

Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum

21

Aryeh Kasher

Jews and Hellenistic Cities  
in Eretz-Israel



**Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum**

herausgegeben von  
Martin Hengel und Peter Schäfer

21



# Jews and Hellenistic Cities in Eretz-Israel

Relations of the Jews in Eretz-Israel  
with the Hellenistic Cities  
during the Second Temple Period  
(332 BCE – 70 CE)

by

Aryeh Kasher



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Dedicated to my wife  
Tamar



## Foreword

Eretz-Israel has never been inhabited in the entirety by a single nation, even during those periods when most of its land area was under Jewish sovereignty, as in the days of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel in Biblical times, or under the Hasmonaean kings in Second Temple days. Since the dawn of history, Eretz-Israel has harboured various nations and peoples living side by side, whether in peace or in hostility. This situation was characteristic of the Second Temple times in general, and particularly of the Hellenistic-Roman era, which is also the object of our investigation. Despite this significant fact, the overwhelming majority of the historical studies of Eretz-Israel in that period devote their primary attention to the Jewish People. No wonder, then, that many of those studies tend to consider the history of the other ethnic groups from a 'Jewish' point of view. Any interest in the Gentile nations of Eretz-Israel was only a by-product of research into the history of the Jewish People; this, the Jews' relations with their Gentile neighbours never became an object of investigation in their own right. Admittedly, since the beginning of the last century, no small number of monographs have been written on the nations surrounding Eretz-Israel (e.g. the Nabataeans, the Ituraeans, the Idumaeans, and the Samaritans)<sup>1</sup>, or on various Hellenistic cities within its borders (e.g. Gaza, Ascalon, Joppa-Jaffa, Strato's Tower – Caesarea, Dora, Acco – Ptolemais, Beth-Shean–Scythopolis, Samaria – Sebaste, Gerasa, Pella, Hippus, Gadara, etc.)<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, for whatever reason, no published monograph has been entirely devoted to the history of the Jews' relations with their neighbours. In my opinion, such a monograph is sorely lacking, if only

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1 For up-to-date bibliographical data regarding the latest studies on the Ituraeans and the Nabataeans, see: Schürer, II<sup>5</sup>, pp. 561, 574–575; Negev, *Lords of the Desert*, pp. 255 ff.; Bowersock, *Roman Arabia*, pp. 193–211; Kasher, *Jews, Idumaeans, and Ancient Arabs*, pp. 240–254. For the Samaritans, see: L.A. Meir, *Guidelines for a Bibliography of the Samaritans in Eretz-Israel* (1956 Hebrew), pp. 252–268; R. Weiss, *Bibliographical Compilation on the Samaritans*, Jerusalem (1974 Hebrew); D. Broadribb, *Bibliography of the Samaritans* (in *Abr nhrin*, Supplements I), Leiden 1964; R. Weiss, 'Supplements to the Samaritan Bibliography', *Annali, Istituto universitario orientale di Napoli*, XXXV (1975), pp. 265–273; M. Mor, 'More Bibliography on the Samaritans', *Henoch*, I (1979), pp. 102–122; A.D. Crown, *The Samaritans*, Tübingen 1989, pp. 795 ff.

2 For more detail, see Schürer, II<sup>5</sup>, pp. 85 ff., and the footnotes concerning his surveys on each specific city. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, II, pp. 217 ff.; Fuks, *Scythopolis*, pp. 179 ff.



because research focussed on this topic could clarify issues heretofore left in the dark.

The task which I have undertaken is a great and difficult one, both because of the manifold nature of the topic and from a methodological standpoint. For this reason, and for the sake of convenience, I thought it proper to divide the present study into two separate sections: (1) relations between the Jews and the Hellenistic cities; (2) relations of the Jews, the nations of the frontier and desert<sup>3</sup>. Out of similar considerations, it is worth devoting a separate monograph, now being written by a special scholar, to the question of relations between the Jews and the Samaritans. From a chronological point of view, it is also preferred to allot a separate monograph to the period of Persian rule, which will be written in future by another scholar specializing in that period – especially for historiographic and methodological reasons, as historical discussion of that period requires consultation of Biblical sources, which must be handled in a manner entirely different from sources dating from the Hellenistic-Roman era. This is also true of relations between Jews and Gentiles as attested to by Talmudic sources, as well as of the historical period following the end of the Great Jewish Revolt. As the vast quantities of Talmudic sources call for a different methodological approach from the standpoint of research, it seems proper to devote a separate unit of study to that topic as well, representing a completing link in the overall research project – the relations between the Jews and Gentiles in Eretz-Israel during the Second Temple, Mishnaic and Talmudic periods. I hope that the conclusion of the research project in its entirety will provide the readers with a complete overall historical picture.

The study presented in this volume is only one link of the project as a whole. It will cover the history of the Jews' relations with the Hellenistic cities of Eretz-Israel in chronological order, from the conquest of the country by Alexander the Great to the end of the Great Jewish Revolt against the Romans; its subdivision into chapters will be in accordance with the same order. It is not my intention to deal here with the broader aspects of Jewish history, or with the special history of each city, but rather, to focus our interest on the question of mutual relations alone, assuming that the general and specific histories of all relevant factors are well known to our readers.

