

THE ABIGAIL STORY (1 SAMUEL 25) ACCORDING TO JOSEPHUS

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Resumen

La figura central de 1 Sm 25 es Abigaíl, quien libera a su familia de la cólera de David y termina casándose con el futuro rey de Israel. Este artículo ofrece una detallada comparación entre el relato de Josefo en *Ant.* 6.295-309 y su fuente bíblica (tal como aparece en TM, LXX y Targum). Se trata de determinar cómo y por qué Josefo adapta el relato bíblico sobre Abigaíl. Del artículo se desprende que Josefo, en contra de su tendencia general a rebajar y descalificar a los personajes femeninos de la historia judía, acentúa los rasgos positivos de la imagen bíblica de esta mujer.

Summary

1 Samuel 25 has as its central character the figure of Abigail who saves her household from David's wrath and ends up marrying Israel's future king. This article provides a detailed comparison between Josephus' version of the Abigail story in *Ant.* 6.295-309 and its Biblical source (as represented by MT, LXX and the Targum) which seeks to determine how and why Josephus adapts the Scriptural Abigail account. Among the article's conclusions is that Josephus, contrary to his general tendency to downplay and denigrate the female personages of Jewish history, accentuates the Bible's own positive portrayal of Abigail.

1 Samuel 25 tells a dramatic and romantic story featuring Abigail who, having saved her household from an enraged David, ends up becoming his wife.¹ Long ago, L. Ginzberg alluded in passing to Josephus' "many embellishments" of the biblical Abigail story.² Inspired by Ginzberg's

¹ On the Biblical story, see J. D. Levenson, "1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History": *CBQ* 40 (1978) 11-28.

² L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* vol. 6 (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication

remark I purpose, in this essay, to examine systematically the Josephan rewriting of 1 Samuel 25 in his *Antiquitates Judaicae* (hereafter *Ant.*) 6.295-309.³ My study will proceed by way of a detailed comparison between Josephus' version and its Biblical source as represented by the following major witnesses: MT (BHS)⁴, Codex Vaticanus (hereafter B)⁵ and the Lucianic (hereafter L) or Antiochene MSS⁶ as well as Targum Jonathan (hereafter TJ) on the Former Prophets.⁷ My comparison seeks answers to such questions as: Which text-form(s) of 1 Samuel 25 did Josephus have available?⁸ How and with what intent did he change the data of the source story? Does Josephus' portrayal of the narrative's three

Society, 1928) 275, n. 137.

³ For the text and translation of Josephus' writing I use: H. St. J. Thackeray, R. Marcus, A. Wikgren and L. H. Feldman (eds.), *Josephus* (LCL; Cambridge, MA - London, Harvard Univ. Press - Heinemann, 1926-65 [*Ant.* 6.295-309 is found in vol. V, pp. 312-321 where the translation and the notes are by Marcus]). I have likewise consulted the text and apparatus of *Ant.* 6.295-309 as found in B. Niese, *Flavii Josephi Opera: Editio Maior* II (Berlin, Weidmann, 1885-1895) 68-72.

⁴ I likewise note the Hebrew fragments of 1 Samuel 25 found in 4QSam^a as cited by E. C. Ulrich, *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus* (HSM 19; Chico, CA, Scholars, 1978) (on p. 271 Ulrich in his "List of 4QSam^a Fragments" cites 1 Sam 25:3-12, 20-21, 25-26, 39-40).

⁵ For the text of B I use A. E. Brooke, N. Maclean and H. St. J. Thackeray (eds.), *The Old Testament in Greek According to the Text of Codex Vaticanus. II: I I and II Samuel* (Cambridge, Univ. Press, 1928). It might be noted that 1 Samuel 25 constitutes part of one of the so-called "non-kaige" segments of the Books of Reigns first identified by Thackeray, i.e. 1 Rgns 11:2-2 Rgns 2:11 in which a certain assimilation to the text of (proto-) MT has occurred, see J. D. Shenkel, *Chronology and Recensional Development in the Greek Text of Kings* (HSM 1; Cambridge, MA, Harvard Univ. Press, 1968) 10-11.

⁶ For the text of L I use: N. Fernández Marcos / J. R. Busto Saiz, *El Texto Antioqueno de la Biblia Griega. I. 1-2 Samuel* (TECC 50; Madrid, CSIC, 1989).

⁷ I use the text edited by A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic* II (Leiden, Brill, 1992) and the translation of D. J. Harrington / A. J. Saldarini, *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets* (The Aramaic Bible 10; Wilmington, Glazier, 1987).

