

# The Reliability of Josephus: Can He Be Trusted?

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The author Joseph ben Matthias ha-Cohen, like most members of the Judean upper class, lived in several worlds at once. Born in A.D. 37 to an aristocratic family of priestly lineage, Josephus was ostensibly connected with the Hasmonean family that had ruled Judea between 165 B.C. and 38 B.C.<sup>1</sup> His native language was Aramaic, although he was well versed in Hebrew, which by his time was largely a liturgical language. He was an observant Jew whose religious interests led him to affiliate with the three major schools of Judaism—the Sadducees, Essenes, and the Pharisees.

Nevertheless, Josephus was educated in Greek literature and was comfortable with the Hellenistic culture that then dominated the eastern Mediterranean. He was also familiar with Roman civilization, not only from the Romanizing efforts of the Herodians and the subsequent direct Roman occupation, but also from his own visits to the imperial capital. When he finally wrote the works that immortalized him, he had, by some surprising turns of events, become a Roman citizen and had taken the name Flavius Josephus.<sup>2</sup>

An awareness of Josephus's multicultural background is essential in order to understand his extant writings: *Jewish War*, *Jewish Antiquities*, *Against Apion*, and his *Vita* or "Life."<sup>3</sup> All of these works, in their final form at least, were published in Greek rather than in Aramaic or Hebrew.<sup>4</sup> In addition to writing in Greek, Josephus also closely followed the Greek historiographic tradition, adopting many elements of its style and outlook and employing Greek historical methods.<sup>5</sup>

Josephus was also uniquely equipped to be a writer of Jewish history; he had the correct religious foundation, knowledge, and background.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, he had access to the necessary sources and was an eyewitness for many of the later events, especially those recorded in *Jewish War*. Such firsthand knowledge was a qualification that Thucydides, the first “scientific” Greek historian, thought was absolutely necessary for writing any contemporary history.<sup>7</sup> For all these reasons, Josephus had such success as a historical author that Jerome once called him “the Greek Livy,” comparing him to one of the great Latin authors of Roman history.<sup>8</sup>

Josephus, however, was sometimes inaccurate, somewhat evasive, prone to tangents, and even sloppy in his writing.<sup>9</sup> The difficulty of working in a second language and the author’s own personality might explain some of these failings. Even other acknowledged ancient historians, such as Herodotus, who is the earliest Greek historian whose works are fully extant, were also known for their digressions. Nevertheless, when elements of Josephus’s works are contradictory, inaccurate, obviously fabricated, or simply wrong, the modern reader may begin to question Josephus’s reliability. To understand how an author like Josephus could be both a great writer and, at the same time, a questionable historian, we must understand the difference between history and historiography.

First we must realize that our current view of history is quite a modern concept. Not until the late nineteenth century did historians begin to believe that the “facts” of past events were recoverable if all the surviving pieces of evidence could be gathered and weighed.<sup>10</sup> Students of ancient history during this period readily adopted this approach, particularly in Germany, where encyclopedias and vast collections of evidence were amassed and detailed histories of the ancient world were written. This, however, was not the ancient approach to history. In antiquity historiography was “writing about history” and was a literary genre of its own.

To the sophisticated reading audiences of Greece and Rome, rhetoric was as important as accuracy. It was a truism that “history was nothing but rhetoric”—meaning that the authors tried to persuade their audiences that what the authors thought happened or even what they thought *should* have happened actually occurred. Therefore, Greek and Roman writers of history omitted, expanded,

or compressed historical material to suit their own needs, freely appropriated whole passages from other writers, and readily invented detail while adorning their narrative to make it more persuasive and aesthetically pleasing.

