


2 MACCABEES AS A JUDEAN WORK

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Abstract

In this article I make the case that 2 Maccabees was composed in Judea, and more specifically in circles associated with the Hasmonean court, through three lines of argument. First, I argue that the Judean social elites and scribes in the Hellenistic period had a far greater command of Greek than is usually assumed, as evidenced by the Romance of Joseph the Tobiad and by works written in Hebrew that show a deep knowledge either of Greek historiography or of Greek philosophy. I also argue that the Hasmoneans, like other local rulers, would certainly have needed Greek-speaking writers in their service. Various scenarios are explored, including the possibility that Jason of Cyrene himself was employed at the Hasmonean court. Next, I reiterate the case that major narrative sections in 2 Maccabees are shaped by the narrative pattern of the ruler founding the temple, and that this pattern could only be used at the Hasmonean court, not in a Greek cultural setting. Furthermore, the presence of the narrative template offers an alternative explanation for several aspects of the text that modern scholars have taken as evidence that the work was composed in a diaspora setting. Two examples are examined: 2 Maccabees, alleged “lack of interest in and knowledge of the geography of Palestine;” and the author’s attack on Jason’s establishment of the gymnasium in Jerusalem. Finally, I explore the overlooked reception of the Danielic textual network in 1 and 2 Maccabees, in the construction of Antiochus IV as a universal evildoer, and in the account of Antiochus IV’s death in 2 Maccabees. While this matter is not decisive for the view that 2 Maccabees was composed in Judea, it lends further weight to this theory.

Keywords: 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, Book of Daniel (reception), Jason of Cyrene, Antiochus IV, Greek in Palestine, *Hellenismos*.

Introduction

The place where the Second Book of Maccabees was composed remains debated.¹ Three types of arguments are usually advanced in support of a diaspora origin—which for most scholars means Alexandria or Ptolemaic Egypt. First, scholars cite the work’s elegant Greek language and its use of technical terms and rhetorical conventions of Hellenistic Greek historiography. Second, scholars point to aspects and statements in the work that supposedly reflect the viewpoint of a diaspora Jew,² including the anonymous author’s “lack of interest and knowledge concerning the geography of Palestine,” religious views, and cultural attitudes, such as his “characterization of Jewish participation in the gymnasium as antithetical to the Jewish way of life.”³ A related clue is the *patris* of Jason of Cyrene, who, according to 2 Maccabees’ anonymous authorial voice, wrote a long work on the Maccabean crisis that 2 Maccabees purports to epitomize (2 Macc 2:23). As this argument goes, Cyrenaica was part of the Ptolemaic Empire, and therefore Jason must have been active in Alexandria, and this must be where the epitomist came across his work. Finally, scholars point to what they see as significant differences between the First and Second Books of Maccabees, particularly the fact that 2 Maccabees focuses on Judas while 1 Maccabees mentions the exploits of Jonathan and Simon in addition to Mattathias, and likewise statements in 2 Maccabees that are understood to be critical of the Hasmoneans. In contrast, as Jonathan Trotter has put it, “for many interpreters the pro-temple and interrelated pro-Hasmonean perspective found in 2 Maccabees provide the weightiest evidence in favour of a Palestinian provenance.”⁴ In particular, the attitude of 2 Maccabees toward the Jerusalem temple has become a bone of contention in this debate, especially following Daniel Schwartz’s assertion that a pre-Maccabean version of 2 Maccabees⁵ dealt with the city of Jerusalem and not the temple, which sparked a debate about the attitude of diasporan Jews in general and 2 Maccabees in particular toward the Jerusalem temple.⁶

Of all the above arguments, only two can (more or less) be taken for granted: 2 Maccabees claims to be the epitome of a longer work composed by a certain Jason of Cyrene (2 Macc 2:23), of whom nothing else is known;⁷ and the language and writing conventions of 2 Maccabees are evidence of the author’s advanced Greek education. In particular, Nikolaos Domazakis, in a thorough philological study, has shown that the Greek of 2 Maccabees contains a large number of neologisms, a feature that definitely indicates that the

¹ For recent historiographical surveys, see Trotter 2019, 113–119; Schwartz 2022, 236–244. For Schwartz’ own arguments, see there, pp. 249–268. Doran 2012, 15–17 offers more nuanced arguments in support of a diaspora origin.

² I use the forms “Jew” and “Jewish” when referring to the views of other scholars, and “Judean” when presenting my own discussion.

³ The quotes are from Schwartz 2022, 238 and Trotter 2019, 116, referring to Doran 2012, 16.

⁴ Trotter 2019, 116.

⁵ Not to be confused with the work of Jason of Cyrene. See Schwartz 2008, 11–15.

⁶ Schwartz 2008, 3–15; Schwartz 2022; see the response in Ego 2017. On the attitude of diasporan Jews towards the Jerusalem temple in general, see also Hacham 2012; Tuval 2012; and *contra*, Trotter 2019, 111–112.

⁷ Questions remain, however, since we do not know precisely what the relationship was between 2 Maccabees and Jason’s work.

author received an advanced education in a Greek-speaking city, such as Alexandria.⁸ All other matters are open to debate. In particular, Jonathan Trotter, in a nuanced discussion, argued that several issues that scholars see as interrelated should rather be separated. As he put it, while “it is clear that [...] the source of 2 Maccabees was written by a diaspora Jew, and the text’s intended audience, as it now stands, was diaspora Jews,” this leaves open the question of where the work was composed.⁹ Similarly, the fact that “the text promoted a particular viewpoint concerning the legitimacy of the temple and Hasmoneans” does not necessarily imply that the work was composed in Jerusalem, since the Hasmonean period saw the development and increased popularity of several practices by which diaspora Jews manifested their attachment to the Jerusalem temple, such as pilgrimages and the sending of financial contributions to the temple.¹⁰ Consequently, “regardless of the exact location of its production, this text gives us a window into how the Hasmoneans and/or their supporters may have gone about promoting their legitimacy among diaspora Jews.”¹¹

While Trotter’s nuanced approach resets the discussion entirely, in this article I will restate the case for 2 Maccabees being composed in Judea, and more specifically in circles associated with the Hasmonean court. The case rests primarily on two lines of arguments. First, as I argued in a book published in 2014, 2 Maccabees does not simply promote the Jerusalem temple, but two of its three main narrative sections are shaped according to a specific narrative template, namely that of the ruler founding (or refounding) the temple, which was at home in Judea but completely alien in a culturally Greek setting.¹² Conversely, we do not find in 2 Maccabees any of the tropes associated with the Greek genre of the *politeia* that, for instance, characterize the description of Jerusalem and Judea in the *Letter of Aristeas*, a work composed in Alexandria in the second half of the second century BCE and thus roughly contemporary with 2 Maccabees.¹³ Although this argument has been either rejected, downplayed, or misunderstood, I believe it is key to understanding the work, and therefore I will briefly restate it below. Moreover, 2 Maccabees does not simply focus on the temple, as we would expect from a work composed in a diasporan setting. Rather, additional themes in the work served the Hasmonean dynasty in a direct manner: in particular, the Nicanor’s Day Story (2 Macc 14–15) encapsulates the message that the Hasmoneans were the legitimate heirs of Onias III, a subject that was of no interest to diaspora communities;¹⁴ similarly, 2 Maccabees refers to three

⁸ 2 Maccabees’ predilection for neologisms points to the influence of the kind of philological scholarship that could only be undertaken by scholars associated with a major institution of learning, such as the Museum and its library. In second-century Alexandria, Lycophron composed his poem *Alexandra* into which he inserted an impressive number of *hapax legomena*, suggesting that he was using a list of such terms. For the dating of the poem to the second century BCE, see Hornblower 2015, 36–38.

⁹ Note that Schwartz (2022, 236–237) also seems open to decoupling the *patris* of Jason from his place of writing, but only to advance a puzzlingly essentializing representation of social agents (“[...] we are asking a question about culture and values, not about geography. Some of my best friends in Jerusalem are diasporic Jews who have been there for decades.” It begs the question of what makes these friends “diasporic Jews”).

¹⁰ Trotter 2019, 118.

¹¹ Trotter 2019, 118.

¹² Honigman 2014, 65–118.

¹³ *The Letter of Aristeas* 83–120, in particular 100–104. See also Hecataeus of Abdera *ap.* Diod. Sic. 40.3. See Honigman 2014, 115–117.

¹⁴ This is the function of Judas’ dream in 2 Macc 15:12–16. See Honigman 2014, 152–156.

festivals established by the Hasmoneans, only two of which—Hanukkah and Nicanor’s Day—are clearly related to the temple, while “Mordecai’s Day” (Purim) refers to the massacre of the people at the time of Antiochus IV’s attack on Jerusalem in 168 BCE (10:8; 15:36). However appealing we think this latter theme may have been to Judeans living outside of Judea, the very mixing of themes muddled and thus weakened rather than strengthened the message of the work when its primary target was Judeans settled in Egypt. In addition to this line of arguments, several aspects of 2 Maccabees’ narrative point to the reception of the Book of Daniel in this work, and while this intertextual connection does not entirely rule out a diaspora composition, it does make a Judean setting more likely.