⁸ On the question of Josephus' text for the material of the books of Samuel overall, see the foundational work of A. Mez, *Die Bibel des Josephus untersucht für Buch V-VI der Archäologie* (Basel, Jaeger & Kober, 1895). Mez himself concluded that for Samuel Josephus' primary Biblical text was a proto-Lucianic one; his view has been widely followed, see L. H. Feldman, *Josephus and Modern Scholarship (1937-1980)* (Berlin - New York, De Gruyter, 1984) 166-170.

main characters, i.e. David, Abigail and Nabal, evidence distinctive features vis-à-vis the Biblical depiction of them?

Given the length of the Biblical/Josephan material to be studied, I break this down into five parallel units as follows: 1) Characters introduced (1 Sam 25:2-3// *Ant.* 6.295-296); 2) David-Nabal Interaction (1 Sam 25:4-13// *Ant.* 6.297-299); 3) Interlude: Abigail Informed (1 Sam 25:14-17// *Ant.* 6.300); 4) Abigail-David Interaction (1 Sam 25:18-35// *Ant.* 6.301-305); and 5) Sequels (1 Sam 25:36-44// *Ant.* 6.306-309). I shall now examine each of these units in turn.

I. CHARACTERS INTRODUCED

1 Sam 25:1a represents a parenthesis within the story of David's wanderings telling of the death of Samuel, the mourning for him and his burial in Ramah. Josephus expands this notice into a eulogy for Samuel that encompasses three paragraphs, i.e. 6.292-294.⁹ On the other hand he has no equivalent (though see below) to the attached mention (25:1b) of David's move to the "wilderness of Paran" (so MT; B Μάων; L τὴν Ἐπήκοον), given, perhaps, the discrepancy among the textual witnesses regarding the name of the site. The story's villain, Nabal, is introduced, initially without name, in 25:2α as a "man of Maon" (so MT; B Μαών; L ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ) with business "in Carmel". Like the source, Josephus (6.295) speaks first only of an anonymous figure. In his presentation that figure becomes a "Ziphite (τις τῶν Ζιφηνῶν)"¹⁰ of the city of Emman

⁹ On the Josephan Samuel, see L. H. Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of Samuel": *Abr-Naharain* 30 (1992) 103-145.

¹⁰ This indication replaces the reference to "Carmel" in 1 Sam 25:2. Why did Josephus make this substitution? Perhaps, he took the Biblical place name as referring to the northern Mount "Carmel" rather than to the Judean site of the same name in the vicinity of Maon and Ziph (see RSV note *ad loc.*). If so, he would have found it strange that Nabal's business was at a place ("Carmel") so far removed from his hometown ("Maon"). Accordingly, he substituted a reference to Nabal's belonging to the "Ziphites" for the former indication, doing so on the basis of 1 Sam 23:24 (MT // *Ant.* 6.280, cf. following note) where "Ziph" and "Maon" appear side by side. Josephus' identification of Nabal, David's future antagonist, as a "Ziphite" further makes sense given that in the context of 1 Samuel 25 the Ziphites figure as enemies of David whose whereabouts they twice betray to Saul, see 1 Sam 23:19-24 (// *Ant.* 6.277-280); 26:1 (// 6.310).

(Ἐμμῶν)." ¹¹ 1 Sam 25:2aβ qualifies Nabal, rather indeterminately, as "very great (LXX μέγας)" and then goes on to cite his three thousand sheep and one thousand goats. Josephus specifies the first source item in light of the second: "(he) was wealthy and had much cattle (πολυφρέμμα-τος) ¹²; indeed he maintained a flock of three thousand sheep and a thousand goats."

1 Sam 25:2 concludes with mention of the "man" (Nabal) shearing his sheep in Carmel; this notice is resumed in 25:4 following the parenthetical characterization of Abigail and Nabal in v. 3. Josephus dispenses with the Bible's opening reference to the shearing operation. In its place he inserts a long "aside" concerning David's instructions to his followers. This reads:

Now David had charged his men to see that these (flocks) should be kept safe (ἀσυνῆ) ¹³ and unharmed, and that neither through greed nor want nor because they were in the wilderness (ὕπὸ τῆς ἐρημίας) ¹⁴ and could escape detection, should they do them any injury, but should hold it more important than all these things to wrong no man (τὸ μηδὲν ἀδικεῖν) and should reckon it a crime (δεινόν) and a offence against God (πρόσαντες τῷ θεῷ) ¹⁵ to touch what belonged to another.