How clearly Josephus falls into the classical historiographic tradition is clear from the direct influence exerted on him by previous Greek authors. His prologue to the *Jewish War* is immediately reminiscent of Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War; both authors began by asserting that their works would cover "the greatest of all wars."<sup>11</sup> Josephus also appears to have deliberately modeled himself on Thucydides, both in his use of alternating direct and indirect discourse and in the use of other compositional techniques, such as using the first book to establish the background and to identify the causes of the upcoming war. More striking are the reflections of Thucydides' plague-stricken Athens that one finds in Josephus's depiction of Jerusalem as famine settled in during its long siege.<sup>12</sup> Another model for Josephus was Polybius, a Greek author who lived in the second century before Christ. Like Josephus, Polybius had watched his homeland, the Greek city-states of the Achaean League, fall before the onslaught of Rome. Both authors sought to explain to their countrymen Rome's apparently invincible power, and they both identified their captors as the divinely appointed masters of the world.<sup>13</sup> From Polybius, Josephus adopted some Greek terms commonly used in Hellenistic period—such as, *to theion* (godly power or being), *to daimōn* (divinity), or *hē tyche* (fortune)—and regularly used these expressions where one would expect him to make a traditional reference to God.<sup>14</sup> Finally, Josephus, Thucydides, and Polybius all shared similar experiences: each was successively an aristocrat, a politician, a general, and finally an exile from his homeland.<sup>15</sup>

Josephus's other major work, *Jewish Antiquities*, while still part of the classical tradition of historiography, seems to have been based on slightly different models. It is not a history of contemporary events like the *Jewish War* or Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War. Instead it is a survey of the history of the Jewish people from the time of creation. Although the influence of Polybius is still present in this work, Josephus seems to have adopted from Dionysius of Halicarnassus the same scheme that Dionysius

had employed in his work on Roman Antiquities.<sup>16</sup> Remembering Josephus's multicultural background, however, we are not surprised to find that this work in particular reflects some Near Eastern elements in both its style and purpose.

Gregory Sterling has identified a subgenre of history writing that he calls apologetic historiography.<sup>17</sup> He sees this as a type of writing, particularly in the Hellenized Near East, in which a local content (the history of a particular people) is recounted in a non-native form adapted from a superimposed, dominant culture. The earliest examples of this kind of historical writing are Berossos and Mantheon, a Hellenized Babylonian and Egyptian respectively, who wrote their national histories in Greek according to the outward form of classical historiography.<sup>18</sup> Josephus engaged in this kind of apologetic writing when he tried to redefine Judaism within the context of a Greco-Roman world. By doing so, he hoped to inform others about his people, while defending them and their traditions from growing anti-Semitism among the Greeks.<sup>19</sup>

The importance of rhetoric is apparent in the regular use of set speeches by the ancient historians. Direct speeches in Greek literature developed out of the epic tradition, and Herodotus subsequently introduced speeches into prose writing.<sup>20</sup> Thucydides further developed the speech by using it to convey the intentions of historical characters and to illustrate other factors that narrative alone could not. Although Thucydides claimed that he tried to keep close to the sense of what was actually said in such situations, he admitted that he had his speakers say what *seemed* to be appropriate for a given situation.<sup>21</sup> Thucydides' rhetorical speeches, written by the historian, but placed in the mouths of his characters, later became a standard feature of classical historiography. These speeches often became set or stock pieces for a given situation and never claimed to be a verbatim reproduction of what a real historical figure actually said.

Hence, in a famous episode prior to the fall of Masada to the Romans, Josephus composed an elaborate, philosophical treatise for the rebel leader, Eleazar. Josephus was not present to hear what speech, if any, Eleazar actually gave; neither were the Roman troops, nor, for that matter, were the Masada survivors, who by this time had safely hidden themselves in a cistern.<sup>22</sup> The speech, like others

in Josephus's works, is a literary creation, and while it contains views that Eleazar might have shared, it nonetheless belongs to Josephus.

Chronological inconsistency is another frequent factor in the historiographic genre; although Thucydides made an effort to maintain a regular chronology, most ancient authors followed the example of another writer named Ephorus, who arranged his material thematically. The latter approach was favored for its clarity even if it meant that the narrative lost some chronological accuracy.

