


JUDEAN PIRACY, JUDEA AND PARTHIA, AND THE ROMAN ANNEXATION OF JUDEA: THE EVIDENCE OF POMPEIUS TROGUS

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Abstract: Pompey the Great's 63 BCE conquest of the Jewish kingdom known as the Hasmonean State has traditionally been viewed as an inevitable event since the Roman Republic had long desired to annex the Middle Eastern nations. The prevailing consensus is that the Romans captured the Hasmonean state, removed its high-priest kings from power, and made its territory part of the Republic merely through military force. However, Justin's *Epitome of the Philippic Histories* of Pompeius Trogus is a neglected source of new information for understanding relations between the Romans and the Jews at this time. Trogus's brief account of this period alludes to a more specific reason, or at least, circumstance for Pompey's conquest of Judea. His work contains evidence that the Jews were involved in piracy, of the type the Republic had commissioned Pompey to eradicate. In addition to this activity that adversely affected Roman commercial interests in the Mediterranean, the Jews were also involved with the Seleucid Empire and the Nabatean Arabs, both of whom had dealings with the Parthians. Piracy, coupled with Rome's antagonism towards the Parthians, negatively impacted the Republic's attitude towards the Jews. Considering the evidence from Trogus, Roman fears of Jewish piracy and Jewish links to the Republic's Parthian enemies were not unfounded.

Keywords: Pompeius Trogus, Justin, Josephus, Hasmonean State, Seleucid Empire, Nabatean Arabs, Parthian Empire, Roman Republic, Pompey the Great.

Justin's *Epitome of the Philippic Histories* of Pompeius Trogus is a neglected source for understanding relations between the Romans and the Jews. The traditional view is that the 63 BCE Roman conquest of Judea is not surprising since the Roman Republic was conquering the East, and that once they had captured Asia Minor and Syria it was inevitable that Judea would come under their control. Trogus, however, suggests that this accepted explanation for the Roman annexation of Judea is insufficient. Trogus's brief account of this period alludes to a more specific reason, or at least, circumstance for Pompey's conquest of Judea. His work contains evidence that the Jews were involved in

piracy, of the type the Republic had commissioned Pompey to eradicate. In addition to this activity that adversely affected Roman commercial interests in the Mediterranean, the Jews were also involved with the Seleucid Empire and the Nabatean Arabs, both of whom had dealings with the Parthians. Piracy, coupled with Rome's antagonism towards the Parthians, negatively impacted the Republic's attitude towards the Jews. Considering the evidence from Trogus, Roman fears of Jewish piracy and Jewish links to the Republic's Parthian enemies were not unfounded.

I. Pompeius Trogus: His Background and His *Philippic Histories*

The *Philippic Histories* of the Latin writer Pompeius Trogus is the only surviving continuous narrative of the Hellenistic period.¹ The content of his book makes it an important supplement to the accounts of the Maccabean Period and the relations between the Hasmonean state (152–63 BCE) and its neighbors, as documented in the writings of Josephus and the Books of the Maccabees.² In many respects, Trogus and Josephus were very similar historians. Both were outsiders interested in explaining the rise of Roman power throughout the Mediterranean region and the Middle East. Josephus was a Jew who witnessed the Roman Empire conquer his homeland. The Roman emperor Vespasian gave him Roman citizenship, a pension, and a home in the city of Rome even though he had fought against him and his son, the future emperor Titus.³ Trogus was a third-generation Roman citizen of Gallic origin whose book shows that he identified with the Roman Republic's conquered peoples. Much of what we know about him comes from the autobiographical note appended to Book 43 of his work.⁴ It informs the reader that Trogus's family originated from the Gallic tribe of the Vocontii, whom the Romans had conquered in 125/124 BCE (43.5.11–12). His grandfather had received Roman citizenship from Pompey, under whom he had served in Spain during the campaign against Sertorius (77–72 BCE).⁵ Trogus's uncle was a cavalry commander in the Republic's war

¹ The title affixed to this work is *Philippic Histories and the Origin of the Whole World and the Places of the Earth* (*Historiae Philippicae et Totius Mundi Origines et Terrae Situs*). Citations follow the Latin text and numeration in the critical edition of Seel 1985. For this work's content and its textual history, see Borgna 2019, xxi–lxv; Yardley – Develin 1994, 1–10. Trogus also wrote a book titled *On Animals* (*De Animalibus*) that was based on Aristotle and Theophrastus. Pliny (*NH* 7.33; 10.101; 11.229, 274; 17.58; 31.131) cites it several times.

² The origin of the name Hasmonean is uncertain. The historian Josephus (*War* 2.344; 5.139; *Ant.* 20.190, 347) claims it derives from a family patriarch named Asamoneus. It is plausible that the Hebrew name “Hasmonean” is a corruption of the name of Mattathias's grandfather, Shim'on. The Hasmonean family is often called the Maccabees and their revolt against the Seleucid monarch Antiochus IV Epiphanes is frequently referred to as the Maccabean Revolt. However, “Maccabee” was a name given to the family's most famous fighter, Judas (Judah), for his prowess in battle. This name is related to the Hebrew and Aramaic root *mqb* and likely means “hammer-like.” See Schürer – Vermes – Millar – Black 1973, 164–173; Bar-Kochva 1989, 147–148; Mason 2001, 6; Dąbrowa 2010, 13–41; Regev 2013, 107–110; Atkinson 2018, 23–46; Berthelot 2018, 65–80.

³ *Life* 422–423. He lived in Vespasian's former residence. For the influence of the Flavian dynasty on Josephus's works: Atkinson 2016b, 4–22; Sterling 1992, 238–240.

⁴ Borgna 2018, 25–30; Seel 1972, 88–93.

⁵ Klotz 1952, 2301.

against Mithridates in the mid-60s BCE. During the 40s BCE, Trogus's father oversaw Julius Caesar's correspondence and legations to him.⁶

Although we know nothing about Trogus other than the brief biographical glimpse of his family's history appended to his book, he wrote his *Phillipic Histories* sometime during the reign of Augustus. This is indicated by the latest dated events in the work, namely the concordat between the Romans and the Parthians in 20 BCE (42.5.11–12) and the Roman conquest of Spain in 19 BCE (44.5.8). He may have written a decade later if, like the *Periochae* of Livy, he conflated the Parthian hostages Phraates IV sent to Augustus (11/10 BCE) with the return of the *signa militaria* to Rome in 20 BCE (42.5.11).⁷ His reference to the 2 BCE murder of the Parthian monarch Phraates IV by his son, Phraates V (42.5.10–12), provides a *terminus post quem* for dating Trogus's history.⁸

The date of Trogus's book makes him an important witness to Roman attitudes about the rise of the Parthians in the Middle East during the Augustan period. Following the Romans' annexation of the Seleucid Empire, Trogus, like many of the time, believed the Parthians were the new rivals of the Romans. Because of the Parthians' long history of interactions with the Jews, both the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire were concerned with preventing an alliance between them. The centuries' relationship between the two peoples caused many Romans to be suspicious of the Jews when Josephus lived in Rome.⁹ Trogus offers an earlier glimpse into Roman attitudes towards the Jews in the Middle East at the time when the Roman Republic sought to conquer the entire region. His account of this period suggests that the fear of a Jewish-Parthian alliance in Josephus's time was not new, but that it went back to beginning of the Roman Republic's early forays in the Middle East.

