Writing History in the Hasmonaean Court: A Study of the Diplomatic Documents in First Maccabees

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More than four hundred years after the kingdom of Judah was destroyed and its inhabitants led off into exile, a sovereign state arose once again with its capital in Jerusalem and its sanctuary on Zion. The events which occasioned this new kingdom were recorded in the book of First Maccabees. Composed under the auspices of the royal court, First Maccabees is an example of history-writing, that is, it is a narrative of past events, but its status as critical historiography has been challenged by scholars. This challenge to its critical stance is not accompanied by a corresponding criticism of its presentation of historical data; First Maccabees is generally accepted as a reliable account of the first generation of Hasmonaean leadership. In order to achieve this standard of historicity, the author of First Maccabees must have employed some critical methods in the composition of his text, most basic criteria for the use and examination of sources. This technique can be seen most clearly in the places in the text where source documents have been inserted whole. This paper will examine the historical context of the diplomatic correspondence embedded within the narrative, its inscription in the text, the authenticity of the documents themselves, and their accessibility for our author.

The dating of First Maccabees relies upon two events. The *terminus post quem* is the last event recorded, the death of Simon and the ascension of his son, John Hyrcanus, in 135/4 B.C.E. The *terminus ante quem* is the invasion of Pompey in 63 B.C.E., after which point expressing positive relations with the Romans was no longer an option. Several scholars give a date surrounding the death of John Hyrcanus in 104, citing "καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν λόγων Ιωαννου" (1M 16.23) as an indication his reign was over when

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the book was composed.[1] Bezalel Bar-Kochva has proposed a date between 129–126 arguing from the same verse. He emphasizes "τῆς οἰκοδομῆς τῶν τειχῶν" (16.23) as the major activity of Hyrcanus mentioned in the text, alongside the noticeable absence of his military conquests.[2] By the time of his death, Hyrcanus had extended the borders of Judaea to Mount Carmel, circumcised the Idumaeans, and destroyed the temple of Mount Garizim, all of which are omitted in the brief summary of his reign, suggesting that they had not yet occurred when the text was completed.[3] The provenance of the text is universally considered to be in Judaea, if not specifically in the court of John Hyrcanus.[4] The evidence for this position is extremely persuasive. The text was originally composed in Hebrew and only later translated into our extant Greek version.[5] Eusebius provides us with the original Hebrew title of the book, *Sarbethsabanaiel*,[6] which could mean "Book of the house of the ruler of the sons of God," or, alternately, "Book of the dynasty of God's resisters."[7] The description of terrain and battle-scenes indicates a close familiarity with the land.[8] The author had access to a wide range of source material that could only have been available at the Hasmonaean archives. From this evidence we can also determine, to some extent, the character of the author of our text. The author of First Maccabees would have to be a Judaean himself, familiar with the battle-grounds of Judah's revolt and the location of nearby villages and estates. He was familiar with the texts of the *Nevwaim*, the Hebrew Prophets, in addition to the Torah. He knew something of foreign affairs and history aside from what could be gleaned from Seleucid or other chronicles. From these indications, we can

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1. Sievers, Joseph. *The Hasmoneans and Their Supporters*. (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1990), 3; Rappaport, U. "1 Maccabees." *In The Oxford Bible Commentary*. Ed. John Barton and John Muddiman. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 711.
2. Bar-Kochva, Bezalel. *Judas Maccabaeus*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 163.
3. Bickerman, Elias. *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), 151.
4. Efron, Joshua. *Studies on the Hasmonaean Period*. (New York: E.J. Brill, 1987), 14–5; Rappaport, "1 Maccabees." 711.
5. Martola, Nils. *Capture and Liberation: A Study of the Composition of the First Book of Maccabees*. (Abo: Abo Akademi, 1984), 13; Rappaport, 711.
6. Eusebius. *Hist. Eccl*. 6.25.1–2.
7. Rappaport, 711.
8. Bar-Kochva, 153.

suggest that our author was employed in some fashion at the Hasmonaean court of John Hyrcanus and that either he or someone to whom he had access was involved in several of Judah's military activities. This is evidenced by the large section of the text devoted to the relatively short period of Judah's military activities as compared with Jonathan and Simon's reigns, which are mostly concerned with diplomatic missions. Our author, then, knows something of the battle-field and the royal court and is able to vividly describe Hasmonaean leadership in both spheres.

The first step for our analysis of the document in First Maccabees is to establish the unity of the text. Several scholars[9] have proposed what Nils Martola calls the "fabrication-interpolation theory."[10] This theory states that the majority, if not all the letters and decrees are falsifications and/or interpolations added to the text by someone other than our author. The extreme positions on this spectrum are represented by Ettelson, who holds that the entirety of the text is unified,[11] and Willrich, who holds that all the letters and documents are later interpolations.[12] Ettelson's position is argued in two ways: the documents do not presuppose any circumstances other than those which existed during the period of the events recorded in the text; and the literary connections between the documents and the narrative "are of the kind that it seems natural to assume that the person who wrote the context also incorporated and partly modified the documents in question."[13] This position, accompanied by the fact that the same translator who translated the narrative also translated the documents indicates that the letters were not interpolations, but does nothing to deny the possibility that they were falsifications from before the time of composition. Dancy points to Document 3 (1 M 12.20–23) as a forgery from before the writing of the text, while Gauger argues for a propagandist function for the Roman letters.[14] Both scholars also suggest a later redactor, responsible for incorporating diplomatic passages and the Hyrcanus comment (16.23–4),

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9. Several of the scholars who have dealt with this issue wrote in German. As the majority of their texts have not been translated into English, I will be reliant on secondary references to these works in Martola, 1984.

