

## DAVID'S MOURNING FOR ABSALOM ACCORDING TO JOSEPHUS

**Christopher Begg**

The Catholic University of America

2 Samuel 18:19-19:9a (Eng. 18:19-19:8a)<sup>1</sup> relates the poignant story of David's mourning over the death of his rebel son Absalom.<sup>2</sup> My focus in this essay is on Josephus' version of the biblical episode in his *Antiquitates Judaicae* (hereafter *Ant.*) 7.245-257.<sup>3</sup> I undertake

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this essay I follow the verse-numbering of MT/BHS. 2 Samuel 19:9b with its mention of the flight home of the rebel forces, constitutes the opening of a new segment within the book, 19:9b-44, that recounts David's resumption of his kingship over the entire people.

<sup>2</sup> For 2 Samuel 18:19-19:9a I have consulted the following commentaries: P.K. McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel*, AB 9 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 402-404, 408-409; A.A. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, WBC 11 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 221, 226-27; A. Caquot and P. de Robert, *Les Livres de Samuel*, COT 6 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1994), 549, 554-57.

<sup>3</sup> I use the text and translation of *Ant.* 7.245-257 in R. Marcus, *Josephus V*, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 1934), 490-97. I have also consulted the relevant text, translation, and notes in E. Nodet, *Flavius Josèphe III: Les Antiquités Juives Livres VI et VII* (Paris: Cerf, 2001), 195-99.

this study with three wider questions in mind. (1) Given the differences among the various ancient witnesses to 2 Samuel 18:19-19:9a, i.e. MT (*BHS*), 4QSam<sup>a</sup>,<sup>4</sup> Codex Vaticanus (hereafter B)<sup>5</sup> and the Antiochene or Lucianic (hereafter L)<sup>6</sup> manuscripts of the LXX, the *Vetus Latina* (hereafter VL),<sup>7</sup> the Vulgate (hereafter Vg.),<sup>8</sup> and Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets (hereafter Tg.),<sup>9</sup> with which of these do Josephus' textual affinities in 7.245-257 lie? (2) What rewriting techniques does Josephus apply to the data of the Samuel passage, and what is distinctive about his own version as a result? (3) How does Josephus' handling of the Bible's story of David's mourning compare with the treatment of the episode elsewhere in ancient Jewish and Christian tradition?

For purposes of my comparison, I divide up the material of 2 Samuel 18:19-19:19a and *Ant.* 7.245-257 into three parallel segments as follows: (1) Messengers dispatched (18:19-23// 7.245-247); (2) Messengers report (18:24-32// 7.248-251); and (3) David's reaction (19:1-9a// 7.252-257).

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<sup>4</sup> In our passage 4QSam<sup>a</sup> is extant only for 2 Samuel 19:6-9. For its readings, see A. Fincke, *The Samuel Scroll from Qumran* (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 43; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 243-44; and for the translation, see M. Abegg, Jr. and others, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), 254.

<sup>5</sup> For the B text of 2 Sam (2 Rgns) 18:19-19:9a, I use: A.E. Brooke, N. Maclean, and H. St. John Thackeray, eds., *The Old Testament in Greek According to the Text of Codex Vaticanus, II: I and II Samuel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), 170-73.

<sup>6</sup> For the Antiochene/Lucianic text of 2 Samuel (2 Rgns) 18:19-19:9a, I use N. Fernández Marcos and J.R. Busto Saiz, eds., *El texto antioqueno de la Biblia griega*, TECC 50 (Madrid: C.S.I.C., 1989), 143-46.

<sup>7</sup> For the (very fragmentary) readings of VL 2 Samuel 18:19-19:9a, I use C. Moreno Rodríguez, *Glosas Marginales de Vetus Latina en las Biblias Vulgatas Españolas*, TECC 48 (Madrid: C.S.I.C., 1989), 147.

<sup>8</sup> For the Vg. text of 2 Samuel 18:19-19:9a, I use R. Gryson, ed., *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 443-45.

<sup>9</sup> For Tg.'s text of 2 Samuel 18:19-19:9a, I use A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic II* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 193-95; and for the translation, D.J. Harrington and A.J. Saldarini, *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets*, *The Aramaic Bible* 10 (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1989), 193-94.

## Messengers Dispatched

The story told in 2 Samuel 18:19-19:9a is set in motion in 18:19 by Ahimaaz' request that he be allowed to bring tidings to David about the successful outcome of the battle against the rebels. Josephus (7.245a) expatiates on the content of the proposed message: "Then Achimas ( Ἀχίμας),<sup>10</sup> the son of *the high priest*<sup>11</sup> Sadok, went to Joab and asked him<sup>12</sup> for permission to go<sup>13</sup> and announce the victory (νίκην)<sup>14</sup> to David<sup>15</sup> and bring him the good news (εὐαγγελίσασθαι)<sup>16</sup> that he had obtained help and guidance (βοηθείας...καὶ προνοίας)<sup>17</sup> of God."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>10</sup> MT גַּמְמִיָּא (Eng.: Ahimaaz); LXX Β'Αχαιμάας; LXX Λ'Αχιμάας. This figure has been previously introduced as one of the two priestly sons who serve as liaisons between their fathers in Jerusalem and the fugitive David in 2 Samuel (15:27,36; 17:17-21); see *Ant.* 7.201, 223-27.

<sup>11</sup> In 2 Samuel 18:19 Ahimaaz' father Zadok is mentioned without title. (In this essay I italicize items of Josephus' presentation like the above which lack an explicit parallel in 2 Samuel 18:19-19:9a.)

<sup>12</sup> In thus specifying the identity of Ahimaaz' interlocutor, Josephus agrees with LXX L 18:19 against MT LXX B which leave the addressee of Ahimaaz' request unmentioned. In what follows Josephus recasts Ahimaaz' direct address word in indirect address, a frequent feature in his rewriting of the biblical account overall; see C.T. Begg, *Josephus' Account of the Early Divided Monarchy*, BETL 108 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993), 12-13, n. 38.

<sup>13</sup> In 2 Samuel 18:19 Ahimaaz' initial request is "let me run." "Run" is a key word throughout 2 Samuel 18:19-23 which, however, Josephus will begin to utilize only at a latter point in his rendition; see 7.248 and n. 33.

<sup>14</sup> Words of the νικ- stem are a *Leitwort* in 7.245-257, occurring a total of seven times there.

<sup>15</sup> Josephus' explicit mention of the name "David" here agrees with LXX L 18:19; MT and LXX B have Ahimaaz refer simply to "the king" as his intended addressee.

<sup>16</sup> Compare LXX B εὐαγγελιῶ; LXX L εὐαγγελιοῦμαι (MT: אַבְשָׁלֹם). On the use of the verb εὐαγγελίζομαι and its nominal cognates in Greek literature generally, see C. Spicq, *Notes de Lexicographie néo-testamentaire Supplément*, OBO 22/3 (Fribourg: Editions universitaires; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 296-306.

