

Rehabilitation of Herod the Great, King of Judea

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Abstract

It is accepted by the author as the axioma in the paper that Jesus Christ was born in Judea and the Christianity era started with his birth at point 0 BC and it was point 0 AD. This subject is very complex. The accusation of Herod the Great, King of Judea started from the description of the Massacre of the Innocents. This subject had, has, and will have implications in the future. Some individuals and some events have had significant imprints on the history of countries, nations and even on the Global population. One of these individuals was Herod the Great, King of Judea and one of the events was the Massacre of the Innocents. Herod's individuality is very controversial and has been described in different sources with significant controversy. Many conclusions and many assumptions have been made in contradiction to the obvious facts and the truth. The name "Herod" became a synonym in Christian society equivalent to an appellative noun (common name), which was used especially against Jews to show the gruesomeness of the Jewish personality and their deeds. It is commonly assumed and presented to the congregation by clerics that Herod the Great was a Jew. Herod the Great could not be so intensely mentioned if not for the event of the Massacre of the Innocents which was described in the Gospel of Matthew as the attempt to kill the Baby Jesus by giving the order to kill all Innocents in Bethlehem. Was Herod the Great a Jew as the impression presented by the clergy on the congregations? Did the Massacre of the Innocents happen as it was described in the Gospel of Matthew? Did the Massacre of the Innocents happen at all? This paper will examine the known facts described in available literature and historical background in order to disclose the probability of the truth and the credibility of the histories presented about Herod the Great in connection with the events described as the Massacre of the Innocents presented by Matthew in the Gospel. This paper will make an attempt to answer these questions by analyzing available sources, facts, and events before, at the time and several hundred years after the reign of Herod the Great, in the Roman Republic, and later in the Roman Empire, and in the land of Israel.

Keywords

Herod the Great, Massacre of the Innocents, Jesus Christ, Gospel of Matthew, Gospel of Luke, Roman Empire, Land of Israel

1. Introduction

The presentation of historical events for many decades before the mentioned time is important for understanding this paper. It will be correct to mention the history of Rome from the time of the first civil war started between the fraction of Gaius Marius (Latin: ['ga:ijʊs 'marijʊs]; 157 BC - 13 January 86 BC) (*the term BC means before Christ*) and Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix (/ 'sʌlə/; 138 - 78 BC), when the transition of the Roman state from Republic to Empire and the expansion of the Roman state to the East started (White, 1912). It is also important to start the story of Judea from the events of the Liberation war of the Maccabees (the Maccabean Revolt (Hebrew: מרד החשמונאים)) against the Seleucid Empire. The revolt lasted from 167 - 160 BC. The Maccabees' Judea received independence in 134 BC. During this war, the Maccabees concluded an agreement and received political support from Roman state. The documentary evidence about all these actual periods is presented in books of several historiographers (Appianus of Alexandria, 1912; White, 1912; Flavius, 1913, 2008; Светоний, 1966; Sallustius, 1645, 1823; Sallust, 1931, 2008, 2010; Cohen, 1988, 2002, 2006; Holy Bible, King James Version, 2010; Den Helliges Skrift et al., 1985; Евангелие, 1891-1892; *The Torah*, 2010).

1.1. The Roman State Expansion to Middle Asia

The infighting in the Roman republic led to the laxity of allies. Mithridates VI the Tzar of Pontus (Mithridates VI Eupator (Greek: Μιθραδάτης; 135 - 63 BC)) was the ruler of the Kingdom of Pontus in northern Anatolia from 120 BC to 63 BC (White, 1912; Sallust, 1931, 2008, 2010; Саллюстий, 1999). He invaded Bithynia (the ally of the Roman Republic, Phrygia (Greek: Φρυγία, Phrygía [pʰrygía]) also known as the Kingdom of Muska), and the Roman province of Asia Minor. Thus, he started the first of the three wars (88 - 63 BC) with the Roman Republic. The three wars are known as the Mithridatic wars. The *Bellum Mithridaticum* ("Mithridatic War") is the first Mithridatic War. The first Mithridatic War was fought between 88 BC and 84 BC. It was declared by the Roman Senate in 88 BC. The reason was the provocation issued by Mithridates VI who initiated the population to genocide against Romans and Italics (citizens of the Roman Republic) in Anatolia and in neighboring territories. According to ancient authors, up to 80,000 people fell in this mass killing known as the *Asian Vespers*, *Ephesian Vespers*, or the *Vespers of 88 BC*. The Roman Senate and people of the Roman Republic could not tolerate this and answered by *Casus bellum*. Sulla (Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix (Latin: 'sʌlə/; 138 - 78 BC)) was a

