

# Cassius' Chronology and Josephus' Vagueness\*

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It not infrequently happens that events of Greco-Roman history and ancient Jewish history are chronologically loose within their respective contexts, but when brought into association one with another may be pinned down more precisely. For this to happen, however, scholars must be interested in chronology and also willing to cross the lines between different compartments of ancient history. The present study, which takes its point of departure from two such open issues, is offered as a tribute to the memory of a scholar who often demonstrated both propensities and reaped worthy harvests.

Before beginning, a word about method. The best cases of work such as this are those in which the date of something in one corner of the ancient world is securely known on the basis of evidence directly relevant to that corner, and that date can then be put to work to pin down the date of something in another corner, once the interrelationship of the events is established. For example, Seleucid coins frequently allow us to pin down Seleucid royal dates, and the latter in turn help us to date the Hasmoneans when the Jewish sources bring them into contact with Seleucid rulers. Unfortunately, the present case does not allow us to use that method. Rather, we will present two open issues, one in Roman history and one in Jewish history, and show that a single reasonable hypothesis, which has long been suggested to resolve the former issue, can resolve the latter one as well. The fact that one hypothesis can solve two problems, including one for which it was not designed, is, we suggest, a significant indication that it is true.

## I. When did Laodicea Fall to Cassius?

The struggle in Syria between Dolabella and Cassius, which ended with Cassius' conquest of Laodicea and Dolabella's suicide there, was one of the crucial steps on the road to Philippi.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the episode in general, see V. Gardthausen, 'Cassius und Dolabella', *Augustus und seine Zeit* I/2, Leipzig 1891, 151-6; D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* I, Princeton 1950, 418-21.

Nevertheless, despite the relatively abundant evidence available for the stormy events of 44-42 BCE, it turns out to be rather difficult to fix the time of the fall of Laodicea – more difficult than is usually assumed.

The unanimous consensus of the handbooks places the fall of the city in July of 43 BCE. However, even a cursory examination of the argument shows how thin it is. According to F. Muenzer,<sup>2</sup> for example,

‘Schon am 2. Juni schrieb Lentulus Spinther aus Pamphylien, die Katastrophe muesse unmittelbar bevorstehen oder gar schon eingetreten sein (ad fam. XII 14, 4, vgl. 15, 7); in Rom waren aehnliche Geruechte schon im Juni und im Juli in Umlauf (ebd. 8, 2. 9, 1. 10, 1), aber da Octavian am 19. August die Acht gegen Dolabella aufheben liess (App. III 95), war vermutlich zu dieser Zeit noch nichts Sicheres bekannt. Trotz seiner verzweifelten Lage wird sich Dolabella, der Anfang Mai in Syrien eingebrochen und noch in demselben Monat in Laodicea eingeschlossen sein mag, bis gegen Ende Juli behauptet haben’.

The same evidence and the same (or approximately the same) conclusion may be found in the standard works by Lange, Gardthausen, Schuerer, Drumann-Groebe, Broughton and elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> But while a June terminus post quem is quite clear, the best one can find by way of a terminus ad quem is Lentulus’ stated impression that Dolabella’s end must be near.<sup>4</sup> This, however, is far from satisfactory, for while in the first passage quoted by Muenzer (12.14.4), of 29

<sup>2</sup> *Paulys Realencyclopaedie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* I/7, 1900, 1308.

<sup>3</sup> L. Lange, *Roemische Alterthuemer* III, Berlin 1871, 547 (‘waehrend Juni’); Gardthausen (n. 1), 155 (‘wahrscheinlich im Laufe des Juli’ — followed by J. Dobiáš, *Dejiny římské provincie syrské* I, Praha 1924, 194 n. 223); E. Schuerer, *Geschichte des juedischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi* I<sup>3-4</sup>, Leipzig 1901, 311 and 351 n. 40 (‘Sommer 43’); W. Drumann, *Geschichte Roms* II<sup>2</sup>, ed. P. Groebe, Leipzig 1902, 112 (‘in Juli’); T. R. S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic* II, New York 1952, 344 (‘probably late in July’). The most detailed account of Cassius’ movements, so far as I know, is J. A. van der Chijs, *Dissertatio chronologico-historica inauguralis de Herode Magno, Judaeorum Rege*, Diss. Leiden, 1855, 16-20; it places the fall of Laodicea ‘mense Julio?’ (p. 18). On Drumann-Groebe and Broughton, see our next note.