<sup>17</sup> This collocation occurs only here in Josephus. On the Josephan key word πρόνοια ("providence"), see H.W. Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus*, HDR 7 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976), 71-196; P. Spilsbury, *The Image of the Jew in Flavius Josephus' Paraphrase of the Bible*, TJAJ 69 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 72-74.

<sup>18</sup> Compare the content of Ahimaaz' proposed message in 18:19: "... that *the Lord* has delivered him [David] from the power of his enemies" (RSV). On Josephus' virtually complete avoidance of the biblical title "the Lord" (LXX: ὁ Κύριος) for the Deity, due likely to the non-currency of this usage in secular Greek, see Begg, *Josephus' Account of the Early Divided Monarchy*, 45, n. 218.

Joab turns down Ahimaaz' request in 18:20. Josephus' version (7.246) clarifies several points about the biblical general's response: "Joab replied that it was not fitting that he *who had always been a messenger of good tidings* (καλῶν ἄγγελων) should now go and inform the king of his son's death, *and so asked him to stay....*"<sup>19</sup> Having thus rebuffed Ahimaaz, Joab next (18:21a) entrusts the message for David to an alternative bearer who in the MT is called by his gentilic "the Cushite" (Hebrew: כּוּשִׁי), whereas LXX (and Vg.) give him a proper name, i.e. Χουσεί.<sup>20</sup> The historian follows the latter witnesses in his designation of the figure, while also leaving aside the reference of 18:21b ("the Cushite bowed before Joab, and ran") to his acting on Joab's orders: "... while he called"<sup>21</sup> Chūsī

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<sup>19</sup> Compare Joab's response of 18:20 in the rendering of RSV: "You are not to carry tidings today; you may carry tidings another day, but today you shall carry no tidings, because the king's son is dead." From this formulation Josephus eliminates the duplication of the prohibition about Ahimaaz' "carrying tidings" and the extraneous reference to his getting to do this on another occasion, while conversely appending Joab's concluding request that Ahimaaz remain with him. In addition, he makes the reference to Absalom's death unequivocally a part of Joab's address to Ahimaaz, whereas 18:20 itself leaves it uncertain whether this element is to be so understood (thus RSV above) or rather as an editorial comment of the narrator explaining what lay behind Joab's rejection of Ahimaaz' request (on the question, see the commentaries cited in n. 2). Finally, the historian interjects the reference to Ahimaaz' customary role as the bearer of good news, this insertion, in turn, making clear why it would be inappropriate for Ahimaaz to bring the bad news of his son's death to David.

With Josephus' version of Joab's word to Ahimaaz compare the paraphrase of that word given by Pseudo-Jerome in his *Quaestio* 166 (see A. Saltman, ed., *Pseudo-Jerome, Quaestiones on the Book of Samuel*, *Studia Post-Biblica* 26 [Leiden: Brill, 1975], 166): "Ac sit diceret: nolo ut talis vir qualis tu es nuntium feras regi quod ejus mortuus sit, nec enim decet ut tale nuntium portes." Note that both Josephus and Pseudo-Jerome unequivocally have Joab's reference to Absalom's death addressed to Ahimaaz himself, just as they both refer to the inappropriateness of someone like Ahimaaz carrying the news of his son's loss to David.

<sup>20</sup> In his *Quaestio* 166, Pseudo-Jerome cites the Vg.'s form "Chusi" and avers, apparently on the basis of his knowledge of the Hebrew, "Notandum quod in hoc loco *Chusi* non proprium sed appellativum sit nomen." (see Saltman, *Quaestiones*, 138-39).

<sup>21</sup> In 18:21a Joab simply addresses himself to "the Cushite/Chousei" as someone who is already presumed to be in his presence. Josephus has him first summon his interlocutor.

(Χουσίς)<sup>22</sup> and charged him with the task of reporting to king what he himself had seen."<sup>23</sup>

In 18:22-23a Ahimaaz renews his request (v. 22a), is once again rebuffed by Joab, this time with a question pointing out that the tidings to be brought David would bring him no profit (v. 22b),<sup>24</sup> but persists (v. 23aα) and is finally told by Joab to "run" (v. 23aβ). Josephus' rendering of this sequence (7.247a) leaves aside its central portion (vv. 22b-23aα [Joab's attempt at dissuasion and Ahimaaz' reiteration of his request]), while also inserting a declaration by Ahimaaz which helps explain why ultimately Joab assents to his appeal after initially rebuffing this. It reads: "But when Achimas again requested him to entrust the message to him,<sup>25</sup> *saying that he would mention only the victory* (νίκης; see n. 14) *and would keep silent about the death of Absalom,*<sup>26</sup> Joab granted him permission to make the journey to David."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> This is the same name that Josephus gives to another biblical figure of the time, "Hushai" i.e. David's friend and supposed supporter of Absalom who misleads the latter with his counsels; see *Ant.* 7.203, 216, 221 (LXX too uses the same name-form, i.e. Χουσαι, for the earlier figure and the one who surfaces in 18:21). As Nodet (*ad loc.*) points out, however, Josephus (like the LXX) gives no indication that the figure here in 7.246 is to be identified with the "Chūsis" earlier presented by him. Matters are still further complicated by the heading of Psalm 7 whose title refers to "Cush (MT: כּוּשׁ; LXX: Χουσι) a Benjamite." (In its commentary on 2 Samuel 18:21 *Pirqe R. El.* 53.3, on the basis of the Psalm 7 title, raises the question of how a "Benjamite" can be called a "Cushite." It answers the question by affirming that just as Cushites are different from all creatures [i.e. in their skin color] so the Benjamite differed from all other Israelites in his moral rectitude. This last affirmation, in turn, relates to the work's identification of the Cushite of 18:21 with the soldier who rejects Joab's call to kill Absalom, given David's earlier plea that his life be spared; see 2 Samuel 18:10-13).

<sup>23</sup> Compare Joab's directive to the Cushite in 18:21a: "Go, tell the king what you have seen."

<sup>24</sup> On the interpretative problems posed by Joab's words in 18:22b (RSV: "Why will you run, my son, seeing that you have no reward for the tidings?"), see the commentaries cited in n. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Compare 18:22a: "Then Ahimaaz... said again to Joab: 'Come what may, let me also run after the Cushite.'"

<sup>26</sup> This inserted statement by Ahimaaz picks up on and addresses the concern expressed by Joab in his earlier (see 7.246) word to him, i.e. that given his reputation as a bearer of good news, Ahimaaz is not the appropriate person to carry the bad news of Absalom's death to David. In response, Ahimaaz now promises that he will limit his report to the king to the good tidings that are his hallmark as a messenger.

<sup>27</sup> Compare Joab's brusque, one-word response to Ahimaaz in 18:23aβ: "Run." Here too (see n. 13), Josephus avoids the *Leitwort* "run" of 18:19-23.

