

REVIEW

Jack Pastor, Pnina Stern, Menahem Mor (eds.), *Flavius Josephus. Interpretation and History*, (*Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism*, vol. 146), Brill, Leiden–Boston 2011, pp. 437 + b/w ill. (ISBN 978-90-04-19126-6)

In spite of the criticism and questioning of the reliability of Josephus as an author, the significance of his works for scholars of Judaism and the history of Jews in antiquity is beyond any doubt, which leads to them being the subject of the unremitting interest of scholars. An eloquent testimony to this worth is the continually growing bibliography of studies referring to Josephus and his works, as well as the lengthening list of academic conferences whose participants strive to verify and interpret the contents of these works. One of these, entitled “Making History: Josephus and Historical Method,” took place on July 2–6, 2006, at the University of Haifa. It was attended by representatives of several countries and academic disciplines, who presented a total of 28 papers. Some 24 of these were published in the volume *Flavius Josephus. Interpretation and History*. The publishers chose to arrange them in alphabetic order of authors names, which does not appear to be the ideal outcome for the reader. This order of texts makes it difficult to quickly get an idea of the subject matter that was of particular interest to the conference participants. One could argue that, given the significant diversity of the topics covered, it would be much more practical to employ a subject-based order. This would certainly make the whole book clearer, especially as the array of papers are linked by similar subjects. There are, however, circumstances which do not just excuse the publishers’ decision, but justify it too. The fact is that some of the texts can be categorized in more than one subject group. To give the reader an idea of which subjects the attention of the conference participants was focused on, it is worth our while to at least note the threads that were dominant.

As per the intentions of the conference organizers, most papers concerned Josephus and his works. It therefore makes sense to give the major thread the title: Josephus the Author. This was treated in very broad terms by the attendees: it occupied a range of subjects referring to the time when some of Josephus’ works were written and the wide topic of his output, including his style and writing technique, the way he presented his own views and the events he described. The following texts can be included in this thread: K. Atkinson, The Historical Chronology of the Hasmonean Period in the *War and Antiquities* of Flavius Josephus: Separating Fact from Fiction (pp. 7–27); Chr. Batsch, Le système sacrificiel de Flavius Josèphe au Livre III des *Antiquités Juives* (Ant. 3.224–236) (pp. 39–51); M. Pucci Ben Zeev, Between Fact and Fiction: Josephus’ Account of the Destruction of the Temple (pp. 53–63); G. Frulla, Reconstructing Exodus Tradition: Moses and the Second Book of Josephus’ *Antiquities* (pp. 111–124); D. Gera, Unity and Chronology in the Jewish Antiquities (pp. 125–124); G. Haaland, Convenient Fiction or Causal Factor? The Questioning of Jewish Antiquity According to *Against Apion* 1.2 (pp. 163–175); J.W. van Henten, Constructing Herod as a Tyrant: Assessing Josephus’ Parallel Passages (pp. 193–216); E. Nodet, Josephus and Discrepant Sources (pp. 259–

277); Josephus, Catullus, Divine Providence, and the Date of the *Judean War* (pp. 331–352); Y. Shahar, Josephus the Stage Manager at the Service of Josephus the Dramatist: Masada as Test Case (pp. 353–379); J. Zsengellér, „To be or not to be ...” An Historical Interpretation of 2 Kings 17 in Josephus’ *Antiquities* (pp. 413–430).

The second area of issues discussed and analyzed during the conference concerned certain bibliographical issues of Josephus, his self-presentation and his political views: J. Curran, Flavius Josephus in Rome (pp. 65–86); E.S. Gruen, Polybius and Josephus on Rome (pp. 149–162); T.M. Jonquière, Josephus at Jotapata: Why Josephus Wrote What He Wrote (pp. 217–225); E. Regev, Josephus, the Temple, and the Jewish War (pp. 279–293); P. Stern, Josephus and Justus: the Place of Chapter 65 (336–367) in *Life*, the Autobiography of Flavius Josephus (pp. 381–396); M. Tuval, A Jewish Priest in Rome (pp. 397–411).

The next group is more difficult to define unambiguously, and comprises those papers that concerned interpreting and verifying the information given by Josephus by confronting them with sources by other authors or in the light of other types of evidence, especially archaeological. Those texts whose authors attempt to present certain detailed issues by analyzing the views of Josephus on the subject can also be included in this group. We can debate whether it might not be better to include at least some of these in the group of papers on biographical motifs, but the general character of some of the issues they discuss goes far beyond these bounds, which is why I feel that they can be counted as a separate subject group. This is made up of the following texts: M. Aviam, Socio-economic Hierarchy and its Economic Foundations in First Century Galilee: the Evidence from Yodfat and Gamla (pp. 29–38); N. Förster, Bemerkungen zum Aufstand des Judas Galilaeus sowie zum biblischen Bliderverbot bei Josephus, Hippolyt und Pseudo-Hieronymus (pp. 87–109); G. Hata, Where is the Temple Site of Onias IV in Egypt? (pp. 177–191); A. Kasher, Josephus on Herod’s Spring from the Shadows of the Parthian Invasion (pp. 227–245); S.S. Kottek, Josephus on Poisoning and Magic Cures or, on the Meaning of *Pharmakon* (pp. 247–257); S. Rocca, The Purposes and Functions of the Synagogue in Late Second Temple Period Judaea: Evidence from Josephus and Archaeological Investigation (pp. 295–313); G. Schimanowski, Propaganda, Fiktion und Symbolik: die Bedeutung des Jerusalemer Tempels im Werk des Josephus (pp. 315–330).

If the reader should wish to gain an overview of the contents of this volume from the point of view of chronological-thematic criteria based on the timeline of the history of ancient Israel, then the texts included in this book together paint a somewhat different picture, the variedness of which adds other aspects that enrich the main subject of the conference. The most important quality of this picture is the emphasis of Josephus’ way and methods of presenting the events concerning the biblical and Hellenistic eras, the rule of Herod and the uprising against Rome. In terms of subject matter, most of the texts refer to the last two of these historical periods.

Offering an assessment of this volume is not easy, as is the case, incidentally, with the proceedings from any congress or conference. Given the space available for this review, there are too many texts to evaluate them all in full. There is no doubt, however, that the richness of the content of many of them, and the new hypotheses and interpretations they propose, mean that this is a volume for which scholars interested in the oeuvre of Josephus will reserve a central place on their shelves.

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