<sup>4</sup> I emphasize this because some formulations give the impression that the mid-August 43 abrogation of the condemnation of Dolabella, recorded by Appian *BC* 3.95, which shows that in Rome there was still no knowledge of Dolabella’s death, is itself a terminus ad quem for it! Note, for example, Drumann-Groebe (n. 3): ‘In Rom war man noch nicht davon unterrichtet, als Octavian am 19. August Consul wurde und die Acht gegen Dolabella aufheben liess; demnach [sic! D.R.S.] ging Laodicea im Juli ueber, wie auch der Zusammenhang lehrt.’ I don’t know what ‘der Zusammenhang’ means here. Similarly, when Broughton (n. 3) writes ‘on the date, App. *BC* 3.95; Joseph. *AJ* 14.289; *BJ* 1.231’, only his reference to Appian is relevant; on Josephus, see below, part II.

May 43, Lentulus expresses his confidence and hope (*spero...spero etiam*) that Dolabella will soon be overcome, in the second (12.15.7), of 2 June 43, Lentulus explicitly notes that his confidence that Dolabella will soon be overcome is contrary to the view held by most observers (*opinione celerius*). Given the fact that Lentulus is engaged in special pleading, namely, his goal is to convince Cicero, and through him the Senate, that he should himself be left in office for Dolabella will soon be out of the picture, one might suspect that his prognosis was perhaps overly optimistic. In any case, besieged cities not infrequently hold out longer than expected.

Thus, to establish a terminus ad quem for the fall of Laodicea the best we can do is — given the fact that Cassius is said to have been there when the city fell (Appian, *BC* 4.62) — consider Cassius' subsequent moves. However, here too there is little specific to go on. While it was once supposed that he spent the winter of 43/42 in Egypt, that view has long been rejected,<sup>5</sup> so all we know is that he proceeded from Syria via Tarsus (in Cilicia) to Smyrna, where he met Brutus. He did so, according to Plutarch (*Brutus* 28) and Appian (*BC* 4.63), as a result of Brutus' call to him (which is what restrained him from his Egyptian campaign), a call which found him still in Syria. But that call went out (as Cassius Dio 47.32.1 indicates) only after the agreement between the triumvirs in late November 43, which was followed by proscriptions and Cicero's death (7 Dec. 43 — Tacitus, *Dial.* 17.2) — all of which events Appian reports in his history (*BC* 4.2-20) a good deal earlier than Brutus' call to Cassius. Hence, it seems that Cassius was still in Syria well into the late autumn/early winter of 43 BCE; most scholars place his Smyrna linkup with Brutus no earlier than January of 42.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Gardthausen (n. 1), 155-6; Schuerer (n. 3), 311 n. 10; etc. The debate centered on the interpretation of three passages cited in our next sentence: while Plutarch might give the impression Cassius did indeed invade Egypt, scholars agree that he can easily be read so as to conform to Appian's plain statement that Cassius did not go to Egypt, which is also implied by Dio.

<sup>6</sup> Although Gardthausen (n. 1), 156 and F. Froehlich (*Realencyclopaedie* (n. 2), I/6, 1899, col. 1732) put Cassius in Smyrna already at the end of 43, it appears more reasonable to go a little further. See, for example, van der Chijs (n. 3), 18 ('medio ferme anno 712' [42 BCE]); Schuerer (n. 3), 311 n. 10 ('eine geraume Zeit' after Cicero's death); R. E. Smith, 'The Greek Letters of M. Junius Brutus', *Classical Quarterly* 30, 1936, 196 n. 13 (probably in January 42). L. Mendelssohn, cited by Schuerer, suggested that Brutus' letter to the Ephesians cited by Josephus in *Ant.* 14.262ff. shows — since Cassius is not mentioned — that the two had not yet linked up even as late as March 42, the date of the letter; see his 'Senati consulta romanorum quae sunt in Iosephi Antiquitatibus', *Acta Societatis Philologiae Lipsiensis* V, 1875, 250-2. However, the evidence for Brutus' name in 263 is not secure (see J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'empire romain* I, Paris 1914, 148-9 n. 12) and it is not clear that, even if the document were produced by Brutus after he met Cassius, the latter's name should have appeared. Hence, we hesitate to build upon this

