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Tuukka Kauhanen

Josephus' Sources and Motivations in Depicting Davidic Kingship

In *Antiquitates judaicae* (*A.J.*), book 7, Josephus (37–ca. 100 CE) retells the stories of David's kingship in 2 Samuel. Instead of quoting the Samuel text, he paraphrases it in a fairly high-style Greek. Generally, the scholarly opinion is divided on whether Josephus based his exposition mainly on a Hebrew (so Nodet) or a Greek (Mez, Ulrich) text, or whether he used both (Rahlf's, Brock). In this article, a case will be made for Josephus being dependent on a Greek text in *A.J.* 7, but it is difficult to determine whether that Greek text was closer to the Lucianic (Antiochian) text than the B or majority texts (so Mez, Ulrich, Spottorno). The most decisive factors behind Josephus' formulations are the need to produce a good story and to present King David in a favorable light. However, details of the underlying Greek text affect Josephus' choice of words in isolated cases, e.g., referring to King David as “the shepherd” of his people (2 Sam 24:17 // *A.J.* 7.328) and explicating that David chose the plague over other forms of punishment following the census (2 Sam 24:14 // *A.J.* 7.322–323). Both of these cases are based on a Greek reading absent from the MT.

In addition to details in the Greek text, Josephus' choice of words or a free expansion are partly motivated by his own situation after the Jewish War. Josephus' motivations can be detected when he deviates from the biblical narrative. Examples of this phenomenon include depicting David's son Absalom as a demagogue who incited the mob to rebellion (*A.J.* 7.196) and justifying the purportedly changed allegiance of David's friend Hushai by prudence and acknowledgement of divine providence (*A.J.* 7.211–212).

The study of Josephus' depiction of Davidic kingship must take into account both the sources and the personal motivations of the author. The study illuminates the impact of a large-scale political transition—the Jewish War and its aftermath—on the rewriting of scriptural texts and traditions.

1. Introduction

1.1 Josephus' Allusions and a Critical Edition of the Greek 2 Samuel

Flavius Josephus (37–ca. 100 CE) was a Jewish scholar, politician, and author who took part in the Jewish War (66–73 CE), first on the rebel and later on the Roman side. Josephus wrote at least four major works, including a detailed account of the war (*Bellum judaicum*, *B.J.*; ca. 75 CE) and a lengthy history known as *Antiquitates judaicae* (*A.J.*; prob. finished by 94 CE). A great part of the latter consists of paraphrases of the historical narratives in the Hebrew Bible in fairly high-style Greek. Most of the time the reader can only discern the story behind Josephus' exposition, not the actual wording of the biblical source. However, in isolated instances Josephus' wording can reveal details of the underlying source text. As the work is vast (ca. 312,000 words), there are quite a number of such isolated instances. The stories

concerning David as king are told in book 7 of *Antiquitates* which corresponds more or less to 2 Samuel in the Bible.

The more general background of this article is my work on the critical edition of 2 Samuel for the Göttingen Septuagint project. The project aims at establishing the oldest possible form of the Greek translation word by word and documenting all relevant textual witnesses in a full apparatus. A significant part of the work will be to document readings in quotations and allusions to 2 Samuel in early Jewish and Christian literature. Special emphasis is given to works that antedate the Christian recensions of the third and fourth centuries. Josephus, because of his early date and the extent of the material, is an important second-hand witness—even though most of the time it is impossible to discern what form of the text he attests and in which language. Though my broader aims in studying Josephus are related to my edition project, that text-critical task can be complemented with considerations relating to Josephus' motivations when he decides to depict events in a certain way. Such motivations can be detected when Josephus clearly deviates from the underlying biblical source. This happens often by a choice of wording or a turn of phrase that results in an interpretation or emphasis that is at most implicit in the biblical story, or by an expansion that recounts facts not told in the source narrative; such facts include, for instance, direct speech or inner thoughts of a character. However, what from the outset looks like a special emphasis by Josephus may, in fact, be explained by his simply following the wording of one or another of the Greek textual traditions. Conversely, a putative agreement between Josephus and a Greek reading may be explained by Josephus' stylistic or rhetorical needs. Thus, in a study of this kind, sources and motivations must be studied together.

A note should be made of Josephus' skill in Greek. He ends *Antiquitates* with an apology for his modest skill in Greek.¹ If it was true that Josephus needed considerable aid from correctors and scribes to produce his Greek text, then details in his wording would stem from those assistants, not from him. However, I find it more likely that Josephus' statement is a rhetorical understatement which is meant to underline specifically the opposite. In the lack of evidence to the contrary, all the details in the text can be attributed to the author himself.

1.2 Previous Studies

The amount of scholarly literature on Josephus is vast. One branch of this immense field of study is Josephus' use of the Bible. Studies of this kind tend to have a focus either on the use of *Antiquitates* for text-critical purposes or on Josephus' narrative itself without much concern for the role of the underlying sources. I have earlier summarized three key findings of text-

¹ A.J. 20.263: "I have also taken a great deal of pains to obtain the learning of the Greeks, and understand the elements of the Greek language, although I have so long accustomed myself to speak our own tongue, that I cannot pronounce Greek with sufficient exactness;" (transl. Whiston). In *Contra Apionem* 1.50 he claims that "I made use of some persons to assist me in learning the Greek tongue" while writing *Bellum judaicum*.

critical studies pertaining to Josephus' allusions to the Historical Books in general or to Samuel in particular:²

