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Josephus and the Book of Exodus

The Theology of Josephus
as Reflected in His
Paraphrase of the Book of Exodus

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Digest

This thesis examines the theology found in Josephus' paraphrase of the Book of Exodus.

It begins with an overview of Josephus' life and his works. The problems relating to sources, literary genre and his objectives in writing the paraphrase are discussed.

Chapter Two outlines the problems of approach of previous studies of the theology in Josephus' Biblical paraphrase. The work of Harold Attridge is given more detailed attention, being the most recent and comprehensive in this area. The theology that Attridge finds in Josephus revolves around a belief in God's providential care for human beings. God exercises this care through a system of retribution, so that the virtuous are rewarded and the wicked punished. This doctrine applies to all humans and the Hebrews are only favored because of their high level of virtue.

The third chapter applies the providential/retributive theology as identified and described by Attridge specifically to the paraphrase of Book of Exodus. Inconsistencies emerge and these are described in this chapter.

Chapter Four examines the notion of covenant in Josephus and attempts to establish that there is a suggestion of covenant in the paraphrase of Exodus, although of a different nature to both that of the Bible and that of Rabbinic literature. This covenant embraces all the promises of the Biblical covenant but is based on the establishment of absolute trust in God rather than obedience through fear. This discussion concludes the current study.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of

Harry Leon Isserow

and

Fay Roth

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Chapter 1

Josephus: His Life and His Works

The background and life-experience of an author will usually impinge on his or her writing in some significant way and in this regard the first century historian, Flavius Josephus, is no exception. Therefore, before embarking on a detailed study of any particular aspect of his writings, it is necessary to survey his life and works in general in order to understand some of the motives and personal inclinations that maybe reflected in his histories.

Life

The details of Josephus' early life are preserved for us in an autobiographical work, Vita, (V), which was appended to his Antiquitates Judaicae, (AJ).¹ Vita deals mainly with his experiences and the difficulties he encountered as he tried to maintain a position of authority in the Galilee during the period leading up to the Jewish War but, in a brief introduction and even more brief conclusion, he does allude to his youth and life after the war. Josephus informs us that he is descended from the most eminent of the priestly families and in addition has royal lineage on his

¹See footnote 5 below.

mother's side, she being a direct descendant of the daughter of the Hasmonean high-priest, Jonathan.² He dates his birth to the first year of Gaius Caesar, A.D. 37-8.

With the same lack of modesty which characterizes his account of his exploits during the war, Josephus tells us of his precocious abilities as a youth, which were such that while still a mere boy, about fourteen years old, I won universal applause for my love of letters; insomuch that the chief priests and the leading men of the city used constantly to come to me for precise information on some particular in our ordinances. (V 8)

He then spent a few years with each of the major sects existing at that time, the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes, and three years living with a hermit. He finally opts for the Pharisees, whose philosophy he regards as being similar to that of the Stoics.

At the age of twenty-six he goes to Rome to plead for the release of some priests who had been sent to Nero for trial. His mission is successful, and on his return to Jerusalem finds that revolution is on the point of breaking out. Josephus then describes, in the major portion of Vita, his

²For a detailed discussion of Josephus' claims of descent see T. Rajak, Josephus, the Historian and his Society, Philadelphia, 1984, pp. 14-18.

involvement in the internecine conflicts between the various leaders in the Galilee. He digresses for a long and vicious attack on Justus of Tiberius, in whose account of the war Josephus felt he had been severely maligned.

With the arrival of Vespasian in the Galilee, Josephus interrupts his account in Vita and refers readers to his work on the Jewish War. He resumes again after his capture and describes how his fortunes improve through his association with Vespasian and Titus. He comments on his precarious position; on the one hand he is regarded as a traitor by the Jews and on the other he is not fully trusted by the Romans. Under the protection of succeeding Emperors, Vespasian, Titus and, to a more limited extent, Domitian, he enjoys privilege and favor, including tax exemption for land in Judaea which he received from Vespasian as a gift.

He was married three times and had five children, three of whom, Hyrcanus, Justus and Simonides, were alive at the time of his writing Vita.

Works

Besides Vita we have three other extant works by Josephus, Bellum Judaicum (BJ), Contra Apionem (CA) and Antiquitates Judaicae (AJ). It appears that the Contra Apionem was

written toward the beginning of the Second Century and Antiquitates Judaicae earlier, during the 90's. Bellum Judaicum and Vita are more difficult to date and some controversy centers around the date of composition of these two works.³ The former was probably written shortly after the war, first in an Aramaic version (now lost) and then in a Greek version in the late 70's. Vita may have had its origin as a report sent by Josephus to Jerusalem in order to clear his name before the siege of Jotapata (A.D. 67) and then, much later, the biographical details were added and the work appended to Antiquitates.⁴ However, as Thackeray points out there is a similarity of style between Vita (including those parts that are supposed to be of the early stratum) and the latest of the books of Antiquitates which would indicate that Vita is either late or has been extensively rewritten.⁵

³For a comprehensive examination of the historical controversy over the dating of these two works see S.J.D. Cohen, Josephus in Galilee and Rome, Leiden, 1979, pp. 3-23.

⁴R. Laqueur, Der judische Historiker Flavius Josephus, Giessen, 1920, pp. 3-5. Laqueur has suggested that Antiquitates shows indications of two endings and that Vita was appended to later editions of Antiquitates. Rajak, Josephus, pp. 237-8 refutes this view and proposes that Vita and Antiquitates most likely appeared together as a unit in A.D. 93/4, as dated by Josephus himself. See also S.J.D. Cohen, Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His "Vita" and Development as an Historian, Leiden, 1979, pp. 3-23 for a detailed review of the history of the controversy.

⁵See the introduction to his edition of Vita and Contra Apionem (Cambridge, Mass., 1926 = LCL Josephus I), pp. xii-xvi.

Bellum Judaicum is Josephus's history of the Jewish War. He begins his account about 200 years before the outbreak of the war and traces Jewish resistance to foreign domination over this extended period. He gives a detailed description of the causes of the war, its passage and the ultimate victory of the Romans over the Jews with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the taking of the last stronghold, Masada. Thackeray, agreeing with Laqueur, suggests that Bellum Judaicum may have been commissioned by Josephus' Roman overlords as a propagandistic work aimed at dissuading the Eastern portion of the Empire from further revolt by pointing out the futility entering into conflict with the might of Rome.⁶

In Contra Apionem Josephus defends Judaism against attacks by various anti-Semitic writers and justifies Jewish beliefs and customs. He 'proves' the antiquity of the Jews, thus answering criticism of his Antiquitates by contemporary detractors. The work is of special value as it contains quotes from authors whose works no longer exist.

Antiquitates Judaicae is a comprehensive history of the Jews from the creation of the world through to the outbreak of the Jewish War in A.D. 66. The name of the work, Ioudaïke

⁶H. ST.J. Thackeray, Josephus, The Man and the Historian, New York, 1967, p. 27.

Archaiologia, indicates that the author may well have been influenced by the model of Dionysius of Halicarnassus' Romaike Archiaologia. This too consisted of twenty books but was written approximately one hundred years before Antiquitates. The extent to which Josephus was influenced by the work of Hellenistic writers will be discussed in greater depth as we proceed. It appears that Antiquitates took almost twenty years to complete and that it was subject to many interruptions. Josephus required the urging of his friends and, more particularly, the man to whom he dedicated his later works, Epaphroditus.⁷

The Bible forms the basis of the first ten books and the majority of the eleventh (to AJ XI.304), while the last nine books deal with the period from Alexander to the revolt against Rome in A.D. 66. The first four books paraphrase the Pentateuch as follows:

Genesis	I.27 - II.200
Exodus	II.201 - III.203
Leviticus	III.204 - III.286
Numbers	III.287 - IV.175

⁷The exact identity of this Epaphroditus is unknown but it may have been either the secretary of Nero (executed by Domitian in A.D. 95) or a grammarian mentioned in the Suda. This latter Epaphroditus lived in Rome during the latter part of his life and assembled a library consisting of 30,000 books. He was a reputed scholar and writer. See Thackeray, Josephus, p. 53, and E. Schuerer, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C. - A.D. 135), ed. G. Vermes et al, Edinburgh, I, 1973, p. 49, n. 9.

Deuteronomy IV.175 - IV.331 (end of book IV)

These divisions are not distinct and there is a merging of some of the material where Josephus' paraphrase has led to a rearrangement of his source.

