



SARA RAUP JOHNSON

# Historical Fictions and Hellenistic Jewish Identities

THIRD MACCABEES IN ITS CULTURAL CONTEXT

The Joan Palevsky



Imprint in Classical Literature

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In honor of beloved Virgil—

“O degli altri poeti onore e lume . . .”

—Dante, *Inferno*

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*Third Maccabees in Its Cultural Context*

SARA RAUP JOHNSON

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*To Myles M. and Ruth R. Johnson, my parents,  
and Erich S. Gruen, il miglior fabbro*





Histories have previously been written with the object of exalting their authors. The object of this History is to console the reader.  
*No other history does this.*

History is not what you thought. *It is what you can remember.*  
All other history defeats itself.

Preface, 1066 and All That



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# Preface

The Greek East in the Roman period abounded in fictions. In *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (1994), G. Bowersock has written memorably of what he characterizes as an explosion in the production of ancient fictions in the Roman empire, beginning in the reign of Nero (54–68 c.e.), and of the paradoxical character of some of these fictions. Lucian wrote a series of fantastic tales that he impudently titled *True Histories* (Ἀληθῆ Διηγήματα). His tales are fabulous, yet they mirror the world around him: “The people of the moon are at war with the people of the sun, but eventually they conclude a peace treaty that mirrors in its terms and language, as well in the oath that concludes it, the traditional peace treaties of the Greeks.”<sup>1</sup> Another writer, named, curiously enough, Ptolemy the Quail (Ptolemy Chennus), composed (as we learn from Photius) an outrageous work known as the *Paradoxical History* or *New History* (Παράδοξος Ἱστορία, Καυὴ Ἱστορία), in which he systematically rewrote the myths of the past, “with a completely straight face and in a pose of scholarly precision,” right down to the citation of a host of wholly fictitious scholarly authorities.<sup>2</sup> Yet another author, Celsus, whose attack on the false doctrines of the Christians is preserved by Origen, complained bitterly about the attempt of the Christians to pass off a series of obviously fictitious stories as true history—but his attack on the Christians is framed in the form of a fictitious dialogue.<sup>3</sup>

All this, argues Bowersock, took place beginning in the reign of Nero, when pagan readers first began to encounter the apparently fantastic stories of resurrection and ritual cannibalism contained in the oral and later

1. Bowersock 1994: 6.

2. Ibid. 24–25.

3. Ibid. 2–4.

written accounts of the life and death of Christ.<sup>4</sup> When one studies, however, the writings of a wide variety of Hellenistic Jewish authors, most of whose literary production is generally dated to the second or first centuries B.C.E., one encounters a group of texts whose paradoxical character is strongly reminiscent of the fictions of the Roman period. In fact, the proliferation of ancient fictions in the ancient Mediterranean began quite a bit earlier than Bowersock suggests. Far from being the source and explanation of the phenomenon, the ambiguous historical character of the Gospels, like that of the classical fictions produced in the Roman period, reflects a more widespread Hellenistic paradox that has yet to be thoroughly explored.

In one Hellenistic Jewish text, the Jews of Alexandria are sentenced to die at the feet of a pack of drunken elephants only to be snatched from the jaws of death at the eleventh hour by the appearance of angels. A charming fantasy—but the author of 3 Maccabees goes to some considerable trouble to locate his tale in the reign of a historical king, in the wake of a well-known historical battle, and soberly cites verbatim documents to prove his case. In another, an eyewitness, a high-ranking pagan courtier in the court of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, gives a careful and well-documented account of the translation of the Septuagint in a letter to his brother. It has long since been established, however, that this author, Aristeas, is a wholly fictitious persona; the *Letter of Aristeas* was written by an anonymous Jew over a century later. A fictional city in Palestine, Bethulia, is threatened by a campaign of invasion, described in elaborate historical detail, until the courageous Judith seduces the enemy commander and beheads him—thus eliminating the general sent by one Nebuchadnezzar the Assyrian, who has recently restored the Jews from exile following the Babylonian Captivity(!).<sup>5</sup> In an apocalypse attributed to the prophet Daniel, we learn of challenges repeatedly overcome by the prophet and his friends under a series of historical kings, one of whom, however, is a wholly fictitious character, apparently based on Darius the Great of Persia, named Darius the Mede.<sup>6</sup> These examples could be multiplied at length. Such texts persistently combine his-

4. Ibid. 99–143.

5. Nebuchadnezzar was, of course, king of Babylon, not Assyria, and he was responsible for carrying the Jews into exile in the first place; it was Cyrus of Persia who ended the Exile.

6. Not only is Darius described incorrectly as a Mede, but he is said to have conquered Babylon and placed it under the control of the empire of the Medes (the Medes never conquered Babylon) and to have ruled before the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus of Persia (who ruled some fifty years earlier than the historical Darius).

torical verisimilitude with patent fiction without betraying the least awareness of contradiction or absurdity.

The mixture of history and fiction in such texts has been variously explained by scholars over the years. Some would argue that the authors of at least some of the more elaborately historical of these texts, such as 3 Maccabees or the *Letter of Aristeas*, set out deliberately to fool their audiences into accepting their works as literally true. Others have argued, with reference to the more outrageously anachronistic of these tales, such as Judith and Daniel, that the inclusion of patently false historical detail was intended precisely as a signal to the reader that these tales were fiction, or novels, similar to the absurdly anachronistic historical novel of Chariton. Yet there has never, up to now, been a systematic study of the use and misuse of historical tradition in these quasi-fictional Jewish texts. For what purpose did the authors of these texts deliberately combine history and fiction in their accounts of the past? For whom were they writing? Did they expect their audience to read their works as history, or as fiction? How in fact were these texts read, regardless of their authors' intentions?

In recent years, there has been an increasing tendency to categorize all Jewish texts that in some way blend history and fiction as members of a single literary genre, "romance." As a result, texts as varied as 3 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeas*, 2 Maccabees, Esther, Daniel, Judith, Tobit, several tales embedded in the *Jewish Antiquities* of Josephus, the fragments of Artapanus, and *Joseph and Aseneth* have all been lumped together as belonging to the category "Jewish novel."<sup>7</sup> To be sure, when certain individual characteristics of one or another of these texts are isolated, they bear a striking resemblance to some of the characteristics of the developing ancient novel in its many forms. No one of these texts, however, can be said to be generically identical with any of the ancient novels, nor indeed are they generically identical with one another. The attempt to illuminate the puzzling quality of any one of these texts by press-ganging them all into a single ill-defined genre amounts to a scholarly counsel of despair. It can result only in a meaningless abstraction.

Yet, when these texts are examined in relation to one another and in relation to other ancient fictions, certain patterns do emerge that may help us to better understand the popularity of Jewish fictions dealing with the past in the late Hellenistic period. To begin with the assumption of a shared genre, however, begs the very question that we are attempting to answer. I begin,

7. See the introduction to Part 1, below, for a short account of the development of this view in the secondary literature.



in Part 1, with a survey of the broad variety of so-called Jewish romances that create fictional accounts of the Jewish past, but in different ways and for varying reasons. I then proceed, in Part 2, to focus in depth on a single text, 3 Maccabees, in order to explore how one author creates a fictional account of the past, for whom, and for what purpose. Throughout both parts, I show that the so-called Jewish romances or novels are united not by their genre, which varies widely, but by a particular attitude toward the uses of the past in service of the needs of the present.

One reason for choosing 3 Maccabees as the primary focus of my study is that this text, unlike many of the other so-called Jewish romances, has received relatively little close attention in the scholarship. The Greek text, fortunately, offers few problems.<sup>8</sup> There are two good, and relatively recent, English translations with introduction and notes available.<sup>9</sup> There is, however, no full-length commentary or monograph on 3 Maccabees available in English, and indeed there is scarcely any full-length study available in any language.<sup>10</sup> I hope that I have gone some way toward rectifying this gap with the present study.

8. I have used Hanhart's 1980 Septuagint text throughout. There are minor textual variants that affect the sense of the text, but none of any great significance. A full critical apparatus may be sought in Swete 1899, Rahlfs 1935, and Hanhart 1980. Third Maccabees is preserved in only one of the three great uncial manuscripts of the Septuagint, the Alexandrinus (mid-fifth century C.E.); it is missing from the Vaticanus and the Sinaiticus. The Codex Venetus (eighth or ninth century) can be used to correct and supplement the text preserved in the Alexandrinus. There are also a number of useful minuscule manuscripts. There is, further, a less reliable corpus of minuscules, the so-called Lucianic Recension, which can be traced back to the revision of the Septuagint made by Lucian of Antioch (d. 312 C.E.). Third Maccabees does not appear in Jerome's Vulgate translation of the Septuagint, and thus is not part of the Roman Catholic Bible or the Protestant Apocrypha. It is therefore officially classified as pseudepigraphic. It is, however, part of the Eastern Orthodox canon. See Hadas 1953: 26–27; Anderson 1985: 509–10.

9. Hadas 1953 (with Greek text, facing translation, extensive introduction, and notes) and Anderson 1985 (English translation only, with a brief introduction and notes). Both offer an excellent introduction to the text but cannot take the place of a full-length commentary.

10. Anderson 1985 is intended merely as a brief introduction to the text in Charlesworth's *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Hadas 1953 (which includes both 3 and 4 Maccabees) is the closest thing to a full commentary available in English, with a lengthy (27-pp.) introduction and detailed notes at the foot of the text. His approach is, however, now outdated or controversial in several respects (see further discussion below, throughout Part 2), and leaves much room for further discussion. In other languages, there is only one full-length commentary available, a nineteenth-century German commentary (Grimm 1857), and one monograph, a Latin dissertation largely devoted to the refutation of secondary scholarship now long obsolete (J. Cohen 1941).

Throughout this work, I argue that in 3 Maccabees and other Hellenistic Jewish fictions, each author sought to recreate the past in his own particular way in order to shape his own particular vision of contemporary Hellenistic Jewish identity. It has been my intention to gain a better understanding of a little-understood group of ancient texts and through them a better understanding of the variety of Hellenistic Jewish communities in which these texts were created. The rewriting of history in order to build a sense of cultural identity is today a common topic of conversation on college campuses. It has not been my intention, in this study, to involve myself in the modern debate over the politics of identity; it is a dangerous proceeding to seek precise ancient analogies for modern controversies. I hope, however, that in gaining a better understanding of the ancient need to create identity through historical fictions, we may gain some insight into our current situation. In the ancient world, as in the modern, the need to envision one's own culture reflected in a particular way in the mirror of history was a powerful one.



# Acknowledgments

The project that became this book has been a long time in the making, and was born and nurtured by an exceptionally fortunate chain of circumstances. It has emerged from a long process of rewriting and reworking my 1996 dissertation, submitted under the title "Mirror, Mirror" to the University of California at Berkeley. The germ of the dissertation was born after I had attended Glen Bowersock's 1991–92 Sather Lectures on a subject, the ancient novel, that was then well outside my usual frame of reference as a historian, and while I was working as a research assistant for Erich Gruen, collecting bibliography on Hellenistic Jewish Greek authors (an early stage of what was later to become Professor Gruen's 1998 book, *Heritage and Hellenism*). It was further developed in a paper in the fall of 1992 written for a seminar taught by Erich Gruen, "Topics in Hellenistic History," and eventually became the topic of my dissertation. The present book's Part 1 was in 1996 a (rather unwieldy) final chapter applying insights gained from a close analysis of 3 Maccabees to other Jewish texts. In the years since 1996, that long final chapter has been heavily reworked to form the prequel or first half of the study in its present form, providing a broader context for understanding the phenomenon of Jewish historical fiction, while the primary original focus of the work, a close analysis of 3 Maccabees, has remained relatively unchanged. Throughout the process, I have benefited alike from the kind guidance of my editors at the University of California Press and the invaluable advice and suggestions of my older and wiser colleagues. My debt to all who have helped this book to come to fruition is greater than I can possibly express.

To all the members of my dissertation committee, Erich Gruen, Shadi Bartsch, Daniel Boyarin, and Susanna Elm, I am deeply indebted for their unfailing good humor and knowledgeable assistance. In a project that

crossed boundaries between religion and classics, the Greek world and the Near East, history and literature, their different perspectives were invaluable. Their expertise was exceeded only by their kindness.

Since the dissertation was submitted in 1996, it has undergone much reorganization and revision. In addition to Erich Gruen, whose continued advice and comments have been indispensable, I would like to thank those who have read and commented on the manuscript as it proceeded toward publication, including Carl Holliday and Louis Feldman, who reviewed the manuscript when it was submitted to the University of California Press, and my colleague at the University of Connecticut, Stuart Miller, who read the revised manuscript and has consistently served as a valuable link to an area of specialization somewhat later than mine, that of early rabbinic Judaism. I am particularly indebted to Louis Feldman, who provided me with exhaustive suggestions to improve the bibliography. If gaps remain in the bibliography (and other aspects of the book), the fault is entirely mine, not his, nor theirs.

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As this, my first book, approaches publication, my gratitude reaches back to my earliest teachers in this field: to Mabel Lang, Richard Hamilton, and

Gregory Dickerson, who patiently guided me through my first difficult acquaintance with the Greek language at Bryn Mawr, and to Simon Hornblower, my tutor in Greek history at Oxford, who first introduced me to the field of Hellenistic history, and especially to the fascinating problems of cultural interaction in the Hellenistic world.

Last but most certainly not least, I owe a special debt of thanks to all those at the University of California Press who have done so much to help this book along to publication. The classics editor during the early stages of acquisition, review, and revision was Kate Toll; without her infinite patience, encouraging words, and gentle prodding, this book assuredly would never have seen the light of day. My gratitude to her can never be fully appreciated except by those authors who were fortunate enough to enjoy her guidance through the publication process during her tenure at the press. After the manuscript entered the copy editing stage, I enjoyed the able and patient supervision of project editor Cindy Fulton and the brilliant editing of Paul Psoinos; if infelicities of prose style remain, the fault is entirely mine. I feel very fortunate to have had the guidance of such a consummate team of professionals throughout the process of publication.

This book is dedicated to my parents and to Erich Gruen. I have no words that would be adequate to express my gratitude to them. To my parents, I am indebted for a lifetime of emotional, moral, and financial support. They have seen me through far too many years of study, and this book is but a poor reward for all that I owe them. Erich Gruen has been the best of teachers, the best of advisors, the best of mentors, and the best of friends. Since my first days at Berkeley, he has never failed to provide me with wise advice, thorough criticism and unfailing encouragement and support. I owe my gratitude to him above all for whatever virtues are to be found in this volume; its faults are mine alone.



PART I

Historical Fictions  
and Hellenistic Jewish Identity



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Scholarship in recent years has tended increasingly to lump a large number of quasi-fictional Jewish—and, indeed, non-Jewish—texts into the vague category “romance” or “novel.” But this attempt to categorize all the so-called Jewish romances or novels as members of a single genre is both circular and ultimately quite unhelpful. How, then, must we understand the relationship of Jewish historical fictions to one another and to the spectrum of ancient fiction more generally? How do we decide what texts belong under this heading? Is it sensible to assign 3 Maccabees to some larger category, such as historical romance or historical novel?

Part 1 of this study begins to answer these questions. I survey the texts that have commonly been categorized as romances in order to discover what they have in common and whether it makes sense to call them representatives of a common genre. I show that there are indeed common elements by which these texts illuminate each other, although they in no way mirror one another exactly. We will see, too, that although it is problematic to suppose that all these texts belong to a single genre—since to do so must entail all the authors’ working with some common mold—nonetheless it is helpful to locate them in a category that I loosely designate “historical fictions,” a term I will discuss at much greater length.

First, let us briefly survey how these puzzling texts have been treated in recent scholarship, particularly in relation to the ancient novel. The problem of genre in relation to the ancient novel in the classical world is a controversy of long standing, one that extends well beyond the confines of the present study. On the one hand, at least some subgenres of the ancient novel, notably that of the Greek sentimental or ideal romance, share a constellation of highly stereotyped features, suggesting that their authors—or at least

those of the so-called Big Five<sup>1</sup>—were conscious of conforming to and developing a generic model that existed in their own and their audiences' minds. On the other hand, the genre (or genres) comprising the ancient novel were exceptionally fluid. Even among the novels that resemble one another most closely, it is possible to pick out significant differences of form and content, and the more broadly the category is expanded, the more difficult it becomes to assert any generic unity. What can we make of a category—the sentimental romance—that includes both the historical romance of Chariton and the pastoral romance of Longus? Or a category—the ancient novel, conservatively defined—that includes alike the sentimental Greek novels of love and adventure, and the satiric and ribald Latin novels?<sup>2</sup> Does the category “novel” mean anything at all if expanded to include the full range of ancient fictions and quasi fictions, from Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* to Lucian's *True Histories*?<sup>3</sup> A conservative approach will restrict the designation “novel” to the two classic subcategories—the sentimental novel as instantiated by the Big Five and the satiric novel as defined by Apuleius and Petronius—while accepting a much broader range of ancient fictions that more or less defy classification. I will use the terms “novel” and “fiction” in this sense henceforth.<sup>4</sup>

1. Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Xenophon of Ephesus's *Ephesiaca*, Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Cleitophon*, Heliodorus's *Aethiopica*, and Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe* (Stephens and Winkler 1995: 4, henceforth cited as Stephens 1995 for brevity).

2. This is the conventional division, which is reflected in the major examples to survive complete, the five Greek novels and the two Latin novels (Apuleius and Petronius). It was once thought, because of this accident of survival, that the Greek novels were exclusively sentimental, whereas the Latin novels were exclusively comic. We now have, however, increasing evidence that satiric novels were written in Greek as well (Stephens 1995: 7); the division can no longer be said to fall along the lines of language alone.

3. Few modern scholars would draw the definition of the term “novel” so broadly without qualification, but the problem of classifying marginal texts that are certainly fictional inside or outside the category of the ancient novel continues to be actively considered. Stephens (1995: 3) remarks that “a more up-to-date map of the terrain labeled ‘novel’ might be drawn to cover everything fictional and in prose from Petronius to the present.” (Note, however, the qualification “might”; the full discussion does not in fact define the term “novel” so broadly.) The problem of *True Histories* (which like the equally problematic *Alexander Romance* is included in Reardon's *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, if only as a marginal case) is discussed by Swain (1998: 8), who considers but rejects the claim of Lucian's work to be regarded as an ancient novel. Both discussions rightly allow that the category of ancient prose fiction is much wider than the category of ancient novel proper. See further Swain 1999: 3–12; Stephens 1995: 3–19.

4. The scholarly consensus on the novel is constantly changing, and the formulation I have adopted here may well be obsolete in the future. Stephens (1995:

There does exist a tentative scholarly consensus on the genre of the ancient novel as conservatively defined, but the secondary literature grows much confused when regarding texts that exhibit clearly fictional elements yet do not conform to the model of the sentimental or the satiric novel.<sup>5</sup> As has justly been observed: "Whereas all novels are fiction, not all fictions are novels."<sup>6</sup> The scholarly discussion of Jewish texts exhibiting clearly fictional elements has suffered correspondingly: there exists no working scholarly consensus on what genre, if any, applies for the range of Jewish historical fictions, and until L. M. Wills published *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World* in 1995, there had been a tendency to offer generic terms like "romance" or "Jewish novel" arbitrarily, with little or no systematic analysis to inform them.<sup>7</sup> Wills's work, however, although it marks the first truly systematic attempt at relating the full range of Jewish fictions to the broader

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4–5), for instance, though acknowledging that the canonical novels are still regarded as central, and other fictions as "marginal or as members of some other generic category," suggests that as we continue to discover and assimilate the fragments of previously unknown or neglected fictions, the ideal or sentimental romance may come to be regarded not as canonical for the entire genre but as one subcategory among many, none of which is truly canonical. In the meantime, however, there is some advantage in using the agreed-upon terminology. For now, I will restrict the term "novel" to those texts that can be classified within the traditional canon and use the more general term "fiction" for those texts that, for one of many reasons, fall outside the agreed-upon canon of the novel.

5. See above, n. 3.

6. J. R. Morgan, in *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World*, ed. C. Gill and T. P. Wiseman (1993), p. 176; quoted by Bowersock 1994: 10 n. 17.

7. Braun (1938) first formulated the category "hero romance," defined as a fictional history designed to build up one or more national figures as heroes whose achievements surpass those of every competitor. He applied this category to a range of texts, including, most important, the *Alexander Romance* and the fragments of Artapanus. Although there are some flaws in his analysis, it remains nevertheless a very valuable discussion, as he did not attempt to make sweeping declarations about similarities between a large number of Jewish texts and the canonical Greek novels but confined himself to a close analysis of texts that do in fact have a great deal in common. (See below, Chap. 3, "Artapanus," pp. 95–108.) Hadas 1949b subsequently attempted to make a more dubious comparison between 3 Maccabees and the Greek novel proper, particularly Chariton, that has been too widely followed. His comparison relied heavily on certain common details—for instance, the fact that the climactic scene of 3 Maccabees, like that of many sentimental novels, takes place in a public arena—and ignored the many significant differences, such as the fact that 3 Maccabees entirely lacks a romantic hero and heroine. This type of analysis, in which a few similarities are highlighted and the serious generic differences minimized, has become all too common in discussion of the so-called Jewish romances; it is one of the serious flaws in Wills's analysis, on which see below. As a result, the term "romance" or even "novel" has come to be more and more widely applied to a large number of Jewish texts in a casual way. Burchard 1985: 184 includes under the

spectrum of ancient fiction, nevertheless is seriously flawed in assuming (as its title indicates) what it intends to prove—namely that all Jewish fictions share a common genre and should be classified unambiguously as Jewish novels, a term implying close kinship with the ancient novel as traditionally and conservatively defined.

In Part 1, I argue that far from sharing a common genre, the various Jewish texts identified as containing significant fictional elements are based on a wide variety of genres, ranging—to cite only a few—from history to apocalypse and even, in one case, to the novel proper. Working within more or less traditional models, each text's author significantly modifies or manipulates the traditional form, to the point that many if not all of the surviving Jewish fictions must ultimately be classified as *sui generis*. In this diversity, they share the most notable characteristic of ancient fictions as broadly defined: the one generic characteristic that almost all of them share is the tendency to defy genre classification.<sup>8</sup> For this reason I refer to the so-called Jewish romances collectively as Jewish fictions—not because they belong to a common genre, but precisely because they do not. All the Jewish fictions contain a preponderant element of deliberate fiction (as opposed, say, to history, legend, or myth), but as we shall see, there is considerable variation in the way in which their authors intended them to be read—or, indeed, in the way they in fact were read.

The attempt to classify the broad range of Jewish fictions according to a single generic model is self-defeating and must be abandoned. The so-called Jewish romances differ from one another not only in genre but in original language, provenance, and ideological purpose. There is, though, one characteristic that they all share: all attempt in some way to manipulate and reshape traditions about the Jewish past in order to articulate a particular view of Jewish identity in the contemporary Hellenistic world. How they do this differs. Some simulate and manipulate the traditions of contemporary Hellenistic historiography, citing familiar names, dates, and events, and quoting documents for the sake of verisimilitude (3 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeas*, 2 Maccabees, Greek Esther, and, probably, certain tales preserved in Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*). Some draw more upon the historical tradition of the Bible, including both the historical accounts of the Assyrian,

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"ancient romance": "Ahiqar, Judith, 3 Maccabees, Daniel 1–6, certain passages from Josephus, the Life of Alexander, the Life of Aesop, the Pseudo-Clementines, the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, and the Greek novella."

8. Pervo 1976: 172, "the novel is probably the most formless of all ancient genres"; and see also the important discussion in Bakhtin 1981: 3–40, 61–68.

Babylonian, and Persian conquests (Esther, Daniel, Judith, Tobit) and the books of the Torah that preserve the quasi-legendary traditions of Jewish history before the establishment of the monarchy (Artapanus, *Joseph and Aseneth*).<sup>9</sup> As we shall see, there was no one dominant model of Jewish identity in the Hellenistic period: each author, each reader, each community was engaged in the process of reinterpreting the past in order to create the particular model of identity that worked best in each particular situation.

In reconsidering here the problem of genre and the nature of ancient fictions as it relates to a number of Jewish texts, I aim to suggest for the problem of Jewish historical fictions a new approach that, if applied in depth to any one of them, must yield more profound insights than I can offer in this study. I will argue that although the presence of historical fiction in Jewish texts has long been recognized, its significance has generally been misunderstood. These authors did not aim to fool their audiences with ersatz history. They were not careless or thoughtless in using traditions about the past. Nor was the use of obviously inaccurate historical detail meant only to flag their texts as entertaining fantasies, not to be taken seriously as truths about the past, as Wills concludes. I will show that in every case historical distortion—fiction—is used to serve the author's ideological purpose, undergirding the didactic lessons of the text. Of course, many fictional elements are entertaining, even hilarious, and were meant to be. But no matter how lighthearted the tone, fictions were employed consciously, thoughtfully, with a view to conveying and supporting the most serious messages. This ideological use of fiction, I argue, has often been missed or poorly understood, even in cases where fictional elements have long been recognized as such and the generally didactic thrust of the texts themselves is well known.

That entertaining, lighthearted Jewish texts can convey serious messages will come as news to no one. I will not suggest much that is new about their authors' didactic purposes. E. Gruen has argued forcefully in his *Heritage and Hellenism* (1998) that Jews of the Hellenistic period used the freedom afforded them by the writing of fictions about their past in order to explore and celebrate their own sense of identity. For my part, I will stress how each author has self-consciously used historical fiction to support his own particular purpose and message, deliberately reshaping the past in service to

9. It is a curious fact that no Jewish fiction, to my knowledge, deals with the period of the independent monarchy. Each in its own way struggles to explore the experience of the Jews living under foreign influence or foreign rule, an issue of acute interest both for those who lived in the Hellenistic Diaspora and those who were struggling to build an infant Hellenistic kingdom in Palestine, surrounded by the competing great powers.

the present. I believe that a willingness to take such historical distortions seriously, as significant evidence of an author's purpose rather than as careless or amusing flourishes, must lead future scholarship to deeper insights into the meaning of particular fictional texts.

In Chapter 1, I discuss a group of texts surviving as independent self-contained narratives preserved in or associated with the manuscripts of the Septuagint, all of them recounting allegedly historical incidents in the period after the fall of Israel and Judah, and ranging through the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Hellenistic periods. In Chapter 2, I consider certain tales embedded in Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* that also regard allegedly historical incidents of the same postmonarchic period but present special problems of distinguishing Josephus's treatment of these stories from their original late Hellenistic form. Chapter 3 takes up two texts that in different ways manipulate traditions about the period before the establishment of the monarchy: the so-called hero romance of Artapanus and the supposed Jewish novel *Joseph and Aseneth*. With the broader context of Hellenistic Jewish fictions established in Part 1, Part 2 analyzes in depth a single purported Jewish romance, 3 Maccabees.



# 1 Jews at Court

Any study of Jewish texts that purport to be historical while yet exhibiting significant historical anomalies must begin with seven that have survived as independent, self-contained narratives in or associated with the manuscripts of the Septuagint. All purport to give an authentic account of some incident in Jewish history, yet are so compounded with elements of the fantastic that the basic historicity of the events they report has been generally rejected. These texts include four composed originally in Hebrew or Aramaic and later translated into Greek—Esther, Daniel, Judith, and Tobit—and three analogous texts originally composed in Greek, the *Letter of Aristeas*,<sup>1</sup> 2 Maccabees,<sup>2</sup> and 3 Maccabees.<sup>3</sup> All are in some sense variations on the so-called court narrative—that is, a self-contained narrative focusing on the relationship between at least one prominent Jew and a foreign king, in which the Jewish hero inevitably emerges triumphant and the foreign king is humbled by or is reconciled with the hero,

1. Properly speaking, the *Letter of Aristeas* was of course preserved not through the manuscripts of the Septuagint, but via an independent manuscript tradition. The *Letter of Aristeas* is, however, so closely associated by its subject matter with the Septuagint tradition, and has so much in common with the Septuagint narratives, that I have thought it better to include it here rather than deal with it in a separate section.

2. Second Maccabees alone among these texts has, as a whole, some claim to be taken seriously as history, although many scholars are inclined to doubt its value as a historical source. I am, however, concerned not with the historical accuracy of 2 Maccabees' account of the Maccabean Revolt but with certain incidents embedded in the narrative preceding the revolt that most scholars regard as legends, such as Heliodorus's frustrated attack on the Temple in the reign of Seleucus IV. See below, pp. 13–16, 38–41.

3. Third Maccabees will be handled separately in greater detail below in Part 2. This chapter will deal with the remaining six texts.



or both.<sup>4</sup> Hence I have somewhat whimsically entitled this chapter “Jews at Court.”<sup>5</sup>

All these texts, together with others that we will treat in later chapters, have at times been assigned in the scholarly literature to a single genre, romance or novel.<sup>6</sup> This problematic category, however, apart from being exceedingly ill defined, does little to enhance our understanding of the texts either individually or as a group. Rather than attempt to force these texts into an *a priori* category so broad as to be meaningless, I begin by considering what they do have in common and then consider how they are distinct from one another. For they do indeed have significant elements in common, and our understanding of these texts both individually and as a group can be enhanced by studying them comparatively. The differences among them, however, are as illuminating as the similarities, if not more so.

The common element among all these texts that has earned them the label “romance” is easy enough to identify superficially: All contain legendary or fictional material intentionally fashioned to fit into the framework of a coherent historical narrative. In this, these texts are quite different from earlier texts containing legends, as L. M. Wills correctly points out.<sup>7</sup> Herodotus includes in his history both legends, from the plausible to the patently absurd, and matters of historical fact, such as inscriptions, dates, and battles, but he makes little or no effort to harmonize the two or to adapt the one to fit the other. To take another example, it appears that chapters 1–6 in the

4. Humphreys 1973 further subdivides the type of the court narrative into “court conflicts,” in which the courtier is unexpectedly plunged into danger by the jealousy of his rivals but is miraculously preserved and restored to favor at the eleventh hour, and “court contests,” in which the courtier proves his superior wisdom in competition with other courtiers and thus impresses the king and secures high office. The two subtypes are often mixed. There is a rich recent literature on the genre (loosely defined) of the court narrative, focusing especially on Esther and Daniel. For further bibliography, see Wills 1995: 41; Wills 1990: 1–12; and the seminal article by Humphreys 1973.

5. I am here severely oversimplifying the case. The classic examples of the court narrative are Esther and Daniel 1–6, but there are certainly problems, to some degree, with classifying 3 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeas*, and 2 Maccabees in this way. Moreover, it should be observed that the preoccupation with relations between the Jews and their foreign rulers does not begin and end with court narratives; almost all the texts with which I will ultimately be dealing (e.g., Artapanus’s life of Moses, *Joseph and Aseneth*, Josephus’s tales of the Tobiads, and so forth) could be said to share the same concern. My grouping of these six texts is necessarily somewhat arbitrary, but it will prove fruitful in the analysis.

6. Most recently, e.g., Wills 1995; Pervo 1987: 86–114.

7. Wills 1995: 5, and cf. 40–52 (on the development of Daniel from corpus of legends into narrative fiction).

Book of Daniel originated as a cycle of unrelated tales clustering around a single figure or group (Daniel and his friends), and only in the version that we now have was some effort made to fit the legends into a coherent historical narrative. It is at this latter point that the line is crossed between pure legend (which would be irrelevant to the present discussion) and self-conscious fiction.<sup>8</sup> Let us, then, examine the texts before us, to see exactly how they perform the alchemy of transmuting legend into history.

Our discussion will first document a problem, showing that each text's author has deliberately fashioned legendary or fictional material into the semblance of historical narrative, and will then return to each text to understand the purpose of this deliberate misrepresentation of history. Though to proceed thus will result in repetition, as in effect I treat each text twice, the consideration of the problem separately from the purpose for each text will illuminate precisely what common features these texts do and do not share. It will also indicate why all these texts have caused scholars similar problems of interpretation, even when their original languages, origins, audiences, forms, and purposes are altogether different. I show that essentially the same technique—deliberately interweaving history and fiction—can be and is used to address very different goals in a wide variety of settings.

The most remarkable example of self-conscious historical fiction in the Hellenistic period is certainly the *Letter of Aristeas*.<sup>9</sup> The letter presents itself as the narrative of one Aristeas, a distinguished Greek (i.e., gentile)<sup>10</sup> courtier of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (r. 285–245 B.C.E.) who witnessed at first hand the translation of the Jewish Scriptures and who now wishes to give an account of the translation for his learned brother Philocrates. According to his account, the Torah was translated on the initiative of Philadelphus himself, under the close supervision of Demetrius of Phalerum, the founder of the Alexandrian library.

In fact, there is no independent evidence that this Aristeas or his brother Philocrates ever existed.<sup>11</sup> The *Letter of Aristeas* is not autobiographical, although it purports to be. Rather, the third-century Greek courtier Aristeas

8. Wills 1995: 44.

9. On the *Letter of Aristeas* generally, see Meecham 1935; Hadas 1951; Pelletier 1962; Shutt 1985; Schürer 1986: 684; Modrzejewski 1995: 65–66, 99–106; Barclay 1996: 138–50; Gruen 1998: 209–11; Collins 2000: 97–103, 191–95.

10. For Aristeas's self-representation as a gentile, see, e.g., *LtAris* 3, 6, 16, 112, 128–29, 306; cf. Meecham 1932: 92; Pelletier 1962: 56.

11. Schürer 1986: 677; Meecham 1932: 135.

is a dramatic persona adopted by a second-century Jewish author.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, although the translation may have taken place in the reign of Philadelphus,<sup>13</sup> the initiative most likely came not from the king but from the Jewish community at Alexandria.<sup>14</sup> Demetrius of Phalerum, at any rate, can have had nothing to do with the matter, since immediately upon accession Philadelphus exiled him.<sup>15</sup>

Yet Aristeas (for our second-century Jewish author has no other name) not only went to the trouble of inventing a fictional narrator and pretend-

12. The degree of detailed knowledge of and interest in Jewish customs exhibited by the author make it virtually certain that he is a Jew; one need only consider Eleazar's detailed exposition of Jewish dietary law (128–71) to see that the *Letter of Aristeas* could scarcely have been composed by a gentile, no matter how sympathetic. Cf. Meecham 1932: 92–93; Pelletier 1962: 56; Shutt 1985: 9; Schürer 1986: 684; Gruen 1998: 210–11. Moreover, the author betrays himself through frequent anachronisms. He not only uses official formulas characteristic of the later second century (Bickermann 1930) but occasionally slips out of his persona to remark on the customs of “those times” (*LtAris* 28, 182; Meecham 1932: 139–40). The precise date of the *Letter of Aristeas* remains a matter for dispute (Gruen 1998: 210 n.76; Collins 2000: 98–101), but there is widespread agreement that the text must be dated, in the broadest terms, “some time in the second century” (Schürer 1986: 684). See also Meecham (1932: 94–109), who, after an extensive review of the evidence, favors “the later Ptolemaic period (say about BC 100)”; Pelletier 1962: 57–58; Goldstein (1991: 9, 18), who favors a narrow limit between 163 and 130 or even more narrowly in the 130s B.C.E.

13. The earliest citations from the Greek Pentateuch are found in the later third century B.C.E. (in the fragments of Demetrius the Chronographer; see Holladay 1983: 51–54), suggesting that a date ca. 250 B.C.E. for the translation of the Torah is not unreasonable.

14. Hadas 1951: 68; cf. Schürer 1986: 491–92. Modrzejewski 1995: 102–6, however, has recently made the fascinating suggestion that there might indeed have been some degree of royal initiative if, as he believes, the Torah was put to practical use in local law courts dealing with Jewish litigants. Modrzejewski (1995: 106) compares the translation of the Torah with Philadelphus's translation of the Demotic Case Book (an Egyptian legal handbook) into Greek during the same period. This is a most intriguing idea, but unfortunately the examples Modrzejewski gives (1995: 107–12) do not seem to clearly show that the Torah was ever used in such a way. Still, the possibility that some degree of royal initiative was involved cannot be ruled out, whether motivated by practical legal concerns or by the cultural ambitions that Aristeas emphasizes.

15. Demetrius of Phalerum had supported Philadelphus's brother, Ptolemy Ceraunus, as Soter's heir. When the question was decided in favor of Philadelphus and Soter associated Philadelphus with himself on the throne in 285 B.C.E., Philadelphus immediately arranged to have Demetrius exiled (Hadas 1951: 7, with references; see also Meecham 1932: 135–38; Pelletier 1962: 66–67; Gruen 1998: 209). To be sure, the error would be caught only by a reader with a fairly good knowledge of early Ptolemaic history, but the well-educated Alexandrian Jew at whose level the text is consistently aimed might easily have had that knowledge.

ing to give an eyewitness account of contemporary events—an act of bizarre creativity difficult to parallel—but went to extraordinary lengths to buttress his fiction with convincing detail. He supplies reams of official correspondence, all composed to mimic the style of the Ptolemaic chancellery (*LtAris* 29–51). He introduces a host of well-known literary figures from the early third century, including not only Demetrius of Phalerum, who plays a leading role, but also others such as Menedemus of Eretria.<sup>16</sup> He introduces an Arsinoe, no doubt intended to evoke the more famous of Philadelphus's two wives named Arsinoe, his full sister Arsinoe II.<sup>17</sup> He gives names to every one of the seventy-two priests. He invokes both Philadelphus's reputation for fabulous wealth<sup>18</sup> and his reputation for cultivating the society of intellectuals.<sup>19</sup> And lest there be the slightest doubt left in the reader's mind, Aristeeas goes out of his way to insist that what he has written is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but.<sup>20</sup> So thoroughly did Aristeeas succeed in creating a believable fiction that the veracity of his account was not doubted until the seventeenth century.<sup>21</sup>

Whereas the *Letter of Aristeeas* represents itself as an eyewitness narrative but proves on closer examination to be a self-conscious fiction from beginning to end, 2 Maccabees appears at first sight to be made of sterner stuff. It represents itself as an epitome of a five-volume history of the Maccabean Revolt by one Jason of Cyrene (2 Macc. 2.19–27), chronicling in detail events

16. Menedemus of Eretria appears as one of those present at the symposium hosted for the translators. He admires the wisdom of the Jewish sages and cites with approval their belief that “man is a creature of God” and that “all power and beauty of discourse have their starting point from God” (*LtAris* 201). Menedemus of Eretria (d. ca. 287 B.C.E.) was a Socratic philosopher and a friend of Antigonos Gonatas. He died too early to have visited the court of Philadelphus, although he may have visited the court of Soter. Cf. Hadas 1951: 7, 178–79 n.201; Meecham 1932: 139, 327–28.

17. It is unlikely that the author meant to fix the date of his tale precisely within the short period of Philadelphus's marriage to Arsinoe II (ca. 275–70 B.C.E.); rather, this detail is part of the portrayal of the quintessential Philadelphus of history, evocative in the same way that Anne Boleyn is evocative for the reign of Henry VIII.

18. Cf. the extended ephrasis on the gifts sent to Jerusalem (*LtAris* 51–82).

19. Most notably in the extended symposium scene (*LtAris* 198–301) and of course in the references to individuals such as Demetrius of Phalerum and Menedemus of Eretria.

20. *LtAris* 296–97, οἶμαι δὲ καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς παραληφθεμένοις τὴν ἀναγραφὴν ἄπιστον φανέται. ψεύσασθαι μὲν οὐκ οὐ καθήκον ἐστὶ περὶ τῶν ἀναγραφόμενων· εἰ δὲ καὶ τι παραβαίην, οὐχ ὅσιον ἐν τούτοις· ἀλλ', ὡς γέγονεν, οὕτως διασαφούμεν ἀφοσιούμενοι πᾶν ἀμάρτημα. He goes on to declare that the accuracy of his account can be confirmed by consulting the royal records (298–300).

21. H. Hody (1659–1707) was the first to question it (*Contra Historiam Aristeeae de LXX Interpretibus Dissertatio* [Oxford, 1685]). Cf. Shutt 1985: 8.

that can for the most part be confirmed from other sources.<sup>22</sup> Yet on closer inspection it also proves to contain fictional or legendary material reworked as history—most important, the account that it gives of the life and death of Onias III.

The high priest Onias III is the central figure in the opening chapters of 2 Maccabees, the hero whose character and actions foreshadow the later role of Judah the Maccabee. The opening words of the main narrative attribute entirely to Onias the unbroken peace (*πάσης εἰρήνης*, 2 Macc. 3.1) that the Jews enjoyed under Seleucid rule before the accession of Antiochus IV.<sup>23</sup> It was because of Onias's piety and hatred of wickedness (*εὐσεβείαν τε καὶ μισοπονηρίαν*, *ibid.*) that the Seleucid kings treated the Temple with respect and even generosity (3.1–3). It is Onias who withstands the attempt of Heliodorus, minister of Seleucus IV (r. 187–175 B.C.E.), to invade and plunder the Temple (3.4–40), and when Onias is murdered at Antioch by an agent of Menelaus, the Greeks of Antioch and Antiochus IV himself are filled with indignation and pity (4.33–38). Later, Onias appears to Judah in a vision on the eve of the crucial battle with Nicanor, side by side with no less a man than the prophet Jeremiah, who bestows upon Judah a golden sword, a symbol of divine favor and victory (15.12–16).<sup>24</sup>

22. The historical reliability of 2 Maccabees, compared to other sources for the Maccabean Revolt such as 1 Maccabees, Josephus, and Daniel, is a matter of controversy. (See, e.g., Goldstein 1983, with extensive bibliography.) However reliable or unreliable, it was certainly dealing (unlike 3 Maccabees or the *Letter of Aristaeas*) with a series of historical events that are also recorded by other historical sources and is generally treated by scholars (again unlike 3 Maccabees and the *Letter of Aristaeas*) as a legitimate historical source, if not necessarily a trustworthy one. Our discussion, however, will focus on the legendary material embedded within the historical narrative.

23. The main narrative of 2 Maccabees begins at 3.1. The first two chapters contain introductory material: two cover letters (1.1–9; 1.10–2.18) and the epitomator's preface (2.19–32). The exact relationship of the letters to the epitome is bitterly disputed (Goldstein 1983: 26, 137–88). Most scholars argue that the letters cannot have been added by the author of the epitome, since the letters contradict the main narrative at several points; rather, they must have been attached to the epitome at some point by some third party. Yet there are striking similarities between the epitome and the letters, both in content and in theme. The letters themselves, dated respectively to 124 and 164 B.C.E., may or may not be forgeries. It is possible that scholars have been overly hasty in dismissing the possibility that the author of the epitome was also responsible for attaching, if not indeed composing, the cover letters. Regrettably, however, this is not the place to reopen this fascinating question. I therefore exclude the letters from this discussion and focus upon the main narrative beginning at 2 Maccabees 3.

24. Parente 1994: 73 also notes this passage (2 Macc. 15.12–16) as an indicator of Onias's extraordinary importance for the author of 2 Maccabees.

There is no doubting the significance of the figure of Onias for the historical account of 2 Maccabees. Yet although Onias III, son of Simon the Just (Sir. 50.1–21), was certainly a historical figure, we know almost nothing about him beyond what is recorded in 2 Maccabees. Josephus scarcely mentions him.<sup>25</sup> Neither is he mentioned by the author of 1 Maccabees, who is concerned only with the events that followed Jason's usurpation of the high priesthood.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the traditions recorded by the author of 2 Maccabees are highly suspect. The Heliodorus incident bears a striking resemblance, down to the smallest details, to the experience of Philopator at Jerusalem described by the author of 3 Maccabees (1.9–2.24). There can be no doubt that the two are variants of the same popular legend.<sup>27</sup> In fact, this particular legend is a subtype of a motif broadly attested both in Greek and in Near Eastern literature, that of the invader who is driven back from a temple by an epiphany of the offended god.<sup>28</sup> Although it is quite possible that this particular instance of the legend may distantly reflect a genuine conflict over Temple treasures in the reign of Seleucus IV,<sup>29</sup> most historians have rightly rejected the incident as largely or wholly fictional.<sup>30</sup>

The tradition regarding the death of Onias is likewise suspect. According to the author of 2 Maccabees, after taking refuge in a pagan temple at

25. Josephus, *AJ* 12.156–57, 223–25 (cf. 20.236, apparently relying on a different source from that used for *AJ* 12; see Hölscher 1940: 7, 19); Goldstein 1983: 199. For a recent detailed discussion of Onias's career and the conflicting traditions surrounding his death, see Parente 1994: 69–98 (incidentally arguing that Onias III did not in fact die, either naturally or by foul play, but fled to Egypt and there was the original founder of the Leontopolis temple).

26. The author of 1 Maccabees does not of course mention Jason by name, but he clearly alludes to his activities at 1.11–15.

27. There is no need to assume that the author of 3 Maccabees borrowed the episode directly from 2 Maccabees or vice versa. Rather, as in the case of the variants of the elephant legend attested in 3 Maccabees and in Josephus's *Contra Apionem*, we have here evidence of a popular legend that recurred at different times and in different places with essentially the same narrative structure but a different cast of historical characters. See further below, Chap. 5, pp. 183–90.

28. Goldstein 1983: 198.

29. There is a pattern of incidents involving Seleucid kings and the plundering of temples in the years following the defeat of Antiochus III at Apamea (Goldstein 1983: 200). It would appear that Antiochus III, Seleucus IV, and Antiochus IV were somewhat strapped for cash during this period, and resorted to a time-honored method for evening up the balance sheet. Moreover, it appears that Daniel 11.20 refers to such an incident in the reign of Seleucus IV: "Then shall arise in his place one who shall send an exactor of tribute through the glory of the kingdom; but within a few days he shall be broken, neither in anger nor in battle" (RSV). Cf. Goldstein 1983: 196–97.

30. *Pace* Goldstein 1983: 196–97.

Daphne Onias was murdered by one Andronicus, a courtier of Antiochus IV. When Antiochus returned to Antioch, he was appalled and promptly had Andronicus executed (2 Macc. 4.33–38). This is suspiciously reminiscent of the account given by Diodorus of the death of the young Antiochus, the ward of Antiochus IV.<sup>31</sup> According to Josephus,<sup>32</sup> by contrast, Onias III died a natural death. The details given in 2 Maccabees for the life and death of Onias III are thus almost purely fictional, but they have been intelligently and carefully integrated into the larger historical framework. As a result, the debate over the historicity of these events has continued to this day.<sup>33</sup>

Whereas 3 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeas*, and 2 Maccabees all deal with the relations of the Jews with their foreign rulers in Hellenistic times and were unquestionably composed originally in Greek, these texts appear to be closely related to four others originally composed largely in Hebrew or Aramaic that are concerned rather with the relationship between the Jews and various Near Eastern kings: Esther, Daniel, Judith, and Tobit.<sup>34</sup> In these texts, as in 3 Maccabees, a patently legendary narrative is located within a fictional historical context integral to the story.

The Book of Esther unfolds ostensibly at the court of a Persian king identified in the Hebrew text as Ahasuerus and in the Greek as Artaxerxes.<sup>35</sup>

31. Diodorus 30.7.2; cf. John of Antioch F 58 (C. Müller, ed., *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum* [Paris, 1878–85], 4.558–59); Mørholm 1966: 42–50; Goldstein 1983: 238–39.

32. *AJ* 12.237–39. Parente (1994: 69–98) considers yet a third strand of the tradition (*BJ* 1.31–33, 7.420–36), according to which Onias III did not die but fled to Egypt to found the temple at Leontopolis (which his son Onias IV would then have inherited).

33. Cf. Goldstein 1983: 196–97, 238–39.

34. See below, Chap. 4, pp. 141–69 for an analysis of the common threads that link 3 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeas*, and 2 Maccabees on the one hand and Daniel and Esther on the other. In this study, I deal primarily with the later Greek versions of Esther, Daniel, Judith, and Tobit, which translate and freely adapt the Semitic originals. I do not therefore deal at any great length with the differences between the Hebrew/Aramaic versions and the Greek versions, or the extent to which changes and developments may have occurred in translation. To the extent that these texts share significant characteristics, those characteristics are in many cases as evident in the Hebrew/Aramaic versions as they are in the Greek versions, as I will show. To what extent these texts should then be considered characteristic of developments in Near Eastern literature or Greek literature, or of a dialogue between the two, must remain an open question, which deserves much further study.

35. As mentioned in the previous note, I focus on characteristics common to both Masoretic and Greek versions of the Book of Esther, but the subject of the development of novelistic features in both Hebrew and Greek versions cries out for further study. The complex tradition history of Esther in particular offers a rich field for this type of research. The relationship between the Masoretic text of Esther and the two



This is unmistakably Xerxes the Great (r. 485–465 B.C.E.), leader of the invasion of Greece in 480.<sup>36</sup> Lest the reader have any doubt, the author clearly<sup>37</sup> identifies the Persian king as “the one who reigned from India to Ethiopia

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Greek versions (the so-called A Text and the Septuagint or B text) has received several important studies recently; cf. Clines 1984, Fox 1991b, and Day 1995. Fox (1991b) convincingly argues that the Greek A text and the Masoretic text represent different traditions expanding and revising a single proto-Esther Hebrew text and that the Septuagint represents a Greek version of the Masoretic text that has been expanded and revised with the help of the A text. The date and provenance of proto-Esther and its Masoretic descendant are still open to debate. I have recently argued (“Novelistic Elements in Esther: Persian or Hellenistic, Jewish or Greek?” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, forthcoming) for a Persian or at the latest very early Hellenistic date for the Masoretic text, suggesting that the novelistic features already seen in Hebrew Esther may in fact be an internal development within Second Temple Persian-era Hebrew literature rather than a mark of Greek influence in the second century B.C.E. In the brief compass of this overview, however, such intriguing questions must be set aside.

36. Esther makes, to be sure, no reference to this event. No doubt from the point of view of Xerxes and his subjects who lived under Persian rule a failed raid into territories that lay on the far western border was of little significance.

37. Levenson 1997: 23, 43; Fox 1991a: 14–15; Moore 1971: 3–4; Paton 1908: 51–54. The identification is explicit in the Hebrew. The Hebrew text begins simply (1.1): “In the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces. . . .” Among all the Persian kings whose name was some variant on *Ahashwerosh* (in Greek, Artaxerxes or Xerxes), it has become clear from comparison with Persian, Babylonian, and Aramaic inscriptions that the Hebrew spelling of the name used here (*hshwrwsh*, not *ahashwerosh*, as at Ezra 4.6, Dan. 1.9, Tob. 14.15) can refer only to Xerxes I (Paton 1908: 51–54; Moore 1971: 3–4), and it appears that the author chose this spelling precisely in order to avoid ambiguity (Moore 1971: 3). The Greek text, which adds an introduction not found in the Hebrew (A1–17), rather repetitively identifies the king twice: once, in its own words, as “Artaxerxes the Great” (A1: Ἐτους δευτέρου βασιλεύοντος Ἀρταξέρξου τοῦ μεγάλου) and a second time where it takes up the translation of the Hebrew (1.1: καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τοὺς λόγους τούτους ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἀρταξέρξου—οὗτος ὁ Ἀρταξέρξης ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰνδικῆς ἑκατὸν εἴκοσι ἐπὶ χωρῶν ἐκράτησεν). Both the formula “Artaxerxes the Great” and the description of his dominions seem to indicate that the Septuagint translator was still thinking of the famous Xerxes but misrendered the name as Artaxerxes; he may have been misled by the more common biblical spelling of Ahasuerus, *Ahashwerosh*. Josephus, however, was confused by the use of the name Artaxerxes in his Greek source and identified this king as Artaxerxes I (Paton 1908: 53). Nevertheless, the description both in Hebrew and in Greek of the extent of Ahasuerus’s territories clearly fits Xerxes I better than any of his successors. Xerxes himself boasted thus of the extent of his dominions in a foundation tablet from his palace at Persepolis, citing both India and Ethiopia by name in a long list of territories (Moore 1971: 4). His claims are confirmed by the account of Herodotus (3.97; 7.9, 65, 69–70). Such an extended empire is consistent with the time of Darius and Xerxes but not with that of a later Persian king such as Artaxerxes I (r. 465–425 B.C.E.) or II (r. 404–358 B.C.E.) (Paton 1908: 54).



over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces."<sup>38</sup> The events of the tale are precisely dated by the years of Ahasuerus's reign (Esther A1, 1.3, 2.16, 3.7, etc.), and the narrative is liberally seasoned with realistic historical details consistent with what we know of Xerxes himself and with the practices of Persian rule.<sup>39</sup> As in 3 Maccabees and the *Letter of Aristeas*, the author of the Masoretic text frequently refers to official records, including both royal chronicles (2.23, 6.1, 10.2) and royal edicts (1.22, 3.12, 8.9–14); the author of the Septuagint version goes still further, inserting purportedly verbatim copies of two of Ahasuerus's decrees (B1–7, E1–24). Most striking, the author intentionally echoes historical biblical narratives, opening with a formula conventional in the historical books of the Bible<sup>40</sup> and closing with an invitation to the reader to consult the "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of the Medes and Persians" for an exact account of Ahasuerus's reign.<sup>41</sup> Thus

38. The reference may be to provinces (Heb. *medinot*), not satrapies, of which there were never more than 31 (Moore 1971: 4); cf. the 120 provinces (*medinot*) supposedly governed by Daniel's Darius the Mede (Dan. 6.2, 9.1). Alternatively, both Esther and Daniel are grossly exaggerating the number of satrapies in the Persian empire—entirely possible, given their unconcern with precise historical accuracy in other respects. Fox (1991a: 15, 139–40) argues that the reference is to satrapies, and that therefore Esther cannot date before the Hellenistic period, since no Persian reader would accept the notion of 127 satrapies; but Levenson (1997: 25–26) rightly objects to the assumption that the audience would have been disturbed by obviously un-historical details. It is in any case hard to believe that even a Hellenistic reader would have accepted 127 satrapies as historical!

39. The action takes place at Susa (1.2, 5–6), where Xerxes did indeed have a winter palace that has been explored in archaeological excavations (Moore 1971: xxxix, xli). The Xerxes described by Herodotus, at times lavish and expansive, at others capricious and violent, is consistent with the portrayal of his character in Esther (1.47, 5.3 and 6.6–7 illustrate Xerxes' better side, while 1.12 and 7.7–8 hint at his darker half; cf. Paton 1908: 64; Moore 1971: xli). The author is, moreover, intimately familiar with Persian administration and customs, such as the seven wise councilors who advise the king (Esther 1.13–14; Ezra 7.14; Hdt. 3.31, 84); the famous postal system instituted by Cyrus (Esther 3.13, 8.10); and the custom of obeisance or *proskynēsis* so despised by the Greeks (3.2, e.g.), to name only a few examples (Paton 1908: 65; Moore 1971: xli). See also Levenson 1997: 23–27; Fox 1991a: 134–35; Gordis 1976: 44 with n. 11.

40. The opening phrase "and it came to pass" (Esther 1.1, Heb. *wyhy*, Gk. *καὶ ἐγένετο*) is paralleled in the historical books of Joshua, Judges, and 1 and 2 Samuel; it seems to be deliberately intended to invoke the opening of an authentic biblical historical narrative in the archaic style (Paton 1908: 64; Berg 1979: 2; Moore 1971: 3). Berlin (2001: xxvii) makes the intriguing suggestion that the author's intent is to burlesque historiography rather than pay homage to it; perhaps there is an element of both.

41. Esther 10.2: "And all the acts of his power and might, and the full account of the high honor of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?" (RSV); *καὶ τὰν*

the author of Esther, like the authors of 3 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeas*, and 2 Maccabees, uses every device at his disposal to create a believable historical setting for his story.<sup>42</sup>

There can be no doubt, however, that the story itself is the stuff of fiction and legend. Many elements of the story are easily recognizable as legendary motifs: the loyal Jewish courtier who saves the king from his gentile enemies, for instance, or the king who is persuaded to persecute the Jews by evil advisors, only to discover his mistake at the eleventh hour, so that the Jews are restored to favor and their enemies are utterly confounded.<sup>43</sup> The accumulation of romantic details and fantastic coincidences leading to a melodramatic dénouement would not have been out of place in any fictional tale, from the *Odyssey* to the ancient novels. The historical narrative, although superficially realistic and convincing, is rife with inconsistencies, anachronisms, and errors.<sup>44</sup> Finally, it has been argued that Purim itself,

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ἰσχνὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνδραγαθίαν, πλούτον τε καὶ δόξαν τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ· ἰδοὺ γέγραπται ἐν βιβλίῳ βασιλέων Περσῶν καὶ Μήδων εἰς μνημόσυνον. In the same way we find cited in 1 and 2 Kings "The Book of the Acts of Solomon" (1 Kings 11.41), "The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" (1 Kings 14.19 and in sixteen other places), and "The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" (1 Kings 14.29 and in fourteen other places); cf. also 2 Chronicles 25.26, 32.32. This may conceivably refer to a popular Jewish chronicle of the Persian period, now lost, similar to the sources used by the authors of Kings and Chronicles (Paton 1908: 304; Moore 1971: 99), but is much more likely a complete fiction invented on the analogy of Kings and Chronicles. Moore (1971: xxxv) assumes that the author would never have dared to extend such an invitation except in good faith. The response of Fox (1991a: 136) is apposite: "The same argument would prove the actuality of Lilliput, since Gulliver's (fictitious) publisher assures the reader that he received Gulliver's papers from Gulliver himself." I argue throughout this study that the authors of these works do not behave as if they expected to be checked or tested; they seem in fact to be cheerfully oblivious of the possibility of being caught or exposed in the creation of a fictional version of history. These authors did not share our prejudices and assumptions about what makes a good historical fiction (i.e., one without errors, which is theoretically undetectable as fiction). Cf. below, Chap. 5, pp. 190–216.

42. Regarding Esther's use of written documentation, Clines (1984: 22) acutely observes that "no part of the Old Testament story is more overtly oriented towards the practice of keeping written records of events and decisions. . . . In Esther, reality tends towards inscripturation, and attains its true quality only when it is written down." Gordis (1981: 375) actually suggests that the author is deliberately emulating the style of a Persian chronicle written by a gentile scribe.

43. There has been an abundant scholarly literature identifying and analyzing obvious folk and legendary motifs in the plot of Esther; see Wills (1990: 1–12) for a survey of some of the most recent bibliography on this subject.

44. Examples are legion, but to name only a few of the more ludicrous: Mordecai was carried off in the Exile in 597 B.C.E. (Esther 2.5) but is still alive and flourishing to be made prime minister in the twelfth year of Xerxes (474 B.C.E.), 123 years

which the narrative of Esther undertakes to explain, is originally not a Jewish but a pagan festival of unknown origin and that the story of Esther is very likely therefore to reflect not a concrete episode of Jewish history but a pagan myth, taken over by the Jews during the Exile and rearticulated in the light of Jewish life under Persian rule.<sup>45</sup> At most, the adaptation of the legend to a Jewish setting under Persian rule may conceivably reflect a forgotten incident of persecution under Persian rule, just as the adaptation of the elephant legend to various Hellenistic settings in 3 Maccabees and Josephus may reflect some forgotten persecution under the Ptolemies.<sup>46</sup> As a historical source for the reign of Xerxes, however, we may safely conclude that the value of Esther is nil.

Where the Book of Esther centers around one particular legend set in the reign of Xerxes, the narrative portion of the Book of Daniel (1–6) contains a series of tales centered around the prophet Daniel and represented as taking place under a succession of Near Eastern monarchs. Daniel is an apocalyptic text—the first of its kind,<sup>47</sup> although the apocalypse was to become

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later (3.7, 8.2); Xerxes holds an empirewide search for a wife and chooses the unknown but lovely Esther, although Persian law required that the queen be drawn from one of seven noble Persian families (Hdt. 3.84); even had Persian law allowed a woman like Esther to become queen, we know that Amestris, not Esther, was queen between the seventh and twelfth years of Xerxes' reign (Esther 2.16, 3.7; cf. Hdt. 7.114, 9.112); and moreover, in the year in which Esther supposedly arrived at court (480 B.C.E., Esther 2.16), Xerxes would have been fighting in Greece. For a more complete discussion, see Levenson 1997: 23–27; Fox 1991a: 131–40; Moore 1971: xlv–xlvii; Paton 1908: 71–77.

45. The name of the festival, Purim, is explained by the author as being derived from the word *pur*, that is, “lot” (3.7; 9.24, 26). As this indicates, the word *pur* is not native to Hebrew. It is, in fact, derived from the Babylonian word *puru*, which means “lot” or “fate” (Moore 1971: xlvii). A popular explanation for the origin of Purim suggests that the festival was originally a historicized Babylonian myth or ritual, in which Mordecai and Esther represent the Babylonian gods Marduk and Ishtar (Moore 1971: xlvii–xlviii; Paton 1908: 87–94). Others trace the legend to the rituals of the Persian New Year (Moore 1971: xlvii–xlviii; Paton 1908: 84–87). A range of theories is reviewed by Gordis 1976: 44 with n. 10. In any case, the attempt to seek a historical kernel in the narrative of Esther is likely to be futile.

46. See below, Chap. 5, pp. 183–90. Gordis (1981: 382–88) goes further than most in attempting (somewhat unconvincingly) to defend the historicity of Esther, but even he allows that Esther represents at best “a traditional reworking of what may well have been a real historical incident” *ibid.* 386).

47. With the possible exception of parts of Enoch. Some parts of Enoch may be significantly older than Daniel, but direct dependence of Daniel on Enoch cannot be demonstrated; rather, both texts have an early, experimental character, demonstrating an fascinating degree of parallel thought development (Collins 1993: 58–60).

an easily recognizable genre in the following centuries.<sup>48</sup> Written during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes as a commentary upon and interpretation of the events of the Maccabean Revolt (167–164 B.C.E.), Daniel consists of a narration of significant events in the life of the prophet in exile, followed by a series of apocalyptic prophecies supposedly uttered by Daniel in those years. Daniel is a legendary historical figure twice mentioned by Ezekiel (14.14, 28.3); it was to become traditional for the author of an apocalypse to attribute his visions to a famous individual from the past.<sup>49</sup>

Daniel's status as a genuine historical figure and the historical context of his prophecies are established by the author with some care. Each of chapters 1–6 in Daniel recounts a different legend: the prophet's arrival at court (Dan. 1.8–21), Nebuchadnezzar's dream about the idol with feet of clay (2.1–49), the three youths in the fiery furnace (3.1–30), Nebuchadnezzar's bout of madness (4.1–37), Belshazzar's feast and the writing on the wall (5.1–31), and Daniel in the lion's den (6.1–28). It seems clear that these legends were originally quite independent of one another.<sup>50</sup> In the current version, however, great care has been taken to provide for the tales a consistent historical framework, and to create a logical narrative progression.<sup>51</sup> In fact,

48. We will return to the problem of genre below. There has been an explosion of recent literature on the literary genre of the apocalypse; see especially Collins 1998: 1–42; Collins 1993: 52–60; Collins and Charlesworth 1991; Collins 1984: 2–24; Collins 1979; Hanson 1975.

49. E.g., Adam, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham (Collins 1998: 6). See Collins (1993: 1–2) for the references to a legendary Daniel in Ezekiel and perhaps elsewhere. The Daniel of the Exile seems to have little in common with his legendary prototype except his proverbial wisdom and his name. He is, for all intents and purposes, an invented fictional character with a distinguished pedigree.

50. Collins 1993: 28, 35; Wills 1995: 44. Daniel 3 does not even mention Daniel but focuses only on his companions. They have a tendency to prove the same point over and over, and even in our current text the transitions from one chapter to the next are abrupt and artificial. Moreover, there is significant evidence that they were originally attributed to the reigns of several different Babylonian and Persian kings without regard to the sequence they now have: Daniel 2 may have been associated with Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel 4 with Nabonidus (not Nebuchadnezzar), and Daniel 6 with Darius I of Persia (not the mysterious Darius the Mede). See further discussion below.

51. It is usually argued that Daniel 2–6 at least were brought together and bound into narrative form before the collection was used by the redactor(s) who added Daniel 7–12 in the Maccabean period. Collins (1993: 26–38) argues for the following sequence: tales, circulating independently (third century B.C.E.); Daniel 2–6 collected and Daniel 1 composed, in Aramaic (late third century?); Daniel 7 added, in Aramaic, in the very early Maccabean period, before 167 B.C.E.; Daniel 8–12 added (in Hebrew) and Daniel 1 translated into Hebrew between 167 and 164. I will be considering the collection of Daniel 1–6 primarily in its current context, without speculating at any great length about earlier redactional layers. However, I briefly

Daniel 1 was composed with the clear intention of providing a framework within which the other tales may be understood.<sup>52</sup> It sets the scene by narrating Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim (1.1–2).<sup>53</sup> It explains that Daniel and his companions were brought to court as part of a program to educate nobly born foreign youths in the service of the Babylonian court (1.3–5). It also explains (1.6–7) why Daniel and his companions are called on the one hand Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (their Hebrew names, used in the Hebrew portions of the text), and on the other hand Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (the Babylonian names assigned to them by the chief eunuch, used in the Ara-

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reconsider theories about the redaction history of the text below where I discuss the significance of the peculiar chronology of Daniel 1–6.

52. Collins 1993: 35, 129–30. The introduction was most likely originally added in Aramaic by the redactor who collected the Aramaic tales of Daniel 2–6, some time before redactor(s) appended the prophecies of Daniel 7–12 in the Maccabean period. As it now stands, Daniel 1, like Daniel 8–12, is in Hebrew; the Hebrew introduction may be a translation of the original Aramaic or a substantial revision or substitution dating from the Maccabean period.

53. There is some chronological confusion in this passage. Jeremiah 25.1 clearly identifies the first year of Nebuchadnezzar with the fourth (not third) year of Jehoiakim (Collins 1993: 130). The third year of Jehoiakim (r. 609–598 B.C.E.) was 606 B.C.E., at which point Judah was temporarily under Egyptian domination and Nebuchadnezzar (r. 605–562 B.C.E.) had not yet succeeded his father, Nabopolassar. (Nebuchadnezzar is attested as crown prince in the Babylonian Chronicle in 607, but did not succeed his father until 605, after the battle of Carchemish; Wiseman 1985: 12–19.) Moreover, in the detailed account of the Babylonian Chronicle there is no reference to any siege of Jerusalem before 598/7 (Wiseman 1985: 23). It seems clear that the author of Daniel is in fact referring to the first deportation of 597, an account of which is given in 2 Kings 24. Jehoiakim had transferred his allegiance from Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar but revolted after three years (2 Kings 24.1), probably in 601 (Collins 1993: 132). Jehoiakim died of natural causes just a month before the siege began (598 B.C.E.), and was succeeded by his son Jehoiakin (2 Kings 24.6), who ruled but three months (24.8) before Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar in the spring of 597 (Wiseman 1965: 32). Second Kings 24.10–17 and 2 Chronicles 36.5–8 give an account of Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem, the deportation of the king Jehoiakin (mistakenly identified as Jehoiakim in 2 Chronicles) and the leading nobles, and the removal of the Temple treasures, to all of which events Daniel 1.1–2 clearly refers. The claim of Daniel that Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar in the third year of Jehoiakim seems to arise from a confused reading of two points in the biblical text: the report of 2 Kings 24.1 that Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar after three years and the mistaken reference of 2 Chronicles 36.5–8 to the deportation of Jehoiakim rather than Jehoiakin (Collins 1993: 132). Evidently, precise chronological accuracy was not our author's first concern (Montgomery 1927: 114; Collins 1993: 132), but it is worth noting that the author of Daniel, like the other authors we have been considering, likes to give the appearance of historical precision even as he is indifferent to genuine historical accuracy.

maic portions of the text). Finally, it specifies the end point of the historical framework of the story by specifying that Daniel lived into the first year of King Cyrus (1.21).<sup>54</sup>

Within this framework, each legend occupies its place in history. Nebuchadnezzar's dream is placed early in his reign (Dan. 2.1); Daniel's success in interpreting it leads to his promotion to the (anachronistically named) office of chief satrap of Babylon and his friends' promotions to correspondingly high positions (2.49). The legend of the three men in the fiery furnace likewise takes place in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, although subsequently, as shown in Daniel's friends' now being called high officials at Babylon (3.12). Nebuchadnezzar's bout of madness, finally, is narrated by the king himself in an alleged royal letter, from a perspective well advanced in the king's reign, when he has survived the tribulations of his illness sent by God to humble him (4.37). The evolution of Nebuchadnezzar's character over time is thus established: he early recognizes Daniel's abilities and promotes him (2.49), is impressed enough by the incident of the fiery furnace to pass legislation protecting the Jews from any interference in their worship (3.29), and finally is driven by his sufferings to personally acknowledge the power of the Most High over himself and his kingdom (4.2, 34-37).

The final chapters of the narrative portion of Daniel take place under subsequent kings. The interpretation of the writing on the wall is set in the reign of Belshazzar, who is represented as the son of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 5.2, 10-11, 13). This, as it happens, is quite incorrect. Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus (r. 556-539 B.C.E.), the last of the Neo-Babylonian kings, who was overthrown by Cyrus in 539. Belshazzar never ruled as king but merely served as regent in his father's absence. Moreover, three kings ruled between Nebuchadnezzar and Nabonidus. The author of Daniel thus radically compresses and rewrites Neo-Babylonian history, leaping from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, in which Daniel was highly honored, to the reign of his "son" Belshazzar, in which Daniel has so fallen from favor that the queen mother

54. In conventional historical terms, this would establish the time period of the narrative as spanning the Exile (597-539 B.C.E.), beginning with Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem (2 Kings 24) and ending with Cyrus's conquest of Babylon, which was shortly to be followed by the restoration of the Jews to their native land (Ezra 1.1-3). In fact, as we shall see, the author's view of history was highly eccentric. Since Cyrus was closely associated in Jewish history with the end of the Exile, however, as Nebuchadnezzar was with its beginning, a roughly similar time period was probably envisioned by the author of Daniel, despite the curious sequence of kings whom he represents as having reigned in the interim.



must remind her son of Daniel's existence (5.11). As is appropriate for a king whose kingdom is soon to be overthrown, Belshazzar recognizes and honors Daniel's wisdom only too late: he is slain that very night by Darius the Mede (5.30).

Darius the Mede, under whose reign Daniel's trial in the lion's den takes place, is a peculiar historical construct. The author's description of Darius's satrapal reorganization (Dan. 6.1–2) makes it quite plain that a much later king is meant, Darius the Great of Persia (r. 522–485 B.C.E.). The appellation "the Mede" is doubly nonsensical. Not only was Darius not a Mede, but the Medes never ruled at Babylon; the Neo-Babylonian empire was overthrown in 539 B.C.E. by Cyrus of Persia, who had already swallowed up the empire of the Medes a decade earlier. In the view of Daniel's author, however, Darius was not a Persian but a Mede, and his reign did not follow Cyrus's but preceded it. Thus Nebuchadnezzar is succeeded by his "son" Belshazzar, who is overthrown by Darius the Mede, who is eventually succeeded by Cyrus the Persian (6.28). The author's understanding of history is completely irreconcilable with the facts as we understand them. He has to all intents and purposes created a sort of alternative reality, a fictional background to the years of the Exile.

It should be observed, however, that this alternative history of successive Babylonian, Median, and Persian empires in Daniel's lifetime is scrupulously maintained throughout. It holds good not only in the narrative structure imposed upon the legends of Daniel 1–6 but also in the apocalyptic interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream at 2.37–45. According to Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom is the first of four to come: it will be followed by a kingdom of silver (the Medes), one of bronze (the Persians), and one of iron, which will eventually develop feet of clay (the Greeks). This fictional history also underlies the four prophecies in the second part of Daniel, two of which are located in the reign of Belshazzar (7.1, 8.1), one in the reign of Darius the Mede (9.1), and one in the reign of Cyrus of Persia (10.1). The historical context of the prophecies, then, exactly parallels the imagined historical reality evoked in the narrative chapters 1–6. We will examine the implications of this correlation below; for now, it is enough to observe that the author's vision of historical reality, however bizarre it may appear to us, is consistently applied throughout. It is in no way capricious or random but is a deliberate fictional creation integral to the purpose of the text.

Unlike Daniel's author, who has created a consistent, if eccentric, apocalyptic vision of successive world empires, the author of the Book of Judith invents a version of Jewish history utterly disorienting in its strangeness. Yet the historical allusions are not careless or incidental. On the contrary,

fully half the book (Jth. 1–7) is given over to the detailed narration of Holofernes' invasion, which forms the historical background of the story. We do not meet Judith until 8.1, by which time the mind is fairly spinning with the byzantine diplomacy of unheard-of kings, the maneuvering of armies, and incomprehensible catalogues of place names.<sup>55</sup>

According to the author of Judith, the story begins in the twelfth year of Nebuchadnezzar, who rules over the Assyrians(!) at Nineveh (Jth. 1.1).<sup>56</sup> (We

55. It is precisely this first half of the narrative of Judith, with its seven chapters loaded with historical and geographical details that are apparently grossly inaccurate, irrelevant to the plot, and unbalanced in relation to the rest of the narrative, that has attracted the bulk of negative comments from critics over the years. While acknowledging the artistry of later chapters, critics have been sorely vexed to account for the nature and purpose of the initial chapters. Cf. Moore 1985: 37–38, 46, 52–56, 123–24 (reviewing a number of valiant but unconvincing efforts to account for the historical and geographical errors in the narrative), 56–59 (on the apparent imbalance of the two halves of the narrative); Alonso-Schökel 1975: 3–5; Craven 1983: 3. In recent years there has been an increase in the appreciation shown for the literary and thematic function of the opening chapters (Moore 1985: 56–59; Craven 1983: 9, 47–48, 53–59; Alonso-Schökel 1975: 4), but the function of the historical anachronisms in the story has still not been fully appreciated. Alonso-Schökel (1975: 19) simply dismisses the attempt to establish precise historical referents for the characters in Judith as futile, remarking that in a work of fiction “any resemblance of the characters to living persons is casual.” Moore (1985: 79, 85, 124, 129; cf. Alonso-Schökel 1975: 11; Craven 1983: 72) suggests that the historical contradictions are meant to signal the ironic nature of the story, thus launching the narrative with a “sly wink”; Wills (1995: 134) argues similarly that they are meant chiefly to signal the fictional, nonreal nature of the story. The historical contradictions may well serve both these purposes, but I argue that they do more. The first chapters of Judith, while they may have playful aspects, also have a quite serious and well-thought-out purpose, and are in fact a tour de force of deliberate historical fiction, designed to manipulate the facts of history in specific ways for a specific purpose. The Book of Judith is comparable to the *Letter of Aristeas* in its conscious attention to detail, although the style of fiction produced is fantastic (since the reader can immediately identify it as fiction) rather than realistic. (Contrast the *Letter of Aristeas*, which was read as history for fully fifteen hundred years.) I return to this point below.