10. Martola, *Capture and Liberation*. 10.

11. Ibid., 12.

12. Ibid., 14.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., 16.

closely following the completion of the original text. However, Martola, following Schnuck, confidently asserts that "the general opinion is that the author of 1 M has inserted the letters and other documents into their position in 1 M."[15] The question of falsification will be trickier to assess and requires a close examination of the documents individually.

First Maccabees is not generally considered to be an example of critical historiography.[16] Instead, the term applied most frequently to this text is "biblical historiography."[17] This term is used to emphasize certain qualities in the text which have close affinities with biblical historiography, in particular the Deuteronomistic history. Certainly these elements can be seen, as First Maccabees includes passages which incorporate references to idolatry (1.10–15), lament (1.25–8, 37–40; 2.7–11; 3.45; 9.21), poetry (3.3–9), testament (2.49–70), prophecy (7.17), and holy war with all its constituent elements (3.42–4.25; 5.45–54).[18] The existence of these elements is undisputed, and furthermore, unsurprising given the social world of our author. He was steeped in the language and expression of the Hebrew Bible, whose enemies are anachronistically imposed on the enemies of the Maccabaeans, i.e. the attack on Philistia and the destruction of their temple (5.63–8; cf. Jg. 16.30). But does the presence of biblical terminology preclude critical historiography? Gregory Sterling's genre of apologetic historiography is defined as "*the story of a subgroup of people in an extended prose narrative written by a member of the group who follows the group's own traditions but Hellenizes them in an effort to establish the identity of the group within the setting of the larger world.*"[19] In this genre, elements from the local tradition are recast in the form of Hellenistic critical

15. Ibid., 14; This position is also held by Lichtenberger, Hermann, "History-writing and History-telling in First and Second Maccabees." in *Memory in the Bible and Antiquity*. ed. Stephen C. Barton, Loren T. Stuckenbruck, and Benjamin G. Wold. (Durham: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 95–110; and Sievers, *The Hasmonaeans and Their Supporters*, 1.

16. Lichtenberger, "History-Writing and History-Telling," 110; Grabbe, Lester L. "Who were the first real historians? On the origins of critical historiography." in *Did Moses Speak Attic?*" ed. Lester L. Grabbe. (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 156–181.

17. Rappaport, 712; Efron, 44–7.

18. For the elements of holy war, see von Rad, Gerhard. *Holy War in Ancient Israel*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdman's, 1991).

19. Sterling, Gregory. *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts, and Apologetic Historiography*. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 16.

historiography. Lester Grabbe provides a list of five necessary characteristics for detecting critical judgment in ancient history-writing:[20]

1. Scepticism towards the sources. This is demonstrated by the choice and interrogation of good sources, reference to eye-witness accounts, and fidelity to the speeches and letters of historical figures.
2. Concern for epistemology and rational explanation, identified by the establishment of cause and connection between events.
3. Focus on human causation, as opposed to divine.
4. Testing of evidence by using a chronological framework and maintaining an objective stance.
5. Explicit mention of method and theme.

These elements, in various combination, can be seen in the histories of Polybius, Thucydides, and Herodotus. In the Near Eastern world, Grabbe singles out the Babylonian Chronicles as the only example of true critical historiography.[21] This text displays objectivity, as it includes mentions of defeats as well as victories. It does not, however, make explicit its principles of historical enquiry. At the same time, Grabbe defines the Deuteronomistic history as the product of theological rather than critical judgment, while acknowledging its use of quite reliable court or temple chronicles.[22] He goes further to state that "it seems doubtful that true critical investigation is found in either 1 or 2 Maccabees."[23] He rejects First Maccabees as a continuation of the thrust of Deuteronomistic history without subjecting the text to a thorough examination of the basis of his own principles. First Maccabees reflects a transition period in the composition of Israelite/Judaean history, where critical influences from the Hellenistic world are being absorbed and disseminated, while the biblical text still functions as a generic model for the construction of narrative. In this way, First Maccabees constitutes an early attempt at apologetic historiography, deliberately continuing the tradition of Kings and Chronicles[24] in the form of Hellenistic history-writing. The end result is an account of the origins of the Hasmonaean dynasty directed

20. Grabbe, "Who were the first real historians?" 156–181.
21. Ibid., 172.
22. Ibid., 174.
23. Ibid., 178.
24. Hengel, Martin. *Judaism and Hellenism.* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 99.

internally, but situated in the context of the larger Mediterranean world both historically and historiographically. The remainder of this paper will focus on the selection and interrogation of source documents, in particular diplomatic correspondence, in order to demonstrate that the author of First Maccabees did employ critical judgment of his sources in his construction of a historical narrative.

First Maccabees relies on three categories of sources: external, internal, and documentary. The use of separate sources for internal and external history is evidenced by the use of two distinct dating systems within the text. For events pertaining to the Seleucid dynasty, official Macedonian dating is used. This system begins counting in the autumn of 312 B.C.E. For events taking place within Judaea, the Babylonian Seleucid calendar is used, which begins its counting in the spring of 311 B.C.E.[25] These chronologies suggest that some sort of Seleucid chronicle was employed alongside official Hasmonaean chronicles, along the same lines as the chronicle of Hyrcanus[26] referred to in 1 M 16.24. The Hasmonaean chronicles were used as supplements, perhaps for dating purposes, to the first-hand eye-witness account of our author and/or the testimony of his friends and colleagues. In addition to these sources, both written and oral, the text of First Maccabees includes several inscribed documents.[27] These documents interrupt the narrative rather than constitute it. The letters can be further divided into two categories: negotiations with the Seleucid authorities and alliances with foreign powers. In the course of the Maccabaean struggle for autonomy, negotiation with the Seleucid powers would have been necessary in the manner seen in First Maccabees. The diplomatic letters, on the other hand, have no external corroboration or clear motivation, and thus are considerably more controversial with regards to authenticity. As such, they will be the focus of my exploration.

