

What Book of Esther Did Josephus Read? A Special Focus on the Old Latin

Dionisio Candido, University of Salzburg

Abstract: The biblical sources of Flavius Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* are still uncertain. Literary investigations have shown Josephus's freedom in paraphrasing biblical accounts and omitting or adding sections, according to his own purposes. From a textual-critical point of view, the case of the *Jewish Antiquities*'s section on the book of Esther (11.184–296) is particularly complicated, since it is attested in three main variant editions: the Masoretic Text, the Old Greek, and the Alpha Text. This article will first offer an investigation of the readings that can be traced back to these three versions. It will also show how the *Jewish Antiquities* made different use of these versions in quantitative and qualitative terms. Second, the paper presents the alignments between the *Jewish Antiquities* and the Old Latin. The article will not only analyze the value of the alignments that have already been identified but also point to some new ones. The analysis provides a clearer view of the biblical sources Josephus employed in his rewrite of Esther.

Flavius Josephus (37–ca. 100 CE) rewrites the content of the book of Esther in his first-century CE work, the *Jewish Antiquities* (11.184–296).¹ This section coincides with the conclusion of the first part of the *Jewish Antiquities*, which is devoted to the books of the Bible; its second part (*A.J.* 11.297–20.347) concerns some events that took place in Judea in the late Persian period. Josephus sets the story of Queen Esther in the time of Artaxerxes I (465–423 BCE): this chronological framework corresponds to his overall arrangement of the biblical canon.² In *Contra Apion* (1.37–42), he divides the Scriptures into three parts and claims that the divine inspiration was exhausted precisely in the time of Artaxerxes I. He thus considers the book of Esther the last prophetic book.³

1. See Steve Mason, *Life of Josephus*, *FJTC* 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), xv–xix, esp. n. 1.

2. See Sid Z. Leiman, “Josephus and the Canon of the Bible,” in *Josephus, the Bible and History*, ed. Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 50–58.

3. See Tessa Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction*, *AGJU* 48 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 16–17.

The *Jewish Antiquities* constitutes fertile ground for not only historical but also literary research. Josephus is known to paraphrase the biblical texts at his disposal. The way in which Josephus retells the biblical texts is particularly interesting. Despite their nature as a paraphrase, the first eleven books of the *Jewish Antiquities* raise several questions relevant to textual criticism of the Bible: Can we recognize Josephus's biblical sources? Were they Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic texts?⁴ Are they the same texts as the ones available today?

1. A Glance at the History of Research

Josephus's biblical sources cannot be identified with precision: not only could the texts on which he has drawn be different from what we currently have as editions, but he also shows himself to be more concerned with good Greek style (see *A.J.* 20.263) rather than word-for-word faithfulness to his sources.

In the case of the book of Esther, the question of Josephus's biblical sources is an even greater challenge.⁵ This biblical book has a complex textual character and a rich history of textual transmission: it is attested not only by the Masoretic Text (MT) but also by two Greek texts: the Old Greek (OG) and the so-called Alpha Text (AT).⁶ The most evident difference between MT and OG-AT is the presence of six large additions in the Greek text of the latter: Additions A–F. But OG and AT also differ from each other: the former is present in the major Greek uncial manuscripts (Codices Vaticanus), while the latter is found in four manuscripts: MS 19 (twelfth century), MS 93 (thirteenth century), MS 108 (twelfth century),

4. For the latter option, which will not be considered in this article, see Charles C. Torrey, "The Older Book of Esther," *HTR* 37 (1944): 1–40.

5. "When it comes to making comparisons between the *Antiquities* and the Bible, and drawing conclusions from these comparisons the interpreter is confronted by a number of thorny questions. The most basic of all relates to the biblical text or texts that Josephus used as the foundation of his work" (Paul Spilsbury, *The Image of the Jew in Flavius Josephus's Paraphrase of the Bible*, TSAJ 69 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998], 23).

6. For Hebrew, see Magne Sæbø, *Esther*, BHQ 18 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft: 2004). For both Greek texts, see Robert Hanhart, *Esther*, 2nd ed., SVTG 8.3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983).

and MS 319 (eleventh century).⁷ As for the content of the two Greek texts, AT also differs significantly from OG.⁸

Throughout the twentieth century, some scholars were interested in the biblical sources of the book of Esther as they appear in the *Jewish Antiquities*. In 1929, Henry St. John Thackeray suggested that Josephus made use of two sources: one Hebrew/Aramaic and one Greek.⁹ Along the same lines, Elias J. Bickerman in 1951 and Józef Tadeusz Milik in 1991 argued that Josephus consulted a single Greek manuscript, which was wholly different from OG and AT.¹⁰ By contrast, in 2019 Étienne Nodet claimed that the entire text of the *Jewish Antiquities* must be considered an elaborate translation from an original Hebrew text.¹¹ In general, Nodet's argument tends to emphasize the singularity of Josephus's text and the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the Greek texts. In the case of the book of Esther, however, this argument is forced for various reasons, two of which are most obvious: first, the nature of AT as a revision of OG is overlooked, with scholars considering it instead a Greek translation from Hebrew, independent from OG; second, the fact that Additions A, C, D, and F were probably written directly in Greek is overlooked, with scholars preferring to give credit to Addition F's own claim that the entire OG (including its Additions) is a translation from Hebrew.

The complexity of this problem and the various solutions were recently summarized by Paul Spilsbury and Chris Seeman as follows:

7. Hanhart, *Esther*, 15–16. To these MS 392 should be added, which dates from the tenth century. It is a mixed text, merging the OG and AT together.

8. For the *status quaestionis* on history of research about AT, see Kristin De Troyer, *The End of the Alpha Text of Esther: Translation and Narrative Technique in MT 8:1–17, LXX 8:1–17, and AT 7:14–41*, SCS 48 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 15–71.

9. See Henry St. John Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian* (New York: Jewish Institute of Religion Press, 1967), esp. 81.

10. Elias J. Bickerman, “Notes on the Greek Book of Esther,” in *Studies in Jewish and Christian History: A New Edition in English Including The God of the Maccabees*, vol. 1 (repr. Leiden: Brill, 2007), 238–65; Józef Tadeusz Milik, “Les Modèles araméens du livre d’Esther dans la grotte 4 de Qumrân,” *RevQ* 59 (1991): 322: “Au moment où les savants juifs se penchaient sur le Canon de la Bible Hébraïque, Flavius Josèphe se procurait à Rome un manuscrit grec d’*Esther*, bien différent de LXX et de Luc. dans leurs formes actuelles; résumé en détail dans le livre XI des *Ant. Juives*, §§184–296.”

11. Étienne Nodet, *The Hebrew Bible of Josephus: Main Features*, CahRB 92 (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 247–59, 262.