56. Nebuchadnezzar (r. 605–562 B.C.E.) was of course king not of the Assyrians but of the Neo-Babylonians. The Neo-Babylonians had overthrown the Assyrians with the help of the Medes in 612 B.C.E., some years before Nebuchadnezzar succeeded to the throne (Moore 1985: 46, 123). Although it is sometimes said that the imagined date of the story is 587 B.C.E., based on the reference to the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar in Jth. 2.1, this conflicts with the explicit statement that the Jews had recently returned from exile (Jth. 4.3) and the generally postexilic setting supposed for the story (Moore 1985: 50, and see below). The imagined date seems rather postexilic than preexilic (see below), but it is better not to assign any one calendar date from history as the imagined setting of the story, since no one date is consistent with all the indications given. It may be noticed, however, that these problems are a direct result of the author's tendency to juxtapose many indications of



learn subsequently [4.3, 5.19] that this was shortly after the Jews returned from exile and built the Second Temple.)<sup>57</sup> In this year, Nebuchadnezzar goes to war with one Arphaxad, who rules over the Medes at Ecbatana (1.1–5).<sup>58</sup> Nebuchadnezzar's allies include "all those who lived along the Euphrates and the Tigris and the Hydaspes,"<sup>59</sup> as well as one Arioch, an otherwise unknown ruler of the Elamites. Nebuchadnezzar invites the Persians and the western nations, including Egypt, to join him, but they refuse (1.7–11).<sup>60</sup>

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precise chronology (Jth. 1.1, 1.13, 2.1, etc.; see Moore 1985: 38) with a historical setting that cannot be located in real time; the author has deliberately created an insoluble paradox.

57. The author thus substitutes Nebuchadnezzar, who was responsible for the destruction of the Temple in 587 B.C.E., in the place of Cyrus of Persia, who conquered Babylon in 539 and restored the Jews to their homeland shortly afterwards.

58. Arphaxad the Mede is unknown. We are treated to several lines of quite irrelevant detail, in the manner of Herodotus, about Arphaxad's building projects at Ecbatana, which supposedly serve to identify this imaginary king (1.2–4). See Moore 1985: 124–25. The historical conquest of Ecbatana, to which this passage seems to vaguely allude, came in 554 B.C.E. at the hands of Cyrus the Persian (Moore 1985: 46–47). The author's use of names resembles his use of precise dates. There is an abundance of personal names that sound very plausible but either cannot be identified with any known historical figure (Arphaxad, e.g.) or do not map properly onto the historical figure they supposedly invoke (Nebuchadnezzar, e.g.). This use of apparently precise but inaccurate detail is deliberately paradoxical: it invites the reader to read the narrative as reliable history only to confound the expectations the author himself has taken pains to raise when the details prove utterly unreliable. Cf. Moore (1985: 39) for the author's use of personal names to create the illusion of verisimilitude.

59. The Hydaspes was a river in India, seemingly relocated by the author to Mesopotamia (Moore 1985: 125–26). The details of geography, and the names of ancient peoples, given throughout the book are as apparently abundant and precise, and as unreliable when put to the test, as are the personal names and the dates. Many are quite unknown to us; it is hard to know whether this is because the names have been corrupted in transmission, forgotten or lost, or were simply invented by the author. See Moore 1985 (39–44) for a catalog of names; Moore 1985 (47, 137–38) for some of the most outrageous geographical blunders. Alonso-Schökel (1975: 11) considers the possibility that this "fantastic use of topography," like the deliberate juxtaposition of historical absurdities, might be intentionally ironic, inviting the reader to share a private joke with the author.

60. The description of the western nations is interesting. It includes, among many others, Carmel, Gilead, the Upper Galilee, Samaria, and Jerusalem. This seems to reflect the political divisions of the Persian period, which were in turn taken over from the administrative arrangements of the Assyrians and the Babylonians. The "western nations" are, however, represented as if they were quite independent and capable of negotiating on their own behalf with their greater neighbors, a state of affairs more reminiscent of the eighth century B.C.E., when Israel and Judah were still more or less independent kingdoms, capable of negotiating with the Assyrians and the Egyptians.

Nebuchadnezzar in his seventeenth year succeeds in conquering Arphaxad (1.16), and in his eighteenth year (2.1) he turns his attention to the recalcitrant West. Holofernes, Nebuchadnezzar's chief general, is dispatched to lead the western invasion and to tell the nations "to prepare earth and water" (2.4–13).<sup>61</sup> There follows an account of Holofernes' campaigns, rendered largely incomprehensible by geographical errors or impossibilities and unknown place names (e.g., 2.21–27). The other nations promptly surrender and are forced to worship Nebuchadnezzar as their only god.<sup>62</sup> The Jews alone prepare to make a stand, at a place called Bethulia (4.6).<sup>63</sup> When Holofernes tries to find out what sort of people would resist his army (5.2–4), Achior the Ammonite narrates the entire history of the Jews, from the wanderings of Abraham down to the return from exile, in order to convince Holofernes that unless the Jews have recently sinned against God he will be unable to defeat them (5.5–21).<sup>64</sup> For his pains, Achior is bound and turned

61. Earth and water are of course the signs of submission demanded by a Persian (not an Assyrian) king: so Darius and Xerxes demanded earth and water from the Greeks (Moore 1985: 50, 133). The name Holofernes is not attested in connection with Nebuchadnezzar, although it is attested for the Persian period. It has often been suggested that his career is loosely based on that of a Persian general named Holofernes who led an invasion of the West under Artaxerxes III Ochus around 350 B.C.E. (Diod. 31.19; cf. Moore 1985: 55, 132–33).

62. No such policy is known from the time of Nebuchadnezzar; this seems to be an anachronistic reference to the perceived policy of Antiochus IV in 167 B.C.E. (Moore 1985: 143). It has often been suggested that the figure of Nebuchadnezzar is a coded reference to Antiochus IV (e.g., Montague 1973: 8, among more recent treatments). (This particular pseudonym theory was most elaborately proposed by Ball 1888; see Moore 1985: 52–56.) That Antiochus IV is one of historical tyrants encoded in the archetypal figure of Nebuchadnezzar the Assyrian is beyond dispute (Moore 1985: 55–56), but given the constellation of foreign invaders whose attacks on Israel are encoded in this archetype, it seems unduly narrow to view Nebuchadnezzar the Assyrian as a one-on-one representation of Antiochus IV in disguise. For invocations of Antiochus IV, Judas Maccabee, and the Maccabean period, see Moore 1985: 50–51; Hengel 1974: 1.140. For further discussion of the historically coded archetype of Nebuchadnezzar the Assyrian, see below.

63. Bethulia cannot be identified (Moore 1985: 47, 150–51). Shechem may have been the primary model, but it is likely that Bethulia is simply a fiction, at once every place and no place. Thus Bethulia, like Nebuchadnezzar, may be considered an archetype constructed using details borrowed from real historical models. The significance of this will be considered below.

64. This Deuteronomistic view of history, placed in the mouth of an Ammonite, may also be seen in Judith's speeches to the magistrates of Bethulia (Jth. 8.18–20) and to Holofernes (11.10; Moore 1985: 48). Achior's narrative goes down into the postexilic period, to describe the return of the Jews from exile and the rebuilding of the Temple. Moore (1985: 48) rightly observes that the supreme anachronism of describing Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the Temple, and the subsequent return of the Jews from exile, to the general of a Nebuchadnezzar who in his eighteenth year

over to the Jews of Bethulia (6.10), and the place is besieged (7.1–18). Only when Bethulia is on the verge of surrender (7.30–31) do we at last meet the heroine of the story (8.1).

What are we to make of this exceedingly odd historical fantasy? The author is unwavering in locating the story shortly after the Exile: that is, early in the Persian period (late sixth or early fifth century). This is consistent with numerous Persian touches in the story: the name Holofernes itself, the fact that Holofernes demands “earth and water” (Jth. 2.7), the administrative divisions of the Jews, and the fact that the Jews are governed by a high priest ruling from Jerusalem (4.6), to list only a few examples.<sup>65</sup> Yet the author is equally adamant in replacing the benevolent Persian king Cyrus with a historical fantasy named Nebuchadnezzar the Assyrian, who seems to be Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, and Antiochus IV<sup>66</sup> rolled into one. Just as the mythical Bethulia is every Israelite city ever besieged and yet none of them, Nebuchadnezzar is every persecutor who ever came out of the East to inflict misery upon the Jews and yet none of them. The fact that the actual tormentor is not the king himself but a general whose name vaguely

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has supposedly not yet destroyed the Temple or carried the Jews off to Babylon, can hardly be anything other than deliberate. As Moore (1985: 59) sees, the figure of Achior is pivotal and unites the two halves of the narrative, for he “has one foot solidly planted in the first part . . . and his second foot resting in the other.” I return to the pivotal figure of Achior later in this chapter, pp. 46–48.

65. See above, n. 61. Moore (1985: 50–51) rightly observes that the book’s setting is in the Persian period (more or less) while its date of composition belongs in the Hasmonean period, and that the two should be kept distinct. What Hengel (1974: 1.140) calls a “strong nationalistic colouring inspired by the Maccabean war of liberation” influences the portrayal of the archetypal struggle against the archetypal tyrant (see below) but is hardly meant to suggest a Hellenistic setting.

66. Although the king bears the name and much of the persona of Nebuchadnezzar, perhaps the best-known historical example of the archetypal persecutor of Israel (cf. Dan. 2–4), like Sennacherib he rules over the Assyrians from Nineveh, and like Sennacherib his armies will turn baffled from the siege of a Jewish city, in no small part because of God’s intervention; like Antiochus IV, the king (at least as represented by Holofernes) demands worship as a god, and as in the case of Antiochus IV, the king’s designs against the Jews will end not in destruction and exile but in victory and independence for the persecuted. (Interestingly, Alonso-Schökel [1975: 13] finds in precisely these three models a precedent for the author’s decision to develop the narrative around a king and his general rather than around the king alone.) In other words, Nebuchadnezzar is not an ahistorical archetype, but a trans-historical archetype—one who invokes simultaneously all the historical persecutors the harassed nation of Israel has ever known. Thus he is all of them and yet none of them. The use of a historically constituted archetype, rather than a specific historical king, enables the author to elevate the conflict to near eschatological levels. Cf. Alonso-Schökel 1975: 4, 16.

recalls that of a historical Persian general, who might have served under any king, intensifies the curiously timeless impression of this elaborately constructed historical fable. Judith herself is an archetype: her name means "Jewish woman."<sup>67</sup> We will explore the significance of this use of historically grounded archetypes below.

Of all the texts considered in this chapter, the Book of Tobit has the most tenuous claim to be considered a historical fiction, in any sense of the word. Tobit is almost purely folklore and fable;<sup>68</sup> the historical allusions that anchor it in time are few. Such historical moorings as it does have, however, have much in common with the endlessly shifting pseudohistorical universe of Judith.<sup>69</sup>

67. As an archetype, the central, title figure of Judith is of course a very complex figure; both as that of a woman and as that of a person of faith, her behavior defies conventional expectations, and much of the most stimulating recent literature deals with this complexity. My concern here, however, is chiefly with the historically grounded archetypes in the story, above all the figure of Nebuchadnezzar. The complex issues raised by the more ahistorical archetype that Judith represents are beyond my scope. For some of the more intriguing recent approaches to Judith as archetype, see (in addition to Craven 1983 *passim*) A. Levine 1992a: 17–30; White 1992: 5–16; Bal 1995: 253–85.

68. There is a rich and abundant literature analyzing folkloric patterns in Tobit, with which I do not deal for the most part since my interest is more in the (less prominent) element of conscious historical fiction, a very different thing. (See Wills [1995: 40–52] on Daniel for the difference between oral tradition/legend/folk tale and conscious historical fiction.) Some (e.g., Blenkinsopp 1981: 38) argue that the element of folklore in Tobit is so preponderant, and the element of conscious fiction or novel so small, that it would be better to omit Tobit from the list of supposed Jewish novels altogether; but see Wills (1995: 75–76) for a defense of regarding Tobit as a literary fiction. The seminal work in any recent analysis of folklore motifs is Propp 1968 (the second edition of the English translation of Propp's 1928 Russian work). For an application of Propp's morphological approach to biblical literature and specifically to Tobit, see Blenkinsopp 1981: 27–46, esp. 37–38; the critique of Blenkinsopp in Milne 1986: 35–60, esp. 46–51; Milne 1988; and, most recently, Soll 1988 and 1989. For an earlier discussion of folk motifs in Tobit that precedes the publication of Propp in English, see Zimmermann 1958: 5–12. For a more general discussion of Tobit as a didactic fairy tale, providing "carefully crafted instructions for how Jews should live in exile," see A. Levine 1992b: 42–51.

69. Although the historical references that anchor Tobit are few, and thus might seem less deserving of analysis than the much more elaborate historical fictions found in other texts, Soll (1989: 219) astutely remarks that the presence of any historical references is quite out of keeping with the predominantly folkloric character of the book; their insertion by the author therefore all the more demands explanation. Soll (1989: 219–21) rightly goes on to stress the importance of understanding how the author of Tobit has transformed his "fairy-tale source" into what Soll cautiously terms a "Jewish sacred book," a written document that is intended to instruct and edify.

Ostensibly, the historical setting of the book is fairly clear: Tobit was taken into exile together with the rest of the northern tribes by the Assyrians and has taken up residence at Nineveh. The version of Assyrian history given by the author seems to be based on 2 Kings 17–19. Tobit tells us that he was taken into captivity in the days of Shalmaneser (Tob. 1.2).<sup>70</sup> Shalmaneser was succeeded directly by his “son” Sennacherib (1.15);<sup>71</sup> Sennacherib was in turn swiftly killed by his elder sons and succeeded by his younger son, Esarhaddon (1.21).<sup>72</sup> This account is riddled with minor errors, but it is entirely consistent with the narrative of 2 Kings.<sup>73</sup> There are, however, more glaring historical errors. In the first place, Tobit apparently claims to have

70. This agrees with the account of 2 Kings 17.6 and 18.9–12, which attribute the fall of Samaria to Shalmaneser (r. 727–722 B.C.E.; Moore 1996: 10, 101). The credit for completing the siege of Samaria (begun in 724 by Shalmaneser) is repeatedly claimed in Assyrian texts by Sargon II (r. 722–705 B.C.E.), who seized the throne after Shalmaneser’s death late in 722 (Moore 1996: 101–2; Bright 1981: 275). Exactly which king deserves the credit is still a matter for dispute (Roux 1980: 287); recent scholarship (Cogan and Tadmor 1988: 197–201) suggests that Samaria was first taken by Shalmaneser in 722 but later retaken and depopulated by Sargon II in 720 (Moore 1996: 102). At any rate, the significant point here is that the author of Tobit gives an account consistent with the historical source most readily available to him. See Zimmermann 1958: 12–13.

71. Again, this is consistent with the account given in 2 Kings, which mentions Shalmaneser’s attack on Samaria (17.6, 18.9–12) and the attacks of Sennacherib on Judah (18.13–19.35) but omits the name of Sargon entirely. Sennacherib (r. 705–681 B.C.E.) was not Shalmaneser’s son, but Sargon II’s; Sargon II (r. 722–705 B.C.E.) had seized the throne by force after Shalmaneser (r. 727–722 B.C.E.) died (Moore 1996: 101, 102, 119). Sargon II’s origins are obscure (Roux 1980: 287).

72. Tobit 1.15–21 clearly seems to imply that Sennacherib died soon after his abortive siege of Jerusalem. Tobit 1.18 explains that Tobit used to bury Israelites killed by Sennacherib “after he came in retreat from Judah, in the days of judgment when the King of Heaven punished him because of the blasphemies he uttered”; in 1.19–20, Tobit is forced to flee into hiding because of his defiance of the king; and in 1.21, we are told: “Not forty days had elapsed before two of Sennacherib’s sons murdered him” (trans. Moore 1996: 115–16 with nn., pp. 119–22). Sennacherib, as it happens, had a long and prosperous reign (705–681 B.C.E.) before his son Esarhaddon (r. 681–669 B.C.E.) came to the throne. As Moore (1996: 121) remarks, the “not forty days” may refer to the time expired after the seizure of Tobit’s property rather than the time after Sennacherib’s return, but the passage certainly does not lead us to believe that Tobit buried Israelites in perfect security for nearly twenty years before Sennacherib caught up with him! The confusion is again due to the account of 2 Kings, which mentions Sennacherib for the first time in the context of his march on Judah in 701 B.C.E. (18.13–19.35) and then reports his death at the hands of his elder sons (19.37) as if it occurred immediately after the king’s return from Jerusalem to Nineveh (19.36), omitting to mention that twenty years had expired in the interim.

73. See above, nn. 70–72.

witnessed the revolt of the northern tribes against Jerusalem.<sup>74</sup> This is utterly absurd, since that quarrel took place at the time of the division of the kingdoms fully two hundred years before, in 922 B.C.E.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, we are told that before Tobit's son Tobias died at the advanced age of 127, he heard of the destruction of Nineveh (as prophesied by Tobit at 14.4)<sup>76</sup> at the hands of "Nebuchadnezzar and Ahasuerus" (14.15). Nineveh was in fact overthrown late in the seventh century—in 612 B.C.E., a date consistent with Tobias's living to hear of it—but was conquered not by Nebuchadnezzar (r. 605–562 B.C.E.) or by Ahasuerus (i.e., Xerxes, r. 485–465 B.C.E.) but by Nabopolassar of Babylon (r. 626–605 B.C.E.) and Cyaxares the Mede (r. 625–585 B.C.E.).<sup>77</sup> The reference to Nebuchadnezzar is at least anachronis-

74. Tobit 1.4: ὅτε ἤμην νέος, πᾶσα ἡ φυλὴ Νεφθαλεὶμ τοῦ πατρός μου ἀπέστησαν ἀπὸ τοῦ οἴκου Δαυὶδ τοῦ πατρός μου καὶ ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ, "When I was still a young man living in my own country, Israel, the entire tribe of my ancestor Naphtali deserted the House of David and Jerusalem." Unless we are to understand this as some kind of cryptic pluperfect ("had deserted") indicating the continuous state of separation into which the young Tobit was born, it is hard to avoid coming to the conclusion that Tobit claims to have witnessed the separation in 922 B.C.E.

75. The chronology is ludicrous even on the terms given within the work itself, as Moore (1996: 107) observes: "Were that really the case, then Tobit (who had gone into exile sometime between 732 and 721) would have been over 200 years old when he *first* arrived in Nineveh, all of which contradicts Tob 14:2, where Tobit died at the age of 112." Moore seems to think that the author has unintentionally given this impression by a poor choice of wording ("the erroneous impression given in the Septuagint"), but I argue below that the implication that Tobit witnessed the separation is quite deliberate and has a specific ideological point to it, however chronologically absurd it may be. A parallel lack of concern for chronology on this scale can be found in Esther, where Mordecai is said to have been one of the exiles of 597 B.C.E. although he is now living in the reign of Xerxes over a hundred years later; see on Esther, above.

76. Since Tobit himself experienced the exile of the ten tribes to Israel in 721 B.C.E., and also foresees the downfall of Assyria to come in 612—a prophecy whose fulfillment is witnessed by his son—his life may be said to span the Assyrian Exile of Israel, as Daniel's life spans the Babylonian Exile of Judah. He virtually personifies the exiled tribes of Israel. Cf. A. Levine 1992b: 48: "Like the nation in exile, Tobit suffered, but he realized that heaven does hear prayers, that righteous action eventually will be rewarded and that family and community will continue." Soll (1989: 222–25) also seems to see Tobit as a personification of the nation in exile; he comments that the misfortunes suffered by Tobit are "acute manifestations of the chronic condition of exile" and that the author has deliberately imposed this "dislocation" on his fairy-tale source by locating (or rather dislocating) the story in specific time and place, a place foreign to the characters that inhabit it (Soll 1989: 222). See further discussion of the significance of this historical symbolism below.

77. Moore 1996: 297.



tic, and the reference to Ahasuerus borders on the ridiculous.<sup>78</sup> One is tempted, at first glance, to suppose that the author of Tobit simply picked these names out of a hat.

Thus, although the historical references in Tobit are few, it will be seen that this text, like the others that we have been discussing, combines the evocation of a concrete historical context (via its references to Shalmaneser, Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon) with a disregard for historical accuracy equaled only by the author of Judith.<sup>79</sup> Thus Tobit and the other texts that we have been considering offer us much the same problem: How can we explain the paradox of a text's meticulously evoking a realistic historical setting while yet utterly disregarding the historical facts?

This question seeks the very heart of what these texts' authors hoped to achieve. Did they hope to fool their audiences into accepting their tall tales for truth? This has certainly been argued, at least for some of the more realistic accounts.<sup>80</sup> And to be sure, Aristeeas does vow, in the most solemn accents, that he is telling the truth, whatever the skeptics in his audience may

78. The bizarre impression given by this careless reference is paralleled by considerable manuscript confusion. The Greek manuscript tradition represented by Sinaiticus, which now tends to be favored by scholars as the more reliable witness to the original text (Moore 1996: 53–60; Zimmermann 1958: xi–xii, 39–42), credits the destruction of Nineveh to a completely unknown King Achiacharos [Ahiqar?] of Media (Tob. 14.15, Ἀχιάχαρος ὁ βασιλεὺς τῆς Μηδίας); the other Septuagint manuscripts, which came to dominate the textual tradition in antiquity, name Nebuchadnezzar and Ahasuerus (Moore 1996: 296; this is the reading found in the RSV). Several modern translations, baffled by this confusion, simply substitute the historically correct name of Cyaxares of Media for the unknown “Ahiqar of Media” found in Sinaiticus: so the NRSV and the translation given by Moore 1996: 296. See the detailed comment on this passage by Moore 1996: 297. Regardless of what the precise original reading was, it does not seem that the original author was exercising any great historical care in this passage, and the activity of subsequent redactors has only further muddled the issue. The reading “Cyaxares” in several modern translations, which is historically accurate but unsupported by any ancient manuscript (Moore 1996: 297), is incidentally an amusing instance of the ongoing effort to correct and regularize the more eccentric elements of these historical fictions, an effort that began as early as the *Jewish Antiquities* of Josephus. Historical absurdities did not apparently bother the original authors or audiences of these fictions, but they certainly do disturb modern editors and readers.

79. A. Levine (1992b: 48) compares the abundance of inaccurate and even outrageous historical details in Tobit to that found in Judith, commenting that as in Judith, these “imaginary geographical and historical references . . . not only indicate the fictional nature of the text, they also show the unreality of the exilic situation.” As in the case of Judith, I would argue that this may be true, but it underestimates the didactic significance of some of the historical distortions; see further below.

80. I show below in Chap. 5 why this argument will not work in the particular case of 3 Maccabees.

think.<sup>81</sup> Lucian, however, implicitly makes the same claim when he entitles his absurdist fantasy *True Histories*.<sup>82</sup> If in fact these authors intended their works to be read as literal history, it is impossible to explain their apparently being unconcerned that even a moderately sophisticated reader would be able to see that their claims were false.

If, then, these authors are primarily not historians but storytellers, spinning tales of things long ago that never happened, how do we explain the care that they have put into constructing realistic but patently fictional historical backgrounds for their fables? The deliberate evocation of a realistic historical setting is a technique quite alien to the world of legend and folklore, from which, it seems, these authors drew their material. It has been argued, on the analogy of the novel, that the glaring anachronisms found in these texts are intentional, meant precisely to signal to the reader that the texts are fiction rather than history.<sup>83</sup> *HERE BE DRAGONS*, as medieval maps say in uncharted waters. On that basis many Jewish texts, including those that we have been considering, have been lumped together as supposed Jewish novels.

It is hard not to sympathize with such a view when confronted with Nebuchadnezzar ruling over the Assyrians and flourishing in the days of Ezra and the Second Temple. Facile comparisons with the ancient novel are dangerous, however, and misleading. The ancient novel invokes history simply and solely in order to entertain. More important, the ancient novel's historical coloration is never essential to its plot: kings, queens, empires, battles, dates could readily be shuffled or eliminated without harming the story. The hero will still be brave and handsome, the heroine fair and virtuous, and both will undoubtedly still be more than once sold into slavery or carried off by pirates before being happily rescued from the jaws of death and reunited in the final scene. In the so-called Jewish romances, by contrast, the historical setting is very much the point. There is no Esther without Ahasuerus, no Judith without Holofernes. In these texts, history is invoked not merely to entertain (although it certainly does that) but to instruct.<sup>84</sup> To

81. *LtAris* 296–97.

82. Aristeeas's purpose is certainly far more grave than Lucian's, and it would be a mistake to see the same twinkle in his eye that we see in Lucian's. Lucian is writing purely to entertain, whereas Aristeeas has a serious message to communicate. In both cases, however, we see the author publicly affirming the truth of what he writes, while knowing that his more sophisticated readers will know better than to take him at his word.

83. Wills 1995: 3, e.g.

84. A case can be made, particularly with regard to Chariton, that the use of historical references in the Greek novels was not always random and may indeed have



understand the history of the Jews is to understand Jewish identity: this is why Achior recounts Jewish history to answer Holofernes' questions about who the Jews are and what he should expect from them (Jth. 5.5–21). The second feature, then, that all these texts share is: All invoke history in order to make a specific didactic point.<sup>85</sup>

Let us now return to each of our problematic texts in order to see how historical distortions are used to support the author's purpose. Consider, for instance, the fictitious narrator of the *Letter of Aristeas*: Why should a second-century-B.C.E. Jewish author have wished to represent his account of the origin of the Septuagint as the eyewitness account of a fictional third-century gentile courtier? It was at one time argued that the author was addressing himself chiefly to a Greek audience and believed that his propaganda would be more easily accepted under the guise of a "heathen mask."<sup>86</sup> The flaws in this argument, however, have long since been exposed by V. A. Tcherikover, who rightly showed that Jewish texts in Greek were addressed first and foremost to Greek-speaking Jews, at least in the Hellenistic period.<sup>87</sup> Why, then, does the author need a mask in the *Letter of Aristeas*?

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had some similarities with the didactic use of fiction in Jewish texts. I argue this point at greater length in "More than the Day of Their Victory: Chariton and Thucydides on the Sicilian Expedition" (unpubl.). It remains true, however, that the historical setting is far more important to any one of the Jewish fictions than it is to any one of the Greek novels. Even if historical detail is sometimes used for a purpose by Chariton, its removal would leave the main story largely intact; the same cannot be said for any of the Jewish fictions considered here, where the subtraction of the historical setting would in every case render the story both pointless and plotless.

85. For my detailed discussion of the way in which this is accomplished in 3 Macabees, see below, Chap. 5.

86. The phrase is Schürer's; see Meecham 1932: 109–19. The view that the *Letter of Aristeas*, along with a number of other Jewish texts, was addressed primarily to a non-Jewish audience was dominant until challenged by Tcherikover in 1956.

87. Tcherikover 1956. Tcherikover's thesis is challenged by Feldman (1996), but most of the evidence that Feldman adduces relates to the first century C.E. or later, whereas my study is chiefly concerned with the circulation of Jewish texts in the pre-Roman period. It cannot be disputed that much of the work of Josephus, and several of the works of Philo, were consciously directed toward gentile as well as Jewish readers, and indeed Tcherikover acknowledged that Josephus is a prominent exception to the rule (Tcherikover 1956: 183, admitted by Feldman 1996: 225). I deal below with two excerpts from Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*, but although this work itself would have been read by gentiles as well as Jews, I am more interested in the original, presumably Jewish, audience of the Hellenistic text traditions adapted by Josephus. (See Chap. 2 below on Alexander's visit to Jerusalem and the Tales of the Tobiad.) No one would deny that sympathetic gentiles, those who had by some means developed an intense interest in the traditions and practices of the Jews, may have been among the readers of Jewish texts already in the Hellenistic period. Be-

A close look at the fictional Aristeas will illuminate the author's purpose. The character of Aristeas is among the most elaborately drawn and sustained fictions in all Jewish Greek literature. As a narrator, he is far from self-effacing. He intrudes himself, his observations, and his opinions into the narrative at every possible opportunity.<sup>88</sup> Without extensively analyzing Aristeas's authorial voice, it is worth observing briefly how his intrusions into the narrative function. In the first place, we are never allowed to forget that Aristeas personally witnessed and participated in the events he reports.<sup>89</sup> Aristeas as narrator is omnipresent, and we are to understand that there is

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fore Philo and Josephus, however, it remains unlikely that any gentile not already keenly interested in Judaism would have been diverted by the preoccupation of Jewish texts with quite detailed and technical matters of Jewish tradition and practice—e.g., in the *Letter of Aristeas*, Eleazar's mind-numbing lecture on the special dietary laws, heard with rapt attention by Philadelphus's delegation. Nor would any but the most sympathetic gentiles have had much patience with the exaggerated status of Jews and Judaism as typically imagined by Hellenistic Jewish authors—e.g., again in the *Letter of Aristeas*, Philadelphus's sevenfold obeisance before the Torah scrolls! Tcherikover's criticism of the concept of "propaganda" directed at gentile readers who were otherwise ignorant of or indifferent or even hostile to Judaism remains valid, at least for the Hellenistic period. Cf. (on *LtAris*) Gruen 1998: 221.

88. *LtAris* 1–8 (preface), 12–20 (Aristeas persuades Philadelphus to free the Jewish slaves), 40 (Philadelphus commends the ambassadors by name to Eleazar), 43 (Eleazar commends the ambassadors by name in his reply), 83 (Aristeas describes his first sight of Jerusalem), 91 (Aristeas describes the water supply of Jerusalem exactly as it was demonstrated to him), 96–100 (Aristeas marvels at Eleazar in all his glory), 103 (Aristeas is admitted only with difficulty into the citadel), 112 (Aristeas apologizes for digressing into a comparison between practices at Jerusalem and practices at Alexandria), 124 (Aristeas and Andreas assure Eleazar that the Jewish sages will be allowed to return to Jerusalem), 129 (Aristeas and Andreas question Eleazar about the special laws of the Jews), 167 (Aristeas answers an allusion made by Eleazar to the wise practices of Philadelphus), 170–71 (Aristeas expresses his approval of Eleazar's discourse and explains why he has in turn passed it on to Philocrates), 173–75 (Aristeas and Andreas return to Alexandria and introduce the delegates to the king), 295–300 (Aristeas apologizes for dwelling at length on the symposium of the sages but expresses his admiration of the translators and strongly insists on the truth of his account), 306 (Aristeas asks why the Jews wash their hands while saying prayers), 322 (epilogue).

89. He was present when Demetrius approached the king with his proposal (*LtAris* 12–20); he is mentioned by name in the official correspondence between Philadelphus and Eleazar (40, 43); he assumes the part of a gawking tourist in Jerusalem, describing the objects that he saw and what he learned from the natives just as Herodotus might have done in his place (83–107, 112); he has conversed at length with the high priest of the Jews (124, 129, 167, 170–71); he was present when the king received the delegates in Alexandria (173–81), at the seven-day symposium at which Philadelphus questioned the Jews (295–300), and on the island where the Jews completed the actual translation (306).

no part of the narrative for which he cannot vouch. Moreover, Aristeas does not merely attest the factual truth of the events that he reports; he seldom misses an opportunity to voice his own (unfailingy adulatory) opinion.<sup>90</sup> It is important that he is himself highly respected both by the king and by Eleazar (*LtAris* 40, 43); a man of extremely high status, he values both Greek and Jewish worlds and is valued in them. His high opinion of the Jews thus carries great weight. Finally, it is surely not an accident that Aristeas, although clearly portrayed as a gentile, could in many scenes be mistaken for a Jew.<sup>91</sup> Aristeas tells the king, "These men [*sc.* the Jews] revere God, the overseer and creator of all, whom indeed all men revere, although we, King, call him by a different name, Zeus."<sup>92</sup> This remark, although ostensibly intended to explain to the king that the Jews really worship the same god as the Greeks—that is, Zeus—could equally well be turned on its head. From the way in which Aristeas speaks of and relates to his god, Jewish readers might be forgiven for concluding that the Greeks evidently worship the same God as the Jews—that is, Yahweh. The piety that Aristeas expresses is indistinguishable from the sentiments of a Hellenized Jew. This may reflect the voice of the true author of the narrative, but it also serves the function of demonstrating that apart from the special laws, which gentiles like Aristeas and Philadelphus respect, there need be no philosophical or religious divide between Greeks and Jews. The fictional Aristeas personifies the harmonious relationship possible between the two cultures.

The flagrantly anachronistic inclusion of Demetrius is equally significant. Demetrius is a figure of central importance to the narrative. Though Philadelphus is ready and willing to sponsor any project suggested by the intellectuals gathered at his court, as befits the role of enlightened monarch, nevertheless it is not his responsibility to seek such things out. It is Demetrius who, having been assigned the task of collecting "all the books in the world" for the king's library, decides that the laws of the Jews are *μεταγραφῆς ἄξια*, worthy of transcription (*LtAris* 10), and informs the king that they will need to be translated with the help of the high priest. It is he who writes the formal research proposal (reproduced verbatim at *LtAris* 29–32), in which he explains that they must apply to Jerusalem for an ac-

90. Almost everything Aristeas says could be cited as an example of this, but cf. especially *LtAris* 96–100, 170–71, 295–300.

91. Note in particular the scene in which Aristeas and his fellows offer up silent prayer to God (*θεός*) to convince Philadelphus to grant Aristeas's request for the freedom of the Jews (*LtAris* 17–18).

92. *LtAris* 16: τὸν γὰρ πάντων ἐπόπτην καὶ κτίστην θεὸν οὗτοι σέβονται, ὃν καὶ πάντες, ἡμεῖς δέ, βασιλεῦ, προσονομάζοντες ἑτέρως Ζῆντα καὶ Δία.

curate translation, since the books of the Law are not only in Hebrew but also have been carelessly committed to writing (σεσήμανται, *LtAris* 30).<sup>93</sup> In other words, it is Demetrius who is responsible for making sure that the Greek translation of the Law is an Authorized Version, based on the most reliable manuscripts and translated by the most highly qualified Jewish scholars. His regard for the Jewish Law is so great that he insists the king go to enormous trouble and expense to obtain a translation “worthy of the subject matter and your benevolence” (32), rather than hire a local scribe to knock off a rough translation on the cheap.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, it is Demetrius who supervises the process of translation (301–2) and finally presents it to the Jews of Alexandria, who acclaim it, request a copy for themselves, and resolve that it not be changed in any way (308–10). Demetrius’s great respect for the Law is not based on whim; he repeatedly cites other highly respected Greek authorities—such as Hecataeus of Abdera (31), Theopompus (314–15), and Theodectes the tragic poet (316)—in support of his view that the Jewish Law is both wise and holy.

Why attribute such an important role to a figure known to have been exiled by Philadelphus promptly upon his accession?<sup>95</sup> Demetrius of Phalerum was a highly respected intellectual; he had been a philosopher, a statesman (ruling Athens between 317 and 307 B.C.E.), and finally a luminary at the court of Ptolemy I. Tradition held that he was instrumental in founding the Library, the jewel in Alexandria’s crown and the key to her claim to be a new Athens, the intellectual center of the Greek world. Demetrius’s status lends enormous weight to the respect that he is made to express for the Jewish Law, at least in the eyes of Aristeeas’s Greek-speaking Jewish audience. More important, however, his active involvement in ensuring that the Greek version of the Torah be fully authorized translation, equal in accuracy and thus in sanctity to the original, is crucial to Aristeeas’s main purpose. As I argue in more detail below,<sup>96</sup> Aristeeas like many another Jewish Greek author was convinced that traditional Jewish piety could be combined

93. The significance of this word has long been disputed, but the most probable interpretation is that it refers to the copying of Hebrew manuscripts rather than to the existence of prior, inadequate (or competing) Greek translations. So, rightly, Gruen 1998: 207 n. 59; Collins 2000: 102–3.

94. Note that the king is at first surprised when Demetrius comes to him for permission to include the Jewish Law in the library; he remarks that Demetrius had the authority to act on his own: τί τὸ κωλύον οὖν, εἶπεν, ἐστὶ σε τοῦτο ποιῆσαι; πάντα γὰρ ὑποτέτακταί σοι τὰ πρὸς τὴν χρείαν (*LtAris* 11).

95. See above, n. 15.

96. Below, Chap. 4, pp. 141–69. For the stress placed by the author on the authoritative nature of the translation, see also Pelletier 1962: 48–49.

with a cultivated Greek education and with participation in the wider Greek world. His main purpose in writing the *Letter of Aristeas* was to show, in particular, that the Septuagint is a perfectly, even divinely, accurate translation, made by scholars who were equally well qualified in Greek and Jewish traditions, working in an atmosphere of ideal harmony, cooperation, and mutual respect, and that therefore an Alexandrian Jew who kept the Law according to the Septuagint was every bit as pious as a Jew who attended the Temple at Jerusalem.<sup>97</sup> By placing the project in the hands of the very founder of the Alexandrian Library and assuring us of that distinguished intellectual's respect for the Law and his concern for its accuracy, Aristeas means to offer historical proof of the Septuagint's authenticity.

Thus the author of the *Letter of Aristeas*, like the author of 3 Maccabees, manipulates historical facts in service of a higher moral and aesthetic truth. A historical account of the Septuagint translation such as would suit modern scholarly opinion<sup>98</sup>—generations of Alexandrian Jews laboring throughout the third century B.C.E. and beyond, translating the Scriptures piece by piece in order to make them accessible to congregations increasingly ignorant of Hebrew—would have the merit of being true to the facts insofar as they can be recovered, but it would utterly fail to communicate the truth that Aristeas values most: his affirmation of the sanctity of the Greek Scriptures, which alone made possible the faithful observance of Jewish law in the Diaspora. The historical author in the persona of Aristeas, and the more sophisticated members of his audience, at least at first, knew perfectly well that the narrator Aristeas was fictional, that Demetrius could not have played any part in the translation, and that the archival documents to which the author so solemnly appeals were imagined, but of the metaphorical truth of the legend they had no doubt. When Aristeas tells us that it would be impious of him to lie about such matters (*LtAris* 297), he is perfectly serious. His loyalty, however, is not to the truth of history but to truth of another sort.<sup>99</sup>

Consider, again, the historical-fictional biography of Onias III embedded in 2 Maccabees. As I will show in greater detail below,<sup>100</sup> at many points, and most notably in the largely fictional chapters on the life and death of Onias, 2 Maccabees resonates strongly with important themes in 3 Mac-

97. It has even been shown that the final scene of acclamation parallels precisely the acclamation of the original Torah. Cf. Orlinsky 1989: 540–48; Gruen 1998: 221.

98. See Schürer 1986: 3.1, 491–92, for bibliography on this now widely accepted consensus. Cf. Gruen 1998: 210.

99. So, rightly, Meecham 1932: 143–44.

100. Chap. 4, pp. 141–69.

cabees. Onias is held up as an ideal ruler because in his time the Seleucids respected and honored the Temple (2 Macc. 3.1–3); when conflict does occur, in the case of Heliodorus, Onias with God's help is able to negotiate a harmonious resolution (3.4–20). Onias never fails to employ his diplomatic talents in defense of his people, the Temple, and the Jewish faith (3.35; 4.4–6, 33). When he is ultimately murdered by his enemies for his courageous defense of the Temple, the Greeks of Antioch mourn, and Antiochus IV punishes the murderer with terrible swiftness (4.33–38). Thus, like 3 Maccabees, the story of Onias's life and death seems intended to praise and promote an attitude of cooperation between Jews and gentiles, provided that no tenet of Jewish law is compromised. The life of Onias provides a positive exemplum for how a pious Jew can and should cooperate with Greek rulers, in explicit (at 2 Macc. 4.5, e.g.) and implicit contrast to the nefarious behavior of Jason, Simon, and Menelaus.

It is precisely those chapters of 2 Maccabees characterized by marked historical fictions—the Heliodorus incident, the death of Onias—that also make strong didactic claims about the idealized hero Onias, preferring him to the villains of the story as a model for interaction between Jews and Greeks. In 2 Maccabees, as in 3 Maccabees and in the *Letter of Aristeas*, fictionalized historical episodes are invoked in order to draw from the past a lesson to be applied in the present. But what, precisely, is the lesson of 2 Maccabees? The glowing portrait of a figure who embodies harmonious relations between pious Jews and (mostly) benevolent Seleucids must seem at first rather odd in a text intended primarily to celebrate the victories of the Maccabean hero Judah over the Seleucid oppressor—a text that concludes triumphantly with the assertion that Jerusalem has been the Hebrews' possession ever since their battle with Nicanor in 161 B.C.E.<sup>101</sup> The author of 2 Maccabees has been credited with coining the very term “Hellenism” as a term of opprobrium, in contrast to the “Judaism” of the faithful.<sup>102</sup>

To be sure, one might argue that the biography of Onias in 2 Maccabees represents independent oral or written traditions that have been incorporated

<sup>101</sup> 2 Macc. 15.37: ἀπ' ἐκείνων τῶν καιρῶν κρατηθείσης τῆς πόλεως ὑπὸ τῶν Ἑβραίων.

<sup>102</sup> 2 Macc. 4.13 Ἑλληνισμοῦ. The term appears to have been coined on the analogy of “Medism” in the Persian Wars. In that context, “Medism” denoted collaboration with the enemy, whereas “Hellenism” connoted the heroic resistance of the Greeks; here, “Hellenism” is the brand of the collaborator, contrasted with the “Judaism” (Ἰουδαϊσμοῦ, 2.21) of the faithful (Goldstein 1983: 192). This, combined with the fact that the author uses the term βάρβαρος to refer to the Greeks (2.21), suggests a most peculiar inversion: the Jews are the true Hellenes, whereas the Greeks are the barbarian enemy. This is no simple repudiation of Greek culture; the author

into the text and that the strongly pro-cooperative strain of the Onias tradition there has been imported. Although the stories presenting Onias as an ideal bridge between Greeks and Jews very likely do predate their present context, however, mere tradition cannot explain why the author chose to integrate this material into his work. Onias's reappearance together with the prophet Jeremiah to bless Judah's army before the climactic battle at 2 Maccabees 15.12–16 leaves no room to doubt the importance of his symbolic role. In fact, the role of Onias demonstrates that the opposition between Judaism and Hellenism in 2 Maccabees is far from being as stark as has been supposed.

Onias is a positive paradigm of how a pious Jewish ruler should interact with Greek kings and generals, in strong contrast with villains like Jason, who introduces customs that violate Jewish law (*παράνομοι*, 2 Macc. 4.11), or like Simon, who conspires with corrupt officials to accuse a fellow citizen (4.5), or like Menelaus, who willingly hands over Temple treasures to a brutal invader (5.15). Yet Onias is also represented as bestowing divine sanction upon Judah's military campaigns against the Seleucid oppressor. The self-proclaimed warrior in defense of the Jewish faith is thus represented as the rightful heir of the legitimate high priest Onias III, the accomplished international diplomat who moved easily between Greek and Jewish worlds without betraying either. The role of Onias, then, is surely meant to suggest a positive paradigm for the newly independent Hasmonean state.<sup>103</sup> In dealing with their Hellenistic neighbors, the Jews are to adopt an attitude of proud integrity but never of xenophobic hostility: thus in another passage they are shown negotiating not only with the Seleucids but even with the far-off Romans.<sup>104</sup> Given that the Hasmonean rulers were for many years not yet in-

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is in effect usurping the central place occupied by the Greeks in the Hellenistic Near East even as he rejects their hegemony. The concept "Hellenism" in 2 Maccabees is far more complicated than it appears. The widespread assumption that 2 Maccabees is the classic proof text for a simple opposition between Judaism and Hellenism has most recently and strongly been challenged by Gruen 1998: 3–9.

103. See Gruen (1998: 9–29) for a detailed analysis of the "complex pattern of reciprocal relations and mutual dependency" that characterizes the Hasmonean age from the very beginning.

104. 2 Macc. 11.34–38 gives the text of a letter addressed by the Romans to the people of the Jews. Compare also the reference to Eupolemus at 4.11. The connection that is made in this passage between Eupolemus, who negotiated a treaty of friendship and alliance with the Romans, and his father, John, who had negotiated the agreement between Antiochus III and the Jews (now overthrown by the heedless Jason), strongly suggests a continuous tradition of diplomatic activity interrupted only briefly by Jason and his ilk. See below, Chap. 4, pp. 141–69.



dependent kings but continued to acknowledge at least nominal Seleucid sovereignty, the suggestion that Judah and his successors inherited the position of Onias is appropriate.<sup>105</sup> The Hasmoneans themselves increasingly adopted in later years the attitudes of Hellenistic kingship, even taking Greek names.<sup>106</sup> Although J. A. Goldstein has argued—unconvincingly—that 2 Maccabees must be interpreted as anti-Hasmonean, the portrayal of Onias would seem to suggest rather a pro-Hasmonean slant. In the eyes of 2 Maccabees' author, the Hasmoneans' increasing Hellenization was a sign not of their corruption but rather of their ability to function effectively in a Greek world as representatives of a traditional Jewish state.

The author of 2 Maccabees employs historical fictions surrounding the life of Onias III specifically in order to represent him as an idealized figure of cooperation between separate but mutually respectful Greek and Jewish worlds. The traditions regarding the life of Onias very likely arose as popular legends—the Heliodorus incident, as we can see by comparing it with the story of Philopator's visit to Jerusalem (3 Macc. 1.9–2.24), was one such—but the author has fitted edifying fables into the quite alien context of Hellenistic history, thus creating a compelling historical exemplum for the Jewish people in general and for the Hasmonean state in particular. The manipulation of the fictional details of the historical Onias's life in 2 Maccabees is both entertaining and affecting, but its purpose goes well beyond sentimental entertainment.

The author of the Book of Esther likewise invokes historical details in order to create a convincing historical fiction, although, as we have seen, this amalgam of folk motifs cannot be traced back to any concrete instance of persecution in the Persian period. The fictionalizing of history is by no means confined to the Greek version. The author of the Masoretic text already employs all the common devices for creating a believable historical

105. The early Hasmoneans continued regularly to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Seleucids (Tcherikover 1959: 237–38). Aristobulus (r. 104–103 B.C.E.) was the first to assume the title of king, but it is hard, perhaps impossible, to define precisely the point at which the Hasmoneans became completely independent. The Seleucid empire was very much a state of mind, both for ruler and for subject. Its physical extent depended largely upon the acknowledgments of supremacy, whether tangible or symbolic, that the central authority was able to coax from its subjects at any given moment in time. The negotiation of a mutually acceptable relationship between the Seleucids and the Hasmoneans thus remained a delicate issue throughout the second century B.C.E., and perhaps even into the first.

106. Gruen (1998: 29–39) suggests that the Hellenizing tendencies of the Hasmoneans, although increasingly visible in the later years of the dynasty, can be traced back as early as the career of Judah himself. On the Hellenization of the Hasmoneans generally, see also Collins 2000: 17 with references there cited.



fiction that we have examined so far:<sup>107</sup> citing specific dates and documents, invoking a recognizable historical figure, adducing the administration and customs of a remote historical period, and deliberately imitating the formulas and hence the genre of the historical books of the Bible.<sup>108</sup> The author of Esther resorts to a fictional history in order to demonstrate that the Jews hold an important and valued place at the court of foreign kings and that persecution is ephemeral and will be triumphantly overcome, so long as the Jews remain faithful to their tribe (as the Hebrew Esther sees it) and their God (as the Greek Esther hastens to add).<sup>109</sup> In a general way, the use of realistic historical detail and documentary evidence helps to enhance the verisimilitude of the text's claim to truth. Since the truth of vindication and deliverance, however, is fundamentally moral rather than literally historical, it disturbs the worshiper celebrating Purim not at all that Xerxes' queen was a Persian named Amestris, as a glance at Herodotus will reveal,<sup>110</sup> not Vashti or Esther, and indeed that Xerxes was campaigning

107. Gordis (1981: 375–78) makes the intriguing suggestion that the author of the Masoretic text deliberately cast his work “in the form of a chronicle of the Persian court, written by a Gentile scribe,” and that this helps to explain why the divine Name is avoided throughout. This must remain speculative, since the unnamed narrator never explicitly claims to be a gentile or to have found this account in court records; nevertheless, such a technique, if this was the author's intention, would link the composition of Esther very closely with the type of deliberate fiction found in the *Letter of Aristeas*. So, rightly, Gordis 1981: 378.

108. To the limited extent that it is shared by all the texts we are here considering, then, the deliberate creation of historical fictions appears to cut across boundaries of language and culture. On the Greek side, it appears in such texts as the *Letter of Aristeas*, 3 Maccabees, and parts of 2 Maccabees; on the Hebrew side, we find it in the Masoretic texts of Daniel and Esther, and it was presumably a dominant feature of the lost Semitic original of Judith. Hebrew Esther provides an interesting test case for the origins of the phenomenon. Hebrew Esther is difficult to date, especially since it clearly draws on oral traditions stretching back into the Persian period; suggestions have ranged from the fourth to the second century B.C.E. (Wills [1995: 98–100], Fox [1991a: 139–40], and Bickermann [1967: 205–7] tend toward a later [third-to-second-century] range; Moore [1971: lix–lx], Levenson [1997: 26], and Berlin [2001: xli–xliii] tend toward an earlier [fourth-to-third century] range). I have argued elsewhere (“Novelistic Elements in Esther,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, forthcoming) that an earlier date is likely due to the absence of Greek influence on the language of Hebrew Esther. If the Masoretic text of Esther can be traced back into the Persian period, it is very likely the earliest of all surviving Jewish fictions and suggests that the origins of the use of fictional history in Jewish literature should be sought already in Hebrew literature of the Persian period rather than Greek and Hebrew literature of the Maccabean period (as Wills [1995: 8–10] would have it). This is a question that requires further research.

109. See below, Chap. 4, pp. 141–69, where these themes are explored in more detail.

110. Hdt. 7.114, 9.112; and cf. 3.84, where Herodotus establishes that Persian queens had to be descended from one of seven high-ranking Persian families, which

in Greece in 480 B.C.E., the year of Esther's supposed arrival at court (Esther 2.16).<sup>111</sup>

An excellent example of historical fiction being used to reinforce ideology may be found in the decree of Artaxerxes supposedly cited verbatim in the Greek version of Esther, calling off the orders previously issued in his name by Haman (Esther E1–24). Like the royal letters in 3 Maccabees, this is patently a Greek forgery.<sup>112</sup> Much like 3 Maccabees 7.1–9, the letter from Artaxerxes to his satraps invokes and sanctions in the king's voice themes that the author has been at some pains to establish.<sup>113</sup> The king wholly disclaims any malice toward the Jews and blames all on Haman (E2–18).<sup>114</sup> The Jews are proclaimed innocent (*οὐ κακούργους ὄντας*), conducting their lives according to righteous laws (*δικαιοτάτοις δὲ πολιτευομένοις νόμοις* E15), and are counted among the king's loyal subjects (E23, *τοῖς εὐνοοῦσιν Πέρσας*), who are to celebrate the day planned for the destruction of the Jews as instead a festival of deliverance. Artaxerxes, like Philopator (3 Macc. 7.2), even acknowledges the power of the Jewish God (Esther E4, 16, 18, 21), who

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makes nonsense of Esther's account of the selection of a new queen for Xerxes. See Levenson 1997: 24; Fox 1991a: 132; Moore 1971: xlvi; Paton 1908: 71–72.

111. Fox (1991a: 139–40) argues that Hebrew Esther must be dated to the Hellenistic period, because he believes that the author meant the audience to read the story as historical and that such an author would not have included details that both he and the audience would have known to be false; therefore, he must be writing at a time when the details of Persian rule were hazy in the minds of author and audience alike. This is precisely the sort of misreading that has tended to arise from modern scholars' inability to understand the use of fictional historical detail in such texts. Levenson (1997: 26) rightly objects that to read Esther as straight history is fundamentally to misunderstand its nature and points to the even more obviously fictional Judith as a corrective against assuming that the audience would have necessarily rejected a narrative that they recognized as fictional.

112. Levenson 1997: 111–14 (cf. 74–75); Moore 1977: 237.

113. Since we are here dealing with a text added in the Greek version, the themes in question are particularly those dear to the author of the expanded and enhanced Greek version. The Greek author's work builds, however, on basic themes already established by the author of the Hebrew version, as discussed above and in Chap. 4, pp. 141–69. See below, Chap. 5, for a discussion of the way in which the comparable decree in 3 Maccabees is used to buttress the verisimilitude of that account and to reinforce the themes stressed by that author.

114. Note especially Esther E5–6: *πολλάκις δὲ καὶ πολλοὺς τῶν ἐπ' ἐξουσίαις τεταγμένων τῶν πιστευθέντων χειρίζειν φίλων τὰ πράγματα παραμυθία μετόχους αἱμάτων ἀθῶων καταστήσασα περιέβαλεν συμφοραῖς ἀνηκέστοις τῷ τῆς κακοηθείας ψευδεῖ παραλογισμῷ παραλογισαμένων τὴν τῶν ἐπικρατούντων ἀκέραιον εὐγνωμοσύνην.*

protects and guides the Persian kingdom.<sup>115</sup> Haman, by contrast, is such an exemplar of disloyalty and treachery (E2–3, 12, 22) that the author has Artaxerxes declare Haman not a true Persian at all but a Macedonian,<sup>116</sup> whose actual intent was to betray the kingdom into the power of the Macedonians (E14). This glance forward at the Macedonian conquest of Persia, fully a hundred and fifty years in the future from Xerxes' point of view, is almost comically anachronistic. It serves an important rhetorical purpose, however, reminding us that Haman previously cast against the Jews the traditional aspersion: that they are a separate and hence disloyal people.<sup>117</sup> Now we learn that it is the enemy of the Jews who is truly foreign (*ἀλλότριος*, E10) and an enemy of the state.<sup>118</sup> In the Greek Esther, even more than in the Hebrew version, history is not fact but metaphor.

All the authors of the texts discussed thus far consciously invoke particular historical contexts, maintaining a certain fundamental consistency with what we believe are the historical facts: Ptolemy IV Philopator in 3 Maccabees (considered in detail below in Chap. 5, pp. 190–216); Ptolemy II Philadelphus in the *Letter of Aristeas*; Seleucus IV, Antiochus IV, and Onias III in 2 Maccabees); Xerxes the Great in Esther. In Daniel, Judith, and Tobit, we encounter an attitude toward the facts of the past considerably more free-wheeling, although no less self-conscious.

As explained above, the author of Daniel has woven what were once disparate legends into a coherent historical narrative (Dan. 1–6) and has thus created a fictional historical background for the Exile that is internally consistent but completely irreconcilable with the facts as we know them. The bizarre chronology of the Book of Daniel, however, reflects not carelessness or ignorance on the author's part but deliberate purpose. The purpose of *ex eventu* prophecy is to show that history—past, present, and future—realizes prophecy. Insofar as past and present events are seen to have validated prophecy, the revelator's claims for a future still unrealized, whatever it may be, are correspondingly strengthened. The accuracy of Daniel's allusions to recent and contemporary events leading up to the Maccabean Revolt (11.3–

115. Esther E16: τοῦ ὑψίστου μεγίστου ζῶντος θεοῦ, τοῦ κατευθύνοντος ἡμῖν τε καὶ τοῖς προγόνοις ἡμῶν τὴν βασιλείαν ἐν τῇ καλλίστῃ διαθέσει.

116. Esther E10: Ἀμαν Ἀμαδάθου Μακεδὼν ταῖς ἀληθείαις ἀλλότριος τοῦ τῶν Περσῶν αἵματος.

117. Esther 3.8: ὑπάρχει ἔθνος διεσπαρμένον ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἐν πάσῃ τῇ βασιλείᾳ σου, οἱ δὲ νόμοι αὐτῶν ἐξαλλοὶ παρὰ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, τῶν δὲ νόμων τοῦ βασιλέως παρακούουσιν, καὶ οὐ συμφέρει τῷ βασιλεῖ ἑᾶσαι αὐτούς.

118. The inversion of the places occupied by the Jews and their enemies is precisely the same as that which is performed in Philopator's second letter in 3 Maccabees (7.1–9; see below, Chap. 5).

35) is precise and can be confirmed in other sources. It should not, then, surprise us that when dealing with the more remote past, the author has provided a historical narrative framework intended to serve as a key to the interpretation of his prophecies. It is unimportant that the successive empires forming the historical background to the Book of Daniel—Babylonian (Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar), Median (Darius), and Persian (Cyrus)—resemble only tenuously the actual succession of historical empires in the sixth century B.C.E. It matters more that the author offers a version of history that best corresponds with his own understanding of how God's predictions have been realized as events in the past and the present. For the Book of Daniel, historical truth is meaningless in itself; history is meaningful only as a roll in which we read the realization of past prophecies and thus gain confidence in the validity of prophecies yet unrealized.

Moreover, the integration of court legends into an apocalyptic narrative-historical framework allows the author of Daniel to suggest a reinterpretation of such traditional stories in the light of his own ideological purpose. In each of the stories collected in Daniel 1–6, Daniel and his friends are offered a choice between assimilation and persecution, and in each case the refusal to assimilate brings about a happy ending in which the loyalty of the Jews is triumphantly vindicated, the enemies of the Jews are punished, and the favor of the king is completely restored. These themes are widespread in many Jewish Greek texts.<sup>119</sup> In Daniel, however, the moral is subtly altered by the context. Each of these stories takes place under a king of the golden age, the first of the empires as defined in Daniel 2.37–45 (Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar), or a king of the silver age (Darius the Mede). The succession of declining ages suggests, however, that a happy ending is unlikely in the age of iron, under Greek rule, and indeed no such tales are told of the Seleucids. The contemporary reader, then, suffering persecution at the hands of Antiochus IV, is encouraged to look forward not (like the reader of 3 Maccabees or the Book of Esther) to a restoration of happy conditions under a reformed and enlightened Antiochus IV but rather to the promised Kingdom of God upon earth, which will sweep away the hopelessly corrupt kingdom of iron mixed with clay (Dan. 2.44). Thus, although Daniel, like the other texts being examined here, appeals to the past in order to construct a model of Jewish identity in a time of crisis, that model turns out very different from what any of those others suggests.

As we have said, the often fanciful historical details included in any of

119. This point is argued in more detail below in Chap. 4, pp. 141–69.

these texts are not meant to mark it as mere fiction, as has sometimes been claimed,<sup>120</sup> but rather serve the author in constructing his particular version of the past, self-consistent and plausible, and thereby articulating his conception of Jewish identity in his own day. Only the Book of Judith's historical jumble seems at first glance genuinely reminiscent of the complete disregard for plausible history seen in the later Greek novels.<sup>121</sup> Is Judith, then, an exception to the rule, a true "Jewish novel"?

The long speech of Achior (Jth. 5.5–21) should serve to warn us that first impressions can be deceiving.<sup>122</sup> It is worth comparing this scene with how Herodotus portrays the deposed Spartan king Demaratus explaining the Greeks' character to Xerxes.<sup>123</sup> For Herodotus, the key to Greek superiority

120. E.g., Wills 1995: 51.

121. Consider, for instance, Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*. Callirhoe is the daughter of Hermocrates, the Syracusan general who defeated the Athenian invasion in 415–413 B.C.E. and died in 407, but the subsequent narrative reflects a promiscuous arrangement of names and events taken at random from the fourth century B.C.E. or even later. Dionysius, ruler of Miletus under Persian rule (Miletus was not under Persian control until 368 B.C.E.), bears the name of the famous tyrant of Syracuse and his son. Other satraps include the plausibly named but quite unhistorical Mithridates of Caria and Pharnaces of Lydia. The Persian king Artaxerxes is made up of elements combining the reigns of Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404–358 B.C.E.) and Artaxerxes III Ochus (358–338 B.C.E.). The famous siege of Tyre, conducted by Alexander the Great in 332, is transplanted into an account of the suppression of the revolt of Egypt, which took place historically in the reign of Ochus. Cf. Reardon 1989: 18. The author has simply plucked out random details from the history of the eastern Mediterranean in the fourth century and sprinkled them throughout his story to create a vague impression of an exotic, long-ago historical setting. Neither the actual facts nor the imagined historical setting is in any way essential to the plot.

122. Craven (1983) and Moore (1985: 59, 158, 161–62) have rightly highlighted Achior's central importance to the entire narrative, as a pivotal figure who links the two halves of the story and as the mouthpiece for the most complete statement of the author's own Deuteronomistic view of history. See now further Roitman (1992: 31–45), who sees Achior as Judith's alter ego. Moore also rightly observes that since Achior's account of Jewish history, down to and including the return from the Exile(!), is perfectly faithful and sober, it is impossible to believe that the author was unaware of the anachronisms in his portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar the Assyrian; the anachronisms must be deliberate. In fact, it is the view of history here articulated by Achior that provides the key to understanding the historical distortions in the story, as I will show.

123. Hdt. 7.101–4, 209. Momigliano (1982: 227–28) makes precisely this comparison, suggesting that the author of Judith may have had Herodotus in mind (directly or through some indirect channel). The suggestion that the author of Judith directly used Herodotus has recently been restated in greater detail by Caponigro 1992: 47–59. Use of Herodotus, directly or indirectly, as a model would help to explain why we find at Jth. 4.7 an otherwise puzzling reference to a narrow pass at Bethulia, resembling nothing known to us from Palestinian geography, but suspi-

in battle is the Spartans' obedience to their law. For Achior, however, the Jews can be explained only in terms of their history. A closer look at Achior's version of Jewish history will be illuminating. The bulk of his account simply summarizes the history given in the Pentateuch.<sup>124</sup> Having brought the Jewish people into the land, however, Achior skips directly over the years of the monarchy to the Exile (5.17–18). The moral that he draws here is important:

As long as they did not sin against their God they prospered, for the God who hates iniquity is with them. But when they departed from the way which he had appointed for them, they were utterly defeated in many battles and were led away captive to a foreign country; the temple of their God was razed to the ground, and their cities captured by their enemies. (RSV)<sup>125</sup>

Now, however, the Jews have returned to their God and hence to their land and their Temple (Jth. 5.19). Thus the Jews have made a fresh start, and only if they have fallen again into sin, as Achior explains, will Holofernes be able to defeat them (5.20–21).

The location of the story historically in the days immediately following the Exile is thus not incidental but enormously significant. It is of course an axiom of biblical literature that God can and does use foreign tyrants as unwitting agents of his will to punish the Jews when they betray the covenant: Shalmaneser, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, and Antiochus IV were all so represented in their day. In this way the survivors of the Exile were able to make sense of catastrophic defeat and to preserve Jewish identity against the threat of cultural annihilation. The Book of Judith illustrates its author's belief that the return from exile and the rebuilding of the Temple represent a fresh start, a return to the pristine days of the Judges, and that only if the Jews repeat their error will disaster fall upon them a second time. Judith's victory over Holofernes is the reward for her piety and her

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ciously similar to the pass at Thermopylae. As Demaratus advises Xerxes before Thermopylae, so Achior advises Holofernes before Bethulia. See Moore 1985: 151, 154–55.

124. The migration of Abraham from Mesopotamia to Canaan (Jth. 5.6–9, Gen. 11.27–37.1); the descent into Egypt and the Exodus (Jth. 5.10–13, Gen. 37.2–Ex. 18.27); the journey through the wilderness by way of Mount Sinai (Jth. 5.14, Ex. 19.1–Num. 10.10); and the conquests in Transjordan and Canaan (Jth. 5.15–16, Num. 20.14–Jos. 11.23). See Moore 1985: 158–60 for detailed commentary.

125. Jth. 5.17–18: *καὶ ἕως οὐχ ἡμαρτον ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ αὐτῶν, ἣν μετ' αὐτῶν τὰ ἀγαθὰ, ὅτι θεὸς μισῶν ἀδικίαν μετ' αὐτῶν ἐστίν. ὅτε δὲ ἀπέστησαν ἀπὸ τῆς ὁδοῦ, ἧς διέθετο αὐτοῖς, ἐξωλεθρεύθησαν ἐν πολλοῖς πολέμοις ἐπὶ πολὺ σφόδρα καὶ ἡχμαλωτεύθησαν εἰς γῆν οὐκ ἰδίαν, καὶ ὁ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ αὐτῶν ἐγενήθη εἰς ἔδαφος, καὶ αἱ πόλεις αὐτῶν ἐκρατήθησαν ὑπὸ τῶν ὑπεναντίων.*

faith in God, to which she holds steadfast when the rest of her people seem prepared to surrender (Jth. 7.30–31, 8.11–27).

The bizarre figure of Nebuchadnezzar the Assyrian must be viewed in this light. Cyrus the Persian was a benevolent character in Jewish tradition, the chosen instrument of God's restoration of the Jews to their land (Isa. 44.28–45.13), and in general the Persians seem to have treated the Jews living under their rule in Palestine, as they treated most of their subjects, with a benign neglect. The historical kings who ruled over Palestine at the time of the return from exile would not, then, have suited the author's purpose. The historical kings who attacked Israel and Judah before the Exile, in and of themselves, were equally unsuitable, for in their time the Israelites had not yet learned the lesson that Achior sets forth. In the place of the historical kings of Assyria, Babylon, and Persia, we have in Nebuchadnezzar the Assyrian a timeless historical construct representing the (theoretically) ever present danger of renewed apostasy and disaster. Nebuchadnezzar the Assyrian, as we saw, is an amalgam of elements recalling not only Shalmaneser, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar (the Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian kings who destroyed Israel and scattered the ten tribes in 722 B.C.E. and besieged Jerusalem in 701, finally destroying it completely a century later), but also a more recent threat, Antiochus IV.<sup>126</sup> By combining the historical persecutors of the Jews into a single archetype, the author of Judith is able to retain the immediacy and force of a lesson drawn from past experience while communicating a moral that transcends literally historical time. The use of precise yet paradoxical historical details in the Book of Judith is not merely amusing (*pace* Craven 1983), ironic (Moore 1985), or deliberately fantastic (Wills 1995): it is significant.

Finally, the Book of Tobit, though more folktale than self-conscious historical fiction, does share some common ground with the texts discussed above, combining the evocation of concrete historical context—the aftermath of the Assyrian conquest of the northern tribes—with the free manipulation of historical elements in order to communicate its moral. Such freedom is particularly clear in Tobit's absurd claim to have been a young man when the northern tribes separated from Jerusalem, fully two hundred years before the fall of Samaria (Tob. 1.4). The point of this claim, as is im-

126. The authors of 1 and 2 Maccabees both suggest that the persecution of the Jews under Antiochus IV was preceded by a betrayal of the covenant on the part of the Jews (1 Macc. 1.11–15, 2 Macc. 4.11), demonstrating that many Jews of the second century B.C.E. interpreted the persecution under Antiochus IV very much in light of experience of the Exile.



mediately made clear (1.6), is that Tobit alone remained faithful to Jerusalem while his kin sacrificed to Baal. The author treats the northern tribes' apostasy from Jerusalem as a trial run for the much greater challenge to Jewish faith presented by the scattering of the ten tribes. Just as during the apostasy Tobit continued to visit Jerusalem for the feasts and offer sacrifice there, so after his deportation to Nineveh he alone refrained from eating the food of the gentiles (1.10–12).<sup>127</sup> The rhetorical power of having Tobit survive both the revolt of the northern tribes and the Assyrian deportation, and throughout alone remain faithful to the pure Judaism centered on the Temple at Jerusalem, far outweighs the historical absurdity of Tobit's living as long as a biblical patriarch.

Thus each of these texts offers tales of the past that are in themselves no more than legends or folktales while yet taking pains to evoke a concretely detailed, consistent, and at least superficially plausible historical setting. In each, however, closer examination reveals not only that these tales are not so historical as they are made to seem but that the historical coloration is itself flawed by errors and distortions readily apparent to the alert reader. Some of these blunders, like the anachronistic placement of Demetrius at the court of Philadelphus in the *Letter of Aristeas*, would be detectable only by a well-educated reader—with a tolerably good knowledge of Ptolemaic history, say—but some, like Judith's Nebuchadnezzar the Assyrian, would be apparent to any Jew who had even a nodding acquaintance with the historical traditions of the Bible.<sup>128</sup>

127. It was for this reason that God made him successful, as a buyer of provisions (*ἀγοραστής*) for Shalmaneser (Tob. 1.13). Because Tobit piously insisted upon burying the bodies of Jews executed by Shalmaneser's successor Sennacherib, he was forced into exile (1.18–20), but he was restored to favor under Esarhaddon at the instigation of his nephew Ahiqar, a high official at Esarhaddon's court (1.21–22). Whereas the Book of Tobit shows, as a rule, little interest in promoting cooperation between Jews and gentiles under Assyrian rule, we do find here the common assertion, as old as the story of Joseph, that piety is rewarded by material success and recognition at court.

128. We have, unfortunately, almost no direct evidence as to how these texts were received, but we do know that the *Letter of Aristeas* at least (in which the anachronisms and impossibilities are relatively subtle) was regarded as historical as early as the time of Josephus. Josephus paraphrases large sections of it in his *Jewish Antiquities*, and its historicity was not subsequently questioned until the seventeenth century. (See above, note 21.) On the other hand, it is hard to imagine that any Jew who was even vaguely familiar with the historical books of the Bible could have accepted Nebuchadnezzar the Assyrian at face value. Most probably, as in modern times, there were some readers who swallowed the greatest of impossibilities whole, and others who noticed even the subtlest errors; but the didactic function of the texts was equally effective for every class of reader, from the most sophisticated to the most credulous.



Whether subtle or blatant, however, the presence of historical impossibilities in an otherwise self-consciously evoked historical setting does not simply signal that the reader is stepping through the looking glass, from a world of history into one of fiction. Rather, it reflects the author's deliberate manipulation of historical details to communicate a particular message. Specifically, the authors of our six texts are at work reinventing Jewish identity by reinventing the past, each in his own way. For all peoples, and for none more than the Jews, a particular view of past events implies a particular way of constructing the present identity of a community.

Each of these texts—the *Letter of Aristeas*, 2 Maccabees, Esther, Daniel, Judith, and Tobit—contains a significant element of historical fiction, deliberate manipulation of historical material to communicate a particular didactic point. A common attitude toward historical fact—treating it as raw material to be mined and manipulated for the purpose of creating a credible, persuasive didactic fiction—unites the authors of these texts and sets them distinctively apart from the mainstream of Jewish and Greek historiography alike. They belong neither to the mainstream of historiography nor to the genre of the ancient novel but to the nebulous group of unclassifiable ancient fictions beginning to proliferate in the postclassical Greek world.<sup>129</sup>

Although these texts do share this one important element, however, calling them “romance” in the sense in which that term is often used—as a genre akin to or even identical with the ancient novel—is wholly misguided. Far from signaling a common purpose, a common audience, and a common genre, the self-conscious manipulation of history for a didactic purpose not only cuts across the boundaries of language and genre but is employed by different authors for quite different purposes. To put this in other words: each author in his own way addresses the question of Jewish identity in the last centuries before the Common Era, and no two authors' answers are quite the same.

An overview will illustrate the diverse purposes of these texts. Third Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeas*, and 2 Maccabees were all composed originally in Greek; all look to the recent Hellenistic past for their settings, and all seek a new Hellenistic Jewish identity that can accommodate both Greek culture

129. Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* has been called one of the earliest known fictions (e.g., Wills 1995: 20–21; and cf. the seminal discussion of Bakhtin 1981, who casts his net to include virtually every sort of prose narrative fiction from the postclassical Greek world). The proliferation of ancient fictions begins much earlier than Bowersock 1994 (who dates the phenomenon to the first century C.E.) suggests. The whole subject of ancient fictions, broadly defined, is deserving of much further study.

and traditional Jewish piety. The authors of 3 Maccabees and of the *Letter of Aristeas* were writing in Egypt and primarily addressing Alexandrian Jews, and as one might expect, the two have much in common. There is, however, a difference of purpose, which influences their invocations of past events. Aristeas invokes history in order to answer critics who denied the validity of the Greek Scriptures. Everything rests on his ability to demonstrate that Greeks and Jews have in the past been able to work together to create a perfect translation, and his historical construction of Jewish identity in the Hellenistic world is hence wholly focused on the possibility of cooperation. The author of 3 Maccabees, on the other hand, has set himself the task of explaining a festival of deliverance. His historical construction of Jewish identity thus focuses upon the Jews' ability to survive persecution through a combination of steadfast faith in God and unwavering loyalty to the state. This fidelity results eventually in the renewal of a positive relationship between Jews and gentiles that had been temporarily disrupted by the anomaly of persecution.<sup>130</sup> The author of 2 Maccabees, in contrast to both, likewise highly values a balance between tradition and cooperation, but his depiction of Onias III does not invoke history to encourage the Jews to persevere under foreign rule, constructing instead a positive model for the fledgling Hasmonean state. Unlike the author of 3 Maccabees, he can openly encourage revolt against a specific abusive gentile regime, that of Antiochus IV, while still allowing for the possibility of cooperation with the broader gentile world.

Esther, Daniel, Judith, and Tobit, by contrast, originally composed in Hebrew or Aramaic before being translated into Greek, look not to the recent past under Greek rule but to the more distant past under Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian kings. Esther, very much like 3 Maccabees, invokes history in order to explain a festival designed to comfort and reassure Jews who lived with the historical experience of intermittent persecution. As in 3 Maccabees, the author of Esther represents foreign rule as essentially benevolent and persecution as ephemeral. Although the Hebrew version stresses ethnic solidarity rather than religious piety, the Greek Esther constructs a model of Hellenistic Jewish identity virtually indistinguishable from that promoted by 3 Maccabees and the *Letter of Aristeas*. Daniel, by contrast, invokes history in order to suggest that the cooperation possible in the golden and silver ages has become impossible in a corrupt age of iron mixed with clay. Working, like the author of 2 Maccabees, directly in the context of the Maccabean Revolt, the author of Daniel places his hope not in the

130. See below, Part 2, where this point is argued in much greater detail.

Hasmonean state (which did not yet exist when he was writing) but in the coming of God's Kingdom on earth.

