

# Spartans or Samaritans? Revealing the Creativity of the Author of 1 Maccabees

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## ■ Abstract

A majority of scholars view the Hasmonean-Spartan correspondence, reported in 1 Maccabees, as inauthentic, since it contains many improbabilities, including the assertion that the Jews and the Spartans are fraternal nations. However, its patent implausibility also renders it unimaginable that the correspondence was intended to be understood literally. Hence, the binary choice offered in research, whereby it is either a bizarre fabrication or an authentic correspondence, despite all its peculiarities, is problematic. The Hasmonean-Spartan correspondence thus remains a conspicuous, unresolved enigma in the research of 1 Maccabees and the early Hasmonean period. Based on a textual clue, this article proposes a solution, namely, that the correspondence is, in fact, an ingenious derision of the Jews' authentic ethnic "brothers"—the Samaritans. This suggestion provides new insights into the history of the early Hasmoneans and the literary creativity of the author of 1 Maccabees.

## ■ Keywords

1 Maccabees, Hasmoneans, Sparta, Second Temple period, historiography and fiction, fabricated documents, Jews and Samaritans, pseudo-documentarism

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## ■ The Enigma of the Jewish Correspondence with the Spartans in 1 Maccabees

1 Maccabees 12:6–23 cites a letter, allegedly sent by Jonathan, the Hasmonean high priest, to the Spartan state, ca. 144 BCE.<sup>1</sup> The letter quotes and responds to a previous missive, supposedly written more than a century earlier, from King Areus of Sparta to a high priest by the name of Onias. A Spartan reply, to Jonathan's brother and successor, the Hasmonean high priest Simon, is cited in 1 Macc 14:20–23.

This suggested third- and second-century BCE correspondence between the Jews of Judea and the Spartans has attracted a great deal of attention in research. The scholarly interest was amplified by the fact that the correspondence suggests a kinship between the two nations, a notion also shared by 2 Macc 5:9.<sup>2</sup> However, the majority opinion holds that Jonathan's letter, including Areus's missive, is inauthentic, for the following reasons (I shall address the Spartan reply to Simon separately, below).

There appears to be no feasible foundation for diplomatic relations between the Jews and the Spartans in the third or second century BCE.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Jonathan's letter seems to discredit the merit of any renewal of friendship between the two nations by informing the Spartans that, although the Jews were obliged to fight

<sup>1</sup> This dating follows Erich S. Gruen, "The Purported Jewish-Spartan Affiliation," in idem, *The Construct of Identity in Hellenistic Judaism: Essays on Early Jewish Literature and History* (DCLS 29; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016) 153–66, at 154.

<sup>2</sup> The origin of this notion should not concern us here. It suffices to note that, far from suggesting a possible ethnic kinship between the Spartans and the Jews, an early 3rd-cent. BCE Greek excursus on the Jews, as part of the Egyptian ethnography of Hecataeus of Abdera, has been read as describing: the leadership of Moses; the Jewish way of life; and the Jewish hatred of foreigners in the likes of Lycurgus, the Spartan lawgiver; the Spartan way of life; and the Spartan practice of expelling foreigners, respectively. See Menahem Stern, *Hasmonean Judaea in the Hellenistic World: Chapters in Political History* (ed. Daniel R. Schwartz; Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1995) 69 (Hebrew); Gruen, "Jewish-Spartan," 160–61; Christopher P. Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999) 73; and Jan N. Bremmer, "Spartans and Jews: Abrahamic Cousins?" in *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham* (ed. Martin Goodman, George H. van Kooten, and Jacques T.A.G.M. van Ruiten; TBN 13; Leiden: Brill, 2010) 47–59, at 47–50. However, Bezalel Bar-Kochva, *The Image of the Jews in Greek Literature: The Hellenistic Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010) 120, denies the existence of a specific Greek model for this description of the origin and constitution of the Jews. According to Bremmer, "Spartans and Jews," 50, the notion of kinship between the two nations emerged among the Jews of Alexandria as a means of legitimizing their special way of life in a Hellenistic society, by comparing themselves to the xenophobic yet illustrious Spartans. For possible extrabiblical Jewish traditions that might support this notion, see Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 237.

<sup>3</sup> Wolf Wirgin, "Judah Maccabee's Embassy to Rome and the Jewish-Roman Treaty," *PEQ* 101 (1969) 15–20, at 15, elaborates on the Spartan aspect of this assessment: "The Jews were not an independent state and could offer neither military assistance nor diplomatic intervention." Gruen, "Jewish-Spartan," 158, comments on the Jewish side: "Little practical advantage would accrue from connection with a relatively weak Hellenic state. . . . Certainly they could expect no Spartan assistance in the Near East!"

many wars, they did not want to trouble their allies and friends over these wars (i.e., they fought them alone), being aided from heaven (12:13–15).<sup>4</sup>

Adding to the confusion is the fact that Jonathan's letter states that Areus's missive made "a clear reference to alliance and friendship" (12:8: διεσαφείτο περι συμμαχίας και φιλίας), yet this is not the case.<sup>5</sup> It refers only to the brotherhood of the two nations through the family of Abraham (12:21) and appends a declaration about shared livestock and property (12:23).

Arguing, nevertheless, for some purpose behind the correspondence, scholars have resorted to Sparta's reputation for valor and order.<sup>6</sup> However, 1 Maccabees' general hostility to the Greeks does not accord with the adoption of a Greek political or moral model. In other words, the Judean origin and nationalistic nature of 1 Maccabees is at odds with any possible Jewish-Hellenistic, diasporic need for legitimation through association with Greek models.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, declaring ethnic brotherhood with the Jews through common descent from a barbarian ancestor would have been unlikely from a Spartan perspective.<sup>8</sup> The fact that this declaration is based on some "authoritative," yet

<sup>4</sup> In the words of Bremmer, "Spartans and Jews," 54: "Surely, if one wants good diplomatic contacts, the last thing to write is: we do not need your help for we have a much better, supernatural ally!"

<sup>5</sup> As observed by Lee E. Patterson, *Kinship Myth in Ancient Greece* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010) 60.

<sup>6</sup> Gruen, "Jewish-Spartan," 160, 166, and Johannes C. Bernhardt, *Die Jüdische Revolution. Untersuchungen zu Ursachen, Verlauf und Folgen der hasmonäischen Erhebung* (Klio 22; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017) 148–51. Ranon Katzoff, "Jonathan and Late Sparta," *AJP* 106 (1985) 485–89, focuses on Spartan education in particular as a possible Hellenic justification for non-Hellenic, Jewish separatism. See the next note, however, regarding the possibility that Hellenistic Jews—more familiar with Sparta's glorious past—constituted a significant, intended readership of 1 Maccabees. On 1 Maccabees' objection to Greek educational institutions see v. 1:14 (compare with 2 Macc 4:9).

<sup>7</sup> For this possible Diaspora Jewish need, see n. 2 above. For the Judean, nationalistic perspective of 1 Maccabees and its hostility to the Greeks, see Jonathan A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 41A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976) 451; and Seth Schwartz, "Israel and the Nations Roundabout: I Maccabees and the Hasmonean Expansion," *JJS* 42 (1991) 16–38, at 21: "Even Alexander the Great, a hero in other ancient Jewish works, is portrayed unflatteringly," and further, at 34: "The pious, conscientiously de-hellenized, Judean rebels and their sons in the second century B.C.E. were mostly not interested . . . in a tradition which was not theirs." Uriel Rappaport, "The Attitude of the Hasmoneans to Far-Off Nations," in *Studies in the History of Eretz Israel Presented to Yehuda Ben Porat* (ed. Yehoshua Ben-Arieh and Elchanan Reiner; Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2003) 18–26 (Hebrew), argues that the Hasmonean approach to foreign nations and rulers was a matter of "Realpolitik." As far as 1 Maccabees is concerned, however, on top of Alexander the Great and Antiochus IV, and with the single exception of Alexander Balas, all the Seleucid kings and generals mentioned in 1 Maccabees are presented as traitorous and mean: the Diadochi (1:9), Apollonius (1:30), Antiochus V (6:62), Bacchides (7:10, 19, 9:26), Nicanor (7:26–35), Demetrius I (10:5, 46), Demetrius II (11:53), Tryphon (12:39–40, 13:17, 19, 31–32), Antiochus VII (15:27). See also Ptolemy VI of Egypt (11:1–2, 11, 16), and Greeks in general (1:15, 2:48).

<sup>8</sup> Patterson, *Kinship Myth*, 64–65: "Whenever expressing relationships with nonhellenic peoples, in diplomatic activity and other venues, the Greeks always employed hellenic personages." Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 449–50, admits, "The Greek mind was usually ethnocentric, and all the more so after the Jews and other peoples of Asia had been the despised subjects of Graeco-Macedonian

unnamed text only adds to the improbability.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the earliest mention of the relevant Jewish patriarch, Abraham, in Greek literature dates to the first century BCE, that is, some two hundred years after Areus's time.<sup>10</sup>

Note also the irregularity in the use of the title of "Spartans" rather than "Lacedaemonians" in this context.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, 2 Macc 5:9 uses the latter term, as does Josephus in his paraphrase of the correspondence in question (*Ant.* 12.225–226, 13.166, 170). Most illuminating, in light of the alleged reference by Areus to himself as "king of the Spartans" (1 Macc 12:20), is the inscription at the base of a statue of Areus in Olympia, dedicated by Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt, Areus's ally in the Chremonidean War. The inscription refers to Areus as "king of the *Lacedaemonians*."<sup>12</sup>

Another irregularity lies in the exclusive use of "brotherhood" (ἀδελφότης—12:10, 17), employed in this correspondence in relation to the Spartan-Jewish kinship. This is atypical usage, from both the Greek and Jewish perspectives.