consul at that time, and he received the leadership of the army which had to be directed against the Mithridates VI Eupator (White, 1912). Marius (Gaius Marius (Latin: 'ga:ijos 'marijos; 157 - 86 BC)) thought that the war would be easy and would bring a significant economical fortune. Marius started intrigues against Sulla with the aim to receive the leadership of the army instead of Sulla. The matter of changing the army leadership was to be decided by the Senate. Marius proposed a law about granting the new citizens, who had been accepted recently into the Roman Republic from the tribes which did not belong earlier to the Republic the right to vote. The *populares* was Marius's party. The *optimates* was Sulla's party. Marius hoped it would change the balance of votes in the *populares*' party favor. The indigenous Roman citizens and the *optimates* party were against that law. With the help of Publius Sulpicius Rufus (124 - 88 BC) and the mob, Marius and Sulpicius managed to force the Senate to accept this law. The First Civil War started and the transition of the Roman Republic to tyranny and later to the reign of Emperors and establishment of the Roman Empire were initiated. Defeated by the populares, the army under the leadership of Sulla escaped and appeared in Middle Asia. In the beginning, the war in Asia was led by Sulla. He significantly weakened Mithridates VI. However, the situation in Rome forced him to make peace with Mithridates VI and return to Italy. The important results of this war were the victory of Sulla over Mithridates VI, he expanded the power of the Roman Republic over the Middle East and received the glory as a military leader. Sulla returned to the Roman land and crushed the *populares* in 82 BC, killing Marius and many of Marius' *populares* supporters. Sulla restored the primacy of the Senate and limited the power of the tribunes of the plebs by reforming Roman constitutional laws. Thus, it can be said that he partly restored the republican reign. In 79 BC, he resigned of free will and died or was killed the following year.

1.2. Judea under Seleucid Reign

After the death of Alexander III of Macedonia—Alexander the Great (Greek: Ἀλέξανδρος Alexandros; 20/21 July 356 BC - 10/11 June 323 BC) in 323 BC, his empire was divided among several of his generals. Asia Minor (modern Turkey), Syria and Judea got under Seleucus' government (Seleucus I Nicator (/sə'ljʊ:kəs nɑ'keɪtər/; 358 - 281 BC; Greek: Σέλευκος Νικάτωρ Séleukos Nikátōr, 'the Victorious')). Ptolemy got Egypt (Claudius Ptolemaeus, or Ptolemy I Soter (/ 'tɒləmi/; Greek: Πτολεμαῖος Σωτήρ, Ptolemaïos Sōtēr "Ptolemy the Savior"; 367 - 282 BC)). They established the Seleucid and Ptolemaic Empires. Seleucus and Ptolemy heavily contested each other for the region in six Syrian Wars of the 3rd - 1st centuries BC.

Between 319 and 302 BC, Jerusalem changed hands seven times (Hooker, 1999). In the Battle of Panium in 200 BC, Antiochus III defeated Ptolemy V and finally conquered the region of Judea (Hooker, 1999; Schäfer, 2003). Later, Antiochus IV was provoked by the uprising of religious Jews in Jerusalem who

