

The Journeys of a Jewish Scholar: Flavius Josephus and the Circulation of Ideas in the Early Roman Mediterranean

11:00-11:20 Welcome and Introduction

11:20-11:50 Prof. Olivier Munnich (CNRS, Paris-Sorbonne University)

The Greek aspect: Flavius Josephus as a connoisseur of Greek literature

11:50-12:20 Dr. Sébastien Morlet (Paris-Sorbonne University)

The Roman aspect: Josephus and imperial *commentarii*: a hypothesis

12:20-12:50 coffee break

12:50-13:20 Dr. Stéphanie Binder (Bar-Ilan University)

The Greco-Judean aspect: Nicolaus of Damascus' text as it has been
preserved by Flavius Josephus

13:20-13:50 Dr. Emmanuel Nantet (University of Haifa)

The tangible aspect: The size of the ship which carried
Josephus to Rome in 64 CE

13:50-14:30 Dr. Gerald Finkielsztein (Israel Antiquities Authority)

Trading and political aspects : The imports of Hellenistic amphoras to
Levantine harbours (Ascalon, Jaffa and Akko-Ptolemais).

Sunday, 10 June 2018, 11:00-14:30

Room 108, Multi Purpose Bldg, University of Haifa.

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Abstracts



Prof. Olivier Munnich (CNRS, Paris-Sorbonne University)

The Greek aspect: Flavius Josephus as a connoisseur of Greek literature

This presentation will deal with the cultural education of the Judean elites in the Mediterranean.

It will question the so-called weak practice of the Greek language allegedly observable in Flavius' works.

Multiple examples of his perfect knowledge of Greek nuances on semantic and lexical levels will

be provided. We shall present evidence of the fact that he originally wrote his works in Greek;

the hypothesis of a first Semitic version or of a reformulation of his Greek text by Roman "assistants" being a mere self-justification.

We shall then elaborate on Josephus' wide literary culture. Scholars often mention Thucydides and Polybius' influences but one has to consider Josephus' accurate use of epic or dramatic vocabulary.

His knowledge of Plato is also obvious, as is his direct link to Philo's texts. These references, both lexical and literary, are too embedded in the writer's argumentation itself to be considered as secondary additions owed to Roman "assistants".

Beside the epigraphic evidence of the Greek language in the 1st century C.E. Roman Judea and, later, the wide use of Greek words in the Talmud, the high cultural level in Greek of a learned Jew like Josephus leads us to reconsider the cultural interrelations in the 1st century among the Judean elites over the Mediterranean.

Dr. Sébastien Morlet (Paris-Sorbonne University)

The Roman aspect: Josephus and imperial *commentarii* : a hypothesis

This presentation will reconsider the circulation of intellectual traditions in the ancient Mediterranean from an original point of view: did Josephus use imperial *Commentarii* to write his *Jewish War*?

In his "Autobiography", Josephus accuses Justus of Tiberias, in his narrative of the Jewish war, of not taking into account the "Hypomnēmata" (= *commentarii*) of Vespasian. Michel Rambaud, in 1966, analyzed the main themes and stylistic features of Caesar's *Commentarii*. The same themes and features can easily be found also in Josephus' *Jewish war*. Beyond the obvious conclusions which such parallels suggest concerning Josephus' aesthetics, do we have to interpret them as indications that the historian made use of imperial *Commentarii*?

Dr. Stéphanie Binder (Bar-Ilan University)

The Greco-Judean aspect: Nicolaus of Damascus' text as it has been preserved by Flavius Josephus

This presentation will investigate the nature of the Greco-Judean roots of some of the Josephan accounts. Did Josephus make an abstract or reformulated in his own words the description transmitted by Nicolaus concerning the Jewish history? Nicolaus of Damascus, Herod's Greek speaking secretary, served as a major source (even if not the only one) for Josephus' detailed account of the time of the Hasmonean leaders and of the Roman appointed king. A small part of this material is presented as fragments, i.e. as quotations in direct speech that Josephus presents in the name of Nicolaus; here and there, appear passages in indirect speech, which are clearly attributed to Nicolaus, but mostly are found passages about which Josephus does not mention his source but that have been recognized by scholars as stemming from Nicolaus' works. Nevertheless, in either of the cases is it obvious whether Josephus abridged Nicolaus' words and reformulated them or preserved them as they were. This question is essential to the reconstitution of the events of the Hasmonean and Herodian days since a huge difference exists between Josephus and Nicolaus' approaches to the Hasmoneans and to Herod. In order to deal with this question, the lexicographical, stylistic and grammatical aspects of two passages established as coming from Nicolaus that Josephus transmitted in his *Antiquitates* will be examined. This will constitute only a sample but which might give a general indication concerning the larger use of the source.

Dr. Emmanuel Nantet (University of Haifa)

The tangible aspect: The size of the ship which carried Josephus to Rome in 64 CE

In his Autobiography (3), Josephus tells that once he traveled to Rome as he was a young man.

Although short, the text shows a few relevant technical details about his journey.

That is why this description is considered by scholars as one of the most precious pieces of evidence about traveling in the early Roman period. Indeed, the ship finally capsized in the middle of the Adriatic Sea with her six hundred unfortunate passengers. Only eighty of them, including the narrator, were rescued and survived. The number of passengers aboard the ship, which probably started her journey in Caesarea, is quite impressive. Thus, this text reveals the existence of a "massive traveling" in the Ancient Mediterranean.

Is it possible to figure out the size of an ancient ship, such as she could carry six hundred passengers?

Could these numerous passengers fit into a small ship? Or did they require travelling on a big ship?

In other words, did Josephus journey on a small or a big ship? The data are too limited to allow an accurate estimation of the tonnage of the ship. Nevertheless, some comments may be offered.

The answer is relying on a careful analysis of the text. Moreover, it considers some other written

evidence, such as the Rhodian Maritime Law, which mentions the surface allocated to each passenger during a sea journey. But the transportation of so many passengers requires the loading of food and water, which should also be taken into account. Thus, it seems that the ship was obviously quite big,

maybe similar to the shipwreck excavated in December by the Leon Recanati Institute for Maritime Studies.