The scene featuring the exchanges between Joab and the two messengers (18:19-23) concludes in v. 23b with mention of Ahimaaz' taking a route that enables him to outrun the Cushite, notwithstanding the latter's headstart (see 18:21b). Josephus (7.247b) supplies indications of his own concerning Ahimaaz' route: "And so, by striking off into a shorter road,<sup>28</sup> *which he alone knew*,<sup>29</sup> he arrived before Chūsis."

### Messengers Report

A new scene within the story opens in 18:24 where David is pictured "sitting between the two gates," while a watchman ascends the roof of the gate, raises his eyes, and beholds a single runner. In reproducing this sequence (7.248a), Josephus expatiates on its presentation of the king, while passing over various of its details about the watchman: "Now as David sat between the gates, *waiting until someone should come from the scene of battle and report how it had gone*,<sup>30</sup> one of the lookouts saw<sup>31</sup> Achimas<sup>32</sup> running<sup>33</sup> along...."

<sup>28</sup> Compare MT 18:23b: כְּרֵךְ הַכְּכָר (McCarter [see n. 2]: "the circuit road"; *RSV*: "by way of the plain"). LXX B transliterates MT's second term with its (ὁδὸν τῆν) τοῦ Κεχάρ, while LXX L (loosely) translates by κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν τὴν διατεταγμένην ("the fixed road"). Josephus' mention of the "shorter road" does have a certain counterpart in Vg.'s "per viam compendii" ("by the shortcut route").

<sup>29</sup> With this interjected phrase Josephus supplies an implicit answer to a question suggested by 18:23b, i.e. why did not the Cushite take the route in question as well?

<sup>30</sup> This appended remark to 18:24a spells out what it is David is waiting for as he "sits." The addition indicates that, contrary to what the Bible's own presentation would suggest, David was not solely or in first place concerned with the personal fate of Absalom. A similar indication is introduced by Josephus in his version of 18:28 in 7.250; see n. 49.

<sup>31</sup> In proceeding immediately to the lookout's "seeing," Josephus passes over the two preliminary (and non-essential) details cited in 18:24b, i.e. his mounting the roof of the gate and raising his eyes.

<sup>32</sup> Already at this point, Josephus informs readers of the identity of "the man running alone" whom the lookout sees in 18:24b.

<sup>33</sup> Here for the first time in his rendition of 18:19-19:9a, Josephus employs the *Leitwort* of the biblical passage; see n. 13.

The scene at the gates continues in 18:25: the lookout speaks to the king, who comments concerning the significance of the runner's being alone, whereupon the narrator adds mention of that runner's drawing near. The historian's version (7.248b-249a) expands the first of these items, shortens the second, and passes over the third: "...and though he could not yet recognize who it was,<sup>34</sup> told David that he saw someone coming towards him.<sup>35</sup> The latter replied that it was a messenger of good tidings (ἄγγελον...ἀγαθῶν<sup>36</sup>)...."<sup>37</sup>

2 Samuel 18:26 recounts a second sighting by the watchman, report by him, and response by David. Josephus (7.249b) compresses: "... and, when a moment later,<sup>38</sup> the man informed him [David],<sup>39</sup> David said that he too was a messenger."<sup>40</sup> The series of lookout's

<sup>34</sup> This inserted phrase explains why whereas in Josephus' presentation (7.248a) the lookout "sees" Ahimaaz, he does not (initially) report the latter's name to the king, but speaks only of "someone" approaching; see above.

<sup>35</sup> Josephus supplies a content to the lookout's "telling the king" as mentioned in 18:25aα.

<sup>36</sup> This is the conjecture of B. Niese which Marcus adopts. Nodet follows the reading of the Greek codices and Lat. i.e. ἀγαθόν. Compare Joab's characterization of Ahimaaz as καλῶν ἄγγελον in 7.246. (David's word of 18:25aβ speaks of there being "tidings [MT בְּשׂוֹרֵה; LXX εὐαγγελία] in his [the single runner's] mouth").

<sup>37</sup> Josephus leaves aside the protasis of David's conditional statement in 18:25aβ: "If he is alone, (there are tidings in his mouth)". It is not immediately apparent what the logical connection between the two parts of David's affirmation might be. On the question see the commentaries cited in n. 2 which suggest, e.g., that a group of runners would signify a rout from which they would be fleeing.

<sup>38</sup> This chronological indication takes the place of the notice of 18:26aα: "And the watchman saw another man running."

<sup>39</sup> In having the second report made directly to the king by the same watchman who had informed him of the first runner, Josephus differs from 18:26aβ where, in turn, the witnesses themselves diverge on the matter: The vocalized MT (and Tg.) has the watchman calling "to the gatekeeper"; in LXX B he speaks "to the gate"; in LXX L the one who "cries out" is the "watchman over the gate"; while Vg. has the speaker crying out "in culmine" ("on the rooftop"). The biblical presentation in any case presumes that David does hear the report concerning the second runner and so Josephus simplifies matters by making the watchman speak directly to him – just as he did in the case of the first runner.

<sup>40</sup> Compare David's word in 18:26b: "He also brings tidings." The Josephan David calls the first runner a "messenger of good tidings"; the second simply a "messenger." The difference intimates the diverse character of what David will, in fact, hear from the two runners.

reports and royal responses concludes in 18:27 with the former identifying the first runner as Ahimaaz and the latter pronouncing him "a good man" who "comes with good tidings." The Josephus parallel (7.249c) expands on both these items:

Then the lookout *recognized Achimas, who was now very close*,<sup>41</sup> and announced that the man running towards them was the son of the high priest Sadok.<sup>42</sup> *At that, David was overjoyed* (περιχαρής)<sup>43</sup> and said that he was a messenger of good tidings (ἀγαθῶν ἄγγελον; see ἄγγελον ἀγαθῶν, 7.249a)<sup>44</sup> and was bringing from the field of battle news of something such as they had prayed for (τῶν εὐκταίων).<sup>45</sup>

Ahimaaz makes a double report to David in 18:28, first in summary terms ("all is well," v. 28α) and then at greater length (v. 28b) with his prostration before the king (v. 28αβ) supervening. The Josephus version (7.250a), e.g., omits Ahimaaz' initial announcement as well as the macarism ("Blessed be the Lord your God") with which his more extended report commences: "*While the king was saying*

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<sup>41</sup> Josephus prefaces the watchman's announcement about Ahimaaz of 18:27a with this notice that provides a basis for his ability to make that announcement. Its reference to Ahimaaz' being "now very close" might be seen Josephus' delayed utilization of 18:25b: "and he [the first runner, Ahimaaz] came apace and drew near." At this point the lookout comes to know the identity of the first runner which he earlier could not yet perceive but about which Josephus has already informed his readers (see 7.248a).

<sup>42</sup> Josephus renders more definite the watchman's report in 18:27a: "I think the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." As in 7.245 (compare 18:19) he supplies a title for Ahimaaz' father.

