

THE FORMATION OF THE THIRD BOOK OF MACCABEES

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In this paper I shall study the coalescence of sources in the Third Book of Maccabees. In section I. an outline of the narrative of 3 Maccabees will be given. It will appear from this sketch that the author combined blocks of narrative material of various provenance. Subsequently it will be suggested that the author used primarily two sources: the legend connected to a liberation festival annually celebrated by the Jews of Alexandria and Egypt (section II.), and the story of Heliodorus as known from 2 Maccabees 3 (section III.). Next, in section IV., the way in which these two stories were combined and adapted will be discussed. In section V., the possible reasons why the author composed 3 Maccabees in this way are investigated. Section VI. contains a summary.

The festival legend in 3 Macc. 3-7 is also known from Josephus, *Contra Apionem* II 53-55, and their interrelationship has been the subject of earlier studies. The connections between Second and Third Maccabees, however, have not yet been thoroughly investigated from a literary-critical point of view.¹

¹ C.W. Emmet, "The Third Book of Maccabees", in: R.H. Charles (ed.), *APOT* I, London 1913, pp. 155-173, esp. pp. 156-157, has listed a large number of similarities between 2 and 3 Maccabees, but refrained from drawing conclusions: "The impression left is that both books belong to the same school of thought, and probably to the same period"; cf. M. Hadas, *The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees*, New York 1953, p. 12, and still H. Anderson, "3 Maccabees", in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* II, London 1985, pp. 509-529, esp. pp. 515-516. E.J. Bickermann, in: *Paulys Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft* XIV,1, Stuttgart 1928, cols. 797-800; col. 798 states positively that 3 Maccabees depends on Jason of Cyrene or on 2 Maccabees.

The two books describe in remarkably similar ways the entrance of the temple (and its consequences) by Heliodorus and Ptolemy Philopator respectively. As far as this part of the story is concerned, scholars have mainly focused the debate on the historical trustworthiness of 3 Maccabees.² For that reason, I suspect, the possibility has been neglected that the author of 3 Maccabees invented this story taking 2 Maccabees as his lead.³

This study is restricted to the composition of the two sources used in 3 Maccabees. I shall not enter into the question of the influences on the author of 3 Maccabees that were possibly exerted by Esther, the Greek Book of Esther, and the Letter of Pseudo-Aristeas.⁴

A study of the relationships between 2, 3, and 4 Maccabees, as well as stories of temple robberies elsewhere in antiquity, was made by N. Stokholm, "Zur Überlieferung von Heliodor, Kuturnahhunte und anderen missglückten Tempelräubern", *Studia theologica* 22 (1968), pp. 1-28. Stokholm's method and conclusions, however, are most unsatisfactory.

² Willrich, "Der historische Kern des III. Makkabäerbuches", *Hermes* 39 (1904), pp. 244-258, pp. 244-246, holds Josephus' version of the festival legend to be more original than the version of 3 Maccabees. According to Willrich, however, Josephus' story is still historically mistaken, for the events described should be dated to the reign of Ptolemy IX Soter II (pp. 246-254). Motzo, "Esame storico-critico del III libro dei Maccabei", idem, *Ricerche sulla letteratura e la storia giudaico-ellenistica*, Rome 1977, pp. 351-391 (= *Entaphia*, in memoria di E. Pozzi, Turin 1913, pp. 211-251), investigates mainly whether a historical kernel of the events as described in 3 Maccabees could have taken place under Ptolemy IV.

³ For the history of research on 3 Maccabees, see F. Parente, "The Third Book of Maccabees as Ideological Document and Historical Source", *Henoch* 10 (1988), pp. 143-182, who on pp. 148-167 reviews scholarship since the early sixteenth century.

⁴ On the relationship between 3 Maccabees and the Greek Book of Esther, see esp. R.B. Motzo, "Il rifacimento greco di Ester e il III Maccabei", *Ricerche* (reprint of: *Saggi di storia e letteratura giudeo-ellenistica*, Florence 1924), pp. 281-309 (= *Saggi*, pp. 272-290); on the relationship with the Letter of Aristeas, see Emmet, "The Third Book of Maccabees", p. 157; more elaborate and speculative, but still rather superficial: S. Tracy, "III Maccabees and Pseudo-Aristeas", *YCS* 1 (1928), pp. 241-252; the relationship with the passage in *Contra Apionem* was studied by H. Willrich, "Der historische Kern", pp. 244-246.

I.

The narrative of the Third Book of Maccabees can be outlined as follows.