1. The scholarly opinion on the possibility of using *Antiquitates* in biblical textual criticism ranges from the optimism of Adam Mez and Henry St John Thackeray³ to the skepticism of Alfred Rahlfs and Sebastian Brock.⁴ Eugene Ulrich and Victoria Spottorno stand somewhere in between, acknowledging the problems yet presenting a number of readings in which Josephus can be said to agree with certain witnesses against one or more of the others.⁵ A good starting point is to assume that "because of its age *Jewish Antiquities* in all likelihood preserves valuable ancient readings, but it is often impossible to achieve certainty of the reading of Josephus' Bible text."⁶
2. At least for the stories in the Books of Samuel, Josephus' main biblical source was the Greek Septuagint version (LXX), as argued most convincingly by Ulrich: Josephus certainly had access to the LXX and using that was a practical choice when composing one's own work in Greek. In addition, a good number of Josephus' choices of words can best be explained by his using a Greek source. In one chapter alone, 2 Sam 6 retold in *A.J.* 7.78–89, Ulrich counted 180 expressions where the biblical source could be discerned. In 56 of those the source could be either the MT or the LXX, while in the remaining 124 the source is Greek with varying degree of certainty.⁷ Ulrich's findings can be complemented with those of Rahlfs and Brock who hold that Josephus also used a Semitic source.⁸ Spottorno points out that Josephus likely knew the narratives in Hebrew by heart;⁹ that sufficiently explains the few striking agreements with the MT against the LXX, such as providing material lacking in the LXX.

² See Tuukka Kauhanen, *The Proto-Lucianic Problem in 1 Samuel*, DSI 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 32–6.

³ Adam Mez, *Die Bibel des Josephus untersucht für Buch V–VII der Archäologie* (Basel, 1895), 80; Henry St J. Thackeray, "Note on the evidence of Josephus," in *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Text Codex Vaticanus*, ed. Alan E. Brooke, Norman McLean, and Henry St John Thackeray (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927) 2.1:ix; idem, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian* (New York: Jewish Institute of Religion, 1929), 75–99.

⁴ Alfred Rahlfs, *Lucians Rezension der Königsbücher*, Septuaginta-Studien 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1911), 84–9; Sebastian P. Brock, *Recensions of the Septuaginta Version of 1 Samuel* (Turin: Zamorani, 1994), 214–16.

⁵ Eugene C. Ulrich, *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus*, HSM 19 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978), 223–4, 190–1; Victoria Spottorno, "Some Remarks on Josephus' Biblical Text for 1–2Kgs," in *VI Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies: Jerusalem 1986*, ed. Claude E. Cox, SBLSCS 23 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 277–85 (278–83).

⁶ Kauhanen, *Proto-Lucianic Problem*, 36.

⁷ Ulrich, *Qumran Text*, 224–44; 255.

⁸ Rahlfs, *Lucians Rezension*, 111; Brock, *Recensions*, 210–12.

⁹ Spottorno, "Some Remarks," 283: "I think we should leave aside the idea that Josephus 'used' the Hebrew text, because the agreements with it are very rare and they can be explained by his knowledge (probably by heart) of the Hebrew Bible, from which he took some data at his convenience."

Before turning to the third key finding pertaining to Josephus' text-critical value, a short remark on the text-historical situation in the Greek books of Samuel and Kings (1–4 Kingdoms in the LXX) is in order. The main text-historical question concerns the so-called *kaige* sections (2 Sam 10/11–1 Kgs 2:11; 1 Kgs 22–2 Kgs), in which it is generally held that the B text attests an early Hebraizing *kaige* revision rather than the original translation in a pure form. The *L* text, often called “Lucianic” or “Antiochian,” occasionally witnesses a better reading than the B text. However, the Lucianic text too presents a revised text, probably dating to the fourth century CE.¹⁰ In my work with 2 Samuel, especially in the *kaige* section, the choice is not just between the B and *L* texts since, occasionally, the majority of the manuscripts have retained the best form of text against the two major textual traditions.

3. Among those who accept that Josephus was directly dependent on the LXX, Mez and Thackeray held that Josephus mainly followed the Lucianic (or “Antiochian”) type of text,¹¹ while Rahlfs and Brock were much more cautious.¹² Of the more recent scholars, Ulrich stands somewhere in between¹³ while Spottorno is more confident of the Lucianic agreements in Josephus' Greek text.¹⁴ Of course, if the Lucianic text originates in a fourth-century revision, Josephus could not have had access to it several hundred years earlier. If Josephus can be shown to agree with some readings found in the *L* text against the B and/or the majority texts, then Josephus' testimony shows that such readings are very old. This touches upon the so-called *proto-Lucianic problem*, the topic of my earlier study on 1 Samuel. There I concluded that, when taking into account Josephus' linguistic preferences and rhetorical needs, most of the suggested agreements between Josephus and the Lucianic text are only seeming or coincidental.¹⁵ What I have observed so far in 2 Samuel reinforces my view that it is very difficult to assess which textual tradition of the LXX Josephus' text was closest to.

¹⁰ The B text is witnessed by *codex Vaticanus* and a handful of manuscripts that regularly follow it. That is the main text in the Cambridge edition by Brooke and McLean, *The Old Testament in Greek*, and, with some corrections, in the pocket edition by Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta: Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935). The *L* text can be found in the apparatus of Brooke and McLean in the manuscripts marked “*boc₂e₂*” and in an edition by Natalio Fernández Marcos and José Ramon Busto Saiz, eds., *El texto antioqueno de la Biblia Griega* (3 vols.; Madrid: Instituto de Filología del CSIC, 1989–1996).

¹¹ Mez, *Die Bibel des Josephus*, 80; Thackeray, “Note”, ix; idem, *Josephus*, 83, 85–6.

¹² Rahlfs, *Lucians Rezension*, 92; Brock, *Recensions*, 216.

¹³ Ulrich, *Qumran Text*, 191: “J [= Josephus] uses a slightly revised form of the OG [= Old Greek, i.e., the original translation of the LXX] ... but that revised form is the early stratum, pL [the proto-Lucianic text] ... J used the text of Samuel strikingly close to 4QSam^a, but ... that text was in the Greek language, closely connected with OG/pL and clearly distant from both M [= MT] and the *kaige* and hexaplaric recensions.”

