

Name: Darlene Ingram-NT 504

Document Title: Josephus Antiquities 14:1-78

Written Assignments #3

Instructions: Use this guide to help you analyze the assigned primary source document. Answer as many of the questions as you can, **using evidence from the document**. Write your answers to as many questions as possible, based on **what you observe** (which may involve reading between the lines).¹

First Impressions

1. What are your first impressions? *Draw from your previous educational and personal knowledge.*

Reminded of statement from Lecture - "Independence becomes a powerful memory, lines are blurred by leaders, leaving Jews vulnerable again". This literature highlights the infighting among the Hasmoneans which opens the door for Rome's aggression and power to overtake them and cause devastation to Judea and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

A Patriarchal Narratives theme of conflict, where we see conflicts between brothers and family that change the course of history permeate throughout this narrative. We learn that God is not thwarted by impossible problems, as we see these conflicts develop and played out in this literature. In the Patriarchal narratives, we see conflicts/sibling rivalry between Ishmael and Issac, Esau and Jacob and Joseph and his brothers. Every time the Patriarch took matters into their own hands things went terribly wrong as we see with Aristobulus and Hyrcanus.

Hyrcanus had a friend called Antipater who was an Idumean and noted that Herod was an Idumean with lineage that stems from the Edomites of which Ishmael was the father of that people. Herod the Great was the second son of Antipater the Idumean, a high ranking official under Hyrcanus. Noting that all these events lay a foundation for the rise of Herod the Great.

When reading the resistance literature, strong family ties were very evident while during this period it appears that family ties are no longer important or strong.

¹ Adapted and expanded from "Engaging Students with Primary Sources," Smithsonian *Natural Museum of American History*. <https://historyexplorer.si.edu/sites/default/files/PrimarySources.pdf> Accessed 12/21/2021.

In-fighting, internal strife becomes the downfall of the Jews. Onias, a righteous man, beloved by God is stoned to death because he does not want his prayers to be used wrongly but God immediately punished them because of their wickedness. This in-fighting also leads the brothers to fight over the sacred elements of the passover.

Jewish leaders ask the Romans for help and that becomes their downfall.

Jews have come out of the Babylonian exile into Judea bringing the Babylonian influence, customs and traditions into the Jewish nation.

2. What kind of document is it (letter, prayer, historical account, apocalypse, testament, narrative, etc.)? How do you know? *Clues within the text will alert you to the literary genre the writer used to communicate this message.*

*This document is considered to be a **Historical Narrative** because it gives an account of real life experiences, as told in "The Antiquities of the Jews", by a noted historian and leader who studied and reported on the events known as the Jewish Wars, Flavius Josephus. According to Larry Heller, "Josephus offers a general history of the Jewish people with a clearly apologetic purpose designed to counter vicious slanders against Jews" (Helyer, Page 343). This literature provides a historical backdrop for the journey of the Jews from Genesis to the New Testament.*

The proof of narration is evidenced by the story being told by Flavius Josephus about Rome's aggression and power to cause devastation to Judea and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The pain, slaughter and death suffered by the Jews and Priest during this time under the power of the Romans and their fight for domination. It has dialogue and characters who interact with one another, even negatively, and gives an connected account of the events.

Nationalistic Pride has waned from the time of the resistance to now. When the Second Temple Period begins in the Persian period, the Jews have restored the temple and have hope in a new beginning worshiping their God and being his chosen people but as they move through the periods nationalism is dimmed by the events of the time. Ptolemaic rule, Alexander the Great conquers but the Jews still have a temple, a place to worship, they live in a community where they are still allowed to follow their traditions and customs. Under the Seleucid rule, Jewish practices and traditions are banned and many are slaughtered because they are forced to embrace Greek customs and ways, which then causes a Maccabean revolt. During the period of Maccabean rule the Maccabees destroy all thing Greek to return back to traditions, they even drove Hellenized Jews off their land. They re-establish Jewish cities and customs only to be conquered by the Romans and face domination, physically, emotionally, financially and spiritually. According to our class presentation, any culture or people spreading out from their homeland will be influenced by their journey and the conditions where they finally settle. Jewish identity is hampered because their culture, customs beliefs and observances are not reinforced or simply diminished.

Looking More Closely

1. Read through the document carefully. Make a list of any unusual words, phrases, or concepts. *Does a particular expression or concept strike you as strange? Does it jump out at you?*

In the midst of bloodshed and destruction Josephus gives a reminiscent and metaphoric description of the Palm trees in Jericho, “where the palm trees grow and that balsam which is an ointment of all the most precious, which upon any incision made in the wood with a sharp stone, distill out there like a juice.”

