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POSIDONIUS AS A POSSIBLE SOURCE OF
DIODORUS' DESCRIPTION OF THE DEAD SEA
(DIOD. 2. 48. 6–8; 19. 98–99)*

Diodorus refers twice to Arabia and particularly to the Dead Sea (which he calls Asphalt Lake) in Books 2 and 19. In the first passage, the features of the Dead Sea (which is unnamed) are mentioned as part of the general geographical description of Arabia (2. 48. 6–8). Diodorus notes that the lake is extremely salty and devoid of life and describes the peculiar phenomenon of the asphalt discharge: asphalt occasionally rises to the surface of the lake and is gathered by the local inhabitants. This description is repeated in Book 19, when Diodorus tells about the expedition of Antigonus Monophthalmus and his son Demetrius Poliorcetes against the Nabataeans in 312 BC (19. 98–99).¹ The second passage repeats the first almost verbatim: the differences are minor and mostly concern word order. In fact, the passage from Book 2 is not very well preserved, having numerous minor defects – but the texts are so close in their remaining parts that it could be restored with the help of Book 19.² This time, Diodorus focuses on asphalt extraction, adding a special passage on the process. Here, in the second description of the Dead Sea, Diodorus also calls it Asphalt Lake – ἡ Ἀσφαλτῖτις λίμνη. This paper examines the question of the designation of the Dead Sea in the second passage and tries to identify the sources behind Diodorus' description.

Diodorus often repeated passages in different parts of his treatise, and the passage about the Dead Sea is the longest cited fragment. As noted by B. Eck and P. Krumbholz, Diodorus iterated the descriptions of distant lands and nations and also mythological and historical excursus more often, with an eye to the comfort of the reader who looks through some chapters that he is interested in, but does not read the

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¹ Eck 2003, 183–184; Reinach 1895, 73.

² Eck 2003, 85.

entire composition.³ Krumbholz gives examples of other iterations: Diod. 3. 62–65 and 4. 2–5 (about Dionysus); 1. 8. 9 and 2. 38. 2 (origin of handicraft); 2. 16. 3 and 2. 35 (India); 2. 37. 3 and 18. 6. 2 (Alexander the Great in India); 1. 21. 2 and 4. 6. 3 (Osiris myth); and passages on the Nabataeans (19. 94. 6 and 19. 97. 4; 2. 48. 1 and 19. 94. 3).⁴ In such an extensive work as Diodorus' *Bibliotheca Historica*, repeating passages could really result from a desire to remind a reader of reported information or to give more details to those who glanced at the composition selectively.

The name ἡ Ἀσφαλτῖτις λίμνη (the Asphalt Lake) in the second passage of Diodorus (19. 98) seems to be the first mention of the distinct name of this lake. In earlier fragments by Greek historians, it has no name and is described indirectly, when needed (Hieronymus of Cardia, Xenophilus, and Posidonius, see below): the name Asphalt Lake is attested for the first time in Diodorus. After him, it became widely accepted in Greek tradition, for example by Josephus Flavius (*Bell. Iud.* 4. 8. 4; *Ant. Iud.* 1. 9), Galen (*De simpl. med. temp.* 11. 690), and Claudius Ptolemy (*Geogr.* 5. 16. 3 Nobbe).⁵ The name Dead Sea (Νεκρὰ θάλαττα / *Mare Mortuum*) appears later; when used, it is sometimes paired with the name Asphalt Lake (Ἀσφαλτῖτις λίμνη / *Asphaltitis* / *lacus Asphalti*), e.g. in Galen (*De simpl. med. temp.* 11. 690; 692), Julius Honorius (*Cosmogr. Excerpta eius sphaerae vel continentia* 2), Priscian of Lydia (*Sol.* 6. 573–574), and Bede the Venerable (*De loc. sanct.* 11) and appears in combinations of three or more names as well.⁶

It is not absolutely clear why the Dead Sea remains unnamed in Diodorus' first description in Book 2 and why the name Ἀσφαλτῖτις λίμνη appears in the second passage in Book 19. The first passage (Diod. 2. 48. 6–7) describes the lake's location and special features:

³ Eck 2003, 184; Krumbholz 1889, 286–289.

⁴ Krumbholz 1889, 291.

⁵ The name Ἀσφαλτῖτις λίμνη was also used by Aelius Herodianus (*De prosod.* 3. 1. 382), Basil the Great (*Homil. in hex.* 4. 4), Stephan of Byzantium (*Ethn.* 581), and Suda (α 4296). In Roman tradition, the name Asphaltites occurs in Vitruvius (8. 3. 8), Pliny the Elder (5. 72), and Solinus (35), and the form Asphaltitis is testified in Pseudo-Hegesippus (Ps.-Heges. *De excidio Hierosolymitanae urbis* 4. 18 = Ambros. Mediol. in PL 15. col. 1961). This name also was found in the anonymous treatise from the time of the Crusades, *De situ terre jerosolimitane et habitatoribus eius. De locis diversis*.

⁶ Euseb. *Onom.* 100; Isid. *Etym.* 13. 19. 3–4; Thietm. *Peregrinatio* 33–44; Faber. *Evagatorium* 159–160.

ἔστι δ' ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ τῶν Ναβαταίων [...] λίμνη τε μεγάλη φέρουσα πολλὴν ἄσφαλτον, ἐξ ἧς λαμβάνουσιν οὐκ ὀλίγας προσόδους. αὕτη δ' ἔχει τὸ μὲν μῆκος σταδίων ὡς πεντακοσίων, τὸ δὲ πλάτος ὡς ἐξήκοντα, τὸ δ' ὕδωρ δυσῶδες καὶ διάπικρον, ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι μήτ' ἰχθὺν τρέφειν μήτ' ἄλλο τῶν καθ' ὕδατος εἰωθότων ζώων εἶναι.

