

## PROFILES OF HISTORY-MAKERS. JOSEPHUS' *AGAINST APION*

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**ABSTRACT.** The following study takes a historical and analytical approach to one of the most important works in Jewish apologetics, namely Josephus' *Against Apion*. In a way similar to the Christian apologists of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, Josephus arguably felt the pressure of living as a second class citizen in the Roman Empire. The history of anti-Jewish sentiments goes back to several centuries before Josephus and it certainly had much to do with the unique practice and religious views of the Jewish people. The characteristics had not changed at the time when Josephus lived. He definitely felt the pressure of Greek antagonists such as Apion and others. Our study will introduce the background of the writer Josephus, a short history of the conflict, and then will proceed to analyze the arguments that Josephus developed against the views of Apion. As the reader will notice, Josephus emphasized both the historical as well as the philosophical/theological proofs that Judaism was a superior faith, one that did not deserve the criticism of Apion. Likewise, Josephus sought to undermine the historical ground on which Apion rested his own views. The Greek writings or history-makers, Josephus will argue, certainly are in no position of academic superiority to the Jews. Their own writings and history-making suffer from inherent inconsistencies and cannot offer one a model to criticizing other worldviews. The study will end with a synopsis of the argument that Josephus developed against Apion.

**KEY WORDS:** Josephus, Apion, Judaism, Apology, History, Bible

### **Introduction and Historical Background**

Josephus (cca. 37-100 AD) was a Judean born, Jewish historiographer, who wrote his most important works from exile in Rome (for general background data see Per Bilde, 1988). Even though he took active part in the Jewish War against Rome, Josephus did not fit the typical imagine of the Maccabean revolutionary. Having been captured by the Romans, Josephus offered his aid to the leading Roman general Vespasian, predicting that he was to become the next emperor of Rome. Gaining Vespasian's favor, Josephus was offered a comfortable pension and the environment where he could put his scholarly skills to work. It was in Rome where Josephus composed his main works *The Jewish War*, *Antiquities*, and *Against Apion*. In this sense, one may include Josephus in the long and illustrious line of literary expatriates.

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Even though he is best known for *The Jewish War* and *The Antiquities*, Josephus took a more apologetical and rhetorical approach in *Against Apion*, and did so with some degree of success. We must begin by saying that the issue of “history writing,” in the objective sense that we practice it today, is not a modern achievement. Rather, the problem has been raised and debated since early antiquity (Brian Croke, 2012: 405-436, for scholarship on the degree of influence that the ancient historiographers had on late-antiquity writers such as Eusebius). Josephus' *Against Apion* illustrates the sensibilities that such classical authors felt when they treaded this path. Josephus approached the issue by raising the question of *wrong history writing*—both deliberate and unintentional—particularly in relation to efforts on the part of “certain individuals” to “discredit the statements in my history concerning our antiquity” (all direct quotations will be taken from Henry St. John Thackeray's translation, *Josephus, Against Apion*, LCL, ed. J. P. Goold, 1926, 1993, Book I, 1). This statement raises certain expectations, one of which would be to assume that Josephus argued for the *antiquity* of the Jewish nation. In other words, that his will be a work dominated by historical concerns. In doing so, however, the author will shift his attention later to topics that have direct bearing on Israel's religion, ethics, constitution, culture, customs, and the like. This is especially the case in Book II, where Josephus will answer his critics and uphold the superiority of Jewish religion. While the arguments in Book II assume his initial concern with proving the antiquity of the Jewish nation, they now take the form of an intellectual debate where the names of Moses, Plato, Socrates, Anaxagoras, and ideas like the nature God, Jewish legislation, morality, and education predominate.

