

DAVID AND MEPHIBOSHETH ACCORDING TO JOSEPHUS

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Throughout 2 Samuel the reader repeatedly encounters the figure of that fortunate Saulide, Mephibosheth, who, thanks to David's favor, escapes the carnage that envelops so many of his family; see 4:4; 9:1-13; 16:1-4; 19:25-31 (MT; EVV 19:24-30); 21:7. The purpose of this essay is to investigate Josephus' version, found in his *Antiquitates Judaicae* (hereafter *Ant.*) Book 7¹ of the biblical story of the interaction between David and Mephibosheth. More specifically, I shall concentrate on his rendition of 2 Sam 9; 16 and 19, since Josephus has no equivalent to the parenthetical notice of 4:4 within his rendition of 2 Sam 4 in *Ant.* 7.46-52 and I have already treated his parallel to 2 Sam 21:1-13 elsewhere.² My investigation will proceed by way of a detailed comparison between the Josephan version of the above segments and the biblical parallel material as represented by the following major witnesses: MT (BHS), Codex Vaticanus (hereafter B),³ the Lucianic (hereafter L) or Antiochene MSS⁴ of the LXX, and *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets* (hereafter *Tg. Jon.*).⁵

¹For the writings of Josephus I used the text and translation of H.St.J. Thackeray, R. Marcus, A. Wikgren, and L.H. Feldman, *Josephus*, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926-1965 [*Ant.* Book 7 is found in vol. 5, ed. by Ralph Marcus]).

²See C.T. Begg, "The Execution of the Saulides according to Josephus," *Sef* 56 (1996): 3-18.

³For B I use A.E. Brooke, N. McLean and H.St.J. Thackeray, *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Text of the Codex Vaticanus*, vol. 2:1, *I and II Samuel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927).

⁴For L I use N. Fernández Marcos and J.R. Busto Saiz, *El Texto antioqueño de la Biblia Griega*, vol. 1, *1-2 Samuel*, Textos y estudios Cardenal Cisneros 50 (Madrid: C.S.I.C., 1989).

⁵For Tj. Jon. I use A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic*, II (Leiden: Brill, 1959) and the translation of this by D.J. Harrington and A.J. Saldarini, *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets*, The Aramaic Bible 10 (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1987).

I undertake this comparison with a number of overarching questions in view: Which text-form(s) of the above passages did Josephus employ? How, and on the basis of what sort of rewriting techniques, does his version differ from its source? Finally, what messages may Josephus have intended his version of the David-Mephibosheth story to convey to his double audience, i.e., (Roman) Gentiles and fellow Jews?

For purposes of my comparison I divide up the biblical and Josephan material into three parallel segments as follows: Mephibosheth Honored (2 Sam 9:1-13// *Ant.* 7.111-117a); 2) Mephibosheth Accused (16:1-4// 7.205-206); and 3) Mephibosheth's Self-Defense (19:25-31// 7.267-271).

Mephibosheth Honored

The biblical story of David's beneficence to Mephibosheth (2 Sam 9) is rather abruptly linked to what precedes, i.e., the list of David's officials, 8:15-18 (// *Ant.* 7.110) by means of the opening words of v. 1, "And David said." Josephus (7.111) provides a much more elaborate transition between the two segments:

He also remembered [ἐμνήσθη] his sworn covenant [τῶν . . . συνθηκῶν καὶ ὄρκων]⁶ with Jonathan, the son of Saul, and Jonathan's friendship and devotion [φιλίας καὶ σπουδῆς],⁷ to him, for beside all the other good qualities [ἀγαθοῖς] he possessed, was also that of being ever mindful [μνημονικώτατος] of those who had benefited [εὖ ποιησάντων] him at any time.

The narration in 2 Sam 9:1 continues with David's direct discourse question about whether anyone is left of Saul's house to whom he might show "kindness" for Jonathan's sake. As he does frequently, Josephus (7.112a) transposes direct discourse into indirect discourse⁸: "Accordingly, he gave orders to inquire whether any of his family [γένους, Β οἴκου]⁹ survived, to whom he might

⁶The phrase "remembered sworn oaths" here in 7.111 recalls Josephus' earlier references to David's and Jonathan's commitment to each other, see *Ant.* 6.241 (// 1 Sam 20:42): "... exhorting each other to remember their oaths (μνησθαι τῶν ὄρκων)" and 6.276 (// 1 Sam 23:18) "(Jonathan) having renewed his oaths [ὄρκους]."

⁷This collocation is hapax in Josephus. The word φιλία figures in Josephus' previous account of the relationship between David and Jonathan; see *Ant.* 6.225,228. On Josephus' overall treatment of that relationship, see L.H. Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of David," *HUCA* 60 (1989): 129-174, esp. 169-170.

⁸On this feature of Josephus' biblical paraphrase, see C.T. Begg, *Josephus' Account of the Early Divided Monarchy* (*AJ* 8,212-420), *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium*, 108: (Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1993), 12-13, n. 38.

⁹In David's question of 9:1 the reference is to "the house of Saul." Josephus, in line with his earlier reference to David's remembering his commitment to Jonathan, has the king ask about "his, i.e., Jonathan's, family."

repay the debt he owed Jonathan for his comradeship [ἐταιρίας].”¹⁰

David’s query leads (9:2a) to the summoning of a certain “Ziba,” a servant of Saul’s house. The Josephan rendition provides both a rationale for the recourse precisely to this figure and an alternative designation for him: “Thereupon there was brought to him one of Saul’s freedmen [ἠλευθερωμένου]¹¹ *who would know whether any of his family* [γένους, see 7.112a] remained alive.”¹²

The exchange between Ziba and David (9:2b-4) begins with a question-and-answer sequence concerning the former’s identity, v. 2b. Josephus passes over this opening element as something superfluous. David’s question (“Are you Ziba?”) seems to suppose that he has already been informed of the identity of the one who had been fetched. Instead, he has the king proceed immediately to the key issue: “and David asked whether he could name any kinsmen of Jonathan¹³ who was alive and might be the recipient of kindness [χάριτας]¹⁴ *in return for the benefits* [εὐεργεσιῶν, compare εὖ ποιησάντων, 7.111] *which he himself had received from Jonathan.*”¹⁵

In 9:3b Ziba informs David that there does remain a lame son of Jonathan, whose name he, oddly, neglects to give. Josephus’ respondent (7.113a) fills this lacuna, anticipating the Saulide’s name from 9:6: “The man replied that a son [υἱόν] was left to him, *named Memphibosthos* (Μεμφίβοσθον),¹⁶ who was crippled in his feet [πεπρωμένον τὰς βάσεις, BL πεπληγῶς τοῦς

¹⁰This term echoes 6.241 (// 1 Sam 20:41), where David and Jonathan “bewail the companionship (ἐταιρίαν) which was begrudged them.”