Because Trogus's book is a world history that explains the Roman Republic's relationship with the many nations it had conquered, it is not surprising that it was once quite popular. Many prominent writers such as Velleius Paterculus, Valerius Maximus, Seneca, Frontinus, and Ampelius cited it.¹⁰ The title of his book may show his indebtedness to the approach and spirit of Theopompos's *Philippika*.¹¹ Trogus's *Phillipic Histories* may be classified as a universal history that is reminiscent of the writings of Diodorus of Sicily and Trogus's contemporary Nicolaus of Damascus.¹² Similarities between Trogus's account of the Jews and that of Apollonius Molon may suggest some relationship between the two works, or perhaps their use of a common tradition.¹³ Trogus contrasted his writing style with other great historians of the Roman Republic, showing that he spent considerable time thinking about the quality of his prose. He criticized Sallust

⁶ For Trogus's background and scholarship on his work, see Klotz 1952, 2300–2313; Seel 1982, 1363–1423; Richter 1987, 3–30; Borgna 2019, liv–lxv. Because his family obtained citizenship from Pompey, Trogus's praenomen was likely Gnaeus.

⁷ Livy, *Per.* 141; Syme 1988, 367; Overtoom 2016, 147–150; Dąbrowa 2017, 173–174.

⁸ Seel 1972, 172–180; Alonso-Núñez 1987, 60–61.

⁹ Atkinson 2016b, 172–177.

¹⁰ Edson 1961, 199.

¹¹ Develin 1985, 110–112.

¹² There are, however, some notable differences between Trogus's accounts of the origin of the Jews and Nicolaus of Damascus (*apud* Josephus, *Antiquities*, 1.159–160) suggesting that the *Phillipic Histories* incorporates materials from other authors who documented Jewish history: Stern 1974, 332–343.

¹³ Bar-Kochva 2010, 488–489.

and Livy (38.3.11) for inserting invented speeches in direct discourse into their works, which he believed were inappropriate for historians to add to their accounts of the past.¹⁴ Although short dialogues appear in his book, he places longer orations in indirect discourse. This makes reading Trogius vastly different than other Greek and Roman historians, for his lack of invented speeches renders his history less dramatic. For Trogius, historical content was more important than literary style or theatrical effect.¹⁵

Trogius structured his history in a chronological manner focusing on world powers, with his narrative progressing from east to west. He provides a history of each empire from start to finish before moving onto the next; however, at times he jumps back into his narrative whenever one nation influenced another.¹⁶ The Middle East plays a prominent role in his book. Although he examines many kingdoms such as the Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians, the Macedonians, the Seleucids, the Ptolemies, and the Parthians, he focused on the Macedonian-Hellenistic states and the rise of the Roman Republic. Trogius excerpted considerable information from his sources; yet, he appears to have added substantial material of his own that reflects his views of Roman society in his day. His excursus on the Jews comprises an important role in his enterprise. Some of this section, however, is likely missing from our extant manuscripts.

Unfortunately, Trogius's once lengthy 44-volume work survives in an epitome by Justin that has been dated as early as 144 CE to as late as 395 CE.¹⁷ Justin admits that he was quite selective in what he chose to retain in his *Epitome* (*Preface* 4). If the later anonymous prologues to the *Philippic Histories* accurately summarize the content of the original work, it appears that Justin has preserved approximately one-fifth of Trogius's book.¹⁸ Of particular interest to the historian of the Hellenistic World is the approximately thirty-five years of Parthian history between the reigns of Mithridates II (123–88 BCE) and Orodes II (ca. 56–38 BCE) that Justin excised from Trogius's history. Presumably, this was among the sections Justin admits he removed because they did not make for pleasurable reading or provide a moral lesson (*Preface* 4). Largely because of this omission, this period has been called the Parthian "Dark Age."¹⁹ Despite our loss of this significant material, it is clear from Justin's *Epitome* that Trogius wanted to explain Roman expansion in the Middle East and the rise of the Parthian Empire in his day (41.1.1–7). He was not alone in his quest to account for the emergence of this new power.

¹⁴ Steele 1917, 19–24; Seel 1972, 323–338; Yardley – Develin 1994, 9–10. Possible allusions or influences from Tacitus may have been introduced into Trogius's work by Justin: Borgna – Costa 2016, 134–135.

¹⁵ In his letter to the historian Lucceius, Cicero represents a dramatic approach to history writing. Cicero urged him to produce history that was full of what we would term romantic sensationalism. See Cicero, *Ep. ad fam.* 5.12. Polybius (2.56) criticized historians who included such materials.

¹⁶ Urban 1982, 86; Syme 1988, 363; Yardley – Develin 1994, 9–10; Alonso-Nuñez 1995, 352–354.

¹⁷ Seel dated it between 144/145 CE while others place it as late as 395 CE. See further Seel 1972, 346–347; Syme 1988, 358–360. Borgna (2018, 107–130) proposes a *terminus ante quem* of 321 CE for Justin's *epitome*. Although it is commonly referred to as an "epitome," this heading appears only in one late manuscript. See Seel 1985, 1. If Edson's (1961, 203) proposal that Nazarius's *Panegyric for the Emperor Constantine* delivered at Rome in 321 CE cites from Justin's *epitome*, this would provide a *terminus ante quem* of 321 CE for the publication of his edition of Trogius's history.

¹⁸ Alonso-Nuñez 1995, 355–356. Justin's omissions were not indiscriminate. He removed much of the chronological and geographical framework of Trogius's book to rewrite it as a series of anecdotes, which nevertheless preserves the original work's interest in natural history and kingdoms. See Borgna 2018, 28–36.

¹⁹ Assar 2006a, 55–56.

The influence of Macedon following Philip II's conquest of the Greek cities, and the successful campaign of Alexander the Great into the heart of the Persian Empire, marked the first time the Greeks had experienced the consequences posed by the appearance of a new empire and the collapse of the previous world power. Consequently, they were obsessed with explaining these cycles in world hegemony.²⁰ Writers such as Theopompus attempted to account for Philip's rise while Clearchus sought to understand the collapse of the Persian Empire.²¹ Clearchus attributed this kingdom's demise to the luxury of the Medes and the kings of Persia. The lesson for the Romans was to avoid such vice. Trogus's contemporary Livy, as well as Sallust and other Roman writers, emphasized the decline of the Roman Republic to warn citizens to return to the values that had made the Romans the most formidable nation on earth.²²

Posidonius, like Trogus, contrasted the luxurious lifestyle of the Hellenistic world and its descent into decadence with the conduct of ancient Roman society to warn Romans of his day that they too faced decline if they did not abandon their often deprived lifestyle. After 146 BCE when many Romans felt morals had begun to deteriorate in the Republic, the Seleucid Empire had already begin its inevitable collapse with no hope of recovery.²³ For Trogus and other writers, the Seleucid monarch Antiochus VII Sidetes represented the pinnacle of Seleucid virtue and power.²⁴ He was a particularly important ruler because he posed a major threat to the Parthian Empire and since the Jews had played a significant role in his effort to subdue the Parthians. His reign serves as a warning in Trogus's book as an example for the Romans not to follow, as well as a prediction of what will happen to the Parthians.