There are five diplomatic letters inscribed in the text of First Maccabees:

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25. Attridge, H.W. "Historiography." In *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period.* Ed. Michael E. Stone. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 157–184.

26. ἰδοὺ ταῦτα γέγραπται ἐπὶ ἡμερῶν ἀρχιερωσύνης αὐτοῦ ἀφ' οὗ ἐγενήθη ἀρχιερεὺς μετὰ τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ (1 M 16.24).

27. 1 M 5.10b–13; 8.20, 23–32; 10.18–20, 25b–45, 52–54, 55b–56, 70–73; 11.9b–10, 30–37, 42b–43, 57b–d; 12. 3, 6–18, 20–23; 13. 15–16, 36–40; 14. 20–23, 27b–49; 15.2b–9, 16–21, 28b–31.

1. A treaty between Rome and Judaea. 8.22–32.
2. A letter from Jonathan to Sparta. 12.5–18.
3. A letter from King Areus of Sparta to the High Priest Onias. 12.19–23.
4. A letter from the Spartans to Simon. 14.20–23.
5. A letter from Lucius, consul of Rome, to King Ptolemy. 15.16–21.

In order to assess the historicity of these documents, the political situation in Rome and Sparta at the times of their composition must be established.

From the period of 201–175 B.C.E., Roman influence grew in the eastern Mediterranean.[28] In 201, a Ptolemaic embassy was sent to Rome, requesting the Senate's support against the allied Macedonian and Seleucid kingdoms.[29] In response, the Senate send a three-man team to the east, ostensibly to bring about a settlement between Ptolemy V and Antiochus III, and in order to demand Philip V's withdrawal from Ptolemaic cities in and around Greece.[30] Instead these delegates drew up an *amicita*, a treaty of friendship, with Antiochus III, hoping to isolate and weaken the Macedonian kingdom and so gain influence over mainland Greece.[31] In 196, a Roman representative named Flaminus granted freedom on behalf of the Senate to those communities in Greece which had been subject to Macedonian rule.[32] The majority of these communities were located in Asia Minor and their emancipation effectively undermined Macedonian power and preemptively countered Seleucid claims to these cities.[33] This declaration was partially the result of petitions to Rome by Smyrna, Lampsacus, and Alexandria Troas in 197.[34] The liberation of these cities not only includes their remittance from tribute, but also that "τοὺς μὲν ἄλλους Ἕλληνας πάντας τούς τε κατὰ τὴν Ἀσιαν καὶ κατὰ τὴν Εὐρωπήν ἐλευθέρους ὑπάρχειν καὶ νόμοις χρῆσθαι τοῖς ἰδίοις."[35] Antiochus III's attempts to place these freed cities

28. Gera, Dov. *Judaea and Mediterranean Politics 219 to 161 BCE.* (New York: Brill, 1998), 58.
29. Polybius. *Histories*, 15.25.14.
30. Poly. 16.27.
31. Gera, 68.
32. Poly. 18.44.
33. Gera, 72.
34. Poly. 21.13.3.
35. Ibid., 18.44.2.

under his yoke resulted in a humiliating defeat at the hands of Rome and the imposition of reparations concluded as the Treaty of Apamea. The terms of this surrender were staggering; Antiochus was forced to retreat beyond the Tarsus mountains and had to pay Rome 15,000 talents for military expenses. Antiochus' ability to rebuild his army was severely limited, as the Romans imposed further bans on the use of elephants and decimated the size of his navy.[36] In 187, Antiochus was crushed while attacking the temple of Bel in Babylon, an attack which was primarily motivated by his need for additional funds for reparations.[37] After his death, Seleucus IV took the throne. His twelve year reign was largely characterized by financial troubles and a weak military, as the treaty was still in effect. Antiochus IV became king in 175 B.C.E. Within two years, the full amount of tribute to Rome had been paid off and a new *amicita* had been drawn up.[38] This treaty left him free to rebuild his military and attack the Ptolemaic kingdom in Egypt. This campaign was largely successful, but Roman intervention in the final stages forced him back to Syria without the total victory and annexation of Ptolemaic possessions for which he had hoped.[39] During his march back to Antioch, he stopped by Jerusalem long enough to raze the walls and defile the Temple.[40] With the Seleucids gaining strength, Rome reinstituted its policy of weakening its Hellenistic rivals, aided by the presence of high-ranking Seleucid hostages. The most important of these hostages was Demetrius, the son of Seleucus IV and nephew of Antiochus IV. When Antiochus died campaigning in Parthia in 164,[41] his son was still very young, which resulted in a power struggle over the rule of the kingdom.[42] Quick to take advantage of this situation was the Roman hostage, Demetrius. Aided by Polybius and other high-ranking Greeks, Demetrius petitioned the Senate for his release. Rome sought to exploit the young Antiochus V and so refused his request.[43] Instead, the Senate used Demetrius as a bargaining chip with Lysias, Antiochus V's guardian, threatening to recognize his claim if Lysias

36. Ibid., 21.17.
37. Diodorus Siculus. *Bibliotheca Historica*, 29.15.
38. Poly. 33.18.
39. Gera, 143; cf. Poly. 28.22.
40. 1 Mac. 1.20.
41. Poly. 31.9.
42. Gera, 218.
43. Poly. 31.2.