¹¹In employing this term to designate the character’s status at the moment of his summons, instead of the source’s “servant” (BL παῖς), Josephus may have in view subsequent indications concerning him in 2 Sam 9 which might suggest that, when called before David here in 9:2a, “Ziba” was not currently a servant but only (re-)assumed that position subsequently at David’s initiative, see 9:10b (Ziba himself has 20 “servants”) and 12b (everyone in Ziba’s household, i.e., including Ziba himself, *becomes* Mepibosheth’s “servants”). In any case, Josephus for the moment (but see 7.115) passes over the proper name of David’s future informant.

¹²I italicize elements of Josephus’ presentation like the above which have no equivalent as such in the source.

¹³Compare 9:3a, “some one of the house of *Saul*.” Once again (see n. 9), Josephus keeps attention focused specifically on Jonathan as the one whose memory evokes David’s initiative.

¹⁴Compare 9:3a, “the kindness of God (B ἔλεος [L ἔλεον] θεοῦ).”

¹⁵The above, biblically unparalleled, motivation for David’s proposed kindness, harks back to Josephus’ editorial “preface” to the story of 2 Samuel 9, see 7.111 (“(David) remembered . . . Jonathan’s friendship and devotion to him,” these being the “benefits” alluded to here in 7.112).

¹⁶This is the declined form of the name as found in B 9:6 etc. Compare MT “Mephibosheth”; L Μεμφιβάαλ (cf. MT 1 Chr 8:34; 9:39 “Meribbaal”).

πόδαζ].” To the speaker’s concluding reference to Memphibosthos’ infirmity, Josephus then attaches an extended explanation whose content he draws from the parenthetical notice found in 2 Sam 4:4 earlier passed over by him (see above). His “delayed” utilization of 4:4 reads thus:

*For after the news came that the child’s father and grandfather had fallen in battle,*¹⁷ his nurse (τροφοῦ) had snatched him up and fled, and he had slipped from her shoulder, thereby sustaining an injury to his feet (βῦσεις).

The David-Ziba dialogue of 9:2b-4 ends (v. 4) with another question-answer sequence (cf. 9:2b) in which the king asks about the whereabouts of the crippled Saulide and is told by Ziba that he is in the house of Malchir, son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. Thereupon (v. 5), David sends to the place and fetches the intended object of his benefactions. Josephus, in effect, fuses the separate contents of vv. 4-5 in 7.113b: “When David learned where and by whom he *was being brought up*,¹⁸ he sent to *the city of Labatha* [Λάβαθα]¹⁹ to Macheiros [Μάχειρον]²⁰—*this was the person by whom Jonathan’s son was being brought up* [see n. 18]—and summoned him to his presence.”

In 2 Sam 9:6 Mephibosheth pays his respects to David (v. 6a), this being coupled with a question-answer exchange between them as to the former’s identity (v. 6b). As he did with the similar exchange between David and Ziba of 9:2b (see above), Josephus leaves aside that of v. 6b. In so doing, he directly juxtaposes (7.114) the Saulide’s homage (9:6a) with David’s opening, general assurances to him (9:7a): “Memphibosthos²¹ came before the king and, falling [πεσών] on his face, did obeisance [προσεκύνησεν] to him,²² but David bade him take heart [θαρρεῖν] and look forward to a better lot.”²³ Thereafter,

¹⁷This allusion to the battle of Mt. Gilboa (1 Samuel 31// *Ant.* 6.368-378) represents a specification of the formulation used in 2 Sam 4:4aβ, “news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel (MT; BL Israel).”

¹⁸The above formulation presupposes the exchange as cited in 9:4. The italicized phrase lacks a parallel in the source; it provides an implicit explanation as to what Memphibosthos was doing at “Machir’s” home as reported by Ziba, i.e., Malchir was rearing the orphan boy.

¹⁹Compare MT “Lo-debar,” BL Λαδαβάρ.

²⁰Compare MT “Machir,” BL Μαχείρ.

²¹In 2 Sam 9 Mephibosheth is mentioned by name for the first time in v. 6a, where the names of his father and grandfather are also cited. Josephus, who has already mentioned the name of the surviving Saulide in his version (see 7.113a), leaves aside those of his forebears in his parallel to 9:6a here in 7.114.

²²Josephus’ above sequence, mentioning first Mephibosheth’s falling on his face and then his obeisance, corresponds to that of MT B 9:6a as against L, where the two items appear in the reverse order.

²³Compare David’s direct address word of 9:7a, “Do not fear; for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan.”

he expatiates somewhat on the two specific favors announced by David in 9:7b: “He then gave him *his father’s house* and all the substance [οὐσίαν] which his grandfather [πάπτος] Saul had acquired,²⁴ and gave orders that he should share his own food at his table [ὀμοτράπεζον]²⁵ and let not a day pass without eating with him.”²⁶ Mephibosheth responds to David’s words with a new act of homage (9:8a, compare 9:6b// 7.114a) and a self-deprecating remark concerning himself (9:8b). Josephus (7.115a) leaves aside the latter component of the Saulide’s response in favor of a transitional phrase “motivating” his renewed homage to the king: “*In acknowledgement of these words and gifts, the lad did obeisance* [προσκυνήσαντος, BL προσεκύνησεν] to him.”²⁷

In 2 Sam 9:9-10abα David shifts his attention from Mephibosheth back to Ziba (see 9:2-3), informing the latter of his decision about the former (see 9:7b) and issuing additional instructions to him. Josephus’ version features both reminiscences of his own earlier formulations in 7.114-115 and various modifications of the source’s wording. It reads: “Then [David] called Siba [Σιβάν]²⁸ and told him that he had made the lad [παιδί, see παιδός, 7.114] a present [δεδωρήσθαι, BL δέδωκα, cf. δωρεαίς, 7.114] *of his father’s house*²⁹ and all of Saul’s possessions [κτησίην],³⁰ and he ordered [Siba] to work his [Mephibosheth’s] land [ἐργάζόμενον αὐτοῦ τὴν γῆν] *and take care of it*

²⁴Compare 9:7bα, “I will restore to you all the land [B ἀγρόν, L ἀγρούς] of Saul your father” (so MT L; B the father of your father, compare Josephus’ his grandfather Saul).

²⁵The word ὀμοτράπεζος is hapax in Josephus.

²⁶Compare the more summary wording of 9:7bβ, “and you shall eat at my table always.”

