



# The encounter of Simon the Just with Antiochus the Great: From Zenon of Rhodes to Josephus Flavius and the Talmud

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## ABSTRACT

The story of the encounter of Alexander Macedon with the Jewish nation, reported by Josephus and the Babylonian Talmud, was a favorite topic of many generations of Judaica scholars but fell in complete disrepute in the last century due to several inconsistencies. To account for some of them, Solomon Zeitlin (1924) suggested that the Greek king of the encounter was King Antiochus III, not Alexander, however his idea did not receive the recognition it deserves. Here I enrich Zeitlin's idea with several new insights.

As Antiochus was accompanied by a historian of note, Zenon of Rhodes, the encounter story is likely a fragment from non-extant history writings by Zenon, known to us through Polybius. I conjecture that it was disseminated by Timagenes of Alexandria who changed the king's name to Alexander Macedon. In this form, through Strabo, the story became known to Josephus who made further amendments changing the high priest's name to Yaddua.

Developing my earlier (2005) insight, I give a rational explanation to a seemingly fabulous detail of the story, the king's alleged 'recognition' of the high priest, and also resolve several other discrepancies between Josephus and the Babylonian Talmud related to 'Parmenio' and 'Antipatris'. Summing up, I claim the encounter story describes a genuine historical episode, which can be dated according to the historical context to January 9, 198 BC.

This reading may provide new bounds on the timing of Septuagint, explain a cryptic episode in the Talmud Yerushalmi and shed light on the circumstances of creating the 'Alexander Romance.'

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**KEYWORDS:** *Encounter, Septuagint, Josephus Flavius, King Antiochus III, Simon the Just, Polybius, Antipatros, Zenon of Rhodes, Canopus, "Chambers of the South", Talmud Yoma, Alexander Romance, Timagenes of Alexandria, Strabo*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

What makes a story genuine? Why do we retell one story and neglect another? Is a story true if a *reputable historian* tells it, if *no one contradicts him*, and if there are *no improbable details*? And if some condition fails, at whose expense must we restore it? Or should we reclassify the story as a fairy tale or myth?

Let us revisit the famous story of the encounter between Alexander the Great and the Jewish nation to see whether we can bring all three conditions together. The story, told by Josephus Flavius in the *Jewish Antiquities* (*Antiq.* 11:325-339) and repeated, differing in several important details, in the Babylonian Talmud, *b. Yoma* 69a, and in the Scholion to *Megillat Ta'anit*, was dear to all Biblical scholars from the surge of European interest in Judaica in the 16<sup>th</sup> century till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Benedikt Niese and other historians destroyed its historic veracity.<sup>1</sup> Yet almost all of these historians believed the story camouflaged a real historic episode. Hugo Willrich (1895: 9-10) argued the story was inspired by Marcus Agrippa's visit to Jerusalem during the time of King Herod, Agrippa's sacrificing in the Jerusalem Temple and defending civic rights of the Jews in Asia Minor (*Antiq.* 16:12-65). Adolph Büchler (1898) thought the background of the encounter story comes from a meeting between Julius Caesar and High Priest Hyrcanus in Syria and Caesar's decrees conferring various benefits to the Jews (*Antiq.* 14:185-216). Friedrich Pfister (1914: 25-6) suggested the story was written by an Alexandrian Jew who reflected on the meeting between Emperor Claudius and the Alexandrian Jewish delegation to Rome after the tumult between local Jews and Greeks in 41 AD and Claudius' verdict restoring Jewish rights (*Antiq.* 19: 279-291).

Yet none of these versions gained wide recognition. Pfister's idea that both Josephus and the Talmud drew independently from an earlier source was ignored. Solomon Zeitlin's paper (1924), which argued that the hero of the encounter could have been another Greek King, Antiochus III the Great, was scarcely noticed by his contemporaries or the next generation of scholars. The only early exception seems to be G.F. Moore (1927), who mentioned 'Zeitlin's conjecture' quite favorably. Later, J. D. Purvis (1968: 123-6) used Zeitlin's basic idea for his own purposes.

Several subtle arguments to save the historicity of the original story with Alexander Macedon as its hero were advanced by Israel Abrahams (1927) who argued that Alexander might have visited Jerusalem immediately after the siege of Gaza. The same idea was supported later by David Golan (1983). But belief in the historicity of the story among later histori-

ans faded until it was quietly dropped from textbooks (see, e.g., Schürer 1973: 138). At this low ebb of the story's popularity, Arnaldo Momigliano (1994:81) denied the possibility of the visit of Alexander to Jerusalem "dogmatically" since "it is not recorded by any respectable ancient source on Alexander and is full of impossible details."

Supported by Momigliano's verdict, modern scholars attributed the story to *Jewish historic imagination* and placed it entirely within the literary genre. Shaye Cohen (1982/3) even described it as "a complex amalgam of motifs rather than a representative of a single genre" and assumed that "Josephus was not a mindless paraphraser of the work of others, but was a real editor, an active participant in the formation of the story as we have it." Erich Gruen (1998: 195) wrote, "Alexander's visit to Jerusalem is outright fabrication" and "Alexander historians could hardly have missed or omitted it." James Vanderkam (2004: 148), though briefly discussing alternative options, assigned the "tale" to "the huge body of Alexander romances and to the narrower corpus of Jewish anti-Samaritan literature." *Inter alia*, Vanderkam dismissed "Zeitlin's attempt to rescue something historical from it by substituting Antiochus III' name for that of Alexander" since it "fails to address the problem with Antipatris and collapses before the fact that Judeans did not rebel against Antiochus" (*ibid*, 148-9).

However, it is impossible to drop the issue at this point. A serious matter is at stake: two major Jewish ancient historical sources are implicated - explicitly or not - in creating and perpetuating a romantic literary fiction. This is hard to accept. Heinrich Graetz (1891-8: vol. 1, 413), a major authority in this area, though designating the story as a legend and dismissing its semi-fantastic elements, did not deny the possibility of such an encounter suggesting however more prosaic circumstances. As recently as 1941, W.O.E. Oesterley (1970: 16-7) wrote, "to rule out the whole episode as imaginary fiction, a view held by some, strikes us as a little too drastic." Even later, Salo Baron (1952: 185) maintained that "Josephus' report of Alexander's friendly treatment of Palestinian Jewry has a solid kernel of historical truth."

Despite these pronouncements, *no-one* studied how the story could have been recorded and transmitted, if it were based on a historical incident. This is unfortunate since any success in this direction would certainly undermine the strength of Momigliano's argument. Alexander's era was famous for a number of prominent historians (Ptolemy Soter, Nearchus, Callisthenes), who personally witnessed every public move made by Alexander. Many other Greek kings were less fortunate with respect to their

posthumous fame, and subsequently the writings of their contemporary historians might not be extant.

King Antiochus III falls in the latter category. What we know of him comes from Polybius' *Histories*, a second-hand account, and the portion related to the king's entrance to Jerusalem and known to Josephus is not extant. Zeitlin (1924) developed the Antiochus option only from the general perspective of Jewish history: the king was a contemporary of High Priest Simon, and the factional strife within the Jewish elite at that time might have allowed Antiochus to enter Jerusalem without a fight. Recently, Jonathan Goldstein (1993), seemingly unaware of Zeitlin's work, analyzing the encounter story from the perspective of "broken loyalty," discussed the Antiochus option but finally rejected it, failing to find support for it in the Book of Daniel.

Though the story in its present form cannot be historically associated with the named participants and – no! – Josephus was not "a mindless paraphraser of the works of others," the possibilities that it is historically based have not been exhausted. This paper explores the implications of the hypothesis that the story is based on real events.

Following this idea, I develop a more compelling picture of the encounter between Antiochus III and Simon the Just than Zeitlin's and Goldstein's. Every section contains new insight never discussed by historians. In sections 1-5, I dispel all the improbable elements from the story showing that supposedly "fantastic" or conflicting details in the tales of Josephus and the Talmud can be resolved only if Antiochus III, not other contenders, is the hero of the episode. *Inter alia*, in section 3, I date the rabbinical version in b. *Yoma 69a* and propose its authors. In section 5 I build a bridge between the encounter and another famous 'Alexander' story. In sections 6 and 7, I date the episode, and finally, in section 8, I find the story's true author. Thus, the story acquires all the attributes of a *true historical episode*.

In sections 9 and 10, I speculate on why and when the story was transformed before it reached Josephus and the rabbis and what could have motivated Josephus to introduce several amendments. Though I occasionally advance conjectures to link the events when explaining the missing reasons or circumstances, they are both probable and historical, as for example, the one that follows.

## 2. THE RECOGNITION OF THE HIGH PRIEST BY THE KING

When a procession of Jewish priests from Jerusalem approached the Greek camp, the Greek king bowed to and saluted the high priest, explaining to his retinue that he recognized the man as someone he had

seen once during his youth in a dream and who had promised him divine protection in his future endeavors (*Antiq.* 11:332-4):

"The kings of Syria and the rest were surprised at what Alexander had done and supposed him disordered in his mind. However Parmenio alone went up to him and asked him how it came to pass that, when all others adored him, he should adore the high priest of the Jews? To whom he replied, "I did not adore him, but that God who has honored him with that high priesthood. For I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit, when I was at Dium (Dion) in Macedonia, who, when I was considering with myself how I might obtain dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay, but boldly to pass over the sea thither, for that he would conduct my army and would give me dominion over the Persians."

Both the king's behavior and his subsequent explanation seem fantastic and must be explained. Indeed, an ordinary king hardly would have allowed himself to behave so *extravagantly*. But the Greek king certainly was *not ordinary*, as is seen from his retinue's reaction to his behavior. His explanation of the reasons for his bow seems to convince his retinue but could it convince a modern reader?