did not disarm in accordance with the Treaty of Apamea.[44] Frustrated, Demetrius planned and executed a daring escape from Rome, arriving in Syria and claiming the throne in 162.[45] This greatly angered Rome, who refused to recognize Demetrius' kingship, even championing the rights of Alexander Balas, an Attalid pretender, in 153/2 B.C.E.[46] So, from the period of 162–152 B.C.E., Rome refused to recognize Demetrius' authority in any way.[47] It is certainly not coincidence that Judah's mission to Rome took place in 162/1 B.C.E. This was the most auspicious time to win Roman support against the Seleucid kingdom.[48] Furthermore, Judah's embassy was not seen by Rome as the diplomatic aggrandizement of a subject people, since the imperial power to which they were subject was not recognized by the Senate at that time. And, as we have seen, the Romans had no problem granting freedom to cities and communities subject to Hellenistic rule in the interest of undermining Macedonian, and later Seleucid influence. The establishment of *amicita* between Judaea and Rome in 162/1 appears plausible in its historical context.

First Maccabees makes specific note of one other diplomatic partner for Judaea under the early years of Hasmonaean rule: Sparta. The recorded correspondence spans over one hundred years, from the reign of Areus I of Sparta (309–265 B.C.E.) to Simon's first year in office (142/1 B.C.E.). In order to situate these documents, we must examine the historical context of both Areus' initial offer of friendship and the motivation behind Jonathan's renewal of this alliace generations later.

Prior to the reign of Areus I, Sparta was a weak state under Macedonian rule. Areus sought to regain Sparta's place of prominence in Greece by refusing to join the Macedonian-sponsored League of Corinth in 302 B.C.E.[49] By 281 B.C.E., he formed and headed a Spartan-led alliance which confronted Macedon's Aetolian allies in an attempt to weaken the Hellenistic empire. This campaign ended in defeat for Areus, but he was able to maintain authority over Spartan territory by exploiting dynastic

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44. Gera, 290.

45 1 Mac. 7.1.

46. Diod. 31.32a.

47. Gera, 293.

48. Ibid., 304.

49. Cartledge, Paul and Antony Spawforth. *Hellenistic and Roman Sparta.* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 29.

struggles and external threats to Macedon.[50] Areus revered this policy of harassment against Macedon by allying with them in 274 B.C.E. against Pyrrhus, who was killed by his Spartan forces.[51] As a result, Sparta saw its international standing grow and began to make moves to exert its newly recovered influence. Between 272 and 268 B.C.E., Areus engaged in an intensive campaign of diplomacy, minting coins with his image for international use and attempting to supplant Macedon in an alliance with the Ptolemaic kingdom in Egypt.[52] This extract from the Chremonides Decree of 268/7 B.C.E. gives a clear indication of Areus' diplomatic ventures:

> Likewise also the Spartans, being friends and allies of King Ptolmaeus, have voted to be allies with the Athenian people together with the Eleans and the Achaeans and the Tegeans and the Mantineans and the Orchomenians and the Phigaleans and the Caphyans and the Cretans, as many as are in the alliance of Sparta and of Areus and of the other allies.[53]

Paul Cartledge states, "Given Areus I's alliance with Ptolemy II, who had strong Levantine interests, it is not beyond the bounds of intrinsic possibility that Areus should have corresponded, as the author of 1 Maccabees claimed, with the high priest of the Jerusalem Temple."[54] Areus' letter is a declaration of kinship, a theme which is readily corroborated and utilized by Jonathan years later. Kinship was a popular medium for diplomacy during the Hellenistic period. To open a dialogue, a letter of renewal would be sent which served not only to call attention to the declared relationship, but required the party making the advance to satisfactorily establish the link by reference to an often legendary shared ancestor.[55] The recipient would then accept the offer of kinship and enter into an informal alliance with their newly established kin. This was especially effective in the mediation between Greek and barbarian, virtually always involving the barbarian coming within the tent of the Greeks rather than vice versa.[56] A

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50. Ibid., 32.
51. Ibid., 34.
52. Ibid., 35.
53. *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecum*, 3rd edition, 434–6; Translation by Cartledge, 36.
54. Ibid., 37.
55. Jones, Christopher P. *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 7.
56. Ibid., 16.

Jewish example of this practice can be seen in the writings of Cleodemus Malchus, who links Moses and Hercules in legendary fashion.[57] What is particularly interesting about the letter from Areus is that it gives Abraham as the common ancestor (1 Mac. 12.21) rather than a Greek hero or deity. The uniqueness and clear tendentiousness of this claim in a Jewish text has led some commentators to suggest that the document itself is inauthentic;[58] at the very least, there is reason to suspect that the document has been tampered with on this point. The question remains, why would Jonathan have sought to ally with Sparta, a relatively weak state by 143, and why would our author have considered this alliance to be of such importance as to inscribe it in our text?

Ranon Katzoff makes the claim that Jonathan was motivated by the Achaean persecution of Sparta from 189–178 B.C.E. During this period, the traditional Lycurgian customs and laws of Sparta known as the ἀγωγή were outlawed by the Achaeans in a way which mirrored the experience of persecution under Antiochus IV. Established in its place was the Hellenistic παιδεία and its supporting institutions. After regaining their autonomy in 178 B.C.E., the Spartans, despite their difference from the rest of the Hellenistic states, maintained an honourable position within their community. By appealing to Sparta, Jonathan was making a claim about Judaea's role as a full member of the international community, regardless of its unfamiliar traditions.[59] This hypothesis demands that Jonathan was not only a keen diplomat, but a master of symbolism with deep knowledge of recent events right across the Mediterranean world. Furthermore, our author must have shared this knowledge and propagandist desire and been writing for a largely Hellenistic audience for whom this claim would be meaningful. While Jonathan's character and motivation cannot be recovered, the assumptions which this theory makes about the aims and means of our author makes its likelihood very doubtful. The fact that over thirty years will have elapsed between the allusion and its referent further

57. Preserved by Josephus, *Ant.* 1.239–41; cf. Eusebius, *PrEv* 9.20.2–4.

58. Gruen, Erich. "The Purported Jewish-Spartan Affiliation." in *Transitions to Empire.* ed. Robert W. Wallace and Edward M. Harris. (London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 254–269.