There is also in the land of the Nabataeans [...] a large lake which produces asphalt in abundance, and from it they derive not a little revenue. It has a length of about five hundred stades and a width of about sixty, and its water is so ill-smelling and so very bitter that it cannot support fish or any of the other animals which commonly live in water.⁷

The second description (Diod. 19. 98. 1) also refers to the peculiarities of the lake, but begins with its name:

Ὁ μὲν οὖν Δημήτριος λαβὼν ὁμήρους καὶ τὰς ὁμολογηθείσας δωρεὰς ἀνέξευξεν ἀπὸ τῆς πέτρας⁸ διατείνας δὲ σταδίους τριακοσίους κατεστρατοπέδευσε πλησίον τῆς Ἀσφαλτίτιδος λίμνης, ἧς τὴν φύσιν οὐκ ἄξιον παραδραμεῖν ἀνεπισήμαντον. κεῖται γὰρ κατὰ μέσσην τὴν σατραπείαν τῆς Ἰδουμαίας,⁹ τῇ μὲν μήκει παρεκτείνουσα σταδίους μάλιστά που πεντακοσίους, τῇ δὲ πλάτει περὶ ἐξήκοντα. τὸ δ' ὕδωρ ἔχει διάπικρον καὶ καθ' ὑπερβολὴν δυσῶδες, ὥστε μήτ' ἰχθὺν δύνασθαι τρέφειν μήτ' ἄλλο τῶν καθ' ὕδατος εἰωθότων ζώων εἶναι.

Demetrius received hostages and the gifts that had been agreed upon and departed from the rock. After marching for three hundred stades, he camped near the Asphalt Lake [namely the Dead Sea], the nature of which ought not to be passed over without remark. It lies along the middle of the satrapy of Idumea, extending in length about five hundred stades and in width about sixty. Its water is very bitter and of exceedingly foul odor, so that it cannot support fish or any of the other animals that commonly live in water.¹⁰

Probably there was no name ἡ Ἀσφαλτίτις λίμνη in Diodorus' source, because it is not found in the first description of the Dead Sea in Book 2. The repetition of the passage on asphalt eruption is due to the accent on Antigonius' expedition, which tried to seize the territories where asphalt

⁷ Transl. Oldfather 1967, 43–45.

⁸ It is probably Petra (Eck 2003, 184). For a more exact localization of the rock, see Marciak 2018, 879–880. F.-M. Abel identified this rock as Oumm el-Biyara (Abel 1937, 380–385).

⁹ The status of Idumea is disputable (Diodorus defines it as a satrapy in 19. 98 and as an eparchy in 19. 95), and it should be discussed specially on another occasion.

¹⁰ Transl. Geer 1983, 99–101, slightly modified.

was extracted. Diodorus could compose the description of the Dead Sea for Book 2 and then repeat it in Book 19, where it was relevant for the narrative, adding a passage on asphalt extraction and coining the name of the lake in accordance with its important feature.¹¹ If Diodorus transferred the description of the Dead Sea from Book 19 to Book 2, it is not clear why he preferred it to stay unnamed, irrespective of its prevalence.¹²

It cannot be ruled out that Diodorus gave the name Ἀσφαλτῖτις λίμνη to this lake himself. He is the earliest author attested to use this name. Nevertheless, the appearance of the name in Diodorus' second description of the Dead Sea seems quite natural. Almost all his account is devoted to asphalt and its eruption, extraction, and use. That is why Diodorus could call the sea Asphalt Lake, referring to the first description of the sea (2. 48. 6: ἔστι δ' ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ τῶν Ναβαταίων [...] λίμνη τε μεγάλη φέρουσα πολλὴν ἄσφαλτον). He did not aim at inventing a toponym, but recalled the previous passage with a definition that accurately characterized the sea (ἄσφαλτῖτις λίμνη i. e. φέρουσα πολλὴν ἄσφαλτον).¹³ This name *ad hoc* became common designation of the Dead Sea afterwards.¹⁴

¹¹ The name ἡ Ἀσφαλτῖτις λίμνη is not a loan translation from Arabic, Aramaic, or Hebrew (Barzanò 1988, 179). In Arabic sources, the Dead Sea was called Malodorous Lake (Ibn Khordadbeh, Abu'l-Fida, Ibn al-Faqih, etc.), Lake of Zohar (al-Biruni, Yaqut, al-Muqaddasi, etc.), Dead Sea (al-Idrisi, al-Biruni, al-Yaqubi, etc.), Lake of Lot (al-Dimashqi, Ibn Battuta); in Hebrew, Sea of Salt (*Gen.* 14:3; *Num.* 34:12; *Deut.* 3:17; *Jos.* 3:16), Sea of Valley (*Deut.* 3:17; *Deut.* 4:49; 2 *Reg.* 14:25; *Jos.* 3:16), and Eastern Sea (*Joel.* 2:20; *Zach.* 14:8; *Ezech.* 47:18).

¹² S. E. Binder and B. Bar-Kochva consider that in Book 2 Diodorus cited a source (Hieronymus) not entirely, as in Book 19, and omitted many details here (Binder–Bar-Kochva 2016, 228). As we will show below, Diodorus seems to add some features from another source (Posidonius) in Book 19 rather than omitting them in Book 2.