Josephus found inspiration for the above insertion in the subsequent course of the source story where it is twice affirmed that Nabal's shep-

¹¹ The codices MSP as well as the Greek Excerpt read Ἐμμῶ, see Lat Ammon. According to Mez, *Bibel*, p. 30 Josephus' name for Nabal's city (Ἐμμῶν) and the reading found in L (ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ) go back to "eine gemeinsame Urform." For A. Schlatter, *Die hebräischen Namen bei Josephus* (BFCT 17.3; Gütersloh, Bertelsmann, 1913), s.v. נָבָל, on the contrary, the form read by Marcus "ist... verstellt aus Μῶων; schr. Μῶωνος." Compare A. Schalit, *Namenwörterbuch zu Flavius Josephus* (Leiden, Brill, 1968), s.v. Ἐμμῶν: "Der Name... ist in Ἐμ und Μῶν aufzulösen. Das erste Element stellt das ἐν von 1 Reg 25,2 ἐν τῇ Μῶων dar; bei J hat sich der Buchstabe ν an das M von Μῶων assimilirt, so das wir ἐμ haben. Μῶν ist natürlich eine Kontraktion des Μῶων der LXX." Further according to Schalit the above development had occurred already in the LXX MS used by Josephus whence it was "gedankenlos" taken over by him.

¹² This term is hapax in Josephus.

¹³ This term is hapax in Josephus.

¹⁴ This phrase might be regarded as Josephus' echo of the notice —previously passed over by him— of 25:1b about David's repairing to "the wilderness (LXX εἰς τὴν ἐρημον) of Paran."

¹⁵ This phrase is hapax in Josephus.

herds and flocks were in no way molested by David's men. This affirmation appears first in the instructions David gives the messengers he sends to Nabal (v. 7) and recurs in the report of one of Nabal's shepherds to Abigail (v. 15). Josephus' "anticipation" of these statements invests them with the credibility that is his as *Ant.*'s all-reliable narrator.¹⁶ The above notices with their portrayal of a David who even "in the wilderness" does not neglect the moral education of his men would likewise surely enhance his stature in the eyes of philosophically-minded Gentile readers.¹⁷ More generally still, by means of the above teaching he attributes to David, Josephus would also be seeking to assure those same readers that Jews do indeed respect the property rights of others.

Both the Bible and Josephus will subsequently represent Nabal, the beneficiary of David's directives, as a thoroughly despicable character. In light of that depiction, readers might be led to wonder why David would have shown such solicitude in regard to him as Josephus has just exhibited him doing. By way of answer to this question about David's psychology, Josephus (6.296a) rounds off the above insertion with the following remark: "These instructions he gave to his men in the belief that he was obliging a good man (ἀγαθῷ) and one worthy (ἀξίῳ) of such consideration (τῆς προνοίας)." After the foregoing lengthy insertion, Josephus (6.296b) rejoins the source for its v. 3. According to the chiasmic pattern of that verse, the names of the spouses appear in the order Nabal and Abigail, while the characterizations of them follow in reverse order. Josephus rearranges. He begins with "Nabulos" (Νάβαλος)¹⁸ whom he straightaway describes as "a hard man and of bad character (σκληρὸς καὶ πονηρὸς)¹⁹, who lived according to the practices (τοῖς ἐπιτηδεύμασιν)

¹⁶ By contrast, the evidently self-interested character of the "protection claim" that David instructs the messengers to make to Nabal in 25:7, i.e. as a basis for the reward request that follows in 25:8, leaves the reader of the Biblical account wondering how much credence should be placed in that claim.

¹⁷ L. H. Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of David": *HUCA* 60 (1989) 129-154, p. 140 cites the above passage as an instance of the historian's retouching of the Biblical record so as to highlight David's possession of the Greek cardinal virtue of justice.

¹⁸ This is the declined form of the name as found in LXX, i.e. Ναβάλ.

¹⁹ This adjectival collocation occurs only here in Josephus. Note the ironic contrast between David's surmise as reported in 6.296a that he was dealing with a "good man" (ἀγαθῷ) and Josephus' own characterization of Nabal in 6.296b as πονηρὸς. See also n. 23.

of the cynics (κυνικήs ἀσκήκος)." ²⁰ The wording of Josephus' characterization of Nabal here is notably similar to that of LXX (BL) which reads ὁ ἄνθρωπος σκληρὸς καὶ πονηρὸς ἐν ἐπιτηδεύμασιν, καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος κυνικός. ²¹ This verbal agreement, which does suggest Josephus' familiarity with a LXX-like text of 1 Samuel 25, is all the more noteworthy given his consistent penchant for modifying the wording of his sources as can be seen dramatically, e.g., in his treatment of the *Letter of Aristeeas* in *Ant.* 12.12-118. ²² As for Nabal's wife, Josephus leaves aside – for the moment – her name as given in 25:3 even while elaborating on its characterization of her: "he had, however, been blessed with a wife who was *virtuous* (ἀγαθῆs) ²³, discreet (σώφρονος, compare LXX ἀγαθὴ συνέσει) and good to look upon (τὸ εἶδος σπουδαίας λελογχώς ²⁴, LXX ἀγαθὴ τῷ εἶδει σφόδρα)." ²⁵

II. DAVID-NABAL INTERACTION

1 Sam 25:4 initiates a new sequence in the Biblical account. At this juncture, David "hears" of Nabal's sheep-shearing (v. 4, see v. 2b), whereupon he dispatches ten of his young men to "greet" Nabal (v. 5).