forcefully drove away loyal to him high priest Menelaus (pro-Hellenistic) and pro-Hellenistic followers. The revolt was under the leadership of recently deposed high priest Jason (pro-Orthodox) who was anti-Hellenistic. Antiochus IV captured Jerusalem in 167 BC and reinstated high priest Menelaus. To enforce his power Antiochus IV introduced laws that had to speed up Hellenization among Jews. His government set up an idol of Zeus with a Hellenistic altar of sacrifice on the Temple Mount (Schwartz, 2009). During the military invasion in Persia in 164 BC Antiochus IV fell ill and died. It was as the Lord's sign for Jews. Jewish priest Mattathias (Mattathias ben Johanan (Hebrew: מַתִּיתְיָהוּ בֶן יוֹחָנָן, Matīṭyāhū haKōhēn ben Yōḥānān; died 166 - 165 BC)) and his sons ousted the Antiochene' party from Jerusalem. They purged the Temple and began the Liberation war (the Maccabees wars) for the independence of Jews. The Maccabees founded the Hasmonean dynasty, who ruled from 167 BC to 37 BC. Judea was a fully independent kingdom from about 110 to 63 BC. However, in the war against Seleucus' government and pro-Hellenistic followers in Judea, the Maccabees needed allies. The Maccabees looked for allies in Egypt and in the Roman Republic. The Roman Republic politically (not militarily) supported the Maccabees.

1.3. The Roman Expansion in the Middle East

In 74 BC, Mithridates VI started the third war against the Roman Republic. In the beginning, the war was successful for Mithridates VI, however, in 72 BC, he was defeated by Romans. He escaped to Great Armenia under the protection of Tzar Tigran II - Tigranes the Great (140 - 55 BC). Romans sent the embassy to Tigran II with the demand to give out Mithridates VI. However, Tigran II denied the demand. Romans started preparation for a new war, this time against Great Armenia. The war started in 70 BC under leadership of Consul Lucius Licinius Lucullus (/lju:ˈkæləs/; 118 - 57/56 BC), who was closely related to Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix. On 6 October 69 BC in the Battle of Tigranocerta Romans defeated Armenians. After several defeats, Tigran II started guerrilla war against consul Lucius Licinius Lucullus. Consul Lucius Licinius Lucullus' legionnaires were too tired and disappointed to battle against illusive enemy as guerrilla. Legionnaires rebelled against their leader. The political changes in Rome, in 66 BC undermined the position of Lucullus in Anatolia, and he was deprived of his command. The command was entrusted to Pompey the Great. Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus was born on September 29, 106 BC, Rome and was killed on September 28, 48 BC, Egypt. Pompey the Great defeated Mithridates VI. For 6000 talents, which Pompey received from King Tigranes II, Pompey set up King Tigranes II on the throne in Armenia as a friend and ally of Rome. Pompey imposed the Roman' power on Colchis as protectorate and included the states to the south of the Caucasus in the Roman state. He annexed Syria, however, left Judaea and surrounding regions as a dependent ally—temple' state under the dynasty of the Hasmonean Kings.