Now, Josephus' reaction was only natural on his part, considering the anti-Semitic sentiments that marked the age in which he lived. For example, David Balch named Apollonius Molon and Apion as two of the more important rhetoricians who made “specific invectives against the Jews”. Apollonius Molon was a contemporary of Josephus and a well known rhetor who taught Cicero and other Roman authors. According to Josephus, Molon accused the Jews of atheism, that is, “of not worshipping the gods as other people”, and for being misanthropes, that along with “being cowardly at some times, and reckless at others” (David Balch 13.1-2, 1982: 102; for Apion, see also E. Schurer, vol. 3, 1986: 600; see also N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Sculard, eds., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 1970). Apion was a Greek grammarian and head of the Alexandrian school. It is likely that he was motivated in his polemic by direct contact with the academic leaders of the Jewish community in Alexandria. He also wrote “fantastic stories concerning the exodus of the Jews from Egypt”, as well as malicious assertions in regard to the Alexandrian Jews and the worship and customs of the Jews in general (Schurer, vol. III.3, 1986: 605). As Kasher argued, it is likely that “*Contra Apionem* was intended

to debate with the followers of Apion in Roman society—such as Tacitus, for instance,” who held several of Apion’s opinions (L. H. Feldman, and J. R. Levison, 1996: 151; concerning other anti-Semitic contemporary authors of Josephus, Kasher mentions Frontinus, Quintillian, Martial, Democritus, Nicarchus, Epictetus, Plutarch, and Juvenal).

In short, *Against Apion* comes to us rather as an encyclopedic apology on behalf of Judaism in general. Moreover, in Cohen's view, “*Against Apion* is not just an apology; it is also an essay in historiography and historical criticism” (Cohen, 1988: 1). However, given Josephus’ expressed purpose to deal with the antiquity of the Jewish nation, we would want to argue on behalf of the *historiographic character* of his work—framed in an apologetic style—and only then on its theological, philosophical, and cultural dimensions, which together make up the apology proper.

Nevertheless, even though Josephus deals with a host of other themes in this work, the notion of reporting on, and interpreting historical facts accurately, comes at the forefront of his treaty. In the following pages, however, we want to focus on Josephus’ treatment of *history writing* in Greece, particularly in light of the apologetic concerns that shaped his arguments.<sup>1</sup> In other words, given his own background in history writing, we will ask what was the profile of the *true historian* in Josephus’ own understanding, and how did he use that ideal in order both to criticize his opponents and to validate the ancient historical roots of the Jewish nation. Specifically, we will review Josephus extended argument in Book I, 1-56, and then will reformulate it a summary logical outline. By having access to the structural flow of his argument one will be in a better position to evaluate Josephus’ logic, we believe, and thus form a reasonable opinion on whether he fulfilled or not the purposes he previewed in the introduction.

### The Modernity of the Greek Culture

In the introduction, Josephus informs Epaphroditus about a problem that is related both to his previous writings and implicitly to the renown of the Jewish nation. He saw his statements on the antiquity of the Jewish nation maliciously challenged on the basis their failure to satisfy the criteria of Greek historiography; namely, “the fact that it has not been thought worthy of mention by the best known Greek historians” (*Against Apion* I.2).<sup>2</sup> As a response

<sup>1</sup> Our main concern here is to analyze the nature of Josephus’ argument against the Greeks. As such, we will try to focus as much as possible on his criticism of Greek historiography. This means that his references to Jewish or Oriental historiography will be discussed only insofar as they contribute to a better understanding of this topic.

<sup>2</sup> Kasher, 1996: 151, notices that Josephus’ debate has a personal dimension, or, “to be more precise, is related to the criticism of his work by Greek authors who rejected the reliability of his writing in *Antiquitates Judaicae*.” As such, Josephus’ attempt to undercut

to this problem, Josephus will answer systematically first, by calling as witnesses the most trustworthy of the Greek authors on antiquity, second, pointing out the self-contradictory statements of his critics, third, offering reasons for why the Jewish nation lacks the recognition of certain historians, and fourth, pointing out to authors whose references on Israel support her antiquity (*Against Apion* I.4-5).

In an ingenious, but debatable move, Josephus argues that historical truth must be based on facts alone.<sup>3</sup> This is the first of the few general premises he will establish in order to question the validity of Greek historiography. He also claims that Greek culture seems to be relatively new, especially when compared with Oriental nations like the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and the Phoenicians (and their ancestors). If this statement is correct, then Greek historiography—as a well-defined discipline which often probes into the remote past—is new as well.