When Josephus came to this part of the biblical story in his long and sometimes rambling narration of the Jewish national story he apparently preferred a Greek translation over the original Hebrew Book of Esther.... Just which of the Greek texts he actually used is a matter of ongoing discussion.... Because Josephus' version of the Esther story is both expansive and paraphrastic the clues are not always clear. In many cases he is simply providing his own colourful retelling of what is already a dramatic tale in its own right. In general, it seems safe to say that he was using a Greek text something like the extant LXX or he was relying on a text that was at places more like our extant Alpha Text. In still other places he occasionally seems to be using a Hebrew text directly.¹²

This statement truly is an adequate summary of the result of scientific research on this topic: while Josephus often proves to be completely autonomous, in his rewriting of the book of Esther one finds traces here and there of his dependence on OG, AT, and MT. The purpose of this article is to briefly account for these aspects but above all to add an element that has not yet been studied in depth: the alignments of the *Jewish Antiquities* and readings of OL.

2. Additions and Omissions in the Paraphrase of the Jewish Antiquities

The *Jewish Antiquities* not only features the author's personal style but, in comparison to the biblical account, also completely omits some sections and adds others. At the beginning of his work, Josephus declares the intention of achieving a faithful translation of the biblical text:

I shall proceed, therefore, recording in detail and in order what is contained in our documents. In fact, this is the procedure that I have promised to follow throughout the work without adding or omitting anything [οὐδὲν προσθεῖς οὐδ' αὖ παραλιπῶν]. (*A.J.* 1.17)¹³

12. Paul Spilsbury and Chris Seeman, *Judean Antiquities 11*, FJTC 6A (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 53.

¹³. All translations are my own.

In spite of this, scholars characterize the *Jewish Antiquities* as paraphrase of the biblical text, as “rewritten Bible,” or as “apologetic historiography.”¹⁴ Paraphrasing may be dictated by reasons of style and/or content—and it needs to be noted that it is not always easy to distinguish between these two. Josephus felt himself free to rewrite the biblical narratives in his own way without close adherence to the texts available to him.

The book of Esther is no exception to this; rather, Josephus seems to be freer than usual, as the extensive additions and omissions compared with the biblical text already demonstrate. A few examples may illustrate this tendency. For example, at the beginning of the section relating to the book of Esther (*A.J.* 11.184–185), Josephus places an extensive introduction to provide a historical context to the events:

¹⁸⁴Τελευτήσαντος δὲ Ξέρξου τὴν βασιλείαν εἰς τὸν υἱὸν Κῦρον, ὃν Ἀρταξέρξην Ἕλληες καοῦσιν, συνέβη μεταβῆναι. Τούτου τὴν Περσῶν ἔχοντος ἡγεμονίαν ἐκινδύνευσεν τὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθνος ἅπαν σὺν γυναίξῃ καὶ τέκνοις ἀπολέσθαι. τὴν δ' αἰτίαν μετ' οὐ πολὺ δηλώσομεν. ¹⁸⁵πρέπει γὰρ τὰ τοῦ βασιλέως διηγείσθαι πρῶτον, ὡς ἔγχευεν Ἰουδαίαν γυναῖκα τοῦ γένους οὔσαν τοῦ βασιλικοῦ, ἣν καὶ σῶσαι τὸ ἔθνος ἡμῶν λέγουσιν

¹⁸⁴When Xerxes died, the kingdom passed to his son Cyrus,¹⁵ whom the Greeks call Artaxerxes. During the time he ruled Persia the whole Judean nation along with their women and children was in danger of being utterly destroyed. The reason for this we will relate shortly, ¹⁸⁵but it is fitting first to describe in full the affairs of the king, including how he married a Judean woman of royal descent, who is said to have saved our nation.

14. Paraphrase: Spilsbury, *Image of the Jew*, 22–34; rewritten Bible: Louis H. Feldman, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible*, JSJSup 58 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 513–38; Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); apologetic historiography: Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephus, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography*, NovTSup 64 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 17.

15. This “Cyros” (Κῦρος) is actually to be considered the king “Ahasuerus” (486–465 BCE).

This introduction serves to locate the narrative that follows in the period of Artaxerxes I (465–423 BCE) and to give advance notice of the central role of the protagonist: Queen Esther.

Moreover, foreseeing that the reader does not know the biblical story in every detail, Josephus explains in *A.J.* 11.211 the reason for Haman's deep hatred toward Mordecai and his Jewish people:

καὶ γὰρ φύσει τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ἀπηχθάνετο, ὅτι καὶ τὸ γένος τῶν Ἀμαληκιτῶν, ἐξ ὧν ἦν αὐτός, ὑπ' αὐτῶν διέφθαρτο

for by nature he hated the Judeans, because the line of the Amalekites, from which he himself came, had been utterly destroyed by them.

With this note Josephus gives his audience an explicit reference to the battle against Amalek, as told in Exod 18:8–16, and identifies Haman as a member of the Amalekites. That ought to suffice for the latter's hatred toward the Jews.

In *A.J.* 11.268, Josephus makes a moral comment on Haman's fate, a comment marked by the doctrine of retribution:

ὅθεν ἐπέρχεται μοι τὸ θεῖον θαυμάζειν καὶ τὴν σοφίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ δικαιοσύνην καταμανθάνειν, μὴ μόνον τὴν Ἀμάνου κολάσαντος πονηρίαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν κατ' ἄλλου μεμηχανημένην τιμωρίαν ταύτην ἐκείνου ποιήσαντος εἶναι καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις μαθεῖν οὕτως [γινῶναι] παρεσχηκότος, ὡς ἂ καθ' ἑτέρου τις παρεσκεύασε ταῦτα λαμβάνει καθ' ἑαυτοῦ πρῶτον ἐτοιμασάμενος

Which gives me reason to marvel at the Deity and his wisdom, and to observe his justice, for he not only checked the evil of Aman, but by having the punishment that was prepared for another rebound on that man himself, he provided thereby for others to learn that whatever a person prepares against another he is unwittingly preparing first against himself.

This digression serves to establish the ethical stance of the narrative.

From the theological point of view, the presence of God in the section of the *Jewish Antiquities* that deals with the book of Esther can be considered rather intrusive: it actually often reflects and expands on what

is found in the two Greek texts (OG and AT). For example, in *A.J.* 11.247, Josephus makes explicit God's intentions in intervening in the ongoing episode:

ὁ δὲ θεὸς κατεγέλα τῆς Ἀμάνου πονηρᾶς ἐλπίδος καὶ τὸ συμβησόμενον
εἰδῶς ἐτέρπετο τῷ γενησομένῳ

But God was mocking Aman's evil hopes and, knowing what would happen, he was delighted by what would come about.

Then, immediately afterward, he says that God causes the king to pass a sleepless night, precisely as OG-AT Esth 6:1 do.

3. *A.J.* in Relation to OG, AT, and MT

The above examples show the freedom with which Josephus rewrites his biblical story of Esther. Nonetheless, a further analysis is necessary in order to see which readings of the *Jewish Antiquities* can be traced back with a high degree of certainty to the most important texts of the Greek and Hebrew textual traditions of the book of Esther: OG, AT, and MT.

3.1. *A.J.* = OG

Josephus must have known the version of OG (or of the AT) of the book of Esther, because he includes in his text at least four of the six so-called Greek Additions, that is, sections that are not present in the MT: B (*A.J.* 11.216–219), C (*A.J.* 11.229b–233), D (*A.J.* 11.234b–241a), and E (*A.J.* 11.272b–283a).

