David’s Dying Directives according to Josephus

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Just prior to his death, David delivers a series of instructions to his son and successor Solomon (1 Kgs 2,1-9) which, inter alia, evidence a striking shift of tone from the pious opening exhortations about Solomon’s keeping the Law of 2,2-4 to the cold-blooded commands regarding the elimination of David’s various enemies in 2,5-6(7)8-9 1. In this article I wish to examine the version of David’s «testament» found in Josephus’ Antiquitates judaicae 7.383-388 2. My investigation will focus on two wider questions: 1) The major ancient witnesses for the text of 1 Kgs 2,1-9, i.e. MT (BHS) 3, the Codex Vaticanus (hereafter B) 4 and

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3 The Hebrew text of 1 Kgs 2,1-9 has not been found among the Qumran materials.

the Antiochene or Lucianic (hereafter L) and Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets (hereafter Tg.) evidence many differences among themselves. With which then of these witnesses do Josephus' textual affinities—to the extent these can be determined in so short a passage—lie in 7.383-388? 2) How does Josephus rework the biblical data of 1 Kgs 2,1-9, and what is distinctive about his own version of David’s words there?

To facilitate my comparison between them, I divide up the material of Ant. 7.383-388 and 1 Kgs 2,1-9 into 5 parallel segments: 1) Introduction (7.383a // 2:1); 2) Exhortation & promise (7.383b-385); 3) Joab to be punished (7.386 // 2:5-6); 4) Barzillai’s sons to be rewarded (7.387 // 2:7); and 5) Shimei’s requital (7.388 // 2:8-9).

INTRODUCTION

1 Kgs 2,1 introduces the two interlocutors, David, whose days to die have arrived, and Solomon his son whom he «charges» (LXX B: answers) at this point. Josephus (7.383a) elaborates on this presentation of the parties with various details about David’s precarious condition that prompts him to speak to Solomon: «Now a little while after this [i.e. the enthronement of Solomon described in 7.382 // 1

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7 In place of MT’s 1 Kgs 2,1a («when David’s time to die drew near...»), LXX L (2 Rgns 26,1a) reads: «and it came to pass after these things that David died and slept with his fathers». Thereafter, it continues with the mention of (the already dead and buried king’s!) «charging» his son Solomon (// MT 2,1b).
Kgs 1,46], David fell ill by reason of old age, and realizing that he was about to die, he called his son Solomon and spoke to him as follows...

EXHORTATION & PROMISE

The first (appropriately pious) half of David’s address (1 Kgs 2,2-4 // Ant. 7.383b-385) consists of the following elements: statement by David about his condition (2,2a // 7.383a), a series of imperatives (2,2b-3 // 7.384-385a), and mention of the hoped-for outcome of Solomon’s observance of these imperatives (2,4 // 7.385b).

In 1 Kgs 2,2a David, using figurative language, informs Solomon of what imminently awaits him (David): «I am about to go the way of all the earth». While retaining the source’s figurative/euphemistic discourse, Josephus (7.383b) also expatiates on this, his David, e.g., insisting on the universality of his coming experience and its finality: «/am now, my son, going to my destiny and must depart to my fathers and travel the common road of all men now».

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8 This notice recalls Josephus’ earlier mention of David’s advanced age and debility in Ant. 7.343// 1 Kgs 1,1.
9 This editorial remark anticipates David’s statement to Solomon about his imminent demise as reported in 1 Kgs 2,2//Ant. 7.383b.
10 Throughout this essay I italicize items of Josephus’ text like the above which have no direct/explicit counterpart in the biblical account.
12 With this element of David’s statement, compare the reference, peculiar to LXX L 2 Rgns 26,1a (see n. 7), to David’s «sleeping with his fathers».
13 Josephus has David uses the same word for «road» or «way,» i.e. Greek ὀδὸς, as do LXX BL 1 Kgs 2,2a. On the other hand, he transposes into an anthropological key («the road of all men») the Bible’s cosmological formulation («the way of all the earth»).
alive or yet to be, from which no one can ever return to learn what is happening among the living». Continuing to elaborate on the Bible’s presentation, Josephus proceeds (7.384a) to have David draw a conclusion about his current speaking to Solomon from his foregoing announcement which itself serves as a transition to the series of exhortations that follow: «Therefore, while I am still alive, through very close to death 14, I exhort you, in the same manner as when I counselled you once before...» 15.