<sup>43</sup> Josephus prefaces David's words of 18:27b with this reference to the king's emotional state upon hearing of Ahimaaz' approach. Words of the χαρ- stem recur in what follows.

<sup>44</sup> In 18:27b David's statement about Ahimaaz' "coming with good tidings" is preceded by the declaration "he [Ahimaaz] is a good man" which Josephus leaves aside, perhaps because it is not clearly motivated in the context – how does Ahimaaz' running make him a "good man"?

<sup>45</sup> Josephus expatiates on the biblical David's statement "he [Ahimaaz] comes with good tidings," spelling out the nature of those "good tidings." The allusion to what "they had prayed for" harks back to Josephus' inserted reference to David's "prayer for victory" as he sends his men out against Absalom in 7.235 (compare 2 Samuel 18:4 where no such prayer by the king is mentioned). Josephus' double added reference to David's praying accentuates the king's piety.



this,<sup>46</sup> Ahimaaz appeared (φανείζ)<sup>47</sup> and did obeisance to him,<sup>48</sup> and, in answer to his inquiry about the battle,<sup>49</sup> announced the welcome news (εὐγελλελιζεται)<sup>50</sup> of a decisive victory (νίκην καὶ κρατός<sup>51</sup>)."

David responds to Ahimaaz' report in 18:29a with a direct address question about the safety of Absalom. Here again, Josephus (7.250b) reformulates in indirect address: "...But when David asked whether he could also tell him something about his son...."<sup>52</sup>

Ahimaaz' reply (18:29b) speaks of his seeing (so MT LXX B; LXX L: hearing) a "great tumult" (MT and LXX L [which adds behind me]; LXX B: crowd) when being dispatched by David, but "not

<sup>46</sup> With this transitional chronological indication, serving to closely link Ahimaaz' arrival with what precedes, compare the phrase "a moment latter" which David inserts between the lookout's first and second report in 7.249. Such additions further the connectedness of the story's various scenes.

<sup>47</sup> This reference to Ahimaaz' "appearing" has a counterpart in the distinctive reading at the opening of LXX L 18:28, i.e. "and Achimaas approached (προσῆλθεν)." Compare MT and LXX B: "and Ahimaaz cried out."

<sup>48</sup> Compare the more fulsome language of 18:28aβ: "and he [Ahimaaz] bowed before the king with his face to the earth."

<sup>49</sup> In 18:28 Ahimaaz delivers his reports without any previous inquiry by the king. Josephus' presentation in which the king is the first to speak evidences his recurrent concern for the observance of proper protocol in the exchanges between persons of unequal ranks (kings and their subjects in particular); see also n. 59 on 7.251. In addition, in having David ask in first place about the outcome of the battle – the matter concerning which he is said to be awaiting news in 7.248 (see n. 30) – Josephus represents him as not solely concerned with the fate of Absalom, as he appears to be in the Bible.

<sup>50</sup> This form echoes the εὐαγγελίσασθαι used by Ahimaaz in his request to Joab to report to David in 7.245. Here in 7.250 he makes good on the intention spoken of there. In 18:28b Ahimaaz' (longer) report is introduced simply with the words "he said."

<sup>51</sup> Josephus employs this hendiadys also in *Ant.* 4.116; 5.15; 6.25,115; 7.73; its opening term recalls Ahimaaz' promise to Joab that he will mention "only the victory (νίκης)" to David in 7.247. Josephus' version of Ahimaaz' report shortens and "detheologizes" the one given by him in 18:28b: "Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delivered up the men who raised [MT LXX L; LXX B: those hating] their hand against my lord the king." On "detheologizing" as a recurrent feature of Josephus' biblical rewriting, see L.H. Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 205-14. See also n. 60.

<sup>52</sup> Josephus gives David a more general question than that voiced by his biblical counterpart: "Is it well with the young man Absalom?"

knowing what this was." The historian embellishes (7.250c) this answer with several additional items, while also rearranging its components: "...he said *that he had hastened to him immediately upon the rout of the enemy*,<sup>53</sup> and though he had heard<sup>54</sup> a great shouting (μεγάλης φωνῆς)<sup>55</sup> of those who were pursuing Absalom,<sup>56</sup> he had been unable to learn anything more about this,<sup>57</sup> *because* he had been sent off *in haste* by Joab to report the victory (νίκην)."<sup>58</sup> David reacts to Ahimaaz' statement in 18:30 by commanding him to "turn aside, and stand here," and Ahimaaz obeys. Given that this development has no significance for the subsequent course of the story, Josephus simply omits it.

The Cushite arrives in 18:31 and immediately informs David of his "good tidings," i.e. the Lord's delivery of him from his opponents. Josephus (7.251a) interjects a prostration by "Chūsīs,"

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<sup>53</sup> This opening words, with their emphasis on Ahimaaz' alacrity in coming to David serve to explain why he has nothing definite to relate concerning Absalom - as he might have had he waited longer.

<sup>54</sup> This verb corresponds to that used by Ahimaaz in LXX L 18:29b. In MT and LXX B he refers to what he "saw."

<sup>55</sup> This is the reading of the codices RO (cf. Lat: *voces*) which Marcus follows. Nodet reads μεγάλης βοῆς with the witnesses MSPE.

<sup>56</sup> This reference to the "pursuit" of Absalom lacks an explicit counterpart in Ahimaaz' reply of 18:29b. It might, however, reflect the plus "(I heard a great tumult) *behind me*" of LXX L. In any case, it does hark back to Josephus' (interjected) mention of all David's men "going after" Absalom in 7.238.

<sup>57</sup> Compare Ahimaaz' concluding word in MT 18:29b: "(I saw a great tumult), but I did not know what it was."

<sup>58</sup> In 18:29b the reference to Joab's dispatch of him stands at the start of Ahimaaz' word. Josephus transfers the item to the end of his version of that word, giving it the function of an explanation ("because") of why Ahimaaz was unable to find out anything further about the "great shouting" he had heard. From the biblical wording of Ahimaaz' declaration Josephus leaves aside its qualification of Joab as "your [David's] servant," while adding the reference to the "haste" with which the general dispatched him (this corresponding to Ahimaaz' previous mention of his "hastening to him [David] immediately" at the start of his reply) and the specification concerning the purpose of Ahimaaz' mission ("to report the victory").

even while he compresses his actual announcement: "Then, when Chūsis arrived and, *with an obeisance*,<sup>59</sup> announced the victory (νίκην)."<sup>60</sup> Just as he did in the case of Ahimaaz (see 18:29a// 7.250b), David responds to the Cushite's report with a question about Absalom's state (18:32a). Whereas, however, the biblical king uses identical wording ("Is it well with the young man Absalom?") in his (direct address) query to the two messengers, Josephus turns the second of these inquiries into the editorial notice: "...David questioned him [Chūsis] about his son."