From the Greek point of view, note, for example, that three sources employ in the same context συγγένεια, the more relevant and usual Greek term in that regard: 2 Macc 5:9; Josephus's paraphrase of Jonathan's letter (*Ant.* 13.167, 169); and Josephus's quotation of a Samaritan petition to Antiochus IV, which denies their

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rule for centuries."

<sup>9</sup> According to Michael Ginsburg, "Sparta and Judaea," *CP* 29 (1934) 117–22, at 120: "The idea of the relationship between Jews and Spartans might have been suggested to Areus by the legendary account of Hecataeus in his *Aiguptiaka*." See n. 2 above for the absence of the notion of kinship between the two nations from Hecataeus's Jewish excursus. Furthermore, the excursus is unaware of Abraham; see the next note. Moreover, as pointed out by Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 459: "If Hecataeus was Areus' source for Spartan kinship with the Jews . . . Areus in his letter would probably have mentioned Hecataeus's name."

<sup>10</sup> As pointed out by Pieter W. van der Horst, "Did the Gentiles Know Who Abraham Was?" in *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites* (ed. Goodman, van Kooten, and van Ruiten), 61–75, at 69. See also Patterson, *Kinship Myth*, 61: "Would Areus have even been aware of Abraham, bearing in mind that the Septuagint did not exist until later in the third century?" The attribution of a work called *On Abraham* to Hecataeus (Josephus, *Ant.* 1.159) is erroneous, the work being a Jewish forgery; Bar-Kochva, *The Image*, 93.

<sup>11</sup> S. Schüller, "Some Problems Connected with the Supposed Common Ancestry of Jews and Spartans and their Relations during the Last Three Centuries B.C.," *JSS* 1 (1956) 257–68, at 258: "Σπαρτιῶται is the designation of the Spartan upper class only"; and Nigel M. Kennell, *Spartans: A New History* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) 4: "The official designation of the Spartan state was *hoi Lakedaemonioi*, 'the Lacedaemonians.'" "Spartans" instead of "Lacedaemonians" appears also in 1 Macc 15:23, in the list of nations to which the Romans wrote, asking them not to seek to harm the Jews (15:19). This occurrence, however, is not in an official letter. On this list and the question of its authenticity, see Jörg-Dieter Gauger, "Überlegungen zum Programma Antiochos' III. für den Tempel und die Stadt Jerusalem (Jos. Ant. Jud. 12,145–146) und zum Problem Jüdischer Listen," *Hermes* 118 (1990) 150–64, 160–62; Daniel R. Schwartz, "Scipio's Embassy and Simon's Ambassadors (*I Maccabees* 15)," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 12 (1993) 114–26, 123; Uriel Rappaport, *The First Book of Maccabees: Introduction, Hebrew Translation, and Commentary* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2004) 336–37 (Hebrew).

<sup>12</sup> IvO 308 = SIG 433 as well as in André Plassart and Gustave Blum, "Orchomène d'Arcadie. Fouilles de 1913. Inscriptions," *BCH* 38 (1914) 447–78, at 448.

kinship with the Jews (*Ant.* 12.257, 260). Certainly, the text of 1 Maccabees is a Greek translation from Hebrew and, if authentic, logic dictates that both Areus's and Jonathan's letters were composed in Greek: that is, they underwent translation into Hebrew by the author of 1 Maccabees, then back into Greek by the translator of 1 Maccabees. Nevertheless, this still does not explain how συγγένεια, assuming that it appeared in the original Greek text, became ἀδελφότης, and it certainly does not justify the exclusive use of "brotherhood" in that regard.<sup>13</sup>

From the Jewish perspective, according to Gen 10:2–5 and 11:10–26 respectively, all Greeks are descendants of Noah's son Japheth, while Abraham descended from another son, Shem.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, even nations fathered by Abraham's sons or grandsons with Keturah and Hagar (Gen 25:1–4, 12–15), such as the Midianites and Qedarites, are not referred to in the Bible as "brother" nations.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, Jonathan's letter declares that the Jews constantly mention their brothers during sacrifices and in prayers, on holidays and other appropriate days (12:11). Such a Jewish practice in relation to the Spartans appears to lack any basis in reality.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Olivier Curty, "A propos de la parenté entre Juifs et Spartiates," *Historia* 41 (1992) 246–48; Kevin L. Osterloh, *The Reinvention of Judean Collective Identity in a Hellenistic World Contending with Rome* (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2007) 303; and Roberto Sammartano, "Kinship, between Cities and Peoples," *Encyclopedia of Ancient History* 7:3768–70: "When two or more communities shared the same ancestry, it was expressed by the word *syngeneia*. . . . The colonists (*apoikoi*) of two or more communities founded by the same mother-city were often designated as *adelphoi*, 'brothers.' Another degree of kinship, not as close as the *syngeneia*, was indicated by the term *oikeiotes*. . . . mostly used to stress close and recently established friendship between non-consanguineous communities." Indeed, Josephus uses οἰκειότης, alongside ἀδελφοί, in his paraphrase of Areus's missive (*Ant.* 12.226) as well as Jonathan's letter (*Ant.* 13.166 and 168). In short, as in relation to other incongruities in the text of 1 Maccabees here, Josephus adapted a more plausible Greek terminology.

<sup>14</sup> Daniel R. Schwartz, *1 Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AYB 41B; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022) 348–49. He also adds a general observation: "The notion of answering a letter sent more than a century earlier sounds laughable" (349).

<sup>15</sup> Compare with the reference to Edom—viz., the nation fathered by Jacob's twin brother, Esau: Deut 2:4, 8, 23:8; Num 20:14; Amos 1:11; Obad 10, 12; Mal 1:2. However, even in this case, 1 Macc 5:3 mentions the "Children of Esau," as opposed to the "seed of Jacob" (5:2), namely, emphasizing the different fathers, rather than the kinship. On the hostility between the Jews under Judas Maccabeus and the Idumeans, see also 1 Macc 4:61, 5:65.

<sup>16</sup> Timo Nisula, "'Time has passed since you sent your letter': Letter Phraseology in 1 and 2 Maccabees," *JSP* 14 (2005) 201–22, at 213 n. 47, views it as a rhetorical formula, *pace* the scholars who view it as a reference to an actual practice but are divided regarding its plausibility; see Bremmer, "Spartans and Jews," 54; Doron Mendels, "Honor and Humiliation as a Factor in Hasmonean Politics," in *Between Cooperation and Hostility: Multiple Identities in Ancient Judaism and the Interaction with Foreign Powers* (ed. Rainer Albertz and Jakob Wöhrle; Journal of Ancient Judaism. Supplements 11; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013) 177–203, at 186; and Ory Amitay, "The Correspondence in 1 Maccabees and the Possible Origins of the Judeo-Spartan Connection," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 32 (2013) 79–105, at 86.

As a result of these and additional improbabilities, most scholars conclude that Areus's missive is inauthentic.<sup>17</sup> Some, nevertheless, defend the authenticity of Jonathan's letter,<sup>18</sup> despite the fact that it shares some strange elements with Areus's missive, such as the use of "brothers" and of "Spartans" instead of "Lacedaemonians." Of course, the assumption that Jonathan's letter is authentic, despite all its peculiarities, entails that the Hasmonean chancellery composed it with a genuine belief in its potential political effectiveness. That, however, leaves us with two untenable options. The first strains the imagination by arguing that the peculiarities are not peculiar after all.<sup>19</sup> The second accepts as reasonable a certain cluelessness about diplomacy and Greek phraseology among the Hasmonean chancellery, to the extent of sending the Spartans, with earnest, respectful intent, a letter that the Spartans would have most likely considered ridiculous and insolent.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, if we acknowledge the dubious nature of the correspondence, we have to query the motive of the author of 1 Maccabees in choosing to cite it. Many suggestions have been raised in scholarly research in that regard, the most frequent being the author's desire to emphasize the attainment of international recognition, and hence the legitimation of the Hasmoneans.<sup>21</sup> Other possibilities

<sup>17</sup> For the minority, differing view, see Amitay, "The Correspondence," 80 n. 3. We should add to Amitay's list Solomon Zeitlin, in his introduction to Sidney Tedesche, *The First Book of Maccabees: An English Translation* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950) 46; James C. VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas: High Priests after the Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2004) 136–37, and Amitay himself.

<sup>18</sup> To the relevant bibliography in Amitay, "The Correspondence," 80 n. 4, we can add Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) 113–14. Another bibliographic list is provided in that regard (as well as in that of the previous note) by Linda Zollschan, *Rome and Judaea: International Law Relations, 162–100 BCE* (New York: Routledge, 2017) 270 n. 25.

<sup>19</sup> This is the approach of Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 447–62, and Amitay, "The Correspondence."