¹³ It is noteworthy that the expression Ἀσφαλτῖτις λίμνη in Vitruvius is also a characteristic of the asphalt lake (near Babylon) and not an exact geographical name: *Babylone lacus amplissima magnitudine, qui λίμνη Ἀσφαλτῖτις appellatur, habet supra natans liquidum bitumen; quo bitumine et latere testaceo structum murum Samiramis circumdedit Babylonem. item Iope in Syria Arabiaque Nomadum lacus sunt immani magnitudine, qui emittunt bituminis maximas moles, quas diripiunt qui habitant circa* (8. 3. 8). Vitruvius does not mention the name of the Dead Sea, indicating only its location near Jaffa. The expression Ἀσφαλτῖτις λίμνη, later usually used to designate the Dead Sea, here (like in Diodorus) has not yet become an established toponym and designates the lake near Babylon (Stern 1976, 344; Callebat 1973, 99).

¹⁴ M. Marciak notes that the asphalt eruption led to the matching name, but does not affirm that the designation goes back to Diodorus: “The name obviously results from the fact that the Dead Sea was famous in ancient times as a reservoir of bitumen deposits” (Marciak 2018, 880). A. Barzanò supposed that the name could have been coined by Hieronymus of Cardia (Barzanò 1988, 179), but it is not preserved in his fragments.

The appearance of the name in Book 19 is connected with the question of Diodorus' sources and work methods. The earliest Greek description of the Dead Sea is contained in *Meteorologica* (Arist. *Met.* 2. 3. 359 a); the other early testimonies are fragmentary and belong to Hieronymus of Cardia (*FGrHist* 154 F 5 = Paradoxographus Florent. *De aquis mirabilibus* 33), Xenophilus (*FHG* IV, 530 = Antigon. Caryst. *Hist. mirab. collect.* 151), and Posidonius (*FGrHist* 87 F 70 = Strab. 16. 2. 42–44). Hieronymus is a generally accepted source for Diodorus' Books 18–20;¹⁵ some scholars, for example Jane Hornblower, even consider him the sole source for these books.¹⁶ Diodorus indeed mentioned Hieronymus by name and knew his writings.¹⁷ He reports that Antigonus put Hieronymus in charge of controlling the asphalt extraction (19. 100. 1–2):

...ἐπὶ δὲ τῷ κατασκέπασθαι τὴν λίμνην καὶ δοκεῖν εὐρηκέναι τινὰ τῇ βασιλείᾳ πρόσοδον ἐπαινέσας ἐπὶ μὲν ταύτης ἐπιμελητὴν ἔταξεν Ἱερώνυμον τὸν τὰς ἱστορίας συγγράψαντα, τούτῳ δὲ συνετέτακτο πλοῖα παρασκευάσασθαι καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν ἄσφαλτον ἀναλαβόντα συνάγειν εἰς τινὰ τόπον.

...but he [Antigonus] praised him [Athenaeus] for examining the lake and apparently having found a source of revenue for the kingdom. In charge of this he placed Hieronymus, the writer of the history, and instructed him to prepare boats, collect all the asphalt, and bring it together in a certain place.¹⁸

¹⁵ F. Bisière's characterization exactly approaches Diodorus' sources: "Tout le monde pense que Diodore a utilisé Hiéronymos, mais avec des nuances. Il y a en gros trois tendances. Certains croient que Diodore a utilisé directement Hiéronymos [...] Certains de ces chercheurs admettent, pour quelques rares passages, l'existence de sources secondaires. Selon la deuxième tendance, Diodore aurait suivi une source plus tardive, qui utilisait beaucoup Hiéronymos, mais aussi d'autres historiens [...] Enfin R. Laqueur [Laqueur 1958, 258] croit à une utilisation directe et systématique de deux sources par Diodore" (Bisière 1974, 369–370). However, A. Meeus admits that "traditional Hieronyman dogma is much more problematic than most scholars assume" (Meeus 2012, 76).

¹⁶ Hornblower 1981, 47; Smith 1961, 283; Bar-Kochva 2010, 412; Takhtadzhian 2004 [C. A. Тахтadžян, "Набатеи в 'Библиотеке' Диодора (XIX, 94–100)"], 181. In discussion, S. A. Takhtadzhian agreed that Diodorus could have also used Posidonius, see below.

¹⁷ S. E. Binder and B. Bar-Kochva use Diodorus' mention of Hieronymus as one of the proofs that Hieronymus was his sole source of the Dead Sea passage (Binder–Bar-Kochva 2016, 227–228).

¹⁸ Transl. Geer 1983, 105. Cf. the testimony of Flavius on Hieronymus (Flav. *Ap.* 1. 213–214): Ὅτι δὲ οὐκ ἀγνοοῦντες ἔνιοι τῶν συγγραφέων τὸ ἔθνος ἡμῶν, ἀλλ' ὑπὸ φόβου τινὸς ἢ δι' ἄλλας αἰτίας οὐχ ὑγιεῖς τὴν μνήμην παρέλιπον, τεκμήριον

Most scholars suggest that Diodorus did not use Hieronymus directly (as J. Hornblower supposed) and that he might have taken his description from an intermediate source,¹⁹ especially from Agatharchides of Cnidus (thus, R. H. Simpson, C. Bottin, and I. Sh. Shiffmann;²⁰ F. Bisière supposed him to be the direct source of Diodorus).²¹ However, Agatharchides' fragments about the Dead Sea are not preserved; and once again, we cannot be sure that Diodorus' text was based on Agatharchides' work, especially since Diodorus did know Hieronymus.