The idea of writing this study came up in the course of my ongoing work in recent years, as a Professor in the Department of Jewish History at Tel-Aviv University, and in the framework of my research work as the Head of

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<sup>3</sup> A monograph on this subject has already been published: A. Kasher, *Jews, Idumaeans and Ancient Arabs*, Tübingen 1988.

Tel-Aviv University's Centre for the Study of Eretz-Israel, also affiliated with the Yad Itzhak Ben-Zvi Institute. A significant portion of the ideas, proposals, and innovations included in the present study were threshed out together with my students; to several of these, I owe my profound thanks, as their questions and reservations were of no small aid to me in routing my thinking processes and formulating my opinions.

As noted in the Preface to the book *Jews, Idumaeans, and Ancient Arabs*, it is also important to stress at the opening of this book that, as I fear that modern readers might be tempted to draw comparisons between the historical reality depicted in this book and that of present-day times, I would like to forestall such an occurrence and state that, from a historian's standpoint, history does not repeat itself. Let my readers not project my, or their own, conclusions relating to this book onto present-day occurrences. Those attempting this type of historical projection both go and lead others astray. Each period must be judged by, and only by, its own criteria, without projecting similarities or conclusions from one period to another, any apparent external similarity between periods notwithstanding.

For the readers' convenience, most quotations from the Bible are English translations from *Tanakh*, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia 1985. Those from the *Books of Maccabees* are English translations from the Cambridge Bible Commentary edition. The quotes from the Writings of Josephus, as well as other Greek and Latin Authors are English Translations from the Loeb Classical Library edition. The quoted passages of Talmudic literature are taken (with a few changes only) from standard works of reference, such as the English translations of the *Mishnah* (H. Danby), *Babylonian Talmud* (ed. I. Epstein), *Jerusalem Talmud* (J. Neusner) and *Midrash Rabbah* (H. Freedman-M. Simon).

For the benefit, interest, and convenience of our readers, this book also includes 17 maps, a bibliography, a list of abbreviations and indices. Also, most of the Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Latin terms (or quotations) have been translated into English; in some places, these are followed by brief explanations (in parentheses) and notes if necessary.

## Acknowledgements

My greatest thanks are reserved for my distinguished teacher, Prof. Joshua Efron, under whom it was my privilege to study for many years. His original thought and expertly formulated methods of research served me as a guiding light. Many times, I unintentionally borrowed thought patterns and ideas from things which I had read in his writings or heard him say; these then wove themselves into my own work and became an integral part of it, to the extent that I cannot even point them out explicitly. I am most grateful to him for this, and consider myself deeply honoured to have his teachings so ingrained in me. Prof. Efron's well-considered questions and scholarly criticism, throughout the course of my work on this study, were of great value to me, as were the long hours of discussion which he spent with me, his encouragement, personal devotion, and sincere friendship. Special thanks to him for courteously agreeing to publish, as an appendix to this book, his study – 'The Deed of Simeon ben Shataḥ in Ascalon', originally part of one of the chapters of his dissertation *The Hasmonaean Kingdom and Simeon ben Shataḥ*, submitted to the Senate of the Hebrew University (Jerusalem) in the 1961/2 academic year. This vast and important work has not yet been published; nevertheless, having had the honour and pleasure of reading it, I may state that it was a vital and profuse source of inspiration to me.

I am especially grateful to my dear and loyal friend Dr. Israel Ben-Shalom, who was gracious enough to read portions of the manuscript of this book and provide me with important and useful comments, especially regarding the Talmudic literature. His acuity, erudition, and scientific caution were expressed in each of his comments and counsels.

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I am particularly indebted to Sharon Neeman for her intelligent contribution to the English translation of this book.

Last, but by no means least, is my wife Tamar, to whom I owe special thanks for the boundless encouragement and support which she gave me throughout my work. Had she not relieved me of the cares of everyday routine, it is doubtful whether I would have been able to complete my research.

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## List of Abbreviations

<i>AASOR</i>	<i>Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>Aegyptus</i>	<i>Aegyptus, Rivista Italiana di Egittologia e di Papirologia</i>
<i>AE</i>	<i>Année épigraphique</i>
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>AJSLL</i>	<i>The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</i>
<i>AJS Review</i>	<i>Association for Jewish Studies Review</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>AO</i>	<i>Der Alte Orient</i>
<i>APE</i>	<i>Année politique et économique</i>
<i>ARAST</i>	<i>Atti della reale Accademia delle Scienze di Torino</i>
<i>BA</i>	<i>The Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>British Archaeological Reports</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BMC</i>	<i>Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum</i>
<i>CAH</i>	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i>
<i>CHJ</i>	<i>Cambridge History of Judaism</i>
<i>CIG</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> (ed. A. Boeckh <i>et al.</i> )
<i>CIJ</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum</i> (ed. J.B. Frey)
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
<i>CIS</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum</i> (ed. S. Krauss)
<i>CPJ</i>	<i>Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum</i> (ed. V. Tcherikover <i>et al.</i> )
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CRAI</i>	<i>Comptes rendus de l'académie des inscriptions et belles lettres</i>
<i>EB</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Biblica</i> (Hebrew)
<i>FGtH</i>	<i>Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (ed. F. Jacoby)
<i>FHG</i>	<i>Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum</i> (ed. C. Müller)
<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>ICC</i>	<i>International Critical Commentary</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
<i>IGLS</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae et Latinae de la Syrie</i> (ed. L. Jalabert <i>et al.</i> ), 1929 ff
<i>IGRR</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes</i> (ed. R. Cagnat)
<i>ILS</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> (ed. H. Dessau), 1892–1916
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JEA</i>	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>