To turn the explanation from being fantastic to real, a simple assumption suffices: the king was familiar with a detailed description of the high priest's garments, which must ultimately have been derived from Ex. 28 or 39.<sup>2</sup> Each of the eight pieces of a high priest's clothing was remarkable on its own, but the 12 precious stones on the breastplate likely produced an unforgettable effect, so anyone knowledgeable of jewelry could visualize it. Josephus intimated that that the Greeks had knowledge of the breastplate, calling it "The Oracle," and that an especially beautiful sardonyx (Urim), attached to the right shoulder, was seen from afar, but that both the breastplate and the sardonyx had ceased shining 200 years before he composed his book, "God having been displeased at the transgression of his laws" (*Antiq.* 3:217-8). Since the *Jewish Antiquities* are dated to AD 93/4, the shining stopped c. 108/7 BC. The Mishna, *M. Sotah* 9:12, says: "when the First Prophets died, Urim and Thummim ceased," which seems to imply an earlier date if the Biblical prophets were meant. However, this can be resolved differently since Josephus's date is close to the end of the life of High Priest John Hyrcanus, d. 104 BC, to whom Josephus ascribed the gift

of prophecy as well (*Antiq.* 13:300). This may resolve the contradiction.

Accepting Josephus' testimony would mean the stones were certainly in use during most of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, and in all likelihood, the high priest would have put this breastplate on before going to meet the king. And indeed, both Josephus (*Antiq.* 11:331) and the Talmud (see below) emphasized that the high priest wore the full set of his regalia at the encounter (Fig. 1). Thus the king recognized this *image*, being familiar with a description of it at some time in his past (Belenkiy 2005).



Figure 1. High Priest's garments

One cannot assume that the Greek king knew Hebrew, for no such thing is recorded. Therefore, the timing of Septuagint, a purported translation of the Bible into Greek, is crucial for the trustworthiness of the encounter story. If Septuagint was composed at the time reported by Josephus, i.e., during Ptolemy II's reign, 283-246 BC, then Alexander Macedon must leave the scene.

One can argue that Septuagint could not have been the only text in Greek with a description of a high priest's clothes. Yet, I confess I don't know of any earlier text. The only possible earlier Greek text, *On the Jews*, ascribed to Hecateus of Abdera of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, lacks such a description, and moreover was recently proven by Bezalel Bar-Kochva (1996: 113) to be a later forgery. If the king did not read Septuagint itself, we may suppose he read a lost text derived from it, now unknown; for simplicity of description we will suppose that he read Septuagint.

Though Septuagint as a source for the king's dream excludes Alexander from the role of the hero of the encounter, it does not exclude several other pretenders. According to Josephus (*Contra Apion*

2.48), Ptolemy III bypassed Judea twice during the Third Coele-Syrian War (245-241 BC), while Ptolemy IV could have visited Judea after the battle at Raphia (217 BC) during the Fourth Coele-Syrian War (III Macc. 1.6-2.23). However both kings were *masters* of Judea, not *conquerors* as the king in the encounter story seemed to be. Two other known visitors to Jerusalem, the Romans Agrippa (*Antiq.* 16:14) and Vitellius (*Antiq.* 18:122) were not kings and were not at war with the Jews. In comparison, King Antiochus III, the Great is a much stronger case - he was in the Land of Israel at least twice on military campaigns, the Fourth and Fifth Coele-Syrian wars, in 220-217 and 199-198 BC (as I argue later), as a conqueror.

When and where could Antiochus III have read Septuagint? Septuagint's time of appearance is uncertain. The Macedonian city Dium seems so far from Antioch and Syria that one must be surprised to hear of it in connection to Antiochus III.

The so-called *Letter of Aristeas*, better known from Josephus's paraphrase (*Antiq.* 12:11-118), ascribes the rendering of the Bible into Greek to the direct command and personal endeavors of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283-246 BC). If so, Septuagint certainly appeared before Antiochus III was born (c. 241 BC). Though the *Letter of Aristeas* seems to be written some 100 years later than the events it describes, it may contain true historic elements, like the names of the translators (Isserlin 1973). Let us support its veracity for the timing of Septuagint's appearance, further narrowing it from another story.

A letter to High Priest Onias, written by the Spartan king, Areus, acknowledged a blood relationship between the two peoples, Spartans and Jews, through the patriarch Abraham (I Macc. 12:19-23; *Antiq.* 12:226). This suggests that a Greek text on Jewish history was written and became known to the Greek world outside Alexandria. Since four High Priests Onias occur in Jewish history, the timing of the letter is unclear. How and when could the Spartans have become aware of the text?

Discussing the possibilities, Erich Gruen gives 309-265 BC for the years of Areus I's reign and says that "the Spartans did enjoy an alliance with Ptolemy II Philadelphus, concluded at some time prior to the Chremonidean War in the 260s" (Gruen 1998: 254, n. 32; 256), but he seemed too timid to proceed further. Let us develop the next step on our own.





Figure 2. The Greek states in the 3rd century BC

The Chremonidean War, waged by the Greek states against Macedonian King Antigonos Gonatas, is usually dated to 267-261 BC, so the Egyptian-Spartan alliance was likely concluded before the War, in 268 BC. This leaves a full 15 years (from the beginning of Ptolemy's II's reign) for the Septuagint to have been composed. To date the composition to 273-269 BC seems quite realistic (see, e.g., Gmirkin 2006: 142).

This fact and a well-known ancient custom of presenting copies of rare books to kings, especially allies, explains how Septuagint could have come to Sparta, while the king's letter to the acting high priest testifies to the impression it produced in the Greek world.<sup>3</sup> VanderKam (2004) again weighed *pros and contras* and did not find the claim of forgery convincing. Surprisingly, he never argued about Septuagint as a background for the king's letter. Besides, the name of the Spartan messenger, Demoteles, mentioned by Josephus twice -- in the Spartan letter (*Antiq.* 12:227) and in the Jewish response, which the reciprocal Judean embassy brought to Sparta (*Antiq.* 13:167) -- speaks in favor of its authenticity. The name 'Demoteles' (Δημοτελης) is quite rare and seems a surprising choice to be used in a fabrication. A *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* (Fraser & Matthews, 1987-2010) counts only 28 people with name Demoteles, mostly Athenians, three or four from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.<sup>4</sup> While the *Lexicon* does not list any Spartan examples, two are well-known: a Spartan messenger, named by Xenophon in *Hellenica* 7.1, in 368 BC; and a head of the Spartan secret police, who betrayed Cleomenes III at Selassia in 222 BC (Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 28.2-3). The claim, that Josephus copied Demoteles' name from Xenophon, was found unsupported by Vanderkam (2004: 127).

Thus the gift dates to 268 BC, while the letter might have been written either by Areus I sometime in 268-265 BC or, alternatively, sometime later, in the name of the child-king Areus II in 262-254 BC. Although there is a great deal of uncertainty about the timing of priesthood of the four High Priests Oniases, the addressee was likely High Priest Onias II,

who held the office until the reign of Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-222 BC) though he might have been quite old at that time (*Antiq.* 12:157-9).

The story concerning the Spartan letter offers also a plausible way for the Septuagint to have appeared in Antioch sometime before 223 BC, when 18-year-old Antiochus III was crowned and embarked on his first campaign in Coele-Syria. The Septuagint could have come to Antioch during the short period of peace between the Ptolemies and Seleucids, 253-246 BC, when a daughter of Ptolemy II was married to Antiochus II (Daniel 11:6). Ptolemy II, who valued the Septuagint highly, could have presented a copy as a royal gift to his son-in-law. Though the marriage soon ended tragically (Antiochus II died and his wife was assassinated), the book could have remained in the Antiochean library, where a young Antiochus III could have read it. Such a library did exist, and was under the royal auspices: as Suda E3801 narrates, after 223 BC, a certain Euphoriion of Calcius was appointed by Antiochus III to be the head of the public library. There is evidence (Finkelberg 2006) that the library started much earlier, as early as the invitation of poet Aratus to the court of Antiochus I (281-261 BC).

An alternative scenario is also plausible: young Antiochus could have seen his dream in Dium, Macedonia, after visiting Sparta, where in the local library he could have acquainted himself with the copy of Septuagint presented by Ptolemy II to King Areus. The Seleucid kings might have had the custom of sending their sons to their native country for education and a patriotic upbringing. Too little is known of King Antiochus' early years to confirm or reject this idea.<sup>5</sup> If this latest scenario is true, then, at this point, Josephus faithfully followed the original narrative.

It is an interesting why the high priest's image heralded victory to Antiochus III. A plausible answer is that the king did not restrict himself with reading two small passages from the Book of Exodus, but read the whole story. Then the high priest, in his eyes, could represent the mighty Jewish god, who granted Jews a victory over Egyptians. Let us remind that before embarking on the Persian campaign, Antiochus III launched the Fourth Coele-Syrian war against Egypt in 219 BC, which ended in his defeat at the Battle of Raphia in 217 BC. Thus, Antiochus III was in the Land of Israel at least a year and could have familiarized himself with the local population and the national legends, in particular, the Exodus story.

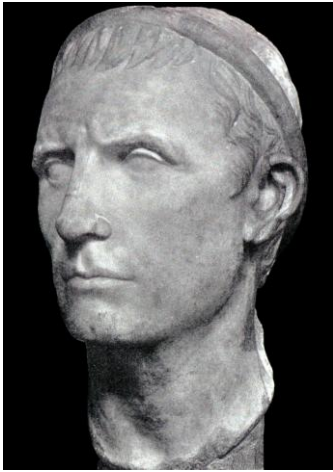


Figure 3. King Antiochus III's bust. (Louvre)

### 3. "THE BOOK OF DANIEL" AND PERSIAN ALLUSIONS

Josephus (*Antiq.* 11:337-8) further says:

"And when the book of Daniel was shown him [Alexander], wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks would destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that he, himself, was the person intended; and as he was glad he dismissed the multitude for the present; but the next day he called them to him and bade them ask what favors they pleased of him. Whereupon the high priest desired that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers and might pay no tribute on the seventh year. He granted all they desired, and when they entreated him that he would permit the Jews in Babylon and Media to enjoy their own laws also, he willingly promised to do hereafter what they desired."