59. Katzoff, Ranon. "Jonathan and Late Sparta." *The American Journal of Philology.* Vol. 106 no. 4 (Winter, 1985), 485–489.

suggests an alternative explanation is in order. Erich Gruen offers another interpretation: the correspondence is a Jewish invention which "constituted a Jewish appropriation and transformation of the Spartan mystique in order to declare the primacy of the Jews."Areus' accomplishments on the international scene gave him a well-known reputation in the Hellenistic era and "Sparta continued to stand for martial virtue, voluntary sacrifice, order, stability, and the rule of law," making this ally ideal for the apologetic motivations of the author, even though the partnership had no documentary basis.[60] Both of these interpretations, though they come to opposite conclusions regarding authenticity, require the Hasmonaean court and its employees to have a deep, precise, and symbolic understanding of Spartan history. The matter may be more practical than metaphorical. Perhaps Jonathan appealed to Sparta because of its close relationship with Rome after the defeat of the Corinthian League in 146 B.C.E., of which Sparta was not a member.[61] It was a recorded diplomatic practice during this period to appeal to states with which a relationship had already been established for support on important embassies.[62] On a mission to Rome in 197–6 B.C.E., a delegation from Lampsacus made a stop in Massilla, where they could claim common ancestry with a close Roman ally[63]—the embassies recorded in First Maccabees may reflect a very similar attempt.

The diplomatic documents differ in form from the narrative in which they are inscribed. All of the documents we will discuss are ἐπιστολή, written correspondence from one party to another. A unique problem exists for our text, as these documents have undergone at least two translations: From Greek to Hebrew and back again to Greek.[64] Some characteristics of contemporary chancery style can be detected in our letters. The typical opening formula for correspondence includes the name of the sender, the addressee, and the infinitive χαίρειν.[65] Official letters could include a health-

60. Gruen, 264.

61. Tigerstedt. E.N. *The Legend of Sparta in Classical Antiquity.* vol. II. (Uppsala, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1974), 67.

62. Jones, 78.

63. Katzoff, 487.

64. Martola, 57.

65. Ibid., 59; 1 Mac. 12.6,20; 14.20; 15.16; cf. 8.23 with καλῶς γέοιτο as an alternative.

wish,[66] a declaration of friendship,[67] and official decisions to be relayed to the community on the basis of earlier negotiations.[68] These characteristics strengthen the argument that each version in our text is based on a written original. Also in the text are a number of passages which make reference to messages but do not quote documentary material.[69] Several of these passage have no formal characteristics whatsoever,[70] while others appear similar to oral messages recorded in the Hebrew Bible.[71] These messages contain pronouns and personal endings which refer to persons outside the passage itself.[72] They are actually embedded within the narrative and cannot be removed from their context. The five documents under our view, on the contrary, can be lifted whole from the text without any damage to the narrative, leaving both the documents and the narrative complete and self-referential.[73] Though this has been used to challenge these passages on interpolation charges, it actually supports their existence as independent documents. Let us now examine these documents individually, as they were encountered by our historian.

Document 1, a treaty between Rome and Judaea dating from 161 B.C.E., is the first instance of diplomatic activity of the part of the newly established rebel government in Jerusalem. Prior to this embassy, Judah's forces had negotiated a cease-fire with the army of Lysias, the regent of the child-king Antiochus V,[74] and a new high priest, Alcimus, had been appointed by the new king Demetrius in 162 B.C.E.[75] When Alcimus proved to be a tyrant, acting only in the interests of the Seleucids much like his Hellenizing predecessors Jason and Menelaus, he was deposed by Judah.[76] This prompted Demetrius to send Nicanor, ἕνα τῶν ἀρχόντων αὐτοῦ τῶν

66. 8.23; 12.11, 22.
67. 12.8, 10, 16; 14.22; 15.17.
68. 15.19–21.
69. 10.70–73; 11.9–10,42–43; 13.15–16; 15.28–31.
70. 11.9–10.
71. Martola, 65; 1 Mac. 10.70–73; cf. Jer. 20.8, 24.9; Jdg. 9.16.
72. Ibid., 257.
73. Ibid., 256.
74. 1 Mac. 6.55–61.
75. 7.8–9.
76. 7.25.

ἐνδόξων,[77] to squash Judaea and reinstate Alcimus to the high-priesthood. Between Alcimus' flight and Nicanor's defeat, Judaea was left without any official head of state or ruling party, a vacuum which Judah did not hesitate to fill as he had done after his last victory. Not being from a high-priestly family, an obstacle overcome by his fraternal successors, Judah sought to gain his legitimacy through political rather than religious means, sending out an embassy before the battle was even won.[78] In this period, there were three possible sources for this legitimacy: Syria, Egypt, and Rome. Rather than appeal to the neighboring Ptolemys, who could have extracted a tribute for their support, Judah chose to appeal to the great liberators of the Greek πόλεις, the victors over Antiochus the Great, and, perhaps most importantly, the enemies of King Demetrius. Our author, if not Judah himself, knew much about the Roman Republic, its successes both in the east and the west, and its political constitution.[79] There are some inaccuracies in this description, namely the anachronistic mention of the defeat of the Achaean League in 146 B.C.E.,[80] knowledge of only one consul,[81] and an incorrect number of senators,[82] but overall the information displays familiarity with Roman customs. This insight into Roman machinations in the Hellenistic world indicates that our Judaean rebels were not simply uneducated rural extremists, but rather had a sophisticated understanding of the political matrix of the eastern Mediterranean. The first diplomatic overtures made by Judah were largely successful, resulting in a treaty of *amicita* with the up and coming power in the region and, more importantly, explicit recognition of Judas Maccabaeus as head of the Judaean state.

