

Josephus' Portrait of Asa

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Whereas the rabbinic tradition attacks King Asa of Judah for trusting in himself rather than in G-d and, in particular, for drafting the sages, Josephus, the apologist, omits such details and, indeed, whitewashes Asa completely. He is praised particularly, in language reminiscent of Josephus' portraits of Saul and David, as well as of Thucydides' Pericles, for putting his nation in order. In particular, Josephus emphasizes Asa obedience to the ancestral laws. And yet, because he realized that his audience, consisting apparently primarily of non-Jews, would resent as intolerant the forcible destruction of idols, tree worship, and mystery cults, he omits such details. Because proselytism was such a burning issue at the time, in view of the Jews' apparently extraordinary success during this period in attracting converts, Josephus omits the passage that implies that Asa attracted proselytes to his army.

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INTRODUCTION

Josephus' modifications in his portrayals of major biblical figures may readily be understood in terms of his apologetic motives.¹ But what

1. See my "Josephus' Portrait of Noah and Its Parallels in Philo, Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*, and Rabbinic Midrashim," *PAAJR* 55 (1988) 31-57; "Abraham the Greek Philosopher in Josephus," *TAPA* 99 (1968) 143-56; "Abraham the General in Josephus," in Frederick E. Greenspahn et al., eds., *Nourished with Peace: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism in Memory of Samuel Sandmel* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984) 43-49; "Josephus as a Biblical Interpreter: the 'Aqedah,'" *JQR* 75 (1984-85) 212-52; "Josephus' Portrait of Jacob," *JQR* 79 (1988-89) 101-51; "Josephus' Portrait of Joseph," *RB* 99 (1992) 379-417, 504-28; "Josephus' Portrait of Moses," *JQR* 82 (1991-92) 285-328; 83 (1992-1993) 7-50, 301-330. "Josephus' Portrait of Joshua," *HTR* 82 (1989) 351-76; "Josephus' Portrait of Deborah," in A. Caquot et al., *Hellenica et Judaica: Hommage à Valentin Nikiprowetzky* (Leuven/Paris: Editions Peeters, 1986) 115-28; "Josephus' Version of Samson," *JSJ* 19 (1988) 171-214; "Josephus' Portrait of Samuel," *Abr-Nahrain* 30 (1992) 103-45; "Josephus' Portrait of Josephus as an Apologist to the Greco-Roman World:

are the factors that guide him in his portrayal of minor biblical figures? One such personality is Asa, the relatively obscure king of Judah who was the son of Abijah, grandson of Rehoboam, and great-grandson of Solomon. Here we shall see a striking and consistent pattern of omitting those elements that would tend to denigrate his character and those elements that would appear to be embarrassing to Josephus in his quest to defend the Jewish people in the eyes of non-Jews.

One indication of the relative importance to Josephus of a given biblical personality is the sheer amount of space that he devotes to him. Thus Josephus uses 2.70 times the space the Hebrew text uses² for his account of Saul, 2.21 for Balaam, 2.16 for Jeroboam, 2.01 for Jehu, 2.01 for Jehoshaphat, 2.00 for Joseph (5.45 for the episode of Joseph and Potiphar's wife and 3.28 for the narrative dealing with Joseph's dreams and subsequent enslavement), 1.98 for Ahab, 1.95 for David, 1.93 for Jehoram of Israel, 1.87 for Samuel, 1.83 for Absalom, 1.71 for Josiah, 1.54 for Samson, 1.52 for Elijah, 1.32 for Daniel, 1.20 for Abraham (2.86 for the ^cAqedah episode), 1.20 for Ezra (.72 as compared with the Greek text of 1 Esdras,³ which was apparently Josephus' source), 1.15 for Jonah, 1.11 for Elisha, .97 for Hezekiah, .91 (or discounting the duplicate material in 2 Chr, 1.26) for Manasseh, .90 for Gideon, and .24 for Nehemiah. As for Asa, the ratio of Josephus (*Ant.* 8.286, 290-97, 304-6, 314-15, consisting of 104 lines in the Loeb text) to the biblical text (2 Chr 14.1-16.14, consisting of 75 lines),⁴ is 1.39, an indication that he is of medium importance to Josephus.

That Asa was, however, of relative importance in Josephus' eyes may be seen from the fact that, at the conclusion of the discussion

His Portrait of Solomon," in Elisabeth S. Fiorenza, ed., *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976) 69-98; "Josephus' Portrait of Hezekiah," *JBL* 111 (1992) 597-610; "Josephus' Interpretation of Jonah," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 17 (1992) 1-29; "Josephus' Portrait of Daniel," *Henoch* 14 (1992) 37-96; "Josephus' Portrait of Nehemiah," *JJS* 43 (1992) 187-202; "Hellenization in Josephus' Version of Esther," *TAPA* 101 (1970) 143-70; and, for an overall survey, "Use, Authority, and Exegesis of Mikra in the Writings of Josephus," in Martin Jan Mulder and Harry Sysling, eds., *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity (Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum 2.1*; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1988) 455-518. Saul," *HUCA* 53 (1982) 45-99; "Josephus' Portrait of David," *HUCA* 60 (1989) 129-74;

2. For Josephus I have used the Loeb Classical Library text. For the Hebrew text I have used the standard edition with the commentary of Meir Loeb Malbim (New York, n.d.).

3. For the Greek text I have used the edition of Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935).

4. The biblical account in 1 Kgs 15:9-24 is much shorter and is clearly not Josephus' major source.

of his achievements, Josephus presents an extrabiblical encomium praising him in the highest terms by remarking that he imitated his great-great-grandfather David in courage and piety (*Ant.* 8.315). We may note that Josephus presents encomia at the conclusion of his discussions of a limited number of biblical figures, namely Abraham (*Ant.* 1.256), Isaac (1.346), Jacob (2.196), Joseph (2.198), Moses (4.328-31), Joshua (5.118), Samson (5.317), Samuel (6.292-94), Saul (6.343-50), David (7.390-91), Solomon (8.211), Elisha (9.182), and Hezekiah (10.6). The fact that he does so for a relatively minor figure such as Asa is significant. Perhaps even more significant is Josephus' clear indication that he intended to speak further about Asa, inasmuch as he closes his account with the statement that "there is no great necessity to speak of this king just now" (*Ant.* 8.315).