Now — and here is the point — since, as stated, we know from both Plutarch (*Brutus* 28) and Appian (*BC* 4.63) that Cassius planned an Egyptian campaign after the fall of Laodicea, and only Brutus' call held him back from it, is it not likely that the siege of Laodicea ended only briefly before Brutus' call? If Laodicea fell in July, what kept Cassius away from Egypt during the several months which went by until Brutus summoned him to Smyrna?

To summarize: while expectations and rumors current in June 43 make it likely that Laodicea fell in July, and Cassius' ten-to-one advantage over Dolabella<sup>7</sup> also suggests an early end for the siege, precise evidence for it is lacking. Indeed, a case could be made, on the basis of the consideration developed in the preceding paragraph, for lowering the date by even four or five months. On the other hand, that case too is lightweight, for one can imagine any number of items which could have occupied Cassius in Syria during the months between a mid-summer conquest of Laodicea and Brutus' call; Muenzer et al. might still be right in placing the event in July. Some more evidence would be welcome.

## II. Josephus: Specific or Vague?

One source which is often ignored, in connection with Cassius' conquest of Laodicea, is Josephus, who briefly alludes to the event in both of his parallel accounts (*BJ* 1.231; *Ant.* 14.289). As it turns out, however, his account may be very useful in attempting to pin down the timing.

Josephus refers to the fall of Laodicea in the course of his account of the tensions between two important figures in the entourage of Hyrcanus II: Herod and Malichus. Namely, Josephus reports that after Herod's father, Antipater, died in circumstances which cast suspicion upon Malichus, Herod planned his revenge (*Ant.* 14.280-284; *BJ* 1.226-228); eventually he turned in this connection to Cassius, who ordered his officers to help Herod (*Ant.* 288; *BJ* 230); after Cassius took Laodicea, the opportunity arose and Cassius' men indeed killed Malichus (*Ant.* 289-293; *BJ* 231-235). What is important for us is the fact that in the paragraphs we skipped in the above summary (*Ant.* 285-287, *BJ* 229), just before Herod's appeal to Cassius, Josephus reports another incident between Herod and Malichus: at the time of a festival — in *Antiquities*: the festival (*tēs...heortēs*) — in Jerusalem, Herod visited the city with his troops despite the fact that Malichus had convinced Hyrcanus to ask Herod to stay away. If we knew what festival it was, we might be able to infer a terminus post quem for the fall of Laodicea.

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additional lowering of the terminus post quem for Cassius' arrival in Smyrna and, by extension, of his departure from Syria.

<sup>7</sup> See esp. Cicero, *ad Fam.* 12.13.4; P. A. Brunt, *Italian Manpower, 225 B.C. - A.D. 14*, Oxford 1971, 486.

As a matter of fact, current commentaries to Josephus are virtually unanimous in the assumption that the reference is to the festival of Tabernacles (Sukkot), which falls in September or October. However, Chamonard simply writes that Josephus means 'sans doute la fête des Tabernacles', Ricciotti too offers the same view without any argument, Michel-Bauernfeind cite it without comment as Ricciotti's view, and Pelletier arrives at it by what seems to be pure *petitio principii*: 'En cette saison (octobre) il doit s'agir de la fête des "Tabernacles"'; I see no independent evidence for the season.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, I have found only one argument, suggested by R. Marcus in a note to the Loeb edition of *Antiquities*, on behalf of the identification of the holiday as Tabernacles; we shall consider it below.