Classical historiography also privileged political and military history and often failed to provide the kinds of material that many modern historians feel is necessary. Consequently, one must supplement the literary sources with material such as archaeological evidence, inscriptions, and numismatics in order to produce social, economic, or cultural history for the period. Accordingly, Josephus's *Jewish War* underestimates the widespread apocalyptic beliefs of his contemporaries and practically omits social and economic factors that contributed to the outbreak of the war.<sup>23</sup>

Since ancient history was intended to be didactic, its writers fashioned their narratives for their own purposes, subordinating events that they recounted to their theme, while at the same time creating a new literary work.<sup>24</sup> The purpose of the history affected authors' selection of material, determining what they would include and what they would omit. Ancient writers were thus subjectively selective: if an event did not support their point, they were free to ignore or modify it.

Writers of this period were also heavily dependent upon their own sources. For the modern student of ancient history, therefore, source criticism becomes particularly important as we try to identify an ancient author's sources and to assess the reliability of those sources. As mentioned above, Josephus was an eyewitness to many of the events in *Jewish War*; in which case he was often his own source. His captivity after the fall of Jotapata in A.D. 67 afforded him time to take notes on what was transpiring and to reflect upon the course of the war,<sup>25</sup> but as his own ideas regarding the causes of the war and its final outcome developed, his recollections could have been affected.

Many other witnesses to the events of the war on both sides would have been available to Josephus, and they could both provide

information and verify his account.<sup>26</sup> Because of his later association with the Flavian emperors, Josephus would also have had ready access to the *commentarii* or field reports of Vespasian, Titus, and succeeding commanders, as well as to other Jewish and Roman archives.<sup>27</sup>

Some of Josephus's sources were in as much a position to approve or even censure his account as they were to provide information for it. Josephus tried to bolster the veracity of his history by soliciting the endorsement of Herod Agrippa II and the Flavians, particularly Titus. Josephus reminded his readers that the *Jewish War* had received the approval of Titus and revealed that during the composition of the history he had regularly provided Agrippa II with installments of the work for his review. The king wrote Josephus sixty-two letters confirming Josephus's accuracy and commending him for his efforts.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, it is apparent that these political figures were able to influence and even direct his history, insomuch that it has been suggested that *Jewish War* was a work commissioned by the imperial government.<sup>29</sup> Josephus's account indeed did take the Roman point of view, since to the Jews the "Jewish War" was actually the "Roman War."

The need to please his patrons provided Josephus with an external bias that imposed limits on what he could and could not include in his work. He regularly praised the roles of both Vespasian and Titus and worked to legitimize the new Flavian dynasty. Accordingly, Josephus emphasized his belief that Vespasian was chosen by God to rule the world, noting his own role in prophesying Vespasian's accession before it occurred.<sup>30</sup> Even when Josephus included questionable actions of the Flavians, such as the Roman burning of the temple, he modified them. Thus Josephus portrayed Titus as anxious to spare the holy edifice and attributed its destruction to common Roman soldiers and Jews alike.<sup>31</sup>

It was Josephus's *internal* bias, however, that had the greatest affect on his selection and use of evidence. Sometimes this bias was purely personal, such as when he exaggerated his own achievements and skills or tried to justify his surrender at Jotapata.<sup>32</sup> More importantly, Josephus's subject presented him with two seemingly conflicting loyalties: he was at the same time pro-Roman and pro-Jewish. Josephus's solution to this dilemma was to blame the war

on neither the Romans nor the aristocratic Jewish leaders, whom he regularly portrayed as desiring peace and working for accommodation. Instead he held responsible the Jewish extremists whom, whether they were the zealots in Jerusalem or the Sicarii who seized control of Masada,<sup>33</sup> he called *lēstēs* or “bandits.”