Moreover, it is possible to further establish his knowledge of Addition A. For example, in *A.J.* 11.207, Josephus calls the two eunuchs who conspire against the king Βαγαθῶς and Θεοδοσίτος, “Bagathos and Theodositos,” corresponding to MT Esth 2:21: ותרש בגתנא, “Bigthan and Teresh.” But later, in *A.J.* 11.249, Josephus calls them Γαβαταῖος and Θεοδέστης, “Gabataios and Theodestes,” corresponding to MT Esth 6:2: ותרש בגתנא, “Bigthana and Teresh.” In this way, he shows that he knows the names used in Addition A12 of OG (Γαβαθα καὶ Θαρρα) and AT (Αστάου καὶ Θεδεύτου).¹⁶

16. See Spilsbury and Seeman, *Judean Antiquities* 11, 66 nn. 673–74, 77 n. 828. Another way of explaining Josephus's names of the eunuchs Γαβαταῖος and Θεοδοσίτος/Θεοδέστης is to assume two different errors at the level the MT. First, reading Γαβαταῖος

Moreover, in *A.J.* 11.208, Josephus says that the king did not give Mordecai a reward for having exposed the conspiracy of the two eunuchs but allowed

προσμένειν αὐτὸν τοῖς βασιλείοις ὄντα φίλον ἀναγκαιότατον τῷ βασιλεῖ

that he himself should stay in the palace as a very close friend of the king.

A similar detail is found only in OG-AT Esth A16, where we read that the king ordered that Mordecai could θεραπεύειν [αὐτὸν in AT] ἐν τῇ αὐλήῃ (“serve in the courtyard”) of the royal palace. It can therefore be concluded that Josephus knew Addition A (and thus possibly Addition F), left traces of it in his text, but chose to omit the full Addition A on purpose.¹⁷

Another interesting case concerns the name of the king and protagonist of the story of Esther. The king is Ἄρταξέρξης in the *Jewish Antiquities*, just as in OG Esther (followed by OL Esther, which reads *Artaxerxes*). Instead, MT Esther seems to refer to Xerxes I with the name *Ἰσθῆρος*; similarly, AT Esther reads *Ἀσσυήρος* (Vg Esther reads *Assuerus*). Usually, the *Jewish Antiquities* follows the names of persons or months of OG. Thus, in *A.J.* 11.202, Esther appears before the king in the month Ἄδέρῳ ... καλουμένῳ, “called Adar,” as in OG Esth 2:16 (ὅς ἐστὶν Ἀδαρ), whereas MT Esther speaks of the month of Tebet (טבת הווא־חודש). These and many other textual cases show that the link between the *Jewish Antiquities* and OG is obvious.

in the *Jewish Antiquities* would derive from a scribal mistake, that is, a metathesis of ב and ג in בגתנא (MT Esth 6:2), but in this case one should assume also the same metathesis in MT Esth 2:1, where instead the *Jewish Antiquities* has Βαγαθῶς. Second, the reading Θεοδοσιτος/Θεοδεστης in the *Jewish Antiquities* would be the result of a misreading of תרת as תד, but again one must presume this misreading twice (in MT Esth 2:21 and 6:2), and moreover it looks more unlikely that Josephus’s reading derives his name of the eunuchs from the Hebrew root תד than to the similar Greek name Θεδευτος (AT Esth A:12).

17. “Josephus, for apologetic reasons, seeks to avoid the notion that there are two lots, one for the Jews and the other for the other nations, and that the Jews and Gentiles are by nature at odds with each other” (Louis H. Feldman, “Hellenizations in Josephus’ Version of Esther,” *TAPA* 101 [1970]: 165).

3.2. *A.J.* = AT

Less clear is the relationship between the *Jewish Antiquities* and AT. There are plenty of examples where these two texts align. Three illustrative cases may suffice.

The first case concerns a single syntagma. Only in AT Esth 1:11 does one read that the king ordered Queen Vasti to be led εἰς τὸ συνεστηκὸς συμπόσιον, “to the prepared banquet.” No mention is found in either MT or OG. Instead, an analogous expression appears in *A.J.* 11.190: εἰς τὸ συμπόσιον.

Moreover, *A.J.* 11.227 records the severe words with which Mordecai calls upon Esther for the last time to intercede with the king on behalf of her people:

εἰ γὰρ ἀμελήσειεν τούτου νῦν, ἔσεσθαι μὲν αὐτῶ βοήθειαν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πάντως

If she neglected it now, although help would by all means come to it [the Jewish people] from God.

Only AT Esth 4:9 (cf. MT-OG Esth 4:14) mentions God here:

Ἐὰν ὑπερίδῃς τὸ ἔθνος σου τοῦ μὴ βοηθῆσαι αὐτοῖς, ἀλλ’ ὁ θεὸς ἔσται αὐτοῖς βοηθὸς καὶ σωτηρία

If you refuse to help your people, then God will be their help and their salvation.

A third case is found in AT Esth 6:13. In this text alone, Haman’s feelings of frustration are described, when he realizes that he is not the beneficiary of the king’s reward:

ὡς δὲ ἔγνω Ἀμαν ὅτι οὐκ ἦν αὐτὸς ὁ δοξαζόμενος, ἀλλ’ ὅτι Μαρδοχαῖος, συνετρίβη ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ σφόδρα, καὶ μετέβαλε τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐκλύσει

when Aman understood that it would be Mordecai and not he that would be honored, his heart was very disturbed and his spirit fainted.

In *A.J.* 11.25, Josephus seems to reformulate this text in his own way:

τούτων ἀκούσας παρὰ πᾶσαν ἐλπίδα τὴν διάνοιαν συνεχύθη καὶ
πληγείς ὑπὸ ἀμηχανίας

When he heard these things contrary to what he had hoped for, his mind was confused and struck by helplessness.

3.3. *A.J.* = MT

The alignments between OG and AT, on the one hand, and the *Jewish Antiquities*, on the other, confirm the hypothesis that Josephus knew both forms of the Greek textual tradition of the book of Esther. Continuing on this road, one may wonder whether or not one can also recognize elements of exclusive alignment between the *Jewish Antiquities* and MT. Three interesting cases need further scrutiny.

