Queen Alexandra:
The Anomaly of a
Sovereign Jewish Queen
in the Second Temple Period

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I give thanks to God for allowing me to reach this milestone:

הודות לה' כ י שופ. כ י' עועלמה חקדו
Abstract

Introduction
The nine-year reign (76-67 BCE) of Queen Alexandra (or Shelomzion HaMalkah as she is popularly known) represents a turning point in Jewish history. It marks the final stage of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel – following her death the Hasmonean kingdom started to disintegrate due to a war of succession between her sons and Judaea was conquered by the Roman Empire. Moreover, it signals the beginning of a division between political and religious power in Israel, an issue with which the modern State of Israel again struggles today. It also represents a unique event both in Jewish history and antiquity in general: notwithstanding the fact that they had two adult sons, Alexander Jannaeus bequeathed the throne to his wife Alexandra.

Despite the rarity of a woman holding absolute power in antiquity, numerous basic questions concerning her identity, political actions, and presentation in various historical sources have not yet been addressed. This dissertation aspires to provide answers to these issues by analyzing the descriptions of Queen Alexandra in primary sources and examining the development of her image from the Second Temple Period until the modern period. Such an investigation will also reflect the changing attitude towards women and political power throughout the centuries.

Biographical Outline
Biographical data concerning Alexandra are based on Josephus’ Antiquities and War, the primary sources for most of our knowledge. Born circa 140 BCE, Alexandra experienced a period that encompassed revolutionary events, both in her internal (Jewish) and external (Hellenistic) surroundings. She lived during the epoch of the first independent Jewish (Hasmonean) state in the Second Temple Period, which most probably influenced her political actions later on when she became queen. She was a contemporary of the Seleucid Queen Cleopatra (Selene) of Syria (ca. 130 BCE - 69 BCE), a strong and powerful queen, which undoubtedly influenced her acceptance by Hasmonean society as well as her own conviction that she too could also rule as a queen.
Alexandra probably married Alexander Jannaeus around 111 BCE, a year before the birth of her eldest son, Hyrcanus II. Subsequently, probably not later than 100 BCE, she gave birth to her younger son, Aristobulus II. She was thirty-seven years old when her husband, Alexander Jannaeus, ascended the throne in 103 BCE. At the age of sixty-four, Alexandra inherited the throne following Alexander Jannaeus’s death and ruled for nine years, passing away at the age of seventy-three.

**Research Questions and Hypothesis**

This study addresses the following questions:

1. What explains the contradictory descriptions of Queen Alexandra in Josephus’ writings?
2. Why did Alexander Jannaeus bequeath the kingdom to Alexandra and not to one of his sons as was the accepted practice in most ancient societies?
3. What factors influenced the patriarchal Hasmonean Jewish society to accept Alexandra as an independent queen? How did the different segments of Jewish society in the Second Temple period view her role as a queen?
4. How has Queen Alexandra’s image changed over the centuries, from its inception in the Second Temple Period up until the early modern period?

This dissertation argues that Alexander Jannaeus bequeathed the throne to his wife since he believed that she would rule the kingdom better than either of their sons. He realized that Alexandra would be an astute queen, and that her piety and willingness to delegate authority would unite the nation behind her. The fact that Ptolemaic queens often inherited the throne may have influenced Alexander’s decision to some degree. Likewise, apocryphal literature shows the readiness of Hasmonean society to accept a pious woman leader such as Queen Alexandra. Still, the decisive factor was Alexandra’s capability to be a strong and wise ruler, and this hypothesis is supported by Josephus. This work will also demonstrate that the status of women in Byzantine society, in particular the presence of female rulers, affected the outlook of historical accounts of Queen Alexandra’s reign. And, of all the primary sources, rabbinic literature has played the decisive role in a positive portrayal of Queen Alexandra up until the present time.
The methodology of this study includes an analysis of the language and content of primary sources: Josephus’ writings, Qumran documents and rabbinic literature. Inasmuch as these primary source materials provide only a limited amount of information, an interdisciplinary approach is also applied. This entails a comparison of other ancient literary works dealing with female sovereigns as well as of Jewish-Hellenistic literary works in the apocryphal literature that portray female leaders. A feminist perspective that focuses upon women and their role in society due to the marginalization of women in history as written by men will provide the framework for this study. A focus upon Queen Alexandra’s reign is important not only in its (or her) own right but also for the implications it may have for Hasmonean society and its attitude towards women.

Chapter 1: Scholarly Research to Date

Modern scholarly studies on Queen Alexandra commenced with Johann Müller’s thirty-nine page Latin monograph, published in 1711 and continued in the nineteenth centuries with studies by German-Christian scholars such as Heinrich Ewald (1851), Ferdinand Hitzig (1869), Julius Wellhausen (1874), and Emil Schürer (1891). Prominent Jewish scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as Joseph Derenbourg, Heinrich Graetz, Simon Dubnov, and Joseph Klausner, based their studies on both Josephus’ writings and rabbinic literature. Disagreements among scholars over an evaluation of Alexandra’s reign are usually due to their acceptance or rejection of rabbinic literature’s favorable description, or to the contradictions within and among Josephus’ writings.

The development of women’s/gender studies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries stimulated a growing interest regarding women in antiquity in general, and Queen Alexandra in particular. From 1989 onwards, Queen Alexandra has been the focus of about ten scholarly articles, mostly dealing with specific issues related to her reign. She features in several books dealing with the Hasmonean period and women in antiquity, has served as the inspiration for two M.A. theses and one Ph.D. dissertation on the Book of Judith, and plays a leading role in Tal Ilan’s recent book, Silencing the Queen (2006), on women in rabbinic sources. Still, to date, no in-depth comprehensive historical
analysis following the development of Queen Alexandra’s image from its inception in ancient sources up until the early modern period has been written. This dissertation endeavors to fulfill such a desideratum.

Chapter 2: Translation and Discussion of Josephus’ Descriptions of Alexandra in *War and Antiquities*

Josephus’ descriptions of Queen Alexandra in *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities* are the main primary source of information on her life. Yet it is difficult to obtain a clear picture inasmuch as these accounts contain numerous variations and inconsistencies. *War* emphasizes the queen’s piety while *Antiquities* highlights her strategic moves and adds new episodes to the narrative, including a scathing summation of her rule at the end of book 13. Scholars view *War* as presenting a more positive appraisal of Queen Alexandra and *Antiquities* a more negative one. Various explanations have been proposed for these divergent descriptions, in particular, the influence of Josephus’ sources.

Based upon a new original translation alongside a philological and source-critical analysis, I propose the following hypotheses: 1) *War* does not provide a totally favorable portrait of Queen Alexandra; 2) *Antiquities*, for the most part, does not condemn her; 3) and although the most derogatory statements about Queen Alexandra in *Antiquities* originated in Josephus’ source, their very inclusion in the narrative indicates some expression of Josephus’ own opinion. This chapter demonstrates that, contrary to the claim of many scholars, Queen Alexandra’s image in *Antiquities* is not significantly more negative than in *War*. Furthermore, it shows that Josephus’ criticism of Queen Alexandra is similar to his criticism of other Hasmonean rulers. Finally, a comparison of Josephus’ summation of Alexandra’s rule at the end of *Antiquities* 13 with those of other Hasmonean monarchs reveals that gender considerations did indeed influence Josephus’ descriptions of the queen.

Chapter 3: The Contribution of the Qumran Scrolls and Archaeology

Several Qumran documents are the only other Second Temple period source on Queen Alexandra’s reign, apart from Josephus’ comprehensive accounts in *War* and *Antiquities*. Yet, they only add some fragmentary information to Josephus’ narrative. Calendrical
Documents 4Q331 and 4Q322 twice mention Alexandra’s Hebrew/Aramaic name, Shelamzion; they also indicate that the Qumranites considered her an important historical figure worthy of mention. Metaphors of sexual promiscuity in Pesher Nahum 3-4 II: 5-9 may allude to Queen Alexandra as well as the Pharisees, whom she supported. Some scholars have suggested that a passage from the prophecy of doom in Pesher Hosea A (4Q166) also alludes to Queen Alexandra. The derogatory context of these allusions was probably due to the negative outlook of the Qumran sect towards Hasmonean leaders and the Pharisees in general, as well as Queen Alexandra in particular.

To date, there are no coins extant from Queen Alexandra’s reign. Scholars believe that coins from the year 25 (79-78 BCE) of Alexander Jannaeus’ rule could have continued to be minted during the reign of Queen Alexandra. Alexandra may have chosen not to mint coins due to her desire to distance herself from imitating the Hellenistic practice of minting artistically realistic coins, which contradicted the Jewish prohibition against the portrayal of human images.

The late Ehud Netzer ascribed the Twin Palaces in Jericho to the reign of Queen Alexandra and, based on Josephus’ writings, suggested that the construction of the two identical palaces was due to Alexandra’s desire to ease the rivalry between her two sons. Yet Josephus’ description of Queen Alexandra does not mention any desire on her part to avoid jealousy between her sons. Furthermore, the fact that most of the ceramic finds from the Twin Palaces date from 85/75 – 31 BCE supports a broad time period for the Twin Palaces’ inhabitation, therefore, we cannot be sure of the exact year of their construction. Consequently, due to the uncertainty as to the exact time for the construction of the Twin Palaces, there are no archeological remains that can be definitely ascribed to the reign of Queen Alexandra.

Chapter 4: The Influence of Hellenism and Apocryphal Literature

Ptolemaic queens, from Cleopatra I till Cleopatra VII, played a pivotal political role in the ancient Hellenistic world in general, and in countries under Ptolemaic influence in particular, including Judaea. Several queens of Hellenistic dynasties led armies, determined foreign policy and minted coins. Hellenistic society’s favorable outlook on
independent aristocratic women may have influenced Josephus’ description of Queen Alexandra in *War*.

Similar to Hellenistic queens, Alexandra gained power by virtue of her husband who designated her as his successor. Nonetheless, her status was different. Male heirs (sons) were often included in Hellenistic testaments while Alexander Jannaeus bequeathed the throne solely to his wife, excluding their adult sons, Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II, which is quite unusual for the Hellenistic world. The disparity between the Hellenistic and Hasmonean inheritance customs may be connected to the widespread Ptolemaic practice of the joint reign of a king and queen who were next of kin – a brother and sister, father and daughter, mother and son/s, etc. Such a joint reign often entailed marriage between these relatives, which is forbidden in Judaism. Thus the differing approaches of Judaism and Hellenism to such marriages may offer another explanation as to why Alexander Jannaeus chose his wife as the sole heir to the Hasmonean kingdom.

Literary Hellenistic works from the Hasmonean period paved the way for the acceptance of Queen Alexandra’s reign, even though they were probably not explicitly written for this purpose. In particular, three somewhat similar apocryphal books with female protagonists – the Greek translation of Esther (which deviates significantly from the Hebrew), *Judith* and *Susanna* – indicate the positive way in which Judaean society in the first century BCE viewed pious female leaders. These books, which tell stories in a post-exilic setting and were composed close to the time period of Queen Alexandra, contain numerous similarities. They have beautiful pious female heroines; their names and topics focus on women’s acts; and the protagonists transcend their subordinate position and assume a position of leadership.

The descriptions of Queen Alexandra in *War* and *Antiquities* reflect the differing status of women in Hellenistic as opposed to Roman society as well as the diverse social realities in which Josephus lived and worked. Josephus finished writing *War* at the end of the 70s CE, when he was a “new immigrant” to Rome and therefore most likely still strongly influenced by Jewish-Hellenistic society. *Antiquities*, on the other hand, was composed later, circa 93-95 CE, when Josephus had already lived in Rome for a considerable period of time and had probably assimilated Roman norms, in particular, its view of women. This transition from a Hellenistic culture, which was open to women as
supreme rulers, to a Roman society, which was opposed to such a role for women and espoused the feminine domestic ideal, may have influenced Josephus’ change in attitude to Queen Alexandra at the end of *Antiquities* 13.

Roman historical and literary accounts, such as Seneca’s *De Clementia*, Tacitus’ *Annals* and Cassius Dio’s *Roman History*, even if composed after Josephus wrote his works, may either characterize literary themes that were popular during the time that Josephus composed his works or represent well-established views of powerful queens in Roman society. In particular, the negative tradition regarding Emperor Augustus’ wife, Livia, which is found in Roman literary sources, may have shaped Josephus’ narrative condemning Queen Alexandra at the end of *Antiquities* 13.

**Chapter 5: The Depiction of Queen Alexandra in Rabbinic Literature**

Following Josephus’ writings and the Qumran documents, tannaitic midrashim (*Sifra* Leviticus and *Sifrei Deuteronomy*) represent the earliest sources that directly mention Queen Alexandra. They also exerted a formative influence upon Jewish historians’ favorable attitude towards Alexandra. As compared with other women, Queen Alexandra appears relatively often in rabbinic texts. The sages viewed her reign as an idyllic era during which the Jewish people kept the commandments, and this resulted in agricultural prosperity. Events concerning Queen Alexandra and her reign, as told by Josephus, are echoed in many rabbinic texts, which apparently drew, either directly or indirectly, upon *Antiquities* and *War*. Still, without Josephus’ historical context, rabbinic literature would only offer us short vignettes on Queen Alexandra’s purported deeds. Both the parallels as well as the historical background that Josephus provides are indispensable for understanding rabbinic texts on Queen Alexandra. Unlike earlier tannaitic literature, the Babylonian Talmud (BT) appears to allude to historical events connected to Alexandra mentioned in Josephus’ works.

Many leading historians of the nineteenth and early twentieth century accepted the laudatory portrayal of Alexandra in rabbinic literature, and this was mirrored in historical works, such as those by Schürer, Dubnov, and Graetz. More recent historians, however, are more circumspect as to the reliability and impartiality of rabbinic texts.
Chapter 6: Queen Alexandra’s Image in Chronicles from the Early Byzantine Period until the Beginning of the Early Modern Period

This chapter presents an analysis of the development of Queen Alexandra’s image in chronicles from the fourth century CE until the end of the sixteenth century. This is the first time such an investigation has been undertaken.

The first Byzantine account to describe Alexandra’s reign is Eusebius’ fourth-century (303/325 CE) chronicle (in Jerome’s Latin translation). Eusebius presents us with a sparse amount of information: a name – Salina Alexandra, her husband’s name, Alexander, the fact that she was a ruler or monarch of the Judaeans and that she ruled in Jerusalem, and finally that her rule was a disaster. Scholars have focused upon only one aspect of Eusebius’ account - that it is the earliest known source that adds the name Salina to Alexandra, and the end result was the (incorrect) popular name – Salome Alexandra. Yet even more significant is the fact that Eusebius chose to encapsulate Queen Alexandra’s reign with the extremely negative part of Ant. 13:432 (“misfortunes and political tumults”), which relates to internal palace affairs, while ignoring the positive ending connected to the entire kingdom (“she maintained the nation peacefully”). Why did Eusebius render such a harsh picture of Queen Alexandra? Eusebius’ description may reflect the patriarchal attitude of Byzantine society towards women, who were viewed as inferior, weak and even an instrument of the devil since they caused Adam to sin. Moreover, the fact that she supported the Pharisees, as Josephus reports, could only redound to her discredit for any reader of the New Testament.

Similar to Eusebius, two additional Byzantine chronicles from the fifth to seventh centuries, the Excerpta Barbari and the Chronicon Paschale, devote a minimal amount of space to the reign of Queen Alexandra and attribute little significance to her reign. The anomalous situation of Queen Alexandra reigning as a sovereign queen but not a high priest confused the authors of the chronicles. One solution was to list her as the mother of a high priest, which relegated Alexandra to the gender role of a mother and silenced her achievements as a sovereign queen.
In contrast, the later chronicles of Syncellus and Zonaras provide a detailed account of Queen Alexandra’s reign. Their attitude is very positive and they even omit criticism that is found in Josephus’ writings. The Byzantine historical context, the change in the status of women and the increasing number of women who obtained political power from the eighth to the twelfth centuries, and even became sovereign empresses, can help explain this change.

*Sefer Josippon*, an anonymous tenth-century (953 CE) historical account in Hebrew written for a Jewish audience, based mainly on Josephus, also reflects the historiographical outlook of Byzantine chronicles— it collects facts from various sources and unites them into one coherent historical account to present universal truths and ethical statements. The author of *Josippon* consistently praises Queen Alexandra and the only criticism voiced is that she gave the Pharisees too much power. When there is a contradiction between the admiring description of Alexandra in rabbinic literature and Josephus’ critical portrait at the end of *Antiquities* 13, the author of *Josippon* reinterprets Josephus’ statements in *Antiquities* to make them conform to the laudatory portrayal in rabbinic sources.

David Gans’ *Zemah David* also offers an approving picture of Queen Alexandra, which is based on *Josippon*. An analysis of *Zemah David* reveals that rabbinic literature influenced Gans to draw an exceptionally complimentary picture of the queen. Moreover, *Zemah David* marks the first significant mention of Queen Alexandra in the early modern period.

**Final Conclusions**

Despite the anomaly of a female sovereign ruler, many Jewish historical works have given little or no space to Queen Alexandra’s reign. My investigation indicates that each respective society’s outlook on women rulers, be it Hellenistic, Roman, or Byzantine, most probably was an important factor in the favorable or unfavorable portrayal of Queen Alexandra as a sovereign ruler in various sources as well as the amount of space they devote to her reign.

Testimony from primary sources – Josephus’ writings, Qumran documents and rabbinic literature – reveals that Queen Alexandra did play a significant role in Jewish
history. Although Josephus presents a predominantly positive depiction of Queen Alexandra as a talented, wise, pious ruler with a keen understanding of foreign affairs, his writings are not always weighted in Queen Alexandra’s favor. In particular, the negative assessment of Queen Alexandra’s reign in *Antiquities* 13: 431-432 contradicts the earlier laudatory narrative.

The interplay of several factors may explain this condemnation. Firstly, the transfer of power from a male to a female ruler challenged the traditional (male) political structure; secondly, the Romanization or assimilation of Josephus into Roman society, which disapproved of women rulers; thirdly, Josephus’ vested interest in portraying the Romans and their conquest of Judaea in a positive light, which necessitated describing a decline of the Hasmonean dynasty, including the rule of Queen Alexandra.

Qumran documents provide some new but scant information on Queen Alexandra, including her Hebrew name. Moreover, the very fact that they connect Alexandra’s name with important events enhances her prominence as a major historical figure.

Rabbinic literature portrays Queen Alexandra in an almost exclusively favorable light, and viewed her as an important figure, which is most probably due to her support of the Pharisees.

Early Byzantine chronicles present a brief and disapproving picture of Queen Alexandra, which was perhaps connected to the patriarchal attitude of Byzantine society towards women as weak, inferior and evil as well as the legacy of Roman society’s negative attitude towards women rulers. This outlook could also be connected to the fact that Queen Alexandra supported the Pharisees, whom the Gospels condemned on account of their hostility towards Jesus. Yet later chronicles reversed this trend, probably as a result of the influence of contemporary events in Byzantium, in particular the reign of several independent queens.

Due to the strong influence of rabbinic traditions, Jewish chronicles from the Middle Ages up until the early modern period expressed a totally positive attitude towards Queen Alexandra. These traditions also impacted upon seminal Jewish scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. More recent scholarship, in contrast, returned to examine the main source for knowledge of Queen Alexandra’s reign – Josephus’ writings.
What role did Queen Alexandra’s gender play in all this? Josephus’ attitude towards women in general influenced, to some extent, his description of Queen Alexandra. This outlook was shaped by Jewish-Hellenistic cultural norms and by Roman attitudes towards women and power. As regards Qumran documents, the metaphors of sexual promiscuity in the allusions to Queen Alexandra in *Pesher Nahum* are definitely gender-biased, as evidenced by the fact that no such sexual slurs are voiced against the “wicked” Yannai.

Finally, despite what we would have expected, Jewish scholars throughout the centuries have chosen to derive their picture of Queen Alexandra from earlier laudatory tannaitic accounts while ignoring the “silencing” or marginalization in later sources. This can be attributed, in part, to a scholarly preference for earlier sources. In this case, adherence to early rabbinic accounts overcame any misgivings as regards Queen Alexandra's gender. Thus rabbinic sources have played a leading role in the positive portrayal of Queen Alexandra in scholarly literature from the tenth century up until the present time.
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Introduction

Queen Alexandra’s nine-year reign (76–67 BCE) represents a major turning point in Jewish history. It marks the final stage of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel – following her death, the Hasmonean kingdom started to disintegrate in the wake of a war of succession between her sons, and subsequently Judaea was conquered by the Roman Republic. Moreover, Alexandra’s rule signals the beginning of a division between political and religious power in Israel, an issue which the modern State of Israel again struggles with today. It also represents a unique event in both Jewish history and antiquity in general: despite the fact that they had two adult sons, Alexander Jannaeus bequeathed the throne to his wife, who subsequently ruled the Hasmonean kingdom as a sovereign queen. Finally, she was the only queen accepted as legitimate in the history of Israel.⁠¹ This work will analyze the descriptions of Queen Alexandra’s achievements in primary sources and delve into the broader issue of the development of her image throughout the centuries, which reflects the changing attitudes towards women and power.⁠²

Although this instance of a woman holding absolute power in antiquity stands out as a singular phenomenon, many basic questions concerning Alexandra's identity, political actions, and historical portrayal have not yet been fully addressed. This dissertation strives to offer an in-depth examination of ancient sources in light of a feminist awareness and aided by modern studies. Starting with primary sources, Jewish and non-Jewish literary accounts will be analyzed along with their subsequent reception up until the early modern period. This will provide a better understanding of Queen Alexandra’s

¹ The only other instance of a woman holding absolute power in Israel in antiquity is that of Athaliah, who reigned for six years (2 Kgs 11:1-20). Still as Carol Smith has pointed out, Athaliah was never termed a “queen” and according to the Deuteronomistic account, she was viewed as an unfit (or illegitimate) ruler since her power did not derive from Yahweh, see Smith, “Queenship,” pp. 142-162. Likewise, in their commentary on II Kings, Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor note that “From the point of view of the Deuteronomistic editor of Kings, Athaliah’s reign is not granted full legitimacy, for neither an opening nor a closing formula is given for her six years.” See Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation, with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible, 11 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1988), p. 133. Unlike Athaliah, Queen Alexandra’s reign was approved of by Jewish religious texts, such as tannaitic sources, which praise her piety and term her a queen. For an in-depth discussion of this matter, see Chapter 5.

² This work complements that of Tal Ilan, who examines the transmission of rabbinic texts regarding Alexandra in particular and women in general. See Ilan, *Silencing the Queen*. 


life and actions, which previous research has not confronted, and thereby bring to light a
new “voice” of this exceptional woman.

I. Biographical Outline

Who was Queen Alexandra? Josephus states that she died at the age of seventy-three (in
67 BCE, Ant. 13: 430) and based on the fact that she reigned from 76-67 BCE, we can
deduce her year of birth (circa 140 BCE). Alexandra lived during a period that
encompassed revolutionary events, both in her internal and external surroundings. In
connection with the Jewish world, she was born during the epoch of the first independent
Jewish state in the Second Temple Period, which was ruled by Simon the Hasmonean.
The fact that Alexandra lived in an independent Jewish state, and did not have any
memories of foreign rule, most probably influenced her political actions later on when
she became queen. In regards to the Hellenistic milieu, she was a contemporary of the
Seleucid Queen Cleopatra (Selene) of Syria (ca. 130 BCE - 69 BCE), the daughter of
Ptolemy VIII and Cleopatra III who ruled a portion of Syria together with her son
Antiochus XIII (ca. 89 – 83 BCE). Both women were strong and powerful queens,
although as was common with Ptolemaic queens, Selene ruled as co-regent with her son.
In contrast, Alexandra ruled independently. The reign of another queen about a decade
prior to Alexandra’s reign undoubtedly influenced her acceptance by Hasmonean society
as well as her own conviction that she could also rule as a queen.

There is no record of when Alexandra married Alexander Jannaeus. We only know
that she was about thirty years old when their eldest son, Hyrcanus II, was born circa 110
BCE (since, according to Ant. 15: 178, Hyrcanus II was over eighty years old when he
was executed by Herod in 30 BCE). Inasmuch as she was married before the birth of
Hyrcanus II, this would place her marriage sometime prior to 110 BCE. Thus she was
probably married at the age of twenty-nine or younger. She had two sons with Jannaeus –
Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II (War I, 109). If the elder, Hyrcanus, was born circa 110
then it is unlikely that the younger, Aristobulus, would have been born when Alexandra

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3 For a description of Queen Selene’s reign, see Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, pp. 170-172.
4 See Chapter 4 for a comprehensive discussion of Hellenistic parallels to Queen Alexandra’s reign.
was older than forty-five years old. Thus Aristobulus was probably born between 109 and 95 BCE.

She was thirty-seven years old when her husband, Alexander Jannaeus, ascended the throne in 103 BCE. At the age of sixty-four, she became the sovereign queen following Alexander Jannaeus’s death (Ant. 13: 405, 409; War I: 110-111) and ruled for nine years, passing away at the age of seventy-three in 67 BCE (Ant. 13: 430, War I: 119).

II. Queen Alexandra’s Name

The issue of the queen’s name has occupied scholars for over three hundred years. Josephus uses only the Greek name for Jannaeus’ widow – Alexandra. The variety of appellations used in Rabbinic and Byzantine literature has created much confusion. Inasmuch as Josephus calls Aristobulus’ wife Σαλίνα...λεγομένη δὲ ύπο Ἐλληνών Ἁλεξάνδρα (Ant. 13:320) and Jannaeus’ wife is also named Ἁλεξάνδρα, many modern scholars identify the two as the same woman. Yet, following Tal Ilan’s hypothesis, I believe that these were two different women. Moreover, Josephus does not explicitly state that these two women, the wife of Aristobulus and the wife of Alexander Jannaeus, were the same person. He merely assigns both women the same Greek name, Alexandra, which, as shown by Ilan, was extremely popular during the Second Temple Period.

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5 The significant difference between Alexander and Alexandra at the time of their marriage has aroused scholarly debate. For a discussion of this matter, see Ilan, Silencing the Queen, pp. 50-52. According to Josephus’ chronology in Ant. 13:404, Jannaeus was probably forty-nine when he died in 76 BCE (a variant reading has fifty-one). This would mean that he was fifteen years younger than Alexandra, and if they were married in 111 BCE, then Jannaeus would have been fourteen years old and Alexandra twenty-nine.

6 The first time the queen is called by her name is in War 1:107 and Ant. 13:405.

7 As noted by Neusner, Rabbinic Traditions, p. 139, cited by Ilan, “Queen Salamzion,” p. 183, and Atkinson, “None of the Weakness,” p. 2. See Chapters 5 and 6 for a discussion of this matter.

8 In War 1:85 Josephus does not name Aristobulus’ widow. Despite this, Thackeray concludes that “Though Josephus never expressly says so, it appears certain that, besides the throne, she (Aristobulus I’s widow) gave Alexander Jannaeus her hand in marriage” (Thackeray, War 1, p. 42).

9 Starting with Müller (Alexandra Judaeorum regina), and continuing with Ewald (The History of Israel), Hitzig (Geschichte des Volkes Israel), and many others, see Chapter 1.

10 Ilan, “Queen Salamzion,” pp. 184-185; see also Ilan, Silencing the Queen, pp. 48-52, for a bibliography and discussion of this matter. Byzantine chronicles, apparently relying upon Eusebius’ chronicle, use the double name Alexandra Salina, which was transformed into her present-day name, Salome Alexandra. For a detailed examination of this matter, see below, Chapter 6.

11 See Ilan, Lexicon, pp. 313-314 and Chapter 1 for a discussion of this matter.
Alexandra’s Hebrew name remained a mystery until modern times. Over one hundred years ago, Clermont-Ganneau deduced (correctly) that the queen’s original Hebrew name was, in fact, Shelamzion (שְלַמְציון). This assumption was based upon an ossuary that Clermont-Ganneau uncovered with the inscription Shelamzion בת שמעון הכהן as well as the Greek name of Herod’s daughter, Σαλαμίσσα, (Ant. 18:4.5). Nevertheless, about fifty years after Clermont-Ganneau, Joseph Klausner claimed that her name was Shelomziyyon/שלאמציוון – a form of her name that is widely accepted today. Yet in 1993, Tal Ilan challenged this assumption, positing that Alexandra’s Hebrew name was Salamzion. In light of Qumran discoveries, Ilan later modified the spelling of the queen’s name to Shelamzion. Furthermore, via a statistical survey Ilan demonstrated that Shelamzion was the third most popular name for women in the period following her reign and suggested that this name gained popularity due to the fact that it was held by a Hasmonean queen. To conclude, Qumran documents have corroborated Clermont-Ganneau’s hypothesis of over one hundred years ago – Queen Alexandra’s original name was the Aramaic Shelamzion.

III. Research Questions and Hypothesis
The following questions will be addressed:

- What explains the contradictory descriptions of Queen Alexandra in Josephus’ writings?

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12 Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches*, pp. 385-392. Indeed, modern scholars perplexed by the variety of names for Alexandra in the Talmud could have easily found the answer to this conundrum in Clermont-Ganneau’s clear-cut statement: “I am convinced that the various readings of the Talmud are derived from a primitive form …and that the real name of the wife of Alexander Jannaeus was Shalam-Zion” (p. 389). Gustaf Dalman notes that Shelamzion is an Aramaic name meaning “the salvation of Zion”, see Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, p. 14. Moreover, in reply to my query concerning the vocalization of her name, Prof. Steven Fassberg of the Hebrew University stated that “the form with a (long a) is indeed Aramaic: shelamziyyon.”
14 See Ilan, “Queen Salamzion Alexandra.”
15 Ilan, “Shelamzion Alexandra.”
16 Similar to the popularity of the names of male Hasmonean monarchs among the all names given to Jewish males, Shelamzion represents twenty-five out of one hundred and sixty-eight female names in late antiquity, see Ilan, *Lexicon*, p. 56; eadem, *Silencing the Queen*, p. 260.
17 See Chapter 3 for a full discussion of this matter.
Why did Alexander Jannaeus bequeath the kingdom to Alexandra and not to one of his sons as was the accepted practice in most ancient societies?

What factors influenced the patriarchal Hasmonean Jewish society, a society in which women did not fulfill important public offices, to accept Alexandra as an independent queen?

How did the different segments of Jewish society in the Second Temple period view Alexandra’s role as a queen?

How has Queen Alexandra’s image changed over the centuries, from its inception in the Second Temple period up until the early modern period? What factors influenced this evolution? Did her gender play a role in this process?

This study will demonstrate that Alexander Jannaeus bequeathed the throne to his wife since he believed that she would be a better ruler than either of their sons. He realized that Alexandra would be an astute ruler, and that her piety and willingness to delegate authority would unite the nation behind her. The fact that Ptolemaic queens often inherited the throne may have influenced Alexander’s decision to some degree. Likewise, apocryphal literature shows the willingness of Hasmonean society to accept a pious woman leader such as Queen Alexandra. Still, the decisive factor was Alexandra’s capability to be a strong and wise ruler. This hypothesis is supported by Josephus. This work will also demonstrate that the status of women in Byzantine society, in particular the presence of female rulers, affected the outlook and the length of the historical accounts of Queen Alexandra’s reign. And, of all the primary sources, rabbinic literature played the decisive role in a positive portrayal of Queen Alexandra up until the present time.

IV. Methodology

The methodology employed in this study will include philological, sociological, literary and feminist approaches.

Firstly, primary sources will be examined in their original language (Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic) in order to avoid any misunderstanding arising from translation.

Secondly, this work will endeavor to reveal various societal influences upon the authors of both primary and secondary sources since “texts cannot reproduce reality” and
“no piece of literature, any more than individual human perception, is an objective portrayal of what we call the ‘real world.’”

Thirdly, inasmuch as the study of Queen Alexandra’s reign is characterized by a scarcity of primary source material, we must rely on an extensive variety of ancient sources and adopt an interdisciplinary approach. Such a methodology involves the utilization of other ancient literary works dealing with the issue of female sovereigns (Roman, Greek), a comparative historical analysis of other (Hellenistic) queens, and an investigation of Jewish-Hellenistic literary works (apocryphal literature) that portray female leaders.

Lastly, a feminist perspective on Queen Alexandra’s reign will provide the framework for this study. A feminist perspective focuses upon women and their role in society due to the marginalization of women in history as written by men. According to Joan Scott, a feminist perspective on the study of history attempts to make the woman an active agent in the historical narrative and the topic of study. It focuses on the woman’s unique personal experiences, her motives as opposed to that of a man, and their influence on her role in history. A feminist perspective involves reading between the lines, against the grain, and looking for what is not written since ancient texts were edited and copied throughout the centuries, and women often were “lost” in this process. Such a perspective may offer new explanations for Queen Alexandra’s actions, both in internal matters (empowering the Pharisees) and in foreign/military affairs, and thus make a contribution to the present study. Moreover, this dissertation aspires to impart the proper status to the reign of Queen Alexandra since in previous historical studies “[n]ew facts might document the existence of women in the past, but they did not necessarily change the importance (or lack of it) attributed to women’s activities.” Indeed, Queen Alexandra’s reign is important not only in its (or her) own right but also for the implications it may have on Hasmonean society and its attitude towards women. Finally the transmission of the account of Queen Alexandra’s reign throughout the centuries

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19 For a discussion of this topic see Scott, Gender and History, pp. 17-20.
20 For a feminist approach to women in antiquity, see Clark, Women in Antiquity, pp. 1-16.
21 Scott, Gender and History, p. 3.
sheds light on the changing attitude of society in general, and Jewish society in particular, towards women and power.

V. Overview of Sources
   a. Primary Sources
      1. Judaean War and Jewish Antiquities
         “Without the testimony of Tacitus, Seneca the statesman could hardly exist.”
         Syme’s dictum can also be applied to the topic being investigated herein. Without Josephus’ writings, Queen Alexandra could hardly exist and the remarks regarding her reign in other primary sources would be either indecipherable (Qumran) or merely describe minor incidents that might have taken place during her reign (rabbinic literature).
         The descriptions of Queen Alexandra in Josephus’ works are therefore indispensable for understanding how Alexandra came to power and why she succeeded in maintaining her authority. An analysis of Josephus’ descriptions of Queen Alexandra in each of his works, The Judaean War and Jewish Antiquities, will reveal agreements and inconsistencies, and will contribute to a better understanding of the portrayal of her reign. This investigation will include a philological and source analysis, as well as an inquiry into Josephus’ objectives.
         To what extent do Josephus’ writings reflect history or his own personal opinion, especially in connection with gender-related issues? Was Josephus merely recording events in Queen Alexandra’s life or was he writing his own opinion of what a queen should be and how she should act? How did Josephus balance the needs of his narrative with his task, as an historian, of accurately recording history? These issues will be explored within this dissertation.
      2. The Dead Sea Scrolls and Archaeological Remains
         An investigation of Qumran documents which either explicitly mention or allude to Queen Alexandra (by her Hebrew/Aramaic name – Shelamzion) will include Calendrical Documents 4Q331 and 4Q322 as well as Pesher Nahum and Pesher Hosea.

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Questions regarding the exact date of the Twin Palaces in Jericho, the only known archaeological remains that have been dated to Queen Alexandra’s reign, and their significance for an understanding of her epoch, will also be explored.

3. Rabbinic Literature

Rabbinic sources that mention Queen Alexandra either explicitly by name or as the wife of Yannai (Alexander Jannaeus) will be examined and compared to Josephus’ accounts. These sources include Sifra, Sifrei, Megillat Ta’anit, the Jerusalem Talmud, and the Babylonian Talmud. The influence of these rabbinic sources on subsequent historical accounts will then be appraised.

b. Indirect Sources

The paucity of direct evidence from the Greco-Roman period requires an interdisciplinary approach in order to recover “women’s lived reality.” The following contemporary influences upon Queen Alexandra’s reign will therefore be examined: 1) Hellenistic society, culture and literature, in particular the line of independent Ptolemaic queens that exemplified the principle of female succession; 2) apocryphal literature, including Judith, Susanna, and Septuagint Esther, which reflect the attitude of Hasmonean society towards a powerful female leader.

The difference between the status of women in Hellenistic as opposed to Roman society, and how this is reflected in the descriptions of Queen Alexandra in War and Antiquities, will also be investigated. Roman historical and literary narratives – Seneca’s de Clementia, Tacitus’ Annals and Cassius Dio’s Roman History – will help clarify the background for this transformation.

c. Later Sources

Byzantine and Jewish chronicles from the fourth century CE until the end of the sixteenth century will provide testimony regarding the transmission of Josephus and the development of Queen Alexandra’s image up until the early modern period. An examination of Byzantine chronicles such as Eusebius’ Chronicle, the Excerpta Barbari, the Chronicon Paschale, and the chronicles of Syncellus and of Zonaras reveal an expansion in the written account of Queen Alexandra’s reign with the progression of time. The reasons for this growth will be examined in light of contemporary events

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connected to women rulers in the Byzantine Empire. Likewise, the descriptions of Queen Alexandra in Jewish chronicles (*Josippon* and *Zemah David*) will be scrutinized, and I will endeavor to uncover the explanation for their divergence from that of Josephus’ account.

To conclude, as a feminist historian, I believe that research undertaken must not be predisposed to a particular outcome but rather be serious, methodological, and based upon an in-depth understanding of primary sources and a search for historical truth. Indeed, I have discovered that some of the presumptions formed at the beginning of this research regarding a generally negative attitude of scholarship towards Queen Alexandra’s reign have been proved wrong. Yet, I also agree with the following statement:

Rather than there being a separation between feminist politics and academic studies of gender, the two are part of the same political project: a collective attempt to confront and change existing distributions of power.  

It is my sincere hope that highlighting the important role played by Queen Alexandra in the Second Temple period will encourage scholars to seek out and examine other, perhaps lesser-known, women who influenced the course of Jewish history.

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24 Scott, *Gender and History*, p. 6.
Chapter 1:
Scholarly Research to Date

Johann Müller’s thirty-nine page Latin monograph, published in 1711, represents the first scholarly study on Queen Alexandra from the modern period. Its title, *On Alexandra, Queen of the Jews, as an example of a wise woman on this nation for the purpose of shedding light on the history of Jewish factions*, indicates the tendentious nature of this work. Through an account of Alexandra’s life, the subsequent war between her sons after her death and the reign of Herod, Müller endeavors to show how the “crimes” of the various Jewish sects, in particular that of the Pharisees, caused the death of Jesus Christ. Müller’s treatise relies upon both Jewish and Christian works: Josephus’ *Antiquities* and *War* in the Greek original, Byzantine chronicles such as that of Eusebius, rabbinic literature, *Josippon*, and David Gans’ *Zemah David*. Yet the fact that he assigns the latter two works the same historical validity as primary sources (and constantly cites them) detracts from the value of this treatise. Furthermore, Müller does not espouse a critical outlook on rabbinic literature and accepts all their accounts as historical facts, e.g., Shimeon ben Shetah’s supposed familial relation as Alexandra’s brother. Still Müller does delve into primary sources and presents some interesting observations. He is apparently the first scholar to claim that Queen Alexandra had been married to two brothers – first to Aristobulus I and then to Alexander Jannaeus. Following an analysis of Queen Alexandra’s Greek name - “Alexandra,” and her Hebrew name which he posits was “Salome,” Müller concludes that those ignorant of Hebrew, starting with Eusebius,

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1 Joh. Müller, *Alexandra Judaeorum regina*. I wish to thank Shlomo Felberbaum for his help in translating this text.
2 The portrayal of the Pharisees in the New Testament has influence other historians as well, see below, n. 14.
3 See Chapter 6 for an examination of these works.
4 Müller, *Alexandra Judaeorum regina*, pp. 8-9. Muller also claims that *Megillat Ta’anit* corrupted Salome into שלמינון, (ibid., p. 8) when in fact this is closer to her original Hebrew name –שלמציון. See Chapter 5 for a discussion of this matter.
5 “Aristobuli atque Alexandri maritorum regimine” (the rule of Aristobulus and Alexander, her husbands), see ibid., p. 6. Likewise, when Müller mentions the father of Shimon ben Shetah, he states that his daughter was the wife of two kings and two high priests (ibid., p. 8). Ilan and other scholars do not accept this hypothesis, see Ilan, “Alexandra and Judas Aristobulus.” Müller bases this assumption upon *Ant*. 13: 320, which states that the wife of Aristobulus was called Alexandra (as well as Salina), see ibid., pp. 11-12.
corrupted the name Salome into Salina. Müller’s assumption that the queen’s full name was Salome Alexandra may have influenced the widespread use of this appellation in modern studies. In general, Müller highly esteems Alexandra and notes that she was educated and conducted political affairs wisely. This favorable appraisal is based on *Josippon*. Interestingly, as with many subsequent scholars, Müller ignores Josephus’ disparaging description of Queen Alexandra in *Ant. 13: 431-432*.

German-Christian scholars such as Heinrich Ewald (1851), followed by Ferdinand Hitzig (1869), Julius Welhausen (1874) and Emil Schürer (1891), launched nineteenth-century historical accounts of Queen Alexandra’s reign.

Ewald and Hitzig challenge Josephus’ derogatory statements about Queen Alexandra in *Ant. 13: 431-432*. Surprisingly for his epoch, Ewald expresses a very positive outlook on women rulers in general, and Queen Alexandra in particular. He notes that “John (Hyrkanus) had nominated his wife to the supreme power; for in those days, both in Egypt and Syria, queens often governed better than kings.” Hitzig commends Alexandra for being a strong ruler and omits Josephus’ disparaging evaluation at the end of *Antiquities*. Based on rabbinic literature, Hitzig states that there was agricultural plenty during her reign and that she died from illness and old age. Ewald blames the struggle between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and not Queen Alexandra, for causing the disintegration of the Hasmonean kingdom. In a note to the description of her death, Ewald holds the Pharisees responsible for this disaster:

Josephus spends a great deal of trouble in trying to thrust on the queen alone the responsibility for the great disaster which was impending on the country, because as a Pharisee he could not see the deeper causes at work, or look for the guilt where alone it was to be found.

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6 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
7 Ibid., p. 11.
8 Ibid., pp. 26-27. See Chapter 6 for a comprehensive analysis of Queen Alexandra in *Sefer Josippon*.
9 See Chapter 2 for a discussion of this matter.
11 Ewald, *History of Israel*, p. 385
12 Hitzig, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel* p. 490. I wish to thank Dr. Shaul Bauman for his assistance in understanding Hitzig’s archaic German.
Ewald’s tendency to fault the Pharisees is probably connected to a general Christian bias against the Pharisees that was prevalent in his era. Thus depicting Alexandra as virtuous served as a foil for the Pharisees, who are portrayed as unscrupulous.

Another issue discussed by Ewald and Hitzig is Queen Alexandra’s name and her identification with the wife of Aristobulus I. Both authors identify the widow of Aristobulus I with Queen Alexandra. Ewald refers to the wife of Aristobulus I simply as his “childless widow” and assumes that she married Alexander Jannaeus:

His childless widow transferred the sovereignty, together with her hand, to the eldest of the three surviving brothers, Jonathan, more generally known by the abbreviated form of his name Jannai (Jannaeus)...

In the same vein as Müller, Ewald states that Eusebius employs Saalinê or Salinê as an abbreviation of the diminutive Salôminê. Hitzig presents a rather far-fetched speculation regarding the issue of the queen’s name. He states that the widow Salome freed her brothers-in-law from prison, gave the throne to the eldest, Alexander and married him, and that is the origin of her Greek name Alexandra:

Jetzt nach des Gamahls Tode entledigte die Wittwe Salome ihre Schwäger der Fesseln, und vergab als an den ältesten und tüchtigsten den Thron nebst ihrer Hand an diesen Alexander, weshalb sie griechisch Alexandra gennant ward.

Later on, Hitzig states that people could not understand this matter! Indeed, I have not found any reference to such a custom either in Jewish or Hellenistic sources. Although noting that Josephus distinguished between two women by the name of Alexandra, Hitzig asserts that they were nevertheless one and the same and that Josephus merely “forgot”
that Salome, the wife of Aristobulus, married Alexander Jannaeus in order to continue to rule:

Josephus würde, zwei Frauen Namens Alexandra unterscheidend, den Leser geflissentlich beirren; und er vergisst vielmehr, dass Salome den Jannäus heirathete, zu melden, nachdem ihme die Notiz, sie sei eben die Alexandra, genügte.19

Hitzig and Ewald display great esteem for Queen Alexandra’s competence as a monarch. While Ewald merely states that she was “a woman of great acuteness and resolution,”20 Hitzig goes into greater detail and questions why the widow of Aristobulus unconditionally gave up the throne to Alexander Jannaeus and did not rule herself. He also notes the importance of the title “queen,” which Alexandra adopted upon ascending the throne. Playing on Josephus' formulation, Hitzig claims that she only appeared to give the Pharisees authority but in reality she was the ruler.21 Unsure as to whether rabbinic traditions are true, Hitzig proposes that Shimeon ben Shetah may have only presented himself as Alexandra’s brother.22 Ewald does not mention this topic although he does note other rabbinic traditions.23 Ewald and Hitzig laid the foundations for the studies of subsequent leading scholars, such as that of Schürer.24

Ewald’s student, the Bible scholar Julius Wellhausen, totally ignores rabbinic traditions associated with the agricultural plenty during Queen Alexandra’s reign and relies solely upon Josephus’ writings.25 Like Ewald, Wellhausen views the struggle between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and not Queen Alexandra’s actions, as the root cause for the subsequent Roman takeover of Judaea. In a brief description of Queen Alexandra’s reign, Wellhausen particularly censures the Pharisees who “desired foreign

19 Ibid.
20 Ewald, History of Israel, p. 393.
21 Hitzig, Geschichte des Volkes Israel, p. 488. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the implications of the title “queen.”
22 Ibid.
23 Ewald refers to the issue of the negative associations with Jannai’s name in rabbinic literature, see Ewald, History of Israel, p. 386, n. 6.
24 Schürer cites these works, along with Müller, Graetz and Wellhausen, in his literature references, see History of the Jewish People, I, p. 229.
25 See Wellhausen, Pharisees and Sadducees, pp. 84-88.
rule so that the ecclesial character of the theocracy may remain uncorrupted.”26

In the same vein as Hitzig, Ewald and Wellhausen, Emil Schürer condemns the Pharisees. He contrasts the despotic reign of King Alexander with the virtuous rule of his widow:

While he hated the Pharisees, and was hated by them, she befriended them…While he was a despot of the real Oriental type, she was a God-fearing ruler, according to the very ideal of the Pharisees. Her rule, measured by the Pharisaic standard, was faultless.27

Based on Josephus, Schürer emphasizes the Pharisees’ power as “the de facto rulers of the land.” He believes that this authority testifies to their inclusion in the Gerousia (council), which until then had only included nobles and priests.28 Interestingly, Schürer accuses the Pharisees of despotic behavior for executing the former counselors of King Alexander (based on Josephus), which is the same accusation that he had earlier hurled against Alexander Jannaeus.29 Paradoxically, one may deduce from the above that Schürer viewed both the Pharisees and Alexander Jannaeus as being equally evil! Yet despite this negative attitude towards the Pharisees, Schürer has only praise for Queen Alexandra, emphasizing her piety throughout the four-page evaluation of her reign. Likewise, he notes that she “showed prudence and energy” in her foreign policy.30 Schürer summarizes her reign as one of peace and prosperity and cites the “Pharisaic” [rabbinic] tradition praising Alexandra’s days as a golden age.31 Unlike Ewald and Hitzig, Schürer does not mention Josephus’ condemnation of Queen Alexandra in Ant. 13: 431-432. But, like Wellhausen, he describes the struggle for the throne between her sons as a conflict between Pharisees and Sadducees.

The studies of Jewish scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries usually contain only a few pages (if at all) on Queen Alexandra.32 They examine the main

26 Ibid., p. 88.
28 Ibid., p. 230.
29 Ibid., p. 231.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 For example, Queen Alexandra merits less than one page in the forty-two page chapter on Simon ben Shetah and King Yannai in Ephron’s Hasmonean Period, p. 147. Studies on Greek history have also
primary source, Josephus’ writings, along with rabbinic literature, but, unlike Müller, do not relate to the secondary account of *Josippon.*

The majority of these scholars, such as Joseph Derenbourg,33 Heinrich Graetz,34 Simon Dubnov,35 and Joseph Klausner,36 view Queen Alexandra in a positive light. Graetz's appraisal summarizes this outlook “She was the only queen in Judaean history whose name has been handed down to us with veneration.”37 This favorable evaluation is due to rabbinic praise of Queen Alexandra, in particular, *Sifra B'Hukotai* 1:1, which most historians from the nineteenth century accepted as historically reliable.38 Although Derenbourg’s citation of rabbinic sources to describe Queen Alexandra’s reign is consistent with the nature of his work, he does cite Josephus two pages later when describing events concerning Onias.39 In the wake of Madden, some scholars attributed a coin to her reign, but this has since been proven wrong.40

In opposition to the above scholars, Solomon Zeitlin and Ben Zion Lurie severely criticize Queen Alexandra.41 Based upon Josephus’ summation of Alexandra’s reign (*Ant.* 13:431-432) and her (mis)identification as the widow of Aristobulus I, Salina Alexandra, they accuse the queen of responsibility for the disintegration of the Hasmonean kingdom. Zeitlin claims that Alexander Jannaeus was a tragic figure (even

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37 Graetz, *History of the Jewish People,* p. 56.
38 Derenbourg, *l’Histoire et la Geographie,* p. 111; Dubnov, *Vseminaya istoriia,* p. 147; Klausner, “Hasmonean Dynasty,” p. 171; Graetz,, *History of the Jewish People,* p.48; Schürer relies upon this tradition to assert that Queen Alexandra’s era was “a time of prosperity” and a “golden age.” (Schürer, *History of the Jewish People,* p. 231). On the other hand, Jacob Neusner believes that “the story comes long after the ‘event’ and is pure fantasy.” (Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions,* p. 89; see also pp. 89-141 for a discussion of the historical veracity of rabbinic traditions about Queen Alexandra and Shimeon ben Shetah). See Chapter 5 for a discussion of rabbinic sources and their influence of the development of Queen Alexandra’s image.
40 Madden, *Jewish Coinage,* p. 72. Schürer cites Madden in his references but does not elaborate (*History of the Jewish People,* p. 308) while Graetz states that the queen “ordered coins to be struck…with the Greek inscription “Queen Alexandra” (*History of the Jewish People,* p. 48).
41 Zeitlin, *Judaean State,* I, pp. 333-42; Lurie, “From Jannaeus to Herod,” pp. 159-175.
though Josephus does not portray him as such) and that Queen Alexandra could have saved Judaea:

Jannaeus Alexander had a tragic life. Yet much of the tragedy, which led the country through a long trail of suffering, was actually due to the vicious character of Queen Salome Alexandra. Her mind was occupied with self-preservation, not the interests of the state of Judaea. She devised the plot to assassinate her brother-in-law Antigonus because she feared she would share the fate of her mother-in-law. She made Jannaeus Alexander king although at that time, if she had wished it, she could have re-established the Commonwealth. She was thus largely responsible for bringing the country to civil war. 42

Here Zeitlin shifts responsibility for Judaea’s woes from the male protagonists (Alexander Jannaeus, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II) to the one female – Queen Alexandra. His ambiguous summation of her reign resembles that of Josephus in Ant. 13: 431-432:

In assessing the nine years of her reign one may say that it was successful. However from the long-range view it was tragic…Salome Alexandra was occupied only with the present…Instead of uniting the Judaean people, she sowed the seeds of dissension among them.43

Lurie points out that Josephus’ condemnation of the queen at the end of Antiquities 13 contradicts the description in War. By adding other incidents, based on Alexandra’s (mis)identification as the widow of Aristobulus I, Lurie deduces that the description in Antiquities is a better reflection of the queen’s image in her time.44 He concludes that the civil war between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II did not mark the beginning of the collapse of the Hasmonean state but rather the schemes of their mother, who murdered Antigonus and afterwards continued with her evildoing, instigated this downfall.45 Interestingly, Lurie is the only scholar to accuse Alexandra of defiling the priesthood by

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42 Ibid., pp. 334-335.
43 Ibid., pp. 341-342. Zeitlin bases his opinion on Ant. 13:431-432, which will be examined fully in Chapter 2.
44 Lurie, “From Jannaeus to Herod,” pp. 162-163
marrying the high priest Alexander Jannaeus when she was (supposedly) a widow, an act prohibited by Jewish law (see Lev 21:14).46

One reason for the contradictions or different interpretations among historians is the acceptance or rejection of sources as reliable, especially rabbinic sources which praise Queen Alexandra. Another factor is the internal contradictions within and between Josephus’ works. These issues will be further discussed later on in this dissertation.47

The major studies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reveal very differing evaluations of the relationship among Queen Alexandra, the Pharisees and the Sadducees,48 mostly based upon Josephus’ descriptions of these groups throughout his works.49 Wellhausen maintains that Queen Alexandra’s inability to serve as a High Priest allowed the Pharisees to control internal affairs, although in external affairs she “ruled without restriction.”50 Graetz credits Queen Alexandra for the reconciliation between the two opposing parties – the Pharisees and Sadducees.51 Schürer emphasizes that Queen Alexandra unhesitatingly sided with the Pharisees: her support was expressed by the restoration of the Pharisaic laws, which had been annulled during the reign of John Hyrcanus.52 Dubnov notes that the majority of the Jewish people opposed the Sadducean rule and therefore the empowerment of the Pharisees brought about internal peace.53 Klausner believes that Queen Alexandra had a concealed motive in giving the Pharisees authority in internal affairs – it allowed her unimpeded control over matters that she viewed as more important: foreign affairs (the military and diplomacy).54 In opposition to Graetz, Zeitlin claims that Alexandra encouraged the rift between the Pharisees and

46 Ibid., p. 163-164.
47 See Chapters 2 and 5.
50 Wellhausen, Pharisees and Sadducees, p. 85. In ibid., n. 21, Wellhausen notes that the statement that Alexandra ruled in name only (Ant. 13:409) represents Josephus’ “poetic license” and contradicts his source.
51 Graetz, History of the Jewish People, p. 48.
52 Schürer, History of the Jewish People, p. 230.
53 Dubnov, Vsemirnaya istoriia, p. 146.
Sadducees and thus divided the Jewish people. Yet Lurie believes that it was Shimeon ben Shetah who was responsible for this division since he led the persecution of the Sadducees by the Pharisees. Zirndorf offers a unique proposition – during Alexander Jannaeus’ reign (up until the incident during the Feast of Tabernacles), Alexandra was responsible for keeping “the king on good terms with the Pharisaic party” due to the fact that she was “an enthusiastic Pharisee.”

