Two a-typical Jewish families in the Greco-Roman period

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ABSTRACT
Following an overview and evaluation of recent research on the roles, stratifications and structures of Jewish families in the Greco-Roman period, the behaviour of the Maccabean family and the household of Judith is examined. In view of the 'a-typical' traits reflected in their behaviour, the article concludes with a call for more nuanced research into individual Jewish families during the Greco-Roman period.

1 INTRODUCTION
Judging from the large number of recent publications on the family and related matters in antiquity, it is clear that historians and biblical scholars nowadays share a renewed interest in the make-up, functions and general characteristics of families in the ancient Mediterranean world (cf. Van der Horst 1993; Noy 1994). Although a number of influential works on Jewish families in the Greco-Roman period have recently been published (cf. Kramer 1989; Cohen 1993), studies on Roman families, however, seem to dominate this field of research (cf. Bradley 1991; Gardner & Wiedemann 1991; Treggiari 1991; Dixon 1992).

Our focus in this article is on the Jewish family in particular; or rather: on two a-typical Jewish families in the Second Temple period that do not always match up to the general picture presented to us by researchers in recent publications (cf section 2). We start off this contribution with an introductory survey of relevant studies pertinent to Jewish families in antiquity. In the second part of the study we shall analyse the textual evidence regarding two extraordinary families or households in the literary sources of the Second Temple period, if only because of our observation that it is important not to attempt too quickly to construct the image of the so-called typical Jewish family in antiquity. If, for instance, one reads the popular novels by Chaim Potok with an eye on Jewish family life in modern America, one quickly understands that there is a wide gap between a family in chassidic circles and one which adheres to a conservative or even liberal synagogue. In antiquity too, there will have been considerable differences between various Jewish families.
2 SOME RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON JEWISH FAMILIES IN ANTIQUITY

2.1 Shemuel Safrai

In an overview of Jewish life in the first century CE, (cf Safrai & Stern 1987) Safrai deals with the home of the family as well as with family life in general. His remarks such as that a Jewish family usually lived in a middle-sized or small town, shared a courtyard with other families and lived in a house with at least two storeys, tend to create a rather uniform picture of Jewish families during this period. This impression is strengthened by sentences like: 'Although there were many families whose dwellings comprised only one room which served as living quarters for the entire household—kitchen, dining and living room and bedroom—most families had more than one' (1987:732).

Safrai's description of the relations between family members and various aspects of their social life is in agreement with this impression. For example, when discussing the baking of bread, which was supposed to be a weekly task for the whole family, Safrai writes that the biblical picture of 'the children gathering wood, the fathers kindling the fire, and the women kneading the dough (Jer 7:18)', remained the general custom in first century Jewish families as well (1987:740).

2.2 Leonie Archer

In her monograph Her price is beyond rubies: The Jewish woman in Graeco-Roman Palestine (1990), Leonie Archer deals with the social and legal position of Jewish women during the Greco-Roman period. However, due to the interrelatedness of her topic of investigation and family life in general, she focuses on many aspects of the Jewish family. For example, she analyses the role of the unbetrothed adult, the married woman, the divorcee, the widow and the deceased woman in relation to the rest of the family. Archer's aim in this regard is to understand the dynamics of the 'lifestyle of the “ordinary” or “average” woman in Graeco-Roman Palestine' (1990:11).

Archer makes it clear that according to all Jewish literary records, through the so-called intertestamental literature to the works of the philosophers and the rabbinic writings, Jewish families were patriarchally structured, with all authority vested in the person of the father. Daughters remained under the control (potestas) of their fathers until they got married, while married women on their part were subject to the authority of their husbands. In these societies structured along rigidly patriarchal lines, women were not allowed to act independently of male control (1990:210ff). As a matter of fact, this almost servile position of the woman was reinforced by duties of a personal nature that she was obliged to perform for her husband, such as
making his bed, and washing his face, hands and feet. On refusal to render these 'services' she was liable to a fine (1990:225). Male dominance was further underscored by the fact that only a father could perform the various religious duties required by law toward his children, and that only he was responsible for their education.

Archer's study provides us with a scenario of a gender-based Jewish society in the Greco-Roman period which ascribed clearcut gender characteristics to men and women. Her analysis of this society's culturally constructed male fear of women, together with all the societal needs these cultural scripts served, enhances this picture of male dominance within the sphere of the Jewish family.

2.3 Amy-Jill Levine

A more nuanced picture of Jewish families in general and Jewish women in particular emerges from the book *Women like this: New perspectives on Jewish women in the Greco-Roman period* (1991), edited by Amy-Jill Levine. Realising that any construction of the role and position of Jewish women at the same time implies a construction of male roles within society, Bow and Nickelsburg in this regard (:128–143) focus on different male and female characters in the book of Tobit. According to them a patriarchal system is portrayed in this narrative, in which the roles played by the characters are determined by gender. The women operate within the domestic sphere and concern themselves with family and household matters, while the men operate within the public sphere as well as in the private world of the family. They also partake in all religious matters on behalf of their families. Bow and Nickelsburg, however, also point to a few twists in the story of Tobit. In this regard they discuss certain tensions between the dominant patriarchal structure, and some aspects of the characterisation in the story, by reflecting on a female figure named Anna who frequently ventures into the male dominated public sphere.

Claudi Camp (:1–39), on her part, deals with the intellectual-affective processes at work in Jesus Ben Sira's description of women. Analysing his well-known work from an anthropological perspective, she then concludes that 'both money and women are overdetermined symbols of male honor, which has to do, in this case at least, with the need for external signs of control: they are the sigla of manliness' (:38).