<sup>20</sup> Moses Hadas, *Hellenistic Culture: Fusion and Diffusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959) 87, Steven Weitzman, *Surviving Sacrilege: Cultural Persistence in Jewish Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005) 36, and Claude Eilers, "Diplomacy and the Integration of the Hasmonean State," in *Belonging and Isolation in the Hellenistic World* (ed. Sheila L. Ager and Reimer A. Faber; Phoenix Sup. 51; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012) 155–66, at 158, all believe that Areus's missive was fabricated in Jonathan's chancellery to facilitate a relationship with the Spartans, by providing justification for it. In short, it was a type of conventional, diplomatic fiction. The aforementioned improbabilities are not, of course, restricted to Areus's missive, but even when viewed alone, his missive is hardly a conventional diplomatic letter. Perhaps that is the reason why Stern, *Hasmonean Judaea*, 67 n. 11, rejected the notion that it was fabricated by Jonathan's chancellery. However, his suggestion that it was an earlier Jewish fabrication, which Jonathan used without a qualm, remains no less problematic.

<sup>21</sup> John C. Dancy, *A Commentary on I Maccabees* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1954) 165; Hadas, *Hellenistic Culture*, 86; Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 113; Osterloh, *The Reinvention*, 305; Julia Wilker, "Unabhängigkeit durch Integration. Zu den Jüdisch-römischen Beziehungen im 2. Jahrhundert v. Chr.," in *Die Septuaginta—Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten* (ed. Martin Karrer, Wolfgang Kraus, and Martin Meiser; WUNT 219; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 194–201, at 200; Amitay, "The Correspondence," 84–85; Francis Borchardt, *The Torah in I Maccabees: A Literary Critical Approach to the Text* (DCLS 19; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014) 138; Vasile Babota, *The Institution of the Hasmonean High Priesthood* (JSJSup 165; Leiden: Brill, 2014) 215; Michael Tilly, *I Makkabäer*

include a wish to convey Hasmonean continuity with the previous, Zadokite line of high-priests, the Oniads;<sup>22</sup> “to impress Hellenized Jews into accepting the Hasmonean regime,”<sup>23</sup> or “to prove the importance of the Jews within the world at large.”<sup>24</sup>

However, as Jonathan Goldstein stated, “a propagandistic forger aims to convince the recipients of his propaganda.”<sup>25</sup> Contrary to this statement, all the above explanations downplay the fact that the correspondence’s improbability is quite evident. Thus, they only shift the conspicuous incompetence in that regard from the Hasmonean chancellery—according to most scholars who view Jonathan’s letter as authentic—to the forger of the correspondence.

In conclusion, none of the explanations offered for the correspondence is compelling, whether or not it is viewed as authentic. A new perspective is required to solve this riddle.

## ■ 1 Maccabees’ Use of Fictive Letters and the Proposed Thesis

According to 1 Macc 10:70–73, a Seleucid general named Apollonius sent a message to Jonathan, goading him and urging him to fight on the coastal plain, rather than in the mountains, a terrain which afforded the Jews an advantage.<sup>26</sup> Contrary to tactical logic, Jonathan accepted this challenge and then proved that the Hasmonean army could defeat the Seleucid force on the plain, too, causing what remained of the Seleucid troops to flee to a nearby city, where they met their death. This course of events replicates a biblical scene—1 Kings 20:23–30. Thus, the episode accords with a dominant characteristic of 1 Maccabees: paraphrasing and alluding to biblical texts.<sup>27</sup> This trait goes beyond mere mimicry of biblical style, indicating, rather, that the author of 1 Maccabees intended that specific biblical scenes would resonate in

(HThKAT; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2015) 249.

<sup>22</sup> Claude Orrieux, “La ‘parenté’ entre Juifs et Spartiates,” in *L’étranger dans le monde grec* (ed. Raoul Lonis; Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1988) 169–91, at 177.

<sup>23</sup> Katzoff, “Jonathan and Late Sparta,” 489, and, following him, Viktor Kókay Nagy, “Die Beziehung der Makkabäer zu fremden Nationen—Die Bündnisse mit Rom und Sparta,” in *The Stranger in Ancient and Mediaeval Jewish Tradition* (ed. Géza G. Xeravtis and Jan Dušek; DCLS 4; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010) 107–17, at 110–12.

<sup>24</sup> Bremmer, “Spartans and Jews,” 58.

<sup>25</sup> Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 450.

<sup>26</sup> Israel Shatzman, *The Armies of the Hasmoneans and Herod* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991) 12: “The mountainous terrain did not allow the Seleucid army to take full advantage of its cavalry.”

<sup>27</sup> Bradford S. Hummel, *An Analysis of the Historiography of 1 Maccabees: A Key to Understanding the Background of the Hasmonean Period* (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1996) 32–65; Thomas Hieke, “The Role of ‘Scripture’ in the Last Words of Mattathias (1 Macc 2:49–70),” in *The Books of the Maccabees: History, Theology, Ideology* (ed. Géza G. Xeravtis and József Zsengellér; JSJSup 118; Leiden: Brill, 2007) 61–74; Arie van der Kooij, “The Claim of Maccabean Leadership and the Use of Scripture,” in *Jewish Identity and Politics between the Maccabees and Bar-Kokhba* (ed. Benedikt Eckhardt; JSJSup 155; Leiden: Brill, 2012) 29–49, at 44–47; Guy Darshan, “The Original Language of 1 Maccabees: A Reexamination,” *BN* 182 (2019) 91–110, at 101–4.

the minds of readers, thus placing the Hasmoneans in line with the relevant biblical tradition.<sup>28</sup> It also indicates that the author of 1 Maccabees envisaged a readership that would include Jews well versed in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>29</sup> This inference will further serve us below.

In 1 Macc 10:70–73, unlike the biblical model here, Apollonius’s belittling of the Jews’ military capabilities takes the form of a missive (or, at least, an oral message), whose fictiveness is noticeable.<sup>30</sup> I mention this missive because it joins another letter in 1 Maccabees (10:25b–45), which I have recently argued is a taunt to Demetrius I, a nemesis of the Hasmoneans, upon his downfall.<sup>31</sup> Fabrication of documents for rivals of the Hasmoneans that present these adversaries as risible is therefore a recurring feature of 1 Maccabees. The Jewish-Spartan correspondence may well constitute another such example, which was not intended to be taken as authentic, at least by the book’s knowledgeable readership. The question remains, however: Who is the object of scorn in this instance? I would like to pursue the possibility that this fictive correspondence with a fictive “brother” nation to the Jews is actually a taunt aimed at a real “brother nation” of the Jews, i.e., not the Spartans but the Samaritans.

## ■ Textual Analysis

### A. The Samaritan Clue

Let us focus on one sentence in the terse, four-line missive of King Areus of Sparta. The king declares: “your livestock and your property is ours and ours is yours” (12:23a). Timo Nisula regards it as a “rhetoric gesture of common things” and “a good example of the Hellenistic phraseology of friendship.” At the same time, he views the idiom of shared cattle and property as Semitic.<sup>32</sup> I wish to respond to both

<sup>28</sup> Katell Berthelot, “Judas Maccabeus’s Wars against Judaea’s Neighbours in 1 Maccabees 5: A Reassessment of the Evidence,” *Electrum: Journal of Ancient History* 21 (2014) 73–85, at 74, refers to Jeremy Corley, who coined the term “canonical assimilation” in a similar context: Jeremy Corley, “Canonical Assimilation in Ben Sira’s Portrayal of Joshua and Samuel,” in *Rewriting Biblical History: Essays on Chronicles and Ben Sira in Honor of Pancratius C. Beentjes* (ed. Jeremy Corley and Harm van Grol; DCLS 7; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011) 57–77. Recently, Dongbin Choi has termed this “scriptural evocation”: *The Use and Function of Scripture in 1 Maccabees* (London: T&T Clark, 2021).

<sup>29</sup> To follow Schwartz, “Israel and the Nations,” 36.

<sup>30</sup> Rappaport, *The First Book of Maccabees*, 265, and Bezalel Bar-Kochva, “Hellenistic Warfare in Jonathan’s Campaign near Azotos,” *Scripta Classica Israelica* 2 (1975) 83–96, at 90: “The letter cannot be authentic as is obvious from its formulas, language, and boasting.”

<sup>31</sup> Matan Orian, “The Temple Archive Used for the Fabrication of 1 Maccabees 10.25b–45,” *JQR* 108 (2018) 502–16.