- JSJ* *Journal of the Study of Judaism in the Persian Hellenistic and Roman Period*  
*JTS* *Journal of Theological Studies*  
*MGWJ* *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*  
*MUSJ* *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph*  
*NC* *La Nouvelle Clio*  
*NTS* *New Testament Studies*  
*OGIS* *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae* (ed. W. Dittenberger)  
*PAAJR* *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*  
*PCZ* *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire; Zenon Papyri* (ed. C.C. Edgar), Cairo 1925–1931  
*PEFQ* *Palestinian Exploration Fund. Quarterly Statement*  
*PEQ* *Palestinian Exploration Quarterly*  
*P. Giss.* *Griechische Papyri im Museum des oberhessischen Geschichtsvereins zu Giessen* (ed. O. Eger, E. Kornemann, P. Meyer), Leipzig-Berlin 1910–1912  
*PIR*<sup>2</sup> *Prosopographia Imperii Romani*<sup>2</sup>  
*PJB* *Palästinajahrbuch*  
*P. Oxy.* *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (ed. B.P. Grenfell *et al.*), London 1989 ff.  
*PSI* *Publicazioni della Società Italiana per la ricerca dei Papiri greci e Latini in Egitto* (ed. G. Vitelli *et al.*), Firenze 1912 ff.  
*P. Tebt.* *The Tebtunis Papyri* (ed. A.S. Hunt *et al.*), London 1902–1938  
*QDAP* *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine*  
*RB* *Revue biblique*  
*REA* *Revue des études anciennes*  
*REG* *Revue des études grecques*  
*REJ* *Revue des études juives*  
*RE(PW)* *Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* (eds. A. Pauly, G. Wissowa, W. Kroll)  
*RES* *Revue des études sémitiques*  
*RHR* *Revue de l'histoire des religions*  
*RN* *Revue Numismatique*  
*SB* *Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten* (ed. F. Preisigke, F. Bilabel, E. Kisseling)  
*SCI* *Scripta Classica Israelica*  
*TAPA* *Transactions of the American Philological Association*  
*TDNT* *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*  
*Yediot* *Yediot be-Hakirat Eretz-Israel ve-Atikoteha* (=Bulletin of the Israel Exploration Society)  
*ZDMG* *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*  
*ZDPV* *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*  
*ZNW* *Zeitschrift der die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*  
*ZPE* *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*





## Introduction

# Guidelines for the Evaluation of Historical Sources and their Tendentiousness

The title of the Hebrew version to this book – *Canaan, Philistia, Greece and Israel* – is likely to confound and astonish those expecting to read an historical study of Eretz-Israel in Second Temple times. What, after all, are terms customarily applied to the Biblical period doing in an account of the Hellenistic-Roman era? If the truth be told, we did not choose to use these names for stylistic reasons, as ornaments to the title page, but in a deliberate, forethought attempt to lend precision to our expression of the relations between the Jews and their Gentile neighbours in the Hellenistic urban sector. In our opinion, these relations developed, to a great degree, on the basis of a well-formulated Jewish outlook on the world, cast in the mould of traditions dating from Biblical times, when the Hellenistic cities in Eretz-Israel were considered by the Jews as Canaanite and Philistine cities, which the Jews were obligated to wipe off the face of the earth, because of their abominations and pagan rituals. It will be recalled that the Torah laid down an absolute prohibition against contracting alliances with the Canaanite nations, or marriages with members of those nations; moreover, the Torah commanded the Jews to shun them, exterminate them, and drive them out of Eretz-Israel, warning against adoption of their vile, abominable, and abhorrent practices<sup>1</sup>. It appears that these Torah commands guided the leaders of the Jewish nation for many generations following the Biblical period, throughout the period of the Return to Zion and into the Hellenistic-Roman era. Anyone perusing the history of Eretz-Israel in the Hasmonaean period, for example, will easily note that the spirit which inflamed the hearts of the Hasmonaean fighters against the Hellenistic cities was nourished by these Biblical ideals and commands. Biblical slogans were apparently flung about freely at the time, and the fervour of the ancient war against idolatry blazed just as strongly when the Hasmonaean fought against the Hellenistic cities, as if no intervening generations had elapsed<sup>2</sup>. As a matter of fact, not only the Jews identified

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<sup>1</sup> *Genesis* XXIII:23–33; *Deuteronomy* 7:1–5, XVIII:9–14, XX:15–18; cf. *Leviticus* XVIII:3 ff. etc.