In 1:1-7, the author sketches the historical events leading up to the visit of King Ptolemy Philopator (221-204 BCE) to Jerusalem: after the Egyptian victory over the Seleucids at Raphia (217 BCE), which returned control over Palestine to Ptolemy, the king visited the neighbouring cities to accept their congratulations and to offer sacrifices in the local sanctuaries.⁵

In 1:8-2:24, the story of Ptolemy's visit to Jerusalem is told. The king admired the temple, and expressed his wish to enter it. The priests and the entire population of the city implored the king not to enter the holy precincts, because such a thing was strictly forbidden in God's law. When Philopator insisted, everybody cried unto the Lord to prevent this sacrilege, and God heard their prayer, especially the intercessory prayer offered by the high priest Simon. As soon as Philopator entered the temple, God struck him with some kind of epileptic attack, so that the king's friends feared for his life. The king's friends dragged him out of the temple, and the king recovered. He did not repent, however, but returned to Egypt announcing bitter threats against the Jews.

According to 2:25-33, the king's wrath turned first of all against the Jewish inhabitants of Alexandria. He published a decree in which the Jews were reduced to the state of slaves, and were made subject to the poll-tax (*λαογραφία*). The king also offered civic rights to those Jews who had themselves initiated in the city's mysteries. Very few, however, were prepared to give up their traditional religion.

This enraged the king so much, that he decided to kill the Jews of the *χώρα* of Egypt (3:1; the Jews of Alexandria are apparently excluded; see

⁵ The essential agreement of the description in 1:1-7 with the actual historical events (as known primarily from Polybius V 83-87) leads to the conclusion that the author has used a written source, though not Polybius himself; see Motzo, "Esame storico-critico", pp. 359-362; Emmet, p. 159, suggests Ptolemy Megalopolitanus as the source for 3 Macc. 1:1-7. The first lines of 3 Maccabees suggest that either these verses, or 3 Maccabees as a whole have been taken from some other source. In view of 3 Macc. 7:20-23, where the story is brought to a regular ending, the possibility that 3 Maccabees as a whole is an excerpt from some source is less likely.

below). In an excursus (3:2-10) the author describes the Jews' loyalty to the Egyptian kings, the hostile slander against the Jews of the "foreigners" in Egypt, as well as the friendly attitude towards the Jews demonstrated by the Greeks of Egypt. Then, in 3:11-30, the story is resumed with the "quotation"⁶ of Ptolemy's decree against the Jews of the Egyptian countryside. The decree ordered the capture and transport of the Jews to Alexandria, where they were to be killed. The author describes pathetically the Jews' imprisonment, transport, and assembly in the hippodrome near Alexandria, and then relates how their registration is ordered. Because the Jews of Alexandria expressed pity with their fellow-Jews, the king commanded that they were to undergo the same fate (4:1-14). The registration, however, could not be completed because of the huge number of Jews brought together (4:15-21).

In 5:1-6:21 it is related how three successive divine interventions miraculously saved the Jews of Egypt from being killed. The king ordered that the Jews were to be killed by inebriated elephants. God, however, prevented the execution of this plan, first by making the king oversleep the hour of its fulfilment, then by making the king forget he ever gave this command, and finally, following a prayer by the famous priest Eleazar, by having two angels appear before the elephants, which consequently turned back in terror and trampled the king's army instead of the Jews.

Finally the king regretted his intemperate anger, gave back to his prisoners their freedom, and organised a feast lasting seven days. The Jews decided to celebrate their liberation annually (6:16-40). The king gave them leave to return home. Moreover, they were allowed to kill the apostate Jews (6:41-7:16). During their travel home, they again feasted for seven days in Ptolemais and erected a commemorative προσευχή there (7:17-19). In the end, they were happier in their hometowns than before (7:20-23). Praise of God finishes the story (7:24).

⁶ This letter to the Egyptian generals contains all elements from the preceding story, but now from the king's crooked perspective (excepting, therefore, his humiliation in Jerusalem's temple). The agreement in style and contents shows that the letter is the author's invention, and has no claim whatsoever to historical credibility.

II.

This short overview suffices to lead one to suspect that 3 Maccabees includes narrative material of different origins. This suspicion is especially raised by the conspicuous changes of subject: first, the Jews of Jerusalem are the king's antagonists (1:8-2:24), then the attention is turned to the Alexandrine Jews (2:25-33), and finally the king's anger is mainly directed against the Jews of the *χώρα* (from 3:1 onwards). In the course of the story, Jerusalem disappears entirely from the author's focus,⁷ and the Alexandrian Jews become unimportant, as well. It has therefore been concluded by a number of scholars that 3 Maccabees is not an original unity, but combines a number of different stories which were originally placed in different geographical and historical circumstances.⁸

On the other hand, the literary style is uniform throughout, and the author seems to have attempted to integrate the various narrative elements. For instance, once attention has altogether shifted to the Jews from the *χώρα*, the author in 4:12-13 still makes the Alexandrian Jews partners in their compatriots' suffering; even the Jews of Jerusalem, who, after the king's return to Egypt, have disappeared completely from the stage, are mentioned in passing in 5:43. Therefore, the present form of 3 Maccabees is best understood if it is assumed that it represents a compilation and thorough redaction of several sources by one author.

