

JOAB'S MURDER OF ABNER ACCORDING TO JOSEPHUS

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Abstract

This article provides a detailed study of Josephus retelling (in Ant. 7. 22-45) of the biblical story of the assassination of Abner by Joab in 2 Sam 3:6-39. The study devotes particular attention to two questions: 1) which text-form(s) of the biblical passage did Josephus utilize in composing his own version? ; and material and what is distinctive about the Josephan account of Abner's murder that results from the application of those techniques?

Resumo

Este artigo provê um estudo detalhado da narração de Josefo (em Ant. 7. 22-45) da história bíblica do assassinato de Abner por Joabe em 2 Sm 3:6-39. O estudo dedica atenção particular a duas perguntas: 1) qual (quais) texto (s) da passagem bíblica que Josefo utilizou na composição de sua própria versão? ; e qual material é distintivo quanto ao relato de Josefo sobre o assassinato de Abner que resulta da aplicação dessas técnicas?

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David's rise to undisputed rule over all Israel following the death of Saul involved much conflict. One such conflict pitted Abner, commander of the forces of Saul's son Ishbosheth, against Joab, David's general, and resulted in the latter's brutal murder of the former, as narrated in 2 Sam 3:6-39.¹ In this essay I will focus on an ancient retelling of the episode, i.e. that of Josephus in his *Antiquitates judaicae* (hereafter *Ant.*) 7.22-45.²

My study will attend, first of all, to the text-critical question: in view of the differences among the ancient witnesses for 2 Sam 3:6-39, i.e. MT (BHS), 4QSam^a,³ the Codex Vaticanus (hereafter B)⁴ and the Antiochene or Lucianic (hereafter L) manuscripts⁵ of the LXX, the (fragmentary) *Vetus Latina* (hereafter VL),⁶ and Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets (here Tg.),⁷ on which text-form(s) of the passage did Josephus draw in *Ant.* 7.22-45? Secondly, I shall investigate the rewriting techniques applied by Josephus to the Samuel material and the distinctive features of Josephus' version that results from their application.

For purposes of my comparison between them, I divide up the biblical and Josephan passages into eight parallel sub-units as follows: 1) The Quarrel (*Ant.* 7.22-23// 2 Sam 3:6-11); 2) David's wife recovered (7.24-26a//3:12-6); 3) Abner's double address (7:26-29a//3:17-19a); 4) Abner visits David (7.29-30// 3:19b-21); 5) Joab murders Abner (7:31-38// 3:22-27); 6) David's reaction to murder (7.39-40a// :28-30); 7) Abner buried (7.41-42a// 3:31-34); and 8) Sequels to burial (7.42b-45// 3:35-39).

The Quarrel

Following their respective "interludes" concerning the sons born to David at Hebron (2 Sam 3:2-5// *Ant.* 7.21), both the Bible and Josephus return (3:6// 7.22) to the topic of the continuing conflict between the partisans of Ishbosheth and David mentioned by them in 3:1// 7.20. In reintroducing the topic, both accounts likewise highlight the role played by Abner, Ishbosheth's commander. In so doing, 2 Sam 3:1b uses an ambiguous phrase in reference to Abner, stating that he "was making himself strong (MT: בַּתְּהָרִיק) in the house of Saul" (RSV). Is this phrase to be taken *in bonam partem* as signifying that Abner was reinforcing the rule of his overlord Ishbosheth over Israel as duty required or, rather, *in malam partem*, i.e. Abner was abrogating power for himself? Josephus' version (7.22a) offers an unambiguously positive interpretation of the biblical formulation: "Now when *civil*

war broke out and the followers of each of the two kings had frequent encounters and fights,⁸ Abenner, the commander-in-chief of Saul's son, being a clever man and enjoying very great favor with the populace,⁹ contrived to keep them on the side of Jebosthos [Ish-bosheth],¹⁰ and for a considerable time they supported him.»¹¹

2 Sam 3:7 brings on the scene the figure of Saul's "concubine" who becomes the occasion for a quarrel between King Ish-bosheth and Abner that starts when the former asks the latter "Why have gone into my father's concubine?" At the same time, the biblical account leaves several points about the episode unclear: did Abner in fact have relations with the woman¹² and—whether he did or not—how did Ish-bosheth come to hear of the matter—as his reproach to Abner presupposes? Josephus (7.22a) leaves the first of these questions unresolved as well, but does provide an implicit response to the second: «Later, however, when Abenner was made the object of complaints and accused of intimacy with¹³ with Saul's concubine,¹⁴ named¹⁵ Respha,¹⁶ the daughter of Sibatos¹⁷ and was censured¹⁸ by Jebosthos¹⁹ »

The biblical account of Abner's reaction to Ish-bosheth's reproachful question of 2 Sam 3:7b begins in 3:8a with mention of his being "very angry" at the king's words. Josephus' rendition (7.23a) elaborates, e.g., supplying a motivation for the intensity of Abner's emotional response: "... he was very much hurt and angered at receiving what he thought was unjust treatment from him in spite of all the kindness he had shown to Jebosthos."²⁰

The "angered" Abner responds at length to Ish-bosheth in 2 Sam 3:8b-10. Josephus greatly abbreviates his reply, passing over the whole of the general's words in 3:8b-9.²¹ Moreover, in reproducing (7.23c) Abner's climatic affirmation of 3:10 about what he intends to do, Josephus notably modifies its content: «He therefore threatened²² to transfer the kingship to David²³ and to show that it was not through his own strength and understanding that Jebosthos ruled over the people across the Jordan,²⁴ but through his generalship and loyalty (πίστιν).²⁵

The biblical “quarrel scene” concludes in 2 Sam 3:11 with the notice: “And Ishbosheth could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him.” In leaving this notice aside, Josephus implicitly accentuates the king’s impotence and insignificance— his (non-) reaction to Abner’s retort is not a matter worthy of the passing mention the Bible gives it.

David’s Wife Recovered

Our episode takes a new turn in 2 Sam 3:12 as Abner actually enters into contact with David. The text of this opening verse features an array of difficulties.²⁶ Josephus’ rendition (*Ant.* 7.24) evidences a communality with a reading peculiar to LXX L, but, but also gives a distinctive wording to Abner’s proposal as cited there: “Then he sent to David at Hebron²⁷ and asked²⁸ for a sworn pledge (literally: oaths and pledges [ὄρκους τε καὶ πίστεις²⁹] that he would own him a comrade and friend³⁰ when once he had persuaded the people to revolt from Saul’s son and caused David to be declared king of the whole country.³¹

In 2 Sam 3:13 David accepts Abner’s proposal in principle, on the condition, however, that he first recover his wife Michal for him. Josephus (7.25a) prefaces David’s verbal response with mention of the emotional effect of Abner’s proposal on him: “When David, pleased at the offer which Abenner had made to him through his envoys, accepted these terms (ὁμολογίας),³² he asked Abenner to furnish a first proof of carrying out their agreement,³³ by recovering for him the wife who had been purchased by him with great perils and the heads of six hundred Philistines which he had brought as payment for her to her father Saul.³⁴

The biblical story takes a surprising turn in 2 Sam 3:14-15 where, after calling on Abner to recover his wife for him in 3:13, David forthwith writes to Ish-bosheth with the same demand (v. 14; see n. 34) and it is the latter who, in fact, does take the lead (v. 15) in Michal’s removal from her second husband, Paltiel. Josephus (7.26a) presents a different, more plausible scenario in which Abner assumes the leading, Ish-bosheth the supporting role: Accordingly, Abenner took Melchale³⁵ away from Opheltias³⁶

who was then living with her, and sent her to David,³⁷ Jebosthos also assisting in the matter for, for David had written to him that he had a just claim to recover his wife."³⁸

The biblical narrative of David's recovery of Michal terminates in 2 Sam 3:16 on a painful note with the weeping "Paltiel" following the wife who has been taken from her until he is brusquely told by Abner to return and does so. This item reflects badly on Abner and ultimately on David himself, both of whom it depicts as utterly insensitive to the distress their initiative causes Paltiel. Accordingly, it is not surprising to find Josephus leaving the verse's content aside in the interest of the positive image of the two principals he wishes to convey.

