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“*Yāwān*” and “*Hellas*” as Designations of the Seleucid Empire.—By CHARLES C. TORREY, Professor in Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

THE Hebrew term יָוָן, *Yāwān*, “Javan,” was originally the collective designation of the Ionians of Asia Minor (יוֹנִים = *’Iáoves*), and then came very naturally to be applied to the whole Greek race inhabiting the distinctly Greek lands. This latter is the standard usage of classical Hebrew, and of the other Semitic languages in which derivatives of this same word are found.

In the ancient times, the Greeks did not really enter into the Semitic world. They were simply a distant trading people, and ideas regarding them and the countries which they occupied were very vague. But with the conquests of Alexander all this was changed. A powerful Greek empire was planted in the very heart of the Semitic territory. Greek armies, traders and colonists poured into Syria, and the new-comers asserted and maintained their supremacy. An absolutely new world-power had been created.

Naturally, this great change had its effect upon the use of the terms יוֹן and הַיּוֹנִים, “the Greeks.” The Jews and their neighbors knew little more about the Greek lands, to be sure, than they had known before. Greece, and Macedonia, and the Greek islands, were all *terrae incognitae* and objects of little interest. They could be designated in Hebrew by the vague and all-comprehensive term יָוָן, or by the equally vague כְּתִים, frequently used for the Greek coast-lands and islands,¹ or even by אֲיִם.

¹ So, for example, Jer. 2:10, אֲיִ כְּתִים; Num. 24:24 (whence Dan. 11:30); cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 1, vi. 1. On the other hand, in the two passages 1 Macc. 1:1 and 8:5 the word appears to be used to mean definitely the Macedonian kingdom. Thus 1:1, Καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τὸ πατάξαι Ἀλέξανδρον τὸν Φιλίππου τὸν Μακεδόνα, ὃς ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ γῆς Χεττιεῖμ, καὶ ἐπάταξε τὸν Δαρειὸν βασιλέα Περσῶν καὶ Μήδων, καὶ ἐβασίλευσεν αὐτῷ αὐτοῦ πρότερον ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα. Here the name of the country in which Alexander had been reigning as king before his conquest of the East is given as כְּתִים, *Kittim*. Similarly in 8:5, καὶ τὸν Φίλιππον καὶ τὸν Περσέα Κιτιέων βασιλέα, καὶ τοὺς ἐπηγμένους ἐπ’ αὐτούς, συνέτριψαν αὐτούς [οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι] ἐν πολέμῳ καὶ

the "islands" in general. But the Greek race, with its superior language and all-dominating civilization, had now become one of the closest of neighbors, and the hand of a Greek ruler rested heavily on Syria and the adjoining countries. From this time forth, יוֹן *Yāwān* took on an altogether new and definite meaning, for it was the name applied to the Greek state in Semitic Asia.

The Seleucid empire was to the Syrian Semites the "Greek dominion." They had no other name for it. Thus in the early Syriac documents, the dating is by the מְלָכוּת יוֹנִיא, "the rule of the Greeks," i. e. the Greek power in Asia which Alexander and his successors established. So in the Greek translation of First Maccabees, one of our earliest witnesses, the dominion of Antiochus Epiphanes and his successors is termed "the kingdom of the Greeks," βασιλεία τῶν Ἑλλήνων (1 Macc. 1:10, and elsewhere).¹ In the Jewish Talmud and Midrash, the יוֹנִים are the Seleucid Greeks. Thus *Megillah* 11a, לֹא מֵאַסְתִּים בִּימֵי יוֹנִים, "I did not reject them in the day of the Greeks," i. e. in the time of the Seleucid rule. And observe especially how in *Midrash Esther*, near the beginning, both מְלָכוּת יוֹן and (oftener) יוֹן alone are repeatedly used to designate the Seleucid power, preceded by the Medo-Persian dominion (מְדִי) and followed by the Roman (אֲדוּם). Thus: בְּמִלְכוּת יוֹן שָׁכַל יְמֵי יוֹן, "During the Greek rule, i. e. throughout the whole Greek period." And finally, there are in the Hebrew Old Testament certain passages, to be discussed below, in which the same usage appears, יוֹן meaning the Greek empire in Asia.

κατεκράτησαν αὐτῶν, the allusion being to the Macedonian kings Philip III. and his son Perseus, who were defeated by the Romans, the former in 197 and the latter in 168 B. C. In both of these passages we should expect to find a generally recognized designation of the Macedonian domain. In the passage 1:1 the use of this term is all the more interesting because of its juxtaposition with another political designation, namely *Hellas*, which here stands for the Seleucid empire, as will be shown below.