The exchange between David and the Cushite takes a new, fateful turn as the latter expresses (18:32b) the wish that the Lord might cause all David's opponents to end up the way Absalom did. Josephus' rendition compresses Chūsis' response: "'May your enemies,' he replied, 'suffer the same fate as Absalom.'"<sup>61</sup>

### David's Reaction

The lengthy biblical account (19:1-9a) of David's reaction to the news of Absalom's demise opens in 19:1 with a description of the king's lamenting in the gate-chamber. The historian prefaces his parallel to this description with a notice (7.252a) of the effect of

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<sup>59</sup> With this insertion Josephus reinforces the parallelism between Ahimaaz and "Chūsis," both of whom begin their reports to David with an act of homage, whereas in the Bible (see 18:28) only the former does this. The insertion likewise reflects the historian's preoccupation with proper (royal) protocol; see n. 49.

<sup>60</sup> Chūsis' announcement of "victory" (νίκην) echoes Ahimaaz' report of "decisive victory" (νίκην καὶ κράτος) in 7.250. Compare the word attributed to the Cushite in 18:31b: "Good tidings for my lord the king! For the Lord has delivered you this day from the power of all who rise up against you." Here too (see n. 51), Josephus "detheologizes" the report given David.

<sup>61</sup> Compare the Cushite's word in 18:32b: "May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up against you [MT LXX L; LXX B Vg.: him] for evil, be like that young man."

Chūsīs' report not only on David himself, but on his entire force: "*These words took away from both him and his soldiers all their joy (χαράν)*<sup>62</sup> *over the victory (νίκη), great as that was.*"<sup>63</sup> Thereafter (7.252b), he continues with the following, embellished rendering of 19:1: "As for David, he went up to the highest part of the city,<sup>64</sup> and bewailed his son,<sup>65</sup> *beating his breast, tearing his hair and doing himself every kind of injury (αἰκίζόμενος),*<sup>66</sup> and crying out,<sup>67</sup> 'O my son, would that death had come to me and that I had died with you.'"<sup>68</sup> To this description of the king in mourning he further attaches an explanation (7.252c) of why David responds in this way to the death of one who was, after all, a rebel and threat to his own life: "... *for he was by nature affectionate (φιλόστοργος), and was especially attached to Absalom.*"

<sup>62</sup> This word echoes the reference to David's being "overjoyed" (περιχαρής) at Ahimaaz' report in 7.249b. The echo serves to accentuate the effect of Chūsīs' subsequent message which completely dissipates all David's joy – and that of his men as well.

<sup>63</sup> The reference to David's "soldiers" losing their joy over the victory along with the king himself in the above notice might be seen as Josephus' anticipation of 19:3a: "So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people."

<sup>64</sup> In 19:1 David goes up to "the chamber over the gate." Josephus makes his grieving place a more conspicuous, exposed site which, as such, would better account for the king's grief becoming generally known – as it does in 19:2-3.

<sup>65</sup> This phrase might be seen as Josephus' amalgamation of the separate references to David's being "deeply moved" (MT LXX B; LXX L: shedding tears) and "weeping" in 19:1a.

<sup>66</sup> The above three items, amplifying the reference to David's "weeping" of 19:1, intensify the king's distress and the pathos of the scene. The last of them picks up on the mention of David's "threatening to do himself some injury (κακόν)" should Absalom be harmed that Josephus inserts into the biblical account of the royal forces sallying forth (18:4b-5) in 7.232b. Now that Absalom has, in fact, been killed, the king makes good on his earlier threat.

<sup>67</sup> Compare the transitional phrase of 19:1bα: "... as he went [MT LXX B; LXX L: as he wept], he said..." Josephus substitutes a more emphatic *verbum dicendi*. At the same time, he (exceptionally) retains the Bible's direct address for the king's following words in which he apostrophizes the dead Absalom; see above.

<sup>68</sup> Compare David's declaration in 19:1bβ: "O my son, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son [LXX L omits the last "my son" of MT and LXX B]." Josephus reduces the Bible's fivefold (fourfold) "my son" to a single one, leaves aside the triple evocation of the name "Absalom," and has David express the wish to have died "with" rather than "in place of" him.

In 19:2-3 Joab and the people learn, separately, of David's grieving over Absalom with the result that their victory is turned into mourning. Josephus, who has already anticipated (see 7.252a and n. 63) the Bible's mention of the royal forces' change of mood, compresses (7.253a): "And when the army and Joab heard<sup>69</sup> how deeply the king mourned his son...."

The result of the people's learning of David's grief is that they "steal into" the city like those who return in shame from a rout (19:4). In a way reminiscent of his handling of David's own mourning in 7.252b, the historian embellishes (7.253b) the biblical portrayal of the army's dejected entry: "... they were ashamed to enter the city *with the appearance of victors* (νενικηκότων)<sup>70</sup> and instead they all came in, as if from a defeat,<sup>71</sup> *with bowed heads and tearful faces.*"<sup>72</sup>

2 Samuel 19:5 returns to the picture of the grieving David featured in 19:1. His face covered, the king now twice cries out the name "Absalom" and three times (so MT; LXX BL: twice) calls him "my son."<sup>73</sup> Just as he did with his version of 19:1 in 7.252c, Josephus (7.254a) compresses this highly repetitious account: "Then, while the king with veiled head was moaning for his son...."

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<sup>69</sup> Josephus reverses the sequence of 19:2 (Joab [alone] is told of David's grieving) and 19:3 (the people hear of this), conflating the two distinct notices as well.

<sup>70</sup> In 19:4 mention of "shame" is connected with the case of a (hypothetical) army that has "fled in battle," with the stealthy entry of David's actual force being compared to this.

<sup>71</sup> Compare 19:4 where the army is said to enter the city "as people who steal in who are ashamed when they flee in battle." See previous note.

<sup>72</sup> Josephus accentuates the biblical portrayal of the army's dejection with these two appended details.

<sup>73</sup> In MT 19:1,5 David uses the expression "my son" a total of eight times (in Josephus' version [7.252c, 254a] the king refers to Absalom as his "son" only twice). This noteworthy accumulation of the designation caught the attention of rabbinic tradition which affirms that its first seven uses were to raise Absalom up through the seven divisions of Gehenna and the eighth either to reconnect Absalom's severed head to his body or, alternatively, to secure his entry into the world to come (thus *b. Šot. 10b*; compare *Pirqe R. El. 53.4* which, with reference to David's fivefold use of the "my son"

In the face of David's uncontrolled grief Joab takes matters into his own hands; entering the house where the king is (19:6a) he delivers a long and severe speech to him (19:6b-8). Josephus (7.254b-256) expatiates on the general's intervention, even while giving his opening words a less abrasive tone. His version runs:

(7.254b) ... Joab went into him<sup>74</sup> and consoled (παρηγορῶ)<sup>75</sup> him, saying, "My lord,<sup>76</sup> you are unwittingly slandering (λανθάνεις διαβάλλων) yourself by this conduct,<sup>77</sup> for you seem to hate those who love you<sup>78</sup> and are risking their lives both for you and for your family,<sup>79</sup> while you hold dear those

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formula in 19:1, avers that this led to Absalom's being removed from the fifth gate of Gehenna where he had been situated following his death and where he was seen by David who thereupon broke into the anguished words of 19:1). On the other hand, rabbinic tradition also cites the dictum of R. Meir, who basing himself on the mention of Joab's armor-bearers both "smiting" and "slaying" Absalom in 2 Samuel 18:15, asserts that their first action has to do with this world, while their second concerns the world to come, in which Absalom has no portion according to Meir; see *b. Sanh.* 103b; cf. *'Abot R. Nat.* 36.

