settled, and by sedition will thy children fall, and thou shalt be rooted out for ever. Dwell not in the dwelling of Shem; for to Shem and to his sons did it come by their lot. Cursed art thou, and cursed shalt thou be beyond all the sons of Noah, by the curse by which we bound ourselves by an oath in the presence of the holy judge, and in the presence of Noah our father." But he did not hearken unto them, and dwelt in the land of Lebanon from Hamath to the entering of Egypt, he and his sons until this day. And for this reason that land is named Canaan.

As will be immediately clear to any reader of the story in Genesis, the author of Jubilees reworked the details considerably. In the rather cryptic biblical version the origin of Noah's curse was due to an offense by his son Ham, Canaan's father, that exudes a sexual odor. It is unclear why Canaan in particular is singled out of

[82] Persian period: Ezra 4:7–17; Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.88, 97. Bar-Kochva: Palestinian Talmud *Ta'anit* 4.5 (68.4); *Eicha Raba* 2.4.

[83] Whatever judgment one might form of this suggestion by Lévi (1912)—I tend to accept it—it is remarkable that in the Gviha tradition as we have it the Egyptian episode lost its literary impetus. As we have seen, it is missing altogether from P, whereas in ms Munich of BT it appears, literally, in the margins of the page. I would suggest that this episode lost its force once it had been removed from its original geopolitical Egyptian context, and was transplanted into an Eretz-Israeli one.

[84] Translation: Charles 1913.

Ham's progeny to be punished for his father's misbehavior (whatever it might have been). Furthermore, while the Genesis story does engage to a limited degree with the question of who gets to reside with whom and in what capacity, the issue remains highly unspecific. In Jubilees, on the other hand, the spotlight is directed squarely at Canaan, and his offense is set out plainly: instead of sailing west to the sea, he trespasses and settles in the Lebanon. This story in Jubilees, then, is the earliest sign of the Canaanite-African connection and the wider accompanying aggadic circle.[85]

The dating of Jubilees is a thorny issue, with estimates ranging from shortly before the rise of the Maccabean movement down to the advanced years of the Hasmonean realm.[86] The later dating has won support in recent scholarship, yet even if the earlier dating is accepted, by that time signs of tension between Judean and Phoenician neighbors are already evident on the ground. The earliest indication comes in 1 Maccabees (5:14–15), where Judean communities in Galilee send letters to Judas Maccabeus, complaining about attacks from their neighbors. We do not know the background to the attacks against these Galileans, but we are informed of the identity of the attackers: people from the Phoenician cities of Ptolemais, Tyre, and Sidon. In the introduction to chapter 5 the author of 1 Maccabees asserts that following the restoration of the altar and the cleansing of the temple (early winter of 164/163 BCE) a fury erupted among the "encircling nations," which fueled the attacks on the "*genos* of Jacob." It is not immediately evident, however, in what way the events in Jerusalem should have excited such intense feelings along the Phoenician coast. It is probably just as well to remember—apropos Temple Mount—that a land dispute between Tyre and Jerusalem, contending over land in west Galilee, is recorded already in I Kings 9:10–13, in the days of Hiram and Solomon.

At any rate, the situation in western Galilee did require the direct intervention of Judas' brother Simon. Taking three thousand select men he marched north, conducted some fighting, and chased his enemies all the way to the gates of Ptolemais. He then removed at least a part of the Judean population that had lived there, and led the evacuees back to Judea "with much rejoicing," according to the author of 1 Maccabees (5:21–3). This early clash of Judean and Phoenician interests may well have contributed to the zeitgeist that blows also through Jubilees' reinterpretation of the curse of Canaan. The repatriation of the refugees from Galilee will have drawn attention to it, and contributed to its acceptance. Indeed, Jubilees' literary attack on Canaan has been interpreted "as part of a dispute concerning the right of the Hasmonaeans to carry out an expansionist policy that

[85] For other manifestations of this motif in later literature and surveys of earlier scholarship see Aptowitzer 1926; Berthelot 2010; Kister 2014.

[86] Van Der Kam 2001, 17–22; Segal 2007, 35–41. Be that as it may, it is probably safe to assume that the author's innovative take on the story of Canaan's curse was available to the original composer of the Gviha and Alexander story.

aims at taking control of the Land of Israel."[87] This dispute was first and foremost internal—enough Judeans had to be convinced that the project was worthwhile—but once the imperialistic drive of the Hasmoneans was underway, it was necessarily reflected outwardly as well.

Tensions between Jerusalem and the Phoenician north are evident also in rabbinic references to Yose Ben-Yoezer and Yose Ben-Yohanan, and to their pronouncement on the impurity pertaining to "the land of the peoples" and to the use of glassware.[88] The exact circumstances of this halakhic ruling are unknown to us, but it is significant to the discussion in two ways. Firstly, because the two sages were contemporaries of Judas Maccabeus.[89] Secondly, because the term "the land of the peoples" refers in all likelihood to Galilee, whereas the nearest local center of glassware manufacture was in the Phoenician cities and their hinterland. The purpose and ramifications of this ruling are a matter of debate, but it seems certain that at the very least it will have created a commercial hindrance for the Phoenician manufacturers. On top of that we should probably add a certain amount of ill feeling, a result of the social segregation that such purity taboos are designed to create.

It is in this atmosphere that the Maccabean movement evolved into the Hasmonean state, and then developed its imperialistic aspirations. When Mattathias, the Hasmonean patriarch, overturned the pagan altar at Modein and slew the king's man in charge, he did so in emulation of Phineas, his mythological priestly forefather.[90] It is well to be reminded that our main source for the rebellion, 1 Maccabees, is later by some three generations than the events it describes. We have no immediate access to the actual words spoken in real time, and the reference to Phineas may well be a later elaboration. Yet the authenticity of Mattathias' battle cry—zeal for the Torah—rings loud in the actions of Judas during his campaign in Transjordania, conducted simultaneously with Simon's march on Phoenicia (1 Maccabees 5). Judas did not suffice himself with evacuating threatened Judean communities, he also exterminated entire communities in full Deuteronomic furor, as well as destroying their places of worship.[91] Even Simon, the least zealous and most practical of the Maccabees, made recourse to tradition in his negotiations with Antiochos VII regarding the tax owed for possession of Jaffa and Gezer. "We have not taken a foreign land," argued Simon, "nor have we seized in power the property of others, but rather the proper

[87] Shatzman 2007, 262–5.

[88] Palestinian Talmud *Shabat* 1.4 (3d); *Psahim* 1.6 (27d); BT *Shabat* 14b. For this issue in general, including a survey of recent archaeological finds, see Grossmark 2008. The relevance of the glassware halakha was pointed out to me by Yaron Ben-Ami.

[89] According to rabbinic aggada Yose Ben-Yoezer was the uncle of Yaqim of Tsrorot, commonly identified with the high priest Alkimos of the books of Maccabees: Amitay 2012.

[90] 1 Macc 2:24–7, 53.

[91] This is, at least, how events are described: 1 Macc 5:28, 35, 44, 51. For the religious and xenophobic nature of Hasmonean military ideology see Shatzman 2007; Trampedach 2012.

share of our own forefathers, unjustly seized in the past by our enemies" (1 Macc 15:33).[92] Unlike Gviha's claims, this argument failed to convince either Antiochos' ambassador or the king himself.

The imperialistic drive of the Hasmoneans did not subside in the following generations—quite the opposite. Hyrkanos I, Simon's son, led two successful campaigns that added to Judea both Idumea to the south and Samaria to the north (this latter campaign will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3). By the end of the second century BCE the first Hasmonean monarch, Aristoboulos I (Hyrkanos' son), brought Judean arms to the borders of Phoenicia proper by conquering Galilee. His successor, Alexander Jannaeus, increased the pressure on the coastal cities and campaigned extensively in Transjordania, leaving behind him a kingdom of Davidic proportions. It is this extended realm that passed first to his wife Shlomzion and then to his two sons, Hyrkanos II and Aristoboulos II, at the eve of Pompey's arrival.

The expansion of Judea is all-important for the discussion at hand, because it is exactly this process that created the situation envisioned in our story, in which Judea encroached on the Phoenician territory on the one hand, and was large enough to be shared with the Ishmaelites on the other. But there may have been more to it than that. As mentioned above, the possibility has been raised that the story of the trials before Alexander may represent not merely the Judean point of view, but also gentile counter-histories, in which non-Judeans appropriated Judean stories and utilized them to attack their original tellers. The internal dynamics of Hasmonean imperialism contributed much to the prospect of such counter-histories. When Hyrkanos conquered Idumea, rather than expel the deeply rooted local population, he gave the people a choice: they could remain in their homes "if they were willing to circumcise their private parts and use the same customs as the Judeans." The Idumeans accepted the offer, and became Judeans for all intents and purposes.[93] A similar offer was made in the next generation by Aristoboulos I to the Itouraioi in Galilee, as noted also by the historian Timagenes.[94] In his synopsis of Hasmonean conquests by the end of Jannaeus' reign Josephus (*Antiquities* 13.395–7) remarks that the king destroyed the city of Pella, because its inhabitants would not under any circumstances revert to Judean customs; the implication being that many others did.

The aspect of Judaization stressed most strongly by Josephus in this context is circumcision. This very tangible, painful, and not quite reversible token of

[92] On December 25, 2016 then prime minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, posted Simon's words on his highly popular Facebook page, commenting that "Simon the Hasmonean already responded to the United Nations more than 2,000 years ago. The light will expel the darkness and the spirit of the Maccabees will live on." (https://www.facebook.com/Netanyahu/photos/AA/10154231117587076/; last accessed July 27, 2023).

[93] Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.257–8: *εἰ περιτέμνοιντο τὰ αἰδοῖα καὶ τοῖς Ἰουδαίων νόμοις χρήσασθαι θέλοιεν*.

[94] Quoted, through Strabo, by Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.319.

commitment to one's new way of life was, and still is, a long-standing symbol of belonging to the Israelite nation. However, Josephus states clearly that circumcision was only part of the deal. In addition, the Judaizing populations had also to adhere to Torahic laws and customs. By adopting the Judean way of life they became themselves Judeans.[95] Josephus does not specify what is entailed under these general statements, but we should hardly be surprised if, at least in some cases, new converts to Judaism strived also to obtain some degree of familiarity with the Torah and its stories. The urge to engage in Torah study will have been particularly enticing, we can imagine, for those belonging to ethnic groups who are actually mentioned in it. The most pertinent example would be the Galilean Itouraioi, who are clearly defined as descendants of Ishmael.[96] Familiarity with biblical stories will thus have been encouraged both by conversion (forced and voluntary), and more generally by the onslaught of the religiously driven Hasmonean imperialism.

It is against this backdrop, then, that the arguments used in the Gviha story were framed and rehearsed. In them we can read the inherent enthusiasm and religious fervor that accompanied the imperialistic drive of the Hasmoneans, as well as the self-justification and anxieties generated by it. However, the story as we have it postdates the arrival of Pompey, and thus reflects the mood in the period after the collapse of the Hasmonean imperialistic project. Arguments such as those used against the Canaanites, which had been previously used both to motivate and to justify the conquests, took on a very different tenor after 63 BCE. In reality no argument raised by any Judean party in defense of the Hasmonean conquests carried any conviction with Pompey. Yet in the story these very arguments win the day. In that sense, the story of Gviha takes the materials used in earlier generations to motivate aggression and mollify angst, and reshapes them as a counter-history that is also completely counterfactual. In the story of Gviha and Alexander no land is actually lost, and it allows its audience to imagine a better reality, whether as the basis for future politics or at least as a respite from present circumstances.

This embrace of counterfactuality does not mean that the story eliminated completely the tension and anxieties generated by Pompey himself. Rather, these are redirected to the second part of the story and to events in Jerusalem. In a way, this literary choice is congruent with Josephus' declaration in *War* 1.152 that "of all the calamities of that time none so deeply affected the nation as the exposure to alien eyes of the holy place, hitherto screened from view." This statement, which is not repeated in *Antiquities*, should most likely be read as a rhetorical flourish

[95] *Νόμοι* (*Antiquities* 13.257); *ἔθη* (ibid. §397); *τὴν ἄλλην τοῦ βίου δίαιταν ὑπέμειναν τὴν αὐτὴν Ἰουδαίοις ποιήσασθαι…ὥστε εἶναι τὸ λοιπὸν Ἰουδαίους* (ibid. §258).

[96] Genesis 25:13–15; 1 Chronicles 1:31. See also Schürer 1973–86, I, 561–2, with further examples for the Itouraioi described as Arabs (or Syrian).

by Josephus, who was anyway in no position to assess the popular feeling in Judea in 63 BCE. Yet if the Gviha story is any indication, Josephus was not far from the truth in stressing the impact of Pompey's entrance into the inner sanctum.

It is less clear, however, what kind of message the story intended to convey regarding Pompey's behavior in the temple. The first difficulty in interpretation arises from the choices made by the different sources as to the story's ending. On the Babylonian side of the tradition the tendency was, was we have seen, to ignore the second part altogether. Naturally, it is always harder to explain why something was not said or done than why it was. It may be that some Babylonian sages were at some point and for some reason unhappy with the story, and decided not to include it; or perhaps that the Gviha story was lost from the Babylonian sources somewhere along the joint line of tradition leading to BT and P. The sources from Eretz-Israel do give the second part of the story, but do so in different ways. The version of BR ends with Gviha's joke. By so doing it paints a typical, almost timeless Jewish picture of Gviha: on the one hand he is a shrewd litigator and a learned scholar of the Torah; but when all else fails, he resorts to the most Jewish of weapons in his arsenal—humor. By turning a historical legend into a joke the redactor of BR seems to employ two different tactics for defusing the tension. Firstly, the surprising switch of genre serves as a diversion from the difficult situation, allowing a release of pressure through laughter. Secondly, the audience is left to imagine an ending that might be easier to accept than the harsh historical reality. Might Alexander not have been won over by Gviha's chutzpah, and given up his offensive insistence on desecrating the holy of holies? The audience might even be diverted by Alexander from thinking about Pompey at all.

This elegant solution is avoided, or rather superseded, in O_o. Gviha's humor is not allowed to win the day, and the standoff continues, only to be resolved in a very different fashion: a serpent suddenly appears on the scene and bites—Whom does it bite, really? The natural assumption in light of the first half of the story, which saw an undisturbed series of victories for Gviha, would be that the serpent bit Alexander. However, that is not stated explicitly, or even hinted. Rather, what the narrative part of O_o says exactly is: "They say that they did not move from the spot until he was bitten by a serpent." The last person previously mentioned is actually Gviha, and on purely philological grounds it is just as likely, if not more so, that he was the victim of the snake bite.[97] This telling of the story, too, ends with an ambivalence that invites the audience to supply an ending. Here, however,

[97] One reader who does seem to have shown awareness of this difficulty was the editor of the so-called "hybrid" version of *Megillat Ta'anit*. At the end of his version, which usually combines elements from both traditions of O_o and P in addition to other rabbinic writings, he specified that the words of the sages at the very end of the story, quoted from Prov 23:25, were directed at Gviha. Note, however, that no such clarification is offered to reveal who was bitten by the serpent. For the text of the hybrid version see Noam 2003, 77.

the levity of BR gives way to a much more sinister note. And although this is nowhere stated explicitly, the humanity of Gviha in BR is replaced with what appears to be, if not properly *deus ex machina*, at least an instance of divine intervention.

This kind of resolution to a confrontation at the temple between a righteous Judean priest and an impudent gentile potentate is hardly unique to the Gviha story. At the beginning of the narrative part in 2 Maccabees we find the Seleukid high official Heliodoros attempting to lay his hands on a significant amount of coin laid in store at the Jerusalem temple. This attempt is foiled by the sudden miraculous appearance of a shining rider on horseback, aided by two brilliantly dressed assistants, sent by "the Ruler of the spirits and of all authority."[98] Even closer to our story is the encounter at the Jerusalem temple described in 3 Maccabees (1:8–2:24). On visiting Jerusalem and sacrificing at the temple Ptolemy IV Philopator (r. 221–204 BCE)—just like Alexander in our story—conceived a passion to enter the holy of holies, and would not listen to the entreaties and protests of the Judeans. His impudence and obstinacy awakened the wrath of God, who "shook him like a reed in the wind" and paralyzed him completely.[99] At a much earlier time, and in much earlier sources, we read of the miraculous salvation of Jerusalem from the Assyrian army at the time of King Hezekiah: an angel of God came out at night and destroyed no less than 185,000 Assyrian soldiers (Isa 37:36; 1 Kgs 19:35).

In our case, however, the divine intervention assumes a very different form, that of a mysterious serpent. This literary choice calls for interpretation. The most immediate connotation of the serpent, now as then, is probably to the myth of the expulsion from paradise (Gen 3), where the serpent is infamously branded as a primal source of humankind's suffering. Pertinently, the serpent represents the temptation to overstep the boundaries set by divine order, and to discover what ought to have remained unknown. Elsewhere in the Bible snakes and serpents appear as a source of danger (e.g., Num 21:6; Isa 14:29; Jer 18:17). In close affinity to our story, serpents are used as instruments of God, spreading terror and destruction (Exod 4:1–5, 7:8–12; Isa 27:1; Amos 9:3). A highly relevant possible biblical reference points to Ecclesiastes 8:10: "whoever breaks a hedge, he shall be bitten by a serpent." The sharp end of this reference would be of course directed at Alexander, who aimed to go beyond where it was permitted to him to go. All these may be sufficient to explain the introduction of the serpent into the story.

[98] 2 Mac 3:24–6; trans. Schwartz 2008, 182–3.

[99] The sense of the desecration by trampling underfoot, expressed in the prayer of the high priest Simon for divine assistance (*κατεπατήσαμεν τὸν οἶκον τοῦ ἁγιασμοῦ*; 3 Macc 2:18), is reminiscent of the language used in the *Psalms of Solomon* (*Ὠνείδισαν γὰρ ἔθνη Ιερουσαλημ ἐν καταπατήσει*; 2:19) in relation to Pompey's desecration of the temple.

Yet there may have been more to it than that. In the context of Alexander, the choice of the snake could point to a number of contexts, beginning with his family and origins. According to Plutarch (*Alexander* 2–3), Alexander's mother, Olympias, was notorious for engaging in various religious practices that involved snakes. What is more, it was said that she had once been seen entertaining a snake in her bed, a sight that King Philippos, her husband, found most offputting. Some long tongues even put it about that the king had decided to avoid his wife's bed altogether following this incident, thinking that she was sharing it with some higher power. Atop this heap of gossip collected by Plutarch we find a Delphic oracle, in which Philippos was ordered by Apollo to revere the Egyptian god Ammon, who visited Olympias in serpentine shape; Philippos, so the oracle, lost his eye because he spied on his wife and the deity through a crack in the door! This tall tale made its way also into the mainstream *Alexander Romance*, where the serpent in the queen's bed is actually the Egyptian exiled king turned itinerant wizard Nektanebo (alpha, 1.4–11). Following his successful rendezvous with the queen, and fearing the suspicions of the jealous husband, Nektanebo once again assumes the form of a serpent and causes great wonderment and alarm in a royal banquet, where he frightens Philippos and his guests, but affectionately warms up to Olympias. A few days later, when Philippos is sitting in his garden, a bird lays an egg in his lap. A small snake hatches from it and encircles the egg. When Philippos consults with his soothsayers he is told that the snake is his son, who will circle the entire world in his conquests. If in Alexander's conception stories a serpent serves as his father, in this prophetic parable the serpent represents Alexander himself! In an alternative version of the story known to Justin (11.11.3–5) Olympias confesses to Philippos that Alexander has in fact been begotten by a giant serpent. The king, upon receiving this information, hastens to disown Alexander. At the very end of the version in O_o we find a quotation by the sages from Proverbs 27:11, focusing on a father-son relationship. Was that a clever reference to Alexander's reputed draconian origins, a vicious jibe at the deception behind his conception and at his own pretensions to divinity?

Or is the reptilian connection to Alexander conveying an altogether different message? The sources, both historical and mythical, present Alexander as using serpents in feats of healing and protection. According to Diodorus Siculus (17.103.3–8) and Curtius Rufus (9.8.17–27) one military operation along the Indus valley brought Alexander's army into confrontation with armed Indians using poisoned blades. Among the victims of this unorthodox mode of fighting was Ptolemy, at that time one of Alexander's highest-ranking officers and the future king of Egypt. As none of the physicians could cure the wound, Alexander incubated by his sick friend's bedside, and in his dream a serpent appeared with a healing herb in its mouth. Upon waking up Alexander ordered a search for that herb, which was indeed found, and used to good benefit in curing all those afflicted by the poison. In the version of this story known to Cicero

(*On Divination* 2.66/135) this was the very serpent that had enjoyed the care of Olympias! There is no need, of course, to accept the story as completely, or even partially, factual. The important and relevant fact is that it was told in the first place.[100] Yet another story with a clear Egyptian connection relates how, during the foundation of a shrine in Alexandria by Alexander, a significant number of serpents appeared all of a sudden, and came to be regarded as guardian spirits by future generations (AR, alpha 1.32.5–7). What seems to be a parallel story with a distinct Jewish slant is recorded in the *Life of Jeremiah* (6–7) ascribed to Epiphanios of Salamis.[101] According to this story Alexander successfully rid his newly founded Alexandria of poisonous snakes by exhuming the bones of the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah, who had been stoned to death by fellow Judeans in the Egyptian city of Taphnes (cf. Jer 43), and transporting them to their new and final resting place. In these stories, therefore, the serpents symbolize good health and prosperity.

Given Alexander's close association with serpents, which may have started already during his lifetime and certainly proliferated after his death, the appearance of the serpent in our story is understandable. It is harder, however, to know what to make of it. The difficulty is double. First, because it is impossible to discern beyond doubt who is actually said to have been bitten by the serpent in the temple. The doubt deepens when we consider that this part of the story has reached us only in one strand of the Gviha tradition, and in a single manuscript at that. The second difficulty is that, as we have just seen, Alexander's association with serpents could be interpreted both positively and negatively.

On the other hand, it is also possible that the literary use of the serpent has to do with Pompey just as, or even more than, with Alexander. In fact, returning once more to the *Psalm of Solomon* 2 we find that the great foreign besieger and defiler of Jerusalem—that is, Pompey—is called "a dragon."[102] It is not impossible that our story retains the memory of this slur against Pompey. Unfortunately, this connection does not help us answer the question who was bitten by the snake.

[100] See also Strabo 15.2.7 (c.723), who reports Alexander's dream, but does not state that he received the information from a serpent. The place of Ptolemy in the story raises the suspicion that he may have had something to do with its origins, perhaps even including it in his own history of Alexander. It is noteworthy that in the story of Alexander's arrival at Siwah Ptolemy is unique in telling of two serpents, rather than two crows, that led the way to the sanctuary (Arrian, *Anabasis* 3.3.5). Eggermont (1975, 107–16) argues that because the story is not reported by Arrian, who famously followed Ptolemy's history of Alexander, and because the story itself is so favorable to Ptolemy, it was surely not included in Ptolemy's work, who "should be expected to have been the very first to inform his readers of the event" (p. 107). But it might just as well have been the story's self-serving attitude that convinced Arrian to disregard it. Eggermont and Ogden (2011, 30–2) suggest Kleitarchos as the source. For more examples and a full discussion of Alexander's connections with serpents see Ogden 2011, 14–56.

[101] Text, translation, and commentary: Torrey 1946, 21–2, 35–6, 49–52. For the development of this story in rabbinic and medieval Hebrew literature see Klęczar 2014.

[102] 2:25; δράκοντος. For Pompey's draconian designation and its biblical connotations see Atkinson 2004, 36.

If it is Alexander-Pompey, then the story may be read as signifying divine retribution with an ironic twist. Such, minus the irony perhaps, is also the gist of the psalm. However, if we understand Gviha to be the victim of the snake, the story's finale can come to represent Pompey's brutality.[103] Finally, the snake might also possibly represent Pompey's Judean allies, Hyrkanos II and Antipatros. Will they, or their minions, have brushed aside the brave and noble Gviha, standing sentry at the entrance to the holy of holies?

2.4 Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, three observations are in order. The first concerns what appears to be the commonest anchor of the story in rabbinic corpora—its use to explain a date in *Megillat Ta'anit*. In both branches of MTT naturally, but also throughout the manuscript tradition of BT, the story of Alexander and Gviha is used as explanation for the departure of the mysterious *demosionai*. However, since the story does not, in fact, involve any tax collectors, the explanation is not immediately obvious. It has been suggested long ago by Graetz that the original event signified the cessation of tax payments to the Roman government at the beginning of the Great Revolt.[104] If so, this has nothing to do with either Alexander or Gviha, but may have much to do with Pompey and his arrangements in Judea. After all, it is with Pompey that a new era starts, in which Judean home affairs increasingly came under Roman influence and dictates. In this way the exegetical legend does not directly address the commemorated event, but rather uses it to create a time frame, from the beginning of Roman encroachment to the violent outburst that ended up consuming the temple. If this interpretation is accepted, it speaks loudly to the historical awareness and to the literary subtlety of this scholion.

The second observation concerns how the story introduces an interesting twist in the development of the literary Alexander as a cipher for a foreign imperialistic power. It is easy to see, as do the authors of Daniel 11 and 1 Maccabees 1:1–10, a clear line of continuation from Alexander to the Hellenistic monarchies of the Ptolemies and especially the Seleukids. Both kingdoms harked back to the great

[103] The negative impression left by Pompey on Judean memory lasted some time. According to Suetonius (*Divus Iulius* 84.5) Judeans in Rome mourned bitterly for the murdered Caesar, a sentiment interpreted as resulting in part from his latter-day enmity with Pompey (Stern 1976–84, II, 109). In writing about Pompey's grave in Egypt Appian (*Civil Wars* 2.90) remarks that it was demolished in his time by Judean militants during the Diaspora Revolt under Trajan, an action that can be interpreted as sign of long-enduring hostility to his memory. According to Cicero (*Pro Flacco* 67–8) and Josephus (*War* 1.153; *Antiquities* 14.73) Pompey refrained from touching the temple treasure. Dio 37.16.4, on the other hand, claims that he robbed it clean (with Smallwood 1976, 27 n. 17).

[104] Graetz 1906, III, 573–4. For the relatively strong scholarly consensus in support of this suggestion see Noam 2003, 199. Roman tax collectors in Jerusalem: Cicero, *Against Flaccus* 69; Josephus, *War* 1.154; *Antiquities* 14.74.

conqueror, and could not have come into existence were it not for his groundbreaking achievements. The transition from a Greek to a Roman Alexander, however, is far from trivial. As argued, it was supported not only by the changing fates of Mediterranean imperialist powers, but also by Pompey's own personal connection with the Makedonian Great. From this point on, as we shall see in the next two chapters, the figure of Alexander comes to represent not a member of a particular culture, language, or polity, but rather the current foreign imperial rule with which Judea must deal—that is, Rome.

Finally, we come to the image of Alexander that emerges from the story. To be sure, Alexander here is more passive and less benevolent than in the Seleukid *Romance* (as well as in the next two strands of the tradition, as we shall see in the following chapters). In the first part of the story Alexander's part is perfunctory, whereas in the second he becomes a dire threat. If my interpretation of the story is accepted, this can be explained as the toll on Alexander's reputation taken by Pompey. On the other hand, the use of Alexander as a stand-in for the Roman conqueror also softens the story somewhat. To begin with, in our story the invasion and desecration are apparently avoided, or at least not mentioned. Secondly, the story diverts attention away from the severe stasis that engulfed both the Hasmonean house and Judean society in general. The focus on Gviha rather than on the warring brothers Hyrkanos and Aristoboulos serves that end.[105] The representation of Pompey as Alexander distances the story from the realm of history, planting it in a more distant and legendary past. It is this distancing that allows, on the one hand, the mitigation of the trauma to religious feelings experienced following the temple's desecration, and on the other the conjuring of an imagined alternative reality, in which the land promised by the Torah has never been lost.

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[105] One wonders whether the story's focus on a third party—i.e., one that is not manifestly identified with either party—may possibly reflect the group of two hundred Judeans who implored Pompey to do away with the Hasmoneans and their kingship altogether, and to return the government to the hands of a high priest (Diodorus 40.2; Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.41).

3
Alexander and Simon the Just

3.1 The Text

The third main branch of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition is a product of the same literary milieu as that of the Gviha story, namely rabbinic literature in general and *Megillat Taʿanit* (MTT) in particular.[1] Two of the three main lines of tradition appear in the now familiar parallel scholia of MTT—Parma (P) and Oxford (O_o)—on the 21st of the month of Kislev, roughly around the winter solstice, and four days before Hanukkah. To make things even more interesting and complicated, five years after the publication of Noam's edition of *Megillat Taʿanit* there came to light another manuscript containing a partial copy of the scroll and the scholion, preserved on a piece of parchment reused in the binding of Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* and housed in the library of the Benedictine monastery of St. Paul at Lavanttal in Austria.[2] This manuscript, designated O_s, derives from the same family as O_o, and is part of what is emerging as a distinct line of tradition (referred to henceforth as the "O tradition"), which has left its traces also in various medieval Ashkenazi rabbinic works.[3] In the parts that have survived, O_s appears to be a somewhat less eroded, but also unfortunately less complete, member of this tradition. The third line of tradition has reached us in a much more familiar literary context, namely tractate *Yoma* (69a) of the Babylonian Talmud (BT). Besides affording a third approach to the story that is quite distinct from the O tradition and subtly so from P, it is in itself preserved in a variety of manuscripts—a boon for the philologist.[4]

Yet the same philological complexity that gives impetus to study and analysis also greatly encumbers the attempt to present the story in an easily readable format. Rather than try to paraphrase the story, to say nothing of proffering a tentative reproduction of the core version of the story as a seemingly authoritative text, I opt here for a tripartite presentation, representing the three literary contexts of the surviving witnesses: the O tradition (represented here by the better-preserved O_s), P, and BT *Yoma* (Table 3.1).[5] As will presently become

[1] See the short introduction to MTT in chapter 2, section 2.1.

[2] Rosenthal 2008.

[3] Yet another witness to this group is the early fourteenth-century work *Kaftor vaFerah* (KF) by the rabbi, traveler, and author Eshtori haParhi. His parallels to the O tradition, including the reference to the Day of Mt. Gerizim, are conveniently available in Noam 2003, 420.

[4] The manuscripts used here are Munich 6; Munich 95; Vatican Ebr 134; JTS 218; JTS 1623; Venice, *editio princeps*.

[5] Table 3.1 gives my translation of the main three versions, a slightly altered version of Amitay 2017, with fuller philological annotation and discussion. I have kept the translation highly literal, so as to allow the reader as close an impression of the original as possible, without becoming completely

clear, the extensive manuscript variance presented in the footnotes can on occasion cause this division to appear a little arbitrary, with different patterns of tradition emerging across rubric lines. For a full appreciation of the philological complexity the reader is referred to the synoptic table provided in the appendix to this chapter.

Table 3.1 Story of Alexander and Simon the Just. Sources: Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 69a; *Megillat Ta'anit* on Kislev 21st, Lavanttal and Parma Mss

Megillat Ta'anit—O_s	*Megillat Ta'anit*—P	BT *Yoma* 69a
On the twenty-first of that (month) the Day of Mt. Gerizim.	On the twenty-first of that (month) the Day of Mt. Gerizim.	**And we have learned:**[6] On the twenty-first of that (month) the Day of Mt. Gerizim, on which no lamentation (is allowed).
When the *Kutim* arrived and told Alexander: hand over[9] to us the five *kwrim*[10] of land on Mt. Moriah;	A day when the *Kutim* asked[7] Alexander[8] Makedon for the temple,	A day when the *Kutim* requested the house of our God from Alexander Makedon,
and he sold[11] (it) to them.	and he gave it to them.	and he gave it to them.
And when they came the men of Jerusalem came out and chased[12] them away with sticks.		
When they came to Antipatris before Alexander,[13]		

Continued

incomprehensible. Text in **bold** script is Aramaic. Text (in parentheses) comprises my own additions, made to clarify the highly elliptical rabbinic Hebrew. I have also made liberal interpretative use of punctuation marks, which are of course absent from the manuscripts.

[6] All BT manuscripts qualify the story with והתניא, a ubiquitous Talmudic marker that defines what follows as material deriving from a Tannaitic source, that is, from before the redaction of the Mishnah in the first generation of the third century CE. I shall return to this qualification later in the chapter.

[7] שאלו. All BT manuscripts give בקשו, translated here as "requested."

[8] Alexander's name is spelled here אלסכנדרוס (*alskndros*), which appears to indicate the influence of the Arabic rendering of the name: Iskandar. This is hardly surprising, given the prominence of the Babylonian tradition (of which P is part) in Arabic-speaking lands. But cf. the spelling in O_o.

[9] O_s: מסור. KF has here מכור, which agrees better with the description of Alexander's reaction to this request: מכר, he sold.

[10] כורים: a unit of measurement. Ben Shahar (2017, 117 n. 110) suggests that this is a borrowing from Mishnah *'Eruvin* 2, and that the expression which originally stood here was כברת ארץ. The reading כורים ארץ is preserved also in KF. The reading of O_o is: המשמרין שבהר המוריה תנם לנו (the guards on Mt. Moriah, give them to us!). This strikes me as a corruption, possibly under the influence of the "first guard" (משמר) appearing later in the text.