David’s exhortations to his son (2,2b-3) open in 2,2b with the summons «be strong and show yourself a man» 16. Josephus’ version spells out the meaning of this general admonition, using language reminiscent of David’s earlier appeal to Solomon to which he has alluded just previously: «... to be just (δικαιός) towards your subjects and pious (εὐσεβεῖ) towards God 17, who has given you the kingship». 18

In 1 Kgs 2,3a, David calls on Solomon to observe the divine decrees as these are set down «in the law of Moses.» Whereas the

14 David’s allusion to his state recalls Josephus’ statement about the king «realizing he was about to die» in 7.383a and provides a prosaic «translation» of the poetic language of 7.383b.

15 With this Rückverweis David’s alludes back to his earlier, biblically unparalleled, admonition to Solomon, prior to the latter’s anointing as king in Ant. 7.356 that he be a pious and just ruler—two qualities which he will again emphasize in the words he is now about to address to Solomon.

16 LXX l specifies a «powerful man» (ἀρχων ὑπάρχων), while Tg. renders «be a man fearing sinners» (γνωρίζω γῆς).

17 With this double exhortation, compare the content of David’s previous appeal to Solomon as cited in 7.356: «He then gave instructions to Solomon concerning his kingdom, in order that he might rule with piety and justice (εὐσεβῶς καὶ δικαιῶς) over all the Hebrew nation and the tribe of Judah.» The repetition of the call to piety and justice here just prior to David’s death highlights the importance of precisely these two attributes for Solomon’s kingship. On justice as a component of Josephus’ portrait of Solomon, see Feldman, Interpretation, pp. 590-593; on piety, see pp. 593-602.

18 This appended phrase suggests a motive why Solomon should be «pious towards God,» i.e. because the latter has awarded him the kingship.
biblical David uses a plethora of terms to designate these decrees, Josephus limits himself to two such words, likewise underscoring the divine authority behind the lawgiver Moses: «... and to keep his commandments and laws (ἐντολὰς καὶ νόμους) which He Himself sent down (κατέπεμψεν) to us through Moses...»

David rounds off his exhortations of 2,2b-3a with a series of indications (2,3b-4) concerning the benefits their observance may be expected to produce. Before presenting his version of the latter segment (see 7.385b), Josephus, in 7.384c-385a, has David solemnly warn Solomon about the negative consequences of his failure to heed the admonitions he has just given him: «do not neglect them [i.e. the commandments and laws] by yielding either to favour (χάριτι) or flattery (θυσκείσ) or lust (ἐπιθυμία) or any other passion (πάθεια) for you will lose the goodwill (εὐνομίαν) of the Deity towards you, if you transgress any of His ordinances (νομίμων;
compare νόμους, 7.384), and you will turn his kind watchfulness (ἀγαθήν... πρόνοιαν) into a hostile attitude (πρὸς τάναντι).

Having appended the above warning to David’s exhortations, Josephus, in the continuation of 7.385, concludes the first part of the dying king’s «testament» with a version of the «dynastic promise» of 2,4: «But, if you show yourself to be such as you should be and as I urge you to be, you will secure the kingdom to our line, and no other house than we shall be lords over the Hebrews for all time».


24 This is the conjecture of Niese which Marcus adopts. Nodet retains the reading πρὸς ἄντερτι (the codices and translates «en toutes choses tu t’aliéneras sa providence favorable». The above warning takes the place of the two opening statements (2,3b) concerning the intended purpose/result of the conduct David has been urging on Solomon: «that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn» (MT LXX L); compare LXX B: «that you may be discerning in what you do according to all that I command you» (NODET, ad loc. suggests that the phrase «as I urge you» in the continuation of David’s words in 7.385 is inspired by the concluding words of this LXX B reading.)