Based upon Josephus, rabbinic literature and Graetz, Henry Zirndorf’s biography paints a dramatic and enthusiastic picture of Queen Alexandra. Published in 1892, this is one of the first modern works to put Queen Alexandra, along with other women from the Apocrypha, Greco-Roman Period and Talmud, in the limelight. The rather melodramatic chapter on Alexandra is significant since it represents, as far as I know, the first attempt (since Müller) to write a complete biography of the queen using ancient and modern sources. Based on the fact that Alexandra’s “character was in all other respects above reproach,” and that she “had nothing to gain by her brother-in-law’s death,” Zirndorf exonerates Alexandra from participation in the murder of Antigonus. He asserts that Josephus’ “narrative could have been based only on unsafe traditions, colored by the bitter animosities of party strife.” In connection with the Jewish legal matter of the marriage of the widow Alexandra with the high priest Jannaeus, Zirndorf proposes that at that time “very little importance was attached to such legal subtleties.” Interestingly, Zirndorf does not consider the possibility of a misidentification between the two royal women (nor do other historians, until Ilan). Finally, Zirndorf offers a solution to Josephus’ contradictory evaluation of the queen. He concludes that Josephus’ “severe censure of the queen [at the end of Antiquities 13] rests solely on these excesses of the Pharisees.”

The development of women’s/gender studies in the twentieth and twenty-first

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56 Lurie, “From Jannaeus to Herod,” p. 168.
57 Zirndorf, *Jewish Women*, pp. 42, 44. Ilan claims that royal women in general, and Queen Alexandra in particular, were attracted to Pharisaism, see Ilan, *Integrating Women*, pp. 17, 21-23.
59 Ibid., p. 33.
60 Ibid., p. 34.
61 Ibid., p. 37.
62 Ibid., p. 54.
centuries has stimulated a growing interest regarding women in antiquity in general, and
Queen Alexandra in particular. From 1989 onwards, Queen Alexandra has been the main
topic of about ten scholarly articles, mostly dealing with specific issues related to her
actions and reign. She also features in numerous books dealing with the Hasmonean
period and women in antiquity (either several pages or an entire chapter), has served as
the inspiration for two M.A. theses and one Ph.D. dissertation, and plays a leading role in
Ilan’s latest book, *Silencing the Queen*, which examines women in rabbinic sources,
 focusing on Shelamzion.

Joseph Geiger, Michael Owen Wise, Hanan Eshel, and Kenneth Atkinson focus upon various historical issues linked to Queen Alexandra’s rule.

Geiger examines the influence of Hellenistic dynastic practices upon Alexander
Jannaeus’ bequest of the throne to a woman. In order to resolve the challenging issue of a
levirate marriage between a high priest (Alexander Jannaeus) and his brother’s widow
(Salina Alexandra), Geiger postulates that Aristobulus I had two wives and that Hyrcanus
II was the son of one of these wives, while the other childless wife (Alexandra) later
married Alexander Jannaeus and gave birth to Aristobulus II. This is problematic since,
as Geiger himself notes, such a theory contradicts Josephus’ explicit statement regarding
the fact that Alexander Jannaeus and Queen Alexandra were the parents of both Hyrcanus
Aristobulus I had two wives. Geiger puts forward this suggestion since, based upon
precedents of royal succession in Ptolemaic society, a desire to avoid amphimetric strife
(rivalry between lines descending from the king by different mothers) would explain why
Jannaeus bequeathed the kingdom to his wife and not to his son. Nonetheless, Geiger
concludes that this theory is “all speculation.” Geiger’s conclusion regarding “the
general generic conformity of the Hasmoneans with the other Hellenistic dynasties, also
in the issue of succession” is in line with one of the hypotheses of this dissertation –

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64 Wise, *Thunder in Gemini*, pp. 186-221.
67 Geiger, “Hasmoneans” p. 16.
68 Ibid., p. 4.
69 Ibid., p. 16.
70 Ibid.
that Hellenistic practices influenced the acceptance of Queen Alexandra as a sovereign queen.

The discoveries of quasi-historical works at Qumran as well as mishmarot texts have provided the trigger for new insights into Queen Alexandra’s reign. Michael Wise analyzes the information in the Calendrical Documents 4Q331-332 and comes to several significant conclusions. Wise identifies the Shelamzion mentioned in these documents with Queen Alexandra. Based on the fact that these Calendrical Documents also refer to the actions of other historical personages from the epoch of Queen Alexandra, such as Hyrcanus II and Aemilius, Wise concludes that the events they describe reflect the outlook of the Pharisees’ opponents, in particular, that of Aristobulus II. Tal Ilan examines this matter from another angle and surmises that the calendrical texts are hostile to Queen Alexandra in particular, and Hasmonean rulers in general.

Inasmuch as Pesher Nahum dates to the epoch of Alexander Jannaeus and Queen Alexandra, several scholars argue that it indicates the attitude of the sect towards these and other leaders. Ilan dates the pericope of Pesher Nahum 4Q169 (frags 3-4 II) to the reign of Queen Alexandra and argues that the negative female imagery of a “harlot” in this text alludes to the woman in power, Queen Shelamzion. Eshel cites the conclusions of Wise and Ilan, and concludes that the religious and political situation depicted in Pesher Nahum reflects the reign of Queen Alexandra, when the Pharisees had the most power.

Although Queen Alexandra’s name appears in the subtitle of his study, Atkinson focuses more upon the Qumran sect than upon the queen. Based upon references to Queen Alexandra and to women in general in the Qumran scrolls, as well as archaeological evidence, Atkinson attempts to prove that the Qumran sect included women. A subsequent article by Atkinson presents a feminist-oriented biographical survey of Queen Alexandra based upon Hellenistic and Hasmonean influences, and the

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72 Ibid., pp. 218-221.
74 Ibid., pp. 58-59.
75 Eshel, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 122.
research of Ilan; which is a precursor to a book that he plans to publish.\textsuperscript{77} One interesting observation therein is that Hyrcanus II resembled his mother while Aristobulus II took after his father.\textsuperscript{78} Atkinson’s latest article presents a melodramatic synopsis of previous research for a general audience.\textsuperscript{79} Atkinson’s comment on Ant. 13:409 sheds light on Queen Alexandra’s military strategy: “Unlike her husband, Salome Alexandra successfully used the mere threat of violence to prevent conflict and bring peace and stability to the region.”\textsuperscript{80}

Isaiah Gafni analyzes Queen Alexandra’s portrayal in rabbinic literature, attributing its positive appraisal of Alexandra to the political and social role of Shimeon ben Shetah, who was reputed to be her brother.\textsuperscript{81} He notes that only later Babylonian sources created a family connection between the two.\textsuperscript{82} Yet Gafni’s innovation is in his assertion that the sages relate positively to Queen Alexandra and other Hasmonean rulers since they created a political system that enabled the development and implementation of Halakhah.\textsuperscript{83} In his\textit{ Encyclopedia Judaica} article, Gafni suggests that the Pharisees prevented Alexandra from continuing the traditional Hasmonean wars abroad, although this hypothesis has no supportive evidence.\textsuperscript{84}

European scholars Ernst Baltrusch and Doris Lambers-Petry offer interesting and new perspectives upon Queen Alexandra’s role in internal affairs and foreign policy.

Baltrusch examines the struggle for primacy between religion and political leadership.\textsuperscript{85} He points out that, according to the constitution of Simon the Hasmonean, the ruler of the Jewish state should be a high priest and not a king.\textsuperscript{86} Inasmuch as this constitution did not consider the possibility of a woman ruler who could not serve as a

\textsuperscript{77} Atkinson, “None of the Weakness”; Ilan,\textit{ Integrating Women}, pp. 249-51, 344, 313; eadem, “Queen Salamzion Alexandra,” pp. 181-190; eadem, “Shelamzion in Qumran,” pp. 27-31. Atkinson is preparing a biography of Salome Alexandra entitled\textit{ Queen Salome: Jerusalem’s Forgotten Ruler and the Mysterious Women of the Dead Sea Scrolls}, however, based on the website description, this will not be a popular, and not a scholarly, work. (see \texttt{http://www.uni.edu/atkinson/cvdocuments/QueenSalome.htm}).

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., p. 7.

\textsuperscript{79} Atkinson, “Salome No One Knows,” pp. 60-65, 72.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., p. 64.

\textsuperscript{81} Gafni, “Hasmoneans in Rabbinic Literature”; idem, “Salome Alexandra.”

\textsuperscript{82} Idem, “Hasmoneans in Rabbinic Literature,” p. 274.

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., p. 275.

\textsuperscript{84} Gafni, “Salome Alexandra.” When I asked Professor Gafni what was the reason for writing such a hypothesis he replied that it was probably based on the hypothesis of the\textit{ Encyclopedia Judaica}’s divisional editor for the Second Temple period, Abraham Schalit.

\textsuperscript{85} Baltrusch, “Königin Salome Alexandra.”

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., pp. 167-168, 171.
high priest, Alexandra’s ascent to the throne created a dilemma. In contrast, Hellenistic societies in neighboring lands had no problem with a female monarch. According to Baltruch, the Sadducees’ conflict with Alexandra’s monarchy was due to their opposition to a political, as opposed to a religious, leader as well as their hostility to a woman fulfilling the functions of a man in religious matters.\(^{87}\) Baltrusch’s subsequent conclusion represents an interesting and innovative idea – that Josephus added the title “queen” to Alexandra’s name in *Antiquities* in order to underline the problematical issue of a woman ruler.\(^{88}\)

Lambers-Petry’s investigation of the contradictory descriptions of Alexandra in *Antiquities* and *War* leads her to the same conclusion as Josephus in *Antiquities*: Alexandra’s political choices were based upon religious inclination (*War*) and personal ambition (*Ant.*), while ignoring dynastic considerations.\(^{89}\) She attributes Josephus’ contradictory descriptions to two main factors: 1) different sources (Strabo and Nicolaus);\(^{90}\) 2) the differing attitudes of various Jewish circles (a negative attitude on the part of the Qumran sect and a positive attitude by the Pharisees).\(^{91}\) According to Lambers-Petry, two factors helped Alexandra consolidate her power: the Pharisees’ support and a strong army. This represents, as far as I know, the only article to offer an in-depth analysis of the military aspect of Alexandra’s rule.

Joseph Sievers, Steve Mason, James VanderKam and Eyal Regev consider the role of the Pharisees during Queen Alexandra’s rule.

Sievers’ survey provides some noteworthy conclusions: 1) Queen Alexandra’s “active role in matters of government” is demonstrated by the fact that both she and Alexander Jannaeus appointed Antipas as the governor of Idumea (*Ant.* 14:10);\(^{92}\) 2) Josephus’ negative descriptions of Queen Alexandra in *Antiquities* (13:417, 13:431-2) is “a vestige of a tradition of Aristobulus’s circle, traditionally identified with the Sadducees;”\(^{93}\) 3) and her rule was “influenced by Hellenistic customs.”\(^{94}\)

\(^{87}\) Ibid., pp. 176-178.

\(^{88}\) Ibid., p. 178. The issue of Alexandra’s title will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

\(^{89}\) Lambers-Petry, “Shelomzion ha-malka,” p. 76.

\(^{90}\) Ibid., pp. 66-67.

\(^{91}\) Ibid., pp. 67, 72.

\(^{92}\) Sievers, “Role of Women,” p. 136.

\(^{93}\) Ibid., p. 139.

\(^{94}\) Ibid., p. 140.
Following a linguistic analysis of several Greek terms used in War (1:107-114), Mason concludes that Josephus paints a negative portrait of the Pharisees in War 1 since “Josephus’s intention was to debunk the Pharisees’ reputation for embodying superior piety.” Moreover, Mason believes that “Josephus’s judgment is that the alliance between Alexandra and the Pharisees was singularly unfortunate” since Queen Alexandra was “genuinely pious” yet “they [the Pharisees] were wolves in sheep’s clothing” who only appeared to be pious.

In an article on Pesher Nahum, James VanderKam explores the Pharisees’ switch of allegiance from opposition to Alexander Jannaeus to support of Queen Alexandra. VanderKam’s inquires as to whether the eight hundred men who Alexander Jannaeus crucified (as detailed in War 1:88-98, 110-114 and Antiquities 13:372-383, 398-415) were Pharisees. Based on the deathbed scene between Alexander Jannaeus and Alexandra (Antiquities 13:401-402), VanderKam concludes that the identification of the eight hundred as Pharisees is correct. Moreover, he asserts that the Pharisees’ subsequent dominance in Alexandra’s regime indicates the historicity of Josephus’ account of Alexander Jannaeus’ deathbed advice to Alexandra.

Eyal Regev’s study of the role of the Pharisees and Sadducees during the reign of Queen Alexandra offers insight into the political power structure of the period. Regev asserts that Pesher Nahum (4Q169) supports Josephus’ description of the Pharisees’ control of internal affairs (War 1:11-112; Ant. 13: 408-409). Based upon rabbinic sources (such as Mishnah Avot 1:8-9 and others) describing the authority of Shimeon ben Shetah and Judah ben Tabbai in the realm of criminal law, Regev attempts to prove that the specific sphere of internal affairs controlled by the Pharisees was the legal realm (along with that of religion). Regev notes that this is also substantiated by Josephus’ statement that the Pharisees had the authority to free and imprison as they wish: “binding and freeing (at will)” (War 1:111). Lastly, Regev comes to the conclusion that Pesher Nahum

95 See Chapter 2 for an in-depth discussion of this article.
97 Ibid., p. 111.
98 VanderKam, “Pesher Nahum,” p. 305.
99 Ibid., pp. 310-311.
100 Regev, Sadducees, pp. 274-286 (Heb.).
101 Ibid., pp. 278-279.
confirms the supposition that the Sadducees (and not gentile officers) are indeed the “men of rank and influence” described in *Antiquities* (13:411) as well as the supporters of Aristobulus II.\textsuperscript{102}

Jonathan Goldstein, Lester Grabbe and Tal Ilan examine the influence of Josephus’s sources in the description of Queen Alexandra’s reign.\textsuperscript{103}

Goldstein attributes both the deathbed scene in *Antiquities* wherein Alexander Jannaeus bequeaths the throne to Alexandra as well as the summation of her rule at the end of *Antiquities* to previously existing sources, which represented opposing traditions.\textsuperscript{104} He also hypothesizes that the precedent of Alexandra reigning while she had adult sons represents an attempt to overcome the objections of certain sects to the monarchy since, as a woman, she could not “fulfill glorious prophesies about a king.” She could therefore “preserve the royal title without rousing opposition” while her son “would keep the high priesthood in the family.” Finally, he claims that the Sadducees “remained loyal to the dynasty [of Queen Alexandra],” although such a supposition contradicts Queen Alexandra’s support of the Pharisees and their support of her.\textsuperscript{105}

Grabbe offers two possible explanations for the inconsistency between Josephus’ portrayal of Queen Alexandra as a good ruler of the Hasmonean state in *War* and *Antiquities* and his later condemnation of her rule as despotic in the summation in *Antiquities*: 1) hostility to Queen Alexandra as a woman ruler; 2) the use of a different source for this section.\textsuperscript{106}

Ilan, the most prolific author on Queen Alexandra, has investigated numerous aspects of her portrayal in both Josephus and rabbinic literature. Her most noteworthy conclusions are as follows: 1) Josephus’ negative depiction of Alexandra is attributable to his source – Nicolaus of Damascus;\textsuperscript{107} 2) Alexandra and the widow of Judah Aristobulus

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{102} Ibid., pp. 280-283.
\item \textsuperscript{103} Menachem Stern’s very brief statement on the issue of Josephus’ sources is often quoted by scholars analyzing this matter. Stern asserts that Nicolaus is the chief source for Josephus’ narrative in *Antiquities* 13 and this explains the “rather cold picture of the three main figures of the Hasmonean monarchy, namely Arisotbulus I, Alexander Jannaeus and Salome-Alexandra.” See Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, p. 230.
\item \textsuperscript{104} Goldstein, “Hasmonean Revolt,” pp. 344.
\item \textsuperscript{105} Ibid., p. 345.
\item \textsuperscript{106} Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, pp. 304-305; 470-472.
\item \textsuperscript{107} Ilan, “Josephus and Nicolaus on Women.”
\end{itemize}
are not the same person;[108] 3) Queen Alexandra’s Hebrew/Aramaic name is Shelamzion[109] and her gender played a significant role in her decision to allocate power to the Pharisees;[110] and finally, 4) rabbinic literature underwent a process of reworking, editing and silencing thereby minimizing her contribution to Jewish history.[111] Ilan’s research has laid the groundwork for this dissertation.

Archeological and numismatic evidence connected to Queen Alexandra’s reign is rather sparse, which explains the paucity of studies on these issues. Both nineteenth and twentieth-century scholars attempted to uncover coins belonging to the reign of Queen Alexandra but present-day scholarship has disproved their suppositions. Ya’akov Meshorer explains the rationale of these earlier scholars:

The discovery of coins bearing her [Queen Alexandra’s] name among the Jewish coins would have been regarded as a natural and obvious development, and their absence seems strange. For this reasons, scholars such as Madden, Reichardt, and de Saulcy tried to attribute various coins to Alexandra on the basis of the interpretation of the inscriptions on them.[112]

Ehud Netzer dates the Twin Palaces uncovered in Jericho to the period of Queen Alexandra (sometime after 80 BCE). He theorizes that Queen Alexandra built two identical palaces in order to quiet the rivalry between her two sons.[113] This topic will be investigated in Chapter 3.

Samuel Rocca[114] and Ernst Knauf[115] explore the relationship between Queen Alexandra and apocryphal/biblical literature.

Rocca identifies the historical figure of Alexandra with the literary figure of Judith and claims that the plot of the Book of Judith concerns the war between Tigranes King of Armenia and Queen Alexandra. He also believes that the author of Judith was a Sadducee and that the book contains veiled criticism of the Pharisees. Rocca’s identification of Queen Alexandra with Judith is highly speculative. Rocca's conclusions are based on

[108] Ilan, “Queen Salamzioz Alexandra.”
[110] Ilan, Integrating Women, pp. 21-23.
[111] Eadem, Silencing the Queen, pp. 276-280.
[112] Meshorer, Jewish Coins, p. 42. See Chapter 3 for a full discussion of this matter.
Morton Enslin and Tal Ilan yet neither author identify the two women as one, they merely point out various similarities.\(^{116}\)

The most recent article on Queen Alexandra by Ernst Knauf (2009) in the realm of biblical studies focuses upon a connection between Queen Alexandra and Psalms. Knauf explores the possibility that “Psalm (Ps) 2 contains an acrostich (sic) referring to King Alexander Yannai and his wife, Queen Salome Alexandra/Shelamzion.”\(^{117}\) He reads this acrostic as “For Yannai on one side and his wife on the other, [by] a “lowly”/Pharisee” – לינאי ואשתו ענ ו.\(^{118}\) This is based upon correspondence between the content of the acrostic and the content of the verses related to Yannai and Salome Alexandra in Psalms 119-150, which Knauf interprets as referring to the political context of the first-century BCE. There is no historical confirmation for this unusual hypothesis.

Three academic studies written on the topic of Queen Alexandra in the last decade demonstrate the great interest this topic has recently aroused in the scholarly world (in particular, among women students): an M.A. thesis by Ellen Case as well as another by Penina Stern, and a Ph.D. dissertation by Dilys Patterson.

Case examines several issues: Queen Alexandra’s relationship with the Pharisees, her foreign policy, Josephus’s portrayal, archaeological findings, and the status of women.\(^{119}\) This thesis is notable as an early attempt to offer a feminist perspective on Queen Alexandra's reign. Unfortunately, unwarranted speculation regarding the connection between certain archeological findings (Hasmonean desert fortresses and ritual baths) and Queen Alexandra constitute a significant shortcoming.

Stern’s thesis discusses several interesting topics: Queen Alexandra’s Hebrew name, internal affairs, the archaeological aspect (architectural remains and coins), the issue of the Pharisees, rabbinic literature, and a comparison with other Jewish and Ptolemaic women rulers.\(^{120}\) Stern’s conclusion is worthy of note – that one must differentiate

\(^{116}\) Enslin states that Judith is “a reflection of Alexandra…the author casts his heroine …out of compliment to this doughty queen,” see Enslin, *Book of Judith*, p. 180-181. Likewise Ilan does not identify the two women as one. Rather she proposes that “the story of Judith is propaganda for women’s leadership,” see Ilan, *Integrating Women*, p. 50; see also pp. 135, 153.


\(^{118}\) Ibid., pp. 10-11.

\(^{119}\) Case, “Salome Alexandra.”

\(^{120}\) Stern, “Queen Shelomzion.”
between the historical Queen Alexandra as portrayed by Josephus and her legendary image in rabbinic literature.

Patterson’s dissertation discusses Queen Alexandra’s connection to the Book of Judith, focusing on the literary aspect. In the wake of Ilan and others, she claims that Judith was composed as political propaganda for Queen Alexandra’s rule. In order to substantiate this theory, Patterson examines Hellenistic literature, the ideal Hellenistic king, the reign of Ptolemaic queens, and Josephus’ descriptions. Patterson’s work undoubtedly contributes to the study of Queen Alexandra. Still, due to the focus on Judith, many important issues connected to Queen Alexandra were not covered. Her theory that Judith was written in order to legitimize Queen Alexandra’s reign will be examined in Chapter 4.

Classical scholars “rediscovered” Josephus as the main primary source on Queen Alexandra; they described her reign and character in exceptionally favorable terms due to the influence of rabbinic literature. This conclusion is surprising inasmuch as 19th century was a “century in which male dominion and the separation of spheres…became entrenched in the ideology of all classes” and “an era desiring to see the end of female power.”

Nonetheless, despite their approving outlook, these classical studies have tended to present only brief surveys on the queen and her life. The advent of feminist studies has ignited an ever-increasing scholarly interest in this topic, indicating the need for an in-depth comprehensive historical analysis of Queen Alexandra. Still, to date, no one has

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121 Patterson, “Honoured in her Time.”
123 For example: an in-depth analysis of Josephus’ sources and external influences on his writings; a critical examination of Queen Alexandra’s relationship with the Pharisees; an investigation into the factors affecting her acceptance by Hasmonean society; etc.
124 Thompson, Queen Victoria, p. xviii.
125 Homans, “Victoria's Sovereign Obedience”, p. 169. There were several regnant queens in the 19th century – Queen Isabella of Spain, Queen Maria II of Portugal, and Queen Victoria of England –who represented anomalies similar to that of Queen Alexandra. Yet these queens did not truly govern their kingdoms nor did they possess significant legislative power since they ruled over constitutional monarchies. For more on these queens, see Homans, Royal Representations; Opfell, Queens, Empresses, pp. 177-184; Monter, Rise of Female Kings; Petrie, Spanish Royal House, pp. 163-189. Petrie’s declaration that “…most of the country’s most recent troubles have their origin in the succession of Isabella II in place of her uncle” (ibid, p. 164) brings to mind Josephus’ condemnation of Queen Alexandra inheriting the throne instead of her sons (see Chapter 2).
followed the development of Queen Alexandra’s image from its inception in ancient sources up until the early modern period. This dissertation endeavors to supply just that.
Chapter 2:
Translation and Discussion of Josephus’ Accounts
of Alexandra in War and Antiquities

Josephus’ accounts of Queen Alexandra in Judaean War and Jewish Antiquities are the main primary source of information on her life. Yet it is difficult to obtain a clear picture of the only female Hasmonean monarch inasmuch as these accounts contain numerous variations and inconsistencies. War emphasizes the queen’s piety while Antiquities highlights her strategic moves and adds new elements to the narrative, in particular a deathbed scene at the beginning and a summation of her reign at the end. Scholars view War as presenting a more positive appraisal of Queen Alexandra and Antiquities a more negative one. Various explanations have been proposed for these divergent descriptions, in particular, the influence of Josephus’ sources.

Based upon a new original translation alongside a philological and source-critical analysis, I propose the following hypotheses: 1) War does not provide a totally favorable portrait of Alexandra; 2) Antiquities, for the most part, does not express disapproval of the queen; 3) but although the most negative statements about Queen Alexandra in Antiquities originated in Josephus’ source, their very inclusion in the narrative is an expression of Josephus’ own opinion. It shall be demonstrated that, contrary to the claim of many scholars, Queen Alexandra’s image in Antiquities is not, for the most part, significantly more negative than in War. Furthermore, it shall be shown that Josephus’ criticism of Queen Alexandra is similar to his criticism of other Hasmonean rulers.

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1. Two other primary sources, Qumran documents and rabbinic literature, will be examined in Chapters 3 and 5.
2. See discussion below and Grabbe, Judaism, pp. 304-311, 466-485; Ilan, “Josephus and Nicolaus,” pp. 221-262; Schwartz, “Josephus on Hyrcanus II,” pp. 219-220; and Mason, “Pharisees and Alexandra,” pp. 113-114. For a survey of the classic conception of Josephus, see Bilde, Flavius Josephus, pp. 126-141. Some of the more influential classic source critics include Gustav Hölscher, who views Josephus as a mere compiler or copier of sources (Hölscher, “Josephus.”); Richard Laqueur, who believes Josephus is a creative historian whose political tendencies influenced him to alter past events (Laqueur, Jüdische Historiker, p. 215); and Henry St. J. Thackeray, who believes that in War Josephus expressed his sincere convictions which were shared by other leaders of his race.” (Thackeray, Josephus: the Man, p. 47). Thackeray also notes that, in Antiquities, Josephus wished to present “the complete history of his nation in the manner of contemporary pagan historians for the benefit of the world at large” (ibid., p. 58).
Finally, in order to better understand Josephus’ intentions when he uses certain words and phrases, the below translations of *War* and *Antiquities*: 1) are less idiomatic and more literal; 2) based on a comparison of Josephus’ usage in other places of the same work as well as in his other works; 3) include an ongoing dialogue with other translations of Josephus’ works into English and Hebrew.

### I. War

**Table 1: New Translation of The Judaean War I: 107-119**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>para.</th>
<th>Niese edition</th>
<th>my translation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>Καταλείπει δὲ τὴν βασιλείαν Ἄλεξάνδρα τῇ γυναικὶ πεπεσεμένις ταύτῃ μάλιστα ἂν ὑπακούσαι τοὺς Ἰουδαίους, ἐπειδὴ τῆς ὑμότητος αὐτοῦ μακρὰν ἀποδέουσα καὶ ταῖς παρασκομιόμεναι ἀνθισταμένη τὸν δῆμον εἰς εὐνοίαν προσηγάγετο.</td>
<td>And he [Alexander] left the kingdom to his wife Alexandra, convinced the Judeans would most of all hearken to her, since her utmost lack of savagery and her opposition to transgressions of the law brought the people to bear goodwill towards her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>καὶ οὐ διήματε τῆς ἐπίδοσις· ἐκράτησεν γὰρ τῆς ἀρχῆς τὸ γύναιον διά δόξαν εὐσεβείας. ἡρῴδου γὰρ δὴ μάλιστα τοῦ νόμου (ἐθνος) τὰ πάτρια καὶ τοὺς πλημμελοῦντας εἰς τοὺς ἱεροὺς νόμους ἐξ ἀρχῆς προεβάλετο.</td>
<td>And he was not wrong in these expectations, for this woman took over the kingdom on account of her reputation for piety. For she was indeed very strict about her people’s ancestral laws (customs), and the offenders of the divine laws she used to throw out of office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>δύο δὲ αὐτῇ παιδῶν ὄντων ἐξ Ἄλεξάνδρου τὸν μὲν πρεσβύτερον Ἰρκανὸν διὰ τὴν ἡμικύριαν ἀποδείκνυσαν ἁρχερέα καὶ ἄλλος ὡντα νικήτερον ἢ ὡστε ἐνοχλεῖν περὶ τῶν ὅλων, τὸν δὲ νεώτερον Ἀριστοβούλου διὰ θερμότητα κατείχειν ἰδιώτην.</td>
<td>And of the two sons that she had from Alexander, the elder, Hyrcanus she appointed high priest because of both his suitable age and moreover because of his being too lazy to be troubled about all things (connected to the state), while the younger, Aristobulus, due to his passion, she kept under [her] control as a private person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>Παραφύσαται δὲ αὐτῆς εἰς τὴν ἔξωσαν Φαρισαίοι, σύνταγμα τὶ Ἰουδαίων δοκοῦν εὐσεβέστερον εἶναι τῶν ἄλλων καὶ τοὺς νόμους ἀκριβέστερον ἀφηγείοθα.</td>
<td>But the Pharisees grew beside her into authority – they were a certain band of Judeans who have the reputation of being more pious than the others and of accurately proclaiming the laws.</td>
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<td>111</td>
<td>And to them Alexandra excessively hearkened, being zealous in matters concerning the Deity. And they gradually undermined this person’s simplicity, and bit by bit they made their way up and became the administrators of all things (connected to the state) — banishing and recalling whomever they wanted, binding and freeing (at will). In general, they had the benefits of the kingship while Alexandra had the expenses and the difficulties.</td>
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<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>She was skillful in administering great things, and by continually gathering (soldiers) she doubled the army, and she also collected a large (number) of foreign (mercenaries), so that not only did she strengthen her own nation but she also caused foreign rulers to fear (her). But while she herself ruled over the others, the Pharisees ruled over her.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>Thus they themselves slew a certain Diogenes, a notable person, a friend of Alexander, having charged him with being an advisor concerning the eight hundred (men) who had been crucified by the king. They urged Alexandra to destroy the others too who had incited Alexander against them; and influenced by superstition she yielded, and they killed whomever they wished.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td>Those considered prominent among those endangered fled to Aristobulus for refuge, and he persuaded his mother to spare them because of their rank; if she did not assume them innocent, she should send them out of the city. So then, granted amnesty, they dispersed into the countryside.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>115</td>
<td>Alexandra sent forth an army to Damascus under the pretext that Ptolemy was continually oppressing the city, but received it (the army) back without it having accomplished anything noteworthy.</td>
<td>Alexandra de; ejkpevmyasa ejpi; Damasko;n stratiavn, provfasi&quot; d' hyn Ptolemai'o&quot; ajei; qlivbwn th;n povlin, tauvthn me;n upedevxato mhve;n aejilojogon ergasamevnh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>And by treaties and gifts she deceitfully led on Tigranes king of Armenia, who was encamped before Ptolemais and was besieging Cleopatra. But the latter hastened to retreat because of domestic troubles, as Lucullus had invaded Armenia.</td>
<td>Tigravnhn de; to;n 'Armenivwn basileva proskaqezovmenon Ptolemai?di kai; poliorkou'nta Kleopatran sufi'khsas kai; dwrois upyaghto. dbanei d' ekxeinos apaanastas dia tás oikoi paracbas ejmebhlhktos eis tìn 'Apmenivan Leukóllon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td>When in the meantime Alexandra became ill, her younger son Aristobulus seized the opportunity, and together with the members of his household, who were many, and all of whom were well-disposed towards him because of his passion, took control of all the fortresses. And with the money from them he gathered mercenaries and proclaimed himself king.</td>
<td>Kair' tooj' osovshis 'Alexavndras d' nejteros tov;n pai'dow 'Aristoboulou tov;n kai'wv arijpasas metá tòw okei'tow, eijen de pollou; kai; pai'ntas eínous dià tìn thermôtera, kratei' mév tòwv épumátowv ápátwv, tois d' ek toojtwv xri'masaiw misofojrowj aériojsas eautwv apodeiknusai basilea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td>The mother, feeling pity for the laments of Hyrcanus about this, imprisoned the wife and children of Aristobulus in the Antonia, which was located adjoining the northern side of the Temple. Long ago, as I have said, it was named Baris, but afterwards it was given this name during Antony’s rule, just as the cities of Sebaste and Agrippias were given their names from Sebastos and Agrippa.</td>
<td>pro's taúta ódyropmenon tov;n 'Yrkanow' h; mhjthr oikei'rasa tìn te 'gynaíka kai; tov;n pai'das 'Aristoboulou kafei'rynvas eis tìn 'Aitwian' frou'pion d' hyn twi borei;w klímate tov; ierou proskei'menon, pálai mév, wós efhn, bárjhs ònomazómenou, aíphs de tauths tuchw tís prostrhgorías épikratíasai'tos 'Aitwianw, kafáper apó te tov; Synastovu kai; 'Agripptas Sébaste kai; 'Agripptías páleis épwnomásthna.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>But before Alexandra [could] proceed against Aristobulus for deposing his brother, she died, having administered the realm for nine years.</td>
<td>pro;n de; ejpejlethei 'Alexavndra tòv; 'Aristoboulou tís tadojlov katalósews telu'tà diokíma sa tìn arxhín éteusin éinea.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the beginning of the narrative on Queen Alexandra in *War*, Josephus praises the queen by emphasizing her piety. This is implied in “her opposition to transgressions of the (Jewish) law” (ταῖς παρανομίαις - 1:107). Further approval of Queen Alexandra is shown by the strong form of the verb πείθω: “convinced (πεπείθη) the Judaean” (1:107). Alexander’s certainty that the nation would obey Queen Alexandra indicates he believed she would be a successful ruler.

Next, we are told that “this woman (τὸ γυναικώ) took over the kingdom” (1:108). The meaning of the term τὸ γυναικώ has aroused scholarly debate. Louis Feldman claims that τὸ γυναικώ is “frequently employed by Josephus in a contemptuous sense.” But Feldman only provides one example of such usage – *Ant.* 19:129:

where γυναῖκα [“silly women”] are coupled with “children and all the slaves and some of the army in their refusal to believe…that any human being would have the courage to kill Gaius.”

Yet in *War*, the majority of times τὸ γυναικώ is used to describe women who were attacked, killed or sold in slavery by the Romans – that is, to describe a woman who was a victim (*War* 2:465, 3:201, 3:262, 4:115, 4:260, 4:403, 6:203, 6:283, 7:208). In *Antiquities*, τὸ γυναικώ is a term employed for a wife or woman (*Ant.* 3:6; 4:148, 7:182; 14:369). As with *War*, it is also used to describe women as victims, i.e., the story of the concubine at Gibeah (Judges 19-20 – *Ant.* 5:136), who can surely be viewed as a victim as well as the women fleeing the Parthians (*Ant.* 14:354).

According to Liddell, τὸ γυναικώ has two meanings – a term of endearment for a wife (“little woman”) or a term of contempt (weak woman). Rengstorf defines τὸ γυναικώ as a “defenseless, weak, pitiable, poor woman; (simple) woman, woman of

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4 In this context, I prefer the more literal translation of ταῖς παρανομίαις – not “crimes” (Thackeray, *War*, p. 53) or פשעיו (Ullmann, *Jewish War*, p. 107 [Heb.]) but rather מעשיו שעשה נגד התורה (Hagai, *War*, p. 32) – transgressions of the (Jewish) law.

5 Feldman, “Josephus’ Deborah,” p. 116, n. 4. In this article on Josephus and women in ancient literature in general, and the prophetess Deborah in particular, Feldman devotes several pages (116, 118-120) to a discussion of Queen Alexandra.

6 Ibid.

7 Liddell, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. γυναῖκα, pp. 170-171.
low status, little woman.” As seen above, Josephus most frequently means a female victim. Still this definition does not seem logical here since it does not fit Queen Alexandra’s personality or station. Rengstorf’s last definition is “(young, marriageable, married) woman wife.” In other translations of War, both William Whiston (English) and Lisa Ullmann (Hebrew) translate this word as simply the neutral “woman,” without any positive or negative connotation. Thackeray, on the other hand, translates it as “frail woman.” When Thackeray’s translation of War was published in 1927, the view of women was as the inherently weak sex, and this may have influenced his translation. Although Thackeray also defines this word as a “frail or poor woman” in his Lexicon, the first definition is young wife (tenderly). Such usage is evident in Ant. 1:220 (referring to Hagar finding a wife for Ishmael – ἄνδρωθεντι δὲ τῷ παιδὶ γυναικόν ἀγεταί), Ant. 1:257 (referring to Rebecca’s conceiving – ἐκεῖθε τὸ γυναικόν); Ant. 4:148 (referring to Zimri’s foreign wife γυναικόν τε ἕξεινκόν), etc. Moreover, the one passage in Antiquities where τὸ γυναικόν is used in connection with a personality who is somewhat parallel to Alexandra, Queen Jezebel, is extremely disapproving: “Now this woman, who was a creature both forceful and bold, went to such lengths of licentiousness and madness…” (ἡ δὲ τὸ γυναικόν δραστήριόν τε καὶ τολμήν, εἰς τοσαύτην δ᾽ ἀσέλγειαν καὶ μανίαν προὔπεσεν..., Ant. 8:318).

Based on her actions in the previous and forthcoming passages, there is no reason to suppose that Josephus would term Alexandra “frail,” “weak” or a victim. Finally, the use of τὸ γυναικόν as a term of contempt would contradict the previous description in War 1:107, which highly praises Queen Alexandra. Therefore, in my opinion, the neutral “woman” would be the most appropriate translation for τὸ γυναικόν.

The description of Queen Alexandra as having a “reputation for piety” and being “very strict about her people’s ancestral laws” (ἡκρίβων γάρ δὴ μάλιστα τοῦ νόμοῦ

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8 Rengstorf, Concordance, I, p. 399.
9 Ibid.
11 Thackeray, War, p. 53.
12 Idem, Lexicon, p. 119.
ta; patria) in 1:108 continues the motif of her religious zeal as expressed by her opposition to transgressions of the law (kai ta;es paranoimias avthistamene) in 1:107.

Dilys Patterson suggests an unusual interpretation for the verb akribow in War 1:107. She translates akribow as “to study” and therefore claims that this passage means that Alexandra was “a scholar of the Law.” Yet Liddell defines akribow as “to make exact or accurate” (def. 1) or “to investigate accurately, to understand thoroughly.” Likewise Rengstorf defines akribow as “to be meticulous about – to be accurate,” and only the middle form is defined as “to set forth in detail, to examine, make sure of.” Patterson states that Josephus uses this word and its cognates six times in War. According to Rengstorf, the verb akribow is employed six times in all of Josephus’ works and its cognates akribos and akribes are found dozens of times in Josephus’ writings (and over twenty times in War). Albert Baumgarten points out that Josephus uses the word akibyew “to refer to the excellence and/or accuracy of different things.” Finally, this word and its cognates are consistently used throughout Josephus’ works to describe the Pharisees.

Inasmuch as Patterson’s claim is based upon the verbal form, we will discuss the other five passages that include this form:

1) War 1:648: diw; h;san sophistai kata; th;n povlin mavlista dokou'nte akribou'n ta; patria — “There were two sages in the capital reputed to be especially meticulous about [the laws] of the country.” In the continuation (War 1:649-651), Josephus states that these men gave lectures and advocated destroying the gold eagle erected by Herod in the Temple. This passage is apparently the basis for Patterson’s conjecture, especially because Thackeray notes that the Greek term “sophist” is “employed by Josephus as the equivalent of the Jewish “Rabbi.” Yet, in this passage, akribow does not refer to the scholarship of these men but to their strict observance of Jewish law, which led them to demand the removal of the eagle. Moreover, as Baumgarten notes, these individuals “may have been Pharisees” and therefore the use of

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14 Liddell, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. akribow. p. 30.
15 Rengstorf, Concordance, I, p. 56.
16 Ibid., pp. 55-56.
17 Baumgarten, “Name of the Pharisees,” p. 413.
18 Ibid.
19 Thackeray, War, pp. 306-307, n. b.
άκριβον would merely follow the aforementioned tendency to associate Pharisees with 
άκριβεια.  

2) *Ant.* 17:28: καὶ τάδε μὲν ἡ καιρὸς ἀκριβώσομαι προϊόντος τοῦ λόγου: “And 
these matters, I shall set forth in detail in the course of my composition at the opportune 
moment.”  

21 Here the middle verb does not refer to study but rather to setting forth in 
detail.

3) *Ant.* 18:189: ἐπανεἶχεν ἀκριβωσόμενος τὰ ἐιρημένα -- “the exact intent of the 
order.” In this case, the middle form refers to exactitude.

4) *Ant.* 19:217: καὶ τοῦ μὲν ἀκριβωσόμενου τὴν ὄψιν ἀμαθῆς ὡν διὰ τὸν σκότον 
— “and while they could not exactly distinguish his face because of the darkness.” Once 
again, the reference is to exactness.

5) Life 365: συγγραφαύται ἡκριβωκέναι Αγρίππα tells Josephus that the latter 
“wrote with exactitude.”

To conclude this matter, Patterson’s twenty-first century perspective apparently 
influenced her to interpret ἀκριβóω as indicating the study the Torah. Based on other 
usages of this verb and its cognates, it clearly refers to strictness/exactitude in religious 
observance.

Let us now examine another word in the clause that we have discussed - νόμος. 
Liddell defines νόμος as “anything assigned a usage, custom, law, ordinance.”  
Rengstorf identifies νόμος as an “(obligatory) custom – law, regulation” and among the 
types of νόμος he cites “Jewish (religious) law, (binding) cultic prescription(s).”  
It is interesting to note that there are two variant readings in *War* 1:108 – one reads that 
Alexandra strictly observed her people’s ancestral customs – τοῦ ἔθνους τὰ πάτρια, and 
the other that she kept the laws – τοῦ νόμου τὰ πατρία (1:108).  

Niese’s edition adopted νόμου based on three manuscripts (PAM), hence, τοῦ νόμου τα πατρία would 
mean “her people’s ancestral laws.” Thackeray, on the other hand, reads ἔθνους (which 
he translates as “national traditions”) and not νόμου.  

I believe the reading of νόμου is

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21 My translation.
23 Rengstorf, *Concordance*, p. 151.
24 For an explanation of νόμου, see Mason, “Pharisees and Alexandra,” pp. 97-100.
more correct since it parallels the second part of the sentence – those who, unlike Alexandra, did not observe *the laws* were thrown out of office. The combination of νόμος and πάτριος is used to describe two other events in *War* with a common motif: 1) *War* 1:649-653 - in connection with a dispute with Herod concerning the placement of statues of eagles in the Temple in defiance of the ancestral laws; 2) *War* 2:192, 3:356 – again concerning a clash with a ruler due to the erection of statues in the Temple (of Gaius). In both these cases νόμος and πάτριος emphasize a contrast – the difference between pagan and Jewish customs. Likewise, the use of νόμος and πάτριος in *War* 1:108 could indicate the contrast between King Alexander Jannaeus, who transgressed Jewish laws, and Queen Alexandra, who strictly kept them.

Josephus parallels Queen Alexandra’s reputation for piety - εὐσέβεια (*War* 1:108) with the Pharisees’ reputation for being pious (1:110). Steve Mason’s comparison of the Pharisees and Queen Alexandra is germane to this matter. Mason points to Josephus’ use of δοξέω or δόξα to show that, according to Josephus, Queen Alexandra “came to power easily because of a (well-founded) reputation for piety” while “[i]t was the Pharisees’ reputation for piety that won them the support of Queen Alexandra.”

The narrative now turns its focus to Queen Alexandra’s sons – Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II – and Alexandra’s relationship with them as the regent queen. She appoints the phlegmatic son, Hyrcanus, as the high priest while the more competitive son, Aristobulus, who presents a serious threat to the throne, is kept under [her] control and given no authority (1:109). Josephus’ choice of words highlights these maneuvers:

...τὸν μὲν πρεσβύτερον Ἰγρακανὸν διὰ τὸ τὴν ἡλικίαν ἀποδείκνυσιν ἀρχιερέα καὶ ἄλλως ὅντα νομότερον ἢ ὦστε ἐνοχλεῖν περὶ τῶν ὄλων, τὸν δὲ νεώτερον Ἀριστοβουλοῦ διὰ θερμότητα κατεῖχεν ἰδιώτην.

…the elder, Hyrcanus she appointed high priest because of both his suitable age and moreover because of his being too lazy/stupid to be troubled about all things (connected to the state), while the younger, Aristobulus, due to his passion, she kept under [her] control as a private person.

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26 For a comprehensive discussion of this matter, see Mason, “Pharisees and Alexandra,” pp. 85-89. Mason notes that “[t]he substance of Alexandra’s εὐσέβεια was her scrupulous adherence to the laws” (p. 89).

27 Ibid., pp. 109-110.
The term ἱλικίαν (1:109), which is defined as “to be of fit age for doing,”

28 demonstrates that Hyrcanus, as the first-born, was the correct son to appoint as high priest (and he would have been the king if not for Alexander Jannaeus’ bequest). Hyrcanus’ personality indicates that he posed no danger to Alexandra since he was νοθέστερον (1:109) – either sluggish or stupid.29 Aristobulus, on the other hand, was not entitled to be the king or high priest. He was viewed as a threat to Alexandra’s reign (and his actions later on proved this) and the word θερμότητα, a metaphor for heat or passion, which is rarely used by Josephus, immediately calls attention to the threat of this “hothead.”30 Up until this paragraph, Queen Alexandra is portrayed as a good, gentle, and pious ruler. Yet now she is also described as an astute ruler who knows which strategic moves are required in order to keep the royal authority in her hands, which benefited the country. For, in antiquity, challenges to royal power would often lead to chaos. That is exactly what happened later on — when the struggle for the throne between Queen Alexandra’s sons led to the collapse of the Hasmonean state.31

We have seen how War 1:108-109 describes Alexandra’s acts to ensure her reign: she solidified her rule as the sole monarch and eliminated any threat from her sons. Now in 1:110 the Pharisees appear and, unlike her sons (δὲ stresses this contrast), they do achieve a measure of authority:

Παραφύουσι δὲ αὐτῆς εἰς τὴν ἐξουσίαν Φαρισαίων, σύνταγμα τι Ἰουδαίων δοκοῦν εὐσέβεστερον εἶναι τῶν ἄλλων καὶ τοὺς νόμους ἀκριβεστέρον ἀφηγεῖσθαι.

But the Pharisees grew beside her into authority – they were a certain band of Judaeans who have the reputation of being more pious than the others, and they accurately proclaim the (ancient ancestral) laws.

This is the first time that the Pharisees are mentioned in War, and here Josephus reveals his attitude towards and definition of this group, which is quite negative (in this work).32

28 Liddell, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. ἱλικία, def. 2, p. 350.
29 Ibid., s.v. νοθήσεως, def. 1 and 2.
30 θερμότητα only occurs two other times in Josephus – in War 1:117 (where it also describes Aristobulus’ temperament) and in Ant. 2:316 (which details how the unleavened bread was heated).
31 Ant. 14:77.
32 The Pharisees are mentioned six other times in War (1:112, 1:571, 2:119, 2:162, 2:166, 2:411) as well as thirty-five times in Antiquities and Life.
The word σώνταγμα (band), which Steve Mason remarks is usually used in a pejorative sense by Josephus, augments this disapproving tone.\(^{33}\) Josephus’ extremely critical attitude towards the Pharisees continues throughout the narrative on Queen Alexandra.\(^{34}\)

The verb δοκε\(\varepsilon\)ω also suggests Josephus’ unfavorable approach towards the Pharisees. Mason notes that the whole definition of the Pharisees in War 1:110 hinges on this verb.\(^{35}\) He interprets δοκο\(\varepsilon\)ν in 1:110 as “having the reputation of being,” for “it was the Pharisees’ reputation for piety that won them the support of Alexandra Salome.”\(^{36}\) Nevertheless, according to Mason, Josephus believes the Pharisees only appeared to be pious while Alexandra was genuinely pious. The Pharisees subsequent actions – “killing whomever they wished on false charges” – demonstrated that they were, actually, “wolves in sheep’s clothing.”\(^{37}\)

Despite its negative overtones, many scholars, starting with Morton Smith, have used the above passage to bolster their hypothesis of the Pharisees being a mass movement with popular support.\(^{38}\)

Martin Goodman asserts that the Pharisees’ “endorsement of ancestral tradition gave them great popularity.”\(^{39}\) This support was due to their “extraordinary accuracy in

\(^{33}\) Mason, “Pharisees and Alexandra,” pp. 84-85. A more neutral translation of σώνταγμα is used by both Thackeray – “body” (Thackeray, War, p. 53) and Ullmann - “group” (Ullmann, War, p. 107).

\(^{34}\) Although in Life 12 Josephus relates that he tried various ways of life and chose that of the Pharisees (“Being now in my nineteenth year I began to govern my life by the rules of the Pharisees, a sect having points of resemblance to that which the Greeks call the Stoic school,” [Thackeray, trans. LCL]), nevertheless, when Josephus describes the Pharisees in connection with Queen Alexandra it is definitely disapproving. Following Morton Smith (“Palestinian Judaism”), several scholars have examined the discussed the differing depictions of the Pharisees in Josephus’ works. Shaye Cohen points out that the Pharisees are portrayed unfavorably in War: “On the whole, the Pharisees are treated better in AJ than BJ. In particular AJ emphasizes their power and influence.” (Cohen, Josephus in Galilee and Rome, p. 148). Tessa Rajak also agrees that in War the Pharisees “are treated on occasion with a distinct lack of sympathy.” (Rajak, Josephus: The Historian and his Society, p. 33). Lee Levine asserts that Josephus wished to portray the Pharisees in a positive light both due to his Roman readers and his own identification with them (Levine “The Political Struggle”). Yet Steve Mason asserts that Josephus did not want to portray the Pharisees in a positive light (Mason, “Pharisees and Alexandra”). Daniel Schwartz believes that the negative descriptions of the Pharisees in Antiquities, which are contrary to Josephus’ inclinations, are due to his source (Nicolaus) and a lack of attention (Schwartz, “Josephus and Nicolaus”). See below analysis of Antiquities 13 for a further discussion of this matter.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., p. 106.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 110.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., p. 111.

\(^{37}\) Morton Smith, “Palestinian Judaism”; see also above, n. 34, and below discussion of Ant. 13:405.

interpretation of the Torah” which was in vogue during this period. Yet the above critical descriptions do not support such a premise.

Martin Hengel and Roland Deines claim this passage demonstrates that the Pharisees had great authority:

…the Pharisees’ claim to be the carriers and continuers of this tradition worked in combination with their ἀκριβεία in scriptural interpretation and their strict manner of life to strengthen their authority in the eyes of the people.⁴¹

Daniel Schwartz proposes that Josephus' source is responsible for descriptions of the Pharisees’ political role, as in the abovementioned passage, and that Josephus tried to minimize this aspect:

BJ reflects Josephus’ attempt to portray the Pharisees, incorrectly, but safely, as uninvolved in politics and certainly as uninvolved in rebellion; that AJ and Vita have basically the same policy; but that in these later books, written when the question of Jewish rebellion against Rome was much more remote that it was when Josephus wrote BJ in the seventies, Josephus was less cautious and therefore much source material, which indicated Pharisaic involvement in politics and even in rebellion, found its way into these books.⁴²

According to Schwartz, Josephus wanted to distance the Pharisees from any political involvement in both War and Antiquities. He was more careful in War but, despite this caution “one passage indicating Pharisaic involvement ‘got through’ (BJ 1.111-114).”⁴³

Nevertheless, Josephus’ motives for writing this passage do not change the impression that it conveys to the reader – that the Pharisees are a devious group.

Continuing the theme of the previous passage, Josephus contrasts the Pharisees and Alexandra in War 1:111:

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 19.
⁴³ Ibid., p. 170.
basileivn ekêivn ἃsan, tā δ’ ἀναλώματα καὶ αἱ δυσχέρειαι τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρας.
And to them Alexandra excessively hearkened, being zealous in matters concerning the Deity. And they gradually undermined this person’s simplicity, and bit by bit they made their way up and became the administrators of all things (connected to the state) — banishing and recalling whomever they wanted, binding and freeing (at will). In general, they had the benefits of the kingship while Alexandra had the expenses and the difficulties.

The term περισσόν, which has a rather negative connotation of overdoing something, shows that Alexandra listened to the Pharisees more than was necessary. The phrase τῆν ἀπλότητα τῆς ἀνθρώπου ("they gradually took control of this person’s naïveté") contain a disapproving overtone and portrays Alexandra in a rather negative light due to her obedience to the Pharisees. Interestingly, ἀπλότητα, (simplicity, frankness) is used only four other times by Josephus: Ant. 7:332 (referring to Aravna’s generosity in giving King David a threshing floor), War 5:529 (referring to Mattithias son of Boethus’ naïveté), War 5:319 (referring to Titus’ naïveté in believing one of the rebels), and in War 2:151 (referring to the Essenes’ simple way of life). Yet only here does it refer to a woman’s character. Thus we can deduce that Queen Alexandra’s naïveté does not denote a weakness due to her gender. Rather, just as others were rather gullible so too was Alexandra. The second word in this phrase, ἀνθρώπος, denotes, according to Liddell, “man generally” hence, it could be translated as “a person.” Yet with another substantive it acquires “a contemptuous sense.” Indeed, when this word is used to refer to a woman it is sometimes used “with a sense of pity.” Rengstorf defines ἀνθρώπος, when used of a woman, as “in a negative sense or expressing pity.” It is used in a similar sense in War 1:571 when describing to the wife of Pheroras who is charged with various misdeeds, which Thackeray translates as “wretched woman.” In War 1:578, ἀνθρώπος is used to refer to the wife of Pheroras, once again in the negative sense of this noun. We may therefore conclude that Queen Alexandra’s naïveté, which is a negative attribute here, can be attributed to a general human tendency to gullibility (as in the other

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44 Liddell, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. ἀπλότης, p. 94.
46 Ibid., def. I, 4, p. 71.
48 Rengstorf, Concordance, s.v. ἀνθρώπος, p. 129.
49 Thackeray, War, p. 271.
examples of men’s naiveté cited above). In particular, it can be ascribed to her connection with, and delegation of authority to, the Pharisees.