A number of these sources can be identified with more or less precision. The main topic of 3 Maccabees is the story of God's miraculous salvation of the Jews in the hippodrome, which has the appearance of an aetiological legend underlying the annual celebration in Alexandria and Egypt of a Purim-like liberation festival (*κώθων/πότον σωτήριο* 6:31; 7:18), held from 8 to 14 Epiph (= 2-9 July; see 3 Macc. 6:40).⁹ The essentials of this legend are also

⁷ Compare Willrich, "Der historische Kern", pp. 256-258, on the illogical introduction of Jerusalem in the story.

⁸ See the survey of scholarly opinions on this topic in Parente, "The Third Book of Maccabees".

⁹ Willrich, "Der historische Kern", pp. 254-255, defends the view that the Purim festival and the book of Esther are the outcome of a compromise between Alexandrian and Palestinian Jewry: the date of the festival is that of the Palestinian

given by Josephus, *Contra Apionem* II 53-55. Josephus mentions the annual celebration of these events as well. However, there are major differences between the two accounts regarding details.

The most important difference between the versions of *Contra Apionem* and 3 Maccabees is their explanation of why King Ptolemy so harshly persecuted his Jewish subjects. Connected to this difference is the question *which* Ptolemy ordered it.

According to Josephus the cause of the king's actions was a rebellion of one of his Jewish generals, Onias. In *Contra Apionem* II 49-55 Josephus defends the Jewish population in Egypt against accusations of disloyalty. Apparently, Apion had written that the actions of Onias were evidence of this alleged disloyalty. Josephus replies that king Ptolemy VI Philometor had two Jewish generals, Dositheus and Onias. When Philometor died, his brother, Ptolemy Physcon, attempted to oust Philometor's widow and son (Queen Cleopatra II and Ptolemy VII) from the throne. Onias and his army chose Cleopatra's side. Therefore, Onias' behaviour was not evidence of disloyalty to King Ptolemy VIII Physcon, but of unwavering loyalty to the legitimate heirs to Ptolemy VI.¹⁰

Nicanor's Day, the legend is that of the Alexandrian Jews; the Persian setting of the Esther story is devised to make the legend fit for all Jews. Motzo, "Il rifacimento greco", pp. 298-300, equally defends the view that the Alexandrian festival existed before the Purim festival was introduced in Egypt, but according to Motzo, the Greek revision of the Hebrew Esther story was mainly based on the (superficially) similar book of 3 Maccabees. C.C. Torrey, *The Apocryphal Literature. A Brief Introduction*, New Haven²1946, p. 81, explained the mention of a feast as an imitation of such books as 2 Maccabees and Esther.

¹⁰ Dositheus does not return in Josephus' story. Perhaps a legend about this general in the days of Ptolemy Philometor and Physcon has survived in the first verses of 3 Maccabees, where Dositheus is said to have saved Philopator's life. Alternatively, a further study of the relationships between Esther and 3 Maccabees might show that Dositheus' role in the latter book is a faint echo of Mordecai's part in the former. In Philopator's days, a Macedonian priest Dositheus, son of Drimylus existed. Willrich, "Dositheos Drimylos' Sohn", *Klio* 7 (1907), pp. 293-294; p. 294, suggested that for this reason the author of 3 Maccabees made Dositheus (who figured in the older legend besides Onias) a renegade Jew, who could not forget his traditionally Jewish loyalty to the king.

Ptolemy Physcon, who eventually succeeded in capturing the throne, was at first afraid to attack Onias' army. For that reason he captured the Jewish inhabitants of Egypt and threatened to kill them. However, the elephants he had ordered to be drugged to do the job turned against his own companions, and killed many of them. The king, being terrified by this outcome and having received reproaches from his beloved wife, repented. Since then, the Jews of Alexandria are known to celebrate this day.

In 3 Maccabees the cause of the persecution is evidently different. First of all, the king under whose rule these events took place is said to be Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-204 BCE), who ruled almost a hundred years before Ptolemy VIII Physcon (146-117 BCE). According to the story in 3 Maccabees, King Ptolemy Philopator, the victor of the battle of Raphia, visited the cities in Phoenicia and Palestine. His misfortune in Jerusalem's temple would have enraged him so much that he decided to persecute the Jews in Alexandria and to kill all Jews in Egypt.