Rearrangement is but one of a number of types of change Josephus has made in his Biblical paraphrase. Some editing and condensation of the material could be expected as this is within the nature of a paraphrase, but Josephus goes much further. He reorders events, includes material not found in the Masoretic Text or the Septuagint versions of the Bible, and even omits certain key occurrences. All these seem to be in direct contradiction to his own claim that

The precise details of our Scripture records will, then, be set forth, each in its place, as my narrative proceeds, that being the procedure I have promised to follow throughout this work, neither adding nor omitting anything. (AJ I.17)

How, then, are these modifications accounted for?

Suggested solutions have embraced three major areas:

- a) The sources which Josephus may have used for his paraphrase.
- b) The language and literary genre in which Antiquitates was written.

- c) Josephus' specific objectives in writing
Antiquitates.

Sources

There appears to be some consensus amongst modern scholars that it is almost impossible to determine exactly which texts Josephus used in his Biblical paraphrase. However, there are indications that he may have had recourse to a Hebrew text, a Greek text and possibly an Aramaic Targum. Evidence for each has been listed by Shalit.⁸

As a youth Josephus lived and studied in Jerusalem and he assures his readers that he had had a comprehensive education in Jewish learning.⁹ Therefore it would be not out of place to assume that he was familiar with the Hebrew Bible and perhaps even possessed a version of it while he lived in Rome.¹⁰ He gives some indication of what he regards as the canon in Contra Apionem where he states that

⁸A.Schalit, see his introduction to the Hebrew translation of Antiquitates Judaicae, Jerusalem, 1944, pp. xxxi-xxxii.

⁹See V 8.12 and AJ 20.236

¹⁰In V 418 Josephus remarks that he received a gift of sacred books from Titus. This could have included a copy of the Hebrew Bible. While Josephus does mention sacred books elsewhere, he does not specify the language in which they were written.

Our books, those which are justly accredited, are but two and twenty, and contain the record of all time.

Of these, five are the books of Moses, comprising the laws and the traditional history from the birth of man down to the death of the lawgiver...the prophets subsequent to Moses wrote the history of the events of their own times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life. (CA I.38-40)

Are these the only books that Josephus regarded as "sacred", or may one add oral traditions which had already been reduced to writing, such as targumim and midrashim, to this concept of "sacred books"? Cohen¹¹ argues for a restricted interpretation while Feldman¹² maintains that "Scriptures" includes Jewish tradition generally, although he does allow a distinction between "laws" and "allied documents" which may well refer to Written Torah and Oral Tradition respectively. In his promise set out in the introduction to Antiquitates, Josephus uses the term embracing the wider definition rather than the restrictive "laws" and thus could well consciously be including oral tradition. Precise definitions of what constitutes "Scriptures" in Josephus'

¹¹Cohen, Galilee, pp. 24-25.

¹²L.H. Feldman, Josephus' Portrait of Saul, In: Hebrew Union College Annual 53, 1982, p. 53, n. 25.

times are difficult to assess because of the limited and somewhat confusing resources available to us.

The Septuagint (LXX) was undoubtedly known to Josephus as, indeed, he mentions it in his introduction to Antiquitates and in Book XII paraphrases the Letter of Aristeeas. Attridge points to the use of the LXX in the later books, especially those books only found in the Greek version.¹³

The use of an Aramaic Targum has also been suggested and since Aramaic was the most widespread language of Jews of Palestine of the time this too is not surprising. The translation and exposition of the Pentateuch in Aramaic was known in the second century of the common era (Onkelos) and the Talmud attributes the practice to Ezra.¹⁴

However, the extent to which Josephus used these sources is subject to dispute and doubt. Attridge comments that there is evidence for the use of these sources but that the matter is still under investigation.¹⁵ Feldman remarks that Josephus may well have had a text which differs from both the Masoretic text and LXX texts extant today, and that, as a

¹³H. Attridge, The Interpretation of Biblical History in the "Antiquitates Judaicae" of Flavius Josephus, Missoula, Montana, 1976, p. 31.

¹⁴Babylonian Talmud, Megilla 3a.

¹⁵Attridge, Interpretation, pp. 31-32 and notes.

result of Josephus paraphrasing rather than translating, it is difficult to identify which manuscript tradition he followed.¹⁶ Cohen dismisses research in this field as being "sloppy" and states that although Shalit has some sound proofs for Josephus' use of the Hebrew text, his proofs for the use of a targum are not decisive. Also, "only four of Shalit's twenty proofs for the use of the LXX are more than conjecture."¹⁷ Both Feldman and Cohen suggest that there is a possibility that the Hebrew text that Josephus used was closer to LXX than to the MT and that reliance on names and numbers for determining the source text is at best risky because of the unreliability of transmission.

As far as the Pentateuch is concerned, in his discussion on Josephus' sources for the various books of the Bible, Feldman comments that

there seems to be strong evidence that Josephus' main source for the Pentateuch a Hebrew text and/or a targumic paraphrase in Aramaic. This is what we would expect in view of the fact that in the synagogue Josephus would have heard the Hebrew text with, in all probability, an accompanying targum. There is, however, a greater degree of agreement between the

¹⁶Feldman L.H., Use, Authority and Exegesis of Mikra in the Writings of Josephus, In: Mikra, ed. M.J. Mulder, Philadelphia, 1988, p. 458

¹⁷Cohen, Galilee, p. 35 and n. 45.

Hebrew and Greek texts for the Pentateuch than for the other books of the Bible, on the one hand, while Josephus himself is freer in his paraphrase of the Pentateuch than he is of the later books of the Bible, on the other hand: and hence it is difficult to be sure whether he is using a Hebrew or a Greek text at any given point.¹⁸

Josephus may also have had recourse to Hellenistic Jewish writings. These would have included the works of Philo, Eupolemus, Artapanus, and Ezekiel the tragedian. There is evidence for Josephus' having used some of these works, but as Feldman points out this evidence may indicate a common source rather than direct dependence.¹⁹

Thus there appears to be no clear indication to what extent Josephus was dependent on the various sources at his disposal, and little, if any, chance of categorically identifying his source for any particular part of the Pentateuch on the basis of the evidence that has been discovered to date.

¹⁸Feldman, Mikra, p. 460.

¹⁹Feldman, Mikra, pp. 473-475 briefly reviews scholarship in this regard.

Literary Genre

Josephus' first visit to Rome at the age of twenty-six (V 13) was for a specific purpose, and in order to achieve his end it is highly probable that he would have required some knowledge of Greek. The extent of this knowledge is unknown but it becomes increasingly clear that once he settled in Rome and began to research and write his history he was influenced by Hellenistic writers and historians of both his and previous generations. His acquaintance with many of these authors can be seen in the extensive reference to and quotation from them in Contra Apionem and Antiquitates.

Their influence on Josephus' composition of Antiquitates extends to both model and style. As mentioned earlier Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who published his Roman Antiquities c. 8 B.C., seems to have been Josephus' model in terms of title and number of books and possibly approach. The extent to which Hellenistic authors have influenced Josephus' style has been widely commented on and the consensus seems to be that, be it to a greater or lesser degree, traces of their influence can definitely be found in Antiquitates in general, including the paraphrase of the Pentateuch. More specifically it can be seen in Josephus' use of standard formulaic phrases, of which his promise to

neither add or omit anything in his paraphrase is but one example.²⁰

There is also a strong possibility that Josephus may have been influenced by early midrashic literature and/or oral traditions. That these forms existed in the first century is now beyond doubt, as can be seen in the Genesis Apocryphon and Psuedo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum.

Objectives

In his introduction Josephus states that Antiquitates is primarily directed at the whole Greek-speaking world (AJ 1.5), which was primarily pagan. But he is also aware that it may well be read by fellow Jews (AJ 4.197). Thus although his main objectives may have been aimed at the former, the possibility that he had different motives aimed at a specifically Jewish audience should not be discounted.

Feldman identifies the two main aims of AJ as being apologetics, defending the Jewish people against anti-

²⁰Feldman, Portrait, p. 96, has pointed Josephus' indebtedness to the Isocratean and Aristotelian schools of historiography and R.J.H. Shutt, Studies of Josephus, London, 1961, Ch. 5, pp. 79-109, deals with a number of other authors including Polybius and Strabo. Cohen, Galilee, pp. 24-33, deals with Hellenistic influence on Josephus. For a comprehensive summary of scholarship on this subject see Attridge, Interpretation, pp. 38-66.

Semitic attacks, and theologizing, presenting a religious interpretation of history. He comments further that he has stressed the apologetic nature of the work and presents evidence for this contention.²¹ Attridge on the other hand has stressed the theologizing aspect, but even in this, sees the major thrust of the work as being apologetic in nature.²²

The methods which Josephus uses to achieve his ends are elaborated by Feldman and include Hellenizations of principal characters, resolving theological problems and contradictions, removing chronological difficulties, avoidance of anthropomorphisms, as well as others.²³

As far as his aims in regard to a Jewish audience are concerned, Josephus may have intended to rekindle a sense of national pride, thereby bolstering faith in the Jewish religion and in small way restoring the spirit of a vanquished people.

