## Yohanan Executed, the Embassy to Gaius, and the Zealot Knifemen from the Yosiphun (Josippon)

Dedicated to Jason King

Translated by Joseph Gebhardt-Klein 2021

Based on:

Breithaupt, Johann Friedrich, ed. Josephus Hebraicus. Gothae & Lipsiae: A. Schallum, 1710.

## Text

## Translation

Yosiphun, Book 5, Chapter 45a

וימת ארקלוס בן הורודוס And Archelus the son of Horodus the king died, ממלך וימלך אנטיפטר אח and Antipater the brother of Archelus reigned, שמר אש' הטיב את שמר who adopted as his name Orodus. Even he was אורודוס גם הוא הרשיע לעשות more wicked acting than all who were before עזב him. And he did not leave off any abomination תועבה שלא עשה וימלוך אחת without having done it. And he reigned eleven עשרה שנה על ישראל והוא years over Yisrael and he took the wife of אשת פוליפוס אחיו Philippos, his still living brother, for a wife. And בנים she had sons from his brother, but he took her for himself for a wife. And he murdered many סד וגם הוא of the sages of Yisrael, and even murdered את יוחנן כהן גדול על Yohanan the high priest on account that he אטר לו אסור לך אסור לך spoke out and said: "It is forbidden for you to לקחת אשת אחיך פוליפוס take the wife of your brother Philippos for a אשר ויהרגהו הוא יוחנן אשר wife!" And he murdered that Yohanan who קיסר קיטר תיבריאוס קיסר practiced immersion. And Tiberius Caesar the מלך רומי את אורודוס לארץ king of Rome exiled Orodus to the land of ספוד וימת שם. וימלוך תחתיו Sephod (Spain), and he died there. And Agrippas אגריפס בן אריסתובלוס בן the son of Aristoblus the son of Horodus the הורודוס הגדול וימלוך עשרים Great reigned in his stead, and he reigned ושלש שנה ובימיו twenty-three years. And in his days Tiberius תיבריאוס קיסר וימלוך תחתיו Caesar died, and there reigned in his stead Gaius, איוס אשר הרשיע מכל אשר היו who was more wicked than all those who were לפניו וקרא את שמו אלוה. ויצו before him, and he called his name God. And he כל מובחות בכל commanded to make and build for himself altars in all the land, and to make mention of his name

ולשבע בשמו כל אדם ויאותו as if God, and for all men to swear by his name. And all the gentiles consented to his voice, and הולוה באלוה built for him altars, and swore by his name, and רק היהוד' לא אבו לשמוע made mention of him as if God. Only the Yehudites did not wish to listen to his voice, and ויתעוררו לחמות ויאמרו היהודים יחד they made contest against this one with wars. נמות ולא נשמע לקולו ולא And the Yehudites said, "Together we may die, טלחו שלחו שלחו but we will not listen to his voice and we will not אליח אל שליח ארץ מצרים שליח אל worship him!" In those days, the people of the גיוס מלך רומא ושמו אפיון וגם land of Mitzrayim sent an ambassador to Gaius דיהורים שלחו כמו כן שליח the king of Rome, and his name was Appion. And פילו איש even the Yehudites sent likewise an ambassador מאר עשה ספרים to Gaius the king, and his name was Philo, a very wise man who made many books. And Appion רומא ויאמר כל הגוים responded before Gaius the king of Rome and ויבנו לך אלהים ויבנו לך said, "All the gentiles mention your name as if מובחות וישבעו בשמך כשם God, and build for you altars, and swear by your חלה הים רק אלה היהודים היהודים מאלהים היהודים היהודים לבדם. ויען אליו פילו שליח these Yehudites alone." And Philo מנם כי אנחנו ambassador of the Yehudites responded to him ממין באלהי ישראל ולא נבנה and said, "Truly it is because we are faithful to מזבח רק ליי' אלהינו ולא the God of Yisrael, and we will not build an altar נוכיר שם אלהים אחרים ולא except to the LORD our God, and will not נשבע זולתי ביי' לבדו ואנחנו mention the name of other gods, and will not נמסור נפשותינו למות ולא swear except by the LORD alone. And we will גיוס deliver our souls over to death and will not listen וישליכהו וישליכהו to your words." And Gaius was angered over ריצא לחוץ Philo the ambassador and sent him away before