The introductory statement or heading for this document is as follows:

> καὶ ἤρεσεν ὁ λόγος ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν καὶ τοῦτο τὸ ἀντίγραφον τῆς ἐπιστολῆς ἧς ἀντέγραψαν ἐπι δέλτοις χαλκαῖς καὶ ἀπέστειλαν εἰς Ιερουσαλημ εἶναι παρ' αὐτοῖς ἐκεῖ μνημόσυνον εἰρήνης καὶ συμμαχίας.[83]

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77. 7.26.
78. Sievers, 20.
79. 1 Mac. 8.1–16.
80. 8.9–10.
81. 8.16.
82. 8.15.
83. 8.21–22.

There are several terms in this heading with which we will become very familiar as we examine the remainder of the documents: ἀντίγραφον, literally 're-written' or, more commonly, a 'copy' of an original document; ἐπιστολή, a 'letter'; ἀντιγράφω, 'to engrave'; and μνημόσυνον, a 'monument' or 'record.' These terms denote some sort of archivization process whereby letters and other written documents could be stored and referenced by interested parties. In several Greek cities of the eastern Mediterranean, we find monuments which has been engraved with treaty inscriptions concluded by Rome.[84] These inscriptions all share a similar structure. They begin with an opening declaration (1 Mac. 8.23), followed by a neutrality agreement (8.24–28), a defense pact (8.31–32), a modification clause (8.30), finally concluding with a testimonial clause.[85] The structure of Document 1 does not correspond perfectly to this arrangement, betraying some editorial work on the part of our author. The defense pact, which follows the main body of the text, appears to be an interpolation into the original document, as can be seen from the separate heading given to this clause (8.31). In addition, this clause deviates from the intention of the *foedus aequum*, a specific type of Roman treaty which is characterized by reciprocity between the two parties.[86] It is not surprising that the Romans would have offered full recognition to the Judaeans in order to undermine Demetrius, but would stop short of promising to engage in war with him on their behalf. It is typical of their behaviour during this period to embarrass Hellenistic rulers with symbolic gestures and support for their enemies, but actual military engagement was not common, and certainly not on behalf of rebel groups; diplomacy was their favoured means of displaying influence. The testimonial clause may have been dropped in order to add the defense pact. Even with these deviations, the treaty fits closely with Greek inscriptionary evidence and is historically plausible for 162/1 B.C.E., allowing the majority of scholars to agree that Document 1 is, for the most part, an authentic rendering of a Roman document of 161/0 B.C.E.[87]

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84. Davies, John K. "Greek Archives: From Record to Monument." in *Ancient Archives and Archival Traditions*. ed. Maria Brosius. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 323–343.
85. Gera, 305.
86. Ibid., 307.
87. Sievers, 68; Gera, 303–315; Martola, 66.

Several of our key words from Document I appear in the context of Document 2. The documents accompanying Jonathan's ambassadors are referred to as ἐπιστολὰς.[88] The heading for the inscribed document reads, "καὶ τοῦτο τὸ ἀντίγραφον τῶν ἐπιστολῶν ὧν ἔγραψεν Ιωναθαν τοῖς Σπαρτιάταις."[89] The greeting for this letter[90] is standard for diplomatic correspondence in the period. The terminology used in this greeting would be familiar to the Spartan recipients, such as γερουσία instead of πρεσβυτέρους for the assembly of elders and δῆμος instead of λαός for the common people. The appearance of these terms suggests that the Hasmonaeans under Jonathan had advisors who were skilled in Greek language, political terminology, and epistolography.[91] If, in fact, this document is a fabrication, the proper use of these terms in the Greek political sense indicates that our author must have been quite familiar with diplomatic practices in order to incorporate the correct official rather than local terms into his forgery. The first section of the document is flattering to the Spartans, confirming their kinship[92] and informing them of sacrifices on their behalf.[93] In the second section, Jonathan describes the Judaean's experience over the past twenty years of revolt,[94] and their ultimate victory,[95] positioning himself as a strong and victorious ally. The ending of this letter makes reference to the primary mission of the ambassadors, the Roman embassy. By informing Sparta of his intentions towards Rome, Jonathan asks for their support and, possibly, expects them to send a letter of recommendation to the Senate with Numenius and Antipater.[96] There is one point where we may be able to detect the hand of our author in the presentation of this document; at 12.9, Jonathan notes that the Judaeans παράκλησιν ἔχοντες τὰ βιβλία τά ἅγια τά ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν ἡμῶν. Our author is interested throughout in asserting that the actions of the Maccabees are continuous with biblical history. Here he makes explicit the intimate connection between his contemporary

88. 1 Mac. 12.2.
89. 12.5.
90. 12.6.
91. Sievers, 69.
92. 1 Mac. 12.8.
93. 12.11.
94 12.13.
95. 12.15.
96. 12.16.

political situation and τὰ βιβλία τά ἅγια, referring, at the very least, to the five books of Moses. Overall, the tone and structure of this document appear reasonable for the period and the purpose. Sparta's lack of political power at the time of composition also indicates authenticity, as does the emphasis both heading and within the document for the writing, copying, and storing of documents.