II. Seleucid-Parthian Relations in Trogus

Trogus focusses on personalities, namely monarchs, to tell the story of a succession of kingdoms.²⁵ His account of the precipitous decline and fall of the Seleucid Empire serves as a character study that shapes his later narrative of the Parthians, as well as his understanding of the Roman Republic of his time. The Jews (36.2.1–3.9) play a minor role in his book as a study in character. He contrasts the Jews' success in creating their own nation with the Seleucid Empire at its height. His account of the Seleucid Empire's history from Demetrius I to Antiochus VII Sidetes (36.1.1–10) precedes his excursus

²⁰ Bar-Kochva 2010, 66–67; Overtoom 2016, 137–174; Overtoom 2019, 118–136. Classical writers increasingly sought to explain the end of contemporary kingdoms by seeking to uncover patterns in history. Aemilius Sura was among the most prominent. He drew upon earlier schemas of writers such as Eratosthenes and Ctesias that divided history up to the defeat of Antiochus III in 190 BCE into five periods. Similar Roman chronologies sought to account for the rise of the Roman Republic. Trogus reflects this interest in using chronology to explain the rise and fall of kingdoms in the Hellenistic Period. See Swain 1940, 1–21.

²¹ Athenaeus 12.514d; 529D; 539D; Flower 1994, 71–130.

²² For a similar Roman understanding of the Parthians: Dąbrowa 2017, 171–189.

²³ Bellinger 1949, 51–102; Overtoom 2019, 134–136.

²⁴ Bar-Kochva 2010, 424–445.

²⁵ Crommelin 1993, 354–385. Trogus inserts his digressions according to the Herodotean model by placing them at the first mention of a people or a region: Borgna 2018, 63.

on the Jews. Of all monarchs who ruled this kingdom, none was more important for Trogus than Sidetes. His reign has been called the “swan song of the Seleucid Empire” because he was the last Syrian ruler to have made a concerted effort to halt Syria’s political decline.²⁶ In his account of his tenure, Trogus contrasts Sidetes with his late father, Demetrius I, whose rule, he writes, had been characterized by arrogance, idleness, and vices (36.1.9).²⁷ Sidetes became determined not to fall into the same weaknesses as his father had by seeking to stabilize his kingdom and increase its size. Trogus believed his 131 BCE invasion of Parthia marked the zenith of his power, his descent into decadence, and his untimely death.

The brief accounts of Trogus (38.9–10) and Josephus are our major sources for the invasion of the Parthian Empire by Sidetes.²⁸ Josephus states that he obtained his information about it from Nicolaus of Damascus (*Ant.* 13.249). Similarities between his report of Sidetes and the narratives of this Seleucid Empire’s king in Posidonius suggest that Trogus preserved portions of the writing of Posidonius of Apamea.²⁹ Because Posidonius was a Stoic author whose works contained much about the Jews, Trogus may have been influenced by his earlier books. This likely led Trogus to include an excursus on the Jews in his account of Seleucid-Parthian relations. Trogus also contains some unique information about the Jews that suggest the original edition of his book may have included more narratives about the Hasmonean rulers and their relationships with the Seleucid Empire’s monarchs and the Parthian kings. Trogus’s account of Sidetes is particularly important because the Jews played a major role in his expedition against Parthia.

Sidetes undertook his invasion of Parthia purportedly to protect his newly acquired subjects in the East when they sought his aide. For Trogus, this speaks well of his character. Upon his arrival, many eastern princes surrendered to him, wishing to break free from Parthian dominance (38.10.5). They did so because Arsaces VII (= Pharaates II) had departed from the tolerant policy of his predecessor, Arsaces V, who had treated his subjects quite well (38.10.5–6).³⁰ Sidetes was more enlightened and viewed as a protector of his vassals. Although Trogus regarded the Parthian Empire at its peak at this time, he considered Sidetes’s invasion not only the beginning of the collapse of Seleucid Empire, but the start of the decline of the Parthian Empire as well.³¹

According to Trogus, the Parthians were ill-prepared to confront Sidetes. He won three battles and forced the Parthians to flee towards Iran. His victories were so momentous that his men began to call him “the Great” (38.10.6).³² Trogus comments that Sidetes even fought more bravely than the Parthians (38.10.9). It is uncertain how his

²⁶ Quotation from Bar-Kochva 2010, 427. See Bevan 1902, 236–426; Schwartz 1996, 83–102; Grainger 1997, 29–31; Ehling 2008, 178–216.

²⁷ For his reign: Grainger 1997, 42–44; Ehling 2008, 122–153.

²⁸ For the details of this event and other historical accounts of it, all of which are extant in fragments: Schürer – Vermes – Millar – Black 1973, 131–132, 204–206; Ehling 2008, 200–207; Dąbrowa 2010, 67–73; Regev 2013, 206–208; Atkinson 2016b, 62–67; Atkinson 2018, 39–52; Berthelot 2018, 240–260.

²⁹ For evidence that Trogus used Posidonius, see the references and discussions in the following: Bar-Kochva 2010, 424–425; Stern 1974, 332–333.

³⁰ Assar 2006b, 98–112.

³¹ See further the extensive examination of the literary, archaeological, and numismatic evidence for the decline of the Seleucid and Parthian Empires in Atkinson 2018, 33–52; Overtoom 2020, 189–276.

³² Ehling 2008, 204–205.

campaign ended. According to Trogus, he quartered his troops throughout Parthia for the winter and compelled the local population to furnish them with supplies. It is probable these were ethnic Greeks living in settlements under Parthian rule. Sidetes's soldiers misbehaved and apparently abused these residents, which led them to turn against him.³³ Coins struck in the name of Sidetes in Syria, dated 128 BCE, suggest he was killed in the autumn of 129 BCE (38.10.8–9).³⁴ It is uncertain how he died or what happened to his army. Although Josephus mentions that the Jews fought with him, they clearly survived as the high priest and king John Hyrcanus somehow returned home from the expedition.³⁵ Diodorus Siculus (37.17.1) mentions that Phraates II killed three hundred thousand of Sidetes's men. Trogus adds that the Parthian monarch also captured some Seleucid soldiers and forced them to serve as conscripts in his army.³⁶ Phraates II later perished during a fight against hostile tribes because some of Sidetes's former troops defected during the battle (42.1.4–5).³⁷

The arrogance of the Parthian king had almost allowed Sidetes to conquer Parthia. Yet, the ancient historians were convinced it was Sidetes's decadence that ended his own kingdom.³⁸ Trogus attributed Sidetes's death in Parthia to his obsession with luxury and his insatiable appetite for vice that consumed him during the final years of his life (38.10.1–4).³⁹ This contrasts with the former respect for him among the region's rulers, which is perhaps best demonstrated by his piety and kindness towards the Jews. When Sidetes besieged the Hasmonean ruler and high priest John Hyrcanus in Jerusalem, he agreed to a seven-day truce so the Jews could celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles. Sidetes not only halted his attack, but he also gave Hyrcanus bulls along with vessels of gold and silver filled with spices for the holiday.⁴⁰

Josephus mentions that Sidetes became known as “the Pious” (Εὐσεβῆς) because of his favorable treatment of the Jews.⁴¹ Josephus claims Hyrcanus sent envoys to Sidetes

³³ For the likely presence of Greeks in this region: Cohen 1978, 74–81; Bickerman 1988, 81–129.

