

Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum

25

Israel Shatzman

The Armies
of the Hasmonaeans
and Herod



Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum

herausgegeben von
Martin Hengel und Peter Schäfer

25

The Armies of the Hasmonaeans and Herod

From Hellenistic
to Roman Frameworks

by

Israel Shatzman



J.C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) Tübingen

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MENACHEM STERN
IN MEMORIAM

Preface

I became intrigued by the subject of this book in the course of my work on the military confrontation between the Jews and the Romans from the death of Herod to the War of Bar-Kokhva, which I was asked to contribute to Vol. VIII of the series *The World History of the Jewish People*: U. Rappaport (ed.), *Judea and Rome* (Masada Publishing Press, 1983, in Hebrew). While working on those chapters, I realized that no comprehensive account had ever been written of the army of Herod, and as for the Hasmonaeans, there existed then only B. Bar-Kochva's book (in Hebrew) on the wars of Judas Maccabaeus; this latter has recently been published in a revised English edition. It could be said that the literary and, more particularly, archaeological evidence was waiting for someone to exploit it. As I envisaged it, the research had to deal with institutions, policies, attitudes and basic problems, and not with tactical analyses of battles, for which the evidence is almost non-existent, at least in my opinion. In addition, various aspects of the security problems and foreign relations of the Hasmonaeans and Herod had to be considered. Broadly speaking, the study I conceived of had to present how the Jews and their rulers reacted to the political and military superiority of, first, the Seleucid kingdom and, later on, the Roman empire. Occupied by other obligations, however, I was able to publish only one article at the time (Shatzman 1983a). I returned to the subject in 1986/7, when I received a sabbatical leave from my university, which I spent in Oxford. It was there that I completed the main part of the research and writing, enjoying the hospitality of Wolfson College, which elected me as a Visiting Fellow, and the excellent facilities of the Library of the Ashmolean Museum, whose staff were most helpful.

The prompt readiness and willingness of a great number of Israeli archaeologists to supply me with information and new evidence and to devote their time to discussions have been extremely valuable and enjoyable. They remained patient even when confronted by inquisitive and provocative queries, which must have been considered impolite, given the fact that the interrogator is, at the most, an amateur in the field of archaeology. For their interest and assistance I wish to record in particular my thanks to Prof. D. Barag, Ms. R. Bar-Nathan, Prof. I. Beit-Arieh, Mr. M. Broshi, Dr. S. Dar, Dr. G. Foerster, Dr. Z. Meshel, Prof. Y. Meshorer, Dr. E. Netzer, and Mrs. R. Sivan.

I am indebted to Prof. A. Kasher for letting me read his book *Jews, Idumaeans, and Ancient Arabs* before publication. For putting at my disposal the manuscripts of their forthcoming books, I am grateful to Dr. E. Netzer (*Masada III: The Buildings*) and to Dr. G. Foerster (*Masada IV: Art and Architecture*).

It is with great pleasure that I express my gratitude to several friends and colleagues who read and commented on drafts of the book or parts of it: Prof. J.C. Greenfield (Chap. III), Prof. Y. Tsafrir (Chaps. II and VI), Prof. F.W. Walbank (Part One), and Professors F. Millar and U. Rappaport (the entire book). Thanks to their advice and criticism I have been able to correct a number of mistakes and slips of the pen and to clarify neglected and obscure points. As usual, they need not be taken as sharing my views. I am alone responsible for the opinions ventured and the interpretations offered, as well as for the remaining errors and shortcomings.

In correcting the proofs I had the invaluable assistance of my friend Prof. J. Geiger, who also offered advice on content and style. I am indebted to Dr. Deborah Gera and Dr. J. Price for innumerable suggestions to improve the language. Miss D. Dueck kindly undertook the arduous task of checking the references. Mrs. T. Soffer patiently and skilfully drew the maps. I also wish to acknowledge a grant given by the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities of my university for the preparation of the maps.