First, however, we should note that the consensus identifying the festival as Tabernacles 43 militates against the consensus with which we began, which places the fall of Laodicea in July 43, for taken together they result in Josephus' narrative giving the events in the reverse of their historical order. Of course that is not impossible, but it should not lightly be accepted, especially as (1) Josephus' account is the same in both of his narratives; (2) Josephus himself seems to show no awareness of any problem; and (3) there is no obvious evidence for a change in sources used by the historian.<sup>9</sup> It is usually such splicing which engenders errors in relative chronology.

<sup>8</sup> See *Oeuvres complètes de Flavius Josèphe* III, trans. J. Chamonard, ed. T. Reinach, Paris 1904, 259 n. 2 ('sans doute la fête des Tabernacles'; the 'Additions et corrections' sheet in this volume adds the possibility that the reference is in fact to the Day of Atonement, which comes five days earlier); G. Ricciotti, *Flavio Giuseppe...La Guerra giudaica* II<sup>2</sup>, Torino 1949, 58 n. 229 ('la festa, non meglio specificata, sembrerebbe quella dei Tabernacoli (cfr. *Antichità*, XIV, 285), che cadeva in autunno'; this seems to be a case of the *petitio principii* explicit in Pelletier); O. Michel and O. Bauernfeind, *Flavius Josephus: De Bello Judaico — Der Juedische Krieg* I<sup>2</sup>, Muenchen 1962, 412 n. 114; A. Pelletier, *Josèphe: Guerre des Juifs* I, Paris 1975, 203-4. So too S. Zeitlin, *The Rise and Fall of the Judaeian State* I, Philadelphia 1968, 379-81 — one of the only modern works to interweave the Herod-Malichus story with that of Cassius in Syria; see below, n. 25. So far, the oldest appearance of this identification of our festival I have found is in A. Hausrath, *Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte* I<sup>2</sup>, Heidelberg 1873, 192, who without argument places Antipater's death 'kurz vor dem Laubhuettenfest des Jahres 43'.

<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, the fact that the account appears so similarly in both *War* and *Antiquities* is itself an argument that both stories (on Jerusalem and on Cassius) are taken from one and the same source, for it is hardly likely that, at least in his summary introduction to *War*, Josephus used several sources. Note, moreover, the reappearance of *hoi peri (ton) Herōdēn* in *Ant.* 14.287 and 14.292, which shows a common point of view (cf. D. R. Schwartz, *Agrippa I*, Tuebingen 1990, 25-26). There is nothing surprising about the source being more closely reproduced in *Antiquities* than in *War*. In fact, the relationship one to another of the versions of both stories in

Thus, we can well understand that earlier historians and commentators on Josephus, aware of the presumed date of the fall of Laodicea, preferred simply to identify the holiday as one earlier than that date. Since Cassius' stay in the Galilee, which according to Josephus seems to have come just before Antipater's death,<sup>10</sup> may be dated around March 43,<sup>11</sup> earlier scholars simply identified the festival in question as one of the spring festivals of that year: Passover<sup>12</sup> or — more usually — Pentecost.<sup>13</sup> This allowed Josephus' narrative to proceed in proper historical order. What made that consensus change?

As far as I can see, two developments brought about the change: one merely removed an obstacle to the autumn (Tabernacles) dating, the other positively encouraged it. The first was mentioned above, at n. 5. Namely, while it was formerly thought that Cassius spent the winter of 43/42 in Egypt, a point which guaranteed the fall of Laodicea before that winter and, therefore, created a pressure to move up to the spring of 43 the holiday Josephus mentions before that event (although Tabernacles still could have been possible), the recognition that (Plutarch notwithstanding) Cassius went straight from Syria to Asia made a longer period available for the fall of Laodicea and, hence, for the Jewish holi-

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Josephus' two works is usual for this part of his narrative: *Ant.* 14 is less dramatic than *BJ* 1, probably because the former is close to Nicolaus' original while the latter was spiced up by the assistants employed by Josephus in the production of that work (*C. Apionem* 1.50!). Thus, in the first story, only *War* mentions that Herod despised Malichus and has Malichus talking to Herod, just as, in the second story, only *War* has Hyrcanus fainting and his speech. See D. R. Schwartz, 'Drama and Authenticity in Philo and Josephus', *Scripta Classica Israelica* 10, 1989/90, 120-9; D. S. Williams, 'On Josephus' Use of Nicolaus of Damascus', *ibid.* 12, 1993, 176-87.