Abner's Double Address

Once the matter of Michal has been resolved, Abner initiates discussions first with the elders of Israel (2 Sam 3:17-18) and then with the Benjaminites (3:19a). Josephus' version (7.26b-29a) expatiates on both these moves by Abner. Thus, he enlarges (7.26b-27) the circle of Abner's initial audience and gives him a more expansive address to them: "Then Abenner called together the elders of the people³⁹ and the lower officers and the captains of a thousand,⁴⁰ and addressed them, saying that when they had attempted to revolt (ἀποστῆναι) from Jebosthos⁴¹ and to join David's side,⁴² he had dissuaded them from this attempt,⁴³ but now he gave them leave to go where they liked,⁴⁴ his reason being that he knew that God, through the prophet Samuel⁴⁵ had chosen king of all the Hebrews⁴⁶ and had foretold that none other than he would chastise the Philistines and, by his victories, make them subject.»⁴⁷

The biblical narrative makes no mention of a response by the elders to Abner's appeal to them of 2 Sam 3:17-18.⁴⁸ Josephus (7.28) supplies an indication on the matter, thereby portraying Abner also as an effective speaker: "When the elders and the leaders heard this and perceived that Abenner's view of the situation was in agreement with that which they themselves had previously held,⁴⁹ they changed over to David's side...."

2 Sam 3:19a makes summary reference to a second address by Abner, this time to the Benjamites. Here too, Josephus (7.29a) elaborates, providing, e.g., a rationale for Abner's separate approach to this particular tribe: "and when they had been won over,⁵⁰ Abenner called together the tribe of Benjamin— for it was from this tribe that all the bodyguards of Jebosthos came⁵¹— and made the same speech to them.⁵²

Abner visits David

2 Sam 3:19-20a makes double mention of Abner's proceeding to David at Hebron in order (v.19b) to inform him of the views of the two groups he has just addressed. The historian (7.29b) eliminates the source's repetition, even while embellishing its content in other respects: "As he [Abenner] saw that they [the Benjamites] made no objection but acceded to his wishes,⁵³ he took some twenty companions and came to David⁵⁴ in order to receive his oath (ὄρκους)⁵⁵ in person— for we all seem to have more faith in what we do ourselves than in what is done through others,⁵⁶— and also to acquaint him with the speech he had made⁵⁷ to the leaders and to the whole tribe.⁵⁸

The biblical David responds to Abner's coming by "making a feast for Abner and the men who were with him" (2 Sam 3:20b). Josephus' rendering (7.30a) expatiates on the king's hospitality while having this directed to Abner (alone): "David received him in friendly fashion and entertained him with splendid and lavish feasts that lasted many days."⁵⁹

Having been entertained by David, Abner addresses him (2 Sam 3:21a) with an extended statement concerning what he now intends to do. Josephus (7.30b) recasts Abner's words in more deferential terms: "Then Abenner asked to be dismissed and given leave to bring the people,⁶⁰ in order that they might hand over the royal power to David when present and before their eyes.⁶¹ 2 Sam 3:21b concludes the «Hebron scene» with the notice «So David sent Abner away; and he went away in peace.» Josephus makes this notice the transition to the narrative's following episode which culminates with Joab's murder of Abner; see below.

Joab murders Abner

As noted above, Josephus (7.31a) combines the biblical conclusion to the account of Abner's visit to David (3:21b) and the opening (3:22) of the next segment featuring the murderous activities of Joab. In so doing, he likewise eliminates several extraneous details of the source sequence: "Hardly had David sent Abenner away⁶² when Joab his commander in chief⁶³ came to Hebron...."⁶⁴

Upon the arrival of Joab and the accompanying army, the latter is informed (7:23) of Abner's coming to David, his dismissal by the king, and his having gone "in peace." Leaving aside, here too (see n. 64) any reference to Joab's entourage, the historian has him receiving a more specific (and personally disturbing) report of what has transpired in his absence: "... and, when he learned that Abenner had been to see the David and had departed a little while before, after reaching an understanding and agreement about the sovereignty...." To this notice on what Joab hears he then appends an extended remark (7.31b) concerning its emotional effect upon him:

... he feared that David might give him [Abenner] honours of the first rank as one who would help him in securing the kingdom and who was, besides, apt in understanding matters of state and in seizing opportunities,⁶⁵ while he himself might be set down and deprived of his command.

To this remark Josephus, in turn, attaches a further one that makes clear, in advance, his negative judgment on Joab's subsequent actions: "He therefore took a dishonest and evil (*κακοῦργον καὶ πονεράν*)⁶⁶ course.

Joab's first initiative according to 2 Sam 3:24-25 is to go to David, trying to convince him that Abner had come under deceitful pretenses in order to spy on his doings. Josephus' version (7.32) has Joab attribute a still alarming purpose to Abner's visit in hopes of arousing the king's suspicions: "First of all he attempted to calumniate Abenner to the king,⁶⁷ urging him to be on guard and not to pay attention to the agreements Abenner had made,⁶⁸

for he was doing everything, he said, in order to secure the sovereignty⁶⁹ for Saul's son, and having come to David with deceit and guile (ἀπάτη καὶ δόλω),⁷⁰ he had now gone away with the hope of realizing his wish and carrying out his carefully laid plans.⁷¹

The biblical account, remarkably, says nothing about any response by David to Joab's warnings concerning Abner; having delivered his discourse (2 Sam 3:24-25), the latter simply "comes out from David's presence" and sends messengers after Abner (3:26a). Josephus (7.33a) fills these narrative gap between Joab's two moves with an extended transitional phrase: "But as he could not persuade David by these means and saw that he was not moved to anger,⁷² he turned to a course (ὁδόν) still bolder,⁷³ having decided to kill Abenner...."⁷⁴

2 Sam 3:26aβb-27aα" summarily relates the process of Abner's return: Brought back the messengers whom Joab sends out after him "from the cistern of Sirah" without David's knowledge, Abner arrives once again at Hebron. Also in this instance, Josephus' rendition (7.33b-34a) elaborates considerably:

[Joab] sent men in pursuit of him, to whom he gave orders that when they came up with him they should call to him in David's name and say that he had certain things to discuss with him concerning their affairs, which he had forgotten to mention when Abenner was with him.⁷⁵ When Abenner heard this from the messengers— they came upon at a certain place called Besera,⁷⁶ twenty stades distant from Hebron⁷⁷— he turned back with no suspicion of what was to come.⁷⁸

Once Abner returns to Hebron (2 Sam 3:27a"), the biblical narrator has Joab murder him in very short order; by the end of 3:27 Abner is already dead. Here again, Josephus (7.34b-35) embellishes, pausing, e.g., to interject a psychological observation about how miscreants like Joab typically operate:

Joab met him at the gate and greeted him with the greatest show of goodwill and friendship— for very often those who undertake disgraceful acts assume the part of truly good men to avert suspicion of their design⁷⁹— and then, having drawn him apart from his attendants,⁸⁰ as if to speak to him privately, led him to a more deserted part of the gate,⁸¹ where he was alone with his brother Abisai,⁸² drew his sword, and struck him under the flank.⁸³

The author of 2 Samuel 3 presents a rationale for the killing of Abner in two separate contexts, both times seemingly identifying himself with the viewpoint of the perpetrator(s): Abner dies “for the blood of Asahel his [Joab’s] brother” (v. 27b), while Joab and Abishai slay Abner “because he had killed [MT; LXX BL: lain in wait for] their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon [see 2 Sam 2:23].” Josephus (7.35) combines these separate explanations into one, while likewise making clear that he does not accept their validity himself: “So died Abenner through this treachery of Joab,⁸⁴ who claimed to have done it to avenge his brother Asael,⁸⁵ for when he had pursued Abenner, the latter had caught and slain him in the fight near Hebron⁸⁶. “Having cited Joab’s “claim” about why he killed Abner on the basis of 2 Sam 3:27b, 30, Josephus proceeds to append an extended statement (7.36b) of his own concerning the assassin’s true motivations. This reads:

... but in truth it was because he feared for his command of the army and his place of honour with the king, of which he himself might have been deprived while Abenner received the foremost place from David.⁸⁷

To this statement about the particular case of Joab he further appends a lengthy remark (7.37-38) about the wider lessons that may be learned from this case:

From this one may perceive to what lengths of recklessness (τολμῶσιν)⁸⁸ men will go for the sake of ambition (πλεόεξίαις)⁸⁹ and power, and in order not to let these go to another; for, in their desire to acquire them, they obtain them through innumerable acts of wrongdoing and, in their fear of losing them, they ensue their continuation of their possession by much worst acts, their belief being that it is not so great an evil to fail to obtain a very great degree of authority as to lose it after having become accustomed to the benefits derived therefrom. Since this would be a surpassing misfortune, they accordingly contrive and attempt (τολμῶσιν; see nn. 73, 88) even more ruthless deeds, always in fear (ἐργαῖν φόβῳ)⁹⁰ of losing what they have. But concerning such matters it is enough to have discoursed such briefly.⁹¹

