

JOSEPHUS

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# The Jewish War

TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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APPENDIX

## The Slavonic Additions

THE Slavonic Version of the Jewish War, surviving in Russian and Rumanian copies, which at some points differ slightly from one another, was made accessible to Western readers by the late Dr Berendts. Though in the view of Dr Eisler it reveals some traces of a Semitic original, the MS from which the version was made was undoubtedly written in Greek. Perhaps this was the first Greek version of the Aramaic to which the Preface refers, published in Titus' reign and followed in Domitian's by a considerably revised second edition, forming our present text. The Slavonic lacks a great many passages of that text, has others in a different and apparently more primitive form, and contains additional matter entirely missing from the Greek. Most of these passages are of little intrinsic interest and may well have been omitted from the later edition in the course of a literary tidying-up; for none of them could an interpolator have had any motive. Others, which bitterly attacked the venality and treachery of the Romans, may well have given offence and have been omitted later in response to protests. The crudeness of the original account of Josephus' contemptible conduct after the fall of Jotapata may likewise have been felt to need toning down. Instead of 'Josephus - shall we put it down to divine providence, or just to luck? - was left with one other man', it runs 'After saying this he counted the numbers cunningly and so deceived them all.'

Some few passages, however, are of the greatest interest, containing as they do records of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and the early Christians. These records, like the famous allusions in *Antiquities*, are condemned as spurious by critics who, victims of their own wishful thinking and bent on destruction, are prepared without a trace of MS authority to bracket or reverse the meaning of any passage that conflicts with their pet theories. Such a proceeding is in the last degree unscientific. It is to be observed also that the forging of these passages for propaganda purposes could not have rendered the least service to a Christian apologist; they could never influence anyone not already convinced by the Gospels; they are in many important points irreconcilable with Christian tradition; and they clearly reveal their author not as a believer but as a doubting, if curious, onlooker.

If then these passages are genuine, how did they come to be omitted from our Greek text? The answer is surely simple. If that text represents the final form of the book, an edition published when Domitian, the

hater and persecutor of Christianity, was at the height of his power, would it not have been the last degree of folly – most improbable in one as careful of his own skin as Josephus – to include references to Christ as a benefactor and miracle-worker, something more than a man, unjustly condemned by Roman authority and perhaps raised from the dead, whose followers too had worked wonders and 'signs' beyond the power of medicine? And if it was not safe to speak thus of Christ, could it be safe to speak of the man who had foretold his kingship? It should be remembered that in Josephus, as in the New Testament, the words 'king' and 'Roman emperor' are interchangeable.

The substance of these controversial passages is given in the paraphrases that follow.

### I. JOHN THE FORERUNNER<sup>1</sup>

At that time a man was going about Judaea remarkably dressed: he wore animal hair on those parts of his body not covered by his own. His face was like a savage's. He called on the Jews to claim their freedom, crying: 'God sent me to show you the way of the Law, so that you can shake off any human yoke: no man shall rule you, but only the Most High who sent me.' His message was eagerly welcomed, and he was followed by all Judaea and the district round Jerusalem. All he did was to baptize them in the Jordan and dismiss them with an earnest exhortation to abandon their evil ways: if they did so they would be given a king who would liberate them and master the unruly, while himself acknowledging no master. This promise was derided by some but believed by others.

The man was brought before Archelaus<sup>2</sup> and an assemblage of lawyers, who asked who he was and where he had been. He replied: 'I am a man called by the Spirit of God, and I live on stems, roots, and fruit.' When he was threatened with torture if he did not stop behaving and talking like this, he retorted: 'It would be more to the point if you stopped acting so disgracefully and submitted to the God you profess to worship.'

Simon, a scribe of Essene origin, sprang up and exclaimed angrily: 'We study Holy Writ every day; you have just come out of the forest like a wild animal; and do you dare put us right and mislead the people with your damnable nonsense?' Simon then rushed at him to tear him to pieces. But the man replied with a warning: 'I will not reveal to you the secret that is in your midst, as you have refused to listen and so have brought immeasurable disaster upon your own heads.' Then off he went to the other side of Jordan, where he resumed his work unmolested.

1. Following 'their money' on page 124.

2. At the time of Archelaus' expulsion John cannot have been more than thirteen!

### 2. JOHN, PHILIP, AND ANTIPAS<sup>1</sup>

During his reign Philip dreamt that an eagle pecked out both his eyes. He summoned his advisers, and when they had given a variety of interpretations in came unannounced the man mentioned above, who used to go round in animal hair and cleanse people in the River Jordan. He began: 'Listen to God's message – the dream you had. The eagle, with its ferocious rapacity, represents your own cupidity – the sin that will cost you your two eyes; that is to say, your throne and your wife.' Before sunset Philip was dead and his throne passed to Agrippa.<sup>2</sup> His wife Herodias then married his brother Herod.<sup>3</sup> This shocked and disgusted all who respected the Law, but they dared not take Herod to task. The man we referred to as a savage, and he alone, faced Herod and fiercely assailed him. 'You have married your brother's wife in defiance of the Law, and just as he died a cruel death, so will divine vengeance bring your life to an end. The judgement of God is inexorable, and you are doomed to die miserably in exile.<sup>4</sup> For you are not "raising up seed unto your brother": you are indulging your own lust and committing adultery, considering that he has left four children.'<sup>5</sup> This attack infuriated Herod, who ordered the man to be flogged and kicked out. But he constantly waylaid the tetrarch and reiterated his accusations, till Herod lost control altogether and ordered him to be killed.