Approaches to the problem.

²¹Feldman, Mikra, p. 481.

²²Attridge, Interpretation, pp. 181-184.

²³Feldman, Mikra, pp. 476-481.

Investigations into Josephus' method of paraphrase have ranged from an examination of the whole Biblical paraphrase in overview to isolating specific characters or incidents and evaluating them in the light of outside sources.

Feldman has embarked on a series which sheds light on Josephus' Hellenization of major characters in the Biblical cycle. Attridge approaches the paraphrase with the view that Antiquitates is a "serious theological endeavor" in which Josephus attempts "to proclaim to the Greco-Roman world the significance and the meaning of Judaism".²⁴ These approaches characterize a greater part of the scholarship on Josephus' paraphrase of the Bible and support Tessa Rajak's remark that

Unfortunately, the literature on Josephus abounds in received opinions and inherited assumptions concerning matters both great and small...These ideas and their like have made it very difficult for readers to notice what Josephus actually says about the war and about his fellow Jews, and to consider in a broader perspective his possible reasons for speaking as he does.²⁵

Her comment may to an extent be extended to studies of the Biblical paraphrase and especially the Pentateuch.

²⁴Attridge, Interpretation, pp. 26-27.

²⁵Rajak, Josephus, p. 10.

The only study to date that deals with an entire book of the Pentateuch is that of T. W. Franksman who has analysed the paraphrase of the book of Genesis, using Targumic, Pseudepigraphic, and Midrashic sources as his references. In his introduction he states

that among the five books of Moses it is Genesis which receives at Jos.' hands a treatment which contrasts impressively with that given to the other portions of the Pentateuch both as to the length and fullness, and in the care taken not to make the kind of large-scale redispersions of the scriptural data which Jos. elsewhere makes.²⁶

Both his assertion that Josephus has seemingly singled out the book of Genesis for special treatment and his concluding statement that "it is hard to give a global characterization of Jos.' method itself"²⁷ call for a further investigation of the Pentateuchal paraphrase from a perspective of the individual books.

The present study will concentrate on Josephus' paraphrase of the book of Exodus, embracing JA 2.201 - 3.187, which begins with the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt,

²⁶T.W. Franksman, Genesis and the "Jewish Antiquities" of Flavius Josephus, Rome, 1979, p. 8.

²⁷Franksman, Genesis, p. 289.

continues through the Sinaitic revelation and the erection of the tabernacle and ends with an explanation of the symbolic meaning of the tabernacle and High Priest's vestments. It will examine aspects of Josephus' theology which emerge out of his paraphrase with special reference to the work that Attridge has undertaken in this area.

The next chapter will provide a brief overview of past approaches to the study of Josephan theology.

Chapter 2

Theology in Josephus

The study of the theology represented in the works of Josephus has been characterized by a number of problems. These emerge from the methods or approaches used in trying to identify Josephus' theology. Several approaches have been suggested by scholars in the past two centuries and although they do point to different aspects of Josephus' theological enterprise, all have weaknesses that obscure their findings.²⁸

The search for a Systematic Theology.

One approach has been to extract from the works of Josephus various terms and motifs which can then be assembled into a systematic theology. This assumes that there is an underlying systematic theology running through the collected works of Josephus. As a method it tends to preclude any cognizance of a development over the space of the thirty or so years during which Josephus wrote his books and fails to recognize that the Josephus of Bellum may have had a

²⁸The following is a summary of Attridge, Interpretation, Ch.1, pp. 3-27.

different theology to that of Josephus of Contra Apion or even Antiquities.

This approach also fails to recognize that Josephus may have been influenced by external factors later in his career which could have had a bearing on his theological viewpoint in the latter portion of his life. The major flaw remains that "(T)heology was not done by Josephus in a systematic or dogmatic way, but by a tendentious, interpretative retelling of history."²³ Thus no comprehensive theology can be formulated purely from the terms and motifs which Josephus used throughout his works.

Diachronic Approach

The problem of developing theological views found in Josephus has been addressed by to an extent by adopting a diachronic approach to the evaluation of Josephus' theology which allows for a possible change in the way Josephus related to the various sects. The shifts in attitude have been attributed to political positions of the sects at particular times as well as to Josephus' personal and political aspirations. However, "Such observations hardly exhaust the analysis of the historian's religious thought. There is a dimension of his writing which cannot simply be

²³Attridge, Interpretation, p. 4

reduced to "political" needs or the requirement of personal self defense."³⁰

Josephus as a sectarian.

Another approach has been to identify Josephus with one of the major sects found in First Century Judaism. There appears to be little problem with this as Josephus identifies himself as being a Pharisee. However, he does not give a comprehensive description of Pharisaic theology nor does he explain his reasons for identifying with the sect. The situation is complicated further by the inconsistencies in Josephus' description of the Pharisees and those found in the New Testament and Rabbinic literature. Josephus' descriptions of the Sadducees and Essenes are as brief as that of the Pharisees and attempts to identify Josephus with any of these sects must be based on external information which too is rather scant. The situation is further complicated by the bias shown by certain scholars against Pharisaism.

This has, however, not discouraged various scholars from placing Josephus within the camps of the above sects and interpreting his theology based on that which is consistent with the beliefs of these groups. These classifications of

³⁰Attridge, Interpretation, p. 15

Josephus have been made by formulating a preconceived picture of sectarian beliefs and then searching through the works of Josephus to find parallels which would indicate to which group he belonged. This method does not allow for an evaluation Josephus' theology based on what he himself is saying, but rather it imposes an existing framework upon his writings. As Attridge remarks, "In general, the description of Josephus as a Pharisee has often had little to do with a direct analysis of the theological elements in his work."¹

In addition to being viewed as a sectarian, Josephus has also been characterized not only as a Hellenistic philosopher in the mold of Philo, but also as a rationalistic philosopher because of his supposed antipathy towards the miraculous. While these classifications may be of some value and shed light on aspects of Josephus' theology they do not begin with an analysis of his writings as Attridge concludes:

Scholarship, thus, has long been concerned with the question of the precise religious affiliation of Josephus. This concern has frequently governed the consideration of his theology. Interest in this subject is certainly understandable, but it has caused neglect of an analysis of the nature of theological activity and its manifestation in individual works.

¹Attridge, Interpretation, p. 10

The results of that analysis may or may not prove to be relevant to classifying Josephus. In any case, to make such an analysis is a separate, and even prior, task.³²

Attridge seeks to redress this "neglect of analysis". Following the example of H. Linder³³ who shows through the analysis of various speeches in Bellum that Josephus has a "general conception of history, which sees Israel as having been judged by God to be unworthy of freedom because of its cultic transgressions"³⁴, Attridge believes that "(I)n Antiquities there is a similar theological presentation of history..."³⁵ Focusing on Antiquitates for his analysis, he discerns "an important theological dimension in the work of Josephus and that this appears in Antiquitates in its interpretative presentation of scriptural narratives. This theology is very much an apologetic one, which reworks Jewish tradition in categories derived from and comprehensible to a Greco-Roman public."³⁶ Attridge finds within Antiquitates two major interpretative themes through

³²Attridge, Interpretation, p. 16

³³Die Geschichtsauffassung des Flavius Josephus im Bellum Judaicum, Leiden. 1972.

³⁴Attridge, Interpretation, p. 5.

³⁵Attridge, Interpretation, p. 5.

³⁶Attridge, Interpretation, p. 17.

which the theology of Josephus can be understood. The first reveals Josephus' conception of how God relates to humans, and the second is an emphasis on moralizing. The latter, however, is integrally associated with the former.

According to Attridge, the theological underpinning of Antiquitates centers around Josephus' belief in God's providential control over the world. This providence is not expressed only in terms of "watchful, concerned forethought and consideration" but extends to actual intervention in the affairs of humankind. Thus God controls history and can directly influence the outcome of human endeavor. God's providence is not haphazardly applied, but depends on the actions of humanity. This is spelt out by Josephus in his proem, as Attridge quotes:

But, speaking generally, the main lesson to be learnt from this history by any who care to peruse it is that men who conform to the will of God, and do not venture to transgress the laws that have been excellently laid down, prosper in all things beyond belief, and for their reward are offered by God felicity; whereas, in proportion as they depart from the strict observance of these laws, things (else) practicable become impracticable and whatever imaginary good thing they strive to do ends in irretrievable disasters.³⁷

³⁷Attridge, Interpretation, p. 67, quoting AJ I. 14.