[11] In O_o, as in the rest of the tradition: and he gave (נתן) it to them. This seems to me the preferable option, although the manuscript reading is kept in the text.

[12] KF also reads: chased (רדפום); O_o: pushed (דחפום), rightly judged by Noam (2003, 264) as inferior.

[13] O_o: "until they arrived in Antipatris; they brought upon them Alexander Makedon." The town's name, whose importance I shall discuss presently, is variously spelled and misspelled across the entire tradition.

Table 3.1 *Continued*

Megillat Ta'anit—O_s	*Megillat Ta'anit*—P	BT *Yoma* 69a
Simon the Just heard (of it). He led with him a thousand *bouleutai*[14] from Jerusalem, clad in white, and a thousand priestly disciples, clad in their cultic dresses,	Came Israel and informed Simon the Just, who donned (the) priestly clothes. And he went out before him, he and all the magnates[15] of Jerusalem,	Came Israel and informed Simon the Just. What did he do? He donned priestly clothes and wrapped himself in priestly clothes, and the important people of Jerusalem with him,
	and while walking in the mountains	
(all) carrying torches in their hands.	they saw the light of torches.	and lit torches before them.
He came to the first guard.[16] (He) told them: "Who are you?"; they told him: "We are the people of Jerusalem. We have come to greet the king."		
		And all night long these were walking from this side and those from that side.
	Said the king: "What is this?" Told him the informers:[17] "These, these are the Judeans[18] who rebelled against you."	He told them: "Who are these?" They told him: "Judeans who rebelled against you."
	He arrived at Antipatris (and) the sun rose.	Since they arrived at Antipatris the sun came up and they met each other.
When Alexander saw Simon the Just he prostrated himself on the ground[19] before him.	He saw Simon the Just, who was wearing his priestly clothes, fell from his chariot and prostrated himself on the ground before him.	Since he saw Simon the Just he descended from his chariot and prostrated himself before him.
They[20] told him: "Our king and master! Before this (man) do you prostrate yourself!?"	They told him: "Before this (man) do you prostrate yourself!? But he is nothing but a son of man!"[21]	They told him: "A great king like yourself should prostrate himself before this Judean?"

[14] בולטין. This is surely an estimated phonetic plural rendering of *βουλευτής*—a ubiquitous Greek term for councilman from Homer onwards. Noam (2003, 264) rightly regards it as a sign of the early origins of the story.

[15] גדולי ירוש׳.

[16] Noam (2003, 264) suspects that the graphic error that turned כורים into משמרין, in combination with a reference to guards in another date on MTT (15th of Av), was responsible for the naissance of the first guard episode, which is absent from P and the *Yoma* manuscripts. However, the appearance of the guard episode in O_s (unknown to Noam at the time of writing), which retains the proper reading כורים, supports the notion that it is indeed a part of the O tradition, not a careless addition of O_o.

[17] מסורות; denouncers, sycophants. [18] יהודאין.

[19] O_o: on his hand. Since both O_s and P retain a reference to the ground, it appears highly preferable to the reading in O_o.

[20] O_o: his slaves told him. [21] This fascinating reading, to be discussed below, is unique to P.

He told them:[22] "When I was going out to war, and I saw him with me, I was going out in peace and coming back in peace."	He told them: "In this (man's) image I see when I go to war and gain victory."	He told them: "The likeness of this man's image wins before me in the house of my war."
	He told him: "What do you request?"	He told them: "Why have you come?"
	He told him: "The house where we pray for your kingdom, these *goyim*[23] misled[24] you and you gave it to them."	They told him: "The place where we pray for you and for your kingdom, that it not be destroyed, shall these *goyim* make you err and shall you give it to them to be destroyed?"[25]
	He told them: "Who has misled me?"	He told them: "And who are those?"
	They told him: "These, these, *Kutim*."	They told him: "*Kutim* who stand before you."
	He told him: "They are hereby given to you."	He told them: "They are hereby handed over to you."
Immediately they put hooks in their feet and dragged them.	He pierced their ankles,[26] and they hung them from behind the horses, and dragged them	Immediately they pierced their ankles and hung them from their horses' tails, and were dragging them
	over the thorns and the briars all the way to Mt. Gerizim.	over the thorns and the briars until they reached Mt. Gerizim.
And Mt. Gerizim[27] was given over to Israel, and they sowed it with *krshinin*.[28]	Since they arrived there, at Mt. Gerizim, they plowed it and sowed it, just as they had thought to do to the temple.	Since they arrived at Mt. Gerizim they plowed it and sowed it with *krshnin*, just as they had sought to do the house of our god.
	The day when they did so, they made into a good day.	And that day they made into a good day.

[22] O_o: He told them: "The likeness of this man's image wins before me in war and brings me out in peace."

[23] גוים can be understood as "gentiles," "peoples," or simply "people." The ambiguity here may well be intentional.

[24] הסעוך, misled. The parallel in *Yoma* is יתעוך, shall make you err. The two words are nearly homophonous, although deriving from different roots. This divergence may well be the product of oral transmission in either of the two strands.

[25] "To be destroyed" is missing from the better mss of Yoma and from all strands of MTT.

[26] The ms. has here "pierced their holes" (Hebrew נקביהן), which makes no sense, and was convincingly corrected by Noam (2003, 265) to "their ankles" (Hebrew עקביהן).

[27] O_o: And Mt. Gerizim, which was their house of prayer, was given over to Israel, and they plowed it and sowed it with salt.

[28] כרשינין: some kind of legume, probably not for human consumption. The use of the former temple precinct as a growing ground for fodder is a sign of humiliation.

3.2 Philology and Source Criticism

This story presents a complex picture in terms of philology.[29] The first question we turn to is that of unity versus variance. Even a cursory look at Table 3.1, let alone a close examination of the more detailed table of sources in the appendix, will indubitably lead to the conclusion that we are dealing here with a single story, told in different ways and with different emphases. As I shall argue presently, the tension between the manifest unity of the story and the impressive variety of ways in which it is told, with variants ranging in scale from a different organization of the plot to localized inconsistencies in spelling, justifies the following basic premise: the more any particular detail is repeated in the various strands, the likelier it is to have been part of the original story. Of course, this does not necessarily entail that all the details that were part of the original story have survived in all versions; it is perfectly possible that parts of the original whole will have survived only in some, or even in a single, telling. It does stand to reason, however, that those elements that are ubiquitous or highly frequent in the tradition are also the ones closest to the core.[30]

In order to appreciate better the situation of the sources let us begin with a comparison of the various versions of the scroll proper—that is, the earlier stratum of MTT, which preceded the production of the scholia—which already provides some clues as to the whole process. The first point to be made is that the story, familiar to us only through the transmission channels of rabbinic literature, reached this literary milieu through the medium of *Megillat Ta'anit*. This of course is stating the obvious as far as the versions of O_s, O_o, and P are concerned, but is far less obvious when we turn to the Babylonian Talmud. The telling sign to the story's origin in an MTT context is its introduction in all (but one) Talmudic manuscripts as taking place "on the twenty-first of that (month)." Importantly, practically all tellings preserve the same date, which puts its authenticity beyond doubt.[31] However, this calendar reference, both natural and obligatory in the context of MTT, is completely meaningless in the context of BT *Yoma*. It follows that the story was borrowed by the Talmudic recensors from a version of MTT that already included the scholion. This is all the more obvious considering that the Talmudic versions neglect to mention on which month the Day of Mt. Gerizim is

[29] The discussion from here onward retains some key points, but otherwise completely replaces my earlier, much shorter treatment in Amitay (2007, 237–40).

[30] An alternative explanation would require us to postulate an outside source, which was in a position to influence all strands of the ms tradition, either wholesale or for each particular detail. Either option strikes me as much less likely.

[31] The sole exception is the Venice *editio princeps*, which gives the date as the 25th, with a later gloss ascribing the affair to the month of Tevet. This version has had a great influence on consequent print and online editions, and is the one most likely to be encountered by modern readers, especially if they conduct their research digitally. It is not, as far as I have seen, supported in any of the manuscripts.

celebrated. In the context of MTT the name of the month is unnecessary, given that the scroll is calendarized and that it specifies the month only on its first occurrence. With two dates in Kislev preceding the 21st, there was no need to repeat the name of the month. Outside the MTT context, however, the reference to the twenty-first day becomes obscure, and thus betrays the source used here by the Talmud.

A second point to be gleaned from the introduction of the date in BT *Yoma* gives some indication as to the process of transmission. In this case, the mention of the day without reference to the month points in my mind to written, rather than oral, transmission. On the one hand, it is easy to see how a scribe could copy a text verbatim, without paying attention to the awkward meaninglessness created by the unconnected mention of the day of the month, or perhaps accepting this awkwardness in deference to the text's integrity. This kind of scribal decision, once it had taken place, would then be replicated, with future scribes unwilling or uncertain how to make further changes. Oral tradition, on the other hand, is considerably less forgiving of such meaningless detail, especially at a story's very beginning. At each and every telling the listening audience will have had the opportunity to stop the storyteller right at the top and ask for clarification.

That is not to say, however, that the versions of the story preserved in the surviving scholia to MTT are a priori more original, more authoritative, or otherwise better than that of BT *Yoma*. A case in point is the halakhic qualification of the date. According to BT the Day of Mt. Gerizim was not merely an occasion for commemoration, but also a day on which mourning and eulogizing of the dead were forbidden, an observation that is missing from either version of MTT. In itself, this inconsistency is not surprising in relation to the O tradition, which contains a number of unique traits that differentiate it from the Babylonian tradition of BT and P, but it is rather striking in comparison with P itself, which is otherwise much closer to BT. *Prima facie* the authority of the MTT scholia might seem greater than that of BT, given the very purpose of the scroll, to remind its audience of the day's accompanying customs. However, there are two reasons to suspect that in this case BT is closer than either O or P to the original halakhic prescription. The first is that the march of the centuries from the close of the second temple period onwards saw a distinct long-term decline in the halakhic authority of *Megillat Ta'anit*. It thus seems to me less likely that the Talmudic recensors should have added this halakhic detail on their own accord; it seems much likelier that they faithfully preserved what they found in their source. The second reason is that *Kaftor vaFerah*, a late witness to the O tradition, also preserves the same halakhic prescription. The fact that two such disparate versions preserve the same halakhic detail strongly suggests that this detail was indeed a part of the original, rather than a later gloss made independently in both contexts.[32]

[32] On this work see note 3 above. Admittedly, KF could also have made this addition to his text through familiarity with BT *Yoma*, which strikes me as somewhat less likely but is certainly possible.

This short exercise demonstrates the methodological principle at the heart of our inquiry. Generally speaking, a close comparison of the varying details in this particular test case may serve as a gateway to the study of rabbinic transmission methods as a whole, a topic of study that is both important and fascinating, but is far too broad to be expounded methodically in the present context. More particularly, the value of these reports of the Day of Mt. Gerizim lies exactly in the balance between the variance in detail and the general uniformity of the reports as a whole. While a close look at the different versions of the story yields a great many incongruities, large and small, a comprehensive look yields a rather uniform picture. The general outline of the plot, the identities of the main protagonists, the recurrence of the locales where the story takes place, even the connection of the story with the date, all far outweigh the variance in detail. This observation leads to two important methodological conclusions: firstly, that at the heart of these different reports lies a coherent original story; secondly, that the best approach to this original story lies exactly in those places where the various surviving tellings are in agreement.[33] In other words, those elements that appear in all (or most) witnesses are the most likely to have been part of the original, and will serve as the backbone for the entire discussion.

The first such detail is the meeting place of Alexander and Simon the Just—Antipatris. This place name is mentioned in all three strands, as represented in the table above, and in all manuscripts within these strands. Even the various faulty spellings of the name, including letters that had dropped out and had then been added above the line in some manuscripts of BT *Yoma*, testify that the place name was important to the transmitters of the story, even at a time when the place itself had been forgotten and its name had become foreign to eyes and ears. The importance of this detail is emphasized further by the fact that it is mentioned at different stages in the story. In the O tradition it is the endpoint of the chase scene, where the Kutim seek the protection of Alexander from the angry, stick-wielding Jerusalemites; in P and BT the name of Antipatris comes up for the first time only when Simon arrives on the scene at sunrise to meet the Makedonian king. Yet despite the fact that the particular localization does not seem to play a part in furthering the plot, both versions, in all their manuscripts, insist that the meeting with Alexander should take place there in particular. Later in this chapter I shall offer a tentative explanation for the insistence on this particular toponym. For now, it seems safe to assume that this detail belongs to the original version of the story.

This conclusion offers us in turn a very solid *terminus post quem* for the naissance of the story as we have it. According to Josephus (*Antiquities* 16.142–4; 13.390)

[33] Note, however, that this conceptualized core story does not necessitate the existence of an authoritative *Urtext* lying behind all surviving versions. As we shall see, a considerable element of oral transmission should also be taken into consideration.

the name Antipatris was given by King Herod to an existing settlement called Kafarsaba in honor of his father Antipatros, the architect of the Idumean family's rise to power and glory, initially under the aegis and then at the expense of the Hasmonean dynasty. And while there is no certainty as to the exact date of Kafarsaba's refoundation as Antipatris, it lies safely in the last generation of the first century BCE, the heyday of the Herodian period.[34]

That is not to say, however, that the story was originally told exactly as we now have it. On the contrary, a number of elements in the story testify both to the deep historical awareness that underlies it and to the processes that shaped it. One such element—the sorry fate of the temple on Mt. Gerizim—plays a crucial double part as both pretext and punch line. It has long been recognized and accepted that the celebration on Kislev 21st is to be connected with the destruction of the Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerizim by order of the Hasmonean high priest Hyrkanos I.[35] It has also been convincingly demonstrated that the description of the temple's destruction combines the histories of two different events from Hyrkanos' reign, namely the destruction of the Samaritan temple at Shechem and the complete and utter razing of the city Samaria-Shomron, some 5 kilometers to the northwest.[36] In our story these two events are woven together by the reference to the annihilation of infrastructure and to the reversion of a solidly constructed site to agricultural use. In reality it was the city of Samaria whose irrigation and water management systems were demolished in order to obliterate the urban landscape. In the rabbinic story it is the temple grounds on Mt. Gerizim that are plowed and then used for growing vetch. Furthermore the rabbinic story combines the histories of the two locales—Gerizim and Samaria—and myth takes the place of history: the memories of two closely related but separate events are intertwined, and the action is transferred from Hyrkanos' to Alexander's time. These observations provide a second chronological marker, in addition to that established by the mention of Antipatris, at the end of the second century BCE.[37] Thus we can postulate about a century between the historical events at the heart of the story and the earliest possible date for their mythical representation. As I shall soon argue, this century also afforded many opportunities for the story to develop overtime, until it reached the form represented by the surviving literary sources.

[34] The anachronism of Antipatris and Alexander is noted by Marcus 1937, 518; Tcherikower 1959, 48; Tropper 2013, 142. An ingenious (if unconvincing) alternative interpretation of Antipatris has been offered by Belenkiy (2015, 8–9), reading the name not as relating to a geographical locality but rather to a person—the nephew of Antiochos III, who served under him as cavalry commander and chief diplomat during the Fourth and Fifth Syrian Wars, and as late as the aftermath of Antiochos' disastrous war against Rome (Polybius 5.79.12, 82.9, 87; 16.18; 21.16.4, 17.9, 24). However, this creative explanation lies on extremely tenuous philological ground.

[35] For a survey of the previous scholarship in the field of rabbinics see Stoneman 1994, 41; Noam 2003, 263; Ben Shahar 2017, 113 nn. 90–2.

[36] Strongly and persuasively argued by Bar-Kochva 2002.

[37] For the likely dating of the fall of Mt. Gerizim to 112/11 BCE and of Samaria to 108/7 see Finkielsztejn 1998; Bar Kochva 2002; Bourgel 2016, 500 n. 4.

Not surprisingly, establishing a *terminus ante quem* for the formed story is a much trickier business. The manuscripts of BT *Yoma* unanimously preface the story with the Aramaic term והתניא. According to the conventions of the Babylonian Talmud, this term literally implies oral transmission through rote learning, but also technically qualifies the material as deriving from pre-Mishnaic times, that is, from before the turn of the second and third centuries CE.[38] Yet there seems to be good reason to trust this chronological qualification, and to limit the time frame further. Consider the historical identity and the rabbinic perception of the Judean protagonist, the high priest Simon the Just. As I argued elsewhere, the historical characters lying behind the rabbinic image of Simon the Just are two high priests, a grandfather and a grandson, covering between them practically all of the third century BCE.[39] Of course, the mention of Simon the Just does not allow a direct dating through an identification with either the elder or the younger historical Simon, just as the mention of Alexander does not allow us to date the story to his time.[40] However, it does give us a good idea of how the original storyteller imagined the reality behind it. In rabbinic literature the figure of Simon the Just is perceived as belonging to, if not being responsible for, a period of prosperity and miracles in the Jerusalem temple. In accordance with this ahistorical perception of Simon in rabbinic literature, he is associated not only with Alexander the Great but also with the Roman emperor Caligula.[41] The important point is that in all appearances of Simon anywhere in Jewish literature—rabbinic or otherwise, historical or mythical—he is firmly connected with an active temple in Jerusalem. The notion of an active Jerusalem temple agrees well also with the interplay between Jerusalem and Gerizim in the story. As demonstrated above, the downfall of the center of Gerizim comprises both the pretext for the story and its bottom line. This satisfaction at the Samaritan catastrophe is accentuated by the success of the rival temple in Jerusalem. A story that begins as a challenge of Gerizim against Jerusalem continues with a striking reversal of fortune and concludes with the surprise triumph of the latter and the utter defeat of the former. This attitude of security and superiority fits nicely within the period between the destruction of Gerizim by Hyrkanos and the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus two centuries later. The Judean glee at the disgrace of Gerizim would have rung hollow at a time when Jerusalem already lay in ruins.

[38] Goldstein (1993, 98) gives 230 CE as the *terminus ante quem* on the same grounds. Tropper (2013, 115) supports the possibility "that the rabbinic account of this legend was already formulated in tannaitic times." For the same impression that the Simon story is independent of Josephus (see chapter 4) and rather early in origin see also Kazis 1962, 7–8; Momigliano 1979, 443; Fletcher-Louis 2004, 81–2.

[39] Amitay 2007. For the mythical nature of Simon the Just in rabbinic literature see Tropper 2013, at much greater length and detail.

[40] Tantalizingly, the arrival of Alexander in Eretz-Israel possibly coincides with the younger days of the elder Simon. On the other hand, the younger Simon was a contemporary of Antiochos III, who, as we have seen in chapter 1, served as inspiration for the Seleukid *Romance* version of the story.

[41] More on this in Amitay 2018.

The time frame for the naissance and formation of our story is thus as follows: at the earliest end stands the latter part of the reign of Hyrkanos, at the end of the second century BCE—a climax of the historical Judean-Samaritan conflict and a thus a fitting font of inspiration for its literary manifestation in this pseudo-historical myth. The earliest date for its actual composition, or original telling, is located in the period of Herod, after the foundation of Antipatris. The lower end of the chronology is less certain, with the philological evidence allowing us a cut-off point in the generation after 200 CE, while the mention of Simon the Just and the existence of the Jerusalem temple push the *terminus ante quem* towards the time before its destruction in 70 CE. Thus, although absolute certainty cannot be achieved, it is probably safe to conclude that the naissance of the story as we have it belongs roughly in the last century of the second temple period.

Having proposed a time frame for the story's composer, what can we say about the sources at their disposal? This question has received a recent thought-provoking answer by Ben Shahar.[42] Taking a literary approach to his analysis, Ben Shahar identifies in our story a combination of three different sources, or rather three different stories. The first involves a confrontation between Samaritans and Judeans that erupted into a violent brawl in or near Jerusalem, developed into a chase scene with the Judeans wielding sticks, and ended with some kind of trial before Alexander. A second story described a meeting between Alexander and Simon the Just, but did not involve any Samaritans. The third story refers to the conquest of the land of Samaria by Hyrkanos and to the double destruction of the temple on Mt. Gerizim and the city of Samaria.

At first glance, this tripartite division appears to agree with the findings described in the previous chapters. In the first chapter we have encountered a meeting between Alexander and the Judean priesthood, which on the one hand culminates in a surprising recognition of Judean religious superiority by the Makedonian king and on the other hand does not involve Samaritans in any way. In the second chapter we read a story that deals with a series of confrontations between the Judeans and other ethnic groups, which brought disagreements about land ownership before Alexander's court, and even more importantly, specifically mentions a Samaritan intervention, exactly at the time when Alexander was on his way to Jerusalem. Following the logic of Ben Shahar's argument, one might be tempted to argue that the two traditions defined and analyzed in the first two chapters of this book—or more broadly two stories that shared a common outlook with them—were combined here with historical data from the time of Hyrkanos to create the story as it now stands.

However, there are also major differences between the two stories encountered so far and the putative sources, or stories, postulated by Ben Shahar. Regarding the story preserved in the epsilon recension of AR (chapter 1), it is important to

[42] Ben Shahar 2017, 112–21 (in English, in less detail, Ben Shahar 2018, 408–11).

note that it presents the Judean priesthood as a collective and does not focus on the figure of a high priest, let alone mention Simon the Just by name. As for the story of Gviha (chapter 2), it is remarkable that unlike the Canaanites-Africans, the Ishmaelites, and the Egyptians, all of whom presented their respective legal cases before the foreign potentate, the Kutim-Samaritans do not participate in the legal proceedings that take center stage in the first part of the story. As a matter of fact, "the Kutim" who appear in the story receive no introduction and make no claim. The Samaritan interest in the story is solely to cause trouble, by inciting Alexander to request entry into the holy of holies. A Samaritan presence was obviously important to the storyteller, but its significance is implied rather than explicated. A simple conflation of the two stories discussed in the previous chapters with two of the three sources identified by Ben Shahar thus seems unwarranted.

A key argument in Ben Shahar's division of the story into three distinct units relies on his estimation of the story's literary quality. Thus, he wonders at the transferal of action between Jerusalem, Antipatris, and Gerizim; at the absence of Simon the Just from the first part of the story; and at the alleged absence of the Samaritans from the meeting between Simon and Alexander. Various differences between O and P are thus explained as the products of the rhetorical tactic employed by each composer in order to smooth over the differences between the disparate stories. The O tradition presents a problematic, possibly mutilated text, whereas P excels in its literary attempts to weave the three different stories into one cloth. However, the use of such narratological niceties is not always warranted, particularly in the context of rabbinic literature, which on the one hand is characteristically succinct and dry, and on the other had been subjected to a long process of tortuous transmission. Thus, for example, Ben Shahar wonders why Simon is not mentioned in the description of the initial Judean reaction to the Samaritan approach, and concludes that he was never a part of the story. An alternative explanation would be that there were other authorities in Jerusalem that could be responsible for the initial response to the challenge (to say nothing of possible spontaneous reaction), and that the entire incident was indeed reported to the high priest, certainly the most authoritative figure in Jerusalem, but only after the immediate unexpected threat had been dealt with. More importantly, rabbinic legend ought not to be pressed for such fine detail. The laconic nature of rabbinic storytelling, here as elsewhere, relies on active interpretation by listeners and readers. Simon the Just appears in the story only when he is needed as counterpart for the dramatic meeting with Alexander. This supposed late appearance need not be interpreted as a sign of his complete absence from the scene, and hence as an indication for the combination of different stories.[43]

[43] One wonders also why the chase scene appears in O, but not in P/BT. Was it part of the original story, faithfully preserved in O but dropped by P/BT, or was it a late addition of O to the common version? A conclusive answer seems to me impossible on the basis of existing evidence. In my opinion, the affinity of O to the Eretz-Israeli tradition, as well as the survival of unique and early linguistic elements (Noam 2003, 464 and see note 14 above) tips the scale in favor of the original story.

Another point where Ben Shahar may have over-interpreted the evidence concerns what he sees as the point of transition between the story of Judean-Samaritan confrontation before Alexander and the story of the king's meeting with the high priest. Ben Shahar rightly points to the extremely dense syntax of P at this point, and argues that the switch in the subject of the sentence from Simon and company (walking in the mountains) to the king and the informers accompanying him (who saw the lit torches) represents the literary attempt of P to clean up the syntactical mess created by the stitching together of the two stories.[44] This argument is hard to accept. Firstly, because if the composer of P encountered a problem here, he could well have come up with a solution that would be less confusing and make better syntactical sense in its own right. Secondly and more importantly, because this argument relies solely on the analysis of P and ignores the parallel, manuscript-rich version of BT. In BT we read clearly that there are two parties traveling by night, and the syntactical difficulty that characterizes P simply does not exist. That the fuller version of BT is closer here to the original story than both O and P is clear from the explicit description of the night march. As it happens, all versions in all manuscripts mention the use of torches—one of a very few details that appear across the board throughout the tradition. But what use are those torches, without any action taking place between dusk and dawn? The night march, related only in BT, is why the torches are necessary, and it is therefore necessarily a part of the original story.

Finally, the Samaritans are not absent at all, from any part of the story, not least from the meeting of Simon and Alexander. To begin with, they are explicitly named and pointed to by the Judeans ("These, these, Kutim" in P; "Kutim who stand before you" in BT). Without the Kutim, it would be extremely hard to understand who are the *goyim* who misled Alexander concerning the Jerusalem temple. It is true that the Kutim remain completely silent during the exchange between Alexander and Simon, but that hardly amounts to their absence from the scene. This silence can be easily explained by the laconic nature of rabbinic storytelling. It is also closely paralleled by the silence of Gviha's antagonists, and more loosely by the lack of reaction to the Judean argument in the trial before Ptolemy Philometor, both discussed in chapter 2.[45] The inability to react to a decisive Judean argument or gesture appears here as a *topos*. Finally, by the time the negotiation between Alexander and Simon is concluded, the Samaritans are readily available for immediate punishment—they have been there all along.

A more fruitful method of inquiry into the sources of the story ought, in my opinion, to start with a perception of the story as a whole, taking all three versions (O, P, BT) into account at all times, and perceiving all three as reworked and

[44] Ben Shahar 2017, 115; 2018, 411.

[45] In the debate before Philometor (Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.78–9) the silence of the Samaritan advocates is not stated explicitly but is rather implied by the statement that their Judean adversary was the first to speak, and by the omission of any response on their part.

eroded versions of an earlier original. It is to the sources of this original that we must turn our gaze.

The first task of the historian is to look for texts in which the relevant information could have been preserved. In regard to the main conflict of the story, that of Judeans vs. Samaritans and Shomronites, the immediate suspect is the now-lost work devoted to the life and works of Hyrkanos I, mentioned (and perhaps even written) by the author of the First Book of Maccabees.[46] The conquest and annexation of the hill country around Shechem and Samaria was one of Hyrkanos' major achievements during his reign. The fate of the city of Samaria and the destruction of the Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerizim will surely have been reported at some length in a work celebrating his career. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that this work, written well within living memory of the events themselves, will have distinguished between the two episodes. Thus, if we imagine a purely textual transmission of the material, it stands to reason that the conflation of the two episodes is the work of the original composer of our story.[47]

There is, however, good reason to consider also the possibility of a parallel source of information deriving from oral transmission. To understand how such a process could have worked, we ought to look at the Day of Mt. Gerizim against the wider context of *Megillat Ta'anit*. The entry for the 21st of Kislev in the scroll itself (that is, not in the scholion) does not mention an action or an event, but rather like the "Lesser Passover," Hanukkah, and Purim, it refers to a day already fixed both in the calendar and in the public awareness.[48] In other words, the scroll as we have it assumes the familiarity of its audience with the Day of Mt. Gerizim, and thus omits the customary explanation. This observation has two significant implications: first, that it demonstrates a degree of awareness that is not likely to have been dominated by one, or even a number of, literary works. Rather, it seems to have been entrenched in life and custom. Second, that a fixed day on the calendar with a strong hold on public consciousness will have served as prime opportunity to pass on stories by word of mouth. The very existence of a Day of Mt. Gerizim provided the Judean community with many opportunities for oral transmission of the story. To give an example, the conflation of Samaria and Gerizim could take place organically, on any number of annually repeating

[46] 1 Macc. 16:23–4. I understand the last two verses of 1 Maccabees, referring to "the rest of his deeds, to his wars, to his benefactions, to the reparation of the walls, and to (the rest of) his deeds," as reflecting a full report of Hyrkanos' reign, to its very end, or at least close thereto. Since it predates 1 Maccabees, it ought to have been written sometime around 100 BCE, a mere decade or two after the capture of Samaria (see note 37 above). We can certainly expect this lost history of Hyrkanos to have been available for perusal in the times before the calamitous "Great Revolt."

[47] The lost history of Hyrkanos is a known unknown. Alongside this we should probably consider also some unknown unknowns. The period was rife with literary activity, most of which remains woefully beyond our knowledge. It is not impossible that the author of our story had access to further textual evidence that has since sunk into complete oblivion.

[48] Ben Shahar (2017, 113) for the observation.

occasions, until it finally came to dominate the tradition.[49] The evidence at our disposal does not allow a clear decision either way, but happily the two explanations are not mutually exclusive. Our anonymous storyteller could well have worked from one or more written sources and at the same time come under the influence of a deep process of oral transmission.

Two other elements in the story provide connections with historical reality and may help us problematize our composer's use of sources. The first is the crucial role played by one of the most familiar Alexander *topoi*, appearing for the first but not the last time in our discussion, and serving as the dramatic turning point of the plot—the prostration of Alexander before the Judean high priest. To be sure, prostration as a sign of recognition and humility before an overlord was hardly an invention of the Hellenistic world. Alexander inherited the custom from the Persian monarchs, and they in turn from earlier rulers of the ancient Near East. A relevant example that comes to mind is the famous "Black Obelisk" on display in the British Museum, erected by the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III and portraying the Israelite king Yehu prostrated before him. As such, this visual and literary element could easily have been conceived by the composer of our story independently of any Alexander tradition, or even of any particular literary source.

On the other hand, it is also a fact that the surviving historical accounts of Alexander make much of his own attempt to introduce this custom into his new Makedonian-Persian court protocol.[50] The question is sharpened by the unique phrasing preserved in ms P: "Before this (man) do you prostrate yourself!? But he is nothing but a son of man!" The underlying message of this exclamation is that Alexander's friends expected obeisance to be done before someone who was somewhat more than mere man. This is, of course, also the gist of the *proskynesis* narratives in both Curtius (8.5.5–6) and Arrian (4.10.7–11.1), the two most extensive and informative authors among the surviving Alexander historians, who famously drew a clear connection between the king's attempt to introduce the custom of *proskynesis* and his fanciful flirt with the divine. P's version is thus in perfect tune with the presentation of the affair by the Alexander historians.[51] How exactly the *proskynesis* motif entered the process that produced our story is impossible to determine. This motif, including its theological ramifications, could certainly have been first introduced in speech, and then handed down orally. Yet it is also possible that the detail was gleaned from one (or more) of the

[49] For the importance of the annual reminiscence in identity formation, and in particular over against the identification of the Samaritans with Mt. Gerizim, see Chalmers 2020, 357–8.

[50] Curtius 8.5.5–18; Plutarch, *Alex.* 54.4–6; Arrian 4.10.5–11.6, 12.3–5.

[51] Admittedly, I see no way to determine with certainty whether this variant is a survival from the original story, or an inspired and attentive invention by one of the anonymous transmitters along the road to the text of P as we have it. It seems to me more probable that P does in fact preserve part of the original story, which was dropped by all other strands.

Alexander histories, and inserted by an unknown hand to a now lost written text. In any case, good reading knowledge in Greek was not uncommon among the literati of Hellenistic Judea, and literature about Alexander was readily available. Either way, it would be an extraordinary coincidence if the *proskynesis* motif entered our story in complete independence of Alexander's actual history.

The second part of the story that seems to correspond with Alexander's history is the horrific punishment meted out by the mythical Alexander to the Kutim. In all strands and all manuscripts there is universal agreement on the mode of torture, or rather execution, of the Kutim: the Judeans pierce the ankles of their adversaries and drag them all the way to Mt. Gerizim.[52] Now, according to a story related in the work of the third-century BCE author Hegesias "the sophist" from Magnesia (preserved by Dionysios of Halikarnassos, *De Comp. Verb.* 18.124–6), as well as in Curtius Rufus (4.6.25–9), after the conclusion of the complicated and dangerous siege of Gaza, Alexander executed the commander of the Persian garrison there, a eunuch by the name of Betis, in similar fashion.[53] Nor was this a random gesture by the Makedonian king: according to Hegesias and Curtius Alexander clearly and consciously emulated his alleged heroic ancestor Achilles and his infamous mistreatment of Hektor's body.[54] How did this gruesome detail reach our story?[55]

In a previous treatment of this question, I argued that the answer to this question lies with oral transmission, and that local memory retained this detail by virtue of its epic cruelty. Furthermore, I argued, this process of retention will have been aided by the actual history of Alexander and the Samaritans: we know from Curtius (4.8.9–10) that some Samaritans revolted against Alexander and were punished severely by him. This mysterious episode, quite likely the reason for the recurrence of Samaritans in the entire tradition, helped detach the gory details from the story of Betis and reattach them to Alexander's treatment of the Samaritans. Such a putative process was supposedly aided by the popularity of Homer, and by the poet's general relevance to the history of Alexander.[56] Homer was indeed widely read and recited throughout the Hellenistic world, and had

[52] All versions except P refer to the agents of this action in the plural, meaning in all likelihood the Judeans to whom the Kutim were handed over for punishment. P alone uses the singular. This seems to refer directly to Simon, but may also invite a reader or a listener to consider Alexander's responsibility.