This shifting of blame, however, is probably only the proximate purpose of *Jewish War*; Josephus’s ultimate intent seems to lie far deeper.<sup>34</sup> His later works, especially *Antiquities* and *Against Apion*, were written largely to defend the history and current rights of the Jews. Outwardly the *Jewish War*, by shifting the responsibility of the war away from the body of the Jewish people, achieved this same purpose. Inwardly, however, Josephus’s *Jewish War* served to promote within the Jewish community greater openness and more cooperation with Rome.<sup>35</sup> The Roman Empire, with divine sanction, had conquered the Jewish homeland; it was necessary, therefore, for the remnants of the Jewish people to submit to God’s will and work within the Roman system to preserve their way of life.

The reliability of the works of Josephus suffered even more after the texts actually left his hands. As with any ancient text, those of Josephus experienced the usual problems of copying and transmission. Unlike the Bible, for which the textual tradition is surprisingly and fortunately strong, the survival of the works of Josephus is similar to that of other Greco-Roman literature. Except for a single fragment of *Jewish War*, which dates to the third century A.D., the oldest manuscripts date between the ninth and eleventh centuries, at least eight hundred years after Josephus first began to write.<sup>36</sup> During that time, copying errors were made, marginal notes were accidentally included, and interpolations were willfully injected into the text.

This last type of change is particularly significant because of the popularity that Josephus gained among early Christian writers. Josephus provided a link between the Old and New Testaments that furnished the young religious community with a connection to the more ancient Jewish tradition. For the Christians, the destruction of Jerusalem was a clear fulfillment of the prophecies of Jesus (Matt. 24:1-2). Later when the Jewish and Christian communities had clearly split and begun to grow hostile to each other, the

destruction of the Jewish state and the further dispersion of its populace seemed to the Christians to be fitting punishments for the death of Christ.<sup>37</sup>

Most importantly, Josephus's *Antiquities* occasionally provided corroborating evidence for events in the Gospels and the book of Acts. The census of Quirinius (Luke 2:2), the reported general cruelty of Herod, the activity of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:5), the death of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:20–23), and the existence of James the brother of Jesus are all attested by Josephus.<sup>38</sup> In each of these instances, there are some discrepancies between the biblical and Josephan accounts,<sup>39</sup> but these may actually strengthen the Josephan references' claim to legitimacy, since Christian copyists or editors would have been likely to harmonize the accounts completely.

Many scholars feel, however, that the mention of James the Lord's brother, the material about John the Baptist, and any direct references to Jesus are deliberate interpolations.<sup>40</sup> The most suspect of these is the so-called *Testimonium Flavianum* in *Antiquities* 18.63–64, which gives an account “of a wise man, if one really should say that he is a man” who “was Christ.” It then speaks of the Lord's trial, crucifixion, and resurrection and concludes by stating that the Christians “have not disappeared to this day.”

Although the historical aim of Josephus was to recount the truth about his people, he also endeavored to write beautifully and dramatically as an heir to the classical rhetorical tradition.<sup>41</sup> Thus, when using Josephus's writings to reconstruct a certain period, we must remember the traditions in which he worked and be aware of the historical (we might occasionally call them “ahistorical”) methods that were accepted in his own time. As with any other literary source of the period, the evidence he presents must be evaluated critically and used carefully, especially when he provides the only literary account for a particular event.

While Josephus's writings may not always be completely reliable, his works can nonetheless be trusted to recreate a dramatic image of a people and the critical events in their history that have been important for Jews, Christians, and other students of the ancient classical world.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.3; Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.187; Josephus, *Life* 1-2, 7. See Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Flavius Josephus: Eyewitness to Rome's First-Century Conquest of Judea*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 7-11. Opinions are divided as to the veracity of Josephus's claim of Hasmonean descent: *for*, Max Radin, "The Pedigree of Josephus," *Classical Philology* 24 (1929): 193-94; *against*, Hölscher, "Josephus," in *Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* 9 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1916), col. 1935; and Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development as a Historian* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 107-8 n. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Per Bilde, *Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, His Works, and Their Importance*, *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*, Supplement Series 2 (Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 27-32; Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephus, Luke-Acts, and Apologetic Historiography* (New York: Brill, 1992), 229-35.

