

The issue of "Yonatan" Alexander II coinage

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Abstract

A small number of coins in the series depicting a double cornucopia on the obverse and a legend "Ywnatan¹ (Jonathan) the High Priest and the Council of the Jews", within a wreath bear the name Yonatan-Ywntn instead the common Yehonatan and Yntr². These coins are attributed according to most scholars to Alexander Jannaeus. The author claims that another possibility exists, namely these coins were minted by another Hasmonean-Maccabean ruler also called Yonatan-Ywntn. that ruled after the death of Alexander Jannaeus and before the time of Mattathias Antigonus.

In his book Meshorer (Meshorer 2001) attributes the coin to Alexander Jannaeus and doesn't point to a specific reason to the name Yonatan-Ywnatan on the coin (S 32). Kaufman describes a number of coin types that bear the legend Ywnatan in his books (Kaufman 1995, 2004) marked HA-68,64,74,134,175,185,191,199³.

Even though the paleography seems similar, the author claims that despite the similarities in the name Yonatan to the attributed names for Alexander Jannaeus: Yehonatan and Yntn, this may be a Hasmonean ruler who bore the Hebrew name *Yonatan-Ywntan* and minted several coins right after Jannaeus' death. The referred period is a transitional one and if a die cutter who worked in Jannaeus' mint in Jerusalem, worked on an average of 20-25 years, he may have designed letters in a similar way to his work during the time following Jannaeus' death for another ruler that served as a High Priest and so the paleography on the coins is similar and exists in a series of coin types inscribed with the title "*High Priest*".

The author studied the minting of the coins in question with the inscription "*Ywnatan*" in several respects: a). The political situation in the period after the death of Alexander Jannaeus in 76 BCE until the beginning of the rule of Mattathias Antigonus IN 40 BCE. B). The common phenomenon of double names in Hasmonean dynasty and common use of names passing from father to son or from father to grandfather (Kindler 1991) (Rappaport 1993)². C) The likelihood that in 36 years there was no minting of coins.

The author focuses on the rebellions that occurred starting with the conquest of Jerusalem by Pompey in 63 BCE until the beginning of the reign of Mattathias Antigonus, according to Josephus. The latter does not mention in his writings the Hasmonean coins. The author assumes the political situation in Judea in 76-63 including the wars between the brothers

¹ יונתן - Yonatan

² ינתן - Yonatan or Yinatan

³ see photographs of the coins in: photos and charts

Hyrchanus II and Aristobulus II, did not allow the minting of the "Yonatan-Ywntn" coins. It should be noted that by the year 67 Queen Shlomzion, the wife of Alexander Jannaeus, controlled the Hasmonean kingdom. She did not serve as High Priest and thus she is not relevant to the matter in question.

There were three Hasmonean coins minters with the title of king existed: Alexander Jannaeus, Judah Aristobulus (Yehudah), Mattathias Antigonus (Mattatyah). Out of the three Judah did not mint the title "king" on his coins.

1. Examination of the political situation in 63-40 BCE according to Josephus

It must be noted that Alexander son of Aristobulus was the next potential candidate to receive the title of High Priest, in the Hasmonean dynasty in the generation following Hyrchanus II and Aristobulus II.

"...and Alexandros son of Aristobulus who had escaped from Pompey's captivity gathered a large force and bothered Hyrchanus, for he passed through Judea and almost put an end to his rule. For he had his heart set on going to Jerusalem and rebuilding its wall, which was destroyed by Pompey⁴" - (this is the time to mint "Ywnatar" coins)

Gabinius went to war with Alexandros he again besieged Alexandrion and Alexandros surrendered Hyrcania and Machaerus ... and then restored Gabinius Hyrcanus (II) to Jerusalem and gave him the charge of the temple ..."

Josephus. "War of the Jews". primer. Chapter VIII. the "Antiquities of the Jews" Chapter 12. (Translation from the Greek, Abraham Schalit 2003).