[53] As basis for the discussion see already Gutmann 1940, 280–2; followed by Tropper 2013, 151. The historicity of Betis' torture was doubted and dismissed by Tarn 1948, 2.67–70; Pearson 1960, 247–8; Hammond 1997, 96; Naiden 2018, 93. This hypercritical approach strikes me as unconvincing, deriving at least in part from the desire to clean up some of the messier parts of Alexander's history. The historicity of the episode is rightly accepted and defended by Lane Fox 1973, 193; Schachermeyr 1973, 220 n. 242; Bosworth 1988, 68; O'Brien 1992, 85–6; Nawotka 2010, 198.

[54] *Iliad* 22.395–400. For current survey and discussion of such episodes of Homeric reenactment by Alexander see Müller 2016 (esp. 28 for the Gaza episode).

[55] The influence of the Betis incident on our story has been assumed (but not elaborated) by Gutmann (1940, 282).

[56] Amitay 2007, 239.

his admirers also in Judean society.[57] However, my previous explanation does not take into account the possibility that our composer had actually read an Alexander history, or more than one (as suggested above, apropos *proskynesis*). If the composer had recourse to a written history of Alexander, then it must become the prime candidate as a source also for the ankle-piercing episode. This does not negate the possibility that the story remained in living memory down to the time of our composer (the *proskynesis* affair took place in central Asia; Betis' torture was much closer to home), but the solution of a written source is certainly plausible in its own right.

3.3 Contextualization

In attempting to contextualize the story, I intend to follow the procedure taken in the previous chapters. The basic premise remains that, as long as we recognize the story under discussion not as a conscious attempt to write history, but rather as a free reworking of historical material aimed to convey a contemporary message, the very act of writing (or telling) historical fiction calls for an attempt to connect the story's tenor, assumptions, and *en passant* remarks with a putative historical context. In the previous two chapters we have seen the formation of Alexander's mythistorical character as a symbolic representative of foreign imperial power governing Judea—a natural choice, as he himself was one such foreign imperial ruler. In chapter 1 we saw Alexander as cipher for Antiochos III the Great, and in chapter 2 we saw him as literary cover for Pompeius Magnus. The connection with Pompey is already a significant step in the development of Alexander's mythistorical character, as perceived in Judean eyes, transcending his historically Greek cultural origins, as well as his Makedonian political pedigree, and coming to represent foreign rule in a much more abstract way. As I shall presently suggest, the Simon story takes another big step forward in the process of abstraction, coming to represent not a particular historical figure, but rather Roman power in general.

The first clue to the contextualization of the story is also one of its most striking features: the unbridled hostility of the storyteller towards the Samaritans-Kutim. The malice and enmity expressed, amplified as it is by the application of Alexander's historical Homeric-style torture to the Samaritan antagonists, provides the story with a powerful narrative driving force. It is therefore also a reasonable starting point in the effort to further contextualize the story's original composition.

[57] Mishnah *Yadaim* 4.6; Talmud Yerushalmi *Sanhedrin* 10.1/28a. If anyone thought to compare the poems of Homer to the Bible, this implies a priori not only familiarity with the epic poet but also a deep engagement with his work. See further Lieberman 1965, 112–13, as well as Liebes 2006, with an example for some rabbinic scholars who read Homer closely and carefully. For the most recent and extensive study concerning the classical education of at least some rabbis see Hidary 2018, esp. 10–23.

Can we point to particular historical circumstances that could have given rise to it, and help us narrow down the gap between the chronological markers defined above?

To be sure, the hostility between the two communities had a centuries-long history, and it evolved side by side with the external and internal transmutations experienced by both Judeans and Samaritans. Besides the many areas of life in which the population of Judea and Samaria lived side by side in peace, this long history also supplied numerous reasons, occasions, and justifications for all kinds of hateful expressions on either side. Furthermore, in principle one need not necessarily look for a particular historical event as the decisive factor that led to the original composition of any story. In other words, it is not imperative that the story has been composed in reaction to any specific event, or in order to further a particular practical agenda. Some stories may be conceived simply as a vehicle of self-promotion for the author and as a source of entertainment and education for the intended audience; and malice against an old enemy is always a good hook. In this respect, our story is a late heir to literary anti-Samaritan expression, beginning with 2 Kings 17. Nevertheless, our story is also a product of its time, and various details in it can help flesh out its creator's time as well as his zeitgeist. In the following pages I shall lay out the general outline for what I see as the generation that gave birth to our story, paying close attention to four of its main themes: the status of the two temples, Judeo-Samaritan relations, the confrontation of both Judea and Samaria with foreign imperial powers (represented in this story, as in the earlier two strands of the tradition, by Alexander), and the prestige of the Jerusalem high priest.

The backdrop presents King Herod at his greatest. Among his many works we have already met the urban upgrade of Antipatris, but that was merely one example of his grandiose building activities. His most famous, if not the most long-lasting, achievement was of course the thorough renovation of the illustrious Jerusalem temple. The process of rebuilding will have necessitated, as it always does, also a fair amount of demolishing. Considering the sacred precinct's vast symbolic significance, the massive project was certain to create no small amount of tension and anxiety. According to Josephus, Herod expected popular discomfort, and even chose to make a public address to explain his plan and alleviate fears. His effort was only partly successful.[58]

The impression of this grandiose project cannot have been ignored in neighboring Samaria. For a century or so since the destruction of the Mt. Gerizim temple by Hyrkanos, the more religious-minded and temple-oriented members of Samaritan society had one of two options: either to succumb to Judean superiority

[58] *Antiquities* 15.380–9. It is remarkable that in Herod's speech (or at least in Josephus' version of it) there is special emphasis on measurement and topography, an interest that Josephus then picks up in his own voice. With every bit of rock and every measured mark imbued with timeless sanctity, God was literally in the topographical and architectural details.

and worship in Jerusalem, or to oppose it and be deprived of the services and excitement of a major sanctuary.[59] Herod's renovation might have aroused hope among the optimists in both groups. Those Samaritans who were happy to join their Judean brethren in joint worship of the God of Israel, even if it was located in the historic southern capital rather than in the northern, could now hope that the new order would also open an opportunity for fuller integration and upwards mobility. Those, on the other hand, who harbored ill feelings towards Jerusalem could now hope that King Herod would decide to rebuild their destroyed temple on Mt. Gerizim. Some of his actions could provide support for such optimism. Was not Herod also married to Malthake, a Samaritan? Did he not invest heavily in the city of Samaria, even renaming it Sebaste, after Caesar Augustus? Might not his triumphal building drive be extended to their benefit? If so, they were sorely disappointed.[60]

In the wake of Herod's death the land erupted into a series of rebellions. According to Josephus, the trouble started immediately after the dead king's *shiva*. One subject of excessive public wailing, which soon led to rioting, was the band of activists who had taken down Herod's golden eagle from the temple's gates. Remarkably, this public display of discontent was accompanied already at the outset with a demand to depose and replace the high priest. Things escalated quickly, and the first tally of casualties reported some three thousand dead, many of them pilgrims who had come to the temple for Passover.[61] But that was merely the first round. Sabinus, an underling of Quirinius the governor of Syria, succeeded in arousing much anger in his excessive zeal to take charge of the citadels and to lay his hands on the various treasure houses, in particular that of the temple. Come Pentecost, a new bout of violence erupted in Jerusalem. By the time this trouble was over, a great many protesters were dead, the celebrated temple porticoes had burnt down, and the temple treasury was robbed first by the soldiers, then by Sabinus.[62]

Things soon went from bad to worse. Sabinus found himself under siege in Jerusalem, facing not only the angry multitude but also the majority of Herod's army.[63] By this stage, the troubles had spread from Jerusalem and engulfed most

[59] For Samaritan worship in the Jerusalem temple see Safrai 1965, 95–100. See also Bourgel (2016) for the intriguing suggestion that this exactly was Hyrkanos' intention in the destruction of the Gerizim temple—to divert Samaritan religious feeling (and the ensuing economic activity) from Shechem to Jerusalem. We may thus easily imagine—for they do not appear in the meager surviving sources—those Samaritans who, unlike their brethren who congregated faithfully on Temple Mount, would not be caught dead worshipping in Jerusalem. Of course, sacrifice could still take place on Mt. Gerizim even after the destruction of the temple there, as it does even today.

[60] Once again, the sources for Samaritan society under Herod are too few and too thin to substantiate these speculations directly. Still, they strike me as reasonable enough, representing ideas and questions that could easily arise in some segments of Samaritan society at the time.

[61] Josephus, *War* 2.1–13; *Antiquities* 17.200–18. In his later account Josephus stresses in particular the sense of urgency that compelled Archelaos, Herod's heir, to initiate the carnage. This makes perfect sense, given the amount of internal pressure created by Herod's long reign, which erupted at his death.

[62] *War* 2.41–50; *Antiquities* 17.251–64.

[63] *War* 2.51–4; *Antiquities* 17.265–8.

of Herod's realm. In Idumea and elsewhere veterans of Herod's army returned to arms and raised them in revolt.[64] In Sepphoris Judas son of Hezekiah raised his own banner and armed a troupe of followers.[65] In Transjordania a certain Simon, who had been the king's slave, dared put a crown on his own head, and proceeded to loot and burn his near vicinity. Simon's claim, as well as his armed forces, were soon eliminated. But his bid was still impressive enough a century later to deserve mention as a royal pretender by Tacitus.[66] In Judea, a herdsman by the name of Ethrongas, who like Judas Maccabeus had four warlike brothers, crowned himself and spread a reign of terror over the local population, and at one point managed to annihilate a Roman cohort near Emmaus.[67] The tide finally changed with the arrival on the scene of P. Quinctilius Varus, governor of Syria, and of the rest of the Syrian legions under his command.[68] In Roman history he is mostly remembered for his eponymous disaster at the Teutoburger forest, the infamous *clades Variana*. But in Judea he managed the affair with manifest proficiency, reducing the rebellion and quashing the various pretenders and bandit leaders.[69] In the historically minded early rabbinic work *Seder Olam* (last generation of the second century CE) his war appears as first item on the short list of armed conflicts between Rome and Judea.[70]

Throughout this explosion of chaotic, rebellious violence, one group is conspicuous in its loyalist and sometimes quietist position—the people of Shomron.[71] During his description of the Pentecost riot Josephus provides some detail on the geographic distribution of the rioters: some came from Galilee and Idumea, others from Jericho and Transjordania, and the greatest numbers naturally from Judea proper. In other words, the rebels came from virtually all of the land ruled by Jannaeus and Herod, short of Samaritis.[72] Shortly thereafter, when Sabinus

[64] From *War* 2.76–8 we learn that this section of the rebellion was led in part by members of the Herodian family, who after their defeat by Varus paid with their lives for this outrage against Rome and the betrayal of familial loyalty.

[65] This Hezekiah, a troublesome figure in the wider Galilee area in the early 40s BCE, had been taken down by the young Herod (*War* 1.204; *Antiquities* 14.158–9).

[66] *Histories* 5.9. Simon looms large in the extremely succinct summary of Rome's relation with Judea, from Pompey's conquest to the generation before the Great Revolt, as presented by Tacitus in this chapter. To offer a sense of proportion, the laden and tumultuous times under Tiberius are famously summarized by Tacitus in three words.

[67] *War* 2.55–65; *Antiquities* 17.269–85.

[68] *War* 2.66–79 ; *Antiquities* 17.286–98.

[69] The achievement of Varus was remarkable. How easily and how badly this kind of operation could go wrong was demonstrated in 66 CE by Cestius Gallus.

[70] *Seder Olam* 30. The only other wars mentioned there are those of Vespasian, Titus (but probably read Trajan), and the war of Bar-Kochva. It is striking that Varus' war was remembered by Judean scholarship as an event of similar significance.

[71] Samaritan pro-Roman and pro-Herodian sentiment became clear already in the mid-50s BCE, during the tenure of Gabinius as the governor of Syria. During these troubled times the Hasmonean prince Alexander (grandson of Jannaeus through Aristoboulos and posthumously also Herod's father-in-law) moved to annihilate all Romans he could lay his hands on. Significantly, those Romans who evaded him fled to and took refuge on Mt. Gerizim, where they felt safer among the local population. They were eventually rescued by Gabinius, with Antipatros, Herod's father, at his side (Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.100–1).

[72] *War* 2.43; *Antiquities* 17.254.

came under siege, he found that except for the legion under his command and his personal unit of armed slaves, the only considerable force that stood by him in the city was Herod's crack unit of *Sebastenoi*, three thousand strong. The people of ancient Shomron, newly refounded by Herod as Sebaste, aligned themselves with Rome and with Herod's principal heir, Archelaos.[73] When he reached Samaria (Josephus uses here the ancient Hebrew name), Varus refrained from attacking the city and took care to camp at some distance from it, in recognition of the fact that its people had kept aloof from trouble.[74] We may be certain that he was also fully aware of the loyalty and excellent efforts displayed by the *Sebastenoi* and their commanders in the interest of Rome. To sum up, the evidence at our disposal presents a picture of obstinate Samaritan loyalty both to Roman rule and to the Herodian dynasty. From the Roman side of things, the loyalty of Samaria was later rewarded with a welcome tax break by Augustus.[75]

It was exactly with Augustus, and not in Judea and the surrounding country, that the fate of the Herodian realm lay. As chance and Herod's murderous family values would have it, two of his three heirs were none other than his sons from the Samaritan Malthake: Antipas and Archelaos.[76] The latter was appointed by Augustus as the ethnarch of Samaria, Judea, and the dynastic homeland of Idumea. Yet the dynastic principle did not go unchallenged. A group of fifty dignitaries from Judea, supported by some eight thousand Judean denizens of Rome, made a direct appeal to Augustus and requested the annexation of Judea to the *imperium Romanum*. If the Romans supplied Judea with competent governors, they would come to realize that the Judeans were hardly as rebellious and warlike as recent events might suggest.[77] Augustus did not yield to this request, preferring to keep the Herodians in place.

With the government in Jerusalem having devolved from the hated Hasmoneans, through well-liked Herod, to the hands of the half-Samaritan Archelaos, many Samaritans will have once again had ample reason for optimism. Yet in his decade-long rule Archelaos managed to disappoint a great many of his subjects, including the Samaritans. As a matter of fact, Josephus records a rare case of common interest between the Judean and the Samaritan communities, who both complained about Archelaos before Augustus.[78] Josephus does not tell us whether, as in the aftermath of Herod's death, these complaints were also accompanied by a request

[73] *War* 2.52; *Antiquities* 17.266 stresses the importance and capability of the three thousand, but not their provenance. On the close relations of Sebaste-Samaria to Herod see Mason 2008, 48–9 n. 424.

[74] See further in Mason (2008, 49 n 428) on the general tendency of Samaritans, at least in the reports by Josephus, to stay out of Judean troubles. Here and in other cases, this seems to be based on solid fact.

[75] *War* 2.96; *Antiquities* 17.319.

[76] *War* 1.562; *Antiquities* 17.20.

[77] *War* 2.80–91; *Antiquities* 17.300–14. Interestingly, this had also been the position of some members of the Herodian family, who were in Rome at the time. United in hatred of Archelaos they had previously lobbied for the very same political solution, but were now too ashamed to appear before the emperor in opposition to their own kin (*War* 2.22).

[78] *Antiquities* 18.342–4. Josephus does not specify the degree of cooperation between the two embassies, but the shared interest is obvious.

for direct Roman rule. But this time, that was the result. The removal and banishment of Archelaos were followed by the administrative annexation of Archelaos' realm to Syria, a proper census to start off the management of this new addition to the Roman *imperium* in good order, and the installation of an equestrian-rank overseer to rule Judea and Samaria in situ.

Such a radical change of government, however welcome to some, nevertheless aroused deep discontent in wide circles. It erupted violently in the form of an anti-taxation revolt in Galilee. Josephus, our main source for practically all events of the period, stresses the role played in the rebellion by a group that he famously called "the Fourth Philosophy," a movement to which he ascribed a leading role in the escalation of hostility and rebelliousness that eventually led to the so-called Great Revolt, and to the ultimate destruction of the Jerusalem temple.[79] Yet the initial uprising of 6 CE failed, and the reality of direct Roman rule soon set in. At the conclusion of the census Quirinius, the governor of Syria who as part of his province supervised also the former realm of Archelaos, moved to replace the high priest Ioazaros with one Ananos son of Seth.[80] Such practice was already common during the reign of Herod and would remain so under Roman rule as long as the temple remained, a reality that left traces of its traumatizing effect also in rabbinic literature.[81]

We are ill informed about the effects of these dramatic changes on Samaritan society. Yet we can be certain that the new reality will have floated a number of questions that had hitherto lay dormant, especially concerning temple-based ritual. One such question was plausibly that of the destroyed Gerizim sanctuary. If there were any in Samaria who were still interested, a long century after its destruction, in reestablishing the Mt. Gerizim temple, they could perceive the new political circumstances as holding highly positive prospects. With the hated Hasmoneans and the hesitant Herodians out of the way, they could now hope to take advantage of the religious liberty offered by Rome, and to acquire a license to rebuild their temple.[82] Other Samaritans may have welcomed the new circumstances as the beginning of a more cordial era, where the Jerusalem temple would serve more inclusively both Judeans and Samaritans.[83] But as a matter of fact, no Samaritan

[79] *War* 2.118; *Antiquities* 18.4–10, 23–5.

[80] *Antiquities* 18.26. Josephus' use of καταστασιασθέντα to describe the ousted Ioazaros, as well as the direct reference to public opinion on the matter, suggests some vigorous political maneuvers in and around the temple at the time.

[81] Bavli (BT) *Yoma* 9a, ascribed to the third-century CE Rabbi Yohanan. See also *Vayiqra Raba* 25.9.

[82] Smallwood (1976, 158): "the Samaritans apparently saw the Romans as deliverers from the yoke of Jewish rule. They had stood aloof from the Jewish rising in 4 B.C. (as they were to do again in 66–70), they had joined the appeal for direct Roman rule in A.D. 6, and they now perhaps hoped to be allowed to rebuild their temple under the aegis of Rome, whose guarantee of religious liberty to the Jews could be expected to stretch to cover a Jewish sect."

[83] The reading in O_o (see note 8 above) regarding the initial Samaritan request from Alexander—the guards on Mt. Moriah, give them to us! תנם לנו המוריה שבהר המשמרין—may be read to signify a Samaritan request to participate in, or even take over, the security arrangements of Temple Mount. This seems to me the less likely reading, but if it is preferred, the context and reasons I suggest for the birth of our story would receive strong support.

temple was built under the aegis of Rome, and the first Judeo-Samaritan incident reported by Josephus following the transition was decisively hostile.

It took place during the tenure of the first Roman governor of Judea, Coponius, a deputy of the aforementioned Quirinius. According to Josephus, it was during the celebration of Passover that some Samaritans took advantage of the custom to throw open the gates of the temple after midnight, hid in advance in the city, and then proceeded to litter and defile the porticoes and outer courts with human bones. The temple authorities, Josephus tells us, reacted to the affair with a tightening of security to prevent similar future attacks.[84] This seemingly simple incident now requires our attention, both because it is crucial for the contextualization of the story, and because it is anything but simple. Indeed, the difficulties it raises have engendered some suspicion as to its historicity.[85] The challenges to the story's factuality need to be addressed.

One such challenge stems from the frustrating lack of information in Josephus. Who exactly were these "Samaritan men"? What was their motivation for this aggressive and dangerous action? Were they eventually apprehended, and if so, what was their fate? And if they were not, how would anyone even know that they were Samaritans?[86] Indeed, one would love to know the answers to these questions. Nevertheless, the lack of information in itself is hardly a reason to doubt the story's historicity, for two reasons. Firstly, because ancient authors rarely satisfy the modern scholar's appetite for detail. By definition, historical writing requires selection of the material, and it is always dangerous to speculate why authors did not include any particular detail in their work. The second, more pertinent reason is that there is a lacuna in Josephus' description of this unusual episode.[87] This lacuna surely falls on either side of ἤρξαντο in 18.30, which may be read as the predicate relating either to the Samaritan perpetrators (from ἔρδω, they performed a scattering) or to the temple authorities (from ἄρχω, they began to think in these matters not as formerly). The switch between the two subjects is the clearest sign of the lacuna, which opens up at the transition point between the actions of the perpetrators and the reaction of the temple administration—exactly where we would find the details answering the questions raised above. While both the extent and the content of the lacuna remain a matter of guesswork,

[84] *Antiquities* 18.29–30. For a comprehensive discussion see Pummer 2009, 222–30.

[85] Pummer 2009, 229.

[86] These questions led Smith (1999, 244) to the conclusion that "the story is suspect."

[87] See Pummer (2009, 223–5) for the various suggested emendations, ranging from small grammatical changes to some ingenious interpolations. We shall return to one of them presently. The damage to the original text was done early on, as is obvious from the sixth-century CE Latin translation commissioned by Cassiodorus. This translation gives the same information as the surviving Greek, and avoids the syntactical difficulty by turning the new security measures, rather than the people who employed them, into the subject of the concluding sentence (*Et ex illo coepit in templo custodia maior a sacerdotibus exerceri*; and from that time greater security began to be exercised by the priests).

its very existence dispels the argument from silence against the historical value of what has survived of Josephus' original story.[88]

A second challenge to the story's coherence is that Josephus supplies no motive for the Samaritan action.[89] This objection can be answered in similar fashion, through the lacuna in Josephus and the often frustrating brevity of ancient sources. But that is not all. It has been suggested that this action may have been motivated by a will to avenge the destruction of Gerizim by Hyrkanos.[90] To be sure, more than a century intervenes between the events.[91] But as we have seen, the demise of the Hasmoneans and Herodians and the advent of direct Roman rule opened up new opportunities. Since we know that no temple was rededicated on Mt. Gerizim, we can be fairly certain of a substantial amount of frustration and anger, which could urge a group of firebrands to take extreme measures.[92]

Yet another set of challenges involves assumptions as to how the reported behavior of the *andres Samareitai* might or might not conform to modern scholarly expectations of them. For example, the stealth ascribed to their arrival in the city raised strong suspicion. After all, were there not Samaritans in important positions in the city already in Herod's days?[93] There certainly were, as there surely were in Jerusalem also other less important Samaritans. Why hide, then? The obvious answer is that this particular band of men intended to perpetrate sacrilege in the temple during a high holiday. Surely a certain degree of stealth, expressed by Josephus with a single word (*κρύφα*), was necessary to carry out their outrageous plan. Another concern raised is that the Samaritans, like the Judeans, were subject to biblical law, and thus could not pollute themselves with human bones, especially not on Passover, which they would miss while carrying out their plan! They therefore must have had non-Mosaic accomplices, or maybe the perpetrators were not Samaritans at all but Sebastean troops garrisoned in Jerusalem.[94] Once again, these worries can be dismissed by the notion of a small group with a strong motivation. Anyone who was daring enough for such an

[88] An interesting look into the missing content is supplied by the ancient lists of contents to *Antiquities*, which, according to Nodet (1999, 127–32), go back to Josephus himself. Whether that is so or not, they were certainly available to Cassiodorus in the sixth century CE (they, too, were translated into Latin), and are therefore much older than the earliest surviving manuscripts of *Antiquities*. The list prefacing book 18 claims that the incident was followed by seven days of pollution applying presumably to the entire people: *ὡς Σαμαρεῖς ὀστᾶ νεκρῶν διαρρίψαντες εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν τὸν λαὸν ἑπτὰ ἡμέρας ἐμίαναν* (with Colautti 2002, 106 n. 64; Noam 2010, 200–1; Fisch 2017, 489). That this piece of information, which is missing from the surviving text, was considered by the list's author (whether he be Josephus or anyone else) as a quintessential part the story strongly supports its overall historicity, and at the same time undermines any appeal to the *argumentum e silentio*. There is, I think, very good reason to ask with Smith (1999, 244): "Has something been suppressed?"

[89] Pummer 2009, 225. [90] Crown 1991, 40. [91] Böhm 1999, 126; Pummer 2009, 225.

[92] As suggested by Smallwood (1976, 158). See also the suggestion of Jeremias (1969, 353), that the Samaritans obviously took revenge "for something about which Josephus is characteristically silent."

[93] Smith 1999, 244.

[94] Jost 1857, 71; Jaubert 1960–1, 8 n. 4; Yankelevitch 1979–80, 40; Egger 1986, 237–46.

attempt against the Jerusalem temple was surely capable of ritual self-pollution, and even of skipping a Seder.

A final argument made against the historicity of the story is that it is merely a literary motif in Judean literature, ascribing evil action, and in particular the pollution caused by human bodily remains, to Samaritan agents.[95] However, the evidence brought in support of this suggestion is both meager and problematic. As a matter of fact, the single story cited in this context involves the purification of the city of Tiberias by R. Shimon ben-Yoḥai (Rashbi), made that much harder by the efforts of one Kuti, that is, Samaritan, who maliciously contributed to the pollution.[96] The foundation of Tiberias by Herod Antipas, which took place within the generation following the bones incident, did indeed pose a challenge in terms of ritual purity. According to Josephus (*Antiquities* 18.36–8) Herod encountered some difficulties in persuading Judeans to settle in this polluted place. However, Josephus does not mention any Samaritan malfeasance in this context. On the other hand, the rabbinic story ascribes the event to the time of Rashbi, some time after the Bar-Kochva rebellion, that is, close to the middle of the second century CE and more than a century after the time of Coponius. Thus, while a case can possibly be made that the rabbinic story about the Samaritan hindrance to the purification of Tiberias was influenced by the reality of the city's foundation combined with the incident of the strewn bones, the Tiberian story can hardly be used to argue the reverse case: that Samaritan pollution was already a literary trope in Jerusalem more than a century earlier, or even in the time of Josephus.[97]

There is good reason, therefore, to accept the basic facts reported by Josephus on the Seder of strewn bones. This incident is crucial to the discussion at hand for a number of reasons. To begin with, it is the only incident from the relevant period that recounts a direct hostile approach of Samaritans against the Jerusalem temple. The relevance to the story of Alexander and Simon is self-evident in that it is the same kind of action that initiates all other actions in our story. As a matter of fact, all tellings posit a Samaritan claim to the Judean sanctuary at the very outset. More particularly, in both manuscripts of the O tradition we read of a physical violent confrontation between Jerusalemites and Samaritans, at the end whereof the former, armed with sticks—implying a spontaneous unofficial response with impromptu weapons—thrash and chase away the latter. The question arises:

[95] Safrai 1965, 100; cited with apparent approbation by Pummer 2009, 229; followed and elaborated by Fisch 2017, 490–1.

[96] Talmud Yerushalmi, *Shevi'it* 9.1/38d; *Bereshit Rabba* 79.6; *Qohelet Rabba* 10.1.8; *Pesiqta deRav Kahana* 11.16.

[97] Fisch (2017, 491) adduces also the story in *Antiquities* 11.297–301 as a second comparandum. But the connection is far too slim to carry the weight put on it by her argument. Here the cause of impurity is not human remains but outright murder; the Persian governor is furious not for the sacrilege but for the murder of his friend; no purification efforts are mentioned; and most importantly, the only connection to the Samaritan question is that the high priest at the time, Yoḥanan, was the father of the Menashe who would later marry Sanballat's daughter (much more on all that in chapter 4). This story can hardly be cited to support the notion of polluting Samaritans as a literary *topos*.

can we identify Josephus' story of the strewn bones and this strand of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition as portrayals of the same story from different angles?

The answer to this question requires some complex argumentation. It begins with a fascinating suggestion made by Safrai apropos the Passover incident.[98] In a short remark that concludes a general discussion of Samaritan attendance of the Jerusalem temple, he cursorily conjectured that the new security measures mentioned, but not elaborated, by Josephus are those recorded in Mishnah *Tamid* 1.3, and that something along these lines may once have stood in the lacuna in Josephus' text. The translation of the Mishnaic text is as follows:

> He took the key, opened the portal and entered from the fire chamber (בית המוקד) to the court (עזרה), and they came in after him with two lit torches in their hand. And they divided into two groups; these went through the *exedra* on the east and those went through the *exedra* on the west. They would walk and check (along the way) until they arrived at the place of the pancake makers.[99] Once both parties had arrived, they would say: "Peace! All is in peace," and order the pancake makers to make pancakes.

Safrai's suggestion makes good sense. In the first place, Mishnah *Tamid* 1.3 is situated as part of a longer text dealing with ritual and security measures at the temple. More specifically, the routine described here starts at night, and the measures in the text appear to be part of the regular dawn schedule. Since the Samaritan attack on the purity of the temple came at the dead of night, and since the action described here is aimed to ascertain the peace just before dawn—hence the need for lit torches—there seems to be good reason to accept Safrai's suggestion, and see this routine as the precaution first instated, as Josephus states, in the wake of the Passover incident.[100]

A point of special interest is the lit torches carried by the temple guards. Of course, it is hardly surprising that the night watch should carry lit torches, necessary not only to find one's way about safely, but particularly to discover any malicious tampering overnight. Yet the language and the scene described in Mishnah *Tamid* 1.3 is also highly reminiscent of the story of Alexander and Simon, not least the torches themselves. The word used in both cases for torch, *avukah* (אבוקה), is rather rare. Absent from the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls, it appears only four times in the Mishnah, three of them in connection with temple security.[101] At the same time, the phrasings used in the various tellings of our

[98] Safrai 1965, 100. Accepted without question by Magen 2004–8, 2.143.

[99] Danby translates חבתים as griddle-cakes. Pancakes strike me as a closer translation, for as their very name indicates, they were prepared in a pan: מחבת (Lev 6:13–14).

[100] Needless to say, one does not have to posit that the lacuna in Josephus once contained a description of these measures, in order to use Josephus as corroboration that such new measures were indeed taken.

[101] Mishnah *Tamid* 1.3, 3.4; *Middot* 1.2. The fourth occurrence in *Sukkah* 5.4 also takes place at the temple, describing the pyrotechnics that accompanied the festivities at Sukkot.

story—"torches of light in their hands," or "lit before them"—are identical to those in the Mishnaic occurrences. The particular usages of this rare word bring our story into close relation with the Mishnaic descriptions of temple security protocol. Thus, this triangulation of sources not only lends strong support to Safrai's suggestion, but also creates a solid link between our story and, through the measures taken in response, the Samaritan attack on the temple.[102]

Nor are the torches an accidental detail in the story of Alexander and Simon. A quick look at the source table at the beginning of this chapter, and a longer look at the appendix, reveals the ubiquity of the torches in each and every one of the textual witnesses. This is already a strong sign that the torches were part of the earliest telling of the story. That statement receives further support from a vertical reading of the source table, that is of each telling individually. In all three tellings of *Megillat Ta'anit* the lit torches are rather inexplicable. It is only in the manuscripts of *Yoma* that we learn explicitly of the night march, which explains why torches were needed in the first place. On a more general level, this observation suggests a greater closeness of *Yoma* to the original story. For the case at hand, it emphasizes the importance of the torches to the story: the immediate reason for their use could be allowed to drop out of the text; their mere mention was enough.

3.4 Interpretation

My conclusion is, therefore, that the Alexander and Simon variant of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition was first thought up and told in reaction to the Passover of strewn bones, towards the end of Coponius' tenure in Judea, in 8 or 9 CE. As such, it will have served, first of all, to give vent to the anger which must have been aroused by the Samaritan attack against temple purity.[103] In the second place, using the narrative philological affinities discussed above, our story will have served to justify and familiarize the new security regulations put in place to prevent similar future attacks. Given the intense religious feeling that imbued each and every aspect of temple protocol, as well as the venerable tradition of storytelling in and around the temple, a new security procedure could well inspire its own foundation myth. In the third place, I would suggest, our story also fulfills a function that is by now already a recurring theme. If the story of Alexander's visit in the Seleukid Alexander *Romance* reflects the transfer of Judea

[102] It has been suggested to me by Dr. Moshe Blidshtein that בית המוקד in Mishnah *Tamid* 1.3 may have been meant to resonate with מוקדון (Makedon). In the same vein, the Hebrew transliteration of *exedra* might remind a reader of Alexander. But these observations may also be a result of the modern scholar's overly heightened sensitivity.

[103] It is tempting to suggest also that the chasing with sticks motif in the O manuscripts represents the actual anger-venting process in the immediate aftermath of the attack. What remains of Josephus, as we have seen, gives no information on that point.

from Ptolemaic to Seleukid rule; and if the Gviha story does the same for the demise of Hasmonean independence, Pompey's arrival, and the beginning of indirect Roman rule; then the story of Alexander and Simon represents the full subjection of Judea to Rome, and was born under the first direct Roman governor. The question therefore remains: what interpretation and vision does our story offer for this time and place in Judean history?