The author of *Judith* has yet a different concern. In *Judith* there is no trace of the positive attitude toward cooperation between Jews and gentiles that is reflected in 3 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeas*, 2 Maccabees, Esther, and Daniel. The author of *Judith* is purely concerned with the survival of the Jews in their homeland as a separate and unique people. The author invokes history in order to prove that the Jews have been and will be protected from the miseries of conquest and exile as long as they remain faithful to the covenant. The Book of *Judith* appeals to the lessons of history just as the prophets do, except that where these invoke the actual sufferings of the Jews at the hands of their historical persecutors in order to show that conquest and exile are God's punishment for sin and apostasy, *Judith* invokes the imaginary history of the Jews of Bethulia, who, having learned the lessons of exile, resisted an imaginary Nebuchadnezzar and were rewarded for their faith accordingly. And finally, *Tobit* invokes history in order to demonstrate how one Jewish family, by preserving its piety unsullied, was able to survive the centuries following the Assyrian conquest intact, at a time when the ten northern tribes were effectively being scattered to the winds. Like the author of *Judith*, the author of *Tobit* is not particularly concerned with promoting cooperation between Jews and gentiles (although we are told that *Tobit* rose high in the Assyrian king's service). His main ideological concern is for the preservation of Jewish faith over the long term, even in the most extreme circumstances of isolation and exile.

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The foregoing brief survey, taken together with the more detailed analysis above explaining how history has been manipulated in each of these texts, suffices to show that although each of these authors invokes history in order to construct a particular Jewish identity, no two offer precisely the same lesson. There are areas of overlap, to be sure; there were, after all, a limited number of different ways for Jews to construct their identity in the Hellenistic period. The sheer diversity of ideas concerning Jewish identity in these texts, however—a diversity that does not break down along simple lines of language or geography—reminds us that in every society, differing constructions of group identity, or of the identity of a people or a nation, can coexist, interact, compete, and coalesce.

Today it is fashionable—and correct—to speak of diverse Judaisms rather than a uniform Judaism in the period between the Bible and the Tal-

mud. Then the canon was not yet fixed, in Greek or in Hebrew; the looser categories of the Prophets and the Writings were still fluid.<sup>131</sup> All the texts we have been considering were potentially available to Greek-speaking Jews; at least four were available to those who spoke only Hebrew or Aramaic. Many Jews were bilingual.<sup>132</sup> Thus all these texts were read by a range of Jews in the late Hellenistic period and exercised their influence in different ways. Even if there can be no simple answer to the question of what constituted Jewish identity in the Hellenistic period, the authors of these texts have provided a glimpse of how diversely Hellenistic Jews defined themselves in relation to the real or imagined past.<sup>133</sup>

Not surprisingly, these authors' diverse purposes are reflected in the diversity of their genres: in each text, history is manipulated within the framework of a different literary form. The variability of genre above all makes nonsense of the very concept of Jewish romance as a literary type. The *Letter of Aristeas* virtually defies genre classification, but it is probably best understood as modeling itself upon an autobiographical memoir within the Greek tradition—comparable, for instance, to the lost *Memoirs* of Aratus (Polyb. 2.40). It is a self-conscious historical fiction from beginning to end; although historical personalities appear, the author, the addressee, and the main narrative of the letter are all imagined, and the self-conscious manipulation of history is sustained throughout. Third Maccabees is likewise hard to classify, although it is very different from the *Letter of Aristeas*. Although 3 Maccabees draws heavily upon the conventions of Hellenistic historiography (particularly the so-called pathetic school, on which see below, Chap. 5), especially in describing the battle of Raphia and in citing official documents, in form and content it resembles nothing so closely as the Book of Esther. Third Maccabees is perhaps best described as an aetiological legend, fashioned by the author into a coherent historical fiction in a distinctly

131. See discussion below in Chap. 4, nn. 50–52.

132. It can be assumed that Greek was dominant among most Jews in the Diaspora, though we cannot rule out the possibility that an educated few remained familiar with Hebrew and Aramaic as well. Within Palestine, the full extent of the penetration of Greek literacy has long been debated, but no one would now deny that at least a significant elite few were bilingual and that some texts were being both produced and read in Greek in Palestine by the mid-second century B.C.E. For a fuller discussion, see Greenfield 1978: 144–52 (along with Peters's response, pp. 159–64). It is especially notable that the documents from the Bar-Kochba archive dating to a slightly later period include letters not only in Hebrew and Aramaic but also in Greek (Greenfield 1978: 150–52). See also Collins 2000: 16–18, with references there cited.

133. For a recent discussion emphasizing the diversity of Hellenistic Judaism (with particular focus on the Diaspora), see Barclay 1996: 3–8 and *passim*.

Hellenistic style. Second Maccabees, by contrast, defines itself clearly as a work of Hellenistic historiography and for the most part treats verifiable historical matters (whether accurately or not is beside the point!), but even so it incorporates discrete elements of historical fiction in its biography of Onias III.

As one might expect with these works, the ones composed originally in Greek are most easily classified with reference to Greek literary forms, and those originally composed in Hebrew or Aramaic tend to reflect biblical models. The Book of Esther, as we have seen, invokes the historiographical conventions of 1 and 2 Kings. Like 3 Maccabees, Esther is best understood as an aetiological legend reworked into historical fiction, drawing in this case not upon the conventions of Hellenistic historiography (at least not in the original Hebrew version) but upon the historical traditions of the Bible. The Book of Judith defies easy classification, but it too can be described as a legend located within an elaborately fictionalized historical context, drawing, like Esther, on conventions familiar from the historical books of the Bible. Tobit is most easily classified as folklore, with superficial elements of historical fiction added. Daniel is an apocalypse combined with a series of court legends, all embedded in a fictionalized historical framework. The apocalypse was to become in later years a popular genre, but at the time when Daniel was written it was unprecedented. The title *Four Strange Books of the Bible*, which E. J. Bickermann applied to Daniel, Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Jonah, could as easily be applied to Daniel, Esther, Judith, and Tobit. Like the Greek texts already considered, these texts composed originally in Hebrew or Aramaic defy easy classification.

Enough has been said here about the problem of genre in these seven works to demonstrate the futility of lumping them all into the single ill-defined category of romance or novel. The deliberate manipulation of historical fact, producing historical fiction, is not a genre but a literary technique, and an attitude toward the uses of the past, that cuts across all boundaries of language, genre, and ideology. The only genre characteristic that these seven texts share is precisely the impossibility of assigning them to any single conventionally recognized genre at all.<sup>134</sup>

M. M. Bakhtin has observed that Greek literature in the Hellenistic and

134. Even those that appear to belong clearly to a distinct genre (2 Maccabees, Daniel) prove on closer examination to contain distinctly odd features that tend to set them apart from others of their kind. Second Maccabees clearly identifies itself as history, but it is not quite like any other work of Hellenistic history that we possess; Daniel set the pattern for the genre of the apocalypse, yet its peculiar combination of narrative (1–6) and apocalyptic prophecy (7–12) is unparalleled.

Roman periods is the product of an open or polyglot society, one admitting cross-fertilization among ideas from many different cultures, and that for this reason texts from these periods consistently resist pigeonholing. The only unifying characteristic of the novel (the rubric under which Bakhtin subsumed most Greek prose narratives written after the fifth century B.C.E.!) is that the genre has no unifying characteristics. Regardless of how valid these observations may be for the novel as broadly defined by Bakhtin, they certainly apply to these seven texts. The quest for a unified genre must be abandoned. Romance as a genre cannot be defined in any way that will make these odd texts any easier to understand. As B. E. Perry has remarked, the great fallacy of pursuing the origins of the novel is the notion that finding them will somehow explain the novel itself (Perry 1967: 8–17).

This chapter has identified the one factor that these texts—collectively designated “historical fictions” simply because they deliberately combine seemingly incompatible elements of history and fiction—do have in common: the manipulation of historical fact to communicate a particular message, the truth of which transcends mere historical exigency. Their collective designation, however, should be viewed as a broad category devised for the sake of convenient reference, not as a genre. Attempts to force these seven texts into the same generic pigeonhole have done little but confuse the issue.

The systematic transmutation of history into fiction shared by all these texts, however, deserves much further study once the will-o’-the-wisp of genre has at last been put to rest. With an eye toward better understanding the technique of historical fiction, we will now examine it in a range of other Jewish texts sometimes dubbed romances, notably certain tales embedded in the narrative of Josephus, the “hero romance” of Artapanus, and the so-called Jewish novel *Joseph and Aseneth*. After considering each of these we will conclude with an overall analysis of fictionalized history in Jewish Hellenistic texts.

## 2 Josephus

Josephus preserves in his *Jewish Antiquities* a number of remarkable tales that deserve consideration here, the most notable of them his account of Alexander and the Jews, and the so-called Tales of the Tobiads. These stories, like the texts considered in Chapter 1, treat the relations of the Jews with their foreign rulers, specifically with their Greek rulers, as in 3 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeas*, and 2 Maccabees. Because these tales have not survived as independent texts but have been incorporated into Josephus's narrative, they present unique problems for our discussion.

Josephus set out to give a complete history of the Jewish people in *Jewish Antiquities*, from their earliest beginnings to his own day. With summaries and paraphrases of Jewish literary works he seeks to harmonize Jewish literary traditions, both biblical and not, with Greek historical traditions and conventions, placing each of his Jewish sources in a linear chronological context, correlating this chronology with that of the Greeks, and incorporating additional material where appropriate. Thus Josephus's account of the Persian period in Book 11 of *Jewish Antiquities* for the most part simply paraphrases excerpts from Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, arranged within a framework of Persian chronology familiar to the Greek world from Herodotus and other Greek writers.

So long as we are discussing Josephus's use of texts still surviving in our time, as here, analyzing how he has adapted his sources to fit his chronological framework remains straightforward. Many of Josephus's sources for the Hellenistic period, however, are unfortunately now lost, and we can only make inferences about their nature based on Josephus's narrative, always a dangerous procedure. Such is the case with Josephus's accounts of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem (*AJ* 11.304–47) and of the adventures of the Tobiad family (12.154–236).

Before considering those accounts, it is worth first briefly comparing how Josephus handles Daniel (*AJ* 10.186–281), Esther (11.184–296) and the *Letter of Aristeas* (12.12–118), already discussed in Chapter 1. *Jewish Antiquities* has preserved the Septuagint Esther narrative virtually intact, in a close paraphrase retaining all the elements of the original.<sup>1</sup> Chronologically, Josephus places the events in the reign of Artaxerxes I (464–423 B.C.E.), the son of Xerxes the Great.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Josephus's account of the translation of the Septuagint for the most part closely paraphrases the *Letter of Aristeas*, although characteristically he never names his source. In this case, however, he freely cut out large parts of the text that he deemed irrelevant, most notably the lengthy symposium scene (*LtAris* 187–294); the parts of the text that he has kept do preserve very closely the character of the original. He correctly interprets the unambiguous chronological indications given by the author of the *Letter of Aristeas*, placing the translation of the Torah in the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus. With these two texts, then, Josephus has done his best to interpret their chronological indications and has inserted close paraphrases where appropriate in his chronological framework; he has changed the originals minimally, merely cutting out what is not essential to his own narrative. Inevitably, in the course of paraphrasing the original, subtle differences of emphasis, literary style, and theme have crept in; but the essential elements remain intact. If Esther or the *Letter of Aristeas* were now lost, we could largely reconstruct either one from Josephus's text without losing the original author's structure or intent.

We find an interesting contrast in Josephus's handling of the Book of Daniel. Josephus's account of the Exile is dominated by a close paraphrase of Daniel's narrative portions (*AJ* 10.186–281; cf. *Dan.* 1–6), which underlie his account from Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem (*AJ* 10.84–185; cf. 2 Kings 24–25 and Jeremiah 37–43) to the return under Cyrus (*AJ* 11.1–158; cf. *Ezra*). The sequence of events in Daniel 1–6 is preserved intact; beyond this, Josephus also attempts to correlate the chronological indications in Daniel with the chronology of the Babylonian and Persian kings

1. For a detailed analysis that focuses on the slight but significant thematic differences between Josephus's paraphrase and his original, see Feldman 1998a and 1998b.

2. As we have seen, the *Ahashwerosh* (Ahasuerus) of the Hebrew text corresponds not to the Greek Artaxerxes, as the Septuagint translator thought, but to the Greek Xerxes, and it is certainly to Xerxes the Great that the Hebrew text refers. Josephus, however, was using the Septuagint text, and accepted the translator's version of the king's name, therefore placing the events in the reign of Xerxes' son (*AJ* 11.184).



in his Greek sources (principally Herodotus and Berossus). Here he runs into trouble, for as we have seen, the author of Daniel has created a largely fictional chronology of the Exile to suit his own apocalyptic purpose. Josephus's attempts to reconcile fiction with fact are instructive. Nebuchadnezzar's reign presents no difficulties (*AJ* 10.219–28), but the chronology of the subsequent kings is another matter. Unlike the author of Daniel, Josephus lists the kings who ruled between Nebuchadnezzar and "Belshazzar" correctly, although assigning them exaggeratedly long reigns.<sup>3</sup> He then identifies Daniel's Belshazzar with Nabonidus in the Greek sources, thus neatly reconciling Daniel's calling Belshazzar the last king of the Babylonian line with the Greek sources' unanimous (and correct) identification of the last king as Nabonidus (r. 556–539 B.C.E.).<sup>4</sup>

Most characteristic of all is how Josephus handles Daniel's fiction Darius the Mede. We have seen that the reign of this Darius, despite drawing on elements of the historical Darius the Great (r. 522–486 B.C.E.), is purely fictional, representing the silver world kingdom of the Medes. Josephus is frankly baffled, since he cannot in good historical conscience identify Darius the Mede, who ruled *before* Cyrus, with Darius the Persian. His solution is characteristically ingenious: Darius the Mede was a son of Astyages the Mede, Cyrus's maternal grandfather, "but was called by another name among the Greeks";<sup>5</sup> he assisted Cyrus in the overthrow of Babylon (*AJ* 10.247–48).<sup>6</sup> As with the identification of Belshazzar and Nabonidus, there is no support for this in our historical sources, but the explanation succeeds

3. Abilmathadachus (Amel-Marduk or Evil-merodach), eighteen years (*AJ* 10.229–31); Eglisharus (Neriglissar), forty years (10.231); Labosordachus (Labashi-Marduk), nine months (10.231). In actual fact Amel-Marduk ruled two years (562–560 B.C.E.), Neriglissar four years (560–556 B.C.E.), and Labashi-Marduk probably less than nine months (556 B.C.E.; Marcus 1937: 285–87).

4. As we have seen, Daniel is in error; Belshazzar was in fact the son and regent of Nabonidus and never ruled Babylon in his own right. Josephus's solution conveniently allows him to preserve both the flawed tradition of Daniel and the accurate tradition of the Greeks, but at the expense of precise historical accuracy.

5. *AJ* 10.248: ἕτερον δὲ παρὰ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἐκαλεῖτο ὄνομα. This is of course especially clever, as he does not give Darius's alleged Greek name, leaving his Greek reader to fill in the blank from the names of Cyrus's known associates. There is an entertaining tradition of modern scholarship that has actually sought to identify which of Cyrus's associates this Darius the Mede might have been. See Marcus 1937: 295.

6. This inventive solution is perhaps reflected, or simply paralleled, in the medieval rabbinic tradition that likewise distinguished between Darius the Mede and Darius the Persian but made Darius the Mede a father-in-law of Cyrus (Marcus 1937: 295).

in fitting the fictions of Daniel into a framework that readers educated in the Greek historical tradition would accept.

Josephus's method here is significant. The authors of such fictions, as I have argued, intended them to be read not necessarily as literally historical but rather as metaphorical, and therefore the appearance of historical errors and absurdities did not disturb them. It is evident from what Josephus has done with them, however, that such absurdities did disturb him, and presumably his audience as well. We see in this the beginning of a second stage of audience reception: Josephus, writing late in the first century C.E., represents a generation that read these Hellenistic fictions as if they were literally historical. This was perhaps inevitable, given the contradiction inherent in these texts from the first. Josephus stands at the head of a line leading ultimately to modern scholarship's vain attempts to make historical sense of texts never written as pure history.

Accordingly it is difficult to be certain, when studying parts of the *Jewish Antiquities* based on sources now lost, whether Josephus has faithfully paraphrased the traditions available to him, as he has done with Esther and the *Letter of Aristeas*, or whether he has corrected and in the process substantially modified his source, as in the case of Daniel. Although our conclusions about Jewish historical traditions from the Hellenistic period preserved only by Josephus must therefore be tentative and somewhat uncertain, nevertheless a close reading of his account of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem and of the so-called Tales of the Tobiads will reveal that these stories, even when viewed through the filter of Josephus's narrative, have much in common methodologically with the historical fictions preserved in the Septuagint.

Josephus's account of the transition of power from Darius III, last of the Persians, to his conqueror, Alexander, immediately raises the problem of Josephus's relationship to his source. Josephus appears to have incorporated two distinct traditions, one dealing with the origins of the Samaritan schism under Sanballat, the last Persian governor of Samaria, and the other with Alexander's visit to Jerusalem and his meeting with the high priest Jaddus. It was long since suggested that these two traditions, originally independent, have been clumsily combined, whether by Josephus himself or by an earlier redactor.<sup>7</sup> Yet such a source-critical approach may be unwarranted.

7. Büchler 1898: 1–26, followed by Abel 1935: 48; Marcus 1937: 530–32; Momigliano 1979: 443; S. Cohen 1982–83: 42; Stoneman 1994: 39–41; Gruen 1998: 194. Büchler actually detects a total of three strands, a pro-Samaritan account of Alexander's approval for the Samaritan temple, a pro-Jewish tendentious revision

These two strands are closely interrelated in the narrative of Josephus, whose ideological thrust relies upon the carefully articulated contrast between the Jews and their neighbors the Samaritans.<sup>8</sup> Josephus's standard procedure, as we have seen, is to follow his source faithfully except when altering the original is necessary for it to fit into his chronology. We may assume, then, that not Josephus but his source would have been the one to organize what may once have been independent legends<sup>9</sup> into a coherent ideological narrative.<sup>10</sup>

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of this account in which Alexander accords much higher honors to the Jerusalem Temple, and a further anti-Samaritan conclusion (Alexander's final rebuff of the Samaritans), but the tendency has been to simplify this division into two main traditions, often referred to as the (pro-Samaritan) Sanballat and (anti-Samaritan) Jaddus traditions. Büchler's view has, however, been contested by Goldstein (1993: 80–90, on which see below). S. Cohen (1982–83: 44–55) suggests further subdividing the Jaddus story into two separate strands, which seems unnecessary. (Cf. Goldstein 1993: 88–90.) Gruen (1998: 194–95) endorses the traditional division of the narrative into Sanballat and Jaddus traditions, although he (rightly, I think) views both as anti-Samaritan. I will argue, with Goldstein, that the narrative is unified and anti-Samaritan throughout.

8. Goldstein (1993: 80–90) seeks to demonstrate in detail the internal coherence of Josephus's account. In particular, he argues that the different parts of the story are united by the common theme of loyalty: Sanballat goes over to the enemy (Alexander), whereas Jaddus remains faithful to Darius. Gruen (1998: 194) objects to Goldstein's argument on the grounds that Jaddus also eventually goes over to Alexander, "albeit with divine sanction." *Pace* Gruen, divine sanction is precisely the point of the story. Sanballat changes sides readily and treacherously in order to promote his own advantage, whereas Jaddus remains loyal to the temporal power set over him until God commands his shift of allegiance. Since Jaddus submits himself to God's will, whereas Sanballat consults his own convenience, Jaddus can (and does) legitimately represent himself to Alexander as more likely than Sanballat to remain faithful to the king now that Alexander is God's chosen representative. The story has the double advantage of stressing the loyalty of the Jews to their Hellenistic rulers, while at the same time stressing the fact that the legitimacy of those rulers depends on God's sanction. The narrative's exaltation of Alexander the Great as a ruler divinely sanctioned by God is a theme eloquently developed by Gruen 1998: 196–99. See further discussion below.

9. Note that Büchler's source-critical argument deals with the joining of written (as opposed to oral) sources into one narrative. Few would deny that the narrative in Josephus combines legends about Sanballat, Jaddus, and Alexander that probably arose independently of one another. The question rather is: Does the historical fiction found in Josephus represent one unified narrative composed by a single author with a single purpose, or a clumsy pastiche of two or more narratives composed by different authors with different purposes?

10. This organization of once independent legends or motifs into a coherent narrative with a particular ideological purpose is entirely consistent with the proceeding of some of the Hellenistic Jewish authors with whom I have dealt above. The various legends surrounding the figure of Daniel, the legends surrounding the figure

Like the texts already studied, Josephus's account of Alexander and the Jews and Samaritans consists of a tissue of legends intentionally tailored to fit a concrete and detailed historical framework. To be sure, the assiduous hand of Josephus almost certainly supplied at least some of the chronological connections;<sup>11</sup> but the story itself is dependent upon a particular chronological framework, that of the transition from Persian rule under Darius III (r. 338–331 B.C.E.) to Hellenistic rule under Alexander the Great,<sup>12</sup> when (at least according to Josephus) Sanballat was governor of Samaria and Jaddus was the high priest at Jerusalem.<sup>13</sup>

According to the story in Josephus, Jaddus had a brother, Manasses. Sanballat, sent by Darius, "the last king," to govern Samaria, sought an alliance with the family of the high priest of the Jews by offering Manasses the hand of his daughter Nikaso in marriage (*AJ* 11.302–3).<sup>14</sup> When Manasses' marriage to a foreigner gives rise to conflict at Jerusalem, Sanballat entices Manasses and his supporters to Samaria, promising him a temple and high priesthood of his own, contingent upon King Darius's approval (11.306–12). Since at this time Darius is preparing to do battle with Alexander at Issus, San-

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of Onias, and the two apparently disparate legends combined in the narrative of 3 Maccabees spring immediately to mind. Although it is impossible to be certain how much Josephus may have modified his original, there is nothing in the account of Sanballat, Jaddus, and Alexander, other than occasional chronological markers (see below, n. 11), that we are compelled to attribute to Josephus's own hand. (Contrast the case of the Tobiads, below, where it is almost certain that Josephus has significantly modified the already muddled chronology of his source.) I proceed on the assumption that Josephus has taken over his source mostly unchanged, without absolutely ruling out the possibility that Josephus was the unifying author. The date of Josephus's source or sources remains uncertain; for a wide range of guesses from the third century B.C.E. to the first century C.E., see Büchler 1898: 16–20, 25–26; Abel 1935: 52–53; Marcus 1937; Momigliano 1979: 444–46; S. Cohen 1982–83: 65–68; Goldstein 1993: 90–96; Stoneman 1994: 42–43; Gruen 1998: 193–94.

11. Cf. esp. *AJ* 11.304–5 and 313–14, whose intrusive character (*κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν καιρὸν*, 304, 313) is typical of Josephus's attempts to coordinate his Jewish sources with the chronology given by his Greek historical sources.

12. Even if we accept Büchler's postulate of two originally separate strands, a story in which Alexander sanctioned the temple on Mount Gerizim and another in which he honored the Temple at Jerusalem, Alexander is the chronological anchor for both legends, and the chronology that ties the two strands together cannot now be disentangled; it is integral to the narrative as a whole.

13. Whether Josephus is accurate in his chronology here is still disputed. See detailed discussion on Sanballat and Jaddus, below.

14. The daughter's name is suspiciously Greek, suggesting that this romantic detail was added to the story at some point by a Greek-speaking author or storyteller. Cf. Marcus (1937 *ad loc.*), who, however, considers the possibility that the name might be a Hellenized form of some unknown Semitic name.

ballat promises to honor his offer as soon as Darius returns victorious (11.315). Contrary to his expectation, however, Alexander wins the battle; Darius retreats in disarray, and Alexander moves down the coast to invest Tyre (11.316–17). During the siege, Alexander demands that the Jews of Jerusalem transfer their loyalty to him, but Jaddus refuses, vowing that so long as Darius is alive he will command their loyalty (11.317–19). Sanballat, by contrast, perceiving an opportunity for self-aggrandizement, offers his submission to Alexander as he is beginning the siege of Tyre (11.321).<sup>15</sup> Sanballat obtains Alexander's consent to build a schismatic temple on Mount Gerizim for Manasses and his people. He subsequently dies just as Alexander is completing the siege of Gaza and preparing to move against Jerusalem (11.325). When Alexander arrives at Jerusalem and meets Jaddus, his outlook is revolutionized: he comes to hold the Jews in the highest regard and grants them extensive concessions. In a rapid about-face, the Samaritans attempt to represent themselves as Jews in order to share in the Jews' good fortune but are politely snubbed. Alexander then departs for Egypt (11.345).

The chronology of the story thus hinges closely upon the reign of the high priest Jaddus at Jerusalem, the last years of the reign of Darius III, and the timing of Alexander's movements between his victory at Issus and his departure into Egypt after the conquest of Tyre and Gaza, in the year 332 B.C.E. The whole focus of the story is upon the contrasting attitudes of Jaddus and the Jews on the one hand, and Sanballat, Manasses, and the Samaritans on the other, to their overlords, first Darius, then Alexander. The chronological background of the story as we find it in Josephus is internally consistent; there is no suggestion that Josephus has had to labor to smooth over chronological contradictions. (Compare the case of the *Toiads*, below.)

Yet the appearance of historical accuracy given to the story by its seemingly detailed and painstaking chronology is quite specious. In the first place, Josephus evidently believed that the Sanballat and the Jaddus who quarreled over the issue of intermarriage in the time of Alexander were identical with the Sanballat who clashed with Nehemiah in the latter half of the fifth cen-

15. There is a glitch in the chronology here, as Sanballat in *AJ* 11.321 is made to offer loyalty to Alexander at the beginning of the siege of Tyre, although Alexander's approach to Jaddus, previously narrated in 11.317–19, was made toward the end of the siege of Tyre. This was one of the discontinuities that led Büchler (1898: 1–26) to postulate two sources, but I argue below that this particular discontinuity exists for another reason.

ture<sup>16</sup> and the Yaddua whose high priesthood was recorded in the time of Darius II (r. 423–404 B.C.E.).<sup>17</sup> Sanballat the Horonite and Yaddua the contemporary of Darius II lived over a century before Alexander. It has been argued that despite Josephus's own confusion there was indeed another historical Sanballat and another Jaddus in the time of Alexander: this may be a reasonable hypothesis, but outside Josephus's narrative we have no evidence for it.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the account of the quarrel between Sanballat and

16. For Josephus's identification of the Sanballat and Jaddus of the Alexander narrative with the governor and high priest who lived in the late fifth century B.C.E., see Cross 1963: 121; Cross 1966: 204–5; Cross 1975: 6; Grabbe 1987: 237, 243; D. Schwartz 1990: 176–85. According to the Book of Nehemiah, Sanballat the Horonite, ruler of Samaria (Neh. 4.2), was prominent among the enemies of Nehemiah (Neh. 2.10, 19; 4.1–3, 7–8; 6.1–9, 12, 14; 13.28). Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, who is to be identified with Artaxerxes I (r. 464–424 B.C.E.), that is to say in 445 B.C.E.; this places Sanballat the Horonite in the mid- to late fifth century. The biblical evidence is corroborated by documentary evidence. A letter from the Jews of Elephantine (no. 30 ed. Cowley; see now Modrzejewski [1995: 39–43] for a fuller discussion of this letter and related correspondence) dated to 407 B.C.E. mentions appeals previously directed to Johanan, high priest at Jerusalem, and to the two sons of Sanballat, governor of Samaria. See Cross 1975: 7; D. Schwartz 1990: 176–79. There was, then, a Sanballat serving as governor of Samaria in the latter half of the fifth century B.C.E. For the possibility that Samaria was ruled in Alexander's time by a descendant of Sanballat the Horonite, see below.

17. Nehemiah 12.10, 22, gives a list of high priests concluding with a Yaddua and says that the list was recorded in the time of Darius the Persian (i.e., Darius II, r. 423–404 B.C.E.; cf. Cross 1975: 6, 17). Josephus gives an identical list (as Grabbe [1987: 243] emphasizes), but he identifies Jaddus/Yaddua as a contemporary of Alexander and Darius III. See Grabbe 1987: 237–42. It might be noted, though, that Josephus adds another name to his list, that of Onias the successor of Jaddus; thus he must have had some additional source of information about the high priestly succession, how reliable we cannot tell.

18. The discovery of another Sanballat (Sanballat II), apparently the famous Sanballat's grandson, in the Wadi Daliyeh papyri, led Cross (1963: 121; also Cross 1975: 17) to suggest that the Sanballat who appears in Josephus may be presumed to be a Sanballat III, the grandson of Sanballat II (on the typical papponymic principle). As tempting as this suggestion is, Grabbe (1987: 237) rightly points out that "Sanballat III is still only a postulate from Josephus' story." Both Cross and Grabbe (see above, n. 17) agree that Josephus confuses the Sanballat and the Yaddua mentioned in Nehemiah with the Sanballat and the Jaddus whom he records in the time of Alexander, but Cross thinks that there actually were two Sanballats and two Yadduas (papponymically named), whereas Grabbe is more skeptical, arguing that Josephus had no evidence to go on beyond Nehemiah and the Alexander story. Although Josephus may have had independent evidence for a Sanballat III and a high priest named Jaddus in the time of Alexander, it is equally possible that he found a story in which a fictional Sanballat and a fictional Jaddus were tied to the reign of Alexander and simply placed them at the appropriate point in his desperately source-poor narrative of the period between Nehemiah and the Maccabees. (Grabbe 1987: 231–46)

Jaddus in Josephus over the issue of intermarriage suspiciously resembles the dispute reported in Nehemiah 13 and may be a mere variant of the same story.<sup>19</sup> If these indications are correct, the quarrel between Sanballat and

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thoroughly demonstrates just how poor Josephus's source material for this period was.) D. Schwartz (1990) suggests that perhaps there were two Sanballats and two Yadduas, and that this led Josephus to conflate events that belonged to the lives of the first two with events that belonged to the lives of the second two; this, however, requires him to posit an unconvincing tangle of source-critical layers to explain how Josephus (who he believes is the primary editor) managed to bring together several sources, some of which referred to the fifth-century-B.C.E. Sanballat, some to the fourth-century Sanballat, and some to an unnamed high priest whom Josephus named Jaddus. It is surely easier to suppose that if there were two Sanballats and two Yadduas, this at most supplied material for the author of the fiction, who combined a tradition about a quarrel over intermarriage involving Sanballat (Neh. 13.28), a legend (perhaps) in which Alexander authorized the building of the Samaritan temple, and a tradition about an encounter between Alexander and the high priest of Jerusalem and used conveniently plausible names for his main characters. *Pace* D. Schwartz (1990: 185–86), assuming that Josephus found the combination Sanballat-Jaddus-Alexander in his source in no way compels us to assume that Josephus's chronology is sound.

19. Whether Josephus's Sanballat-Manasses-Jaddus story is a doublet of Nehemiah 13.28 is a debate of long standing. It should be noted at once that Josephus was using not the canonical Book of Nehemiah directly, but rather a Nehemiah tradition substantially different from the one we now have (Grabbe 1987: 232–35, 237); he probably did not know the version of the story known to us from Nehemiah 13. (Cf. D. Schwartz 1990: 197–98.) He gives no account of a dispute over intermarriage in the time of Nehemiah, and Grabbe (1987: 237) points out that he certainly would not have missed the chance to mention two separate incidents supporting his anti-Samaritan polemic had he known of them. We must then ask whether the intermarriage quarrel Josephus found in his Alexander-Sanballat-Jaddus source is simply a variant of the dispute known to us from Nehemiah 13.28. There are strong similarities between the two accounts. Both involve a bitter dispute over intermarriage in which the offenders were driven out, and both involve a brother of the high priest who married a daughter of Sanballat, governor of Samaria. In Nehemiah 13.23–27, Nehemiah rails against the widespread practice of intermarriage in his time. Nehemiah 13.28 mentions in particular one whom he “chased away,” a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite. This unnamed son-in-law (contrast the named Manasses of Josephus's version) was one of the sons of Jehoiada (Yoyada): that is to say, presumably a brother of the high priest Yohanan son of Yoyada who is mentioned in the Elephantine papyri (Marcus 1937: 498–511; Cross 1975: 17). It is, then, possible that that the son-in-law of Sanballat who was driven out of Jerusalem was an unnamed brother of Yohanan (late fifth century B.C.E.), as Nehemiah 13.28 has it, and not Manasses the brother of Jaddus (late fourth century B.C.E.), as Josephus would have it. Earlier scholars widely assumed that Josephus's story is only a doublet of Nehemiah 13.28 (cf. D. Schwartz 1990: 176–80), but Cross (1963: 121; 1975: 6) advocates regarding them as two separate incidents on the strength of the discovery of a Sanballat II in the papyri. (See above, n. 18.) Grabbe (1987: 236–42), however, makes a strong case for a single incident in the time of Nehemiah. Although one could cite differences between the stories (the unnamed son of Jehoiada/Yoyada vs.



the high priest of Jerusalem, and the alleged separation of the Jews and the Samaritans over the issue of mixed marriage, originally had nothing to do with Alexander or with the transition from Persian to Macedonian rule.<sup>20</sup> Alexander's connection with building the Samaritan temple is questionable in its own right. In its present context Alexander's approval of the temple

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Manasses the brother of Jaddus, driven out by Nehemiah vs. driven out by the high priest Jaddus himself), these differences of detail could easily spring up through oral transmission, and it is very hard to imagine two separate incidents a hundred years apart in which the brother of a high priest marries the daughter of a Sanballat and is driven out in consequence. Cf. Grabbe 1987: 238; D. Schwartz 1990: 195–96.

20. If the arguments in favor of a single incident in the time of Nehemiah are sound, as I believe they are, the author has at the very least transplanted the expulsion of the high priest's brother-in-law into the time frame of Alexander. It is more difficult to decide whether the author has also transferred the two further events he reports, the breaking away of a schismatic group of Jews to join the Cuthaeans (i.e., foreign) Samaritans and the building of a new temple on Gerizim, out of historical sequence as well.

The issue is complicated by the question of the dating of the Samaritan schism and the building of the temple on Mount Gerizim, which is itself a disputed issue. The account in Josephus gives a clear sequence: a quarrel over intermarriage, exacerbated by the marriage of the high priest's brother to Sanballat's daughter, leads directly to a schism (several priests abandon the Jerusalem cult along with Manasses) and to the building of a new temple on Gerizim, with Alexander's permission. This is a clearly anti-Samaritan account of the origins of the Samaritan cult (see Egger 1986: 66; Grabbe 1987: 238–42; D. Schwartz 1990: 190); Samaritan chronicles (themselves no doubt tendentious) insist on their independence from the Jerusalem cult, as Grabbe *loc. cit.* points out. Nehemiah 13 is less clear; here too Nehemiah inveighs against intermarriage, and a brother of the high priest marries the daughter of Sanballat and is driven out, but Nehemiah says nothing in this particular context of the establishment of a new cult in Samaria or of conflict with the Samaritans as schismatic Jews (Sanballat the Horonite, whatever his ethnicity may have been, is treated by Nehemiah as a gentile). If we assume that Nehemiah 13.28 is historical (it is a very brief mention and contains none of the colorful, romantic elaboration found in Josephus), when did the actual schism (if there was a decisive break at all, which Coggins [1975: 162–65] doubts) and the building of a new temple occur, and was the parting of ways in fact connected in any way with the intermarriage dispute?

The question of Samaritan origins remains unsettled in the scholarship: see Gaster 1925: 1–39; Coggins 1975; Egger 1986: 65–82; Mor 1989: 1–18; Crown 1991: 17–50. (Mor, one of the most recent treatments, unconvincingly resurrects the attempt to defend the complete historicity of Josephus's account.) Jewish tradition (based on 2 Kings 17) represents the Samaritans as descendants of a mixed race formed by the settlement of foreigners after the destruction of Israel, and many scholars have posited a modified version of this tradition in which the final break with the quasi-foreign Samaritans came only at the time of Ezra-Nehemiah's prohibitions on intermarriage. Samaritan tradition claims that the decisive break had already occurred in the eleventh century B.C.E. and labels the Jerusalem cult as schismatic. Both these traditions should be viewed with skepticism (Coggins 1975: 1–7). Almost all modern scholars (except perhaps Crown 1991: 17, who does not see a final break



is no credit to the venal Samaritans and merely sets the stage for their later comeuppance. The Samaritans themselves, however, do preserve a pro-Samaritan version of a meeting between a Sanballat and Alexander, so Josephus (or his source) may be drawing on such a legend here. The date of the building of the temple on Gerizim is still disputed,<sup>21</sup> so we cannot be certain whether in this case the author has changed the date of a historical event to fit his story. Whenever the temple at Gerizim was built, however, it is very unlikely that it had anything to do with Alexander's authorization.<sup>22</sup> In any case, the author of this version of the story has deliberately trans-

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until after 135 C.E.) are agreed that the Samaritans existed in the second century B.C.E. as a distinct group living at Shechem and worshiping at a temple on Mount Gerizim, since both Shechem and Gerizim were attacked and destroyed by John Hyrcanus at the end of that century, but at what point they became identifiable as a completely distinct group, whether that separation took place gradually or abruptly, and when the temple on Gerizim was built are all still disputed questions. On the current state of the evidence, we simply do not know if the connection made by Josephus's source between the intermarriage dispute, the Samaritan schism, and the building of the temple has any historical validity. The connection the author makes between the issue of intermarriage with foreigners and the break with the Samaritans is inherently anti-Samaritan, since the Samaritans themselves would have vehemently denied that they were anything other than pure descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh. Josephus's account continues to be treated by many in the discussion as sober historical evidence for the origin of the Samaritans (see, most recently, Mor 1989: 4–11); if nothing else, an analysis of Josephus's Alexander-Sanballat-Jaddus narrative as self-conscious fiction should serve to caution against relying on this narrative for historical purposes. Josephus's account may be no more reliable for the history of Judah and Samaria in the time of Alexander than 3 Maccabees is for the reign of Ptolemy Philopator. (See below, Part 2.)

21. Archaeology at one time seemed to confirm the building of the Gerizim temple at the end of the fourth century B.C.E. (although that in itself does little to confirm or deny Josephus's account of the specific circumstances: Coggins 1975: 97; Egger 1986: 66–67; Grabbe 1987: 241), but even that has been recently called into question (Goldstein 1993: 79).

22. The story of Alexander's authorization of the Samaritan temple is afflicted with the same kind of inherently improbable details that mar the account of Alexander at Jerusalem; for instance, we are asked to believe that the temple was requested, approved, and built within a matter of months(!). Moreover, it does not agree with other historical information we have about Alexander and the Samaritans. According to Curtius 4.8.9–10, after Alexander departed Palestine for Egypt, the inhabitants of Samaria rebelled and murdered their new governor. As Alexander marched north from Egypt on his way to Gaugamela, Samaria was harshly punished for its intransigence and resettled with a military colony (Cross 1963: 110–19; Coggins 1975: 106; Egger 1986: 74–77; Goldstein 1991: 75–76; Stoneman 1994: 40–41). Curtius's account seems to be partially confirmed by the Wadi Daliyeh finds, where the bodies of many victims were discovered in smoked-out caves (likely, although not certainly, refugees from the sack of Samaria; cf. Cross 1963: 110–19; Coggins 1975:

ferred at least one late-fifth-century tradition into a quite different chronological context, almost a century later than where it belongs, and has probably taken liberties with the building of the Gerizim temple as well, all with the aim of blackening the Samaritans. (See further below.) Many problems that vex the attempt to read Josephus's account here as straightforward history would not arise if we accept the hypothesis that Josephus's source deliberately fictionalized the historical details.

The story of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem, too, although loaded with circumstantial historical details, is itself almost certainly pure legend, with no basis in historical fact. According to Josephus, Alexander toured Jerusalem and the surrounding cities after he completed the siege of Gaza but before leaving for Egypt, a reasonable enough proceeding on the face of it (*AJ* 11.325). It is clear from the sources for Alexander's reign, however, that Alexander delayed at Gaza only long enough to make essential arrangements before proceeding to the next phase of the campaign (Arrian 3.1, *Plut. Alex.* 26, *Diod.* 17.49, *Curtius* 4.7). There was no time for any such detour as Josephus describes. Nor is Alexander likely to have wasted time on the punitive mission that the author of this tale ascribes to him. Whereas Tyre and Gaza were strategically important enough to warrant halting the campaign until they were secured—the famous siege of Tyre took seven months—the task of securing the loyalty of the lesser cities of the interior would have fallen to the governor of Coele Syria whom Alexander left behind. There is no reason to believe that the historical Alexander ever visited Jerusalem.<sup>23</sup>

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106–8; Egger 1986: 74–77), and by the appearance of a destruction layer at Samaria at the end of the fourth century B.C.E. (Cross 1963: 119). Archaeology also shows that around this time, and most likely in connection with this disaster, the population of Samaria dwindled and Shechem was resettled after a gap of many years (Cross 1963: 118–19; Coggins 1975: 102–6; Goldstein 1993: 78). Even if Alexander had given permission for a temple to be built less than a year earlier, it is highly unlikely that he would have allowed its completion after the inhabitants of Samaria incurred his wrath. (Cf. Egger 1986: 81; Grabbe 1987: 241; Stoneman 1994: 40–41.) If indeed the temple at Gerizim can be dated archaeologically to the latter part of fourth century B.C.E., it must have been complete before Alexander arrived, or begun in the age of the Successors. The motivation for both the pro-Samaritan legend (preserved in Samaritan tradition) and the anti-Samaritan tradition (preserved in Josephus) to associate the Gerizim temple with Alexander was polemical rather than historical.

23. The scholarship is virtually unanimous on this point; the very few defenders (e.g., Kasher 1975: 187–208; Golan 1991: 19–30) of the tale's historicity have not found favor. See Büchler 1898: 1–2, 15; Momigliano 1979: 443; S. Cohen 1982–83: 68; Goldstein 1993: 70–71 (although Goldstein [1993: 76–79, 101] does accept the historicity of many individual details, such as the submission of the Samaritans to Alexander); Stoneman 1994: 40; Gruen 1998: 195.

Moreover, the description of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem itself contains several striking anachronisms. We are told that as Alexander approached Jerusalem, he was accompanied by Phoenicians and Chaldeans (i.e., Babylonians; *AJ* 11.330). That these are not merely mercenary soldiers or itinerants is made plain by the subsequent astonishment of the "kings of Syria" (*τῆς Συρίας βασιλεῖς*, 11.332) on witnessing the king's change of heart. Alexander, like Darius before him, is the king of kings, and these high-ranking personages are on hand to marvel at the honor accorded to the Jews. But at this time, Alexander had not yet conquered Babylon, which opened its gates to the conqueror only after Gaugamela, some two years later. The distinguished Chaldeans are quite out of place in this account of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem in the fall of 332 B.C.E.<sup>24</sup>

There are more anachronisms in the debate with Parmenio, which follows. Parmenio is surprised that Alexander should prostrate himself (*προσκυνήσειε*, *AJ* 11.333) before the high priest of the Jews, when it is more usual for all men to prostrate themselves before him (*προσκυνησούντων αὐτὸν πάντων*, *ibid.*). Yet Alexander introduced the controversial practice of *proskynēsis* only after Darius's death.<sup>25</sup> The debate in itself, although not anachronistic, is a historical truism. The sources for Alexander's reign record several debates between Alexander and Parmenio, each of them allowing Alexander to score points off his more cautious, pragmatic general; the debate on the eve of Gaugamela is the most famous.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, it may be noted that the reference to Alexander discovering himself in the prophecies of Daniel is of course anachronistic, since the present version of the Book of Daniel—and certainly the apocalyptic second half,

24. The same anachronistic idea is found when Alexander promises to extend the concessions that he has offered to the Jews to cover the Jews of Babylon and Media (*AJ* 11.338)—inhabitants of a region that he does not yet at this time control (Büchler 1898: 14–15; Gruen 1998: 198).

25. Büchler 1898: 14; Abel 1935: 51.

26. In a tradition apparently going back to the court historian Callisthenes, all the sources for Alexander's reign report that before the final battle between Alexander and Darius at Gaugamela in 331, the Persian king offered very generous peace terms, and the seasoned general Parmenio advised Alexander that he would accept the terms, if he were Alexander; Alexander replied, "So would I, if I were Parmenio." This was the most famous of a series of debates that "represented Parmenio as prosaic and unimaginative, an obstruction to the heroic aspirations of the young king" (Bosworth 1988: 76). For the ancient sources for the debate before Gaugamela, see Plut. *Alex.* 29.7–8, Diod. 17.54.1–5, Curt. 4.11.1–22, and Arr. 2.25.1–3 (who mistakenly places the famous exchange in the context of the siege of Tyre); on the tradition of Parmenio debates, see Bosworth 1988: 76; Bosworth 1980: 29–32.

in which Alexander finds his conquest foretold—was not written until the time of the Maccabean Revolt.<sup>27</sup> Likewise, the prophecies contained both within Daniel and within Alexander's dream vision of the high priest, predicting that Alexander will overthrow the empire of the Persians, point forward to an event that has not yet occurred when Alexander supposedly visits Jerusalem.<sup>28</sup> In 332 B.C.E., Alexander's greatest conquests still lay ahead of him.

In Josephus's account of Sanballat and the Samaritan schism, we have a historical tradition (itself of somewhat dubious value, since it reduces a significant social and religious schism to a simple conflict of personalities) uprooted from its original context in the time of Nehemiah and relocated to the time of Alexander. In his account of Jaddus and Alexander's meeting, we have a legend with no basis in historical fact, narrated within a detailed and circumstantial historical context riddled with anachronisms. Similarly, above we have seen historical traditions deliberately manipulated and distorted in order to communicate a didactic point. What precisely was the original author trying to communicate by his reworking of these Jewish historical traditions?

Let us consider first the account of the Samaritan schism with which Josephus begins. Clearly, this account was originally independent of the legend of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem, since a version of the story of Sanballat's son-in-law can be found in the Book of Nehemiah. By the same token, however, it is important to emphasize that this version of the schism was drawn from Jewish, not Samaritan, tradition. The Samaritan chronicles make no reference to any intermarriage between the family of the high priest of the Jews and that of Sanballat or any other Samaritan ruler, and it is quite likely that this story of the disastrous consequences of mixed marriage at the high-

27. We need not regard this particular detail as establishing a *terminus post quem* of ca. 164 B.C.E. for the composition of Josephus's source, since the Daniel episode could easily have been added after the narrative was first composed but before Josephus found it. Whenever the episode entered the narrative, it is entirely consistent with the nature of the anachronisms found throughout the account. Although the detail could have been added by Josephus, it could as easily have been added at any time after the apocalyptic parts of Daniel were written. Cf. Goldstein (1993: 96), who thinks that Josephus's source dates to 200 B.C.E.

28. Of course, the prophecies themselves are not strictly anachronistic, since they are supposed to point forward to the future. Modrzejewski (1995: 54–55) draws an interesting analogy with the more famous oracle at Siwah, which also was said (not least by Alexander's own court historians) to have prophesied Alexander's world dominion; the Jewish author may even have consciously been competing with the Egyptian oracle.

est levels is itself an anti-Samaritan Jewish fiction.<sup>29</sup> The Samaritans, we are to understand, are a bastard breed whose ancestors intermarried in violation of strict Jewish law. It is, then, highly doubtful that the bulk of Josephus's Sanballat account was originally a pro-Samaritan tradition, as has been argued, seeking legitimacy through Alexander's endorsement of the temple on Mount Gerizim and only subsequently revised by pro-Jewish authors engaged in a polemic against the Samaritans.<sup>30</sup> On the contrary, this account of the Samaritan schism is specifically designed to delegitimize the Samaritans and to justify the Jews, and the relocation of the story to the period of Alexander, and its association with the Alexander-Jaddus story allow the author to strengthen that rhetorical point.

If we examine the story of Alexander's encounter with the Samaritans closely, we will find several themes already familiar to us from the study of other so-called Jewish romances. In the first place, picking up the emphasis of Nehemiah, the account stresses the importance of strict adherence to Jewish tradition and condemns those who would depart from it for the sake of some personal or political advantage. Josephus, like Nehemiah, focuses on the issue of mixed marriage, which was strictly forbidden under Jewish law. Nehemiah claims to have chased out many Jews who had intermarried with foreigners (Neh. 13.23–27), among them the unnamed son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite (13.28). In the account of Josephus, the marriage of Manasses and Nikaso, the daughter of Sanballat, takes center stage (*AJ* 11.302–3). This marriage is the cause of the conflict: the elders of Jerusalem and Jaddus the high priest join together to bar Manasses from the altar, regarding his marriage as a bad example capable of leading the Jews back into the trans-

29. Gaster 1925: 30; Marcus 1937: 464–65; Grabbe 1997: 238–42.

30. See above, n. 22. Interestingly, although Goldstein (1993: 80–90) is virtually the only scholar in recent years to systematically defend the thematic unity of the Alexander-Sanballat-Jaddus narrative, and although skeptics (e.g., Gruen 1998: 194) continue to regard Josephus's narrative as a composite of several strands, the fundamentally anti-Samaritan character of the Sanballat narrative has been much more widely recognized in recent years. It is not a matter, as Büchler (1898: 12–15) thought, of a light pro-Jewish revision of an originally pro-Samaritan text; the entire narrative is built on anti-Samaritan principles, with the possible exception of its incorporation (and distortion) of a Samaritan legend in which Alexander approved and blessed their temple. See Kippenberg 1971: 52–53; Egger 1986: 66; and Mor 1989: 5, all citing what has become a broad consensus in the area of Samaritan studies; Gruen (1998: 194) also recognizes the anti-Samaritan character of the Sanballat strand. If the anti-Samaritan character of the Sanballat narrative is fully recognized, much of the rationale behind Büchler's original division of the narrative into distinct written sources, with differing *Sitz im Leben* and differing polemical goals, is lost. One is left only with the appearance of certain narrative lapses and discontinuities, at least some of which (I argue below) are not discontinuities at all but part of the author's plan.

gressions that had caused their exile (11.306–8). When Manasses goes over to Sanballat, his actions are the direct cause of the schism, since all the Jews who had made mixed marriages deserted to him and were resettled in Samaria. The ancestors of the Samaritans are precisely those Jews who have repudiated their ancestral law (11.312).

In this account, as throughout Nehemiah, Sanballat is the villain. He seeks a marriage alliance with the house of the high priest for the sake of political advantage,<sup>31</sup> and when Manasses is rejected by his family and threatens to divorce Nikaso if he cannot retain his status, Sanballat appeals to his ambitions and promises him a temple and priesthood of his own if he will come to Samaria (*AJ* 11.309–11). Sanballat and Manasses alike are thus represented as cynical politicians, driven by venal motivations rather than any genuine religious conviction.<sup>32</sup> Those who follow are the victims of their leaders' cynical pursuit of power and of their own corrupt desire to preserve their illegal mixed marriages. Not only do the Samaritans willfully reject Jewish law, but there is nothing to approve or admire in their reasons for doing so. Jaddus, by contrast, is depicted as a staunch defender of the faith, willing to repudiate his own brother if necessary to protect the sanctity of the Temple. As we shall see, the conduct of Sanballat on the one hand and Jaddus on the other at the time of the schism prepares us for the role each will play when Alexander appears on the scene.

Even as Manasses and his followers are settling into their new homes on Mount Gerizim, Darius is moving to confront Alexander at Issus in Cilicia (*AJ* 11.313–14). With Darius's defeat, a second familiar theme is introduced into the narrative: that loyalty to a foreign ruler is inseparable from the pious observance of Jewish law, that disloyalty, by contrast, goes hand in hand with apostasy, and that a foreign ruler, although he may initially be deceived, will inevitably recognize and reward the true loyalty of the pious and reject the false loyalty of the wicked.<sup>33</sup> Although the tale of Sanballat and the

31. He thus, incidentally, fits (as does Alexander later in the story) the role of the gentile ruler who is impressed with the Jews out of all proportion to their actual importance: *εἰδὼς λαμπρὰν οὖσαν πόλιν τὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα καὶ πολλὰ τοῖς Ἀσσυρίοις καὶ τοῖς ἐν τῇ κοίλῃ Συρίᾳ κατοικοῦσιν τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ βασιλεῖς πράγματα παρασχόντας* (*AJ* 11.303). Unlike Alexander, however, Sanballat seeks only to turn the prestige of the Jews to his own advantage.

32. In the exquisite phrase of Reicke (cited by Coggins 1975: 108), Josephus thus "present[s] the detested Samaritan community as the unripe fruit of Hellenistic opportunism."

33. See Goldstein 1993: 84–85. Büchler (1898: 12–15) notes this intentional contrast of the loyalty of Jaddus with that of Sanballat, though he views the contrast as a product of the pro-Jewish revision of an earlier pro-Samaritan layer.

story of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem may once have been independent of one another, the two are closely interwoven by this thread in the narrative as it is preserved by Josephus. The account as now preserved does not divide easily into pro-Samaritan and anti-Samaritan strands but is anti-Samaritan throughout.

On the one hand, the pious and upright Jaddus is willing to risk Alexander's wrath by standing firm in his loyalty to Darius, refusing a direct demand for surrender:<sup>34</sup> "But the high priest replied to the bearers of the letter that he had given his oath to Darius not to take up arms against him, and said that he would never violate this oath so long as Darius remained alive."<sup>35</sup> He defies Alexander even after Darius's ignominious flight from Issus (*AJ* 11.316) and in spite of the fact that the end of the bitter seven-month siege of Tyre is in sight.<sup>36</sup> Although Jaddus is terrified by the king's wrath,<sup>37</sup> he nevertheless does not knuckle under to Alexander's temporal power but places his trust in God to protect the nation (11.326). He welcomes Alexander only after God orders him in a dream to do so (11.327). The implication is that he will be as staunchly loyal to Alexander as he once was to Darius, so long as God continues to endorse the reign of Alexander and his successors.

By contrast, Sanballat's conduct after the defeat of Darius at Issus is as cynical and self-serving as we have come to expect. He is loyal enough to Darius before Issus, expecting that the king's presence in the area will offer him a happy opportunity to secure the concessions he wants (*AJ* 11.315). As soon as Darius is defeated, however, Sanballat, perceiving an opportunity for gain, hastens to present himself before Alexander at Tyre with eight thousand followers in tow, apparently not even waiting to receive Alexander's request for surrender.<sup>38</sup>

It is worth pausing to note an apparent discontinuity at this point in the narrative that has caused much scholarly discussion. The story of Jaddus's refusal (*AJ* 11.317–19) takes place during the seven-month siege of Tyre: Alexander demands that Jaddus surrender during the siege (*ἐπολιόρκει*

34. *AJ* 11.317: ἡξίου τε ἀποστείλας γράμματα πρὸς τὸν τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἀρχιερέα.

35. τοῦ δ' ἀρχιερέως ἀποκριναμένου τοῖς γραμματοφόροις ὡς ὄρκους εἶη Δαρεῖω δεδωκώς μὴ βαστάζειν ὅπλα κατ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ τούτους ἕως ἂν ἡ Δαρεῖος ἐν τοῖς ζώσιν μὴ παραβήσσεσθαι φήσαντος (*AJ* 11.318, trans. Marcus 1937).

36. *AJ* 11.319: τὴν μὲν Τύρον οὐκ ἔκρινε καταλιπεῖν ὅσον οὐδέπω μέλλουσαν αἰεῖσθαι. On the significance of the timing, see below.

37. *AJ* 11.326: ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ καὶ δέει.

38. *AJ* 11.321: νομίσας δὲ καιρὸν ἐπιτήδειον ἔχειν ὁ Σαναβαλλέτης τῆς ἐπιβολῆς, Δαρείου μὲν ἀπέγνω, λαβὼν δὲ ὀκτακισχιλίους τῶν ἀρχομένων ὑπ' αὐτοῦ πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον ἦκε.



*Τύρον*, 11.317) and seemingly receives his reply toward the end of it (*ὅσον οὐδέπω μέλλουσιν αἰρεῖσθαι*, 11.319). In *AJ* 11.320, Alexander completes the siege of Tyre and proceeds to Gaza: either he has forgotten the angry threat just made in *AJ* 11.319, to settle with Jaddus as soon as he finishes with Tyre, or else, more likely, we are to assume that Jaddus's situation will become dire just as soon as Alexander is done with Gaza. (It is at precisely this point that the narrative resumes in *AJ* 11.325, with Alexander eager to get on to Jerusalem after Gaza and Jaddus nearly paralyzed with fear at the prospect.) But in the very next sentence (11.321), after we have been informed of the fall of Tyre and the investment of Gaza, Sanballat arrives eager and unbidden at Alexander's camp to surrender his forces—at the beginning of the siege of Tyre, fully seven months earlier!<sup>39</sup>

At first sight this discrepancy seems to support the theory that the narrative comprises two distinct written traditions, clumsily combined by some editor (e.g., Büchler 1898: 4; Cohen 1982–83: 43): otherwise, why would the narrator tell his story in this strange order? In fact, the narrator's choice here may be deliberate, designed to highlight Jaddus's courage in contrast to the craven opportunism of his rival. This peculiar narrative order contrasts Sanballat's self-serving political opportunism and Jaddus's steadfast loyalty much more strongly than a straightforward chronology would, and so it is best explained in these terms.<sup>40</sup> The fact that Alexander's famous siege of Tyre is nearly finished when Jaddus refuses to surrender both emphasizes how great a risk Jaddus is taking and stresses the high priest's courage in the face of a very real cause for fear. The siege of Tyre was famous in antiquity for demonstrating Alexander's determination, his insuperability in every military situation, and his total ruthlessness toward those who resisted—after the siege two thousand survivors were crucified along the coast as a gruesome example to others (Abel 1935: 42). The historical Jaddus, of course, could not have known all this before the siege ended, but we do. This use of the siege of Tyre, like the anachronistic references to *proskynēsis* and to victories not yet won in 332 B.C.E., is another good example of how the author anticipates Alexander's famous achievements to build a vivid fictional narrative. Only after Jaddus's courageous refusal at the end of the siege, as he faces the prospect of immediate retaliation, does the narrative backtrack to show how Sanballat surrendered at the beginning of the siege, when the personal risk to himself was far smaller, and in-

39. *AJ* 11.321: *καταλαβὼν αὐτὸν ἀρχόμενον τῆς Τύρου πολιορκίας*.

40. So, rightly, Goldstein 1993: 85; this point has not been as widely acknowledged as it deserves.



deed before Alexander had even had a chance to present his demands! Here we have a clear example of how the author of a Jewish historical fiction will subordinate chronology (which would demand that Sanballat's surrender be narrated first) to the dramatic requirements of his story—and that, too, while chronicling matters of some precision and historical importance, in this case the precise timing of Alexander's Palestinian campaign and the details of his famous siege of Tyre.

To return to Sanballat's meeting with Alexander (*AJ* 11.321–24): his first act as Alexander's subject is to ask for the concessions he had hoped to be granted by Darius. It is worth examining Sanballat's rhetoric here. He represents the foundation of a schismatic temple as politically advantageous to Alexander, since the Jews are rebellious by nature and the king will be safer if they are divided.<sup>41</sup> Like the enemies of the Jews in 3 Maccabees and other Jewish fictions, Sanballat tries to convince the king that the Jews are inherently disloyal and that mistreating them will serve the interest of the state. Although he is initially successful in this, Alexander, and by implication the reader, will soon learn that precisely the opposite is the case: it is the Jews who are truly loyal and deserving of special favor. It may seem for the moment that the apostate Samaritans have gained the upper hand, but their triumph proves short-lived. In securing Alexander's permission to build their temple on Mount Gerizim, the Samaritans are simply being set up for a fall.<sup>42</sup>

With Alexander's visit to Jerusalem, we arrive at the inevitable dénouement.<sup>43</sup> As we have seen, Jaddus is authorized by God in the nick of time to welcome Alexander to the city. As soon as Alexander sees the high priest, the king's attitude completely reverses: he prostrates himself before the high priest (*AJ* 11.331), and he recognizes Jaddus as the figure that had appeared to him in a dream at Dium in Macedonia, promising him victory over the

41. *AJ* 11.323: τοῦτο δ' εἶναι καὶ τῷ βασιλεῖ συμφέρον, εἰς δύο διηρῆσθαι τὴν Ἰουδαίων δυνάμιν, ἵνα μὴ ὁμογνωμονοῦν τὸ ἔθνος μηδὲ συνεστός, εἰ νεωτερίσει ποτε, χαλεπὸν ἢ τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν, καθὼς καὶ πρότερον τοῖς Ἀσσυρίων ἀρξάσιν ἐγένετο.

42. The fact that Alexander gives his approval for the temple on Mount Gerizim does not, therefore, necessarily prove that the story must be pro-Samaritan in origin, as many have argued (e.g., Büchler 1898: 3–11; see above, n. 7). Although there may have once been a legend to this effect among the Samaritans, in its present context Alexander's approval of the Gerizim temple merely sets the stage for the Samaritans to receive their eventual comeuppance.

43. Sanballat conveniently dies at just this point (*AJ* 11.325), allowing the author to smoothly make the transition to a legend that originally had nothing to do with Sanballat or Manasses.

Persians (11.334). He subsequently treats the Jews with exaggerated respect, offering sacrifice in the Temple (11.336), granting them the right to observe their ancestral laws, and granting them further exemption from tribute in every seventh year (11.338). He also agrees to respect the customs of any Jewish soldiers who enroll in his army (11.339). When the Samaritans try to cash in on the Jews' good fortune by professing themselves Jews, however, they are politely snubbed. Alexander promises to visit their temple and offer sacrifice "some other time" (*αὐθις ὑποστρέφων*, 11.343), and he flatly refuses to extend them the sabbatical exemption he has granted the Jews (11.340–45). Now the loyal and pious Jews enjoy special favor; the apostate Samaritans are left out in the cold. Transferring the tale of Sanballat and the Samaritan schism into this period of transition, the author is able to show that the founder of the Hellenistic kingdoms himself was in a position to compare the competing claims of the Jews and the Samaritans and that he decided in favor of the Jews.

In addition to the anachronistic dating of the Sanballat story and the Samaritan schism, we have seen that the story of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem itself contains a number of curious anachronisms: the presence of Chaldeans in Alexander's train (and the subsequent reference to the Jews of Babylon and Media), the conversation with Parmenio regarding *proskynēsis*, and the prophecies (both in Alexander's dream and in the Book of Daniel) of Alexander's overthrow of the Persian empire. All these anachronisms have but one purpose: to suggest that the Alexander who visited Jerusalem and paid homage to the Jewish God was not the young upstart who had not yet crossed the Euphrates but the World Conqueror, the King of Kings.<sup>44</sup> All Alexander's campaigns have been collapsed into a single moment. The details are carefully calculated to evoke the reign of the historical Alexander, but the figure who here emerges does not represent so much the historical Alexander of 332 B.C.E. as he does the pure idea of Alexander, the quintessence of the conqueror, so to speak, a much more powerful image. Thus the story's familiar motifs—the exaggerated respect of a foreign king for the God of the Jews, the idea that the king's authority depends on divine favor, the

44. As Gruen (1998: 197) remarks, it is Alexander, not Jaddus, who actually comes off as the central figure of the story. Alexander is always in control, whereas Jaddus is often in a state ranging from uncertainty to outright panic. The magnification of the young king serves two profitable purposes for the Jewish author of the narrative. Alexander's glory as world conqueror is dependent upon the approval of the Most High God, and the extraordinary deference he shows to Jerusalem and the high priest redounds to the credit of the Jews. See Gruen 1998: 196–99 for the development of this theme.

king's willingness to respect the unique customs of the Jews—are immeasurably strengthened. The king who acts out the part designed for him by the Jewish author is not merely the Alexander of history but, more important, the Alexander of myth.

. . .

Let us now turn to a second so-called romance in the *Jewish Antiquities*: Josephus's Tales of the Tobiads (*AJ* 12.154–236). This account of the years between the Seleucid conquest of Palestine at the end of the third century B.C.E. and the crises during the reign of Antiochus IV is dominated by the adventures of one particular family: Joseph, the tax farmer, son of Tobias, and Joseph's youngest son, Hyrcanus, a robber baron who ended his days ruling over a fortress in the Transjordan. Josephus's account as it stands is vexed by chronological contradictions and logical impossibilities too numerous to count.<sup>45</sup> Scholars have reckoned it as everything from sober history<sup>46</sup> to novelistic fiction,<sup>47</sup> with most settling for some combination of the two. What can we make of this narrative?

As we have seen, interpreting the historical fictions that Josephus has incorporated into his *Jewish Antiquities* is particularly difficult since we cannot be certain to what extent, and in what manner, he may have "corrected" his quasi-historical sources where their cavalier treatment of fact offended his sensibilities as a Greek historian. I have argued that Josephus's account of Sanballat, Jaddus, and Alexander was most likely adapted by him directly from his source with minimal changes; the distortions and manipulations of historical fact apparent throughout the narrative can most likely be ascribed to the original. Since those historical errors caused Josephus no difficulty when coordinating Jewish and Greek chronology, he felt no great need to correct them. In the Tales of the Tobiads, however, the narrative is so severely garbled as to make it almost certain, as we shall see, that Josephus has made significant efforts to correct his source, thereby not only

45. For detailed analysis of the narrative's many chronological and logical problems, see Willrich 1895: 91–95; Wellhausen 1921: 229–32; Tcherikover 1959: 127–38. For more general discussion of the Tobiads, see Goldstein 1975: 85–123; Gera 1990: 21–38; Wills 1995: 187–93; Barclay 1996: 30, 107; Gruen 1998: 99–106; Collins 2000: 74–77.

46. Goldstein 1975: 123 is the strongest statement of this position, but many authors have tried to mine the text for historical evidence of political maneuvering in the third and second centuries B.C.E. (e.g., Tcherikover 1959: 127–38; cf. Gera 1990: 23).

47. Gera 1990: 21–38; Wills 1995: 187–93.

worsening the confusion but making it extremely difficult to recover an accurate picture of the original narrative. The prospect is the more daunting in that we can assume that the original source was in some way problematic. Had it been straightforward, Josephus would not have felt the need to correct it. The parallel case of Daniel gives one serious pause. Could we recover any accurate sense of Daniel's highly eccentric chronology in the Persian period if all that survived were Josephus's attempts to rationalize it?

If we are to attempt any understanding of the nature, provenance, and purpose of the Tales of the Tobiads, which have much in common with the historical fictions we have already considered, a source-critical approach cannot be avoided. Although any conclusions that we may draw from a hypothetically reconstructed narrative can be only tentative, still Josephus's account of the Tobiads does appear more intelligible when examined in the light of other Hellenistic Jewish fictions.

Hitherto I have generally begun my discussion of each "romance" by identifying the discontinuities between its fiction and what we know of the relevant facts, such as anachronisms and other apparent chronological and historical howlers. With Josephus's account of the Tobiads, however, a simple list of the historical and logical problems in the text would quickly overwhelm the discussion and involve us in a premature attempt to distinguish problems introduced by Josephus from the problems posed by the original. Instead, I will begin with a review of what little independent evidence we do have for the historical activities of the Tobiad family.

Almost all the evidence for the activities of the Tobiads comes from Josephus. There is, however, independent evidence to suggest that at least some of the persons and activities he describes are historical. Joseph is described as the son of Tobias (*AJ* 12.160): by chance, the Zenon archives preserve the correspondence of one Tubias, commander of a fortress in the Transjordan, with Ptolemy II Philadelphus and his finance minister Apollonius in the mid-third century B.C.E.<sup>48</sup> The *birta* (Aram. "fort") mentioned in the Zenon archive is almost certainly to be identified with the ruins of a fortress excavated at Araq el Emir in the Transjordan, which is also believed to be the fortress in which Hyrcanus spent his last years, described by Josephus as a *baris* (Aram. "fort") named Tyre (12.230–33).<sup>49</sup> The name Tobiyah (Tobias),

48. Tcherikover and Fuks 1957–64: vol. 1, nos. 1, 2, 4, 5. The letters are dated 259 and 257 B.C.E. Cf. Gera 1990: 24.

49. Gera 1990: 24–26. Tcherikover and Fuks 1957–64: vol. 1, no. 1 mentions a fortress (*βίρτα τῆς Ἀμμανίτιδος*) where soldiers of Tobiah were stationed. The fort excavated at Araq el Emir (cf. Mazar 1957) matches the location and description given

inscribed in Aramaic characters of the fourth century B.C.E., was discovered on the wall of a cave near Araq el Emir, suggesting that Tobiad activity in the Transjordan extended over a period of centuries.<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, a Hyrcanus is mentioned in 2 Maccabees 3.11, where we learn that part of the Temple deposits to which Heliodorus laid claim were the property of a prominent person named Hyrcanus the Tobiad, who is apparently not on the scene to defend himself and his property.<sup>51</sup> Although, as we have seen, the story of Heliodorus's attempt to enter the Temple at Jerusalem is itself partly fictional, there is independent evidence for a dispute of some sort over Temple finances in the reign of Seleucus IV.<sup>52</sup> The name Hyrcanus the Tobiad is purely incidental to the narrative of 2 Maccabees 3; there seems to be no reason why the author of 2 Maccabees would have invented a fictional character for this purpose or introduced one from another story. Rather, the name Hyrcanus seems to belong to the category of genuine historical details introduced for the sake of verisimilitude. It follows that there was a genuine Hyrcanus, a prominent Jew apparently living in exile during the reign of Seleucus IV, possessed of a fortune that was stored, or could reasonably be alleged to be stored, in the Temple treasury. The verisimilitude of the debate between Heliodorus and Onias III depends upon this fact.

We can conclude, then, that there was a historical Hyrcanus, of the Tobiad family, a prominent and wealthy Jew who lived during the reign of Seleucus IV (187–175 B.C.E.). We have the ruins of a fortress in the Transjordan associated with name Tobias as early as the fourth century B.C.E., probably identical with the fortress in which, according to Josephus, Hyrcanus lived out his exile. Moreover, we know that a certain Tubias was active in Ptolemaic service in the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283–245 B.C.E.) in precisely the same part of the Transjordan (the Ammanitis), most

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by Josephus, *AJ* 12.230–33, to the fortress of Hyrcanus, although Josephus says Hyrcanus built it, which cannot be right if Araq el Emir is the site of Hyrcanus's fortress and both are identical with the site of the *birta* mentioned in the third-century-B.C.E. Zenon archive. Gera (1990: 26–27) reasonably suggests that the author of the fiction wrongly gave Hyrcanus the credit for building an already existing fortress in order to enhance his reputation.

50. Marcus 1937: 117; Mazar 1957: 141–42; Goldstein 1975: 91–92; Gera 1990: 24–26.

51. Or possibly “Hyrcanus the son of Tobias,” which would imply a rather different genealogy than that given by Josephus; 2 Macc. 3.11: *τινὰ δὲ καὶ Ὑρκανοῦ τοῦ Τωβίου σφόδρα ἀνδρὸς ἐν ὑπεροχῇ κειμένου*. See Gera 1990: 24.

52. See above, Chap. 1, n. 29.

likely operating out of the same fortress. We have no independent evidence for the figure whom Josephus identifies as Joseph, the tax farmer in the service of the Ptolemies, the son of Tobias and the father of Hyrcanus. However, given the accumulation of evidence for the activities of the Tobiad family in Transjordan extending over several generations, it seems reasonable to assume that Joseph, like Hyrcanus, was a historical personage, and that his floruit fell between that of the Tubias of the Zenon archive and that of Hyrcanus in the reign of Seleucus IV. This would place Joseph in the latter half of the third century B.C.E.

Let us consider briefly also the chronological evidence for the high priests who are important in the Tales of the Tobiads: Onias II and Simon II. Josephus explains the chronology of the high priests in two asides (*AJ* 12.157–59, 224–25), in which he is probably drawing on some source other than his source for the Tales of the Tobiads. It is clear, however, from the important role played in the Tales of the Tobiads by the two high priests, especially Onias, that their characters were an integral part of the narrative of Josephus's source. We should therefore consider the independent evidence for the activities of not only the Tobiads but also the high priests with whom Joseph and Hyrcanus are associated.

Unfortunately we are almost totally dependent on Josephus for the chronology of the high priests between Jaddus, the contemporary of Alexander the Great, and Onias III (2 Macc. 3–4), the contemporary of Seleucus IV and Antiochus IV. Josephus is certainly our only source for a full chronological list of the pre-Maccabean priests. What little external evidence we do have, however, allows us to make some corrections to Josephus's list that are significant for the chronology of the Tobiads.

Josephus lists the following: Onias I, son of Jaddus (*AJ* 11.347); Simon I, called "the Just," son of Onias I (12.43); Eleazar, brother of Simon I (12.44); Manasses, uncle of Eleazar; Onias II, son of Simon I (12.157); Simon II, son of Onias II; and Onias III, son of Simon II (12.224–25). Without getting into all the details, the most significant problems are that Josephus identifies Simon I as Simon the Just (12.43), placing him in the early third century B.C.E., and that he claims that the Seleucid conquest of Coele Syria and the subsequent arrangements took place in the time of Onias II.<sup>53</sup> He also dates the beginning of Simon II's high priesthood after the accession of Seleucus IV in 187 B.C.E. (12.224). Yet the external evidence suggests overwhelmingly that the high priest known as Simon the Just was Simon II, not Simon I, and moreover that Simon II the Just was in office when Antiochus III conquered

53. *AJ* 12.157: ἐγένετο δὲ ταῦτα ἐπὶ ἀρχιερέως Ὀνίου.

Palestine, around 200 B.C.E.<sup>54</sup> If Josephus's list is retained, then, we must place the high priesthood of Onias II in the latter part of the third century B.C.E., in the last years of Ptolemaic rule over Palestine, and the high priesthoods of Simon II and Onias III must span the years between the Seleucid conquest of Palestine around 200 B.C.E. and the accession of Antiochus IV in 175. Significantly, this agrees with what we have already concluded from the independent evidence for the activities of the Tobiads. The name Onias is closely associated in Josephus's text with Joseph—indeed, Josephus reports both their deaths in the same passage (12.224)—and we have seen that the evidence points toward a late third-century date for Joseph. Likewise, Josephus associates the activities of Hyrcanus with the high priesthoods of Simon II and Onias III, and we have seen that indeed the external evidence for Hyrcanus's activities places him in the period leading up to the Maccabean Revolt.