Josephus next analyzes the origins of Greek *writing* by referring to the Phoenicians as the people who made possible the Greek alphabet. That Josephus was generally correct on this issue has been confirmed by modern scholarship as well (on the origins of the alphabet in the Ancient Orient, and the contribution of the Semites to the 22 letter alphabet, see R. S. Hess, 2003: 491-97; L. McFall, in G. Bromiley, 2, 1982: 657-663; P. Schmitz, in D. N. Freedman, 4, 1992: 204-206; B. K. Waltke, M. O'Connor, 1990: 7; B. S. J. Isserlin, in J. Boardman, vol. III/1, 1982: 794-818, esp. 799; Schmitz, in N. D. Freedman, 4, 1992: 203-206; Z. Harris, 1936, 1990: 1-6; Lipinsky, vol. 2, 1994: 83-84; C. H. Rollston, 1930, 2011: 12ff., and Orly Goldwasser,

the authority of Greek historians comes as an implicit effort to validate his own work. Concerning the charge of “malice”, Shaye Cohen (1988: 4) explains that Josephus might have been inspired by classic Greek criticism. A revealing example of how this works is Plutarch’ *On the Malice of Herodotus*, where he attacks Herodotus for letting prejudiced dictate his sense of history.

<sup>3</sup> Cohen (1988: 8) believes that, while Josephus’ theory of history writing was basically sound, it may have not appeared so to a Greek audience, especially to “those Greeks who believed in the notion of progress and admired inventors and discoverers.” That the Greeks were capable of writing more scientific history is proven by the school of Cleidemus and Androtion, “who wrote local histories of Attica based on documentary evidence”, and by Aristotle and Philochorus, who “collected and published records of public and religious institutions, games, and literary competitions.” However, “the principal historians of the Hellenistic age, disregarding documentary evidence and the technique of history writing, aimed, as a general rule, not at being accurate and learned, but readable”, with an emphasis on rhetoric and romantic emotionalism. It is not clear whether Josephus himself was motivated or not by political reasons when writing his historical treatises. We want to maintain that if his argument in *Against Apion* is sound on internal, logical grounds, then there should be no reason to question the conclusions he reached. Note also “Historiography, Greek”, in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

March/April, 2010, accessed 3/24/2010. For “the influence of the Canaanite/Phoenician script on “linear consonantal alphabet used for Aramaic”, see also S. Kaufman, in D. N. Freedman, 4, 1992: 173-78). And so, as a discipline Greek literature came late on the stage of culture; at least not earlier than the work of Homer, which is the most ancient undisputed piece of literature.<sup>4</sup>

In the view of Josephus, Greek *philosophy* too was influenced by Oriental thought, as “the world unanimously admits” that Pythagoras and Thales were, “in their scanty productions on the disciples of the Egyptians and Chaldeans” (I.14). Finally, Greek historians such as Cadmus of Miletus, Acusilaus of Argos, “and any later writers who are mentioned, lived but a short time before the Persian invasion of Greece” (Acusilaus lived “before the middle of the fifth century. In general, he is recognized not as a historian, but as an early mytographer who commented and corrected Hesiod’ genealogies and wrote epic legends in prose, see J. B. Bury, 1958: 18). Again, Josephus draws the implicit conclusion that not only Greek historiography, but also Greek culture in general is new in comparison with the Oriental civilizations; which, of course, the Jewish nation was a part of.

This was an argument that Philo, another Jewish author, developed a few decades before Josephus. According to Philo, the Hebrew Scriptures were the highest form of philosophy and Plato was, in fact, a follower of Moses (note M. Leonard, 2012: 21). In this sense Josephus believes that “it is absurd that the Greeks should be so conceited as to think themselves the sole possessors of a knowledge of antiquity and the only accurate reporters of its history” (I.15).

### **Problems with the Greek Historians**

Beginning with Book I.15, Josephus focuses exclusively on the topic of historiography. He argues that anyone can easily discover that the Greek historians did not use factual knowledge when they wrote history; the assumption being that common access to truthful reports about a given incident would yield a unified historical account. Kasher notices here a rhetorical device employed by Josephus in order to involve “the readers in the difficulties, planning, and submission of the writing.” This method, he believes, “is intended to create a feeling of closeness, on one hand, and, on the other, to guide the readers to the desired channels. In the next paragraph Josephus also uses *flattery*, by giving compliments to his readers, as he asserts that readers better informed than himself would know about the discrepancies found in certain

<sup>4</sup> Dating *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* has proved notoriously difficult. “Literary evidence gives at least a terminus *ad quem* in the seventh century, when Terpander is said to have recited Homer at Sparta, though we must admit that there is always a possibility of his text having been altered and the indications of date being additions.” *Homer, The Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

Greek authors, as if he would almost insult one's intelligence should he point them out to his readers (Kasher, 1996: 160).