³⁴ Atkinson 2016b, 65–66. It is difficult to determine when Sidetes died since none of our sources provides a date. His last coins were minted in Syria in 128 BCE nearly two years after he set out for Parthia. Numismatic evidence places him in Babylon from approximately July 130 BCE to October 129 BCE. Assuming that the 128 BCE coins produced in Syria were minted before news of his failed expedition reached his homeland, sometime around the autumn of 129 BCE is a plausible date for his death in Parthia. For evidence to support this dating: Assar 2006b, 113–114; Ehling 2008, 201–205.

³⁵ Josephus (*Ant.* 13.250–253) describes the participation of John Hyrcanus in the campaign but does not mention what happened to him after he reached Parthia with Sidetes's army.

³⁶ For possible numismatic evidence of their presence as conscripts in the Parthian Empire, see Loginov – Nikitin 1996, 40. The tenth-century CE Hebrew book known as *Jossipon*, which was erroneously attributed to Josephus in antiquity, incorporates material from a possible Byzantine Chronicle that may contain portions of a lost pagan source about Sidetes's invasion of Parthia. It sheds new light on how the Jewish high priest and ruler, John Hyrcanus, survived this expedition by indicating that he betrayed Sidetes by cooperating with the Parthians. For this evidence, see Pucci Ben Zeev 1981, 333–338; Atkinson 2018, 42–45.

³⁷ Diodorus 42.1.1–5.

³⁸ For Sidetes's morally corrosive behavior just before his death, see Kosmin 2014, 148–150, 162–163.

³⁹ Athenaeus (10.439E) describes his drunkenness while (Pseudo-)Plutarch (*Apophtegmatata*, 184D–E) writes that during his Parthian campaign, Sidetes foolishly went on a hunting excursion while neglecting his duties and became lost in enemy territory.

⁴⁰ For the archaeological evidence of this siege in light of the written accounts, see Ariel 2019, 25–52.

⁴¹ *Ant.* 13.244; 7:393. The accounts of Diodorus (34–35.5) and (Pseudo-)Plutarch (*Moralia*, 184 E–F) emphasize the respect of Sidetes for Judaism. The former states that he rejected the advice of anti-Semites

requesting that he allow him to keep the traditional form of Jewish government (*Ant.* 13.245); Sidetes agreed to do so and ended his assault upon Jerusalem. Josephus also mentions that Hyrcanus made a friendly alliance (φιλία καὶ συμμαχία) with Sidetes at this time. Hyrcanus even hosted him and his troops in Jerusalem.⁴² Hyrcanus became a vassal of Sidetes. The Jewish army consequently accompanied Sidetes on his expedition to Parthia. Only Hyrcanus returned home with his force intact.

The story of the Parthian expedition of Sidetes is among the most puzzling sections of the *Antiquities*. Josephus was apparently so concerned his readers would doubt its accuracy that he prefixed the following statement to his account of it: “We have the testimony of these things, also of Nicolaus of Damascus” (μάρτυς δέ τούτων ἡμῖν ἔστιν καὶ Νικόλαος ὁ Δαμασκηνός).⁴³ This passage suggests that Josephus consulted other unnamed books about this period that documented the participation of Hyrcanus in this war. According to Josephus, Nicolaus wrote:

“After defeating Indates, the Parthian general, and setting up a victory monument at the Lycus River, Antiochus [=Sidetes] remained there two days at the request of the Jew Hyrcanus because of a festival of his ancestors during which Jews are forbidden to travel.” He (=Nicolaus) does not speak falsely in saying this; the Festival of Pentecost had come round, after the Sabbath, and we are not permitted to travel on the Sabbath or a festival.⁴⁴

Josephus next mentions that the Parthians killed Sidetes, that his brother Demetrius II returned to Syria, and then proceeds to describe the campaigns of Hyrcanus in Seleucid territory. He does not explain what happened or how Hyrcanus made it home since he states that he has documented these “events elsewhere in our writings.”⁴⁵

Josephus’s description of Sidetes’s respect for Judaism during his Parthian campaign is not unique. According to Trogus, the Parthians so respected Sidetes that they honored him by returning his body in a silver coffin (39.1.5–6). The extant accounts show that there was much mourning throughout Syria following Sidetes’s death because many of his men had either perished in battle or been taken captive by the Parthians.⁴⁶ Athenaeus, like Trogus, regarded Sidetes as a tragic and honorable figure despite his flaws. His failed invasion of Parthia marked the end of the golden age of the Seleucid Empire.

in his army to abolish Judaism. The Jewish community may have called Sidetes “Pious” in gratitude for his decision to spare the Jerusalem temple.

⁴² *Ant.* 13.249. See also (Pseudo-)Plutarch (*Moralia*, 184 E–F).

⁴³ *Ant.* 13.250. I follow the translation of this passage suggested by Pucci Ben Zeev, who writes: “The position of the word καὶ lets us understand that here its significance is ‘also.’ In other words, if Josephus writes that Nicolaus also testifies about these facts, it is clear that he was acquainted with another source as well. Actually, we know that other sources do exist.” Pucci then continues to discuss the battle between Antiochus VII Sidetes and the Parthians as recounted by Diodorus (34.4.15), which she and others believes came from Posidonius. She regards these as examples of other sources regarding Sidetes, possibly used by Josephus, of which only small excerpts are extant: Pucci Ben Zeev 1983, 16.

⁴⁴ *Ant.* 13.250–252. The brief passage is reminiscent of Josephus’s claim that Sidetes ended his siege of Jerusalem because the Festival of Tabernacles had arrived. See Atkinson 2016b, 57–58.

⁴⁵ *Ant.* 13.253. Following the variant reading in Niese 1892, 198. There is no account of this event in Josephus’s books.

⁴⁶ Bar-Kochva observes that Posidonius, who was born in Apamea between 143 and 129 BCE, was likely an infant when news of Sidetes’s death and the collapse of the expedition reached his hometown. Diodorus (34/35.16–18) mentions the shock and grief in Antioch in the report of his death reached the city: Bar-Kochva 2010, 431.

Sidetes's drunkenness and arrogance, Athenaeus believed, were the causes.⁴⁷ Trogus inserts his lengthy digression about the Jews at a unique place in his narrative following Sidetes's death.

III. The Role of the Jews

Trogus's ethnographic excurses concerning the Jews does not contribute any new historical information or insight about his previous narrative (36.2.1–3.9). He places it after his statement that Sidetes had conquered the Jews (36.1.9). Although Trogus does not mention the Hasmonean king and high priest John Hyrcanus, he is clearly referring to Sidetes's siege of this monarch in Jerusalem following the death of his father and predecessor, the Jewish ruler and high priest Simon.⁴⁸ His lengthy digression describes Jewish history, the geography of Judea, and the history of the Jews from the Persian period to the alliance between Rome and Judea in 161 BCE, which he views as the beginning of Jewish independence (36.3.9). Trogus apparently knew little about the Hasmonean state and the Maccabean Revolt. He merely writes that the Jews had regained their independence by force against previous Seleucid rulers. He also mentions that the Jews had tormented Syria with several wars (36.1.10). Trogus emphasizes that the Jews had created an independent state shortly after they had become allied with Rome during the reign of Demetrius I (36.3.9).⁴⁹ Trogus apparently considered this a good policy and the reason the Jews successfully gained their independence.