In *A.J.* 11.192, there is no mention of the names of the eunuchs, but the text says that they are τὸς ἑπτὰ, “the seven,” as in MT Esth 1:14: [שבעת ושרי פרס ומדי]. As previously noticed, in *A.J.* 11.249, Josephus mentions the names of the two eunuchs who had conspired against the king: Γαβαταῖος and Θεοδέστης, “Gabataios and Theodestes.” Albeit with a different morphology, the two names are mentioned only in MT Esth 6:2: בגתנא ותרש, “Bigthana and Teresh.” A third case can be found in the final part of the account. Only the MT Esth 8:8 specifies that the king invites Esther and Mordecai to write על-היהודים, “on the Jews.” Similarly, in *A.J.* 271, the king allowed the queen to write whatever she wanted περὶ τῶν Ἰουδαίων, “concerning the Jews.” Lastly, in *A.J.* 11.291, the number of enemies killed by the Jews is ἑπτακισμύριοι καὶ πεντακισχίλιοι, “seventy-five thousand.” This number is found only in MT Esth 9:16: חמשה ושבעים אלף. OG Esth 9:16 reads instead μυρίουσ πεντακισχιλίους, “fifteen thousand,” and AT Esth 7:46 reads μυριάδας ἑπτὰ καὶ ἑκατὸν, “seventy thousand, one hundred.” Of course, in these and similar cases, it can always be argued that there is no need to postulate a written Hebrew text from which Josephus draws: he could simply have quoted from memory elements learned from his repeated listening to the Hebrew Scriptures.¹⁸

18. “One would assume ... that although the third-century rabbis Rav and Samuel grudgingly permitted the Book of Esther to be read in Greek on Purim (*B. T. Megilla* 18a), Josephus, as one who knew Hebrew, would have heard it twice each year in the

4. A.J. in Relation to the OL

The next step now is to ask whether an exclusive relationship can be found between the readings of the *Jewish Antiquities* and OL of the book of Esther. Traditionally, OL is considered a witness to OG. However, OL of Esther holds some surprises: it often has its own readings, but it also contains readings shared exclusively with the MT. This has led some scholars to argue that the Greek *Vorlage* of OL of the book of Esther is to be considered a third Greek text (Gr III), translated from Hebrew, independent from and preceding the OG and AT.¹⁹

4.1. The Contribution of Hanhart and Haelewyck

From a text-critical point of view, Jean-Claude Haelewyck has convincingly clarified the textual history of OL of the book of Esther.²⁰ The so-called *R* text is the most ancient textual type. It is found in three manuscripts: MS 155 (fifth century CE, a papyrus containing only Esth 3:15–4:7); MS 151 (thirteenth century CE); and MS 130 (ninth century CE). The *R* text is to be held as the best, but it shows already the signs of recensional activity toward the MT and against OG and AT. The other three textual types identified (*I*, *J*, and *F*) can be considered as different stages on the path of a continuous reworking on the *R* type.²¹ Comparing these texts with other external witnesses, such as liturgical texts, biblical quotations by the church fathers of the European region during the fourth and fifth centuries CE, and quotations in polemical works of the African region,²² one can recognize the

original Hebrew” (Louis 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. Martin Jan Mulder and Harry Sysling [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004], 465).

19. “Le modèle grec du texte vieux latin remonte bien à un texte hébreu, et qu’il n’est pas une simple refonte d’un autre texte grec” (Jean-Claude Haelewyck, *Introduction*, vol. 1 of *Esther*, VL 73 [Freiburg: Herder, 2003], 67; see also 70).

20. See Haelewyck, *Introduction*, 34–64.

21. The textual type *I* shows traces of a first revision based mainly on OG. The *J* text can be considered a revision of a previous Latin text based on OG. Finally, the *F* text is a further revision with a particular concern for the syntax and the addition of elements deriving from AT.

22. Liturgical texts: especially some antiphons of celebrations in the Ambrosian, Roman, and Mozarabic rites (see Haelewyck, *Introduction*, 31–33); biblical quotations by the church fathers of the European region: e.g., Rufinus (345–411 CE), Ambrosi-

presence of the textual forms *R* and *I* for the first time in Europe in the fourth century CE. Subsequently, in the first half of the fifth century CE, there are traces in Africa of another OL text, which derives from OG (and, in part, from AT). But rather than there being two distinct textual forms of OL, perhaps there was a recension (or revision) of the European OL in the direction of OG and also, partly, of AT.²³

The specific question of the relationships between the *Jewish Antiquities* and Josephus's biblical sources was brought up in the 1920s by Henry St. John Thackeray and Raimondo Bacchisio Motzo.²⁴ Later on, Robert Hanhart and Jean-Claude Haelewyck addressed this issue much more meticulously in the introductions of their respective critical editions, both calling at the same time for more in-depth research.²⁵

aster (fourth century CE?), Ambrose (ca. 339–397 CE), Jerome (347–420 CE), the *Liber de divinis scripturis* (beginning of the fifth century CE), Prosper of Aquitaine (390–463 CE); quotations in polemical works of the African region: especially the anti-Pelagian writings of Augustine (354–430 CE) and in the *Contra Varimadum arianum*, attributed to Pseudo-Vigilius of Thapsus (end of the fifth century CE). It is notable that no citations from the book of Esther have been discovered in the works of Cyprian (210–258 CE).

23. “Cela signifie-t-il pour autant que deux traductions vieilles latines du livre d’Esther auraient circulé conjointement dans l’Antiquité, l’une faite sur La-Grec III, l’autre sur o? La question doit être posée. Pourtant, dans l’état actuel des connaissances sur l’histoire de la vieille latine, il faut rester prudent. En effet ce serait l’unique cas d’une double traduction de tout un livre. Il est plus vraisemblable que les citations patristiques dont il vient d’être question témoignent d’une révision d’un texte vieux latin sur le texte o (éventuellement avec des leçons de *L*). En l’absence de toute citation africaine plus ancienne (Cyprien par exemple), il n’est pas possible d’en dire davantage” (Haelewyck, *Introduction*, 39–40; see also 69).

24. Henry St. John Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian*, Hilda Stich Strook Lecture (New York: Jewish Institute of Religion Press, 1929). According to Thackeray, Josephus depends on two distinct texts: one Hebrew or Aramaic and the other Greek. See also Raimondo Bacchisio Motzo, “Il testo di Ester in Giuseppe,” *SMSR* 4 (1928): 84–105. Concerning specifically the book of Esther, Motzo had the merit, among other things, of highlighting the relationship between *Jewish Antiquities* and AT.

25. “Eine differenziertere Analyse der Ios-Vorlage, die ihre Gemeinsamkeiten mit o, L, La und M erschöpfend ausgrenzte und innerhalb des Ios-Sondergutes an Hand der Stilprinzipien und des Sprachschatzes zwischen vorliegender Tradition und Eigentum des Schriftstellers schied, gehört nicht in den Rahmen dieser Textausgabe und muß einer besonderen Untersuchung vorbehalten bleiben” (Hanhart, *Esther*, 38). “La plupart des auteurs signalent que son [of Josephus, *DGC*] texte a des contacts avec la *vetus latina* (mais sans donner beaucoup d’exemples)” (Haelewyck, *Introduction*, 73–74).

According to Hanhart, when the *Jewish Antiquities* diverges from OG, AT, and MT, it is usually a case of Josephus's classical paraphrastic style. However, some contacts between the *Jewish Antiquities* and OL could be an indication that Josephus also drew on a text like the Greek *Vorlage* of OL.²⁶ In other words, Josephus basically used a Greek text that was close to OG and AT, but he must have had access to a third Greek *Vorlage*, which is attested by OL. Examining the critical apparatuses of his edition of OG and AT, fifty instances can be collected in which Hanhart refers to a reading of the *Jewish Antiquities*.²⁷ Although the quantity of these readings may be impressive, they are not really useful in ascertaining whether Josephus consulted a hypothetical Greek *Vorlage* of OL, since these are not readings shared exclusively between the *Jewish Antiquities* and OL.