The answer starts at the unlikely place—Antipatris. As we have seen, this place name is one of a handful of narrative elements that are ubiquitous throughout the manuscript tradition.[104] Yet it is an odd one. In the *Romance* and in the Gviha story the dramatic climax of the meeting between Alexander and the Judeans takes place naturally enough in Jerusalem. That is also the case in the famous story of Josephus, to be discussed in chapter 4. Our story, too, is focused on the city and on its temple. Why then is the meeting between Simon and Alexander removed from the story's geographical and symbolic focal point? And why to Antipatris?

Admittedly, a possible answer might be that this is where a historical meeting between representatives of Makedonian and Judean authorities actually took place, and that this fact somehow survived, either orally or in writing, only to reappear in our story dressed in mythical garb.[105] Yet even if that be the case, the fact remains that the storyteller made a conscious choice to include this factoid in the story in the first place. A possible alternative explanation, which I find more convincing, is that Antipatris, too, stands in the story as a symbol. If so, surely it symbolizes Herod, who named the city after his own father. As I suggested above, two major innovations of Herod's time had a huge impact on Judean society. Firstly, the massive renovation of the Mt. Moriah precinct, clearly and directly relevant to our temple story. The second is the active intertwining of Judea into the fabric of the Roman empire. It is hardly a coincidence that rabbinic literature so regularly refers to Rome as Edom, that is, Idumea, fatherland of the Herodian house. If one is willing to accept that the insistence on Antipatris was meant to reflect on Herod, its signification as a site of good omen would appear to entail a positive outlook on both Herod and his *oeuvres*.

As for the Samaritans, the story makes no qualms and gives no quarter. Of all the anti-Samaritan sentiments ever expressed by Judeans, this surely stands as

[104] Fascinatingly, the name of Antipatris managed to find its way also into the P scholion on another date in *Megillat Ta'anit*, the 22nd of Shvat, which celebrates the seemingly miraculous deliverance of the Jerusalem temple from the infamous order of the emperor Caligula to install an iconic manifestation of his divine self at the very heart of Judaism. (For the date in MTT, with all *loci* classical and rabbinic, discussion, and previous scholarship, see Noam 2003, 283–90; 2017). The connection between the story of Caligula and the tradition of Alexander in Jerusalem is demonstrated by a plethora of philological and narrative examples, far too numerous and complex to be explored here at any length (but see Noam *supra*; Amitay 2018). The significant fact is that P insists on Antipatris in flat contradiction both of the more logical geographical coherent version of O (placing the action in Phoenicia) and of the historical record.

[105] It is assumed a priori that some meeting meant to regulate the transition of government must have taken place in reality. This aspect of the discussion is reserved to chapter 5.

one of the most vicious. Combining Homeric and Alexandresque cruelty with the harsh memory of the victorious and destructive Hyrkanos, the story brims with vitriol and vengeance. This ill feeling can be explained as a direct response to the actual attack on the temple under Coponius, exacerbated by an already long history of friction and enmity. The message is clear enough: as far as it was possible for the Jerusalem authorities to act autonomously under a foreign rule, Samaritans were to be kept away from temple and city, by force if necessary. Inasmuch as the dispute between the two communities was to be decided by the foreign imperial rule, the spirit of Alexander could be invoked to prefer Moriah over Gerizim.[106]

Turning to Alexander, and to the motif that from this point on came to dominate the literary tradition—*proskynesis*—the story takes an audacious approach. In the *Romance* Alexander maintains a superior attitude throughout: he sees through the actions of the Judeans in diplomacy and war, and he is magnanimously condescending during the meeting in Jerusalem. In the Gviha story he is pragmatic and detached during the trial phase, but becomes menacing and haughty at the threshold of the inner sanctum. In the Simon story Alexander errs initially, when he responds positively to the Samaritan request, a mistake that puts righteous Jerusalem in a quandary. However, this stage of the story, which could present Alexander in negative light, is over and done within a couple of words, and the narrative focus shifts to Jerusalem and to Simon. When Alexander reenters the story, not only does he rectify his earlier misjudgment with an immediate recognition of the inherent greatness in the high priest standing before him (just as he does for the assembly of priests in the AR version), but he also expresses, physically and unmistakably, his own inferiority and submission. This bold scene runs in the face of military and political reality. The message conveyed by the irony rings loud and clear: earthly supremacy may well lie with a foreign power, but a clever and pious foreign ruler should also recognize the moral pre-eminence of the high priest of Jerusalem.

The personal aspect of this claim is quite distinct. In the *Romance* version Alexander meets a collective of nameless priests, whereas the high priest himself is conspicuously missing. In the Gviha story the powers that be in Jerusalem remain behind the scenes, and the Judean protagonist is a temple official—no doubt an important member of system and caste, but hardly their figurehead. Yet in our story it is the high priest himself who represents the temple and becomes the object of God's revelation to Alexander, and he is identified as none other than the most illustrious of high priests since the beginning of the Hellenistic era. This is no moot point. In the heyday of the Hasmoneans the high priesthood of the Jerusalem temple reached a position of power never attained before, standing for the first time at the head of an independent polity with an expansionist

[106] Spak (1911, 41) recognized a more apologetic tone, creating an illusory threat against Jerusalem to justify the treatment of Gerizim by Hyrkanos.

agenda. Yet from the coming of Rome through the rise of Herod to the census of Quirinius this position went through rapid decline. Political and military independence became a thing of the past, and the holders of high priestly honor became at times no more than puppets at the hands of greater powers. Now, with the transition to direct Roman rule, there was a chance to recuperate. Of course, the military and foreign policy spheres remained out of the question. Yet the new situation did open up an opportunity to regain some lost ground both in terms of local leadership and as the institution representing all Judeans (or at least those in the land of Israel) vis-à-vis Rome. The choice of Simon the Just is particularly poignant, in that he represents the glory days of Judean autonomy under foreign rule in the time before Hasmonean independence. Our story conveys this message inwards and outwards simultaneously. To the extent that it gained currency with the Judean general population, it could serve to bolster the prestige of the high priesthood locally. At the same time, it could help raise the morale of the temple elite in relation to the Roman government. One might imagine an instance or two when the story was told to Roman interlocutors, in the attempt to sway their opinion on some point or other with the argument that "even Alexander…"

On the theological level the story of Simon and Alexander may be aiming higher still. The key to the interpretation lies again with the motif of *proskynesis*. As we have seen, the notion of prostration was an extremely important one in the history of Alexander. Whatever his practical purpose was vis-à-vis his new cadre of Persian noblemen, Alexander's introduction of formal obeisance was taken by his Makedonian and Greek friends to mean a recognition of his godhood in life. Yet in our story the tables are completely turned. The flamboyant promoter of ruler cult and apotheosis is cast down by the storyteller, and is made to prostrate himself before the representative of the God of Israel. The connection is made most poignantly by ms P—"Before this (man) do you prostrate yourself!? But he is nothing but a son of man!"—but it is resonant throughout the manuscript tradition. The message is clear: the theological claims of divine kingship are ridiculous, since human fates are determined by God. The good king is he who realizes this truth.

The theological significance of our story is developed further immediately following Alexander's *proskynesis*. His followers ask why he should bow down before "that Judean"; he replies that the image of that man accompanies him in war and procures his victories for him.[107] Now, the idea that the historical successes of Alexander were a part of Israel's sacred history was hardly a novelty in the first decade of the first millennium CE. Already in the book of Daniel we see how the ascension of Greece over Persia is perceived as part of the divine plan, foreseen in advance by the Judean prophetic prodigy. Alexander is never mentioned in Daniel by name, yet his forceful presence and epoch-making character are all too

[107] This being a diplomatic rendering of the various readings.

clear.[108] A particularly relevant statement comes in 10:20, where a supernatural being appears before Daniel and tells him: "Know you why I have come to you? Now shall I go back and fight with the prince of Persia; I depart and here comes the prince of Greece."[109] The dramatic struggle between empires is envisioned by Daniel as part of God's master plan for the march of history, played out in actual life by his ministers and minions. Our story accepts this premise and takes it a step further. To begin with, the glory that is seemingly Alexander's belongs in truth to God. As master of history, God divulged to his seer-sage all of Alexander's greatness, centuries before the event. In our story God divulges the truth directly to Alexander. Secondly, by including Alexander in God's plan the book of Daniel at the same time subjects him to the biblical world order and removes him from his own religious and mythological world. If anyone should wonder how Alexander became great, the answer lies not with Homer's gods nor with Egypt's, but rather in Judea.[110] And while Daniel's revelation comes from a mysterious being, our story chooses for its vehicle none other than the Jerusalem high priest. For approbation from God, let one look to the temple and its head.

A final point in the interpretation of our story involves a literary motif already familiar from the earlier versions: a threat dispelled by a sudden reversal of fortune. In the *Romance* story the threat is posed by the very news of Alexander's advance, and alleviated only at his arrival and unexpected amicable approach. In the Gviha story the danger comes from an attempt by neighboring peoples to sway Alexander's judicial opinion against the Judeans, and is countered initially through the skillful litigation of the temple sentinel, and then by the mysterious serpent. In other respects, too, our story seems to have borrowed from its predecessors. In agreement with the first of part the Gviha story, the Simon story frames the threat as an appeal by a hostile neighbor community to Alexander; in agreement with the second part, the adversary is Samaritan. As to the meeting itself, our story bears some resemblance to the *Romance* version.[111] The peripety motif can thus be explained as a literary borrowing.

[108] In chapter 8 Alexander is represented by the Greek he goat, charging from the west to trample underfoot the Persian ram. In chapter 11:2–4 he is the hero-king of Greece, who overcomes the last king of Persia. In the multi-metallic dream of Nebuchadnezzar (2:31–45) Alexander's empire ushers in a new age (with Collins and Collins 1993, 166–70; Newsom 2014, 80–97 for the identification of Makedon in the sequence of empires).

[109] שׂר; "prince" in KJV and NRSV. For the notion that each nation belongs to a particular divinity, that all such national divinities are the sons of God, and that God himself is in charge of Israel, see Deuteronomy 32:8–9 with the LXX translation and the telling reading of the fragment from Qumran Cave 4 (= 4QDeut^{j}), with Collins and Collins 1993, 374–5; Newsom 2014, 332.

[110] See also Gruen 1998a, 197–8 (apropos the story of Josephus, but to the same effect).

[111] Compare the emphasis in our story on priestly clothes and other paraphernalia with the huge impression made in the Seleukid *Romance* by the *σχῆμα* of the enrobed priests. This focus on form resonates with the exact image of the high priest (דמות דיוקנו) in our story. It is also remarkable that in *Yoma* the entire story is given as an interlude in a halakhic discussion about the robes of the high priest. Gutmann (1940, 284–5) compares this literary motif with the report in the historical sources of a dream by Alexander, in which the image of Herakles leading him into the city signified his eventual victory over Tyre (Curtius 4.2.17; Plutarch, *Alexander* 24.5; Arrian 2.18.1). Note especially Curtius'

Yet literary borrowing does not negate the possibility that the story responds also to some lucky change of fortune in reality, at the time of the story's composition. The strewn bones incident, even if taken as fully historical, could hardly have caused the deep anxiety displayed in the story. In the long run, this declarative outrage against temple purity was surely an annoying aggravation, but hardly a grave danger. If we trust the ancient contents list of *Antiquities* 18 and follow Safrai's suggestion, the entire affair was officially dealt with through a week of purification and a tightening of security. But there were much greater issues at hand, connected directly with the transition from the Herodian dynasty to direct Roman rule. In this context, the key phrase in the story (in P and *Yoma*) is put in the mouths of the Samaritan sycophants before Alexander: "these, these are the Judeans who rebelled against you!"[112] In the context I suggest for the story's origin, the Samaritan argument closely reflects historical reality. As we have seen, Herod's death and the deposition of Archelaos were both followed by explosions of Judean violence.[113] Considering their own loyalty and cooperation, the Samaritans could rightfully expect a reward far beyond the tax relief decreed by Augustus. Yet somehow Judea dodged the bullet and won the day. We hear of no more concessions to the Samaritans (certainly nothing about rebuilding the Gerizim sanctuary), while Jerusalem maintained its prime position. How close the call really was, at least in the mind of our storyteller, is represented not only by the eager and angry cry of the Samaritans, but also by Alexander's surprising *proskynesis*.

To conclude this chapter, a final thought about the use of Alexander as a symbolic representative of Roman power. In the story of Gviha Alexander recognized the Torah as a legitimate source for litigation and ruling. The story of his meeting with Simon once again makes a much bolder case. Here Judaism is not merely accepted by the imperial foreign ruler. Rather, it is recognized through its temple and high priest as an authentic connection to true prophecy, superior to any that Alexander—that is, Rome—had had before that fateful meeting. In a world of wide sweeping myths, at a time when the Mediterranean world was being reorganized and consolidated in unprecedented manner, our story offers a powerful vision of the place of Jerusalem, its temple, and its god. We shall return to the potential of such visions in the next chapter.

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words: *speciem sibi Herculis sibi in somno oblatam* (the *image* of Hercules appeared to him in a dream). Gutmann's enticing suggestion, that the epiphany motif was inspired by the reports of Alexander's Herakles dream in Tyre, is, unfortunately, unsupported by further evidence.

[112] This sentence caused a difficulty for Ben Shahar (2017, 115–16), who saw it as a cumbersome intrusion of an inorganic element into the story, solving a narrative problem but creating a syntactic one in its stead. The purpose of P was presumably to give some cause for complaints against the Judeans (seeing as P did not include, or know, the chasing with sticks element). However, the presence of this expression in all the *Yoma* manuscripts weakens, in my mind, the explanation about P's clumsy efforts. More likely, this expression was part of the original story.

[113] According to Josephus (*War* 2.91; *Antiquities* 17.314), the Judean embassy of 4 BCE concluded its case before Augustus thus: "For this would demonstrate that those now being maligned as factious and bellicose, know how to tolerate mild governors" (trans. Mason 2008, 61). Notice the clear reference to the accusations of Judean violence.

Appendix B

Alexander and Simon the Just, manuscript synopsis

מגילת תענית				בבלי יומא				
תענית א֯	תענית א֯	כו"פ	תענית פ	מינכן 6	מינכן 95	ותיקן Ebr 134	ג״י בהמ״ל 1623 אנלאו 271	דפוס ונציא	נ״י בהמ״ל 218 אנלאו 270
בעשׂרי׳ וחד ביה יום הר גריזים	בעשׂרים וחד ביה אגרזים	מעשׂרים ואחד בכסלו יום הר גריזים דלא למספד	בעשׂרים ואחד בו יום הר גריזים	והתניא בעשׂרין וחד ביה יום הר גרזים די לא למספד	והתניא בעשׂרים ואחד יום הר גריזים דלין למספד בהון	והתניא בעשׂרים ואחד יום בו יום הר גריזים דילא למספד	והתניא בעסרין וחד בה יום הר גריזים הוא דילא למספד	והתניא בעשׂרי׳ וחמשה יום הר גריזים דלא למספד	והתניא בעשׂרים וחד ביה יום הר גריזים דלא למספד
			יום ששאלו הכותיים את בית המקדש מאלסכנדרוס מוקדון	יום שבקשו כותיים את בית אלהינו מאלכסנדרוס מקדון	יום שבקשו כותים את בית אלהינו מאלכסנדרון מוקדון להחריבו	ביום שביקשו כותי׳ את בי אלהינו מלאכסנדרוס מוקדון להחריבו	שביקשו כותיים את בית אלהינו מאלכסנדרוס מקדון	יום שבקשו כותיים את בית אלהינו מאלכסנדרוס מקדון להחריבו	יום שבקשו כותים את בית אלהינו מאלאכסנדרוס מוקרון
כשבאו כותים ואמרו לאלכסנדר׳ מסור לנו חמשת כורים ארץ בהר המורי׳	שבאו כותיים ואמרו לאלסכנדרוס מוקדון המשמרין שבהר המוריה תנם לנו	כשבאו כותים אמרו לאלכס-נדרוס מכור לנו חמש כורים ארץ בהר המוריה							
ומכר להן	נתן להם	ומכר להם	ונתנו להם	ונתנו להן	ונתנו להם	ונתנו להם	ונתנו להן	ונתנו להם	ונתנו להם
וכשבאו יצאו בני ירושל׳ ורדפו׳ במקלות	כשבאו יצאו יושבי ירושלם ודחפום במקלות	וכשבאו יצאו בני ירושלים ורדפום במקלות 'וכו							
כשבאו לאנטיפטרס	עד שהגיעו לאנטפטרס								
לפני אלכסנדר׳	הביאו עליהן אלסכנדרוס מוקדון								

Continued

מגילת תענית		בבלי יומא				
שמע שמעו׳ הצדי׳	שמע שמעון הצדיק	באו ישׂראל והודיעו את שמעון הצדיק	באו והודיעו את שמעון הצדיק מה עשׂה	כיון שהודיעו את שמעון הצדיק מה עשׂה	ובאו והודיעו את הצדיק מה עשׂה	ובאו והודיעו שמעון הצדיק מה עשׂה	באו והודיעו את שמעון הצדיק מה עשׂה
נהג עמו אלף בולטין מירושלם מכוסין בלבנים ואלף פירחי כהונ׳ מכוסין בכלי שרת	ונהג עמו אלף בליטין מירושלם מכוסין ואלף פירחי כהונה מלובשין בכלי שרת	לבש בגדי כהונה ויצא לפניו הוא וכל (וכל) גדולי ירוש׳ וכשהם מהלכים בהרים	לבש בגדי כהנה ונתעטף בבגדי כהנה ויקרי ירושלם עמו	לבש בגדי כהונה ונתעטף בגדי כהונה ומיקירי ירושלם עמו	לבש בגדי כהונה ומיקירי ירוש׳ עמו	לבש בגדי כהונה ונתעטף בבגדי כהונה ויקירי ירושלים עמו	לבש בגדי כהונ׳ ונתעטף בבגדי כהונ׳ ומיקירי **ישר׳** עמו
ואבוקו׳ בידם	ואבוקות אור בידם	ראו אבוקות של אור	ואבוקות של אור דולקות לפניהן	ואבוקו׳ של אור בידיהן	ואבוקי אור בידיהם	ואבקות שלאור דולקות לפניהם	ואבוקו׳ של שלאור בידיהן
			והלילה כלו הללו מהלכין מצד זה והללו מהלכין מצד זה	כל הלילה כולו הללו מהלכין מיצד זה והללו מהלכין מיצד אחר	וכל הלילה כולו הללו מהלכין ב בצד אחד והללו מהלכין בצד אחר	והלילה כולו הללו מהלכין מצד זה והללו מ---- מצד זה	וכל הלילה הללו הולכי׳ מצד זה והללו הולכי׳ מצד זה
			עד שעלה עמוד השחר כיון שעלה עמוד השחר	עד שעלה עמוד השחר	עד שעלה עמוד השחר	עד שעלה עמוד השחר כיון שעלה עמוד השחר	עד שעלה עמוד השחר
הגיע למשמר הראשו׳	הגיעו למשמר הראשון						
א׳ להן מי אתם	אמרו לו מי אתם						
אמרו לו אנו אנשי ירושלם באנו להקביל פני המלך	אמרו להם אנו אנשי ירושלם באנו להקביל את פני המלך						
		אמ׳ המלך מה זה	אמ׳ להן מי הם אלו	אמ׳ לה׳ מי הללו	א׳ מי הללו	אמר להן מי הללו	א׳ להם מי הללו	אמ׳ להן מי הללו
		אמרו לו המסורות הם הם יהודאין שמרד בך	אמרו לו	אמרו לו	אמרו לו הללו	אמרו לו	אמרו לו	אמרו לו הללו
			יהודים שמרדו בך	יהודים שמרדו בך	יהודים שמרדו בך	---- ים שמרדו בך	יהודים שמרדו בך	יהודיים שמרדו בך
	הגיעום לפני אלסכנדרוס	הגיע לאנטפטרס זרחה החמה	כיון שהגיעו לאנטיפטרס זרחה חמה ופגעו זה בזה	כיון שהגיע לאנטיפ״רס זרחה חמה פגעו זה בזה	כיון שהגיע לאנטיפטריס זרחה החמה	שהגיעו לאנטי״טרס זרחה חמה פגעו זה בזה	כיון שהגיע לאנטיפטרס זרחה חמה ופגעו זה בזה	כיון שהגיעו לאנטיפטרס זרחה חמה ופגעו זה בזה

כשראה אלכנסדר׳ שמע׳ הצדי׳	כשראה אלסכנדרוס את ר׳ שמעון	ראה את שמעון הצדיק שהוא לובש	כיון שראה את שמעון הצדיק	כיון שראה המלך לשמע׳ הצדיק	כיון שראהו לשמעון הצדי׳	כיון שראה אלכסנדרוס מקד-- -- שמעון הצדיק	כיון שראה לשמעון הצדיק	כיון שראה את שמעון ׳ הצד
נשתטח לפניו על הארץ	נשתטח לפניו על היד	בגדי כהונה נפל ממרכבתו והשתחוה לארץ לפניו	ירד מעל מרכבתו והשתחוה לו	ירד ממרכבתו והשתחוה לפניו	ירד ממרכבתו ונשתחוה לפניו	ירד ממרכבתו והשת׳חוה לפניו	ירד ממרכבתו והשתחוה לפניו	ירד ממרכבתו והשתחוה לפניו
אמרו לו אדניו המלך לזה אתה משתחוה	אמרו לו עבדיו אדוננו לזה תשתחוה	אמרו לו לזה אתה משתחוה והלא בן אדם הוא	אמרו לו מלך גדול שכמותך ישתחוה ליהודי זה	אמרו לו מלך גדול כמותך תשתחוה ליהודי הזה	אמרו לו מלך גדול שכמותך משתחוה ליהודי זה	אמרו לו מלך גדול שכמותך ישתחוה ל----- הזה	אמרו לו מלך גדול כמותך ישתחוה ליהודי זה	אמרו לו מלך גדול שכמותך תשתחוה ליהודי זה
א׳ להן כשהייתי יוצא למלחמתי וראיתי את עמי הייתי יוצא בשלום ונכנס בשלום	אמ׳ להם דמות דיוקנו מנצחת לפני במלחמה ומוציאני לשלום	אמ׳ להם בדמותו של זה אני רואה כשארד למלחמה ונוצח	אמ׳ להן דמות דיוקנו של זה מנצחת לפני בבית מלחמתי	אמ׳ להן דמות דיוקנו של זה מנצח לפניי בבי׳ מלחמתי	א׳ להם דיוקני אני רואה יורד במלחמה ומנצח	אמר להם דמות דיוקנו של זה מנצחת לפני בבית מלחמתי	אמ׳ להם דמות דיוקנו של זה מנצחת לפני בבית מלחמתי	אמר להן דמות דיוקני שלזה מנצחת לפני בבית מלחמתי
		אמ׳ לו מה אתה מבקש	אמ׳ להן למה באתם	אמ׳ להן למה באתם	א׳ להם למה באתם	אמ׳ להם למה באתם	אמר להם למה באת׳	אמ' להם למה באתם
		אמ׳ לו בית שאנו מתפללין בו על מלכותך	אמרו לו יש מקום שאנו מתפללים בו עליך ועל מלכותך שלא תחרב	אמרו לו אפשר בית שמתפללין בו עליך ועל מלכותך שלא תחרב	אמרו לו בית שמתפללין עליך ועל מלכותך שלא תיחרב	א--- לו מקום שאנו מתפללין עליך ועל מלכותך שלא תיחרב	אמרו איפשר בי׳ שמתפללין בו עליך ועל מלכותך שלא תחרב	אמרו לו מקום שאנו מתפללין בו עליך ועל מלכותיך שלא תיחרב
		הטעוך גוים ונתתו להם	יתעוך גוים הללו ותתנו להן	יתעוך גוים הללו להחריבו	יתאוו (?) גוים הללו להחריבו	יתעוך גוים הללו ותתנו להם	יתעוך גוי׳ להחריבו	יתעוך גוים הללו ותתנו להם
		אמ׳ להם מי הטעוני	אמ׳ להן ומי הם אלו	אמ׳ להן ומי הללו	א׳ להם ומי הם הללו	אמר להם מי הללו	אמר להם מי הללו	אמ' להם מי הללו
		אמ׳ לו הן הן הכותיים	אמרו לו כותיים שעומדין לפניך	אמרו לו הללו שעומדין לפניך	אמרו לו הללו כותים שעומדי׳ לפניך	אמ׳ לו כותיים שעומדין לפניך	אמרו לו כותיים הללו שעומדין לפניך	אמרו לו כותיים שעומדין לפניך
		אמ׳ לו הרי נתונים לך	אמ׳ להן הרי הן מסורין בידכם	אמ׳ להן הם מסורים בידכם	א׳ להם הרי הן מסורי׳ בידכם	אמר להן הרי הן מסורין בידכם	אמר להם הרי הם מסורי׳ בידיכם	אמ' להם הרי הן מסורין בידכם

Continued

מגילת תענית			בבלי יומא				
מיד נתנו חכין ברגליהן וגררום	מיד נתנו סכין ברגלי הכותיים וגררום	מיד נתנו סכים ברגליהם וגררום	נקב את נקביהן ותלאום אחרי סוסים וגררום על הקוצים ועל הברקנים עד הר גריזים	מיד נקבום בעיקביהן ותלאום בזנבי סוסיהן והיו גוררין אותן על הקוצין ועל הברקנין עד שהגיעו להר גריזים	מיד נקבו בעקביהם ותלאום בזנבי סוסיהן והיו גוררין אותן על הקוצים ועל הברקנין עד שהגיעו להר גריזים	נקבום בעקביהם ותלאום מ?? סוסיהם והיו מגו ?? מגררין אותן על הקוצים ועל הברקנים עד שהגיעו להר גריזים	מיד נקבום בעקביהן ותלאום בזנבי סוסיהן וגררו אותן על הקוצים ועל הברקונים עד שהגיעו להר גריזים	מיד נקבום בעקביהם ותלאום בזנבי סוסיה׳ והיו מגררין אותן על הקוצים ועל הברקנים עד שהגיעו להר גריזים	מיד נקבום בעקביהם ותלאום בזנבי סוסיהם וגררו אותן על הקוצים ועל הברקנים עד שהגיעו להר גריזים
וניתן הר גריזי׳ לישר׳ וזרעוהו כרשינין	ונתן הר גריזים שהיה בית תפלתם ביד ישׂראל וחרשוהו וזרעו בו מלח	וניתן הר גריזים לישׂראל וזרעוהו כרשינין	כיון שהגיעו שם להר גריזים חרשוהו וזרעוהו כדרך שחשבו לעשׂות לבית המקדש יום שעשׂו כן עשׂאוהו יום טוב	כיון שהגיעו להר גרזים חרשוהו וזרעוהו כרשנין כדרך שבקשו לעשׂות את בית אלהינו ואותו היום עשׂאוהו יום טוב איבעי אימ׳ בגדים הראוין לכהנה איבעית אימא עת לעשׂות לי׳ הפרו תורתך	כיון שהגיעו להר גריזים חרשוהו וזרעוהו כרשינין כדרך שבקשו לעשׂות את בית אלהינו ואותו היום עשׂאוהו יום טוב איבעי אימ׳ ראויין לבגדי כהונה ואי׳ עת לעשׂות לי׳ הפרו תורתך	מיד חרשוהו ??? וזרעוהו כרשינין כדרך שביקשו לעשׂות בבית אלהינו ואותו היום עשׂו אותו יום טו׳ איב׳ אימ׳ ראוין לבגדי כהונה ואיב׳ אימ׳ ער [sic] לעשׂות לי׳ הפרו תורתך	חרשוהו וזרעוהו כרשנין כדרך שבקשו לעשׂות בבית אלהינו ואותו היום עשׂאוהו יום טוב אי בעית אימא בגדים הראויין לכהונה או בעית אימא עת לעשׂות ליי הפרו תורתיך	כיון שהגיעו להר גרזים חרשוהו וזרעוהו כרשנין כדרך שבקשו לעשׂות בית אלהינו ואותו היום עשׂאוהו יום טוב איבאית אימ׳ דראויין הן לבגדי כהונה ואי באית אימ׳ עת לעשׂות ליי הפרו תורתיך	חרשוהו וזרעוהו כרשנין כדרך שביקשו לעשׂות בבית אלהינו ואותו היום עשׂאוהו יום טוב

4
Josephus

4.1 Introduction and Story

Finally, Josephus. Josephus' version of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition is by far the most familiar to the general public, and certainly the one most extensively discussed in modern scholarship. This is hardly surprising. Unlike the sources studied in the previous chapters, Josephus' *Antiquities* have always been available to various audiences for nearly two millennia since their initial publication, while in recent centuries the work has also been widely translated into a wide variety of modern languages. It is thus only to be expected that Josephus' version should receive more than the lion's share of scholarly and popular attention. This situation is therefore clearly due to Josephus' accessibility, but also to the certainty as to his identity and time. Unlike the putative sources of the earlier three versions discussed so far in this book, which had to be sought out through philological analysis and contextualization, we know exactly who Josephus was, when he lived, and what he wrote.

The discussion about Josephus has focused for the most part on the twin questions of historicity and sources. In answer to both, there is much to learn from the conclusions of the previous chapters. Concerning the sources, it is remarkable that only a few of the previously attempted reconstructions of Josephus' sources made an attempt to deal with the three earlier versions.[1] Once again, hardly a surprise, given the consensus view that Josephus' story is the earliest of the four.[2] To be sure, the publication of Josephus' *Antiquities* very likely

[1] It is striking that Buchler 1898, possibly the single most influential piece in the long discussion of Josephus' sources, completely ignores even the Simon story, widely accessible through the Babylonian Talmud.

[2] For various expressions of this assumption see: Niese 1893, I, 83 n. 1; Willrich 1895, 8; Abrahams 1927, 10–11 (implicitly); Abel 1935, 50; Simon 1941/62, 128; Kazis 1962, 7–8; Kasher 1975, 205; Merkelbach and Trumpf 1977, 136; Momigliano 1979, 443; Cohen 1982/3, 65; Goldstein 1993, 97–9; Gruen 1998a, 190; Jouanno 2002, 378; Kim 2003, 435 (not merely the earliest but "the only source"); VanderKam 2004, 68; Fletcher-Louis 2004, 80; Tropper 2013, 116, 136; Ben Shahar 2017, 91 n. 1 (Josephus as source for epsilon); Finn 2022, 123. Recognizing the independence of the rabbinic tradition from Josephus: Kazis 1962, 7–8; Momigliano 1979, 443; Fletcher-Louis 2004, 80–1; Ben Shahar 2017.

A notable exception to the rule is Schwartz (1990, 188), who assumed that Josephus' source for the part of his narrative that described the meeting between Alexander and the high priest was in fact a story that mentioned Simon the Just. This opinion, to which I subscribe and which is explored in this chapter, was not picked up by later scholarship. The objection to Schwartz by Tropper (2013, 141 n. 78) is negated by my new dating of the Simon the Just story.

precedes the compilation of the two scholia on *Megillat Ta'anit*, and certainly that of the Babylonian Talmud and of the epsilon recension of the *Romance*. However, if the reader is willing to accept the datings and contextualizations offered in the previous chapters for the other three versions—all deriving from much earlier times than the works wherein they have been preserved—it must follow that these strands of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition were already potentially available to Josephus when he came to compose his own Alexander story. Furthermore, while modern scholarship has focused its attention on written sources, it has failed for the most part to acknowledge the unavoidable influence of oral tradition.[3] As we have seen regarding the stories about Gviha and Simon the Just, myths about Alexander became part of the annual cycle of *Megillat Ta'anit*. This alone allowed for two yearly opportunities to tell Alexander tales, and we can safely assume other instances of similar storytelling in less formalized circumstances. The cumulative influence of the oral tradition could have come into play both in the general structuring of the story, and more particularly in those parts of Josephus' narrative where he seems to be making an original contribution or speaking his own mind. Josephus, like all of us, surely "knew" a lot of things that, if asked, he would be hard pressed to trace to any particular source.[4] Of course, this oral tradition also helped to shape the common conception of Alexander in various circles of Judean society. In other words, even at an intuitive level, Josephus could expect his audience to be influenced by it as well.

As for historicity, reading Josephus in line with the earlier manifestations of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition, we are prompted to understand him within this wider mythistorical context. It is true, of course, that in writing the *Antiquities* Josephus was aiming to write history—he professes so himself at the very beginning of the work.[5] Yet at the same time, his treatment of Alexander in this *longue durée* exposition of Judean history clearly conforms to the standards of the earlier strands of the tradition, in that it uses a historical background and historical characters with a degree of literary freedom that transgresses the acceptable limits set by the modern perception of history. The most blatant example of this kind of

[3] Tcherikover (1959, 420–1 n. 17) stands out in asserting that the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition was "fundamentally a Palestinian folk-story," which also stands behind the rabbinic tradition. However, he putatively interjects between this folktale and Josephus an otherwise unattested written version deriving from first-century CE Alexandria. One scholar who does figure in the oral ("non-Thucydidean," in his words) tradition as a direct source of Josephus is Golan (1982, 34–7). Accepting the historicity of Alexander's visit in Jerusalem, he ascribes to oral tradition an important role in shaping Josephus' story, and sees it in action in places where Josephus presents original (one might say midrashic) contributions to his narrative. Golan (1982, 48–9) also recognizes a second oral tradition behind the Simon story, and claims that the two traditions reinforce each other's basic historicity. My own conclusions in the previous and in this chapter point in a different direction.