1.4. The Sources of Information about Herod the Great, King of Judea and His Crime as the Massacre of the Innocents

The name of King Herod the Great together with the name of Jesus Christ is most often mentioned among the members of the Christian society. This is not surprising because King Herod's name and his deeds are directly connected by Evangelists to Jesus Christ and all Christian religions, especially because of the Massacre of the Innocents. Every day the name of Herod the Great is mentioned hundreds and hundreds of times by clerics all over the world, especially often at Easter. King Herod the Great was and is accused of the heaviest sins, one of them is the Massacre of the Innocents as the attempt to kill born Jesus (the Baby Jesus). The event of the Massacre of the Innocents is described only in the Gospel of Matthew. The event of the Massacre of the Innocents is not mentioned in the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel of Luke, and the Gospel of John (Holy Bible, King James Version, 2010; Den Hellige Skrift et al., 1985; Евангелие, 1891-1892). Also, no word is mentioned about the Massacre of the Innocents by Flavius Josephus (Flavius, 1913, 2008; Edwards, 2008; Светоний, 1966) and in the Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (Svetonii, M.D.C.XX). From Flavius Josephus as the source of most of the information about Herod the Great was copied to other serious historical works. No word was said about the Massacre of the Innocents in the Jewish sources despite the hatred to Herod the Great among the population of Judea and the Synedrion. The Massacre of the Innocents (Jewish children) could not be unmentioned by the "teachers", or temple servants of the Synedrion (the highest religious court of seventy-one or seventy-two judges) or passed without being noticed by them. Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (Latin: ('ga:ios swe:'to:njus trə'kʰil:os)), commonly referred to as Suetonius (/swi'toʊniəs/swih-toh-nee-əs; 69 - 122 AD) (*the term AD anno Domini means "Christian era"*), lived close to the time as Evangelists did. He had excellent knowledge of the Roman history and was an official Roman historian. Suetonius described the lives of Roman Caesars in *De Vita Caesarum*, translated into English under the title *The Life of the Caesars* or commonly known as *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, or *The Twelve Caesars*, *Lives of the Caesars*. He did not mention a word about the Massacre of the Innocents (Suetonius, 1966; Светоний, 1966). He described very scrupulously the lives of Caesars: Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus and Domitian. Caesar Augustus (23 September 63 BC - 19 August 14 AD) whose original name was Octavian ruled the Roman Empire at the same time as Herod the Great, King of Judea ruled Judea. Octavian was the Roman Emperor who reigned from 27 BC until 14 AD (Edwards, 2008). This period should cover without exceptions, the time of the events connected to the ones discussed in this paper. Caesar Augustus is mentioned in the Gospel of Luke 2:1. Following the Gospel of Luke 2:1, he ruled at the time of Jesus Christ's birth. The birth of Jesus Christ is undisputable. The author personally got through hundreds of available original sources, but with the exception of the Gospel of Matthew 1:16 could not find the notice about the Massacre of the Innocents. All stories told and paintings made about the Massacre of the Innocents by other authors

had the Gospel of Matthew as the source.

1.5. The Hasmonean' (/ˌhæzməˈniːən/ (Hebrew: הַשְׁמוֹנִימִי חַשְׁמוֹנָאִים) Dynasty

The Revolt against Seleucids reign and against Hellenization started by Mattathias ben Johanan resulted in semi-autonomy for Judea in 140 BC. Since roughly 110 BC Judea gained full autonomy and even included under the reign of the Hasmonean Kings regions of Samaria, Galilee, Iturea, Perea, and Idumea, with boundaries in the North-East to the Golan plateau, in the North-West to Mountain Carmel all the territory between the river Jordan, the Dead Sea in the East, and to the Mediterranean Sea in the West, and in the South-West as far as to the Sinai peninsula and to Rafah, and some territory (belt in width of about 40 to 50 kilometers) from the East of Galilean Lake and the river Jordan, and all of the East shore of the Dead Sea with the settlements of Gamla, Gadara, Pella, Madaba, and in the South most of Negev with the settlement Beersheba. Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus defeated Mithridates VI in Asia Minor in 63 BC and reorganized the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire and frontier ally kingdoms. Judea as an ally received the status of a free independent state under the dynasty of the Hasmonean' Kings. However, in reality, Judea became a vassal state. The Hasmonean' King ruled until 37 BC, the last one was Antigonos II Mattathias (Greek: Αντίγονος Antigonos; Hebrew: מַתִּיתְיָהוּ, Matītyāhū) who died in 37 BC or known as Antigonos the Hasmonean. He received help from the Parthians and ruled from 40 BC as a leader, a King for Jews' forces against the Romans in the struggle for the independent state up to 37 BC (Cohen, 2006; Schürer, Vermès, & Millar, 1973).

1.6. The Biography of Herod the Great, King of Judea

It is important to know the origin and how Herod became King (Stewart, 2003). Herod I (/ˈherəd/; Hebrew: הֵרֹדֵדוֹס, Greek: Ἡρώδης Hērōidēs; 72 - 4 BC or 1 BC), commonly known as Herod the Great, became the Roman client-king of Judea (Perowne, 2003). Herod was born in 72 BC and died in 4 BC according to German Protestant theologian Emil Schürer, who is known for his study of the Jews' history in connection to Jesus and to the epoch of Christianity' start. Schürer dated Herod the Great's death 4 BC (Schürer, 1891; Schürer, Vermès, & Millar, 1973). However, Steinmann A. in "When Did Herod the Great Reign?", *Novum Testamentum*, Volume 51, Number 1, 2009 proposed another dating. Here, I need to site the text from abstract to Steinmann's paper:

"For about 100 years there has been a consensus among scholars that Herod the Great reigned from 37 to 4 BCE. However, there have been several challenges to this consensus over the past four decades, the most notable being the objection raised by W.E. Filmer. This paper argues that Herod most likely reigned from late 39 BCE to early 1 BCE, and that this reconstruction of his reign can account for all of the surviving historical references to the events of Herod's reign more logically than the current consensus can. Moreover, the reconstruction of Herod's reign

proposed in this paper accounts for all of the datable evidence relating to Herod's reign, whereas the current consensus is unable to explain some of the evidence that it dismisses as ancient errors or that it simply ignores”.