¹ See further below, where the passage 1 Macc. 1:10 is discussed. Contrast the usage of Josephus, who had himself gone beyond the borders of Asia, and wrote his histories for the benefit of Greeks and Romans. Thus, for example, in *Ant.* xiii. 6, 7, in dating by the Seleucid era he designates it as that "of the kings of Syria," τῶν Συρίας βασιλέων (according to another reading, τῆς Ἀσσυρίων βασιλείας).

Further illustration of this changing use of the term Yāwān comes from India.¹ The word came to the Hindus from the Babylonians, probably during the Persian rule, but possibly earlier. It was thus in its origin a mere transfer of current Semitic usage. In the Great Epic and Pāṇini, the "Yavanās" are the Greeks in general; the far-off and vaguely known people for whom, since the time of Darius Hystaspis, the Orient had a new respect. But as Weber has shown (see his letter in *The Indian Antiquary*, 1875, pp. 244 f.), it was not until the conquest of the East by Alexander that the name Yavana became well known and popular in India. From this time on, there is increasing evidence that the influence of Greek culture was making itself strongly felt. Note especially the phrase, "the all-knowing (*sarvajñā*) Yavanās," *Mbh.* viii. 45, 36, in a chapter which Professor Hopkins (*The Great Epic of India*, p. 392) regards as a late interpolation. It was the Greek civilization in Asia that had made this profound impression. The application of the name, moreover, undergoes a change which is altogether analogous to that which has been observed in Semitic usage. The "Yavanās" are the Greeks of the Asiatic dominions, and especially the Bactrians, situated just beyond the borders of India. Naturally, the nearest Greek people is given the first right to the name. Similarly, the nearest important Greek power overshadows all the others, and is spoken of and thought of as though it were the only one. Thus, in the rock inscription of Aśoka, the Seleucid ruler Antiochus Theos is spoken of as "the Greek king."

That is, to the Hindus as to the Semites, the whole Greek world had simply moved eastward. Since the time of Alexander the Great, the center and head of Yāwān and the Yavanās was no longer in Europe, but in Asia. Alexander was not a sojourner; he came to stay, and brought his kingdom with him.

This use of य, Yavanā, was a most natural one. As has just been observed in connection with the Hindu usage, the fact of proximity is all-powerful in fixing the application of such truly popular designations as these. Those Greeks who are seen and known through actual contact are "the Greeks."

¹ For the references to the literature bearing upon this subject I am indebted to my colleague, Professor Hopkins.

Moreover, in this case the actual importance of the Seleucid empire gave further justification for the Asiatic way of speaking of it as “the Greek kingdom,” as though there were no other. That this Syrian power stood at the head of all the Greek world, no one in Semitic Asia would have doubted, from the time of Seleucus I. onward. Then, too, it was easy (and perhaps especially easy for Semites) to transfer the ethnic name to the political entity. יון had never been a geographical designation, and it was just the term to use for the great Greek power. Such transfers of usage are very common, and parallels at once suggest themselves. Among the most familiar ones belonging to the history of Syria are the use of الروم, for the Byzantine empire and its subjects, and that of ترك, “Turk,” as the designation of Syrian Mohammedans, of whatever nationality.

It remains to notice the Old Testament use of the word יון as the designation of the Greek empire in Asia.

There are, in fact, in the latest books of the Old Testament several examples of this usage, though it has not received due recognition, and some of the principal passages which exemplify it have been universally misunderstood. In the Lexicon of Gesenius-Buhl, only two meanings of the word יון are recognized: (1) the Ionians of Asia Minor, and (2) Greece and the Greeks in general. In Briggs-Brown-Driver, a single passage (Dan. 8:21) is given in which the word means “the Greek kingdom of Alexander.” Only in Siegfried-Stade are all the chief examples of this usage included and put in a place by themselves; and even there the definition given, “das makedonische Weltreich,” is an unfortunate one, for the adjective “Macedonian” is sure to be misleading.

The best starting-point is furnished by the passage 1 Macc. 8:18, in which the meaning is certain and the illustration of current popular usage beyond question. The historian, writing of the times of Judas Maccabaeus, speaks of the oppression of the Jews by the Syrian power, and designates the latter as “the kingdom of the Greeks,” τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν Ἑλλήνων. In the original Hebrew¹ this was מלכות היונים or מלכות יון.

¹ That the original language of 1 Macc. was Hebrew, and not Aramaic, is beyond all question.

