

THE EXECUTION OF THE SAULIDES ACCORDING TO JOSEPHUS

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INTRODUCTION

2 Samuel 21-24 constitutes a kind of interlude within the «succession narrative» of 2 Samuel 9-20; 1 Kings 1-2. At the head of the former complex stands 2 Sam 21,1-14, the story of seven descendants of Saul done to death for their ancestor's crime and the heroic care given their remains by Rizpah, the mother of two of them ¹. In this essay I wish to investigate Josephus' (highly abbreviated) retelling of the above episode in his *Antiquitates Judaicae* (= *Ant.*) 7.294-297 ². My investigation will proceed by way of a detailed comparison between the Josephan narrative and its Biblical source as attested by the following witnesses: Masoretic Text (BHS) ³, Codex Vaticanus

¹ On this narrative see G. HENTSCHEL, «Die Hinrichtung der Nachkommen Sauls (2 Sam 21,1-14)», in H. M. NIEMANN *et al.* (eds.), *Nachdenken über Israel, Bibel und Theologie. Festschrift für Klaus-Dietrich Schunck zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, Frankfurt am Main 1994, 93-116 and the literature cited there, to which add: W. THIEL, «Rizpa und das Ritual von Gibeon», in I. KOTTSEPER *et al.* (eds.), «*Wer ist wie du, HERR, unter den Göttern?*» *Studien zur Theologie und Religionsgeschichte Israels für Otto Kaiser zum 70. Geburtstag*, Göttingen 1994, 247-262.

² For the text and translation of Josephus' works I use H. ST. J. THACKERAY *et al.* (eds.), *Josephus*, London-Cambridge, MA 1926-1965 (*Ant.* 7.294-297 stands in vol. V, pp. 514-517 where the translation and notes are by R. Marcus). The story of 2 Sam 21,1-14 generated considerable discussion in Rabbinic tradition, see, e.g., TY-*Qiddušim* 4.65b-65c; TB-*Yēbamôṭ* 78b; *Ba-Miḏbar Rabbā* 8.4; *Midraš Šēmū'el* 28.5; *Addendum to Midraš Tēhīl-ġim* 17.10; *Pirqē de-rabbi Elī'ezer* 17; and cf. L. GINZBERG, *The Legends of the Jews*, Philadelphia 1909-1925, vol. IV, 109-111; vol. VI, 268-270, nn. 111-118.

³ E. C. ULRICH, *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus*, Chico, CA 1978, 271 lists (the still not officially published) MS 4QSam^a as containing fragments of a Hebrew text of 2 Sam 21,1-2.4-6.

(= B) ⁴ and the Lucianic or Antiochene MSS ⁵ of the LXX (= L), plus Targum Jonathan on the Former Prophets (= TJ) ⁶. In carrying out the comparison, I have in view several overarching questions: 1) which text-form(s) of 2 Sam 21,1-14 did Josephus have available? ⁷; 2) how does Josephus deal with the data of the source story and what were his reasons for handling these as he does?; and 3) what is the cumulative effect of Josephus' modifications of the source, i.e. how, taken as a whole, does his version of the episode relate to its Biblical prototype?

THE STORIES COMPARED

The story of 2 Sam 21,1-14 (// *Ant.* 7.294-297) is immediately preceded by a list of David's officials (2 Sam 20,23-26 // *Ant.* 7.292b-293) which itself follows upon the account of Joab's crushing of Sheba's revolt (2 Sam 20,1-22 // *Ant.* 7.278-292a). MT 2 Sam 21,1 simply juxtaposes the story of the Saulides' execution with the list of 2 Sam 20,23-26 by means of the conjunction *waw*. Josephus (7.294) provides something more of a transition between the two blocs of material with his phrase «after these events». The source's introduction of the problem which gives rise to all that follows is rather jejune: «there was a famine (LXX λιμός) in the days of David». Josephus dramatizes: «the country was ravaged by a famine (λιμῶν)» ⁸. On the other hand, he leaves aside the Biblical indication that the famine continued «for three years». His omitting this item

⁴ For the text of B I use A. E. BROOKE, N. MACLEAN and H. ST. J. THACKERAY, *The Old Testament in Greek, II: I and 2 Samuel*, Cambridge 1927.

⁵ For the text of L I use the edition of N. FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS and J. R. BUSTO SAIZ, *El Texto Antioqueno de la Biblia Griega, I. 1-2 Samuel*, Madrid 1992.

⁶ I use the edition of TJ by A. SPERBER, *The Bible in Aramaic II*, Leiden 1959, and the translation of this by D. J. HARRINGTON and A. J. SALDARINI, *Targum Jonathan on the Former Prophets*, Wilmington, DE 1987.

⁷ On the overall question of Josephus' text for the Book of Samuel, see: A. MEZ, *Die Bibel des Josephus untersucht für Buch V-VII der Archäologie*, Basel 1895.