<sup>10</sup> Cassius' departure from Judaea is mentioned in *Ant.* 14.277 and *BJ* 1.223, just before the death of Antipater. This is what lies behind the usual assumption that Antipater was killed ca. March 43; so, for example, H. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden* III/1<sup>5</sup>, M. Brann ed., Leipzig 1905, 183.

<sup>11</sup> Cicero, *Ad fam.* XII,11 = M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* I, Jerusalem 1974, no. 71.

<sup>12</sup> So van der Chijs (n. 3), 19; Graetz (n. 10), 183.

<sup>13</sup> This is the older view, found in a brief and unsigned note ('*Sc. Pentecostes*') to *BJ* 1.11.6 (229) in Hudson's 1720 Oxford edition of Josephus' *Opera omnia* (vol. I, p. 638, n. + ), reprinted in Havercamp's 1726 Amsterdam *Opera omnia* (vol. I, p. 717). (By comparison, the 1691 'Cologne' [Leipzig?] *Opera omnia* with Rufinus' Latin *War* and Galenius' Latin *Antiquities* leaves our festival undefined, as does R. L'Estrange's 1702 English translation. I have been unable to discover any discussion underlying the note in Hudson.) In the wake of Hudson, various printings of Whiston's English translation of *BJ* 1.229 amplify the text with '[Pentecost]' or give a footnote consisting of the same single word, and the former course was taken by Clementz in his translation of *Ant.* 14.285: 'das (Pfungst-)fest'. None of these comes with any supporting argument.

day. Since Pentecost is a one-day festival and Tabernacles lasts a week, and since Tabernacles is in general a particularly festive holiday,<sup>14</sup> the natural preference for the latter was given free rein. We may observe that, if it is indeed true that recognition that a longer period was available for the fall of Laodicea played a role here, it is simply an oversight of scholarship that the July dating remained so confidently in the handbooks.

The second point is linked to the first: it was noticed that ancient Hebrew usage, in biblical and rabbinic literature, indeed employs the term *heḥāg* ('the festival') for Tabernacles in particular.<sup>15</sup> Thus, it seemed simple to assume that if Josephus referred here to 'the festival', he was referring to Tabernacles. And this, indeed, is what Marcus offered in his Loeb note on *Ant.* 14.285, which, as noted, seems to be the only argument offered for the current consensus.

This, however, will not do. For there is, to my knowledge, not a single instance of Josephus, or any other Greek writer,<sup>16</sup> using the absolute *hē heortē* for Tabernacles. As for Josephus,<sup>17</sup> he usually identifies this Jewish festival, as others, by name; note, for example, such nearby passages as *Ant.* 13.46, 241 and 15.50, along with *BJ* 1.73 and 2.515.<sup>18</sup> And note that in *Ant.* 13.372 (the only passage to which Marcus refers for comparison here), Josephus does not merely speak, absolutely, of 'the holiday'; he goes on to call it Tabernacles (*skēnopēgia*). As Pelletier has noted, the use of the definite article in that passage simply means that the holiday was the one at hand, just as we say, for example, that we'll do something after 'the holiday' with reference to any coming holiday,

<sup>14</sup> Note that in his discussions of these two festivals, esp. in relationship to Jerusalem, S. Safrai has two pages on Pentecost and sixteen on Tabernacles: *Die Wallfahrt im Zeitalter des Zweiten Tempels*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981, 236-8, 238-54. Among earlier scholars, note especially, on the one hand, G. F. Moore's comments on Pentecost (few pilgrims, minimal cult) in his *Judaism* II, Cambridge, Mass. 1927, 49 and, on the other hand, the heading 'The Most Important of the Yearly Festivals' in I. Benzinger's article, 'Tabernacles, Feast of', Cheyne-Black, *Encyclopaedia Biblica* IV, 1903, 4875.