<sup>32</sup> Nisula, “Time has passed,” 214. See also Wirgin, “Juda Maccabee’s,” 15: “The Spartans . . . as is well known, were not an agricultural or cattle-raising people who would be likely to have such a proverb”; and Osterloh, *The Reinvention*, 303, who admits that “The phrase does bear a distinctively biblical syntax” but suggests that the author of 1 Maccabees “invested it . . . with an archaizing biblical flavor.” For suggestions which are quite remote from the plain meaning of the text, see



parts of Nisula’s statement. First, regarding the “phraseology of friendship,” one has to admit that something appears innately wrong in the structure of this sentence. Take, for example, the known idiom of hospitality: “my house is your house.” If you reverse the order of the possessive pronouns and place the entire saying in the mouth of the guest, rather than the host, it has a very different meaning, one of covetousness and usurpation: “your house is my house.”<sup>33</sup>

Regarding the “Semitic” origin of the reference to shared cattle and property, there is indeed a single, similar expression in the Bible in the context of an alliance between two kings but, as would be expected, it is couched in the proper, tactful manner: “my horses are as your horses” (1 Kgs 22:4; 2 Kgs 3:7).<sup>34</sup>

However, there is also a single biblical example of the form of phrasing that we find in 1 Macc 12:23a, which reveals a greedy expectation of gaining property as a result of the proposed alliance. Moreover, this example is set in a highly relevant context, that is, one relating to the creation of an alliance between a foreign nation and Israel. Having just seen that paraphrasing and alluding to specific biblical texts is a literary convention in 1 Maccabees, let us compare the text under discussion of 1 Maccabees with this biblical reference. Given that the extant text of 1 Maccabees is a Greek translation from Hebrew, the two ancient Greek translations, i.e., the Septuagint and 1 Maccabees, lie at the heart of the following comparison:

<b>Gen 34:23a</b>	Hebrew	מקנהם וקנינם וכל בהמתם הלווא לנו הם
	English	Will not their livestock, their property, and all their beasts be ours?
	Greek (LXX)	τὰ κτήνη αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ τετράποδα οὐχ ἡμῶν ἔσται;
<b>1 Macc 12:23a</b>	Greek	τὰ κτήνη ὑμῶν καὶ ἡ ὑπαρξίς ὑμῶν ἡμῖν ἔστιν, καὶ τὰ ἡμῶν ὑμῖν ἔστιν.
	English	Your livestock and your property is ours and ours is yours.
	Hebrew (My suggested reconstruction)	מקנכם וקנינכם לנו הם ואשר לנו לכם הם

Certainly there are some differences. The possessive pronouns are in the third person plural in Gen 34:23a and in the second person in 1 Macc 12:23a; Gen 34:23a divides the livestock into two groups by adding “all their beasts,” and 1 Macc 12:23a

Wirgin, “Juda Maccabee’s,” 16: “Is it not likely that what is meant . . . is ‘investment and profit?’”; Goldstein, *1 Maccabees*, 457: “Areus could invite Jews to fill up the depleted Spartan ranks. Such, indeed, may be the meaning of vs. 23.” For the Semitic flavor of another phrase in Areus’s missive, the enquiry “about your peace” (12:22), see Amitay, “The Correspondence,” 93 n. 54.

<sup>33</sup> Compare with the enemy’s threat in 1 Kgs 20:3: “Your silver and gold are mine; your fairest wives and children also are mine” (RSV).

<sup>34</sup> Of course, unlike the sentence under discussion from Areus’s missive, here horses are agents of combat rather than property in general.

adds the reciprocal aspect of shared property (“ours is yours”).<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, even without suggesting that the Greek translator of 1 Maccabees was necessarily aware of the biblical reference made here, the close similarity between the two literal Greek translations from Hebrew appears to be a matter of fact.<sup>36</sup>

To state it unequivocally: the original Hebrew of 1 Maccabees in this sentence must have resonated in the mind of every reader familiar with the well-known biblical text of Gen 34, in which a proposed alliance between Israel and the Shechemites, conditioned upon the latter’s circumcision, sets the background for the killing of all the male Shechemites by Jacob’s sons. The popularity of this biblical tale in the Hellenistic period—below, we shall explore several references to Gen 34 in pertinent Jewish compositions—allows us to assume that many of 1 Maccabees’ intended readers were familiar with the text of Gen 34 and were thus able to decipher the literary encryption of the correspondence with the Spartans. The correspondence’s congruence with 1 Maccabees’ predilection for echoing specific biblical texts through paraphrase and allusion would further suggest that the author of this correspondence and the author of 1 Maccabees are one and the same.

However, why put the greed-motivated incentive for an alliance with Israel, voiced by the Shechemites in the famous biblical story of Gen 34, in the mouth of a Spartan king addressing the Jews? The answer is that at least in the Hellenistic period, if not earlier, Gen 34 was viewed by Jews as referring to the people of Shechem of their own time, i.e., the Samaritans.<sup>37</sup> The conclusion suggests itself: 1 Maccabees writes of Spartans but envisions Samaritans.

<sup>35</sup> The present participle (in neutral plural) ὑπάρχοντα carries the same meaning as the noun ὑπαρξίς, with both deriving from the verb ὑπάρχω, so this difference is insignificant. Most modern Hebrew translations of 1 Macc 12:23a translate ὑπάρχοντα as אֲשֶׁר רַכִּיתָ rather than קָנִין: Abraham Kahana, “1 Maccabees,” in *The Apocryphal Books* (ed. Abraham Kahana; 2 vols.; Tel Aviv: M’qoroth, 1937) 2:95–175, at 158; Elias Artom, “1 Maccabees,” in *The Apocryphal Books* (9 vols.; Tel Aviv: Yavneh, 1958) 1:8–97, at 87; Menahem Stern, *The Documents on the History of the Hasmonean Revolt* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1983) 112; Rappaport, *The First Book of Maccabees*, 288. Only the 19th-cent. translation by Seckel Isaac Fränkel, *Ketuvim Aḥaronim* (3rd ed.; Warsaw, 1885) 88, used קָנִין here. On the question of the familiarity of the translator of 1 Maccabees with the LXX, see Harry W. Ettelson, *The Integrity of 1 Maccabees* (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1925) 311–30; Bezalel Bar-Kochva, *Judas Maccabaeus: The Jewish Struggle against the Seleucids* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 169; and Darshan, “The Original Language,” 101–4.

<sup>36</sup> Compare with Josephus’s paraphrase of 1 Macc 12:23a, which is quite remote from the original text: τὰ τε ἡμέτερα ἴδια νομοῦμεν καὶ τὰ αὐτῶν κοινὰ πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔξομεν (We shall consider what is yours as our own, and what is ours we shall hold in common with you; *Ant.* 12.227).

<sup>37</sup> Magnar Kartveit, *The Origin of the Samaritans* (VTSup 128; Leiden: Brill, 2009) 199: “Gen 34 resonates in a number of texts from the third and second centuries B.C.E. . . . The amount of material shows that the rape of Dinah and the killing of the Shechemites had developed into a topos of contemporary ideology. . . . These texts brand the contemporary Shechemites with the acts committed by the Shechemites of Gen 34. What appears to be a re-telling of the old story is directed at the contemporary inhabitants of the city.” Moreover, John Collins quotes from H. G. Kippenberg, *Garizim und Synagoge* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971) 90: “The story of Genesis 34 became the Magna Carta of Jewish violence against the Samaritans” (John J. Collins, “The Epic of Theodotus and the

Credit is also due to Adolf Büchler, who, more than 120 years ago, compared the correspondence's statement to the effect that the Jews mention their brothers in their prayers (12:11), as well as the overall emphasis on brotherhood, with the opening letter of 2 Maccabees. The latter is addressed "to the Jewish brothers in Egypt" (1:1) and further declares that their Jewish brothers in Jerusalem and Judea are praying for them (1:6). Büchler therefore concluded that Jonathan's letter could only have been written to either Jews or Samaritans.<sup>38</sup>

### *B. The Enigma Resolved*

Note how the view of the Spartans as an alias for the Samaritans explains all the discrepancies in the text. First, the use of "brothers" in the correspondence rather than "kin," which seems strange in relation to the Spartans, makes perfect sense in relation to the Samaritans as descendants of the Ten Tribes. In fact, in another second- or even third-century BCE Jewish text referring to Gen 34, namely, the Aramaic Testament of Levi (1:2–3), the sons of Jacob offer the Shechemites the opportunity to become "brothers and friends" ([אחיך] ו[חבריך] . . . א[חיך]).<sup>39</sup> Evidently, this language is identical to that in the correspondence under discussion.

Second, as mentioned above, Jonathan's letter states that Areus's missive made "a clear reference to alliance and friendship" (12:8), whereas the missive merely states that the nations are related through Abraham.<sup>40</sup> If by employing "Spartans" the correspondence actually refers to the Samaritans, this incongruity is resolved, because it opens the possibility that the original Hebrew word ברית in 1 Macc 12:8 (or בעלי ברית in v. 14—compare with Gen 14:13) should probably not have been translated in the sense of a military alliance (συμμαχία) but, rather, as a covenant, as used in Amos 1:9, "the covenant of brothers" (LXX: διαθήκη ἀδελφῶν), or even the Abrahamic covenant of circumcision shared by Jews and Samaritans.<sup>41</sup>

Third, while implausible in relation to the Spartans, the statement to the effect that the Jews constantly mention their brothers during sacrifice and in prayer (12:11) is perfectly reasonable in relation to the Samaritans. As descendants of the Ten Tribes, it might be argued that they are included by implication in Jewish liturgy and holiday hymns, whenever the term "Children of Israel" appears.

Hellenism of the Hasmoneans," *HTR* 73 [1980] 91–104, at 98 n. 18).

<sup>38</sup> Adolf Büchler, *Die Tobiaden und die Oniaden im II. Makkabäerbuche und in der verwandten jüdisch-hellenistischen Litteratur* (Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1899) 136.

<sup>39</sup> Compare with Gen 34:16, 22. The Aramaic text is taken from Jonas C. Greenfield, Michael E. Stone, and Esther Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document: Edition, Translation, Commentary* (SVTP 19; Leiden: Brill, 2004) 56. See p. 19 regarding the date of the Aramaic Levi Document.

<sup>40</sup> Abraham's name may have "replaced" Jacob/Israel as the relevant ancestral father, because a reference to Jacob would have been outright absurd in the context of an alleged kinship with the Spartans. Alternatively, Abraham may have been mentioned in a reference to the "covenant of circumcision" practiced by both Jews and Samaritans.

<sup>41</sup> A possibility not discussed by Angelo Penna, "Διαθήκη ε συσθήκη nei libri dei Maccabei," *Bib* 46 (1965) 149–80, at 152–55.

