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**“HONOURED IN HER TIME”:
QUEEN SHELAMZION AND THE BOOK OF JUDITH**

By

Dilys Naomi Patterson

Dissertation submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate and Post-doctoral Studies, University of Ottawa,
in partial fulfillment for the requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Religious Studies

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**This work is dedicated to my parents,
Joan Greenfield Patterson
and William Patterson
and to my daughter,
Alexis Patterson**

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ABSTRACT

The Book of Judith is a tale about a time in Jewish history when the Jews were threatened with annihilation and saved by a pious widow. It is also an example of the early Hellenistic novel and evinces many hitherto unexplored ties to Hellenistic literature; however, even when these similarities are accounted for, the characterization of Judith, the book's main character, stands out in marked contrast to other Hellenistic female heros. Although the date of composition of the work is still disputed, there is strong evidence that links the work to the Hasmonean period. It was during this period that a woman ruled Judea; this woman was Shelamzion, whom Josephus refers to as Salome Alexandra. Charles Ball, Solomon Zeitlin, and the contemporary feminist scholar Tal Ilan postulate that the Book of Judith was written as a means of promoting the popularity of this Hasmonean queen; however, the idea has not been thoroughly examined by scholars.

This dissertation explores the possibility that the Book of Judith was written as political propaganda for the only Hasmonean queen, Shelamzion. The first part of the dissertation explores literary patronage and propaganda in the Hellenistic period. Part Two examines the literary world of Shelamzion, the world which gave birth to the Hellenistic novel. The third part offers a fresh evaluation of Josephus' accounts of Shelamzion's reign; these accounts are found in *The Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*. Her reign is examined against the backdrop of the politically powerful female descendants of Ptolemy Soter I, the various Cleopatras of the second and first centuries B.C.E. The final section assesses the Book of Judith as political propaganda for Shelamzion, revisiting anthropological studies of honour and shame and discussing the similarities between Shelamzion and Judith.

INTRODUCTION

The idea of an association between the Book of Judith and the only Hasmonean queen regnant, Shelamzion (Salome Alexandra), is long-standing. In 1888, Charles Ball put forth the idea that the Book of Judith was written as a tribute to this queen who ruled early in the first century B.C.E.¹ Observing that the book supports “the Pharisaic theory of government by High Priest and Sanhedrin”,² Ball observes that this sort of government was only in effect during the nine years of Salome’s rule.³ Many years after Ball’s observation, Solomon Zeitlin advanced the same hypothesis. Zeitlin felt that the characterization of Judith as a widow and a descendant of Simeon was a “deliberate and purposed touch”.⁴ Both scholars commented on the regal manner in which Judith addresses the elders of her city.⁵

More recently, feminist scholar Tal Ilan proposes a socio-historical context for the Book of Judith (along with the books of Esther and Susanna), which resurrects this hypothesis of earlier scholars. Ilan thinks that these three books functioned as political propaganda for Queen Shelamzion. Accepting Bickerman’s argument for the date of the colophon to the Book of Esther, Ilan observes that this date (77-76 B.C.E.) coincides with

¹ Charles Ball, “Judith”, *The Holy Bible: Apocrypha*, vol. 1 (ed. Henry Wace; London: John Murray, 1888) 247

² Two terms for a legislative body are used in the Book of Judith. These two terms are τῆς συνεδρίας (6: 1, 17; 11: 9) and ἡ γεπουσία (4: 8; 11: 14; 15: 8). The term τῆς συνεδρίας is used of “the council of Holofernes” (τῆς συνεδρίας Ολοφέρνηου) (6: 17). The term ἡ γεπουσία is found in the Septuagint, Exodus 3: 16 and Joshua 23: 2.

³ Ball, “Judith”, 246.

⁴ Solomon Zeitlin, “Judith the Widow”. in Morton S. Enslin, *The Book of Judith: Greek Text with an English Translation, Commentary and Critical Notes* (Dropsie University Edition: Jewish Apocryphal Literature, vol. 7; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972) 180-181.

⁵ Ball, “Judith”, 248, ft. 1; Zeitlin, “Judith the Widow”, 181.

the approximate date of Shelamzion's accession.⁶ Ilan argues that these three books about Jewish heroines may have functioned as "part of a larger literary campaign designed to promote the leadership of women through dialogue with other contemporary points of view".⁷ The idea that Judith represents "an alternative leader" has also been brought forward by Jan Willem Van Henten. Van Henten's intertextual analysis of chapters 7-13 of the Book of Judith successfully demonstrates that the author portrays Judith as being tested for leadership in a manner similar to that of Moses in biblical literature.⁸

The notion of testing a woman as a leader in defense of her people seems appropriate for a story composed during a period when the leadership of a woman was being inaugurated. The Hasmonean period was a time of change and the dynasty accomplished many exceptional things. It ousted the Seleucid regime that had controlled Judea for decades, successfully established its own rule that lasted about a century, and greatly expanded the territory under its control. Aristobulus I (104-103 B.C.E.) re-introduced the monarchy; however, before that John Hyrcanus, the father of Aristobulus, attempted something more remarkable. For reasons unknown, Hyrcanus bequeathed the governing of Judea to his wife instead of one of his sons (*War.* 1. 71; *Jewish Ant.* 13. 302).⁹ All that is known is the fate of the unnamed woman; her son, Aristobulus

⁶ Tal Ilan, " 'And Who Knows Whether You Have Not Come to Dominion for a Time Like This?' (Esther 4: 14): Esther, *Judith* and *Susanna* as Propaganda for Shelamzion's Queenship", *Integrating Women into Second Temple History* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1999) 127- 153.

⁷ Ilan, " 'And Who Knows Whether' ", 135.

⁸ Jan Willem van Henten, "Judith as Alternative Leader: A Rereading of Judith 7-13", *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith and Susanna* (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) 238-243.

⁹ Except where indicated, I use the translation found in the Loeb Classical Library Series throughout; see *Josephus: The Jewish War, Books 1-3*, vol. 2 (LCL; trans. H. St. J. Thackeray; London and Cambridge, MA: William Heinemann and Harvard University Press, 1956) and *Josephus: Jewish Antiquities*, vol. 7

imprisoned her and left her to starve to death.¹⁰ These elements of institutional change implemented by the Hasmoneans brought with them a significant shift in the social identity of the Jewish people. The dynamics of these changes warrant closer scrutiny.

Sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann write about institutional change. According to their theories, institutional change is rendered legitimate through symbols, symbols found in literature, among other places.¹¹ Their theories are helpful for an understanding of the dynamics of political reform attempted during this period. The Hasmonean dynasty not only needed political support to legitimate itself, but it also required continued support to survive. Literary works, such as *I Maccabees*, were written during this period and Jonathan Goldstein observes the probability that this work functioned as political propaganda.¹² But the Hasmoneans did more than just establish and maintain institutional change; each successive generation tested the limits that Jewish society of the time would tolerate and gradually created a system of government similar to “the nations roundabout”. Many of their changes were accepted; however the first of their reforms to be extinguished was leadership by a woman; opposition for this reform came from within the Hasmonean family itself. Yet one generation after this unsuccessful attempt at female leadership, Alexander Janneus, the brother of Aristobulus I, tried once again to leave the kingdom to his wife, Shelamzion. Her success is recorded, albeit ambiguously, in history.

(trans. Ralph Marcus; Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press and William Heinemann, 1957).

¹⁰ εἶρξε δὲ καὶ τὴν μητέρα περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς αὐτῷ διενεχθεῖσαν ἐκείνην γὰρ Ὑρκανὸς τῶν ὅλων κυρίαν κατελελοίπει) καὶ μέχρι τοσαύτης ὠμότητος προῆλθεν. ὥστ’ αὐτὴν καὶ λιμῷ διαφθεῖραι δεδεμένην; *Jewish Antiquities*, 13. 302.

¹¹ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York and Toronto: Doubleday, 1966) 104-110.

¹² Jonathan A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 41; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976) 83-86. I discuss Goldstein’s views below.

Unfortunately, an explicit connection between Shelamzion and the Book of Judith cannot be made; however, there does exist sufficient circumstantial evidence of a connection, provided it can be demonstrated that the Book of Judith was composed late in the Hellenistic period. Elements of the plot of *Judith* that mirror Hasmonean history and aspects of Shelamzion's reign are strongly suggestive of a specific socio-historical context. This context points to a period when a woman was instrumental in the defense of the Jewish nation. As for elements of plot, the Temple was rededicated during the Maccabean period (*1 Macc.* 4: 54); the Book of Judith is set shortly after the Temple has been rededicated (*Jdt.* 4: 3). Judas Maccabee killed the Syrian general Apollonius and used his sword in battle from there on (*1 Macc.* 3: 11-12); Judith slays the Assyrian general Holofernes with his own sword (*Jdt.* 13: 6-8). A second Syrian general, Nicanor, was decapitated and his head was hung from the parapet (*1 Macc.* 7: 47; *2 Macc.* 15: 30, 35); Judith tells her fellow citizens to hang the head of Holofernes from a parapet (*Jdt.* 14: 1). The Hasmonean Simon was murdered at a banquet, while drunk (*1 Macc.* 16: 16); Judith likewise kills Holofernes while he is intoxicated (*Jdt.* 12: 20).

Turning to the reign of Shelamzion, the historical setting of the story provides a precedent for the military leadership of a woman. We do know that Shelamzion was renowned for her external defense of the Jewish nation (*War* 1. 112; *Jewish Ant.* 13. 409). While being dominant in external matters, she functions in conjunction with the elders (οἱ πρεσβύτεροι) of her city and the High Priest of Jerusalem. Through its portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar, the book also conveys a polemic against the Hellenistic tendency of leaders to deify themselves. When taken together, these elements suggest that a political situation may have provided the impetus for the Book of Judith; it is thus worth exploring

the hypothesis that this work was composed at a time when a woman leader was in need of political support. This possibility does not lie far from another scholar's opinion about the cultural context of *Judith*. Van Henten also associates the Book of Judith with the Hasmonean dynasty. In fact, he speculates that the book may have served as some form of Hasmonean political propaganda, although he fails to elaborate on the details.¹³

There are some difficulties with this hypothesis that need to be addressed. The first difficulty concerns the date of composition of the Book of Judith. It is a date that has never been firmly established. Although recent scholarly works tend to favour the Hasmonean period, some scholars maintain the notion that the work was composed during the Persian period because it contains Persian terminology. A second difficulty with this hypothesis concerns the reign of Shelamzion herself. We possess only one major source for the rule of Shelamzion, but this information comes filtered through the first century historian Josephus, who wrote two books covering the Hasmonean period. These two works are *The Jewish War* (*De Bello Judaico* 1.107-119) and *Jewish Antiquities* (*Antiquitates Judaicae* 13. 399-432). The received view of the Josephan accounts of her rule presents an ambiguous portrait of a woman who was both vulnerable to Pharisaic manipulation, yet possessed of a passionate zeal for power. Josephus' assessment of her rule has never been critically challenged; however, recent scholarly research into his tendencies proves a useful tool for fresh insight into elements of her reign.

My thesis explores the possibility that the Book of Judith was written as political propaganda for the only Hasmonean queen regnant, Shelamzion. It is a socio-historical study that examines the existence and use of literary propaganda as an instrument of

¹³ Van Henten, "Judith as Alternative Leader", 244.

social change in the Hellenistic period. This form of social change has not received sufficient attention by scholars. The present exploration of the Book of Judith as a work of political propaganda brings together a variety of methodologies as it works towards locating *Judith* in its literary and socio-political context. It is also a feminist reconstruction of the reign of Shelamzion, in light of her female Egyptian contemporaries, those who possessed the matronym Cleopatra. Shelamzion's degree of conformity to the ideals of Hellenistic leadership and her need for propaganda are crucial elements of my argument.

This dissertation presumes interdependency between a literary work and the culture that produced it, assuming that both literature and culture participate in the production of meaning.¹⁴ The insights of Berger and Luckmann focus attention on the manipulation of symbols as a vehicle for the legitimation of institutional change. The acceptance of a Greek education by Hellenistic Jews and an exploration of the forms and contents of Hellenistic literature prove to be extremely helpful in assessing the Book of Judith as a medium of the political construction of support for this Hasmonean queen.

1. SYNOPSIS OF THE PLOT

The Book of Judith is about a Jewish woman who saves her people. It is set shortly after the return from Exile at a time when Israel has just renewed her covenant with Yahweh, her god. The Temple and its sacred vessels "had been consecrated after their

¹⁴ Cf. Jonathan Culler, "Literary History, Allegory, and Semiology", *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation* 7. 2 (1976) 260.

profanation” (4: 3).¹⁵ In a neighbouring kingdom, the evil despot Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians, decides to do battle with King Arphaxad, king of the Medes.

Nebuchadnezzar requests the support of the surrounding nations in this battle; however, they refuse (1: 11). Although he destroys King Arphaxad, Nebuchadnezzar is enraged at the rebuff and, as revenge, sends his general Holofernes to “seize all the territory” and “hold them for me till the day of their punishment” (2: 11). Holofernes is very successful in his campaign, until he comes to the Judean town of Bethulia where he meets resistance. One of Holofernes’ mercenaries, Achior, cautions the general against invading the land “because their God will protect them and we shall be put to shame before the whole world” (5: 21). Holofernes, annoyed at Achior’s news, has his slaves take Achior out of the camp, tie him up and leave him at the foot of one of the region’s many hills.

Achior is found by the Israelites and is taken into the city where he tells them all that had taken place. The people are frightened, but look after Achior and call on God for help (6: 20). Holofernes breaks camp and seizes the nearby spring, intending to let the people die of thirst (7: 17). After thirty-four days the people are desperate and plan to surrender within five days, if God has not saved them (7: 30-31). Enter Judith whose name means “Jewess”. She is a pious and wealthy widow, with an impressive lineage. She has been a widow for three years and four months and lives secluded in a tent atop her house. She lives in a state of mourning, dressing in sackcloth and fasting continually, except on religious feast days (8: 4-6). Judith sends her maid to summon the elders and then chastises them for putting God to the test (8: 12), rather than allowing themselves to be tested (8: 25-28). Uzziah, one of the city’s magistrates, praises her wisdom and

¹⁵ The Revised Standard Version is cited, unless otherwise stated.

Judith informs them that she will “do a thing which will go down through all generations” (8: 32). After the elders leave, Judith prays to God, the God of Simeon who avenged the rape of his sister, Dinah (Gen. 34). She prays that her “deceitful words” will be the downfall of the Assyrian nation. Dressing herself in her finest clothes, clothes that “she used to wear while her husband Manasseh was living” (10: 3) and taking her maid, enough food, wine and dishes for four days, she leaves the city.

Captured by Holofernes’ scouts, Judith and her maid are taken to him. She tells Holofernes that she is running away from her people because they are about to die. Achior’s words were true; the army could never kill the Jews but if they sin God will punish them (11: 9), and they are about to do just that. The people, in their desperation, are planning to eat the food, to drink the wine and to use the oil set aside as a sacrifice to God. Judith tells Holofernes that she will go to the valley every night to pray and God will inform her when this sacrilege has taken place. Then Holofernes can take all of Judea (11: 17-19).

Holofernes agrees and Judith establishes a routine of leaving the camp late every night. On the fourth day, Holofernes holds a banquet for his slaves and requests that Judith join them. The banquet is just an excuse to seduce her for Holofernes has had his eye on her from the moment they met; he thinks that she will ridicule him if he doesn’t make a move on her (12: 12, 16). In the Greek text it is clear that Holofernes intends to take Judith by force should she be unwilling to have sex with him.

Judith arrives, bringing her own food and wine. Holofernes drinks a lot of wine “much more than he had ever drunk in any one day since he was born” (12: 20). When the banquet ends Judith is left alone with Holofernes who is passed out on the bed.

Taking his sword and saying a prayer, Judith cuts off his head and places it in her food bag (13: 4-10). Then she and her maid, who had been waiting outside, leave the camp and go home. Everyone is pleased to see her and stunned by what she did. She assures them that Holofernes did nothing to “defile and shame” her (13: 16). She tells the people to put his severed head on the parapet of the wall. At dawn they are to leave the city gates and mill around, but not attack. They are to wait until the Assyrians try to wake Holofernes and then, when the Assyrians realize that their general is dead, the Israelites are to chase them and kill them (14: 2-4). Everything happens as planned. The camp is plundered and Judith is “honoured in her time” (16: 21).

2. TEXTUAL ISSUES

Most scholars believe that the Book of Judith was originally written in Hebrew. It contains many “Hebraisms”, literal translations of Hebrew into Greek.¹⁶ Yet not all are convinced that Judith’s original language was Hebrew. Craven, following Scholz, believes that the book may have been written in “elegant hebraicised Greek”.¹⁷ Although the least popular theory, it is worth considering; a thorough linguistic analysis of the Book of Judith would be helpful to scholars.

There is some evidence that suggests scholars should take a closer look at the way Jewish writers of the Second Temple period wrote in Greek. In his linguistic analysis of Hebraisms in the Septuagint version of Genesis, Henry Gehman concludes that the religious intelligentsia that translated the Hebrew scriptures had developed their own

¹⁶ Cowley, “Introduction”, 244. For a more detailed discussion, see Moore, *Judith*, 66-67.

¹⁷ Craven, *Artistry and Faith*, 5.

form of Greek that contained a decidedly “Hebrew cast”.¹⁸ It is, therefore, worth asking if *Judith* may have originated from circles in which this type of Greek was used.

The Book of Judith is preserved in Christian copies of the Septuagint. It is found in uncials, minuscules and fragments.¹⁹ The most important uncial codices are the Codex Vaticanus (LXX^B) which dates from the fourth century C. E., the Codex Alexandrinus (LXX^A) which dates from the fifth century C. E. and the composite Basiliano-Vaticanus (LXX^N) which dates from the eighth-ninth centuries C. E.²⁰ There also exist various Aramaic and Hebrew versions of the text as well as *midrashim*. These *midrashim* are later translations from the Greek version of the book.²¹ Critical editions are by Robert Hanhart and Rahlfs.²² Morton Enslin, whose Greek text I use here, relies on Rahlfs’ text.²³

¹⁸ Henry Gehman, “Hebraisms of the Old Greek Version of Genesis”, *VT* 3 (1953) 148.

¹⁹ Ancient manuscripts are in two styles: uncials or capitals and minuscules or cursive. Uncials are not necessarily more important nor are they necessarily older than minuscules. Sidney Jellicoe states that although minuscules tend to represent a later version they are often based on “an early text form”. Some of the poorer communities were forced to take meticulous care of their original texts and would, therefore, use these copies longer than the wealthier communities, which could afford to requisition copies more frequently; each copy risked the introduction of errors. See Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1968) 215. For more information on the codices, see Jellicoe, *The Septuagint*, (Vaticanus) 177-179, (Alexandrinus) 183-188, (Basiliano-Vaticanus) 197-199 and (Sinaiticus) 180-183.

²⁰ The Book of Judith can also be found in the codex Sinaiticus (LXX^S). This codex dates from the fourth century C.E; however, Moore states that it suffers from additions, changes and omissions by later scribes. See Moore, *Judith*, xx, 91-92.

²¹ Moore, *Judith*, 101-107; see also André Marie Dubarle, “Les récits midrashiques”, *Judith: Formes et sens*, vol. 2, 80-104.

²² Robert Hanhart, *Text und Textgeschichte des Buches Judith* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1979) and Alfred Rahlfs, *Ioudith* (Septuaginta, id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes, 5th ed, Stuttgart: Württ. Bibelanstalt, 1952) 973-1002.

²³ Enslin, *The Book of Judith*, 48.

3. SCHOLARLY RESEARCH TO DATE

There are a variety of scholarly approaches to the Book of Judith, all of which point to the importance of considering the book from its socio-historical context. Scholars first attempted to reconcile what has until recently been thought to be historical and factual errors made by its author. The book's opening words are troublesome; they situate the events during the rule of the Assyrian leader, Nebuchadnezzar (1: 1). Anyone well acquainted with biblical literature recognizes that something is amiss; the Nebuchadnezzar of biblical literature was the king of the Babylonians and responsible for the second exile in 587/6 B.C.E. (2 Kings 24-25; 2 Chr. 36: 5-21). The Assyrian empire, on the other hand, existed long before Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon became powerful. Both empires had an impact on Jewish history; they exiled the Jews from Judea and this experience of being taken away from their land grew into a dominant theme that recurs throughout biblical literature. Similar discrepancies with other historical events and geographical locations persist throughout the initial chapters of the book.

Preliminary research on the Book of Judith sought to reconcile these "mistakes" with historical events in an attempt to understand the book as some sort of historical account of a salvific deed performed by a woman.²⁴ Later research developed the idea

²⁴ Moses Gaster believes that "a Judith must have existed, and must have been ... the author of some daring act, perpetrated by her in times of dire and cruel persecution", "An Unknown Hebrew Version of the History of Judith", *Studies and Texts in Folklore, Magic, Mediaeval Romance, Hebrew Apocrypha and Samaritan Archaeology*, I (Reprinted from the "Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology", March, 1894; New York: KTAV, 1971) 87; George T. Montague similarly thinks that *Judith* has "a historical nucleus", *The Books of Esther and Judith* (Pamphlet Bible Series, 21; New York: Paulist Press, 1973) 8, as does André Marie Dubarle, *Judith: Formes et sens des diverses traditions*, I (Analecta Biblica, Inverstigations Scientificaes in Res Biblicas, XXIV; Rome: Institut Biblique Pontifical, 1966) 135-136. Carey A. Moore discusses the geographical and historical "mistakes" in detail; see *Judith: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB: 40B; Garden City: Doubleday, 1985) 38-49; cf. Arthur E. Cowley, "The Book of Judith: Introduction", *APOT*, 245.

that these “mistakes” were disguised representations of actual events or persons. Mathias Delcor argues that the figure of Nebuchadnezzar stands for the Seleucid leader Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.E.),²⁵ the foreign ruler whose persecution of the Jews led to the Maccabean revolt. There have, in fact, been various associations posited between the characters in the book and male political leaders of the past;²⁶ however, none has been convincing.

The recognition that the author of the Book of Judith intentionally misrepresented historical events encouraged scholars to abandon the historical-critical approach to the book in favour of a better understanding of its genre. This approach has likewise produced a diversity of opinions. Although most scholars have come to regard the book as fiction, its specific form of fiction has been questioned.²⁷ Genre is an important issue

²⁵ Mathias Delcor, “Le livre de Judith et l’époque grecque”, *Klio: Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte* 49 (1967) 178-179.

²⁶ A synopsis of these theories can be found in Moore, *Judith*, 52-56.

²⁷ Many scholars acknowledge the historical quality of the Book of Judith. Bruce Metzger calls it “a quasi-historical novel”, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957) 51; John C. Dancy, *Judith* is “a short historical novel which carries a strong religious message”, *The Shorter Books of the Apocrypha: Judith* (The Cambridge Bible Commentary; ed. P. R. Ackroyd, A.R.C. Leaney, and J. W. Parker; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) 67; Nicholas de Lange likewise thinks it a “story of virtue and heroism, dressed up as history”, *Apocrypha: Jewish Literature of the Hellenistic Age* (New York: Viking Press, 1978) 114. Scholars also observe the educational aspect of the book. For instance, Martin Goodman retains Emil Schürer’s classification of the work among “didactic and parnetical stories”, in Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.- A.D. 135)*, 3/1 (ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar and Martin Goodman; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986) 216-222; Charles C. Torrey calls it “edifying fiction”, *The Apocryphal Literature: A Brief Introduction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945) 90. Herbert T. Andrews thinks of it as a “religious” novel, *An Introduction to the Apocryphal Books of the Old and New Testaments*, 5th ed. (1954; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1964) 37. Patrick Shekan and George W. E. Nickelsburg think the book is a form of parable: Shekan, “Why Leave Out *Judith*?”, *CBQ* 24 (1962) 149; Nickelsburg, “*Judith*”, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) 107.

Other scholars classify the Book of Judith as a folktale. Mary P. Coote classifies *Judith* as an “AT 888” type folktale, according to the Stith-Thompson Index. This type of folktale describes the rescue of an enslaved husband by his faithful wife who disguises herself as a man. The epic version of this type involves nations in conflict. A female disguised as a man conquers the enemy nation. In myth a warrior goddess saves a god. For Coote, the character of Judith corresponds to the Female Warrior motif. See “Comment on ‘Narrative Structures in the Book of Judith’”, in Luis Alonso-Schökel, “Narrative Structures in the Book of Judith”, *Protocol Series of the Colloquies of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture*, 11, 27 January 1974 (ed. W. Wuellner; Berkeley, CA: The Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 1975) 21-22. Coote’s folktale classification is

because understanding its form has consequences on our ability to grasp the book's reception by its original audience. Form-critical analysis of the Book of Judith is, however, constrained by the disregard of ancient scholars for the medium of prose fiction. More recent attempts to classify the Book of Judith consider the work from within its cultural context. Lawrence M. Wills argues that the Book of Judith is a uniquely Jewish form of the embryonic Hellenistic novel (*roman*) that grew in popularity in the late Hellenistic period.²⁸

Before Will's interesting study a number of scholars did notice a similarity between the Book of Judith and Greek literature; of course, *Judith's* "symphony of biblical allusions", as George Montague terms it, is also a popular approach to the book. The biblical character most similar to Judith is Jael, the woman who killed general Sisera by driving a tent peg into his head (Judges 4: 17-22; 5: 24-27). Edgar Bruns believes that *Judith* was, in fact, a reworking of the story of Jael.²⁹ Sidnie Ann White observes the parallel between Judith and Jael; she sees the Book of Judith as a signal of the continuing

contested by Pamela Milne who identifies the text as "an epic struggle": "What Shall We Do with Judith?: A Feminist Reassessment of a Biblical 'Heroine' ", *Semeia* 62 (1993) 51-53. Moore also thinks that the Book of Judith belongs in the folktale category, *Judith*, 78.

Some scholars prefer to draw attention to the book's subtle eschatological elements. Although some have termed it an "apocalypse", these scholars write in the days before John J. Collins clarified the aspects of the apocalypse as a genre; see "Towards the Morphology of a Genre", *Semeia* 14 (1979) 1-27. The scholarly studies that classify the Book of Judith as an apocalypse or that discuss the eschatological elements of the book are presented in Moore, *Judith*, 73-76. See specifically, André Lefèvre, "Livre de Judith", *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, 4, col. 1319. André Barucq thinks the basic idea behind the text is "apocalyptic", meaning the opposition between Judith and Holofernes is akin to the opposition between God and the ungodly, *Judith, Esther*, 2nd ed. (La Sainte Bible de Jérusalem, 13; Paris: Cerf, 1959) 15. Ernst Haag observes a similar dichotomy, arguing that the book's main characters are typologies that represent the *hybris* of the lord of the Earth, Nebuchadnezzar, and Israel's faith in YHWH, Judith; see *Studien zum Buche Judith. Seine theologische Bedeutung und literarische Eigenart* (Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1963) 22-25, 44-47. Delcor, while classifying the text as a midrash, nevertheless notes that it has "une certaine couleur d'apocalypse"; "Le livre de Judith", 179. Jean Steinmann thinks *Judith* is "a synthesis of two genres" - Haggadah and apocalyptic; *Lecture de Judith* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1953) 129.

²⁸ Lawrence M. Wills, *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996); Zeitlin also thinks *Judith* "a popular Jewish novelette", "The Books of Esther and Judith: A Parallel", in Enslin, *The Book of Judith*, 1.

²⁹ Edgar Bruns "Judith or Jael?", *CBQ* 16 (1954) 12.

importance of biblical literature in the Second Temple period and the indelible theme of the triumph of the weak over the strong, symbolized by the defeat of a man by the hand of a woman.³⁰ Susan Ackerman is another scholar who explores the intertextual relationship between the Book of Judith and Judges. Ackerman believes that the characterization of Judith is an adaptation of the Canaanite warrior goddess, Anat, whose seductive quality has been parleyed into her weaponry.³¹ Van Henten's interesting intertextual study of the Book of Judith in connection with passages from Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy leads him to recognize the existence of a particular motif from biblical literature. This motif is the testing of a leader;³² thus van Henten sees the character of Judith being promoted as a type of "alternative leader".

A second intertextual dimension of the Book of Judith is its tie to Greek literature. Both Arnaldo Momigliano and Mark Caponigro demonstrate that the Book of Judith contains elements from the fifth century work, *The Histories* by Herodotus.³³ Moses Hadas observes similarities between the Book of Judith and the fifth century play, *The Persians* by Aeschylus.³⁴ Hadas and Michael Heltzer also discuss similarities between the Book of Judith and the first century inscription on the temple of Atheane Lindia on Rhodes. This inscription, known as the *Lindos Chronicle*, mentions three "epiphanies" or revelations of the gods, one of which bears a striking similarity to the plot of the Book

³⁰ Sidnie Ann White, "In the Steps of Jael and Deborah: Judith as Heroine", *"No One Spoke Ill of Her": Essays on Judith* (ed. James C. VanderKam. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992) 7, 14.

³¹ Susan Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen: Women in Judges and Biblical Israel* (New York and Toronto: Doubleday, 1998) 66-68.

³² Van Henten, "Judith as Alternative Leader", 232-238.

³³ Mark Caponigro, "Judith, Holding the Tale of Herodotus", *No One Spoke Ill of Her: Essays on Judith* (ed. James C. VanderKam; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992) 47-59 (= *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader* [ed. Alice Bach; New York and London: Routledge, 1999] 377-386); Arnaldo Momigliano, "Biblical Studies and Classical Studies: Simple Reflections about Historical Method", *Biblical Archeologist* 45 (1982) 224-228.

³⁴ Moses Hadas, "Eastern Elements in Post-Exilic Jewish, and Greek, Historiography", *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1977) 26.

of Judith.³⁵ Hans Yohanan Priebsch discusses the Hellenistic sources of *Judith*, most notably the fragments of Eupolemus.³⁶

Some scholars examine structural elements within the book itself. Of these types of studies two are noteworthy. The first is the work of Luis Alonso-Schökel. "Narrative Structures in the Book of Judith" is an insightful exploration of a variety of narrative aspects of the book, such as irony, characterization, and composition. The second structural study of the Book of Judith is by Toni Craven. Craven successfully refutes the idea that the book is an awkward juxtaposition of two separate stories, one of a military battle (chapters 1-7) and another of a heroic deed performed by a woman (chapters 8-16). Craven demonstrates that the book forms a structural whole that uses chiasmic patterns, typically seen in biblical literature.³⁷ Both of these structural analyses observe the same things about the Book of Judith, namely that Nebuchadnezzar is portrayed as a deified ruler³⁸ and that Judith, in contrast, is portrayed as a mother of her people.³⁹

It would seem at first glance that all feminist scholars would view the characterization of Judith positively; however, this is not the case. Like much of the research into the Book of Judith, feminist scholars are equally divided in their approaches to and conclusions about the book. Amy-Jill Levine views Judith as a character that is salvific

³⁵ Moses Hadas, *Hellenistic Culture*, 165-169; Michael Heltzer, "The Persepolis Documents, The Lindos Chronicle and the Book of Judith", *La Parola de Passato* 44 (1989) 90; I discuss Heltzer's research in Part Two, below.

³⁶ Hans Yohanan Priebsch, "Das Buch Judith und seine hellenistischen Quellen", *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 90 (1974) 50-60.

³⁷ Toni Craven, *Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith* (SBL Diss. Series 70; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983) 60-64.

³⁸ Alonso-Schökel, "Narrative Structures in the Book of Judith", 13; Craven is careful to note that Nebuchadnezzar does not specifically call himself a god; nevertheless, she does acknowledge that the book poses and answers the question "who is the real god?", *Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith*, 69, cf. ft. 11, 74, 90.

³⁹ Alonso-Schökel, "Narrative Structures in the Book of Judith", 15; Craven, *Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith*, 107, 122.

but the “domesticated” ending of the story demonstrates that women such as Judith threaten society and have to be controlled.⁴⁰

One concern that feminist scholars have about the characterization of Judith is her use of sexuality as a weapon. Betsy Meridith, drawing on Mieke Bal’s theory of focalization, argues that the Book of Judith carries an “anti-woman ideology”, although Judith herself is a strong character.⁴¹ Using a structural analysis, Pamela Milne argues that Judith is, in fact, “a seductive helper who effectively promotes gynophobia, not equity ...”.⁴² Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza also discusses *Judith* in her groundbreaking book *In Memory of Her*. Schüssler Fiorenza concedes that the character of Judith “fights with women’s weapons”; however, the men in the story, although “beguiled by her attractiveness and femininity... have not the faintest idea of her religious and national self-identity and strength.”⁴³ For Schüssler Fiorenza the critical issue is Holofernes’ male “arrogance and stupidity” which lets him see Judith “just as ‘woman’ - and no more ...”.

Comparing the Book of Judith to another Jewish Hellenistic work, *Ben Sira*, Alexander A. Di Lella puts forth the idea that the Book of Judith “functioned as a corrective to the sexist mind-set of that day” and should be considered as “a notable

⁴⁰ Amy-Jill Levine, “Sacrifice and Salvation: Otherness and Domestication in the Book of Judith,” *No One Spoke Ill of Her”: Essays on Judith*. (ed. James C. VanderKam. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992) 26-28 (= *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith and Susana*. Ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) 221-223.

⁴¹ Betsy Meridith, “Desire and Danger: The Drama of Betrayal in Judges and Judith”, *Anti-convenant: Counter-reading Women’s Lives in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Mieke Bal; Decatur, GA: Almond Press, 1989) 74-76. A different perspective on the erotic elements in the Book of Judith is provided by Monika Hellmann, *Judith: eine Frau im Spannungsfeld von Autonomie und göttlicher Führung: Studie über eine Frauengestalt des Alten Testaments* (Frankfurt: P. Lang, 1992) 114-120.

⁴² Milne, “What Shall We Do With Judith?”, 55.

⁴³ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (1983; New York: Crossroad, 1988) 117.

achievement”.⁴⁴ In an interesting and multi-dimensional approach to women in biblical narratives, Alice Bach reads the character of Judith as indicative of “the failure of individual male power”.⁴⁵ Bach traces the association between fasting, food, and eroticism, an association that links both the nurturing and sexual aspects of women. For Bach, the interaction of food and sexuality during the banquet scene in which Judith kills Holofernes portrays the transformation of “maternal woman” into “virago”, that is, a woman who possess masculine strength and character.⁴⁶

It is an interesting side note that different methodologies yield similar conclusions. Michael P. Carroll’s structural analysis of the books *Esther*, *Judith*, and *Susanna* confirms Ilan’s hypothesis that the three books are connected. Carroll observes that the common denominator of all three books is the failed seduction scene.⁴⁷ Carroll’s research proposes that the original audience of these three books may well have recognized them as a unit.⁴⁸ His work underscores the importance of assessing the Book of Judith from its cultural context.

Of all these approaches to the Book of Judith relatively few have sought to situate the book in its social location,⁴⁹ that is, an attempt to understand the social conditions that

⁴⁴ Alexander A. Di Lella, “Women in the Wisdom of Ben Sira and The Book of Judith: A Study in Contrasts and Reversals”, *Congress Volume: Paris 1992* (VT Supp. 61; Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1995) 52.

⁴⁵ Alice Bach, *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 188.

⁴⁶ Bach, *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal*, 204.

⁴⁷ Michael P. Carroll, “Myth, Methodology and Transformation in the Old Testament: The Stories of Esther, Judith, and Susanna”, *SR* 12. 3 (1983) 306.

⁴⁸ Carroll, “Myth, Methodology and Transformation”, 304.

⁴⁹ A recent and insightful examination of the cultural values of honour and shame in the Book of Judith is provided by Philip F. Esler, “‘By the Hand of a Woman’: Culture, Story and Theology in the Book of Judith”, *Social Scientific Models for Interpreting the Bible: Essays by the Context Group in Honor of Bruce J. Malina* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2001) 64-101. The theoretical impetus for the type of analysis in this dissertation was provided, in part, by similar scholarly work in the area of early Christian literature; see Richard L. Rohrbaugh, “‘Social Location of Thought’ as a Heuristic Construct in New Testament Study”, *JSNT* 30 (1987) 103-119.

generated a popular literary work about a pious Jewish widow who saved the nation.

Today's very existence of the Book of Judith attests to certain elements that existed in the social world of its author and original audience. These elements allowed the story to be composed, attain popularity, come to the attention of the Jewish community in Alexandria, perhaps attract the interest of a wealthy patron who sponsored its translation into Greek, and elevate the book's significance enough to win it a place in the corpus of Septuagint literature. These elements evince what Peter Berger refers to as a "plausibility structure", a zone of meaning, created and upheld by a social group.⁵⁰ In this case it is a group in which a woman had the authority and wherewithal to confidently face an enemy nation and murder its general in cold blood. The story itself would lack any association with edification or religious "truth" and would be merely comic if it were devoid of any plausibility in its social world.

Of the few scholarly studies that approach the Book of Judith from its socio-historical context, two are important to my study. The first work is the doctoral dissertation by Linda Bennett Elder. Part One of her study examines the social world of women in the Hellenistic period in an attempt to determine to what extent the characterization of Judith was modeled on social reality. Elder's study determines that Judith's social status and authority was, in fact, plausible given historical evidence about Jewish women during the Hellenistic period.⁵¹ The historical study that most closely approximates my work is by Peter Haider. Haider seeks a historical situation that is similar to that in the Book of Judith, namely a time when the Judean state was threatened

⁵⁰ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York and Toronto: Doubleday, 1969) 45.

⁵¹ Linda Bennett Elder, *Transformations in the Judith Mythos: A Feminist Critical Analysis* (unpublished dissertation, The Florida State University, 1991) 183.

by an enemy and saved by “the hand of a woman”. Haider argues that such a historical event did, in fact, exist; this event occurred when Alexander Jannaeus, the husband of Shelamzion, called upon Cleopatra III for military aid in 103/102 B.C.E.⁵² According to Haider, Judith is modeled on the historical person Cleopatra III.⁵³ Haider is on the right track with the idea that Judith is modeled on a person. Shelamzion’s reputation as a woman with “none of the weakness of her sex” (*Jewish Ant.* 13: 430), the idea that she “struck terror into the local rulers” (*Jewish Ant.* 13: 409), and that her rule was one of peace (*Jewish Ant.* 13: 432; *Jdt.* 16: 25) strongly suggest that this Hasmonean queen, and not Cleopatra III, should also be considered as the inspiration for the character of Judith.

4. DATE AND PROVENANCE OF THE BOOK OF JUDITH

If my hypothesis is correct, it has consequences for the dating of the Book of Judith. Attempts to determine the date of composition of the book are hindered by its medley of historical, geographical and intertextual references, references which resist attempts to date the book on internal evidence. The first mention of the Book of Judith is found in the first century Christian document, *1 Epistle of Clement*. This Christian reference is to the character of Judith; she is credited with accomplishing a deed of “manly valour”

⁵² Peter W. Haider, “Judith – eine zeitgenössische Antwort auf Kleopatra III. als Beschützerin der Juden?” *Grazer Beiträge* 22 (1998) 122-123.

⁵³ Haider, “Judith”, 128.

(πολλὰ ἀνδρεῖα) through the grace of God (50. 3).⁵⁴ Thus the *terminus ad quem* would seem to be the first century C.E., assuming that the author of this text knows our *Judith*.

The book's *terminus a quo* has yet to be firmly established. A variety of possibilities have been proposed. Meir Bar Ilan, following Yehoshua M. Grintz who writes over forty years ago, dates the Book of Judith very early, sometime in the fourth century.⁵⁵ It is the few Persian elements in the story, such as the reference to "earth and water" (2: 7), the use of the term "God of Heaven" and the post-exilic setting⁵⁶ that have enticed scholars such as George Nickelsburg to believe that the book was written in Persian times and then later reworked in Hellenistic period.⁵⁷

Many scholars, however, believe that the work was written during the Hasmonean period, based on elements within the text. Zeitlin points out that the pollution and purification of the Temple is an important clue to the text's later date. The Temple was profaned during the persecution of Antioches Epiphanes in 168 B.C.E. and was later re-sanctified by Judas Maccabee in 165 B.C.E. (*1 Macc.* 1: 21-24; 4: 52-58).⁵⁸ Yet he dates the book sometime late in the Hasmonean period or earlier in the Roman primarily

⁵⁴ *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1 (trans. Kirsopp Lake; Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University and William Heinemann, 1970) 103.

⁵⁵ Bar-Ilan, *Some Jewish Women*, 2. For Grintz' perspective on the Book of Judith, see *Sefer Yehudit* (Hebrew; 1957; Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1986).

⁵⁶ On the Persian elements, see Moore, *Judith*, 50.

⁵⁷ Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 109, ft. 48.

⁵⁸ Zeitlin, "The Books of Esther and Judith", in Enslin, *The Book of Judith*, 27-28. A chronology of time periods represented in the book is presented by Robert H. Pfeiffer, in *History of New Testament Times with an Introduction to the Apocrypha* (1949; Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972) 293-294. Pfeiffer dates the text to 150 B.C.E. primarily because of the type of role played by the *gerousia* (p. 295); however, Delcor's discussion of the use of the term *gerousia* in Jewish Hellenistic literature pushes the date of the book's translation in the period before Hyrcan II; Delcor, "Le livre de Judith", 157-161. Doron Mendels dates the Book of Judith to the period 140-133 B.C.E. before Antiochus VII, who took the coast and besieged Jerusalem. Mendels does not discuss the possibility of a later date for the book, although his thesis depends upon this narrow time frame. See *The Land of Israel as a Political Concept in Hasmonean Literature: Recourse to History in Second Century B.C. Claims to the Holy Land* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1987) 53.

because of the text's siege mentality.⁵⁹ Zeitlin's date of composition falls clearly within the required time frame.

Judith's city, Bethulia, is located in the northern part of Jewish territory, which places it in Samaria, a region that was taken over by John Hyrcanus in 107 B.C.E. This detail leads Moore to place the date of composition sometime during the reign of John Hyrcanus I; however, Moore is not rigid about this date and concedes that a later date is also acceptable.⁶⁰ Schürer, on the other hand, dates the text from its description of Judean territory, observing that the independence of Azotus and Jamnia (2: 28) must indicate that the book was written before Alexander Janneus took over these two cities.⁶¹

Although there have been theories to the contrary,⁶² few contest the idea that the book was written in Judea because of the accurate knowledge of Judean geography.⁶³

The author is generally thought to be a Pharisee because of the text's focus on ritual purity,⁶⁴ although other possibilities have been proposed.⁶⁵

Although it is difficult to find internal evidence that definitively dates the Book of Judith to the time of Shelamzion, there is nothing that prohibits dating the text to this period either. The reasons for dating the text during the time of Hyrcanus or Janneus are problematic, provided the Pharisean outlook of the book is also accepted, an outlook that

⁵⁹ Zeitlin, in Enslin, *The Book of Judith*, 28.

⁶⁰ Moore, *Judith*, 67-70, cf. 141.

⁶¹ Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, 219.

⁶² See for instance, the articles by Edgar Bruns that argue that the book is a product of Egyptian Jewry, "Judith or Jael?", 12-14, and "The Genealogy of Judith", *CBQ* 18 (1956) 19-22.

⁶³ Moore, *Judith*, 70.

⁶⁴ Ball, "Judith", 246; Cowley, "The Book of Judith: Introduction", 246-247; Pfeiffer, *History of New Testament Times*, 302-303; Moore, *Judith*, 70.

⁶⁵ Hugo Mantel proposes Sadducean authorship in part because of the text's emphasis on the Temple cult. See Hugo Mantel, "Ancient Hasidim", *Studies in Judaism* (in Hebrew; *Studies in Judaism* [1976]) 60-80. An English summary of Mantel's ideas can be found in Craven, *Artistry and Faith*, 118-120. See also Ilan's discussion of the scant evidence about the Sadducees in "The Attraction of Aristocratic Women to Pharisaism During the Second Temple Period", *HTR* 88. 1 (1995) 21, ft. 92 (= *Integrating Women into Second Temple History* [Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1999] 31, ft. 59).

I also support. Although the text's northern setting may point to the period after the annexation of Samaria in 107 B.C.E., it is important to remember that Hyrcanus and Janneus were both at odds with the Pharisees during most of their time in power⁶⁶ and that a story supporting female leadership would certainly be polemical if written during this time.

There is the possibility that the Book of Judith could have been composed for John's successor, his wife, who was supposed to take over Judea after his death, but who was killed by her son Aristobulus instead. Had she gained power, John's bequest would have appeased the Pharisees' desire that religious and political control be made separate.⁶⁷ In anticipation of this event, the Pharisees could have had this work composed in support of separate political and religious institutions and for this reason supported a woman. Were they to do this, they would still have to confront the same issues that Shelamzion had to later, namely the need to demonstrate divine approval to rule and a capability to defend Judea's borders. Thus the argument that the Book of Judith is propaganda for a woman ruler still would hold; however, I believe this is the less likely option. Although it is impossible to be sure from the account given by Josephus, it seems that Hyrcanus' wife did not have as solid a base of support for her rule as did Shelamzion. We are only told that Hyrcanus "left her mistress of the realm" and that she "disputed the royal power with" her son Aristobulus.⁶⁸ Obviously she did not have support of the military and could not therefore resist the arrest that was ordered by her son.

⁶⁶ *Ant.* 13. 295-296; *Ant.* 13. 403-404.

⁶⁷ *Ant.* 13. 291-292. For an analysis of Josephus' account of Hyrcanus' breach with the Pharisees, see Steve Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991) 227-230.

⁶⁸ *Jewish Antiquities* 13. 302; cf. *War* 1. 71.

In contrast, Shelamzion garnered more support prior to Janneus's death than did her predecessor. Shelamzion had the loyalty of the military; according to Josephus, she was told to "conceal his death from the soldiers until *she* had captured the fortress".⁶⁹ It seems, therefore, that she wielded considerable power in her own right while her husband was alive. About her accession to power Josephus writes: "Alexander bequeathed the kingdom to his wife Alexandra, being convinced that the Jews would bow to her authority as they would do no other, because by her utter lack of his brutality and by her opposition to his crimes she had won the affections of the populace".⁷⁰ There must have been, therefore, a public dimension to her opposition of Janneus, although our sources do not inform us as to its content or form.

Unlike Hyrcanus or Janneus, Shelamzion had a good rapport with the Pharisees and this close association is backed by historical evidence.⁷¹ In fact, Josephus bases his criticism of Shelamzion's rule on her relationship with the Pharisees. According to Josephus, the Pharisees ruled Shelamzion; she allowed them to do as they pleased.⁷² With royal endorsement for the first time since the early days of Hyrcanus, which would be approximately fifty years or so, it stands to reason that the Pharisees of her court could have her honoured with a literary work which was supportive of her rule.

Being a queen who supported the Pharisees, it is only commonplace that she would be close to their leader, the foremost Pharisee of her day, Simon ben Shetah. Some traditions even depict them as being brother and sister.⁷³ In Jewish tradition, they

⁶⁹ *Ant.* 13. 400, italics mine.

⁷⁰ *War* 1. 107; cf. *Jewish Antiquities* 13. 407.

⁷¹ Ilan, "The Attraction of Aristocratic Women to Pharisaism", 11 (= *Integrating Women*, 21).

⁷² *War* 1. 111; *Jewish Antiquities* 13. 408-409.

⁷³ *b. Berakhot*. 48 a; cf. Jacob Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions About the Pharisees Before 70: Part 1, The Masters* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971) 116-117, and Ilan, "The Attraction of Aristocratic Women", 15 (= *Integrating Women*, 25).

are both associated with a time of prosperity⁷⁴ in much the same fashion as the days of Judith are considered to have been the “golden age”.⁷⁵ Thus Judith’s outright support of Pharisean piety could equally have served the additional purpose of being Pharisaic propaganda as well as propaganda for the rule of the queen herself.

The one objection to dating this text during the reign of Shelamzion is Schürer’s observation about the independence of Azotus and Jamnia;⁷⁶ however, this can be accounted for, provided the Pharisean perspective of the text is accepted. While it is true that Azotus and Jamnia were under the control of Janneus and hence Shelamzion, their independence in the Book of Judith does not necessarily demonstrate that the book was written before Janneus’ rule: the degree to which these two cites were independent before Janneus’ time is debatable. According to Schürer, both Judas Maccabee and his brother Jonathan persistently attacked Azotus.⁷⁷ During the time of Janneus, Azotus, or what little was left of it, eventually fell within Hasmonean territory; however, it was no longer a city proper. Likewise, Jamnia was also attacked by Judas but may have become part of Judea before Janneus’ time.⁷⁸

A third city has been mentioned in connection with the date of composition of *Judith*. This city is Gaza. In some ancient manuscripts of the Book of Judith, this city is notably absent from the list of the cities that are fearful.⁷⁹ This ancient near eastern city

⁷⁴ This tradition is discussed below.

⁷⁵ Ball, “Judith”, 246; Cowley, “The Book of Judith”, 244.

⁷⁶ Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, vol. 1, 108-109.

⁷⁷ Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, vol. 1, 109; cf. 1 Macc. 5: 68; 10: 84; 11: 4.

⁷⁸ Josephus tells us that Simon took Jamnia, see *War* 1. 50 and *Ant.* 13. 215; however, Schürer believes that it was Janneus who eventually took it, *The History of the Jewish People*, 110; cf. *Ant.* 13. 395 where Josephus seems to be listing territories under Jewish control and not necessarily territories conquered by Janneus.

⁷⁹ These are the Codex Sinaiticus, the Old Latin and the Syriac. According to Moore, the Codex Sinaiticus is corrupt and the Old Latin and Syriac are based on the Origenic recension. See Moore, *Judith*, 91-92

was mentioned in the Hebrew scriptures as a city of the Philistines.⁸⁰ During the Maccabean period it was put under siege by Jonathan and was later conquered by Janneus who left it, like Azotus, in ruins.⁸¹

Precisely how much importance we can place on the omission of this city in regard to the book's date is questionable. The absence of Gaza from most manuscripts and the independence of Azotus and Jamnia in *Judith* cannot necessarily be linked to the book's date of composition, the author having already proved herself or himself to be inconsistent with temporal and geographical elements. It is, therefore, doubtful that the date of composition can be derived from such a small piece of evidence.

Although scholars are keen to find internal clues that link the Book of Judith to a specific date, looking for these in the text's geographical minutiae may prove to be futile, as I will later discuss. Given that the book is a fiction, set sometime in Israel's past, should we really expect minor geographical elements to reflect the time in which it was written? The northern setting of the text is, however, a different question. It does, perhaps, point to a time of composition after the annexation of Samaria. Again if a Pharisaic perspective of the book is assumed, this may explain why certain cities/provinces were omitted. According to Zeitlin, the Pharisees, in general, opposed expansion and enforced proselytism, preferring instead propaganda that supported conversion.⁸² They did not, according to Zeitlin, approve of the conquest of Gaza, Azotus "and other cities ... because these cities were populated with hellenized Syrians

⁸⁰ Judges 1: 18; Joshua 11: 22.

⁸¹ *Ant.* 13. 358-364.

⁸² Solomon Zeitlin, "Queen Salome and King Jannaeus Alexander: A Chapter in the History of the Second Jewish Commonwealth", *The Jewish Quarterly* 51. 1 (1960) 8.

and their presence would have a deleterious influence on Judaism”.⁸³ This concern with the purity and continuation of Jewish culture is also represented by one major element in the Book of Judith: the threat of Assyrian invasion. Similarly, Achior’s willingness to convert to Judaism because he “saw all that the God of Israel had done” (14: 10) could be viewed as evidence of Pharisaic propaganda in favour of proselytism.⁸⁴

If it is correct that the author of the Book of Judith promoted the outlook of the Pharisees and wrote during the time of Shelamzion, then this may explain why Janneus’ victories were not included. Still, the inclusion of Samaritan territory as the setting of the book probably does indicate that the Book of Judith was written well after Hyrcanus annexed the territory, perhaps at a time when its inclusion in Judean territory was commonplace.

The northern setting of the Book of Judith may yield a further clue to the book’s date. First and foremost, the enemies of Israel are traditionally thought of as invading from the north (Dan. 11: 15). It is at this time that God will avenge the “haughty pride of the king of Assyria” (Isa. 10: 12; 24-25; 2 Kings 19; cf. Isa. 37). More importantly, Samaritan territory is in the portion of land given to the tribe of Manasseh and this is the name of Judith’s dead husband.

The name Manasseh is not without significance to a Jewish audience and could have served the author a two-fold purpose. In biblical literature two persons are called Manasseh. The first is one of Joseph’s sons, a grandson of Jacob (Israel) (Gen. 48:1-2), who had a tribe named after him. This tribe had land to the east and west of the Jordan

⁸³Zeitlin, “Queen Salome and King Jannaeus Alexander”, 15.

⁸⁴ Although he does not argue for a Pharisaic perspective, Adolfo D. Roitman observes a strong parallel between Judith and Achior. Achior is, in Roitman’s view, “designed thematically as well as functionally as the mirror image of Judith”. Thus a certain type of proselytism is a crucial element in the book. “Achior in the Book of Judith: His Role and Significance”, *No One Spoke Ill of Her*, 31-46, 38.

river. The western portion of this territory includes Samaria. Thus the author can draw on the biblical tradition of invaders from the north.

The second biblical person who bears the name Manasseh is King Manasseh, a notoriously wicked king. According to Deuteronomic history, which is also reflected in the Book of Judith,⁸⁵ King Manasseh “did evil in the sight of the Lord”, with idolatrous behaviour and the shedding of “innocent blood” much as Shelamzion’s husband, Alexander Janneus (2 Kings 21: 3- 16; cf. *Jewish Ant.* 13. 373, 376). Thus, the reference to Manasseh may have served as a veiled reference to Alexander Janneus.

In spite of the difficulties inherent in dating this text, none of the evidence thus far precludes dating it sometime during the reign of Shelamzion. In my thesis I will show that reading the Book of Judith as propaganda for Queen Shelamzion is not only feasible, but also accounts for many features of the work that hitherto remained a puzzle to scholars.

5. THE APPROACH TO THIS STUDY

In order to explore the hypothesis that the Book of Judith is political propaganda for the Hasmonean queen regnant, Shelamzion, a multi-dimensional approach to the question is necessary. Part One of this dissertation addresses the essential issue of the existence of what we would call political propaganda by Hellenistic rulers. This is problematic because it is difficult to identify how literary works were used in antiquity; however, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that Hellenistic rulers did, in fact, use literature as

⁸⁵ Moore. *Judith*, 48, cf. 60.

propaganda. But did Jewish Hellenistic writers and political leaders use literary political propaganda? *The Letter of Aristeas* and *I Maccabees* are two Jewish literary works that help discern the use of literary political propaganda in the Jewish world.

Part Two of this study explores the literary world of Shelamzion; that is, the forms, techniques and content that were used during the late Hellenistic period and that may have been used to fashion the character of Judith as well as determine the plot of the book. This exploration of the literary world of Shelamzion is hindered by the lack of literary theory about fiction and the nascent form of the novel. Yet it can be demonstrated that Hellenistic authors used techniques such as intertextuality and allegory to construct and articulate new meaning; this tendency needs to be explored in relations to the Book of Judith.

The third part of this dissertation examines the political world of Shelamzion. In this section I discuss the political history of Shelamzion's world from the perspective of the female descendants of Ptolemy Soter I. These women are the various Cleopatras who ruled Egypt and influenced Seleucid politics. I argue that Shelamzion had a certain amount of ideological guidance on which to model her rule. I attempt to extract elements of Hasmonean ideology towards kingship from *I Maccabees* and *The Letter of Aristeas*. After this discussion of ideals of Hasmonean monarchy I turn to a feminist reconstruction of the rule of Shelamzion. Here I examine Josephus' accounts of her reign in light of his tendencies. I distill certain personal qualities and elements of her administrative style from Josephus' accounts and compare these qualities and elements against the Hasmonean ideals of monarchy.

Part Four of the dissertation assesses the Book of Judith as political propaganda for Shelamzion. Here I revisit anthropological evidence about honour and shame as it pertains to internal and external group dynamics, notably the unique status of aristocratic women, and hospitality codes. I address the cultural values of honour and shame presented in the Book of Judith and highlight the political leadership of Judith. Lastly I argue that the characterization of Judith in this book was modeled on the personal qualities and administrative style of Shelamzion.

I. PROPAGANDA AND LITERARY PATRONAGE IN THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD

In the introduction, I mentioned briefly that the Hasmonean queen, Shelamzion, needed propaganda of some sort to help legitimate her rule. One critical issue for Shelamzion was the demonstration of divine approval for her leadership; however, claims to this type of approval had to be carefully established. Any propaganda that promoted her reign had to be effective enough to prove divine approval and yet not so demonstrative that it allowed her detractors to propagate the idea that she was raising herself above Jewish ideals for women and engaging in idolatrous behaviour. In fitting with the Hasmonean priority given to the land, Shelamzion also needed to demonstrate that she could effectively maintain the boundaries of her community. In the type of culture found in the Hellenistic period, a culture which was governed by the values of honour and shame, Shelamzion's ability to guard her own virtue could be symbolically expanded to signify that she was capable of maintaining the boundaries of her territory.

In this chapter I take a closer look at the production of literary works and their use as propaganda in antiquity. My aim is to assess whether someone who was close to and supportive of Shelamzion's rule could have written the Book of Judith. If this is possible, does the Book of Judith have the potential to be used as political propaganda? In order to address these issues, I first discuss the system of literary patronage which operated in the Hellenistic period. I will next discuss how propaganda was used by Hellenistic kings and queens as well as some of the materials created by Hellenistic-Jewish authors that are

particularly representative of the type of propaganda that was created for the Hasmoneans.

Delineating the terms of propaganda in antiquity is a difficult task which is made all the more challenging by the use of a relatively modern term to describe something that went un-named and largely unnoticed in antiquity. To help in this task, I will draw on the work of other historians who have studied propaganda in the ancient world; however, in surveying these studies I have found that the term “propaganda” is often used in a less distinct sense than I hoped. In the studies by contemporary scholars, the term “propaganda” is intertwined with nationalistic, cultural, religious and political elements, and distinguishing these elements, whenever possible, has proved problematic. My discussion will attempt to narrow the terminology to the use of nationalistic and political propaganda.

1. THE SYSTEM OF LITERARY PATRONAGE IN THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD

In the Hellenistic period the economics of literary patronage differed from that of today. In today's society, the arts rely on a certain amount of private funding from wealthy benefactors. Often the money that is donated to the arts goes to a business, which in turn helps artistic endeavours in a variety of ways. Seldom do wealthy benefactors provide money directly to an artist. This system differs greatly from that which was in place in antiquity. In antiquity, artistic endeavours were totally dependent on personal funding

that went directly to the artists; however, the artists, for their part, owed something back to their benefactors.

This system of “interpersonal obligation” is termed “patronage”. It was a system that was founded on the imbalance of power that existed between the wealthy and those who depended upon them.⁸⁶ It involved a reciprocal exchange of resources, mostly economic and political; benefactors would typically provide funding, accommodation or gifts in return for loyalty, an increase in status, or in this case, artistic products. The relationship between benefactors and their “friends”, although not a formal written contract, was nevertheless binding and long-term.

Within this system we find the rhetorician, poet, philosopher and scholar as “friends” of kings and other wealthy benefactors. Rhetors were not paid directly for each and every composition. Instead they lived their lives under the protection of a patron. It was believed that these talented persons should have the freedom to pursue their creative work without concern for their financial well-being.⁸⁷ As such, one of the most valued items a client could give their patron was a literary work composed on his or her behalf. These types of works could praise the patron, or his or her friends, or would criticize the patron’s enemies. These literary works were as valuable as a monument, or even more so, for they possessed a type of permanence and portability that monuments lacked, thereby bestowing on the recipient an immortal quality. From classical times onwards, the *literati* were clients of royal courts, their high esteem reflecting the value ascribed to

⁸⁶ These characteristics of patron-client relationships are drawn from S. N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society* (New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 48-50; an interesting discussion of literary patronage is found in Barbara K. Gold, *Literary Patronage in Greece and Rome* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987); for the Roman period, see R. P. Saller, “Martial on Patronage and Literature”, *Classical Quarterly* 33. 1 (1983) 246-257.

⁸⁷ Gold, *Literary Patronage*, 1-3.

literature in antiquity. Poems and other literary works held religious significance for such works were considered to be the product of divine inspiration.⁸⁸

The work of the Hellenistic kings, Ptolemy Soter and his son Ptolemy Philadelphus, demonstrate the high value placed on literature. Ptolemy Soter created the great library at Alexandria, Egypt, and Ptolemy Philadelphus continued his father's work, adding to the library and building its reputation as a centre of learning.⁸⁹ According to the Jewish legend recounted in the Hellenistic-Jewish work *Aristeas to Philocrates*, commonly called *The Letter of Aristeas*,⁹⁰ it was Ptolemy Philadelphus who commissioned a Greek translation of important foreign works for his library; one of these works was the Torah. This legend, although not created by the author of the "letter", offers an explanation of how the Septuagint, the Greek translation of Hebrew Scriptures, came into being; for our purposes evidence about the workings of the patronage system are evinced in this text.

From this letter we learn the importance of royal patronage for the production and translation of literature and the important role played by religious functionaries in this

⁸⁸ Gold, *Literary Patronage*, 16-17.

⁸⁹ Gold, *Literary Patronage*, 33-34.

⁹⁰ The English translation of the "letter", an introduction with bibliography by R. J. H. Shutt, is in Charlesworth, *OTP*, vol. 2, "Introduction" 7-11, "Aristeas to Philocrates", 12-34. The Greek text of this work as well as information on its manuscript transmission is found in Henry Barclay Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (New York: KTAV, 1968) 533-606. Reference to this letter will be in parentheses in the body of the text.

An excellent introduction to this work, which includes discussion of the Museum and its library at Alexandria as well as the Alexandrian Jewish community and a useful background on the development of the Septuagint (LXX), including its transmission in the Eastern, Western and Rabbinic traditions, is found in the critical commentary by André Pelletier, *Lettre d'Aristée à Philocrate* (Sources Chrétiennes, no. 89; Paris: Cerf, 1962). A classic resource for this period in general is the work by Peter Marshall Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* vol. 1 (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1972), henceforth *PA*. This work includes chapters on Ptolemaic patronage (pp. 305-335), Alexandrian scholarship (pp. 447-479), philosophy (pp. 480-494) and literature (pp. 495-716), and "*The Letter of Aristeas*" (pp. 696-703); cf. relevant notes in volume 2. See also the classic monograph by Sidney Jellicoe which discusses the relationship between this letter and the Septuagint, *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1968) 29-58. Albert Marie Denis offers a concise summary of the existing manuscripts in *Introduction aux pseudépigraphes grecs d'Ancien Testament* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970) 106-108, cf. 105, 109-110; see also G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Epistle of Aristeas", *JWSTP*, 75-80.

form of patronage. In the letter, the king is told that the versions of the Torah that exist in Alexandria were “carelessly” made because they lacked “royal patronage”, that is, someone to provide the funding for the best translations possible (30). The importance of royal patronage for the maintenance of scholarship is further demonstrated by Aristeeas’ observation that the king “... out of his love of culture, considered it of supreme importance to bring to his court any man, wherever he might be found, of outstanding culture and prudence which excelled his contemporaries” (124). This included the elders in Judea who translated the Torah. It is interesting to note that before the seventy elders returned to Judea, Philadelphus provides them with an open invitation to return to his court anytime (321).

The early Ptolemies did much to encourage literary production and they were honoured in return; however, it was not only the male rulers who were the subject of praise. Ptolemaic queens were also honoured. The third century scholar, Callimachus, produced two works honouring the two Ptolemaic queens, Arsinoë II and Berenice II. Queen Arsinoë was the co-regent of Egypt along with her brother, Ptolemy Philadelphus.⁹¹ Upon her death Callimachus wrote the lyric poem, *The Deification of Arsinoë*, of which we have only a fragment.⁹² In this poem, Callimachus calls on Apollo

⁹¹ Later in life, the two married. Both had been married before and had children from these earlier unions. This brother-sister union was political and it is possible that they ruled together but did not co-habit. Their union produced no children and Arsinoë was more interested in Philadelphus adopting her son from a previous marriage, Ptolemy, than she was in monitoring her husband’s sexual liaisons. She was an ambitious and astute woman whose political and military accomplishments prompted modern day historian Grace Macurdy to write: “in her energy, political foresight, and utter unscrupulousness the Gods made her to match the men of her time”, Grace Harriet Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens: A Study of Woman-power in Macedonia, Seleucid Syria, and Ptolemaic Egypt* (The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Archaeology, no. 14; ed. David M. Robinson; Chicago: Argonaut, 1967) 130. For more information on the life of Arsinoë, see Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 111-130, and Sarah Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt: From Alexander to Cleopatra* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984) 17-20.

⁹² Callimachus: *Aetia - Iambi - Lyric Poems - Hecale - Minor Epic and Elegiac Poems - Fragments of Epigrams - Fragments of Uncertain Location* (LCL; trans. C. A. Trypanis; 1968) no. 228, pp.162-169. For a thorough discussion of the contribution of Callimachus to Hellenistic literature, see Auguste Couat,

and the Muses to inspire his speech. The section of the poem that remains tells how Arsinoë's sister, Philotera, who predeceased Arsinoë and who also had been deified, learned of her death, when she was in the afterlife, by noticing the smoke from the funeral pyre.

*The Lock of Berenice*⁹³ was written for Queen Berenice, the wife of Ptolemy Euergetes. This work tells how a lock of Berenice's hair which she dedicated to the gods became one of the constellations. The close association between Arsinoë and Berenice with divinity and the cosmos was typical of Egyptian society where, since early dynastic times, the Pharaoh was considered to be divine. These two literary works by Callimachus demonstrate that clients of the Ptolemaic court also praised their female patrons.

By the first century B.C.E., literary circles grew around the sponsorship of a royal patron.⁹⁴ The poets and other authors in these circles did not lend their names to their works; their identity was considered to be less important than the product itself, the literary composition that praised their patron. These works, written on behalf of a royal patron, honoured the patron's achievements, often setting these achievements in a historical perspective. The literary work would also be tailored to reflect the patron's wishes and interests.⁹⁵ Eventually these intellectuals took on a more political role.⁹⁶

Callisthenes, for instance, was the "secretary" of Alexander the Great, yet he did not just

Alexandrian Poetry Under the First Three Ptolemies, 324-222 B.C. (trans. James Loeb; Chicago, Ares, 1991); *The Deification of Arsinoë* is discussed on pages 567-568; cf. C. A. Trypanis, *Greek Poetry From Homer to Seferis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981) 270-277, and the chapter by Fraser, in *PA*, 717-793. Macurdy also discusses this work in *Hellenistic Queens*, 127-128.

⁹³ *Callimachus*, no. 110, pp. 80-85. See also Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 133; Couat, *Alexandrian Poetry*, 118-125, especially page 118, ft. 4 which discusses the work's translation in ancient times by the Roman writer Catullus. On the life of Berenice II, see Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 130-136, and Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt*, 20-23.

⁹⁴ Gold, *Literary Patronage*, 7-8.