[4] Thus, for example, Josephus could theoretically replicate parts of the Seleukid *Romance* story, passed down orally over the three centuries separating him from it, without even knowing about this work's existence.

[5] *Antiquities*, prooemium 1.1.

practice appears at the most dramatic of the story's multiple turning points—Alexander's astonishing prostration before the high priest. This is certainly a place where Josephus relinquished his commitment to historical fact in favor of historical mythmaking. Alexander's reason for the prostration—having seen the high priest in his holy vestments in a dream in Makedonia before setting out on his expedition—is even harder to accept as factual in any way.[6] For even though the story is technically within the realm of possibility (people have all kinds of dreams all the time), its basic logic and obvious intent require us to read it as a manifestation of divine providence—a causal agent that has no room in modern historiography. The prostration story, with its inevitable cultural and theological ramifications, is also the reason that Josephus' story was criticized so vigorously in modern scholarship.[7] The unavoidable conclusion is that, while Josephus' story may possibly contain some clues as to what actually happened when Alexander was present in the vicinity of Judea, its purpose was not only to describe the past but also, possibly even primarily, to comment on the present and to offer a possible vision for the future.

The aim of this chapter therefore is not to rehash the old controversies and arguments of previous scholarship, but rather to examine what the recognition of the earlier versions can add to our understanding of Josephus' sources and of his methods in composing the Alexander narrative; to examine how his narrative functions in relation to other parts of the *Antiquities*; and to try to discern what messages it may have carried to its intended audience at the end of the first century CE. But first, let us begin with a short recap.[8]

The story begins with the accession of Iaddous to the high priesthood, and with his brother Manassês. The mention of the latter is the pretext for the introduction of the real driving force in the first half of the story—Sanaballetes, the Persian-appointed satrap of Samaria, a Kuti (*Χουθαῖος*), that is, Samaritan. Wishing to gain the goodwill of the Judeans and to establish a degree of influence in Jerusalem, Sanaballetes arranged a marriage between his daughter Nikaso and Manassês. As it happened, this marriage achieved the opposite effect, provoking the anger of the elders in Jerusalem. This connection, they claimed, contravened the prohibition against exogamous marriage, and might serve as example and justification for further transgressions of that kind. This was no laughing matter:

[6] For a detailed analysis of the twin dreams in Josephus' narrative see Kim 2003.

[7] For a lucid example of the frustration, anger, and contempt Josephus could evoke nearly two millennia after his time see the opening words of Willrich (1895, 1): "Alexander der Grosse, der gewaltigste Held des Altertums, beugt sich vor Jahve und bringt ihm an heiliger Stätte in Jerusalem ein feierliches Opfer dar. Welch ein 'welthistorischer Moment', welch ein erbaulicher Gedanke!" Willrich then proceeds to eviscerate the story, and keeps up the same interpretative line in a relentless attack on Josephus' veracity. As I shall argue, Josephus did indeed intend to write an edifying story of global significance.

[8] *Antiquities* 11.302–47. Given the length of the story and its easy accessibility, a summary should suffice. For English translations see Whiston's Classic, Marcus' 1937 Loeb translation, and Spilsbury and Seeman 2017 in the Brill Josephus Project.

in the minds of the elders such commingling with foreign women was the reason for their former captivity. They therefore demanded that the marriage be disbanded, or that Manassês be prevented from partaking in the sacrifices. Iaddous was convinced and forbade his brother to approach the altar. Upset by this turn of events, Manassês presented his problem before his father-in-law. Sanaballetes promised Manassês he would recompense him by building a temple on Mt. Gerizim comparable to that of Jerusalem and by making him his political heir as well—all with the approval of King Dareios. Manassês was then convinced to keep with Nikaso and cast his lot with that of Samaria. A considerable number of priests and laymen, who were also married to foreign women, took their cue from Manassês and emigrated thither. Sanaballetes did his best to support them with both money and allotments of agricultural land.

Thus far Josephus' narrative has been interspersed with notices about the murder of Philippos, the ascension of Alexander, and the beginning of his Asian campaign. The disparate strands of the narrative begin to coalesce once Dareios finally sets out with his grand army to face Alexander and the Makedonians. This news drives Sanaballetes to action, in the hope that after destroying Alexander, Dareios would be available and partial to authorizing the construction of the Gerizim temple. Alexander's resounding victory at Issos comes as a great surprise, but Sanaballetes remains unfazed. Marshalling some eight thousand troops he marches to meet Alexander outside Tyre and declares his loyalty. He pleads his case before the Makedonian monarch, explaining that a political division between Samaria and Judea would be in the king's favor, and requests approval for building the temple and appointing Manassês as its high priest. Alexander consents, and Sanaballetes sets to work with all possible speed. Already advanced in years, Sanaballetes reaches the end of his life about the time when Alexander manages to take Gaza, some eight or nine months after their initial meeting.

Meanwhile in Jerusalem, anxieties amount. At the beginning of the siege of Tyre Alexander had sent letters to Iaddous and demanded military aid and material support for the siege. Iaddous refused, citing his previous oath of fealty to Dareios. On hearing this reply Alexander becomes incensed, and threatens that once he is done with Tyre he will march on Jerusalem and show everybody to whom they should be keeping oaths. Having done so, and having taken Gaza as well, Alexander is now ready to march on Jerusalem. Hearing the news, the high priest Iaddous is in agony and fear, being at a loss as to how he should stand up to the Makedonian army and to the fury of the king. In his distress, he sacrifices to the deity, prays for deliverance, and then falls asleep. In his dreams he is visited by a divine revelation, and is ordered to bedeck the city with wreathes, throw open the gates, and come out to greet the approaching king with all pomp and circumstance: the people wearing white, and the priests in their holy vestments.

Once awake he is cheered up, and immediately orders that all the instructions he had received in his dream be carried out.[9]

When Alexander approaches the city he observes the festive reception prepared for him. The Phoenicians and the Chaldeans accompanying him eagerly await permission to charge and plunder, but like everyone else they are dumbstruck by what happens next: Alexander steps forward and prostrates himself before the high priest! The Judeans shout out in joy, and the kings of Syria and the rest of Alexander's companions are stricken by amazement. Parmenion alone keeps his poise and asks Alexander why on earth, when all others were bowing down to him, he should bow down to the high priest of the Judeans. Alexander answers:

> Not to him I bowed down, but to the god, by whose archpriesthood this man is honored. For this man I saw in my dreams, in the same shape as now, when I was in Makedonian Dion, and I was pondering with myself, how I might overpower Asia. He called on me not to procrastinate but to take courage and cross over; for he would lead my campaign and provide me with the rule of the Persians. Since then I have not seen anyone else in this outfit, but seeing this man now, and recalling his appearance and the encouragement in my dreams, I think that I shall make my campaign with a divine escort, that I shall conquer Dareios, that I shall undo the power of the Persians, and all things that may come to my mind, shall go well! (§§333–5)

Alexander next enters the city together with the high priest, comes up to the temple and sacrifices there to the deity under Iaddous' instruction. Alexander is then shown the book of Daniel, where, he is told, it has been foretold that one of the Hellenes would undo the power of the Persians. Alexander understands the prophecy as referring to himself, and naturally is mighty pleased. On the next day he promises to give the Judeans whatever gifts they should ask for. The high priest requests authorization for the Judeans to use their forefathers' laws, and that every seventh year be free of tax. Alexander consents. He is further asked that the Judeans in Babylon and Media be allowed to use the their special laws, and again consents. He then addresses the crowd and asks whether any wished to join in his

[9] Up to this point, Josephus wove his story as "a composite of intersecting sub-plots" (Spilsbury and Seeman 2017, 87), switching between different arenas of action (Jerusalem, Samaria, Makedon, Asia Minor, and Persia), with each plot line moving at its own pace (events in Judea and Samaria seem to have unfolded over a longer period than the time from Alexander's accession to his arrival on the scene). From this point onward the narrative focuses on Alexander, and moves forward in linear fashion and without interruption. See also Spilsbury and Seeman (2017, 118 n. 1107) for a fair appraisal of "the logistical challenges confronting any historian who is attempting to manage parallel sequences of events: whether to constantly cut from one scene to keep everything up to date, or to finish a given situation, to some extent, before returning to the others."

campaign, remaining in their ancestral customs and living according to them; many are content to campaign with him.

Having settled affairs in Jerusalem, Alexander marches on with his army to nearby cities, where he is received in friendly fashion. The Samaritans, impressed by the privileges awarded to the Judeans, decide to ask for similar recognition. (Josephus here interjects a statement that this was the usual Samaritan *modus operandi*: to pretend to be Judeans when the latter enjoyed good fortune, and to make the opposite claim in times of trouble.) The Samaritans therefore set out to meet Alexander, bringing with them also those soldiers whom Sanaballetes had previously sent to him, and invite him to honor their own temple. Furthermore, they request a similar tax rebate on the sabbatical years. Alexander replies that these privileges were accorded to the Judeans, and asks whether they too were Judeans. When they answer that they are Hebrews, and that they are called "Sidonians in Sikimoi" (that is, Shechem, modern Nablus), Alexander replies: "But I gave these things to the Judeans. However, after I return, and learn from you more exactly, I shall do what seems good." In this manner he bids the people of Shechem farewell; but the soldiers of Sanaballetes he takes with him to Egypt, where they are allotted plots of land and serve as garrison in the Thebaïs. Following Alexander's death, the temple on Mt. Gerizim, which he had authorized, remains active and continues to attract any of the Jerusalemites guilty of various transgression of the law.

4.2 The Historian and His Sources

Even in the summarized version provided here, Josephus' story is certainly the most elaborate and detailed of the entire tradition. Yet reading the story in light of its three predecessors, it also becomes clear that it owes much, both in terms of the general plot line and regarding some very particular details, to two of the three. In terms of the general plot line, Josephus tows a line that is very close to that of the Judean episode in the Seleukid *Romance* (chapter 1): on Alexander's approach the Judeans first adopt a contrary position; in the initial meeting between the parties Alexander confidently responds to Judean opposition (covert in the Seleukid *Romance*; overt in Josephus) with a promise to arrive in Jerusalem and pay the recalcitrant inhabitants their due; the Jerusalemites consider their dire situation, and decide that the best course of action is to come out to greet Alexander in great numbers and festive fashion, with an emphasis on the priestly vestments; Alexander arrives in Jerusalem and is struck by the beauty and order of the priestly trappings; he immediately adopts a positive attitude to the Jerusalemites and their deity, and confirms his cordiality with a tax remission. Leaving aside for a moment the Samaritan aspects of Josephus' version, his way of telling the story can fairly be described as a refined and elaborated version of the Judean episode in the Seleukid *Romance*.

The Simon the Just story (chapter 3), despite the very obvious difference in the location of the meeting and the identity of the high priest (Antipatris with Simon; Jerusalem with Iaddous), also shares some very strong similarities with the story of Josephus. In both stories the action is occasioned by Alexander's advent, but it is motivated by a Samaritan anti-Judean initiative—the anonymous Samaritans who claim the temple in the rabbinic tale; Sanaballetes in Josephus. Most strikingly, the encounter itself is almost copied by Josephus from the rabbinic story: Simon and the rest of the priests don their formal attire and set out to greet Alexander; when the two parties meet, Alexander surprises everyone by stepping forward and prostrating himself before the Judean high priest; when asked about the reason for this strange behavior he answers that the high priest, or his image, is providentially responsible for his victories on the battlefield; as a token of his favor Alexander asks the Judeans to request from him whatever they wish, and then proceeds to fulfill their request.

In light of these similarities in structure and detail, it is hard to escape the conclusion that these two earlier versions served Josephus as the basis for his own story about Alexander in Jerusalem.[10] Taken together, they provide a very strong backbone, clearly visible behind Josephus' telling. It is less easy to answer the question, in what forms Josephus had met these earlier versions. On the side of written texts, it is at least possible that Josephus could have come across a manuscript of the now lost Seleukid *Romance*, written (as I suggest in chapter 1) nearly three centuries before his time. By his own testimony Josephus was an avid learner already in his youth,[11] and despite the traumatic rupture between Seleukids and Judeans at the time of Antiochos IV, it is not unthinkable that a copy of the Seleukid *Romance* remained in Jerusalem for him to have perused, or alternatively that the Judean episode became incorporated in some other text, now beyond our knowledge. It is also quite likely that a copy of the Seleukid *Romance* survived in the former Seleukid capital complex in Syria, whether in Judean or other hands.[12] Finally, when in Rome, Josephus had access to the best of libraries.[13] A copy of the Seleukid *Romance* could have made its way to any of them. On the other hand, we cannot rule out the possibility that this story also

[10] The suggestion that Josephus' story sprang out of the arrival in Judea of Antiochos III "the Great" has been raised and supported by Krochmal 1860, 20–1; Zeitlin 1924/5, 138; Moore 1927, 357–8; Purvis 1968, 125–6; and, in more detail, Goldstein 1993, 91–6.

[11] Josephus, *Life* 8–12.

[12] This seems to me the safest bet as to how the Seleukid *Romance* arrived at Byzantium, and eventually reached the author of epsilon. Other scenarios can, of course, be postulated.

[13] In the preface to the *Antiquities* (1.8) Josephus engages in the customary scholarly thanks to those who have facilitated one's research. He especially names one Epaphroditus, who made a particularly large contribution. The majority opinion in scholarship identifies him with M. Mettius, a famous scholar and librarian, said to have possessed no less than three myriad scrolls. On him see Suda, "*Επαφρόδιτος*" (*E*2004 in Adler 1928–38, I.2, 334–5); Fornaro, s.v. "Epaphroditus" 3 in *Brill's New Pauly*. This identification was first suggested by Laqueur 1920, 23–30, and is accepted by Momigliano 1979, 442; Weaver 1994, 474–5; Cotton and Eck 2005, 50–1 (hesitantly); Seward 2009, 303 (in the index, without discussion); Curran 2011, 68–9 (implicitly). A different identification, which does not in any way detract from Josephus' access to rare manuscripts, will be discussed below.

made its way from papyrus or parchment into Judean folk oral tradition, and that Josephus received the essentials of the Seleukid *Romance* story without ever reading the actual text. The two channels of transmission are, of course, hardly mutually exclusive.

As for the stories transmitted to us through the rabbinic lines of tradition, the balance weighs in favor of the use by Josephus of oral sources. Firstly, because by its nature rabbinic scholarship in antiquity was focused on rote memorization and on face-to-face discussion. Whenever rabbinic learning was eventually put down in writing, usually as part of a major halakhic or hermeneutical project (Talmud and Midrash), the terms used for referencing sources are overwhelmingly verbs of speaking, rather than of reading and writing.[14] The second reason is the constant circulation both of the Gviha story and of that on Simon the Just through the annual celebration of *Megillat Ta'anit* dates. Even if there were already in Josephus' time texts that contained the historical legends preserved for us in the two *Megillat Ta'anit* scholia (I do not know of positive evidence that they did), these dates will surely have provided ample opportunity for storytelling, which, as in the case of rabbinic learning, happened orally. Of the two rabbinic stories, the one featuring Simon the Just is surely the relevant one to the discussion at hand. Josephus' borrowings from it go to the very core of the story: the Samaritan motivation, the *proskynesis*, the Gerizim temple, and the Judean priestly vestments. The emphasis on the vestments and on the temple's meticulous and magnificent order, together with the all-important peripety motif, are of course present already in the Seleukid *Romance* version. These then, I suggest, were Josephus' main sources, on which he constructed his own account.

Before proceeding to those parts of Josephus' narrative that clearly do not derive from the Seleukid *Romance* and Simon the Just versions, let us review some minor details in his story that may indicate some connection with the earlier versions. The first is the mention of two groups, Phoenicians and Chaldeans, who accompany Alexander's army and expect to be allowed to plunder the city and vent their anger personally against the Judean high priest. The expectations of these two groups serve a clear literary purpose, namely to emphasize the danger to the Judean community, and to build up the tension, which is then released by the unexpectedness of Alexander's reaction. But why these two groups in particular? The presence of the Phoenicians is less difficult to understand, as they were neighbors of Judea.[15] In Josephus' story the mention of

[14] For the centrality and intensity of oral tradition in rabbinic scholarship see the mass of evidence in Sussmann 2019. Following Golan (1982, 34) it is interesting in this context to note Josephus' boast of his own memory (μνήμη; *Life* 8), which marked his scholarly excellence.

[15] Marcus (1937, 474 note a), comparing the story with 1 Maccabees 3:41, is surely right in assuming that the promise of plunder included also lucrative opportunities in the slave trade (endorsed by Cohen 1982/3, 67 n. 79). Wholesale enslavements also accompanied the occupations of Tyre (Diodorus 17.46.4; Arrian 2.24.5) and Gaza (Arrian 27.7).

Phoenicians goes hand in hand with his mention of the sieges of Tyre and of Gaza. Yet their particular mention may possibly also owe to their role in the Gviha story, where they appear as Canaanites or Africans. The Chaldeans, on the other hand, are much harder to explain. First of all, unlike the Phoenicians, they are hardly neighbors of Judea. Secondly, at this stage of Alexander's campaign, Babylon—home of the Chaldeans—was still firmly under Persian rule.[16] One explanation suggested for their puzzling presence is that Josephus' text originally referred not to Chaldeans, *Χαλδαίοι*, but rather to *Χουθαῖοι*, that is, Kutim or Samaritans.[17] This is a clever emendation that would neatly solve the problem, and which also agrees with the gist of the Simon the Just story. Nevertheless, it should in all likelihood be rejected. Josephus' story is focused on Judeo-Samaritan relations, and it is hard to see how such a crucial reference to them would be replaced, even by a careless copyist, with an enigmatic reference to Chaldeans. The more difficult reading is in this case surely the right one.[18] Another interpretation of the Chaldeans understands them not as Babylonians but rather as an umbrella term used for soothsayers, diviners, and magicians.[19] Such is the use of the term in chapter 2 of the book of Daniel, which, as we shall see presently, plays a crucial role in the *Antiquities*. Josephus himself uses "Chaldeans" in this sense in his narration of the Daniel story (10.198, 234). The purpose of the Chaldeans here would presumably be to create an antithesis between their failed prognostications and the truthful revelations made both to Alexander and to the Judean high priest—a theme that would echo the story of Daniel's rise to power. This explanation makes sense contextually, but runs into the same basic difficulty, that the Chaldeans were a Babylonian phenomenon.[20] This problem can perhaps be looked at from a different angle, if we are willing to accept that Josephus did in fact read the Seleukid *Romance* (rather than receiving the Judean episode as a standalone story). In the *Romance* story Babylon is in fact already under the control of Alexander when he first arrives in Judea. The Chaldeans can thus easily be a part of Alexander's entourage. This explanation can possibly solve yet another difficulty: following the entente between Alexander and the high priest, the Judeans make a request concerning their coreligionists in Babylon and Media (11.338).

[16] For this anachronism as an argument to undercut Josephus' historicity see Niese 1893, I, 83 n. 1; Buchler 1898, 14; Tcherikover 1959, 45; Tropper 2013, 128.

[17] Niese (Teubner) and Marcus (Loeb) bring this suggested emendation by Schotanus. This emendation received the full-hearted support of Whiston 1726, 61. Abel (1935, 50) and Tcherikover (1959, 420 n. 15) accept its possibility and VanderKam (2004, 79) offers cautious support.

[18] Marcus 1937, 474 n.a.

[19] Tcherikover 1959, 420 n. 15; Cohen 1982/3, 67 n. 79; Spilsbury and Seeman 2017, 120–1 n. 1136.

[20] For a useful summary of this issue see Spilsbury and Seeman (2017, 120–1 n. 1136), who rightly stress the relevance of the Chaldeans to the Danielic theme in the story. They further intriguingly suggest that Josephus may have used the Chaldeans in order to echo the destruction of the first temple, and thus to accentuate the agony of Iaddous and his compatriots. The relevance of Nebuchadnezzar to Josephus' overall view of Judean history in the context of the Alexander story is discussed later in this chapter.

Some scholars have used this anachronism to attack Josephus' veracity; others explained it as a request foreshadowing Alexander's future victories, and thus meant to compliment him.[21] The putative influence of the Seleukid *Romance* on Josephus can explain this seemingly strange request in the same way it does the mention of the Chaldeans. According to the geographical logic of the Seleukid *Romance*, Alexander already ruled Babylon and Media.

But there is of course much more to Josephus' Alexander narrative than a mere conflation of two existing stories. To begin with, Josephus must also have used one or more historical sources about Alexander. This is most evident in 11.304, where he mentions Pausanias son of Kerastes of the Orestai as the murderer of King Philippos, Alexander's father. The mention of the patronym is especially striking, as it is "the sole surviving attestation of the name of Pausanias' father."[22] Another striking detail is Josephus' reference to Dion as the location where Alexander first received the vision of the mysterious image, predicting his victories. According to Diodorus (17.16), this is exactly where Alexander mustered his army and carried out a bout of sacrifice and celebration, as well as discussing his plans for the Asian campaigns.[23] The use of a historical source is evident also in the description of Alexander's campaign in Asia Minor (§305), of Dareios' movements (§§313–14), of Dareios' flight and the capture of his family (§316), and finally of Alexander's only military challenges in the Levant—at Tyre and Gaza (§§317, 319–20). A final point that demonstrates Josephus' debt to Alexander historiography is his use of Parmenion as literary foil.[24] It seems pointless to try and guess which source(s) Josephus used for this purpose. With the libraries of Rome at his disposal he could have consulted practically any of the first-generation historians. For all we know, he could even have read Diodorus or Curtius. It would be more useful to consider why he included these details. One conceivable answer would be that he did so in order to furnish his narrative with a historically sound framework, possibly to create a verisimilitude of historicity that would increase faith in the story's more fantastic parts.

4.3 The Persian Period and the Samaritan Question

But Josephus was hardly a slavish copyist, or even synthesist, of his sources. On the contrary, he was a conscientious historian, who intended to provide his

[21] Noted the anachronism: Buchler 1898, 14; Tcherikover 1959, 45; Tropper 2013, 128; Spilsbury and Seeman 2017, 121 n. 11136; Finn 2022, 166. Beneficent foreshadowing of Alexander's success: Whiston 1726, 60; Spak 1911, 37; Kasher 1975, 198; Golan 1982, 52–3.

[22] Spilsbury and Seeman 2017, 108 n. 1024.

[23] Gutmann (1940, 284) concludes that Josephus and Diodorus used essentially similar sources here.

[24] The reference to Parmenion's classic role as Alexander's foil has been noted by Gruen 1998a, 197; Spilsbury and Seeman 2017, 122 n. 1149.

readership with a clear understanding of the past. With this in mind, we now turn to an issue that occupied the attention and exercised the ingenuity of modern scholarship, that is, the story of Sanaballetes, Nikaso, and Manassês. The story is provided by Josephus as background to the foundation of the Gerizim temple, set in a defined historical context at the very end of the Persian period. The family drama that sets the scene for Josephus' story has rightly reminded scholars of the events lurking behind the laconic notice at the very end of the book of Nehemiah (13:28): "and (one) of the sons of Yoyada' son of Eliashiv was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite, and I made him run away from me." The resemblance between the two storylines is clear: in either case a person by the name of Sanaballetes/Sanballat appears as the father-in-law of a renegade member of the archpriestly dynasty, who is consequently turned away from Jerusalem for his transgression of endogamous purity. The relevance of Nehemiah's story to that of Josephus is strengthened by the comparison of the archpriestly lineage in either source. In Nehemiah 12:10–11 we read that "Yeshu'a begat Yoyaqim, and Yoyaqim begat Eliashiv, and Eliashiv begat Yoyada' and Yoyada' begat Yonathan, and Yonathan begat Iaddu'a." In 12:22 the last four links in the dynastic chain are reiterated: Eliashiv, Yoyada', Yohanan, Iaddu'a.[25] Josephus, for his part, provides us with the exact same sequence of names (11.297, 302). The Hebrew name Iaddu'a (ידוע) is universally identified with Josephus' Iaddous (Ἰαδδοῦς), an identification that rests confidently on both philological and contextual grounds.[26] The question that stands at the heart of the discussion is therefore: did Josephus transpose an event from Nehemiah's time to that of Alexander, or did he report the later of two comparable but different events?

The answer lies in the name of the high priest who met Alexander. As suggested above, two of the three earlier versions served Josephus as the primary sources of inspiration for his own story. Of the two, the story in the Seleukid *Romance*, at least in the form in which it has reached us, does not make room for a high priestly figure, and focuses rather on the priests and elders as a governing class. The story wherefrom Josephus borrowed the *proskynesis* and the ascription of Alexander's victories to the god of Israel clearly names not Iaddous, but Simon the Just. The logical and economical conclusion is, therefore, that Josephus adopted Nehemiah's Iaddu'a and made him high priest during Alexander's time.

Why did he do so? To my mind, the reason for this seemingly strange decision derives first and foremost from the general intractability of the chronology of Persian-period Judea. The best representation of the inevitable frustration caused by this historiographical conundrum is the remark made by Rabbi Yosi ben

[25] Note that in 12:11 the father of Iaddu'a is called Yonathan, while in §22 he is Yohanan. This discrepancy has been interpreted as a scribal error: Schwartz 1990, 178 n. 9; VanderKam 2004, 54–5; Kalimi 2020, 338.

[26] E.g., Spak 1911; Torrey 1928; Kazis 1962, 6; Schwartz 1990; Goldstein 1993, 74; Stoneman 1994, 39; VanderKam 2004, 64; Tropper 2013, 126–7; Spilsbury and Seeman 2017, 106 n. 1006.

Halafta, a scholar of the late second century CE, who composed a biblically based chronology from the creation of the world to the time of Alexander. When he came to the Persian period, he declared in despair: "You do not find more than two kings of Persia, Cyrus and Darius; and two in Media, Darius and Ahasueros; but Cyrus is Darius is Artaxerxes; for all the kingship is called Artaxerxes!"[27] Josephus appears to have approached this mine-laden field in earnest, displaying a considerable degree of ingenuity. For example, he correctly inserted into his history the Persian monarch Kambyses (Cyrus' son), who is nowhere to be found in the biblical record. He was also unafraid to identify the biblical Ahasueros not as the Xerxes who infamously invaded Greece, but rather as Artaxerxes I, his son.[28] Yet when Josephus' reconstruction is taken as a whole, and compared with the actual history of the Achaemenid dynasty, it is surely incorrect. Throughout book 11 of the *Antiquities* Josephus follows the succession of Persian kings meticulously, from Cyrus down to Artaxerxes I (§296), who reigned in 465–424/3 BCE.[29] However, in the next paragraph, which brings us to the story of the strife between the two high priestly brothers Ioannes and Iesous, a generation before Alexander's arrival, we are jarringly transported to the reign of "the other" Artaxerxes.[30] It is not clear which Artaxerxes is meant: Artaxerxes II Mnemon (405/4–359 BCE) or Artaxerxes III Ochos (359–338 BCE). In either case, Josephus' Persian chronology not only ignores one of the two kings by that name, but also Darius II (424/3–405/4 BCE). Josephus' neat chronology thus misses the better half of a century—exactly the gap that allowed him to bring Iaddous and Alexander together.[31]

Yet Josephus' story contains many details that are missing from the biblical texts in our possession: the names of Nikaso and Manassês; the very foundation of the Gerizim temple; the Samaritan request for Judean privileges. Are these the products of Josephus' reasoning and inventiveness, or was he exposed to one or more versions of the story, orally or in writing, that treated this material and are now lost to us? The present state of the sources does not offer a conclusive answer, but it does leave some scope for speculation. Josephus obviously knew that a Samaritan temple had once existed on Mt. Gerizim. It is certainly a testimony to his curiosity and to his historical sensibility that he raised the question of its

[27] *Seder 'Olam Rabah* 30. Anyone who has tried to solve the problems of Judean chronology in the Persian period will surely appreciate R. Yosi's exasperation.

[28] Kambyses: *Antiquities* 11.21–30; Artaxerxes as Ahasueros: 11.184.

[29] Dates of the Achaemenid monarchs according to Kuhrt and Sancisi-Weerdenburg in *BNP*, s.v. Artaxerxes.

[30] §297: *τοῦ ἄλλου Ἀρταξέρξου*. Despite some manuscript variance, this is the likeliest reading (Spilsbury and Seeman 2017, 102–3 n. 976).

[31] Another famous problem in the chronology of Persian-period Judea is that Nehemiah 12 and Josephus preserve only six names of high priests, spanning a period of some two centuries. This is within the realm of possibility, but only barely, as it requires an average tenure of forty years. This difficulty has led Cross (1975) to propose adding "lost generations" to the genealogy. One wonders, in this context, whether the discrepancy between Yohanan and Yonathan in Nehemiah 12:22 (see note 25 above) possibly hints at where such lost generations may be missing.

origins.[32] Modern archaeology sets the foundation of the Gerizim precinct roughly in the mid-fifth century BCE.[33] This is much too early for Alexander, of course, but it is quite in place with the widely accepted dating of Nehemiah's first mission to Jerusalem, in 445–433 BCE. Josephus may have made this mistake because his chronology of the Persian period was considerably shorter than ours. But, for all we know, he may have got the story right. It is at least possible that Nehemiah's expulsion of the Horonite Sanballat's high priestly son-in-law was connected in one way or another with the foundation of the Gerizim temple.[34]

A second speculation concerns Josephus' description of the sentiments behind the objection to Manassês' marriage (11.308):

> Indeed (they thought) that their former captivity and the troubles began for them by reason that some people played out of tune concerning marriages, and taking for themselves women who were not of the land. Therefore they demanded that Manassês decouple from his wife, or that he not approach the altar.

This strikes a very close chord with Nehemiah's own justification of the expulsion of the unnamed high priest (13:23–7):

> In these days also I saw the Judeans, who settled down with women—Ashdodite, Ammonite, Moabite—and half of their sons speak Ashdodite, and cannot speak Judean, and so forth with other nations' tongues. And I quarreled with them and cursed them and struck some of them and plucked their hair; and I made them swear to God, if you ever give your daughters to their sons, and if you carry from their daughters for your sons or for you. For it is in these things that Solomon the king of Israel sinned. And among the many nations there was no king like him beloved by his god, and God made him king over all Israel. He, too, was dragged to sin by the foreign women. So shall we listen to you, to do all this great evil, to betray our god, and settle down with foreign women?

[32] In remarkable contrast, none of the surviving Ezra-Nehemiah books makes any reference whatsoever to the Samaritan temple.

[33] Magen 2004–8, 1.167–80; accepted with various degrees of certainty by Dušek 2007, 544–8 (based on Magen's earlier publications); Spilsbury and Seeman 2017, 118 n. 1114. Upholding the historical value of Josephus' account for the date of the Gerizim temple: Mor 2003, 91–4; 2011.

[34] Nehemiah first became active in the affairs of Jerusalem in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes' reign, and was recalled to court in the same monarch's thirty-second year (13:6). Only Artaxerxes I and Artaxerxes II reigned long enough to enable a reference to their thirty-second year. The time of Nehemiah's first sojourn in Jerusalem can thus be dated either to 445–433 or to 385–373 BCE. To complicate things further, the archpriest Eliashiv, a contemporary of Nehemiah, is identified in 12:10 as the grandson of the archpriest Yeshu'a, who was Zerubavel's companion and ally in the time of Darius I, at the end of the sixth century. This dating of Eliashiv points toward the earlier dating of Nehemiah. For a discussion of the later date see Torrey 1928. The problems posed by the sources for the chronology of Persian-period Judea are infamously insoluble.

Yet Josephus' elders go a step further than Nehemiah in ascribing to this reason the former Judean captivity, that is the Babylonian exile. Remarkably, Josephus does not engage with the topic of foreign marriage in his narration of the fall of Jerusalem and the consequent exile. Rather, this interpretation of cause and effect is unique to the Alexander episode. It is once again at least possible, therefore, that Josephus preserved here an authentic sentiment from the time of Nehemiah.[35]

It remains to be asked, what Josephus may have hoped to achieve with the Samaritan part of his narrative. The most straightforward answer regards Josephus the historian. Considering his sources, both written and oral, Josephus clearly recognized the crucial role played by the Samaritans in the local history of the Persian period. He certainly gave this recognition full expression in his own narrative. Furthermore, reliant as he was on the Simon story, Josephus was bound to think of Samaritans, and of their temple, in connection with Alexander.[36] It is thus both possible and likely that Josephus actually thought he had solved the chronological problems he was facing, putting earlier legend into its proper historical context, and answering the question of the Gerizim temple's origins. The modern reader can surely appreciate Josephus' pride as a historian, even if his historical reconstruction turned out to be erroneous and misleading.[37]

Yet there is reason to think that Josephus may also have had an agenda that went beyond his historiographical achievement. Towards the end of his story, just as Alexander approaches the vicinity of Shechem and Mt. Gerizim, Josephus interjects the following remark:

> For the Samareis are so by nature, as we have already shown before: in times of trouble they deny that they are akin to the Ioudaioi, speaking then the truth; but when they see that anything from Tyche glows about them (Ioudaioi), they leap

[35] Spilsbury and Seeman (2017, 111 n. 1043) see here "support to the view that Josephus did not invent the Manasses story but instead drew upon an already existing tradition." Elsewhere in the *Antiquities* Josephus ascribes very different reasons for the destruction of the first temple and the Babylonian captivity. Following the biblical narratives (Isaiah 39; 2 Kings 20:12–19) Josephus ascribes the Judean downfall to the positive reception of the Babylonian ambassador by the otherwise righteous King Hezekiah (10.30–4). In 10.60–1 the prophetess Huldah informs the most righteous King Josiah of impending doom, but says nothing of marrying foreign women. In 10.88–9, 122 Jeremiah speaks of an eminent Babylonian disaster, but relates only to the folly of relying on Egyptian military aid, with not a word on exogamy. Even the fall of the kingdom of Israel is ascribed (9.281–2) to transgressions of the laws, disregard for the prophets, and replication of the sins of Jeroboam. The idea in Josephus that mixed families were at the heart of the national catastrophe is unique to the present context.