There is, then, some slender historical basis for Josephus's *Tales of the Tobiads*. Before we tackle the problems of Josephus's precise chronology, however, we must recognize that the narrative as it stands in Josephus is unmistakably composed largely from a cycle of legends that were originally independent of one another. The combination of independent legends has resulted in an internal chronology that is fundamentally contradictory, illogical, and impossible, no matter what external chronology we adopt for the events Josephus reports. The narrative emphasizes repeatedly that Joseph served the Ptolemies as a tax farmer for twenty-two years (*AJ* 12.186, 224). When he first acquired the contract, he was a clever young man.<sup>55</sup> Yet a few years later, not only is Joseph the father of seven elder, grown sons and an eighth by his second marriage, Hyrcanus (12.186), now a teenager, but he himself is too old to travel abroad and must send one of his sons to pay compliments to Ptolemy on his behalf (12.196)! No external chronology in the world can turn a youth, a *νεανίσκος*, into a doddering old patriarch within less than twenty-two years. If the figure of twenty-two years for Joseph's Ptolemaic service is accepted from the text, the stories of the young Joseph and the tales of the young Hyrcanus are fundamentally incompatible with one another.

The prominence of certain motifs, moreover, supports the theory that the

54. The evidence is summarized by Marcus 1943: 732–36, app. B, “The Date of the High Priest Simon the Just.” See more recently Olyan (1987: 261–86), who argues that Ben Sira (ca. 200 B.C.E.) appears to be reacting to Simon the Just as a contemporary; and Parente (1994: 69), who also endorses the identification of Simon the Just with Simon II and associates him with Ben Sira and Antiochus III.

55. *AJ* 12.160, *νέος μὲν ἔτι τὴν ἡλικίαν*; 12.171, described by Ptolemy's envoy as a *νεανίσκος*; 12.172, *παρὰ δὲ ἡμῶν ἔσται σοι τῶν νέων ἅπαντα*; 12.173, *τοῦ νεανίσκου*.



Tales of the Tobiads originated as a collection of legends that gathered around the Tobiad family, just as a multitude of legends gathered around the prophet Daniel. The echoes of the biblical Joseph cycle are very strong.<sup>56</sup> We have, for instance, not once but twice, the motif of the clever young man who wins the favor of the king (*AJ* 12.172–79 of the young Joseph, 12.190–220 of the young Hyrcanus).<sup>57</sup> We have the motif of the jealousy of the worthless elder brothers (12.190, 195, 197, 221).<sup>58</sup> The romantic deception that brought about Joseph's marriage to his own niece, who became the mother of the beloved youngest son, Hyrcanus, is also reminiscent of biblical motifs (12.186–89).<sup>59</sup>

Thus far it seems clear, as virtually all scholars have agreed, that the Tales of the Tobiads contain both genuine historical material and legendary and fictional elements. So much can scarcely be disputed. I am arguing, however, that the essence of didactic historical fiction lies in deliberate manipulation of historical elements in the service of a particular didactic point. How, precisely, did Josephus's source seek to manipulate his account of the historical activities of the Tobiad family, and what was his purpose?

In order to answer these questions, we must confront another problem: What was the chronology of Josephus's original source?

The difficulties that Josephus's chronology raises for the Tobiads are extensive. The most basic are difficulties integral to the story itself. For example, it is impossible for Joseph to be transformed from a clever youth to a venerable patriarch in less than twenty-two years. Josephus's attempts to locate the story within an absolute chronological framework only compound the problem. According to Josephus, Joseph first acquired the contract to farm the taxes of Palestine in the reign of Ptolemy V, after the conquest of Palestine by Antiochus III, around 200 B.C.E., and more precisely after the marriage of Ptolemy V to Antiochus's daughter Cleopatra about 193.<sup>60</sup> The already impossibly short twenty-two years thus becomes ridiculously compressed. We are told that Joseph, having grown from the prime of youth to a venerable old age, died around the time of the accession of Seleucus IV (r. 187–175 B.C.E.)—a mere six years after he first acquired the contract!

56. On the use of biblical motifs in the story, see Gera 1990: 31–33; Gruen 1998: 104.

57. On the doubling of motifs in the adventures of father and son, see Gera 1990: 33. On the motif of the success of the clever young man, see Gera 1990: 31; Gruen 1998: 104–6.

58. Gera 1990: 31; Gruen 1998: 104.

59. Gen. 29.21–23 (Leah and Rachel switched on Jacob's wedding night). See further the analysis of Willrich 1895: 93–95; Gera 1990: 32; Gruen 1998: 104.

60. *AJ* 12.154–55. For the date of Ptolemy's marriage to Cleopatra, see Marcus 1937: 80.



Something is very wrong with Josephus's chronology. His account of the high priests Onias II and Simon II is also flawed, dating the death of Onias II at the same time as Joseph's—that is (according to him), toward the beginning of the reign of Seleucus IV—although independent historical evidence suggests that Onias's successor, Simon, had already taken office before 200 B.C.E. Moreover, the assumption of Ptolemaic control over Palestine, which is basic to the story of Joseph, does not fit the period after 200. Josephus attempts to explain away this obvious contradiction by explaining that Antiochus III deeded Coele Syria to Ptolemy V as Cleopatra's dowry (*AJ* 12.154). This supposed dowry is mentioned by several ancient sources,<sup>61</sup> but Polybius makes it quite clear that the story is based on Ptolemaic propaganda from the time of the Sixth Syrian War (170–168 B.C.E.), not fact. The Ptolemies never ruled over Palestine or collected revenues there after 200.<sup>62</sup> This tale of a dowry, which Josephus espouses although he must have known it to be false,<sup>63</sup> is no more than a feeble plot device designed to cover up the patent impossibility of Josephus's own chronology.

The independent historical evidence for the activities of the Tobiads, the independent evidence for the chronology of the high priests with whom they are associated, and the assumed background of Joseph's story all combine to suggest that Joseph the tax farmer, if indeed he did exist (as seems likely), served the whole of his twenty-two years before the Seleucid conquest of Palestine around 200 B.C.E. How, then, did Joseph's story come to be pushed down and compressed, in so improbable a manner, into the period after the Seleucid conquest?

It has long since been suggested that this impossible chronology results from Josephus's attempt to correct his source, and there are in fact strong indications in favor of this theory.<sup>64</sup> The evidence points to a Ptolemaic date both for the historical Joseph's activities and for the oral traditions of the clever young man at court that grew up around him. Beyond that, however, the evidence suggests that the written text Josephus used dated Joseph's activities to the latter part of the third century B.C.E. Although Josephus identifies the Ptolemy of his story as the Ptolemy who married the daughter of Antiochus III after the Fifth Syrian War—that is, Ptolemy V Epiphanes (r. 204–180 B.C.E.)—the Ptolemy who receives the young Joseph is twice identified (in a variant preserved in several manuscripts) as Ptolemy Euer-

61. Polyb. 28.20.9, *App. Syr.* 5, Porphyry *ap. Euseb. Chron.* (*FGrH* 260 F 47).

62. Goldstein 1975: 86; Tcherikover 1959: 128, 458 n. 29.

63. Goldstein 1975: 86.

64. Tcherikover 1959: 129, 458 n. 32; Goldstein 1975: 94–95; Collins 2000: 74.

getes: that is, Ptolemy III (*AJ* 12.158, 163). In the first of these passages, he is even more explicitly identified as “the father of [Ptolemy IV] Philopator.”<sup>65</sup> This identification has been dismissed by some scholars as a gloss or interpolation,<sup>66</sup> but such is improbable. No gloss is needed to explain how the Ptolemies came to be in control of the revenues of Palestine in the story, since Josephus has already explained that anomaly, however feebly.<sup>67</sup> Nor does it help to clear up the chronological inconsistencies of Josephus’s narrative;<sup>68</sup> on the contrary, it makes an impossible narrative worse by inexplicably introducing a king of the third century B.C.E. into a sequence of events that Josephus has clearly marked as taking place after 200. It is much more likely that Euergetes represents the original reading, suppressed in some manuscripts by scribes who were alert to the obvious absurdity of identifying Ptolemy V Epiphanes as Euergetes, the father of Philopator.<sup>69</sup> This likelihood is confirmed by the fact that the text contains an apparent pun upon Ptolemy’s cult title: Hyrcanus calls Ptolemy his father’s benefactor (*εὐεργέτη*, 12.206).<sup>70</sup> The presence of a literary pun contained in the story itself, combined with not one but two errors that can only have been introduced into the text through Josephus’s careless copying of his written source, makes it virtually certain that Josephus’s source identified the Ptolemy who was Joseph’s benefactor as Ptolemy III Euergetes and thus located both Joseph and Onias II, correctly, in the latter half of the third century B.C.E.

We are therefore in a position to recover a tentative chronological and historical structure for Josephus’s source, which will allow us to address two questions: What was the original author’s purpose in composing a narrative of the Tobiad family, compounded of historical and legendary elements? And what compelled Josephus to correct a chronologically straightforward narrative into a chronologically impossible one?

To be sure, the original narrative is not entirely unproblematic. The Ptolemaic queen is more than once identified as Cleopatra (*AJ* 12.154, 167, 185, 204, 218), although the wife of Ptolemy V was the first so named. It would appear that the author was himself or expected his audience to be under the

65. *AJ* 12.158: τὸν βασιλέα Πτολεμαῖον; the variants add at this point τὸν Εὐεργέτην ὃς ἦν πατὴρ τοῦ Φιλοπάτορος. See Marcus 1943: 82–83 with n. 2 (on the Greek text) and n. c (on the translation).

66. Marcus 1937: 82–83.

67. Goldstein 1975: 94.

68. As Marcus (1937: 83) suggests.

69. Tcherikover 1959: 129, 458 n. 32; Goldstein 1975: 94–95; Gera 1990: 31; Collins 2000: 74.

70. Goldstein 1975: 95.

impression that all Ptolemaic queens were named Cleopatra in the early Ptolemaic period, as they were later.<sup>71</sup> This is consistent with the common tendency in such historical-fictional texts to prefer verisimilitude over precise accuracy. The characterization of the king and queen, too, is more characteristic of the royal court in the second century B.C.E. than in the third: Ptolemy and his queen appear as joint rulers of virtually equal power, and indeed their status as co-owners of the Syrian tax revenues is the pivot on which Joseph's witty coup turns.<sup>72</sup> This may have been one of the factors that led Josephus to correct his source.

Second-century anachronisms aside, there are other indications that the chronology of the original narrative was not entirely straightforward. We have seen, for instance, that a span of twenty-two years, twice given for Joseph's career, is too short to contain all the adventures reported within it. Josephus cannot have invented this figure, since it is wholly incompatible with his chronology. That the original source gave twenty-two years or less as the time between Joseph's acquiring the tax contract and the coming of age of his precocious son Hyrcanus is, as we have seen, an indication that the original author combined formerly independent, not entirely compatible legends into a single narrative. It is also a symptom of the deeper chronological problems afflicting Josephus's source.

The nature of these problems will become evident if we consider the career of Hyrcanus in the light of the conclusions we have already drawn regarding the chronology of Joseph's career. It is virtually certain, as we have seen, that the original source placed the beginning of Joseph's career at some point in the reign of Euergetes (245–221 B.C.E.). That career lasted twenty-two years, during which time Joseph fathered eight sons by two wives (*AJ* 12.186). When we come to the third episode of the story—the first two being Joseph's acquisition of the tax contract and his romantic marriage to Hyrcanus's mother—the youngest of Joseph's sons, Hyrcanus, has reached age thirteen (12.190). The precise timing of this story is not altogether clear, but there are several chronological indications.

1. Joseph is still counted among the leading men of the province (*AJ* 12.196: οἱ πρῶτοι τῆς Συρίας καὶ τῆς ὑπηκόου χώρας), and

71. Goldstein 1975: 99, 109; Gera 1990: 35–36.

72. On the point of Joseph's witty remark, cf. Holleaux 1899; Marcus 1937: 81; Gera 1990: 36. Goldstein (1975: 98) gives evidence for the Ptolemaic practice of associating wives in transactions and decrees, which became particularly common under Ptolemy VI and later Ptolemy VIII.

thus this event falls within, and probably toward the end of, his twenty-two-year career.

2. Palestine is clearly still under Ptolemaic rule (*AJ* 12.196). Therefore, Hyrcanus's trip to court took place before the Seleucid conquest.
3. It is twice implied that the king whom Hyrcanus visits is the same one whom the young Joseph captivated: we are told that the occasion was the birth of a son to King Ptolemy, without any suggestion that a change of ruler has taken place (*AJ* 12.196); the queen, like the wife of Joseph's Ptolemy, is named Cleopatra (12.204, 218); and in one passage Hyrcanus seems to be suggesting a pun on the cult title Euergetes (12.206).
4. Hyrcanus is still very young, apparently not much more than thirteen. We are told at *AJ* 12.190 that Hyrcanus showed exceptional promise when he was but thirteen (ἔτι δὲ ὢν τρισκαίδεκα ἐτῶν); this statement is immediately followed by an anecdote illustrating Hyrcanus's youthful precocity (12.191–95), and we are then told that it was at "about this time" (κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν καιρόν, 12.196) that news arrived of the birth of a son to Ptolemy.

All these indications are completely consistent in suggesting that Hyrcanus made his youthful visit to the Ptolemaic court in the reign of Euergetes. This date, however, raises a whole host of problems. Although Joseph's twenty-two years might conceivably fit entirely within the Euergetes' long reign (245–221 B.C.E.), we have already seen that the cocky young Joseph could hardly have been displaced by his precocious youngest son in so short a time. We run into even more serious problems when trying to relate this incident with what we know of Hyrcanus's later career. We are told that the success of Hyrcanus at the Ptolemaic court so exasperated his father and brothers that he was forced on his return to meet his brothers in battle and, having killed two of them, to flee into the Transjordan, where he, like his father, became a collector of tribute (*AJ* 12.221–22). Now, however difficult it may be to credit the tale of teenaged Hyrcanus's success at the Ptolemaic court,<sup>73</sup> we cannot possibly believe that Hyrcanus fought a battle with his

73. Pace Goldstein (1975: 102), who remarks: "Youthful wit at royal courts and teenagers undertaking military enterprises were commonplace phenomena in the Hellenistic age."

brothers, fled to the Transjordan to become a tax collector, and built a massive fortress there all at age thirteen.

Moreover, placing Hyrcanus's youthful visit in the reign of Euergetes creates a significant chronological gap. As we saw, such independent evidence as exists for Hyrcanus places him in the reign of Seleucus IV, and Josephus's account is consistent with this: he tells us that Hyrcanus ruled from his fortress in the Transjordan "for seven years, through all the time that Seleucus ruled as king over Syria,"<sup>74</sup> and that he committed suicide shortly after the accession of Antiochus IV (*AJ* 12.236). There is no reason to suspect that the chronology of Hyrcanus's final years was different in Josephus's source. The account seems therefore to leap inexplicably from the reign of Euergetes (245–221 B.C.E.) to that of Seleucus IV (187–175 B.C.E.).

Another oddity: Josephus's account of Hyrcanus's later activities tacitly assumes a Seleucid background,<sup>75</sup> but no transition from Ptolemaic to Seleucid power or its implications for Hyrcanus is mentioned.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, Hyrcanus seems to have waged his private war with his brothers and Simon II—not to mention the neighboring Arab tribes—entirely without regard for the Seleucids, until Antiochus's growing power belatedly alarms him.<sup>77</sup> The

74. *AJ* 12.234: ἦρξε δ' ἐκείνων τῶν μερῶν ἐπὶ ἑπτὰ, πάντα τὸν χρόνον ὃν Σέλευκος τῆς Συρίας ἐβασίλευσεν. The figure of seven years is incorrect; Seleucus IV ruled for twelve.

75. *AJ* 12.223 reports the accession of Seleucus IV, tying it to the deaths of Joseph and Onias. *AJ* 12.234–36 makes reference to the "seven years" (?) of the reign of Seleucus IV, the death of Seleucus IV, and the accession of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175 B.C.E.). As an afterthought, it also reports the death of Ptolemy V Epiphanes (which actually took place in 181 B.C.E.). At least some of this information was probably added by Josephus, since it is characteristic of his periodic attempts to tie the narrative of the *Jewish Antiquities* to a recognized historical chronology (the first notice, as we have seen, was almost certainly added by him, since it conflicts with the chronology of the original version). If these references are removed, we have a story that fails to make any direct reference whatsoever to Seleucid rule. However, the original must have contained at least one oblique reference tying the story of Hyrcanus's later years to the period of Seleucid rule, since there is no reason to believe that Josephus added the passage attributing Hyrcanus's suicide to the accession of Antiochus IV (*AJ* 12.236).

76. One might argue that Josephus suppressed any reference to the conquest, but one would still expect to see some reflection of the changed situation beyond a few brief chronological references.

77. Gera (1990: 27–31) shows that the common assumption that Hyrcanus was actually in rebellion against Seleucus IV cannot be right: 2 Maccabees 3.11 would not be able to defend the alleged Temple deposits of Hyrcanus if the historical Hyrcanus was a known rebel, and later references in 1 and 2 Maccabees indicate that the Tobiad fortress remained in operation until at least 163 B.C.E. (Gera 1990: 30). Indeed, Josephus never claims that Hyrcanus revolted against Seleucus IV; he simply depicts Hyrcanus behaving as if the Seleucids did not exist, until Antiochus IV came

text's reluctance even to mention the fact of Seleucid rule, in contrast to its enthusiastically pro-Ptolemaic bias in the account of Joseph's career, is really quite striking. Yet, although scholars have tried to deduce from the text a political map of pro-Ptolemaic and pro-Seleucid factions at Jerusalem, the conflict is never cast in such terms.<sup>78</sup> The author seems eager simply to ignore the Seleucids, as if the very fact of their existence were an embarrassment.

We have, then, a text whose original chronology seems to have been decidedly eccentric, if not so bizarre as it became when Josephus tried to fix it. It reported a series of episodes—the adventures of the young Joseph, Joseph's marriage, the adventures of the young Hyrcanus, Hyrcanus's flight into the Transjordan, and his incessant wars with his brothers in Jerusalem—without regard for the chronological consistency of one episode with another. It located those adventures, on the one hand, in the reign of Ptolemy III Euergetes and, on the other, in the reigns of Seleucus IV and Antiochus IV without making any serious effort to bridge the gaps between them. It identified the wife of Ptolemy Euergetes as Cleopatra, a name no Ptolemaic queen bore before the wife of Ptolemy V. And it seems to have done everything possible to focus upon the benefits of Ptolemaic rule while all but ignoring the Seleucids, even after their conquest of Palestine. If this summary accurately reflects Josephus's source, no wonder Josephus became bewildered and tried to correct the narrative.

How, then, does the eccentric chronology of the source for the Tales of the Tobiads relate to the original author's purpose? The Tales of the Tobiads, like many such texts as we have been discussing, is marked by a strong thematic dichotomy: loyalty toward a foreign ruler is identified with piety and loyalty to one's fellow Jews; disloyalty, by contrast, is identified with the basest motives. This particular text stresses the benefits of Ptolemaic patronage and praises those, like the Tobiads, who cooperated with the Ptolemies for the greater good of their fellow Jews. At the same time, it blackens those, like Onias II and Simon II, who resisted Ptolemaic rule and obstructed the efforts of those like the Tobiads for petty, selfish motives.

Joseph is a good and just man (*AJ* 12.160, *δικαιοσύνης δόξαν ἔχων*; 12.224, *ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς γενόμενος καὶ μεγαλόφρων*) who shows great concern for the

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along. The depiction of Hyrcanus as a rebel stems from an overly political reading of the text, which seeks to find pro-Seleucid loyalists and pro-Ptolemaic fifth columnists among the cast of characters.

78. See Tcherikover 1959: 127–42 and esp. 152–74.

well-being of his fellow Jews (12.161, 164–65, 167). His activities in Ptolemaic service “brought the Jewish people from poverty and a state of weakness to more splendid opportunities of life.”<sup>79</sup> Evidently the author held a trickle-down theory of foreign relations: if a few prominent and wealthy Jews prospered in the service of the Ptolemies, all would benefit. By contrast, under Joseph’s enemy Onias II the Jews had nothing but trouble. We are told at the very beginning of the narrative that in the time of Onias II the Jews suffered much harassment from the Samaritans (12.156). D. Gera rightly connects the problems with the Samaritans with the “state of weakness” mentioned in Joseph’s eulogy (12.224)—under Joseph, the Jews no longer had to worry about such things.<sup>80</sup> Onias most seriously risked danger to his people when he refused tribute to Ptolemy, regardless of the consequences, because he was “small-minded and passionately fond of money” (12.158: *βραχὺς τὴν διάνοιαν καὶ χρημάτων ᾗπτων*).<sup>81</sup> Attempts to discover Onias’s true political motives miss the point of the story,<sup>82</sup> which is precisely that Onias’s behavior is petty, selfish, and without redeeming value.

Onias cares nothing for the dignity of his office. He obtained it through promises of money (*AJ* 12. 161), which he is now unwilling to pay, and to Joseph’s reproaches he replies that he would just as soon be rid of the high priesthood (12.163). Joseph, by contrast, although he engages in some sharp practices in his pursuit of Ptolemaic favor, does so out of concern for his fellow Jews. In the one scene in which serious religious scruples arise, he is

79. *AJ* 12.224: *καὶ τὸν τῶν Ἰουδαίων λαὸν ἐκ πτωχείας καὶ πραγμάτων ἀσθενῶν εἰς λαμπροτέρας ἀφορμὰς τοῦ βίου καταστήσας*. This clearly reflects the opinion of the author, who regards Joseph with nothing but admiration; never mind that, as Collins (2000: 75) cynically observes, “it is quite obvious that Joseph and his son Hyrcanus were motivated by self-interest with little concern for the Jewish people.” As far as the author of this story was concerned, whatever was good for the Tobids was good for the Jewish people.

80. This is surely the right interpretation of this otherwise apparently pointless remark about the prosperity of the Samaritans in the time of Onias II (Gera 1990: 33–34). It is hardly evidence of a Samaritan source, as Büchler (1899: 86–88) and Willrich (1895: 99–100) suggest, since the main point is that the prosperity of the Samaritans enabled them to make trouble for the Jews!

81. Gera (1990: 35) is most likely correct in arguing that not only the description of Onias II but the whole incident in which Onias II refused to pay tribute, allowing Joseph to snatch the contract from him, is a fiction designed to glorify Joseph and belittle Onias. If Joseph indeed existed and held the tax contract in his day, which seems not unreasonable to suppose, he did not obtain the contract in the manner described in the story.

82. See above, n. 78.



represented as trying to keep the Law as he understands it (12.187–89).<sup>83</sup> Likewise, Hyrcanus is represented as following in his father's footsteps, only to be frustrated by the small-minded jealousy of his elder brothers, allied with the high priest Simon II (12.195).

The author of the tales is particularly interested in promoting beneficial relations with the Ptolemies; it is never suggested that loyalty to the Seleucids brought the Jews any benefit.<sup>84</sup> Rather, it is implied that Hyrcanus continued to remain loyal to the Ptolemies while in exile in the Transjordan and prospered as a result, whereas the small-minded jealousy of his brothers, backed by Onias's successor, Simon II, cut the Jews of Jerusalem off from the benefits they might have enjoyed. The suicide of Hyrcanus on Antiochus IV's accession is surely an acid hint at the miseries of persecution that the future was to bring at Seleucid hands.<sup>85</sup>

The effect of the peculiar chronology of the Tales of the Tobiads, as we

83. Collins (2000: 75) notes that this is the only point at which an explicit concern for Jewish law is expressed, though "it relates to the ethnic purity of the Jewish people rather than to any moral concern." Barclay (1996: 107) cites Joseph the Tobiad as an example of a social climber under the heading of "high assimilation": i.e., Joseph commits what some Hellenistic Jews would have viewed as violations of Jewish law and tradition (table fellowship with gentiles, for instance) in order to get ahead. Although some of Joseph's contemporaries might have seen him in this light, however, it is worth noting that the original author of the Tobiad narrative views Joseph's social climbing with apparently unmixed approval. (So, rightly, Collins 2000: 75.) Barclay (1996: 84–86) himself rightly emphasizes that it is unwise to refer to any Hellenistic Jewish behavior as deviant if nothing critical is said about that particular behavior in our sources. To be sure, it cannot be denied that strictly religious scruples are rather low on the Tobiad author's list of priorities; he does not dismiss the importance of observance of the Law, but does not emphasize it either. His interests seem rather more focused on the promotion of Jews' position in the secular world. In this respect (if not in other respects) the author is rather reminiscent of the author of Hebrew Esther. Collins (2000: 75) regards both the Tales of the Tobiads and the competitive historiography of Artapanus as examples of literature in which the emphasis on ethnic pride prevails over concern for "religious or moral principle"; Hebrew (not Greek) Esther could also be regarded in this light.

84. On the pro-Ptolemaic (but not pro-Oniad) bias of the story, see Collins 2000: 75–76.

85. Gera (1990: 30–31) makes the intriguing suggestion that the whole story of Hyrcanus's suicide is a fiction akin to the likewise fictional story of the murder of Onias III (on which see above, Chap. 1, pp. 15–16, 38–41). If we accept that Hyrcanus was a historical figure from the time of the Maccabean Revolt, as 2 Maccabees 3.11 seems to confirm, then we do not know how he died; the suicide story is not impossible. However, a dramatic suicide when faced with the prospect of rule by one of the great tyrants of Jewish tradition—the very worst of the Seleucids—certainly fits the author's purpose extremely well. The comparison with the murder of Onias III is highly apt.



have seen, is to place great weight on the years of prosperity under Ptolemaic rule and to deemphasize the period of Seleucid rule, almost to the point of implying that the Seleucids never effectively displaced the Ptolemies from their control over the region. Certainly they are not represented as having had any control over Hyrcanus in the Transjordan. By contrasting the activities of the Tobiads, who sought to promote Jewish prosperity, with the small-minded opposition of Onias II and Simon II, the author also succeeds in thoroughly blackening the last ruling members of the Oniad line. It is Joseph and Hyrcanus who are the Jews' true "spokesmen" (*προστάτην*, *AJ* 12.167) and who take up the responsibilities abdicated by the last high priests of the Oniad line.<sup>86</sup> With Hyrcanus's death, this position is left, so to speak, vacant.

We have, then, an author who thoroughly identifies with Ptolemaic rule, to the extent of consistently using Ptolemaic rather than Seleucid terminology to describe the provincial organization of Palestine.<sup>87</sup> He promotes the benefits of Ptolemaic rule for the Jews of Palestine and twists history in order to minimize any record of the brief period of Seleucid rule in that region. He systematically denigrates the last high priests of the Oniad line. He most likely wrote in the latter half of the second century B.C.E.<sup>88</sup> It is clear that the author is himself a Jew intensely loyal to the Ptolemies and probably living under Ptolemaic rule; yet he is completely preoccupied with the relationship of the Ptolemies to the Jews of Palestine, which would be more likely to appeal to a Palestinian rather than an Egyptian audience.<sup>89</sup>

86. Who, interestingly, are related to the Oniad line through Joseph's mother, a sister of Onias II (*AJ* 12.160).

87. The official Ptolemaic term for the region was "Syria and Phoenicia": Goldstein 1975: 107–8; Gera 1990: 35; Collins 2000: 76. Gera (1990: 34–35) shows that the author had considerable knowledge of Ptolemaic tax-farming methods, although he argues (rightly, I believe) that the author intentionally distorted the description of the tax-farming process in order to enhance Joseph's image—for instance, the author has Joseph command an army in order to collect the taxes, although the job of actually collecting the taxes, in Palestine and elsewhere in the Ptolemaic empire, was normally left to the *oikonomoi* rather than the *dioiketēs*. The job of the *dioiketēs* was to set the rate of tax to be collected by the *oikonomoi*. Further evidence of the author's intimate knowledge of the Ptolemaic system and his Egyptian sympathies is cited by Gera 1990: 35.

88. Goldstein (1975: 106) astutely points out that the formulation "Euergetes the father of Philopator," makes most sense after Ptolemy VIII had adopted the cult title Euergetes, at which point it became necessary to distinguish the first Euergetes from the second. The first inscriptions that attest to Ptolemy VIII's adoption of the cult title Euergetes date to shortly after 145 B.C.E. (See detailed evidence cited by Goldstein *ad loc.*, with n. 75.)

89. Tcherikover (1959: 141–42) suggests an origin in the Transjordan, which remained under Ptolemaic rule. Goldstein (1975: 107–8) proposed an author from the

It is hard to escape the conclusion that the unknown author was writing for the Jews who lived in Palestine in the latter half of the second century B.C.E., and specifically for the Hasmoneans. As the Hasmoneans gradually moved out of the Seleucid orbit and began to assume a position (at least in their own eyes) of parity with the other Hellenistic powers of the day, it was reasonable to suggest that they might benefit from Ptolemaic backing and support. We have seen that for the author of 2 Maccabees, Onias III, who sought to establish a working relationship with the Seleucids, was a hero and a potential model for Hasmonean-Seleucid interaction. I suggest that the author of the *Tales of the Tobiads* similarly sought to construct a model of political interaction for the Hasmoneans, but one with a slightly different ideological orientation. This pro-Ptolemaic author may have been living in Palestine in a community of Jews with deep Ptolemaic sympathies, or, more likely, in light of his using Ptolemaic administrative terminology, in a Jewish community under Ptolemaic rule (in Egypt? the Transjordan?) acutely concerned with developments in Hasmonean Palestine.<sup>90</sup> In this

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pro-Ptolemaic circle around Onias IV, but as Collins (2000: 76) observes, this seems unlikely given the story's distinctly anti-Oniad slant. Gera (1990: 31, 35) argues strongly for a Jewish author resident in Ptolemaic Egypt. An author belonging to a community of Palestinian Jews with strong Egyptian sympathies is also possible, although somewhat less likely. By contrast with texts of clearly Egyptian provenance that also make reference to the Jews of Palestine, such as 3 Maccabees and the *Letter of Aristaeas*, the Jews of Egypt are not once mentioned. Yet it might have been natural to introduce them in the context of Joseph's and Hyrcanus's visits to the Egyptian court. This suggests that the Jews of Egypt are not intended to be the primary audience. (*Pace* Gera [1990: 38], who argues that the story's purpose was "to stimulate the self-confidence of the Jews in Ptolemaic Egypt and to demonstrate to all that Jews did—and therefore should again—play an important role in the service of the Ptolemaic kings.") An audience among Ptolemaic Jews is not impossible, but the absence of the Jews of Egypt from the text is hard to explain in this case. Still less likely is it that the text was flattering propaganda intended primarily for the eyes of the Ptolemies themselves, as Goldstein (1975: 108–16) suggests. Although the pro-Ptolemaic sympathies of the text are clear, its actual provenance remains a mystery.

90. Continuing interaction between communities of Jews in Egypt and in Palestine in this period (leaving aside the whole Leontopolis problem) is illustrated, among other things, by the coda to the Greek translation of Esther (Greek Esther F11) and by 2 Maccabees 1.1–9, both dating to the late second century B.C.E. Both are concerned with documents carried or sent from Palestine to Egypt; presumably the correspondence went both ways. In Esther F11, the carrier of the letter is a priest and Levite named Dositheus son of Ptolemy, and the translator was alleged to be one Lysimachus son of Ptolemy, a resident of Jerusalem. The patronymics are suggestive, especially since both fathers must have been born in the years surrounding the Maccabean Revolt. Here we see a community of Jews living in Jerusalem, apparently with strong Egyptian sympathies, that is concerned

light, it is perhaps significant that Joseph is represented as subduing the inhabitants of Ashkelon and Scythopolis (*AJ* 12.180–85) and that Hyrcanus ruled over the barbarians of the Transjordan (12.222). The Hasmoneans, too, were in the process of expanding their authority over Jews and gentiles alike in the latter half of the second century B.C.E.

I have argued that much of the didactic force of these Jewish fictions is drawn from the manipulation of history, transmuting historical fact into historicized myth. These texts are often characterized by outrageous historical anachronisms and distortions, which, when closely analyzed, can serve as keys to understanding their works' purposes. Such anachronisms, I argue, did not disturb original readers of the text, whether sophisticated or naive. They did, however, disturb Josephus, who was attempting to construct a historical narrative consistent with other historical sources, both biblical and Greek. It is therefore exceedingly difficult to separate the original Hellenistic fictions from Josephus's handling of them with any confidence. However, insofar as we can recover them, the Hellenistic fictions embedded in Josephus's text, like those surviving intact in the Septuagint, attempt to create a fictional account of past events, combining historical verisimilitude with a cavalier attitude toward precise historical accuracy, for the purpose of arguing some didactic point. In the interwoven stories of Sanballat, Alexander, and Jaddus, I argue that Josephus adopted the chronology of his source more or less intact; as in the case of the *Letter of Aristaeas*, the original contained a number of historical problems and anachronisms, but none too glaring for Josephus to ignore. In the *Tales of the Tobiads*, however, as in the *Book of Daniel*, the historical distortions were so evident when compared with his other sources that Josephus was left with little choice but to fix the

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to promote the observance of Purim in Egypt. In the cover letter that is attached to 2 Maccabees (1.1–9), we likewise see a Jewish community in Jerusalem attempting to encourage the celebration of a festival (in this case, Succoth) in Egypt. We might also note that the original five-volume history of the Maccabean Revolt epitomized in 2 Maccabees was written by one Jason of Cyrene (note the geographic identifier, although we do not know where he was living when he wrote it) and that the epitome, most likely made in late second-century-B.C.E. Hasmonean Palestine, now appears attached to a cover letter directed by the Jerusalem community to the Egyptian community and was presumably preserved by the latter community. I further argue below, in Part 2, that the Egyptian author of 3 Maccabees was influenced by knowledge of events during the Maccabean Revolt when he wrote his fictional account of a persecution under Ptolemy Philopator. Evidently at least some of the Jews of Egypt and the Jews of Palestine were acutely interested in following each other's fortunes and influencing each other's behavior. See above, Chap. 1, pp. 13–20, 38–44, for bibliography and discussion of these two passages.

problem. His efforts at correcting the chronology of the original resulted in chronological confusion far more extreme than what he started with. My conclusions, drawn via reconstructing original fictions embedded in Josephus's narrative, are of course provisional. Nevertheless, a better understanding of the paradoxical and fundamentally fictional character of Josephus's original source here is vital if we are to avoid the pitfall of attempting to reconstruct a reliable historical narrative on the basis of such tales. Josephus's account of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem and of the adventures of the Tobiads can no more be used to reconstruct the history of Palestine in the early Hellenistic period than 3 Maccabees can be used to provide a historical account of the reign of Ptolemy IV Philopator.<sup>91</sup> They are much better read as examples of how the Jews of the late Hellenistic period attempted to shape their identity by creating historical fictions about imagined events in the past.

91. Pace, e.g., Goldstein (1975: 123), who concludes his detailed analysis of the Tales of the Tobiads with the following statement: "Except for the exaggerated figure for the Ptolemaic revenues, the stories of Joseph and Hyrcanus are entirely true."

### 3 Patriarchal Fictions

Thus far we have surveyed a wide variety of Jewish fictions about the past, ranging from self-contained fictional narratives like Esther and Judith to fictions embedded in larger works, such as those found in Daniel, 2 Maccabees, and Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*. While the fictions found in Josephus in particular required special handling because of the problems of transmission involved, all the fictions treated so far have in common a setting in the relatively recent past, either in the Hellenistic period, with a primarily Greek cultural context (3 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeas*, 2 Maccabees, Alexander, the Tobiads), or in an Assyrian (Tobit), Babylonian (Daniel), or Persian (Esther, Judith) exilic setting. We have seen that while fictions with a Hellenistic setting tended to draw upon Greek models, the exilic fictions were more likely to base themselves upon the historical books of the Hebrew Bible, such as Kings and Chronicles, or the apparently fictional Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia (Esther 10.2). Curiously, no fictions survive that were set in the period of the monarchy. However, there are some fictions set in a yet earlier period, stretching back to the age of the patriarchs. In this chapter, I will briefly consider two Jewish fictions that take their inspiration, in greater or lesser degree, from the narratives of Genesis and Exodus: the fragments of Artapanus, and *Joseph and Aseneth*. As in the case of the earlier fictions, we will see that in terms of genre and purpose these two are more different than alike; both, however, again combine the manipulation of details from historical tradition (in this case, Genesis and Exodus) with an innovative use of contemporary Hellenistic literary genres to support their diverse purposes.

## ARTAPANUS

Of Artapanus's work, entitled *On the Jews* (*Περὶ Ἰουδαίων*),<sup>1</sup> we have only three fragments quoted in the work of Alexander Polyhistor. The title suggests that Artapanus classified his work (misleadingly) as a straightforward historical and ethnographic narrative,<sup>2</sup> akin to that of his contemporary(?) Eupolemus.<sup>3</sup> The fragments span the period of the patriarchs: fragment 1 deals with Abraham; fragment 2, Joseph; and fragment 3, by far the longest, most vivid, and most detailed of the three, Moses. Although it is difficult to be certain about fragments, Artapanus seems to have treated the patriarchal narrative rather selectively, focusing closely on the adventures of each figure in Egypt. Whether Artapanus's history continued beyond the Exo-

1. Polyhistor actually gives two titles, both of which would be appropriate for a general history of the Jewish people: *Judaica* (F 1 = Euseb. *PE* 9.18.1, ἐν τοῖς Ἰουδαϊκοῖς) and *On the Jews* (F 2 = Euseb. *PE* 9.23.1; F 3 = Euseb. *PE* 9.27.1–37). Assuming that both titles refer to the same work, the second title is certainly the correct one, as it is attested independently by Clement (F 3b = *Strom.* 1.23.154.2), who gives an abbreviated account of one portion of the third fragment. Cf. Holladay 1983: 189. Fragments of Artapanus are cited in this volume by fragment and section number, as given in Holladay: thus F 3.5 = fragment 3, section 5 = Euseb. *PE* 9.27.5.

2. Alexander Polyhistor's own work was itself titled *Περὶ Ἰουδαίων* (Holladay 1983: 8). Aristaeas and Hecataeus (or rather pseudo-Hecataeus) were also credited with historical and ethnographic accounts entitled *On the Jews* (Holladay 1983: 261, 278). Eupolemus's work, which focused largely on the period of monarchy and exile, was apparently called *Concerning the Kings in Judaea* (*Περὶ τῶν ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ βασιλέων*; Holladay 1983: 93). Holladay (1977: 215–16) rightly points out that the title of the work implies a claim to compete with elite historians, although he himself regards Artapanus's literary pretensions as "comical." Because scholars have traditionally seen historical and other inaccuracies as a sign of ignorance, Artapanus's creativity has been widely underestimated (so, rightly, Gruen 1998: 156). Whether Artapanus is pulling our leg throughout (as Gruen [1998: 155–60] is inclined to believe) or whether he is engaged in a sincere polemic with a light touch (as I see it), it is high time to reconsider the traditional view of Artapanus as an incompetent hack from the sticks of Memphis. (See discussion in Braun 1938: 4–5; Fraser 1972: 1.704–6; Holladay 1977: 212–14; Barclay 1996: 127; Collins 2000: 39).

3. The date of Artapanus has not been definitively fixed, but must fall between ca. 250 and ca. 50 B.C.E. The earlier limit is fixed by the translation of the Septuagint in the mid-third century B.C.E., since Artapanus consistently betrays knowledge of the Greek rather than the Hebrew Bible (Holladay 1983: 192). The later limit is fixed by the date of Polyhistor (mid-first century B.C.E.), our source for the fragments. Suggested dates have varied from the late third century to the late second century B.C.E. (Cf. Holladay 1983: 189–90; Collins 1985: 890–91; Schürer 1986: 523–24; Doran 1987: 263; Collins 2000: 38–39.) I will argue below that Artapanus's work is most likely post-Maccabean, which would make him a rough contemporary of Eupolemus (ca. 160 B.C.E.).

dus is impossible to say; it probably did not, since Polyhistor does not quote Artapanus in his account of later Jewish history. Still, Artapanus's narrative clearly sought to cover a broad span of Jewish history, based upon (but often departing from) the accounts of Genesis and Exodus. The common designation of Artapanus's work as a Moses Romance is thus inaccurate.<sup>4</sup> Moses is only the last and the greatest of a series of Jewish heroes whom Artapanus celebrated.

Although Artapanus's work is structurally modeled on Hellenistic accounts that sought to present ancient traditions, whether Jewish, Babylonian or Egyptian, in a respectable historical guise, nevertheless Artapanus as historian differs significantly from a contemporary like Eupolemus. Eupolemus is certainly not above embroidering his account; very much like 3 Maccabees, he even cites putatively genuine documents, such as the lengthy correspondence between Solomon and the kings of Egypt and Tyre, which are patently Hellenistic fictions.<sup>5</sup> On the whole, however, Eupolemus attempts to stick close to biblical traditions and to present Jewish history in a relatively sober, respectable manner, much like Berossus and Manetho before him and Josephus after him. Artapanus, on the other hand, seeks to shape Jewish identity by constructing a heavily fictionalized narrative only loosely and occasionally in contact with the historical tradition of the Torah.<sup>6</sup> M. Braun, perhaps rightly, likened Artapanus's work not to those of Berossus and Manetho but to the Alexander Romance, which maintains only a tenuous connection with historical reality.<sup>7</sup> Through his largely fictional account of the patriarchs in Egypt, and especially of the Exodus narrative, Artapanus seeks not merely like Eupolemus to validate a long-standing Jewish historical tradition in the eyes of educated Hellenized Jews but rather to create a new and paradoxical Exodus narrative to suit the partic-

4. E.g., Braun 1938: 26; Wills 1995: 28. Tiede (1972: 146–47) and Holladay (1977: 215) rightly protest the inaccuracy of the designation.

5. Euseb. *PE* 9.31–34; cf. Holladay 1983: 118–23 (Eupolemus F 2).

6. Gruen (1998: 87) rightly characterizes Artapanus as a “creative retelling” of biblical traditions. See also Collins 2000: 39–40.

7. Braun (1938: 4–5) classifies the works of Berossus, Manetho, and Josephus as competitive historiography of a “high literary class,” contrasting this class of literature with “popular anonymous literature” such as the *Alexander Romance* and the work of Artapanus. The distinction phrased in terms of social class may not be very useful, but the distinction between the two types of work is a valid one. Cf. Tiede 1972: 149–51. Note, however, that since Artapanus's work is not anonymous and the title suggests literary ambitions (see above, n. 2), while the nature of the work may more closely resemble popular romance than history, Artapanus as an author aimed to compete at a higher literary level. Then again, the same claim is made by “Callisthenes,” the pseudonymous author of the *Alexander Romance*.

ular needs of his Egyptian Jewish audience. Though Artapanus's liberal—to say the least!—treatment of biblical traditions has been much discussed, and the creativity of his approach is now drawing more sympathetic attention than before, the self-conscious nature of the balancing act that Artapanus performs between history and fiction has not, I believe, always been fully appreciated.

Artapanus consciously suggests that his work is a sober piece of Hellenistic historiography relying upon the ancient traditions preserved in Genesis and Exodus.<sup>8</sup> It contains many detailed allusions both to its ultimate source, the Septuagint text, and to the Greek historical tradition within which Artapanus was ostensibly working. Each of the fragments of Artapanus takes its starting point from the biblical narrative. His brief account of Abraham's visit to Egypt is based on Genesis 12.10–20; that of Joseph's adventures at the court of Pharaoh, on Genesis 37–50; and his version of Moses' upbringing and the Exodus, on Exodus 1–16.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, close verbal echoes of the Septuagint text make it apparent that Artapanus not only used the Greek text of the Bible as his primary source but sought to evoke that text in the mind of his audience.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Artapanus is careful to invoke elements of the Greek historiographical tradition whenever possible. His title and scope are characteristic of Hellenistic scholarly works seeking to frame a non-Greek historical tradition in terms familiar to an educated Greek-speaking audience. Artapanus also speculates on the etymology of *Ἰουδαῖος*, deriving it from the curious word *Hermiouth* (*Ἑρμιούθ*, F 1); such etymologies were characteristic of Hellenistic scholarship.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, in a

8. Gruen (1998: 155–60) calls for a more whimsical appraisal of Artapanus; he argues that Artapanus's playfulness has been underestimated. It may well be that Artapanus is occasionally engaged in a sort of proto-Lucianic enterprise (comparable to Lucian's *True Histories*), faking ponderous scholarship for the entertainment of his readers. (His bizarre etymologies such as “Hermiouth,” noted below, come to mind.) This, however, need not be incompatible with the view of Artapanus's work as competitive historiography or romantic national history, which Gruen (1998: 156) feels has been overemphasized. Entertainment and didactic purposes need not be mutually exclusive, as I show throughout this study.

9. Artapanus of course handles the original narrative very freely and introduces many quite unbiblical details, to which we will return below.

10. A detailed analysis of Artapanus's use of the Septuagint text may be found in Freudenthal 1875: 152, 215–16. Cf. Holladay 1983: 192 with n. 19; Collins 1985: 894.

11. Artapanus's point here remains obscure, but the best suggestion is still that of Freudenthal (1875: 153), who suggested that the name is derived from a combination of *Hermēs* and *Ioudaioi*, “Hermes-Jews,” a name that would link the Jews both to the distinguished cultural figure Hermes and, more important, to Moses, who according to Artapanus was called Hermes by the Egyptian priests (F 3.6). Cf. Holladay 1983: 226 n. 4; Collins 1985: 897 n. a; Gruen 1998: 151.



manner reminiscent of Herodotus, he more than once cites the native inhabitants of a place as his source,<sup>12</sup> and once even weighs rival traditions about the parting of the Red Sea. Finally, Artapanus repeatedly tries silently to correct the rival account of the Exodus preserved under the name of Manetho in Josephus's *Against Apion*, although he never explicitly cites what he sees as the false account.<sup>13</sup> He thus places himself in the long tradition of historians, from Herodotus through Thucydides to Polybius, who corrected the accounts of their rivals and predecessors. In all these subtle ways, Artapanus sought to root his work both in the ancient biblical traditions and in the Greek historical tradition including Herodotus, Hecataeus, Manetho, Eupolemus, and ultimately Josephus.

This point deserves some emphasis, because Artapanus's frequently eccentric content has caused modern scholars to underestimate the creativity of his pretension to scholarship. Artapanus's treatment of the parting of the Red Sea provides a good example. The account attributed to the inhabitants of Memphis is decidedly rationalistic, claiming that Moses was able to guide the Jews across because he waited for the ebb tide,<sup>14</sup> whereas the miraculous version, identical to that in Exodus, is attributed to the Heliopolitans (F 3.35–37). In this passage Artapanus manages to buttress his scholarly pose in several ways: he exhibits his own ability and willingness to consult rival traditions (which may have been entirely his own invention); he gives the impression of considering, in a balanced fashion, both scientific and miraculous explanations of a popular legend, and he neatly attributes the miraculous version not to the Jewish sacred Scriptures but to an impartial independent source, which appears to confirm the Exodus account.<sup>15</sup> (The

12. Artapanus F 3.8, where the Heliopolitans are cited as the source for the statement that Moses' campaign in Ethiopia lasted ten years, and F 3.35–37, where the inhabitants of Memphis and the inhabitants of Heliopolis are made to give conflicting accounts of the crossing of the Red Sea.

13. See discussion below. Although Josephus, *C.Ap.* 1.229–51, cites Manetho as his source, it has been argued that the hostile account may not have been originally Manetho's but may have been added to Manetho's work by a later hand (Braun 1938: 26; Gager 1972: 113–18; Collins 2000: 9–10, 31). Fortunately, the question of pseudo-Manetho lies outside the scope of this study. If the anti-Jewish polemic preserved under the name of Manetho is a later addition, either Artapanus might be responding to pseudo-Manetho, or he might be responding to some earlier tradition that would eventually serve as one of pseudo-Manetho's sources. A reconsideration of pseudo-Manetho has been proposed by Gruen 1998: 55–65; see below.

14. Artapanus F 3.35: *Μεμφίτας μὲν οὖν λέγειν ἔμπειρον ὄντα τὸν Μωῦσον τῆς χώρας τὴν ἄμπωτον τηρήσαντα διὰ ξηρᾶς τῆς θαλάσσης τὸ πλῆθος περαιῶσαι.*

15. Modrzejewski (1995: 139) notes Artapanus's presentation of both rationalizing and magical explanations in this passage and acutely observes that both sources

second, miraculous explanation is given the privileged position and is no doubt the preferred account, but it is worth noticing that the first, rationalized explanation is also highly complimentary toward Moses.) As so often with Artapanus, we are uncertain how far to take him seriously; the citation of apparently fictitious authorities to resolve a mock-serious dispute is rather like Lucian's much later satire of Herodotus in *True Histories*. Taken seriously, however, Artapanus, no less than Josephus after him, aims to use non-Jewish traditions to confirm and exalt Jewish traditions in a manner Greek (and Greco-Egyptian) intellectuals would understand and respect.

Although Artapanus's work may superficially resemble serious historiography, in its content it quickly diverges from the biblical tradition to which Eupolemus adheres so closely. As fantastic, entertaining, and eccentric (some would say syncretistic)<sup>16</sup> as Artapanus's account is, all his alterations and additions to the biblical story are not pure whimsy but support a variety of didactic points that combine to serve a single purpose: to provide a historical context for the life of the Jews in Egypt, reinforcing their position and status there.

It has long been observed that Artapanus, like many other Jewish authors, goes to considerable trouble to show that the heroes of his Jewish history are not merely equal but superior to all others. Braun identified the work of Artapanus, together with the Alexander Romance and the less well-preserved stories of Ninus, Semiramis, and Sesostris, as "hero romance," a form of popular historiography in which a particular national hero is shown to have exceeded the achievements of every conceivable rival.<sup>17</sup> Artapanus's heroes are Abraham, Joseph, and especially Moses: Abraham taught astrology to the king of Egypt (F 1.1); Joseph carried out much-needed land reforms (F 2.2), discovered weights and measures (F 2.3), founded communities, and built temples (F 2.4), achievements attributed also to Isis, Osiris, and Sesostris.<sup>18</sup> The culture hero par excellence in Artapanus, however, is Moses: virtually equated with Hermes and his Egyptian counterpart, Thoth,<sup>19</sup> Moses is also credited with surpassing the achievements of

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are presented as native Egyptian accounts, thus supporting Artapanus's generally pro-Egyptian stance and his claim to expertise in this area.

16. E.g., Hengel 1974: 1.91; Holladay 1983: 189; Collins 1985: 893.

17. Braun 1938: 4–5, 26–31; Tiede 1972: 149–60; Holladay 1977: 202–2, 215–29; Doran 1987: 258–63; Barclay 1996: 129; Gruen 1998: 155–60; Collins 2000: 39–46.

18. Holladay 1983: 228 n. 18; Doran 1987: 257–58.

19. According to Artapanus, the priests of Egypt actually called him Hermes (F 3.6), and the city that Moses founded at the conclusion of his war with the Ethiopians was named Hermopolis, apparently in his honor (F 3.9; cf. Collins 1985: 899;

Isis and Osiris.<sup>20</sup> Above all, Moses usurped the achievements of Egypt's greatest hero, Sesostris, who was said to have campaigned more widely and successfully than Alexander the Great himself (Diod. 1.55.3). Like Sesostris, he invented ships,<sup>21</sup> divided the state into thirty-six nomes,<sup>22</sup> organized Egyptian animal worship,<sup>23</sup> assigned land to the temples,<sup>24</sup> conquered the Ethiopians,<sup>25</sup> and was wildly popular.<sup>26</sup> Moses' adventures in Arabia are also paralleled in the campaigns of Sesostris.<sup>27</sup> By besting at every step such distinguished Egyptian cultural icons as Hermes-Thoth, Isis, Osiris and, most important, the Egyptian national hero, Sesostris, Moses demonstrates clear superiority in a specifically Egyptian context.<sup>28</sup> The fact that Moses in usurp-

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Doran 1987: 259–60). Like Hermes-Thoth, Moses was the founder of Egyptian worship and the discoverer of the sacred books (F 3.4; cf. Holladay 1983: 232 n. 46).

20. The long list of useful inventions credited to Moses (F 3.4) is similar to the many useful contributions credited to Isis and Osiris by Diodorus; likewise also the assignment of local deities to the districts of Egypt and the decision to set aside land for the exclusive use of the priests (F 3.4), the founding of cities (F 3.9, 16), and the conquest of Ethiopia (F 3.7–10). Detailed references are given in Tiede 1972: 149–60; Holladay 1983: 232–33 n. 46, 235 n. 56; Doran 1987: 259–61. Also, Moses is said to have founded Meroe (F 3.16), where Isis was worshiped and where, according to one tradition, she was said to have been buried (Holladay 1983: 238 n. 74; Collins 1985: 900 n. y; Doran 1987: 261). Artapanus also asserts Moses' supremacy over Isis, since the earth is Isis and produced marvels when Moses struck it with his rod (F 3.32; cf. Collins 1985: 902 n. q2; Doran 1987: 262). Collins (2000: 41) pertinently notes that Moses outshines not only the heroes of the Egyptians but also their gods!

21. Artapanus F 3.4; cf. Diod. 1.55.2. On parallels with Sesostris in general, see Tiede 1972: 149–60; Doran 1987: 259–61.

22. Artapanus F 3.4; cf. Diod. 1.54.3.

23. Artapanus F 3.4; cf. Diod. 1.56.2.

24. Artapanus F 3.4; cf. Hdt. 2.107.

25. Artapanus F 3.8; cf. Diod. 1.55.1. According to Artapanus, the Heliopolitans said that Moses' war with the Ethiopians lasted ten years, an epic length.

26. Artapanus F 3.6, 10; cf. Diod. 1.54.2.

27. Artapanus F 3.17; cf. Diod. 1.53.5.

28. It is only in a rather incidental aside that we learn that Moses was also identical with Musaeus, who is identified by Artapanus as the teacher of Orpheus, thus making Moses indirectly a cultural hero for the Greeks as well as the Jews and the Egyptians (F 3.3–4). (In Greek literature, Musaeus is usually the son or the disciple of Orpheus, not his mentor: Holladay 1983: 232 n. 45). However, Moses' broader spectrum of achievements clearly locates him first and foremost within an Egyptian context. It has been observed that according to Hecataeus, Orpheus acquired his wisdom from Egyptian priests; according to Artapanus, Moses thus usurps the superior cultural role attributed to the Egyptians by the Greeks in this connection (Holladay *loc. cit.*). Thus, even the significance of Moses' identification with Musaeus is to be understood primarily in the light of his Egyptian context. See also Tiede 1972: 152; Holladay 1977: 224; Doran 1987: 259; Barclay 1996: 128–29; Collins 2000: 41.

ing the role of his rivals becomes incidentally responsible for establishing the entire Egyptian ritual system, so often ridiculed by Hellenistic Jews for its polytheistic animal worship, does not disturb Artapanus in the least. Indeed, on the contrary, it supports his larger purpose, allowing him to encourage his audience to tolerate Egyptian polytheism while yet distancing themselves from its practices.

Artapanus's seeming willingness to embrace Egyptian polytheism raises an issue that has often troubled modern studies of his work and that can be better understood when we view him as consciously creating a fictionalized version of the first Jewish Egyptian diaspora with a didactic purpose. Just how far was Artapanus willing to depart from biblical tradition? And how representative was he of his peers? That Artapanus represents a rather unusual strain of Hellenistic Judaism, one among many possible variants, seems reasonable to assume. It is hard to imagine even Josephus, let alone any modern Jewish confessional group, enthusiastically endorsing the view of Moses as Hermes-Thoth, the founder of Egyptian animal cult. Other Jewish authors of the Hellenistic and Roman periods more often speak of animal worship with extreme contempt.<sup>29</sup> But are we to assume that Artapanus's Judaism was so syncretistic that he honestly did not distinguish between Egyptian and Jewish ritual practices and would have been as comfortable before the altar of Isis or Serapis as he was worshipping with fellow Jews? Would he have prayed equally to Hermes or Moses—supposing a Hellenistic Jew would ever pray directly to Moses? Some scholars writing on Artapanus seem to accept this as a possibility,<sup>30</sup> but Artapanus's own text does not warrant so strong a conclusion. It is important to remember that Artapanus speaks here of Moses' life before the Exodus and the giving of the Torah. Jewish tradition itself, as represented by Exodus, held that Moses was raised in Pharaoh's house and was unaware of his Jewish identity until he reached adulthood; though Artapanus does not signal a clear break between these stages in Moses' life, it follows that Moses must have been involved in non-Jewish worship in the Egyptian period of his life. It does not follow that Ar-

29. Barclay (1996: 46) and Collins (2000: 42) give some examples of Hellenistic Jewish authors who spoke of Egyptian and other forms of animal cult with contempt.

30. See, for instance, Barclay 1996: 124, where Artapanus is cited as an admirer of Egyptian animal cult; he describes Artapanus as "both a proud Egyptian and a self-conscious Jew" (ibid.) and regards him as both a monotheist and a polytheist (p. 132)! I would not question the description of Artapanus as a proud Egyptian, but I would question the image of Artapanus proudly sacrificing in Egyptian temples alongside his non-Jewish peers. Collins (2000: 42) provides a useful corrective, though he too, with some justice, regards Artapanus's Judaism as "sharply at variance with Deuteronomic tradition."

Artapanus or his readers would have felt entitled to enter the temples Artapanus claims Moses helped to found, or that they worshiped the animal pantheon Moses helped to create. Indeed, Artapanus never speaks of Moses himself or Jews in Moses' own time doing such things; the implication, rather, seems to be that Moses contributed to the establishment of Egyptian worship as a civic benefaction but himself remained aloof from its practice. Artapanus's syncretism could be construed as paternalistic toward the Egyptians: for Artapanus, polytheism is not a dangerous rival but is to be viewed with patronizing indulgence.<sup>31</sup> The Egyptians lacked temples and a system of worship, but not being children of Abraham, they were ineligible to worship the God of Abraham (and were perhaps too theologically immature for such a concept); therefore, Moses in the kindness of his heart gave them a form of worship that they could participate in, inferior though it might be. (Really, one would have thought that the Egyptians would be more grateful.) Such an attitude would have been unlikely to endear him to a non-Jewish Egyptian audience, if there was one, but it would have encouraged Artapanus's readers to treat their neighbors' temples with a certain amused, detached respect rather than with idol-smashing fervor.<sup>32</sup> In other words, this eccentric view of Moses as an Egyptian quasi-divine hero fits very well into Artapanus's overall program of encouraging harmonious relations between the Jews of Egypt and their Egyptian neighbors. The didactic goal overrides the extreme unlikelihood that Moses ever played such a role in actual fact.

As has likewise long been observed, Artapanus seeks throughout his work, but especially in his account of the Exodus, to counter the hostile account of Manetho.<sup>33</sup> According to that account, the Jews were lower-class

31. So, rightly (I think), Collins 2000: 42 nn. 67, 68. Against this view Barclay (1996: 131) argues that Artapanus's description of Egyptian animal cult cannot be seen in any way as a "demotion" of Egyptian religion. Since the inference of tone from any ancient text is perilous, particularly where sarcasm or humor is involved, this is a question that cannot be definitively settled but remains open to the reader's interpretation.

32. For the tragic and bloody results of such idol-smashing fervor in the Roman period, see Barclay 1996: 48–81.

33. Artapanus's refutation of this hostile account has been explored by a long line of scholars: cf. Freudenthal 1875: 161–62; Braun 1938: 26–31; Fraser 1972: 1.704–6; Tiede 1972: 148–50; Holladay 1977: 213–14, 216–20; Holladay 1983: 189–90 with n. 10; Collins 1985: 891–92; Doran 1987: 263; Modrzejewski 1995: 135–41; Barclay 1996: 33–34, 129–30; Collins 2000: 40. The view that the hostile account now found in Manetho is purely a pagan invention designed to discredit the Jews has, however, recently been challenged by Gruen (1998: 41–72), who argues that what we find in Manetho and other anti-Jewish authors is actually a distorted

Egyptians, enslaved because they were crippled or leprous, and Moses was a renegade Egyptian priest who rebelled against Pharaoh and led hostile incursions against Egypt before being expelled together with the rest.<sup>34</sup> Artapanus in his account not only seeks to refute these charges but departs from biblical tradition to construct a positive alternate model for the Jewish sojourn in Egypt.<sup>35</sup>

Artapanus begins by reasserting the antiquity of Jewish settlement in Egypt. He appeals to biblical tradition to show that the Jews came to Egypt from Syria, both in Abraham's time and in Joseph's. Artapanus, however, goes well beyond the biblical account in representing the Jewish sojourn in Egypt as a positive, consistent pattern of voluntary settlement. According to Genesis 12.10–20, Abraham's visit in Egypt was brief and troubled, dominated by conflict with Pharaoh over Sarah, and he ultimately departed "with all that he had" (Gen. 12.20). Artapanus breathes no hint of trouble between Abraham and Pharaoh; on the contrary, Abraham did the king a favor by teaching him astrology.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, Abraham remained in Egypt twenty years—a figure not attested in Genesis and considerably longer than the time assigned to this sojourn by any other source<sup>37</sup>—and when he left, many of his companions remained behind, seduced by the country's prosperity.<sup>38</sup> Thus Artapanus pushes long-term Jewish settlement in Egypt all the way back to the time of Abraham.<sup>39</sup>

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form of a now lost alternative Jewish Exodus tradition, one in which some Egyptian Jews took pride in accounts of their ancestors' fighting Egyptian armies, attacking Egyptian temples, and so on. If Gruen is right, Artapanus may be engaged in a dialogue not with some form of anti-Jewish polemic, but with one or more competing Hellenistic Jewish traditions. Such an intracommunity debate would be entirely plausible, if alternative Jewish Exodus traditions did exist (although the tradition as we have it is so hostile to the Jews that it is a little difficult to imagine an earlier pro-Jewish form). Although much of my discussion here assumes the traditional view that Artapanus was refuting the hostile account of non-Jews (for the benefit of his Jewish readers, not for the benefit of the non-Jews), my observations would apply equally well if we are in fact dealing with a debate between competing Jewish views.

34. Josephus, *C.Ap.* 1.228–51.

35. The pro-Egyptian *Tendenz* of Artapanus is rightly stressed by Holladay 1977: 216–20.

36. Artapanus F 1.1: *τοῦτον δέ φησι πανοικία ἐλθεῖν εἰς Αἴγυπτον πρὸς τὸν τῶν Αἰγυπτίων βασιλέα Φαρεθώθην καὶ τὴν ἀστρολογίαν αὐτὸν διδάξαι.*

37. Cf. the discussion in Holladay 1983: 227 n. 8, where the longest time given by any source is five years; other suggestions are two years, or as little as three months.

38. Artapanus F 1.1: *τῶν δὲ τοῦτω συνελθόντων πολλοὺς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ καταμεῖναι διὰ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν τῆς χώρας.*

39. This point was noticed by Doran 1987: 257.

Similarly, Artapanus's account of Joseph's migration to Egypt contains a number of unbiblical details that subtly alter the biblical presentation of the Jewish experience in Egypt. For instance, Joseph was not kidnapped and sold into slavery but hired the Arabs to spirit him into Egypt when he learned that his brothers were plotting against him (F 2.1). This version is of course apologetic in a general sense, in that it exalts Joseph's cleverness and partly exonerates his brothers,<sup>40</sup> but more important, it places a positive spin on Joseph's arrival in Egypt: he came not as a slave but by his own choice, fleeing persecution at home and seeking a better fortune abroad. The story also entirely omits Joseph's years of slavery and imprisonment, jumping immediately to his years of prosperity and success: immediately upon arrival, he makes the acquaintance of the king and assumes the office of *dioiketēs*, chief finance minister, an exalted position in the Ptolemaic Egyptian bureaucracy of Artapanus's time (F 2.2).<sup>41</sup>

Thus, in contrast to the derogatory anti-Jewish account denying the foreign origin of the Jews, and in contrast even to the biblical account representing Jewish settlement in Egypt in the age of the patriarchs as a matter of necessity mingled with chance, fraught with problems, Artapanus presents the explosion of Jewish settlement in Egypt in Joseph's time as the culmination of a pattern of voluntary emigration, mutually beneficial to both sides.

Having given what he claims is the true account of the origin of Jewish settlement in Egypt, Artapanus proceeds to refute in detail the anti-Jewish account of the Exodus itself. Again, as we shall see, he does not simply uphold biblical tradition against those who would attack it. Rather, he constructs a significantly different version of the Exodus story, which paradoxically serves as a positive model for Jewish life not in the Land but in the Diaspora.

According to the account preserved under the name of Manetho in Josephus's *Against Apion*, Moses was not a Jew but a degenerate Egyptian priest of Heliopolis who gathered a cult following among a group of Egyptian lepers condemned to forced labor on account of their disfiguring disease. Under Moses' leadership, the lepers rebelled, desecrated temples, and sacked cities with the help of foreign invaders (descended from the Hyksos) whom Moses invited into the country. Finally Moses and his followers were expelled from Egypt for their crimes.<sup>42</sup>

In refuting this account, Artapanus begins by appealing to the biblical

40. E.g., Holladay 1983: 228 n. 15.

41. As Doran (1987: 258) observes, Joseph's life is "moulded by Artapanus to follow that of the rise to power of a hero."

42. See above, nn. 33, 34.



tradition. As we have seen, he establishes that the Jews were indeed immigrants from Palestine, not native Egyptians. In fragment 3 of *On the Jews* he reiterates the biblical account of Moses' adoption into the family of Pharaoh, making him a Jew who was nevertheless able to rise high in royal service in a time of persecution (F 3.3). He likewise implicitly confirms the biblical account, as we have seen, when he cites two variants (attributed to putatively objective sources) for the crossing of the Red Sea, of which the second and clearly preferred version is identical with the biblical account (F 3.35–37).

Artapanus goes well beyond the biblical account, however, in constructing a positive model for Moses' activities in Egypt in order to refute the hostile tradition of Manetho. The portrait of Moses as a cultural hero, besides soothing Jewish ethnic pride and creating a positive place for Moses and the Jews within Egyptian society, also refutes the hostile portrait in every detail: Moses was not a destroyer but a founder of cities; he did not destroy temples or kill sacred animals but on the contrary founded animal worship; he did not dispossess the priests but endowed them with land; he did not oppress the people but was loved by them.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, Artapanus goes out of his way to stress Moses' loyalty to the crown, and his popularity with the Egyptians—two themes with which we are thoroughly familiar. We are told that the primary motive for Moses' reforms and benefactions was "to keep the monarchy stable for Chenephres,"<sup>44</sup> in contrast to the previous state of affairs: "For prior to this time the mob was disorderly, and they would sometimes expel, sometimes install kings, often the same persons, but sometimes others."<sup>45</sup> The behavior of the mob here strikingly recalls the tumultuous years of civil war between Ptolemy VI and Ptolemy VIII in the mid-second century B.C.E., in which the whims of the Alexandrian mob played a significant role<sup>46</sup>—and in which, incidentally, according to Josephus (*C.Ap.* 2.50–55), the Jewish general Onias supported Ptolemy VI Philometor and his wife Cleopatra.<sup>47</sup> Artapanus is thus

43. Braun 1938: 26–29; Holladay 1977: 228–29 ("the Jews, viewed properly, have been a boon, not a bane, to Egypt").

44. Artapanus F 3.5: *χάριν τοῦ τὴν μοναρχίαν βεβαίαν τῷ Χενέφρῃ διαφυλάξαι.*

45. Artapanus F 3.5: *πρότερον γὰρ ἀδιατάκτους ὄντας τοὺς ὄχλους ποτὲ μὲν ἐκβαλλεῖν, ποτὲ δὲ καθιστάνειν βασιλεῖς, καὶ πολλάκις μὲν τοὺς αὐτοὺς, ἐνιακίς δὲ ἄλλους* (trans. Holladay 1983).

46. For the role of the mob and the intervention of the Jews, see Barclay 1996: 37–38.

47. The apparent reference to the political conditions of the second century B.C.E. is one of a number of references that seem to point toward a second-century date. Some scholars have detected in the text what seems to be a reference to the temple



simultaneously stressing the loyalty of Moses to Chenephres (in contrast to the hostile portrait of Moses as a rebel leader) and at the same time making a point about the loyalty of Jewish elite in contemporary second-century-B.C.E. Hellenistic Egypt. Moses' loyalty is continuously reiterated: the biblical story of Moses' slaying the Egyptian (Ex. 2.12) is altered so that he kills the Egyptian not in a rage but purely in self-defense (F 3.18); and far from inciting foreign powers to invade as the hostile account alleges, he restrains his ally Raguel from invading Egypt (F 3.19).<sup>48</sup> Finally, Artapanus, again like many Hellenistic Jewish authors, also stresses Moses' popularity among the Gentiles: he was greatly loved by the masses and regarded as worthy of divine honor by the priests, who called him Hermes (F 3.6); the Ethiopians, whom he conquered, so admired him that they adopted the practice of circumcision (F 3.10); and even some of those hired to conspire against his life were sympathetic to him and informed him secretly of the plot (F 3.16).

These two themes—the loyalty of the Jews to the crown and the popularity of the Jews among the Gentiles, even in times of crisis and persecution—are so well worn in the texts that we have been examining as scarcely to require comment. What does require comment here is the significance of their being stressed in this particular context. The central point of the Exodus story may be seen precisely in the meaning of the biblical book's Greek name: it is about the Jews' forging of Jewish identity through their departure from Egypt. The Jews acquired their identity as a nation through renouncing their status as slaves in an alien land and thus enabling themselves to take up their inheritance in a land of their own. For the Jewish inhabitants of Egypt, however, most of whom had no desire to leave their adopted country and return to the Land, the annual celebration of the Exodus at Passover must have had a curious ambivalence, all the more in light of the contemporary drama of persecution, revolt, and eventual independence being played out in Palestine in the mid-second century B.C.E. They could scarcely repudiate the tradi-

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at Leontopolis (F 2.4: Holladay 1983: 230 n. 28). There are also several references that are most easily understood in the aftermath of the persecution of the Jews of Palestine by Antiochus IV. We have, for instance, the reference to the regulation forcing Jews to wear identifying clothing (F 3.20), which cannot be explained by reference to any known incident in Egypt. It is, however, reminiscent of the branding of the Jews in 3 Macc. 2.29 with the ivy leaf of Dionysus, which in turn was most likely inspired by the forcing of Dionysiac worship on the Jews of Jerusalem as reported in 2 Macc. 6.7. Moreover, Chenephres, much like Antiochus IV (2 Macc. 9), dies of a horrible lingering disease (F 3.20) of a peculiar (and therefore divinely inflicted) type, elephantiasis, as punishment for his persecution of the Jews.

48. Braun 1938: 29.

tion, however, and indeed Artapanus does not: he follows biblical tradition in reporting the plagues (F 3.27–33), the flight of the Jews from Egypt (F 3.34), the crossing of the Red Sea (F 3.35–37), and the forty years in the desert (F 3.37).<sup>49</sup> However, as we have seen, in his fictional elaboration of the biblical narrative, Artapanus repeatedly stresses not the enmity between the Jews and the Egyptians but the positive aspects of that first diaspora. The Jews, according to him, entered Egypt voluntarily; they prospered under Egyptian rule and served at the highest levels, both initially (in the case of Joseph) and even in times of persecution (in the case of Moses); their leaders bestowed many benefits on the Egyptians and indeed adopted the role of Egyptian cultural heroes; the Jews were loyal to their Egyptian rulers and popular among their Egyptian neighbors. Whereas the author of the *Letter of Aristeas*, writing for a cultivated Alexandrian audience, consistently tries to strike a balance between Jewish tradition and classical Greek culture, Artapanus consistently seeks to strike a balance between Jewish tradition and the Greco-Egyptian culture of his audience. In effect, Artapanus undertook to produce a pro-Egyptian Jewish account of the Exodus in order to counter the anti-Jewish Egyptian account. This conciliatory retelling of the Exodus story may account for one of the most bizarre features of Artapanus's account, his total omission of the final plague, which passed over the Jews and fell upon the first-born of the Egyptians. That story could scarcely be made in any way to promote good will between the Jews of Egypt and their Egyptian neighbors.

The omission of the Passover, like the attribution of Egyptian animal worship to none other than the founder of Jewish monotheism, illustrates the fine line that Artapanus walked in his fundamentally paradoxical account of the history of Jews in Egypt. Yet even if Artapanus's work does reveal what freedom the Jews of the Hellenistic period enjoyed in interpreting biblical tradition, it does not deserve to be called syncretistic. Artapanus did not reject biblical tradition, nor did he embrace Egyptian culture indiscriminately. Rather, through creatively reworking biblical accounts, he sought to balance the Jewish tradition of the Exodus and the contemporary reality of life in the Egyptian diaspora. His audience was encouraged to adhere to Jewish tradition by revering Moses and celebrating the Exodus, while at the same time regarding the culture of their Egyptian neighbors with a benevolent tolerance. The relationship of the Jews and the Egyptians in Egypt

49. He does not, at least in the fragments preserved by Polyhistor, report the arrival of the Jews in the land, but in this his account parallels the conclusion of the Torah narrative.

was overshadowed and soured by centuries—not to say millennia—of conflict between the lands of Syria and Egypt, stretching all the way back to the days of the Hyksos. Artapanus's efforts to balance Jewish and Egyptian traditions may not, in the long run, have been very successful, but the aim of his highly imaginative and amusing fictions about early Egyptian Jewish history was laudable.