<sup>15</sup> For this point, see already Benzinger, *ibid.*; Safrai (n. 14), 238.

<sup>16</sup> See the dictionaries and A. Pelletier, 'La nomenclature du calendrier juif à l'époque hellénistique', *Revue biblique* 82, 1975, 225-6: in this review of the Greek nomenclature of Tabernacles, there is no suggestion that it could be termed plain *hē heortē*. On Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata* 6.5.41.3, see below, Part III.

<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, Thackeray's Josephus lexicon did not get up to *heortē*.

<sup>18</sup> See also 13.304, 'the festival when tabernacles are erected to God'. Earlier references to Tabernacles, by that name, include *Ant.* 4.209 and 8.100, 123, 225; 11.77, 154. *Ant.* 15.50 is especially interesting, for after mentioning Tabernacles Josephus felt the need to explain that 'this is a festival which we observe with special care', as if the reader didn't know; would such a reader have known, a few pages earlier, that *hē heortē* = *heḥāg* = Tabernacles?!

because the context of our conversation makes clear which holiday is meant.<sup>19</sup> Nothing in *Ant.* 14.285 does.

Moreover, if Josephus' Greek reflected Hebrew in our passage, that would imply either that he was freely composing here without a written source, or that he was using a Hebrew source. But the fact that the narratives in both his works are so similar here in fact tells against both possibilities, for although there are several pieces from Jewish tradition in the middle books of the second decade of *Antiquities*, none is paralleled in *War*.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, it is usually supposed, for good reason, that Josephus' Herodian narratives are based on the lost universal history by Nicolas of Damascus; and this is all the more likely for a passage such as ours, where Herod is righteous while Malichus is hypocritical (*Ant.* 286-287; *BJ* 229-230),<sup>21</sup> and which goes on to describe Roman affairs in *Syria*. But there is no good reason to suppose a Hebrew idiom such as *heḥāg* affected Nicolas' Greek.

Thus, it seems that Josephus' vagueness concerning 'the holiday' cannot reasonably be taken to be the very opposite of vagueness, viz., a terminus technicus referring to a specific holiday. So it seems, as scholars of earlier centuries assumed, that we are free to suppose the holiday in question was anywhere we want in 43 B.C.E. This, then, is a loose item of Jewish history, paralleling the five months or more (depending upon when we place Cassius in Smyrna) of that same year which seem to be available for the fall of Laodicea.

### III. From Josephus' Vagueness to Chronological Specificity

Perhaps we should stop here. Pointing out that open questions are open is valuable enough. However, prudence notwithstanding, I will not suppress my impression that Josephus' vagueness is so problematic that it requires an explanation. Anyone reading Josephus, who so often refers to Jewish festivals, should be bothered by the fact that he refers to 'the festival in Jerusalem' without specifying which. Note, by way of comparison, that at the opening of our book (*Ant.* 14.21,25), and then again somewhat after our passage (337), Josephus specifically refers to Passover and Pentecost by name, just as he frequently does elsewhere; these references serve as chronological markers which he apparently found it important to include. Why, then, did he not include one here?

<sup>19</sup> For Pelletier, see above, n. 8. The situation is the same in L. H. Feldman's Loeb translation of *Ant.* 18.122, where the Greek uses no definite article but Feldman does: 'the traditional festival which the Jews were celebrating'.

<sup>20</sup> See esp. *Ant.* 13.288-298, 14.22-28, 15.425, 17.165-167; S. J. D. Cohen, 'Parallel Historical Tradition in Josephus and Rabbinic Literature', *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* B/1, Jerusalem 1986, 7-14.

<sup>21</sup> See above, n. 9, also, in general, Stern (n. 11), 229-30. For Nicolas as a propagandist for Herod, see *Ant.* 14.8-9; 16.179-187.