It might have been either of the two, and was certainly the one or the other. In all of the canonical Old Testament passages which represent this usage, namely Zech. 9:13, Dan. 8:21, 10:20, 11:2, the Hebrew word used is יון, not יונים, and the Greek (in Daniel both LXX and Theodotion) translates by Ἕλληνες. We may therefore feel pretty certain, especially in view of the Ἑλλάς (!) of 1 Macc. 1:1 (see below), that the author of this history wrote מלכות יון in speaking of the Seleucid kingdom.

Another passage of the same nature is 1 Macc. 1:10, where the accession of Antiochus Epiphanes is mentioned. The historian says of him that he "ascended the throne of the Grecian kingdom in the [Seleucid] year 137." Here also the phrase employed is βασιλείας Ἑλλήνων, and the Hebrew pretty certainly had יון. These are the only examples of the phrase βασιλεία (τῶν) Ἑλλήνων in 1 Macc. In Dan. 11:2, however, we have מלכות יון, used in precisely the same sense, as will appear presently.

Dan. 10:20 is a passage in which יון, *Yāwān*, alone is used to designate the Greek state in Asia. The author is speaking of the struggle of the guardian angels of Israel against the angels of the great powers which successively oppress the Jews. The angel Michael, Israel's "captain" (שר), is at that time fighting with the "captain" of the Persian kingdom (שר מלכות פרס, verse 13); and the angel Gabriel, foretelling the future to Daniel, says that as soon as this conflict is over, another will begin, namely that with the "captain of *Yāwān*." ועתה אשוב להלחם עם שר פרס ואני יוצא והנה שר יון בא: "And now I return to fight with the captain of Persia (i. e. of the Persian kingdom, vs. 13), and when I have finished,² lo,

¹ In this verse, the phrase βασιλείας Ἑλλήνων is generally connected with the preceding date, the verb being regarded as used absolutely, thus: "He reigned in the 137th year of the Grecian kingdom." I do not believe that this interpretation is the correct one. There is no reason why the writer should have designated the era of his chronology. He was narrating recent events, and those for whom he wrote, namely the Jews of Palestine, had for generations past used only the one era. On the contrary, the word βασιλείας is governed by ἐβασίλευσεν, just as in 11:9, and elsewhere.

² This meaning of יצא, to "finish," is wanting in some of our Hebrew lexicons. It is closely allied to the use of the verb with the meaning "perish," Ezek. 26:18; cf. also the *Hiphil* of this, with the meaning "destroy," in Is. 43:17.

the captain of *Yāwān* will come.” It is plain that *Yāwān* here cannot mean “Greece,” for the Jews never had any conflict with Greece, and the passage would be meaningless. Nor can the word mean “the Greeks” in general. It would not have been possible for a writer who wrote at any time after 300 B. C. to put even the three Greek states, Macedonia, Egypt and Syria, under one and the same heavenly “captain,” or guardian angel. They were rival powers with altogether separate interests, struggling against each other, as every Jew was well aware. Nor did the Jews have any conflict with Macedonia or Egypt. On the contrary, the author of the book of Daniel is speaking of a distinct and very dangerous foe, the foe which was to succeed the Persian power as the oppressor of Israel; and this was the powerful Syrian kingdom whose capital was on the Orontes. This had inherited the name *Yāwān*, and no other state or people could claim an equal right to it. Even Alexander the Great is mentioned by the authors of Daniel and 1 Maccabees merely as the founder and first head of this *Asiatic* empire (Dan. 8:21, 11:3, 1 Macc. 1:1 [as emended below]). In both books alike, ¶ is consistently represented as the great power founded in Asia by Alexander, and ruled after him by the Seleucids. Both conception and usage are perfectly natural.

A passage whose interpretation has caused a great deal of trouble is the one with which 1 Maccabees opens. 1:1, Καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τὸ πατάξαι Ἀλέξανδρον τὸν Φιλίππου τὸν Μακεδόνα, ὃς ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ γῆς Χεττιείμ, καὶ ἐπάταξε τὸν Δαρεῖον βασιλέα Περσῶν καὶ Μήδων, καὶ ἐβασίλευσεν ἀντ’ αὐτοῦ πρότερον ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα. I do not know of any place where the last clause of this verse is rightly interpreted. As the Greek stands, it is nonsense. In all of our translations and commentaries the nonsense is either faithfully reproduced, or else it is removed by an unwarranted surgical operation. The English Revised Version disposes of the passage in the following manner: “And it came to pass, after that Alexander the Macedonian, the son of Philip, who came out of the land of Chittim, and smote Darius king of the Persians and Medes, *it came to pass*, after he had smitten him, that he reigned in his stead, in former time, over Greece.” And a marginal note adds: *That is, the Greek Empire*. As a specimen of a thoroughly awkward and unsatisfactory “translation,” this verse is probably equal to anything that the Revisers have