²⁰ This is Josephus' only mention of the "Cynics." On this philosophical current of his time, see recently F. G. Dowling, *Cynics and Christian Origins* (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1992).

²¹ This is LXX's rendering of the MT designation in 25:3b, i.e. כלבו, of Nabal's ethnic origins which it associates with the Hebrew word כלב, "dog."

²² On this feature see L. H. Feldman, "Use, Authority and Exegesis of Mikra in the Writings of Josephus," in M. J. Mulder / H. Sysling (eds.), *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (CRINT 2:1; Assen, van Gorcum, 1988) 455-518, p. 479.

²³ This reference to Abigail's moral character has no equivalent as such in 25:3 (although see the double use of the term ἀγαθὴ with reference to her "understanding" and "appearance" in LXX). By means of the above term Josephus represents Abigail as being in reality the "good" person whom David wrongly took her "evil" husband to be, see n. 19.

²⁴ Niese, *ad loc.* reads the last words above with the codices RO as ὀραίας λελογχώς.

²⁵ Rabbinic tradition elaborates on Abigail's beauty, see *b. Meg.* 15a which designates her (along with Sarah, Rahab and Esther) as one of the four most beautiful women in history, the very memory of whom inspires desire.

Vv. 6-8 then "quote" David's instructions to his messengers at length. Finally, v. 9 reports the actual delivery of the message. Josephus (6.297) compresses instructions and delivery into a single formulation. His version of vv. 4-6 reads: "At that time, then, when this Nabal was shearing (ἔκειρε, LXX κείρει) his sheep, David²⁶ sent ten of his men (ἄνδρας, LXX παιδάρια) by whom he greeted him (αὐτὸν ἀσπάζεται²⁷, cf. L 1 Rgns 25:5 ἀσπάσασθε αὐτόν) and joined him in praying (συνεύχεται)²⁸ that he might be so employed for many years to come."²⁹

Following the actual "greeting" prescribed by him in v. 6, David goes on to instruct his messengers to inform Nabal of the good treatment his shepherds have received from his (David's) men (v. 7) — a fact to which the former can themselves attest (v. 8a)— and then to ask Nabal to give them something (v. 8b). Josephus —continuing to report the actual delivery of the message to Nabal (see above)— highlights the point of David's whole message, i.e. the request for a donation by mentioning this in first place: "he then besought him to grant him somewhat from his abundant means."³⁰ To this appeal the Josephan David then adds a series of "motivations", partially inspired by 25:7-8a: "he would learn from his shepherds that (// v. 8a)³¹ David and his men had done them no wrong (μη-

²⁶ In 25:4 David hears of Nabal's shearing operation "in the desert." This indication picks up on the notice of 25:1b about David's repairing to "the desert of Paran" (MT). Josephus, who passed over that earlier indication, leaves aside that of 25:4 as well.

²⁷ Note the historic present, a very frequent feature in Josephus' writings, see C. T. Begg, *Josephus' Account of the Early Divided Monarchy* (AJ 8,212-420) (BETL 108; Leuven, Leuven Univ. Press - Peeters, 1993) 10-11, n. 32.

²⁸ Note again the historic present.

²⁹ The above is Josephus' specification/compression of David's more general "greeting" as cited in 25:6 "Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have."

³⁰ In formulating David's request Josephus confines himself to the above specific appeal corresponding to the final words of 25:8b. In so doing, he dispenses both with the more general request ("let my young men find favor in your eyes") and the attached motivation ("for we come on a feast [literally good] day") which precede it. His omission of the latter item perhaps reflects Josephus' uncertainty about the identity of the "day" in question.

³¹ Note how in Josephus' version David's claims about the benefits done by his men to Nabal's shepherds are given a heightened credibility by having the latter invoked at the very start —rather than only as a kind of afterthought (so the sequence of 25:7-8a)— as witnesses to the veracity of those claims.

δὲν αὐτοὺς ἀδίκησαν³² ³³, but had been (γεγόνασι)³⁴ the guardians of their persons and of their flocks throughout their long sojourn in the wilderness (ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ)³⁵, nor would he ever repent (μετανοήσει)³⁶ of having given anything to David."³⁷ Josephus then (6.298) rounds off his account of David's message with the notice (// 25:9): "the messengers acquitted themselves of this mission to Nabal..."³⁸

1 Sam 25:10 proceeds immediately to the brusque question with which Nabal responds to the messengers' words. Josephus pauses to first provide readers with an evaluation of Nabal's subsequent reaction: "but he gave them a very uncivil (ἀπανθρώπως)³⁹ and harsh (σκληρῶς)⁴⁰ recep-

³² Thus the reading of the codices RO (+ Lat). The remaining witnesses have ἡδικήσαμεν which first person plural form corresponds to that found in LXX 1 Rgns 25:7 οὐκ ἀπεκωλύσαμεν αὐτούς; see also n. 34.