There is one debt which I record with profound feeling of loss. The late Prof. M. Stern showed much interest in the subject, even though he was able to read and comment on the first part of the book alone. His brutal, untimely death has deprived all students of ancient history of a great scholar; I have lost a warm friend and generous counsellor. In many respects and in various ways, direct and indirect, he has left his imprint on this book, which I dedicate to his memory.

January 1990
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Israel Shatzman

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Abbreviations

Periodicals are abbreviated as in *L'Année philologique*, in few cases with slight modifications which will cause no difficulty. The following should be noted:

<i>AASOR</i>	<i>Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>ADAJ</i>	<i>Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan</i>
<i>AJ</i>	Josephus, <i>Antiquitates Judaicae</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	H. Temporini (ed.), <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>Bibl.Arch.</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BJ</i>	Josephus, <i>Bellum Judaicum</i>
<i>BMC</i>	<i>British Museum Catalogue of Greek Coins</i>
<i>C.Ap.</i>	Josephus, <i>Contra Apionem</i>
<i>CPJ</i>	V. Tcherikover, A. Fuks, M. Stern, <i>Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum</i> , I–III (1957–62)
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
<i>EAEHL</i>	M. Avi-Yonah (ed.), <i>Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i> , I–IV (1957–78)
<i>F.Gr.Hist.</i>	F. Jacoby, <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i>
<i>IGLS</i>	<i>Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie</i>
<i>ILS</i>	H. Dessau, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JPOS</i>	<i>Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>LCL</i>	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i>
<i>OGIS</i>	W. Dittenberger, <i>Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i>
<i>PAES</i>	<i>Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria in 1905 and 1909</i>
<i>PCZ</i>	C.C. Edgar, <i>Zenon Papyri</i> , I–IV (1925–1940)
<i>PEFQS</i>	<i>Palestine Explorator Fund Quarterly Statement</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>PJB</i>	<i>Palästinajahrbuch</i>
<i>P.Lond.</i>	T.C. Skeat, <i>Greek Papyri in the British Museum</i> , VII (1970)
<i>PSI</i>	G. Vitelli et alii, <i>Pubblicazioni della Società Italiana. Papiri greci e latini</i> , IV–VI (1917–1920)
<i>QDAP</i>	<i>Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>

<i>RE</i>	<i>Real-Enchclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i>
<i>SAB</i>	<i>Sitzungsberichte der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zur Berlin</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

Note also the following:

<i>G.R.</i>	<i>Grid reference to the Israel grid of coordinates</i>
<i>H</i>	<i>Hurvat (Hebrew)</i>
<i>Kh.</i>	<i>Khirbet (Arabic)</i>
<i>T.</i>	<i>Tel (Hebrew), Tell (Arabic)</i>
<i>W.</i>	<i>Wādī</i>

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The following have kindly supplied me photographs and given me permission to include plates or maps in this book. I am grateful to all of them, and apologize for any inadvertent omissions.