¹⁴ Spottorno, “Some Remarks”, 283: “we can say that the agreements with the Lucianic text are more frequent than those with the majority Septuagint.”

¹⁵ Kauhanen, *Proto-Lucianic Problem*, 43–4.

Generally speaking, one should firmly resist all sweeping claims and generalizations such as one can still read in Louis Feldman's *Interpretation*: "[T]he evidence overwhelmingly indicates that the text that Josephus used was intimately related to that which we find in 4QSam^a, and that this text was the proto-Lucianic text in Greek."¹⁶ In my view, nothing in that sentence is correct. There is, however, one view still further away from truth than such unfounded generalizations, namely, that nothing could be said about Josephus' biblical text. That claim is right 99% of the time, and in that 99% there is nothing to be said; it is the one percent¹⁷ of Josephus' text that rightly interests textual scholars, and much can be said about that.

I will end this literature survey with a brief overview of the relevant studies that are more concerned with the narrative and Josephus' motivations than his sources. Feldman compiled the essential parts of his numerous articles on "Josephus' portraits" of biblical figures into a thick monograph *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible*, and treated more general issues in his equally impressive *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible*.¹⁸ Of Christopher T. Begg's over one hundred "according to Josephus" articles, some dozen touch upon 2 Samuel. Begg's translation and commentary in the series *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*¹⁹ summarizes with astonishing compactness and lucidity the essential parts of most of his articles (see his bibliography for details). Finally, I am aware of *Josephus' Interpretation of the Books of Samuel* by Michael Avioz.²⁰ As promising as the title is, I did not find much beyond brief summaries of selected cases of possible special interpretations by Josephus in it.²¹

1.3 Best Arguments for a Greek Base Text

Concerning Josephus' rewriting of 2 Samuel in book 7 of *Antiquitates*, there is enough evidence to make the claim that Josephus used the Septuagint translation, at least on occasion: there are several formulations by him that could not be explained otherwise. An exhaustive list of such cases would be beyond the scope of this article; the following presents thirteen cases that can

¹⁶ Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible*, Hellenistic Culture and Society 27, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 34. Feldman's notion may be based on a superficial reading of Ulrich's concluding remarks in *Qumran Text*; see note 14 above.

¹⁷ Actually, the figure may be closer to 0.5%. The books that roughly correspond to 1–2 Samuel, A.J. 6–7, consist of ca. 18,500 + 19,000 = 37,500 words. Fernández Marcos and Busto Saiz claim that in ca. 200 instances it can be discerned which of the Greek variant readings Josephus follows. That means roughly one instance per 200 words.

¹⁸ Louis H. Feldman, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible*, SJSJ 58 (Leiden: Brill, 1998); idem, *Josephus's Interpretation*.

¹⁹ Christopher T. Begg, *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary, Volume 4* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

²⁰ Michael Avioz, *Josephus' Interpretation of the Books of Samuel*, LSTS 86 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015).

²¹ For references to older studies pertaining to Josephus' biblical text, the reader should consult L.H. Feldman, *Josephus and Modern Scholarship* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984), 165–70.

be considered fairly unproblematic. Some of the cases are followed by a very brief comment. References to Josephus are given in Begg's translation²² unless otherwise indicated.

2 Sam 5:23 מְרִיבֵי בְּרִיחַ וְהָיָה וְהָיָה וְהָיָה וְהָיָה וְהָיָה וְהָיָה וְהָיָה וְהָיָה וְהָיָה וְהָיָה
A.J. 7.76 ἐν τοῖς ἄλσεσι τοῖς καλουμένοις **Κλαυθμῶσι** κατέχειν τὴν στρατιάν

The precise meaning of מְרִיבֵי is unclear and here it could be a place name or specify a species of wood (NRSV: “balsam trees”). Josephus’ “the groves called the ‘Weepers’” is likely a combination of the notions of ‘wood’ and ‘crying’ (בכה ‘to cry’) and the use of the word κλαυθμών is probably dependent on the Septuagint.

6:8 הַיֵּצֵא רֶצֶף **διακοπή** Οζα
82 ὁ δὲ τόπος ἐν ᾧ ἐτελεύτησεν Ὀζᾶ **διακοπή** καλεῖται
6:19 תְּהָא הַשִּׁשָּׁאִי תְּהָא רַב־שִׁשָּׁאִי תְּהָא הַחֶלֶץ תְּהָא **κολλυρίδα ἄρτου και ἐσχαρίτην και λάγανον ἀπὸ τηγάνου**
86 **κολλυρίδα ἄρτου και ἐσχαρίτην και λάγανον τηγανιστόν**

This is the closest instance to an actual quotation: “a loaf of bread and a cake, and another cake baked in a pan” (trans. Whiston).

8:4 הַיֵּצֵא רֶצֶף הַיֵּצֵא רֶצֶף הַיֵּצֵא רֶצֶף **χιλία ἄρματα** και ἐπτακισχιλίους ἵππεῖς
99 δ’ ἵπποτων ὡς πεντακισχιλίους ἔλαβε δὲ και αὐτοῦ **ἄρματα χιλια**
11:2 גָּלַעַל הַלְהַתִּי וְכִי **περιπάτει (imprf.)** ἐπὶ τοῦ δώματος
130 **περιπατεῖν** κατ’ ἐκεῖνο τῆς ὥρας **ἦν ἔθος**

The Hebrew verbal form means “to walk about” without an implication of this being something that David did often. Josephus’ “was walking—as was his custom” attests to the same understanding of habituality as the imperfect tense in the Septuagint.²³

11:22 — LXX plus in which David utters a reproach on wrong military tactics
142 Josephus mentions David’s anger and makes him give advice on military tactics (cf. 11:24)
15:32 הַיֵּצֵא רֶצֶף הַיֵּצֵא רֶצֶף **Χουσι** ὁ Ἀρχι **ἐταῖρος** (ἀρχιεταῖρος many mss) Δαυיד
203 **φίλος ἀνήρ** και βέβαιος **Χουσις** ὄνομα (Josephus never refers to Hushai by his gentilic)

For a more comprehensive analysis, see the section “Hushai Deceives Absalom” below.