25 The verse reads: «that the Lord may establish his word [MT LXX B; LXX L: words] which he spoke concerning me [LXX B lacks concerning me], saying, “If your sons take heed to their way [LXX L ways], to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and all their soul [LXX B lacks and with all their soul, but adds the word «saying» after all their heart], there shall not fail you a man on the throne of David”». This quotation by David of God’s dynastic promise as cited in 2 Sam 7:11-16 (cf. Ant. 7.90-95) involves a «conditionalizing» of what is there an unconditional promise of a perpetual dynasty for the Davidids (see vv. 13,16).

26 On Josephus’ use of this designation at various moments of the people’s history, see G. HARVEY, The True Israel. Uses of the Names Jew, Hebrew and Israel in Ancient Jewish and Early Jewish Literature (Leiden 1996) pp. 124-129.

27 The above formulation is Josephus’ adaptation of the (unconditional) dynastic promise of 2 Samuel 7 as this is recast in conditional terms in 2,4. Perhaps, the discrepancy between the two biblical forms of the promise prompted Josephus to substitute his own wording for that of 2,4. In any case, whereas 2,4 focusses on the right conduct expected of the whole succession of David’s «sons»/successors, Josephus’ David centers attention on the behavior of Solomon alone, making the perdurance of the Davidic dynasty dependent on his acting appropriately. Finally, it is worthy of note that here in 7.385, Josephus does reckon with the possibility
PUNISHMENT FOR JOAB

The second, *realpolitisch* portion of David’s testament (2,5-9 // 7.386-388) opens with the king addressing the case of a first person with whom he wishes Solomon to deal with after his death, i.e. the general Joab (2,5-6 // 7.386). In 2,5 David first straightforwardly accuses Joab of a double murder (v. 5a), and then amplifies this charge in highly figurative (and obscure) language (v. 5b) 30. Josephus resolves the difficulties of 2,5b by simply leaving it aside, while rendering (7.386a) 2,5a as follows: «Remember also the crime (Τηπανομίας) 31 of Joab, the commander, who because of envy...» 32, who because of envy (διὰ Ζελοντο-
κατέκτησεν δύο just and brave (δίκαιους καὶ ἀρετούς) generals, Αβένερ, the son of Νέρ and Αμάσα, the son of Jēthra

Having made his charges against Joab in 2,5, David proceeds in 2,6 to urge Solomon: «act therefore according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to Sheol (LXX BL εἰς θάνατον, to Hades) in peace». Josephus avoids both the reference to Solomon’s «wisdom» and the figurative language of this verse. In its place he substitutes an explanation (7.386b) as to why David must leave it to Solomon to requite the assassin Joab instead of having done this

This reference to «envy» recalls Josephus’ earlier accounts of Joab’s murders where envy is presented as the motive for these crimes; see Ant. 7.31-38 (Abner) and 7.284-285 (Amasa). On «envy» as the driving force, not only of Joab’s own career, but also of the rivals and opponents of Josephus himself, the «Joabs» of his day, see Feldman, Studies, pp. 209-213.

This inserted positive characterization of the two generals underscores the enormity of Joab’s murder of them.

1 Kgs 2,5a qualifies the pair, prior to naming them, as «commanders of the armies of Israel» (in its subsequent mention of Amasa, LXX L adds the designation of him as «commander-in-chief of Judah»).

Greek: 'Αβενενήρ. MT Ḫabor (Eng.: Abner); LXX BL 'Αβενενήρ. On Josephus’ account of his murder by Joab who fears to lose his own command to him, see Ant. 7.31-38 (// 2 Sam 3:22-30).

Greek: Νήρος. MT Ῥη (Eng.: Ner); LXX BL Νήρ.

Greek: Αμάσα. MT Ἄμασα (Eng.: Amasa); LXX B Ἄμασσα, LXX L Ἄμασσα. Joab’s murder of him at the time of the revolt of Sheba, when both men are commissioned by David to repress the revolt, see Ant. 7.284-285 (// 2 Sam 20, 8-10).

Greek: Τήθρα. MT Τήθρα (Eng.: Jether); LXX BL Ἰεθρᾶ.

His non-utilization of David’s allusion to his son’s wisdom may be inspired by the fact that according to his subsequent indications Solomon was «still a mere youth» (Ant. 8.2), indeed only 14 years old (8.211) at this point. In addition, he has not yet received the divine gift of wisdom –this comes only in 8.22-25 (// 1 Kgs 3,3-15 // 2 Chr 1,2-13)– that made him Israel’s preeminently wise man.