⁸ One finds a similar embellishment in the Rabbinic sources cited in n. 2. According to these the famine of 2 Sam 21,1 was one of ten great famines to befall the earth in the period from Adam to the time of the Messiah (the sources further state that properly the famine should have come in the reign of Saul since it was sent as punishment for his sin, but was delayed to the time of his spiritually stronger successor, David).

might reflect the consideration that the sequence of 2 Sam 21,1 could suggest an unfavorable view of David, i.e. he did nothing to counteract the famine for three whole years ⁹.

In response to the famine David (21,1aβ) «sought the face of the Lord» (so MT, B ἐζήτησεν ... τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ κυρίου). Josephus' parallel avoids both the anthropomorphism of this formulation ¹⁰ and its reference to «the Lord» ¹¹. It reads: «David supplicated God (ἰκέτευε ¹² ... τὸν θεόν)» ¹³. Whereas the source limits itself to citing David's approach to the Lord, Josephus gives an explicit content to the king's initiative: he supplicated God «to have pity (ἐλεῆσαι) ¹⁴ on the people (τὸν λαόν) ¹⁵ and reveal to him the cause of the affliction, and the remedy». This expansion highlights the figure of David, representing him as one who knows just what to ask for from God at this juncture. As we shall see, each of its three component petitions has its counterpart in the following divine answer.

⁹ In the Rabbinic sources cited in n. 2 David is credited with attempting to identify, in each of the three years, those (idolaters, the unchaste and persons who had failed to honor their pledges to charity, respectively) whose sins could have led God to sent the famine. It was only when no such culprits were found out that David concluded the fault must lie with himself and so turned to the Lord as he is represented as doing in 2 Sam 21,1aβ.

¹⁰ Compare the equally de-anthropomorphized renderings of L (ῥῆμα ἐζήτηι παρὰ Κυρίου) and TJ (י' קדמ מן תממ ... נבנ). According to the Rabbinic sources cited in n. 2, David «sought the Lord's face» by way of the Urim and Thummim. Those sources base this assertion by associating 2 Sam 21,1 and its term שָׁרַב with Num 27,21 which speaks of Eleazar «inquiring» (לָשׁוּ) «by the judgment of the 'Urim before the Lord».

¹¹ On Josephus' virtual complete avoidance of the Biblical title «the Lord» in reference to the Deity, see C. T. BEGG, *Josephus' Account of the Early Divided Monarchy* (AJ 8,212-420), Leuven 1993, p. 45, n. 218.

¹² The codices M S P read the aorist ἰκέτευσε, cf. Lat *rogavit*. On Josephus' frequent use of the historic present where LXX has a past form, see C. T. BEGG, *Josephus' Account*, pp. 10-11, n. 32.

¹³ Josephus uses the above phrase «supplicate (the) God» some 30 times in *Ant.*, see C. T. BEGG, *Josephus' Account*, p. 48, n. 251. Note in particular *Ant.* 8.234 where Josephus substitutes this phrase for that of 1 Kgs 13,6 «entreat now the face of the Lord your God», thereby eliminating the Biblical anthropomorphism just as he does here in 7.294.

¹⁴ Compare TJ 2 Sam 21,1 «David sought *mercy* (יממ) from before the Lord».

¹⁵ With the above formulation ἰκέτευε ... τὸν θεόν ἐλεῆσαι τὸν λαόν compare *Ant.* 10.12 where Hezekiah asks Isaiah to «exhort him (God) ... to take pity on his own people (παρακαλεῖν αὐτὸν ... ἐλεῆσαι ... τὸν αὐτοῦ λαόν)».

2 Sam 21,1b depicts God as responding directly to David; Josephus, by contrast, has the divine message conveyed through «the prophets (τῶν προφητῶν)». This is one of many instances in *Ant.* where Josephus introduces the term «prophet(s)» where the source lacks such ¹⁶. God's word in 21,2b simply calls David's attention to the existence of a problem, leaving it up to him to decide what to do about this: «there is bloodguilt (MT כּוּמִתָּה, compare LXX ἀδικία) on Saul and his house ¹⁷, because he put the Gibeonites to death». Josephus' prophets, on the contrary, begin by spelling out the divine will in the situation: «God wished the Gabaonites to be avenged (ἐκδικίας τυχεῖν)». This expansion corresponds to the third of David's preceding requests, i.e. that God «reveal to him the remedy» for the current famine. In addition, this amplification of God's response serves to invest with divine legitimacy David's subsequent, legally problematic measures, see below. Next, Josephus attributes to the prophets an expanded (and negatively-charged) version of the source's neutral reference to Saul's putting the Gibeonites to death. It runs: «(the Gibeonites) whom King Saul had *wickedly* killed (ἀποκτείνας ἠσέβησεν ¹⁸) ¹⁹ and with whom he had dealt

¹⁶ On the point, see L. H. FELDMAN, «Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus», *JTS* NS 41 (1991) 386-422, 389-392. See in particular Josephus' addition to 2 Sam 5,19 in *Ant.* 7.72 according to which David «never permitted himself to do anything without prophecy (προφητείας)».