David's reaction to murder

2 Sam 3:28-29 cites the words of David, vehemently disassociating himself from Abner's deed once he hears of this.

Josephus (7.39a), dramatizes the royal reaction, prefacing his reproduction of the king's words with mention of his emotional state and the hand gesture that accompanies his words: "When David heard that Abenner had been slain, he was grieved in spirit and, with his right hand upraised to God and in a loud voice, called upon all to bear witness that...." Thereafter (7.39b), he renders the content of David's two-part speech in indirect-discourse form: "... he had no share in Abenner's murder and that it was not by his command or at his own wish that Abenner had died.⁹² He also called terrible curses upon the man who had murdered him and declared his whole house and his accomplices⁹³ liable to the penalties for having caused his death...."⁹⁴

Appended to David's words of 2 Sam 3:28-29 one finds a— seemingly out-of-place— appendix (3:30) which returns to

the question, already touched on at the end of 3:27, of why Abner was killed. As noted above, Josephus makes prior use of the content of 3:30 in 7.36, combining this with his version of 3:27b. Accordingly, he lacks an equivalent to 3:30 at the point where this appears in the biblical sequence; instead, he moves directly to the following episode, i.e. the burial of Abner, introducing this (7.39c) with a remark about the “concern” that prompts David to react to Abner’s murder as he does: “for he was concerned that he himself not seem to have brought this about in violation of the sworn pledges (πίστεισ καὶ... ὄρκου)⁴⁹⁵ which he had given Abenner.”⁹⁶

Abner buried

The account of Abner’s burial in 2 Sam 3:31-34 begins in v. 31a with David directing “Joab and all the people” to undertake mourning for the slain general. Josephus’ rendering (7.40) leaves aside the Bible’s surprising (and off-putting) notice that the assassin Joab himself was to participate in the funeral. Otherwise it reproduces the source data with minor expansions: “Furthermore, he commanded all the people⁹⁷ to weep and mourn for the man and to honour his body with the customary rites by rending their garments and putting on sackcloth and in this fashion to escort the bier.”

2 Sam 3:31b succinctly mentions the fact of David’s “following the bier.” Josephus’ elaboration of this item (7.41) highlights the king’s emotional involvement in the funeral rite and the realization this produced in those who witnessed it: “He himself followed with the elders and those in office,⁹⁸ beating his breast and showing by his tears⁹⁹ both his affection (ἔννοιαν)¹⁰⁰ for him when alive and his grief (λύπην)¹⁰¹ in death, and also that the slaying had not been in accordance with his will.”¹⁰²

The conclusion to the Bible’s account of Abner’s funeral features David’s lament for the murdered man (2 Sam 3:33-34a), this accompanied by mention of the actual burial (3:32a) and “weeping” by both king (3:32b”) and people (3:32b, 34b). In contrast to his general practice throughout 7.22-45, Josephus abbreviates this portion of the biblical narrative. His

condensed version (7.42a) of 3:32-34 comprises a mere half-paragraph which runs: “He¹⁰³ then gave him a magnificent (μεγαλοπρετῶς)¹⁰⁴ burial in Hebron and composed laments for the dead¹⁰⁵; standing by the grave he himself began the wailing which was taken up by others.¹⁰⁶”

Sequels to burial

The Bible and Josephus both conclude their narratives of Abner’s murder with a segment (2 Sam 3:35-39// *Ant.* 7.42b-45) concerning the sequels to Abner’s burial in which David assumes a preeminent role.

2 Sam 3:35 initiates this segment with mention of the people’s trying to get David to eat, only to meet with his sworn refusal to do so before sun down. Josephus’ parallel (7.42b) features an opening, added reference to the king’s continued distress over the murdered man: “So greatly did Abenner’s death affect him that he did not take the food¹⁰⁷ which his comrades¹⁰⁸ forced upon him, but swore¹⁰⁹ that he would taste nothing¹¹⁰ until the setting of the sun.”

According to 2 Sam 3:36, David’s refusal to eat “pleased” the people, “just as everything the king did pleased all the people.” This notice gives Josephus the occasion for another lengthy expansion in which he spells out what it was two different groups among the people found “pleasing” in David’s behavior. The passage (7.43) reads:

This conduct procured for him the favor of all the people. For those who held Abenner in affection were greatly pleased with him for honouring the dead man and keeping faith (πίστεως),¹¹¹ in that he had seen fit to pay him all the customary tributes as if he had been a kinsman and friend, and had not treated him shamefully, as if an enemy, by giving him a bare and shameful funeral¹¹²; and all the others rejoiced that he so kind (χρηστῶ)¹¹³ and gentle a nature, for each thought he himself would in like circumstances receive from the king the same care that he saw the corpse of Abenner receive.

To the statement of 2 Sam 3:35 about the people's being "pleased" with David's respect for the murdered Abner, 3:36 adds a further remark about their a general recognition at this point that David had indeed not willed the killing of Abner. Josephus introduces the latter notice with a reference (7.44a) to David's on-going concern for his good reputation among the people: "Moreover it was quite natural that David should desire to merit a good opinion by showing care (for the dead),"¹¹⁴ so that no one suspected that Abenner had been murdered by him."¹¹⁵

The scriptural account of the sequels to Abner's burial terminates in 2 Sam 3:38-39 with a final speech by David. This speech opens (v. 38) with the king addressing a rhetorical question to his servants that highlights the dead Abner's status as a "prince and great man." The historian (7.44b) turns the question into a statement by David which itself begins with the king's declaration concerning his feelings towards the deceased: "He also said to the people¹¹⁶ that he himself felt more than passing grief (lu,ph)¹¹⁷ at the death of so good (a.gaqou/)¹¹⁸ a man,¹¹⁹ while the fortunes of the Hebrews had [see 6.27] suffered a great blow when they were deprived of one who could who could have held them together and preserved them, both by his excellent counsels and his bodily strength in time of war."¹²⁰

David's ends his discourse in 2 Sam 3:39 with an acknowledgement about his own ineffectiveness *vis-à-vis* Abner's killers (v. 39a) and an appeal that the Lord "requite the evildoer." Josephus' rendition (7.45) duplicates the king's invocation of divine vengeance, even while leaving aside the biblical David's initial self-characterization: "But God, he said, who has all things in His care will not see this deed go unavenged."¹²¹ As for me, you know that¹²² I¹²³ can do nothing to Joab and Abishai [see 7.35], the sons of Saruia, who are more powerful than I,¹²⁴ but the Deity will inflict just punishment on them for their lawless deed (τετολμημένων)."¹²⁵

Having expatiated on the biblical account of Abner's murder over the course of the extended unit 7.22-45, Josephus rounds

off the whole segment with a closing formula at the end of 7.45: “In such a manner, then, did Abenner meet his end.”¹²⁶

Conclusions

At the conclusion of this essay, I return to the two general questions I posed at its start in order to summarize my findings concerning them. Regarding my initial question of which text-form(s) of 2 Sam 3:6-39 Josephus had available in composing *Ant.* 7.22-45, the relevant indications turned out to be rather sparse. We did, however, that Josephus’ form of the name of Saul’s concubine in 7.23 stands closest to that of LXX L 2 Sam 3:7 (see n. 17), just as he agrees (7.24) with LXX L 3:12 against MT and LXX B in specifying that Abner sent his messengers to David “at Hebron.” On the other hand, he lacks an equivalent to the LXX L plus of 2 Sam 3:7a stating that Abner actually did “take” Rizpah (see n. 12). Like LXX BL 3:12, he has no counterpart to the words with which Abner’s message to David begins in MT, i.e. “to whom does the land belong?” (see n. 8).

Conversely, however, he goes together with MT, against both LXX BL and 4QSam^a in giving the Saulide king his correct name, i.e. “Ish-bosheth” (Josephus: Jebosthos), as opposed to the “Mephibosheth” of the latter witnesses (see n. 19). These findings— meager as they are— do suggest that Josephus made use of various biblical text-forms in our passage.¹²⁷

As to my second opening question concerning Josephus’ rewriting techniques in *Ant.* 7.22-45, four broad categories of such techniques have emerged in the preceding discussion: additions, omissions, re-arrangements, and (other) modifications. At this point, I simply recall salient examples of each category that my study has identified.