Josephus uses the word «Hades» (Greek: θάνατος), the term employed by LXX BL 2,6 for the underworld, only once in the entire Antiquities, i.e. 6.32 (in the story of the Endor medium [// 1 Samuel 28] who summons the spirit of Samuel from the realm of the death). Elsewhere the word appears four times in the War (1.596; 2.156,165; 3.375).
already himself: «... in whatever you may think best, avenge their
deaths 43. for Joab, being stronger and more powerful than I, has
until now (μὲξ ὑπὲρ νῦν) escaped punishment 44».

BARZILLAI’S SONS TO BE REWARDED

At the center of David’s enumeration of those whom he enjoins
Solomon to deal appropriately with (2,5-9 // 7.386-388) stands (2,7) 45
a positive mandate, i.e. that Solomon reward the sons of «Barzillai»
who had assisted him in his flight from Absalom. The mandate con­s­
ists of a double injunction concerning Solomon’s treatment of Bar­
zillai’s sons (v. 7a), coupled with a motivation for this in terms of
their father’s past services (v. 7b). Josephus (7.387) reproduces both
these elements, though using his own wording to do so: «But I com­
mend to you the sons of Barzelos 46 the Galadite 47, whom you shall
hold in all honor and care for (προνοια; see πρόνοια, 7.385) 48, and

43 Solomon acts on this mandate in Ant. 8.13-16 (1 Kgs 2,28-35) where he
commissions Benaiah to execute the fugitive Joab.

44 The above explanation of David’s failure to move against Joab with its confession
of his own impotence in the latter’s regard echoes a similar statement by David to the
people on the occasion of Joab’s murder of Abner in Ant. 7.45: «As for me, you know
that I can do nothing to Joab and Abisai, the sons of Saruia, who are more powerful
(δυναμεῖνα) than I...», which has its biblical equivalent in 2 Sam 3,39 «these men the
sons of Zeruiah are too hard for me». On the significance of Josephus’ temporal
limitation («until now») of Joab’s immunity, see n. 60 on 7.388.

45 On this verse, see I. W. PROVAN, «Why Barzillai of Gilead (1 Kings 2:7)?
Narrative Art and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion in 1 Kings 1-2», Tyndale Bulletin

46 Greek Βερζέλλιος. MT וֹנֶזֶב (Eng.: Barzillai); LXX B Βερζέλλιοι; LXX L
Βερζέλλι.

47 MT 1 Kgs 2,7 calls Barzillai «the Gileadite». Josephus’ designation corresponds
to that of LXX BL.

48 In 1 Kgs 2,7a Solomon is called on to «show loyalty» (MT πονοια, LXX BL
ἐλέος). Josephus leaves aside David’s further, more specific directive that Bar­
zillai’s sons are to be among those who eat at Solomon’s table.
thus gratify me \(^49\); for in this matter we are not the first to show kindness, but are repaying the debt owed them \(^50\) for their father’s service to me during my exile (παρὰ τὴν ψυγήν) \(^51\).

SHIMEI’S REQUITAL

David concludes his catalogue (2,5-9 // 7.386-388) of those whom Solomon is to requite—whether negatively or positively—with the figure of Shimei. 1 Kgs 2,8 recalls various personalia about this figure and his interactions with David. Josephus (7.388a) has an equivalent to virtually all the items of information cited in the source verse: «And as for Sūmūs \(^52\), the son of Gēra \(^33\), of the tribe of Ben-

\(^{49}\) This inserted element provides an additional motivation for Solomon to obey his father’s directive concerning Barzillai’s sons, i.e. thereby, he will be doing something pleasing to his father.

\(^{50}\) This interjected phrase makes the transition from David’s directive concerning Barzillai’s sons to the motivation for that directive he is about to cite. The insertion makes clear that what David is instructing Solomon to do is not a matter of a whimsical favor which Solomon might or might not choose to bestow, but rather an obligation, given Barzillai’s past services to David. As such, David’s instruction on the matter is all the more something which Solomon is bound to carry out (although, in fact, it is not recorded that he did so; see next note).