¹⁷ The Rabbinic sources cited in n. 2 base themselves on a more literal rendering of 21,2b, i.e. «it is for Saul *and* his bloody house» in representing God as evoking here two distinct offenses which had caused him to send the famine, i.e. David's failure to give Saul burial in the land of Israel (according to 1 Sam 31,13 he had been interred in Jabesh-gilead in the Transjordan) and Saul's own violence against the Gibeonites.

¹⁸ Conceivably, this term stands on the influence of the word ἀδικία which in LXX 2 Sam 21,1 replaces the «blood(s)» of MT, see above in the text. At the same time it also echoes Josephus' two previous uses of the verb ἠσεβέω in reference to Saul (see *Ant.* 6.154.288).

¹⁹ In reproducing the statement of 2 Sam 21,1b about Saul's having killed the Gibeonites, Josephus does not advert to the problem posed by the fact that the Biblical account of Saul contains no mention of such a deed of violence perpetrated by him (or indeed of any interaction between him and the Gibeonites). By contrast the Rabbinic sources cited in n. 2 do raise the problem. The solution proposed involves a combination of Jos 9,27 (the Gibeonites are designated as «hewers of wood and drawers of water» for the altar) and 1 Sam 22,17 where Saul commands the killing of the priests of the sanctuary of Nob. By his thus instigating the massacre of the Nob priests for whom the Gibeonites worked and who, in turn, provided for

treacherously (ἐξαπατήσας)²⁰ in violation of the oaths which the commander (στρατηγός)²¹ Joshua and the elders (ἡ γερουσία) had sworn to them»²². With this statement God responds to the second of the Josephan David's requests, namely, that he make known the cause of the current distress. The foregoing component of the divine address likewise serves to intimate a contrast between the God-seeker David and his predecessor Saul who wantonly violated the solemn oaths made by Israel's earlier leaders. Moreover, the placing of condemnatory language concerning Saul on the lips of God himself, language which in the source has its counterpart in words of the narrator (see 21,2b, cf. n. 22) or of the Gibeonites (see 21,5, cf. n. 20), helps legitimate the subsequent severe (and legally problematic, see below) punishment of Saul's descendants²³.

Josephus' amplification of God's word to David concludes (7.295) with a conditional promise, this echoing both the king's appeal that he be shown the remedy for the people's predicament and his plea

their support, Saul, according to the Rabbis, made himself guilty of putting to death the latter as well, since they were thereby deprived of the livelihood the priests had provided for them.

²⁰ This element has no equivalent in the wording of 21,1b (here and in what follows I italicize such elements). It might, however, be seen as an anticipation of the Gibeonites' charge against Saul in 2 Sam 21,5 «the man who consumed us and planned to destroy us...» (MT; LXX «the man who would have made an end of us and persecuted us, who plotted [παρελογίσαστο] to destroy us...»).

²¹ L. H. FELDMAN, «Josephus's Portrait of Joshua», *HTR* 82 (1989) 351-376, 358 and n. 20 points out that Josephus uses this term of Joshua no less than ten times. Feldman further suggests that his doing so is part of Josephus' effort to accentuate the military prowess of the Jews so as to counteract contemporary charges about Jewish cowardice.

²² This specification of the preceding charge of treachery on Saul's part represents Josephus' anticipation of the (awkwardly positioned, see below) parenthetical notice of 21:2b «(Now the Gibeonites were not of the people of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites), although the people of Israel had sworn (LXX ὄμοσαν) to spare them, Saul had sought to slay them in his zeal for the people of Israel and Judah». This notice, in turn, is a *Rückverweis* to Josh 9,15 «And Joshua made peace with them (the Gibeonites), and made a covenant with them, to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation swore (LXX ὄμοσαν) to them». Josephus' version of the latter text occurs in *Ant.* 5.55 «... Joshua ... made a league with them; and Eleazar the high priest along with the council of elders (μετὰ τῆς γερουσίας, compare ἡ γερουσία, 7.294) swore (ὄμυσεν) to hold them as friends ... and the people ratified the oaths».

²³ As a further indication of Josephus' accentuation of Saul's guilt in our passage, note that in his anticipation of 2 Sam 21,2b in 7.294 he leaves aside the former text's

for divine mercy upon them. That promise reads: «If, then, he would permit the Gabaonites to exact such satisfaction (δίκην ... λαβεῖν)²⁴ as they might desire (θέλουσιν)²⁵ for those who had been slain, God would, He promised, be reconciled (διαλλαγῆσεσθαι)²⁶ to them and would free the multitude from its affliction (τὸν ὄχλον ἀπαλλάξειν τῶν κακῶν²⁷)».