given us. It is certainly not calculated to prepossess favorably the layman who makes his first approach to 1 Macc. through this version. Their rendering does indeed possess the merit of recognizing the true meaning of the last word in the verse, which, however, they only venture to translate by "Greece"! Kautzsch, *Die Apokryphen des A.T.*, renders as follows: "Nachdem Alexander . . . Darius, den König der Perser und Meder, geschlagen hatte, herrschte er an seiner Statt [zuerst über Griechenland]." And a footnote adds: "Da der nächstliegende Sinn dieser drei letzten Worte ("Alex. herrschte an Darius' Statt zuerst über Gr.") ausgeschlossen ist, können sie trotz der guten Bezeugung nur Glosse eines Lesers sein, der dem Missverständnis vorbeugen wollte, als sei Alex. d. Gr. erst durch die Besiegung des Darius zu einer Herrschaft gelangt." But even glossators must be granted a sufficient reason for their action. That Alexander was a royal personage before his victory over Darius, is plainly implied in the first part of the verse; he was "the Macedonian, the son of [king] Philip" (of whom every reader of the book had heard since his childhood).¹ What danger of "misunderstanding" was there, and why should it be of such concern to the reader of this history? Grimm, in his Commentary on the book, proposed to read *πρότερον* δέ. This would make a passable reading (though not such as to increase our respect for the literary ability of the author of the book), but would be a curious specimen of textual criticism.

The chief sources of the difficulty are two: the noun Ἑλλάς and the adverb πρότερον. Ἑλλάς is elsewhere "Greece"; there is no other instance of its use to mean anything else. As for πρότερον, it is hard to find any justification for its presence here. But in the Greek First Maccabees we are dealing with a translation; and, what is more, in this particular case we are dealing with a *mistranslation*. Ἑλλάς is, of course, the rendering of

¹ *Kittim* and *Yāwān* are both treated as technical terms in this verse, and are plainly contrasted. *Kittim* is the Macedonian Kingdom; cf. 8:5. If either the original author or a glossator had wished to say that Alexander had been king before his arrival in Asia, it certainly would have been done without adding to *Kittim* another name, which could only result in confusion. Compare also the parallel passage in 6:2, where the fact that Alexander was king while still in Macedonia is plainly stated.

יין. What the author of the book wrote, in this last clause, was: יין על יין תִּהְיֶה רִאשׁוֹן, “he reigned in his stead, as the first ruler of the Syrian Empire.” Here, again, we have the current use of *Yāwān*; while in the emphasis laid on the idea that Alexander was the successor of Darius, namely in the possession of Syria and Palestine, and as the master of the Jews and their neighbors, we have a perfect parallel to Dan. 8:21, 10:20, and 11:3. As for the Greek rendering, it is not easy to decide whether the translator really misunderstood the passage, or only translated timidly. If the latter, we can readily forgive him for refusing to paraphrase יין here; but he certainly should have written *πρῶτος* instead of *πρότερον*.

The correctness of this interpretation of the clause seems to be still further assured by the two passages 1 Macc. 6:2 and Dan. 8:21. The former reads as follows: καὶ ἐκεῖ . . . ὅπλα, ἃ κατέλιπεν ἐκεῖ Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ τοῦ Φιλίππου ὁ βασιλεὺς ὁ Μακεδών, ὃς ἐβασίλευσε πρῶτος ἐν τοῖς Ἑλλήσι. “And there were . . . arms, which Alexander the Macedonian king, sōn of Philip, had left there; *he who was the first ruler of the Syrian empire*.” Here the original Hebrew must have been: אֲשֶׁר מֶלֶךְ רִאשׁוֹן בֵּינוֹ (the verb in this case construed with ב instead of על).

The other passage, Dan. 8:21, furnishes a very close and interesting parallel. The angel is interpreting to Daniel the vision of the ram and the goat. Verse 20 proceeds: “The two-horned ram which thou didst see, they are the kingdoms¹ of Media and Persia. ²¹ And as for the he-goat, he is the kingdom of the Greeks (יין מֶלֶךְ standing for יין מַלְכוּת, see the preceding note); and the great horn which was between his eyes is *the first king* (הַמֶּלֶךְ הָרִאשׁוֹן).” Here, there is fortunately no doubt as to the interpretation. The “kingdom of *Yāwān*” is the empire founded by Alexander, who is himself the “great horn.” We have here precisely the same βασιλεία τῶν Ἑλλήνων as in 1 Macc. 1:10 and 8:18, namely, the Seleucid empire, of which Alexander is characteristically regarded as the first ruler—just as in 1 Macc. 1:1, 6:2, and Dan. 11:2 ff.