Josephus most likely referred to Daniel 8:3-7, 20-21, which describes a Greek putting an end to the Persian Empire. Shaye Cohen (1982/3: n. 80) asserts that Josephus invented this episode. Indeed, the reference to the Persian Empire seems to point uniquely to Alexander – after all, who else had defeated Persia? For one, Antiochus III, the Great! He also had a victory over Persia in his military career, a fact missed by Shaye Cohen. After Antiochus' father's death c. 220 BC, the satraps of Persia and Media declared independence from the Seleucid Empire and it was young King Antiochus's particular task to

recover them. According to Polybius (*Histories* 5.30-40), it was after the Persian campaign that the appellation of 'Great' was bestowed upon King Antiochus by the world.

The fact that the king promised the high priest to "permit Jews in Babylon and Media to enjoy their own laws" (*Antiq.* 11:338) immediately eliminates Alexander, who had yet to conquer these places, as a hero of the encounter story, but definitely supports Antiochus III, who had just reestablished his dominance over these places. Actually such a request from the high priest to Alexander could have only jeopardized the Jews of Persia still living under Darius' rule, who easily could have been accused of dual loyalty and punished. Moreover, the conspicuous *absence* of the Egyptian Jews in the high priest's request not only supports Antiochus rather than Alexander, as Goldstein (1993) has noticed, but also negates all Ptolemys once and for all.

Of course, this does not mean that the "Book of Daniel" shown to the king was the book we know. True, Daniel 11:13-19 and particularly verse 15 ("So the king of the North shall come and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities, and the arms of the south shall not withstand") are a direct reference to Antiochus III's campaign during the Fifth Coele-Syrian War. Moreover, Goldstein claims verse 14 relates to the campaign by Egyptian general Scopas discussed below. However, this is just another indication that chapter 11, as well as all of Part III of Daniel, i.e., chapters 8-12, was written *later* than the events I discuss here, which is a common view (Collins 1994: 499).

Alternatively, Josephus could have taken liberty to name the most appropriate book in his mind, conflating discussion about Persian Jews with the Book of Daniel, while the true book shown to the king could have been something else, for example, the Book of Exodus. The latter could have easily seduced the man who had just defeated the Egyptians to "rejoice". The death of the Pharaoh and his charioteers could have been one such example. Upon listening to Exodus 23, the king could have agreed to a remission of taxes every seventh year (*Antiq.* 11:338), while the description of the tabernacle in Exodus 26 could have caused him to agree to the Jews' plea to improve the building and the state of its servants (*Antiq.* 12:141-44).

### 4. DATING BARAITA IN B. YOMA 69A

To understand the nature of discrepancies between Josephus and the Talmud let us first examine the passage in *b. Yoma* 69a (Epstein 1938: vol. 2, *Yoma* 69a):

"It was taught: the twenty-[fifth of Tevet] is the day of Mount Gerizim – it is forbidden to say a eulogy, [since on that] day the Samaritans asked Alexander Macedon to destroy our Temple and were permitted, whereupon some people came and informed Simon the Just. What did he do? He put on priestly garments and robed himself in priestly garments and [took] with him noblemen from Israel who held torches in their hands. They walked all the night, some walking on this side and others were walking on the other side until the dawn. When dawn rose, [the king] asked: "Who are those?" [They] answered: "Jews, who rebelled against you!" When they reached Antipatris, the sun rose and they met. As soon as [the king] saw Simon the Just he went out of the chariot and bowed down to him. [They] asked him: "You, the great king, bow down before this Jew?!" He answered: "His image it is which wins for me in all my battles!" [?] He said to them: "What have you come for?" They said: "Is it possible that star-worshippers [?] should mislead you to destroy the House wherein prayers are said for you and your kingdom that it be never destroyed!" He said to them: "Who are these?" They said to him: "These are Samaritans who stand before you!" He said: "They are delivered into your hand." At once they perforated their heels, tied them to the tails of their horses and dragged them over thorns and thistles, until they came to Mount Gerizim, which they ploughed and planted with vetch, even as they had planned to do with the House of God. And that day they made a festive day."

This is Soncino's translation. VanderKam (2004: 140-1) gives an identical translation of this passage with a reference to Soncino's translator, L. Jung. Yet, as one may verify, the two extant manuscripts of *b. Yoma* containing page 69a, one at the Vatican Library (Ebr. 134) and the other at the Jewish Theological Seminary Library (Rab. 1623), have "goyim" (גוים) instead of "star-worshippers" (עבדי כוכבים).<sup>6</sup> It could be that L. Jung had at his disposal only three other extant manuscripts of *b. Yoma*, one at London and two at Munich, where page 69a is missing, and was forced to translate this page from the earliest printed

versions, perhaps from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, where the censors often replaced the word 'goyim' with something else, the expression 'star-worshippers' being one alternative (Steinsaltz 1976: 81-5).

Since the writing of the Babylonian Talmud is stretched over many centuries, it is important to find the exact time it recorded the encounter story. Noticing that the above passage is cited with a preamble "it was taught," Goldstein (1993) rightly qualifies the story as a *baraita* and consequently dates it to somewhere in the Mishnaic period, between 48 and 230 AD.

Another implication of Goldstein's insight is that the encounter story was taught by a rabbi who came from the Land of Israel. This is reassuring since the local rabbis spoke and read Greek at least till the 4<sup>th</sup> century (as seen in several examples, including Rabbi Yona's below)<sup>7</sup>, while one would have difficulty explaining how Persian ("Babylonian") rabbis could have learned it. Though the author of the *baraita* is unknown, the best candidates are the first great leaders of Parthian-Persian Jewry, Rav and Shmuel, who came to Parthia in 180-220 AD to become the heads of two major Talmudic academies and whose teachings were often accompanied by this preamble.<sup>8</sup>

Let us warn, however, that the final "touches" to the story could have been added either by Rav Ashi, c. 425 AD, or by Ravina, c. 499 AD, the editors of the Babylonian Talmud.<sup>9</sup> The trace of editing the encounter story in *b. Yoma* 69a is seen in the reversed order of the Hebrew words in the phrase described above in italics: ( דמות דיוקנו של זה מנצחת לפני בבית (מלחמת), where the order of the second (בבית) and the third word (לפני) from the end must be reversed. This not only would restore the meaning of the passage as "this image appeared at home, before the war," but also would closely match Josephus's version, where the image appeared before the king only once, at his home city, before his Persian campaign.

More importantly, the editing might have affected two elements of the story in *b. Yoma* 69a: the date of the episode, Tevet 25, and the name 'Antipatris,' discussed below. Importantly, born in Persia, both editors were not supposed to know Greek.

The Scholion to *Megillat Ta'anit* is practically identical to *b. Yoma* 69a, and since it supposedly was written in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, some two centuries after the closure of the Babylonian Talmud, it is most certainly *derived* from *b. Yoma* 69a.

## 5. "KINGS OF SYRIA" AS SAMARITANS, "PARMENIO" AS ANTIPATROS

Accepting the encounter story with Antiochus as a hero allows resolving two troubling discrepancies between Josephus and the Talmud.

First, Josephus says that *Kings of Syria* (Συρία βασιλείς) were present at the encounter while *b. Yoma* 69a mentions only Samaritans. However, although not speaking directly of Samaritans, Josephus mentions among the king's retinue "the rest" who could be the Samaritans. Of the two groups, "kings of Syria" and Samaritans, the latter was by far more important to the Talmudic rabbis. This eliminates the problem. But a simpler solution is at hand: since both Judea and Samaria were parts of Coele-Syria, the "kings of Syria" and 'Samaritans' could be one and the same group. Samaritans certainly are not accidental heroes in the story, as we shall see, because Antiochus took over Samaria just before approaching Jerusalem. It seems Samaria surrendered to him to be first in line for future rewards and to bargain a deal with the king regarding the Jerusalem Jews.

Second, Josephus says it was Parmenio, the second in command in Alexander's army, who asked Alexander about his strange behavior at the encounter with the Jewish high priest. Actually Parmenio was mentioned twice, the second time as an addressee of the king's speech. But Parmenio could not possibly have been there if Alexander's name was substituted for Antiochus! Then Parmenio's name also must have been substituted for one of Antiochus' generals. Antiochus' closest comrade-in-arms was his nephew *Antipater* or *Antipatros* (αντίπατρος), whom Polybius mentioned at least *four* times in the narrative about the Fourth and Fifth Coele-Syrian war as a key commander (*Histories*, 5.82-7 and 16.18) and later after the defeat at Magnesia (21.16), as a negotiator for peace. At the Battle at Panium, Antipatros was in command of the *Tarentine*, mercenary cavalry armed in a particular way. Can we find any textual support of Antipatros in the encounter story?

Yes, the above baraita in *b. Yoma* 69a mentions this name, though in a strange fashion. The baraita says that the Jewish procession reached 'Antipatris,' presumably the place of the encounter. But could it be so?

The answer is no! Josephus not only reports that the encounter occurred at 'Saphein' (Σαφειν) but also takes pains to explain the etymology of that word to Greek readers as 'scopon' (σκοπόν) or 'observer' since "one can observe thence Jerusalem and the Temple" (*Antiq.* 11:329). There is only *one* place in modern Israel that simultaneously carries both characteristics - etymological and geographical: *Har Ha-*

*Tsofim* (הר הצופים, in Modern Hebrew) or *Har Ha-Tsofin* (הר הצופין, in Mishnaic Hebrew), literally: 'Mount of Observers,' also known by its Greek equivalent 'Mount Scopus.' It is the hill located north-northeast of the Temple Mount, the direction from which Antiochus approached Jerusalem. Alexander certainly would have come to Jerusalem from Gaza, which lies southwest of Jerusalem, a direction from which there is no convenient hill to observe Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. Other convenient places to see the Temple Mount in modern Jerusalem, like Talpiot in the south and along the Jaffa Road in the west, have names that are far from 'Saphein,' and there is no reliable history for their original names.

