

The passage in Dan. ix. 26, "shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself," is generally referred to the murder of Onias (comp. Baethgen in Stade's "Zeitschrift," 1886, vi. 278). Onias III. is the central figure of the legendary history of later times; the Byzantine "Chronicon Paschale" says that he officiated for twenty-four years, thus placing the beginning of his term of office under Egyptian rule. The Byzantine "Chronographion Syntomon" follows Josephus in mentioning "another Onias" as the successor of Onias III., referring probably to Menelaus, who ought, perhaps, to be added to this list as Onias IV.; an account of his life is given, however, in *JEW. ENCYC.* viii. 491, *s.v.* MENELAUS.

**Onias IV. (V.):** Son of Onias III. and the lawful heir of the legitimate high priests. He had reason to hope that the victory of the national party under Judas Maccabeus would place him in the office of his fathers; but being disappointed in his expectations by the election of ALCIMUS, he went to Egypt to seek aid against the tyranny of the Seleucids at the court of the Ptolemies, their political enemies. About 154, with the permission of Ptolemy VI. (Philometor), he built at LEONTOPOLIS a temple which, though comparatively small, was modeled on that of Jerusalem, and was called by the name of its founder. Onias doubtless expected that after the desecration of the Temple at Jerusalem by the Syrians the Egyptian temple would be regarded as the only legitimate one; but the traditional teachings of Judaism, as contained in the Mishnah, concede only quasi-legitimate status to the temple of Onias (*Men.* xiii. 10); in fact, even for the Egyptian Jews the latter did not possess the same importance as did the Temple of Jerusalem.

Onias IV., who enjoyed the favor of the Egyptian court, succeeded in elevating Egyptian Judaism to a position of dignity and importance. A large number of able-bodied Judeans had accompanied Onias to Egypt, and these strangers, who were there called *Κάτοικοι* ("inhabitants"), received, on condition of performing military service and preserving the internal peace of the country, tracts of land of their own, on which they lived with their families (*"Ant."* xi. 8, § 6; see Paul Meyer in *"Philologus,"* 1897, lvi. 193). The district inhabited by them lay between Memphis and Pelusium, and was long called the "country of Onias" (*"Ant."* xiv. 8, § 1; *"B. J."* i. 9, § 4). The first-born sons of the colonists inherited their fathers' privileges and duties; but both Chelkias and Ananias, the sons of Onias, performed military service and acted as generals under Cleopatra III. (117-81; *"Ant."* xiii. 10, § 4). Even Ptolemy Physcon (146-117) had to fight against Onias, who was faithful to his benefactor (Josephus, *"Contra Ap."* ii. 5), which proves that candidates for the office of high priest occupied a prominent military position. In the course of time the family of Onias lost its prestige, and the later ALABARCHS belonged to another family, not entitled to the rank of high priest. A family of "Oniades," in the sense of "Tobiades" as the term is used by Büchler, existed neither in Palestine nor in Egypt, and the designation "Oniades" is, therefore, misleading.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** H. P. Chajes, *Beiträge zur Nordsemitischen Onomatologie*, p. 23, Vienna, 1900 (on the name); Herzfeld,

*Gesch. des Volkes Israel*, i. 185-189, 201-206; Grätz, *Gesch.* 2d ed., ii. 236; Schürer, *Gesch.* 3d ed., i. 182, 194-196; iii. 97-100; Niese, in *Hermes*, xxxv. 509; Wellhausen, *I. J. G.* 4th ed., p. 248, Berlin, 1901; Willrich, *Juden und Griechen vor der Makkabäischen Erhebung*, pp. 77, 109, Göttingen, 1895; A. Büchler, *Die Tobiaden und die Oniaden*, pp. 106, 240, 275, 353, Vienna, 1899; J. P. Mahaffy, *The Empire of the Ptolemies*, pp. 217, 353, London, 1895; Geizer, *Sextus Julius Africanus*, ii. 170-176, Leipzig, 1885; Weiss, *Dor*, i. 130 (on the halakic view of the temple of Onias).