The next passage (1:112) reverts to a positive evaluation of the queen, and δείνη (skillful) demonstrates this: δείνη δ’ ἦν τὰ μείζων διοικεῖν δύναμιν (“She was skillful in administering great things”). Thackeray translates δείνος as “wonderful” while Whiston uses “sagacious,” which, I believe, is more accurate. Liddell define δείνος as “the sense of powerful, wondrous passed into that of able, clever, skillful…esp. of practical ability.” Hagai translates δείνος as efficient (יעילה) while Ullmann writes excelled (הצטיינה), which is close to what I believe is Josephus’ intention. Since the passage describes Alexandra’s talents in military organization, I believe that “skillful” best describes her ability.

The Pharisees are again the (negative) focus of matters in War 1:113:

Διογένην γούν τινα τῶν ἐπισήμων φίλον Ἀλεξάνδρῳ γεγενημένον κτείνοσαν αὐτοῖς συμβουλοῦν ἐγκαλούντες γεγονόντα περὶ τῶν ἀνασταυρωθέντων ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ὀκτακοσίων, ἐνήγοι δὲ τὴν Ἀλεξάνδραν εἰς τὸ καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους διαχειρίσασθαι τῶν παροξυνόμενων ἐπὶ ἐκεῖνος τῶν Ἀλεξάνδρων εὐδιδούσης δ’ ὑπὸ δεισιδαμινίας ἀνήρουν οὕς ἐθέλοιεν αὐτοῖ.

Thus they themselves [the Pharisees] slew a certain Diogenes, a notable person, a friend of Alexander, having charged him with being an advisor concerning the 800 (men) who had been crucified by the king. They urged Alexandra to destroy the others too who had incited Alexander against them; and influenced by superstition she yielded, and they killed whomever they wished.

By using the words κτείνοσαν αὐτοῖ Josephus emphasizes that the Pharisees are the ones responsible for killing Diogenes, and not Alexandra. However, Alexandra also shares some blame for this state of affairs for, due to her superstition (δεισιδαμινία) she allowed the Pharisees, who are portrayed as evildoers, to rule.

War 1:115-116 tells of Queen Alexandra’s military activities:

50 Ibid., p. 54.
52 Liddell, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. δείνος, def. III, p. 177.
53 Hagai, War, p. 32.
54 Ullmann, War, p. 107
Alexandra sent forth an army to Damascus under the pretext that Ptolemy was continually oppressing the city, but received it (the army) back without it having accomplished anything noteworthy.

And by treaties and gifts she deceitfully led on Tigranes king of Armenia, who was encamped before Ptolemais and was besieging Cleopatra…

The way in which ὑπηγάγετο is translated determines whether Alexandra is viewed as merely pacifying her opponent, Tigranes king of Armenia, or as implementing an astute military strategy. Liddell define ὑπάγω as “to bring under one’s power” (def. I) but also as “to lead on by art or deceit” (def. III).55 Thackeray defines it as “won over.”56 I believe that def. III, which indicates a deception, is more appropriate in this case. Josephus often uses this word to denote something underhanded — a plot or deception, as in War I: 485, 489, 502 (Herod’s suspicion that Pheroras was plotting to poison him). In Ant. 17:7 it is used in a very similar context – Herod gives presents to gain the goodwill of various high officials in Rome but he was only feigning friendship. Likewise, in describing a battle with the Roman decurion Aebutius, Josephus states that Aebutius tried to “deceive” his force into the plain (in order to attack him) (Vita 116). Based on the above passages, it can be deduced that Alexandra was using the treaties and gifts as a decoy, perhaps to attack Tigranes, but he retreated before she could implement this plan.

The final passage on Queen Alexandra (1:119) describes her death: τελευταὶ διοικήσασα τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐτεσίων ἐννέα (“…she died, having administered the realm for nine years”). Josephus’ use of διοικήσασα (administered) here may indicate his view of her queenship. This verb is also used in War 1:112 (διοικεῖν), and it is defined it as to “control, govern, administer…esp. of financial matters.”57 In War 1:170 it is used to denote the civil administration of the Jews by the aristocracy under Gabinius as opposed to Hyrcanus II, who received the religious administration. In most cases (War 1:244, 399; 2:22, 91, 67 etc.) διοικεῖν is used to signify a civil administration under Roman rule. The

55 Liddell, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. ὑπάγω, I,1; I, 2, p. 830.
56 Thackeray, War, p. 55.
57 Liddell, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. διοικεῖν, def. I, p. 203.
use of διοικέω in War may consequently indicate a differentiation between Alexandra’s civil administration as opposed to Hyrcanus’ religious rule as high priest.

Why didn’t Josephus employ the more common verb for a monarch’s reign – βασιλεύω (to rule/reign) as in War 1:106 (Alexander Jannaeus), War 1:121 (Aristobulus II), War 1:434 (Hyrcanus II), War 1:284, 391, 435, 521, 665, and others (Herod), and War 1:631 (Antipater)? Moreover, similar to War 1:119, in both War 1:106 and 1:665 βασιλεύω is used to describe the death of a monarch who had ruled for x years as opposed to governed (διοικέω), which is used here. Perhaps, due to Alexandra’s gender, Josephus did not view her as a “real” monarch but rather just an administrator. Indeed, in War Josephus only calls Alexandra by her name but does not add the title of queen (see below discussion on this matter in Antiquities).

Which verb does Josephus use for Queen Alexandra’s rule in his other works? In contrast to War, in Antiquities Josephus does use βασιλεύω to describe Alexandra’s reign (Ant. 13:414, 417, 430) and unlike War, it is also used to describe her death after reigning for x years (Ant. 13:430). Interestingly, when Josephus writes about the reign of Athaliah in Antiquities (9:142), he also uses βασιλεύω and not διοικέω. Even more surprising is the fact that after Josephus describes the destructive acts of Athaliah (the annihilation of all the descendents of the house of David) he voices no condemnation of her subsequent rule, merely providing the impassive statement that: ἔβασιλεύσεν Ὄθλία τῶν ἱεροσολύμων καὶ τῶν δύο φυλῶν (Athaliah ruled over Jerusalem and the two tribes) (Ant. 9:142). This seems to indicate that in Antiquities Josephus was more accepting of female rulers. In contrast, in War Josephus appears to have little regard for Queen Alexandra’s royal functions, viewing her as a mere administrator.

Another point to note vis-à-vis War 1:119 is that it does not contain a summation of Queen Alexandra’s rule (unlike Antiquities, see below). Rather, as with other later Hasmonean rulers, she simply dies after ruling for nine years. Yet we can arrive at an assessment of her reign based on the above analysis. With the exception of allowing the

58 Biblical accounts use the same verbal form for Athaliah’s rule (מלך) as for that of male monarch, see 2 Kgs 11:3; IIChr 22:12.

59 Although Josephus does give a (positive) evaluation of the reign of John Hyrcanus (War 1: 68-69) he does not furnish any appraisal of that of Aristobulus I and Alexander Jannaeus, who simply die (War 1:84, 1:106). This may be due to the fact that Josephus regarded their reign as a καταστροφή.
Pharisees too much authority, Josephus viewed Alexandra as a good and wise ruler. She is portrayed as a beloved, pious, skillful and strong ruler but, apart from granting authority to the Pharisees, definitely not a “naïve” woman. Internal threats to her rule were eliminated via strategic moves – either neutralizing these threats via force (Aristobulus) or delegating a certain amount of authority (the Pharisees). She also used cunning military maneuvers when confronted with external threats (Tigranes). These maneuvers along with the support of the people ensured a successful and peaceful reign.

**II. Antiquities**

The following translation of *Antiquities* will examine Josephus’ sources and objectives, particularly in light of scholarly research after the LCL translation by Ralph Marcus was first published in 1943.

**Table 2: New Translation of Jewish Antiquities 13: 399-432**

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<th>Niese edition</th>
<th>my translation</th>
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<tr>
<td>399</td>
<td>οἵον δ’ αὐτὸν ἡ βασίλισσα πρὸς τῷ τελευτῶν ὄντα καὶ μὴ δεῖμαν ὑπογράφοντα μηκέτι σωτηρίας ἐλπίδα, κλαίουσα καὶ κοπτομένη τῆς μελλούσης ἐρήμως αὐτὴν τε καὶ τοὺς παῖδας ἀποδύσετο, καὶ “τίνι καταλέξεσις ὡς ἤμε σὺ καὶ τὰ τέκνα τῆς παρὰ ἄλλων βοηθείας δεόμενα” πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔλεγεν “καὶ ταυτ’ εἰδὼς πῶς διάκειται πρὸς σὲ δυσμενῶς τὸ ἔθνος.”</td>
<td>And [when] the queen saw that he was subscribed to death [going to die] and had no hope of any recovery, she wept, beat her breast and lamented that she and her children would be left alone. And she said to him: “To whom are you abandoning me and your children in such a manner, who require the support of others – although you know how hostile the nation is disposed toward you?!”</td>
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<tr>
<td>400</td>
<td>ο δὲ συνεβούλευεν αὐτήν πείθεσθαι μὲν ὁς ὑποθήκηται πρὸς τῷ βασιλεῖαν ἀσφαλῶς κατέχειν μετὰ τῶν τέκνων, κρύπτει δὲ τὸν βάναυσον αὐτοῦ πρὸς τοὺς στρατιώτας, ἐσπῶ ἄν ἐξέλθη τὸ χορίον.</td>
<td>In order to securely retain the throne along with her children, he counseled her to obey him [and do the following]: to conceal his death from the soldiers until she took the fortress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401</td>
<td>ἐπείτα ὡς ἀπὸ νῖκης λαμπρὰς εἰς τὰ ἱεροσόλυμα παραγενομένην τοῖς Φαρισαίοις ἐξουσίαν τινὰ παρασχεῖν</td>
<td>Then, she should go as from a brilliant victory to Jerusalem, support the Pharisees, [and] grant them some power, for they, by giving her</td>
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approval in exchange for these honors, would render the people well disposed to her, and he said, these [Pharisees] have much power among the Judaeans – both hurting those that they hate while helping those with whom they are friendly.

For they are highly trusted by the people, even when they speak harshly of someone due to envy, and he himself had come into conflict with the people due to these [Pharisees], saying that they had been affronted by him.

“Therefore” he said, “when you come into Jerusalem, summon the members of their [the Pharisees’] party, display my corpse to them, with much sincerity let them treat me as they wish, either abuse my corpse by leaving it unburied due to the great suffering I caused, or according to their wrath, perform upon my corpse any other offense. Also promise them that you will do nothing regarding the kingdom without their consent.

If you speak with them in such a manner then I shall then be deemed worthy of a more illustrious funeral from them than I would have obtained from you. Once they have power, they will not even treat my corpse badly and you will securely rule.” Having thus advised his wife, he died, having reigned seven and twenty years and lived fifty less one.

So after Alexandra had taken the citadel, she talked with the Pharisees as her husband had counseled, and offered them all matters connected to his corpse and the kingdom, and their wrath against Alexander ceased, and
she made them well-disposed and friendly.

And they [the Pharisees] came forward and spoke to the populace – they described the actions of Alexander saying that they had lost a just king. And their praise elicited the people’s mourning and sorrow over Alexander so that they gave him a more illustrious funeral than any other king before him.

Although Alexander left behind two sons – Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, nevertheless he bequeathed the kingdom to Alexandra. Of these children, Hyrcanus was [too] feeble to govern public affairs and much desired a quiet life while the younger, Aristobulus, was energetic and daring.

Yet this woman was loved by the people since it was reputed that she was displeased with her husband’s offences.

So, although in title she ruled the kingdom, the Pharisees held the power. For they recalled exiles and freed prisoners, and they were no different than absolute rulers. Still this woman acted with foresight for the
kingdom – she organized a large number of mercenaries and doubled her own force so that she terrified the surrounding tyrants and received hostages from them.

And the entire country was quiet except for the Pharisees, for they troubled the queen by entreating her to kill those who had advised Alexander to kill the eight hundred.

Afterwards, they cut the throat of one of them, Diogenes, and following him, one after another until the men of rank and influence came to the palace, along with Aristobulus (for he had become vexed, and it was clear that if he would ever have the opportunity, he would not trust his mother). They reminded (her) how great were the dangers, that they had demonstrated their faithfulness to their master, and due to this he viewed them worthy of the greatest honors.

And they begged her not to utterly defeat their hopes, for after escaping from the dangers of the enemy they were now being slaughtered at home like fattened cattle, with no one to punish (their enemies).

They also said that if their adversaries would be satisfied with those slain, it would be tolerable for them to bear, and they would agree to it due to their devotion to their masters. On the other hand, if their adversaries would continue to follow the same path, then let her grant them deliverance. For they could not bear it if she did not provide them with some safety, yet
they would gladly receive death in front of the palace if she would not pardon their faithlessness.

It would be disgraceful both for them and for her, the monarch, if being neglected by her, the enemies of her husband would welcome them. For Aretas the Arab and his princes would certainly deem it worthwhile to hire such strong men for mercenary service, men whose very name had caused them to shudder before they had heard it.

But if not, then the second [option] – if she had determined to honor the Pharisees, then she should station each one of them in one of the citadels, for if an evil spirit would be enraged against the house of Alexander, then they would prove themselves even though living in a humble manner.

Talking much in such a manner, they called upon the departed spirits of Alexander to pity those killed and in danger. Then all of the bystanders were moved to tears, most of all Aristobulus, who showed his sentiments by reproaching his mother very much.

But still these people themselves were to blame for their own misfortunes. For they allowed themselves to be ruled by a woman’s raving mad lust for power, when her offspring were in their prime of life. Not understanding how to act in accordance with her dignity, she entrusted the guarding of the fortresses to them except for Hyrcania, Alexandreion and Machaerus, where most of her valuables were.
And not long afterward she dispatched her son Aristobulus with an army to attack Damascus against Ptolemy, who was called (the son) of Mennaeus, who was an oppressive neighbor to the city. But he did nothing noteworthy so he turned around and returned (home).

At this time it was reported that Tigranes, king of Armenia, with an army of three hundred thousand, had invaded Syria and was coming against Judaea. This aptly alarmed the queen and the people. And they sent many remarkable gifts and ambassadors to him while he was besieging Ptolemais.

(For Queen Selene, who is also called Cleopatra, ruled Syria, and she persuaded the inhabitants to shut out Tigranes.) So they [the ambassadors] met with him and [asked him] to agree to give good terms for the queen [Alexandra] and her people.

And he received them favorably for coming to pay court to him from a great distance, and he offered them good hopes. But Ptolemais had just been captured when it was announced to Tigranes that Lucullus, who was pursuing Mithridates, utterly failed to catch him, as he had fled to the Iberians, and he had laid waste to Armenia and was besieging [its cities]. And when Tigranes discovered this, he returned home.

After this the queen was stricken with a severe disease and Aristobulus [then] resolved to attempt to attack the state. So he stealthily departed during the night along with one of his attendants and went to the fortresses.
where his father’s friends were placed under his command.

For a long time he had been vexed with how his mother managed affairs and very much dreaded that upon her death all of his people would fall under the Pharisees. For he saw the incapacity of his brother who was to succeed to the government.

And his wife who he had left behind in this place with his children knew of this matter. And he first arrived at Agaba, where Palaestes, one of the leading men of influence, received him.

On the next day the queen became aware of Aristobulus’ flight, and for some time she supposed that his departure was not in order to cause a revolt. However, when messengers came, one after the other, and reported that he had captured the first fortress, the second one, and all (for when one began all hastened to submit to his will), then both the queen and the people were in the greatest confusion.

And Aristobulus brought together a great amount of treasures from the people so that now a royal retinue surrounded him. For in almost fifteen days he had occupied twenty-two fortresses, and with this base of operations he mustered an army from...
both Lebanon and Trachonitis and the princes. For the most part, men are easily led, and hearken to him, and also if they rally around him they could have the fruits of the kingdom, since they had been the occasion of his becoming the ruler.

And the elders of the Jews and Hyrcanus went to the queen and begged her counsel and opinion about the present circumstances. For Aristobulus was now lord of almost all since he had captured so many fortresses. Still, even if she was very sick it was absurd for them to take counsel by themselves while she was alive, but on the other hand, the danger was not far off from them.

And she bid them to manage affairs as they thought fit, having left many resources to them: a vigorous people, armed forces, and money in the treasuries. As for herself, she had little interest in the affairs of state as her body was failing her.

And she bid them to manage affairs as they thought fit, having left many resources to them: a vigorous people, armed forces, and money in the treasuries. As for herself, she had little interest in the affairs of state as her body was failing her.

Shortly after having spoken to them she died. She had reigned nine years and altogether she lived three and seventy [years] – a woman who experienced none of her gender’s feebleness, for she was skillful while fond of power; she proved by her deeds both her effectiveness and her [good] judgment as well as the stupidity of those men who always make blunders in matters of sovereign rule.

For she deemed the present state of affairs more important than those of
And the way in which she governed during her lifetime caused the palace to be filled with both misfortunes and political tumults even after her death. But although she ruled in such a way, she maintained the nation peacefully. This was the end of Alexandra.

Antiquities adds a whole new block of information - the account of Alexander Jannaeus’ deathbed bequest of the kingdom to Alexandra and his advice for keeping it secure (13:399-406), which has no parallel in War. Jonathan Goldstein believes that the death-bed scene appears only in Josephus’ later work, Antiquities, since “in later life Josephus became more and more sympathetic to the Pharisees” and it “looks very much like Pharisaic propaganda.” Yet this theory does not accord with the narrative. For example, the phrase τούτους ἐφασικε βλάψαι τε μισοῦντας καὶ φιλῶς διακειμένους ὀψελήσαι (“these [Pharisees] have much power among the Judaeans – both hurting those that they hate while helping those with whom they are friendly”) in Ant. 13:401 is not

60 This examination does not aspire to prove the historicity of the deathbed scene, which is almost impossible to accomplish. Still James VanderKam hypothesizes that “it is reasonable to think that something of the sort occurred because of the sequel. The Pharisees, according to both War and Antiquities, became dominant in Alexandra’s regime…” (VanderKam, “Pesher Nahum,” p. 310). The rabbinic parallel, bSotah 22b, softens the harsh criticism of the Pharisees in Antiquities by stating that they are not to be feared, see the discussion of bSotah 22b in Chapter 5.

very complimentary to the Pharisees. It emphasizes their power to harm those whom they
do not like. Another more probable possibility, which will be discussed in Chapter 3, is
that Josephus’ report of the deathbed scene was influenced by similar accounts in
contemporary Roman literature.

The vocabulary used in Jannaeus’ deathbed oration is also significant. For example,
the term $\phi\theta \nu \omicron \omicron \varsigma$62 in the following passage:

\[\mu \alpha \lambda \iota \sigma \tau \alpha \varsigma \gamma \alpha \rho \pi \iota \sigma \tau \varepsilon \sigma \theta \alpha \iota \varphi \pi \lambda \iota \eta \iota \varepsilon \pi \varepsilon \alpha \iota \varsigma \omicron \varsigma \ \omega \nu \ \kappa \alpha \nu \ \phi \theta \nu \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \varsigma \ \tau \iota \ \chi \alpha \lambda \epsilon \pi \omicron \omicron \omicron \ \lambda \epsilon \gamma \omicron \omega \omicron \omicron \omicron \]

For they [the Pharisees] are highly trusted by the people, even when they speak
harshly of someone due to envy (Ant. 13:402).

Israel Shatzman’s theory concerning Josephus’ use of the Greek motif of “success
followed by envy,” may shed light on this matter.63 The motif of “success followed by
envy” is employed for the first time in War 1:68, which describes the envy aroused by
the success of Hyrcanus I, and the subsequent rebellion of the Jews against him. Ant.
13:288 also describes the envy of the Jews against Hyrcanus for his successes and then
adds the theme of the Pharisees’ anger and power, which Josephus continues to elaborate
upon until Ant.13:299.64 Shatzman claims that Josephus used a “cut and paste” method
in order to add an assessment of the Pharisees in Antiquities: Josephus took the original
version of the story in War and then inserted the accusation that the Pharisees were
moved by envy in Antiquities.65 According to Shatzman, this negative description of the
Pharisees could only be due to Josephus’ source, Nicolaus of Damascus,66 who often
used the motif of “success followed by envy.”67

Although there is no parallel in War 1 to the passage in Ant. 13:402, nevertheless, the
use of $\phi\theta \nu \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \varsigma$ here may relate to the envy of the Pharisees towards Alexander

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62 Liddell, *Greek-English Lexicon*, defines this as “ill-will, envy jealousy”, s.v. $\phi\theta \nu \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \varsigma$, p. 861.
63 See Shatzman, “Success Followed by Envy,” pp. 36-54. Shatzman notes that envy connected to
success, related to historical reports or events, appears dozens of times in Josephus’ writings, e.g. Life 80,
64 Josephus only mentions the rebellion much later, in Ant. 13:299.
66 Josephus’ main source for War 1:30-2:116 as well as Antiquities 13-17 (along with other sources) is
the universal history of Nicolaus of Damascus, an autobiography consisting of 144 books, which was
written after the death of Herod in 4 BCE and tells of his reign. See Mason, *Flavius Josephus*, p. 222; on
Nicolaus as Josephus’ source, see Stern, “Nicolaus of Damascus.”
67 Ibid., pp. 50-53.
Jannaeus due to his military victories. This could be a continuation of the motif of the Pharisees envying the success of a Hasmonean monarch. Interestingly, when Ant. 13:401 cites Queen Alexandra’s impending victory and the Pharisees’ great power – δύνασθαι δὲ πολὺ – there is no mention of any envy, perhaps because a woman’s success could not arouse any envy.

Alexandra’s capture of the citadel of Ragaba (Ant. 13:405), which is omitted in War, attests to her military competency. This theme is continued in Ant. 13:409.

The phrase – εὐνοῦσα δ’ ἐποίησε καὶ φίλους (“she made them [the Pharisees] well disposed and friendly,” Ant. 13:405) – demonstrates the difference in the interaction between Alexandra and the Pharisees in War and Antiquities. War only mentions her delegation of authority to the Pharisees (1:111) but Antiquities adds the dimension of friendly and cordial relations. What could be the reason for this? And why did the Pharisees have good relations with Queen Alexandra?

Pharisaic support of Queen Alexandra may be due to the fact that her reign separated religion and state. As a woman, Queen Alexandra could not serve as a high priest hence she delegated the priesthood to her eldest son Hyrcanus II while retaining secular powers, especially in foreign affairs. Daniel Schwartz points out that the Pharisaic opposition to Hasmoneans in general, and to Alexander Jannaeus in particular, was due to the fact that they “held it was not legitimate to join priesthood and monarchy.”68 Thus the Pharisees supported Queen Alexandra, as opposed to the previous Hasmonean monarchs, due to the separation of religion and state during her reign (and the consequent delegation of internal/religious affairs into their hands).69 Nevertheless, this separation of authority could be problematical for a Hasmonean ruler. David Goodblatt calls attention to the fact that “possession of the high priesthood continued to be an important source of legitimation for the Hasmonean dynasty until its end.”70 Since Queen Alexandra did not hold the office of high priest, and this contradicted the model of what Goodblatt terms the “priestly monarchy,” she therefore required the Pharisees’ support in order to give an aura of religious legitimacy to her reign. Thus cordial relations between the Pharisees and

69 For a discussion of the initial rift between the Pharisees and the Hasmoneans, see Schalit, “Internal Policy,” pp. 182-186.
Alexandra were in the interests of both parties – Alexandra required the Pharisees’ support in order to acquire legitimacy for her reign and the Pharisees supported Alexandra in order to gain control of religious affairs.

Other scholars hold differing opinions concerning the role of the Pharisees. Morton Smith claims that Antiquities emphasizes the Pharisees’ popularity in order to convince the Roman government to support them as the dominant party:

That [Roman] government must have been faced with the problem: Which group of Jews shall we support? …Which Jews…can command enough popular following to keep things stable in Palestine? To this question Josephus is volunteering an answer: The Pharisees…

In opposition to Smith, Steve Mason believes that Antiquities regards “Alexandra’s policy of cultivating the Pharisees as an unqualified disaster.” He cites three passages in Antiquities in order to demonstrate that Josephus viewed the Pharisees as a calamity for both Queen Alexandra and the land of Judaea: 1) the Pharisees were “unprincipled power mongers” (13:406); 2) they slaughtered their enemies (13:412); and 3) the Hasmoneans lost power due to Alexandra’s concessions to the Pharisees (13:430-432).

Other passages in Antiquities also support Mason’s claim of an anti-Pharisaic bias, e.g. “they [the Pharisees] were no different than despots” (13:409); “And the entire country was quiet except for the Pharisees, for they troubled the queen by entreating her to kill those who had advised Alexander to kill the eight hundred”(13:410) “Afterwards, they cut the throat of one of them, Diogenes, and following him, one after another” (13:411). Reports of such cruel acts by the Pharisees certainly would not encourage anyone to support them.

This section of Antiquities describing Queen Alexandra’s reign contains a clear anti-Pharisaic bias. What can explain this negative attitude? Source analysis offers one possible solution. Daniel Schwartz attributes the anti-Pharisaic statements in Antiquities, which contradict Josephus’ own viewpoint, to his source material (Nicolaus). According

71 Smith, “Palestinian Judaism,” pp. 75-76. See also, Levine “Political Struggle,” p. 69.
73 Ibid.
74 Shaye Cohen posits that “AJ still has a few nasty things to say about the Pharisees, but, on the whole, these sectarians do better in AJ than in BJ.” See Shaye Cohen, “Josephus and His Sources” in Cohen, Josephus in Galilee and Rome, p. 237.
to Schwartz, Josephus’ earlier work, *War*, reflects an attempt to show that the Pharisees were uninvolved in politics and hence uninvolved in the Jewish rebellion against Rome. Schwartz posits that Josephus was less cautious about mentioning Pharisaic political involvement in his later work, *Antiquities*, since the Jewish rebellion against Rome was almost twenty years past. And, “due to inattention, he [Josephus] did not always suppress source material which contradicted his own view.” This suggestion complements the view held by many scholars that Josephus relied more upon Nicolaus in *Antiquities* than in *War*.

The Pharisees remain in the narrative’s limelight reference in 13:408, which emphasizes Alexandra’s support of their authority:

Thus, even any minor regulation which had been introduced by the Pharisees and revoked by her father-in-law Hyrcanus, even that she once again restored.

This passage is related to *Ant*. 13:296-297, which describes how the Sadducees convinced John Hyrcanus to cancel Pharisaic laws:

Josephus uses the word νόμιμος in both *Ant*. 13:408 and 13:296 to denote certain regulations handed down by former generations. Lambers-Petry believes that the regulations Alexandra restored “must have had a public rather than private importance”

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76 Ibid., p. 170.
78 Translation from Marcus, *Jewish Antiquities*: XIII, pp. 375-376. There is no parallel in *War* for this incident.
since this passage describes punishing those who observed these regulations.  
Other scholars believe the use of νόμος indicates external influences. Bernd Schröder has shown that Josephus places a greater emphasis on Jewish law in his later works, including Antiquities, than in his earlier War. Daniel Schwartz believes this could be due to Josephus' growing diasporization after living some twenty years in Rome.

Ant. 409-411 has partial parallels with War and is analyzed below in the comparison of the two books.

The text of Ant. 13:413 echoes a scene in the Book of Esther 7:4, as retold by Josephus in Antiquities 11. The following comparison of these parallel texts highlights various similarities between Queen Alexandra and Queen Esther:

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<td>ἐπιστάθημεν γὰρ ἐγὼ τε καὶ ὁ λαὸς μου εἰς ἁπάλειαν καὶ διαπαγήν καὶ δουλείαν ἡμεῖς καὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν εἰς παιδᾶς καὶ παιδίσκας παρῆκοντα ὡς γὰρ ἄξιος ὁ διανολὸς τῆς αὐλῆς τοῦ βασιλέως.</td>
<td>...τοῦ τούτου κίνδυνον ἀποδῷσε καὶ πρὸς ἀπολέσειν ἔλεγε μέτα τοῦ ἐθνοῦς ἑκδοθήσει διὸ καὶ ὑπολείψει περί τούτων τοῖς λόγοις· οὐ γὰρ ἡ ἡρωικήναι αὐτῷ, εἰ πρὸς δουλείαν πικρὰν ἐκέλευσεν αὐτοὺς ἀπεμπολήθηναι· μέτριον γὰρ τούτῳ τὸ κακὸν παρεκάλει τοῖς τούτων ἀπαλαγήναι.</td>
<td>ἐλεγὼν τε ὡς, εἰ μὲν ἀρκεθῇ τοῖς ἀνηρμενεύσις οἱ ἀντίδικοι, διὰ τὸ πρὸς τὸ ὡς δεσπότας γνήσιον μετρίως οἴσειν τὰ ἐυμβάντα,</td>
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For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, slain and annihilated. And if we had been sold as slaves and as maids I should have kept silent for the enemy is not sufficient for the injury of the King.  

They also said that if their adversaries would be satisfied with those slain, it would be tolerable for them to bear, and they would agree to it due to their devotion to their masters.

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79 Lambers-Petry, “Shelomzion ha-malka,” p. 73.
80 Schröder, ‘Väterlichen Gesetze.’
82 Rahlfs, Septuaginta, p. 965.
83 Translation from Paton, Book of Esther, p. 258.
would have been tolerable, [and] she appealed to be delivered from this.  

We can observe several noteworthy similarities between the dialogue between Queen Esther and King Artaxerxes and that of Queen Alexandra with the “men of rank and influence” (οἱ δύνατοί). In Ant. 11:263, Queen Esther implores the king to spare her people, stating that the evil of slavery would have been μετριόν - tolerable or within measure. In Ant. 13:413 the “men of rank and influence” (perhaps Sadducees) plead with Alexandra, stating that it would be tolerable (μετρίως) for them to bear it if the Pharisees would be satisfied with those already slain. In the Esther story, Josephus adds the phrase μετρίων γὰρ τοῦτο τὸ κακόν (Ant. 11:263), which embodies a thematic and verbal parallel between Queen Esther and Queen Alexandra, and is not present in the Septuagint text. Furthermore, in Ant. 13:413, Alexandra’s role parallels that of King Artaxerxes – the Sadducees beseech the Queen while Queen Esther pleads with the King. What could be the reason for Josephus’ addition to the Septuagint version of the story of Esther? Lewis Paton points out that Josephus’ retelling of the story of Esther is closer to the Septuagint reading than that of any other recension despite the fact that it does have numerous additions which are either exegetical expansions or based on an early Jewish midrash.  

Inasmuch as Jerome’s Latin version of the Esther story does contain the phrase: “esset tolerabile malum” (for the evil would have been bearable), Paton concludes that for this verse Josephus apparently relied on the Greek text, later cited by Jerome, and not on the accepted edition of the Septuagint. The remarkable similarities between Ant. 13:413 and Ant. 11:263 cannot be mere coincidence. Inasmuch as there are almost no other queens in Jewish history, it is not surprising that Josephus associates the story of Queen Esther with Queen Alexandra. Still there is a fundamental distinction between the two queens – Alexandra held infinitely more power as she was the sole monarch while Esther was only the wife of the king and dependent upon his whims.

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84 My translation.
85 Paton, Book of Esther, p. 39.
86 Ibid., p. 258. For a discussion of the difference between the Hebrew text of the Book and Esther and the Greek, along with a commentary, see Kahana, “Septuagint Translation,” esp. p. 229.
87 Ibid.
Daniel Schwartz perceives another parallel between Antiquities and the Book of Esther: the banquet story telling of King Agrippa’s attempt to persuade Emperor Caius’ not to erect a statue in the Temple (Ant. 18) resembles Esther’s attempt to persuade Artaxerxes to save her people at a dinner that she arranged (Esther 5 and 7). Both of these feasts entailed “a dramatic turnabout of fortune.” The similarity in the genre of the two stories, according to Schwartz, cast doubts upon the historical veracity of Antiquities here. Similarly, we must also be skeptical as to the historical truth of Ant. 13: 413, which has no parallel in War. What would then be the purpose of inserting the scene with the Sadducees? Josephus may have added it for dramatic effect, imagining that such an incident could have taken place.

Hellenistic works adjoining the time period of Queen Alexandra’s reign, such as 2 Maccabees (second century BCE), may also allude to the Book of Esther. For example, Meneleus is killed by being thrown off a tower fifty cubits high (2 Mac 13:5-8) and Haman is hanged on a gallows fifty cubits high (Esther 7:9-10); Judas orders the Jewish people to weep and fast for three days (2 Mac 13:10-12) and Esther asks the Jews of Shushan to fast for her for three days (Esther 4:16).

The remaining paragraphs (Ant. 13:419-431) are discussed in the analysis of the synoptic version, where I will draw final conclusions regarding these two works.

III. Comparison of Queen Alexandra’s Portrayal in War and Antiquities

War the first of Josephus’ two works, was completed between 78-81 CE, while Antiquities was finished ca. 93/94. The different time periods during which Josephus composed these works, and in particular his adoption of Roman cultural norms, may have influenced the description of Queen Alexandra, as will be shown below. The following synopsis shall serve as the main tool for the next stage of my analysis.

88 Schwartz, Agrippa, pp. 34-35.
89 Although earlier scholars believed that War was written between 75-79 AD (Thackeray, War, p. xii), today scholars date War somewhat later: “Josephus appears to have completed his work [War] between 78 and 81 after previously receiving the encouragement and approval of Vespasian and Titus.” See Edmonson, Flavius Josephus, p. 4. This is based upon Christopher P. Jones’ dating of 79 AD as the terminus ante for most of BJ and 81 AD for its completion (Jones, “Chronology of Josephus,” p. 114). The dating of Antiquities is clearer as Ant. 20:267 relates that it was completed in the “13th year of the reign of Domitian Caesar,” that is, 93/94 CE (ibid; see also Vita, Schwartz, p. 4).
90 See Chapter 4.
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<th>Para.</th>
<th>The Judean War 1</th>
<th>Antiquities 13</th>
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<td>399</td>
<td>And [when] the queen saw that he was subscribed to death [going to die] and had no hope of any recovery, she wept, beat her breast and lamented that she and her children would be left alone. And she said to him: “To whom are you abandoning me and your children in such a manner, who require the support of others – although you know how hostile the nation is disposed toward you?!”</td>
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<td>400</td>
<td>In order to securely retain the throne along with her children, he counseled her to obey him [and do the following] – to conceal his death from the soldiers until she took the fortress.</td>
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<td>401</td>
<td>Then, following a brilliant victory, she should go to Jerusalem and support the Pharisees, and grant them some power, for they, by giving her approval in exchange for these honors, would render the people well disposed to her, and he said, these [Pharisees] have much power among the Judaeans – both hurting those that they hate while helping those with whom they are friendly.</td>
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<td>402</td>
<td>For they are highly trusted by the people, even when they speak harshly of someone due to envy, and he himself had come into conflict with the people due to these [Pharisees], saying that they had been affronted by him.</td>
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<td>403</td>
<td>“Therefore” he said, “when you come into Jerusalem, summon</td>
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the members of their [the Pharisees’] party, display my corpse to them, with much sincerity let them treat me as they wish, either abuse my corpse by leaving it unburied due to the great suffering I caused, or according to their wrath, perform upon my corpse any other offense. Also promise them that you will do nothing regarding the kingdom without their consent.

If you speak with them in such a manner then I shall then be deemed worthy of a more illustrious funeral from them than I would have obtained from you. Once they have power, they will not even treat my corpse badly and you will securely rule.” Having thus advised his wife, he died having reigned seven and twenty years and lived fifty less one.

So after Alexandra had taken the citadel, she talked with the Pharisees as her husband had counseled, and offered them all matters connected to his corpse and the kingdom, and their wrath against Alexander ceased, and she made them well-disposed and friendly.

And they [the Pharisees] came forward and spoke to the populace – they described the actions of Alexander saying that they had lost a just king. And their praise elicited the people’s mourning and sorrow over Alexander so that they gave him a more illustrious funeral than any other king before him.
| 107 | Although Alexander left behind two sons – Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, nevertheless he bequeathed the kingdom to Alexandra. Of these children, Hyrcanus was [too] feeble to govern public affairs and much desired a quiet life while the younger, Aristobulus, was energetic and daring. Yet this woman was loved by the people since it was reputed that she was displeased with her husband’s offences. |
| 108 | And he [Alexander] left the kingdom to his wife Alexandra, convinced the Judeans would most of all hearken to her, since her utmost lack of savagery and her opposition to transgressions of the law brought the people’s good will upon her. And he was definitely not wrong in these expectations, for this beloved woman ruled over the kingdom on account of her reputation for piety. For she was indeed very strict about her people’s ancestral laws (customs), and those who offended the divine laws she used to throw out of office. |
| 109 | And of the two sons that she had from Alexander, the elder, Hyrcanus she appointed high priest because of both his suitable age and moreover because of his being too lazy to be troubled about all things (connected to the state), while the younger, Aristobulus, due to his passion, she kept under [her] control as a private person. |
| 110 | But the Pharisees grew beside her into authority – they were a certain band of Judeans who have the reputation of being more pious than the others and of accurately proclaiming the laws. |
| 111 | And to them Alexandra excessively hearkened, being zealous in matters concerning the Deity. And they gradually delved under this person’s simplicity, and bit by bit they made their way up and became |
| 407 | She also permitted the Pharisees to do all things and commanded the people to obey their authority. Thus, even any minor regulation which had been introduced by the Pharisees and revoked by her father-in-law Hyrcanus, even that she once again restored. |
| 408 | And she appointed Hyrcanus as the high priest due to his age, and even more so, due to his passive nature. |
| 409 | So, although in title she ruled the kingdom, the Pharisees held the power. For they recalled exiles and freed prisoners, and they were no different than absolute rulers. Still this woman acted with foresight for the kingdom – she organized a large number of mercenaries and doubled her |
the administrators of all things (connected to the state) — banishing and recalling whomever they wanted, binding and freeing (at will). In general, they had the benefits of the kingship while Alexandra had the expenses and the difficulties.

112 She was skillful in administering great things, and by continually gathering (soldiers) she doubled the army, and she also collected a large (number) of mercenaries, so that not only did she strengthen her own nation but she also caused foreign rulers to fear (her). But while she herself ruled over the others, the Pharisees ruled over her.

113 Thus they themselves slew a certain Diogenes, a notable person, a friend of Alexander, having charged him with being an advisor concerning the 800 (men) who had been crucified by the king. They urged Alexandra to destroy the others too who had incited Alexander against them; and influenced by superstition she yielded, and they killed whomever they wished.

410 And the entire country was quiet except for the Pharisees, for they troubled the queen by entreat ing her to kill those who had advised Alexander to kill the eight hundred. Afterwards, they cut the throat of one of them, Diogenes, and following him, one after another until the men of rank and influence came to the palace, along with Aristobulus (for he had become vexed, and it was clear that if he ever would have the opportunity, he would not trust his mother). They reminded (her) how great were the dangers, that they had demonstrated their faithfulness to their master, and due to this he viewed them worthy of the greatest honors.

412 And they begged her not to utterly defeat their hopes, for...
after escaping from the dangers of the enemy they were now being slaughtered at home like fattened cattle, with no one to punish (their enemies).

| 413 | They also said that if their adversaries would be satisfied with those slain, it would be tolerable for them to bear, and they would agree to it due to their devotion to their masters. On the other hand, if their adversaries would continue to follow the same path, then let her grant them deliverance. For they could not bear it if she did not provide them with some safety, yet they would gladly receive death in front of the palace if she would not pardon their faithlessness. |

| 414 | It would be disgraceful both for them and for her, the monarch, if being neglected by her, the enemies of her husband would welcome them. For Aretas the Arab and his princes would certainly deem it worthwhile to hire such strong men for mercenary service, men whose very name had caused them to shudder before they had heard it. |

| 415 | But if not, then the second [option] – if she had determined to honor the Pharisees, then she should station each one of them in one of the citadels, for if an evil spirit would be wroth against the house of Alexander, then they would prove themselves even though living in a humble manner. |

| 114 | Those thought to be prominent among those endangered fled to Aristobulus for refuge, and he persuaded his mother to spare |

<p>| 416 | Talking much in such a manner, they called upon the departed spirits of Alexander to pity those killed and in danger. Then all of |</p>
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<th>them because of their rank; if she did not assume them innocent, she should send them out of the city. So then, granted amnesty, they dispersed into the countryside.</th>
<th>the bystanders were moved to tears, most of all Aristobulus, who showed his sentiments by reproaching his mother very much.</th>
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<td>115 Alexandra sent forth an army to Damascus under the pretext that Ptolemy was continually oppressing the city, but received it (the army) back without it having accomplished anything noteworthy.</td>
<td>417 But still these people themselves were to blame for their own misfortunes. For they allowed themselves to be ruled by a woman’s raving mad lust for power, when her offspring were in their prime of life. Not understanding how to act in accordance with her dignity, she entrusted the guarding of the fortresses to them except for Hyrcaenia, Alexandreion and Machaerus, where most of her valuables were.</td>
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<td>418 And not long afterward she dispatched her son Aristobulus with an army to attack Damascus against Ptolemy, who was called (the son) of Mennaecus, who was an oppressive neighbor to the city. But he did nothing noteworthy so he turned around and returned (home).</td>
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|116| And by treaties and gifts she deceitfully led on Tigranes king of Armenia, who was encamped before Ptolemais and was besieging Cleopatra. But the latter hastened to retreat because of the domestic troubles, as Lucullus had invaded Armenia. | 419| At this time it was reported that Tigranes, king of Armenia, with an army of three hundred thousand, had invaded Syria and was coming against Judaea. This aptly alarmed the queen and the people. And they sent many remarkable gifts and ambassadors to him while he was besieging Ptolemais.  
(For Queen Selene, who is also called Cleopatra, ruled Syria, and she persuaded the inhabitants to shut out Tigranes.) So they met with him and [asked him] to agree to give good terms for the queen [Alexandra] and the people. And he received them favorably for coming to pay court to him from a great distance, and he offered them good hopes. But Ptolemais had just been captured when it was announced to Tigranes that Lucullus, who was pursuing Mithridates, utterly failed to catch him, as he had fled to the Iberians, and he had laid waste to Armenia and was besieging [its cities]. And when Tigranes discovered this, he returned home. |
|117| When in the meantime Alexandra became ill, her younger son Aristobulus seized the opportunity, and together with the members of his household, who were many and all of whom were well-disposed towards him because of his passion, took control of all the fortresses. And with the money from them he gathered | 421|   |
|   |   |   |
|422| After this the queen was stricken with a severe disease and Aristobulus [then] resolved to attempt to attack the state. So he stealthily departed during the night along with one of his attendants and went to the fortresses where his father’s friends were placed under his command. |   |
mercenary and proclaimed himself king.

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<th>423</th>
<th>For a long time he had been vexed with how his mother managed affairs and very much dreaded that upon her death all of his people would fall under the Pharisees. For he saw the incapacity of his brother who was to succeed to the government.</th>
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<td>424</td>
<td>And his wife who he had left behind in this place with his children knew of this matter. And he first arrived at Agaba, where Palestes, one of the leading men of influence, received him.</td>
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<td>425</td>
<td>On the next day the queen became aware of Aristobulus’ flight, and for some time she supposed that his departure was not in order to cause a revolt. However, when messengers came, one after the other, and reported that he had captured the first fortress, and the second one, and all (for when one began all hastened to submit to his will), then both the queen and the people were in the greatest confusion.</td>
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<td>118</td>
<td>The mother, feeling pity for the laments of Hyrcanus about this, imprisoned the wife and children of Aristobulus in the Antonia, which was located adjoining the northern side of the Temple. (Long ago, as I have said, it was named Baris, but afterwards it was given this name during Antony’s rule, just as the cities of Sebaste and Agrippias were given their names from Sebastos and</td>
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<td>426</td>
<td>For they realized that not long in the future Aristobulus would acquire the power to possess the kingdom, and they also were very much afraid lest he exact vengeance for the violence on his house. Therefore they decided to secure his wife and children in the fortress, which was above the temple.</td>
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<td>427</td>
<td>And Aristobulus brought together a great amount of treasures from the people so that now a royal retinue surrounded him. For in almost fifteen days he had occupied twenty-two fortresses, and with this base of operations he mustered an army from both Lebanon and Trachonitis and the princes. For the most part, men are easily led, and hearken to him, and also if they rally around him they could have the fruits of the kingdom, since they had been the occasion of his becoming the ruler.</td>
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<td>428</td>
<td>And the elders of the Jews and Hycanus went to the queen and begged her counsel and opinion about the present circumstances. For Aristobulus was now lord of almost all since he had captured so many fortresses. Still, even if she was very sick it was absurd for them to take counsel by themselves while she was alive, but on the other hand, the danger was not far off from them.</td>
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<td>429</td>
<td>And she bid them to manage affairs as they thought fit, having left many resources to them: a vigorous people, armed forces, and money in the treasuries. As for herself, she had little interest in the affairs of state as her body was failing her.</td>
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<td>119</td>
<td>But before Alexandra [could] proceed against Aristobulus for deposing his brother, she died, having administered the realm for nine years.</td>
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<td>430</td>
<td>Shortly after having spoken to them she died. She had reigned nine years and altogether she lived three and seventy [years] – a woman who experienced none of her gender’s feebleness, for she was skillful while fond of power, she proved by her deeds both her effectiveness and her</td>
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For she deemed the present state of affairs more important than those of the future and she regarded all things secondary to possessing the power to rule. Because of this, she did not pay attention to that which is noble nor just. Anyway, she caused misfortune to her dynasty, which had achieved sovereignty despite many dangers and difficulties, due to a lust for these things which were not befitting a woman. Not very long afterwards it (the sovereignty) was taken away from us [the Judaeans] because she had agreed with the opinions of those hostile to her family and had left the kingdom bereft of anyone to care for it.

And the way in which she governed during her lifetime caused the palace to be filled with both misfortunes and political tumults even after her death. But although she ruled in such a way, she maintained the nation peacefully. This was the end of Alexandra.

Joseph Sievers’ points out the usefulness of presenting a synopsis of Josephus’ works:
1) it can “serve as a basic tool for the literary and historical analysis of the texts included, which are our only continuous accounts for substantial portions of Judean history from 175 to 37 BCE”;
2) it “shows where the *Antiquities* add specific details to *War*, or rewrite it in a more or less biased fashion;”
3) and it can highlight where *Antiquities*

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91 Sievers, *Synopsis of Greek Sources*, p. xi.
92 Ibid., p. xii.
often adds “blocks of new material.” In short, a synopsis can demonstrate major and minor similarities as well as differences in content and style.

What does this synopsis reveal? First of all, as with almost all of Josephus’ accounts, the description in *Antiquities* is much longer than that of *War.* Yet once the parallel passages commence (*War* 1:107 // *Antiquities* 13:407), it can be observed that most of the positive statements concerning Queen Alexandra in *War* 107-112 are paralleled in *Ant.* 407-409.

The only phrase that has no parallel is her δόξαν εὐσεβείας (reputation for piety) (*War* 1:108). Yet *Ant.* 13:408 may hint at this matter: “Thus, whatever minor regulation τῶν νομίμων which had been introduced by the Pharisees and revoked by her father-in-law Hyrcanus, even that she once again restored.” Following Mason, I believe that this passage in *Antiquities* accords with Queen Alexandra’s reputation for strictly following her people’s ancestral laws, as mentioned in the discussion of *War* 1:108 – ἡκρίβων γάρ δὴ μάλιστα τοῦ νόμου τὰ πάτρια.

It is noteworthy that one complimentary paragraph, *Ant.* 13:430, has no parallel in *War*. The favorable descriptions include “a woman who experienced none of her gender’s feebleness, for she was skillful …she proved by her deeds both her effectiveness and her [good] judgment…as well as the stupidity of those men who always make blunders in matters of sovereign rule.” Here, Queen Alexandra’s merits are contrasted with the flaws of others – either women (τοῦ φύλου - her gender) or men (τὸ ἀσύνετον…άνδρῶν - stupidity of those men”).

Three paragraphs in the second half of the description in *Antiquities* – 13:417, 431, 432, encompass the major difference between the outlook of the two works towards Queen Alexandra:]

by a woman’s raving mad lust for power…Not understanding how to act in accordance with her dignity…(417);
she deemed the present state of affairs more important than those of the future and she regarded all things secondary to possessing the power to rule.
Because of this, she did not pay attention neither to that which is noble nor

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93 Ibid.
94 One significant plus is the account of Alexander Jannaeus’ deathbed bequest (*Antiquities* 399-406), which has no parallel in *War*. See Chapter 4 for a discussion of this matter.
95 Mason, “Pharisees and Alexandra,” pp. 83-84; see also above discussion of *War* 108, pp. 36-37.
just. Anyway, she caused misfortune to her dynasty… she had agreed with the opinions of those hostile to her family and had left the kingdom bereft of anyone to care for it (431);
And the way in which she governed during her lifetime caused the palace to be filled with both misfortunes and political tumults (432).

These extremely critical passages have no parallel in War. Nonetheless, 430 does contain a somewhat positive evaluation of the queen (“she was skillful while fond of power, she proved by her deeds both her effectiveness and her [good] judgment”) while 431 expresses a negative appraisal for the same actions – holding power and not giving it to her sons.

Why then did Josephus include these three paragraphs (13:417, 431, 432) in Antiquities? One possibility is that they are part of an overall tendency in Antiquities to criticize the later Hasmonean monarchs. Aristobulus I caused his mother to starve to death in prison (Ant. 13:302) and murdered his brother Antigonus (Ant. 13:309); Alexander Jannaeus slaughtered the inhabitants of Gaza (Ant. 13:362-364), killed 6,000 fellow-Jews and then another 50,000 (Ant. 13:373, 376) and crucified 800 of his Jewish opponents (perhaps Pharisees). Finally Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II are blamed for causing the end of the Hasmonean kingdom (Ant. 14:77, 490-491). All of these events follow Josephus’ general premise of the decline of the Hasmonean dynasty (Ant. 13:300).

Scholars have suggested two other reasons for the existence of these disparaging passages – they either express Josephus’ own viewpoint or the opinion of his sources, in particular, the historian, Nicolaus of Damascus.

Based upon parallels between Josephus’ portrayal of Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II (Ant. 14:77-78) and that of Queen Alexandra (Ant. 13:431), Daniel Schwartz maintains that these three paragraphs in Antiquities represent Josephus’ own opinion. Moreover, the fact that these descriptions have no equivalent in War, “bolsters our confidence that

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96 I am indebted to Prof. Daniel Schwartz for pointing this out.
97 For a comprehensive discussion of this, see Schwartz, “Josephus on Hyrcanus II,” pp. 210-232.
98 This is attributed to Josephus’ dependence upon Nicolaus of Damascus, who is viewed as having an anti-Hasmonean bias. See Stern, “Flavius Josephus’ Method”; idem “Nicolaus of Damascus.” See below for further discussion of the passage in Antiquities.
99 Based on the differing accounts of Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II in Antiquities 14 and War 1, Schwartz concludes that War represents Nicolaus’ viewpoint while Antiquities embodies Josephus’ own opinion (Ibid., pp. 219-220). Yet Mason asserts that while War relies on Nicolaus, it embodies his own opinion, especially in connection to the Pharisees (Mason, “Pharisees and Alexandra,” pp. 113-114).
This is Josephus’ own point of view.”¹⁰⁰ Schwartz believes that Josephus does not actually condemn Queen Alexandra for her actions at the end of Antiquities 13. Rather, the text reflects Josephus’ own view that “what matters in affairs of state is who is successful and who is not.”¹⁰¹ Josephus does not fault Alexandra for trying to rule but rather “these people themselves” (Ant. 13:417), these stupid men (Ant. 13:430) who let a woman rule.¹⁰² For “the people to blame are the legitimate rulers of the Jews who failed to preserve that which was entrusted to them.”¹⁰³ Still, if Josephus’ opinion is that “the Jews themselves were responsible for their fall” or the leading citizens who allowed “a pushy woman to take power,” does that absolve Alexandra from all blame?¹⁰⁴ No, for Schwartz admits that Queen Alexandra “had given no consideration for decency or justice (Ant. 13 § 431). That’s not something a homo politicus does.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, Schwartz’s emphasis on the responsibility of others for the downfall of the Hasmonean state still leaves Queen Alexandra with some accountability.

In contrast to Schwartz, Tal Ilan believes that the derogatory statements about Queen Alexandra in Antiquities 13 derive from Josephus’ source, Nicolaus of Damascus. Ilan asserts that “Josephus, as a historian, found women to be a topic of little interest” and he did not “blame them for negatively affecting the course of history;” however, his source, Nicolaus of Damascus, was hostile both towards women and Hasmoneans.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, in Antiquities “the queen is blamed for all the misfortunes of the Hasmonean household” due to the fact that she was a woman and women should not assume supreme power. This type of “misogynist” statement is typical of Nicolaus but “usually absent in Josephus’ historical writings.”¹⁰⁷ In support of this hypothesis, Ilan cites the differing linguistic styles of the two parallel texts, Ant. 14:78 and Ant. 13:431-432. Josephus utilizes the first person plural voice to blame Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II for the downfall of the Hasmonean kingdom in Ant. 14:78. Yet in Antiquities 13:431-432, Josephus uses a

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¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 219.
¹⁰² Ibid.
¹⁰³ Ibid.
¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 220.
¹⁰⁵ Ibid.
¹⁰⁶ Ilan, “Josephus and Nicolaus on Women,” p. 233. Ilan points out that Josephus only mentions two women by name (Queen Berenice and Mary daughter of Eleazar of the Peraea) in the latter part of War and in Life. For a discussion of Josephus’ treatment of women, see ibid., pp. 225-234.
¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 240.
distant third person voice to hold Queen Alexandra accountable for the demise of the Hasmonean dynasty. Ilan concludes that the first person plural voice in *Antiquities* 14:78 (we, the Jews of Palestine) indicates Josephus’ own viewpoint while the distant third person in *Antiquities* 13:431-2 demonstrates that “Nicolaus is its author.”

Nevertheless, Richard Laqueur has observed that “Josephus ist keine mechanische Abschreibemaschine, sondern ein Mensch, der sein Wollen und Fühlen in die Erzählung der Vergangenheit hineingetragen hat.”