The description of the two brothers, “Aristobolus is seen as a contrary temper, an active man and one of a great and generous soul while his brother Hyrcanus is viewed as a degenerate, unmanly with a temper and a want of spirit.”

Description Herod as a “puppet King”. Herod is a convert under the Hasmoneans, he becomes a powerful client king and friend to Rome. He is called the King of the Jews because of where he comes from and his treatment of the Jews at the time. Under Herod Jews allowed to live according to traditions and customs.

Text mentions Damascus and immediately thought of the road Paul traveled and was converted on in Acts the 9th chapter.

Terminology like “Wicked Jews” is used to describe the Jews who stoned Onias, a righteous man who was beloved of God to death.

2. Is there a date on it? If so, what is it? If not, are there any other clues within the document that might indicate when it was written? *Documents may allude to a past well-known event as if it was happening now (a common device used to impact how the hearer-readers understand the message the author wants to convey). 2nd Temple writers tended to look back for precedents that provided analogies for the exhortations or messages they wanted their generation to consider.*

The Jewish Antiquities, Josephus’s second work was completed in 93/94 c.e., the thirteenth year of the reign of Domitian. Its content, which complements and in part overlaps with the Jewish War, trace the history of his people from Adam to the inception of the Jewish war”(Nickelsburg, page 291).

The text outlines the beginning of this battle after Queen Salome Alexandra has died and we are now faced with the two brothers, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus rebelling against each other at Jericho.

3. Is there a location indicated? What is it? *Explicit locations could be Babylon or Jerusalem, for example. But the location may be veiled. Perhaps the author mentions customs or events that suggest the location is outside of Judea.*

The text outlines the beginning of this battle after Queen Salome Alexandra has died and we are now faced with the two brothers, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus rebelling against each other at Jericho. During these writing we see, Jerusalem fall and Judea weakened and devastated and Roman power strengthened. All of these locations are backdrops to this historical event.

4. Who wrote or created the document? How can you tell? *If the author is stated, is it the actual person identified or is it an anonymous writer using a famous name to give the message greater authority? 2nd Temple writers often used pseudonyms of well-known biblical characters to draw attention to the seriousness of the issues he is addressing. Is the author familiar with Jewish tradition? Is he familiar with Gentile values? There is much you can learn from the document itself even if you do not know the author's exact identity.*

Joseph ben Mattathias, better known by his adopted Roman name, Flavius Josephus was the author of The Jewish Antiquities of which this Josephus Antiquities 14:1-78, is a portion of. The twenty books of Jewish Antiquities fall into five major divisions from the primeval period to the outbreak of revolt against Rome (Helyer, page, 343). Flavius Josephus is considered to be a noted historian *on the events known as the Jewish Wars and according to Larry Helyer, "Josephus offers a general history of the Jewish people with a clearly apologetic purpose designed to counter vicious slanders against Jews" (Helyer, Page 343).*

5. For whom was the document written or created? How do you know? *Is the document written to or for a specific group of Jews (or Gentile readers)? Do these Jews seem to live in Palestine or in other parts of the empires in control? Look for clues like the mention of the Torah, Temple, or Jewish customs. Maybe Gentile customs are mentioned (which may clue you into a group of Jews living outside Judea). Do the Gentiles live in parts of the empire—possibly a city—or does the document just have a general audience in mind?*

This document is written for everyone interested in the Bible and its history. It's also written for the Jews because the Antiquities is a lengthy celebration and elaboration the Jewish nations history, constitution, culture and virtue. Books 1-10 recount Israel's history through the Babylonian exile, Book 11 deals with Alexander the Great while books 12-20 give a view in history that is limited and known as the silent years. Josephus' accounts of these event provides historical accounts, letters, literature and contextual information to help understand the periods that lead into the New Testament (Nickelsburg, 293).

6. What is the purpose of the document? What made you think this? *Are the documents written to people who are oppressed, need encouragement, need to be warned, etc.? It helps to imagine what life must be like in the era we are studying for a specific lesson.*

The purpose of this document is to provide an primary account of the History of the Jewish people. Josephus begins by retelling stories from the Hebrew Bible and then provides a narrative that leads up to the Jewish wars. In his writing he tells the story of the Jewish people their struggles from exile, return and then dispersion, which eventually leads to revolt, destruction and reconstruction.