³³ Note the verbal echo of the instructions previously attributed to David by Josephus in 6.295, i.e. τὸ μηδὲν ἀδικεῖν. The repetition of the formula serves to underscore the credibility of the claims which David here makes on behalf of his men.

³⁴ This is the reading of the codices RO (+ Lat); the remaining witnesses read γεγόναμεν; compare n. 32.

³⁵ Compare 25:7b "they (Nabal's shepherds) missed nothing, all the time they were in Carmel." Here again (see on 6.295) Josephus eliminates a source reference to "Carmel." The sequence italicized above in which David makes a positive claim on behalf of his men has no equivalent in 25:7 where David's assertions are formulated exclusively in negative terms. Josephus may have found inspiration for the additional, positive claim he attributes to David here in the words of the servant to Abigail cited in 25:15 "yet the (i.e. David's) men were very good to us." In any case, by having David aver that his men not only refrained from harming Nabal's shepherds, but also actively "guarded" them, Josephus underscores the well-foundedness of the request David here makes of Nabal. See further n. 37.

³⁶ On Josephus' terminology for "repentance," see A. Schlatter, *Die Theologie des Judentums nach dem Bericht des Josefus* (BFCT 2.26; Gütersloh, Bertelsmann, 1932) 146-147; E. K. Dietrich, *Die Umkehr (Bekehrung und Busse) im Alten Testament und im Judentum* (Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1936) 309-313.

³⁷ With this, Biblically unparalleled word of assurance Josephus supplies David with yet another (see n. 35) motivation for his request of Nabal which, accordingly, appears as an eminently reasonable one.

³⁸ Josephus has no equivalent to either of the contrasting indications with which 25:9 concludes in MT ("and they [the messengers] waited [וַיִּחַיְתוּ]", compare TJ "they ceased [קָרְעוּ]") and LXX ("and he [Nabal] jumped up [ἀνεπήδησεν]").

³⁹ Josephus' only other uses of the term ἀνάνθρωπος are in *Ant.* 8.117 and 16.42.

⁴⁰ This term echoes Josephus' previous characterization – itself inspired by LXX 25:3 – of Nabal as σκληρός in 6.296. The above adjectival collocation as applied to

tion". Nabal's question as cited in 25:10a is a double one: "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse?" The two parts of this question might seem not to agree in that the latter query suggests that, in fact, Nabal already knows who David is. Accordingly, Josephus reformulates: "He first asked them who this David was, *and, on being told that he was the son of Jesse (Ἰεσσαίου, LXX Ἰεσσαί), said...*". Following his opening questions (25:10a), the Biblical Nabal goes on (25:10b) to assert disdainfully: "there are many servants nowadays who are breaking away from (the face of) their masters." Josephus accentuates the contemptuousness of Nabal's reply by having him censure the "uppitiness" of contemporary servants: "so then nowadays fugitives (οἱ δραπέται, cf. B [οἱ δούλοι] ἀναχωροῦντες, L οἱ ἀποδιδράσκοντες)⁴¹ think much of themselves and boast of deserting their masters (δεσπότης, LXX τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ)." Nabal's response ends up in 25:11 with a rhetorical question about his giving supplies to "men who come from I do not know where." Josephus leaves aside Nabal's closing question — perhaps on the consideration that Nabal, in fact does "know", at this point, whence his hearers have "come."

Instead, he passes immediately (6.299) to his version of 25:12 (the messengers return and inform David), formulating this as a genitive construction that leads into the account of David's reaction (// 25:13): "these words being reported to David...". In relating the latter point, Josephus expands the source notice with mention of David's emotional state upon hearing of Nabal's response: "(these words) aroused his indignation (ὀργίζεται)...".⁴² 1 Sam 25:13a begins by citing David's direct address command to his troops: "Every man gird on his sword," and then relates that both they and he did this, whereupon some four hundred men "go up after David." Josephus omits the Biblical notice on the "execution" of David's command by his men as something self-evident. He likewise

Nabal in 6.298 accentuates the contrast between him and the politeness just previously displayed by David in his message to the former.

⁴¹ This is Josephus' only use of the term δραπέτης in *Ant.*; it appears twice in *BJ* (1.198; 2.358). The term as used here in *Ant.* 6.298 is obviously directed against David who in what precedes is portrayed as a "fugitive" from Saul. Ulrich, *Qumran Text*, 186, sees Josephus' form δραπέται as reflecting his dependence on the compound participle ἀποδιδράσκοντες of L.