Thus the doctrine of divine retribution has an important part to play in regard to the matter of God's providence. The exaggerated nature of God's intervention is emphasized by Josephus. God's retribution takes spectacular form whether it be as reward or punishment. Attridge points to the miracles of the Red Sea, the Akedah and Moses' rescue as an infant as examples of how Josephus draws attention to God's beneficent power and the reasons for God exercising his providential care.

Parallels to the theology identified in Josephus are found in Rabbinic material but Attridge finds closer associations in the contemporary Jewish literature like Jubilees and Second Maccabees and Pseudo-Philo.³⁸ The vocabulary used by Josephus may have had a base in early Stoic philosophy, but it has undergone some development by the time of Josephus. Similar usage can be found in Third Maccabees and to an extent in Philo.³⁹ The doctrine of divine punishment can also be found in earlier Greek writers, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Polybius and Diodorus Siculus.⁴⁰ Josephus, however, seems to be alone in linking the notion of providence with that of divine retribution.

³⁸Attridge, Interpretation, pp. 146-148.

³⁹Attridge, Interpretation, pp. 156-159.

⁴⁰Attridge, Interpretation, pp. 159-165.

The idea of retribution leads directly to the other major interpretative theme identified by Attridge, that of moralizing. Josephus not only points out the "exemplary virtues of the ancients" but asserts that Moses believed that, as God was the very essence of perfection, it was incumbent upon humanity to aspire to participate in that divine virtue. Those who are successful are rewarded, those who shun the effort or who do not believe in these principles are punished.

Providence is thus not exercised in a fickle or impulsive way. It is dependant on the actions and conduct of humanity and this doctrine is universal in its application. Yet, Josephus does allow for God to grant his providence to a specific people and in the case in question it is the Israelites. Attridge points out that God acts as "benefactor and ally" and in some ways this is parallel to the covenant theology found within the Hebrew Bible. However, there does not seem to be any direct contract made between God and humanity but at the same time it does appear to be related to the Deuteronomic idea of covenant.

Attridge sums up Josephus' view of how God operates in the world as follows:

...God exercises providential care for the world. This providence consists primarily in the rewarding of

virtue and punishing of vice. The history of Israel is seen to be a collection of miraculous and prophetic evidence for the truth of that belief... Ultimately God's special care for Israel is seen to be simply a particular case of his general mode of relating to the world... The history of Israel provides a basis for continued hope and confidence in the God who can and will aid in an unexpected way those who will follow His law.⁴¹

Attridge draws on various examples throughout Antiquitates to substantiate his case. In the next chapter we will examine Josephus' paraphrase of the book of Exodus and attempt to evaluate if and how the theology as outlined by Attridge is consistently applied by Josephus and in what way it has influenced additions to and exclusions of Biblical material.

⁴¹Attridge, Interpretation, p. 107

Chapter Three

Providential Theology applied to the Paraphrase of Exodus

As we have seen, Attridge has identified God's providential care working through a system of retribution as being the underlying theology in Antiquities. This conclusion has been arrived at through an evaluation of Josephus' own comments in the proem and an examination of some of the speeches and editorial comments throughout the work. It remains to be seen whether this theology can be shown to be consistent in each individual book in its entirety and how the theology proposed by Attridge may have influenced the modifications which Josephus has made to the Biblical text. This study will focus on the paraphrase of the book of Exodus (AJ 2.201-3.187) and will proceed by identifying those additions and omissions which may support a providential/retributive theology and then evaluate those which mitigate against it. We will also attempt to deal with those additions and exclusions which do not fall into either category, but which may in their own right suggest facets of Josephus' theology not covered by Attridge.

From the Enslavement of the Hebrews to the Crossing of the Red Sea.

Pharaoh and the Egyptians

Josephus' opening description of the Egyptians as being a "voluptuous people and slack to labor, slaves to pleasure in general and to a love of lucre in particular" (AJ II.201) lays the ground work upon which he will build to justify their eventual demise. Their enslavement of the Hebrews results from an "envy of their prosperity" and a belief that "their growth in power was to their (the Egyptians) own detriment." According to Josephus the Egyptians have no substantial reason to perpetrate the ills that they bring upon the Hebrews. This is underscored by Josephus leaving out the sentiment expressed in the MT that the Israelites constituted a threat to the Egyptian security in that they may unite with an foreign invading force against Egypt. The fear of so numerous a population allying itself with the enemy may well have been construed as being sufficient reason to subject the Hebrews to the strictures of enslavement, thereby justifying the action of the Egyptians and clouding the retributive nature of their treatment in the events which follow.

In relating the slaughter of the male children Josephus transforms the midwives from Hebrews into Egyptians and has them complying completely with the decree of the king. The addition of a further decree calling for the death of parents who attempt to save their children increases the culpability of the Egyptians.

The ill-fate of the Egyptians is compounded by the conduct of the ruler who succeeds the king under whom Moses was forced to flee Egypt after the successful Ethiopian campaign. Josephus goes to great lengths to develop the character of this new Pharaoh as being headstrong, filled with his own importance and showing nothing but contempt for the God of the Hebrews, their leader and his pleas on their behalf. Despite the dire warnings of Moses as to the consequences that will flow from ignoring his requests, Pharaoh dismisses him as a trickster. Moses attempts to explain that in not letting the people depart from Egypt the king is thwarting the will of God and

in hindering them, he should unwittingly have but himself to blame for suffering such a fate as was like to befall him who opposed the commands of God ; for to them that rouse the divine ire dread calamities arise from all around them : to them neither earth nor air is friendly, to them no progeny is born after nature's laws, but all things are hostile and at enmity ; and

such trials, he affirmed, would the Egyptians undergo and withal would see the people of the Hebrews quit their country despite their will. (AJ II.291-2)

Finally plagues descend upon Egypt, which Josephus recounts partly because "it behooves mankind to learn to restrict themselves to such action as shall not offend the Deity nor provoke Him in wrath to punish them for their iniquities". (AJ II.293)

The king continues to be obdurate, although there is a distinct amelioration in attitude as the plagues progress. Josephus expresses his own exasperation by commenting that (T)the calamities already named might indeed have sufficed to recall to reason and a sense of his own interests a mere imbecile devoid of malice. But Pharaohes, less fool than knave, though alive to the cause of it all, was matching himself against God as a deliberate traitor to the cause of virtue...(AJ II.307)

Thus it appears that the idea of retributive punishment is very much present in the build up to the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt and that the punishments inflicted on the Egyptians were directly a result of either their own misconduct or that of their king.

Josephus' intention in this regard may be further born out by his complete neglect of the notion that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. This aspect plays an important part in the MT version of the story and is present to such an extent that it could not have been simply overlooked by Josephus. While there may be other reasons for the non-inclusion of this motif, the possibility remains that the case for retributive justice would be severely damaged should the Egyptians appear to have had no option but to disobey the commands of God.

The fact that the Egyptians did have the ability to choose their fate is evident in the "lamentations and regrets of the Egyptians for having treated them so hardly." (AJ II.315)

Not only was the loss of life occasioned by the imposition of the plagues justified, but the final complete destruction of the Egyptian army can, according to Josephus, also be attributed to retributive justice. Once the Hebrews had left "the Egyptians repented of having let the Hebrews go and, their king being mortified at the thought that it was the jugglery of Moses that had brought this about", so they pursued the Hebrews with the intention of resubjugating them and returning them to slavery. Their crime is compounded by their looking "for an easy victory over unarmed folk,

exhausted by their march." (AJ II.320)⁴² The Egyptian pursuit ends abruptly as the sea closes over them and God's absolute displeasure at their actions is evident in that

there was not one of those destructive forces which in token of God's wrath combine to smite mankind that failed to assemble then ... Thus they perished to a man, without a single one remaining to return with tidings of the disaster to those whom they had left at home.
(AJ II.344)

Once again we find evidence of Josephus excluding a salient motif in order to ensure that God's justice appears unsullied. The MT indicates clearly that God intentionally causes the Egyptians to pursue the Israelites and furthermore guides the Israelites into a situation where God could destroy the Egyptian host and prove his power at their expense. The element of retributive punishment appears to be absent in the MT and the object of the exercise purely the establishment of God's supremacy for, even when the Egyptians wish to "flee from the face of Israel" (Ex. 14:25), they are not permitted to do so. Despite indicating that Pharaoh still does not acknowledge God's role in the imposition of the plagues Josephus does not dwell on this aspect of the Biblical account and has instead introduced

⁴²The Amalekites are condemned to extinction for a similar crime. AJ III.60

retributive punishment as being the prime cause of the Egyptian demise.