In this historical narrative we see Rome's entrance into Jewish affairs. Rome with all its conquest, displacement and enslavement. Rome forcing people to adjust to the transfer of power through conquest and death. Imperial expansion, Roman Armies and Herod the Great. "This must have been a terrible blow to many Jews to once again come under the influence of foreign domination"(Grabbe, page 20). Why? Because these were God's chosen people and they now had to endure the hardness of watching their city destroyed, the temple and Jerusalem being desecrated, again. An identity shift from a religious identity to an ethnic Jewish identity. Learning to live Jewish outside of Palestine and watching the world as they know it change forever all around them. This document was written so that they never forget where they came from when they get to where they are going.

Thinking Further

1. What do you think the writer thought was the most important information to convey? Why? *Think theologically and/or practically.*

The author thought it was important to convey the event, the historical recounting of how the Israelites of the Old Testament have become the Jews of the New Testament. It also sets the stage for the entrance of Jesus, his message and sacrificial death on the cross. The Jews find themselves in a place where life looks so different for them. They have had to deal with the pains and consequences of their disobedience which has led them to be the captives of their enemies and as a result have to deal with the cruelty placed upon them. In the wake of the Jewish revolt they are now faced with taxes, living outside their communities, urbanization and unknown social norms, having to dwell among the Gentiles.

Josephus says that Onias is probably the only one who realizes that this internal strife will be the downfall of the Jews. There is such internal fighting that they even fight over the sacrifices to be made over the Passover.

The fall of Jerusalem allows us to see Rome's war tactics

Josephus states, " Because two brothers could not get along, we lost our freedom and liberty to Rome"

2. Does the document convey a certain tone? *For example, is it entertaining, humorous, encouraging, warning, etc.?*

Cruelty, shame, painful, vulnerability, authoritarian, callous, contemptuous, domineering, childish, tragic, warning, trickery, depressing and unease about what's next.

3. Can you tell the point of view of the writer? Is it objective? *No writer is purely objective, but the document may want to portray a sense of being objective (usually historical documents such as the writings of Josephus). Yet even Josephus has a clear bias in how he tells the story of Israel's history. The point of view could be something as simple as favorable to some aspects of a foreign culture or completely disapproving of pagan culture.*

Josephus has a clear bias as you mentioned above in how he tells this story, he wants to convey the unrest between the two brothers that eventually leads to the Jews losing their Cities, Temple and Freedom to Rome after much struggle. He wants the Jews to see the results of fighting among themselves. He, himself proclaims that he must speak with truth and accuracy of these things that occurred. Most importantly, *According to Larry Heller, "Josephus offers a general history of the Jewish people with a clearly apologetic purpose designed to counter vicious slanders against Jews" (Helyer, Page 343). This literature provides a historical backdrop for the journey of the Jews from Genesis to the New Testament and shows Jewish pride in the telling of events.*

4. What is the writer's attitude about Israel's God or the nations' gods? How can you tell?

Flavious Josephus, the Jewish Historian, is the main source for understanding Second Temple Judaism presents Israel's God, in this text, as a powerful God of miracles, blessings and vengeance. This can be seen through the eyes and workings of Onias, a righteous man, who was beloved of God, He prayed to God and God heard him and answered his prayers. He was put to death for his prayers and God punished them immediately for their barbarity and took vengeance of them for the murder.

We can also see from the sanctity and sacredness of the passover and the treatment of the Temple vessels after Pompey, invades and enters the Temple, God is to be revered.

The writer also outlines the Jews still maintaining their customs and traditions of observing the sabbath during the siege. The Priest are still offering sacrifices twice a day and maintaining their Jewish identity but once the sabbath is over they return to fighting among themselves.

5. What is the writer's attitude toward "Jews"? *Pay particular attention to whether the writer distinguishes between Jews (for example, Jews who are faithful and those who are disobedient to the Torah). Does he disapprove of some Jews?*

In this particular document the writer identifies various types of Jews. The "Wicked Jews" used to describe the Jews who stoned Onias, a righteous man who was beloved of God to death. The Jews who had come out of Babylon into Judea and the Jewish brothers and their people who were fighting amongst each other. Josephus states that he is writing this historical narrative to counter slander against Jews.

6. What is the writer's attitude about "non-Jews" or those ruling over them? How can you tell? *The most pressing issue for Judaism during the 2nd Temple period was the relationship of Jews with Gentiles. Their experiences vary throughout the centuries and with different writers. How is this writer relating or thinking about non-Jews?*

The writer clearly feels that non-Jews, the Romans, are wicked and prey on the naïveté of the Jews in this document. We see Rome's entrance into Jewish affairs through the weakness displayed by the sons of Salome Alexandra. Rome manipulates the situation politically to their advantage. The aggression of Rome is seen through the battles being fought all around Judea and Jerusalem. They are expanding both in territory and power, but due to the fighting, the Jewish Cities are not paying attention until it hits them when Pompey takes Jerusalem. This writer conveys this in this document but in his life he ends up assisting Rome in the latter part of the war and the Jews considered him a traitor.