⁹⁵ Gold, *Literary Patronage*, 3.

⁹⁶ This close association between political leaders and *literati* continued on into the Roman period, see William S. Anderson, *Pompey, His Friends, and the Literature of the First Century B.C.* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963).

record events but created “laudatory and often fictionalized or vastly modified accounts” of these events.⁹⁷ This type of literary/political relationship between patron and client was part of later Jewish society as well. Nicolaus of Damascus was the secretary of Herod the Great and typical of his time. According to Ilan, his writing demonstrates a preference for drama over historical fact and a strong prejudice against women.⁹⁸

2. PROPAGANDA IN THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD

With the goal of supporting the interests of their patrons, rhetors’ works became increasingly political, so much so that some of these works took on the flavour of propaganda for a ruler or a nation. The following section presents a definition of propaganda and examines its contours in the ancient world. It discusses examples of Hellenistic literary propaganda and then examines works written by Hellenistic-Jewish authors. The works of these authors reveal the importance of literary patronage in Jewish society as well as the existence and function of propaganda within the Jewish community. Elements that help support my claim that the Book of Judith could have been written as political propaganda for the Hasmonean, Shelamzion, are found in *1 Maccabees* and in the remaining fragments of the epic poem by Theodotus. This discussion provides a background for assessing the possibility that the Book of Judith is political propaganda.

⁹⁷ Gold, *Literary Patronage*, 35.

⁹⁸ Ilan, *Integrating Women*, 125.

a The Definition and Contours of Propaganda

The word “propaganda” comes from the Latin verb “*propagare*”. This Latin word means, in this case, “to propagate”, in the sense of spreading information. The use of the term “propaganda” dates from medieval Christian times when it was used in the context of propagating or spreading the Christian faith. It is only in recent history that propaganda takes on first a political and then a negative, manipulative meaning.⁹⁹ In the Hellenistic world, there was no word for propaganda as such. It is, therefore, difficult to define propaganda when discussing ancient literature. The term “apologetic” is often applied to this literature;¹⁰⁰ however, it is important that we understand what is meant by this term. Apologetic literature defends a particular viewpoint, be it political, religious, or cultural.¹⁰¹ John J. Collins sees this literature as being directed to both Greeks and Jews.¹⁰²

Technically, propaganda has a manipulative quality. In antiquity, it involved, as R. Hadley remarks, attempts “to publicise a ruler’s actual achievements or omens, legends, and prophecies” with the function of self-aggrandizement and to encourage

⁹⁹ Cf. Jan N. Bremmer, “Myth as Propaganda: Athens and Sparta”, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 117 (1997) 9.

¹⁰⁰ John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U. K. and Livonia, MI: William B. Eerdmans and Dove Booksellers, 2000) 14-16.

¹⁰¹ See P. Kyle McCarter Jr., “‘Plots, True or False’: The Succession Narrative as Court Apologetic”, *Interpretation* 35.4 (1981) 358; Collins equates this type of literature with the promotion of “nationalistic” ideals; see *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 60; cf. his article titled “The Sibyl and the Potter: Political Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt”, *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World: Essays Honoring Dieter Georgi* (ed. Lukas Bormann, Kelly Del Tredici and Angela Standhartinger: Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994) 57-58. Here he qualifies Sibylline literature as unique because it possesses “an overt political element” (p. 58).

¹⁰² Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 15.

continued devotion not only to the ruler but to future members of the dynasty.¹⁰³ This type of propaganda was instrumental in the evolution of the Hellenistic ruler cult;¹⁰⁴ however, propaganda could also be used for less individualistic purposes. Propaganda could also be designed to evoke feelings or behaviours that support the self-identity of a cultural group.¹⁰⁵ This type of propaganda is most often called “nationalistic” by scholars; it may also, at times, contain political elements.¹⁰⁶

Distinguishing between nationalistic/cultural and political propaganda is challenging. For the purposes of this study, I tend to classify as political propaganda that which promotes a person in his or her political capacity. Propaganda that supports the ideals of a nation and fosters national pride I term nationalistic. The two terms are not mutually exclusive as political propaganda can promote a person as the fulfillment of the ideals of the nation. In the Book of Judith I note that both types of propaganda are being used.

In as much as they can be distinguished, political and nationalistic propaganda, both ancient and modern, contain certain distinct elements. I distil the contours of political/nationalistic propaganda from a 1982 article by Alan Lloyd that offers the best discussion I know of the elements of this type of propaganda that can be applied to ancient literature.¹⁰⁷ Although his article deals with literary propaganda that promotes a cultural ideal and not with what I would more narrowly call political propaganda that aims at legitimating the rule of a monarch, the critical elements that Lloyd identifies

¹⁰³ R. A. Hadley, “Royal Propaganda of Seleucus I and Lysimachus”, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 94 (1974) 51.

¹⁰⁴ Hadley, “Royal Propaganda”, 64-65.

¹⁰⁵ Alan B. Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt”, *Historia: Journal of Ancient History* 31 (1982) 35, cf. 55.

¹⁰⁶ In this category I would place the kind of literature Collins terms “apologetic”.

¹⁰⁷ Lloyd, “Nationalistic Propaganda”, 34-35.

remain unchanged. According to Lloyd, propaganda is (1) covert; it does not explicitly state that it aims at manipulating feelings or behaviour. In propaganda, (2) the enemy is clearly identified. (3) Symbols are used to convey messages and elicit the desired feelings. (4) Propaganda uses genres and media that are familiar to and accepted by its target audience and (5) sources believed by them to be authoritative. In many cases, this target audience is the general public or the literate elite who, according to Keith Whitelam, posed the most serious threat to the political status quo.¹⁰⁸ One non-literary example of political propaganda in antiquity is coins; coins have symbolic images on them and convey sentiments of national pride and/or political affiliation.

A most poignant example of the use of coins as propaganda is the Flavian *Judea capta* coins of the first century C.E.¹⁰⁹ These Roman coins were minted after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70. There are different types of these coins; however, they have many features in common. Generally they depict a Jewess sitting with her knees drawn close to her body and her head held in her hands. In some coins the Jewess is bound. These coins are propaganda, minted to demonstrate the glory of Rome and the

¹⁰⁸ Keith W. Whitelam, "The Symbols of Power: Aspects of Royal Propaganda in the United Monarchy", *BA* 49 (1986) 168. Although we know that texts were read aloud in antiquity we do not always know the venue in which this would take place. Literary works could be read aloud at banquets. The possibility that servants would have overheard the stories and transmitted them amongst their associates should not be overlooked. In a non-literary society it is remarkable how much can be memorized. *Second Maccabees* contains an intriguing reference to the fact that it is a "shorter" chronicle of Jason of Cyrene's five volume work written in part so that "those who are inclined to memorize" will have an easier time (2 Macc. 2: 23-25). On literacy in antiquity, see William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (London and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) and Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

¹⁰⁹ A discussion of the *Judea capta* coins within the context of later Jewish literature can be found in the article by Philip F. Esler, "God's Honour and Rome's Triumph: Responses to the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE in Three Jewish Apocalypses", *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context* (ed. Philip F. Esler; New York and London: Routledge, 1995) 246-254. Although Esler doesn't label the three apocalypses, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch* and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, as nationalistic propaganda, these literary works may be considered as such for they aim at bolstering Jewish identity. For an example of non-literary propaganda in the Ptolemaic period, see E. E. Rice, *The Grand Procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus* (Oxford and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1983).

shame of Israel and her God. The enemy, in this case, Judea, is clearly depicted. Such a coin would have a powerful impact on many who used it. Romans would feel pride, Jews humiliation. Anyone else would be keenly aware of how Rome treated its enemies, if they didn't already know. These coins served to legitimate the new power structure.

b. *Literary Propaganda in the Hellenistic Period*

Sociologically, propaganda plays an important role in creating and maintaining political systems.¹¹⁰ As we have seen, propaganda involves the distribution of a certain type of information. Although coins were an obvious means of propaganda in antiquity, the images on them would be meaningless without connection to a pre-existing symbol system that the target audience understood. In many cases these coins were used in conjunction with artistic and literary propaganda.

Literary propaganda also played a crucial function in the Hellenistic ruler cult. Seleucus I and Lysimachus successfully promoted themselves through the use of stories (*logoi*) as well as coinage.¹¹¹ These stories drew on myths and achievements of past rulers and highlighted the present ruler's charisma, or explained how his reign was divinely sanctioned. All this functioned to legitimate political power and solidify further dynastic claims.

¹¹⁰ See Antti Laato, "Assyrian Propaganda and the Falsification of History in the Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib", *VT* 45. 2 (1995) 198-226; Whitelam, "The Symbols of Power", 166-173. For the use of political propaganda during the reign of David, see Keith W. Whitelam, "The Defence of David", *JSOT* 29 (1984) 61-87.

¹¹¹ Hadley, "Royal Propaganda", 54, 64. See also Martin P. Nilsson, *Cults, Myths, Oracles, and Politics in Ancient Greece with two Appendices: The Ionian Phylae, The Phratries* (Göteborg: Paul Åström förlag, 1986) 81, 113.

The use of propaganda to legitimate political power predates the Ptolemaic rulers who are mentioned above. Ancient Greek society created or adapted genealogies and myths in order to demonstrate land rights, to bolster national pride, or justify military action.¹¹² Isocrates writes in the fourth century and draws on the Demeter/Kore myth to demonstrate the superiority of Athens.¹¹³ Chronologies were also used as propaganda,¹¹⁴ as were eponyms, which gave a people claim to a common ancestor. For the Greeks, one such ancestor was Hellen, the son of Deucalion.¹¹⁵ In Hellenistic times, Seleucus claimed to be the son of Apollo.¹¹⁶ For Jews as well, one eponym in particular united a nation, that of Jacob who is said to have been given the name “Israel” by an angel (Gen. 32: 28).

This tradition of drawing on myths, ancient history and ancestors continued into Hellenistic time and is demonstrated by the fragment of a Jewish author named Cleodemus Malchus.¹¹⁷ The only fragment we have of his work associates various

¹¹² Bremmer, “Myth as Propaganda”. 11, cf. 16.

¹¹³ *Panegyricus*, Isocrates, vol. 1 (trans. George Norlin; London and Cambridge, MA: William Heinemann and Harvard University Press, 1964) § 28-30. See also Charles D. Hamilton, “Isocrates IG ii² 43, Greek Propaganda and Imperialism”, *Traditio* 36 (1980) 83-109.

¹¹⁴ W. Den Boer, “Political Propaganda in Greek Chronology”, *Historia: Journal of Ancient History* 5 (1956) 162-177.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Martin Hengel, *Jews, Greeks and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the Pre-Christian Period* (1976; trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980) 55.

¹¹⁶ Nilsson, *Cults, Myths, Oracles*, 111.

¹¹⁷ The Greek text is found in Carl R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, vol.1 (SBL, Texts and Translations Series, 20 and Pseudepigrapha Series, 10; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983) 245-259, and Felix Jacoby, *FGrH*, no. 727, 3c, pp. 686-687. The English translation by Robert Doran is found in *OTP*, vol. 2, 883-887. Alexander Polyhistor, a historian of the first century B.C.E and a contemporary of Diodorus of Sicily and Nicolaus of Damascus, originally preserved this little passage of Cleodemus Malchus. His work was unique in that he copied the works of others at length, and thanks to him we have access to many works that would have otherwise been lost to us, albeit in a fragmentary form. Later writers, in this case Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* [trans. Ralph Marcus; LCL; London and Cambridge, MA: William Heinemann and Harvard University Press, 1958] 1. 239-241), and more typically Eusebius (*Praeparatio Evangelica* 9. 20. 2-4), quote him at length. Thus we have these fragments third-hand. On the life of Polyhistor and his works the classic scholarly study is J. Freudenthal, *Hellenistische Studien, 1-2: Alexander Polyhistor und die von ihm erhaltenen Reste jüdischer und samaritanischer Geschichtswerke* (Breslau: Skutsch, 1875); see also Ben Zion Wacholder, *Eupolemus: A Study of Judaeo-Greek Literature* (Cincinnati and New York: Hebrew Union College, 1974) 44-52. The fragments in Greek are found in Jacoby, *FGrH*, 3c, no. 723, pp. 671-678. On Cleodemus Malchus, see Denis, *Introduction aux pseudépigraphes*, 244-246; Martin Goodman in Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, vol. 3 /part 1. 526-528.

peoples with the Jews through Abraham as the common ancestor.¹¹⁸ These sons of Abraham are said to be Afera, Surim and Iafra. According to Cleodemus Malchus “Assyria was named after Surim; the city of Afra and the region Africa were named after Afera and Iafra ...”.¹¹⁹ Likewise, genealogies in biblical literature served a political purpose, specifically the legitimation of political power or authority; Robert Wilson observes that these politically oriented genealogies derive their meaning from their narrative context.¹²⁰ Later we will see this phenomenon in the Book of Judith, where the genealogy that the author provides legitimates Judith’s claim to authority.

In addition to using myths, genealogies and eponyms, political propaganda could also draw on religious symbolism. In the second century B.C.E., Cleopatra III drew on religious symbolism for propagandist purposes. In a move that went one step beyond Egyptian tradition, Cleopatra III portrayed herself as Isis Incarnate.¹²¹ The portrayal of herself as a “living goddess”, as John Whitehorne calls her, not only increased her popularity but provided a marked contrast to the wicked deeds of her co-regent, her uncle/husband Ptolemy VIII Euergetes.

Like the propagandist stories of Seleucus I and Lysimachus, stories that appealed to national pride and reaffirmed a sense of cultural identity can also be termed propaganda. Alan Lloyd discusses four such stories that originate in Ptolemaic Egypt. *The Sesostris Romance*, *The Demotic Chronicle*, the story of Nectanebo found in the *Alexander Romance*, and *The Potter’s Oracle* all bolster Egyptian cultural identity

¹¹⁸ Cf. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 51-52.

¹¹⁹ Doran, “Cleodemus Malchus”, *OTP*, 887.

¹²⁰ Robert B. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven and London: Yale University, 1977) 193.

¹²¹ John Whitehorne. *Cleopatras* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994) 122, cf. 129-130. On her life see Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*. 161-170.

through various means.¹²² The cultural superiority of Egypt is the common theme in all these stories. In the *Sesostris Romance*,¹²³ the main character, Sesostris, is portrayed as an ideal Pharaoh, a conflation of Egyptian ideals and historical reminiscences of Pharaonic past;¹²⁴ he is also a great military leader and, as such, personifies “Egypt triumphant”.¹²⁵ This tale plays with historical information, portraying Egypt as conquering Scythia, a “fact” that is incorrect but which, according to Lloyd, is intended to present the Egyptian military forces as being more powerful than the Persians, who had failed to conquer Scythia.¹²⁶ The two texts present oracles (*The Demotic Chronicle* and *The Potter’s Oracle*) and stress the value of Egyptian Pharaohs to live in accordance with the divine order (*ma’at*) before they will be allowed to return to power.

The Nectanebo tale¹²⁷ from the *Alexander Romance* is particularly relevant to the Book of Judith. The *Alexander Romance* reached its final form early in the fourth century C.E.; however it contains elements which date from an earlier period, and the Nectanebo story is one of them.¹²⁸ In this tale, Nectanebo, who is “the last native king of Egypt”, is also an excellent magician and prophet; he foresees the defeat of Egypt by Artaxerxes III in the fourth century B.C.E. and predicts his own return to Egypt, this time

¹²² I will be discussing *The Sesostris Romance* and the story of Nectanebo from *The Alexander Romance* in the next chapter.

¹²³ An early version of the story is found in the work of the fifth century historian Herodotus, *The Histories* 2. 102-110; the tale is also recounted by the first century B.C.E historian Diodorus Siculus, see *The Library of Histories* (1.53.1 - 1.58.4). A discussion of this story in the context of Hellenistic literature is found in Martin Braun, *History and Romance in Graeco-Oriental Literature* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1938) 13-18. Lloyd’s discussion of the *Sesostris Romance* is found in “Nationalist Propaganda”, 37-40. I will discuss this story further below.

¹²⁴ Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda”, 38.

¹²⁵ Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda”, 40.

¹²⁶ Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda”, 39.

¹²⁷ Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda”, 46-50.

¹²⁸ Lloyd L. Gunderson, “Early Elements in the Alexander Romance”, *Ancient Macedonia: Papers Read at the First International Symposium Held in Thessaloniki, 26-29 August 1968* (ed. Basil Laourdas and Ch. Makaronas; Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1970) 354-375. See also Braun, *History and Romance*. 19-25. This tale will also be discussed below.

as a young man. This prophecy is realized for, according to the story, after Egypt was conquered by the Persians, Nectanebo travels to Macedonia and seduces Olympia, becoming the biological father of Alexander who, in turn, ends the Persian dominance of Egypt. This tale is important for our study of the Book of Judith because it demonstrates a tradition of using the trickster character in conjunction with the seduction of a powerful woman and draws on the idea that sexual dominance is synonymous with political domination, elements that are hallmarks of the Book of Judith.

Lloyd believes that all four stories were authored by local Egyptian priests and that their target audience was the general populace.¹²⁹ Although he prefers to think of these texts as “cultural propaganda”, they all have a definite political element to them, particularly in that they deal with the threat of losing national identity due to a foreign invasion.

c. Literary Patronage and Jewish Propaganda in The Letter of Aristeas

The Letter of Aristeas,¹³⁰ as it is typically known, presents itself as a correspondence between two Greek men, Aristeas and Philocrates. It is a discourse, told in the first person by someone named Aristeas, about how the Torah came to be translated into Greek by seventy-two Jewish elders. According to Aristeas, Ptolemy Philadelphus was collecting books for his library at Alexandria and asked his chief librarian, Demetrius, about the project. Demetrius informs him that the Scriptures of the Jews are worth acquiring; apparently the existing scrolls are not of the quality they should be because

¹²⁹ Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda”, 40, 45, 50, 54-55.

¹³⁰ For the scholarly works on this “letter”: see footnote 5.

copying so far has lacked royal patronage (30). Ptolemy sends a letter to Eleazar the high priest in Jerusalem requesting that he send to Alexandria six elders from each of Israel's twelve tribes who are educated in the Law and able to translate (39); however, before doing so, the king is persuaded by Aristeeas to release all the Jewish slaves that were taken in the campaign by his father as a "thank-offering" (19-22, 37). The king also sends gifts and personnel to Eleazar and among them is Aristeeas.

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Aristeeas describes the Temple, its sacrificial arena and the high priest (84-99). Eleazar then selects seventy-two elders who "had not only mastered the Jewish literature, but had made a serious study of that of the Greeks as well" (121).¹³¹ Next follows an allegorical discussion of an aspect of dietary law (150-161); the arrival of the elders in Alexandria and their unprecedented immediate reception by the king (174-175); and a seven day symposium during which time each member of the group responds favourably to the king's philosophical questions and impresses even the Greek philosophers themselves (187-296). The final section that outlines the translation of the Torah is unexpectedly brief; the elders finish their task in seventy-two days and their work is read to the Jewish community in Alexandria (307-308) before the elders return home with gifts (319-320).

The Letter of Aristeeas was not actually a letter. Scholars doubt that it was actually written by a person named Aristeeas. For this reason, the work is sometimes referred to as *The Letter of Pseudo-Aristeeas*. It may be that the author of the text drew on the reputation of a Hellenistic Jewish writer of the time who was named Aristeeas, and who

¹³¹ On the value the Jews placed on a Greek education, see Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period*, vol. 1 (London and Philadelphia: SCM Press and Fortress Press, 1974) 65-78. For the specifics of a Greek education, see Henri Irénée Marrou, "Classical Education in the Hellenistic Age", *A History of Education in Antiquity* (1956; trans. George Lamb: Toronto: Mentor Books, 1964) 137-308.

wrote *Concerning the Jews*.¹³² This work exists only in a fragment preserved by Eusebius in his *Preparatio Evangelium* (9. 25). At any rate, the author of the supposed letter had first hand knowledge of court practices in Ptolemaic Egypt.¹³³ Although the voice of the author of “the letter to Aristeeas” speaks as someone who is outside the Jewish community looking in with admiration at the quality of Jewish thought and scholarship, the author’s identity as a Jew, probably an Alexandrian Jew, nevertheless, underscores the text.

Scholars are the least in agreement over the date of the text. Fraser believes it was written about 160 B.C.E., based on Aristobulus’ knowledge of the letter; however, determining the exact date of “*The Letter of Aristeeas*” is not necessary here.¹³⁴ For the purposes of my argument, it is reasonably safe to assume that this work was written either before or about the same time as the Book of Judith and therefore belongs to the same literary climate.

The letter format is a vehicle for the author’s message.¹³⁵ This format and the inclusion of “historical” information make this work seem like an authentic historical document, much the same way as does the introduction to The Book of Judith; however the style of presentation is just the author’s literary device. Precisely what type of genre the work is has been debated. Some scholars believe that it may have been a speech of

¹³² Moses Hadas, *Aristeeas to Philocrates* (New York: KTAV, 1973) 4.

¹³³ Fraser, *PA*, vol. I, 699; cf. 703.

¹³⁴ Fraser, *PA*, vol. I, 696; for an excellent summary of the attempts to date this work see Goodman in Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, vol. 3/1, 679-684. Tcherikover accepts Bickerman’s date of sometime in the second half of the second century, “The Ideology of *The Letter of Aristeeas*”, *HTR* 51 (1958) 60, ft. 9 [= *Studies in the Septuagint: Origins, Recensions, and Interpretations* (New York: KTAV, 1974) 181-207]. See Elias Bickerman, “Zur Datierung des Pseudo-Aristeeas”, *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 29 (1930) 280-298 [= *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, part I (Leiden: Brill, 1976) 108-136]; Hadas (*Aristeeas to Philocrates*) settles on 130 B.C.E. based on internal (pp. 9-18) and external evidence (pp. 18-53). The few scholars who date the work to the Roman period are noted in Denis, *Introduction aux pseudépigraphes*, 110.

¹³⁵ I agree here with Hadas, *Aristeeas to Philocrates*, 59.

some sort,¹³⁶ but it is more likely that Moses Hadas is correct in judging the work to be a narrative.¹³⁷ The author calls it a *diegesis*. According to ancient literary criticism, Hadas argues correctly that it is a type of literature termed *πλάσματα* (*plasmata*): “an imaginative treatment of history which should however preserve historical verisimilitude and present a higher ‘poetical’ truth”.¹³⁸ The few “historical facts” which are presented in the work are often incorrect.¹³⁹ Demetrius was never the chief librarian in Philadelphus’ time and there are problems with the information the author gives about the philosopher Menedemus. It is highly unlikely that the Septuagint was translated in the way in which the author would have us believe.¹⁴⁰

As a sample of Hellenistic literature,¹⁴¹ *The Letter of Aristeas* purports to demonstrate the close association between Jews and Greeks. Not only does the king want Jewish Scripture included in his library, but he and the visiting Greek philosophers are quite impressed with the performance at the symposia of the seventy-two elders, who, although Judean, are, nevertheless, well versed in Greek literature. *The Letter of Aristeas* has long been believed to be propaganda, albeit of the apologetic kind; however, Victor Tcherikover successfully demonstrates that its target audience was the Jewish community in Alexandria and not the Greek.¹⁴² It portrays the Judean elders as proficient in, not only the Greek language, but Greek literature, and supports the Greek education of Jews

¹³⁶ Nickelsburg, “Epistle of Aristeas”, 78.

¹³⁷ Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates*, 56.

¹³⁸ Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates*, 57-58.

¹³⁹ Denis, *Introduction aux pseudépigraphes*, 109; Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates*, 7-9.

¹⁴⁰ See also Jellicoe’s discussion of contemporary ideas of the origin of the Septuagint, *The Septuagint and Modern Study*, 59-73. See also Emanuel Tov, “Jewish and Greek Scriptures”, in *EJMI*, 224-225.

¹⁴¹ Victor Tcherikover, “The Ideology of Aristeas”, 186-186; Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates*, 54-59.

¹⁴² Many scholars writing before Tcherikover believed that the target of Aristeas’ propaganda was the Greeks. Tcherikover presents a brief discussion of their views in his article, “The Ideology of *The Letter of Aristeas*”, *HTR* 51 (1958) 59-60; the remainder of his article proves his thesis that the propaganda is, in fact, aimed at Alexandrian Jews, cf. 60-85 [= *Studies in the Septuagint: Origins, Recensions, and Interpretations* (New York: KTAV, 1974) 181-207].

throughout the Diaspora and in Judea as well, provided Jewish religious practices are retained.

d. *Jewish Political Propaganda: The Sibylline Oracle, Book Three*

With *The Letter of Aristeas* we see a type of propaganda that advocates a close association with the Greek way of life. This association includes linguistic ties (the translation of the Torah), personal bonds (Philadelphus' invitation to the elders to return to his court) and the embracing of Greek education. Yet, at the same time, the letter also promotes the continuation of a Jewish way of life. The author of this narrative was, therefore, careful to avoid presenting Hellenistic Greek culture as normative. The story of the Greek translation of the Torah is situated in a broader cultural context; a context in which there is a safe degree of accommodation to the dominant culture and a reciprocal degree of acceptance from that culture.

In addition to cultural propaganda, Jews, as the above example demonstrates, adapted certain literary forms that existed in Hellenistic society. There existed also, as we have seen, Hellenistic literature that served as propaganda for political purposes. In this section, I will discuss Jewish political propaganda. There are three particular Jewish works of this period that are pertinent to my discussion. These are the Jewish *Sibylline Oracles* (specifically Book 3), *1 Maccabees* and the fragments of *The Epic of Theodotus*. The first example demonstrates the use of Jewish political propaganda in support of a

foreign king. The last two serve as examples of political propaganda that support the Hasmonean dynasty and will be discussed in the next section.

Oracular literature was one of the types of literature the Jews adapted from the Greeks. This type of literature was derived from the ecstatic prophecies delivered by the famous Sibyls,¹⁴³ whose prophetic utterances were written down over time. Later authors wrote in this prophetic style which Fraser describes as “traditionally wild, chaotic, and obscure”.¹⁴⁴ By writing in this pagan style Jews participated in the Sibyl’s lengthy tradition, drawing on her long-standing religious authority.¹⁴⁵

Oracular literature was easily adapted by the Jews who were themselves accustomed to the prophetic literature of the Bible.¹⁴⁶ The books are written in hexameter verse and, although they conform in literary style, they are a complex and wild array of loosely related prophecies. It is difficult to distinguish literary units within the books and their arrangement cannot necessarily be relied upon as reflecting the intent of a particular author or redactor.¹⁴⁷ There are twelve Sibylline oracles written¹⁴⁸ which

¹⁴³ The history of the Sibylline prophecy is long and complex and will not be fully treated here; however, literary evidence for their existence dates from the sixth century B.C.E. An excellent discussion of the Sibyls, including ancient sources, is provided by Goodman in Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, 618-626; cf. H. W. Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity* (ed. B. C. McGing; London and New York: Routledge, 1988) and John J. Collins, *Seers, Sibyls and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997).

¹⁴⁴ Fraser, *PA*, 711.

¹⁴⁵ Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 84.

¹⁴⁶ On the connection between prophecy and political propaganda in biblical literature, see Jesper Høgenhaven, “Prophecy and Propaganda: Aspects of Political and Religious Reasoning in Israel and the Ancient Near East”, *SJOT* 1 (1989) 125-141.

¹⁴⁷ Goodman, in Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, 631-632.

¹⁴⁸ The books are preserved in two collections and, although they number one to fourteen, Book Nine contains excerpts from the first collection and Book Ten duplicates Book Four. See John J. Collins, “Sibylline Oracles”, *OTP*, vol. 1, 320-321. For further details on the manuscript transmission, see Goodman in Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, 3/1, 628-631. For critical editions, see Collins, “Sibylline Oracles”, 325. A great deal of the English literature on the oracles is from Collins; see his dissertation *The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism* (SBL Diss. Series, no. 13; Missoula; SBL and Scholars’ Press, 1974), his articles “The Development of the Sibylline Tradition” in *ANRW* 20. 1 (1987) 421-459, “The Sibyl and the Potter”, 57-69, “The Sibylline Oracles”, in *JWSTP*, 357-381, and *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 83-97.

contain pagan and Jewish elements some with later Christian interpolations. The oracles were “religious” propaganda; however, their political overtones were often dominant.¹⁴⁹

Of the twelve prophecies it is generally agreed that Book Three is predominantly Jewish and contains the oldest layer.¹⁵⁰ It is a composite work; however, the core of the book is comprised of verses 97-349 and 489-829.¹⁵¹ Collins believes that this main section was written in Egypt and dates from the time of Ptolemy Philometor, about 163-145 B.C.E.

Book Three begins with the construction of the tower of Babel and includes a pagan account of the time when Greek gods ruled the earth (110-158).¹⁵² After the gods

¹⁴⁹ While classifying the oracles as “religious propaganda”, Goodman also observes that they “...often carried a political message which was usually dire”, in Schürer *The History of the Jewish People*, 3/1, 626-627; on their function as political propaganda, see Collins, “Sibylline Oracles”, 320, and “The Sibyl and the Potter”, 58. For a discussion of other types of political oracles in the ancient Near East, see Collins, *The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism*, 9-19.

¹⁵⁰ Fraser, *PA*, 708; Goodman in Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, 3/1, 632, a survey of its contents is found on pp. 633-634; Collins, “The Development of the Sibylline Tradition”, 430.

¹⁵¹ Of Collins’ numerous studies on the topic, the best introduction to this main section of Book 3 is in Charlesworth’s *OTP*, vol. 1, 354-357; cf. *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 84-87.

¹⁵² The reference to the Titans is not unique to this oracle; it is also found in the fragments of Pseudo-Eupolemus (preserved by Alexander Polyhistor in Eusebius’ *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.17.2-3, 9 and 9.18.2) who speaks of them in connection with Abraham. Reference to the Titans is also found in the second fragment of Thallus who mentions a Titan in passing in his discussion of the antiquity of Moses. According to Robert Graves, the Titans (“lords”) were the planetary powers created by Eurynome, the Goddess of All Things. The Titans have a complicated history that predates their place in Greek mythology. Graves observes that they were originally Canaanite deities which governed the days of the week; however, in all probability, the mention of the Titans in Jewish literature of this time derives from their appearance in Hellenistic literature. For more information on Alexander Polyhistor, see footnote 27; on the Titans in Greek mythology, see Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, vol. 1 (1955; London: Penguin Books, 1960) §1-1.3, pp. 27-29, and Hesiod’s “Theogony”, in *The Poems of Hesiod* (R. M. Frazer; Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985) § 126-38, pages 32-33.

Of particular interest for our study are the references in Book 3 to the Titans (110-157); see also Fraser, *PA*, 709. These references to the Titans in the Sibylline oracles could explain a similar reference to Titans in the “Song of Judith” (16: 7). If there is a connection between this Jewish oracle and the Book of Judith, there could also be an association with its controversial verses 75-92. These verses speak of a widow that rules the world and whose actions (throwing metals into the sea) foreshadow the end of creation and the judgement of God. Collins argues that this passage refers to Cleopatra VII who fought at the battle of Actium (*The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism*, 66-70); however, there is no solid reason to connect this unit with that particular Cleopatra and neither are there grounds for calling her “the eschatological adversary of God” (p. 69). Although Cleopatra VII is mentioned elsewhere in the oracles (Bk. 3, 350-380, and Bk. 11, 243-260), the reference here is too vague for a confident assertion. In keeping with the date of the main corpus of Bk. 3, the widow referred to here may well be one of two Ptolemaic queens: (1) Cleopatra II, wife of Philometor, and who was associated with Isis and well respected by the Jews (see

kill each other there follows a series of kingdoms including Persian, Median, and Assyrian/Babylonian¹⁵³ (158-161; cf. 196-217). The Sibyl, who later claims to be the daughter of Noah and that she was present during the flood (819-820), then prophesies that the rule of the seventh Ptolemaic king of Egypt will usher in the rule of God's people (162-195), and praise of the Jews then follows (218-294). In this last section disasters are prophesied (489- 544); the Greeks are condemned (545- 572), the Jews are praised for a second time (573-600), the cosmic judgement is prophesied with an exhortation for pagans to convert and the eschatological kingdom is described (601-808).

While some scholars have seen support for the Maccabean revolt in this book, Collins has effectively argued against this view.¹⁵⁴ Instead, Collins sees support for a Ptolemaic king as messiah. Critical to his argument is the importance of the "seventh king" who is a Ptolemy (192-193, 318 and 608) and the messianic "king from the sun" (286, 611, and esp. 652ff) who, according to Egyptian mythology, is associated with Isis.¹⁵⁵ This situation coincides with the reign of Ptolemy VI Philometor who supported Onias IV, the son of Onias III, last hereditary high priest of the cult in Jerusalem. Onias

Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 147-161, esp. 153-156), or (2) Cleopatra III who was the first to proclaim herself as Isis Incarnate, lived during this time, and, although less well-liked than her mother, still had Jewish advisors in her army and supported the Hasmonean king Yannai in his conflict with her son (*Jewish Antiquities* 13. 348-355). On the life of Cleopatra III, see above.

It is possible that the passage in question (75-92), which is typically recognized as not belonging to the main corpus, actually resonates with a later passage within the main body of the text. Verses 781 to 787 form part of the description of the eschatological kingdom. In this section, it is said that the "Prophets of the great God" who judge men and "righteous kings" will "take away the sword" (781-782). The woman in verse 75 to 79 "casts the bronze and iron of ephemeral men into the sea", in other words, she takes away the sword. It is possible that this woman is meant as the one in whom God dwells and who has been given "the joy of the age" (786-787).

¹⁵³ Here these two empires are considered as one; see Collins, "The Sibylline Oracles: Book 3", 368, ft. e2.

¹⁵⁴ See Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 88-91. The three scholars who see Hasmonean propaganda in this book are Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975) 118-119; J. Nolland, "Sib Or III. 265-94: An Early Maccabean Messianic Oracle", *JTS* 30 (1979) 158-167 and J. M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE - 117 CE)* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1996) 223.

¹⁵⁵ Collins, "The Sibylline Oracle: Book 3", *OTP*, vol. 1. 376, ft. x3.

III was disposed by the Seleucid Antiochus Epiphanes.¹⁵⁶ Onias IV founded the Jewish colony at Leontopolis. Collins believes that the Ptolemaic messiah referred to in this book is Philometor, and that this Jewish oracle is therefore political propaganda for the Jewish support of a Ptolemaic king.¹⁵⁷

3. HASMONEAN LITERARY PROPAGANDA

Other adaptations of Hellenistic literature also served a political purpose. The historiography, *1 Maccabees*, and the epic poem of Theodotus promoted the Hasmonean dynasty of which Queen Shelamzion was a member. This section provides some background information about the inception of this dynasty and discusses the works of *1 Maccabees* and *The Epic of Theodotus* as political propaganda.

a. *The House of Hashmonay*

The Hasmonean dynasty, we are told, especially in *1 Maccabees*, began with the sons of Mattathias, the son of Asmonaeus.¹⁵⁸ Mattathias was the grandson of Simeon, a priest in the Jerusalem cult who moved from Jerusalem to Modein (*1 Macc.* 2: 1), presumably due

¹⁵⁶ Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 96.

¹⁵⁷ Collins, *The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism*, 43-44; cf. Collins, "The Sibylline Oracle: Book 3", 355-356, and Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 94.

¹⁵⁸ Josephus, *The Jewish War*, I. 36; on the frequency of the name in Josephus and its origin, see Joseph Sievers, *The Hasmoneans and Their Supporters: From Mattathias to the Death of John Hyrcanus I* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990) 28-29, and Goldstein, *1 Maccabees*, 17-21.

to the intolerable situation under Antiochus Epiphanes. Mattathias had five sons, one of whom was called Judas and was nicknamed “the Hammer” or “Maccabeus” (*1 Macc.* 2: 1). It was Mattathias and his five sons who began what was later called the Maccabean revolt, a revolt which created the basis for the family’s political control of Judea from about the middle of the second century until the Roman conquest of Judea in 63 B.C.E.¹⁵⁹ The story of this revolt is told in *1* and *2 Maccabees* and also in Josephus’ works *The Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*.¹⁶⁰

The first Hasmonean to hold power as a high priest was Jonathan, who was appointed by the Seleucid king Alexander Epiphanes (*1 Macc.* 10: 18-20). After Jonathan’s murder, Simon was appointed high priest (*1 Macc.* 13: 23, 36). Still control of the priesthood remained with the Seleucids, although apparently they and the Jewish populace quickly became used to Hasmonean leadership. During this time, the Seleucid dynasty suffered with its own internal rivalries for power. After Simon, his wife and two of his sons were treacherously murdered at a banquet given by his son-in-law, the Jewish general Ptolemy, another son of Mattathias, John Hyrcanus, took over the priesthood. He was the first Hasmonean to take power without sanction from the Seleucids.¹⁶¹

John Hyrcanus ruled Judea from 135 to 104 B.C.E., during which time rivalries in the Seleucid dynasty worsened. Hyrcanus stopped paying tribute to the Seleucids and acted with increasing independence. He continued the territorial conquests started by his father, beginning with Shechem in the north, then turning to Idumea where, according to

¹⁵⁹ The causes of the Maccabean revolt are complex and will not be discussed here. For a good summary of the major theories on this issue, see Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaism From Cyrus to Hadrian*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) 247-256; for a chronology of the events leading to the revolt, see Sievers, *The Hasmoneans*, 15-26.

¹⁶⁰ *The Jewish War* 1. 36 - 1. 137 and *Jewish Antiquities*, 12. 237-13. 229.

¹⁶¹ *Jewish Antiquities*, 13. 228-230.

Josephus, he forced the men to be circumcised.¹⁶² A while later, he besieged Samaria and left it in ruins, digging beneath the wall into an underground stream until it collapsed.¹⁶³ He controlled Judea for just over thirty years and died a natural death.

The expansionist mission that Simon started continued with Hyrcanus and his sons Aristobulus I, and Alexander Janneus (or Yannai). By the time Janneus died, Judea was the largest it had been since the monarchy in biblical times. These military conquests were characteristic of the Hasmonean dynasty;¹⁶⁴ first Jewish control of Judea was re-established, then secured and, finally, under Simon, Hyrcanus, Aristobulus and Janneus, the territories which according to Jewish tradition had once been part of Jewish soil were reclaimed.

First Maccabees constructs the Hasmonean agenda of conquest and reclamation. As part of this agenda, it recounts that Simon told an envoy of Antiochus VII Sidetes: “We have neither taken foreign land nor seized foreign property, but only the inheritance of our father, which at one time had been unjustly taken by our enemies. Now that we have the opportunity, we are firmly holding the inheritance of our fathers.”¹⁶⁵ This idea that the Hasmoneans were reclaiming ancestral territory was obviously passed down through generations for even Josephus records of the Idumean take-over by John Hyrcanus that they submitted to circumcision “out of attachment to the *land* of their fathers”.¹⁶⁶ Likewise, Doron Mendels correctly observes that the land played a critical role in “the collective memory” of the Jews, and that the ability to occupy it “was always

¹⁶² *Jewish Antiquities*, 13. 254-258.

¹⁶³ *Jewish Antiquities*, 13. 275-281.

¹⁶⁴ Tessa Rajak, “Hasmonean Kingship and the Invention of Tradition”, *Aspects of Hellenistic Kingship* (Studies in Hellenistic Civilization, no. 7; ed. Per Bilde, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Lise Hannestad, and Jan Zahle; Oxford and Oakville, CT: Aarhus University, 1996) 112.

¹⁶⁵ *Jewish Antiquities*, 13. 33-34.

¹⁶⁶ *Jewish Antiquities*, 13. 258, emphasis mine.

dependent on the character and power of the Jewish political authority".¹⁶⁷ This authority had to have some degree of public sanction which required a process of legitimation for, although the Hasmoneans, like other Hellenic rulers, used mercenaries these campaigns, nevertheless, cost money and Jewish lives.

b. *First Maccabees*

The history of the Hasmonean military conquests is recounted in *1 Maccabees*. This work was written by an anonymous author¹⁶⁸ early in the first century B.C.E., probably in Hebrew or Aramaic, for, like the Book of Judith, evidence of a Semitic original shows

¹⁶⁷ Doron Mendels, *The Land of Israel as a Political Concept in Hasmonean Literature: Recourse to History in Second Century B.C. Claims to the Holy Land* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1987) 2. Mendels' discussion includes the Book of Judith; however he dates it sometime between 140-133 B.C.E., only because the book states that Jerusalem is independent and the Temple is purified. Mendels believes that the period it reflects must therefore date before the persecution of Antiochus VII Euergetes (pp. 51, 53). Mendels also dates *1 Maccabees* to this time, and believes that the Book of Judith and *1 Macc.* 10-14 both reflect the same type of political/religious authority, namely the High Priest as *strategos* and the role of the *gerousia* (p. 54); however, Mendels overlooks the role played by Judith as *strategos* (Jdt. 10: 11-13: 10; 14: 1-5) and her control of the *gerousia* (Jdt. 8: 10-34). Organizing Jewish literature of this time in chronological order is a risky task, since the dates of these works can seldom be established within the narrow time frame that Mendels' argument requires. It is unfortunate that he didn't chose a thematic or some other approach, because the basic idea of his work, the importance of the land as reflected in this literature, is a good one.

¹⁶⁸ Ben Zion Wacholder believes that the work of the Jewish historian Eupolemus is echoed in *1 Maccabees* and in a lost work known as the *Acts of Judah*. See Wacholder, *Eupolemus: A Study in Judaeo-Greek Literature* (Cincinnati and New York: Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, 1974) 35-38.

through the extant Greek translation.¹⁶⁹ The historian Josephus who uses all but the last two chapters as a source knew the work.¹⁷⁰

First Maccabees tells of the Maccabean uprising, the events leading up to it and the establishment of Hasmonean political and religious authority (169-135 B.C.E). It is written primarily in prose; however, it also contains some poetry.¹⁷¹ It recounts the beginning of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, his defiling of the Temple, the persecution of the Jews and the attraction of the “lawless men” to the Greek way of life (1: 10-60). In response to the persecution, Mattathias and his five sons rise up in opposition to the Greeks and in defense of the Law (2: 1-5; 44-48). Their actions are explained as a demonstration of “zeal” for the Law (2: 26), and condoned in the same vein as Phinehas’ murders of Zimri and Cozbi in *Numbers* (25: 6-12); in other words, the Maccabean uprising is seen as an act that “turned back” God’s wrath from the Jewish people and bestowed the “perpetual priesthood” of Phinehas on the house of Hashmonay (Num. 25: 13).

At his death, Mattathias gives a speech of encouragement to his sons. This speech is testimony to the ethos that fuelled the Hasmonean claim to power. Mattathias urges his sons to continue their “zeal for the law” for through this zeal, they, like their forefathers, will receive honour (2: 50-51). Mattathias mentions the testing of Abraham, the commitment of Joseph, the zeal of Phinehas, and other forefathers as models for his sons

¹⁶⁹ Harold. W. Attridge, “Historiography”, *JWSTP*, 171; more discussion on the quality of the Greek of *I Maccabees* is found in the commentary by Goldstein, *I Maccabees* 14; for an account of the textual transmission of *I Maccabees* and the problems therein, see Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 175-178; Geza Vermes in Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, 182-183. A critical edition of the text is *Maccabaeorum liber I, Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Göttingensis*, vol. 9, fasc. 1 (ed. Werner Kappler, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990).

¹⁷⁰ Attridge, “Historiography”, *JWSTP*, 171; cf. Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 14.

¹⁷¹ For a study of the poetry of *I Maccabees*, see G. O. Neuhaus, *Studien zu den poetischen Stücken im I. Makkabäerbuch* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1974).

to emulate.¹⁷² Mattathias states: “none who put their trust in him will lack strength” (2: 61); he counsels his sons to “avenge the wrong done to your people” (2: 67). He mentions two of his sons, Simeon and Judas, stating that “Simeon ... is wise in counsel; always listen to him; he shall be your father. Judas Maccabeus has been a mighty warrior from his youth; he shall command the army for you and fight the battle against the peoples” (2: 65-66). Thus Mattathias justifies the Hasmonean uprising as the fulfillment of Israel’s portion of the covenantal treaty, and sanctions Simeon and Judas as the key players in the continuation of their divine mission.

The rest of *1 Maccabees* outlines the military encounters between Judas and the Greeks. Judas wins his first encounter with Apollonius and takes his sword and uses it in battle the rest of his life (3: 12). This battle between the Maccabees and the Greeks is portrayed as a battle against “the lawless and ungodly men” (ἄνδρες ἄνομοι καὶ ἄσεβεῖς) (7: 5) possessed of “great pride” (πλήθει ὑβρεως) (3: 20). Some of these ungodly men are Jews who oppose the Hasmoneans; this includes Alcimus who for a time takes over the high priesthood (6: 22; 7: 5-9). Simon also participates in these battles, going to Galilee in order to rescue Jews who are suffering retaliation from local Greeks angered by the success of the Maccabees (5: 9-21). A crucial battle is fought between the Seleucid general Nicanor and the Jews who win the altercation and cut off Nicanor’s head and his right hand, a symbol of his pride (7: 26- 47). Judas is killed in battle and his brother Jonathan takes over the leadership (9: 28-31) and begins to “judge the people” and to destroy “the ungodly” in Israel (9: 73). Eventually, the Seleucid king

¹⁷² In addition to Abraham, Joseph, and Phinehas, Mattathias recalls Joshua the judge, the testimony of Caleb, the mercy of David, the zeal of Elijah, the devotion of Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael, and the innocence of Daniel (2: 52-60).

Demetrius accepts Jonathan's authority and appoints him high priest, giving to Judea "three districts from Samaria and Galilee" (10: 6, 20, 30, 38).

About this time the Seleucids start to fight amongst themselves and compete for the affiliation of Judea; however, Trypho, the general of the young Antiochus, another pretender to Seleucid rule, turns against Judea and attacks it, killing Jonathan (13: 23). After this event, a fellow Seleucid killed Trypho, and Simon, appealing to Demetrius, became "high priest and commander and leader of the Jews", and Judea was granted its independence (13: 41-42). The peacefulness of Simon's rule was celebrated in one of the poems in *1 Maccabees* (14: 4- 15). Simon was later killed by his son-in-law Ptolemy; he and his two sons were killed with their own weapons at a banquet while they were drunk (16: 11, 16). *First Maccabees* ends with the beginning of the reign of John Hyrcanus (16: 23-24).

First Maccabees is both political and theological in focus. It legitimates Hasmonean political rule as well as the Hasmonean theological claims to the high priesthood. Mattathias' sons are portrayed as agents of God according to established biblical motifs;¹⁷³ they have proved themselves through testing, their zeal allows them to participate in the "perpetual priesthood" of Phinehas (Num. 25: 11-13), and they serve as judges over Israel. They are members of the family "through whom deliverance was given to Israel" (5: 62). According to Arenhoevel, this deliverance is not temporary, but also has an eschatological dimension.¹⁷⁴

First Maccabees also legitimates the political authority of the Hasmoneans. It contains numerous documents addressed to Jonathan or Simon which demonstrate

¹⁷³ Attridge, "Jewish Historiography", *EJMI*, 318; cf. Diego Arenhoevel, *Die Theokratie nach dem 1. und 2. Makkabäerbuch* (Mainz: Matthias-Grunewald Verlag, 1967) 40.

¹⁷⁴ Arenhoevel, *Die Theokratie nach dem 1. und 2. Makkabäerbuch*, 58-69.

Seleucid sanction of their authority.¹⁷⁵ In one letter, Demetrius gives Jonathan some authority (10: 6). Another document credits Alexander Balas¹⁷⁶ with the appointment of Jonathan as high priest (10: 20). *First Maccabees* also contains a letter from Demetrius II giving Judea independence (13: 35-40).

In addition to the legitimization of the Hasmoneans, there are some elements that stand out as characteristics of the Hasmonean campaign. Two in particular are worth mentioning. The first is the notion of revenge for the harm the Greeks have done to the Jews.¹⁷⁷ The second is found in the persistent references to the ungodly and lawless men who oppose the Hasmoneans; these are Jews as well as Greeks.¹⁷⁸ These elements, as we will see, find their way into other literature that was also written during the Hasmonean period.

c. *The Epic of Theodotus*

In addition to early Hasmonean history, other Jewish rhetors of this time produced works that were modelled on Greek literature. One author, known as Theodotus, wrote an epic poem; however only eight fragments survive. Alexander Polyhistor initially preserved the eight fragments; he quotes parts of the original poem and summarizes other sections in prose. We have the work of Polyhistor thanks to the Christian writer Eusebius.¹⁷⁹ The

¹⁷⁵ On scholarly opinion about the authenticity of these documents and for a brief bibliography on this subject, see Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, vol. 1, 259-261.

¹⁷⁶ c. 153 B.C.E.

¹⁷⁷ *1 Macc.* 2: 67; 7: 38; 9: 37-42.

¹⁷⁸ *1 Macc.* 3: 15; 6: 22; 7: 5, 9; 9: 23-25, 73; 11; 21, 25.

¹⁷⁹ *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9. 22. 1-11; on the transmission of texts through Alexander Polyhistor, see ft. 27. For the Greek and English translations of the fragments, see Carl Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, vol. 2 (SBL Texts and Translations Series, 30 and Pseudepigrapha Series, 12; Atlanta,

fragments of the poem follow the epic style of Homeric hexameters, in fact, the few fragments that we have show many similarities with Homer's works, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.¹⁸⁰ Given the importance of Greek education among the elite in Palestine,¹⁸¹ the presence of Hellenistic literary forms in a Jewish work is not surprising. This observation is particularly important when we turn to the Book of Judith for it draws on certain techniques and traditions found in Greek literature in order to convey its support of female leadership.

Much debate about this work has centred on arguing against J. Freudenthal's notion that Theodotus was a Samaritan. Many convincing arguments have been presented to indicate that he was a Jew.¹⁸² It has also been argued that the work is anti-Samaritan;¹⁸³ however, this has been disproved by Reinhard Pummer.¹⁸⁴ Collins believes that the fragments of the epic poem written by Theodotus indicate a support of the expansionist policies of John Hyrcanus.¹⁸⁵

GA: Scholars Press, 1989); cf. Jacoby, *FGrH*, 3C, no. 732, pp. 692-694. In addition to Holladay, another English translation and introduction to Theodotus' work by F. Fallon is found in "Theodotus", *OTP*, vol. 2, 785-793. My analysis relies on the translation by Holladay, except where noted.

¹⁸⁰ We have already seen the use of hexameter in the Sibylline oracles. On the use of Homer in Theodotus, see Holladay, *Fragments*: vol. 2, 72-73 (the specific words are found pp. 95-97, fts. 61-67), and especially the article by Reinhard Pummer and M. Roussel, "A Note on Theodotus and Homer", *JSJ* 13 (1982) 177-182.

¹⁸¹ This was observed in our examination of *The Letter of Aristeas* above; the importance of Greek schooling continued into the Hasmonean times.

¹⁸² The argument is far too lengthy to be enumerated here; a concise summary is provided by Holladay, *Fragments*, vol. 2, for reasons for a Samaritan identity, see pp. 58-60, for reasons for a Jewish identity, see pp. 60-68.

¹⁸³ Collins, "The Epic of Theodotus", 98-99.

¹⁸⁴ "Genesis 34 in Jewish Writings of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods", *HTR* 75 (1982) 177-188.

¹⁸⁵ Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 59. His reasons are given in more detail in his article "The Epic of Theodotus and the Hellenism of the Hasmoneans", *HTR* 73 (1980) 91-104. While I agree with his general conclusion, that this epic poem reflects the expansionist policies of the Hasmoneans, I do not agree that the poem is "anti-Samaritan propaganda". My reasons will be given below.

The date of the fragments is determined, for some, by Theodotus' description of the wall surrounding Shechem.¹⁸⁶ Like Bethulia in the Book of Judith, Shechem is situated between two steep mountains, close to a "narrow" path and is surrounded by a wall, which Theodotus refers to as "smooth" (Fr. 1; cf. Jdt.4: 7). Many take this observation about the smoothness of the wall to mean that Theodotus is describing its state at the time of writing.¹⁸⁷ If this were true, it would indeed place the poem's composition between the late third and the middle of the second century, for archaeological evidence tells us that the wall was intact at that time. Collins contests Bull's interpretation of the archaeological evidence and sees a later date, during the time of Hyrcanus.¹⁸⁸

The fragments present a retelling of the biblical story of the rape of Dinah and its subsequent revenge by her brothers Simeon and Levi. The story is told in Genesis 33: 18-34: 31. The patriarch Jacob buys land from Hamor of Shechem. Later Leah's and Jacob's daughter, Dinah, goes "to visit the women of the land" and is raped by Shechem, Hamor's son (34: 1). Shechem wants to marry Dinah and requests that his father, Hamor talk it over with Jacob. Hamor goes further than Shechem's request and suggests that the rest of the Shechemites intermarry with Jacob's people. When Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, hear of the rape, they become "indignant" (34: 7). The brothers tell Hamor that in order to marry Dinah and the rest of their women the male Shechemites must be circumcised (34: 15-16). The Shechemites agree and "on the third day, when they were sore" Simeon and Levi kill all the men and bring Dinah back with them; Jacob's sons

¹⁸⁶ The argument surrounding the date of the poem is presented in Holladay, *Fragments*, vol. 2, 68-70; see also Robert J. Bull, "A Note on Theodotus' Description of Shechem", *HTR* 60 (1967) 221-227.

¹⁸⁷ So Bull, "A Note on Theodotus' Description of Shechem", 227; followed by F. Fallon, "Theodotus", 787-788, and G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Theodotus the Epic Poet", *JWSTP*, 124.

¹⁸⁸ Collins, "The Epic of Theodotus", 101.

plunder the city (34: 25-29). Later in Genesis, Simeon and Levi are cursed for their anger and cruelty (49: 7); however, in Jewish tradition, Levi and his descendants are blessed by Moses and become the priestly class (Deut. 33: 8-10).

A number of non-biblical elements stand out in Theodotus' poem. We are told by Polyhistor's introductory comments that Shechem was "occupied by the Hebrews when Hamor was king" and that initial relations with the Shechemites were good; Hamor gave Jacob a "portion of land" (Fr. 2). This differs from the biblical version in that Jacob bought his land. Another non-biblical element concerns the people of Shechem. Although Hebrews "occupied" the city, many living in Shechem were not Jewish (Fr. 4). After Dinah's rape, Shechem wants to marry her. In contrast to the biblical version, Shechem and Hamor do not want the Shechemites to intermarry with the Jews *en masse*; the request is for Dinah only. Polyhistor tells us the marriage is agreed upon provided that "all those living in Shechem" are circumcised (Fr.4). It is unclear from the fragments that remain whether this was carried out or even agreed to.¹⁸⁹

What stands out in the poem is the elaborate reasoning for the slaughter. The idea is credited to Simeon because of "the outrage to his sister" (Fr. 6). Yet the idea has its inception in God. Polyhistor states "God implanted this notion in their mind because the Shechemites were godless" (Fr. 7).¹⁹⁰ The poem itself confirms Polyhistor's summative statement, claiming that "God was maiming the inhabitants of Shechem, for they did not

¹⁸⁹ Collins, "The Epic of Theodotus", 98; Pummer argues the contrary noting that there is no mention of a refusal to follow the king's request, "Genesis 34", 182, ft. 15.

¹⁹⁰ The translations of this critical Greek word, ἀσεβείς, vary slightly in most cases. Holladay translates it as meaning "godless"; *Fragments*, vol. 2, 123, cf. 191-192, ft. 121. Fallon translates it as "impious"; "Theodotus", 793. According to Pummer and Roussel it means "ungodly"; "A Note on Theodotus and Homer", 180. All these translations reveal the author's opinion that the Shechemites were not observing their religion properly. Polyhistor's interpretation, therefore, is consistent with the direct quote from Theodotus' poem: the Shechemites lack values; they honour no one, nor are they concerned with justice. In contrast, only Collins takes this word to mean "wicked", which implies that they had values but acted against them; "The Epic of Theodotus", 94.

honour anyone who came to them, low or noble; neither rights nor laws did they observe in the city, but they were occupied with thoughts of pernicious deeds.”¹⁹¹

Noteworthy too is the relationship between Simeon and Levi which is unique to this poem. Although Simeon is credited with the idea, Polyhistor tells us he turns to his brother for “assent” (Fr. 6). In order to persuade Levi, Simeon cites “an oracle” that God promised “to give Abraham’s descendants ten nations” (Fr. 6).¹⁹²

In assessing Theodotus’ poem for Hasmonean political propaganda it is useful to compare it with other interpretations of the same story found in works from the same period. These works are *Jubilees* (30: 1-18), *The Testament of Levi* (2: 1-3; 6: 3-9), and *Judith* (9: 2-4).¹⁹³ The critical issues in this story are (1) the description of the Shechemites, (2) the request that the Shechemites be circumcised, (3) the degree of divine and (4) human sanction for the act.

How the Shechemites are portrayed differs in all four works. *Jubilees* states that Hamor was a Hittite and “ruler of the land” (30: 2). In *The Testament of Levi*, the Shechemites are called “Canaanites” (7: 1), who “persecuted Abraham when he was a nomad” (6: 9). We are also told that Levi foresees that God will “give their land” to Israel (7: 2). In the Book of Judith, the Shechemites are referred to only as “strangers” (9: 2). It is only in Theodotus’ epic poem that the Shechemites are portrayed as lacking values and being unconcerned with justice (Fr.7); however, the words and ideas about the

¹⁹¹ Here I follow the translation of Pummer and Roussel, “A Note on Theodotus and Homer”, 182.

¹⁹² Cf. Gen. 15: 19-21.

¹⁹³ On *Jubilees*, see the introduction by O. S. Wintermute in *OTP*, vol. 2, 35-51; *Testament of Levi* 2: 1-3, 6: 3-9, see the introduction by H. C. Kee, “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs”, in *OTP*, vol. 1, 775-781; for the Book of Judith, see Moore, *Judith*, 190-191, 194-195. For a comparison of these three works, see Collins, “The Epic of Theodotus”, 95-99, and Pummer, “Genesis 34”, 177-188.

Shechemites used in this poem are identical to the description of the enemy in *I*

Maccabees. There as well we find the ungodly and lawless men (*I Macc.* 3: 15, 20).

The request that the Shechemites be circumcised is directly mentioned only in the poem (Fr. 4, 6); however, the Testament of Levi does state that Levi advised his father and Reuben against circumcision because of “the abominable thing they had done” to Dinah (6: 3). This work also states that circumcision was carried out: Jacob disapproved of the slaughter because the Shechemites had “received circumcision” (6: 6). In *Jubilees*, there is no mention of an offer to accept the Shechemites as Jews if they become circumcised; however, while not mentioning circumcision in this context, the work prohibits intermarriage (30: 12).¹⁹⁴ A conversion to Judaism is actually depicted in the Book of Judith. Achior, the Ammonite (member of a tribe that was hated by the Jews), accepts circumcision and converts to Judaism upon seeing “all that the god of Israel had done” (14: 10).¹⁹⁵ Thus, conversion is an unexpected element of the Book of Judith.

The poem by Theodotus, *Jubilees*, *The Testament of Levi*, and the Book of Judith all condone at some level the murder of the Shechemites. In the poem, approval comes from Levi who was enticed into action by an oracle from God, which spoke of Abraham acquiring ten nations (Fr. 6). In *The Testament of Levi*, a “spirit of understanding” comes upon Levi and he is filled with “zeal”. Although the brothers sin in disobeying Jacob, Levi nevertheless has God’s approval because he knows that the Shechemites were about to rape other women (2: 2; 6: 3-9). In *Jubilees*, as well, the vengeance is “ordered in heaven”, as a way of dealing with the “shame” caused by the rape (30: 5-6). In the Book

¹⁹⁴ This sanction against intermarriage seems to be exaggerated in the Book of Judith where Judith marries Manasseh, someone from her own tribe (8: 2).

¹⁹⁵ Adolfo D. Roitman. “Achior in the Book of Judith: His Role and Significance”, “*No One Spoke Ill of Her*”, 39.

of Judith, the act is divinely sanctioned as well. Judith adopts the role of avenger that Simeon played in this Jewish Hellenistic version of the story. Her initial prayer to God draws on divine support of Simeon's act of revenge in order to gain the strength to kill Holofernes. This prayer describes Simeon as revenging Dinah's shame; however, Judith takes the story one step further than the biblical version by stating that Shechem "polluted her womb", implying that Dinah became pregnant (9: 2). About the slaughter specifically, the prayer states that the "zealous" brothers killed the rulers of Shechem in their beds (9: 2-4).

The attitude of Jacob and his sons to the murder differ in these works. The poem therefore bears witness to the co-operation between Levi, the priest, and Simeon, the military leader. Other works that speak of Simeon in a leadership capacity are the Book of Judith and *1 Maccabees*. In the Book of Judith, Judith calls on the God of her ancestor, Simeon, for help in delivering the people of Judea (9: 2). The name Simeon played an important role in Hasmonean history; as was observed above, Simeon, the priest, was the grandfather of Mattathias (*1 Macc.* 2: 1), the first Hasmonean to move from Jerusalem. Generations later, a different Simon was one of the key leaders of the Maccabean revolt; Mattathias blessed his wisdom (*1 Macc.* 2: 65). Jonathan Goldstein, who argues that *1 Maccabees* was political propaganda for Alexander Janneus,¹⁹⁶ observes that *1 Maccabees* makes a point of emphasizing the significance of Simon in Maccabean history; Simon is credited as the one who "won lasting freedom" for his people.¹⁹⁷ Conversely, Goldstein also perceives a polemic against Simon in another work that portrays Maccabean history; this work is *2 Maccabees*. Goldstein notes that 2

¹⁹⁶ Goldstein, *1 Maccabees*, 86.

¹⁹⁷ Goldstein, *1 Maccabees*, 80.

Maccabees discredits Simon.¹⁹⁸ It is therefore apparent that Simon held important symbolic meaning for pro-Hasmonean historians. The manner in which these works make associations with this important icon of Hasmonean and Judean independence seems to be an indicator of pro- or anti-Hasmonean propaganda.

Collins contends that the epic of Theodotus echoes the anti-Samaritan sentiment of the Hasmoneans and it seems particularly close to Hyrcanus' "imposition of circumcision on the Idumeans".¹⁹⁹ He argues that the author used the story of the killing of the Shechemites typologically, that the reference to the Shechemites was meant to imply the Samaritans of his day.²⁰⁰ What is particularly reminiscent of Hyrcanus' campaign, Collins argues, is (1) the "detailed representation of the violence of the attack", (2) "the insistent requirement of circumcision", and (3) the notion that God promised the ten tribes to Abraham's descendants, which Collins sees as "an assertion of Jewish claims to sovereignty over Samaria."²⁰¹

Pummer refutes the existence of this anti-Samaritan polemic. Among the many problems with Collins' argument Pummer contends with Collins' equation of the Shechemites of biblical times with the Samaritans who were contemporaneous with Hyrcanus' day.²⁰² According to Pummer, not enough is known about the Samaritans of Hyrcanus' time to make this assertion and we cannot trust Josephus to be objective. We know that Josephus does quote a letter from the Sidonians of Shechem to Antiochus VI Epiphanes.²⁰³ These Sidonians wish to distinguish themselves from the Jews (and hence

¹⁹⁸ Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 83.

¹⁹⁹ Collins, "The Epic of Theodotus", 100.

²⁰⁰ Collins, "The Epic of Theodotus", 98.

²⁰¹ Collins, "The Epic of Theodotus", 100.

²⁰² Collins, "The Epic of Theodotus", 95, 98; cf. Pummer "Genesis 34", 184-185.

²⁰³ *Jewish Antiquities* 12. 257-264; cf. 11. 340-347.

avoid Antiochus' persecution) and they inform Antiochus that they want to call "the temple without a name ... Zeus Hellenios".²⁰⁴ What we do not know, argues Pummer, is how closely connected these Sidonians were to Samaritans; in fact, it is doubtful that they represented the entire Samaritan community.²⁰⁵ Moreover, Pummer argues, the emphasis on circumcision, which Collins sees as being directed against the Samaritans, could not have been applied because evidence strongly suggests that the Samaritans never abandoned this vital ritual.²⁰⁶

Much contention can be clarified by a close examination of Josephus' account of this period. Of particular relevance are his accounts of what Collins calls the "imposition of circumcision"²⁰⁷ and Hyrcanus' campaign in Samaria and Shechem. Josephus tells us that "Hyrcanus also captured the Idumaeen cities of Adora and Marisa, and after subduing all the Idumaeans, permitted them to remain in their country so long as they had themselves circumcised and were willing to observe the laws of the Jews. And so, out of attachment to the land of their fathers, they submitted to circumcision and to making their manner of life conform in all other respects to that of the Jews".²⁰⁸ Therefore, according to Josephus' account, Hyrcanus was primarily interested in territorial acquisition; the conversion of the Idumeans was a condition of their being allowed to remain on newly reclaimed Jewish soil. Likewise, years later under Aristobulus I the same was asked of the Itureans. Josephus states that Aristobulus "... made war on the Ituraeans and acquired a good part of their territory for Judaea and compelled the inhabitants, if they

²⁰⁴ *Jewish Antiquities* 12. 261.

²⁰⁵ Pummer, following Delcor, notes that the letter may have been sent by a colony of Sidonians in Shechem. "Genesis 34", 185, ft. 21. More on this below.

²⁰⁶ Pummer, "Genesis 34", 185.

²⁰⁷ Collins. "The Epic of Theodotus", 100.

²⁰⁸ *Jewish Antiquities*, 13. 257-258.

wished to remain in their country, to be circumcised and to live in accordance with the laws of the Jews".²⁰⁹ Josephus also adds the witness of Timagenes, another historian, who corroborates this fact with his comment that Aristobulus "... acquired additional territory ... and brought over to them a portion of the Ituraean nation, whom he joined to them by the bond of circumcision".²¹⁰

For the Hasmoneans then the acquisition of territory was linked to ancestral claim; as Mendels has observed, they claimed to be recovering the land of the Jews. Those foreigners who remained were required to follow the law of Moses. A. Kasher's study of forced circumcision speaks to this issue. He concludes that both the Idumeans and the Itureans voluntarily became Jews.²¹¹ In both cases it is said that they had the option of leaving. In the Idumeans' case, they choose to stay in the land of their fathers. *First Maccabees* does tell of the forcible circumcision of infants (2: 46); however, this was not specific to Samaritans, but to all "ungodly" who had abandoned this practice.

Nevertheless, it is true that Hyrcanus destroyed the temple on Mt. Gerizim and took Shechem and later destroyed Samaria.²¹² Josephus writes that the moment Hyrcanus heard of the death of Antiochus Sidetes, he began a campaign to acquire (or reclaim) land, thinking that there would be few to stop him.²¹³ One of the first places he hit was Shechem and the nearby temple. We are told that this temple was "built after the model of the sanctuary at Jerusalem, which Alexander permitted their governor Sanaballetes to build for the sake of his son-in-law Manasses, the brother of the high priest Jaddua".²¹⁴

²⁰⁹ *Jewish Antiquities*, 13. 318-319.

²¹⁰ *Jewish Antiquities*, 13. 319.