Thus, in regard to Josephus' treatment of the Egyptians, it appears that he has adhered to the system of theology proposed by Attridge. The only mitigating factor in the account may be the prophecy of the scribe which foretells of the birth of a male child "who would abase the sovereignty of the Egyptians and exult the Israelites".(AJ II.205) This threat may be regarded as grounds for justifying the king's murderous decree, as the threat of sedition appears to be in the MT, but it does not constitute a serious challenge to the basic approach as outlined by Attridge.

The Hebrews

While the application of retributive justice to case of the Egyptians is relatively simple the same can not be said for that of the Hebrews. In the former God's providence was seen to be acting purely in a negative sense, that is against the Egyptians as punishment for their conduct, while as regards the Hebrews, Josephus wishes to portray it in a positive sense. However, a strict adherence to the MT would create complications to the scheme which Josephus (according to Attridge) wishes to present.

The first confirmation of God's providence in the Exodus portion of Antiquities comes in Amram's dream.⁴³ As God reassures Amram, he recounts that which he has already done for the patriarchs of the Hebrews, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, as well as for the Hebrews themselves in terms of multiplying their numbers from the mere 70 souls who arrived in Egypt to "upwards of six hundred thousand." It is unclear whether Josephus views the increase as being is a result of God's promises to the patriarchs⁴⁴ or purely an example of God exercising his providence in favor of the Hebrews. In a scheme of providence dependent on conduct, the former would result from the deeds of the patriarchs and the latter from the conduct of the Hebrews themselves. It would appear that in this case Josephus does see the increase as being attributable to the patriarchs, for he states that God would reward the Hebrews "even as He had already granted their forefathers to grow from a few souls into so great a multitude." (AJ I.212)⁴⁵

⁴³The manner in which God's providence is exercised in regard to Amram himself will be discussed later. See p. 37.

⁴⁴For the predictions that God makes to the patriarchs see AJ as follows: to Abraham, I.183, I.191, I.235, to Isaac, I.257, and to Jacob I.282.

⁴⁵This may suggest an underlying notion of covenant. See the discussion of covenant, p. 50

Although in regard to the increase of numbers no definite conclusion can be reached, throughout the rest of the events leading up to the Exodus Josephus shows that God's beneficent providence is a direct result of the conduct of the Hebrews themselves. Their increase in wealth and prosperity is attributed to "their virtues and aptitude for labor." (AJ II.202) Even when subjected to the extreme hardships inflicted upon them by the Egyptians they maintained their former attitude to their work, "it was indeed a contest between them, the Egyptians striving to kill off the Hebrews with drudgery, and these ever to show themselves superior to their tasks". (AJ II.204) Amram states in his prayer that throughout the years of captivity the Hebrews had "in no wise transgressed in their worship of Him" (AJ II.211) and thus God listens to the cries of the Israelites because "He had their piety in remembrance and would ever give them its due recompense..." (AJ II.212) When, on Pharaoh's instruction the straw is withdrawn from the Hebrews, thereby increasing their burden, Josephus has them complaining, but not as seriously as one finds in the MT.

The MT also gives no indication of the piety of the Israelites nor of their "worshipping" God. It is God who hears their cry and only on the strength of the covenant that he had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that he

intervenes. (Ex 2:24) Josephus appears to have deliberately engineered the retelling of this part of the exodus story to emphasize the righteousness of the Israelites in order to give just cause for divine providence to be exercised on their behalf.

While the above does tend to support Attridge's assessment of Josephus' underlying theology of God's providence being retributive in nature, we are still faced with the huge problem of why the Hebrews were enslaved in the first place. Surely a retributive punishment of 400 years of slavery would have had a rather obvious cause or at least one that was worth stating? Apart from God's predictions to the patriarchs that this would occur, we are given no indications by Josephus as to why the Hebrews were punished in this manner.

Amram and the young Moses

Amram is a clear example of how a person's piety results in reward. His prospective child is not only to survive but has a future that will make him known for generations to come. The reward aspect is entirely absent from the MT and may therefore again indicate that Josephus has remodelled the story to fit his theology.

The Amram pericopy does however raise the question of how the reward system works. Does one acquire reward solely through one's own conduct or does the idea of *zechut avot*, merit of the ancestors, apply? It is difficult to determine this from the Amram story because, just as the birth of Moses is his reward so may the fortune and fame that accompany Moses be part of that reward. It would appear that Josephus places more emphasis on the deeds of the individual and conduct of the people as a whole than upon the merit those who have gone before but is not consistent in this regard.

Once God has declared to Amram his intention the effects of his providential concern quickly become apparent. Moses' miraculous birth, his initial survival in hiding and his rescue by Pharaoh's daughter all point to proof of God's special providence. Added to these are Josephus' description of Moses as a youth, his superior intellect and amazing beauty. Meeks⁴⁶ has suggested that Josephus may have been influenced by the portrayals of divine men in Hellenistic literature but this is countered by Josephus' insistence that Moses was human and although a divinely appointed leader and prophet without equal still merely a man.

⁴⁶W. Meeks, The Prophet-King, Moses Traditions and the Johanne Christology, Leiden, 1967 pp. 138-142

Two further incidents reflect God's providence at work, the first directly and the second indirectly. Josephus relates the story of Moses' narrow escape from death after dashing the king of Egypt's crown to the ground. The scribe rushes forward to kill the young Moses, "(B)ut Thermuthis was too quick for him and snatched the child away; the king too delayed to slay him, from a hesitation induced by God, whose providence watched over Moses' life." (AJ II.236) The second and more major story deals with Moses' Ethiopian campaign. While God is not mentioned as being directly involved, the pericopy does end with Moses offering a thanksgiving sacrifice to God after his victory.

Both these incidents and the elaborations mentioned earlier are all non-Biblical. Even those that do have some Biblical precedent have been embellished by Josephus. For example, Amram's placing the child in the basket is cast in terms of trusting the baby to God's providence which in turn is shown to exist by Moses' rescue by the very people who wished to kill him. Thus we find additional evidence to support the supposition that Josephus may have altered the Biblical account to bring out aspects of his own theology.

As Moses grows up his own stature is increased so that even if as a youth he was protected by the divine promise to his father, in later life it is by virtue of his own behavior

that he merits divine protection. Josephus presents Moses' successful Ethiopian campaign as the goad which prompts the Egyptians, including the king, to attempt to kill Moses. Their motives are clearly envy and fear that he will indeed bring down the current regime. Moses, still as always under divine protection, is warned of their intended actions and flees to Midian. In the MT the killing of an Egyptian overseer is the basic cause of Moses' flight. Josephus omits this incident, even though he could quite easily have reworked it to show Moses' belief in justice and his dedication to protect the disadvantaged, just as his defense of the shepherdesses at the well is supposed to do. On the other hand, Josephus may have felt that the slaying of the overseer would sully Moses' unblemished record and therefore omitted it entirely. It may still have been in the back of his mind for when Moses first approaches the king to request the release of the Hebrews he is dismissed as a criminal who has escaped from punishment.

Moses and Providence

The figure of Moses, as one who is deserving of divine providence, is developed throughout the exodus narrative. The Moses of the MT undergoes a substantial transformation of character in Josephus in order to measure up to this end.

The MT portrays Moses as fearful, uncertain and reluctant and even when he receives God's assurances is still hesitant to do God's bidding.⁴⁷ He has little confidence in his own abilities, both as a leader and especially as God's spokesperson. In fact, he goes so far as to anger God by continuously making excuses why he should not be chosen for the mission. Moses requests God's name, for he doubts whether the Israelites will listen to him, even if he tells them he has been commanded by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He claims that he cannot act as spokesperson for he is "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue"(Ex 4:10)

Josephus' Moses is a very different character. His self-confidence is evident in the fact that he is not afraid to venture near the mountain of God, even though it is avoided by the shepherds of the area. When given his charge by God Moses does not attempt to elude God's command, but rather out of a sense of humility asks

...how I, a mere commoner, blest with no strength, could either find words to persuade my people to quit that land that they now inhabit and follow me to that whereunto I would lead them, or even should they be persuaded, how should I constrain Pharaohes to permit the exodus of those whose toils and tasks his subjects look to swell their own prosperity. (AJ II.271)

⁴⁷Exodus Ch.3 and 4

Moses does not doubt God's promise and requests God's name so that after the successful completion of his mission he may "invoke Him by name to be present at the sacred rites." (AJ II.275)

Josephus has omitted the rather puzzling incident found in Ex 4:24-26 in which God seeks to kill Moses who is saved by the actions of his wife, Zipporah, when she circumcises their son. Apart from being difficult to understand, God's apparent willingness to kill Moses would certainly cast a shadow on Moses' exalted status as well as call into question God's providential care, both of which Josephus has gone to great lengths to establish.