Of the above techniques, the most prominent throughout *Ant.* 7.22-45 is clearly that of addition. Josephus’ amplifications of biblical data in the unit extend from brief, supplementary remarks (e.g., mention of Abner’s sending Michal to David once he has taken her from her second husband [7.26; cf. 2 Sam 3:16] or the closing notice to the entire segment he appends at the end of 7.45) to paragraph-long commentaries on characters’

actions (see, e.g., 7.31b [Joab's motivations in calumniating Abner to David]; 7.36-38 [his real reason for murdering Abner]; 7.43 [the varying grounds for the populace's being "pleased" with David's response to Abner's murder; compare 3:36] without any explicit basis in the Bible itself.

Omissions and compressions are much less prominent in Josephus' handling of 2 Sam 3:6-39. The following instances may, however, be recalled. Josephus' omits the notice on Ish-bosheth (non-response) to Abner (3:11) and the confrontation between Abner and Paltiel over the latter's loss of his wife (3:16). He regularly eliminates source duplications of content (e.g., Abner's coming to David at Hebron [3:19b, 20a], David's dismissal of Abner and the latter's going away in peace [3:21b, 22b], and the people's "weeping" both before and after David's lament for Abner [3:32b, 34b]). That lament itself (3:33-34ab") is reduced to a brief allusion, just as the extraneous details mentioned in connection with Joab's return (3:22a; compare 7.31) are passed over.

Josephus makes little use of the technique of re-arrangement in his version of the story of Abner's murder. He does, however, anticipate the mention of Abishai as Joab's accomplice (3:30) to an earlier point in his own presentation (see 7.35). Conversely, other kinds of modifications of source data abound throughout 7.22-45. Direct discourse is frequently reformulated as indirect. The actual wording of oaths (see 3:9 [compare 7.23], 3:35 [compare 7.42]) and curses (see 3:29 [compare 7.39]) is avoided, as is the language of "covenant" (see n. 29) and "anointing" (see n. 129). The use of *Leitworte*, e.g., the term πίστις (singular and plural; see n. 29) and the τολμ:-stem (see n. 73) serves to enhance the inner coherence of the segment. As for contentual modifications of the biblical presentation, Josephus' thorough-going reworking of the confusing account given in 2 Sam 3:12-16 of David's recovery of Michal and the parts played in this by Abner and Ish-bosheth in 7.24-26a is especially noteworthy. As part of that re-working he further takes care to align (see 7.25) the reference of 3:14 to the bridal price David paid Saul for Michal within his own earlier indications on the matter (see n. 34).

My second opening question asked not only about which rewriting techniques Josephus employs in *Ant.* 7.22-45, but also about the distinctiveness of his version of the story of Abner's demise that results from their utilization. Overall, Josephus presents readers with a markedly expanded rendition of the biblical account. In particular, Josephus' retelling of the episode devotes much greater attention to characters' emotions and motivations and to psychological commentary on and ethical evaluation of moves made by them than does the Bible itself which relates events in a largely objective and neutral fashion, making, e.g., no overt criticism of Joab's deed and, in fact, seeming to identify with the killer(s)'s own perspective on this (see 3:27b, 30). A further dimensions to the "expansiveness" of Josephus's version *vis-à-vis* the source's story is its providing answers to questions left unresolved in the latter, i.e. what happened to Michal once she was taken from Paltiel? (see 7.26; compare 3:15) and how did David respond to Joab's attempt to incriminate Abner (see 7.33 and compare 3:24-26)?

Of the story's four most significant figures, i.e. Ish-bosheth, Abner, David, and Joab, each receives a more or less distinctive treatment at Josephus' hands. Ish-bosheth appears even more insignificant than does his biblical namesake: his (non-) response to Abner is not even mentioned (see 7.23; compare 3.11), and his role in the recovery of Michal downplayed (see 7.24-26a; compare 3:12-16). The positive source portrayal of Abner, on the other hand, is consistently accentuated. He is "clever" and popular with the people (7.22); it is his "generalship and loyalty" that keep Ish-bosheth's kingdom afloat (7.23); it is he, rather than Ish-bosheth, who takes the leading role in the recovery of Michal for David and his unfeeling response to Paltiel is passed over (7.24-26a; compare 3:12-16); he is an effective speaker who wins over both the Israelite leadership (7.28) and the Benjamites (7.29); he is the guileless opposite of Joab (7.34); is recognized by Joab himself as "apt in understanding matters of state and in seizing opportunities" (7.31), and he is lauded by David as "so good a man," one whose "excellent counsels and strength in war" would have been a source for the people (7.44)— all these being points in which Josephus' differs from the Bible's

won. The story's other good character, i.e. David, undergoes a similar positive magnification: his hospitality to Abner is accentuated (7.30; compare 3.21); he refuses to credit Joab's calumnies (7.33), displays intense emotion in the face of Abner's death (7.39, 41,44), evidences much concern for his good reputation with the people (7.40, 44), is acknowledged by them to be "kind and gentle" (7. 43), and calls on the Deity to requite the miscreant(s), not just once (as in 3:39), but twice (7.45). Conversely, Joab, the villain of 2 Sam 3:6-39, comes off still worse in Josephus' depiction of him. He reacts with fear and envy to the news of Abner's "agreement" with David; his approach to David is qualified as a "dishonest and evil course" in which he "attempts to calumniate Abenner" (7.31c-32a), though unsuccessfully, thus showing himself to lack the persuasive powers of his rival (see 7.33). Thereafter, he "turns to a course still bolder" (7.33), instructs his messengers to lie to Abner in David's name (7.33), and himself welcomes Abner with feigned "goodwill and friendship" (7.34). And finally, his alleged reason for killing Abner is simply a pretext for his determination to hold on to power at all costs (7.36-38; compare 3:27b, 30).¹²⁸

The above conclusions on my opening two questions raise a final one. The biblical episode of Abner's assassination is, ultimately, just one of the many violent happenings surrounding David's long rise to power. Why then does Josephus take such an interest in the episode, consistently amplifying its content as we seen? A convincing answer to this question has been proposed by L.H. Feldman in his study of the Josephan Joab (see previous note): Josephus perceived in the conflict between Joab on the one hand and Abner together with his patron David on the other a scriptural prefigurement of the contemporary struggle between himself (the new Abner) and his Flavian backers (playing the role of Gentile Davids) and his and their opponents, the infamous John of Gischala (the Joab of his own day) in particular as portrayed himself elsewhere in his writings. Perceiving the parallelism between the "then" of Abner and the "now" of his own story latent in the biblical account, Josephus elaborates the source presentation in order to highlight that parallelism.¹²⁹ What emerges here then, as in so many other

instances throughout the work, is the fact that in composing his Antiquities, Josephus did not only have antiquarian interests in mind.

Endnotes

1. On this text, see, in addition to the commentaries: T. Ishida, "The Story of Abner's Murder: A Problem Posed by the Solomonic Apologist," Eretz-Israel 24 (1993) 109-13*; J.C. Haelewyck, "La mort d'Abner: 2 Sam 3,1-39," Revue biblique 102 (1995) 161-92; D.W. Parry, "The Aftermath of Abner's Murder," Textus 20 (2000) 83-96; Y. Shemesh, "Why did Joab kill Abner (2 Sam 3:22-27)? An Exemplary Representation of a Partial Explanation by the Narrator," Beit Mikra 48 (2003) 144-53 (Hebrew); R. Duarte Castillo, "Abner: General y Hacedor de Reyes," EfMex 22 (2004) 41-48.

2. I use the text and translation of Ant. 7.22-45 found in R. Marcus, Josephus V (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 1934), 371-84. I have likewise consulted the text of the passage in B. Niese (ed.), Flavii Iosephi Opera, II (2d ed.; Berlin: Weidmann, 1954), 94-95 and the more recent text and translation of E. Nodet, Flavius Josephus, Les Antiquités juives, Vol. II: Livres VI et VII (Paris: Cerf, 2001), 122-28*.

3. I use the text of 4QSam^a 2 Sam 3:6-39 (found in its cols. 33-34) given by A. Fincke, The Samuel Scroll from Qumran (Studies on the Texts of the Judah 43; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 23-24 and the translation of Martin Abegg, Jr., P. Flint and E. Ulrich, The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1999), 238-39.