²¹¹ Kasher's work in Hebrew is summarized by Lester Grabbe in *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) 330-331.

²¹² *Jewish Antiquities*, 13. 254-256; 280-281.

²¹³ *Jewish Antiquities*, 13. 254.

²¹⁴ *Jewish Antiquities*, 13. 256.

Hyrchanus' attack on Samaria, on the other hand, is not portrayed as being motivated by religion. Josephus states that Hyrchanus' act was due to vengeance: "... for he hated the Samaritans as scoundrels because of the injuries which, in obedience to the kings of Syria, they had done to the people of Marisa, who were colonists and allies of the Jews".²¹⁵ The attack on Samaria seems to be motivated by politics, namely its affiliation with Syria, and by revenge for their treatment of the people of Marisa. The destruction of Samaria in Josephus was not associated with forced circumcision.

Although Theodotus' epic poem is not anti-Samaritan, there are other reasons, overlooked by Collins, to believe that the poem may have functioned as political propaganda sometime in the Hasmonean period. The first reason is the insistence on divine approval for the killings, which impresses upon the reader that the violence against the Shechemites was the will of God. This idea is reinforced by mention of an oracle that foresees the Judean acquisition of ten nations. In addition to the territorial expansion suggested by the oracle is the current political situation of the Hebrews vis à vis the Shechemites. In what seems to be a situation that parallels pre-Maccabean politics, the poem depicts the Hebrews occupying a land ruled by gentiles. One element in the poem that is noteworthy because it does not reflect the biblical version of the story is the fact that Jacob was given the land as opposed to buying it. The coalescence of the Hebrews living in a land ruled by others with the promise of the Hebrews acquiring nations echoes what we have seen of the political situation of John Hyrchanus. Could not this reflect the idea, seen in *1 Maccabees*, of reclaiming the land of the fathers?

²¹⁵ *Jewish Antiquities*, 13. 275-276. Although Marcus translates Σαμαρεῦσιν as Samaritans, the term refers to "Samaritan", i.e. inhabitants of Samaria.

The interaction between Simeon and Levi also recalls the Hasmonean period. Here we have the “ascent” given by someone with priestly authority, Levi; however, it is Simeon who is the military leader, the *strategos*. This idea of splitting political and religious authority was actually put to Hyrcanus by the Pharisees.²¹⁶ Hyrcanus did not adopt the idea, although he did want his wife, whose name is unknown, to take over leadership of the country. Because she could not be high priest, this move would have had the effect of adopting the Pharisaic idea of separate religious and political leadership. Thus the epic of Theodotus contains certain elements that suggest a Hasmonean provenance. These elements are the divine approval for the murder of the Shechemites, the oracle supporting territorial expansion and the relationship between Simeon and Levi.

4. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE BOOK OF JUDITH AS HASMONEAN PROPAGANDA IN LIGHT OF ITS LITERARY CONTEXT

What have we seen of Hasmonean propaganda thus far that will help in assessing the propagandist potential of the Book of Judith? We observed that literature was often the product of court patronage in Hellenistic times. Literary works were written that praised kings and queens. These works could have a political focus and often incorporated the patron’s achievements. Often a historical setting was used as a backdrop for the literary work. Within the corpus of Jewish literature, we observed in *1 Maccabees* and in the

²¹⁶ *Jewish Antiquities*, 13. 288-291. The idea was proposed at a banquet given by Hyrcanus; however the Talmud records that the banquet was given by King Yannai (*b. Qidd.*). The banquet scene is discussed in Sievers, *The Hasmoneans*, 148.

fragments of the epic of Theodotus certain commonalities, which, if seen in the Book of Judith, could indicate that the Book of Judith was written as Hasmonean propaganda.

These commonalities include the threatening presence of the ungodly and lawless, who in the case of *1 Maccabees* are possessed of “great pride”, the focus on territorial acquisition, the importance of revenge and zeal, and divine approval for the resulting violence. Honour is also a concern in *1 Maccabees* and the epic of Theodotus.

According to the literature surveyed, three archetypal heroes are crucial to the success of Hasmonean plan. These persons are Simeon, Levi and Judas. Simeon is the wise, military leader; Judas too is a *strategos*; Levi is the religious authority.

Yet the presence of certain commonalities is not enough to assess this book as political propaganda. Earlier in this section, Lloyd’s schema of propaganda was presented.²¹⁷ We saw that propaganda is covert: i.e. it does not present itself as such. Instead it suggests a certain type of correspondence between the literature and the real world; in the case of the literature discussed by Lloyd, often the main character is representative of an ideal that the author wants to promote. In propaganda, the enemy is obvious. Because symbols condense a variety of associated cognitive and affective elements, the economy of symbolic representation is drawn on. The propagandist message is conveyed in media and genres that are familiar to the target audience. Finally, propaganda draws on sources that its audience sees as authoritative.

Lloyd’s schema of propaganda can be discerned in The Book of Judith. The book’s propagandist potential is subtle; it does not present itself as a formal history but it does draw on history. According to the Book of Judith, Judith’s period of leadership occurred well in the past. It is only the contextual setting, the authorship of this book

²¹⁷ See I. 2. a.

about the time of Shelamzion, which suggests a propagandistic message. Thus, the book fulfills Lloyd's first criterion of being covert. The character of Judith is representative of a Jewish ideal; although female, Judith is the archetypal Jew whose faith does not falter. This is Lloyd's second criterion for propaganda, that the main character is typological. His third criterion is also apparent in *Judith*, this is the clearly articulated role of the enemy. This enemy comes from outside the Jewish community; Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Assyrians, and his general Holofernes, threaten not only Bethulia, but Jewish existence itself. Lloyd's fourth criterion is also present: the power of symbolic representation. The intertextual quality of the Book of Judith, as we shall see, evokes from its antecedent texts certain elements that acquire potency as symbols. By drawing on the authority of biblical sources but presenting a narrative in the fashionable style of a Hellenistic novel, the author of the Book of Judith appeals to its target audience, the Jewish people.

Hasmonean propaganda is also evident in this book. While the Book of Judith does not focus on territorial acquisition, this would not be surprising if it had been written after Alexander Jannaeus had reclaimed the land of his forefathers, and the oracles of the ten nations had thus been fulfilled. Certainly Judith's defense of her community also includes defense of the land. The setting of Bethulia, at the gateway to Judea's northern boundary, is significant in that it demonstrates that none of Judean territory had been lost to the Assyrians. These enemies of Judea are portrayed as a people who do not honour, respect or even tolerate the gods of others. Holofernes had been ordered "to destroy all the gods of the land" (3: 8). Nebuchadnezzar is presented as a human contender to the worship normally given to the Most High. He is called "the lord of the whole earth" (2:

5) and, like a god of the eschaton, sends Holofernes out to “hold” disobeying nations “till the day of their punishment” (2: 10). Most importantly, it is Nebuchadnezzar’s desire that he be worshipped by all nations “and all their tongues and tribes should call upon him as a god” (3: 8). In this sense are the Assyrians ungodly.

Much of the Hasmonean propaganda in the Book of Judith comes from the character of Judith herself. Having married someone of her “tribe and family” who later dies, she is left in charge of a very large estate (8: 2, 7). With the wisdom of Simeon she sees the current plight of the Jews as a period of “testing” her zealousness for God (8: 25).²¹⁸ Her prayer to God draws on the biblical and intertestamental use of the killing of the Shechemites. As in the version of the story told in the fragments of Theodotus, Simeon is also here called upon as her “father” to strength her for her act of vengeance (9: 2), for while no virgin has been defiled in this story, the boundary of the nation as a whole has been penetrated. Like Judas, whose name is very similar to her masculine counterpart,²¹⁹ she is the cunning *strategos*. Her murder of Holofernes has the approval of Joakim, the high priest (15: 8-10). In the end she is “honoured in her time” (16: 21).

There are therefore many thematic similarities between *I Maccabees*, the epic of Theodotus and the Book of Judith that suggest that this book may also have functioned as Hasmonean propaganda. While it is impossible to state with certainty that the Book of Judith was political propaganda, this seems to be a likely conclusion when the book is read against the types of propagandist literature in the Hellenistic world. Given its similarities to other works of Hasmonean propaganda, the evidence strongly suggests that

²¹⁸ This idea of the testing of a leader has biblical parallels and is discussed in van Henten, “Judith as Alternate Leader”, 232-238.

²¹⁹ The masculine form of the name is Judah, see Hadas, *Hellenistic Culture*, 166.

the Book of Judith was created by a Hasmonean supporter as political propaganda for use within Jewish society.

II. THE LITERARY WORLD OF SHELAMZION

Scholars such as Priebatsch, Delcor, Wills and Haider have attempted to situate the Book of Judith in its historical and literary contexts.²²⁰ While these scholarly works contribute insights into the study of *Judith*, it is time to look at both the form and the content of the book from a fresh perspective. In this part of the dissertation I examine the Book of Judith in light of the close association between historiography and the development of early fiction, particularly, Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. Although the influences on the development of the novel involve more than the historiographic form, I examine this form in connection with the Book of Judith because *Judith* presents itself as a historical work. In fact, as Wills observes, the book "begins in a style that is typical of royal chronicles".²²¹ Thus, because it draws specifically on the historiographic form, it is crucial to examine the link between historiography and the novel. Within this context I also examine some of the Hellenistic Jewish fragments, not only because they illustrate the close connection between Jewish and Greek literature, but also because they employ some of the tendencies of Greek literature while remaining faithful to their Jewish literary heritage.

This heritage included traditions about people who played a crucial role in Jewish history. In fact, the character of Judith fits into this corpus of writings. Biblical figures such as Moses, David, Joseph and Abraham are some of the characters from Jewish history about whom Hellenistic Jews wrote. Of course, the most contemporary heroes

²²⁰ Hans Yohanan Priebatsch, "Das Buch Judith und seine hellenistischen Quellen", *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-vereins* 90 (1974) 50-60; Delcor, "Le livre de Judith et l'époque grecque", 151-178; Wills, *The Jewish Novel*; Haider, "Judith – eine zeitgenössische Antwort auf Kleopatra III. als Beschützerin der Juden?", 117-128.

²²¹ Wills, *The Jewish Novel*. 219.

were the Maccabees; however, the tales about them fit into the category of historiography more than they do fiction. In the fragments, Miriam and Dinah are the only women that seem to be mentioned, albeit briefly. In the case of Dinah, it is the story of her rape and the revenge taken by Levi and Simon that is the focus. Susanna and Esther also figure in the literature of this period; however, Susanna's story is intended to highlight the wisdom of another national hero, Daniel, rather than draw attention to her virtue and accomplishments. The general portrayal of women in Jewish literature of this period is stereotypical of the Greek attitude towards women in general. Esther, it could be argued, is the closest to Judith; they are both female salvific figures. Yet, as we shall see, the characterization of Esther is weak in comparison.

In another vein, Judith does fit into the female warrior tradition that existed in the ancient Near East. Susan Ackerman successfully demonstrates the close association between Judith, Deborah/Jael and the warrior goddess from Ugaritic literature, Anat. Women warriors figure prominently in Greek historiography of the day: widowed queens such as Queen Tomyris, who avenged the death of her son; Semiramis who was quite legendary in her time; Xerxes's top military advisor Artemisia; and the Ugaritic heroine, Paghit. When studied against this backdrop there remain

on a particular person. This approach to the Book of Judith is not without its methodological problems. Research into the earliest novels offers only a speculative dating; however, one of the earliest forms of the novel, Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* or *The Education of Cyrus*, was written long before novels began to appear and is considered to be the prototype of the genre. A second problem is the parameters of the *genre* itself. Although extended fictional prose narratives, novels, are a common form today, in antiquity they were not considered worthy of scholarly attention. Early literary theorists, such as Aristotle, expressed a few thoughts that can be loosely applied to the form itself and these will be discussed. There is also the additional influence of biblical literature to consider, because the Book of Judith is set in Israel's past. The historical setting of the book has implications for its propagandistic purpose, as the work of John Van Seters will help demonstrate.

1. INFLUENCES ON EARLY JEWISH FICTION: FORMS AND LITERARY DEVICES

The question of the influences on early Jewish fiction is problematic from the onset, for where do we place the beginning of Jewish fiction? The Book of Judith is most certainly fiction: for although its general setting is in Israel's past, the number of historical inaccuracies marks it as fictional. Other similar works about women like Ruth, Esther or Susanna could conceivably reflect historical events. For that matter, biblical literature in general is viewed both from the perspective of a historical document and as literature that embellishes or theologizes actual events.

The following discussion takes biblical literature to be part of the corpus of literature that is drawn from but not necessarily reflective of actual events. Of the many scholars who write in this area, attention is given to the work of John Van Seters and Robert Alter. In Part One it was observed that Hellenistic Jews greatly valued a Greek education and there is ample evidence, as demonstrated in *Aristeas*, that they were versed in Greek literature as well as Jewish. Arnaldo Momigliano has firmly established the close association between Greek and Jewish historiography and their common use of Persian elements.²²²

Of the various literary devices that authors used in antiquity, there are two that merit close attention. The first is allusion; however, in contemporary scholarship it now goes by the term Julia Kristeva coined for it, “intertextuality”. Allusion plays an important role in ancient literature; it was a device that demonstrated the learning of both author and audience. Allegory was also an important device. Although the novel was a new form that had few conventions, there still existed, as Heather Dubrow and Mary Gerhart discuss, a certain contractual agreement or “protocol” between a literary work and its audience.²²³

Although scholars of the early novel do not believe that there was a direct evolution from historiography to the ancient novel, they do credit this type of writing as

²²² For his comparison of Greek and Jewish history writing, see Arnaldo Momigliano, “Persian Historiography, Greek Historiography, and Jewish Historiography”, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Oxford and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1990) 18-21; on the persistence of Persian elements in the historiography of these two cultures, see “Eastern Elements in Post-Exilic Jewish and Greek Historiography”, *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University, 1977) 25-35.

²²³ Heather Dubrow, *Genre* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982) 2; Mary Gerhart, “Generic Competence in Biblical Hermeneutics”, *Semeia* 43 (1988) 31; J. R. Morgan terms this “the protocols of fictionality”, “Make-believe and Make Believe: The Fictionality of the Greek Novels”, *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World* (ed. Christopher Gill and T. P. Wiseman; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993) 175.

being a major influence.²²⁴ Some scholars suspect that biography, the story of an individual hero, may have also influenced the earliest novels.²²⁵ This influence is particularly apparent in the Book of Judith,²²⁶ because it begins with a chronicle of events leading up to Holofernes' campaign and carefully situates the days of Judith during the immediate return from Exile and rededication of the Temple (Jdt. 4: 3). Although the Book of Judith is not a biography of her life, it is an account of a heroic deed that was performed by her. There has been little agreement on what precisely constituted a novel in antiquity;²²⁷ literary forms that were studied and accepted in learned circles were

²²⁴ Niklas Holzberg, *The Ancient Novel: An Introduction* (1986; trans. Christine Jackson-Holzberg; New York and London: Routledge, 1995) 35; however, scholarly opinions on the earliest influences on the development of the novel form vary greatly. See, Tomas Hägg, who claims that the novel did not evolve from historiography, *The Novel in Antiquity* (1980; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983) 109.

²²⁵ See Hägg and Consuelo Ruiz-Montero, "The Rise of the Greek Novel", *The Novel in The Ancient World* (ed. Gareth Schmeling; New York and London: E. J. Brill, 1996) 47. On the connection between biography, autobiography and political propaganda in the classical period, see Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* (1971; London and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) 110.

²²⁶ One of the biggest problems in assessing the genre of the Book of Judith is the tendency of modern scholars to use contemporary terms such as folktale or novel to try to determine the book's genre. The problem is compounded by the fact that these works of narrative prose fiction went unnamed and unnoticed in antiquity by the scholars of the day. For a survey of the various genre classifications that scholars have given to the book, see Moore, *Judith*, 71-76. Pamela Milne argues that the book is a folktale ("What Shall We Do with Judith? A Feminist Reassessment of a Biblical 'Heroine' ", *Semeia* 62 [1993] 37-58), as do Mary Coote and Alan Dundes, in Alonso-Schökel, "Narrative Structures", 21-26; 27-29. See my discussion of the book's genre in the Introduction. Although he uses the term "novel" in relation to the Book of Judith, Lawrence Wills acknowledges that the word was unknown in antiquity. Wills chooses the term "novel" as "a hermeneutical model" which allows him to assess the data at hand; however, his use of the term can be criticized. On his choice of the term, see *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995) 7; on his classification of the Book of Judith as a Jewish novel, see pages 132-157.

In her doctoral dissertation, Sara Raup Johnson demonstrates crucial differences between the many Jewish works that she believes argue against their generic classification as a novel; however, as she herself admits, the manipulation of historical facts is a literary technique that many seem to share. Wills identifies "the significance of the historical blunder" as a semantic element of the novel, that is, a more superficial aspect of a work than its themes or techniques. According to Wills, both semantic elements and syntactic relationships, the relationships between these semantic elements, are critical determinants of genre. See Johnson, *Mirror Mirror: Third Maccabees, Historical Fictions and Jewish Self-fashioning in the Hellenistic Period* (unpublished dissertation; Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1996) 110-156. For Wills' discussion of semantic and syntactic aspects of the novel, see *The Jewish Novel*, 21-22; 232-235. On his discussion of the conscious manipulation of historical fact, see pages 217-224.

²²⁷ Niklas Holzberg, "The Genre: Novels Proper and the Fringe", *The Novel in The Ancient World* (ed. Gareth Schmeling; New York and London: E. J. Brill, 1996) 11.

rhetoric, historiography, epic, and drama, to name a few. Thus the social location of these works of extended prose fiction is conjectural.

At this point it is fruitful to examine the earliest forms of historiography, both Greek and Jewish, and the earliest known fictional prose narratives. This discussion will help us assess the unique elements of the form of the Book of Judith. Knowing how this book is unique in terms of its form will permit us to assess if the Book of Judith could have been used as propaganda; specifically, it may have played a role in legitimating the political and military leadership of a particular woman.

a. *Greek Historiography*

Only the Greek historians that seem to have inspired the author of the Book of Judith will be considered here; these are Herodotus, Ctesias, and Xenophon. I am discussing these three historians and omitting the obvious, Thucydides, because elements of the work of these three have demonstrated links to the development of the novel and, in the case of Herodotus, to the Book of Judith itself.²²⁸ Although we do not know the social location of the earliest novels, we do know that Herodotus' *Histories* and Xenophon's various

²²⁸ Mark Stephen Caponigro, "Judith. Holding the Tale of Herodotus", *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader* (ed. Alice Bach; New York and London: Routledge, 1999) 377-386 (= "Judith, Holding the Tale of Herodotus", *"No One Spoke Ill of Her": Essays on Judith* [ed. James C. VanderKam; SBL, Early Judaism and its Literature, no. 2; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992] 47-59. See also Arnaldo Momigliano, "Biblical Studies and Classical Studies: Simple Reflections about Historical Method", *BA* 45 (1982) 228.

works including, *Anabasis* and *Cyropaedia*, were considered “classics”, were used in Greek education during the Hellenistic period and were, in general, quite popular.²²⁹

Herodotus wrote his *Histories* sometime around the mid – to late fifth century B.C.E. The work is an extended prose narrative that was unique in its day, although, like other literature of the time, it was intended to be read aloud.²³⁰ Other authors had written travelogues and ethnographies; Herodotus wrote what he called a *historia*, an “on-the-spot inquiry of what one sees and hears”.²³¹ His subject matter was largely political; his inquiry was into the expansion of Persia into Lydia, Babylonia and Egypt and the blocking of continued Persian expansion by Greece. It sought the causes of the conflict between Greece and Persia.

The structure of the book itself is debated, the current nine book division being a late addition. J. B. Bury thinks the work was written in three parts each with their own three-fold divisions; these three main parts focus on the reigns of four Persian kings. The first part explores the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses, the second part discusses Darius’ accession and the last part examines the reign of Darius and his son Xerxes.²³²

One distinctive element from Herodotus is worth mentioning because it bears on the development of the novel. Herodotus’s work is not just straight narrative; he also

²²⁹ Oswyn Murray, “Herodotus and Hellenistic Culture”, *CQ* 22. 2 (1972) 202, 204, 212.

²³⁰ Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven and London: Yale, 1995) 30, 39-40; for an argument in support of silent reading in antiquity, see A. K. Gavrilov, “Techniques of Reading in Classical Antiquity”, *CQ* 47. 1 (1997) 56-73; and Michael Grant, *Greek & Roman Historians: Information and Misinformation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995) 6.

²³¹ T. J. Luce, *The Greek Historians* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997) 21; an excellent discussion of the life and times of Herodotus as well as the literary forms from which he drew inspiration can be found in the article on “Herodotus”, *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. 1 (ed. P. E. Easterling and B.M. W. Knox; New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 426-441; see also Robert Drews, *The Greek Accounts of Eastern History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973) 83.

²³² J. B. Bury, *The Ancient Greek Historians* (New York: Dover, 1958) 38-39. For some opposing views of the structure of *The Histories*, see Drews, *The Greek Accounts of Eastern History*, 65-67.

incorporates direct speech,²³³ even though the characters he discusses were long dead.

Here Herodotus seems to have been influenced by Greek drama. *The Histories* reflects the Greek interest in Persian things, an interest that had already been demonstrated in Aeschylus' earlier play *The Persians*, a play that has clear ties to *The Histories*.²³⁴

Additionally, *The Histories* evinces the presence of short prose narratives, anecdotes, about "real-life people in a real-life setting", in which there is a reversal of fortune.²³⁵

Sophie Trenker calls these short works *novellae*. The themes in these stories resemble Greek drama in that they demonstrate themes, such as *hybris*, its involvement in creating a tyrant and the outcome of tyranny itself.²³⁶

One such *novella* is that of Candaules and his wife.²³⁷ In essence this *novella* tells the tale of the change in dynasties from that of Heracles to that of Croesus. The story begins with a presentation of the genealogy of Candaules, a descendant of Heracles (1.7.2). Candaules is so proud of his wife's physical beauty that he wants his favourite bodyguard, Gyges, to see her, even though this act is "lawless" and would cause her shame (1.8.4; 1.10.3). Candaules hides Gyges in their bedroom and Gyges sees her when she undresses for bed; however, unbeknownst to Gyges, the queen, who is not named in this story, sees Gyges leave. The next day she calls Gyges and informs him that he has two choices: to "... either kill Candaules and take me and the throne of Lydia for your own, or be killed yourself now without more ado; that will prevent you from obeying all

²³³ Bury, *The Ancient Greek Historians*, 42.

²³⁴ "Herodotus", *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. 1, 432-433.

²³⁵ Sophie Trenker, *The Greek Novella in the Classical Period* (Cambridge at the University Press, 1958) xiii.

²³⁶ Trenker, *The Greek Novella*, 24, see also Bury, *The Ancient Greek Historians*, 56-60.

²³⁷ Herodotus, 1.7-1.13.2. *The Histories* is also available on the Web at the site of the Perseus Project of Tufts University, see www.perseus.tufts.edu. For a discussion of Herodotus' characterizations of historical personages, see Lionel Pearson, "Real and Conventional Personalities in Greek History", *Selected Papers of Lionel Pearson* (ed. Donald Lateiner and Susan A. Stephens; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983) 136-145.

Candaules' commands in the future and seeing what you should not see" (1.11.2). Gyges chooses to kill Candaules (in his sleep) and marry the queen, two acts that were later recognized by the Delphic oracle. This little *novella* demonstrates the Herodotean tendency to portray history through the vehicle of its agents, that is, the decisions and actions of royalty.²³⁸ Vengeance for prior injustices and imperialism, in this case, the change of dynasties, are two types of interactions that figure in Herodotus.²³⁹

Herodotus has earned for himself the reputation of being "the father of history". According to Luce, "that Herodotus was able to gather most of his information by personal inquiry and to see how it fitted together in one grand historical scheme is one of the great achievements of his or any other age. His invention of history was not some tentative and blinkered affair, therefore, but one of astonishing scope and complexity".²⁴⁰

Ctesias is the next ancient writer whose work may have influenced the author of the Book of Judith. According to Michael Grant: "Ctesias of Cnidus flourished in the late fifth century BC. He wrote a history of Persia (in Ionic), a geographical treatise, and a pioneering separate work on India (*Indica*). He questioned the accuracy of Herodotus about Persian affairs, but was himself far from trustworthy, inventing documents and, in general, foreshadowing the romantic historical novel."²⁴¹ There is really not much more to be said about Ctesias; his works are lost or exist only in fragments, quoted primarily by Diodorus Siculus and Nicolaus of Damascus.²⁴² Of most import is his work titled *Persica*, which was in twenty-three books.²⁴³

²³⁸ Drews, *The Greek Accounts of Eastern History*, 76.

²³⁹ "Herodotus", *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. 1 (ed. P. E. Easterling and B.M. W. Knox; New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 435.

²⁴⁰ Luce, *The Ancient Greek Historians*, 21.

²⁴¹ Grant, *Greek & Roman Historians*, 107.

²⁴² See Jacoby, *FGrHist.*, no. 688; see also the discussion in Drews, *The Greek Accounts*, 104 and 195, ft. 32 for particular information on the use of Ctesias by Diodorus regarding the life of Semiramis. More

A synopsis of this work remains; it began, scholars believe, with the story of Ninus and Semiramis, legendary figures in Assyrian history.²⁴⁴ Drews believes that Ctesias' discussion of this couple and their exploits filled at least two books.²⁴⁵ Median history is also discussed. *Persica* covers much the same material as Herodotus' *Histories*; it deals with the reigns of Cyrus, through to Artaxerxes II. Ctesias' work, if we could put it in contemporary terms, was *The National Enquirer* of Persian history. Eunuchs and sexual exploits abound.²⁴⁶ As court physician to Artaxerxes II, Ctesias probably recorded only those stories that were of interest to those around him.²⁴⁷ The political and philosophical tendencies of Herodotus seem to be missing. In addition, Ctesias made the unfortunate decision to criticize the work of Herodotus; perhaps without this criticism Ctesias would have been remembered as an ethnographer, instead of a teller of tall tales. Yet these tales, particularly the legend of Semiramis, are crucial when it comes to examining the tradition of women warriors in antiquity, a tradition in which the author of the Book of Judith clearly participates. According to Drews, the most important aspect of Ctesias' work was that it satisfied contemporary fascination with the

information about Diodorus Siculus and his times can be found in the book by Kenneth S. Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus and the First Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990). For a discussion of Nicolaus of Damascus, see Part 3, below.

²⁴³ The fragments of Ctesias' *Persica* are collected in one volume by Friedrich Wilhelm König, *Die Persika des Ktesias von Knidos* (Archiv für Orientforschung, herausgegeben von Ernst Weidner, Beiheft 18; Graz: Ferdinand Berger & Söhne, OHG, 1972).

²⁴⁴ According to Drews, Ninus was not an actual person. He was the eponymous ancestor of the Assyrians, a descendant of Heracles and founder of the city of Nineveh, from which the name "Ninos" derives; see Drews, *The Greek Accounts*, 9. Unlike Ninus, Semiramis was a historical person about whom legends were told. Her real name was Shammuramat and she was co-regent of Assyria during the ninth to eighth centuries; see Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, vol. 2, 491.

²⁴⁵ Drews, *The Greek Accounts*, 105; see König, *Die Persika*, on Ninus, 34-37; on Semiramis, 37-40.

²⁴⁶ Drews, *The Greek Accounts*, 106.

²⁴⁷ Drews, *The Greek Accounts*, 107.

history of Assyria, Media, and Persia, a fascination that held popular interest throughout the Hellenistic period.²⁴⁸

The last ancient historian whose work may have influenced the author of the Book of Judith was a contemporary of Ctesias, Xenophon. There is a qualitative difference in the works of these two men. Although they both wrote about the past, Ctesias had been content to limit his sources to fellow members of the Persian court. Xenophon, on the other hand, had been a Greek mercenary and his work clearly demonstrates an interest in military and political affairs.²⁴⁹ Xenophon wrote many works that survive today. Like Ctesias and Herodotus, he was focused on history in general and Assyrian/Persian history in particular. One of Xenophon's most popular works was the *Anabasis* ("Expedition up the Country"). This work was about Cyrus the younger, a namesake of Cyrus the Great, and was based on Xenophon's own exploits in the army. The work is notable for its details and verisimilitude and a marked tendency to make his point through the vehicle of narrative rather than through philosophical discussion, as Plato had done in the *Republic*.²⁵⁰

Cyropaedia or *The Education of Cyrus* is the most important of Xenophon's works, as far as we are concerned; it is often credited as playing a major role in the later

²⁴⁸ The importance of Assyria, Media and Persia is also reflected in Justin's Epitome of the universal history written by Pompeius Trogus in the mid first century B.C.E. but drawing on older written material; see *Justin: Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* (American Philological Association: Classical Resources Series, no. 3; trans. J. C. Yardley; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997) 253. See also Drews, *The Greek Accounts*, 116; for a discussion of the Persians in Herodotus, see David M. Lewis, "Persians in Herodotus", *The Greek Historians: Literature and History, Papers Presented to A. E. Raubitschek* (Saratoga, CA: Anna Libri, 1985) 101-117; for the origin of the three empire *topos* (Assyria, Media, and Persia), see Doron Mendels, *Identity, Religion and Historiography: Studies in Hellenistic History* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 319.

²⁴⁹ On the life of Xenophon, see Karl Otfried Müller, *A History of the Literature of Ancient Greece*, vol. 2 (1858; Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1971) 183-185.

²⁵⁰ Müller, *A History of the Literature of Ancient Greece*, vol. 2, 190-191.

development of the Hellenistic novel.²⁵¹ Written about the middle of the fourth century, it may have been a response to Plato's *Republic*.²⁵² Like the *Republic* it deals with an ideal form of government. Xenophon draws on the life of Cyrus the Great who ruled Persia almost two centuries earlier. Through his portrayal of Cyrus, Xenophon presents his own view on "politics, education, social institutions, and military tactics".²⁵³ Cyrus is portrayed as an ideal ruler, "a wise and warlike but perfectly virtuous prince" who rules not just a city-state, as Plato had described in the *Republic*, but an empire.²⁵⁴

The most outstanding element of the *Cyropaedia* is its style. It is an extended prose narrative based on the life on an important historical figure. Like his other work, *Hellenica*, *Cyropaedia* too incorporates the voices of its main characters in the form of speeches and dialogue.²⁵⁵ In addition to the story of Cyrus, and, perhaps, drawing on the tendency of Herodotus to insert novellae into his stories, and Ctesias' love for dramatic stories,²⁵⁶ Xenophon includes a tale of the romance between Abradatas, the king of Susa, and his wife, Panthea (VI. i. 31- VII. iii. 14).²⁵⁷ This story contains some elements that are later echoed in the Book of Judith. Both works are set during a military conflict. Panthea is the prisoner of Cyrus and, like Judith, she finds herself in the enemy camp and the object of a man's desire, that of the Median friend of Cyrus, Araspas. Panthea fights

²⁵¹ Michael Reichel, "Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and the Hellenistic Novel", *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel*, vol. 6 (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1995) 1-20.

²⁵² Müller, *A History of the Literature of Ancient Greece*, vol. 2, 194; Drews, *The Greek Accounts*, 120.

²⁵³ Drews, *The Greek Accounts*, 119.

²⁵⁴ Müller, *A History of the Literature of Ancient Greece*, vol. 2, 195; cf. Steven W. Hirsch, *The Friendship of the Barbarians: Xenophon and the Persian Empire* (Hanover and London: Tufts University, 1985) 64-65.

²⁵⁵ Bury, *The Ancient Greek Historians*, 152.

²⁵⁶ On the influence of Ctesias on Xenophon, see Trenkner, *The Greek Novella*, 25-26.

²⁵⁷ On this romance, see James Tatum, "The Education of Cyrus", *Greek Fiction: The Greek Novel in Context* (ed. J. R. Morgan and Richard Stoneman; New York and London: Routledge, 1994) 19-21; on its influence on the later Hellenistic romances, see Reichel, "Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*", 7-11.

to remain loyal to her husband, who later becomes an ally of Cyrus and is reunited with his wife.

There are also stylistic similarities between *Judith* and *Cyropaedia*. Both works create interest through anticipations, use irony to highlight moral issues, and employ intertextuality.²⁵⁸ The overall framework of the book evokes “a certain expectation in the reader which is different from the expectation he would have, were it a historical work”.²⁵⁹ Xenophon draws the reader into a personal relationship with his characters. He accomplishes this through what Mieke Bal has termed focalization.²⁶⁰ Focalization is “the relation between the vision and that which is ‘seen’, perceived.” It differs from the narrative perspective in that it distinguishes between “the vision through which the elements are presented” and “the identity of the voice that is verbalizing that vision”. What is particularly noteworthy about focalization is conscious manipulation of the reader. A story accomplishes this manipulation through the author’s voice, and through direct speech of the characters both to each other and about others.²⁶¹

Focalization is important to examine in the Book of Judith for its manipulative effect.²⁶² I am particularly interested in the manipulative aspect of presenting a character, in this case a woman, as a successful leader because this is precisely what political propaganda does. It has been observed that the reader is aware from the outset that Judith

²⁵⁸ Bodil Due, “Narrative Technique in Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*”, *Classica et Mediaevalia: Revue danoise de philologie et d’histoire* 50 (1999) 213-220.

²⁵⁹ Due, “Narrative Technique”, 216.

²⁶⁰ Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (trans. Christine van Boheemen; 1980; Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 100-101.

²⁶¹ Due, “Narrative Technique”, 218-219.

²⁶² Betsy Merideth has previously drawn upon focalization in her analysis of the Book of Judith; see “Desire and Danger: The Drama of Betrayal in Judges and Judith”, *Anti-covenant: Counter-reading Women’s Lives in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Mieke Bal; Decatur, GA: Almond Press, 1989) 68-69, 73.

will succeed in her endeavour.²⁶³ The question is *how* will Judith succeed not *if* she will succeed. Elements call the reader's attention to the salvific role Judith will play in the story. We know immediately that Judith's role will be salvific because the author of the book has taken so much care in articulating the seriousness of the threat to Bethulia, the Temple and the Jewish people. We know that the purpose of this threat is Nebuchadnezzar's desire to punish those nations that did not respond to his request for support.

The first thing we learn of Judith is that she is of a noble lineage. Before we learn anything of her character, we learn that she has the ancestral qualities it takes to save Judea. In addition to this, we are told that the current political establishment of Bethulia has reached the limits of its ability to cope with the situation. Everyone is desperate but the only person with a clear head is Judith. Her ability to take control when others fail is boldly expressed. It is this confidence in the ability of a woman to manage a threatening situation that suggests that the Book of Judith may have served political propagandistic purposes.

The Book of Judith would not have been the first extended prose narrative to be employed as political propaganda. The motivation for writing *Cyropaedia* may have been similar to the motivation for writing the Book of Judith. According to Steven Hirsch, *Cyropaedia* was written as political propaganda for Cyrus the younger who was embroiled in a struggle for the throne with his brother, Artaxerxes II. It was this Artaxerxes who later became the patron of Ctesias.²⁶⁴ Hirsch thinks that Cyrus the

²⁶³ Merideth, "Desire and Danger", 73.

²⁶⁴ Hirsch, *The Friendship of the Barbarians*, 72-74; on Xenophon's legitimization of the political power of the upper class, see Steven Johnstone, "Virtuous Toil, Vicious Work: Xenophon on Aristocratic Style", *Classical Philology* 89. 3 (1994) 219-240.

younger purposely drew on the historical importance of Cyrus the Great in order to legitimate his claim to the throne. Hirsch cites some evidence that supports this claim; Artaxerxes did, in fact, create inscriptions claiming that Cyrus the Great was a mere usurper;²⁶⁵ however, whether the author of the Book of Judith was aware of the political motivation behind Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* is questionable. The book itself, *Cyropaedia*, ends with the death of Cyrus and a deathbed speech in which Cyrus the Great leaves the kingdom to his older son, Cambyses (8. 7. 8).²⁶⁶

b. *Jewish Historiography*

Jewish historiography grew alongside Greek historiography and, according to Arnaldo Momigliano, was a "parallel phenomenon".²⁶⁷ Judaism is predicated on the belief that God is an active agent in its history; biblical literature was written testimony of this belief. Yet there is much more going on in biblical literature than merely an account of God's actions. Biblical literature is also witness to political struggles, sexual politics, and the evolving self-identity of a people. Written in narrative prose, its tales have both intrigued and edified its audience for millennia.

Hidden within these tales are layers and layers of oral and literary history itself, for biblical literature as we read it today is a product of centuries of redacting, at times, splicing and blending elements of different variations of a story into a homogeneous tale.

²⁶⁵ See also Roland G. Kent, "The Oldest Old Persian Inscriptions", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 66 (1946) 206-212; Hirsch, *The Friendship of the Barbarians*, 173, ft. 42.

²⁶⁶ For a brief account of the failed attempt of Cyrus the Younger to usurp the kingship, see Amélie Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East, c. 3000-330 BC*, vol. 2 (1995; London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 673.

²⁶⁷ Momigliano, "Eastern Elements", 26.

The redactors of these texts were not, as Robert Alter humourously observes, "...in the grip of a kind of manic tribal compulsion, driven again and again to include units of traditional material that made no connective sense, for reasons they themselves could not have explained."²⁶⁸ Instead, biblical literature reflects a consciousness of the historical process that speaks of the resolution of conflicting values, shifts of political power, and the ongoing struggle to find God's presence in historical events.²⁶⁹ Commenting on Deuteronomic history John Van Seters states,

The past was used in many different ways and by means of many distinct forms to exercise an authority over institutions, customs, rights, and behavior. An expansive portrayal of the past, however, could embody the explanation and the legitimation of all of these in one complex genre. The prestige of a dynasty, the primacy of a temple and its priesthood, the question of territorial rights and boundaries, civil and religious laws – all could be integrated and supported by one "history", instead of using a variety of forms, such as king lists, temple legends, priestly genealogies, treaty "histories", and law codes. The genius of Dtr. history is that it attempted such a wide-ranging integration of forms in order to set forth within one work the whole foundation of Israelite society.²⁷⁰

Van Seters rightly observes the two-fold importance of the past in Jewish minds. The past was infused with divine authority. At the same time, later Jewish authors came to draw on the authority of the past when needing to legitimate social change or to construct self-identity.²⁷¹

At no time in Jewish historiography do we see this tendency more than in the literature of the Second Temple Period. It was at this time that Greek culture, its

²⁶⁸ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981) 20.

²⁶⁹ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 33.

²⁷⁰ John Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983) 347.

²⁷¹ The question of the historical accuracy of biblical literature need not concern us here. For a perspective that differs from Van Seters', see Baruch Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (New York and San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

literature, education, values, and general way of life challenged the integrity of Jewish society.²⁷² *The Letter of Aristeas* demonstrates that the Jews of the third century valued a Greek education. H. I. Marrou discusses the specifics of the literary component of this education. Children were taught from the age of seven and their education continued indefinitely.²⁷³ At the elementary level, students learned how to read and write; advanced classes were given by a grammarian and included a study of classical literature and rhetoric. The plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were studied, as were the historians Herodotus and Xenophon. All this was made the more challenging because punctuation was not included and the words were not distinguished by spaces. Many of these works were, in fact, learned by rote.²⁷⁴ Greek education was not without its guiding principle; it taught morality and how to exemplify its ideal values.²⁷⁵ Yet for Jews, the study and embodiment of Greek values posed no small threat to the Jewish way of life.

As a means of maintaining and, in fact, redefining their self-identity in light of Greek culture, Jewish authors of this period refashioned the lives of their ancestors to reflect their own cultural antiquity and superiority.²⁷⁶ Numerous works are associated with this period: the works of Demetrius the Chronographer, Ezekiel the Tragedian, Eupolemus, Artapanus, and Aristobulus, just to name a few. Unfortunately many of

²⁷² Much has been written about the close and complex relationship between Greeks and Jews. For some classic studies in this area, see Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (1959; New York: Atheneum, 1979); Elias J. Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (1988; London and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism and his Jews, Greeks and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the pre-Christian Period* (German, 1976; trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 3 vols. (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1972) and Moses Hadas, *Hellenistic Culture: Fusion and Diffusion* (1959; Morningside Heights, NY: Columbia University Press, 1963).

²⁷³ *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 201, 224; Marrou gives us every reason to think that girls were educated as well as boys, 202.

²⁷⁴ Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 227-231.

²⁷⁵ On the importance of morality in a Greek education, see Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 301-302.

²⁷⁶ See Doron Mendels, *Identity, Religion and Historiography: Studies in Hellenistic History* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 357.

these works are extant only in fragments; lengthy quotations from some of their works were preserved by later writers such as Alexander Polyhistor and the Christian author Eusebius.²⁷⁷

What sets these fragments apart from biblical and Greek literature is their growing disregard for the original stories in favour of fresh retelling of a story about the patriarchs, Moses or David.²⁷⁸ As Harold Attridge fittingly observes, it is difficult to classify the genre of many of these fragments based solely on their concern for Jewish historical figures;²⁷⁹ we have little idea of the original social location of the complete works. In general we know that these Hellenistic Jewish authors demonstrated a thorough knowledge of Greek literature and even imitated Greek literary forms.²⁸⁰ Ezekiel wrote a tragedy in iambic trimeter about the education of Moses, in which, according to Holladay, he shows more than a passing acquaintance with the works of Herodotus, Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles.²⁸¹ As discussed above, Theodotus composed an epic poem in hexameter verse.²⁸² Mimicking the style of Homer, Theodotus retells the story of the rape of Dinah and the killing of the Shechemites (Gen.

²⁷⁷ These works can be read in their original Greek with a German or English translation in two important collections: Felix Jacoby *Die Fragmente der griechisch Historiker*, vol. 3, C 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958) and Carl R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, 3 vols. (SBL: Texts and Translations Series, nos. 20, 30, 39/Pseudepigrapha Series, nos. 10, 12, 13; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1983-1995). Charlesworth's *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, contains only the English translation.

²⁷⁸ For a discussion of the importance of the historical in the works of Hellenistic Jewish authors, see Tessa Rajak, "The Sense of History in Jewish Intertestamental Writing", *Crises and Perspectives: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Polytheism, Biblical Theology, Palestinian Archaeology and Intertestamental Literature, Papers Read at the Joint British-Dutch Old Testament Conference Held at Cambridge, U.K., 1985* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986) 124-145.

²⁷⁹ Harold W. Attridge, "Historiography", *JWSTP*, 157.

²⁸⁰ The recent article by John Van Seters highlights the need to examine intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible, see "Creative Imitation in the Hebrew Bible", *SR* 29. 4 (2000) 395-409.

²⁸¹ Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, vol. 2, 303; see also R.G. Robertson, "Ezekiel the Tragedian", *OTP*, vol. 2, 803.

²⁸² See I. 3. c.

34).²⁸³ Artapanus, who writes in the middle of the second century, produced what seems to be an “adventure novel” about Moses.²⁸⁴

2. LITERARY THEORY AND TECHNIQUES IN THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD

There was little in the way of literary theory in the Hellenistic period in general and nothing in the way of the theory of the novel; however, there were some guiding principles that existed and may have influenced the author of the Book of Judith. The dramatic forms were modelled on Plato’s idea of *mimesis*, or imitation of life. Other ancient thinkers developed his thoughts further. Aristotle, in his works *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, Cicero, and the anonymous author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* provide early forms of literary criticism which can be used to help assess what were considered elements of good literary technique and composition. These elements were not rigidly adhered to; authors, particularly those who wrote in the fresh style of the extended prose narrative, embellished earlier forms with imaginative fluidity. Two elements of ancient writing are particularly pertinent to this discussion. The first is intertextuality and the second is allegory. Both were used in ancient literature to present new ideas, including political ones. As such an understanding of these two elements is important in order to comprehend how the Book of Judith could function as political propaganda.

²⁸³ Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, vol. 2, 53.

²⁸⁴ Holladay himself includes Artapanus in his volume on Hellenistic Jewish historians, but admits that the fragments are classified as part of “popular romance literature”, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, vol. 1, 190-191; cf. 196, ft. 16. I will discuss Artapanus’ Moses at length below.

a . *Mimesis*

The primary literary theorist of the classical and Hellenistic periods was Aristotle. He drew on the theories of his teacher, Plato, who first postulated that all art is *mimesis* or imitation of life.²⁸⁵ Aristotle further developed this idea in his work *Poetics* that deals with specific forms such as music, and drama, and especially tragic poetry.²⁸⁶ For Aristotle, as for Plato, art drew a realistic portrait of elements of human life. It had to be, as Grube observes, “true to something actual” and the enjoyment of imitation is “the pleasure of recognizing the model in the image”.²⁸⁷ For Aristotle, life could be imitated in different ways: different things could be imitated in different forms (tragedy or comedy) and by different modes (rhythms, language or melody). Later writers interpreted *mimesis* to include imitation of the works of others.²⁸⁸

Aristotle was aware of types of literary forms that existed but went unnoticed; for instance, he mentions an art that uses “plain language” and is “so far unnamed” (1447a). It is quite possible that here he is referring to prose and perhaps even the earliest forms of

²⁸⁵ Plato, *The Republic*, 2 vols. (trans. Paul Shorey; London and Cambridge, MA: William Heinemann and Harvard University Press, 1963) 10.

²⁸⁶ Epic poetry, comedy and history are dealt with in as much as they relate to tragic poetry. Aristotle mentions in a later text, *Rhetoric*, that he has also dealt with comedy; however, this discussion is no longer extant. *Poetics* (LCL; ed. and trans. Stephen Halliwell; Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1995); all citations from *Poetics* are taken from this edition. Much has been written about Aristotle's theories, in this discussion I have found useful *Ancient Literary Criticism: The Principal Texts in New Translations* (ed. D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom; Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1972) 85-90; G. M. A. Grube, *The Greek and Roman Critics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965) 70-89.

²⁸⁷ Grube, *The Greek and Roman Critics*, 71-2.

²⁸⁸ A brief summary of this imitation and its link to intertextuality is found in Van Seters, “Creative Imitation”, 397-398; D. A. Russell offers more detail on *mimesis*, see *Criticism in Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981) 99-113; *mimesis* in Roman literature is discussed by Gian Biagio Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets* (Italian; trans. Charles Segall; Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996).

fiction, for Xenophon, the famous writer, had penned his *Cyropaedia* about fifty years or so before Aristotle wrote.

Two elements of Aristotle's theories are, however, relevant to later fiction and the Book of Judith in particular. The first is the idea of "reversal" and the second is the concept of "recognition". Reversal of plot occurs, according to Aristotle, when there is "a change to the opposite direction of events" (1452a). Recognition is also a change; it occurs when there is a new awareness between people, a shift "from ignorance to knowledge, leading to friendship or to enmity, and involving matters which bear on prosperity or adversity" (1452a-b). According to Esler, both these elements occur in the Book of Judith.²⁸⁹ The primary reversal is, of course, the reversal of fortunes of the Jews and the Assyrians; the powerful Assyrian army is defeated and humiliated, not by a cunning and skillful Jewish army, but by an unarmed Jewish woman. The defeat of an army by a woman is associated with the cultural value of shame: in Judges (9: 52-54), Abimelech was fatally wounded by a woman in Thebez who dropped a millstone on his head. Abimelech asked his armour-bearer to kill him quickly "lest men say of me, 'A woman killed him.' " There is also the element of recognition in the book. In addition to Achior's recognition of the head of Holofernes (14: 6), the Jewish people are recognized as a powerful force of which the surrounding nations need to beware. Judith, in particular, stands out as a military, religious and political leader.

Aristotle was not the only literary theorist whose ideas could have influenced the genre of the Book of Judith. The anonymous author of the first century (B.C.E.)

²⁸⁹ Esler, " 'By the Hand of a Woman' ", 97-98.

*Rhetorica ad Herennium*²⁹⁰ and Cicero's *De Inventione* are witnesses to some of the literary conventions that governed composition and oratory during this period. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* acknowledges the existence of narratives based on persons (1. 13). Cicero talks of the need for narratives to be plausible, that they must resemble reality.²⁹¹

b. *The Encomia and the Book of Judith*

Epideictic or panegyric speeches written in praise of an individual were known as *encomia*. An *encomium* contained certain elements. These elements were an introduction, a narrative that presented the origin, genealogy and/or birth of the person praised and listed their achievements, their virtues, deeds, and blessings and then ended with a conclusion.²⁹²

This pattern is evinced in the Book of Judith. Although it is fiction, it nevertheless introduces Judith with a genealogy (8: 1). In fact, this is the longest genealogy of any woman in biblical literature.²⁹³ She is of noble birth, according to Jewish custom. She is beautiful and blessed with wealth (8: 7). She has self-control, living in mourning for three years and four months (8: 4), devout (a Jewish virtue), generous (in that she risks her life), courageous, gentle (unaccustomed to violence, she

²⁹⁰ This work was for a long time attributed to Cicero and, indeed, there are many similarities between this work and Cicero's *De Inventione*; however, some scholars think that the author of the *Rhetorica*, although writing after Cicero, drew on older material. The quotes from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* are from Cicero: *Ad C. Herennium de Ratione Dicendi (Rhetorica ad Herennium)* vol. 1 (28 vols.; trans. Harry Caplan; London and Cambridge, MA: William Heinemann and Harvard University Press, 1989) xxv-xxviii.

²⁹¹ Cicero, *De Inventione*, 1.29.

²⁹² The elements of the *encomium* are outlined by Burton L. Mack, *Rhetorica and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990) 48.

²⁹³ Moore, *Judith*, 187-188.

has to take two strokes to kill Holofernes) (13: 8). She is wise (8: 29); all in all a virtuous woman, “no one spoke ill of her” (8: 8). She did a great deed when she saved her people from the Assyrians, not only avoiding much bloodshed, death and rape, but also proving to the surrounding nations that Judea was a fearsome opponent, for “... no one ever again spread terror among the people of Israel in the days of Judith, or for a long time after her death” (16: 25). She was blessed by Joakim the high priest (15: 10) and “honoured in her time throughout the whole country” (16: 21).

Yet most *encomia* were written about men. Aristotle and other Greek philosophers thought that men were inherently worthier than women and consequently their deeds and virtues carried more importance (i. ix. 22). These values may have been similar in Jewish society. Abimelech was ashamed to have been fatally wounded by a woman. The fact that a woman wounded him debased an act which, if carried out by a man, would have been ennobling. Even the Book of Esther passes over her deeds in the end. Only the Book of Judith honours the achievement of a woman (16: 21). It seems apparent that the author of the book was breaking with social norms in his or her praise of a woman, fictitious though she be.

c. Allusions/Intertextuality

The use of allusions or noticeable references to other literary works was one means of actualizing *mimesis*. Although a common literary device in antiquity,²⁹⁴ the use of allusions has attracted recent literary attention due to the literary theories of Julia Kristeva.²⁹⁵ Kristeva asserts that intertextuality is not merely source criticism; she sees intertextuality as a transposition of different “signifying systems” into a new communication. In other words, the elements from other literary works are not combined in a haphazard manner, but in a way that draws on elements of the symbolic systems of the older works to articulate a new vision. This new vision could merely evoke elements of older works or critique them.

Although he writes about Christian literature, Willem Vorster’s observations of the dynamics of intertextuality are pertinent to this discussion. According to Vorster, the older texts, which he calls “precuser texts”, are “activated” when the new literary work

²⁹⁴ This convention existed in the time of Aristophanes and also found its way into the early novels. On the use of literary allusions in the plays of Aristophanes, see *The Complete Plays of Aristophanes* (1962; ed. Moses Hadas; New York: Bantam Books, 1968) 9; for the use of allusions in the early novels, see *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) 84; Niklas Holzberg, *The Ancient Novel: An Introduction* (1986; German; trans. Christine Jackson-Holzberg; London and New York: Routledge, 1995) 35. The use of literary allusions has been studied in our society by scholars such as Julia Kristeva, who came to call this phenomenon *intertextuality*. On intertextuality, see George Aichele and Gary A. Phillips, “Introduction: Exegesis, Eisegesis, Intergesis”, *Semeia* 69/70 (1995) 7-18; Vernon K. Robbins, “Historical, Rhetorical, Literary, Linguistic, Cultural, and Artistic Intertextuality - A Response”, *Semeia* 80 (1997) 291-303; Willem S. Vorster, “Intertextuality and *Redaktionsgeschichte*”, *Speaking of Jesus: Essays on Biblical Language, Gospel Narrative and the Historical Jesus* (ed. J. Eugene Botha; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1999) 477-490.

²⁹⁵ See the English translation of her work, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (*La révolution du langage poétique*; 1974; trans. Margaret Waller; New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) 59-60. Kristeva also discusses *mimesis*; however, it is worthwhile asking to what extent our definition of the term has evolved from that of the ancients; for Kristeva’s understanding of the term, see pp. 57-61.

alludes to them.²⁹⁶ In a work with many allusions, the reader is drawn into a type of “dialogue” between the new work and its antecedent texts. According to Vorster, the reader assigns meaning to these intertextual works, based on the function of the elements from the precursor texts that appear in the new text.²⁹⁷ The extent to which an allusion to an antecedent text harmonizes with or clashes with the ideas that the new work presents establishes how the new text constructs meaning. An example will illustrate this idea. If I write a work about a person who went into battle single-handedly against a great enemy and who later became a great leader I would, of course, be alluding to the biblical portrayal of King David. However, this reference alone is not enough to convey my meaning. I could construct this allusion to convey the idea that this new person who resembles King David is, in fact, a new David. Along with this idea would come all the symbolic importance of the David character. On the other hand, I could use the allusion to David’s heroic action to signify how my person lacked the essential David-like qualities to be a good leader. In this latter case, I would be using the allusion to discredit my character. Allusions on their own, therefore, are not enough to convey meaning; it is the way that these allusions are used that determines what they signify.

With this awareness of the power of intertextuality in mind, this device has the potential to initiate social change. George Aichele and Gary Phillips observe that the new ideas constructed through intertextual references derive “... from the subjective, or

²⁹⁶ Willem S. Vorster, “The Protevangelium of James and Intertextuality”, *Text and Testimony: Essays on New Testament and Apocryphal Literature in Honour of A. F. J. Klijn* (ed. T. Baarda, et al.; Kampen: Kok, 1988) 262-275. The concept of “activating” the precursor text is taken from Z. Ben-Porat, “The Poetics of Literary Allusion”, *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1 (1976) 107.

²⁹⁷ Willem S. Vorster, “Intertextuality and *Redaktionsgeschichte*”, *Speaking of Jesus: Essays on Biblical Language, Gospel Narrative and the Historical Jesus* (ed. J. Eugene Botha; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1999) 485, 490. Although Vorster acknowledges the difference between ancient and modern literary theory, he successfully demonstrates the importance and dynamics of intertextuality in early Christian literature.

ideological, juxtaposing of text with text *on behalf of* specific readers in specific historical/material situations in order to produce new constellations of texts/readers/readings.”²⁹⁸ In other words, for us to grasp fully how this new meaning may have been perceived by its original audience we need to study the text and its intertextual allusions from within its cultural context.

How do these observations about intertextuality relate to the Book of Judith? It is important to acknowledge the demonstrated intertextual links between this book and, not only the Hebrew Scriptures, but also works of Greek literature as well. Momigliano remarks on the similarities between the way Holofernes acquires information about the Jews in the Book of Judith and the way Queen Atossa gathers data about the Athenians in *The Persians* by Aeschylus.²⁹⁹ Specific references to “earth and water”, references that Nickelsburg thinks indicate a Persian provenance for the Book of Judith, are found in Herodotus (6. 48. 1). Michael Heltzer demonstrates a further similarity between the Book of Judith and Greek literature.³⁰⁰ The *Lindos Chronicle* was written early in the first century B.C.E. and presents an account of an attack by the Persians against Lindos. The Lindians were put under siege and, like the Bethulians, were dying of thirst and wanted to surrender; however, the Goddess of the city came in a dream to one of the city leaders and told him that she would ask Zeus for help. The next day a torrent of rain fell on the acropolis. When the leader of the Persian army saw this miraculous event he dedicated many valuable personal objects to this goddess, Athena, and made a treaty with the Lindians. The events that the Chronicle describes may or may not have been a

²⁹⁸ Aichele and Phillips, “Introduction: Exegesis, Eisegesis, Intergesis”. 9: 15.

²⁹⁹ Momigliano, “Eastern Elements”, 26.

³⁰⁰ Heltzer, “The Persepolis Documents”, 81-101; on the date of the Chronicle and its Ephiphanes, see p. 88; for his translation of the story, see p. 90.

historical event, but the composition of these works during the first century shows that the story was actively being transmitted at this time. The similarities between this tale and the Book of Judith hardly need to be enunciated, they are so obvious. The Bethulians are like the Lindians, the Assyrians are like the Persians and, most importantly, Judith is a parallel to the goddess Athena.

When it comes to biblical literature, George Montague writes that the Book of Judith is “a symphony of biblical allusions”.³⁰¹ It would be a lengthy task to discuss every literary allusion in the book; many are to *1 Maccabees*. As we have seen in Part One of this dissertation, *1 Maccabees* was written at approximately the same time as the Book of Judith. The strongest allusion to *1 Maccabees* that is found in *Judith* involves the death of the Seleucid prince, Nicanor.³⁰² Nicanor hated Israel and was sent to destroy its people (7: 26). He approached Judas peaceably, but, according to *1 Maccabees*, it was “with treacherous intent” (7: 30). Both Nicanor and the fictional Holofernes intend to destroy the Temple (1 Mac. 7: 35; Jdt. 3: 8; 9: 8). Like Judas, Judith prays that God “crush” the enemy (1 Mac. 7: 42; Jdt 9: 7, 10). Like Holofernes, Nicanor was the first to die in battle (1 Mac. 7: 43). Nicanor’s right hand and his head were cut off (7: 47) and the enemy was chased for a day while the Jews sounded “...the battle call on the trumpets. And men came out of all the villages of Judea round about, and they outflanked the enemy and drove them back to their pursuers, so that they all fell by the sword” (7: 45-46). Nicanor’s head and hand were put on display outside Jerusalem (7: 47). Many of these elements appear in the plot of the Book of Judith. The “treacherous

³⁰¹ George Montague, *The Books of Esther and Judith* (New York: Paulist Press, 1973) 10.

³⁰² A parallel account of the death of Nicanor also appears in *2 Maccabees* 15: 1-35; however, it is sufficient to focus on the tale found in *1 Maccabees* because it is not a synopsis of a larger work (2 Macc. 2: 23).

intent” in *Judith* lies with our hero. Holofernes is the only one to die and his head is cut off and displayed (Jdt. 13: 8; 14: 11). Like the Seleucid army, the Assyrians in the Book of Judith were pursued, “outflanked” and killed and the enemy camp was plundered (Jdt. 15: 3-7).

What new meaning can be drawn from these allusions to *1 Maccabees*? The strongest element that stands out is the parallel between the leadership of Judas and the leadership of Judith. Both are political and military leaders. In addition to this similarity, they are both instrumental in the death of their enemy, although Judith is more directly so. Both enemies, Nicanor and Holofernes, meet the same end. They are decapitated and their heads are displayed for all to see. Also, the Jews pursue both the enemies and plunder their camps. Given that an oral tradition about the death of Nicanor at the hands of Judas’ army probably existed before *1 Maccabees* was written, the parallels that manifest themselves in the Book of Judith are crucial markers that point to a correspondence between the historical Judas and the fictional Judith. Why would an author “activate” such an intimate association between a historical person, Judas, and a powerful woman leader? Although fictional, the character of Judith is exceptional for its time. As we will see, Judith’s characterization is more vivid than that of her closest biblical parallel, Esther. If Aichele and Phillips are correct in their estimate of the role intertextuality (allusions) played in ancient literature, then the allusion to Judas and the death of Nicanor in the Book of Judith suggest that a new idea is being presented to the original audience. The apparent implication is that the leadership of a particular woman parallels that of the Hasmonean hero, Judas Maccabee. This woman deals in a similar fashion with her enemies; her leadership is similarly exemplary.

One further interesting observation that comes out of the research is the use in this type of literary work of allusions to the more highly regarded works of literature.³⁰³ While it is true that those who did not understand the allusions could enjoy these works, they were obviously written with the intent of drawing on the experience of a formal education. It seems that Holzberg is correct in remarking that “the number of people who were able and could afford to read a book purely for entertainment was still quite small and comprised for the most part members of the upper and middle classes.”³⁰⁴

d. *Allegory*

There is another element of literary composition in antiquity which bears special mention, that is the use of allegory. Allegory began with the Stoics (third century B.C.E.) who read Homer on a figurative rather than literal level. The search for deeper meaning behind existing texts and the incorporation of allegorical elements in new texts continued on into the first century (C.E.) when Jewish philosophers (Philo is the most prominent example) used this method of allegorical interpretation to explain Scripture.³⁰⁵ Although allegorical interpretation of Scripture is most often associated with Philo, it does appear in earlier Hellenistic Jewish writing. It is, therefore, important to discuss this literary device because it existed at the time the Book of Judith was written.

³⁰³ Pervo, *Profit with Delight*, 84; cf. Holzberg, *The Ancient Novel*, 35.

³⁰⁴ Holzberg, *The Ancient Novel*, 34.

³⁰⁵ On the Stoic background of Philo's use of allegory, see Samuel Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) 19-21 and Ronald Williamson, *Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo* (Cambridge, MA and New York: Cambridge, 1989) 147-150.

According to David Dawson, in antiquity the allegorical and symbolic were synonymous.³⁰⁶ Allegorical interpretations originated at court³⁰⁷ and were closely associated with royalty.³⁰⁸ An allegory is an indirect expression of the author's ideas. The word "allegory" derives from the Greek words ἄλλος which means "other" and ἀγορεύειν which means "to speak publicly in the agora"; ἀλλεγορία means "to say something other than what one seems to say".³⁰⁹ An allegory is often found in a narrative context. In this narrative context "... characters and objects in the fictional sequence of events are symbols for the realities which make up the truth or truths which the author wishes to communicate to his readers".³¹⁰ Allegories are designed to encourage "... readers into fresh ways of thinking about something else in a wholly different dimension of reality".³¹¹

One way of creating new meanings through allegory involved the technique of personification. This technique is seen in the works of Hellenistic Jewish authors. For instance, Aristobulus, who writes to one of the Ptolemies³¹² in the mid-second century B.C.E.,³¹³ draws attention to the way the Law speaks of God's "hands, arm, visage, feet and ability to walk" "as signifiers for the divine power" (Fr. 2. 10. 1).³¹⁴ Of particular importance for our understanding of the Book of Judith is Aristobulus' personification of

³⁰⁶ David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley and Oxford: University of California Press, 1992) 76.

³⁰⁷ Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 71.

³⁰⁸ Russell, *Criticism in Antiquity*, 99-100

³⁰⁹ Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 2.

³¹⁰ Williamson, *Jews in the Hellenistic World*, 145.

³¹¹ Williamson, *Jews in the Hellenistic World*, 145.

³¹² For a discussion of the controversial addressee of Aristobulus' work, see A. Yarbro Collins, "Aristobulus", *OTP*, vol. 2, 833.

³¹³ See Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors: Aristobulus*, vol. 3, 74-75; also A. Yarbro Collins, "Aristobulus", *OTP*, vol. 2, 832-833.

³¹⁴ Carl R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors: Aristobulus*, vol. 3 (SBL Texts and Translations, no. 39; Pseudepigrapha Series, no. 13; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995) 135.

power, both divine and royal, as the hand of God or the king (Fr. 2 10.7-8). Likewise in the Book of Judith it is her *hand* that is portrayed as being the instrument of Holofernes' destruction. Here we have a clear link between the will of YHWH and its execution by the "hand" of a woman (Jdt. 13: 14).

Given the convention of allegorically portraying the power of a king or of YHWH as a hand, under what circumstances would the author of the Book of Judith have been able to plausibly represent Judith's power as *her* hand? D. Rudman's study of the theological allegory behind the story of David's killing of Goliath is helpful in order to understand what the author of the Book of Judith may have had in mind. As we have seen through both Esler's study and that of LaCocque, a strong case can be made that the author intended to draw a parallel between the legendary king David and Judith.³¹⁵ Rudman, too, sees the point of the David and Goliath story as a theological demonstration that David, although young and a shepherd instead of a warrior, "has got what it takes to shepherd Israel".³¹⁶ If we turn at this point to the theory of Roland Boer regarding "political or national allegory", then the author's intent in creating new meaning through the allegory of Judith's hand as power and the allusions to the David story become apparent. According to Boer, "when a political identity is questioned or threatened" political/national allegory "comes into play".³¹⁷ This political/national allegory is, for Boer, "a genre in which characters play out complex relationships that interpret and highlight what are felt to be the significant features of the national situation in past and present and project possibilities for the future; thus, national allegory connects public and

³¹⁵ See Esler, "By the Hand of a Woman". 78-91; LaCocque, *The Feminine Unconventional*, 35.

³¹⁶ D. Rudman, "The Commissioning Stories of Saul and David as Theological Allegory", *VT* 50. 4 (2000) 528.

³¹⁷ Roland Boer, "National Allegory in the Hebrew Bible", *JSOT* 74 (1997) 112.

private, society and individual, where public and society are constituted by a 'nation' ".³¹⁸

This process of creating an allegorical narrative is subtle; it provides small clues "that suggest that something else is going on with the text, that a larger realm lies just beyond reach".³¹⁹

The power of allegory to create new meanings is linked to what David Dawson calls "cultural revision". According to Dawson, allegory is a way of making "cultural meanings scriptural"; allegorical interpretation has the potential to change the meaning of texts. Allegorical interpretation can "neutralize" an aberrant literal meaning of a passage and thereby "protect" a culture; it can also "criticize" a culture by providing an alternative meaning for an established text. In cultures that rely on scripture, allegorical interpretation can also allow scripture "to absorb and reinterpret" its contemporary cultural setting;³²⁰ however, the power of allegory goes even further. According to Dawson, allegorical composition was a "rhetorical strategy"³²¹ that could be used, among other things, to legitimate political authority. He writes,

In a truly revisionary reading of culture according to scripture, one will not only make cultural meanings scriptural, one will also make one's own sacred scripture prior to, and hence authoritative over, everyone else's not-so-sacred scripture. If one posits one's own text as prior to other texts and construes that priority as an authority bestowed by absolute and divine originality, all competing texts will be subordinated. Thus one might not only declare that scripture rather than Plato offers the most persuasive description of the soul's transformation, but also insist that Moses preceded Plato and that Plato derived all his best insights from original Mosaic wisdom.³²²

³¹⁸ Roland Boer, "National Allegory", 95.

³¹⁹ Roland Boer, "National Allegory", 97.

³²⁰ Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 10-11.

³²¹ Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 75.

³²² Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 11.

This tendency is, in fact, seen in the Book of Judith. The revisionary reading of culture to which Dawson refers can be seen in the historical setting of the Book of Judith. By placing Judith's political and military leadership in the past, the author of the book legitimates female leadership as something that has already occurred; in other words, female leadership is not presented directly as something that Jews should *now* accept, but something that they *had* accepted at one time, under certain circumstances, and should consequently accept now.