It is of particular interest to compare the rabbinic accounts of Asa, with which Josephus may well have been acquainted and which are ambivalent, with that of Josephus, who is uniformly favorable.⁵ Thus, on the one hand, the rabbis ask how it is possible that

5. That Josephus was acquainted with traditions recorded in later rabbinic tradition is evident from Josephus' remarks on his excellent education, presumably in the legal and aggadic traditions of Judaism, which he received in his native city of Jerusalem, then the center of Jewish learning (*Life* 2.8-9). Josephus says he received a reputation for his excellent memory and understanding (μνήμη τε καὶ σύνεσις) and that while he was only fourteen years of age he already had won universal applause for his love of learning (φιλογράμματον). Moreover, he is not afraid to assert that his compatriots admit that in Jewish learning—and it is hard to believe that would be restricted to the written Bible alone—he far excels them (*Ant.* 20.263). While it is probably true that Josephus is not averse to boasting, he had so many enemies that it seems unlikely that he would have made such broad claims unless there were some basis to them. Bernard J. Bamberger has argued convincingly that the Talmud and Midrashim are compilations of traditional material that had existed orally for a considerable time before they were written down ("The Dating of Aggadic Materials," *JBL* 68 [1949] 115-23). He notes that extra-rabbinic sources, notably the Septuagint, the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, Hellenistic Jewish writings, and the New Testament—all apparently older than rabbinic writings in their present form—contain innumerable parallels to the rabbinic aggadah. For example, inasmuch as the second-century Rabbi Meir states, as does the Septuagint, that Mordecai had married Esther, it is more likely that the translators of the Septuagint were acquainted with this ancient tradition than that Rabbi Meir consulted the Septuagint (*Meg.* 13a; *Est* 2:7). Similarly, the plague of כַּרְסֵי is understood by the second-century Rabbi Nehemiah to consist of stinging insects, whereas the Hebrew is generally understood to refer to varied wild beasts; again, this is the explanation of the Septuagint (*Exod. Rab.* 11.3; *Exod* 8:17). Moreover, one of the paintings of the third-century CE Dura Europos synagogue depicts Hiel, a confederate of the priests of Baal, crouching beneath the altar while a snake approaches to bite him (1 *Kgs* 16:34); but such a story is not mentioned in a Hebrew source until much later midrashim (*Exod. Rab.* 15.15; *Pesiq. Rab.* 4.13a) and not fully until the thirteenth-century *Yal.* (on 1 *Kgs* 18:26). Hence that tradition must have been more ancient. For further examples see Salomo Rappaport, *Agada and Exegese bei Flavius Josephus* (Wien: Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1930). That the rabbis carefully preserved the statements of their predecessors and did not ascribe to

Asa did not destroy the high places, since surely he destroyed all the idolatrous cults in Palestine (*Šabb.* 56b). On the other hand, they remark that Asa showed little confidence in G-d and trusted rather in his own skill; indeed, in a milieu in which scholarship was so revered, they state that Asa even went to the length of forcing the scholars in his realm to enlist in his army when he went to war against Baasha the king of Israel (*Sota* 10a). Moreover, even the bridegroom from his chamber was not exempted; and it was, consequently, because of this conscription of scholars and bridegrooms, according to the tradition transmitted by the fourth-century Rava, that he was punished by G-d. Furthermore, they stress that the prophet Hanani justly rebuked Asa for trusting in princes rather than in G-d—and this despite the fact that Divine help had been visible in his conflict with the Ethiopians and the Libyans (*Lam. Rab.*, introduction 30, and *Midr. Pss.* 79, 358). Indeed, the rabbis remark that G-d at first intended to limit the division between the kingdoms of Judah and Israel to thirty-six years and that if Asa had shown himself deserving he would have been accorded dominion over the whole of Israel (*S. °Olam* 16; *t. Sota* 12.1-2). In fact, as the rabbis note, Asa, through his connection by marriage with the house of Omri, the king of Israel, actually contributed to the stability of his great enemy, the Kingdom of Israel; consequently, G-d resolved that the descendants of Asa should perish simultaneously with those of Omri (*S. °Olam* 17; *t. Sota* 12.13). The rabbis note still another grievous sin committed by Asa (*S. °Olam* 17), namely that he gave some of the treasures of Solomon, which he captured from Zerah the Ethiopian

them remarks that they have not made would seem to be borne out by the strong statement in *Meg.* 15a, in which the third-century Rabbi Eleazar is reported to have said in the name of Rabbi Hanina that whoever reports a saying in the name of its originator brings deliverance to the world. Indeed, most recently Richard Kalmin ("Talmudic Portrayals of Relationships between Rabbis: Amoraic or Pseudepigraphic?" *AJSR* 17 [1992] 165-97) concludes, in opposition to the view frequently expressed by Jacob Neusner (e.g., *Making the Classics in Judaism: The Three Stages of Literary Formation* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989] 19-44), that aspects of Amoraic attitudes, at least so far as expressions of praise and special respect, most likely originate close to the time of the rabbis involved, and are not later editorial fabrications. Further evidence against Neusner's skepticism may be seen in Kalmin's study in which he convincingly demonstrates that the interactions among contemporary Amoraim in the Talmud are not the product of the fancy of the redactor but are historically grounded ("Collegial Interaction in the Babylonian Talmud," *JQR* 82 [1992-92] 383-415). Again, in a forthcoming essay Kalmin shows, through an analysis of rabbinic statements and stories about dreams, that several differences between early (prior to the third century CE) and later (from the early third to the early sixth century) rabbis are most likely accurate historically, reflecting real changes in rabbinic attitudes, and are not the product of the redactor ("Dreams and Dream Interpreters in Ancient Rabbinic Literature").

king, to the king of Aram, Hadrimon the son of Tabrimon (*Pesah.* 119). Finally, they make note of the appropriateness of the fact that he, who was distinguished on account of the strength residing in his feet, was afflicted at the end of his life with gout in his feet (*Sota* 10a) This, say the rabbis, is the disease referred to in David's curse of Joab (*Sanh.* 48b; 2 Sam 3:29).

If, indeed, as we have suggested, Josephus may well have been aware of such rabbinic traditions, we may ask why his portrait of Asa systematically omits all criticisms of him.

ASA'S VIRTUES

The chief function of a leader, as we can see from the example par excellence of Pericles in Thucydides' portrait, is to put his nation in order. It is precisely this quality that Josephus emphasizes as the major achievement of Asa (*Ant.* 8.290). In this respect he is thus comparable to Josephus' portrayal of Saul, who likewise set the nation right (κατωρθωμένων) through his victory over Nahash, as well as through his success (κατωρθωμένοις) over the Amalekites (*Ant.* 6.81). We find the same language, significantly, in Josephus' description of David's successes wherever he went (*Ant.* 6.196, 6.335, 7.109, 8.1). Hence, by implication, Asa is compared with the two greatest kings of the Jewish people, at least as delineated by Josephus.

In his portrayal of biblical heroes Josephus stresses the virtues they possess. Likewise, the hero must be a combination of a Platonic philosopher-king and a Thucydidean ideal statesman in the mold of Pericles in his knowledge, ability to persuade, his being beyond corruption, and his putting his nation above his own needs (2.60-65).⁶ One of the cardinal virtues, courage (ἀνδρεία), is stressed by Josephus in a number of additions to the biblical narrative,⁷ especially since the Jews had been reproached with cowardice by such critics of the Jews as Apollonius Molon (*Ag. Ap.* 2.148). Josephus himself was especially sensitive on this point because he himself had been subjected to such a charge (*J.W.* 3.358).