18:21–32 MT: the messenger is “a **Chusite**”; LXX: proper noun **Χουσι**
246, 247, 251: proper noun **Χουσι**

In ch. 18, both the LXX and Josephus interpret the Hebrew חִשְׁיָא as a proper noun instead of “Chusite” (“Cushite”) or “Ethiopian.”

19:1 הַיֵּצֵא רֶצֶף הַיֵּצֵא רֶצֶף הַיֵּצֵא רֶצֶף **לְהַתִּי** και ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὑπερῶον τῆς **πύλης** (= MT)
A.J. 7.252 ἀναβὰς ἐπὶ τὸ ὑψηλότατον τῆς **πόλεως** (< πύλης?)

²² Begg, *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary, Volume 4*.

²³ Two manuscripts known for many Hebraizing corrections change the verb to aorist: *περιπατησεν* O (= 247-376).

When mourning Absalom, Josephus has David retreat to “the upmost part of the city” instead of the upper chamber of the archway (thus MT and LXX); this can be explained by corruption from πύλης to πόλεως in Greek, while a similar thing cannot happen in Hebrew.

19:11 — καὶ τὸ ῥῆμα παντὸς Ἰσραηλ ἦλθεν πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα (MT has the notion at the end of v. 12)

260 ταῦτα μὲν οὖν συνεχέστερον ἀπηγγέλλετο Δαυίδῃ (follows the order of the LXX)

20:19 **מִן הַיָּם וְעַד הַיַּבְיָכָה וְעַד הַיַּבְיָכָה** πόλιν καὶ **μητρόπολιν**

289 σὺ δὲ σπουδάξεις **μητρόπολιν** Ἰσραηλιτῶν καταβαλεῖν

24:15 **עַד חֹמַת הָעִיר וְעַד חֹמַת הָעִיר** καὶ ἕως ὥρας **ἀρίστου**

326 ἕως ὥρας **ἀρίστου**

24:17 **וְעַד הַיַּבְיָכָה הַשְּׂמֵרָה** ὁ ποιμήν

328 αὐτὸς εἶη κολασθῆναι δίκαιος ὁ ποιμήν

See the section “The Census Plague: The King as Shepherd” below.

By contrast, I found only one case of Josephus clearly presenting the narrative in a way that went against the Septuagint:

24:13 **שָׁנָה אֶתְּרִים וְעַד אֶתְּרִים** τρία ἔτη λιμὸς (no variants)

321 λιμὸν γενέσθαι κατὰ τὴν χώραν ἐπὶ ἔτη **ἑπτὰ**²⁴

Finally, it can be noted that Josephus often follows 1 Chronicles when it provides material additional to 2 Samuel, but not otherwise. In other words, his narrative is a paraphrase of Samuel specifically—with occasional expansions from Chronicles.²⁵

2. Rewritings Probably Motivated by Josephus’ Historical Situation

In the words of Feldman, “Throughout his paraphrase of the Bible, one can see that Josephus is commenting on the current situation in his own day.”²⁶ I will present here a small selection of such cases in 2 Samuel. The selected cases loosely pertain to the themes or narratives related to David’s kingship as they feature the rebellion of Absalom and David’s responsibility as the king in the outcome of the census.

2.1 Presentation of the Evidence

The Greek text of 2 Samuel is quoted either according to my own provisional critical text (marked “Kauhanen”) or Rahlfs’ edition (= “Rahlfs”) with noteworthy variant readings cited in footnotes when they are relevant for the discussion; those footnotes give the full provisional apparatus of my forthcoming critical edition for the readings cited.²⁷ Josephus’ text is given in Begg’s translation (marked with “Begg” if necessary) unless otherwise noted.

²⁴ See also Feldman, *Josephus’s Interpretation*, 34.

²⁵ Feldman, *Josephus’s Interpretation*, 34 n. 33.

²⁶ Feldman, *Josephus’s Interpretation*, 143.

²⁷ Manuscript grouping: majuscules B A V M; minuscule groups O = 247-376; L = 19-82-93-108-127, 19’ = 19-108; CI = 98-243-379-731, 98’ = 98-379; CII = 46-52-236-242-313-328-530, 46’ = 46-52, 242’ = 242-328; a =

2.2 Absalom's Demagoguery (2 Sam 15:5–6 // *A.J.* 7.196)

Josephus recounts Absalom's demagoguery with a special nuance that is not based on any of the source texts. King David's son Absalom wins over the hearts of the Israelites and, subsequently, begins a rebellion. Feldman lists some ten instances in which the use of the word ὄχλος betrays Josephus' contempt for the ignorant mob.²⁸ In Josephus' depiction of Absalom winning over the hearts of Israel the same word is used twice:

τούτοις **δημαγωγῶν** τὸ πλῆθος ὡς βεβαίαν ἤδη τὴν παρὰ **τῶν ὄχλων** εὐνοίαν ἐνόμιζε ... καὶ πολὺς ἐπισυνέρρευσε **ὄχλος** ἐπὶ πολλοὺς αὐτοῦ διαπέμψαντος (Josephus, *A.J.* 7.196)

In this way **he curried favor** with the crowd. When he thought that the loyalty of **the mobs** was now secure, ... and a great **crowd** assembled, many having been summoned by him.