3. NATIONAL HEROES IN THE FIRST CENTURY B.C.E

a. *The Assyrian, Egyptian and Greek Heroes: Ninus, Sesostris, Nectanebo, and Alexander*

In his study of Jewish identity in the literature of Diaspora Hellenistic Jewish authors, John Collins observes that a large portion of Hellenistic Jews discovered their "identity in the often-fantastic stories of ancestral heroes who outshone the best of the Greeks, Babylonians, and Egyptians".³²³ Collins terms this tendency of Hellenistic Jewish authors to reshape biblical traditions about their own cultural heroes such as Moses, Joseph, Abraham and others "competitive historiography".³²⁴ By this he means that the biblical traditions about Jewish "heroes" were re-cast in accordance with what was

³²³ Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 63.

³²⁴ Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 53.

considered heroic and exemplary by the standards of the cultures that surrounded Judea at the time.

It is important at this point to examine the heroes of first century literature in order to see how they were characterized and what acts made them heroic to the Hellenistic mind. I will first examine male heroes such as the Babylonian Ninus, the Egyptians Sesostris and Nectanebo and the Greek Alexander. I will also look at the way the Jewish heroes are portrayed in the fragments of some of the Hellenistic Jewish authors. From there I move on to discuss the women warrior tradition of the ancient Near East. Examining the hero and women warrior traditions provides important background information when we come to assess the degree of uniqueness expressed in the character and actions and focalization of Judith.

The earliest sources about the war hero Ninus, the Assyrian king and founder of Nineveh, are Herodotus, Ctesias and Diodorus (who drew on Ctesias).³²⁵ Ninus at some time is joined with the traditions surrounding Semiramis, a legendary figure in her own right.³²⁶ Not much is written about Ninus in Herodotus; he appears in a genealogy (1. 7. 2). Ninos is also an alternate name for the city of Nineveh (2. 150. 2). Diodorus Siculus, who writes in the first century B.C.E., credits Ctesias (2. 5. 4) as his source for material on Ninus (2. 1. 7 – 2. 7. 5). Ninus has a fuller portrayal in this work. In Diodorus, he is

³²⁵ Much of the preliminary comparative material for the male heroes of the Hellenistic period can be found in the work by Martin Braun, *History and Romance in Graeco-Oriental Literature* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1938). For more information on Ninus and Semiramis, see also above Section II. 1. a.

³²⁶ Braun discusses Ninus and Semiramis together. He basically examines the contrast between the earlier layers of the Ninus/Semiramis tradition and its later expression in the fragments of the early romantic novel that is believed to have existed anywhere from the first century B.C.E. onwards; see *History and Romance*, 6-13. A brief introduction to this romance is found in Holzberg, *The Ancient Novel*, 38-39. For a more detailed analysis of the fragments and related bibliography, see *Ancient Greek Novels, The Fragments: Introduction, Text, Translation and Commentary* (ed. Susan A. Stephens and John J. Winkler; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995) 23-31, 63, 500-501; alternatively, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (ed. B. P. Reardon; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989) 803-808. The figure of Semiramis will be discussed below.

the king of Assyria and founder of the city that bore his name (Nineveh; 2.3.4). This king was a great military leader and became the husband of the legendary Semiramis (2.4.1). We learn that Ctesias gave great detail about the number of foot soldiers, cavalry and chariots that participated in Ninus' campaign against Bactriana (2.5.4) and its capital Bactra. Like Judean territory, Bactriana is hill country and its passes are narrow (2.6.2).

The Egyptian military leader, Sesostris,³²⁷ figures more prominently in Herodotus than does Ninus. According to Herodotus, Sesostris conquered many lands (2. 102. 3). Sesostris set up a number of pillars indicating which cities he had taken; however, if a city was taken too easily or just surrendered, the inscription on those pillars included a drawing of a woman's genitalia signifying the cowardice of its people (1. 102. 5; 1. 106. 1).³²⁸ Herodotus also recounts an incident in which Sesostris' life and the life of his family were threatened. Sesostris' brother invited the family to a banquet and then set the house on fire, intending to kill the family. Sesostris and his wife and four of their sons escaped and two sons died (1. 107).³²⁹

In the work of Diodorus Siculus, this Pharaoh is called Sesoösis (1. 53. 1 - 1. 58. 5). This account is longer than the one in Herodotus; it speaks of Sesoösis's birth and education, his many military conquests and the irrigation canals that he had built. He died a noble death, he committed suicide when he went blind. According to Diodorus, "this act won for him the admiration not only of the priests of Egypt but of the other inhabitants as well, for it was thought that he had caused the end of his life to comport

³²⁷ This figure is alternately known as Sesoösis (Diodorus) or Sesonchosis (the *Alexander Romance*); see also Braun, *History and Romance*, 13-18. Three men named Sesostris ruled Egypt. Egyptologists call the first Senwosret. They ruled during the second millennium; see Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, vol. 1, 162.

³²⁸ Cf. Diodorus Siculus (trans. C. H. Oldfather; London and Cambridge, MA: William Heinemann and Harvard University Press, 1960) 1. 55. 8.

³²⁹ A different account of this story is found in Diodorus, 1. 57. 6-8.

with the loftiness of spirit shown in his achievements” (1. 58. 3). In summary, Diodorus states, “This king is thought to have surpassed all former rulers in power and military exploits, and also in the magnitude and number of the votive offerings and public works which he built in Egypt” (1. 58. 3).

The Sesostri legend seems to be based on a conflation of Egyptian pharaohs³³⁰ and designed to bolster Egyptian national pride by presenting its accomplishments as surpassing those of the conquering Persians.³³¹ The tradition itself portrays the Pharaoh as a model ruler, based on Egyptian ideals; indeed, Sesostri becomes the symbol or allegory of Egypt itself.³³² Fragments of a romantic novel based on this king have been found at Oxyrhynchus.³³³ The date of these fragments is uncertain;³³⁴ however, it is clear that the Sesostri tradition existed for a considerable time.

Nectanebo was also an Egyptian pharaoh; however, he was the last Pharaoh before the Persian conquest in the fourth century B.C.E. The earliest sources for his tradition are found in *The Demotic Chronicle*, which is actually a collection of oracles³³⁵ and Diodorus (16. 48. 6 f). In Diodorus, Nectanebo is an Egyptian king who eventually

³³⁰ Braun believes that the image of Sesostri may have been modeled on the life of the Persian king Cambyses, see Braun, *History and Romance*, 17; Lloyd thinks that the character was based on the Pharaohs of the 12th Dynasty, see “Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt”, 38.

³³¹ *Ancient Greek Novels, the Fragments*, 246; on the anti-Persian tendencies, see Braun, *History and Romance*, 15-16; see also Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt”, 39.

³³² Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt”, 38, 40.

³³³ See Braun, *History and Romance*, 18; Holzberg, *The Ancient Novel*, 39-41; on Sesonchosis in general and the fragments of the novel that bears his name, see *Ancient Greek Novels, the Fragments*, 246-266 and bibliography 502-503; an alternative English translation is found in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, 819-821. The papyri numbers are 1826, 2466, and 3319. The Ninus and Sesostri novels are similar in structure but possess marked stylistic differences, see *Ancient Greek Novels, the Fragments*, 248.

³³⁴ *Ancient Greek Novel, the Fragments*, 248.

³³⁵ See Lloyd, “National Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt”, 41-45.

lost the battle against the Persians (16. 47. 5-7; 16. 48. 6) and fled to Ethiopia (16. 51.1).³³⁶

The story of Nectanebo is further embellished and inserted into a larger story about Alexander by Pseudo-Callisthenes (1. 3. 4. ff) and another story about him exists in a fragment and is called “The Dream of Nectanebos”.³³⁷ In this later tale, Nectanebo, who was also a magician, prophesied the Persian conquest and left Egypt for Macedonia. It was prophesied that he would someday return and rule Egypt.³³⁸ While he was in Macedonia his status as a prophet and astrologer grew and Olympias, the wife of Philip, wanted a meeting with him. Nectanebo fell in love with her and told her that she would become pregnant by the god Ammon of Libya who would visit her in a dream. Nectanebo procures a room next to hers in the palace and ensures that she sees this god in various incarnations, including that of Nectanebo himself “with whose assistance”, Lloyd tells us, “the prophesied conception took place.”³³⁹ Olympias has Alexander who later kills Nectanebo. According to Lloyd, this story is political propaganda that demonstrates how the Egyptians kept alive their desire to return to self-government after the Macedonian conquest.

³³⁶ One element in Diodorus’ story of Nectanebo is the name of an important general on the Persian side. Bagoas is mentioned in this episode as the “most faithful” of Artaxerxes’ generals (16. 47. 4; 16. 49. 4, 6). Another general mentioned in Artaxerxes’ army is Olophernes (31. 19. 2-3). The names of these two generals are also found in the Book of Judith. Holofernes could be a corruption of the Persian name, Olophernes, and Bagoas is the name of Holofernes’ eunuch. On the names Olophernes and Bagoas, see Moore, *Judith*, 132, 223, and Enslin, *The Book of Judith*, 67, 147.

³³⁷ See *The Romance of Alexander the Great by Pseudo-Callisthenes* (trans. Albert Mugrdich Wolohojian; New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1969) and Helmut van Thiel, *Die Rezension ē des Pseudo-Kallisthenes* (Habelts Dissertationsdrucke Reihe Klassische Philologie, heft 3; Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1959); alternatively, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, 650-735; for a discussion of the fragment, see “The Dream of Nektanebos”, *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 22 (1985) 171-194. The Nectanebo tradition is discussed in Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, I, 680-683. The Alexander tradition is discussed below.

³³⁸ Braun, *History and Romance*, 19.

³³⁹ Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt”, 47.

One of the most renowned heroes of this Hellenistic period is, of course, Alexander the Great. Many stories were created about this popular figure and they were, much later, compiled in a collection of tales now known as the *Alexander Romance* by Pseudo-Callisthenes.³⁴⁰ It is a strange mix of what seems plausible history and miraculous, fantastic events.³⁴¹ Lloyd Gunderson's study of the earliest layer of this romance identifies what he calls the "miracle-letters" as dating from the late 4th century B.C.E; other elements of the story also seem to have an early date.³⁴² Clearly, Alexander was also a hero of the Hellenistic period whose adventures were recounted in the literature of the day.

This brief survey of some of the Hellenistic heroes demonstrates that forms of what we would term "historical fiction" existed prior to the composition of the Book of Judith. Some things about these fictions are noteworthy. Although fictional, these literary figures are, in the custom of *mimesis*, modeled on the lives of historical persons. These historical persons were political and military leaders of their respective nations, often those who opposed Persian domination. Military exploits figured prominently in these stories, including the motif of the ruse, a trick designed to capture or kill the enemy. These tendencies are continued in the literary traditions concerning women warriors that we will be discussing after a look at the Jewish heroes of the Hellenistic period.

³⁴⁰ Braun, *History and Romance*, 31-43; the date of composition of the *Alexander Romance* is debatable; for a discussion of the earliest layers of this written tradition about Alexander, see Lloyd L. Gunderson, "Early Elements in the Alexander Romance", *Ancient Macedonia, Papers Read at the First International Symposium Held in the Thessaloniki, 26-29 August 1968* (ed. Basil Laourdas and Ch. Makaronas; Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1970) 353-375. On the historical accounts of the life of Alexander, see N. G. L. Hammond, *Three Historians of Alexander the Great: The So-called Vulgate Authors, Diodorus, Justin and Curtius* (New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

³⁴¹ One such event has Alexander being carried off into the air by large birds that hold ties to a large basket in their mouths. Alexander travels like this for three days.

³⁴² Gunderson, "Early Elements", 354-356.

b. The Jewish Heroes: Abraham, Joseph, Moses, the Tobiad Family, and Judas Maccabee

Much of the Hellenistic Jewish work that is preserved in fragments³⁴³ reveals that some Jewish authors of this time were not only well acquainted with the literature and hero traditions of the surrounding cultures but felt compelled to demonstrate that their own heroes, such as Abraham, Joseph and Moses, were superior to the heroes of other cultures. Authors such as Cleodemus Malchus, the anonymous author whom we call Pseudo-Eupolemus, and Artapanus serve as examples of Hellenistic Jewish authors engaged in a competitive hero tradition.³⁴⁴

Cleodemus Malchus portrays Abraham as the eponymous ancestor of the Assyrians and Africans - but he also states that Abraham lived before Heracles (Fr. 1).³⁴⁵ Abraham is again the subject of the fragment by Pseudo-Eupolemus.³⁴⁶ He is credited with being noble and wise and with discovering astrology and Chaldean science (Fr.1).³⁴⁷ This account of the “career” of Abraham is only loosely modeled on the biblical tales. Artapanus also mentions Abraham.³⁴⁸ He writes that the Jewish people were called “Hebrews” from the time of Abraham (Fr. 1). This term is noteworthy because Judith refers to herself as “a daughter of the Hebrews” (Jdt. 10: 12), a term which, according to

³⁴³ The history of transmission of these fragments is complex and need not concern us here. Accounts of their transmission can be found in Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, 1, 7-13 and the various authors in *OTP*, 2; these individual references will be given below.

³⁴⁴ While Collins terms this tendency “competitive historiography”, I think that it is more accurate to focus on the hero aspect of these works than on the “historical”. Given that the Hebrew Scriptures and the Septuagint presented what was to the Jew the historical, these literary embellishments are obviously far from historical.

³⁴⁵ See Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, 1, 245-259 and *OTP*, 2, 883-887.

³⁴⁶ Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, 1, 157-187 and *OTP*, 2, 873-882.

³⁴⁷ Precisely what this Chaldean science is, is debatable, see Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, 1, 180, ft.12.

³⁴⁸ Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, 1, 189-243 and *OTP*, 2, 889-903.

Graham Harvey, harkens back to the days of Abraham when the Jews were one nation; however, it denotes more than a link to ancestral traditions. In *2 Maccabees* it is used to signify those Jews who take an active stand against foreign domination and, overall, it asserts a “claim” to being “a good Jew”.³⁴⁹ Artapanus also talks about Joseph; he recognizes Joseph as the patriarch who divided the land of the Egyptians and created a system of standardized measurement (Fr. 2).

The Hellenistic Jewish author, Artapanus, wrote about Moses, Abraham, and Joseph sometime from the mid-third to the late second century B.C.E.; of the three fragments we have of his work, the one about Moses is the longest.³⁵⁰ In fragment three, Moses is credited with many wondrous accomplishments. Basically, he is recognized as establishing Egyptian cults, politics and culture itself. Moses is also portrayed as a military leader (3. 7-8). He is characterized as being Mousaios and having a connection to Orpheus and Hermes and surpassing the achievements of Sesostris and the salvific deeds of the Egyptian god and goddess, Osiris and Isis.

About the social location of these fragments, it is believed that this work by Artapanus has a strong political thrust;³⁵¹ many think that Artapanus wrote to refute the

³⁴⁹Graham Harvey, *The True Israel: Uses of the Names Hew, Hebrew and Israel in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums, no. 35; New York and Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996) 144, 146; the use of the term in the Book of Judith is discussed on pages 114-115.

³⁵⁰ The three fragments themselves are found in Greek and English in Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, vol. 1, 204-225; the English only version is found in *OTP*, 2, 897-903. These fragments form a tradition that is distinct from the one evinced by *Jubilees* in which biblical literature is re-written, but remains true to its source. Both *Jubilees* and Artapanus' work discuss Moses, Abraham, and Joseph (*Jubilees* discusses other patriarchs including Jacob). Probably the biggest difference between *Jubilees* and the work of Artapanus concerns the significance given to the Law; Artapanus does not mention it, at least in the fragment we have. On *Jubilees*, see O. S. Wintermute, “Jubilees: A New Translation and Introduction”, *OTP*, 2, 35-142.

Joseph and his brothers are the subjects of the second century B.C.E. Jewish work *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*; see H. C. Kee “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs”, *OTP*, 1, 775-828.

³⁵¹ Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 45.

anti-Judaic ideas of Manetho.³⁵² Sara Johnson also calls attention to the many allusions in these fragments, allusions to both Jewish and Greek literature.³⁵³ Braun classifies this fragment as a panegyric about Moses.³⁵⁴ Definitely Moses is portrayed as a national hero of the Jews.³⁵⁵

In a similar vein, the Book of Tobit, which was written during the second century B.C.E.,³⁵⁶ functions as political propaganda³⁵⁷ for the Tobiad family and it has many elements that are similar to the Book of Judith. Like the character of Judith, the Tobiards are portrayed as an ideal.³⁵⁸ As in the Book of Judith the names of the family members hold specific meaning³⁵⁹ and, according to Wills, assonance with the legendary hero, Daniel, is created.³⁶⁰ In a similar fashion to the plot of the Book of Judith, the main issue for the reader is “not what will happen but how”.³⁶¹ Similar to the Book of Judith, the *Tobiad Romance* that is found in the first century (C. E.) writing of Josephus is aretalogical (12. 4. 1-11).³⁶² What is particular about the Book of Tobit is the patron-client relationship.³⁶³ Similarly, in the Book of Judith, Judith is the patron of her people.

Another Jewish hero of this time that cannot go unmentioned is Judas Maccabee. Judas was the son of Mattathias, the patriarch of the Hasmonean family. Judas has a reputation of being “a mighty warrior” and the primary military leader of the Maccabees (2: 66). *First Maccabees* provides a poetic account of Judas’ achievements (3: 3-9).

³⁵² Frazer, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 1, 705-706; Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 40.

³⁵³ Johnson, *Mirror, Mirror*, 192-193.

³⁵⁴ Braun, *History and Romance*, 26-31; Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 40-41.

³⁵⁵ Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 44.

³⁵⁶ Wills, *The Jewish Novel*, 193.

³⁵⁷ Wills, *The Jewish Novel*, 195.

³⁵⁸ Wills, *The Jewish Novel*, 72.

³⁵⁹ Wills, *The Jewish Novel*, 73.

³⁶⁰ Wills, *The Jewish Novel*, 92.

³⁶¹ Wills, *The Jewish Novel*, 72.

³⁶² Wills, *The Jewish Novel*, 188.

³⁶³ Wills, *The Jewish Novel*, 89, 192-193.

Like Judith, Judas has a reputation for using the sword of his enemy. Much as Judith killed Holofernes with his own sword, Judas took Apollonius' sword "and used it in battle the rest of his life" (3: 12). Judas had many victories including the victory against Nicanor in which Nicanor's head was cut off and displayed (7: 47); later, Judas died in battle (9: 18) and the nation mourned him (9: 20-22).

c. The Woman Warrior Tradition: Semiramis, Tomyris, Artemisia, Deborah/Jael, Paghit, and Esther

In addition to the literary tradition about male heroes that was available during the first century B.C.E. there was also a tradition of female political and military leaders. The traditions about these women can be considered separate from, but related to, those traditions and myths regarding warrior goddesses such as Athena. Because Judith is portrayed as a human and not a goddess, it is more appropriate to limit the discussion to women warriors in the classical and Hellenistic historiography. Of these women warriors the main figures are the Babylonian Semiramis, the queen of the Massagetae, Tomyris, and Artemisia, leader of Halicarnassus. All these women were queens and, consequently, military leaders of their people. Their exploits are similar to those of Judith in varying ways. In Jewish biblical tradition, the figures of Deborah and Jael are also considered women warriors and therefore will be included in this survey.³⁶⁴

³⁶⁴ The similarities between the Book of Judith and the biblical story of Deborah's political and military leadership and Jael's murder of general Sisera have been discussed above.

Regarding the legendary Semiramis,³⁶⁵ Martin Braun states, "...it would also be erroneous to think that the rulership of a woman was too shameful a thing to be glorified by her own people ... The memory of Semiramis was as dear to the Syrian-Mesopotamian peoples, as was that of Dido-Elissa to the Carthaginians".³⁶⁶ Scholars agree that the traditions about this woman are, in fact, based on a historical person; she is Shammuramat, the wife of Shamshi-Adad, who lived early during the first millennium B.C.E, and played a crucial role in ensuring the continuation of her dynasty.³⁶⁷ Although no historical documentation exists concerning this woman, there is a strong tradition about her. Herodotus writes only that she was responsible for the creation of embankments that controlled the river Euphrates (1. 184).³⁶⁸

A more colourful portrayal of this queen and her life is found in Diodorus, who uses Ctesias as his source for this material.³⁶⁹ Diodorus chronicles her birth, early childhood and reign as queen (2. 4.1- 2. 20.5). According to Ctesias' account of her birth, Semiramis is the daughter of the goddess Derceto (Astarte) and a human male. She was left to die; however, doves looked after her until she was found and raised by someone who cared for the royal herds. He named her Semiramis and she was exceptionally beautiful. She was married to Onnes, the governor of Syria (2. 5.1). When Onnes was fighting at the siege of Bactra along with the Assyrian king Ninus, he sent for his wife. She dressed in clothing that concealed her sex and traveled to meet him. When she arrived at Bactra, she observed that the acropolis had been left undefended and,

³⁶⁵ On Semiramis, see Section II. 1. a.

³⁶⁶ Braun, *History and Romance*, 6.

³⁶⁷ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 491.

³⁶⁸ A valuable discussion of Herodotus' treatment of women is found in the article by Carolyn Dewald, "Women and Culture in Herodotus' *Histories*", *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, 4th ed. (1981; ed. Helene P. Foley; Philadelphia and Paris: Gordon and Breach, 1992) 91-125.

³⁶⁹ Ctesias' fragments about Semiramis are found in König, *Die Persika*, 37-40.

taking some soldiers, together they climbed the heights and took the acropolis (2. 6. 5-8). The king fell in love with her and tried to persuade Onnes to give her up; instead Onnes killed himself. Ninus married Semiramis and she had a child, Ninyas, and after the death of her husband, she ruled as queen of Assyria.

Semiramis founded Babylon, and accomplished many architectural and engineering feats. Around the city she built a massive wall wide enough for two chariots to travel abreast. She also built many towers (2. 7.3-5), a bridge over the Euphrates (2. 8. 1-3), and had the city walls and towers decorated with engravings of animals (2. 8. 4). She built two palaces and had them connected by an underground passageway that traveled under the river (2. 9.1-3). She built a temple to Belus (Zeus) (2. 9. 4-9). She later set out with an army and established parks and roads (2. 13. 1-3) and built a palace in Ecbatana and cut a channel from the city to a nearby river so that the city could be supplied with water (2. 13. 6-8). She established roads throughout Asia and conquered Libya and Ethiopia (2. 14. 3-4).

Semiramis next set out to conquer India (2. 16.1-2). Feeling her forces were disadvantaged because they had no elephants, she devised a ruse. She had killed three hundred thousand black oxen and had their hides sewn together to look like elephants. Each dummy was run by a man and a camel (2. 16. 9-10). Although these dummy elephants participated in the battle against the Indians (2.19. 1-4), Semiramis failed to conquer India and returned to Bactra where she turned into a dove and flew away (2. 20. 1-2).

A second important queen is Tomyris, queen of the Massagetae. Her story is found in Herodotus. Like Semiramis, she took the throne after her husband died. This

widowed queen was a military leader, as was all royalty back then. A particularly gruesome tale is told of her battle with Cyrus in which he died. Cyrus wanted to take over her territory; when she refused to marry him they met in battle (1. 203). One of Cyrus' officers, Croesus, devised a ruse to trick the Massagetae. He had a great feast prepared and left a small contingent of men behind and left. The Massagetae found these men and their feast and killed them, then ate and "drank so much that they went to sleep" (1. 211). The Persians returned and killed most of them, keeping some hostages, including Spargapises, Tomyris' son and general of her army. Tomyris wrote to Cyrus stating:

Glutton as you are for blood you have no cause to be proud of this day's work, which has no smack of soldierly courage. Your weapon was the fruit of the vine, with which you fill yourselves till you are so mad that, as the liquor goes down, shameful words float up on the fumes of it – that is the poison you treacherously used to get my son into your clutches. Now listen to me and I will advise you for your good: give me back my son and get out of my country with your forces intact, and be content with triumph over a third part of the Massagetae. If you refuse, I swear by the sun our master to give you more blood than you can drink, for all your gluttony. (1. 212).

Cyrus ignored the message and Spargapises killed himself in Cyrus' custody. They fought one of the most violent battles of which Herodotus had ever heard. The Massagetae won and Cyrus was killed. As a final farewell, in keeping with her letter, Tomyris "...flung his severed head into a skin which she had filled with human blood, and cried out as she committed this outrage: 'Though I have conquered you and live, you have ruined me by treacherously taking my son. See now – I fulfil my threat: you have your fill of blood (1. 214)'".

A third widowed queen who is a military leader is also discussed in Herodotus. This queen is Artemisia.³⁷⁰ She was the queen of Halicarnassus and, like Tomyris, ruled, although she too had a grown son (7. 99). She was the top naval adviser to Xerxes. Typical of other military encounters presented in this literature, Artemisia gets involved in a ruse. At one point in the battle of Salamis, Artemisia found her ship being pursued by an Athenian trireme; the Greeks were anxious to get her, because they thought it terrible that a woman would lead a military force against Athens (8. 93).³⁷¹ At that moment, Artemisia was in trouble because she was fenced in on all sides by allied ships (8. 87-88). She rammed an allied ship and it sank. The Athenian captain took her for one of his allies and withdrew. Xerxes was watching and thought the ship Artemisia hit was Greek. He thought even more highly of her and remarked: “My men have turned into women, my women into men” (8. 88).

The biblical characters that so closely resemble Judith are Deborah and Jael (Judges 4: 1- 5: 31). Deborah was a prophetess and judge of Israel (4: 4). She told Barak to gather an army and she would challenge Sisera, the general of the army of king Jabin of Canaan, to a battle (4: 6-7). She prophesied that Sisera would die “at the hand of a woman” (4: 9). The armies fought and Sisera fled and found himself in Jael’s tent (4: 17). Jael took Sisera into her tent to hide him and gave him milk to drink (4: 18-19). While he slept, Jael took a tent peg and drove it into his head, killing him (4: 21). This victory is celebrated in the Song of Deborah (5: 2- 31), one of the oldest songs in biblical literature.

³⁷⁰ See Rosaria Vingolo Munson, “Artemisia in Herodotus”, *CA*, 7. 1, (1988) 91-106. On Artemisia see also above.

³⁷¹ δεινὸν γάρ τι ἐποίηυντο γυναῖκα ἐπὶ τὰς Ἀθήνας στρατεύεσθαι .

The parallels between the Book of Judith and the story of Deborah/Jael are numerous. Sidnie Ann White observes similarities in the type of conflict portrayed as well as the plot and characterization.³⁷² Susan Ackerman explores further similarities. Drawing on the work of Toni Craven, Ackerman demonstrates that Judith too is portrayed as “a mother of Israel”.³⁷³ The conflation of maternalism and “erotic assassin”³⁷⁴ is close to the Deborah/Jael paradigm; however, Ackerman goes further in positing a connection between Deborah/Jael/Judith and the Ugaritic goddess, Anat.³⁷⁵ The Ugaritic heroine, Paghit, also figures in this woman warrior tradition and her story is worthy of attention.

³⁷² Sidnie Ann White, “In the Steps of Jael and Deborah: Judith as Heroine”, *“No One Spoke Ill of Her”: Essays on Judith* (ed. James C. VanderKam; SBL: Early Judaism and its Literature, no. 2; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992) 6.

³⁷³ Craven, “Tradition and Convention”, 60; cf. Rachel Adler, “A Mother in Israel: Aspects of the Mother Role in Jewish Myth”, *Beyond Androcentrism: New Essays on Women and Religion* (ed. Rita M. Gross; Missoula, MA: Scholars Press, 1977) 237-255.

³⁷⁴ The erotic element in Jael’s murder of Sisera is discussed by Susan Niditch, “Eroticism and Death in the Tale of Jael”, *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel* (ed. Peggy L. Day; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989) 43-57 and briefly in *War and the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 114-115. A judgment about the morality of Jael’s and Judith’s deception need not concern us here, in spite of the insistence by Betsy Merideth that “the assumption that contemporary readers will not be influenced by the message that women use deceit to harm men is indefensible”, “Desire and Danger”, 74. As Gale A. Yee points out, contemporary gender ideology influences how deception is understood. Commenting on Jael’s deception, Yee observes that the liminality of the woman warrior is open to ambiguous interpretations, “By the Hand of a Woman: The Metaphor of the Woman Warrior in Judges 4”, *Semeia*, 61 (1993) 125-126. If we can restrict our interpretative framework to ancient thinkers, Aristotle has the following to say about deception: “As to the question whether anything that has been said or done is morally good or bad, this must be answered not merely by seeing whether what has actually been done or said is noble or base, but by taking into consideration also the man who did or said it, and seeing to whom he did or said it, and when and for whom and for what reason; for example, to secure a greater good or to avoid a greater evil” (*Poetics*, 1461a). For a more phenomenological analysis of women and deception in biblical literature, including Judith, see Alice Bach, *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 190-192; 200-204.

³⁷⁵ Susan Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen: Women in Judges and Biblical Israel* (New York and London: Doubleday, 1998) 63.

According to the story told on the tablets, Paghit tries to avenge the murder of her brother Aqhat.³⁷⁶ Aqhat was killed because the goddess Anat wanted his special bow. Anat has her warrior Yatpan kill Aqhat and take his bow. Paghit, his sister, is described as “the bearer of water, collector of the dew from the fleece [?], who knows the course of the stars” (2. 1-3). Judging from the symbolism of the epithet, Paghit holds a unique role. Since water is essential for life, the one who carries it transmits life. Collecting dew from the fleece is unclear; however, it does place Paghit at that transitional period between night and day. Knowing “the course of the stars” was a special skill that was typical of male priests. Thus Paghit has an extraordinary association with the divine.

Paghit asks her father’s blessing to avenge the murder of her brother (4. 32-40). She prepares herself by washing and “rouges herself with a shellfish”; she dons “a hero’s outfit” including a sword over which she wears women’s clothing and goes to Yatpan’s camp (4. 51-52). They seem to be expecting her, because Yatpan is told that “the woman we hired” has arrived. This could be a reference to the hiring of a prostitute, which would explain why she uses rouge. Yatpan offers her wine, which she drinks.

It is unfortunate that the tablet is broken at this point and we cannot find out how the story unfolds; yet the parallels are clearly apparent. Although Paghit sets out specifically to avenge the death of her brother, Judith similarly draws on the notion of vengeance when she prays to the God of her father Simeon who revenged the rape of Dinah (Jdt. 9: 2). Both ritually prepare themselves before they go to the enemy camp. Alone with the military leader and focused on murder, they sip wine. The close association between these two stories suggests that the idea of a woman murdering a

³⁷⁶ An English translation of the story is found in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (ed. Simon B. Parker; SBL Writings from the Ancient World Series, vol. 9; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997) 65-78; Parker makes the connection between Paghit and Judith, 50. cf. 78, ft. 2

military leader in his tent while he was drunk may have existed in the ancient Near East, but not enough of the story of Paghit's revenge exists to establish that specific parallel.

What does this tradition of women warriors who possess "manly courage" and are skilled in military strategy suggest about the Book of Judith? Except for the case of Paghit, these women are not fictional characters but representations of actual historical personages. In all cases, the men in their lives are absent or dead. Given the convention of *mimesis*, not only types of literature were imitated. Aristotle, who writes in the fourth century, after Herodotus, speaks of characters modeled on the lives of real people (*Poetics* 1454); however, in the case of female characters, Aristotle believes that "it is not appropriate for a woman to be manly or clever". If literary conventions were drawn on, the chances that the author of the Book of Judith created this fictional figure from nowhere are small. According to the philosophers, they and not the authors were the creative ones; however, who is to say that Judith was not modeled on these examples of literature? The close association between Judith and Deborah/Jael has already been demonstrated.

At this point it is important to examine the characterization of Judith in contrast with the general attitude towards women that appeared in Jewish literature at the time. Two works are particularly relevant for this discussion. The first is Ben Sira or the deuterocanonical book called *Ecclesiasticus*. The second is *The Testament of Reuben* which is found in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.³⁷⁷ Both works are believed to have been in circulation during the second century B.C.E. Claudia Camp's study of *Ben*

³⁷⁷ For an introduction to this work, see Howard C. Kee, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs", *OTP*, vol. I, 775-781.

Sira demonstrates the role women played as indicators of male honour.³⁷⁸ The major threat that a woman can pose to a man's honour is through her sexuality, which is considered to be a challenge for even her to control (26:12).³⁷⁹ Two things are particularly dangerous: a beautiful woman, who arouses "passion" "like a fire" (9: 8), and alcohol; dining and drinking wine with someone's wife will certainly get a man into trouble (9:9). These cultural stereotypes are also reflected in *The Testament of Reuben*. For the author of this testament women are prone to "the spirit of promiscuity" (5: 3). By adorning herself a woman increases her threat, for a beautiful woman entices a man. This author draws on the idea that women are the source of evil, a legend which is found in the tale of the Watchers. This story appears in Genesis 6:1 and, more specifically, in *The Book of Enoch* (6: 1 – 7: 6).³⁸⁰ What both these works reveal is a cultural aversion to praising the virtue of women. Indeed, in this light the idea that Judith was "honoured in her time" (Jdt. 16: 21) is truly exceptional.

It is also crucial to compare Judith with another character who saves the lives of her people: this character is Esther. Solomon Zeitlin demonstrates that the plots of the two books are parallel: Israel is "saved by a woman"; however, he also observes that the characterizations of the two women differ significantly.³⁸¹ For Zeitlin, the largest

³⁷⁸ Claudia V. Camp, "Understanding a Patriarchy: Women in Second Century Jerusalem Through the Eyes of Ben Sira", *Women Like This: New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. Amy-Jill Levine; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1991) 38; see also W. C. Trenchard, *Ben Sira's View of Women* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982).

³⁷⁹ Camp, "Understanding a Patriarchy", 22.

³⁸⁰ On *The Book of Enoch*, see E. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch", *OTP*, vol. 1, 5-12. An important discussion of the association between women and evil is by Bernard P. Prusak, "Woman: Seductive Siren and Source of Sin? Pseudepigraphal Myth and Christian Origins", *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether; New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974) 89-116.

³⁸¹ Zeitlin, in Enslin, *The Book of Judith*, 14-15. Detailed analysis of the characterization of these two figures depends upon whether or not the six additions to Esther that are found in the LXX are considered. For a discussion of these additions, see Moore, *Judith*, 195-197; 214-215. Wills considers both the Hebrew *Esther* and its Greek additions, *The Jewish Novel*, 93-131.

contrast is in their religiosity and their marital status. Esther is married to a pagan king, eats at his table and is very secular. In contrast, Judith is a devout widow who is courageous and willing to sacrifice herself for her people. Toni Craven also observes the heightened concern with theological issues in the Book of Judith, in comparison to the Books of Esther and Ruth.³⁸² Unlike Esther, whose salvific actions are prompted by her cousin Mordecai, Judith acts alone. Michael P. Carroll also observes similarities of plot, but focuses on the similarities in the attempts to seduce the heroine.³⁸³ What is most important for our purposes is a comparison of the characters of these two figures.

The characters of these two women can be compared in terms of their closest male relations, their first speech, and what we are told of their emotional state. For Esther, her closest male relatives are Mordecai, her cousin, and King Ahasuerus, her husband. Judith's husband, Manasseh is dead; however, as noted, she is provided with the longest genealogy of any woman in Jewish literature.³⁸⁴ Sixteen generations of men are presented, including Merari, Joseph, Gideon, Elijah and Israel himself. In contrast to Esther, Judith is portrayed as a member of Israel's elite; Judith's nobility is her heritage, while Esther achieves her nobility through marriage.

The first speeches of Esther and Judith differ considerably. According to Robert Alter, characters reveal their most salient elements through their speech, particularly their first few words: "... the initial words spoken by a personage will be revelatory, perhaps

³⁸² In particular, Judith upholds covenantal nomism, see Craven, "Tradition and Convention", 52; cf. 56-59. An interesting study of the characters of Ruth, Esther, and Judith from the perspective of liberation theology is found in the article by John F. Craghan, "Esther, Judith, and Ruth: Paradigms for Human Liberation", *BTB* 12. 1 (1982) 11-19.

³⁸³ Michael P. Carroll, "Myth, Methodology and Transformation in the Old Testament: The Stories of Esther, Judith, and Susanna", *SR* 12. 3 (1983) 301-312; André LaCocque discusses these plot similarities in his book *The Feminine Unconventional: Four Subversive Figures in Israel's Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990) 67-74.

³⁸⁴ The significance of this genealogy is discussed in Section VI below.

more in manner than in matter, constituting an important moment in the exposition of character”.³⁸⁵ Esther’s first words warn of the prohibition against, and even the possible death, of anyone who approaches the king unsummoned (Est. 4: 11). On the other hand, Judith addresses the “rulers of the people of Bethulia” in a lengthy monologue (Jdt. 8: 11-27). It is in this monologue that she admonishes them for putting God to the test and reminds them of their faithfulness to God (8: 12, 18-20). She also calls upon them to undergo the test that God has offered them (8: 25). There is a marked qualitative difference in the opening words of Esther and Judith. Esther’s words reveal her lack of autonomy in her present situation and her reliance on the goodwill of her husband. In contrast, Judith is commanding; she “summons” (ἐκάλεισεν) the elders of the city (8: 10) and shamelessly chastises them.

The contrast in the characterization of these two women is further reflected in what we learn of their emotional states. In the case of Esther, we are party to her innermost feelings. She is “deeply distressed” about the state of her people and her cousin Mordecai’s mourning (4: 4). If the Greek addition to Esther is included in our survey, Esther is “seized with deathly anxiety” before she prays (14: 1). In her prayer, she asks to be saved from her fear (14: 19). Returning to the Hebrew version of Esther, as she approaches the king, we are told “her heart was frozen with fear” (15: 5). We never really learn about the emotional state of Judith; however, we do learn that she prays for “the strength” to do what she has in mind (9: 9). Her request for strength is repeated again just before she kills Holofernes (13: 7). Not once are we told that she feels fear, anxiety or apprehension.

³⁸⁵ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 70, 74.

There exists, therefore, a large disparity between the two characters. Esther is submissive, fearful, and dependent. Judith could not be more different; she is bold, assertive, and independent. Margarita Stocker also observes Judith's strength of character in contrast to other female characters in biblical literature. The Book of Judith is, for Stocker, not only "a myth which shows a woman intervening in history",³⁸⁶ but a tale where the "mystery of supernatural governance" is revealed through a woman.³⁸⁷

Stocker explains:

Esther's ability to save her countrymen is wholly dependent on her marriage to Ahasuerus, who possesses might and power; salvation is achieved by influence upon him. Meanwhile, the prophetess Deborah has a henchman, an army and Jael to do her work for her: Jael is no sooner introduced to perform an assassination, than she is dismissed from the narrative. Only Judith fully performs an action, at once by direct agency and with public consequence. Her story signifies an action in history, devised and performed by a woman despite women's marginality in history.³⁸⁸

In Judith are united the concepts of politics and history, even her name, according to Stocker, "signifies her national responsibility".³⁸⁹

This survey of women heroes in classical and Hellenistic literature reveals certain significant elements. All of these heroes, including the women warriors, are modeled on historical persons. These historical widowed queens played a crucial role in the defense of their people or allies. They were prized for their military achievements and intelligence. In contrast to the representation of women in general, the portrayal of Judith stands out in marked relief. Whereas women were believed to be associated with sexual licentiousness and drunkenness, Judith's encounter with Holofernes boldly defies this

³⁸⁶ Margarita Stocker, "Biblical Story and the Heroine", *The Bible as Rhetoric: Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility* (ed. Martin Warner; New York and London: Routledge, 1990) 85.

³⁸⁷ Stocker, "Biblical Story and the Heroine", 88.

³⁸⁸ Stocker, "Biblical Story and the Heroine", 84-85.

³⁸⁹ Stocker, "Biblical Story and the Heroine", 88.

stereotypical portrayal. Judith's chastity and honour are never challenged; she retains control of the situation, especially when the renowned general succumbs to drunkenness. Judith's virtue surpasses that of anyone else in the story; however, a further comparison with Esther, the salvific female character closest to Judith, reveals an enormous disparity between the two. Can this bold portrayal of Judith be accounted for, if the genre of the Book of Judith is considered?

4. READING FICTION AS CONTRACT AND THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF GENRE

Although Lawrence Wills categorizes the Book of Judith as a historical novel, this book's genre classification has been greatly disputed, as indicated earlier. I will not attempt to resolve this issue here; instead, I will approach the question of the genre of the Book of Judith from a different perspective, which is the notion of genre as a contract between a literary work and its audience. The genre, or literary style, in which a text is written conveys certain information. According to Heather Dubrow, genre functions as a "code of behaviour" between writer and audience.³⁹⁰ This code establishes rules governing the construction of the work and rules about how the text should be read.³⁹¹ The choice of a genre dictates "what can and cannot happen" within the story. For instance, the terrible and unimaginable can only go as far as the specific genre in question permits.³⁹² An author writing a detective story has to have a murder or other crime to solve; readers anticipate this crime and expect its resolution. The story cannot end with the gory death of its sleuth.

³⁹⁰ Heather Dubrow, *Genre* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982) 2.

³⁹¹ Dubrow, *Genre*, 31.

³⁹² Dubrow, *Genre*, 33.

Genres therefore form a tradition in which the author participates; however, an author's participation in a specific generic tradition can vary. An author can choose to participate fully in a specific tradition, by copying or following the "contract"; or an author can choose to participate partially, by adapting a genre, changing the contract somewhat, in order to create a new form or to critique an existing genre.³⁹³

The literary style of a text thus provides a heuristic format through which we decipher its meaning. Mary Gerhart observes, "different kinds of texts give rise to different kinds of expectations".³⁹⁴ Yet these expectations have their limits. Although both author and audience share generic meaning, it is limited to the boundaries of the culture in which it is used. Literary genres are, therefore, culturally bound. Thus, it becomes important to ask in which genre category did the authors of ancient texts believe that they were writing? Specifically what "code of behaviour" existed between the author of the Book of Judith and its earliest audience?

Let us begin with the audience. Who read in antiquity? We have already observed the close association between literature and the royal courts; *The Letter of Aristeas* testifies to the literacy of the upper classes. It is probable that the military officers also read or were entertained at banquets by those who could tell stories. Sophie Trenkner observes that Xenophon tells of officers entertaining each other with stories at a banquet.³⁹⁵ Plutarch informs us that the work of Aristides, his *Milesiaca*, was found in the belongings of the Roman Rustius, a member of Crassus' army (*Crass.* 32), and the

³⁹³ Dubrow, *Genre*, 10-13.

³⁹⁴ Mary Gerhart, "Generic Competence in Biblical Hermeneutics", *Semeia* 43 (1988) 31.

³⁹⁵ Trenkner, *The Greek Novella*, 17.

Parthians mocked the Romans for carrying with them such light reading into war.³⁹⁶ It is impossible to be certain who read these works of extended prose fiction in antiquity; however, scholarly research favours the wealthy and well-educated upper class, including military officers.³⁹⁷ We have observed that the content of these early novels is predominantly military and that the allusions to classical works were intended to intellectually stimulate the audience. The Book of Judith and the Hellenistic tendency to write about heroes strongly suggest that Judith will be the female hero of this military adventure. The question is never whether Judith will succeed, but how. The expectation that is cultivated between the work and its audience is that the Assyrians will be humiliated and that the Jews will triumph. What never enters the story is the suggestion that a woman cannot lead her people or outwit an enemy general. Through the use of national allegory and allusion, the author of the Book of Judith presents a story of a woman's leadership and salvific action that has never before been presented. A new literary genre and the literary devices of allegory and allusion work together in this book to weave a fresh perspective on the ability of a particular woman to accomplish an extraordinary deed in a desperate situation. Even at the literal level of the tale itself, the political implications that lie behind this book's support of female leadership should not be ignored.

³⁹⁶ Plutarch: *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (trans. John Dryden; New York: Random House, 1864) 673.

³⁹⁷ See Berber Wesseling, "The Audience of the Ancient Novels", *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel*, 1, (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1988) 76-77; the question of whether women could read or write need not concern us here because reading was typically done aloud in antiquity, thus the audience did not have to be literate. On this question, see Susan Guettel Cole, "Could Greek Women Read and Write?", *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, 219-245, and Ross S. Kraemer, who considers women's authorship in the early Christian era. "Women's Authorship of Jewish and Christian Literature in the Greco-Roman Period", *Women Like This*, 221-242.

Tal Ilan posits that *Judith* and Esther as well as Susanna, were, in fact, written as political propaganda for Shelamzion;³⁹⁸ however, using Shelamzion as a model for Judith is to date considered problematic. The assessment of her reign that is provided by Josephus and his contemporary scholarly interpreters falls short of the image of Judith that I am suggesting Shelamzion modeled. The next section of this dissertation challenges the received view of Shelamzion's reign and demonstrates that she was, in fact, an exemplary leader, one for whom a unique literary composition would have been a fitting honour.

³⁹⁸ Ilan, *Integrating Women*, 153.

III. THE POLITICAL WORLD OF QUEEN SHELAMZION

This chapter critically examines what is known about the reign of Queen Shelamzion from a fresh perspective. What few sources we have about her life are problematic. Josephus has long been known to contain biases and tendencies that have to be understood and accounted for in his presentation of history. Josephus' account of her reign is found in both *The Jewish War* (1. 107- 117) and *Jewish Antiquities* (13. 400- 432) and it is closely linked to his stance on the Pharisees. Josephus relies on the earlier history about the Hasmonean period that was written by Nicolaus of Damascus, and, therefore, not only Josephus' but Nicolaus' biases and tendencies need also be considered. Yet a careful reading of Josephus' two (at times contradictory) accounts of the reign of Shelamzion and his words about the Pharisees can be used to discern elements of Shelamzion's personal qualities and administrative style, when these accounts are assessed in light of documents that articulate Josephus' tendencies. These qualities and her leadership style strongly suggest that she was an astute ruler who was aware of the importance of public support and, in fact, used it to help legitimate her rule. The Pharisees, who supported her, were also able to produce a literary work like the Book of Judith.

Much of her rule remains unaccounted for; we know from Josephus and later Rabbinic sources that she was a Pharisaic Jew who had a close relationship with the leading Pharisee of the day, Simon ben Shetah; Josephus informs us that national defence was the primary concern of hers. The one time Judea was threatened during her reign she dealt with the incident in a manner that avoided war and the loss of Jewish lives. In

general, hers was a reign of peace (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 432). These elements echo the Jewish ideals of self-government as articulated in *The Letter of Aristeas*, *The Temple Scroll* that was found among the Qumran literature, *Jubilees*, and *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. When Josephan tendencies are accounted for and the reign of Shelamzion is assessed against the ideals of her day, support is generated for the overall positive portrayal of her reign which is found in later Rabbinic literature, and Josephus' ambiguous parallel accounts become clearer.

1. PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP ON SHELAMZION (SALOME ALEXANDRA)

The existing scholarship on Shelamzion is rather sparse and tends to take the Josephan accounts as historically reliable.³⁹⁹ Schürer's brief summary of her rule deals mostly with the Pharisees; however, it is a positive assessment, focusing on the peace and prosperity of her reign, as are the encyclopaedia entries by Isaiah Gafni and Louis Ginzberg.⁴⁰⁰ In spite of his appendix to Enslin's Greek translation of the Book of Judith in which he speculates that *Judith* was written as a tribute "to this doughty queen",⁴⁰¹ Solomon Zeitlin is the harshest critic of Shelamzion, connecting her to the murder of Antigonus and blaming her, as Josephus does, for the downfall of the Hasmoneans.⁴⁰² Zeitlin expresses pity for Janneus and scorn for Shelamzion; he writes: "Jannaeus Alexander had a tragic life. The

³⁹⁹ See e.g. Derenbourg *Essai sur l'histoire et la géographie de la Palestine* (1867) 102-112 and Mitchell C. Pacwa, "Alexandra Salome", *ABD*, vol. 1, 152.

⁴⁰⁰ Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, vol. 1, 229-232; Isaiah Gafni, "Salome Alexandra", *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 692-694 and Louis Ginzberg, "Alexandra", *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (ed. Isidore Singer; New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1964) 359-360.

⁴⁰¹ Zeitlin, "Judith the Widow", in Enslin, *The Book of Judith*, 181.

⁴⁰² Zeitlin, "Queen Salome and King Jannaeus Alexander", *JQ* 51. 1 (1960) 3-4.

hatred displayed toward him by his parents shadowed him all his life. He was poisoned with scorn from his youth. This manifested itself in his actions toward his people that brought his country to civil war. The tragic events which led the country through a long trail of suffering were actually the results of the *vicious character* of Queen Salome".⁴⁰³ He also blames the civil disharmony on her, stating: "she did not grasp the importance of uniting the people to be a nation in a sound moral and political condition and to mold them so that they could withstand the storms that would endanger them".⁴⁰⁴ Yet Zeitlin's view of leadership seems to be based more on contemporary democratic ideals than those of Hellenistic monarchy. Joseph Klausner devotes much space to Shelamzion's Pharisaic associate, Simeon ben Shetah; however, he does astutely observe that Shelamzion "may have deliberately turned over domestic affairs to the Pharisees to preclude their interference in foreign matters which she regarded as much more important and to which she paid much attention".⁴⁰⁵ Joseph Sievers, like Steve Mason, believes that Josephus' comments about Shelamzion were fuelled by anti-Pharisaic polemic; in addition to this, Sievers also thinks that Josephus' comments about Shelamzion contain "the vestige of a tradition of Aristobulus' circle", that is the public opposition to her rule that was voiced by Aristobulus.⁴⁰⁶ In all, Sievers observes that Shelamzion was one of only a small number of Hasmoneans who lived to old age and died of natural causes, while over twenty-five members of the dynasty died a violent death. During her reign, the influence of the

⁴⁰³ Zeitlin, "Queen Salome and King Jannaeus Alexander", 23 (italics mine).

⁴⁰⁴ Zeitlin, "Queen Salome and King Jannaeus Alexander", 32.

⁴⁰⁵ Joseph Klausner, "'Queen Salome Alexandra", *The World History of the Jewish People*, vol. 6 (1961; ed. Abraham Schalit; Givatayim, Israel: Rutgers University Press, 1972) 245; Derenbourg too speaks mostly of Simeon ben Shetah. For a presentation of Rabbinic literature that contains references to Shelamzion and Simeon, see Jacob Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions About the Pharisees Before 70: Part 1, The Masters* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971) 89-90, 96-99, 106, 112-112, 116-119.

⁴⁰⁶ Joseph Sievers, "The Role of Women in the Hasmonean Dynasty", *Josephus, the Bible, and History* (ed. Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata; Detroit: Wayne State University, 1989) 139.

Pharisees certainly went beyond what we might call religious concerns, but their interests seem to have been focused only on internal affairs and not the whole range of responsibilities required of a government. The initiative for armaments and military and diplomatic activity is credited entirely to her, control of these objects was not easily wrested from her. Even during her final illness, the order to proceed against Aristobulus' revolt was expected from her.⁴⁰⁷

For his part, Jacob Neusner, in *From Politics to Piety*, quotes at length Josephus' passages on Alexandra, observing that the account in *Jewish Antiquities* favours the Pharisees more than its parallel in *Jewish War* does.⁴⁰⁸ In most of the scholarly studies of this period the Pharisees and Simeon ben Shetah stand out in greater relief than does a critical assessment of the reign of this unique Hasmonean queen. It is, therefore, important to look afresh at her rule from within its cultural context and to attempt to reconstruct what we can of her side of the story before we assess the Book of Judith as a work of political propaganda for Shelamzion.

2. THE PTOLEMAIC AND SELEUCID QUEENS OF THE SURROUNDING NATIONS

The first task in such a study is to survey the politics of the surrounding nations. This survey will give us an idea of the kinds of issues and personalities that Shelamzion had to contend with in her duties as ruler of a nation. Political history is typically presented from the viewpoint of male rulers; however, here I will depart from tradition and present the

⁴⁰⁷ Sievers, "The Role of Women", 138.

⁴⁰⁸ Jacob Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973) 51, 60-63.

politics of the surrounding nations through the perspective of their female participants.⁴⁰⁹

It is, of course, a viewpoint limited, as any history is, to what little we know of the lives of these women; however, the Ptolemaic women were a strong and present enough force that by discussing the lives of those who lived during the time of Shelamzion (c. 140 – 67 B.C.E.) we get an impression of the women who could have been role models for the young Shelamzion and must have influenced her perception of monarchy. Josephus himself does not hesitate to mention their power alongside of that of the men. Even *I Maccabees* includes mention of the marriages of these Ptolemaic women. Obviously, theirs was a presence to be reckoned with and the presentation of political history would be incomplete without them.

The only predictable element in the political world of antiquity was change. This was a hostile environment for rulers; the next pretender to the throne was a constant threat and a large number of monarchs were murdered. In this climate, women played a two-fold role. They were most often the wives of rulers, typically being used as precious hostages by their parents to ensure the continued fidelity of a neighbouring ruler. Occasionally, and most often in the case of Egypt, they ruled as co-regents or monarchs in their own right; however, the price was familial discord. The rule of a mother meant estrangement from her adult sons who wanted to take her place. Thus, for a female descendant of Ptolemy I Soter, relinquishing power so that her son could rule was unacceptable.

Such was the world in which Shelamzion was raised. If she died, as Josephus tells us, at the age of seventy-three (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 430), she would have been born at a crucial time in Hasmonean and, indeed, Judean history. A few years before her birth Judea

⁴⁰⁹ See Appendix I.

became independent (ca. 142 B.C.E.) (*1 Macc.* 13: 41; *Jewish Ant.* 13. 228). At this time, Simon was chosen to be “high priest by the populace” (*1 Macc.* 15: 41; *Jewish Ant.* 13. 213). Although we do not know anything about her family, it is reasonable to suppose that she came from a wealthy, educated Jewish family who probably had close ties to the Hasmoneans; she may even have been a Hasmonean herself. According to Josephus, Absalom, the older brother of Janneus, the husband of Shelamzion, was both the uncle and father-in-law of Aristobulus II (*Jewish Ant.* 14. 71); this means that the later Hasmoneans married their cousins. There is, to date, no evidence of Shelamzion’s family origins. Her name, Shelamzion, means “peace of Zion” and could denote the patriotism of this age of independence. She would have spent most of her years growing up during the time of John Hyrcanus (135-104 B.C.E.). During this period, Ptolemy I Soter’s female descendants were politically very powerful. Shelamzion’s aristocratic upbringing would have placed her in circles that were concerned with the goings on of the surrounding nations and would have been aware of these women and their politics. Both Ptolemaic and Seleucid politics at this time involved Cleopatra III and her daughters. In fact, Tessa Rajak believes that Janneus’ choice of Shelamzion as his successor may have been influenced by the involvement of these women in the political world of the times.⁴¹⁰

Cleopatra III, daughter of the brother/sister co-regents, Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II,⁴¹¹ ruled Egypt, along with a variety of male relatives, from 141 B.C.E. until 101

⁴¹⁰ Tessa Rajak, “Hasmonean Kingship and the Invention of Tradition”, *Aspects of Hellenistic Kingship* (Studies in Hellenistic Civilization, no. 7; ed. Per Bilde, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Lise Hannestand, and Jan Zahle; Oxford and Oakville, CT: Aarhus University, 1996) 106.

⁴¹¹ Ptolemy VI allowed Onias IV to found the colony at Leontopolis; see Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, vol. 3/part 1, 47-49; for Josephus’ account of this event, see *War* 7. 423-426, and *Ant.* 12. 237-238, 387, 13. 62-63. On the colony itself, see Matthias Delcor, “Le temple d’Onias en Egypte,” *RB* 75 (1968) 188-205 and R. Hayward, “The Jewish Temple at Leontopolis: A Reconsideration”, *JJS* 33 (1982) 429-443. On the character and political power of Cleopatra II, see Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 151-153.

B.C.E.⁴¹² Her family history is the stuff of “soap operas”. When the father of Cleopatra III, Ptolemy VI, died in battle, his brother, now Ptolemy VIII, returned from Cyrene to take the throne. Ptolemy VIII quickly killed the son of Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II (Cleopatra III’s brother), who was heir apparent and would have been Ptolemy VII. Ptolemy VIII is gruesomely portrayed by historians of the time as ridiculously short, obese and altogether nasty.⁴¹³ Shortly after marrying Cleopatra II, he began a sexual relationship with his step-daughter and niece, Cleopatra III, who soon bore him a son.⁴¹⁴ The two later married and had four more children (three daughters and two sons in all), in spite of the fact that Ptolemy VIII was already married to Cleopatra II. While the incestuous, bigamous relationships seem inappropriate to us, they served personal and political purposes and were accepted practice in this group. Ptolemaic and Seleucid rulers quickly found their lives endangered by usurpers. In the very least, they lost their power; typically, they lost their lives. Women were particularly vulnerable after they bore a son or two. Holding on to power, at whatever cost, guaranteed survival.⁴¹⁵

Both women, Cleopatra II and Cleopatra III, managed to survive the politics of their times. Cleopatra II always remained popular with her people (even if it is unknown what she used as political propaganda), but Ptolemy VIII did try to isolate his sister from her supporters as an initial attempt to get rid of her. With this goal in mind, he tried to

⁴¹² She may have been murdered by her younger son and co-regent Ptolemy X; see Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 143-146.

⁴¹³ Justin 38. 8. 9-10; Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 106-108; Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 156.

⁴¹⁴ On this liaison, see Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 110-114 and Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 157-158, 162-163.

⁴¹⁵ The mother of Cleopatra III, Cleopatra II, manoeuvred through this political quagmire successfully, briefly proclaiming herself as sole ruler and ousting Ptolemy VIII and Cleopatra III from Egypt for a time. Cleopatra II was probably one of the most powerful of the Cleopatras, for in spite of her daughter’s manipulation of religio-political propaganda, her popularity never faltered.

break her good reputation with the Jews and the intelligentsia, but he was unsuccessful.⁴¹⁶

In 132 B.C.E., Cleopatra II proclaimed herself sole ruler, independent of her brother and daughter. She took the title, “Cleopatra the mother loving goddess, the saviour”; this title recalled the importance of her parents Cleopatra I and Ptolemy I Soter and portrayed her as a goddess, thereby increasing the status of her son by Ptolemy VIII, whose name was Ptolemy Memphitis.⁴¹⁷ This period of sole rule did not last long; the co-regency was re-established in 124 B.C.E. with Cleopatra II maintaining her dominant status.⁴¹⁸

Cleopatra II and Ptolemy VIII died in 116 B.C.E., leaving the choice of co-regent up to Cleopatra III, who was by now forty years old. According to John Whitehorne, Cleopatra III “... took over the mantle of authority which her mother had put together so carefully over so many years” and used religion to create an image of herself as being more divine than her mother.⁴¹⁹ Her son had the good fortune of being born the same day as the Apis bull, the incarnation of the creator god, Ptah. Giving birth on that day added to Cleopatra III’s honour, replicating Isis’ roles as “mother of the gods” and mother of the Apis bull.⁴²⁰ Eventually Cleopatra III had her own cult presided over by a priest, which was considered to be more prestigious than having a cult ministered by a priestess. Cleopatra III became “the epiphany of Isis in all her myriad forms”.⁴²¹ After her mother’s death, she became “queen Cleopatra the mother loving goddess, the saviour, mistress of justice, bringer of victory”.⁴²²

⁴¹⁶ Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 127.

⁴¹⁷ Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 127.

⁴¹⁸ Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 130.

⁴¹⁹ Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 122.

⁴²⁰ Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 124-5.

⁴²¹ Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 129.

⁴²² Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 133; Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 168.

In her later years, Cleopatra III played a role in maintaining Judean independence.⁴²³ It is possible that her respect for the Jews had been long standing. Her parents allowed a rebel group of Jews to found a colony at Leontopolis,⁴²⁴ and the sons of its leader, Chelkias and Ananias, later became generals in her army. They were, according to Strabo, “held in special favour (εὐδοκιμεῖν μάλιστα) by the queen” (as quoted in *Jewish Ant.* 13. 284-287; 348-349). It is, therefore, reasonable to suggest that the close ties between Cleopatra II and Onias and Cleopatra III and her Jewish military leaders, Chelkias and Ananias, continued throughout this time.

There may also have been a certain affinity between Egypt and the Jews in Palestine. Alexander Janneus, the husband of Shelamzion, appealed to Cleopatra III when her son Ptolemy IX was threatening Judea. Ptolemy had taken the city Ptolemais, a coastal city on the Mediterranean, and had attacked and brutally murdered some Jews in the outlying territories of Judea (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 345-346). Cleopatra III came to the city Ptolemais herself with her army, drove out her son, but did not unleash her military power against Judea, perhaps for fear of losing the support of Alexandrian Jews (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 350-355).

Another Cleopatra who had ties to Judea was Cleopatra Thea, the elder sister of Cleopatra III. Cleopatra Thea was also the wife of three Seleucid kings, Alexander Balas, Demetrius II. and Antiochus VII, remaining throughout this time under the control of her father. All these Seleucid monarchs had dealings with Judea and played a role in its

⁴²³ Peter Haider suggests that the Book of Judith was actually written to honour Cleopatra III, but this is unlikely. While the Jews may have been grateful, they would hardly portray a foreign woman who had married her uncle and had children by him as a pious Jewish widow who possessed more faith than their elders; see his “Judith - Eine zeitgenössische Antwort auf Kleopatra III. als Beschützerin der Juden?”, *Grazer Beiträge* 22 (1998) 117-128.

⁴²⁴ See footnote 410.

struggle for independence as their mention in *1 Maccabees* and Josephus attests. Thea's first marriage must have had some significance for the Jews for it is specifically mentioned in *1 Maccabees* (10: 54, 57-58; *Jewish Ant.* 13. 80).⁴²⁵ Alexander Balas was the first to extend to the Hasmoneans the symbols of royalty (could his wife Thea have influenced this gesture?); Balas let Jonathan, the high priest, wear purple and later a gold buckle, indicating a familial association with the Seleucid king (*1 Macc.* 10. 62, 89).

Seleucid kings continued to support Judea during the life of Cleopatra Thea. When the relationship between Alexander Balas and Ptolemy VIII soured, Ptolemy gave his daughter Thea to Demetrius (*1 Macc.* 11: 9-12).⁴²⁶ Initially, Demetrius was supportive of growing Judean independence and released Judea from taxes (*1 Macc.* 11: 34). Jonathan later sent troops to his aid and they saved the king's life (*1 Macc.* 11:44-51); however, Demetrius turned against Jonathan (*1 Macc.* 11: 53), only to change his mind again and revert to his previous support for Judean independence (*1 Macc.* 13: 41). Demetrius was later taken captive by Mithradates and his army revolted and joined queen Cleopatra Thea (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 221). This suggests that Cleopatra Thea's authority existed while Demetrius was in power and may have been independent of him. She seems to have garnered the respect of military officials on her own terms.

Thea, now twenty-seven, married her brother-in-law Antiochus VII Sidetes (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 222). Antiochus later invaded Judea and forced Hyrcanus to surrender. The latter provided money and even provided his brother as a hostage (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 245-248). During the hostilities, Antiochus called a truce during the feast of Tabernacles and even provided the Jews with a "magnificent sacrifice" (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 242-243).

⁴²⁵ Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 94.

⁴²⁶ Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 95; Alexander's severed head was later sent to Ptolemy (*1 Macc.* 11: 17).

After the surrender, John Hyrcanus later marched with Antiochus against the Parthians (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 249-251). Whitehorne speculates that Thea or Antiochus' mother-in-law, Cleopatra II, may have influenced his positive disposition towards the Jews.⁴²⁷

After the death of Antiochus, Thea's second husband, who had been captive for so many years, returned. Wanting nothing to do with him, she proclaimed herself ruler and issued coins in her own name, the only royal woman of the time to do so; however, unlike the Egyptians, the Syrians' concept of kingship was primarily a military one and, according to Whitehorne, a sole woman monarch could not maintain the necessary confidence in her military ability. She soon appears on coins with her son Antiochus VIII Epiphanes (Grypus), a contemporary of Alexander Jannaeus, although Thea remains in the dominant spot, in the foreground, and her name appears first.⁴²⁸ She also had Demetrius and her son by him killed to ensure her survival.

In the meantime, two of the three nieces of Cleopatra Thea, the daughters of her younger sister Cleopatra III, had ill-fated unions with their Seleucid cousins. Ptolemy Soter II, Lathyrus ("Chick-pea"), had been married to his sister Cleopatra IV. Their mother, Cleopatra III, made them divorce and forced Lathyrus to marry his younger sister Selene. Cleopatra IV, indignant, went to Cyprus which was ruled by her brother, Ptolemy Alexander, and there she raised her own army and joined forces with (and married) Antiochus Cyzicenus her cousin.⁴²⁹ Tryphaena, another sister of Cleopatra IV, was married to Antiochus Grypus. Cyzicenus, now possessing a strong army, attempted to gain the upper hand but was defeated. Justin records that it was an angry and jealous Tryphaena who ordered the death of her sister Cleopatra IV, who in her view had

⁴²⁷ Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 155.

⁴²⁸ About the coins of Thea, see Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 98 and Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 160-163.

⁴²⁹ *Justin*, 39. 3; Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 164.

disobeyed their mother and instigated the conflict between the brothers Grypus and Cyzicenus. Cyzicenus returned to the fight and promptly avenged the death of Cleopatra IV with the death of Tryphaena herself.

Cleopatra V Selene was not to be left out; her mother sent her to marry Antiochus Grypus, replacing her murdered sister.⁴³⁰ Grypus was soon killed himself and Selene married his brother, Cyzicenus, the husband of her other dead sister. Cyzicenus was killed in battle (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 366). Selene later married the son of Cyzicenus, Antiochus X Eusebes Philopator; she was in her forties, he was about twenty. (They later had two children.) When Mithradates II (124/3-87 B.C.E.) the Parthian began expanding his territory, Antiochus X responded to a request for assistance from the Samenian queen Laodice and was killed in battle (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 371). Selene never married again, probably remaining in Ptolemais, a city that she defended unsuccessfully against the Armenian king, Tigranes, during his campaign in the region. This campaign included a threat to Judea while it was under the rule of Shelamzion. According to Josephus, Cleopatra Selene ruled Syria at this time (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 420); Shelamzion and Cleopatra Selene were thus rulers of neighbouring countries for a short while. Selene was captured and killed sometime after 69 B.C.E. Whitehorne believes that her actions later in life were “calculated” attempts to regain “Ptolemaic control over that side of the Seleucid dynasty”.⁴³¹

Cleopatra Berenice III was the daughter of Cleopatra IV and Ptolemy Soter II. She was married to her uncle Ptolemy Alexander who possessed his father’s “charms”. He died in battle and his widow Berenice soon found herself married to her father (88-80

⁴³⁰ Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 167.

⁴³¹ Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 172.

B.C.E.). Like the Ptolemaic women, Berenice cultivated a close relationship with her subjects.⁴³² On the death of her husband, in 80 B.C.E. she ruled, for a time, as sole monarch, until she was forced to marry Ptolemy XI, who quickly killed her but suffered revenge at the hands of the angry Alexandrian mob.⁴³³ Another Ptolemy was found (the XII) and he was wedded to Cleopatra V Tryphaena, but neither of them was a Ptolemy on both parents' sides. By this point in time the political control of both the Ptolemaic and the Seleucid dynasties was waning. Rome was growing in power, and had been instrumental in arranging the ill-fated union between Berenice and Ptolemy XI.