The whole of the extended segment 7.294-295 is Josephus' elaboration of the single Biblical verse, 2 Sam 21,1. By contrast in what follows, as we shall now see, the historian markedly abridges the source's presentation.

2 Sam 21,2-6 relates the dialogue between David and the Gibeonites pursuant to the Lord's word to the former in 21,1b. The sequence opens with the introductory notice «The king called the Gibeonites and said to them». Josephus (7.296) supplies a more elaborate (and smoother) transition, one which picks up on language used in the preceding: «Accordingly, after learning from the prophets (see above) that this was God's desire (ἐπιζητεῖν τὸν θεόν)²⁸, he sent

extenuating indication that Saul sought to kill the Gibeonites «in his zeal (LXX ζηλώσαι) for the people of Israel and Judah». Josephus' omission of this indication may likewise reflect his anti-Zealot stance evident elsewhere, e.g., in his passing over Biblical references to Elijah's zeal, see L. H. FELDMAN, «Josephus' Portrait of Elijah», *SJOT* 8 (1994) 61-86, 81-82. On Josephus' (nuanced) treatment of Saul overall, see L.H. FELDMAN, «Josephus' Portrait of Saul», *HUCA* 53 (1982) 45-99.

²⁴ Compare the opening of the divine word to David in Josephus' version: «God wished the Gabaonites to be avenged (ἐκδικίας τυχεῖν)...». On Josephus' use of the key Greek ethical term δίκη, see A. SCHLATTER, *Die Theologie des Judentums nach dem Bericht des Josephus*, Gütersloh 1932, pp. 40-41.

²⁵ Note the correspondence between the divine will and that of the Gibeonites with regard to the Saulides in Josephus' formulation: «... God wished (βούλεσθαι) the Gabaonites to be avenged ... if he (David) would permit the Gabaonites to exact such satisfaction as they might desire (θέλουσιν)...».

²⁶ Josephus' use of διαλλάσσω/διαλλάττω with God as subject here echoes his earlier statements regarding Saul (*Ant.* 6.151 Samuel «saw that God was not to be reconciled [διαλλαττόμενον]», i.e. with Saul) and David (*Ant.* 7.153 God «was reconciled [διαλλάττεται]» to David following the latter's confession of sin).

²⁷ The above genitival construction with ἀπαλλάσσω/ἀπαλλάττω occurs also in *Ant.* 2.309; 3.48; 9.85; *c. Ap.* 2.50.

²⁸ Compare 7.294 «God wished (βούλεσθαι) the Gabaonites to be avenged»; note the continued emphasis on the upcoming fate of the Saulides as in conformity with the will of God. Josephus' only other use of the verb ἐπιζητέω with God as subject is *Ant.* 6.149 (cf. 1 Sam 15,22): (Samuel tells Saul) «God requires (ἐπιζητεῖ) no sacrifice». The Josephan contrast between Saul and David continues: whereas Saul

for (μεταπέμπεται)²⁹ the Gabaonites and inquired...». The sequence of 2 Sam 21,2 could seem to indicate that David's opening words to the Gibeonites (v. 2aα) are the third-person statement about their status and history recorded in v. 2aβb, whereas RSV reads the latter as a parenthetical editorial remark within the flow of David's address in vv. 2-3³⁰. Josephus avoids the source's awkward ambiguity here, having already anticipated the content of v. 2b³¹ in his version of the divine word in 7.294 (see n. 22). In place thereof he moves immediately to his compressed version of David's further word in 21,3 («What shall I do for you? And how shall I make expiation, that you may bless the heritage of the Lord?»): he inquired «what satisfaction they wanted (τίνος βούλονται τυχεῖν³²)»³³.

In 2 Sam 21,3bα David asks the Gibeonites what they want from him. When the latter reply (v. 4a), however, it is to mention things they are not looking for (i.e. the Saulides' «gold and silver») or over which they have no jurisdiction (i.e. the execution of Israelites). Accordingly, in v. 4b David must repeat in exasperation his earlier (see v. 3bα) question to them: «What do you say that I shall do for you?». Josephus, by contrast, has the Gibeonites eschew such indirection and come immediately to their actual positive demand. Specifically, passing over the entire initial exchange of v. 4, as well

did something (i.e. sacrifice from the Amalekite booty) which the Deity did not require (6.149), David acts on what he learns that God wants of him (7.296).

²⁹ Note the historic present; cf. n. 12.

³⁰ In so doing RSV suppresses the phrase «and he said to them» of v. 2aα. The Rabbinic sources cited in n. 2, taking v. 2aβb as addressed by David to the Gibeonites, understand the words as a royal pronouncement expelling them from the people of Israel.

³¹ He has no parallel to the statement of 21,2aβ («Now the Gibeonites were not of the people of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites») perhaps because the account of Joshua 9 (*Ant.* 5.49-57) would seem to indicate that the Gibeonites indeed had some part in the Israelite community.