Haelewyck stands in the same line of thought, but he attempted to look for clear readings that in his opinion show the exclusive proximity between the *Jewish Antiquities* and OL; he came to select fifteen readings.²⁸ As will be seen below, having carefully considered these readings noticed by Haelewyck, I believe that eight of them are questionable (see "Uncertain Correspondencies," §4.2, cases 1–8). For the other remaining seven readings, I provide additional arguments in favor of considering them "Certain Correspondencies" (§4.3, cases 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9). Finally, I identify two more readings (see §4.3, cases 3 and 6) that were not identified by Haelewyck but that need to be added.

26. "Wenn Ios einen von *o'*, *L* und *M* abweichenden Text überliefert, liegt gewöhnlich eine freie Paraphrase des Schriftstellers vor. Doch lassen einige Berührungen mit La darauf schließen, daß auch hier zuweilen andere griech. Tradition vorliegen kann" (Hanhart, *Esther*, 37).

27. Esth 1:1 (A.J. 11.186), 1:3 (A.J. 11.186), 1:5 (A.J. 11.187), 1:9 (A.J. 11.190), 1:13 (A.J. 11.192), 1:14 (A.J. 11.192), 1:16 (A.J. 11.193); 2:7 (A.J. 11.198), 2:16 (A.J. 11.202), 2:21 (A.J. 11.207); 3:1 (A.J. 11.209), 3:6 (A.J. 11.211); B:1 (A.J. 11.216), B:2 (A.J. 11.216), B:4 (A.J. 11.217), B:6 (A.J. 11.218), B:15 (A.J. 11.220); 4:5 (A.J. 11.223), 4:16 (A.J. 11.228); 5:10 (A.J. 11.245); 6:2 (A.J. 11.249), 6:6 (A.J. 11.253), 6:14 (A.J. 11.260); 7:7 (A.J. 11.265), 7:8 (A.J. 11.265), 7:9 (A.J. 11.261, 266), 8:1 (A.J. 11.269), 8:5 (A.J. 11.270), 8:9 (A.J. 11.272); E:4 (A.J. 11.274), E:7 (A.J. 11.276), E:9 (A.J. 11.276), E:10 (A.J. 11.277), E:11 (A.J. 11.277), E:13 (A.J. 11.278), E:19 (A.J. 11.281), E:20 (A.J. 11.281), E:23 (A.J. 11.282); 8:14 (A.J. 11.284); 9:1 (A.J. 11.286), 9:3 (A.J. 11.287), 9:6 (A.J. 11.288), 9:11 (A.J. 11.289), 9:12 (A.J. 11.289), 9:13 (A.J. 11.289), 9:14 (A.J. 11.290), 9:15 (A.J. 11.290), 9:16 (A.J. 11.291), 9:18 (A.J. 11.292), 9:19 (A.J. 11.292).

28. Haelewyck, *Introduction*, 74; see esp. n. 126.

4.2. Uncertain Correspondencies

(1) In *A.J.* 11.190, after giving the banquet for the women, Vasti is called by the king, eager to show off her beauty to the diners. The reading ἐκέλευσεν, “he [i.e. the king] summoned,” would correspond to the reading *iussit* of OL Esth 1:10. This match is not wholly convincing. Here, in fact, Josephus could have read εἶπεν of OG-AT Esth 1:10 or רמא of MT Esth 1:10. The reading of ἐκέλευσεν in the *Jewish Antiquities* can therefore be explained as the result of simple *translation technique*.

(2) In *A.J.* 11.207, the reading χρόνῳ δ’ ὕστερον, “sometime afterward,” corresponds to the reading *post haec*, “after these things” of OL Esth 2:21. MT, OG, and AT lack this reading. The antecedent of this passage in the book of Esther is the designation of Esther as queen and her marriage with the king (MT-OG-AT-OL Esth 2:17–18; *A.J.* 11.203), the presence of Mordecai at the king’s palace (MT-OG-OL Esth 2:19; *A.J.* 11.204), and the information that Esther had not disclosed her Jewish origins to her husband (MT-OG-OL Esth 2:20; cf. *A.J.* 11.203). Josephus inserts here a free digression to explain that no one was allowed to enter the presence of the king of Persia without being summoned: the transgressor would risk his or her life (*A.J.* 11.205–206; cf. 226; MT-OG-AT-OL Esth 4:11). Then, only MT and OL (Esth 2:21) repeat the information that Mordecai sat by the palace gate.

At this point come the readings that introduce the episode of the two eunuchs plotting against the king (MT-OG Esth 2:21–23). The reading in OL, *post haec*, “after these things,” thus refers to the new situation at the court of Persia and also to the fact that Mordecai was sitting by the king’s palace. The readings of the *Jewish Antiquities*, χρόνῳ δ’ ὕστερον, “sometime afterwards,” on the other hand, serves to restart the account after the previous digression. Therefore, despite the fact that the readings of OL and the *Jewish Antiquities* have no parallels in other witnesses and that they correspond well with each other, it cannot be excluded that both OL and the *Jewish Antiquities* independently felt the need for their readings in order to introduce a new scene and to make their texts more fluent.

(3) In *A.J.* 11.217, the reading [ἔθνος] τοῖς νόμοις ἀλλόκοτον, “[a people] different as to its laws,” would correspond to the reading *alias autem leges habentes*²⁹ of OL Esth B:4. But the *Jewish Antiquities* reading can be con-

29. Actually, Haelewyck transcribes the reading *alias autem et alienas leges habentes*, referring to text types R and I. The latter has only the words *et alienas*. The

sidered a paraphrase of OG Esth B:4: [λαόν] τοῖς νόμοις ἀντίθετον [πρὸς πᾶν ἔθνος], “[a people] who has laws contrary [to every nation],” and/or of AT Esth 3:16: [λαόν] τοῖς μὲν νόμοις ἀντιδικοῦντα [πρὸς πᾶν ἔθνος], “[a people] who has laws opposed [to every nation].

(4) In *A.J.* 11.229b, it seems possible to recognize a correspondence with the *plus* of OL Esth C:1. The latter describes Mordecai in prayer with the *presbyteri*, “the elders” of Israel. A close relationship of OL with the *Jewish Antiquities* is recognizable here only if one admits—as Samuel Naber does in his edition³⁰—the priority of the following family of manuscripts of the *Jewish Antiquities*: Codex Ambrosianus F 128 (A) from Codex Medicaeus pluteo 69; cod. 10 (M) and from Codex Vaticanus gr. 984 (W). In this case, the reading σὺν αὐτοῖς [ἰκέτευσε], “[he prayed] with them,” should replace the reading αὐτὸς [ἰκέτευσε], “he [prayed].” Even assuming this reading of the *Jewish Antiquities*, one should still admit that there are no precise lexical references but only an allusion to an element present in OL.