Fourth, the use of שפרטנים / ספרטנים (if I may reconstruct the Hebrew of 1 Maccabees here) rather than לקדימונים could derive from the fact that the former is somewhat closer in spelling and pronunciation to שמרנים. The name “Samaritans,” following a biblical *hapax legomenon* (2 Kgs 17:29), appears in the New Testament and Josephus.<sup>42</sup> If, indeed, a certain similarity, in Hebrew, between Samaritans and Spartans underlies 1 Maccabees’ use of the latter term, it constitutes far earlier textual evidence for the use of the term “Samaritans” among Jews.

Fifth, Areus states that he found the reference to the two nations’ “brotherhood,” from the stock of Abraham, “in writing” (12:21). If the “Spartans” are actually Samaritans, the identity of this “writing” is clear: the Hebrew Bible.

### *C. An Allusion to the Gibeonites of the Book of Joshua or the Amorites of an “Addition” to the Book of Genesis?*

Perhaps Gen 34 is not the only biblical or extrabiblical text to which this correspondence alludes. Note that Jonathan’s statement that “the surrounding kings made war against us” (ἐπολέμησαν ἡμᾶς οἱ βασιλεῖς οἱ κύκλω ἡμῶν—12:13) is anachronistic in its use of “the surrounding kings.” Other than the Seleucids, the relevant nations and cities against which the Hasmoneans fought were not ruled by kings but by local chieftains or Seleucid officers.<sup>43</sup>

I can think of two biblical or extrabiblical traditions that might explain this use of “the surrounding kings” in the context of war. One tradition is that of Joshua’s wars and the Gibeonites. The phrase “the surrounding nations” appears four times in chapter 5 of 1 Maccabees (5:1, 5:10, 5:38, 5:57), which narrates the Hasmonean wars, under Judas Maccabeus, in Transjordan, the Galilee, and the Negev, as well as against the cities of Hebron and Azotus.<sup>44</sup> Jonathan Goldstein and Ernst Knauf observed that this chapter portrays Judas as Joshua.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, in chapters 9–11 of

<sup>42</sup> See József Zsengellér, “*Kutim or Samarites: A History of the Designation of the Samaritans,*” in *Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress of the Société d’Etudes Samaritaines, Helsinki, August 1–4 2000: Studies in Memory of Ferdinand Dexinger* (ed. Hasseb Shehadeh and Habib Tawa, with the collaboration of Reinhard Pummer; Paris: Geuthner, 2005) 87–104.

<sup>43</sup> See, however, the general reference to kings in 1 Macc 2:48, 3:7, 14:13b.

<sup>44</sup> The idiom also appears in a general sense in 1 Macc 1:11, 3:25, 12:53.

<sup>45</sup> Goldstein, *1 Maccabees*, 293; Ernst Exel Knauf, “Joshua Maccabaeus: Another Reading of 1 Maccabees 5,” in *‘Even God Cannot Change the Past’: Reflections on Seventeen Years of the European Seminar in Historical Methodology* (ed. Lester L. Grabbe; LHBOTS 663; London: T&T Clark, 2018) 203–11. This view is challenged by Berthelot, “Judas Maccabeus’s Wars,” suggesting that the biblical model in 1 Macc 5 is King Saul, following 1 Sam 14:47–48, and again in her book *In Search of the Promised Land? The Hasmonean Dynasty between Biblical Models and Hellenistic Diplomacy* (trans. Margaret Rigaud; Journal of Ancient Judaism. Supplements 24; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018) 102–9, where she argues for the lack of explicit references in 1 Macc 5 to the Book of Joshua. However, Berthelot herself admits that 1 Macc 5:4 alludes to Josh 23:13 (“Judas Maccabeus’s Wars,” 80). Furthermore, to the list provided by Knauf (p. 211) of the shared terminology between 1 Macc 5 and the Book of Joshua we can add v. 5:42, alluding to Josh 1:10 (Rappaport, *The First Book of Maccabees*, 179), v. 5:47, showing similarity to Josh 6:1 (Thomas R. Elßner, *Josua und seine Kriege in jüdischer und christlicher Rezeptionsgeschichte*

the Book of Joshua, we encounter consecutive wars with various surrounding—i.e., neighboring—kings. The text even exhibits similarity to Jonathan’s letter by stating that Israel won these wars because God fought for them (Josh 10:14, 42; compare with 1 Macc 12:15). Significantly, within this narrative in the Book of Joshua, there is a well-known episode describing how the Gibeonites approached Israel under false pretenses, seeking to form an alliance (תִּרְיָ = διαθήκη in the LXX to Josh 9:6, 7, 11, 14, 16). Perhaps by mentioning the wars with the surrounding kings and God’s aid in these wars, 1 Macc 12:13–15 is alluding to this biblical episode regarding the formation of a deceitful alliance with Israel.

The other tradition is that of the wars of Jacob and his sons in Samaria. Jubilees 34:1–9, the Testament of Judah (chapters 3–7), as well as the medieval rabbinic midrashim Yalkut Shimoni (to Gen 35:5) and Midrash Vayissa’u (chapter 2), preserve an extrabiblical tradition that explains why, contrary to Jacob’s expectation in Gen 34:30, the “surrounding cities” (LXX—αἱ πόλεις αἱ κύκλω αὐτῶν), mentioned in Gen 35:5, did not pursue Jacob’s sons following the massacre in Shechem. The explanation, relying on an otherwise obscure verse in Gen 48:22, is that Jacob and his sons actually fought against these Amorite cities and their kings and defeated them. As offered in research, and as can be expected from the context, the relevant cities lie in the vicinity of Shechem in Samaria. It was therefore suggested that this tradition represents an extra anti-Samaritan Jewish polemic, in addition to Gen 34.<sup>46</sup> Note that according to T. Jud. 7:7, and the rabbinic versions of the tradition, following the wars with the relevant kings, the Amorites/Samaritans begged Israel (Jacob) for peace. It is possible that the author of 1 Maccabees hints at that tradition in the context of a Samaritan offer of friendship made to the Hasmoneans.

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[Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008] 62 n. 218), and v. 5:10, alluding to Josh 10:6 (Dov Gera, *Judaea and Mediterranean Politics 219 to 161 B.C.E.* [BSJS 8; Leiden: Brill, 1998] 46 n. 44). Gera, by the way, suggests in this context that the letter in 1 Macc 5:10–13 is also “in all probability fictitious.”

<sup>46</sup> See Itzhak Hamitovsky, “The Jewish-Samaritan Territorial Controversy during the Hellenistic and Hasmonian Periods as Reflected in the Qumran Scrolls and the Pseudepigrapha,” *Meghillot: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls* 7 (2009) 43–70, at 54–58 (Hebrew); Martha Himmelfarb, “Midrash Vayissa’u,” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures* (ed. Richard Bauckham, James R. Davila, and Alexander Panayotov; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013) 143–59, at 143–48; Cana Werman, *The Book of Jubilees: Introduction, Translation, and Interpretation* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2015) 445–48 (Hebrew). The relevant tradition of Midrash Vayissa’u also appears in the Chronicles of Jerahmeel (also known as Sefer ha-Zikhronot, the Book of Memories). See Eli Yassif, *The Book of Memory, that is, The Chronicles of Jerahme’el* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2001) 137–40 (Hebrew).

## ■ Scorn for Jonathan, alongside the Samaritans?

The correspondence's scorn of the Samaritans, veiled as Spartans, is therefore manifest in the following innuendoes and messages:

1. Recall the reasons that propelled the biblical Shechemites into a bond with Israel (as narrated in Gen 34:21–23)—i.e., Israel's richness (and daughters).
2. As Jews, we possess the same holy books ("in our hands"), so the Samaritans need not remind us about this "brotherhood" of ours. We remember it constantly in our liturgy (whenever we mention the Children of Israel). However, where were the Samaritan "brothers" during our recent wars?<sup>47</sup>
3. With God's help, we overcame the surrounding kings. Only then was this bond evoked, thus recalling the Gibeonites who approached the victorious Joshua deceptively, or the Amorites/Samaritans who approached the victorious Israel (Jacob) after defeat at his hands and those of his sons.

Assuming, however, that the decision by the author of 1 Maccabees to place the correspondence in the context of Jonathan's high priesthood is not arbitrary, we should ask whether Jonathan is also being criticized for responding to Areus's missive and offering to renew the ties between the two nations. Note that after receiving the (likewise fabricated) letter of Demetrius I, Jonathan and the people rejected "Demetrius's offers" unconditionally (10:46). It is true that in Gen 34, 1 Maccabees' relevant biblical model, Jacob's sons also responded to the Shechemites' offer (vv. 8–12). However, Gen 34:13 makes it clear that this was a ruse.

In comparison, Jonathan's letter portrays him as an earnest negotiator, albeit unenthusiastic: he suggests a renewal of the (ties of) brotherhood and friendship (12:10, 17) but then downplays the value of alliance and friendship, compared with the "holy books" (12:9),<sup>48</sup> and adds that he writes only to prevent the two nations from becoming estranged (12:10).<sup>49</sup> Likewise, he points out that the Jews constantly

<sup>47</sup> Compare with Seth Schwartz, "John Hyrcanus I's Destruction of the Gerizim Temple and Judean-Samaritan Relations," *Jewish History* 7 (1993) 9–25, at 16: "It is not unlikely that some inhabitants of southern Samaria rose, or were thought by the Seleucids likely to do so."