²⁷As mentioned above, Josephus leaves aside Mephibosheth’s self-deprecating words of 9:8b (“What is your servant, that you should look upon a dead dog such as I?”). His doing so coheres with his omission of the comparable self-denigrations attributed to David himself in 1 Sam 24:14 and 26:20. The motivation for the historian’s procedure in all these cases may be the concern not to evoke contempt for biblical characters from the side of his Gentile readers, whose great ethical authority, Aristotle, had deprecated excessive modesty (μικροψυχία); on the point, see L.H. Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrait of Saul,” *HUCA* 53 (1982): 45-99, esp. 80-82. In this connection it is of interest to note that *Tg. Jon.*, in its renderings of 1 Sam 24:14; 26:20; and 2 Sam 9:8b, replaces the (self-pejorative) “dog” imagery of MT with alternative terminology.

²⁸This form of the name is the declined version of that read by MT “Ziba” and L (Σιβά); compare B Σειβά. In Josephus’ version of 2 Sam 9, this is his first mention of “Ziba” by name.

²⁹In 9:9 the reference is to David’s having given Mephibosheth “all that belonged to Saul and to all his (i.e., Saul’s) house.” Josephus’ rendition, with its mention of Mephibosheth’s “father,” directs attention specifically and distinctly to Jonathan, this in line with a tendency observable throughout his version of 2 Sam 9.

³⁰Compare the equivalent phrase of David’s word to Mephibosheth himself in 7.114, “all the substance (οὐσίαν) which . . . Saul had acquired.”

[προνοούμενον],³¹ to send all the yield [πρόσοδον] to Jerusalem,³² and to bring the lad [literally him] to his table every day.”³³

The story in 2 Sam 9:10 ends in v.10bβ with a parenthetical notice on the figures for Ziba’s sons (15) and his servants (20), whom David had previously directed (v. 10aα) to till the soil along with Ziba himself (see above), these references being then recapitulated in the seemingly extraneous remark of 9:12b (“and all who dwelt in Ziba’s house became Mephibosheth’s servants”). Josephus conflates the source’s three separate mentions of Ziba’s “household” in his notice on the king’s next initiative: “David also presented [χαρίζεται, cf. χάριτας, 7.112] Mephibosthos with Siba himself, his sons, of whom there were fifteen, and his servants [οικέτας, BL δούλοι],³⁴ twenty in number.”

Next, Josephus (7.116a) elaborates on the circumstances surrounding Ziba’s promise to do as directed by David as cited in 9:11a: “*When the king had given these instructions, Siba did obeisance to him [προσκυνήσας],*³⁵ saying he would do all these things,³⁶ and withdrew.” He then proceeds to combine into one the two similar references to Mephibosheth’s eating place of 9:11b³⁷

³¹Compare 9:10aα, “you and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him” (BL ἐργᾶ αὐτῷ τὴν γῆν). Josephus reserves mention of Siba’s fellow “cultivators” to a later point in his presentation; see below.

³²The above phrase reads like a further clarification of (the opening element of) the L reading in 9:10bα, “and you shall bring bread(s) into the house of your lord and they shall eat,” specifying the location of Mephibosheth’s “house,” i.e., in Jerusalem. Compare MT (“and you shall bring and it will be to the son of your lord that he may eat it”) and B (“and you shall bring breads to the son of your lord and he shall eat breads”), which lack an indication as to where Ziba is to “bring” what he is commanded.

³³Compare 9:10bα, “but Mephibosheth your master’s son shall always eat at my table.” Josephus’ specification that Ziba is to “bring” Mephibosheth to the royal table has in view both the latter’s crippled state and the fact of his being still a “lad” (παῖς), a designation twice previously applied to him by Josephus without biblical warrant as such; see above.

³⁴On Josephus’ terminology for slaves and slavery, see J.G. Gibbs and L.H. Feldman, “Josephus’ Vocabulary for Slavery,” *JQR* 76 (1986): 281-310.

³⁵With this inserted indication Josephus, going beyond the Bible, places in parallel the responses of Mephibosheth (7.115// 9:8a) and Ziba (7.116) to David’s respective words to them.

³⁶Compare the more expansive wording of 9:11a, “Then Ziba said to the king, ‘According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so will your servant do.’”

³⁷This verse-half poses another text-critical problem. In MT (and *Tg. Jon.*) it functions as continuation of Ziba’s response begun in v. 9a: “and Mephibosheth is eating at my [i.e. Ziba’s] table like one of the king’s sons.” Given the seeming contradiction between this affirmation and the statements of vv. 10 and 13a about the Saulide survivor’s eating at David’s own table, most scholars opt for the LXX reading, in which the “table” spoken of in v. 11b is that of David (so B) or “the king” (so L) such that the verse-half is to be understood either as a comment by the narrator (so RSV) or as an instance of courtly

and 13a. The combination runs: “So Jonathan’s son³⁸ dwelt [κατώκει = BL] in Jerusalem [// 9:13a], sharing the king’s hospitality [συνεστιώμενος, compare ὁμοτράπεζον, 7.114]³⁹ and receiving every attention [θεραπείας]⁴⁰ as though he were his own son [// 9:11b].”⁴¹

The story in 2 Sam 9:12-13 constitutes a kind of appendix/recapitulation to the story of David’s gracing of Mephibosheth. From the items making up this appendix, Josephus elects to utilize only their one new element, i.e., the notice of v. 12a concerning Mephibosheth’s own son: “There was also born to him a son [παῖς, BL υἱός],⁴² whom he called Michanos [Μίχανον].”⁴³

As noted above, Josephus introduces the biblical story of the favor shown Mephibosheth by David with an elaborate transitional formulation in 7.111 (compare the abrupt opening of 9:1, “and David said”). Now at the end of his version, the historian provides an equally elaborate closing notice (7.117a), which lacks any counterpart in the source, but which serves to highlight, one last time, David’s magnanimity towards the dispossessed Saulides. This reads: “Such then were the honours [τιμῶν] which those who were left of the family [γένους, 7.111, 112] of Saul and Jonathan received [ἔτυχον, compare θεραπείας τυγχάνων, 7.116a] from David.”⁴⁴

Mephibosheth Accused

The triangular interaction involving David, Mephibosheth and Ziba,

language by Ziba, making third-person reference to his addressee David, as in v. 11a. See n. 41.

³⁸In both 9:11b and 13 the reference is to “Mephibosheth.” Josephus’ substitution, once again, highlights the figure of Jonathan: it is as Jonathan’s son that Mephibosheth enjoys the privilege of the royal table.

³⁹Josephus’ remaining uses of the verb συνεστιάω are in *Bf* 1.331; *Ant.* 12.93; 15.77. The above phrase is Josephus’ equivalent for the double reference to Mephibosheth’s “eating” (BL ἔσθιεν) at the (royal) table in 9:11b and 13a.