It is, consequently, significant that whereas the Bible notes that Asa built fortified cities which he surrounded with walls, towers,

6. See my "Use, Authority and Exegesis of Mikra in the Writings of Josephus," 488-94.

7. See my 'Abraham the General in Josephus'; "Josephus' Portrait of Jacob," 110-12; "Josephus' Portrait of Joseph," 400-401; "Josephus' Portrait of Joshua," 358-61; "Josephus' Version of Samson," 179-89; "Josephus' Portrait of Samuel," 122-24; "Josephus' Portrait of Saul," 66-79; "Josephus' Portrait of David," 141-47; "Josephus' Portrait of Hezekiah," 602-3; "Josephus' Portrait of Daniel," 50-51; "Use, Authority and Exegesis of Mira in the Writings of Josephus," 490-91.

gates, and bars (2 Chr 14:6-7), Josephus, eager to emphasize, rather, Asa's leadership in battle, totally omits these details. Again, the biblical narrative notes that Asa cried out to G-d, presumably in utter dismay (2 Chr 14:11). Josephus' Asa is more positive in that in addition to crying out he asks G-d for victory and for the destruction of many myriads of the enemy. To have opposed such a huge army successfully clearly adds to Asa's reputation for bravery.

Another method by which Josephus aggrandizes a biblical personality's reputation for courage is through diminishing the role of G-d in giving military victory to the Israelites and through assigning the credit instead to the biblical hero. For example, at the siege of Jericho, whereas in the Bible it is G-d who tells Joshua that He has given the city into his hands (Joshua 6:2), in Josephus it is Joshua who, in consultation with the priests and the council of elders, resolves to besiege the city (*Ant.* 5.22).⁸

Similarly, in the Bible we are told that it is G-d who defeated the Ethiopians before Asa (2 Chr 14:12), whereas in Josephus' version the role of G-d is reduced to merely giving a sign that Asa would be victorious, whereupon it is Asa himself who then becomes the center of attention as he encounters the Ethiopians and slays many of them (*Ant.* 8.294). Thus, whereas, indeed, in the Bible it is G-d's victory, in Josephus the victory is Asa's, but Asa is careful to acknowledge that it was from G-d that he had received this victory (*Ant.* 8.295).

Moreover, though there is some reason to believe that Josephus was aware of rabbinic traditions, in order to make his account more credible he avoids such a tradition as that thirty-one kings, as well as the satraps of many foreign kings, opposed Joshua; instead, shunning this apparent exaggeration, he speaks merely of four kings who joined the Gibeonites in their alliance with Joshua and an unspecified number of kings who joined the king of Jerusalem in opposing Joshua (*Ant.* 5.58).

Similarly, whereas the Bible presents the sweeping statement that the Ethiopians fell in battle against Asa until none remained alive (2 Chr 14:13),⁹ Josephus presents the more reasonable statement that Asa slew merely *many* of the Ethiopians (*Ant.* 8.294). Likewise, whereas the Bible states that Asa's army plundered all the cities around Gerar (2 Chr 14:14), Josephus makes the statement more

8. Again, whereas in the Bible it is G-d who tells Joshua to lay an ambush against the city of Ai (Joshua 8:1-2), in Josephus it is Joshua who takes the initiative to think of an ambush (*Ant.* 5.45). Likewise, whereas the biblical text declares that the L-rd gave Libnah and Lachish into the hands of Israel (Josh 10:30, 32), in Josephus it is Joshua who captures the kings and punishes all the host (*Ant.* 5.61).

9. The Greek translation says that the Ethiopians fell so that they could not recover ("keep up," "preserve") themselves (ὥστε μὴ εἶναι ἐν αὐτοῖς περιποίησιν).

credible by omitting the word "all" (*Ant.* 8.294). On the other hand, whereas the Bible vaguely states that they carried off plunder without indicating the contents of the plunder (2 Chr 14:14), Josephus increases the value of the plunder by specifying that it consisted of much gold and silver (*Ant.* 8.294).

The virtue of justice (δικαιοσύνη), it will be recalled, is the centerpiece of Plato's *Republic*. The fact that Josephus identifies justice with law must have made a powerful appeal to the Romans in his audience, who placed such a premium upon the rule of law and who were so proud of their achievements in this field (*Ant.* 6.305, 13.294).¹⁰ Indeed, the importance of justice as an attribute of the biblical heroes is constantly stressed by Josephus in additions to the Bible;¹¹ in particular, it is an attribute of the three patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as we see for example in Nehemiah's extrabiblical remarks in his address to the people (*Ant.* 11.169).

That justice is for Josephus a key quality of Asa may be seen in noting the biblical statement of the prophet Azariah to Asa after the latter's victory over the Ethiopians, that "the L-rd is with you while you are with him" (2 Chr 15:2) as compared with Azariah's statement in Josephus specifically declaring that Asa and his people had obtained their victory because they had shown themselves just (δικαίους) and pious (*Ant.* 8.295).

We may likewise see the importance of this quality of justice in Josephus' depiction of Asa in that whereas in the Bible, when Asa hears the words of the prophet Azariah he takes courage (2 Chr 15:8), in Josephus the reaction of the king and the people is in terms of justice, as we see from Josephus' remark that they take thought (πρόνοιαν) for what was right (δικαίου, that is, "just" [*Ant.* 8.297]).

Coupled with justice is the virtue of humanity (φιλανθρωπία), as we see in Philo,¹² just as its Latin equivalent *humanitas* is likewise

10. Josephus boastfully remarks that while customs vary even within a given nation, justice is regarded as most useful by both Greeks and non-Greeks, and that the laws of the Jews have the greatest sense of justice, so that, if they are properly kept, one must be kind and friendly to all men (*Ant.* 6.176). He remarks that the Jews strive especially to educate their children to keep the laws and the ancient piety (*Ag. Ap.* 1.60).

11. See my "Josephus' Portrait of Jacob," 112-13; "Josephus' Portrait of Joseph," 405-13; "Josephus' Portrait of Joshua," 362-64; "Josephus' Version of Samson," 190-92; "Josephus' Portrait of Samuel," 125-29; "Josephus' Portrait of Saul," 82-83; "Josephus' Portrait of David," 150-56; "Josephus' Portrait of Daniel," 52; "Josephus' Portrait of Hezekiah," 604; "Use, Authority and Exegesis of Mikra in the Writings of Josephus," 493-93.