One may suppose that the Talmud gives a later name for the place, and indeed, King Herod built or rebuilt several cities naming them after his father *Antipatros* (Tcherikover 1970:48, nn. 25 & 26.). However, these cities, for example, *Saba*, were quite distant from Jerusalem; therefore, it is impossible to accept Marcus' comment (1966: 518) that "either site, Saphein or Saba, is geographically suitable." Saba is located near modern Kefar Saba, a suburb of modern Tel-Aviv, some 52 km from Jerusalem, so the Temple could not possibly be seen from it. Besides, it is difficult to imagine that a group of unarmed people walked throughout the night in wartime for many hours! However, it is possible that the original baraita could have had both 'Saphein' (צופין) and 'Antipatros' (אנטיפטרוס) but its editor, Rav Ashi or Ravina, not having benefit of Josephus' detailed explanation of the origin of the word 'Saphein' and seeing nearby the name 'Antipatros', confused the former with Saba (סבא) and conflated both words into 'Antipatris' (אנטיפטריס). *Antipatris* has practically the same spelling in Hebrew as *Antipatros*, with letter *yud* (י) instead of *vav* (ו), and these two letters were often interchanged or omitted.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the Talmudic אנטיפטריס (*Antipatris*, αντιπατρήσις) could not have been initially referring to the place of the encounter. It was rather the name of a person, אנטיפטרוס (*Antipatros*, αντιπατρος). It was Antipatros, captain of the vanguard, who first met the Jewish delegation at the Mount Scopus and escorted them to King Antiochus. It was he who later asked the king about his strange behavior before the high priest. Actually, who else, save a close relative, a nephew, would dare to ask the Great King such a question?

The rabbis were much less prepared than Josephus to explain who the historical Antipatros was, and it is no surprise the editor, either Rav Ashi or Ravina, felt confused upon seeing his name in the baraita. Antipatris, the city, was the safest escape from the confusion. There was a less innocent escape



as well: the Talmudic MS Oxford, for example, has a garbled version: אַנטיפּרס (Antipars), which forced *Dikdukei Soferim* to discuss a variant אַנטיפּוס (Antipas) (Rabbinovicz 2002, Yoma, page “mem”). These variant spellings clarify nothing, but instead show the degree with which the later rabbis were confused over the meaning of ‘Antipatros.’

Settling the problem of ‘Antipatris’ as meaning ‘Antipatros,’ I set aside the first of Vanderkam’s objections to Zeitlin’s version. His second objection that “Judeans did not rebel against Antiochus” refers to the exclamation “Jews, who rebelled against you!” by the king’s retinue, cited in *b. Yoma* 69a. However this fact can be easily explained.

Before approaching Jerusalem, King Antiochus most likely dispatched an order to the ruler, the high priest, requesting surrender. Most likely, strife in Jerusalem between two factions, pro-Ptolemaic and pro-Seleucid, could have broken out, as Solomon Zeitlin (1924) suggested (see also Tcherikover 1970: 81-89). And certainly, the pro-Ptolemaic faction, backed by an Egyptian garrison in the Citadel, initially could have turned down such a request. That would explain why the high priest would have been “in agony and under terror, not knowing how to meet the Macedonians, since the king was displeased by his foregoing disobedience” (*Antiq.* 11:326). The very purpose of convening the Great Assembly at that moment was to resolve the problem: to surrender or not. The result is known to us: the encounter.

Setting aside the high priest’s name, Goldstein (1993) correctly notes: “Thereafter, only one change of ruler confronted the Chosen People with the dilemma which had faced Yaddua: the war of 203-197 between the empires of Ptolemy V and the Seleucid Antiochus III.” However, failing to discern in Daniel 11 any vestige of the “broken loyalty,” Goldstein looked for other episodes in later Jewish history that could have brought about the Encounter story and found one in the time of John Hyrcanus. Goldstein did not consider the possibility that the encounter was a real story and not an “eschatological guide” for future generations. Why the author of Daniel chose not to reflect on this episode is a separate (though certainly not trivial) problem.

## 6. THE CITADEL AND ANOTHER ‘ALEXANDER’ STORY

The Citadel evokes another story, attached to ‘Alexander Romance’ and invariably considered as a fiction. This is a cryptic story from the Talmud Yerushalmi (*y. ‘Aboda Zara*, 3.42c) attributed to a rabbi of the early 4<sup>th</sup> century AD:

א"ר יונה אלכסנדרוס מוקדון כד בעא מיסק לעיל והוה סלק וסלק סלק עד שראה את העולם ככדור ואת הים כקערה בגין כן ציירין לה בכדורא בידה ויצורינה קערה בידה.

“Rabbi Yona said: when Alexander Macedon intended to rise, he rose higher and higher, until he saw the world as a *ball* and the sea as a *bowl*. That’s why [they] depict *her* with a ball in *her* hand; and *her* hand is depicted as a *bowl*.”

The whole passage is most enigmatic; the second phrase is even difficult to translate. W.J. van Bekkum (1992: 11-12) incorrectly translates ‘bowl’ (קערה) as ‘dish’ and, more importantly, ‘her’ (לה) as ‘him’ (לו) – thus giving a misleading impression that the second phrase also refers to Alexander.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, van Bekkum was quoted indiscriminately by several later authors (see, e.g., Stoneman 2008: 107).

Ory Amitay (2010: 72) gives a better translation, similar to ours, additionally suggesting that the second phrase may refer to a *statue*. Indeed, what else could have been “depicted” except for a statue or, with less probability, a fresco? Yet Amitay seems to miss the fact that the generic “statue” (פסל) and “fresco” (תמשיח) are masculine both in Hebrew and Aramaic! Therefore the reference must be to a *specific* statue with a *feminine* name, as is discussed later in this section.

Thus, according to Rabbi Yona, the Greek king rose till he saw the round Earth floating in the sea. To best interpret this statement, the missing part of the argument must be recovered. For that, we have to find how Greeks talked about the Earth. Indeed, those who “depicted” were certainly Greeks, since Jews were forbidden to “depict” by their laws.

According to Aristotle (*De Caelo* 2:14.297b30-298a9), the most advanced proof that the Earth is *round* (“as a ball”) in the south-north direction is a *different sky* (with *different stars*) at *different latitudes*. Therefore, the most logical interpretation of the above passage is that Antiochus was shown *a star* or *a number of stars* that demonstrated to him the Aristotelian argument (Belenkiy 2005). The main star of consequence could have been Canopus, *Alpha Carinae*, the second brightest star in the northern hemisphere. Canopus certainly was Aristotle’s main target, being by far the *brightest* among the stars that are “seen in Egypt and in the neighborhood of Cyprus but *not* in the northerly regions.” Aristotle’s books were an important part of education of every Greek, particularly kings. King Antiochus likely took the opportunity to personally check Aristotle’s statement since in his native Antioch (modern Antakya,

36:21 N), Canopus not only rises above the horizon for just a few minutes in the winter months, but also culminates at negligible 1.2 degrees and is practically unobservable.<sup>12</sup>

In c. 200 BC, Canopus could be seen from Jerusalem only from October to March. This timing speaks against Alexander Macedon, who was known to have marched near Jerusalem in the summertime, but improves the chances for Antiochus III, who marched on Jerusalem in the winter. This fact encourages us to explore Antiochus' story further, upon which we immediately see where to advance. Canopus rises quite low above the horizon of Jerusalem (31:47 N), by 5.6 degrees of altitude. Before Herod the Great's renovation of the Temple Mount in the 20s BC to clear the way for observing the star on the southern horizon, one would probably have found it necessary to climb to a very high point in the Temple Mount's vicinity. Let us look for such a point in Josephus' narrative.

The striking gap in the flow of Josephus' narrative, between describing King Antiochus' advance to Jerusalem and quoting the king's letter to Ptolemy V with details of the city's surrender (*Antiq.* 12:138), suggests the *exact* place the encounter story could have originated. Antiochus' letter offers a missing link to the Canopus story – it is the Citadel, a fortress near the Temple Mount, captured by Antiochus from the Egyptian garrison.

The Citadel likely was Baris (the future Antonia fort) on the northwest of the Temple Mount known from the Book of Nehemiah (2:8 and 7:2) as the 'Castle' (בִּירָה); its existence in 160s BC is confirmed in the Second Book of Maccabees (II Macc. 4:12, 5:6). The Citadel would have been an excellent place for observing the sky, and a king trained in philosophy would not have missed an opportunity to gain a new experience.<sup>13</sup>

How could the king "rise higher and higher"? A fantastic answer comes from the *Greek Alexander Romance* (Stoneman 1991: 123) which says the "king was raised by two large birds yoked to the ox-skin bag." However, it also says the king saw the Earth in the shape of a "threshing floor," i.e., *flat*, which contradicts Rabbi Yona's saying.

A better explanation comes from the medieval recension, *Wars of Alexander*, a part of the so-called *Hebrew Alexander Romance*: "He ascends the air in the iron car raised by four griffins" (Skeat 1886: 271). The story immediately acquires realistic features ("the iron car") while the raising device ("four griffins") must have been artistically ingenious. Certainly, Egyptian engineers were technically skillful – the Pyramids are a prime example. Discussing this episode, Richard Stoneman (2008:112) correctly observes that already in the reign of Ptolemy II, Greek

inventor Ctesibius (d. 225 BC) began experimenting with pneumatic devices; to have such a device installed in the Citadel seems quite plausible. Griffins, well-attested to in ancient Egyptian and Greek lore, could have been used to adorn that device. But the king saw the Earth as a "millstone," i.e., *flat*.