¹ As all interpreters agree, and the author himself indicates (see 7:17, and cf. 7:23), מֶלֶךְ here stands for “kingdom.”

There remains one highly interesting passage to be discussed, namely Dan. 11:2. The angel Gabriel, speaking to Daniel in the days of Cyrus king of Persia, is telling him what things Israel has yet to undergo. He has just told the prophet (in the passage 10:20, already discussed) that the conflict of Israel's heavenly "captain" (שר) with the guardian-angel of Persia will be immediately followed by the conflict with the guardian-angel of *Yāwān*. He now announces, a little more definitely, that three (or four!)¹ more Persian kings will reign; and that when the last one of them shall have reached the height of his prosperity and his insolence, יעיר את מלכות יון. These words are ordinarily interpreted to mean that Xerxes (!) will raise a great army to fight against Greece: "He (i. e., the Persian king) will stir up everything against the kingdom of Greece." But such a prophecy would be altogether pointless. The author of this book and those for whom he wrote could not have cared a straw for the expedition of Xerxes against Greece, supposing that they had ever heard of it. Again, the context shows beyond all question that the *final downfall* of the Persian power is predicted in these words; and Xerxes was not the last Persian king. And finally, the whole sentence, as thus read, is unsatisfactory from every point of view. הכל is ambiguous; this use of את is contrary to Hebrew usage; מלכות יון is not a likely way of speaking of Greece, and has troubled the commentators accordingly; and of what value is the verb יעיר? Supposing that Xerxes has "stirred up" everything against

¹ As commentators have observed, the author of the book of Daniel expressed himself cautiously here because he did not know how many Persian kings there were. It would be surprising indeed if he had known. The fact that he represents the last of these kings (Darius III. Codomannus) as richer and more powerful than his predecessors is sufficient evidence that he derived his information from popular legend (of the conquest of Alexander), rather than from any authoritative text-book of Persian history. The task of keeping distinct the various kings named Artaxerxes and Darius was more than could have been expected of him; it was a problem too difficult for most of the ancient historians and narrators. Of one thing we are certain: that he knew Darius Hystaspis as "Darius the Mede," and placed him *before* Cyrus (10:1, 11:1, compare 5:31). In this, he shares the view of the Chronicler and of the old Jewish tradition generally, as I have shown elsewhere. See my *Composition of Ezra-Nehemiah*, p. 8; and the *American Journal of Theology*, Jan., 1903, p. 133 f.

Greece, we are not informed as to the result; whether there was any actual contest, and whether the Persians were victorious, or vice versa. The “mighty king” of verse 3 is hanging in mid air; there is absolutely nothing to indicate to what nation he belongs.

Obviously, the text has met with a slight accident; the word **שָׁר** has fallen out after **יַעִיר**. As the missing word is graphically almost exactly identical with the last three letters of **יַעִיר**, as they are ordinarily written, the accident would be an extremely easy one. The text originally read: **וּבְחִזְקָתוֹ בְּעֶשְׂרוֹ יַעִיר שָׁר הַכֹּל אֶת מַלְכוּת יוֹן**. “And when he has become mighty in his riches, *The Lord of All* will raise up the kingdom of *Yāwān* [in the place of the kingdom of Persia].” This title of the God of Israel, **שָׁר הַכֹּל**, is just such a one as we should expect here. He was entitled **שָׁר הַצִּבְאוֹ** in 8:11, and **שָׁר שְׂרִים** in 8:25;¹ and it is especially natural that the term should be introduced again here, because of the way in which it has just been used as the designation of the angels in charge of the Persian and Seleucid kingdoms. There is a **שָׁר פֶּרֶס** and a **שָׁר יוֹן**, but Yahwè is the **שָׁר שְׂרִים** and the **שָׁר הַכֹּל**.² It is he who raises up and overthrows empires. The sense of the passage is thus exactly what the context requires, and **יוֹן** here also designates the kingdom founded by Alexander and continued (according to the usual Jewish conception) by the Seleucids.

Still another Old Testament passage in which the word **יוֹן** has this same meaning is Zech. 9:13, as the context, taken in connection with the evidence of current usage here presented, plainly shows.

¹ See Moore in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1896, pages 193 f.

² It is worthy of notice that this is the exact equivalent of *šar kiššati*, the title so often assumed by the Assyrian kings.