<sup>2</sup> For more detail, see Chapter 2 of this book, especially Section 2.4.

the Gentile population in Eretz-Israel with the descendants of the ancient Canaanites, but so did not a few of the Hellenistic cities themselves, as one can learn from literary and numismatic sources<sup>2a</sup>.

On the other hand, the Jews were considered by their Gentile neighbours as cruel, predatory conquerors, like their Biblical forefathers, whose settlement of Eretz-Israel had been a continuous pattern of barbaric robbery, tyranny, and plunder<sup>3</sup>. Those perusing M. Stern's monumental book *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, I–III, Jerusalem 1974–1984 will soon find that, in fact, the harvest of historical information on Jews and Judaism during the Hellenistic-Roman era is pitifully scanty and miserable. The reason for this is not only the loss of many written sources in the depths of historical oblivions; even the deliberate literary compilation of such information by Josephus Flavius in his books *Against Apion* and *Antiquities of the Jews* cannot compensate for this sad situation, even though he was familiar with more numerous and more complete treatises than have come down to us. The literary evidence included in Stern's book comprises, for the most part, a cacophonous choir of libels against the Jews and Judaism, with only a very few words of praise for Israel and its historical tradition.

Greek writings, dating as far back as the first generation of their authors' encounters with Jews and Judaism, portray the Jews as shrinking from idolatry and its rituals. The first known literary expression of this tendency may be found in the writings of Hecataeus of Abdera, a contemporary of Alexander the Great and Ptolemy I Soter, as quoted by Diodorus of Sicily<sup>4</sup>. Admittedly, he did point out the positive side of Mosaic law and its reverrations concerning paganism<sup>5</sup>; at the same time, he nonetheless emphasized Jewish separatism, and attributed to the Jewish legislator Moses a tendency to foster a lifestyle of inhumanity and hatred of foreigners (*ἀπανθρώπων τῶν καὶ μισόξενον βίον* – Diodorus, XL, 3, 2). In other words: an anti-social lifestyle, which frowned on fraternization with non-Jewish strangers. Although his criticism is buried in a wealth of praise, homage, and admiration directed toward the Laws of Moses, its importance is, nonetheless, not

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2a See for example: M.E. Babelon, *Les Rois de Syrie*, 1890, p. 84; V. Head, *Historia Numorum*, London 1963, p. 790; *BMC. Phoenicia*, pp. 1ff., 51–52; R. Mouterde, "Regards sur Beyrouth phénicienne, hellénistique et romaine", *Mél. Univ. St. Joseph*, 40 (1964), p. 145, 156; J.H. Levy, *Studies in Jewish Hellenism*, p. 67; especially see F. Millar, *Proceedings of Cambridge Philological Society*, 209 (1983), pp. 55ff.; idem, in: *Hellenism in the East* (eds. A. Kuhrt & S. Sherwin-White), pp. 110ff.

3 See e.g.: Levy, *Studies in Jewish Hellenism*, pp. 60–78.

4 Stern, *Authors*, I, pp. 20 ff., especially pp. 26 ff.

5 For more complete detail, see: Levy, *op. cit.*, pp. 44 ff.; Gutman, *The Beginning of Jewish-Hellenistic Literature*, I, pp. 39 ff. He did not even condemn the conquest of Judaea, as 'it was completely barren in those times' (Diodorus, XL, 3, 2).

to be ignored, as it can serve as a foundation for anti-Jewish accusations. In fact, that same Diodorus who quoted Hecataeus also ascribes to the Hasmonaean-era oppressors of the Jews the famous image of Jews as misanthropes and universal enemies, rejecting the gods and hated by the gods, in order to justify the necessity of conquering Jerusalem and wiping out the Jewish nation<sup>6</sup>.

A generation or two after Hecataeus of Abdera, in the third century BCE, and principally in the days of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (284–246 BCE), Manetho wrote his crass and venomous accusations against the Jews and Judaism; these, as we now know, provided a literary foundation for most of the vitriolic and vituperative anti-Jewish writings in the generations to follow. In this connection, it is important to stress that Manetho described the invasion of Egypt by the Hyksos tribes (whom he believed to be the distant forebears of the Jews) as a cruel conquest by persons 'of base origin', who overran the country and its rulers by main force, burned its cities, utterly destroyed its temples and idols, hatefully oppressed and cruelly decimated its residents, and forced its women and children into slavery (*Against Apion*, I, 14, 75–76). As we proceed in this study, we will see that this description provided a sort of literary model for describing the conquests of the Hasmomaeans, who were also portrayed as cruel barbarians, destroyers and devastators of the Hellenistic culture, enemies of humanity, despicable brigands and tyrants. Furthermore, the description of the Hyksos tribes' vile deeds in Manetho's *History of Egypt* served as a basis for the same author's famous 'leper' calumny. According to his particular brand of propaganda and ethnography, the Hyksos tribes supposedly commingled with various lepers and unclean persons, originally exploited by them as slave labour; these later banded together to comprise the Jewish nation. Apparently, in their rebellion against the Egyptian rulers, they exceeded their precursors (the Hyksos) in cruelty, barbarism, and heresy. For many years they tormented Egypt's population, trampled its legal structure and adopted laws contradictory to those of Egypt, desecrated temples and idols, and transformed holy places into abattoirs for the slaughter of beasts sacred to the local deities. Moreover, they forced the Egyptian priests and prophets to take part in such abominations, and sowed destruction throughout the country<sup>7</sup>.