If we accept Laqueur’s premise, then even if Nicolaus is the source for these passages, they still could express, to some extent (through rewriting or editing), Josephus’ own opinion.

A comparison with assessments of other rulers may also shed light on the harsh assessment of Queen Alexandra’s reign in *Antiquities*. In contrast to the above, Josephus’ summary of John Hyrcanus’ reign in *War* and *Antiquities* contains nothing but praise for this Hasmonean monarch:

*War 1:68-69*

(68) τὸ λοιπὸν δ’ ἐπιβιοῦσ εἰς εὐδαιμονία Ἰωάννης καὶ τὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν κάλλιστα διοικήσας ἐν τριάδιν ὀλοίς καὶ τρίακοντα ἐτέσιν ἐπὶ πέντε υἱῶν τελευτά μακαριστὸς ὄντως καὶ κατὰ μηδὲν ἑάς ἑφ᾿ ἐαυτῷ μεμφθήναι τὴν τύχην. τρία γούν τὰ καρποτεύνεια μύης εἰς εὑν, τίμιτε ἀρχὴν τοῦ ἑθους καὶ τὴν ἀρχιερωσίαν καὶ προφητείαν (69) ὡμέλει γὰρ αὐτῷ τὸ δαίμονιν ὡς μηδὲν τῶν μελλόντων αἴγνειν, ὡς γε καὶ περὶ δύο τῶν πρεσβυτέρων οὐκ ἦν διαμενοῦ σκύροι τῶν πραγμάτων παρ᾿ ὅσιν τῆς πατρίας εὐδαιμονίας ἀπέκλειαν

68: For the rest of his days John lived in prosperity, and, after excellently directing the government for thirty-one whole years, died leaving five sons; truly a blessed individual and one who left no ground for complaint against fortune as regards himself.

69: He was the only man to unite in his person three of the highest privileges: the supreme command of the nation, the high priesthood, and the gift of prophecy. For so closely was he in touch with the Deity, that he was never ignorant of the future; thus he foresaw and predicted that his two elder sons would not remain at the head of affairs. The story of their

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109 Laqueur, *Jüdische Historiker*, p. 218
downfall is worth relating, and will show how great was the decline from their father’s good fortune.\(^{111}\)

\textit{Ant. 13:299-300}

(299) Ίτακανός δὲ παύσας τὴν στάχιν καὶ αὐτὴν βίωσας εὐδαιμόνιως καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν διουκρισάμενος ἀριστὸν τρόπον ἔτεσιν καὶ τριάκοντα τελευτᾶ καταλαβὼν ὑπὸ τὴν βίωσα τριῶν τῶν μεγίστων ἰδίων ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ κράτεις, ἀρχὴς τοῦ ἔθνους καὶ τῆς ἀρχιερατικῆς τυμβῆς καὶ προφητείας.

(300) συνὴν γὰρ αὐτῷ τὸ θεῖον καὶ τὴν τῶν μελλόντων πρόγνωσιν παρεῖχεν αὐτῷ τε εἰδεναι καὶ προλέγειν οὕτως ὡστε καὶ περὶ τῶν δ' ὑπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων παίδων ὅτι μὴ μενοῦσαν τῶν πραγμάτων κύριοι προείπεν ὡς τὴν καταστροφὴν εἰς τὸ μαθεῖν τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπέβασαν εὐτυχίας ἰδίων ἀφηγήσασθαι.

299: And so Hyrcanus quieted the outbreak and lived happily thereafter; and when he died after administering the government excellently for thirty-one years, he left five sons. Now he was accounted by God worthy of three of the greatest privileges: the rules of the nation, the office of high priest, and the gift of prophecy;

300: For the Deity was with him and enabled him to foresee and foretell the future; so, for example, he foretold of his two elder sons that they would not remain masters of the state. And the story of their downfall is worth relating, to show how far they were from having their father’s good fortune.\(^{112}\)

A certain parallel between Hyrcanus I and Alexandra is noticeable here. Hyrcanus is highly praised even though two of his sons caused a \textit{katastrophi} while Alexandra is condemned for, in essence, the actions of her two sons. Could the difference in their gender be the cause of this differing evaluation?

In order to answer this question, let us examine an evaluation for someone of the same gender – Queen Mariamme (Herod’s wife and the great-granddaughter of Queen Alexandra).\(^{113}\) Josephus’ summation reveals contradictory evaluations of Mariamme’s character, similar to his estimation of Queen Alexandra. Thus Mariamme possessed, on the one hand, \textit{eγκράτεια} and \textit{μεγαλοψυχία} (self-control and magnanimity), but on the other hand she had \textit{παρησοία} \textit{ἀσύμμετρον} (a disproportionate outspokenness):

\textit{Antiquities 15:237-239}

\(^{111}\) Thackeray, \textit{War}, p. 35.

\(^{112}\) Translation from Marcus, \textit{Antiquities}, p. 377.

\(^{113}\) See Ilan, “Josephus and Nicolaus on Women,” pp. 242-251 for a discussion of Mariamme in Josephus’ writings
237: And so in such a way the woman [Mariamme] died, and for her self-control and for her magnanimity she belongs to the noblest; but she herself lacked fairness/kindness, and her character abounded with contentiousness.

238: And to start with, this abundance was not acceptable to the king nor to his enjoyment of life. Since he deferred to her due to love, and because of the expectation that he would never be vexed with her, she developed a disproportionate outspokenness.

239: The matter of the members of her household also distressed her, and she had thought to speak [to the king] of all that they had suffered, and finally, both the mother and the sister of the king, and he himself, the only one she believed would do her no harm, became her enemies. If Josephus had only copied Nicolaus for the above eulogy of Mariamme, then it would probably have contained a total condemnation of her, as in the previous passages (Ant. 15: 219-230), for Herod himself had condemned her to death (and Nicolaus usually espoused Herod’s point of view). Tal Ilan offers another explanation for this ambivalent description. She surmises that Nicolaus wished to portray Mariamme as an ideal tragic heroine, which accounts for describing her as “beautiful, good, tender and above all innocent. Her only weakness was her arrogance.”

Thus Josephus is of two minds in his summations of the lives of both Alexandra and Mariamme, and, one common denominator is their arrogance – Alexandra has a lust for things μὴ προσηκόντων γυναικί (not befitting a woman), that is a lust to rule, while Mariamme ἡ παρρησίαν ἀσύμμετρον εἶχεν (had a disproportionate outspokenness). Here we can observe a clear patriarchal bias – Josephus views

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114 My translation.
116 Upon rereading this passage, I decided to refine the translation in the dissertation (which originally
Alexandra's desire to rule as unwomanly and so too does he consider Mariamme's “speaking her mind” as disproportionate (suggesting that a woman should be quiet and passive). For women in Graeco-Roman antiquity “were associated with weakness, incompetence, unreason, untamed nature, and uncontrollable desires…” Thus, according to Josephus, both Alexandra and Mariamme had uncontrollable desires and untamed natures – the former for power and the latter in her speech.

Josephus’ evaluation of Herod in Antiquities is less ambivalent. Herod possessed no favorable characteristics; he was a savage/cruel man (ἀνήρ ὤμος) but had good fortune (τύχη) and became a king:

Antiquities 17:191-192

191: He accomplished this and he died on the fifth day after he killed his son Antipater; he reigned thirty-four years after having done away with Antigonus; he was appointed for thirty-seven years by the Romans. A savage/cruel man to all equally and dominated by his anger, and just, but fate favored him.

192: From a private person he was made a king, and surrounded by countless dangers he made an escape from all, and he reached the longest life. But however concerning the affairs of his household and children, according to his judgment, he was entirely fortunate because he prevailed over his enemies. Yet I believe he failed and that he was entirely unfortunate.

These passages are reminiscent of the total condemnation of Queen Alexandra in Ant. 13:431-432, but with one major difference – a gender bias. Alexandra is condemned for a lust for things μὴ προσηκότων γυναικεί (not befitting a woman) while Herod is merely condemned for being a ἀνήρ ὤμος (savage/cruel man). It is noteworthy that although had “developed insolence”).

117 See McAuslan, and Walcot, Women in Antiquity, p. 4.
Alexandra also lived a long life for her epoch (seventy-three years) it is not emphasized as with Herod. For Josephus states that although Herod was an evil and cruel ruler he was favored by fortune – he became a king καὶ τοῦ ζῆν ἐπὶ μήκαστον ἔξηκετο (and he reached the longest life). Finally, Josephus disagrees with Nicolaus’ estimation of his affairs regarding his family – Herod views them as fortunate while Josephus believes they are unfortunate: "Yet I (Josephus is expressing his own point of view here) believe he failed and that he was entirely unfortunate.").

The above survey demonstrates that Josephus’ summation of Queen Alexandra’s life most resembles that of Mariamme in its ambivalent attitude, which is probably due to their gender. Alexandra’s desire to reign is viewed as unwomanly, and she is held responsible for the actions of her sons, unlike male Hasmonean rulers. This reveals the inherent patriarchal bias in Josephus’ assessment of Queen Alexandra.

Josephus’ personal experience with women – his marriage to several women and what he says about them – may have affected his attitude towards women in general, and in particular, his condemnation of Alexandra at the end of Antiquities.118

According to Life (414-415, 426-427), Josephus was married three times. Of them, the first wife was a woman from Caesarea whom Vespasian had captured and then commanded him to marry (Life: 414-415). This wife left Josephus when he went to Alexandria, and he then married a second time. He divorced his second wife due to his displeasure with her moral character (τὴν γυναῖκα μὲ ἀφεσικόμενος αὐτῆς τοῖς ἤθεσιν) (Life: 426). His last and final marriage was to a Jewish woman from Crete with whom he had two sons, in addition to one surviving son from his first marriage (Life: 427). Several studies relate to the above marriages.119 Josephus mentions another wife in War 5:419 (during an appeal to the defenders of Jerusalem to surrender)120 but this passage tells us only that Josephus’ wife and mother were ὅς ἁσμών καὶ πάλαι λαμπρός ὁκος (not insignificant and from an illustrious family). Both Louis Feldman and James Bailey point out that Josephus does not name any of his (three or


120 Mason, Life, p. 6; Schwartz, Vita, p. 138, n. 431.
Bailey concludes that Josephus “thus reveals that the male members carry more importance than do the female.” Likewise, Tal Ilan notes that in the latter part of War and in Life there are almost no women, and those who do appear are “nameless, characterless.”

Various passages in Josephus’ writings concerning women in general reveal narrow-minded attitudes. For example, in connection with Jewish laws regarding marriage, Josephus states:

γυνὴ χείρων, φησίν, ἀνδρός εἰς ἀπαντα. τοιγαροῦν ὑπακούετο, μὴ πρὸς ἱβραῖ, ἀλλ’ ἐν’ ἀρχεται· θεὸς γὰρ ἀνδρί τὸ κράτος ἐδώκεν

It [the Law/Torah] says: a woman is in all things inferior to a man. Accordingly, let her yield/listen, not in order to be maltreated, but so that she be ruled over; for God gave the authority to man. (Against Apion 2:201)

Niese, however, suspects this passage is not Josephus’ due to New Testament parallels (Ephes. 5:22, Coloss. 3:18, 1 Petr. 3:1). Be that as it may, numerous other passages, which are definitely attributed to Josephus, also denigrate women. For example, Josephus condemns women (and children) for not having moral fortitude in the desert, “a rabble of women and children too feeble to respond to oral admonition” (Ant. 3:5). In connection with Herodias’ advice to her husband, Herod Antipas, to go to Rome and acquire court honors similar to those of her brother, which resulted in their perpetual exile and the loss of Antipas’ tetrarchy, Josephus states that God punished Herodias for envying her brother and Antipas for listening to his wife's κοὐφολογιῶν (“light-minded/thoughtless talk”) (Ant. 18:255). Even a complimentary passage, such as that concerning the old woman at Masada: φρονήσει καὶ παιδείᾳ πλείστον γυναικῶν διαφέρουσα (“she surpassed most women in education and prudence,” War 7:399) implies that most women were unintelligent. Interestingly, Josephus' praise of his third wife echoes this description: ἦθει πολλῶν γυναικῶν διαφέρουσαν (“she surpassed most women in character,” Life 427). One may therefore deduce that, according to Josephus, most women lacked

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122 Ibid.
124 Niese, Flavii Josephi IV, p. 83.
125 Bailey, “Josephus’ Portrayal of the Matriarchs,” p. 156
education, prudence and character. Louis Feldman points out that, for Josephus, “women can be praised only when compared to other women, since they are obviously inferior to men.”\textsuperscript{126} And, in this matter, Josephus was most probably influenced by Roman attitudes towards women, as will be shown below in Part III of Chapter 4, and this in turn influenced his assessment of Alexandra.

I now wish to explore whether or not there was a significant change in Josephus’ attitude towards Queen Alexandra in light of the approximately fifteen-year gap between War and Antiquities.\textsuperscript{127} The following two tables distribute the descriptions of Alexandra in War and Antiquities into two categories (positive and negative), and will provide the basis for this examination.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{127} See above n. 85 for the dating of these two works.
\textsuperscript{128} Other scholars who employ a similar method of text analysis include Louis Feldman who tabulates the number of lines devoted to a biblical personality as composed to other biblical figures (“Josephus’ Portrait of Ezra,” idem, “Josephus’ Portrait of Hezekiah”), H. R. Moehring counts and compares the number of times that each sect (Essenes, Pharisees, Sadducees) is mentioned in War and Antiquities and converts these numbers into percentages in order to show how (un)important the Essenes were for Josephus (see “Josephus on the Marriage Customs of the Essenes,” p. 126).
### Table 4: Descriptions of Queen Alexandra in War 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Para.</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>• her utmost lack of savagery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• her opposition to transgressions of the law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>• this beloved woman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• her reputation for piety.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• very strict about her people’s ancestral laws</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>• Alexandra heeded to them somewhat excessively in matters concerning the Deity</td>
<td>• Naiveté</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>• She was skillful in administering great things,</td>
<td>• the Pharisees ruled over her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• not only did she strengthen her own nation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• but she also caused foreign rulers to fear (her).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>• And she yielded, being superstitious, and they killed whomever they wished.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td>• he persuaded his mother to spare them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An examination of Table 4 reveals the following results for War: out of a total of thirteen paragraphs (107-119) there are six positive paragraphs, that is, 46% of the description is favorable to Queen Alexandra. In contrast, there are three negative passages and consequently 25% of the narrative is critical. Let us now analyze the content of these descriptions. Queen Alexandra’s actions are usually contrasted with those of other people. Thus her “utmost lack of savagery” and “opposition to transgressions of the law” is in opposition to her husband’s cruelty (107). Likewise, her “reputation for piety” and her being “very strict about her people’s ancestral laws” (108) is in opposition to the Pharisees who only appear outwardly religious (110) but are actually cruel and power hungry – they wanted to rule (111) and they even killed their opponents (113) to achieve this end. The few negative descriptions of Queen Alexandra (111-113) criticize her naiveté in yielding to the Pharisees and delegating authority to them.
Let us now examine *Antiquities*.

Table 5: Descriptions of Queen Alexandra in *Antiquities 13*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Para.</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>405</td>
<td>• she made them well-disposed and friendly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>407</td>
<td>• Yet this woman was loved by the people since it was reputed that she was displeased with her husband’s offences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>409</td>
<td>Still this woman acted with foresight for the kingdom – she organized a large number of mercenaries and doubled her own force so that she terrified the surrounding tyrants and received hostages from them.</td>
<td>• She also permitted the Pharisees to do all things although she held the title of “the queen” the Pharisees held the power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>417</td>
<td></td>
<td>For by the raving mad lust for power of a woman who desired to be the monarch when her offspring were in their prime of life. Not understanding how to act in accordance with her dignity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>419</td>
<td></td>
<td>This aptly alarmed the queen and the people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>430</td>
<td>a woman who experienced none of her gender’s feebleness, for she was skillful … she proved by her deeds both her effectiveness and her [good] judgment as well as the stupidity of those men who always make blunders in matters of sovereign rule.</td>
<td>while fond of power,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>431</td>
<td></td>
<td>For she deemed the present state of affairs more important than those of the future and she regarded all things secondary to possessing the power to rule. Because of this, she did not pay attention to that which is noble nor just. Anyway, she caused</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
misfortune to her dynasty, which had achieved sovereignty despite many dangers and difficulties, due to these things which were not befitting a woman. Not very long afterwards it (the sovereignty) was taken away from her because she had agreed with the opinions of those hostile to her family and had left the kingdom bereft of anyone to care for it.

But although she ruled in such a way, she maintained the nation peacefully. And the way in which she governed during her lifetime caused the palace to be filled with both misfortunes and political tumults even after her death. But although she ruled in such a way, she maintained the nation peacefully. This was the end of Alexandra.

The picture of Queen Alexandra in Antiquities 13:399-432 is more complex. As in War, here too she is portrayed as being loved by the people because of her disapproval of her husband’s actions (407). Table 5 reveals that out of a total of thirty-four paragraphs there are five positive paragraphs, mostly in the first half of the description (twelve positive phrases). Thus 15% of the description is positive. On the other hand, there are six negative paragraphs (18% of the total description), many of which criticize the way she delegated power to the Pharisees and used it herself. Thus while both War and Antiquities criticize Queen Alexandra for giving the Pharisees power, only Antiquities criticizes the way she acquired and used her sovereign power. Thus the relationship between the positive paragraphs in Antiquities and the negative ones is almost equal (15% positive as opposed to 18% negative).

To summarize, the account in War is not totally positive (six paragraphs positive as opposed to three negative) and that Queen Alexandra’s portrayal in Antiquities is not overwhelmingly negative (five paragraphs positive as opposed to six negative). In other words, if we examine each work individually and compare the descriptions relative to that text, then the result is that War has a clear positive tendency towards Queen Alexandra while Antiquities presents an almost balanced picture, albeit tending towards
the negative. The derogatory statements are concentrated in three paragraphs – 417, 431, and 432 – which condemn Queen Alexandra’s political moves or actions as being due to “a lust for these things which were not befitting a woman” (*Ant.* 13:431) (ἐπιθυμία τῶν μὴ προσηκόντων γυναικί). Without these three paragraphs, the description of Queen Alexandra would be quite positive.

Another indication of Josephus’ opinion of Queen Alexandra is the amount of space that he devotes to her reign relative to that of previous Hasmonean monarchs. In *War* Josephus devotes sixteen sentences (1:54-69) to Hyrcanus I’s thirty-one year rule, sixteen sentences (1:70-85) to Aristobulus I’s one-year reign, twenty-two sentences (1:85-106) to Alexander Jannaeus’ twenty-seven year reign, and thirteen sentences (1:107-119) to Queen Alexandra’s reign. In *Antiquities* he devotes seventy sentences to Hyrcanus I (13:230-300), nineteen sentences to Aristobulus I (13:301-319), eighty-four sentences to Alexander Jannaeus (13:320-404) and twenty-eight sentences to Queen Alexandra (13:405-432). This extensive coverage of her reign indicates that Josephus viewed Queen Alexandra as a sovereign of a standing equal to that of male members of the Hasmonean dynasty.

Alexandra’s title as a queen can also help clarify the issue of the attitude towards her reign in *Antiquities* 13. *War* only uses her name in Greek, Alexandra (*War* 1:107, 111, 112, 113, 115, 117, 119), while *Antiquities* uses Alexandra twice (*Ant.* 13: 405, 407), preferring to call her a βασίλισσα six times. Furthermore, none of the passages that term Alexandra a queen are derogatory (*Ant.* 13:399, 410, 419, 422, 425, 428).

The use of a name for a Hasmonean monarch does not necessarily denote a disparaging attitude. Josephus rarely employs the term βασιλεὺς for Hasmonean monarchs in both *War* and *Antiquities*. In fact, he almost always uses only their name, without any title, for both Alexander Jannaeus and Aristobulus I. Moreover, Josephus calls Alexander Jannaeus a king only once – when he became mortally ill (*Ant.*13:398). Therefore, in my opinion, the fact that Josephus did decide to refer to Alexandra by her title, and not just her name, is very significant.

Grace Macurdy points out that the title βασίλισσα possesses a very clear political connotation:
The title βασίλισσα when found on the coins of various queens who were acting as regents for an absent husband, or for minor sons, and on those of Cleopatra in her own right, does not mean the “wife of the king”, but “a female king”. 129

Although the use of Alexandra’s name alone in War is not a negative feature per se, Antiquities highlights her prominence by bestowing upon her the highest status – that of a queen. Consequently, the title βασίλισσα as well as the laudatory passages in Antiquities cited above depict a generally favorable picture of Queen Alexandra.

Josephus’ view of Queen Alexandra’s political powers is expressed in a brief reference in Antiquities 14:

οὗτος τούτων ὁ Ἀντίπατρος Ἀντίπας τὸ πρῶτον ἐκαλεῖτο, καὶ τῷ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ τούτῳ ὕπ ἡ δύναμιν, ὃν Ἀλέξανδρον τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τῆς γυναικὸς αὐτοῦ στρατηγῶν ἀποδείξαντον ὅλης τῆς Ἰδομειαίας...

This Antipater, it seems, was first called Antipas, which was also the name of his father, whom King Alexander and his wife appointed governor of the whole of Idumaea…(Ant. 14:10)

According to this passage, even before she inherited the kingdom, Alexandra played a significant role in political appointments by appointing Antipas together with her husband.130 Alternatively, it might mean that they both, in turn, appointed him, Alexander when he was king and Alexandra when she was queen. One way or another, Antiquities emphasizes Alexandra’s status and power.

Finally, Josephus’ general account of the line of high priests, beginning from Ant. 20:224, can also contribute to an understanding of Josephus’ attitude to Queen Alexandra. Ant. 20:242, which belongs to the genre of chronological lists, contains a relatively neutral summary of information found in War 1:107, Ant. 13:407-408 and Ant 13:430, but without any of the harsh criticism in Ant. 13:431-432:

βασιλεύσας δὲ ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος καὶ ἱερατεύσας ἐτη εἰκοσιεπτά

129 Macurdy, Hellenistic Queens, p. 8.
130 Note the similarity to rabbinic literature (bBer 48a and yBer 7,2,54a), where the king and queen sit together, perhaps to decide on matters of state, see pp. 148-149.
After Alexander was king and the high priest for twenty-seven years and his life came to an end, he entrusted to his wife Alexandra the appointment of a successor to the high priesthood. And she gave the high priesthood to Hyrcanus and she herself occupied the throne for nine years, then her life ended...\footnote{My translation.}

What then can account for the totally disparate summations of Queen Alexandra in Antiquities 13 and 20? It has been posited that Antiquities 20 is not based on the previous passages but rather that Josephus inserted the list of high priests from a distinct source.\footnote{See Hölscher, Quellen des Josephus, p. 75. James VanderKam views a parallel between Aristobulus II replacing Hyrcanus II as high priest and Jason replacing Onias III, see VanderKam, From Joshua to Caiphas, p. 340.} Consequently, in this case (as opposed to Ant. 13:43-432), the passage may reflect the opinion of Josephus’ source (and not his own).

Nevertheless, I believe that even if Josephus inserted this passage from another source, his very decision to insert this passage, and not change it to a more critical evaluation of Queen Alexandra, reflects his own point of view, to some extent.

**IV Conclusion**

The above analysis demonstrates that Queen Alexandra’s portrayal in War and Antiquities is not black and white but rather composed of varying shades of gray. In War she is not totally virtuous and in Antiquities she is not completely evil. She is a wise but naïve ruler with one major weakness – a tendency to give the Pharisees too much power. Still she possesses many strong points – she is pious, lacks cruelty, and is a skillful and effective ruler with an understanding of foreign affairs. Moreover, the final phrase describing Ant. 13:432 praises Queen Alexandra for “she maintained the nation peacefully.”

Josephus’ attitude towards Queen Alexandra in Antiquities is rather ambivalent. This is expressed by Ant. 13:399-429, which draws a balanced portrait of the queen and even praises her as a talented ruler equal to a king. In contrast, the end of Antiquities (13:431-432) condemns her, as a woman, for stealing the patriarchal rule. Although Alexandra is censured for taking the kingship away from men as the rightful rulers and for the lack of...
continuity of the Hasmonean dynasty (since she did not let one of her sons rule), most of
the criticism relates to what happened after she died. All of the ξυμφορών...καὶ ταραχῆς
(misfortunes and political tumults) mentioned by Josephus relate to the civil war between
her sons and not to her actions during her lifetime.133

Do the negative descriptions of Queen Alexandra in Antiquities reflect the opinion of
Josephus or that of his source – Nicolaus of Damascus? It is difficult to determine. Shaye
Cohen points out that Josephus “did not confuse fidelity with slavish imitation … he
molded his sources to suit his own tendentious and literary aims.134 On the one hand, Ant.
13:431 viciously attacks Alexandra:

For she deemed the present state of affairs more important than those of the
future and she regarded all things secondary to possessing the power to rule.
Because of this, she did not pay attention to that which is noble nor just.
Anyway, she caused misfortune to her dynasty, which had achieved
sovereignty despite many dangers and difficulties, due to these things which
were not befitting a woman. Not very long afterwards it (the sovereignty)
was taken away from us [the Judaeans] because she had agreed with the
opinions of those hostile to her family and had left the kingdom bereft of
anyone to care for it.

Yet Ant. 13:432 embodies an internal contradiction between the very negative
statement – “And the way in which she governed during her lifetime caused the palace to
be filled with both misfortunes and political tumults even after her death,” whose source
is probably Nicolaus of Damascus – and the final laudatory conclusion “But although she
ruled in such a way, she maintained the nation peacefully.” This statement definitely
appears to be Josephus’ own viewpoint, and in this matter I concur with Tal Ilan.135
Although Josephus’ epitaph for Herod is also somewhat ambivalent, nevertheless, his
assessment of Mariamme resembles that of Queen Alexandra since Josephus ascribes
both good and bad character traits to both women. This leads to the conclusion that
Josephus’ evaluation of Queen Alexandra is due to a gender bias since the same actions
in men are not condemned.

133 As Schwartz has noted, in Antiquities 14:77, 491 Josephus blames Queen Alexandra’s sons for the
134 Cohen, “Josephus and His Sources,” p. 47.
135 See Ilan, “Josephus and Nicolaus on Women,” p. 241. Both Ilan and Schwartz believe that
Josephus’ description in Antiquities is more dependent upon Nicolaus of Damascus than that of War, ibid
Let us return to the beginning of the narrative, Ant. 13:407. Alexander Jannaeus apparently realized that his wife would be a better ruler than either of their sons and therefore he bequeathed the throne to her. Queen Alexandra’s skillful politics and achievements during her nine-year reign, as well as what transpired after her death, proved him correct.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize Richard Laqueur’s basic premise: “So tritt denn an die Stelle der bisher üblichen Art der Quellenkritik, welche Josephus zu einem stumpfen Abschreiber der ihm gerade vorliegenden Quellen machen will, die Erkenntnis von der eigenen Arbeit und der sich allmählich entwickelnden Sonderart des Schriftstellers”\textsuperscript{136} (“The customary approach of source criticism, which up to now has made Josephus out to be a stupid copyist of the sources lying directly before him, is superseded by a recognition of his own work and of the gradual development of the unique style of this author”\textsuperscript{137}). Thus even if Josephus inserted other sources into his writings the very decision to include these harsh passages would still be an expression of his own opinion.

\textsuperscript{136} Laqueur, \textit{Jüdische Historiker}, pp. 4-5.
\textsuperscript{137} Idem, \textit{Jewish Historian}, p. 4
Chapter 3:  The Contribution of the Qumran Scrolls and Archaeology

Several Qumran documents are the only other Second Temple period source on Queen Alexandra’s reign, apart from the extensive accounts in War and Antiquities discussed above. Yet, as will be shown, these documents only add some fragmentary information to Josephus’ narrative. Calendrical Documents 4Q331 and 4Q322 provide contemporary confirmation of some names and events; Pesher Nahum and Pesher Hosea contain codewords that most probably indicate the attitude of the Qumran sect towards Queen Alexandra.

The Twin Palaces in Jericho are the only known archaeological remains that have been dated to Queen Alexandra’s era. Nevertheless, this chapter will demonstrate that their exact date of construction is questionable and therefore we can only theorize as to their significance for her reign. There are no extant coins that bear witness to her queenship.

I Calendrical Documents 4Q331 and 4Q322

Literary works from Qumran include six fragmentary copies of the mishmarot text – Calendrical Documents 4Q332-4Q324c. The texts include a long list of the names of priestly courses who served in the Temple. Structured by a cyclical solar calendar of 364 days, the twenty-four priestly courses are distributed over six years.¹ This text is unusual in that it integrates historical events from the Second Temple Period within the framework of a religious chronology.²

4Q331 and 4Q322 introduce the name שלמים – the name of the Judaean ruler Queen Alexandra according to scholarly consensus.³ The mention of a woman’s name in a Qumran document is very significant. For, as Eileen Schuller and Cecelia Wassen point

¹ Wise, Thunder in Gemini, pp.190-193.
² Shmaryahu Talmon et al. term 4Q332 an “historical text.” They note that “historiographical documents, in which the occasional mention of a mishmar and a date in its turn of duty serve as a supportive device for dating historical events, as in 4Q331 5 and 7; 4Q332 12; 3 3 and are distinct from the mishmar texts.” See Pfann and Alexander, Qumran Cave 4, p. 13.
³ See above, Introduction: Queen Alexandra’s Hebrew Name. See also, Fitzmyer, “4QHistorical Text D” in Pfann and Alexander, Qumran Cave 4, pp. 275, 278, 284; Tal Ilan, “Shelamzion in Qumran, p.196.
out, “There is virtually no theoretical discussion about women per se, nor mention of individual women [in Qumran documents:] the only woman’s name that occurs is that of the queen Shelamzion (Salome) Alexandra in a calendric type document…”

Joseph Fitzmyer’s proposal for dating these Calendrical Documents, which is based upon a palaeographic analysis, is extremely significant for the documentation of Queen Alexandra’s reign. Fitzmeyer suggests that 4Q331 was written in the mid-first century BCE and that 4Q332 dates to circa 25 BCE. If so, then these documents represent the earliest primary source on the era of Queen Alexandra since they were written, at the most, approximately fifty years after her death.

Let us examine the texts:

4Q331 frg. 1ii:

Fitzmyer’s translation reads:
1. son [    ]
2. from[    ]
3. [    ]
4. [    ]
5. a human being[    ]
6. [    ]
7. Shelamzion[    ]

4Q332 frg.2:

Fitzmyer, “4QHistorical Text D,” in *Qumran Cave 4*, pp. 276, 281.
6 Ibid., p. 277.
7 Ibid.
Fitzmyer’s translation reads:

1. [ to ]give him honour among the Arab[s   ]
2. [ on the n]inth of Shebat, this (is)[   ]
3. [   ] which is the [tw]entieth in the month[ of   ]
4. [   ]with secret counsel Shelamzion’ came[
5. [   ] to confront the[   ]
6. [   ] Hyrcanus rebelled[ against Aristobulus]
7. [   ]to confront[   ]

These fragments provide very sparse information, two names - הרקנוס שלמנזון and a date – the 20th of Shevat, and a hint of some sort of rebellion. Without Josephus’ historical context, we would not be able to decipher these documents. Therefore, Qumran scholars have used Josephus’ accounts in order to complete these fragments and attempt to understand them.

The only information that we can derive from 4Q331 frg. 1ii is the name Shelamzion, which is also mentioned in 4Q332 frg.2. Inasmuch as the latter fragment contains significantly more material (or words), I shall focus upon this text and discuss the significance of the name Shelamzion afterwards.

Michael Wise’s seminal work is the key to deciphering these fragmentary texts. Based on a solar calendar as well as the mention of priestly courses in other fragments (4Q332a, fragment 1 - מִשְׁמַרְיָה [_meshérī-yāh; romanized:] Shelamzion, and 4Q332b fragment 1 - כלשכה [kēlšēqa; romanized:] Shelamzion), Wise surmises that the author of the Calendrical Documents used the chronology of the twenty-four priestly courses to record historical events. Inasmuch as various fragments of the Calendrical Documents 4Q332-4Q324c mention several proper names from the Hasmonean period (יוחנן = John Hyrcanus [4Q324b, frg. 1], הרקנוס = John Hyrcanus II [4Q332 frg.2], שלמנזון = Shelamzion/Alexandra [4Q332 frg.2], אמרלוס = the Roman

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8 Ibid., p. 278
9 Here Fitzmyer wrote “Salome”.
10 Ibid., p. 278.
11 Many Qumran works, notably the Book of Jubilees and Enoch, rely on a 364-day solar calendar (as opposed to the lunar calendar used by the Pharisees) in order to ensure that the festivals will always fall on the same day, see VanderKam, Calendars.
12 4Q332a, fragment 1 reads:
13 See Wise, Thunder in Gemini, esp. p.193.
general M. Aemilius Scaurus [4Q324a frg.2]), Wise hypothesizes that these fragments formed a “Hasmonean Chronicle” referring to events involving Alexandra in 72 BCE and Hyrcanus’ struggle against Aristobulus in late 66 BCE. Wise views the Calendrical Documents as supportive of Aristobulus due to the use of the negative term “rebelled” (מרד) for Hyrcanus, and concludes that they were written by the opponents of the Pharisees.

If Wise is correct, then based on the proper names mentioned, the fragments may be connected to two sets of events: 1) the threat to Queen Alexandra by Aristobulus and his followers to join the mercenary army of Aretas the Arab (Ant. 13:414); 2) the later conflict between the two sons of Alexandra – Hyrcanus, supported by Aretas III, and Aristobulus, supported by the Roman general Aemilius Scaurus (War 1: 123-130 and Ant. 14:4-21). Aretas the Arab, king of Arabia, who is apparently mentioned at the beginning of the fragment – בערב, represents the common denominator for both events.

Josephus first mentions Aretas III in connection with the battle between the Gazans and Alexander Jannaeus. The former hoped that Aretas would aid them in their battle against the Judaean king:

Their courage was heightened by the expectation that Aretas, the king of the Arabs, would come to their assistance (Ant. 13:360)

Subsequently, Josephus tells how οἱ δυνατοὶ “the men of rank and influence” along with Aristobulus came to the palace and threatened Queen Alexandra to join her late husband’s enemy:

For Aretas the Arab and his princes would certainly deem it worthwhile to hire such strong men for mercenary service, men whose very name had caused them to shudder before they had heard it. (Ant. 13:414)

The third time that Aretas is mentioned in Antiquities is in the description of the struggle for the throne between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, which took place circa 66 BCE:

14 Ibid., p. 218.
[Antipater] persuaded him [Hyrcanus] to take his advice and flee to Aretas, the Arab king, promising that if he followed his advice, he too would be his ally. (Ant. 14:14).

... Aretas marched against Aristobulus with an army of fifty thousand horsemen and footsoldiers as well, and defeated him in battle (Ant. 14:19).

Meanwhile Pompey sent Scaurus also to Syria (Ant. 14:29)...

And so [Pompey] took Aristobulus’ side... put an end to the siege by commanding Aretas to withdraw or else be declared an enemy of the Romans (Ant. 14:33)

In *War*, Aretas is mentioned only in connection with the second stage of the internecine war between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus:

...he [Antipater] committed Hyrcanus into the hands of Aretas, and by dint of conciliatory speeches and cajoling presents, induced the king to furnish an army, fifty thousand strong, both cavalry and infantry, to reinstate his ward. This force Aristobulus was unable to resist. Defeated in the first encounter he was driven into Jerusalem, and would have been speedily captured through the storming of the city, had not Scaurus the Roman general, intervening at this critical moment, raised the siege. (*War* 1:126-127)

The above accounts demonstrate that although Aretas was an enemy of both King Alexander Jannaeus and Queen Alexandra, he subsequently became an ally of Hyrcanus II. If the first line of 4Q332 frg.2 - [כַּהַתָּלִיָּה לְעַד] does indeed refer to Aretas, then whoever would give him honor would therefore be an enemy of these two regents, and/or an ally of Aretas. Wise proposes that this line refers to the relations between Hyrcanus and Aretas. The phrase may easily be taken as connoting an alliance between the two in which the Jewish would-be king attained a new status in Nabatea.13

The next event, detailed in line 4 of 4Q332 frg.2, “בְּיסַעַד בֵּית שֶלֶם צִיּוֹן” alludes to an earlier period than line 1. Based on a calculation of the cycle of priestly rotations, Wise dates Shelamzion’s “coming” to 72 BCE, however, other than stating that she “came” for

13 Ibid., p. 205.
inimical purposes, he does not propose any insights into this episode. If Wise’s dating is correct, then this could be connected to the negotiations between Queen Alexandra and Tigranes, king of Armenia, which took place close to this time period (War 1: 115-116; Ant. 13:419-421). And, in connection to these negotiations, if my interpretation of ὑπηγάγετο in War 1:116 is correct and there is some sort of deception going on (see Chapter 2), then it could be connected to something secretive that Queen Alexandra accomplished in the diplomatic arena.

In any case, the surviving words in the text testify that this event was connected to other traumatic and important events, which involved both Jewish and non-Jewish civil/military leaders: אסורים – prisoners, ערבים – perhaps King Aretas, הרקנוס – Hyrcanus II, ראש הגועים – the leader of the gentiles murdered, and in 4Q324a הרג אמליוס – Aemelius murdered (identified as the Roman general M. Aemilius Scarus). Moreover, even though she was not a priest or a male ruler, the author of the Calendrical Documents still mentions Shelamzion-Alexandra. We can therefore conclude that the Qumran sect viewed her as a leader on par with Hyrcanus II and a Roman general and that some important event occurred during her reign.

Thus a partial decoding of 4Q332 frg.2 yields the following conclusions: Shelamzion came secretly and accomplished something noteworthy, perhaps by deceiving Tigranes of Armenia. Her son Hyrcanus rebelled, probably against his brother Aristobulus, as Josephus reports the confrontation between the two in both War and Antiquities. Finally, the repetition of the word להקביל for both Shelamzion’s action and that of Hyrcanus could indicate that they both confronted major enemies (Shelamzion – Tigranes and Hyrcanus – Aristobulus).

Tal Ilan believes that one can surmise the attitude of the sect from the documents’ literary context. She notes that since the special days listed in the Calendrical Documents usually mark calamities, “the mention of the queen may suggest hostility towards her.”

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16 Ibid., p. 208.
17 “And by treaties and gifts she deceitfully led on Tigranes king of Armenia, who was encamped before Ptolemais and was besieging Cleopatra. But the latter hastened to retreat because of domestic troubles, as Lucullus had invaded Armenia.” (War 1:116).
18 Wise, Thunder in Gemini, pp. 196-197.
Ilan disputes Wise’s contention that the text is supportive of Aristobulus II since his name is only a (suggested) completion of the document. She concludes that “This text is probably another piece of anti-Hasmonean propaganda produced in Qumran.” Moreover, Ilan claims that since the Dead Sea Sect opposed Alexandra and rejected her legitimacy, “they attempted to blot Shelamzion Alexandra out of their historical record.” This claim is based upon the lack of a code-name for Alexandra in *Pesher Nahum* (see below). Still, the Calendrical Documents contradict Ilan’s contention that the Qumranites erased the queen’s name since the name Shelamzion is found in both fragments.

Queen Alexandra’s Hebrew/Aramaic name, Shelamzion, which appears in these fragments, is not mentioned in Josephus’ *War* (1:107-120) and *Antiquities* (13:398-432). As I have already mentioned, even prior to the discovery of Qumran, Clermont-Ganneau deduced that the queen’s original Hebrew (or rather Aramaic) name was Shelamzion (שלאמציון) and his supposition has been confirmed by 4Q332 Frg. 2 (which gives her name שלםציון in full) and 4Q331 frg. 1ii (which is missing the last letter). This Aramaic name is vocalized as Shelamzion.

Thus the main contribution of the Calendrical Documents to a study of Queen Alexandra is the discovery of her correct Hebrew/Aramaic name and the fact that she was considered important enough to be mentioned in a “Hasmonean Chronicle.” The latter is not to be taken lightly considering that nineteenth and early twentieth-century historians devoted little space to her reign and some recent ones have omitted it altogether. Even if the Qumran sect was hostile towards Queen Alexandra, they realized that she was an important historical figure worthy of mention.

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20 Eadem, “Shelamzion Alexandra,” p. 873. On the anti-Hasmonean outlook in Qumran scrolls, see Eshel, *Dead Sea Scrolls*. Eshel notes that the Qumran scrolls indicate that even if Josephus’ negative descriptions of Hasmonean monarchs derive from his source, Nicolaus, they do have some basis, ibid, pp. 10-11.

21 Ilan, *Silencing the Queen*, p. 61.

22 See above, Introduction: Queen Alexandra’s Hebrew Name.

23 And this is how both Wise and Ilan spell her name. In reply to my query concerning the vocalization of her name, Prof. Steven Fassberg of the Hebrew University stated that “this form is indeed Aramaic: Shelamziyyon.”

24 See Chapter 1. As mentioned therein, Tarn’s outline of the Hasmonean dynasty omits Queen Alexandra’s reign; it describes that of Alexander Jannaeus and then proceeds directly to that of his two sons, see Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilisation*, pp. 236-7.
II *Pesher Nahum*

In the Qumran sectarian text *Pesher Nahum* (4Q169), “successive verses from the biblical book of Nahum are interpreted as reflecting historical realities of the first century BCE.”

Its importance for this study lies in the fact that “the pesher interpretations are contemporizing historical/eschatological applications of the [prophetic-biblical] base-texts that reflect the theology and concerns of the Qumran community.”

Based on its “formal” style of paleography, Strugnell dates the composition from the end of the Hasmonean to the beginning of the Herodian period. The following text that is presumed to describe the reigns of Alexander Jannaeus and Alexandra could therefore indicate the attitude of the Qumran community towards historical events during the first century BCE in general, and towards the reign of Queen Alexandra in particular:

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25 Berrin, *Pesher Nahum*, p.1. The historical names mentioned outright in Pesher Nahum are that of the kings of Seleucid Syria, Antiochus and Demetrius, pp. 24, 89
26 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
Shani Berrin’s translation reads:

1 **Nah 3:1a** Woe, city of blood! She is all [deception, with pillage] she is filled

2 Its **pesher**: “she” is the city of Ephraim, the Seekers-after-Smooth Things at the end of the days, that the[y will] conduct themselves in deception and falsehoo[d].

3 **Nah 3:1b-3** There will not cease predation, nor the sound of the whip and the sound of the rumbling of the wheel, and the galloping horse, and the charging chariot. Lunging horsemen! Flame

4 and flash of spear! And a multitude of slain and a mass of corpses! And there is no end of (dead) bod[i(es)] and they will stumble over their bodies. Its **pesher**: concerning the domain of the Seekers-after-Smooth Things

5 that there shall not cease from the midst of their congregation the sword of Gentiles, captivity and plunder, and fever among them, and exile from fear of the enemy; and a **multitude** of

6 guilt **corpses** will fall in their days, and **there will be no end** to the sum of their **slain**, and even over their fleshly **bodies** they shall **stumble**, by their guilty counsel.

7 **Nah 3:4** Because of the may harlotries of the harlot, charmingly pleasing, and mistress of sorceries, who betrays nations through her harlotries and families through her sor[ce]ries

8 Its **pesher**: concerning the misleaders of Ephraim, who mislead many by their false teaching, and their lying tongue and their wily lip;

9 kings, princes, priests and populace together with the resident alien. Cities and **clans** will perish through their counsel, n[ob]le[s and rul[ers]

10 will fall [by the fury of their tongue. **Nah 3:5** “Behold I am against you,” it is the declaration of the Lord of h[os]ts, “and you will uncover

11 [your] skirts up over your face; you will sh[own nat]ions [your] nakedness and kingdoms your shame. Its **pesher**:[…]

Similar to the Calendrical Documents, here too Josephus’ accounts are indispensable for a decoding of this allegorical text.  

Based upon an identification of the Pharisees as **דורשי החלקות**, scholars view the text of column 2 as focusing upon the Pharisees (column 1 mentions the **דורשי החלקות** within the context of the deeds of **כפיר החרון** - Alexander Jannaeus).  

Yet the historical context is a topic of debate. Schiffman dates the periscope of the text to refer to the reign of

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29 Ibid., p. 196.
Alexander Jannaeus; yet Dupont-Sommer concludes that it reflects the civil war between Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II (67-63); and Berrin narrows the latter period to the time of Pompey’s takeover of Jerusalem in 63 BCE. Nevertheless, I agree with the premise of Flusser, Amusin, and Ilan, who believe the pericope relates to the reign of Queen Alexandra. The key phrase in the *Pesher* for this dating is line 4: —the rule of the Seekers-after-Smooth-Things, i.e. the Pharisees. Amusin and Ilan note that Josephus’ writings provide the key to confirm this dating. In particular, this phrase coincides with Josephus’ description of Queen Alexandra delegating political authority to the Pharisees in *War* 1:112 and *Ant.* 13:408-410.

The continuation of the *Pesher* (lines 5-6) describing “captivity, plunder, and corpses” seems to describe the Pharisees’ persecution of their opponents during Queen Alexandra’s reign. This could parallel Josephus’ description of the Pharisees killing Diogenes as well as the others who had incited Alexander against them (*War* 1:113; *Ant.* 13:411). Another support for dating this text to Queen Alexandra’s reign is Amusin’s interpretation of the phrase חרב גוים as possibly alluding to the foreign mercenaries that Queen Alexandra gathered (*War* 1:112; *Ant.* 13:409).

The text continues with a citation from Nah 3:4:

Because of the many harlotries of the harlot, charmingly pleasing, and mistress of sorceries, who betrays nations through her harlotries and families through her sor[ce]ries (line 7).

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34 In line with dating the historical context of *Pesher Nahum* 4Q169 to the time of Alexander Jannaeus, Schiffman disagrees with the prevalent translation of מושב as rule or government. He argues that “the use of מושב does not imply the Phrisees were ruling. Rather, it refers to their “domain,” similar in meaning to the term גורל, lot in Qumran usage. This passage clearly refers to the aftermath of the war with Demetrius, rather than some period of Pharisaic rule…” See Schiffman, “Pharisees and Sadducees,” p. 281.
36 See Amusin, “Éphraim et Manassé,” p. 392
37 Flusser notes that “the dark description of the “rule of those looking for smooth interpretations” is not substantially different from Josephus’ description of that period.” (Flusser, “Pharisees,” p. 220).
This biblical verse refers to Nineveh’s might in terms of its seductive powers. Who (or what) is the subject of this allegory? The זונה (harlot) is most probably someone (or a group) that the Qumranites despised since, as Berrin points out, the enemies of the Qumran Community are often accused of ‘fornication.’ Due to the subsequent pesher, most scholars (see below) have interpreted this phrase as referring to the Pharisees. In opposition to the scholarly consensus, Ilan offers an innovative proposal. She argues that the negative female imagery of a “harlot” alludes to the woman in power, Queen Shelamzion. This hypothesis is based upon the verse’s position in the text, immediately after the passage describing the rule of the Pharisees. Ilan points out that “just as the sect disliked the Pharisees, it similarly disliked the new Hasmonean ruler” but “the queen’s gender was of no particular importance since “all Hasmoneans were bad.” Ilan believes that the metaphor of a harlot for Alexandra represents a “silencing technique,” since the queen is subsumed under the biblical figure of the whore…she has no independent existence outside of the Bible.”

Yet the subsequent pesher of this verse states that this coded passage denotes “the misleaders of Ephraim” who most scholars identify as the Pharisees. Ilan resolves this contradiction by arguing that Shelamzion is the ruler in whose name the Pharisees act.

If Ilan is correct, and the “harlot” refers to Queen Alexandra, then this passage could indicate the attitude of the sect towards women in power, which could have been influenced by the external historical context.

Berrin notes that the term כשפים (magic) in line 7 is often coupled with sexual offences (זנונים) in biblical and apocryphal literature (Mal 3:5, II Kings 9:22 and in the

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39 Berrin, Pesher Nahum, p. 245.
40 Ilan, “Shelamzion in Qumran,” p. 60. Schuller and Wassen note that “the type of abstract misogynous statements found in Josephus and Philo about the “nature” of women…finds little parallel in the scrolls” (Schiffman, Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls, 2, s.v. “Women,” p. 981).
41 Ilan, Silencing the Queen, p. 66
44 This would be a very rare occurrence since, as Eileen Schuller notes, “there are no passages [in the scrolls] that explicitly discuss what the authors thought about women …or appropriate roles for women in the family, community or broader society,” see Schuller, Dead Sea Scrolls, pp. 84-85.
Book of Watchers in Enoch, chap. 7). Here too there may be a connection with Queen Alexandra. Ilan claims that the text in the Jerusalem Talmud (YSan 6:8), which is based on the Mishnah (MSan 6:4) referring to the hanging of eighty witches by Shimon ben Shetah, has some historical basis. In fact, Ilan believes that Queen Alexandra was instrumental in executing the accused witches. If true, then Pesher Nahum connects Queen Alexandra’s reign with witchcraft.

Line 9 refers to “kings, princes, priests and populace together with the resident alien. Cities and clans will perish through their counsel...” The word “kings” (מלכים) would also include Queen Alexandra as well as other Hasmonean monarchs. Berrin, however, believes that this line lists Pharisaic supporters. Still this would not exclude Queen Alexandra, for she was indeed a Pharisaic supporter. Schiffman’s interpretation is that the Pharisaic leadership had “led others astray with false interpretations.” In such a case, it would also include Queen Alexandra as a Pharisaic supporter and one who followed their practices. Thus line 9 could definitely refer to Queen Alexandra, either directly or indirectly.

We can therefore conclude that the significance of Pesher Nahum is not the addition of concrete historical data but rather the fact that it provides us with “tools for reconstructing the Weltanschauung of ancient Judaism.” The above analysis strongly indicates that Pesher Nahum 3-4 II: 5-9 alludes to Queen Alexandra. These passages convey a very negative picture, embodied in metaphors of sexual promiscuity, of both Queen Alexandra and the Pharisees, whom she supported. The negative attitude of the surrounding non-Jewish Roman society towards powerful queens may be one factor affecting the Qumran sect’s outlook on Queen Alexandra. Flusser’s incisive observation that new discoveries tend to confirm the accuracy of previously existing written historical

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46 Ilan, *Silencing the Queen*, p. 214-241. Ilan’s claim of the historicity of this event is based upon the contradiction of the halakha in the Mishnah (one does not hang two people in a single day), which the rabbis did not deny, the numerous rabbinic accusations against women of practicing magic, the biblical injunction to kill witches, and the story’s similarity to other witch-hunts in history. Klausner, Schürer and many others do not accept this story as historically true, see Klausner, “Queen Salome Alexandra,” p. 249; Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, p. 310.
48 Berrin, *Silencing the Queen*, p. 223.
50 Ibid., p. 306
sources, is especially true in the case of Qumran documents, Queen Alexandra and Josephus’ writings.  

III Pesher Hosea

Based upon the above analysis of היות in Pesher Nahum, Ilan suggests that the following passage from the prophecy of doom in Pesher Hosea A (4Q166) also alludes to Queen Alexandra:

1 ידיה לא ידענה כי אנכי נתתי לה דגן [ותוריהו]
2 והרבחתי והשתעשע [מבחמ] (emoth ב’ פהרי)
3 אשר...[יה]כנעני וישבまして אלי...
4 מçıיתו השילוח חאיר בן אפור שלח אוים [כפי]
5 עבורי הנביאים ופתיתםيطע ידך ו다면
6 וכלים פזרו מתים בעורנים
7
8 לבך אשרו בעכלות יצרן חנני וחדרו [כמוצד]
9 ותכלתינו זמריכו ופשחתו את [טוראה]
10 והנה אנגלת אשת בנהלו לעיני מת[חרז ואירש]
11 לא Beitelנה פריד (emoth ב’ א’)
12 משם אשר הכבשה ברעה וכתיברתי להו [לקול
13 והרחבת עלין תנוchecker אשר נשתל הלוחה ונהב
14 לא ישתלים זרורתיהו

1[“And she did not know that] it was I who gave her the grain, [the wine and the oil
2 and who lavished upon her the silver] and gold which they used [for Ba’al” (Hosea
2:10) Its meaning:…]
3 and they were satisfied and forgot God who […]
4 his commandments they cast behind them, which he had sent to them [by the mouth of]
5 his servants the prophets, yet they listened to those who misled them, and honored

52 Allegro, *Qumran Cave 4: V*, p. 32.
them,

6 and in their blindness feared them like gods.

7 [vacat]

8 “Therefore I will take back my grain in its time and my wine [in its season]
9 and I will take away my wool and my flax which were to cover [her nakedness].
10 Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lo[vers and no one]
11 shall rescue her out of my hand” (Hosea 2:11-12).
12 This means: that he smote them with hunger and nakedness to be a sha[me]
13 and ignominy in the sight of the Gentiles upon whom they relied,
14 but they will not save them from their torments.

Joseph Amusin believes certain details in this pesher “clearly point to some concrete
events and facts.” He identifies “those who misled them” (המתעיהם) in line 5 as the
Pharisees and cites two other details – the presence of strangers (or Gentiles - הגואים) in
line 13, whom Amusin identifies as the troops of the Nabatean king Aretas and the
famine (or hunger - רעב) in line 12, which, he deduces, refers to the war between
Hyrcanus and Aristobulus in 65 BCE. Amusin bases these assumptions upon another
source that contains these three elements (Pharisees, strangers and famine), which is, not
surprisingly, Josephus’ work (Ant. 14:28). Josephus' narrative relates that King Aretas
and Hyrcanus II, supported by the Pharisees, besieged Aristobulus II in the Temple, and a
famine took place during this time (which was a punishment for not observing God's
commandments). Based on Amusin's theory as well as rabbinic literature (Sifrei Deut.
42), which describes the agricultural prosperity during Queen Alexandra's reign within
the context of rainfall as a reward for observing the commandments, Ilan posits that the
satiation or prosperity mentioned earlier in line 3 (וישבו) refers to Alexandra’s reign
even though she is not specifically mentioned. This theory is based upon the
chronological sequence of Pesher Hosea A – if lines 12-13 refers to events that took place

54 Ibid., p. 149.
55 Ibid., pp. 146-150. Hanan Eshel also agrees with Amusin (and Ilan) that the topic of Pesher Hosea is the
famine that occurred during the civil war between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II in 65 BCE, see Eshel,
Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 133, n. 40.
56 See Chapter 5 for an in-depth discussion of Sifrei Deut. 42.
57 Ilan, Silencing the Queen, pp. 68-71.
in 65 BCE, then line 3 would refer to an earlier time, that of the reign of Queen Alexandra. Ilan concludes that this pesher is a sectarian response to the Pharisaic tradition that Queen Alexandra’s reign was an idyllic epoch of agricultural plenty. Thus instead of the rabbinic tradition of abundance – we have here starvation, and instead of faithfulness – harlotry. Still, as Ilan herself notes, "Unlike Pesher Nahum … there is little to go on when attempting to glean historical data from this Pesher." Even though there may be some connection between Pesher Hosea and Queen Alexandra, it is rather tenuous. It is based on the assumption that the Pharisaic tradition in Sifrei Deut. dates to the early Herodian period (and not later). Finally, Ilan reinforces her hypothesis by claiming that since Pesher Hosea B (4Q167) mentions the כפיר חרון – the codename for Yannai, and אפרים – the codename for the Pharisees, it is therefore discussing events that predate Pesher Hosea A or the events it discusses.