From a literary point of view, Josephus' explanation is more consistent and coherent than the one offered in 3 Maccabees.¹¹ It has been suggested that Josephus' account reflects a more original story than the version of 3 Maccabees, especially since the captives as they appear in 3 Maccabees 3-7 are soldiers and their families.¹² This detail in this part of the story of 3 Maccabees corresponds closer to Josephus' military context than to the first chapters of 3 Maccabees itself.¹³

The question whether Josephus' military context is more original can here be left unanswered. For our purpose it suffices to conclude that it is unlikely that Josephus knew 3 Maccabees (or that the author of 3 Maccabees knew Josephus' *Contra Apionem*).¹⁴ Probably, both authors followed a common tradition, and the simplest explanation for the tradition's occurrence

¹¹ On the possible mix-up in *Contra Apionem* of the Alexandrian legend with the story in the Greek Book of Esther, see Motzo, "Il rifacimento greco", pp. 300-301.

¹² See 3 Macc. 3:7; 4:11; cf. 3:21, 24; 5:41; 6:25-26. Compare Willrich, "Der historische Kern", p. 246; Motzo, "Esame storico-critico", pp. 372-375.

¹³ Willrich, "Der historische Kern", pp. 245-246.

¹⁴ Had Josephus known 3 Maccabees, he would have used it for his description of the period 219-200 BCE, which period is now lacking in his description of the Jewish history; see Büchler, *Die Tobiaden und die Oniaden*, p. 172.

in both writings is the actual existence of a yearly liberation festival among the Egyptian Jews. The legend underlying the festival was used independently by Josephus and the author of 3 Maccabees. It contained a tale about the Jewish soldiers of Egypt's countryside harshly treated by a Ptolemaic king of Egypt. God, however, saved them from a cruel death by means of drunken elephants. This legend, in whatever form the author of 3 Maccabees may have known it, is one of the sources compiled and redacted in 3 Maccabees.

III.

Another source of 3 Maccabees was the Second Book of Maccabees. It has long been noted that 3 Macc. 1-2 is very similar to the story of Heliodorus in 2 Macc. 3. This similarity regards both the structure of the story and several details. The following schema may serve to compare the outlines of 3 Macc. 1-2 and 2 Macc. 3.

3 Maccabees 1-2

After his victory at Raphia, king Ptolemy visits Jerusalem. The king admires the temple in Jerusalem, and wishes to penetrate into its holier courts.

The local leaders attempt to dissuade the king from entering the sacred precincts, but they fail.

The entire population of Jerusalem gathers near the temple in order to pray to the Lord and prevent the temple's pollution.

The high priest Simon makes intercession for the people and asks God not to blame them for the king's transgression.

God strikes the king, so that his fellows

2 Maccabees 3

King Seleucus sends his minister Heliodorus in order to demand the refund of the king's subventions for the temple cult.

The high priest remonstrates against the king's demands, but his arguments are neglected.

The entire population of Jerusalem gathers near the temple in order to pray to the Lord and prevent the temple's pollution.

(This element is absent from 2 Maccabees)

God strikes Heliodorus, so that his

J. TROMP

fear for his life; they drag him out of the temple.

(This element does not occur in 3 Maccabees)

The king is angry, and retires to Egypt.

He decides to punish the Judeans in Egypt for the insult he received in Jerusalem.

When the elephants are finally about to trample the Jews, angels appear, and the king finally repents.

fellows fear for his life; they drag him out of the temple.

The high priest makes intercession for the life of Heliodorus.

(These elements are absent from 2 Maccabees)

Angels appear, and Heliodorus repents.

There are a number of differences in pattern between the two stories. These differences can be easily explained if one assumes that the author of 3 Maccabees used the Heliodorus-story known from 2 Maccabees.¹⁵

That this is indeed the case is especially apparent when a number of details are compared. The comparison shows that the two stories agree in details to such an extent, that one cannot but assume that the one is in some way dependent on the other. Moreover, these details show evident marks of revision and elaboration on the part of 3 Maccabees.

First, there are a number of details which make it likely that there is indeed a direct literary relationship between 3 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees (or its source). They include the following: the honours bestowed on the temple by king Seleucus and king Ptolemy (2 Macc. 3:2-3; 3 Macc. 1:6-9); the friendly reception of Heliodorus and the king by the officials of the city (2 Macc. 3:9; 3 Macc. 1:9); the fear for Heliodorus' and Ptolemy's lives after the heavenly intervention, and their being dragged out of the temple by their servants (2 Macc. 3:28, 31; 3 Macc. 2:23).

¹⁵ It must be stated beforehand that it cannot be ascertained whether the author knew the Second Book of Maccabees, or, alternatively, its source, i.e., Jason of Cyrene, assuming this source agreed in essentials with the story of 2 Maccabees.