7. What does the writer believe about the Torah (the Law)? *2nd Temple Judaism was unified in their common interest in the Mosaic Law and the idea that all forms of Judaism related to it in one way or another. The law is discussed to some degree or another throughout the Jewish corpus of 2nd Temple literature. Think about such issues as whether the author thinks the Mosaic covenant is eternal. Does he see a connection between the law and wisdom or perhaps between the Mosaic Law and the unwritten law of nature? To what extent is the Law applicable to the nations?*

The Author thinks that the Law or Torah is essential to the Jewish way of living because in his writing recounts the first 5 books of Moses that makeup the Hebrew bible in his Antiquities. It is evidenced that the Jews of the Second Temple period thought that the Torah was important because they were maintained their customs of Passover even in the midst offer and in-house fighting. The author sees the Mosaic law as eternal and foundational for the Jewish people because it provides a basis for their worship and customs.

8. What other customs or institutions of Judaism do the writers mention? What is his attitude toward these customs or institutions? *These can include such things as dietary laws, marriage, the Temple, the priesthood, etc.*

The Writer talks of the priesthood, rituals of worship, the passover and the temple, the utensils and vessels of worship as it pertains to the Jews. The temple vessels are not touched by Pompey showing a reverence for the things

of God. He tells them to cleanse the Temple and to bring what offerings the law required to God.

9. What is the attitude of the writer toward morality or natural law? How can you tell? *The writer may have a general audience in mind, or he may have a specific group he is addressing. Does he expect these groups to demonstrate morality?*
- is addressing. Does he expect these groups to demonstrate morality?*

The Writer is addressing the Jews, in general, and he hopes and purposes that by telling this story, no one ever forgets the sacrifices of these Jews who gave their lives so that the customs and traditions could be passed from generation to generation to uphold the morality of a people who were chosen by God to preserve and carry the law. They were not destined to have Gentiles rule over them but live among them. This document was written so that they never forget where they came from when they get to where they are going

10. Does the document remind you of any biblical event, character, or book of the Bible? What made you think of those events, characters, or biblical books?

A Patriarchal Narratives theme of conflict, where we see conflicts between brothers and family that change the course of history permeate throughout this narrative. We see how a conflict between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus changed the course and the Jews lost their freedom and liberties.

Trickery of Jacob over Esau, where the one brother tricks the other out of his birthright. An agreement is made between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus. The terms of their settlement, which Hyrcanus initiates is to give the kingship to Aristobulus, while he would live out his life in private, but in wealth. Hyrcanus changes his mind and decides to fight his brother over the Kingship after the urging of Antipater.

Onais' description as a righteous man who was beloved by God who in a certain drought prayed for rain and God answered by putting an end to the drought is reminiscent of the Bible and God's description of Job. " Job is described as a blameless and upright man who fears God and shuns Evil.

Also reminded of how Elijah prayed to God for rain, He had faith to send his servant seven time to the sea to look for rain he was certain that God would answer his prayer and send rain and the rain came.

Summary Statement: How does this document give insight into the beliefs and concerns of Jews for the historical period being investigated? How does it add to what the textbooks say about the period?

At the close of this historic document, “the Hasmonaean kingdom has come to an end and Israel has once again come under foreign rule. Much of the land gained by conquest under Hasmonaean rule has been taken away creating hardships and difficulties for the Jewish settlers and many must leave because Judah is now under the Roman government”(Grabbe, 20). One hundred years of independence is now ended after Pompey lays siege to the City of Jerusalem.

This story was eventful, sad but yet informative because we get to see Rome's power and might in battle. We also see how God is still working on behalf of his people by the reverence for traditions and customs that are evident. After such a great fight for independence, it ends because the Jews could not get along. Josephus sums it up at the end of the document with this statement. *“Now the occasions of the misery which came upon Jerusalem were Hyrcanus and Aristobulus by raising sedition one against the other; for now we lost our liberty, and became subject to the Romans and were deprived of that country which we had gained by our arms from the Syrians and were compelled to restore it to the Syrians”*. The results of war leads to defeat and humiliation with no where to call home, no where to worship their sovereign God who has desired to dwell among his people and be their God from the book of Genesis. Conquered people were subject to displacement and enslavement under the mighty hands of the Romans who ruled with callousness and disregard. Heavy taxes or death, when payment was not made they would enslave family. Traditional views once held begin to fade and reflect a life response to the new environment. This journey of the Jews leads them right to the New Testament teaching of Jesus where a new theological perspective awaits them.