It is known and commonly accepted that Herod reigned as King for 33 years (Stewart, 2003). Accepting the version of W.E. Filmer that Herod's reign started in 39 BC, the date of his death in 1 BC is in strong contradiction to simple arithmetic. However, it is in good agreement with the dating of his start in 37 BC and death in 4 BC and the starts of the reign of Herod's successors in Judea.

Herod's father was Antipater I the Idumean (born in 113 or 114 BC and died in 43 BC) (Stewart, 2003). Antipater was an Idumean (not a Jew) from land in the southeast of Judaea which was populated by the Edomites. He became a powerful man in the administration under King Hyrcanus II after the conquests of Pompey the Great during Pompey's war against the coalition of Mithridates VI and Tigranes II. Antipater was greatly non-popular with Jews because he was put in power by foreign administration. He installed Herod as the governors of Galilee in 47 BC (Flavius, 2003; Richardson, 1996). Although Herod was raised as a Jew according to Judaism, he could not be a Jew because of his mother Cypros' origin, as she was a Nabatean Arab princess from the city of Petra. In Judaism, the mother's origin decides the belonging of a human to Jews or to not Jews. Herod didn't belong to the Jewish nationality because his mother was an Arab. Herod was not connected one of the 12 Jewish tribes either because his father was an Idumean. Herod was completely unrelated to Jews and in addition to the Jewish superstition that the King of Judea must be a relative to King David, Herod could not be the King of Judea. However, Herod was successful in ridding Galilee region of bandits (Hayes & Mandell, 1998). He also collected taxes for the Roman State. Later the governor of Syria (Roman administrator) appointed Herod the general of Coelesyria and Samaria. Herod was appointed by Mark Antony (14 January 83 BC - 1 August 30 BC) as the tetrarch of Judea in 41 BC (Stewart, 2003). It means that he was appointed the ruler of the part of Judea with nearly unlimited authority, and he was only subordinated to the Roman Senate and the Roman Emperor. However, he was not the ruler of Judea, but the major officer supporting King Hyrcanus II, who was the vasaal monarch of Judea. With the help of the Parthians in 40 BC Antigonos II Mattathias ousted King Hyrcanus II and replaced him on the throne. To save his life Herod fled to Rome. The Roman Senate appointed Herod as King of Judea due to Mark Antony's and Julius Cesar's strong support (Flavius, 1913). Herod received support to his troopers of the Roman army from Syria province under the leadership of Sosius, the governor of Syria. The joint forces of Herod and Sosius captured Jerusalem, the Freedom-fighter King Antigonos Hasmonian was captured and handed by Herod to the Romans for humiliation and execution. Herod became the sole ruler of Judea and titled himself by the title of basileus (Βασιλεύς, “king”) in 37 BC. The title Basileus had several meanings of monarchy in several regions: King in Greece, Tzar in East Europe, Emperor in Rome, and Byzantium. However, calling himself

Basileus he stressed the meaning of his position of freedom in his decisions. It was the fact that he was among the minority of vassals who had the right to mint his own coins. Herod defined his title as Basileus despite the fact that he was a vassal, but with broad spectrum of free decisions, and nearly real power, with the army, the fleet of chariots, fortified cities, and the fleet of battle vessels. He even could start war against his enemy, without the Roman Senate's permission, which was an exception for vassals. The Sanhedrin was in strong opposition to Herod and condemned his brutality and drive to despotism, which brought the land of Israel and Jews to disaster. He ruled as a King for 33 - 34 years in accordance with Josephus and it is in good agreement with Emil Schürer's estimation about Herod's death in 4 BC.