Some of the other essays point toward a more 'humane' Jewish system in operation during the Greco-Roman period, since they suggest from different perspectives that this family system was not as repressive as certain scholars make it out to be.
2.4 Shaye Cohen

In a collection of essays on rabbinical and non-rabbinical texts entitled *The Jewish family in antiquity* (1993), edited by Shaye Cohen, different aspects of Jewish family life in antiquity are addressed. Apart from the provocative investigation by Miriam Peskowitz (:9-36) in which she discusses the fact that the concept ‘family’ is a complex cultural construction which is embedded in a web of different religious and social concerns, and that Jewish families existed in plural socio-historical forms in antiquity, the other essays deal with the generally accepted division of roles within the patriarchal Jewish familial system. For example, Larry Yarbrough (:39-59), in his analysis of the obligations parents and children owed to each other, and after looking at some examples from the Hellenistic moralists, concludes that according to the available material, Jewish families were not distinctive in this regard. According to him, ‘both Jewish and Hellenistic moralists argued that parents had obligations to their children and children to their parents’ (:56).

Ross Kraemer (:89-112), on her part, points out that ‘traditional’ Jewish regulations of marriage, divorce and child custody shared several salient features with Roman law. For example: divorce was permissible, and children of legal marriages belonged to their fathers in the event of a divorce. Only one point of difference existed between Jewish and Roman women, namely that of the acceptance of polygamy by Jewish law.

2.5 Bruce Malina

In the revised edition of his study *The New Testament world: Insights from cultural anthropology* (1993), Malina analyses the ancient Mediterranean world on a very high level of abstraction. His point of departure in this anthropological analysis is that the different cultural groups in the ancient world shared sufficient meanings and symbols, and also drew their boundaries around time and space in such similar fashion that they formed what he calls ‘a Mediterranean culture.’ As a matter of fact, ancient Mediterranean people held such similar views on a variety of issues that Malina even contrasts typical Mediterranean preferences to childbearing with modern emerging preferences in the United States (:56-58).

Malina shares the notion of a patriarchally dominated Mediterranean social system with the male as the head of the household and the females always under his control. In this regard he deals with salient features of the Mediterranean kinship system by focusing on typical Jewish marriage conventions (:117-148), as well as other distinctive features of Jewish kinship norms, such as emphasis on the male line of descent, patrilocal marriage, extended family living arrangements and the family as unit of production.
2.6 Tal Ilan

In a recent monograph, *Jewish women in Greco-Roman Palestine* (1995), Tal Ilan surveys aspects of Jewish family life in relation to the role of women. She focuses on aspects such as birth, marriage, divorce, religious matters, and the role of women in public. Admitting that the available sources for research of this kind are of diverse backgrounds, and also serve different, conflicting purposes, she does not find a uniform picture of the family in general and women in particular during the Greco-Roman period. She states that Jewish society during this time was ‘highly heterogeneous.’ Different groups and families lived by different versions of Jewish law (1995:228).

According to Ilan, literature from this time presents us with an idealistic picture of Jewish society: women provide what is asked of them, be it doing housework, remaining faithful to their husbands, or producing legal heirs. Men, on their part, avoid contact with other women and provide for their families. According to Ilan, some of the surviving tannaitic sources on Jewish family life, such as Ben Sira and Josephus, belonged to the so-called upper-middle and aristocratic classes. Within these circles a more uniform approach to social matters involving the women and other family members is to be found.

2.7 A typical Jewish family in antiquity?

In the above mentioned works on Jewish families in the Greco-Roman period, quite a number of generalisations regarding the familial structures, roles and customs are to be found. In order to form an impression of the general direction of research in this regard, a few brief methodological remarks need to be made.

Firstly, terminological clarity is urgently needed in studies on Jewish families. The concept ‘the Jewish family’ is frequently used by researchers in an uncritical, almost timeless manner, as if all Jewish people during the period(s) in question shared the same conceptualisations in this regard. Scholars should take cognizance of recent research on Roman family/ies which has opened up some new vistas by moving away from theoretical constructs of the ancient Roman family based on kinship terminology to the study of ‘hard data’, that is, actual behaviour, documented norms and expressions of feelings (cf Dixon 1992:1-35).

In the second place, and closely linked to our first methodological remark, research on Jewish families should be undertaken at a much lower level of abstraction. The terminological confusion with regard to concepts such as ‘the Jewish family’, or ‘the Jewish female’, is caused by generalisations. A number of scholars obviously want to provide us with scenarios,
with general pictures of what the Jewish family looked like and how it functioned during the Greco-Roman period. Therefore, they seem to be more interested in commonly shared conceptualisations of, say, Jewish gender roles, than in case studies of specific Jewish families. Although this type of ‘scenario-research’ has a legitimate place, it becomes one-sided if the peculiarities of specific Jewish families and their interaction with their respective socio-historical environments are not taken into consideration.

By focusing on the impact of socio-cultural factors in the Mediterranean world, such as regional customs, different perceptions of the family in the different social classes, the functions of different, culturally-defined conceptualisations of the family in Palestine and the Diaspora, and the influence of historical catastrophes such as wars and famines on specific families, a more nuanced picture of Jewish families could eventually emerge. By also simultaneously viewing Jewish families from various angles of incidence (as socio-economic units, cultural products, or historical entities), the present picture of ‘the Jewish family’ could be replaced by a historically more viable picture of people of flesh and blood who interacted with their environments and whose respective roles and identities were influenced and/or nuanced by these social interactions.