The discussion below makes the case that 2 Maccabees was composed in Jerusalem through three main headings. Two consist in critically examining a selection of the traditional issues that scholars have pointed to as evidence for the diasporic origin of 2 Maccabees. First, I address the arguments concerning the author’s training in Greek and Greek literature and likewise the origin of Jason. Next, I will show that when we take into account the narrative pattern of the ruler founding or refounding the temple, certain aspects and statements in the work that scholars have interpreted as evincing the viewpoint of a diaspora Jew can be understood in a completely different way. Finally, I will contend that key features in 2 Maccabees’ narrative point to the reception of the Book of Daniel. Incidentally, while the detailed examination of the relationship between 1 and 2 Maccabees requires a separate treatment, the discussion below makes several contributions to this issue. While the interpretation of the genesis of 2 Maccabees put forward in the first section suggests that the differences in style between the two works are of secondary importance, the presence of the narrative pattern and the reception of Daniel discussed in the second and third sections, respectively, point to fundamental similarities between these works.¹⁵

1. Greek in Palestine

As noted in the introduction above, scholars often cite 2 Maccabees’ high command of Greek and of the rhetorical conventions of contemporary Greek historiography as evidence that the work was composed in the diaspora.¹⁶ While acknowledging that Jason

¹⁵ I examine the relationship between 1 and 2 Maccabees in a paper entitled “Judas Maccabee in history and literary sources: why 1 and 2 Maccabees are parallel works,” presented at “History, Theology and Reception of 2 Maccabees,” International Conference organized by Manfred Oeming, and Aleksandar Danilović, University of Heidelberg, 1–3 April, 2025. As I argue in this paper, scholars who see 1 and 2 Maccabees as unrelated to each other because of their different chronological scope, style and alleged religious sensibilities assume that this shared account of the past events has a genuine historical basis and/or derives from a common source. Beyond these differences, however, 1 and 2 Maccabees share a basic storyline, and in recent years the historicity of all major components in this shared storyline has been disputed. The gap between history and narrative means that the supposed common source, if it existed at all, was not simply describing the world “out there,” but already had a political agenda. It is difficult to see who, if not the Hasmoneans, could have a political agenda regarding these events.

¹⁶ See, lastly, Schwartz 2022, 236–237; also, e.g., Doran 2012, 16.

of Cyrene and the epitomist were two different persons, some scholars point to the fact that Cyrene was part of the Ptolemaic Empire as (indirect) evidence that the two of them lived in Alexandria.¹⁷ Correlatively, the traditional view persists that in the second century BCE, knowledge of Greek, and even more so Greek education, remained very limited in Palestine. Thus, as we see, when discussing the issues of Greek language and education, scholars tend to combine contextual and intratextual considerations that need to be tackled separately.

1.1. Greek in Palestine

The question of how much Greek was spoken in Palestine in general and in Judea in particular in the Hellenistic period is usually approached from two different angles, including the epigraphic material and the very limited list of “Greco-Jewish” works that were probably either composed or translated in Jerusalem at the time.¹⁸ However, the relevant corpus of evidence needs to be both updated and expanded.

Epigraphic material from Marisa suggests that the language of administration shifted from Aramaic to Greek, for reasons that remain poorly understood, with the Seleucid conquest of Coele-Syria from the Ptolemies in 200/198 BCE.¹⁹ More crucially, it is no longer possible to investigate how much knowledge of Greek Judean scribes (and authors) possessed on the sole basis of the corpus of works written in Greek. This is because, as scholars have come to realize, literary techniques, works, and genres circulated across languages in both ways. On the one hand, the once-prevailing assumption that Greek translations of biblical books were made in Egypt is increasingly being questioned, and some scholars have seriously considered the possibility that at least some of the works were translated in Palestine, including in Judea itself—indeed, this is precisely what most scholars assume with respect to 1 Maccabees.²⁰ Conversely, numerous literary works written in Hebrew during the Hellenistic period incorporate Greek ideas and tropes. For example, sapiential works such as Qohelet and the Wisdom of Ben Sira borrow extensively from Greek philosophical ideas. Similarly, intertextual references to the *Persika* genre can be found in MT Esther and the first part of MT Daniel.²¹ Although this list is by no means exhaustive, it demonstrates that the Judean literati could at once write in Hebrew (or Aramaic) and have a very good command of Greek and be well acquainted with Greek literature.²²

¹⁷ Schwartz 2022, 236.

¹⁸ Schwartz 2022, 237, with note 16.

¹⁹ Ecker 2022, 50–54.

²⁰ See Aitken 2014, 90–104. Moreover, Septuagint scholars have become increasingly convinced that the translators, including those of the books of the Pentateuch who were active in the third century BCE, were aware of the exegetical activity on these books that was taking place in the scribal schools of Judea, presumably in Hebrew and/or Aramaic. This is the best way to explain how the translators were able to successfully render difficult words and phrases. Jean Maurais, personal communication (December 2024).

²¹ For Esther and the *Persika*, see Macchi 2018, 41–44.

²² See Honigman 2024.

Furthermore, the difference between translationese and good Greek is certainly not geography. If an example is needed, we may point to the Greek Sirach (Ecclesiasticus): the proem is written in good Greek, because it was a free composition. In contrast, the rest of the text displays the familiar, clumsy features of a translation.²³

Equally problematic are assumptions that basic cultural referents appearing in a text are a safe guide to the place and/or time when it was composed. The trilingual synodal decrees from Ptolemaic Egypt are a good case in point, because it is nowadays accepted that all three versions (in hieroglyphs, Demotic, and Greek) were written by the same Egyptian priests. Yet, the Greek texts describe the kings' actions through Greek political concepts, such as euergetism, while the hieroglyphic counterparts use strictly traditional pharaonic referents.²⁴

In sum, we are dealing with professional scribes and authors, who deployed sophisticated strategies of identity as they chose which language and cultural referents to use. They cannot be apprehended with essentializing preconceptions in mind.

1.2. Where to learn Greek in Palestine?

The cross-linguistic reception of Greek literature in Judea further suggests that if the same people read Greek literature and composed literary works in Hebrew, they presumably learned Hebrew in the same way—*i.e.*, in the same institutional setting—as Hebrew and Aramaic. This assumption is fully supported by the evidence from Ptolemaic Egypt showing that the sons of Egyptian literate families learned both Demotic (and classical, hieroglyphic Egyptian) and Greek, like Aramaic before that, in the scribal schools linked to the Egyptian temples.²⁵ Therefore, the late establishment of a gymnasium in Jerusalem has no bearing on this matter. As its description in 2 Macc 4:10–15 suggests, the gymnasium was primarily a place for physical, *i.e.*, military training, not for intellectual education.²⁶

1.3. Jason of Cyrene, between Joseph Tobiad and Nicolaus of Damascus

In addition to the literati,²⁷ the Judean social elites also had to master the Greek language and cultural codes at a high level. The romance of Joseph the Tobiad (Josephus, *Ant.* 12.160–236) illustrates how these skills were essential for elite members to either maintain or advance their status in society—and even if we do not believe every detail of the story as it appears in Josephus, we must accept that Joseph's biography sounded plausible to its original readers. Joseph spent most of his time on his rural estate, relying

²³ Wright 2003, 4.

²⁴ Clarysse 1999; Pfeiffer 2004.

²⁵ Clarysse – Thompson 2006, 125–133, esp. 129–130. For an overview, see Honigman 2016a.

²⁶ See Kennel 2005. Schwartz 2022, 237, erroneously assumes a connection between the gymnasium and the knowledge of Greek in Judea.

²⁷ Scribes of high literacy, *i.e.*, capable of writing literary works.

on his mother, the high priest's wife, for news from Jerusalem (*Ant.* 12.160). Yet Joseph also maintained a business agent in Alexandria (12.200), knew the etiquette and cultural codes of the Ptolemaic court well enough to navigate among the courtiers, and was reportedly able to converse with and charm the king, while Joseph's brother took his daughter to Alexandria in order to marry her off there (12.186–187).

An intriguing question is what Josephus's source was for the romance. We may reasonably surmise that he used a biographical account written in Greek by a professional Greek-speaking writer in the service of Joseph and/or his son Hyrcanus. Two Ptolemaic models come to mind: Ptolemy I wrote his own *Memories* (*Hypomnemata*); and the early Ptolemies, like other Macedonian kings, attracted Greek historians and poets to their courts to document and praise their reigns.²⁸ If this suggestion is correct, Joseph Tobiad inaugurated in Judea a practice that was to be imitated by rulers down the road. The case of Herod the Great inviting Nicolaus of Damascus to his court is well known and may furthermore hint at a Hasmonean precedent. Indeed, as usurpers who entertained close links both with the Greco-Macedonian rulers of their days and with the Judean communities of Egypt—as the festal letters prefacing 2 Maccabees show—the first Hasmoneans, like Herod the Great after them, needed skilled, Greek-speaking historians at their service. We cannot rule out that Jason of Cyrene served as official historian at the Hasmonean court. If this is correct, it makes sense that he was invited precisely because he was trained in the best Alexandrian learning tradition and already enjoyed a solid reputation.

At the same time, if the comparison between Nicolaus of Damascus and Jason of Cyrene is correct, Jason would have been required to supplement his excellent Greek education with knowledge of the local literary traditions. Alternatively, he may have been asked to train, or work with local scholars who already had a basic dual education. The Greek Prologue of Sirach indeed attests that Judean scholars settled in Alexandria as teachers, and the Hasmonean rulers could easily have lured one of these scholars back to their court. The anonymous epitomist of 2 Maccabees could have had this kind of trajectory. In this case, he could have come across Jason's work in Alexandria and brought a copy back to Jerusalem, or otherwise.

Whatever scenario we want to figure out, literary traditions, as noted above, crossed languages in both directions. The anonymous author of 2 Maccabees used Jason's work to compose a work that not only abridged the original, but also combined the rhetorical conventions of contemporary Greek historiography both with intertextual references to the biblical tradition, and with the narrative template of the ruler founding or refounding the temple derived from the local, Judean literary tradition, that informs the work's second and third narrative sections. The Hasmonean court was the most evident setting for this kind of hybrid work.

²⁸ On Ptolemy I's *Hypomnemata*, see, e.g., Caneva 2018, 102–103. For poets, see, for instance, Theocritus' *Idyll* 17 praising Ptolemy II Philadelphus.

1.4. Conclusion

To conclude this matter, it is quite possible to reconcile Trotter's convincing view that 2 Maccabees was from the outset composed for diaspora (Egyptian?) Jews with the idea that it was a product of the Hasmonean court. Indeed, 2 Maccabees combines statements that might be more at home in a diaspora setting, as numerous scholars opine, and aspects that can only be explained by a Jerusalem setting. Those are first and foremost the narrative pattern of the ruler founding or refounding the temple shaping some of the work's sections, and also statements in support of the Hasmonean rulers, such as Judas' dream in which the late high priest Onias III recognizes him as his legitimate heir (2 Macc 15:12–16). In other words, the fact that the two first Maccabean books feel so different from each other may be rooted in the different generic and rhetorical features of the works, and not necessarily in their different compositional settings.