Nevertheless, Diodorus does not state specifically that Hieronymus was his source for the description. A fragment about the Dead Sea by Hieronymus was preserved in an anonymous paradoxographic treatise "On marvelous water", the *Paradoxographus Florentinus*, dated probably to the 2 century AD (*De aquis mirabilibus* 33 = *FGrHist* 154 F5):

Ἱερώνυμος ἰστόρησεν ἐν τῇ Ναβαταίων χώρα τῶν Ἀράβων εἶναι λίμνην πικράν· ἐν ἧ οὔτ' ἰχθύς, οὔτε ἄλλο τι τῶν ἐνύδρων ζῶων γίνεσθαι· ἀσφάλτου δὲ πλίνθους ἐξ αὐτῆς αἶρεσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἐπιχωρίων.²²

Hieronymus narrated that there was a salty lake in the Nabataean country of Arabs, where neither fish nor any other water animal lived, and that bricks of asphalt were gathered from its surface by the inhabitants.

The fragment of Hieronymus is very brief, but his characterization of the Dead Sea resembles Diodorus' description (see the table).

οἶμαι παρέξειν· Ἱερώνυμος γὰρ ὁ τὴν περὶ τῶν διαδόχων ἱστορίαν συγγεγραφὼς κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν μὲν ἦν Ἑκαταίῳ χρόνον, φίλος δ' ὢν Ἀντιγόνου τοῦ βασιλέως τὴν Συρίαν ἐπετρόπευεν· ἀλλ' ὅμως Ἑκαταῖος μὲν καὶ βιβλίον ἔγραψεν περὶ ἡμῶν, Ἱερώνυμος δ' οὐδαμοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἱστορίαν ἐμνημόνευσε καίτοι σχεδὸν ἐν τοῖς τόποις διατετριφὼς· τοσοῦτον αἱ προαιρέσεις τῶν ἀνθρώπων διήνεγκαν – "Now that some writers have omitted to mention our nation, not because they knew nothing of us, but because they envied us, or for some other unjustifiable reasons, I think I can demonstrate by particular instances; for Hieronymus, who wrote the History of [Alexander's] Successors, lived at the same time as Hecateus, and was a friend of king Antigonos, and governor of Syria. Now it is plain that Hecateus wrote an entire book concerning us, while Hieronymus never mentions us in his history, although he was bred up very near to the places where we live. Thus different from one another are the inclinations of men" (transl. Whiston 1802, 507, slightly modified).

¹⁹ L. I. Hau assumed that Hieronymus' account was the main source for Books 18–20, but it went back to Diodorus, probably through an intermediate source (Hau 2016, 166).

²⁰ Simpson 1959, 370; Bottin 1928, 1326; Shiffmann 2007 [И. Ш. Шифман, *Набатейское государство и его культура*], 8–9.

²¹ Bisière 1975, 166–167.

²² Öhler 1913, 44.

Hieronymus (<i>FGrHist</i> 154 F 5)	Diodorus 2. 48. 6–8	Diodorus 19. 98–99	Posidonius (<i>FGrHist</i> 87 F 70)
salty (πικράν)	2. 48. 6: situated in the Nabataean country (ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ τῶν Ναβαταίων)	19. 98: the Asphalt Lake (Ἀσφαλτίτιδος λίμνης)	(Strabo calls the Dead Sea Lake Sirbonis by mistake) ²³
situated in the Nabataean country (ἐν τῇ Ναβαταίων χώρᾳ)	2. 48. 6: asphalt (λίμνη τε μεγάλη φέρουσα πολλὴν ἄσφαλτον)	19. 98: Idumean satrapy (τὴν σατραπείαν τῆς Ἰδουμαίας)	
	2. 48. 7: length (500 × 60 stades)	19. 98: length (500 × 60 stades)	(Strabo 16. 2. 42): length 1000 stades (χιλίων σταδίων εἰρήκασί τινες τὸν κύκλον· τῇ μέντοι παραλίᾳ παρεκτέταται μικρῷ τι πλέον τῶν διακοσίων σταδίων μήκος ἐπιλαμβάνουσα)
	2. 48. 7: very salty water and foul odor (διάπικρος, δυσῶδες)	19. 98: very salty water and foul odor (διάπικρον, δυσῶδες)	(42) extremely dense (literally “heavy”) water (βαρύτατον ἔχουσα ὕδωρ)
fish don’t live (οὐτ’ ἰχθυῖς, οὔτε ἄλλο τι τῶν ἐνύδρων ζώων γίνεσθαι)	2. 48. 7: fish don’t live (μήτ’ ἰχθὺν δύνασθαι τρέφειν μήτ’ ἄλλο τῶν καθ’ ὕδατος εἰωθότων ζώων)	19. 98: fish don’t live (μήτ’ ἰχθὺν δύνασθαι τρέφειν μήτ’ ἄλλο τῶν καθ’ ὕδατος εἰωθότων ζώων εἶναι)	(42) so that swimming is not required (μὴ δεῖν κολύμβου)
asphalt	2. 48. 7: asphalt	19. 98: asphalt	(42) asphalt
	2. 48. 8: asphalt discharge compared to an island (οἶονεῖ τις νῆσος)	19. 98: asphalt discharge compared to an island (οἶονεῖ τις νῆσος)	(42) asphalt discharge compared to a hill (ἡ ἐπιφάνεια λόφου φαντασίαν παρέχει)

²³ Posidonius’ description, cited by Strabo, referred to the Dead Sea, but Strabo called it Sirbonis, the salt lake in Egypt (Radt 2009, 329–330), and probably combined the features of both lakes (Bar-Kochva 2010, 362 n. 15).