Document 3 is not an independent text available to our author, but was sourced by him as an appendix to Document 2. This is internally evident, as Jonathan writes of the document to which he is replying that, "τὸ ἀντίγραφον ὑπόκειται."[97] The heading for this document should be considered to be part of the editorial activity of our author, based on its similarity to the headings of the two previous documents. In this case we find, "καὶ τοῦτο τὸ ἀντίγραφον τῶν ἐπιστολῶν ὧν ἀπέστειλαν Ονια."[98] Based on the names Areus and Onias, this document should be dated during the latter years of the reign of Areus I of Sparta and the high-priesthood of Onias I, son of Jaddua.[99] This document is considered the most tenuous of the ones discussed in this essay. The fact that the original and its reply date over one hundred years apart, as well as the blatant propagandist function suggests to some scholars that this document is a forgery.[100] If this is the case and Document 2 is authentic, then the forgery must be attributed to Jonathan himself, since it was he (or his secretaries) who identified and copied out this document as the ground for his reply. At the same time, a diplomatic desire on the part of Sparta during Areus's reign cannot be definitively ruled out. The intended audience of this letter needs of be established in order to assess who is to gain from the addition of this document to the historical narrative. Surely Jonathan would like to establish kinship ties with Sparta, but even though this strategy was employed by diasporic Jewish writers, this tactic was much more commonly used by Macedonian Greeks to assimilate subject peoples to their own mythology. First Maccabees, which gives no indication of being for a gentile or even diasporic audience in its original form, unlike Second Maccabees, would have little reason to establish a specific kinship tie with Sparta at the time of composition at the end of

97. 12.7.
98. 12.19.
99. Jones, 75; cf. Josephus. *Ant*, 11.8.7.
100. Gruen, 259.

the second century. Furthermore, the kinship legend is independent of First Maccabees, making an appearance in the Second Book of Maccabees.[101] All this suggests that Document 3 was initially composed for the purposes of kinship diplomacy rather than for the construction of a historical narrative. The lineage is traced back to Abraham, suggesting a Jewish rather than Spartan provenance, though this could be an editorial mark of our author. On the other hand, in Areus' letter, he affirms that proof of kinship was εὑρέθη ἐν γραφῃ.[102] The Spartan archives feature heavily in Document 4, the Spartan response to Simon, indicating a sophisticated and long-standing archival tradition. Since kinship ties are confirmed through the examination of one's own archives, as Jonathan indicated in his letter,[103] it is plausible that the Spartans upon receiving his letter would consult their own records which purport to contain evidence of mutual descent ἐκ γένους Αβραὰμ.[104] As we shall see, the deposition in and consultation of the archives is, above all else, the Spartan response to the Judaean embassy.

Jonathan's game of allegiance with Seleucid claimants meets a grisly end. Trypho extends a peace treaty to Jonathan, tricking him into dismissing his forces and entering Ptolemais with only a thousand troops and bodyguard.[105] There he is immediately seized and killed,[106] leaving Trypho free to march on Galilee, where he is surprised to find himself turned back by the leaderless Hasmonaean forces.[107] With no commander left in Jerusalem, πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τὰ κύνλω αὐτῶν ἐκτρῖψαι αὐτούς,[108] necessitating the election of a strong leader and a new round of international diplomatic efforts. Wary of Trypho, Simon places his allegiance with Demetrius, an alliance which pays off hugely, allowing our author to declare that, "ἦρθη ὁ ζυγὸς τῶν ἐθνῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ Ισραηλ."[109] Simon regains the citadel, the official πόλις of Hellenistic Jerusalem, banishing the last vestiges of Seleucid

101. 2 Mac. 5.9.
102. 1 Mac. 12.21.
103. 12.9.
104. 12.21.
105. 12.46–7.
106. 12.48.
107. 12.51.
108. 12.53.
109. 13.41.

control from the newly autonomous state of Judaea.[110] Though Documents 4 and 5 follow these events in the text, they should best be understood as responses to an embassy sent out immediately following Jonathan's death. In fact, their embassies employed the same ambassador, Numenius.[111] The chronology of these potentially overlapping missions is problematic. One possibility is that 14.24, regarding Simon's shield-bearing trip to Rome, originally followed 14.16 and should be seen as occasioning both of our remaining documents. This scenario implies that Jonathan's mission never left the harbour, resulting in only one mission for Numenius, who carried both Simon's shield and Jonathan's letter. Dancy makes the suggestion that Document 5 should be placed immediately prior to Document 4.[112] This explanation does not account for the reference to the shield in the Roman response.[113] Another possibility is that the chronology is, in fact, correct. Numenius traveled to Sparta with Jonathan's letter, learned of his death,[114] and thought to return to Jerusalem instead of continuing on to Rome with the diplomatic overtures of a deceased high-priest. Bringing with him the Spartan response, he was immediately sent out, with shield, by Simon to complete his mission and establish new ties between Rome and Judaea. This explanation accounts for the placement of the documents in the text while taking into account the political situation of 143/2 B.C.E.