Thirdly, primary sources for the reconstruction of ‘Jewish families’ in the Greco-Roman period should be used more carefully, so as not to draw overhasty conclusions. The nature and reliability of the sources being used in each instance should also be spelled out explicitly, since one-sided, even contradicting, images of Jewish families often emerge, depending on the sources used by the various researchers. Safrai’s previously quoted essay may be used as an example in this regard. His survey is largely based on rabbinic sources, and the validity of his conclusions depends on his assessment of the influence of rabbinic halakha on the family in Israel and the Diaspora. But can we assume that this halakha was more or less uniform and widely practiced or not? Besides, other literary as well as non-literary sources seem to be relevant too. This implies that the description of Safrai should be appended by material like the important Babatha archive. Let us include one example to illustrate this statement. It concerns the issue of polygamy: Biblical law allowed a man to marry more than one woman. But the question is whether this was taken into practice. Safrai writes: ‘Family life was generally built around a monogamous marriage. Tannaitic literature contains no discussion of contemporary concubinage...’ (1987:748). Somewhat further on he acknowledges a few cases of bigamy in upper class circles, but states: ‘Various halakhic and haggadic statements, however, are based upon the assumption of monogamy, and also plainly recommend the practice’ (1987:749). Now, according to the Babatha archive, the Jewish woman Babatha had at least one
son by her first husband Jesus. After the death of this Jesus, Babatha married Judah, the son of Eleazar. But Judah already had another wife with the name Miriam. Judah and Miriam had a daughter together, named Shelamzion.

This type of evidence for polygamous marriage in the Babatha archive clearly demands a re-evaluation of the role of polygamy in Jewish families in Palestine and the Diaspora.

3 THE MACCABEES

In the remaining part of this paper we will concentrate on the images of a few Jewish families in post-biblical Jewish literary sources, and especially on the role of men and women in connection to the family. Although these images relate somehow to the reality of Jewish women, men, children and slaves, we do not intend to draw conclusions on the representativeness of these images. We only note that they seem to confirm the impression that the life of Jewish families could vary a lot and that we should therefore speak of 'Jewish families' rather than of 'the Jewish family' (cf also Peskowitz 1993a:13).

The most famous Jewish family of the Second Temple period may very well be the family of the Maccabees. Its successful history climaxing in the foundation of an autonomous Jewish state in the forties of the second century BCE, is described in the First Book of Maccabees and in Josephus' Antiquitates. The family produced a dynasty of rulers which lasted until Herod the Great, who, as is well known, was married to Mariamme, a woman from the Hasmonean family. We would like to focus here on the First Book of Maccabees, which presents itself as a history of liberation of the Jewish nation. It can also be characterised as the history of the rise of a dynasty of rulers. Of course one can look at the composition of 1 Maccabees from various perspectives (cf Martola 1984). In any case, the political liberation of the Jews in Palestine and the rise of the Maccabean family go hand in hand. The war of independence as the counterpart of the oppression by Antiochus 4 is described in three units, which all end with a feast of deliverance: after the recapture and cleansing of the temple, the Feast of Dedication (Chanukkah) is held, which is established as an annual feast beginning on the twenty-fifth day of Chislev (1 Macc 4:52-59). The defeat of Nicanor is also celebrated annually on the the thirteenth day of Adar (1 Macc 7:48-49). After the elimination of the final remnant of Gentile oppression, the so-called Day of Nicanor (2 Macc 15:36) is also instituted.

The Jewish liberators are, of course, the Maccabees, and in particular Simon. For instance, in 1 Macc 14:26, at the beginning of the decree of honour of the Jewish people for Simon, we read: 'For he and his brothers and the house of his father have stood firm; they have fought and repulsed Israel's
enemies and established its freedom' (cf 14:36; 16:2). The war of liberation comes to a climax in the time of Simon, but his period is at the same time a period of transition to the reign of his successor, his son John Hyrcanus. This appears from several details in the text. The famous decree of honour for Simon is, as a matter of fact, meant for 'Simon and his sons' as is stated twice (14:25; 49). It is also suggested that Simon's sons had already performed beneficial acts to Israel (14:25). Here we read: "When the people heard these things they said, "How shall we thank Simon and his sons?"" In chapter 16 the treacherous murder of Simon and his sons Judas and Mattathias is described, as well as John's succession of his father. This means that three generations of the family are presented in the book: the priest Mattathias, his five sons, and his grandchildren. We assume that this data is familiar to our intended readers. What surprised us at a new reading of the book is that the perspective of the family is present in the book from chapter 2-16 and that belonging to this unique family is emphasised time and again. Let us go into details for a moment:

The family is presented firstly by the figure of Mattathias, the father of the Maccabees. From his genealogy in 1 Maccabees 2:1 it appears that he was a priest from the family of Joarib. A reference to this genealogy is given in connection to Simon in 14:29. Mattathias did not belong to the family of the legitimate highpriests, as appears from the support which the Hasideans provided to Alcimus who was of the line of Aaron (7:13-14). The native town of the family seems to have been Modein (seventeen miles northwest of Jerusalem), in spite of the mention in 2:1 that Mattathias moved from Jerusalem to Modein (2:15, 23, 70; 9:19). Mattathias and Judas the Maccabee were buried in the tomb of their ancestors at Modein, and Jonathan was given an enormous tomb in Modein as well (13:25-30). According to chapter 13:25, Modein is the city of Jonathan's ancestors. Mattathias is invited by officers of the Seleucid king to offer the sacrifices which were charged by Antiochus, because he was a leader, an honoured man in the town of Modein (2:17). In connection to their follow up with Simon as the undisputed leader of the Jewish people and the legitimate highpriest, the details in this passage imply an enormous progress in the status of the family. Within two generations the Maccabees have moved up from being the local elite in the town of Modein to being the leaders of the Jewish people.