#### JOSEPH AND ASENETH

Our final example in this brief survey of texts commonly classed as Jewish romances or Jewish novels is the story *Joseph and Aseneth*.<sup>50</sup> I have objected

50. *Joseph and Aseneth* (henceforth *JosAs*) has enjoyed a surge of scholarly attention in recent years. After decades of controversy, it appeared that work of Burchard in particular (see extensive citations in following notes) had resulted in a growing scholarly consensus on several long-debated issues. This consensus is reflected in the excellent full-length study by Chesnutt (1995), which includes a very helpful and thorough summary of the history of research up to that time (1995: 20–64). As of 1995, the consensus broadly held that Burchard's 1979 provisional Greek text (the "long version") is to be favored over Philonenko's 1968 Greek text (the "short version"; Chesnutt 1995: 65–69); that the original language of *JosAs* is Greek (1995: 69–71); that *JosAs* is Jewish, not Christian (1995: 71–76); that the provenance is almost certainly Egypt (1995: 76–80); that the date of composition must lie somewhere between 100 B.C.E. and 115–35 C.E., when the Egyptian Jewish community was virtually annihilated by Rome (1995: 80–85); and that *JosAs* has strong affinities with the genre of the ancient novel, but also significant differences (1995: 85–92). Since 1995, when the first draft of this chapter was written, various parts of this consensus have been challenged (but not yet overturned) by several major studies. Bohak (1996) links the composition of *JosAs* with the events of the mid-second century B.C.E., especially the construction of the Jewish temple at Leontopolis, a view that has not so far met with wide acceptance. Standhartinger (1995: 219–25) accepts the consensus view of the text as Jewish, Egyptian, and pre-115 C.E. (with mild reservations) but reconstructs a dialogue between the author(s) of the short version, which she dates to the late Hellenistic period, and the author(s) of the long version, which she regards as a revision of the shorter version, dating to the first century C.E. Working along independent lines, Kraemer (1998) has issued a much more dramatic challenge to the whole consensus. Like Standhartinger, Kraemer (1998: 6–9 and *passim*) views the long version as a revision of the short version (*pace* Burchard, who sees the short version as an abbreviated form of the long version; see more detailed discussion of the textual problem below). Unlike Standhartinger, Kraemer challenges almost every other aspect of the consensus as well. Kraemer (1998: 225–44) proposes a date in the late third century C.E. for the short version and a date in the mid-fourth century C.E. for the long version. Kraemer (1998: 245–85) builds a case for agnosticism about the cultural and religious background about the text, suggesting that Christian authorship is at least as likely as Jewish authorship. Kraemer (1998: 286–93) likewise takes an agnostic stance on the provenance of the text, suggesting that nothing compels us to place the composition in Egypt and that Syria is some

to using the term “novel” indiscriminately to cover the wide variety of Jewish fictions that we have been examining; as noted above: “Whereas all novels are fiction, not all fictions are novels.”<sup>51</sup> Although most of the texts that we have discussed do exhibit what L. M. Wills has called “novelistic elements”<sup>52</sup>—that is, certain traits commonly found later in the canonical ancient novels—they are fundamentally different in form and purpose from the ancient sentimental novels with which they have been compared. We do not find, in 3 Maccabees or in Esther, for example, a chaste, beautiful couple united by passion, separated by cruel fate, subjected to fantastic adventures. In *Joseph and Aseneth*, however, we meet a wealthy Egyptian’s beautiful, proud, chaste daughter, Aseneth, who is utterly overwhelmed at first sight by love for the equally beautiful, chaste, pious Joseph. They are separated by her paganism, united by her spontaneous conversion, and then subjected to wholly improbable adventures when the son of Pharaoh, with the aid and encouragement of Joseph’s evil brothers, attempts to take the beautiful Aseneth for himself. Is this, then, a true Jewish novel?

At first glance, the answer appears to be yes. The generic similarities between *Joseph and Aseneth* and the Greek novels, both in overall narrative structure and in individual details, have been extensively catalogued.<sup>53</sup> Particularly significant is the often-noted similarity between the opening of this

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what more likely. This reconsideration of authorship, date, and provenance allows Kraemer to make possible comparisons with Jewish and Christian traditions dating well into the third and fourth centuries C.E., comparisons hitherto ruled out by the view of *JosAs* as Jewish, Egyptian and early (pre-115 C.E.). Kraemer’s analysis is salutary and provocative, but not ultimately convincing. Kraemer does, in each case, succeed in showing that a challenge to the consensus view is possible (remotely, in my view) but does not convince me that a reading of the text as (to cite one possibility) fourth-century, Syrian, and Christian is more persuasive than the traditional view of the text as Hellenistic, Egyptian, and Jewish. It is too soon to tell whether recent challenges to the consensus view will significantly change the direction of scholarship on *JosAs*. Among the most recent treatments, Gruen 1998 and Collins 2000 are still inclined to prefer a late Hellenistic or early Roman date. In this chapter, I will continue to base my arguments on Burchard’s long version and to regard the text as Jewish, Egyptian, and early. A late Hellenistic date seems slightly preferable to a Roman date, given the generally positive view of relations between Jews and gentiles seen in the story (cf. Gruen 1998: 93), but any date before 115–35 C.E. is possible.

51. J. R. Morgan, in *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World*, ed. C. Gill and T. P. Wiseman (1993), p. 176; quoted by Bowersock 1994: 10 n. 17.

52. Wills 1995: 1–39.

53. E.g., Philonenko 1968: 43–48; West 1974: 70–81; Pervo 1976: 171–81; Burchard 1985: 183–87; Chesnutt 1995: 85–92; Standhartinger 1995: 20–26; Gruen 1998: 93–94; Kraemer 1998: 9–11.

work and the opening lines of several canonical romances.<sup>54</sup> A citation will best illustrate the point. Compare the opening of *Joseph and Aseneth* with that of perhaps the earliest surviving canonical ancient novel, Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*:<sup>55</sup>

The Syracusan general Hermocrates, the man who defeated the Athenians, had a daughter called Callirhoe. She was a wonderful girl, the pride of all Sicily; her beauty was more than human, it was divine, and

54. Suggested comparisons have included not only the opening of Chariton, cited below, but also Xenophon of Ephesus 1.1.1–3 and the introduction to the story of Cupid and Psyche in Apuleius 4.22.1–24.4; see references in previous note.

55. Chariton trans. Reardon 1989: 22. All citations of *Joseph and Aseneth* are taken from Burchard's English translation (1985: 202–47), based on his provisional Greek text published in 1979. The text of *Joseph and Aseneth* presents serious problems; as Schürer remarks (1986: 550), with considerable understatement: "The present editions are not satisfactory." The problems are summarized by Burchard in several recent articles, especially 1965: 4–17; 1985: 178–81; 1987a; 1987b: 32–35. Briefly, there are four manuscript families, *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d*. The first critical edition (Batiffol 1889–90: 21–55) is based on a manuscript of the *a* family, which is now generally agreed to be a Middle Byzantine revision aimed at improving the biblicized Greek of the text. The *a* family is therefore not the most reliable witness to the original text. Burchard, in any case, dismisses Batiffol's work as "no more than a mediocre transcription of Vatican Greek 803 with a faulty apparatus from some other witnesses" (Burchard 1987b: 32), and the edition is today not readily available. The edition of Philonenko (1968), on the other hand, is based on the *d* family, which is about a third shorter than the text preserved by the other three families (there are omissions throughout the text, and 11.11x, most of chapters 18 and 19, 21.10–21 and 22.6b–9a are missing altogether; cf. Burchard 1987b: 33). Philonenko believed that this *d* family represented the oldest recension, and that the *b* family represents the first long recension, made in an attempt to expand the older text (Philonenko 1968: 16–26). Burchard, however, argues that *d* is in fact an abbreviation of the original text and that the best witness to the original text is to be found in the *b* family. Burchard (1979) has therefore produced an eclectic preliminary text relying primarily on *b* but drawing on the other three manuscript families when they have a fuller text than *b*. This text is now widely (though not universally) accepted as the best available edition, being both the most thoroughly researched and the most modern, and is the basis for some of the most recent studies (e.g., Wills 1995, Chesnutt 1995, Bohak 1996, Gruen 1998). Unfortunately, Burchard's preliminary Greek text is extremely difficult to obtain. In the meantime, since I first wrote this chapter, there have been two book-length challenges to the general acceptance of Burchard's text. Standhartinger 1995 attempts to analyze the dialogue between the communities that authored Burchard's long version and Philonenko's short version and is inclined as a result of her study to regard the shorter version as the earlier one (1995: 219–25). Kraemer (esp. 1998: 6–9, 19–88) also argues at length (relying primarily on literary rather than strictly text-critical arguments) that the longer version can be understood only as a revision of the shorter version. These recent challenges do not yet seem to have seriously shaken Burchard's dominance, but the question remains open. In any case, my discussion will here be based on the long version.

it was not the beauty of a Nereid or mountain nymph at that, but of the maiden Aphrodite herself. Report of the astonishing vision spread everywhere, and suitors flocked to Syracuse, rulers and tyrant's sons, not just from Sicily but from southern Italy too and farther north, and from foreigners in those parts. (Chariton, *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 1.1–2)

And there was a man in that city, a satrap of Pharaoh, and this man was a chief of all the satraps and the noblemen of Pharaoh. And this man was exceedingly rich and prudent and gentle, and he was a counselor of Pharaoh, because he was understanding beyond all the noblemen of Pharaoh. And the name of that man was Pentephres, priest of Heliopolis. And he had a daughter, a virgin of eighteen years, very tall and handsome and beautiful to look at beyond all virgins on the earth. And this girl had nothing similar to the virgins of the Egyptians, but she was in every respect similar to the daughters of the Hebrews; and she was tall as Sarah and handsome as Rebecca and beautiful as Rachel. And the name of that virgin was Aseneth. And the fame of her beauty spread all over that land and to the ends of the inhabited world. And all the sons of the noblemen and the sons of the satraps and the sons of all kings, all of them young and powerful, asked for her hand in marriage, and there was much wrangling among them over Aseneth, and they made attempts to fight against each other because of her. (*Joseph and Aseneth* 1.3–6)

The similarity between these two opening passages is significant, because these establish readers' expectations of what sort of book they are about to read. Just as the unusually historiographic opening of 3 Maccabees signals the audience to expect a work of Hellenistic historiography,<sup>56</sup> so *Joseph and Aseneth* is never more reminiscent of an ancient novel than in its opening lines. Whereas we have no evidence that the author of (say) 3 Maccabees or the *Letter of Aristeas* knew that sentimental novels even existed, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the author of *Joseph and Aseneth* was very much aware of the emerging genre and deliberately adopted its outward conventions for his own purposes.<sup>57</sup>

56. See below, Chap. 5.

57. The relative dates of *JosAs* and the earliest Greek novels are still open to debate. Traditionally, the emergence of the Greek novel has been dated to the first century C.E. Chariton, generally thought to be the earliest of the extant sentimental novels, is usually dated on stylistic grounds toward the middle or end of the first century C.E. (Bowie 1989: 4.123–28). The papyrus fragments of the earliest text identifiable as a Greek sentimental novel, the *Ninus Romance*, date to the beginning of the Common Era (Stephens 1995: 23). If *JosAs* is a late Hellenistic text (on dating *JosAs*, see above, n. 50), it might seem to predate the novels that it appears

Compare *Joseph and Aseneth* with the earliest known Greek sentimental novel, the *Ninus Romance*. The *Ninus Romance* survives only in fragments, but these suffice to reveal the characteristics of the genre. The hero and heroine are young, nobly born, beautiful, and chaste. In one fragment (A), they are pleading for permission to marry; others envision a dramatic military campaign in the mountains of Armenia (B) and at least one shipwreck (C). As in all the sentimental novels, there is a strong focus on the intense emotions of the characters.<sup>58</sup> The generic similarities with *Joseph and Aseneth* are evident.

The particular interest of the *Ninus Romance*, however, is that it belongs to a subcategory of the sentimental romance, sometimes called "nationalistic drama," focusing on the sentimentalized adventures of a quasi-historical figure of non-Greek origin.<sup>59</sup> Like the so-called hero romances (e.g., Artapanus or the *Alexander Romance*), such novels weave their fictions around a legendary hero whose life and deeds are already known from history. The *Ninus Romance* is quite distinct from a fiction such as the *Alexander Romance*, however, in that it portrays not Ninus's achievements as a national hero (which have become almost irrelevant except as excuses for colorful narration)<sup>60</sup> but the emotional lives of the hero and heroine.<sup>61</sup>

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to be imitating by at least a century. It is, however, very likely that the composition of the *Ninus Romance* significantly predates the papyri (the earliest known papyri of Chariton date to the third century C.E.: Stephens 1995: 4), which would push the date of the *Ninus Romance* back into the late Hellenistic period. Perry suggests a date for the *Ninus Romance* of ca. 100 B.C.E. on stylistic grounds (Perry 1967: 153; so also Bowie 1989: 4.123). Indeed, some scholars are inclined to push even Chariton back into the late Hellenistic period (e.g., Papanikolaou 1973: 162). It is not, therefore, unreasonable to suppose that the author of *JosAs* was familiar with the emerging genre of the ancient novel, even if *JosAs* is to be dated to the late Ptolemaic period. Of course, if Kraemer (1998) is right in pushing the date of *JosAs* down into the third or fourth century C.E., the problem disappears; but this does not seem to me to be a strong reason for favoring a late date.

58. See Stephens (1995: 23–24) for a more detailed analysis of the *Ninus Romance* as a typical novel. The *Ninus* fragments may conveniently be found in the colorful translation of Reardon (1989), or in a more literal translation with full Greek text, line numbers, and textual notes in Stephens 1995.

59. One might also include in this category *Sesonchosis*, which centers around the legendary Egyptian conqueror Sesonchosis or, as he is better known, Sesostris; the *Babyloniaca*, whose hero becomes the king of Babylon; and perhaps also *Caligone* (Stephens 1995: 8).

60. Cf., for instance, the dramatic winter crossing of the snow-covered mountains of Armenia (B).

61. Consider the eloquent and emotional (and wholly Greek in its rhetoric) plea of the seventeen-year-old Ninus to be allowed to marry the thirteen-year-old Semi-



This *Ninus Romance* is especially interesting, because it can be compared with an earlier, more historical phase of its tradition. Diodorus, drawing on the fourth-century-B.C.E. Greek historian Ctesias, reports several legends concerning Ninus, the founder of Nineveh, and his consort, Semiramis (Diod. 2.1–20). There are distinct similarities between the *Alexander Romance* and Ctesias's narrative of the Assyrian campaigns of Ninus and Semiramis: both are primarily concerned with the achievements of a national hero, and both, although ostensibly historical in form, consist largely of a series of fantastic stories.<sup>62</sup> The Semiramis whom we meet in Ctesias (via Diodorus) is a powerful figure, the daughter of a goddess, capable of leading armies and disposing of lovers at whim.<sup>63</sup> The Semiramis of the *Ninus Romance*, by contrast, is a bashful teenager.<sup>64</sup> One can scarcely imagine this shy maiden scaling a Bactrian citadel, wearing the Persian trousers that she invented to conceal her gender (Diod. 2.6.6–8). The Semiramis of the novel does, however, resemble our Aseneth, who on Joseph's departure rushes to her room, throws herself on her bed, and bursts into tears like any adolescent (*JosAs* 9.1). Thus, where Artapanus's fictionalized treatment of the Exodus is akin to the *Alexander Romance* or to Ctesias's highly embroidered account of Ninus and Semiramis,<sup>65</sup> *Joseph and Aseneth* is much more like the highly sentimental *Ninus Romance*, with its attention to the interior lives of the protagonists rather than their historical roles. As we shall see, the author in fact deliberately chose this model

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ramis, and the blushes and tears of the heroine as she attempts to make the same plea (A); or Ninus's distress at the reversal of his fortunes after narrowly escaping shipwreck (C).

62. Stephens (1995: 25) has an amusing list of the more romantic features of Ctesias's narrative, including Semiramis's campaign against the Indians with "a large force of life-size elephant puppets."

63. E.g. Diodorus 2.5.2, 7.1, 13.4 (Semiramis's ill-fated husbands and lovers, including Ninus, who in this version does not long survive his marriage).

64. The plot of the *Ninus Romance*, and the way in which it differs from the historical legend, is memorably described by Perry (1967: 16) thus: "Ninus, who seems to be on vacation for a few days from his duties as royal field marshal of the Assyrians, is pleading earnestly and piously with his Aunt Dercy (elsewhere the goddess Derceto of Ascalon) for permission to marry her daughter Semiramis, although he has already conquered a large part of Asia and has had the opportunity, as he himself points out, of behaving otherwise, had he so desired, than as the model young man that he is, so careful of his morals and above all of his chastity. As for our dear little heroine, Semiramis, her bashfulness is such that she is unable to tell her aunt, the mother of Ninus, that she is in love, but is overcome by embarrassment in her efforts to do so."

65. See discussion of Artapanus and hero romance above.



from the literary precursors available to him, as being best suited to his particular purpose.

Although *Joseph and Aseneth* strongly recalls the formal conventions of an ancient sentimental novel, in several respects it is significantly different.<sup>66</sup> Though the couple's intense emotions are central, especially Aseneth's, ultimately the story is not about their romantic union but about the obstacles to it: first the necessity of conversion, then conflict within the community. In the first episode, recounting their meeting and marriage, Joseph appears only twice, once to stun Aseneth with his glory only to reject her (*JosAs* 1–9) and again to marry her after her conversion (18–21). We hear a great deal about Aseneth's character (2.1, 4.9–12, e.g.) and feelings (6.1, e.g., and of course the long conversion scene, 10–17) but almost nothing of what Joseph thinks or feels, except that he dreads the love-crazed women of Egypt (7.2–5) and will not suffer himself to be kissed by any worshiper of idols (8.5–7). Aseneth's fully developed character dominates this first part of the story, and we must understand the biblical patriarch largely from the Genesis story and from the meager indications of his great beauty and strict piety (*JosAs* 4.7–8, 5.5, 7.1–6, 8.5–8).<sup>67</sup>

In the second episode, which describes the attempt of Pharaoh's son to kidnap Aseneth, Joseph scarcely appears (*JosAs* 26.1–4), and Aseneth, the ostensible victim, is featured only in chapters 26 through 28.<sup>68</sup> Hero and heroine both are pushed into the background by Pharaoh's wicked son and Joseph's own brothers. The romantic attachment between the two, overshadowed in the first part by Aseneth's conversion, is almost missing from the second part, wherein Joseph and Aseneth are now a staid married couple with two children.<sup>69</sup> The text is also, incidentally, much shorter than any surviving sentimental novel.<sup>70</sup>

66. For an astute analysis of some of the ways in which Aseneth differs from the heroine of the typical Greek romance, see Pervo 1991: 148–55; for several recent discussions that type *JosAs* as a “novel/romance, with deviations,” see Chesnutt 1995: 85–92; Standhartinger 1995: 20–26; Kraemer 1998: 9–11; Gruen 1998: 92–94.

67. Burchard (1985: 182) calls Joseph “a passive figure who has his marriage more or less wished upon him.” Heroes are often more passive than heroines in the canonical novels, but Joseph is an extreme case. While Joseph is something of a cipher in terms of character and plot development, however, he is a star in the eyes of other characters, from Pharaoh to Pentephres to Aseneth; see Gruen (1998: 95–99), who sees this aspect of Joseph's characterization as a reflection of Jewish self-confidence in a Hellenistic Egyptian setting.

68. Burchard 1985: 182.

69. *Ibid.* 186; so, rightly, Gruen 1998: 93.

70. Burchard 1985: 186.

*Joseph and Aseneth* may have the form of a novel, but it cannot be classed as one without serious qualification.<sup>71</sup> This statement has an important corollary. Since in the programmatic opening lines the author has deliberately invited the audience to receive his work as a novel, the deviations from the traditional form of the sentimental novel must be regarded as significant: the audience must have recognized certain elements of the story as departures from the norm that the opening led them to expect.<sup>72</sup>

If the author was not aiming at a straightforward novel of love and adventure centered around a quasi-legendary historical figure, then what was his purpose? I believe that the author of *Joseph and Aseneth*, like many authors discussed above, was retailing a story about the past in order to explore pressing questions in the contemporary Diaspora. We have come full circle, in a sense: whereas texts like the *Letter of Aristeas* and 2 Maccabees manipulate the conventions of Hellenistic historiography to produce a convincing fiction and, thus, a model for Hellenistic Jewish identity, and in the process create something that shares many features with the later ancient novel, the author of *Joseph and Aseneth* draws on the conventions of the ancient novel itself for the same purpose.

So-called Jewish novels, as I have argued, in fact draw upon a variety of genres—historiography, autobiography, apocalypse, to cite only a few—to create more or less convincing fictions about the past and to develop different models for Hellenistic Jewish identity. *Joseph and Aseneth*, though drawn from the ancient genre of the novel, is not quite a novel itself. It is, rather, a Jewish fiction of identity based on the genre of the ancient novel,

71. Attempts to qualify the exact genre of *Joseph and Aseneth* have not been entirely successful (see above, n. 66, for some recent summaries). Some have attempted to interpret it as a novel centered around a mystic initiation ritual, akin to Apuleius (Philonenko 1968; Kee 1976: 183–92); Pervo (1976: 171–81) calls it a “Sapiental novel,” classifying it with Ahiqar, Tobit, and Daniel 1–6. The mystic interpretation, however, demands that one focus on the conversion sequence to the exclusion of the rest of the text, and I have already shown that any classification that attempts to explain texts as various as Tobit, Daniel, and *Joseph and Aseneth* with reference to a single generic model is unhelpfully vague. Pervo’s remark that “the novel is probably the most formless of all ancient genres” is more helpful. *Joseph and Aseneth* adopts the outward features of a recognizable species of literature, but (like, indeed, many works of ancient fiction) it is sui generis in its particular combination of form and content.

72. Although it has been almost universally recognized that *JosAs* is generically similar to the ancient novel, but with many departures from the norm, only Standhartinger (1995: 26) seems to have considered the possibility that the audience would have recognized these deviations and taken them into account when responding to the text.

just as 3 Maccabees is a Jewish fiction of identity based on the genre of historiography.

In *Joseph and Aseneth*, the author's obvious ideological focus is on conversion and the role of the proselyte in the Hellenistic Jewish community.<sup>73</sup> Only with the author's ideological purpose in view, however, do his reasons both for using and departing from novelistic conventions become clear.

To begin with, the ancient novel as a form is peculiarly well suited to this author's purpose. Other Jewish historical fictions manipulate historical traditions in various ways in order to shape diverse models of Hellenistic Jewish identity, each for its own community. A particular community's shared version or reinterpretation of its past will shape its identity in a particular way. The other fictions that we have read, however, center very much on the community; the interests of individuals, where they do appear, are entirely subordinated to community needs.<sup>74</sup> By contrast, *Joseph and Aseneth* has a historical referent,<sup>75</sup> as do most ancient novels, but here that referent is so slight, and the midrashic elaboration upon it is so great, that just as in the ancient novels the author of *Joseph and Aseneth* is practically engaging in free invention.

Although a historical basis lends an ancient novel an aura of respectability, the use of relatively little-known historical characters allows the author to invent more freely and to focus on their interior lives and personal relationships in a way that would not be possible if more famous

73. E.g., Burchard 1985: 194–95; Schürer 1986: 548. Gruen (1998: 94–95) suggests that the issue of conversion may be overemphasized in the literature, but his objections center rightly on the improbability of *JosAs*'s being used as missionary propaganda to convert outsiders. Chesnutt's view (1988: 21–48; 1995: 96–117) that the text chiefly addresses the concerns of insiders—those who have converted or are thinking of converting, those who have intermarried, and those who are unsure how to deal with converts in their midst—remains in my view the most probable understanding of the text, as I argue below.

74. Some historical fictions, like 3 Maccabees, have no single individual hero; in others the hero exists in relation to his or her ability to benefit the group (e.g., Daniel, the Tobiads). Esther may have private moments of doubt and anguish, but on Mordecai's command she puts those feelings aside for the sake of the group (4.10–17, and cf. Esther's prayer [Addition C], which follows her conversation with Mordecai in the Greek).

75. The first episode is framed by two references: 1.1 alludes to Gen. 41.46, where Pharaoh sends Joseph out to collect corn during the years of plenty, whereas 21.1–9 alludes to Gen. 41.45 (Pharaoh gives Aseneth to Joseph in marriage) and 41.50–52 (birth of Manasseh and Ephraim). The second episode refers only briefly to the coming of the years of famine and the migration of Jacob and his family to Goshen (22.1–2; cf. Gen. 41.53–54, 46.5–6, 28).

historical figures were used.<sup>76</sup> Thus, in Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, the more famous father, Hermocrates, plays a small role, while the role of heroine is given to his lesser-known daughter. According to Plutarch (*Dion.* 3.2), Hermocrates did have a daughter who married Dionysius I, the tyrant of Syracuse, and later died tragically, but her name is not recorded. Chariton is thus free to embroider the details of the fictional Callirhoe's life at will. Similarly, the author of *Joseph and Aseneth* chooses as his heroine Aseneth—a character only twice mentioned in Genesis—and a large part of the story is occupied with the intensely personal and individual experience of her conversion. *Joseph and Aseneth*, alone among Jewish fictions, is primarily concerned with the experience of the individual, and thus more than any other Jewish fiction it benefits from the use of novelistic conventions.

Furthermore, the author's ideological purpose also explains why, having chosen the form, he departed from it. The two episodes of the story take up two different but related issues regarding proselytes and the Jewish community.

The first episode, presenting the intensely personal experience of conversion, of course focuses primarily on Aseneth. Joseph's appearance prompts her conversion, and his return rewards it, but in other respects he is essentially irrelevant: hence his relegation to a marginal, bloodless role. Aseneth's character, in contrast, is fully developed, so that we may understand and empathize with her transformation from proud virgin (*JosAs* 2.1, 4.9–12, e.g.) to humble and penitent convert.<sup>77</sup> The story's details betray the concerns of its audience.<sup>78</sup> *Joseph and Aseneth* is not missionary literature, strictly speaking, since it assumes that the reader has considerable experience of and commitment to Jewish tradition and practices.<sup>79</sup> Rather, it is written for a community genuinely concerned about the assimilation of proselytes, and more

76. Perry 1967: 35–36.

77. Aseneth is willing to go to Joseph as a slave: 6.8, 13.15. "Aseneth desires almost as little as the prodigal son (Lk. 15:19), and like him she will get more" (Burchard 1985: 210 n. 1).

78. Indeed, even the fact that the author chooses to explain Joseph's marriage to an Egyptian woman by focusing on her conversion is symptomatic of his cultural environment. Later Hebrew midrashic tradition went to great lengths to explain that Aseneth was not actually an Egyptian at all, but a daughter of Dinah resulting from her rape; Aseneth did not need to convert, as she was actually Jewish by birth. Ap-towitz (1924: 243–56) regards the Hebrew (midrashic) version of the Aseneth legend as the original, but Burchard (1985: 183) points out that it is surely a revision of the Greek (novelistic) version.

79. Burchard 1985: 195, e.g.

important, the detailed narration of Aseneth's conversion speaks to the experience of the proselytes themselves.<sup>80</sup>

The aspects of Jewish life emphasized in the first part of *Joseph and Aseneth* are dietary laws and intermarriage—precisely those that mattered to Jews of the Diaspora who mixed with gentiles, and likewise to gentiles who would alter their lives in order to join them. Joseph, entertained as a guest in Potiphar's home, cannot eat with him (*JosAs* 7.1), and he strictly obeys his father's injunction not to associate intimately with any foreign woman (7.5), refusing even to kiss Aseneth (8.5–7). Accordingly, Aseneth alters precisely these aspects of her life: she repudiates her idols (9.1, 10.12) and refuses to eat unclean food (10.1, 13, 17: "the bread of strangulation" and "the cup of insidiousness," as Joseph calls it, 8.5). Apart from these fundamental changes in her way of life, only an emotional conversion of the heart is required of her: no known ancient ritual of conversion to Judaism, such as proselyte baptism, is mentioned.<sup>81</sup>

In the second episode, the focus shifts from Aseneth to Joseph's brothers—that is, from the individual to the community. In this case the individual is neither defined in relation to the community nor subordinated to the common good; rather, the community must respond to stresses arising from the proselyte's introduction into its midst. Aseneth's role as Joseph's wife, and her right to remain a part of the family and community, are never questioned; thus she recedes into the background, and Joseph all but disappears. Instead, Joseph's brothers dominate the second episode: representing the Jewish community at large, they must decide where they stand when Pharaoh's son, representing the gentile population, attempts to separate Aseneth from Joseph—that is, from the Jewish community.<sup>82</sup>

80. Nonproselytes could scarcely be expected to identify with this long and emotional sequence, although they might take an interest in this part of the narrative for the sake of their fellows who had converted.

81. The mysterious cultic meal, which has excited much discussion but has never been satisfactorily explained, should probably be interpreted as wholly symbolic of Aseneth's interior transformation rather than as a recollection of some unknown ritual of initiation. The emphasis is not on ritual but on the conversion of the heart, which brings with it a fundamental change in certain aspects of one's way of life. See now Chesnutt's extensive discussion, stressing how the text both speaks to the concerns of a broad Diaspora Jewish community (1988: 21–48; 1995: 96–117) and reflects a normative conception of Jewish proselytism (1995: 153–84). He explores, but ultimately sensibly deemphasizes, the possibility that the text encodes some particular ritual form or sectarian belief system (1995: 118–52; 185–216).

82. The possibility that the various characters are representative of different social groups in Hellenistic Egypt was first explored by D. Sanger (cf. Burchard 1987b: 40), although Sanger pushes the historical symbolism of the text too far in making

The tone is set at the very beginning of the episode, when Joseph and Aseneth visit the aged Jacob in Goshen, and Jacob blesses his daughter-in-law (*JosAs* 22.8–9). Simeon and Levi, the sons of Leah, escort them home, but the sons of Zilpah and Bilhah are jealous and hostile, refusing to have anything to do with them (22.11). This division between the sons of Jacob's legitimate wives (Simeon and Levi, the sons of Leah, and of course Joseph himself and Benjamin, the sons of Rachel) and the sons of his wives' maidservants Zilpah and Bilhah (Dan, Gad, Naphtali, and Asser) was traditional,<sup>83</sup> but here the category "good sons" applies especially to those who embrace the proselyte; and that of "bad sons," to those who reject her out of hand. The division within the family, and by extension the Jewish community, is basic; it requires only the activity of Pharaoh's son to bring it out into the open. Pharaoh's son represents the exceptional non-Jewish persecutor, familiar to us from many a Jewish fiction, whereas Pharaoh himself and Potiphar represent the more normative, benevolent non-Jewish authorities. Familiar themes play out in this conflict: Simeon and Levi reject the tyrannical and unjust demand of Pharaoh's son that they attack their brother's wife, but as loyal subjects they refrain from harming their persecutor in any way (23); Levi even tries to save Pharaoh's son after he has been injured in battle, much as Onias helps the stricken Heliodorus in 2 Maccabees (3.31–34), although in *Joseph and Aseneth* the villain eventually dies of his injuries (29.1–7). Pharaoh's son thus receives the just penalty for his actions; the wicked brothers are defeated in battle but reconciled with the community (significantly, through the intercession of the proselyte Aseneth: 29.9–17), and the Jews are restored to favor, Joseph even ruling over Egypt for forty-six years in place of Pharaoh's fallen heir (29.8–9). Within this traditional framework, the actions of Simeon, Levi, and Benjamin, the brothers who embrace the proselyte Aseneth, are decisively vindicated over against Dan, Gad, Naphtali, and Asser, who would have rejected her.

The second episode of *Joseph and Aseneth* is perhaps the only Jewish fiction to envision a conflict, eventually harmoniously resolved, emerging from within the Jewish community and being merely exacerbated rather than caused by outside pressures. In this composition, the author of *Joseph*

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*JosAs* a cryptic account of the persecution of 38 C.E. under Caligula. See now the more balanced analysis of Chesnutt (1995 *passim*). Gruen (1998: 95–99) also explores how *JosAs* reflects relations between Jews and gentiles in the Hellenistic world, including the existence of frictions within the Jewish community.

83. Burchard 1985: 239 n. m.

and *Aseneth* makes good use of the episodic nature of novelistic fiction,<sup>84</sup> though he departs from the form of the novel in virtually abandoning the hero and heroine in order to focus on Joseph's brothers, the symbolic representatives of the community.

Thus, the author of *Joseph and Aseneth* drew deliberately on the conventions of the ancient novel in order to explore proselytism in the Diaspora, both from the perspective of the individual convert and from the perspective of the Jewish community. In pursuing this purpose, he freely departed from his model, creating no typical sentimental novel but a work of fiction sui generis. *Joseph and Aseneth* stands between the other Jewish historical fictions that we have examined and the broader spectrum of all ancient fiction. Like other Jewish fictions, it reshapes traditions about the Jewish past in order to redefine the identity of one segment of the changing Diaspora community. Unlike other Jewish fictions, however, it focuses upon the experience of the individual first and the community second, and the free play of imagination regarding the personal feelings and motivations of the characters correspondingly replaces a painstaking evocation of the fictionalized historical past such as we find in most other Jewish fictions. Of all Jewish fictions, *Joseph and Aseneth* is closest to the ancient novel proper, but it occupies nevertheless its own unique place among all ancient fictions.

84. The conventional form of the ancient novel allowed an author to string together an infinite series of adventures, loosely if at all related, expanding the narrative more or less at will (Bakhtin 1981: 86–110). So also the meeting and marriage of Joseph and Aseneth is only loosely connected with the later kidnaping episode, allowing the author to explore the issue of conversion in the Jewish community from two different angles while providing his audience with exactly the sort of episodic narrative they would have expected. Thus, although the transition from conversion story to adventure story is abrupt, the two halves are by no means unrelated.

PART II

# Third Maccabees

*A Case Study*



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In Part 1, we explored a wide variety of Jewish fictions: 3 Maccabees (in passing), the *Letter of Aristeas*, 2 Maccabees, Esther, Daniel, Judith, Tobit, the tales of Alexander and the Tobiads embedded in the narrative of Josephus, the fragments of Artapanus, and *Joseph and Aseneth*. Those texts significantly differ one from another in many respects. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a more mixed assortment. Some were composed originally in Greek—3 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeas*, 2 Maccabees, Artapanus, *Joseph and Aseneth*, and, most likely, the sources of the tales taken over by Josephus. Others—Esther, Daniel, Judith, and Tobit—were most likely composed originally in Hebrew or Aramaic and only later translated into Greek. Some were clearly written in Egypt: 3 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeas*, Artapanus, *Joseph and Aseneth*. Others' provenance is less clear; they may have originated in the eastern Diaspora (Esther, Daniel 1–6, Tobit) or in Palestine itself (2 Maccabees, Daniel 7–12, Judith). The potential audience for these texts thus comprises every Hellenistic Jewish community imaginable: those who spoke Greek and those who spoke Aramaic; those who read the Bible in the Greek translation and those who read it in the original language; those who lived in the Diaspora, whether in Egypt or in Babylon, and those who lived in Hasmonean Palestine.

These Jewish fictions, moreover, draw upon a wide variety of genres, although ultimately they are themselves largely unclassifiable. Third Maccabees imitates the conventions of pathetic Hellenistic historiography, but its subject matter is almost wholly invented. The *Letter of Aristeas* borrows the form of the autobiographical memoir, but like 3 Maccabees and unlike the typical memoir, it is an elaborate fiction from beginning to end. Second Maccabees, though an epitome of a historiographical work concerning actual events, incorporates significant fictional episodes. Esther and Judith draw

upon the conventions of the historical books of the Bible, as do the narrative portions of Daniel. Daniel itself in its present form is an apocalypse, perhaps the first of its kind, whereas most other Jewish fictions bear no trace of apocalyptic influence (references to the end-time, to the coming of a heavenly kingdom, etc.). Tobit draws for some details upon the historical books of the Bible but is like nothing so much as a folktale. Artapanus combines midrashic elaboration upon the Genesis and Exodus narratives with the conventions of Hellenistic historiography, although his work is most reminiscent of the *Alexander Romance* in its exaltation of Moses as a Jewish culture hero. *Joseph and Aseneth*, like Artapanus a midrashic elaboration upon the Joseph tradition of Genesis, seems to reflect an active knowledge of the conventions of the sentimental ancient novel. In short, each of these texts has a foot in one or more conventional genres, but none is identical to another or to the conventional representatives of the genres on which they draw; ultimately each is best regarded as *sui generis*. There is no one genre—call it romance, novel, or what you will—that can explain them all.

Yet however varied these texts are, they do have one thing in common: regardless of the language or the genre in which each author happens to be writing, they all employ fictions about the past in order to make a particular didactic point. The point being made is not always the same, for Jewish identity in the late Hellenistic period was far from monolithic. There were Jews who spoke Greek and Jews who spoke Aramaic, Jews living in Palestine and Jews living in the Diaspora, those who lived under or looked to Hasmonean rule and those who thrived under foreign rule, those who sought a niche in the wider Hellenistic world and those who looked to the coming of God's Kingdom to sweep that world away and replace it with a better one. Thus it should not surprise us that these so-called Jewish romances reflect a variety of ideas about Jewish identity in the Hellenistic era. What is most interesting is that they all employ self-conscious historical fictions to make their point: the technique was infinitely adaptable.

These fictions encompass almost every imaginable contradiction to be found amid the diversity of Hellenistic Jewish communities. Not to grossly oversimplify the complex messages communicated by these diverse fictions, we have texts which sought to promote cooperation between Greeks and Jews in the Diaspora (e.g., 3 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeas*, Greek Esther); texts which sought in some part to create a cooperative model for the Jews of Hasmonean Palestine (2 Maccabees); texts whose only interest seems to have been in protecting the Jewish community against harmful outside influences, whether in Palestine (Judith) or in the Diaspora (Tobit); texts contrasting the cooperative mode of existence possible in the past with the

inevitable coming of God's Kingdom to sweep away the hopelessly corrupt reality of the present (Daniel). It is worth noting that there is no simplistic division in these texts between those written in Palestine and those written in the Diaspora, those written in Hebrew or Aramaic and those written in Greek, or those written to incite separatism or revolution and those written with an eye to harmonious coexistence. Rather, we find a multiplicity of different communities, each of which sought to articulate its own unique model of identity in a rapidly changing world where languages, nations, political views and ethical systems jostled side by side, competed, coalesced, influenced each other, and emerged transformed. Every story was an opportunity for the author and his audience to imagine the community anew.

Part 2 will examine 3 Maccabees in detail, demonstrating how the approach I have suggested can be employed in an in-depth historical and literary analysis to illuminate a particular Jewish fiction about the past. I will begin, in this introduction, with a brief survey of 3 Maccabees, highlighting some problems that its paradoxical nature has caused for modern readers, particularly historians, who have been sadly puzzled whether to take the text as covert history or purest fiction. After stating the general problems that the text presents, I will study in depth several issues relevant to solving them and finish with a close reading of the use and misuse of historical material in the construction of a didactic fiction.

I will first look briefly at a scholarly debate of long standing, the resolution of which is critical to a proper understanding of 3 Maccabees' social context: When was the work actually composed? I will argue that there is no basis for a date in the Roman period. Rather, the text belongs, like 2 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeas*, and Esther (texts that it much resembles), to the late Hellenistic period and should be understood in that social context. Second, I will examine thematic similarities between 3 Maccabees and other texts such as the *Letter of Aristeas*. In so doing, I will show that 3 Maccabees is not, as has often been argued, fundamentally a confrontational text, emphasizing the inevitability of conflict between Greeks and Jews, but on the contrary, it seeks, very much like the *Letter of Aristeas*, to construct a model of cooperation between Jews and Greeks—albeit in a world rather less perfect than that of the *Letter of Aristeas*. Third, I will examine the question of the authorship and audience of the text; this, too, bears closely on the issue of the author's purpose, and thus the particular model of Jewish identity that the author seeks to promote. Finally, having thoroughly explored the social, historical, and literary context within which the text was composed, I will turn to the most pressing problem, the author's apparently bizarre use of historical material. I will demonstrate in detail for

3 Maccabees what I have argued in outline for the texts in Part 1: that the misuse of historical material is not careless or random, nor is it intended to deceive; rather, it has been deliberately shaped to meet the author's ideological purpose.

Before analyzing the text in depth, let us briefly consider its apparently paradoxical nature. For this is what my study ultimately seeks most to explain.

In the year 217 B.C.E., as every student of Hellenistic history knows, the armies of Ptolemy IV Philopator, king of Egypt, and of Antiochus III the Great, king of Syria, met near the town of Raphia, in southern Palestine. At the battle of Raphia, Philopator secured a decisive victory over Antiochus, and after a short tour of the surrounding countryside, he returned to Egypt in triumph. Thus ended the fourth in a long series of wars between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids over the disputed territory of Coele Syria: Palestine remained, for the moment, securely under Egyptian control.

For most historians, Raphia is best remembered as the battle in which, according to Polybius (5.107), native Egyptians were first recruited in large numbers to fight alongside Greco-Macedonian soldiers and foreign mercenaries in the Ptolemaic army. If we are to believe Polybius, it was as a result of this battle that the natives began to acquire ideas above their station, thus spelling the beginning of the end for the Ptolemaic dynasty. However, it is not the purpose of this study to ponder whether a dynasty that was to last another two centuries was already moribund in the year 217 B.C.E. For an anonymous Jewish author, writing over a century after the battle, the implications of the battle of Raphia for Egyptian history were of no concern. The significance of the battle of Raphia, for the author of 3 Maccabees, was that it set the stage for a series of dramatic events seldom included in the history books.

Third Maccabees begins with a detailed account of the battle of Raphia, which harmonizes in its main outlines with that given by Polybius (5.58–72, 79–86). Philopator learns of the capture of certain fortified towns in Palestine (Seleucia and Ptolemais: Polyb. 5.58–62), immediately musters an army, and sets out to confront Antiochus III at Raphia (3 Macc. 1.1; cf. Polyb. 5.79–80). On the eve of battle a treacherous courtier, Theodotus, attempts to assassinate Philopator, but the plot is foiled by a quick-thinking, loyal apostate Jewish courtier, Dositheus (3 Macc. 1.2–3, cf. Polyb. 5.81). During the battle that follows, Antiochus's forces are initially successful, until Philopator's sister (and future wife) Arsinoe makes an emotional appeal to the soldiers and the tide of battle turns in Philopator's favor (3 Macc. 1.4–5, cf. Polyb. 5.83–85). This detailed and largely accurate historical narrative

establishes the chronological time frame of the story, but in other respects it seems strangely irrelevant to the narrative.

After the battle, according to the author of 3 Maccabees, Philopator celebrated his victory by touring the surrounding cities and offering sacrifice in their temples, a fact also reported by Polybius (5.86). What Polybius does not tell us, however, is that on this tour Philopator came to the city of Jerusalem. Here the loyal Jews welcomed him with rejoicing (3 Macc. 1.8–9). Upon visiting the Temple, the king was so struck with awe and admiration that nothing would satisfy him but that he should be allowed to enter the Holy of Holies (1.9–10). The Jews attempted to explain to him that this was forbidden by Jewish law. They wept and pleaded, but, as all the historical sources tell us,<sup>1</sup> Philopator was headstrong and tyrannical, and he forced his way into the Temple (1.11–21). The hotheaded young men of Jerusalem called upon the people to take up arms (1.23), but the high priest insisted upon calm and offered up a lengthy prayer to God (2.1–20). His faith was rewarded: as Philopator entered the Temple, he was struck down senseless (2.21–22). Unlike the Seleucid minister Heliodorus, who had a remarkably similar experience in 2 Maccabees (2 Macc. 3.27), Philopator did not awake humble and repentant, but withdrew to Egypt vowing vengeance (3 Macc. 2.24).

Back in Alexandria, Philopator lapsed into his accustomed life of idleness and debauchery (3 Macc. 2.25–26). Again, the historical sources confirm this, in some lurid detail.<sup>2</sup> He did not forget his anger against the Jews, however, and at the instigation of his wicked companions he was soon persuaded to launch a persecution against the innocent Jews of Alexandria. The persecution was at first covert: the Jews were to be registered by name, reduced in status to the level of the native Egyptians, and branded with the mark of Dionysus. Only those who opted to enroll in the Mysteries of Dionysus, thus repudiating their faith, would be spared this humiliation and accorded special favor (2.27–30). The vast majority of the Jews refused to violate their faith, and those few who did become apostates were shunned (2.31–33). At this, Philopator became enraged and issued a formal decree condemning all the Jews of Egypt to imprisonment and death (3.1). Like all good Hellenistic historians, the author includes a copy of the decree as evidence (3.12–29). The decree is highly authentic in tone, perfectly preserving the distinctive style of the Ptolemaic chancery, although, to be sure, the style that it preserves belongs to the author's own time, not Philopator's.

1. See below, Chap. 5, for a detailed discussion of the historical evidence for Philopator's character and reign.

2. See below, Chap. 5, esp. nn. 50–60.

There follows a series of pitiable scenes, as all the Jews of Egypt are gathered together in the great hippodrome at Alexandria to await their miserable end (3 Macc. 4.1–10). The Greek neighbors and friends of the Jews are indignant and sympathetic, but they can do nothing to help (3.8–10). Although the Jews are now slated for death, for some reason the king's scribes continue to register their names (4.14). The Jews are so numerous that the registration continues for forty days, until the king's scribes report that the kingdom has entirely exhausted its supply of papyrus and ink (4.20; strangely, this innumerable horde nevertheless still fits into one admittedly large hippodrome). The king gives orders for the Jews to be executed publicly in the hippodrome in a particularly horrible manner: they are to be trampled under the feet of five hundred drunken elephants (5.2). Three times their executioner prepares to carry out the king's orders. Three times the Jews pray for deliverance, and three times they are miraculously spared. The first time the king oversleeps (5.12). The second time he is overwhelmed with divine forgetfulness and furiously berates the executioner for abusing his loyal subjects (5.27–32). The third time, when the crowds are assembled in the hippodrome, the Jews are offering up their last prayers, and the intoxicated elephants are being driven through the gate, two angels appear (6.18). The elephants turn upon their masters and trample them (6.20). The Jews are spared. Philopator undergoes a complete change of heart and celebrates the deliverance of the Jews with a great feast (6.30). He not only forgives the Jews but becomes a model of justice and benevolence ever thereafter. He issues a second decree—again cited verbatim by the author (7.1–9)—restoring the Jews to favor, praising their loyalty and the greatness of their God. The Jews request Philopator's permission to punish the apostates, which he grants (7.10–12). The apostates are slaughtered by the hundreds, and the Jews return in triumph to their homes (7.15–22). Everyone is happy—except, of course, the apostates and the enemies of the Jews.

Not surprisingly, none of this is to be found in the usual textbook accounts of Philopator's reign. Few historians have been willing to accept this edifying and highly entertaining tale as a straightforward historical account. The story is, in fact, more or less a fiction from beginning to end.<sup>3</sup> Beyond this point of general agreement, however, there has been little consensus on how to read 3 Maccabees and other Jewish texts that combine history and fiction in surprising and puzzling ways. Did the author of 3 Maccabees

3. There is, to be sure, still considerable controversy over whether the story, although itself largely fictional, reflects some particular historical event or situation. See below, Chaps. 4 and 5, for further discussion of this problem.

intend that his work should be read as sober history? If so, why does his work abound in anachronisms, fantastic exaggerations, and historical impossibilities? Did he intend that it should be read purely as an entertaining fiction? Why, then, take care to forge royal decrees and provide a detailed and circumstantial historical background for this improbable fantasy? What was the author's purpose in writing, and for what sort of audience was the work intended? And why, finally, does the author of 3 Maccabees confound history and fiction in such a paradoxical manner? These are the questions that Part 2 will answer.

## 4 Date, Literary Context, Authorship, and Audience

The curious historical distortions that abound in Jewish fictions are in no way random but are deliberately employed for rhetorical purposes. In 3 Maccabees we will explore in depth the setting, author, audience, and intent of the text before turning to examine how the author has manipulated history to support his purpose. Third Maccabees has often been misunderstood. Because it recounts a persecution (albeit one miraculously averted at the last moment), it has been seen primarily as a confrontational text rejecting assimilation and interaction with gentiles. I believe, on the contrary, that the author aims to define to what extent cooperation and friendly association between Jews and outsiders are permissible and desirable. To understand the purpose of this text, however, we must first decide when and in what circumstances it was written.

### DATE OF COMPOSITION

Like most pseudepigrapha, 3 Maccabees is anonymous, and as usual in anonymous works, the text offers us no direct evidence of its date, provenance, historical context, or purpose. Let us begin our inquiry with the date of composition.<sup>1</sup>

The principal subject of 3 Maccabees is a persecution of the Jews of Alexandria that allegedly took place under Ptolemy IV Philopator (r. 221–204 B.C.E.) not long after the battle of Raphia in 217 B.C.E. It has long been recognized, however, that the text as it stands cannot possibly have been

1. Provenance, historical context, and purpose will be discussed below under Authorship and Audience, pp. 169–81.



composed before the end of the second century B.C.E., nearly a century after the events it purports to describe.<sup>2</sup> The terminus post quem is fixed by a clear allusion in 3 Maccabees 6.6 to the Greek translation of Daniel together with the additions now considered apocryphal, specifically to the prose narrative bridge between the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men.<sup>3</sup>

Third Maccabees 6.6, which is part of the prayer of the aged Eleazar, reads: “You, Lord, saved those three companions in Babylonia, who gave their lives voluntarily to the fire rather than serve empty idols; sprinkling the fiery furnace with dew [δροσίσας κάμινον], you saved them without a hair on their heads being harmed, and you sent the fire upon all their enemies.”<sup>4</sup> Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the companions of Daniel, were cast into the fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar when they refused to bow down to a golden idol, but they were miraculously preserved by an angel of God, whereupon Nebuchadnezzar repented and issued a decree honoring and protecting the God of the three young men. This familiar tale is found in Daniel 3, but the specific reference is to verses 26–27 [49–50]:<sup>5</sup> “And an angel of the Lord came down

2. The last scholar to suggest in print that 3 Maccabees was indeed composed in the reign of Philopator was one Petrus Allix, a theologian and writer of polemical treatises who died in 1717. Grimm (1857: 220), who cites Petrus, remarks dryly that this interpretation “geschieht schon durch ihre blosse Erwähnung zu viel Ehre.” This is of course separate from the question of when (if ever) the persecution recorded in the text occurred, whether under Philopator or at some later time; we will return to this question below, particularly in Chap. 5.

3. Grimm 1857: 220. There are three additions to the Book of Daniel which were included in the Septuagint translation of Daniel but omitted from the Jewish canon, and thus declared apocryphal by the Protestants in the sixteenth century. We are here concerned with the first of these additions, which consists of sixty-eight verses appearing in the Septuagint text between vv. 23 and 24 of chapter 3 of the canonical Book of Daniel. These sixty-eight verses are known collectively today as *The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men*, and may be found in the standard collections of Apocrypha under that name. Cf. Moore 1977: 5. *The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men* actually consists of at least two separate texts connected by a prose narrative bridge. The account of how the prayer, the prose narrative, and the song came to be combined is exceedingly messy. Suffice it to say that one may be confident that this addition came to occupy its present position between vv. 23 and 24 of chapter 3 of the canonical Daniel before the Book of Daniel was translated into Greek by the author of the Septuagint text, and it is with the Septuagint text that we have here to deal (Moore 1977: 39–53, 63–65; see further below).

4. 3 Macc. 6.6: σὺ τοὺς κατὰ τὴν Βαβυλωνίαν τρεῖς ἑταίρους πυρὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀθαιρέτως δεδωκότας εἰς τὸ μὴ λατρεῦσαι τοῖς κενοῖς διάπυρον δροσίσας κάμινον ἐρύσω μέχρι τριχὸς ἀπημάντους φλόγα πάσιν ἐπιπέμψας τοῖς ὑπεναντίοις.

5. *The Prayer of Azariah* (etc.) will be cited henceforth as vv. 1–68 [24–90], where the numbers outside brackets refer to the numbering of the *Prayer of Azariah* as

into the furnace and joined Azariah and his companions, and he drove the flame of the fire out of the furnace, and he made the heart of the furnace like a wind of dew [πνεῦμα δρόσου] whistling through."<sup>6</sup> The verbal parallel and the unusual image make it highly probable that 3 Maccabees 6.6 is directly referring to the Greek translation of Daniel, which dates to approximately 100 B.C.E.<sup>7</sup> In addition, formulas in the spurious royal letters of 3 Maccabees have also been dated to roughly the same period. (See below.)

It is, then, universally agreed that 3 Maccabees cannot have been composed before the end of the second century B.C.E.<sup>8</sup> At the other extreme, it

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found in the standard collections of Apocrypha and the numbers inside brackets refer to the numbering of the Septuagint text of Daniel. Thus v. 27 [50] refers to *Prayer of Azariah* 27 in the RSV, which is equivalent to Daniel 3.50 in the Septuagint text. As a general rule, when citing the Greek text of Daniel, I follow the Theodotionic version (θ'), which early supplanted the original Septuagint version (ο'). However, since I am here dealing with a question of ancient citation, I quote from ο', which was the version used by the translator of 1 Maccabees (Ziegler 1954: 22). The crucial words referred to below (πνεῦμα δρόσου) are found in both ο' and θ'.

6. *Prayer* 26–27 [49–50]: ἄγγελος δὲ κυρίου συγκατέβη ἅμα τοῖς περὶ τὸν Ἀζαρίαν εἰς τὴν κάμινον καὶ ἐξετίναξε τὴν φλόγα τοῦ πυρὸς ἐκ τῆς καμίνου καὶ ἐποίησε τὸ μέσον τῆς καμίνου ὥστε πνεῦμα δρόσου διασυρρίζον.

7. For the date of the Greek translation of Daniel together with its additions, see Moore 1977: 29, 33. The verbal echo (δροσίσας, echoing πνεῦμα δρόσου) makes it virtually certain that the author of 3 Maccabees is alluding to the Greek version of Daniel. Schürer (1986: 539) remarks that the Greek additions to Daniel "may have circulated separately earlier." More accurately, Semitic versions of both the *Prayer of Azariah* and the *Song of the Three Young Men* appear to have circulated independently before they were added to the Semitic text of Daniel, after the Book of Daniel was written ca. 167–163 B.C.E. but before Daniel was translated into Greek ca. 100 B.C.E. (Moore 1977: 28–29). There is no reason to suppose that the author of 3 Maccabees was familiar either with the independently circulating Semitic additions or with the Semitic Book of Daniel before it was translated into Greek at Alexandria. Thus, the date of the Septuagint translation of Daniel stands as the terminus post quem for the date of composition of 3 Maccabees. The date 100 B.C.E. is an approximation, not a strict cutoff; it denotes a time period around the end of the second century B.C.E. The claim of Modrzejewski (1995: 141) that the text is to be dated "at the end of the Ptolemaic epoch, or the beginning of the Roman domination," based on the Greek version of Daniel ("dating from the first century BCE"), is a little misleading if he intends to suggest that Daniel forces us to place the terminus post quem no earlier than the end of the first century. I argue below for a date early in the window opened by Daniel, probably in the decades immediately before or after 100 B.C.E. but certainly not post-Ptolemaic.

8. E.g. Grimm 1857: 220; Emmet 1913: 158; Bickermann 1928: 798; Hadas 1953: 18–19; Anderson 1985: 512; Schürer 1986: 539; Delcor 1989: 495–96; Barclay 1996: 448; Modrzejewski 1995: 142. Other scholars cite a similar terminus post quem on the basis of similarities with 2 Maccabees and the *Letter of Aristeas*, or on the basis of papyrological evidence; see below.

is likewise universally agreed that 3 Maccabees cannot be later than the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem in 70 C.E., since the author's description leaves no doubt that he views the Temple as still standing.<sup>9</sup> Within that modest range of some two centuries, however, there simmers a heated, seemingly endless debate over the exact dating, and hence the exact circumstances, of the composition of 3 Maccabees. The majority of scholars are inclined to place the composition of 3 Maccabees in the later Ptolemaic period, in the first half of the first century B.C.E., but a significant and vocal minority would insist upon a Roman date, which would imply a very different social and political context for the work.<sup>10</sup>

Are there indications in 3 Maccabees to compel a date in the Roman period?<sup>11</sup> In that text, the persecution of the Jews of Alexandria shortly follows an attempted attack upon the Temple at Jerusalem. Alert readers are of course at once reminded of a similar combination of events in the reign of Gaius Caligula.<sup>12</sup> According to the accounts of Josephus and Philo, the

9. So Emmet 1913: 156; Weiser 1961: 397; Anderson 1985: 510–11; Schürer 1986: 539; Williams 1995: 24; Modrzejewski 1995: 141.

10. Arguing for a Ptolemaic date are Emmet 1913: 155; Motzo 1924: 274; J. Cohen 1941: 23–25; Bickermann 1928: 798; Moreau 1941: 111; Anderson 1985: 512; Delcor 1989: 495; Williams 1995: 24. The Roman camp is divided into two equally strong factions. A date in the reign of Caligula, an early favorite that has recently been championed anew, was argued by Ewald 1852: 4.535–38; Grimm 1857: 215–19, 221; Grätz 1888: 3.613; Willrich 1904: 256; and most recently by Collins 2000: 125. Another school, most strongly represented by Hadas (1953: 17–21) and Tcherikover (1961: 12–18), argues that 3 Maccabees must be dated around the time of the first census under Augustus in 24 B.C.E., on the basis of the word *λαογραφία*, on which see below; Barclay (1996: 448) is inclined to share this view (Collins [2000: 124–25] also accepts 24 B.C.E. as a *terminus post quem*). Two relatively recent and important works, Nickelsburg 1981 (171–72) and Schürer 1986 (540), seem curiously inclined to waver between the first and third schools, showing that the minority view may be down but is certainly not out.

11. I pass over the argument that the image of the Jews threatened with death in the hippodrome must refer to the historical events following the death of Herod in 4 B.C.E. (Jos. *AJ* 17.6.5, *BJ* 1.33.6) or to the affair of the standards under Pontius Pilate in 26 C.E. (Jos. *AJ* 18.3.1, *BJ* 2.9.3; Ewald 1852: 4.535–38; Grimm 1857: 221). Not only is the resemblance too general on which to hang a certain indication of date, but these incidents may well have been themselves legendary. Indeed, if 3 Maccabees is to be dated to the late Hellenistic period, Josephus's account (or his sources) may have been influenced by 3 Maccabees rather than vice versa.

12. This was the earliest interpretation of the text, proposed by Ewald (1852: 4.535–38) and embraced by a series of scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including Grimm 1857: 215–19, 221; Grätz 1888: 3.613; and Willrich 1904: 256. The theory was generally discarded after Emmet (1913: 158) pointed out its essential flaws, but Collins (2000: 125–30) has championed the idea anew, albeit unconvincingly. For recent discussions rejecting the Caligula hypothesis, see Barclay 1996: 203; Gruen 1998: 225.

famous persecution of the Jews of Alexandria was loosely linked with Caligula's attempt to introduce his image into the Temple at Jerusalem.<sup>13</sup> Was this the combination of circumstances that inspired the composition of 3 Maccabees?

A closer look, however, shows that the resemblance of the events narrated in 3 Maccabees to the sufferings of the Jews under Caligula is largely superficial.<sup>14</sup> Both Josephus and Philo place the attempt of Gaius to profane the Temple after the riots at Alexandria, not before; this reverses the order of events found in 3 Maccabees, trouble in Jerusalem followed by trouble in Alexandria.<sup>15</sup> To the extent that these two events are logically connected at all, it is by the common thread of Gaius's campaign to deify himself and to enforce his worship upon all Roman subjects. The troubles at Alexandria and at Jerusalem arose independently, according to Josephus, from Jewish resistance to an empirewide policy.<sup>16</sup> Third Maccabees has Philopator return from his rebuff at Jerusalem to visit an irrational vengeance upon the hapless Jews of Alexandria, a logical connection of quite a different kind.<sup>17</sup> The theme of self-deification, so central to Josephus's and Philo's account of events at Jerusalem under Caligula, is wholly missing from 3 Maccabees.<sup>18</sup> According to Josephus and Philo, the persecutions at Alexandria were launched on the initiative of the Alexandrian populace; in 3 Maccabees, the

13. Jos. *AJ* 18.257–60 (Alexandria), 18.261–88 (Jerusalem); Philo, *Leg.* 120–83 (Alexandria), 184–333 (Jerusalem).

14. The case is cogently argued by Emmet 1913: 158–59. See also Anderson 1985: 511; Williams 1995: 20; Barclay 1996: 203.

15. Collins (2000: 125) argues that the “dramatic conception” of 3 Maccabees necessitated this change. This does not, however, explain why the logical connection between events is so drastically different in the two accounts; see below.

16. Indeed, even this tenuous connection exists only in Josephus; according to Philo, the earlier source, the riots at Alexandria had nothing to do with any campaign of Gaius to have himself deified. Rather, the troubles at Alexandria and the later troubles at Jerusalem were completely unconnected.

17. If any historical precedent for this is to be sought at all (which is doubtful), the appropriate reference is Hellenistic, not Roman. According to Daniel 11.30, Antiochus IV did in fact profane the Temple at Jerusalem as an act of vengeance after he was humiliated by the Romans at Alexandria in 168 B.C.E.: “For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant” (RSV).

18. So, rightly, Barclay 1996: 203. The argument of Collins (2000: 128), that the absence of the theme of self-deification can be explained by the fact that the author of 3 Maccabees simply adopted the focus of religious conflict (the cult of Dionysus) from his “traditional source,” is weak. On the contrary, there is every indication that the author of 3 Maccabees may have been the first to draw a connection between the elephant persecution and the Dionysus cult; the cult of Dionysus is not involved in Josephus's two versions of the legend.

initiative comes from corrupt courtiers who play upon the king's injured feelings. All in all, the differences are more striking than the similarities. Nothing in the narrative of 3 Maccabees compels us to date its composition after the reign of Caligula.

Another indication of a Roman date has been seen in the word *λαογραφία* at 3 Maccabees 2.28. At one time, it was thought that this word occurred only in the Roman period, when it was used as a technical term to refer to the poll tax introduced by Augustus in 24 B.C.E.<sup>19</sup> We now know that the word appears at least three times in the Ptolemaic papyri, where it refers more generally to a population census for taxation purposes. Some scholars, however, continue to insist that *λαογραφία* in 3 Maccabees can refer only to the Roman poll tax. The Ptolemaic *λαογραφία* (so the argument goes) was an ordinary census implying no degradation of status. The Roman poll tax, by contrast, was imposed on all alike, save those who were privileged to possess Greek citizenship, and it reduced all who were not Greek citizens to second-class status. According to 3 Maccabees 2.28, Philopator condemned the Jews *εἰς λαογραφίαν καὶ οἰκετικὴν διάθεσιν* ("to the *laographia* and to servile status"). This link between the *λαογραφία* and a reduction in status, they argue, makes sense only in a Roman context, specifically in the context of Augustus's imposition of the poll tax, and the composition of 3 Maccabees should be dated to that period.<sup>20</sup>

This view is oversimplified and misleading.<sup>21</sup> In fact, there are several

19. For the use of the word *λαογραφία* to refer to the census under Augustus, see J. Cohen 1941: 13–14, citing Wilcken, *Ostr.* 1 p. 245, *P.Oxy.* 2 pp. 210–11; Willrich 1904: 244. The word *λαογραφία* is the linchpin of the argument advanced by Hadas (1953: 17–21) and Tcherikover (1961: 12–18).

20. Hadas 1953: 19–21; Tcherikover 1961: 12–18.

21. In particular, the way in which Hadas and Tcherikover link the phrase *εἰς λαογραφίαν καὶ οἰκετικὴν διάθεσιν* with the controversial issue of Alexandrian citizenship and the Jews is seriously misleading. By reading *λαογραφία* as "poll tax," Hadas and Tcherikover import the assumption (correct for the Roman period, but not necessarily for 3 Maccabees) that the *λαογραφία* was imposed on the Jews because they were not Alexandrian citizens and that *οἰκετικὴν διάθεσιν* therefore refers to their noncitizen status. They thus read into the text a strong contrast between a desirable, privileged state (exemption from the *λαογραφία*: i.e., Alexandrian citizenship) and a despised, servile state (i.e., the lack of citizenship). Cf. Hadas 1953: 511; Tcherikover 1961: 15. It is by no means so clear from the text that citizenship was an issue for the Jews of 3 Maccabees. (Indeed, it is not even clear that citizenship, as opposed to the retention of a privileged noncitizen status, was a serious issue for the Jews in the time of Caligula; but that is another matter, and not relevant to our discussion here.) The Jews of 3 Maccabees are clearly anxious not to be reduced to the despised status of the native Egyptian population (see below on 3 Macc. 4.14), but that need not imply that they coveted Alexandrian citizenship. Significantly, what

reasons why liability to a census might have been considered degrading in the Ptolemaic period. In the first place, it is entirely possible that Augustus was not the first to impose a poll tax that excepted certain privileged classes. The first incontrovertible evidence for a poll tax comes from a document of 22 B.C.E.,<sup>22</sup> but there is indirect evidence that Philopator himself may have introduced some kind of poll tax that fell unequally upon the population.<sup>23</sup> Even if there was no Roman-style poll tax in the Hellenistic period, however, that does not rule out the possibility that the Hellenistic census itself was considered degrading. The precise meaning of *λαογραφία* in the Ptolemaic period was “a taxing-list of persons, most if not all of whom were native Egyptians.”<sup>24</sup> It appears that the *λαογραφία* in the late Ptolemaic period was a census conducted for the purpose of collecting *σύνταξις*, an occasional tax imposed only upon the rural population of Egypt.<sup>25</sup> The extension of such a census to include the Jews of Alexandria would certainly have been viewed as degrading, and there is some evidence that this is exactly what the author of 3 Maccabees had in mind.<sup>26</sup> Finally, there is no need to seek

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Philopator offered to those Jews who were willing to be initiated into the rites of Dionysus was not citizenship per se but *ἰσοπολιτεία*, an equality (not identity) of status with the citizens of Alexandria (3 Macc. 2.30).

22. Hadas 1953: 20.

23. Wallace 1938: 418–42; Hadas 1953: 17–18; Anderson 1985: 511; Modrzejewski 1995: 150–51. He was certainly the first to conduct a nationwide census at regular fourteen-year intervals (Wallace 1938: 442; Hadas 1953: 17), which can have had little purpose except as an aid to tax reform. Against this possibility, one must admit the absence of any documentary record of such a poll tax (Hadas 1953: 20; Anderson 1985: 511). Modrzejewski (1995: 150) links the increased focus on tax collection under Philopator with the Fourth Syrian War, the levying of Egyptian troops before Raphia, and the outbreak of native resistance some ten years later, all of which might have provided a context for widening the *λαογραφία*. In addition to the distaste for being classed with the *λαός* that is so evident in 3 Maccabees, Modrzejewski (*loc. cit.*) notes that census taking had traditionally been associated with disaster in biblical tradition, so the Jews of Egypt may have had more than one reason to object to the idea of being counted and registered.

24. Grenfell and Hunt 1902: 447. *Λαός* is the technical term for Egyptians as contrasted with Greeks (Grenfell and Hunt 1902: 552; Emmet 1913: 165).

25. Tcherikover 1950: 179–207.

26. At 3 Macc. 4.14, Philopator commands that all the Jews of Egypt be registered “not for the service of hard labor, mentioned briefly above” (*οὐκ εἰς τὴν ἔμπροσθεν βραχεῖ προδεδηλωμένην τῶν ἔργων κατάπονον λατρείαν*) but to be tortured and executed. Registration in the *λαογραφία* (2.29) is here equated with hard labor, which was only imposed on the Egyptian peasantry (Tcherikover 1961: 13). Third Maccabees is, then, concerned with the extension of a census previously imposed only on the rural population of Egypt, which accords well with what is known of the Hellenistic *λαογραφία*.



an exact parallel with the situation in 3 Maccabees. In a world where the privileged classes, most commonly the citizens of the Greek poleis, were often excepted from the more burdensome taxes by royal decree, the burden of any tax reform at any time was certain to fall disproportionately upon the less privileged, among whom the Jews were eager not to be counted.<sup>27</sup> The term *λαογραφία* simply cannot bear the burden that has been placed upon it.<sup>28</sup>

In preference to any Roman date for the text, the evidence strongly favors one not much later than about 100 B.C.E. There are significant similarities, both stylistic and thematic, between 3 Maccabees and two other texts dated by majority opinion to around 100 B.C.E., 2 Maccabees and the *Letter of Aristeas*.<sup>29</sup> No one is likely ever to prove the absolute priority of any one of these texts over the others;<sup>30</sup> rather, it is best to assume that the authors belonged to the same "literary school" or "school of thought."<sup>31</sup> One assumes that authors of the same school, however defined, would most likely be writing at the same time. However, those who argue for a later date have

27. So, rightly, Anderson (1985: 511), who argues that there existed "a caste system of taxation under which the Jews could have suffered at any time during the Ptolemaic period." Modrzejewski (1995: 81–83) suggests that Jews throughout the Hellenistic period were anxious to be classed (socially at least) as Hellenes rather than as Egyptians; Jews typically seem to have appeared in Greek rather than Egyptian law courts, for example (Modrzejewski 1995: 107–12).

28. Williams (1995: 20) rightly remarks that the word *λαογραφία* is at the very least "ambiguous" and therefore inconclusive.

29. The similarities are most exhaustively catalogued by Emmet 1913: 155–57. For further discussion see Bickermann 1928: 798; Tracy 1928; J. Cohen 1941: 50; Hadas 1953: 8–12; Tcherikover 1961: 6, 17; Nickelsburg 1981: 172; Anderson 1985: 511–12, 515–16; Delcor 1989: 495; Williams 1995: 20. See below, "Third Maccabees in Its Literary Context," pp. 141–69, for a more detailed discussion.

30. As for 2 Maccabees, most of those who have expressed a definite opinion on the subject assume that the author of 3 Maccabees was using 2 Maccabees, usually on the strength of the assumed priority of the Heliodorus episode (2 Macc. 3.22–31): Bickermann 1928: 798; Tcherikover 1961: 6; Collins 2000: 123. In the case of the *Letter of Aristeas*, those who have tried to establish relative priority have assumed a sharp contrast of ideology between the two and have tried to show that one is a reply to the other (Tracy [1928] that the *Letter of Aristeas* is a reply to 3 Maccabees; Hadas [1953: 9–10] that 3 Maccabees is a reply to the *Letter of Aristeas*). The latter debate is based on a dubious assumption (see below, "Third Maccabees in Its Literary Context" and "Authorship and Audience") and is highly circular; it seems unlikely to bear fruit.

31. Emmet 1913: 156–57, "same school of thought"; Hadas 1953: 12, "same reservoir of ideas, incidents, and linguistic expression"; Tcherikover 1961: 17, "same literary school"; Anderson 1985: 516, "same milieu." It may be noted that these scholars, although seemingly in perfect harmony, disagree strongly on the implications of this conclusion for the dating of 3 Maccabees.

insisted, with perfect justice, that authors who share the same “thought world” need not necessarily have belonged to the same generation.<sup>32</sup> The evidence of a shared milieu is thus suggestive rather than conclusive.

Can a more decisive relationship be established between 3 Maccabees and the Greek version of Esther? The similarities in this case are too strong to be explained as the product of a similar “thought world”; there are verbatim parallels virtually guaranteeing that one of these two was directly using the other.<sup>33</sup> If it could be definitively established that the Greek Esther was using 3 Maccabees, we would have a strong indication that 3 Maccabees was composed in the Ptolemaic period, because the colophon to the Greek Esther states that this translation was brought to Egypt “in the fourth year of Ptolemy and Cleopatra.”<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, although compelling arguments have been advanced for the priority of 3 Maccabees,<sup>35</sup> the point cannot be regarded as proved. That the translator of the Greek Esther used 3 Maccabees is likely but not sufficiently certain to prove that 3 Maccabees was composed in the Hellenistic period.<sup>36</sup>

32. So Hadas 1953: 10; Tcherikover 1961: 17.

33. The parallels are most striking in the royal decrees cited by both authors and in the prayers of Mordecai and Esther, which strongly resemble the prayers of Simon and Eleazar. The most detailed analysis may be found in Motzo (1924: 274–82), who argues that the translator of Esther held 3 Maccabees “before his eyes” as he worked.

34. Esther, Addition F11: *ἔτους τετάρτου βασιλεύοντος Πτολεμαίου καὶ Κλεοπάρας*. For the full Greek text of the colophon, see Hanhart’s Septuagint text of Esther; for translation and commentary, see Moore 1977: 250–52. Exactly what is meant by “the fourth year of Ptolemy and Cleopatra” is disputed; the most commonly accepted date is 77 B.C.E., but it could also refer to 114 B.C.E. or 48 B.C.E. In any case, the reference is clearly Ptolemaic. See Bickermann 1944: 339–62; Collins 2000: 110–12.

35. One common argument is that had the author of 3 Maccabees been acquainted with the story of Esther he would surely have included it in Eleazar’s catalogue of miraculous deliverances (3 Macc. 6.2–15): e.g., J. Cohen 1941: 29; Hadas 1953: 8, who cites the argument in order to deny it. Another, stronger argument is advanced by Motzo 1924: 272–90. His argument for the originality of 3 Maccabees is based on the fact that the verbatim parallels are overwhelmingly concentrated in the Greek additions to Esther, whereas the similarities between the main narratives of 3 Maccabees and the Hebrew Esther are of a much more generic type and do little to demonstrate influence in either direction. This is what we should expect if the Greek translator of Esther used 3 Maccabees. Had the author of 3 Maccabees been using the Greek Esther, we should expect the parallels to be more evenly distributed. The bald assertion of Collins (2000: 123 n. 57) that “it is significant that the parallels are not confined to the Greek additions to Esther” is unsupported by evidence and does not take account of the difference between verbatim parallels and vague generic similarities.

36. Barclay 1996: 448.



It is, then, impossible to establish a Ptolemaic date for 3 Maccabees solely by comparing it with other literary texts, although the literary evidence points in that direction. But even if literary resemblances as such are not decisive, in another sense, the common thought-world shared by 3 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, and the *Letter of Aristeas* militates strongly against a Roman date for 3 Maccabees. All three texts share a common command of Ptolemaic court procedure and the technical language of the Ptolemaic chancery, suggesting that the author of 3 Maccabees, like the others, had direct experience with a functioning Ptolemaic administration. Moreover, all three share a worldview that is more Ptolemaic than Roman in its optimism.