A version of the Greek Alexander Romance (recension  $\alpha$ ) was translated into Latin c. 320 AD and then both underwent numerous recensions in many languages (Carey 1967:10). As we saw, all those that reached us claim that the Earth is flat. Rabbi Yona, a sage of the early 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, used quite a different source, which refers to the Earth as "a ball." This must be viewed not as an incidental correction but as a *conceptual schism* and implies that at the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, the *Alexander Romance* already existed at least in two different versions and therefore the original source, Pseudo-Callisthenes, might have greatly predated the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The original source surely had Rabbi Yona's version – one would hardly believe that the Greeks or Romans viewed the Earth as *flat* before Christianity became the state religion, that is, before the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, Pliny the Elder, in *Natural History* 2:64-66, written in the 70s AD, testifies that the Earth was commonly viewed as a "round ball" being "hemmed in the midst of the sea that flows round about it." The Babylonian Talmud, by the mouth of a well-known Jewish leader, Rabbi Yehuda ha-Nasi, fl. 180-220 AD, provides evidence that the "nations" (i.e., Greeks and Romans) viewed the Earth as *round*, while rabbis viewed it as *flat* (Epstein 1938: vol. 2, Pesachim 94b). Thus the original source could not be rabbinical. Later in the text, I hypothesize on its identity.

The female holding a ball in her hand, mentioned by Rabbi Yona in the second phrase, was most likely a statue of Urania, Greek muse of astronomy (Fig. 4).



**Figure 4. Urania, Muse of Astronomy. The Muse holds a ball in her left hand and a pointer in her right hand. Second century Roman copy of a statue of Urania; probably created c. 350 BC (Pergamon Museum, Berlin).**

Though Rabbi Yona's mention of Urania looks more like a side remark, unrelated to the original story, one may imagine the statue being present in the Citadel c. 200 BC. This would suggest a Greek-Egyptian sky observatory on the Citadel's roof, built by an order of one of the first four Ptolemys. We know that astronomy definitely flourished in 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC Alexandria, and its renowned astronomer, Timocharis, conducted many observations of the stars as early as 300 BC (Toomer 1998: 330-8). A Greek-Egyptian garrison might have carried out not only military but also cultural functions among barbaric people.

Though Canopus seems to be the most appropriate star to support Aristotle's argument, another option must be considered as well. The Book of Job (9:9) mentions the "Bear [?], Orion, and Pleiades and the Chambers of the South." Italian scholar G.V. Schiaparelli suggested that the "Chambers of the South" (חדרי תמן) could have been a reference to the spectacular show in the southern sky of the constellations Centaurus and Crux (Southern Cross).<sup>14</sup> Though nowadays both constellations are completely out of sight for the latitude of Jerusalem, the situation was quite different in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC when they had declination c. 50 degrees S and could arise to an altitude of 10 degrees for an observer in Jerusalem. They were visible in the Jerusalem sky from October till June.

Although the view in Jerusalem was very impressive, especially in winter and spring, both Centaurus and Crux also could have been observed in Antioch and even in Athens, though with lesser effect, since the stars would be at a lower altitude, some just grazing the horizon.

Note that Alexander of Macedon is an unlikely hero of R. Yona's story as he could not have seen either Canopus or the "Chambers of the South," at least in Jerusalem. Indeed, after taking Tyre in July 332 BC, Alexander marched directly to Gaza, and then, after the two-month siege, went to Egypt, spending the winter and spring there. From there he marched through the Land of Israel northward toward the Gaugamela battle on October 1, 331 BC. Thus, he might have been in the vicinity of Jerusalem sometime between July and mid-September when the major stars of our three constellations are unobservable in all the Near East.

## 7. THE YEAR OF THE ENCOUNTER

The year of the encounter is problematic. In his later work, Zeitlin (1962: 16) dated the encounter to 202 BC. Goldstein (1993) dated the capture of Gaza and Sidon to 202 BC and the encounter to the winter of 201/200 BC.

Josephus provides only one hint. In a post-war letter to Ptolemy V, Antiochus wrote about the wonderful reception and assistance given to him by the Jews, and how he, aiming to repopulate Jerusalem, "granted a discharge from taxes for three years to its present inhabitants and to such as shall come to it until the month Hyperberetus" (*Antiq.* 12:138).

Let us note that according to Parker and Dubberstein (1956: 40, line 8), the Seleucid calendar requires intercalation of Hyperberetus II in the fall of 199 BC, corresponding to the Babylonian Ululu II. If this is correct, it is unlikely that the encounter happened in the winter 200/199 BC, since the king did not specify which Hyperberetus he meant.<sup>15</sup>

Another argument is implied by "a discharge from taxes," which points to the beginning of a Sabbatical year; the only Sabbatical year during the Fifth Coele-Syrian war was 199/198 BC.<sup>16</sup> The other two years of the king's decree likely included two post-Sabbatical years.

Clearly, the date of the battle at Panium could be decisive for dating the encounter. However, there is no agreement among scholars about it. The majority of 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars date the battle to the winter of 201/200 BC (see M. Stern 1974). Summarizing their arguments, John Grainger (2010: 257) puts it in the second half of 200 BC.

However, there is also a dissenting opinion. Gaetano de Sanctis (1969: 115, n. 8) is in favor of the



winter of 199/198 BC and even suggested emending the above text by Josephus:

“Book XVI of Polybius comprises the third and fourth year of the 144th Olympiad (BC 202-200). But since the Egyptian insurrection must have taken place *after* Scopas recruited troops in Aetolia, it must be an error on the part of Josephus. The fragment hence refers to book XVII (i.e., the year 199/98).”

M. Stern (1974: 114) dismisses de Sanctis’ opinion and concludes that the “arguments for year 200 BC as the year of the battle at Panium are convincing enough.” But he immediately contradicts himself, saying that “the last remnants of Ptolemaic dominion fell into the hands of Antiochus only in 198 BC.” It is unclear what those “last remnants” are: do they include Gaza and Sidon only, or Jerusalem as well?

Let us argue that the Fifth Coele-Syrian War began in 199 BC and was over by 198 BC. Obviously, 202 BC or even 200 BC is a mistake. Indeed Livy, in the *History of Rome* 33:19, says:

“Still more opportune was the victory over Philip at a time when Antiochus was already taking hostile action from Syria. Not only was it easier to meet each singly than if they had joined forces, but Spain was giving trouble at the same time and a warlike movement on a large scale was taking place in that country. During the previous summer, Antiochus had reduced all the cities in Coele-Syria, which had been under Ptolemy’s sway, and though he had now withdrawn into winter quarters, he displayed as great activity as he had done during the summer.”

If the “hostile action from Syria” taken by Antiochus happened sometime in 202-200 BC, the first phrase of Livy becomes completely *incomprehensible* since the Roman victory over Philip, at Cynoscephalos, came only in 197 BC. However, the phrase is quite *transparent* if Livy meant the campaign of 199-198 BC as the *only* campaign of Antiochus. Besides, the last phrase clearly indicates that Antiochus’ campaign lasted no more than *two* summers with one winter in between.

Livy’s statement that in the *winter* Antiochus displayed as much activity as in the summer is quite

remarkable. Let us show that, indeed, the Jewish sources believed that the winter of 199/198 BC was the time of the encounter and find the exact date.

## 8. THE DATE OF THE ENCOUNTER

The fact that the encounter story is cited by *b. Yoma*, dedicated to the Yom Kippur festival, held on Tishrei 10, may suggest the encounter occurred in Tishrei (i.e., in September-October) (Belenkiy 2005). However, the discussion in *b. Yoma* is not related to a particular time but only to the possibility of taking a High Priest’s clothes out the Temple, so this fact alone does *not* necessarily fix the month of the encounter.

In all likelihood, King Antiochus was near Jerusalem *in the winter*. From Josephus (*Antiq.* 12:135) we learn about the following (though non-extant) fragment from Polybius’ *Histories*:

“Polybius of Megalopolis testifies to this. For he says in Book XVI of his *Histories*: “Scopas, Ptolemy’s general, set out into the upper country and destroyed the Jewish nation in this winter.” And also: “The siege having been negligently conducted, Scopas fell into disrepute and was violently assailed.”

As we have seen, tractate *b. Yoma* gives the Jewish date for the encounter, Tevet 25, the winter month (December-January). However, the printed copies of *b. Yoma* always have the month’s name, Tevet, in brackets, indicating “confusion” about the real date when the text was transmitted from the manuscript to the printed book. Moreover, Raphaelo Rabbino-vicz alerted to the fact that not only the name of the month, but also the expression והמשה (“and five”) must appear in brackets too, since both are missing in the extant manuscripts. Instead, two extant manuscripts have at that place the word ואחד (“and one”), making the date “21” without naming the month.<sup>17</sup> This date, together with the words that immediately follow, “The day of Mount Gerazim,” closely resemble one entry in *Megillat Ta’anit*, a famous scroll from the Second Temple time containing references to thirty-five important festive events in Jewish history, month by month. The entry corresponding to “The day of Mount “Gerazim” is dated “Kislew 21” (Noam 2006: 343, no. 24), which immediately explains where “21” belongs. But this event is commonly believed to refer to the destruction of the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerazim by High Priest John Hyrcanus in 129 BC (ibid, 345) -- and thus has nothing to do with the encounter story!



Thus, *b. Yoma 69a* commingles two separate stories, "Mount Gerazim" and the "Encounter." This confusion has a plausible historical background – the editing of the Babylonian Talmud by Rav Ashi, c. 425, and Ravina, c. 499, as discussed above. The scope of editing was enormous, probably, all 63 tracts in their entirety. Under such an amount of work, the editor could have made errors, conflating two stories related to the two close entries in *Megillat Ta'anit*. The second one is: "On Tevet 28 the Knesset took its seat for judgment" (Noam 2006: 343, no. 26).<sup>18</sup> As mentioned earlier, it was Solomon Zeitlin's ingenious idea that the Knesset [the Great Assembly] took place on those days, during Antiochus III's approach to Jerusalem. The editor of the Talmud conflated two events, on Kislev 21 and Tevet 28, into one, leaving out the second date. How the editor of the first printed version of *b. Yoma* was able to recover the original date remains a puzzle.