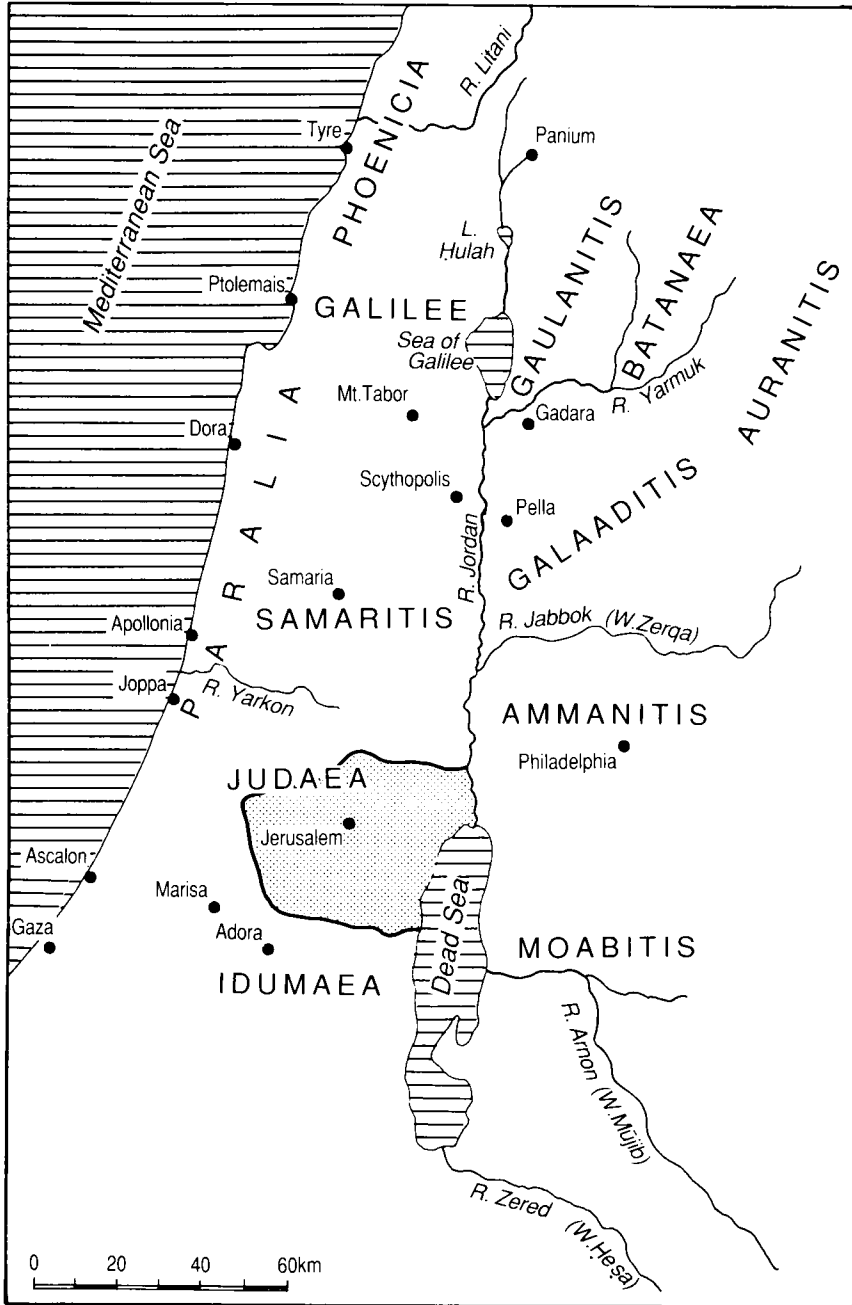
Mr. D. Amit: map 8; Prof. I. Beit-Arieh: plates 25, 26; Dr. S. Dar: plates 4, 5; Mr. I. Goldrath: plate 17; Dr. Y. Hirshfeld: plates 10, 11, 18, 27; Dr. E. Netzer: plates 6, 20, 21, 22, 24, map 18; Mr. Y. Naor: plates 2, 3; Prof. E. Stern: plate 1; Prof. Y. Tsafirir: plates 12, 13, 16; Mr. Y. Weinberg: plate 23.