The Roman conquest of 30 B.C.E. brought about significant changes for the people of Alexandria, Jews and gentiles alike. The Ptolemaic court, which had been deeply involved in local Alexandrian politics and in which many upper-class Jews had held a high position, was replaced by the transient and aloof representatives of a remote Roman emperor. For reasons that are not entirely clear, relations alike between the Jews and the Roman government and the Jews and their fellow Alexandrians steadily worsened until tensions exploded in the riots under Caligula. Those who view 3 Maccabees as confrontational and antiassimilationist generally date the work to the Roman period precisely because this context of tension and conflict seems more suitable for an author whose attitude is uncompromising and hostile to outsiders.<sup>37</sup>

Yet strangely, 3 Maccabees betrays no awareness of this changed world. Its focus is entirely on the relationship of the Jews of Alexandria with the Ptolemaic court. The text lingers lovingly over the ceremonial of the court, its intrigues, the language of its letters and decrees. There is no trace of the rituals of Roman imperial administration. The author anxiously reiterates the loyalty of the Jews to their monarch. The Roman emperors and their representatives were unlikely to have been touched by fervid assurances of loyalty to the ancestors of Cleopatra VII. Third Maccabees stresses the importance of God's favor and protection to the well-being of the king and his realm—a typically Hellenistic theme.<sup>38</sup> The enemies of the Jews are a minority, masterminded by evil courtiers; relations between the Jews and the majority of their Alexandrian neighbors are by contrast cordial, as the

37. A serious misapprehension; see below, "Third Maccabees in Its Literary Context" and "Authorship and Audience."

38. Cf. the *Letter of Aristeas*, which is indeed so preoccupied with these themes that it has been analyzed, rightly or wrongly, as a treatise on Hellenistic kingship. Cf. Murray 1967: 337–71.

author of 3 Maccabees is at pains to emphasize (e.g., 3 Macc. 3.8).<sup>39</sup> The thought-world of 3 Maccabees, like that of 2 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeas*, and the Greek Esther, is so thoroughly Ptolemaic that no trace of Roman influence can be seen.<sup>40</sup>

This argument is strongly buttressed by the evidence of the papyri. Third Maccabees, like 2 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeas*, and the Greek Esther, seeks to enhance its air of authenticity by including a number of putatively genuine documents, as was the custom in Hellenistic historiography. In particular, the author includes two royal letters, at 3.12–29 and 7.1–9, both with the same formula of greeting: “King Ptolemy Philopator [to his subjects] . . . greetings and good health” (βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος Φιλοπάτωρ . . . χαίρειν καὶ ἐρρῶσθαι). Because greeting formulas in official correspondence were highly regular and stylized, changes in them over time can be used in dating particular documents.

Two indications in 3 Maccabees’ greeting formula point to a date between 160 and 30 B.C.E. One indication of late Ptolemaic date lies in the epithet Philopator. Such divine epithets were never used in greeting formulas until sometime in the first century B.C.E.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the formula “greetings and good health” did not come into use until the end of the second century B.C.E., and it was displaced a century later. Letters of an earlier period normally open with the simple formula χαίρειν, never with the double infinitive found in 3 Maccabees; letters of a later period use the formula “many greetings” (πλείστα χαίρειν).<sup>42</sup> This point is worth stressing, for those who favor a Roman date acknowledge freely that the appearance of the formula “greetings and good health” provides us with a terminus post quem of about 100 B.C.E. but are inclined to ignore the corollary: that the disappearance of the same formula toward the end of the first century B.C.E. gives us a terminus ante quem as well.<sup>43</sup>

39. There are, to be sure, some among the Alexandrians who bear ill will toward the Jews (3 Macc. 4.1), but the author is at pains to suggest that they were in the minority and that the Greeks of Alexandria at least were universally sympathetic. See below, “Third Maccabees in Its Literary Context,” for further discussion.

40. This point was well made by Motzo (1924: 274) and endorsed by Bickermann (1928: 798, 799). Both argued, correctly, that the Roman conquest of 30 B.C.E. should therefore be treated as a terminus ante quem for the composition of 3 Maccabees. The point has, unfortunately, been too little stressed by later scholars.

41. Bickermann 1928: 798. The first instance comes from a decree in the reign of Cleopatra VII in 41 B.C.E. (Lefebvre 1913: 103–13).

42. Emmet 1913: 157–58. This point is endorsed by Williams 1995: 20.

43. Tcherikover (1961: 11) acknowledges the force of the papyrological arguments put forth by Emmet and Bickermann but asserts that they only fix the terminus post quem. Collins (2000: 124) actually seems to imply that Bickermann’s

It is highly unlikely that the author of 3 Maccabees would have used an archaic greeting formula that was no longer in current use when the text was written. The author's aim in citing purportedly official documents was to lend his work an air of historical verisimilitude, even if only for artistic effect and the reader's enjoyment. This he could have achieved either by imitating genuine correspondence of Philopator's own period (which he did not)<sup>44</sup> or as he in fact did, by imitating the correspondence of his own period, which would have used the officialese most familiar to his audience.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, by imitating the correspondence of his own day, he was likely to have achieved a greater effect of verisimilitude than he would have with the unfamiliar style of a by-gone era.<sup>46</sup> It is important to realize that although opening formulas are most easily dated within a narrow range, the letters and decrees in 3 Maccabees are as a whole remarkably sophisticated and clever imitations of late Hellenistic documents. Like the documents in 2 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristaeas*, and the Greek Esther, those in 3 Maccabees display a fluent command both of the technical vocabulary and of the contorted style of the late Ptolemaic bureaucracy; were it not for some of the sentiments expressed in them, they could easily be genuine products of the royal chancery. The author of 3 Maccabees had nothing to gain by elaborately forging documents in a style nearly a century old. The documentary style of 3 Maccabees, like its worldview, is purely Ptolemaic and should be dated to that period.

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arguments support a Roman dating for the text ("Despite these positions [supporting a date of ca. 100 B.C.E.], the arguments of Bickermann and Tcherikover . . . seem decisive"). In fact, both Bickermann (1928: 798) and Emmet (1913: 157) positively rule out the possibility of any date in the Roman period.

44. Correspondence from the period of Philopator (and from the end of the third century B.C.E. in general) invariably opened with the simplest possible greeting formula: A to B, *χαίρειν*. Cf., e.g., Welles 1934: 33 (letter of Ptolemy IV or V to the Magnesians).

45. For an example of this methodology in Hellenistic Jewish historiography, see the fictitious correspondence between Solomon and the kings of Egypt and Tyre included by Eupolemus in his account of the building of the Temple (F 2 Holladay). The language of these letters is so typically Hellenistic as to be positively comical in its effect. Incidentally, the use of epistolary formulas in these letters also hints at a political point by casting Solomon as the dominant figure and the kings of Egypt and Tyre as his subordinates. This is a nice example of the potential advantages of the approach, favored by Hellenistic Jewish authors, of using contemporary touches to add verisimilitude. Our culture tends rather to favor the use of archaizing details to add authenticity to historical fictions. We are inclined to view anachronisms as absurd and as spoiling the effectiveness of a work, but there is little evidence of this prejudice in Hellenistic Jewish writings.

46. See, in more detail, below, Chap. 5.

The evidence, then, overwhelmingly points to a date of composition in the later Ptolemaic period, probably not long after roughly 100 B.C.E. but certainly before the Roman conquest in 30 B.C.E.

### THIRD MACCABEES IN ITS LITERARY CONTEXT

Scholars have frequently recognized close links between 3 Maccabees and certain other texts, notably the *Letter of Aristeas*, 2 Maccabees, Esther, and (to a lesser extent) Daniel. Indeed, the similarities in language, style, imagery, and subject matter are sufficiently great to fill exhaustive and painstakingly compiled catalogues in the secondary literature.<sup>47</sup> Direct contact between 3 Maccabees and these texts is certain. Unfortunately, there is simply not enough evidence to demonstrate in which direction influence occurred, save in the case of Daniel, to which 3 Maccabees explicitly alludes, not only to the story but to the text of the Greek translation.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, although the quest to establish a clear chain of influence is tempting, it is not merely doomed to failure; it is essentially fruitless, for the connections among these texts are of a nature that transcends chronology. This section will explore how important themes in 3 Maccabees are echoed in contem-

47. 2 Macc.: Emmet 1913: 156–57; Hadas 1953: 11–12; Anderson 1985: 515–16; Delcor 1989: 495. *LtAris*: Emmet 1913: 157; Hadas 1953: 9; Anderson 1985: 515–16; Delcor 1989: 495. Esther: Motzo 1924 *passim*.

48. The case for seeing in 3 Maccabees a reaction to the *Letter of Aristeas* has been argued at length (Hadas 1953: 9–10), as has the reverse (Tracy 1928). Neither side has decisively proved its case. Indeed, I hope to show that any view that places 3 Maccabees and the *Letter of Aristeas* at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum fundamentally misconstrues the text. We simply do not know, and cannot know, which came first; both are too deeply imbued with the same dye. On the grounds of general probability, one might argue that 3 Maccabees follows 2 Maccabees but precedes Esther. The Heliodorus episode in 2 Maccabees, in which a minister of Seleucus IV is struck down for his presumption in attempting to enter the Temple, forms a natural prelude to a narrative that deals with a series of assaults upon Jerusalem, while the very similar episode in which Philopator is struck down upon attempting to violate the sanctuary is in 3 Maccabees linked in a noticeably awkward manner with a narrative dealing primarily with the Jews of Egypt. Conversely, the closest similarities between Esther and 3 Maccabees are confined, as Motzo (1924: 274–82) has demonstrated, to the additions that were integrated into the now canonical text at the time at which it was translated into Greek. This is much more likely to have occurred if the Greek translator of Esther was using 3 Maccabees rather than the other way around. However, probability does not constitute proof. In the discussion that follows, I will attempt to avoid any argument that rests upon proving a direct linear connection running in any particular direction; that way circularity lies.

porary literature in such a way as to create an ongoing dialogue rooted in common ideological ground.

All these texts, save one, are preserved in the manuscripts of the Septuagint. The exception is of course the *Letter of Aristeas*, which is not part of the Septuagint but purports to give an authoritative account of the translation of the Torah. It is thus intimately connected with the Greek Bible, although it is preserved via a separate manuscript tradition. As we examine 3 Maccabees in its literary context, then, we may pause momentarily to consider how these texts are related to the canon developing when they were composed or translated into Greek (or both), in the century roughly between 150 and 50 B.C.E.<sup>49</sup>

During those years, and indeed at any time up to the establishment of a canonical Hebrew text at some point after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., the Jewish canon was far from fixed or universally agreed upon.<sup>50</sup>

49. The case for a late Ptolemaic date for 3 Maccabees I have argued at length above in "Date of Composition"; the other texts with which I am here dealing are all generally agreed to fall roughly within the same window of time. The precise date of the *Letter of Aristeas* is uncertain, but virtually all scholars place it in the second century B.C.E., with the majority favoring a date between 150 and 100 B.C.E. (Schürer 1986: 679–84 gives a useful survey of arguments to date, while cautiously refraining from espousing any date more precise than "some time in the second century"; see on the *Letter of Aristeas* in Chap. 1, pp. 11–13.) Second Maccabees, which itself purports to be an epitome of an earlier work by Jason of Cyrene, must (it has been argued) have been completed at some time after the Maccabean Revolt but before or in 124 B.C.E., when two letters, the first of which can be precisely dated to 124/3 B.C.E., were prefixed to the text (Schürer 1986: 532–34; for a more detailed discussion of the date of 2 Macc., see Chap. 1, pp. 13–16). Esther was translated into Greek together with its additions sometime in the late Ptolemaic period, as the colophon (Addition F11) attests: "the fourth year of Ptolemy and Cleopatra" probably refers to 77 B.C.E., although it could also refer to 114 B.C.E. or 48 B.C.E. (See n. 34 above.) Last but not least, Daniel was composed in its current form in Aramaic and Hebrew during the reign of Antiochus IV (167–164 B.C.E.) but was translated into Greek together with its additions no later than 100 B.C.E., as is evidenced by the fact that the Septuagint text of Daniel was used by the translator of 1 Maccabees (Moore 1977: 29, 33). In this section I consider only the Greek versions of Daniel and Esther.

50. The once widely accepted consensus that the Jewish canon was established at Jamnia (Yavneh) ca. 90 C.E. is now widely doubted. Exactly when the Jewish canon was formed has therefore been reopened for debate. For a recent discussion of the evidence for the formation of the Jewish canon, see Beckwith 1990: 37–86. On the one hand, Beckwith convincingly argues that not only were the main three divisions (Torah, Prophets, and Writings) widely recognized by the second century B.C.E. (though see further discussion on these three divisions below) but all the books today regarded by Jews as canonical were variously and individually already viewed as holy scriptures (in the sense that they were clearly sacred writings, set apart from others) by that time. He is much less convincing, however, when he goes on to argue that the canon must therefore have been essentially closed as early as the time

Contemporary allusions make it plain that at least three basic groups of sacred texts were recognized,<sup>51</sup> corresponding very roughly to the modern tripartite division of the Hebrew Bible into the Law (Torah), the Prophets (Nevi'im), and the Writings (Ketuvim). Only the Torah (i.e., the Pentateuch) was really fixed in the Hellenistic period. It appears from numerous sources that the categories of the Prophets and the Writings were regarded as considerably more fluid in the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E.<sup>52</sup>

Let us, then, proceed: first identifying key themes in 3 Maccabees that are vital to our understanding of the nature and purpose of that text, and thereafter determining to what extent these themes are also to be found in the *Letter of Aristeas*, 2 Maccabees, Esther, and Daniel. This is not to imply that every thematic detail in 3 Maccabees is echoed, parrotlike, identically

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of the Maccabean Revolt. The fact that writings later accepted as canonical were already regarded as sacred by this time period in no way rules out the possibility that other writings, particularly some now included in the Christian Apocrypha or Pseudepigrapha (or both), might still have been regarded as equally sacred by some groups of Jews in certain places or at certain times. It also does not establish that all Jews throughout Palestine and the Diaspora before 70 C.E. fully agreed on which books were sacred and to what degree, although there must have been considerable overlap even beyond the Torah. On the fluidity of the canon and the possibility for diverse interpretations even of those texts early agreed to be scripture, see also Collins 2000: 19–20.

51. For instance, the author of the prologue to Sirach refers in the second century B.C.E. to the Law, the Prophets, and “the rest” (τὰ ἄλλα, τὰ λοιπά: Sirach prol. 1–2, 8–10, 24–25).

52. The third category was in fact exceedingly ill defined. In addition to the vague wording of Sirach (above, n. 51), one may consider the New Testament, which has no single name for the Writings, alluding often to “the Law and the Prophets” but collectively only once to the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms; and the testimony of Josephus (*C.Ap.* 1.8), who seems to restrict the third group to a total of four poetical books (Psalms, Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes?), counting the rest of the Writings among the Prophets. Philo (*De Vita Contemplativa*) knew of the Law, the Prophets, and ὅμνοι καὶ τὰ ἄλλα; it is not clear whether the latter should be counted as one group or two (Swete 1900: 216–17). In short, it seems that Greek writings prior to 70 C.E. recognized the Law, the Prophets, and “everything else,” and that the criteria for inclusion in the third, catchall category (and to some extent even in the category of Prophets) were highly variable. See now, however, Beckwith (1990: 39–86), who argues against the traditional view that the Torah was canonized first, the Prophets second, and the Writings a distant last. He argues that while the Torah was clearly preeminent, the Prophets and the Writings were not far behind in terms of their definition and sacred weight by the second century B.C.E. His argument is salutary, as it reminds us that not only the Prophets but many of the individual Writings had already acquired significant scriptural status at an early stage, but he does not, in my opinion, take adequate account of the fuzzy boundaries that seem to have categorized the Writings in particular.

in each of our comparanda. One would not expect or even wish for lockstep similarity in such diverse texts. I will show, however, that every important theme in 3 Maccabees recurs in these works and that, taken together, these thematic details inform a coherent interpretative model for understanding all these texts.

In the first place, all these texts, like 3 Maccabees, focus on the Jews' relationships with foreign rulers.<sup>53</sup> This is hardly surprising: because of their religious position as a "peculiar people," and particularly because of their delicate geopolitical situation as a shrimp between two whales (as the Korean proverb has it), the Jews throughout their history were much concerned with the problems of their relations with the great powers of Egypt and Asia. In 3 Maccabees that potentate is obviously Ptolemy IV Philopator of Egypt.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, in the *Letter of Aristeas* it is through Ptolemy II Philadelphus (r. 283–246 B.C.E.) that the Jews of Palestine and of Egypt are united in the project to produce an authoritative Greek version of the Law. Without Philadelphus, according to Aristeas, the Septuagint would never have existed.

The Jews' interest in their relations with foreign rulers was scarcely confined to the borders of Hellenistic Egypt. The author of 2 Maccabees shows great interest in the complex relationship of the Jews of Palestine with their Seleucid overlords, first Seleucus IV and then Antiochus IV and his successors. Whereas the author of 1 Maccabees dismisses Antiochus IV as a "sinful root" (1.10), a wicked descendant of the arrogant Alexander's pernicious successors (1.3, 9) who persecuted the Jews without conscience or explanation, the author of 2 Maccabees regards the Seleucids in a far from unambiguously negative light, and the Jews' diplomatic relations with the Seleucid kings is a recurrent theme in his narrative.<sup>55</sup>

The Books of Esther and Daniel explore another dimension of the long history of the Jewish experience of foreign rule, ostensibly being concerned with the place of the exiled Jews at a succession of Near Eastern courts un-

53. This focus is, of course, hardly confined to the texts here under discussion; as I have argued above in Part 1, virtually all the so-called Jewish romances are preoccupied with this theme in one form or another.

54. In the version of the story given by Josephus, who omits the Jerusalem incident and recounts only a slightly different version of the persecution at Alexandria, the place of Philopator is occupied by Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II Physcon (r. 145–116 B.C.E.). The problems raised by the existence of the variant will be dealt with below in Chap. 5; for now we need merely observe that Josephus's version, like the version in 3 Maccabees, revolves about the relationship of the Jews with a Ptolemy.

55. See the discussion of 2 Macc. in Chap. 1, pp. 38–41.



der Babylonian and Persian administration.<sup>56</sup> The narrative time frame of the Book of Daniel is the earlier. The prophet Daniel is said to have been captured by Nebuchadnezzar as a young boy in 586 B.C.E. and to have survived into the early years of Cyrus the Great (king of Persia 559–530 B.C.E.; conquered Babylon 539). The story places Daniel successively at the courts of Nebuchadnezzar, the conqueror of Judah; Belshazzar, the son and regent of Nabonidus, the last of the Neo-Babylonian line; Darius the Mede;<sup>57</sup> and Cyrus of Persia. His career thus spans the reigns of representatives of three of the successive kingdoms (Babylonian, Median, Persian) that appear in Daniel's visions.<sup>58</sup> The Ahasuerus whom Esther marries is Xerxes the Great (r. 486–465 B.C.E.), the adversary of the Greeks in 480.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the stories contained within the frame of Daniel and Esther are played out at the courts of, and in close interaction with, some of the most famous kings to rule over Judah in the two and a half centuries between Nebuchadnezzar's conquest in 586 and Alexander's arrival in 332.<sup>60</sup>

56. In fact, of course, although many of the stories contained in Esther and Daniel may have originated in the Persian period, the final Semitic versions and especially the Greek versions are deeply influenced by their Hellenistic context. Esther's Xerxes, in the Greek version, behaves at times so like a Ptolemy that it is difficult to remember that one is not in the palace at Alexandria. The canonical Daniel took shape in the reign of Antiochus IV as an apocalyptic commentary on that reign even before the text was translated into Greek. However, regardless of later Hellenistic influences, my point here is that the narrative is centered around a series of Babylonian, Median, and Persian potentates.

57. According to the author of Daniel, it was Darius the Mede, not Cyrus, who conquered Babylon and put an end to the Neo-Babylonian empire; in his narrative, the reign of Cyrus follows that of Darius. This Darius is persistently described as a Mede. However, the Medians, who had helped the Babylonians to overthrow the Assyrians in 612 B.C.E., and who ruled over an empire to the north of the Neo-Babylonian kingdom until they were overthrown by Cyrus in 550 B.C.E., never ruled Babylon. It is apparent from several details in the narrative (e.g., Dan. 6.1) that the author is thinking of Darius I of Persia (r. 521–486 B.C.E.), who succeeded Cyrus's heir, Cambyses. This remarkable historical muddle is explored further in Chap. 1, pp. 20–24, 44–45.

58. Daniel 2.31–35, e.g., describes a vision of the idol with feet of clay, a statue with a head of gold, breast of silver, thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron mixed with clay. Daniel interprets this (2.36–45) as representing a kingdom of gold (Babylonian), a kingdom of silver (Median), a kingdom of bronze (Persian), and a kingdom of iron (Greek), which would ultimately be destroyed and replaced by the Kingdom of God.

59. Evidence for this identification is considered above in Chap. 1, pp. 16–20.

60. Interestingly, all these stories are told exclusively from the point of view of the eastern Diaspora. It does not appear that Daniel, by then an old man, ever thought of returning to Judah when Cyrus sent the exiles home—indeed, there is no mention of this event in the text—and Esther's family had evidently elected to stay in Susa, where they are still living some sixty years later.



In each of these texts the relationship between the Jews and the king, the representative of centralized secular authority, is either harmonious throughout or is resolved harmoniously after a period of conflict. Although the central subject in all these texts, save the *Letter of Aristeas*, is conflict and persecution, harmonious coexistence is represented as the norm. The conflicts on which the texts center deviate from the norm; persecution is the abnormal exception that provides their plots and drives their narratives. This point deserves emphasis, for such narratives as 3 Maccabees and Esther have often been characterized as unambiguously confrontational, assuming a state of opposition and hostility as the norm.<sup>61</sup> This view fundamentally misconstrues a text such as 3 Maccabees.

Third Maccabees and the *Letter of Aristeas* alike presuppose a world wherein Jews are highly placed at court. The author of the *Letter of Aristeas* displays an extensive, detailed knowledge of court protocol, appropriate for the persona that he adopts: Aristeas, the narrator, presents himself as a high-ranking gentile courtier in the reign of Philadelphus, and the pseudonymous author, although evidently a Jew of the second century rather than a gentile of the third, may himself have held high rank at the Ptolemaic court.<sup>62</sup> He cites a sheaf of official rescripts and royal letters (*LtAris* 22–25, 29–32, 35–40), composed in a bureaucratic idiom that is uncannily accurate when compared with late second-century papyri.<sup>63</sup> He adduces official court records, the *hypomnēmata*,<sup>64</sup> as a source for the detailed account of the banquet that Philadelphus holds for the Jewish sages (298–300). He comments upon how Philadelphus hastened to receive the Jewish embassy as soon as it arrived, ignoring the established order of precedence in violation of all

61. So, e.g., Collins 2000: 112 (Esther), 126 (3 Macc.); Barclay 1996: 192–203. It is precisely this view of 3 Maccabees that has led scholars to assign 3 Maccabees to the Roman period, which is often (rightly or wrongly) characterized as a period of turbulence and oppression for the Jews. Again, it is this interpretation of the text that has led some to contrast the “confrontational, provocative” tone of 3 Maccabees with the “cooperative” or “conciliatory” tone of the *Letter of Aristeas* and thus to assume that the authors of these texts were engaged in some kind of hostile, polemical dialogue with one another.

62. E.g., Fraser 1972: 1.698–99.

63. Emmet 1913: 1957 gives a detailed list.

64. *LtAris* 300. Literally “memoranda,” often in the Hellenistic context referring to a series of journals or daily records kept for the court archives (although that is not the only possible meaning of the word). One is reminded of the *hypomnēmata*, or “royal journals,” that Plutarch claimed to have consulted as a source for the last days of Alexander the Great. (These *hypomnēmata*, not inappositely, are thought by many modern scholars to have been forged in antiquity, on the analogy of later Hellenistic court practice.)

court etiquette (174–75). He explains that the king's concern for his guests' dietary requirements was standard, a procedure established at court for handling the special needs of foreign dignitaries, "which you may observe in use even now."<sup>65</sup>

Although 3 Maccabees is sometimes rashly characterized as a product of low culture, penned by an author accustomed to the hurly-burly of Alexandria's streets, it exhibits a similar familiarity with court protocol. Like the author of the *Letter of Aristeas*, the author of 3 Maccabees cites numerous royal documents and letters versed in meticulously correct language (for the late second century). Indeed, the similarity of the language of the official documents given by the two authors is one of the most frequently cited points of contact between them. Evidently the author of 3 Maccabees, like the author of the *Letter of Aristeas*, expected his audience to appreciate the apparent authenticity of his documentation.

Furthermore, the author of 3 Maccabees not only assumes a world in which Jews are familiar with and take an interest in minute details of court protocol. He also hints, in a way that the *Letter of Aristeas* does not, at the actual presence of high-ranking Jews at court within the narrative time frame of his story, in the time of Philopator. The story opens with a tale of court intrigue, in which Philopator is rescued by Dositheus, a thoroughly Hellenized Jew in his entourage, from a plot against his life. This brief anecdote, related almost incidentally (3 Macc. 1.2–3), reveals the normal presence of high-ranking Jews at Philopator's court.<sup>66</sup>

We will turn to the question of Dositheus's historicity later, but it is worth pausing here to consider his role at this point in the story. Is his presence at court a positive indicator, or a negative? As a character, Dositheus presents intriguing problems: he typifies high-ranking Jews at court, but he is an apostate—he has "rejected his ancestral customs" (3 Macc. 1.3), a choice the author disapproves of, as his denunciation of apostates throughout the text clearly shows. Although the theme of apostasy comes up often, Dositheus himself is never mentioned again, not even in the obvious context of the universal persecution of all the king's Egyptian Jewish subjects; nor is anything said of his dealings, if any, with the king's evil companions. The ultimate fate of this apostate Mordecai is left quite unresolved. As has

65. *LtAris* 182: ἀ μὲν ἔτι καὶ νῦν ὁρᾷς.

66. For the identification of this Dositheus with a Dositheus son of Drimylus attested in the papyri, see Chap. 5, pp. 195–98; Chap. 5 will also deal with the historicity of the plot against Philopator, reported in a somewhat different form by Polybius. For further discussion of Dositheus the apostate in 3 Maccabees, see Paul 1987: 299–303; Gruen 1998: 227.

also been pointed out, Dositheus is loyal to an unreformed tyrant; he saves Philopator, only to have the king turn upon the Jews. Dositheus should perhaps be seen as inverting the paradigm that the author promotes throughout: his high position at court, though desirable, has come at too high a price; the proper paradigm will be supplied by Jews who are both loyal (as Dositheus is) and pious (as Dositheus is not). Dositheus himself is rightly consigned to moral and historical oblivion.<sup>67</sup>

Though Dositheus disappears from the story, the interest in court politics remains. The author alludes to Philopator's notorious debauchery as if the reader must already be well aware of it, even referring to the king's "aforementioned drinking buddies."<sup>68</sup> As the story builds to its denouement, we witness a number of his debauched parties, featuring as guests "those of his Friends and of the army who were most hostile toward the Jews";<sup>69</sup> it is these Friends whom Philopator officially blames for leading him astray in the letter reversing the persecution (3 Macc. 7.1–9).<sup>70</sup> Thus the author, through the king himself, represents the persecution as arising in no small part from the agitation of a small, malicious clique of courtiers. Given that the author has provided us with alleged evidence for the presence of high-ranking Jews at Philopator's court, it requires no great leap to infer that Philopator's evil courtiers share precisely the same motivation as the courtiers who conspire against the Jews in Daniel and in Esther—namely professional jealousy of highly favored Jewish rivals. The Jews of 3 Maccabees are no strangers to the dangerous world of court intrigue and dynastic politics.<sup>71</sup>

In 2 Maccabees, Jews do not appear in permanent positions at the Seleu-

67. On the thematic importance of the apostate Dositheus, see Paul 1987: 299–303; Gruen 1998: 227.

68. Philopator's character is maligned at length in Polyb. 5.35. The puzzling reference to *προαποδεδειγμένων συμποτῶν*, together with the fact that the story begins with the backward-looking words *ὁ δὲ Φιλοπάτωρ*, has led most scholars to assume that as much as a chapter has been lost at the beginning. It seems to me more likely that the striking word *προαποδεδειγμένων* is an appeal to the readers' inside knowledge, initiating them into a sort of elite society within which familiarity with court gossip can be taken for granted. It is also highly reminiscent of the style of Polybius, who never misses an opportunity to refer to the "aforementioned." See further below, Chap. 5, pp. 192–93.

69. 3 Macc. 5.3: *τοὺς μάλιστα τῶν φίλων καὶ τῆς στρατιᾶς ἀπεχθῶς ἔχοντας πρὸς τοὺς Ἰουδαίους*.

70. 3 Macc. 7.3: *τῶν φίλων τινὲς κακοθηεῖα πικνότερον ἡμῶν παρακείμενοι συνέπεισαν ἡμᾶς*.

71. There are numerous examples from the second century B.C.E. of Jews who not only served at the Egyptian court but were involved in dynastic politics at the highest level. Cf. Jos. *BJ* 1.33, 2.49–52, 7.421–432; *AJ* 12.387–88, 13.62–71, 13.284–87.

cid court, but there can be no question that a number of prominent Jews are highly adept at playing Seleucid politics, whether for good or for evil. On the one hand, the villains of the story on the Jewish side frequently turn political intrigue to their own advantage. First Jason and subsequently Menelaus are able illegitimately to buy their way into the high priesthood and to secure royal approval for their schemes by bribing Antiochus IV.<sup>72</sup> So also Simon, the brother of Menelaus, who is represented as a constant thorn in Onias's side in the later years of the reign of Seleucus IV, is actively aided and abetted by the wicked governor Apollonius (2 Macc. 3.5–6, 4.4). Even more than Simon, Menelaus is represented as a master of bribery. He bribes Antiochus IV to grant him the priesthood (4.24), Andronicus to lure Onias out of sanctuary and murder him (4.34), and Ptolemy son of Dorymenes to intercede with Antiochus IV to drop the charges brought against him in the aftermath of riots at Jerusalem (4.45–47).

On the other hand, Onias III is no less adept than his enemies at court politics, although he uses his knowledge of diplomacy for the good of his fellows rather than for his personal advantage. Not only is he able—with divine help—to prevail with Heliodorus and win him over as a result of the Temple incident (2 Macc. 3.35),<sup>73</sup> but he repeatedly appeals directly to the king (first Seleucus IV, then Antiochus IV) against the machinations of Simon (4.5–6) and later against the depredations of Menelaus (4.33). It is presumably because Menelaus fears that Onias will successfully accuse him before the king that he takes the extreme step of having the former high priest assassinated.<sup>74</sup> The martyred Onias is the real hero of the early chapters of

72. Jason: 2 Macc. 4.7–9. Menelaus: 2 Macc. 4.24.

73. Interestingly, we are told that Simon, having been frustrated in his plot to make trouble for Onias with the help of the governor Apollonius, slandered Onias on the grounds that he had acquired undue influence over Heliodorus by foul means (2 Macc. 4.1: *ὡς αὐτός τε εἶη τὸν Ἡλιόδωρον ἐπισεσκεικῶς καὶ τῶν κακῶν δημιουργὸς καθεστηκῶς*). In other words, Onias's enemies did in fact regard Onias as having scored a political success in this round when he secured the support and protection of Heliodorus.

74. It cannot be a coincidence that Onias is said to have withdrawn into sanctuary (2 Macc. 4.33: *εἰς ἄσυλον τόπον*) at Daphne. This must surely refer to the Sanctuary of Apollo at Daphne, the patron deity of the Seleucid house, whose temple at Daphne was internationally famous and was extensively refurbished by Antiochus IV as part of a wide program of benefactions. This explains what one might otherwise regard as a rather peculiar (although not strictly forbidden) act on the part of a pious Jew. By taking shelter in this particular pagan sanctuary, Onias not only (temporarily) secured his physical safety but also implicitly appealed to the protection of Antiochus's divine patron. Regardless of the precise historicity of this tale, Onias is here represented as being capable of considerable political savvy.

2 Maccabees, and the author places a high value on his ability to intercede with the Seleucids in the interest of the Jews.<sup>75</sup> It is apparent from 2 Maccabees that the Jewish ambassadors who later journeyed to Sparta and Rome were no novices at international Hellenistic politics.<sup>76</sup>

Finally the entire plot of the Book of Esther and the stories in the first six chapters of Daniel revolve entirely around the plight of Jews at the royal court (in these cases, Babylonian and Persian). Daniel was among a number of well-born Jews recruited to serve at court from a very young age (Dan. 1.3–5). Nebuchadnezzar promotes him to the position of chief satrap of Babylon,<sup>77</sup> and in the reign of Darius the Mede he becomes one of three governors (*τακτικούς*) in charge of the 120 satraps who administered the empire in accordance with Darius's reorganization (6.1–2).<sup>78</sup> His position at court, despite numerous crises and episodes of persecution narrowly averted, could scarcely have been higher.

Esther likewise comes to occupy the highest conceivable position—for a woman—when she is chosen to marry Ahasuerus. To be sure, she conceals her ethnic identity on her uncle's orders, and so she is perhaps not the best

75. The author explicitly contrasts Onias's decision to appeal to the king with the nefarious activities of the likes of Simon (2 Macc. 4.5: οὐ γινόμενος τῶν πολιτῶν κατηγορος, τὸ δὲ σύμφoron κοινῇ καὶ κατ' ἰδίαν παντὶ τῷ πλήθει σκοπῶν). This passage has been called defensive, indicating that the author was uneasy about any involvement of a pious Jew in Hellenistic politics and felt a need to defend Onias's actions here. On the contrary, the author here compares Onias favorably with Simon's ilk as a positive example of how a pious Jew should work within the system whenever possible for the good of his or her people. Onias symbolizes the norm, the system as it ought to work, and his murder is a symptom of the breakdown of that system and the onset of crisis.

76. Cf. 2 Macc. 4.11, where Jason is accused of casting aside the royal privileges (presumably something like the privileges that, according to Josephus, Antiochus III granted to the Jews after the conquest of Coele Syria in 200 B.C.E., which guaranteed the Jews the right to practice their religion and govern themselves in their traditional manner without interference) that had been obtained for the Jews by John, the father of the Eupolemus who went as an ambassador to Rome. This unknown John, Onias, and Eupolemus are represented in 2 Maccabees as occupying a continuum of constructive diplomatic activity, which was recklessly interrupted by Jason and his followers.

77. Dan. 2.48: ἄρχοντα σατραπῶν. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, at Daniel's request, are assigned the vaguely titled position ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα τῆς χώρας Βαβυλωνίος (2.49), which in Seleucid parlance commonly denotes general authority over a particular region at the highest level. These three men are after the fiery furnace incident further promoted in some unspecified manner and given charge of all the Jews in the kingdom (3.30). The mention of satraps is of course an anachronism belonging to the Persian period.

78. Another anachronism; this is obviously an allusion to the reforms of Darius I of Persia.

example of the high status of Jews at court; her position is nevertheless analogous to that of other high-ranking Jews. Mordecai's position in the story is interesting. According to the Hebrew version, Mordecai sat "at the gate"<sup>79</sup> until he was finally promoted, late in the story, to serve at court (Esther 6.3; 8.1–2, 15). However, his position at the gate seems to have been uniquely privileged. He is in a position, for instance, to discover the plot of the eunuchs to kill the king (2.22), and he is in constant contact with Esther—a curious circumstance, which the author only occasionally remembers to explain.<sup>80</sup> The Greek version carries the implication of Mordecai's privileged status to its logical extreme by simply promoting him to the court at a much earlier stage.<sup>81</sup> The Mordecai of the Greek Esther is assumed throughout to be a "great man" (A2: *ἀνθρῶπος μέγας*), a high-level courtier like Daniel, the object of his rivals' professional jealousy.<sup>82</sup>

Thus all these texts assume or expressly state that Jews occupy high places at court and are as capable as their gentile contemporaries of taking an active role in high-level politics and intrigue. Despite the occasional persecution, the Jews in these texts have in no way been ghettoized or excluded from the public stage.

Another sign in all these texts of normally harmonious relations between royal authority and the Jews is their typically being represented as highly regarded by both king and courtiers.

Examples abound in the *Letter of Aristeas*. Both Philadelphus and his leading courtiers are fulsome in their admiration for the Jews. The Jewish Law is so famous that it has come to the attention of the distinguished Demetrius of Phalerum (*LtAris* 10); he cites as his authority the well-known historian Hecataeus of Abdera (31). Aristeas, the narrator and putatively a high-level gentile courtier, seizes his opportunity to forward a cause he has long supported, the liberation of the Jews enslaved in the reign of Ptolemy I Soter (12). Philadelphus insists upon paying full price for the liberation of every Jewish slave, down to the infant in arms and even including "any who were in the country previously or introduced subsequently," a clause added on the king's own initiative (26). To his subordinate Eleazar, the high priest,

79. Esther 2.19, 21; 3.2; 5.13. Cf. Moore 1971: 32.

80. Such as, e.g., Esther 2.11, 4.2; but cf. 2.22.

81. Addition A 2, *θεραπεύων ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ*; Addition A16, *θεραπεύειν ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ*.

82. The words *ὅτι προήχθη Μαρδοχάιος*, "because Mordecai had been promoted," are added only in the Greek (Esther 2.21) as an explanation for the disaffection of the eunuchs who plotted to kill the king. Addition A17 also implies that Haman initially turned against Mordecai because of palace rivalry *ὑπὲρ τῶν δύο εὐνούχων* rather than, as the Hebrew version has it, because Mordecai refused to bow down to him.

the king writes a letter that would be more appropriate addressed to an equal (35–40).<sup>83</sup> The gifts accompanying Philadelphus's embassy to Jerusalem, described at length, are staggeringly extravagant (50–82). When the Jewish elders arrive at the Alexandrian court, Philadelphus bumps them straight to the top of the audience roster, which Aristeeas explicitly tells us was unusual (174–75). Philadelphus then bows seven times before the scrolls and bursts into tears (177–78). A feast is celebrated for the Jews with every attention (182–86). Philadelphus probes the wisdom of the elders in mind-numbing detail and listens with reverential admiration; other philosophers at the court, like Menedemus of Eretria, are impressed (201). Aristeeas himself says of this account that he fears his readers will not believe him (300). Judging from the subsequent popularity of the text, he apparently underestimated the capacity of people to hear themselves praised.

In the *Letter of Aristeeas*, the Jews are regarded by king and court alike with the highest admiration. Third Maccabees makes essentially the same point. According to the author, trouble begins when Philopator visits Jerusalem, offers sacrifice and thank offerings to “God the Greatest” (τῷ μεγίστῳ θεῷ), and, stunned (καταπληγείς) by the beauty of the Temple, is eager to enter the Holy of Holies (3 Macc. 1.9). Philopator, like Philadelphus, admires the Temple and wishes to honor it; unfortunately, he lacks Philadelphus's courtesy and tact. For much of the subsequent narrative, the king's initial admiration is overlaid by his rage at being repulsed and his desire for revenge, but there is one passage that deserves closer attention. When the king temporarily suffers a divinely induced forgetfulness, he bitterly berates Hermon, the master of the elephants, and his Friends, and he threatens them with death when they remind him of his plan to execute the Jews (3 Macc. 5.31–33). The Jews, he says, are blameless in his eyes and have shown outstanding and unwavering loyalty to him and to his ancestors.<sup>84</sup> In the end, of course, the veil is lifted from the king's eyes, and perfect harmony is restored (6.22–29). Thereafter Philopator shows the most complete indulgence and favor to the Jews. He repeats his extravagant praise of their

83. The form of the address and the language of the letter are both those of someone making a polite request of an equal or a superior rather than that of a superior giving commands to an underling. Cf. the letters cited in fragment 2 of Eupolemus, in which Solomon addresses the kings of Egypt and Tyre in language reminiscent of the powerful Apollonius writing to his secretary and manager Zenon!

84. 3 Macc. 5.31: τῶν ἀνεγκλήτων ἐμοὶ καὶ προγόνους ἐμοῖς ἀποδεδειγμένων ὁλοσχερῇ βεβαίαν πίστιν ἐξόχως Ἰουδαίων. While the king may appear in this scene to be not quite himself, it is in fact the king's rage against the Jews that is abnormal. Philopator's words here are precisely consonant with his enlightened attitude at the end of the story and thus represent paradoxically a brief moment of sanity.



loyalty and good will (6.25–26), hosts a seven-day feast of deliverance at royal expense (6.30), and writes a letter to the generals of Egypt canceling the persecution and making arrangements for the Jews' safe return home (7.1–9)—a letter that goes so far as to acknowledge the power of the God of the Jews. Finally, and remarkably, he grants the Jews full immunity to avenge themselves upon the apostates who submitted to persecution and transgressed the Law (7.12). The reformed Philopator much resembles Aristeas's Philadelphus, almost a type of the ideal foreign ruler. Thus, the author of 3 Maccabees, like the author of the *Letter of Aristeas*, represents the normative state of affairs as harmonious. Although the persecution occupies the bulk of the book, it is exceptional and highly abnormal, being ascribed to the king's temporary madness.<sup>85</sup>

It is perhaps more surprising that in 2 Maccabees the Seleucid kings and their leading ministers and generals often express a like admiration for the Jews. We are told, for example, that so long as Onias ruled, the Seleucid kings were accustomed to honor the Temple, particularly Seleucus IV (2 Macc. 3.23). Once again the tenure of Onias as high priest is represented as a norm from which the Jews have unfortunately departed. Heliodorus, following the Temple incident, embraces Onias and returns to the capital, where he bears witness before Seleucus IV to the great power of the Jewish God to protect his own (3.35–40). After the murder of Onias, Antiochus IV weeps over him and executes his murderer Andronicus forthwith (4.37–38). Even after the outbreak of the revolt, there are isolated examples of Seleucid admiration for the Jews: Nicanor, having barely escaped with his life from battle, is said to have publicly acknowledged the power of God to defend the Jews (8.36); Antiochus IV, most improbably, repents on his deathbed, even offering to become a proselyte (9.11–17); and Lysias undertakes to negotiate peace with the Jews, because he acknowledges that they are unbeatable so long as they have the help of God (9.13). These instances of rapprochement are sporadic in the later part of the book, and there is no climactic reconciliation, but the author holds out some hope that the Jews may be able in the future to achieve some patched-up return to the happy state of affairs that existed under Onias.

The ability of the Jews to excite admiration and royal favor is a very marked theme in the Book of Daniel. The story begins when Daniel and his companions are selected, as young men of unusual promise, to participate in a program designed to integrate well-born young Jews (and presumably the youth of other nations as well) into the court culture (Dan. 1.3–5). Daniel

85. So, e.g., 3 Macc. 5.42, ἀλογιστίας.



is able to secure the privilege of a kosher diet when he proves to the chief eunuch that he and his companions are healthier on a diet of lentils and water than are their fellows who dine at the king's table (1.16). Nebuchadnezzar is forced to confess the power of Daniel's God when Daniel is able to solve a riddle that has baffled the king's wisest men (2.46–49); he subsequently passes a decree protecting the worship of the Jewish God after he witnesses an angel protecting the three young men in the fiery furnace (3.28–30). Later, the queen mother has heard of the fame of Daniel's wisdom; it is she who recommends that Belshazzar consult Daniel in the mysterious matter of the handwriting on the wall (5.11–12). The attitude of Darius is particularly remarkable: he does everything he can to protect Daniel from the consequences of violating the king's decree (6.14), and finally he must fall back on trusting Daniel's God to protect him (6.16). He fasts during Daniel's ordeal (6.18), and he rejoices over his salvation (6.23). The tale concludes with a decree in which Darius praises God (6.25–27), very like the decrees that conclude 3 Maccabees and Esther. Despite the apocalyptic tenor of Daniel in its present form, and its patently anti-Seleucid stance, the effect of the stories of Daniel 1–6 is to communicate the message that at least under Persian rule, persecution was ephemeral, and royal favor was the norm.<sup>86</sup>

Furthermore, the relationship between the Jews and the royal court is strongly reciprocal. Third Maccabees and other texts repeatedly emphasize the loyalty of the Jews to the empire under which they happen to be living—so long as that loyalty does not conflict with the demands of Jewish law. This theme is strongly foregrounded in 3 Maccabees, in which the loyalty of the Jews undergoes the ultimate test. In the very first chapter (3 Macc. 1.2–3), on the eve of the battle of Raphia, Philopator is saved from the plot of Theodotus, a Greek, by Dositheus, an apostate Jew: here already the themes of political fidelity and apostasy are brought before us. A crisis is touched off when the Jews of Palestine, living at this time under Ptolemaic rule, loyally congratulate Philopator on his victory and welcome him to Jerusalem (1.8–9) but refuse to allow him to violate Jewish law by entering the Holy of Holies (1.11–12). Likewise, the loyalty of the Jews of Egypt is steadfastly asserted in the face of persecution (3.13), but the majority of the Jews nevertheless decline to escape persecution by apostatizing. Yet although apostasy is wholly unacceptable, neither is armed insurrection a valid

86. It is generally argued, on precisely these grounds, that Daniel 1–6 was originally composed before the rest and only later incorporated into the longer apocalyptic version we now have. For more discussion of the complex redaction history of Daniel, see Chap. 1, nn.50–52.

alternative, as is specifically evinced amid the crisis at Jerusalem, when hot-headed young men bent on taking up arms to protect the sanctity of the Temple are persuaded by the elders to trust in prayer and supplication instead (1.23). Both at Jerusalem and at Alexandria, the Jews are saved from pollution and martyrdom not by taking up arms in their own defense but by the intervention of God. The contrast with the Maccabean Revolt is pointed. At the end of the story, the Jews in a notable gesture of submission to royal authority request permission to punish the apostates, pointing out that those who disobey God's commands to save their skins will never be loyal to the king either<sup>87</sup>—and the king, in a startling reversal, agrees with them. The wheel has come full circle: only the Jews who unlike Dositheus do not apostatize are truly loyal subjects of the king.

The theme of Jewish loyalty to the state is likewise strongly emphasized in the *Letter of Aristeas*. In the *Letter of Aristeas*, as in 3 Maccabees, the Jews of Egypt and the Jews of Palestine are subject to a single ruler of Egypt, in this case Philadelphus. The Jews of Egypt appear briefly only at the beginning and end of the story. In the context of the liberation of a hundred thousand Jewish slaves, it is mentioned that Ptolemy I Soter stationed thirty thousand Jews under arms in garrisons throughout Egypt (*LtAris* 1)—because of their proven loyalty, according to Philadelphus's letter to Eleazar (36)—and at the very end of the story “the multitude of the Jews” (τὸ πλῆθος τῶν Ἰουδαίων), assembled by Demetrius to hear the new translation, obediently acclaims the work and decrees that it must in no way be changed (308–11).

The loyalty of the Jews of Egypt, then, frames the narrative, and its centerpiece is the relationship of Philadelphus with the high priest and elders of Palestine. So elaborate are the diplomatic courtesies Philadelphus observes that they tend to obscure the plain fact that in his time Jerusalem was under Ptolemaic rule and obligated to honor the king's slightest request. Thus, strictly speaking, when Eleazar declares, “Whatever is to [the king's] advantage, even if it be contrary to nature, we will carry out,”<sup>88</sup> he does no more than acknowledge the reality of conquest; but he immediately adds, “for to do so is a mark of friendship and affection.”<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, upon acknowledging Philadelphus's innumerable benefactions toward the Jews,

87. 3 Macc. 7.11: προφερόμενοι τοὺς γαστροὺς ἕνεκεν τὰ θεῖα παραβεβηκότας προστάγματα μηδέποτε εὐνοήσιν μηδὲ τοῖς τοῦ βασιλέως πράγμασιν.

88. *LtAris* 44: πάντα γὰρ ὅσα σοι συμφέρει, καὶ εἰ παρὰ φύσιν ἐστίν, ὑπακουσόμεθα.

89. *Ibid.*: τοῦτο γὰρ φιλίας καὶ ἀγαπήσεως σημεῖόν ἐστι.

Eleazar goes on to say that the Jews have offered sacrifices to God on behalf of Philadelphus and his family, and have prayed as a body for his safety and prosperity. The relationship of patron and client is thus turned on its head, so that the benefactions conferred and the obligations imposed cancel each other out, and a mutually beneficial friendship of equals is established.

Though one would not expect the Jews' loyalty to a foreign ruler to be emphasized in a text primarily interested in the early years of the Maccabean Revolt, there are intriguing points of overlap between 3 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees. In particular, there is the remarkable similarity between the story of Heliodorus and Philopator's visit to Jerusalem. Seleucus IV sends Heliodorus to collect the equivalent of taxes on unreported income after Simon, a disaffected Jewish official, reports to the governor Apollonius that the Temple treasury is storing up money that has nothing to do with the sacrifices (2 Macc. 3.6). Onias, striking a balance between his duty to the king and his duty to the Temple, receives Heliodorus courteously and tries to explain that part of the money is intended for charity and part is being held in trust for Hyrcanus the Tobiad, that it does not belong to the Temple or to the king (3.9–12). When Heliodorus nevertheless insists, the priests, in acute distress, call upon God, who then strikes Heliodorus down like Philopator, as he attempts to enter the Temple (3.24–29). Unlike Philopator, Heliodorus does not become vengeful and enraged: restored to life by the prayers of Onias (3.31–34), he is immediately reconciled with the Jews, and he returns to Seleucus to make his report (3.35–36). The tag is especially noteworthy: Heliodorus advises Seleucus IV that if he has any enemies or traitors he wants to be rid of, he should send them to Jerusalem to violate the Temple, and God will take care of them (3.37–39). In a curious way, the equation of loyalty to the state and piety toward God so strongly made in 3 Maccabees (7.11–12) is here found also at the end of the Heliodorus incident.

In a sense, this insistence that loyalty to the state and piety toward God are of a piece, that any violation of the one inevitably compromises the other, perfectly counters one of the accusations most commonly leveled against the Jews. In Esther (3.8), Haman argues before the king that because the customs (*nomoi*) of the Jews are different from those of all other people, they do not and cannot obey the laws (*nomoi*) of the king. This allegation is a commonplace of anti-Jewish rhetoric in the Hellenistic period and later; it is used also by the enemies of the Jews in 3 Maccabees.<sup>90</sup> Just as in 3 Mac-

90. 3 Macc. 3.7: τὴν δὲ περὶ τῶν προσκυνήσεων καὶ τροφῶν διάστασιν ἐθρύλουν φάσκοντες μήτε τῷ βασιλεῖ μήτε ταῖς δυνάμεσιν ὁμοσπόνδους τοῖς ἀνθρώποις γίνεσθαι, δυσμενεῖς δὲ εἶναι καὶ μέγα τι τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐναντιούμενους.

cabees the Jews are ultimately able to convince the king that only the pious are truly loyal, so in Esther the king's savior and most loyal servant is shown to be Mordecai (6.2), whereas Haman proves to be a traitor, covertly working against the king's interests (7.6). So also Daniel claims to be protected by an angel in the lion's den not only because of his piety (ἐνθότης) but also because he had done the king no wrong.<sup>91</sup> The moral of these stories is clear and consistent: faithful observance of the Jewish Law and loyal observance of the law of the land are two sides of the same coin, and no violation of the one can be justified by appeal to the other. It is perhaps in this sense that we must understand the advice of the Jewish elder in the *Letter of Aristeas* who is asked how to be a lover of one's country (φιλόπατρις) and answers: "By keeping in mind that it is good to live and die in one's country."<sup>92</sup> The Jews of these texts are deeply committed to living and dying, as Jews, in the non-Jewish lands of their birth.

Third Maccabees and related texts, then, strongly emphasize the fundamentally harmonious relationship of the Jews with secular authority. Likewise, in 3 Maccabees and many related texts, the Jews are shown to enjoy good relations with their gentile neighbors—for the most part. Again, this is apparent in the sunny world of the *Letter of Aristeas*, but it has not always been recognized how strongly the same point is made in supposedly confrontational stories of persecution, like 3 Maccabees.

In such accounts, Jews regularly interact with gentiles without violating Jewish law. This is apparent in the *Letter of Aristeas*, which narrates the ultimate example of a cooperative Jewish-gentile enterprise: on the initiative of the king of Egypt and one of his most distinguished courtiers, and with the full cooperation and approval of the high priest, Jewish elders from Palestine work in an environment constructed by the king and court of Alexandria to translate the Jewish Law for the benefit of Greek-speaking Jews and

91. Dan. 6.(23)22: ὁ θεός μου ἀπέστειλε τὸν ἄγγελον αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐνέφραξε τὰ στόματα τῶν λεόντων, καὶ οὐκ ἐλυμήναντό με, ὅτι κατέναντι αὐτοῦ ἐνθότης εὗρέθη μοι· καὶ ἐνώπιον δὲ σου, βασιλεῦ, παράπτωμα οὐκ ἐποίησα.

92. *LtAris* 249: προτιθέμενος, εἶπεν, ὅτι καλὸν ἐν ἰδίᾳ καὶ ζῆν καὶ τελευτᾶν. This passage has traditionally puzzled commentators, as it seems to imply a veiled condemnation of the Diaspora. This is, however, surely a misreading. We are inclined to view the Jews of the Diaspora as exiles, strangers in a strange land whose true loyalty was owed to Jerusalem. Close study of these texts suggests that this is not how the Jews of the Diaspora saw themselves. Strong as the links to Jerusalem are acknowledged to be (see below), such passages as we have been examining suggest that many Jews clearly perceived themselves as loyal subjects of their foreign rulers and as natives of the lands in which they were born. For them, perhaps the ξενία that is said at *LtAris* 249 to bring contempt and disgrace would paradoxically have been to return permanently to the land of Judah.

for the edification of gentiles. The long symposium, at which Jew and gentile sit down together to eat a kosher meal and share in a philosophical debate in the best Greek tradition (*LtAris* 181–294), is symbolic of the entire enterprise. As has rightly been observed,<sup>93</sup> the author's enlightened attitude toward cooperation between Jews and gentiles is placed in the mouth of the high priest himself for good reason: it thus receives the highest possible sanction.

Whereas the *Letter of Aristeas* shows Jews and gentiles cooperating for mutual benefit at the highest levels of international diplomacy, in 3 Maccabees we find even the humbler Jews accustomed under normal circumstances to live on good terms with their gentile neighbors. The Jews of 3 Maccabees have enemies, of course, at both the highest and the lowest levels of society. When persecution is decreed, some gentiles (ἔθνεσιν) celebrate in the streets (3 Macc. 4.1), just as the enemies of the Jews at court are said to have feasted with the king to celebrate the Jews' imminent demise (5.3). Whoever these ἔθνη were, however, they were not the Greeks of Alexandria, who according to the author of 3 Maccabees were appalled and did their best to help the Jews (3.8). Moreover, the Greeks seem not to have been alone in sympathizing with the Jews: according to the author, the Jews made some (ἐνίοις) enemies because of their separatism, but in general they enjoyed a high reputation among all men (ἅπασιν ἀνθρώποις) for their orderly way of life (3.5). In the midst of persecution, the plight of the Jews moved even their enemies to tears (4.4). It is thus repeatedly emphasized that the enemies of the Jews were a minority, and that most of the Jews' neighbors supported and sympathized with them.

Again, although one would not expect 2 Maccabees to emphasize how harmoniously and even profitably the Jews can cooperate with gentiles, the early sections of the book contain surprising examples of exactly that. For example, the treacherous murder of Onias angers not only the Jews but many gentiles besides,<sup>94</sup> and when Antiochus IV returns to Antioch the Greeks of the city officially support the Jews in appealing to him for justice (4.35–36).<sup>95</sup> Thus, in 2 Maccabees as in 3 Maccabees, gentiles and especially the Greeks sympathize with the Jews and speak up for them when they are wronged.

Similarly in 2 Maccabees the Tyrians, full of sympathetic indignation,<sup>96</sup>

93. Howard 1971: 345.

94. 2 Macc. 4.35: πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐθνῶν.

95. Ibid. 4.36: συμμυσοπονηροῦντων καὶ τῶν Ἑλλήνων.

96. Note that the verb is virtually the same as at 2 Macc. 4.36: μυσοπονηροῦντες.

“provide handsomely” for the burial of Jews unjustly blamed and executed after a riot in Jerusalem (2 Macc. 4.49).<sup>97</sup> This incident invites comparison with Jason’s embassy to Tyre earlier in the same chapter (4.18–20). On that occasion, Jason sends money for sacrifices to Heracles during an annual festival, but the bearers scrupulously divert it toward building triremes instead. This passage is usually cited as an example of the pitfalls of Hellenism for the Jews: Jason’s behavior was so repugnant that even his own envoys could not stomach it! As the passage stands, however, it does not demonstrate the inherent evils of interaction with neighboring Greeks. Rather, it cites an instance of sensible diplomacy that shuns participating in a rite offensive to Jewish sensibilities while yet finding a way to honor Jason’s desire to gratify the Greeks of Tyre on their festival day. The Tyrians’ burial of the Jews later in the same chapter, as described above, illustrates the success of this compromise. Before the Maccabean Revolt, it was indeed possible, under the right circumstances, for the Jews of Palestine to interact with the inhabitants of Greek cities without offending the customs of either people. Whereas 1 Maccabees sees conflict between Jews and gentiles as natural and inevitable, 2 Maccabees tells the story of the ultimate failure of a compromise strategy that might have worked.

Where conflict does occur, it is inevitably blamed not upon the king himself but upon somebody else, usually his evil henchmen. In 3 Maccabees, Philopator represents himself as misled by his Friends and Companions. So also in the *Letter of Aristaeas*, Philadelphus in his rescript freeing the Jews from slavery blames their original enslavement on the greed of Soter’s soldiers, “contrary to the will of our father” (*LtAris* 23). In 2 Maccabees, Seleucus IV and Antiochus IV are repeatedly misled, either by renegade Jews like Simon and Menelaus or by the corruption of their own ministers.<sup>98</sup> It is assumed at least throughout the early chapters that redress can be had by appealing directly to the king, and in more than one case this strategy pays off.<sup>99</sup> In Esther (3.8), Ahasuerus is completely bamboozled by Haman, and he is outraged when Esther reveals to him the extent of Haman’s treach-

97. 2 Macc. 4.49: τὰ πρὸς τὴν κηδείαν αὐτῶν μεγαλομερῶς ἐχορήγησαν. This seems to imply, incidentally, that the Tyrians did not personally bury the Jews using Greek rites but paid for their burial, which was presumably carried out according to the proper Jewish rites.

98. E.g., 2 Macc. 3.5–7 (Simon, aided and abetted by Apollonius); 4.45–47 (Menelaus bribes Ptolemy son of Dorymenes to use his influence with Antiochus IV on his behalf).

99. 2 Macc. 4.4 (Onias appeals to Seleucus IV over the head of Apollonius); 4.36–38 (the Jews appeal to Antiochus IV for, and obtain, the punishment of the murderer of Onias).

ery (7.5–10). Likewise in Daniel, Darius (to take but one example) is dismayed to realize that his courtiers have misled him into convicting Daniel, although in this case he is unable to contravene “the law of the Medes and Persians” and can only pray for his friend (Dan. 6.14–23). This thematic insistence that the king is not to blame and that recourse is always available shrewdly defends the ultimate legitimacy of secular authority even in times of trouble. Fundamentally, it affirms the faith of the Jews that the system can and does work for them.

Although these texts stress the value of good relations between the Jews and secular authority and gentile neighbors alike, they in no way neglect the paramount importance of adhering to the tenets of Jewish law. This is manifest in 3 Maccabees. The whole text revolves around the Jews’ refusal to do anything in violation of the Law.<sup>100</sup> Death is infinitely preferable to the violation of any particular of the Law—a point explicitly made during the initial incident at Jerusalem.<sup>101</sup> Any method of avoiding apostasy is acceptable (cf. 3 Macc. 2.31–33, where the Jews of Alexandria try to escape the consequences of Philopator’s decree by bribing the officials in charge of the registration), but the attitude toward those who choose to violate the Law is utterly uncompromising. The apostates are shunned by their neighbors (2.33), and when Philopator is brought to realize the error of his ways, the apostates are ruthlessly slaughtered (7.10, 7.14–16). Where the author of 3 Maccabees stands on this issue is clear beyond question.

It is less often recognized that in the *Letter of Aristeas* the author’s commitment to this same principle is no less uncompromising. Although the *Letter of Aristeas* goes to great lengths to celebrate cooperation between Jews and Greeks, there is no evidence anywhere in the text that the author would have tolerated assimilation to the point of abandoning Jewish traditions. On the contrary: he returns again and again to the point that even the deepest involvement in the non-Jewish world is compatible with the maintenance of Jewish identity. Eleazar’s elaborate, highly allegorical defense of Jewish dietary regulations is but one example of the author’s commitment to such separatism as is required under Jewish law (*LtAris* 128–71), and we see when

100. Indeed, the puzzling series of decrees issued by Philopator at Alexandria (2.28–30; 3.1, 12–29; 4.13) seems to have no intelligible purpose other than to present the Jews with a choice between apostasy and death. They are purely a plot device, which perhaps explains why scholars have never been able to reconstruct from these decrees some coherent royal policy that lay behind the supposed real persecution or persecutions.

101. 3 Macc. 1.29: πάντων τότε θάνατον ἀλλασσομένων ἀντὶ τῆς τοῦ τόπου βεβηλώσεως.



the elders arrive at Alexandria and are invited to a kosher feast that Philadelphus is more than willing to respect Jewish scruples on just this point (181). Moreover, the author insists repeatedly upon the perfection of the Greek translation of the Torah. Its infallibility is guaranteed on the one hand by the fact that the translators are hand-picked by the high priest himself and base their translation upon a manuscript brought straight from the Temple; on the other, by the fact that the elders prove themselves to be perfectly at home amid the well-known intellectual rigors of the Ptolemaic court. Despite its rather brief account of the translation itself, the translation is in a very real sense the centerpiece of the *Letter of Aristeeas*. Greek language is no barrier to keeping the Jewish law.

Second Maccabees not surprisingly emphasizes the importance of adhering to traditional Jewish Law. Especially in its earlier chapters, 2 Maccabees does not exhibit so uncompromising a hostility toward the interaction of Greeks and Jews as has sometimes been thought;<sup>102</sup> but where the reforms of Jason are roundly condemned, it is not because the new fashions are Greek but precisely because they are *παράνομοι*—contrary to Jewish law (2 Macc. 4.12)—and because, in effect, they encourage the Jews to neglect and flout the Law (4.13–15). As noted above, the high priesthood of Onias is represented as a golden age when Onias not only cooperated with the Seleucids but, unlike Jason and Menelaus, vigorously upheld the Law and the sanctity of the Temple.<sup>103</sup>

In the Book of Daniel, the first six chapters present several examples of how willingly Daniel and his companions adhere to Jewish law even when they are isolated from their fellow Jews or when refusal to assimilate becomes awkward and even dangerous. In an interesting sequence toward the beginning of the book (Dan. 1.8, 10–16), Daniel and his companions are able to convince the chief eunuch to allow them to keep a kosher diet, although the official is at first afraid that their refusal to eat from the king's table will reflect badly upon them and upon himself. Likewise, two of the persecutions that Daniel and his companions miraculously survive are touched off by their refusal to abandon the core principles of Jewish tradition: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are cast into the fiery furnace because they refuse to bow down to a golden idol (3.18), and Daniel, conversely, is cast into the

102. See above, Chap. 1, n. 102.

103. Cf. 2 Macc. 3.12, where Onias attempts to protect the sanctity of the Temple against Heliodorus, and 4.33–34, where he vigorously denounces Menelaus's despoliation of the Temple, bringing about his own murder. For contrast, one need only consider 2 Macc. 5.15–16, where Menelaus not only fails to protect the Temple from Antiochus IV but actually acts as his guide and helps him to strip the place bare.



lion's den because he perseveres in offering prayers to God after a decree forbids praying to anyone but Darius.

The Book of Esther offers an interesting contrast, for the original Hebrew text betrays little concern for Jewish adherence to the Law; rather, it emphasizes national solidarity, the loyalty that one owes to family and kin group independently of religious obligations (e.g., Esther 4.13–14, 10.3). The Greek versions of Esther, by contrast, are profoundly concerned with religion. Most commentators have observed that the Greek translation corrects the secular tone of the original, incorporating several instances of Esther's showing concern for her obligations under Jewish law. For instance, where the Hebrew version has Esther conceal her ethnic origins on Mordecai's orders (2.20), the Greek adds that Mordecai further commanded her "to fear God, and perform his commandments, just as when she was with him; and Esther did not change her way of life."<sup>104</sup> Again, when Esther prays to God before her ordeal (in Addition C, a passage not in the Hebrew), she professes her hatred of her mixed marriage in the strongest terms and swears that she has not eaten from the royal table or drunk the wine of libations (i.e., participated, even passively, in any pagan ritual).<sup>105</sup> The concerns that Esther here expresses appear nowhere in the original Hebrew version, but by the time of Esther's translation into Greek such concerns had become acute for the translator and his audience.

In 3 Maccabees and elsewhere, not only is the highest importance placed on the correct observance of Jewish law, but traditional piety is regarded as virtually inseparable from the loyalty that one owes to the state. An interesting corollary to this attitude is the belief, repeatedly stressed in 3 Maccabees and elsewhere, that the prosperity of the non-Jewish state depends on the favor of God. In 3 Maccabees, the reformed Philopator himself espouses this belief upon waking from his madness, ordering his Friends to release the children of "the all-powerful living God in heaven, who from

104. Esther 2.20: οὕτως γὰρ ἐνετείλατο αὐτῇ Μαρδοχαῖος, φοβεῖσθαι τὸν θεὸν καὶ ποιεῖν τὰ προστάγματα αὐτοῦ, καθὼς ἦν μετ' αὐτοῦ· καὶ Ἑσθηρ οὐ μετήλλαξεν τὴν ἀγωγὴν αὐτῆς.

105. Addition C 25–29, a remarkable speech that is worth quoting at length: πάντων γνώσωις ἔχεις καὶ οἶδας ὅτι ἐμίσησα δόξαν ἀνόμων καὶ βδελύσσομαι κοίτην ἀπεριτμήτων καὶ παντός ἄλλοτριου. σὺ οἶδας τὴν ἀνάγκην μου, ὅτι βδελύσσομαι τὸ σημεῖον τῆς ὑπερφηφάνιας μου, ὃ ἐστίν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς μου ἐν ἡμέραις ὀπτασίας μου· βδελύσσομαι αὐτὸ ὡς ῥάκος καταμηνίων καὶ οὐ φορῶ αὐτὸ ἐν ἡμέραις ἡσυχίας μου. καὶ οὐκ ἔφαγεν ἡ δούλη σου τράπεζαν Ἀμαν, καὶ οὐκ ἐδόξῃσα συμπόσιον βασιλέως οὐδὲ ἔπιον οἶνον σπονδῶν.

the time of our ancestors until the present has provided our affairs with uninterrupted prosperity and glory.”<sup>106</sup>

This same theme pervades the *Letter of Aristeas*. The belief that the God of the Jews, “God the Greatest” (τῷ μεγίστῳ θεῷ; cf. 3 Macc. 1.9), actively guides, protects, and honors the kingdom of Philadelphus is expressed not only by the king himself in his letter to the high priest Eleazar (*LtAris* 37) but by leading courtiers such as Aristeas (15) and Sosibius (19). In this context, the prayers offered by the Jews of Jerusalem (45) and later by the eldest of the priests sent by Eleazar (185) for the prosperity of Philadelphus’s kingdom and family acquire more than symbolic significance. The link between divine favor and the well-being of the kingdom is so pervasive in the extended symposium (*LtAris* 187–294) that this scene has been analyzed as a secular treatise on kingship, imported wholesale into an otherwise Jewish text.<sup>107</sup> Though it is a mistake thus to detach the symposium from the rest of the text, the underlying intuition is nevertheless correct: this theme, as it is explored in Jewish texts, is adapted from a common tenet of Hellenistic kingship theory. That theory conventionally stresses the importance of divine favor for the legitimacy and hence the prosperity of the royal lines established by the Successors of Alexander. In Jewish texts, the role of Zeus, or Apollo, or Dionysus is simply taken over by the Jewish God, whose stamp of approval legitimates the royal house in the eyes of Jews and gentiles alike.

The same theme recurs briefly in the Book of Daniel when the prophet tells Nebuchadnezzar that he is the “head of gold” in his vision of the idol with feet of clay, “to whom the God of heaven has given a powerful and strong and honorable kingdom” (Dan. 2.37–39).<sup>108</sup> Given the tenor of the rest of Daniel’s vision, in which the feet of iron mixed with clay represent the weakness and ultimate collapse of the Greek (i.e., Seleucid) kingdom, one infers that the divine favor granted to the Babylonians has been withdrawn from the Seleucids. The same theory that is invoked in 3 Maccabees and the *Letter of Aristeas* to legitimize Ptolemaic rule is thus here invoked to strip the Seleucid empire of its legitimacy—an intriguing testimony to

106. 3 Macc. 6.28: ἀπολύσατε τοὺς υἱοὺς τοῦ παντοκράτορος ἐπουρανίου θεοῦ ζῶντος, ὃς ἀφ’ ἡμετέρων μέχρι τοῦ νῦν προγόνων ἀπαραπόδιστον μετὰ δόξης εὐστάθειαν παρέχει τοῖς ἡμετέροις πράγμασιν.

107. Murray 1967: 337–71.

108. Dan. 2.37: ὃ ὁ θεὸς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ βασιλείαν ἰσχυρὰν καὶ κραταιὰν καὶ ἔντιμον ἔδωκεν.

the influence of an essentially Hellenistic ideology upon the thought of Greek-speaking and Aramaic-speaking Jews alike.

One last theme linking these texts is particularly prominent in 3 Maccabees: the stress placed upon the close interdependence of the Jews of the homeland and the Jews of the Diaspora. In 3 Maccabees, the persecution in Egypt is directly touched off by a contretemps in Ptolemaic-ruled Palestine. Evidently the author of 3 Maccabees deliberately introduced this causal connection, as the legend of an attack upon the Temple miraculously thwarted and the legend of a persecution involving elephants at Alexandria are elsewhere attested independently of one another.<sup>109</sup> The implication is clear: events in Palestine could have direct repercussions upon Jews living in the Diaspora. This is logical enough in a story in which Egypt and Palestine both belong to the same Ptolemaic empire. When 3 Maccabees was written, however, Palestine was no longer under Egyptian control. (Indeed, it was probably no longer even nominally under Seleucid control.) The more pressing concern in the late second century B.C.E. was not shared Ptolemaic rule but rather the implications that the Maccabean Revolt and the subsequent rise of the Hasmonean dynasty might have for Jews living outside Hasmonean territory—in the case of 3 Maccabees, particularly for Jews living in Egypt.

Third Maccabees successfully addresses these concerns and finds one sort of resolution for the anxieties of the Jews in the late second and early first centuries B.C.E. The *Letter of Aristeas* offers a still more optimistic scenario: whereas 3 Maccabees envisions relations with the Jews of Palestine as a potential source of conflict that may nevertheless be resolved, the author of the *Letter of Aristeas* represents the relationship between the Jews of Palestine and the Jews of Egypt as essential to the well-being of both, though requiring extremely careful negotiations. In the *Letter of Aristeas*, Philadelphus negotiates with Eleazar as if with an independent ruler of equal status—that is, Eleazar occupies in the narrative the place that from the mid-second century onward was occupied in Palestine by the increasingly pow-

109. A modern student of urban legends would certainly say that the Heliodorus incident in 2 Maccabees and the attack of Philopator on the Temple in 3 Maccabees are variants of the same tale; likewise, the tale of Philopator's persecution of the Jews of Alexandria and the very similar persecution attributed by Josephus to the reign of Physcon. I do not mean here to beg the question of whether the author of 3 Maccabees knew 2 Maccabees or whether Josephus in turn knew 3 Maccabees. Regardless of which text influenced which, the stories that 2 Maccabees and Josephus contain are evidence for the independent attestation of legends that are combined, to our knowledge, only by the author of 3 Maccabees. These problems will be examined further below, in Chap. 5.

erful and quasi-independent Hasmonean dynasty. Despite Aristes's glowing vision of the relationship between Philadelphus and Eleazar, the elaborate courtesy that each shows toward the other is a strong indication of genuine anxiety underlying the political ambiguities of the late second century B.C.E. This anxiety is no less acute in the *Letter of Aristes* than in 3 Maccabees; it is simply expressed in a different manner. Likewise, the repeated emphasis in the *Letter of Aristes* upon the central importance of Jerusalem and the Temple as the ultimate center of the Jewish Law and Jewish worship serves as a constant reminder to the Jews in Egypt that they cannot disregard any connection with their homeland, regardless of how fraught with difficulty such connections may have become.

The stories preserved in the original versions of Daniel and Esther are remarkable for their utter lack of concern for the Jewish homeland, which is literally never mentioned. When these stories originated, perhaps as early as the Persian period, relations with Palestine were apparently of no interest. Yet although relations with the Jews of Palestine may not have mattered much, if at all, to the Jews of Babylon and Media in (say) the fourth century B.C.E., there are indications that by the time of the mid-second century B.C.E. such relations were beginning to mean a great deal to the Jews of Egypt and Palestine at the very least. The prophecies of the more apocalyptic chapters of Daniel contain a clear allusion linking the first assault of Antiochus IV upon Jerusalem directly with his humiliation at the hands of Rome in Egypt. In Daniel's view, rightly or wrongly, international affairs could have very direct repercussions upon the Jews of the homeland.

Conversely, late additions to the texts of 2 Maccabees and Esther indicate that the Jews of Palestine were beginning to take a very strong interest in the religious observances of their coreligionists in Egypt—and no doubt in other parts of the Diaspora, although we lack direct evidence for this. The famous letters appended to the opening of 2 Maccabees (1–2), whatever their exact nature and origin, represent the Jews of Jerusalem in the late second century as being acutely concerned with the correct celebration of Hanukkah (or, more precisely, the purification of the Temple) in Egypt.<sup>110</sup> In view of the fact that a festival commemorating a historical event in Palestine can have been of interest to the Jews of Egypt only inasmuch as they might consider the fortunes of the Temple at Jerusalem as their own, it becomes apparent from the letter-writing campaign of the Jews of Jerusalem found in 2 Maccabees 1–2 that the rhetoric in the *Letter of Aristes* was not entirely home-grown in Alexandria. Rather, it was actively fostered and

110. E.g., 2 Macc. 1.9, 18; 2.16.

propagated by Jews living under the Hasmonean regime. From this point of view, the acute anxiety expressed in 3 Maccabees appears well founded: the consequences of events in Palestine might be forced, willy-nilly, upon the Jews of Egypt.