Hieronymus (FGrHist 154 F 5)	Diodorus 2. 48. 6–8	Diodorus 19. 98–99	Posidonius (FGrHist 87 F 70)
	2. 48. 8: silver, gold, and copper are tarnished (ἄργυρός τε καὶ χρυσὸς καὶ χαλκός)	19. 98: silver, gold, and copper are tarnished (ἄργυρός τε καὶ χρυσὸς καὶ χαλκός)	(42) silver, gold, and copper are tarnished (χαλκὸς καὶ ἄργυρος καὶ πᾶν τὸ στιλπνὸν μέχρι καὶ χρυσοῦ)
	2. 48. 8: seismicity and underground fire (ὁ δὲ πλησίον τόπος ἔμπυρος ὦν καὶ δυσώδης)	19. 98: seismicity and underground fire (ὁ δὲ πλησίον τόπος ἔμπυρος ὦν καὶ δυσώδης)	
		19. 99. 1: inhabitants prepare for the extraction and make rafts of reed (οἱ περιιοκοῦντες ... παρασκευασάμενοι γὰρ δέσμας καλάμων)	(42) inhabitants prepare for the extraction and make the rafts of reed (οἱ περιιοκοῦντες ... παρασκευάζονται πρὸς τὴν μεταλλεῖαν αὐτοῦ, ποιησάμενοι σχεδίας καλαμίνας)
		19. 99. 2: asphalt is cut (ἀποκόπτοντες)	(42) asphalt is cut (τομῆς καὶ κοπῆς δεῖσθαι)
		19. 99. 2: nothing sinks (οὐ καταδύεται)	(42) swimming is not required (μηδὲ κολύμβου δεῖσθαι)
		19. 99. 3: dense and heavy water (βάρος)	(42) asphalt is cut (κόπτουσι)
			(16. 2. 44) seismicity and underground fire (ἔμπυρον τὴν χώραν εἶναι)

The similarity of expressions and Diodorus' mention of Hieronymus are, of course, a serious reason to admit Hieronymus as Diodorus' source. Both Hieronymus and Diodorus noted the location of the lake in the Nabataean land, its salinity, the asphalt eruption, and the absence of fish. However, these features are the best-known and can be found in almost every geographical description of the Dead Sea. Moreover, the general order of characteristics in Hieronymus is quite different from Diodorus' one, and some features, such as the extent of the lake, are missing in the fragment.

Diodorus' further description (19. 98 ≈ 2. 48. 7–8) contains more rare details that cannot go back to Hieronymus according to his fragment in *Paradoxographus Florentinus*:

ἐξ αὐτῆς δὲ μέσης ἐκφυσᾷ κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν ἀσφάλτου στερεᾶς μέγεθος ποτὲ μὲν μεῖζον ἢ τρίπλεθρον, ἔστι δ' ὅτ' οὐ πολὺ λειπόμενον πλέθρου· ἐφ' ᾧ δὴ συνήθως οἱ περιοικοῦντες βάρβαροι τὸ μὲν μεῖζον καλοῦσι ταῦρον, τὸ δὲ ἔλασσον μόσχον. ἐπιπλεύουσης δὲ τῆς ἀσφάλτου πελαγίας ὁ τόπος φαίνεται τοῖς ἐξ ἀποστήματος θεωροῦσιν οἰονεῖ τις νῆσος. τὴν δ' ἔκπτωσιν φανερὰν συμβαίνει γίνεσθαι πρὸ ἡμερῶν εἴκοσι· κύκλῳ γὰρ τῆς λίμνης ἐπὶ πολλοὺς σταδίους ὁσμὴ τῆς ἀσφάλτου προσπίπτει [μετὰ] πνεύματος μοχθηροῦ καὶ πᾶς ὁ περὶ τὸν τόπον ἄργυρος καὶ χρυσὸς καὶ χαλκὸς ἀποβάλλει τὴν ιδιότητα τοῦ χρώματος. ἀλλ' αὕτη μὲν ἀποκαθίσταται πάλιν, ἐπειδὴ ἀναφυσήθηναι συμβῇ πᾶσαν τὴν ἀσφαλτον· ὁ δὲ πλησίον τόπος ἔμπυρος ὣν καὶ δυσώδης ποιεῖ τὰ σώματα τῶν περιοικούντων ἐπίνοσα καὶ παντελῶς ὀλιγοχρόνια.

And from its centre each year it sends forth a mass of solid asphalt, sometimes more than three plethra in area, sometimes a little less than one plethrum. When this happens the barbarians who live near habitually call the larger mass a bull and the smaller one a calf. When the asphalt is floating on the sea, its surface seems to those who see it from a distance just like an island. It appears that the ejection of the asphalt is indicated twenty days in advance, for on every side about the sea for a distance of many stades the odour of the asphalt spreads with a noisome exhalation, and all the silver, gold, and bronze in the region lose their proper colours. These, however, are restored as soon as all the asphalt has been ejected; but the neighbouring region is very torrid and ill smelling, which makes the inhabitants sickly in body and exceedingly short-lived.²⁴

The text containing evident parallels in the greater amount of characteristics and having a similar plan of exposition is the description

²⁴ Transl. Geer 1983, 101.

of the Dead Sea in Strabo (16. 2. 42–44). It goes back to Posidonius' treatise *On the Ocean* (*Περὶ Ὠκεανοῦ*), as F. Jacoby (*FGrHist* 87 F 70), W. Theiler (F 60), and S. Radt admitted.²⁵

On the whole, Posidonius was one of the main sources of Diodorus' *Bibliotheca*.²⁶ So, Theiler considers him the source of Diodorus' chapters that follow the description of the Dead Sea (2. 49–53).²⁷ Another passage by Diodorus, on the Jews (Diod. 34–35. 1. 1–5), also goes back to Posidonius.²⁸ M. Stern does not accept the Posidonian provenience of Diodorus' information on the Dead Sea, referring to the standard view that Hieronymus was the main source for Diodorus' account of the history of Diadochi, viz. in Book 19.²⁹ Only T. Reinach assumed that Diodorus had borrowed the description of the Dead Sea (both 2. 48. 6–8 and 19. 98) from Posidonius.³⁰