In the long list that follows, Josephus points to some of the *bona fide* Greek historians as examples of mutual contradictions. The names presented here alternate between local and national, or even universal historians. The reference to the Attic affairs "between the authors of the 'Atthides'" is not at all incidental. As mentioned above, Cleidemus and Androtion founded in the fourth century "a more scientific if less ambitious school of historiography". As Bury shows, one of the criteria considered when writing history was to use "documentary evidence" in the form of public (official) documents from the life of the city (Bury, 1958: 18ff).<sup>5</sup> In essence, Josephus appeals to few of the more reliable historical accounts in order to underline their lack of unity and agreement.

Having listed these inaccuracies, Josephus then considers the international historian Herodotus, who was, Josephus contends, criticized by "everybody". Using humor and irony with reference to Herodotus was also meant to underscore the fragility of this discipline as practiced by the Greeks (Bury, 1958: 44, 65, for the notion that Herodotus was interested in both Greek and Eastern civilizations). Bury, however, thinks that "the contrast of Hellenic with oriental culture... is the keynote of the history of Herodotus." Shaye Cohen (1988: 3-4) points to some problems with Herodotus' history. He refers to Plutarch's *On the Malice of Herodotus*, who "catalogued seven ways in which a historian, in this case Herodotus, evinces malice", and thus produces a work that is prejudiced and distorted. Another author, besides Manetho, Ctesias, and Strabo (mentioned by Thackeray, *Against Apion*, 171), who criticized Herodotus, accusing him of distorting the facts, was Aristophanes (see "Herodotus", *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*). As scholars have shown, in order to illustrate the differences between them, he created fictional dialogues (for example, the one between Croesus and Solon) in order to illustrate his points. His history was also marked by political interests ("history is distorted in the interest of politics"). For example, he adopts a pro-Athenian stance when he "set forth the mytho-historical claims of Athens to a hegemony of the Greeks, and represents Athens as asserting those claims at the time of the Persian war" (Bury, 1958: 44. 65). In Bury's view, however, this "is an anachronism... for Athens was a member of the Peloponnesian confederacy, and the strife for supremacy had not begun." Without underestimating Herodotus' value, Bury characterizes his work as "that of a historian who cannot help being

<sup>5</sup> Bury also believes these historians were in fact chroniclers who recorded the local events in the life of Athens. The documents themselves were the equivalent of our modern day archives, and, although not entirely free of political or other forms of prejudice, in general they were more reliable than the more polished works of Herodotus or Thucydides.

partial” and who “exhibited a strong bias in the preference given to Athenian sources.”

In this sense, Josephus seeks to paint a rather “hopeless” scenario, where even episodes such as the Persian wars, ranked among the highest on the list of critical events, lack unified documentation (Kasher, 1996: 176).<sup>6</sup> In particular, Josephus mentions Thucydides, also known to have written “the most accurate history of his time” (I.18) (see “Thucydides”, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*). Even according to modern scholars, Thucydides “saw more fully, inquired more responsibly, and reported more faithfully than any other ancient historian.” Yet, some aspects about his description of the war between Athens and Sparta did not escape criticism of later historians. Thucydides collected material on the war for a long period of time. Furthermore, considering the fact that his opinion on the “true cause” of the war “was not formed until after the fall of Athens, that the speeches might have been partly fictional, and that the final form of his book might have been the work of editors, it is not difficult to understand why Josephus focused on his work.

A more skeptical position is taken by M. I. Finley, who does not “believe that it is possible to ‘save’ even Thucydides once it is held that the issue is one of honesty, of morality, in twentieth-century terms. He quotes one phrase from Thucydides that “has exercised commentators for perhaps two centuries, with no prospect of the difficulties.” Namely, that his method “has been, while keeping as closely as possible to the general sense of words that were actually said, to have the speakers say what, in my view, was called for by each situation” (Finley, 1986: 14). But again, the fact that the speeches were not entirely accurate, does not mean that all other descriptions of events must have been fictitious as well.