\(^{51}\) Compare the more specific wording used by David in 1 Kgs 2,7b: «for with such loyalty they [i.e. Barzillai’s sons] met me when I fled from Absalom your brother». Note too that whereas the Bible has David refer to services rendered by Barzillai’s sons («they»), in Josephus the services are those of Barzillai himself. (The historian’s formulation in this regard corresponds to the presentation in 2 Sam 18,27// Ant. 7.272 where it is Barzillai in person who welcomes the fugitive David). Curiously, however, neither the Bible nor Josephus himself mentions Solomon’s carrying out of David’s directive concerning Barzillai’s sons—as they both do in the case of the two other persons whom the dying David instructs Solomon to deal with, i.e. Joab and Shimei.

\(^{52}\) Greek: Σουμούις. MT יְשֵׁמֶע (Eng.: Shimei); LXX BL Σεμειί.

\(^{53}\) Greek: Γηρᾶς. MT יֵרָע (Eng.: Gera); LXX BL Γηρᾶ.
jamin \(^{54}\), who cursed me repeatedly (πολλά). \(^{55}\) during my flight (παρά τίνος θυγήν) \(^{56}\) on the way to the camps (Παραμβολάς) \(^{57}\), and when he met me at the Jordan\(^{58}\), received a pledge that he would suffer no harm for the time being (τότε)... \(^{59}\).

David concludes his word concerning Shimei, in terms reminiscent of those used of Joab in 2,6, by urging Solomon (2,9) to use his «wisdom» to insure that the culprit go down «with blood to Sheol».

As noted above, Josephus replaces the formulations of 2,6 with alternative phraseology in 7.386 (see nn. 41, 42); he does the same in...
the case of the analogous language of 2.9. His (shortened) version of this latter verse reads simply: «look now (vûv) for a reasonable pretext to punish him».

CONCLUSIONS

At the conclusion of my essay I return to the two questions with which it opened in order to summarize my findings concerning them. On the question of Josephus’ textual affinities in 7.383-388, my investigation, in fact, did not generate any very definite results—not unexpectedly so given both the brevity of the segment and its highly paraphrastic character. The one item of relevance to emerge concerning Josephus’ biblical text for «the testament of David» is the fact that he agrees (7.388) with LXX BL 1 Kgs 2,8 in his translation («[the] Camps») of MT’s proper place name («Mahanaim»).

My second question concerned Josephus’ handling of the data of 1 Kgs 2,1-9 and the effect of this on his own presentation. In Ant. 7.383-388, the historian utilizes three re-writing techniques in particular, i.e. amplifications, replacements, and omissions/abbreviations. Of these, the most prominent is his recurrent expansion of source elements. Examples include: the elaboration of the introduction to

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60 This particle sets up a contrast with the immediately preceding term tòtē («for the time being») during which David pledged not to harm Shimei and the present time when that time has elapsed and Solomon is free to impose punishment on him without violating the terms of David’s oath as just cited by the latter; see previous note. The particle likewise has a counterpart in 7.386 where David refers to Joab’s having escaped punishment «until now» (νέχρι νûv) —a state of affairs that is to be reversed under Solomon. The linguistic link serves to highlight the similarity between the offenders Joab and Shimei and the long-delayed punishment that imminently awaits them both.

61 Compare 1 Kgs 2,9 «Now therefore hold him not guiltless, for you are a wise man; you will know what you ought to do to him; and you shall bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol». In Josephus’ generalized rendering of this injunction, the references to Solomon’s «wisdom» and to «Sheol» both disappear, just as they do in his version of 2,6 in 7.386. Solomon’s punishment of Shimei in accordance with his father’s instructions is related in Ant. 8.17-20 // 1 Kgs 2,36-46a.
David’s words (2,1) in 7.383a; the lengthening of the allusion to David’s «going the way of all the earth» (2,2a) in 7.383b; the inserted warning of 7.384c-385a; the various details about Joab and his victims (7.386a; compare 2,5); and the phrase about the priority of benefit in 7.387 (compare 2,7).