<sup>48</sup> Somewhat obscurely, the text refers to the "holy books," which the Jews hold "in their hands," as their "encouragement," i.e., not "source of encouragement." Josephus paraphrased it as follows (*Ant.* 13.167): "We need no such evidence (for our kinship) since it has already been made certain through our holy books." The Bible, of course, does not suggest kinship with the Spartans. Research debates whether Josephus used the Hebrew text of 1 Maccabees alongside its Greek translation: see Ezra Zion Melamed, "Josephus and Maccabees I: A Comparison," *Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies* 1 (1951) 122–30 (Hebrew); Louis H. Feldman, "Josephus's Portrayal of the Hasmoneans," in *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period: Studies in Memory of Morton Smith* (ed. Fausto Parente and Joseph Sievers; Leiden: Brill, 1994) 41–68, at 41 n. 3; Etienne Nodet, "Josèphe et 1 Maccabées," *RB* 122 (2015) 507–39; Darshan, "The Original Language," 94.

<sup>49</sup> Note, however, the irony in the wish to prevent the two nations from becoming estranged, when expressed in a reply to a letter that was left unanswered for more than a century.

mention their brothers in their liturgy and rejoice in their glory (12:11–12), but then he adds, “heaven is our aid” (12:15).

It should be recalled that 1 Maccabees buttresses the dynastic claims of Simon’s descendants. A softened reproach, therefore, of Jonathan’s willingness to negotiate with the Spartans/Samaritans would accord with a certain ambivalence of 1 Maccabees toward Simon’s brother and immediate predecessor as high priest and Hasmonean leader. On the one hand, 1 Maccabees mentions Jonathan in the honorary decree for Simon (14:30), in comparison with Judas, who is not mentioned specifically. On the other hand, as pointed out by Daniel Schwartz, this reference actually belittles Jonathan by summing up his 18 years of military, political, and religious leadership in the following sentence (note the wordplay by using the same verb twice): “Jonathan gathered his people and became high priest and was gathered unto his people” (14:30).<sup>50</sup> Also, at face value, 1 Maccabees attempts to exonerate Simon from sending Jonathan’s sons to Tryphon (13:17–19), to their death. However, as pointed out by Uriel Rappaport and taken further by Johannes Bernhardt and Benedikt Eckhardt, this attempt is not very convincing, and even yields the impression that Simon seized the opportunity to clear the way for his sons, perhaps as far as cooperating with Tryphon.<sup>51</sup>

### ■ 1 Maccabees’ Replacement of Samaritans by Spartans and the Spartan reply to Simon (14:20–23)

From a literary and structural point of view, once the author of 1 Maccabees decided to blur the contact with the Samaritans by replacing them with the Spartans, he saw no better place for it than in the context of Jonathan’s international relations, that is, along with his renewal of the Hasmonean ties with Rome. His choice of the Spartans, however, of all possible foreign nations, had three possible incentives. First, he was apparently aware of the (diasporic) Jewish-imagined notion of kinship between the Spartans and the Jews, which also appears, as mentioned, in 2 Macc 5:9. Second, Sparta was a foreign nation on a par with Rome, in the sense that it was somewhat remote, yet renowned and familiar. Third, as already suggested, perhaps a certain similarity between the names “Spartans” and “Samaritans” appealed to him.

After designating the Spartans as an alias for the Samaritans, the author of 1 Maccabees sought a known Spartan leader to whom he might ascribe the

<sup>50</sup> Daniel R. Schwartz, “1 Maccabees 14 and the History of the Hasmonean State,” in *Die Makkabäer* (ed. Friedrich Avemarie et al.; WUNT 382; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) 69–84, at 77. However, when the people were fearful, after Jonathan was taken captive—compare with their parallel distress after Judas’s death (9:27)—Simon too, “gathered the people” (13:2). Perhaps, therefore, this act conveys a deep sense of leadership and moral comfort.

<sup>51</sup> Rappaport, *The First Book of Maccabees*, 272, 296–97, 317–18, 347; Bernhardt, *Die Jüdische Revolution*, 358–60; Benedikt Eckhardt, “Reading the Middle Maccabees,” in *The Middle Maccabees: Archaeology, History, and the Rise of the Hasmonean Kingdom* (ed. Andrea M. Berlin and Paul J. Kosmin; ABS 28; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021) 249–362, at 359: “At no point . . . does Simon actually fight Tryphon.”

initial contact with the Jews. He opted for the illustrious Areus, thus creating a considerable hiatus between this contact and Jonathan's reply. At the same time, it is questionable whether the author of 1 Maccabees was necessarily aware of the fact that the interval between Areus's death and Jonathan's alleged reply was that long, namely, 121 years. It nevertheless remains that the Spartans, i.e., the Samaritans, apparently initiated the contact with the Jews. The last identity left for the author of 1 Maccabees to allocate was that of the high priest who ostensibly received Areus's missive. The author chose Onias, a recurring name among the high priests of the third century BCE.

1 Maccabees' basic decision in this context, however, was to allude to the Samaritans as Spartans, rather than mock them directly, as it does in the fabricated letter that it attributes to Demetrius I (10:25b). In reply, it could be argued that Gen 34 represented for the author of 1 Maccabees a biblical model for an implicit criticism of the Samaritans in a story about a different national group (the Shechemites). That being said, the above-mentioned criticism of Jonathan may have posed a more practical reason for this disguise. Namely, the fact that the author camouflaged that criticism may disclose misgivings about openly criticizing Jonathan. Once the Samaritan affair was thus encrypted, however, the author must have realized that the correspondence would have two distinct groups of readers. The first group consists of those who would grasp the reference to the Samaritans through the allusion to Gen 34 and, therefore, also sense the criticism of Jonathan—albeit, slightly mitigated for those readers by presenting Jonathan as unenthusiastic about the alliance. The second group consists of those who would not grasp the reference to the Samaritans, and thus regard this episode as actually acclaiming Jonathan's international achievements. For such readers, Jonathan's distinct lack of enthusiasm, along with the many other incongruities in the text, remained a puzzle.

Let us now turn to the final letter of the correspondence, the "Spartan reply" to Simon. In my view, it strengthens the impression of two distinguished, intended readerships.

This "Spartan reply" is but a clerical note, which evinces no knowledge of any former or special relationship with the Jews.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, it contains no response to the content of the suggested Hasmonean offer of a renewal of friendship (1 Macc 14:22—*φιλία*—i.e., neither brotherhood nor kinship).<sup>53</sup> It is as if the author of 1 Maccabees wanted to checkmark a "Spartan" letter to Simon, regardless of its content. Indeed, the honorary decree for Simon—an authentic document cited

<sup>52</sup> See Burkhart Cardauns, "Juden und Spartaner. Zur hellenistisch-jüdischen Literatur," *Hermes* 95 (1967) 317–24, at 321; Gruen, "Jewish-Spartan," 158; and Bremmer, "Spartans and Jews," 56: "The letter is a concoction of Seleucid terminology, Jewish vocabulary and bad Greek—hardly the characteristics we would expect in a Spartan letter."

<sup>53</sup> Whereas the text of the "Spartan reply" does not mention brotherhood, the word "brothers" (*ἀδελφοί*) is awkwardly inserted into its opening greetings (14:20). The same term is also inserted in v. 14:40, in reference to the Roman view of the Jews, despite its absence from any Roman letter cited by 1 Maccabees.



by 1 Maccabees—does not mention the Spartans in referring to the international recognition of Simon (14:38–40). Clearly, this “Spartan reply” cannot be read as a clandestine criticism of the Samaritans. Therefore, how can we explain it? The answer is that it served those readers who were unaware of the hidden scorn in Jonathan’s letter to the Spartans. Since Jonathan reached out to both Rome and Sparta (12:1–23), the Roman acknowledgment of Simon’s succession of Jonathan (and Judas—14:17–18) had to be accompanied by a similar acknowledgment on the part of Sparta. Otherwise, Simon would have been presented as falling short of Jonathan, in terms of his international reputation.

### ■ The Historical Plausibility and Implications of a Samaritan-Hasmonean Contact

Jonathan’s letter attests to a certain degree of confidence on the part of the Hasmoneans, declaring that they had humbled their enemies (12:15). Moreover, 1 Macc 12 opens by stating that Jonathan saw that time was working in his favor (12:1). Indeed, according to 1 Maccabees’ narrative, Jonathan sent his letter to the Spartans after gaining the recognition of Ptolemaic Egypt,<sup>54</sup> as well as gaining key territories through military force (for example, the capture of Beth-Zur—1 Macc 11:66) and by exploiting recurring struggles between different contenders to the Seleucid throne through international negotiations. An example of the latter are the three districts, formerly part of Samaria, which the Hasmoneans received from Demetrius II (1 Macc 11:34). It is not unreasonable to assume that, at this point, the Samaritans had a stronger incentive to reevaluate their interests in the Hasmonean-Seleucid conflict. We can also guess that it was in Jonathan’s strategic interest not to turn the Samaritans into direct rivals. This concern shifted when 1 Maccabees was composed (per consensus) under Hyrcanus,<sup>55</sup> thus triggering the ironic presentation of the correspondence.