⁴⁰The above phrase has no equivalent in either 9:11b or 13a as such. It underscores the magnitude of David’s benefactions to the son of his deceased friend.

⁴¹As will be noted, the above rendition of 9:11b + 13a aligns itself with the BL readings of the former verse with their reference to Mephibosheth’s eating like one of the king’s sons at David’s own table, as opposed to the MT/Tg. *Jon.* wording wherein Ziba speaks of Mephibosheth’s eating at “my table”; see n. 37.

⁴²Note that Josephus’ above designation for Mephibosheth’s progeny is, somewhat oddly, the same one twice used by him for Mephibosheth himself (see 7.114, 115): the “child” Mephibosheth himself begets a “child.”

⁴³MT “Mica,” B Μειχά, L Μιχά.

⁴⁴The above closing notice for Josephus’ rendering of 2 Sam 9 (7.117a) is followed, in 7.117b-129a, by his version of 2 Sam 10 (David’s victories over the Ammonites and Syrians).

commenced in 2 Sam 9 (// 7.111-117a), next resurfaces in the context of David's flight from Jerusalem prompted by the revolt of his son Absalom, in 16:1-4// 7.205-206. This new episode, in which Mephibosheth figures only as an offstage presence, opens when Ziba presents himself before David as the latter passes "beyond the summit" (MT 16:1 *mēbā'ōš*, BL, transliterating, ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰ(ο)ώς), i.e., of "the Mount of Olives"; see 15:30). Josephus, who does take over the earlier source reference to David's ascending the Mount of Olives in 7.202, leaves the site of the David-Ziba encounter indeterminate. On the other hand, he introduces an explicit reminiscence of the events of 2 Sam 9 as described by him in his rendition (7.205a) of 16:1: "Now David had gone a little further when he was met by Ziba, the servant [δούλος, BL παιδάριον] of Memphibosthos whom David had sent to take charge [προνοησόμενον; see προνοούμενον, 7.115] of the property which he had given [κτήσεων ἃς δεδώρητο, see δεδωρήσθαι . . . κτήσιν, 7.115] to the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul." Having thus expatiated on 16:1a's reference to Ziba, Josephus drastically compresses the extended catalogue of items with which he approaches David, according to 16:1b: "Siba had with him a couple of asses [ζεύγους ὄνων] laden with provisions."⁴⁵ In 16:2a David initiates the exchange by asking Ziba the reason for his bringing the things just mentioned. Josephus leaves aside the king's question, directly linking mention of what Ziba brings (// 16:1b) with his word concerning these (// 16:2b)⁴⁶: "[the provisions] from which he bade David take whatever he himself and his men might need."⁴⁷

The narrative of 16:1-4 takes a critical turn in v. 3a with David asking about the whereabouts of "your [Ziba's] master's son." Josephus' indirect discourse rendition of the royal question (7.206a) eliminates the source's roundabout allusion to one about whom David queries Ziba: "And, when he was asked where he had left Memphibosthos."⁴⁸ In response to David's

⁴⁵Compare 16:1b, "with a couple of asses [BL ζεύγους ὄνων = Josephus] saddled, bearing two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred [so MT B; L an ephah] bunches of raisins, a hundred [MT B, L 200] of summer fruits, and a skin [MT *nēbel*, BL transliterate] of wine."

⁴⁶In so doing, Josephus accentuates Ziba's eagerness to ingratiate himself with the king: Not waiting to be asked, he immediately presents what he has brought to David.

⁴⁷As he did with the catalogue of 16:1b, Josephus generalizes and compresses the more differentiated wording of Ziba's response as cited in 16:2b, "The asses are for the king's household to ride on, the bread [so MT *qere* and the versions, MT *ketiv* and for war] and summer fruit for the young men to eat and the wine for those who faint in the wilderness." The historian's handling of the two source sequences goes together in that, since he does not take over the particulars of the listing of 16:1b, it would not make sense for him to reproduce Ziba's evocation of those particulars in his version of the latter's word, 16:2b.

⁴⁸In substituting the Saulide's proper name for the circumstantial designation of 16:3a, Josephus eliminates the seeming incorrectness of the source's wording, which continues to speak of Saul as Ziba's "master" (so 9:2), whereas according to 9:12 (// 7.115b) David had

question, Ziba tells him (v. 3b) of Mephibosheth's remaining in Jerusalem and his (alleged) reason for doing so, i.e., his hope that the Israelites would restore his father's kingdom to him. Josephus expatiates on the biblical Ziba's reply: "He said, 'In Jerusalem,' where he was waiting to be chosen king *in the midst of the prevailing confusion*,⁴⁹ *in recognition of the benefits* [εὐεργέτησεν, see εὐεργεσιῶν, 7.112] *which Saul⁵⁰ had conferred on the people*.⁵¹

The Ziba-David exchange of 16:1-4 concludes in v. 4 with mention of the king's decision, inspired by what he has just been told, and Ziba's obsequious response to this. The historian's rendering (7.206b) prefaces a reference to the king's emotional state, provides a motivation for his decision, and transposes Ziba's words into a notice on the interior affect of the royal decision upon him. This concluding sequence runs: "*In his indignation* [ἀγανακτήσας] *at this*,⁵² David made a present [χαρίζεται, see 7.115] to Ziba of all that he had granted to Mephibosthos, *for*, he said, *he recognized that he had a far more just claim* [δικαιότερον] *to possess them than had the other*.⁵³ And so Ziba was greatly pleased [περιχαρής]."⁵⁴

made Ziba (and his household) the "servant" of Mephibosheth himself.

⁴⁹Ziba's mention of the "prevailing confusion" in Jerusalem provides an initial explanation as to why the cripple Mephibosheth should have any hope of becoming king: In the current "confusion" anything might happen.

⁵⁰In 16:3b Ziba "quotes" Mephibosheth's word about "the kingdom of *my father*." This formulation leaves the identity of the "father" in question ambiguous—is it Jonathan or rather Saul? Josephus' substitution of the proper name "Saul" resolves the matter. Cf. n. 48.

⁵¹The above phrase, "in recognition of . . . on the people," provides a further motivation for Mephibosheth's (alleged) expectation about his being made king. In appending such motivations to Ziba's claim about Mephibosheth's current hopes, Josephus renders that claim more plausible than it might appear in the Bible. Thereby too, he better accounts for David's immediate and drastic response to it as described in what follows.

⁵²Such inserted psychological indications are a hallmark of Josephus' biblical paraphrase. The notice in question suggests that David took Ziba's "plausible" (see nn. 49-51) allegations—which will subsequently be exposed as mendacious—at face value and so proceeded to act on them immediately.