In a whole series of instances throughout our passage Josephus likewise replaces source contents with his own. Thus, e.g., he turns the appeal to Solomon to «be strong and show himself a man» (2,2b) into a renewal of David’s earlier admonition that he be «just» and «pious» (7.384a), just as recasts the conclusions to David’s words about both Joab (7.386b; compare 2,6) and Shimei (7.388b; compare 2,9). Similarly, he gives his own content to the «dynastic promise» cited in 2,4 (see 7.385b), and represents Barzillai himself, rather than his sons (so 2,7), as the one who had assisted the fugitive David (7.387). Finally, omissions/abbreviations also surface in the unit: the lengthy catalogue of legal terms (2,3a) is reduced to a single pair (7.384), while the sequence of 2,5b with its figurative language is left aside completely.

What then are the distinctive features of Josephus’ version of the «testament of David» that result from his utilization of the above rewriting techniques? In general, Ant. 7.383-388 is not, in fact, so different from its Vorlage: it features, e.g., the same two main parts (2,2-4 // 7.383-385; 2,5-9 // 7.386-388), and the same persons to be dealt with by Solomon appear in the same order in both, etc. On the other hand, the Josephan rendition is markedly paraphrastic and expansionistic in its handling of the biblical material. The Bible’s figurative language (e.g., putting blood on a person’s girdle and sandals [2,5b] and going down / bringing down to Sheol [2,6,9] is avoided for the most part 62. Implicit corrections (who assisted the fugitive David? [compare 7.387 and 2,7; and see n. 51]; the attribution of «wisdom» to the boy Solomon who has not yet received

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62 On the other hand, Josephus actually elaborates on the figurative expression «to go the way of all the earth» of 2,2a in 7.383b.
that gift from God [see 2,6 and 9; cf. n. 41]) and clarifications (why has Joab not already been punished for his crimes? [see 7.386b and cf. n. 44]; how can Shimei be legitimately be punished by Solomon notwithstanding David’s oath to spare him? [compare 2,9 and 7.388b and see n. 60]) of problematic source items are introduced. The reference to «fate» (τὸ χρεών) in 7.383 imparts a non-biblical, Hellenistic touch to the words of the Josephan David (see n. 11). And lastly, the interjected Rückverweis to David’s earlier appeal to Solomon (7.356) in 7.384 furthers the coherence of Josephus’ work and highlights the importance of the «justice» and «piety», to which the Josephan Solomon is twice called, for his rulership.

The six paragraphs of 7.383-388 are a minuscule portion of the twenty books that make up the Antiquities in its entirety. Still, as this essay has tried to show, there is much of interest to be learned about Josephus’ ways of dealing with his biblical source material by a close study even of so short a passage.

63 One feature of his source text that Josephus does retain in 7.383-388 is its use of direct discourse throughout. This finding is of note given that elsewhere Josephus regularly recasts biblical direct discourse as indirect; on the phenomenon, see C. T. Begg, Josephus’ Account of the Early Divided Monarchy (AJ 8,212-420) (Leuven 1993) pp. 12-13, n. 38. By allowing David to speak in his own voice when delivering his testament, Josephus highlights the importance of that testament as something that deserves citation in the king’s own words.
RESUMEN

1 Re 2,1-9, «el testamento de David», recoge las últimas instrucciones del rey para su hijo Salomón. Este artículo ofrece un detallado estudio de la versión de Josefo (Ant. 7.383-388) del testamento en relación con su fuente bíblica. El estudio se centra especialmente en las afinidades textuales de la presentación de Josefo, a la vista de las diferencias entre las distintas versiones antiguas del testamento (TM, LXX, Targum). Así mismo, el artículo examina las diferentes técnicas de re-escritura empleadas por Josefo en Ant. 7.383-388 y su contribución a la producción de una versión diferenciada del testamento de David.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Josefo, David, testamento de David, Salomón.

SUMMARY

1 Kgs 2,1-9, «the testament of David», records the king’s final instructions to his son Solomon. This article offers a detailed study of Josephus’ version (Ant. 7.383-388) of the testament in relation to its biblical source. The study focusses particularly on the textual affinities of Josephus’ presentation, given the differences among the various ancient versions (MT, LXX, Targum) of the testament. The article likewise examines the range of re-writing techniques utilized by Josephus in Ant. 7.383-388 and their contribution in generating a distinctive rendition of David’s testament.

KEYWORDS: Josephus, David, David's testament, Solomon.