³² Note the verbal echoes of the prophets' words of 7.294-295 here: God wanted (βούλεσθαι) the Gabaonites to be avenged (ἐκδικίας τυχεῖν); (David is urged to permit the Gibeonites) «to exact such satisfaction as they might desire (θέλουσιν)...».

³³ Note Josephus' replacement of the direct address of 21,3 with indirect address; this is a very frequent feature of his rewriting of the Bible, see C. T. BEGG, *Josephus' Account*, pp. 12-13, n. 38. As for Josephus' non-utilization of the second of David's questions to the Gibeonites from 21,3 («And how shall I make expiation, that you may bless the heritage of the Lord?»), this may perhaps be due to his sense that any blessing of Israel was a divine prerogative.

as the charge against Saul (v. 5)³⁴ with which the Gibeonites preface their demand (v. 6a), he cites the following (generalized) version of that demand: «And when they asked that seven³⁵ sons of Saul's family be given up to them³⁶ for punishment (πρὸς τιμωρίαν)...»³⁷.

2 Sam 21,6b-9a relate with much circumstantial detail David's (positive) response to the Gibeonites' demand (v. 6a). Once again, Josephus drastically abridges: «... *the king had a search made for them*³⁸ and surrendered them to the Gibeonites (// v. 9a)³⁹, but he spared Jebosthos (Ἰεβόσθου)⁴⁰, the son of Jonathan»⁴¹.

³⁴ Recall that this has been (partially) anticipated by Josephus in the word he attributes to the prophets in 7.294; cf. n. 20.

³⁵ In the Rabbinic sources (see n. 2) the Gibeonites base their demand that *seven* sons of Saul be handed over to them on the (un-Biblical) claim that Saul had put to death *seven* of their people, i.e. «two hewers of wood, two drawers of water, a superintendent, a scribe and an attendant» (so *Ba-Midbar Rabbâ* 8.4).

³⁶ Here again (see n. 33) Josephus' transposes the direct address of 2 Sam 21,6a into indirect address.

³⁷ This formulation, which leaves indeterminate what it is the Gibeonites intend to do with their victims, replaces the closing words of 21,6a where the Gibeonites announce their intention of hanging the seven «up before the Lord at Gibeon on the mountain of the Lord». Josephus' suppression of the source's specification on the point plays down the brutality of the episode. It is likewise understandable given the fact (see below) that Josephus will make no use of the story's subsequent portrayal of Rizpah's guarding the corpses of the hanged men.

³⁸ This notice has no equivalent as such in 2 Sam 21,6b-9a; the detail was likely suggested to Josephus by the account of 2 Sam 9,1-13 (// *Ant.* 7.111-116) where David is portrayed as initially ignorant of the existence and whereabouts of survivors of the house of Saul. In any case the item, which replaces the source's v. 6b «And the king said, "I will give them"», serves to underscore the energy with which David pursues God's directives to him.

³⁹ 2 Sam 21,8 lists the names of the parents of the seven victims as well as those of two of the victims themselves (Armoni and Mephibosheth). As he does not infrequently elsewhere, Josephus spares Gentile readers such a catalogue of odd-sounding Hebrew names. In eliminating the source listing, Josephus likewise disposes of a problem posed by that list, i.e. its reference to «Michal» (so MT, B) as wife of Adriel whereas according to 1 Sam 18,27 (no parallel in Josephus) it was another daughter of Saul, i.e. Merab who married Adriel. Other approaches to the problem are those of the two Hebrew MSS and L which read «Merab» for «Michal» in 2 Sam 21,8 and of the Rabbinic sources as well as TJ which affirm in connection with the verse that Michal raised the children whom Merab bore to Adriel and so is credited with their maternity.

⁴⁰ According to R. MARCUS, *Josephus*, V, 517, n. e, this form is «a slip for Memphibosthos (Mephiboscheth)», the name read in 2 Sam 21,8 (cf. also the Memphiuos of Lat and the Μεμφιβόσθου of the *editio princeps*). Elsewhere, Josephus does mention the Biblical figure of «Memphibosthos» son of Jonathan, see *Ant.* 7.111-116 (// 2 Samuel 9).

⁴¹ In the above notice Josephus reverses the (odd) sequence of 2 Sam 21,7-8 where

The source story reaches its grisly climax with the notice of 2 Sam 21,9aβ «(the Gibeonites) hanged them (the Saulides) on the mountain before the Lord (see v. 6a), and the seven of them perished together». As with his earlier re-formulation of the Gibeonites' demand (see above), so also here Josephus (7.297) leaves matters much more indeterminate: «Then the Gabaonites took them and punished them as they saw fit (ὡς ἐβούλοντο)»⁴². His omission of the source detail about the hanging of the victims in both instances spares readers' sensibilities (while also introducing an air of mystery into the proceedings— what, in fact, happened to the Saulides?). That omission further makes sense in that whereas the hanging motif is important for the sequel of the source story, i.e. Rizpah's heroic deed, Josephus himself will not make use of that sequel, see below⁴³.