(5) Before presenting herself to the king, Esther fasts and prays to God. In this context, in *A.J.* 11.232, the reading τὸ δὲ εἶδος εὐπρεπεστέραν τῆς τάχιον οὔσαν, “[that] the beauty would be still greater,” would correspond to the reading *gratissimam me in conspectu eius facite*,³¹ “make me most pleasing in his sight,” of OL Esth C:24. One must notice that this reading does not belong to the *R* type of OL but is present only in the *I* type (more precisely MS 123 Vercelliensis and MS 152 Pechianus).³² Such a reading certainly arouses some curiosity: one may indeed wonder where this reading comes from and how it emerges precisely in a textual type of OL that is generally regarded as a revision harmonizing toward the OG. However, its scarce attestation (in only two manuscripts) and its presence in a secondary textual type (*I* type) prudentially suggest not to count this reading among the safe correspondences.

readings of MS 109 (*alienas a nostris habentes leges*), MS 123 (*et alienas leges habentes*), MS 130 (*et alias leges et alienas habentes*), and MS 151 (*alias au leges habentes*), reproduced in the critical apparatus, do not seem to offer an argument more convincing than that for the reading of text type *R*.

30. See Samuel Adrianus Naber, ed., *Flavii Josephi opera omnia*, vol. 1, BSGRT (Leipzig: Teubner, 1888), section 1, chapter 6: *Jewish Antiquities*; paragraph 2: *Texts, Editions and Translations of JA 11*.

31. This reading is found in MS 123.

32. That this reading does not belong to the *R* type of OL is already pointed out in Motzo, “Il testo di Ester in Giuseppe,” 98. On its presence in the *I* type, see Haelewyck, *Introduction*, 283–84; with regard to the characteristics of the two manuscripts, see 52–59.

6. In *A.J.* 11.240, the reading καὶ κατελείπομην ὑπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς, “and I remained without breath,” would correspond to the reading *deficiente eius spiritu*, “her spirit failing [her],” of OL Esth D:15. Leaving aside the fact that here the *Jewish Antiquities* prefers indirect speech to direct speech, what makes the match weak is that OG Esth D:15 has a similar reading: ἔπεσεν ἀπὸ ἐκλύσεως, “she fell in a faint.” So the correspondence between the *Jewish Antiquities* and OL is not exclusive.

(7) In *A.J.* 11.254, the reading τῶν ἀναγκαίων φίλων ἓνα, “one of his closest friends,” would correspond to the reading *neminem habet rex necessarium nisi me*, “the king has no one as close as me,” in OL Esth 6:6. However, Josephus’s sentence corresponds perfectly with a later expression that is found with slight differences in all three major biblical witnesses: MT Esth 6:9: המלך משרי המלך הפרתמים, “to the hand of one of the king’s noble princes”; OG Esth 6:9: ἐνὶ τῶν φίλων τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν ἐνδόξων, “to one of the king’s noble princes”; AT Esth 6:11: εἷς τῶν ἐνδόξων, τῶν φίλων τοῦ βασιλέως, “one of the nobles, among the king’s friends.” Therefore, the adjective ἀναγκαίος can be considered as the result of *translation technique* of ἐνδόξος.

(8) In *A.J.* 11.254, the reading δι’ ὅλης τῆς πόλεως would correspond to the reading *in tota civitate* of OL Esth 6:9. Inasmuch as the two readings are extremely similar, one must admit that OG Esth 6:9 presents an analogous reading: διὰ τῆς πλατείας τῆς πόλεως, “in every square of the city.” Therefore this, too, is not a reading exclusive to OL, and it cannot be completely ruled out that Josephus is here reformulating the OG reading in his own words.

(9) In *A.J.* 11.287, the reading καὶ οἱ τύραννοι καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς, “the princes, the kings, and the scribes,” corresponds to the reading *et tyranni et reges et scribae* of OL Esth 9:3, but according to MSS 123 and 130.³³ Relying fundamentally on MS 151, Haelewyck chooses the reading *et tyranni regis et scribae* for the *R* text. However, the presence of the reading καὶ οἱ τύραννοι [καὶ οἱ σατράπαι in AT] καὶ οἱ βασιλικοὶ γραμματεῖς of OG and AT Esth 9:3 does not suggest that here the *Jewish Antiquities* depends only on the reading found in OL.

As seen, it must be admitted that these textual cases cannot be taken as readings shared exclusively by the *Jewish Antiquities* and OL. Rather, they are readings of the *Jewish Antiquities* that can also be explained dif-

33. See Haelewyck, *Introduction*, 45, 74; Haelewyck, *Esther 6:3–fin*, vol. 5 of *Esther*, VL 7.3 (Freiburg: Herder, 2009), 403; Hanhart, *Esther*, 37 n. 1.

ferently, as product of translation technique (case 1) or of paraphrase (case 3). Four close correspondences between the *Jewish Antiquities* and OL are not always absolute but show affinities with readings from OG (cases 6 and 8) or from OG-AT (cases 7 and 9). A reading of the *Jewish Antiquities*, then, corresponds to readings present not in the *R* text but in the *I* text of OL (case 5). Moreover, a reading of the *Jewish Antiquities* contains only possible allusions to elements present in OL (case 4). Finally, a similar and common reading only between OL and the *Jewish Antiquities* may actually have arisen independently in the two witnesses (case 2).

4.3. Certain Correspondencies

By placing all five implied texts (MT, OG, AT, OL, and the *Jewish Antiquities*) in synopsis,³⁴ it is possible to identify and discuss more easily and convincingly the readings that reveal clear and exclusive correspondences between the *Jewish Antiquities* and OL. In the section below, the cases reported by Haelewyck (cases 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, and 8) and two additional ones, which were hitherto not yet identified (cases 3 and 5), will be presented.

4.3.1. OL Esth 1:8 = A.J. 11.188

In A.J. 11.188, the reading τῶν κατακειμένων [ἕκαστος], “[each] of those who were lying down,” corresponds to the reading *recumbentium*, “of those who were lying down” of OL Esth 1:8. Instead, MT Esth 1:8 reads only ״וַיֵּשְׁבוּ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ״, “[of] each,” and OG-AT Esth 1:8 read τῶν ἀνθρώπων, “of the men.”

| MT | OG | AT | OL | A.J. |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|--|---|
| וַיֵּשְׁבוּ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ | ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ καὶ | ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημα | sed facere voluntate | ἀλλ' ἐπιτρέπειν καὶ πρὸς ὃ βούλεται |
| :וַיֵּשְׁבוּ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ | τῶν ἀνθρώπων. | τῶν ἀνθρώπων. | <u>recumbentium</u> , ad iocunditatem bibere secundum legem | <u>τῶν κατακειμένων</u> ἕκαστος φιλοφρονεῖσθαι. |

In Esth 1, which recounts the two banquets in the palace of Susa, it is told that the king gave orders to the servants to let everyone drink as

34. See Dionisio Candido, *Synopsis of the Book of Esther: Masoretic Text, Old Greek, Alpha Text, Old Latine, Vulgate, Jewish Antiquities*, BET 102.1 (Leuven: Peeters, 2023).

much as they wished. In fact, MT Esth 1:8 says that the king ordered the servants **לְעֵשׂוֹת כְּרִצּוֹן אִישׁ־וְאִישׁ**, “to do according to each one’s wish”; similarly, OG-AT Esth 1:8 reads **ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἀνθρώπων**, “to do according to his will and the will of all men.”