Next, there are elements which show that, if it is granted that a literary relationship exists between 2 and 3 Maccabees, it is likely that the author of 3 Maccabees used 2 Maccabees (or its source), and not the other way around. In this respect a very important detail is provided by 3 Macc. 1:22-23. In this passage it is said that brave citizens were prepared to take up arms and to die rather than transgress the ancestral laws. This is of course the central theme of 2 Maccabees (see, e.g., 2 Macc. 6:27-28; 7:2, 30, 37; cf. 1 Macc. 2:50; As. Mos. 9:6 [also related to the Maccabean traditions]). However, according to 3 Macc. 1:23 the elders succeeded in pacifying these courageous young men, and in persuading them to pray instead. If a literary relationship between 2 and 3 Maccabees is assumed, it is unlikely that the author of 2 Maccabees developed his thematic material from the episode in 3 Macc. 1:22-23, a passage of no more than secondary importance, whereas the author of 3 Maccabees probably had his reasons for trying to curb militant action (see below, section V.), and could easily adapt to that end themes and terminology from 2 Maccabees (or its source).

In 2 Macc. 3:15 it is related that the priests react to Heliodorus' decision to enter the temple's treasury by praying to God, prostrating themselves "in their priestly vestments" (ἐν ταῖς ἱερατικαῖς στολαῖς). When, according to 3 Macc. 1:10, the king decided to enter into the holy precincts of the temple in Jerusalem, the priests fell down in all their garments (ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐσθήρεσιν) to pray to God (3 Macc. 1:16). In 2 Maccabees priestly garments are mentioned in line with the author's interest in the priests and their outward appearance (cf. 2 Macc. 3:1, 9-12, 16-17). In 3 Maccabees, this mention of priestly garments is hardly functional; the point seems to be that the priests at that moment simply fall on the ground regardless of the possible consequences for their costly garments. The inescapable impression is that this detail is introduced in 3 Maccabees because of its occurrence in the author's source, namely 2 Maccabees (or its source). The slight difference in terminology must be ascribed to redaction by the author of 3 Maccabees.¹⁶

Finally the dependence of 3 Maccabees on 2 Maccabees (or its source) is most clearly evidenced by the following example. According to 2 Macc. 3:18-19, the people of Jerusalem, on hearing of Heliodorus' plan, rush out to

¹⁶ It appears from 3 Macc. 5:30, 36; 6:8, 16, 30 that the author had a certain predilection for the expressive use of πᾶς as in ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐσθήρεσιν (3 Macc. 1:16).

pray near the temple. The author gives a vivid description of women crowding the streets and of young women (who were not allowed to be in the streets) standing in the doorways and looking from the windows. This description is grossly exaggerated by the author of 3 Maccabees, who says that young women, normally not allowed to leave their houses, rushed out on the streets; women who were just married forgot chastity and left their bridal rooms;¹⁷ even women who had just given birth abandoned their children in order to assemble at the temple and pray (3 Macc. 1:18-19).

These instances make it highly plausible that the author of 3 Maccabees used 2 Maccabees (or an essentially identical source of that writing).

With this in mind, one can easily understand why some other details from the Heliodorus-story occur at a later stage in 3 Maccabees: the appearance of two angels (2 Macc. 3:26, 33; 3 Macc. 6:18), and the repentance of Heliodorus and the king (2 Macc. 3:35; 3 Macc. 6:22). The simple explanation for this fact is that the author of 3 Maccabees has moulded the festival legend in accordance with the Heliodorus-pattern. Whereas in 2 Maccabees Heliodorus is punished and immediately repents, the legend of the elephants in 3 Maccabees precedes the repentance which did not come after the first punishment in Jerusalem.

There are also several details from other passages in 2 Maccabees (esp. on the Antiochan persecution in Jerusalem) which the author of 3 Maccabees found colourful enough to use as elements in his description of the Ptolemaic persecution, most prominently the obligation imposed on the Jews by the king to participate in the festival of Dionysus (2 Macc. 6:7; 3 Macc. 2:29-30),¹⁸

¹⁷ The motif of newly wed women apparently appealed to the author of 3 Maccabees; it recurs in 4:6.

¹⁸ A typical example of the way in which scholars have defended the historical trustworthiness of 3 Maccabees is found in J. Cohen, *Judaica et aegyptiaca. De Maccabaeorum libro III, Quaestiones historicae*, Groningen 1941, pp. 11-12 (with reference to numerous other scholars). A papyrus (of unknown date) is adduced as evidence for the fact that Philopator ordered the *τελοῦντες τῷ Διονύσῳ* to come to Alexandria (the meaning of the Greek phrase is debated). Because Philopator must have identified Dionysius Sabazius with the God surnamed Sabaoth, he must have concluded that the Jews, just like himself, revered Dionysus. Therefore he must have been annoyed because the Jews neglected his command to come to Alexandria. This would be the "historical kernel" of 3 Macc. 2:29-30. On the papyrus, see esp.

and the role ascribed to the pious old man Eleazar (2 Macc. 6:18-31; 3 Macc. 6:1-15).