That said, some of the narrative elements and authorial statements in 2 Maccabees that certain scholars have taken to express diasporan views can be read in very different ways, either as constitutive elements of the narrative pattern of founding the temple that gives thematic coherence to the work, or as intertextual allusions to the Book of Daniel. In what follows, I examine these two aspects in turn, beginning with the narrative pattern that informs 2 Maccabees.

2. Genre, narrative pattern and their implications for reading 2 Maccabees

2 Maccabees is not simply a story about the temple. Rather, several key sections in the work are shaped according to the well-identified narrative template of the ruler founding or refounding the temple, which has a political meaning.

2.1. What is a “schematic narrative template,” or “narrative pattern”

Narrative patterns are a fundamental tool for constructing meaning in a given society. They exist because human cognition, in its functions of “perceiving, imagining, remembering, thinking and reasoning,” is never simply a response to stimuli, but rather a “‘constructive’ process” that organizes its response according to pre-existing patterns, or “schemata,” *i.e.*, “tendencies which [in individual psychology] the subject brings with him [or her] into the situation with which he [or she] is called upon to deal.”²⁹ This is because an individual's response to stimuli is directed toward the creation of meaning. Collective memory is created through a similar process involving a social group instead of a single subject.

²⁹ Wertsch 2008, 123, including a quote from Bartlett 1995 (original publication in 1932), 44.

More precisely, a social group constructs its memory of an event through a tension between social agents and cultural tools—or “instruments of memory”—such as narratives (spoken or written) produced by means of pre-existing schemata (patterns of meaning) or, to use James Wertsch’s nomenclature, “schematic narrative templates.” As a result, different narratives produced in a cultural tradition to commemorate different events combine specific details—such as names, places, and dates—and a “generalized narrative form,” or “schematic narrative template.” While the specific details preserve the singularity of each event, the “schematic narrative template” provides a recurrent storyline. It is the template that instils culturally-relevant meaning in the event in question, ensuring its relevance for commemoration.

Furthermore, because the meaning of schematic narrative templates—hereafter, narrative templates or narrative patterns—is culturally situated, their transcultural circulation is far more limited than that of simple narrative elements, including the components of narrative patterns taken separately. This is because a narrative item can easily be repurposed or assigned a different meaning when it is appropriated by social agents belonging to a cultural habitus distinct from its original one. In contrast, narrative patterns are inherently linked to specific political, social, religious, or cultural conditions, and therefore can only travel between societies that share those conditions. To take one example, in the *Letter of Aristeas*—a work composed in Ptolemaic Egypt, probably in Alexandria in the second half of the second century BCE—the proximity of the citadel to the Jerusalem temple precinct is used as evidence that Judea was a *theokratia*, according to the Greek genre of the *politeia* as it was reformulated by Aristotle.³⁰ In 1 Maccabees, by contrast, the citadel becomes a source of contamination for the temple, setting the stage for its conquest and purification by Simon. In this work, the story is a well-documented variant of the narrative template of the ruler founding the temple, in which a distinct, meaningful architectural item is substituted for the temple.³¹ Finally, the narrative in 2 Maccabees lay the stress on the gymnasium, not the citadel. While this urban item has no meaningful role in the *politeia* genre, in 2 Maccabees, as we shall see below, it is shaped as yet another variant of the narrative template of the ruler founding the temple—namely, a wicked ruler founding an anti-temple. As we see, then, the isolated item—the citadel—can travel transculturally, but it is embedded in different narrative templates according to the cultural setting.³²

2.2. The narrative template of the ruler founding the temple

The first two Maccabean books contain narrative sections that follow the template of the ruler founding the temple. As Victor Hurowitz has shown, this narrative template originated in Mesopotamia and subsequently made its way to other societies, including Judah, which shared similar state structures based on a royal court and an associated temple

³⁰ Honigman 2004. The *politeia* of a polis and the number and location of fortresses within its territory are interrelated.

³¹ The citadel becomes Simon’s palace: Waerzeggers 2011, 727; Honigman 2014, 96.

³² See further section 2.2 below.

institution.³³ The narrative template precisely reflected this association between a king and a patron deity, in that the construction of a temple was seen as a royal privilege, and required the consent of the deity. Consequently, the person elected by the deity—through a dream or other oracular means—to build or rebuild his or her temple was at the same time acknowledged as king.

If the temple had been damaged or destroyed by an enemy invasion, it had to be rebuilt after the enemies were vanquished, and stories of restoration often included accounts of the (new) king's victory and the people's reconciliation with the deity. Usurpers, who by definition lacked dynastic legitimacy, further exploited the ideological potential of the template by making two adjustments to its basic narrative line. First, they claimed that it was the previous king who had brought the temple to ruin by neglecting his duties towards the deity and his or her house. Next, the usurper's victory over his impious predecessor became the entitling sign that the deity had chosen him as his or her new royal servant.

As Hurowitz showed, the narrative template shaped the accounts of how Solomon built the Jerusalem temple.³⁴ After the demise of native kingship, it was adapted to legitimize other kinds of rulers, and in this way it continued to shape narrative and prophetic works about the rebuilding of the temple in the Persian period.³⁵ In Zechariah 8 and the Wisdom of Ben Sira 50:1–4, the kingly status is transferred to the Jerusalem high priest.³⁶ Moreover, because it was linked to kings, the narrative template was extended to the construction accounts of royal palaces (cf. 1 Macc 13:43–53),³⁷ and likewise of any architectural object that could be conceptualized as a necessary complement to the temple or palace, such as city walls (Nehemiah) or a cistern (Ben Sira 50:1–4).

In contrast with the narrative template of the ruler (re)founding the temple, stories of temple salvation in Greek literature and narrative inscriptions followed a different narrative template, in which the temple is saved by the deity him- or herself (not by a king). This template had a very different ideological function from the template of temple re-foundation, as it focused on the powers of the deity and his or her special connection to the place.³⁸ Accordingly, it had no political implications whatsoever, consistent with the way temple institutions per se lacked political power. This was true of all temples in the Greek world, and of temples not linked to dynastic patron-deities in the East. At the same time, the narrative pattern used for conceptualizing power in the Greek cultural world was the *politeia* genre, which focused on how power was distributed within the civic society between a single ruler, the wealthy minority, or the citizen community, and whether those at the head of the city exercised power for the benefit of the entire citizen community (*monarchia*, *aristokratia*, and *demokratia*) or for their own interests (*tyrannis*,

³³ Hurowitz 1992. For Mesopotamian and Ugaritic sources, see pp. 32–105. For a summary, see Honigman 2014, 95–102.

³⁴ The sources are 1 Kings 5:15–9:25; 2 Samuel 7; 1 Chr 17–2 Chr 8. See Hurowitz 1992, 106–110, 131–310.

³⁵ On Nehemiah, see Hurowitz 1992, 118–124. On Ezra 1–6, see Edelman 2005, 151–208. On Haggai-Zechariah, see Edelman 2005, 131–147; Sérandour 1996. For a summary, see Honigman 2014, 99–98, 106–115.

³⁶ Honigman 2014, 114–115.

³⁷ On Simon's building of two palaces for himself and his son in the Jerusalem's Akra and in Gazara, see Honigman 2014, 160, 164–169.

³⁸ For examples other than the Heliodorus Story, see Kosmin 2016, and section 3.2 below.

oligarchia, and *ochlokratia*).³⁹ Because of these different ways of emplotting political regimes, the presence of a particular narrative pattern in a text is a good indication of the cultural setting in which it was composed.

2.3. Identifying the narrative pattern in 2 Maccabees

As usurpers, the Hasmoneans were in deer need of legitimizing tools, and it should come as no surprise that they adapted this tradition to their own needs. Hanukkah in Hebrew means “dedication,” which easily connotes “foundation.” Because the altar is indispensable for the sacrificial cult, the dedication of a new altar can easily be conceived as re-foundation of the temple.⁴⁰ Therefore it is not surprising that the two accounts of the etiological story of the Hanukkah festival in 1 and 2 Maccabees are shaped according to the narrative pattern of the ruler founding or refounding the temple.⁴¹ This is true of both the limited sections describing Judas and his brothers’ cleansing of the temple (1 Macc 4:36–61; 2 Macc 10:1–8) and the longer narrative units into which they are embedded (Judas’ biography in 1 Macc 3:1–9:22; and as noted above, the Hanukkah Story in 2 Macc 4:7–13:26).⁴²

The compositional structure of 2 Maccabees is particularly telling. As Robert Doran has shown, the work’s main narrative consists of three successive stories dealing with the temple, which I have subsequently labeled the Heliodorus Story (3:1–4:6), the Hanukkah Story (4:7–13:26), and the Nicanor’s Day Story (14:1–15:37a).⁴³ The Heliodorus Story, which features Onias III—that is, not a Hasmonean dynastic ancestor—is a temple liberation account, while the Hanukkah and Nicanor’s Day Stories (both featuring Judas Maccabee) are (re)foundation accounts.

In the Heliodorus Story, the Jerusalem temple is saved by God’s angels, while Onias III, the priests and the whole population merely pray to God (2 Macc 3:15–36). Destruction of the temple has been prevented and therefore there is no need for purifying or rebuilding it. In contrast, in the Hanukkah and Nicanor’s Day Stories, after the temple suffered damage (2 Macc 4:7–5:26; 14:1–36), it is rescued thanks to Judas’s victories (8:1–36; 15:1–29). Moreover, reconciliation with the deity is achieved thanks to the martyrs (6:1–7:42; 14:37–46), while in the Hanukkah Story Judas emerges as a pious leader (5:27) and in the Nicanor’s Day Story he is acknowledged as the legitimate high priest and king by Onias III and Jeremiah (in Judas’s dream, 15:12–16). Then, Judas and his

³⁹ According to Polybius’ nomenclature.