Bar-Kochva has commented extensively on the uniqueness of Trogus's account of the Jews. Comparing it with parallels from Posidonius's *Histories*, he notes that its location immediately following the death of Sidetes suggests that Trogus believed this event provided a suitable place in his narrative to discuss Jewish history to the present.⁵⁰ Like Trogus, Posidonius avoided excessive criticism of Rome, preferring to take a more Stoic attitude and accept the present world order.⁵¹ Unlike Sallust, whose historical style of writing he disliked, Trogus largely avoids any direct criticism of Rome and is content to accept Roman expansionism.⁵² This is perhaps most evident in his speech of Mithridates VI Eupater (38.4–7), which differs markedly from Sallust's version in its lack of nega-

⁴⁷ Athenaeus, 10.439d–e.

⁴⁸ For detailed discussions of the sources for Sidetes's siege of Hyrcanus in Jerusalem: Schwartz 1996, 83–102; Bar-Kochva 2010, 399–439; Atkinson 2016b, 55–59. This event was quite well known among ancient authors as evident by numerous references to it in writers such as Diodorus 34/35.1.1–5; (Pseudo-) Plutarch, *Regum et Imperatorum Apopothegmata*, 184E–F, and in the lost history of Timochares devoted to Sidetes's reign cited by Eusebius (*Praeparatio Evangelica*, 9.35.1). It is plausible that Trogus obtained much of his information about the Jews from Timagenes's detailed account of Jewish history.

⁴⁹ 1 Macc 8. According to tradition, Simon gained independence from the Seleucid empire in the Seleucid year 170 (143/42 BCE). See Schürer – Vermes – Millar – Black 1973, 189–199; Goldstein 1976, 344–369; Dąbrowa 2010, 42–66; Regev 2013, 113–117; Atkinson 2016b, 32–44.

⁵⁰ Bar-Kochva 2010, 449.

⁵¹ Bar-Kochva 2010, 427.

⁵² For this interpretation of Trogus, see Adler 2006, 383–407; Borgna 2015, 106–109. However, Bar-Kochva (2015, 380–384) suggests there is some implied criticism of Rome in Trogus that may point to “On the Kings” of Timagenes of Alexandria as one of his sources. For a comparative study of Trogus's sources

tive comments about the Romans.⁵³ Justin considered this dialogue so important that it is the only oration from Trogus's *Philippic Histories* that he copied word-for-word in his abridgment. This not only suggests that Justin has preserved Trogus's opinions about Roman imperialism, but it also shows that both thought the best option for foreign nations was to submit to the Republic. After the death of Sidetes, the Seleucid Empire's monarchs failed to realize the importance of following the Jews' example in recognizing the inevitability of Roman domination. Unlike the Hasmonean monarchs, they failed to make an alliance with the Romans. This led to the end of the Seleucid Empire. Its collapse profoundly affected the Hasmonean state's relationship with the Romans as well.

According to Trogus, the death of Sidetes marked the beginning of a period of turmoil in Syria that led to the demise of the Seleucid Empire. Trogus (40.1.4) highlights this decline by mentioning the lengthy civil war for control of the Seleucid Empire between Antiochus VIII Grypus (128–96 BCE) and Antiochus IX Cyzicenus (114/113–96/95 BCE).⁵⁴ The political and economic tumult created by this conflict lasted for twelve years as the offspring of these monarchs fought nearly continuous wars against one another to control Syria.⁵⁵ Trogus comments that the political instability that plagued Syria following the death of Sidetes, and the constant civil wars there by its rulers, led its population to seek a foreigner to govern them. Unlike the Jews, they did not consider the Romans, but looked for another Middle Eastern monarch (40.1.1). This, Trogus believed, was a fatal error, especially because he believed they chose the wrong man to administer the Seleucid Empire.

After ruling out Mithridates VI of Pontus and Ptolemy IX of Egypt as unreliable leaders, Syria's citizens settled on Tigranes II largely because he had an alliance with the Parthian Empire (40.1.1–4).⁵⁶ Many in the Seleucid Empire thought that cooperation with this strong ruler who had ties with the Parthian Empire would protect them. It proved to be an unfortunate choice as the Roman consul Lucullus soon invaded Armenia, besieged Tigranes II's capital of Tigranocerta, and forced him to relinquish his claim to rule Syria.⁵⁷ Trogus states that after he had defeated Tigranes II, Lucullus placed Antiochus XIII Eusebes Asiaticus on Syria's throne.⁵⁸ Although Justin was aware of the alliance between the Seleucid Empire's rulers and the Parthians at the time of Lucullus's conquest of

using traditional source criticism combined with a more modernist perspective that examines his text as a self-sufficient entity: Binder 2017.

⁵³ Sallust, *Hist.* 4.69M.

⁵⁴ *Ant.* 13.272. For their reigns and relationships with the Hasmoneans: Ehling 2008, 214–246.

⁵⁵ The five sons of Antiochus VIII Grypus were: Seleucus VI Epiphanes Nicator, Antiochus XI Epiphanes Philadelphus, Demetrius III Eucerus, Philip I Philadelphus, and Antiochus XII Dionysus. The sole son of Antiochus IX Cyzicenus was Antiochus X Eusebes Philopator: Josephus, *Ant.* 13.365–371, 384–391; Appian, *Syr.* 69.365–366. For additional discussion and sources, see Dobiaš 1924, 214–227; Bellinger 1949, 231–256; Atkinson 2016a, 7–21.

⁵⁶ Manandyan 2007, 22–27.

⁵⁷ Strabo, 16.2.8; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.419–420; Appian, *Syr.* 48, 69. See Ehling 2008, 255–256; Atkinson 2016b, 141–144.

⁵⁸ In 40.2.3–4, Trogus confuses this ruler with his father, Antiochus X Eusebes (*Antiochus Cyziceni filius*). Such errors are common among the ancient historians, who frequently misidentified the many different rulers named Antiochus because of the lack of reliable Seleucid chronicles and since many of its kings had the same name: Assar 2006a, 74; Hoover 2007, 291; Borgna 2018, 981.

Armenia, his rather condensed account does not fully describe what took place.⁵⁹ Yet, it contains some important information about Jewish history that helps us to understand a likely and overlooked reason for Pompey's 63 BCE conquest of Judea.

The victory of Lucullus over Tigranes II forever changed the political structure of the Middle East. The Romans now considered the entire region as their spoils of war. They adopted the Seleucid Empire's administrative policy to govern their territories, which included the Hasmonean state. The Heliodorus Stele reveals that the Seleucid Empire's rulers earlier had tried to exercise the same control over the Jerusalem temple and the royal administration in Coele-Syria and Phoenicia they already had accomplished elsewhere.⁶⁰ They did this by taking direct control of the shrines in their territories, which included the Jerusalem temple and its priests. When Pompey arrived in the region, he considered the Seleucid Empire's dynasty of kings terminated because of the Roman defeat of Tigranes II. Trogius notes that Pompey rejected the request of Antiochus XIII Eusebes Asiaticus (40.2.3–5) for the throne and additional lands.⁶¹ Instead, Pompey annexed Syria and the Hasmonean state because he regarded their lands as the rightful property of the Roman Republic.⁶² It is probable that the Seleucid Empire's relationship with the Parthians made him and the Republic suspicious of all the Middle Eastern powers, including the Hasmonean state.