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**ONIAS (HONI) HA-ME'AGGEL** ("the circle-drawer"): Teacher and miracle-worker; lived in the first century B.C. Tradition declares him to have been a descendant of Moses (Tan., Wayera, ed. Buber, p. 22). He was an Essene, stood in high repute, and was respected on account of his pious life and his ability to work miracles. He had many pupils and, according to later accounts, was a great scholar, so that in his day halakic sentences were clear and intelligible; for whenever he entered the schoolhouse he used to reply lucidly to all questions and answer all objections addressed to him by the rabbis (Ta'an. 28a). Nevertheless no halakah of his has been preserved.

Onias is better known through his miracles. Once when a drought had lasted almost throughout the month of Adar and the people had supplicated in vain for rain, they came to Onias to ask him to bring rain by his prayers. Onias thereupon drew a circle (hence probably his name, "the circle-drawer"), and,

placing himself in the center of it, His "Mir- prayed for rain; and his prayer was  
acles." immediately answered. When the

rain had continued to fall for some time in torrents, and there was danger that it might prove harmful instead of a blessing, he prayed that it might cease; and this prayer also received an immediate answer. Simon b. Sheṭah, who was displeased at the unseemly tone of Onias' prayer, said to him: "Wert thou not Honi I would put a ban upon thee; but what shall I do to thee since thou sinnest before God and yet He does thy will? Of thee was it said [Prov. xxiii. 25]: 'Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.'" In the same way the members of the Sanhedrin showed their respect for him by interpreting the verses Job xxii. 28 *et seq.* to refer to him (Ta'an. l.c.). It was related of him that whenever he entered the hall of the Temple the place became brightly lighted up (Yer. Ta'an. l.c.).

The end of this pious scholar was a sad one. During the war between the two Hasmoneans Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, after the death of Queen Salome, Aristobulus, who had shut himself up on the Temple mount, was besieged by Hyrcanus. The soldiers of the latter found Onias, who lived in a lonely district, and, dragging him into Hyrcanus' camp, tried to force him to use the power of his prayers to destroy the besieged. Instead of cursing the besieged the pious man uttered the following prayer: "Lord of the earth, since the besieged as well as the besiegers are Thy people, I beg that Thou wilt not answer the curses which they may utter against each other." The rude soldiers, who did not sympathize with these brotherly sentiments of Onias, stoned him on the spot (Josephus, *"Ant."* xiv. 2, § 1; comp. *JEW. ENCYC.* vi. 517b, *s.v.* HYRCANUS II.). This story of Onias' death is not mentioned in the

Talmud; and there is another tradition according to which he is said to have slept seventy years, and when he awoke, as no one would believe that he was Onias and as he was refused the respect due to him, he himself sought death (Ta'an. l.c.). According to Yerushalmi (Ta'an. l.c.) he went to sleep at the time of the destruction of the First Temple and did not awake until after the building of the Second Temple. But this tradition in the Jerusalem Talmud may refer to his grandfather, who also was called Onias (comp. Brüll, "Einleitung in die Mischna," i. 24-25, Frankfurt-on-the-Main, 1876). The parallel with the Seven Sleepers and with Rip Van Winkle is of course obvious.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** *Yühasin*, s.v.; Heilprin, *Seder ha-Dorot*, ii. 63b; Levinsohn, *Bet Yehudah*, i. 129, Warsaw, 1878; Grätz, *Gesch.* 2d ed., iii. 157; Schürer, *Gesch.* i. 293 et seq.; M. Braunschweiger, *Die Lehrer der Mischna*, pp. 80-81, Frankfurt-on-the-Main, 1903.

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**ONKELOS** (commonly called the **Proselyte Onkelos**): Tanna of the end of the first century c.e. Although the proselyte Onkelos is frequently confounded with the proselyte Aquila in the Talmud and the Tosefta, even the designation of the official targum to the Pentateuch as "Targum Onkelos" being based on this confusion between the two proselytes (comp. *JEW. ENCYC.* ii. 36 et seq., s.v. AQUILA; see *TARGUM ONKELOS*), yet there is no reason to doubt the existence of a tanna by the name of Onkelos (*Ἀγκύλος* or *Ἀγκύλιον* = "crooked," both forms occurring as proper names; see Pape, "Wörterb. der Griechischen Eigennamen," 3d ed., i. 11). This Onkelos originated the explanation that the cherubim had their heads bent backward in the manner of a pupil when leaving his teacher (B. B. 99a). This statement being quoted as a tannaitic sentence, it is impossible to substitute here "Aquila" for "Onkelos," the Scriptural comments of the former in the Talmudic Midrash literature always being quoted as those of a translator and not of a tanna.