⁵³In supplying the above motivation for David's decision, Josephus further underscores the king's good-faith belief in Ziba's allegations, just as he plays down the apparent arbitrariness and precipitousness of the biblical David's initiative.

⁵⁴With the use of the above term Josephus introduces a word-play on the verb χαρίζεται used previously in 7.206 of David's "grant." On the division of opinion among the rabbis as to whether or not David was guilty of listening to slander, given his response to Ziba's charges in 2 Sam 16:4a, see, e.g., *b. Šabb.* 56ab; *b. Yoma* 22b.

Mepibosheth's Self-Defense

Having been denounced *in absentia* by his servant in 16:1-4 (// 7.205-206), Mephibosheth reappears on the scene in 19:25-31 ([Eng. 19:24-30]// 7.267-271) in the context of David's return to Jerusalem following the suppression of Absalom's revolt.⁵⁵ The latter segment commences (19:25) with a description of the Saulide's appearance as he approaches David. MT and BL differ here in several respects, with Josephus' rendering (7.267a) reading like an elaborated version of the latter:

And there also met him Saul's grandson⁵⁶ Memphibosthos, wearing a soiled garment (ῥυπαράν . . . ἐσθῆτα περικείμενος)⁵⁷ and with hair (κόμην) long and unkempt,⁵⁸ for, after David's flight, *he had not, because of grief* (λυπούμενος),⁵⁹ *either cut his hair or washed his garment,*⁶⁰ *but had condemned himself to this unhappy state on the king's fall from power.*⁶¹

Before continuing with David's pointed question to the suppliant Saulide (// 19:26b), Josephus (7.267b) pauses to insert an editorial remark which resolves a matter left indeterminate in the source, i.e., in their respective claims and counterclaims to David, who is telling the truth—Ziba or Mephi-

⁵⁵I leave out of consideration here the (intrusive) notices on the earlier, separate approach to the returning David by Ziba and his household as described in 2 Sam 19:18b-19// *Ant.* 7.263b-264a, since my concern in this essay is with the David-Mephibosheth interaction, not as such with Ziba.

⁵⁶This designation for Mephibosheth corresponds to that found in B ("the son of the son of Saul") and L ("the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul") 19:25, as opposed to MT's "the son of Saul."

⁵⁷Compare B (τὰ ἱμάτια . . . οὐκ ἀπέλυεν) and L (τὸν ἱματισμὸν . . . οὐκ ἔπλυεν) 19:25. In making Mephibosheth's soiled vesture the first item in his description, Josephus reverses the sequence of both MT and BL, where this item appears as the last in the series.

⁵⁸This phrase appears to represent Josephus' equivalent to the second item in the listing of 19:25, "(Mephibosheth) had not trimmed [literally done] his beard [BL οὐτὲ ἐποίησεν τὸν μύστακα αὐτοῦ]." See, however, n. 60.

⁵⁹This inserted notice on the emotions underlying Mephibosheth's mourning gestures has no biblical equivalent. As an editorial comment, it provides a first indication regarding the veracity of the Saulide's subsequent claims about his loyalty to David.

⁶⁰The reiterated reference to Mephibosheth's neglect of his hair and vesture takes the place of the source's mention of a third mourning practice undertaken by the Saulide—one which, in all witnesses, appears as the first item in the listing of 19:25—i.e., "he had not dressed [MT literally made] his feet [BL οὐκ ἐθεράπευσεν τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ οὐδὲ ὠνυχίστατο (L + τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ)]."

⁶¹The above "appendix" to the source notice on Mephibosheth's appearance as he meets David underscores the purposefulness of the Saulide's actions ("he had condemned himself") and the occasion for these, i.e., the king's (temporary) loss of power. Both points, made as they are by Josephus, *Ant.*'s reliable narrator, reflect positively on Mephibosheth as indeed a Davidic loyalist.

bosheth? Already before the latter opens his mouth, the historian makes clear that his story is the one we (and David) are to believe: “He (Mephibosheth) had moreover been unjustly [ἀδίκως, compare δικαιοτέρον, used of Ziba in David’s word to him of 7.206] accused [διβέβλητο] by his steward Siba.” He likewise inserts mention of Mephibosheth’s respectful self-presentation to the king: “and so, when he greeted David and did obeisance [προσκυνήσαντος, see 7.114,115] to him.”⁶² With this, Josephus comes finally to his indirect-discourse rendering of David’s question (“Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?” v. 26b): “[the latter] inquired just why he had not gone out with him *and shared his exile* (φυγῆς).”⁶³

Mephibosheth’s response to David begins (v. 27) with an accusation concerning Ziba whose wording—which differs in MT and BL—and line of thought appear obscure in several respects.⁶⁴ Aligning himself with the BL reading of Mephibosheth’s charge, Josephus (7.268b-269a) both elaborates and clarifies its content:

Whereupon he replied that this [i.e., Mephibosheth’s failure to accompany David on his flight; see 7.268a] was Siba’s fault [ἀδίκημα; see ἀδίκως used by Josephus of Ziba’s accusation of Mephibosheth in 7.267], *for although he had been ordered to prepare for the departure,*⁶⁵ *he had paid no attention, but had disregarded him quite as if he had been a mere slave* [ἀνδραπόδου].⁶⁶

⁶²The above phrase takes the place of the resumptive reference to Mephibosheth’s “meeting” David in 19:26a, thus picking up on the notice of 19:25a following the description of the Saulide’s appearance in v. 25b. This resumption contains the problematic indication that Mephibosheth came “to Jerusalem” to meet David (in L the phrase “to Jerusalem” is attached as well to the mention of David’s returning “in safety” at the end of v. 25). This indication seems to conflict with the overall context of chap. 19, in which David is still at the Jordan (see vv. 18-19), as also with the reference in v. 25a to Mephibosheth’s “going down” (i.e., from Jerusalem to the lower-lying area around the Jordan) to meet David. Josephus disposes of the difficulty by leaving the location of the meeting unspecified.

⁶³The above italicized phrase spells out (what would have been) the purpose of Mephibosheth’s “coming with” David as cited in the latter’s question of 19:26b.

⁶⁴MT (and *Tg. Jon.*) 19:27 reads, “He answered, ‘My lord, O king, my servant deceived me for your servant said, *I will saddle an ass for myself* and I will ride upon it and I will go with the king. For your servant is lame.’” BL makes the opening part of Mephibosheth’s self-quotation rather a command by him directed to Ziba, thus: “your servant said *to him*, ‘saddle the ass for me.’”

⁶⁵With this phrase Josephus clearly reflects—while also generalizing—the BL reading in 19:27, where Mephibosheth quotes his previous order to Ziba, “Saddle the ass for me.” See n. 64.