These monstrous descriptions, in the best tradition of Hellenistic-Roman ethnographic propaganda, were fertile soil for further calumnious defamations, written by such renowned authors as Agatharchides of Cnidus, Apol-

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6 *Ibid.*, XXXV, 1, 1; Stern, *Authors*, I, p. 182.

7 *Against Apion*, I, 26, 228 ff.; Kasher, *Studies in the History of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel*, III (1975), pp. 69–84.

lonius Molon, Apion, Tacitus, and others. In the course of the generations, their malicious libels became fixtures in the literature of Greece and Rome, and their influence is still recognizable in the historiography of that era. It appears that the traits attributed to the Jews in the Manetho libels run through most of the literary testimony handed down by Greek and Roman authors, gathering momentum from the Hasmonaean period, and that the main purpose of their writings was to stigmatize the Jews in general, and the Hasmomaeans in particular, as barbarous brigands, wickedly conspiring against the Hellenistic culture. The implantation of the most fanciful calumnies into historical works – such as, for example, those of the renowned historian Tacitus – may indicate how deeply rooted these fabrications were in the consciousness of their readers, and how explicitly they were intended to provide historical justification for the oppression, slaughter, and myriad injustices dealt to the Jews and that which they held sacred<sup>8</sup>.

It seems that no small number of modern scholars have been duped by Greek and Roman historiography into believing that the Hasmonaean conquests and Jewish aggression against the Hellenistic cities were themselves the principal cause of the well-known hostility toward the Jewish People throughout the Graeco-Roman world<sup>9</sup>. Tcherikover, at one point, even went so far as to state, for example, that the Hasmonaean rebellion preceded the religious persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes – as if his *gezerot* (namely, his anti-Jewish decrees) were in the nature of a religious response to the revolt of popular-Hasidaean circles, swept up in the religious fervour of their struggle against the Hellenizers and their allies among the Seleucid rulers in Jerusalem<sup>10</sup>.

These opinions, for some reason, ignored the previous manifestations of anti-Jewish defamation. Even Hecataeus of Abdera himself was aware of the deliberate fabrications propagated by the Jews' neighbours in the Persian era<sup>11</sup>. And how could anyone ignore Manetho's calumny concerning

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8 For Tacitus, see: Levy, *op. cit.*, pp. 115 ff., especially pp. 128 ff., 150 ff. Diodorus of Sicily, whose testimony is noted above, also makes use of the same literary tactics intended to justify the extermination of the Jews and the destruction of their capital and temple; see: Diodorus XXXIV–XXXV, 1, 5; Stern, *Authors*, I, pp. 181–185. Cf. also Posidonius of Apameia, in Strabo, *Geographica*, XVI, 2, 43; *Against Apion*, II, 7, 80 ff.

9 See e.g.: Levy, *op. cit.*, pp. 8 ff.; Bickerman, *The God of the Maccabees*, pp. 30 ff.; Heinemann, *RE(PW)*, Supp. V, p. 8; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, p. 306.

10 See: Tcherikover, *The Jews in the Graeco-Roman World*, pp. 165 ff.; *id.*, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, pp. 186 ff.; and other learned scholars followed in his footsteps. For additional comments in support and in opposition to his opinion, see my book *Jews, Idumaeans, and Ancient Arabs*, Chapter 1, pp. 21 ff.

11 See: *Against Apion*, I, 22, 191. To be precise, this is a testimony given by Hecataeus and quoted by Josephus Flavius; many who doubt its reliability have called it 'Pseudo-Hecataeus'. The debate on the authenticity of this source has not yet been settled; for details see: Gager, *ZNW*,

the debased origin of the Jewish People<sup>12</sup>? The Third Book of Maccabees also clearly testifies to religious persecutions against Jews in Eretz-Israel and Egypt in the late third century BCE, following the Battle of Raphia – that is, 50 years before the outbreak of the Hasmonaean Revolt (217 BCE)<sup>13</sup>. This historical source even provides fascinating evidence of the existence of a well-rooted tradition of anti-Jewish defamatory propaganda, whose accusations aimed at Jews and Judaism were anchored in the historical reality of Ptolemy IV Philopator's time, if not earlier<sup>14</sup>.

There can be no doubt that the success of the Hasmonaean Revolt constituted an important turning point, which ushered in a vast increase in the number and severity of calumnious attacks on the Jewish people and religion. Nevertheless, we must not be deceived into thinking that the Hasmonaean Revolt was the primary and principal reason for the phenomenon itself. At most, it should be considered as a catalyst, which accelerated the development of the phenomenon, and no more. Indeed, the Hasmonaean conquests and the pietistic fervour which accompanied them, and which found an outlet in the smashing of idolatrous altars and temples and the expulsion of hostile population, only added fire to fire. In any event, the Hasmonaean conquests are by no means to be described as the sole factor behind the sudden and immediate generation of Hellenistic hatred toward the Jewish People, as that hatred had been rooted in the Hellenistic world long years before, and did not necessarily relate to Eretz-Israel alone.