According to 1 Maccabees 2:2-5 Mattathias has five sons: John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar and Jonathan. All of them figure in the struggle for liberation

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1 The scene in 1 Macc 2:15-28 is inspired by the performance of Phinehas in Num 25 (cf 1 Macc 2:54) and corresponds to a certain extent to a story of martyrdom (cf Van Henten 1989:151-159).
and all die in harness, but only Judas, Jonathan and Simon are prominent.\textsuperscript{2} The bond between Mattathias and his sons is very strong. In chapter 2 we find the expressions ‘Mattathias and his sons’ (2:14, 16), ‘he and his sons’ (2:28) or ‘I and my sons’ (2:20; cf also 2:17, 49). Mattathias sets the trend by his refusal to sacrifice. He also gives the starting signal for the rebellion, and his loyal sons put up the fight. Mattathias’ testament (2:49–69)—cf also Von Nordheim 1980), which ends with the blessing of his sons, contains the programme for the liberation of Israel, and also shows, together with the decree for Simon and his sons in chapter 14, the legitimacy of the Maccabean leadership. The sons fulfil the conditions of their father and their success proves that they obeyed their father, which implies that they stayed loyal to the covenant of the forefathers, kept the law and its ordinances (2:19–22, 67–68), and fought for the sanctuary (13:3; 14:29). Their deeds show the support of the Lord, and their performance corresponds in this respect to that of the judges (3:6; 14:36; 16:2). In 14:36, for example, it is stated: ‘In his days (the days of Simon) things prospered in his hands, so that the Gentiles were put out of the country, as were also those in the city of David in Jerusalem...’ As a matter of fact, 1 Maccabees contains several references to the salvation of Israel through Judas the Maccabee and his brothers, which echo phrases in passages on the judges. These support the construction of the Maccabees as new judges who restore the ideal theocratic state, which automatically affirms the divine support for their leadership. An example or two may suffice. There is a climax in the period of rest for the land of Judah after deliverances by Judas, Jonathan and Simon, running from a few days to two years to all the days of Simon (1 Macc 7:50; 9:57; 14:4). The terminology in these verses corresponds to the formula which concludes the period of a judge (Judges 3:11, 30; 5:31; 8:28—cf Janssen 1971:44; Enermalm-Ogawa 1987:21). After Samson’s victory over a thousand Philistines he says to the Lord: ‘You have granted this great victory by the hand of your servant’ (Judg 15:18; cf Judg 6:36f; 2 Sam 3:18). A similar phrase expressing the salvation of the Lord by the hand of his servant, the judge, occurs in connection to Judas the Maccabee (cf the song of praise for him in 1 Macc 3:1–9).

Mattathias’ testament already hints at a dynasty of leaders. After the death of Mattathias the brothers act against their non-Jewish enemies in close harmony (cf phrases such as: ‘Judas (or he) and his brothers’—5:63, 65; 7:6, 27). Similar phrases occur concerning Simon, who succeeds Jonathan (13:3; 14:18, 26). In some of these passages we also find the expression ‘the house of my father’ (13:3; 14:26; 16:2), which already points to the idea of a dynasty. It

\textsuperscript{2} Eleazar dies in an attempt to kill the Seleucid king (1 Macc 6:43–46), which is similar to an act of devotio (cf Van Henten 1989). John is killed by the family of Jambri from Medeba (9:35–42). In 2:42, 50; 9:10; 13:4 and 14:29 it is emphasised that the
is interesting that there are also several references to the third generation. In the first place there is the phrase 'Simon and his sons' (which occurs in 14:25, 49; 16:13, 16), and secondly an authorisation of his sons by Simon which reminds one of the testament of Mattathias: 'Simon called in his two eldest sons Judas and John, and said to them: "...I have grown old, and you by Heaven's mercy are mature in years. Take my place and my brother's and go out and fight for our nation, and may the help that comes from Heaven be with you"' (16:2–3). Because of the death of his two brothers, John is the only son of Simon who enjoys this sanction. In fact, the last chapter of 1 Maccabees is focused on him (where John continues to struggle against Kendebeaus while his brother Judas is wounded, which means that the whole construction of legitimate rulership by the Maccabees is to his benefit). One can consider 1 Maccabees as a preamble to his reign, which makes it plausible that the book was composed during his life. According to 14:41 it is stated, probably with an eye on later generations, that the assembly of the people and the priests proclaimed that the leadership of Simon and his high priesthood would last forever. The Greek phrase eis ton aiona in this verse reminds one of the high priesthood of Phinehas's family and the kingship of David's family which was also eternal according to Mattathias's testament (2:57: thronos basileias eis aionas. Cf also Num 25 and 2 Sam 7).