The difference in the attitudes of the two Moses figures can be further seen in their reactions to adversity. The MT's Moses questions God's actions despite frequent reassurances that things are proceeding as planned. Josephus' Moses on the other hand "neither wavering before the king's threats, nor yielding to the recriminations of the Hebrews, steeled his soul against both and devoted all his efforts to procuring his people's liberty." (AJ II.290) He is steadfast in his faith in God and does not waiver. Moses of the paraphrase also shows greater or, at least, more obvious leadership than does the Biblical Moses. In the Biblical

account God does the directing. He issues Moses with detailed instructions as to what to do and where to go, whereas Josephus has Moses making most of these decisions and only resorting to God when he is faced with problems which require divine intervention.

The portrait of Moses drawn by Josephus may well be modelled on that of the Greek hero, primarily for apologetic purposes and to make him acceptable to a Greek audience, as many scholars have suggested, but in addition it may lend support to Attridge's view of the underlying theology in the paraphrase, in that Moses is shown as a figure who is deserving of God's concern and care.

Attridge has extensively analyzed Moses' speech on the shores of the sea and finds within it strong evidence of Josephus' belief in providence and retributive justice.⁴⁸ He also points to the washing up of the Egyptian arms on the shore the day after the crossing as being a further example of God's providence and here again we can see evidence for Josephus having altered the Biblical version of the story to reveal his own theology.

⁴⁸Attridge, Interpretation, pp 76-107.

After the Crossing to the Revelation at Sinai

There are very definite indications of God's providence being active in the Israelites favor during the period following the crossing of the Red Sea through the revelation at Sinai. However, it becomes increasingly difficult to identify a retributive element at work.

The most obvious example of retribution is the victory of the Israelites over the Amalekites⁴⁹ and Moses declaration that the Amalekites were to be "utterly exterminated and not one of them survive to after ages, because they had set upon the Hebrews at a time when they were in desert country and in sore distress". (AJ III.60) Josephus embroiders the circumstances surrounding the attack showing that the Amalekites were not only the aggressors but tried to stir up other nations against Israel. He thereby justifies divine intervention which leads to the defeat of the Amalekites and determines that their subsequent condemnation is well deserved. This is, however, an example of retribution against the Amalekites rather than anything that might be attributed to the conduct of the Israelites.

⁴⁹see AJ III.39-62 for the circumstances leading up to the battle with the Amalekites and their defeat. The Biblical parallel is in Ex 17:8-16

Nothing in the way Josephus portrays the conduct of the Hebrews lends itself to the view that God's providence is being exercised on their behalf because of any deserving action. Even the piety that appeared to be present while they were in Egypt seems to be absent in the desert.

The rewards that they receive seem to be a direct result of God's regard for Moses their leader and are responses to his appeals to God. Thus here it would seem that God's providence is dependent on the merits of Moses and has little or nothing to do with the people as a whole. This compounds the problem of understanding how Josephus applies the doctrine of retributive providence for why should the Hebrews benefit from the actions of Moses, when their own conduct merits nothing?

The answer is also not found in the excuse Moses makes to God for the people's apparent lack of faith. He asks God "to pardon the people what they would but now have done under stress of necessity, seeing that the race of men was by nature morose and censorious in misfortune." (AJ III.23) Thus, it is because of their dire circumstances that the people question Moses' leadership and wish to stone him and this is something that God should take into account. Perhaps this explains why God shouldn't punish the Hebrews for acting as they do, but provides no reason why God should

exercise beneficent providence on their behalf. Moses himself seems to view the Hebrews rather pragmatically, for when faced with yet another rebellion at Rephidim, he asks God to provide water "for their gratitude for the meat would perish were drink withheld." (AJ III.34)

It is only after God has provided them with a supply of meat, manna and water that the attitude of the Hebrews begins to change. This change is complete once they are victorious over the Amalekites. They appear to have far more confidence in Moses and are prepared to accept his word that God is looking after them. This attitude pertains throughout their stay at Sinai and until they revolt again in III.295⁵⁰ some time after leaving the mountain. It may well be that Josephus engineered this change in order to create an atmosphere that would be suitable for the revelation.⁵¹

Josephus reinforces this new attitude of the people throughout the period at Sinai. They are overjoyed the first time Moses descends from the mountain and after the initial revelation and theophany urge Moses to re-ascend the

⁵⁰It is interesting to note that on that occasion God punishes the Hebrews for their revolt and "in fact no small number of them perished". (AJ III.299)

⁵¹Please see ch. 4 for further elucidation of the process of change and its implications.

mountain and return with even more laws. This enthusiasm builds over the Sinai pericopy and is consistent. It is thus not surprising that Josephus would have omitted anything in the MT which may have impinged on his carefully crafted scenario. One example is that he dispenses with the people's abject fear at the time of the revelation and substitutes instead enthusiasm and joy.⁵² But, by far the most dramatic example is his omission of the golden calf incident.⁵³

Josephus has coalesced the two periods of forty days that Moses spent on the mountain into a single period of forty days and has him descend with the instructions to build the tabernacle as well as with the only set of tablets he mentions. (AJ III.99-101) The predominant notion advanced by scholars as to the reason for this startling omission is that it is apologetic in nature. Thackeray suggests that Josephus "deliberately omits the episode of the golden calf with the sequel, in order to avoid giving any handle to the malicious fables about the Jews current in his day (their alleged cult of an ass, etc.contra Apionem, passim)."⁵⁴

⁵²For further discussion on the modification of the fear motif see ch.4.

⁵³Ex. 32 relates the making of the golden calf and Moses' reaction on his descent from the mountain.

⁵⁴H ST.J. Thackeray, Jewish Antiquities, LCL, Cambridge, 1930, vol IV, p 362, Footnote c.

Attridge refers to it as an example of the use of defensive apologetic in a negative way, "consisting in the removal of potentially damaging material,..."⁵⁵ Smolar and Aberbach state that Josephus was "concerned with pagan anti-Semitism" and so omitted the golden calf incident. They add that Josephus also seeks "to avoid any reference which might be disparaging to Aaron's reputation", because Josephus himself was a "priest and proud of his priestly descent".⁵⁶

Apologetics may well be part of the reason for the omission of this major episode, but in addition, Josephus may well have realized that the story would create serious problems for him theologically. If the Israelites had totally rejected God at this critical stage it would have meant that there could be no grounds on which they should retain God's providential care, and therefore his scheme of reward and punishment would have collapsed. This is further born out by Josephus stating that although the people were in the "deepest distress" (while Moses was on the mountain) and were not able to "restrain their grief and dejection" they did not break camp because Moses had "charged them to abide there." (AJ III.98) This indicates that the Hebrews at last had developed some sense of obedience to Moses and thus God

⁵⁵Attridge, Interpretation, p 61.

⁵⁶L. Smolar and M. Aberbach, "The Golden Calf Episode in Postbiblical Literature.", HUCA, vol 39, 1968, p 92.

and were therefore worthy of receiving God's beneficent providence.

One may point to the revolt in III.295 as creating a similar problem, but there the Israelites are punished for their conduct and besides the revolt was not of the nature of as complete a rejection of God as the golden calf appears to be.

Thus throughout Josephus' paraphrase of Exodus it is possible to bring evidence to support Attridge's conception of the theology which underpins the Antiquities, but as has been pointed out there are instances where it appears that the scheme does not work. In the next chapter we will attempt to show that the exodus story has within it a developmental aspect not mentioned by Attridge and, in addition, discuss the issue of providence through covenant.

Chapter 4

The Covenant in Josephus

A discussion of the theology of Josephus as found in the Antiquities would not be complete without some consideration of whether there exists in the paraphrase evidence of a special relationship between God and the Israelites and whether this relationship is founded on the notion of covenant. We will again examine the Book of Exodus and Josephus' treatment thereof in an attempt to arrive at some understanding of Josephus' view of the existence of a covenantal relationship between God and the Israelites.

The MT clearly establishes a covenantal relationship initially between the patriarchs and God and, in Exodus, between the Israelites as a people and God. Early in Exodus the covenant is expressed as having already been established.