12. Philo, *De Mutatione Nominum* 40.225; *Mos.* 2.2.9; *Decal.* 30.164. See the discussion by Harry A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (vol. 2; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947) 220, n. 146.

connected with the virtue of justice.¹³ Similarly, connected with the quality of φιλανθρωπία is the virtue of showing gratitude. Thus Jethro, in a considerable amplification of the Bible, compliments Moses for his sense of gratitude and for his requiting favors (*Ant.* 2.262; Exod 2:20).¹⁴ Moreover, whereas the Bible, in presenting Azariah's prophecy, says nothing about G-d's benevolence and the gratitude that one should feel for this (2 Chr 15:2-7), in Josephus' version Azariah advises Asa and his people not to be ungracious in refusing to accept the benevolence (εὐμενείας, "goodwill," "mercy," "favor," "goodness") of G-d (*Ant.* 8.297).

It is significant that Aristotle defines piety as a part of justice or as an accompaniment of it (*De Virtutibus et Vitiis* 55.1250B22-23). Moreover, Dionysius of Halicarnassus couples the two virtues in his

13. Cf. Macrobius in Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* (*De Re Publica*, Book 6), cited by Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy*, 2.220, n. 146.

14. Furthermore, Moses, in an extrabiblical addition, shows the way to exhibit gratitude in the manner in which he rewards the valiant soldiers after their victory over Amalek and eulogizes their general Joshua (*Ant.* 3.59). Likewise, in his last speech to the people, Moses, in a supplement to the Bible (Deuteronomy 32), renders personal thanks to G-d for the care which He had bestowed upon them, for the help which He had given him in his struggles, and for the graciousness which He had shown toward him (*Ant.* 4.315-16). Furthermore, Josephus adds to the biblical text (Josh 6:25) by having Joshua specifically acknowledge his gratitude to Rahab for having protected his spies and assure her that in recompensing her he would not be found to fall short of such a benefaction (*Ant.* 5.30). In concrete terms, Joshua's show of gratitude goes beyond the biblical text by having Joshua present her with lands forthwith and show her every consideration. Moreover, both in an earlier address at Shiloh (*Ant.* 5.74) and in his farewell address to the two and a half tribes who had their settlement beyond the Jordan (*Ant.* 5.95), Joshua renders thanks to them for having shared his perils; he very graciously recalls how they had deferred the enjoyment of their possessions and resolved to partake of them only after helping the other tribes, and adds that the Israelites will be grateful to them "not only today but forever." In the Bible there is an acknowledgment that the tribes had not deserted their brethren, but there is no expression of thanks (Josh 22:3). Joshua gives thanks to his soldiers (*Ant.* 5.96), adding to the biblical text (Josh 22:8) that they will take with them "our goodwill and readiness to serve and requite you in whatsoever you may desire." He then compliments them for having in nowise shirked the behests of Moses nor disdained his authority after his death, "nor is there aught for which we do not accord you gratitude." Likewise, Josephus elaborates on the concern that David shows for the remnant of the house of Saul, adding, in particular, that beside all the other qualities that he possessed was the virtue of being ever mindful of those who had benefited him at any time (*Ant.* 7.111; 2 Sam 9:1). Moreover, Josephus spells out the way in which David would show his gratitude to Barzillai for providing him with sustenance, namely that he would cherish him in old age with every honor; he also promises to take care of him and to provide for him (*Ant.* 7.272). Even after Barzillai, because of his old age, declines David's generous offer, David asks him to leave his son Chimham so that he might bestow the good things of hospitality upon him (*Ant.* 7.274), whereas David's gratitude is much less impressive in the Hebrew original, where it is Barzillai who proposes that his son take his place in accompanying David to Jerusalem (2 Sam 19:38).

remark that the Roman king Numa Pompilius introduced two things by which he supposed that the city would be prosperous, namely εὐσέβεια and δικαιοσύνη (2.62.5). Diodorus Siculus in his prologue likewise stresses piety and justice as the two virtues that historians extol in their heroes (1.2.2). Similarly, Josephus frequently cites the two virtues together,¹⁵ the difference between them being, as Attridge remarks, that justice applies to relations among men, whereas piety is used with reference to man's relationship with G-d.¹⁶

Piety (εὐσέβεια), one of the cardinal virtues, as we see in Plato (*Protagoras* 330B, 349B) and in the Stoics (*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* 3.64.40; Diogenes Laertius 7.119), was likewise especially important for the Romans, as may be perceived in the fact that the key quality of Aeneas in Virgil's great national poem is *pietas* (*Aeneid* 1.10). Hence it is not surprising that this virtue is exemplified in almost every major character in Josephus.¹⁷ In particular, Josephus makes a point of stressing that the main lesson to be learned from his entire history is that those who conform to the will of G-d and do not transgress His laws prosper beyond belief, whereas those who depart from the strict

15. Adolf Schlatter (*Die Theologie des Judentums nach der Bericht des Josefus* [Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1932] 37) cites *Ant.* 7.384, 9.236, and 15.376. To these Harold W. Attridge (*The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus* [Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976] 115-16) adds *Ant.* 6.160, 6.265, 8.120-21, 8.300, 8.314, 8.394, 9.16, 9.260, 9.276, 10.50, and 18.117. To these, besides *Ant.* 8.295, we may add 6.18, 6.87, 7.338, 7.341, 7.356, 8.245, 8.280, 8.295, 9.35, 12.43, 12.56, 12.284, 14.283, 14.315, 15.182, and 15.375; and *Ag. Ap.* 2.125 and 2.146. As an example of the effective juxtaposition of the virtues of justice and piety in Josephus we may cite the fact that whereas the biblical narrative states that G-d was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the ways, of his father (2 Chr 17:3), Josephus, almost at the very beginning of his account of Jehoshaphat, notes that the reason why Jehoshaphat wins the favorable response of G-d is that he is just (δικαιος) and pious (εὐσεβής) and that he daily sought to do something pleasing and acceptable to G-d (*Ant.* 8.394). Another instance of the effective juxtaposition of Jehoshaphat's justice and piety may be seen in Josephus' version of the aftermath of the miraculous victory over Ammon and Moab (*Ant.* 9.16). Whereas the Bible says that thereafter the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet (2 Chr 20:30), Josephus shifts the emphasis again to Jehoshaphat himself, remarking that from that time onward he enjoyed splendid fame because of his righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) and his piety (εὐσεβεία) toward G-d (*Ant.* 9.16). Likewise, in an extrabiblical addition, when the prophet Elisha is consulted by the allied kings of Israel, Judah, and Idumaea at a time of severe drought, Elisha swears that he would not answer them were it not for the sake of Jehoshaphat, who was a holy (ἅγιον) and righteous (δίκαιον) man (*Ant.* 9.35).