Regarding possible implications to be drawn out of this ironic correspondence for the date of 1 Maccabees, I can only point out that the thought of an alliance

<sup>54</sup> On the relations of the Hasmoneans with Ptolemaic Egypt, see Menahem Stern, “The Relations between the Hasmonean Kingdom and Ptolemaic Egypt, in View of the International Situation during the 2nd and 1st Centuries B.C.E.,” *Zion* 50 (1985) 81–106 (Hebrew). Christelle Fischer-Bovet, “The Machinations of the Ptolemaic State in Its Relationship with Judea (160–104 BCE),” in *The Middle Maccabees* (ed. Berlin and Kosmin) 293–310, warns against exaggerating the practical importance of these relations but ignores 1 Macc 11:60, attesting to the favorable relations between Jonathan and pro-Ptolemaic Ashkelon.

<sup>55</sup> On the various dates offered for the composition of 1 Maccabees within the last third of the 2nd cent. BCE, see Arnaldo Momigliano, “The Date of the First Book of Maccabees,” in *L’Italie préromaine et la Rome républicaine. Mélanges offerts à Jacques Heurgon* (2 vols.; Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1976) 1:657–61; David Williams, “Recent Research in 1 Maccabees,” *CurBS* 9 (2001) 169–84, at 173–74; Rappaport, *The First Book of Maccabees*, 60–61; Tilly, *1 Makkabäer*, 48; Schwartz, *1 Maccabees*, 7–8; Bernhardt, *Die Jüdische Revolution*, 42.

with the Samaritans would have been more ironic after their actual defeat and the destruction of their temple by Hyrcanus.<sup>56</sup>

## ■ Brotherhood and Resentment Reconciled

After suggesting that the correspondence under discussion derides the Samaritans, we must address its reference to them as “brothers.” Apparently, there was no inherent contradiction between this usage and the prevailing Jewish hostility toward them. Indeed, several Jewish sources from the Hellenistic period, and the second-century BCE, in particular, exhibit resentment toward the Samaritans:<sup>57</sup>

1. Whereas Gen 34:7ba reads: *כי נבלה עשה בישראל* “for he (Shechem) had wrought villainy in Israel,” T. Levi 7:2–3a terms the city of Shechem “a city of fools” (πόλις ἄσυνέτων) and explains: *ὅτι ὡσεὶ τις γλευῦσαι μωρὸν οὕτως ἐγλευῦσαμεν αὐτοῦς ὅτι καίγε ἀφροσύνην ἐπραξάν ἐν Ἰσραήλ*, “because as one mocks a fool, so we mocked them, for they had truly wrought folly in Israel.”<sup>58</sup>
2. Ben Sira 50:25–26: *עם איננו עם + גוי נבל הדר בשכם* = not a nation + a villainous nation that dwells in Shechem.<sup>59</sup>
3. 4Q371 1 + 4Q372 1 line 11 + 20: *עם אויב + נבלים* = villains + an enemy nation.
4. 11Q14 2 line 1: *[ל] הגוי הנבל* = the villainous nation.

<sup>56</sup> Dated ca. 112/111 BCE by Jonathan Bourgel, “The Destruction of the Samaritan Temple by John Hyrcanus: A Reconsideration,” *JBL* 135 (2016) 505–23, and ca. 110–107 BCE by Israel Shatzman, “The Expansionist Policy of John Hyrcanus and His Relations with Rome,” in *Judaea Sotia—Judaea Capta* (ed. Gianpaolo Urso; Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2012) 29–77.

<sup>57</sup> The references are taken from the following textbooks: Moshe Z. Segal, *The Complete Ben-Sira. With an Introduction and Commentaries* (2nd rev. ed.; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1958) 348–49 (Hebrew); Elisha Qimron, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: The Hebrew Writings* (3 vols; Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2010–2014) 2:78; *Qumran Cave 11.II: 11Q2–18, 11Q20–31* (ed. Florentino G. Martínez, Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, and Adam S. van der Woude; DJD 23; Oxford: Clarendon, 1998) 249; Marinus De Jonge, *Testamenta XII Patriarcharum* (2nd ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1970) 14; Carl R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors, Volume II: Poets* (SBLTT 30/Pseudepigrapha Series 12; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989) 123, 192–93, 197.

<sup>58</sup> As noted by James Kugel, “The Story of Dinah in the ‘Testament of Levi,’” *HTR* 85 (1992) 1–34, at 24, while the rape of Dinah was, of course, far beyond mere folly, the text here explains, “As a result of the rape the sons of Jacob ‘mocked’ the Shechemites.” This interpretation of נבלה (villainy) as foolishness follows the LXX to Deut 32:21, where נבל is translated as ἄσυνετος (נהלה) in Gen 34:7 is translated in the LXX as ἄσχημος, shame). It may also draw upon the name of Shechem’s father in Gen 34, Hamor, i.e., an ass in Hebrew. This is suggested by Philo, calling Shechem the son of folly (ὁ ἔγγονος ἀνοίας; *Mut.* 193), and hence stating that he practiced folly (ἀφροσύνην ἐπιτηδεύων; *Migr.* 224).

<sup>59</sup> Ben Sira’s reference to the Samaritans as “not a nation” follows Deut 32:21, which calls a villain nation “not a nation.” In the LXX translation of Ben Sira, from the late 2nd cent. BCE, נבל is translated in this verse as μωρός (as in the above-cited text from the Testament of Levi).

5. The epic poem of Theodotus, fragment 7 (Eusebius, *PE* 9.22.9b), refers to the people of Shechem as “godless (ἄσεβεις), who are engaged in deadly deeds (λοιγία ἔργα).”<sup>60</sup>

At the same time, the ethnic brotherhood of the Samaritans and the Jews appears in both 1 and 2 Maccabees, as well as in Josephus.<sup>61</sup> They all mention that the Seleucids, under Antiochus IV (2 Macc 5:23, 6:2; *Ant.* 12.257–264) and Demetrius II (1 Macc 11:34), considered the Samaritans to be part of the nation (τὸ γένος—2 Macc 5:22) of the Jews (2 Macc 6:1) and that the two communities were mainly distinguished by the temples where they worshiped—either in Jerusalem or on Mount Gerizim.<sup>62</sup> The fact that these Jewish sources do not criticize the Seleucid view suggests that this stance was also acceptable to Jews.<sup>63</sup> However, if the correspondence in question refers to the Samaritans, this perspective is no longer inferred solely through the absence of any Jewish objection to the Seleucid position in the texts of 1 and 2 Maccabees and Josephus. In other words, contrary to the previous “argument from silence” in that regard, Jonathan’s letter could be seen as explicitly acknowledging the Samaritans’ brotherhood with the Jews.

Jonathan Bourgel suggests that Ben Sira’s reference to the Samaritans as “not a nation” (50:25) also indicates a perception of the Samaritans as not entirely separate from the Jews.<sup>64</sup> Bourgel, furthermore, posits in that light the destruction of the Samaritan temple by John Hyrcanus and the Hasmonean wish to restrict the worship of the Samaritans to the Jerusalem temple, that is, as indicative of a Jewish perception of the Samaritans as Israelites.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Research debates whether Theodotus was a Samaritan (which would explain his reference, in fragment 1, to Shechem as a holy city) or a Jew, in light of the malevolence he attributes to the Shechemites. However, Reinhard Pummer argues that a Samaritan would have identified himself with the sons of Jacob, rather than with the ancient Canaanite inhabitants of Shechem (“Genesis 34 in Jewish Writings of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods,” *HTR* 75 [1982] 177–88, at 183).

<sup>61</sup> Notwithstanding that Josephus, following the Bible (2 Kgs 17:24, 30–31; Ezra 4:2), also stresses the alien ethnic background of the Samaritans (*Ant.* 9.288–290, 11.85, 302). On Josephus’s view of the Samaritans, see Reinhard Pummer, *The Samaritans in Flavius Josephus* (TSAJ 129; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), and Magnar Kartveit, “Josephus on the Samaritans: His *Tendenz* and Purpose,” in *Samaria, Samaritans, Samaritans: Studies on Bible, History and Linguistics* (ed. József Zsengellér; SJ 66; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011) 109–20.

<sup>62</sup> The Samaritan view is reflected in two inscriptions from the Aegean island of Delos, dating to 250–175 and 150–50 BCE, respectively, in which the dedicators of the inscriptions refer to themselves as, “the Israelites who make offerings to holy Argarizein (Mount Gerizim).” See Shemaryahu Talmon, “A Masada Fragment of Samaritan Origin,” *IEJ* 47 (1997) 220–32, at 226–29.

<sup>63</sup> Jonathan A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 41A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983) 261; and Daniel R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees* (CEJL; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008) 264: “It seems that it must also have been our author’s position, for he made no effort . . . to distance himself from it.”

<sup>64</sup> Jonathan Bourgel, “Brethren or Strangers? Samaritans in the Eyes of Second-Century B.C.E. Jews,” *Bib* 98 (2017) 382–408, at 386–88.

<sup>65</sup> Bourgel, “The Destruction,” 517.

## ■ Conclusion

The implausibility of the Hasmonean-Spartan correspondence suggests that it was not intended to be taken literally. This observation pulls the rug out from under the binary (and unsatisfactory) view of Jonathan's letter in research: either as an incompetent and unconvincing fabrication, designed to enhance the prestige of the Hasmoneans/Jews, or as an authentic diplomatic initiative, notwithstanding its many inconsistencies and irregularities that would have been far more likely to thwart any possible relationship with the Spartans than to establish one.