[36] The Gviha story, too, finds room for some Kutim, i.e., Samaritans. If Josephus was aware of it—and his family connection, discussed in section 2.2, makes it likely that he was—it will have corroborated the notion that an Alexander story simply had to include Samaritans in some way.

[37] Kasher 1975, 200; Grabbe 1987, 233. Goldstein (1993, 80–90), following a very different argumentation, reaches a similar conclusion about Josephus' literary achievement. As noted already by Spak (1911, 10), it is highly remarkable that the foundation of the Samaritan temple and the so-called schism, an event that he envisioned as important for Judaism at the time as the Reformation was later for Christianity, left no record in biblical literature. Josephus' answer appears to have been wrong; his important achievement was in raising the question.

> upon the communion with them, saying that they belong to them, and claiming their genealogy as descendants from Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manassês. (11.341)

Nor is this the only place in the *Antiquities* where Josephus complains about Samaritan duplicity. In the very last sections of book 9 (288–91), just after narrating the dramatic fall of the kingdom of Israel to the Assyrians, Josephus introduces the Kutim for the first time, and explains how they came to join the cult of the biblical deity. He ends the introduction with a reference to their inherent unfaithfulness, in terms that are nearly identical to the ones used in the Alexander episode.[38] Josephus returns to this theme for the last time at the very end of his description of the Antiochene persecution, and just before the outbreak of the Hasmonean resistance (12.257–64). Here, for the first and only time in the *Antiquities*, Josephus elaborates his complaint with a story. At the time of the persecutions, a most horrible crisis that threatened the very core of Judaism, the Samaritans proved their true nature, and betrayed the faith to which they had falsely pledged their allegiance. Now it is easy to see why Josephus should refer to the innate cowardly vacillation of the Samaritans in their initial introduction, then once again apropos the incident that so roused his ire. The decision to bring this theme up also in relation to Alexander is less obvious, and therefore invites an explanation. The reason might be that Josephus used his Alexander story not only to lay out an idealized model for Roman-Judean relations (see section 4.4), but that in so doing he also took care to exclude the Samaritans from the deal. His malice towards them derives perhaps not only from the bitter memory of their conduct at the time of Antiochos, but possibly also from their lack of participation and support during the recent war, in which he himself had taken part.

A central point in the Samaritan plot line is of course the strong objection to intermarriage. We know nothing of the relations between the twin communities of Judea and Samaria in the generation after the Judean war. Josephus, for his part, may well have heard news from the homeland when in Rome. Yet how much the position he expressed through his story is related to the situation on the ground in post-war Judea is anyone's guess. In the context of his own life, however, Josephus may well have had good reason to dwell on the topic of mingling with gentiles. Biblical precedent certainly was on his side. Joseph bravely refused the advances of Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39), and Daniel kept kosher (and vegan) in school in Babylon (Daniel 1:8–16). Keeping in mind that the *Antiquities* were aimed also at Judean readers wherever they might live throughout the Roman empire, it is possible that the story was meant to draw a boundary around Judean diasporic communities. Living among the gentiles was all well and good, as long

[38] Pummer 2009, 123–4.

as the relations were kept outside the home. This was certainly the impression of Tacitus, Josephus' younger contemporary, who famously wrote that the Judeans had a hostile hatred towards all others, ate separately, and did not share their beds; and although it was a most libidinous of nations, they refrained from sleeping with others.[39] This mirror image presented by Tacitus testifies that a significant part of the Judeans encountered by him, personally or from hearsay, were averse to mingling with non-Judeans. Josephus' story draws the line close, excluding from marriage even the Samaritans.

4.4 Sacred History and Foreign Overlords

A unique trait of Josephus' story, which puts him apart from its three predecessors, is that not only is it preserved as written in its original literary context, this context includes a history of Israelites and Judeans from the beginning of time down to the author's own lifetime. Within this long chronological framework, Josephus had a number of opportunities to express his own views on what now stands out as a main theme in this book: the trilateral relationship between dominant foreign rulers, the Judean people, and the Judean deity. Two of the three sides—the deity and its people—are constant. It is the third side, the imperial foreign monarch, that changes with the march of time. Alexander is of course one such example. Two other such towering epoch-making figures, Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, have been widely recognized as pertinent for the discussion of Josephus' relation to Alexander.[40] Unlike the Makedonian, concerning his two predecessors we also possess the biblical accounts, which of course served Josephus as the backbone for his own history. It would be beneficial, therefore, to examine closely some cases where Josephus went beyond the words of the Bible, providing his own position and interpretation, and to see how his interpretations of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus reflect on his portrayal of Alexander.

The first case concerns the speech of Nebuchadnezzar before Zedekiah (*Antiquities* 10.139). In the biblical accounts the situation is described extremely laconically, a mere three words in either case.[41] In Jeremiah (39:5) we merely read

[39] *Histories* 5.5: "adversus omnis alios hostile odium. separati epulis, discreti cubilibus, proiectissima ad libidinem gens, alienarum concubitu abstinent."

[40] The significance of either or both characters to Josephus' Alexander story is explained and demonstrated in various ways by Radet 1931, 133–4; Kasher 1975, 199; Cohen 1982, 57, 63–4; Kim 2003, 429–31; Fletcher-Louis 2004, 79; Finn 2022, 144–82. In addition see the fascinating tradition of the Midrash of Ten Kings, which places these two figures as important precedents to Alexander as ecumenical monarchs. The core version appears in *Pirqei deRabi Eli'ezer* 10 or 11 (in different mss. and print editions); the evolved versions are *Targum Esther Sheni* on 1:1; Raymondus Martini, *Pugio Fidei* (2.10.5; from a now-lost version of *Bereshit Rabbati*); *'Aqṭan deMar Ya'aqov* (Carmoli 1885, 12); Ms. De-Rossi 327 (Hurwitz 1881, 16–33, 38–55). For a comparative table of the kings lists and a short discussion of Alexander's role in particular see Amitay 2010a, 114–20.

[41] Jeremiah 39:5: וידבר אתו משפטים (and he spoke to him judgments); 2 Kings 25:6: וידברו אתו משפט (and they spoke to him judgment).

that Nebuchadnezzar pronounced judgment on Zedekiah; in 2 Kings (25:6) it is the Babylonian generals, who had captured the fleeing fallen monarch, who pronounce the judgment—in either case without further detail. In Josephus, however, we enjoy a rather more elaborate telling of the story. Nebuchadnezzar complains about Zedekiah's disloyalty and ungratefulness, and then adds, in direct speech: "but the great god, who despised your behavior, put you under our hand."[42] Josephus' Nebuchadnezzar does not say explicitly who is the great god who had punished Zedekiah thus; there is every reason to expect, however, that Josephus meant his readership to recognize here none other than the god of Israel.[43] Josephus' contribution to the story is highly significant. In making Nebuchadnezzar aware of the Judean god, and in making him ascribe Zedekiah's fall to righteous divine justice, Josephus not only incorporates the Babylonian conqueror into this sacred history, but also hints at the foreign ruler's complicity in the divine plan, as well as his own subjection to it.[44]

Next in line comes Cyrus. His role in the historical drama is well known: whom Nebuchadnezzar exiled he allowed to return; what Nebuchadnezzar destroyed he allowed to rebuild. After Babylon cast down Judah, Persia gave rise to Judaism. The book of Ezra (1:1–3) explains why this happened in no uncertain terms:

> And in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia (after the completion of YHWH's word from the mouth of Jeremiah), YHWH awoke the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, and he sent word throughout his kingdom, in writing as well, saying so:
>
> Thus spoke Cyrus king of Persia: YHWH, god of heaven, gave me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he ordered me to build him a house in Jerusalem that is in Judea. Any of you, of the entire people, let his god be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem that is in Judea, and let him build the house of YHWH the god of Israel, who is the god in Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles (36:22–3) gives a highly similar if somewhat condensed version of Cyrus' motivation and action. Isaiah (44:28) fills out the picture.[45] First, the prophet (most likely the so-called Second Isaiah) names Cyrus as God's

[42] *Antiquities* 10.139: *ἀλλὰ μέγας, εἶπεν, ὁ θεός, ὃς μισήσας σου τὸν τρόπον ὑποχείριον ἡμῖν ἔθηκε*. In all likelihood, this is a Josephan development of the succinct biblical scene (Begg 2000, 582). None of this should be ascribed in any way to the historical Nebuchadnezzar, nor to any of his generals.

[43] Begg 2000, 582 n. 56.

[44] For the tradition, bitterly ironic, that Nebuchadnezzar was a righteous king, worthy of playing a part in god-sent miracles, see Bavli *Ta'anit* 18b.

[45] Bruce (1965, 151) notes the relevance of Josephus' rendering of Isaiah 44:28 to his Alexander in Jerusalem story, but does not pause to offer an interpretation. The same connection is noted also by VanderKam (2004, 79), and is realized more decisively by Spilsbury and Seeman (2017, 93): "Book 11 begins and ends with a conqueror reading a book that predicts his rule: Cyrus reads Isaiah (11.5–6); Alexander reads Daniel (11.337). These are the only instances in Josephus' history in which a non-Judean ruler reads Scripture."

shepherd, the executor of God's will, and the author of the building of Jerusalem and of a temple's dedication. Thereupon comes a fuller prophecy:

> (1) Thus spoke YHWH to his Messiah, to Cyrus, whose right hand I held to bring down nations before him and pry loose the waists of kings, to open to him doors, and gates shall not be shut. (2) I shall walk before you and make the crooked straight, I shall break doors of copper and cut bolts of iron. (3) And I gave you treasures of darkness and hidden troves, for you to know that I am YHWH, who calls by your name, the god of Israel. (4) For Jacob my slave and for Israel my chosen—and I shall call you by your very name, and you shall not know me. (5) I am YHWH and there is none other but me; I shall make you strong, and you did not know me. (45:1–5)

Unlike the more prosaic statements in Ezra and 2 Chronicles, Isaiah does not make mention of Cyrus' letter. This is understandable, since his words are presented as a prophetic vision for the future, and thus need not engage in the technical details of its fulfillment. However, Isaiah also gives a different picture regarding the degree of the Persian monarch's recognition of the god of Israel. In verse 3 God declares his purpose to act in favor of Cyrus exactly to gain such recognition, but verses 4–5 reveal that this might after all not be the case.

Josephus' version of Cyrus' letter makes a significant contribution to the biblical story, when he makes the Persian kings say:

> Since the greatest god appointed me the king of the *oikoumenē*, I think him to be that before whom the ethnos of the Israelites bows down. And for that reason he spoke my name through the prophets, so that I shall institute his temple in Jerusalem in the land of Judea. (11.3–4)

The message is clearly the same, but there are important differences. One is that while in the biblical accounts Cyrus recognizes YHWH as the god of heaven and as the source of his own empire, in Josephus he openly declares the god of Israel as the "greatest" (μέγιστος). This subtle change presents the deity not only as the provider of the greatest military power, but as the greatest in any way. Another addition by Josephus is the introduction of the prophets into Cyrus' letter, a detail that does not appear in any of the biblical accounts. In so doing he makes the Persian monarch accept not only the god of Israel as the greatest deity, but also the inherent truth and worth of biblical prophecy. Josephus drives this point home in the next two sections (11.5–6), where he asserts that Cyrus had actually read Isaiah's prophecy, and implies that Cyrus derived his political and military impetus from it, as well as the idea for the liberation of the Judeans and the restoration of the Jerusalem temple. There is clearly nothing in Josephus' elaboration here that goes back to the historical Cyrus. Yet the picture he paints is a powerful

one: the master of the world's greatest empire acknowledges that his own greatness is a gift of the god of the Bible, and repays the people worshipping that god with freedom and a proper place of worship.[46]

Returning to Alexander, he appears to represent a further, even more advanced stage in the progression of foreign imperial rulers. After Nebuchadnezzar called God "great" and ascribed to him the victory over Judah, and after Cyrus called him "greatest" and ascribed to him the conquest of his entire empire, Alexander actually prostrates himself before the Judean deity. What is more, he does so not before the deity, but rather before the high priest, signifying not only the deity's lack of physical form, but also the importance of the Jerusalem temple and its priesthood. God's mode of revelation to Alexander, too, implies a sense of progress. If Nebuchadnezzar deduced the deity's power through political and military analysis, and Cyrus through reading the words of the prophet, Alexander receives a full-blown epiphany in his own dream. In that respect, he is put on equal ground with the Judean high priest, who receives the deity's message in exactly the same way. According to Josephus, the Makedonian monarch was as worthy of direct divine communication as the Jerusalem high priest—an exulted status that both presents Alexander as greater than either of his predecessors and brings him into an intimate connection with the Jerusalem temple.[47]

The combination of dream divination and the founders of the Babylonian and Persian empires brings us naturally to Daniel, a biblical figure that plays a crucial role in Josephus' *Antiquities*.[48] Josephus refers twice to Daniel, once at length and then in brief. The first, extensive treatment takes up the last third of *Antiquities* book 10 (§§186–281); the latter is the dramatic reappearance of Daniel's prophecy in the Alexander episode. Standing like bookends at both termini of his Persian-period narrative, and square at the center of the work as a whole, these two references supply a framework for the narrative both literarily and conceptually.

Daniel was important for Josephus for a number of reasons. In the first place, he was significant in his role as the classic Judean diasporic hero. Captured as a youth and brought to the royal court in Babylon, Daniel climbs through the ranks of the imperial education system, and eventually takes his place as close as can be

[46] One point where Josephus detracts rather than adds is that he does not refer in any way to what is perhaps the most striking aspect of Isaiah's prophecy—Cyrus' status as Messiah. As ever, it is much harder to interpret omissions than additions. Yet a simple and likely explanation for Josephus' choice here is that he lived in a catastrophic era, when the expectations for the Messiah, and the deep frustration caused by his persistent failure to arrive, ran high. Josephus was not looking back to a foreign Messiah of the past, but rather to that of the hopefully near future. More on that anon.

[47] In historical terms, Alexander of course had much less of a connection with the temple than Nebuchadnezzar its destroyer, or Cyrus the author of its refoundation.

[48] See the detailed and meticulous argumentation of Mason (1994), the seminal treatment of Josephus and Daniel. See also the earlier work of Bruce, especially his discussion of Danielic influence on Josephan chronology (1965, 152). The importance of Daniel to Josephus' Alexander narrative, although approached from a very different angle, is emphasized also by Kim 2003, 430–1; Tropper 2013, 132–3.

to the seat of royal power. The key to his success in this process is his strict loyalty both to the deity and to the religion of his fathers, and at the same time to the foreign rulers whom he serves. Daniel's situation is clearly comparable to that of Josephus himself, who like the biblical hero experienced in his lifetime the devastation of Judea in a terrible war and the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. In this respect Daniel serves as a source of inspiration and as a role model for Josephus himself and for his entire generation.[49] Just as Daniel served the Babylonian king, so are Josephus and his contemporaries justified in assuming an active and positive role in the Roman empire.

In addition, Daniel stands out in the *Antiquities* as a unique prophet, who plays an important role in Josephus' perception of history. Through the two Danielic references Josephus delimits and defines his narrative of the Persian period, as well as effecting the transition from the biblical to the post-biblical era in the *Antiquities*. At the same time, Josephus' Daniel also sounds a grand finale in the evolution of biblical prophecy.[50] It is worthwhile to quote Josephus' actual words in his thematic concluding remarks on Daniel (10.277–80):[51]

> All these things, as God revealed them to him, he left behind in his writings, so that those who read them and observe how they have come to pass, must wonder at Daniel's having been so honored by God, and learn from these facts how mistaken are the Epicureans, who exclude providence from human life and refuse to believe that God governs its affairs, or that the universe is directed by a blessed and immortal being to the end that the whole of it may endure, but say that the world runs by its own movement without knowing a guide or another's care.…It therefore seems to me, in view of the things foretold by Daniel, that they are very far from holding a true opinion, who declare that God takes no thought for human affairs. For if it were the case that the world goes on by some automatism, we should not have seen all these things happen in accordance with his prophecy.

[49] For Josephus as a latterday Daniel see Momigliano (1979, 442); Daube (1980); Mason (1994, 176–7), who describes Josephus "as a Jew who is prospering in the Flavian court…who is now defending his ancestral traditions before the literary world, yet who runs into persistent accusations from those who 'envy' his success," and thus "we can hardly avoid the conclusion that his paraphrase of Daniel 1–6 reflects his own image;" Feldman (1998, 629–657); Segal (2024, 176). For the perception of Josephus as a prophet, conforming in one way or another to the models of Jeremiah or Daniel, see also the bibliographical survey in Glas 2021, 524 n. 6. Glas himself argues against Josephus' prophetic self-portrayal in the *War* but accepts it in the *Antiquities*, with which we are concerned here.

[50] Spilsbury and Seeman (2017, 92–3) note Josephus' transition from "prophetic" to "post-prophetic" time; see also Friis 2018, 97 n. 171. For the pivotal rule of the Persian period in Josephus' perception of his people's history see his remark about the naissance of the term "Judean": *Antiquities* 11.173; with Spilsbury and Seeman 2017, 10 n. 22. For a detailed and nuanced interpretation of what Josephus perceived as "Judean" see Spilsbury 1998, 36–42.

[51] Trans. Marcus 1937. These words appear at the very end of book 10 of the *Antiquities*, the exact middle point of the work, expressing "the heart of an author's concerns" (Mason 1994, 171).

This emphasis on the divine direction of human history serves, first of all, to corroborate the interpretation of Daniel as a role model for Josephus. For if all of history is ordained from above, so must be the hegemony of Rome. Serving Rome may thus be seen not as treachery committed against the notion of national independence, but rather as the fulfillment of a legitimate and positive role in the divine plan.[52] Secondly, in view of the transition from the biblical to the post-biblical part of history (and of the *Antiquities*), Daniel supplied Josephus with an authoritative blueprint that went far and beyond that of any of the other prophets, and included the downfall of the Babylonian empire at the hands of the Medes and the Persians, the victory of a Hellenic king over Persia, the religious persecutions of Antiochos Epiphanes, then finally: "and in the same fashion Daniel also wrote concerning the mastery of the Romans."[53]

More important still, in his rendering of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (10.208–10) Josephus makes a vital exegetic elaboration of his own. While the usual interpretation of the iron feet of the multi-metallic statue in the dream refers in fact to Alexander and to the Hellenistic kingdoms,[54] Josephus identifies Alexander as the bronze, leaving the iron feet to be identified with Rome![55] The theological and political significance of this identification assume momentous proportion in view of the final part of Nebuchadnezzar's dreamtime vision: a huge rock that appeared at the end of the dream and crushed the statue to dust. In Josephus' own words:

> And Daniel also revealed to the king the meaning of the rock, but I have not thought it proper to relate this, since I am expected to write of what is past and done and not of what is to be. If, however, there is anyone who has so keen a desire for exact information that he will not stop short of inquiring more closely, but wishes to learn about the hidden things that are to come, let him take the trouble to read the book of Daniel, which he will find among the sacred writings. (10.201; trans. Marcus)

[52] Josephus (*War* 3.354) expresses this sentiment exactly in his first-person narration of his own prayer: *δίδωμι μὲν Ῥωμαίοις τὰς χεῖρας ἑκὼν καὶ ζῶ, μαρτύρομαι δὲ ὡς οὐ προδότης, ἀλλὰ σὸς εἶμι διάκονος*; "and I give my hands to the Romans willingly, and I live, and I testify that I (do so) not as a traitor, but rather as your servant." See also Mason (1994, 164): "while awaiting God's perfect kingdom a Jew may participate fully in the apparatus of foreign government *without* becoming tainted by the association."

[53] *Antiquities* 10.272–6. Marcus (1937, 310–11) makes an addition to the text, gleaned from Chrysostomos, at the end of §276: "and that by their hands Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed." This addition is accepted as originally Josephan also by Bruce 1965, 151; Momigliano 1979, 446; Mason 1994, 168.

[54] The identification is ubiquitous in Daniel scholarship. For detailed treatments of the four-metal schema see for example Collins and Collins 1993, 166–70; Newsom 2014, 80–97.

[55] Josephus' interpretation is in line here with that of 4 Ezra, chapter 12 (especially verses 10–16), and is accepted unequivocally by Jerome in his *Commentary on Daniel* 2:40. For a recent comprehensive treatment of 4 Ezra in this context see Gore-Jones 2020.

The reason for Josephus' elusiveness here is that the rock was (and still is) commonly understood to signify the Messiah, whose arrival and rise to power would challenge and prevail over the might of Rome.[56] For our purpose here, the main point is that for Josephus the scheme of history presented by Daniel had not yet been fulfilled. The catastrophic war against Rome and the destruction of the temple were not the final word, but rather another unavoidable step along the way. The game was still afoot, and a proper understanding of Daniel's prophecy was critical for winning.

Josephus' reinterpretation of the Danielic world scheme in a way that encompasses Rome as the ultimate foreign empire frees up the kingdom of the Hellenes, that is, the stage of history initiated by Alexander, to assume a new significance. The Alexander episode is therefore the obvious place for Josephus to return to the Danielic theme. Indeed, this may well be one reason why he introduced Daniel into the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition in the first place.[57] In previous scholarship, Josephus' mention of Daniel came under attack as anachronistic, given that in its current form the book contains clear references to the Ptolemies and the Seleukids. This observation served in turn to attack the historicity of Josephus' story.[58] The question of historicity is reserved for chapter 5. At this point suffice it to say that Josephus' confession of faith in Daniel's prognostic powers—"for he was not only wont to prophesy future things, as did the other prophets, but he also fixed the time at which these would come to pass" (10.267)—both calls for the inclusion of the book of Daniel in his own narrative and helps to shape its message. A recurring theme in my own interpretation of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition is that Alexander was used in the three previous stories as a code, or cypher, for a foreign empire coming to control Judea: Rome, in the latter two cases. By using the Danielic coda in his Alexander story Josephus seems to have taken this motif in a new direction. Josephus' Alexander surely does not represent the Roman empire, but rather serves as a precedent and a possible role model. Just as Alexander owes his greatness to the role allotted to him in the great divine plan, so does Rome. And just as Josephus' Alexander surpasses the

[56] For the rock as representing the Messiah see 4 Ezra 12–13 (implicitly but clearly); Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.26.2; Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel* 2:40 (testifying that contemporary Judeans still awaited the event, in hope of ruling the entire world forever); *Pirqei DeRabbi Eliezer* 10/11 (citing Daniel 2:35 as proof text for the ninth king, that is, the Messiah); Rashi and Ibn-Ezra on Daniel 2:44. Newsom (2014, 83) warns correctly that these interpretations begin rather later than the actual composition of Daniel 2, but nevertheless accepts that the rock represents either "a final universal sovereignty exercised by a revived kingdom of Israel—or is rather the direct sovereignty of the God of heaven directly manifested on earth."

[57] For a parallel line of thought see Momigliano 1979, 446–7.

[58] Niese 1893, I, 83 n. 1; Willrich 1895, 2; Marcus 1937, 477 note d; Tcherikover 1959, 45; Kasher 1975, 199; Goldstein 1993, 79; Stoneman 1994, 40; Gruen 1998a, 197; VanderKam 2004, 74; Tropper 2013, 128; Finn 2022, 166.

destroyer of the temple and its restorer because of his openness to the manifest truth of this divine plan, so can Rome surpass Alexander.[59]

This complex message—the subjection of Roman destiny to the God of Israel, the possibility of fruitful cooperation, and the resulting justification for serving Rome in her prime—will have been clearly understood (in agreement or otherwise) by Josephus' Judean audience. What will it have signified to his non-Judean, particularly elite Roman audience? No author can fully visualize the entirety of his or her eventual audience, and Josephus is no exception. Nevertheless, there is good reason to assume that he could expect his work to be read, or at least his ideas to circulate, in some very high-flying circles in Rome.[60] Furthermore, his work appeared at a time that was both imbued with a sense of dire emergency and at the same time offered great opportunity. The emergency is easy to understand. In the bigger picture, Judaism had just lost in the previous generation both its major cultic center in Jerusalem and the minor temple in Leontopolis, leaving the god of Israel devoid of an official physical cult-activated contact point. Secondly, the traditional contribution made by Judeans to the temple in Jerusalem was reverted by Vespasian into the infamous *fiscus Iudaicus*—a poll tax on Judeans that created a strong financial and psychological burden.[61] Under Domitian things went from bad to worse, and the *fiscus Iudaicus* was exacted ever more severely, with a new group being targeted: those who did not confess to Judaism, but nevertheless led a Judean lifestyle to such a degree that made them the targets first of denouncers and then of the tax authorities.[62] That such people existed in numbers that made their exposure a lucrative business is a strong demonstration that even after the disastrous war in Judea, and even despite the harmful and expensive stigma branded by the Judean tax, Judaism still remained an alluring and attractive option for those Romans looking to expand their social and religious horizons. Josephus surely had such people in mind while composing the *Antiquities*.

[59] Gruen (1998a, 198) interprets the story of Josephus' putative main source as implying that "Jews both of Palestine and of the Diaspora would become an integral part of the Macedonian empire—and that they would hold a distinct and privileged position within it. The suzerain's secular power is clear and unequivocal. But that power itself derives from the God of the Hebrew patriarchs whose authority Alexander openly and publicly recognizes." Replace the Makedonian with the Roman empire, and the very same words can be applied to Josephus and his audience. For a similar sentiment, with an explicit mention of Rome, see Tropper 2013, 135–6.

[60] The aim at a non-Judean audience is stated explicitly in the prooemium to the *Antiquities* (1.1–25). For recent treatments of Josephus' focus on a non-Judean and especially Roman audience see Friis 2018, 7–10; Pena 2021; Glas 2021. For the emphasis on an elite audience, including the highest echelons of Roman society, see in detail Mason 1998; also Amitay 2014, and more below.

[61] Smallwood 1976, 371–6; Goodman 1989; Schäfer 1997, 113–16; Goodman 2005. The fullest treatment of the *fiscus Iudaicus* is Heemstra 2010.

[62] Suetonius, *Domitian* 12.2: *inprofessi Iudaicam viverent vitam*. On this group see Schäfer (1997, 114–15), and especially Heemstra (2010, 32–54), who argues convincingly that aside from God-fearers and sympathizers with Judaism this category will also have included a financially significant number of gentile Christians.

One critical case of such Judaizing tendencies is reported by Dio Cassius in the year 95 CE, at the very end of Domitian's reign. In this year Domitian conducted a deep purge in the closest circles around him,

> executing, along with many others, Flavius Clemens the consul, although he was a cousin and had to wife Flavia Domitilla, who was also a relative of the emperor's. The charge brought against them both was that of *atheism, a charge on which many others who drifted into Jewish ways* were condemned. Some of these were put to death, and the rest were at least deprived of their property. Domitilla was merely banished to Pandateria. But Glabrio, who had been Trajan's colleague in the consulship, was put to death, having been accused of the same crimes as most of the others, and, in particular, of fighting as a gladiator with wild beasts.[63]

Suetonius (*Domitian* 15.1), a contemporary eyewitness, does not mention the accusation of atheism (with its implication of Judean tendencies), but otherwise corroborates Dio's report. He does remark that Clemens was contemptibly lazy, an appraisal that presents him as a small danger politically.[64] Nevertheless, he was a member of the imperial family's inner circle—Domitian had openly named Clemens' sons, who were then still very young, as his own successors, changing their former names and calling the one Vespasian and the other Domitian!

Putting together Dio's information with that of Suetonius, a tantalizing picture emerges. According to Dio, the official accusation made against the purged group was "atheism," "a charge on which many others who drifted into Jewish ways were condemned."[65] The multiplicity of cases testifies to the frequent use made of this accusation. It may well have been a bogus charge in some, or even many cases, but to function in such a way successfully it also had to be believable, and thus based on a familiar phenomenon.[66] Yet even within the high aristocratic circles Clemens and company constituted a special case. Clemens was married to the daughter of Domitian's sister, and their two sons were marked as would-be

[63] Dio Cassius 67.14.1–3 (trans. Cary, Loeb; my italics).

[64] Suetonius (*Domitian* 10.2) also counts Glabrio as one of a group of men of consular rank who had been executed after being charged with promoting revolution (*quasi molitores rerum novarum*). There is no knowing, of course, if an actual coup was being planned by Glabrio, or by any of the others who suffered Domitian's wrath. In any case, according to Suetonius (15.1) this purge hastened Domitian's downfall, as is also implied by Dio (67.14–15). See also Jones 1992, 193; Grainger 2002, 16; Collins 2009, 86–7.

[65] 67.14.2: *ἔγκλημα ἀθεότητος, ὑφ᾽ ἧς καὶ ἄλλοι ἐς τὰ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἤθη ἐξοκέλλοντες πολλοὶ κατεδικάσθησαν.*

[66] This frequency is attested by Nerva's change of policy, making sure that no further legal attacks would be carried out under this pretext (Dio 68.1.2). See also Smallwood 1976, 377–8; Schäfer 1997, 115–16; Grainger 2002, 53; Heemstra 2010, 79–84. On the sympathy for Judaism in certain senatorial families see Stern 1964.

emperors.[67] The story told by the legal accusation that was brought against this group is one wherein the future emperor of Rome was growing up under considerable Judean influence.

Dio, who reports the charge but does not vouch for its veracity, does not supply us with enough data to decide whether that was just a plausible enough story, or whether high-ranking members of the imperial family were in fact Judaizing in some way. Nor is it clear what "drifting into Judean ways" actually means; it will surely have meant different things to different people in Clemens' circle.[68]

Further evidence for Judaizing tendencies among the Flavians comes from the Babylonian Talmud, where we read about a certain Onkelos son of Kalonymos (alias Kalonikos), a son of Titus' sister, who had proselytized and become a full-fledged Judean, thus incurring the emperor's wrath.[69] In itself the story contains distinctly aggadic elements, and cannot in any way be taken as straightforward history. Nevertheless, this rabbinic legend seems to be based on some solid facts. To begin with, it echoes Dio's claim about Jewish tendencies in the imperial family. Secondly, the names Kalonymos and Clemens are close enough to support a tentative identification. The identification is corroborated by a specific detail concerning the family connection of Onkelos, who is said to be the son of Kalonymos, who in turn is the son of Titus' (hence also of Domitian's) sister. As we have seen, the historical Clemens was in fact married to a daughter of Domitian's sister. The rabbinic account thus somewhat simplifies the family connection (making Clemens-Kalonymos a nephew of the emperor, instead of his niece's husband), yet it nevertheless retains a crucial bit of information, namely the relation to the imperial family through the emperor's sister. Finally, the rabbinic sources are unanimous in asserting that the convert to Judaism was not Kalonymos-Clemens himself, but rather his son. This agrees with the opinion that Clemens never fully converted, and fits the sociological pattern, beautifully described by Juvenal (*Satires* 5.14.96–106), whereby involvement in Judaism increased from one generation to the next.[70] The picture painted in the rabbinic sources is in strong agreement with

[67] Suetonius, *Domitian* 15.1. For the prosopography of Clemens and Domitilla see *PIR*^{2} F240 (pp. 142–3), F418 (188–9); Townend 1961; Jones 1992, 47–8 (with notes).

[68] For the opinion that Clemens and company were σεβόμενοι (God-fearers), not committed to full acceptance of Judaism but involved enough to be associated with it, see Smallwood 1956, 9; 1976, 382–3 (with earlier bibliography in n. 95); Jones 1992, 117–18; Collins 2009, 86.

[69] Bavli *Gittin* 56b; '*Avodah Zarah* 11a; Lauterbach 1951, 502; Smallwood 1956, 8; 1976, 382–3. The rabbinic evidence is accepted as admissible and pertinent by Jones 1992, 117; Griffin 2000, 75–6. Goodman (2005, 169 n. 1), on the other hand, considers it to be "of dubious relevance," but gives no reason for his statement beyond the silence of Schäfer 1997.

[70] Another rabbinic story (Tosefta *Demai* 6.13; Silverstone 1931, 5) juxtaposes Onkelos with his brother, who did not convert to Judaism. This detail may or may not be grounded in fact, but it certainly represents faithfully how different family members could react very differently to Judaizing tendencies.