Introduction

The rise of the Hasmonaean state, more than four hundred years after the fall of the kingdom of Judah and the destruction of the First Temple, is a phenomenon which calls for explanation from various points of view, including military factors and considerations. At that time the Jewish population of Eretz-Israel (Land of Israel) was concentrated mainly in the relatively small area of Judaea which extended from about Ammaus in the west to the river Jordan in the east and from Beth-Zur in the south to about 15–18 km. north of Jerusalem. Jews also lived in Transjordan (Peraea) and Galilee, and were possibly to be found in a few sites in Idu-maea. Since Jews formed a minority in all the last three regions, living within a Gentile populaton, only Judaea proper is to be considered a Jewish territory at the beginning of the Hasmonaean period¹. It is thus remarkable that the Seleucid empire failed to suppress the revolt of such a small-size community, divided initially by fierce internal conflicts, for the Hellenising party in Judaea cooperated actively with the Seleucid regime. With no political organization and seemingly without previous military experience or institutions, the rebels defied the Seleucid authorities and won victories on the battlefield. Great leadership and religious devotion on the one side and various deeply rooted structural, political and personal weaknesses on the other side might serve to explain the success of the Jewish rebels. But in the final analysis it was a military achievement. The first battles won by Judas Maccabaeus, at Beth-Horon and Ammaus and the expedition to Transjordan etc., demonstrate this aspect of the Hasmonaean uprising. Later on, it was mainly military victories which paved the way for the territorial expansion of the Hasmonaean state, an expansion which led to the spread of Judaism over much of the territory of the Land of Israel. This extension of Judaism was the outcome of the conversion of many of the local populations of the conquered regions; those Jews from Judaea proper who migrated to and colonized the newly won territories

¹ On the ethnic demography of Eretz-Israel at the time see the account in Schürer 1973–87 II, 1–20. Throughout this book the term Judaea is used in two senses. One refers to Judaea proper, as defined in the text, which, however, as an administrative unit, was later extended to include some parts of Samaria and the coastal plain. The other means the entire kingdom of the Hasmonaean and Herod. Usually it should be clear from the context what sense is meant, but in those cases where ambiguity might be involved I have added 'proper' to refer to Judaea in the narrow sense.

Map 1: Seleucid Palestine



contributed to this development. Thus it came about that Idumaea, parts of the coastal plain, Samaria, Galilee and Peraea were gradually Judaized. Apparently possessing talent for military affairs, the Hasmonaean rulers adopted an aggressive policy which was quite often combined with clever diplomatic manouevres. For almost a century, as long as they faced the neighbouring Hellenistic kingdoms, mainly the Seleucid epigones, Greek cities and native rulers of the territories closely adjacent to their realm, they proved successful in the expansionist policy, notwithstanding several defeats and setbacks. By a series of wars, in particular successful siege operations, Alexander Jannaeus brought the Hasmonaean state to its maximum territorial expansion, which Alexandra Salome, his widow and heir to the throne, was able to retain and consolidate. Their achievement marked the culminating stage of the Hasmonaean military enterprise.

Until the reign of Alexander Jannaeus, the Hasmonaean rulers managed to establish and maintain friendly relations with the Roman empire which, although geographically remote at the beginning of this period, showed interest in the political affairs of the eastern part of the Mediterranean. But the foreign policy of Jannaeus apparently did not win approval at Rome, and the Jewish-Roman alliance was not renewed during his reign². The military edifice he established did not last long after the death of his wife in 67. The internal struggle for power between their sons Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II had already started before the death of Salome and was to set Judaea in turmoil for the next forty years. This struggle involved various opposing parties within Judaeian society and in a short time the situation gave an opportunity to foreign powers to intervene in Judaeian affairs. It was the Nabataean king Aretas III who was the first to try to take advantage of the fraternal conflict. The Roman intervention in 64, however, completely changed the political setting. The appeal of the Hasmonaean brothers to Pompeius to adjudge their dispute ended with the conquest of Jerusalem by the Roman general in 63 B.C.E. Not only did Pompeius put an end to the independence of the Judaeian state established by the first Hasmonaean, leaving Hyrcanus II to rule the Jews as High-Priest while withholding from him the royal title, but by re-establishing the Greek cities he severely reduced the territory of the Judaeian state. But Hyrcanus II was a weak person and his timidity and, probably, vacillations fostered contention for power and influence among his councillors and commanders, Antipater being only the most prominent among them. This situation as well as the renewed attempts of Aristobulus II and his son Alexander to raise rebellion in Judaea prevented the restoration of peace. These very revolts in their turn occasioned more military interven-

² Rappaport 1968; Stern 1981, 28-9.

tion by the Roman governors of Syria in the fifties: Gabinius, Crassus and, after the latter's death at Carrhae, Cassius.