16. Attridge, *Interpretation of Biblical History*, 115.

17. See my "Josephus' Portrait of Jacob," 113; "Josephus' Portrait of Joseph," 413-16; "Josephus' Portrait of Joshua," 364-66; "Josephus' Portrait of Samuel," 129-30; "Josephus' Portrait of Saul," 83-93; "Josephus' Portrait of David," 156-64; "Josephus as an Apologist to the Greco-Roman World: His Portrait of Solomon," 73-82; "Josephus' Portrait of Hezekiah," 604-7; "Josephus' Portrait of Daniel," 52-54; "Use, Authority and Exegesis of Mikra in the Writings of Josephus," 493-94.

observance of the laws suffer irretrievable disaster (*Ant.* 1.14). It is this very point that is stressed by the prophet Azariah in an addition to the biblical text (2 Chr 15:2), namely, that if Asa and his people continued to be righteous (δικαίους) and pious (ὁσίους) G-d would grant them to overcome their foes and to live happily, but that if they abandoned His worship, everything would turn out to the contrary and that the time would come when there would be no true prophet among them nor any priest to give righteous judgment (*Ant.* 8.296). Such a prediction would be particularly effective, inasmuch as Josephus was himself a priest and regarded himself as a prophet.¹⁸ The same point is made in Josephus' encomium for Asa where he remarks that Asa's prosperity demonstrates how close a watch G-d keeps over human affairs and how He loves good men but hates the wicked, whom He destroys root and branch (*Ant.* 8.314).¹⁹ The fact that Josephus here employs the neutral phrase τὸ θεῖον for the Deity is an indication that he intended to impress this lesson upon all his readers, including those who would not identify with the distinctively Jewish conception of G-d.

Whereas the Bible, in introducing its characterization of Asa, is content merely to state, in the most general terms, that Asa did what was right in the eyes of the L-rd and adds, "as David his father had done" (1 Kgs 15:11), and whereas in the more extended account in 2 Chronicles he is said to have done what was good and right in the eyes of the L-rd his G-d (2 Chr 14:2), Josephus praises him considerably more, remarking that he was of excellent (ἄριστος) character and that he actually looked to (ἀφορῶν) the Deity for guidance (*Ant.* 8.290). In particular, Josephus stresses Asa's piety, remarking that he neither did nor thought anything that did not show due regard for piety (εὐσέβειαν) and the observance (φυλακῆν) of the laws (νομίμων, "customs," "traditions based on physical laws").

18. See my "Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus," *JTS* 41 (1990) 386–422, esp. 397–400.

19. Josephus makes a similar point in connection with the misfortunes of the Benjaminites, namely that their misfortunes were due to G-d's decree and to their own iniquity (*Ant.* 5.168). Likewise, he notes the same lesson in connection with the death of Nabal, namely that David learned thereby that "the wicked are pursued by G-d, who overlooks no act of man but repays the good in kind, while He inflicts swift punishment upon the wicked" (*Ant.* 6.307). Again, the prophetess Huldah tells those sent by King Josiah that G-d had issued His sentence to destroy the people and to drive them out of their country and to deprive them of all good things because they had transgressed against the laws and had not repented (*Ant.* 10.60). Similarly, Josephus moralizes, in connection with Haman's punishment, that G-d thus gave others an opportunity to learn that whatever mischief a man prepares against another he has, without knowing it, first, stored up for himself (*Ant.* 11.268).

Josephus was particularly sensitive to the importance of observing the traditional laws, since his favorite historical model, Thucydides, constantly stresses the dire results arising from their disregard, as for example during the period of the plague in Athens (2.52-53). The Romans felt strongly, in the words of Ennius, that their state and its very strength depended upon allegiance to the ancient laws (*Moribus antiquis res stat Romana viresque*). Indeed, in an extrabiblical addition, Josephus remarks that King David was by nature "strongly observant of the ancestral laws" (*Ant.* 7.130). In fact, it is a continuing theme in Josephus that the kings of Israel fell precisely because they did not observe the ancestral laws.

We likewise see greater emphasis on Asa's trust in G-d in Josephus' version of Asa's prayer when he encounters Zerah the Ethiopian with the latter's huge army. In the biblical version Asa asks for divine help, "for we rely on Thee, and in Thy name we have come against this multitude" (2 Chr 14:11). Josephus' Asa declares more positively that he can put his trust in G-d alone, since only G-d can make the few triumph over the many and the weak over the strong (*Ant.* 8.293). Moreover, the biblical Asa clearly implies that it is G-d Himself who is on trial in the forthcoming battle with Zerah the Ethiopian, the implication being that if Zerah should prevail it will be a manifest blow to G-d's credibility (2 Chr 14:11). Josephus, seeking to avoid such lack of faith, says merely that Asa cried out and prayed to G-d for victory (*Ant.* 8.293).

We see Asa's piety, moreover, in his enforcement of the biblical laws. Thus, in a passage that has no biblical parallel, Josephus states that after Asa had been warned by Azariah's prophecy he sent men throughout the country to watch over the enforcement of the (religious) laws (*νομίμων*; *Ant.* 8.297).

Josephus was apparently in a quandary as to what to do with the biblical text which stated that Asa put away the prostitutes (*הַקְדָּוֹשִׁים*) and (removed all the idols (*הַגִּלְגָּלִים*; 1 Kgs 15:12). The Greek translation goes even further and is more precise in rendering the word *הַקְדָּוֹשִׁים* by *τελευτάς*. This would indicate that Asa had ended the aspect of Judaism as a mystery cult, since this word indicates the mystic rites practiced in initiations. To Josephus' pagan readers this would be nothing short of amazing, since the mysteries were held in such high regard even by Philo, who declares that he himself had been initiated into the Great Mysteries of Judaism (*Cher.* 14.49), and who had referred to Moses as he who had been instructed in all the mysteries of his priestly duties (*Mos.* 2.15.71). Moreover, in place of the reference to the Asherah (associated with Canaanite tree worship) that Asa's mother Maacah revered, the Greek version states that she made a meeting (*σύνοδον*) in her grove (*ἄλσει*); and there would surely be

nothing objectionable in such a meeting. Again, Josephus resolves the matter by simply omitting the reference altogether.

Quite clearly Josephus was concerned about the apparent contradiction in Asa's behavior in that, on the one hand, according to the biblical narrative he removed his mother Maacah from being queen mother because she had an abominable image (מִפְּלֵזָה)²⁰ made for Asherah²¹ and cut down this image and burned it (1 Kgs 15:13; 2 Chr 15:16), but on the other hand he did not take away the high places where forbidden sacrifices were taking place. Moreover, the Bible follows this contradiction with the further contradiction that, nevertheless, the heart of Asa was blameless all his days (1 Kgs 15:14; 2 Chr 15:17). Josephus, however, resolves these contradictions by simply omitting altogether the statements about Maacah, the destruction of the image, the failure to destroy the high places, and the loyalty of Asa to G-d all his days.