He was a strange creature, not like a man at all. He lived like a disembodied spirit. He never touched bread; even at the Passover Feast he would not eat the unleavened bread or pronounce the words 'In thankfulness to God, who delivered the nation from slavery, shall you eat this; it was given for the flight, because the journey was made in haste.' Wine and other strong drink he would not allow to be brought anywhere near him, and animal food he absolutely refused – fruit was all that he needed. The whole object of his life was to show evil in its true colours.

### 3. THE MINISTRY AND CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS<sup>6</sup>

It was at that time that a man appeared – if 'man' is the right word<sup>7</sup> – who had all the attributes of a man but seemed to be something greater. His

1. Following 'in Perea' on page 126.

2. Philip died in 33 or 34 A.D., several years after John, and three years before Agrippa's accession.

3. Antipas. According to Antiquities her first husband was not this Philip but a half-brother of Antipas, who was still alive when Antipas married her.

4. He died at Lyons in 39 A.D.

5. According to Antiquities, only Salome.

6. Following 'Jerusalem forthwith' on page 127.

7. There is in Antiquities a similar sentence, where Jesus is named.

actions, certainly, were superhuman, for he worked such wonderful and amazing miracles that I for one cannot regard him as a man; yet in view of his likeness to ourselves I cannot regard him as an angel either. Everything that some hidden power enabled him to do he did by an authoritative word. Some people said that their first Lawgiver had risen from the dead and had effected many marvellous cures; others thought he was a messenger from heaven. However, in many ways he broke the Law – for instance, he did not observe the Sabbath in the traditional manner. At the same time his conduct was above reproach. He did not need to use his hands: a word sufficed to fulfil his every purpose.

Many of the common people flocked after him and followed his teaching. There was a wave of excited expectation that he would enable the Jewish tribes to throw off the Roman yoke. As a rule he was to be found opposite the City on the Mount of Olives, where also he healed the sick. He gathered round him 150 assistants and masses of followers. When they saw his ability to do whatever he wished by a word, they told him that they wanted him to enter the City, destroy the Roman troops, and make himself king; but he took no notice.

When the suggestion came to the ears of the Jewish authorities, they met under the chairmanship of the high priest and exclaimed: 'We are utterly incapable of resisting the Romans; but as the blow is about to fall we'd better go and tell Pilate what we've heard, and steer clear of trouble, in case he gets to know from someone else and confiscates our property, puts us to death, and turns our children adrift.' So they went and told Pilate, who sent troops and butchered many of the common people. He then had the Miracle-worker brought before him, held an inquiry, and expressed the opinion that he was a benefactor, not a criminal or agitator or a would-be king. Then he let him go, as he had cured Pilate's wife when she was at the point of death.

Returning to his usual haunts he resumed his normal work. When the crowds grew bigger than ever, he earned by his actions an incomparable reputation. The exponents of the Law were mad with jealousy, and gave Pilate £30,000 to have him executed. Accepting the bribe, he gave them permission to carry out their wishes themselves. So they seized him and crucified him in defiance of all Jewish tradition.

#### 4. THE EARLY CHRISTIANS<sup>1</sup>

In the time of Cuspius Fadus and Tiberius Alexander many of the Miracle-worker's followers came forward and declared to the adherents of their master that, although he had died, he was now alive and would free them from their slavery. Many of the common people listened to

1. Replacing last half of paragraph ending 'Greater Armenia' on page 131.

their preaching and accepted their call – not because they were men of mark, for they were working men, some only shoemakers, others cobblers, others labourers. But they worked marvellous 'signs'; in fact nothing was beyond their power.

Seeing the unsettlement of the people, these excellent procurators decided after consulting the scribes to arrest the men and put them to death, for fear that the movement, though of no consequence at the moment, might end in a major upheaval. But in face of the 'signs' they hesitated and dared not take any action, convinced that no medical treatment could account for such marvellous cures, and surmising that if these were not the work of God Himself they would soon be shown up. So they gave the men complete freedom of action. Later, however, they were persuaded by the scribes to send them to Rome or Antioch to be tried, banishing others to distant countries.

#### 5. A TEMPLE INSCRIPTION ABOUT JESUS<sup>1</sup>

Above these announcements was hung a fourth in the same characters (Greek, Latin, and Jewish) declaring that Jesus, the king who never reigned, was crucified by the Jews because he foretold the end of the City and the utter destruction of the Temple.

#### 6. THE RENDING OF THE VEIL AND THE RESURRECTION<sup>2</sup>

In the days of our pious fathers this curtain was intact, but in our own generation it was a sorry sight, for it had been suddenly rent from top to bottom at the time when by bribery they had secured the execution of the benefactor of men – the one who by his actions proved that he was no mere man. Many other awe-inspiring 'signs' happened at the same moment. It is also stated that after his execution and entombment he disappeared entirely. Some people actually assert that he had risen; others retort that his friends stole him away. I for one cannot decide where the truth lies. A dead man cannot rise by his own power; but he might rise if aided by the prayer of another righteous man. Again, if an angel or other heavenly being, or God Himself, takes human form to fulfil his purpose, and after living among men dies and is buried, he can rise again at will. Moreover it is stated that he could not have been stolen away, as guards were posted round his tomb, 30 Romans and 1,000 Jews.<sup>3</sup>

1. Following 'wall of its own' on page 391.

2. Following 'signs of the Zodiac' on page 393.

3. The exaggerated numbers are in the best Josephan style.

7. THE ORACLE OF THE WORLD-RULER<sup>1</sup>

Some took this as a reference to Herod, others to the crucified Miracle-worker Jesus, and others to Vespasian.

I. *Replacing the passage beginning 'This they took to mean' on page 328.*

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