Dio's data about the Judaizing tendencies of Clemens and his family.[71] If so, Clemens and his circle will have been a primary target for Josephus' *Antiquities*.[72]

How close was Josephus to getting through to this particular audience? In the opening remarks of the *Antiquities* Josephus names and praises a benefactor by the name of Epaphroditos, who provided constant encouragement and support in carrying the project to fruition. As we have seen above, the identification of Josephus' Epaphroditos is debated in modern scholarship.[73] The likelier identification, in my opinion, is with Nero's freedman secretary (*a libellis*), who famously aided in his master's death.[74] According to both Suetonius and Dio, this Epaphroditos was eliminated by Domitian during the same purge that took Clemens and Glabrio.[75] This identification, if accepted, puts Josephus very close indeed to the innermost circles of empire.[76]

What did Josephus stand to gain from all this, and what did he want to achieve? To be sure, this particular part of his narrative, with its mythic and theological reconstruction of history, can be seen as self-serving. His entire presentation of Daniel not only justified his own actions from the moment he joined the Flavian cause, but also presented himself, its author, as a latterday Daniel, both revered by his coreligionists and fruitfully employed by the empire. Yet putting personal benefit aside, it would be well to ask whether we can read into Josephus' words also a more general agenda. One place where such an agenda can be sought is in one of Josephus' major departures from the model he found in the Simon story. As we have seen in the previous chapter, in the rabbinic story about the Day of Mt. Gerizim Alexander is presented as the foreign authority that authorized the complete annihilation of the Samaritan temple. In Josephus' story, Alexander plays the exact opposite role: it is by his authorization that the same temple is built. If indeed, as I suggested above, Josephus' Alexander is to be understood both as a precedent for Roman hegemony and as a source of inspiration for a

[71] The long-term importance of the Clemens-Domitilla episode is demonstrated also by its adoption and adaptation in the Christian tradition. For an unravelling of this long tradition, beginning with Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.18.5; *Chronikon*, 218th Olympiad, year of Abraham 2110), see Knudsen 1945. In the present context: Smallwood 1956, 1–2; Keresztes 1973; Mason 1998, 97.

[72] Collins (2009, 86) accepts that Clemens and his wife were "Judaizers of some sort" and that "the imperial family still had Jewish clients like Josephus who encouraged such practices."

[73] See note 13 above for the identification with Mettius. The arguments for either identification are regarded as inconclusive by Cohen 1979, 174; Schwartz 2007, 3 n. 4.

[74] The identification was first made by Luther 1910, 61–3. The identification is accepted by Applebaum 1974, 118; Hadas-Lebel 1991, 235; especially Mason (1998, 98–100), who argues convincingly in its favor; Eck s.v. "Epaphroditus" in *BNP*.

[75] Suetonius, *Domitian* 14.4–15.1; Dio 67.14.4.

[76] Mason (1998, 100) suggests that Epaphroditos' name was remembered alongside Clemens, Domitilla, and Glabrio because it was he who introduced them to Josephus' *Antiquities*, and conjectures in addition that his initial interest in Judaism was due to Nero's Judeophile wife Poppaea Sabina. I would add that it is even possible that the connection of Clemens' family with Epaphroditos stood behind the particular choice of atheism (that is, Judaizing tendencies) as the pretext for the persecution. For a maximalist interpretation of Judean influence in the highest social strata of Flavian Rome, with rich evidence from rabbinic sources, see Applebaum 1974.

more benevolent attitude to the Judeans and their god, then there is good reason to think that Josephus' aim was winning Roman hearts and minds for the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple.[77]

It is impossible to say with certainty whether this notion ever reached an audience that could do anything practical about rebuilding the Jerusalem temple. Even if we identify Josephus' Epaphroditos with Nero's freedman and secretary, the dedication alone does not testify to its reception by the honorand. As a matter of fact, we do not know that Epaphroditos ever read the *Antiquities*. In addition, Nero's former secretary was indeed eliminated at the same time as Clemens and the other Judaizers, but as far as we know, the accusation leveled against him regarded his failure in obedience to his former master, not his religious inclinations. The connection of Epaphroditos to Judean affairs relies solely on Josephus' dedication. And, of course, the possibility remains that the person celebrated and thanked in the *Antiquities* was in fact Mettius the librarian. If that is the correct identification, it would carry Josephus even further away from any centers of power capable of influencing policy on the Judean question. If that is the case, we can at least credit Josephus for having tried his best, with the best means at his disposal—the writing of history. On the other hand, if one is willing to accept Epaphroditos as Nero's freedman, and to make the connection between Josephus' dedication, the timing of the Domitianic purge, and the accusations of Judaizing against Clemens and company, a fascinating counter-historical moment emerges. Were it not for Domitian's persecution—or, if he was right in his suspicions, had the conspiracy against him succeeded—could the story of Rome and Jerusalem have turned out very differently?

By its very nature, this tantalizing question cannot be answered historically. It is, however, within the realm of historical inquiry to try to read Josephus in its light. In other words, how did Josephus envision the optimistic future of Judaism within the Roman empire? A possible answer may be gleaned from one more detail that is unique to his version of the Alexander in Jerusalem story:

> And after he addressed the crowd, whether any wished to join in his campaign, remaining in their fathers' customs and living according to them, for he would gladly bring them on, many were contented to campaign with him. (§339)

[77] This was also the opinion of Momigliano (1979, 442): "There must have been people who looked back to the reconstruction of the Temple after the Babylonian captivity as a more realistic model of hope for Israel. I would suggest that Josephus was one of these Jews." For the same spirit in the *Antiquities* see 4.314 (with Attridge 1976, 106), about the restoration of the temple not once, but often (thus, at least, once again). See also 15.387, where Josephus has Herod declare that he is able to start renovation on the temple because of the unparalleled peace and tranquility, and "what is of most importance, the Romans, who are so to speak the masters of the world, and have become friends through my loyalty" (trans. Marcus, Loeb; with a correction by Eckhardt 2017, 264 n. 65).

The fact of the matter is that none of the five mainstream narratives for Alexander's history—Diodorus, Trogus/Justin, Curtius, Plutarch, and Arrian—says anything anywhere about any Judean volunteers in Alexander's army. Nor do the earlier versions of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition. The only other place where Judean soldiers appear under Alexander's command is once again in Josephus, this time in *Against Apion*, on the authority of Hekataios, or rather Pseudo-Hekataios.[78] In 1.192 Josephus tells the story of Judean soldiers who refused to participate in clearing the soil from a temple of Bel that had collapsed. In 1.200 Josephus asserts that Judeans served both in Alexander's army and in those of the successors.[79] It seems to me highly unlikely that Hekataios, real or pseudonymous, related the story of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem. The more reasonable option, in my mind, is that Josephus added this detail to his Alexander episode on his own accord. Indeed, the evidence for Judeans in foreign military service intensifies in the following centuries, when Judeans served in considerable numbers in various Hellenistic armies.[80] Judeans in the Roman army were a distinctly less noticeable phenomenon.[81] It is therefore worth considering that in asserting Judean enthusiasm for serving under Alexander, and at the same time stressing the importance of Judean observances during military service, Josephus also tried to convince his Roman audience, and his Judean audience as well, that a rapprochement between Rome and Judea could in the future open the ranks of the Roman army to Judean recruits. Thus, the populace of the troublesome province, as well as the many coreligionists in the Mediterranean diaspora, could transform from a military problem into a solution. This immense counterhistorical boon is thrust into sharp relief when one considers the military toll taken by the Second and Third Judean Wars under Trajan and Hadrian, a mere few decades after the publication of the *Antiquities*.

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[78] Josephus seems to have thought that he was reading Hekataios of Abdera's work on the Judeans. For the case that this was a later writer, not necessarily but most likely a Judean, who pseudonymously assumed this prestigious identity, see Bar-Kochva 1996; Barclay 2007, 338–40.

[79] In 1.201–4 Josephus tells an anecdote of a skillful and haughtily humorous Judean archer by the name of Mosollamos. The text may be understood to say that he served under Alexander, but it is just as likely that Josephus referred here already to the wars of the Diadochi. The anecdote itself may well be fictional.

[80] For an updated and comprehensive treatment of Judeans in the armies of the Hellenistic kingdoms, and in particular in the Roman army, see Salinero 2022. His trust in the factuality of Josephus' Alexander story leads him to conclude that "it is obvious that Alexander also recruited Jewish mercenaries to bolster his forces" (p. 12). If not "obvious," it is at least possible.

[81] Roth (2007), marshalling the fragmentary evidence for Judean presence in the Roman military, paints a picture that does not come close to the situation in Hellenistic armies.

5
From Myth to History

So what did transpire between the Judeans and Alexander, when he first arrived in Eretz-Israel and then again on his way back from Egypt on the road to Gaugamela? The straight and honest answer must be that we cannot know for certain. Outside of the siege of Gaza and its aftermath, an event that plays an important role in my interpretative approach in this chapter, the Greek and Latin non-Judean sources provide precious little information about Alexander's actions in the southern Levant.[1] The Judean tradition on the other hand is rich and colorful, but if the discussion in this book has taught us anything, it is that this tradition is essentially mythistorical. That is to say, that all four strands of the tradition represent historical events and personages, but at the same time they are not committed to writing history in the modern or, bar Josephus, in any sense of the word. While the historical sources say nothing about Judea and Judeans, the Judean sources say too much. Can we therefore deduce anything, if not with certainty then at least with a positive degree of probability, about the actual events of Alexander's actions concerning Judea and Jerusalem?

Since the Judean sources have been discussed extensively in this book so far, it is now time to take a close look at the historical sources, to appraise their silence about Judeans and Judea, and to see what can be argued from it.[2] The first problem the historical sources present is that none of them is primary. The earliest, Diodorus, wrote some three centuries after the event. Their silence on any particular point may thus be attributed to the silence of their respective sources, but may also be the result of their own authorial tendencies and agenda. The task of interpreting the silence of the historical sources on Judean affairs is thus more complex than, say, Thucydides' silence about an event of the Peloponnesian War. But before we ask what details these sources do not provide—whether because they were not considered important or interesting enough, or because they never happened—let us look first at what they do tell us.

Taking our cue from the Judean sources, which all feature Alexander's meeting with the Judeans on his arrival in Eretz-Israel, the first step is to look at the

[1] The Greek and Latin sources in question are Diodorus, Curtius, Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*, Arrian's *Anabasis*, and Justin's epitome of Trogus (himself roughly a contemporary of Diodorus). Despite Plutarch's famous apology about writing biography rather than history (*Alexander* 1.2), I group him among the historical sources.

[2] For a more detailed discussion, albeit one that represents an earlier (and more naïve) stage in my study of the AIJ tradition (as well as a different argumental approach), see Amitay 2010b.

different narrative parts that relate events at the time, that is, between the conclusion of the siege of Tyre and Alexander's departure for Egypt. Diodorus (17.48.7–49.1) makes do with a concise and condensed narrative: Alexander marched on Gaza and its Persian garrison, besieged it for two months, and then took it. Having settled the conquered city's affairs, he sent Amyntas back to Makedonia to raise fresh troops. Alexander then marched with his entire army to Egypt, and captured all the cities there without any risk. All these events and actions are described in merely sixty-one words.[3] Yet even this short sequence of dry factual quips looks generously elaborate in comparison with what Justin's epitome of Trogus has to say, which is that after the capture of Tyre "Alexander captured Rhodes, Egypt, and Cilicia without a struggle" (11.11.1).[4]

A useful point of comparison is the treatment, or lack thereof, of the siege of Gaza. The most strategic position on the way to Egypt, defended by a strong Persian contingent and a fierce and adamant citizenry, Gaza could not be left to its own devices. The siege, albeit overshadowed in the sources by the drama of Tyre, was nevertheless a long and a dangerous one, as we know from Curtius (4.6.7–30) and Arrian (2.25.4–27.7). It certainly provided a serious historian with plenty to write about. Beside the time consumed and the loss of manpower, there were captivating and peculiar details worth recording, such as a failed attempt to assassinate Alexander, two alarming injuries that he suffered while fighting, an omen successfully interpreted by the famous seer Aristandros, and of course the epically cruel execution of Betis, the Persian garrison commander.[5] Plutarch (*Alexander* 25.4–5) does mention Aristandros' success, but is otherwise silent about the siege and other events surrounding it. Considering the intensity of the Gazan siege, and the multiple points of interest related to it, this short comparative exercise yields an immediate conclusion. The silence of Diodorus and Plutarch, who referred ever so briefly to the siege of Gaza, as well as Justin, who did not even mention the city by name, may be interpreted to mean that nothing as significant or dramatic took place between Alexander and the Judeans. Whatever we think about what actually transpired, the intensity of events must have been levels of magnitudes lower than the dramatic events around Gaza. If Diodorus, Plutarch, and Justin decided to devote so little attention to Gaza, we should not be surprised that they ignored Jerusalem altogether.

What then about the silence of Curtius and Arrian? To assess its significance properly, yet another comparison is in order. According to Curtius (4.8.7–11), while Alexander was sailing down the Nile (we are not told where exactly),

[3] Fourteen more words in this section mark the chronology of a new year (331/330).

[4] Here, for example, there is good reason to suspect that Trogus' original work provided a longer narrative, and that this jarringly laconic leap forward in the plot is the result of Justin's editing. Even the Tyrian siege, described at length by Diodorus, Curtius, and Arrian, and discussed in some detail even by Plutarch, is passed over very quickly by Justin.

[5] On the historicity of Betis' execution see chapter 3 note 53.

a boating accident took the life of Hektor, one of Parmenion's sons and one of Alexander's dearest friends. Describing Alexander's grief at the loss of his beloved companion, Curtius continues:

> It was made graver still by a messenger who bore news of the death of Andromachos, whom he had made the prefect of Syria; Samaritans had burned him alive! Alexander hurried in all possible haste, and on his approach the authors of such great a crime were handed over to him. Then he appointed Menon instead of Andromachos, and having executed those who had killed his commander, he handed over the tyrants—among whom were Aristonikos and Stesilaos of Methymna—to their own populace, who in turn put the tyrants to death by torture, because of injuries suffered from them.[6]

The obvious attention-grabber in the present context is of course the tantalizing story about Andromachos and the Samaritans. This is a crucial piece of evidence, and we shall return to it later in this chapter. For the time being, let us note how this otherwise unattested episode is incorporated into the narrative. Curtius weaves the sorry fate of Andromachos into his story through the motif of mental anguish—Alexander was grieved both for the death of his friend and for the murder of his governor. The Samaritan incident thus serves Curtius as a means of furthering the plot and carrying Alexander from Egypt back to the southern Levant. Having summed up the Samaritan affair, Curtius then uses the topic of changes in local government to divert his attention, mid-sentence, to Alexander's policy regarding the situation in the Aegean, and particularly on Lesbos. The short segment about the Samaritans is thus sandwiched between two other short informational segments, all three being highly irrelevant to one another. Had Curtius chosen another narrative route to transfer Alexander from Egypt back to the Levant, we would have remained completely ignorant concerning Andromachos and the Samaritans.

What does Arrian have to say about all this? On the whole, his description of events in Egypt, taking up the entire first five chapters of *Anabasis* book 3, is significantly more detailed than Curtius' version. For example, Curtius' curt mention of Aristonikos is elaborated by Arrian into a relatively detailed review of the situation in the eastern Aegean (3.2.3–7). In 3.5 Arrian relates a long list of military and administrative appointments carried out by Alexander in Memphis, right before his departure from Egypt; this information, as well as Alexander's

[6] 4.8.9: "oneravit hunc dolorem nuntius mortis Andromachi, quem praefecerat Syriae; vivum Samaritae cremaverant. (10) Ad cuius interitum vindicandum quanta maxima celeritate potuit contendit, advenientique sunt traditi tanti sceleris auctores. (11) Andromacho deinde Menona substituit affectisque supplicio qui praetorem interemerant, tyrannos, inter quos Methymnaeorum Aristonicum et Stesilaum, popularibus suis tradidit; quos illi ob iniurias tortos necaverunt." The Latin text according to Rolfe's Loeb edition.

second sojourn in Memphis, is absent from Curtius. Arrian also offers a more detailed account of Alexander's actions back in the Levant (3.7.1–3). It is thus striking that neither Hektor's death nor the Samaritan episode appear in his work. It is impossible to determine with certainty whether these omissions result from Arrian's editorial decision or from his lack of exposure to these data in his sources. Either way, his silence exemplifies the borderline between the reportable and the negligible. The same principle applied above to the siege of Gaza is appropriate here as well: if the burning alive of a Makedonian governor did not make it into Arrian's lengthy and detailed history of Alexander, there is no reason to expect Jerusalem and the Judeans to appear in it either.

We are left therefore with the silence of Curtius. This is hardly the resounding silence required to argue the absence of events, but it is nevertheless highly instructive. The comparison with Gaza, and especially with the burning of Andromachos, allows us a high degree of certainty that Alexander's encounter with the Judeans was mostly harmless. If Jerusalem had shown any resistance of the kind that required vigorous action, or had the Judeans reacted violently to the new Makedonian rule once it had been installed, we should have heard about it. This conclusion is also strongly supported by the Judean sources. Three of the four stories—the Seleukid *Romance*, the Simon story, and Josephus' version—make it a point that despite strong tensions at the outset of the relationship, the eventual encounter was cordial and benign. Even the Gviha story, which retains the tension and the sense of danger to the very end, initially has Alexander amble peacefully into the city and enter the temple with all pomp and circumstance. According to the story's logic, had Alexander not requested to enter the inner sanctum, the visit would have ended splendidly. But that request, as I argue in chapter 2 section 2.3, tells the story of Pompey, not of Alexander. The silence of the historians, combined with and supported by the narrative tendency of the Judean mythistories, makes it as certain as can be that there were indeed no acts of aggression between Alexander and the Judeans.

That does not mean, however, that there was no communication at all between the two parties. Even without any mention in the sources, by the time that Alexander started out for Egypt, certain goings-on must have already taken place between Alexander's military and diplomatic corps and their opposite numbers in Jerusalem.[7] The most immediate topic would be security arrangements.

[7] In the words of Tcherikover (1959, 48–9): "Is it likely that Alexander would have traversed Palestine twice without the Jews appearing before him to 'welcome the king'…? Their appearance before their new sovereign was not only their right but their duty, and failure to appear would have been interpreted as lack of political tact or as deliberate opposition to the new authority. There is no doubt that all the peoples of Palestine made submission to Alexander…; why then should the Jews have been an exception? We do not know where and when the Jews presented themselves before the king, but the meeting itself appears to me a certainty." See also Golan (1982, 37–8): "Alexander would have had to act extraordinarily to avoid meeting the heads of government and to sacrifice in the temple." This position is accepted explicitly by Goldstein (1993, 74) and implicitly by VanderKam (2004, 80–1).

The dramatic change of government surely necessitated some level of coordination with the leaders of local communities. Then, there were issues of taxation. Since the Makedonian regime was bound to exact tribute from its new subjects, we can safely assume an exchange of demands and requests on that score. A third area of concern was legal—how was the law of the land to be administered, both between members of different communities and among the communities themselves? Even if Alexander's general method was to cling to the Persian system and change as little as possible, we must also assume that the contact between Alexander's headquarters and local leaders throughout the land included a certain amount of negotiation. Finally, we can surely expect that some demands were made on Judea to supply the Makedonian army with various commodities and services.[8]

So far, there is nothing in these assumptions that is surprising or particularly interesting, which is surely why we hear nothing about these putative yet necessary proceedings in the Alexander histories. The number of political entities large and small taken over without a struggle during Alexander's blitz campaign was immense. These encounters entered the history books only when they included a military confrontation or provided an interesting anecdote. A comparable example comes from the city of Sidon. The important Phoenician city yielded to Alexander without a blow. Nevertheless, its former monarch was deemed untrustworthy, and a new one had to be appointed. Similar occurrences must have taken place many times during Alexander's campaign, and we certainly hear only of some of them. In Sidon, the former monarch was replaced by an unlikely surprise candidate, a scion of the local royal house who eked a living as a gardener. It is this piquant detail that aroused the imagination of storytellers, which is why the story has reached us.[9] Jerusalem, it seems safe to conclude, when looked at through the lenses of Greco-Roman historiography, did not supply even this degree of excitement in real time.

As unexciting as the dealings of Alexander and the Judeans may have been, they surely took place. Can we say anything about the details of this interaction? The sources, both historical and mythistorical, do supply us with some clues. According to Justin (11.10.6), when Alexander moved to Syria in the aftermath of Issos,

> he had before him many kings of the orient with sacred fillets. Among these he accepted some into his alliance, each according to personal merit, and from others he deprived their reign, installing new kings in their places.

[8] This last point is claimed by Josephus (*Antiquities* 11.317). Kasher (1975, 190) expands the picture to include the role of the Syrian hinterland in supplying Alexander's army, and considers Josephus' remark about "offering a market" (§317) as testimony to his overall historical accuracy. For this practice in general see Spilsbury and Seeman (2017, 116 n. 1092) on *ἀγορὰν παρέχειν* (provide a market).

[9] For the story see Curtius 4.1.15–26; Justin 11.10.6–9. Diodorus (17.46.5–47.6) tells the story wrongly about Tyre, while Plutarch (*De Fortuna Alexandri* 340d) transplants it to Cyprian Paphos. For the Paphian version see Amitay and Pestarino, forthcoming.

Justin does not name names, but there is no reason to assume that the Judeans shunned any contact with the Makedonian conqueror altogether. Such a move would mark Jerusalem out as a potential source of trouble and create an unnecessary risk. That does not mean, however, that the magnates of Jerusalem switched their loyalty, or at least their cooperation, automatically. According to the Seleukid *Romance* (epsilon 20.2), "those who thought to stand against him (Alexander) send scouts, as if they were ambassadors." There is no way to ascertain that this snippet of information is in fact historical, and not merely an invention by the author of the Seleukid *Romance*. But this description of the initial Judean position is at least plausible: the Judeans contemplate resistance, but attempt to disguise their intent and keep their options open.[10] According to the story, Alexander recognizes their dissimulation immediately and sends them away to warn their government against such folly. This is congruent not only with Justin's description, where Alexander (and presumably his staff) reaffirm or discharge the local rulers according to loyalty and merit, but also with the succinct remark by Curtius (4.1.5) about the Syrian reaction to Issos: "The Syrians, still insufficiently broken in by the disasters of war, spurned (Alexander); but they were quickly put down and carried out orders obediently." This statement can easily include a hypothetical group of Judeans, whose covert mission as spies was quickly exposed, and who had to carry a dire warning to their government back home.[11]

A more detailed account of initial Makedonian-Judean relations is offered by Josephus (*Antiquities* 11.317–19):

> (317) And Alexander, having arrived in Syria, took Damascus, overcame Sidon, and started besieging Tyre. And he requested, having sent letters to the high priest of the Judeans, to send him a *symmachia*, to supply the army with a market, and whatever gifts they had previously paid Darius, (now) to give him, as those who have chosen the friendship of the Makedonians. (318) And they would not regret these actions. But the high priest replied to the letter-bearers, that he had given oaths to Darius not to raise arms against him, and said that as long as Darius was among the living he would not overstep them. (319) Alexander heard and became incensed, but as he did not think to leave Tyre alone,

[10] Kasher (1975, 201–2), who knew of this episode only through the gamma recension (2.24), thought that despite its anecdotal and legendary nature this tradition demonstrated the Judean awareness of the rapidly changing situation around them.

[11] Bosworth (1974, 50 n. 3) notes a similar picture in Josephus' story. Indeed, says Bosworth, according to Josephus "most of the populace of Syria had been firmly convinced that Alexander would be crushed by the Persian national army… Issus apparently came as a complete surprise, and it took time for the indigenous Syrians to modify their attitude." Despite his description of Josephus' story as "apocryphal," Bosworth seems to be willing to accept the description of the Syrian reaction as historical. For a fair description of these events, with discreet putative suggestions, see Golan (1982, 40–2, 46–8), who, basing his analysis on Josephus, wholly accepts an initially wary Judean attitude.

> inasmuch as it was still not taken, he remained by it and threatened that he would march against the high priest of the Judeans and teach everybody, to whom they should observe the oaths.

The time and place of communication are established clearly: at the beginning of the siege of Tyre. This makes good sense in terms of Alexander's situation: Tyre kept him relatively static for a while, a good opportunity to begin exercising control over the lands to the south. This description by Josephus is unique also in its relatively detailed portrayal of the modes of communication: Alexander composes a letter, which is carried by ambassadors to Jerusalem; these conduct verbal communication with the Judean high priest; they then bring the message back to Alexander. Further communication is also indicated by Alexander's threat: it would require a further letter and embassy to Jerusalem to deliver his message, which would otherwise be quite useless.

The main problem with Josephus' evidence here is that we cannot ascertain whether it derives from a reliable source, or is a product of his imaginative historical reconstruction (which, as argued in chapter 4, may account for a considerable part of his story). However, it may receive some support from a strange and alarming detail in the Seleukid *Romance* (epsilon 20.2). After Alexander swiftly realizes that the Judean ambassadors are actually spies,

> he commands some exceedingly noble-minded young men from the Makedonian phalanx to leap into a ravine which was there. And they fulfilled the order in all haste, for the Makedonian force was quick to [obey] the things ordered by Alexander.

This is meant by Alexander as a demonstration to the Judean spies of how little the Makedonians feared death. It would behoove the Judeans, adds Alexander, to reconsider their position in the face of such fearless foes. Alexander's life work did indeed demand the lives of a great many Makedonians of all ages and dispositions. But it can hardly be argued that the historical Alexander wasted his own men's lives so cavalierly. On the contrary, the historical Alexander almost always participated in the fighting himself, very often in the thick of battle. His instruction to his men effectively to commit suicide does not agree with his image in the historical sources.

This difficulty can be explained if we follow Josephus' cue and envision the encounter as taking place in Tyre. According to Diodorus (17.43.4–10), the final assault that finally broke down the Tyrian defense was conducted simultaneously from the now finished causeway, which connected the island of Tyre with the mainland, and from Alexander's newly acquired warships. The attack on both fronts was conducted from high siege towers. The Tyrians fought back fiercely, employing barbed tridents that were hurled at the attackers.

> These stuck in the shields, and as ropes were attached to the tridents, they could haul on the ropes and pull them in. [9] Their victims were faced with the alternative of releasing their arms and exposing their bodies to be wounded by the missiles which showered upon them, or clinging to their shields for shame and perishing in the fall from the lofty towers. [10] Other Tyrians cast fishing nets over those Makedonians who were fighting their way across the bridges and, making their hands helpless, pulled them off and tumbled them down from bridge to earth.

The scene described here does not, of course, involve suicide. It does however depict Makedonian soldiers, the bravest and proudest at the front, protecting their soldier's honor and falling to their death in the crevice between tower and wall. Curtius (4.6.11) also records deaths by falling from the walls, this time by the Tyrian defenders. In Arrian's description Alexander participated in the heat of the action, "keeping his eyes open for any conspicuous display of courage and daring by others in the danger" (2.23.4). Taking these complementary reports together, they provide a possible background for Alexander's cruel command portrayed in the Seleukid *Romance*.[12] If this explanation is accepted, it may perhaps hint at some early source, or a tenacious oral tradition, that put the initial Judeo-Makedonian negotiations during the siege of Tyre.

Leaving Tyre, we arrive at the next locale connected in the Judean tradition with the meeting of Alexander and Simon the Just—Antipatris. I suggested in chapter 3 section 3.4 that the mention of Antipatris can be interpreted as a reference to the Herodian house, symbolizing the collaboration of this dynasty with Rome and viewing it as a successful prototype for Judean existence under foreign rule. Yet the mention of Antipatris as a meeting point between the Makedonian king and the Judean high priest may also be rooted in historical fact. Contemplating Alexander's route from Tyre to Gaza, one can only assume that he took the ancient sea road along the Mediterranean coast, all the way down to Philistia. Along this route, Antipatris makes for a natural rendezvous point for anyone coming down from Jerusalem. As argued above, there is every reason to postulate some kind of communication between Alexander's camp and Jerusalem in the period between Issos and the conclusion of the Tyrian siege. In the same vein, we can safely hypothesize a delegation that set out from Jerusalem to greet the new master of the land closer to home. This delegation would be sure to make proper homage, and possibly approach the king, or one of his close friends at least, to discuss further the new terms of government. The Simon story cannot by

[12] Epsilon 20.2 uses the word *φάραγξ* to describe the deathplace of the brave Makedonians. One wonders whether this word was chosen in order to echo the LXX rendering of Isaiah 40:4, *πᾶσα φάραγξ πληρωθήσεται* (every ravine shall be filled up; the Hebrew reads כל גיא ינשא, every valley shall be raised). The LXX version of Isaiah's prophecy would thus anticipate Alexander's monumental effort in building the causeway to Tyre and connecting the island city to the mainland.

itself be taken as positive proof that such a meeting did in fact take place, but it does supply strong support to the argument from reality.[13]

What about Jerusalem? The general tendency in scholarship has been to deny any historicity to Alexander's visit to Jerusalem, with a strong emphasis on the *argumentum e silentio*.[14] If none of the five historical sources mentions such a visit, it must follow that Alexander was never in Jerusalem. However, as demonstrated above, the use of the *argumentum e silentio* is extremely weak in this case. Firstly, because it essentially relies only on Curtius, a single author, whose narrative is far from detailed at this point. Secondly, because the encounter between Alexander and Judea was in reality a humdrum affair that evidently did not earn any mention in the historical record. In other words, the answer to the question whether Alexander ever actually visited Jerusalem should be disentangled from both the mythistorical accoutrements of the Judean tradition and the argument from silence, and should be discussed solely against its disappointingly mundane historical backdrop.

A second objection to a Jerusalem visit is that there was simply not enough time. Alexander was occupied by the sieges of Tyre and Gaza, and then hurried on to Egypt.[15] This argument, too, is open to criticism. According to Plutarch (*Alexander* 24.10–14), the Makedonian king did have time to campaign in the interior during the Tyrian siege, marching against the Arab population of the Antilibanus simultaneously with the siege operations. Jerusalem was probably too far from Tyre, as well as too docile, to share the experience. Yet this episode at least demonstrates how different events were taking place concurrently with the greater dramas that fixated the historians' attention and interest on Tyre, and that at least in this instance Alexander indeed played his usual leading role, but on a side stage.[16] We can probably assume that Alexander did not bother personally with the inland communities on his way from Tyre to Gaza (hence the significance of Antipatris). It stands to reason that he will have made all haste to crush the last

[13] See already Gutmann (1940, 294), who recognized the strategic location of Antipatris, and viewed a meeting between Judean delegates and Alexander there as the piece of information "closest to the historical reality of the time"; accepted by Golan (1982, 50–1). For a similar conclusion see Goldstein 1993, 73. Tcherikover (1959, 48) admits the possibility, but prefers interpreting Antipatris as a "matter of convention."

[14] For example: Niese 1893, I, 83 n. 1; Buchler 1898, 1; Tcherikover 1959, 41; Momigliano 1979, 443; Goldstein 1993, 70–1; Gruen 1998a, 195; Tropper 2013, 126; Finn 2022, 123.

[15] Willrich 1895, 1; Buchler 1898, 1; Tcherikover 1959, 45; Gruen 1998a, 195. Abrahams (1927, 11) and Kasher (1975, 194–5) suggest a more protracted stay in Gaza, which allowed Alexander an opportunity for the Jerusalem visit.

[16] This scene in itself is a good example of the weakness of the *argumentum e silentio*. This minor military campaign is overlooked by Diodorus, Curtius, and Arrian, who are completely engaged with the siege. The story itself was included by Plutarch only as the background to an anecdote about Alexander's faithfulness to his aging tutor and about his agility, swordsmanship, and invincible chutzpah. The details of the anecdote, derived from Alexander's secretary Chares, may be made up (Chares is a primary source, but one that could be prone to exaggeration). Not so the background to the story, i.e., the campaign in the Antilibanus, which makes good sense historically and conforms to the report of Curtius (4.1.5) about the pacification of some unruly Syrians.

bastion of resistance on the Mediterranean coast. A visit to Jerusalem during the Gazan siege is definitely possible—the distance is about two to three days' march—but seems less likely.[17] Given that Alexander, as was his wont, took active part in the fighting, was seriously wounded twice, and had to spend considerable time recuperating from his wounds, it appears less likely that he also made any trips to the interior during the siege.

However, once Gaza had fallen, a window of opportunity opened for some extracurricular activity. Concerning Alexander's actions from the fall of Gaza to his arrival in Egypt, Diodorus (17.49.1) says merely that once Alexander settled the affairs of the city, he sent Amyntas with ten ships to recruit fresh troops in Makedonia.[18] The latter action, which is confirmed by Curtius (4.6.30), surely took very little of his time. Settling the affairs of the captured city was another matter. Arrian, who devotes a couple of sentences to the topic, says that "Alexander sold their women and children into slavery, populated the city from the surrounding tribesmen and used it as a fortress town for the war" (2.27.7). This, according to Arrian, all happened before Alexander's departure to Egypt. Even if we allow that Alexander only initiated this process, and that some of it—Gaza's resettlement in particular—continued for some time thereafter, the short span required even for the initial steps could, in theory at least, accommodate a short trip to the hilly hinterland.