In the wake of the outbreak of the civil war between Caesar and Pompeius in 49 B.C.E. Judaea was necessarily involved in the internal Roman struggle for power between the contending parties, as were other dynasts, cities and provinces in the East. Caesar's victories did not put an end to the struggle for, soon after his departure from the East in 47, a Pompeian supporter, Caecilius Bassus, successfully rose against Sextus Iulius Caesar, the Caesarean governor of the province of Syria. Caesar's murder in 44 led to fresh, fervent military activities in the eastern part of the Roman empire, where the tyrannicides sought to build up their forces in view of the imminent encounter with Antonius and Caesar Octavianus. This war ending with the victory of the Triumvirs in the battles of Philippi in October 42, Judaea did not return to normal conditions as, first, the victorious Antonius exacted enormous sums of money from the native populations of the East and then, in the year 40, the Parthians invaded the Roman empire. They swept over Syria and Asia Minor and helped Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus II, in his attempt to gain control of Judaea.

The political career of Herod, the son of Antipater, the shrewd minister of Hyrcanus II, began in 47 with his appointment as governor of Galilee. By 40 he and his brother Phasael had managed to become masters of Judaea. As a result of the Parthian invasion he fled from the country and, on his arrival in Rome in the same year, was recognized as king of Judaea by the Roman senate on the proposal of Antonius and Caesar Octavianus. It took Herod almost three years of fighting before he was able to complete the reconquest of Judaea, which he did only with the support of Roman troops, the siege of Jerusalem proving to be the hardest task he had to undertake. Even afterwards he had to take precautions against both the remnants of Hasmonaean opposition to his rule in the country and especially the greed and machinations of Cleopatra VII, who coveted his territories. The intrigues of the Ptolemaic queen entangled him in war with the Nabataean king Malichus but fortunately saved him from taking part personally in the campaign of Actium. Herod succeeded in winning the favour of Caesar Octavianus, who not only confirmed his position as king of Judaea but also enlarged his dominions.

Herod's rise to power was due largely to his cunning and adroitness, will-power and ambition, administrative talent and political dexterity; above all he understood, as his father had already discovered, that under the new conditions obtaining in the East after the conquests of Pompeius, all power and authority depended on and emanated from the Roman rulers, and hence that complete loyalty to the Roman government was the key to political success. The task of remaining loyal became complicated and difficult because of the rapid succession of Roman rulers of the East

in the two turbulent decades between the civil war of 49 and the battle of Actium. Other loyal dynasts and cities of the eastern Roman provinces faced the same problems; not a few paid the highest price for not changing sides at the right moment, for remaining loyal to a lost cause or for collaborating with the Parthians, surely a grave mistake. Not so Herod. He always showed his loyalty to each successive Roman who happened to be in power and convinced the next one that his loyalty would benefit the Roman interests. For loyalty was judged and assessed in concrete terms: the ability of the local dynast to contribute monies, food, provisions, military equipment and troops. It thus appears that Herod's prospects of taking control in Judaea and maintaining his power largely depended on his ability to build up military strength.