⁶⁶The above formulation takes the place of the (self-evident) indications concerning the purpose of Mephibosheth’s order that Ziba prepare his mount in BL 19:27, i.e., “that I may ride upon it and go with the king.” By means of it, Josephus has Mephibosheth spell out the nature of Ziba’s “offense,” which in the source remains unclear.

"If indeed," he added, "I⁶⁷ had sound feet [βάσεις, see 7.113 (*bis*)] and had been able to use them in flight [φυγήν, see φυγῆς, 7.268], I should not have been far behind you."⁶⁸

Mephibosheth next proceeds (19:28a) to accuse Ziba of a further offense, i.e., "slandering" him to David, this alluding to the incident recounted in 16:1-4. Josephus prefaces the Saulide's new charge with an extended transitional phrase that accentuates Ziba's culpability which prevented him (Mephibosheth) from acting on his devotion to David. The sequence (7.269b) reads: "*But this is not the only way, my lord, in which he has wrongfully hindered [ἠδίκησε]⁶⁹ my obedience [εὐσέβειαν] to you, for he has also slandered [προσδιέβαλε]⁷⁰ and has maliciously lied [κατεψεύσατο κακουργῶν] about me.*"⁷¹

Having completed his denunciation of Ziba in vv. 27-28a, Mephibosheth goes on to address David with a high-flown word of flattery ("my lord the king is like the angel of God," v.28bα) and then urges him to "do what seems good to you" (v. 28bβ).⁷² Josephus replaces both Mephibosheth's (excessive) exaltation of David as an "angel"⁷³ and his proposal to the king with an extended expression of confidence by Mephibosheth (7.269c): "I know very well, however, that none of these [calumnies] finds admittance into your mind, for it is just [δικαία]⁷⁴ and loves [ἀγαπῶσα] the truth

⁶⁷Note the shift here in Mephibosheth's word from the preceding indirect to direct discourse. Such shifts are not uncommon in the more extended speeches Josephus attributes to his characters.

⁶⁸This is Josephus' expansion of Mephibosheth's concluding word in 19:27, "For your servant is lame," whose connection with his preceding charge against Ziba is not immediately obvious. The expansion underscores Mephibosheth's desire to have accompanied David on his flight.

⁶⁹The verb ἀδικέω here echoes the adverb ἀδίκως of 7.267 and the noun ἀδίκημα of 7.268, all three terms qualifying the behavior of Ziba.

⁷⁰The verb προσδιεβάλλω is hapax in Josephus; compare the related form used in Josephus' editorial comment that Mephibosheth had been unjustly "accused" (διεβέβλητο) by Ziba in 7.267.

⁷¹Josephus' double verb reinforces Mephibosheth's charge as cited in 19:28a, "he has slandered (Β μεθῴδουσεν, L κατηγορήκε) your servant to my lord the king."

⁷²Thus MT B. Compare L ("but my lord the king like an angel of God did the good before God") and *Tg. Jon.* ("and my master the king is wise like the angel of the Lord. And do what is good in your eyes").

⁷³On Josephus' highly varied treatment of biblical references to angels, see M. Mach, *Entwicklungsstadien des jüdischen Engelglaubens in vorrabbinischer Zeit* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1992), 300-332.

⁷⁴With his use of this term for David, Josephus sets the king in sharp contrast to Ziba who is thrice qualified with terms of the ἀδικ- stem in 7.267-269. The term recurs in

[ἀλήθειαν],⁷⁵ which the Deity also wishes to prevail.”⁷⁶

Mephibosheth’s *apologia* culminates in 19:29 with his recalling David’s favor to him, which leaves him (Mephibosheth) with no right to make any further demand of the king. Here again, Josephus (7.270bc) expands considerably

And though you were exposed to great hardships at the hands of my grandfather, on which account⁷⁷ our whole family was deserving of extinction [ὀφειλοῦσης . . . ἀπολωλέναι],⁷⁸ you were, none the less, forbearing and kind [μέτριος καὶ χρηστός]⁷⁹ in making yourself forget all these things at the very time when you might have remembered them and also had the power to take vengeance.⁸⁰ But you considered me your friend [φίλον]⁸¹ and had me daily at your table [ἐπὶ τῆς τραπέζης], and in no way was I less well treated than the most honoured of your relatives.⁸²

David’s curt response to Mephibosheth’s extended self-defense comes in 19:30: The king cuts the latter short with a question that is tantamount to a command that he desist (“why speak [so MT B; L multiply] any more of your affairs [words]?”), and then decrees that he and Ziba are to “divide

Josephus’ concluding assessment of David in 7.391 where he qualifies him as δίκαιος.

⁷⁵The two attributes of David cited in Mephibosheth’s word here in 7.269 echo Josephus’ own editorial remark concerning David in 7.110: “He was of a just (δίκαιος) nature and, when he gave judgement, considered only the truth (ἀλήθειαν).”

⁷⁶Marcus notes that in the codices RO the last part of Mephibosheth’s statement reads rather, “for it [David’s mind] is just and wishes the truth to prevail and loves the Deity” (*Josephus*, 5:502, n.a.).

⁷⁷The above-inserted reference to Saul’s long-running pursuit of David (see 1 Sam 21-26) serves to motivate the biblical Mephibosheth’s following characterization (19:29a) of the Saulides as “men of death.”

⁷⁸With this phrase Josephus elucidates the meaning of the Semitic idiom “men of death [BL ἄνδρες θανάτου] before my lord the king” used by Mephibosheth in reference to his family in 19:29a.

⁷⁹Josephus’ one other use of this collocation—in reverse order—is in *Ant.* 6.33 where it is employed of “good, honest folk” who are themselves children of “knives.” The cognate noun to the adjective μέτριος is used in reference to David in 6.290, where, in his version of the story of David’s sparing Saul in the cave (1 Sam 24), Josephus represents Saul as “amazed at the youth’s [= David’s] forbearance [μετριότητα].” The term χρηστός recurs in Josephus’ final eulogy of David in 7.391.

⁸⁰The whole italicized phrase above has no equivalent in Mephibosheth’s closing word as cited in 19:29. It accentuates the magnanimity operative in the favor David had shown the grandson of his persecutor Saul.

⁸¹This item as well has no equivalent in the biblical Mephibosheth’s closing words. Cf. Josephus’ use of the noun φίλια in reference to the David-Jonathan relationship in 7.111.