The resemblance of Areus's offer of alliance to the LXX text of Gen 34:23a, in both language and the unusual tactless construction, suggests a taunt at the Samaritans. Following this keystone, the entire enigma is decoded, and all the otherwise seemingly discordant elements of Jonathan's letter fall into place, aligning in one direction.

Thus, the use of *אחים וחברים* is identical to the reference to the Samaritans, found in the Aramaic Testament of Levi; the constant references in Jewish liturgy to the Children of Israel include the Samaritans, as descendants of the Ten Tribes; the Bible emerges as the "writing" that attests to the brotherhood of the two nations; and, finally, the *ברית* between them is a covenant rather than a military alliance. Even the choice of "Spartans," rather than "Lacedaemonians," may have been designed to help grasp the allusion to the Samaritans. An underlying sarcasm toward the Samaritans is consistent with their negative image and portrayal in other Jewish texts of the Hellenistic period and the second century BCE in particular, the implicit (and, if I am correct, now explicit) recognition of their ethnic brotherhood notwithstanding.

Rather than being a poorly crafted document, whether fabricated or authentic, Jonathan's letter presents an ingenious work of fiction. Like other ironical, fake documents in 1 Maccabees—i.e., the letter of Demetrius I and Apollonius's message to Jonathan—it was designed to entertain by satirical criticism of a contact, apparently made under Jonathan, with the Jews' authentic ethnic brothers, the Samaritans. Moreover, in this text the author successfully combines two literary devices, common in 1 Maccabees: paraphrase of biblical texts and the fabrication of letters. Congruence with these two attributes in 1 Maccabees strongly suggests that the author of this specious correspondence and that of 1 Maccabees are one and the same.

However, unlike the letter of Demetrius I and Apollonius's message to Jonathan, here, the identity of the non-Jew approaching the Jews is veiled. Rather than a Samaritan (a real ethnic brother), he is depicted as a Spartan (a fictive, ethnic brother). My suggestion is that this disguise resulted from the author's reluctance to criticize Jonathan directly. Under Simon's son, Hyrcanus, an alliance with the Samaritans was no longer advantageous to the Hasmoneans, perhaps even risible, if indeed 1 Maccabees was composed after Hyrcanus subdued them. However, openly criticizing Jonathan for a past attempt of negotiation with the Samaritans

was apparently still a far too sensitive move for the author of 1 Maccabees. This suggestion also accords with the book's ambivalence toward Jonathan. However, as a result of the disguise of the Samaritans as "Spartans," two readerships have been envisioned by the author: those who, aided by the biblical paraphrase, would grasp the irony, and those who would not. The improbable "Spartan" letter to Simon appears to serve the latter readership.

Deciphering the enigma of the correspondence with the "Spartans" offers a glimpse into the political leadership of Jonathan, who overcame past resentments in negotiating with his rivals, the Seleucids, and apparently adopted a similar approach toward the Samaritans. This leads us to wonder whether the relationship between the two brother nations might have turned out differently, had he not been killed shortly thereafter.

## ■ Appendix: An Insight into the Literary Nature of 1 Maccabees

### *A. Laughs within Serious Historiography?*

Irony and wit are not absent from ancient Jewish historical fiction, as demonstrated by Erich Gruen.<sup>66</sup> He focused, in particular, on humor in works relating to the lives of Jews as ethnic and religious minority communities in the Diaspora, beginning with the Book of Esther. While 1 Maccabees, too, recounts the deliverance of a small ethnic group from a hostile foreign power (as well as from the surrounding nations), it was composed and compiled in the independent, expanding Jewish state of Judea. Its lampooning of the Hasmoneans' foes, therefore, probably does not, "open an avenue into the mentality of Jews *adapting* to a world of alien culture and Gentile overlords."<sup>67</sup>

What stymied research from realizing the extent of the irony in 1 Maccabees appears to be the fact that modern readers rigidly categorize this composition as "history"—whether fabricated or authentic. Undoubtedly, a considerable gap exists between 1 Maccabees and ancient Jewish works of evident pseudo-history, such as the Book of Esther. True, Gruen adds that "even serious historiography (as in 2 Maccabees) could be enlivened by novel touches that slipped into comedy,"<sup>68</sup> but his choice of 2 Maccabees as an example of serious ancient Jewish historiography embellished with humor only strengthens the case for overlooking the humor in 1 Maccabees. The reason is that 2 Maccabees' blatant penchant for overdramatization, graphic description, exaggeration, and falsification has contributed to the low regard for its historical value, and therefore, in light of its

<sup>66</sup> Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002) 135–81.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 136 (italics added).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

habitual alignment against 1 Maccabees, reinforced the perception of the latter as a work of history of more serious caliber.<sup>69</sup>

*B. Varying Degrees of Pseudo-Documentarism: Another Comparison with 2 Maccabees*

To be sure, 1 Maccabees' humor is not straightforward, being mainly expressed through ostensibly official documents.<sup>70</sup> As such, it may be termed pseudo-documentarism, following the definition of Karen Ní Mheallaigh: "A strategy in which an author claims—with varying degrees of irony—to have discovered an authentic document which he transmits to his readers."<sup>71</sup> Mheallaigh, however, examined the use of allegedly authentic documents in ancient fiction, whereas 1 Maccabees represents the use of fictional and ironical documents in ancient historiography. Arguably, this type of pseudo-documentarism is harder to detect, because documents cited in a historical work are presented as "hard evidence" that did not pass through the historian's interpretative, biased prism. However, ancient standards of historical "accuracy" differed in that respect. In the words of Angelos Chaniotis: "[Greek] historians used fictitious orations and constructed documents in order to vivify the historical narrative. The fabrication of a document corresponds to the principle of *enargeia* (vividness) that characterizes Greek oratory and historiography."<sup>72</sup> Perhaps, therefore, an ancient audience of Jewish historiography, such as 1 Maccabees, would have also been less surprised than modern readers at its literary license through the use of ironic, fictitious documents. There are, of course, differences of degree in that respect. It is sufficient to compare, in that context, the correspondence under discussion with a fake letter in 2 Maccabees,

<sup>69</sup> To follow Lawrence H. Schiffman, "1 Maccabees," in *Outside the Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture* (ed. Louis H. Feldman et al.; 3 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2013) 3:2769–2831, at 2770. See also Joseph Sievers, *The Hasmoneans and their Supporters: From Mattathias to the Death of John Hyrcanus I* (SFSHJ 6; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) 10. On the topos of exaggeration in 2 Macc, see Gary Morrison, "The Composition of II Maccabees: Insights Provided by a Literary topos," *Bib* 90 (2009) 564–72.

<sup>70</sup> There is also less sophisticated and more straightforward humor in 1 Macc, such as the wordplay in 14:30, mentioned in n. 50 above, or the one in 13:34b, combining the plural term טריפות (*trifot*)—Terephah is an animal torn by a beast of prey, rendering its meat impure according to Jewish law—with the name Tryphon, another Seleucid rival of the Hasmoneans; see Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 477. This type of wordplay also appears in the Bible, 1 Macc's source of inspiration and imitation; for example, 1 Sam 25:25aγ: "Naval is his name, and Nevalah is with him." Of course, the name Naval means "noble," but Nevalah is villainy. See further: Jeev Weisman, *Political Satire in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1996) 26–28 (Hebrew).

<sup>71</sup> Karen Ní Mheallaigh, "Pseudo-Documentarism and the Limits of Ancient Fiction," *AJP* 129 (2008) 403–31.

<sup>72</sup> Angelos Chaniotis, "Archival Research, Formulaic Language, and Ancient Forgeries of Legal Documents," in *AEQN: Studies in Honor of Ronald S. Stroud* (ed. Angelos Matthaiou and Nikolaos Papazarkadas; Athens: Greek Epigraphic Society, 2015) 669–90, at 683.

allegedly written by Antiochus IV on his deathbed (9:19–27). The content of this letter is so preposterous that its pointed satire is incontestable.<sup>73</sup>

In conclusion, despite the distinct sophistication of the ironical letters in I Maccabees, and the encrypted correspondence under discussion in particular, they appear to bolster David Williams's advice: "Scholars who approach I Maccabees should be open to considerations of literary artistry within the book, in addition to the historical information which it provides."<sup>74</sup> Indeed, the cloaked sarcasm in this correspondence reveals an additional dimension of the author's artful use of biblical texts and biblical models, and it deepens our understanding of the literary creativity embedded in this important historical composition.

<sup>73</sup> See Christian Habicht, "Royal Documents in 2 Maccabees," *HSCP* 80 (1976) 1–18; Victor Parker, "The Letters in II Maccabees: Reflexions on the Book's Composition," *ZAW* 119 (2007) 386–402, at 390–400; Robert Doran, *2 Maccabees: A Critical Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012) 189–98, 223–27; Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 361–62; Tobias Nicklas, "Der Historiker als Erzähler. Zur Zeichnung des Seleukidenkönigs Antiochus in 2 Makk. IX," *VT* 52 (2002) 80–92; idem, "Irony in 2 Maccabees," in *The Books of the Maccabees* (ed. Xeravits and Zsengellér; n. 27 above), 101–11, at 106–8; Nisula, "Time has passed," 209–10, 215–17; George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006) 102–4; Gruen, *Diaspora*, 178–79.

<sup>74</sup> David S. Williams, "Narrative Art in I Maccabees VI 1–17," *VT* 49 (1999) 109–18, at 118.