Cf. 2 Sam 15:5–6:

Whenever people came near to do obeisance to him, he would put out his hand and take hold of them, and kiss them. Thus Absalom did to every Israelite who came to the king for judgment; so Absalom stole the hearts of the people of Israel. (NRSV)

The Greek story in 2 Samuel 15:1–12 does not feature the word ὄχλος; λαός is found without variants in 15:12. The word ὄχλος is, however, used in 15:22,²⁹ but there the term refers to Ittai's people who flee Jerusalem with David. Thus, the use of the word ὄχλος seems to be a deliberate choice by Josephus. In addition, Josephus uses the verb δημαγωγέω, 'lead the people' mainly in a bad sense. Both Feldman and Begg note that Josephus uses the same term with respect to the actions of his arch-rival, Justus of Tiberias (Josephus, *Vita* 40).³⁰ In light of the use of the two derogatory terms, it is clear that Josephus wants to emphasize the dangers of ochlocracy. This goes hand in hand with his hostile attitude towards the mob of revolutionaries in many passages in *Bellum judaicum* (e.g., 3.475, 542; 4.107; 6.283).³¹

2.3 Hushai Deceives Absalom (2 Sam 16:16–19 // *A.J.* 7.211–212)

Having fled Jerusalem, David hears that Ahithophel, the man famous for his wise counsel, has sided with the rebellious Absalom. David then sends his trusted friend Hushai to spy on

119-527-799; *b* = 121-509; *d* = 68'-74'-107', 68' = 68-122, 74' = 74-106-120-134-370, 107' = 44-107-125-610; *f* = 56-246; *s* = 64-92-130-314-381-488-489-762, 64' = 64-381, 488' = 488-489; ungrouped minuscules 29 55 71 158 244 245 318 342 372 460 554 707. For bibliographical details of the manuscripts, see Alfred Rahlfs, *Verzeichnis der griechischen Handschriften des Alten Testaments*, MSU 2 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1914) and idem, *Verzeichnis der griechischen Handschriften des Alten Testaments; Bd. I,1: Die Überlieferung bis zum VIII. Jahrhundert*, ed. Detlef Fraenkel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

²⁸ Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation*, 145–147.

²⁹ καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ὁ] κ. παντες οι ανδρες οι *L*; > 44-107-610. While the reading of B and the majority corresponds more closely to the Hebrew, it hardly results from Hebraizing correction.

³⁰ Feldman, *Studies*, 224; Begg, *Flavius Josephus*, 260.

³¹ See Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation*, 146. Michael Avioz, *Josephus's Interpretation*, 136, points out that, in Josephus' account, Absalom blames the king's counsellors, not the king himself, for the lack of justice. Avioz does not discuss the terms 'mob' or 'demagoguery.'

Absalom and, if possible, “to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel” (2 Sam 15:34). When Hushai arrives, Absalom confronts him for abandoning his former friend and king, David. In Josephus’ account:

Apsalom then asked him why, given that he had been a special friend (φίλος ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα) of his father and had the reputation of being faithful in everything (πρὸς ἅπαντα πιστός), he was not with him now, but rather, having deserted him, he had gone over to himself. Chousis responded in a way that was both adroit and prudent. (212) For he said that one should follow both God and the whole crowd. “Since these are with you, O master, it is appropriate that I too follow you, for you have received the kingship from God. I shall manifest that same fidelity and loyalty—should I be credited as a friend—that you know I bestowed on your father. It is not fitting to be indignant over the present state of things, seeing that the kingship has not been transferred to another house, but has remained in the same one, now that the son has succeeded.” (A.J. 7.211–212)

The corresponding verse in the LXX uses the term ἑταῖρος (2 Sam 16:17; no variants). Begg notes that Josephus accentuates Hushai’s close friendship with David by making Absalom depict Hushai as “a special friend of his father” with “the reputation of being faithful in everything.”³² Later Josephus refers to Hushai with the term ἀρχίφιλος, “chief friend” (μετακαλεῖται καὶ τὸν Χουσὶν τὸν Δαυίδου ἀρχίφιλον A.J. 7.216; cf. Χουσι πρῶτος φίλος 1 Chr 27:33). The word ἀρχίφιλος is a *hapax legomenon* in all of known Greek literature.³³ There is a variant φίλον in two manuscripts of *Antiquitates*,³⁴ but the editor has certainly made the correct choice here. Earlier Josephus had introduced Hushai as “a proven friend” (φίλος ἀνὴρ καὶ βέβαιος Χουσις ὄνομα A.J. 7.203) of David. In the LXX, the corresponding expression is Χουσι ὁ Ἄρχι, ἑταῖρος Δαυίδ “Chousi the Archite, friend of David” (2 Sam 16:16) but in most manuscripts³⁵ the words ‘Archite’ and ‘friend’ are spelt as one word: ἀρχιεταῖρος; this is easily brought about by the practice of *scripta continua*. That Josephus never refers to Hushai by his gentilic “the Archite”³⁶ and that he emphasizes the close friendship between David and Hushai using a term featuring the word ἀρχί- may be taken as additional evidence for Josephus using a Greek text of 2 Samuel in which he read the words Ἄρχι and ἑταῖρος as one word.³⁷

Josephus commends Hushai’s answer as “adroit and prudent” (7.211). The appraisal may be directed to the effect of Hushai’s words which, ultimately, prove to be positive to David’s cause. However, I would not count out the possibility that Josephus means that the

³² Christopher T. Begg, “Ahithophel versus Hushai according to Josephus,” *Annali di Storia dell’ Egesi* 22/2 (2005): 480–2.

³³ A search on *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, January, 2019.

³⁴ See the apparatus in Benedictus Niese, ed., *Flavii Iosephi Opera* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1885–1892): ἀρχίφιλον] φίλον SP; *amicum antiquum* Lat.

³⁵ Ἄρχι, ἑταῖρος] unum B^c V L⁹³ CI CII a⁻⁵²⁷ b d⁻³⁷⁰ f s 55 71 244 318 342 460 554 700 707.