If this indeed is what happened, the month, Tevet, could be considered accurately established for the encounter, while which of the two dates, 25 or 28, is correct remains uncertain. Actually, one could be a misprint for another, since "5" (ה) can be easily confused with "8" (ח).

Accepting Tevet 25 as it is, let us find its equivalent in the proleptic Julian calendar. In 199 BC, Babylonian Tashritu began on October 18 (Parker & Dubberstein 1956: 40). However, translating the Babylonian date into the Jewish date, one faces a problem due to a peculiar difference between the two calendars. During the 19-year cycle, the Babylonian calendar was intercalated six times with Adaru (Adar) II and once with Ululu (Elul) II. However the Jews, who on return from the Babylonian exile used the Babylonian calendar with Babylonian names, resisted intercalating Elul II in the middle of the year (counted from Nisan to Nisan) even once, preferring to wait an extra six months to intercalate Adar II at the end of the year. During the half-year period that passed between these two intercalations, from Elul 199 BC to Adar 198 BC, there was a one-month discrepancy between the Babylonian and Jewish calendars.

While Jerusalem leaders may have expected various benefits from the surrender, the subsequent agreement had to include a calendar concordance. Permission to "enjoy the laws of their forefathers," granted by the king, meant the Jews could continue intercalating Adar II, not Elul II.

Indeed, assuming that Elul II was not intercalated in 199 BC, then Jewish Tishri began a month earlier than Babylonian Tashritu, i.e., on September 18. This implied a perfect timing, October 2, for the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles (Tishri 15<sup>th</sup>), the festival that had to closely follow the autumnal equinox, which fell on September 25 in the second century BC. Further assuming that Heshvan and Kislev lasted for 29 and 30 days respectively, Tevet 25 must have fallen on January 9, 198 BC.

Support for early January as a plausible date of the encounter comes from Polybius who says that the Egyptian general Scopas passed through Galilee "in the winter." According to Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* 18.60), both the Greeks and Romans counted winter from November 10-11. Winter seems to be a strange time to conduct warfare, but this might be among the surprise tactics that Antiochus used in abundance in this war, as Bezalel Bar Kochva (1976: 145) describes. The king likely gathered his forces in Damascus and there began his campaign in mid-November. Scopas rushed across the upper country, Galilee, likely from his base at a sea port, Gaza or Sidon, to prevent the king from entering it. Assuming the events cited by Josephus from Polybius – "the siege was negligently conducted, Scopas fell into disrepute and was violently assailed" – occurred within a month, Antiochus, on the route taking four other cities that did not offer any resistance, still had three-four weeks to arrive at Jerusalem.

Antiochus could have observed Canopus in comfort from Jerusalem in the evening of January 9, 198 BC. On that day the star rose at 20:06 p.m., culminated at 22:36 p.m., and set at 01:06 a.m. the next day; hence, it could be observed for all five hours, since sunset was at 17:16 p.m. and complete darkness fell at 18:36 p.m.<sup>19</sup>

And what a spectacular sky the king could have seen before sunrise, soon after the setting of Canopus (Fig. 5)! At 3:42 a.m. the entire Crux culminated. At 4:53 a.m. Beta Centauri, a star of 0.6 magnitude, culminated at 9;45 degrees altitude. At 5:32 a.m. Alpha Centauri, a star of 0.0 magnitude, next in brightness after Canopus, culminated at 8;0 degrees altitude, though the latter two were obscured by the appearance of the waning crescent Moon. The dawn at 6 a.m. impelled the king to continue his warfare.



Figure 5. Constellations Centaurus and Crux at night of January 9, 198 BC, seen from Jerusalem at 10 m altitude (Program STELLARIUM).

Even if the Egyptian garrison in the Citadel resisted Antiochus for a period up to three months, Antiochus could have seen Canopus, and if six months, the brightest stars of Crux and Centaurus.

## 9. THE CHRONICLER OF THE ENCOUNTER

Let us now argue that the original version of the encounter story, naming Antiochus and Antipatros, came from the pen of a professional historian, Zenon of Rhodes.

Though Zenon's work did not come down to us, in Book XVI of his *Histories* Polybius cited several fragments from Zenon's account of the Fifth Coele-Syrian War, esteeming him highly compared to other contemporary historians (*Histories* 16.14):

"These are Zenon and Antisthenes of Rhodes, whom for several reasons I consider worthy of notice. For not only were they contemporary with the events they described, but they also took part in politics, and generally speaking they did not compose their works for the sake of gain but to win fame and do their duty as statesmen."

Polybius not only appreciated Zenon's skills but also engaged him in polemics pointing to the inconsistencies of Zenon's description of the battle at

Panium (*Histories* 16.20). Seemingly Zenon agreed with this critique and, according to Polybius' testimony, would have been willing to make some amendments to his text had the text not been finalized and sent away to different places.

The scope of required amendments should not be exaggerated -- as we know from another occasion, much of Polybius' criticism of Callisthenes' description of the battle of Issus is "demonstrably wrong-headed" (Bosworth 1988: 4-5). But the fact that Zenon recognized the critique as valid serves as proof that he had been an *eyewitness* to the battle or heard it directly from eyewitness -- indeed, only an eyewitness could have known the truth of these arguments. Therefore, he must have taken part in King Antiochus' campaign. Certainly, it would be no surprise if, as a "court" historian, he stayed at the king's headquarters<sup>20</sup> and thus had been an eye-witness to the encounter, and in particular, to its most striking details: the king's bow to the high priest and his explanation for his deed.

How could a copy of Zenon's work find Polybius? Surely some copies were distributed across the learned world, in Rome and Athens in particular, and deposited in the local libraries. Since Zenon was still alive at the time Polybius read his work, the reading happened most likely before 146 BC, in Rome, where Polybius was kept as a hostage, rather than later, when Polybius stayed in Greece as Roman envoy. Though we don't know the scope of Zenon's work, most likely it included not only the battle of Panium but also other details of King Antiochus'

campaign, for example, the route the king's army followed after Panium. Unfortunately, this part of Book XVI is missing.

Josephus read Book XVI of the *Histories* (or Book XVII, as de Sanctis suggested), quoting two non-extant fragments from it in *Antiq.* 12:136.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, in the same place, Josephus narrates something that closely resembles the encounter story:

"He [Polybius] also says, in the same book: "when Scopas was conquered by Antiochus, Antiochus received Betanea and Samaria, and Abila, and Gadara; and that awhile afterwards, there came in to him those Jews who inhabited near the temple which was called Jerusalem; concerning which, although I have more to say yet do I put off my history till another opportunity." This is what Polybius relates; but we will return to the series of the history when we have first produced the epistles of King Antiochus."

Scopas, the Egyptian general of Aetolian descent, was defeated at river Panium, a tributary of the Jordan River, to the north of the Sea of Galilee. Seemingly Scopas escaped to Sidon and was besieged there, but there is no proof Antiochus personally followed him. The most likely southern route for Antiochus was along the eastern bank of the Jordan River through Decapolis in Transjordan, where he "received" Abila and Gadara. Bezalel Bar-Kochva (1976: 147) certainly errs by placing the route to the west of the Jordan River -- because Samaria was mentioned by Josephus *prior* to Abila and Gadara. Enumerating the events or sources, Josephus often does *not* follow a chronological sequence, as we shall see below.

The choice of the route through Greek Decapolis means that the Galilee inhabited by Jews remained faithful to their Egyptian ruler and that Scopas or another Egyptian general likely waited for him there. King Antiochus circumvented him from another side of the Sea of Galilee. After crossing the Jordan River at the southern shore of the Sea and taking Samaria, the king secured a direct route to Jerusalem, known among Jerusalem Jews as the "road to Shechem." Along the way, Antiochus "received" Bethania, a city near Jerusalem. Since all four cities had just surrendered to Antiochus, the advance was quick, not longer than three weeks, as was suggested earlier. At this point, the encounter episode near Jerusalem would have its most logical location in Polybius' and Josephus' narratives.

## 10. AN INTERMEDIATE SOURCE

One may wonder about the meaning of Polybius' words "although I have more to say [concerning Jews and Jerusalem] yet do I put off my history till another opportunity." Was he originally prepared to tell the general history of the Jews including the encounter? If so, why then did he omit it? Polybius reproached Zenon for "not having been as much concerned with inquiry into the facts, as with elegance of style"; could he have found the encounter story too *fantastic* and omitted it from his narrative? If this is the case, then either Josephus concocted the story himself or learned it from another source.

The first assumption is impossible. If Josephus authored the story, then the rabbis could have learned it only from him. So far this seems plausible since the rabbis did assimilate other Josephus's stories.<sup>22</sup> But if the rabbis of the Talmud learned the story from Josephus, why are there serious deviations between their versions, the major one being the name of the high priest? Besides, it would be unclear where the rabbinical story of the "lifting the king" came from since it is not found in Josephus.

Clearly both Josephus and the rabbi of the Talmud relied on an *intermediate* source, one who, upon reading Zenon or Polybius, singled out the encounter story, replacing Antiochus' name with Alexander's or simply omitting the king's name from the narrative. This source had to have been highly educated in order to handle the Aristotelian argument implied in *y. 'Avoda Zara*. Five possible names are suggested by Josephus in a later work (*Contra Apionem*, II:83) when enumerating them in one line after Polybius -- though, quite surprisingly for a historian, *not* in chronological order: Strabo the Cappadocian, Nicolaus of Damascus, Timagenes, Castor the Chronicler, and Apollodorus.