It can be concluded that the relationship between the stories of Heliodorus in 2 Maccabees 3, and of Ptolemy in 3 Maccabees 1-2 is not sufficiently explained by the assumption of an underlying traditional pattern,¹⁹ but must be understood as a relationship of direct literary dependence. The author of 3 Maccabees knew the Heliodorus-story from 2 Maccabees (or its source, if it was essentially identical), used it to his particular end while rephrasing it in sophisticated quasi-classical Greek.

IV.

In the preceding sections I have attempted to identify two of the sources used by the author of 3 Maccabees as the Heliodorus-story known from 2 Maccabees, and the legend connected with an Alexandrian-Jewish liberation festival. The following schema may serve to clarify the way in which these two stories were combined in the composition of the Third Book of Maccabees.

There is little doubt that the author's main aim was to relate the festival legend. The author, being an Alexandrian Jew, evidently knew the legend connected to the annual festival, possibly in some written form which he has adapted.

However, he also wished to provide the legend with a proper, edifying historical context. To this end, he used the pattern provided by the story of Heliodorus. This pattern he replaced in history, enabling himself to manipulate it, and make it into a suitable framework for the legend.

G. Zuntz, "Once More the So-Called 'Edict of Philopator' and the Dionysian Mysteries (BGU 1211)", *Hermes* 91 (1963), pp. 228-239.

¹⁹ Such a traditional pattern may well have existed, as Stokholm has shown; see "Zur Überlieferung". However, the existence of such a pattern must not lead to the conclusion that, for instance, 4 Maccabees is independent of 2 Maccabees, or even a reflection of the tradition in a more original form (so also Stokholm, "Zur Überlieferung", pp. 25, 28).

J. TROMP

<i>Josephus</i>	<i>2 Maccabees</i>	<i>3 Maccabees</i>
Ptolemy Physcon <i>Egypt (χώρα)</i>	Heliodorus <i>Jerusalem</i>	Ptolemy Philopator <i>Jerusalem</i>
	Temple pollution	Temple pollution
	Collective prayer	Collective prayer and intercessory prayer
<i>Alexandria</i>		<i>Alexandria, later: χώρα</i>
Elephants		Elephants
		Collective prayer and intercessory prayer
	Angels	Angels
	Intercessory prayer	
	Repentance	Repentance
Liberation festival		Liberation festival

The expansion of the Alexandrian legend in 3 Maccabees with a revised version of the Heliodorus-story had its consequences for the structure of 3 Maccabees. The pattern in 2 Maccabees comprises a temple pollution, a divine intervention, and the repentance of the culprit. In 3 Maccabees, the Ptolemaic persecution of the Egyptian Jews is made to precede the repentance. For this reason, some elements in the pattern occur twice in 3 Maccabees. According to 3 Maccabees, the element of divine intervention in the Jerusalem temple did not cause Ptolemy's repentance, but his anger.²⁰ The king's anger is the

²⁰ Cf. Stokholm, "Zur Überlieferung", p. 3: "eine Bekehrungsszene [wäre] an dieser Stelle verfrüht. Doch lässt sich wahrscheinlich die ausdrückliche Mitteilung, dass er keine Reue empfand (V. 24), als eine Rücksichtnahme auf das Fehlen eben dieses Zuges auffassen." Stokholm, by the way, regards 2 Maccabees 3 and 3 Maccabees 1-2, as well as 4 Maccabees 4, as three independent reflections of a common tradition ("Zur Überlieferung", p. 5).

reason for the persecution in Egypt. Only the second divine intervention (or series of divine interventions) brings the pattern to its conclusion. Because of this extension of the pattern, the appearance of two angels is replaced from the temple scene to the final intervention of God. Also, the prayers from 2 Maccabees are repeated and given another function. The collective prayer for the prevention of the temple pollution is maintained, but another collective prayer is situated before the final intervention of God in 3 Macc. 5:51. In both cases, the collective prayer is followed by a priestly intercessory prayer, which also occurs (with a different intention) in 2 Maccabees.²¹

V.

It was noted in section II. that attention in 3 Maccabees shifts twice, first from the Jerusalem Jews to the Alexandrian Jews, then from the Alexandrian Jews to the Jews of the Egyptian χώρα. In sections III.-IV., I have explained these shifts as the result of a deliberate attempt of the author to combine the story of the temple pollution with the story of the Egyptian Jews' liberation from being killed by elephants. The first question now to be answered is why the author of 3 Maccabees wanted to introduce the temple pollution and the Jews of Jerusalem into the story of the liberation in Egypt.