2 Sam 21,9 concludes with the chronological indication that the Saulides' hanging took place at «the beginning of the barley harvest». This indication, in turn, sets up the following concatenation of events: Rizpah stands guard over the hanging corpses from the

the exception, i.e. Mephibosheth is cited (v. 7) prior to the actual list of victims (v. 8). He likewise leaves aside the motivation for David's sparing of Mephibosheth as given in 21,7b («because of the oath of the Lord which was between them, between David and Jonathan...»), perhaps counting on readers to supply this explanation for themselves here in light of his earlier presentation concerning David's beneficence to Mephibosheth in *Ant.* 7.111-116 (// 2 Samuel 9). The Rabbinic sources (see n. 2), by contrast, adduce an additional reason for the exemption of Mephibosheth, i.e. his status as a great scholar and David's teacher. Those same sources likewise introduce a description of the procedure used to determine which descendants of Saul would be handed over to the Gibeonites: the Saulides were made to process before the altar (or the ark); those whom it drew to itself were spared, while the others were doomed. In response to David's prayer God caused Mephibosheth to fall into the former category.

⁴² Note the echo of the prophets' directive to David that he «permit the Gabaonites to exact such satisfaction as they saw fit (ἦν ... θέλουσιν)» in 7.295; see also the phrase «God wished (βούλεσθαι) the Gabaonites to be avenged» in 7.294.

⁴³ See also n. 37. Unlike the Rabbinic sources (see n. 2) Josephus does not explicitly address the problem posed by the discrepancy between David's treatment of the Saulides and the prohibition of Deut 24,16 (// *Ant.* 4.289) of putting children to death for the sins of their fathers. (The Rabbinic response to the difficulty is to affirm that it is better for a letter to be rooted out of the Torah [*in casu* Deut 24,16] than for the divine name to be profaned among the nations as would happen if Saul's crime against the Gibeonites were allowed to go unpunished, see, e.g., TB-*Yēbamōt* 79a). On the other hand, as indicated above, he does supply an implicit legitimation for David's action by tracing this back, as the Bible does not, to an express statement of the divine will mediated to him by the prophets (see 7.294).

beginning of the harvest until the coming of the rains (v. 10); informed of her deed (v. 11), David has the bones of Saul and Jonathan brought from Jabesh-Gilead (see 1 Sam 31,13 // *Ant.* 6.377) and those of the seven victims gathered (vv. 12-13). Finally, the bones of Saul and Jonathan are buried in the tomb of the former's father Kish (v. 14a), whereupon God «heard supplications for the land» (v. 14b). Skipping over the entire content of 21,9bβ - 14a, Josephus concludes the story with an expanded parallel to/explication of v. 14b: «And God *at once* began to send rain (ὕειν)⁴⁴ and to restore the land to its fruitfulness, by delivering it from drought. And once more the country of the Hebrews⁴⁵ flourished (εὐθρήνησεν ἡ ... χώρα⁴⁶)».

In attempting now to account for Josephus' conclusion of our episode and the major omission of source material this involves, I would note the following points. First, the historian's way of ending the narrative is in line with his earlier modifications of the Biblical story. Specifically, his passing over previous references to the hanging of the Saulides (see 21,6a.9ba), as well as the chronological indication of v.9bβ, finds its counterpart in his non-use of the description of Rizpah keeping guard over the hanged corpses «from the beginning of the harvest until rain fell» in 21,10. Similarly, the only condition laid down in the Josephan version of the divine speech for the restoration of God's favor is the satisfaction of the Gibeonites' craving for revenge (see 7.295). Hence, once this condition is met (7.297a), God «immediately» intervenes on behalf of his afflicted people (7.297b). By contrast, in the Biblical account, David's granting satisfaction to the Gibeonites in accord with God's word to him (2 Sam 21,2-3) does not, of itself, lead to a divine relenting. Such

⁴⁴ Josephus doubtless found inspiration for this specification regarding the nature of the favorable divine response alluded to in 2 Sam 21,14b in the notice of 21,11 that Rizpah stood guard over the corpses «until rain (literally water) fell upon them from the heavens». That reference likely also led him to infer that the famine mentioned in 21,1 (// *Ant.* 7.294) was due to a drought, whose termination by God he will proceed to relate here in 7.297, see above in the text.

⁴⁵ On Josephus' (oscillating) designations (Hebrews, Israelites, Jews) for the chosen people at the different stages of their history, see A. ARAZY, *The Appellations of the Jews (Ioudaios, Hebraios, Israel) in the Literature from Alexander to Justinian*, Diss. New York University 1973, pp. 170-181.