It is not our intention here to review the various testimonies given by Greek and Roman authors regarding the Jews, lest we diverge from the subject of our study into irrelevant side issues<sup>15</sup>. In the introductory survey, we will content ourselves with exposing the general historiographic trends which directed the Greek and Roman authors in their descriptions of the Jews and their relations with their neighbours. As already noted above, the information contained in those authors' works on the People of Israel in general, and on the residents of Judaea in particular, is very

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LX (1969), pp. 130–139; Schaller, *ZNW*, LIV (1963), pp. 15–31. In our opinion, the source should be considered credible; cf.: Stern, *Authors*, I, pp. 20 ff., pp. 135 ff., and especially p. 42 (concerning *Against Apion* I, 22, 191).

12 There were, indeed, those who tried to cast doubt as to whether Manetho was really a hater of Jews; see: Kasher, *Studies in the History of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel*, III (1975), p. 72 and notes 17–19. On Manetho's testimony and its background, see above, note 7.

13 This is expanded upon in: Stern, *Authors*, I, pp. 97 ff., including a detailed, up-to-date bibliography. See also: Efron, Dissertation, pp. 12–13; and see below, Chapter 2, Section 2.1.

14 For greater detail, see: Kasher, *Studies in the History of the Jewish People and Eretz-Israel*, IV pp. 59–76.

15 For more detailed surveys, including quoted testimonies dating back to the days of Agatharchides of Cnidus, see: Stern, *Authors*, I, pp. 104 ff.

shallow – indicating both an amazing level of ignorance and a total lack of honest motivation to learn and understand the values of the Jewish People. From this standpoint, no significant change can be observed from the days of Hecataeus of Abdera, a witness of the first-generation encounter of Greeks and Jews, to the time of Tacitus, the greatest Jew-hater in Rome during the tempestuous generations of the Great Jewish Revolt (66–70CE) and the revolt of the Jews in the Diaspora (115–117 CE). Actually, the one clear trend is that, starting at the time of the Hasmonaean Revolt, the hostile and libelous testimony increased drastically in both quantity and viciousness. Admittedly, the Jewish People was not the only Mediterranean nation which showed signs of nationalist awakening, to the extent of fomenting a revolt and overthrow of Hellenistic rule. However, no other revolt is so clearly reflected in Hellenistic literature as was that of the Jews.

By no means may we ignore the troubling question of the reason for this singularity. It appears that the answer is lodged in the unique nature of the Hasmonaean Revolt. This was not a revolt aimed at attaining purely political and nationalist goals, as were most of the revolts launched by Eastern peoples. Moreover, the tyranny of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes was not the only factor prompting its eruption. No, this was a cry of challenge against Hellenistic dominion over Eretz-Israel in general; a struggle against the very presence of the foreign Hellenistic settlement, and even more so, against its seductive, harmful cultural and religious influence. The Hasmonaean Revolt, therefore, was neither local, circumstantial, nor ephemeral. Thus, it did not end when the Epiphanes decrees were revoked<sup>16</sup>. It was a powerful, protracted struggle, which continued unbroken for several generations; the primary factors at stake were the fate of the Jewish nation and its monotheism, and the question of sovereign Jewish rule in the historical homeland was more secondary.

Notwithstanding the Hasmomaeen victories on the battlefield, and despite the impressive political achievements in the regional and international spheres, the Hasmonaean Kingdom did not know rest and tranquility. Many enemies beset it from all directions, lying in wait for the first opportunity to wreak their revenge. It appears that, despite the great

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16 In our opinion, it is impossible to accept the opinions stating that, in the 'Alcimus affair', the Hasidaeans abandoned Judas Maccabaeus because the Epiphanes religious decrees has been abolished and there was no longer a reason to ally themselves with the rebels. This is expanded upon in: Efron, *Studies on the Hasmonaean Period*, pp. 20–28, 49, 52. In this connection, it is worthwhile to quote the words of Alcimus himself (attributed to him in *II Maccabees*), spoken before King Demetrius I and his council: 'Those of the Jews who are called Hasidaeans and are led by Judas Maccabaeus, are keeping the war alive and fomenting sedition, refusing to leave the kingdom in peace.' (*II Maccabees* XIV:6).

and widespread Hasmonaean conquests, idolatry was not totally rooted out of the confines of Eretz-Israel, and the vision of Israel's redemption and purification in the spirit of the Biblical commandments was not fulfilled in its entirety. To meet all these objective, the Jews of Eretz-Israel would have required more time and more extensive human resources. Furthermore, the Hasmonaean achievements, which reached a glorious zenith in the reign of King Alexander Jannaeus and Queen Salome-Alexandra, were suddenly cut off by the Roman conquerors. These claimed – and proved – to be able to turn the wheel of history backward, to the days before the great Hasmonaean conquests.