Now therefore, if you will hearken unto My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be Mine own treasure from among all the peoples; for all the earth is Mine; and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.⁵⁷

⁵⁷Ex 19:5-6

The existence of this covenant can again be inferred from the Israelites' unanimous assent "All the words which the Lord hath spoken we will do." (Ex 24:2) The commitment is reiterated when Moses takes the sacrificial blood and sprinkles it over the people saying "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you in agreement with all these words." (Ex 24:8)

A more specific reference to the terms of the covenant can be found in Exodus Ch.34 once Moses has ascended the mountain for the second period of forty days. Here God describes what he expects from the Israelites and commands Moses to "write thou these words, for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel... And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten words" (Ex 34:27-28) In this chapter, rather than emphasizing the chosenness of the Israelites, God promises to perform miraculous acts as have never before been performed for any people and these are to be aimed at driving out of the land (which had been promised to the patriarchs) the current inhabitants, leaving the way free for Israelite occupation. The Israelites side of the covenant is to obey the word of God and observe the laws and commandments which he has set before them.

Thus we find two aspects to the divine covenant in Exodus, the first involving the selection of the Israelites to be a "treasure" and the second promising them possession of the land. Both of these aspects are present in the covenant made with the patriarchs although the first is extended to include a continuity and a proliferation of their descendants, as well as prosperity.

Turning to the Josephan paraphrase we find some disagreement as to whether a covenantal relationship exists at all and if it does whether both of the elements found in the MT covenant are reflected.

Attridge states that there is an "absence of an explicit doctrine of covenant" and instead Josephus has substituted the "terminology of benefactor and ally".⁵⁸ This was deliberate and is born out by Josephus not using language which, if he had wished, was available to him and which would have conveyed the covenantal relationship. The use of the benefactor terminology indicates that "there is a potential for universal application, whereas covenant implies an exclusive arrangement between God and a single people"⁵⁹ The alliance terminology "does not imply any necessary, formal, long-term or automatic commitment on the

⁵⁸Attridge, Interpretation, p. 79

⁵⁹Attridge, Interpretation, p. 81

part of God to act on behalf of the Israelites".⁶⁰

Attridge ties this into his view of retributive providence and points out that God's "special concern for Israel is ultimately due to the special virtue of the people or its leaders."⁶¹ Thus, for Attridge no covenantal relationship exists, but any position of privilege that the Israelites may hold is as a result of their own actions.

Amaru⁶² suggests that there is some notion of covenant in Josephus but it appears more in the form of predictive statements rather than promises. She regards promises as being the type of statement found in the Biblical text in which "God is the clear giver and Abraham and his descendants the clear recipients of the gifts".⁶³ Whereas predictions do not have this sense of active donation, but merely statements of what will come to pass. Thus,

Just as the Genesis narrative of the patriarchs sets a pattern with promises to Abraham, so Josephus follows his own pattern of (1) deleting some covenantal scenes, often those which cannot be set within the context of reward; (2) reinterpreting other scenes in order to

⁶⁰Attridge, Interpretation, p. 82

⁶¹Attridge, Interpretation, p. 83

⁶²B.H. Amaru, "Land Theology in Josephus' Jewish Antiquities", The Jewish Quarterly Review 71, 1981, pp. 201-229

⁶³Amaru, Land Theology, p. 203.

stress future greatness in the number of Hebrews rather than in land; (3) setting land acquisition in the tone of predictions of providential assistance rather than the promise of land as a divine gift.⁶⁴

This method is consistently applied by Josephus to the succeeding patriarchs and the idea of covenanted land theology is avoided. The acquisition of the land is linked to the growth of the people and their numerical superiority and rather than a direct promise of a gift of the land. Josephus employs his "alliance structure" to make "acquisition of the land conditional on morality and obedience, of even the fortuitous swing of God's rod."⁶⁵

Amaru finds a similar consistency in Josephus' approach to Exodus.

The covenantal connection between land and law is ignored both in terms of the forefathers and in terms of the land-based context in which the law was to be observed. He replaces these with his own special themes: prediction of the future, God as ally, promises of great population growth, and a one-sided

⁶⁴Amaru, Land Theology, p. 208

⁶⁵Amaru, Land Theology, p. 211.

non-covenantal theme of land retention based on obedience."⁶⁶

She is critical of Attridge as regards his view of the absence of covenant in Josephus and points out that "(H)he also does not deal with the promises of nationhood and great numbers which Josephus does present in unconditional covenantal terms".⁶⁷

Therefore it appears that for Amaru the idea of covenant is found in Josephus but modified to by him be as to be different from the idea of covenant found in the MT.

The distinction Amaru draws between prediction and promise may not have the full implications that she asserts in her article. Josephus frequently uses the format of a prediction instead of a promise, but then equally stresses that the will of God will come to be. One can assume that a prediction made by God would become part of God's will and would therefore ultimately come to pass. There is then a definite sense of the active participation of God in the manifestation of the prediction and this would closely approximate the idea of promise as found in the Biblical text. Thus for Josephus a prediction and a promise have

⁶⁶Amaru, Land Theology, p.213.

⁶⁷Amaru, Land Theology, p. 210-1, note 22.

same strength and force and stand the same chance of being fulfilled.

When God appears to Amram in his dream he informs Amram that the child who has been predicted to bring about the demise of the Egyptians is to be born to him and "he shall escape those who are watching to destroy him, and, reared in marvelous wise, he shall deliver the Hebrew race from their bondage in Egypt, and be remembered, so long as the universe shall endure, not by Hebrews alone but even by alien nations...." (AJ II.216) This is certainly predictive, although one could argue that the words which follow "that favour do I bestow upon thee and thy posterity." transform the prediction into a promise. However, this clause may refer only to the portion dealing with remembrance and not to the whole prediction. In either case that there is a predictive element in the dream is what is relevant to our discussion.

Later, when the child is placed in the basket and set upon the river Josephus tells us

Then once again did God plainly show that human intelligence is nothing worth, but that all that He wills to accomplish reaches its perfect end,... (AJ II.222)

What God predicts will happen becomes God's will and is subsequently accomplished. Therefore, God's predictions and promises are interchangeable and are equal for Josephus. If the manner in which God works within the world is by the exercising of his will through divine providence, then providence too is linked to prediction and promise. Thus a prediction that the Israelites would settle in the land of Canaan would be the equivalent of a promise of divine assistance in its acquisition and no real distinction can be drawn between them.

Does the idea of covenant then exist in Josephus? Is it as Attridge maintains merely an extension of a universally applying doctrine of providential retribution or is there, as Amaru posits, some notion of covenant in regard to proliferation of descendants and prosperity, but none as far as possession of Canaan is concerned?

Evidence for and against Attridge's overall contention has been presented in the previous chapter and so it will suffice to examine here only that which may pertain to the idea of covenant. The promises relating to the Hebrews in Amram's dream come about because of God "having their piety in remembrance and (thus he) would ever give them its due recompense,..." (AJ II.212) It can be argued that this same "piety" is what causes God to rescue them on the shores of

the Sea, from thirst and starvation in the desert and from the attack of the Amalekites. However, as has been shown previously in none of these instances is the "piety" of the Israelites mentioned and their conduct alone does not warrant the type of protection they receive.

At the burning bush the voice instructs Moses to return to Egypt and deliver his fellow Hebrews "(F)or indeed, they shall inhabit this favoured land wherein Abraham dwelt,..., and shall enjoy all its blessings, and it is thou,..., that shall conduct them thither." (AJ II.269) Amaru, having drawn a distinction between prediction and promise, sees this passage as having relevance only for Moses and as "combining predictions of his glory and honor with the assurance that through his leadership the Hebrews would come to inhabit the land..."⁶⁸ If, as is maintained above, there are grounds for believing that prediction and promise are equivalent in Josephus, then this statement suggests that habitation of the land by the Hebrews is part of the divine will and, although not specifically expressed as such, may reflect that for Josephus these promises have a covenantal basis.

This is further born out by references to God's special care for the Hebrews despite an absence of a corresponding

⁶⁸Amaru, Land Theology, p. 215.

mention of their "piety". On the shores of the sea, when all hope appears to be lost, Moses urges the Israelites to expect help from God "who has even now caused you to be compassed about on this difficult ground, to the end that, in extricating you from extremities, whence neither ye nor the enemy think ye can escape, He may display both His own power and His tender care for you." (AJ II.332) The first time Moses returns from the top of the mountain he tells the people "For I have been admitted to a sight of God, I have listened to an immortal voice: such care hath He for our race and for its perpetuation." (AJ III.88) Again, when he descended from the mountain a second time Moses "proceeded to disclose the care which God had for them,..." (AJ III.99)

We even find Josephus referring to the Hebrews as being a possession of God, reminiscent of "ye shall be Mine own treasure" (Ex 19:5) When in the desert Moses asks God to "grant some succour to His people" (AJ III.23)

This evidence leads one to the conclusion that the relationship between God and the Hebrews entails more than that described by Attridge and that in fact there is an underlying notion of covenant in Josephus. Further, it may well extend beyond numbers and prosperity to the promise of inhabitation of the land, despite Amaru's having argued to the contrary.