We would like to go still one step further and consider whether the Jewish nation almost became the household of the Maccabean family. Not only does 1 Maccabees suggest that the Maccabean brothers are the actual leaders of the Jewish people (that is, from the time of the death of their father), but also that they seem to determine the economic life of the nation (cf 3:1 where Judas Maccabaeus takes command in the place of his father). The Maccabees take the initiative with deeds which have consequences for the whole nation. Judas chooses the blameless priests who have to restore the sanctuary (4:42), and he and his brothers and the whole assembly of Israel determine that the feast of dedication should be celebrated each year (4:59). The Jewish ambassadors Eupolemos and Jason introduce themselves to the Roman senate as follows: 'Judas, who is also called Maccabaeus, and his brothers and the people of the Jews have sent us to you to establish alliance and peace with you...' (8:20; 10:5; 12:3, 6; 13:36; etc). The honorary decree, Maccabees risked their lives for the saving of their people.

3 The rulership may concern all three categories of traditional Israelite leadership: the high priesthood forever (14:41, 47; cf 2:54), political and military leadership (in fact kingship, 14:41, 47; cf 2:57), and even prophecy. The references to prophets (4:46; 9:27 and especially 14:41) may imply that John claimed the gift of prophecy for himself (cf Van Henten 1989).
(14:25-49) depicts Simon as a benefactor who financed the war of independence and is given the absolute leadership of the people in return. 1 Maccabees 14:32-35 reads as follows:

then Simon rose up and fought for his nation. He spent great sums of his own money; he armed the soldiers of his nation and paid them wages. He fortified the towns of Judea and Beth-Zur on the borders of Judea...He also fortified Joppa, which is by the sea, and Gazara, which is on the borders of Azotus...He settled Jews there, and provided in those towns whatever was necessary for their restoration.

His reward is indicated in 14:41-47. In these verses it is stated that Simon should be governor over the Jewish people and should take charge of the sanctuary and appoint officials over its tasks and over the country (14:42), and that he should be obeyed by all (14:43). According to 14:47 Simon accepted the high priesthood, the chief military command, the leadership of the ethnos and the priests, and to be the protector of all (prostatesai panton). Thus Simon is not only the father of the Maccabees, as Mattathias suggested (2:65), but he appears almost as the father of the Jewish nation.

The Maccabean brothers are presented as the saviours of Israel like the judges and kings of old times (3:6, 18; 9:21, 73; 13:4). The make-up of the family is very masculine: hardly a woman of the family is mentioned, although several women are presupposed as the mothers of the Maccabean brothers and their sons (13:16–19, 53; 16). Only the mother of the Maccabean brothers is mentioned once anonymously in connection to the family tomb (13:28). From Josephus we hear more about the women of the Maccabean family. Well known is the criticism of John Hyrcanus by Eleazar the Pharisee, who teases John by suggesting that his mother was a captive of Antiochus 4, so that he did not match the laws concerning the suitability to the high priesthood (Josephus, AJ 13.288–92; Lev 21:14). Other women do appear in 1 Maccabees, together with other categories of the Jewish population, for example in the context of references to oppression or mourning (1:26–27; 2:29, 38; 3:20; 5:13). 1 Maccabees shares with 2 and 4 Maccabees the tradition that women who had circumcised their sons in spite of the interdiction by Antiochus 4 were executed with their babies (1 Macc 1:60–61; 2 Macc 6:10; 4 Macc 4:25). But the deliverance of Israel happens only by the hand of the Maccabees.\(^4\) The story is very androcentric. Let us recall for a moment the scene where Mattathias refuses to sacrifice according to the king’s order. The officers of Antiochus say to him: ‘You are a leader, honoured and great in

\(^4\) Cf the contrast with Joseph and Azarja who fail because they do not belong to the Maccabean family (5:18, 55-62).
this town, and supported by sons and brothers... Then you and your sons will be numbered among the friends of the king, and you and your sons will be honoured with silver and gold and many gifts' (2:17–18). One may think that this androcentric saying should be linked with the non-Jewish outside world, but it is nevertheless completely in line with the tenor of the rest of the book. There are other examples of a family of a heroic father and loyal sons and no mother. Taxo and his seven sons in the Ascension of Moses (chapter 9), who retreat to a cave in the field and await their death, form a parallel (Tromp 1992:223–227). The opposite to this situation would be the anonymous Maccabean mother and her seven anonymous sons (2 Macc 7:4; 4 Macc 8–18). The mother acts contrary to the obligation to raise her children by encouraging their sons to die for the law and the Lord. The author of 4 Maccabees elaborates this motif by the use of several metaphors which were rhetorical topoi, and stresses that the mother disregarded her motherly affection for their sons (cf already 2 Macc 7:20). This is in line with the philosophical argument of the book: 'For the law prevails even over affection for parents, so that virtue is not abandoned for their sakes' (4 Macc 2:10).

4 JUDITH

After our discussion of 1 Maccabees the reader will not be surprised by the statement found in several studies that women were dependent on men, that is, on their husbands, or substitutes in the case of widowship. We will not challenge this view, but Judith is an amazing exception in this connection (cf van Henten 1994). The dependence of women appears also from rabbinic sources, for example from the Mishna tractate Ketuboth. In this tractate are provisions indicated for a woman when her husband had to go abroad. The minimum amount of food the husband had to provide included among other things two cobs of wheat [cob=2.2 litres], half a cob of pulse, half a log [-0.5 litre] of oil, one cob of dried figs or other fruits (Safrai 1987:747). Another proof of this dependence is the levirate marriage, which offered protection to the widow and the possibility of a descendant for her deceased husband. In case a man died without leaving a descendant, one of his brothers was supposed to marry the widow (Deut 25:5–6). Of course this applies to a son in

5 According to mKetub 5.5 a married woman has to grind flour, bake, launder, cook, nurse her children, make the beds and spin wool. This implies only activities within the private life of the family. Cf Safrai (1987:761): 'No legal obligation for wives to assist their husbands at work in the fields is mentioned, but this seems to have been the custom, particularly during the seasons of fruit collecting and harvest, and some even obtained employment together with their husbands, as fruitpickers.'
Deuteronomy 25, but according to later traditions also to a daughter (Josephus AJ 4.254; Luke 20:28).