Trogius's confusion regarding the deeds and identities of the last of the Seleucid Empire's rulers has obscured the historical importance of his account. Because of the gap in the sources relating to both Parthia and Arabia, it is difficult to determine the extent to which, if any, Parthian rulers had penetrated into Seleucid or Arab territory during the reign of Antiochus X Eusebes.⁶³ Trogius does, however, connect political activity in the Seleucid Empire and the East with Roman incursions there. His account mentions that when the Syrians invited Tigranes II to rule their kingdom, the Romans became obsessed

⁵⁹ Although it is probable that Justin has introduced errors into his *Epitome* of Trogius's book, the mistaken identification of Antiochus XIII Asiaticus as Antiochus X Eusebius shows a lack of familiarity with the Seleucid rulers that Justin likely copied from Trogius.

⁶⁰ For this inscription, also known as the Olympiodoros inscription: Cotton – Wörrle 2007, 192–205; Gera 2009, 125–155. For a discussion of this evidence, see Honigman 2014, 324–325; Atkinson 2018, 20–26.

⁶¹ As previously noted, Trogius misidentified him as Antiochus X Eusebes.

⁶² The Roman consul Lucullus defeated Tigranes and replaced him in Syria with Antiochus XIII Asiaticus in 69 BCE. Asiaticus ruled a small territory centered around Antioch until Pompey deposed him in 65/4 BCE. The Romans at this time considered the Seleucid Empire part of their spoils of war connected with their subjugation of Tigranes. Pompey believed this gave him the legal authority to annex the Seleucid Empire, which he apparently thought included Judea. Consequently, Pompey treated Aristobulus II the same as he had Antiochus XIII: he annexed both their kingdoms because he regarded their lands as the rightful property of the Roman Republic because Lucullus earlier had conquered much of the region. As part of the Seleucid Empire from the Roman point of view, this gave them legal authority over Judea. See Glanville 1951, 149–163; Sartre 2005, 38–39; Ehling 2008, 256–277; Hoover 2007, 279, 299–300.

⁶³ Josephus's account of Seleucid history in *Antiquities* 13:365–371 is confusing and therefore not helpful for understanding Trogius's difficult to comprehend version of the late Seleucid Empire. This is because Josephus made many chronological errors and frequently confused one ruler with another who had a similar name. His mistakes are too numerous to describe but the following representative sample demonstrates the problematic nature of his account of the Seleucid Empire's history:

1. The claim of Josephus (*Ant.* 13.371) that Antiochus X Eusebes died helping the Arabs ward off the Parthians is clearly erroneous. He has combined hostilities between the Parthians and Arabs with the struggle over the Parthian succession that took place during the reign of Eusebes.

with conquering the entire Middle East. In his narrative, Trogus is correct to highlight that the treaty between Tigranes II and the Parthian ruler Mithridates VI against the Romans (38.3.1–3.11) made the Republic suspicious of both kings.⁶⁴ Justin felt this relationship was so important that he commented that he has preserved in full Trogus’s speech that Mithridates VI delivered when he considered forming his anti-Roman alliance (38.3.11). Justin included this discourse from Trogus’s work to show eastern thoughts towards the Romans. Trogus’s inclusion of such material not only provides a unique witness of eastern attitudes towards the Roman Republic, but it also contains some valuable information about Roman attitudes towards that Jews that later led Pompey to conquer the Hasmonean state.

In his account of the Seleucid Empire, Trogus includes a valuable clue concerning relations between the Jews and their neighbors that shed some light on the possible reason for Pompey’s later invasion of Judea and his annexation of the Hasmonean state. Trogus makes the unsubstantiated claim that the Jews were robbers (*Prol.* 39 [*Ut Syriam Iudaei et Arabes terrestribus latrociniiis infestarent*]; 40.2.4; cf. Strabo, 16.2.40) and had harassed Syria with several wars (36.1.10). Because the Seleucid Empire had long been involved in Hasmonean affairs, any relationship between the Jews and the Syria’s rulers or the Parthians would have made the Romans equally suspicious of any possible Jewish anti-Roman activities in the Middle East. Trogus suggests the Romans’ fear was based in a historical reality, namely Jewish piracy.

Diodorus Siculus preserves an account of a meeting between the Hasmonean brothers Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II with Pompey that took place in Damascus, which may shed some light on Trogus’s claim the Jews were robbers. Diodorus Siculus (40.2.2) writes that Pompey denounced Hyrcanus II at this gathering for the “lawless behavior of the Jews (παρανομίας τῶν Ἰουδαίων) and the wrongs committed against the Romans.” At this meeting, according to Diodorus’s account (40.2.2), some Jews accused the Hasmoneans of “having overthrown the ancient laws and enslaved the citizens in defiance of all justice; for it was by means of a horde of mercenaries, and by outrages and countless impious murders that they had established themselves as kings.” Pompey responded by stating that Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II deserved a harsh punishment for their actions. However, in the interest of Rome’s traditional clemency, Pompey stated that he would consider granting Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II a pardon if they became more obedient

2. Josephus has confused Mithridates II (= Arsaces XI; ca. April 121–ca. September 91 BCE) with Sinatruces (= Arsaces XII; ca. 93/2–69/8 BCE). Josephus’s account of the death of Eusebes in *Antiquities* 13.371 actually refers to the victory of Sinatruces over Mithridates II.

3. Josephus omits that it was the Parthian ruler Mithridates III who took advantage of the Seleucid Empire’s dynastic feuds to attack the Nabatean Arabs and seize power for a time. His reign is important to Jewish history because his ascension coincided with the capture of the Seleucid ruler Demetrius III by the Parthians. This event ended the effort of Demetrius III to annex the Hasmonean state from its high priest and monarch, Alexander Jannaeus. These events took place in approximately July/August 87 BCE. Demetrius III died of illness in Parthian captivity, further fragmenting Syria’s political situation.

For these and other mistakes in this section of Josephus’s book, see Atkinson 2016a, 7–19.

⁶⁴ For Tigranes II, and the events of this period, see further Manandyan 2007, 36–42; Ehling 2008, 246–256.

to Rome's demands.⁶⁵ In his response to these Hasmonean siblings, Pompey appears to allude to some unspecified crime that Hyrcanus II had committed in the past.

Josephus may refer to an earlier offense when he states that Hyrcanus II had accused Aristobulus II of raiding neighboring territories and committing acts of piracy at sea.⁶⁶ However, it may have been Hyrcanus II who engaged in such activity or failed to stop it in his territory. Hyrcanus II ruled in 67 BCE, which was also the year that Roman Senate commissioned Pompey to abolish piracy.⁶⁷ Pompey's campaign to protect the Mediterranean trade routes was part of a larger Roman operation against banditry in the Mediterranean.⁶⁸ He was determined to fulfill his mission; he and his legates pursued brigands on the coast from Lycia to Phoenicia. There was a historical reason behind his tenacity in trying to eradicate them in the Middle East. Earlier, in 100 BCE, the Roman Republic passed a law (*lex de piratis persequendis*) that required the kings and states allied to Rome in Anatolia, Syria, and Egypt to stop pirates in the Mediterranean and to deny them use of their ports.⁶⁹ This directive shows that the Roman Republic at this time expected the nations of the Middle East to comply with its edicts and that it was worried about pirates there. There is indirect evidence in Pompey's commission that the Romans were especially concerned with Hasmonean piracy.