It is reasonable to assume that Shelamzion knew about the exploits of these powerful Ptolemaic queens; she may well have known some of these women personally. The exploits, murders, and incestuous unions between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties would no doubt have been the object of discussion and criticism in the upper class Jewish circles in which she was raised; however, the unabashed political force of these "Cleopatras" and their maneuvers would, arguably, have provided a powerful role model throughout Shelamzion's youth. When the time came to exercise her own authority, Shelamzion did not hesitate to rule in the manner in which she saw fit. She did not relinquish the throne to her sons; indeed, she was one of the few Jewish women to have been bequeathed the role of queen. Yet she would have been well aware, judging from the examples in Egypt, Syria and Judea, that a woman monarch ruling alone was not easily tolerated. She also would have witnessed the rapid deterioration of these dynasties at the hands of the younger and impulsive generation. Her choice of the more malleable son, Hyrcanus II, as high priest seems an obvious attempt to maintain power. As a sixty-

⁴³² Whitehome, *Cleopatras*, 175.

⁴³³ Whitehome, *Cleopatras*, 177.

four year old woman she seems to have been determined to rule Judea according to the ideals she felt best represented the Hasmonean dynasty.

3. THE IDEAL OF THE HELLENISTIC MONARCH

Although the rulers of Hellenistic states possessed absolute authority, their conduct was governed by an ideology towards rule that consisted of maintaining the right relationships with their gods and their subjects. These relationships, in turn, were governed by certain codes of conduct. Of course, the ruler was at liberty to ignore this ideology; however, he or she did so at his or her peril. The tyrant who exhibited *hybris*, the over-confident abuse of power designed to produce pleasure by shaming persons or groups, would soon find himself or herself with a dramatic reversal of fortune.⁴³⁴

A thorough discussion of the role of the Hellenistic monarch is beyond the scope of this project; however, the critical elements will be presented. The success of a ruler's reign was judged by his or her virtue or moral excellence and achievements. Part of this virtue included the quality of the rulers' relationship with their gods; their achievements were primarily what they did for their nation and its people.

Hellenistic rulers publicly demonstrated their unique relationship with and reverence for their gods. Religious worship performed in public, such as elaborate sacrifices, proved to both the subjects and the gods that the monarch played a role in the right order or harmony of the cosmos and sought the compassion and favour of the

⁴³⁴ The literature on *hybris* is voluminous and varied; an in-depth discussion is offered by N. R. E Fisher, *Hybris: A Study in the Values of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greece* (Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips, 1992). *Hybris* as an attack on the honour of a community and thus a threat to political stability, see pages 493-500.

gods.⁴³⁵ These acts would ensure national prosperity and also functioned as political propaganda for the ruler. A concern for their public image is also borne out by the qualities that ideologically defined a successful monarch. The ideal monarch had a reputation for good-will (εὐνοία) and beneficence which was modelled on the generosity of the gods (εὐεργεσία). This good-will and beneficence was shown not just to their clientele but to the general populace by maintaining and distributing resources, such as grain, in times of need, for instance, during a famine or other natural disaster. The scale of this beneficence had a profound effect on the lives of the people. In return, Hellenistic monarchs were honoured with statues and literary works, among other things.

Around the monarch gathered a group of artists, philosophers, military commanders and scholars who acted in an advisory capacity. This group was collectively known as “Friends” (φίλοι) of the ruler.⁴³⁶ At times, such consultants were so closely associated with the ruler that they held the title of “brothers” of the king and possessed considerable power.⁴³⁷ This system continued throughout the Hellenistic period and is evinced, for example, in Jonathan’s relationship with Antiochus (*1 Macc.* 11: 57).

One crucial area in which the monarch was judged was her or his achievements. These achievements were primarily military, i.e. new territories were conquered. The acquisition of new territory served as a testimony to the power and efficacy of the ruler as well as proof of his or her close and positive relationship with the gods, for gods were believed to be responsible for the outcome in battle. The primary role of the Hellenistic

⁴³⁵ Helen S. Lund, *Lysimachus: A Study in Early Hellenistic Kingship* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) 158.

⁴³⁶ F. W. Walbank, *The Hellenistic World* (rev. ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) 75-77.

⁴³⁷ Simon Price, “The History of the Hellenistic Period”, *The Oxford History of Greece and the Hellenistic World* (ed. John Boardman, Jasper Griffen, and Oswyn Murray; Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 374.

monarch was to be “the protector and saviour” of his or her people.⁴³⁸ Divine sanction of a monarch’s rule was also demonstrated through her or his military achievements.⁴³⁹ The chief commander of the military was the monarch, who, according to *2 Maccabees*, took the additional title of στρατηγός (9: 19). Seleucid kings were, in fact, often present in battle; less so were their Ptolemaic counterparts. At times, however, the monarch was replaced in battle by the next in line or another high-ranking official.⁴⁴⁰ Their presence in battle served to augment morale and reinforce loyalty.

Loyalty was not always an issue, for Hellenistic rulers acquired a large contingent of mercenaries, professional soldiers who were paid for their services. In addition to payment, these mercenaries swore an oath to the gods to be loyal to their employers; monarchs, likewise, swore fidelity to their commanders and mercenaries.⁴⁴¹ Mercenaries were typically recruited through diplomatic means; they were most often sent by an allied nation who had professional soldiers at their disposal.⁴⁴² There were also cities to which the professional soldier tended to congregate, and recruitment would be done on an individual basis.⁴⁴³ Of course, mercenaries could always desert and ally themselves with the other side, oath be damned.

Although possessing the ability to do anything that was financially possible, the ideal of the Hellenistic monarch was constrained by the adherence to certain values, if a monarch wanted to maintain the best possible relations with his or her subjects. This is

⁴³⁸ Lund, *Lysimachus*, 166.

⁴³⁹ Simon Price, “The History of the Hellenistic Period”, 375.

⁴⁴⁰ Bezael Bar-Kochva, *The Seleucid Army: Organization and Tactics in the Great Campaigns* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976) 86.

⁴⁴¹ For an example of such an oath, see Yvon Garlau, *War in the Ancient World: A Social History* (trans. Janet Lloyd; London: Chatto and Windus, 1975) 96-98.

⁴⁴² G.T. Griffith, *The Mercenaries of the Hellenistic World* (Gröningen: Bouma’s Boekhuis, 1968) 254, 257-258.

⁴⁴³ Griffith, *The Mercenaries*, 259-261.

not to say that these ideals were consistently and persistently followed. It is reasonable to assume that monarchs in general did what they wanted when they could, but interpreted their actions in a manner that was consonant with these ideals. The public image or propaganda that the monarch cultivated was crucial in order to maintain public support. Although such support was not necessary, it was useful in order to ensure harmony and to discourage pretenders from gathering support. The conceptual distance gained by idealizing a Persian king, who ruled according to Socratic principles and modelled his constitution and army on Spartan custom, provided Xenophon with the freedom to re-shape the perception of the perfect monarch centuries earlier.⁴⁴⁴ If Hellenistic kings were under such scrutiny, how much more so were their queens?

4. “ ‘I WILL SET A KING OVER ME, LIKE ALL THE NATIONS ROUND ABOUT ME’ ” (DEUT. 17: 14): POSSIBLE ASPECTS OF THE HASMONEAN IDEOLOGY OF MONARCHY

The Seleucids and Ptolemies strongly influenced the Hasmonean concept of what it meant to be a king, but Jewish society added its own set of expectations. Aristobulus I was not only the first Hasmonean to “take the diadem” (*War* 1. 70; *Jewish Ant.* 13: 301), but also called himself *Philhellene*, lover, or friend, of Greeks. The Hasmoneans toyed with images of Hellenistic rule before Shelamzion took power (or it could equally be argued that they were seduced into adopting the trappings of Hellenistic monarchy by the

⁴⁴⁴ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, vol. 1 (LCL; trans William Miller; London and New York: William Heinemann and G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1932) 9-12; cf. K. O. Müller, *A History of the Literature of Ancient Greece*, vol. 2 (1958; trans. Karl Otfried; Port Washington and London: Kennikat Press, 1971) 195.

Seleucids). *First Maccabees* speaks of Jonathan,⁴⁴⁵ the high priest, wearing the purple robes and later the gold buckle of a Hellenistic ruler (10: 62, 11: 59). Given the concern about the changes to Jewish society due to the encroachment of Hellenistic values and way of life, the later Hasmoneans must have evoked some type of propagandistic mechanism in order to legitimate their unique type of rule and close imitation of Hellenistic values. It is difficult to reconstruct with any certainty the Hasmonean ideals of leadership. Tessa Rajak observes: “the recovery of Hasmonean ideology, possible only to a limited extent, depends principally on the interpretation of complex literary material;”⁴⁴⁶ however, some examples of Hellenistic-Jewish literature can be drawn upon as a heuristic device to try to distil certain ideals towards sovereignty which may have attracted the Hasmoneans.

We see an element of Hasmonean political propaganda in *1 Maccabees* where Simon,⁴⁴⁷ Jonathan’s successor, is proclaimed high priest in perpetuity by “the Jews and their priests”, “until a trustworthy prophet should arise”; he is also given control of the governing of Judea, the care of the sanctuary and the appointment of its caretakers, and, in addition, he is, like the king, the commander (στρατηγός)⁴⁴⁸ of the nation; in return, the populace is to obey him (14: 41-44). This passage, embedded in a historical account of the rise of the Hasmonean dynasty, attests to the need of the Hasmoneans to legitimate their dynasty; however, it does nothing in itself to explain the process of how the dynasty was rendered legitimate.

⁴⁴⁵ Jonathan led the Maccabean revolt from 161-143; a concise overview of his contribution to Hasmonean history is found in Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, vol. 1, 293-297.

⁴⁴⁶ Rajak, “Hasmonean Kingship”, 115.

⁴⁴⁷ Simon’s term as high priest and leader of Judea lasted from 143-135; Grabbe also provides a short discussion of his role in Judean politics of the time, see *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, vol. 1, 297-299.

⁴⁴⁸ Goldstein, *1 Maccabees*, 508

There are some clues to this process of legitimation in *1 Maccabees*: certain elements suggest the reasoning behind the Hasmonean claim to authority. The first is testimony to divine approval for their military actions; the Hasmoneans are “the family of those men through whom deliverance was given to Israel” (5: 62). This comment recalls the deliverance out of Egypt in which Moses, Aaron and Miriam played crucial roles and suggests the beginning of a new era in the Promised Land with self-government. The subtle manner in which this Exodus symbolism is drawn on in *1 Maccabees* suggests that the Hasmoneans drew on elements from the symbolic universe of biblical literature, which they could shape in order to justify their ongoing political domination.

Sociological theory supports the notion that existing elements in the symbolic universe of late Hellenistic Jewish society could have been used to legitimate Hasmonean dynastic claims. According to Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, “all social phenomena are *constructions* produced historically through human activity”.⁴⁴⁹ As constructions, the institutions of a given society are constantly in a process of legitimating themselves. Symbols play a crucial role in this legitimating process; but, when the symbolic universe of a society is rendered problematic because it no longer fits with the ideals of those in power, the symbolic universe then has to be fine-tuned (or altered) in order to reflect the new way the institutions operate, given the ideals of those who are in control. In other words, for the Hasmoneans to legitimate their dynastic claims, they would have to manipulate the existing symbolic universe in a manner that accommodated

⁴⁴⁹ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 106.

those claims. Pierluigi Piovanelli shows ample evidence of this in his discussion of the evolution of messianic figures during the Second Temple period.⁴⁵⁰

This is not to say that the concept of monarchy was completely foreign to the Jews. King David and his son King Solomon long represented a golden age in Jewish history. Messianic expectations were connected to the return of a ruler from the branch of Jesse. The biblical precedent for kingship is found in Deuteronomy and it is worth quoting in full:

When you come to the land which the Lord your God gives you, and you possess it and dwell in it, and then say, "I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are round about me": you may indeed set as king over you him whom the Lord your God will choose. One from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. Only he must not multiply horses for himself, or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply horses, since the Lord has said to you, "You shall never return that way again." And he shall not multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply for himself silver and gold. And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, from that which is in charge of the Levitical priests; and it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them; that his heart may not be lifted up above his brethren, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left; so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel (17: 18-20).

Hasmonean kingship differed from that which is described in biblical literature. It was not a kingship of a ruler who was anointed by a prophet. *First Maccabees* is clear on this point. The Hasmonean claim to power lasts as long as there is no "trustworthy prophet" to tell the community otherwise; however, practically speaking, in a situation

⁴⁵⁰ Pierluigi Piovanelli, "Les figures des leaders «qui doivent venir»: Genèse et theorization du messianisme juif à l'époque du second Temple", *Messianismes: Variations sur une figure juive* (Religions en perspective, no. 10; eds. Jean-Christophe Attias, Pierre Gisel et Lucie Kaennel; Genève: Labor et Fides, 2000) 33-40.

such as this, the trustworthiness of a person claiming to be a prophet is subject to authentication by the very leadership which would be abrogated should such a prophet be found. It seems, therefore, probable that trustworthy prophets would be hard to come by during the Hasmonean regime. Also, the messianic claims associated with the Davidic kingship are absent from Hasmonean political propaganda, if *1 Maccabees* can be taken as an example. Still, Deuteronomy offered a strong argument for the existence of divine support that with political independence in “the Promised Land” came political leadership modelled on “the nations that are round about”.

The best presentation of Jewish ideals of monarchy is probably found in the work *The Letter of Aristeas*. Although its date of composition is in dispute, it is safe to assume that *Aristeas* existed at the time of Shelamzion and we should not discount the possibility that she looked to it for inspiration. Oswyn Murray believes that the author of *Aristeas* provided a model for the Jewish monarchy to emulate; he writes, “it is difficult to see a Jew bothering to write such a long and detailed account of the proper way to rule, unless there were some chance that his ideas might have an effect on the present government”.⁴⁵¹ This Jewish document contains many topics that would have been of interest to a monarch. It includes information on the education, personal qualities, and piety of an ideal ruler, as well as information on choosing the best advisors, how to maintain the best relationship to their subjects, and national defence.

According to *The Letter of Aristeas*, rulers must spend the majority of their time reading, particularly “the accounts of travels, which have been written and dedicated to thrones for the permanent betterment of mankind” (283). One such account could possibly be *The Histories* of Herodotus. Monarchs should also invite “men of learning” to

⁴⁵¹ Oswyn Murray, “Aristeas and Ptolemaic Kingship”, *Journal of Theological Studies* 18 (1967) 370.

their banquets. These learned men are there to advise the ruler “of matters advantageous to the kingdom and to the lives of the subjects”; such men “are beloved of God” for their minds are trained “for the noblest ends” (286-287). Accordingly, the ideal Jewish ruler should have men of virtue as advisers. These will “hate wickedness” and love justice and, like the ruler, will be conscious of their good reputation (280).

Consistent with Hellenistic ideals on monarchy, the Jewish ruler should demonstrate beneficence (εὐεργεσία), reverence to the gods (εὐσέβεια) and benevolence (εὐνοία).⁴⁵² The Jewish rulers need also be pious, following “the laws, so that by practicing justice they may improve the lives of men” (279). By doing so, they create for themselves a positive reputation, establishing “an everlasting memory” of themselves (279). A positive reputation was crucial for effective leadership and was considered to be a blessing from God (269).

The most prized possession of a ruler was “the love and affection of his [of her] subjects... by these means the bond of goodwill is unbreakable” (265). This concern for self-image and promotion of positive propaganda about their reign was something of which monarchs need always be mindful:

Always have an eye to your glory and prominence, so that you may say and think what is consistent with it, knowing that all your subjects have you in mind and speak of you. You must really be not the least among the actors! They observe the character which they have to portray and do all their actions consistently with it. Yours however is no acting role, you are really a king. God having granted you authority as your manner deserves. (218-219)

It is in the area of military achievements that *The Letter of Aristeas* provides the most insight into the Jewish ideology towards national defence. Ultimately, the

⁴⁵² On these values in a Hellenistic milieu, see Lund, *Lysimachus*. 166.

guardianship of the Land is vested in God. The ruler is to call “continually” upon God “to direct his [or her] enterprises” (193). The monarch is not to seek to expand his [or her] territories, to “covet the unattainable” (223), but find the most satisfaction in peace and the “saving of a human life” (292). Military commanders should be “men of outstanding bravery and justice, who prefer saving men’s lives to victory at the reckless risk of lives” (281). The peaceful solution to conflict is preferred. Generosity in dealing with enemies “wins hearts”, for “goodwill ... is stronger than the greatest of weapons” (230). Peaceful solutions to conflict demonstrate “the fear of [God’s] power” which lies “in every breast” (195). Overall, “the most important feature in a kingdom” is “to establish the subjects continually at peace, and guarantee that they obtain justice quickly in verdicts” (291).

Another important document that sheds light on the concept of kingship during the Hasmonean period is *The Temple Scroll* from Qumran. Although it was found in the library of this sect that had renounced mainstream Jewish society, it still is testimony to the issues about kingship that were a concern at this time. Some scholars believe that *The Temple Scroll* was written about the time of Alexander Janneus.⁴⁵³ The scroll draws on biblical ideals of kingship but adapts them to the current situation. It is testimony to the symbolic importance of monarchy that depicted the king as “a nationalistic symbol”.⁴⁵⁴ According to the scroll, the king’s primary role is as military leader and as one of a group of judges, although the sect did not approve of a political ruler who was also a high priest.⁴⁵⁵ The king is to surround himself with thirty-six councillors, twelve from the “princes of his people”, twelve priests, and twelve Levites, whose task it was to

⁴⁵³ M. Hengel, J. H. Charlesworth, and D. Mendels, “The Polemical Character of ‘On Kingship’ in *The Temple Scroll*: An Attempt at Dating 11QTemple”, *JJS* 37 (1986) 38.

⁴⁵⁴ Doron Mendels, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism* (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 69.

⁴⁵⁵ Mendels believes that this separation of the roles of king and high priest is a hallmark of the literature of the day; see, *The Rise and Fall*, 70.

“(proclaim) judgement and the law so that his heart shall not be lifted above them” (LVII).

These councillors were “men of truth, God-fearers, haters of unjust gain and mighty warriors” (LVII). They were to accompany him constantly to prevent his capture.

The king’s primary goal is to guard against invasion.⁴⁵⁶ When he discovered that “any nation or people” wanted to invade and plunder Israel he had to send a set number of troops - this number varies according to the degree of threat; however, there were always to be some men left in the cities to protect the general populace (LVIII). The king and his warriors were to “avoid everything unclean, everything shameful, every iniquity and guilt” (LVIII). This concern with the defence of Judea and the emphasis on the purity of its army and its sovereign may have been a response to the supposed cavalier attitude Janneus had towards the defence of his country; it was during his reign that the most serious incursions into Judean territory occurred and this seriously harmed his reputation.⁴⁵⁷

The king’s familial relations were also a concern for the Qumran community. He was forbidden to “marry as wife any daughter of the nations” and had to “take a wife for himself from his father’s house, from his father’s family” (LVII); nor could he marry a close relation (as the Ptolemies did) (LXVI).⁴⁵⁸ As in the passage on kingship in Deuteronomy, the king’s behaviour while he rules has a bearing on whether or not his sons will inherit the kingdom:

The king whose heart and eyes have gone astray from my commandments shall never have one to sit on the throne of his fathers, for I will cut off his posterity for

⁴⁵⁶ Hengel, et al., “The Polemical Character”, 32-34.

⁴⁵⁷ Hengel, et al., “The Polemical Character”, 34-35.

⁴⁵⁸ Specifically, “A man shall not take his father’s wife and shall not lift his father’s skirt. A man shall not take the wife of his brother and shall not lift the skirt of his brother, the son of his father or the son of his mother, for this is unclean. A man shall not take his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother, for this is abominable. A man shall not take his father’s sister or his mother’s sister, for this is immoral. A man shall not take the daughter of his brother or the daughter of his sister for this is abominable” (LXVI); cf. *Jub.* 41: 26.

ever so that it shall no more rule over Israel. But if he walk after my rules and keep my commandments and do that which is correct and good before me, no heir to the throne of the kingdom of Israel shall be cut off from among his sons for ever. I will be with him and will save him from the hand of those who hate him and from the hand of those who seek his life. (LIX)

In addition to the Qumran *Temple Scroll*, two other pseudepigraphic documents speak of kingship. These are *Jubilees*, and *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Both documents date from the time of the Maccabean revolt, roughly 161-140 B.C.E.⁴⁵⁹ *Jubilees* is an adaptation of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus which aims at encouraging strict adherence to the Law.⁴⁶⁰ *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* draws on the tradition of the patriarchs,⁴⁶¹ which is also found in Genesis. Fragments from *Jubilees* were found at Qumran; there is also a close link between Qumran literature and *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*; both these pseudepigraphic works may have played roles in the formative years of the sect.⁴⁶² In Genesis, Judah and Levi are two of the twelve sons of Jacob (35: 24). Judah's kingship is hinted at in Genesis (49: 10); however, there the priestly role of Levi is absent. It is in *Jubilees* and *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* that Judah is clearly portrayed as a king and his brother, Levi, as the high priest. Judah was made king because of his obedience to God (*TJud.* 1: 5-6). According to Mendels. "Judah, like Osiris in the Ptolemaic court, was given precedence over his brothers, and he was given a nonscriptural historical role that really fits a Jewish

⁴⁵⁹ See O. S. Wintermute, "Jubilees", *OTP*, 35-142; George W. E. Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded: Jubilees", *JWSTP*, 97-104.

⁴⁶⁰ Wintermute, "Jubilees", 38.

⁴⁶¹ They are the twelve sons of Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph, and Benjamin.

⁴⁶² For the importance of *Jubilees* and *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* to the Qumran community, see Gabriele Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways Between Qumran and Enochic Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, U. K.: William B. Eerdmans, 1998) 86-98 and 138-140; see also J. J. Collins, "Testaments", *JWSTP*, 340-341.

king of the Hellenistic period”.⁴⁶³ *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* has the kingdom of the Jews established through Judah (17: 6); however, this kingship is subordinate to the high priesthood (21: 2).⁴⁶⁴ The primary role of Judah is as military leader; many of his battles are recounted (2: 1-7: 11), including a battle at Shechem (4: 1). As leader of the Jewish nation, Judah evoked fear in his enemies (Jub. 31: 18). Those who inherit his throne are blessed, whereas enemies will be uprooted and destroyed (Jub. 31:20).

Although it is impossible to assess how, or indeed whether, *The Letter of Aristeas*, *The Temple Scroll* from Qumran, *Jubilees*, and *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* influenced Hasmonean rulers, it is important to acknowledge that a well-developed Jewish ideology towards monarchy existed in this society during the late Hellenistic period. Jewish monarchs were expected to work closely with the Law, not only reading it but writing it as well. These monarchs were also to read other literary works and maintain close relationships with educated men. Like all Hellenistic monarchs, general qualities such as reverence for the gods, benevolence and beneficence were essential; however, Jewish monarchs had also to care for their reputation, guard the Land with little loss of Jewish lives and cultivate peace. The existence of these principles would inspire a certain amount of conformity in a monarch, particularly one who was anxious about maintaining popular support.

In her article on the development of Hasmonean kingship,⁴⁶⁵ Tessa Rajak outlines elements that seem, in general, to typify the interests of this dynasty. These elements are

⁴⁶³ Mendels, *The Rise and Fall*, 70-71.

⁴⁶⁴ Interestingly for our study, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* names one of Judah's sons Shelom (8: 3). In *Genesis* and *Jubilees*, this son is named Shelah (Gen. 38: 5, Jub. 41: 6).

⁴⁶⁵ Rajak considers Alexandra all too briefly, "Hasmonean Kingship", 106.

the sanctity and purity of the Land and of its inhabitants, as demonstrated by the requirement that those males who inhabit the Land are circumcised; the literature of the times draws on the rape of Dinah as a precedent.⁴⁶⁶ In a similar vein, concern for the Land is expressed by the importance of military achievement, specifically in the person of a warrior high-priest, whose military success demonstrates divine approval for his control over the Land.⁴⁶⁷ In its ideal state, as is typified by John Hyrcanus, this leader possessed the gift of prophecy (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 299-300) and was also concerned with involving a certain degree of “popular participation” in government, as demonstrated on their coinage which bears the words “community (*hever*) of the Jews”.⁴⁶⁸ Rajak also suggests that the Hasmoneans associated their rule with the Feast of Tabernacles. She observes that mention of this festival re-occurs in Josephus’ accounts of Hasmonean rule and speculates that Jonathan, Antigonus and Janneus seem to have used the festival as propaganda (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 46, 304, 372).⁴⁶⁹ The association of a Hasmonean leader with a religious event that celebrated God’s sovereignty could be construed as a public demonstration of divine approval to rule. If the elements that Rajak identifies with the Hasmonean dynasty can be distilled into critical concepts, these elements are: (1) the concern for national defence and (2) the use of propaganda to ensure the dynasty’s continued close ties to Jewish society. Although it can be argued that these elements would concern any monarch, Rajak stresses that the Hasmoneans articulated these concerns specifically through literary means, in particular, the reinterpretation of their history.

⁴⁶⁶ Rajak, “Hasmonean Kingship”, 113-114.

⁴⁶⁷ Rajak, “Hasmonean Kingship”, 112-113.

⁴⁶⁸ Rajak, “Hasmonean Kingship”, 111.

⁴⁶⁹ Rajak, “Hasmonean Kingship”, 112.

5. MODELLING HASMONEAN QUEENSHIP

The legitimization of Hasmonean rule was not so successful that Janneus could get away with anything he wanted to do. He clearly went too far in his exercise of authority because he was almost killed by his subjects. On one occasion he was pelted with citrons when he tried to offer a sacrifice at a religious festival, probably Tabernacles (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 372-373),⁴⁷⁰ and on another he was “pushed by a multitude of camels into a deep ravine” (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 375). Taking over the reins of government must have been difficult for Shelamzion; however, it may also have offered a unique opportunity for her to re-establish what she believed to be Hasmonean tradition. It is logical that, like others before her, she wanted the dynasty to continue. If Deuteronomy and *The Temple Scroll* preserve an idea that was also common in mainstream Jewish society, then this prediction comes true: “the king whose heart and eyes have gone astray from my commandments shall never have one to sit on the throne of his fathers” (LIX; cf. Deut. 17: 20). Here we are reminded of Janneus’ brutality and the degree to which it deviated from the ideal behaviour of Jewish monarchs. Janneus tricked Ptolemy Lathyrus by pretending to befriend him while forming a military alliance with Ptolemy’s mother, Cleopatra III (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 334), killing one of his own brothers and many other Jews (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 323, 373, 376); Janneus even had Jewish men crucified and their wives and children slaughtered while he and his concubines were feasting in front of them (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 380). It, therefore, cannot be discounted that Shelamzion’s strident control of government and strict observation of the Law may have been designed to compensate for Janneus’

⁴⁷⁰ See note d to *Ant.* 13. 372 (LCL: Marcus).

narcissistic ways, providing the good leadership and religious devotion that would ensure the continuation of the dynasty. But even if this interpretation is accepted, there remains the problem, for the queen, of not only gaining and maintaining enough popular support to ensure that she held on to power, but, more importantly, of demonstrating that there was divine approval, perhaps in the form of a biblical precedent, for a woman to rule.

Biblical literature typically does not portray queens and queen mothers in a positive light. Jezebel (1 Kings 16: 31) and her daughter Athaliah (2 Kings 8: 26; 11: 1-3) are associated with the worship of Ba'al and Asherah and, irrespective of their actual roles in history, are seen as evildoers from the viewpoint of Deuteronomistic historiography.⁴⁷¹ Those who supported the dynastic claims of Shelamzion would have been careful to avoid linking her to these two queens who were renowned for trying to lead Israel astray. The Hasmoneans had already established a reputation for themselves that drew mainly on the judges.⁴⁷² For those responsible for legitimating Shelamzion's right to rule, the model of the Hasmoneans as judges was ideal. This model offered a powerful image of two women, one who was a prophetess, judge, military leader, and mother⁴⁷³ of her people

⁴⁷¹ On the role of the queen in the ancient Israel, see Carol Smith, "'Queenship' in Israel? The Cases of Bathsheba, Jezebel and Athaliah", *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (JSOT, Supplement Series 270; ed. John Day; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 142-162. On the role of the queen mother in ancient Israel, see Susan Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen: Women in Judges and Biblical Israel* (New York and Toronto: Doubleday, 1998) 128-180, and "the Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel", *JBL* 112 (1993) 385-401.

⁴⁷² Rajak, "Hasmonean Kingship", 105; cf. 1 Macc. 9: 73.

⁴⁷³ The association between motherhood and women's military leadership is made in the Song of Deborah, commonly thought to be one of the oldest poems in the Hebrew Bible. This association between female military leadership and mothering was institutionalized in ancient Israel, see Rachel Adler, "A Mother in Israel: Aspects of the Mother Role in Jewish Myth", *Beyond Androcentrism: New Essays on Women and Religion* (ed. Rita M. Gross; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977) 247. This image of a woman protectress may have been derived from the biblical passage which compares the power of YHWH to protect with the efficiency of a she-bear protecting her cubs (Hos. 13: 8). The image of a bear as a symbol of the divine is pre-historic and is reflected in the naming of two major constellations Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, Big Bear and Little Bear. On the female aspects of God, see Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

(Judges 4: 1, 6-8; Judges 5: 7), the other who murdered an enemy general while he was asleep in a tent (Judges 4: 21-22; Judges 5: 26). These women are Deborah and Jael, characters that are reflected in the Book of Judith, as will be discussed below.⁴⁷⁴

6. EXAMINING THE LITERARY SOURCES OF SHELAMZION'S REIGN

Josephus discusses Shelamzion, whom he refers to as Alexandra, in *the Jewish War* (1. 107-119) and *Jewish Antiquities* (13. 399-432).⁴⁷⁵ The following is a close examination of this source of information on her reign. It aims at a critical assessment of the primary authors of her life's story, Josephus, and his source, Nicolaus of Damascus.

a. *Flavius Josephus*

Scholars have never figured out quite what to make of Josephus and, because of his importance for the critical period covering the end of Second Temple Judaism and the birth of Christianity, they will never stop trying. Josephus fought in the Jewish revolt of 66-70, was a prisoner of Rome, and eventually a client of the emperor Vespasian. He became so close to his patron that he took his family name, Flavius.

⁴⁷⁴ The literature on Deborah and Jael is voluminous and will not be discussed in detail; see Rachel C. Rasmussen, "Deborah the Woman Warrior", *Anti-covenant: Counter-reading Women's Lives in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Mieke Bal; Decatur, GA: Almond Press, 1989) 79-93; Gale A. Yee, "By the Hand of a Woman: The Metaphor of the Woman Warrior in Judges 4", *Semeia* 61 (1993) 99-132 and Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988). See also my discussion of Deborah and Jael, Section II. 3. c.

⁴⁷⁵ See Appendix 2.

Flavius Josephus wrote history that served propagandist purposes; his first work, *The Jewish War* (*De bello Judaico*), was written for the glory of Rome and that of Josephus' new patrons, Vespasian and his son, Titus. In contrast, *Jewish Antiquities* (*Antiquitates Judaicae*) is cultural propaganda for the Jews, demonstrating their antiquity and cultural superiority. *Life* (*Vita*), which is appended to *Jewish Antiquities*, is personal propaganda that attempts to redeem Josephus' poor reputation among the Jews for having become so closely affiliated with Rome. *Against Apion* (*Contra Apionem*) is cultural propaganda for the Jews as well; it counters the anti-Semitism of the time and, an important factor for modern scholarship, it also contains quotations from authors who would otherwise have been unknown. Much has been written about Josephus; his works are a witness, and often the only extant witness, to the crucial happenings of first century (C.E.) Mediterranean society and the earlier Hasmonean and Herodian dynasties. They also reflect the cultural fusion of Greek, Roman, and Jewish elements that existed during this period.

The Jewish historian, Josephus ben Matthias, was born about 37 C.E. into a priestly family with ties to the Hasmonean dynasty.⁴⁷⁶ He was raised in upper class Jewish society and was, in his mid-twenties, sent to Rome to procure the release of some Jewish priests. A few years later, he found himself in command of the defence of Jotapata during the revolt against Rome. He surrendered to the Romans (in controversial fashion) and remained their prisoner, witnessing their attack on and destruction of Jerusalem (*War* 6. 277). Much attention has been given to a pivotal event in Josephus's life, his prophecy

⁴⁷⁶ Tessa Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1983) 16-17.

that Vespasian would become emperor (*War* 3. 399-402).⁴⁷⁷ This event, according to Tessa Rajak, won him the confidence of the Romans and proved to be auspicious later when Vespasian was made emperor.⁴⁷⁸ Josephus became closely associated with Vespasian and his son Titus. An earlier, Aramaic or Hebrew version of *The Jewish War* once existed (*War* 1. 3, 6) but is now lost. Josephus died near the end of the first century.

b. *The Jewish War, Jewish Antiquities, and their Sources*

Because the information about Queen Shelamzion is contained in *The Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*, I will discuss only these two works of Josephus in detail. *The Jewish War* was the first of his works. It was written sometime in the late seventies; an earlier version of Books 1 - 6 was presented to the emperor Vespasian, Josephus' patron (*Life* 359-361; *Against Apion* 1: 50-51). Josephus met Vespasian and his son Titus when he surrendered to the Romans during the Jewish revolt.⁴⁷⁹ As was noted above, *The Jewish War* is clearly Roman propaganda; Rome is presented as not wanting to go to war but having been forced into it by inept and money-hungry administrators.⁴⁸⁰ On the Jewish

⁴⁷⁷ For Josephus' general attitude towards prophecy in *Jewish Antiquities*, see Harold W. Attridge, "Josephus and His Works", *JWSTP*, 223-224.

⁴⁷⁸ Rajak believes that this episode is mendacious or exaggerated at least; however, we should remember that elsewhere Josephus mentions that the gift of prophecy was a feature of the Hasmoneans. John Hyrcanus had the gift of prophecy (*Jewish Ant.* 13: 282, 300, and 322). Josephus' comment, therefore, could have been part of his demonstration of royal lineage for the Romans and would have, at the least, won him, along with his obvious upper class status and rank as commander, a certain degree of privilege within the Roman camp. For Rajak's discussion of the surrender of Josephus and the surrounding details, see *Josephus*, 169-172; on the prophecy itself, see 185-192.

⁴⁷⁹ Josephus' account of the final siege of Jotapata and his own capture are recounted in the third person. On his surrender, see *The Jewish War* 3. 393-398.

⁴⁸⁰ Grabbe discusses briefly Josephus' intent in writing his historiography, see *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, vol. 1, 7.

side, Josephus states that a few “Jewish tyrants” started the rebellion,⁴⁸¹ but community leaders were generally against it. The overall aim of the work is “to deter others who may be tempted to revolt” (3. 108).

The Jewish War was published between 79-81 C.E. It begins with the Maccabean revolt and proceeds on through Judean history until the siege of Masada and its capture in 73/74 C.E. Some scholars believe that the last book (Book 7) was added later.⁴⁸² The work we now possess is in Greek; however, as noted, there was an earlier Aramaic version that circulated in the East.⁴⁸³ It is obvious that this Greek version is not a literal translation of the original. In a later work Josephus acknowledges the assistance of persons who helped him compose in Attic Greek (*Against Apion* 1. 50); according to Thackeray, their contribution is “apparent on almost every page of the work”.⁴⁸⁴ It is an ongoing question just how dependent Josephus was on these assistants and for how long. The quality of the Greek in *The Jewish War* is accepted as being better than that of his later work, *Jewish Antiquities*. It is highly probable that his Greek would have improved in the years intervening between the composition of *The Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*.⁴⁸⁵ Thus, as we shall see, the use of unusual terminology in *The Jewish War* suggests that Josephus drew some of his strong opinions about the relationship between Shelamzion and the Pharisees directly from Nicolaus. In accordance with the literary

⁴⁸¹ On these Jewish tyrants, see Attridge, “Josephus and His Works”, 196-200.

⁴⁸² See Shayne Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development as a Historian* (Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition, vol. 8; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979) 87-89 and Seth Schwartz, “The Composition and Publication of Josephus’s ‘Bellum Judaicum’ Book 7”, *HTR* 79 (1986) 373-386.

⁴⁸³ *The Jewish War*, ix.

⁴⁸⁴ *The Jewish War*, xv. Some scholars, such as Richards and Shutt, have criticized Thackeray’s theory that Josephus needed help to produce a quality Greek version of his works. See G. C. Richards and R. J. H. Shutt, “The Composition of Josephus’ *Antiquities*”, *Classical Quarterly* 33 (1939) 36-40; R. J. H. Shutt, *Studies in Josephus* (London: SPCK, 1961) 75. For a concise summary of early scholarship on this issue, see Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus and Modern Scholarship (1937-1980)* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984) 827-830.

⁴⁸⁵ Shutt, *Studies in Josephus*, 75-77.

conventions of the time, there are also many allusions to classical writers in *The Jewish War*. The work contains elements from Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Demosthenes, and Polybius and also Homer and some Greek tragedies.⁴⁸⁶

For information that he had not garnered first hand, Josephus used a variety of sources. Agrippa II, ruler of the Roman province of Judea during the mid first century C.E., provided some information and the memoirs of Vespasian and Titus were also helpful.⁴⁸⁷ These memoirs were the field notes of the Roman generals that were written during the campaign. For earlier material, Josephus relied on the writing of Nicolaus of Damascus. Nicolaus authored a “universal history in 144 books” and was a friend and advisor of Herod the Great.⁴⁸⁸ Nicolaus is Josephus’ main source for the Hasmonean period.⁴⁸⁹ In *The Jewish War* Josephus does not seem to be aware of *I Maccabees*; however he used this work when he wrote *Jewish Antiquities*.

The sources for *Jewish Antiquities*, the second work of Josephus which was written around 93-94 C.E. are more numerous and varied than those of *The Jewish War*. This is to be expected because this second work covers the range of Jewish history as recorded in biblical and extra-biblical literature and Greek and Jewish historiography. For instance, *Jewish Antiquities* is modelled on the historiographic accounts of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Diodorus of Sicily.⁴⁹⁰ The first ten chapters cover biblical history, from creation until the first exile. In addition to the Septuagint, Josephus draws on various

⁴⁸⁶ *The Jewish War*, xviff; a list of the passages which are drawn from other Greek works are found on pages xvii-xviii.

⁴⁸⁷ *The Jewish War*, xx-xxi.

⁴⁸⁸ *The Jewish War*, Vol. 1, xxii.

⁴⁸⁹ Josephus also used Strabo of Amaseia, a contemporary of Nicolaus, whose work often agrees with Nicolaus. Dependency of one upon the other is generally ruled out. Of the fragments directly attributable to Strabo, none speak of Salome Alexandra: see Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism: Edited with Introductions, Translations and Commentary*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974) 261-315; see also Shutt, *Studies in Josephus*, 106-109.

⁴⁹⁰ Attridge, “Josephus and His Works”, 217; cf. Shutt, *Studies in Josephus*, 92-101.

legends and the works of Hellenistic-Jewish writers such as Demetrius, Eupolemus, Cleodemus Malchus and Artapanus, as well as on the works of Pseudo-Philo. Of particular interest is Josephus' presentation of Jewish history in a manner that would be interesting to Greek readers. His Greek slant includes the use of philosophical themes and psychological or emotional elements (including the erotic), which was popular among Greek readers at the time.⁴⁹¹ Books 11-13 recount post-exilic Jewish history and the Hellenistic period, up to the reign of Shelamzion (Salome Alexandra).⁴⁹² Josephus draws on some extra-biblical material found in *1* and *2 Esdras*, *Esther* and its Greek additions, *The Letter of Aristeas*, *1 Maccabees* and unknown sources for the period of the Macedonian conquest of Alexander the Great and the legend of the Tobiad family.⁴⁹³ The next three books cover Herodian times up until Archelaus; the source for this is, of course, Nicolaus of Damascus; however, Josephus does not feel constrained to use him verbatim. The last three books (18-20) speak of a variety of topics, including Jewish history in the Diaspora.

⁴⁹¹ Attridge, "Josephus and His Works", 212-213. On Josephus' Hellenized elements, see L. H. Feldman, "Abraham the Greek Philosopher in Josephus", *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 99 (1968) 143-156; "Hellenizations in Josephus 'Portrayal of Man's Decline'", *Religions in Antiquity: Festschrift E. R. Goodenough* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968) 336-353; and "Hellenizations in Josephus' Version of Esther (Ant. Jud. 11. 185-295)", *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 101 (1970) 143-170. See also the following: H. Moehring, *Novelistic Elements in the Writings of Josephus* (Diss.; Chicago, 1957); W. C. Van Unnik, "Josephus' Account of the Story of Israel's Sin with Alien Women", *Travels in the World of the Old Testament: Studies Presented to M. A. Beek on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday* (ed. M.S.H.G. Heerma van Voss, Ph. H. J. Houwink ten Cate, and N. A. van Uchelen; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974) 241-261 and H. W. Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976).

⁴⁹² See *Jewish Antiquities*, LCL, note a to 13. 320. It is important to note that Shelamzion (Salome Alexandra) is presented as the wife of Aristobulus only in *Jewish Antiquities* (13. 320, cf. 13. 405). In *The Jewish War*, the wife of Aristobulus I is not named (1.76 -85). Josephus never, himself, states that Janneus performed a levirate marriage by marrying Aristobulus' widow. A cogent discussion of the possibility of a levirate marriage is presented by Tal Ilan, "Queen Salamzion Alexandra and Judas Aristobulus I's Widow: Did Jannaeus Alexander Contract a Levirate Marriage?", *JSJ* 24. 2 (1993) 181-190.

⁴⁹³ On the sources of *Jewish Antiquities*, see Attridge, "Josephus and His Works", 211-216.

Josephus' approach to history is not through events, but through the lives of those who caused them. Villalba Varneda observes two critical moments in Josephan historiography. The first is when a person is introduced and the second is when her/his death is discussed.⁴⁹⁴ Josephus introduces his historical agents with comments that typically describe their physical, intellectual and moral qualities as well as their defects. These introductory comments "constitute the summary of the image which will endure up until death".⁴⁹⁵ When it comes time to talk about the death of a person, Josephus provides either praise, as a form of eulogy, or censure. These personal comments form an interpretative framework around the critical moments in a person's life that have shaped history.

The objectivity of Josephus has often been questioned against today's academic standards; what seems to have been a dramatic shift in allegiance and perspective from *The Jewish War* to *Jewish Antiquities* has led scholars to be suspicious of his apparent objectivity. Or perhaps it is that scholars, having so few sources for this time period, grasp too strongly at the window on the world Josephus provides us. Josephus is not without his biases and this is typical of any historian. It should always be borne in mind that Josephus writes with the stylistic and rhetorical tools of his environment; his histories, in spite of his protestations,⁴⁹⁶ are intended to be enjoyed. It is doubtful that he ever expected his works to survive to the present day and be our sole access to this important period in world history. Josephus' value as an historical source is undisputed; however, his work should be approached with a critical eye. Horst Moehring writes of Josephus:

⁴⁹⁴ Villalba Varneda, *The Historical Method of Flavius Josephus* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986) 69, cf. 200-203.

⁴⁹⁵ Varneda, *The Historical Method of Flavius Josephus*, 201.

⁴⁹⁶ Josephus' claim that his work was "... written for lovers of the truth and not to gratify my readers" (*The Jewish War* 1. 30) can be read as part of his rhetoric: above all, literature in antiquity was written for those who had the leisure to enjoy the process of reading.

“... every single sentence of Josephus is determined and coloured by his aims and tendencies”.⁴⁹⁷ Lester Grabbe posits some caveats to bear in mind when assessing Josephus for historical reliability. In brief, he states that (1) the differences between parallel accounts should be carefully scrutinized; (2) Josephus’ sources should “always be considered”; (3) the style of ancient historiography needs to be understood; (4) propagandist passages should be carefully assessed; and (5) all possible sources other than Josephus should also be utilized.⁴⁹⁸ As Josephus is the primary source on the life and times of Shelamzion, I draw on Grabbe’s advice in my analysis.

c. *Nicolaus of Damascus*

Of all of Josephus’ sources, Nicolaus of Damascus is the most important. Nicolaus was born at Damascus around 64 B.C.E. into a wealthy, upper class Syrian Greek family and was well educated. He became the tutor of the children of Antony and Cleopatra and later (about 14 B.C.E.) became a close associate of Herod the Great, eventually defending Herod’s cause before Augustus.⁴⁹⁹ Nicolaus wrote an enormous universal history that is no longer extant: it covered a vast time period, from mythological times to his day, and drew on a wide variety of sources itself. Some of his work is preserved in fragments.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁷ Horst Moehring, “Review of Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*”, *JJS* 31 (1980) 241.

⁴⁹⁸ Grabbe, *Judaism From Cyrus to Hadrian*, vol. 1, 11-12.

⁴⁹⁹ On Nicolaus of Damascus, see Ben Zion Wacholder, *Nicolaus of Damascus* (University of California Publications in History, 75; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962) 14-36; *idem*, “Josephus and Nicolaus of Damascus”, *Josephus, the Bible, and History* (ed. Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989) 147-172; Shutt, *Studies in Josephus*, 79-91.

⁵⁰⁰ Wacholder discusses the fragments in “Josephus and Nicolaus” 148-150; see also Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 227-260.

Because Josephus is so dependent on Nicolaus it is difficult to discern how much of what Josephus writes is not only based on Nicolaus' work but also incorporates Nicolaus' personal or professional opinions about the Hasmoneans. Herod was strongly adverse to them and Nicolaus' work reflects this anti-Hasmonean tendency.⁵⁰¹ Scholars are divided as to which of Josephus' works is more heavily dependent upon Nicolaus. Some scholars believe that Josephus relied upon Nicolaus more in *The Jewish War* than in *Jewish Antiquities*; however, Ben Zion Wacholder thinks that the reverse is true, that Josephus focused "more closely" on Nicolaus in *Jewish Antiquities* than he did in *The Jewish War*.⁵⁰² Although in *Jewish Antiquities* Josephus is generally believed to have been more discerning of Nicolaus' pro-Herodian stance,⁵⁰³ this tells us nothing about Josephus' critical eye when it comes to assessing Nicolaus' account of the reign of Shelamzion.

7. JOSEPHUS AND NICOLAUS: EXAMINING THEIR ATTITUDES

Because of the nature of this study, another of Josephus' tendencies must not be overlooked. This is his attitude towards women. *The Letter of Aristeas* is representative of the prevalent Hellenistic perception of women. The letter states: "the female sex is bold, positively active for something it desires, easily liable to change its mind because of

⁵⁰¹ See particularly, Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, vol. 1, 230-231.

⁵⁰² Wacholder outlines the reasons for the notion that Josephus followed Nicolaus more closely in *The Jewish War* and concludes that the idea is "founded on sheer guesswork"; see "Josephus and Nicolaus", 154-155; cf. his *Nicolaus of Damascus*, 60-61; Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, vol. 1 229, and Ilan, *Integrating Women*, 103-104.

⁵⁰³ See *Jewish Antiquities* 16.179-185.

poor reasoning powers, and of naturally weak constitution. It is necessary to have dealings with them in a sound way, avoiding provocation which may lead to a quarrel” (250). In spite of what we may think about this patronizing attitude today, we have to accept that it existed during the period in question and that Josephus, and his source Nicolaus of Damascus, were products of their time.

As “an aristocratic priest”,⁵⁰⁴ Josephus particularly disapproved of authoritative women. This tendency is particularly strong in *Jewish Antiquities*. In this work, he makes many “sneers directed against women”, including reworking biblical literature in order to diminish the role played by Deborah in Jewish history (*Jewish Ant.* 5. 200-209).⁵⁰⁵ For Josephus, only Deborah’s role as a prophetess is acceptable. It has been demonstrated that Josephus specifically omits Deborah’s contribution as a judge and political leader because he finds women who function in this capacity intolerable.⁵⁰⁶ In contrast, Pseudo-Philo embellishes the biblical account of Deborah, presenting her as a female Moses, personification of Wisdom, and mother of her people.⁵⁰⁷

When it came time to write about the Hasmonean queen Shelamzion, Josephus may have felt it necessary to correct the account of her reign that he found in Nicolaus’ work. Wacholder’s observation, that Josephus was more loyal to Nicolaus in *Jewish Antiquities*, is an idea echoed in the work of Tal Ilan. Ilan observes that the two passages

⁵⁰⁴ Steve Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees: A Composition-Critical Study* (Studia Post-Biblica, no. 39; New York and Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991) 374.

⁵⁰⁵ Louis H. Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrait of Deborah”, *Hellenica et Judaica: Hommage à Valentin Nikiprowetzky* (ed. A. Caquot, M. Hadas-Lebel et J. Riaud; Leuven: Peeters, 1986) 115-128; regarding Pseudo-Philo’s portrayal of Deborah (XXX. 5- XXXIII.6), see *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo* (trans. M. R. James; New York: KTAV, 1971) 171-180. For a discussion of the contrast between the portrayals of Deborah in Pseudo-Philo and Josephus, see Cheryl Anne Brown, *No Longer Be Silent: First Century Jewish Portraits of Biblical Women: Studies in Pseudo-Philo’s Biblical Antiquities and Josephus’s Jewish Antiquities* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992) 39-92.

⁵⁰⁶ Brown, *No Longer Be Silent*, 74.

⁵⁰⁷ Brown, *No Longer Be Silent*, 69-71.

that discuss responsibility for the demise of the Hasmonean dynasty not only conflict, but are written in different styles. The first passage, which blames Shelamzion for the downfall of the dynasty, is written in the third person (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 431); the second passage, which blames Hyrcanus and Aristobulus for the end of the Hasmoneans, is written in the first person plural, “we” (*Jewish Ant.* 14. 78). Ilan takes this as evidence that Josephus wrote the second passage and merely copied the first, which blames Shelamzion, from Nicolaus. She suggests that Josephus’ last comment on Shelamzion in *Jewish Antiquities*, that she “kept the nation at peace”, is a corrective.⁵⁰⁸

8. THE REIGN OF QUEEN SHELAMZION

Considering the fact that Shelamzion was the only Hasmonean queen to rule Judea, surprisingly little has been written about her. It is true that the only sources we have for her life are a few relatively short passages in Josephus’ *The Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*; however, a paucity of evidence has never stopped scholars from voicing an opinion before. Louis H. Feldman’s compendium of scholarly work written on topics related to Josephus lists well over one thousand entries. He has a special section for works on Hasmonean kings; however, there is nothing in this category about Shelamzion, even though Schürer, Derenbourg, and Klausner wrote early enough to be included in his

⁵⁰⁸ Ilan, *Integrating Women*, 103-104.

work.⁵⁰⁹ The one article about Shelamzion that is included in Feldman's survey appears because it is also about her husband Alexander Jannaeus.⁵¹⁰

Even when this queen is discussed, scholars often take Josephus' portrayal of her reign at face value. For instance, commenting on the Hasmonean dynasty in general, Thomas Fischer writes: "In the end, the Hasmoneans suffered from the same *evils* as other dynasties: the loss of group cohesiveness, increasingly noticeable in the quarrels for succession among the Hellenistic dynasties; the *growing influence of women*, embodied in Salome Alexandra, similar to the Seleucid Cleopatra Thea."⁵¹¹

In this section, I will attempt to extract from Josephus' accounts of the reign of Shelamzion as much information as I can in order to try to reconstruct something of her rule. This is difficult because both Nicolaus of Damascus and Josephus inject their personal opinions into their history of her reign; however, certain elements can be weeded out. What we know of her rule can be compared with Hellenistic-Jewish works that discuss ideals of political leadership. This reconstruction can be used as a heuristic tool that aims at shedding more light on her qualities and accomplishment, something few scholars have thus far attempted to do.

⁵⁰⁹ See Feldman, *Josephus and Modern Scholarship*, 241; see Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, vol. 1, 229-232; Derenbourg, *Essai sur l'histoire et la géographie de la Palestine*, 102-112; and Klausner, "Queen Salome Alexandra", 242-254.

⁵¹⁰ The article in question is listed in the table of contents under the heading of Alexander Jannaeus and was written by Solomon Zeitlin, "Queen Salome and King Jannaeus Alexander: A Chapter in the History of the Second Jewish Commonwealth", *JQR* 51, 1 (1960) 1-33 (number 1122 in Feldman's compendium).

⁵¹¹ Thomas Fischer, "Hasmoneans and Seleucids: Aspects of War and Policy in the Second and First Centuries B.C.E.", *Greece and Rome in Eretz Israel: Collected Essays* (International Scientific Conference on Greece and Rome in Eretz Israel, March 1985; ed. A. Kasher, U. Rappaport, G. Fuks; Jerusalem: The University of Haifa and Tel Aviv University, 1990) 15, italics mine.

a. *Shelamzion (Salome Alexandra) in The Jewish War*

Josephus discusses the reign of Salome Alexandra in Book 1 (107-119) of *The Jewish War*. Here we learn Alexandra (Shelamzion)⁵¹² was bequeathed the kingdom by her husband Janneus, who would ordinarily have been expected to leave it to his sons.

Janneus made this decision because Alexandra had a popular following independent of Janneus; she was without “his brutality” and opposed “his crimes” (107).⁵¹³ Josephus tells us that she had “a reputation for piety” (διὰ δόξαν εὐσεβείας) and stridently followed “national traditions” (τοῦ ἔθνους τὰ πάτρια);⁵¹⁴ in fact, she had high expectations of anyone who worked closely with her and would dismiss “any offenders against the sacred laws” (108). As Josephus phrases it: “this γύναιον firmly held the reigns of government”. Thackeray translates “γύναιον” as “frail woman”; however, the Greek word “γύναιον” is a word used most frequently as a form of contempt, which, in fact, is the way Josephus or Nicolaus probably meant it.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹² On her Hebrew name, see Klausner, “Queen Salome Alexandra”, 242; see also the work by Ilan which supports this correct spelling of her name, “Shelamzion in Qumran: New Insights”, *Historical Perspectives From the Hasmoneans to Bar Kokhba in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Proceedings of the Fourth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature*, 27-31 January, 1999; ed. David Goodblatt, Avital Pinnick, and Daniel R. Schwartz: Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah, No. 37 (Leiden and Boston: E. J. Brill, 2001) 58.

⁵¹³ Ἐπειδὴ τῆς ὠμότητος αὐτοῦ μακρὰν ἀποδέουσα καὶ ταῖς παρανομίαις ἀνθισταμένη τὸν δῆμον εἰς εὐνοίαν προσηγάγετο (LCL: Thackeray, 107).

⁵¹⁴ A variant reading is τοῦ νόμου; I will discuss the significance of this variant below.

⁵¹⁵ On Josephus’ use of the word γύναιον, see Louis H. Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrait of Deborah”, 116, ft.4. The whole passage reads thus: ἐκράτησεν γὰρ τῆς ἀρχῆς τὸ γύναιον διὰ δόξαν εὐσεβείας· ἡκρίβου γὰρ δὴ μάλιστα τοῦ νόμου τὰ πάτρια καὶ τοὺς πλημμελοῦντας εἰς τοὺς ἱεροὺς νόμους ἐξ ἀρχῆς προεβάλλετο. (“... for this frail woman firmly held the reins of government, thanks to her reputation for piety. She was, indeed, the very strictest observer of the national traditions and would deprive of office any offenders against the sacred laws.”) (LCL: Thackeray, 108).

As Shelamzion grew in power, so did the Pharisees (here Josephus uses the unusual word (παράφύονται) (110), the most popular Jewish sect, who, like Shelamzion, were also staunch observers of the Law. According to Josephus, Shelamzion was too open to their influence for she gave them control of internal affairs (111). For their part, they sought vengeance on those who had supported Alexander, driving many upper class citizens to fear for their lives and to look to Aristobulus for their safety (114).

It seems that Shelamzion was more interested in external matters than internal politics, for she recruited constantly with such success that she “doubled her army” and gathered foreign troops with the result that “she not only strengthened her own nation, but became a formidable foe to foreign potentates” (112).⁵¹⁶ There were no territorial acquisitions during her reign; she did send a force to Damascus in order to help the city against Ptolemy, but it did not “achieve anything remarkable” (115). She also avoided a confrontation with Tigranes of Armenia. In the area of external affairs, Josephus says that she was “a wonderful administrator” (112).

When Shelamzion became ill, Aristobulus and his followers took over the fortresses and used the money therein to purchase mercenaries, and then Aristobolus proclaimed himself king (117). According to Josephus, it was Hyrcanus’ complaints that stirred his mother into action: she shut up the wife and children of Aristobulus in a temple fortress; shortly afterwards she died. She had ruled for nine years (119).

⁵¹⁶ δεινὴ δ’ ἦν τὰ μείζω διοικεῖν, δυνάμιν τε αἰεὶ συγκροτοῦσα διπλασίονα κατέστησεν καὶ ξενικὴν συνήγαγεν οὐκ ὀλίγην, ὥς μὴ μόνον κρατύνεσθαι τὸ οἰκεῖον ἔθνος, φοβερὰν δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἔξωθεν εἶναι δυνάσταις (LCL: Thackeray, 112).

b. *Shelamzion (Salome Alexandra) in Jewish Antiquities*

The account of Shelamzion's reign in *Jewish Antiquities* is longer and more detailed than the account in *The Jewish War* (13. 399-432). It opens during the siege of Ragaba with Shelamzion lamenting the approaching death of her husband, Janneus. Josephus creates for Janneus a deathbed speech, in which, according to the translation provided by Marcus, Janneus instructs Alexandra how to keep "the throne secure for herself and her children" (400); however, the Greek only mentions the children. Alexandra is to keep "the monarchy secure with the children".⁵¹⁷ Janneus tells Alexandra to hide his death until "she had captured the fortress"⁵¹⁸ and then, according to the translation by Marcus, give the Pharisees "a certain amount of power" (400-401). The Greek literally means that she "should give a certain power/authority to the Pharisees";⁵¹⁹ it is unclear whether this means "a certain amount" or "a certain type" of authority. Most scholars have interpreted this as a degree of power; however, the possibility that a particular kind of authority may have been intended cannot be ruled out. The Pharisees were, according to Josephus, extremely influential among Jews (*War* 1. 162-163; *Jewish Ant.* 18. 13f). It was, as Josephus tells us, this submission to the Pharisees that won popular support for Shelamzion (405). In this manner, she also gained a good reputation for her deceased husband (406).

We are told of Shelamzion: "she was loved by the masses because she was thought to disapprove of the crimes committed by her husband" (407). Here, as in *The Jewish*

⁵¹⁷ πρὸς τὸ τὴν βασιλείαν ἀσφαλῶς κατέχειν μετὰ τῶν τέκνων.

⁵¹⁸ ἕως ἂν ἐξέλῃ τὸ χωρίον (LCL; Marcus, 400).

⁵¹⁹ τοῖς Φαρισαίοις ἐξουσίαν τινὰ παρασχεῖν (LCL; Marcus; 401).

War, she is presented as having “permitted the Pharisees to do as they liked in all matters”, even restoring the Pharisaic traditions that John Hyrcanus had abolished (408). She was, then, according to Josephus, the titular head of the government while the Pharisees made the decisions (409).

As in *The Jewish War*, the Pharisees’ revenge for the deaths of their members is recounted (410) along with the appeal of the upper class citizens to Aristobulus; however, in *Jewish Antiquities* this scene is significantly different. Here Aristobulus is “obviously resentful” (δυσανασχετῶν) of these events and communicates that, given the chance “he would not leave his mother any power at all” (411).⁵²⁰ Josephus paraphrases this appeal to Shelamzion in a manner that evokes pity for those whose lives are in danger and, once again, Aristobulus is said to voice “his sentiments by denouncing his mother bitterly” (πολλὰ τὴν μητέρα κακίζων) (416).

In the translations by William Whiston (1732) and Marcus (1957), the next sentence is attributed to different persons. Whereas Marcus presented the following sentence as an interjection by the narrator (Josephus or Nicolaus), Whiston records it as indirect speech attributable to Aristobulus. The sentence in question is the following: “But still they themselves were to blame for their misfortunes, in allowing a woman to reign who madly desired it in her unreasonable love of power, and when her sons were in the prime of life” (417).⁵²¹ The implication of this change in the speaker of this derogatory sentence is significant. Coming from the mouth of Aristobulus, it reflects only his opinion; however, when the sentence is presented as the opinion of the historian it

⁵²⁰ εἰ ἀφορμῆς λάβοιτο. μὴ ἐπιτρέψων τῇ μητρὶ (LCL: Marcus 411).

⁵²¹ ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι μὲν αἰτίοι σφίσιν τῶν συμφορῶν ἐγένοντο, κατὰ φιλαρχίαν ἐκλευσσηκυῖα γυναικὶ παρὰ τὸ εἰκὸς βασιλεύειν. γενεᾶς ἐν ἀκμῇ οὐσης, ἐπιτρέψαντες (LCL: Marcus, 417).

takes on the additional importance of a statement of “fact” and resonates strongly with Josephus’ final words on the reign of Alexandra (430-432). Josephus resumes his account by informing us that these leading citizens were given the task of guarding some of the fortresses that did not house the “most valuable possessions” (417).

The campaign to Damascus is mentioned here as in *The Jewish War*. We learn that Shelamzion sent her troops with Aristobulus at their head, a fitting assignment for a “man of action”, as Aristobulus is called in *Jewish Antiquities* (13. 407); however, he did not accomplish “anything noteworthy” (418). Aristobulus probably represented the Hasmonean monarchy as head of the army.

The threat of invasion from Tigranes of Armenia is also mentioned. In this account, the queen is portrayed as being “frightened” (ἐφόβησε) and as consequently sending Tigranes “valuable gifts and envoys” (419). These, we are told, were well received and Tigranes “gave them reason to hope for the best”. Events in Armenia called him away (421). In spite of this, Shelamzion is also presented earlier as being strong in foreign affairs, recruiting “a large force of mercenaries” and making “her own force twice as large”. Josephus writes, “... she struck terror into the local rulers round her and received hostages from them” (409).⁵²²

Josephus tells us that Aristobulus quickly seized power when news came that Shelamzion was ill (422). Motivated by a fear that the Pharisees would seize the country, Aristobulus fled to a friend and then began capturing fortresses (422-425). In turn, Aristobulus’ wife and children were locked in the temple fortress (426). In fifteen days Aristobulus acquired twenty-two fortresses and had gathered the support of the

⁵²² ὥς καταπλῆξαι τοὺς πέριξ τυράννους καὶ λαβεῖν ὄμηρα αὐτῶν (LCL: Marcus, 409).

surrounding nations, who hoped to gain influence over Judea once Aristobulus was successful (427-428). Shelamzion was asked for her advice and told them that they had the resources to fight back; however, she was too sick to participate (429). She died shortly after this, “having reigned nine years and having lived seventy-three years in all” (430).

Josephus provides us with a summary of her reign that is worth quoting in full.

The translation by Whiston is the most literal:

A woman she was who showed no signs of the weakness of her sex, for she was sagacious to the greatest degree in her ambition of governing; and demonstrated by her doings at once, that her mind was fit for action, and that sometimes men themselves show the little understanding they have by the frequent mistakes they make in point of government; for she always preferred the present to futurity, and preferred the power of an imperious dominion above all things, and in comparison of that had no regard to what was good, or what was right. However, she brought the affairs of her house to such an unfortunate condition, that she was the occasion of the taking away that authority from it, and that in no long time afterward, which she had obtained by a vast number of hazards and misfortunes, and this out of a desire of what does not belong to a woman, and all by a compliance in her sentiments with those that bare ill-will to their family, and by leaving the administration destitute of a proper support of great men; and, indeed, her management during her administration while she was alive, was such as filled the palace after her death with calamities and disturbance. However, although this had been her way of governing, she preserved the nation in peace.⁵²³

9. ASSESSING JOSEPHUS' ACCOUNTS OF THE REIGN OF SHELAMZION

Faced with two different accounts of the reign of Shelamzion (Alexandra), how are we to evaluate them? Unfortunately, no comprehensive study exists that attempts to separate Josephus' comments from those of Nicolaus, although some scholars have done such a

⁵²³ William Whiston, *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (1732; New York: Worthington, 1890) 370.

study with individual translations of these two passages.⁵²⁴ Nicolaus of Damascus, the source for this time period for Josephus, was anti-Hasmonean. Although a Hasmonean himself, Josephus was anti-Pharisaic and Shelamzion is so closely linked with the Pharisees in Josephus' account that it becomes impossible to separate Josephus' condemnation of the Pharisees from his appraisal of Shelamzion's reign. In fact, she seems to be the vehicle whereby Josephus gives voice to his strong sentiments against the Pharisees.

Mason observes that historiography in antiquity was an expression of the personal rhetoric of the author.⁵²⁵ Because of her close association with the Pharisees, Josephus' appraisal of Shelamzion's rule is, therefore, influenced by his antipathy for this group. Mason believes that Josephus intended "... to debunk the Pharisees' reputation for embodying superior piety and for expounding the laws with particular accuracy".⁵²⁶ Thus Josephus' appraisal of the reign of Shelamzion arguably reflects more anti-Pharisaic polemic than her accomplishments or shortcomings.

It is unfortunate that many scholars overlook Josephus' tendencies, when it comes to assessing Alexandra's reign. Scholars such as Gideon Fuks and Solomon Zeitlin give much weight to the speech that Josephus reports was spoken by Janneus to Alexandra (Shelamzion). This speech, found in *Jewish Antiquities* (13. 399-404), but absent from Josephus' earlier work, *The Jewish War*, has Shelamzion express anxiety about the approaching death of her husband. In response, Janneus tells her to give power to the Pharisees in order to draw on their popularity. Fuks remarks that this move on Janneus'

⁵²⁴ For *The Jewish War* 1. 110, see Mason, *Flavius Josephus*, 113; for *Jewish Antiquities* 13. 430-2, see Ilan, *Integrating Women*, 103, ft. 56.

⁵²⁵ Mason, *Flavius Josephus*, 376.

⁵²⁶ Mason, *Flavius Josephus*, 114.

part is a sign of his “astute” statesmanship.⁵²⁷ Zeitlin has no doubt about the authenticity of this speech.⁵²⁸

The passage does have a parallel in the later Babylonian Talmud (*bSotah* 22b), where Janneus tells Shelamzion not to “fear” the Pharisees. Tal Ilan doubts that Josephus’ or the Talmud’s speech belongs to Janneus; however, she does think that the passage in the Babylonian Talmud preserves an earlier version of what Janneus *might* have said at some time.⁵²⁹ Still, as Ilan notes, there is considerable difference between what is reported in the Talmud and in *Jewish Antiquities*: being told not to “fear” a group is not the same as being told to “yield power” to them (*Jewish Ant* 13. 401). Ilan rightly discounts the speech reported by Josephus, observing that it is Josephus who wanted to make Shelamzion’s association with the Pharisees look like it was Janneus’ idea.⁵³⁰

Presumably, Shelamzion and her supporters could argue that the Hasmonean ideology towards monarchy applied regardless of gender and that the power of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid women in the surrounding nations meant that Judea too should have a queen regnant. Support for this reasoning can be found in the Pentateuch, the most traditional and the most conservative of sources. Here it is stated that Israel was to have a ruler, “like all the nations that are round about [it]” (Deut. 17: 14). Although the passage, in its original context, refers to a king, it could be interpreted in light of the rise to power

⁵²⁷ Gideon Fuks, “Josephus and the Hasmoneans”, *JJS* 41 (1990) 171.