If we accept the hypotheses of Amusin and Ilan, the most that we can learn from these pesharim is that the Qumran sect loathed the Pharisees and Queen Alexandra, just as they disliked all Hamonan rulers, and that they used biblical language to express their aversion.

IV Coinage

Four Ptolemaic queens appear on ancient coins, which may be connected to the ancient Egyptian heritage of honoring royal women, and the fact that the daughter of the Pharaoh would at times inherit the throne, even if there were male offspring. Those queens displayed on coins reigned either prior to the era of Queen Alexandra or several decades later. Arsinoe II is the first Ptolemaic queen to appear on a coin (circa 261-240 BCE), although only after her death. A silver tetradrachm from the five-year reign of Queen Berenice II of Egypt, dates to 246-241 BCE, when her husband fought in the

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58 Ibid., p. 68.
59 Ibid., p. 71.
60 Stahl, *Women on Ancient Coins* is the only book that I have found which deals with the specific topic of queens and coinage in ancient times.
61 After the death of Queen Arsinoe II of Egypt (who died in 269/270 BCE), her image appears on a gold octadraochm (dated to 261-240 BCE) together with Ptolemy II, see Shipley, *Greek World*, p. 72. She also appears by herself on a silver dekadrachm, dated to 270-242 BCE, which portrays her head with a royal diadem, dressed in the style of a goddess; see Rowlandson, *Women and Society*, p. 27.
Third Syrian War.\footnote{Fantham et al., Women in the Classical World, pp. 146, 148.} This is one in a series of gold and silver coins on which she appears.\footnote{Stahl, Women on Ancient Coins, p. 21.} The Seleucid Queen Cleopatra Thea is shown on a coin from 125 BCE with the inscription “of queen Cleopatra, goddess of Plenty.”\footnote{Macurdy, Hellenistic Queens, pp. 98, 112.} She was “the only Seleucid queen who minted coins with her own portrait and in her own name.”\footnote{Grant, Hellenistic World, p. 197.} We find two silver tetradrachms dating to the reign of the Ptolemaic queen Cleopatra VII: one from 39-37 BCE and another coin in which she wears the diadem of a Hellenistic king is dated to 34 BCE.\footnote{Fantham, Women in the Classical World, p. 37; Rowlandson, Women and Society, p. 39.} There are also two bronze coins dating to the years of her reign, 42-30 BCE.\footnote{Stahl, Women on Ancient Coins, p. 25.}

Still, despite these precedents, Queen Alexandra apparently chose not to mint coins since, to date, there are no coins extant from her reign. In the past, several scholars have attempted to uncover such coins but their identification of these coins has been since proven incorrect. In 1854 Louis de Saulcy identified a coin as belonging to the reign of Queen Alexandra based on the (incorrect) reading of the legend of a coin inscribed with ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΑ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΑ. de Saulcy read this as ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΑ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΑ. The remains of an inscription from the reverse side, which had been eroded except for traces of the Hebrew letter מ, he read as מלכה or מלכתא (Queen).\footnote{de Saulcy, numismatique judaïque, p. 106, pl. IV, no. 13.} Yet de Saulcy himself notes that there are identical coins belonging to the reign of a King Jonathan (that is, Alexander Jannaeus, see below): “On remarquera que les types de cette rare monnaie sont identiques avec ceux des pieces bilingues d’un roi Jonathan, inscrivant sur ses monnaies la légende grecque d’un roi Alexandre.” Following de Saulcy, Madden also mistakenly identified this coin as belonging to Queen Alexandra’s reign.\footnote{See above, Chapter 1. See also Madden, Jewish Coinage, p. 72; de Saulcy, numismatique judaïque, p. 106, pl. IV, no. 13.} Madden followed de Saulcy in the identification of this coin with Queen Alexandra.\footnote{Madden, Jewish Coinage, pp 70-72.} However, recent excavations have unearthed better preserved specimens of this coin which read וֹתֵנָה יְהֹהֵן, demonstrating that it clearly belongs to the reign of Alexander Jannaeus.\footnote{See Meshorer, Ancient Jewish Coinage, p. 81; idem, Jewish Coins, pp. 37-42; Stahl, Encyclopedia, p. 30 (Heb.).} One hundred years later, Arie
Kindler also tried to identify another coin with the Greek letter A to Queen Alexandra but has also been proven incorrect since this coin has been identified as belonging to John Hyrcanus I.\textsuperscript{72}

Stahl points out that the portraits of queens on coins are highly artistic representations; they are more realistic and detailed than that of kings.\textsuperscript{73} Yet Hasmonean monarchs in general, and Alexander Jannaeus in particular, did not mint coins bearing their portraits (unlike Hellenistic monarchs) due to the biblical prohibition of making a graven image.\textsuperscript{74} Therefore, at most, Queen Alexandra would have had her name/title inscribed on a coin.

What coins then were in circulation during the reign of Queen Alexandra? Meshorer believes that the large number and variety of type L Jannaeus coins minted in the year 25 (שנת כה) (79-78 BCE) of Alexander Jannaeus’ rule indicates a long period of minting these coins, which perhaps continued through the reign of Queen Alexandra.\textsuperscript{75} Thus the concrete answer to this question is that there were only coins of Alexander Jannaeus in circulation during the reign of Queen Alexandra. If so, then what can explain Queen Alexandra’s decision not to mint her own coins? The norms of the surrounding Hellenistic society may provide an answer. Even though several Ptolemaic queens minted coins, there are no extant coins depicting queens between 125 BCE to 42 BCE. Moreover, the Hellenistic coins that did portray queens were very realistic. Queen Alexandra, consequently, may have wanted to distance herself from imitating the artistic style of Hellenistic coinage due to the Jewish prohibition against the portrayal of human images.

\section*{V Archæological remains}

The Twin Palaces in Jericho may be the only known archæological remains from Queen Alexandra’s reign. The palaces were built on a slope, close to an earlier central palace and south of a cluster of pools built by Alexander Jannaeus. They had a beautiful view of the surrounding area and faced the sun. The two adjoining palaces were two stories high and each had a staircase. The dimensions of each palace were exactly 22.5 by

\textsuperscript{72} Kindler, \textit{Ancient Jewish Coins}, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} Meshorer, \textit{Jewish Coins}, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., p. 40.
25.5 meters and each one had a courtyard measuring 9 by 10 meters. The courtyard was surrounded by decorated rooms, including a large main room (*triclinium*), measuring 9 by 7 meters, for receiving guests and banquets. The palaces were abruptly destroyed in an earthquake in 31 BCE. This is the only architectural example in the ancient world of a semi-detached “two-family” structure. Using Josephus as his source, the late Ehud Netzer ascribed the palaces to the reign of Queen Alexandra. He maintained that the construction of the two identical palaces was due to Alexandra’s desire to ease the rivalry between her two sons. Since the high priesthood could not be divided up, she divided up her property by building two palaces in Jericho, one for each son.

Although in 2001 Netzer proposed dating the construction of the palaces to shortly after the eighties of the first century BCE due to archaeological and stratigraphical data, in an earlier publication in 1982, he offered a broader estimate of the palaces’ date of construction – between 76 BCE (the year of Alexander Jannaeus’ death) and 37 BCE (the beginning of Herod’s reign). In that earlier study, Netzer proposed two possible time periods for the construction of the Twin Palaces: 1) during Queen Alexandra’s reign, in which she will have lived in the central palace and each of her sons in one of the identical twin palaces; 2) following the truce between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, after Alexandra's death, when Hyrcanus abdicated and, according to Netzer, the brothers divided up the royal property (*War* 1: 121; *Ant.* 14: 6-7).

The fact that most of the ceramic finds from the Twin Palaces date from 85/75 – 31 BCE supports a broad time period for the Twin Palaces’ inhabitation, therefore, we cannot be sure of the exact year of their construction. Furthermore, Netzer’s premise that the palaces date to the reign of Queen Alexandra is based on Josephus’ writing (as cited by Schürer), yet there is no mention of these palaces in Josephus’ work. Moreover, Josephus’ description of Queen Alexandra does not mention any desire on her part to prevent jealousy between her sons. In fact, Queen Alexandra preferred Hyrcanus

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76 This description is based on Netzer, *Palaces of the Hasmoneans*, p. 31; see also entire article, pp. 30-39.
77 Ibid., p. 30.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
82 Ibid., p. 25.
84 Ibid., p. 29, n. 1.
for the high priesthood and viewed Aristobulus as a threat (War 1:109; Ant. 13: 408). Netzer’s dating of the palaces to the reign of Queen Alexandra may be correct but there is no other source that corroborates this theory. Consequently, due to the uncertainty as to the exact time of the construction of the Twin Palaces, we have no archeological remains that can definitely be ascribed to the reign of Queen Alexandra.

**Conclusions**

To conclude, inasmuch as archeological remains dating to the reign of Queen Alexandra are questionable, we can only rely on written documentation from the Second Temple Period – Josephus’ writings and Qumran documents. The latter confirm Queen Alexandra’s prominence and strength as a ruler, one to be feared and even hated but certainly not to be ignored.
Chapter 4:  
The Role of Hellenism and Apocryphal Literature

Scholars such as Martin Hengel, Tessa Rajak Lee Levine and many others have emphasized the growing impact of Hellenism upon Jewish society in the land of Israel, which reached a high point in the first century CE. Yet Hellenism, the degree to which Greek philosophy, religion and literature as well as economic, social, political and material culture influenced the East was not a one-way street. Levine emphasizes that Jewish society adopted and adapted Greek culture – its language, art, political and social institutions.

Thus, according to the scholarly consensus, Hellenism exerted a strong influence during the late Second Temple Period in general, which includes the reign of Queen Alexandra. I propose that Hellenism also influenced the acceptance of Queen Alexandra’s reign by Hasmonean society as well as her portrayal in Josephus’ writings. Aspects of Hellenism that most probably impacted upon Queen Alexandra’s reign include the following: 1) the line of sovereign Ptolemaic queens and other cases of female succession to the throne in the Hellenistic world; 2) the apocryphal books of Judith, Susanna, and Septuagint Esther, which reflect Jewish society’s outlook on powerful women leaders in the first century BCE; and 3) the status of women in Hellenistic as opposed to Roman society.

I. Women in Hellenistic Society

How were women viewed in Hellenistic society? Testimony concerning women rulers (in particular, the reign of the dynasty of Cleopatra), magistrates (such as Phyle of Priene in the first century BCE), and poets demonstrates the improved status of women

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1 This chapter is an expanded version of a lecture given at the World Congress of Jewish Studies on August 2, 2009.
2 See Hengel with Marschies, Hellenization of Judaea; Rajak, “Location of Culture”; Levine, Judaism and Hellenism; Bickerman, Jews in the Greek Age; Braun, Griechischer Roman und hellenistische Geschichtsschreibung; idem, History and Romance; Moehring, “Josephus on the Marriage Customs of the Essenes”; Mussies, “Greek in Palestine”; Sevenster, Do You Know Greek?
3 Levine, Judaism and Hellenism, p. 18.
4 Ibid and see the entire book.
during the Hellenistic Age (323-30 BCE), as opposed to the earlier classical period. Hellenistic society allowed women a newfound freedom of movement, in particular royal women. Elaine Fatham describes one change:

In the Classical period, respectable women—at least those of Athens—had been able to look forward to only two journeys: the first from their father’s house to their husband’s, the next from their husband’s house to the grave. But in the Hellenistic period both women and men … forged new lives … non-royal Greek women still needed to conduct their economic and legal transactions through the intermediary of a male guardian, but royal women … did not do so (my emphasis).

The fact that Hellenistic society was characterized by a favorable outlook on independent aristocratic women may have influenced Josephus’ flatter description of Queen Alexandra’s leadership skills in War. In particular, Josephus does not criticize the fact that a woman took over the reins of government, and he even praises her political and military skills (War 1:112, 116).

Furthermore, Ptolemaic queens, from Cleopatra I till Cleopatra VII, played a pivotal political role in the ancient Hellenistic world in general, and countries under Ptolemaic influence in particular, including Judaea. Several queens from the Hellenistic dynasty led armies, determined foreign policy and minted coins. Cleopatra I ruled Egypt as regent for her minor son (180-176 BCE). Cleopatra III reigned for about fifteen years (116-101 BCE, one of the longest terms for a queen) and even obtained the position of priest in the royal cult (which was normally held by a king). The most famous of all queens, Cleopatra VII, eliminated her siblings in order to become the sole ruler of Egypt (51-30 BCE) and also played a leading military role. A votive relief from the first year of Cleopatra’s reign (51 BCE) depicting her as a male pharaoh, as well as a coin portraying her with the diadem of a Hellenistic king (34 BCE), demonstrate that she was viewed as a supreme ruler. This heritage of Hellenistic regent queens undoubtedly influenced the

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5 See Cantarella, Pandora’s Daughters, pp. 90-91.
6 Fantham et al., Women in the Classical World, p. 140.
7 See Macurdy, Hellenistic Queens, pp. 8-12. On the issue of queens and coinage, see Chapter 3.
acceptance of Queen Alexandra’s authority in Hasmonean society as well as Josephus’ subsequent account.

Josephus’ description of Alexandra’s reign also mentions a contemporary of Queen Alexandra – Queen Cleopatra (Selene) of Syria (Ant. 13:421). The daughter of the Ptolemy VIII and Cleopatra III, Selene was born circa 135 and died in 69 BCE. Following the death of her fifth husband, Antiochus X King of Syria in 83 BCE, she ruled a portion of Syria together with her son Antiochus XIII. Both Alexandra and Selene ruled during the same time period as strong and powerful queens, although Selene ruled as co-regent with her son while Alexandra ruled independently. Thus a regent queen was an accepted phenomenon before, during and after the era of Queen Alexandra.

Not only were regent queens prevalent in Hellenistic society but also the way in which they achieved sovereignty most probably influenced Alexandra’s inheritance of the throne, as described in War:

And he [Alexander] left the kingdom to his wife Alexandra, convinced the Judaeans would most of all hearken to her, since her utmost lack of savagery and her opposition to transgressions of the law brought the people to bear good-will towards her. And he was not wrong in these expectations, for this woman ruled over the kingdom on account of her reputation for piety. For she was indeed very strict about her people’s ancestral laws (customs), and the offenders of the divine laws she used to throw out of office. (War 1:107-108)

According to Josephus’ account in War, Alexander Jannaeus bequeathed the throne to Alexandra due to her popularity with the people. This popularity was on account of a) her lack of savagery, which may hint at her opposition to her husband’s cruel

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12 Ibid., pp. 171-172.
behavior, such as his crucifixion of eight hundred of his opponents;\textsuperscript{13} b) her reputation for piety (δόξαν εὐσέβειας) as expressed by her opposition to transgressing the Jewish law (ταῖς παρανομίαις) and her strict observance of her people’s ancestral laws (customs) (τοῦ νόμου (ἐθνοῦς) τὰ πάτρια). The description in \textit{War} demonstrates that Josephus viewed Alexandra’s succession as a favorable event and indicates that he did not regard Alexandra’s inheritance of the throne as something unusual. Josephus’ positive outlook on female succession may have been influenced by the fact that in the Hellenistic world the widow of a king often inherited the throne. The following historical precedents confirm that the situation of a queen inheriting the throne following her husband’s death was a widespread phenomenon.

The first-century CE Greek historian Memnon writes in the \textit{History of Heracleia} that, following Mithridates V’s assassination circa 120 BCE, his widow received the throne together with her son, Mithridates Eupator:

\begin{quote}

φοινικώτατος δ’ ἐκ παιδὸς ὁ Μιθριδάτης ἤν · τὴν γὰρ ἀρχὴν τρισκαίδεκατης παραλαβὼν, μετ’ οὐ πολὺ τὴν μητέρα, κοινώνιον αὐτῶν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς τῆς βασιλείας καταλειφθείσαν, δεσμωτηρῶι κατασχόν βίαι καὶ χρόνωι ἐξανάλωσε καὶ τῶν ἄδελφων ἀπέκτεινε.\textsuperscript{14}

Mithridates was a great murderer from childhood. After succeeding to the kingship at the age of 13, not long thereafter he first imprisoned and then killed his mother, who, together with him, had been left the kingdom by his father.\textsuperscript{15}

It is unclear whether the widow was only supposed to rule as sole regent until her eldest son Mithridates reached maturity or to rule jointly with him and perhaps with her other son as well.\textsuperscript{16}

In his \textit{Epitoma} of Pompeius Trogus’ universal history, the Latin historian Justin (Iustinus) reports that in his final testament, Ptolemy VIII bequeathed the kingdom to

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ant.} 13:380. \\
\textsuperscript{14} “Memnon Heracleota,” p. 351. \\
\textsuperscript{15} My translation. \\
\textsuperscript{16} See McGing, \textit{Mithridates VI}, p. 43.
\end{flushright}
Cleopatra III in 116 BCE:\textsuperscript{17}

…moritur rex Aegypti Ptolomeus, regno Aegypti uxori et alteri ex filiis quem illa legisset relictio…\textsuperscript{18}

…Ptolemy the king of Egypt died; he bequeathed the kingdom of Egypt to his wife and to whichever of his sons she would choose.\textsuperscript{19} (Justin 39:3.1)

In both \textit{Antiquities} and \textit{War} Josephus tells us that John Hyrcanus bequeathed the Hasmonean kingdom to his (unnamed) wife. Subsequently, however, their son Aristobulus I imprisoned her and starved her to death in 105/4 BCE:

\begin{quote}
δεσμεῖ δὲ καὶ τὴν μητέρα διενεχθέειν περὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας, ταύτην γὰρ κυρίαν τῶν ὅλων ὁ Ἰωάννης ἀπολείποιτεί, καὶ μέχρι τοσάττης ὀμότητος προῆλθεν, ὡστε καὶ λυμὸ διαθέειαι δεδεμένην.\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

And so he also had put his mother in chains, for disputing the matter of his power, for John had left her as the caretaker of everything, and his savageness went so far as to starve her to death in prison.\textsuperscript{21}

What can we learn from all of these incidents concerning queens and succession? The murders of Berenice III and of the wife of John Hyrcanus by their sons and heirs demonstrate that the inheritance of the throne by a king’s wife was not always a propitious event. In fact, these occurrences may have served as a warning signal to Queen Alexandra, who kept her son, Aristobulus II, under strict control (\textit{War} 1:109).

We shall, however, perceive a significant difference in the bequest of the throne by Ptolemaic/Hellenistic rulers and of that by Hasmonean monarchs. Grace Macurdy calls attention to the fact that Hellenistic queens usually shared the throne with a co-ruler:

These women [Hellenistic queens] had great prestige and influence and in some cases great political power, though this last did not come to them as it

\textsuperscript{17} Pompeius Trogus’ \textit{Historiae Phillipicae}, consisting of forty-four books, was written during the time of Augustus. The original did not survive but we have Justin’s shortened version, which dates to circa 200 CE, see J.M. Alonso-Núñez, “An Augustan World History: The Historiae Phillipicae of Pompeius Trogus,” in \textit{Greece and Rome} 34:1 (April 1987), pp. 56-72
\textsuperscript{18} Seel (ed.), \textit{Epitoma historiarum}, p. 271.
\textsuperscript{19} I am grateful to Rivkah Fishman-Duker for her help with this translation; see also Hölbl, \textit{Ptolemaic Empire}, p. 204.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{War} 1:71. Cf. an almost identical description in \textit{Ant.} 13:302.
\textsuperscript{21} My translation.
came to the men by direct inheritance or by conquest, but through the doorway of marriage, which often afforded them opportunity to act as regent for an absent husband, or for a minor child, or as co-regent with a husband whose weakness of character allowed a queen of strong nature to come forward as co-ruler.  

Similar to Hellenistic queens, Alexandra gained power by virtue of her husband who designated her as his successor. Nonetheless her status was different, for male heirs (sons) were often included in Hellenistic testaments (since the queen usually ruled until the son reached maturity) while Alexander Jannaeus (as well as John Hyrcanus) bequeathed the throne solely to his wife, without any mention of a son(s). In fact, Alexandra ruled as the sole regent in spite of the fact that she had two adult sons, Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II. Finally when a Hellenistic queen inherited the throne she typically married quickly, but such was not the case with Alexandra.  

What can account for the difference between the Hellenistic practice of bequeathing the throne to a wife and son(s) together and that in which Hasmonean monarchs left the throne solely to the wife? This disparity may be connected to the widespread Ptolemaic practice of the joint reign of a king and queen who were next of kin – a brother and sister, father and daughter, mother and son(s), etc. Such a joint reign often entailed marriage between these relatives, particularly between a brother and sister, which is forbidden in Judaism. Consequently, the differing approaches of Judaism and Hellenism to such marriages may offer one explanation as to why Alexander Jannaeus chose his wife as the sole heir to the Hasmonean kingdom.

II. Women in Jewish-Hellenistic Literature

Literary Hellenistic works from the Hasmonean period may have also had a positive

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23 Such as in the case of Cleopatra Berenice III who inherited the Ptolemaic throne upon the death of her father, Ptolemy Soter II, in 80 BCE. Due to the royal court’s desire for a male ruler, she was married off to her nephew, Ptolemy XI, who subsequently murdered her, see Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, pp. 6, 172-175.
24 Lev 20:16 details the biblical injunction against marriage between first-degree relatives. Examples of consanguineous marriages include the following: Cleopatra II married her brothers, Ptolemy VI Philometor and Ptolemy VIII Physcon; Cleopatra V married her brother Ptolemy IX Soter; etc. See Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, pp. 153, 161, 172.
effect upon the acceptance of Queen Alexandra’s reign. Tal Ilan has proposed that the books of Judith, Esther and Susanna, were written as propaganda for Queen Alexandra’s rule.\(^{25}\) Even though this is a rather speculative theory, as Ilan herself states, it is worthy of consideration.\(^{26}\) Moreover, it has stimulated several other scholars to use this theory as a basis for further studies (see below).

Athalya Brenner notes that the apocryphal figures of Judith, Esther and Susanna “make female characters visible” and lists various common denominators. All three are beautiful and involved in unconventional sexual circumstances; they are in mortal danger, challenge the authority of male leaders, step outside the bounds of conventional female behavior, and through their natural resources and pious faith are successful in overcoming the male leaders who threaten them.\(^{27}\)

**a. The Book of Judith**

The apocryphal Book of Judith relates the folktale of a courageous widow who killed Holofernes, the general of the Assyrian king Nebuchadnezzar, and thereby saved the Jewish people.\(^{28}\) Its objective was not to convey historical fact but rather to teach “moral and religious lessons and exhortations.”\(^{29}\)

The time of Judith's composition determines whether it would have impacted upon Queen Alexandra's reign. Emil Schürer dates Judith to the late Hasmonean period due to its interest in political and religious liberty and its outlook of “Pharisaic legalism.”\(^{30}\) Morton Enslin assumes that Judith belongs to the late Hasmonean – early Roman period (161-40 BCE) and believes it reflects Nicanor’s war against the Judeans.\(^{31}\) Amy Jill-Levine places Judith in the late first-century BCE;\(^{32}\) David Freedman proposes that the book received its final form sometime circa 107 BCE;\(^{33}\) and Doron Mendels dates it to

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\(^{25}\) Ilan, *Integrating Women*, pp. 132-133. See also Patterson, “Honoured in her Time.” Patterson uses Ilan’s hypothesis as the basis for her dissertation.

\(^{26}\) Ilan, *Integrating Women*, p. 5.

\(^{27}\) Brenner, *Feminist Companion*, pp. 11-12.

\(^{28}\) For the conclusion that Judith can best be defined as a folktale, see James Moyar, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, III, s.v. “Judith,” p. 1121.

\(^{29}\) Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, II, p. 32.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 34.

\(^{31}\) Enslin, pp. 28-29.


\(^{33}\) *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 3, s.v. “Judith,” p. 1123.
140-134 BCE. Consequently, inasmuch as most scholars ascribe Judith’s composition to between fifty and one hundred years before or after Queen Alexandra’s reign (76-67 BCE), we may use it as a witness to the Hasmonean cultural milieu and the Jewish attitude towards female leaders at that time. Furthermore, this work demonstrates “Second Temple Judaism’s attempt to define itself in terms of Greek culture.”

Van Henten suggests that Judith espouses a critique of Hasmonean rule:

In spite of the fictitious nature of the book of Judith this image of the heroine may well have had a political significance, especially if the socio-historical context of the book is taken into account. It can easily be contrasted with the contemporaneous propaganda of the Hasmoneans, who portrayed themselves as the legitimate successors of kings, high priests and other Israelite leaders … and tried to support this ideology by … emphasizing the parallels between the performance of the judges and theirs. I Maccabees contains several references to the salvation of Israel through Judas the Maccabee and his brothers which echo phrases in Judges passages. These support the construction of the Maccabees as new judges who restore the ideal theocratic state, which automatically affirms the divine support for their leadership … Thus … the figure of Judith may have functioned as a way of releasing criticism against the new Hasmonean dynasty, firmly in control at the time.

If van Henten is correct, then this would challenge Ilan’s supposition that Judith served as propaganda for Queen Alexandra’s rule. In any case, whether or not Judith conveys an anti-Hasmonean message, it still provided its readers with a prototype of an active, strong, heroic female leader. Van Henten also believes that the name Judith might have been chosen as a comparison with Judah Maccabaeus.

Philip Esler connects Judith to biblical events. He views it to be a “fictional parallel to the story of David and Goliath” in that both convey the message that God raises the

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34 Mendels, Land of Israel, p. 51.
35 Even though some scholars (e.g. Grintz, Sefer Yehudith) date Judith to the Persian period due to Persian terms and practices, as Carey Moore points out, the storyteller may have used oral traditions from the Persian period while the story in its present form was written much later, see Anchor Bible Dictionary, 3, p. 1120.
37 Van Henten, “Judith as an Alternative Leader,” pp. 243-244.
38 Ibid., pp. 244-245.
lowly and brings down the mighty.\textsuperscript{39} Esler draws several parallels between the characters of David and Judith, one of which is that both are improbable saviors due to their low social status: David was a young shepherd while Judith was a woman.

It might be noted, however, that the attempt to link Judith to previous male military leaders (Judah Maccabaeus and David) reflects a somewhat gratuitous supposition that the story of a female leader could not have emerged \textit{ex nihilo}, or be modeled on a female biblical heroine such as Jael, but rather must have been the result of a male precedent.

The following salient parallels between the characters of Judith and Queen Alexandra have triggered several scholarly studies:

- Both women were widows, which afforded them greater freedom of movement. They remained widows until their demise.
- Both were known for their piety – Judith devoted herself to prayer and fasting following her husband’s death (\textit{Judith} 8:6, 8) while Josephus emphasizes Queen Alexandra’s reputation for piety $\delta \omicron \xi \alpha \omicron \nu \epsilon \sigma \epsilon \beta \epsilon i a \varsigma$ (War 108).
- The two women resemble the model of a warrior queen – wise, cunning and militant.
- Finally, both women ended their lives quietly at home.

There is no mention of \textit{Judith} in Josephus’ writings nor were any copies of this book (or Esther) discovered in Qumran.\textsuperscript{40}

Due to these parallels, Samuel Rocca identifies the historical figure of Alexandra with the literary figure of Judith. He claims that the plot of the \textit{Book of Judith} refers to the war between Tigranes King of Armenia and Queen Alexandra, and was written by a Sadducee in order to criticize Queen Alexandra’s rule.\textsuperscript{41} Yet a thorough reading of Josephus’ works does not support such a hypothesis, which is derived from Tal Ilan’s theory that the three apocryphal books were composed as propaganda for Queen Alexandra’s rule. First of all, Queen Alexandra does not embody all the characteristics of Judith. As Rocca points out, Judith is described as beautiful while Josephus provides no physical description of Queen

\textsuperscript{39} Philip Esler, “‘By the Hand of a Woman,’” p. 99.
\textsuperscript{40} Tal Ilan posits that “[s]ince the Qumranites were clearly hostile to the Hasmonean dynasty, any books promoted by that regime, or that promoted its interests, would have ipso facto been rejected by the Dead Sea Sect.” See Ilan, \textit{Integrating Women}, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{41} Rocca, “\textit{Book of Judith},” pp. 85-98.
Alexandra, who was 64 years old when she ascended the throne. Nonetheless, Rocca endeavors to parallel Judith’s beauty with that of a Hellenistic basilissa and thus to arrive at a parallel with Alexandra, but this argument is unconvincing.\textsuperscript{42} Likewise his argument that Judith’s wealth makes her the equivalent of a queen is unsubstantiated.\textsuperscript{43}

Tal Ilan’s hypothesis also prompted Dilsy Patterson to claim that the Book of Judith was composed as political propaganda for Queen Alexandra’s rule.\textsuperscript{44} Unlike the present dissertation, Patterson focus is a literary analysis. Based on previous research, she draws a parallel between the political and military leadership of Judas Maccabee and Judith as well as that of King David and Judith\textsuperscript{45} and then connects the literary objectives of Judith to Queen Alexandra’s reign.\textsuperscript{46} Patterson concludes that Judith represents a new literary genre which supports female leadership, such as that of Queen Alexandra, by the use of national allegory and allusion.\textsuperscript{47} I agree with this hypothesis to some degree – Judith certainly does reflect a willingness to accept female leaders. Patterson asserts that the literary objective of Judith also connects Alexandra and Judith – the book warns the audience not to underestimate a female leader such as Alexandra, as the Assyrians had underestimated Judith.\textsuperscript{48} This supposition is based upon a speculative literary exegesis of Judith, which might have literary merit but is unsubstantiated by historical sources. Likewise, Patterson’s claim, based on Pesher Nahum, that Queen Alexandra was liable to charges of sexual impropriety for associating with male Pharisees, and that the Book of Judith aims to counter such charges of sexual impropriety by portraying her as “pristine,” is an interesting conjecture but unconfirmed by other sources.\textsuperscript{49} Another difficulty is Patterson’s translation of War 1:108: ήκριβος γαρ δή μάλιστα τοῦ νόμου τὰ πάτρια (which is the basis for one of her main hypotheses). Patterson claims that the third person imperfect indicative active of ήκριβος shows that Shelamzion was a “scholar of the [Jewish] law”.\textsuperscript{50} As shown in Chapter 2, in most cases ήκριβος refers to strictness or

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., pp. 88-89.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 88.
\textsuperscript{44} Patterson, “Honoured in her Time.”
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., p. 4, 71, 99, 101-102, 105, 115-116; cf., van Henten, “Judith as an Alternative Leader,” pp. 244-245; Esler, “‘By the Hand of a Woman’ p. 99.
\textsuperscript{46} Patterson, “Honoured in her Time,” pp. 219-220, 271-283.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., pp. 284-288.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., pp. 221, 243-245, 278.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., pp. 201-202, 211.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., pp. 186-187.
accuracy, therefore the correct translation of this passage is that Queen Alexandra was “very strict about…ancestral laws.” Nevertheless, one of Patterson’s conclusions is quite plausible: Queen Alexandra’s knowledge of the dynasty of Cleopatras, and perhaps her personal acquaintance with some of these queens, would have provided her with a role model of a powerful female ruler.

b. The Septuagint Book of Esther

As with all his biblical portraits, Josephus’ description of Queen Esther in Antiquities 11:198-296 relies, to a great extent, upon the Septuagint/Greek Esther (LXX). Josephus' account of Queen Esther is germane to this study inasmuch as there are several similarities between the descriptions of Queen Esther and Queen Alexandra. Since there are almost no other queens in Jewish history, it is not surprising that Josephus associates the story of Queen Esther with Queen Alexandra, especially since both are viewed in a positive light.

First, let us begin with a little background. The LXX adds six Additions (107 verses) to the canonical Book of Esther (MT): a dream of Mordechai, an edict by Haman, prayers of Mordechai and Esther, Mordechai’s royal edict countering that of Haman, the interpretation of Mordechai’s dream, and a colophon, as well as the mention of God’s name (fifty times!). Antiquities (11:6) includes all the Additions of Septuagint Esther, which shows clearly that Josephus was acquainted with this Greek version.

The date of the composition of Septuagint Esther is critical for determining its relationship to Queen Alexandra’s reign. Elias Bickerman dates the Septuagint Esther to 78-77 BCE. According to Carey Moore, the most probable date is either 78 BCE or more likely 114 BCE (assuming the colophon is reliable). Like Moore, John Barton also

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51 See above, Chapter 2, pp. 35-36.
52 She writes: “It is reasonable to assume that Shelamzion knew about the exploits of these powerful Ptolemaic queens; she may well have known some of these women personally. The exploits, murders, and incestuous unions between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties would no doubt have been the object of discussion and criticism in the upper class Jewish circles in which she was raised; however, the unabashed political force of these ‘Cleopatras’ and their maneuvers would, arguably, have provided a powerful role model throughout Shelmazion’s youth.” See, Patterson, “Honoured in her Time,” p. 144.
54 Schürer, History of the Jewish People, II, p. 182.
56 See Moore, Additions, p. 161. The colophon states that the book was written “In the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra,” which would determine the terminus ad quem as 114 BCE, assuming
adds the proviso that if the colophon is authentic then the Septuagint Esther would date, in general terms, to the late second or early first century BCE.57 Charles Torrey argues that 114 BCE is the only possible date for the book’s composition.58 He posits that the Septuagint version of Esther is not a translation of the Hebrew text but rather a totally different book, which includes the same material as the Hebrew Masoretic text (the minority of the work) and a significant amount of new information.59 More recently, 48 BCE has also been added as a possible date.60 In any case, this would place the composition of Septuagint Esther very close to (or soon after) Queen Alexandra’s reign. The circulation of a work extolling a Jewish queen during the era of Queen Alexandra, would have, to some extent, engendered a positive attitude by Hasmonean society towards queenship.

The LXX adds a religious dimension to the MT description of Esther: “But Esther did not reveal her ancestry. For so Mardochaios had commanded her: to fear God and to do his ordinances…” (LXX Esther 2:19). Here Esther is portrayed as an exceedingly pious Jew who observes the commandments (although she is married to a non-Jew!). Elsewhere in the LXX, God’s name is also added (for a total of over fifty times!).61 Addition C in the LXX includes several descriptions connected to Esther’s piety: her loathing of sharing the King’s bed since he is a non-Jew: “I abhor the bed of the uncircumcised one” (C:26); and her abstinence from eating non-kosher food and drinking the wine libations: “And your slave has not eaten at Haman’s table, and I have not honored the king’s banquet nor

57 Due to the fact that there were several Ptolemies with wives named Cleopatra, Barton cites the dates of 114, 77, and 48 BCE as all being possible, see John Barton, Oxford Bible Commentary, p. 643.
58 Torrey, “Older Book of Esther,” pp. 12, 26. Torrey claims that Greek Esther was translated from Aramaic to Greek in Jerusalem and then brought to Egypt in 114 BCE, where the colophon was added. He believes that the Hebrew text, like the Greek, was based on an Aramaic original (p. 30 ff.). Torrey’s innovative idea posits that there are two distinct Greek texts of Esther, with the A text being derived from a Semitic Vorlage distinct from that of the B text (Septuagint).
59 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
60 Jon Levenson notes that possible dates for the colophon range from 114-48 BCE (Levenson, Esther, p. 136). Likewise, John Barton adds the proviso that if the colophon is authentic then Septuagint Esther would date, in general terms, to the late second or early first century BCE and he cites 114, 77, and 48 BCE as possible dates (John Barton, Oxford Bible Commentary, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001] p. 643). Hanna Kahana broadens the possible date range even further to between 114 BCE and 93 CE and notes that “the composition of the Esther Scroll and its Greek translation were made within [a] hundred years of each other” (Hanna Kahana, Esther: Juxtaposition of the Septuagint Translation with the Hebrew Text [Leuven: Peeters, 2005], p. xxvii). Are you sure you got her right???
drunk the wine of libations” (C:28). Interestingly, Josephus’ retelling of the Esther story in *Antiquities* minimizes her piety. For example, Josephus follows the MT, and not the LXX, in declaring that Esther did not reveal her ethnic origin/people (τὸ ἐθνὸς - *Antiquities* 11:203), without any mention of God or commandments as in the LXX, he shortens Esther’s prayer (Addition C) and leaves out the expressions of Esther’s attack on idol worship (C 19-22) and non-Jews (C 24-28). What could be the reason for this deliberate omission? Louis Feldman’s observation that “[a] major purpose of Josephus’ *Antiquities* . . . is to answer the charges of the anti-Semites,” such as that of intolerance of other religions, can provide an answer. Josephus probably eliminated those descriptions of Esther’s piety which involved disparaging remarks concerning non-Jews in order to demonstrate the tolerant nature of the Jewish religion to his Roman readers.

It is remarkable that the difference between the MT and LXX’s emphasis on Esther’s piety resembles the transition between the portrayal of Alexandra as a pious queen in *War* as opposed to her description in *Antiquities*, which minimizes her religiosity.

To conclude, if the LXX was composed prior to Queen Alexandra’s ascent to the throne in 76 BCE, then the depiction of Esther as a powerful queen in the LXX would have impacted upon Hasmonean society’s acceptance of a powerful queen like Alexandra. And even if it was composed after her ascent, then it would have impacted upon Josephus’ account, in particular – upon the thematic parallel concerning Alexandra’s and Esther’s piety (or rather lack of it).

There are also striking similarities between the characterizations of Queen Esther and the apocryphal figure of Judith: “Both of these two women act in a situation of mortal danger to the Jews, perform with cleverness and courage in spite of risk to their own lives, and succeed almost singlehandedly in making a way for Jewish salvation and military victory.” Both women interact with a Gentile man to save the Jews from

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62 Although it would seem that Esther declares that she does not eat with Haman due to her observance of Jewish dietary laws, Luzia Sutter Rehmann proposes another explanation. She claims that Esther does not eat with Haman in order to avoid socializing with an enemy who schemes to kill the Jewish people. See Luzia Sutter Rehmann, “Abgelehnte Tischgemeinschaft in Tobit, Daniel, Ester, Judit: Ein Plädoyer für Differenzierung” *Lectio Difficilior* 1/2008, p. 10.

63 Thackeray believes Josephus utilized two biblical texts: a Hebrew or Aramaic Bible and a Greek version, see Thackeray, *Josephus the Man*, p. 81. In this case, Josephus might have been following the Hebrew Bible.


destruction, are beautiful, and carry out their own strategy. Day notes that characteristics of Esther in the Greek text (beyond what is in the Masoretic text) are even more similar to Judith: both feel alone and express this in prayer to God; ask for success; are assured by the king/general that they will not be harmed; obey dietary laws; express a theological understanding of Israel’s religious traditions, etc. Day theorizes that “the figure of Esther appears progressively more similar to Judith as we move from the M [Masoretic] to the B [Septuagint] text to the A [shorter Greek] text.” Kristin de Troyer believes that the Septuagint translator “softened” the male perspective of the Masoretic text and criticized its male bias. 

Let us now return to Ilan’s hypothesis. Based on a date of 78-77 BCE for the composition/translation of the Septuagint Esther, its awareness of gender issues and the positive roles that women can play in this work (as well as that of Judith and Susanna), and the fact that both women are the wives of kings, Ilan claims that the decision to promote the book of Esther could well be associated with the coronation of Shelamzion. The composition of Esther may have thus been part of a larger literary campaign designed to promote the leadership of women through dialogue with other contemporary points of view, which…were hostile to the idea of women in power.

True, as shown above, there is a wide variety of opinion as to the date, which Ilan herself notes. Consequently, due to the uncertainty as to its date of composition, her hypothesis rests on tenuous grounds. Nonetheless, Ilan's proposition does have significant implications. For, even a broader range of dating (114-48 BCE) for Septuagint Esther would, at the least, indicate the cultural milieu and attitude towards royal Jewish women during the era of Queen Alexandra.

66 Ibid., p. 223.
67 Ibid., pp. 223-224.
68 Ibid., p 224. Earlier in her book, Day explains that “…I accept the basic consensus on the formation of the three texts … the bulk of the A text arose from an alternate stratum of the early Esther story which differed from the Masoretic text, that the Septuagint (B Text) reflects a translation of the Hebrew version much like the Masoretic text except for six extended additions…” (p. 18).
70 Ilan, Integrating Women, p. 135.
71 Ibid.
72 Barton concludes that the main thrust of Greek Esther is the emphasis upon the covenantal
c. Susanna and the Elders

The apocryphal story of *Susanna and the Elders* tells how a married woman, Susanna, was falsely accused of adultery by two elders (judges) whose sexual proposition she had refused. The young prophet Daniel saves her from death by demonstrating that the elders bore false witness and they were then stoned to death instead of Susanna.  

The narrative appears in two different Greek versions: the earlier Old Greek/Septuagint and the Theodotion version, which Carey Moore views as separate translations of two similar Semitic texts. Moore provides a broad time range for the story of Susanna – from the Persian period to circa 100 BCE. Some scholars prefer the later date (circa 100 BCE) based on the premise that *Susanna* was written as a Pharisaic polemic against Sadducean court procedures. Still, this date merely places the *Vorlage* of *Susanna* within the general era of Queen Alexandra but not specifically to the time of her ascent to the throne (76 BCE). Consequently, inasmuch as we are uncertain of *Susanna*’s date of composition, this aspect does not confirm, one way or the other, Ilan’s hypothesis that it was specifically written as propaganda for Queen Alexandra’s reign.

Dan Clanton attempts to link *Susanna* to Queen Alexandra based on the theme of witnesses. He notes that Shimeon ben Shetah, was “reputed to be the brother of Salome Alexandra,” and that “rabbinic literature records several incidents involving Simeon and witnesses.” In particular, Clanton cites the story of the imprisonment of the son of Shimeon ben Shetah (ySanhedrin 6:3) who refused to be set free after the witnesses relationship between God and Israel, which is absent in the Hebrew, Barton, *Oxford Bible Commentary*, p. 649.  

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74 Ibid., p. 80. As with Judith, there is no mention of *Susanna* in Josephus’ *Antiquities*. Explanations for this include the possibility that it was either not circulating at the time, it was not included in the manuscripts that Josephus had at his disposal (Moore, *Additions*, p. 81) or that Josephus considered it fiction and not history (Ilan, *Integrating Women*, p. 136).
75 Ibid., p. 92.
76 Dan Clanton proposes that Sussana represents Pharisaic legal propaganda against the Sadducees. Sadducean juridical procedures required someone who falsely accused another of murder to be put to death himself, but only if the person falsely accused had been killed, while the Pharisaic interpretation of the law is that the intent of false witnesses to cause someone’s death by their perjury is sufficient for these witness to be condemned to death. See Clanton, “(Re)Dating Susanna,” pp. 126-130 and the entire article.
77 Ibid., pp. 128, 136-137. Clanton repeats this claim of a familial relationship between Alexandra and ben Shetah several times, indicating that he believes it to be true. Yet, as will be shown in Chapter 5, the only place that this relationship is mentioned is in *bBerakhot* 48a and Ephron has shown that this reputed brother-sister relationship was the result of an orthographic mistake.
against him were proved false and instead accepted the death penalty in order to “bring to the fore” the Pharisaic view that “a defendant does not have to be injured prior to punishing any perjurious witnesses.” Based on the fact that, in the case of Susanna, the false witnesses were executed even though Susanna was not injured, Clanton concludes that this “would seem to be in accord with the Pharisaic interpretation of the law of lex talonis” and would be connected to the time when they had almost total power – during the reign of Queen Alexandra. True, Jacob Neusner has demonstrated that the rabbinic traditions concerning the execution of false witnesses originally blamed Judah ben Tabbai for sentencing a perjurer to death and only later transferred the guilt to Shimeon ben Shetah. Neusner’s conclusion does not, however, contradict Clanton’s thesis that the issue of false witnesses was prominent in the time of Queen Alexandra, as Judah ben Tabbai was a contemporary of ben Shetah. One the other hand, it supports Clanton’s assertion that the story of Susanna dates to the first century BCE.

Despite the fact that these three works (Greek Esther, Judith and Susanna) do not appear to be propaganda per se for Queen Alexandra’s reign, I can agree with Ilan that there are numerous similarities between the three works inasmuch as they all take place in a post-exilic setting and were composed most probably close (between fifty to one hundred years) to the time period of Queen Alexandra; reflect a Palestinian provenance and represent the standpoint of Pharisaic Judaism; portray an imaginary history; have a beautiful pious female hero; and their names and topics focus on women’s acts. Most important, the women in these works question gender hierarchy by transcending their subordinate position and assuming a position of leadership. In conclusion, one can say that the literary parallels between the figures of Esther and Judith would indicate the positive way in which Judaean society in the first century BCE viewed pious female leaders. Likewise, the apocryphal books of Greek Esther, Judith and Susanna must have influenced Hasmonean society of the larger time period and most probably did pave the way for the acceptance of Queen Alexandra’s reign, although they were not explicitly written for this purpose.

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78 Ibid., pp. 129-130.
79 Ibid., p. 130.
81 For an analysis of Palestinian Jewish literature, see Schürer, History of the Jewish People, III, p. 177.
82 Ilan, Integrating Women, pp. 138-148.
III. The Influence of Hellenistic and Roman Society upon Josephus’ Portrayal of Queen Alexandra

a. Josephus: From Judaea to Rome

I propose that Josephus’ descriptions of Queen Alexandra in War and Antiquities reflect the differing status of women in Hellenistic as opposed to Roman society, in particular, the diverse social realities in which Josephus lived and worked. Josephus finished writing War at the end of the 70s CE, when he was a “new immigrant” to Rome and therefore most likely still strongly influenced by Jewish-Hellenistic society. Antiquities, on the other hand, was composed later, circa 93-95 CE, when Josephus had already lived in Rome for a considerable period of time and had probably assimilated Roman norms, in particular, its view of women. This transition from a Hellenistic culture, which was open to women as supreme rulers, to a Roman society, which was opposed to such a role for women and espoused the feminine domestic ideal, may have influenced Josephus’ change in attitude towards Queen Alexandra at the end of Antiquities 13. Roman historical and literary narratives will clarify the background for this transformation.

As was shown in Chapter 2, the majority of the descriptions of Queen Alexandra in Antiquities and War are not that different in their appraisal of her reign. Yet, the end of Antiquities (13:417, 431, 432) sharply condemns Queen Alexandra’s political actions and inheritance of the throne, while such censure is totally absent in War. This hostile critique of Queen Alexandra’s reign in Antiquities 13 was probably influenced by two external factors: 1) the attitude in Rome towards women in general and queens in particular; 2) Roman literary works written close to Josephus’ time and Roman literary traditions.

84 As previously stated, based on Levine, Judaism and Hellenism, pp. xi-xii, I use the term “Jewish-Hellenistic society” to refer to a society that has adopted and adapted, to some extent, the Greek language, culture, and philosophical outlook. For the influence of Hellenism upon Josephus’ writings, see Louis Feldman, “Abraham the Greek Philosopher in Josephus,”; idem, “Hellenizations in Josephus’ Version of Esther,” 143-170; idem, “Josephus as an Apologist,” pp. 69-98; idem, “Josephus’ Portrait of Saul,”, pp. 45-99; and “Josephus’ Portrait of Deborah,”, pp. 115-128. James Bailey analyzes the influence of Hellenistic literary models on Josephus, in particular, his portraits of biblical women, see “Josephus’ Portrait of the Matriarchs,” pp. 154-179. For the influence of Hellenism on Jewish society in the land of Israel, see n.2 above.
85 Ibid; Edmonson et al., Josephus, p. 6.
b. Attitudes towards Women in Rome

As students of Roman art have shown, in the wake of the war against Cleopatra VII, Rome rejected any representation of an imperial woman that would suggest the official status of a queen. Moreover, Augustus made every effort to differentiate the nature of his power from that of a Hellenistic-style hereditary monarchy, which included the model of female succession.

Even outside of Rome, a drastic transformation in the status of women ensued once Hellenistic countries fell under Roman domination. Jane Rowlandson details how royal women in Egypt, a close neighbor of Judaea, lost their rights:

…the Ptolemies accorded an exceptionally prominent role to the women members of their dynasty…Like queens elsewhere they might hold royal property and had some financial independence; more unusually several of them ruled as regents or even in their own right. Some seemed to have achieved considerable popularity among both Greek and native subjects…The situation changed dramatically when Egypt was made a province of the Roman Empire in 30 BC…[and it reflected] Roman reluctance to allow the imperial women to appear to have any independent public role.

Various clauses in the *Gnomon of the Idios Logos*, a set of rules promulgated by Augustus, of which the extant copy dates to 149/150 CE from Theadelphia, indicate the attitude of Roman society towards women and inheritance of property.

6: Ἀλεξανδρεὶ ὁ ἐξὸν διατάξαι γυναῖκα γενεάς αὐτῷ ἐξ αὐτῆς μὴ ὀὕσης πλέον τετάρτου μέρους ἢ ἔχει περιουσίας, τέκνων δὲ αὐτῷ ἐξ αὐτῆς ὅπως οὐκ ὀφείλον ὁ πλείονος ἐξὸν περὶ ἐφεύτων ὥσπερ ἐὰν ἔκαστῳ τῶν ὑιῶν διατάξῃ

28: γυνῇ ἐὰν ἢ ἐπὶ ὅ τι πλῆρον, ὅ σου ἀνθείουν ἢ μηδὲν...[90]

[clause] 6. An Alexandrian cannot bequeath to his wife from whom he had

87 Ibid., p. 8.
89 The *Gnomon* was apparently a guide given to a Roman financial official in Egypt, which mostly contained provisions dealing with hereditary laws based upon royal decrees. For further detail on the *Gnomon*, see M. David and B.A. Van Groningen, *Papyrological Primer* (3rd ed.) (Leiden: Brill, 1952), p. 54.
no progeny more than a fourth part of his wealth; but if he has children by her, he can give his wife a share no greater than that which he assigns to each of his sons…

[clause] 28. If a woman is 50 years old, she does not inherit…

This Augustan legislation on inheritance was designed, like previous social legislation such as the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordiniubus* (18-17 BCE), to encourage fertility as a part of an attempt to encourage Romans to uphold domestic values.\(^92\) Moreover, as Kristina Milnor points out, “the feminine domestic ideal as it is expressed in Roman texts…does not vary by class (my emphasis).”\(^93\) Thus the bias against women inheriting property in the *Idios Logos* as well as the feminine domestic ideals advanced by Augustan legislation might have affected Josephus’ outlook on a woman inheriting the throne.

The view of Roman society towards women is germane to Josephus’ outlook on royal women in general, and Queen Alexandra in particular, since “consistently the same virtues recur in texts which range from funerary epitaphs for freedwomen to descriptions of women in the imperial house.”\(^94\) For example, a woman’s desirable characteristics is demonstrated by the final lines of the well-known Murdia tombstone inscription (*Laudatio Murdiae*), which contains a son’s eulogy for his mother (an upper-class matron named Murdia), dating to the reign of Augustus (the end of first century BCE):\(^95\)

Eó maiorem laudem omnium carrissima mihi máter meruit, quod modestiá probitate pundicitia opsequo lanificio diligentia fide pár similisque cetereis probeis feminís fuit…

My beloved mother, then, deserves all the more praise, for in modesty, integrity, chastity, submission, wool-work, diligence and loyalty she was

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\(^91\) Translation of clauses from Rowlandson, *Women and Society*, p. 176

\(^92\) The *lex Iulia de maritandis ordiniubus* penalized those who married persons from different classes and also rewarded men and women for producing children, see Milnor, *Gender, Domesticity, Augustus*, pp. 140-143.

\(^93\) Ibid., p. 37.

\(^94\) Ibid.

\(^95\) Theodor Momson dates the inscription to the reign of Augustus on the basis of its orthography and semantics, see *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, VI:2, “Tituli Sepulchrales Reliqui,” 10230, p. 1354. For a discussion of the social ideology of this and similar inscriptions see Fantham, *Classical World*, pp. 318-319.

just like other women of integrity.  

Interestingly, the only woman who had some measure of independence was a widow – she could manage her own financial affairs with only a token or no participation of her guardian and if she was over fifty years old she was not obligated to remarry.  

Needless to say, Queen Alexandra was a widow.

Women did not vote or serve in any public or priestly office in Rome. True, certain elite women did play a prominent role on the stage of history, such as Fulvia, who ran affairs in Rome when Antony left for the East in 42 BCE:

This was what took place then. The following year Publius Servilius and Lucius Antonius nominally became consuls, but in reality it was Antonius and Fulvia. She, the mother-in-law of Caesar and wife of Antony, had no respect for Lepidus because of his slothfulness, and managed affairs herself, so that neither the senate nor the people transacted any business contrary to her pleasure.

Nevertheless, Fulvia represents the exception, and not the rule, for Roman society believed that women belonged solely in the domestic sphere as wives and mothers.

Kristina Milnor observes that in the Augustan era “the gendered divide between public and private life … [became] a significant aspect of Roman culture.”