חתיכות

אשר היו אשר היודים אשר היו him in disgrace. And he departed outside and מקוי' אותו בחצר המלכו' spoke to the Yehudites who were waiting in the כיכם הטיבו דרכיכם court of the kingdom, and said to them: "Make נשובו אל יי' בכל לבבכם כי good your paths and return to the LORD with עת צרה הוא ויאמרו היהודים your whole heart, for it is a time of affliction." איש לאחיו לא תסבו היו' כי עת And the Yehudites said each man to his brother, צרה היא לישראל כי קצף גיום "Do not recline today, for it is a time of מלך רומא מאד אבל יש רפואה affliction for Yisrael. For Gaius the king of Rome is very angry, but there is some healing for the matter and help. Come, and we shall return to דוא ייי׳ אלהינו וילכו לבית the first help, the old help of our fathers, who is ויקראו צום ויקראו the LORD our God." And they went to the house 'עצרת שלש' יומ' ויקראו אל ייי of prayer, and sanctified a fast, and called for a 'אלהי ישראל בחזק' ויענם ייי detention of three days, and called to the LORD ובתפלה כצום ובתפלה God of Yisrael with fasting and with prayer. And ויהי ביום השלישי ויער יי׳ על it was on the third day, even the LORD stirred up גיוס את רוח גדודיו וידלגו against Gaius the spirit of his troops, and they ומיתוהו שלופו' וימיתוהו leapt against him with swords drawn, and killed ויכרתוהו ויקצצוהו him. And they cut him and severed him piece by דתיכות עד אש' לא נתן ליקבר piece until there was nothing to be delivered 'ויאכלו הכלבי' את בשרו וינקו over to be buried, and the dogs ate his flesh. מי' נקמת היהודים מאת גיוס And the LORD made vengeance as the revenge סלוך תחתיו בלאוריש of the Yehudites by means of Gaius Caesar, and את בלאוריש את Blaorish (Claudius) Caesar reigned in his stead. אל And Blaorish sent Philo the sage (and) the ארצם בכבוד גדול וילכו Yehudites to their land with great honor. And ירושלם וכל עם הארץ הרסו they went to Yerushalem, and all the people of שם את המובחות אשר בנו על שם the land destroyed the altars that they built for

. גיוס מכל ארץ ישראל. the name of Gaius from all of the land of Yisrael. Book 5, Chapter 45b

ויאבדה.

ויהי אגריפס מלך ישראל And it happened, Agrippas the king of Yisrael was קיסר קיסר בעיני בלאוריש קיסר much honored in the eyes of Blaorish Caesar the מלך רומא מאד וימת אגריפס king of Rome. And Agrippas died and the days that he reigned over Yisrael were twenty-three עשרים ושלש שנים וימלוך years, and there reigned in his stead Agrippas' son, and he reigned twenty years. And even עשרים שנה. וגם בלאוריש Blaorish the king of Rome died, and Neron Caesar רומ' מת וימלוך תחתי' reigned in his stead in the days of this Agrippas נירון קיסר בימי אגריפס זה בן who was the son of Agrippas. And all the days of אגריפס וכל ימי מלכותו לא his reign the land was not quieted from the wars ארץ of Yisrael with the Romans, until the exile of עם רומיים עד גלות Yehudah to Rome, that is the exile of the לרומא הוא גלות חורבן desolation of the second Sanctuary House in the בית המקד' השני בשנת עשרים twentieth year of king Agrippas, in the fifth month: it was the month of Ab on the ninth of .בתשעה לחרש. the month. And in the days of this Agrippas, the ובימי אגריפס זה נחרב הבית House was desolated, and great wars were stirred up in all the land of Yehudah and in all the ובכל ארץ יהודה ובכל ארץ iand of Aram, and he made slaughter and וישחיתה destruction of it. And for twenty years Agrippas לא חדל אגריפס did not stop from capturing and plundering and משלול שלל ולבוז בז ולהרוג murdering souls. And he meted out in all the land ס נפשות ויצע בכל ארץ ארם of Aram a great measure of dead bodies. And מצע גדולה פגרי' מתים וגם even in Yehudah he piled up many bodies until לה פגרים רבים עד there arose against him Felix, the captain of the צבא מר צלה עליו פילוס שר צבא army of Rome, who forcefully weighed down, and