⁵²⁸ Zeitlin, “Queen Salome”, 22-23.

⁵²⁹ Ilan, *Integrating Women*, 22.

⁵³⁰ In a similar vein, Mason too doubts the authenticity of this speech; however, he imagines that Alexandra, in a fury, visited the site of the siege “in order to castigate [Janneus] for his lack of responsibility” for dying and leaving her with two grown sons (*Ant.* 13. 398-399), *Flavius Josephus*, 250. That this speech may have been created to serve Josephus’ tendencies is supported by research into the Greek version of *The Jewish War*. Gohei Hata believes that speeches were fabricated by Josephus in order to make his story “vivid” and to voice his personal opinions, as was the trend in Greek and Hellenistic historiography; see his “Is the Greek Version of Josephus’ *Jewish War* a Translation or a Rewriting of the First Version”, *JQR* 66 (1975-1976) 103.

of Ptolemaic women in Egypt and Syria. “*Like the nations round about me*” could be taken to mean that Israel need follow the Hellenistic custom of co-regency and the legal succession of the widowed queen.⁵³¹ Janneus (and presumably Hyrcanus before him) could have bequeathed the realm to their wives because they had always been involved to some degree in the rule of the nation.

For his part, Janneus had felt confident enough in Alexandra’s abilities to bequeath Judea to her, knowing full well what his brother, Aristobulus, had done to their mother. Three pieces of direct evidence suggest that Shelamzion had garnered some degree of political authority before Janneus died. The first is a political appointment that was made jointly by her husband and by her. Josephus tells us that a man named “Antipas” was “appointed governor of the whole of Idumaea” by Janneus “and his wife” (*Jewish Ant.* 14. 10).⁵³²

The second piece of evidence comes to us through one of Josephus’ literary devices. In the deathbed speech in which Janneus bequeaths his realm to Alexandra, Janneus specifically cautions Alexandra “to conceal his death from the soldiers until *she* had captured the fortress” (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 400).⁵³³ It is important to take a closer look at this passage for it yields critical information about the involvement of the Jewish queen in military affairs prior to the death of Janneus. Although the speech itself is a Josephan creation, one of two possible interpretations presents itself. The first is that this speech was based on historical fact. Shelamzion could have commanded the Jewish military

⁵³¹ On this custom, see Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 153.

⁵³² Sievers acknowledges that Shelamzion (Alexandra) may have participated in politics before Janneus’ death; however, Sievers does not follow Derenbourg in thinking that she had control of internal affairs while Janneus was away on campaigns. See Sievers, “The Role of Women”, 136 and Derenbourg, *Essai sur l’histoire et la géographie de la Palestine*, 96.

⁵³³ κρύψαι δὲ τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ πρὸς τοὺς στρατιώτας. ἕως ἂν ἐξέλῃ τὸ χωρίον (LCL: Marcus, 400).

while her husband was ill and captured the fortress. The second possible interpretation is that Josephus fabricated the entire scene. In which case Josephus believes that Janneus would relinquish military authority to her and Josephus also expects his audience to accept Shelamzion's military authority. Either way this evidence suggests that Shelamzion commanded the Jewish army at some point prior to the death of Janneus. Further, Josephus himself does not choose to discredit her involvement with the military: to him it is acceptable that Shelamzion led the campaign at Ragaba for a time and Josephus clearly expects his audience to accept her military authority. At first glance this idea of the Jewish army under the leadership of a woman seems to be unique; however, we must remember that years earlier the Egyptian army of Cleopatra III was commanded by the two Jewish generals, Chelkias and Ananias. There was, therefore, a precedent of Jewish militia serving under the command of a queen.

There could have been another reason why Josephus inserted this speech into the story about Shelamzion's capture of the fortress and the death of Janneus. If Ilan is correct in suggesting that Josephus wanted to present Shelamzion's association with the Pharisees as being Janneus' idea, then Josephus is portraying Shelamzion as acting in obedience to her husband. Whether she was a military leader or not, the portrayal of a domesticated Shelamzion in league with the Pharisees and following her husband's orders at Ragaba could have served to weaken an existing tradition that presented Shelamzion as an independent political authority while Janneus lived.⁵³⁴ It could well be that Shelamzion's involvement in Judean politics after the death of her husband was a continuation of an already existing mandate. According to Louis Finkelstein, a tradition

⁵³⁴ If this is a Josephan device, it has convinced other scholars. Steve Mason reads this passage as evidence of Alexandra's fury at having to face a hostile nation after Janneus' death, see *Flavius Josephus*, 249.

existed among the upper class of this time that ensured continuing support for a widow. This tradition would have affected Shelamzion. Finkelstein informs us that the upper class land-owners had a clause in their marriage contracts that permitted a woman to remain in her husband's house and continue to be supported by his property, provided she remain a widow (*Ket.* 4, 12).⁵³⁵ We see this tradition at work in both the actual life of Shelamzion and the fictitious life of the widow Judith in the Book of Judith.

Since we cannot definitively untangle Josephus' attitudes, it is helpful to reconstruct the reign of Shelamzion by drawing on ideas that we know existed in her own era. As we have seen, the Hasmoneans legitimated their monarchy by interpreting existing ideals of kingship drawn from biblical and pseudepigraphic works. The general principles of Hellenistic monarchy, reverence towards the gods, benevolence and beneficence were maintained. Jewish ideals about monarchy went further than these basic Hellenistic principles. The monarchs were to read, not just biblical literature but literature in general. They were also to keep a book in which to write their own copy of the law and keep it with them (*Deut.* 17: 18). Jewish monarchs were also to associate with educated men, presumably this meant those educated in the Law and Hellenistic literature⁵³⁶, to guard the Land with minimal loss of Jewish life, to cultivate a good reputation amongst their subjects and to, above all, keep the nation at peace.

⁵³⁵ This practice is evinced in the first century C.E. in early Christian literature that had a Jewish social setting. Anna, the prophetess and widow, had remained in the Temple for more than fifty years (*Luke* 2: 36-37). Roman inscriptions refer to these pious widows as *μόναυδος*; see *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*, vol. 2 (ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern; Amsterdam: Assen, 1976) 787 and Louis Finkelstein, *The Pharisees: The Sociological Background of their Faith* (2nd ed. rev. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946) 48. For the etymology of the word, *χήρα*, and a discussion of her social status in the ancient world, see Gustav Stählin, "*χήρα*", *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 9 (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; ed. Gerhard Friedrich; Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974) 440-448; on the status of the Jewish widow, see Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine: An Inquiry into Image and Status* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1995) 147-151.

⁵³⁶ See Section III. 4, above.

From what we have seen so far these ideals manifest themselves clearly in Josephus' accounts of Shelamzion's rule: she upheld the Law, dismissing any who transgressed it (*War*. 1. 108); she guarded the Land with mercenaries, thus saving Jewish lives (*War* 1. 112; *Jewish Ant.* 13. 409); she developed a good reputation (*War* 1. 108; *Jewish Ant.* 13. 407); and she kept peace (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 432). Also consistent with these ideals is her close relationship with the leading Pharisee of the day, Simon ben Shetah. This relationship is left out of Josephus' account, but appears in Rabbinic sources.⁵³⁷ Two passages speak of the days of Shelamzion and Simeon as a "golden age" in Jewish history when the absence of sin brought prosperity, the constant rains allowing the wheat to grow to the size of kidneys and the barley to grow as large as olive-pits (*Sifra Behuqotia Pereq* 1: 1; *Lev. R.* 35: 10).⁵³⁸ Thus the crucial Hellenistic principles of reverence, benevolence, and beneficence are also apparent during her reign.

We also know that she had some supporters, the Pharisees, and some detractors, her son Aristobulus and his faction. In what follows we will take a closer look at the personal qualities of this Hasmonean queen and examine the dynamics of her administrative style in its internal and external aspects. Shelamzion's relationship with the Pharisees will be considered as part of her internal politics. Here, I present the idea that Shelamzion chose to relinquish internal affairs to the Pharisees in order to keep control of external affairs, the military being an important ingredient of Hasmonean leadership.

⁵³⁷ Klausner, "Queen Salome Alexandra", 247-254; cf. Derenbourg, *Essai sur l'histoire*, 104-113.

⁵³⁸ Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions*, 89-90, 117. In *b. Ta'anit* 23a only Simeon is mentioned in connection with this period of prosperity; see Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions*, 106.

a. *The Personal Qualities of Shelamzion*

One important area that has been overlooked by scholars is Josephus' description of Shelamzion's character; but again this area is problematic because of its inconsistencies. As was observed above, Shelamzion is presented differently in *The Jewish War* from how she is presented in *Jewish Antiquities*. While there are many methodological problems inherent in trying to discern what Shelamzion was like from Josephus' accounts, we can at least pay attention to what he writes about her and compare this with what we know of his own tendencies. The result cannot be a complete understanding of her character, but it will suffice to garner some critical pieces of information that can be used later in our discussion of the Book of Judith as propaganda for this queen.

In *The Jewish War*, Josephus introduces Shelamzion as a peaceful woman who lacks Janneus' brutality; the populace is aware that she opposes his "crimes" (1. 107). Her rule was grounded in her "reputation for piety" (διὰ δόξαν εὐσεβείας) (1.108).

According to Mason, the word εὐσεβεία is a critical term in Josephus' thought. It is a Greek concept that denotes the honouring of and obedience to God that a ruler possesses. Thus, it is an indicator of a ruler's competence. Abraham and Solomon possess εὐσεβεία (*Jewish Ant.* 2.196; 8.13).⁵³⁹ For Josephus, εὐσεβεία is "centred in the Temple cult"; it involves the proper observance of purity laws, sacrifices and celebration of feasts.⁵⁴⁰ The use of this term in *The Jewish War* is rare; it is found only ten times, whereas it occurs over ninety times in *Antiquities*. Its only use in connection with the

⁵³⁹ Mason, *Flavius Josephus*, 86.

⁵⁴⁰ Mason, *Flavius Josephus*, 85-88.

Hasmoneans occurs here, in Josephus' description of Shelamzion; he indicates the high esteem in which her piety was held. This places Shelamzion, in Josephan terms, on par with Abraham and Solomon: Alexandra's εὐσέβεια is exceptional.

Closely linked with the concept of εὐσέβεια in Josephan thought is ἀκριβόω. This verb refers to the process of investigating or examining something with precision, or accuracy and its use here signals the quality of Shelamzion's involvement with the Law. In *The Jewish War* we are told that Shelamzion ἡκριβου γὰρ δὴ μάλιστα τοῦ ἔθνους τὰ πάτρια (1. 108). Thackeray translates this passage as follows: "she was, indeed, the very strictest observer of the national traditions". Whiston, on the other hand, presents a significant difference in translation; his text reads: "she chiefly *studied* the ancient customs of her country".⁵⁴¹ These translations agree on the object of her devotion, "the national traditions" or "the ancient customs of her country"; however, the tenor of Shelamzion's action is notably different in the two translations. In Thackeray's translation, Shelamzion observes or follows national traditions meticulously; in Whiston's version, she *studies* or *investigates* these traditions/customs.

This statement in *The Jewish War* (1. 108) warrants further scrutiny. Before we examine what exactly Shelamzion does, it will be helpful to clarify the object of her devotion. Although both Thackeray and Whiston agree on the meaning of the words τοῦ ἔθνους τὰ πάτρια, they both overlook Josephan tendencies and an important variant of this phrase. According to Mason, Josephus' phrase τοῦ ἔθνους τὰ πάτρια is synonymous with the Law.⁵⁴² This analysis also is supported by a variant reading of the

⁵⁴¹ Whiston, *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, 560, italics mine.

⁵⁴² Mason, *Flavius Josephus*, 102-103.

word ἔθνους. In what Thackeray believes are the better manuscripts, the word νόμου, Law, is found.⁵⁴³ Returning to the verb in this passage, ἀκριβόω, its infinitive form, and its cognates appear only six times in *The Jewish War*. In the passage in question ἡκριβου is the third person imperfect indicative active. Josephus' point here is that Shelamzion was a scholar of the Law.

It is not so remarkable that a Jewish ruler would study the Law, but did women? It has never been demonstrated that this particular Hasmonean queen studied it. Regarding the pragmatic aspect of being a ruler of a Jewish state, it makes sense that Shelamzion would have to have a deep understanding of the Law in order to rule effectively. We have already noted that Deuteronomy requires a ruler to “write for himself in a book a copy of this law, from that which is in charge of the Levitical priests; and it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them” (17: 18-19). This act of writing “for himself” required a close examination of the text, not merely copying it without understanding and reflection. It is implied that Levitical priests would aid in this study. The Law requires study; it is not a static entity, but demands reflection and the ability to interpret how it is to be applied to daily life. Such was the importance of the Levitical priests, or in Shelamzion's case, the Pharisees.

Shelamzion's association with the leading Pharisees of the day, and Simon ben Shetah in particular, as well as the level of education an upper class ruler was required to maintain, would have placed her in a situation that required her to understand the Law in

⁵⁴³ According to Thackeray, the better manuscripts are the codices Parisinus Graecus 1425, Ambrosianus d. 50 sup and Marcianus Gr. 383. All three date from the tenth or eleventh centuries; see *The Jewish War* (LCL, Josephus II, pages xxviii - xxix).

all its ramifications. The discussions she had with her Pharisaic associates would, no doubt, have revolved around religious matters and the interpretation of the Law, particularly as it pertained to the policies she wanted to promote. As a ruler who was concerned with her reputation and, more particularly, as a woman monarch who was subject to special scrutiny, she needed a thorough understanding of the Law's dynamics.

This ongoing study of the Law can be linked to her "reputation for piety" and to her opposition to her husband's deplorable actions (1.107-108). This is strong evidence for a public dimension to her life, one that was not in keeping with the usual cultural values of the times. These cultural values dictated that a woman should remain obedient to her husband and remain secluded within the domestic sphere; however, Shelamzion was not obedient to her husband. She disobeyed by appearing in public and cultivating a reputation for piety and studied the Law with Simon ben Shetah. She also gained a reputation as a military strategist. Shelamzion, therefore, must have made public gestures that let it be known that she disapproved of Janneus' actions. She was devout, not just within the confines of her home, but publicly, perhaps making regular visits to the women's court in the Temple or appearing at the Festival of Tabernacles. Her "reputation for piety" had a propagandistic element. This is not to suggest that her actions were contrived or insincere. They occurred in public and formed part of the public knowledge of her as a person. In being publicly pious, Shelamzion showed that she could follow the ideals of Hasmonean monarchy, which had been expressed in the literary works of the times.

As we have seen, Shelamzion's actions are consistent with what we can derive of the Hasmonean ideology of monarchy. Documents such as Deuteronomy and *The Letter*

of Aristeas, The Temple Scroll, Jubilees and The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

advise monarchs to maintain close relations with learned men, guard the Land and save Jewish lives. These documents also speak of the importance of a good reputation; opinion about Shelamzion's reign was so positive that an oral tradition about her rule persisted for centuries. This tradition found its way into later Rabbinic literature, which describes her rule as a time so prosperous that wheat grew to the size of kidneys and barley was as large as olive-pits (*Sifra Behuqotia Pereq* 1: 1; *Lev. R.* 35: 10), as mentioned above.

Shelamzion's close relationship with the Pharisees and Simon ben Shetah in particular can also be viewed as following the advice of *Aristeas* to associate with educated men, men who are "beloved of God" (286-287). She studied the Law, as a monarch was expected to do. All of these elements suggest that Josephus' fabricated speech in which Shelamzion is instructed by Janneus to involve the Pharisees in her rule is intended to domesticate the strength of her reputation.

Josephus also uses this portrayal of Shelamzion's character to comment negatively on the nature of the Pharisees. Josephus tells us that they take advantage of her "simplicity" (ἀπλότητα) (*War* 1. 111).⁵⁴⁴ To portray the parasitic nature of this group, Josephus uses the rare term παραφύονται, (drawn from treatises on biology), which denotes an opportunistic relationship. According to Thackeray the Pharisees "grew up beside into her power" (like suckers round a tree)".⁵⁴⁵ Josephus also uses the term ὑπιόντες, which signals a stealthy encroachment upon her authority. In *The Jewish War*,

⁵⁴⁴ οἱ δὲ τὴν ἀπλότητα τῆς ἀνθρώπου κατὰ μικρὸν ὑπιόντες (*War* 1. 111).

⁵⁴⁵ *The Jewish War*, note b to 1. 110. The word occurs in nine passages of Greek literature, in addition to *The Jewish War*. Twice in Aristotle (*De generatione animalium*, and *De partibus animalium* and four times in ancient medical texts (Dioscorides Pedanius, *De materia medica*, Bk. 4, 82. 1. 4; Oribasius, *Collectiones medicae*, Bk. 11, μ. 17. 3; Paulus, *Epitomae medicae libri septem*, Bk. 6, 28. 1. 7 and Bk. 6. 43. 1. 1), as well as Elias, *Porphyrii isagogen*, page 50, 18. Iamblichus *De mysteriis*, Ch. 10. 2. 16. I discuss the significance of this term below.

it is Shelamzion's piety, typically a source of praise for Josephus, which is her weak point; she follows the Pharisees out of δεισιδαιμονία ("fear of God" or "superstition") (1. 113).

The one area of her work that is not explicitly linked to the Pharisees is Shelamzion's foreign policy. In this area Josephus praises Shelamzion; she "skilfully" (δεινῇ) managed the larger affairs of state, enlarging her army and hiring mercenaries (1. 112). She was so effective that foreign nations did not invade Judea.

Josephus' portrayal of Shelamzion's personal qualities in *Jewish Antiquities*, which was written after the *War*, is dramatically altered; in *Jewish Antiquities* the favourable comments about her piety are gone, replaced with an image of this woman as a manipulative schemer who used the Pharisees to satiate her personal lust for power.⁵⁴⁶ For instance, it is only in *Jewish Antiquities* that Shelamzion is linked to the murder of Antigonus, the brother of Aristobulus. In both *The Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus reports that the wife of Aristobulus played a role in the plot to kill Antigonus (*War* 1. 76; *Jewish Ant.* 13. 308); this wife is not named in *The Jewish War* - we are told only that "the widow of Aristobulus released his imprisoned brothers" (1. 85).⁵⁴⁷ Alexandra is introduced later as the widow of Janneus (1. 107). There is nothing in *The Jewish War* that links Alexandra to this murder. The connection to the murder of Antigonus is only found in *Jewish Antiquities*. In this text, the name of this murderous widow is provided: it is "Salina" who is also called "Alexandra" (13. 320). The next time the name Alexandra appears, is in connection with the death of Janneus and the capture of the fortress at Ragaba (13. 405). As Ilan has shown, the name "Alexandra" was very

⁵⁴⁶ Mason, *Flavius Josephus*, 258-259.

⁵⁴⁷ On the customs of avoiding mention of women's names, see David Schaps, "The Women Least Mentioned: Etiquette and Women's Names", *The Classical Quarterly* 27. 2 (1977) 323-330.

popular in this society at this time.⁵⁴⁸ Nowhere does Josephus explicitly state that Salina is the widow of Janneus as well as Aristobulus. The association of Shelamzion with the murder of Antigonus in *Jewish Antiquities* and the disassociation of Shelamzion from this murder in *The Jewish War* seem to be one of the few times that Josephus separates his portrait of this queen from his portrayal of the Pharisees, although it is not clear why Josephus makes this choice.

It is not just in connection with the murder of Antigonus that Josephus castigates Shelamzion in *Jewish Antiquities*. She is further portrayed as lacking the qualities of a woman (13. 430): she desires power. In *The Jewish War*, it is Aristobulus' nature as a "hot-head" that keeps him from public office, whereas here, in *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus agrees with Aristobulus' complaints about his mother being "fond of power", in other words, "ambitious" (φιλαρχον) (13. 430; cf. 13. 417); she takes what rightfully belongs to her sons (13. 411). It is this ambition, this "desire for things unbecoming a woman" (δυναστείαν ἐπιθυμία τῶν μὴ προσήκόντων γυναικί) which, according to *Jewish Antiquities*, led to the downfall of the Hasmonean dynasty (13. 431). Ilan rightly observes a discrepancy in Josephus' accounts, for Josephus also later blames Hyrcanus and Aristobulus for the dynasty's demise (*Jewish Ant.* 14. 77). Ilan attributes these derogatory comments about Shelamzion to Nicolaus of Damascus, as well as the link between Shelamzion and the murder of Antigonus because she believes that the use of the first person plural "we" in the account that blames the brothers for the dynasty's demise accurately reflects Josephus' opinion.⁵⁴⁹ If Wacholder is correct, it is, in fact, *Jewish Antiquities* that adheres more closely to its source in presenting these events. According

⁵⁴⁸ Ilan, "Queen Salamzion Alexandra", 184-186.

⁵⁴⁹ See Ilan, *Integrating Women*, 101, 103-104.

to Ilan, the last words about Shelamzion in *Antiquities* reflect Josephus' true thought:
"Nevertheless, in spite of reigning in this manner, she had kept the nation at peace"
(*Jewish Ant.* 13. 432).

b. *The Administrative Style of Shelamzion*

Having assessed Josephus' portrayal of Shelamzion's character and having taken into account his literary devices and his tendencies, we can now assess Shelamzion's reign by examining the way her regime handled internal and external politics. The one piece of information that is both prevalent and persistent in both Josephus' writings and rabbinic tradition is the fact that she had a very close association with the Pharisees who handled the internal aspects of Jewish politics. Josephus' interpretation of this division of labour in *The Jewish War* is that Shelamzion let the Pharisees "rule" her.⁵⁵⁰ Yet to what degree they controlled her should be subject to scrutiny. Josephus is clear that she continued to handle the problems and expenses of government (1. 111). In contrast, the parallel account from *Jewish Antiquities* presents the idea of giving "a certain amount of power" to the Pharisees as coming from Janneus (13. 401); but as we have seen, this speech, attributed to Janneus, may be a literary device used to support Josephus' opinion, and not a historical "fact". Approaching the same question from a feminist perspective, Tal Ilan concludes that this speech is spurious and is used by Josephus to veil Shelamzion's

⁵⁵⁰ ἐκράτει δὲ τῶν μὲν ἄλλων αὐτῇ. Φαρισαῖοι δ' αὐτῆς (*War* 1. 112).

“independent choice” to associate her regime with the Pharisees.⁵⁵¹ By doing so she seems to be following the Pharisaic request made of John Hyrcanus I and the counsel of *Jubilees* and *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* to separate the role of high priest from the role of the political leader. In his discussion of the break between Hyrcanus and the Pharisees, Victor Tcherikover observes that “a theocratic polity”, as he terms it, has complete access to the Temple funds. In Tcherikover’s opinion, “the Hasmoneans, therefore, would have lost all their power and influence, both morally and materially, had they agreed to the Pharisee demand to give up the high priesthood and ‘to be satisfied’ with the royal crown”.⁵⁵² Yet, this is precisely what occurred under Shelamzion when her son, Hyrcanus II was high priest. It remains, therefore, to be asked if there is a way of reading Josephus so as to reconcile his contradictory description of Alexandra as an ambitious person, desirous to rule, on the one hand, and someone who would have respected the Pharisaic way of life enough to allow it to inform her policies, on the other.

A second element that needs addressing is her handling of external affairs. In both *The Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities* she is portrayed as being quite a powerful administrator in this area. *The Jewish War* states that she “doubled her army” through recruitment, gathered a large mercenary force and, as a result, became “a formidable foe to foreign potentates” (1. 112). The account in *Jewish Antiquities* is remarkably (for Josephus) similar. We are also told that her Jewish force was doubled and a large contingent of mercenaries was engaged. The reported outcome is voiced even more strongly in *Jewish Antiquities* than in its parallel passage in *The Jewish War*. In *Jewish*

⁵⁵¹ Ilan, *Integrating Women*, 21-23 (=“The Attraction of Aristocratic Women to Pharisaism”, 11-13).

⁵⁵² Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 260.

Antiquities we are told that her combined forces “struck terror into the local rulers round her and [she] received hostages from them” (13. 409).

These comments bear reflection particularly because of their consistency in Josephus’ accounts. She was someone who “firmly held the reigns of government” (*War* 1. 108), who had the reputation to attract and win the allegiance of twice as many troops as her husband; she also possessed the financial backing of the populace (no doubt through taxation which, if too excessive, could have damaged her valuable reputation) in order to enlarge her mercenary force. Given these facts, we have to question whether Shelamzion consciously gave the Pharisees control of the internal affairs of Judea and maintained control of its external and military affairs or whether, as Josephus reports, it was the Pharisees who took “advantage of an ingenuous woman” (*War* 1. 111).

i. *Shelamzion, the Pharisees, and Internal Politics*

Unfortunately, it is difficult to get a full picture of the Pharisees, for our main source on them is once again Josephus. Josephus discusses them, independently of Alexandra, in *The Jewish War* (1. 162-163) and *Jewish Antiquities* (18. 13-14) where they are classified as “philosophical schools” (*War* 1. 166). This classification shows us that Josephus was conscious of his Greek audience and wanted them to think of Jewish religious sects in terms that were familiar to the Greeks.⁵⁵³ Josephus gives the most attention to the Essenes (*War* 2. 120-161; *Antiquities* 18. 4, 9 11); however, he does comment briefly on the

⁵⁵³ Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (Hebrew; trans. S. Applebaum; New York: Atheneum, 1979) 261-262.

Pharisees. In *The Jewish War* Josephus writes that the Pharisees “are considered the most accurate interpreters of the laws, and hold the position of the leading sect, attribute everything to Fate and to God; they hold that to act rightly or otherwise rests, indeed, for the most part with men, but that in each action Fate co-operates. Every soul, they maintain, is imperishable, but the soul of the good alone passes into another body, while the souls of the wicked suffer eternal punishment” (2. 162-163). Later he adds, “the Pharisees are affectionate to each other and cultivate harmonious relations with the community” (2. 166). In *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus again writes that the Pharisees “say that certain events, but not all, are the work of fate; with others it depends on ourselves whether they shall take place or not” (13. 171).⁵⁵⁴

Much information about the Pharisees is tightly linked to Josephus’ discussion of the reign of Shelamzion (Alexandra). In *The Jewish War* it is said that

beside Alexandra, and growing as she grew (παρὰ φύονται), arose the Pharisees, a body of Jews with the reputation of excelling the rest of their nation in the observances of religion, and as exact exponents of the laws. To them, being herself intensely religious, she listened with too great a deference; while they, gradually taking advantage (ὑπιόντες) of an ingenuous women, became at length the real administrators of the state, at liberty to banish and to recall, to loose and to bind, whom they would. ... if she ruled (ἐκράτει) the nation, the Pharisees ruled her (1. 110-112).

The biggest complaint Josephus has about the Pharisees is that they persecuted those who supported Shelamzion’s husband, Janneus. Both accounts in *The Jewish War* and in *Jewish Antiquities* speak of the death of Diogenes at the behest of the Pharisees (*War*. 1. 113 and *Jewish Ant.* 13. 410). Diogenes was implicated in the crucifixion of eight hundred persons (cf. *War*. 1. 96-98, 113; *Jewish Ant.* 13. 380-383; 411). These persons

⁵⁵⁴ For the purpose of my argument it is assumed, following Mason, that Josephus was the author of both passages; see *Flavius Josephus*, 207-211.

were part of a faction that had appealed to the Seleucid Demetrius III during the civil strife of Janneus' rule. After the confrontation with Demetrius, this group continued its "war" with Janneus who "butchered" (ἀπέσφαττεν, literally, "cut the throats of") their wives and children in front of these men, then crucified the eight hundred of them as entertainment for himself and his concubines (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 380). After the death of Diogenes, the revenge continued, prompting leading citizens to fear for their lives and appeal to Aristobulus for help in persuading his mother to halt the retaliation (*War* 1. 114; *Jewish Ant.* 13. 410-415).

These comments about the Pharisees show us how politically powerful they were in Shelamzion's regime. Various scholarly interpretations about Josephus' portrayal of their role in this period of Jewish history have been put forward. Because they are relevant to the rule of Shelamzion but not the subject of this study, these interpretations will not be discussed in detail; however, one key element that has come out of these studies is the notion that Josephus' discussion of the Pharisees was an important vehicle for voicing his personal opinions, as opposed to providing an "objective" description, of Jewish history.⁵⁵⁵

One important element that is left out of Josephus' account is the close association Shelamzion had, according to Rabbinic sources, with the Pharisaic leader, Simeon ben Shetah.⁵⁵⁶ Evidence of this relationship is found in rabbinic literature. In this literature,

⁵⁵⁵ For instance, Morton Smith, followed by Jacob Neusner, argues that Josephus' later work, *Jewish Antiquities*, was a subtle endorsement of Pharisaic rule written to entice the Romans into supporting this group. See Smith, "Palestinian Judaism in the First Century", *Israel: Its Role in Civilization* (ed. Moshe. Davis; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America and Harper and Row, 1956) 67-81; Jacob Neusner, "Josephus' Pharisees: A Complete Repertoire", *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity* (ed. Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987) 274-292. A critique of this view is offered by Steve Mason, *Flavius Josephus*, 32-35. Mason's overall view is that Josephus was antipathetic towards the sect for personal reasons and disapproved of their influence over the masses: *Flavius Josephus*, 372-375.

⁵⁵⁶ Klausner, "Queen Salome Alexandra", 247-254; cf. Derenbourg, *Essai sur l'histoire*, 104-113..

Simeon is identified in only one *baraita* as the brother of the Queen (*b. Ber. 48a*).⁵⁵⁷

Although Jacob Neusner believes that the absence of any mention of Simeon in Josephus is “remarkable”, it could be that Josephus’ source, Nicolaus of Damascus, did not include Pharisaic traditions in his account of this period. This is not to say that these *beraita* are not based on an oral tradition; however, given the paucity of Rabbinic traditions about Shelamzion, this additional association of Shelamzion with times of prosperity does substantiate Josephus’ account when he comments positively about her reign. Josephus’ overall estimate of Alexandra is that her reign was a time of peace (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 432), and peace in Judaism is considered to be a blessing from God. According to Johannes Pedersen, “peace and blessing are so closely united that they cannot be separated”;⁵⁵⁸ Pedersen comments: “He who has *shalom* has everything”.⁵⁵⁹ As we have seen, her association with Simeon ben Shetah fulfils the prescriptions found in Deuteronomy and *Aristeas* that monarchs should rule by the Law and associate with learned men. Such a liaison is important in a theocratic state where political policies impact on ritual purity. Sinlessness was the goal of her rule as is stated in the ideals about monarchy found in Deuteronomy and *The Temple Scroll*. This Pharisaic association of her rule with a period of sinlessness becomes crucial when the Book of Judith is discussed as propaganda for Shelamzion.

An understanding of Josephus’ biases does not bring us any closer to comprehending the beliefs and practices of the Pharisees and the role they played in

⁵⁵⁷ For a discussion of this *baraita*, see Jacob Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions*, 112-113. On the tendency of the Babylonian Talmud to portray historical personalities as relatives, see Shmuel Safrai, “Tales of the Sages in the Palestinian Tradition and the Babylonian Talmud”, *Studies in Aggadah and Folk-Literature* (ed. Joseph Heinemann and Dov Noy; *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, vol. 22; Jerusalem, at the Magnes Press, the Hebrew University, 1971) 229-232.

⁵⁵⁸ Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1991; orig. 1926-1940) 311.

⁵⁵⁹ Pedersen, *Israel*, 313.

Hasmonean history, and in Shelamzion's regime in particular. We have relatively little concrete information about them at this time. Although the Pharisees were primarily concerned with the interpretation of the Torah and the preservation of the traditions of the fathers, the sources indicate that for them these concerns were best realized when backed by a strong liaison to the political power of the day.⁵⁶⁰

The association between the Pharisees and Hasmonean rule did not originate with Alexandra. It is previously mentioned in connection with John Hyrcanus, the father of Alexander (Janneus) and, as it happens, the ruler who first left Judea in the hands of a woman. The relationship between the Pharisees and John Hyrcanus is told only in *Jewish Antiquities* (13. 288-298). Hyrcanus, at one time, was a "disciple" (μαθητής) of the Pharisees and was "greatly loved" (ἡγαπᾶτο) by them (13. 289). According to Josephus, the Pharisees, who were popular with the masses, "had passed down on to the people certain regulations handed down by former generations and not recorded in the Laws of Moses" (13. 297). These religious observances played a crucial role in the Pharisaic way of being Jewish. Josephus does not provide details as to what these observances were.

Josephus does record that Hyrcanus broke off his relations with the Pharisees.⁵⁶¹

The break came over an event that happened at a banquet. According to Josephus,

⁵⁶⁰ Some scholars, like Neusner, argue that the Pharisees of this time were a political party; see *Formative Judaism: Religious, Historical, and Literary Studies* (Brown Judaic Studies, no. 91; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985) 63-64; cf. *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973) 65-66; however, I concur with Antony Saldarini that the separation of religion from politics is a contemporary perspective and does not reflect the world view of ancient societies; see "Sanhedrin", *ABD*, vol. 5, 975.

⁵⁶¹ In the Rabbinic tradition, the Hasmonean who severed relations with the Pharisees was Janneus Alexander (*b. Qidd.*). For a scholarly discussion of this event in Hasmonean history, see Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 254-256; Joseph Sievers, *The Hasmoneans and Their Supporters: From Mattathias to the Death of John Hyrcanus I* (South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism, no. 6; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990) 147-152.

Hyrchanus, in an attempt to be a righteous Pharisee, had asked for the Pharisees' assistance by pointing out any transgression of Pharisee traditions that he may have committed. They all thought that he was an excellent observer; however, one of them told Hyrchanus "to give up the high-priesthood and be content with governing the people" (13. 291).⁵⁶² Hyrchanus asked why he thought this and was told that some believed that his mother had been a captive of Antiochus Epiphanes (13. 292). The implication of this captivity was that Hyrchanus' mother would have been raped while in prison and thus the legitimacy and, hence, "purity" of her children was questionable and none of them could, therefore, possess the degree of purity necessary to serve as high priest. The answer angered Hyrchanus and the other Pharisees; however, Hyrchanus was encouraged by a Sadducean friend to ask the Pharisees what punishment this man deserved (13. 293-294). They thought that he deserved only "stripes and chains" (13. 294), a lenient punishment, consistent with the Pharisaic point of view; however, Hyrchanus was convinced that the sect as a whole was behind this insult and decided not only to break his connection with them but to "abrogate" (καταλῦσαι) the religious ordinances that had become established (13. 296). This break of the ties between the government of Judea and the Pharisees, and the official dissolution of Pharisaic ways remained until the time of Shelamzion, at least twenty-five years, perhaps more, because we do not know precisely when this break occurred. Thus the discussion in *Jewish Antiquities* indicates that the relationship between the Pharisees and the Hasmoneans predated the time of Shelamzion; however, this is contradicted in *The Jewish War* where the Pharisees are introduced along with Alexandra.

⁵⁶² τὴν ἀρχιερωσύνην ἀπόθου, καὶ μόνον ἀρκείτω σοι τὸ ἄρχειν τοῦ λαοῦ (LCL; Marcus. 13. 291).

Precisely when the Pharisees emerged as a distinct group and how they cultivated the attention of the populace is unknown; however, some scholars think that they are linked to the Hasidim mentioned in Maccabean history⁵⁶³ and were probably instrumental in Simon's appointment as high priest (*1 Macc.* 14: 35).⁵⁶⁴ The name Pharisees (οἱ Φαρισαῖοι) was probably imposed on them; it means "The Separated" and refers to their practice of keeping apart from all uncleanness.⁵⁶⁵ They probably did not refer to themselves as such, perhaps choosing terms like "companion", "scribe", or "sage".⁵⁶⁶ According to Ellis Rivkin, the Pharisees were a group of scholars who studied the written Law and discussed its interpretative tradition.⁵⁶⁷ They were adverse to the Sadducees, the aristocratic group who held religious and political power before the Maccabean revolt. Members of this group came from various social and economic backgrounds - the affluent rural class and less wealthy urbanites.⁵⁶⁸ The Pharisees were especially concerned with issues of purity and tithes and they were known for their moderation and justice. As Josephus states, they valued close relations within their group, they believed in reincarnation (*War* 2. 163), and thought that free will worked with divine providence to determine the outcome of life.⁵⁶⁹ Josephus also tells us that they "made no concession to luxury" (*Jewish Ant.* 18. 12) - they fasted regularly in order to demonstrate humility

⁵⁶³ On their origins from this group, see Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, vol. 1, 400-401; cf. Louis Finkelstein, *The Pharisees: The Sociological Background of Their Faith*, 2nd ed. rev. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946) vol. 2, 606 and Joachim Schaper, "The Pharisees", *CHJ*, vol. 3, 405.

⁵⁶⁴ This is what Ellis Rivkin calls "the hidden revolution", see *A Hidden Revolution* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978) 215-219; cf. Schaper, "The Pharisees", 411.

⁵⁶⁵ Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, vol. 1, 396-397; cf. Ellis Rivkin, "Defining the Pharisees: The Tannaitic Sources", *HUCA* 40 (1969-1970) 247-248.

⁵⁶⁶ Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, vol. 1, 397, ft. 55.

⁵⁶⁷ Rivkin, "Defining the Pharisees", 247.

⁵⁶⁸ Finkelstein, *The Pharisees*, vol. 2, 608.

⁵⁶⁹ Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, vol. 1, 391-392; cf. Rivkin, *A Hidden Revolution* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978) 74.

before God and to incline God's attention to their prayers.⁵⁷⁰ Ilan claims that they favoured sexual abstinence, because one tractate in the Mishnah that associates women and Pharisees plays on the notion of separateness.⁵⁷¹ In spite of these practices, they were not an ascetic movement in the sense that was to become popular among the later Christians.⁵⁷² The Pharisees also approved of proselytism for those drawn to conversion by their free will.⁵⁷³

Although popular, the Pharisees had detractors. In addition to the Sadducees, the Qumran community saw the Pharisees as adversaries. In the Qumran sectarian literature the Pharisees are referred to as "Ephraim", and are called "the interpreters of 'slippery things'" (alternately translated as "The Seekers of Smooth Things"), while the Sadducees go by the name "Manasseh".⁵⁷⁴ It is possible that the Qumran literature speaks disapprovingly of the reign of Shelamzion. In 4Q 169 (4Q Pesher Nahum) it is said that Ephraim walks "in deceit and lies" (3:1) but, nevertheless, possesses "power".⁵⁷⁵ In this Qumran fragment, Ephraim is connected to "a lewd woman with pleasant appearance, who is experienced in magic, who betrays peoples through her whoredom, and tribes - by magic [charms]" (3: 4). Amusin believes that this fragment refers to the historical events surrounding Shelamzion, when the Pharisees (Ephraim) were in power.⁵⁷⁶ Although nowhere is Shelamzion explicitly linked to lewd behaviour, given the cultural values of

⁵⁷⁰ George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950) 258-260.

⁵⁷¹ The passage in question is *mSotah* 3: 4. According to Ilan, the Hebrew word that denotes sexual abstinence is פרישות; this Hebrew word is derived from the root פרש, the same root that gives us the word "Pharisee"; see Ilan, *Integrating Women*, 19-20 (= "The Attraction of Aristocratic Women to Pharisaism", 10).

⁵⁷² Moore, *Judaism*, 263-264.

⁵⁷³ Zeitlin, "Queen Salome", 8.

⁵⁷⁴ The symbolism behind the names and description of the Pharisees is explained by Joseph D. Amusin, "The Reflection of Historical Events of the First Century B.C. in Qumran Commentaries (4Q 161; 4Q 169; 4Q 166)", *HUCA* 48 (1977) 141-142.

⁵⁷⁵ Amusin, "The Reflection of Historical Events", 137.

⁵⁷⁶ Amusin, "The Reflection of Historical Events", 143.

the time along with the expectation that wives obey their husbands, Shelamzion's publicly close relationship with Simon ben Shetah and other male members of the Pharisees would draw criticism from some factions and entice remarks about her sexual licentiousness, particularly given her husband's association with concubines. When looked at from a different perspective, the fact that she associated closely and publicly with these learned men but escaped criticism about her sexual conduct in the work of Josephus is extraordinary.

Tal Ilan takes these ideas of Joseph Amusin⁵⁷⁷ further, arguing that Shelamzion is also mentioned negatively in the *Pesher Hosea A* (4Q166).⁵⁷⁸ This sectarian document speaks of a time when God will take back the wealth that he has given a harlot.⁵⁷⁹ Hosea 2: 10, the verse interpreted in 4Q166, col. 2.1, draws on a verse from Deuteronomy (7: 13-14). Ilan observes a further intertextual link between later rabbinic literature, the *Sifre Deuteronomy*, and the Deuteronomic verse that Hosea draws on; however, in the *Sifre Deuteronomy*, Shelamzion is specifically mentioned. This mention of Shelamzion is highly unusual because the *Sifre Deuteronomy* in general disapproves of queenship. Ilan thus concludes that the *Pesher Hosea* is a response to a specific historical situation, namely the Pharisaic propaganda that praised Shelamzion's reign.⁵⁸⁰

Although they were not as popular with everyone as Josephus would have us believe, the Pharisees, nevertheless, had their appeal, especially, it seems, with aristocratic (Sadducean) women, those who would have been referred to, by the Qumran community,

⁵⁷⁷ Amusin, "The Reflection of Historical Events", 149-150

⁵⁷⁸ Tal Ilan, "Shelamzion in Qumran: New Insights", 59-62.

⁵⁷⁹ Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (1962; New York and Toronto: Penguin, 1997) 470-471.

⁵⁸⁰ Ilan, "Shelamzion in Qumran", 65.

as being from the tribe of Manasseh.⁵⁸¹ Both Shelamzion and the women of Herod's court maintained a close association with the Pharisees. Ilan argues that the Pharisees drew on the benefactor mentality of the times and gathered support where they could: "wealthy women could support opposition movements over and against their husbands' political leanings, thus maintaining financial independence by supporting charities of their choice. Through their monetary contributions, such women may have influenced decision and policy makings in the opposition parties they chose to support."⁵⁸² If the break between John Hyrcanus I and the Pharisees actually occurred as Josephus tells us, Finkelstein may be correct in thinking that the Pharisees, while out of power, "intensified their propaganda and sought by educational and peaceful methods to win back their position in the community".⁵⁸³ The possibility that this propaganda was aimed at affluent and politically influential women cannot be discounted.

When it comes to assessing Josephus' accounts of Alexandra's reign, we have to question why the Pharisees were allowed to be so influential with internal politics, but left out of external affairs? If Shelamzion were so gullible and submissive, as Josephus would have us believe, why did they not have their way in everything? Conversely, if she "firmly held the reigns of government", did the Pharisees take control or were they given control?

One clue may lie in Josephus' choice of words in *The Jewish War*. When he introduces the Pharisees in connection with Alexandra's reign, he uses the Greek word παραφύονται (1. 110). This word is extremely rare in Greek literature, although its use

⁵⁸¹ Ilan, *Integrating Women*, 31 ("The Attraction of Aristocratic Women to Pharisaism During the Second Temple Period", *HTR* 88. 1 [1995] 21).

⁵⁸² Ilan, *Integrating Women*, 33 ("The Attraction of Aristocratic Women to Pharisaism", 24).

⁵⁸³ Finkelstein, *The Pharisees*, vol. 2, 609.

in conversation cannot be assessed. It is most often used in scientific works, and, thus not of human behaviour. It is generally accepted that Josephus had only a limited knowledge of the Greek language when he wrote *The Jewish War*. It is, therefore, probable that Josephus borrowed the term from Nicolaus of Damascus. He seems to imply that the parasitic relationship between a Hasmonean ruler and the Pharisees was unique to Shelamzion's reign; however, as we have seen, the relationship between this family and the Pharisees had a lengthy history that pre-dated their association with John Hyrcanus, Shelamzion's father-in-law. Schürer tells us that the Maccabees were "originally closer to the Pharisees than to the Sadducees".⁵⁸⁴ We are told that Shelamzion restored the Pharisaic ordinances that Hyrcanus abolished; however, it is important to note that these ordinances had become "established" (κατασταθένται), that is, institutionalized, by Hyrcanus' time (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 296); they were not innovations associated with his rule. It is conceivable then that by investing the Pharisees with authority over some internal matters (for Josephus tells us that "the expenses and burdens" of running the state fell to her)⁵⁸⁵ *War* 1. 111) she was, in fact, reverting to what she understood to be Hasmonean traditions.

The Josephan account of internal politics during the reign of Shelamzion is problematic because of its ambiguity. There exists a considerable difference in the tenor of his thoughts on domestic policy during her reign. Shelamzion in *The Jewish War* is portrayed as the pious and naive victim of the Pharisees. The vulnerability of Shelamzion is dramatically altered in the parallel account in *Jewish Antiquities*. Here she is a schemer herself who uses the Pharisees. The only concrete problem Josephus seems to have with

⁵⁸⁴ Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, vol. 1, 213.

⁵⁸⁵ τὰ δ' ἀναλώματα καὶ αἱ δυσχέρειαι τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρας (*War* 1. 111).

her rule is that she allowed the Pharisees to avenge the deaths of those who died during her husband's reign. When viewed from the perspective of the Hasmoneans, Shelamzion resurrected the religious policies that had been established during the early days of Hasmonean rule. This would be in keeping with her Pharisaic piety. Overall, she "firmly held the reigns of government" (*War* 1. 108), being responsible for the expenses and problems of leadership, while agreeing with the Pharisaic concept of justice in the matter of the death of Diogenes. In spite of her agreement with the Pharisees in this matter, Shelamzion, nevertheless, gave the supporters of Diogenes amnesty in some of the surrounding fortresses. Even in her handling of internal politics, an area in which Josephus criticises her, she maintained peace.

ii. *Shelamzion and External Politics*

In both accounts of the reign of Shelamzion Josephus praises her external policy. In the brief account found in *The Jewish War*, Josephus tells us that she handled the foreign affairs of state with considerable skill, the Greek word δεινὴ meaning "powerful" or "skilful". Her focus was the defence of the nation: she doubled the size of her national army, and also brought in mercenaries (*War* 1. 112; *Jewish Ant.* 13. 409).

John Hyrcanus was the first Hasmonean to use mercenaries (*War* 1. 61). These paid soldiers would have been Gentiles, probably from Asia Minor,⁵⁸⁶ and would have

⁵⁸⁶ Janneus got his mercenaries from Pisidia and Cilicia (*War* 1. 8).

been stationed in Jerusalem.⁵⁸⁷ They would have been detached from local politics and were directly affiliated with the ruler.⁵⁸⁸ Shelamzion, then, would have had a large contingent of soldiers at her command.

Alexandra's policy on national defence had an effect on the neighbouring nations. Both *The Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities* agree on this point; Judea was not only thought of as strong, but it became a "formidable foe" under Shelamzion's rule (*War* 1. 112). *Jewish Antiquities* paints a vivid image: Shelamzion "struck terror into the local rulers round her and received hostages from them" (13. 409).

Later, when she was near the end of her rule we find the only example of Shelamzion's handling of a threat of invasion, in spite of the "terror" that she struck into the surrounding nations. Tigranes, the Armenian ruler, was expanding his territory and got as far as Ptolemais. Josephus writes that Queen Selene Cleopatra "was then ruling over Syria and she induced the inhabitants to shut their gates against Tigranes" (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 420). Shelamzion offered him gifts while he was besieging Ptolemais, and Tigranes was impressed (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 420). We do not know if he would have invaded Judea because the Romans attacked his own country and he abandoned his campaign into Judea (13. 421).

It is necessary at this point to discuss briefly certain concepts of war as they existed in Hellenistic and Jewish societies. Firstly, military conflict was not just between peoples - war also involved the gods of the nations engaging in military conflict. As representative of both the people and their gods the ruler of the nation played a critical role. In Hellenistic times it was crucial that monarchs were also portrayed as powerful

⁵⁸⁷ On the mercenaries of the Hasmoneans, see Morton Smith, "The Gentiles in Judaism, 125 BCE – CE 66", *CHJ*, vol. 2, 197.

⁵⁸⁸ Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 251.

military figures; kings were presented as “great warriors able to turn the tide of battle by feats of personal heroism and even by their mere presence on the field”.⁵⁸⁹

The Persians, a play written by Aeschylus in the fifth century B.C.E., presents a perspective about war that provides an interesting comparison with the Book of Judith. In *The Persians*, *hybris* is responsible for the demise of the Persian empire and the confrontation between the Greeks and the Persians is cast in gendered imagery. In this play, Asia is “...constructed as a paradigm of femininity”.⁵⁹⁰ Edith Hall explains this paradigm, as follows:

Since woman was the ancient [male] Athenian’s primary “other” and, with barbarian slaves, one of the primary objects of his power, he used her as an image for the ethnically other, thus transferring the asymmetrical power-relation embedded in her difference from the patriarchal male to the sphere of international power struggle. This has two effects on the narratives recounting the Persian wars. First, the oppositions man-woman and rapist-raped are transferred to the Greek-non-Greek relationship; Greek victory over Persia is made to appear “naturally” sanctioned. Second, the ambivalence towards woman’s otherness, as source and symbol of violence, danger, and anarchy, is projected onto the foreign culture against which war continued to be waged for many years.⁵⁹¹

In general, the military conquest of a nation is interpreted in terms of the sexual conquest of a woman. One example that was mentioned earlier was the Roman *Judea capta* coins of the late first century C.E. These coins portray Judea as woman, bound and slumped on the ground beside a tree. This image participates in the symbolic universe of the time by sexualizing war and feminizing the loser.

⁵⁸⁹ Hans van Wees, “Politics and the Battlefield: Ideology in Greek Warfare”, *The Greek World* (ed. Anton Powell; New York and London: Routledge, 1997) 170.

⁵⁹⁰ Edith Hall, “Introduction”, *Aeschylus: Persians* (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 1996) 6, 13; for a re-examination of the social significance of the penetrator and penetrated, see Martin Kilmer, “Painters and Pederasts: Ancient Art, Sexuality, and Social History”, *Inventing Ancient Culture: Historicism, Periodization, and the Ancient World* (ed. Mark Golden and Peter Toohey; London and New York: Routledge, 1997) 36–49.

⁵⁹¹ Edith Hall, “Asia Unmanned: Images of Victory in Classical Athens”, *War and Society in the Greek World* (1993; ed. John Rich and Graham Shipley; London and New York: Routledge, 1995) 112–113.

As we have already seen, educated Jews had an excellent knowledge of Greek literature. Even in biblical literature we can detect a similarity between Jewish and Greek concepts of war.⁵⁹² The biblical concept of war is found in Deuteronomy; it is grounded in the story of God's salvific act of deliverance from Egypt. Like many ancient societies, the god of the Israelites went before them into battle (Deut. 20: 1-4); victory came by "his right hand" (Psalm 20: 6).⁵⁹³ The warrior was to maintain ritual purity even in the camp (Deut. 23: 10-11, 14). The ruler, who was commander of the army, was the mediator between the people and their god; the army itself was the community "in a condensed and intensified form".⁵⁹⁴

In her discussion of war ideology in the Hebrew Bible, Susan Niditch identifies one type of ideology that corresponds to the Deuteronomistic view of war. This ideology is tricksterism. In the ideology of tricksterism, victory comes not by way of might but by way of cunning and deception. According to Niditch, in this type of war story political power is "sexualised".⁵⁹⁵ In the stories Niditch cites, the stories of Dinah (Genesis 34), Jael (Judges 4 17-24.; 5: 24-31), Samson (Judges 14-15), and the assassination of Eglon (Judges 3: 15-30), the weaker party triumphs over the stronger by outwitting the enemy. This type of ideology would appeal to a monarchy interested in defence more than conquest.

Preference for defence over conquest seems to suit Shelamzion's approach to confrontation. Like a ruler who was concerned with meeting biblical prescriptions,

⁵⁹² Robert Carroll, "War in the Hebrew Bible", *War and Society in the Greek World* (1993; ed. John Rich and Graham Shipley; London and New York: Routledge, 1995) 26.

⁵⁹³ The development of this concept can be traced to the idea of Yahweh's victory as sovereign over the cosmic forces, see Patrick Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (Harvard Semitic Monographs, no. 5: Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1975) 162-163.

⁵⁹⁴ Johannes Pedersen, *Israel*, vol. 2, 12.

⁵⁹⁵ Susan Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 119.

Shelamzion initially negotiated for peace with Tigranes (Deut. 20: 10; cf. 13. 420); she also did her best, by avoiding warfare and paying mercenaries, to save Jewish lives. Unlike her husband, she undertook no campaigns to acquire new territory. Josephus' final comment on her rule in *Jewish Antiquities*, that she "had kept the nation at peace", reflects an enormous achievement on her part (13. 432). Given her political world, this accomplishment should not be under-rated. Shelamzion's major achievement, the peace of her nation, has its strong parallel in the Book of Judith. The Jewish adaptation of the Greek concept of war follows the same basic sexual dynamics: war is sexualized and the loser is rendered effeminate; however, this Jewish adaptation evokes cunning and deception. The author of the Book of Judith draws on the concept of woman as "other" to signify danger. Although female and other, Judea is a potent military force. The parallel works on another level also, the level of cultural values. Although she associates with men, Shelamzion, like Judith, brings not shame, but honour to her group, the nation of Israel. The similarities between the Josephan accounts of Shelamzion's rule, Josephus' domestication of Shelamzion's behaviour and the story line of the Book of Judith are too similar to be coincidence: this book was written to promote Shelamzion's achievements; *Judith* is political propaganda.

10. CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I examined the political world of the only Hasmonean queen regnant, Shelamzion. Her reign was assessed within its cultural context. This context included an examination of the numerous female descendants of Ptolemy Soter I, who bore the matronym Cleopatra. These women were very powerful in the political world of Shelamzion, and it is shortsighted to think that the lives and exploits of these women went unnoticed in Judean politics and unnoticed by the young Shelamzion.

In addition to the lives of these powerful women, ideals of monarchy found in biblical and Hellenistic-Jewish literature were also discussed. Certain elements that may have been valued by the Hasmonean dynasty were highlighted. These elements include the importance of having a monarchy similar to those of its surrounding nations. In this light, rule by woman is acceptable and perhaps even desirable. I also observed that works such as *The Letter of Aristeas*, *The Temple Scroll*, *Jubilees* and *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* spoke to issues that could have been used by the Hasmoneans as ideals that guided, or alternately legitimated, their policies. Most notable were the general Hellenistic values of reverence, beneficence and benevolence. Closely associated with these general ideals were certain specifically Jewish adaptations. Jewish monarchs were to read the Law and write it in a book that they kept with them. They were to associate with learned men, cultivate a good reputation, guard the Land, save Jewish lives by not engaging in unnecessary or expansionist wars and above all, maintain peace. Monarchs who achieved these goals would be blessed by God and have a dynasty to pass on to their

children. *Jubilees* and *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* also advocate the separation of religious and political offices.

Against this political and literary background I assessed the reign of Shelamzion (Salome Alexandra) as it is presented in the parallel accounts of Flavius Josephus. Although Josephus draws on the work of Nicolaus of Damascus, who is considered to be anti-Hasmonean, a superficial reading of his accounts of her rule present an ambiguous assessment; however, when recent research into Josephus' tendencies is considered, the account of her rule takes on a more positive tone. The most important observation this assessment of Shelamzion's reign offers is that she was unequivocally a scholar of the Law. Additionally, the Josephan attempt to domesticate Shelamzion masks just how independent and powerful she was. Shelamzion's association with religious leaders, especially Simon ben Shetah, should have encouraged criticism. Even though Shetah is described in rabbinic literature as the "brother" of Shelamzion, the involvement of other Pharisaic men would have exposed her to accusations of sexual impropriety; however, none of this is in the historical record, although it may be reflected in the Qumran documents. The Book of Judith, a book I believe was written as political propaganda for Shelamzion, does contain what may be seen as propaganda to counter accusations of impropriety.

The author of the Book of Judith makes a point of stressing the pristine nature of her reputation, as we will see in the next chapter; "no one spoke ill of her" (Jdt. 8: 8). Drawing on the cultural concept of war as sexual politics, the author of the Book of Judith presents what can be read as both literary tribute and political propaganda in support of this Hasmonean queen.

IV. The Book of Judith as Propaganda for Queen Shelamzion

In this section, I tie together the arguments made thus far and demonstrate how the Book of Judith can be read as political propaganda for Queen Shelamzion. Both literature and culture produce meaning; both are used to legitimate and maintain institutional power through the strategic manipulation of a given culture's symbolic world. For the Book of Judith to function as political propaganda for Shelamzion we would expect it to contain, as Berger and Luckmann point out, a cognitive and normative argument for female leadership;⁵⁹⁶ the book would not only present female leadership as an established reality but also cast it in a positive light. This is what we see in the Book of Judith; female leadership is not only presented as plausible, but it is something that has already occurred in Jewish history. The book carefully delineates the circumstances around this power; given a particularly drastic situation, a woman with exceptional attributes can save the nation.

The dynamics of the Book of Judith incorporates more than just acceptance and knowledge of female leadership. It draws extensively on sexual imagery, particularly female sexual imagery. This in itself is not enough to suggest a deeper level of meaning for the text; however, this female sexual imagery is used in a manner that is exceptional for the literature of the time. Drawing on the biblical motif of the female trickster and the intricacies of the cultural values of the time, the Book of Judith draws the reader into that part of the symbolic universe where the female is public, dominant, and aggressive. This

⁵⁹⁶ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 93.

unique reliance on what we shall see as the “loop holes” in these cultural values suggests that a deeper meaning underscores the ironic reversals embedded in the text and points to the possibility that the author of the Book of Judith intended the work to inspire the reader to recognition, not just the recognition that Assyria, and by implication the world at large, underestimated the potential of Judea, but also the recognition that the particular type of woman on which the character of Judith is modeled is the ideal female leader for a crisis situation.

This section develops the idea that the Book of Judith was written as propaganda for the reign of Shelamzion. I begin with a review of the argument thus far. In particular, I draw attention to the need of Shelamzion and her supporters to prove divine approval for her rule and to clearly demonstrate that her reign is being tested in response to a divine calling. In the Book of Judith, a clear distinction is made between the *hybristic* rule of other (Hellenistic) leaders who seek to deify themselves and the work of one woman for her community. The devotion and adherence to Jewish law that Judith demonstrates are adapted from the personal qualities and administrative style of Shelamzion, according to my critical reading of Josephus.

As Philip Esler points out, an understanding of how the book is to be read against the backdrop of its cultural values provides the text with its “unifying message”;⁵⁹⁷ however, my study goes beyond Esler’s in that I revisit the early anthropological sources that were used by the pioneers of the social scientific method in biblical studies. A re-examination of these studies and a survey of the work of feminist anthropologists such as Jill Dubisch reveal that there is much about the role women play in the honour and shame

⁵⁹⁷ Esler, “By the Hand of a Woman”, 72.

dynamic that has previously been overlooked. Scholars have, in general, neglected the freedom that aristocratic, widowed women possessed.⁵⁹⁸

Van Henten's work on the Book of Judith demonstrates the book's unique nature. He remarks that it is "an unconventional Jewish writing from the perspective of gender relations" and it is this unconventionality that needs to be explored and explained, given the patriarchal nature of the society of the time. According to Van Henten, although the book is embedded in an androcentric framework, it nevertheless presents the fictional character of Judith as a hero and "alternative leader" of her people⁵⁹⁹ who, like many biblical leaders undergoes divine testing in order to prove her ability to lead.⁶⁰⁰ The idea of being tested for leadership of the Jewish people is also echoed in *1 Maccabees* (7: 39-47), another work that functions as Hasmonean propaganda and, incidentally, celebrates the defeat of a Northern army with the decapitation of its general.⁶⁰¹

Thus it is my contention that the character of Judith is not *romanesque* or symbolic, but intended to legitimate the leadership of the only Hasmonean queen regnant, Shelamzion.

⁵⁹⁸ This question is currently being addressed by scholars such as Shelly Matthews in her article "Ladies' Aid: Gentile Noblewomen as Saviors and Benefactors in the Antiquities", *HTR* 92 (1999) 199-218.

⁵⁹⁹ van Henten, "Judith as Alternative Leader", 247.

⁶⁰⁰ See Judith 8: 25. Other leaders that van Henten thinks are similarly tested are Levi and Moses; see his article "Judith as Alternative Leader", 238-241. Van Henten, while not suggesting that the Book of Judith has ties to Shelamzion, nevertheless associates the text with Hasmonean political propaganda in general, see 243-244.

⁶⁰¹ Nicanor is with the Syrian army, but Judas' prayer recalls Yahweh's crushing of the Assyrians (1 Macc. 7: 41).

1. SYNOPSIS

Ancient societies such as Egypt, Judea and Rome used propaganda to promote cultural identity and political ideals. The Hasmonean dynasty was no exception to this trend. / *Maccabees* and perhaps the epic poem of Theodotus promoted the Hasmonean agenda of territorial reclamation and portrayed the early Hasmoneans as agents of God who were selected to deliver the nation from the hands of ungodly, lawless men who were possessed of excessive pride. Utilizing Exodus symbolism, Hasmoneans such as Simon and Jonathan are presented as having been tested by God and thus divinely sanctioned as military leaders and judges of the people in much the same way as were Levi and Judah.

On the level of fictional literature, the cultural values of honour and shame were incorporated into the story lines and functioned to demonstrate plausibility. These values governed the behaviour of many ancient societies. Drawing on these values, military aggression against an enemy nation was portrayed in terms of the sexual conquest of a woman. Examples of the prevalent use of this cultural metaphor are seen in the Nectanebo story, the play by Aeschylus, *The Persians*, and the late *Judea capta* coins of the Flavians. The Book of Judith also participates in this cultural metaphor, but in an innovative way. The story plays with the established perception of a humiliated female nation in such a way as to evoke reflection on the assumptions that underscore this norm. Drawing on Deuteronomy's portrayal of Israel as a powerless state whose monarchy is dependent upon obedience to YHWH's covenant and Torah, the book uses the trickster ideology of defense, observed in biblical literature, in order to depict the power of the nation when it stays faithful to the Law. To convey this message, the book presents an

imaginary treatment of history: a woman is depicted as a saviour of *her* people (Jdt. 16: 5). Up until this point, the Book of Judith reads like a counter-cultural tale that radically challenges the traditional view of gender relations; however, given the tendency to use female imagery as a metaphor for conquered nations and the vague distinction between fact and fiction that existed in the literature of the day, it is important to look beyond this superficial level and ask if a propagandistic intent did, in fact, underscore this work.

Arguing for an early first century (B.C.E.) date of composition and accepting the scholarly opinion that the work was written by a Pharisee, this dissertation explores the possibility that the Book of Judith was written as propaganda for the only Hasmonean queen regnant in Jewish history, Shelamzion (Salome Alexandra). According to Ilan, after John Hyrcanus withdrew his support of the Pharisees, this group turned to propaganda in order to regain the support it lost. Affluent Sadducean women, known in the Qumran community and perhaps elsewhere in Judea as members of the tribe of Manasseh, may have been the focus of their solicitation. As a Hasmonean queen, Shelamzion would certainly have been one of these women. I have already demonstrated in a previous part of the dissertation that the Book of Judith echoes Pharisaic ideals and reflects a detailed and comprehensive knowledge of biblical literature such as would have been possessed by a member of this community. The book's novelistic style was a contemporary innovation and it would have been a fashionable form of tribute to honour a queen. There is a high degree of correlation between the personal qualities and administrative style of Shelamzion and the fictitious character of Judith, both widows endowed with large territory, both representative of the corporate identity of the Jews and

both defenders of Jewish territory. Both perform acts “unbecoming a woman”.⁶⁰² These elements strongly suggest that the Book of Judith was written with Shelamzion in mind.

2. WHY QUEEN SHELAMZION NEEDED PROPAGANDA

The reasons why Shelamzion needed literary political propaganda have been discussed above. One point that the supporters of Shelamzion had to demonstrate was that God endorsed her leadership. Without popular acceptance that YHWH was behind her rule it would be easy to persuade her dissenters to oppose her. Shelamzion, like all Hellenistic monarchs, was vulnerable, although she may have garnered popular support from her “public opposition” to the “crimes” of her husband and her public demonstrations of reverence. As a wealthy woman, she may also have been the benefactress of charitable causes that demonstrated her love for her community; evidence of this tradition is seen in Rabbinic literature. Although we are not sure of the details, the fact that she became queen regnant demonstrates that she overcame every major objection to her reign.

As the only Hasmonean woman to rule Judea she must have faced opposition on the grounds of her gender alone. As we have seen, some Qumran documents may have suggested sexual licentiousness, and certainly Shelamzion’s association with Pharisaic men and her public appearances would have risked shame. We know that Shelamzion’s son, Aristobulus, objected to her power. Although we lack the details of his argument against her reign, it is fair to assume that it involved the inappropriateness of women assuming leadership roles, particularly a woman with two adult sons. To bolster his

⁶⁰² Josephus says this of Salome Alexandra, see *Jewish Antiquities*, 13. 432.

position, Aristobulus could have pointed to the behaviour of Ptolemaic queens as an example of the unsuitability of female rulers.

3. EXPLORING THE CULTURAL VALUES OF THE BOOK OF JUDITH AS AN APPROACH TO ITS FUNCTION AS PROPAGANDA

As was previously discussed, political propaganda involves the strategic manipulation of the symbolic world of a given culture. Rather than argue against what was culturally normative in Jewish society it would have been more useful for Shelamzion and her supporters to affirm these norms, but draw on pre-existing Hasmonean propaganda and biblical literature to argue an exception to the rule. Divine endorsement for her rule could be presented by using the Hasmonean notion that Shelamzion was being tested by God in the same manner as the other Hasmoneans had been. The use of elements from Hasmonean propaganda and established cultural norms can be supported by sociological theory. According to Berger and Luckmann, social events or facts (for instance the accession of a woman to the throne) can never be made to seem arbitrary; these events or facts have to be made to look “legitimate” by way of making them appear to be part of an “objective reality”. Part of this process of legitimating an event is a process called “reification”. Reification is the presentation of a social event or fact as something other than the mere “product of human activity”; these events or facts are made to appear as the “manifestation of divine will”.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰³ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 89.

With this sociological theory in mind, the Book of Judith could be read as an attempt to reify the leadership of Shelamzion by drawing on biblical allusions in order to present a historical tale of a wealthy widow with a large territory who rose from relative obscurity to save the Jewish people during a threat of invasion. This reading of the Book of Judith functions to affirm the existing institutional order and cultural values and legitimate the leadership of a specific woman under certain circumstances. As it is written, the book does not threaten cultural institutions *per se*; Judith is not typical of Jewish women, she is clearly an anomaly. Emerging from her rooftop sanctuary where she regularly communes with God, she fulfills the role of the only Jewish warrior and defender of her community in the encounter between Israel and Assyria. This role recalls the biblical story of David and Goliath. David went on to become Israel's archetypal king.