<sup>74</sup> 2 Samuel 19:6a speaks of "the house" that Joab enters for his exchange with David. Such a house has not been mentioned previously in the references to David's whereabouts of 18:24-19:5. Not surprisingly then, Josephus omits the allusion.

<sup>75</sup> Nodet's translation (*ad loc.*), i.e. "exhorter" gives a somewhat different nuance to the general's intervention. In 19:6a Joab simply "says" to David.

<sup>76</sup> The biblical Joab uses no such title in his address to David that begins immediately (19:6b) with reproachful words. Josephus' insertion of it serves to impart a more respectful character to his whole discourse.

<sup>77</sup> This opening statement by Joab with its recognition that David has been acting in ignorance of the effect of his behavior on his reputation lacks a counterpart in the biblical Joab's speech where there is no suggestion that David has been (mis-) conducting himself with anything less than full deliberation. The general's allusion to David's "slandering himself" takes on a particular pointedness in view of Josephus' previous mentions of David's being "slandered" to Saul both by Doeg (see *Ant.* 6.270) and by the Ziphites (see 6.280; cf. 6.285); now, according to Joab it is David himself who is damaging his own reputation – albeit "unwittingly" – by acting as he is. (In the *Vita* [see 424-425, 429] Josephus portrays himself as likewise the object of slanderous accusations to his Flavian patrons by his envious compatriots, thereby implicitly paralleling himself with the exalted David.)

<sup>78</sup> Compare 19:7aβ where Joab avers: "you hate those who love you." Josephus accentuates this charge by advancing it to first place in the accusatory portion of Joab's speech (19:6b-7). At the same time, he softens its tone with the interjected phrase "you seem (to hate)."

<sup>79</sup> Josephus shortens the catalogue of David's dependents as cited by Joab in 19:6b: "You have covered with shame the faces of your servants who have this day saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters, and the lives of your wives and concubines." In his version Josephus splices his equivalent to this sequence between his rendering of 19:7aα (David loves those who hate him) and 19:7aβ (David hates those who love him), appending it to the later charge as its continuation.

who are most hostile to you,<sup>80</sup> *although they had justly (δικῆ) died.*<sup>81</sup> (7.255) *For, if Absalom had conquered and had firmly secured the kingdom, not one of us would have been left to survive, but all of us, beginning with you and your children, would have perished miserably,*<sup>82</sup> *and the enemy, instead of weeping for us, would have rejoiced (χαρόντων)*<sup>83</sup> *and punished any who pitied our misfortunes.*<sup>84</sup> *And yet you are not ashamed*<sup>85</sup> *to behave in this way about a man, who is the more hateful for having been so impious (ἀσεβής),*<sup>86</sup> *though your son.*<sup>87</sup> (7.256) *Cease, therefore, from you unjustified grief (ἀδίκου λύπης)*<sup>88</sup> *and go out and show yourself to your soldiers and thank them for the victory (νίκης) and for their ardour in*

<sup>80</sup> Compare 19:7αα: "you (David) hate those who love you." Josephus reverses the charges of 19:7αα and 19:7αβ, having Joab cite that of 19:7αβ in first place; see previous note.

<sup>81</sup> Via this attached characterization of the rebels, Josephus' Joab highlights the wrongfulness of David's mourning over them.

<sup>82</sup> This sequence has no equivalent in the biblical Joab's words. It insertion serves to underscore the magnitude of the threat posed by Absalom and his supporters that endangered, not only David's household, but all those associated with him. Thereby, the Josephan Joab undergirds his previous affirmations both about the "justice" of the rebels' death and the wrongfulness of David's mourning for them.

<sup>83</sup> This word echoes the references to David's being "overjoyed" (περιχαρής) in 7.249 and to his and his men's having their "joy" (χαράν) taken from them in 7.252.

<sup>84</sup> Also this element of Joab's speech lacks a biblical counterpart. The addition introduces a further charge to the indictment against Absalom, i.e. had they prevailed, he and his supporters would never have shown the same compassion for David and his backers as David is displaying towards his rebel son.

<sup>85</sup> In 19:6b Joab's opening charge against David runs: "you have covered with shame the faces of all your servants." The Josephan Joab accuses David personally of "having no shame" in his grieving for a son who does not deserve it.

<sup>86</sup> With this adjectival qualification of Absalom, Joab recalls David's own earlier surprise over the "impiety (ἀσβεία) and audacity" of the rebel Absalom as cited in *Ant.* 7.195.

<sup>87</sup> This conclusion to Josephus' expanded version of Joab's indictment of David highlights the wrongful behavior of both father and son. Compare the closing words of Joab's accusation in 19:7b: "for today I perceive [MT LXX B; LXX L: you perceive] that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today [LXX L lacks today] then you [David] would be pleased." In Josephus' version, the wrongfulness of Absalom's behavior (and so conversely the rightfulness of his death) are highlighted far beyond what one finds in the biblical Joab's speech.

<sup>88</sup> With this phrase – which lacks an equivalent in Joab's exhortation to David about what he should do now of 19:8 – the general sets the king in contrast with Absalom and his adherents who "died justly (δίκη)" according to 7.254. (The expression "unjustified grief" is *hapax* in Josephus.)

the fight.<sup>89</sup> For, if you persist in doing as you have just been doing, *I will this very day persuade the people to revolt from you and give the kingdom over to another,*<sup>90</sup> *and then I shall make your sorrow more bitter and real.*<sup>91</sup>

David responds to Joab's admonition by immediately "arising and taking his seat in the gate" (19:9α). Josephus (7.257a) precedes his equivalent to this notice with mention of the effect of the general's words upon the king: "*By these words Joab diverted the king from his grief (λύπη<sup>92</sup>), and brought him to taking thought about the matter.*"<sup>93</sup> He then proceeds to amplify (7.257b) the biblical account of David's "session": "So David, *changing his appearance (μετασχηματίσας),*<sup>94</sup> *made himself presentable to the people,*<sup>95</sup> and sat by the gates...."

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<sup>89</sup> Compare 19:8α: "Now, therefore, arise, go out and speak kindly to your servants." Josephus has Joab spell out what he has in mind when calling on David to "speak kindly to your servants."