On the other hand, OL Esth 1:8 says that the king ordered the servants to indulge the wishes of the *recumbentium*, “of those who were lying down.” This participle (from the verb *recumbo*) makes the position of the diners at the banquet more explicit: they were, precisely, reclining according to the custom of the time. Corresponding to this reading of OL, something analogous is found in *A.J.* 11.188: **τῶν κατακειμένων** [ἕκαστος], “[each] of those who were lying down,” with the verb **κατάκειμαι** indicating exactly the assumption of the reclining posture for consuming the meal.

4.3.2. OL Esth 2:2 = *A.J.* 11.195

In *A.J.* 11.195, the reading **οἱ φίλοι**, “the friends,” matches the reading *amici*, “friends,” of OL Esth 2:2. Instead, MT Esth 2:2 reads **יְעָרִי**, “the young men of,” OG Esth 2:2 reads **οἱ διάκονοι**, “the slaves,” and AT Esth 2:2 reads **οἱ λειτουργοί**, “the servants.”

| MT | OG | AT | OL | <i>A.J.</i> |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| וַיֹּאמְרוּ וְעָרִי | καὶ εἶπαν οἱ διάκονοι | καὶ εἶπον οἱ λειτουργοί | Dixerunt <u>amici</u> | <u>οἱ φίλοι</u> |
| מִלְּפָנֶיךָ מִשְׁרָתִי | τοῦ βασιλέως | τοῦ βασιλέως | eius | συνεβούλευον τὴν μὲν τῆς γυναικὸς μνήμην καὶ τὸν ἔρωτα μηδὲν ὠφελοῦμενον ἐκβαλεῖν |

In chapter 2 of the biblical account, after the deposition of Queen Vasthi, the king’s advisors suggest that he begin the search for a new queen to take her place. According to MT Esth 2:2, those who speak to the king are **יְעָרִי [הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁרָתִי]**, “the young men/servants of [the king, who served him]”; OG Esth 2:2 reads **οἱ διάκονοι [τοῦ βασιλέως]**, “the slaves / servants [of the king]”; and AT Esth 2:2 reads **οἱ λειτουργοί [τοῦ βασιλέως]**, “the servants [of the king].” On the other hand, OL Esth: 2:2 speaks of *amici*,

“friends,” with a completely analogous reading being found in *A.J.* 11.195, which reads οἱ φίλοι, “the friends.”³⁵

4.3.3. OL Esth 2:7 = A.J. 11.198

In *A.J.* 11.198, the reading ὀρφανή, “orphan,” corresponds to the reading *orphana* of OL Esth 2:7. This term is found only in the *Jewish Antiquities* and OL, and it is present in both versions as a *plus* in relation to the biblical text of MT-OG-AT.

| MT | OG | AT | OL | <i>A.J.</i> |
|----------------------------|--|--------------|---|---|
| יֵן אֵין לָהּ אָב וְאִמָּה | ἐν δὲ τῷ μεταλλάξαι αὐτῆς τοὺς γονεῖς ἐπαίδευσεν αὐτήν | <i>absit</i> | | |
| | ἐαυτῷ | | et nutrierat eam Mardocheaus sibi | |
| | εἰς γυναῖκα· | | adoptatam filiam, quoniam erat <u>orphana</u> . | συναχθρισῶν δὲ πολλῶν εὐρέθη τις ἐν Βαβυλώνι κόρη τῶν γονέων ἀμφοτέρων ὀρφανή |

The figure of Esther is introduced for the first time in chapter 2. From the synopsis above, it is also clear that in verse 7 each textual witness has its own way of presenting Esther and her kinship with Mordecai. MT has יֵן אֵין לָהּ אָב וְאִמָּה, “she had neither father nor mother.” The OG has ἐν δὲ τῷ μεταλλάξαι αὐτῆς τοὺς γονεῖς, “When his parents died.” Both texts (MT immediately before and OG immediately after) state that Mordecai had raised little Esther, who had been left without parents. The element, however, that stands out is the *plus* at the end of OL Esth 2:7, which explains that Mordecai had adopted Esther as his daughter *quoniam erat orphana*, “because she was an orphan.” This reading matches the feminine adjective ὀρφανή in *A.J.* 11.198.

35. Spilsbury and Seeman mention the corresponding words in MT, OG, and AT but not in OL (see *Judean Antiquities* 11, 63).

Moreover, the only other occasion in which the OL uses the same term is OL C:30: here Esther prays to the Lord, saying: *Et nunc subveni orphanæ mihi*, “And now come to the aid of me who am an orphan.” But this expression is a lonely *plus* of OL that has no parallels in other texts.

Thus, the word *orphanæ*-ὄρφανή is found only in OL and the *Jewish Antiquities* and appears in two expressions that are both a *plus* in relation to the biblical text attested by MT-OG-AT.

4.3.4. OL Esth 2:21 = A.J. 11.207

In A.J. 11.207, the reading Θεοδοσίτου, “Theodosites,” corresponds to the reading *Thedestes* of OL Esth 2:21, from which it diverges with a minimal difference in spelling. Instead, MT Esth 2:2 reads תרש, “Teres,” while OG and AT do not supply here either the name of this second eunuch or that of the first (cf. OG Esth A:12 and AT Esth A:11).

| MT | OG | AT | OL | A.J. |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| בגתן ותרש | <i>absit</i> | <i>absit</i> | Bartageus et <i>Thedestes</i> | Βαγαθῶου καὶ Θεοδοσίτου |

4.3.5. OL Esth 4:4 = A.J. 11.223

In A.J. 11.223, the reading ἀποδύσασθαι τὸν σάκκον, “put off the sackcloth,” corresponds to the reading *deponere saccum*, “put off the sackcloth” of OL Esth 4:4. There is a similar expression in MT-OG Esth 4:4 and in AT Esth 4:3.

| MT | OG | AT | OL | A.J. |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|---|----------|--|
| ותשלח בגדים להלביש | καὶ ἀπέστειλεν στολίσαι | καὶ ἀπέστειλε | et misit | ἐξέπεμπεν τοὺς μεταμφιάσσοντας αὐτόν. |
| את־מרדכי | τὸν Μαρδοχαῖον | πρὸς Εσθηρ, καὶ εἶπεν ἡ βασίλισσα | | |

| | | | | |
|--------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| וּלְהַסִּיר | καὶ ἀφελέσθαι αὐτοῦ | περιέλεσθε | | |
| וּקְשׁוּ | τὸν σάκκον, | τὸν σάκκον καὶ εἰσαγάγετε | | |
| מֵעַל | | αὐτόν· | spadonem Etac, [...] | |
| וְלֹא קָבַל: | ὁ δὲ οὐκ ἐπεισθη. | ⁴⁴ ὁ δὲ οὐκ ἤθελεν. | Et noluit Mardochoaeus <u>deponere</u> <u>saccum</u> | ²²³ οὐ πεισθέντος δὲ <u>ἀποδύσασθαι</u> τὸν σάκκον |

Chapter 4 describes the communication between Queen Esther and Mordecai through a eunuch. Esther is concerned for Mordecai: she knows that he is dressed in garments of mourning and would like him to change into garments more suited to his person, rank, and circumstance. According to MT Esth 4:4, וּתְשַׁלְּחֵהוּ בְגָדִים לְהַלְבִּישׁ אֶת־מַרְדֵּכַי וְלְהַסִּיר שָׂקוֹ, “she sent garments to Mordecai, that he might put them on and take the sack off.” OG Esth 4:4 has likewise: καὶ ἀπέστειλεν στολίσαι τὸν Μαρδοχαῖον καὶ ἀφελέσθαι αὐτοῦ τὸν σάκκον, “she sent to dress Mordecai and to take off the sack.” A slightly difference is found in AT Esth 4:4: καὶ ἀπέστειλε πρὸς Εσθηρ, καὶ εἶπεν ἡ βασίλισσα περιέλεσθε τὸν σάκκον, “[he] sent [the eunuch] to Esther, and the queen said: “Take off his sackcloth.” In other words, according to MT-OG Esth 4:4 and in AT Esth 4:3, the queen sent the eunuch to Mordecai with two purposes: to give him new clothes (only AT does not have this detail) and to make him take off his mourning robe. Then these textual witnesses conclude saying that he refused.