Timagenes and Castor, the most obscure, are the foremost candidates for popularizing Zenon's stories. According to *Suda*, Castor was from Rhodes, thus a compatriot of Zenon, and supposedly lived in Rome though the exact time is uncertain. Timagenes, an Alexandrian, in 55 BC was taken prisoner by the Roman general Aulus Gabinius and, on the orders of Pompey the Great, brought to Rome, where he subsequently lived. Timagenes was notorious for his loose tongue and fell out of favor with Octavian. In spite of that, he was "commonly esteemed because of his learning and elegant rhetorical style" (Schürer 1973: 22-3). *Suda* T588 alleges that he "advised Cleopatra to kill Mark Antony or deliver him to Octavian and that he later fled from Octavian after destroying his writings." But certainly, he could not destroy *all* his writings since some of them influenced several later writers, like Strabo, Pompeius Trogus, Curtius

Rufus etc. Timagenes is also known to have composed a tractate on the Jews (Stern 1974: 222-3).

Timagenes was the source for Josephus for the events in Judea at the turn of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (*Antiq.* 13:319 and 13:344), certainly for the important fact that the breastplate and sardonyx Urim “ceased shining” in 108/7 BC and most likely for the entire tenure of High Priest John Hyrcanus (*Antiq.* 13:299). Born in c. 100 BC, Timagenes could have heard these facts in his immediate environment, but to learn about high priests’ historical importance in Jewish history in the earlier times, he had to have found references in history books, like Zenon, Polybius, and Apollodorus. An Alexandrian, Timagenes could have read King Antiochus’ letter to King Ptolemy, either at the Alexandrian library or Ptolemaic court archives. Timagenes was certainly capable of using the Aristotelian argument. In Rome, sometime between 55 and c. 40 BC, in his tractate on the Jews, Timagenes could have utilized Zenon’s work, mixing Antiochus’ exploits with Alexander lore from Samaritan sources (*Antiq.* 11:321-5). In such a case it would be natural to attribute all laurels to one king.

Actually, Timagenes possessed all the characteristics modern historians attribute to the original author of the *Alexander Romance*, Pseudo-Callisthenes - a “native of Alexandria,” who composed his work “at some date after 200 BC and possibly much later” (Carey 1967: 9). The stimulus for replacing Antiochus with Alexander could be either his origin or his personal history. His origin is murky: *Suda T588* mentions rumors that his father was “an Egyptian and a royal banker.” But his motivation could have arisen for a different reason: he could have befriended the Jews exiled by Pompey from Judea in 63 BC, who resided at the Tiber Island (Canfora 2007: 211). He certainly knew Cecilius, a sophist and prolific writer in Rome during Emperor Octavian’s era, who, according to *Suda K1165*, was of Jewish faith and servile parentage.

Indeed, the desire to eliminate Antiochus from Jewish history for a Jewish writer at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC or later was clear: Antiochus the Great was a figure of the past and historians had started to reevaluate his “greatness.” As early as 130 BC, in analyzing the Fifth Coele-Syrian War, Polybius had already remarked that “in the late period of his life, Antiochus became inferior to his former self” (*Histories* 15.37). Besides, Romans would not applaud the Jews for surrendering to an *enemy of Rome*, which Antiochus III became toward the end of his life. In Jewish circles, his name was discredited by his son and namesake, Antiochus IV, who violated the sanctity of the Jerusalem temple. Jewish historians could have considered obliterating the name of Antiochus from Jewish history as early as 165 BC -

after the first political overtures to Rome, initiated by Judah Maccabee. This type of argument suggests an outright falsification, but - remember! - at stake were international public relations: the people of Samaria had a true Alexander story in their historical luggage (*Antiq.* 11:321), while the Jews did not (Büchler 1898). The need became urgent when the schism between the two peoples regarding the inception of Antiochus IV’ policies broke out c. 166 BC (*Antiq.* 13:74-79) and even imperative in order to justify the destruction of Samaria by John Hyrcanus in 108 BC (*Antiq.* 13:275-281).

In that era there appeared a number of Jewish writers capable of *creatively* reading Greek authors. Gruen suggests, for example, that the author of *The Third Book of Maccabees* could have consulted Polybius (Gruen 1998:227). The person best fitted to stand behind such a falsification would be the Jewish philosopher, Aristobulus, mentor to Ptolemy VI Philometer. As a resident of Alexandria, Aristobulus seems to be the only historian, after Zeno and Timagenes, who could have held in his hands Antiochus’ original letter to Ptolemy V. Russell Gmirkin (2006: 77) charged Aristobulus with forging the *Letter of Aristaeas*, presently dated to 150 BC. If proven, this would of course, tell much about Aristobulus’ character and habits. However, in Aristobulus’ writings, preserved by Eusebius, there is nothing similar to the encounter story. Another writer who could have quoted King Antiochus III’s letter to Ptolemy, as well as a second-hand eyewitness report about Antiochus’ behavior at the encounter, was Eipolemus, a Maccabean diplomat, author of the book, *On the Kings of Judea* (c. 150 BC).

No matter how significant the hatred of Antiochus’ name was, the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century BC does not seem ripe for using Alexander’s name as a substitute. Indeed, Alexander Macedon’s service to humanity was not yet fully understood. The use of the appellation “Great” in connection with Alexander’s name came later. As late as 130 BC, the author of the First Book of Maccabees calls Alexander simply a “son of Philip, king of Macedonia.” Also, Polybius, throughout the *Histories* (c. 140-120 BC), simply calls him ‘Alexander.’ Only with the large-scale Roman military expansion in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC did Alexander’s popularity in Rome soar reaching a peak in the era of Julius Caesar and Octavian Augustus, as Suetonius Tranquillus testifies in *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 1:7 and 2:18.

Hence, a later author could have been responsible for singling out the encounter story of Zeno’s work using Alexander’s name. The story of how a high priest, rather than a king, saved the Jewish nation could have been of special importance in a particular historical period. The most suitable is the turn of the



1<sup>st</sup> century BC, when the sons of High Priest John Hyrcanus, Aristobulus and then Alexander Janneus, put the king's diadem upon their head. This would be an intended rebuke to the kings, so the author might be *foreign*, likely from Alexandria. Likewise, Momigliano (1994: 83) says: "it is difficult to imagine Palestinian Jews inventing a visit of Alexander to Jerusalem between 170 and 70 BC. But the story of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem may have been invented in Egypt."

This attitude, however, became legitimate in Judea after Pompey's arrival in the Near East. According to Diodorus Siculus, Pompey's decision to abolish the Jewish kingdom in 63 BC in favor of restoring rule by the high priest, Hyrcanus II, came from the argument that *theocracy was the true Jewish form of government* (Gmirkin 2006: 70; 259-63). Büchler's (1898) insight that the generous tax exemption ("no tribute in the seventh year") granted to the Jews by the Greek king is identical to the one granted to Judea by Julius Caesar (*Antiq.* 14:202) suggests the encounter story obtained its final form only after the period 48-44 BC; the intention was to please Julius Caesar by connecting his actions to those of Alexander the Great, its alleged hero. We know that Timagenes composed *Universal History* up to the time of Julius Caesar, whom Timagenes certainly esteemed as the destroyer of Pompey. On the other hand, the story could have been publicized even later, as a memorial to Julius Caesar, who was deified in 42 BC. The story could have safely circulated before Herod was proclaimed king of the Jews by the Roman Senate in 40 BC. After this, only Herod's enemy would champion such a story. Again, Timagenes, who hated Mark Anthony, a patron and close friend of King Herod, is the best candidate for this role.

The encounter story from Timagenes' tractate on the Jews could have become popular in the third period without a king - after King Herod's death in 4 BC and the banishment of Herod's son and successor Archelaus in AD 10 by Octavian August and before a brief reign of King Agrippa I in Judea in 41-44 AD. One major historian of that era, Nicholas of Damascus, an intimate friend of King Herod (*Antiq.* 16:299) and Archelaus (*Antiq.* 17:240), is an unlikely candidate for propagating this story. But another major historian, Strabo (63 BC-24 AD), could have been the one, since he cited Timagenes on several occasions, in particular his description of the events in Judea at the turn of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, as testified by Josephus by the words "as Strabo bears witness in the name of Timagenes" (*Antiq.* 13:319).

While writing the *Jewish Antiquities* in Rome in the early AD 90s, Josephus Flavius was concerned as much with the Jews' destiny as his reputation as a

reliable historian: Rome of Tacitus and Pliny the Younger was a merciless critic. Alexander Macedon was deemed by Rome a hero, almost mythological, and Josephus probably thought that it would be helpful for the future Jewish cause to associate Jews with his name. Though he did not cite the encounter story in someone's name, he had to be prepared to provide a reference upon request. Timagenes' tractate on the Jews, even if it had been destroyed, could be such a reference, especially if the story also had been favorably cited subsequently by such an important writer as Strabo. On the other hand, Josephus' reliance on Strabo is overwhelming: *almost all* of the fragments of Strabo's *Histories* have reached us through Josephus Flavius (Canfora 2007: 215).

Though study of the Talmudic borrowings from Strabo is not known to us, Luciano Canfora points to an important fact, that Strabo sometimes cites different writers on the same event, even if they diverge in details (*Antiq.* 14.137-9). This fact could explain the major discrepancies between *b. Yoma* 69a and Josephus.

## 11. JOSEPHUS THE HISTORIAN

Though Josephus (Fig.6) should be exonerated from the charge of concocting the encounter story, let us address Shaye Cohen's (1982/3) question as to what extent Josephus had *edited* the works of his predecessors.

Isaac Newton (1728: chapter 5), in comparing two versions of the Encounter, that of Josephus and that of the Talmud, suggested that Josephus "computed backward" the High Priest's identity, changing the original name, Simon, to Yaddua. Newton's guess might stem from the fact that Josephus (*Antiq.* 12:157-8; 12:224-5) felt it necessary to introduce in his narrative, close to the time of Alexander, another High Priest Simon, now known as Simon I - not necessarily a historic figure.<sup>23</sup>

Was Josephus an honest person? Did he himself believe in the encounter story with Alexander as the hero? There is *no* reason to say he did not. He could have experienced difficulty working with at least six historical sources, often mutually contradictory. Seeing Antipatros' name, he likely thought it was just an error in *transmittal* of the story but *not* in its essence, since there was indeed an *existing* Antipatros closely associated with Alexander. He could have been the second in command and could have reproached Alexander for his strange behavior upon meeting the Jewish high priest. But during Alexander's Persian campaign, Antipatros remained in Greece, which was known to Roman historians. Therefore Antipatros's name was just a 'typo' that

had to be amended to the *true* second in command, Parmenio.