Posidonius' description of the lake in Strabo (16. 2. 42 = *FGrHist* 87 F 70) is quite extensive and detailed:

...βαρύτεστατον ἔχουσα ὕδωρ, ὥστε μὴ δεῖν κολύμβου, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἐμβάντα καὶ μέχρι ὀμφαλοῦ εὐθὺς ἐξαίρεσθαι· μεστὴ δ' ἐστὶν ἀσφάλτου· αὕτη δὲ ἀναφυσᾷται κατὰ καιροὺς ἀτάκτους ἐκ μέσου τοῦ βάθους μετὰ πομφολύγων ὡς ἂν ζέοντος ὕδατος· κυρτουμένη δ' ἡ ἐπιφάνεια λόφου φαντασίαν παρέχει· συναναφέρεται δὲ καὶ ἄσβολος πολλή, καπνώδης μὲν πρὸς δὲ τὴν ὄσιν ἄδηλος, ὕψ' ἧς κατιοῦται καὶ χαλκὸς καὶ ἄργυρος καὶ πᾶν τὸ στιλπνὸν μέχρι καὶ χρυσοῦ· ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ κατιοῦσθαι τὰ σκευὴ γνωρίζουσιν οἱ περιιοκοῦντες ἀρχομένην τὴν ἀναβολὴν τοῦ ἀσφάλτου,

²⁵ Jacoby 1993, II A, 266–267; Theiler 1982, II, 67–68; Radt 2009, 330; Malitz 1983, 303. Jacoby, Theiler, and Radt attribute to Posidonius the whole account of the Dead Sea in Strabo (16. 2. 42–44), while L. Edelstein and I. G. Kidd (F 279) attribute only a part of it, 16. 2. 42–43 (Edelstein–Kidd 1972, 244). After his detailed analysis of Strabo's excursus on the Jewish state (16. 2. 35–37), Bar-Kochva maintains that Posidonius was Strabo's source for this excursus (Bar-Kochva 2010, 357–358, and esp. 389–391); he holds the view that in 16. 2. 44 Strabo combined information from Eratosthenes, Artemidorus, and Posidonius (see 362 n. 15, cf. 398 n. 129). We follow Jacoby and Theiler.

²⁶ Drews 1962, 384; Hornblower 1981, 27–28.

²⁷ Theiler 1982, I, 78–81; II, 76.

²⁸ Bloch 2002, 42–45; Berthelot 2003, 182–187.

²⁹ Stern 1976, 167–168; 174.

³⁰ “À l'époque de notre historien [Diodore], et probablement dès le temps de Posidonios qu'il copie, ils [Nabatéens] paraissent avoir absorbé entièrement les anciens Iduméens” (Reinach 1895, 71); “Cette répétition textuelle prouve que Diodore copie ici littéralement un auteur plus ancien, peut-être Posidonios, sans se rappeler qu'il l'a déjà mis à contribution” (Reinach 1895, 74). M. Rathmann also compared Diodorus' description with Strabo's (Rathmann 2016, 148; 259).

καὶ παρασκευάζονται πρὸς τὴν μεταλλείαν αὐτοῦ, ποιησάμενοι σχεδίας καλαμίνας. ἔστι δ' ἡ ἀσφαλτος γῆς βῶλος [...] ὥστε τομῆς καὶ κοπῆς δεῖσθαι· εἴτ' ἐπιπολάζουσα διὰ τὴν φύσιν τοῦ ὕδατος, καθ' ἣν ἔφαμεν μηδὲ κολύμβου δεῖσθαι, μηδὲ βαπτίζεσθαι τὸν ἐμβάντα ἀλλ' ἐξαίρεσθαι· προσπλεύσαντες δὲ ταῖς σχεδίαις κόπτουσι καὶ φέρονται τῆς ἀσφάλτου ὅσον ἕκαστος δύναται.

...and the water is exceedingly heavy, so that swimming is not required, but if anyone wades into it up to the waist, and attempts to move forward, he is immediately lifted out of the water. It abounds with asphalt, which rises, not however at any regular seasons, in bubbles, like boiling water, from the middle of the deepest part. The surface is convex, and presents the appearance of a hillock. Together with the asphalt, there ascends a great quantity of sooty vapour, not perceptible to the eye, which tarnishes copper, silver, and everything bright – even gold. The neighbouring people know by the tarnishing of their vessels that the asphalt is beginning to rise, and they prepare to collect it by means of rafts composed of reeds. The asphalt is a clod of earth, [...] that requires cutting or chopping (for use). It floats upon the water, which, as I have described, does not admit of diving or immersion, but lifts up the person who goes into it. Those who go on rafts for the asphalt cut it in pieces, and take away as much as they are able to carry.³¹

So, Posidonius' description and Diodorus' have a very similar list of features and a very similar order: they both mention the tarnishing of metals, but Diodorus reports it briefly. Posidonius writes χαλκὸς καὶ ἄργυρος καὶ πᾶν τὸ στιλπνὸν μέχρι καὶ χρυσοῦ, and Diodorus writes ἄργυρός τε καὶ χρυσὸς καὶ χαλκός.³²

Posidonius also refers to the Dead Sea neighborhood (*FGrHist* 87 F 70 = Strab. 16. 2. 44):

Τοῦ δ' ἔμπυρον τὴν χώραν εἶναι καὶ ἄλλα τεκμήρια φέρουσι πολλὰ· καὶ γὰρ πέτρας τινὰς ἐπικεκαυμένας δεικνύουσι τραχείας περὶ Μοασάδα...