"Alexanderos son of Aristobulus then came back to power by force and criminalized, many Jews and moved with a large army throughout the country and killed all the Romans he struck them ... when Gabinius found in Syria... but he could not stop Alexander because he had thirty Thousand Jews and came towards Gabinius When he suffered a great defeat and ten thousand fell beside him at Mount Tabor... "

According to the source of Josephus, and based on Schalit's translation (2003) from Greek to Hebrew, Alexander II fled Pompey captivity, who exiled his family to Rome and rebelled. Alexander had a large army that ruled parts of the land of Judea, and according to the source "almost put an end to Hyrchanus II power and began building the wall of Jerusalem," meaning that this is a ruler who acted within the Hasmonean state, conquered Jerusalem and as evidence began building its wall. Hyrchanus II fled from Jerusalem as from the same source it can be understood that at a later stage in the rebellion "Gabinius returned Hyrcanus (II) to Jerusalem and gave him the charge of the Temple." meaning when Alexander conquered Jerusalem he took the charge of the Temple to himself, it is possible that it was a High Priesthood, in theory or in practice responsible for the custody of the Temple. At the same time he used the mint of Alexander Jannaeus and the staff that was employed in it, while

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Josephus, "wars of the Jews with the Romans" 2008, translation from Greek by Liza Ulman. Scientific editing and notes. Israel Shatzman. "Alexander son Aristobulus...seemed like he would soon end (Hyrchanus') rule for he already came to Jerusalem and brazenly began re-building the wall Pompey destroyed – if not overpowered by Gabinius...he later restored Hyrcanus to Jerusalem and charged him with the temple" *reference 169 – Hyrcanus was confirmed as High Priest.

using the inscription on the coin with his name. It may be that the Hebrew name *Yonatan-Ywnatan* used as the one he inherited from his grandfather and great grandfather and the sons of Mattathias the founder of the dynasty, being a High priest in charge of the temple according to Josephus. The other side of the coin was minted with the cornucopia as a common symbol on the previous Hasmonean coins.

As for Gabinius, in 61 he returned to Rome to serve as consul in 58 with Lucius Calpurnius. In 57 he was appointed governor of Syria as Proconsul and intervened in Judea by rebuilding Greek cities. This led to the resentment and uprising of Alexander II who raised an army of ten thousand infantry and a fifteen hundred horsemen. According to Josephus, Alexander II ruled the fortresses of Hyrcania, Alexandrion and Machaerus. Alexander II finally surrendered to Gabinius and was sent into exile to Rome in 57.

In 56 when Gabinius was in Egypt, Alexander II escaped from prison and recruited an army of thirty thousand soldiers. The uprising was renewed. Alexander was eventually defeated near Mount Tabor. His death is described by Josephus:
"...and Skipioas ordered by Pompey to kill Alexander son of Aristobulus ... executed by the gallows and so died Alexander in Antioch."

2. Analysis of the issue of the Hasmonean names:

The Hasmoneans used double names in Hebrew and Greek. An examination of the Hasmonean dynasty⁵ double names according to the research shows:
Hyrcanus' I Hebrew name based on his coins was Yehohanan (John).
Antigonus II Hebrew name based on his coins was Mattatyah (Mattathias).
Alexander Jannaeus' Hebrew name was Yehonatan (Jonathan) / Yntn. Alexander minted coins with the inscription High priest and King Alexander. Some of his coins were bilingual with his name in Hebrew and Aramaic. He also minted coins with his name in Aramaic.
Aristobulus' I Hebrew name Yehudah, (Judah). Despite being king he also minted coins with the title of High Priest.

The Hasmonean used names who passed from father to son or grandfather to grandson, as is sometimes the case with many Jewish families commemorating the great grandfather or grandfather who died. Some examples of the method of transfer of the Hasmonean dynasty names: the name Mattathias founder of the dynasty may be transferred to his grandson, the son of Simon and brother of John (Yehohanan) Hyrcanus I. It is unknown whether Antigonus I son of John Hyrcanus I received the name. On the other hand we know Antigonus son of Aristobulus II who ruled between years 40-37 carried the name Mattathias according to his coins.

John Hyrcanus' I Hebrew name according to most scholars in the past - was Yehohanan, a name he probably inherited from his uncle. The name probably passed to Hyrcanus II. It should be noted that at first a lot of the scholars attributed some of the coins bearing the inscription "*Yehohanan the High priest and the Council of the Jews*" to Hyrcanus II, who served as High Priest in 63-40.

Yehudah's Hebrew name, was used in almost every generation in the dynasty beginning with Judah the son of the founder of the dynasty, which then passed to Judah, the brother of John

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see chart of Hasmonean dynasty at the end of the article

Hyrchanus I. During the next generation it passed to Yehudah(Judah) Aristobulus I, then to Aristobulus II, who may have carried at the same time his uncle's name in Greek.