4. For the text of B I use A. E. Brooke, N. Maclean, and H. St. John Thackeray, The Old Testament in Greek, II: I I and II Samuel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927).

5. For the text of L I use N. Fernández and J.R. Busto Saiz, El Texto Antioqueno de la Biblia Griega, I: 1-2 Samuel (Textos y Estudios "Cardenal Cisneros" 50; Madrid: C.S.I.C, 1989).

6. For the (very fragmentary) text of VL, I use C.M. Rodríguez, Glosas marginales de Vetus Latina en las Biblias Vulgatas Españolas: 1-2 Samuel (Textos y Estudios “Cardenal Ciseros” 48; Madrid: C.S.I.C., 1989), 36.

7. For the text of Tg., I use A. Sperber, The Bible in Aramaic, Vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1959) and for the translation D.J. Harrington and A.J. Saldarini, Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets (The Aramaic Bible 10; Wilmington, DE; Glazier, 1987).

8. The above italicized elements lack an equivalent in 2 Sam 3:6 (I italicize such elements throughout this essay). They serve to highlight both the reprehensibility (the war is fought against fellow Israelites) and severity (it results in repeated engagements) of the conflict. As such, the “war” in question puts one in mind of the intense civil strife that marked the Jewish Revolt of Josephus’ day and which he so strongly deplors in the Bellum Judaicum.

9. The above characterization of Abner, his rank, qualities and public approval, has no counterpart in 1 Sam 3:6 which mentions him simply by name. It does, however, recall Josephus’ equally positive (and likewise “unbiblical” remarks concerning Abner when he intervenes to make Ish-bosheth king in Ant. 7.9 (// 2 Sam 2:8): “... Saul’s commander-in-chief Abenner... a man of action and of good character...”

10. Greek: τῶ’Ιεβόσθῶ. These words are absent in the codices RO and are bracketed by Niese. Marcus and Nodet read them without brackets.

11. With the above conclusion to his version of 2 Sam 3:6, Josephus makes clear that Abner used his acumen and influence to “strengthen,” not in his own position, but that of his overlord, among the people.

12. The matter is resolved in the plus of LXX L which following the mention of the concubine in 2 Sam 3:7a adds “and Abner took her.” Josephus has no equivalent to this plus; see above.

13. In this formulation it remains unclear whether the “complaint” had any basis in fact (compare the LXX L plus in 2 Sam 3:7 cited in n. 11), just as there is no indication concerning the identity of Abner’s accusers (and their motivations). The formulation simply serves to explain— as the Bible does not— how Ish-bosheth come to know the matter about which he reproaches Abner; see above.

14. Greek: *παλλακῆ*. This is the same designation used in LXX BL 2 Sam 3:7.

15. This specification corresponds to the plus of MT and LXX L 2 Sam 3:7a, lacking in 4QSam^a and LXX B.

16. Greek: *Ῥεσθᾶ*; MT *רִצְפָּה* (Eng.: Rizpah); LXX BL *Ῥεσθᾶ*.

17. Greek: *Σιβάτης*; on the problem of the name of Rizpah’s father, see A. Schalit, *Namenwörterbuch zu Flavius Josephus* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), s.v. who argues that the original form as written by Josephus in majuscule letters would have been ANΣEBAΘOT. MT *אִיָּה* (Eng.: Aiah); LXX *Ἰάλ*; LXX L *Σιβά* (compare Josephus’ *Σιβάτης*).

18. Josephus recasts Ish-bosheth’s direct-address question of 2 Sam 3:7b (“why have you gone into my father’s concubine”) as an indirect-discourse formulation. This procedure is very frequent in Josephus’ handling of the words of biblical characters; on it, see C.T. Begg, *Josephus’ Account of the Early Divided Monarchy (AJ 8,212-420)* (BETL 108; Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters), 12-13, n. 38.

19. Greek: *Ἰέβουθος*. In supplying the name of Abner’s reprover, Josephus aligns himself with 4QSam^a LXX BL against MT (where the speaker of the question posed to Abner in 2 Sam 3:7b is left indeterminate). Whereas, however, the former witnesses, both here and subsequently, use an incorrect form of the king’s name (4QSam^a *מִפִּיבֶשֶׁת*; LXX BL *Μεμθυβόσθε*) that reflects a confusion between him and the crippled son of Jonathan (and grandson of Saul) mentioned in 2 Sam 4:4, i.e. “Mephibosheth,” Josephus, here in 7.22b (and thereafter), renders the name of Abner’s correctly, in accordance with the *אִישִׁיבֶשֶׁת* (Eng.: “Ish-bosheth”) of MT 3:8ff.

20. The above “explanation” of why Abner responds with such intensity might be inspired by his subsequent words to the king in 2 Sam 3:9b, where he juxtaposes his own loyalty to Ish-bosheth (and the entire royal family) with Ish-bosheth’s pettiness towards himself (“... and yet you charge me today with a fault concerning a woman”). The wording of the explanation still leaves the “fact question” concerning Abner’s offense unresolved (see above on 7.22b): is he outraged because he is not guilty of the charge made against him or rather because, while he has in fact had relations with “Rizpah,” his doing so seems to him a matter of no significance vis-à-vis his own services to Ish-bosheth?

21. This omitted segment of Abner’s reply reads in RSV’s translation of MT: “Am I a dog’s head of Judah [4QSam^a and LXX BL lack of Judah; compare the paraphrase of Tg.: “Am I not the head? Since when did I become a common man for the remnant of the house of Judah?”]? This day I keeping showing loyalty to the house of Saul, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not given you into the hand of David; and yet you charge me today with a fault concerning a woman [v. 8]. God do so to Abner, and more also, if I do not accomplish for David what the Lord has sworn to him [v. 9].” I suggested in n. 20 that Josephus has perhaps made use of Abner’s words about his dealings with Ish-bosheth and the latter’s mean-spirited treatment of him of 3:8b in formulating his explanation of Abner’s emotional response to the king’s reproach in 7.23a. As for the remaining elements of Abner’s speech in 3:8a,9, one may suggest various reasons for Josephus’ non-utilization of these: he regularly avoids both the sort of self-derogatory language that Abner employs in 3:8a (“dog’s head”) and the wording of self-curses/ oaths such as Abner pronounces in 3:9a. Finally, Abner’s allusion to what the Lord “has sworn” to David is problematic, as commentators have noted, in that the biblical account has not made mention of such a divine oath to David hitherto.

22. In 2 Sam 3:9 Abner introduces his statement of intention in v. 10 with a conditional self-curse which Josephus leaves aside; see previous note.

23. This portion of the Josephan Abner's statement compresses his word in 2 Sam 3:10 where he spells out what he intends to "accomplish for David" (see 3:10b), i.e. "to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba" (elements without an equivalent in Josephus' version are italicized).

24. This phrase echoes Josephus' mention of Abner leading Ish-bosheth "to the people across the Jordan" and making him king there in Ant. 7.9.

25. This above indication concerning the motivation behind Abner's intended move takes the place of the one intimated in 2 Sam 3:9b, i.e. the fulfillment of what God had sworn to David (see n. 21). The formulation, with its echoing of Josephus' remarks concerning Abner in 7.22a, highlights the relation of total dependence in which Ish-bosheth stands to Abner for the continuation of his rule. The reference to the general's "loyalty" with which it ends represents a further (see n. 21) utilization by Josephus of Abner's claims about his past attachment to Ish-bosheth and his house in 3:8b.

26. For details see the commentaries.

27. This geographical indication has a counterpart in LXX L 2 Sam 3:12. MT reads a prepositional phrase (תחת) at this point, which is quite variously interpreted (RSV: "where he [David] was"), while LXX B offers the conflate reading εἰς Θαλάμῳ οὗ ἦν παραχρημᾶ.

28. Like LXX BL Josephus has no equivalent to the (obscure) opening words of Abner's message in MT 2 Sam 3:12 which RSV renders "to whom does the land belong?"

29. Cf. the singular form πίστιν in 7.23 used by Abner there of his "loyalty" to Ish-bosheth; the word πίστις (singular and plural) constitutes a Leitwort in Ant. 7.22-45, recurring in 7.40, 43. In 2 Sam 3:12b? Abner calls on David to "make your covenant (MT ברית, LXX διαθήκη) with me." Josephus invariably reformulates biblical uses of the above words in the sense of "covenant," given that this meaning of διαθήκη was not current in secular Greek; on the point, see Begg, Josephus' Account, 100-101, n. 69 and the literature cited there.