One possibility, of course, is that he did not know the identity of the festival. However, this is unlikely. If Josephus did not know, that is, if his source did not identify the festival, wouldn't it and he have said 'a festival', like *Ant.* 13.251 (Nicolas!), 18.122, 20.133, etc.? The reference to 'the festival', with definite article but without antecedent, is so striking, if not positively harsh, that it is unlikely that any narrator would offer it for no good reason.

In order to illustrate this point, let us advert for a moment to the one Greek passage which lexicographers have pointed to as evidence for *hē heortē* meaning Tabernacles. The long entry on *heortē* in Bauer's lexicon of New Testament Greek, which begins by illustrating abundantly that the word may be used of various holidays and the context must make clear which is meant, does give one reference for its absolute use for Tabernacles: *Kerygma Petrou* 2 = Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 6.5.41.3 (ed. Staehlin, p. 452). But all that passage says is that if the moon doesn't appear the Jews celebrate 'neither the so-called first sabbath nor the new moon nor [the feast of] unleavened bread nor [any other] feast or great day' (*oute heortēn oute megalēn hēmeran*). Just such a literal translation may be found in Migne's *Patrologiae Graecae* 9.262: *neque azyma, neque festum, neque magnum diem*. But what do modern translators do? While James offered 'nor the feast (of tabernacles?) nor the great day (of atonement)', Schneemelcher dropped the question mark and Elliott, in his revision of James, dropped the parentheses around 'of tabernacles' too. They offer no argument, and their decision is hence no more compelling than Preuschen's suggestion that *tēs pentēkostēs* be added in after *heortēn*.<sup>22</sup> Hence, we will not accept this as proof that *hē heortē* means Tabernacles. But what is acceptable and important here, for us, is that the efforts of these scholars demonstrate that experienced readers expect specificity in cases like this, where the specific references to Sabbath and new moon and Passover entitle the reader to expect the next words to have similarly specific meaning.

That same expectation, we submit, is all the more warranted in cases like *Ant.* 14.285, where the text itself uses a definite article, thus implying the reader should know what holiday is meant. Those readers of *Ant.* 14.285 who do not make it palatable the modern way, by making it more specific than it is, can well understand Whiston's approach: he simply made it say 'at the approach of a festival' (my emphasis).

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<sup>22</sup> The works cited in the preceding lines are: W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*<sup>2</sup>, W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich edd., Chicago-London 1970, 289; M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Oxford 1924, 17; W. Schneemelcher in E. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha* II, W. Schneemelcher ed., Philadelphia 1965, 100; and J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Oxford 1993, 22. Preuschen's suggestion is cited by Staehlin ad loc., along with Diels' — to add *skēnōn* before *heortēn*.

That is, our text poses a problem: it reads as if it is more specific than it is. Readers have solved the problem either by making it be more specific (the current solution) or by making it sound less specific (Whiston). Our question is: Why did Josephus create such a problem for his readers? It is, I believe, unlikely that an experienced author would create such a problem if writing freely; hence, we may search for the constraint(s) upon Josephus here. My suggestion is, that we can resolve our problem by assuming the hypothesis created by Roman historians to solve their Roman problem, namely, the date of the fall of Laodicea. I propose we consider the possibility that Josephus' source did indeed specify the holiday in question, but Josephus suppressed it because it caused some difficulty for him. In suppressing the name of the festival, however, as so often happens the editing was somewhat careless, and the definite article remained to tell the tale.

That Josephus may have suppressed material in his sources due to his own knowledge or assumptions is indicated by his practice elsewhere. We shall note four cases in which it seems, with varying degrees of certainty, that Josephus, in order to avoid perceived chronological difficulties but also to avoid the necessity of explicitly contradicting his source, deliberately left his narrative vague where his source was specific. The first case is at *Ant.* 11.22, where Josephus omits the name of Artaxerxes offered by his source (Ezra 4:11/LXX I Esdras 2:13 [Rahlfs]), settling instead for the anonymous 'sovereign', because according to his chronology the king in question was Cambyses. While Josephus does refer to Cambyses in the surrounding context, here — as Marcus notes in his Loeb note ad loc. — 'by omitting the name Josephus avoids the awkwardness of openly contradicting Scripture'. It seems to be Josephus' way of hedging his bet. How many of us haven't done the same, when our lecture notes give one name but the source on our handout gives another, especially when we're not really sure what the real truth is?