Judea's rulers were not asked by Rome in its 100 BCE law to stop pirates or to participate in its campaign against piracy despite the Jews' longstanding relationship with the Republic. Laqueur suggests that Josephus provides evidence of widespread knowledge about Jewish piracy that could help to explain this surprising omission in Rome's edict. He proposes that Josephus's statement in *Antiquities* 14.43 that the Jewish high priest and king Hyrcanus II's accusation that his brother and rival for the throne, Aristobulus II, had "instigated raids against neighboring peoples and acts of piracy at sea" came from Theophanes.⁷⁰ It is probable that pirates operated from the Judean coast during Hyrcanus II's tenure. If Hyrcanus II did not make up his accusation that his brother had engaged in piracy, it is probable that Aristobulus II supported pirates as well. Even if pirates operated from Judea without the knowledge or cooperation of the Hasmonean rulers, the Romans would have held Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II responsible for any such activity during their reigns regardless of whether they were involved.

⁶⁵ The Romans emphasized the successes of Pompey and Augustus in defeating bandits. Like Pompey, who subdued pirates in the Mediterranean in 67–66 BCE, Augustus managed to control brigands in Italy. The Romans were shocked at the speed and efficiency of both in eradicating this menace, which greatly enhanced their reputation and increased their political power. See further, Shaw 2004, 354–360.

⁶⁶ *Ant.* 14.43. Laqueur suggests the reference to pirates in *Antiquities* 14.43 came from Theophanes, whose work was used by Strabo and Diodorus: Laqueur 1920, 145–158. For some points of contact between Trogon and Strabo, which could imply that the former used sources consulted by the latter: Borgna 2015, 92–94.

⁶⁷ For Pompey's efforts to eradicate pirates in the Mediterranean, see Greenhalgh 1981, 91–100.

⁶⁸ Shatzman 1999, 79–80.

⁶⁹ Loader 1940, 134–136. Shatzman (1999, 79–80) writes that the Romans believed Pompey's commission to eradicate pirates effectively granted the Republic supremacy over the world. Many Romans believed that it also gave Pompey the right to campaign anywhere he wished because by this time the Roman Republic believed that its power should extend everywhere.

⁷⁰ Theophanes wrote his works between 63 and 40 BCE. Despite his support for Pompey, Julius Caesar forgave him. Theophanes eventually returned to Italy. See Laqueur 1920, 147–152.

Zollschan also finds earlier hints in the extant literature that the Jews engaged in piracy during the reign of Hyrcanus II's father, Alexander Jannaeus. According to Josephus, Jannaeus was the first Hasmonean ruler to employ mercenaries from Cilicia (*War* 1.88; *Ant.* 13.374). She notes that Josephus describes these men as auxiliaries, namely soldiers, in the Hasmonean army. This was problematic because Cilician pirates hired themselves out as soldiers to such an extent that the name "Cilician" became synonymous in the minds of Romans with pirates.⁷¹ Strabo (16.2.28 (C 759)) even writes that the principal Hasmonean port of Joppa served as a base of operations for pirates. In light of this background, we can possibly understand Rome's omission of Judea from its Piracy Law as the Romans believed the Jews were in league with pirates. Jannaeus's employment of Cilician mercenaries also violated Rome's edict against pirates, which had included an embargo on contact with Cilicia. This blatant defiance of Rome's directive against pirates, coupled with Roman perceptions that the Jews had a long relationship with the Parthians, made the Romans suspicious of the Jews. Consequently, when Pompey arrived in the region, he was particularly angry that the Jews had failed to comply with Rome's earlier law and had allowed pirates to plunder its trade routes to the detriment of the Roman Republic.

Fragmentary references to this obscure period of Middle Eastern history may show that others shared Trogu's belief that the Jews had engaged in robbery and activities that opposed Rome's interests in the Middle East. Josephus mentions that the Hasmonean monarch Shelamzion Alexandria travelled with her army to Ptolemais to save the Seleucid ruler Cleopatra Selene when Tigranes II besieged her there. Josephus places this event to the time when Lucullus had laid siege to Tigranes II's capital of Tigranocerta (Josephus, *War* 1.116; *Ant.* 13.421). Although Josephus does not tell us what happened to Selene, Strabo mentions that Tigranes II imprisoned her in the fortress of Seleucia and ordered her execution in 69 BCE before he returned to Armenia.⁷² Although none of our sources offers an explanation as to why a Hasmonean ruler attempted to save a Seleucid monarch, the Romans would have been suspicious of an alliance between them. It is, moreover, probable that the Nabatean Arabs played a role in their partnership.

The numismatic evidence shows that Selene controlled Damascus in 72/71 BCE when Shelamzion Alexandra sent her son Aristobulus II with her army there. She did this to ward off Itureans, who posed a threat to the region's stability.⁷³ Coins minted in 72/1 BCE show that Tigranes II had taken Damascus.⁷⁴ The numismatic evidence, moreover, suggests that Selene, for reasons not stated in the extant sources, had succeeded the Nabatean Arab ruler Aretas III at Damascus prior to the arrival of Tigranes II there.⁷⁵ It is possible that Alexandra formed a coalition with Aretas III and Selene to oppose Tigranes II.⁷⁶ If so, this would verify Trogu's claim (*Prol.* 39; 40.2.4) of a Jewish and Nabatean Arab alliance that the Romans believed included marauding.

⁷¹ Zollschan 2017, 267–268.

⁷² Strabo 16.2.3 (C 749).

⁷³ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.420. See Bellinger 1949, 81–82; Ehling 2008, 253–256.

⁷⁴ Necessian 2000, 95–107 and plates 26–27.

⁷⁵ For this numismatic evidence, see Bellinger 1949, 81; Hoover 2007, 296; Wright 2010, 253.

⁷⁶ For this thesis, see Atkinson 2012, 210–220.

There is little historical documentation for this period. However, a fragmentary Dead Sea Scroll may preserve a contemporary reference to an alliance at this time between the Jews and the Nabatean Arabs. Known as *4QHistorical Text D* (4Q332), it refers to Shelamzion Alexandra and mentions her “secret counsel,” which was apparently a clandestine meeting she had with a local official or ruler.⁷⁷ It also states that she had given honor to the “Arabs.”⁷⁸ This may refer to an alliance between Alexandra, Selene, and the Nabatean Arabs to confront Tigranes II. If so, it would explain why later Alexandra’s son, Hyrcanus II, sought the assistance of the Nabatean Arabs to regain the throne from his brother, Aristobulus II.⁷⁹ The Nabatean Arabs had made an alliance with the Hasmonean queen Alexandra that Hyrcanus II, as her successor, invoked to reclaim power.