⁴⁰ See further the comment below on the conceptual connection between the way the Hanukkah festival was celebrated and the Sukkot Festival, and n. 48 below.

⁴¹ The ideological function of this etiological story (to legitimize the Hasmonean dynasty through Judas Maccabee’s rebuilding of the temple) is all the more evident in the light of John Ma’s demonstration that the temple was recovered under very different circumstances, namely through negotiations between Menelaus and Antiochus V in early 163 BCE. See Ma 2020. I address the recurring gap between the common narratives of 1 and 2 Maccabees and history elsewhere (see above, n. 15).

⁴² Honigman 2014, 119–146.

⁴³ Doran 1981; for a summary, see Honigman 2014, 66–68, 71–72, 77–80. For the work’s composition, see pp. 409–411.

companions refound the temple (10:1–8; 15:30–37a).⁴⁴ While, as we see, the general conformity of the Hanukkah and the Nicanor's Day Stories to the narrative pattern is clear, the details are somewhat contrived. This is particularly the case with the Hanukkah Story, into which the author squeezed too many wicked high priests (Jason *and* Menelaus) and wicked kings (Antiochus IV *and* Antiochus V) as temple destroyers, presumably in a bid to remain faithful to the account of Jason of Cyrene and/or to the oral accounts that were shaping Judean collective memory around the institution of the commemorative festival of Hanukkah.⁴⁵ In comparison, the Nicanor's Day Story is a pure illustration of Hurowitz' narrative pattern, with the provision that Nicanor's desecration of the temple remains intentional (2 Macc 14:33; 15:32–34).⁴⁶ An even purer illustration of the template is the concise description of the construction of the new altar in 2 Macc 10:1–8.

2 Maccabees 10:1–8

The numbers inserted in the passage correspond to the six conceptual steps that make up the narrative template:⁴⁷

(1) As for Maccabeus and his companions, with the Lord leading them on they took back the temple and the city, (2) and they demolished the altars fabricated by the foreigners in the marketplace as well as the sacred precincts. After purifying the temple, (3) they made another altar. (4) Making stones red hot and catching a flame from them, they offered sacrifices and incense after a two-year hiatus, and they made lamps and the showbread. (5) After doing this, flat on the ground they prayed to the Lord that they would no longer meet with such evils but, if ever at some time they would indeed sin, that they would be disciplined with mildness by himself and not be handed over to blasphemous and barbaric peoples. (6) The purification of the temple occurred on the very same day as the one on which the Temple was defiled by foreigners, the twenty-fifth of the month of Kislev. For eight days they observed tent living in merriment, as they recalled how, a little time before at the festival of Tents, they had been living like wild animals in the mountains and in the caves. Therefore, holding ivy-wreathed wands and harvest branches as well as palm fronds, they offered up hymns to him who succeeded in having his own place be purified. (7) They decreed by a communal ordinance and vote for all the people of the Judeans to observe these days each year.

In the case of a re-founding, a preliminary step (1) can be added to record the circumstances of the project, including the victory over the enemy and the recapture of the city (2 Macc 10:1). Step (2) refers to the preparations for the building or rebuilding. This phase in 2 Maccabees (10:2–3a) focuses on the destruction of the foreign religious places and objects. Step (3) of the building concisely refers to the new altar (2 Macc 10:3b). The next step (4), corresponding to the dedication rites and celebrations, is divided into two phases: the resumption of sacrifices and additional rites (10:3c) and the more detailed description of the celebrations, specifying the date and nature of the new festival and stressing its conceptual connection to the Sukkot festival (10:5–7). Although the text explains this connection through an alleged historical similarity, a more fundamental

⁴⁴ See Honigman 2014, 409–411.

⁴⁵ For the detailed analysis, see Honigman 2014, 119–146. 1 Maccabees solved the problem by keeping the “sinners” who arose within Israel anonymous and summarizing this phase of events to the extreme.

⁴⁶ Honigman 2014, 147–159.

⁴⁷ See Honigman 2014, 102–106, 125–127. Translation Doran 2012, slightly modified.

reason is that the rites of Sukkot reenacted the dedication of the temple.⁴⁸ Step (5), including a blessing or prayer of the king, is replaced by a collective prayer of atonement (10:4). Finally, the final step (6) records the establishment of the commemorative festival, which in 2 Maccabees explicitly concerns all Judeans, possibly alluding to Judeans living outside of Judea (10:8).

Because 2 Maccabees 10:1–8 is shaped according to Hurowitz’ narrative template, it simply cannot have been composed in Ptolemaic Egypt. For similar reasons, this is also true of the Nicanor’s Day Story (2 Macc 14–15). However, the section 10:1–8 has been the subject of some scholarly debate. Several scholars have argued that it was originally inserted in a different place in the narrative, because it seemingly disrupts the account of Antiochus IV’s death narrated in chapter 9 and concluded in 10:9.⁴⁹ Alternatively, it has been contended that the section was interpolated at the very time the two prefacing letters (in 2 Macc 1:1–2:18) were added.⁵⁰

The claim that vv. 10:1–8 are currently misplaced rests on anachronistic expectations about how a narrative should be constructed, a matter that is culturally conditioned. On the contrary, as Jonathan Trotter has convincingly argued, the coherent literary unit is formed by vv. 10:1–9 (not 10:1–8), whereby the rebuilding of the temple precedes, and through this literary construction is presented as the cause of Antiochus’ death.⁵¹ A similar construction, both philological and thematic, concludes the Nicanor’s Day Story in 2 Maccabees 15:36–37: in both sections, the institution of the commemorative festival (10:8 and 15:36) is followed by a sentence summarizing the death of the temple’s enemy (Antiochus IV in 10:9; and Nicanor in 15:37). In view of these parallel constructions, vv. 10:1–8 belong to the original text of 2 Maccabees.⁵²

⁴⁸ See Regev 2008, including a survey of previous scholarship.

⁴⁹ See the historiographical survey of this question in Trotter 2017, 117–118.

⁵⁰ Schwartz 2008, 8–10, 371–379.

⁵¹ Trotter 2017, esp. 120–121.

⁵² Schwartz’ theory is based on—and is a key aspect of—his view that an early, pre-Hasmonean version of 2 Maccabees composed in the diaspora told the story of the city of Jerusalem and had no interest in the temple. In his view, because diaspora “Jews” were unable to participate in the temple’s sacrificial cult, they developed alternative religious practices. Schwartz 2022 is a firm restatement of this view, which raises several fundamental objections. As Trotter (2019) has shown, both literary works written by diaspora Judeans—such as the *Letter of Aristeas*—and documented practices—such as the increased popularity of the pilgrimage and the dispatch of monetary contributions to Jerusalem—demonstrate that diaspora individuals and communities maintained strong religious ties to the Jerusalem temple, while also developing new practices to cope with the centralization of the sacrificial cult there. The cultural context of the time may also be relevant, since such a distinction between a city and its main temple would not have been obvious either to Greek cities or to the Romans. On the contrary, the epigraphic evidence documents how civic communities used their main temples, respectively, for the benefit of the whole community. Magnesia-on-the-Meander, for example, used the epiphany of Artemis Leukophryene to establish Panhellenic games and in this way enjoy both the economic benefits and prestige of an interregional fair and the protective status of *asylia* (Rigsby 1996, 179–279). Similarly, colonies of Roman veterans established temples dedicated to Rome’s Capitoline Triad, showing that they strongly associated their former homeland with its main religious institution (Orlin 2011). Furthermore, since political and administrative power in Jerusalem was in the hands of the high priest, it would have been particularly unthinkable to separate the temple from the city. Finally, it is difficult to see why an author who set out to recount the suffering of the city and people of Jerusalem would have failed to include the damage done to the temple too. As Doran (1981) has shown, the Heliodorus and Nicanor’s Day Stories also concern the temple, not just the city. Heliodorus is indeed

The presence of the narrative template in 2 Maccabees offers an alternative explanation for several aspects of the text which modern scholars have taken as evidence that the work was composed in a diaspora setting. Two examples will be examined next.

2.4. 2 Maccabees' lack of interest in the geography of Palestine

In a recent article, Daniel Schwartz argued that one of three “simple indicators of the diasporic provenance” of 2 Maccabees is the work’s “lack of interest in and knowledge of the geography of Palestine,” citing the descriptions of the battles against Nicanor in chapters 8 and 15.⁵³ This argument rests on the unsupported premise that any Judean work recounting events from the recent past must necessarily conform to the rules of naturalistic writing that characterized Greek historiography. However, while 2 Maccabees does borrow certain rhetorical tropes from contemporary Greek historiography, it is not simply an example of the genre. The fact that the work’s author is anonymous—only Jason of Cyrene is named—and its cyclical composition, juxtaposing three temple histories, readily demonstrate this.

The contrast between 1 and 2 Maccabees in terms of naturalistic description should not be overstated either. Within 1 Maccabees there is a (strictly internal) contrast between the first five chapters and the following ones.⁵⁴ In the first chapters—particularly chapters 3–4 narrating the first battles entitling Judas and his brothers to cleanse (*i.e.*, refund) the temple, and chapter 5 recounting the first subsequent wars—contemporary ethnic and topographical names are mixed with a nomenclature borrowed from the biblical accounts of the wars of David and Jonathan.⁵⁵ The Maccabean brothers also move within a symbolic mental geography by gathering at Mizpah, “for in Mizpah there used to be a place of prayer for Israel” (3:46).⁵⁶ This superimposition of two geographies (biblical and contemporary) in the early chapters sets the tone for the entire book, and thereafter readers are invited to continue to project the mental, biblical map onto contemporary geography in chapters 6–16, even as biblical nomenclature becomes scarcer. Moreover, this device shapes the main characters of the narrative as biblical figures, and modern scholars have amply noted how Judas in 1 Maccabees is portrayed as a new David.⁵⁷ Consequently, whereas in Greek historiography the naturalistic description of events merely reflected an indigenous cultural development, the use of contemporary ethnonyms and toponyms in 1 Maccabees was a deliberate choice aimed at a very different response

punished for trying to force his way into the temple in order to seize money there, and likewise Nicanor is punished for threatening to destroy the temple.