<sup>3</sup>The usual dating of these documents is *Jewish War* circa A.D. 78, *Antiquities* circa A.D. 94, *Life* shortly after A.D. 94 as a supplement to *Antiquities*, and *Against Apion* in A.D. 95. See Steve Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1992), 58-81; and Michael Grant, *Readings in the Classical Historians* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992), 367-68. Hadas-Lebel places the publishing of the Greek version of *Jewish War* during the reign of Titus A.D. 70-81. Hadas-Lebel, *Josephus*, 213.

<sup>4</sup>Although Josephus read and spoke Greek with relative ease (Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.7-8, 20.263), writing the language well still caused him some difficulty. Accordingly, he often composed in Aramaic, his native tongue, and then reworked the material into suitable Greek with the help of secretaries who helped him with his style. See Bilde, *Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome*, 62; Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 58-59; and Hadas-Lebel, *Josephus*, 209.

<sup>5</sup>Bilde, *Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome*, 203-4; Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, 28-29.

<sup>6</sup>Josephus, *Jewish War* 3.352; Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.262-63; Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.54. See also Bilde, *Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome*, 62.

<sup>7</sup>Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.3; Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.4; Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.48-49, 53, 55. For the methodology of Thucydides, see Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War* 1.20-23.

<sup>8</sup>Jerome, *Epistles* 22.35. Admittedly Jerome, like many early Christian writers, was favorably disposed towards Josephus because he saw him as a link between the Old and New Testaments and as a witness of the apocalyptic punishments of the Jews.

<sup>9</sup>Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 29.

<sup>10</sup>H. E. Barnes, *A History of Historical Writing* (New York: Dover, 1963), 266-75.

<sup>11</sup>Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 59; Sterling, *Historiography*, 241; Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, 91.

<sup>12</sup>Hadas-Lebel, *Josephus*, 211.

<sup>13</sup>Hadas-Lebel, *Josephus*, 211-12.

<sup>14</sup>Bilde, *Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome*, 200–201. Contrast Hadas-Lebel, who maintains that Josephus did not see God as Nemesis or Fortune, but rather as a judge and father. Hadas-Lebel, *Josephus*, 212.

<sup>15</sup>Bilde, *Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome*, 202. Thucydides was an upper-class Athenian who was active in politics and was later elected general. After the loss of Amphipolis during the Peloponnesian War, he was exiled from his home. Likewise Polybius was elected a general of the Achaean League but was later deported to Italy by the Romans. For the different stages of Josephus's life, see notes 1 and 2 above.

<sup>16</sup>Emilio Gabba, "Literature," in *Sources for Ancient History*, ed. Michael Crawford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 18–19; Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, 25–26.

<sup>17</sup>"Apologetic historiography is the story of a subgroup of people in an extended prose narrative written by a member of the group who follows the group's own traditions but Hellenizes them in an effort to establish the identity of the group within the setting of the larger world." Sterling, *Historiography*, 17.

<sup>18</sup>Sterling, *Historiography*, 104–36.

<sup>19</sup>Hadas-Lebel, *Josephus*, 215–18.

<sup>20</sup>C. W. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 142–68; Michael Grant, *Greek and Roman Historians: Information and Misinformation* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 44–47.

<sup>21</sup>What Thucydides actually meant in *Peloponnesian War* 1.22 has been the subject of much discussion. See A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945–70), 1:140–48; and J. S. Rusten, *Thucydides: The Peloponnesian War Book 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 7–17.

<sup>22</sup>Solomon Zeitlin, "Masada and the *Sicarii*," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 55 (April 1965): 305.

<sup>23</sup>Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, 188–91.

<sup>24</sup>Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, 30–31.

<sup>25</sup>Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.49. Hadas-Lebel suggests that the Jotapata account reads as if it were "new information," suggesting that Josephus wrote an early draft of the siege shortly after the city fell. Hadas-Lebel, *Josephus*, 122.