Given the weakness of Hyrcanus II during his brief time in office before his sibling deposed him, it is probable that pirates had taken advantage of the instability in Judea to use its coast to disrupt trade in the Mediterranean, which would have adversely affected the Roman Republic.⁸⁰ Because Hasmonean territory at this time was not under direct Roman control, it would have afforded pirates a refuge. Although the Romans had limited toleration of pirates for nearly a century (ca. 160’s–60’s BCE) in the Mediterranean, the collapse of the major Hellenistic kingdoms left a vacuum in the region that allowed piracy to increase to the detriment of the Republic. Pompey and the Republic saw the pacification of the entire Middle East, and the annexation of its territory, as part of their goal of finally eliminating pirates from the region.⁸¹ As a nation-state bordering on the Seleucid, the Ptolemaic, and the Parthian Empires, the Romans now felt they had to annex the Hasmonean state to prevent the resurgence of any of the region’s former kingdoms while preventing the expansion of those nations that still existed, particularly the Parthians. As the last Middle Eastern kingdom to support piracy, the Hasmonean state’s existence was now a threat to the Republic.

Josephus provides some indirect support for Jewish piracy when he mentions that Pompey later cut the Jews off from the sea by taking away their harbors (*War* 1.156). This suggests that Pompey felt that the Jews, presumably because of some past action by them that threatened the Roman Republic, could not be trusted with possession of these ports. Considering the fragmentary sources for this period, Trogus’s connection between lawless activity of the Jews and the Arabs (*Prologue*, 39; 40.2.4) is not as surprising as it sounds. Any Hasmonean alliance with a Seleucid monarch and the Nabatean Arabs would have made Pompey suspicious of all the rulers of these territories. Consequently, Pompey annexed all the kingdoms of the Middle East, except for the Parthians who were

⁷⁷ Fitzmyer 2000, 281–286 (fig. 2). Fitzmyer, the text’s editor, translates the passage as follows: “with secret counsel Shelamzion came” (בסוד באה שלמציין). He justifies his translation of בסוד by commenting that יסוד here is used in the sense of סוד “counsel” as it is in other Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS VII 17, 18; VIII 10; IX 3; CD X 6).

⁷⁸ Fitzmyer 2000, 283. Fitzmyer translates the passage as: “[to] give him honor among the Arab[s] (ל[ת]תת לו יקר בערב[ים]). He (Fitzmyer 2000, 283) follows the proposal of Wise (1994, 206) that this is a reference to the Nabatean Arabs. Although one could argue the last word could be “evening,” Fitzmyer’s reading makes the best sense of the passage considering its historical context since the line refers to someone giving honor to another person.

⁷⁹ For Hyrcanus II’s relationship with the Nabatean Arabs: Atkinson 2016b, 158–165.

⁸⁰ Ehling 2008, 256–177; Atkinson 2016b, 146–157.

⁸¹ Shaw 2004, 354–360.

powerful enough to resist Roman control. He apparently had a great fear of the Jews at this time, likely because of their alleged Parthian ties.

Trogus wrote his book when the Romans increasingly began to worry about a possible Jewish and Parthian alliance. A circular letter from Rome sent to various Middle Eastern nations, including the Parthians, mentioned Rome's friendship with the Jews.⁸² Tigranes II, moreover, had deported many Jews to Armenia adjacent to Parthian territory.⁸³ This undoubtedly made the Roman Republic more suspicious of the Jews. After the death of Crassus in Parthia, many Jews revolted against his general, Cassius, when he and the survivors of his failed Roman invasion of the Parthian Empire reached the Galilee.⁸⁴ In 40 BCE the Parthians made Antigonus king, which forced Mark Antony to seek support in the Senate to install Herod as Judea's monarch to halt their advance.⁸⁵ Pheroras, who was accused of plotting to poison Rome's ally, the Jewish monarch Herod the Great, was supposedly prepared to flee to Parthia to avoid capture.⁸⁶ Such a story, even if a rumor, suggests that many Romans were willing to accept tales of purported Jewish-Parthian alliances as factual. In light of these events and stories of supposed Jewish contacts with the Parthians, we can better understand Trogus's brief allusions to Jewish activities that the Roman Republic would have viewed as dangerous because they opposed the Republic's political and commercial interests and its expansion in the Middle East. The evidence of Jewish relations with Rome's enemies, the Seleucid and the Parthian Empires, and pirates, made Pompey determined to annex the Hasmonean state. By taking control of Jewish territory, Pompey also hoped to prevent Parthian expansion in Judea, which would have given the Parthians unhindered accesses to the Mediterranean.⁸⁷

IV. Conclusion

It is with the collapse of the Seleucid Empire that Trogus turns to the Parthian Empire. He includes several passages that help us to understand Jewish history at this time. Observing that the Parthians currently rule the East, he provides an excursus on Parthian history similar to his earlier treatment of the Jews (41.1.1–6.9) ending with Sidetes's invasion of Parthia. As with Polybius, who, like Trogus, wrote about Roman history from the perspective of an outsider, Trogus stated that *fortuna*, and not virtue alone, had made the Roman Republic the last and the greatest in a succession of world empires.

⁸² 1 Macc. 15:16–24; *Ant.* 14.145–147. For a dating of the passages in 1 Maccabees to the 140's BCE, see Goldstein 1976, 493–494.

⁸³ Moses of Khoren, *History of Armenia*, 2.14; Neusner 1965, 26.

⁸⁴ A Jewish leader named Peitholaus attempted to rally the followers of Aristobulus II in the region to fight against the surviving Roman soldiers: Josephus, *Ant.* 14.120; *War* 1.180; Cassius Dio 40.28. For the Roman Republic's wars with the Parthians and Jewish involvement with the Parthians, see Bivar 1983, 24–66.

⁸⁵ Atkinson 2016b, 160–165. Several authors comment that many of the residents of Syria and the neighboring lands favored the Parthians: Horace *Odes*, 3.6; Tac. *Ger.* 37; Cassius Dio 49.19.

⁸⁶ *War* 1.485.

⁸⁷ For Jews residing in the diaspora, including Parthia and Asia Minor, see Smallwood 1981, 120–128. If the Jewish accounts in the Talmud of a visit by a Parthian delegation to the Hasmonean court during the reign of Alexander Jannaeus are factual, this may confirm the existence of an earlier treaty between the Jews and the Parthians. For this and favorable relations between Jews and Parthians: Debevoise 1938, 120–128.

Fortuna had not only played a role in Rome's rise to a great power from the beginning of the Republic, but it was directly responsible for the Romans' conquests of the Middle East (30.4.6; 39.5.3; 43.2.5). Trogus considered the Parthians, although a challenger to Roman supremacy, a nation devoid of *fortuna*. It had, like its Seleucid predecessors, become corrupted by luxury and wealth (41.2.10) and had lost its former virtue (41.1.6, 5.5, 6.2). Trogus ends his account of the Parthians with the return of the *militaria signa* to Rome in 20 BCE. For Trogus, this event signified that *fortuna* had now passed to Rome (42.5.11). The message is clear, Trogus believed, namely that Parthia is in a state of decline and will meet the same fate as the region's other kingdoms, particularly the Seleucid Empire and the Hasmonean state, whose rulers had lost their way, defied Rome, and engaged in unlawful behavior that had adversely affected Roman interests.

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