⁴² Note the historic present.

rewords that command in indirect address⁴³, while also incorporating the source statement about the advance of the four hundred into this: "... bidding four hundred of his men to follow him in arms (ὀπλισμένους)...". Thereafter, he explicitly ascribes to David's own initiative that which 25:13b records simply as a fact: "and leaving two hundred to guard (φύλακας)⁴⁴ the baggage (τῶν σκευῶν, Β μετὰ [L ἐπὶ] τῶν σκευῶν)...".

To his version of 25:13 Josephus appends (6.299b) a series of notices that have no parallel at this juncture in the source account. The first of these added elements is the parenetical remark attached to his previous mention, drawn from 25:13, of David's companies of 400 and 200 men, respectively: "for he had *by now* six hundred men." Josephus' insertion of this (seemingly self-evident) tally is related to the fact that, earlier (see 6.274), he had reproduced the LXX 1 Rgns 23:13 figure, i.e. 400 (MT 600) for the number of men who accompanied David on his flight from Saul. In light of this earlier figure, the reference here in 6.299 to David's "now" having 600 men is intended to assure readers that Josephus has not "forgotten" his previous statement on the point.

Next, Josephus proceeds to spell out the destination, purpose and motivation for David's advance to which 25:13 merely alludes in passing. His notice on these points reads:

... he marched against Nabal, having sworn utterly to destroy his house and all his possessions that self-same night; for he was angry not merely at his ingratitude (ἀγάριστος) in making no return to those who had shown him such great kindness (φιλοanthρωπία)⁴⁵, but also because he had further insulted (προσεβλοσφήμησε)⁴⁶ those from whom he had received no injury.

As noted, the above sequence represents Josephus' own "appendix" to 25:13. Clearly, however, he derives this appendix by anticipation⁴⁷

⁴³ On Josephus' penchant for replacing Biblical direct with indirect address, see Begg, *Josephus' Account*, 12-13, n. 38.

⁴⁴ Josephus' specification that David left the 200 to "guard" the baggage (compare MT/LXX 25:13 "they remained with the baggage") has a counterpart in TJ which renders "200 were left behind to guard (למשר) the baggage."

⁴⁵ Contrast the cognate term ἀπάνθρωπος used of Nabal in 6.298. On φιλοanthρωπία and its *Wortfeld* in Josephus, see Schlatter, *Theologie*, 29-30.

⁴⁶ This term is hapax in Josephus.

⁴⁷ Compare Josephus' previous "anticipation" of the source statements about

from the "quotation" of David's statement regarding his expedition against Nabal which one reads in 25:21-22, where, it might seem, that statement come "too late" given that, by this point, David has already long been underway and is, in fact, about to encounter Abigail. Accordingly, Josephus shifts the content of 25:21-22 to a more "logical" point in the flow of the narrative, i.e. in immediate conjunction with his account of David's preparatory measures (// 25:13). That, in fact, Josephus' wording in 6.299b is inspired by that of 25:21-22 is clear from a comparison of the former (see above) with the latter which reads (RSV):

Now David had said, "Surely in vain have I guarded all this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; and he has returned me evil for good.⁴⁸ God do so to David and more also⁴⁹, if by morning I leave so much as one male [MT/LXX literally anyone pissing against the wall] of all who belong to him."⁵⁰

III. INTERLUDE: ABIGAIL INFORMED

Between the two longer segments concerning, respectively, David's interactions with Nabal (25:4-13// 6.297-299) and Abigail (25:18-35// 6.301-305) stands a brief interlude (25:14-17// 6.300) in which Abigail is

David's solicitude for Nabal's property made by David himself (25:7) and one of Nabal's young men (25:15) in 6.295b.

⁴⁸ Note how Josephus in 6.299b reverses the order of David's words in 25:21-22, having him first cite the reason for his outrage at Nabal and only then his intentions with regard to him. Compare his inversion of David's claim about the good his men had done Nabal's shepherds (25:7-8a) and the "request" he makes on the basis of this (25:8b) in 6.297b. Note too that at the end of 6.299b (see the italicized phrase above) Josephus adds a further motivation for David's outrage at Nabal, i.e. the latter's "insulting" those who had done him no wrong. Thereby, he seeks to give a greater legitimacy to David's murderous intent. See also n. 52.

⁴⁹ Compare 6.299b above where Josephus simply notes the fact of David's "having sworn." Also elsewhere, Josephus regularly leaves aside the actual wording of characters' oaths as cited in the Bible, likely with a view to precluding any suggestion of a misuse of the divine name.