### **Reasons for the Inconsistencies**

Josephus believes that among the “many other causes” responsible for the errors of Greek historians, two merit a separate analysis. The first comes as “the more fundamental” and it assumes that the errors of later historians were caused in part by the original neglect of the Greeks to keep official records of current events” (I.20). Josephus refers here to early historians that antedated even Herodotus (for an informative discussion on the earliest forms of Greek history, see Bury, 1958: 15-17). Hence, he could not find any

<sup>6</sup> According to Kasher, Josephus often used the rhetorical technique of the “ranking system”. One of the instances is this paragraph, where twice he begins with less important and then moves to more prominent authors. In the first instance he concludes that Herodotus was criticized by everybody, and in the second case, he draws a second conclusion by reminding the readers that even the great Thucydides has been criticized by some historians.

historical document going back earlier than 621 B.C.E (see Thackeray's dating, 1926, 1993: 173). That is, when the laws of homicide were drafted by Dracon for the Athenians.<sup>7</sup> This statement may be another implicit effort on the part of Josephus to show not only the first cause of the inconsistencies, but also to undermine the entire discipline of Greek historiography. The historian who lacks credible and old sources concerning his own history ought to have little else to say about other people's more ancient histories. Then Josephus concludes this segment with another axiom: the lack of any basis of documentary evidence, helpful both in informing some and correct others, accounts in the main for the inconsistencies among different historians (I.23).

The second cause, as he sees it, is related less to the process and more to the motivation behind the proper writing of history (I.25). And here "motivation" can be expressed itself in different ways. In some cases, the Greek historians aimed for *recognition*, not necessarily for historical truth. As such, they "criticized the facts" or the more established historians "as the road to reputation". Josephus also portrays their activity as a "contest-like" rivalry, in which *literary style* and *originality* replaced the historian's obligation to find the truth, as it was (Cohen, 1988: 8).<sup>8</sup> For them, choosing a subject had to do

<sup>7</sup> Josephus may be correct here. As Bury argues (1958: 30, 33), the birth of Greek historiography came only in the fifth century, with the Persian conquest. Prior to that event, Greek historiography was still influenced by the epic and genealogical traditions of Homer and Hesiod, which are classic examples of mythology overlapping with history. Thus, "the genealogical principle, lying at the base of their historical reconstruction, hindered the Greeks from drawing a hard and fast line between the mythical and the historical age." Concerning the "autochthonous" Athenians, Bury cites Hellanicus, who instead of relying on stone or other types of inscriptions found in Athens, used traditional genealogies and placed several military events that occurred the same archonship in a time frame which spanned over three archonships" (see the period of the Fifty Years). It is not improbable, then, that the sources used by many subsequent historians (like Ephorus and Diodorus) depended in fact on the debatable chronicles of Hellanicus and Thucydides, the major historians of the fifth century.

<sup>8</sup> Cohen concurs with Josephus when he explains that unlike the Hebrew understanding of history, the Greek historians "interpret their data and, through their labor and dedication to truth, create a work of art and a monument for the future." Apparently, Socrates and Plato's inquisitive approach in finding the truth influenced the Greek historians as well. As Cohen points out, for the Greeks "human knowledge is advanced through argumentation and through trial and error... Debate allows the truth to emerge. Such is the Greek conception—and ours." Cohen believes that Josephus' approach toward history would have seemed unintelligible to an educated Greek reader. This is debatable. That a Greek reader would view history writing as an art, where debate and style and originality valued more than just laying down bare facts, may be true. But Cohen does not mention Josephus' charges of rivalry, personal interests, and fame seeking among the Greek historians. Where these charges genuine, or did Josephus commit one more *ad hominem*, as he had just accused the Greeks of doing? Also, Josephus' axioms concerning history seem to presuppose a shared tradition on the historiographical method among his readers. And then, even the Greek obsession with debate—as a means to find

more with the prospect “of outshining their rivals”. Furthermore, others sought “popularity by encomiums upon cities or monarchs”. Now, it is beyond the scope of this paper to establish whether these charges were entirely accurate or not. Yet we see no compelling reason to question the integrity of at least some, since the evidence mentioned so far points unequivocally to problems among the older and more contemporary Greek historians.