⁵³ Schwartz 2022, 238, citing previous bibliography. Note, in particular, Bar-Kochva 1989, 185.

⁵⁴ This paragraph summarizes a literary analysis that I present in detail elsewhere. See Honigman (forthcoming).

⁵⁵ For combinations, see, for instance, the phrases “a force from Syria and from the land of the Philistines” (ἀλλόφωλοι, 3:41); and “the sons of Esau in Idumea” (5:3). For this nomenclature and intertextual links, see further Berthelot 2007.

⁵⁶ Translation by G. T. Zervos, in NETS, ch. 20. On Mizpah and related biblical references, see Goldstein 1976, 261, at 3:46; Tilly 2015, 125–126; Schwartz 2023, 221.

⁵⁷ On 1 Maccabees 5, see Berthelot 2014; Tilly 2022.

in its intended audience. MT Daniel 11, which covers the Syrian wars between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, is also a good example of how Judean authors could opt for a symbolic rather than a naturalistic transcription of recent history.⁵⁸

Structurally, Judas' battles against (two generals named) Nicanor in 2 Maccabees 8 and 15 are the preliminary victories of the Hanukkah and Nicanor's Day stories, respectively, which, according to Hurowitz's narrative template, show that Judas enjoys divine support and is therefore entitled to rebuild God's temple. Accordingly, their descriptions are primarily concerned with symbolic aspects, including Judas' prayers asserting divine support and, in Nicanor's Day Story, Judas' dream asserting that Jeremiah and Onias III recognized him as the legitimate leader (2 Macc 15:12–16), while realistic details are secondary.⁵⁹ The special status of these battles is also evident in the similarly elaborate treatment of Judas' three preliminary victories in 1 Maccabees 3–4, which contrast with the far more sober depictions of battles in the chapters following the rebuilding of the temple at the end of chapter 4.⁶⁰ For example, the trope of the few against the many garnering victory with divine assistance is common to the three entitling battles in 1 Maccabees and to that in 2 Maccabees 8.⁶¹ In contrast, in the following battles situations in which the Judean troops are outnumbered are described in a factual manner, to explain defeat.⁶² In sum, the blurred geography in 2 Maccabees is a matter of genre and focus, not of lack of knowledge.⁶³

2.5. The gymnasium (2 Macc 4:7–17), and the opposition between *Hellenismos* and *Ioudaismos*

In his 2012 translation and commentary on 2 Maccabees, Robert Doran pointed to what he saw as the author's "passionate" plea that "Jews should not go to the gymnasium" as likely evidence that he lived in a Hellenistic city where Jews actually participated in the culture of the gymnasium.⁶⁴ Doran's argument focuses on 2 Maccabees 4:7–17 and raises two concerns. First, as noted above, the language of 2 Maccabees is evidence that its author acquired an advanced education, which further implies that he belonged to a social and cultural elite. Therefore, if we locate him in a Greek city of the Hellenistic period, it is inconceivable that he would have condemned Jews for going to the gymnasium, since *in Greek cities* this is where advanced education was provided. Access

⁵⁸ See also the Book of Judith, although its place of composition is controverted.

⁵⁹ On Judas' dream, see Honigman 2014, 153–156.

⁶⁰ Against Seron (3:13–26), Gorgias (3:38–4:24), and Lysias (4:27–35), respectively. This paragraph summarizes a literary analysis I presented elsewhere (see above, n. 15). For a suggestion of why there are three entitling battles and of why the first battle against Apollonius (1 Macc 3:10–12) is described in a very succinct way, see there.

⁶¹ See in 1 Maccabees' entitling battles against Seron (3:17–22); Gorgias (4:7–8); and Lysias (4:30, 35); in 2 Maccabees, see the entitling battle in 2 Macc 8:16 (see also 8:9; and 2:21).

⁶² See the battle against Timothy in Raphon (1 Macc 5:37–44, at 5:38); and the battle at Beth-Zechariah (1 Macc 6:32–47, at 6:41). Likewise, Judas' death in battle is explained because Bacchides' army was very large, and Judas' men had fled out of fear (9:6–7).

⁶³ See further section 3.2 below.

⁶⁴ Doran 2012, 15–17, quotations from p. 16.

to the gymnasium was also a matter of social status. Finally, it would be difficult to understand why the author did not mention the worship of Hercules and Heracles, which in *Greek cities* was associated with the gymnasium.

For similar reasons, the contrast between *Ioudaismos* and *Hellenismos* that 2 Maccabees creates definitely rules out the possibility that the author lived in Hellenistic Egypt. Not only were the *Ioudaioi* there part of the colonial society of the *Hellenes*, but in at least one settlement in the Fayum, ethnic Judeans bore the official label of *Hellenes*.⁶⁵ Rather, the documented strategy of educated Judean authors living in a Greek environment was to transcend the perceived gaps between Greek and Judean ways of life, not to stress the opposition between the two. Particularly in Egypt, Judean authors positioned themselves as sharing values with the Greeks and later the Romans as opposed to the Egyptians.⁶⁶

Rather, 2 Maccabees 4:7–17 is not simply an attack on the gymnasium, but on the high priest Jason who established it. Moreover, a key argument in this diatribe is that the priests neglected the service of the altar in order to rush to train in the palaestra (4:13–14). We may wonder how, from the perspective of a “Jew” living in a Hellenistic city, it was so important to emphasize what the gymnasium did to the temple, or that Jason was “no true high priest” because of that (διὰ τὴν τοῦ ἀσεβοῦς καὶ οὐκ ἀρχιερέως Ἰάσωνος ὑπερβάλλουσαν ἀναγνείαν, 2 Macc 4:13). As I have argued elsewhere, the gymnasium is described in 2 Maccabees as an anti-temple, and Jason, as its builder, is charged with causing the ruin of the temple.⁶⁷ According to Hurowitz’s narrative pattern, this passage advances the trope that the previous ruler (Jason) neglected his duties to the patron deity, and therefore the deity chose a new servant (Judas) to restore his temple and rule over the people.

It is also worth noting that *Hellenismos*, in 2 Maccabees, refers exclusively to (evil) Judeans, never to the Seleucid kings, generals, or soldiers, whereas non-Judean ethnicity was designated by the semantic field of *allophyllismos*.⁶⁸ As I have argued elsewhere, in 2 Maccabees *Ioudaismos* and *Hellenismos* have political meanings, capturing in two abstract words the positive and negative sides of the complex semantic field of Hurowitz’s narrative pattern. That is to say, *Ioudaismos* can be paraphrased as “the legitimate social order attuned to the divine order of things, which was established by the pious (or righteous) Judas when he refounded the temple, and in which the dynasty of the Hasmoneans ruled.” In this social order, all aspects of *Ioudaismos* as described in the work are respected, including the struggle for the land, the temple, and the laws. Symmetrically, *Hellenismos* denotes “the illegitimate social order opposed to the divine order of things, established by the wicked Jason when he founded the gymnasium,” as an antitemple in which the Greek way of life was implemented.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ See Honigman 2013; Honigman 2016b. For Judean *Hellenes* in the village of Trikomia, see Honigman 2023b, 202–208. This was a privileged fiscal status, but its name obviously connoted culture and ethnicity, even if in a fictional manner.

⁶⁶ On the *Letter of Aristeas*, see Honigman 2013, arguing that its author painted the Law of the Judeans as the best embodiment of Greek values; also, Honigman 2023a. On Philo, *In Flaccum*, see Niehoff 2001, 60; van der Horst 2003, 17–18.

⁶⁷ Honigman 2014, 199–214.

⁶⁸ In Ptolemaic Egypt, the label of *allophylos* designated non-residents. See *CPJ IV* 557, l. 18, with commentary p. 92.

⁶⁹ Honigman 2014, 143–145, 198–199.

3. The reception of the Danielic textual network in 2 Macc

An additional aspect of 2 Maccabees that supports the view that it was composed in Judea rather than in the diaspora is the overlooked intertextual connection between 2 Maccabees and the textual network of Danielic stories.⁷⁰ The testament of Mattathias in 1 Maccabees (2:59) contains an explicit reference to the story of Daniel's three companions rescued from the fiery furnace, also recorded in MT, OG, and Theodotion Dan 3:8–30, and thus the reception of Daniel in this work is certain.⁷¹ However, a more subtle form of reception, common to both Maccabean books, concerns the construction of space.

3.1. The construction of space in the Danielic tradition

The construction of space in Daniel is determined by the combined models of cosmic dominion and universal kingdom—that is, one mythic and one historical—which are used together to represent both God and his human kingly counterparts. An indication that the rule of God and the rule of kings are imagined as mirror images of each other is found in the recurring statements—echoing the Achaemenid ideology of imperial rule—that human kings (Nebuchadnezzar and Darius the Mede) and God alike rule over “peoples, nations, and languages.”⁷² In the second part of the work (chs. 7–12), Antiochus IV is portrayed as a cosmic agent of destruction by means of mythical templates, including the Levantine creation myth (Dan 7–8) and the Egyptian kingship myth, which depicts Pharaoh—the embodiment of Osiris' son Horus—as the daily guarantor of Creation and Justice against the daily assaults of Seth, who personifies Chaos and Evil (chs. 7–9).⁷³

Alongside the cosmic dimension of the Sethian myth, foreign invaders of Egypt and domestic rebels against the Pharaoh were traditionally described as embodiments of Seth, and in Hellenistic times several enemies of the Ptolemies—such as Antiochus III in the relief adorning the stele on which the Raphia Decree was inscribed—were depicted as Sethian or Sethian-Typhonian figures. Jan Willem van Henten has suggested that the depiction of Antiochus IV as a Sethian-Typhonian figure in Daniel was inspired by a Ptolemaic precedent that appeared in the aftermath of Antiochus' siege of Alexandria and two

⁷⁰ On the concept of “textual networks,” see Selden 2009. Selden defines these as “autopoietic bodies of related compositions” such as the apostolic Gospels and the Enochic corpus (pp. 6–7). The concept posits a reciprocal interaction over time between the variants of a text or a cluster of related compositions as an alternative to the image of the genealogical tree, which posits a linear, unidirectional process.