⁵⁰ Compare Josephus' accentuation of David's threatening words in 6.299b "(having sworn to utterly destroy) his (Nabal's) house and all his possessions." With this formulation Josephus avoids as well the vulgar phrase "anyone pissing against the wall" of MT/LXX 25:22 (TJ does the same with its rendering "anyone knowing knowledge," ידע מדע).

informed of what has just transpired between David and her husband.⁵¹ Abigail's informant is called, somewhat indeterminately, "one of the young men" (LXX παιδαρίων) in 25:14; Josephus' designation is more specific, i.e. "one of the slaves (δούλου) that kept the flocks of Nabal...". The young man's report to Abigail is couched (25:14b-17) in direct address; Josephus, characteristically (see above on 6.299), shifts to indirect address. From her informant Abigail first (25:14b) hears that David had sent messengers to her husband who "railed" (LXX ἐξέκλινεν) at them. Josephus' "slave" expatiates considerably on Nabal's perverse reaction⁵²: "... David had sent a message⁵³ and *not only failed to receive a fair answer* (τῶν μετρίων), but had been further insulted (προσ-υβρισθείη)⁵⁴ with shocking abuse (βλασθημίας)...".⁵⁵

The informant's report continues in 25:15-16 with an extended contrast between Nabal's rude response and the sustained solicitude previously displayed to his fellows by David's men. Josephus, who has previously "anticipated" (see 6.299b) these claims on David's behalf, compresses⁵⁶ this component of the slave's message: "... although he had shown all consideration (πάση... προνοία)⁵⁷ to the shepherds and had protected their flocks (φυλακῆ τῶν ποιμνίων)." ⁵⁸

⁵¹ Throughout 6.300 (as previously in 6.296, contrast 25:3) Josephus will refer to Abigail without naming her (contrast 25:14). His very first use of the name will come in 6.301, see above.

⁵² Again (see n. 48) the effect of this amplification is to underscore the seriousness of Nabal's crime which, in turn, gives David's response a greater legitimacy.

⁵³ Josephus omits the geographical specification from the servant's report in 25:14, i.e. that David's messengers were dispatched "from the wilderness"; recall the similar omission in 6.297 vis-à-vis 25:4.

⁵⁴ Josephus' only other use of the verb προσυβρίζω is in *Ant.* 12.181.

⁵⁵ With this term Abigail's informant echoes Josephus' own statement (6.299) that David's anger was due to the fact that his men had been "further insulted" (προσεβλασφήμησε) by Nabal.

⁵⁶ He leaves aside, e.g., the image of the "wall by day and night" which the informant uses of David's men in 25:16. Also elsewhere Josephus tends to eschew Biblical images in favor of their prosaic equivalents, see Begg, *Josephus' Account*, 279, n. 1829.

⁵⁷ Note the echo of 6.296 where Josephus cites David's supposition that Nabal was a man "worthy of such consideration (προνοίας)." Cf. also the equivalent phrase πολλῆ φιλανθρωπίᾳ which Josephus uses of David's men in their dealings with Nabal in 6.299.

⁵⁸ With this phrase Josephus' informant underscores the credibility of David's prior

Abigail's informant concludes his report by urging her (25:17a) "to know this and consider what you should do." Josephus omits this exhortation which might seem impertinent in the mouth of a "slave." In place thereof, he passes directly to the first of the two statements with which the speaker motivates (25:17b) his appeal that Abigail do something. His version of the item runs: "Such [i.e. like the one just taken by Nabal] action, he added, would result in mischief (ἐπὶ κακῶ, LXX ἡ κακία) for his master (τοῦ δεσπότου, LXX εἰς τὸν κύριον)⁵⁹ and for her (i.e. Abigail)."⁶⁰ From 25:17 he omits as well the second reason cited by the informant in urging Abigail to act, i.e. "and he (Nabal) is so ill-natured (MT בן־בליעל, LXX υἱὸς λοιμὸς) that one cannot speak to him."⁶¹

IV. ABIGAIL-DAVID EXCHANGE

The longest segment within our episode is the account of the exchange between Abigail and David in 25:18-35// *Ant.* 6.301-305. The exchange proper is preceded by a segment (25:18-22// 6.301) telling of Abigail's setting out and her eventual meeting of David. 25:18 first enumerates the various provisions (200 loaves, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five measures of parched grain, a hundred clusters of raisins, and 200 fig cakes) which Abigail makes haste to lay on her asses. It is at this juncture that Josephus finally cites the heroine's name, doing so following the transitional phrase with which 6.301 begins: "*at the servant's story, Abigaia (Ἀβιγαία)*⁶² — *such was her name...*"⁶³ Thereafter, he pres-

word as cited in 6.297: (Nabal) could learn from his own shepherds that David and his men "had been the guardians... of their flocks (φύλακες... τῶν ποιμνίων)."