ירושלם ובכל שוקיה בסכיו

by his hand took hold, and struck his rebels, and ויך את פריציו וילכדהו seized him back to Rome. And even because Felix ויאסרהו בנחשתים ויוליכהו sent Eleazar the rebel to Rome, he did not purify פילוס פילוס the land from the blood, for the hatred of the את אלעזר הפריץ אל רומא people was great, each man with his brother, to כים כי hate and to murder. Then erupted a great evil in לה שנאת העם איש באחיו the midst of Yerushalem within its outskirts, and יהרוג. אז צמחה רעה in all its markets, and in the Temple of the LORD. בקרב And if a man came to hate his friend, he even hired against him a murderer from the rebels, and in his hand was one small sword possessing מן ביו רוצה מן edges called a knife (sakkin). And the rebel מבידו חרב חדה concealed the knife under his clothes and entered יות הנקרא סכין into the midst of the crowd of people in the תחת הסכין תחת market, or in the Temple of the LORD, and found דגריו ויבא בתוך המון העם the man he would seek to murder, and drew near את בהיכל יי' וימצא את him in the midst of the people, and approached להרוג שר יבקש להרוג beside the man, and stabbed him with the knife, ויקרב אליו בתוך העם ויגש and killed him, but it was unknown who stabbed ויכהו האיש ויכהו him. So they did continually on every day within ימיתהו ולא נודע מי הכהו כה Yerushalem, the carriers of knives in the midst of תוך בכל יום תמיד בכל יום תוך the people. And the people groaned a groaning of לרום נושאי הסכינים בתוך degradations, even seeing continually with their פעם אנחת חלליי eyes the death, but the killing they did not see. ורואי' תמיד בעיניה' את המות Wherefore they called that death 'the blind death על כן קראו which had no eyes.' And the people were much מות עורית אשר afraid of the children of the rebels, the handlers מאר העם מאד of knives, for they were the swift handlers of

מבני הפריצי' בעלי הסכיני' knives and hastened in their work and were skilled at murdering a soul with their subtleties. And they שמנים במלאכתם ואמנים would befriend and act lovingly with human beings להרוג נפש בערמתם ויהיו for a day, or some days, until the man trusted לתחברים ומאהבי' עם בני him, until he would be walking with him into the אדם יום או יומים עד כי האמין midst of the people, and he stabbed him with a לו אד' עד כי הלך עמו בתוך knife and killed him. And they wept before the וימיתהו בסכי' וימיתהו eyes of the people, and it was unknown who נובעו ולא נודע stabbed him. And they killed many with the swiftness of this deed and by the subtlety of this wickedness. And then was murdered Natan the priest, a righteous and pious and good man, and אבריק וחסיד וטוב וימת בתוך he died in the midst of the court, and it was נודע מי הכהו unknown who stabbed him. And many like him, righteous and pious and sages, were murdered in . ההם נהרגו בימים those days. And the fear of the handlers of ותגדל אימת בעלי הסכינים knives grew more than the fear of the war. And the people walked in the midst of Yerushalem, בקרב ירושלם איש איש כלי each person with his instruments of war in his שריון שריון מולבש שריון hand, dressed in armor because of the handlers סלינים אבל הסכינים אבל of knives. But some of the poor of the people שלא היה להם who did not have armor were afraid because of שרייונו' יראו מפני חרבות the blades of the handlers of knives, and they went out from Yerushalem with their women and עם נשיהם וטפם וכל אשר infants and all that they had. And they went to go here and there to dwell because of the הרוצחים. ויאמרו מפני הרוצחים. ויאמרו murderers. And the rebels said to Felix the ער צבא מר לפילוס שר צבא captain of the army of the Romans, "Lo, the יצאו למרוד במלכות people went out from Yerushalem to rebel against the kingdom of the Romans." And Felix sent after them an army and struck them with the edge of the sword. From a man even to a woman, from a child even to a suckling, there did not remain even up to one of them.

## Bibliography

Breithaupt, Johann Friedrich, ed. *Josephus Hebraicus*. Gothae & Lipsiae: A. Schallum, 1710.