The encounter between Judith and Holofernes also demonstrates the continuing importance of the covenantal relationship between Israel and YHWH. Judith as head of the Jewish community functions as both the client of YHWH and the patron of her people. Within this covenantal relationship, the cultural values of honour and shame come to the forefront.⁶⁰⁴ Judith, therefore, performs a function that is typically connected not only with kingship but also with Israel's king *par excellence*;⁶⁰⁵ she guards her community against the imminent threat of chaos. Like David, Judith slays her Goliath, Holofernes, with his own sword (1 Sam. 17: 51; Jdt. 13: 6-8). Yet in contrast to an

⁶⁰⁴ Scholars often overlook the existence of honour and shame in ancient Israel because it was seldom explicitly mentioned in biblical literature. One interesting contribution to the study of these values in biblical Israel is the article by Saul M. Olyan, "Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and its Environment", *JBL* 115. 2 (1996) 201-218; see also the review of Olyan's article by T. R. Hobbs, "Reflections on Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations", *JBL* 116. 3 (1997) 501-503.

⁶⁰⁵ Sam Meier, "The King as Warrior in Samuel-Kings", *Hebrew Annual Review* 13 (1991) 64, 71.

incident that occurred later in David's life, an incident where he remains behind the city gates when his army goes out to fight (2 Sam. 18: 4), Judith, as leader and warrior, leaves the city gates accompanied by her maid (Jdt. 10: 10). Unlike David, however, Judith retreats to her estate after her escapade where she maintains her liminal status as a widow, faithful to her husband's memory (Jdt. 8: 4).⁶⁰⁶

Thus the Book of Judith incorporates cognitive and normative elements from the Jewish symbolic universe that serve to legitimate female leadership. The story is set in Israel's past and it draws on what I shall for the moment term "loop holes" in the cultural values of the day, that is, exceptions to the cultural norm that accommodate female leadership. These "loop holes" are evident in the numerous reversals seen in the text. These reversals, the juxtaposition of something that *is* normative with something that *is not* normative, are used in support of female leadership. These reversals are Judith's appropriation of the role of the warrior, the murder of a great general by a mere woman, the military superiority of the tiny nation of Judea, just to mention a few. As we have seen in Part Two of this dissertation, reversals were integral to the plot. Partnered with recognition, they advanced the story line. Recognition is always recognition between persons and, according to Aristotle, "the finest recognition is that which occurs simultaneously with reversal".⁶⁰⁷ The effect of this combination of elements, reversal and recognition, causes "either pity or fear". The classic example of this technique is found in Homer's eighth century epic, *The Odyssey*. In this work reversal and recognition are seen in the relationship between Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, and Odysseus, the warrior returning from the Trojan War twenty years later. In his absence,

⁶⁰⁶ Like Anna in the Christian gospel of *Luke*, some women remained widows as an act of piety. Roman inscriptions call these widows μόνανδρος. Shelamzion, too, did not remarry. See my discussion above.

⁶⁰⁷ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1452a-b.

Penelope has maintained Odysseus' household and kingship, becoming much like a king herself (19. 107-114).⁶⁰⁸ Odysseus returns home disguised as a beggar to find Penelope announcing that she finally will remarry. Penelope tests Odysseus and recognizes that he is, indeed, her husband.

Esler believes that irony in the Book of Judith contributes to the element of recognition. Esler rightly observes that the story is grounded on the fact that the Assyrians function with a "very defective level of knowledge"; the audience, with "access to the full picture" and conversant with the rubrics of their honour/shame culture would have appreciated "the brilliant way in which Judith takes control".⁶⁰⁹

Yet the Assyrians are not the only group that underestimates Judith. I believe that a second recognition also operates in the text. This second recognition involves the ancient audience of the Book of Judith who would have recognized in themselves their own prejudices against the leadership of a woman. If indeed the Book of Judith is propaganda for Shelamzion, then the plot implicitly addresses the cultural prejudices of its audience and effectively promotes Shelamzion as leader.

There is clearly a strong identification in the text between the character Judith and the Israelites of Judea. This strong identification is well documented by scholars. Alonso-Schökel and Reinhartz point out that as a widow Judith resonates with the image of Mother Zion that is found in biblical literature.⁶¹⁰ This imagery, common to prophetic

⁶⁰⁸ Homer, *The Odyssey*, rev. (1946; trans E. V. Rieu; London: Penguin, 1991). A good discussion of the reversals and recognition in this work is found in an article by Helene P. Foley, " 'Reverse Similes' and Sex Roles in the Odyssey", *Women in the Ancient World: The Arethusa Papers* (eds. John Peradotta and J. P. Sullivan; Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1984) 59-78.

⁶⁰⁹ Esler, "By the Hand of a Woman", 97-98. One could easily argue that the irony in the Book of Judith is synonymous with the element of reversal.

⁶¹⁰ Alonso-Schökel, "Narrative Structures", 14-15; Reinhartz, "Better Homes and Gardens", 331-333; Levine argues that Judith's identification with the community can only be partial and "incomplete", "Sacrifice and Salvation", 18.

literature, personifies the city of Zion as a widow who mourns the loss of her children, the Jewish people.⁶¹¹ As previously pointed out, the name Judith is, in fact, the feminine form of the name Judah.⁶¹²

4. THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE BOOK OF JUDITH

Both Carey Moore and Philip Esler observe that the cultural values of honour and shame are important components of the Book of Judith.⁶¹³ For my argument as well, an understanding of these values is crucial. Honour and shame were drawn on in such a way as to link Judith to her community and present the defense of that community as the responsibility of this particular woman.

In this section I will examine the anthropological model of honour and shame. Although biblical scholars such as Philip Esler and Bruce Malina have produced significant insights into the biblical world with the use of this model, the complexities of anthropological fieldwork have yet to be fully explored. It is, therefore, fruitful to revisit some of the original works upon which Malina first drew in order to extract any observations that may provide a deeper insight into the honour/shame dynamics of the Book of Judith and bolster my argument for the Book of Judith as political propaganda for Shelamzion.

⁶¹¹ References to Mother Zion imagery are too extensive to be discussed in detail here. See, for instance, Lamentations 1: 1, Isaiah 54, Micah 4: 11-13.

⁶¹² Cf. Moses Hadas, *Hellenistic Culture: Fusion and Diffusion* (1959; Morningside Heights, NY: Columbia University Press, 1963) 166.

⁶¹³ Moore, *The Book of Judith*, 128 and Esler, "By the Hand of a Woman", 72.

a. *The Importance of Honour and Shame*

Biblical scholars are increasingly turning to socio-scientific models in order to illuminate the social world that underlies ancient texts. The use of these models brings with it the recognition that the ancient world differs from ours in subtle ways and not so subtle ways. The values that informed the beliefs and behaviour of ancient people were based on ethical codes that are unlike those of the contemporary Western world. Ancient texts not only speak to a different audience but may have been interpreted in a way that we overlook. Literacy rates were lower than they are today.⁶¹⁴ Fewer people wrote and the novelistic genre of a work such as the Book of Judith was innovative. Although the audience of the Book of Judith is likely to be debated for some time, it did expect from its literature a reflection of the cultural values that existed within its society.⁶¹⁵ Literature echoed the real world. These early works of prose fiction altered characters and events but still retained the element of plausibility. Understanding these ancient texts on their own terms means not only understanding these cultural “codes” but also deciphering how the original audience of these works might have understood those codes.

For the biblical scholar, the question then becomes: how do we break this code? The socio-scientific models that many biblical scholars use are drawn from anthropological observations of contemporary Mediterranean societies, societies which value the ethics of honour and shame in a manner which is believed to be similar to that

⁶¹⁴ On literacy in antiquity in general, see Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 7-9.

⁶¹⁵ Douglas L. Cairns, *Aidōs: The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

of ancient Mediterranean societies. As T. F. Carney reminds us, models both conceal and reveal; they are “speculative” tools that should always be used with a critical eye.⁶¹⁶

With this *caveat* in mind, the following discussion of anthropological observations of honour and shame aims at a deeper understanding of key elements of the honour/shame dynamic that present themselves in the Book of Judith. I identify these elements as intra- and inter-group dynamics, involving in particular the status of wealthy aristocratic widows and hospitality codes. One additional element is the unique understanding of honour and shame as it was found in Jewish society.

b. *The Basics: What is Honour and What is Shame?*

The early work of Julian Pitt-Rivers provides a good basis to begin to understand honour, shame and the social dynamics that these values elicit. The overall idea of honour in social relationships is rooted in the notion of the sacred.⁶¹⁷ It draws on a hierarchial understanding of esteem that derives from the concept of the divine. Within this construct God and honour are inextricably linked; the ultimate honour is bestowed upon God. Among the social relations of a particular society, honour seems to “trickle down” through the social hierarchy. The ruler of the nation typically is the most honourable

⁶¹⁶ T. F. Carney, *The Shape of the Past: Models and Antiquity* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1975) 34-37.

⁶¹⁷ Julian Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem or the Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University, 1977) 13; Pierre Bourdieu, “The Sentiment of Honour in Kabyle Society”, *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (ed. J. G. Peristany; London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1965) 219.

person in a given society, with the upper class possessing more honour than the lower.

Honour functions to legitimate and maintain established power systems.⁶¹⁸

Operating from the opposite end of the scale is shame, the antithesis of honour; it is synonymous with dishonour and is the loss of reputation or status in the eyes of others as well as an inward acknowledgement of this loss. Shame is the inverse of honour; it can be used to control social behaviour through the withdrawal of valuable reputation.⁶¹⁹ These features point to the importance of group dynamics to the individual and his or her behaviour. Honour/shame societies are dyadic; the group initially determines an individual's identity and social location and plays an integral role in the social behaviour of individuals. That being said, even members of the lowest social group, slaves, can possess honour. Using *The Odyssey* as an example, Eumaeus and Eurycleia, slaves in Odysseus' household, are honoured for their loyalty, whereas those who were not loyal were killed ignominiously (22. 460-480).

For Pitt-Rivers, then, honour is the point where societal ideals and individual behaviour meet. It is the embodiment of what a society says is its best behaviour and where it elicits the social rewards for personifying this type of behaviour.⁶²⁰ Individuals who exemplify the social ideals may have their honour recognized, and with that gain social status. Honour, therefore, is a commodity; as a commodity it can be acquired or ascribed. Honour can be acquired at birth by inheriting the social status of one's father or through marriage by acquiring the social status of one's husband. Honour can also be ascribed, or earned. for instance, it can be bestowed upon the victor of a contest for

⁶¹⁸Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 16.

⁶¹⁹Lyn M. Bechtel, "Shame as a Sanction of Social Control in Biblical Israel: Judicial, Political, and Social Shaming", *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 49 (1991): 47-76.

⁶²⁰Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 1.

honour.⁶²¹ Acquiring honour involves the dynamics of one's own group. Within this interplay, a challenge to one's honour comes in the form of words or actions that transgress the claim to worth or physical boundaries of a person and/or his or her ties to the social group.⁶²² The contest for honour is a public event, typically between males, where the winner is chosen by the group and granted greater esteem. As a public commodity, honour is a resource that is worth holding. Lost status is difficult to reclaim, as is evinced in Herodotus' *The Histories* by the drastic effort of Aristodemus to reclaim his honour after his disgraceful absence at the Battle of Thermopylae (7. 229- 231, 9. 71).⁶²³

According to Pitt-Rivers, honour and shame are largely synonymous.⁶²⁴ Shame is the sensitivity one has to one's reputation or public estimation of one's honour. To not care about one's honour is to be without shame. For the most part, therefore, both honour and shame are moral qualities, components of virtue; however the conduct required of a virtuous person is largely determined by their sex. It is at this point that honour and shame move beyond synonymity. According to Pitt-Rivers, acquired honour is an "exclusively male attribute" involving the public "aspiration and validation of status" while shame is a female attribute which involves preserving, within the private sphere, the sensitivity one has towards one's status⁶²⁵ as well as an avoidance of any contact that might bring with it the threat of dishonour.⁶²⁶ In this task the women of the group traditionally need the support of the men. This element is the public dimension of female

⁶²¹Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 29, 43.

⁶²²Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 6-7.

⁶²³ See also, E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971) 17-18.

⁶²⁴ Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 20.

⁶²⁵ Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 21.

⁶²⁶ Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 23.

shame; a woman who has been shamed sexually transmits that shame to her social group, like some form of contagion.⁶²⁷ This shame calls for vindication, often through violent means as in the story of Simeon's and Levi's revenge of Dinah's rape.

Yet shame need not be an exclusively female attribute. Although the concept of shame remains strongly associated with femaleness, males can be shamed as well, particularly in the military arena. For a man to show physical or moral weakness is shameful.⁶²⁸ The conceptual link between shame and femaleness is drawn into the orbit of masculinity when it comes to the shaming of men. If a man is shamed by an erotic or even a social defeat, this carries the symbolic connotation of emasculation, or, as David Gilmore terms it, "sexual reversal"; he "*becomes* a woman who is victimized and penetrated".⁶²⁹ This libidinal response to male shame existed as early as ancient Israel. In the book of Jeremiah, a taunt to the Chaldeans states: "A sword upon her warriors, that they may be destroyed./ A sword upon her horses and upon her chariots, and upon all the foreign troops in her midst, that they may become women" (50: 36-37).

c. The Interplay of Honour and Shame: Internal and External Dynamics

Although it is tempting to view honour and shame as opposites that apply uniformly to either sex, the cultural values of honour and shame are more complex. They are a group of related concepts that are, in fact, "applied differentially by the different status-groups

⁶²⁷ An analogy first used by John Davis, *Land and Family in Pisticci* (London: Athlone Press, 1973) 160.

⁶²⁸ J. K. Campbell, "Honour and the Devil", *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (ed. J. G. Peristany; London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1965) 152.

⁶²⁹ David D. Gilmore, "The Shame of Dishonor", *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, 11.

defined by age, sex, class, occupation, etc. in the different social (not merely linguistic) context in which they find their meanings.”⁶³⁰ Honour serves a unique social purpose, according to Pitt-Rivers; it is “the clearing-house for the conflicts in the social structure, the conciliatory nexus between the sacred and the secular, between the individual and society and between systems of ideology and systems of action”.⁶³¹ As such the dynamics of challenges to honour and ripostes to them in the Book of Judith can be analyzed from different perspectives. In terms of the resolution of conflict, for instance, the encounter between the Assyrians and Jews, because of the text’s slurring of history and geography, becomes representative of the relationship between the Jews and their outside world. In Judith’s own honour and her defense of her community are seen not only the bond between Jews and their God but also the actualization of Jewish theology.

The work of Julian Pitt-Rivers was instrumental in bringing together honour and shame studies and the study of biblical literature. Returning to his work is particularly relevant to the task at hand for it illuminates aspects of the honour/shame dynamic that have hitherto been overlooked by biblical scholars, namely the class distinctions within a honour/shame society and the status of upper class women in particular. Especially significant to the study of *Judith* are Pitt-Rivers’ observations about internal and external group dynamics and how the group comes to represent itself through symbols.

⁶³⁰Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 16.

⁶³¹Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 47.

5. INTERNAL GROUP DYNAMICS

In the competitive forum of a honour/shame culture men are not free to compete with whomever they may choose. Certain elements determine whether or not one individual may contest the relative status or honour of another. First and foremost, honour is always based on a contest between equals.⁶³² Men of high rank gain nothing from attempting to prove superior status to an inferior. Such a contest between superior and inferior ranking individuals would, in fact, bring dishonour to the higher ranked of the two, particularly if he were to lose. At the other end of the scale, a challenge from an inferior is merely ignored by a superior ranking individual. Honour contests always occur where both parties have the potential to gain or lose. Honour contests are always public, as it is this public, male, forum that judges the winner.

Pitt-Rivers' observations concerning the involvement of the upper class in the honour and shame dynamic is the most pertinent for our study. He noticed that the upper class has social codes of its own.⁶³³ Honour is a transferable resource; it is something that is passed down from parent to child. Honour is derived from the father, more specifically from the actions of the father; and the honour acquired by him is passed to his children.⁶³⁴ hence the ancients' concern with genealogies of patrilineal descent.⁶³⁵

⁶³² Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 10.

⁶³³ Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 39.

⁶³⁴ Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 29.

⁶³⁵ Although not concerned with honour and shame as such. Robert Wilson's study of the historicity of biblical genealogies does draw attention to the social and political value of ones "claim to worth". *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977) 38-44; 195, n. 126. See also his article "The Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research", *JBL* 94 (1975): 169-189.

Sexual dishonour, in particular, is of considerably less concern in this upper class group “where claim to honour is both greatest and ascribed through linear descent”.⁶³⁶

The status of upper class women differs greatly from that of their lower class counterparts. The honour of women born and wed into the higher ranks is virtually impenetrable and divorced from the need for protection.⁶³⁷ These women possess “an element of masculine honour”,⁶³⁸ something that is heightened when an upper class woman becomes a widow.⁶³⁹ For instance, in our survey of the Greek literature in Part One it was noticed that some upper class women, particularly widowed queens, not only participated in military conquest but played a decisive leadership role. Characters such as queens Tomyris, Semiramis and Artemisia,⁶⁴⁰ are successful military leaders and are accepted as such by their armies. Queen Tomyris avenges the death of her son, Spargapises, ensuring that Cyrus, as head of his nation and the one ultimately responsible for her son’s death, meets a similar fate (for Spargapises died with honour by his own hands and not at the hand of his captors). Cyrus, in contrast, died in battle, a honourable fate, but was dishonoured, along with his nation, when Tomyris played with his severed head. Semiramis and Artemisia are renowned for their military leadership. Semiramis takes command at the siege of Bactria and Artemesia gains for herself the honour of being one of Xerxes’ best military advisors and best naval commanders. Although Herodotus in general strives to articulate the superiority of the Greeks over the Barbarians, Artemisia, queen of Halicarnassus, is not part of this motif. Rosaria Munson

⁶³⁶ *The Fate of Shechem*, 39.

⁶³⁷ *The Fate of Shechem*, 45.

⁶³⁸ *The Fate of Shechem*, 46.

⁶³⁹ *The Fate of Shechem*, 44, 80-83.

⁶⁴⁰ Artemisia is much like Shelamzion, both women retain power after the deaths of their husbands even though they have adult son[s] and both exhibit courage and bravery thought to be atypical for their gender. For a discussion of the character of Artemisia, see also Munson, “Artemisia in Herodotus”, 91-106 and Carolyn Dewald, “Women and Culture in Herodotus’ *Histories*”, 109-110.

demonstrates that Artemisia is analogous to the Athenians not the Barbarians.⁶⁴¹ As active participants in the quest for honour, which was strictly a male prerogative in these societies, these women represent anomalies. As victors over their male counterparts, these women reveal how tenuous a thing is honour.

6. EXTERNAL GROUP DYNAMICS

These observations about the workings of honour within a group require a few comments about the dynamics of honour between two groups. It has been noted above that the contest for honour is confined to competition between equals, yet this type of competition rarely occurs outside the group as a whole. Those outside one's group are considered foreigners. Outsiders may be brought into the group via marriage or contact with them may be limited to economics only. The encroachment of strangers upon the boundaries of village or nation "affronts the sense of honour of those whose duty is to protect them".⁶⁴² This duty may apply to women as well as to men.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴¹ Munson, "Artemisia in Herodotus", 107.

⁶⁴² Carol Delaney, "Seeds of Honor, Fields of Shame", *Honor and Shame and the Unity*, 44.

⁶⁴³ David D. Gilmore, "The Shame of Dishonor", *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, 9.

a. *The Nation as Group and the "Head" as a Symbol of Group Representation*

By means of analogy, the group is symbolized as a body, its leader or representative figuratively referred to as its "head",⁶⁴⁴ a term we still use today. According to Pitt-Rivers, honour and shame are accorded through the head. The act of cutting off a head therefore carries symbolic significance, particularly when it is the head of the head of a group. It is an act of dishonour or shame both in that the group is deprived of its leadership and in that the group is rendered symbolically unidentifiable. The heads of groups are most often men. Thus the act of decapitating a male leader is also an act of emasculation or feminization of the group.⁶⁴⁵ The decapitations of Nicanor in *I Maccabees* and Goliath in 1 Samuel are examples of this; however, these men were killed by other men. Decapitation at the hand of a woman held a more humiliating sting. Even Queen Tomyris did not kill Cyrus.⁶⁴⁶ Biblical literature draws attention to the shame that is inflicted when a woman kills a man. Abimelech whose skull was cracked by the woman of Tekoa, asks his compatriot to kill him "lest it be said of me, 'A woman killed him'" (Jud. 9: 53-54).

⁶⁴⁴ Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 5.

⁶⁴⁵ David D. Gilmore, "The Shame of Dishonor", *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, 11.

⁶⁴⁶ Earlier Cyrus tricked a detachment of the Massagetae into slaughtering some of his non-combatant men who were enjoying a feast. When the Massagetae had killed the feasting Persians they sat down to the meal themselves "and drank so much that they went to sleep" (Herodotus, 213, p. 99). This was when Cyrus' men returned and attacked, killing many and taking prisoners, one of whom was the Queen's son, Spargapises. Queen Tomyris chastises Cyrus for his cowardice in using wine as a weapon and demands the return of her son or she will give him "more blood than [he] can drink". Spargapises later kills himself in prison.

b. *Hospitality Between Groups*

One means of controlling interaction with strangers and dealing with potential conflict is through hospitality. In an honour and shame society, hospitality is a code of conduct between two strangers, the guest and the host. This code is necessary because the presence of a stranger in a community is a threat to its social order. Strangers carry with them things new and unknown, things that could potentially disrupt the established norms of the society. According to Pitt-Rivers, "the stranger belongs to the 'extra-ordinary' world, and the mystery surrounding him allies him to the sacred and makes him a suitable vehicle for the apparition of the God, the revelation of mystery."⁶⁴⁷ The relationship between guest and host is unique in that the two do not compete for honour, but instead exchange honour.⁶⁴⁸ During their relationship as host and guest any conflict between the guest and host or their respective communities is put on hold. When a stranger enters a community, it is obvious that he or she may become a guest of one of the community's members. Social status of the potential guest is a determining factor; "a person of high social status honours the whole community ... and must be made a guest by a leading member".⁶⁴⁹

Determining who becomes guest and who becomes host would be different where territory is disputed. A host can only be a host where he (or she) has the authority to

⁶⁴⁷Julian Pitt-Rivers, "The Stranger, the Guest and the Hostile Host: Introduction to the Study of the Laws of Hospitality", *Contributions to Mediterranean Sociology: Mediterranean Rural Communities and Social Change, Acts of the Mediterranean Sociological Conference, Athens, July 1963* (ed. J.-G. Peristiany; Paris and the Hague: Mouton & Co., 1968) 20. Strange women tend to be thought of as posing a larger threat, see Claudia V. Camp, "What's So Strange about the Strange Woman?", *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on his Sixty-fifth Birthday* (ed. David Jobling, Peggy Day and Gerald T. Sheppard; Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1991) 17-31.

⁶⁴⁸Pitt-Rivers, "The Stranger", 25. [13-30]

⁶⁴⁹Pitt-Rivers, "The Stranger", 24.

assert territorial dominion.⁶⁵⁰ Likewise, a person cannot ordinarily be a guest on his or her own land, as Odysseus demonstrates. Duties of the guest and host are circumscribed; the guest must respect and honour his or her host, while the host must protect and provide for his or her guest as well as honour them in return.⁶⁵¹

c. *Hybris: The Willful Shaming of a Group*

Related to the notion of shame on the battlefield is the intentional shaming of a group. Warfare requires that there be one winner and one loser; however, humiliation can occur outside the arena of war. The Greeks had a concept of this intentional and malicious humiliation of others for the sake of increasing the prestige of the perpetrator: it was called *hybris*.⁶⁵² *Hybristic* acts are not only acts against an individual but, in a dyadic society, they are acts against the group as well. For instance, to rape a woman brings shame to her *kyrios* (lord) and her household.⁶⁵³ At a communal level a *hybristic* act, such as sexual offences, can jeopardize group integrity, individual identity, and social stability.⁶⁵⁴ Those most prone to *hybris* are the wealthy and those in power; men who can “lord” it over others and who feel immune from any sort of retribution.⁶⁵⁵ *Hybristic* acts vary in type. They include sexual assault and other violent assaults even while the perpetrator is intoxicated. The political assault of expansionist policies by a tyrant for the

⁶⁵⁰Pitt-Rivers, “The Stranger”, 26.

⁶⁵¹Pitt-Rivers, “The Stranger”, 27-28.

⁶⁵²N. R. E. Fisher, *Hybris: A Study in the Values of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greece* (Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips, 1996) 86. The notion that hybristic acts involved divine wrath has been disproven by Fisher’s exhaustive study; see in particular his discussion on *hybris* and religion, pp. 142-148.

⁶⁵³Fisher, *Hybris*, 104-105.

⁶⁵⁴On the severity of sexual offences in general, see Fisher, *Hybris*, 104-111; on their threat to social order, see pps. 493-500.

⁶⁵⁵N. R. E. Fisher, “Hybris and Dishonor I”, *Greece and Rome* 23. 2 (1976) 182-184.

sheer pleasure of dominating and shaming surrounding states are similarly *hybristic*.⁶⁵⁶

As we will observe later, *hybris* is a key concept in the Book of Judith.

7. HONOUR AND SHAME IN THE JEWISH CONTEXT

Anthropologists have long debated what some see as the uniformity of honour and shame dynamics within Mediterranean societies.⁶⁵⁷ Although Johannes Pedersen drew attention to honour and shame in ancient Israel some time ago, biblical scholars are still in the process of exploring how these two important cultural values governed behaviour in Jewish society.⁶⁵⁸

The starting point for the discussion of the concept of honour in Jewish society is its semantic attributes.⁶⁵⁹ The Hebrew word for honour is “*kabod*”. This word and its

⁶⁵⁶On *hybris* and sexual assault see Fisher, *Hybris*, 104-111; cf. David Cohen, “Sexuality, Violence, and the Athenian Law of *Hubris*”, *Greece and Rome* 38. 2 (1991) 171-188. On the connection between alcohol and *hybris*, see Douglas M. MacDowell, “*Hybris* in Athens”, *Greece and Rome* 23. 1 (1976) 16-17 and Fisher, *Hybris*, 99-102. An exhaustive account of the *hybris* of imperialist nations in antiquity is found in Fisher, *Hybris*, 502; cf. 131-135; see also his chapter on Herodotus which explores the Persian lust for conquest, pp. 343-385.

⁶⁵⁷These questions and the approaches to them are summarized by David D. Gilmore, “Introduction: The Shame of Dishonor”, *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean* (ed. David D. Gilmore; Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1987) 5-8; see also Michael Herzfeld, “Honour and Shame: Problems in the Comparative Analysis of Moral Systems”, *Man: The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15.1 (1980) 347-348. The volume of *Semeia* that is devoted to *Honor and Shame in the Bible* (68, 1994) is criticized by John K. Chance for its uncritical acceptance of the honour/shame model, see 140-148.

⁶⁵⁸See in particular Johannes Pedersen, “Honour and Shame”, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, vol. 1 (1926-1940; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1991) 213-244; Saul M. Olyan, “Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and its Environment”, *JBL* 115. 2 (1996) 201-218; T. R. Hobbs, “Reflections on Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations”, *JBL* 116. 3 (1997) 501-503 and Lyn M. Bechtel, “Shame as a Sanction of Social Control in Biblical Israel: Judicial, Political, and Social Shaming”, *JSOT* 49 (1991) 47-76.

⁶⁵⁹For an overview of these attributes, see Timothy S. Laniak, *Shame and Honor in the Book of Esther* (SBLDS 165; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997) 17-23.

cognates denote “heaviness” or “weight” in the sense of being important.⁶⁶⁰ It is related to the concepts of power and might and is itself an attribute of “God, the king and other persons of high status and authority”; however, an individual whose behaviour is exemplary can also achieve it.⁶⁶¹ For instance, the crown was a manifestation of this divine honour or glory and it was worn by the king or the hero.⁶⁶² Honour also held a strong visual association with beauty. Kings were clothed with a “terrifying radiance” (cf. Ps. 45: 2) and divine intermediaries such as Mother Zion wore beautiful garments (Isa. 52: 1).⁶⁶³ In battle in the ancient Near East, the honour and glory of the deity clothed the king’s countenance and prevailed over the enemy.

For the rest of humankind it is an element that is linked to the soul⁶⁶⁴ and as such is intimately related to its source, YHWH.⁶⁶⁵ Honour also has a physical manifestation; it reveals itself in strength, valour and great deeds and is a radiant quality apparent in physical beauty, even filtering through the clothing one wears.⁶⁶⁶ To be honoured is to be blessed by God and this includes financial prosperity. Honour, however, is not just an individual quality. It is a possession of the family, inherited by its children.⁶⁶⁷ Yet it moves beyond the family and involves the community as a whole. In Jewish society, the honour of the individual is bound up with communal well-being. Honour, bestowed by the community, is returned in the form of community leadership and responsibility to

⁶⁶⁰ M. Weinfeld, “kābod”, *TDOT*, vol. 7, 23-24.

⁶⁶¹ Weinfeld, “kabod”. *TDOT*, 26-27.

⁶⁶² Weinfeld, “kabod”, *TDOT*, 27.

⁶⁶³ Weinfeld, “kabod”, *TDOT*, 28.

⁶⁶⁴ Pedersen, *Israel*, vol. 1, 213, cf 234-239. C. Dohmen, “kabad”. *TDOT*, vol. 7, 13.

⁶⁶⁵ Pedersen, *Israel*, vol. 1, 224.

⁶⁶⁶ Pedersen, *Israel*, vol. 1, 227.

⁶⁶⁷ Pedersen, *Israel*, vol. 1, 217.

provide for the weaker members of the group. This, as Pedersen observes, is typified in the early life of Job, where Job became a benefactor to his society (29: 2-20).⁶⁶⁸

Shame too is linked to the soul. As an opposite of honour, shame is the emptying of the soul.⁶⁶⁹ It is the effect of weakness, the inability “to maintain one’s honour”.

Shame is brought about through words or deeds, often causing bodily harm.

Moving beyond the semantic level, honour and shame govern human relations, both interpersonal and international. An interesting study by Saul Olyan draws attention to the element of honour in covenantal relations. Covenants were cut between kings and clients and between gods and their people. Israel, for instance, had covenantal relations with its God, YHWH.⁶⁷⁰ Olyan observes that honour is an “implicit requirement” of all ancient Near Eastern covenants. Honour is reciprocal in nature; a king is honoured by his subjects and clients. He in turn gives them protection, peace and prosperity and they, in response, are loyal to him. This loyalty had to be demonstrated publicly. Should the patron desire to battle with an enemy nation, his loyal subjects and clients found themselves at war.⁶⁷¹ To refuse to support a patron in his battle with an enemy is to shame him and break the covenant.⁶⁷² Thus, in the Book of Judith we find justification for Nebuchadnezzar’s anger because the surrounding nations did not support him in his campaign against Araphaxad, king of the Medes (1: 12).

⁶⁶⁸Pedersen, *Israel*, vol. 1, 213-215.

⁶⁶⁹Pedersen, *Israel*, vol. 1, 239-244: cf. Horst Seebass, “bôsh”, *TDOT*, vol. 2, 50-60 and J. Gamberoni, “hapar”, *TDOT*, vol. 5, 107-111.

⁶⁷⁰Olyan, “Honour, Shame and Covenantal Relations”, 205; cf. 1 Sam. 2: 30.

⁶⁷¹Olyan terms the two parties to a covenant as “suzerain” and “vassal”; however, as T. R. Hobbs demonstrates, the anthropological term for this type of relationship is “patron-client”, a term I will use here. The use of the term “patron-client” instead of “suzerain-vassal” in no way diminishes Olyan’s argument. See Hobbs, “Reflections”, 502 and Niels Peter Lemche, “Kings and Clients: On Loyalty Between the Ruler and the Ruled in Ancient “Israel””, *Ethics and Politics in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Douglas A. Knight; Semeia 66; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995) 119-132.

⁶⁷²Olyan, “Honour, Shame, and Covenantal Relations”, 207.

Within this system everyone has his or her place or status. Clients may challenge the honour of other clients but never the honour of their patron. Clients, as well, can never usurp what is rightfully the property of their “lords”.⁶⁷³ To do this or to challenge a patron would be to destroy the relationship. Patrons, however, are free to increase or decrease the relative status of their clients.⁶⁷⁴

Shame, the taking away of one’s honour or the refusal to recognize honour, could be used as a means of social control, particularly at the international level. Shame was a critical element when nations were at war. Kings and warriors stood as symbols of their people and the defeat of an enemy meant that any captive would be shamed by being bound and led naked through the streets. This technique was used by the Assyrians and later by the Romans; the power of the *Judea capta* coins has already been discussed. The technique had a strong psychological impact and was intended to wound the pride of the offending nation; it also functioned as propaganda for the winning side.⁶⁷⁵ Shame could also be used as a diplomatic gesture, unpredictably withdrawing honour from a nation that expected honour. This reversal increased the effect of the shaming gesture.⁶⁷⁶ For example, Hanun the Ammonite made this type of gesture to David and it led to war (2 Sam (10: 1-5)).⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷³The term lord, or “ba’al” in Hebrew and *kurios* in later Greek, was commonly used of male persons who held power over someone. See Pedersen, *Israel*, vol. 1, 63.

⁶⁷⁴Olyan, “Honour, Shame, and Covenantal Relations”, 206-208.

⁶⁷⁵ Although the propagandistic dimension of these shaming acts is not specifically discussed, it is nevertheless an important element of warfare, see Lyn M. Bechtel, “Shame as a Sanction of Social Control in Biblical Israel: Judicial, Political, and Social Shaming”, *JSOT* 49 (1991) 63-64; H. W. F. Saggs, “Assyrian Warfare in the Sargonid Period”, *Iraq* 25 (1963) 145-154.

⁶⁷⁶ Bechtel, “Shame as a Sanction”, 69.

⁶⁷⁷Olyan, “Honour, Shame, and Covenantal Relations”, 212-213.

8. DECEPTION AND THE POLITICS OF BIBLICAL TRICKSTERISM

Scholars often assess Judith's deception of Holofernes as though it were identical with the erotic elements in the book.⁶⁷⁸ In the following analysis I want to disassociate the erotic⁶⁷⁹ from the deceptive and consider the elements separately. I feel that it is important to analyze these elements separately because how deception is understood and interpreted is culturally bound and as such falls within the orbit of my continuing analysis of honour and shame.

As a working definition of deception, the one proposed by Fuchs is useful:

"Deception is the intentional production of (a) misleading message(s) - through linguistic or other means - or the intentional concealment of required information. The concept of deception is predicated upon the expected correspondence of semiosis and reality, language and fact. To deceive is to signify something to which no real state of things corresponds".⁶⁸⁰ Traditionally, deception is viewed negatively as an indirect means of gaining one's goal; in biblical literature this strategy is typically resorted to by women who lack the power to achieve what they want through direct means.⁶⁸¹ Yet in the Hellenistic literature examined thus far, deception plays a crucial and, moreover, a

⁶⁷⁸More recent discussions avoid comment on the moral aspect of Judith's actions, see Ackerman *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, 61-65; Bach, *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative*, 202-203; Stocker observes that Judith's chastity "is the symbolic guarantee of all the values she represents, metaphysical, moral and national", yet still terms her a "sexual warrior", *Judith: Sexual Warrior*, 8.

⁶⁷⁹The erotic elements in the book were discussed in Part Two.

⁶⁸⁰Esther Fuchs, "For I Have the Way of Women: Deception, Gender, and Ideology in Biblical Narrative", *Reasoning with the Foxes* Fuchs, 68-69.

⁶⁸¹Carole Fontaine, "The Deceptive Goddess in Ancient Near Eastern Myth: Inanna and Inaraš", *Reasoning with the Foxes: Female Wit in a World of Male Power* (Semeia 42; ed. J. Cheryl Exum and Johanna W. H. Bos; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988) 85; see also Fuchs, "For I Have the Way of Women", 68-83 and Johanna W. H. Bos, "Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4: 17-22; Ruth 3", *Reasoning with the Foxes*, 37-67 and Esther Fuchs, "Who is Hiding the Truth? Deceptive Women and Biblical Androcentrism", *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship* (ed. Adela Yarbro Collins; Chico, Ca.: Scholars Press, 1985) 137-144.

socially acceptable form of defense. The typical behaviour when dealing with confrontations with strangers is to try to trick or outwit them. In Part 1, for instance, we observed the frequent use of ruse, especially in military matters. Cyrus tricked Tomyris' small detachment into thinking they had killed a major Persian contingent and won for themselves a wonderful feast; they were, however, killed by Cyrus' army (Herodotus, 1. 211). Even in Josephus' depiction of Hasmonean history, Janneus is portrayed as having duped Ptolemy Lathyrus by feigning an agreement with him while asking his mother Cleopatra III for help (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 334). Deception in the literature of the times was commonplace and, in fact, to be expected when dealing with those outside one's group.

Anthropological studies of honour and shame societies provide insight into this phenomenon. Unlike the values of our North American white society, the act of deception in these societies is not always looked at in morally pejorative terms.⁶⁸² Persons in honour and shame societies do not focus on the truth-value of what is spoken. Instead they reason in terms of which member of the group is owed the truth. The truth is only owed to those to whom honour is due.⁶⁸³ Those outside of the group dynamics are beyond the boundary of requisite honesty. Strangers, therefore, are fair game for deception, so too is an enemy or someone who threatens to do harm. Deception as we have seen reflected in the literature can be used as a powerful tool against an enemy. To dupe someone is to humiliate them.⁶⁸⁴ As a stratagem, deception is an effective means of

⁶⁸²Juliet du Boulay observes that the modern Greek word for lie (*pséma*) is devoid of the negative connotations that its English equivalent carries. See "Lies, Mockery and Family Integrity", *Mediterranean Family Structures* (ed. J. G. Peristiany; Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 406, ft. 3.

⁶⁸³Bourdieu, "The Sentiment of Honour", 228-229; cf. Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 11.

⁶⁸⁴Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 12.

defending familial or communal boundaries and thereby protecting the integrity of the social group.⁶⁸⁵

The power of deception to invert a potentially harmful situation is acknowledged in the figure of the trickster. A trickster functions in society and in literature as a person or character that reshapes cultural norms in order to present a different, deeper or more penetrating perspective of reality.⁶⁸⁶ Many cultures have trickster figures. These characters take forms that are unique to their cultures, thus they are best examined from within their specific cultural context.⁶⁸⁷ Various types of trickster-like behaviours are found in both Hellenistic literature⁶⁸⁸ and in biblical literature,⁶⁸⁹ for instance, differs considerably from its African counterparts. What seems to be common to tricksters, in general, is that they are used as a vehicle for voicing social concerns⁶⁹⁰ by confronting

⁶⁸⁵ Juliet du Boulay, *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974) 74. See also her article "Lies, Mockery and Family Integrity", 389-406.

⁶⁸⁶ Tricksters figure primarily in North American and African aboriginal societies. Two important anthropological studies of their behaviour include Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (New York: Bell Publishing, 1956) and Robert D. Pelton, *The Trickster in West Africa: A Study of Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980).

⁶⁸⁷ Pelton, *The Trickster*, 16-17.

⁶⁸⁸ Although the type of trickster that Radin and Pelton identify is not specifically attested in ancient Hellenistic and Jewish societies, the literature of these two societies contain characters that share some of the traits and functions seen in the African trickster. Drawing on the anthropological studies of Radin and Pelton, some classicists and biblical scholars have studied these trickster-like characters. Examples of both male and female trickster behaviour figure in Herodotus' work, *The Histories*; however, it is the female tricksters, according to Dewald, that succeed "by exploiting the false assumptions of their male opponents"; Dewald, "Women and Culture in Herodotus' Histories", 105-107. Dewald rightly observes that Herodotus contains characters that exhibit "trickster behavior" on certain occasions but are not tricksters *per se*. The same can be said of Judith, as we shall see below. For a discussion of the tricksters in Herodotus, see Carolyn Dewald, "Practical Knowledge and the Historian's Role in Herodotus and Thucydides", *The Greek Historians: Literature and History, Papers Presented to A. D. Raubitschek* (Saratoga, CA: Anna Libri, 1985) 54-55.

⁶⁸⁹ See the works by Susan Niditch. *Underdogs and Tricksters: A Prelude to Biblical Folklore* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987) is very useful as is her chapter titled "The Ideology of Tricksterism" in *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 106-122. I will discuss this chapter more fully below. Other works on biblical tricksters are found in the *Semeia* volume, *Reasoning with the Foxes: Female Wit in a World of Male Power* (Semeia 42; ed. J. Cheryl Exum and Johanna W. H. Bos: Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988).

⁶⁹⁰ Naomi Steinberg, "Israelite Tricksters. Their Analogues and Cross-cultural Study". *Reasoning with the Foxes*, 1.

and eventually breaking down the boundary between those in authority and those subject to authority.⁶⁹¹

The trickster behaviour of biblical characters has its own special characteristics. Biblical characters that use trickster behaviour are most often female and, true to trickster form, rely on deceit as their *modus operandi*.⁶⁹² More specifically, these trickster tales are about an overall Israelite worldview, group identity, empowerment and different means of dealing with authority; for instance, according to Niditch, the book of Esther is a comment on survival within an unjust political system.⁶⁹³ These comments on deception are interesting. Analysis of how this research informs our reading of *Judith*, however, will have to wait until we have situated Judith's actions within the book's political setting.

⁶⁹¹ Cristiano Grottanelli, "Tricksters, Scapegoats, Champions, Saviors", *JR* 23. 2 (1983) 138-139.

⁶⁹² Steinberg rightfully cautions us against viewing trickster behaviour as synonymous with normative female behaviour; "Israelite Tricksters", 8. Claudia V. Camp also observes that Western society's tendency to regard the trickster's deception as immoral is, in fact, an imposition of our cultural values; see "Wise and Strange: An Interpretation of the Female Imagery in Proverbs in Light of Trickster Mythology", *Reasoning with the Foxes*, 26. It could just as easily be argued that because male behaviour is more prescribed than female, female characters have a broader range of acceptable behaviour to choose from and therefore possess the freedom to exhibit trickster characteristics. For a study that gets beyond the morality of deception, see Alice Bach, *Women, Seduction and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), which examines the phenomenon of deception and seduction through the lens of the cultural codes of the biblical world.

⁶⁹³ Susan Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters: A Prelude to Biblical Folklore* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987) 152.

9. THE POLITICAL SETTING OF THE BOOK OF JUDITH: ISRAEL'S HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE RETURN OF THE ASSYRIANS

Israel has always viewed its surrounding nations as a potential threat to its cultural and religious integrity. No nations more poignantly typify this threat than Assyria and Babylonia. Historically, Assyria, Israel's neighbour to the north, invaded Samaria late in the eighth century B.C.E. and deported some people (2 Kings 17: 6; Isa. 36: 1). At that time Samaria, along with Judah, were vassals of Assyria (2 Kings 16: 1, 7; 17: 3). This meant that they had sworn an oath to be loyal to Assyria and to pay tribute. Included in this covenant was the obligation to come to the aid of Assyria if it were requested.

Vassal states were supposed to be terrified by the awesome power of the Assyrian king and his vengeance, if an oath was not honoured. These wayward states openly rejected the power of the king and his gods and it was thought that these states took a tremendous risk, brazenly trusting in their own power. The power of the Assyrian king had its physical manifestation. Amélie Kuhrt, citing a work by Helene Cassin, observes "the royal power to inspire fear was visualized as a shining radiance" that made the king "both beautiful and terrifying"; it was a power that "could strike his enemies down, so that they fell to their knees before him, dazzled by the fearful glow."⁶⁹⁴ The deportation of the people of Samaria is attributed to the "treachery" of its king Hoshea who failed to pay tribute to Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria (2 Kings 17: 3-7).

⁶⁹⁴ For a concise account of the Neo-Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and especially Assyria's understanding of the oaths of loyalty and the striking power of its king, see Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 514-517.

The Babylonian deportation had a profound effect on the Jewish psyche. It was not merely recorded in biblical literature, but became a theological statement about the rupture in the relationship between the Jewish people and its god YHWH. The Exile took its place alongside the Exodus from Egypt as definitive events in Jewish history. Whereas the Exodus represented YHWH's salvific act of deliverance from oppression, the Exile came to represent YHWH's punitive act for Israel's collective sins; the return from Exile became a symbol of the restoration of the community's relationship with YHWH.

Within this paradigm, the historical players took on symbolic importance. References to Assyria, Babylon/Babylonia and Nebuchadnezzar recur frequently in biblical literature, becoming symbolic tools of the various authors in their quest to portray the universal sovereignty of their God. As we have seen in a previous section, the importance of biblical themes continued in the intertestamental literature of the Second Temple period and also figured prominently when it came time for Jewish authors to surrender to what Lawrence Wills calls "the novelistic impulse".⁶⁹⁵

The Book of Judith draws on the biblical perspective of these enemies from the North. Assyria threatens, with Nebuchadnezzar and later Holofernes at the helm. Although Nebuchadnezzar was the historical king of the Babylonians, I believe that it is wrong to assume the author erred when he or she made him king of the Assyrians. Conflation of historical events and geographical places is typical of these early works of prose fiction, as we have seen, and may have been a signal to the audience of these early works that they were entering the world of fiction. Ancient authors of fiction were

⁶⁹⁵ Wills, *The Jewish Novel*, 216, 227.

primarily concerned with the moral message and philosophy that underscored their work.⁶⁹⁶

The overall setting of the Book of Judith is critical. The Jews have just returned from exile; the Temple has just been rededicated. A new beginning is at hand. The people are without sin and so soon are they being threatened. This new threat to the land and its people has a universal, even eschatological quality. Assyria's aggression is not aimed at acquiring territory; it is an act of vengeance for sending their ambassadors home "empty-handed and shamefaced" (1: 11). The political context suggests that the nations surrounding Assyria were not vassal states. Nebuchadnezzar requested help from much of the known world, but many nations rejected Nebuchadnezzar's request because of their independence; they "were not afraid of him, but looked upon him as only one man" (1: 7-11). Enslin best conveys the sense of insignificance with which these nations view Nebuchadnezzar's request in the translation. He states: "And all who dwelt in all the land made light of the word of Nabouchodonosor king of the Assyrians and did not assemble themselves with him for war, because they did not fear him, but in their eyes he was but an ordinary man" (1: 11); this comment suggests that Nebuchadnezzar is out of place in thinking too much of himself, as Enslin observes.⁶⁹⁷ Thus the text begins by addressing a critical issue involved in Jewish monarchy, the tendency of the monarchs of the surrounding nations to elevate themselves above humankind to the level of gods.

⁶⁹⁶ D. C. Fenney, "Towards an Account of the Ancient World's Concepts of Fictive Belief", *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World*, 234.

⁶⁹⁷ καὶ ἐφάυλισαν πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν τὸ ῥῆμα Ναβουχοδονοσορ βασιλέως Ἀσσυρίων καὶ οὐ συνῆλθον αὐτῷ εἰς τὸν πόλεμον. ὅτι οὐκ ἐφοβήθησαν αὐτόν. ἀλλ' ἦν ἐναντίον αὐτῶν ὡς ἀνὴρ εἰς ... "; Enslin, *The Book of Judith*, 63.

a. *The Hybris of Nebuchadnezzar*

Nebuchadnezzar plays a brief but vital role in the Book of Judith. In the fashion of Herodotus, Nebuchadnezzar's *hybris* is portrayed as the cause of the situation in which Judea finds itself. In order to understand the severity of the threat posed to Judea and its people it is necessary to first understand Nebuchadnezzar's actions as a challenge to YHWH's honour.⁶⁹⁸

The character of Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Judith is drawn, for the most part, from the portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar in biblical literature. In most biblical literature Nebuchadnezzar is presented only as the Babylonian king responsible for deporting the Jews.⁶⁹⁹ The author of the book of Daniel uses the image of Nebuchadnezzar as a powerful and *hybristic* king to comment on the universal sovereignty of God. Daniel is set during the time when Judah was in exile in Babylon (1: 1-2). Nebuchadnezzar covets the worship of everyone, even the Jews (3: 10-12). Through a series of disturbing dreams and miraculous incidents, he comes to accept the fact that YHWH's sovereignty is greater than his own (4: 34-37).⁷⁰⁰ This initial image of Nebuchadnezzar recurs in the Book of Judith.

The story begins with a direct threat not to the Jews, but to one of their neighbours. King Nebuchadnezzar goes to war against King Arphaxad the Mede (1: 1, 5). Many nations joined Nebuchadnezzar's army (1: 6) and he called on even more

⁶⁹⁸ Esler, "By the Hand of a Woman", 73.

⁶⁹⁹ Occasionally Nebuchadnezzar's military aggression is portrayed as the instrument of Yahweh (Jer. 34: 1-2). On the historical Nebuchadnezzar, see Donald John Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon* (Oxford and New York: Oxford, 1985).

⁷⁰⁰ David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford and New York: Oxford, 1993) 175, 181; cf. John J. Collins, *Seers, Sibyls and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (New York and Leiden: Brill, 1997) 136.

nations to join him (1: 7-10). They refused, because they felt he was “only one man”, and thus they sent his messengers back “empty-handed and shamefaced” (1: 11). Having his call for help rejected, Nebuchadnezzar was shamed and vowed to avenge this rejection (1: 12). Years later, he defeated Arphaxad and thus shamed the Medes and, after a victory celebration, begins to carry out his plan (1: 15; 2: 1). Esler rightly observes that Nebuchadnezzar’s response is in keeping with the prevailing values of honour and shame.⁷⁰¹ Yet Nebuchadnezzar’s *hybristic* character is revealed in his command to his general Holofernes: “Thus says the Great King, the lord of the whole earth ... for I am coming against them, from my anger, and will cover the whole face of the earth with the feet of my armies. ... You shall go and seize all their territory for me in advance. They will yield themselves to you, and you shall hold them for me till the day of their punishment” (2: 5-10). Although it is debated the degree to which Nebuchadnezzar sets himself up as a god,⁷⁰² the eschatological thrust of this passage should not be overlooked. In a later interview with Holofernes, Judith speaks of Nebuchadnezzar as having dominion over not only the earth and “every living soul”, but also “the beasts of the field and the cattle and the birds of the air” (11: 7). This

⁷⁰¹ Esler, “By the Hand of a Woman”, 71.

⁷⁰² Moore equivocates on this issue, claiming that “the ancient Jewish readers would have regarded all of Nebuchadnezzar’s claims in vv 7-13 as pretentious, if not blasphemous”. He blames Holofernes for overreaching his authority. “Nebuchadnezzar made no claim to being divine. ...and in no instance did he require or even ask for divine honors. Yet Holofernes will try to enforce exactly that (3: 8; 6: 2). Thus, in the story at least, it will be Holofernes, the overzealous and blasphemous general, who is destroyed, not Nebuchadnezzar”, *Judith*, 134. Toni Craven also misreads the evidence. She writes: “Nebuchadnezzar’s complaints against the nations are political and he frames his plan of political revenge in appropriate language. His vassals have shunned his authority, his ‘lordship’ and they must pay for their foolishness. For all his arrogance, nowhere does Nebuchadnezzar claim the title ‘god’ (Θεός) for himself”. Later she writes: “The question about who is the true God and the issue of what does faithfulness to this God require have been sketched in full opposition.” See, *Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith*, 69, 90. Craven’s starting point is the assumption that Nebuchadnezzar is already lord of the earth and that all the nations are his vassals. The fact that Holofernes is commissioned with the task of subduing them “till the day of their punishment” (2: 10) is, as Alonso-Schökel points out, god-like language in the manner of Ezekiel and the psalms, “Narrative Structures”, 14-15.

sovereignty of Nebuchadnezzar's suggests an allusion to biblical literature that warrants a closer look.

In Jeremiah, a prophetic book that I have previously discussed as being an important key to the Book of Judith, Nebuchadnezzar is portrayed as a servant of YHWH. Jeremiah states: "Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him. All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave" (27: 6-7; cf. Dan. 2: 37-38). This passage is similar in thought to the political setting reflected in the Book of Judith. There Nebuchadnezzar's promise to punish those nations who refuse to assist him in his war with Arphaxad and the subsequent fate of his general Holofernes sound very much like Jeremiah's prophetic words. In Jeremiah YHWH vows to punish Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon and he orders Jeremiah to: "Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. They shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword which I am sending among them" (25: 12, 15-16). The eschatological quality of these words continues in Jeremiah until the cutting of a new covenant is marked by a new creation: that new creation of YHWH's is a female who protects the warrior.

b. *The Allegorization of the Threat of Shame to Israel, the Land and its People*

In the Book of Judith not just its main character, Judith, but the land and by implication, its people are personified as female. Judith in her prayer to God portrays the military threat against the Jewish people in terms of the sexual assault against Dinah. We have already seen that during the Hellenistic period the loser of a military battle is thought of as having been emasculated/feminized, but before the battle these military contestants are typically personified male. This is not the case in the Book of Judith where female imagery is a key element. Judith, “the Jewess”, her people, and the geography of Bethulia are depicted as being female from the onset. Additionally, the symbolism that is linked to the Assyrians undergoes a crucial transformation. As we will later observe, the symbolic significance of the maleness of the Assyrians and Holofernes versus the femaleness of the Jews are inverted during Judith’s encounter with Holofernes. Given the probability that the Book of Judith could also have been read by its original audience on an allegorical level and that allegories use symbols as a vehicle to give voice to political conflicts,⁷⁰³ it is useful at this point to ask whether there is a deeper meaning contained in the sexual symbolism of the book.

The threat to Israel posed by the Assyrians is allegorized as a sexual assault on a woman. Bethulia, while it may not be etymologically derived from the Hebrew word for virgin, *betulah*, is, according to Alan Dundes, “semantically appropriate”.⁷⁰⁴ As Dundes and others observe, the passageway to Bethulia, a narrow space between the hills, mirrors

⁷⁰³ Fletcher, *Allegory*, 20-23.

⁷⁰⁴ Dundes, “Comment on ‘Narrative Structures in the Book of Judith’ ”, 28.

the landscape of the approach into the female body. This interpretation of the impending military assault as a sexual assault is also echoed in Judith's prayer to God. Judith prays to God as the God of her "father Simeon" who was, according to Judith, given "a sword to take revenge on the strangers who had loosed the girdle of a virgin to defile her" (9: 2). Judith's version of the Simeon/Dinah story has Dinah not only shamed by the rape but also disgraced by the "pollution" of her womb, in other words, pregnancy.

Judith herself personifies the vulnerability of Israel. Her name means "the Jewess" and her status as widow reflects the biblical metaphor of the Jewish community in exile as a widow (Isa. 54: 4).⁷⁰⁵ It must be remembered, however, that the story is set shortly after the return from the Exile at a time when the sacred vessels, altar and temple had just been re-dedicated (Jdt. 4: 3). It is a time when the community is closest to God, a time of restoration when YHWH is protective of his people; Isaiah states: "I have also created the ravager to destroy; no weapon that is fashioned against you shall prosper" (54: 16). Given the context, the metaphoric link between Judith and her people is solid; Judith may be a widow, but she is not vulnerable; Israel may be a small state, but she is not defenseless, provided she remain close to God.

This threat of sexual assault is also extended to Judith when she leaves the relative safety of the city for the Assyrian camp. The vulnerability of a lone woman amidst an army of men needs little comment. An interesting shift in the sexual dynamic is offered when Holofernes plans to seduce her or take her by force: if he fails to have sexual

⁷⁰⁵ See Alonso-Schökel, "Narrative Structures", 15. Amy-Jill Levine acknowledges "the metaphoric potential" of the character of Judith, but argues that this character both supports and subverts the metaphoric connection between Judith and her community. Levine points to Judith's economic status, piety, rhetoric, beauty and genealogy as elements that define her link to her community; however, Levine's argument assumes that Judith cannot fully represent the Israelite community because women at this time were not active historically; see "Sacrifice and Salvation: Otherness and Domestication in the Book of Judith", *No One Spoke Ill of Her*, 17-30. As we have seen in Part 3, this is not the case.

intercourse with her he believes that he will be a laughing-stock (12: 12).⁷⁰⁶ It is at this point that there is a dramatic shift in power. Holofernes experiences the threat of shame; the prospect of the failure to conquer sexually renders Holofernes vulnerable. He may be, as Judith declares “thoroughly informed and marvellous in military strategy” (11: 8), but the marvellous beauty of her face (10: 23), like the striking appearance of the Assyrian king which was mentioned above, undermined his confidence.

Anthropological studies remind us “sexuality is a form of social power” and that power is contextual.⁷⁰⁷ As Margarita Stocker remarks: “The most striking element in the Book of Judith is that it is so conscious and deliberate in its acknowledgement of the phallic concept of power”.⁷⁰⁸ Initially exercised by Nebuchadnezzar and Holofernes, this “phallic concept of power” is quickly usurped by Judith and used to maintain her people’s independence. The power shift is from male to female. This shift is demonstrated through what Lawrence Wills calls “vaginal” symbolism. Wills argues that Holofernes’ tent is representative of a vagina and his canopy, a hymen. Judith’s return to Bethulia with the bloody proof that the Assyrian invulnerability has at last been penetrated is analogous to a “token of virginity”.⁷⁰⁹ Although Judith’s continued celibacy after her return to Bethulia is viewed by some scholars as an indicator of her “domestication”, albeit incompletely, Stocker aptly observes that Judith’s political ties to her community continue throughout her life, remarking that the latter phase of Judith’s life “symbolically conveys that in her celibacy Judith is living out the price of the

⁷⁰⁶ ἰδοὺ γὰρ αἰσχρὸν τῷ προσώπῳ ἡμῶν εἰ γυναῖκα τοιαύτην παρήσομεν οὐχ ὀμιλήσαντες αὐτῇ· ὅτι ἐὰν ταύτην μὴ ἐπισπασώμεθα, καταγελάσεται ἡμῶν.

⁷⁰⁷ Gilmore, “The Shame of Dishonor”, *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, 4 and Jill Dubisch, “Introduction”, *Power and Gender in Rural Greece*, 19.

⁷⁰⁸ Stocker, *Judith: Sexual Warrior*, 7.

⁷⁰⁹ Wills, *The Jewish Novel*, 149.

nation's security.”⁷¹⁰ This shift in power is also cast in terms of “reversals”, which as we have seen, connotes the veiled appeal for a recognition of some type.

10. “WOE TO THE NATIONS THAT RISE UP AGAINST MY PEOPLE” (JDT. 16: 17): THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP OF JUDITH

The question is yet to be asked why Judith comes forth to take responsibility for the plight of her people? Typically, and this is seen initially in the Book of Judith, the high priest, the senate (ἡ γερουσία)⁷¹¹ and the city elders⁷¹² are the key decision-makers and they are all male; however, it is their ineffectiveness in the face of danger that spurs Judith into action. It is not the encroaching Assyrian army that prompts Judith's action; it is the disorder and lack of faith within her community that inspires her.

Incensed by what she sees as a lack of faith and reluctance to be tested by God (8: 12-13, 25), she informs them: “the Lord will deliver Israel by my hand” (8: 33). Although Judith stipulates that the elders not “bind the purposes of the Lord our God” (8: 16), she, nevertheless, assures them that God will save Israel through her. I believe that this admonition of the elders is an important clue to the propagandistic message of the book. It is important to note that Judith speaks only to the elders, whereas the chief elders, Uzziah, Chabris, and Charmis speak to the other elders and an assembly of the people (6: 14-16). Judith never addresses the people as a whole until she returns

⁷¹⁰ Levine, “Sacrifice and Salvation”, 26-28; Stocker, *Judith: Sexual Warrior*, 8.

⁷¹¹ Jdt. 4: 8; 11: 14; 15: 8.

⁷¹² Jdt. 6: 15.

successful from the Assyrian camp; at this point the people are astounded and bow down and worship God (13: 17).

It is important to contrast Judith's story with those of other women who save the Jewish people by killing someone who threatens them, for there is a qualitative difference between Judith's story and the stories of these others. While it is true that biblical literature contains episodes where women kill men, these episodes are markedly unlike the murder of Holofernes in the Book of Judith. Jael's assassination of Sisera and the murder of Abimelech by the unnamed woman from Thebez (Jdg. 4: 21; 5: 24-27; 9: 53) were unplanned, spontaneous events; Judith's murder of Holofernes was not. To borrow from contemporary law in order to contrast the situations metaphorically, Jael commits second-degree murder; she intentionally killed Sisera on the spur of the moment without planning it. The woman from Thebez, arguably, commits manslaughter. She tossed the millstone that to her good fortune killed Abimelech. Judith, on the other hand, leaves the city intending to kill Holofernes; it does not matter that she has no weapon. This act, in our society, would legally fall under first-degree murder, the most serious offence because it is premeditated. Judith goes about her business in the Assyrian camp for days, knowing that at some time she will attempt to kill its general.

This distinction between Jael, the woman of Thebez, and Judith warrants elaboration. Judith does not merely take advantage of an opportune moment; she creates the opportune moment by going to the Assyrian camp. Additionally, as Levine rightly observes, the men in the Book of Judith

are weak, stupid, or impaired: Manasseh dies ignominiously: Holofernes is inept; Bagoas is a eunuch; Achior faints at the sight of Holofernes' head. Uzziah, who shares Judith's ethnicity and elevated social status and who, because he is descended from Simeon, might even be able to claim levirate privileges, is the

biggest disappointment. Judith must correct his naïve theology, and she stands firm while he wavers in his faith (cf. 7: 30-31). The only fit male companion for Judith is the deity ...⁷¹³

The action of a woman in the face of ineffective leadership asks the question why? Why would an author of this time write such a strong role for a woman? Returning for a moment to Lloyd's discussion of the elements of propaganda, it is useful to remind ourselves that the propagandist draws on existing symbols in the symbolic universe of his or her culture and shapes these symbols in such a way as to convey the desired meaning and thus elicit the desired response.

In order to understand how the shift is made from the traditional view that defending the nation is a male task to the uncharacteristic view that a woman can accomplish this task, it is useful to examine first a unique biblical passage that presents this reversal of roles as a creation of YHWH.

Jeremiah 31: 22 is an unusual passage that has long puzzled scholars. It is the final verse of a poetic unit that is known as Rachel's Song (31: 15-22). In this song, Rachel, the wife of Jacob, is portrayed as the mother of Israel. She is crying over the sin of her people and their exile from the Land after the Assyrian invasion. In response to Rachel's weeping, YHWH promises the return of her children because they have repented of their sins (16-17). This repentance is personified in YHWH's personal response to one of Rachel's children, her son Ephraim (18-19). YHWH calls for the restoration of the community in Israel and then proclaims that a new creation is now "on the earth". This new creation is a woman protecting a man (22).

This is a very interesting and, I think, important passage as far as the plot of the Book of Judith is concerned, because it is the one other passage in biblical literature that

⁷¹³ Levine, "Sacrifice and Salvation", 20-21.

directly supports Judith's salvific action. The passage is a difficult one and much scholarly debate has centered on it. The Hebrew text is understandable, but its meaning is obscure; the Greek version is cryptic, but it does maintain its connection to salvation history.⁷¹⁴ According to the commentary by William Holladay, the Hebrew text reads as follows: "For YHWH has created something new on earth, a female shall encompass a hero (*geber*)."⁷¹⁵ The Hebrew word *geber* is alternately translated "warrior". This passage is part of a larger section that speaks of the threat of the enemy from the North. Although this northern enemy has roots in a historical situation, in some prophetic books, including Jeremiah, it is given a meta-historic, even apocalyptic cast.⁷¹⁶ Within this military context the suggestion is made that Israel's warriors have turned into women and, as women, are, therefore, impotent as defenders of the land.⁷¹⁷ This taunt is accepted, but Jeremiah adds a twist: YHWH will make a new creation. Here the Hebrew word *br'* is used in conjunction with *nqbh*, evocatively linking the meaning of this passage with the unique creation of male and female in Genesis.⁷¹⁸ One interpretation of

⁷¹⁴ Bob Becking, "Jeremiah's Book of Consolation: A Textual Comparison of Notes on the Masoretic Text and the Old Greek Version of Jeremiah XXX-XXXI", *VT* 44. 2 (1994) 154, 168.

⁷¹⁵ William Lee Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah*, vol. 2 (ed. Paul D. Hanson; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986-1989) 154. For a discussion of the female imagery in this passage, see Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1978) 47-50 and Barbara Bozak, *Life 'Anew': A Literary-theological Study of Jer. 30-31* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1991) 155-174. For a different view of the meaning of this passage, see Bernhard W. Anderson, "'The Lord Has Created Something New': A Stylistic Study of Jer. 31: 15-22", *CBQ* 40 (1978) 463-478 (= *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies* [ed. Leo G. Perdue and Brian W. Kovacs; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1984] 367-380).

⁷¹⁶ Bernard Gosse, "La menace qui vient du nord, les retournements d'oracles contre Babylone: Jérémie 30-31" *Estudios Bíblicos* 56. 3 (1998) 289-314; on the connection between this northern enemy and the return of primordial chaos, see Brevard S. Childs, "The Enemy from the North and the Chaos Tradition", *JBL* 78 (1959) 187-198 (= *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies* [ed. Leo G. Perdue and Brian W. Kovacs; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1984] 151-161).

⁷¹⁷ Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 192. On the use of this taunt in biblical literature, see William L. Holladay, "Jer. xxxi 22B Reconsidered: 'The Woman Encompasses the Man'" *VT* 16 (1966) 236-239.

⁷¹⁸ Bozak, *Life 'Anew'*, 104, ft. 416; cf. Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 195.

this passage is that this new creation will be a female, possessing military expertise, who defends both the heroes and the land of Israel.⁷¹⁹

This concept informs the plot of the Book of Judith. The book's setting is shortly after the return from exile, a time when Israel is in a sinless state (4: 3; 8: 18-20). "The people of Israel living in Judea" are threatened by the Assyrian invasion (4: 1). The males of Israel are helpless to defend themselves and are planning to surrender (7: 26-31). Judith enters with a plan and defeats the enemy single-handedly. Her prayer to God, in fact, mirrors the passage in Jeremiah: "Break their pride by the hand of a female (ἐν χειρὶ Θηλείας)" (Jdt. 9: 10). This motif of the power of "the hand of a female" recurs throughout the text (13: 15; 16: 5),⁷²⁰ even appearing in the Song of Judith near the end of the book.

The Song of Judith perplexes scholars with its eschatological elements, the distinctive nature of a few of its verses prompting some scholars to speculate that elements of the song pre-date the book as a whole.⁷²¹ Yet if the Book of Judith is drawing on Jeremiah 31, then the Song of Judith may be read as a response to the Song of Rachel. Judith's salvific action is linked to YHWH's new creation and thus this song of celebration becomes an integral part of the book. Just as in Jeremiah, the enemy in the

⁷¹⁹ Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 195. This interpretation is supported in part by Douglas Rawlinson Jones who understands this unusual passage to refer to the Jewish nation personified as a female which, although oppressed by other nations, has through divine creation reversed the situation and become the protector, see Douglas Rawlinson Jones, *New Century Bible Commentary: Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1992) 395-396.