Judith has a household of her own. Her husband Manasseh had died and had left her gold and silver, men and women slaves, livestock, and fields (8:7). The same verse tells that Judith maintained this estate. The extremely pious Judith was a widow for forty months (8:4), which means that the normal period for mourning was certainly over. To remarry, a widow had to wait only long enough to be certain that she was not already pregnant at the time of her second marriage, so she had to wait at least until the end of the first thirty days of mourning. Nevertheless, Judith kept wearing sackloth around her waist and dressing in widow's clothing after the forty months after the death of her husband. This can be linked to Judith's great piety, but may have an economic dimension too (cf Cohen 1993:2). By not marrying again, Judith remained the owner of the estate. Of course, Judith is depicted as an ideal woman, a model for Israel. But it is nevertheless interesting to look at her story from the perspective of the family and the relations between men and women. It is also tempting to compare her story to that of the Maccabean family.

For the book of Judith Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes (1986:123-147) assumed a process of domesticating women in her discussion of three biblical women who are called 'blessed among women', namely Deborah, Judith and Mary. She considers the story of Judith as a reproductive reception of Judges 4 and 5. She points to the fact that in Judith 13:18 men are blessing Judith: 'Then Uzziah said to her, "O daughter, you are blessed by the Most High God above all other women on earth..."'. According to her the 'blessed among women' were transformed to an idealised picture attractive to men. The dangerous mother of Israel who gives life by killing someone was put in a safety box (Van Dijk-Hemmes 1986:141). The androcentric frame of reference in Judith cannot be denied, but Judith acts at the same time as an alternative leader, an alternative to men, which may be considered as a redefinition of reality from a female perspective.

This assumption is supported by some indications that the book of Judith is an unconventional Jewish writing from the perspective of gender relations. For instance, the introduction of Judith begins with a very extensive and extraordinary genealogy, which vastly surpasses the genealogical references

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6 mYebam 4.10; tYebam 6.6; Safrai 1987:789-790. Some mourning practices lasted for an entire year, bMoed Katan 21a-b; pMoed Katan III,82a-83a.

7 Marriage contracts from Galilee and Judea allow a woman in case of death of the husband to remain in his house and support herself from his property: mKetub. 4:12; tKetub. 11:5. Cf also Safrai 1987:787.
concerning the male leaders in Judith (6:15). The genealogy (8:1) is clearly fictitious (cf Bruns 1956:19-22; Craven 1983:846). It starts with the name Merari and ends with the name Israel. All the names are biblical and probably echo biblical figures. In the Hebrew Bible there is only one Merari, the third son of Levi (Exod 6:16). So the genealogy probably begins with a reference to the tribe of Levi and ends with the father of the twelve tribes. This affirms the observation that Levi and his descendants play a prominent role in the book and that Judith can also be considered as a model for the people as a whole (Israel). One other tribe besides Levi seems to be highlighted in the genealogy by the fourteenth and fifteenth names.8 Salamiel and Sarasadai are a well known combination in the Bible (Num 1:6; 2:12). They belong to the tribe of Simeon, which can be read as an anticipation of Judith’s prayer with the allusion to the revenge on the Shechemites by Levi and Simeon (Jdt 9.2-4; Gen 3).9 Somehow, the author depicts Judith in this genealogy as the ideal Israelite woman, who represents more than one tribe. The names point to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (Joseph, Gideon—cf Deut 33:13-17), Issachar (Nathanael/Nethanel)10, Zebulon (Elia?)—Num 1:9) and especially to Simeon (Salamiel, Sarasadai) and Levi (Oziel/Uziel; Elkiah/Hilkiah; Gideon?; Ahitub; Eliab).11

This data become more significant if we compare it to the reference to Judith’s husband in 8:2, which almost seems to be a joke: ‘Her husband Manasseh, who belonged to her tribe and family, had died during the barley harvest’. Which tribe is meant? Simeon or Levi, or one of the others? It is very difficult to determine the answer. Moreover, the husband derives his identity from his wife, not the other way around. Judith is given an extensive genealogy, but her husband is only introduced by a reference to Judith’s family.12 This is very unconventional in the Bible. It also differs from the intro-