⁴⁶ Compare Josephus' notice on conditions in Israel at the end of the reign of Jehoahaz in *Ant.* 9.176 ἡ χώρα ... εὐθρήνησε.

relenting (see 21,14b) only comes following a series of initiatives involving the remains of the Saulides (21,10-14a) about which God had said nothing explicitly earlier⁴⁷. In eliminating the whole of the sequence 21,10-14a Josephus thus disposes of this discordance internal to the source. The omission allows Josephus to avoid other problems that might suggest themselves about the above unit as well. For one thing, that unit represents Rizpah as showing a *pietas* for the remains of the dead which David himself only begins to display once he has heard of her initiative. Given his generally minimalizing/negative approach to the role of women in his history⁴⁸, Josephus would not have been eager to reproduce such a portrayal of a woman putting David himself to shame⁴⁹. Via his non-utilization of 21,10-14a (plus the related references to the hanging of the Saulides in vv. 6 and 9), Josephus likewise contrives to avoid the discrepancy between the prolonged exposure of the victims' corpses (see v. 10) and the law of Deut 21,22-23 (// *Ant.* 4.264-265) enjoining that those hung be buried on the same day⁵⁰.

CONCLUSIONS

Our study of *Ant.* 7.294-297, first of all, yielded few definite indications about the text-form(s) of 2 Sam 21,1-14 available to

⁴⁷ Compare the Rabbinic sources (n. 2) which with their disjunctive reading of the phrase «for Saul and his bloody house» in 2 Sam 21,1 do see a divine requirement for the proper burial of Saul (see 21,14a) intimated already in God's opening communication to David; see n. 17.

⁴⁸ On the point, see, e.g., L. H. FELDMAN, «Josephus' Portrait of Deborah», in A. CAQUOT *et al.* (eds.), *Hellenica et Judaica (Festschrift V. Nikiprowetzky)*, Leuven-Paris 1986, 115-128; C. A. BROWN, *No Longer Be Silent: First Century Jewish Portraits of Biblical Women*, Louisville 1992.

⁴⁹ Contrast, e.g., *Ba-Midbar Rabbâ* 8.4 which, in an elaboration of 2 Sam 21,10-11 represents David (who had hitherto neglected the divine injunction concerning the reburial of Saul in the land of Israel) as reflecting that if Rizpah «who is but a woman» had shown care for the remains of the dead, he as king was obligated to do still more.

⁵⁰ Just as they do with the discordance between the execution of the Saulides for their ancestor's crime and the law of Deut 24,16 (see n. 43), the Rabbinic sources (see n. 2) explicitly address this discrepancy as well, averring that the need to preclude a profanation of the divine name as would happen if the wrong done the Gibeonites by Saul were allowed to go unpunished takes precedence over an individual prescription of the Torah (*in casu* Deut 21,22-23).

Josephus in composing his version. We did, however, note that he shares his avoidance of the anthropomorphism of MT (and B) 21,1a β with L and TJ, just as his having David pray for divine mercy is paralleled in TJ. We found no clear evidence, either, of Josephus' acquaintance with the Rabbinic traditions surrounding the episode, even though in many other instances Josephus does appear to display familiarity with such traditions⁵¹. On the other hand, their brevity notwithstanding, the four paragraphs of *Ant.* studied do provide noteworthy examples of various Josephan rewriting techniques. His *additions to/elaborations of* the source's content come largely at the beginning and very end of the episode (7.294-295 // 21,1; 7.297b // 21,14b); they concern especially the figures of God and David, see below. In his amplification of the divine reply to David in 7.294 Josephus *anticipates* elements that in the source stand only at a later point, i.e. in its vv. 5 and 2b⁵². Similarly, he *reverses* the sequence of 21,7 (Mephibosheth's exemption) and 8 (list of the seven designated victims) so as to give David's measures a more logical movement. Stylistic/terminological *modifications* introduced by him include a two-fold use of the historic present, the substitution of indirect for direct discourse and the replacement of «the Lord» by «God». Among more contentual modifications we noted especially Josephus' turning the Bible's unmediated divine word to David (see 21,1b) into a message conveyed by «prophets», this reflecting his consistent accentuation of the prophetic factor in Israel's history (see n. 16).

Of all the rewriting techniques applied by Josephus in 7.294-297 the most noteworthy of all is, however, his *condensation* of the source's long middle section, 21,2-14a, his parallel to which occupies a mere one-and-a-half paragraphs, 7.296-297a. Our study indicated that a variety of considerations were operative in this abridgement process. These include a desire to expedite the narrative flow (e.g., the Gibeonites make their demand immediately, so that David need not ask his question of what they want from him twice, 7.296a, compare 21,3-4). Concern not to overwhelm Gentile readers with a mass of foreign names leads him to omit the listing of such in 21,8. Omission of the entire sequence of 21,10-14a (as well as of the

⁵¹ On the point, see L. H. FELDMAN, «Elijah», pp. 62-63, n. 3.

⁵² This latter anticipation also serves to eliminate the awkwardly ambiguous sequence of 21,2, see above.

references to the hanging of the Saulides in vv. 6 and 9b α and the chronological indication of v. 9b β which prepare this) further the inner coherence of Josephus' version (while also disposing of various other problematic features of that segment, see above).