Herod founded the Herodian dynasty. Herod's adherence to Judaism is more than questionable.

1.7. The End of the Hasmonean' Dynasty

King Hyrcanus II was ousted with the help of the Parthians in 40 BC and replaced on the throne by Parthians vassal the Hasmonean King Antigonos who sent his uncle King Hyrcanus II as a prisoner in chains to Babylon. For three years Antigonos the Hasmonean ruled Judea until 37 BC. In 37 BC Herod and Sosius captured Jerusalem. Practically in this way, the chain of the Hasmonean' kings dynasty ended in the same way as the chain of David' Kings Dynasty by King Jeconiah (Hebrew: יְחִזְקִיָּהּ Yəḵōnəyā [jəxəŋja:]) had ended earlier. King Jeconiah was dethroned by the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar II in the 6th century BC. After King Nebuchadnezzar II captured Jerusalem, he installed the uncle of King Jeconiah on the throne of Judea. However, the Lord's curse written by prophet Jeremiah in (22:30) was fulfilled for Jeconiah: *"This is what the LORD says: 'Record this man as if childless, a man who will not prosper in his lifetime, for none of his offspring will prosper, none will sit on the throne of David or rule anymore in Judah'".* By fulfilling this curse of the Lord, the one from David's house will not be a King on the throne of David and will not rule in Judah or over Jews, this is what the LORD ordered (Denova, 2021).

1.8. The Start of Herod the Great's Reign

The Hasmonean' Kings were not from the house of David, it is difficult to say that they were sitting on the throne of King David, because all the time of their reign they were the vassals or dependent on other Powers. The prophesy by Jeremiah in (22:30) was fulfilled already in the 6th century BC. Herod became the King of Judea and founded the Herodian dynasty in 37 BC after capturing Jerusalem and ousting King Antigonos the Hasmonean. He had many wives and many children. He had a son Antipater II from his first wife Doris, daughters Salampsio and Cypros, from wife Mariamne I, a son Alexander, a son Aristobulus IV, a daughter Salampsio, and a daughter Cypros, from wife Mariamne II a son Herod II, from wife Malthace a son Herod Archelaus who became an ethnarch, a son Herod Antipas who became a tetrarch, and a daughter Olympias, from wife Cleopatra of Jerusalem, a son Philip

the Tetrarch, and a son Herod, from wife Pallas, a son Phasael, from wife Phaidra, a daughter Roxanne, and from his eighth wife Elpis, a daughter Salome.

The title tetrarch was explained before, the title ethnarch is not a King, and it is like a governor. It is important to understand the difference between the tetrarch and King, because in the Gospels both titles are used. King is a monarch like Herod was. In Matthew 21:12, it is written: "... *He [Jesus] overturned the tables of the money changers ...*" it is evident that besides Roman coins under Herod, there were local coins minted by Herod the Great. Archaeologically it is supported that there were copper coins in the time of Herod, bearing the legend "ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΗΡΩΔΟΥ" ("Basileōs Hērōdou"). Herod paid taxes to the Roman Empire directly; however, the citizens of Judea paid taxes directly and only to Herod.

