

Josephus (A.D. 37-c. 100) was a Jewish statesman and soldier high in the esteem of the emperors Vespasian and Titus and the author of two historical works for a Roman audience: *Wars of the Jews* and *Antiquities of the Jews*. In Book XI of the latter work, Alexander emerges without preface, having crossed the Hellespont, won his first victory at the Granicus River, and subdued Asia Minor. Unlike other sources, Alexander is not the focus of Josephus' work—not even of the small segment of it in which he appears. The great conqueror is woven into another story, taking center stage only when he intersects the history of the Jewish people. Among the historians, Josephus alone reports this interaction, and he alone records that Alexander visited Jerusalem.

Alexander in Josephus

The story in which Alexander intervenes is concerned with Jewish national and religious identity. At the time of Alexander's advent in Asia, Jaddua is the high priest of the temple at Jerusalem. Jaddua's brother, Manasseh, was married to a Samaritan woman, a people with whom the Jews had long had a problematic relationship. The elders of the city, concerned that such a union in close proximity to the highest office could renew intermarriage with foreigners, commanded Manasseh to divorce his wife. Rather than be deprived of sacerdotal dignity, he agreed. But his father-in-law—Sanballat, Governor of Samaria—sought to dissuade him. Sanballat promised to build a new temple upon Mount Gerizim and to make Manasseh the high priest. But this promise could only be fulfilled with the approval and support of Darius III, the Great King of Persia. In this way, the long-standing division between the Jews and the Samaritans comes into contact with the fresh conflict between Darius and Alexander.

Alexander's victory at the Granicus River (334 B.C.) and march through Asia Minor roused Darius to check the invader's advance, eventually offering battle at Issus in Cilicia (333 B.C.). Supremely confident of Persian victory and the celebratory generosity that would presumably follow, Sanballat renewed his promises to Manasseh, but the Persians were crushed at Issus. Alexander continued his forward march into Syria. While besieging Tyre, he dispatched a letter to the Jewish high priest, commanding him to send men and provisions and in the future to remit whatever taxes he had previously given Darius to himself. Jaddua responded boldly that he had given his oath to Darius to never oppose him and that he would not break his word. Angered by this response, Alexander threatened to teach the high priest the realities of the new situation. Tyre fell after seven months of siege, and Alexander attacked the city of Gaza, the last holdout along the coast.

Sanballat, perceiving opportunity, had renounced Darius and marched to Alexander at Tyre with seven thousand men and pledged his loyalty. Received kindly, Sanballat pressed the matter of the new temple upon Alexander, arguing that it would be to the conqueror's

benefit to have the Jews divided and so less troublesome. Alexander granted his request, and Sanballat returned to Samaria, built the temple and installed his son-in-law as high priest.

When Gaza fell, Alexander turned his attention to Jerusalem. Jaddua, the high priest, was in great fear because he had refused Alexander's commands. He ordained that the people should make supplication to Alexander while beseeching God for His protection. God told him in a dream to be of good courage, open the city gates, and go forth with the priests to meet Alexander in all the trappings of their order.

As the conqueror approached, the priests and a multitude of citizens went forth to meet him. The Phoenicians, Chaldeans, and Syrians who accompanied Alexander expected the Jews to be punished for their disobedience, the high priest tortured, and Jerusalem given to them to plunder. They were amazed when Alexander saluted the high priest and adored the name of the Hebrew God. But only Parmenio, Alexander's longest-serving general, dared to ask the king why he had done these things. Alexander explained that while still in Macedonia a man dressed exactly as the high priest had exhorted him in a dream to press forward boldly and that he would be granted victory.

Alexander entered Jerusalem and sacrificed at the temple according to the high priest's direction. He was then shown the Book of Daniel and was told it indicated that a Greek would destroy the empire of the Persians, which he took to be a reference to himself.

Thereupon Alexander granted the Jews favors: they would be governed by the laws of their forefathers (extended also to the Jews living in Babylon and Media) and would pay no tribute on the seventh year.

Timing, Strategy, and Policy

Despite Alexander's irritation with Jaddua, going on to besiege Gaza instead of proceeding directly to Jerusalem lines up with what we know of Alexander's strategy. As elaborated by Arrian, he intended to seize the coast, securing Greece against Persian interference and buttressing the march into the heart of the Persian Empire. Persian-controlled Gaza was the last city on the road to Egypt, which he was also determined to control.

Alexander would have seen the journey as valuable, even necessary. He was concerned not merely with conquering but with setting up a sustainable governing structure in Asia. He intended no mere hit-and-run raid, but a steady, ordered conquest that replaced the rule of the Great King with his own. As a result, he was concerned to transfer the loyalties of the people he encountered to himself.