Josephus was certainly an “editor” – perceiving historical inaccuracy in the source he trusted, he was looking for the most *historically probable* substitution. Hence, two problematic proper names that we met in his text, the “Book of Daniel” and “Dium” must be questioned as authentic as well. Both could be substitutions for something else, such as the Book of Exodus and Sparta, respectively. Josephus was capable of omitting an entire passage that did not fit his strategy: the omission of Polybius’ description of Jerusalem is most conspicuous.

But this is all Josephus allowed himself as an editor: there is *no reason* to assert he had “invented” the episode concerning the Book of Daniel, or the reference to the Jews of Persia and Media, or changed “the nature of Alexander’s dream” or made “many other changes which we can no longer identify,” as Shaye Cohen (1982/3, n. 80) asserts.



Figure 6. Josephus Flavius (?) (Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, Denmark).

## 12. SUMMARY

To sum up: historians who deny historicity of the encounter missed several important facts: Antiochus III could have learned the description of the high priest’s garments from Septuagint; the Babylonian Talmud was edited by two men who were ignorant of Greek; the encounter story is interconnected with another ‘Alexander’ story from the Talmud Yerushalmi via Citadel; the encounter episode with Antiochus III as its hero could be eye witnessed by a reputable historian, Zenon of Rhodes; and Josephus learned the Jewish history of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC from Strabo and Timagenes. When combined, these facts make a strong cause for Antiochus III.

Thus we see that the encounter story and its satellite stories need not be regarded solely as literature, but can reasonably be interpreted as an account of a precise historical event that has been adapted for other purposes. From that perspective, with Antiochus the Great as its hero, the encounter story gives

life to several rabbinical stories that previously were regarded as fabulous and discarded. As a result, we are rewarded with the circumstances of Jerusalem’s surrender: the observation of the several bright stars in the southern sky from the Citadel’s roof; and Antipatros, Antiochus’ nephew, being another hero of the encounter.

To support Antiochus’ claim that he had seen the image of a high priest in his youth, one must assume that a portion of the Torah, which included Exodus 28 or 39, describing the attire of the Jewish high priest, had already been rendered in Greek by 223 BC. An ordinary king hardly could have allowed himself to behave at the encounter so *extravagantly*, but King Antiochus III, the Great, was *not ordinary*. The story was recorded by Zenon of Rhodes, a reputed historian acknowledged by Polybius, and an eyewitness to the event. The exact dating of the story, January 9, 198 BC, enhances the case from conjectural to almost certain. Therefore, the story is *genuine* – to the extent that all ancient stories are genuine.

The story underwent some intermediate metamorphoses before it reached Josephus and rabbis of the Talmud. Sometime between 44 BC and 40 BC, a Jewish author, or one affiliated with Jews, separated the encounter and other episodes from Zenon’s work related to Antiochus III’s entrance in Jerusalem and, mixing them with Alexander Macedon lore from Samaritan sources, gathered them in a set of legends, later known as the *Alexander Romance*. The author of this compilation, the so-called Pseudo-Callisthenes, could be Timagenes, an Alexandrian historian. The encounter story could later have been reiterated by Strabo in a non-extant 43-book history.

Either Timagenes or Strabo became a source used independently by Josephus and the rabbis. Except for swallowing Alexander’s bait, in all other aspects the rabbi of the Talmud, likely Rav or Shmuel, retold the encounter story from that source faithfully. Later, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, an editor of the Babylonian Talmud, either Rav Ashi or Ravina, believing ‘Antipatros’ represented a possible place of the encounter, changed it to Antipatris. He also commingled two separate entries from *Megilat Ta’anit* into one, producing the date “21” instead of correct Tevet 25 or 28.

Josephus, however, could not pass on the story as it was left by Timagenes or Strabo without correcting its glaring inconsistencies. Writing in Rome for Romans, he had to convince Romans of the historicity of the encounter between the Jews and Alexander Macedon by removing historically inaccurate elements, and so he replaced Antipatros with Parmenio and Simon the Just with Yaddua. Approved by the Roman elite, the encounter story within the *Jewish*

*Antiquities* seemed much more reliable to later generations of historians than the Talmudic version. Newton's warning was not heard and the story told by Josephus was cloned in a thousand books till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when a group of historians denied the historicity of the encounter between a Jewish high priest and Alexander Macedon. A new explanation, first introduced by Solomon Zeitlin in

1924 and developed further here, must bring the encounter story back from legend to history, though with two new major heroes, King Antiochus III and High Priest Simon the Just, as well as a number of new supportive characters and details, like Antipatros and Zenon of Rhodes, Canopus and the Citadel, Mount Scopus and January 9, 198 BC.

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> References can be found in Marcus 1966, vol. VI, App. C, 512-513.
- <sup>2</sup> There also a description in Lev. 8 but brief and unimpressive.
- <sup>3</sup> A similar insight, though without specific details and dating, was offered earlier by Wolf Wirgin (1969).
- <sup>4</sup> Name Demoteles: vol. I: Aegean Islands, p. 218, from Thasos, III BC, and Euboia, IV/III BC; vol. II: Attica, p. 112, from Pallene, 228/7 BC; vol. V-a: Coastal Asia Minor, p. 127, from Sinope, III BC.
- <sup>5</sup> See an attempt to recover Polybius' sources on Antiochus by Brown (1964).
- <sup>6</sup> See the *National Library and HUJI's Online Treasury of Talmudic Manuscripts* [http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/talmud/intro\\_eng.htm](http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/talmud/intro_eng.htm) (for *b. Yoma* 69a). Not clear why Vanderkam left it as it is, seeing that there is a difference between the baraita and a similar piece in the Scholion to *Megillat Ta'anit*.
- <sup>7</sup> The official permission to learn Greek was given by Rabban Gamaliel II, fl. c. 100 AD (*Tosefta Soṭah*, xv. 8; *b. Soṭah*, end). Gamaliel's son Simon relates (*b. Soṭah* 49b) that many children were instructed in his father's house in "Greek wisdom."
- <sup>8</sup> See Foreword by Rev. Dr. J.H. Hertz (Epstein 1935, *Nizikin*, vol. 1, XXII). See also [http://halakhah.com/talmud/nezikin\\_h.html](http://halakhah.com/talmud/nezikin_h.html)
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* (See also *Jewish Encyclopedia*). Though modern scholarship suggests existence of later editors of Talmud Bavli, their names are not preserved, most likely, because their contribution was miniscule compared to the above two. Besides, they certainly suffered the same disadvantage as the former ones – poor knowledge of Greek.
- <sup>10</sup> For example, the Vatican manuscript (Ebr. 134) has "yud" in 'Antipatris' while the Jewish Theological Seminary manuscript (Rab. 1623) does not.
- <sup>11</sup> Moreover, the second Hebrew phrase contains three other words, twice בידה ("in her hand") and ויצורינה ("is depicted"), where suffix ה indicates the feminine gender.



- <sup>12</sup> Moreover, a star seems dimmer near the horizon due to atmospheric extinction (Roth 2009: 561).
- <sup>13</sup> This was true till modern times. Abraham Lincoln visited the Naval Observatory on 22 August 1863 to observe the Moon and Arcturus with a telescope (Pinsker 2005: 115, 200).
- <sup>14</sup> See Antonello (2011) and particularly Fig. 2 with a computer simulation of the sky visible in the Land of Israel in biblical times.
- <sup>15</sup> However, there are now indications that the Seleucid calendar had a one month differential vs. the Babylonian at least as early as 210 BC, i.e., its first month Dios was aligned with the eighth Babylonian month Arahshamnu, not Tashritu. In this calendar, the intercalated Macedonian month corresponding to Ululu II in 199 was Gorpiaios II, not Hyperberetus II. See Bennett 2011: 219-220 and Addenda et Corrigenda at [http://www.academia.edu/attachments/6979691/download\\_file](http://www.academia.edu/attachments/6979691/download_file)
- <sup>16</sup> Some scholars argue that it could have been a year later (S. Stern 2001: 89-92).
- <sup>17</sup> Rabbinovicz 2002: Yoma, page "mem." The manuscript from the Vatican Library has clear וְאֵת הַיּוֹם, while the one from the Jewish Theological Seminary Library has somewhat confusing וְאֵת הַיּוֹם. See the *National Library and HUJI's Online Treasury of Talmudic Manuscripts*; [http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/talmud/intro\\_eng.htm](http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/talmud/intro_eng.htm)
- <sup>18</sup> The only other entry between these two is the reference to Hanukah on Kislew 25.
- <sup>19</sup> All times given in local Jerusalem time (UT+2). See Sky View Cafe 4.0 at: <http://www.skyviewcafe.com/> introducing the date as "-197/01/09".
- <sup>20</sup> As most "court" historians of the campaigning kings did in the past, from Alexander to Napoleon. The earlier example, Callisthenes, could be an inspiration for Zenon.
- <sup>21</sup> M. Stern (1974: 115) claims Josephus "knew Polybius only indirectly, mainly through Nicolaus of Damascus or Strabo."
- <sup>22</sup> The most famous assimilation is Josephus' prophecy that General Vespasian would be the future Emperor (*The Wars of the Jews* 3.399-407), which Talmud (*b. Gittin* 56b) bestowed upon a rabbi, a contemporary of Josephus.
- <sup>23</sup> Moore (1927) also pointed out that in Josephus' list of priests almost nothing is said about the High Priest Simon I.