A problem that confronted Josephus was the apparent compromise with Asa's reputation for piety in the biblical statement that he took silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the Lord and sent them to Ben-hadad king of Syria (2 Chr 16:2). To take such sacred materials from the very Temple and to give them to a pagan king would hardly seem consonant with a G-d-fearing king. Josephus, apparently aware of this, first makes no mention that the gold and silver came from the Temple, and second attempts to justify the deed by explaining that Asa felt he had to make an alliance in view of the fear that the army of the king of Israel was a mere forty stades (that is, approximately five miles) from Jerusalem itself (*Ant.* 8.304).

A major charge against Asa's piety, as it appears in the Bible, is made by the seer Hanani to Asa that he had done foolishly in relying upon the king of Syria rather than upon G-d (2 Chr 16:7-10). The resulting angry reaction of Asa, which led him to put the seer in the stocks in prison and the further cruelties that he inflicted upon some of the people at the same time is surely a severe indictment of Asa.²² That Josephus totally omits this incident is a clear indication that he was seeking to whitewash Asa.

A further indictment of Asa may be seen in the biblical account of Asa's final illness and death (1 Kgs 15:23, 2 Chr 16:12). The biblical

20. The rabbis have a tradition that Maacah made for this image a phallic symbol and that she would copulate with it every day (*Abod. Zer.* 44a).

21. The Greek translation goes even further in indicating the pagan practices of Maacah, since it states that she was priestess (λειτουργοῦσαν) to the goddess Astarte (2 Chr 15:16).

22. The Septuagint somewhat softens this gross flaw in Asa's character by reading that he vexed (ἐλυμήνατο, "outraged," "maltreated," "harmed," "injured") some of the people (2 Chr 16:10).

narrative, clearly seeking to indict Asa, goes out of its way to remark that even when his disease became severe Asa, instead of seeking help from G-d, turned instead to physicians (2 Chr 16:12). Once again, Josephus, eager to protect Asa's reputation, totally omits this incident.

There is a further criticism of Asa implied in the biblical description of his funeral. There we read that the people made a great fire (הַפְּרִי) in his honor (2 Chr 16:14). This sounds like a funeral pyre such as we find in Homer's *Iliad* and throughout classical pagan literature. Apparently, the Greek translators of this passage were aware of this problem, so they rendered it very vaguely that the people made a very great funeral (ἐκφορά, "carrying out [of a corpse to burial]"). Josephus avoids the problem altogether by simply omitting the details of the funeral.

Indeed, in his final encomium of Asa, Josephus pays a supreme compliment to him by remarking, as we have noted, that he imitated his great-great-grandfather David and citing the two respects in which he did so, namely in courage (ἀνδρείων) and in piety (εὐσέβειων), which all men have recognized from his deeds (*Ant.* 8.315).

APOLOGETICS

To a high degree, as I have tried to indicate elsewhere,²³ Josephus in the *Antiquities* is endeavoring to do what he does systematically in his essay *Against Apion*, namely, defend the Jews against the charges of their enemies. One of the recurrent charges against the Jews is hatred of mankind. Even Hecataeus, who is otherwise well disposed toward the Jews, describes the Jewish way of life as "somewhat unsocial" (ἀπάνθρωπόν τινα) and hostile to foreigners (μισόξενον [ap. Diodorus 40.3.4]).²⁴ Throughout his *Antiquities* Josephus is concerned with refuting these charges.²⁵ Thus he notes that Abraham is moved

23. See my essays cited in n. 1 above.

24. The Alexandrian Lysimachus (probably first century BCE) reflects such a charge when he says that Moses instructed the Israelites "to show goodwill to no man, to offer not the best but the worst advice and to overthrow any temples and altars of gods which they found" (*Ag. Ap.* 1.309). Tacitus remarks that while the Jews are extremely loyal to one another and always ready to show compassion to compatriots alone, they feel only hate and enmity toward all other peoples (*Hist.* 5.5.1). Juvenal goes so far as to attack the Jews for not showing the way or a fountain spring to any but fellow-Jews (*Satires* 14.103-4). Haman, we may note, according to Josephus (*Ant.* 11.212), charges that the Jews refuse to mingle with others (ἄμικτον, a term used of the Centaurs in Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 1095, and of the Cyclopes in Euripides, *Cyclops* 429), are unsocial (ἀσύμφυλον, "not akin," "incompatible," "unsuitable"), and are in customs and practices the enemy both of the Persians and, indeed, of all mankind.

25. Indeed, Josephus is proud that two of Abraham's sons fought along with Heracles and that the daughter of one of them married Heracles himself (*Ant.* 1.241).

with compassion for his friends and neighbors the Sodomites (*Ant.* 1.176); that Joseph sells grain to all people and not merely to native Egyptians (2.94, 101); that David, far from being a misanthrope, is described as φιλόανθρωπος; and that Solomon asks that G-d grant the prayers not only of Jews but also of foreigners (8.116-17). Indeed, says Josephus, following the Septuagint (Exod 22:27), Jews are forbidden by the Torah to blaspheme the gods of others out of respect for the very word "god" (*Ant.* 4.207; *Ag. Ap.* 2.237).²⁶

It is in line with this tolerant attitude toward the religions of others that we find Josephus omitting the biblical statement that Jehoshaphat did not seek the Baals (2 Chr 17:3; *Ant.* 8.394). Likewise, he omits the Bible's statement that Jehoshaphat removed the pagan high places and the Asherim from the land of Judah, just as he omits a similar statement with regard to Asa (2 Chr 17:6; *Ant.* 8.394).²⁷

Furthermore, presumably in the interests of tolerance, he omits the conversion of the Temple of Baal into an outhouse (*Ant.* 9.138). Again, significantly, though he generally follows the Apocryphal Addition C containing Esther's prayer to G-d rather closely, Josephus omits the abhorrence of foreigners expressed by Esther: "I detest the bed of the uncircumcised and of any alien" (C 26-27). See my "Use, Authority and Exegesis of Mikra in the Writings of Josephus," 494-96.