Document 4, a letter from Sparta to Simon, is described by our author as a spontaneous reaction to Jonathan's death on the part of the Spartan.[115] Another document is mentioned in this introductory section but is not recorded in our text. Parsing this section, the comment about δέλτοις χαλκαῖς[116] refers to the missing Roman reply to Jonathan's embassy, on analogy with 1 Mac. 8.22. This monument may or may not have existed in 142 B.C.E., but it was no longer available to our author at the time of composition and so was not inscribed in the text of First Maccabees. Given the importance of diplomatic ties with Rome for the Hasmonaeans and the general tendency of governments to preserve and display such

110. 13.49–52.
111. 12.16; 14.24.
112. Dancy, J.C. *A Commentary on 1 Maccabees*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1954), 182–3.
113. 1 Mac. 15.18.
114. 14.16.
115. 14.18.
116. Ibid.

documents, as well as the easy parallel with Document 1, it seems likely that these tablets never existed. The Spartan letter, on the other hand, is headed in the same manner with which we are keenly familiar: "καὶ τοῦτο τὸ ἀντίγραφον τῶν ἐπιστολῶν ὧν ἀπέστειλαν οἱ Σπαρτιᾶται."[117] Its opening section is identical to Jonathan and Areus's letters, that is, it corresponds to expected epistolographic form with sender, recipient, and greetings.[118] The contents of the letter constitute the "read-receipt" of Jonathan's letter, further indicating that Document 4 was composed as a response rather than a spontaneous renewal of diplomacy. As a read-receipt, this document is primarily concerned with the storage and preservation of diplomatic records. At least three archivizational activities took place as a response to Jonathan's mission. Firstly, the Spartans declare that, "καὶ τοῦτο τὸ ἀντίγραφον τῶν ἐπιστολῶν ὧν ἀπέστειλαν οἱ Σπαρτιᾶται." "We recorded the things by which they spoke in the public counsel."[119] This indicates an audience with the Spartan ἄρχοντες, where the proceedings were carefully recorded by a secretary for the use of the public. Secondly, "τοῦ θέσθαι τὸ ἀντίγραφον τῶν λόγον αὐτῶν ἐν τοῖς ἀποδεδειγμένοις τῷ δήμῳ βιβλίοις τοῦ μνημόσυνον ἔχειν τὸν δῆμον τῶν Σπαρτιατῶν." "A copy of their words was placed to be displayed in the public archives as a monument for the people of Sparta to have."[120] It was not uncommon for Greek cities to display and make available favourable diplomatic documents which would serve to enhance their own prestige.[121] Finally, "τὸ δέ ἀντίγραφον τούτων ἔγραψαν Σιμωνι τῷ ἀρχιερει." "And a copy of this was written for Simon the High-Priest."[122] The τούτων here refers to Jonathan's letter which had been deposited in the archives. This means that while the Spartans were recording and preserving these documents for their own use, they took the care to make an additional copy for the Judaean archives and, ostensibly, the use of the Judaean public. This has important implications for the authenticity of Documents 2 and 3 as they appear in the text. Numenius carried letters destined for Sparta and Rome

117. 14.20.
118. Ibid.
119. 14.22.
120. 14.23.
121. Davies, 327–8.
122. 1 Mac. 14.23.

as well as other unidentified locations when he went out on Jonathan's embassy, but only the Spartan document was recorded in our text. Here, in Document 4, we see why. Our author was unable to obtain out-going letters, for which copies may not have been produced or accessible. Four of five documents have the Hasmonaeans as the recipient rather than the sender. In the case of Jonathan's letter to Sparta, a copy was helpfully provided by the Spartans alongside their response where it could be sourced by our author a generation later.

Document 5, a letter from Lucius, consul of the Romans to King Ptolemy, is presented as a response to Simon's, not Jonathan's, mission to Rome, as indicated by ἀσπίδα χρυσῆν ἀπὸ μνῶν χιλίων.[123] Josephus mentions Simon's alliance with Rome, but instead of quoting this letter he reports of a *senatus consultum* in the name of L. Valerius Flaccus which is closely related in content.[124] Lucius was the consul in 142 B.C.E., which corresponds precisely to Numenius' mission, while L. Valerius was consul in 131 B.C.E., indicating a praetorship not too long before 134 B.C.E.[125] Based on the similarities between these two documents, it appears that they are dependent upon each other. Josephus' version makes greater use of personal names, while First Maccabees elaborates as to whom the additional letters are to be sent.[126] This document differs in two ways from the preceding four: the heading does not have the key word 'ἀντίγραφον'[127]; and the letter is addressed to someone other than sender and the recipient—King Ptolemy.[128] This was not the only letter sent by the Romans. Letters were also composed to Attalus, Ariarthes, Arsakes, Sampsakes, as well as the cities of Sparta, Delos, Myndos, Sicyon, Caria, Samos, Pamphylia, Lycia, Halicarnassus, Rhodes, Phaselis, Cos, Sideh, Aradus, Gortyna, Cnidus, Cyprus, and Cyrene, but these are not recorded in the text of First Maccabees.[129] If this letter is authentic, the prestige of the Hasmonaeans and the autonomy of Judaea have increased to the point where Rome is prepared to write on their behalf to its other allies. They are still not likely to act militarily in support of Judaean

123. 15.18; cf. 14.24.
124. Josephus. *Ant*, 14.145–148.
125. Sievers, 117.
126. 1 Mac. 15.22–23.
127. 15.15; ἀντίγραφον` does not appear until 15.24.
128. 15.16.
129. 15.22–23.

interests, but they fully recognize Simon as high-priest and ruler, not only of the Jews in Judaea, but of Judaeans across the Mediterranean. What this letter describes is Simon's motivation for renewing the Roman alliance: to exert his authority over 'τινες οὖν λοιμοι ἐκ τῆς χώρας αὐτῶν'[130] his enemies who had fled Judaea. Simon's lavish gift may have bought such a right.

The diplomatic documents of First Maccabees shed light on the process undergirding the construction of the narrative. The letters reflect real situations and dialogues. The repeated emphasis on the copying, storing, and retrieving of documents functions as a methodological statement; this was precisely how our author did part of his own research for the project. By weaving decrees and letters together with biblical historiographical elements, the author has crafted a work combining tradition with innovation, local with universal, and legend with critical investigation in order to create a specifically Jewish history in Hellenistic clothing.

130. 15.21.