Instead, OL Esth 4:4 states that [*noluit Mardochoaeus*] *deponere saccum*, “he refused to put off the sackcloth.” A similar statement is found in *A.J.* 11.223: [οὐ πεισθέντος δὲ] ἀποδύσασθαι τὸν σάκκον, “[not being persuaded to] put off the sackcloth.” Therefore, OL and the *Jewish Antiquities* are similar in rephrasing the description of the scene: here the sackcloth, that is, the mourning attire, is not mentioned in Esther’s command to the eunuch but appears only at the end, along with Mordecai’s refusal to remove it.

4.3.6. OL Esth C:13 = A.J. 11.231

In *A.J.* 11.231, the reading *ρίψασα κατὰ τῆς γῆς ἑαυτήν*, “throwing herself to the ground,” corresponds to the reading *cecidit super terram* of OL Esth C:13. This reading is absent from MT, OG, and AT.

| MT | OG | AT | OL | JA |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--|---|
| <i>absit</i> | <i>absit</i> | <i>absit</i> | et <u>cecidit</u> <u>super terram</u> | <u>ῥίψασα</u> <u>κατὰ τῆς γῆς ἑαυτὴν</u> |
| | | | cum ancillis suis, a mane usque ad vesperam | καὶ πενθικὴν ἐσθῆτα περιθεμένη |

The present textual case is not found in the text that is shared between the Hebrew and Greek traditions, but it is present in Addition C. Here, in the introduction to Esther's prayer (OG Esth C:12; AT Esth 4:18), OL Esth C:13 has a *plus*, which makes the scene more vivid.

4.3.7. OL Esth 6:8 = A.J. 11.25436

In A.J. 11.254, the reading *περιαυχένιον χρυσοῦν*,³⁷ “golden necklace,” corresponds to the reading *corona aurea*, “golden crown,” of OL Esth 6:8. The correspondence specifically concerns the adjective “golden”; the two substantives (“necklace” and “crown”) are not identical but similar objects. According to MT Esth 6:8, the king commands “that a royal crown (כתר מלכות) be placed on his [Mordecai's] head.” The adjective “royal” (lit. “of the kingdom”) does not refer to the precious metal of which the crown is made but to the individual who wears it. OG and AT do not mention here this object at all.

36. For a complete view of all the readings concerning these text case, see Candido, *Synopsis of the Book of Esther*, 133.

37. Josephus seems to distinguish clearly between a necklace and a crown. At the king's command, Haman makes Mordecai put on the golden necklace (A.J. 11.254: *περιαυχένιον χρυσοῦν*; A.J. 11.256: τὸ χρυσοῦν περιαυχένιον; A.J. 11.257: τὸ περιαυχένιον). At the end of the narrative, on the other hand, the king will honor him with the crown of gold as well as the *στρεπτόν*, a circular object that can be understood precisely like the necklace spoken of previously (A.J. 11.284: τὸν στέφανον τὸν χρυσοῦν καὶ τὸν στρεπτόν).

4.3.8. OL Esth 8:9 = A.J. 11.272

In A.J. 11.272, the reading [καὶ ἄρχουσιν ...] ἡγούμενοις, “[the governors ...] who command,” corresponds to the reading *imperantibus*, “who command” of OL Esth 8:9. This reading is lacking in MT, OG, and AT.

| MT | OG | AT | OL | A.J. |
|------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ושרי המדינות אשר | καὶ τοῖς ἄρχουσιν τῶν σατραπῶν | <i>absit</i> | et principibus satrapum, | καὶ ἄρχουσιν |
| מהדו ועד־כוש | ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰνδικῆς ἕως τῆς Αἰθιοπίας, | | ab India usque ad Ethiopiam, | ἀπὸ Ἰνδικῆς ἕως τῆς Αἰθιοπίας |
| שבע ועשרים ומאה | ἑκατὸν εἴκοσι | | centum viginti septem | ἑκατὸν εἰκοσιεπτὰ |
| מדינה | σατραπείαις | | satrapis gentium <i>imperantibus</i> | σατραπειῶν ἡγούμενοις |

After the elimination of the wicked Haman (Esth 7:10), Esther asks the king to revoke the decree of extermination of the Jews (Esth 8:5). Indeed, Esth 8:9 tells of the king’s willingness to make known to the Jews in writing the new decree delivered to the royal officials. According to MT Esth 8:9, Esther and Mordecai write among the others to אשר מהדו ועד־כוש שבע ועשרים ומאה מדינה, “the princes of the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia.” Similarly, in OG Esth 8:9, it is stated that they write τοῖς ἄρχουσιν τῶν σατραπῶν ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰνδικῆς ἕως τῆς Αἰθιοπίας, ἑκατὸν εἴκοσι ἐπτὰ σατραπείαις, “to the commanders of the one hundred and twenty-seven satrapies, from India to Ethiopia.” Therefore, according to both MT and OG, these officials include the heads of the satrapies, that is, the provinces of the Persian Empire. In AT, none of these officials is mentioned. OL strengthens this idea by adding that they were “those who ruled” over the satrapies, using the verb *impero* with dative. The same emphasis is found in the *Jewish Antiquities* with the verb ἡγέομαι with genitive.

Conclusion

Although Josephus took liberties in his paraphrasing of the biblical text, his reliance on the OG of Esther is evident, as well as, to a lesser degree, on the AT. There are also readings that can be attributed to the MT, but

these could be derived from a purely mnemonic recollection rather than from an actual consultation of a written text. With regard to the possible link between (the Greek *Vorlage* of) OL and the *Jewish Antiquities*, the issue is even more delicate. Some scholars acknowledged this connection, yet they had not thoroughly examined how strong this link is. By critically reviewing, evaluating, and improving on Hanhart's and especially on Haelewyck's suggested data, it is now possible to state that there are eight readings exclusively shared between OL and the *Jewish Antiquities* that can be labeled certain. Regardless of whether one considers this a high or a low number, the correspondences seem certain. These correspondences suffice to conclude that Josephus was familiar with a manuscript (or manuscripts) that contained, besides an OG and AT text, also some readings from the Greek *Vorlage* of OL.