⁸²This conclusion to Mephibosheth’s discourse harks back to 7.116, where Josephus states that the Saulide “received every attention as though he were his [David’s] own son.”

the land.” Josephus tones down the abruptness of David’s reaction with an inserted transitional phrase (7.271a) which informs readers in advance of the magnanimous royal decision regarding the disputants: “After this speech of his, David decided neither to punish Memphibosthos nor to condemn Siba for having made false charges [καταψευσαμένου].”⁸³ Following this aside on David’s mental processes, he comes to report the king’s actual response to Mephibosheth. In so doing, he passes over the interruption/question of v. 30a, while greatly expanding on David’s “decree” (v. 30b), investing this with a more positive tone toward the recipient. His indirect-discourse rendition of David’s reply thus runs: “But he told Memphibosthos that, *because he had not come to him with Siba, he had presented* [χαρίσασθαι, see 7.115,206] *all his substance to the latter;*⁸⁴ *however, he promised to forgive* [συγγινώσκειν] *him*⁸⁵ and ordered that half the property [οὐσίας, see 7.114] be restored to him.”⁸⁶

The Mephibosheth-David exchange concludes in 19:31 with the former averring that, given David’s safe return, he is ready to let Ziba have the whole of his erstwhile property. The Josephan scene ends similarly (7.271b): “Thereupon Memphibosthos exclaimed, ‘Let Siba have it all! As for me, it is enough that you have recovered your kingdom.’”⁸⁷

Conclusion

By way of conclusion to this essay, I shall now briefly summarize my findings regarding the three overarching questions with which it began. The first of those questions asked about the text-form(s) of the material concerning Mephibosheth used by Josephus. On this point, the foregoing study disclosed

⁸³This term echoes the wording of Mephibosheth’s statement in 7.269, “[Ziba] maliciously lied [κατεψεύσατο] about me.” It likewise reinforces Josephus’ own earlier editorial remark (7.267) about Mephibosheth’s having been “unjustly accused” by Ziba. Josephus thus—in contrast to the Bible itself—leaves readers in no doubt as to which of the parties, Ziba or Mephibosheth, is to be believed.

⁸⁴With this amplification of David’s word in 19:30b Josephus has the king inform Mephibosheth of his own earlier decision about the latter’s property (see 7.206// 16:4a), a decision he is now about to modify in Mephibosheth’s favor.

⁸⁵This inserted phrase goes beyond the source in having David express a beneficent attitude toward Mephibosheth personally at this moment.

⁸⁶Compare 19:30b, “I have decided [literally said] you and Ziba shall divide the land.” Josephus’ use of the term “restore” here relates back to David’s earlier decision transferring all of Mephibosheth’s property to Ziba, of which he has informed the former just previously; see above. Jewish tradition records the statement, attributed to Rab, that David’s decision as cited in 19:30b evoked a heavenly announcement that, in like fashion, David’s grandson would have to divide the land with Jeroboam; see *b. Šabb* 56b; *b. Yoma* 22b.

⁸⁷Compare 19:31, “O, let him take it all, since my lord the king has come safely home.”

a whole series of affinities between Josephus' version and readings of B and/or L against MT. Instances include: his form of the name of the Saulide protagonist (i.e., "Memphibosthos"), which stands closest to B's "Memphibosthe"; qualification of Saul as Mephibosheth's "grandfather" (7.114, so B 9:8 vs. MT L's "father") and of the latter as the former's "grandson" (7.267// BL 19:25 vs. MT "son"); specification of the "destination" of the harvested produce (7.115// L 9:10); nonmention of Mephibosheth's eating at Ziba's ("my") table (thus MT 9:11b); and Mephibosheth's "quotation" of his order to make preparations for flight (7.268// BL 19:27 vs. MT, where Mephibosheth claims to have announced that he would saddle his own ass). By contrast, we did not find clear-cut indications of Josephus' dependence on readings peculiar to MT in the material surveyed.⁸⁸

My second opening question had to do with the rewriting techniques applied by Josephus to the biblical data and the distinctive features of his version that result therefrom. Our investigation brought to light a whole range of (interconnected) Josephan rewriting techniques in the passages treated. Thus, he omits, e.g., the source's preliminary question-and-answer sequence between David and both Ziba (9:2b, cf. 9:4a) and Mephibosheth (9:6b), the Saulide's self-deprecating word (9:8b), plus the closing reference to Mephibosheth's lameness (9:13b). Similarly, he drastically reduces the Bible's circumstantial opening notices on the interview between Ziba and David, 16:1-2, in his rendition of these in 7.205, and leaves aside both the problematic reference to Jerusalem as the site of the David-Mephibosheth encounter of 19:26a and the king's curt, interruptive question to the Saulide (19:30a). On the other hand, Josephus also repeatedly expatiates on the source's presentation. Among instances of this rewriting technique the following stand out: the "framework" he provides for his version of 2 Samuel 9 in 7.111 and 117a; the *Rückverweis* concerning Ziba's status in 7.205; the elaboration both of Mephibosheth's (purported) motivation for remaining in Jerusalem (7.206a; compare 16:3b) and David's response to Ziba's charge (7.206b; compare 16:4a); and, above all, his amplification of almost all elements of the narrative of 19:25-31 in 7.267-271.

Another of Josephus' rewriting techniques is his rearrangement of the source's sequence. The most notable example in the material studied is his "repositioning" of the story of Mephibosheth's laming, which, in all the biblical witnesses, stands within the account of the assassination of Ishbosheth in 2 Sam 4 (see v. 4), incorporating this within his version of 2 Sam 9—where, in fact, it does seem to fit better. In less dramatic fashion, he likewise

⁸⁸For more on the text of Samuel used by Josephus, see E.C. Ulrich, "Josephus' Biblical Text for the Books of Samuel," in *Josephus, the Bible and History*, ed. L.H. Feldman and G. Hata (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 81-96.

brings together the Bible's three separate mentions of Ziba's "household," who become servants of Mephibosheth (9:10αββ, 12b), into a single notice (7.115c); reserves mention of Mephibosheth's own son (9:12a) to the conclusion of his rendition of 2 Sam 9 (see 7.116c); and reverses the biblical order for Mephibosheth's mourning practices (7.267; compare 19:25). Finally, Josephus also modifies the source's data in various respects. On the stylistic level, he introduces historic present forms, replaces direct with indirect address, and substitutes hypotaxis for parataxis. With regard to content, he takes care to clarify several formulations in 16:1-4 which appear ambiguous or incorrect in light of the narrative of 2 Sam 9: David's periphrastic allusion to "your master's son" in his question to Ziba (16:3a) becomes a straightforward mention of "Memphibosthos" (7.206a), while the ambiguity of Ziba's own reference to his charge's hopes of regaining the "kingdom of *my* father" (16:3b) is eliminated in Josephus' evocation of "the benefits which *Saul* had conferred on the people" (7.206b). In the same line, Josephus' rewriting of 2 Sam 19:25-31 substitutes a statement about David's justice and love of truth (7.269b) for Mephibosheth's overly-effusive comparison of him to "an angel of God" (19:29βα), spells out the sense of the Semitism "men of death" (19:29a; compare "deserving of extinction," 7.270a), and recasts Mephibosheth's allusion (19:31) to David's safe arrival "home" (i.e., to Jerusalem) as a reference to his "recovering his kingdom" (7.271b), seeing that, at the moment, the king would appear to be still in the area of the Jordan.