26. Inasmuch as Josephus is writing for a primarily non-Jewish audience, he could hardly afford to offend these pagan readers. Thus he omits, in an obvious show of tolerance (*Ant.* 10.16), the statement in Hezekiah's prayer before G-d that the kings of Assyria had cast the gods of other nations into the fire (2 Kgs 19:17-18). He furthermore omits, as apparently too strong (*Ant.* 10.16), the prophet Isaiah's blistering promise of G-d that He would put His hook in Assyria's nose and His bit in their mouth (2 Kgs 19:28). If Sennacherib is defeated, it is not that he returns to his own land because of a mere rumor, as the Bible would have it (2 Kgs 19:7), since that presumably, from Josephus' point of view and from that of much of his audience, would have trivialized the whole incident, but rather because he is a victim, in a manner reminiscent of a Greek tragedy, of overconfidence (θράσους) similar to the overweening pride (ὑβρις) characteristic of the generation of the Tower of Babel and of Haman (*Ant.* 10.13). And yet, just as in the Daniel pericope Josephus shows respect for Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius, so here he shows regard for Sennacherib, despite the latter's attack upon Jerusalem, as we see from his addition to the biblical statement, pointing out that it was by treachery that Sennacherib was slain by his son (2 Kgs 19:37). Similarly, it is not surprising that he totally omits (*Ant.* 12.290) the reference in 1 Maccabees 3:49 to the incident in which the "nations" (ἔθνη) drew the likenesses of their idols upon a scroll of the Law. Again, whereas we read in 1 Maccabees 3:25 that after Judah crushed Seron, the fear and dread of Judah and his brothers began to fall upon the nations (ἔθνη) around them, Josephus omits mention of the effect upon the nations (*Ant.* 12.293). Indeed, in the one place where Josephus does refer to the "nations," he is speaking not of the heathens generally but rather of the nations geographically surrounding Judaea (*Ant.* 12.327). An indication of Josephus' desire to avoid attacking the religious institutions of non-Jews may be seen in his complete omission of the fact that it was to the high places of the pagan god Baal that Balak took Balaam in order to inspect the Israelites (*Ant.* 4.118).

27. Perhaps Josephus was troubled that the Bible seems to contradict itself on this point, inasmuch as 1 Kgs 22:43 says specifically that during Jehoshaphat's reign the high

As for Asa, Josephus has systematically removed references to his destruction of pagan cults, as we have noted. Thus, although the account of his reign in 1 Kings is extraordinarily brief, yet we have mention that he put away the male cult prostitutes out of the land and that he removed all the idols his father had made (1 Kgs 15:12). In the parallel passage in 2 Chronicles we have still further details of mass destruction of pagan cult objects, namely that he took away the foreign altars and the high places, that he broke down the pillars and hewed down the Asherim, and that he took out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the incense altars (2 Chr 14:3, 5). In Josephus' version we hear nothing specific about destruction of pagan cult objects; rather, the language is quite deliberately vague, with the emphasis on the positive: "He put his kingdom in order by cutting away whatever evil growths were found in it and cleansing it from every impurity"

places were not taken away and that the people continued to sacrifice and burn incense on the high places. Josephus resolves the problem by omitting the statements of both kings and Chronicles on this point. Furthermore, whereas, according to the Bible the prophet Jehu, after reproaching Jehoshaphat for joining Ahab in a military alliance, remarks that there is some good to be found in him in that he had destroyed the Asherim (2 Chr 19:3). Josephus diplomatically omits mention of Jehoshaphat's destruction of the Asherim, since this would imply disrespect for the religion of others, and instead declares in the vaguest terms that he would be delivered from his enemies, despite having sinned, because of his good character (φύσιν [*Ant.* 9.1]). This emphasis upon Jehoshaphat's liberal attitude toward pagans may be seen in Josephus' version of the biblical remark that the reason why the neighboring kingdoms did not make war against Jehoshaphat was that the fear of the Lord fell upon them (2 Chr 17:10). In Josephus' version this fear is replaced by a positive feeling of love, since we read that the neighboring peoples continued to cherish (στέργοντες, "love," "be fond of," "like," "feel affection towards," "esteem," "think highly of") him (*Ant.* 8.396). As to Jehu, Josephus was confronted with a dilemma, in that, according to the Bible, Jehu's men were obviously less than tolerant of other religions, inasmuch as they destroyed the pillars of Baal and broke down the house of Baal and made it a latrine "unto this day" (2 Kgs 10:27). (The word for "latrine" as it appears in the written text is לְמִקְוֵה אִשָּׁה and signifies a place for a privy. It comes from the stem הָרַח "a hole," and alludes to the orifice from which the solid wastes are excreted. As it is read in the synagogues, the word is לְמוֹצָא אִשָּׁה and signifies a place for excretion.) Clearly, making a shrine of another nation's gods into a latrine would be regarded as insulting, and especially so the remark that it is a latrine until the present day. Josephus has, therefore, deliberately omitted these details and instead retains only the comment that they burnt down the temple of Baal, thus purging Samaria of strange rites (*Ant.* 9.138). A Roman, familiar with the banning of the Bacchanalian revels in 186 BCE, would have understood such a suppression. As for Samuel, we may note that whereas in the Bible he is represented as speaking to the Israelites assuring them that if they put away their foreign gods and the Ashtaroth and direct their hearts to God they will be delivered from the hand of the Philistines (1 Sam 7:3), Josephus' Samuel says nothing about the worship of the foreign gods, presumably because the non-Jews, comprising most of his audience, might be offended by such a reference, and instead speaks to the Israelites of liberty (ἐλευθερία) and of the blessings that it brings (*Ant.* 6.19). See my "Use, Authority and Exegesis of Mikra in the Writings of Josephus," 470-71.

(*Ant.* 8.290). For similar reasons Josephus omits the biblical statement that when Asa heard the warning given him by the prophet Azariah, he put away the idols from the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities that he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim (2 Chr 15:8).

In line with Josephus' concern not to offend his pagan readers, we should not be surprised to find that he omits the biblical statement that Asa's people entered into a covenant to put to death whoever, whether young or old, man or woman, would not seek the L-rd (2 Chr 15:12-13).

The Romans were particularly sensitive to the considerable success experienced by Jews in converting others to Judaism; and, significantly, the expulsion of the Jews from Rome on at least two occasions (139 BCE and 19 CE) appears to have been connected with their success in winning converts.²⁸ According to the biblical version, when Asa was gathering his army, a number of Jews from the Kingdom of Israel who happened to be sojourning in the Kingdom of Judah deserted to him when they saw that G-d was with him (2 Chr 15:9). The Septuagint, in its version of the passage, declares that Asa assembled the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, together with strangers (προσηλύτους) that dwelt with them. The word here translated as "strangers" is the word "proselytes," and implies that they were actually converts. Again, Josephus avoids the issue by simply omitting this passage.

Josephus is also careful not to offend non-Jews politically.²⁹ In particular, he is critical of messianic and messianic-like movements,

28. For the expulsion of 139 BCE see Valerius Maximus 1.3.3 in the epitomes of Januarius Nepotianus and Julius Paris. For the expulsion of 19 CE see Josephus, *Ant.* 18.81-84; Tacitus, *Annals* 2.85.4; Suetonius, *Tiberius* 36.1; Dio Cassius 57.18.5a; and possibly Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* 108.22. A third expulsion of the Jews from Rome is mentioned by Suetonius, *Claudius* 25.4; but there is dispute as to whether this affected only the Christians and whether Claudius' order simply denied the Jews the right of assembly without actually expelling them. See my discussion of these expulsions in *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 300-304.