What of Alexander's journey back from Egypt? As we have seen, the historical narratives have relatively little to say about Alexander's actions en route to Gaugamela. And, as Curtius tells us, he was required to take action against those Samaritans who had cremated his governor, a datum which brings us close indeed to Judean affairs and possibly to Jerusalem. According to Josephus (*Antiquities* 11.340), the visit to Jerusalem was part of a wider tour by Alexander of various cities newly under his rule. Once again, it is impossible to determine whether Josephus preserves anything that he had found in his sources, or whether he inferred this detail on his own and reported it as fact. Either way, on the way back from Egypt there definitely was enough time to visit some of the newly acquired communities along the way, even when there was no one in particular to punish, as in Samaria. If there was an opportune moment for a visit to Jerusalem, that was it. And if there was indeed a visit to Jerusalem, there is no reason to view it as unique.[19]

The crucial piece of evidence that pertains to the historicity of Alexander in Jerusalem appears in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* (12.54/111–23). One section of this grand oeuvre deals with a uniquely Judean, extremely rare, and highly

[17] Golan (1982, 32–3) suggests that it was conducted only with a small cavalry force. In such a case, the journey could have taken as little as a single day in each direction.

[18] This was Amyntas son of Andromenes. See Berve 1926, no. 57, 26–8; Heckel 2006, s.v. no. 4, 24–5.

[19] As concluded by Spak 1911, 30; Radet 1931, 134–5; Abel 1935, 60. Mor (2003, 66) accepts the historicity of a visit on the return journey from Egypt, but locates it Antipatris, following the geography of the Simon story.

lucrative plant—balsam. The relevance of balsam to our discussion comes apropos Pliny's description of the long and patient process of collecting the balsam resin, the plant's most precious product. In this context Pliny remarks that "when Alexander the Great was conducting business there, it was an honest summer day's work to fill one conch shell."[20]

What was Pliny's source for the balsam situation at the time of Alexander? In an early and influential treatment of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition Büchler asserted that Pliny's description of the balsam was a literal copy of the account by Theophrastos (*Historia Plantarum* 9.6.1–4). The name of Alexander, he opined, was added merely as a chronological marker.[21] Theophrastos' account is indeed the earliest, and fullest, surviving Greek text about balsam, and it does share a lot of information with Pliny. Yet Büchler's argument ought to be rejected, for three reasons. The first and most obvious is that a quick perusal of both texts clearly shows that Pliny cannot have copied Theophrastos. A significant point of disagreement between the two authors concerns the method of harvesting the balsam resin. According to Theophrastos (9.6.2) the bark of the tree was cut with an bent iron blade. Pliny (12.115) stresses that iron utensils caused great harm to the plant, which is why tools made of glass, stone, or bone were preferred.[22] Another telling point of disagreement concerns the sites of the balsam plantations. Both authors agree that there were only two such gardens, but while Theophrastos merely locates them "in the valley of Syria" (*ἐν τῷ αὐλῶνι τῷ περὶ Συρίαν*; 9.6.1), Pliny points specifically to Judea.[23] In either case Pliny's information appears more detailed and more exact.

Nor is it likely that Alexander's name was inserted into Pliny's text merely as a kind of time stamp. According to the standards of Greco-Roman scholarship,

[20] 12.117: "Alexandro Magno res ibi gerente toto die aestivo unam concham impleri iustum erat." If Pliny can be understood to say that Alexander was handling his business in the area during the summer (*die aestivo*), this fits better with the summer of 332, which began with the final assault on Tyre and continued with the siege of Gaza. Alexander left Egypt at the dawn of spring (Arrian 3.6.1), and by the summer of 331 he was already on his way to the ultimate clash with Darius. If so, this would be an indication of the familiarization of the Makedonian court with the land even before Egypt. However, Pliny's time marker may well refer not to Alexander's chronology but rather to the process of production.

[21] Buchler 1898, 7. The notion that Alexander's name merely serves as a time stamp was adopted from Willrich 1895, 18. For the same opinion see Spak 1911, 47 n. 2; Marcus 1937, 521–2; Stoneman 1994, 39.

[22] Patrich (2006, 246) sees here an evolution of agricultural practice (from iron to other materials), but this is extremely hard to accept in light of Pliny's description of the iron's highly detrimental effect. Such severe damage would have been noticed immediately, and a remedy would hardly take centuries to be found. A much better explanation is that Theophrastos erred in his report.

[23] Geographically, Theophrastos appears to have been the least exact of the ancient sources. Dioscorides (*De Materia Medica* 1.19.1) locates the plant in a certain valley in Judea, while Diodorus (2.48.9) speaks of a certain valley in the area of the Dead Sea. Strabo (16.2.41) and Justin (36.3.1–3) both put the balsam squarely in Jericho. If Theophrastos was indeed the primary source for information on the balsam, we would then have to assume that all these other authorities, Pliny included, corrected his vague geography independently, each according to his own sources and resources. Strictly speaking this is not impossible, but it would require a detailed demonstration in each case.

Pliny was extremely generous in disclosing his sources. As a matter of fact, Theophrastos is mentioned copiously in the *Historia Naturalis*.[24] It is not easy to see why here in particular Pliny should neglect to cite Theophrastos as his source. Furthermore, Pliny's own dating of Theophrastos' *Historia Plantarum* puts the work at the 340th year of Rome, that is, about a decade after Alexander's death.[25] Theophrastos was certainly a contemporary of Alexander, but it is far from obvious why Pliny should choose Alexander in particular as the chronological marker here, when Theophrastos could and in fact did serve the same purpose elsewhere, and was in any case somewhat later than Alexander.

A third reason against accepting Theophrastos as the ultimate source for all things balsam is that, according to his own text, he himself borrowed the materials from others (φασι; 9.6.1). The simplest and best solution is that Theophrastos' source, or sources, included the exact and correct information, and was (or were) used independently by later writers, Pliny included. What will this source have been? Luckily, we are aided once again by Pliny's meticulous generosity. In the first book of the *Historia Naturalis* Pliny listed the topics covered in each book, and also mentioned his sources, or at least some of them. Among the sources used in the preparation of book 12 we find no less than six Alexander historians! These are Kallisthenes, Kleitarchos, Nearchos, Onesikritos, Chares, and Ptolemy. Since the works of all these authors survive only in fragments, and since none of these fragments contain any mention of balsam, it seems pointless to try and guess which author(s) preserved the information we now have in Theophrastos and Pliny. However, the notion that one or more of the contemporary Alexander historians should have included a description of the balsam is perfectly sensible. Alexander, a student of Aristotle, was famously interested in medicine, and the qualities of this rare, marvelous, and lucrative plant may well have attracted his attention, and thus gained entry to one or more of the first-generation histories.[26]

What can we learn from this anecdotal bit of information about balsam production? To begin with, it offers us a glimpse of the reality of Alexander's campaign, which obviously did not make it into any of the surviving Alexander histories—in and of itself, a demonstration of the complexity of the argument from silence. A second implication for the discussion at hand depends on our understanding of one word in Pliny: *ibi*, there. Josephus, who was of course a native of Judea and thus a primary witness to the production of balsam, tells us that it was grown only in two places: Jericho, some 25 km east by northeast of Jerusalem, and ʿEin-Gedi, on the shores of the Dead Sea, some 40 km southeast

[24] 3.5.57; 8.43.104, 8.49.111, 8.54.128, 8.69.173, 8.82.222; 9.8.28, 9.83.175; 10.41.79; 11.116.281; 13.30.101; 15.1.1, 15.3.10, 15.40.138; 16.62.144; 17.37.226; 19.10.32, 19.48.162; 21.9.13, 21.68.109; 25.5.14, 25.32.69; 26.63.99; 27.40.63.

[25] 13.30.101, in reference to *History of Plants* 5.3.7. For other mentions of Theophrastos' time see: 15.1.1, 16.62.144.

[26] Interest in medicine and healing herbs: Plutarch, *Alexander* 41; Curtius 9.8.21–7.

of the city.[27] One way to understand Pliny is as referring generally to the time of Alexander's presence in the area, which is also when the balsam's description enters the sphere of Greek knowledge and letters, and the revenues from the balsam plantations start flowing into the coffers of the Makedonian monarch. If that is the case, we can easily imagine the activities of Makedonian administrators, accompanied no doubt by token armed units, visiting the balsam plantations both to wonder at the plant itself and to assess the appropriate taxation and establish its terms of payment.[28] Alternatively, if we understand *ibi* as referring to the particular locations of the balsam plantations, Pliny's testimony puts Alexander squarely in either Jericho or 'Ein-Gedi. In this scenario, which fits Josephus' portrayal of Alexander conducting a victory round between local *poleis*, the Makedonian king could surely have visited Jerusalem along the road. Given the geography of the land, one wonders how he would reach either destination without passing through Jerusalem at least once.[29]

The upshot of the discussion so far is almost discouraging. Even if we are willing to accept Alexander's presence in Jerusalem, the inescapable conclusion is that in practical terms there was no difference between a visit by Alexander, by Parmenion, by Andromachos, or by any other senior Makedonian officer who will have been allotted this particular assignment. The main feature of actual Judeo-Makedonian relations in the years 332–331 BCE seems to be their unremarkableness. This conclusion stands in stark contrast to the very essence of the four stories studied in the previous chapters, all of which portray scenes of great drama and communicate a strong sense of anxiety and peril. As we have seen, the dramatic progression offered throughout the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition is one of tension and release, achieved through the literary motif of peripety. It remains to be asked, therefore, whether there is anything historical in the peripety motif. Was Jerusalem in any actual danger from Alexander, avoided at the last moment in a seemingly miraculous manner? And if not, why was this motif in particular chosen time after time as the tradition's narrative framework?

[27] Josephus, *War* 1.138, 361; 4.469; *Antiquities* 9.7 (the only locus that mentions 'Ein-Gedi), 14.54, 15.96. For the location of balsam according to non-Judean sources see note 23 above.

[28] Büchler (1898, 7) envisaged a Makedonian guard that accompanied the group of scientists that followed the army (such a group is not in fact documented anywhere in the sources). The scientific aspect is highlighted also by Abel (1935, 58), who hints at the balsam's financial value and adds that there is no knowing whether the force also reached Jerusalem. Gutmann (1940, esp. 278–9) plausibly put Parmenion at the head of activities in the hinterland and rightly emphasized the economic aspect of the story; his opinion was endorsed by Stern 1976–84, I, 490. Kasher (1975, 193) points out that Makedonian forces were also in close proximity to Jericho, when they attacked the Samaritan refugees in nearby Wadi Daliyeh.

[29] Compare for example Pompey's march against Jerusalem, when Jericho was used as the staging ground (Josephus, *War* 1.139). Droysen, the founder of modern Alexander studies, was of the opinion that Alexander visited Jericho in person, and even crossed the Jordan in order to found Gerasa. However, his embarrassment at this detail is manifest in the decision to express it not in the main historical narrative (vol. 1), but rather in a section about city foundations by Alexander and his successors (vol. 3 part 2, 203).

One answer, easy and straightforward, is that the peripety motif is simply a highly useful plot device, which both lent the story its dramatic drive and helped to celebrate the greatness of the Judean deity, the Jerusalem temple, and the institution of the high priest. Looking at the question from a wider perspective, one can argue that the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition should be viewed alongside the peripety stories in the biblical books of Daniel and Esther. It is easy to see how an original story about Alexander could resonate with these two biblical literary contexts. The Makedonian monarch is clearly referenced in Daniel as the conqueror and heir of the Persian empire, which in turn is also the setting of the story in Esther. Both books could very easily come to mind in any storytelling about Alexander, and may therefore be envisaged also as a source of inspiration.[30]

Following this interpretation, it would be logical to view the version of the Seleukid *Romance* as the point of origin for the entire tradition. The generation of the Fourth and Fifth Syrian Wars indeed marked a major shift in Judean history. After a century of Ptolemaic rule, an extraordinarily peaceful period for Eretz-Israel, the land was once again (and as usual) plunged into a swirling abyss of violence and war. The very real apprehensions and jeopardies created by the struggle between the Ptolemies and the Seleukids, and in particular by the changeover in government in the aftermath of the Fifth Syrian War, provide a viable background for the dramatic pattern established in the Seleukid *Romance* story. This pattern would have been replicated, in essence if not in detail, by the later versions. This explanation is, in my mind, both economical and sufficient.

An alternative answer would be that the original circumstances of the Judeo-Makedonian encounter did in fact yield a dramatic shift of some sort, which engendered in real time the peripety motif of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition, and continued to change shape according to the changing circumstances. What could this shift have been? The obvious place to look for an answer is the Samaritan context. As Curtius tells us, there was in fact a violent clash between Alexander and some members of the Samaritan community. Three out of the four Judean stories cast Samaritans in the roles of villains. The Simon story as well as Josephus' version lay crucial emphasis on the Judeo-Samaritan conflict. Is there reason to think that the notion of peripety was born out of a shift in these relations during the encounter with Alexander?[31]

[30] For the relevance of Daniel and Esther for both Josephus and the Simon story see Willrich 1895, 7–8; Momigliano 1979, 442; Tropper 2013, 151–4. Baßfreund (1920, 19) intriguingly suggested that, since the Danielic tradition was a long one, Alexander may in fact have been shown some early version of it, as Josephus tells us (*Antiquities* 11.337). Such a putative Ur-Daniel will obviously have not included the last two chapters of the Masoretic biblical book, which cover events in the third and second centuries BCE.

[31] In *Against Apion* 2.43 Josephus makes an isolated remark on the authority of "Hekataios," to the effect that Alexander awarded the land of Samaria to the Judeans free of tax (*τὴν Σαμαρεῖτιν χώραν προσέθηκεν ἔχειν αὐτοῖς ἀφορολόγητον*). Spak (1911, 38) interpreted this donation as the reward given by Alexander to the Judeans for not supporting the Samaritan rebellion, possibly even for helping to quench it. However, I agree with Willrich (1895, 21–2), Bar-Kochva (1996, 134–6), and Barclay

The answer seems to lie in two different lines of argument, the first of which is the context of Andromachos' burning. The available data are vexingly exiguous. All we know is that Andromachos was burnt alive by Samaritans, and that Alexander hastened to the scene to punish the perpetrators. The paucity of information leaves us answerless in face of the most basic questions: What was the grievance that led to this outburst of violence?[32] How could the Samaritan perpetrators lay their hands on the Makedonian governor, who was presumably escorted by an armed force as part of his trappings of power? What did they aim to achieve with this flagrant affront to the new Makedonian regime? Was there even any such aim to begin with, or could the entire affair have started in a purely personal exchange that escalated quickly and violently? The fact that the Samaritan affair left such a meager trace in the historical tradition, as well as the lack of any archaeological evidence for extensive warfare and destruction in and around Samaria at the time, indicate that the Andromachos affair does not appear to reflect a major effort by the Samaritan community to challenge Alexander militarily.[33] The famous finds in Wadi Daliyeh—some two or three hundred skeletons found huddled together in a cave in the Samarian desert in 1962, and a damaged dossier of documents reaching down almost to Alexander's time—have been suggested as possible external evidence for the Makedonian action against the Samaritans described by Curtius.[34] According to this interpretation the group trapped and killed in the cave would be identical with the murderers of Andromachos, including their families and close companions. If that is indeed the case, and unless further similar scenes from the same period are unearthed in other locations in Samaria, these finds surely testify to the limited scope of the Samaritan outburst. One wonders, then, whether the incident was not an entirely private affair, some personal offense or a misunderstanding gone terribly wrong, which did not involve the Samaritan community in general. It is conceivable that the action against the Samaritans, especially if those punished for Andromachos' murder were for some reason particularly disliked in Jerusalem, helped create a

(2007, 192–3 nn. 144–6), that this report does not relate to Alexander's time, but rather reflects the Hasmonean expansion drive at the expense of the Samaritans, first under Jonathan son of Mattathias and the Seleukid king Demetrios II (1 Macc. 10.30, 38; 11.34) and then in the time of Hyrkanos I.

[32] Spak (1911, 34, 46) speculates that the rebellion may have been aided by auxiliary troops stationed under Andromachos, and that the outburst itself originated in religious fanaticism, possibly in connection with the process of temple building. Intriguing as they are, these speculations lack any support in the sources, and are further weakened by the divorce of the Gerizim temple's foundation from the time of Alexander. His suggestion (1911, 36) that the Samaritans who did not rebel were those who approached Alexander at the end of Josephus' story, and that they in turn were entrusted with guard duty in Egypt, is perhaps more plausible.

[33] The deep archaeological study of Magen (2004–8) shows no sign of destruction at the time of Alexander.

[34] For a description of the discovery, acquisition, and initial treatment of the Wadi Daliyeh material see Cross 1963. For the possibility that these findings are the physical remains of Alexander's punitive action see Cross 1966; 1974; Kasher 1975, 206; Goldstein 1993, 75; Mor 2003, 61; Tropper 2013, 127; Dušek 2020.

positive Judean reaction to Alexander. It is also conceivable that Alexander's anger against the offending Samaritans made him spitefully, and unexpectedly, well disposed to the Judeans. The combination of these two propositions could plausibly form the historical kernel behind the peripety motif. But supporting evidence is altogether lacking.[35]

Yet another reason, speaking against the Samaritan affair as the origin of the peripety motif, is its gradual appearance in the tradition. In the Seleukid *Romance*, at least in the form that has reached us, Samaritans are altogether absent. In the Gviha story Samaritans do appear in a harmful role, but their role is both limited and is not a necessary part of the plot. The picture changes dramatically in the Simon the Just story and in Josephus' version, but these are remarkably the later versions in the tradition. If the conflict between Judeans and Samaritans had been the crux of the matter from the beginning, we should expect it to be present in the tradition from its very beginning, rather than appear as a minor point in the second version and then develop further from one version to the next. Ultimately, it is not impossible that the damage inflicted by Alexander on some leading Samaritans aroused some glee in Jerusalem, and was transformed by popular long-term memory and storytelling into a manifestation of mythistorical schadenfreude. But it is hard to view the historical Samaritan affair as the driving force behind the tradition's addiction to peripety.

An alternative explanation is that the literary motif of peripety was engendered not by a sudden change in policy and a clever evasion of danger, but rather by a serendipitous moment during the actual encounter in Jerusalem. Let us imagine for a moment that Alexander did in fact visit Jerusalem. In such a case, we can surely expect the Judean government, from the high priest down, to have exerted itself to make the visit as splendid as possible.[36] Now it is a distinct feature of the tradition that Alexander is struck by the beauty and order of the priestly accoutrements. This narrative element is strongly present in three of the four versions:

[35] Kasher (1975, 204), who allowed a considerable degree of historicity to Josephus' account, and combined it with the Samaritan notice in Curtius, suggested that Alexander's change of attitude towards the Judeans was what caused the Samaritan rebellion. Mor (2003, 60–6), following the same line, paints the following picture: after the death of Sanballat, the appointment of Andromachos robs the Samaritans of their earlier autonomy, a change that leads to outright revolt. He then conjectures that Judean cooperation in tracking down the Samaritan rebels may have been the reason for Alexander's positive reversal of attitude. However, while the last conjecture lacks any supporting evidence, the main part of both reconstructions relies heavily on those parts of Josephus' account that, as argued in chapter 4 section 4.2, are more likely based on his own historical deductions. In either case, the relative insignificance of the Samaritan effort is demonstrated by the anecdotal reference of Curtius and the silence of the other historical sources.

[36] Golan (1982, 40) emphasizes the importance of such ceremonial receptions along Alexander's march. The centrality of the ceremonial motif in Josephus' story brought Cohen (1982–3, 45–9) to propose a distinct "adventus" source behind his narrative. But no such source need be postulated. Since the material in Cohen's putative source would necessarily be based on real-life practice, there is no reason to assume that either the Jerusalemites who faced Alexander, or Josephus, would require a written literary representation of standard political *modus operandi*.

the Seleukid *Romance*, Simon the Just, and Josephus.[37] In all three versions it is the visual effect of the Judean priesthood that captures Alexander's heart and mind, and achieves the peripety effect. Even in the Gviha story, which runs along very different lines, the story takes the time to dwell on a particular fashion item (the gilded slippers), which does not play a major, or even necessary, part in the plot. Is it possible that Alexander did in fact visit Jerusalem, was strongly impressed for some reason by the physical aspects of the Jerusalem temple and its high priest in particular, and declared that he had not seen any such sight from the day he set out from Makedon? Such a gesture, especially if it was authentic, could well serve as the original point of the tradition, with the sense of averted danger being added at a later stage, either apropos Antiochos III the Great, or as a literary borrowing from Daniel and Esther. This explanation also holds good, of course, if Jerusalem received a visit not by the Makedonian monarch himself, but merely by one of his minions. If so, we can perhaps imagine an overly positive reaction by Parmenion, or possibly by Andromachos, which was then projected, already in oral tradition and then in writing, on to Alexander himself.

To conclude this chapter, we return once again to the question posed at the start: Did Alexander the Great visit Jerusalem? In the first place, the answer to this question lies in the chronology and logic of Alexander's campaign. According to Arrian (3.6.1), the most detailed of our sources at this point, Alexander set out from Memphis to Phoenicia at the very beginning of spring. Arrian takes Alexander directly to Tyre, and then locates him as far east as Thapsakos on the Euphrates by midsummer (3.7.1). This chronological framework leaves ample time not only for punishing the Samaritan murderers of Andromachos, but also for ceremonial visits in local centers of power along the way. In other words, there was a wide window of opportunity for a royal visit to the Judean capital, and good reason to carry it out. Three out of four of the Judean stories insist on the presence of Alexander in Jerusalem, but their metaphoric presentation and mythological tendencies rule them out as evidence in the court of history. If a visit by Alexander in Jerusalem is to be accepted as fact, it must rely first and foremost on the argument from reality. Since a parade through the newly subject cities, accompanied by all the necessary pomp and circumstance, is logical enough, and since there are no obvious chronological or technical objections to the reconstructed historical narrative, it is at least possible that a visit by Alexander to Jerusalem is indeed a historical fact.

[37] According to Pena's (2021) detailed analysis, Josephus' description of the high priest's attire is meant to portray the entire cosmos in a way that would be comprehensible to his Greco-Roman audience. The account supposedly describes the high priestly vestments in pre-temple times, but is likely influenced by what Josephus saw in his own time. It is impossible to say what the holy vestments looked like in the late fourth century BCE, but it is worth considering that Alexander might have been influenced by them in similar fashion.

In second place lies the *testimonium Plinianum*. If Pliny is understood to mean that Alexander visited a balsam plantation in person, that would be proof both of his interest in the land and of his leisure to explore it and its inhabitants. In my mind, such a reading would validate the argument from reality and amount to positive proof of a visit to Jerusalem. However, it is perfectly possible to understand Pliny as referring merely to Alexander's sojourn in the general area, marking the location, the time, and the source of Pliny's information about balsam. This interpretation naturally decreases the probability of a royal visit to Jerusalem.

Yet if there was in fact a visit, what can we expect to have taken place in such an event? A festive reception should be taken for granted. We can also expect Alexander to have expressed his admiration for the local temple and priesthood. Such an expression was certainly called for by diplomacy, but it may well have been authentic. It is also possible that Alexander sanctioned a tax relief aimed to facilitate the Sabbatical year. Those in the Judean community who were particularly hateful towards the Samaritans and their temple would surely be content with the demise of at least some of their northern neighbors. At the same time, it must be admitted that, considering the evidence at our disposal, the acceptance of the historicity of Alexander's visit remains arbitrary to a certain degree. No direct and reliable evidence puts Alexander squarely in situ, and the short putative description given here could very well apply to one of the Makedonian monarch's delegates. The surest answer to the question whether Alexander the Great ever visited Jerusalem is that we do not know. What remains beyond doubt is that his own world-changing personal story provided boundless inspiration for Judean historical imagination in the centuries after his death.

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Conclusion

What have we learned from this study of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition? The first lesson, evident in the arrangement of this book, concerns the history of the tradition's evolution. Previous scholarship has focused for the most part on the story of Josephus, treating it as representing the earliest version of the story. The other three versions, long familiar since Marcus's 1937 Loeb edition, have usually been treated as later, and therefore secondary. The arguments and conclusions put forth in this book turn this paradigm on its head. The chronological order in which the four stories appeared is thus: the Seleukid *Romance*, the story of Gviha Ben-Psisa, the story of Simon the Just, and Josephus, now representing not the earliest but rather the latest and most developed stage among the four.

A second lesson pertains to the historicity of the tradition. In view of the silence of the non-Judean historical sources about Judea and Jerusalem, it is safe to state that, even if Alexander did visit the city in person (and even more so if he did not), the encounter between the Judean polity and the new Makedonian regime was mundane and unremarkable. So much so that it did not merit mention in any of the surviving historical works. The Judean tradition stepped into this vacuum and created in it a panoply of political legend. This shift from history to legend is already evident in the Seleukid *Romance*, it is embraced as a matter of course by the rabbinic stories, and is clearly visible even in Josephus. Here and there, the various stories may contain some historical nuggets: the torture of Betis, a historical fact that was transplanted into the Simon story; the strange suicide scene in the Seleukid *Romance*, putatively reflecting the selfless fighting of the Makedonians on the walls of Tyre; even Josephus' description of the communication between Alexander's camp and the government in Jerusalem. More importantly, the motif of peripety, which stands at the heart of the entire tradition, may possibly reflect an initial wary Judean stance, which then switched to full subordination and cooperation once the reality of the post-Issos era began to crystalize. The presence of Samaritans in the tradition may reflect a memory of their punishment by Alexander, which in turn may possibly have made its own contribution to the peripety motif. But all this pales in comparison with the silence of the historical sources, and with the mythistorical polyphony of the Judean ones. The contribution of the Alexander in Jerusalem tradition to the actual history of Alexander is negligible.

Not so when we turn to Judean history. The most immediate and extensive contribution of this study lies in the contextualization of the three earlier stories,

and in the ability to use these stories to illuminate further aspects in their three relative periods: the early days of Seleukid rule over Judea, Pompey's conquest, and the transition to direct Roman rule. But the tradition has something to teach us also when studied as a whole. The essential point is that there is a gap of some five generations between the historical events and the first written version of the tradition known to us—the Seleukid *Romance* at *c.*200 BCE. What happened in between? This question does lend some significance to the question of historicity. If we accept the approach that brings Alexander to Jerusalem in person, that accepts the historicity of a dramatic shift of attitude by Alexander that engendered the peripety motif, and that connects the trouble with the Samaritans to the Judean sense of victory at the end of the encounter, we may also presume the existence of early manifestations of the tradition, which presented a similar spirit to that of the surviving stories. On the other hand, the more we detract from the interest and drama of real-time events, that much more does the Seleukid *Romance* rise in importance as the real font of the tradition.

This gap, as well as the gaps between the various versions, can be filled by two mutually inclusive means: lost written works and oral tradition. Previous scholarship has, with few exceptions, focused on lost written works. Early on in the modern study of the tradition Büchler (1898) influentially postulated as many as five different texts that served Josephus as sources for his Alexander story. My own conclusions show that, although Büchler's model should be abandoned, the Seleukid *Romance*, which served as a backbone for Josephus' story, does in fact belong to the category of lost written works. There may well have been more such works relevant to this discussion, whose discovery and contextualization remains the work of future scholarship.

The second way to fill the gap is oral tradition. It is, of course, extremely hard to determine the influence of the oral element in any tradition before the age of audio recording, let alone at a time two millennia or more in the past. Yet the crucial role played by the stories related to *Megillat Ta'anit*, a cultural context that virtually demanded an annual oral rehearsal of Alexander stories, leaves no room for doubt as to the importance of the oral element. This is particularly evident in the story of Simon the Just, where the core story, transmitted orally independently and probably long before it was ever put down in writing, shines clearly through the legion of minor and major variances in the textual witnesses. The impression left by the study of the rabbinic stories is, to my mind, a good cause for optimism in looking for more second temple material, embedded in the vast ocean of rabbinic literature.

A further lesson, which can be learned only through a consideration of the tradition as a whole, is what appears as its unifying theme: the transition of Judea to a new era of foreign rule. According to the contextualizations offered in this study, our four stories project back to the time of Alexander first the Seleukid takeover of Judea in the Fifth Syrian War, then the Roman conquest by Pompey,

the abolition of Herodian hegemony and the institution of direct Roman rule, and finally the establishment of a full-fledged provincia Iudaea following the Great Revolt and the destruction of the temple. The historical Alexander is an extremely fitting choice for this purpose. To state the obvious, he himself wrought a most dramatic change in the foreign government of Judea, as well as changing the military and cultural balance of power everywhere from the eastern Mediterranean to the valley of the Indus. Furthermore, he did so in a strikingly surprising manner. Antiochos III conquered and failed to retain the southern Levant in the generation before the production of the Seleukid *Romance*, and the Seleukids had had a claim to that land for a good century before that. The Romans first showed their power in Asia against the same Antiochos, while Judas Maccabee had Rome well on his radar a good century before Pompey's conquest. Yet when Alexander ascended the throne in Makedon, not even the savviest of councilors in Judea could predict that he would defeat Darius and overrun the Levant within half a decade. One wonders how much of the peripety motif owes directly to the unique drama created by Alexander *historicus*.

A final major lesson concerns the tradition's positive appreciation of Alexander. Beginning with the Seleukid *Romance*, the impression made on Alexander by Judean priestly order and splendor offers a promise that other foreign imperial powers might follow suit and recognize the uniqueness and superiority of the Jerusalem temple and the community around it. The story that stands out in that respect is of course that of Hunchback Gviha. For all his sharpness and wit, in his story the anxiety caused by the advent of Alexander remains unalleviated, and the general attitude to Alexander changes from fretful to distinctly hostile. This is surely the result of the historical change effected by Pompey. Unlike the other three historical contexts, when some form of foreign rule was already in place at the outset, Pompey's conquest ended three generations of Judean sovereignty and independence. This allowed for no sympathy towards Alexander, or towards foreign rule in general. But Gviha is the exception that proves the rule. The Seleukid *Romance*, the Simon story, and Josephus openly endorse Alexander in the most glowing terms, thus showing their approval of the new foreign government. Josephus even casts Alexander as an example as to how Rome, in all its greatness, could become greater still through the restoration of the temple. This position can be attributed no doubt to realpolitik. What could a small nation do against world empires, other than submit or resist? And once submission is preferred, new myths come to life in order to make it palatable, or even fruitful.

Yet there appears here to be something more than straightforward realpolitik. The AIJ tradition shows that at least some parts in Judean culture chose to adopt Alexander as a sign of optimism, the ultimate good guy in Judean-gentile relations. This is clearly evident in the earliest surviving story. Looking at the message of the Seleukid *Romance* (portrayed through the lenses of the Byzantine epsilon), one is struck by what appears to be a process of conversion. Alexander is

enchanted during his visit to Judea; confesses his new faith, and abjures the old gods at the foundation of his city in Egypt; and at the Breasts of the North he receives a mountainous miracle after praying to a sole god, except whom there is none. In distant hindsight, the notion that Antiochos III, or any other Seleukid king, should ever have embraced Judean faith to such a degree seems ridiculous. One may venture that the prospect did not appear too realistic even in real time. Yet the story stands, and it simultaneously bears witness to and is a part of the strong Judean belief in the ecumenical powers of the Judean deity. The sense of impotence vis-à-vis the vicissitudes of foreign powers is countered by the notion that not only are these powers a part of God's plan, they are also liable to join His true faith.[1]

The Simon story keeps the same direction as the Seleukid *Romance* in terms of Alexander's relation to the Judean deity, but steers a different narrative and theological course, relinquishing the notion of proselytism for that of *proskynesis*. In both stories Alexander recognizes and avows that the Judean deity is the helper of his success. Yet in the Simon story Alexander shows no sign of joining the faith himself, but rather prostrates himself before the human representative of the deity. The resonance of this gesture with the one required by Alexander *historicus* rings loud, and establishes a relationship of domination and submission that is contradictory to military and political reality. The story's new outlook thus moves away from the possibility of personal susceptibility to the Judean faith, and focuses rather on a clear notion of ecumenical hierarchy.

By the time we reach Josephus, catastrophe had already struck. Of our four storytellers, he was the only one to have witnessed firsthand the full implications of all-out war against Rome. Yet despite the catastrophe, Josephus retained the *proskynesis* motif, and elaborated and enforced it with dreamtime epiphanies and with Danielic prophecy. The deeper the depth of disaster, the stronger the literary decorations establishing the supremacy of the Judean god. The importance of the divinity itself, rather than the high-priestly trappings so eminent both in the Seleukid *Romance* and in the Simon story, is stressed in Alexander's words to Parmenion. Of our four storytellers, Josephus was both closest to the calamity, but also, however improbably, to the possibility of the story's fulfillment. Later generations, as far as we know, did not give rise to new stories. The later manifestations are mostly reproductions and reworkings of either Josephus or the Simon story. They certainly deserve their share of scholarly attention, but that must remain a future endeavor.

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[1] The reader who feels too easily inclined to ridicule the notion of a conversion by Antiochos III, or to brush aside the importance (or even factuality) of the Judean interests in the household of Domitian, will do well to remember what actually happened in the time of Constantine and his successors.

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