

# Prayer For King Jonathan

## Tefillah li-Shlomo shel Yonatan ha-Melekh



4Q448

Parchment

Copied between 103-76 B.C.E.

Height 17.8 cm (7 in.), length 9.5 cm (3 3/4 in.)

Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority (2)

The King Jonathan mentioned in this text can be none other than Alexander Jannaeus, a monarch of the Hasmonean dynasty who ruled Judea from 103 to 76 B.C.E. The discovery of a prayer for the welfare of a Hasmonean king among the Qumran texts is unexpected because the community may have vehemently opposed the Hasmoneans. They even may have settled in the remote desert to avoid contact with the Hasmonean authorities and priesthood. If this is indeed a composition that clashes with Qumran views, it is a single occurrence among 600 non-biblical manuscripts. However, scholars are exploring the possibility that Jonathan-Jannaeus, unlike the other Hasmonean rulers, was favored by the Dead Sea community, at least during certain periods, and may explain the prayer's inclusion in the Dead Sea materials.

This text is unique in that it can be clearly dated to the rule of King Jonathan. Three columns of script are preserved, one on the top and two below. The upper column (A) and the lower left (C) column are incomplete. The leather is torn along the lower third of the right margin. A tab of untanned leather, 2.9 by 2.9 cm, folds over the right edge above the tear. A leather thong, remains of which were found threaded through the middle of the leather tab on the right edge, probably tied the rolled-up scroll. The form of the tab--probably part of a fastening--seems to indicate that the extant text was at the beginning of the scroll, which was originally longer. Differences between the script of Column A and that of B and C could indicate that this manuscript is not the work of a single scribe.

This small manuscript contains two distinct parts. The first, column A, presents fragments of a psalm of praise to God. The second, columns B and C, bear a prayer for the welfare of King Jonathan and his kingdom. In column A lines 8-10 are similar to a

verse in Psalm 154, preserved in the Psalms Scroll (11QPsa) exhibited here. This hymn, which was not included in the biblical Book of Psalms, is familiar, however, from the tenth-century Syriac Psalter.

Reference:

Eshel, E., H. Eshel, and A. Yardeni. "A Qumran Scroll Containing Part of Psalm 154 and a Prayer for the Welfare of King Jonathan and His Kingdom," *Israel Exploration Journal*, forthcoming.

## English Translation of Prayer For King Jonathan (Tefillah li-Shlomo shel Yonatan ha-Melekh)

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Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority (2)

Column A

1. Praise the Lord, a Psalm [of
2. You loved as a fa[ther(?)
3. you ruled over [
4. vacat [
5. and your foes were afraid (or: will fear) [
6. ...the heaven [
7. and to the depths of the sea [
8. and upon those who glorify him [
9. the humble from the hand of adversaries [
10. Zion for his habitation, ch[oooses

Column C

1. because you love Isr[ael
2. in the day and until evening [
3. to approach, to be [
4. Remember them for blessing [
5. on your name, which is called [
6. kingdom to be blessed [
7. ]for the day of war [
8. to King Jonathan [
- 9.

Column B

1. holy city
2. for king Jonathan
3. and all the  
congregation  
of your people
4. Israel
5. who are in the four
6. winds of heaven
7. peace be (for) all
8. and upon your kingdom
9. your name be blessed

Transcription and translation by E. Eshel, H. Eshel, and A. Yardeni

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