It would seem to me that the author in this way has tried to elevate the festival legend to a higher, theological plane. The conflict between Ptolemy and his Jewish subjects in Alexandria and Egypt is raised to a conflict between the king and God himself by making the king pollute God's sanctuary. Traditionally, a foreign king has a conflict with the God of Israel when he does evil things in the temple of Jerusalem, or even when he just enters the holy precincts. In this connection the king is also traditionally called "arrogant" (ὕπερηφάνης; cf. 3 Macc. 1:27; 2:5, 6). In the following passages the combination of these three motifs occur: (1) an arrogant foreign king (2) enters, robs or destroys the sanctuary and (3) therefore has a conflict with God and must be punished: Ps. 73 (LXX) 3, 22-23; 1 Macc. 1:21, 24; Ps. Sol. 2:1-2; cf. Dan. 11:31.

It is likely that the author of 3 Maccabees introduced the episode in

²¹ Compare Stockholm, "Zur Überlieferung", pp. 3-4.

Jerusalem with no other goal than to construct a conflict between Ptolemy and the God of Israel. Polluting the temple in Jerusalem is the surest way for a foreigner to be subjected to God's wrath. If this intention is accepted as the sole aim for introducing this part of the story, it is easily understood why the Jews in Jerusalem play no role whatsoever in the next parts.

Another question rises from this conclusion; namely, what the author's interest in the enhancement of the theological content of the story may have been. Of course, he may just have been a theologian by profession or inclination. On the other hand, raising the conflict to the level of God and king transfers it from the everyday level of Jews and non-Jews. There are indications that in the author's time tensions between Jews and non-Jews existed in Alexandria, and that the author wished to alleviate these tensions by promoting a spirit of reconciliation.

In 3 Macc. 3:8-10 it is related that the Greeks were most friendly to the Jews during the latter's persecution in Alexandria. The author blames the "foreigners" in Alexandria and Egypt for slandering the Jews and thus making their lives miserable, while explicitly exonerating the Alexandrian Greeks. In this way he suggests that in the time of Ptolemy Philopator, the Jews and the Greeks were anything but enemies. I suspect that this peculiar message must be explained against the background of the circumstances of the author's time, which was a time of high ethnic tension between the Greeks and Jews of Alexandria.

In the second chapter of 3 Maccabees clear allusions are made to the poll tax (λαογραφία) in Egypt, and the denial of civic rights to the Judean inhabitants of Alexandria. It has been argued that the λαογραφία existed since the early Ptolemaic times,²² and that the struggle for Jewish civic rights may have had a long history. Even so, it is a well-established fact that it was the Roman poll-tax (introduced in 24/23 BCE) that occasioned ethnic disturbances between Greeks and Judeans in Alexandria and made the question of Jewish

²² The juxtaposition of λαογραφία and οἰκετική δόθεσις in 3 Macc. 3:28, as well as the reference to registration in 3 Macc. 3:29, led B.P. Grenfell *et alii*, *The Tebnotis Papyri I*, London 1902, p. 447, to conclude that the λαογραφία as intended in 3 Maccabees was a pre-Roman tax, especially intended for particular groups in the Ptolemaic society; see also Motzo, "Esame storico-critico", pp. 366-367.

rights acute (as is evidenced by Claudius' letter from 41 CE),²³ In view of the preoccupation with ethnic relations displayed in 3 Maccabees (see esp. 3:3-10), it seems too cautious to state that 3 Macc. 2 has nothing to do with these particular circumstances.²⁴

R.B. Motzo has made several objections to relating 3 Maccabees to the first-century C.E. disturbances.²⁵ First, the Greeks in Alexandria are portrayed as the Jews' best friends, whereas in the Roman period they were their worst enemies. Second, the civic rights of the Alexandrian Jews were the hottest issue in the ethnic struggles of the Roman period, whereas the author of 3 Maccabees plays down the importance of these rights. Also, the alleged friendly attitude of the Egyptian Jews towards the Ptolemaic royal family makes no sense in the Roman period.

However, even if it is assumed that 3 Maccabees was written around the turn of the Christian era, one must not conclude that the story it contains is "actually" about the Roman period. The Third Book of Maccabees tells a story about the time of King Ptolemy Philopator, which is, to the author and his intended readers, a long time ago. In that time, he suggests, Jews and Greeks were the best of friends, and the Ptolemaic rulers were (at least eventually) most sympathetic to the Jews. If these relations were different in the Roman period, that does not invalidate the more pleasant situation in earlier times. Furthermore, in telling this story, the author adds a number of details which enhance the story's relevance for the present situation: the question of civic rights and the poll-tax. It is not unthinkable that a Jewish writer from Alexandria would play down the importance of these matters with reference to earlier, happier days, when Greeks and Jews lived together in peace, instead of hating and hurting each other as was the case in the early Roman period.

VI.

The composition of 3 Maccabees can best be reconstructed as follows.