1.9. The Dynasty of Herod the Great

After he and Sosius, the governor of Syria, captured Jerusalem in 37 BC from rebellion' King Antigonus and Persian' troops sent Antigonus to Rome for execution, Herod became the ruler of Judea and titled himself basileus (Βασιλεύς, "king"). After his 33 years of reign, he divided Judea in several territories in the will and gave those to his relatives and children. Herod's sister Salome I became the toparchy of Iamnia, Azotus, Phasaelis according to the testamentary given by Herod in 4 BC. This is additional support to Emil Schürer's theory about the date of Herod the Great's death in 4 BC. Herod Antipas (Greek: Ἡρώδης Ἀντίπας, Hērōdēs Antipas); (20 BC - 39 AD), following Herod the Great's will, he received the tetrarchy of Galilee and Perea in 4 BC. Antipas was recognized as a tetrarch by Rome. He never was a king (Jeffers, 2000). Herod Archelaus (Ancient Greek: Ἡρώδης Ἀρχέλαος, Hērōidēs Archelaos) (23 BC - 18 AD) received the ethnarchy of Samaria, Judea, and Idumea, including the cities of Caesarea and Jaffa (4 BC - 6 AD) (Shatzman, 1991; Flavius, 2008). Archelaus was removed after nine years of being in power, and the province got under direct Roman reign in 6 AD under Census of Quirinius that was taken by Publius Sulpicius Quirinius, the governor of Roman Syria. This is also an additional documented support to Emil Schürer's theory about the date of Herod the Great's death in 4 BC. Herod Philip II or Philip the Tetrarch (26 BC - 34 AD) received tetrarchy over the Northeast part of Judea 4 BC - 34 AD, and he ruled up to his death. In this text and above, Judea means the kingdom of Herod the Great which was divided in accordance with his testament after his death. Judea geographically means the territory of the kingdom of Herod the Great which was before his death. The division of the Kingdom Judea in accordance with the Roman chronicle dated 4 BC the time of the reign of Emperor August and Census of Quirinius.

2. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and Accounts about the Described Time

The first book of the New Testament in the Bible is the Gospel of Matthew, fol-

lowed by the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John. The Apostle Matthew, first recognized by attesting with Papias of Hierapolis, the attestation dated 125 AD. However, this date is rejected by modern scholars (Burkett, 2002; Duling, 2010). According to the New Testament, Matthew the Apostle was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus. The described event is very important for understanding if the Massacre of the Innocents really happened or if it is only alleged crime which was incriminated Herod the Great, and he had nothing to do with the tragedy or possibly the tragedy was a fable which was told to the Apostle Matthew. It is commonly accepted that Matthew the Apostle, often named as Saint Matthew was possibly a Jew by name Levi one of Jesus' disciples and he should be of nearly the same age as Jesus. If it is really so, he could not be a witness of the Massacre of the Innocents. The Massacre of the Innocents (Hebrew: טבח התמימים) is described as the attempt of Herod the Great, king of Judea to kill the Born King of Israel (Jesus Christ) (the Baby Jesus), which is the incident presented only in the Gospel of Matthew (2:16 - 18), but not in the Gospels of Mark, Luke and John. Following the facts presented above and below it is difficult to connect the living time of Herod the Great, to the crime of the Massacre of the Innocents. From several historical sources Emil Schürer's conclusion about the date of Herod's the Great's death in 4 BC looks correct as it is supported by the starts of the reign of Salome I, Herod Antipas, Herod Archelaus, and Herod Philip II. The description in the Gospel of Luke (2:2 - 7) who connected the arrival of Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem because the *Census* which was issued: "This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria". It is historically documented that the census took place in 6 AD, according to Emil Schürer and even to W. E. Filmer (Steinmann, 2009). Herod the Great had been dead for ten years before the Census of Quirinius. The combination of the Gospel of Matthew and Luke shows that Joseph and Mary's arrival in Bethlehem should occur six years after the birth of Jesus Christ and ten years after Herod the Great's death. Several scientists tried to find out the date of the Massacre of the Innocents, compiling the appearance of the Bethlehem Star which directly preceded the Massacre of the Innocents described in the Gospel of Matthew. The most prominent among them was German astronomer Johannes Kepler (/ˈkeɪplər/; German: [joˈhanəs ˈkɛplɐ, nəs] (27 December 1571 - 15 November 1630)). He tried to adjust the date of appearance of the Bethlehem Star, or Christmas Star to the events described by the Apostle Matthew in (2:16 - 18). Kepler calculated that a series of three conjunctions of the planets Jupiter and Saturn occurred in the year 7 BC, and this could be seen as supernova. However, the modern calculations show that these conjunctions were not visually impressive. Herod died in 4 BC after a lunar eclipse and before Passover Feast as it is described by Josephus Flavius in Antiquities of the Jews. It is possible to propose dozens of conjunctions of planets mentioned in different sources, but none of these will fit this concrete time just before or after 0-year AD. The reasons for this are several. From the start of Christianity era the Heliocentric system of the Solar galaxy with the Sun in the middle was changed to Geocentric model with the Earth in the middle. All knowledge in astronomy from the time of

ancient Sumer, Egypt even from ancient Hellas was abandoned and wild fables of Astrology replaced it. The calendar was abused, and several time dates were moved forward and backward. On the First Council of Nicaea at 325 AD on which only four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were canonized, the other Gospels were destroyed. It was about forty different versions of Gospels. If those destroyed texts of Gospels had not been destroyed, it could be possible to determine the exact Jesus Christ's date of birth.