As a characteristic of Onkelos is mentioned his extraordinarily strict observance of the Levitical laws of purity; he observed in his daily life the

same laws of purity that Scripture

**Strict Ob-** commands at sacrifices. He surpassed  
**servance.** on this point even the patriarch Gamaliel II., who also was extremely

rigorous in these observances (Tosef., Hag. iii. 2-3). Once, when both were at Ashkelon, Onkelos took his ritual bath in the sea because he held that the bathing-places outside of the Jewish territory were not fit to be used; the patriarch, however, was not so rigorous (Tosef., Mik. vi. 3). The relation between the two seems to have been a very close one, as Onkelos is almost always mentioned together with the patriarch (in addition to the passages quoted, comp. Tosef., Kelim, B. K. ii. 4); hence when R. Gamaliel died Onkelos arranged a costly funeral by burning spices and other materials that were used at the burial of royal personages (Tosef., Shab. vii. 18; 'Ab. Zarah 11a; Sem. vii.). It is related, as an example of Onkelos' piety, that on coming into possession of the property which his pagan father had left to him and his pagan brother, he laid aside those things that were forbidden to the Jews, nor would he exchange them for anything

else, as he might legally have done (Tosef., Dem. vi. 13; Yer. Dem. 25a reads "Aquila" instead of "Onkelos," but it has been by no means proved—notwithstanding Frankel and many other modern scholars—that Yerushalmi has the right reading).

There are a number of Talmudic legends concerning Onkelos. He is said to have been the son of a Kalonymus, or, according to another version, of Kalonikos. When he had become a convert to Judaism, the emperor sent a cohort to take him prisoner, but Onkelos converted his would-be captors by citing Biblical sentences; this happened no less than three times. The fourth

**Conversion** time he was taken prisoner because  
**to** the soldiers had strict orders not to

**Judaism.** speak with him. They noticed, however, on leaving the house, that he laid his hand on the mezuzah, and had the curiosity to ask what it was; whereupon the proselyte gave them such an answer that they also were converted: thereafter he was left in peace ('Ab. Zarah 11a, top). This story, and also the legend of the acts of necromancy which "Onkelos, the son of Kalonikos, and sister's son of Titus," performed before his conversion to Judaism (Git. 50a; comp. *JEW. ENCYC.* l.c.), are probably only the Babylonian versions of legends that had gathered around Aquila and FLAVIA DOMITILLA in Palestine. At Babylon hardly anything was known of the proselyte Aquila, while Onkelos was known through the tannaitic traditions; hence legends that were really connected with the former were transferred to the latter proselyte. This explains also the statement of the Babylonian Talmud (Meg. 8a) "that Onkelos translated the Pentateuch into Aramaic according to the instructions of R. Eliezer and R. Joshua." For as soon as Aquila had to give place to Onkelos it was natural that Aramaic should be named as the language in which he made his translation, for a Greek Bible was hardly known in Babylonia.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** Anger, *De Onkelo*; Friedmann, *Onkelos und Akyllos* (especially pp. 96-104; his arguments concerning Onkelos' activity under Gamaliel I. are not convincing); comp. also the bibliography to AQUILA IN RABBINICAL LITERATURE and to TARGUM.

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**ONKENEIRA, ISAAC BEN SAMUEL:**

Turkish Talmudist, poet, and polemical writer; flourished at Constantinople about the middle of the sixteenth century. He was a friend of Don Joseph Nasi, Duke of Naxos, and is supposed to have transcribed and prefaced, under the title "Ben Porat Yosef" (Constantinople, 1577), the religious disputation which took place between the latter and a Christian scholar. This work contains both an apology for Judaism and a refutation of Christianity. Onkeneira was also the author of "Zofnat Pa'neah" (ib. 1566) and "Ayummah ka-Nidgalot" (ib. 1577 or 1672). The latter work is a diwan, containing riddles and stories, and the dispute between the letters of the alphabet at the time of Creation. Zunz ("Z. G." p. 228) gives the date of its publication as 1577; but L. Dukes, in Jost's "Annalen" (i. 416), asserts that it was written in 1573 and printed in 1672. The "Zofnat Pa'neah" is a commentary on R. Nahshon's "Re'umah," dealing with the laws concerning slaughtering.