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GLAJJ: Two More Addenda¹

Joseph Geiger

Abstract: The two notes are further Addenda to Stern's masterful *GLAJJ*. The first is a mention by Herodas of Ake (Acre) before renamed Ptolemais. The second argues that Plutarch's mention of Nicolaus dates in *Table Talk*, 8.4 should have earned a separate entry.

Keywords: *GLAJJ*, Herodas, Plutarch

1. Herodas authored his mimiambms in the first half of the third century BCE.² In the second of these, *The Brothel-keeper* (Πορνοβοσκός) Battaros, the gentleman in question, complains in court on the island of Cos that the sea-captain Thales attempted to abduct and mishandled one of his prostitutes. In ll. 16-18 he contrasts their merits: Thales will tell you that he came from Ake with wheat in the famine, and I came from Tyre with whores (a commodity obviously as necessary as wheat). The city of Ake, later Acre, was renamed Ptolemais by 'the king', viz. Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246)³, thus dating the mimiamb before that event.⁴ Though the text is quite problematic, the words 'εξ Ἀκῆς are beyond doubt. Elsewhere Stern does include in his collection also cities not in a Jewish context, thus, e.g., the very earliest of mentions, Ascalon in Alcaeus.⁵ The hinterland of Acre and its important port is a fairly extensive fertile valley, so that importing wheat from there seems practicable.

2. At Plutarch's *Table Talks* 8.4, 723D, ('Why at the various athletic festivals different kinds of wreaths are awarded, but the palm-frond at all of them; also, why large dates are called "Nicolauses"'), we are told:

The king, they say, being very fond of the Peripatetic philosopher Nicolaus, who was sweet in character and slender and tall physically, and whose face was overspread with a ruddy glow, dubbed the largest and handsomest dates 'Nicolauses', and so they are called to this day (Trl. E.L. Minar, Jr., LCL).

The translator then appends a note, starting with 'The king mentioned here is apparently Herod the Great of Judaea, for whom Nicolaus performed many services.'⁶

¹ See *SCI* 33 (2014), 55-66.

² See G.O. Hutchinson, *Hellenistic Poetry* (Oxford 1990), 236-57; there is a very useful Loeb, including also Theophrast's *Characters* and Cercidas and the choliambic poets.

³ *Letter of Aristeas* 115.

⁴ The efforts to deduce a more exact *terminus ante quem* from coins is not at issue here.

⁵ *GLAJJ* III, i, pp. 1-4.

⁶ Remarkably S.-T. Theodorsson, *A Commentary on Plutarch's Table Talks* III (Göteborg 1996), 201-2, who has a 24 line note on the sentence, does not say anything about the

Now the passage here under consideration obviously did not escape Menahem Stern's sharp eye. At *GLAJJ* I, 495 (LXXVIII, 214), commenting on Pliny, *HN* 13.45, where these dates are discussed, he refers to the passage together with a number of other parallels from later, Christian authors, and from Athenaeus 14.66, 652A, who does not mention the king and ascribes the naming of the dates to Augustus.⁷

A reference in Plutarch to Herod clearly should have earned a separate entry in *GLAJJ*,⁸ and indeed another reference to the dates, without explaining their name, is to be found in Stern's collection.⁹ The purpose of Stern's masterful compilation was not only to consider what Graeco-Roman antiquity in general knew about Jews and Judaism, but also to appreciate the information the various authors had on the subject and their attitudes to it, a concern frequently discussed by him. In the present case it is of some interest to understand the reason for Plutarch not mentioning the king by name: the person in the dialogue to whom the above saying is ascribed is the sophist Herod.¹⁰

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identity of the king. Writing some 25 years after the appearance of the Loeb volume, which seems to reflect the scholarly consensus, we may perhaps assume silent assent.

⁷ These dates are frequently mentioned in Rabbinic literature, see S. Lieberman, 'Palestine in the 3rd and 4th Centuries', *JQR* 37 (1946), 51-52.

⁸ See, e.g., *GLAJJ* II, 665 (CLIV, 543), Macrobius *Sat.* 2.4.11, quoting the famous dictum ascribed to Augustus on preferring to be Herod's pig rather than his son.

⁹ *Expositio Totius Mundi et Gentium* 31, *GLAJJ* II, 496 (CXXXIV, 477).

¹⁰ See on him Theodorsson (above, n. 6), 198-9; again, the point of Plutarch's avoiding the name of the king is missed by him. Incidentally, the correspondence of the speaker's and the king's name vouches for the authenticity of the dialogue – the author would not have invented a detail posing a difficulty for his story.