⁷¹ The companions' names are Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael in 1 Macc 2:59, and Sedrach, Misach, and Abednago in OG and Theodotion, a close rendering of their names in MT (see, e.g., v. 3:13 in all three versions).

⁷² Dan 3:4, 7, 29; 4:1; and 5:19 (Nebuchadnezzar); 6:25 (Darius); and 7:14 (God). I intend to discuss this aspect elsewhere.

⁷³ Lebram 1975, followed by Henten 1993 point to the Greek myth of Typhon rather than to its Egyptian counterpart, but several tropes rather point to Egyptian Seth. These are God's enemy speaking “arrogant words” (7:8, 11, 25; 11:36); and God speaking “truth” (Dan 8:12; cf. Daniel's visions being truth: 7:16, 19; 10:21; 11:2) while his enemy speaks “lies” and acts “deceitfully” (8:23–25; 11:21, 23).

invasions of Egypt.⁷⁴ Moreover, under the Ptolemies—who were, of course, pharaohs—Egyptian royal ideology shifted away from its exclusive focus on Egypt to embrace the idea of universal pharaonic rule.⁷⁵

This Ptolemaic development may explain why the Judean Danielic tradition, through combined mythical and historical allusions, portrayed Antiochus as a universal evildoer rather than simply focusing on the harm he caused in Judea. In MT Daniel 11:21–45, the King of the North (Antiochus IV in these verses) not only seizes power by deception, acts deceitfully against those with whom he makes an alliance, and uses lies (11:21, 23, 27), in a Sethian-Typhonian manner, but he also invades the prosperous regions of the province⁷⁶ and distributes plunder, spoils, and supplies to his men (11:24), and returns from Egypt with great spoil (11:28) before being stopped by the “ships of the *kittim*” (i.e., the Romans coming from the west) and turning his wrath against Jerusalem and defying God (11:30). Likewise, the theme of battles with peoples in the east, the north, the sea and the holy mountain, and south beyond Egypt recurs in the final verses of the section, which shift from describing Antiochus’ historical warlike expeditions to a mythical extension of his aggressions against peoples (11:40–45). Although the geographical scope of Antiochus’ evildoing was never strictly canonized, the trope of a king wreaking havoc in many places seems to have persisted, as 4Q248 shows. This fragmentary historical prophecy written in the style of Dan 11 dates to the first half of the first century BCE at the latest (see also 4Q246), and according to the reconstruction proposed by Magen Broshi and Esther Eshel, a Seleucid king—plausibly identified as Antiochus IV—attacks Egypt, Judea, and “foreign lands.”⁷⁷ Likewise, the opening verses of the Qumran War Scroll may refer to the mythical portrayal of Antiochus IV in Dan 11:40–45.⁷⁸

3.2. The construction of space in 1 and 2 Maccabees as reception of Daniel

The Danielic tradition may explain why 1 and 2 Maccabees combine two opposite discourses with respect to their geographical and historical references. On the one hand, it has become clear in recent years that the warlike activities of Jonathan, Simon, and, in all likelihood, Judas himself before them, were entangled in the ongoing conflicts between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids for control of the southern Levant and, from the death of Antiochus V in 162, in the civil wars between contenders for Seleucid kingship. In a nutshell, while the legitimate rulers of Judea allied themselves with one of the warring parties, the Maccabean brothers fought battles and conquered cities on behalf of the opposing camp.⁷⁹ However, in the Maccabean books, the Seleucid rulers instruct their

⁷⁴ Henten 1993, 225.

⁷⁵ For this shift, see Fischer-Bovet 2016.

⁷⁶ The end of verse 11:24 mentions Antiochus’ plans against the “strongholds,” i.e., Egypt. Therefore, I understand that the “prosperous regions of the province” refers to regions other than Judea. According to 2 Maccabees 5, Antiochus attacked Judea when he returned from Egypt, not before.

⁷⁷ Broshi – Eshel 1997.

⁷⁸ Broshi – Eshel 1997, 128.

⁷⁹ See Eckhardt 2016a; Eckhardt 2016b; Berlin – Kosmin 2021b, 393–406; Chrubasik 2021; Fischer-Bovet 2021; Honigman (forthcoming); and Heidelberg conference paper (above, n. 15).

generals to prepare for campaigns in Judea specifically, while the broader military goals of the expeditions in question are concealed.⁸⁰

Typical of 1 Maccabees are the claims that forces from neighbouring regions attacked Judea because these peoples were angry that the Judeans had rebuilt the altar (1 Macc 5:1–2), and that Antiochus IV took his armies to the Upper Satrapies because he needed more money to continue his war against the Judeans (3:27–31). Readers unsatisfied with these explanations are left wondering why Judas had to go fighting in Idumea, Transjordan, and Galilee, back and again (1 Macc 5).

2 Maccabees downplays the question of causality by omitting information, both geographical and contextual. Typically, once Judas has recruited men into a military force, he begins “setting fire to towns and villages” (2 Macc 8:5–6), without clarifying which towns those were and who the people were who lived in these places, and why Judas needed to burn villages if his enemies were Seleucid generals attacking Judea specifically (8:8). The suppression of geographical details in chapters 10–11 achieves a similar effect. As the narrative focalizes on the victorious nature of Judas’ campaigns, no explanation is given as why the Idumeans were harassing the Judeans, why Judas felt the need to retaliate to the point of destroying their city by siege, and why he then “parted for regions that urgently needed him” (2 Macc 10:15–19). Readers may try to fill the blanks by assuming that the Idumeans were acting as allies of the Seleucid general Gorgias (10:14), but ultimately the geopolitical context is lost to us. Overall, the suppression of geographical data, far from simply demonstrating the author’s alleged “lack of interest in the geography of Palestine,”⁸¹ is an efficient narrative device that allows the author to simultaneously tell an uplifting, not to say hagiographic story of Judas’ victories without entering into complex factual contextualization in the style of Greek historiography. Similarly, we are told in a matter-of-fact manner that Antiochus left a governor in Jerusalem and one in Gerizim (2 Macc 5:22–23), and in v. 9:1 the narrative suddenly shifts to Antiochus returning from Persis, and the narrative flow simply shifts the reader’s attention away from wondering what had happened in Samaria that made it necessary for Antiochus to leave an official in Mount Gerizim, and when, how, and why Antiochus went to Persis.

In contrast with this systematic and evidently deliberate omission of the broader geostrategic context in which the so-called Maccabean wars unfolded, it is striking that 1 Maccabees, and to an even greater extent 2 Maccabees, provide details about Antiochus’ doings in the Upper Satrapies that on the face of it are irrelevant given the two books’ focalization on the military activities of the Maccabean brothers.⁸² It seems that this exceptional widening of the geographical scope when it comes to Antiochus IV owes much to the Danielic tradition.

In other words, the authors of 1 and 2 Maccabees were receptive to Daniel’s portrayal of Antiochus as a universal and cosmic evildoer, because this spatial construction gave a universal and cosmic significance to the events that took place in Judea, while at the

⁸⁰ See, e.g., 1 Macc 3:10, 13–15, 27, 34–35, 38–39; 2 Macc 10:14, 24; 11:1–2. See Honigman (forthcoming); and Heidelberg conference paper (above, n. 15).

⁸¹ See section 2.4 above.

⁸² 1 Macc 1:17–19; 3:27–37; 6:1–13; 2 Macc 1:11–17; 9:1–5.

same time asserting or reasserting the universal and cosmic status of the divine owner of the Jerusalem temple that Antiochus had harmed.⁸³

Sethian and cosmic themes in 1 and 2 Maccabees

The reception of Daniel in 1 and 2 Maccabees is confirmed by additional tropes that likely reference it. These intertextual allusions sometimes work very similarly in the two Maccabean books, and sometimes the two works must be distinguished. Both share the theme of Antiochus speaking and acting with arrogance (1 Macc 1:21, 24; 2 Macc 9:3–4, 7), while 1 Maccabees adds the theme of deceit (1 Macc 1:30).

In the account of Antiochus' death, 2 Maccabees amplifies Antiochus' arrogance to cosmic dimensions, as the king believes he can command the sea, the mountains, and the stars (2 Macc 9:8, 10; cf. Dan 11:40–45). In 1 Maccabees, the mythical tropes were grafted onto Antiochus' genealogy. Alexander the Great advances to the ends of the earth, plunders many nations, exalts himself, and gathers a formidable army (1:2–4), and while 1 Maccabees may be an early witness to the mythification of Alexander's biography in the Greco-Roman tradition, this imagery also recalls Dan 11:3.⁸⁴ Indeed, the theme of the Greek king plundering the nations to the ends of the earth (1 Macc 1:3) definitely places Antiochus' attack on Jerusalem in a universal framework, while the geographical definition of Alexander as coming from "the land of the Kittim" in 1:1 borders on the mythical.⁸⁵ That said, the tropes describing the next generation—who "caused many evils on the earth" (1:9)—and Antiochus Epiphanes himself—as a "sinful root" coming from them (1:10)—share more affinities with the beginning of the Book of Enoch than with Daniel (cf. 1 Enoch 9:1).