30. With this inserted phrase Josephus spells out the content of the commitment Abner is asking of David.

31. Josephus expands on the statement about what he is ready to do for David with which Abner's message of 2 Sam 3:12 concludes, i.e. "and behold, my hand shall be with you to bring over all Israel to you." In particular, he has Abner make explicit mention of the prerequisite for his turning the people over to David, namely, getting them to turn against their present king Ish-bosheth.

32. Compare David's declaration in 2 Sam 3:13a: "Good, I will make a covenant with you." Once again (see n. 29) Josephus reformulates biblical covenant language, likewise recasting direct as indirect discourse.

33. With this prefatory phrase Josephus has spell out the purpose behind the demand David will make of Abner in 2 Sam 3:13b, i.e. he wants prior proof that Abner is negotiating in earnest.

34. In formulating David's request of Abner, Josephus draws in first place, not on his words to the latter of 2 Sam 3:13b ("but one thing I require of you, that is, you shall not see my face, unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face"), but rather on those he addresses to Ish-bosheth in 3:14, i.e. "... Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed [so MT; LXX BL: took] at the price of a hundred foreskins of the Philistines." At the same time, Josephus also adapts the wording of 3:14 to bring this into line with his own previous presentation in *Ant.* 6.203 where the bridal price David brings Saul for Michal is 600 Philistine heads rather than 100 foreskins, as in 1 Sam 18:27.

35. Greek: Μελάλη. MT (2 Sam 3:13-14) מלחל; LXX BL Μελχόλ. In *Ant.* 6.204 Josephus calls the woman Μελέα, while in 7.85 she appears as Μιχάλη.

36. Greek: Οθέλτιος. MT (2 Sam 3:15) לַאֲשֵׁרֵי; LXX B Παλτιήλ; LXX L Φαλτίου. In *Ant.* 6.309 Josephus calls the figure Φέλτιος (compare “Palti,” 1 Sam 25:43). Here in 7.26 he omits the name of the man’s father (“Laish,” MT 2 Sam 3:15), which he does cite in 6.309.

37. Compare 2 Sam 3:15 where it is Ish-bosheth who takes Michal from her husband and where it is not stated what he did with her once he did this. Josephus has Abner carrying out the request made of him by David in 3:13b, i.e. that he recover his former wife for him (7.25; cf. 3:13b).

38. Via this appended phrase, Josephus, adapting the content of 2 Sam 3:14-15 (see above), assigns Ish-bosheth a subordinate role in the proceedings. Having utilized the wording of David’s message to Ish-bosheth of 3:14 in formulating the former’s request to Abner in 7.25 (see n. 34), he reproduces David’s communication to Ish-bosheth in more general terms, having him adduce his “just claim” to recover Michal.

39. 2 Sam 3:17: “elders of Israel.”

40. In 2 Sam 3:17 Abner speaks only to the civil officials (the elders). Josephus has him address the military leadership as well.

41. This inserted phrase echoes Abner’s previous word to David concerning his intention of “persuading the people to revolt (ἀποστῆναι) from Saul’s son” in *Ant.* 7.24.

42. Compare Abner’s opening words to the elders in 2 Sam 3:17b: “For some time now you have been seeking David as king over you.” Neither the Bible nor Josephus has made previous mention of such a shift to David on the part of the non-Judean tribes.

43. This inserted affirmation harks back to Josephus’ editorial remark in *Ant.* 7.22 that Abner “contrived to keep them [the Israelites] on the side of Jebosthos.”

44. Compare 2 Sam 3:18a? where Abner urges the Israelite elders: “Now then bring it [their past desire to make David their king, 3:17b] about.”

45. The divine promise cited by Abner in 2 Sam 3:18ab does not mention Samuel as its intermediary. L.H. Feldman, Josephus' Interpretation of the Bible (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 491 points out that whereas the Books of Samuel themselves use the prophet title for Samuel only once (see 1 Sam 3:20), Josephus does so no less than 45 times.

46. This reference to the divine choice of David as king over the entire people is an expansion of God's promise to David as cited by Abner in 2 Sam 3:18b which speaks only of David's role as a military liberator. On Josephus' use of the term "Hebrews" as a designation for the people at various moments of their history, see G. Harvey, The True Israel. Uses of the Names Jew, Hebrew and Israel in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature (AGAJU 35; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 124-29.

47. Compare Abner's citation of God's promise to David in 2 Sam 3:18b: "By the hand of my servant I will save [so LXX BL; MT: he (David) will save] my people [MT LXX L, > LXX B] Israel from the hands of the Philistines and from the hands of all their enemies [Josephus replaces this generalizing concluding promise with one centered on the Philistines, i.e. that David will subject them; see above]." Whereas the Bible itself does not record such a past promise of God to David, Josephus, in his version of the anointing of David by Samuel (Ant. 6.157-166// 1 Sam 16:1-13) does represent the prophet as informing David in God's name that "he would subdue the Philistines." On the Josephan and Pseudo-Philonian versions of David's anointing, see C.T. Begg, "Samuel's Anointing of David in Josephus and Pseudo-Philo," Revista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa 32 (1996), 492-529.

48. A (positive) response on their part is presupposed by the notice of 2 Sam 3:19b: "... Abner went to tell David... all that Israel... thought good to do."

49. On the officials' earlier mindset to which Josephus alludes here, see Abner's reference to their having "prepared to revolt from Jebosthos and join David's side" in 7.27.

50. With this phrase, highlighting the success of Abner's address to the Israelite officials, Josephus effects a smoother transition between Abner's two addresses. Compare 2 Sam 3:19a where his speaking to the Benjamites is simply juxtaposed ("Abner also spoke...") with his previous discourse to the elders.

51. This Josephan insertion suggests an explanation as to why Abner would have needed to speak separately and in particular to the Benjamites: as the retainers of Ish-bosheth, they would be the group most likely to oppose Abner's plans and so the ones that most needed to be won over by him before he took any further steps. Josephus' assigning the Benjamites the role of "bodyguards" for Ish-bosheth here makes sense in that, as a son of Saul the Benjamite (see 1 Sam 9:1// *Ant.* 6.45), he belonged to their tribe. Note too 2 Sam 4:2 (*Ant.* 7.47) where Ish-bosheth's two bodyguards are called sons of "Rimmon a man of Benjamin."

52. 2 Sam 3:19a does not specify what it was Abner said to the Benjamites.

53. This transitional phrase, comparable to the one Josephus inserts at the opening of 7.29 (see n. 50), underscores, once again, Abner's effectiveness as a speaker— even in the case of a group, the Benjamites, that might have been expected to prove especially recalcitrant.

54. Josephus omits the double indication of 2 Sam 3:19b-20a that Abner came to David at Hebron, having previously noted (7.24// LXX L 2 Sam 3:12) that it was to this site that Abner dispatched his messengers to David.

55. This term picks up on Abner's request that David give him "sworn (ὄρκους) pledges" in 7.24.

56. With this appended observation Josephus supplies an implicit answer to the question of why Abner now comes to David himself rather than simply using messengers to communicate with him, as he had earlier. Such "anthropological asides" are a recurrent feature of Josephus' rewriting of the Bible; we shall meet another example in 7.34. Their insertion serves to invest one-time biblical events with a wider significance.

57. Compare 7.29a where Josephus reports that Abner delivered “the same speech” to the Benjamites as he had to the Israelite officials earlier.

58. 2 Sam 3:19b records a single purpose behind Abner’s going to David, i.e. “to tell him... all that Israel and the whole house of Benjamin thought good to do.” Josephus replaces this single motivation for the visit with a double one, both of whose components focus on Abner himself (he wishes to receive David’s oath in person and inform him of what he had said to his two audiences).

59. Whereas the Bible speaks of a single “feast” that presumably lasted a single day, Josephus has David provide Abner with several opulent feasts that extend over a number of days.

60. Compare the more self-assured/presumptuous wording used by Abner in addressing David, his new king, in 2 Sam 3:21a: “I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel to my lord the king.”

61. Compare Abner’s statement concerning the purpose of his bringing the people to David in 2 Sam 3:21a: “... that they may make a covenant with you and that you may reign over all that your heart desires.” Once again, Josephus reformulates biblical covenant language, just as he accentuates the personal interaction between the king and people Abner intends to bring about (cf. Josephus’ remark about the greater credibility of what one does for oneself as opposed to what is done on one’s behalf by others in 7.29).