8 According to Bruns (1956:19-22) the genealogy connects Judith with Jael, which cannot be supported from the names in the genealogy.
9 Uzziah is also of the tribe of Simeon (6.15), which may enhance the contrast between him and Judith.
10 The most prominent Nathanael in the Hebrew Bible is the son of Zuar, Num 1:8; 2:5; 7.18, 23; 10:15.
11 Cf Uziel the son of Kohath according to Exod 6:18 and other passages. Hilkiah is a priestly name which may refer to the high priest during the reign of Josiah (2 Kgs 22.8). Cf 1 Chron 6:45 and Neh 8:4; 12:7, 21. The name Gideon in manuscripts of the Septuagint is sometimes the translation of the Hebrew ‘Gershon’ (one of the sons of Levi—cf Gen 46:11; Exod. 6:16). Ahitub is again a priestly name, used for example for the son of Pinechas (1 Sam 14:3; 22:9) and the father of Zadok (2 Sam 8:17). Eliab may be associated with Levi (cf 1 Chron 6:27; 15.18, 20), but also with other tribes. The names of Ozi/Uz (cf Gen 22:21), Ananias, Raphain and Elijah cannot be convincingly associated with one Israelite tribe.
12 Therefore we only partly agree with Kramer’s (1993:91) designation: ‘Judith is another example of the motherless heroine, identified by her father’s illustrious
duction of other heroines in Hellenistic Jewish literature. Esther, for example, is called the cousin of Mordecai who adopted her (Est 2:7). Esther 2:15 identifies her as ‘the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai’. Esther has no genealogy of her own like Mordecai in chapter 2:5. Esther's family is indicated through Mordecai. So Esther derives her identity from Mordecai, which fits in with the unfolding of the story. It is Mordecai who persuades Esther in the end to go to the Persian king in order to rescue her people.

If we compare Judith 8:1–2 with the introduction of women who are considered as models for Judith, the a-typical introduction of Judith stands out again. Miriam is introduced anonymously in Exodus 2 as Moses' sister (2:4), and later on as Aaron's sister in Exodus 15:20 (cf also Num 12:1; 26:59). As is well known, Deborah is characterised as a prophetess and further identified as ‘wife of Lappidoth’ (Judges 4:4). In a similar way Jael is introduced as ‘wife of Heber the Kenite’ (Judges 4:17; 1 Sam 25:2f). In the light of these parallels, Judith 8:1–2 is a significant deviation from established patterns of introductions of women in biblical narratives (White 1992:7).

The relation between Esther and Mordecai draws our attention, by contrast, to another characteristic of Judith's story. Judith does not act on the advice of a man, but takes the initiative in an independent way. After the decision of the leaders to turn over the city to the Assyrians if God has not intervened after five days, Judith invites them into the shelter on the roof of her house (probably a sukkah—cf Neh 8:14–17) and teaches them a lesson (8:9–36): ‘“Listen to me, rulers of the people of Bethulia! What you have said to the people today is not right; you have even sworn and pronounced this oath between God and you, promising to surrender the town to our enemies...”’ (8:11). The leaders do not protest against the sharp reproaches of Judith, but suggest to her to pray for rain (8:31). However, Judith ignores the request of the elders (8:32–34). This visit ends with the magistrates' blessing of Judith and their return to their posts (8:35f). Thus, Judith manages to get a carte blanche from them.

A third indication of a possible redefinition of reality from a female perspective seems to be the departure from the traditional pattern of men who act as warriors and liberators, and women who sing the song of victory. The Hebrew Bible contains several specimens of such a victory song or a reference to it (Exod 15:20f; Judges 11:34; 1 Sam 18:6f; see Haag 1963:56; Goiten 1988:1–33; Brenner & Van Dijk-Hemmes 1993:32–43). Judith 15–16 corresponds to them, but again there is a deviation from the usual pattern. 1 Samuel 18:6–7 reads for instance: 'As they were coming home, when David
returned from killing the Philistine, the women came out of all the towns of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments...'. In the book of Judith a similar event is being described. All the women from Israel come together, start dancing and singing with timbrels, praising the victor (Judith 15:12-14; 16:1). However, if one focuses on the role of the leaders and gender patterns, a different picture emerges. In fact, not men but Judith and her maidservant rescue the Jews from the siege of the Assyrians, supported by the Lord. After the killing of Holofernes, the battle of the Jews and the Assyrians is easy, and the author takes less than a chapter to describe it (14:11-15:7). Moreover, it is Judith who gives the orders for the counterattack of the Jews (14:1-5). In 16:1-17 we find an extensive song of triumph, started by Judith and joined by the rest of the people (15:14). The overture to this song in 15:8-13 is very interesting, compared to the songs of victory just mentioned. It looks like a reversal of gender roles. First Joakim the high priest and the senate come from Jerusalem to Bethulia 'to witness the good things that the Lord had done for Israel, and to see Judith and to wish her well' (15:8). They acknowledge that it was Judith who rescued Israel (15.10). Judith 15:12-13 refers to the dancing and singing of all women from Israel, gathered to see Judith. The men join this party (15:13). It is very clear that a woman is the hero here:13 'They (the women) blessed her, and some of them performed a dance in her honour...' (emphasis ours). In contradiction to the other references to songs of victory in the book of Judith, female (and male) singers and dancers are found together with female liberators.

How does this picture of Judith relate to the story of the Maccabees? Judith may well have functioned as an alternative to them. In spite of the fictitious character of the book, Judith's image of the heroine may well have had a political significance, if the socio-historical context of the book is taken into account. Judith can easily be contrasted with the contemporaneous propaganda of the Hasmonaens, who portrayed themselves as the legitimate successors of judges, kings, high priests and probably also prophets. Concerning the issue of the legitimate leader who delivers the people from a perilous attack by foreign aggressors, the books of Judith and 1 Maccabees share important concepts and vocabulary. Against the background of a roughly contemporaneous origin and the fact that the Maccabees were presented as the leaders who were exclusively supported by the Lord (1 Macc 5:62), the figure of Judith may have functioned as a way of releasing criticism against the new dynasty of the Hasmonaens who were sitting firmly in the saddle at

13 A significant detail is that Judith and the other women crown themselves with olive wreaths (15:13). It confirms the image of Judith as victress.
the time (cf. Van Henten 1989:158–161 with regard to 2 Maccabees). The fact that Judith is also depicted as a model for the people, which appears from her name and genealogy ending with Israel, seems to support this assumption. The name could even have been chosen in contrast to the name of Judas the Maccabee: ‘If one accepts a Hasmonaean date..., the name “Judith” naturally suggests a comparison with Judas Maccabaeus.’14 However, one can only guess which group might have uttered these views.