Josephus alludes to another axiom here, namely, that “the proof of historical veracity is universal agreement in the description, oral or written, of the same events” (I.26). Evidently, the criterion of universal agreement is indeed quite demanding, and it is unlikely that any historical work—if required—would have met such a demand. Cohen is probably right to identify here a strong *biblical view of history*, where “historical truth is not created or discovered by human inquiry.” In addition, “if witnesses confirm one another’s words, their testimony is true. If they contradict one another, their testimony is false.” However, one need not forget the nature of an apologetical argument and the rhetorical context in which these claims are made. Josephus’s point, essentially, is that in history, unlike literature—where the Greeks’ eloquence and ability are unparalleled—there must be a certain agreement among different accounts describing the same event.

One final aspect in Josephus’ criticism of the Greeks is related to the way some of his contemporaries described the Jewish war. Josephus explains that “we have had so-called histories even of our recent war published by persons who never visited the sites nor were anywhere near the actions described” (I.46). And yet they put together a few hearsay reports and “miscalled their productions by the name of history.” Apparently, Josephus thought that his association with the Jewish War invested him with enough credibility to criticize any person whom he thought misrepresented the events of the War (see Thackeray, who mentions Justus of Tiberias (*Vita*, 336 ff.) as the author of a

the truth—somehow presupposes an objective reality to be discovered (in this case, to arrive at a correct knowledge of historical truth, regardless of the art and skillfulness with which this may be presented). We have seen how Hellanicus and Herodotus did not escape the charge of favoritism. Why the outrage that followed, if not because historical truth had been perverted—or so their critics thought—by their pro-Athenian allegiance? This is not to say that Josephus’ theory of history was not influenced by his Judaism. However, we cannot but wonder whether Josephus was so ignorant as not to understand how history writing was viewed among the intelligentsia of the Graeco-Roman Empire. He seems to have grasped the Greek world-view quite well when he depicted Moses and the Jewish religion in a way comprehensible to a pagan audience. Why would he err in the matters of history, when he showed a clear awareness of the critical issues (on literature, history, culture, etc.) that were debated in his time? Momigliano (in Silvia Berti, 1994: 58) makes a quite suggestive remarks, namely, that as presented by Hellenistic Judaism, the “Jewish ideals and conceptions—above all, monotheism—appeared to echo in Greek philosophy under different forms.”

rival history of the War, although there must have been other attempted histories as well). While Josephus does not offer any specific details concerning the errors of the so-called historians, he questions their knowledge not only of the events, but also of the geography of the sites where the War took place. In other words, not only did they not witness the events, but they made no effort to visit those places in order to form a better opinion concerning the War.

As Bury believes, the interest of the Greeks in geography and history seems to have been kindled by the works of Hecataeus. He “was, first and foremost, a geographer”, and one of the “founders of geographical sciences” (Bury, 1958: 11-12). Herodotus too was influenced by the Hecataean School to such an extent that some critics believe the geographical sections in his work on the War might have been originally intended as a separate geography (Bury, 1958: 40-41). It is likely, then, that Josephus accused these historians on the basis of not respecting the canons of proper historical investigation (here, investigation of the war), of which geography was an important dimension.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Religious Background to Jewish Historiography**

One of the rhetorical techniques that Josephus used several times in *Against Apion* was *the contrast*. In one instance, Josephus compared the Greek recording of ancient events with the Oriental, and in particular, the Jewish tradition. He argued that the Egyptians and the Babylonians had a more secure way of preserving “their chronicles from the remotest ages”, by entrusting the priests and the Chaldeans with this task (I.28-40). In Israel too those who recorded and kept the historical records were “men of the highest character” and devoted to the service of God. Mentioning the role religion here is hardly incidental, for Josephus will argue that, given the stringent divine commands toward purity, the Israelite priests kept an accurate record of genealogies in order to prevent “abnormal” marriages and thus maintain the purity of the priestly lineage (and implicitly keep the covenant boundaries laid out by Moses). Thus, “the most convincing proof of our accuracy in this matter is that our records contain the names of our high priests, with the succession from father to son for the last two thousand years” (I.36). In essence, their piety served as a *controlling mechanism* in the process of recording the genealogies, since not every person, but only those of the highest spiritual (like the prophets) were entrusted with “writing a clear account of the events of their own