⁷²⁰ The significance the motif of the "hand" in the Book of Judith is discussed by Patrick Shekan; he observes a connection between the hand of Judith and the hand of Moses and a link between the deliverance from the Assyrians depicted in the Book of Judith and the deliverance from the Egyptians described in Exodus. See "The Hand of Judith", *CBQ* 25 (1963) 94-110.

⁷²¹ Craven, following Zeitlin and Enslin thinks the eschatological language is mere "rhetorical flourish", *Artistry and Faith*, 110; H. Ludin Jansen thinks that the author of the Book of Judith wrote this canticle by taking psalms that were not part of the biblical tradition and consolidating excerpts from them with his own original elements, "La Composition du chant de Judith", *Acta Orientalia* 15 (1936) 70-71; on Jansen's ideas see Moore, who also discusses the close connection between the Song of Judith and the Song of the Sea in Exodus 15, *Judith*, 254-257.

Song of Judith is from the North and referred to as “the Assyrian”. Presumably this is Holofernes but it could equally represent Nebuchadnezzar (Jdt. 16: 4). The close association between the enemy from the North and chaos is thus retained. YHWH, working as always through a human agent, although this time the female Judith, defeats the enemy, and thereby fulfills the prophecy in Isaiah that “the Assyrian shall fall by a sword, not of man” (Isa. 31: 8; cf. Jdt. 16: 4-6). YHWH’s defeat of the enemy is described as YHWH shaking the mountains “to their foundations” so that the rocks will “melt like wax” (Jdt. 16: 15). In his study of the symbolic meaning of the enemy from the North, Brevard Childs successfully demonstrates that the image of YHWH shaking the land evolved into a descriptor of “the final shaking of the world at the return of chaos”.⁷²² Thus this mention of YHWH’s cosmic power alludes to the eschaton. This subtle reference to a female messianic figure would have been highly contentious in its time.

John Levison demonstrates that the Song of Judith does, in fact, speak of a new creation driven by female energy. His linguistic study of Judith 16: 14 reveals that this passage “underscores a profound reorientation of the conception of creation”.⁷²³ Judith 16: 14 states, in part: “You sent forth your spirit, and it formed them”. This passage is drawn from Psalm 104: 30a which states: “When thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created”. According to Levison, the use of the word “formed” in Judith 16: 14 harkens back to its first occurrence in Genesis 2: 22, the building or forming of the first woman. Judith herself is the new creation.

⁷²² Childs, “The Enemy from the North”, 197.

⁷²³ John R. Levison, “Judith 16: 14 and the Creation of Woman”, *JBL* 114. 3 (1995) 468.

This new creation is the female of Jeremiah 31: 22. Just as the Song of Rachel speaks in the second person singular feminine, the Song of Judith answers it in the first person singular feminine: “He delivered me from the hand of those who pursued me” (Jdt. 16: 2). The threat of this northern enemy, to “burn up my borders”, “slay my young men”, “give my babes for spoils” and “despoil my maidens” is thwarted (16: 4). H. Ludin Jansen rightly notes that these words of Judith’s which speak of *her* young men, babes and maidens, are similar to those which would be spoken by a king.⁷²⁴ In the Book of Judith, they are not the words of a king, but of a queen.

In light of the biblical tradition of female warriors and the interpretation of Jeremiah 31 that a female protects a hero, it becomes necessary to ask if there was a historical situation that could have fostered the creation of a fictional narrative that highlighted the female hero. One plausible explanation is that it was prompted by real-life needs, namely the need to present divine approval for a woman as a leader of the Jewish community.

11. JUDITH, THE DAUGHTER OF MERARI

The character of Judith is modeled on the idea of a devout widow who inherits a vast amount of land. This widow is for the most part concerned with boundaries. Collective, personal and territorial boundaries are elements in the Book of Judith. From the standpoint of the cultural values of honour and shame, territorial boundaries are the

⁷²⁴ Jansen states: “ On ne comprendra vraiment ces versets qu’en admettant qu’ils ont fait partie d’un psaume destiné à une communauté et recité par le roi”. “La Composition du chant de Judith”, 68.

concern of men and of kings, physical boundaries between a man and a woman are also the concern of men, collective boundaries are maintained by men and women, according to their division of labour. It is, therefore, crucial to examine the indicators of Judith's status that are found in the text and to assess these status indicators according to information derived from anthropological studies of honour and shame.

As mentioned earlier, there are two types of honour, ascribed and acquired. Ascribed honour is the honour one is born with, that is the familial honour that is inherited from one's father. Acquired honour is the honour that one accumulates by one's own meritorious actions throughout life. Judith possessed both.

a. *Ascribed Honour*

As already pointed out, Judith possesses the longest genealogy of any woman in Jewish literature.⁷²⁵ In fact, her ancestry is the first thing we learn about her. As in the case of the priest/scribe Ezra (Ezra 7: 1-5), sixteen male ancestors are listed. We are told that Judith was "the daughter of Merari the son of Ox, son of Joseph, son of Oziel, son of Elkiah, son of Ananias, son of Gideon, son of Raphaim, son of Ahitub, son of Elijah, son of Hilkiah, son of Eliab, son of Nathanael, son of Salamiel, son of Sarasadai, son of Israel" (8: 1). Traditionally, scholars have tried to make biological sense out of this list, but this is impossible since Merari and Israel are, in the biblical tradition, separated by only one generation. Merari is the son of Levi and grandson of Israel. It is crucial to note that Judith is defined exceptionally by the status of her father and not her husband.

⁷²⁵ Moore, *Judith*, 187-188.

This point signifies that her father was of a higher status than Manasseh, her husband.

The significance of the other names and their relevance to Judith's status would have been readily apparent to the ancient audience of the book. Most of the names are taken from biblical literature, although some, such as Oziel and Raphaim, are unidentifiable.⁷²⁶ Other names, such as son of Salamiel, son of Sarasadai, are thought to refer to "Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai" (Num. 1: 6), who was the prince of the tribe of Simeon. Ox may be a version of Uzzi. The others are biblical names, even Ananias, who appears in the book of Tobit (5:12-13), is, according to Moore, a son of Hananiah who was a prince of Judea (Jer. 36: 14).⁷²⁷

While the list itself is chronologically impossible and obviously fictitious,⁷²⁸ it nevertheless must have signaled something about Judith to its audience. Levine observes that Judith's genealogy incorporates the names of men who played an important role in Israel's history as priests, judges, and prophets. Levine thinks that the presence of these men's names signifies that Judith, too, is meant to function in a similar capacity.⁷²⁹

Wilson's study of genealogy demonstrates that the meanings of biblical genealogies were conveyed through their narrative context. Bruce Halperin also observes that genealogies are not always statements of biological ancestry. Using both literal and figurative language, they convey a variety of meaning. Genealogies can contain political or geographic information; however, when the knowledge of the content dissolves,

⁷²⁶ Ball believes that Raphaim is the Hebrew Rephaim, "a race of giants" (Gen. 14: 5; 2 Sam. 21: 16, 18, 20), see *The Holy Bible*, 308.

⁷²⁷ Moore, *Judith*, 179.

⁷²⁸ Moore, *Judith*, 188; cf. Steinmann, *Lecture de Judith*, 72-74. Edgar Bruns proposes that Judith is actually Jael transformed and that she descended from the Egyptian colony at Elephantine; however, his thesis has never been taken seriously. See "Judith or Jael?", 12-14, and "The Genealogy of Judith", 19-22.

⁷²⁹ Levine, "Sacrifice and Salvation", 21

subsequent generations tend to view them as statements of biological ancestry.⁷³⁰

According to Wilson, biblical genealogies function “to support an individual’s claim to status, power or property by linking the individual with an early ancestor”.⁷³¹ Rather than trying to find a biological connection between Judith’s male ancestors, it may therefore be more helpful to view her forefathers as indicators of Judith’s ascribed status within the community.

There is not a great deal that can be said about each of Judith’s ancestors, but the symbolic significance of most can be accounted for. When we read them as a unit, certain biblical stories or motifs can be recalled. We are told that Judith’s father was a man named Merari. In biblical literature, Merari is the son of Levi, who was the son of Jacob (Israel) (Gen. 46: 11). These names provide both the first and the last of Judith’s recorded genealogy. They form a framework that incorporates fourteen other names of men who played roles at various times throughout Israel’s history.

Within this grandfather (Israel)/ grandson (Merari) framework, are contained the names of representatives of ten of the twelve tribes. The ten tribes that are represented are Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Gad, Naphtali, Joseph, and Benjamin (Gen. 49: 3-27). Following the order in which her ancestors are presented, Merari, Judith’s father, is from the tribe of Levi. As noted, the name Ox may be a form of the name Uzzi, according to Moore.⁷³² If Moore is correct, then Ox/Uzzi may represent the tribe of Issachar, who was not only head of his household but a “mighty warrior” (1 Chr. 7: 1-3). Joseph is both the name of a son of Jacob and the progenitor of

⁷³⁰ Bruce Halperin, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (New York and San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988) 274.

⁷³¹ Robert R. Wilson, *Sociological Approaches to the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 60.

⁷³² Moore, *Judith*, 179.

the tribe of Joseph and that of a commander in the Maccabean revolt (*1 Macc.* 5: 18).

Joseph's connection to Judean geography also becomes significant, for it was at Dothan, a city in Ephraimite territory, that Joseph was betrayed by his brothers (*Gen.* 37: 17-18) and near Dothan that Holofernes stations his army and threatens Judea (*Jdt.* 3: 9-10). In a manner much like Joseph's encounters with Potiphar's wife, Judith remains in control of the sexual dynamics between herself and Holofernes.⁷³³ The next name on the list is Oziel, which may be a version of the name Uzziel, much like Ox.⁷³⁴ It is not uncommon for genealogies to repeat names. The name Uzziel is mentioned many times in biblical literature and is connected with the tribes of Levi, Simeon and Benjamin and is also connected with lyrical and musical worship.⁷³⁵ Elkiah is the next name in Judith's genealogy. Elkiah is a version of Hilkiah, a name of another of Judith's ancestors. Elkiah/Hilkiah was the father of Susanna (*Dan.* 13: 1-2), who, incidentally, is the wife of Joakim. This is also the name of the high priest in the Book of Judith (15: 8). Hilckiah himself is a Levitical priest. Ananais, another of Judith's ancestors, is a relative of Tobit and renowned as one who did not "go astray" (5: 13). Tobit is a member of the tribe of Naphtali (*Tob.* 1:1). Gideon, the next name on Judith's genealogical list, has connections to the tribe of Manasseh and was an important military leader in Israel's history. Gideon, a member of the weakest tribe (*Jud.* 6: 15), fought on the plains of Esdraelon, the setting of Judith's victory over Holofernes. His name meant "slasher or hacker" and he ushered in forty years of peace for Israel.⁷³⁶ Raphaim is a name that is unknown in its present form and there is conjecture about its meaning. Ball relates the name to "a race of

⁷³³ Ilan, *Integrating Women*, 148.

⁷³⁴ See Ball, "Judith", 308.

⁷³⁵ Rod R. Hutton, "Uzziel", *ABD*, VI, 779-780.

⁷³⁶ Robert G. Boling, "Gideon", *ABD*, II, 1013-1015.

giants”,⁷³⁷ while Sidnie Ann White links this name to Rephaiah, the tribal leader of the Simeonites (1 Chr. 4: 42).⁷³⁸ Ahitub was a Levitical priest and Elijah was the leader of the tribe of Benjamin. Hilkiah has already been discussed. The name Eliab is connected with the tribes Zebulun, Reuben and Gad. In the tribe of Reuben, Eliab is a rebel (Num. 26: 5, 8) and in the tribe of Gad, Eliab is a “mighty and experienced” warrior, “expert with shield and spear” with a face “like a lion and the speed of a gazelle” (1 Chr. 12: 9). Salamiel (Shelumiel) and Sarasadai (Zurishaddai) are generally believed to be of the tribe of Simeon,⁷³⁹ and Israel is another name for Jacob, the progenitor of the Jews. Additionally, many of the names in this genealogy also represent other members of the tribe of Levi. In all, every tribe and its corresponding territory except Dan and Asher, the two northern-most tribes/territories of Israel, are represented by Judith’s genealogy. This geographical representation reflects the territory of Judea during the time of Shelamzion.

Judith’s genealogy is, therefore, constructed to highlight her close association with Levitical priests, leaders of the tribes and territories of Israel and the community itself. It also links her to key figures involved in the administration (Joseph) and defense of her community (Gideon and Eliab) who did not stray from their beliefs (Ananais). The *gestalt* of her genealogy exhibits the high esteem with which she was held in her community. As the book of *Tobit* demonstrates, people in this society were valued on the basis of their lineage (5: 11-13). Judith holds a very noble lineage indeed.

⁷³⁷ Ball, “Judith”, 308.

⁷³⁸ Sidnie Ann White, “Raphaim”, *ABD*, V, 622.

⁷³⁹ Moore, *Judith*, 179.

b. *Acquired Honour*

In addition to her ascribed honour, Judith has acquired honour as well. This acquired honour comes from a variety of sources. She was the wife of Manasseh, of “her tribe and family” (8: 2). In biblical literature the name Manasseh belongs both to the son of Joseph (Gen. 48: 1) and to a king who did evil in God’s eyes (2 Kings 21: 6). When we meet Judith, Manasseh, her husband, has been dead for over three years (8: 4). We are told nothing of his character. Judith is a widow in an extended period of mourning, who wears sackcloth, fasts, except on occasions when fasting is inappropriate, and lives in a tent on her rooftop (8: 5-6). She inherited from her husband “gold and silver, and men and women slaves, and cattle, and fields; and she maintained this estate” (8: 7). Her reputation for piety is renowned, for “no one spoke ill of her” (8: 8). This reference to the public reputation of Judith is not out of place when it comes to wealthy women of this time. According to Riet Van Bremen, the institution of “euergetism” that was established during the Hellenistic period, affected wealthy women by permitting them access to the political arena. Now publicly visible and politically active, wealthy women became key players in the continuity of familial status and power while, at the same time, being bound by the cultural values traditionally associated with women, values that prescribed modesty and fidelity.⁷⁴⁰

The character of Judith is, therefore, modeled on a specific type of woman who, as a general rule, had a unique social status in Jewish society. This status was that of a widow. It can be argued that the author required a character that was sexually

⁷⁴⁰ Riet Van Bremen, “Women and Wealth”, *Images of Women in Antiquity* (ed. Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt; 1983; London: Routledge, 1993) 235-236.

experienced but nevertheless independent of human male presence. It is also crucial to consider the larger picture, the combination of Judith's ascribed honour derived from her lineage and her acquired honour as a devout widow, who inherits the territory and wealth of her husband and who is concerned with defending both personal and communal boundaries. These qualities match the characteristics known of Shelamzion. It is true that we do not know Shelamzion's background, but it can be inferred that she possessed sufficient lineage to become a queen by marriage and may, in fact, have been a Hasmonean herself. Judith's character as a widow, who spends her days fasting and praying, mirrors what we have seen of the type of daily life Shelamzion apparently lived. It is important therefore to understand what being a widow meant in the first century B.C.E.

In Judith's prayer to YHWH she asks for his assistance in carrying out her plan. Judith specifically appeals for divine help on the grounds that she is a widow. The notion that a widow had a unique relationship with the divine is an ancient Near Eastern tradition that is also found in early Jewish society and reflected in biblical literature. Judith's status as a widow also carries other connotations that bear on the plot of the story.

In the Septuagint, the word for widow is "χήρα" (9: 4). This word translates the Hebrew word for widow *'almānāh*.⁷⁴¹ In Jewish society a *'almānāh* was a woman who had no adult males in her life to provide for her and to protect her.⁷⁴² Widows were

⁷⁴¹ On the meaning and usage of both these words, see Gustav Stählin, "χήρα", *TDNT*, vol. 9 (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; ed. Gerhard Friedrich; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974) 440-465 and Harry A. Hoffner, "almānāh", *TDOT*, vol. I (trans. John T. Willis; ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974) 287-291.

⁷⁴² Hoffner, "almānāh", *TDOT*, vol. I, 288; for a discussion of these biblical women who often did have adult sons, see Elder, *Transformations in the Judith Mythos*, 16-20

classed with orphans, sojourners and Levites, persons who had no economic resources of their own and who were protected by God's commandment that they should receive a portion of the tithes every three years (Dt. 14: 28-29; 26: 12). Yet not all widows were poor; if their husbands had been wealthy, they were allowed to possess their property provided they remained unmarried.⁷⁴³ Wealthy widows who could economically look after themselves gained an independence that was unusual for their social context and were probably reluctant to marry again, although they were commonly encouraged to do so.⁷⁴⁴

Being a widow, in general, carried negative connotations; the widowed woman lived on the margins of society and was at times viewed as being dangerous since the sexuality of these women was not restricted by the presence of a male partner or guardian.⁷⁴⁵ Yet the widow was often thought to be particularly close to God, for God took the place of the male relative who was absent.⁷⁴⁶

Because of their special relationship with God, widows' prayers and curses were thought to be especially potent, particularly, it seems, if they had had only one husband.⁷⁴⁷ In nascent Christianity, a religion whose earliest members were Jews, there

⁷⁴³ Hoffner, "almānāh", *TDOT*, vol. 1, 290; cf. Stählin, "χήρα", *TDNT*, vol. 9, 445; for a discussion of the inheritance rights of widows in the ancient Near East see Elder, *Transformations in the Judith Mythos*, 20-30.

⁷⁴⁴ On the remarriage of widows, see Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine*, 148; specific examples dating from the Herodian period are discussed on page 150.

⁷⁴⁵ Karel van der Toorn, "Torn Between Vice and Virtue: Stereotypes of the Widow in Israel and Mesopotamia", *Female Stereotypes in Religious Traditions* (ed. Ria Kloppenborg and Wouter J. Hanegraaff; Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1995) 1-13.

⁷⁴⁶ Paula S. Hiebert, "'Whence Shall Help Come to Me?': The Biblical Widow", *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel* (ed. Peggy L. Day; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989) 137. See also F. Charles Fensham, "Widow, Orphan, and the Poor in Ancient Near Eastern Legal and Wisdom Literature", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 21. 2 (1962) 129-139 and the two articles by John Rook, "Making Widows: The Patriarchal Guardian at Work", *BTB* 27. 1 (1997) 10-15, and "When is a Widow Not a Widow? Guardianship Provides an Answer", *BTB* 28. 1 (1998) 4-6.

⁷⁴⁷ 2 Samuel 20: 3 may allude to this custom. In this passage David confines the ten concubines of Absalom to live in widowhood for the rest of their lives.

is evidence that Judith's devout widowhood and devotion to her dead husband may have been understood as a choice she made for religious reasons. In Luke, Anna is a widow who, like Judith, is introduced as being someone's daughter. Anna is "the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher" (Luke 2: 36-37). She was married only once and lived in the temple. She had a reputation as a prophet. In fact, the widows of early Christianity were very much like Judith. They prayed "night and day" and could only be enrolled if they, too, had been the wife of just one husband (1 Tim. 5: 5, 9).⁷⁴⁸ Biblical literature testifies to the close relationship between God and the widow. Exodus contains a powerful curse against those who threaten to harm widows: "If you do afflict them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword ..." (22: 23-24). One specific role that YHWH played in the life of a widow was as a defender of her boundaries (Prov. 15: 25).

In this context, Judith's status as a widow contributes to her acquired honour. She had "lived at home as a widow for three years and four months" (8: 4) and cultivated a close relationship with God (8: 5). The prolonged period of mourning meant that Judith occupied a social location that was separate from the rest of society and closely associated with the divine world.⁷⁴⁹ The significance of the tent (set up by Judith on the roof of her house, Jdt. 8: 5) as an indicator of her social and religious status is easily overlooked. Reinhartz observes that Judith's tent demonstrates her "high political status"; she concludes that "the description of Judith's tent is therefore instrumental in establishing her personality and credibility as a figure who has the political authority, singleness of purpose, strength of character and divine backing to carry out the audacious

⁷⁴⁸ Van der Toorn, "Torn Between Vice and Virtue", 8-9.

⁷⁴⁹ Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 4th ed. (trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee; Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968, orig. 1960) 147.

deed which is about to be described".⁷⁵⁰ Additionally Judith fasted daily, except on certain days. Judith's prayer to God for "the strength to do what I plan" (9: 9) thus carries special weight by virtue of her widowhood. Not only will God's wrath be awakened by her cries, and he will avenge her with the sword, but God's promise to defend the boundaries of the widow, sexual as well as territorial, is also evoked.

12. JUDITH'S TEST

Recent studies of the Book of Judith demonstrate that the story draws on the biblical motif of testing, particularly the testing of a leader. Van Henten observes parallels between the testing of Moses in the Exodus story (17: 1-7) and the Book of Judith. Both Moses and Judith are portrayed as being descendants of Levi (Ex. 2.1; Jdt. 8: 1). In Exodus, the people are dying of thirst and Moses saves them, remarking that they should not test God.⁷⁵¹ The Book of Judith similarly draws on the motif of testing. Judith interprets the plight of Bethulia and the promise of the elders to surrender in five days as a test of God (8: 12). Van Henten further observes that the significant differences between these stories inform the character of Judith. Whereas Moses possesses positive

⁷⁵⁰ Reinhartz, "Better Homes and Gardens", 328. For anthropological evidence that attests to the ability of women, mothers in particular, to create sacred space and mediate between the divine and earthly realms, see Nancy Sultan, "Private Speech, Public Pain: The Power of Women's Laments in Ancient Greek Poetry and Tragedy", *Rediscovering the Muses: Women's Musical Traditions* (ed. Kimberly Marshall; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993) 101; Anna Caraveli, "The Bitter Wounding: The Lament as Social Protest in Rural Greece", *Gender and Power in Rural Greece* (ed. Jill Dubisch; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986) 173; and Anna Caraveli-Chaves, "Bridge Between Worlds: The Greek Women's Lament as Communicative Event", *Journal of American Folklore* 93 (1980) 144. Judith's prayer for God's assistance to carry out her plan, albeit not a lament strictly speaking, can be categorized as a cry to the Lord. Although not a mother in the biological sense, Judith is portrayed as being the mother of her people in the canticle at the end of the tale (16: 4).

⁷⁵¹ Van Henten discusses these parallels in his article, "Judith as Alternative Leader", 234-236.

and negative qualities (he doubts his abilities and disobeys God),⁷⁵² Judith possesses only positive qualities, and Uzziah and the other elders of Bethulia personify the negative elements seen in Moses' character.⁷⁵³

In addition to this testing motif, Van Henten observes a close association between the Book of Judith and Hasmonean propaganda. Both the Book of Judith and the Hasmoneans draw on the image of the judge as a saviour type; *I Maccabees* portrays the early Hasmoneans as “new judges who restore the ideal theocratic state, which automatically affirms the divine support for their leadership”.⁷⁵⁴ *First Maccabees* also portrays the early Hasmoneans as having been tested like Abraham, Joseph, Phinehas, Joshua, Caleb, David, Elijah, Hannaniah, Azariah, Mishaël and Daniel (2: 51-60). The dying words of Matthatias to his sons Simeon and Judas bear a strong resemblance to the theme of the Book of Judith: “... none who put their trust in him will lack strength” (2: 61). Commenting on the similarities between the Book of Judith and *I Maccabees*, Van Henten observes that they “share important concepts and vocabulary”, specifically in regard to legitimization of leadership and deliverance from foreign aggression.⁷⁵⁵ Although it seems a logical next step to associate the legitimization of a female leader with the rule of Shelamzion, Van Henten stops short of this suggestion, concluding that the Book of Judith “functioned as a way of releasing criticism of the new Hasmonean dynasty”, without further elaboration.⁷⁵⁶

The recent study of the Book of Judith by Philip Esler takes a different tactic from that of Van Henten. In his study of the book from the perspective of a honour/shame

⁷⁵² Num. 20: 12; cf. Van Henten, “Judith as Alternative Leader”, 240.

⁷⁵³ Van Henten, “Judith as Alternative Leader”, 238.

⁷⁵⁴ Van Henten, “Judith as Alternative Leader”, 243-244; see also Arenhoevel, *Theokratie*, 47-50.

⁷⁵⁵ Van Henten, “Judith as Alternative Leader”, 244.

⁷⁵⁶ Van Henten, “Judith as Alternative Leader”, 244.

society Esler demonstrates that the character of Judith is modeled on that of the archetypal Jewish king, David. Dating the text to the first half of the first century, Esler argues that the challenge-response pattern in the book is not modeled on Jael, Elijah or Moses, but is instead on the encounter between David and Goliath.⁷⁵⁷ Esler successfully demonstrates that Judith, and David, share the same trait; they are both unlikely salvific figures, David because of his youth and Judith because of her sex.⁷⁵⁸ Be that as it may, her accomplishments are meant to be as outstanding as David's were: Judith is David "played in a different key".⁷⁵⁹

These associations with Hasmonean propaganda and with the archetypal king of Israel's history can be no mere co-incidence. This fictitious "historical" character, Judith, shares qualities with the biblical judge, Deborah, and the female character that is closely associated with her, Jael; Jael killed the general of the invading army, Sisera. Judith is also linked to Israel's archetypal king, David. Like Deborah and David, Judith copes with a threat to the boundaries of Judea and successfully defends her nation against it. The Book of Judith was likely written at a time when the boundaries of Judea were similarly threatened and when the only Hasmonean queen regnant, Shelamzion, ruled the country. The weight of this circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that the inspiration for the Judith story was Shelamzion.

⁷⁵⁷ Esler, "By the Hand of a Woman", 75-78.

⁷⁵⁸ Esler, "By the Hand of a Woman", 90.

⁷⁵⁹ The similarity between Judith and David is also discussed briefly by André LaCocque who states that Judith is "David in the feminine"; see *the Feminine Unconventional*, 35.

13. JUDITH'S VICTORY AND HONOUR

According to Esler, David is the biblical parallel of Judith; David was “secretly anointed by God to be his king and destined to become a famous warrior” and “Judith, too, is an utterly improbable savior of Israel” because of her sex and expected sex-role; nevertheless, “her achievements [are] as surprising as those of David”.⁷⁶⁰ Like David, Judith cuts off the head of her enemy. Unlike David, however, she does not meet him on the battlefield. Judith’s victory is dependent on her manipulation of the code of hospitality. Judith draws on this code in such a way as to ensure that she and her God gain access to the Assyrian camp. She toys with Holofernes’ belief that he is in control of her land in order to find an opportune moment to “convince” him otherwise. Judith’s ploy begins when she tricks Holofernes into accepting her as a guest. As a guest of Holofernes she had an obligation to honour him and he was obliged to protect her. She appealed to his men by claiming a refugee status, her people were all going to die but Judith did not want to be one of them. Judith chose to present herself not as a widow, someone of marginal social status and poor means, but as a woman of high social standing, wearing the clothes that she wore “while her husband Manasseh was living” (10: 3). Her outfit, from her tiara to her ornaments, was designed “to entice” or “beguile” (ἀπάττω) the eyes of the Assyrian men (10: 4); however, as we have already seen above, the political and military power of Assyrian royalty had an equally powerful physical manifestation.⁷⁶¹ Her wealth represented her upper class status. Her presence in the camp would therefore honour the Assyrians. To the lower class Assyrian scouts,

⁷⁶⁰ Esler, “By the Hand of a Woman”, 90.

⁷⁶¹ See my section, “The Political Setting of the Book of Judith”, above.

she was someone who must be taken to Holofernes. Her offer of military information ensured her delivery to the General and her status as a wealthy woman ensured her physical protection. The scouts, for their part, could not touch her, for to harm her would have meant that they had violated social codes and Holofernes would punish them.

As a guest, however, Judith brought her God with her into the camp, not just through her prayers and faith, but through her own presence as a stranger. Judith's acceptance as a guest has no particular defining moment. When Judith meets Holofernes he is "resting on his bed, under a canopy which was woven with purple and gold and emeralds and precious stones" (10: 21). He seems more like a king than a general. It is obvious from Holofernes' words that he has learned of Judith's story and accepts her presence as a guest. Yet just as Judith's words to Holofernes have a double *entendre*, so too does this presentation of herself as a guest. To be a guest of Holofernes would require that Judith accept the Assyrian claim to Jewish territory, something Judith clearly does not do. In reality it is Judith who is the actual host; it is her land and her people. She does not accept the Assyrian presence for their aim is to take the land and destroy her people and their God. The rules of hospitality do not really apply; they are only pretense for both Holofernes and Judith. Holofernes too is deceptive, but along a different line. He had been biding his time in order to seduce or rape her from the moment he saw her (12: 16). Just as Pantera was sought out amongst the women to be married to Cyrus, Holofernes was expected to bring the best spoils of war, and this includes Judith, back with him for Nebuchadnezzar. He clearly had no intention of taking her back, for Nebuchadnezzar would have discovered that his general had raped her. Both parties use

the hospitality codes to their own ends; however, it is Judith's presence in the Assyrian camp that summons the presence of her God.

It is to God that she appeals for the physical and perhaps psychological strength to cut off the head of the great Assyrian general (13: 7). After placing it in her food bag, she and her maid leave the camp for Bethulia. Upon returning to her city, Judith shows the severed head to her fellow citizens and proclaims that drunkenness and the Lord helped defeat him "by the hand of a woman": "it was my face that tricked him to his destruction, and yet he committed no act of sin with me, to defile and shame me" (13: 15-16).

For her achievement, Judith is "honoured in her time". It is fruitful to take a look at the use of the Greek adjective ἔνδοξος in the Septuagint for it will inform our understanding of how this adjective is applied both to divinity and to humanity.

According to Hatch and Redpath, there are sixty-four occurrences of the Greek word ἔνδοξος in the Septuagint. Of these, the only one that applies to a woman is that which is found in the Book of Judith. The word is used elsewhere both of God and of men.

Often the word ἔνδοξος or one of its derivatives is used of God or spoken by God; however, more often it is used of men, both non-Jews and Jews. The six Jewish men who are called ἔνδοξος, are Jabez (1 Chr. 4: 9), Abishai and Benaiah, warriors of David (1 Chr. 11: 21, 25), Joakim (the husband of Susanna [Dan. 13: 4]), Daniel (Dan. 6: 3; 14: 2), and Mattathias (*1 Macc.* 2: 17). The word ἔνδοξος is found twice in the Book of Judith, once in relation to God (16: 13), and once in relation to Judith herself when it is said that she is "honoured in her time", καὶ ἐγένετο κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν αὐτῆς ἔνδοξος (16: 21), as we have clearly seen.

What can we derive from this unique use of the word *ἐνδοξος* in relation to our main character? First of all, it can be inferred that Judith is no ordinary woman, wealthy or otherwise. Honour, as we have seen, is the due of royalty and persons of the highest standing; but, there is more to Judith and her story than just her reputation. During this time of crisis, Judith stepped forward and took responsibility for the plight of her people and their territory. This too is an action that echoes the responsibilities of a monarch: to enter into battle on behalf of his or her nation. Judith, like royalty, enters the arena of war armed with her God and grounded in the belief that Holofernes is an unwelcome guest on her territory. The interplay of male and female symbolism is also used to bolster the support of this unique woman and her leadership capabilities. The reversal of meaning indicated by the shift in the power balance from male to female is an additional layer of rhetoric that enhances the reader's recognition that honour is due this remarkable woman. On the literal level of the story the conclusion can be made that Israel owes honour to this female saviour.

14. PROPAGANDA FOR SHELAMZION'S REIGN

We have seen that most literature of this time in particular contains an allegorical or hidden message and that allegories can reflect a conflict in rival definitions of political power. I have also demonstrated that the Hasmonean queen, Shelamzion, required some means of legitimating her claim to the throne in light of the ability of either of her two sons to ascend to this position after the death of King Janneus. Legitimation, as we have seen, is part of the process by which those in power construct arguments that advocate

their continued authority. An essential part of this process draws on the existing symbolic universe of a culture in such a way as to present a solid case for accepting things the way they now are. Many of these elements of the legitimation process are echoed in the elements of political propaganda. Political propaganda, as we have seen, may be manipulative, but subtle; it uses authoritative sources to argue a perspective that may not be easily accepted by its target audience. It draws on the symbolic universe in such a way as to make its message credible, and it presents itself in a format that the audience will easily accept. Given the existence of these elements at the time the Book of Judith was written, it is fruitful to ask what subtle message about political power of the time is revealed in this book? More to the point, is there a recognition suggested that has been overlooked in previous research?

a. *Judith's Implicit Association to Shelamzion*

In Part Three of this study I discussed Josephus' portrayal of Shelamzion (Alexandra Salome). I demonstrated that a critical reading of his portrayal of her life revealed her to be an exemplary political leader who was concerned with defending the boundaries of her territory. In addition she was also well educated in the Law and possessed many positive personal qualities and achievements of a sort that were associated with successful leadership. This section reviews my findings and discusses the differences between Shelamzion and Judith and the striking similarities.

It is helpful at this point to revisit the observations I made in Part Three about the Jewish ideology of kingship during the late Hellenistic period. Documents that outline

the qualities of the ideal Jewish king are found in *Aristeas*, *The Temple Scroll*, and other Jewish-Hellenistic works such as *Jubilees* and *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. I observed that this ideology about kingship was well developed at this time. In general, these works testify to the close bond between God, the king and his people. A ruler was a symbol of the nation and as such embodied God's love (benevolence) towards his people. Guarding against invasion was a particular concern. God aided a monarch in this goal. Key figures in the literature of this period were Judah and Levi. Judah was the archetypal king, while Levi represented the archetypal priest. The Hasmoneans used propaganda to legitimate their dynastic claims and to demonstrate divine support for their military endeavours. They promoted themselves as the family through whom "deliverance was given to Israel" (*1 Macc.* 5: 62). According to *Aristeas*, a monarch was expected to be pious and to "call upon God" continually for his assistance in ruling the nation (193). Additionally, they were not to expand their territory and focus instead on maintaining its boundaries and saving lives (223, 292). A Hasmonean queen with the experience of Shelamzion would have taken these ideals to heart and actively sought to "establish an everlasting memory" of herself in the minds of her people (279).

In Part Three my feminist reconstruction of Josephus's discussion of Shelamzion in *The Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities* moved beyond Josephus' tendencies and rhetoric to demonstrate that Shelamzion possessed all the desired qualities of a Jewish Hellenistic monarch. She honoured and obeyed God, displaying εὐσεβεία and, as is required by Deuteronomy, she studied the Law. Her close friendship with the leading Pharisee of the day, Simeon ben Shetah, and her education in the Law surely guided her in developing policies that were in tune with these ideals. In opposition to the cultural

norms for a woman, Shelamzion cultivated a public reputation for piety, which was also a crucial aspect of Jewish Hellenistic rule. In keeping the Pharisees close to her she returned the Hasmoneans to their historical close bond with this group. Josephus' only tangible critique of her is that she allowed the Pharisees to avenge the deaths of those who were killed by her husband's supporters; however, this revenge is in keeping with the cultural climate of the day. While internal issues were left largely to the Pharisees, Shelamzion still maintained economic control of internal politics and focused primarily on external affairs, namely maintaining the boundaries of her community. In this regard she was in keeping with the duties of a queen.

Now that we have thoroughly discussed both the rule of Shelamzion and the character of the fictitious Judith, it is time to examine the many similarities between the historical person Shelamzion and the fictitious character Judith. This discussion assesses the degree to which the character of Judith is modeled on the historical person of Shelamzion.

The first evidence we have of the similarities between the two is their noble lineage. Judith is the daughter of Merari, and, as we have seen, is linked to the Levites and through them to Jewish nobility. Although we do not know the descent of Shelamzion, we have noted that she resurrected the earliest Hasmonean tradition of maintaining close ties with the Pharisees. This fact and her marriage to the Hasmonean king Janneus suggest that Shelamzion may herself have been a Hasmonean. It is unlikely that Janneus would have married someone far removed from his family line. Judith was married to Manasseh and from literature found in the Dead Sea corpus the name Manasseh was a name for the Sadducees. Although Shelamzion supported the Pharisees.

research by Tal Ilan demonstrates that Sadducean women were “courted” by Pharisees because of their potential to become patrons to the Pharisean cause. Thus the name Manasseh is also relevant to Shelamzion. In an interesting twist to the use of the term Manasseh, king Manasseh was a wicked king who “did evil in the eyes of the Lord”. King Manasseh’s reputation can be applied to Janneus who also shed innocent blood. Thus from two angles the link between Judith and Shelamzion through the name of Manasseh is feasible.

Turning to their current situation, both Judith and Shelamzion are widows. Both inherited large estates. Judith’s estate is on the northern border of Judea. Shelamzion’s estate is Judea itself; thus its northern boundary would still serve as a symbol of the territory that was under her control and a reminder to be cautious of invaders from the North. Our discussion of Shelamzion also revealed that the only time her territory was directly threatened was when the Armenian king, Tigranes, invaded Syria, besieged Ptolemais and captured Shelamzion’s contemporary Cleopatra Selene, queen of Syria (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 419-420; *War* 1. 116).

A third similarity between Shelamzion and Judith is their public reputation for piety and wisdom. We know that “no one spoke ill” of Judith and certainly in circles supportive of Shelamzion her reputation would have been equally exemplary. Judith fasted and prayed. Shelamzion too followed the traditions of the Pharisees, which included fasting and prayer. I demonstrated earlier in Part Three, “The Personal Qualities of Shelamzion”, that she most likely studied the Law, perhaps with the Pharisee leader ben Shetah, and made public demonstrations of her devotion to God. These actions were

in keeping with the ideals of a Jewish Hellenistic monarch. Thus both Shelamzion and Judith, her fictitious counterpart, shared these personal qualities.

With regard to her relationships among her people, here, too, Shelamzion and Judith shared considerable authority. Josephus tells us in *Jewish War* that Shelamzion “firmly held the reigns of government” (1. 107-108). Judith just as assertively “summons” the elders to her property (8: 10). We are told specifically that the elders Chabris and Charmis were called, but we learn later that Uzziah is also present (8: 28). Thus Judith summoned a small contingent of leaders and, in an action atypical in a patriarchal society, these elders heeded her call and responded. Not only did they listen to her but also they accepted and even praised her views (8: 29, 35).

Both Shelamzion and Judith are further alike and similarly atypical of female behaviour in that they possess a high degree of military prowess. A careful reading of Josephus reveals that Shelamzion played a military role during Janneus’ last campaign. She held the support of the military, particularly during the final days of Janneus’ life (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 400). We are also told that she publicly opposed the brutality of Janneus’ actions: she was not involved in his brutalities but openly stood against them (*War.* 1. 107). Both accounts of her rule written by Josephus agree that Shelamzion had major concerns for the boundaries of her community. In particular she doubled the size of her national force and recruited many mercenaries (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 409-410; *War* 1. 112). By doing so, she gained a terrifying reputation among foreign rulers. In a similar vein, Judith’s military action is the focus of the book. She, along with her trusted maid, infiltrates the Assyrian camp, gains the confidence of its general and later assassinates

him. She leaves the camp unnoticed, returns to her city and assumes military control of the men of Bethulia.

A further comment on the overall character of these female figures again presents us with strong similarities. Both the characters of Shelamzion and Judith were more typical of men than of women. Shelamzion "... showed none of the weakness of her sex" (*Jewish Ant.* 13. 430); Judith too possessed manly qualities, a fact to which early Christian writers called attention.⁷⁶²

The actions of these women are renowned for essentially the same thing. They are both known as instruments of peace in their community. The final word of Josephus on Shelamzion's rule is that she "kept the nation at peace" (*War* 13. 432). The same is said of Judith: "no one ever again spread terror among the people of Israel in the days of Judith, or for a long time after her death" (*Jdt.* 16: 25).

In spite of the numerous similarities between Shelamzion and Judith there is one appreciable difference that needs to be addressed. First and foremost, Shelamzion had children whereas Judith had none. Shelamzion had two adult male sons who could have assumed responsibility for the nation after the death of their father. They were prevented from doing so by Shelamzion's taking power. Judith, on the other hand, is a widow without issue. This in itself is unusual, for a woman in her position would have been encouraged to enter into a levirate marriage, a liaison whereby the brother of her dead

⁷⁶² The earliest Christian references to Judith are found in the *First Epistle of Clement* and *Stromata* by Clement of Alexandria. These works are dated to the end of the first, and late second/early third centuries, respectively. As I mentioned in my introduction, *1 Clement* credits Judith with having performed a deed "of manly valour" (πολλὰ ἀνδρεῖα) (50.3); see *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1. Clement of Alexandria argues that Judith demonstrates the ability of women to attain perfection in the eyes of God (4. 19); see *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2 (ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; Edinburgh and Grand Rapids, MI: T & T Clark, and Wm. B. Eerdmans, rep. 1994). For a discussion of Judith in ancient literature, see André Marie Dubarle, "La mention de Judith dans la littérature ancienne, juive et chrétienne", *RB* 66 (1959) 514-549.

husband would become her husband and their children would be considered to be heirs of her first husband. In the Book of Judith, Judith never remarries and does not have children.

This seeming dissimilarity in their status as mothers is, however, overcome when we look at the situation from the perspective of responsibility for the nation. Shelamzion assumes the motherhood of her people and Judith, likewise, views the Assyrian assault as a threat to her people (16: 5). From Shelamzion's point of view, her biological sons were contenders for her power. She may also have considered them as being among the many people for whom she was responsible. We know that Aristobulus openly opposed his mother and questioned her legitimacy to rule the nation. Shelamzion's supporters would logically have been careful to avoid any mention of a son. They could also have emphasized Shelamzion's role as a mother of her people. This use of maternal symbolism portrays all Jewish people as sons and daughters of Shelamzion and could possibly have been used for propagandistic purposes to mitigate Aristobulus' claim to the throne because he was her son. This maternal symbolism draws on "a powerful mythic strain" in biblical literature that is divorced from biological motherhood but wedded to the sociological role of motherhood in Jewish society; it is a symbol that portrays "the mother role as a power-role involving leadership, daring and protectiveness of a society rather than simply a familiar level."⁷⁶³

⁷⁶³ Rachel Adler, "A Mother in Israel: Aspects of the Mother Role in Jewish Myth", *Beyond Androcentrism: New Essays on Women and Religion* (ed. Rita M. Gross; Missoula, MA: Scholars Press, 1977) 249.

b *The Political Message of the Book of Judith*

I argue that the Book of Judith presents a subtle argument for the acceptance of the Hasmonean queen Shelamzion. It does so by drawing on a literary convention of the time that uses allegory, allusion, irony and reversals to persuade the audience to recognize the validity of its underlying message. The Book of Judith moves through possible opposition to female leadership and creates a strong case for a woman as leader during a time of crisis. The author of the Book of Judith conveyed this message by setting his or her story in Israel's past. The book also overcomes possible opposition to a woman as leader by presenting this "historical" character as a person who saw her role as a servant of God and her people, as well as their protector. The possible concern that a female leader might wish to deify herself (much like the neighbouring Ptolemaic women) is also addressed indirectly in this book, by revealing that such *hybristic* behaviour is not only punished by God, but also crushed by the quality of female leadership that this very woman exemplifies. Such a strong condemnation of self-serving behaviour would surely have had a positive influence in favour of Shelamzion's leadership, particularly given her public demonstrations against the *hybristic* behaviour of her Manasseh-like husband, Janneus. If even one of his sons resembled him in kind or appearance, the Jewish public would have been cautious about supporting his rule. Shelamzion's piety and her opposition to behaviour which went against the Jewish moral code (that is, the Law as presented in the bible and as interpreted by the legal scholars, the Pharisees) as well as her role as a benefactress to her people would, on the other hand, have been welcomed,

seen as divinely approved, perhaps like that of a “new” David and, indeed, “honoured in her time”.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I explored the connection between literature and history. My hypothesis is that there is an association between the Book of Judith and the only Hasmonean queen regnant, Shelamzion. Specifically, I argue that the Book of Judith was written as political propaganda for this Hasmonean queen.

Both literature and history are producers of meaning; they are intimately involved in the cultural system of their times. The connection between literature and history that I focus on in this dissertation involves the use of symbols in a literary medium as an instrument of institutional change. The theoretical basis for my study is grounded in the sociology of knowledge. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann articulate the role symbols play in the legitimation of political reform.

My study of political propaganda in the Hellenistic age (Part One) revealed that literature originated in the arena of politics: rhetors were clients of royalty and used their talents to promote the reputation of these patrons. Literary political propaganda in the Hellenistic period not only existed but also was widespread in educated circles. *The Letter of Aristeas* and *I Maccabees* are two examples of political propaganda that derive from a Jewish milieu. The difficulty in identifying literary political propaganda in this time period is two-fold. There is agreement on the definition and contours of the concept of political propaganda in antiquity. Part of the problem in delimiting such propaganda is the inherent difficulty in distinguishing between propaganda that is cultural and propaganda that is nationalistic or political. In fact, there is often much overlap between propaganda aimed at promoting nationalism and propaganda aimed at promoting a

specific historical figure, as leaders often attempt to represent or personify the ideals of a nation. That said, a study by Alan Lloyd provided certain criteria that were useful in identifying elements of political propaganda. Another difficulty in identifying literary political propaganda in the Hellenistic period is the fact that such works lose their ability to function as propaganda when divorced from their cultural context.

The present study located the Book of Judith in its literary and socio-political context, for it is only through an examination of the social conditions that existed at the time it was written that the book's potential as political propaganda can be appreciated.

The second part of this dissertation examined the literary world of Shelamzion as an approach to the study of the Book of Judith. It discussed the various literary forms, techniques and contents that were common during the late Hellenistic period. The latter was an interesting time for literature, as the earliest form of extended prose narratives, what we now call "novel", or "*roman*", was emerging. These early forms of novels presented themselves as historical works, but the well-educated Hellenistic reader would readily identify them as works of fiction. Consonant with the use of this new form was the means that Hellenistic authors used to construct and articulate new meaning. The reading audience was well versed in the classics and studied works like Herodotus' *The Histories* closely during their education. Intertextuality (the allusions to other well-known works) was used as a literary device to build new meaning. Allegory was a similar tool, personification being a particularly common type of allegory. Allegory, in turn, can be used to legitimate political authority. Studies of the Book of Judith have associated Judith's character with that of the archetypal warrior and king of Israel, David. The motif that speaks of the power of Judith's hand, feeds into the established tradition of

speaking of the power of the king's hand or YHWH's hand. Regardless of the date of composition of *Judith*, the author chose to situate her or his story in the past, thus presenting female leadership as something that had been accepted and, by implication, could be accepted now.

The only time in Jewish history that a woman assumed leadership of Judea was the nine year period from 76-67 B.C.E. It was also a time when women rulers were common in Ptolemaic Egypt and Seleucid Syria. These women were the female descendants of Ptolemy Soter I, and the role they played in regional politics could receive closer attention by scholars. About the rule of our Hasmonean queen, there is one main source of information, the work of Josephus. In his two accounts of her rule Josephus refers to her as Salome Alexandra, while later scholars identify her by her Hebrew name, Shelamzion. Josephus' two accounts present a very complex assessment of her reign; at times Josephus is critical, other times he praises her. He associates her with the murder of Antigonus I in *Jewish Antiquities* and presents her liaison with the Pharisees as an act of obedience to her husband, Janneus. On the other hand, Josephus praises her ability as an administrator and defender of the nation. A close reading of his accounts and an understanding of his tendencies permit an evaluation of Shelamzion's personal qualities and administrative style. In light of Jewish-Hellenistic ideologies of monarchy, Shelamzion's personal qualities and administrative style were exemplary. Also worthy of particular attention is this study's finding that she was a scholar of the Law.

Shelamzion was the second woman who was given the rule of the nation. One generation prior to Shelamzion's rule, her mother-in-law was bequeathed the land by her husband, John Hyrcanus. However, this unfortunate woman, whose name is now lost,

soon died imprisoned by her son Aristobulus. The political machinery that kept Shelamzion in power must have taken the possibility of a similar event into account.

That Shelamzion needed some type of political propaganda is evident; that this propaganda was the Book of Judith is what I have attempted to demonstrate. The Book of Judith draws on the Hellenistic concept of thinking about war in terms of sexual politics. Into this conceptual framework the author injects a difficult passage from biblical literature that speaks of a woman protecting a hero. There are also allusions to the leadership of Deborah and Jael's murder of general Sisera in the book. When the Book of Judith is examined from the perspective of its cultural values, its connections with Shelamzion become clear. The internal and external dynamics of the cultural values of honour and shame reveal how the political leadership of Judith mirrors that of Shelamzion.

The results of my research have important implications for the dating of the Book of Judith. To begin with, there is no agreement among scholars as to when the book was written; opinions range from the Persian period to early Christian times. If, as I have tried to show, the Book of Judith was a work of propaganda for the reign of Queen Shelamzion, it must have been written during her time. There is certainly nothing that excludes such a dating; on the contrary, numerous features clearly point in the direction of Shelamzion and her rule.

This study suggests further research in a variety of areas. It is important for scholars to address the role literary political propaganda played as a vehicle of social change in antiquity. One facet of this further study would be an examination of the contours of propaganda in light of ancient cultures. The use of inscriptions on stelae

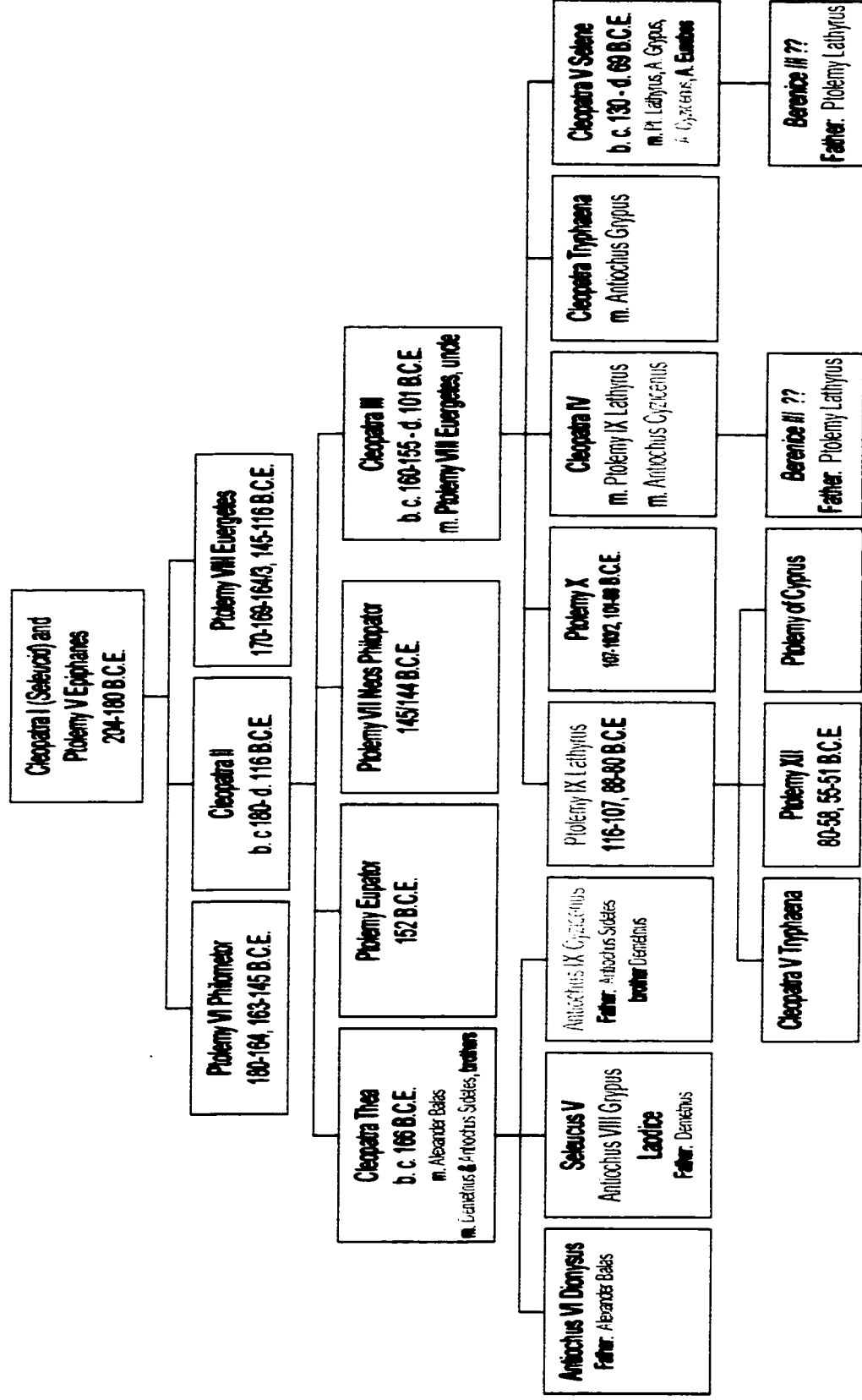
could also be incorporated into this research. More work is to be done on discerning the quality of literary theory during this period. Popular works such as the nascent novel were not the focus of academic discussions of rhetoric; however, embedded within early novels and other literary forms themselves could be clues as to how fiction was thought of and used. Regarding the political history of the time, I am certain a book could be written about the role the various Cleopatras and other women played in the politics of the age. A similar reconstruction of the role of the Herodian women based on Josephus' accounts would also be very helpful. Lastly, an assessment of the books of Esther and Susanna as political propaganda for Shlamzion is the next logical step in a fascinating journey.

APPENDICES

Appendix I

The Cleopatras, the Children, and Husbands

(b. = born, c. = circa, m. = married, d. = died)



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<i>The Jewish War Bk. 1</i>	<i>Jewish Antiquities Bk. 13</i>
Alexander bequeathed the kingdom to his wife Alexandra, being convinced that the Jews would bow to her authority as they would to no other, because by her utter lack of brutality and by her opposition to his crimes she had won the affections of the populace. Nor was he mistaken in these expectations; for this frail woman firmly held the reins of government, thanks to her reputation for piety. She was, indeed, the very strictest observer of the national traditions and would deprive of office any offenders against the sacred laws. (107-108)	Thereupon Alexandra, after capturing the fortress, conferred with the Pharisees as her husband had suggested, and by placing in their hands all that concerned his corpse and the royal power, stilled their anger against Alexander, and made them her well-wishers and friends. And they in turn went to the people and made public speeches in which they recounted the deeds of Alexander, and said that in him they had lost a just king, and by their eulogies they so greatly moved the people to mourn and lament that they gave him a more splendid burial than had been given any of the kings before him. (405-406)
Of the two sons whom she had by Alexander, she appointed the elder, Hyrcanus, high priest, out of consideration alike for his age and his disposition, which was too lethargic to be troubled about public affairs; the younger, Aristobulus, as a hot-head, she confined to a private life. (109)	Now although Alexander had left two sons, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, he had bequeathed the royal power to Alexandra. Of these sons the one, Hyrcanus, was incompetent to govern and in addition much preferred a quiet life, while the younger, Aristobulus, was a man of action and high spirit. As for the queen herself, she was loved by the masses because she was thought to disapprove of the crimes committed by her husband. Alexandra then appointed Hyrcanus as high priest because of his greater age but more especially because of his lack of energy; ... (407-408)

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Beside Alexandra, and growing as she grew, arose the Pharisees, a body of Jews with the reputation of excelling the rest of their nation in the observances of religion, and as exact exponents of the laws. To them, being herself intensely religious, she listened with too great deference; while they, gradually taking advantage of an ingenuous woman, became at length the real administrators of the state, at liberty to banish and to recall, to loose and to bind, whom they would. In short, the enjoyments of royal authority were theirs; it expenses and burthens fell to Alexandra. (110-111)	... and she permitted the Pharisees to do as they liked in all matters, and also commanded the people to obey them; and whatever regulations, introduced by the Pharisees in accordance with the tradition of their fathers, had been abolished by her father-in-law Hyrcanus, these she again restored. And so, while she had the title of sovereign, the Pharisees had the power. For example, they recalled exiles, and freed prisoners, and, in a word, in no way differed from absolute rulers. (408-409)
She proved, however, to be a wonderful administrator in larger affairs, and, by continual recruiting doubled her army, besides collecting a considerable body of foreign troops; so that she not only strengthened her own nation, but became a formidable foe to foreign potentates. But if she ruled the nation, the Pharisees ruled her. (112)	Nevertheless the queen took thought for the welfare of the kingdom and recruited a large force of mercenaries and also made her own force twice as large, with the result that she struck terror into the local rulers round her and received hostages from them. And throughout the entire country there was quiet ... (409-410)

Thus they put to death Diogenes, a distinguished man who had been a friend of Alexander, accusing him of having advised the king to crucify his eight hundred victims. They further urged Alexandra to make away with the others who had instigated Alexander to punish those men; and as she from superstitious motives always gave way, they proceeded to kill whomsoever they would. The most eminent of the citizens thus imperiled sought refuge with Aristobulus, who persuaded his mother to spare their lives in consideration of their rank, but, if she was not satisfied of their innocence, to expel them from the city. Their security being thus guaranteed, they dispersed about the country. (113-114)

... except for the Pharisees; for they worked upon the feelings of the queen and tried to persuade her to kill those who had urged Alexander to put the eight hundred to death. Later they themselves cut down one of them, named Diogenes, and his death was followed by that of one after the other, until the leading citizens came to the palace, Aristobulus among them – for he was obviously resentful of what was taking place, and let it be plainly seen that if only he should get the opportunity, he would not leave his mother any power at all -, and they reminded her of all that they had achieved in the face of danger, whereby they had shown their unwavering loyalty to their master and had therefore been judged worthy by him of the greatest honours. And they begged her not to crush their hopes completely, for, they said, after escaping the dangers of war, they were now being slaughtered by him like cattle by their foes, and there was no one to avenge them. They also said that if their adversaries were to be contented with those already slain, they would bear with equanimity what had taken place, out of genuine devotion to their masters; but if, on the other hand, these men were to continue in the same course, let them, they begged, at least be given their freedom; for they would never bring themselves to seek any means of safety but what should come from her, and would welcome death in her palace so long as they might not have disloyalty on their conscience. It would be disgraceful both for them and for her who ruled as queen, they added, if, being abandoned by her, they should be given shelter by the enemies of her husband; for Aretas and Arab and the other princes would consider it of the utmost value to enlist such men as mercenaries, whose very name, they might say, had caused these princes to shudder before they had heard it (spoken aloud). But if this could not be, and she had determined to favour the Pharisees above all others, let her, as the next best thing, station each of them in one of the garrisons, for, if some evil genius were thus wroth with the house of Alexander, they at least would be themselves (loyal) even though living in humble circumstances.

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	Speaking in this vein at great length, they called upon the shades of Alexander to take pity on those who had been killed and those who were in danger, whereupon all the bystanders burst into tears. And Aristobulus in particular made plain his sentiments by denouncing his mother bitterly. But still they themselves were to blame for their misfortunes, in allowing a woman to reign who madly desired it in her unreasonable love of power, and when her sons were in the prime of life. And so the queen, not knowing what to do consistent with her dignity, entrusted to them the guarding of the fortresses with the exception of Hyrcania, Alexandreion and Machaerus, where her most valuable possessions were. (410-417)
Alexandra sent an army to Damascus, on the pretext of the constant pressure put upon that city by Ptolemy; the troops, however, returned to her without having achieved anything remarkable. On the other hand, by means of treaties and presents, she won over Tigranes, king of Armenia, who was seated before Ptolemais, besieging Cleopatra. He, however, had to beat a hasty retreat, recalled by domestic troubles in Armenia, which Lucullus had invaded. (115-117)	And not long afterward she sent out her son Aristobulus with an army to Damascus against Ptolemy, the son of Mennaeus, as he was called, who was a troublesome neighbour to their city. He returned, however, without having accomplished anything noteworthy. About this time news came that Tigranes, king of Armenia, with an army of three hundred thousand men had invaded Syria and was coming against Judaea. This naturally frightened the queen and her people. And so they sent many valuable gifts and envoys to him as he was besieging Ptolemais. For Queen Selene, also called Cleopatra, was then ruling over Syria and she induced the inhabitants to shut their gates against Tigranes. The envoys therefore met with him and asked him to grant favourable terms to the queen and her people. Thereupon he commended them for coming so great a distance to do homage to him, and gave them reason to hope for the best. But hardly had Ptolemais been captured when news came to Tigranes that Lucullus, who was pursuing Mithridates, had failed to catch him, as he had fled to the Iberians, and had therefore ravaged Armenia and was besieging (the capital). And when Tigranes learned of this, he withdrew to his own country. (418-421)

Alexandra now falling ill, her younger son Aristobulus seized his opportunity and with the aid of his followers – a numerous body, every one of whom was devoted to him because of his fiery nature – took possession of all the fortresses and, with the money which he found there, recruited a mercenary force and proclaimed himself king. The complaints of Hyrcanus at these proceedings moved the compassion of his mother, who shut up the wife and children of Aristobulus in Antonia. This was a fortress adjoining the north side of the temple, which, as I said, was formerly called Baris, but afterwards took this new name under Antony's supremacy; just as Augustus and Agrippa gave their names to the cities of Sebaste and Agrippias. (118)	Some time after this the queen was stricken by a serious illness, whereupon Aristobulus decided to make an attempt to seize power, and slipped away by night with one of his servants, and went to the fortresses where his father's friends had been stationed. For while he had long resented the things his mother was doing, he was just then especially fearful that on her death their whole family might come under the rule of the Pharisees, for he saw the incapacity of his brother, who was destined to succeed to the throne. The only one informed of his deed was his wife, whom he had left in the city with their children. And he first came to Agaba, where he found Palaestes, one of the leading men, and was given shelter by him. Now on the next day the queen became aware of Aristobulus' flight, and for a time she believed that his departure was not for the purpose of beginning a revolt. But when successive messengers came to report that he had captured the first fortress, and after that the second, and after that all of them – for when once the first had made a beginning they all hastened to submit to his will -, then at last both the queen and her people were in the greatest dismay. For they knew that Aristobulus was not far from being able to seize the throne for himself, and they were very much afraid that he might exact satisfaction for the excesses which they had practised on his house. They therefore decided to place his wife and children in the fortress overlooking the temple. And Aristobulus received such large contributions from many sources that there was already a veritable royal train about him. For in barely fifteen days he had occupied twenty-two fortresses, and obtaining resources from these, he gathered an army from Lebanon, Trachonitis and the local princes. These men readily submitted to him, being drawn to the stronger side, and at the same time believing that if they aided Aristobulus they could exploit his kingdom no less than those who were closely related to him, on the ground that they had been the means of his conquering it. Meanwhile the elders of the Jews and Hyrcanus went to the queen and begged her to give them some counsel about the present situation. For, they said, Aristobulus was already master of almost the entire country by virtue of having
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	occupied so many fortresses; but it was not their place, however seriously ill she might be, to make plans by themselves while she was still alive; and yet the danger was not at all far off. Thereupon she told them to do whatever they thought expedient, saying that there were many resources left to them, namely a nation in a sound condition, an army, and money in the various treasuries. As for herself, she was no longer greatly concerned about affairs of state, as her physical strength was almost spent. (422-429)
But before Alexandra could take action against Aristobulus for his deposition of his brother, she expired, after a reign of nine years. (119)	Not long after she had spoken these words she died, having reigned nine years and having lived seventy-three in all. (430)
	She was a woman who showed none of the weakness of her sex; for being one of those inordinately desirous of the power to rule, she showed by her deeds the ability to carry out her plans, and at the same time she exposed the folly of those men who continually fail to maintain sovereign power. For she valued the present more than the future, and making everything else secondary to absolute rule, she had, on account of this, no consideration for either decency or justice. At least matters turned out so unfortunately for her house that the sovereign power which it had acquired in the face of the greatest dangers and difficulties was not long afterward taken from it because of her desire for things unbecoming a woman, and because she expressed the same opinions as did those who were hostile to her family, and also because she left the kingdom without anyone who had their interests at heart. And even after her death she cause the palace to be filled with misfortunes and disturbances which arose from the public measures taken during her lifetime. Nevertheless, in spite of reigning in this manner, she had kept the nation at peace. (430-432)

Topic	<i>The Jewish War</i> Bk. 1	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i> Bk. 13
Character	... her utter lack of brutality and by her opposition to his crimes she had won the affections of the populace. (107)	
Public Reputation	“thanks to her reputation for piety	
Connection with the murder of Antigonus	To meet the occasion the queen concerted with the conspirators a very crafty plot. (75)	But the queen and the men who were plotting with her against Antigonus persuaded the messenger to say the opposite, namely that his brother had heard that he had equipped himself with arms and military gear, ... (308)
	The widow of Aristobulus released his imprisoned brothers and placed on the throne Alexander, who had the double advantage over the others of seniority and apparent moderation of character. (85)	On the death of Aristobulus, his wife Salina, by the Greeks called Alexandra, released his brothers – for Aristobulus had imprisoned them, as we have said before –, and appointed as king Jannaeus, also known as Alexander, who was best

APPENDIX 2

		fitted for this office by reason of his age and his evenness of temper (320-321) And when the queen saw that he was on the point of death and no longer held to any hope of recovery, she wept and beat her breast, ... (399) Thereupon Alexandra, after capturing the fortress, ... (405)
	Alexander bequeathed the kingdom to his wife Alexandra (107)	

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . 6 Vols. Ed. David Noel Freedman. Toronto and New York: Doubleday, 1992.
<i>ANF</i>	<i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> . Vols. 1, 2, 4. Ed. The Rev, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Edinburg and Grand Rapids, Michigan. T & T Clark and Wm. B. Eerdmans. Rep. 1989-1994.
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> . Teil II: Principat. Ed. Wolfgang Haase und Hildegard Temporini. New York and Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. 1987
<i>APOT</i>	<i>The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English</i> , 1. Ed. R. H. Charles. Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1913.
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>CA</i>	<i>Classical Antiquities</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CHJ</i>	<i>The Cambridge History of Judaism</i> . 3 Vols. Ed. William Hornbury, W. D. Davies and John Sturdy. Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press. 1999:
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>EJMI</i>	<i>Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters</i> . Ed. Robert Kraft and W.G.E. Nickelsburg. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Atlanta, Georgia: Fortress Press and Scholars Press. 1986.
<i>FGrH</i>	<i>Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker</i> . Jacoby, Felix. 3 Vols. Leiden: E. J. Brill. 1961-1969 (orig. 1924ff).
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>

<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JQ</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JWSTP</i>	<i>Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period.</i> Ed. Michael E. Stone. Assen and Philadelphia: Van Gorcum and Fortress Press, 1984.
<i>LCL</i>	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i>
<i>OTP</i>	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.</i> 2 Vols.; Ed. James H. Charlesworth. New York: Doubleday. 1983-1985.
<i>PA</i>	<i>Ptolemaic Alexandria.</i> 3 vols.; P. M. Fraser. Oxford at the Clarendon Press. 1972.
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandanavian Journal for the Old Testament</i>
<i>SR</i>	<i>Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>

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