This trend of growing interest at Jerusalem in religious observances in the Diaspora is carried further in the colophon to the translation of Esther (Addition F), according to which this Greek Esther was translated at Jerusalem and brought to Egypt by a self-proclaimed priest and Levite, apparently with no other purpose than to propagate the celebration of Purim throughout the Diaspora.<sup>111</sup> The deliberate and ultimately successful propagation of a festival of purely local Persian origin throughout the Diaspora is truly remarkable. In the last centuries of the Hellenistic period, apparently, the Jews of Jerusalem were subtly but systematically manipulating the entire festal calendar of the Jews of Egypt—a process that would eventually culminate in the formation of a Jewish canon adopted by Jews throughout the Diaspora.

. . .

To sum up: themes in 3 Maccabees are paralleled in closely related Septuagintal texts, namely the *Letter of Aristeas*, 2 Maccabees, Esther, and Daniel. All these texts envision the relations of the Jews with foreign rulers, whether Ptolemaic, Seleucid, Babylonian, or Persian, and all represent these relations as fundamentally harmonious. Although their narratives often center around a persecution, that persecution is always represented as a deviation from the norm, and in most cases the story ends happily with harmony restored. Positive relationships between the Jews and their foreign rulers are explored on many levels. The stories generally assume or explicitly describe a world in which the Jews occupy high places at court and engage regularly in dynastic politics at the highest level. The Jews, like their gentile contemporaries, function as upper-class insiders and are counted among the elite. Furthermore, individual Jews and Jewish culture typically are highly regarded by the king and others at court. Such enemies as they have are few, and these are generally motivated by jealousy. Moreover, the relationship is reciprocal: the Jews' loyalty to their king is unfailing. If the king misguidedly demands something of the Jews that conflicts with their Law, they can only refuse and submit to persecution; active resistance is

111. Collins (2000: 112) characterizes the Greek translation of Esther as "Hasmonean propaganda."

never sanctioned, and in the end the king always realizes that the Jews' loyalty to himself is inseparable from their piety toward God.

Not only do the Jews enjoy good relations with their rulers; for the most part, they also enjoy good relations with their gentile neighbors and are able to interact with gentiles without being forced into any violation of the Law. This is true not only internationally (Philadelphus and Eleazar) but at the level of neighboring communities as well (Antioch, Tyre), and even at the level of neighboring shops in the streets of Alexandria and farms in the Egyptian *chōra*. Moreover, where the Jews do have enemies, these enemies are in the minority, and it is frequently emphasized that that minority specifically excludes the Jews' Greek neighbors.<sup>112</sup> When the king persecutes the Jews, it is always because he has been misled by certain malicious persons, and recourse can regularly be had by appealing directly to the top. As the papyri indicate, the Jews were not the only inhabitants of Egypt (or, for that matter, of any other bureaucratic empire) who occasionally felt persecuted and trusted in the probity of the highest officials to protect them from their enemies.

In these texts, however good the relations may be between the Jews and their rulers on the one hand, and the Jews and their neighbors on the other, obedience to the tenets of Jewish law is nevertheless generally represented as paramount. There can be no excuse for apostasy. Where actual conflict occurs, the Jews have no choice but to put up with inconvenience and even, if necessary, submit to persecution sooner than violate the Law. On the positive side, however, these texts stress that even in the most difficult circumstances compromise within the limits of Jewish law remains possible. In fact, not only is traditional piety virtually inseparable from the loyalty that one owes to the state, but the very prosperity of the state itself depends upon the favor of God. And finally, all these texts acknowledge a close interdependence between the Jews of Jerusalem and the Jews of the Diaspora.

Such themes, taken together, form a pattern within which 3 Maccabees and these related texts may be understood. To say this is not to deny the many differences among them. But 3 Maccabees and the *Letter of Aristeas*, so often represented as polar opposites—the one encouraging Hellenization and cooperation between Jews and gentiles; the other negative, con-

112. We may here have a relatively early development of the rhetoric that is heavily employed by Josephus and Philo when discussing conflict between the Jews of Egypt and their gentile neighbors. Both have a tendency to exculpate the "Greeks" of Alexandria and to identify their enemies as "Egyptian," whatever that may have meant after several centuries of intermarriage and cultural assimilation.

frontational, and separatist—are in fact in perfect agreement on all essential points. The differences between these two texts are purely a function of the imaginative point of view: one author has chosen for his subject a co-operative enterprise and the other a persecution happily averted, but each in his own way addresses the same concerns and makes the same point.

Daniel and 2 Maccabees, by contrast, are distinct from 3 Maccabees in many important ways. Daniel as we now have it was conceived as an apocalypse; 3 Maccabees betrays no apocalyptic influence. Whereas in the stories and prophecies of the Book of Daniel the Kingdom of God is foreseen sweeping aside the Greek (Seleucid) empire and establishing a kinder, gentler one in its place, the hopes of 3 Maccabees' author are fully realized in the reformed Philopator's kingdom. Likewise 2 Maccabees, despite sharing more than one might expect with 3 Maccabees, is conceived along very different lines. Whereas 3 Maccabees may be best characterized as a folktale or urban legend in literary form, inspired by a need to explain the long-forgotten origin a local Egyptian festival,<sup>113</sup> 2 Maccabees epitomizes a work of Hellenistic historiography recounting a more recent, well-documented historical event. Moreover, since 2 Maccabees principally regards the early years of the Maccabean Revolt, its overall attitude toward secular authority cannot help but be far more ambivalent than that found in 3 Maccabees.

Given the more confrontational outlook of Daniel and 2 Maccabees in their final form, it is perhaps not surprising that the thematic similarities I have identified with 3 Maccabees and the *Letter of Aristeas* in general occur in passages based on material that predates the contexts in which they now appear. The stories in Daniel's first six chapters are patently traditional, many of them originating as early as the Persian period, and the stories surrounding the life of Onias may likewise have been taken from oral tradition.<sup>114</sup>

Esther occupies a middle position between the more conciliatory stance of the *Letter of Aristeas* and 3 Maccabees on the one hand and the more confrontational attitude of Daniel and 2 Maccabees on the other. Like Daniel it has a long history, dating back as early as the Persian period. In this case, the thematic similarities with 3 Maccabees are noticeably stronger in the Septuagint translation of Esther than in the Hebrew version, where the like are weak or absent.

Even so, the similarities remain compelling among these diverse texts, which have as their common ground a close relationship with 3 Maccabees.

113. See further below, Chap. 5.

114. See above, Chap. 1, nn. 27–33.



The next section will examine central themes of 3 Maccabees to discover the interests of its author and his audience, and what those interests can tell us about Hellenistic Jewish identity at a particular place and time. Although none of our authors would have approved of the extreme assimilation attributed to Jason and later Menelaus, each would have understood the plaint attributed to the “lawless men” (*υἱοὶ παράνομοι*) of 1 Maccabees: “Come, let us make a covenant with the gentiles who live around us, for ever since we separated ourselves from them, we have had nothing but trouble.”<sup>115</sup> Each of their texts is concerned to address the problem of relations with gentile neighbors without forsaking the Jews’ covenant with God.

#### AUTHORSHIP AND AUDIENCE

Who wrote 3 Maccabees, for what audience, and for what purpose? Given the author’s evident familiarity with the Ptolemaic court and chancery, the setting of the story, reaching its climax at the hippodrome in Alexandria, and the elaborate—some would say precious<sup>116</sup>—literary style of the text, there has never been any doubt but that 3 Maccabees was composed in Egypt, almost certainly at Alexandria. Again, for obvious reasons, there can be no doubt that the anonymous author was Jewish. These facts have never been questioned. There do, however, remain many questions. Who was the intended audience? What was the author’s purpose in writing 3 Maccabees? And, given that interpretation becomes an open field the moment a text leaves its author’s hands, what if anything can be inferred from the text about the beliefs and attitudes of the author and his intended (and actual) audience? In short, what can we learn from 3 Maccabees about the milieu (or milieux) at Alexandria within which the text was composed, circulated, and read?

In order to say anything at all about the milieu in which a text has been written and circulated, one must first establish not only where it was composed, but also when, and the historical circumstances of its composition.<sup>117</sup>

115. 1 Macc. 1.11: *πορευθώμεν, καὶ διαθώμεθα διαθήκην μετὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν τῶν κύκλῳ ἡμῶν, ὅτι ἀπ’ ἧς ἐχωρίσθημεν ἀπ’ αὐτῶν, εὗρεν ἡμᾶς κακὰ πολλὰ.*

116. Denigration of the affected style of 3 Maccabees is widespread: cf. among others, e.g., Grimm 1857: 214–15; Hadas 1953: 22 (“verbose . . . florid . . . bombastic”); Tcherikover 1961: 1, 18 (“pompous”).

117. A principle rightly laid down by Tcherikover 1956 (cf. pp. 186–89), a seminal article. Tcherikover’s approach to the analysis of so-called Jewish apologetic writings in their historical context is exemplary. I have in many ways tried to apply his methods here, although I would argue that in the particular case of 3 Maccabees



I have argued that the text was composed in the later Ptolemaic period (ca. 150–30 B.C.E.), not in the Roman period (ca. 30 B.C.E.–70 C.E.).<sup>118</sup> This date establishes very general parameters for understanding the text. The Ptolemaic era was a time of relative prosperity for Jews, whereas the Roman period was one of greater conflict.<sup>119</sup> Although the precise extent of conflict in the Roman period is debatable,<sup>120</sup> Roman rule did bring the imposition of a hated poll tax, the first documented riots and massacres at Alexandria, and writings by Philo and Josephus that are apologetic in the true sense—that is, as aggressive defenses of Judaism directed explicitly against its enemies. By contrast, in the more prosperous Ptolemaic period leading Jews exercised considerable influence at court and participated actively in the vicissitudes of dynastic politics.<sup>121</sup> Onias IV founded a temple at Leontopolis, built a fortress there, and surrounded it with Jewish military settlers who farmed the area (which came to be known as “Onias’s territory”) and served as a unit in the Egyptian army down to Roman times.<sup>122</sup> No doubt there were other Jewish military settlers who had farmed the Egyptian *chōra* since the time of Ptolemy I Soter. Thus in the later Hellenistic period the Jews of Egypt, both in Alexandria and in the *chōra*, served alongside their neighbors as courtiers, generals, shopkeepers, farmers, and soldiers. Close interaction with non-Jews was inevitable, and assimilation vied with traditional ties even as a new experiment in Hellenistic self-government was being undertaken by

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Tcherikover’s dating of the text to the Roman period, and consequently his interpretation of the text, is misguided.

118. See above, “Date of Composition.”

119. So, most succinctly, Tcherikover (1956: 188–90), who gives a summary account of the historical circumstances of what he calls the periods of “full flourish” (180–30 B.C.E.) and “crisis” (30 B.C.E.–66 C.E.). His characterizations are essentially still those widely accepted in the literature today, with but minor variations.

120. For instance, it is by no means clear that Jews, individually or collectively, acquired Alexandrian citizenship in the Hellenistic period but then were systematically deprived of it in the Roman period, whether as a result of the Augustan poll tax or by the edict of Claudius (*pace* Tcherikover 1956: 189–90; for a recent overview of this perennially controversial issue, see Barclay 1996: 60–71). The extent of fully developed anti-Semitism in the Roman period before 70 C.E., too, has been somewhat overstated (Collins 2000: 6–13), although the increasing frequency of violent clashes between Jews and their neighbors in the first century C.E. (particularly in Egypt) can hardly be denied (Barclay 1996: 48–81).

121. E.g., Onias IV, who served as a *stratēgos* under Cleopatra II in 145 B.C.E., remaining loyal to her in the conflict with Physcon (Jos. C.Ap. 2.49–50), and Ananias and Chelkias, who served as generals under Cleopatra III in 104–102 B.C.E., at the head of a section of the Egyptian army made up entirely of Jewish military settlers from Leontopolis. (Jos. AJ 13.349). Cf. Tcherikover 1959: 281–84.

122. Cf. Tcherikover 1959: 278–89.

the Hasmoneans in neighboring Palestine.<sup>123</sup> It is against this general background that 3 Maccabees must be understood.

For whom was the author writing? It was long thought that so-called apologetic Jewish writings, mainly from Alexandria, were written primarily for a gentile audience, namely the Hellenized elite. Hence the very term “apologetic,” which implies a need felt by the Jews to defend their culture and religion in the skeptical eyes of an elite educated in, and respecting, only classical Greek culture.<sup>124</sup> The broad category “apologetic” has been taken to include not only true self-defense against perceived anti-Semitism, such in the tracts of Josephus and Philo, but also highly idealized representations of Judaism (panegyric), attacks on polytheistic religions (polemic), and active proselytism of gentile converts (propaganda).<sup>125</sup> V. A. Tcherikover, however, has thoroughly demonstrated how improbable it is that the entire corpus of Hellenistic Jewish literature was addressed primarily to Greek-speaking gentiles.<sup>126</sup>

Tcherikover reminds us, tellingly, that ancient conditions of publication were in no way conducive to bombarding an indifferent population with unwanted information; rather, the circulation of manuscripts in antiquity depended almost entirely upon the initiative of the reader in seeking out copies and passing them on to friends, and hence depended upon a strong preexisting interest on the part of the intended audience.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, Greeks in the Hellenistic period had no interest in or knowledge of the literature of the Bible, as is evident from the complete absence in non-Jewish literature of any citations from the Greek Bible before the Christian era; yet much

123. Tcherikover 1956: 189.

124. Recently, however, Collins (2000: 261) has observed that a distinction can be made between apologetic literature (which could, in theory, be aimed at persuading a primarily Jewish audience) and proselytizing (which by definition would be aimed at converting gentiles). If “apologetic” is used in this sense, then certainly much Hellenistic Jewish literature is apologetic or didactic in nature, though it remained primarily a mode of Jewish self-expression in a Jewish context (so, rightly, Collins 2000: 271).

125. Tcherikover 1956: 169.

126. Tcherikover 1956. Feldman (1996: 216–29) has attempted to critique Tcherikover’s article, but his objections are largely limited to the period of Josephus and Philo (citing passages from these authors in which it can clearly be seen that gentiles were among the intended audience); Tcherikover’s observations remain valid for the Hellenistic period. Collins (2000: 14–16) offers a well-balanced view of this issue, commenting that “there can be little doubt that the primary readership was Jewish” but adding that “this in no way precludes the possibility that the Jewish authors also aspired to address their pagan neighbors, however unrealistic their aspiration may have been” (Collins 2000: 16). See also Collins 2000: 261–72.

127. Tcherikover 1956: 171–74.

Jewish literature is heavily invested in interpreting and commenting upon the biblical tradition for an audience that was already familiar with the texts.<sup>128</sup> Finally, high praise of Judaism has often been viewed as an effort on the Jews' part to impress their Greek contemporaries and to convince them of the equal, not to say superior, merit of Jewish culture and tradition. Yet the very passages cited as exemplifying this tendency are hardly likely to have had the desired effect. For instance, the passage of the *Letter of Aristeas* in which Philadelphus hastens to pay all honor to the Jewish envoys and finishes by bowing seven times before the scrolls and bursting into tears:<sup>129</sup> this scene can scarcely have inspired anything but incredulity and outright mirth in any gentile who was not already strongly prejudiced in favor of Judaism, to say the least. It is much more likely that those in need of reassurance were the Hellenized Jews themselves, who were deeply imbued with Hellenic culture and may have been led by their classical education to doubt the value of their own ancestral traditions.<sup>130</sup> Hence also the attacks upon pagan worship and especially upon Jewish lapses into apostasy:<sup>131</sup> the problem with polytheism was not that many non-Jews practiced it but that, as in the days of old, it held a considerable attraction for Jews who were tempted to leave the faith in order to assimilate to the ways of their neighbors.<sup>132</sup>

Thus one is entitled to doubt, *a priori*, whether 3 Maccabees is likely to have been addressed to the gentile readers of the elite literary circles of non-Jewish Alexandria or to the reigning Ptolemy himself. Examination of the text bears this out, for it is most unlikely to have been addressed to the powers that be. Philopator is represented (until his reformation) as a self-indulgent, sensual, vicious, irrational tyrant; such a portrait was not calculated to appeal to the Ptolemy of the moment. To be sure, the historical Philopa-

128. Ibid. 176–79.

129. *LtAris* 177–78.

130. One is reminded of Augustine, who confesses that as a youth, when he tried to reexamine the Latin Scriptures of the religion of his childhood in the light of his classical education, he was revolted by what at first seemed to him their embarrassing illiteracy: “to me they seemed quite unworthy of comparison with the stately prose of Cicero” (*Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin [London 1961] 60). The reaction of a highly educated and Hellenized Jew to some passages of the Septuagint may well have been not dissimilar; Barclay (1996: 108–9) speculates that one passage in Philo referring to Jewish critics of the Scriptures may reflect this social phenomenon. See also Tcherikover 1956: 180–81.

131. For Jewish attacks on pagan worship, see, e.g., Barclay 1996: 429–34.

132. Tcherikover 1956: 181.

tor was notorious, and indeed the happy ending of 3 Maccabees leaves the Philopator of the legend looking much more attractive than Polybius ever allowed the historical Philopator to be.<sup>133</sup> We need not, therefore, suppose that a ruler whose eye fell upon 3 Maccabees would have found the tale unduly offensive or seditious, but the text does not read like one calculated primarily to court a king's favor.

Nor can the text have intrinsically appealed to the Greco-Macedonian elite of Alexandria. The stress it lays upon the inviolability of the Law and the sanctity of the Temple; the prayers of Simon and of Eleazar, versed in the liturgical Greek of the Alexandrian synagogues;<sup>134</sup> the pitiable distress of the Jews when forced to contemplate the pollution of the Temple, or when compelled to choose between apostasy and death; the miraculous interventions of the all-powerful God on behalf of his people in answer to their prayers—none of these details seems likely to have aroused sympathy and interest, or even comprehension, in an audience not already sympathetic to the Jewish cause. Indeed, a non-Jewish reader is more likely to have been bemused by what would have seemed to him, as to Philopator, much ado about nothing. The story is calculated rather to appeal to cultural taboos deeply rooted in a traditional Jewish upbringing and to confirm preexisting beliefs about (for instance) God's concern for his chosen people. In short, there should be no doubt that the author not only was Jewish himself but was writing for a Jewish audience, as most scholars who have worked closely with 3 Maccabees have in fact assumed.<sup>135</sup>

But precisely what Jewish audience did the author intend to address, and (a closely related question) with what purpose? Tcherikover rightly stresses that the Hellenistic Jews of Alexandria, as represented by their literary production, were not culturally monolithic. Like any community, theirs was di-

133. See below, Chap. 5, pp. 202–9 for a detailed comparison of Philopator's character as it is described by the historical sources with Philopator's character in 3 Maccabees.

134. It should be noted that here and elsewhere I use the term "synagogue" somewhat loosely, since the institution was not yet fully defined in the Hellenistic period and varied from place to place (L. Levine 2000: 118–23). I use the term to refer to any "house of prayer" (*προσευχή*, the most popular term in Hellenistic Egypt) or building that would have been used for a variety of functions, possibly including community meetings, communal worship and/or prayer, study of the Torah, and public reading of the Torah. For the evidence for synagogues in Egypt in the Hellenistic period, see Barclay 1996: 26; Modrzejewski 1995: 87–98; L. Levine 2000: 75–82. For a more detailed discussion of the various functions of synagogues in the Second Temple period, see L. Levine 2000: 124–59.

135. E.g., Grimm 1857: 217–18; Emmet 1913: 157–58; Hadas 1953: 3; Anderson 1985: 515 (to cite only a few).

vided by ideological strains.<sup>136</sup> To whom, then, was the author speaking, and what was his message? Opinion on this question has been considerably divided in the scholarship on 3 Maccabees. Some have argued that the author sought to encourage his fellow Jews to resist persecution in the face of a specific crisis;<sup>137</sup> others, that the author sought in more general terms to exhort Jews to reject and separate themselves both from Greek culture and from fellow Jews who had compromised their religious purity by Hellenizing.<sup>138</sup> Some have located the popularity of the text narrowly among the disaffected, anti-Hellenizing lower classes—the Jewish segment of the notorious Alexandrian mob.<sup>139</sup> Some, more plausibly, have viewed the text quite differently, seeing it mainly as a generalized attempt to preserve Jewish orthodoxy while at the same time accounting for the long-forgotten origin of a popular Egyptian Jewish festival.<sup>140</sup> I for my part believe that to seek out and emphasize supposedly antigentile elements of 3 Maccabees is quite mistaken: the text aims not to promote hostility between Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors but to assist pious Jews strongly invested in Greek culture to steer a middle ground between the evils of separatism and the perils of assimilation.

The commitment of 3 Maccabees to the traditional Jewish way of life is too profound to be denied by anyone who works with that text; nor has it

136. Tcherikover (1956: 190–91), who cites (by way of example) conflicts between faithful Jews and apostates, between those who embraced Greek culture and those who shunned it, between advocates and opponents of the Septuagint, and between those who practiced more or less allegorical interpretations of the Bible. Unfortunately, Tcherikover goes on to make the unwarranted leap of assuming that the divisions and disagreements that are evident in Alexandrian Jewish literature are representative of some single deep social chasm, between rich and poor, traditional and Hellenizing (ibid. 191–93). This very modern view is not borne out by close examination of the texts available to us. There may well have been conflicts between the rich and poor in the Jewish community at Alexandria, but if there were, Alexandrian Jewish literature has not preserved the views of the disenfranchised.

137. So, e.g., Grimm 1857: 217; Hadas 1953: 3. Anderson 1985: 511–12 rightly questions this theory on the ground that “the book itself does not really read like a ‘crisis document.’” I have already (above, “Date of Composition”) advanced arguments against viewing 3 Maccabees as a response to a crisis in the Roman period (such as the introduction of the poll tax under Augustus or the troubles at Alexandria in the time of Caligula), but I postpone until Chap. 5, below, pp. 183–90, the discussion of theories that envision a crisis situation that lay behind the origin of the legend in the Hellenistic period, in 145 or 88 B.C.E.

138. E.g., Tcherikover 1956: 191–93; Nickelsburg 1981: 169.

139. Tcherikover 1956: 192.

140. Anderson 1985: 515. I use the term “orthodox” loosely; Barclay (1996) has clearly shown that while particular authors, groups, or communities individually had standards to define offending behavior, there was no fully agreed-upon standard for orthodoxy shared by all Jewish groups in the prerabbinic period.

ever been. This commitment brooks no compromise. The deep reverence of the Jews of Jerusalem for the sanctity of the Temple lies at the heart of the opening chapters. Not merely the priests but the entire population—women and children, hotheaded young firebrands and sober graybeards—are overwhelmed with anguish and dismay at the prospect of the pollution of the Holy of Holies (3 Macc. 2.16–23). This entire opening sequence depends for its emotional effect upon the assumption that the largely Egyptian Jewish audience shared this reverence toward the Temple, which most of them had probably never seen.<sup>141</sup>

Then again, just as the Jews of Jerusalem read the Law out to Philopator in an effort to dissuade him from his purpose, so also the Egyptian Jews' devotion to the Law is unshaken alike in the face of persecution and of material inducements. The first decree of Philopator mingles the carrot and the stick (3 Macc. 2.28–30). He decrees that all Jews are to be reduced to a degraded status (*οἰκετικὴν διάθεσιν*, 2.28; *αὐθεντίαν*, 2.29); they are to be registered and branded with an ivy leaf, the symbol of Dionysus. Those unwilling to sacrifice (i.e., to participate in civic cult?) are further to be banned from entering their own shrines and hence from practicing their own religion. Besides these threats, however, Philopator offers an incentive to anyone willing to be initiated into the Mysteries: the chance to escape the fate of their fellows and to enjoy *isopoliteia* with Alexandrian citizens. Only after the vast majority of the Jews decline to apostasize by bowing down before the Ptolemaic equivalent of the golden calf is a death sentence passed upon all the Jews in Philopator's realm (3.1; 12–30). We incidentally learn also that the Jews of Alexandria, although highly regarded by most of their neighbors, made some enemies by holding themselves apart not only in worship but also in diet (3.4, 7). It thus appears that the Jews of Egypt in 3 Maccabees adhere not only to the first commandment but to the dietary regulations as well. These are, of course, among the most difficult laws for Jews living in a non-Jewish society to keep.

Moreover, not only do the Jews of Egypt, like the Jews of Jerusalem, adhere to the Law regardless of the consequences, but they have only contempt for apostasy. Death is preferable (3 Macc. 1.29); those who apostasize are shunned by their neighbors (2.31–33, 3.23), and when the crisis is past the survivors obtain Philopator's permission to slaughter the renegades, whom they successfully represent as traitors alike to God and to the state

141. The same reverence for the Temple is expressed at length in the *Letter of Aristeas*, most notably in an extended ecphrasis devoted to describing Jerusalem and the Temple through the eyes of Aristeas and his fellow ambassadors (*LtAris* 83–120).

(7.10–15). Over three hundred apostates are killed. The only casualties of Philopator's abortive persecution are the faithless, and one could say that in a way the Jews not only survived the persecution, as represented by 3 Maccabees, but were even strengthened and purified by it. Indeed, the faithful treat the day of the slaughter as an occasion for celebration and joy (7.15). The message is clear, not to say chilling, for any Jew who had ever considered lapsing for any reason whatsoever, and those who have remained faithful in the face of inconvenience, difficulty, even prejudice, are heartily confirmed in their perseverance.

The text's preoccupation with the specter of apostasy is an important clue for our understanding of the everyday concerns of its intended audience. Even if like many a work of fiction 3 Maccabees makes its point by envisioning the most extreme situation imaginable—worship an alien god or else be slaughtered—the Egyptian Jews will daily have faced the dilemma in less dire form: the challenge of living in accordance with Jewish law far from the biblical homeland in a gentile society at best indifferent and at worst hostile to the concerns of observant Jews. This challenge will have been the greater insofar as during this period, before the full development of rabbinic Judaism after the destruction of the Temple, there may not have been perfect agreement at the level of the synagogue as to the exact requirements of Jewish law, especially outside the land of Israel. For instance, it is not clear whether all Jews in this period believed that the dietary laws were to be obeyed outside Israel.<sup>142</sup> Artapanus's sometimes wildly eccentric account of the life of Moses sufficiently demonstrates how diverse beliefs were within the Egyptian Jewish community in this period.<sup>143</sup> In addition, all the evidence indicates that this was a time of rapid Hellenization, that apostasy

142. Goldstein, in an article dealing with the tales of the Tobiad family preserved in Josephus's *Antiquities*, has a most enlightening note on a passage (*AJ* 12.213) that suggests that Hyrcanus ate meat that may not have been kosher. It reads, in part: "Alternatively, the original author may have held the view that the dietary laws were to be observed only in the Land of Israel (Deut. 12:1 with 12:20–25 and 14:3–21) or at any rate that they were not binding in Egypt (see Leviticus 11:45)." Whether or not this possibility throws any light on the particular passage, it is very salutary to realize that before the full development of rabbinic Judaism, such a doubt concerning a basic point of Jewish law could have existed (Goldstein 1975: 88 n. 11). It is worth noting that in the one passage of the Tales of the Tobiards in which religious scruples are mentioned (in connection with Joseph's near miss with a gentile dancing girl, *AJ* 12.187–89), the Tobiards are represented as trying to keep Jewish law as they understand it.

143. See Holladay (1983: 189–243) for a good edition and discussion of the fragments. Artapanus is normally dated to the period of Ptolemy VI Philometor (r. 180–145 B.C.E.; *op. cit.* 190).



was not uncommon—the apostate Dositheus is mentioned quite matter-of-factly at 3 Macc. 1.3—and that intermarriage was probably increasing. (Such a marriage is at the heart of *Joseph and Aseneth*, for instance.) In an atmosphere of such uncertainty, there will have been enormous anxiety attaching to the effort to remain faithful to the traditions of Jewish law.<sup>144</sup> Though it would hardly have been useful as a primer of practical advice, 3 Maccabees could offer reassurance and reaffirmation: not only is the effort to keep Jewish tradition worth making, but it will be rewarded in the end by divine sanction, royal favor, and material prosperity, whereas the apostate will be duly punished.

Yet 3 Maccabees does not affirm its loyalty to Jewish tradition at the expense of wholly rejecting Greek culture and gentile society. It advocates tradition, not separatism. In fact, the text betrays a considerable emotional investment in the ability to participate in non-Jewish elite circles. This is obvious already from the language of its composition. Even if by this time Greek had become the lingua franca of Egyptian Jews, the author's idiom is not simple, semiliterate, the Greek of the poor and downtrodden. On the contrary, it adopts a highly artificial style, typical of the Alexandrian rhetoric of the day.<sup>145</sup> By his style alone, the author bids to have his work accepted as sophisticated literature; in this sense, he himself is posturing as a member of the literary elite.

Not only does the author have literary pretensions, but he is deeply interested in the royal court as a center of high social status. He introduces us, at the very beginning of the story, to a Jew (albeit an apostate) so intimately employed in the king's service that he is in a position to save his life (3 Macc. 1.2–3). By using official documents phrased in a self-consciously correct idiom (2.28–30, 3.12–29, 7.1–9), the author advertises his own familiarity with court protocols, and he invites his audience to join him in that familiarity. Accordingly his audience, if not made up of political insiders, must at least have been made up of those who fancied themselves so. The author's offhand allusions to familiar details of the reign of the historical Philopator are likewise calculated to have the effect of appealing to the putative insider, while at once adding an air of authenticity. The battle of Raphia, Philopator's sister-wife Arsinoe, his debauchery, his evil companions, the conspiracy of Theodotus—all found in Polybius—are introduced as if they

144. For an excellent general discussion of the issues and concerns that Jews in Hellenistic Egypt would have likely dealt with on a daily basis, see Barclay 1996 (103–24), which analyzes levels of Jewish assimilation in Hellenistic Egypt.

145. Anderson 1985: 510, e.g.



are quite familiar to the reader and need neither introduction nor explanation.<sup>146</sup> Evidently the author expected his audience to be familiar not only with official court protocol but with court history and gossip as well. Such an expectation in turn must imply an audience predominantly either itself upper-class or else upward-identified. Such an audience is also implied in the dilemma posited by the author for his tale. Philopator's initial decree offers the Jews the choice between degraded status, which would presumably identify them with the native Egyptians (2.29, *οἰκετικὴν διάθεσιν*), and highly preferential treatment, which would place them on a par with the Hellenized citizens of Alexandria. Clearly, it was the upper-class Hellenized Jews, not the urban poor, who would have found such a choice most wrenching.

Although the portrait of Philopator before he is reformed is less than flattering, and although the Jews do unquestionably have enemies among the gentiles, there is no suggestion that Jews should separate themselves from court life or from their gentile neighbors. Certainly separation in worship and diet is advocated (3 Macc. 3.4–5). Yet precisely where this issue is raised we are explicitly told that although separatism in these matters did bring the Jews enemies, it won them respect and admiration in the eyes of most gentiles.<sup>147</sup> The separatism required by Jewish law must be observed even when the consequences are inconvenient, but at least in the author's view the good opinion of all right-thinking gentiles is likewise to be valued. Jews need not sacrifice good relations with their neighbors in order to keep God's law; indeed, keeping the Law will only enhance their reputation among many gentiles. Furthermore, although the Jews may have enemies among the gentiles, most of their Greek neighbors can be expected to sympathize with them, even to support them in times of trouble, as do the Greeks in 3 Maccabees (3.8). Without positive evidence, it is impossible to say how much Egyptian Jews interacted with their gentile neighbors in the Hellenistic period or how good relations between them were. We can, however, be certain at least of what the author of 3 Maccabees wished to believe about relations between Jews and gentiles, and what he encouraged

146. See below, Chap. 5, for the parallels with Polybius and other historical sources. The problems of the author's use of historical details and purportedly official documents will there be taken up in much greater detail.

147. 3 Macc. 3.4–5: *σεβόμενοι δὲ τὸν θεὸν καὶ τῷ τούτου νόμῳ πολιτευόμενοι χωρισμὸν ἐποιοῦν ἐπὶ τῷ κατὰ τὰς τροφάς, δι' ἣν αἰτίαν ἐνίοις ἀπεχθεῖς ἐφαίνοντο. τῇ δὲ τῶν δικαίων εὐπραξίᾳ κοσμοῦντες τὴν συναναστροφὴν ἅπασιν ἀνθρώποις εὐδόκμοι καθειστήκεισαν.*

his audience in turn to believe. Far from being a polemic against non-Jews, as is often supposed,<sup>148</sup> 3 Maccabees in fact does all it can to promote positive relations between Jews and gentiles.

The author likewise has very strong views about the loyalty that Egyptian Jews owe to the crown. Their loyalty even under persecution and their services to the state are repeatedly highlighted (3 Macc. 1.2–3, 1.8–9, 3.13, to cite only a few examples). The Jews have a long history of loyalty to the state, as Philopator himself acknowledges, at first only under the influence of divinely inflicted amnesia (5.31) but later freely and openly, in his letter to the generals of Egypt rescinding the persecution (7.1–9). Loyalty to the crown cannot justify pollution of the Temple or apostasy; in these cases, the righteous Jews' only choice is to disobey the king. Yet armed resistance is explicitly ruled out (1.23), and the Jews, constrained to what we today call "civil disobedience," must rely on God for their preservation (1.16, 27; 2.1–20; 5.6–8, 25, 51; 6.1–15). God inevitably provides (2.21–24, 5.11–13, 28, 6.18–21). In fact, as the Jews argue in appealing to Philopator for permission to punish the apostates, loyalty to the state is bound fast with piety toward God: those who disobey the commands of God cannot be trusted to obey the king (7.11–12). Loyalty to the state, even amid persecution, thus becomes a point of honor for the Jews, a further proof of their righteousness.

. . .

Let us summarize our inferences about the author and intended audience of 3 Maccabees. They placed the highest priority upon remaining faithful to their ancestral tradition. The importance of keeping Jewish law is paramount for them, from its first, most important commandment—*YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME*—to the seemingly trifling details of the dietary regulations. The Temple, although distant, is deeply revered. The liturgical Greek of the prayers of Simon and Eleazar suggests an intimate familiarity with regular worship in the largely Greek-speaking synagogues of Egypt. The special relationship of God with his chosen people, and his ability to hear their prayers in times of trouble and to intervene miraculously on their behalf, is affirmed throughout. In keeping with this commitment to a traditional Jewish way of life, the audience seems to have regarded apostasy as a threat even more serious than persecution. Those who forsake the faith "for the sake of their bellies" (3 Macc. 7.12) deserve only

148. See above, nn. 61, 137–39.

death; the purge of the faithless from the community is hailed as joyfully as is the deliverance of the survivors (7.15–16).

Yet even though keeping the Jewish Law is paramount and wholesale assimilation is regarded as the most serious threat to the community, the audience is not one inclined to embrace rigid separatism. On the contrary, the text encourages its reader to embrace and participate in the wider culture of the Hellenistic world—within the limits prescribed by the Law. The author has literary pretensions, and he expects his audience to have a taste for high rhetorical style. He is deeply interested in court life, from the language of official protocols to the gossipy detail surrounding the reigns of past kings, and he assumes a like interest on the part of his audience. The loyalty of the Jews to their sovereign, even under the severest strain, is much advertised, and the reader is encouraged to believe that that loyalty will in the end lead even the most irrational king to recognize the superior merit of his Jewish subjects. Cooperation with one's non-Jewish neighbors is likewise encouraged, and the good opinion of the gentiles is highly valued. Though the Jews have enemies, the author suggests that these are a misguided minority. Apart from a perverse few, all men respect the Jews for their virtuous way of life, and the Greeks of Alexandria in particular feel a strong sympathy for their Jewish neighbors in times of trouble. These are pleasant fictions, to be sure, but highly revealing of the readers' and author's concerns and desires.

The author and audience of 3 Maccabees were deeply committed to Jewish religious traditions, but at the same time they hoped to reap the benefits of participation in the cosmopolitan world of Hellenistic Alexandria. To cultivate a Greek education while remaining steeped in the culture of the synagogue and the Septuagint, to rise to lofty rank in the service of the court or the army and wield power at the highest levels without abandoning one's peculiar customs, can have been no easy task. The sheer existence of 3 Maccabees, however, suggests that there was a considerable audience in Alexandria toward the end of the second century B.C.E. who sought to do just that. The task of 3 Maccabees is not merely to preserve the traditions of the Jewish faith or to explain the origin of a particular Egyptian Jewish festival, although to be sure it does both. Rather, at its most ambitious, it seeks to help create a new Hellenistic Jewish identity embracing both the values of Jewish tradition and the benefits of a cosmopolitan education. Like the Greek Esther, 3 Maccabees through its account of a persecution celebrates the possibility of beneficial coexistence and even cooperation between Jews and gentiles in the Diaspora.

Recreating the identity of a people often involves reinventing their past.

The author of 3 Maccabees recounts a persecution of the Egyptian Jews in the reign of Philopator that ends not in another Exodus but with a joyful reconciliation between the Jewish people and Pharaoh's current incarnation. In this attempt to reshape Jewish identity by reinventing the Jewish past, the author of 3 Maccabees was by no means alone.

We turn now to the question of how 3 Maccabees handles the stuff of history.

## 5 Historicity and Historical Ambivalence

Perhaps the most vexed questions surrounding 3 Maccabees regard the relationship of the text to the factual events of the Hellenistic period. The story takes place under the reign of a known historical figure, Ptolemy IV Philopator (r. 221–204 B.C.E.), and the author has gone to some trouble to supply historical details and official documents to add to the verisimilitude of his setting. We have, however, no independent evidence of a persecution such as he reports taking place in the reign of Philopator; indeed, we do not even have independent evidence suggesting that Philopator was in any way hostile to the Jews, or that the Jews underwent any kind of crisis in the latter part of the third century B.C.E. Moreover, Josephus reports a virtually identical persecution at Alexandria (*C.Ap.* 2.53–55), complete with drunken elephants, which he places under the reign of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II Physcon (r. 145–116 B.C.E.); and 2 Maccabees (3.9–40) reports an incident very similar to Philopator's experience at the Temple in Jerusalem but substitutes Heliodorus, a minister of Seleucus IV, in Philopator's place. Virtually all scholars, with a few notable exceptions,<sup>1</sup> have rejected 3 Maccabees as a legitimate, reliable historical source for an otherwise unknown persecution in the reign of Philopator.

If it is easy to discredit 3 Maccabees as a straightforward historical source, however, many questions remain unanswered. There is no justification for regarding 3 Maccabees as a covert commentary,<sup>2</sup> cast in Hellenistic guise, upon a contemporary crisis in the Roman period such as the introduction of the poll tax under Augustus or the riots at Alexandria in the time of

1. See below, esp. nn. 4–8.

2. See above, Chap. 4, n. 10.

Caligula.<sup>3</sup> The hypothesis of a Roman referent must be regarded as a quite separate issue. If the tale told in 3 Maccabees does not describe a historical event of the reign of Philopator, however, whence was it inspired? Granted that the story as we now have it bears all the hallmarks of a heavily embroidered legend, where and how did the legend arise? Is it based on some forgotten incident in Philopator's reign? Is it a distorted version of a genuine persecution at some point in the Hellenistic period, and if so, when? Does Josephus's version give the true account of a persecution in 145 B.C.E.? Or alternatively, might both the account of 3 Maccabees and that of Josephus be traced back to a single persecution in some other year? Or finally, are the legends reported in 3 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, and Josephus's *Against Apion* just that—pure fiction, the stuff of oral tradition and popular gossip?

Yet another question concerns the relationship of this particular author with his chosen material. Why did he choose to unite two disparate legends into one narrative under the reign of Philopator? He is at pains to cast his story as a straightforward historical narrative, particularly in its opening chapters: Can we identify his sources? How does his account of Philopator's reign compare with what the surviving ancient sources preserve? Finally, why has the author combined historical and legendary material in a single narrative? Did he hope to fool his audience into accepting it as true history? Or was he, on the contrary, quite unconcerned with such matters? This chapter will address these questions and, more important, will explore reasons why such problems so frequently arise in regard to Hellenistic Jewish texts concerned with past events.

## HISTORICITY

To be sure, some scholars—a very few—have done their best to swallow the fantastic tale of 3 Maccabees whole. C. L. W. Grimm cites a number of scholars who before his time regarded both the confrontation in the Temple and the persecution of the Jews of Egypt as historical events in Philopator's reign, although they did attempt to edit out the more miraculous elements.<sup>4</sup> I. Abrahams and A. Büchler argued that a persecution did take place in Egypt in the reign of Philopator but that it applied only to the Jews

3. See above, Chap 4.

4. Grimm 1857: 217.

of the Fayum.<sup>5</sup> P. Perdrizet traced the story back to an attempt by Philopator to incorporate the Jews as citizens of Alexandria.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, M. Hadas argues that in covertly representing a crisis during the reign of Augustus (31 B.C.E.–14 C.E.), the author of 3 Maccabees drew upon the memory of a similar crisis involving a poll tax and the civic status of the Jews in 206/5 B.C.E.<sup>7</sup> More recently, A. Kasher has claimed that 3 Maccabees entire can be credited as “genuinely historical.”<sup>8</sup> None of these theories has met with much favor.

By contrast, historians have taken Josephus’s variant report of the tale much more seriously (*C.Ap.* 2.53–55). According to Josephus, when Ptolemy VIII Physcon attacked Alexandria, in 145 B.C.E., after the death of his brother Ptolemy VI Philometor, and attempted to wrest the throne from his widowed sister-in-law Cleopatra II, Onias and his army came to the aid of Cleopatra and her young son Ptolemy VII Neos Philopator. Physcon retaliated by binding the Jews of Alexandria and casting them under the feet of a herd of drunken elephants. The elephants, however, turned on Physcon’s friends and trampled them instead. Confronted by a divine apparition, which warned Physcon not to harm the Jews, and importuned by the pleas of his favorite concubine, Physcon repented. This, claims Josephus, was the origin of a festival that the Jews of Alexandria continued to celebrate in his own time.

Although many details present in the much longer account of 3 Maccabees are missing from *Against Apion*—the Jerusalem Temple incident, the issue of the *laographia*, the Dionysiac Mysteries, the involvement of the Jews of the *chōra*, to name only a few—Josephus and 3 Maccabees evidently allude to the same incident (or, more accurately, the same legend). Josephus’s version, however, seems to be quite independent of 3 Maccabees. Not only does he place the events under a different Ptolemy, but some details are different, notably the role of the king’s concubine. Moreover, he gives two variants for the concubine’s name (Irene and Ithaca), which indicates that he

5. Abrahams 1897: 39–58; Büchler 1899: 172–212. On this theory, Arsinoe, not Alexandria, was the center of the persecution.

6. Perdrizet 1910: 235 n. 1.

7. According to Hadas (1953: 17–18), Philopator introduced in 220/19 B.C.E. a *λαογραφία* (census), a registration that brought with it liability to a poll tax. He argues that the Jews were not initially subject to the *λαογραφία* but were threatened with reduction to this status in the subsequent census of 206/5 (assuming a fourteen-year interval similar to that attested in the Roman period). The king ultimately relented, and the story was subsequently enriched by the embroidery of legend.

8. Kasher 1985: 211–32.

knew at least two different versions of the legend.<sup>9</sup> It is significant, then, that both Josephus and 3 Maccabees associate the deliverance of the Jews with a particular festival at Alexandria. There can be no doubt that the festival itself existed and that it was associated with the Jews' being saved from elephantine extinction by the intervention of God, just as the festival of Purim is associated with the story of Esther.<sup>10</sup> But although the existence of at least three independent versions of the legend tends to corroborate the existence of a genuine festival, it does much to discredit the historicity of 3 Maccabees as a source for the reign of Philopator. Is the claim of Josephus's version to historical credibility any greater?

Many scholars have assumed that Josephus's allegedly more sober version of the legend is the more ancient and that it does in fact reflect the historical situation of the Jews in the dynastic struggles of 145 B.C.E. On this argument, a persecution of the Jews, as supporters of the losing side in a civil war, fits sensibly into the context of known historical events, whereas the motives ascribed to Philopator are thin at best and at worst incomprehensible. Therefore 3 Maccabees, by contrast with Josephus, has willfully altered the legend and transplanted it into the time of Philopator to suit his own polemical purpose. Josephus's version, not 3 Maccabees, is the "historical kernel" to which the origin of the festival and the legend should be traced.<sup>11</sup>

The sobriety of any tale about the threat of death at the feet of a pack of drunken elephants is questionable. Still, some facts that Josephus reports in connection with the legend are historical. We have no reason to doubt that Onias and his army did in fact support Cleopatra in the civil war against Physcon; this is the very fact that Apion attacked in his speech and that Josephus is trying to defend (*C.Ap* 2.50, 56). The Jews of Alexandria very likely feared retaliation and were mightily relieved by the proclamation of amnesty after Cleopatra and Physcon reached their seemingly amicable settlement, which was to cost the young Neos Philopator his life. It should be emphasized, however, that not only was there no retaliation under the terms of

9. As a number of scholars have pertinently observed: cf., e.g., Tcherikover 1961: 8; Collins 2000: 123. This point has not been sufficiently emphasized; I will return to it below.

10. As all are agreed: Grimm 1857: 216; Swete 1900: 279–80; Bickermann 1928: 799–800; J. Cohen 1941: 50–51; Anderson 1985: 511; Schürer 1986: 539.

11. So Grimm 1857: 216, 218; Hadas 1953: 10–11; Tcherikover 1961: 8–9; Nickelsburg 1981: 170; Schürer 1986: 539; Barclay 1996: 38, 194; Modrzejewski 1995: 147; Collins 2000: 124 ("partially historical reminiscences which are used as building blocks in a fictional composition").



the amnesty but the settlement itself was reached without bloodshed. The armies of Onias and Physcon never came to blows. On any theory, any persecution of the Jews in connection with these events must be accounted pure fantasy.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, though the context in which Josephus places the legend may be historical and may make sense of the persecution, we are not on that account required to accept his version as the more authentic. To be sure, we cannot accuse Josephus of placing the story in the reign of Physcon entirely on his own initiative. The fact that he knew of at least two versions of the story, both of them presumably naming a concubine of Physcon's rather than some other king's, suggests that the legend dating the persecution to the time of Physcon was a widespread popular variant. That it was the sole and original version, however, does not follow. Josephus had good reason to choose this particular version of the story: his purpose in this section of *Against Apion* is to discredit Apion's charge that the Jews have traditionally been faithless and disloyal subjects of the sovereign of Egypt. To this end he lists the many rulers of Egypt who have recognized and rewarded the loyalty of the Jews. In answer to Apion's accusation that Onias took up arms against his rightful sovereign, Physcon, Josephus counters that not only was Onias defending his true masters, Cleopatra and her son, but that this loyal service was divinely endorsed by the miraculous intervention of God on behalf of the Jews whom Physcon persecuted. The version of the story ascribing the persecution of the Jews to the political activities of Onias and his army thus suits Josephus's purpose very well. By contrast, the story of a king who persecuted the Jewish people simply for their loyalty to their faith would not have suited his purpose at all. Moreover, as a historian working in the Greek tradition, Josephus has reason to prefer a historically plausible version of a legend over one less plausible, as do we ourselves.

In short, Josephus's variant of the story has no more intrinsic claim to historical veracity than does the variant represented by 3 Maccabees.<sup>13</sup> Nor need we assume that his version is the original and that 3 Maccabees de-

12. It is also worth noting that, far from being a persecutor of the Jews, Physcon is attested in the documentary evidence for the period as a benefactor to them (Mahaffy 1899: 192–216; Moreau 1941: 115; Anderson 1985: 510–11).

13. A conclusion rightly reached, though along somewhat different lines, by Modrzejewski 1995: 148; Modrzejewski is inclined rather to favor the idea that the story can be traced back to a now forgotten incident under Philopator, given the many accurate historical details included in 3 Maccabees. I argue below that these accurate details are more likely the fruit of our author's research, the mark of a clever fiction, than reminiscences of a genuine historical event.

liberately alters it. Rather, both Josephus and 3 Maccabees independently report (and shape for their own purposes) popular variants of a legend whose origin must for the time being remain uncertain.<sup>14</sup>

There is, then, no clear evidence outside 3 Maccabees for a genuine persecution either in the reign of Philopator or in the reign of Euergetes II Physcon. Might both Josephus's account and 3 Maccabees have been distantly inspired by yet another persecution, which took place under some other Ptolemy? H. Willrich argued with characteristic ingenuity that Josephus's account should be connected with a brief notice in Jordanes allegedly recording a persecution of the Alexandrian Jews in the reign of Ptolemy Alexander I.<sup>15</sup> Ptolemy X Alexander I (r. 107–88) was ousted in a civil war in 88 B.C.E. by Ptolemy IX Soter II, commonly called Lathyrus (r. 116–107, 88–81 *bis*). Willrich points out that Soter II was also nicknamed Physcon, and Alexander's dynastic epithet was Philometor. (It might be noted that Ptolemy IX's full title was Ptolemy IX Philometor Soter II, so technically both Ptolemy IX and Ptolemy X were Philometors.) Moreover, Willrich argues, Josephus's Onias should be identified as the grandson of Onias IV, and the Thermus whom Josephus mentions might be identified as the one who accompanied L. Valerius Flaccus (cos. 86) to the East in 86 B.C.E. (App. *Mithr.* 52). All the circumstances of Josephus's account (*C.Ap.* 2.53–55) are thus recreated in the civil war of Alexander I and Soter II. The story told by Josephus originally related, then, not to the events of 145 B.C.E. but to the events of 88.

The fantastic improbability of thus completely reuniting the cast of characters from the civil war of Physcon and Cleopatra II has convinced no one;<sup>16</sup> invariably it is cited only to be thrown out of court. But although Willrich

14. So, rightly, Bickermann 1928: 799–800; J. Cohen 1941: 50–51; Moreau 1941: 115–16; and most recently (and sensibly) Anderson 1985: 510–11.

15. Willrich 1904: 244–58. The notice is brief indeed, and is worth quoting in full. It reads: "Ptolemeus qui et Alexander ann. [*sic*, and not—*pace* Willrich 1904: 249—*anno*] X, quo regnante multa judeorum populus ab Alexandrinis quam etiam ab Antiocensibus tolerabat" (Jordanes, *Romana* 81, ed. Mommsen, *MGH, AA*, 5.1 [Berlin 1882]). Jordanes was the author of a late-antique chronicle, a summary of Roman history known as the *Romana*, composed ca. 551/2 C.E. His other work, the *Getica* (a history of the Goths), is much better known, since it contains information not found elsewhere; the *Romana* is not highly regarded (e.g., "an epitome of epitomes . . . an epitome of Roman history of little interest": O'Donnell [1982: 223], summarizing the traditional scholarly view). O'Donnell seeks to reevaluate Jordanes' literary aims, but he does not contest the generally low opinion of Jordanes as a historical source.

16. Willrich 1904: 250–53. More or less detailed critiques may be found in Bickermann 1928: 799; J. Cohen 1941: 36–42; Moreau 1941: 116; Lévy 1950–51: 127–36.

has failed in trying to connect Josephus's account to the events of 88 B.C.E., he has succeeded in introducing permanently into the debate the persecution that Jordanes allegedly reports. This specious persecution of 88 B.C.E. has taken on a life of its own in the literature on 3 Maccabees and beyond. Yet it has long since been demonstrated that Jordanes reports nothing of the kind.<sup>17</sup> In the first place, he does not give an exact year for the troubles endured by the Jews during the reign of Alexander; the events that he reports could have taken place at any time during Alexander's reign.<sup>18</sup> More serious, Jordanes has not furnished us independent evidence, taken from a reliable Alexandrian source, of an otherwise unknown persecution of the Alexandrian Jews in the first century B.C.E.<sup>19</sup> Rather, he has confusingly abbreviated a sequence of events that Josephus recounts in much greater detail (*AJ* 13.324–47). From Josephus, we learn that it was the Jews of Palestine, rather, who suffered heavily during the dynastic struggles among various members of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid houses when Ptolemy Alexander ruled over Egypt.<sup>20</sup> By contrast, Josephus says nothing at all about a persecution of the Jews in the first century B.C.E., whether at Alexandria or at Antioch. The inexact wording of a late (sixth-century-C.E.), ill-informed Christian chronicler cannot bear the weight that has been placed upon it.

This point deserves more emphasis than it has received. The fact is, we have no solid evidence for any persecution whatsoever of the Alexandrian Jews at any time during the Ptolemaic period, whether under Philopator, Physcon, or Ptolemy Alexander. No theory reconstructing a persecution during Philopator's reign is based on anything but unwarranted extrapolation, based on the known historical events, from the patently legendary account in 3 Maccabees. Again, even those who argue that the legend variously reported by Josephus and 3 Maccabees originated with the crisis of 145 B.C.E.

17. See in detail the arguments of Lévy (1950–51 *passim*), surprisingly neglected in subsequent literature.

18. Lévy 1950–51: 129. "Ann. X" stands not for "anno X" ("in the tenth year") but for "anni X" ("ten years"), the duration of Alexander's reign. The figure is itself an error, widely reproduced in later Christian sources, that can be traced back to the chronicle of Eusebius (Lévy 1950–51: 129; J. Cohen 1941: 36–37).

19. Mommsen, in his edition (1882), identified as the source of Jordanes' information here as "Chronicon quoddam alexandrinum." As Lévy shows, this refers not (as it is usually translated) to an Alexandrian chronicle, implying the work of a local historiographer relying on good information in the Ptolemaic archives, but (as Mommsen specifies) to a product of the Christian schools of Alexandria. In general, it can be shown that Jordanes relied on later compilations of material taken largely from authors such as Josephus and Philo (Lévy 1950–51: 130–31).

20. *Ibid.* 131–33.

must admit that there is no evidence that the Jews suffered any actual consequences for their support of Cleopatra II; like all the parties to the dispute, they were protected by the amnesty that concluded the war. Finally, the persecution of 88 B.C.E. is a mere myth based on Willrich's misreading of a muddled Christian chronicler. Although we cannot rule out the possibility that the elephant legend arose from some forgotten persecution of the Egyptian Jews, now wholly lost to us, neither 3 Maccabees nor Josephus's account can furnish positive evidence for any persecution of the Alexandrian Jews during the Hellenistic period. It is entirely possible that there never was one. If a real persecution be needed to explain why the Jews of Egypt would invent such a story—a doubtful proposition, since persecution of the faithful is a theme deeply rooted in Jewish literature as far back as Exodus—then the persecution of the hapless Jews of Jerusalem under Antiochus IV in 167 supplies a more than adequate example.<sup>21</sup> Third Maccabees may well have simply been asking the question, *What if it happened here?*<sup>22</sup>

How, then, did the legend of a persecution of the Alexandrian Jews under Ptolemaic rule arise? The best explanation remains one that was suggested more than fifty years ago: the Alexandrian Jews themselves did not

21. One could, of course, argue that even in the absence of any positive evidence for a historical persecution at Alexandria, the mere existence of a festival celebrating deliverance is strong evidence of some crisis averted, the details of which had long since been forgotten by the Jews themselves. While this argument has considerable force, however, it is not decisive. It is by no means certain, for instance, that the similar tale preserved in Esther in connection with Purim reflects any historical persecution of the Jews under Persian rule. By comparison, one might observe that the historical circumstances surrounding the emergence of Hanukkah after the Maccabean Revolt were faithfully remembered and written down within two generations. If there was a persecution at Alexandria in the Hellenistic period that gave rise to the festival associated with the elephant legend, how did it happen that the historical circumstances of that persecution were so quickly forgotten by a highly literate community?

22. More could be done to explore the possibility that the anxiety about possible persecution reflected in 3 Maccabees was directly inspired by contemplation of the events of the Maccabean Revolt rather than by any actual experience in the Egyptian diaspora. This possibility is rarely explored in any of the literature on 3 Maccabees, but see Gardner (1986), who argues that the author of 3 Maccabees may be responding to specific thematic elements in 2 Maccabees. It is intriguing that we find in 2 Macc. 6.9 an allusion to Antiochus IV's forcing some of the Jews of Jerusalem to wear ivy wreaths and march in a Dionysiac procession. It is precisely the Dionysiac connection that our author seems to have introduced into a story that may not have originally contained such a link (the versions known to Josephus do not), and it is even possible that our author could have chosen Philopator, the known promoter of Dionysiac worship, as the chief tyrant of his story on that account. But it is impossible to be sure when we do not know where to draw the line between the oral (and written) traditions the author used and his own invention.

know the origin of the festival that they celebrated in the month of Epiphi, and the versions of the legend in 3 Maccabees and in Josephus represent their attempts to explain it.<sup>23</sup> If the Jews of Alexandria, who had at their disposal a rich store of evidence in the form of archives and literary records, were so much in the dark that they were unable even to agree under which king the alleged persecution took place, it is unlikely that we, without access to better sources than they had, will succeed where they failed. I find it significant that Josephus did not include this supposed persecution in his *Jewish Antiquities*, whence comes most of our information for Egyptian Jewish history in the Hellenistic period. Rather, he employs it in the highly rhetorical context of *Against Apion*, where one version of the popular tale happens to support a point that he is trying to score against his opponent.<sup>24</sup> How the festival itself originated, we may never know; this is perhaps a question better left to anthropologists. It may indeed have resulted from some crisis that the Alexandrian Jews faced in the Hellenistic period, which had already been almost wholly forgotten by the time the first versions of the elephant legend began to appear. It may equally, however, have been (as is sometimes suggested of Purim) a pagan festival that was transformed into a Jewish holiday;<sup>25</sup> or it may have been consciously founded by the Alexandrian Jews on the model of Purim. We simply do not know. What is certain is that no aetiological speculation, however ingenious, is sound foundation for reconstructing the historical experience of the Alexandrian Jews in the Hellenistic period. To be sure, 3 Maccabees is of great historical value as a testament to the beliefs and rituals of the Jews at a particular place and time, but it cannot be used as a legitimate historical source for the events of the period.

#### HISTORICAL AMBIVALENCE

Yet although 3 Maccabees cannot be used as legitimate historical evidence in the manner of Polybius or Josephus, its author has taken the trouble to package his tale as a work of Hellenistic historiography. The miraculous de-

23. Bickermann 1928: 800; followed by, among others, Moreau 1941: 117–18; Weiser 1961: 396; Anderson 1985: 515; Schürer 1986: 540.

24. In much the same way, to cite an example from a quite different context, Plutarch includes material in his rhetorical composition *De Alexandri Fortuna* that he rightly omits or rejects as unhistorical in his *Life of Alexander*. Cf. the introduction to J. R. Hamilton, *Plutarch: Alexander; A Commentary* (Oxford, 1969).

25. So Weiser 1961: 396.

liverance of the Jews at Jerusalem and at Alexandria is narrated in the wake of a well-known, extensively documented battle, the victory of Ptolemy IV Philopator over Antiochus III at the battle of Raphia in 217 B.C.E., and the author's description of the battle accords well, although not perfectly, with what the historical sources have preserved. The attempt of Theodotus on the king's life is historical, although no Dositheus, renegade Jew or otherwise, appears in the account of Polybius. The character of Philopator in 3 Maccabees—indolent, capricious, cruel, addicted to wine, women, and song, fanatically devoted to the cult of Dionysus—reflects with devastating accuracy the character unanimously attributed to him by the historical sources.<sup>26</sup> The historical personalities of Philopator's court—his sister-wife Arsinoe, the king's infamous drinking companions—are likewise ostentatiously introduced into the story. The stages of the persecution at Alexandria are precisely dated, to the month and day if not to the year. The author even cites verbatim a host of letters and decrees purported to come directly from the royal chancery, a fashionable practice among Hellenistic historians.

However questionable its historicity may be in regard to the Jews, it has long been acknowledged that 3 Maccabees contains a host of seemingly accurate details relating to the reign of Philopator and the practices of the Ptolemaic court.<sup>27</sup> Yet this observation seems to have provoked remarkably little curiosity among scholars. Did the author intend that his work should pass as history?<sup>28</sup> Did he expect his audience to perceive no difference between his work and that of a Polybius, or even between, say, his work and 1 Maccabees? If so, his audience must have been unsophisticated, to say the least, for judged even by the standards of the most careless and sensational Hellenistic historians, the historical coloring of 3 Maccabees is superficial, riddled with errors large and small, whereas the legendary and the fabulous occupy center stage. Even allowing for a high tolerance for miracles and pathetic exaggeration, both of which are certainly found in (for example) 2 Maccabees,<sup>29</sup> the details of the central narrative must surely have strained

26. See below, nn. 50–60.

27. E.g., Grimm 1857: 215; Bickermann 1928: 798–99; Hadas 1953: 17–19; Anderson 1985: 513; Schürer 1986: 538; Collins 2000: 123.

28. Grimm (1857: 215), Bickermann (1928: 798–99), and Hadas (1953: 3) have no doubt that he did.

29. It should be noted, however, that in 2 Maccabees such things are ancillary to the main story, which centers upon the historical revolt of the Maccabees; in 3 Maccabees the unverifiable legend is the main focus, whereas it is the historical material that is ancillary.

the credulity of even the most naive readers. (*Five hundred elephants?!*) Yet if the historical coloration is mere window dressing, not intended to be taken seriously, if the reign of Philopator is merely a prop on which to hang an edifying legend, then the author has taken far greater pains, and the level of detail is far more elaborate, than is justified. Third Maccabees is, in short, in terms of its genre, too fabulous to be history and too much like history to be legend; and the label “romance” that it has earned in consequence merely names the problem without solving it. The narrative of 3 Maccabees deserves much closer study than it has received.

Any discussion of the author’s use of historical material must begin with the opening lines of the book, which set the stage for the main drama with a brief description of the battle of Raphia in 217 B.C.E. This rather remarkable fact itself deserves comment. Evidently, the mention of Raphia, together with the name Philopator, anchors the book historically. Further, it provides a plausible historical context for linking two apparently distinct legends: one describing a threat to the Temple of Jerusalem; the other, the sufferings of the Jews of Alexandria. For so simple a purpose as this, however, a line or two mentioning the battle and Philopator’s subsequent tour of Coele Syria would suffice. Instead, the first seven verses of 3 Maccabees are wholly devoted to a detailed description of the circumstances of the battle (3 Macc. 1.1–7), though these are virtually irrelevant to the book’s main subject. These lines are quite different in character from the rest of the narrative; if preserved in isolation, they might be taken for the work of any Hellenistic historian. Indeed, V. A. Tcherikover, attempting to analyze 3 Maccabees via *Quellenkritik*, argued that they derive from a distinct source, the lost work of a knowledgeable Ptolemaic historian writing not long after the reign of Philopator.<sup>30</sup> Though a source-critical approach must be used only with caution, the distinctive character of these lines is quite striking and deserves closer analysis.

The beginning is abrupt, as has often been observed, plunging the reader into a narrative that seems to be already in progress. The first paragraph opens with the words *ὁ δὲ Φιλοπάτωρ*, where *δέ* would ordinarily mark a connection with some preceding text. The content, as much as the grammar, casts us literally *in medias res*. We find Philopator making immediate preparations for war upon being informed of Antiochus’s conquests in Coele Syria by “the men who had just returned.” Who these people may be, we are not told. Before the reader so much as arrives at the first punctuation

30. Tcherikover 1961: 2–11. A favorite candidate for this role is one Ptolemy of Megalopolis, of whom more later.



mark, the Egyptian army is encamped at Raphia and preparing for battle.<sup>31</sup> In the very next sentence, “a certain Theodotus” is discovered attempting to carry out a plot against the king, which is introduced as if the reader is already familiar with it.<sup>32</sup> A later passage refers offhand to “aforesaid drinking companions” appearing there for the first time in the narrative (3 Macc. 2.25).<sup>33</sup> The effect is startling, to say the least.

Many scholars have supposed that something has been lost from the beginning of the text.<sup>34</sup> Is it necessary to posit such a curious mutilation? The so-called lost beginning has not rendered the text unintelligible. Although the opening of the narrative may feel abrupt, the events leading up to the battle of Raphia and the plot on Philopator’s life had been handled in detail by Polybius, and presumably by the sources on whom Polybius drew. The educated ancient reader, like the modern, could reasonably be expected to fill in the blanks. Indeed, the basic outline of events would be quite clear even to a reader unfamiliar with the events of Philopator’s reign. The introduction is thus accessible to any reader, although it is the educated reader who would best be able to appreciate the rapid-fire allusions to a familiar historical setting. The opening lines function on more than one level.

The stylistic oddities are certainly curious, but they do not compel us to posit a lost beginning. Rather, I believe that they result from the author’s (perhaps less than successful) effort at stylistic effect. The reader is plunged *in medias res* and is invited to draw upon whatever familiarity he or she might have with the reign of Philopator.

Yet although the text invites the better-educated reader to draw upon his

31. 3 Macc. 1.1: Ὁ δὲ Φιλοπάτωρ παρὰ τῶν ἀνακομισθέντων μαθὼν τὴν γνωμένην τῶν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ κρατουμένων τόπων ἀφαίρεσιν ὑπὸ Ἀντίοχου παραγγέλλας ταῖς πάσαις δυνάμεσι πεζικαῖς τε καὶ ἵππικαῖς καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν Ἀρσινόην συμπαράλαβὼν ἐξώρμησε μέχρι τῶν κατὰ Ῥαφίαν τόπων, ὅπου παρεμβεβλήκεισαν οἱ περὶ Ἀντίοχον.

32. Ibid. 1.2: Θεόδοτος δέ τις ἐκπληρῶσαι τὴν ἐπιβουλὴν διανοηθείς. Note the use of the definite article with ἐπιβουλὴν.

33. Ibid. 2.25: διὰ τε τῶν προαποδεδειγμένων συμποτῶν καὶ ἐταίρων τοῦ παντὸς δικαίου κεχωρισμένων.

34. Grimm examined the evidence and concluded that a few sentences, or a chapter at most, have been lost from the beginning of the text (Grimm 1857: 219–20, 224–26). He rightly rejects other theories that had held that the text is a chance-preserved fragment of a larger work, or what Grimm calls a “headless torso” deliberately excerpted by its author from a greater work; there are no signs of incompleteness in the rest of the text. This judgment has generally been echoed by all who have since noticed the problem in passing (e.g., Bickermann 1928: 798, who also considers the possibility that the author was simply slavishly copying his source[!]; Tcherikover 1961: 2 n.; Weiser 1961: 395; Nickelsburg 1981: 169).



or her knowledge of the actual events of Philopator's reign, certain problems emerge when one compares the account of the battle in 3 Maccabees closely with Polybius.<sup>35</sup> The main facts as given by 3 Maccabees are correct: Antiochus attacks and captures the cities of Coele Syria (3 Macc. 1.1; cf. Polyb. 5.58–62), both armies encamp outside Raphia (1.1; cf. Polyb. 5.83), Philopator's sister Arsinoe accompanies him on the campaign and helps her brother exhort his soldiers to battle (1.1, 1.4; cf. Polyb. 5.83), Theodotus plots unsuccessfully against the king's life (1.2; cf. Polyb. 5.81), Antiochus prevails in the early fighting but Philopator wins the ultimate victory (1.4–5; cf. Polyb. 5.84–86), and after the battle Philopator decides to tour the cities of Coele Syria (1.6–7; cf. Polyb. 5.86). Thus far the impression of historical accuracy is glib and convincing. Evidently, the author of 3 Maccabees used a good source or sources akin to those used by Polybius, if not Polybius himself.

When we examine the passage more closely, however, troubling inconsistencies emerge. In the first place, 3 Maccabees clearly implies that Philopator responded swiftly and energetically to Antiochus's attack upon Coele Syria: "When Philopator learned from the men who had returned of the seizure by Antiochus of the places that had been subject to him, he commanded all the infantry and cavalry forces, took his sister Arsinoe with him, and advanced to the area around Raphia, where Antiochus and his men had encamped."<sup>36</sup> This, according to the scathing account of Polybius, is laughably far from the truth. Antiochus invaded Coele Syria in the spring of 219 B.C.E., in a blow that appears to have taken everybody completely by

35. There are a number of surviving sources for the character and reign of Philopator (notably Polyb. 5.34–40, 58–72, 79–87; Plut. *Cleo.* 33–38; and Justin 30.1–2); only Polybius gives an account of the battle of Raphia sufficiently detailed to allow us to evaluate the accuracy of the account given in 3 Maccabees 1.1–7. Throughout this discussion I treat Polybius's account as the standard by which to establish the level and detail of historical information potentially available to the author of 3 Maccabees and his audience. This is not to say that the author of 3 Maccabees used Polybius directly. (Indeed, there are good, if not necessarily compelling, reasons to argue that he did not; see below.) However, even if the author of 3 Maccabees did not know the work of Polybius, his account of the battle of Raphia is based on a source or sources close to the reign of Philopator very similar to, if not identical with, those used by Polybius. Polybius's account of the character and reign of Philopator, and in particular his very detailed description of the battle of Raphia, can therefore be regarded as representative (if perhaps less sensational; cf. Polyb. 15.25) of the sources for the reign of Philopator available to the author of 3 Maccabees and other educated Jews at Alexandria toward the end of the second or the beginning of the first century B.C.E.

36. 3 Macc. 1.1; quoted above, n. 31.

surprise despite the fact that Antiochus had made an abortive attack on the same area two years before.<sup>37</sup> As Polybius tells it (5.62.7), the indolent and pleasure-loving Philopator was too weak to respond to the attack of 219; it fell to his ministers Sosibius and Agathocles to distract Antiochus with a constant stream of negotiations while they worked frantically to build up an army hopelessly enfeebled by neglect. For two years they secretly recruited and trained mercenaries from every part of the Greek world (Polyb. 5.63–65); they were driven even to what Polybius infamously regarded as the disastrous last-ditch step of recruiting and training twenty thousand native Egyptians. It was not until the spring of 217, after two years of foot-dragging negotiations and secret preparations, that Philopator's army was ready to set out for the showdown at Raphia. Even granted that 3 Maccabees attempts to compass in a single sentence events that Polybius covers in more than a dozen chapters (5.58–72, 79–80), the swift, energetic response opening 3 Maccabees must have been jarring, if not comical, to a reader familiar with such a detailed version of events as we know from Polybius.

The version of Theodotus's plot in 3 Maccabees raises similar problems. The role played by Dositheus son of Drimylus is of course pure fantasy. Polybius has nothing to say of any such person; according to his account, the king was saved not by the intervention of any courtier but by the sheer chance of his not habitually sleeping in his official tent. Theodotus, who had deserted to Antiochus two years previously, was unaware of the fact. As Polybius remarks, the plot failed simply because Theodotus had not done his homework.<sup>38</sup> The author of 3 Maccabees, however, seems to have been interested in the plot only inasmuch as it allowed him to insert a motif familiar in Jewish folklore, that of the gentile king who is saved from the treachery of his own people by a loyal Jewish courtier.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the author draws upon a preexisting popular legend for the story of Dositheus, Theodotus, and Philopator, but it is also possible that the story is his own invention.

If no Dositheus took part in this particular historical drama, did such a person even exist at the court of Philopator? A Dositheus son of Drimylus is attested in the papyri as a priest of Alexander in the year 222 B.C.E.<sup>40</sup> The

37. Cf. Polyb. 5.58–62.

38. Polyb. 5.81.7: *τῇ μὲν τόλμῃ συντετελεκὼς τὴν πρόθεσιν, τῇ δὲ προνοίᾳ διεσφαλμένος διὰ τὸ μὴ καλῶς ἐξητακέναι ποῦ τὴν ἀνάπαισιν ὁ Πτολεμαῖος εἰώθει ποιεῖσθαι.*

39. The most famous example being, of course, Mordecai in Esther.

40. Tcherikover and Fuks 1957–64: vol. 1, nos. 127d–e (= P. Tebt. 815, P. Hibeh 90 [patronymic restored]; cf. *ibid.* no. 127, “Dositheos son of Drimylus,” pp. 230–36, for complete citations and commentary), Willrich 1907: 293; Hadas 1953 *ad loc.* (1.3); Fuks 1954: 205–9. Modrzejewski (1993: 83–85; 1995: 56–61) reviews in some detail

coincidence is hard to ignore. It seems very likely, as some have suggested, that our author has taken a known courtier from the early years of Philopator's reign, perhaps conflating him with the Jewish Dositheus who, together with Onias, supported Cleopatra in the civil war of 145,<sup>41</sup> and has emerged with a lapsed Jewish courtier from the reign of Philopator. (*N.b.* the priesthood of Alexander.) It is even possible that the author did not merely impute Jewish identity to Philopator's Dositheus but drew on the Jewish community's memory of a distinguished citizen (albeit lapsed, in some eyes). Whether the original Dositheus was Jewish or not, this evidence of the author's mining historical sources for material that might plausibly be transformed into an edifying Jewish fiction is in itself quite remarkable—and quite suggestive.

The fictional story is very cleverly inserted into the historical narrative. The king was, after all, saved by being away from his tent, and another was in fact killed in his place. (The "certain obscure person" of 3 Maccabees [1.3, ἀσσημόν τινα] who slept in the tent as a decoy and was killed in Philopator's place was in fact, according to Polybius [5.81.6], the king's personal physician, Andreas, who had the ill luck to be there at the wrong time.) By skillfully embroidering the facts (as we know them through Polybius), the author cleverly suggests that his version is the real inside story behind the official version given by the mainstream historians of Philopator's day.

Quite apart from the presence of a fictional Dositheus, the plot of Theodotus as described by 3 Maccabees sits rather uneasily in certain details beside the version in Polybius. Perhaps most curious is the fact that 3 Maccabees introduces Theodotus as "a certain Theodotus" (Θεόδοτος . . . τις, 3 Macc. 1.2) but refers to his plot as if it is already known to the reader.

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the papyrological evidence for this Dositheus, whose activities as courtier and priest of Alexander in the last years of Ptolemy III and the early years of Ptolemy IV are now attested in several documents. Modrzejewski presumes without question that the Dositheus attested in the papyri, like the fictional Dositheus, was Jewish (necessarily apostate, if so, since he held a pagan priesthood). This is certainly possible and even likely, given the name. Dositheus ("Gift of God") was a name often borne by Greek-speaking Jews in the Hellenistic period, but rarely by non-Jews (Tcherikover and Fuks 1957–64: 1.231); Modrzejewski (1995: 56) also notes that while Dositheus was a common Jewish name, Drimylus was not, so the appearance of the patronymic in both 3 Maccabees and the papyri considerably strengthens the case for identifying the two. However, it ought not to be assumed without question that the author of 3 Maccabees was correct in identifying the historical courtier, whose identity he borrowed for fictional purposes, as an apostate Jew; Dositheus is nowhere identified as Jewish in the papyri themselves. See also Barclay 1996: 32, 104.