Many other proofs are produced to show that this country is full of fire. Near Moasada are to be seen rugged rocks, bearing the marks of fire...³³

³¹ Transl. Hamilton–Falconer 1857, 182, modified.

³² Although the tarnishing of metals is not testified in Hieronymus' fragment, Binder and Bar-Kochva note that Hieronymus mentioned this detail, because they consider him the sole source for the Dead Sea description (Binder–Bar-Kochva 2016, 228).

³³ Transl. Hamilton–Falconer 1857, 183.

Diodorus speaks about the underground fire word by word (ὁ δὲ πλησίον τόπος ἔμπυρος ὢν). The authors also describe asphalt extraction with very similar expressions:

Posidonius: οἱ περιουκοῦντες ... παρασκευάζονται πρὸς τὴν μεταλλείαν αὐτοῦ, ποιησάμενοι σχεδίας καλαμίνας

Diodorus (19. 99. 1): οἱ περιουκοῦντες ... παρασκευασάμενοι γὰρ δέσ-
μας καλάμων

In the next two points, Posidonius and Diodorus describe asphalt cutting and note that nothing sinks in the lake, though in different words. Diod. 19. 99. 2–3:

[...] ὅταν δὲ πλησίον γένωνται τῆς ἀσφάλτου, πελέκεις ἔχοντες ἐπιτη-
δῶσι καὶ καθάπερ μαλακῆς πέτρας ἀποκόπτοντες γεμίζουσι τὴν δέσμην,
εἴτα ἀποπλέουσιν εἰς τοῦπίσω. ἂν δέ τις αὐτῶν ἀποπέσῃ τῆς δέσμης
διαλυθείσης μὴ δυνάμενος νεῖν, οὐ καταδύεται καθάπερ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις
ὑδασιν, ἀλλὰ ἐπινέχεται τοῖς ἐπισταμένοις ὁμοίως. φύσει γὰρ τοῦτο τὸ
ὕγρον παραδέχεται βάρος ὃ συμβαίνει μετέχειν αὐξήσεως ἢ πνεύματος...

...when they have come near the asphalt they jump upon it with axes
and, just as it were soft stone, they cut out pieces and load them on the
raft, after which they sail back. If the raft comes to pieces and one of
them who does not know how to swim falls off, he does not sink as he
would in other waters, but stays afloat as well as do those who know.
For this liquid by its nature supports heavy bodies that have the power
of growth or of breathing...³⁴

So, in Posidonius: τομῆς καὶ κοπῆς δεῖσθαι and κόπτουσι; and in
Diodorus: ἀποκόπτοντες; then Posidonius: μηδὲ κολύμβου δεῖσθαι; and
Diodorus: οὐ καταδύεται.

The extent of the Dead Sea coastline in Strabo and Diodorus is
an important characteristic. Strabo gave two different dimensions,
1000 stades (according to his sources – εἰρήκασί τινας) and 200 stades
(as he considers). T. Reinach supposed that the same extent of the lake in
Diodorus' passage (500 stades in length) and Strabo's one (1000 stades
around) proves a common source, namely Posidonius.³⁵ Strabo's remark

³⁴ Transl. Geer 1983, 103.

³⁵ "Il n'est pas douteux que l'une et l'autre [Diod. 2. 48. 6–8 and 19. 98] dérivent de Posidonios. Les 1000 stades de périmètre mentionnés par Strabon remontent également à la même source, puisque nous avons vu chez Diodore la longueur du lac évaluée à 500 stades et sa largeur à 60 seulement" (Reinach 1895, 108).

“τῇ μέντοι παραλίᾳ παρεκτέταται” could refer to Lake Sirbonis, a coastal lagoon of the Mediterranean Sea on the Sinai Peninsula. So, Strabo combined the Dead Sea and the Lake Sirbonis and their lengths.³⁶

However, some differences between Posidonius’ fragment and Diodorus’ should also be noted. Strabo could have transferred the passage about the seismicity and the underground fire to the end of his chapter because this phenomenon drew his attention more, and after the detailed description of the relief (which begins with the words “Τοῦ δ’ ἔμπυρον τὴν χώραν εἶναι καὶ ἄλλα τεκμήρια φέρουσι πολλά”), he cited Eratosthenes (Strab. 16. 2. 44; Eratosth. I B 17).³⁷ In addition, the preserved fragment of Posidonius does not mention the very high salinity and absence of fish in the Dead Sea. It may be assumed that these features, better known than others, had already been mentioned by Posidonius, but that Strabo missed them for some reason. Moreover, Strabo could somehow change the order of characteristics when copying out a text fragment from Posidonius. So, Strabo focused on the density of the water. He began his description of the Dead Sea with this characteristic and returned to it at the end of the chapter when remarking that it was not necessary to be able to swim in such water (μὴ δεῖν κολύμβου and μὴδὲ κολύμβου δεῖσθαι).

Another difference between Diodorus and Posidonius is the variation in their comparison of the discharged asphalt: the former author compared it to an island (οἰονεῖ τις νῆσος) and the latter to a hill (ἢ ἐπιφάνεια λόφου φαντασίαν παρέχει). Comparing the massive asphalt clod that appears on the lake surface to an island is more trivial than comparing it to a hill: it is plausible that Diodorus modified the *comparandum* of Posidonius’ comparison using a simpler and more expected image.