It appears that a study which encompasses the Hasmonaean and Herodian periods in Judaea, as does the present one, must deal with two distinct sets of political conditions. The Hasmonaean rulers won their achievements within the political framework of the Hellenistic world and, this has to be underlined, during the period of decline of the great Hellenistic powers. This setting had its effects on some of the military features of the Hasmonaean state, which are examined here, as well as on the goals of the foreign policy of Jonathan, Simon and the latter's successors. The political conditions under which Herod had to build up his power differed in a very essential respect. Ambitious and in command of resources not inferior, perhaps even superior to those of the Hasmonaean rulers, he nonetheless could not allow himself to adopt the expansionist policy of his predecessors on the throne of Judaea. Thus the view that military power was a fundamental condition both for the Hasmonaean and Herodian achievements, clearly not a novelty by itself, merely provides the starting point of this study. To probe the correctness of this claim, or premise, has required a comprehensive investigation of various topics pertinent to the military history of the period in question. It seemed relevant and instructive to document, describe and analyse in detail the structure of the Hasmonaean and Herodian armies, the military installations constructed by these rulers, the security problems they faced and the use they made of their power. For instance, the extent of the adoption of military institutions of the Hellenistic armies by the Hasmonaean rulers is an intriguing and important subject. Something is said on this problem here but, it must be admitted, a satisfactory picture cannot be drawn on the basis of the available evidence. Similarly it is of interest to find out whether the Herodian army employed Hellenistic or Roman tactics. This question, which has some bearing on the development of the Roman army of the imperial period, deserves a detailed examination. In a sense then the investigation of the Hasmonaean and Herodian military institutions might provide an insight into the transition from Hellenistic to Roman influence, or might

testify to the mixture of these influences. However, first and above all the present study aims at delineating the military resources available to the Hasmonaean rulers and Herod. Their presentation will contribute to some understanding and evaluation, from a military angle, of the victories and political gains of the Hasmonaeans. It will also serve to demonstrate clearly the extent of the political limitations imposed on Herod in the sphere of foreign policy, despite the extensive military potential and actual forces at his disposal and in striking dissimilarity to what had been feasible for the Hasmonaeans.

The above-mentioned considerations and aims have dictated the procedure, structure and scope of this study. I start with a somewhat detailed account of the military institutions characteristic of the Hasmonaean state together with an attempt to related them to political developments. This comprises a discussion of the weapons available to the Jewish rebels at the initial stage and of the tactics they employed then and later, when a regular Hasmonaean army came into being. The strength and composition of the Hasmonaean army naturally belongs in this account, even though the necessary data for their study are meagre and problematic. The importance of these subjects for the understanding of success in war is self-evident and justifies a detailed analysis of the available figures. There follows a comprehensive description, based on the literary sources and the archaeological findings, of the fortifications constructed by the Hasmonaeans. As well as illuminating the comprehension of the security problems of the Jewish state, the emerging picture sheds some light on the means forged to tackle them. The lengthy account of the confrontation between the Hasmonaean state and the Nabataean kingdom needs no more than a short explanation. Excepting the struggle with the Seleucid kings, this was the only military and political confrontation of fundamental importance. The geographic expansion and nature of the Nabataean kingdom have to be carefully studied in order to arrive at a balanced judgement of the security problems this power presented to the Hasmonaean rulers. Only by meticulous scrutiny and strict interpretation of all pieces of evidence pertinent to the subject, even in an indirect way, can a proper assessment of the relations between the Hasmonaeans and the Nabataeans be attained. This comprehensive description, based on the literary sources and the archaeological finds, of the fortifications constructed by the Hasmonaeans. As well as concludes the first part of the study.

The second part opens with a somewhat detailed description of the military and political events of the period 63–30, focusing on the military aspects of Herod's rise to power from his appointment as governor of Galilee in 47 B.C.E. to the confirmation of his status as royal ruler of Judaea by Augustus after the battle of Actium. The size, structure and nature of Herod's army in the period of the Augustan Principate, as well as

the military installations he constructed in his realm, are then described and analysed. These are examined in reference to the king's relations with the Jews and Greeks as well as with the Nabataeans. Indeed the intricate relations between Herod and the Nabataeans seemed important enough to constitute the subject of another separate chapter. An overall assessment of the security problems, military means and political achievements of the Hasmonaeans and Herod closes the study. It mainly aims at presenting and underlining the similarities and differences between the two systems of government elaborated by these rulers.

Part One
The Hasmonaean Period

General Index

Greek, Hebrew and Latin words are italicized. Romans are generally listed under their *cognomina*; in some cases they are entered under the names of their *gentes* with appropriate cross-references.

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