Similarly, *ibid.* 174 Josephus omits the reference to Sanballat given by his source (Nehemiah 4:1/LXX II Esdras 14:1 [Rahlfs]), just as he everywhere fails to bring Sanballat into connection with Nehemiah, because he thought Sanballat belonged in the days of Alexander the Great and indeed mentions him in that later context (*Ant.* 11.302-325). Third, we have suggested that the repeated absence of the high-priest's name in *Ant.* 11.313-339 (the story of that figure's dealings with Alexander the Great) resulted from the fact that Josephus' source, as the talmudic parallels, termed the high-priest 'Simon' although Josephus was convinced he was Jaddua.<sup>23</sup> Finally, we note that of the two visits to Jerusalem by L. Vitellius, the proconsul of Syria, reported by Josephus in *Ant.* 18.90-95 and *ibid.* 122-125, the first is said to have been on Passover but the second merely — on 'a festival'. Scholars have long noticed the difficulty of accounting

<sup>23</sup> D. R. Schwartz, 'On Some Papyri and Josephus' Sources and Chronology for the Persian Period', *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 21, 1990, 186-9.

for the second festival, and we have argued, following a suggestion by W. Otto, that both narratives in fact report the same visit.<sup>24</sup> But Josephus, at least at one stage of his editing process, apparently thought they were not the same visit, and so – even if his second source too dated the visit specifically to Passover, which is likely – he left the text vague. We suggest that Josephus did the same in our case too, concerning Herod's visit to Jerusalem; in our case, however, the definite article survived the editing.

Now, if we assume that we have indeed uncovered the explanation for 'the festival', then we must ask what festival would have caused a problem, and the answer is obvious: Tabernacles. As we have seen, earlier scholars suggested Passover or Pentecost to avoid the problem caused by Tabernacles, which came later than the fall of Laodicea. But Josephus too seems to have had a fairly good knowledge of the chronology of this period. If, then, he knew that Laodicea fell in July, as has been suggested by modern Roman historians, or at least before Tabernacles, he too will have seen a problem here, and avoided it – not by substituting the name of another festival, but by suppressing the troublesome name of Tabernacles, following the same procedure as that followed in the four cases cited above. That is, Josephus' striking or harsh style here may be explained by the assumption that he knew something that modern historians have posited; Josephus turns out to support their hypothesis.

Our conclusion, in other words, is that modern scholars are probably right: probably Laodicea did fall to Cassius in the summer of 43, and probably the holiday mentioned by Josephus was Tabernacles 43. Josephus' narratives at *Ant.* 14.289 and *BJ* 1.231, which – probably following Nicolas of Damascus – report the fall of Laodicea after Herod's visit to Jerusalem, are to be understood as supplying background material from the recent past, explaining to the reader how it happened that Cassius was ruling Syria at the time following Herod's visit to Jerusalem. That's how we should read Josephus, and that's how Josephus should have read Nicolas.<sup>25</sup> What is new here are the suggestions that we infer the identity of the festival Josephus mentions not from any supposed specificity of his language but, on the contrary, from its very vagueness and difficult style, and that we put that inference to use in order to bolster the consensus about the date of the fall of Laodicea. As we have seen, that consensus is reasonable but far from secure. Perhaps it is now a little closer.

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<sup>24</sup> See W. Otto, *Herodes*, Stuttgart 1913, cols. 192-4, n. \* (= *Realencyclopaedie* [n. 2], Supplementband II, 1913, cols. 185-7, n. \*); D. R. Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity*, Tuebingen 1992, 202-17.

<sup>25</sup> Zeitlin's narrative (n. 8) illustrates well such a reading of Josephus: he simply reports the fall of Laodicea before Herod's Jerusalem visit.