Cassius Dio’s assessment of Cleopatra VII, who reigned as queen of Egypt from 51 BCE-30 BCE, demonstrates the attitude of Roman society towards a powerful queen:

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97 Translation based upon Gillian Clark, “Roman Women,” p. 53.
98 Ibid., p. 49
99 Ibid.
100 Despite her prominence, Cassius Dio also describes Fulvia quite negatively: “And even Fulvia also caused the death of many, both to satisfy her enmity and to gain their wealth” (47.8.2)… “When, however, the head of Cicero also was brought to them one day (he had been overtaken and slain in flight), Antony uttered many bitter reproaches against it and then ordered it to be exposed on the rostra more prominently than the rest, in order that it might be seen in the very place where Cicero had so often been heard declaiming against him, together with his right hand, just as it had been cut off. And Fulvia took the head into her hands before it was removed, and after abusing it spitefully and spitting upon it, set it on her knees, opened the mouth, and pulled out the tongue, which she pierced with the pins that she used for her hair, at the same time uttering many brutal jests.” See Cary, Dio’s Roman history, V, 47.8.3-4., pp. 131-133.
101 Ibid., 48.4.1, p. 225.
102 For a discussion of the ideology of gender in early imperial Rome, see Milnor, Gender, Domesticity, Augustus, pp. 1-4
103 Ibid., p. 31.
Cleopatra was of insatiable passion and insatiable avarice; she was swayed often by laudable ambition, but often by overweening effrontery. By love she gained the title of Queen of the Egyptians, and when she hoped by the same means to win also that of Queen of the Romans, she failed of this and lost the other besides. (Roman History 51.15)\textsuperscript{104}

Even a modern-day historian such as William Tarn, states that “Cleopatra’s courage is as indisputable as is the complete absence of moral scruple in the use of her person and her lovers for one end.”\textsuperscript{105}

c. Josephus’ Assimilation into Roman Society

From the time of his arrival in Rome in the year 71 (Life 415-422), until the end of his life (about thirty years later), Josephus became an esteemed member of Roman society. This is demonstrated by his connection to the Roman aristocracy: Vespasian provided Josephus with numerous benefits: a domicile, Roman citizenship, monetary support and great honor (Life 423), as well as land in Judaea (Life 425); Titus and Domitian also continued to honor Josephus (Life 428-429). Likewise Josephus’ increasing use of “Latinisms” (Latin expressions/constructions used in Greek) testifies to his desire to assume a Roman identity and gain acceptance into Roman society.\textsuperscript{106}

Yet not all scholars consider these advantages as indicative of Josephus’ assimilation into Roman society. Hannah Cotton and Werner Eck view Josephus as a lonely and isolated man in Rome, distant from the socio-political elite.\textsuperscript{107} They believe that Josephus exaggerated his closeness to the imperial house and that the above benefits were given to most clients of the emperor.\textsuperscript{108} Likewise, Jonathan Price also asserts that Josephus was indeed isolated in Rome, since external sources do not mention any contact between him and the Roman elite, and Josephus himself does not mention any such interaction (except with Roman emperors).\textsuperscript{109} In opposition to this, John Curran cites

\textsuperscript{104} Cary, Dio’s Roman History, VI, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{105} William Tarn, Hellenistic Civilisation, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{106} See J.S. Ward, “Roman Greek,” esp. p. 635.
\textsuperscript{107} Cotton and Eck, “Josephus’ Roman Audience,” p. 52.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., pp. 38-39.
\textsuperscript{109} Price, “Provincial Historian,” p. 105. Other factors for this isolation include Josephus’ Jewish identity, manner and style of writing, ibid, p. 118.
Eusebius’ testimony as proof of his fame amongst his fellow-Jews. Thus Eusebius reports that:

[Josephus] was the most famous Jew of that time, not only among his fellow countrymen but also among the Romans, [my emphasis] so that he was honored by the erection of a statue in the city of Rome, and the inclusion of works composed by him in its library. (Ecclesiastical History 3.9.2).

Eusebius’ declaration not only attests to Josephus’ fame among the Romans, but also could signify his assimilation into Roman society.

Steve Mason points out various thematic parallels between Antiquities and Roman historiographic works: in both one can find an aristocratic constitution, a senate, and a description of a disastrous monarchy; both emphasize natural law, priests and piety, and the Roman virtues of austerity, discipline, justice and humanity. Although Mason’s point here is to show that Antiquities is geared to a Roman audience, these features would also indicate Josephus’ assimilation of Roman literary and cultural traditions.

Likewise, Michael Tuval believes that the priestly-centered description of the Mosaic constitution in Ant. 4:223 parallels a discussion of the Roman constitution by the Roman philosopher, Marcus Tullius Cicero. Antiquities’ emphasis on Josephus being a member of the priestly class could therefore represent his adoption of Roman cultural norms.

Finally, Paul Spilsbury views the Roman influence on Josephus’ writings by the absence of the covenant between God, the Jews and the land of Israel, and its replacement by the idea of God and the Jews as patron and client.

One way or the other, prominent or not, Josephus’ continued residence, language, and literary themes indicate a great degree of acculturation.

111 Cotton and Eck cast doubt upon the reliability of Eusebius’ testimony yet they present no evidence that contradicts him. See Cotton and Eck, “Josephus’ Roman Audience,” p. 38, n. 4.
d. Roman Historiography and its Influence upon Josephus

Roman historical and literary accounts, such as Seneca’s *De Clementia*, Tacitus’ *Annals* and Cassius Dio’s *Roman History*, may either characterize literary themes that were popular during the time that Josephus composed his works or offer narratives of well-known events. At the very least, they may represent, for us, the way in which powerful queens were viewed by Roman society.

Let us examine the writings of a contemporary of Josephus, Lucius Annaeus Seneca or Seneca the Younger (ca. 4 BCE-65 CE), a wealthy member of the senate and a prolific writer. Seneca’s philosophical prose essay, *de Clementia*, was written early in Nero’s reign (56 CE)\(^{115}\) and aimed to demonstrate the value of clemency for a ruler (Nero). Seneca’s work includes a dialogue between Emperor Augustus and his wife Livia concerning her suggestion that the emperor grant clemency to Lucius Cinna, who had conspired to assassinate the emperor:\(^{116}\)

Finally his wife Livia interrupted him and said, “Will you take a woman’s advice? Do as the doctors do. When the usual remedies have no effect they try the opposite. Harshness has done you no good so far. After Salvidienus there was Lepidus, after Lepidus there was Murena, after Murena there was Caepio, after Caepio there was Egnatius not to mention the others whose great audacity is shameful. Now, find out how clemency can turn out for you: pardon Lucius Cinna. He has been detected – he cannot now do you any harm, but he can enhance your reputation.” (1.9.6).\(^{117}\)

Augustus, who had conflicting emotions as whether or not to kill Cinna, follows Livia’s advice and pardons the conspirator (though without mentioning that it was his wife’s idea).

Josephus was acquainted with Livia (or rather Julia, as she was later called) and mentions her several times in *Antiquities* as a friend and ally of Herod. She sent treasures from Rome for the festivities marking the completion of the construction of Caesarea (*Ant.* 16:139); she convinced Herod’s sister, Salome, to marry his friend Alexas, as Herod desired (*War* 1:566 [here she is called Livia], *Ant.* 17:10); and Herod bequeathed

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\(^{115}\) For a comprehensive discussion of Seneca’s life and this work, see Braund, *Seneca*, esp. pp. 2-16 for a biographical sketch.

\(^{116}\) This is apparently the same incident described by Dio, see below for a comparison of the two accounts.

\(^{117}\) Translation from Braund, *Seneca*, p. 111.
to her five hundred talents (Ant. 17:146) and later altered his testament and bequeathed her five million pieces of silver (Ant. 17:190). Overall, Josephus’ attitude towards Livia is quite positive, and perhaps was influenced by her favorable treatment by Seneca.

Cassius Dio (164 - circa 229 CE), a prominent Greek senator who held numerous offices, composed his eighty-book Roman History a little over a century after Josephus’ death (the beginning of the third century).118 His work, however, most probably reflects long-enrooted Roman attitudes towards women which were prevalent even when Josephus lived in Rome. Furthermore, Josephus may have read and/or been influenced by Dio’s sources, such as the memoirs of emperors or Seneca’s de Clementia.119

Dio’s in-depth account of the reign of Augustus (27 BCE-14 CE, books 53-56), assigns a prominent role to the emperor’s wife, Livia. There are several literary parallels between the descriptions of Livia in Dio’s Roman History and Seneca’s de Clementia, and both of these seem to parallel the narrative of Alexander Jannaeus’ deathbed advice to Queen Alexandra in Antiquities.

As in de Clementia, Livia advises Augustus to pardon the suspected conspirator and thereby make him an ally, but Dio refers not to Cinna but rather to Cornelius, a grandson of Pompey the Great:120

…and I [Livia] have some advice to give you,— that is, if you are willing to receive it, and will not censure me because I, though a woman, dare suggest to you something which no one else, even of your most intimate friends, would venture to suggest,— not because they are not aware of it, but because they are not bold enough to speak… (55.16.1)
I, therefore, when I hear such considerations advanced and turn my thoughts to them, am inclined to go so far as to urge you to give up altogether the inflicting of the death penalty in any case for reasons of this kind… (55.20.1)
Augustus heeded these suggestions of Livia and released all the accused with some words of admonition; and he even appointed Cornelius consul. (55.22.1)

Nevertheless, there is a difference between the focus of the Roman dialogues. Seneca’s narrative stresses the value of clemency while Dio’s (similar to Josephus’

119 Cary Dio’s Roman History, VI, p. xvii; Braund, Seneca, p. 259.
presentation of Alexander Jannaeus’ advice) focuses on maintaining absolute power. Another difference is the length and style of the Roman narratives, with Dio’s being longer, less dramatic and, in my opinion, assigning a more prominent role to Livia. Still, the similarities in their presentation of Livia are greater than the differences. In both works, Livia is the one who comes up with the idea of offering clemency. Both emphasize the fact that Livia is “only” a woman (Seneca – “Will you take a woman’s advice?”; Dio – “…I, though a woman, dare suggest to you…”). Finally, both use a medical analogy. In Seneca’s account, Livia advises: “Do as the doctors do. When the usual remedies have no effect, then try the opposite. Harshness has done you no good so far…Now, find out how clemency can turn out for you…” In Dio’s narrative, Livia advocates “the application of fomentations and the milder drugs’ as opposed to “surgery and cautery”

In Antiquities the roles are reversed: Alexander Jannaeus advises Queen Alexandra to give the Pharisees a certain measure of power and thereby ensure their support of her reign (Ant. 13:401, 405):

Then, following a brilliant victory, she should go to Jerusalem and support the Pharisees, and grant them some power, for they, by giving her approval in exchange for these honors, would render the people well disposed to her, and he said, these [Pharisees] have much power among the Judaeans – both hurting those that they hate while helping those with whom they are friendly… So after Alexandra had taken the citadel, she talked with the Pharisees as her husband had counseled, and offered them all matters connected to his corpse and the kingdom, and their wrath against Alexander ceased, and she made them well-disposed and friendly.

An unmistakable parallel exists between the discussion between Augustus and Livia and Alexander Jannaeus and Alexandra. Both monarchs are discussing how to treat the

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121 Upon discovering the plot, Augustus tells Livia: “Do you not see how many are attacking both me and our sovereignty?” Ibid., 14.3, p. 429.
122 Cf. Braund’s commentary, Braund, Seneca, pp. 258-259
123 Ibid., p. 259.
124 Ibid., p. 111; Dio’s Roman History, VI, 55.17.1, p. 437.
opposition and both come to the same conclusion – getting the adversary on one’s side is preferable to the use of force to annihilate him/them.125

Source analysis may offer an explanation for the similarities between the accounts of Seneca and Dio, and connect them to Josephus’ writings. Based on previous scholarship, Braund surmises that either both Seneca and Dio either used a common source for the story of Augustus and Cinna or that Dio derived his account, directly or indirectly, from that of Seneca.126 She concludes that it “seems unlikely that Dio was the first to exploit this rhetorical potential in the way that he does.”127 Braund’s conclusion that this episode originates in earlier sources reinforces my theory that Josephus did indeed rely upon some pre-existing version/source of Dio’s narrative for the deathbed scene as well as other similar episodes, as will be shown below.

Both Dio Cassius and Josephus emphasize the importance of military force for their protagonists. Livia declares:

We have many soldiers who protect us, some arrayed against foreign foes and others about your person, and also a large retinue, so that by their help we may live in security both at home and abroad.128

And according to Josephus, Queen Alexandra strengthened the army to ensure security:

she organized a large number of mercenaries and doubled her own force so that she terrified the surrounding tyrants and received hostages from them. (Ant. 13:409) and by continually gathering (soldiers) she doubled the army, and she also collected a large (number) of foreign (mercenaries), so that not only did she strengthen her own nation but she also caused foreign rulers to fear (her) (War 1:112).

Finally, Alexander Jannaeus’ advice to Queen Alexandra on his deathbed, as related in Antiquities (it is absent in War), resembles the tactic Livia employs following Augustus’ death:

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125 As Braund notes, Dio uses “the conspiracy of Cinna as a jumping-off point for a more general treatment of dealing with opposition to the emperor...”, Braund, Seneca, p. 425
126 Ibid., p. 259. Miriam Griffin points out that Seneca’s narrative was probably based on another source: “The Cinna incident, illustrating Augustus’ conversion to clemency, probably came to Seneca from a historical source to judge by the definite indications of time and place,” Griffin, Seneca, p. 410.
127 Braund, Seneca, p. 260.
128 Dio’s Roman History, VI, 55.15.3, p. 433.
His [Augustus’] death, however, was not immediately made public; for Livia, fearing that as Tiberius was still in Dalmatia there might be some uprising, concealed the fact until he arrived.\textsuperscript{129}

And Josephus states:

In order to securely retain the throne along with her children, he counseled her to obey him [and do the following]: to conceal his death from the soldiers until she took the fortress (\textit{Ant.} 13:400).

This strategy led to Alexander Jannaeus’ being given “a more illustrious funeral than any other king before him” (\textit{Ant.} 13:406). Likewise, splendid posthumous honors were bestowed upon Augustus:

A shrine voted by the senate and built by Livia and Tiberius was erected to the dead emperor in Rome…they placed a golden image of him on a couch in the temple of Mars, and to this they paid all the honours that they were afterwards to give to his statue.\textsuperscript{130}

Nevertheless, despite Dio’s laudatory description of Livia in most of his \textit{History}, at the end of the narrative on Augustus’ death he states that Livia “incurred some suspicion in connection with his [Augustus’] death.”\textsuperscript{131} Fearing that Augustus would become reconciled to Agrippa, she “smeared with poison some figs that were still on trees...offering the poisoned ones to him [Augustus].”\textsuperscript{132} Yet Dio is unsure (!!!) as to whether this caused Augustus’ death since he writes “from this or some other cause he became ill.”\textsuperscript{133} Thus the previous complimentary picture of Livia concludes with the accusation of murder.

Unlike Seneca, another contemporary of Josephus, Tacitus (circa 56/58 CE-120? CE), draws a uniformly critical picture of Livia.\textsuperscript{134} He views her as a vicious woman who would stop at nothing to accomplish her objectives. Tacitus insinuates that she murdered

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., VII, 56.31, p. 69.

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., VII, 56.46.3-4, p. 105.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., VII, 56.30.1 p. 67

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., VII, 56.30.2, p. 69.

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., VII, 56.30.3, p. 69.

Augustus in order to ensure that her designated choice, her son Tiberius, would inherit the throne:

…the malady of Augustus began to take a graver turn; and some suspected foul play on the part of his wife.\textsuperscript{135}

Likewise Tacitus accuses Livia of murdering her stepgrandsons:

When Agrippa gave up the ghost, untimely fate, or the treachery of their stepmother Livia, cut off both Lucius and Caius Caesar.\textsuperscript{136}

Yet some scholars believe that Tacitus’ portrayal of Livia was influenced by a pre-existing “unfavorable tradition about Livia.”\textsuperscript{137} This tradition could also be connected to Livia’s great-granddaughter, Agrippina the Younger (15-55 CE), who played a pivotal role in the succession of her son, Nero in 50 CE by persuading Claudius to adopt him.\textsuperscript{138} Tacitus depicts both Livia and Agrippina as ruthless in pursuing the goal of their respective sons’ succession: he insinuates that Livia poisoned Augustus and overtly states that Agrippina poisoned Claudius in order to ensure the succession of her son Nero.\textsuperscript{139} M.P. Charlesworth believes that the literary parallels between the succession of Tiberius and that of Nero as related by Tacitus are too great to be accidental.\textsuperscript{140}

Following Charlesworth, Francis Goodyear suggests a reason for Tacitus’ similarities: “By bringing into prominence supposed similarities between the accessions of Tiberius and Nero, T. may intend to suggest that Tiberius’ accession was as questionable, disreputable and indeed criminal as Nero’s.”\textsuperscript{141}

Let us return to Livia and how her portrayal may have affected Josephus works. Charlesworth’s analysis of the background and reasons for Tacitus’ accusations against

\textsuperscript{135} Jackson, *Tacitus*, 1:5, p. 251.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 1:3, p. 247.
\textsuperscript{137} Goodyear, *Tacitus*, I, p. 111; see also pp. 125-129 for an explanation of the origin of this allegation and its similarity to the accession of Nero. Goodyear’s assertion is based upon Charlesworth, “Tiberius and Augustus,” pp. 145-157. Susan Wood points out that Tacitus condemns Livia’s involvement in provincial affairs (she often submitted pleas to Augustus on behalf of provincial cities) as a usurpation of male authority. Nevertheless, although Tacitus censures her, these cities were grateful for her help and honored Livia with statues, inscriptions titles and cults. See Wood, *Imperial Women*, pp. 79-80.
\textsuperscript{138} Brill’s New Pauly, s.v. “Agrippina Julia A.,” p. 393.
\textsuperscript{139} *Tacitus* I, V, p. 251 (Livia); XII:LXI-LXIX (Agrippina), pp. 412-417.
\textsuperscript{140} Charlesworth, “Livia and Tanaquil,” p. 55. Charlesworth believes that the whole story of Livia poisoning Augustus is an invention, especially since it is refuted by other historians such as Suetonius.
\textsuperscript{141} See Goodyear, *Tacitus*, I, p. 126.
Livia may also be applicable to Josephus’ condemnation of Queen Alexandra at the end of *Antiquities* 13:

…one of the most puzzling problems is the way in which she [Livia], the stately and faithful wife of Augustus, the pattern of a Roman matron, is transformed in Tacitus into a plotting stepmother of the most melodramatic kind. No hint of this occurs in previous writers… we find her figured as a *gravis noverca* of the worst type, treacherously getting rid of possible rivals and working on the mind of a senile husband. And the charges are always brought in regard to the question of accession, never elsewhere…

Josephus’ assessment of Alexandra also views her as a cunning woman who would stop at nothing to obtain power for she “regarded all things secondary to possessing the power to rule” and “left the kingdom bereft of anyone to care for it” (*Ant*. 13:431). Even prior to this summation, Josephus hurls a similar accusation: “But still these people themselves were to blame for their own misfortunes. For they allowed themselves to be ruled by a woman’s raving mad lust for power, when her offspring were in their prime of life” (*Ant*. 13:417). In other words, Queen Alexandra did not ensure the continuity of the Hasmonean dynasty by appointing one of her sons as king instead of ruling herself. Similar to Livia, the accusations against Queen Alexandra in *Antiquities* (13: 417, 431-432) are connected only with the issue of succession.

**Conclusion**

The cultural influence of Hellenistic and Roman societies played an important role in the history of the reception and account of Queen Alexandra’s reign. The precedent of independent Ptolemaic queens in Hellenistic society, many of whom inherited the throne, prepared Hasmonean society for the reign of a queen. Likewise, the descriptions of

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142 Charlesworth, “Tiberius and Augustus,” pp. 152-153. In contrast, Wood believes that a true assessment of Livia’s character is to be found in the appellation her great-grandson, Caligula, uses to describe her: “Ulixem stolatum.” Emphasizing that the common translation, a ”Ulysses in petticoats” misses the point of this compliment, Wood points out that this sobriquet combines cleverness and respect: Ulysses was a sympathetic hero and “stolatum” signifies a high social standing (since a *stola* was the garment of a matron of Roman citizenship). See Wood, *Imperial Women*, p. 87.

143 Josephus’ general attitude towards women may have also affected this description, see the discussion of *Antiquities* in Chapter 2.
strong female leaders in apocryphal books from the Hasmonean period most probably facilitated Jewish society’s acceptance of a female monarch.

Josephus “spent much of his life operating at the intersection of three powerful cultural traditions: Jewish, Greek and Roman.” After living in Rome for over twenty years, Josephus surely must have become acculturated into Roman society, to some extent, and absorbed its societal-cultural-ideological norms and outlook. Josephus’ experiences in Rome and exposure to Roman literary works undoubtedly colored his narrative in Antiquities. In particular, the traditions connected with Empress Livia, which reflect earlier well-established attitudes of Roman society seem, quite probably, to have influenced Josephus’ portrait of Queen Alexandra. This may help explain the harsh criticism of Queen Alexandra’s nine-year reign at the end of Josephus’ later work, Antiquities.

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Chapter 5:
The Depiction of Queen Alexandra in Rabbinic Literature

The references to Queen Alexandra in rabbinic literature represent an anomalous situation. Women with specific names, and even less so powerful women, are seldom mentioned in rabbinic writings.¹ Unfortunately, little historical information can be derived from these sources, which were redacted hundreds of years after her reign.² If so, can rabbinic literature help us understand the reign of Queen Alexandra? Shaye Cohen’s premise may provide one answer. Cohen concludes that in all cases the Josephan narrative is “earlier than the rabbinic…The Josephan parallels…illuminate the ways in which the rabbis molded the traditions they received.”³ That is, Queen Alexandra’s portrayal in rabbinic literature can help shed light on how certain circles in post-70 Judaea reinterpreted sources on Queen Alexandra due to their religious outlook. Moreover, the didactic message that rabbinic texts convey, and the consequent image of Queen Alexandra, have implications for the way in which historians have evaluated Alexandra and her reign up until the present time.

I. Tannaitic literature on Queen Alexandra and its Metamorphosis in Amoraic Texts

Two tannaitic sources contain midrashim connected to Queen Alexandra/Shelamzion:
1) Sifra Leviticus, B’hukotai, 1:1 2) Sifrei Deuteronomy 42. According to Menahem Kahane and other scholars, the final redaction of halakhic midrashim, including Sifra and Sifrei, took place by the middle of the third century in the Land of Israel.⁴ Thus,

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¹ Rabbinic literature refers to Queen Alexandra with some version of her Hebrew/Aramaic name (Shelamzion) or as the wife of King Yannai, see below, “Names within midrashim.” For a comprehensive discussion of women in rabbinic literature see Ilan, Mine and Yours and for an in-depth study of Queen Alexandra in rabbinic literature see eadem, Silencing the Queen.
² Rabbinic sources that mention Queen Alexandra include Sifra Lev BeHukotai 1:1, Sifrei Deut 42 Sifrei Jud 157, bTa’anit 23a, bSotah 22a, bBerakhot 48a, Tosfot Shabbat 16b (from d’amar); Vayikra Rabba 35, Megillat Ta’anit 28th of Tevet.
following Josephus’ writings and the Qumran documents, *Sifra Leviticus* and *Sifrei Deuteronomy* probably represent the earliest sources that directly mention Queen Alexandra.

Although *Sifra Leviticus* and *Sifrei Deuteronomy* are termed *Midreshei Halakhah* (Halakhic Midrashim), Kahane points out that they actually contain a significant amount of aggadic material. The passages on Shelamzion that will be discussed belong to this category. Moreover, Kahane notes that “aggadic passages…originate in all likelihood in shared early material. Parallel collections frequently contain aggadic expositions of very similar order, content, and style.” The below aggadot on Queen Alexandra in *Sifrei* and *Sifra* may therefore be derived from one common source. The midrashim read as follows:

And I shall give you rain in its season” – on Sabbath eves (Friday nights). It happened during the days [time] of Shimeon ben Shetah, during the days [time] of Queen Shelamtsu that rains fell from Sabbath eve to the [next] Sabbath eve so that grains of wheat became as [large as] kidneys, and grains of barley as [large as] pits of olives, and lentils as [large as] gold dinarii.

Rabbi Natan said: “In its season” (Deut 11:12) [This means that rains fell] only on Sabbath eves [Friday night] as in the way that they had fallen during the days [time] of Queen Shlamtsu.

Two centuries later, an almost identical description to *Sifra* is found in an amoraic source, *Leviticus Rabbah* 35:10, a collection of homiletical midrashim redacted in Palestine in the fifth century.

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6 Ibid., p. 44.
7 Weiss, *Sifra*, p. 89 (Heb.).
8 My translation.
10 My translation.
There was the case, in the time of Simeon ben Shatah, in the time of Queen Shelamstu, when it would rain on Sabbath eves [Friday nights] until the grains of wheat became as [large as] beans, and the grains of barley as [large as] olive pits, and the lentils as [large as] golden denarii.\textsuperscript{13}

Another story similar to that in the \textit{Sifra} is found in an even later amoraic source – the Babylonian Talmud (BT), \textit{bTa'anit} 23a:

\begin{quote}
In their season” (Lev 26:4): [This means that rains fell only] on the eves of Wednesdays\textsuperscript{14} and Sabbaths [Friday evenings]. For so it happened during the days (time) of Shimeon ben Shetah - rains fell on the eves of Wednesdays and Sabbaths so that grains of wheat became as [large as] kidney beans, and grains of barley as [large as] pits of olives, and lentils as [large as] gold dinarii.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

Based on Jeffrey Rubenstein’s methodology, I shall analyze the story’s underlying assumptions, cultural and literary context, and didactic message, and draw conclusions.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{a. The literary context of \textit{Sifra} and \textit{Sifrei}}

Both midrashim are located within discussions of the biblical promise of rainfall as a reward for observing the commandments. The midrash in \textit{Sifra} (and following that, \textit{bTa’anit} and \textit{Lev. Rabbah}, see below,) is based on a passage from Leviticus 26:3-4

\begin{quote}
\textbf{3} If you follow My laws and faithfully observe My commandments.  
\textbf{4} I will grant you rains in their season, so that the earth shall yield its produce and the trees of the field their fruit.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

The midrash in \textit{Sifrei} is based, instead, on a passage from Deuteronomy 11:14:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{3} הרוממות התאנים יבואות לברכה, \textsuperscript{13} ו\textsuperscript{14} ו\textsuperscript{15} ו\textsuperscript{16} ו\textsuperscript{17} ו\textsuperscript{13} ו\textsuperscript{14} ו\textsuperscript{15} ו\textsuperscript{16} ו\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{13} My translation.
\textsuperscript{14} Epstein, \textit{Ta'anith}, p. 115 n. 4, notes that people did not go out on Wednesday evenings since they believed that demons were about, cf. Pes 112b.
\textsuperscript{15} My translation.
\textsuperscript{17} Tanakh, p. 198.
If, then, you obey the commandments that I enjoin upon you this day, loving the Lord your God and serving Him with all your heart and soul.

I will grant the rain for your land in season, the early rain and the late. You shall gather in your new grain and wine and oil...

b. The textual context of the midrashim

The midrash in *Sifra* is preceded by another midrash about rain. Neusner suggests that both rain stories in *Sifra* may have originally been part of one pericope. The midrash relates that when the Second Temple was being rebuilt by Herod it rained only in the evenings. Thus it was dry during the day and the workers could build the Temple unhindered:

Then how am I to interpret, “then I will give you rains in their season”? It is in chunks [of rain]. There was the case, in the time of Herod, in which the rain would come down by night. At dawn the sun shown, the wind blew, the land dried out [so that it could be worked]. And the workers would go out to their labor knowing that the things that they did were for the sake of heaven.

The midrash about the rebuilding of the Temple has a parallel at the end of *Antiquities* 15.

It is also told that during this season of the building of the Temple, during the day there was no rain but during the nights rainstorms took place, so as not to hinder [the rebuilding]... (*Ant.* 15:425)

Inasmuch as the enlargement/rebuilding of the Temple is dated to sometime between 20-4 BCE, during the latter part of the reign of King Herod, this would place it about fifty years after the time of Queen Alexandra (76-67 BCE). Queen Alexandra’s reign is
thereby compared to the time of the rebuilding of the Second Temple, one of the
pinnacles of Jewish history!

The BT (bTa’anit 23a) frames the aggadah of agricultural plenty during the epoch of
Shimeon ben Shetah with a story about Honi the rainmaker, who is reputed to have lived
during Queen Alexandra’s reign:

It happened that they sent to Honi the Circle-Maker etc. Our rabbis have
taught us: Once it happened that most of the month of Adar had passed and
the rains had not fallen. They sent for Honi the Circle-Maker. He prayed and
the rains fell, he prayed and the rains did not fall. He drew a circle and stood
in the middle as Habakkuk the prophet used to do…

This rain story also has a parallel in Josephus’ Antiquities:

And a certain person named Onias, a just person and a friend of God, who
when there was a want of rain he prayed that God would put an end to the
draught and it happened that God, hearing [his prayer] brought rain, hid
himself since he saw the exceedingly strong civil strife continue,
[nevertheless] he was taken to the camp of the Judaean and they demanded
that as he had prayed and stopped the want of rain, in such a way he should
place a curse upon Aristobulus and his fellow rebels. (Ant. 14:22)

Unlike the Talmud, Josephus connects Honi (Onias) with Aristobulus II and the
internecine war with his brother, Hyrcanus II, and not with Shimeon ben Shetah.

The fact that the midrash of Queen Alexandra’s rain is located near the story of rain
and the building of the Temple, which does have a parallel in Josephus, as well as the
story of Honi the rainmaker, may indicate either some common ancient source for both
Josephus, Sifra and bTa’anit or that Sifra and bTa’anit were derived from Josephus. In
the case of rain, the Temple and Honi, this common tradition survived in two sources
(Sifra and bTa’anit), while in the case of Alexandra and rain, it survived in four rabbinic
sources (Sifre, Sifra, Lev. Rabbah, bTa’anit).

24 Epstein, Ta’anith, 23a.
25 My translation.
26 See Kalmin, Jewish Babylonia, pp. 13, 42, 49-172.
Thus *Sifra*, *bTa‘anit* and *Lev. Rabbah* frame the story of Alexandra, rain and agricultural plenty with other stories related to rainfall from the Second Temple period, close to Alexandra’s time. The overall framework – Queen Alexandra’s reign is related to the time of the rebuilding of the Second Temple – demonstrates that rabbinic sources had a very favorable attitude towards Queen Alexandra.

The focus of *Sifrei* 40 ff, on the other hand, relates more to interpreting the second paragraph of the *Shema* (Deut 11) and less to the topic of rain. It is preceded by a discussion of prayer within the context of the *Shema* and followed by a discussion of the *yoreh* (the first rains) – its blessings and proper times. Such a liturgical framework may have been influenced by the description of Queen Alexandra as pious (*War* 1:108), especially if the tradent/editor of *Sifrei* had read Josephus.²⁷

A comparison of these midrashic texts raises several possibilities:
1) *Sifrei* is an abbreviated version of the longer text from *Sifra*,
2) *Sifra* is an expansion of the shorter original text from *Sifrei*
3) Due to the textual similarities and their later date, it is almost certain that *bTa‘anit* and *Lev. Rabbah* are based on or were copied from *Sifra*. Still, this is not unusual, as Kahane notes that the Amoraim drew upon collections of halakhic midrash and that many midrashim of *Sifra* are cited by the BT in their original language.²⁸

*Sifra* preserves an interesting and rare linguistic style wherein *Beymai* (בֵּיתָים, in the days/time) is repeated twice – מְעַנֶּה בֵּיתָים מְעַנֶּה בֵּיתָים (during the days [time] of Shimeon ben Shetah and during the days [time] of Queen Shlamtsi).²⁹ Interestingly, the reference to words מְעַנֶּה בֵּיתָים - the days [time] of Shimeon ben Shetah are absent in *Sifrei*. This repetition of *Beymai* may be based on the introduction to the Song of Deborah (*Jud* 5:6) – מְעַנֶּה בֵּיתָים מְעַנֶּה בֵּיתָם מְעַנֶּה (‘In the days of Shamgar son of Anat, in the days of Jael’) – which employs the same linguistic formula. Moreover, both Judges and *Sifra* have the same male-female structure – first the man is mentioned and then the woman.

²⁷ Ibid; see also Cohen, “Parallel Traditions,” pp. 7-14, esp. p. 13.
²⁸ Kahane, “Halakhic Midrashim” p. 58.
²⁹ Neusner notes this unusual repetition but cannot think of “the motive in originally including both sage and queen” (Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, p. 90).
Finally, similar to Queen Alexandra, Jael represents a courageous and unusual woman for her time (Jael’s actions are that of a soldier and Queen Alexandra is a military leader).  

I have not found any other case of בימים (Beymai) being repeated twice in the same sentence in rabbinic literature. Such a unique linguistic formula may have important implications. In addition to the connection to the Song of Deborah, the repetition of the word בימים may also indicate that the phrase בימים שלמצו was added to the story later on. Shimeon ben Shetah was a well-known rabbi from the era of Queen Alexandra, and the redactor of the Talmud tended to date events according to rabbinic personalities. Although she was a queen, Alexandra was not part of their mindset. Thus the midrash may have originally read: מעש ימי שלמצו המלכה.

**c. Names mentioned in the midrashim**

Since Josephus only uses the Greek name Queen Alexandra, the tannaitic midrashim represented the earliest source for the queen’s Hebrew/Aramaic name prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Let us summarize the evolution of her names (and the names adjacent to them) in the various works.

- *Sifrei* has בימים שלמצו המלכה,
- *Sifra* - בימים שלמצו המלכה,
- *Lev. Rabbah* - בימים שלמצו המלכה,
- And finally *bTa’anit* – בימים שלמצו המלכה (without any mention of Alexandra)

(Shelamtsu or Shelamtso, it is unclear which vocalization is correct) which is common to both *Sifra* and *Sifrei*, is the first version of her name and is also found in inscriptions, suggesting that the form was known. This name was somehow changed into Shelamtsi in *Lev. Rabbah*. Why did not the midrashim term her Shelamzion? Perhaps was some sort of nickname or shortened form for the queen that was

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30 The linguistic formula of repeating בימים is only employed two other times in the Bible (Neh 12:26, 47), both times in connection to Nehemiah.

31 Neusner points out that the absence of Shimeon ben Shetah in Josephus’ writings shows that Josephus was unaware of any such tradition in connection with Alexander Jannaeus or Queen Alexandra. See Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, p. 137.

32 See Ilan, *Silencing the Queen*, p. 37. I am grateful to Prof. Moshe Benowitz for his assistance in understanding the issue of בימים in rabbinic literature.

popular during tannaitic times (Jastrow notes that this is an abbreviation for שלם ציון or perhaps somehow the last few letters of her name dropped out due to some scribal error. There are numerous versions of her name in other rabbinic works such as של ציון (see below discussion on bShabbat 16b), שלמינון, שלميرון, שלמנסון or other variations.35

Although the Babylonian Talmud (BT) is much later than the tannaitic midrashim in Sifra and Sifrei, the appellation של ציון, which only appears in the BT, is closer to her correct Hebrew/Aramaic name in the Calendrical Documents of Qumran – שלמציה, it only has the letter ז missing. This may indicate that the editor/s of the BT had access to some historical source, unknown to the editors of Sifra and Sifrei, which mentions Alexandra. Or, perhaps the editors/tradents of bShabbat deduced the queen’s name from Megillat Ta’anit (see below). Thus, although it is a later source, the BT has a closer version of Queen Alexandra’s Hebrew name than earlier tannaitic sources – a leap of over six hundred years after Qumran!36

Why do rabbinic texts contain a “maze of diverse and incorrect readings” of Queen Alexandra’s name?37 Why is she “a queen whose name no one can get right”?38 Neusner asserts that rabbinic traditions “reveal no very accurate knowledge of contemporary, second century B.C. conditions or traditions.”39 The confusion about Queen Alexandra’s Hebrew name therefore only indicates one item on the sages’ agenda. Perhaps they considered it unimportant to preserving the correct name of a woman or even know her name. Or, perhaps the situation of an independent queen was so unusual that it confused them, causing distortions of her name.

34 Jastrow, Dictionary, s.v. שלמציה, שלמצה, p. 1587.
35 Ibid. s.v. שלמציה, שלמצה. For a table summarizing her various names, see Ilan, Silencing the Queen, pp. 53-4.
36 Another similar version of Shelmazor’s name, also in Megillat Ta’anit (in the Parma ms) is שלמציה (see pp. 110, 280-281). Here is appears that the ז and ה were interchanged. According to Megillat Ta’anit, the festival of 2 Shevat was instated in order to celebrate the death of Yannai, since he had killed seventy elders (apparently Pharisees). Then it states that Shalazioon was a good woman (אשה טובה), which parallels Josephus’s positive description of the queen in War 1:107-108. Noam, in the wake of Graetz and others, believes that Megillat Ta’anit exchanged Yannai’s name with Herod’s, and in fact this story refers to Josephus’ account (in both War 1:659-660, 666 and Antiquities 17:173-181, 193) of Salome actions following the death of Herod (Noam, Megillat Ta’anit, p. 280). See also Ilan, Integrating Women, pp. 121-122.
37 Ilan, “Queen Salamzion,” p. 183.
38 Neusner, Rabbinic Traditions, p. 139.
39 Ibid., p. 140.
d. The didactic message

The abovementioned biblical verses deal with the issue of reward and punishment – those who keep God’s commandments will be rewarded with rain which will produce a bountiful crop. The description of a bountiful crop in rabbinic literature leads to the conclusion that, according to the sages, Queen Alexandra observed the commandments. The idyllic picture concerning Queen Alexandra’s era in Sifra, Sifrei, Lev. Rabbah and bTa’anit endeavors to convey this didactic message even though she is not a sage.

Why only in the ימי midrash in Ta’anit does Shimeon ben Shetah's name replace that of Alexandra? The following observation by Shmuel Safrai may help solve this question:

The Aggadot of the Talmud recount, inter alia, episodes in the personal lives of the Sages. Such anecdotes were recorded for posterity to provide an example of ethical conduct of the highest degree.

Consequently, this unusual literary event, in which a woman's name disappeared and was replaced by that of a man, may be due to the fact that a sage, and not a woman, is viewed as the correct personage for imitation. Indeed, a Pharisaic leader such as Shimeon ben Shetah observing the commandments and thereby bringing about rain would seem quite logical to the sages as opposed to a woman who holds a secular political position.

Let us return to the tannaitic midrashim, where Queen Alexandra does appear. If the tannaitic authors were acquainted with Josephus’ works, then they may have derived the conclusion of Queen Alexandra’s observance of the commandments from the description of her piety in War 1:108:

And he was definitely not wrong in these expectations, for this woman took over the kingdom on account of her reputation for piety. For she was indeed very strict about her people’s ancestral laws (customs), and those who offended the divine laws she used to throw out of office.

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40 See above, p. 134.
42 Ilan views this as a technique employed in rabbinic literature whereby women's names, such as that of Shelamzion and Bruriah, were consistently eliminated. See Ilan, Silencing the Queen, pp. 36-37.
43 My translation.
The enthusiastic description of the times of Queen Alexandra in tannaitic literature may also be due to the fact that she empowered the Pharisees (War 1:111), the predecessors of the rabbinic sages. Tal Ilan suggests that this description is parallel to Josephus’ assessment at the end of his description in Antiquities, where he states that there was peace in the time of the queen.44

Although there are no extant sources describing the agricultural conditions in the Land of Israel during the epoch of Queen Alexandra, we can say that an oral tradition viewed her era as symbolizing a period in Jewish history pervaded by piety, which brought about agricultural abundance, regardless of whether or not wheat, barley and olives really did grow to an extravagant size.

e. The Influence of Tannatic Literature on Modern Historical Accounts

In addition to the fact that the tannaitic midrashim are the earliest (rabbinic) sources mentioning Queen Alexandra’s reign, they are also markedly important due to their formative influence in shaping Jewish historians’ favorable attitude towards Alexandra.

Joseph Derenbourg refers to the midrashim about agricultural fertility during the epoch of Queen Alexandra as though they were historical fact.45 Simon Dubnov’s laudatory portrayal of Queen Alexandra cites the “Pharasaic” legend of agricultural plenty as proof that Queen Alexandra’s epoch was a “calm, happy time.”46 Heinrich Graetz describes Queen Alexandra as “a woman of gentle nature and sincere piety.” He cites the midrash of agricultural plenty as fact adding that “The extraordinarily large grains of wheat gathered during this time in the fields of Judaea were kept and exhibited during many subsequent years.”47 Joseph Klausner believes that these tannaitic descriptions somewhat exaggerated the prosperous economic situation in Israel during the era of Alexandra, which he also ascribes to the spoils of war accumulated by Alexander Jannaeus.48 Emil Schürer describes Queen Alexandra’s epoch as “a time of prosperity” and “a golden age” where “as though to reward the queen’s piety – even the soil was

44 Ilan, Integrating Women, p. 104.
46 Dubnov, Vsemirnaya istoriia, pp. 146-147 (Russ.)
astonishingly fruitful. Although Schürer terms these descriptions a “Pharisaic tradition” it is clear that he accepts them as truth. Likewise, despite Zeitlin’s negative picture of Queen Alexandra, he also cites these midrashim as demonstrating that it was a period of “almost millennial bliss.”

In opposition to nineteenth-century historians, Efron posits that there is not a single remnant of historical testimony in these accounts of agricultural plenty since there is no mention of Yannai’s schemes and the turnabout of fortunes of the Pharisees. Tal Ilan views the passages from Sifra, Sifrei and bTa’anim as demonstrating the way women were “paled” and eventually “eliminated” in rabbinic literature. Her premise is that anomalous women in general, and Shelamzion in particular, were cited in a positive manner in early rabbinic literature and eventually eliminated in later rabbinic literature. According to Ilan, Shelamzion is “a representative of this process” of silencing women. Thus, Sifrei, which only states בימי שלמצ במלכה, is an earlier tradition. Sifra, on the other hand, is a later source since it reads בימי שמעון בן שטח בימי שלמצ במלכה – it cites Shimeon ben Shetah as determining the era and places שלמצ in second place. The BT (Ta’anit) totally eliminates her name. Ilan’s analysis helps us to understand the change over the centuries in the rabbis’ (or more precisely, the editors/tradents of rabbinic literature) understanding/interest/bias against Shelamzion. Still, I do not believe that we can base which text is the original solely on this point.

II. Parallels between the Babylonian Talmud and Antiquities

Queen Alexandra is mentioned several other times in rabbinic literature, though not always by her name but rather as the wife of Alexander Yannai.

The following passage is especially noteworthy as it has (somewhat of) a parallel in Josephus:

49 Schürer, History of the Jewish People, I, p. 231
50 Zeitlin, Rise and Fall, p. 341.
51 Ephron, “Shimon ben Shetach,” p. 94. See below “Queen Alexandra and Shimeon ben Shetah” for a discussion of the topic of Yannai and the killing of the Pharisees.
52 Ilan, Silencing the Queen, pp. 35-37.
53 Ibid, p. 3.
King Yannai said to his wife: “fear not the Pharisees nor those who are not Pharisees but the hypocrites who appear as if they are Pharisees because their deeds are like the deeds of Zimri but they request a reward like Phineas.”

a. The Literary/textual context

This passage in the gemara attempts to interpret the phrase (the plagues of Pharisees) in mSotah 3:4 (cited in bSotah 20a):

Rabbi Yehoshua says: A woman prefers one kab and sexual indulgence to nine kab and abstinence. He used to say: “a foolish pietist, a cunning evildoer, a female Pharisee, and the plagues of Pharisees – all of these bring destruction upon the world.

There are two possible connections between bSotah 22b and the above mishnah. According to Albeck’s commentary on the Mishnah, (a female Pharisee) has a positive context and refers to a woman who is zealous in her asceticism and modesty. This expression may therefore refer to Queen Alexandra since she supported the Pharisees. On the other hand, Albeck notes that the phrase (the plagues of Pharisees) denotes the evil Pharisees who are hypocritical and only outwardly act with asceticism:

The gemara may consequently be linking the Pharisees with Queen Alexandra, or with hypocritical actions, or both.

Three literary parallels to bSotah 22b in Second Temple period literature may lead to a better understanding of the gemara:

1) The text bears a striking similarity to the description of the Pharisees in the New Testament as hypocrites, and this shared motif may indicate a common tradition:

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54 Zimri was killed by Phineas the Priest for taking a Midianite wife and worshipping their gods (Num 25:1-16). Isidore Epstein, The Talmud: Sotah (London: Soncino, 1978) 22b, n. 7 believes that this refers to Josephus’ account (Ant. 13: 13, 5) of a group of zealots requesting the assistance of Demetrius Eucarbus, King of Syria in their struggle against Alexander Jannaeus.

55 A small amount, that is, a scanty livelihood.

56 A large amount, that is, a luxurious living.

57 See Albeck, Mishnah, p. 241.
The scribes and the Pharisees...so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach but do not practice (Matt 23:2-3)

Woe, woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites (Matt 23:13)58

2) This incident somewhat resembles Alexander Yannai’s instructions on his deathbed to Queen Alexandra in Ant. 13:401 (There is no similar description in War), which brought about friendly relations between Alexandra and the Pharisees. Here as well the Pharisees are described in hostile terms (for they harm anyone who disagrees with them):

Then, following a brilliant victory, she should go to Jerusalem and support the Pharisees, and grant them some power, for they, by giving her approval in exchange for these honors, would render the people well disposed to her, and he said, these [Pharisees] have much power among the Judaeans – both hurting those that they hate while helping those with whom they are friendly.

For they are highly trusted by the people, even when they speak harshly of someone due to envy, and he himself had come into conflict with the people due to these [Pharisees], saying that they had been affronted by him. (Ant. 13:401-2)59

Yet another passage in Antiquities describes the Pharisees as pretenders who opposed the king:

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58 See also Matt 23:15, 23, 25, 27, 29; 5:20, 12:38.
59 My translation.
There was also a segment of Jews that prided itself greatly on its extreme precise observance of the ancestral heritage and pretended to observe laws with which the deity was pleased. By them the female faction [or clique] was directed. Called Pharisees, these men were eminently capable of predictions for the king’s benefit and yet, evidently, they rose up to combat and injure him.\(^\text{60}\) (\textit{Ant.} 17:41)

One of the definitions of the Greek word \textit{προσποιεῖ} is “to take what does not belong to one, pretend to, lay claim to”\(^\text{61}\) while \textit{υποκρίτης} can be a metaphor for “a pretender, dissembler, hypocrite.”\(^\text{62}\)

Finally, \textit{Pesher Nahum} 3:1 follows this tendency to condemn the Pharisees. It describes the “Seekers of Smooth Things” – דורשי החלקות, assumed to be a codename for the Pharisees, as conducting themselves in lies and falsehoods – בכחש ושקר תהלכו.\(^\text{63}\)

We have seen that the Pharisees are often portrayed in a negative fashion. Four sources (\textit{Antiquities}, the New Testament, the BT and Qumran documents) describe Pharisees (some or all) disapprovingly, as dissemblers. Two distinct early sources, the works of Josephus (\textit{Antiquities}) and the New Testament (Mathew), depict the Pharisees as hypocrites/pretenders. Yet a third, much later source, the Babylonian Talmud (\textit{Sotah}), distinguishes between the “real Pharisees” and those who act as if they are Pharisees but in reality are not. Likewise the Pharisees are also depicted as deceitful in the Qumran documents.

\textbf{b. Historical background}

Mason argues that “the mere fact of Pharisaic dominance before 70 CE may be the key to understanding Jesus’ hypocrisy charge. Noting that “it is an observable phenomenon that

\(^{60}\) Translated by Mason in “Pharisaic Dominance,” p. 3
\(^{62}\) Ibid., s.v. \textit{υποκρίτης}, def. 2, p. 844.
\(^{63}\) See above, Chapter 3; see also Ilan, \textit{Silencing the Queen}, p. 65 and Eshel, \textit{Dead Sea Scrolls}, p. 122.
leaders and policy-makers invariably attract the charge of hypocrisy from disaffected groups,"64 Mason concludes that:

Jesus...joined others in denouncing the apparent hypocrisy of the policy-makers, without thereby questioning the legitimacy of their role as scriptural exegetes. But this authentic hypocrisy charge was naturally misconstrued by groups within the church...and was reborn as an outright rejection of Pharisaic teaching.65

Although Jesus accepted the Pharisees’ authoritative religious role, he did not abstain from criticizing their conduct. Thus the passage in Sotah may preserve the original meaning of the pericope in the New Testament as well as the Josephan passages – the Pharisaic teachings are not hypocritical per se and therefore should not be rejected, but rather the conduct of individual Pharisees is hypocritical.

Tal Ilan asserts that the later Babylonian text encompasses an oral tradition that preserves a better and earlier version of this incident than Josephus.66 Still, since we have no other source close to Queen Alexandra’s era other than Josephus, there is no way to confirm this hypothesis. In contrast, Shaye Cohen argues that, due to the fact that the literary form of rabbinic texts date, at the earliest, to the third century, “Josephan traditions are older and more ‘original’ than the rabbinic.”67 Other scholars believe that the tradents/editors of the BT either read some version of Josephus or incorporated Josephan-like traditions into the BT.68

To conclude, it is possible that the tradents/editors of the rabbinic texts reworked the Josephan description in order to eliminate criticism of the Pharisees.69 Consequently, instead of Pharisees who “pretended to observe laws” (Ant 17: 41) now they are not to be feared (bSotah 22b).

64 Mason, “Pharisaic Dominance”, p. 380.
65 Ibid., p. 381.
66 Ilan, Integrating Women, pp. 21-23.
68 Ibid., pp. 7-14, esp. p. 13 and Kalmin, Jewish Babylonia, pp. 4, 149-172 esp. p. 156.
69 Kalmin believes that the incorporation of Josephus or Josephus-like traditions “motivated the BT’s tendency to portray the Sadducees in negative terms.” See ibid, p. 156.
c. Didactic message

The baraita of *mSotah* 3:4 has puzzled scholars since, on the one hand, it gives a very negative interpretation of anything connected to the word פרוש while, on the other hand, the Pharisees are the predecessors of the sages, and as such, are usually only regarded positively\(^{70}\). Menahem Mansoor claims that this passage demonstrates that “the leaders were well aware of the presence of the insincere among their numbers.”\(^{71}\) In other words, the Pharisees wanted to show that a small minority within their group were insincere. The name פרוש was given to this group by their opponents (the Sadducees), who “regarded these scholars as ‘usurpers,’ ‘separatists,’ ‘heretics’ because they proclaimed that God had given, alongside the Written Law, an Oral Law as well.”\(^{72}\) Since the rabbis did not view themselves as separatists but rather as mainstream Judaism, they may have wanted to distance themselves from such an appellation.

According to the gemara, there is no need to fear either those who are פרושין or their opponents (probably the Sadducees), however those who we have to fear are the צבועים. They appear to act like Pharisees but actually behave like Zimri and rebel against God. This analogy may indicate that the Babylonian rabbis were confronted with such a phenomenon in their time – of people who outwardly appeared religious but were not truly so in reality.

Tal Ilan calls attention to the fact that in *bSotah* Shelamzion is “nameless” and that this passages therefore belittles her importance (unlike the previous sources in which she is named).\(^{73}\)

Let us examine another passage:

*bShabbat 16b*

> שמואל בן שמחה חניך לארה ותואר עלאו מתנה בoverrides דאורייתא?
> נינהו דכתיב במדבר לא, לא נצרכה אלא לטומאה ישנה! ?' וגו'אך את הזהב ואת הכסף
> אפו אר ביהודא אマー ר: 'מעשה בשיל צוין הלל משחת המשחת לפני תחת כל תחת
> ורשברג ותנו לזרוק והיתכן עשה סנא כים חשים ו掬יו המים חזרה לטומאת ישנה.
> "מלט? מושמ גד מיהב כי נגנה הב.

\(^{70}\) Unlike the negative portrayal of Pharisees in the New Testament.

\(^{71}\) See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. “Pharisees,” p. 31.

\(^{72}\) Rivkin, “Scribes, Pharisees,” p. 140. Rivkin emphasizes that the Pharisees never called themselves Pharisees by citing *mYadayim* 4:6: “The Sadducees say, “We complain against you Pharisees because you say that Holy Scriptures renders the hands unclean” (p. 141). Here we see that it is the Sadducees who are calling the Pharisees as such.

\(^{73}\) Ilan, *Silencing the Queen*, p. 40.
“Simeon ben Shetah instituted a Ketubbah [woman’s marriage settlement] and imposed impurity upon metal vessels.” But isn’t [the impurity of] “metal vessels” biblical? For it is written “Yet the gold and the silver”, etc. (Num 31:22). This [rabbinical law] was necessary only in respect of former impurity, for Rabbi Yehudah said in Rab’s name: “An event occurred that Shel Zion made a feast for her son and all her utensils were made impure, and she broke them and gave them to a goldsmith/silversmith, who melted them down and made from them new utensils. But the sages declared – They revert to their previous impurity.” What is the reason? The sages became involved in this issue in order to protect [purification] through the [usage of] sanctioned purifying waters.

a. The Literary/textual context

This passage is an elaboration of bShabbat 14b:

הנהו: יהי ב וינון יאש ירדה יהי ב וינון ביבן יוחנן מוירונלון גזרו טומאה על ארץ העמים יהי ב יועזר: דתניא.שמעון בן שטח תיקן כתובה לאשה וגזר טומאה על כלי מתכות. ועל כלי זכוכית. שמעון ב וינון יאש יזאדה לארץ עמה לע ארכים מים.

For it was taught: Yose ben Yoezer of Zeredah and Yose ben Yohanan of Jerusalem decreed impurity as regards the country of heathens and glass utensils. Shimeon ben Shetah instituted the Ketubbah (woman’s marriage settlement) and imposed impurity upon metal utensils.