62. Josephus compresses 2 Sam 3:21b, which reads: “So David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.” In his presentation Abner’s word to David “asking to be dismissed” and David’s “sending him away” coincide, whereas in 2 Sam 3:21 Abner, after he has informed David of what he himself intends to do (“I shall arise and go”), ends up being dismissed by the king.

63. Josephus used this title for Joab previously in *Ant.* 7.10. In fact, however, it is only in 7.64 (// 1 Chr 11:6) that Joab is formally awarded the position by David as a reward for his being the first to ascend the walls of Jerusalem. The same title is used of Abner in 7.22.

64. Josephus sharply reduces the circumstantiality of 2 Sam 7:22 (“Just then the servants of David arrived with Joab from a raid, bringing much spoil with them. But Abner was not with David at Hebron, for had sent him away and he had gone away in peace” [elements without a parallel in Josephus italicized]) whose second half appears simply repetitious of what was said in 7:21b and whose reference to a “raid” by David’s men (v. 22a) has not been mentioned in what precedes. Josephus’ version focusses all attention on the person of Joab and his sudden appearance on the scene.

65. This characterization of Abner recalls Josephus’ qualification of him as a “clever man” in 7.22.

66. Josephus’ one other use of this collocation is in *Vita* 290 where he applies it to his Tiberian opponent Ananais.

67. With this preface to his report of Joab’s words to David, Josephus introduces a further negative qualification of the former’s initiatives. Josephus represents himself as an object of equally false accusations made by his Jewish opponents to his Flavian patrons— who, like David in response to Joab’s calumnies (see below) give them no credit—; see *Vita* 424-429.

68. This initial warning— which picks up on the reference to Joab’s having heard that Abner “had reached an understanding and agreement about the sovereignty with David” that Josephus introduces in 7.31— takes the place of Joab’s oddly obvious opening remarks to David in 2 Sam 3:24: “What have you done? Behold, Abner came to you; why is that you have sent him away, so that he is gone?” Does David need to be informed that Abner had “come to” him? And was it not to be expected that David would “send him away” once the visit was over?

69. Greek: ὑγομνία. This is the same word used in 7.31 where Joab is (truthfully) informed that Abner had come to an agreement with David “about the [i.e. David’s] sovereignty.” As used by Joab here in 7.32 the term now becomes part of a false claim about Abner’s trying to “secure the sovereignty” for Ish-bosheth.

70. This collocation recurs in Ant. 9.134; 12.404; 13.188, 204; and in reverse order in Ant. 18.326 and Apion 2.200. This element of Joab’s discourse is the only one that has a clear parallel in the biblical Joab’s words to David; see 2 Sam 3:25a: “you know that Abner... came to deceive you.” In both the Bible (and even more so) in Josephus there is great irony in Joab’s charging Abner with coming to David as a “deceiver” in that is, in fact, Joab who is trying to “deceive” the king concerning his rival’s intentions.

71. In comparison with the biblical Joab who accuses Abner of having come to spy on David (2 Sam 3:25b), Josephus’ character “ups the ante,” charging Abner with endeavoring to win David’s rulership for Ish-bosheth.

72. This allusion to the ineffectiveness of Joab’s words upon David set him in implicit contrast with Abner who earlier won over both the Israelite leaders (7.28) and the Benjamites (7.29) to his plans. In comparison with Abner then Joab is an unpersuasive orator who can get his way only by resorting to violence. The notice further suggests that, just like Josephus’ Flavian patrons in his own case (see n. 67), David was not taken in by Joab’s “calumnies” against Abner.

73. This inserted characterization of Joab’s projected new move, echoes Josephus’ qualification of his efforts to vilify Abner to David as “a dishonest and evil course (ᾠδόν)” in 7.31, likewise indicating that Joab is now about to attempt something even more reprehensible. The adjective *τολμηρος* used above in its comparative form (*τολμηροτέρων*), along with the verbal cognate *τολμάω*, is a Leitwort of Josephus’ presentation of Joab’s actions in 7.22-45, appearing a total of four times in this unit (see 7.33, 37, 38, 45).

74. This conclusion to Josephus' insertion in 7.33a alerts readers about what they are to expect as the following story of Joab's dealings with Abner unfolds.

75. With these instructions he has Joab impart to his messengers, Joab provides an answer to a question suggested by the biblical account, i.e. how were the messengers so readily able to secure the return of Abner, seeing that he has just been sent off by David? At the same time the above insertion highlights Joab's continued "deceit and guile" (7.32): having himself lied to David, he does not hesitate to direct others to tell lies in the king's name.

76. Greek: Βησηρά. MT (2 Sam 3:26) מְבוֹר הַסֵּרָה (Eng.: from the cistern of Sirah); LXX B ἀπό τοῦ φρέατος τοῦ Ζεειράμ; LXX L ἀπό τοῦ φρέατος Σεειρά; VL "a puteo Exira." Josephus conflates the two elements of the biblical phrase, treating this as a single proper place name.

77. Marcus (*ad loc.*) notes that 20 stades are equivalent to *ca.* two and a half miles. Josephus regularly introduces such distance indications into his version of biblical history for the benefit of readers unfamiliar with Palestinian topography. The reference takes the place of the parenthetical statement with which 2 Sam 3:26 concludes about David's "not knowing" of the "recall" of Abner by Joab.

78. This appended characterization of the returning Abner sets up an implicit contrast between his "guilelessness" and the "deceit and guile" (7.32) of Joab which serves to cast the latter in a still more negative light.

79. With this inserted anthropological aside, compare Josephus' comment about people's finding greater credibility in what they do for themselves than in what is done for them by others in 7.29.

80. 2 Sam 3:27 does not mention these figures explicitly. The reference is to the twenty men who accompanied Abner on his visit to David according to 7.29 (// 3:20).

81. In 2 Sam 3:27ab Joab leads Abner "into the midst of the gate"—a setting which would not appear as conducive to a "private" conversation as Josephus' "more deserted part of the gate."

82. The account of the murder of Abner in 2 Sam 3:27 makes no mention of Abishai's presence. Josephus draws his mention of him from a later moment in the biblical narrative, i.e. 3:30 where— quite unexpectedly— one learns that Abner was killed not by Joab but also by Abishai.

83. According to 2 Sam 3:27b Joab “smote him [Abner] in the belly so that died.” The wording Josephus uses to describe Abner's assassination is reminiscent of that employed by him when recounting the mutual slaughter of the twelve pairs of champions representing the forces of David and Ishbo-sheth in *Ant.* 7.12 (// 2 Sam 2:16): “they... drew their swords and... pierced the other's... flanks.”

84. This derogatory term for Joab's deed continues Josephus' previous emphasis on his deceptiveness, Joab's preeminent trait in the historian's account of Abner's murder.

85. What 2 Sam 3:27a represents as an apparent fact, i.e. Abner dies “for the blood of Asahel his [Joab's] brother” is turned into a matter of a (false) claim by Josephus, as will emerge in the continuation of his presentation.

86. As Marcus (*ad loc.*) points out, Josephus' reference to “Hebron” here is a slip on the historian's part in that the battle to which he alludes in fact took place in the vicinity of “Gibeon,” as stated both in 2 Sam 2:12; 3:30 and his own *Ant.* 7.11. Josephus above rendition of 2 Sam 3:30 (Joab and Abishai slay Abner “because he had killed their brother in the battle at Gibeon”) introduces a more specific reference to the circumstances of Asahel's death at Abner's hands as described by him in *Ant.* 7.13-15 (// 2 Sam 3:18-23).

87. Josephus' statement about Joab's true motives in killing Abner here reiterates in very similar terms his earlier notice on Joab's reaction to his hearing that Abner had come to an agreement with David in 7.31: “... he feared that David might give him [Abenner] honours of the first rank... while he himself might be set down and deprived of his command.”

88. This verbal form is a cognate of the adjective *τολμηρός* used of Joab's course of action in 7.33. The verb occurs in 7.38, 45.

89. This term also has the meaning of “greed,” a vice which Josephus repeatedly ascribes to his personal opponents and the Jewish rebels in general, of whom Joab is the biblical prototype in his presentation; see L.H. Feldman, Studies in Josephus’ Rewritten Bible (JSJSup 58; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 213.

90. The above sequence is Marcus’ rearrangement of the reading— followed by Niese and Nodet— of the codices which have ἐν φόβῳ ἔργα. Marcus ad loc.) calls the text “doubtful” and notes that Holwerda proposes omitting the word ἔργα.