What then are the distinctive features of Josephus' portrayal of the David-Mephibosheth interaction that result from the above rewriting procedures? Particularly in the case of the first two episodes (2 Sam 9; 16:1-4), Josephus streamlines the biblical account, eliminating much of its circumstantial detail and repetition. Throughout, he essays to improve on the source's style, via, e.g., the insertion of transitional phrases and employment of hypotaxis in place of the Bible's monotonous parataxis. Source ambiguities and discrepancies of various sorts—most strikingly the uncertainty as to whether it is Ziba or Mephibosheth whose story should be believed—are resolved, by way of reformulation, interpolated remarks, or simple elimination. The personages' emotional states receive more explicit attention,⁸⁹ as does the rationale for their words and actions.⁹⁰

Scripture's characterization of each of the five figures cited by name

⁸⁹See, e.g., 7.206 (David's "indignation," Ziba's "great pleasure"); 7.267 (Mephibosheth's "grieving").

⁹⁰See the reason for Ziba's being brought to David (7.112; compare 9:2a), and for Mephibosheth's stay with Malchir (7.113; compare 9:4b), the (alleged) grounds of Mephibosheth's hope that he will be acknowledged as king (7.206a; compare 16:3b), and the basis for David's initial decision in Ziba's favor (7.206b; compare 16:4a; 7.271a; compare 19:30b).

in the material likewise undergoes greater or less nuancing in Josephus' rewriting. Specifically, Saul's abusive treatment of David is underscored, one last time, in the word he attributes to the former's grandson in 7.270. Conversely, Jonathan and his earlier solicitude for David are highlighted. The Josephan Ziba loses the moral ambiguity with which the Bible invests him, references to his mendacity being inserted throughout the historian's version of 19:25-31. By contrast, Josephus gives the story's two preeminent characters, David and Mephibosheth, a positively enhanced treatment. The former emerges as still more munificent in his requiting the kindness shown him by Jonathan and magnanimous in response to the failures of both Ziba and Mephibosheth in his regard (see especially 7.271a, and compare 19:30) than is his biblical counterpart. Still more striking is the Josephan handling of Mephibosheth, whom, going beyond the Bible itself, he depicts as unquestionably sincere in his attachment to David, outrageously misrepresented and abused by his own servant, but also as a speaker who evidences pronounced persuasive capacities in making his case to David.⁹¹

My final question concerned what messages Josephus may have intended his retelling of the David-Mephibosheth interaction to convey to his double audience, i.e., (Roman) Gentiles and fellow Jews.⁹² To the former audience, his version presents in the person of David, a Jewish example of that "great-souledness" (*μεγαλοψυχία*) so lauded by Aristotle.⁹³ Such a David would effectively further Josephus' overarching aim of bringing Gentile readers to the realization that his people did indeed have their great men, possessed of all the qualities Greeks and Romans admired in the heroes of their own history.⁹⁴ As for Jewish readers, Josephus' treatment of the David-Mephibosheth-Ziba triangle is intended, I suggest, to present them with several points for reflection. First, in depicting David magnanimously refraining from "punishing"

⁹¹In this connection, it is of interest to note that Mephibosheth is the only one of the characters of the story whom Josephus allows to speak in his own voice, using direct address (see 7.269-270, 271b); in the case of both Ziba and David he speaks for them by recasting their words in indirect address.

⁹²On *Ant.*'s twofold intended audience, see L.H. Feldman, "Use, Authority, and Exegesis of Mikra in the Writings of Josephus," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. M.J. Mulder and H. Sysling, *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*, sect. 2, vol. 1 (Assen: van Gorcum, 1988), 455-518, esp. 470-471.

⁹³On the point, see Feldman, "David," 154. Conversely, Josephus, as noted above (see n. 27) leaves aside the self-denigrating words of Mephibosheth as cited in 9:8b, which might seem to exemplify the opposite quality, derided by Aristotle, of *μικροψυχία* ("littleness-of soul").

⁹⁴On this aim and the contemporary claims about the absence of "great men" in Jewish history which it is intended to address, see Feldman, "Saul," 54-55.

Ziba's lie to him (7.271a), while also "promising to forgive" Mephibosheth's failure to accompany him into exile, Josephus offers fellow Jews a positive alternative to the unrestrained, internecine conflict and pursuit of vengeance which had so fatally marred the Great Revolt (and which of course remained a temptation for those Jews who had survived it).⁹⁵ Secondly, on a more personal level, Josephus' positively enhanced portrayal of Mephibosheth as the innocent victim of slander by his compatriot Ziba may be intended as a kind of indirect *apologia* for himself to his coreligionists who would have heard of the many charges that had been made against him by his fellow Jews.⁹⁶ To Jewish readers then the Josephan portrayal of Mephibosheth offers the cautionary reminder that also exemplary biblical figures had been "unjustly accused" (so 7.267) of wrongdoing in their day. With that realization in mind contemporary Jews should, accordingly, not be quick to credit negative reports about Josephus' activities that might reach them.⁹⁷

In *Antiquities*, as in the Bible itself, Mephibosheth remains a quite minor character and his story of limited significance. Still, as I hope this essay has made clear, in his retelling of that story Josephus shows himself alert to its problems and possibilities, and is inventive in his handling of both.

⁹⁵On the many reflexes of Josephus' experiences of the horrors of intra-Jewish conflict during the Revolt in his presentation of Biblical history in *Ant.*, see, e.g., L.H. Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of Joab," *Estudios Biblicos* 51 (1992): 323-351, 335-337.

⁹⁶In this connection it is of interest to note that the *Vita* concludes (see ## 424-425, 428) with repeated references to the "calumnies" to which Josephus was subjected by fellow Jews (but which—as in the case of David and Mephibosheth—found no credit with his imperial patrons).

⁹⁷Josephus makes a similar use of the figure of David himself in his elaboration of the story of the Ziphites' reporting David's whereabouts to Saul (// 1 Sam 23:19-23) in *Ant.* 6.277-280. On the historian's treatment of other biblical heroes for purposes of self-legitimation in the eyes of fellow Jews, see, e.g.: D. Daube, "Typology in Josephus," *JJS* 31 (1980): 18-36; C.T. Begg, "Daniel and Josephus: Tracing Connections," in *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings*, ed. A.S. van der Woude (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 106; Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1993), 539-545.