What is the nature of the Josephan covenant?

Understandably the covenant of the patriarchs is of a different nature to that which we find between the Israelites and God. In Genesis the covenant is in the form of a promise of proliferation, prosperity and possession of the land and it is granted by virtue of the actions of Abraham, rather than his successors.

In Exodus we find the covenant changing. Instead of a one-sided commitment by God to grant all that was promised, we find a mutual commitment with the Israelites undertaking to obey God's commandments and God to reward or punish them accordingly.

The same change is evident in Josephus as well. Whereas initially God's promises or predictions appear unilateral, once the laws have been given to them, the Hebrews' share of responsibility is also laid out.

Let them be had by you in veneration: battle for them more jealously than for your children and wives. For blissful will be your life, do ye but follow these: ye will enjoy a fruitful earth, a sea unvexed by tempest, a breed of children born in nature's way, and ye will be redoubtable to your foes. (AJ III.88)

Thus the same sense of required obedience and subsequent reward found in the MT covenant is evident in Josephus' paraphrase of Exodus.

The Fear vs Trust Motif

The Biblical account of the Exodus and theophany at Sinai seeks to establish יהוה as the God of the Israelites and demands obedience through fear of God's power.

And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord; and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses. (Ex 14:31)

This fear also plays a major role in the idea of covenant, for it is through the fear of punishment as much as the desire for reward that maintains the relationship between God and the Israelites.

If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His eyes, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon thee, which I have put upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee. (Ex 15:26)

In the Josephan paraphrase of Exodus the emphasis is not on proving the existence and power of God, but more on the

establishment of a relationship between the Deity and the Hebrews. The essence of this relationship is the development of trust in and reliance upon God as opposed to the idea of obedience through fear that characterizes the MT. Josephus accordingly modifies the Biblical account to achieve these ends.

When Moses first approaches the Hebrew leaders and informs them of God's instructions they disbelieve him until he performs for them the miracles of the rod etc.. At this point "(A)amazed at this astonishing spectacle, they took courage and were in hopes that all would go well, since God was caring for their safety." (AJ II.280). It is immediately apparent that the Hebrew leaders are anything but confident in the outcome of Moses' intended actions but go along with them anyway. This lack of confidence is further borne out by their complaints when their burdens are increased.

On the shores of the sea the Hebrews panic and threaten to stone Moses and capitulate to the Egyptians. Moses however urges them to rely on God and "have faith in such a defender, who has power alike to make the little great and to sentence such mighty hosts as these to impotence." (AJ II.332) The waters part and the Hebrews follow Moses through and the Egyptians are destroyed as the sea closes in

on them. The Hebrews reaction is one of joy, "believing themselves assuredly at liberty, now ... that God had so manifestly befriended them." (AJ II.345) This is only the beginning of the relationship and as they travel through the desert toward Sinai we can trace its development.

At Mar Moses reminds the people that it is God who has listened to his prayers and purified the water. At Elim, where the people again show signs of serious rebellion Moses calms them and urges them not to forget all the miracles that God has performed for them in the past, nor how God had rescued them time and time again when it appeared that all hope was lost.

Rather ought they to expect relief also from their present straits to come from God's solicitude, for it was probably to test their manhood, to see what fortitude they possessed, what memory of past services, and whether their thoughts would not revert to those services because of the troubles now in their path, that He was exercising them with these trials of the moment. (AJ III.15)

Moses indicates that by their actions they are failing God's test and he recalls for them all the wonders that God has brought about on their behalf.

So they should not despair even now of His providence, but should await it without anger, not deeming His

succour tardy, even if it came not forthwith and before they had had some experience of discomfort, but rather believing that it was not through negligence that God tarried, but to test their manhood and their delight in liberty..." (AJ III.19)

This test of manhood appears to relate to their ability to sustain "deprivation of food and lack of water" (AJ III.20) for the sake of liberty, but if one takes into account Moses' earlier words in the same speech it may also entail a test of the degree of their reliance upon God and their confidence in His providential care for them. The concluding lines of the speech support this contention as Moses expresses his concern that "in flinging those stones at him they should be thought to be pronouncing sentence upon God." (AJ III.21)

After the Hebrews have been saved once again from thirst by miraculous means at Rephidim, we are told that "they conceived an admiration for Moses, so high in God's esteem, and they offered sacrifices in return for God's care for their welfare." (AJ III.38) This is the first time that the Hebrews themselves voluntarily offer up sacrifices to God and that we have a clear indication that they begin to trust in both Moses and God's providence. When faced with the impending attack of the Amalekites "there was great agitation in the Hebrews' host" but nowhere near the

threatening rebellion that occurred at Elim. The people respond to his words, the bonds of trust now having been established.

The theophany at Sinai seals the relationship and although the people do show signs of dejection at the perceived loss of their leader they still heed Moses' orders and remain encamped at the foot of the mountain. Their enthusiasm for the building of the tabernacle is final proof of their acceptance of the alliance they have forged with God.

Once this covenant of trust has been established the Hebrews are liable for its maintenance. Thus, while they were not punished in the period leading up to Sinai for their mistrust and rebelliousness they are punished once they leave Sinai for the very same crimes. (AJ III.313-4)

The Affect of the Covenant of Trust on the Josephan Paraphrase of Exodus

Josephus has manipulated the Biblical account of the Exodus in specific ways in order to arrive at the scheme outlined above. He has done this primarily by reworking major motifs, excluding material that conflicts with his intended goal and adding, mainly in the form of speeches of Moses, ideas which point to his notion of covenant.

As has been mentioned earlier in this chapter the motif of God having to prove himself to the Israelites is absent in Josephus and the emphasis is placed on Moses encouraging the Hebrews to trust in God and believe in his special providential care for them. This is achieved through the elaboration of the Biblical speeches that Moses makes on the shores of the sea, particularly at Elim and again on the eve of the battle with the Amalekites. Confirmation comes in his speech before the theophany and again when he descends from the mountain after forty days and explains God's instruction to build a tabernacle so that "He himself, frequenting the tabernacle, may be present at our prayers." (AJ III.100)

Josephus maintains the development of the trust motif by excising those occurrences in the MT which may interfere with it. Thus the Israelites collecting more manna than their fair share is not construed by Josephus to be disobedience whereas in the MT "Moses was wroth with them." (Ex 16:20) He thereafter does not mention the breaking of the Sabbath commandment and therefore does not have to deal with God's angry response. (Ex 16:28)

Perhaps the most significant omission is that of the golden calf incident. The whole scheme of creating an atmosphere of trust between the Hebrews and God would have collapsed

with the inclusion of this absolute denial of God which the calf represents. Not only this, but it would fly in the face of the underlying premise that is apparent in Josephus, that being that God's power is already established and all that is necessary is for the Hebrews to accept that a special relationship exists between themselves and the Deity. Thus Josephus has coalesced the two periods of forty days which disposes of the golden calf incident.

It therefore becomes apparent that there is a notion of covenant in Josephus and that this covenant is predicated on the Hebrews' acceptance of God's providential care for them and on their complete trust that God will continue to exercise this care in their favor. In addition, they must observe God's commandments and in return they will enjoy God's beneficence. Josephus has carefully crafted his paraphrase of the book of Exodus to reinforce this covenantal relationship, even going so far as to leave out major pericopies that may conflict with it.

In this rests the difference between Josephus' concept of the covenant and that found in Rabbinic and contemporary writings. Although Attridge points out "the theme of covenant is frequently absent from Jewish apologetic literature in this period"⁶⁹, we do find an emphasis on the

⁶⁹Attridge, Interpretation, p. 149, n. 1.

idea of covenant in Pseudo-Philo and Jubilees. This covenant closely parallels the Deuteronomic covenant and the stress is on obedience through fear of retribution. (The idea of Yirat Shamayim, fear of God, is also found in later Rabbinic literature.)⁷⁰ Josephus' covenant is based on trust rather than fear and although the ultimate rewards of keeping the covenant are the similar, Josephus emphasizes the providential aspect of obedience through trust, rather than reward through fear.

The rewards derived from this absolute trust in God can be seen in the treatment of Amram and to the greatest extent in that of Moses, but the consequences of breaking it are equally evident in the post-Sinaitic rebellions.

Thus, in the paraphrase of the book of Exodus we again find evidence of Josephus' careful crafting of the Biblical account to reflect his own theology. One should certainly not discount the skill with which he has modified and shaped his paraphrase to make it a vehicle for his own belief structure while still managing to achieve his apologetic aims.

⁷⁰For a discussion of the part that fear of God plays in the exercise of free will See S. Schechter, Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, New York, 1909, pp. 264-292.

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