Antiochus as a universal king

The account of Antiochus' campaign against Egypt in 1 Maccabees 1:16–19 more clearly references Daniel 11, even as it portrays Antiochus as a formidable ruler within a historical (as opposed to a mythical) frame of discourse. That is to say, he is depicted as a universal ruler, not a cosmic one. As soon as "Antiochus saw that his kingdom was established, he determined to become king of the land of Egypt, in order that he might rule over both kingdoms" (1 Macc 1:16),⁸⁶ thereby aspiring to universal dominion. The lengthy

⁸³ Kosmin 2016 is a fundamental study of the way 2 Maccabees incorporated Antiochus' doings in the Upper Satrapies into its narrative, although the author ultimately offers an alternative explanation and misses the intertextual connections with Daniel suggested in the present discussion.

⁸⁴ Compare also 1 Macc 1:5–6 with Dan 11:4, meaning that the opening sequence of 1 Maccabees seems to follow Daniel 11. On the mythification of Alexander's campaigns in the Greco-Roman tradition, see, in particular, his expedition to India (Arrian, *Indica*).

⁸⁵ The polyvalence of the "land of Kittim," which may stand either for the land of the Macedonians or that of the Romans, recalls the polyvalence of the "King of the North" and the "King of the South" which, in Daniel, stand for a succession of Seleucid and Ptolemaic kings. It is also stated that Alexander became king of "Greece" before becoming king in place of Darius. Broshi – Eshel 1997, 121, note that "Greece" refers to the Seleucid kingdom in Qumran's Nahum Commentary, the Damascus Document, and 4Q248, l. 2. See also Dan 11:2. 4Q248, as noted above, belongs to the Danielic textual network.

⁸⁶ Translation here and below NRSV.

description of his army further suggests that it was formidable (“So he invaded Egypt with a strong force, with chariots and elephants and cavalry and with a large fleet,” 1:17; cf. Dan 11:25), and v. 1:19, which mentions Antiochus’ conquest of fortified cities and plunder, builds further on Daniel 11:24, 28. The trope of Antiochus’ formidable forces is repeated in 1 Maccabees 3:32–37 to encompass at once “Israel and Jerusalem” and “Persia” (3:31). When Antiochus left for Persia, he “put Lysias [...] in charge of the king’s affairs from the Euphrates to the borders of Egypt,” leaving half of his forces with Lysias to destroy Israel and Jerusalem, and taking the other half of his armies with him across the Euphrates to the upper satrapies. As we see, 1 Maccabees’ spatial construction highlights three focal points, namely Egypt to the south, “Persia” across the Euphrates, and standing at the center of the huge region delineated by these two poles, Jerusalem and Israel/Judah are the focus of attention of a king aspiring to universal rule. The is the king against whose formidable armies Judas and his brothers are victorious, and Judas’ fame reaches this king and these nations, that is, the whole world (1 Macc 3:26).⁸⁷

The characterization of Antiochus’ campaign in Egypt in 2 Maccabees differs markedly from Daniel and 1 Maccabees because of the author’s consistent willingness to shift the blame for Antiochus’ subsequent attack on Jerusalem onto Jason and Menelaus.⁸⁸ Therefore, his account of Antiochus’ second campaign in Egypt focuses on the well-intentioned prayers for the king that the people of Jerusalem offered in response to an epiphany (5:1–3), as a way to emphasize that Antiochus had absolutely no reason to believe that Judea was in revolt had it not been for the sudden civil war between Jason and Menelaus (5:4–7, 11–16). Any mention of Antiochus’ misdeeds in Egypt would have distracted readers from this focus, and therefore the whole matter is omitted. The author simply records (or makes up) the rumor that Antiochus had died in Egypt as prompting Jason’s attack on Menelaus (2 Macc 5:5).

Nevertheless, 2 Maccabees constructs space in a way very similar to Daniel. To quote Paul Kosmin, “the narrative [in chapter 9] splits Seleucid imperial space into the two geographic poles of Judea and Persia,” omitting both Antiochus’ celebrated festivities at Daphne on the eve of his anabasis and the early phases of his campaign prior to his failed attempt to take and plunder Persepolis (9:1–2). All the places between Ecbatana and Judea are similarly bracketed out when the enraged Antiochus “instructs his charioteer to drive—without stopping in any intermediate province [...]—all the way to Jerusalem” (9:4).⁸⁹ The division of space into two poles in 2 Maccabees definitely recalls Daniel 11, even though the bipolarity shifts geographically. Because Daniel’s narrative focuses on the conflict between the “King of the North” and the “King of the South,” it refrains from distinguishing between Syria and the Transeuphratene region, treating them simply as the kingdom of the north. As a result, while the text explicitly distinguishes between Antiochus’ two successive invasions of Egypt (Dan 11:25–28 and 29–30a), Antiochus’ entire campaign to the East goes unmentioned.

In sum, the two Maccabean books admittedly use different rhetorical devices to portray Antiochus Epiphanes as God’s enemy, and to some extent the different construction of causality in the two works also entails differences in content, especially when it comes

⁸⁷ On this mythical construction, see further Honigman (forthcoming).

⁸⁸ See Honigman 2014, e.g. 70, 91–94, 219.

⁸⁹ Kosmin 2016, 43, including the two quotations.

to their treatment of Antiochus' campaign in Egypt, respectively. Because 2 Maccabees uses the rhetorical device of authorial intervention, it can easily insert a metaphorical image to turn Antiochus into a cosmic evildoer who defies God even as he lies on the ground (2 Macc 9:7–10). In contrast, 1 Maccabees remains within the naturalistic register to construct Antiochus as a universal ruler. Despite their different means, the two works similarly amplify the significance of both Antiochus' assault on the Jerusalem temple and of the Maccabees' military exploits. For both works, the Danielic tradition provided an inspiring model, even as they modify its spatial construction. 2 Maccabees substitutes Persia for Egypt to maintain a bipolar division, while 1 Maccabees includes both Persian and Egypt to create a tripartite division.

Antiochus' anger as the cause of his military aggressions

The reception of Daniel in 1 and 2 Maccabees can be further pinpointed through two specific similarities. First, the trope of Antiochus shifting his aggressive drive to a new target because of a previous disappointment—which portrays him as a ruler who knows no bounds, that is, a perpetual defier of God's power—recurs in all three works, though each time it is adapted to a different situation. In Daniel, when the *Kittim* come against the King of the North in Egypt, he turns his wrath against the holy covenant (Dan 11:30).⁹⁰ 1 Maccabees shifts the theme to create a causal link between the events in Judea and Antiochus' *anabasis*. When Antiochus heard the reports that the armies he had sent against Judas had been routed, he was angry, and with his coffers empty, he prepared for a campaign in Persia to collect revenue from the Upper Satrapies (1 Macc 3:27–31). In 2 Maccabees, the bad news from Judea reached Antiochus in Persis' capital Ecbatana, prompting him to redirect against the Judeans the frustration of his failure to take and plunder Persepolis and his subsequent flight (2 Macc 9:1–4).⁹¹ As it appears, 2 Maccabees is particularly close to Daniel, for in these two works Antiochus redirects his anger against Judea and the Judeans, confirming the conceptual equivalence between Egypt in Daniel and Persia in 2 Maccabees.

Antiochus as a universal plunderer

Finally, the three works portray Antiochus as a universal plunderer, especially of temples, and as Kosmin noted, the inclusion in 1 and 2 Maccabees of well-known stories illustrating Antiochus' failures to plunder temples in the East also serves to “validate the supra-Judean agency of the Jewish God.”⁹² In fact, Antiochus is depicted as plundering

⁹⁰ 1 Maccabees makes no causal connection between the campaign in Egypt and the attack, as a way of signifying that Antiochus' attack on Jerusalem was simply because of his evil nature (1 Macc 1:20). See Honigman 2014, 235–236 and *passim*. On 2 Maccabees, see above.

⁹¹ In the parallel account in 1 Maccabees, the trope is modified: when the report of Lysias' defeat in Judea reaches Antiochus, he becomes ill with disappointment and dies as he confesses the evil he has done in Jerusalem and Judea (1 Macc 6:8–13). Moreover, Antiochus' disappointment is caused by his generals' failures in Judea, not by his flight from Persepolis. Although 1 Maccabees maintains the chronological sequence between Antiochus' attempted sack of a city in Persia and his death, there is no causal connection between the two (1 Macc 6:1–13).

⁹² Kosmin 2016, 33. On this theme, see further, pp. 35–36, 44.

or attempting to plunder at each of the geographical poles with which each work deals. As we saw above, 1 Maccabees first describes Alexander—implicitly defined as the founder of Antiochus’ dynasty, if not his genealogical line—as a universal plunderer himself (1 Macc 1:3), and 1 Maccabees and Daniel record Antiochus’ return from Egypt with spoils (1 Macc 1:19; Dan 11:28).⁹³

The third geographic coordinate is the North (so to speak), i.e., the region beyond the Euphrates, which, as noted above, appears only in the Maccabean books. 1 Maccabees 6 and 2 Maccabees 9 contain similar sequences, including Antiochus’ thwarted attack on an eastern city to plunder its temple, his flight, and his death shortly thereafter in the Upper Satrapies. Two Greco-Roman sources confirm that this was indeed the accepted storyline, around which each author embroidered details at will.⁹⁴ While the two versions in 1 and 2 Maccabees differ as to the exact city (Elymais or Persepolis) and the region to which Antiochus fled (Babylon or Ecbatana), they roughly agree that Antiochus attacked the city and also intended to plunder its temple, but was repelled and driven away by the inhabitants (1 Macc 6:1–4; 2 Macc 9:13). As Kosmin argued, this story resonated with the Hanukkah story—“Antiochus attempts to plunder the temple of an ancient, pre-Seleucid capital, but is defeated by the heroic resistance of the local population”—and moreover, the two episodes were synchronous in time.⁹⁵

Since 2 Maccabees includes an earlier attack on the temple by Heliodorus in 2 Macc 3, an additional parallel with Persis was added in the second epistle that introduces the work (2 Macc 1:12–17). Again, as Kosmin pointed out, the two incidents (Judean and Eastern) are structurally similar in that a royal official attempts to appropriate the temple’s wealth by trickery and is repelled by a divine epiphany.⁹⁶

Since our primary concern in this article is to determine whether 2 Maccabees was composed in Judea or in a diaspora setting, we may dwell on Kosmin’s comment that 2 Maccabees’ decision to locate Antiochus’ attempt to plunder the temples beyond the Euphrates in Persia specifically was meaningful. To quote him,

2 Maccabees constructs a relationship with the Persian past. Antiochus’ assault on the heartland [...] of the former Achaemenid empire is a brutal demonstration that the imperial flame had passed on from Persia. [...] The location generates an inevitable comparison of the Seleucid and Achaemenid dynasties: the present-day horror of Seleucid monarchy, when both Jerusalem and Persepolis are under sacrilegious attack, is judged against the good old days of beneficent Persian kings, when Persepolitan gold funded the rebuilding of Jerusalem. It is well known that the

⁹³ See above, section 3.2a.