The text refers to the various reforms issued by the rabbis concerning the purity of utensils. According to the gemara at 16b, the rabbis were concerned that Shel Zion’s act – melting down utensils in order to purify them from contact with the dead – would set a bad example to the rest of the people who would use this solution instead of the sanctioned purifying waters. They therefore declared her new remade vessels impure. Interestingly, the literary context includes an important women’s issue – the institution of the Ketubbah. Furthermore, it connects Queen Alexandra (Shel Zion) to Shimeon ben Shetah, who elsewhere in the gemara is presumed to be her brother (see discussion below of bBerakhot 48a, 16b).

bShabbat relates that Alexandra had a son, which is correct historically. This fact was not mentioned in any of the passages from rabbinic literature that we have discussed so far. Here there is a role reversal of what was related in bSotah – instead of the woman (Shelzion) being “nameless” now she is named and cunningly tries to get around the rabbinic prohibition while the male character, her son, is unnamed and plays no role in the matter in dispute.

74 These rabbis are dated to the second century BCE, close to the time of Shelamzion.
Finally, there is a dispute between the queen and the sages – who declare her utensils impure. It seems highly unlikely that such an event would have really taken place as the sages would be placing themselves in mortal danger by opposing the queen. Quite typically, the BT transforms the religious leaders of that time, the Pharisees, into rabbinic sages. It also creates tension with the beloved queen of tannaitic sources.

**b. Didactic message**

The BT’s message appears to be that even if you were a queen you should not oppose the religious rulings of the sages. Since Queen Alexandra symbolizes secular rule and the sages embody religious authority, this story could indicate a conflict that existed between the sages and those holding high political positions during the amoraic period. The BT may have wished to emphasize the primacy of the rabbis over anyone who held secular political authority, or anyone who held authority in general.

Tal Ilan views this story as depicting a very different picture of the queen than previous passages. Now the rabbis control her, which “accords with Jewish thinking of the time, the proper hierarchy – men at the top, women beneath them.” The queen accepts their superiority grudgingly, and attempts to outsmart them. Ilan concludes that “[t]his source is clearly one that denigrates the otherwise truly positive picture of the queen of the tannaitic sources.”

I agree with Ilan that this adds a negative shade to the otherwise positive picture of the queen in rabbinic literature. Still, this description, which does not fit the other portrayals of Queen Alexandra, may actually indicate that this story has no historical/factual basis and was only inserted in order to convey the message of the rabbis’ supreme authority. This point, that the rabbis are superior to any Hasmonean ruler, is also emphasized in *yNazir* 5, 3, where Shimeon ben Shetah overcomes King Yannai by providing a better solution for providing sacrifices for Nazirs.

**III. Queen Alexandra and Shimeon ben Shetah**

Although Shimeon ben Shetah is frequently mentioned in rabbinic sources both in connection to Shelamzion and independently, Josephus does not mention him even

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75 Ilan, *Silencing the Queen*, p. 41.
76 Ibid.
77 See below, n. 91.
once. Shimeon ben Shetah’s prominent standing in tannaitic and rabbinic literature on the one hand, and his absence in historical works, on the other, may indicate that he was unknown and unimportant in the Second Temple Period. In contrast, Queen Alexandra is known in both rabbinic and historical sources, which would indicate that her status and importance was much higher, both in her time and during the later rabbinic period.

Megillat Ta’anit, the earliest rabbinic source, dating to the Second Temple Period, recounts several events connected to the era of Queen Alexandra. Describing a festival of the 28th of Tevet, apparently marking the Pharisees’ takeover of the Sanhedrin from the Sadducees, the Oxford ms. of Megillat Ta’anit states:

כ בימי יא יומרי והביאו אל אשתו של חלוכית ילדה ואחריה עמה שמעון בן שטח והביאו אל משפחתו של אשתו של חלוכית והביאו אל משפחתו של אשתו של חלוכית והביאו אל משפחתו של אשתו של חלוכית והביאו אל משפחתו של אשתו של חלוכית והביאו אל משפחתו של אשתו של חלוכית והביאו אל משפחתו של אשתו של חלוכית.

For in the days of King Yannai and Queen Sheliion they [the members of the Sanhedrin] would sit [convene] and only Shimeon ben Shetah was with them, and he brought his disciples until it [the Sanhedrin] filled up, and they would ask questions and halakhot and they [the members of the Sanhedrin] would not know what to respond. They sent for and brought Shimeon ben Shetah and he brought his disciples until the Sanhedrin was filled with twenty-three.

This text relates how Shimeon ben Shetah and his pupils took over the Sanhedrin from the Sadducees. Thus both of the above rabbinic texts express the triumph of the sages or their Pharisaic predecessor – bShabbat 16b describes how the sages subjugated the queen while Megillat Ta’anit describes how Shimeon ben Shetah eventually took over the Sanhedrin from the Sadducees (the Parma and Cambridge ms. provide a more in-depth description than the Oxford ms.). Both texts also refer to the queen as

78 See, Cohen “Parallel Historical Tradition,” p. 7. Neusner notes that the omission of ben Shetah’s name in Josephus is noteworthy since Josephus himself was a Pharisee. Thus Josephus apparently did not know of ben Shetah, see Neusner, Rabbinic Traditions, p. 137. On the other hand, Ephron believes that the omission of ben Shetah is due to Josephus’ tendency to focus on political events, see Ephron, “Shimon ben Shetach,” p. 109.
79 See Noam, Megillat Ta’anit, p. 19. Noam’s skillful analysis of Megillat Ta’anit is the basis for my discussion below.
80 Ibid, p. 277.
81 Ibid., pp. 107-108, 277.
82 According to Vered Noam, this is based on the parallel with the Parma ms., which ends with Shimeon ben Shetah throwing the Sadducees out of the Sanhedrin and replacing them with his pupils: 

וכך [steam on ben Shetach] ואילו ילדה ומעמידים אנונימיים, ושמעון בני שטח את שלום, שאיתו יושבים יחדיו...

See ibid, p. 277.
Shelzion/Shel Zion and also mention Shimeon ben Shetah (though without creating a family connection between him and Alexandra, unlike bBerakhot 48a).

Several scholars have connected ben Shetah’s takeover of the Sanhedrin with a baraita in bKid 66a. During a discussion concerning a promiscuous wife, the gemara cites a baraita concerning a conflict between Yannai and the Pharisees (חכמי ישראל). A certain Pharisee (ץֶקֶן) demanded that Yannai renounce the high priesthood since a) he is not descended from Aaron and b) there is a rumor that his mother was a captive, which would render him unfit for the priesthood. Upon the advice of Eleazar ben Poirah, probably a Sadducee, Yannai killed all of the Pharisees and there was no one to teach Torah until Shimeon ben Shetah appeared on the scene and their teachings were restored:

והיה העולם משתומם עד שבא שמעון בן שטח והחזיר את התורה ליושנה

and the world was desolate until Simeon n. Shetah came and restored the Torah to its pristine [glory].

In the parallel story in Antiquities 13:289-296, the king who falls out with the Pharisees is Hyrcanus I (instead of Yannai/Alexander Jannaeus). Moreover, in a dispute in the gemara (bBrakhot 29a), Abbaye in declares that Yannai and Hyrcanus are the same person while Rabba asserts that they are two separate people:

שריר וחתך כחר שמש בחתוך ד قوله שימת נפשו כשרין פלך. אמר אביי: הוה

For the High Priest Yohanan served in the high priesthood for eighty years and eventually became a Sadducee. Abaye said: “[King] Yannai and Yohanan [the High Priest] are one.” Rabba said: Yannai is separate [person and Yohanan is a separate [person]; Yannai is essentially evil and Yohanan is essentially good.

Yet it is not unusual for rabbinic texts to associate all evil acts with Yannai since there is a “general aggadic tendency to concentrate all stories of evil kings around the same figure.”

Kalmin believes that Abbaye’s statement was motivated by the story in bKid

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81 The Cambridge ms. has a different version of Alexandra’s name – שלמינון, while the Parma ms. does not mention her at all.
82 Noam, Megillat Ta’anit, p. 277. See also Kalmin, Jewish Babylonia, pp. 160-169 for a discussion of this baraita’s hostility towards the Sadducees.
83 Schwartz, “KATA TOYTON,” p. 267. Ephron views the Palestinian tradition of a rather even-handed approach to Yannai as more authentic than that of the BT, which depicts Yannai as a cruel ruler who slaughters multitudes of rabbis, see Ephron, “Shimon ben Shetach,” p.75.
He also claims that this is another example of how “Josephus-like traditions motivated the BT’s negative portrayal of the Sadducees.”

Although *bKid* 66a states that it was ben Shetah who restored the Torah, in actuality it was Queen Alexandra who restored the law by empowering the Pharisees. This can be viewed as another example of “elimination,” wherein women “disappear entirely from the record.” Likewise, it demonstrates how, due to the patriarchal mindset of the sages, a woman’s act is transferred to a man.

The following text from the BT also connects Queen Alexandra, Yannai and Shimeon ben Shetah:

### bBerakhot 48a

King Yannai and the Queen were eating bread together, and since he [Yannai] had slain the rabbis there was no one to recite the blessing [of Grace after Meals] for them. He said to his wife: Who will provide us with a man who will recite the blessing for us? She said to him: Swear to me that if I bring you a man you will not harm him. He swore to her and she brought her brother, Shimeon ben Shetah. She sat him between him [Yannai] and herself. He [Yannai] said to him [Shimeon ben Shetah]: Do you see what honor I give you? He [Shimeon ben Shetah] said: You do not honor me but rather the Torah honors me, as it is written: “Hug her [wisdom] to you and she will exalt you; She will bring you honor if you embrace her” (Proverbs 4:8). He [Yannai] said to her: You see that he does not accept authority! They gave him a cup [of wine] in order to recite the blessing of Grace after Meals and he said what blessing shall I recite [since I have not eaten]: “Blessed be [God] whose food Yannai and his companions have eaten”?! He drank the cup [thereby having eaten something] and they gave him another cup and he recited the blessing of Grace after Meals.

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86 Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia* p. 162.
87 Ibid., p. 156.
88 Ibid., p. 22.
89 My translation.
The pericope in the BT has a parallel in the Yerushalmi (yBerakhot 7, 2, 54a), which relates to a previous story concerning Nezirim and Shimeon ben Shetah: 91

...Ki...
eaten? He ordered: Bring him food to eat. They brought food and he ate and said: Let us say grace for the food that we have eaten.\footnote{Ibid.}

\textbf{a. The Literary/textual context}

This passage is located within a series of discussions regarding the obligation to recite Grace after Meals. Yannai’s slaying of the rabbis/sages is also mentioned in \textit{bKiddushin} 66a, which we have already discussed. Neusner notes that \textit{bBerakhot} 48a is derived from earlier rabbinic accounts (\textit{yBer} 7:2, \textit{yNaz} 5:3).\footnote{Neusner, \textit{Rabbinic Traditions}, p. 113.} Thus \textit{bBerakhot} 48a may be based upon or connected to \textit{bKiddushin} 66a.

The gemara’s account of Yannai slaying the sages may have been derived from Josephus. The continuation of \textit{Ant.} 13:401 (cited above in connection to \textit{bSotah} 22b), indicates a severe conflict between Yannai and the Pharisees, the predecessor of the rabbinic sages:

\ldots and he said he himself had come into conflict with the people due to these [Pharisees] after they had had been affronted by him. (\textit{Ant.} 13:402)\footnote{My translation.}

Inasmuch as \textit{ὑβρισθεντας} signifies to be affronted, outraged or assaulted,\footnote{Liddell, \textit{Greek-English Lexicon}, s.v. \textit{ὑβρις}, def. ii 2 and 3, p. 827.} this mistreatment may refer to Alexander Jannaeus having killed 6,000 of his opponents during the Festival of Sukkot:

προσεξελοδόρησαν δ’ αὐτὸν ὡς ἐξ αἴχμαλῶτων γεγόντα καὶ τής τιμῆς καὶ τοῦ θείου ἀνάξιου ἐπὶ τούτους ὀργίσθεις κτεῖνει μὲν αὐτῶν περὶ ἐξακασχίλους...

\ldots and they added insult to injury by saying that he was descended from captives and unfit to hold office and to sacrificing; and being enraged at this, he killed some six thousand of them… (\textit{Ant.} 13:372-3)

The Pharisees probably were the opponents that Josephus refers to inasmuch as they are very exacting in their interpretation of the Jewish Law (\textit{War} 1:110). In \textit{Ant.} 13:292 the Pharisees opposed the accusation that Hyrcanus I, Alexander Jannaeus’ father, was
descended from a woman who was a captive, which therefore made him unfit to hold the
office of High Priest. Yet later on, in Ant. 13: 372-3, they supported this allegation due
to their opposition to the king. In the parallel passage in War 1:89 there is no mention of
this accusation. Alexander Jannaeus’ persecution of the Pharisees could also refer to his
crucifixion of eight hundred of his opponents as mentioned in Ant. 13:380, War 1:97 and
bQid 66a. 

In either case, the BT’s reference to the killing of the ראבנ (rabbis), which is not
mentioned in the Jerusalem Talmud (JT), is apparently grounded in the historical reality
of Alexander Jannaeus’ persecution of the Pharisees. Similar to bSotah 22b and bShabbat
16b, here the BT hints at Second Temple Period events, which in this case are absent in
the earlier JT.

b. Didactic message

Similarly to bSotah 22b, here too the queen is a nameless appendage to her husband
Yannai but now she is also the nameless sister of Shimeon ben Shetah. Interestingly, she
plays a more significant role in the BT than in the JT. In the BT, the queen makes her
husband swear that he will not harm ben Shetah, and only then does she agree to send for
him. In the JT, she plays no significant role – she is only mentioned as being seated next
to the king. Thus, in the BT, Yannai is subservient to both the queen and ben Shetah.
Only after Yannai obeys their wishes, do both the queen and ben Shetah agree to do the
king’s bidding. Yannai’s subservience to the queen, whom the rabbis favored, could
symbolize the superiority of the Pharisees and their supporters over the King, who had
previously persecuted the Pharisees.

Similar to bShabbat 16b, once again the gemara is demonstrating the superiority of
the religious authority of the rabbis over the secular power of the king.

96 And see below discussion of bKid 66a regarding the rumor that Alexander Jannaeus’ mother was a
captive.
97 See Derenbourg , Essai sur l'Histoire, p. 99, who bases this supposition upon the words פליטת ספרא
in Megillat Ta’anit.
c. Influence on Modern Historians

For the first (and only) time in the gemara, the queen is defined as the sister of Shimeon ben Shetah. On the basis of this pericope, several modern scholars, as early as Derenbourg, adopted this legend as fact. Klausner proposes an interesting explanation for this family connection – that Shimon ben Shetah and Queen Alexandra had very close relations – he guided her actions and in this way acted like her brother. Even later scholars such as Tessa Rajak accept this relation: “The scholar Simon ben Shetah (the brother-in-law of King Alexander Jannaeus who ruled in the early first century B.C.).”

Modern historians cast doubts upon a family connection between Alexandra and ben Shetah. Joshua Efron claims that the close and “courageous” relationship between Alexandra and ben Shetah caused a scribal error. According to Ephron’s textual explanation, the word לאתחיה (“to his wife”) was changed into לאחתיה (“to his sister”) due to the similar spelling of the two words. Shmuel Safrai points out that only the BT makes Alexandra and ben Shetah sister and brother due to its tendency “of connecting prominent historical personalities by family ties while the Palestinian Talmud only notes similarities of outlooks and ideas.” It is possible that the gemara’s creation of a familial relation between the two may be due to Alexandra’s support of the Pharisees. Tal Ilan notes that the BT often brings “free-floating women into rabbinic patriarchal households.” Inasmuch as there is no other historical or rabbinic source (not even the parallel in the JT) that supports this alleged familial connection between Alexandra and Shimeon ben Shetah, we cannot rely upon this information in bBerakhot 48a.

Conclusion

The above survey demonstrates that Queen Alexandra was a figure well-known and admired by the sages even though they were confused about her name. As compared with

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98 Neusner terms this “a little gloss.” One other rabbinic source, bSot 47a, mentions a sister of Shimeon ben Shetah without specifying who she is. See Neusner, Rabbinic Traditions, p. 113-114.

99 See Derenbourg, Essai sur l’histoire, p. 96; see also Graetz, History of Jewish People, p. 48.

100 Klausner, p. 248

101 Rajak, Josephus, p. 27.


other women, she appears relatively often in rabbinic texts, especially in connection with Yannai (Alexander Jannaeus) and Shimeon ben Shetah. In fact, the latter is constantly connected to stories about Queen Alexandra, indicating that they were contemporaries. Even though Alexandra was a queen, Shimeon ben Shetah was more important for the sages since they were primarily interested in personalities who played a role in the religious aspect of history (and not the political realm).

Events concerning Queen Alexandra and her reign, as told by Josephus, are echoed in many rabbinic texts, which apparently relied upon Antiquities and War (either directly or indirectly). Without Josephus’ historical context, rabbinic literature would only offer us short vignettes on Queen Alexandra’s purported deeds. Indeed, “[a]ll we may say for sure is that some of the rabbinic traditions are roughly congruent with some of the things Josephus reports.” Both the parallels as well as the historical background that Josephus provides are indispensable for understanding rabbinic texts on Queen Alexandra.

Early rabbinic literature views her reign as an idyllic era during which the Jewish people kept the commandments, and this resulted in agricultural prosperity. In contrast to earlier tannaitic literature, the later BT appears to allude to historical events connected to Alexandra that are mentioned in Josephus’ works. This is in line with Richard Kalmin’s view that the BT contains literary traditions from Roman Palestine, albeit somewhat distorted. Surprisingly, in one instance, in fact, Queen Alexandra plays a much more prominent role in the BT than in the JT. The BT recounts a clash between the rabbis and Queen Alexandra, which is extremely critical of the queen. This story may have been invented as a convenient backdrop to emphasize the supremacy of rabbinical ordinances and authority.

Inasmuch as many nineteenth and twentieth-century historians accepted the laudatory portrayal of Queen Alexandra in early rabbinic literature, it was therefore mirrored in historical works such as those by Schürer, Dubnov, and Graetz. Present-day historians, however, are more circumspect as to the reliability of rabbinic texts. Safrai claims that when the same event/aggadah is recorded in both the BT and the JT, then we have a

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105 See Kalmin, Jewish Babylonia, p. 9 and Ephron, Hasmonean Period, p. 173.
106 Neusner, Rabbinic Traditions, p. 140.
107 Kalmin, Jewish Babylonia, p. 61.
“genuine historical core.” On the other hand, Jacob Neusner believes that we cannot obtain any information on the Second Temple Period from rabbinic literature. Shaye Cohen and Richard Kalmin believe that Josephus’ writings are the source of parallel rabbinic texts and are therefore more reliable.

The majority of studies on Queen Alexandra from the last two decades place almost no value upon rabbinic literature as a historical source. They rely almost exclusively upon Josephus’ *War and Antiquities*, and their evaluation of Queen Alexandra’s reign is determined by which passages and books they choose to emphasize. Nonetheless, the positive image of Queen Alexandra in early rabbinic sources may still continue to play a role in modern historical accounts. Either consciously or subconsciously, present-day authors may have absorbed the laudatory outlook on the queen in early rabbinic literature, for, if we examine recent scholarly articles, they exhibit little, if any, censure of her rule.

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110 See Chapter 1, “Literature Review,” for an analysis of articles from the past twenty years.
111 Ibid.
Chapter 6: 
Queen Alexandra’s Image in Chronicles from the 
Early Byzantine Period until the Beginning of the 
Early Modern Period

This chapter will survey both Byzantine and Jewish chronicles that refer to the reign of Queen Alexandra. It will examine and analyze Byzantine chronicles from the fourth century CE until the twelfth century and Jewish chronicles from the tenth until the end of the sixteenth century.

Surprisingly, to date, no one has undertaken a survey and analysis of the development of the figure of Queen Alexandra in these chronicles and this chapter represents such an endeavor.

Byzantine chronicles present an account of world history from Creation until the lifetimes of their authors, who were usually monks or churchmen. Emphasizing the dating of historical events, these chronicles view “history as the working out of God’s plan.” The authors usually acquired their knowledge on the Second Temple Period in general from Josephus’ *Antiquities* and *War*. I will examine how and why the description of Queen Alexandra changed from a brief mention in early Byzantine chronicles from the fourth to seventh centuries, to in-depth portraits in later chronicles from the ninth to twelfth centuries.

Although they were written by Jews for a Jewish audience, *Sefer Josippon* and *Zemah David* employed the historiographical style of Byzantine chronicles. *Sefer Josippon*, written in the tenth century by an unknown author, marks the beginning of Jewish

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historiography in the Middle Ages. David Gans' *Zemah David* was published at the end of the sixteenth century and represents one of the first Jewish historical works in the early modern period. *Josippon* resembles Byzantine chronicles in its reliance upon Josephus while *Zemah David* distances itself from this primary source by relying almost entirely upon *Josippon*. These two Jewish chronicles are extremely significant due to their overwhelming influence on subsequent Jewish historians. The following remark on *Zemah David* by André Neher is equally applicable to *Josippon*:

This historical chronicle was mentioned in the scholarly footnotes of all the nineteenth-century Jewish historians, who rightly saw David Gans as a precursor in their own field…

I. Byzantine Chronicles

Several factors reveal the development of Queen Alexandra’s image in Byzantine chronicles: the number of lines or pages devoted to her reign, which events and descriptions are copied from Josephus’ writings and which are omitted, and the additional information they provide which is not included in Josephus’ narrative. The outlook of Byzantine chronographers is significant for "it is now recognized that chronicle-writers were intelligent and original thinkers who made a distinctive contribution to the recording of history."  

The lives of women in the Byzantine world and their role in politics, religion, religion, art and literature have become a topic of intense scholarly research in the past two decades.

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3 The premise that *Josippon* belongs to the genre of Byzantine chronicles due to its methodology of excerpting various sources and collecting them in one treatise is based upon Bowman, “Josephus in Byzantium,” pp. 371, 375.

4 Neher, *Jewish Thought*, p. 54.


**a. Background: Early Byzantium**

The Church Fathers exhibited an ambivalent attitude towards women. On the one hand, women were viewed as inferior, weak and even an instrument of the devil since they caused Adam to sin, while on the other hand, the church proclaimed their spiritual equality with men.\(^7\)

Queen Helena represents one woman who broke this mold; she received the title of “Augusta” in 324 and became a prototype for subsequent imperial women who replicated the monuments she built as well as her acts.\(^8\) Helena’s image later appeared on a coin legend which reads on one side ‘security of the republic’ (SECURITAS REIPUBLICE [sic]). According to Leslie Brubaker, the coin reflects the Roman state ideology of women as “images of dynastic strength and state stability.”\(^9\)

What were the sources for the Byzantine chronographers’ history of the Second Temple Period? Early Christian writers from the first to third centuries such as Theophilus of Antioch, Melito of Sardis, Irenaeus of Lyon, Minucius Felix, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Julius Africanus either knew or referred to Josephus and/or his works.\(^10\) In the first half of the third century, Origen was “the first Christian theologian who comprehensively uses the Jewish historian [Josephus] for the apologetic interests of Christian theology.”\(^11\) In the fourth century Eusebius so profusely cited Josephus that he [Josephus] “became one of the most influential ‘Christian’ authors.” Steven Bowman summarizes Eusebius’ influence on the transmission of Josephus:

Eusebius created the basic framework for subsequent Christian world histories. To him Josephus was an authentic eyewitness to the period of Jesus’ career, as well as an independent Jewish source to ancient history...Eusebius’ works became the major vehicle through which the Josephan corpus was transmitted to Byzantine chronographers for the next nine centuries.\(^12\)

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\(^8\) See Brubaker, “Memories of Helena,” p. 61.

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 58.


\(^11\) Ibid., p. 61.

\(^12\) Bowman, “Josephus in Byzantium,” pp. 363-364.
Indeed, Eusebius put Josephus on the map for historians, and he has retained this prominent position up until the present time.

II. References to Queen Alexandra in Byzantine Chronicles

a. Eusebius

Eusebius of Caesarea (c.255-339) is the earliest Byzantine historian who mentions Alexandra’s reign.13 His fourth-century (303/325 CE) chronicle, in Jerome’s Latin translation,14 reads:

1941 [years from Abraham]
Alexandra, quae et Salina, uxor Alexandri, Hierosolymis regnauit, ex cuius aetate Iudaecos rerum confusion et variae clades oppresserunt. 15
Alexandra, who is also called Salina, wife of Alexander, ruled in Jerusalem. From [the end of] her time a state of disorder and various misfortunes pressed upon the Judeans.

Eusebius presents us with a sparse amount of information here. A name – Salina Alexandra, her husband’s name – Alexander (probably mentioned since she succeeded him), the fact that she was a ruler or monarch of the Judeans and that she ruled in Jerusalem, and finally that her rule was a disaster. This negative appraisal of Queen Alexandra’s reign in Eusebius’ chronicle (especially the words “rerum confusion et variae clades”) echoes Josephus’ summation of Queen Alexandra’s rule in Ant. 13:432:

καὶ ξυμφορῶν δὲ ἐνέπλησε καὶ ταραχῆς, ἐξ ὧν ζῶσα ἐπολιτεύσατο καὶ μετὰ τὴν τελευτήν τὸ βασιλείου 16

13 Unlike many scholars, who classify Eusebius’ chronicle as early Church historiography (such as Oded Irshai, “Jews and Judaism in Early Church Historiography: The Case of Eusebius of Caesæa” in Reuven Bonfil et al. [eds.], Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures [Leiden: Brill 2012]), I follow Warren Treadgold (Treadgold, Early Byzantine Historians) in classifying it as Byzantine chronicle.

14 Which some scholars believe is based, in part, on the chronography of Julius Africanus. See Grant, Greek and Latin Authors, p. 161.

15 Eusebii Chronicorum Libri duo, II, p. 135. I am indebted to Rivkah Fishman-Duker for translating the Latin texts in this chapter and for her insightful comments. The Armenian version of Eusebius’ chronicle reads in Latin, “Alexandra, quae et Salina, uxor Alexandri Iudaes imperabat, et deinceps Iudaorum res deoraubantur.” (Alexandra, who is also Salina, wife of Alexander, ruled over the Jews and consequently the affairs of the Jews were corrupted).

16 In Liddell, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 765 s.v. συμφορᾶ is defined as mishap, mischance, misfortune (def. 2) and on p. 792 s.v. ταραχῆ is defined as political confusion, tumult (def. 3).
And the way in which she governed during her lifetime caused the palace to be filled with both misfortunes and political tumults even after her death.\textsuperscript{17}

This parallel is no coincidence for, as previously mentioned, Eusebius relied on Josephus, particularly for historical information on the reign of the Judaean monarchs.\textsuperscript{18}

Scholars have focused upon only one aspect of Eusebius’ account: that it is the earliest known source that adds the name Salina to Alexandra, and the end result was the [incorrect] popular name, Salome Alexandra.\textsuperscript{19} Tal Ilan believes that Eusebius confused the widow of Aristobulus I, Salina Alexandra, with Queen Alexandra although they were two different women.\textsuperscript{20} In a footnote, Schürer details the chain of events leading to this misnomer.\textsuperscript{21} Although Josephus merely uses the Greek name Alexandra in both War and Antiquities, all subsequent Byzantine chronicles relying upon Eusebius use the double name Alexandra Salina.\textsuperscript{22}

Yet there are other interesting aspects of Eusebius’ description. For example, Eusebius states that Queen Alexandra “Hierusolymis regnauit” while in Josephus her connection to Jerusalem is only mentioned in Ant. 13:401: εἰς τὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα - “[she should go] to Jerusalem”. Eusebius may have used this expression due to the innumerable times it is used in the biblical book of Kings to describe a king ruling in Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{23}

Yet even more significant is the fact that Eusebius chose to encapsulate Queen Alexandra’s reign with the extremely negative part of Ant. 13:432, which relates to internal palace affairs, while ignoring Josephus’ positive ending connected to the entire kingdom: ἐν ἑαυτῇ ἡδύπλαξεν - “she maintained the nation peacefully.” What can be the cause for this harsh picture of Queen Alexandra? It may reflect the patriarchal attitude of Byzantine society towards women for, as mentioned above, the

\textsuperscript{17} My translation.

\textsuperscript{18} See Mosshammer, Chronicle of Eusebius, pp. 133-134 and Treadgold, Byzantine Historians, pp. 26-27.

\textsuperscript{19} Müller is the first early modern author to mention Eusebius in connection with the issue of the name Salina. See Joh. Müller, Alexandra Judaearum regina, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{20} For an in-depth discussion of this matter, see Ilan, “Queen Salamzion, pp. 181-190. Ilan describes how the name Salina has caused many scholars to assume that Queen Alexandra had been previously married to Aristobulus I. She believes that this is incorrect and points out that Josephus does not explicitly assert that Aristobulus’ widow and Alexander Jannaeus’ widow were one and the same person.

\textsuperscript{21} Schürer, History of the Jewish People, I, pp. 229-30, n.2. Ralph Marcus mentions the variations of Salina and Salome without referring to Eusebius, see Jewish Antiquities: XIII: 320., p. 388, n. a.

\textsuperscript{22} As stated in the Introduction, her Hebrew/Aramaic name was Shelamzion.

\textsuperscript{23} For example, I Kings 15:2, 10, 22:42; II Kings 8:17, 26, 12:2, 14:2, 15:2, 33, 16:2, 18:2, 21:1, 19, 22:1, 23:31, 36; 34:8, 18.
Church Fathers viewed women as weak, inferior and evil. Moreover, Byzantine society inherited Roman society’s negative attitude towards women rulers (see above, Chapter 4). This censure may also be connected to Queen Alexandra’s support of the Pharisees, who are depicted in the gospels as opponents of Jesus and/or his disciples, and also as hypocrites.24 As will be seen below, it is more puzzling when a Byzantine chronicle chooses to present a positive image of Queen Alexandra.

The phrase “ex cuius aetate” (from her time) is especially significant here. Time is particularly important or sacred for Christian chroniclers since holy events, such as the Incarnation, must be accurately dated.25 Byzantine chroniclers believe that the vision of the four beasts in the Book of Daniel 7-11 represents an allegory of the course of Jewish history.26 They view Daniel’s vision as foretelling the four successive kingdoms to which the Jewish people will become subject following the end of the House of David: the Assyrian/Babylonian, the Mede/Persian, the Greek/Macedonian, and the Roman kingdom.27 The last kingdom, Rome, which is viewed as wicked, leads to the apex of sacred history, which occurs during the reign of Herod – the birth of Jesus.28 Thus, according to Eusebius, the death of Queen Alexandra marked a turning point in the measurement of time. It signaled a turn for the worse since it heralded the conquest of Judaea by the evil Roman Empire, although it also marked the beginning of the period leading to the central event in sacred history – the Incarnation.29

Eusebius’ patriarchal bias is revealed by the fact that he ignores Josephus’ statement that matters for the Hasmonean kingdom started to decline from the time of John Hyrcanus (due to the downfall/kαταστροφή of his two sons, Ant. 13:300)30 and only emphasizes the deterioration from the time of Queen Alexandra.

26 See also below discussion of the Chronicon Paschale and n. 40.
29 I am grateful to Dr. Oded Irshai for drawing my attention to this matter.
30 See above, p. 71.
b. *Excerpta Latina Barbari*

The anonymous Alexandrian world chronicle, the *Excerpta Latina Barbari*, was written in the beginning of the fifth century, but the original Greek text was lost. The Latin translation was composed in the sixth or seventh century by someone with an inadequate knowledge of Greek and Latin, hence its name. This chronicle also briefly mentions Queen Alexandra:

XVII …Post Ianneum autem quem et Alexandrum principem sacerdotum et regem, in quo finierunt, qui secundum ritum principes sacerdotum uncti nominabantur.

XVIII Post hos regnuit Salinai et Alexandra uxor eius

XVIII Post hunc tumultum inter se eius pueri facientes Pompius Romanorum archistratigus expugnauit Hierusalem tenens usque ad progressionem temple apertionis. Tunc gensilla Iudeorum tributaria facta est Romanis. Principatum quidem sacerdottii Yrcano tradidit, Antipatrum autem Ascalona Palestine procutatorem faciens.32

17 …After Jannaeus [who is] also Alexander, the high priest and king, with him the rite of appointing the anointed high priests came to an end.

18 After him ruled Salinai [who] is also Alexandra, his wife.

19 After his sons made strife between themselves, Pompey general of the Romans fought against Jerusalem, taking as far as up to the open inner part of the Temple. Then the Jewish people was made tributary to the Romans. However, he handed over the high priesthood to Hyrcanus, making Antipater of Ascalon the governor of Palestine.33

This above list in the *Excerpta Latina Barbari* is part of a list of rulers from the Assyrian kings to the Roman consuls, which includes the Hasmonean rulers/high priests. The list of Hasmonean high priests is of utmost importance for the chronicle’s author since they herald the epoch of Jesus.

The *Excerpta Latina Barbari* states that Alexander Jannaeus ruled as king and high priest and then Alexandra ruled. This is noteworthy since Queen Alexandra is mentioned as a monarch, even though she was not a high priest. Still, this is in line with the

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31 See Frick, *Excerpta Latina Barbari*, lxxxv; lxxxiii–lxxxvi. Joseph Scaliger termed the text the *Excerpta Latina Barbari* in 1606; the word “Barbari” demonstrates his estimation of the translator’s ignorance of Greek and Latin due to the many grammatical and lexical errors, see Grafton, *Joseph Scalinger*, pp. 560-569. For an in-depth analysis of the *Excerpta Barbari*, its origin and objectives, see Garstad, “*Excerpta Latina Barbari,*” pp. 3–42.


33 I thank Rivkah Fishman-Duker for help with this translation.
The chronicle contains one significant error. It states that the appointing of high priests ended with Alexander Jannaeus (line 17), which is not the case since Queen Alexandra appointed her son Hyrcanus II as High Priest \(\text{(War 1: 109, Ant. 13: 408, 20:242)}\). Only after the chronicle describes Pompey’s conquest of Jerusalem does it mention that the latter appointed Hyrcanus II to the priesthood.

Why did the Excerpta Latina Barbari neglect to mention Queen Alexandra’s appointment of Hyrcanus II? One possibility is that the author did not view the appointment of a high priest by a woman as important or even worth mentioning. Another possibility is that in contrast to previous Hasmonean rulers, the author was confused due to the anomalous situation of a (female) monarch and a separate high priest, and its focus was on rulers and not high priests.

c. Chronicon Paschale

The next chronicle that refers to Queen Alexandra is the seventh-century (628/29) anonymous Chronicon Paschale, which traces the history of the world from Creation to 630 CE. In contrast to the Excerpta Latina Barbari, which lists the various rulers and kings, the Chronicon Paschale provides a list of high priests. This chronicle also refers to Alexandra:

\[
\text{Ὑρκανῷ τὴν ἀρχιερευσίνῃ τῷ υἱῷ Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ Ἀλεξάνδρας τῆς Σαλίνας παραδίδωσι (Πομψίλος)}
\]

He [Pompeius the Great] handed over the high priesthood to Hyrcanus, the son of Alexander and Alexandra Salina.

Although the Chronicon Paschale usually relies upon Eusebius’ Chronicle and Demonstratio Evangelica for most of its information, the source for the above statement is apparently Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History (6:1), which in turn depends upon Josephus (War 1:153, Ant. 14:73).

Here Queen Alexandra is not mentioned in her own right as a monarch but only as the mother of Hyrcanus II who Pompey appointed as high priest. Why does the Chronicon

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34 Many subsequent chronicles (see below) eliminated any mention of Queen Alexandra because she was not a high priest.
36 Dindorius, Chronicon Paschale, p. 351, lines 4-6.
Paschale provide only this brief reference to Queen Alexandra? Why does it ignore Alexandra’s status as a monarch? First of all, the style of the Chronicon Paschale with regard to Second Temple Period events is usually terse. The objective of the Chronicon Paschale can also provide an explanation. This passage is part of the list of the high priests following the Return to Zion, therefore all previous Hasmonean monarchs were included since they were also high priests. Queen Alexandra, however, was not a high priest and therefore was not included. In another list of high priests, the Chronicon Paschale also ends the line with Alexander Jannaeus, similar to the Excerpta Barbari. Why did the author omit Queen Alexandra’s appointment of her son to the priesthood? This may be due to the fact that the transmission of the list of high priests became confusing thereafter: first Alexandra appointed her son Hyrcanus II, then Aristobulus II seized the priesthood, and finally Pompey reinstated Hyrcanus II. Moreover, this list had to end with Alexander Jannaeus in order to prove the truth of the chronicle’s calculation, based on the prophecy in Daniel 9:25, that 483 years elapsed between the time of Cyrus and the end of the line of Judaean kings and high priests. In this case, the elimination of Queen Alexandra’s reign apparently had nothing to do with gender issues.

Up until now, we have examined three Byzantine chronicles from the fourth to seventh centuries which devote a minimal amount of space to the reign of Queen Alexandra. We can also add other chronicles, such as that of Orosius (416-7) or Malalas (circa 550), which do not mention her at all. This state of affairs changed in the ninth century.

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39 Chronicon Paschale, p. 452a
40 Ibid., p. 358. This idea is based on a conversation with Rivkah Fishman-Duker.
41 “…From the issuance of the word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the [time of] the appointed leader is seven weeks; and for sixty-two weeks it will be rebuilt…” (Daniel 9:25). The calculation of 483 years is based on 62 + 7=69 “weeks”; each week is interpreted as a 7-year period, therefore 69 x 7 years = 483 years.
43 Ioannes Malalas, Chronographia, ed. L. Dindorf, Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae (Bonn, 1831).
d. *Ecloga Chronographica*

The chronicle of the monk Georgios Syncellus [or Synkellos], *Ecloga Chronographica*, composed between 808-810 CE,\(^{44}\) provides a much more detailed account of Queen Alexandra’s reign than other Byzantine chronicles. What influenced Syncellus’ decision to compose an in-depth portrait of Queen Alexandra in his *Ecloga Chronographica*?

One factor is Syncellus’ treatment of all of Second Temple Period history – which is quite detailed and consequently so is the section of Alexandra.

The Byzantine historical context, in particular the reign of Irene the Athenian, may provide another explanation. In 780, when Emperor Leo IV died, his widow Irene acted as regent for their nine-year old son, Constantine VI, and even after he became of age to rule she struggled to retain power. In 797, soldiers loyal to Irene seized and blinded her son. Irene then became the first woman in Roman or Byzantine history to rule alone as a “Basileus” (emperor and not empress), until she was arrested and relegated to a convent in 802.\(^{45}\) These historical events, which occurred just before the time that Syncellus composed his chronicle, surely aroused interest in the issue of women and power and may have influenced Syncellus’ interest in a sovereign queen. Moreover, Irene’s ascent to the throne resembled that of Alexandra – both inherited the throne following the death of their husbands.

Syncellus’ sources for his chronicle include excerpts from Josephus, apparently derived directly from *War* and *Antiquities*, as well as the chronology of Sextus Julius Africanus, which was based on Justus of Tiberias.\(^{46}\)

I present below a table with Syncellus’ Greek text\(^{47}\) with the English translation of Adler and Tuffin,\(^{48}\) and refer to the parallel passages in Josephus’ *War* and *Antiquities* as well as in Eusebius’ Chronicle:

\(^{44}\) Adler and Tuffin, *Synkellos*, p. xxix.
\(^{47}\) The Greek is based upon the text of Mosshammer, *Georgius Synkellos*, pp. 355-356, 360; line numbers are cited in parentheses.
\(^{48}\) The English translation is taken from Adler and Tuffin, *Synkellos*, p. 431-32.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parallel passages</th>
<th>Ecloga Chronographica</th>
<th>Ader and Tuffin Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ant. 13:407</td>
<td>(p. 355, line 17)</td>
<td>…[Jannaios] died after a reign of thirty years. He had entrusted rule to his wife Salina, although she had two sons by him, Hyrkanos and Aristoboulus. Thereafter the affairs of the Jews were thrown into turmoil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eus. p. 134, Ant. 13:432</td>
<td>θυνήσει βασιλεύσας ἐτη λ', Σαλίνη γαμετή την' ἀρχήν 'εγχειρίσας, ὄτων αὐτή δύο παιδών εξ αυτῶν Ἰρκανίου καὶ Ἀριστοβούλου, εντεθήνεν δὲ τα Ἰουδαίων συγκέχιναι</td>
<td>The twenty-first ruler of the Jews was Salina, also known as Alexandra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eus. p. 134 Ant. 13:430</td>
<td>ἐτη θ',</td>
<td>9 years AM 5427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War 1:107, Ant. 13:407</td>
<td>τοῦ δὲ κόσμου ἦν ἔτος ευκ', Ἀλεξάνδρα ἡ καὶ Σαλίνη παυτή τῆς ὁμότετος ἀπόδειξα τοῦ ἀνδρός Ἰανναίου τοῦ καὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου τὸ Ἰουδαίων ἕθος ταῖς χρυσταῖς εὐνοίαις κερδήσασα διὰ δόξαν εὐσεβείας καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὸ θείον ὀρθὴν πίστιν καὶ περὶ τοὺς πατρίους νόμους ἀκράβειαν, εὐσταθὸς βασιλεύσασα ἐτη θ', ταύτην τὸν Φαρισαίου ἐγκάλη σύστημα, ὡς τῶν ἄλλων δύο, Σαδδουκαίων καὶ Ἐσθλεν' εὐσεβέστερον εἶναι δοκοῦν, καὶ τούτος τὴν τῶν παραγμάτων ἐγχειτε διοίκησιν ὡς θεοκλή. καὶ ἦν ἡ μὲν ἀπόλαυσις τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν Φαρισαίων διεμμούντων καὶ λύπης τῶν ξένων, αἱ δὲ δυσχερεῖα τῆς γυναίκος, καίτερ ὄψεις δεινοτέρας καὶ φοβερᾶς τοῖς ἐξω. πλὴν ἤρξε τῶν πολλῶν καὶ ἤρχετο ὑπ' αὐτῶν.</td>
<td>Alexandra, also known as Salina, was entirely lacking in the brutality of her husband Jannaios, also known as Alexander. By bestowing benefits, she gained the favour of the Jewish people, and because of her reputation for piety, her righteous trust in divinity, and her strictness in observing the ancestral laws, she reigned with steadfastness for nine years. She cultivated the Pharisaic system considering it more devout than those of the other two, the Sadducees and Essenes, and since she was a religious woman, she entrusted the management of affairs of state to them. Whereas the pleasure of rule fell to the Pharisees, who would bind and loose as they wanted, the disagreeable matters fell to this woman. She was, however, more formidable and intimidating to foreigners. But even as she ruled the masses, she was dominated by them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War 1:111</td>
<td>τῶν δὲ παῖδων Ἀριστοβούλου καὶ Ἰρκανίου ταύτη προσόπων αὐτῆς τὴν βασιλείαν Ἰρκανίῳ τῷ πρεσβυτέρῳ ἐπέτρεπε περὶ τῶν βάνατον, Ἀριστοβούλου δὲ τῷ γεωτέρῳ τὴν ἀρχερωτήτην. ἀλλ' ὀντός ἀθεονούσης τῆς μητρὸς ἀρπάσας τῶν καιρῶν μετά</td>
<td>Of the two sons who belonged to her, Aristoboulos and Hyrkanos, to her elder son Hyrkanos she entrusted the kingdom as she was approaching death; to the younger son Aristoboulos she gave the high</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Out of pity for Hyrkanos' distress, Salina confined Aristoboulos' wife and children near the northern side of the temple in the citadel called Baris. In the course of doing this and before punishing Aristoboulos for his insurrection against Hyrkanos, she died, after managing the government, as was stated above, for nine years and leaving Hyrkanos as her heir…

So upon capturing Jerusalem by siege, Pompey took Aristoboulos captive…And after entrusting the high priesthood to Aristoboulos' brother Hyrkanos, he made the Jews tributaries to the Romans.

The text of Syncellus embellishes Josephus' description and draws a very flattering picture of Queen Alexandra.

One example of this favorable attitude is the addition to Josephus' description – that the reason the people loved Queen Alexandra was due to her ταίς χρησταίς, which Liddell and Scott define as “good services, benefits, kindnesses.” Unlike Adler and Tuffin, I would translate this as kindnesses (not benefits) since this fits the context of Queen Alexandra embodying the opposite qualities of her husband’s cruelty/savagery - τής ώμοτος. This expression is not found in Josephus although he emphasizes that it was due to her piety that she succeeded in reigning nine years (War 110-111).

In keeping with a Christian outlook emphasizing faith, Syncellus emends Josephus' description of Alexandra’s piety by adding the expression

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**Table:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War 1:117</th>
<th>πολλῶν οἰκετῶν κρατεῖ τῶν ἐρυματῶν καὶ μισθοφόρους ἐκ τοῦτων ἄθροισας τοὺς χρήματαν ἀνέπειν ἑαυτῶν βασιλεᾶ.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ant. 13:426, War 1:118</td>
<td>(7) Τὸν δὲ Ἰύρκανον οἰκείρουσα Σαλίνα πανούμενον τὴν Ἀριστοβούλου γαμετὴν σὺν τέκνοις καθεῖρξε πρὸς τῷ βαρεῖο κλίματι τοῦ ίανοῦ εἰς βαρείστα φρούριον καὶ ἐν τῷ ὑμὸς τελευτᾷ πρὸν Ἀριστοβούλου τιμωρήθησαν περὶ τῆς καθ’ Ἰύρκανον ἐπαναστάσεως, διοεκήσσα, ὡς προεἰρήται, τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐτεσσ' β' καὶ τῶν Ἰύρκανου ταύτης κληρονόμου καταλιποῦσα…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

priesthood. But when his mother was becoming infirm, Aristoboulos seized his opportunity, and took control of the fortresses with the aid of many members of his household; and with the money he found there, he recruited mercenaries and proclaimed himself king.
τὴν πρὸς τὸ θείον ὄρθην πίστιν - her correct faith in the Deity (Josephus only states that Alexandra had a δοξὴν εὐσεβείας - reputation for piety- War 108).

Synellus continues to emphasize Alexandra’s piety, stating that her choice of the Pharisaic system was due to it being more devout than that of the Sadducees and Essenes, for she:

ταύτην τὸ Φαρισαϊκὸν ἐγάλα σύστημα, ώς τῶν ἄλλων δῶν, Σαδδουκαίων καὶ Ἐσσηνῶν, εὐσεβεστεον εἶναι δοκοῦν cultivated the Pharisaic system, considering it more devout than those of the other two – the Sadducees and Essenes.

Yet Josephus does not mention the Sadducees or Essenes in either War or Antiquities in connection to Queen Alexandra. Moreover, she had not cultivated (ἐγάλα) the Pharisaic system; rather she delegated power to the Pharisees. Synellus may have extrapolated this claim from Josephus’ description that τούτων περισσόν δὴ τι προσέχειν ἦ Ἁλεξάνδρα (And to them [the Pharisees] Alexandra excessively hearkened, War 1:111), and that she gave the Pharisees a certain amount of power. Synkellos might have understood hearkening to the Pharisees as preferring their religious system. The other two sects were probably added (by Synellus) since they are mentioned together with Pharisees elsewhere in Josephus. 49

Finally, Synellus does not end his description with Eusebius’ negative comment “rerum confusio et uariae clades oppresserunt” or Josephus’ condemnation of her rule καὶ ξυμφορῶν δὲ ἐνέπλησε καὶ ταραχῆς. Rather, Synellus simply states that she “died, after managing the government, as was stated above, for nine years” καὶ ἐν τούτων τελευτᾷ ..ωκήσασα, ώς προείρηται, τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔτεσιν θ’

In contrast to Eusebius, Synellus’ description of Queen Alexandra is not only more lengthy but also complimentary as opposed to hostile. For while Eusebius in his short description focused on the “rerum confusio et uariae clades,” Synellus’ in-depth portrayal totally omitted this negative appraisal.

Another example of the influence of contemporary historical events upon Synellus is the issue of the high priesthood of Queen Alexandra’s sons. Synellus states that Queen Alexandra bequeathed the kingdom to Hyrcanus II and the High Priesthood to

49 In Ant. 13: 171-173 and in War 2:119.
Aristobulus II. Although Josephus does state that Queen Alexandra entrusted the kingdom to Hyrcanus II as heir to the throne at the end of her lifetime (War 1:120), she also bestowed the high priesthood upon him at the onset of her reign (War 1:109; Ant. 13:408, 20:242) and not to Aristobulus.

What can account for the divergences between the accounts of Syncellus and Josephus? According to Seth Schwartz, the confusion over the roles of Queen Alexandra’s sons was “influenced perhaps by the division of powers between emperor and pontifex maximus typical of the later Roman Empire.” Schwartz presumes that the Byzantine political system in existence during Syncellus’ lifetime, where the offices of emperor and patriarch were held by two separate people, influenced Syncellus to assume that the monarchy and priesthood could not be held by one person in the Second Temple period as well. Syncellus therefore thought it logical that the two offices would be divided between Queen Alexandra’s sons.

What then can be the source of Syncellus’ account of Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II? Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History, published in 324 CE, briefly mentions Queen Alexandra’s sons (though not Alexandra herself), a parallel briefly noted by Adler and Tuffin. Describing the Jewish rulers following the return from Babylon to Zion as an oligarchy of the best-born/aristocrats (the priests), Eusebius states that Pompey sent Aristobulus, “the king and high priest,” to Rome as a prisoner:

τὸν δὲ ἐκ προγόνων διαδοχῆς ἔις ἑκείνῳ τοῦ καίρου διακρέαντα βασιλέα τε ὡμοῦ καὶ ἄρχιερέα...

who, continuing his ancestors’ succession, had endured in time as both king and high priest...

Then Pompey:

' Ἰρκανῶ μὲν τῷ τούτου ἄδελφῳ τὴν ἄρχιερωσύνην παραδίδωσιν.

While he transmitted the succession of the high priesthood to his brother Hyrcanus.

50 Ant. 14:2 states that Hyrcanus II assumed royal power but does not say that Queen Alexandra gave it to him
51 See Schwartz “Georgius Syncellus, p. 2 and the entire article. See also Gilbert Dagon, Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
52 Adler and Tuffin, Synkellos, p. 432, n. 1.
53 Eusebius: Ecclesiastical History, 1.6.6, p. 52.
The account of Pompey and the high priesthood is based on the abovementioned passages in *War* 1:153 and *Ant.* 14:73. Yet Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* records a different version of the high priesthood – Aristobulus II was initially the high priest and then the priesthood was transferred to Hyrcanus II. Thus the information provided by Eusebius contradicts Josephus’ account. Josephus states that Queen Alexandra appointed Hyrcanus II as high priest while she was queen (*Ant.* 13:408, 20:242; *War* 1:109). Hence, some sort of distortion seems to have crept into Eusebius’ testimony, which may have affected later Church historians who relied upon him, such as Syncellus.\(^5\) To conclude, I surmise that Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*, which states that Aristobulus II was both king and high priest before Pompey handed over the priesthood to Hyrcanus II, is the source of Syncellus’ mistake concerning Aristobulus’ role as high priest.

**e. Zonaras**

The twelfth-century Byzantine chronicle of Ioannes Zonaras, *Epitome historian* (\(\varepsilon\pi\tau\omicron\mu\eta\ i\sigma\tau\omicron\phi\omicron\nu\)), gives an account from the creation of the world until 1118.\(^6\) Similar to Syncellus, it also devotes a significant amount of space to a description of Queen Alexandra’s reign. What is the reason for this in-depth treatment of Queen Alexandra?

Firstly, as with Syncellus, the Byzantine historical context of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which Zonaras himself records, influenced his writing to some extent. For example, Zoe and Theodora, the daughters of Constantine VIII, were “sovereign empresses who ruled in their own right,” similar to Queen Alexandra.\(^7\) Likewise, several women who wielded power from the middle of the eleventh to the end of the twelfth century, some as rulers and others in various public functions, exercised “the prerogatives

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54 Ibid.
55 For a survey of how Eusebius’ chronicle became the basis for all Byzantine and medieval chronologies, see Glenn Chesnut, “Eusebius, Augustine, Orosius and the Later Patristic and Medieval Christian Historians” in Attridge and Hata, *Eusebius*, p. 690 and the entire article pp. 687-713.
56 For an introduction to the life and writings of Zonaras, see Eugene Lane and Thomas Banchich (transl.), *The History of Zonaras: From Alexander Severus to the Death of Theodosius the Great* (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 1-19. This book provides only a partial translation of Zonaras’ work (books XXII-XIII). In the prologue, Zonaras states that he writes this chronicle as a “concise history” and not for theological purposes (ibid., pp. 23-25).
enshrined in the ideology of the widowed mother." This too strikes a chord with Queen Alexandra’s status. Finally, in 1118 (the same year in which Zonaras’ chronicle ends), Irene Doukaina was entrusted by her bed-ridden husband, Emperor Alexios I Komnenos, with the management of Byzantine state affairs. This event resembles Queen Alexandra’s succession, although Irene did not take control of the kingdom but rather tried to designate a successor to her husband.