A Man Accused of Crime Which Possibly Didn't Exist

Only Luke in the Gospel (1:1 - 4) honestly told that the story was presented to him by others: *"¹Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ²just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught"*, but he didn't claim that he was an eyewitness. In the other Gospels of Matthew, Mark and John the text gives the impression that they were the source and eyewitnesses. They could not be significantly older than Jesus and be the eyewitnesses to many things described by them. Because of this more appreciation should be given to Luke in the Gospel of Luke (2:2 - 7). John the Baptist according to the Gospel of Luke (1:1 - 66) could be the same age as Jesus Christ, this is in part supported by the Gospel of Matthew (11:2 - 4). In the Gospel of Matthew (14:1 - 12), it is clearly stated that John the Baptist was beheaded by the order of Herod the Tetrarch not of Herod the Great. Due to this evidence and the facts that Herod the Great died in 4 BC and Herod Antipas, ruled in Galilee, but not in Jerusalem, he was the Tetrarch since 4 BC, not the King, it follows that Herod Antipas could order the Massacre of the Innocents at the time just after 0 - year AD. Jesus called Herod Antipas a Fox. More emphasis should be put on the fact that even Herod the Great did not possess the power to give orders about capital punishment without permission from the Roman authorities, this was described by Josephus Flavius in the case when Herod intended to execute his son accusing his son of plotting against him (against Herod). Herod Antipas had less power as Tetrarch than King Herod the Great. The Synhedrion (the highest court in Judea) had bad and very critical relations with Herod the Great. The massacre of a big number of Jewish children should have been reflected by the Synhedrion, Josephus Flavius and at least by one of the Roman' historians of that time or especially by those who described the Cesar Augustus reign (Suetonius, 1966; Светоний, 1966). The number of massacred children according to Greek sources 14.000, Syrian' sources 64.000 and Coptic sources 144.000. The children were from 0 to 2 years old. Following the statistics 1, one-year-old children could be adjusted to possible number of citizens in Bethlehem at this time. According to Greek sources, there were 7000 one-year-old children, Syrian sources give the number 32.000 and Coptic –72.000. Every child should have two parents, it means 14.000, 64.000

and 144.000 respectively. The life span was approximately 50 years. Totally, the population in Bethlehem calculated from these numbers should be at that time: $14.000 \times 50 + 7.000 = 707.000$, $64.000 \times 50 + 32.000 = 3.232.000$ and $144.000 \times 50 + 72.000 = 7.272.000$ people respectively. Today, neither Bethlehem nor even Haifa has 707.000 population; today, neither Bethlehem nor even Jerusalem has 3.232.000 population; today, the Jewish population in Israel is less than 7.272.000. Coptic Bishops have unrestricted fantasy to give the number of 144.000 massacred. The other given numbers are also hardly believable.

3. Conclusion

Herod the Great didn't have a possibility to order the Massacre of the Innocents because he had a perfect alibi, and he was dead at the time of the alleged Massacre of the Innocents.

The unsupported story of Matthew was not supported by the Gospel of Mark, Luke and John and many others.

The presented numbers of the massacred look very suspicious and fabulous.

The archaeological evidence of Jesus' birth date must be searched for.

The text of the Gospel of Matthew must be corrected in the same way as the term "virgin" was corrected to "young lady" (Brondz & Aslanova, 2019; Schürer, Vermès, & Millar, 1973; Holy Bible, King James Version, 2010; Den Hellige Skrift et al., 1985).

Herod the Great must be rehabilitated, and his name must be deleted from the story of the Massacre of the Innocents in the Gospel of Matthew, or the whole story should be deleted.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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