<sup>26</sup>Bilde, *Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome*, 62–63, noting Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.150–51 and *Life* 361–64. For the frequent collusion of witnesses with the artistic license taken by ancient historians, see the discussion of Josephus and Flavius Silva in Eric D. Huntsman, "And They Cast Lots: Divination, Democracy, and Josephus" in this volume.

<sup>27</sup>Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.185–89, 265–67; 16.161, 164–78; Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.56; Josephus, *Life* 342, 358. For a discussion, see Bilde, *Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome*, 62.

<sup>28</sup>Josephus, *Life* 363. Josephus even goes to the extent of quoting two of Agrippa's letters, an unusual expedient in ancient history writing. See Hadas-Lebel, *Josephus*, 213–14.

<sup>29</sup>Hadas-Lebel, *Josephus*, 207–8.

<sup>30</sup>Opinions differ on Josephus's "prophecy" to Vespasian, who was proclaimed emperor in A.D. 69 by his legions while still campaigning in Judea. See

Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 45–49; and Hadas-Lebel, *Josephus*, 104–6. One possibility is that Josephus conspired with Vespasian after the fact for propaganda purposes, saving his own life in the process. Another possibility is that he was reinterpreting existing oracles that claimed that a future prince would arise in Judea and rule the world. Josephus apparently came to believe that, although the promised ruler was to come from Judea, he did not need to be Jewish. Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.313. There remains the possibility that Josephus had a revelatory experience of some kind, especially since he seems to have been a mystic who viewed himself as a “chosen” messenger to his people. Cohen notes that his self-perception as a latter-day Jeremiah helped him justify his surrender at Jotapata. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, 98.

<sup>31</sup>Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.28; 6.250–80.

<sup>32</sup>Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, 94–97.

<sup>33</sup>Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 60–61; Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, 97. For the difference between the Zealot party and the *Sicarii* (“dagger men”) who recognized no human lordship of man over man, see Zeitlin, “Masada and the *Sicarii*,” 310, 314–17. See also S. Kent Jackson, “Revolutionaries in the First Century,” in this volume.

<sup>34</sup>Compare Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War* 1.23, and his discussion of the pretexts as opposed to the actual causes of the Peloponnesian War.

<sup>35</sup>Bilde, *Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome*, 121–22. The first, Aramaic version of *Jewish War* seems to have been directed towards the Jews in the eastern Diaspora as a warning for them not to challenge Rome. The later Greek edition, however, targeted the largely Greek-speaking Jewish population within the Roman Empire.

<sup>36</sup>*Papyrus Graecus, Vindobensis* 29810 contains *Jewish War* 2.576–79 and 582–84. See Bilde, *Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome*, 63, for a discussion of the earliest manuscripts and their transmission.

<sup>37</sup>Hadas-Lebel, *Josephus*, 223–29.

<sup>38</sup>Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.26–28 (census and its aftermath); 18.116–19 (John the Baptist); 19.343–52 (death of Herod Agrippa); 20.200 (James).

<sup>39</sup>See Hadas-Lebel, *Josephus*, 259 nn. 9–12. The New Testament account in Luke places the census (translated as a “tax” in the King James Version) *before* the slaughter of the innocents. Josephus does not mention the slaying of the children of Bethlehem in his list of Herod’s atrocities, but it must have occurred before Herod’s death, which Josephus places in 4 B.C. The census, however, took place when P. Sulpicius Quirinius (translated as “Cyrenius” in the King James Version) was governor of Syria, and his governorship was in A.D. 6. See *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3d ed., s.v. “Sulpicius Quirinius, Publius.” Josephus also does not draw a connection between John the Baptist and Jesus, and Herod Antipas executes the former only because he fears that John will raise a revolt.

<sup>40</sup>Bilde, *Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome*, 88, 126–28; Hadas-Lebel, *Josephus*, 225–27. Lengthy interpolations and other additions are found in the late Slavonic versions of Josephus. In addition to longer treatments of Christ and John the Baptist, the Slavonic Josephus is more readily anti-Roman and anti-Herodian than existing Greek versions.

<sup>41</sup>Bilde, *Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome*, 191–92.