The name Yehonatan (Jonathan) passed from the son of the founder of the dynasty Jonathan to Alexander Jannaeus I who received the Hebrew name Yehonatan (Jonathan) / Yntn from his grandfather. Did the son of Aristobulus II, who also carried the name of Alexander II, get the corresponding name in Hebrew Yonatan (Jonathan) from his grandfather Alexander Jannaeus I or on loan from his great grandfather Jonathan?

The names: Elazar (Lazarus), Simon and Avshalom according to the dynasty were not transferred to future generations.

The author offers four double - common names that were in use as a method of the Hasmonean dynasty:

Mattatyah (Mattathias)- Antigonus

Yehudah (Judah) - Aristobulus

Yehonatan (Jonathan) / Yntn / Yonatan or Yinatan - Alexander

Yehohanan (John) - Hyrcanus.

The author argues that Alexander II may have gotten the name Ywnatan (Jonathan) A). Assuming that the Hasmonean dynasty adopted double permanent names, in Greek parallel to the same names in Hebrew. B) In terms of the names of Alexander II, family members names it seems that each generation carried a name that isn't similar in the same generation. His brother Antigonus carried the name Mattatyah (Mattathias). His father Aristobulus II must have carried the name Yehudah (Judah). His uncle Hyrcanus II, apparently carried the name Yehohanan (John), his grandfather's Hebrew name. Therefore, only one name remained, for Alexander II to adopt – Yehonatan (Jonathan). This was done to avoid duplicate names in the same generation.

3. Transition period without minting

It is the authors` opinion that it wasn't economically realistic not to mint coins in the Hasmonean state for 36 years, meaning from 76 to 40, when at that particular time there was a population growth. We know that that the Hasmonean state suffered wars and revolts and required a steady flow of additional coins, both to finance military expenses, other expenses and market expenses. The Hasmonean ruler had to mint additional coins to finance these expenditures.

4. Coin minting in Eretz Israel by Jewish rebels during the Roman period.

Large scale revolts occurred in Israel during the Roman period. It was customary for most rebel leaders under the Roman rule to mint bronze coins during the revolt. The coins were used for propaganda, advertising the rebellious rule, promoting the goals of the rebels and to help meet the needs of the market and the armies in the regions under the rebels' control.

During times of revolts additional coins were required to finance the revolt, thus minting of coins by the rebels somewhat corresponded with the dimensions of the revolts.

The following are a few examples of Jewish revolts in addition to that of Alexander II in which coins were minted by rebels:

a). The revolt by Alexander II's brother, Mattathias Antigonus. Mattathias minted bronze coins in Jerusalem during the revolt against the Romans and the struggle against his rival Herod.

B). During the Great revolt against the Romans, the rebels minted bronze and silver coins in Jerusalem. In addition the rebels minted unique bronze coins at Gamla in the Golan.

c). Bar-Kochba minted bronze and silver coins during the Revolt against the Romans.

Conclusions:

Further to the above, the author suggested that Alexander II, under the circumstances probably minted the coins bearing the legend *"Ywnatan the High priest and the Council of the Jews"*,

From the political situation as described by Josephus, it seems that Alexander II may have rebelled and ruled for a number of years. Sufficiently long to mint coins. Exact data regarding the reigning years of Alexander II were apparently not at Josephus' disposal based on documentation of events relating to Alexander II, but time can be estimated by the leaders as subject to events that appear in Josephus' writings. If we examine the revolt leaders situation – Alexander II, his capabilities and the strength of the forces at his disposal according to Josephus' description it seems Alexander was a military leader who recruited twice substantial forces and brought to the removal of his uncle Hyrcanus II from Jerusalem, ruled and built its walls (he apparently didn't complete them). It may be that parallel to his actions to stabilize his reign in the regions and serving at the temples charge, he acted in the same way previous Hasmonean rulers did and minted a series of coins with the same model carrying the name *"Yonatan-Ywnatan"*. Josephus' testimony attests to the fact that Gabinius gave the charge of the temple to Hyrcanus II. Apparently the fact that Alexander II held the position of High Priest, is shown by the fact that the coins were minted without the monarchy symbols as the coins of his grandfather the king Alexander I – Yehonatan (Jonathan) / Yntn, meaning "King Alexander", but coins with the legend *"Ywnatan the High Priest and the Council of the Jews"* include only the title of High Priest.