³⁶ Hushai/Chousi is referred to by name in 7.203, 216, 221; in 7.246, 247, 251 the question is of a Chusite (cf. 18:21–32) that is taken as a proper noun already in the LXX.

³⁷ Begg, “Ahithophel,” 486 n. 47 notes the problem with the word ἀρχίφιλος but does not make the same suggestion as I do.

reader should receive Hushai's words positively too: his words are deceptive, but the reasons he gives for his (purportedly) changed allegiance may still be valid. To elaborate: Hushai acknowledges that God and the people have "chosen" Absalom and thus Hushai himself, too, must be and remain with Absalom (2 Sam 16:18–19). Josephus accentuates this slightly by making Hushai imply that in doing so he is following not only the one who had received his kingship from God (τὴν γὰρ βασιλείαν ἔλαβες παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ 7.212)³⁸ but God himself, as well as the people (ἔπεσθαι δεῖν αὐτὸν τῷ θεῷ καὶ τῷ παντὶ πλήθει 7.212). Of course, the statement is Hushai's and it is ultimately meant to deceive Absalom. Nevertheless, it resonates with Josephus' citing divine providence as the explanation both for his own survival in the Jewish War (*B.J.* 3.341, 387) and for the outcome of the conflict. In his speech to the rebels outside the walls of Jerusalem, Josephus claims that God himself has favored Rome and therefore it is right to submit to their rule (κατὰ ἔθνος τὸν θεὸν ἐμπεριάγοντα τὴν ἀρχὴν νῦν ἐπὶ τῆς Ἰταλίας "and that God, when he had gone around the nations with this dominion, is now settled in Italy" *B.J.* 5.367; transl. Whiston).³⁹

In Josephus' account, Hushai goes on: "It is not fitting to be indignant over the present state of things, seeing that the kingship has not been transferred to another house, but has remained in the same one, now that the son has succeeded" (7.212). This is a notion added by Josephus with no counterpart in the biblical narrative. Begg notes that these words introduce the notion of "dynastic continuity" which Hushai can present as a motivation for accepting Absalom's rule.⁴⁰ There may be a deeper rationale behind these words Josephus puts in Hushai's mouth: since things have changed in any case and not clearly for the worse, there is no good reason not to side with the new rule. This brings to mind Josephus' own situation: Roman rule meant a change for the better from the tyrannical rule of the rebel leaders, e.g., Simon bar Giora: ἦν δὲ τῷ δήμῳ Σίμων μὲν ἕξωθεν Ῥωμαίων φοβερώτερος "Now this Simon, who was outside the wall, was a greater terror to the people than the Romans themselves" (*B.J.* 4.558; see also 4.503–544, 556–565; transl. Whiston).⁴¹ Changing one's loyalty from the rebels to the Romans, or from David to Absalom, does not diminish *loyalty* itself; only the object of

³⁸ Interestingly, Josephus makes David worry about Absalom's lawlessness, particularly the fact that the kingship had *not* been given to him by God: ἀλλ' ἐκείνων πολὺ χείροσι καὶ παρανομωτέροις ἐπεβάλετο βασιλεία πρῶτον μὲν ὑπὸ θεοῦ οὐ δεδομένη "he was [committing deeds] much worse and more lawless than those, by laying hands on the kingship which, first of all, had not been given him by God" (*A.J.* 7.198). This fact underlines Hushai's deceitfulness in 7.212, which, of course, serves a good cause.

³⁹ See James S. McLaren, "Delving into the Dark Side: Josephus' Foresight as Hindsight," in *Making History: Josephus and Historical Method*, ed. Zuleika Rodgers, SJSJ 110 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 58–9. Avioz, *Josephus' Interpretation*, 137, does not treat the passage but has a brief mention of Josephus justifying Ahithophel's (Avioz: Hushai's!) advice for Absalom concerning his father's concubines.

⁴⁰ Begg, "Ahithophel," 482 n. 25.

⁴¹ Feldman, *Josephus' Interpretation*, 122, has noted that Josephus praises the Romans for clemency towards Jews—foreigners in Roman eyes—in contrast to the tyrants that oppressed the Jewish people even though being of the same nation (*B.J.* 1.10, 27).

loyalty is changed. Nodet points out that a similar notion can be found in Josephus' account of the address of Herod the Great to Octavian (*B.J.* 1.386–392). Herod had sided with Antony, but after the defeat at Actium (31 BCE), Herod hastened to swear allegiance to the winner Octavian.⁴² Feldman has noted that Josephus is particularly concerned with civil strife and the importance of showing respect for the legitimate ruler, even a bad one.⁴³

In sum: Echoes of Josephus' own situation in the Jewish War can be heard even through the deceptive words of Hushai. A detail of the Greek reading (*ἀρχιεταῖρος*) in Josephus' source can be deduced from how he introduces Hushai.

2.4 David's Choice of Punishment (2 Sam 24:14 // *A.J.* 7.322–323)

The next case is a striking example of Josephus following one form of the source text instead of another. Following the ill-advised census he commanded, King David must undergo a punishment.⁴⁴ He is given three choices: “Shall three years of famine come to you on your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land?” (2 Sam 24:13 NRSV) In the MT, it is not explicitly said that David chose the pestilence or plague; his answer seems somewhat vague: “let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great.” The same holds true for the parallel in 1 Chronicles (21:13) both in Hebrew and Greek.⁴⁵ In the LXX of Samuel, however, the choice is explicated: “and David chose for himself death” (*καὶ ἐξελέξατο ἑαυτῷ Δαυὶδ τὸν θάνατον*).⁴⁶ Josephus adds a lengthy speculation on what went on in David's mind while contemplating the choice:

The king thought that if he requested famine, it would seem to the others that he had done so without risk to himself, because he had much grain stored up, while to them it would bring harm. (323) And if he opted to have them defeated for three months [they would say] he had opted for war because he had heroes around himself as well as fortresses, and so had nothing to fear. **He therefore requested a suffering common to both kings and subjects**, in which the anxiety would be equal for all, having previously declared that it was much better to fall into the hands of God than into those of the enemy. (*A.J.* 7.322–323)