<sup>90</sup> Compare Joab's warning to David in 19:8αββ: "for I swear [MT B; LXX L VL: they swear] by the Lord, if you do not go [LXX L VL + to meet the people], not a man will stay with you this night [LXX BL add and know for yourself]." Josephus' version eliminates the reference to Joab's "swearing," while conversely accentuating both the threat facing David should he not do as Joab is urging (a active revolt and transfer to the kingdom to another rather than a mere desertion of his forces) and Joab's own active role in bringing this about.

<sup>91</sup> Compare the conclusion of Joab's discourse in 19:8ββ: "and this [i.e. David's abandonment by his men] will be worse for you than all the evil that has come upon you from your youth until now." Here again (see previous note), Josephus has Joab insist on the active role he intends to take in requiting David – should the king disregard his appeal.

<sup>92</sup> This word echoes Joab's reference to David's "unjustified grief" (ἀδικοῦ λύπης) in 7.256. The echo suggests that the king has indeed recognized the inappropriateness of his grief for Absalom as a result of Joab's words to him.

<sup>93</sup> The above inserted remark highlights Joab's efficacy as a speaker – even to a king.

<sup>94</sup> Josephus' one remaining use of the verb μετασχηματίζω is in *Ant.* 8.267 where it refers to the wife of Jeroboam's "disguising herself" prior to her visit to the prophet Ahijah to inquire about the fate of the couple's sick son.

<sup>95</sup> Josephus' mention of these two preliminary measures by David prior to his sitting in the gate (19:9α) accentuates his whole-hearted adherence to Joab's proposed course of action – he appears before the people as one who has put his grief behind him completely.



The description of David's initiative continues in 19:9aβy as the people hear of this and themselves "appear before" the king. Josephus' rendition (7.257c) gives a more definite content to the people's response to the news and appends a notice rounding off the whole story of David's mourning: "...until all the people heard of it<sup>96</sup> and ran to greet him."<sup>97</sup> *And this was how these matters were.*<sup>98</sup>

## Conclusion

Having completed my detailed comparison of *Ant.* 7.245-257 and 2 Samuel 18:19-19:9a, I now return to my opening questions in order to summarize its findings concerning these. The first of those questions concerned the text-form(s) of the Samuel passage utilized by Josephus. The indications in this regard generated by my comparison were, in fact, rather limited. The following might be mentioned here. Like LXX and Vg., the historian takes MT's gentilic "the Cushite" as a proper name (see 7.246). He agrees (7.257) with MT and LXX L 19:9a in having the people learn about David's "session", rather than announcing this themselves – as they do in LXX B (see n. 96). On the other hand, Josephus aligns himself with peculiar readings of LXX L in a whole series of instances: The names "Joab" and "David" are mentioned explicitly in the account of

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<sup>96</sup> In having the people informed of David's move Josephus agrees with MT and LXX L 19:9aβ against LXX B where all the people are the ones who announce that David is sitting in the gate.

<sup>97</sup> Compare 19:9αy: "and all the people came before the king (+ at the gate, LXX L)." Josephus accentuates the enthusiasm of the crowd's response to David's appearance and their verbalization of this – they do not simply "appear before" the king, but also "greet" him.

<sup>98</sup> Such closing formulas, signifying the end of a given segment, are a characteristic feature of Josephus' biblical rewriting. They serve to make clear that he has now concluded his presentation of a particular event or topic.

Ahimaaz' request in 7.245 and LXX L 19:18 (see nn. 12 and 15); Ahimaaz' "appearance" before David is noted in 7.250a and LXX L 18:28 (in MT and LXX B he "cries out"; see n. 47); the same Ahimaaz refers to his having heard (rather than seen, so MT and LXX B) the post-battle tumult (7.250c and LXX L 18:29b), while his further mention of the "pursuit" of Absalom might be inspired by the LXX L plus "behind me" in 18:29b (see n. 56). Finally, the allusion to the "shorter road" taken by Ahimaaz in 7.247 has a counterpart in Vg. 18:23's distinctive reference to "the shortcut route" (see n. 28). These findings, limited as they are, do at least suggest that Josephus had various text-forms of 2 Samuel 18:19-19:9a with which to work.<sup>99</sup>

The second of my questions focussed on Josephus' rewriting techniques in 7.245-257 and the distinctiveness of his presentation of David's mourning that these generate. A first prominent rewriting technique utilized throughout our passage is its additions to/ expansions of the biblical data. Instances include: Ahimaaz' inserted promise about what he will (not) say to David (7.247) and his sole familiarity with the shorter road (7.247), the purpose of David's seating himself between the gates (7.248; compare 18:24), the lookout's non-recognition of Ahimaaz and the giving of a content to his speaking to the king (compare 7.248 and 18:25), David's response to the lookout's second communication concerning the approaching Ahimaaz (compare 7.249 and 18:27), the king's inquiry of Ahimaaz (7.250; compare 18:28), the latter's statement about the situation of Absalom (7.250; compare 18:29), Chūsīs' obeisance (7.251; compare

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<sup>99</sup> For more on Josephus' Samuel text, see E.C. Ulrich, "Josephus' Biblical Text for the Books of Samuel," in *Josephus, The Bible and History*, ed. L.H. Feldman and G. Hata (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 81-96. (He holds that in his retelling of the material of 1-2 Samuel, Josephus drew primarily on a L-like text, a claim that the findings of this study would support.)

18:31), the prefatory notice concerning the effect of Chūsis' report on both David and his troops (7.253), David's mourning gestures and the attached comment about his affectionate nature (7.252; compare 19:1), the army's dejected entry into the city (7.253; compare 19:4), the amplification of Joab's address to David (7.254-256; compare 19:6-8), and the elaboration of the story's final scene, the encounter of David and his men (7.257; compare 19:9a).

Conversely, Josephus either omits or compresses a variety of source elements, e.g., the Cushite's prostration to Joab and his running (18:21b), the second exchange between Joab and Ahimaaz (18:22-23a; compare 7.247a), David's remarks about the significance of the first runner's being "alone" (18:25; compare 7.249a) and his being "a good man" (18:27b; compare 7.249c), Ahimaaz' battle report (18:28; compare 7.250a), David's telling him to "turn aside" and his doing so (18:30), the Cushite's messages about the battle and about Absalom (18:31-32a; compare 7.251), the separate mentions of Joab and the army's hearing of David's grieving (19:2-3; compare 7.253a), and the king's words of lament (9:1,5; compare 7.252b and 7.254a).

Josephus also rearranges the sequence of the Bible's narration. We noted the following instances: Ahimaaz' "drawing near" is cited at a later point in the unfolding of the story (compare 7.249 and 18:25), and he pays homage before rather than after addressing David (compare 7.250 and 18:28). The components of Ahimaaz' report concerning Absalom's state are reproduced in a different order (compare 7.250c and 18:29b), as are those of Joab's discourse (compare 7.254-256 and 19:6-8). Mention of the army's loss of satisfaction in its victory is anticipated (compare 7.252a and 19:3a).