The above rewriting techniques converge in generating a version of the episode which differs from its Biblical counterpart above all with respect to its portrayal of God and David. For one thing, already quantitatively, Josephus' amplification of the narrative's opening and closing segments (where God and/or David are the sole actors) while conversely sharp reducing the intervening material (where other personages come into play) serves to highlight these two figures⁵³. In addition, however, both figures take on distinctive characteristics in Josephus' presentation. His God is more directive as to what he wants of David⁵⁴, just as he is more explicit in the promises he makes for the event of David's compliance (see 7.294b-295, compare 21,1b). God's fidelity to his promises (and ability to deliver on them) is underscored as well in Josephus' amplified version of 21,14b in 7.297b. As for David, he emerges, via the three-fold petition attributed to him in 7.294a, as more articulate and purposeful in his approach to the Deity than his Biblical counterpart (compare 21,1a β). The omission of the notice of 21,1a α that the famine persisted for three years from the opening of 7.294 precludes the idea that David failed to make a timely response to his nation's affliction. David's compliance with God's directive (which extends to his having a search made for the surviving Saulides, see 7.296b, a non-Biblical detail) concerning the mollification of the Gibeonites sets him in contrast with Saul whose oath-breaking treatment of them Josephus goes beyond the source in villifying (see 7.294b and compare 21,2b)⁵⁵.

One final question that remains to be asked about *Ant.* 7.294-

⁵³ Josephus' accentuation of the divine role in the Saulide episode is noteworthy in that in many other contexts of *Ant.* he tends to detheologize Biblical accounts, see L. H. FELDMAN, «Use, Authority, and Exegesis of Mikra in the Writings of Josephus», in M. J. MULDER and H. SYSLING (eds.), *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, Assen 1988, 455-518, 503-507.

⁵⁴ As noted above, this feature serves to invest David's subsequent measures with a divine legitimacy.

⁵⁵ On the Josephan David overall, see L. H. FELDMAN, «Josephus' Portrait of David», *HUCA* 60 (1989) 129-174.

297 is why Josephus chose to include the incident recorded in 2 Sam 21,1-14 in his work at all given its potential to offend the sense of justice of both Gentile and Jewish readers⁵⁶. In reply to this question I would note two factors that might have influenced Josephus' decision to retain the problematic narrative. First of all, the story depicts the Jews as doing right by a group of foreigners at great cost to themselves⁵⁷. As such it would provide welcome support for Josephus' apologetic endeavor to counteract claims that Jews lacked concern for the welfare of anyone other than their own people⁵⁸. Secondly, and more generally, this story of obedience to God's directives leading to the restoration of divine favor provides a noteworthy illustration of the moral set out by Josephus at the very beginning of *Ant.* (1.14) i.e. «men who conform to the will of God ... prosper in all things beyond belief and for their reward are offered felicity by God...». Given these features of the source account, one can then readily understand Josephus' decision to include a rewritten version of it in his own work.

⁵⁶ In other instances (e.g., the Golden Calf episode of Exodus 32) Josephus does not hesitate to completely eliminate embarrassing material from his retelling of the Biblical record, notwithstanding his opening promise (*Ant.* 1.17) to neither «add nor omit anything» from what he found in his Scriptural sources.

⁵⁷ This aspect of the Biblical story likewise receives great attention in the Rabbinic sources (see n. 2) which affirm that the Gentiles were so impressed by the satisfaction given the Gibeonites by David that 150,000 became proselytes on this occasion.

⁵⁸ On this point, see L. H. FELDMAN, «Josephus' Portrait of Gideon», *REJ* 152 (1993) 5-28, 14-15, n. 21.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo analiza el relato de la ejecución de los hijos de Saúl descrita por Josefo en *Antigüedades* 7.294-297 en relación con su fuente bíblica de 2 Sam 21,1-14, (según el TM, el ms. Vaticano y los mss. lucíanicos/antioquenos, y el Targum Yonatán para los profetas primeros) y en relación también con el tratamiento rabínico del episodio. El estudio muestra claramente que, a pesar de su brevedad, el pasaje ofrece ejemplos de las técnicas empleadas por Josefo para reescribir las narraciones bíblicas que merecen ser puestos de relieve y también es un exponente del cuidado e intención deliberada con que este autor lleva a cabo su propia versión de la historia de Israel.

SUMMARY

This essay examines Josephus' account of the execution of the Saulides in *Ant.* 7.294-297 in relation to its Biblical source, 2 Sam 21,1-14, (as attested by MT, the Vaticanus and Lucianic/Antiochene manuscripts and Targum Jonathan on the Former Prophets) as well as the Rabbinic treatments of the episode. The study makes clear that, notwithstanding its brevity, the passage offers noteworthy examples of Josephus' «rewriting techniques», just as it exemplifies the care and purposefulness with which he developed his own version of Israel's history.