¹⁴καὶ εἶπεν Δαυὶδ πρὸς Γάδ Στενά μοι πάντοθεν σφόδρα ἐστίν, καὶ τὰ τρία· ἐμπεσοῦμαι δὴ εἰς χεῖρας Κυρίου, ὅτι πολλοὶ οἱ οἰκτιρμοὶ αὐτοῦ σφόδρα, εἰς δὲ χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων οὐ μὴ ἐμπέσω· **καὶ ἐξελέξατο ἑαυτῷ Δαυὶδ τὸν θάνατον**. (2 Sam 24:14 Kauhanen)

⁴² Etienne Nodet, ed., *Flavius Josèphe III: Les Antiquités Juives Livres VI et VII* (Paris: Cerf, 2001), 184 n. 4. Begg, “Ahithophel,” 482, credits Nodet with this remark in the article but not in his translation.

⁴³ Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation*, 142.

⁴⁴ Avioz, *Josephus' Interpretation*, 157, mentions the Census Plague in passing with not much analysis.

⁴⁵ As of yet, there is no edition of 1 Chronicles in the series *Septuaginta: Vetus testamentum graecum* by the Göttingen Academy of Sciences. No significant variants for 1 Chr 21:13 are reported in the edition by Alan E. Brooke, Norman McLean, and Henry St J. Thackeray, eds., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Text of Codex Vaticanus*, vol. 2:3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932).

⁴⁶ The clause is left out by V 121 68', in all likelihood due to a parablepsis from *καὶ* to *καί*.

In Josephus' narrative, David rejects both famine and war on moral grounds: they would not affect him, at least not to the same extent as his people: the king would have "much grain stored up" and "heroes around himself as well as fortresses." Instead, he "requested a suffering common to both kings and subjects" (*ἤτήσατο πάθος κοινὸν καὶ βασιλεῦσι καὶ τοῖς ἀρχομένοις*), that is, the plague. Josephus' formulation highlights David's moral integrity in taking more personal risk in the punishment of his own mistake with the census and it may be based on Josephus' somewhat idealized portrait of David. Taken separately, neither the invented theme of moral deliberation, nor the expression "he requested" (*ἤτήσατο*) would be sufficient to claim that Josephus followed the LXX plus "and David chose for himself death." It is quite unclear what the MT actually implies here: Does David refuse to choose (my interpretation), does he only exclude the war option (Hertzberg),⁴⁷ or does he wish to "fall *by* the hand of Yahweh" (McCarter's translation) thus implicitly choosing the plague?⁴⁸ Josephus may well have arrived at his interpretation on the basis of the Hebrew text. However, taken together, the two phenomena may point to the conclusion that he followed the LXX plus: that would explain well both his emphasis on the moral deliberation and the use of the expression "David *requested* the plague." The outcome is that in Josephus' depiction David shows virtue and moral integrity that is not explicit in the biblical text, at least, not in the Hebrew one.

2.5 The Census Plague (2 Sam 14:15–17 // *A.J.* 7.324–328)

The previous case, in which Josephus was probably dependent on the LXX plus "and David chose for himself death," can be contrasted with his immediately following vivid description of the horrors of the Census Plague (2 Sam 24:15–16 // *A.J.* 7.324–326). The description includes intense suffering by the victims as well as the tragedy of people dying while burying their family members "so that the burial rites remained unfinished" (*A.J.* 7.326). Marcus and Feldman, among others, have observed that the description resembles the account by Thucydides (*Historiae* 2.47–52) of the plague in Athens at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War.⁴⁹ The description may even be affected by the famine Josephus himself witnessed in Jerusalem during the Jewish War (*B.J.* 5.512–518).⁵⁰ The motivation for inventing such horror and tragedy in connection with the Census Plague may well be merely to make the story more memorable to the readers. However, Josephus might have had a motivation for emphasizing how lawlessness—this time brought about by the king's error—leads to unimaginable suffering for the people. The thematic link to contemporary affairs is strengthened by the Census Plague

⁴⁷ Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, OTL 10, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1986), 413.

⁴⁸ P. Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 9 (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 511.

⁴⁹ Ralph Marcus, ed., *Josephus, vol. 5: Jewish Antiquities: Books V–VIII*, Loeb Classical Library 281 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1934), ad loc.; Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation*, 178.

⁵⁰ See Begg, *Flavius Josephus*, 294 n. 1204.

happening in or in the surroundings of Jerusalem. Josephus’ wording “the angel then stretched his hand also towards Hierosolyma, sending the terror **there**” (ἐξέτεινε δὲ ὁ ἄγγελος τὴν χεῖρα καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα τὸ δεινὸν **κάκεισε** πέμπων) may actually imply that the plague extended to the city itself; the Bible is unclear in this respect.⁵¹

Another detail related to the plague is David’s reaction to seeing the angel executing the plague. In Chronicles, both the king and the elders put on sackcloth and prostrate themselves in front of the angel (1 Chr 21:16)—in Samuel, David does no such thing.⁵² In Josephus’ account, it is *only* David, not the elders, who does these signs of repentance: “the king put on sackcloth and lay on the ground” (*A.J.* 7.327). This enhances the portrait of a virtuous, repentant king.

An especially noteworthy notion in Josephus’ account of the Census Plague is that David presents himself as “the shepherd” of the people:

[David said to God] that it was just that he, **the shepherd** (ὁ ποιμήν), be punished, but **the flock** (τὰ δὲ ποίμνια) should be saved, for they had committed no offense.