41. As Schürer 1986: 539 suggests; cf. Josephus *C.Ap.* 2.49.

This inconcinnity has generally been attributed to the imagined lost beginning, which must have mentioned the plot. Yet this hardly solves the problem: if the plot had already been introduced, the reader would certainly have met Theodotus. With or without a lost beginning, the sentence as it stands fundamentally contradicts itself.

Moreover, the reference to “a certain Theodotus” would by all rights strike an educated reader familiar with the reign of Philopator as ludicrous. The language of 3 Maccabees implies that this Theodotus was an obscure mercenary, whose attack on Philopator’s life was his one shot at glory. In fact, Theodotus the Aetolian was a prominent figure in the events leading up to the battle of Raphia. He had been Philopator’s governor of Coele Syria. During Antiochus’s first attack in 221 B.C.E., he had performed good service and repelled the attack, but according to Polybius (5.40.2), he not only received no credit for this but almost lost his life in a court intrigue. Disgusted with the court and the debauched king, and embittered by his own experience, he went over to Antiochus III. In 219 he invited Antiochus into his province, turning over all the resources under his control (5.61–62), and became a loyal member of his retinue.<sup>42</sup>

This famous Theodotus is almost unrecognizable in the Theodotus of 3 Maccabees. Not only is the distinguished governor of Coele Syria, instrumental in Antiochus’s early success in the war, disparaged as “some Theodotus or other,” but 3 Maccabees bizarrely implies that he was still a member of Philopator’s court when he tried to kill him. The text reads: “But a certain Theodotus, intending to carry out his plot, took the best of the Ptolemaic arms that had previously been assigned to him and went by night to Ptolemy’s tent, so as to kill him single-handedly and in this way to put an end to the war.”<sup>43</sup> The phrase “the best of the Ptolemaic arms which had previously been assigned to him” can hardly imply anything other than that the treachery foiled by Dositheus was coming not from an enemy agent but from a trusted courtier.<sup>44</sup> The statement that Theodotus used resources en-

42. Theodotus as an obedient subordinate of Antiochus: Polyb. 5.66.5; 5.68.9–10; 5.69.3, 9; 5.71.6–7; 5.79.4.

43. 3 Macc. 1.2: Θεόδοτος δέ τις ἐκπληρώσαι τὴν ἐπιβουλὴν διανοηθεὶς παραλαβὼν τῶν προυποτεταγμένων αὐτῷ ὅπλων Πτολεμαϊκῶν τὰ κράτιστα διεκομίσθη νύκτωρ ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ Πτολεμαίου σκηνὴν ὥς μόνος κτείνειν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐν τούτῳ διελῦσαι τὸν πόλεμον.

44. The exact meaning of the phrase is obscure. Hadas (1953 *ad loc.*) considers the possibility that ὅπλων might refer to men rather than to weapons, in which case this would be an oblique reference to the two men who, Polybius says, accompanied him. In any case, whether it refers to men or weapons, the adjective “Ptolemaic” remains equally inappropriate.

trusted to him in order to strike at the king is not, strictly speaking, accurate if it refers only to the attempt on the king's life; it becomes appropriate only with reference to Theodotus's initial act of treachery two years before in handing over to Antiochus the resources he controlled as governor of Coele Syria. In effect, Theodotus's entire career of treachery has been telescoped into one night's work. The Theodotus of 3 Maccabees is indeed a historical figure and would have been recognized by the reader as such, but he is also a curiously timeless literary construct. He is the archetypal treacherous courtier potentially lurking in any Hellenistic court, and as such, he is best suited to serve the role that 3 Maccabees would have him play in its edifying tale of gentile treachery and Jewish fidelity.

Thus even while the author of 3 Maccabees, in describing both the run-up to the battle of Raphia and Theodotus's plot, encourages his reader to locate his tale in a context of known historical events, he nevertheless departs significantly from the facts, at least as we know these from Polybius. Apart from the startling incongruities already examined, there are other, minor differences and errors. For example, according to Polybius Philopator's sister Arsinoe accompanied him to the battle, and together with her brother she addressed the troops before the battle (Polyb. 5.83). Moreover, Polybius tells us that Antiochus's forces were successful at first, but that the tide of battle eventually turned in Philopator's favor (5.84–85). According to 3 Maccabees, the tide turned when Arsinoe rode out to address the troops in the heat of battle, tearfully (*μετὰ οἴκτου καὶ δακρύων*, 3 Macc. 1.4) exhorting them to fight bravely and promising them two minas of gold apiece if they should be victorious.<sup>45</sup> Now, compare Arsinoe's plea with the speeches that Polybius attributes to the two kings before their battle (5.83.4–7):<sup>46</sup>

45. 3 Macc. 1.4: *γενομένης δὲ καρτερᾶς μάχης καὶ τῶν πραγμάτων μᾶλλον ἔρρωμένων τῷ Ἀντιόχῳ ἰκανῶς ἢ Ἀρσινόῃ ἐπιπορευσαμένη τὰς δυνάμεις παρεκάλει μετὰ οἴκτου καὶ δακρύων τοὺς πλοκάμους λελυμένη βοηθεῖν ἑαυτοῖς τε καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις καὶ γυναιξὶ θαρραλέως ἐπαγγελλομένη δώσειν νικήσασιν ἐκάστῳ δύο μνᾶς χρυσίου.*

46. Polyb. 5.83.4–7: *ἦν δὲ παραπλήσιος ὁ νοὺς τῶν ὑφ' ἑκατέρου παρακαλουμένων· ἴδιον μὲν γὰρ ἔργον ἐπιφανὲς καὶ κατηξιωμένον προφέρεισθαι τοῖς παρακαλουμένοις οὐδέτερος αὐτῶν εἶχε διὰ τὸ προσφάτως παρεληφέναι τὰς ἀρχάς, τῆς δὲ τῶν προγόνων δόξης καὶ τῶν ἐκείνοις πεπραγμένων ἀναμιμνήσκοντες φρόνημα καὶ θάρσος τοῖς φαλαγγίταις ἐπειρῶντο παριστάναι. μάλιστα δὲ τὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν εἰς τὸ μέλλον ἐλπίδας ἐπιδεκνύντες, καὶ κατ' ἰδίαν τοὺς ἡγουμένους καὶ κοινῇ πάντας τοὺς ἀγωνίζεσθαι μέλλοντας ἠξίουσαν καὶ παρεκάλουν ἀνδρωδῶς καὶ γενναίως χρήσασθαι τῷ παρόντι κινδύνῳ. ταῦτα δὲ καὶ τούτοις παραπλήσια λέγοντες, τὰ μὲν δι' αὐτῶν τὰ δὲ καὶ διὰ τῶν ἑρμηνέων, παρίππευον.*

The substance of the addresses was on both sides very similar. For neither king could cite any glorious and generally recognized achievement of his own, both of them having but recently come to the throne, so that it was by reminding the troops of the glorious deeds of their ancestors that they attempted to inspire them with spirit and courage. They laid the greatest stress, however, on the rewards that they might be expected to bestow in the future, and urged and exhorted both the leaders in particular and all those who were about to be engaged in general to bear themselves therefore like gallant men in the coming battle.

Many details in Polybius are paralleled in Arsinoë's appeal to the soldiers in 3 Maccabees, but the author has rearranged them for greater pathos and dramatic effect.<sup>47</sup>

On the basis of such differences, minor and major, between Polybius's account of the battle of Raphia and the account in 3 Maccabees, it has been argued that the author of 3 Maccabees was not familiar with the work of Polybius but rather used a lost Ptolemaic history of the reign of Philopator. The favorite candidate has been one Ptolemy of Megalopolis.<sup>48</sup> Ptolemy of Megalopolis, who wrote a history of the reign of Philopator (of which four fragments survive: *FGrH* 161), is usually identified with the Ptolemy of Megalopolis whom Polybius mentions. This Ptolemy, son of Agesarchus of Megalopolis, was a distinguished courtier who served Ptolemy IV Philopator in his later years. After the accession of Ptolemy V, the powerful courtier Agathocles sent Ptolemy of Megalopolis on a convenient diplomatic mission—to get him out of the way, Polybius says (15.25.14–15)—and later in the reign of Ptolemy V, Ptolemy of Megalopolis became governor of Cyprus (Polyb. 18.55.6–9). Polybius presumably knew and used

47. In Polyb. 5.83.1–3 Ptolemy addresses the troops before battle, supported by his ministers and his sister, whereas in 3 Macc. 1.4 Arsinoë alone addresses the troops in the heat of battle; in Polyb. 5.83.6 vague rewards are promised (*εἰς τὸ μέλλον ἐλπιδας*), whereas in 3 Macc. 1.4 Arsinoë promises two minas of gold to each man; in Polyb. 5.83.5 the kings are obliged to remind the men of the glorious deeds of their ancestors since they have none of their own to boast, whereas in 3 Macc. 1.4 Arsinoë urges the men to fight for themselves and their wives and children; in both passages, the soldiers are naturally encouraged to fight bravely (Polyb. 5.83.6, *ἀνδρωδῶς καὶ γενναίως*; 3 Macc. 1.4, *θαρραλέως*).

48. Emmet (1913: 159) first proposed this theory and was followed by Bickermann (1928: 799); see most recently Modrzejewski (1995: 147). Later scholars have rightly objected that we in fact know almost nothing of Ptolemy's work, and that the identification must remain no more than a guess (Tcherikover 1961: 3; Anderson 1985: 513).

his work, although he does not mention it. We know virtually nothing about this lost history of Ptolemy of Megalopolis: it mentioned the king's drinking companions, whom the king called his *geloiaiastai* (γελοιαστάς: FGrH 161 F 2); it also for some reason mentioned Philadelphus's cupbearer (F 3) and listed the mistresses of various Hellenistic kings (F 4). From so much it has been inferred that the negative portrait of the debauched Philopator in 3 Maccabees and Polybius is based on Ptolemy of Megalopolis,<sup>49</sup> that he favored history in the pathetic style, that the graphic account in Polybius of Agathocles' death at the hands of the Alexandrian mob derives from his work, and that Polybius alludes to him when criticizing sensationalist authors like those who described the death of Agathocles at length (Polyb. 15.34; the reference to sensationalist authors, one notes, is plural). The chain of inference is tenuous indeed; we do not in fact know for certain that Ptolemy of Megalopolis was a historian of the pathetic school or that his view of Philopator was negative. He must remain only one of many sources close to the reign of Philopator whom Polybius and the author of 3 Maccabees alike may well have used.

Whether or not the author of 3 Maccabees used Ptolemy of Megalopolis specifically, it has been widely accepted that the divergences between Polybius and 3 Maccabees on the battle of Raphia must be attributed to the author of 3 Maccabees' having used not Polybius directly but rather a different source, perhaps one of Polybius's own numerous Ptolemaic sources. It is by no means clear that this is so. Polybius's work had existed for at least a generation before the earliest date at which 3 Maccabees could have been written, and given the author's evident literary pretensions, it would be surprising if he was completely unaware of a major Hellenistic author.

Moreover, the differences between Polybius and 3 Maccabees need not—indeed, cannot—be explained purely by source criticism. The similarities between the accounts are more striking than the differences; even the proponents of a different source generally theorize that the two used a common source, though they suppose that the author of 3 Maccabees must have used a single, sensationalist, pathetic history of the reign of Philopator, whereas Polybius made judicious use of many sources. Yet the pathetic coloring need not derive from the Septuagint author's source. For instance, the fact that the Arsinoe of 3 Maccabees addresses the troops amid the battle and makes a specific promise that Polybius does not record can easily be attributed to the license of the author himself. Regardless of the character of his source or sources, the author of 3 Maccabees himself favored

49. Inferred esp. by Emmet 1913: 159. Polybius on Philopator: 5.34–40; 5.87.3, 7.



the pathetic style of Hellenistic historiography (cf. 1.16–29, 4.5–10, e.g.) and could easily have altered the facts as given in Polybius in order to enhance their popular appeal.

Other divergences can likewise be safely ascribed to the author of 3 Maccabees rather than to his source. It is highly unlikely, for instance, that he found the apostate Jew Dositheus foiling Theodotus's plot in Ptolemy of Megalopolis or any other Ptolemaic source. Rather, here he has probably grafted a Jewish legend onto the historical account of the plot, altering the details freely in order to suit his didactic purpose. It is therefore at least as likely that the differences between his and Polybius's accounts of Raphia arise in the former's free use of the latter as that each reflects a different source. I leave open the possibility that 3 Maccabees is based on a lost source, but I do not find anything in the text that compels us to believe this.

In fact, 3 Maccabees' account of Theodotus's plot is the key to understanding its author's historiographical method throughout. The author invokes the historical Theodotus only to render him almost unrecognizable. This rendering, however, is not capricious: it purposely transforms the historical Theodotus into an effective legendary foil for the heroism and loyalty of the Jewish courtier Dositheus. In effect, the author of 3 Maccabees mines his historical source, whether that be Polybius, Ptolemy of Megalopolis, or some other source entirely, for raw material enabling him to construct a credible fiction with a specific didactic purpose. If any reader well educated in Ptolemaic court history would easily have recognized the fiction as such, that must have been quite irrelevant in the eyes of the author and, presumably, of his audience likewise. In 3 Maccabees, literal truth is subordinated to literary truth: the archetypes of the treacherous gentile and the loyal Jewish courtier are what matter, not the historical realities of Theodotus the Aetolian or Dositheus son of Drimylus, priest of Alexander. Their historical identities have simply been coopted to lend the legend verisimilitude.

Just as the author uses the historical plot of Theodotus to launch his legendary story of Dositheus's intervention, so also the historical circumstances surrounding the battle of Raphia launch the linked persecutions of the Jews in Jerusalem and in Alexandria. Polybius reports that Philopator did tour the cities of Coele Syria after the battle (Polyb. 5.86), as 3 Maccabees claims (1.6–7), but we have no record outside 3 Maccabees of any visit to Jerusalem, let alone any crisis associated with such a visit. Just as introducing Dositheus into the plot of Theodotus shifts from the world of history into the world of fiction, so also Philopator's visit to Jerusalem shifts from Polybius's world to the field of Jewish legend. Accordingly, there is a distinct shift in content. Unlike the author's account of the battle of Raphia in 3 Maccabees (1.1–7),



the events that he subsequently reports at Jerusalem and at Alexandria find no parallel in our historical sources for the reign of Philopator. Having in his opening verses established the historical setting of his story and its historical claim to verisimilitude, the author turns to focus on his principal narrative, which is essentially the stuff of legend. But even if the crises that the Jews face in Jerusalem and at Alexandria find no parallel in the historical sources, the author continues to link history and legend throughout the story in two ways: through the character and interests of Philopator, and through ostensible documentary materials such as decrees and letters.

The historical sources paint Philopator's character with remarkably consistency in their hostility and contempt.<sup>50</sup> The chief charges leveled by Polybius are that the king was indolent,<sup>51</sup> addicted to drink, sex, and revelry,<sup>52</sup> and that in consequence he so disastrously neglected both domestic and especially foreign affairs that the state was effectively ruled by his chief advisors, Sosibius and Agathocles.<sup>53</sup> Plutarch's description tallies in every detail,<sup>54</sup>

50. Our principal sources for Philopator's character are Polyb. 5.34, Plut. *Cleo.* 33, and Justin 30.1–2. See also incidental references in Aelian, *VH* 13.22, 14.31; Pliny, *NH* 7.56; and *Etym. Mag.* s.v. *Γάλλος* (quoted below, n. 67).

51. Polyb. 5.34.4, *ὀλιγῶρον δὲ καὶ ῥάθυμον*; 5.34.10, *ὀλιγώρως*; 5.35.6 *εὐήθως*.

52. Polyb. 5.34.3, *πανηγυρικώτερον διήγε τὰ κατὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν*; 5.34.10, *ὁ δὲ προειρημένος βασιλεὺς ὀλιγώρως ἕκαστα τούτων χειρίζων διὰ τοὺς ἀπρεπεῖς ἔρωτας καὶ τὰς ἀλόγους καὶ συνεχεῖς μέθας*.

53. Polyb. 5.34.3–5, *καταπιστεύσας διὰ ταῦτα τοῖς παροῦσι καιροῖς πανηγυρικώτερον διήγε τὰ κατὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν, ἀνεπίστατον μὲν καὶ δυσέντευκτον αὐτὸν παρασκευάζων τοῖς περὶ τὴν αὐλὴν καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις τοῖς τὰ κατὰ τὴν Αἴγυπτον χειρίζουσιν, ὀλιγῶρον δὲ καὶ ῥάθυμον ὑποδεικνύων τοῖς ἐπὶ τῶν ἔξω πραγμάτων διατεταγμένοις, ὑπὲρ ὧν οἱ πρότερον οὐκ ἐλάττω μείζω δ' ἐποιοῦντο σπουδὴν ἢ περὶ τῆς κατ' αὐτὴν τὴν Αἴγυπτον δυναστείας*; 5.34.10–11, *ὁ δὲ προειρημένος βασιλεὺς ὀλιγώρως ἕκαστα τούτων χειρίζων διὰ τοὺς ἀπρεπεῖς ἔρωτας καὶ τὰς ἀλόγους καὶ συνεχεῖς μέθας, εἰκότως ἐν πάνυ βραχεὶ χρόνῳ καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ἅμα καὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἐπιβούλους εὔρε καὶ πλείους, ὧν ἐγένετο πρῶτος Κλεομένης ὁ Σπαρτιάτης*; 5.35.6–7, *ὁ μὲν οὖν βασιλεὺς οὕτ' ἐφιστάνων [ἐν] οὐδενὶ τῶν τοιούτων οὔτε προνοούμενος τοῦ μέλλοντος διὰ τὰς προειρημένας αἰτίας εὐήθως καὶ ἀλόγως αἰεὶ παρήκουε τοῦ Κλεομένου· οἱ δὲ περὶ τὸν Σωσίβιον (οὗτος γὰρ μάλιστα τότε προεστάτει τῶν πραγμάτων) συνεδρεύσαντες τοιαύτας τινὰς ἐποίησαντο περὶ αὐτοῦ διαλήψεις*. See also 5.63, 67, for Agathocles' and Sosibius's handling of preparations for the Fourth Syrian War.

54. Plut. *Cleo.* 33.1–2: *ὁ μὲν οὖν πρεσβύτερος Πτολεμαῖος πρὶν ἐκτελέσαι τῷ Κλεομένει τὴν ἔκπεμψιν ἐτελεύτησε· τῆς δὲ βασιλείας εὐθύς εἰς πολλὴν ἀσέλγειαν καὶ παροινίαν καὶ γυναικοκρατίαν ἐμπεσούσης ἡμελείτο καὶ τὰ τοῦ Κλεομένου. ὁ μὲν γὰρ βασιλεὺς αὐτὸς οὕτω διεφθαρτο τὴν ψυχὴν ὑπὸ γυναικῶν καὶ πότων ὥστε, ὅποτε νήφοι μάλιστα καὶ σπουδαιότατος αὐτοῦ γένοιτο, τελετὰς τελεῖν καὶ τύμπαλον ἔχων ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις ἀγείρειν, τὰ δὲ μέγιστα τῆς ἀρχῆς πράγματα διοικεῖν Ἀγαθόκληαν τὴν ἐρωμένην τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τὴν ταύτης μητέρα καὶ πορνοβοσκὸν Οἰνάνθη.*

adding further accusations of cowardice and stupidity,<sup>55</sup> as well as capriciousness and cruelty.<sup>56</sup> Both authors quote Cleomenes' contemptuous remark to a man who was delivering the king a shipment of war horses: "I wish you had brought harp girls and catamites instead; for these are now the things that most interest the king."<sup>57</sup> Indeed, since both introduce Philopator's debauchery in the context of the downfall and death of Cleomenes of Sparta, both probably shared a common source. Justin describes Philopator similarly, although he does not mention Cleomenes; he stresses the king's savagery upon his accession,<sup>58</sup> echoes the charge that the king's neglect weakened the country and exposed it to attack,<sup>59</sup> and describes with some relish the debauchery of the king and his court.<sup>60</sup>

How accurate this characterization is remains uncertain. Recent scholars have emphasized the positive achievements of Philopator's reign, which may or may not be attributable to Sosibius, a minister whom Polybius generally represents as efficient, if ruthless.<sup>61</sup> In any case, the author of 3 Maccabees embraces the negative portrait of Philopator in every detail, at least until the king's miraculous eleventh-hour reformation. Like Justin, the author of 3 Maccabees represents Philopator as returning from Raphia to take

55. Plut. *Cleo.* 33.5: ὕστερον δέ, τοῦ Πτολεμαίου τῆς ἀσθενείας ἐπιτεινούσης τὴν δειλίαν, καὶ καθάπερ εἴωθεν ἐν τῷ μὴδὲν φρονεῖν, τοῦ πάντα δεδοικέναι καὶ πᾶσιν ἀπιστεῖν ἀσφαλεστάτου δοκοῦντος εἶναι.

56. Plut. *Cleo.* 36.4, referring to Cleomenes: κᾄθηται μητραγύρτου βασιλέως σχολὴν ἀναμένων, ὅταν πρῶτον ἀπόθῃται τὸ τύμπανον καὶ καταπαύσῃ τὸν θίασον, ἀποκτενοῦντος αὐτόν; compare also Philopator's vicious treatment of the body of Cleomenes and of his surviving family after Cleomenes' abortive revolt (Plut. *Cleo.* 38.2).

57. Plut. *Cleo.* 35.2, γελάσας ὁ Κλεομένης, "Ἐβουλόμην ἄν," ἔφη, "σε μᾶλλον ἤκειν ἄγοντα σαμβυκιστρίας καὶ κιναίδους· ταῦτα γὰρ νῦν μάλιστα κατεπείγει τὸν βασιλέα"; Polyb. 5.37.11, "ἐβουλόμην ἄν σε καὶ λίαν ἀντὶ τῶν ἱππων κιναίδους ἄγειν καὶ σαμβύκας· τούτων γὰρ ὁ νῦν βασιλεὺς κατεπεύγεται."

58. Justin 30.1, "regno parricidio parto et ad necem utriusque parentis caede etiam fratris adstructa," a charge that Polybius lays mostly at the feet of Philopator's advisor Sosibius; cf. Polyb. 15.25.2.

59. Justin 30.1: "itaque non amici tantum praefectique, verum etiam omnis exercitus depositis militiae studiis otio ac desidia corrupti marcebant."

60. Justin 30.1: "sed contentus reciperatione urbium, quas amiserat, facta pace avide materiam quietis adripuit revolutusque in luxuriam occisa Eurydice, uxore eademque sorore sua, Agathocliae meretricis inlecebris capitur, atque ita omnem magnitudinem nominis ac maiestatis oblitus noctes in stupris, dies in conviviis consumit. adduntur instrumenta luxuriae, tympana et crepundia; nec iam spectator rex, sed magister nequitiae nervorum oblectamenta modulatur."

61. Heinen 1984: 435; Huss 1976. Cf. Polyb. 5.35–39, 63–67, for some examples of Sosibius's handling of affairs; cf. 15.25.2, where the ruthless elimination of rivals in Philopator's early years is credited to him.

up still greater debauchery than before he left.<sup>62</sup> At this point we meet the king's notorious drinking companions for the first time, a crew strangely introduced as if they are already known to the audience (3 Macc. 2.25: "his aforementioned drinking companions and friends").<sup>63</sup> Third Maccabees and Plutarch both use the same word for Philopator's licentious behavior (*ἀσελγείαις*, 3 Macc. 2.26; *ἀσελγειαν*, Plut. *Cleo.* 33.1), and the remark that the king's behavior was so outrageous that it raised slanders (*δυσφημίας*, 3 Macc. 2.26) throughout the country might calculatedly allude to the downfall of Cleomenes, who fell afoul of the king for just such ill-advised malicious gossip (Polyb. 5.37, Plut. *Cleo.* 35). The king's drinking parties feature prominently in the narrative:<sup>64</sup> three times he turns from ordering the death of the Jews to revelry and drinking with their enemies, his debauched companions (3 Macc. 5.3, 14, 36).<sup>65</sup> Even the manner in which the Jews are repeatedly spared by the provident intervention of God is reminiscent of the king's reputation for idleness and his neglect of state affairs: once he oversleeps (and is shaken awake only to begin drinking again, 5.14–17), and once he simply forgets all about his own orders (5.27–35).

62. 3 Macc. 2.25, *διακομισθεὶς δὲ εἰς τὴν Αἴγυπτον καὶ τὰ τῆς κακίας ἐπαύξων*; cf. Justin 30.1, "facta pace avide materiam quietis adripuit revolutusque in luxuriam."

63. The use of the word "aforementioned" (*προαποδεδειγμένων*) is extremely peculiar. If one is not to accept the theory that the beginning of the text has been lost, or alternatively that the author simply carelessly copied this phrase from his source(!), the word would seem to be intended to evoke the notoriety of these companions. (Cf., for instance, the mention of the king's *geloistai* in one of the fragments of the lost work of Ptolemy of Megalopolis, *FGrH* 161 F 2.) It is also remotely possible that it might be intended as a stylistic homage to Polybius (who often refers back to persons and events already mentioned) or another similar Hellenistic author.

64. 3 Macc. 4.16, *συνπόσια ἐπὶ πάντων τῶν εἰδῶλων συνιστάμενος*; 5.3, *ἐτρέπετο πρὸς τὴν εὐωχίαν συναγαγὼν τοὺς μάλιστα τῶν φίλων καὶ τῆς στρατιᾶς ἀπεχθῶς ἔχοντας πρὸς τοὺς Ἰουδαίους*; 5.14–17; 5.36.

65. Philopator's evil-living companions, who are universally excoriated by the historical sources, are thus shrewdly equated by the author of 3 Maccabees with the enemies of the Jews; morally upright, respectable courtiers, he implies, would not have so conspired against the Jews. Philopator's eleventh-hour reform brings about their discomfiture (3 Macc. 6.34), a happy event for the Egyptian court that is sadly not paralleled in the historical accounts of Philopator's reign. On the contrary, according to the sources (Justin 30.2, Polyb. 15.25–34), Philopator's court became ever more debauched, and the king himself fell ever more under the influence of prostitutes and degenerates. Agathocles and his creatures assumed the guardianship of the young Ptolemy V after Philopator's death, and when it became known that they had secretly murdered Philopator's popular wife, Arsinoe, Agathocles and the others were literally torn to pieces by the mob in the streets of Alexandria, in one of the more disgusting spectacles in the annals of Ptolemaic history. It is perhaps a pity for historians (and for the people of Alexandria) that the happy ending of 3 Maccabees is only a charming story.

Like the Philopator of Plutarch and Justin, the Philopator in 3 Maccabees is not merely self-indulgent, debauched, and under the thumb of his evil advisors; he is also a capricious, cruel, evil-tempered tyrant. In contrast to the historical sources, where the king directs his savagery against Cleomenes and his family or against his own relations, in 3 Maccabees the king's anger falls primarily upon the Jews. Third Maccabees repeatedly compares him with Phalaris, the notorious sixth-century-B.C.E. tyrant of Agrigentum (3 Macc. 5.20, 42; cf. 3.8). Indeed, the king is cast throughout in the mold of a tyrant, driven by caprice and showing no respect for the laws or for the rights of his people. As such, he is the antithesis of the legitimate Hellenistic king, as legitimacy is defined by, to take only one example, the *Letter of Aristeas*. Although the roots of this characterization can be found in the historical sources, 3 Maccabees develops Philopator's tyrannical character much further. This characterization enables the author to cast the persecution of the Jews as the act of an irrational, lawless tyrant, whereas the reformed Philopator who ultimately takes the Jews under his protection is represented as a wise, just, lawful king, akin to Philadelphus in the *Letter of Aristeas*.

Thus 3 Maccabees coopts the details of the traditionally negative portrayal of the historical Philopator in order to construct an archetypal foreign oppressor of the Jews, like Pharaoh in Exodus or Ahasuerus in Esther. As in the case of Ahasuerus, the providence of God would swiftly convert this oppressor into an equally archetypal protector and champion of the Jewish people, like the Cyrus who rescued the Jews from exile or the Philadelphus of the *Letter of Aristeas*.

In addition, 3 Maccabees also makes significant use of one facet of Philopator's character that is directly or indirectly attested by historical, papyrological, and archaeological evidence: that is, Philopator's devotion to the cult of Dionysus. The hostile literary sources allude to the king's enthusiasm for Dionysus, if only to further ridicule his dissolute way of life. Plutarch (*Cleo.* 33.1) mentions the king's habit of celebrating Dionysiac Mysteries at the palace in the same breath with the king's drinking parties and the domination of his court by his mistresses and prostitutes.<sup>66</sup> Likewise Justin associates Philopator's debauched way of life with the musical instruments

66. Plut. *Cleo.* 33.2: ὁ μὲν γὰρ βασιλεὺς αὐτὸς οὕτω διέφθαρτο τὴν ψυχὴν ὑπὸ γυναικῶν καὶ πότων ὥστε, ὁπότε νήφοι μάλιστα καὶ σπουδαιότατος αὐτοῦ γένοιτο, τελετὰς τελεῖν καὶ τύμπανον ἔχων ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις ἀγείρειν, τὰ δὲ μέγιστα τῆς ἀρχῆς πράγματα διοικεῖν Ἀγαθόκλειαν τὴν ἔρωμένην τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τὴν ταύτης μητέρα καὶ πορνοβοσκὸν Οἰνάνθη. Cf. Plut. *Cleo.* 36.4, κάθηται μητραγύρτου βασιλέως σχολὴν ἀναμένων, ὅταν πρῶτον ἀπόσθῃται τὸ τύμπανον καὶ καταπαύσῃ τὸν θίασον, ἀποκτενοῦντος αὐτόν.

used in Dionysiac rites ("instrumenta luxuria, tympana et crepundia," 30.1), seemingly referring like Plutarch to the king's celebration of Dionysiac rites at the palace: "nec iam spectator rex, sed magister nequitiae nervorum oblectamenta modulatur." The *Etymologicum Magnum* also mentions that Philopator acquired his nickname Gallus because of his habitual participation in the rites of Dionysus.<sup>67</sup> The king's commitment to Dionysus was, however, more serious than the literary sources suggest. According to a fragment of Satyrus, a biographer of the king, Philopator made serious attempts to reform and regulate the cult of Dionysus throughout his realm.<sup>68</sup> This is borne out by the text of an official decree preserved in the papyri,<sup>69</sup> according to which Philopator summoned all initiates into the Mysteries of Dionysus to the capital to be registered and to give a complete account of those from whom they received the rites,<sup>70</sup> going back three generations<sup>71</sup>—a remarkably ambitious project, whether in fact it encompassed all initiates or only the priests of the Dionysiac rites.

There are striking similarities between that genuine decree of Philopator and the one reported in 3 Maccabees (2.28–30). According to the latter, a perplexing document, Philopator's first act against the Jews was to ordain

67. *Etym. Mag.* s.v. Γάλλος: ὁ Φιλοπάτωρ Πτολεμαῖος· διὰ τὸ φύλλοις κισσοῦ κατεστίχθαι, ὡς οἱ γάλλοι. αἶ γὰρ ταῖς Διονυσιακαῖς τελεταῖς [κισσῷ ἔστεφανοῦντο].

68. Satyrus F 21; text and discussion in Perdrizet 1910.

69. Berlin Papyrus VI 1211; see now Modrzejewski (1995: 149), who observes that the precise details of what Philopator was trying to achieve by this order remain unclear, but his official concern for the cult of Dionysus is unmistakable. The theory of Modrzejewski (1995: 151–52), however, that Philopator may actually have tried to apply the same measures to the Jews as to the Dionysiac initiates (not in order to force Dionysiac worship upon the Jews but simply to register members of both groups in the same manner due to perceived similarities between the two), goes beyond the evidence. Precisely because Philopator was devoted to the cult of Dionysus and well versed in its details, he surely would not have confused Jews with worshippers of Dionysus, as the Romans apparently did when they expelled the Jews in 139 B.C.E. on charges of promulgating the worship of Sabazius (Modrzejewski 1995: 152).

70. The meaning of the word *τελοῦντας* is obscure. It is most often taken to refer to all those who were initiated into the Mysteries (Moreau 1941: 118–19; Tcherikover 1961: 4–5), although it has been argued by some that the word should be taken to refer only to the priesthood, not to the general population of worshippers, initiates, or both (Jesi 1956: 237).

71. The order reads (Berlin Papyrus VI 1211): βασιλέως προστάξαντος. τοὺς κατὰ τὴν χώραν τελοῦντας τῷ Διονύσῳ καταπλεῖν ἐς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν, τοὺς μὲν ἕως Ναυκράτews ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας τὸ πρόσταγμα ἔκκειται ἐν ἡμέραις ι', τοὺς ἐπάνω Ναυκράτews ἐν ἡμέραις κ', καὶ ἀπογράφεσθαι πρὸς Ἀριστόβουλον εἰς τὸ καταλογεῖον ἀφ' ἧς ἂν ἡμέρας παραγένωνται ἐν ἡμέραις τρισὶν, διασαφεῖν δὲ εὐθέως καὶ παρὰ τῶν παρελθήσασιν τὰ ἱερὰ ἕως γενεῶν τριῶν καὶ δίδόναι τὸν ἱερὸν λόγον ἐσφραγισμένον ἐπιγράψαντα τὸ ὄνομα ἑκαστον τὸ αὐτοῦ ὄνομα.

that they all be “registered in their former limited status.”<sup>72</sup> The process of this registration was to include branding with an ivy leaf, the symbol of Dionysus;<sup>73</sup> only those who elected to be initiated in the Mysteries of the god would be exempted from the decree and entitled to *ἰσοπολιτεία* with the citizens of Alexandria.<sup>74</sup> When Philopator discovered that many Jews were seeking to evade the registration, he became enraged and ordered that all the Jews, both of Alexandria and of the *chōra*, be brought to the city for registration and immediate execution (3 Macc. 3.1).

When we are evaluating historical material independently attested in Polybius or Plutarch or Justin, assessing the author’s own contribution in handling and shaping his material is a fairly straightforward undertaking. It becomes more difficult, however, to assess the author’s part where the narrative seems based on legend and oral tradition, given that the legends in question do not survive independently except in very different versions. (I.e., Josephus’s version of the elephant legend and the Heliodorus story in 2 Maccabees.) In that case, even if we begin by assuming that the variant of the legend of the persecution at Alexandria with which the author began centered on the reign of Philopator and not on the reign of Euergetes or some quite different king (as I have argued above), it remains difficult to distinguish the traditional material that the author shaped from the author’s own shaping of it. Since the bulk of 3 Maccabees focuses on the arbitrary execution of the Jews, however, and since only one passage suggests that the Jews had the option of escaping death through apostasy (3 Macc. 2.28–31), I infer that the theme of Philopator’s attachment to Dionysus, and his alleged attempt to force the Dionysus cult upon the Jews, was not part of the original legend but is the author’s own addition to the story.<sup>75</sup>

72. 3 Macc. 2.29: καταχωρίσαι εἰς τὴν προσυνεσταλμένην αὐθεντίαν.

73. Ibid.: τοὺς τε ἀπογραφομένους χαράσσεσθαι καὶ διὰ πυρὸς εἰς τὸ σῶμα παρασήμῳ Διονύσου κισσοφύλλῳ.

74. Ibid. 2.30: Ἐὰν δέ τινες ἐξ αὐτῶν προαιρῶνται ἐν τοῖς κατὰ τὰς τελετὰς μεμνημένοις ἀναστρέφεσθαι, τοὺτους ἰσοπολίτας Ἀλεξανδρεῦσιν εἶναι.

75. So also in the variant of the elephant legend given by Josephus (C.Ap. 2.50–56), the emotional focus is upon the imminent destruction of the Jews and upon their salvation, and not upon the ostensible reason for the persecution. According to Josephus, the Jews were persecuted for having been on the wrong side in a civil war; there is no indication that they could have saved themselves by any recantation. Interestingly, this marks a strong contrast between the elephant legend and a traditional martyrology. A martyr, whether Jewish or Christian, has up until the last moment the option of recanting his or her faith; the act of witnessing is located in the martyr’s refusal to recant. It would appear that at least in the version of the elephant legend known to Josephus, and very likely also in the version known to the author of 3 Maccabees, the original emphasis was not upon the refusal of the Jews



Here again 3 Maccabees uses a known characteristic of Philopator as raw material with which to construct a plausible legend with a didactic purpose. We have no evidence outside 3 Maccabees that Philopator ever sought to force the worship of Dionysus on any of his subjects.<sup>76</sup> Philopator's known devotion to the cult of Dionysus, however, made entirely credible the allegations of 3 Maccabees that Philopator had sought alternately to entice and to compel the Jews to abandon their God for the Mysteries of Dionysus. The scenario must have seemed especially plausible to a generation of Jews whose fathers or grandfathers had witnessed the forced sacrifices that Antiochus IV imposed upon Jerusalem.<sup>77</sup> The nature of the legend itself may have encouraged the anonymous author to connect the elephant legend, the forcing of Dionysiac worship upon the Jews of Jerusalem by Antiochus IV, and Philopator's known enthusiasm for Dionysus, since the elephant was associated with Dionysus in Hellenistic iconography.<sup>78</sup>

The similarities between Philopator's Dionysiac decree in 3 Maccabees (2.28–30) and the genuine Dionysiac decree preserved in Berlin Papyrus VI 1211 are particularly intriguing; more than one scholar has suggested that

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to save themselves by apostasy but upon the entire dependence of the Jews upon God to save them when caught up in a situation beyond their control.

76. Notwithstanding the speculation of Jesi (1956: 239), who in fact bases his theory of the imposed monotheistic worship of Dionysus under Philopator in part upon this passage in 3 Maccabees.

77. Cf. 2 Macc. 6.9, which attests forced participation of Dionysiac worship as one element of the persecution of 167 B.C.E.

78. I owe this important observation to Modrzejewski 1995: 150. Elephants appeared in the great procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus in 271 B.C.E., which had a strongly Dionysian theme and depicted (among many other things!) the return of Dionysus from India, which the Ptolemies associated with Alexander's conquest of India. (Rice [1983: 45–115] explores the Dionysiac part of the Grand Procession in great detail, with pp. 82–99 concentrated entirely on the return from India.) Modrzejewski (1995: 150) further observes that the elephants in 3 Maccabees were specifically Indian elephants, known to be militarily superior to the African variety and found primarily in the Seleucid armory; this "suggests the idea that Philopator, who had only African elephants, seized Indian elephants of the vanquished Antiochus as booty of war." At the end of the fourth century B.C.E., five hundred Indian elephants represented the "exact number of elephants that Seleucus I had at his disposition . . . offered him by an Indian king" (Modrzejewski 1995: 149), so this number if taken literally would represent a heavy Seleucid loss indeed; however, Modrzejewski also notes that five hundred is a common synonym for "a great number." (Ironically, he also remarks [ibid.] that according to Polybius, Philopator's own elephants at Raphia had caused more damage to the Egyptian troops than to the enemy on account of their lack of discipline—perhaps explaining why Philopator might have wanted to commandeer a better-trained elephant corps!)

the author of 3 Maccabees was familiar with the latter decree.<sup>79</sup> The author's familiarity with official decrees is apparent from the verisimilitude of the documents that he has forged (see below), and as we have already seen, he not only used a good source for the reign of Philopator, but he seems also to have been well versed in such trivia as the existence of Dositheus son of Drimylus. It seems very likely, then, that the author of 3 Maccabees did in fact know and make use of this decree. Once again, as with Theodotus's plot, a historical source is simply a point of departure, allowing the author's imagination to transform a historical fact into an edifying legend—in this case, illustrating Jewish fortitude in the face of religious persecution.

Finally, not only does the author allude to known historical facts from Philopator's reign, but he even purports to cite genuine royal letters and decrees verbatim—a popular practice among Hellenistic historians, emulated by Jewish historians from Eupolemus to Josephus. Close study of the two royal letters (3 Macc. 3.12–29, 7.1–9) much illuminates the methodology of the author of 3 Maccabees.<sup>80</sup>

Just as the details of the battle of Raphia in 3 Maccabees appear on first reading to agree very well with the historical sources for Philopator, certifying the author as a historical authority and lending credibility to the story that he is about to tell, so also the use of the official formulas and bureaucratism of the Ptolemaic chancery places a stamp of authenticity upon the ostensibly official documents that the author cites. The greeting formulas,<sup>81</sup> as we have seen, are precise enough to date the text at least tentatively. It is, however, not insignificant that the date suggested by these formulas does not in fact place us in the reign of Philopator but in the period around 100 B.C.E., contemporary (as I argue) with the author himself and his audience.<sup>82</sup> The care that the author has taken to emulate the official chancery style of his own day reflects neither carelessness nor ignorance on his part but rather

79. E.g., Moreau 1941: 118–22; Tcherikover 1961: 3–5.

80. I will pass over, for the moment, the decree cited at 3 Macc. 2.28–30. As noted above, this decree raises many problems, not the least of which is that it is not clear whether the author purports to be citing or merely summarizing the text of an authentic decree. I will therefore concentrate for now on the letters, demonstrably intended to be taken as verbatim copies.

81. 3 Macc. 3.12: *Βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος Φιλοπάτωρ . . . χαίρειν καὶ ἐρρῶσθαι*. So also at 7.1, with a slight variation in the addressees.

82. As discussed above in Chap. 4, the divine epithet *Φιλοπάτωρ* is not found in the greeting formulas of royal letters before 100 B.C.E., and the formula *χαίρειν καὶ ἐρρῶσθαι* is likewise not attested before the first century B.C.E. The papyrological sample upon which this dating is based is admittedly small and could probably be stretched to include any date in the late second century or early first century B.C.E., but it certainly does not correspond with the official usage of the reign of Philopator.



a deliberate stylistic choice, in order that the contemporary bureaucratic style most familiar to his audience might lend credibility to his pretended official documents.<sup>83</sup> It follows that the author was quite unconcerned that an expert reader could debunk his forgeries as impossible in Philopator's day. This corresponds well with the author's indifference to precise historical accuracy in his report of the battle of Raphia. It is the impression, not the fact, of accuracy that matters to him—and presumably to his audience also.

The author's concern for specious historical documentation is further borne out by the content of Philopator's supposed letters (3 Macc. 3.12–29, 7.1–9), which are, as Tcherikover observes (1961: 9), patently fictional. The first of these recapitulates in one way or another all the disparate events and legends so far covered in 3 Maccabees: Philopator's victory at Raphia and subsequent tour of the cities of Coele Syria (3.14, 15; cf. 1.1–5, 6–7); his visiting Jerusalem to honor the Temple and the Jews' welcoming him (3.16–17; cf. 1.8–10); the Jews' refusal to let him enter the Temple and his withdrawal (amusingly represented as a generous concession on his part: 3.18; cf. 1.11–2.24); his return to Egypt (3.20; cf. 2.25–26); his first decree, offering *isopoliteia* to Jews who sacrifice (3.21; cf. 2.27–30), and the Jews' efforts to evade it (3.22–23; cf. 2.31–33); and finally his decision to condemn all the Jews to death (3.25; cf. 3.1). Thus does the entire sequence of historical and legendary events so far narrated receive the ultimate sanction: Philopator's official voice, as conveyed through a supposedly genuine document.

Perhaps even more important, many themes that the author has thus far invoked find a place in this putative court document: Philopator's irrational hostility toward the Jews,<sup>84</sup> the Egyptian Jews' historic loyalty to the crown,<sup>85</sup> the attempt to seduce Jews into apostasy through the offer of *isopo-*

83. By contrast, using the idiom of Philopator's day, which would have been unfamiliar to all but the most knowledgeable antiquarians among the readers of 3 Maccabees, would be likely to have had an off-putting and even confusing effect on the audience. I am informed by experts in costume design that the same practice is followed in designing costumes for the stage. It is common practice to dress (for example) prostitutes in *Les Misérables* not as eighteenth-century French prostitutes would actually have been dressed, in filthy rags, but as the audience subconsciously expects a prostitute to dress, in gaudy and suggestive finery.

84. 3 Macc. 3.16, τῶν ἀλιτηρίων καὶ μηδέποτε ληγόντων τῆς ἀνοίας; 3.19, τὴν δὲ αὐτῶν εἰς ἡμᾶς δυσμένειαν ἔκδηλον καθιστάντες ὡς μονώτατοι τῶν ἐθνῶν βασιλεῖσι καὶ τοῖς ἑαυτῶν εὐεργέταις ὑβανχενοῦντες οὐδὲν γνήσιον βούλονται φέρειν; 3.22, οἱ δὲ τοῦναντίον ἐκδεχόμενοι καὶ τῇ συμφύτῳ κακοηθείᾳ τὸ καλὸν ἀπωσάμενοι, διηλεκῶς δὲ εἰς τὸ φαῦλον ἐκνεύοντες; etc.

85. Ibid. 3.21: διὰ τε τὴν συμμαχίαν καὶ τὰ πεπιστευμένα μετὰ ἀπλότητος αὐτοῖς ἀρχήθεν μυρία πράγματα.

*liteia*,<sup>86</sup> the contempt of the Jewish faithful for those who did apostasize,<sup>87</sup> and the assumption of Philopator that Jews unwilling to apostasize will be disloyal to the state in a crisis.<sup>88</sup> The important themes of Jewish loyalty in the face of inexplicable royal persecution, of the balance to be struck between loyalty to the state and loyalty to God, are thus raised in the very documentation that the author cites in order to buttress his narrative.

Philopator's second letter (3 Macc. 7.1–9), canceling the persecution of the Jews, is likewise clearly the author's own composition. Its conventional formulas echo those of the first letter, with slight variations: Philopator salutes the generals and officials whom he is addressing,<sup>89</sup> reassures them that he himself is well,<sup>90</sup> and proceeds to the content of his letter.<sup>91</sup> This letter's conventional formulas, besides being appropriate for the author's own time rather than Philopator's, also contain a significant historical error. In the first letter, Philopator had assured his generals in conventional fashion that "I myself am well, and our affairs also" (3.13, *ἔρρωμαι δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐγὼ καὶ τὰ πράγματα ἡμῶν*); in the second letter, he offers a different but equally conventional reassurance, "We ourselves are well, and our children also" (7.2, *ἔρρώμεθα δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ καὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν*).<sup>92</sup> As it happens, however, Philopator had only one child that we know of, a son, who was born in 209/8 B.C.E., fully nine years after the battle of Raphia.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, when Arsinoe accompanied Philopator to Raphia, she was still only his young sister, not yet his

86. Ibid. Here, as at 2.30, Philopator presents this first decree as an intended boon to the Jews (*πολιτείας αὐτοῦς Ἀλεξανδρέων καταξιώσαι*), although the author at 2.27 accuses Philopator of intending from the first to punish the Jews of Egypt for his humiliation at Jerusalem (*προέθετο δημοσίᾳ κατὰ τοῦ ἔθνους διαδοῦναι ψόγον*).

87. Ibid. 3.23: *βδελύσσονται λόγῳ τε καὶ σιγῇ τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς ὀλίγους πρὸς ἡμᾶς γνησίως διακειμένους*.

88. Ibid. 3.24: *προνοούμενοι, μή ποτε αἰφνιδίου μετέπειτα ταραχῆς ἐνστάσης ἡμῖν τοὺς δυσσεβεῖς τούτους κατὰ νώτου προδότας καὶ βαρβάρους ἔχωμεν πολεμίους*.

89. Ibid. 3.12, *Βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος Φιλοπάτωρ τοῖς κατ' Αἴγυπτον καὶ κατὰ τόπον στρατηγοῖς καὶ στρατιώταις χαίρειν καὶ ἔρρῶσθαι*; cf. 7.1, *Βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος Φιλοπάτωρ τοῖς κατ' Αἴγυπτον στρατηγοῖς καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς τεταγμένοις ἐπὶ πραγμάτων χαίρειν καὶ ἔρρῶσθαι*.

90. Ibid. 3.13, *ἔρρωμαι δὲ καὶ ἐγὼ αὐτὸς καὶ τὰ πράγματα ἡμῶν*; cf. 7.2, *ἔρρώμεθα δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ καὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν κατευθύνοντος ἡμῖν τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ τὰ πράγματα, καθὼς προαιρούμεθα*.

91. This letter, unlike the first letter, also concludes with a conventional farewell: *ἔρρωσθε*, ibid. 7.9.

92. He also, significantly, adds here (as he does not in the first letter) *κατευθύνοντος ἡμῖν τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ τὰ πράγματα, καθὼς προαιρούμεθα*, ibid. 7.2. See further discussion below.

93. E.g., Hadas 1953 *ad loc.*

sister-wife; the two were not married until some time after the battle and could scarcely have been parents yet.<sup>94</sup> The reference to Philopator's children may indicate that the author is for the moment thinking not of the historical Philopator but of the generic epistolary formulas that every Hellenistic king used.

Then again, the reference is thematically appropriate in the context. Philopator speaks in this letter of God's concern for his realm and of the loyalty of his Jewish subjects, references that touch closely upon the issue of royal legitimacy. The possession of legitimate children who will be able to serve as capable heirs is also a key to royal legitimacy in the Hellenistic period.<sup>95</sup> Thus it is appropriate that the Philopator of this letter should appear not as he really was at that time, an unmarried, childless king only recently established on the throne, but as every Hellenistic king hoped to become, a mature monarch with a house full of capable heirs.

As in the first letter, the content of the second also betrays the hand of the author. Perhaps the most striking anomaly in this putatively genuine document is its frequent, pious reference to a watchful *θεός*, suspiciously reminiscent of the God of the Jews,<sup>96</sup> whose epithets are such as a Jewish Greek writer would choose.<sup>97</sup> This *θεός* is all-knowing, all-seeing and all-powerful, watches over the Jews like a father and an ally (3 Macc. 7.6), and will avenge any wrong done to them (7.9). The references are not so specific as to be precisely impossible in the mouth of a pagan king, or so as to force the reader

94. Cf. Hadas 1953 *ad loc.* The author of 3 Maccabees may have been aware of this fact, since he refers to Arsinoe as *τὴν ἀδελφὴν* and never specifies that she was Philopator's wife. It is impossible to be sure that any such precision was intended, however, since "sister" was a conventional Ptolemaic equivalent for "wife" or "queen." If, however, the author was conscious of the potential for ambiguity, his use of the double-edged word "sister" may well have been intentional. Arsinoe's role in addressing the soldiers is that of a queen rather than that of a young sister barely out of the schoolroom, and her presence in the text would surely have recalled to the reader the Arsinoe who became the famous and popular wife of Philopator, not his teenaged sister.

95. An excellent example of the importance of this issue for one early Hellenistic king may be found in Theocritus, *Idyll* 17, where the establishment of a legitimate line running through Philadelphus from his father to his sons is repeatedly emphasized.

96. 3 Macc. 7.2, *κατευθύνοντος ἡμῖν τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ τὰ πράγματα*; 7.6, *τὸν ἐπουράνιον θεὸν ἐγνωκότες ἀσφαλῶς ὑπερησπικότα τῶν Ἰουδαίων ὡς πατέρα ὑπὲρ υἱῶν διὰ παντὸς συμμαχοῦντα*; 7.9, *οὐκ ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλὰ τὸν πάσης δεσπόζοντα δυνάμεως θεὸν ὕψιστον ἀντικείμενον ἡμῖν ἐπ' ἐκδικήσει τῶν πραγμάτων κατὰ πᾶν ἀφεύκτως διὰ παντὸς ἔξομεν*.

97. *Ibid.* 7.2, *τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ*; 7.6, *τὸν ἐπουράνιον θεόν*; 7.9, *τὸν πάσης δεσπόζοντα δυνάμεως θεὸν ὕψιστον*.

to accept the absurd implication that Philopator has converted to Judaism, but they suggest a knowledge of and respect for the God of the Jews highly improbable, to say the least, in an official Ptolemaic document.

Again as in the first letter, Philopator's words echo many important themes that the author has taken pains to develop. The Great God not only watches over the Jews, but first and foremost watches over the affairs of Philopator himself, provided that he maintains a correct attitude toward his subjects, and toward the Jews in particular (3 Macc. 7.2, 9). As Hellenistic kings in general establish their legitimacy through the favor of the gods and through just dealings with their subjects, so Philopator owes his standing in part to the favor of the Jewish God, obtained through his newly enlightened treatment of the Jews.

Philopator disowns his previous campaign against the Jews, and blames it upon his Friends' evil character (*κακοηθεία*, 3 Macc. 7.3).<sup>98</sup> This may be politically self-serving, but it also conveys to the audience the message that leaders who persecute the Jews only do so when they have been misled by wicked advisors—and the attitude of a leader who has been so misled is always open to correction. Significantly, the language of the king's *recusatio* echoes his first letter, turning the meaning of the original on its head. The uncomplimentary adjectives reserved in the first letter for the Jews who were then the target of the king's irrational fury now accumulate upon the evil Friends who have become the object of his righteous anger.<sup>99</sup> The idea that by reason of their ill will toward all men the Jews are liable to betray the state, as the king himself declared in the earlier letter (3.24), is here ascribed to the king's wicked Friends<sup>100</sup>—and vigorously repudiated.<sup>101</sup> To the con-

98. Ibid. 7.3, τῶν φίλων τινὲς κακοηθεία πικνότερον ἡμῖν παρακείμενοι συνέπεισαν ἡμᾶς εἰς τὸ τοὺς ὑπὸ τὴν βασιλείαν Ἰουδαίους συναθροίσαντας σύστημα κολάσασθαι; 7.6, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἐπὶ τούτοις σκληρότερον διαπειλησάμενοι, καθ' ἣν ἔχομεν πρὸς ἅπαντας ἀνθρώπους ἐπιείκειαν, μόγις τὸ ζῆν αὐτοῖς χαρισάμενοι. Note that the word *κακοηθεία* is the same that is used at 3.22 of the Jews: τῇ συμφύτῳ κακοηθείᾳ τὸ καλὸν ἀποσάμενοι.

99. E.g., ibid. 7.3, κακοηθεία; 7.5, νόμου Σκυθῶν ἀγριωτέραν ἐμπεπορημένοι ὠμότητα.

100. Ibid. 7.3–5: τῶν φίλων τινὲς κακοηθεία πικνότερον ἡμῖν παρακείμενοι συνέπεισαν ἡμᾶς εἰς τὸ τοὺς ὑπὸ τὴν βασιλείαν Ἰουδαίους συναθροίσαντας σύστημα κολάσασθαι ξενίζουσας ἀποστατῶν τιμωρίας προφερόμενοι μήποτε εὐσταθήσεν τὰ πράγματα ἡμῶν δι' ἣν ἔχουσιν οὗτοι πρὸς τὰ πάντα ἔθνη δυσμένειαν, μέχρις, ἂν συντελεσθῇ τοῦτο· οἱ καὶ δεσμίους καταγαγόντες αὐτοὺς μετὰ σκυλμῶν ὡς ἀνδράποδα, μάλλον δὲ ὡς ἐπιβούλους, ἀνευ πάσης ἀνακρίσεως καὶ ἐξετάσεως ἐπεχείρησαν ἀνελεῖν νόμου Σκυθῶν ἀγριωτέραν ἐμπεπορημένοι ὠμότητα.

101. Ibid. 7.6: ἡμεῖς δὲ ἐπὶ τούτοις σκληρότερον διαπειλησάμενοι, καθ' ἣν ἔχομεν πρὸς ἅπαντας ἀνθρώπους ἐπιείκειαν, μόγις τὸ ζῆν αὐτοῖς χαρισάμενοι.

trary, the king here especially praises the constant loyalty of the Jews and their good will toward him and his ancestors.<sup>102</sup> In his first letter, the king especially stressed his *philanthrōpia* toward all men in explaining why he accepted the rebuff of the unreasonable Jews of Jerusalem and retired gracefully;<sup>103</sup> now it is the wicked Friends whom Philopator, likewise in the kindness of his heart toward all men, has allowed to escape with their lives.<sup>104</sup> The Jews and the evil advisors have changed places, with the Jews fully restored to favor and their enemies cast out, amid much wailing and gnashing of teeth.<sup>105</sup>

Thus, as in the first letter, the king himself in the language of a putatively genuine document articulates many of the author's most important themes—the dependence of Philopator on God's favor, which in turn depends on his treatment of the Jews; the suggestion that leaders persecute Jews not of their own free will but because they are temporarily deranged or have been misled by the Jews' enemies; the steadfast loyalty of the Jews to the state, and their good will toward the king, which decisively refutes any charges of treachery or misanthropy raised against them; and the implicit promise that God will always be able to restore the Jews to the king's favor and discomfit their enemies. The author's own ideas and views thus acquire all the authority of a dusty roll taken directly from the court archives, bearing the official seal of authenticity.

These documents, of course, are highly unlikely to have come from the royal archives. Just as when he exercises license with the historical material, the author here seems to have been quite unconcerned about the reader's ability to detect a forgery: these fictional documents stamp the tale with archival legitimacy. We must assume that readers sophisticated enough to notice what the author was up to would simply have enjoyed and appreciated the artistic ingenuity of his plausible fiction. By the time the fictive character of his creation is noticed, if it is noticed at all, the author's message has already been communicated; the exposure of the text's artificiality does nothing to decrease its effectiveness as a medium for expressing the author's view of Jewish identity in Hellenistic Egypt. By ingeniously creating fictional documents and manipulating freely adapted historical

102. Ibid. 7.7: τὴν τε τοῦ φίλου, ἣν ἔχουσι βεβαίαν πρὸς ἡμᾶς καὶ τοὺς προγόνους ἡμῶν εὐνοίαν.

103. Ibid. 3.20: τοῖς πᾶσιν ἔθνεσι φιλανθρωπῶς ἀπαντήσαντες.

104. Ibid. 7.6: quoted above, n. 101.

105. Cf. ibid. 6.34: οἳ τε πρὶν εἰς ὄλεθρον καὶ οἰωνοβρώτους αὐτοὺς ἔσεσθαι τιθέμενοι καὶ μετὰ χαρᾶς ἀπογραφάμενοι κατεστέναξαν αἰσχύνην ἐφ' ἑαυτοῖς περιβαλόμενοι καὶ τὴν πυρόπνουν τόλμαν ἀκλεῶς ἐσβεσμένοι.

records, the author succeeds in achieving what we today call the suspension of disbelief.<sup>106</sup>

In 3 Maccabees, then, historical, legendary, and fictional elements are interwoven in the author's handling of the battle of Raphia (3 Macc. 1.1–7), the character of Philopator and his devotion to the cult of Dionysus (*passim*), and the fictional documents (3.12–29, 7.1–9). In each case authentic historical material is used, but there is tension between reality—what we know of Philopator's reign from other sources—and how the author represents it. In order to buttress his didactic purpose, the author consistently manipulates the realia that he incorporates, and many peculiar errors or distortions of fact can be explained only by reference to this purpose.

The use of history as raw material in service of the author's purpose helps to explain the disorienting conjunction between the self-consciously historical and the patently legendary or fictional. It also explains why a concern for superficially accurate detail coexists with apparent unconcern for flagrant errors or anachronisms. Historical details and verbatim documents are simply tools to create a convincing literary effect, and accuracy for its own sake is subordinated to the author's need to communicate a particular message. Both author and audience focused on the message, not on the medium.

Disjunction of fact and fiction was far from uncommon in Hellenistic Jewish texts dealing with the past. The creative use of history is the tool of many an author, working in many a genre, to explore and to communicate themes of importance to his particular work. The phenomenon cuts across boundaries of language, genre, geography, and even of ideology. I have shown in Part 1 how authors of very different provenance and ideological background have manipulated historical traditions in support of their didactic fictions. Part 2's closer examination of history's manipulation in 3 Maccabees has illustrated just how elaborate and intelligent the construction of so-called

106. In modern popular culture, the suspension of disbelief is generally used purely for the purposes of entertainment, whereas I would argue that in 3 Maccabees the effect is used for the purpose of instructing as well as entertaining the audience; nevertheless, the principle is the same. The modern parallel may also help us to understand the point of view of an intelligent audience that was perfectly capable of seeing through the fiction. At the risk of descending from the sublime to the ridiculous, much of the scientific jargon or technobabble used on *Star Trek*, while being internally self-consistent and intentionally reminiscent of genuine scientific terminology, is readily recognizable to any scientist as complete nonsense. This has not, however, prevented the show from being wildly popular among highly educated hard scientists, and indeed probably contributes to that audience's enjoyment of the show.

historical fictions can be. Their authors were neither careless nor uneducated; they did not aim to swindle their readers, nor were they much concerned about the chance that their elaborate frauds would be discovered. Rather, their goal was to communicate some deeper truth about the nature of Hellenistic Jewish identity as they understood it. Systematically mining the rich but unsatisfactory veins of history “wie es eigentlich war,” they created a far more meaningful imagined history for their audience and for their community. This was not history as it really happened but, in the readers’ minds, history as it should have been.

# Conclusion

This study set out to understand the apparently paradoxical juxtaposition of history and fiction, combining historical verisimilitude with a remarkable disregard for historical accuracy, characteristic of a wide variety of Jewish Hellenistic texts. In 3 Maccabees, we have examined one possible model for how and why history and fiction were so combined. Third Maccabees, a late Hellenistic text often seen as confrontational, was not designed to encourage the Jews of Alexandria to separate themselves from their fundamentally hostile surroundings, for all its awareness that confrontation could occur. On the contrary, through the fictional story of a persecution happily averted, it sought to construct a model of identity allowing the preservation of traditional Jewish piety while at the same time making possible Jewish involvement in the wider Greek world. The reader is encouraged to believe that under normal circumstances, Jews may hold high positions in gentile society, are unfailingly loyal to the state, and are highly regarded by the king and by their Greek neighbors; that persecution is abnormal and ephemeral, and that when it does occur, the persecuting king is misguided or temporarily deranged, not fundamentally evil, and can be persuaded through appeal or divine intervention to restore the Jews to favor; and that God will reward those who are willing to endure the passing trial of persecution with a restoration of the status quo, whereas those who abandon the faith will be satisfactorily punished for their shortsightedness.

Moreover, although the superficially accurate historical setting of the text reveals itself upon examination to be riddled with errors or anachronisms, these are not signs of the author's carelessness; still less are they simply intended to flag the work as purely fictional. Rather, the historical setting is systematically manipulated and subordinated to serve the author's didactic purpose: first, to produce a convincing illusion of authenticity; second, to



help communicate the author's message more effectively. This is not to say that the author sought deliberately to fool his audience, nor even that he believed or expected that they would read his work as history. Rather, the anonymous author was primarily concerned with communicating moral and not historical truth. The historical truth of the events that he reports is simply irrelevant, except inasmuch as the illusion of their truth serves his purpose; thus there is no contradiction in favoring verisimilitude over accuracy. Historical accuracy is invoked so far as it supports the didactic purpose of the story, but the author does not hesitate to alter the facts if it serves his purpose, or to forge documents in whatever style will best favor the illusion of authenticity.

Precisely this invoking the past to create a particular vision of Hellenistic Jewish identity connects the diverse body of texts that have been identified as Jewish fictions, not a unity of genre or even purpose. The deliberate creation of fictions about the past cuts across almost every division within Hellenistic Jewish literature: it is found in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, in Egypt and in Palestine, in texts that imitate a wide variety of Jewish and Greek literary genres; it is subordinated to radically different purposes, whether Aristee's historical proof to the Greek-speaking Jews of Egypt that the Greek translation of the Torah is valid or Daniel's that the Seleucid kingdom will inevitably be destroyed.

The creation of fictions about the past in Jewish writings does not always proceed along identical lines, by any means. Some fictions, like 3 Maccabees, go to great lengths to create an illusion of historical accuracy as it was measured by Greek readers, citing names, dates, even quoting forged documents. Not surprisingly, we find this tendency most marked in texts originally composed in Greek, imitating the literary genre of historiography (3 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristee*, 2 Maccabees, and probably the original sources of the tales preserved in Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*). Others model themselves primarily on biblical exemplars, including both the historical books of the bible (Esther, Daniel, Judith, Tobit) and the traditions of Genesis and Exodus (Artapanus, *Joseph and Aseneth*); these seem to have had more a free-wheeling attitude toward history, such that historical verisimilitude blurs into the blatant historical fiction that one finds in, for example, the personalities of Darius the Mede and Nebuchadnezzar the Assyrian. Indeed, Artapanus and the author of *Joseph and Aseneth* seem to have felt most at liberty of all: although both follow the basic traditions of Genesis and Exodus in their work, Artapanus in filling the gaps has created a version of the Exodus that resembles history about as much as the *Alexander Romance* does

Arrian, and the author of *Joseph and Aseneth* has based on three verses of Genesis a pure fiction that one might in fact call a novel, if only with serious reservations.

Much more can be done to analyze the complex interplay of history and fiction in these Jewish texts. I have sought in Part 1 of this study simply to indicate the direction in which analysis might most fruitfully proceed. Simply picking out particular details wherein these Jewish fictions resemble the ancient novels, or attempting to force diverse texts willy-nilly into a single and perforce exceedingly vague genre, will not help us to understand the uniquely inventive nature of each of these texts. Rather, we need to focus more closely on precisely how each author invokes the past in order to create a particular fiction of identity, and for what purpose, integrating this understanding with our knowledge of the specific historical circumstances in which each work was composed. I hope that the present analysis will open the way for future research: for each of these texts one could write a separate book about its historical ambivalence.

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I have argued that the authors of these texts regarded the reconstruction of a particular version of the past as an important, indeed sacred, task but that they deliberately intended neither to fool their audiences into accepting spurious fictions as history nor to mark their texts as merely fictional, devoid of historical truth. Rather, they were concerned to communicate moral truth, clothed in the acknowledged illusion of historical verisimilitude. How their audiences actually read 3 Maccabees and other Jewish fictions is another question. We have no direct evidence on this point relating to 3 Maccabees proper; indeed, we have very little evidence for the subsequent use of the text at all, although the existence of a Syriac translation shows that the work was still popular with the Syrian church in late antiquity.<sup>1</sup> Presumably, the fact that Josephus in *Against Apion* gives an alternative account of the origin of the festival associated with the Alexandrian Jews' deliverance from elephantine extinction indicates that the festival purportedly being explained in 3 Maccabees was still celebrated in Alexandria in the late first century C.E. Josephus, however, gives no indication of knowing 3 Maccabees' version of the festival's origin; whether he knew of this version and chose to

1. Anderson 1985: 516. The Syriac translation dates to the late fourth century C.E. (Anderson 1985: 510).

ignore it, or whether it was quite unknown to him, is impossible to say. We are therefore forced back upon speculation.

Josephus in his *Jewish Antiquities* seems to accept as historical the account of the Septuagint given in the *Letter of Aristeas*; or at least so much may be inferred from the fact that he includes a paraphrase of Aristeas's account in his history without attempting to qualify, excuse, or alter it (as he alters, for instance, the historical background of Daniel).<sup>2</sup> The *Letter of Aristeas* was subsequently regarded as historical throughout the medieval period.<sup>3</sup> For that matter, Josephus also incorporates the text of Esther into his history, with only minor modifications.<sup>4</sup> Josephus, to be sure, although he is a highly educated, sophisticated Greek historian, cannot be wholly absolved of the charge of repeating tendentious historical traditions that he did not necessarily believe, in the service of magnifying the achievements of the Jewish people.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, Josephus's treatment of such texts must indicate that even highly educated Jews read texts like the *Letter of Aristeas* and Esther as history a few generations after they were written.

Most likely, these texts were read, at various times, on multiple levels. Some may have perceived their fictional character but accepted the stories nevertheless, because they regarded historical accuracy as essentially irrelevant to the point of the story. Some may have perceived them as fictions but claimed to regard them as history for tendentious purposes. Some, who were intellectually capable of perceiving them as fictions, may nevertheless have been led by their need to believe in a certain vision of the past into actually reading them as history. And no doubt there were some, as there are in every age, even when the texts were first written, to

2. See above, Chap. 2.

3. See references given above in Chap. 4.

4. This is particularly interesting, because it has been argued by many that texts like 3 Maccabees and the *Letter of Aristeas*, which go to great lengths to maintain an illusion of accuracy, were intended to fool their audience into reading them as history, while texts like Esther were deliberately marked by outrageous historical impossibilities (e.g., the claim that the Persian king would marry a Jewish queen) so that the audience would recognize them as fiction (Wills 1995: 2–3, 185–87). It would appear that Josephus at least did not distinguish between Esther and the *Letter of Aristeas* as valid historical sources (a fact that Wills [1995: 186–87] is somewhat puzzled to explain).

5. To take only one minor example, we have seen that he accepts the Ptolemaic propaganda which insisted that Antiochus III ceded the tax revenues of Coele Syria to Egypt as his daughter's dowry, because it happens to suit his purpose, although he must (or should) have known from Polybius that this propaganda was false. See discussion in Chap. 2, above.

whom it never occurred to question the gospel truth of the most outrageous tales.

. . .

There are many directions in which future research could proceed. I have already indicated that much more could be done individually with each of the Jewish fictions that I have touched upon in Part 1. There is, moreover, much that could be done to fit these fictions into the broader context of the literature of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, both Hebrew and Greek. Here I highlight only a few possibilities for future research.

In addition, although I have examined a wide variety of Jewish fictions, this study by no means exhausts all those that one might examine. In particular, Philo's intriguing use of fiction and history would be a highly fruitful area for further study. The quasi-fictional traditions in Philo present a significant subject for further study, for a number of reasons. For one, his quasi-legendary historical accounts are in fact still hotly disputed; there is no general agreement as to the fictional nature of those accounts, which means that the question of their historicity per se must be considered in much greater depth.

I have argued that for all these Jewish texts, the driving impulse to create fictions about the past is to be found in their need to create a variety of models for Hellenistic Jewish identity. One could argue that the need to communicate a particular didactic message, whether relating to communal identity or to some other purpose, may have been an important element in some other fictions as well, perhaps even in the Greek and Roman novels and in other, less easily classifiable fictions such as the *Cyropaedia* or the *Alexander Romance*.<sup>6</sup>

The whole question of how these Jewish fictions are related to the ancient novel remains to be further explored. It would, I think, be too simplistic to regard the former straightforwardly as the latter's ancestors; perhaps we would better regard them as part of a wider phenomenon, the

6. Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, to name only one example, is often regarded as a *speculum principis*, that is, a model for the education of the ideal leader (Shadi Bartsch, pers. comm.). As for the novel, Froma Zeitlin (pers. comm.) has suggested to me that Chariton may have been concerned, among other things, with certain issues of Greek identity, while Daniel Boyarin (e-mail comm.) has questioned whether the emphasis of the sentimental novel as a whole upon the ultimate reconciliation of the lovers may not have been intended to communicate a message of social cohesion and stability (much as does the modern mystery novel, with its emphasis on the inevitable solution of the crime and punishment of the malefactor).

increasing production of fictions of every variety in the postclassical Greek world, which laid the ground for the explosion of fictions that Bowersock has chronicled in the Roman period.<sup>7</sup>

The origins of the ancient novel, and of ancient fictions generally, constitute perhaps the most vexed of all problems in the scholarly literature, most often debated and with the least progress. A non-Greek origin, whether in so-called nationalistic hero romance (Braun 1938) or in Egyptian literature (Barns 1956), has been suggested more than once but never argued decisively.<sup>8</sup> Increasingly scholarship regards the question as probably unanswerable and not worth asking.<sup>9</sup> If, as seems likely, we are to believe that the novel proper was born amid a fervor of fictional production, both Greek and non-Greek, in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, perhaps the most fruitful line will lie in exploring the circumstances in which each individual fiction was written and examining what importance the interaction between diverse cultures and languages in the Hellenistic world and later in the Roman empire may have had in shaping those circumstances.<sup>10</sup> The closer we come to understanding the specific historical contexts in which the many different varieties of ancient prose fiction were produced, the closer we will be to understanding the origins of the phenomenon of ancient fiction as a whole.

One might also ponder the issue of the relationship of these Jewish fictions to the Gospels, and later to emerging Christian fictions such as the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles and the pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*. Bowersock has argued that the explosion of fictions in the Roman world can be traced to the influence of the Gospels, an early corpus of ancient fiction.<sup>11</sup> Should such fictional elements as can be found in the Gospels be traced in turn to the popularity in the late Hellenistic period of Jewish fictions about the past? This enormously complex question, one that any scholar would tremble to undertake, must provide a most interesting study.

As we have seen, historical fictions were written not only in Greek but also in Hebrew texts that were ultimately translated into Greek. There are many intriguing points of contact between these Hellenistic Jewish fictions and the later development of the midrashic tradition, beginning in the second century C.E. Some fictions originally penned in the Hellenistic period

7. Bowersock 1994, esp. pp. 9, 22.

8. See the recent and balanced discussion in Stephens 1995: 11–18.

9. To cite only two recent examples: Bowie 1989: 127–28; Stephens 1995: 18.

10. A direction to some extent already suggested by Bowersock (1994) and Stephens (1995), among others.

11. See references above in the introduction to Part 1.

found their way into the midrash, including among others legends relating to the translation of the Septuagint,<sup>12</sup> and legends relating to the marriage of Joseph and Aseneth.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, fictions not of Jewish origin made their way into the midrash. Consider, for instance, the *Alexander Romance*: it is an open question whether apparent allusions to this text in the midrash reflect the direct influence of a largely Greek body of literature or the influence of parallel oral traditions. One might also consider the extent to which the midrash took over some of the didactic themes of the original fictions, and the extent to which they sought to modify or answer them.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, one might examine how far the midrashic tradition not only took over older ancient fictions but itself made use of similar techniques as an aid to commentary, thus creating further original fictions.

. . .

I have arrived at the conclusion of this project, obtaining some answers to my questions along the way, only to discover, like most of my colleagues, that there remain in the end more questions unanswered than answered. If, however, I have succeeded in clearing up a few areas of confusion, illuminating one small corner of the vast and mysterious terrain of ancient fictions, and perhaps suggesting new approaches for the investigation of this still largely unexplored field, I will have achieved my purpose. In the words of Paul Veyne: "Men do not find the truth; they create it, as they create their history."<sup>15</sup>

12. Hadas 1951: 53, 73–84.

13. See above, Chap. 3, "*Joseph and Aseneth*," for preliminary references.

14. As seems to be the case with the midrashic traditions on Aseneth; see above.

15. Veyne 1988: xii; quoted by Bowersock 1994: 11.



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