Under the new circumstances, the enemies involved scarcely changed, nor did the aims and objectives of the old-new struggle. The Hellenistic cities were still the main adversary in the path of the Jewish settlement of Eretz-Israel; the Roman rule only granted its political and military protection to that adversary. It is therefore correct to consider the Jewish Zealot movement, from the conquest of Eretz-Israel by Pompey to the Great Jewish Revolt (or, more correctly, to the Bar-Kokhba Revolt), as a direct continuation of its precursor in Hasmonaean times. This continuity becomes evident when one realizes that the two had identical ideological motives, similar enemies, the same religious and national fervour, and, of course, the same hopes and expectations of redemption.

Apparently, Hellenistic-Roman historiography also underwent no significant changes in the new era. A basic hostility is immediately evident on all strata of that discipline. Its descriptions manifest complete neglect and alienation toward the spiritual and ethical values of the People of Israel and Mosaic law, as well as toward any evidence of Jewish nationalist or religious ideals, the noble images of Jewish sages, and the true leaders and guiding institutions of the Jewish People. Prominent in the testimony of Greek and Roman authors are deliberate distortions, written in ink black with infinite hatred and animosity. The Jewish Zealots of the Roman era were described as 'brigands' and 'tyrants', just like the Hasmonaean before them. Extremist authors continued to view the Jewish laws and 'base' origin as the root of all evil<sup>17</sup>. By contrast, the more moderate and restrained writers merely condemned the negative influences, or the perversions and corruptions, caused by these 'brigands' and 'tyrants'; with hypocritical self-righteousness, they did not slander the original Judaism of Mosaic days<sup>18</sup>. Judaism's struggle for its very existence, the ambition

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17 A typical representative of these extremist authors in the Roman period is, of course, the famous historian Tacitus; see: Levy, *Studies in Jewish Hellenism*, pp. 115–196.

18 See e.g.: Strabo, *Geographica*, XVI, 2, 39–40; Efron, Dissertation, pp. 21–24; Stern, *Essays in Jewish History and Philology – In Memory of Gedaliahu Alon*, pp. 169 ff. It should be noted that modern-day anti-Semites also attempt to delude their readers by claiming that they dis-



of the Jewish nation toward sovereign life, the fervour of Jewish faith and spiritual creativity, the Messianic longing for redemption and the Heavenly kingdom – none of these were so much as mentioned in the Greek and Roman writings. On the contrary: their deliberate neglect of all of these – stamped, as it were, with the seal of infinite hatred – adds insult to injury with its contemptuous attitude toward the values of Israel, and even toward the most basic historic truths. If we add to all this the deliberate misrepresentations and the ignorant, confused negligence attested to by innumerable errors, we get a true picture of the ‘contribution’ made by Graeco-Roman historiography.

The rise of Herod to power in Judaea added a dimension to that part of Graeco-Roman historiography related to the history of the Jewish People. The Herodian chapter of that history opened in the early days of Antipater, Herod’s father. The most important source for that chapter is Nicolaus of Damascus, the scope of whose writings also includes periods under the rule of the Herodian tetrarchs, Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip<sup>19</sup>. This author, as we know, was one of Herod’s senior advisors and won his complete trust, to the extent of being allowed to represent him before the Roman authorities in extremely sensitive matters (such as the Syllaeus affair). It is therefore clear that his writing is distinctly pro-Herodian, and not unprejudiced in its historical approach. His hostility toward the Jewish People and its adored national leadership (the Hasmonaeans) reflects not only his animosity as a Hellenistic author from a neighbouring city, but also Herod’s own Jewish-Hasmonaean trauma.

It is now agreed by most scholars that Nicolaus of Damascus’ works were the principal source on which Josephus based his review of the period from the Antiochus Epiphanes decrees to the days of Archelaus, especially in his work *The Jewish War*<sup>20</sup>, and also in Books XIV–XVII of his work *Antiquities of the Jews*. Admittedly, in the latter work, Josephus occasionally criticized Nicolaus’ positions. Nevertheless, his basic attitudes remained in line with those of the Damascene, at least where loyalty to Rome (or, conversely, Jewish nationalistic views) were concerned, and Nicolaus’ writings continued to serve as his primary source<sup>21</sup>. In addition, the fact that Josephus titled his first work *The Jewish War* most clearly

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tinguish between Judaism and Zionism, and condemn the latter as ‘imperialist aggression’ (i.e. the ‘brigandism’ and ‘tyranny’ of ancient days).

19 On the period of his political and literary activity, see: Stern, ‘Nicolaus of Damascus’, pp. 375–394; *id.*, *Authors*, I, pp. 227 ff.

20 Thackeray, *Josephus, the Man and the Historian*, New York 1929, p. 66; Laqueur, *Der jüdische Historiker etc.*, pp. 129 ff.; Hölscher, ‘Josephus’, *RE(PW)*, XVIII, pp. 1934f.; Schürer, I<sup>4</sup>, p. 84; Efron, *Dissertation*, pp. 46–47.