<sup>9</sup> Setting this argument right before his description of the War was not accidental. He was a direct actor in the war and had an intimate knowledge of the geography of Palestine. As such, by raising the objection of witness and geographical knowledge, Josephus strengthened his own credibility and offered a new argument against the supremacy of the Greeks in the field of history.

time just as they occurred" (I.38). As such, though Jewish history lacks the artistic sophistication characteristic to Greek literature, it did not distort the truth, and furthermore, it does not display the inconsistencies found in the myriads of Greek accounts.

### **Conclusions**

We believe that, since *Against Apion* is a work of apologetics that follows closely the rhetorical canons of the Graeco-Roman tradition, it should be possible to trace a logical diagram, or a sketch, on the basis of which Josephus construed his arguments. (For an informed analysis on the rhetorical structure of *Against Apion*, see Aryeh Kasher's *Polemic and Apologetic Methods of Writing*, and J. R. Levison and J. Ross Wagner's *The Character and Context of Josephus' Contra Apionem* in L. H. Feldman and J. R. Levison, 1996). We believe this outline will offer a better picture of the argument that Josephus laid out against his critics.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Problem**

- a. Jewish history discredited
- b. Not mentioned by major Greek historians

### **2. Solution**

- a. Convict detractors of malignity and falsehood
- b. Correct others' ignorance
- c. Instruct interested listeners concerning the truth of Jewish antiquity

### **3. Plan**

- a. Call as witnesses the most trustworthy Greek authors
- b. Present their reasons on why the Jews lack some international recognition
- c. Point out their self-contradictions
- d. Offer proof of outside recognition of the Jewish nation

## **II. GENERAL ANALYSIS OF GREEK CIRCUMSTANCES**

**AXIOM:** truth must be based on facts alone, especially historical truth

1. The discipline of history is new in Greece (as well as arts, writing, legislature, etc.)
2. Therefore, they cannot claim superiority in a discipline which presupposes antiquity

3. Oriental culture is ancient, whereas Greek culture is not
4. Geographical and historical circumstances obliterated memory of the past
5. Greeks late in learning the alphabet, which they inherited from Phoenicia
6. Oldest Greek poetry is Homeric, and even that is disputed and has inconsistencies
7. First major historians, Cadmus and Acusilaus, lived shortly before the Persian war
8. First philosophers were disciples of Oriental cultures (Egyptian and Chaldeans)

**CONCLUSION:** With such a basis, the Greeks have no right to claim superiority

### III. PARTICULAR ANALYSIS

1. Greek historians produce mere conjectures, not factual data
2. They often contradict each other when describing the same event
  - Examples:** Hellanicus, Acusilaus, Ephorus, Timaeus, Herodotus, Thucydides
3. Minor histories need not be mentioned, when major events have contradictions
4. **Two reasons** for inconsistencies in Greek histories
  - a. Neglect of early Greeks to keep records of current events
    - i. **Example:** The Athenians, known for patriotism and late legislature (Dracon) and the Archadians, late even in learning the alphabet
  - b. Greek historians motivated by personal agenda, display of skills, desire to succeed

**FIRST CONCLUSION:** Lack of documentary evidence led to later contradictions

**AXIOM:** Proof of historical veracity is universal agreement in description of the same events

**SECOND CONCLUSION:** In matters of historical veracity, Greeks cannot be trusted

### IV. ANALYSIS OF ORIENTAL CIVILIZATIONS

1. Egyptians and Babylonians were careful when recording their chronicles

2. Phoenicians used the alphabet before the Greeks, in order to record daily-life affairs
3. Jewish ancestors selected men of highest character to record the genealogies
4. Concern to maintain priestly purity led to scrupulous accuracy in recording
5. Names of High Priests cover 2000 years, from father to son
6. Only a few people (see prophets) were inspired and recorded events as they happened

**CONCLUSION:** Jewish books are few, not myriads, are correct and record all past time.

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