Zonaras represents an anomaly among Byzantine chroniclers since instead of using Eusebius as his source Zonaras directly cites Josephus. Moreover, unlike Eusebius and other Byzantine chroniclers, he excludes theological explanations and a Christian focus. Rivkah Fishman-Duker points out that Zonaras’ “technique lies in summarizing Antiquities and eliminating certain features such as lengthy speeches, documents and letters; character evaluations and philosophical digressions.” Such abridgement is evident in the following passages describing Queen Alexandra in Zonaras’ Epitome historian I:V:4, which parallels Ant. 399-430:

<table>
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<th>Parallel passages in Ant. 13</th>
<th>Zonaras</th>
<th>My Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>399</td>
<td>ὁρῶσα δὲ αὐτὸν ἡ βασιλίσσα ήδη ἀπεγνωσμένον, έαυτήν τε καὶ τοὺς παιδὰς ὑώρετο.</td>
<td>And when the queen saw him she now realized that she and her children would be left alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400</td>
<td>ὁ δὲ κρύπται δὲ τὸν θάνατον αὐτὸν πρὸς τοὺς στρατιώτας, ταύτη ὑπέθετο, ἐὼς ἀν ἔξελη τὸ χοριόν. (ἐτυχε γὰρ τι πολυρκῶ VERSION),</td>
<td>He told her that therefore she should conceal his death from the soldiers until she would capture the fortress (since it was being besieged)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401-402</td>
<td>ἐπείετα ὡς ἀπὸ λίκης εἰς ἱεροσόλυμα παραγενομένην τούς Φαρισαίους ἐξουσίαν μεταδόνα τινός, δύνασθαι γὰρ αὐτοὺς θέσθαι τὸ ἑθνὸς εὐγονικοῦ αὐτῆ καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ διὰ τούτους ἔλεγε τῷ ἔθνει προσκούσαι, ὑβρισθέντας ὑπ’ αὐτῶν.</td>
<td>Then following a victory she should go to Jerusalem and support the Pharisees giving them a share (of authority). For they have the power to bring the goodwill of the people upon her, and he had come into conflict with them due to them saying they had been affronted by him.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

58 Ibid., p. 83.
59 Ibid., p. 92, see also Garland, Byzantine Empresses, pp. 193-198.
<p>| 403 | “Therefore,” he said, “summon their leaders, let them treat my corpse as they wish, so as to greatly wax wanton with it, and do no undertakings without their consent. |
| 404 | If you speak to them in such a manner I will have a magnificent burial and you will securely rule.” Thus he advised his wife and died. He had reigned seven and twenty years and lived fifty years less one. |
| 405 | And Alexandra did all that her husband had advised and commanded, and she made the Pharisees well-disposed towards her, and the kingdom was securely established, and her husband’s funeral was more illustrious than that had been done to any other king. |
| 407-410 | Alexander begot two sons: Hyrcanus and Aristobulus. While the elder, Hyrcanus, was inept in public affairs, the younger was energetic in all things. The mother appointed Hyrcanus high priest due to his passive nature, and she permitted the Pharisees to do all things. And the people whom they freed, obeyed them. But although she herself held the title of the kingdom, the Pharisees kept her in check/restrained her. And the entire country was quiet except for the Pharisees, they troubled and entreated the queen to kill Alexander’s advisors who had annihilated the eight hundred. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>416-417</th>
<th>Weeping, they said many things - that they are now being killed after escaping from the dangers of the enemy, and that the present state of affairs at home was moving them to tears. And Aristobulus greatly reproached his mother, and she did not know how to act.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>419</td>
<td>At this time it was reported that Tigranes, with a great army had invaded Syria and was coming against Judaea. This alarmed the queen and the people. And they sent him many valuable gifts and ambassadors while he was besieging Ptolemais.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>421</td>
<td>And he received them favorably and offered them good hopes. But Ptolemais had just been captured when it was announced to Tigranes that Acelaus had attacked Armenia and because of all this he returned home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>422, 424</td>
<td>After this the queen was stricken with a severe disease and Aristobulus secretly departed and went to the fortresses where his father’s friends were placed under his command, only his wife who knew of this matter, and he was accepted by them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>425-426</td>
<td>His mother became aware of his flight and that he had captured all of the fortresses, and both she and the nation were greatly disturbed. Therefore they decided to secure his wife and children in the fortress, which was above the temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>427-429</td>
<td>Knowing that in almost fifteen days Aristobulus had occupied twenty-two fortresses, Hyrcanus and the elders of the Jews went to the queen and asked her counsel and opinion about the news concerning Aristobulus. But she said she herself had no interest in the affairs of state as she was now dying, and she counseled them to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Since the order of this account follows *Antiquities* quite closely, let us examine those parts of Josephus’ narrative that Zonaras decided to leave out or shorten. This will help clarify what Zonaras viewed as important in Josephus’ description of Alexandra. Josephus cites the following events connected to the religious and military spheres, while Zonaras omits them: 1) Alexandra’s restoration of regulations that her father-in-law had abolished (*Ant. 13:408*); 2) Queen Alexandra’s dispatch of Aristobulus II’s supporters, the “men of influence” (the Sadducees), to guard the fortresses (*Ant. 13:417*); 3) her recruitment of a large mercenary force (*Ant. 13:409*); and 4) her dispatch of Aristobulus II on a military expedition to Damascus (*Ant. 13:418*); the summation of Queen Alexandra’s reign (*Ant. 13:431-432*). These events do not belong to usual categories that Zonaras tended to delete, such as philosophical speeches or character evaluations.

Why, then, were the above events omitted? The first event relates to Jewish legal matters. Possibly, as a Christian, Zonaras did not consider these affairs to be important. The subsequent events that Zonaras eliminated were connected to military actions undertaken by Queen Alexandra. Zonaras might not have viewed the above military actions as significant since they did not involve international forces (as opposed to Tigranes’ attempt to invade Judaea). Moreover, these military actions were undertaken by a woman, which would also diminish their importance.

Zonaras ascribes even greater power to the Pharisees than Josephus by saying that not only did she delegate authority to the Pharisees (as in *Ant. 13:408*) but that they kept her in check (which does not appear in *Antiquities*). Yet *War* 1:112 does state that the Pharisees ruled Alexandra and this may be the source for Zonaras’ addition.

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Furthermore, by deleting Josephus’ summation of her reign in _Ant._ 13:431-432, Zonaras thereby eliminated almost all the negative descriptions of Alexandra. For example, at the end of his description, Zonaras, like Syncellus, simply writes that she died after a reign of nine years and a life of seventy-three years: καὶ μετ’ οὖ πολὺ τετελεύτηκε, βασιλεύσασα ἐτη ἑννέα, βιώσασαδὲ τρία καὶ ἐβδομήκοντα.

In conclusion, on the one hand, Zonaras’ portrayal of Queen Alexandra is more favorable than Josephus’ depiction in _Antiquities_ since Zonaras eliminates the passages in _Ant._ 13:431-432. Yet on the other hand, inasmuch as Zonaras also omits aspects of Queen Alexandra’s military leadership and actions, and emphasizes the Pharisees’ power even more than Josephus, this results in a picture of a weak queen who is dominated by the religious establishment.

II. Jewish Chronicles

a. _Sefer Josippon_

_Sefer Josippon_, (also called _Josephus Gorionides_), an anonymous tenth-century (953 CE) historical account in Hebrew written for a Jewish audience, based mainly on Josephus, surveys the period from the destruction of the First Temple until that of the Second. Although it does not belong to the corpus of Byzantine chronicles, except in the date of its composition, _Josippon_’s “approach to the past reflects the historiographical outlook of the mid-tenth-century Byzantine world.” Similar to the authors of Byzantine chronicles, the author of _Josippon_ collected facts from various sources and united them into one coherent historical account that presented universal truths and ethical statements.

_Josippon_ was mistakenly ascribed to Josephus until the eighteenth century even though the anonymous author never claimed that his was the original Hebrew version of Josephus. As has been proven by manuscripts analyzed by David Flusser, the medieval author quotes Josephus but does not claim to be Josephus.

64 For a critical edition and commentary of this work, see Flusser, _Sefer Josippon_.
68 Ibid., p. 389.
According to Flusser, the author of *Josippon* was a unique historian of Jewish literature in the Middle Ages who understood his sources.\(^69\) From the time that it was appeared, *Josippon* became widely popular among Jews due to the fact that it was almost the only source for an organized Jewish chronological description of Jewish and non-Jewish history during the Second Temple Period.\(^70\) The author of this tenth-century narrative describing the Second Temple Period might not have known Greek very well and he apparently did nor have access to libraries with the complete works of Josephus. He therefore relied largely upon a Latin manuscript, which only included sixteen of the twenty books of Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities* and a Latin adaptation of *The Jewish War*. Nonetheless, *Josippon*’s importance lies in the fact that it represents the first attempt by a Jew to interpret, understand and use Josephus. Moreover, inasmuch as up until the nineteenth century *Josippon* was the authoritative source of knowledge for the Second Temple Period for Jews throughout the world, its description of Queen Alexandra had a far-reaching influence. In fact, the first modern study of Queen Alexandra (from 1711) relies, to a great extent upon *Josippon*, which shaped its sympathetic portrayal of the queen.\(^71\)

The following description of Queen Alexandra’s reign in *Josippon* is based on *Ant.* 13:399-432, with embellishments and interpretations of the author. Inasmuch as there is no English translation based on Flusser’s critical edition,\(^72\) I have composed my own translation:

\(^70\) Ibid., p. 67.
\(^71\) Müller, *Alexandra Judaeorum regina*.
\(^72\) The only English translation of *Josippon* is from the end of the seventeenth century, see *The wonderful, and most deplorable history of the later times of the Jews: with the destruction of the city of Jerusalem: which history begins where the Holy Scriptures do end, by Josephus Ben Gorion* (London: 1694). According to the Epistle dedicatory, the author of this translation (termed *The Wars of the Jews*) is apparently James Howel. Moreover, this translation is very tendentious since its purpose is to serve as a warning “not to profane the High Majesty of Heaven by such kind of sedition and prophaneness (sic)” since the Temple was destroyed and the land of Israel became “a stage of blood” since the Jews crucified the Savior (Epistle dedicatory, no page no.).
As the time of his death drew near, it came to pass that Queen Alexandra, the wife of King Alexander approached him and said: "You know the hostility that existed between you and the Pharisees, and now your sons are young and I am a woman, to whom are you abandoning me?" And Alexandra lamented before the king, and the king said to her: "Let me give you counsel and if you do not deviate from it then it go well for you and your sons. After I die conceal my corpse from all of these people until you capture this city, and when you capture the city anoint my corpse with oils so that it will not reek, and carry me into Jerusalem as if I were a sick person, and do not reveal the secret except to your faithful chamberlains. When you come to Jerusalem summon my enemies, the Pharisees, reveal to them the secret, and hand them my corpse, and speak to them in this manner: 'If you wish to throw him to the dogs, throw him, and whatever you wish, do to him.' And if you speak in this way, they will honor you greatly and bury me with honor. For I know their nature, they will not bear any grudge for they are merciful, and they will help you to seize the kingdom, and the nation will hearken to them for they rule the people and do as they wish. And you – do all that they command you and hearken to their counsel and do not deviate neither to the right nor the left, and you shall rule until the boys grow up.
The queen did accordingly – she captured the city and went to Jerusalem and summoned the Pharisees and spoke to them all that Alexander her husband had commanded. The Pharisees summoned the people and they buried the king with honor, and they spoke to the people and they crowned Alexander’s wife, Alexandra, queen over all of Judaea. Alexander reigned over all of Judaea twenty-seven years, and he died and was gathered up unto his ancestors. And the remaining acts and exploits are written in the book of Yosef ben Gurion and the book of the kings of Rome. And the king died and Alexandra his wife reigned in his stead.

It came to pass when she was sitting on the royal throne that she summoned the Pharisee leaders and gave them authority over all the people. And she sent for and brought the Pharisee leaders from all the places that they had fled during the time of Hyrcanus her father-in-law and during the time of Alexander her husband and she took out of prison all of the prisoners. And she restored the validity of the Torah (laws) of the Pharisee leaders which Hyrcanus her father-in-law and Alexander her husband had abrogated.

The queen saw that her two sons began to grow up, and she gave the high priesthood to Hyrcanus since he was humble and meek, and she made her younger son Aristobulus the commander of the army because he was a handsome youth with strong arms and swift legs, and she therefore appointed him as the commander of the army of the Sadducees. The queen sent for all the kings that Hyrcanus her father-in-law and Alexander her husband had conquered and she took their sons hostage and kept them by her as a surety. The queen ruled in happiness and peace and there was no disturbance or misfortune during her time. And all the surrounding kings sent presents of gold and silver to the queen every year for
her entire lifetime.

There was peace and truth during Alexandra’s time, and only the Pharisee leaders aroused conflicts and wars with the Sadducean officers. Then the Pharisee leaders came [to her] together with her son Hyrcanus and said to the queen: Long live the queen! May she be forever powerful and strong! Give us Alexander’s advisors, the Sadducees, who counseled him to hang the eight hundred Pharisee leaders, which Alexander your husband hung. And she said to them: Do with them as you see fit! And the Pharisee leaders came and killed the Sadducee officer Diogenes and with him they killed many others.

Then the Sadducee officers together with her younger son Aristobulus came before the queen and said to her: Do not forget, holy queen, all the hardships that we endured during the time of Alexander your husband, whom we supported and served during great and terrible wars, and we placed our lives in danger for him, and we relinquished our lives for his life, and we fought his wars to save him from those who sought to kill him. We who are sinless and have not committed any misdeeds — why should we now die like sheep led to the slaughter as you glorify the enemies of your husband Alexander and humiliate his supporters? Now when you humiliate us, your enemies will rejoice, and Aretas the king of Arabia will rejoice, for they feared our valor and wars. For if someone mentioned our name to Aretas and your enemies, they would grow angry, and sick, and quake [with fear] where they
lived, even from our visage. Far be it from us to rebel against you and lift a finger against your commands, for you are a lady monarch. But now you shall know that we shall not tolerate the yoke of our enemies, the Pharisee leaders, and we shall not die like sheep led by them to the slaughter. If it pleases you, let us leave Jerusalem to the other cities of Judaea, and we shall live humbly, and we shall no longer see the evil of our people. And they wept and the queen wept in their presence.

Then Aristobulus spoke imprecations and curses to his mother and revealed his true thoughts. The queen reacted as was the custom of women, and she did not know what counsel to take, and she said to them: Leave Jerusalem and choose cities in Judaea and dwell in them, and do not dwell in Jerusalem with the Pharisee leaders for they are your enemies. Thus they did and the Sadducee officers left Jerusalem together with the valiant soldiers and they seized cities and dwelled in them because of the Pharisee leaders.

At this time Damascus rebelled, for Ptolemy who is called Minaeus rebelled therein, and did not present tribute to the queen as had been decreed every year. Then the queen sent her son Aristobulus with the people’s army of the Pharisee leaders since they did not have the army of Sadducees and Hasidim. They left Jerusalem and went to Damascus but returned in shame and disgrace.

At that time Tigranes the king of Armenia went forth with three hundred thousand soldiers dressed in armor and a great number of people, and he headed towards the land of Judaea. The queen and the people feared Tigranes greatly, and she sent ambassadors and gifts to him, and they found him fighting in Acre, which is called Ptolemais. Tigranes received the ambassadors and gifts favorably. He asked after the queen’s health, praised and blessed her, and made a treaty with the queen’s ambassadors.
At that time it was told to Tigranes that the Roman officer Lucullus had pursued Mithridates but had failed to catch him for he escaped to the mountains of Persia. So Lucullus returned and invaded the land of Armenia. When Tigranes heard this he hurried back to Armenia to save his land from Lucullus. Lucullus said: it is better for us to safeguard our land than to covet a foreign land.

At that time Queen Alexandra was stricken with an illness from which she died. When Aristobulus saw that his mother would soon die, he left his wife and children and her entire family with her in Jerusalem to help him from the city, and he took one servant with him and left Jerusalem at night, and went to dwell in the cities of Judaea where the Sadducees, his father’s supporters, lived. At the beginning of his flight he came to Gabatha, the place where Galestes, his supporter and a Sadducee warrior, dwelt, and he went with him from Gabatha to gather the Sadducee force.
Afterwards a very great and mighty force of the Judaean people, the Sadducee and Hasid warriors, joined Aristobulus. They went out into the field, blew the shofar, and gave the signal for battle, for a large multitude had gathered around him – from the mountains of Lebanon and the Galilee and all of the land of the realm of Israel. Then Hyrcanus and the elder Pharisees trembled, and the queen also was very frightened of Aristobulus her son, and the queen became very anxious, and due to this anxiety she fell into a sickness from which she died.

Then the Pharisee elders, with her older son Hyrcanus, came before the queen and said to her: It would be a serious sin to do something without your counsel while you are still alive, holy queen, for Aristobulus your son has greatly frightened us and he is now boldly coming to wipe out our name and kill his elder brother. Now holy queen, give [us] your counsel and assistance. And the queen replied: Leave me, leave me alone, for my soul is very weary, for I am on the threshold of eternal life and will return my soul to the Lord who gave it to me. Do as you think is right. You have here silver, gold and many treasures, you have an army of bold warriors in my palace. Do as you wish for I have no counsel to give you on this matter, for I am going the way of all flesh. After she spoke these words her life ended and she died and was gathered up unto her people.

73 Flusser, Sefer Josippon, I, pp. 138-143.
She reigned nine years and lived altogether seventy-three years. She was a woman weak due to her gender but she did not sin or commit any offence against her God. For she possessed wisdom, knowledge and cunning, and due to her great wisdom at times she also knew the future, only she did not act wisely when she glorified her husband’s enemies and humiliated his admirers and friends. Thus after her death misfortunes, troubles and wars arose in her household. But during her lifetime the land was quiet since she did not covet other lands except for the lands that Alexander her husband conquered, and that Hyrcanus her father-in-law conquered, returned to the Israelites. These lands the queen safeguarded and she did not relinquish control of them until she died. This concludes the account of Queen Alexandra.

Unlike Zonaras, Josippon’s account contains numerous additions to Josephus’ description of Queen Alexandra’s reign. For example, Josippon states on his deathbed Alexander Jannaeus tells Alexandra: \( \text{ותמלוכי עד אשר יגדלו הנערים} \) (33:83) and earlier states the sons were minors - \( \text{但不限ך הם קטנים} \) (33:70). Yet according to Josephus both sons were adults. Josippon apparently assumed that Alexander Jannaeus’ bequest followed the Hellenistic pattern of a regent queen ruling until her minor sons came of age – which was also the norm in the Byzantine empire.

Josippon confers an even higher status on the Pharisees than does Josephus. According to Ant. 13:407 and Josippon 33:83 Alexander bequeathed the throne to Alexandra while Josippon alone has the Pharisees crowning Alexandra – \( \text{ורמלוכי את אלכסנדרה המלכה אשת אלכסנדר על כל יהודה} \) (33:86-87). Perhaps Josippon cannot conceive of a woman possessing absolute power and therefore he places the Pharisees above her. Or, inasmuch as the Pharisees were the predecessors of the Talmudic rabbis, Josippon might be demonstrating the authority of the rabbis, similar to the pericope in bShab 14b.

It is interesting to note the evolution of the adjective used to describe the Pharisees in Josippon. In chapter 33, they are simply פרושים but in chapter 34 they receive the appellation רבי הפרושים and towards the end of the chapter (line 72 onwards) they become זקני הפרושים. This may indicate a sense of the Pharisees’ increasing authority – they began

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74 The translation of this sentence is based upon Flusser, who cites the Latin translation of Josephus as the source for this sentence: “mulier quae debilitate sui sexus nunquam succubuit.” See ibid, p. 143.

75 On the ages of Queen Alexandra’s sons, see above, Introduction: Biographical Outline.

76 As Garland notes, “Most commonly empresses came to power as regents for young sons, implying a fixed period of caretaker government until the young emperor came of age, usually at sixteen” (Garland, Byzantine Empresses, p. 1).

77 See Chapter 5.
as simply one group of Jews, like other groups or sects, and they subsequently became leaders and elders.\textsuperscript{78}

In chapter 34 Josippon empowers Alexandra (as Ant. 13:408): she delegates authority to the Pharisees, frees the prisoners (which Josephus attributes to the Pharisees, Ant. 13:409) and recalls the Pharisees who fled (which is absent in Josephus). The dualistic attitude towards the Pharisees and Alexandra may reflect an internal conflict of the author of Josippon between accepting the rabbis’ as the supreme authority, as reflected in rabbinic literature, and Alexandra as the sovereign power, as revealed by Josephus’ writings.\textsuperscript{79}

Josippon’s description of Queen Alexandra’s sons also differs from Josephus. According to Josephus, Queen Alexandra viewed Aristobulus II as a threat (War 1:109 and see Chapter 2). Yet in Josippon she deems him a strong warrior and appoints him to be the chief army officer over the Sadducees – וא里斯טוברולוס בעה חקמה נתנה אוחו לוהט שרי (34:7-9).

Josippon’s identification of the Sadducees as soldiers in connection with the passages on Queen Alexandra is also absent in Josephus. Later on, Josippon concludes that Queen Alexandra’s military expedition to Damascus failed due to the fact that the army lacked the Sadducees giboorim. Josephus uses the term \(\text{o\beta \delta\nu\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\iota\iota}\) - “men of rank and influence” (Ant. 13:411) but does not elaborate as to their identity. Earlier in the text, Flusser points out that, based on an analysis of his sources, the author of Josippon adds on to Josephus’ description of the three sects (in Ant. 13:297-298) the adjective giboorim to the description of the Sadducees since they fulfilled the role of being military leaders.\textsuperscript{80}

According to Flusser, this deduction indicates the author’s exceptional historical sense especially since this deduction was proved correct when almost a thousand years later Pesher Nahum was discovered to have described the Sadducees as giboorim melahemah.\textsuperscript{81}

At times, the author of Josippon changes the tone or even import of Josephus’ description. For example, he repeatedly emphasizes the peace that prevailed in the land during Queen Alexandra’s reign: והמלך המלך יBaseUrl התמיד בתורה אוחו ששים ושלח אוחו לחימה.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{78} This idea is based upon a conversation with Rivkah Fishman-Duker.

\textsuperscript{79} See below for further discussion of the influence of rabbinic literature upon Josippon.

\textsuperscript{80} Flusser, Sefer Josippon, II, p. 120, n. 34.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., p. 177.
Although Josephus also states that there was peace for the nation: ἀρξάσσα ἐν εἰρήνῃ τὸ ἔθνος, (Ant. 13:432), this statement is balanced by a very negative description of Queen Alexandra’s reign: καὶ ξυμφοράν δὲ ἐνέπλησε καὶ παραχής. Thus Josippon transposes the negative statement of “caused the palace to be filled with both misfortunes and political tumults” into the positive “there was no disturbance or misfortune during her time.”

Likewise, Josippon omits Josephus’ accusation that Queen Alexandra was responsible for the end of Jewish independence (Ant. 13:431) and adds praise for her lack of imperial ambitions: "ец היא ארץ אשר לא חמדה" (34:90).

What could account for the fact that the author of Josippon did not see fit to include any of these negative appraisals and even adds in words of admiration? I wish to suggest that the author was undoubtedly influenced by her positive portrayal in rabbinic literature. Flusser also observes that Josippon clearly was acquainted with certain matters from the Midrash and Talmud, and used them.

Nevertheless, the fact that the queen is called Alexandra and not some version of her Hebrew/Aramaic name Shelamzion, demonstrates that, in this matter, Josippon relied mainly upon Josephus, and not rabbinic literature. It therefore appears that the author of Josippon adopted the favorable attitude of rabbinic literature in general, while most of the specific details of her life were derived from Josephus.

Another innovation not found in Josephus is the appellation מלכה קדושה (34:22) for Queen Alexandra. Flusser attributes this title to the Byzantine custom of calling their emperors “holy king/emperor.” Yet, if this is so, then why didn’t Josippon term the other Hasmonean monarchs קדוש? In fact, this is the first time such a term is employed for a Hasmonean ruler. Josippon could have deduced this phrase from Josephus’ description of her piety – δόξαν εὐσεβείας (War 1:107), which is also mentioned in rabbinic literature.

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82 Flusser’s footnotes to the text do not mention that Josippon either omits or changes Josephus’ extremely negative paragraphs in Antiquities (13:417, 431-432). This is an interesting example of how different focuses will lead to different conclusions.
83 See Chapter 4.
84 Flusser, Sefer Josippon, II, p. 114. Still, according to Flusser, whenever there is a disagreement between Josephus and the Talmud, Josippon will agree with Josephus.
85 Flusser, Sefer Josippon, I, p. 139.
86 That is, the agricultural plenty due to the observance of the commandments by both Queen
Josippon also calls Queen Alexandra (מלכה הנברשת) (34:31), which is absent in Josephus. And, the Sadducees claim that because of her being a “lady” they would not rebel. Surprisingly, now Queen Alexandra’s gender, or perhaps her social status as a “lady,” is given as a reason to respect her authority! Yet later on, her gender is given as the reason for not knowing what course of action to take against her rebellious son Aristobulus II: והמלכה נ確定 הנשים ושחה ולא ידע מה לעשות (34:37-38).

Josippon’s admiration of Alexandra is demonstrated by the embellishment of Queen Alexandra’s strategic moves, making them even more successful than in Josephus. Thus Antiquities merely says that Tigranes offered Queen Alexandra’s emissaries good hopes:

ο δὲ ἀποδεξάμενος αὐτοῖς τῆς ἐκ διαστήματος θεραπείας ἔλπιδας υπέθετο χρήστας (Ant. 13:421)

In contrast, Josippon states that these gifts resulted in a treaty (34:50). Still this could be derived from War, which does mention συνθήκαις καὶ δώροις (War 1:116).

Towards the end of the narrative, Josippon states that Queen Alexandra’s illness and subsequent death was a result of her strained emotional state due to Aristolubus’ rebellion: והמלכה בדאגה ומדאגה לחולי אשר מתה בו (34:73-74). The wording is based on the deathbed scene with the prophet Elisha ותבואו אלישע חלה את חליו אשר ימת בו (Kgs 13:14) and once again, paints a most admiring picture – Queen Alexandra is compared with a prophet who is a defender of Israel! In contrast, Josephus does not give any explanation for Queen Alexandra’s illness, he merely states that she was stricken with a severe disease:

Metὰ δὲ τοῦτο τῆς βασιλίσσας εἰς νόσου χαλεπῆς ἐμπεσοῦσης (Ant. 13:422).

Flusser asserts that Josippon’s explanation of Queen Alexandra’s death is one example of the author’s psychological approach and his attempt to discover the emotional reason for

Alexandra and the people, see Chapter 4.
certain actions. I would add that Josippon’s explanation may be due to the stereotypical patriarchal image of women as weak, emotional creatures.

Finally, the summation of Queen Alexandra’s reign in Josippon significantly differs from that of Josephus. While Josephus’ synopsis is generally critical with one positive statement, as we have already seen, Josippon’s description is almost completely admiring. Thus Josephus states that:

Josippon writes:

Here we see that Josippon’s only criticism of Queen Alexandra is the fact that she glorified the Pharisees (her husband’s enemies) and humiliated the Sadducees (her husband’s friends). She possessed wisdom, knowledge, cunning, and even knew the future!

Another interesting difference between Josephus and Josippon is found in the list of high priests in Antiquities 20. Unlike all the Hasmonean male kings, who are simply listed as continuity, for Alexandra, Josippon states: while Josephus merely states that Alexander

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87 Flusser, Sefer Josippon, II, pp. 210-212.
88 This also resembles Josephus statement that Hyrcanus I was skilled in reading the future (Ant.13:114).
89 Flusser, Sefer Josippon, I, p. 296
Jannaeus bequeathed the right of appointing a successor to the high priesthood to Alexandra. Thus, according to *Josippon*, Queen Alexandra’s succession was decided by the people and not her husband, which demonstrates her popularity as a ruler.

Why did the author of *Josippon* consistently misconstrue Josephus’ derogatory remarks concerning Queen Alexandra? As above, I believe that the dissonance between Queen Alexandra’s overwhelmingly admiring description in rabbinic literature (and in *War*) and Josephus’ critical portrait at the end of *Antiquities* 13 caused the author of *Josippon* to reinterpret Josephus’ statements in *Antiquities* to make them conform to her laudatory portrayal in rabbinic sources.

**b. Zemah David**

In the style of Byzantine chronicles, David Gans’ *Zemah David* recounts the history from the beginning of the world until the book’s publication in 1592. Written in Hebrew, *Zemah David* represents the first attempt to organize Jewish and general history (in two separate sections) according to the years of the creation (of the Jewish calendar). Gans’ groundbreaking chronicle reflects the tendencies of his hometown Prague Jewish community, which fostered both the study of Jewish law as well as that of philosophy, literature, linguistics and science. The fact that *Zemah David* was subsequently published in eight editions and translated into Latin attests to its popularity. Let us now examine the text:

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90 Azariah de’ Rossi’s *The Light of the Eyes* (מאור עיני), which was printed some twenty years earlier, briefly mentions Queen Alexandra but only in connection to her husband, Jannaeus Alexander. Relying directly upon Josephus, de Rossi refers to the deathbed scene and Jannaeus Alexander’s recommendation that Alexandra support the Pharisees. He also refers to rabbinic literature which mentions Jannai and his wife. See Azariah de’ Rossi’s *The Light of the Eyes* (מאור עיני), Vilna: David Cassel edition, 1864-1866, pp. 243-244 (Hebrew). For an annotated translation and introduction, see Azariah de Rossi’s *The Light of the Eyes* (Tranlated from the Hebrew, with an introduction by Joanna Weinberg; Princeton: Yale University Press, 2001). See also Reuven Bonfil (ed.), Azaria de’ Rossi, *Selected Chapters from Sefer Me’or ‘Einayim and Matsref la-Kessef* (Bialik: Jerusalem 1991) (Hebrew).

91 Although it does not provide any in-depth historical analysis of events but simply offers a calendar of events. See Breuer *Zemah David*, p. 9.

92 Ibid., p. 3.

93 Neher, *Jewish Thought*, p. 54.
Alexandria, the wife of King Alexander Jannaeus, the eighth monarch of the Hasmonean dynasty, reigned in the year 3688. She was a wise and sin-fearing woman; she loved the Pharisees and gave them authority over the Sadducees to do as they wished with them. She had two sons, the name of the elder Hyrcanus III. He loved the Pharisees and the queen gave him the priesthood. The name of the second [son] was Aristobulus II, who loved the Sadducees. She made him the commander of the Sadducees and sent them from the city of Jerusalem to live in other cities of the state. Alexandria ruled in happiness and peace and there was no disturbance or misfortune during her time. And she was 37 years old when she died in the ninth year of her reign.  

This brief matter of fact text offers a brief approving picture of Queen Alexandra based on Josippon, as the author himself states in his introduction to the Second Temple Period monarchy:

The Hasmonean monarchy, their epoch and most of the calculations of their years, is according to the book of Josippon ben Gurion, except for the fact that I arranged them according to the years of Creation...  

Still, there are several disparities with Josippon.
The first issue that we observe is the distortion of the queen’s name: she is called Alexandria (אלכסנדריאה) instead of Alexandra. What could be the cause of this? Josippon has her correct name - Alexandra. An examination of rabbinic literature shows that there were great variations and distortions of her Hebrew name and a similar transformation may have occurred with her Greek name, Alexandra. Another possibility is that this error is due to a scribal error or orthographic mistake, as with the matter of her age when she died (see below). Inasmuch as there is no indication of the source of the mistake in Alexandra’s name we cannot come to any concrete conclusions.

Why does Gans term Queen Alexandra’s son Hyrcanus III instead of Hyrcanus II? This is due to the fact that Gans counts John Hyrcanus as Hyrcanus I, and his son Alexander Jannaeus as Hyrcanus II. Thus Alexander Jannaeus’ son would be Hyrcanus III. Although Josephus never calls this king Hyrcanus but rather Alexander (War 1:85) or Alexander Jannaeus (Ant. 13:320), still, in context, Alexander would be Hyrcanus II. Josippon also calls the king Alexander and not Hyrcanus (see above). Despite this error, Gans does correct Josippon’s orthographic mistake by writing Hyrcanus’ name with א instead of an א (חוכנס). Yet the similarities with Josippon are greater than the differences. Several phrases in Zemah David are either paraphrases or taken directly from Josippon. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zemah David</th>
<th>Josippon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>לא תתהא ... כי חכמה</td>
<td>hạtם לוח מלאשהעל האדורכים לושה עמנ כטורב (34:85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אתנה לוח מלאשהעל האדורכים</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>עשתה לוח זרא על האדורכים</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בשקטנו התיכה, אני שלח ואיא פגוע אינש בימי</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>מפלת אכלפנידריאה בשקטנו בודהשקט, אני שלח ואיא</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>פגוע רע חיים</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What does Zemah David add to Josippon? Due to its emphasis on chronology, Zemah David adds in the year Queen Alexandra ruled from the time of creation, the number of her reign as a Hasmonean monarch (eighth), and that she died at the age of thirty-

99 See Chapter 5 for a discussion of this matter.
100 He arrives at this number since he adds Mattithias as well as two of his sons as Hasmonean kings –
seven(?!). Queen Alexandra’s age here is apparently an inversion of the correct number since Josippon following Josephus, explicitly states that she died at the age of seventy-three: “She reigned nine years and lived altogether seventy-three years” (34:95). He also adds that Queen Alexandra and Hyrcanus “loved” the Pharisees and Aristobulus “loved” the Sadducees. Yet there is no mentioned of any enmity between the two brothers or between Aristobulus and Queen Alexandra. In fact, this text contains no criticism of Queen Alexandra’s actions so that her image is even more laudatory than in Josippon (which criticizes her for giving the Pharisees too much power). What can account for this difference between the two texts? On the one hand, Josippon relied upon Josephus, yet the author improved Josephus’ image of Queen Alexandra so that there was only a minimal amount of criticism. Zemah David, on the other hand, was not acquainted with Josephus and relied almost solely upon Josippon.101 Gans, a scholar of Jewish law and Talmud, was certainly acquainted with rabbinic literature and its admiring portrayal of Queen Alexandra, which, of course, did not criticize her giving too much power to the Pharisees.102 Thus, we may conclude that, as with the author of Josippon, rabbinic literature influenced Gans to draw an exceptionally complimentary picture of the queen. Finally, one can say that Zemah David marks the first significant account of Queen Alexandra in the early modern period, and as noted above, it was quite popular.

Conclusion

We have seen that most early Byzantine chronicles from the fourth to the seventh century only briefly mention Queen Alexandra, if at all, that their attitude is usually negative, and that they attribute little significance and space to her reign. Eusebius’ Chronicle presents a brief and negative synopsis of her reign, the Excerpta Latina Barbari describes her only as Alexander’s wife and a reigning queen, and the Chronicon Paschale mentions her only as the mother of the high priest. The anomalous situation of Queen Alexandra reigning as a sovereign queen but not a high priest confused the authors of the chronicles. Therefore, Byzantine chronicles often did not know how to relate to

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101 See above.
102 Breuer, Zemah David, pp. 4-5.
Queen Alexandra. One solution was to list her as the mother of a high priest. Thus, these chronicles relegated Queen Alexandra to the gender role of a mother, thereby silencing her achievements as a sovereign queen.103

In contrast, the later chronicles of Syncellus and Zonaras provide a detailed account of Queen Alexandra’s reign. Their attitude is very positive and they even omit criticism that is found in Josephus’ writings. The Byzantine historical context, the change in the status of women and the increasing number of women who obtained political power from the eighth to the twelfth centuries, and even became sovereign empresses, can help explain this change.104

Even though the information they offer is usually sparse, nevertheless Byzantine chronicles are worthy of further study as they may shed light on their view of ancient Jews and the Christian transmission of Josephus.

The favorable portrait of Queen Alexandra in Josippon and Zemah David is apparently due to the influence of the authors’ frame of reference – rabbinic literature. In light of the complexity of using rabbinic literature for historical purposes, this conclusion has implications for an assessment of Queen Alexandra’s image. Finally, inasmuch as from the Middle Ages until modern times Josippon provided the main source for understanding Jewish history in the Second Temple Period, it impacted upon a positive attitude towards Queen Alexandra by the Jewish people at large and may even continue to influence the outlook of contemporary historians.

103 For a discussion of how women have been silenced in historical accounts, see Ilan Silencing the Queen, pp. 4-39.
104 This is indeed a general trend. J. Herrin et al. point out that “The situation [of the status of women] changed by the end of the 11th C. The bellicose Komnenoi acknowledged the important role of their women...Literature also reflects a certain liberation of women from the 12 C. onwards,” see Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, 3, s.v. “Women,” p. 2203.

201
Final Conclusions

In the spirit of “second wave feminism” of the 1960s, in which feminist activists pointed out the lack of references to women in standard texts and sought to re-discover women’s active role in the past, this dissertation has attempted to rediscover the dynamic role of a remarkable woman in the Second Temple period and thereby reduce, to some extent, the dearth of women in Jewish historiography.¹ For, as has been demonstrated, despite the anomaly of a female sovereign ruler, many Jewish historical works have given little or no space to Queen Alexandra’s reign.² My investigation indicates that each respective society’s outlook on women rulers, be it Hellenistic, Roman, or Byzantine, most probably was an important factor in the favorable or unfavorable portrayal of Queen Alexandra as a sovereign ruler in various sources, as is indicated both by what the sources say and also by the amount of space they devote to her reign.³ This is in line with Joan Wallach Scott’s thesis that “history operates as a particular kind of cultural institution endorsing and announcing constructions of gender.”⁴

Testimony from primary sources – Josephus’ writings, Qumran documents and rabbinic literature – reveals that Queen Alexandra did play a significant role in Jewish history.

Josephus’ predominantly positive depiction of Queen Alexandra as a talented, wise, pious ruler with a keen understanding of foreign affairs, the use of the title “queen,” as well as the amount of space that he devotes to her reign relative to that of previous Hasmonean monarchs, indicates that he viewed her as a sovereign of a status and capability equal to that of male members of the Hasmonean dynasty. This is significant since the very fact of her being a woman excluded her from being a High Priest, and up until the reign of Alexandra this religious role had been a prerequisite for a Hasmonean

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¹ For an overview of the writing of women’s history, see “Making History Project,” Institute for Historical Research, School of Advanced Study, University of London: 2008 http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/womens_history.html
² See the Literature Review in Chapter 1.
³ As Marilyn Katz points out “from the historiographic point of view, there is not a ‘history of women’ as such. But there is a history of women in society…” See Marilyn Katz, “Ideology and the Status of Women’ in Ancient Greece” in Hawley and Levick, Women in Antiquity p. 40.
⁴ Scott, Gender and the Politics of History, p. 9.
ruler. Indeed, as Sherry Ortner has noted, female inferiority in a given culture is demonstrated by “female exclusion from the most sacred rite or the highest political council.” Yet, despite the fact that her gender disqualified her from the highest religious office it did not impede Alexandra from successfully attaining the highest political office. Moreover, this paradoxical situation led to the first division between the political and religious spheres in the history of Israel.

Nevertheless, despite the predominantly laudatory portrayal, Josephus’ writings are not always weighted in Queen Alexandra’s favor. The description in Antiquities is, in effect, rather ambivalent. In particular, the assessment of Queen Alexandra’s reign in Antiquities 13: 431-432 contradicts the earlier narrative.

The interplay of several factors may explain this condemnation. Firstly, the transfer of power from a male to a female ruler challenged the traditional (male) political structure. The distress caused by the reversal of the ‘natural’ (male) order is evidenced in Josephus’ statement that “Alexandra caused misfortune to her dynasty, which had achieved sovereignty despite many dangers and difficulties, due to a lust for these things which were not befitting a woman” (Ant. 13:431).

Secondly, a cultural factor may have affected Josephus differing evaluations of Queen Alexandra – the Romanization or assimilation of Josephus into Roman society, which disapproved of women rulers. A related factor is Josephus’ vested interest, and that of his source Nicolaus, in portraying the Romans and their conquest of Judaea in a positive light. In order to accomplish this objective, Josephus describes a continuous decline of the Hasmonean dynasty, starting with John Hyrcanus and ending with the struggle between Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II. The resulting chaos necessitated the arrival of the Roman patron, King Herod, in order to save the country. Queen Alexandra was part of this slanted narrative. According to this narrative, the very fact that she was a woman influenced the decline of the Hasmonean dynasty, for as Josephus states: “Alexandra caused misfortune to her dynasty …due to a lust for these things which were not befitting a woman. Not very long afterwards it (the sovereignty) was taken away from us [the

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5 Sherry Ortner, “Is Female to Male,” p. 70.
6 As opposed to the unfortunate wife of John Hyrcanus, who was killed in 105 BCE before she could inherit the throne, see Chapter 4.
Judaeans] because she had agreed with the opinions of those hostile to her family and had left the kingdom bereft of anyone to care for it” (Ant. 13:431).

Notwithstanding the antipathy expressed in Qumran documents towards Hasmonean rulers in general, and Queen Alexandra in particular, they do provide some new information on Queen Alexandra, in particular her Hebrew name. Moreover, the very fact that they connect Alexandra’s name with important events enhances her prominence as a major historical figure.

Finally, rabbinic literature portrays Queen Alexandra in an almost exclusively favorable light. What accounts for this enthusiastic evaluation? A close reading of early tannaitic literature leads to the conclusion that, according to the sages, Queen Alexandra scrupulously observed the commandments. Consequently, Queen Alexandra’s reign symbolized a period pervaded by piety, which brought about agricultural abundance. The fact that the sages viewed her as an important figure, one worthy of mention, is most probably due to her support of the Pharisees. Here we can observe a reciprocal effect – Queen Alexandra empowered the Pharisees and later on in history the sages, the heirs of the Pharisees, empowered (or highlighted) her. Yet this is mainly true for earlier rabbinic literature and not later writings (the Babylonian Talmud) where either the name Alexandra or even the mention of a queen disappears.  

The Babylonian Talmud, more than the Jerusalem Talmud, appears to allude to historical events mentioned by Josephus. Yet due to either an orthographic mistake or a general tendency to invent relationships between historical personalities, it created a sister-brother relationship between Alexandra and Shimeon ben Shetah, which many scholars, up until the present, (mistakenly) believe is true. This identification between Alexandra, the representative of political authority, and Shimeon, that of religious authority, led to a decline or even the disappearance of any mention of Queen Alexandra in the BT inasmuch as the sages, quite naturally, preferred to emphasize their predecessor’s acts. And, in line with Tal Ilan’s thesis, here we can also observe how the female protagonist disappears and is superseded by a man.  

7 See Ilan, Silencing the Queen, pp. 35-42.
8 Ibid.
Josephus provides the major, and apparently the only, source for Byzantine chronicles describing the Second Temple period. Most early chronicles present a brief and disapproving picture of Queen Alexandra by highlighting Josephus’ derogatory summation of her rule at the end of *Antiquities* and ignoring the earlier positive descriptions as well as the account in *War*. This antipathy towards Queen Alexandra was perhaps connected to the patriarchal outlook of Byzantine society, which viewed women as weak, inferior and evil as well as the legacy of Roman society’s negative attitude towards women rulers. This viewpoint could also be connected to the fact that Queen Alexandra supported the Pharisees, whom the Gospels condemned on account of their hostility towards Jesus. Yet later chronicles reversed this trend, probably due to the influence of contemporary events in Byzantium, in particular the reign of several independent queens, and they presented in-depth sympathetic portrayals of Queen Alexandra.

As a result of the strong influence of early rabbinic traditions, Jewish chronicles from the Middle Ages up until the Early Modern Period expressed a totally favorable attitude towards Queen Alexandra. These traditions also impacted upon seminal Jewish scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. More recent scholarship, in contrast, returned to examine the main source for knowledge of Queen Alexandra’s reign – Josephus’ writings.

What role did Queen Alexandra’s gender play in all this? Josephus’ attitude towards women in general influenced, to some extent, his description of Queen Alexandra. This outlook was shaped by Jewish-Hellenistic cultural norms and by Roman attitudes towards women and power.

We cannot assess whether gender considerations influenced the description of her in the Qumran Calendrical Documents, given the fragmentary nature of these sources. On the other hand, the metaphors of sexual promiscuity in the allusions to Queen Alexandra in *Pesher Nahum* are definitely gender-biased, as evidenced by the fact that no such sexual slurs are voiced against the “wicked” Yannai.

The conclusion of my research regarding rabbinic sources and Queen Alexandra differs, to some extent, from that of Tal Ilan, who emphasizes the escalating silencing process of powerful women in general, and of Queen Alexandra/Shelamzion in
particular, from earlier to later rabbinic sources.⁹ For despite what we would have expected on the basis of the trajectory delineated by Ilan, it is nevertheless the case that Jewish scholars throughout the centuries, beginning at least as early as Josippon in the tenth century, have chosen to derive their picture of Queen Alexandra from earlier laudatory tannaitic accounts while ignoring her “silencing” or marginalization in later sources. This can be attributed to a scholarly preference for earlier sources.¹⁰ In this case, adherence to early rabbinic accounts overcame any misgivings as regards Queen Alexandra's gender. Thus rabbinic sources have played a leading role in the positive portrayal of Queen Alexandra in scholarly literature from the tenth century up until the present time.

⁹ Ibid.
¹⁰ On even Josippon’s predilection for citing early sources, see Sefer Josippon, II, pp. 120-139.
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All frequently used works are cited in the footnotes by the author's name and shortened title and are listed in the bibliography. For other works full details are given in the footnotes.


Abbreviations
DJD=Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
LCL = Loeb Classical Library
HUCA= Hebrew Union College Annual
JJS= Journal of Jewish Studies
JPS = Jewish Publication Society
JTS= Jewish Theological Seminary
TAPA= Transactions of the American Philological Association
YBZ=Yad Ben Zvi


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The title in the image is "A monument to Cleopatra Selene." It appears to be a citation or a focus on Cleopatra Selene, a prominent figure in Jewish and Roman history.

The text mentions Cleopatra Selene, born in the early 2nd century BCE, as the daughter of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, who was the sister of the famous Cleopatra VII. She was a daughter of the Hasmonean leader, Alexander Jannaeus, and married Hasmonean King John Hyrcanus. Cleopatra Selene was a significant figure in Jewish and Roman history, and her life spanned crucial periods in the history of the Jewish people.

The text also refers to her as a queen who ruled during the Hasmonean period in Israel, and her rule was marked by conflicts with the Roman Empire. Cleopatra Selene's story is a testament to her influence and her role in shaping the political and cultural landscape of the time.

The text discusses the challenges and complexities of Cleopatra Selene's life, including her relationships with powerful figures such as Hyrcanus, and her struggles with Roman conquerors. It highlights her role as a queen and her impact on the region.

The text concludes with a statement about the enduring legacy of Cleopatra Selene, as well as the significance of her rule and her influence on the region.
1. What factors contributed to the depiction of Alexander's family, and how did this influence the portrayal of Joas in the works of Josephus?

2. As was customary, the throne was usually passed to the queen or to a male member of Joas's family. What factors might have influenced Joas's decision to pass the throne to his wife?

3. What are the underlying reasons for Alexander's acceptance as a royal figure by the Jewish community, despite the tradition of men holding positions of power?

4. What factors contributed to the evolution of Alexander's character from the time of Josephus until modern times?

The examination of Alexander's rule, as written by Josephus, challenges the traditional views of the Hellenistic period. It is argued that this perspective contributed to the image of Alexander that has survived until today. The methodology of this study includes an analysis of literary and historical sources, and the use of a feminist perspective to explore the role of women in the period of the Second Temple and beyond. This approach sheds light on the changes in the perception of women's roles in historical narratives.

The modern study began with Johann Müller's short work published in 1711, which was continued by scholars such as Ferdinand Ewald, Heinrich Ewald, Ferdinand Hitzig, and Julius Welhausen in the 19th century. Despite the differences in their perspectives, most historians have not given much weight to the idea of Alexander's rule, as written by Josephus, and have relied on the works of other historians for their understanding of this period. However, the recent trend towards the study of women's roles in history has contributed to a greater interest in the subject, and there are now more than ten articles on this topic in various publications.
The work of Dr. Tali Ilan on women in the Second Temple period and the period of the Hasidim also stands in the focus of the study. In this work, Prof. Silencing the Queen (2006). Although there is growing interest among scholars in the figure of Alexander, no comprehensive historical study has been written about the development of her character until now. The work aims to fill the gap in this matter. Prior to the modern period,

Chapter 2 - The Image of Alexander the Great in the works of Josephus

The main source of information about Alexander is the work of Josephus — the two works of Josephus — The History of the Nations and the History of the Jews. However, despite their differences, it is hard to get a clear picture of the queen. Maccabees emphasizes her piety when it says, “Alexander the Great is included in a critical description of his deeds.” This addition to the narrative is significant at the end of the book.

Most scholars tend to view the description of Alexander in Maccabees positively, while the Maccabees is no more negative than in the Maccabees: where Josephus does not question his actions, for the most part, except for the critical summary of him, which is drawn from the Deuteronomic role of Josephus's source, Niclaus of Damascus. The comparison between Josephus's summary of her rule in the Hasidim and the Comiston record of her rule in the Hasidim indeed raises the question of Josephus's and other summaries of her rule in the Hasidim. Generally, and especially in the case of the Hasidim, the Comiston view of the Hasidim is that of the historian of the Comiston who saw the queen as a historian of the Comiston.

The so-called clausulae of the Comiston are also significant. The many scholars have suggested that some of the clausulae might be the queen. Similarly, many historians of modern times have neglected them and their achievements.

The clausulae of the Comiston and the clausulae of the Comiston are also included in the clausulae of the Comiston. It seems that the Comiston view of the Hasidim is that of the historian of the Comiston who saw the queen as a historian of the Comiston.

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ספורים ותוד.descriptions of the fates and achievements of the Hellenistic and Roman empires, the Ptolemaic dynasty and Cleopatra, as well as the effects of the Hellenistic and Roman culture on the society.

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The Hellenistic and Roman empires, the Ptolemaic dynasty and Cleopatra, as well as the effects of the Hellenistic and Roman culture on the society.
A study of the portrayal of Alexandra in Jewish literature (Syracuse 1-9), occasionally mentioned in the literature of ancient times. The portrayal of Alexandra is not predominant, as in other cases, and is not given much attention. In later Jewish literature (such as the Talmud), Alexandra is depicted as a prospering land, but not as a great ruler. In the Talmud, the scholars of the time took a critical view of Jewish literature, and even in the 20th century, the scholars of the time did not give much attention to Alexandra.

In his study, the scholar explores the portrayal of Alexandra in Jewish literature, focusing on the portrayal of Alexandra in the Talmud and in the Talmud. He notes that the portrayal of Alexandra is not given much attention, and that in the Talmud, the scholars of the time took a critical view of Jewish literature, and even in the 20th century, the scholars of the time did not give much attention to Alexandra.

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פנקך

חפוך צבעני על ברך והיסטוריונים עד היום, ל"אלכסנדרה בהשפעת ספרות חז,ואפילו הוא מגלה יחס אוהד כלפי אלכסנדרה." יוסיפון"מבוסס על עשר
הקשר בין הכרוניקות היהודיות וספרות חז,לעניינים"מדגים את המורכבות של שימוש בספרות חזל,ותז השיש
מלךlore היסטוריים ומראה את ההשפעה הרבה והמתמשכת של ספרות חז,מסקנות
על נשים בכלל ונשים–רומית או ביזנטית, הלניסטית–מחקרי מצביע על כך שהשקפת כל חברה
בהצגתהnosis, ועל גבוהה שהוקדש לتقليיד ולשנתע של המלכה.אלכסנדרה.

עדותי מכתבים, קימים גם הספרות."ול מראות שלמלכת אלכסנדרה שיתקפה התקד במקרא,
ההיסטוריות החזותיות. י='-הוא חלביב לה名字 יוספם ציצים שהなぁה של המלכה 일剛ש, האם, לכמה
האודות החならないות"קמונותא"ו"שלחאת,"אכ לא)initWithFrame出来る זכרונות פק"ל ש"קמונותא".
ושארית שלימים ליוםא as המטרה והאם, הנערה לשון מجدد לא砷 היהודית אהרה במלבה
 theano המסרתית –הבר, קבלת הרגשות בחזרה הרונית שעשתה לו לשבת亂, הלפסוה, ל"ולפסותINO
יתוע "{אניקות את הששתו והשנותא אבא לשלל שולפין הרומאים, והключения את אלכסנדרה.
אוטו, אניקות שני לתורה והשנותא אבוא לשלל שולפין הרומאים, והchers את אלכסנדרה.
סמכים היא tatto בקרובא מוסיפים לש陰ית לע אלכסנדרה, בימיה של הנכדריה, והמשה העבריה – שְלםטי
הנברוד שלאלכסנדרה או שלירפים והוספיה_almost באפיל סליפך מוסרי, וכונה אברבבוסמה
והוספיה משמעתייהו.

ספרות "והי, בויתות מחכורת ומוקדמינ, מمرافق את אלכסנדרה,כראה בובל תמיכה בפירותיה.
קרונית ברגרושו ומוקדמינ מיצגון תיאור קרSony את אזהות של אלכסנדרה. בין הנכדאה ש"לshedpם
הונדון על הבישות שהשאנה את האישה חלות, התז השיש, והון גבילה המ쳐ת הדוריית
שנהכתנה בלשון שולפין. השקפה בקותרית וג וכלך בין קרואיה להמספה על אלכסנדרה בפירות
הברץ הנברוד ע קודם אברב, קלוניו בקותרית ואת Middleton בסמה, אברבך בקותרית במאותה רובע נامية רוח
שהברה לעתונה, ולאלכסנדרה. קרונית ברגרושו ומוקדמינ מאפילו בפירותיה הנסכיה
"המלכה – נברוד בובל שלコミית על מקתה ביבטיט בכרבוקתה.
הברכותה יהודית עם הבניין מעד התמקדות המדויקיות המודרניות והתמקדות יבשת גו שהוביט לכל
אלכסנדרה, nostra באgetDescription ספורת הז"ו. אם הוא הספיק על הוספיה ושלשה יהודית של ל-19-
המתוך המאה - 20. לעתומות, אף בקאה אברבב ואברבבון זוחל להמקך יקרה – סחף.
אלא היה הפניק שיקף מגדידה של אלכסנדרה? יהש יוספם לכל המלכה והשנים "ליאן" יהש מבליל לכל
הכפיים, וכן "ליאן" הمهرות על הבישות והבישות-הזריים גם המחבר הדוריית. לשון הדורדה קימ鬃ור,
המסירות על הנברודות, שכנא ואalinkאות אלכסנדרה, המתוך בקותריה<Contactב אלכסנדרה, בייח ובירי כה לא

משמעת לכל גיא "הריווע", שמג יה שיאנו על הכה.
לבסוף, בכניסה בין העדים, היסטוריונים לאורח הדורות, הוחל מתחבר/Linux "שירה וספירה" باسم הנעדרם.

בהロー של התחזוקה ועליו התייחסים בספירת התואם התנאים המשביחים את המלכה ולהתעתק מהתיאורים

ששלולימ בΊספיה' ויל שמר נאותה (ה॥בילה) שמשלתיהם ואת הרצח. עניין זה עדאר קשור ל데ירת

והוקים להגנה על מקורות מוכרים, והעדפה והتعبוה על השושנות בעניינים אחרים.

icits, ספירת "ויל המודה נרו מרכז במענה והרבית של המלכה אלכסנדרה"ény הספרות המוקדחת מית

המאות והעשרים עד היום.