So, Diodorus, Hieronymus, and Posidonius in Strabo (especially Posidonius and Diodorus) followed quite a similar order in their descriptions of the Dead Sea and used similar expressions. Obviously, all of them are part of the geographical tradition of the Dead Sea. Comparing their descriptions suggests that both Hieronymus and Posidonius were direct sources of Diodorus’ description. Diodorus mentioned Hieronymus by name, and the main part of the description in Book 2 repeated in Book 19 goes back to Hieronymus. However, Posidonius has striking similarities with Diodorus, and it is probable that Diodorus used his illustration to expand his own description of the Dead Sea in Book 19 (and already in Book 2). To summarize, the description in Book 2 goes

³⁶ Strabo (16, 2, 32) gave also another length for Sirbonis Lake, 100 stades.

³⁷ On the origin of Lake Sirbonis, see also Eratosth. F I B 15; Strab. 1. 3. 4.

back to Hieronymus and Posidonius (Diod. 2. 48. 6–7 to Hieronymus and 2. 48. 8 to Posidonius). Book 19 contains the same text going back to both authors (Diod. 19. 98 before the comparison to an island), and in addition, the passage on asphalt extraction (Diod. 19. 98, beginning with the comparison to an island, and 19. 99). It is difficult to determine the source of this passage: we know that Hieronymus was entrusted to control the extraction of asphalt in the area and would certainly have described this process; however, no such passage has come down to us. Posidonius, who was born in Apamea, Syria and travelled a lot,³⁸ had the possibility to investigate the Dead Sea himself and describe it without basing his writing on Hieronymus. The absence of parallels between Hieronymus and Posidonius in Strabo may, with due reservation, be taken as a sign that Posidonius was independent of Hieronymus.³⁹ Moreover, Posidonius' description contains two rather rare details: the seismicity and the tarnishing of metals, which were not mentioned by Hieronymus.

This conclusion modifies the generally accepted idea that Hieronymus was the only source for Diodorus' description of the Dead Sea. It is likely that Diodorus used both Hieronymus and Posidonius, comparing them and reformulating the information, rather than copying the texts. This confirms C. H. Oldfather's remark on Diodorus' method: the earlier view that Diodorus copied a single author for many chapters is now rejected because "while Diodorus probably leaned very strongly upon a single author for one or another section, he used at the same time other writers as well".⁴⁰

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³⁸ Reinhardt 1953, 663: "...hat Poseidonios seine Forschungsfahrten und die Umstände seiner Beobachtungen in breiter, ja fast autobiographischer Weise vorge-tragen. In dem riesigen systematischen Werk muss manches sich wie ein Reisejournal – das er natürlich geführt hat – gelesen haben"; Reinhardt 1921, 4.

³⁹ However, Jacoby suggested that Posidonius might have used Hieronymus (Jacoby 1993, II C, 199).

⁴⁰ Oldfather 1946, 17.

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The name Asphalt Lake (ἡ Ἀσφαλτῖτις λίμνη) for the Dead Sea is first attested in Diodorus (Diod. 19. 98. 1), who describes the lake twice in almost identical passages (2. 48. 6–8 and 19. 98–99). It is remarkable that this name occurs in the second passage (19. 98–99) and at the same time the Dead Sea remains unnamed in the first description. The name Asphalt Lake is likely enough to have been coined by Diodorus himself and not borrowed by him from another source. Hieronymus of Cardia, the author of the *History of Diadochi*, whom Antigonus entrusted to control the asphalt extraction, is a generally accepted source for Books 18–20 of Diodorus' *Bibliotheca Historica* (19. 100). However, the description of the Dead Sea in 19. 98 could not go back only to Hieronymus (*FGrHist* 154 F 5). Rare details (such as metals tarnishing caused by the lake vapors and the seismicity of the Dead Sea region) and the common order of characteristics suggest that Diodorus received information about the Dead Sea also from Posidonius, the extract of whose *On the Ocean* on the Dead Sea was preserved by Strabo (16. 2. 42–44 = *FGrHist* 87 F 70). Diodorus could use two sources at the same time, supplementing Hieronymus' testimony, which was the basis of the first extract about the lake, with Posidonius' information, added to the description in the second passage.

Впервые название Асфальтовое озеро (ἡ Ἀσφαλτῖτις λίμνη) для обозначения Мертвого моря засвидетельствовано у Диодора (XIX, 98, 1), который описывал водоем дважды, в практически идентичных пассажах (II, 48, 6–8 и XIX, 98–99). Примечательно, что это наименование возникает во втором пассаже (XIX, 98–99), тогда как в первом описании Мертвое море никак не названо. Весьма вероятно, что название Асфальтовое озеро было дано

самим Диодором, а не заимствовано из источника. Общепринятым источником XVIII–XX книг *Исторической библиотеки* Диодора считается Иероним из Кардии, автор истории диадохов, которому Антигон поручил взять под контроль добычу асфальта из Мертвого моря (Diod. XIX, 100). Однако описание Мертвого моря, содержащееся в девятнадцатой книге (XIX, 98), не может, на наш взгляд, восходить лишь к Иерониму (*FGrHist* 154 F 5). Редкие детали (такие как помутнение металлов от испарений водоема и сейсмоактивность окрестностей Мертвого моря) и общая последовательность изложения позволяют предположить, что сведения о Мертвом море Диодор почерпнул также у Посидония, фрагмент из сочинения *Об океане* которого, посвященный Мертвому морю, сохранился у Страбона (XVI, 2, 42–44 = *FGrHist* 87 F 70). В статье показывается, как Диодор мог пользоваться одновременно двумя источниками, дополняя свидетельства Иеронима, которые легли в основу первого пассажа о Мертвом море, сведениями Посидония, которые были добавлены к описанию во втором пассаже.

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