Judith is clearly the head of a large household, to which Jewish slaves probably also belonged. Let us come back for a moment to the viewpoint of Safrai. In the so-called Zeno archive, activities of a Jewish sheik are described which can be considered as trading in slaves (CPJ 1 and 4 from 259–257 BCE)—some of them were circumcised and may have been Jews. Josephus mentions that thousands of Jews from Palestine were sold into slavery to other countries (BJ 3.304–306; 540–542; 6.418—cf. also Van der Horst 1993:45; 99). But Safrai (1987:748) claims in connection to the tannaitic period: ‘By this time there were no longer Jewish maidservants.’ However, in Judith 8:7 it is said: ‘Her husband Manasseh had left her gold and silver, men and women slaves, livestock, and fields; and she maintained this estate.’ Nowhere is it said that these slaves were non-Jews. We have to decide whether they are Jews or not. Now, Judith also has a maidservant (Greek: ἱβρα). The possibly female author again does not inform us whether this slave woman was Jewish or not. But there are indications which make it more probable that she was a Jewess than not. Judith lets her prepare the kosher food, which she takes with her to the camp of Holofernes (10:5). Moreover, if this maidservant was not Jewish, she then acts like a fool, because she does not run away the moment she leaves Bethulia with its dying inhabitants, but stays faithful to Judith and returns with her to the town with the head of Holofernes in the knapsack. All these facts indicate that this woman was Jewish.

The position of this maidservant is, as a matter of fact, very important. She acts as Judith’s assistant and representative, and according to 8:10 she is in charge of all the possessions of Judith. This means that she is the oikonomos, the manager of the household or the steward of the estate. This situation with two women at the head of a large household is, of course, very particular. But it is not completely unrealistic, as appears from non-literary sources. A few epitaphs from Hierapolis in Phrygia show that Jewish women could effect financial transactions to the benefit of the family,15 by buying a burial place for the family (Kraemer 1986:194–195; Trebilco 1991:112).

15 Cf. Peskowitz (1993), on earned wages of a wife and daughter.
may be compared to the rich woman Rufina from Smyrna. She was the head of a synagogue (archisynagogos) and notifies that she had built a tomb for her freedpersons and slaves (thremmata): ‘Rufina, a Jewess, head of the synagogue, built the tomb for her freed slaves and the slaves raised in her house. No one else has the right to bury anyone (here)...’ (transl. Trebilco). The phrase thremmata may mean ‘foster children’, but, because of the preceding words, probably indicates slaves who were born or reared in the household of Rufina. Martin (1993:124) concludes in connection to the social status of Rufina: ‘Here we have, then, a Jewish woman who, like a few Greek and Roman women of her time and place, holds a role as the head of her own familia and accordingly provides for the burial of her slaves and freedpersons.’

We also know of another female manager of a household, called Calliope, whose funeral inscription is found at Beth She'arim (Schwabe & Lifshitz 1974:185-186). Calliope was a freedwoman of a man named Procopius. The position of manager of the household (oikonomos) was usually held by male slaves (Mt 24:45; Lk 12:42) or freedmen (Martin 1993:122).

**5 CONCLUSION**

After focusing on the general picture drawn up by researchers of the Jewish family in the Greco-Roman period, we have discussed a few Jewish families and households in post-Biblical literature. This discussion in part confirms observations by other scholars about Jewish family life. The Maccabees took care of the burial of their father and other relatives (2:69-70; 9:20; 13:23, 25-30), as was expected of every family. The family can also be seen as an economic unit, as appears for instance from archaeological sources: ‘The (so-called) residential architecture of Meiron, Upper Galilee, witnesses the combination of work activities with the other activities of sustenance and production that we more typically associate with families’ (Peskowitz 1993a:28). In a very special sense the Maccabean family was also an economic group, as appears from Simon’s honorary decree. It is clear that this family, like others, took care of the interests of later generations. We can also assume that Mattathias and his sons fulfilled the obligation to bring up their children. According to biblical and rabbinic law a father had to redeem his son (Exod 22:29), circumcise him (Lev 12:1-8) and teach him the commandments of God (Deut 4:9; 6:7; 31:12-13; Prov 6:20-21; Tob 1:7-8; 4; mSot 3:4; 4 Macc 18:9-19). At the same time we have found significant exceptions to what was thought to be the standard. The family of the Maccabees and Judith’s household are very exceptional, because the Maccabees and Judith functioned as leaders of the people. Judith does not follow the trend by remarrying in spite of many offers of marriage (Judith 16:22), and she also apparently had no children.
Oudith (16:24). She abandons the possibility of having children by a second marriage and, together with her female oikonomos, runs her own estate. The maidservant lives as long as Judith does and was set free just before Judith’s death (16:23).

The a-typical behaviour of the Maccabean family and the household of Judith should lead us to reconsider the present scholarly consensus (section 2, above) on the roles, interactions and stratifications in ancient Jewish families. Over and above present research, which is usually undertaken at a rather high level of abstraction, investigations into individual Jewish families during the Greco-Roman period could lead to a more nuanced picture in this regard and open up new vistas for research.

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