The author assumes based on the double Hebrew – Greek names that there is a pattern to the Hasmonean dynasty, until the death of Mattathias Antigonus the last of the Hasmonean kings, in transferring the names from father to son, from grandfather to grandson, when the name in Hebrew is the basic name. Thus the Hebrew name must be taken assuming there's no duplicate name in the same generation. The author also examined lists of High Priests from the Persian period and found no duplication of names in that generation. In the authors view the Greek names are the same at all times according to the Hebrew name, which means there is no duplication of names in Hebrew – Greek at the same generation, thus the author sees that in addition to Alexander Jannaeus, Alexander II bearing the name of his grandfather Alexander Jannaeus – Yehonatan / Yntn validate his Hebrew name Yonatan-Ywnatan.

Photos and chart



Alexander Jannaeus coin bearing the legend Yntn



Alexander Jannaeus coins with an overstrike minting



Alexander Jannaeus coin bearing the legend Yehonatan



(משורר ש 32)

Meshorer 2001 S32 . Yonatan-Ywntn coins



HA-64

HA-68

HA-74



HA134



HA175



HA185

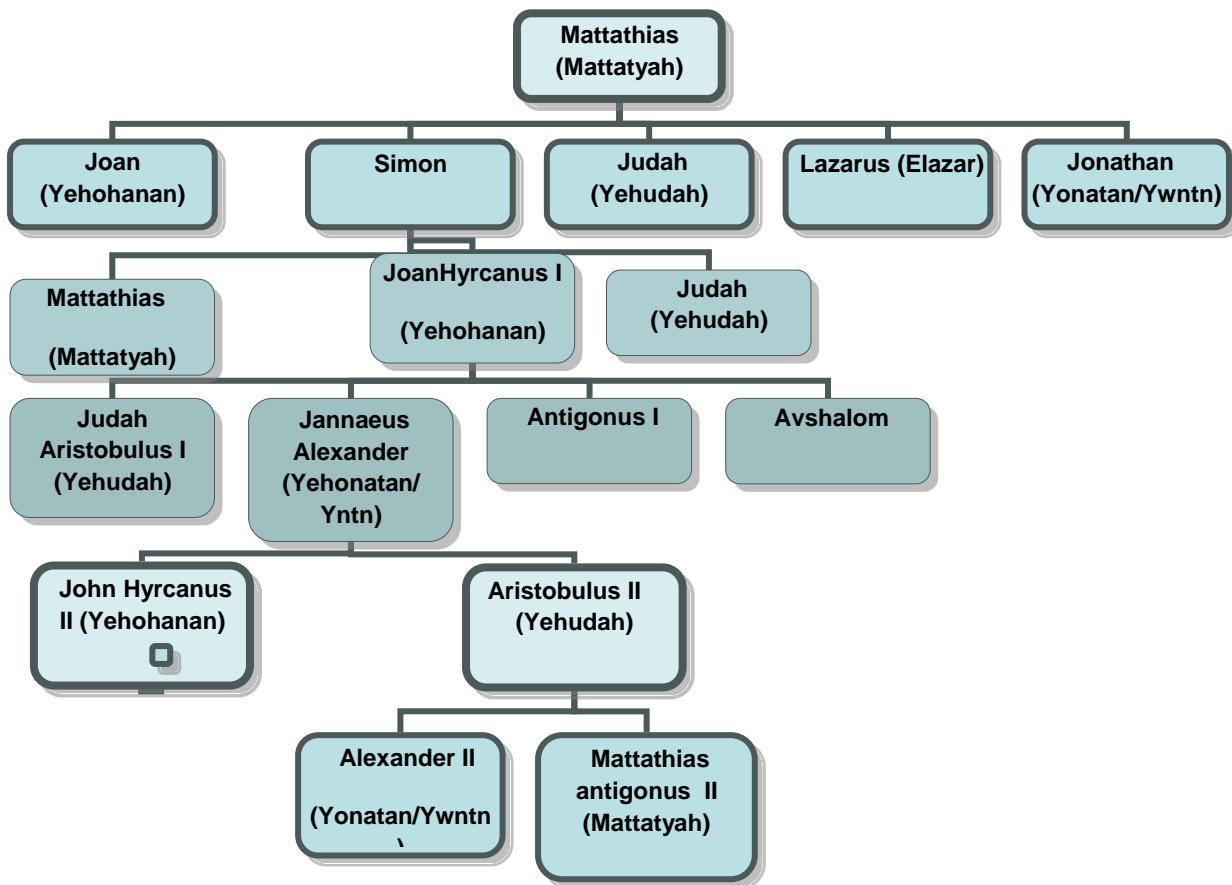


HA191



HA199

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