91. The use of such closing formulae, rounding off a given segment of material, is a characteristic of Josephus’ style. The above reflections on the motivations and behavior of the powerful (and those who aspire to power) have a close counterpart in the remarks Josephus appends to his account of Saul’s massacre of the priests of Nob (1 Samuel 22) in Ant. 6.262-268.

92. Compare David’s declaration of innocence in 2 Sam 3:28: “I and my household are for ever guiltless before the Lord of the blood of Abner....”

93. David’s curse in 2 Sam 3:29 does not mention these figures. The reference is apparently to Abishai whose presence at Abner’s assassination Josephus mentions in 7.35 on the basis of 2 Sam 3:30; see above.

94. Josephus, in line with his usual practice, generalizes the wording of David’s curse in 2 Sam 3:29, in particular passing over the five specific (and sometimes obscure) calamities the king there invokes upon Abner and his household: “May it fall upon the head of Joab, and upon all his father’s house; and may the house of Joab never be without one who has a discharge, or who is leprous, or who holds a spindle, or who is slain by sword, or who lacks bread.”

95. This phrase echoes that used in Ant. 7.39 where Abner asks τὰς πίστεις καὶ ὄρκους of David.

96. According to Josephus’ statement here, David was concerned, not only that he not be perceived as a party to Abner’s murder, (7.39), but also that he not be viewed as an oath-breaker.

97. 2 Sam 3:31a specifies “who were with him (i.e. apparently Joab).”

98. The biblical notice on Abner’s burial (2 Sam 3:31-34) does not mention the role of these figures. Their involvement confers a greater solemnity on the proceedings.

99. These added allusions to the manner in which David “follows the bier” (2 Sam 3:31b) accentuate the pathos of the scene as well as David’s emotional engagement in the funeral ceremony. He not only directs the people to undertake public expressions of mourning (3:31a), but performs these himself.

100. This word represents an ironic reminiscence of 7.34 where Joab “greet[s] abner with the greatest show of goodwill (εὖνους) and friendship.” In Joab’s case, of course, the sentiment is entirely feigned, whereas David’s distress over Abner’s death manifests his genuine “affection” for the murdered man.

101. Compare 7.39 where news of Abner’s murder causes David to be “grieved in spirit (ἠλγησε... τήν ψυχὴν).”

102. This concluding notice on the second realization about the king engendered by David’s manner of participation in Abner’s funeral recalls his calling the people to witness “that he had no share in Abenner’s murder and that it was not by his command or at his own wish that Abenner had died” in 7.36.

103. In 2 Sam 3:32a Abner is buried by an indeterminate “they.” Josephus accentuates David’s involvement in the proceedings by attributing his burial specifically to the king.

104. Elsewhere too, Josephus uses this term to qualify the burials of biblical characters; see *Ant.* 3.210 (the sons of Aaron); 9.44 (King Jehoshaphat), 182 (Elisha).

105. This is Josephus’ summarizing reference to David’s lament for Abner cited in 2 Sam 3:33-34a. The historian regularly either reduces to a passing allusion the poetic passages— as he does with David’s laments for both Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam 1:17-27; compare *Ant.* 7.6b) and Abner here— woven into biblical narrative materials or passes over these entirely, as is the case, e.g., with “Song of Deborah and Barak” (Judges 5) and the “Song of Hannah” (1 Sam 2:1-10).

106. Compare 2 Sam 3:32b: “the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept.” Josephus combines into one the two separate mentions of the people’s “weeping”— each time in response to David’s own lamenting— of 3:32b and 34b.

107. Josephus’ reference to the fact o David’s not eating goes beyond 2 Sam 3:35 which only mentions the king’s statement of intention about not eating.

108. In 2 Sam 3:35a “all the people” urge food upon David. Josephus, more plausibly, has the attempt made by the more restricted group of David’s intimates.

109. Josephus leaves aside the opening formula of David’s oath in 2 Sam 3:35b (“God do so to me and more also, if...”) with its innovation of the Deity. Elsewhere as well, Josephus typically avoids reproducing the wording of biblical oaths, likely to avoid any possible profanation of the divine name.

110. The biblical David specifies “bread or anything else” in his oath of 2 Sam 3:35b.

111. This term recalls David’s concern— which has now been allayed— that he not be perceived as having violated his “sworn pledges (πίστεις)” to Abner as mentioned in 7.39.

112. The above sequence harks back to Josephus’ qualification of the burial David gave Abner as “magnificent” in 7.42.

113. Josephus uses the term χρηστός (“kind”) twice elsewhere of David: 7.270 (in Mephibosheth’s address to him), 391 (in his own eulogy for the king).

114. The above formulation— the underlying Greek text of which Marcus (*ad loc.*) calls “doubtful”— is reminiscent of Josephus’ earlier statements in 7.39 (David “was concerned that he himself should not seem to have brought this about in violation of the sworn pledges which he had given Abenner”) and 7.41 (David’s display of mourning was to show “that the slaying had not been in accordance with his will”).

115. With this notice, inspired by 2 Sam 3:37 (see above), Josephus makes clear that David's concern—to which Josephus has made repeated reference in what precedes (see previous note)—to preserve his reputation in the face of Abner's murder has reached a positive resolution.

116. In 2 Sam 3:38 David addresses "his servants." Josephus enlarges the audience for the king's final words concerning Abner's murder.

117. Josephus used this same term in 7.41 when mentioning David's "grief for him (Abenner) in death." This recurrent emphasis on David's emotions in the face of Abner's death distinguishes his version from the biblical account which speaks only of what David says and does following Abner's murder, not of what he feels.

118. The use of this term for Abner creates an ironic echo of 7.34, where in connection with Joab's show of affection for Abner, Josephus comments that miscreants often "assume the part of truly good (*ἀγαθῶ*)." Abner is that "truly good man" Joab only pretended to be.

119. Compare the biblical David's qualification of Abner as a "prince and a great man" in 2 Sam 3:38.

120. With the above formulation Josephus has David spell out for his hearers what it is they have lost in the "fall" of Abner to which the king alludes in 2 Sam 3:38. The amplification likewise constitutes an encomium for Abner, highlighting his mental and physical-military qualities.

121. This statement of confidence in God's all-encompassing solicitude and retributive justice lacks a counterpart in David's words of 2 Sam 3:39. The addition accentuates the king's piety.

122. This allusion to what the hearers "know," without counterpart in 2 Sam 3:39 itself, might be inspired by the opening words of David's question to his servants in 3:38: "do you not know...."

123. Josephus leaves aside David's self-characterization of 2 Sam 3:39a": "And I am this day weak, though anointed king." He generally avoids biblical uses of the terms "anointed" and "anoint" which would be likely to provoke negative Roman reactions, given their "Messianic" connotations. On Josephus' effort to downplay the Messianic element throughout his rewriting of the Bible, see Feldman, *Studies*, 554-55.

124. Compare 2 Sam 3:39a: "these men the sons of Zeruah are too hard for me."

125. Compare 2 Sam 3:39b: "The Lord requite the evildoer according to his wickedness." Josephus has David invoke divine retribution not only on Joab ("the evildoer" of 3:39b), but also on his accomplice Abishai, mentioned just previously. The participial form of the verb *τολμάω* above is the fourth and final occurrence of this *Leitwort* of Josephus' account of Abner's murder in 7.22-45; see n. 73.

126. With this formula, signifying the end of the entire unit 7.22-45, compare the expression with which Josephus marks the conclusion to his appended reflections on Joab's motives for killing Abner (7.36-38): "But concerning such matters it is enough to have discoursed briefly" (7.38c).

127. For a more general discussion of the text-form(s) of the Samuel utilized by Josephus, see E.C. Ulrich, "Josephus' Biblical Text for the Books of Samuel," in L.H. Feldman and G. Hata, eds., *Josephus, the Bible and History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 81-96.

128. On Josephus' overall portrait of Joab, see Feldman, *Studies*, 203-14, who notes that the historian goes beyond both the Bible and Rabbinic tradition in his negative characterization of the Joab.

129. For details see Feldman, *Studies*, 202-13. At the same time, the different outcomes of the two parallel stories should be noted: Whereas Joab succeeds in eliminating his rival, notwithstanding David's backing of the latter, Josephus, with the support of the Flavians, prevails over the machinations of all his Jewish opponents. Josephus is then, in his own presentation, not just a second Abner; he is also a more successful, luckier Abner.