The legend of the Alexandrian liberation festival was the starting-point.

²³ See E.M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian. A Study in Political Relations* (SJLA 20), Leiden ²1981, pp. 224-250.

²⁴ See Hadas, *The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees*, pp. 19-21.

²⁵ Motzo, "Esame storico-critico", pp. 354-357.

According to this legend king Ptolemy tried to kill the Judeans in Egypt by means of drunken elephants, but he failed because of God's miraculous intervention.

Josephus places this story in the days of king Ptolemy Physcon, and gives Onias' opposition to Physcon's accession to the throne as the reason for the persecution. The author of 3 Maccabees, however, has placed the legend in a different historical context. In order to lift the theme of the conflict between Jews and non-Jews to a theologically higher level, he used the pattern of the Heliodorus-story told in 2 Maccabees (or its source). This story he situated in the time of Ptolemy Philopator. At the beginning of his writing, the author placed an introduction which contains some historical facts that explain Ptolemy's visit to Jerusalem.

The author's main aim is still to tell the story of the festival: God's miraculous interventions in the past are the subject of an annual celebration, and the author does not want to change the festival or its legend. He does however expand the legend by a lengthy historical introduction, in which it is made clear that Ptolemy had a conflict with God, and not with the Jews. The Greeks had no reason to bear any grudge against the Jews either. The cause for devising this historical context must be found in the author's own circumstances, to which he alludes in 3 Macc. 2:28-30: the high ethnic tension between Alexandrians and Jews caused by the introduction of the *λαογραφία* and the denial of civic rights to the Jewish inhabitants of Alexandria. Against this background of hatred and impending violence, the author retells the well-known, annually recounted miracles, and against this background the festival occasions him to strike a conciliatory tone (the Jews refrain from taking up arms, 1:22-23; the appeal to the loyal and adjusted way of life the Jews in Alexandria have always maintained, 3:3-5; the exculpation of the Greeks over against the incrimination of the "foreigners" 3:6-10; the long-standing loyalty of the Jewish soldiers towards the Ptolemaic kings 6:25-26; 7:7).²⁶

The author's appeal for reconciliation is well-placed at the occasion of the liberation festival. This festival had a merry and probably rather alcoholic character (see 6:31, 36) and history has shown more than once that in difficult circumstances such days can easily lead to outbursts of violence. Possibly the author wished to prevent the festival from becoming the cause of riots. To this end it seems that the author attempted to move the conflict away from

²⁶ Cf. Hadas, *The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees*, pp. 24-25.

the level of Jews and Greeks, and Jews and the Egyptian king, and raise it to the level of God and the king, while emphasizing the traditional innocence and loyalty of the Jews in Egypt, as well as the usefulness of prayer, pacifism, and trust in God's righteousness and miraculous power.

Thus, the author retold the legend of the Alexandrian liberation festival as a story not just of miracles past, but of relevance for the present circumstances. His serious message on a joyful day is to trust in God, remain steadfast in his laws, but to keep the peace and seek reconciliation.

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Presentato da Paolo Sacchi

Zusammenfassung

In diesem Beitrag wird gezeigt, daß der Verfasser des 3. Makkabäerbuches für die Zusammenstellung seines Werkes hauptsächlich zwei Quellen benutzt hat. Diese Quellen sind (1) die Legende die mit einem jährlich von den ägyptischen Juden gefeierten Befreiungsfest verbunden war; und (2) die Legende (erhalten in 2. Makk. 3) vom Einzug Heliodors in den Jerusalemer Tempel. Die Befreiungslegende erzählt von der Absicht eines ptolemäischen Königs der Vergangenheit, die jüdischen Einwohner Alexandriens und Ägyptens auszurotten, welches Vorhaben durch wunderhaftes Eingreifen Gottes mehrmals vereitelt worden sei. Die Geschichte Heliodors wurde vom Verfasser als Umrahmung der Befreiungslegende benutzt. Es wird hier vorgeschlagen, dieses Verfahren des Verfassers (der wahrscheinlich um den Anfang unserer Zeitrechnung schrieb, also in einer Zeit höchster ethnischen Spannungen in Alexandrien) so zu verstehen, daß er die Geschichte der Rettung der Juden aus der Hand des griechischen Königs theologisch als die Geschichte eines Privatkonflikts zwischen Gott und dem König deuten wollte. So wurde die Befreiungsgeschichte von den aktuellen Konflikten zwischen Juden und Griechen, zu deren gewalttätigen Eskalation die Feier leicht hätte führen können, losgelöst. Diese Vermutung wird im 3. Makkabäerbuch durch die nachdrückliche Behauptung eines im wesentlichen guten Verhältnisses zwischen den Juden und Griechen in Alexandrien und durch die öfters wiederkehrenden Warnungen vor Gewalt, bestätigt.