⁹⁴ Polybius 31.9.1–4; Appian, *Syrian Wars* 11.66. On these stories, see Mittag 2006, 149–151, 307–310; Kosmin 2016, 44–45.

⁹⁵ Kosmin 2016, 41. On synchronism, see pp. 41–43.

⁹⁶ Kosmin 2016, 35–40. Kosmin (pp. 36–38) shrewdly points out that that the description of the priests’ stratagem exposes the false epiphany in Persis, as opposed to the true apparition of God’s angels in Jerusalem. Moreover, Antiochus failed to appropriate the wealth of Nanaya in Persis, and was killed by the priests of Nanaya’s temple ostensibly, but in truth through God’s punishment for his (truly) impious deed in Jerusalem. The story in 2 Maccabees’ second epistle derives from a distinct tradition of Antiochus IV’s death recorded in Granius Licinianus 28.4–6, which links it to his attempt to appropriate the wealth of the great temple of the Syrian Goddess at Hierapolis-Bambyke by means of a hierogamy. As Kosmin noted, it is incompatible with the version of Antiochus’ death used in chapter 9, but the thrust of the matter in chapters 1 and 9, respectively, is the manner in which the temples were threatened each time, not Antiochus’ death.

Persian empire was kindly received in Achaemenid period Jewish sources (Especially Deutero-Isaiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah, where Cyrus was presented as legitimate king and Judea's fortunes associated with the Persian monarchs.)⁹⁷

If Kosmin is correct, his comment definitely rules out the possibility that 2 Maccabees was composed in Egypt and strongly supports Judea. The Ptolemies associated their dynasty with Alexander the Great, and through him with Nectanebo II, thereby bracketing out the period of Persian domination in Egypt.⁹⁸ Simply put, the memory of Achaemenid rule in Ptolemaic Egypt was negative, and it is hard to believe that a local Judean author would have been so impervious to the discourse about the past that prevailed in the society in which he lived as to include a favorable memory of the Persian Empire in his work. By this logic, it is also intriguing that in his construction of space in 2 Maccabees, as we have seen, the author shifted the trope of Antiochus IV directing his wrath against the Judeans from Egypt to Persia and, more generally, omitted any parallel between Egypt and Judea.

3.3. The death of Antiochus IV

Finally, 2 Maccabees' reception of Daniel extends beyond the Book of Daniel itself to the Palestinian Danielic textual network. As Doron Mendels has shown, the account of Antiochus' death in 9:5–27 has close affinities with the Prayer of Nabonidus, a Judean-Aramaic composition preserved in a Dead Sea Scroll (4QrNab = 4Q242).⁹⁹ The storyline of the two texts is similar. To quote Mendels,

Both sources emphasize that the king was far away from his capital [...] when by God's command he was smitten with inflammation for his impudent deeds against the God of Israel. In both cases the king repents during his illness and expresses himself in prayer. If, as seems probable, the text of 4QPrNab had a happy ending, like the version of Daniel 4 [...] then again there is a striking parallel: Antiochus [...] is ready according to [2 Macc 9:17] to become a Jew. Moreover, in v. 20 he shows that he is a believer in the Jewish God.¹⁰⁰

In the Mesopotamian tradition reflected in the Prayer of Nabonidus, divine punishment for a sacrilegious king came in the form of physical sickness. In contrast, the punishment for sacrilege in the Greek cultural sphere was insanity.¹⁰¹ Indeed, Polybius claimed that Antiochus IV was struck with madness as divine vindication after his failed attempt to plunder the sanctuary at Elymais (Pol 31.9.1–4).¹⁰² In other words, not only did

⁹⁷ Kosmin 2016, 45, and n. 81.

⁹⁸ On the Ptolemies' construction of their genealogy, see Honigman – Gorre 2022, 70–81.

⁹⁹ Mendels 1981. On this text, see Collins 1996; Newsom 2010; Waerzeggers 2017.

¹⁰⁰ Mendels 1981, 55.

¹⁰¹ See, e.g., Cleomenes' madness for bribing the oracle of Delphi to depose the Spartan king Demaratus (Herodotus 6.74–75). Cambyses also went mad for causing the death of the Apis bull (Herodotus 3.27–38), although Herodotus also associates his folly with a bodily disease (3.33).

¹⁰² Likewise, according to Granius Licinianus (28.4–6), Antiochus IV died of terror after his failed bad-faith hierogamy with the goddess of Hierapolis. In addition, his body was accidentally thrown into

2 Maccabees use a Daniel-related text (the Prayer of Nabonidus) preserved in Aramaic and unknown to the Greek translations of Daniel, but, given the choice, he had Antiochus IV die of a physical illness, not madness. These data support the view that 2 Maccabees was composed in Judea, not in a Greek cultural setting.

4. Summary

To determine whether 2 Maccabees was composed in Jerusalem or in a diaspora setting—either Alexandria or a Greek city of Asia Minor—the various issues discussed in the previous article should be considered. First, there are ways to explain how a work composed in Judea could not only be written in excellent Greek but also follow the rhetorical conventions of contemporary Greek historiography. In a region where the major imperial powers (the Seleucids, Ptolemies, and Attalids) were linguistically and culturally Greek, the non-Greek rulers of local societies needed to be fluent in Greek and, moreover, to have men fluent in Greek among their most trusted courtiers. Alongside all the practical aspects requiring Greek, numerous local rulers, including the Hasmoneans, must have felt the need to have works written in good Greek to serve their propaganda needs. Herod's employment of Nicolaus of Damascus provides a parallel, and as in so many respects, could well have followed a Hasmonean precedent. Moreover, there were close ties between the Judeans settled in Egypt (and indeed Cyrenaica) and Judea, and the development of pilgrimage under the Hasmoneans shows that those were eager to maintain these ties.¹⁰³ The composition of a work aimed at the diaspora at their court—and not only the prefacing letters—would make perfect sense within the framework of this policy.

While the features outlined above could easily be at home at the Hasmonean court, the presence in 2 Maccabees of narrative patterns and tropes that in Judean literature were inherited from Mesopotamian literate culture while being alien to Greek culture, is not consistent with the idea that the work was produced in a culturally Greek environment. We may think of the narrative pattern of the ruler founding the temple that shapes 2 Maccabees 10:1–8, the story of Nicanor's day in 2 Maccabees 14–15, and the preliminary battle of the Hanukkah story in 2 Maccabees 8. Although less decisive, the reception of Daniel in the way space is constructed in 2 Maccabees, as in 1 Maccabees, strongly suggests a Judean setting, and even more so the intertextual reference to the Aramaic Prayer of Nabonidus in the depiction of Antiochus' death in 2 Maccabees 9. The fact that the punishment meted out to Antiochus for his sacrilegious behaviour is a physical illness rather than insanity is particularly telling.

Next, scholars who read 2 Maccabees with a diasporic setting in mind naturally interpret all aspects of the work in that light. However, while certain features of 2 Maccabees can plausibly be interpreted as *directed* to a Judean diaspora audience, more than once aspects of the text that supposedly reflect views that only a Judean author living

the river, depriving him of a proper burial. In contrast, however, Appian, *Syrian Wars*, 11.66 claims that Antiochus died of a disease.

¹⁰³ Trotter 2019, 13–110.

in a diaspora setting could hold can actually be explained in other ways. As we have seen, this is true of the author's alleged reservations about "Jews" going to the gymnasium—which can be read as an attack on Jason as the founder of an antitemple—and of his alleged lack of interest in and knowledge of Palestinian geography—where the author rather deliberately blurs geographical data in order to downplay the geostrategic and geopolitical context in which Judas' campaigns were entangled.

In addition, several aspects of 2 Maccabees definitely rule out Ptolemaic Egypt as the place where the author lived and wrote. The most prominent element is the fierce opposition between *Ioudaismos* and *Hellenismos* that he builds, if we take these words to mean "Judaism" and "Hellenism." Similarly, the parallel fates of Judea and Persia that the stories of temple looting construct do not fit comfortably in a Ptolemaic environment, since the memory of the Achaemenid dynasty was negative, if not simply erased.

Conversely, the absence of basic Greek literary tropes, such as the *politeia* genre, in 2 Maccabees is striking. In particular, the citadel plays a secondary role in 2 Maccabees compared to the gymnasium. Furthermore, 2 Maccabees does not deal with Ptolemaic realia at all. In particular, it has no references to Isis, unlike the *Letter of Aristeas* and Sirach.¹⁰⁴ While these details are not decisive per se, they add quantitative weight to the overall evidence.

Finally, the foregoing discussion has, on at least two occasions—namely, in the use of Hurowitz's narrative pattern and in the reception of Daniel—suggested substantive similarities between 1 and 2 Maccabees. Scholars tend to be more sensitive to the differences between the two, but as noted above, these are largely due to the style and tone of the works, and they unduly obscure the similarities of content. Rather, those become all the more apparent in light of recent studies that reveal the numerous gaps between the story of the Maccabean crisis as told in both 1 and 2 Maccabees and the way scholars tend to reconstruct how events unfolded. This issue, however, requires a separate treatment.¹⁰⁵

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¹⁰⁴ Honigman 2023a; Newman 2017.

¹⁰⁵ I address this issue in my Heidelberg conference paper (above, n. 15).

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