2 Sam 24:17a Ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἡμάρτηκα καὶ ἐγὼ ὁ ποιμήν ἐκακοποίησα, καὶ οὗτοι τὸ ποίμνιον τί ἐποίησαν; (Kauhanen)⁵³

2 Sam 24:17a MT When David saw the angel who was destroying the people, he said to the LORD, “I alone have sinned, and I alone have done wickedly (העויתי; 4QSam^a הרעה הרעה); …” (NRSV)

Josephus clearly follows the reading “the shepherd” found in almost all Greek witnesses as well as a Qumran Samuel scroll (4QSam^a: הרעה) against both the MT and the parallel in 1 Chr 21:17 (הרעה והרעה κακοποιῶν ἐκακοποίησα). It seems plausible that in the MT of Samuel, the word הרעה “the shepherd” has dropped out by homoiarcton. Following that, a *reš-vav* confusion together with a metathesis has led from הרעה “I have done evil” to העויתי “I have done wickedly.”⁵⁴ I see no real reason for Josephus to add “the shepherd” against a source text simply to make a connection with the immediately following cognate word ποίμνια “the flock.” Concerning the latter, Josephus may be in genuine agreement with the reading τὸ ποίμνιον found only in manuscript group *L*. In the Greek Samuel, ποίμνιον is the more usual equivalent for the

⁵¹ Contrast 2 Sam 24:16a (the plague stopped before it reached Jerusalem) and 16b–17 (David still saw the angel destroying people). Some regard such unclarity as a mark of literary disunity; see McCarter, *II Samuel*, 514–15.

⁵² 4QSam^a has a plus that is only partially preserved; the visible part follows the Chronicles account very closely and it is likely a conflated reading. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 506–507, by contrast, suggests the plus is original in Samuel and was dropped out by parablepsis.

⁵³ A selective apparatus in which differences from Rahlfs marked with “Ra”: ἐγώ¹ V L 122*] εἰμι 245; + εἰμι rel Ra: cf ℳ | ἡμάρτηκα] ἡμαρτον L; ἡδικησα B^{txt} A 64’ 55 Ra; ο ἀδικησας 247 | om καὶ ἐγὼ ὁ ποιμήν ἐκακοποίησα B^{txt} 55: homoiot | ἐγώ² A 247 L⁻⁹³ 44–610 f] εἰ 460; εἰμι 64’; + εἰμι rel Ra: cf ℳ | om ὁ ποιμήν 530* | τὸ ποίμνιον L] τα προβατα rel Jos (?).

⁵⁴ See McCarter, *II Samuel*, 507; similarly Anneli Aejmelaeus, “Translating a Translation: Problems of Modern ‘Daughter Versions’ of the Septuagint,” in eadem, *On the Trail of the Septuagint Translators: Collected Essays*, CBET 50 (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 241–63; on p. 248.

Hebrew רֶבֶעַת but there is no solid evidence of the *kaige* revisers favoring πρόβατα .⁵⁵ The choice of the oldest Septuagint reading here is very tentative as the Lucianic reviser may have changed πρόβατα to ποίμνιον to match ποιμήν . Counting in Josephus' probable support, the *L* reading τὸ ποίμνιον seems to be a slightly better choice. In this kind of case, one must consider carefully both Josephus' motivations and what is probable from the point of view of the textual criticism of the Septuagint; agreement in a lexeme between Josephus and *L* is not in itself a sufficient text-critical argument.

3. Conclusion

While the nature of Josephus' narrative in *Antiquitates judaicae*, book 7, makes it hard to determine the form of his biblical source, a good case can be made for him frequently consulting the Greek Septuagint version. In the section "Best Arguments for a Greek Base Text," I cited some dozen instances where this is the best explanation for what we find in Josephus' text. A case in point is the notion of King David as "the shepherd" of his people (2 Sam 24:17 // *A.J.* 7.328) which is based on a Greek reading absent from the MT. The Greek text Josephus attests to is a good, old text with no clear *kaige* features. The sparse agreements between Josephus and the *L* text, when not coincidental, are best explained as both witnessing an original reading independently of one another.

When Josephus departs from his biblical sources, often expanding the narrative, the main motivation is to make the narrative more appealing to the readers. In isolated instances, however, a choice of wording or an expansion may be motivated by Josephus' own situation. These instances include: depicting Absalom as a demagogue who incited the mob to rebellion (*A.J.* 7.196); justifying Hushai's purportedly changed allegiance by prudence and acknowledgement of divine providence (211–212); and depicting David as a virtuous, rightful king—in contrast to rebel leaders and other demagogues—who puts his own life at risk in choosing the plague over other forms of punishment following the census (322–323).

The study of Josephus' depiction of Davidic kingship must take into account both the sources and the personal motivations of the author. The study illuminates the impact of a large-scale political transition—the Jewish War and its aftermath—on the rewriting of scriptural texts and traditions.

⁵⁵ The following lists all the occurrences in 1–2 Samuel. The Lemma is given according to Rahlfs' edition. When there is variation in the manuscripts, it is noted in parentheses and a small apparatus may be given. For the cases in 1 Samuel, the apparatus is that of the forthcoming *Septuaginta: vetus testamentum graecum* edition, under preparation by Anneli Aejmelaeus.

πρόβατα : 25:18; 2 Sam 7:8 (ποίμνιον *L*), 17:29. ποίμνιον or ποίμνια : 1 Sam 8:17; 14:32; 15:9, 14, 15, 21; 16:11, 19; 17:34; 24:4; 25:2 (ποίμνια^1] ἐργασία *L* 509 158 554^{ms} | ποίμνια^2 B A O b] πρόβατα *L* rel | ποίμνιον] ποίμνια A L 106), 4, 16; 27:9; 30:20; 2 Sam 12:2, 4. In 1 Sam 25:2 ποίμνια^2 it seems that the usually most *kaige*-like witnesses B A O b have preserved the original reading and the change from "flocks" to "sheep" is an early contextual variant; the sense requires the latter.

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