Finally, the historian adapts/modifies the Samuel data in still other ways. Stylistically, he regularly replaces direct with indirect

discourse (see n.12). On the terminological level he avoids the divine title "Lord" (see n.18), while giving prominence to words of the *vix*-stem (see n.14). Contentual modifications are also in evidence in Josephus' version. David ascends "to the highest part of the city" rather than to "the chamber over the gate" and wishes he had died "with" instead of "in place of" Absalom (compare 7.252b and 19:1). Joab's threat about what will happen should David ignore his appeal is intensified and the general's own role in activating that threat highlighted (compare 7.256b and 19:8b). David's forces, for their part, do not simply "come before him" (so 19:9a), but "run to greet him" (7.257b).

What then is distinctive about Josephus' story of David's mourning in comparison to the biblical one? For one thing, the historian fills various "gaps" left by source: What makes Ahimaaz an unsuitable messenger of Absalom's death in Joab's eyes (compare 7.245 and 18:20)? How was the former nevertheless ultimately able to persuade the latter to let him go to David (compare 7.247a and 18:23a)? Why did the Cushite not use the road taken by Ahimaaz as well (compare 7.247b and 18:23b)? For what purpose did David position himself between the gates (compare 7.248 and 18:24)? Why should he lament the death of his rebel son so intensely (compare 7.252 and 19:1)? What effect did Joab's words have on the king (compare 7.257a and 19:9a)? In the same line, Josephus introduces transitional (e.g., "a moment later" [7.249] and "while the king was saying this" [7.250]) and closing ("and this was how these matters were" [7.257]) formulas that impart a heightened cohesion to his presentation. On the other hand, he also endeavors to streamline the biblical account, especially where repetitions (e.g., David's verbose laments for Absalom; compare 19:1,5 and 7.252,254) and non-essential details (e.g., the Cushite's bowing before Joab and then

running [18:21b], the watchman's ascent and lifting up his eyes [18:24], and David's directive to Ahimaaz about "turning aside" [18:30]) are involved. Source obscurities are clarified or otherwise disposed of as well. Thus, Josephus makes clear that Ahimaaz was indeed informed of Absalom's death by Joab and elucidates the connection between his being so and his unsuitability to carry the news to David (compare 7.245 and 18:20). Similarly, he resolves the puzzling sense of Joab's subsequent word to Ahimaaz about the "unprofitability" of the mission he wishes to undertake (18:22b) and of David's comments about the first runner's being "alone" (18:25) and his status as a "good man" (18:27) by simply leaving these elements aside. His rewriting further evidences a certain "detheologizing" tendency (see nn. 51, 60) together with a concern with the observance of royal protocol (see nn. 49,59). We likewise noted the incorporation of (implicit) reminiscences of earlier passages of Josephus' David story, e.g., the king's pre-battle prayer (7.249, alluding to 7.235) along with Joab's reference to David's "slandering himself" (see n. 77) and qualifying Absalom as "impious" (7.255, echoing 7.198).

A last distinctive feature of the historian's retelling of the biblical story of David's mourning concerns the characterization of its two chief figures, i.e. David and Joab. In his portrayal of David Josephus retouches the Bible's depiction in several respects: His king is not so exclusively focussed on the fate of Absalom (see 7.248, 249 [David is "overjoyed" at the prospect of good news from the battlefield], 250); the allusion to his earlier prayer in 7.249 accentuates his piety (see n. 45); his verbal laments for Absalom are accompanied by an array of mourning practices (7.252; compare 19:1.5); his affection for his son in spite of everything is highlighted (see 7.252 *in fine*); and finally he is represented as recognizing the validity of Joab's remonstrances and "going all out" in his acting on these (compare

7.257 and 19:9a).<sup>100</sup> As for Joab, Josephus, first of all, gives him a considerably longer, more fully developed speech to David than that pronounced by his biblical counterpart (compare 7.254-256 and 19:6-8). That speech, in turn, shows the general both more respectful and empathetic towards the king (see nn. 76-78), but also more assertive about his own taking the lead in requiting David should his appeals to him go unheeded (see nn. 90-91).<sup>101</sup>

My final opening question asked about Josephus' handling of the story of David's mourning Absalom in comparison with its treatment elsewhere in early Jewish and Christian tradition. In the course of this essay, we noted a certain similarity between the historian's rewording of Joab's initial response to Ahimaaz of 18:20 in 7.245 and the interpretation of the general's reply in Pseudo-Jerome's *Quaestio* 166 (see n. 19). By contrast, Josephus diverges from Pseudo-Jerome "appellative" understanding (see n. 20) of the name of Joab's second messenger (MT: the Cushite), just as he has no counterpart to the rabbinic discussions concerning the *post mortem* fate of Absalom and the (non-) effect of David's laments upon this (see n. 73).

In 2 Samuel 18:19-19:9a Josephus found a biblical story whose pathos and depiction of the competing claims of private grief and political responsibility would undoubtedly appeal to his Greco-Roman readers. Not surprisingly then, he offers those readers a detailed reproduction of the story. In so doing, however, he also goes to much trouble to improve on the original story in a variety of

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<sup>100</sup> On the overall Josephan portrait of David, see Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible*, 537-69.

<sup>101</sup> On Josephus' presentation of Joab overall, see L.H. Feldman, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible*, JSJSup 58 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 203-14.

ways and for a number of different purposes. Josephus' exertions in this regard call for similar exertions on the part of those who wish to understand what he has made of the story the Bible gave him.

## ABSTRACT

2 Samuel 18:19-19:9a (Eng. 18:19-19:8a) tells one of the most poignant stories in the Bible, David's mourning for his rebel son Absalom who has just been defeated and killed contrary to his earlier pleas. This article examines Josephus' retelling of the story in his *Ant.* 7.245-257. It aims to elucidate three overarching questions regarding the Josephan version. Firstly, which text-form(s) of the biblical text did the historian utilize? Secondly, what rewriting techniques has he brought to bear on the data of his *Vorlage* and what is distinctive about his rendition as a result of his doing so? Thirdly and finally, how does Josephus' handling of the Samuel material compare with its treatment elsewhere in ancient Jewish and Christian tradition?

## 撮 要

撒母耳記下十八章19節至十九章9節上，記述了聖經其中一個最淒酸的故事——大衛哀悼謀反的兒子押沙龍。大衛面對兒子叛變，雖然曾要求部下保存押沙龍的性命，但兒子最後還是被殺。本文審視約瑟夫在《猶太古史》(*Ant.* 7.245-257)中如何重述這故事，並闡明在此版本中蘊含的三個主要問題：第一，約瑟夫使用了哪（幾）個聖經文本形式；第二，他處理「原稿」資料時運用了哪種寫作技巧，這種處理方法有甚麼特色；第三，約瑟夫處理關於撒母耳資料的方法，與古猶太及基督教傳統有何不同。