21 Efron, *Dissertation*, pp. 47, 74; see also; Stern, *Authors*, I, pp. 229–231.

reflects his own historiographic position – which, of course, is absolutely pro-Roman. Scholars have been aware for some time of a fascinating parallel between the name of that composition and those of other Roman works (e.g. *The Gallic War*, *The Punic Wars*, etc.), which clearly express the Roman position<sup>22</sup>. On at least two occasions (*The Life*, 361–363; *Against Apion* I, 50), Josephus admitted that his work *The Jewish War* had received the approval of Vespasian and Titus; this, in itself, is an indication that the work did indeed portray history from the Roman viewpoint. True, in the first passages of that work, he accused other authors of a lack of objectivity and distortion of the truth; that very accusation, however, may in many other instances be no less justly applied to Josephus himself. The fact that he had access to the imperial *commentaria* (i.e. reports, surveys, memoirs and diaries) of Vespasian and Titus bears witness not only to his sources, but to his historiographic tendentiousness. Indeed, in mentioning the imperial *commentaria*, he sought to verify the historical ‘truth’ of his treatise, especially in the argument with Justus of Tiberias (*The Life*, 342, 357–358). Josephus also boasts of his extensive correspondence with Agrippa II (62 letters), which, he claims, confirms the truth embodied in his work *The Jewish War* (*The Life*, 364–366); however, this very fact should indicate his continued historiographical affinity to the House of Herod. It is possible that he made use of Agrippa II’s archives, and was influenced to no small extent by his testimony; he himself states that Agrippa II, like Vespasianus and Titus, could bear witness to the reliability of his writings. In fact, Josephus Flavius’ basic historical ‘truth’ did not change even in his apologia *The Life*, although that work includes many altered versions of facts earlier described in *The Jewish War*, as well as a desperate attempt on Josephus’ part to clear his name as a Jew, in the face of Justus of Tiberias’ accusations.

Nor did Josephus deviate far from his ‘truth’ in his treatise *Antiquities of the Jews*. The book was originally intended for Hellenistic readers (*Antiquities* I, 5, 9, 12; XVI, 174); the appeal to Jewish readers (*ibid.*, IV, 197) was only incidentally slipped in. Josephus wrote the book to shed light on the development of the Jewish People, from antiquity to his own era, in order to extol its image and its cultural and religious heritage in the eyes of the Hellenistic-Roman world, while at the same time to refute the deliberately false accusations cast at the Jews<sup>23</sup>. Nonetheless, despite the book’s fervid panegyric on the People of Israel and Mosaic law, Josephus did not depart in any way from his basic political positions vis-a-vis Rome. He continued to lavish praises on that nation on one hand,

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22 Laqueur, *op. cit.*, p. 98; Stern, *Judea and Rome – the Jewish Revolts*, p. 91.

23 See: Schalit, *Flavii Josephi Antiquitates Judaicae*, I, pp. xi ff., lxxii ff.

and, on the other, to launch penetrating criticism against the Zealot and dissident circles<sup>24</sup>. There can be no doubt that, relative to *The Jewish War*, this work is more balance; having undertaken to write it in defence of the Jews and Judaism, its author was occasionally forced to evaluate various historical incidents in a more controlled manner. Thus, for example, he even permitted himself, as stated above, to criticize the House of Herod, which he had not dared to do in *The Jewish War*. He also gave favorable literary expression to several Jewish folk tales, and occasionally emphasized various Jewish values in warm, sympathetic tones.

In actual fact, only the period preceding the great Hasmonaean conquests under John Hyrcanus I and Alexander Jannaeus was described favorably and in detail in Josephus Flavius' historical survey. The reason for this is clear and understandable: Josephus' loyalty to Rome was not jeopardized by that historical survey, as, up to the time of John Hyrcanus I, the Romans were strongly allied with the Jews – a fact fascinatingly attested to by well-documented writs of alliance. Nevertheless, that historical survey, too, contains easily recognized traces of literary editing by its author. Even the Biblical events discussed in that history were given significant 'cosmetic' treatment. This may have been done out of literary and artistic considerations, with a view toward pleasing Graeco-Roman readers with familiar and accepted Hellenistic motifs; or as an attempt at justification of Judaism and its values; and there were certainly also political and personal reasons for the author to blur the Zealot-nationalistic nature of certain historical incidents. Accordingly, on several occasions, he exercised considerable license even with well-known Biblical texts, in order to adapt Jewish history into his predetermined literary plan<sup>25</sup>.

If he was capable of this even with ancient sources imbued with an aura of sanctity, how much more so could and did he alter the teachings of apocryphal sources on the post-Biblical period. Admittedly, the scantiness, superficiality, and poor, distorted writing of Hasmonaean history, which characterized the version given in *The Jewish War*, were replaced in *Antiquities of the Jews* by an amended, broader version, based on the excellent historical source of the *First Book of Maccabees*. However, it appears that, just as Josephus allowed himself great license with the Biblical sources, he also submitted to his readers an 'improved' Hasmonaean history, for reasons and considerations of his own. At times, he diverged from *I Maccabees*, and embellished the historical plot with supplements drawn from hostile alien sources; at other times, he worked in patches of his own

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24 Compare e.g.: *Antiquities*, XIV, 160; XVII, 271–285; XVIII, 4–10, 23–25; XX, 2–5, 97–124, 160–172, 185–188, 204–210 etc.

25 This is expanded upon in: Efron, Dissertation, pp. 48 ff.

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