29. Thus, according to the Bible, when the Israelites asked Samuel for a king they specifically requested that he choose a king for them to judge them "like all nations" (1 Sam 8:5). As we see from Samuel's strongly negative response, he objected strongly to the idea of a king but also, more particularly, to the implication that they wished to be like other nations instead of maintaining their unique identity. Josephus, apparently, realizing that such a request and such a reaction on the part of Samuel would be interpreted as an attack upon the way other nations, presumably including the Romans, are governed, simply omits the clause "now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." Instead, the request is put in terms of the need to wreak vengeance upon the great enemy, the Philistines. We may note that Rabbi Eliezer in the Talmud states that in requesting a king, the elders were acting properly; rather, it is the masses who acted unworthily in seeking a king so that they might be like all other nations (*Sanh.* 20b). See also *t. Sanh.* 4.5, *Sipre Deut.* 156, *Midr. Tannaim* 103—4, *Mek. Devarim* 5-6, *Deut. Rab.*

since the goal of such movements was ipso facto a political Jewish state independent of the Romans.³⁰

In view of Josephus' sensitivity to the charge that the Jews constituted a nation within a nation whose allegiance, wherever they were scattered, was to the Land of Israel and that they would forever be subversive until their return from captivity, it is instructive to note Josephus' paraphrase of the warning issued by the prophet Azariah to King Asa. According to the biblical version, if the Jews forsake G-d He will punish them by forsaking them; "they will be broken in pieces, nation against nation and city against city" (2 Chr 15:2-7). Josephus, in his paraphrase, introduces a new element when he declares that as a punishment G-d will scatter the Jews over the face of the earth so that they will lead a life as aliens (ἑπηλυοι) and wanderers (ἀλήτην [*Ant.* 8.296-97]). From this we might conclude that the Diaspora is a curse and a punishment, whereas one would have expected Josephus, who spent the second half of his life in the Diaspora under Roman protection, to have glorified this event in Jewish history since he clearly opposed an independent Jewish state.³¹ However, we must note that there is no hint here in Josephus

5.8-11, cited by Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (vol. 6; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1928) 230, n. 47.

30. If Josephus foretells the calamities that will befall kings and cities of the highest celebrity (some of which, he says, have not yet been established), he is careful to keep this prophecy cryptic enough so that Gentile readers will not necessarily identify this as referring to Rome (*Ant.* 4.125), just as he has a similarly cryptic prophecy in his pericope of Daniel (*Ant.* 10.210). The most striking indication of Josephus' ambiguity with regard to the Romans may be seen in his evasiveness with regard to the meaning of the stone which, in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, destroyed the kingdom of iron (*Ant.* 10.210, Dan 2:44-45). The perceptive reader might well have connected this with the passage in which Josephus states explicitly that Daniel wrote about the empire of the Romans, though admittedly there is no necessary connection between the two passages (*Ant.* 10.276). Günter Stemberger concludes that Josephus is more critical toward Rome in the *Antiquities* than in the *War* and stands in the apocalyptic tradition (*Die Römische Herrschaft Urteil der Juden* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983] 33-37). Perhaps we should say not that he is more critical but that he is more ambiguous. His excuse is that, as a historian, he is expected to discuss the past and not to predict the future, although Josephus certainly saw a kinship between the prophet and the historian, particularly since he must have been aware of the dictum of Thucydides (1.22.4; see my "Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus," 397-400), one of his favorites, that "whoever wishes to have a clear view of the events which have happened and of those which will some day, in all human probability, happen again in the same or a similar way" will find his history useful. Conversely, a prophet is concerned with recording the past, as may be seen from the fact that Moses, at the close of his life, "prophesies" to each of the tribes the things that are past (*Ant.* 4.320). Indeed, this is the only place where Josephus makes such a statement; and, in fact, no other ancient historian makes any such remark.

31. Azriel Shochat indeed points to this passage as evidence that Josephus viewed the Diaspora as a punishment ("The Views of Josephus on the Future of Israel

of the traditional Jewish hope that the Jews will some day be gathered together from the exile and return to the Land of Israel.

SUMMARY

It is of interest to see how Josephus remolds a relatively obscure biblical figure, King Asa of Judah. Whereas the rabbinic tradition attacks him for trusting in himself rather than in G-d and, in particular, for drafting the sages, Josephus omits such details and, indeed, whitewashes Asa completely. He is praised particularly, in language reminiscent of Josephus' portraits of Saul and David, as well as of Thucydides' Pericles, for putting his nation in order. So as to aggrandize Asa's bravery Josephus diminishes the role of G-d. He makes his account of Asa's courage more credible by avoiding gross exaggerations of the enemy's power. In order to emphasize Asa's justice Josephus stresses that his very victory was due to the fact that he and his people possessed this quality. An important aspect of justice is to show gratitude, and this too is stressed in Josephus' portrait of Asa and his people. Josephus likewise stresses Asa's piety, an attribute which is often in Josephus as here coupled with justice and which was historically so meaningful to the Romans.

In particular, Josephus emphasizes Asa's obedience to the ancestral laws, likewise a key trait of the Romans. And yet, because he realized that his audience, consisting apparently primarily of non-Jews, would resent as intolerant the forcible destruction of idols, tree worship, and mystery cults, Josephus omits such details. The Bible admits that Asa did not remove the pagan high places where sacrifices to pagan gods took place, but at the same time declares that his heart was blameless all his days. Again, Josephus, realizing the self-contradiction in this passage, omits such details. Likewise, the Bible declares that when he is rebuked by the seer Hanani, Asa puts him into prison and inflicts further cruelties upon the people at large.

Because he was sensitive to the charge that the Jews showed disdain for other religions, Josephus goes out of his way to omit Asa's destruction of foreign cult objects, high places, and altars. Again, because it would have been embarrassing as showing lack of respect for other people's religious practices, as well as lack of respect for his own mother, to repeat the Bible's statement that Asa removed his mother from being queen because she had worshiped idols, he omits this detail.

and its Land" [in Hebrew], in *Yerushalayim* [vol. 1; review for Erez-Israel Research Dedicated to Isaias Press; ed. Michael Ish Shalom et al.; Jerusalem: Mosad Ha-Rav Kuk, 1953] 43-50).

Because proselytism was such a burning issue at the time, in view, of the Jews' apparently extraordinary success during this period in attracting converts, Josephus omits the passage which implies that Asa attracted proselytes to his army. Finally, although Josephus states that the Jews have been scattered in the Diaspora because they have disobeyed G-d, he does not mention the Messianic hope that the Jews would some day be gathered together from the Diaspora and be conveyed to the Land of Israel, where they would establish a truly independent state. Such a view would, of course, be anathema to the Romans, who were always conscious of the fact that they were a minority in their own empire.