⁵⁹ This same difference in the Greek terms for "master" used occurs in 6.298// 1 Rgns 25:10b, see above.

⁶⁰ Compare the more general wording of 25:17 "and against his house (LXX οἶκον)." The Josephan informant's specific mention of Abigail herself as one of David's intended victims here highlights the drama surrounding their subsequent meeting.

⁶¹ Perhaps, Josephus' omission of this item may have in view his subsequent presentation (see 6.301, 306), where, following 25:36, he attributes Abigail's (temporary) "not speaking" to her husband rather to the latter's drunkenness.

⁶² So L; B Ἀβειγαία.

⁶³ This appended phrase underscores the fact that, in contrast to his source,

ents a condensed version of 25:18 from which he omits its extended list of particular items (see above): "... she saddled her asses (τοὺς ὄνους, so LXX), loaded them with all manner of presents...". To this notice Josephus directly attaches his parallel to 25:19b with its mention that, in setting out, Abigail said nothing to her husband. In so doing he skips over Abigail's directive (25:19a) to the young men "Go on before me; behold I come after you."⁶⁴ Conversely, he supplies, as the Bible itself does not, a reason for the fact of Abigail's not notifying her husband at this point, namely his being "insensible from drink" (ὕπν... μέθης ἀναίσθητος).⁶⁵ Here again (see on 6.295, 299), Josephus "anticipates" a subsequent source element, see 25:36 which speaks of Nabal's being "very drunk" (LXX μεθύων) at the moment of Abigail's return so that she tells him nothing until morning. Finally, he rounds off the account of Abigail's preparations (// 25:18-19) with explicit mention that "she set off (to find) David."⁶⁶

It is (25:20) as Abigail is "coming down (LXX καταβαινούσης) under the cover [TJ side] of the mountain (LXX ἐν σκεπῇ τοῦ ὄρους) of the mountain" and David and his men are advancing towards her that the two parties meet. Josephus (6.301b) formulates equivalently: "and as she was descending (καταβαινούση) the defiles of the mountain (τὰ στενὰ τοῦ ὄρους), she was met (ἀπῆντησε)⁶⁷ by David *coming against Nabal* (ἐπὶ Νάβαλον ἐρχόμενος)⁶⁸ with his *four hundred* (men)."⁶⁹

In the source account, the meeting of (25:20) and exchange between the parties (25:23-35) is interrupted by a flashback (25:21-22a) concerning David's thoughts as he sets out against Nabal. As noted, Josephus has

Josephus is here introducing the name "Abigail" for the first time.

⁶⁴ The effect of this "omission" is that the Josephan Abigail appears to go forth alone to meet David; her doing so underscores her courage. See also n. 69.

⁶⁵ Compare Josephus' notice on Gedaliah in *Ant.* 10.169 βεβαπτισμένον εἰς ἀναίσθησιον... ὑπὸ τῆς μέθης.

⁶⁶ This appended notice underscores the purposefulness of Abigail's actions.

⁶⁷ In LXX 25:20 Abigail herself is the subject of this verb, whereas in Josephus David is subject, see above.

⁶⁸ Note the echo of Josephus' -likewise inserted- phrase ἐπὶ τὸν Νάβαλον ἐβάδιζεν in 6.299.

⁶⁹ Josephus' re-utilization of this figure from 6.299 (// 25:13) here serves to accentuate the (implicit) contrast between David's large force and the solitary Abigail, see n. 64.

"anticipated" the latter sequence (see 6.299). Hence, he now passes immediately from mention of the meeting to the initiatives thereupon taken by Abigail. 1 Sam 25:23-24a relates Abigail's opening, non-verbal homage to David rather circumstantially. Josephus (6.302) compresses: "At sight of (θεασαμένη, LXX εἶδεν) him the woman leapt to the ground (κατεπήδησε)⁷⁰, and falling on her face (πεσοῦσα ἐπὶ πρόσωπον)⁷¹ bowed down before him (προσεκύνει)...".⁷²

Abigail's actual word to David, encompassing all of 25:23-31, comprises an appeal that he relent, set within a variety of exculpations and motivations. In his two-paragraph parallel (6.302-303), Josephus both rearranges and significantly condenses. Thus, he leaves aside Abigail's opening assumption of guilt, coupled with a plea for David's attention (25:24). Instead, he has her come (// 25:25) immediately to the salient point, i.e. Nabal's misdeed and her own seeming negligence: "she entreated him not to mind (μνημονεύειν) the words of Nabal⁷³, for *he could not be ignorant that* the man was like his name (Nabal in the Hebrew tongue [κατὰ τὴν Ἑβραίων γλῶτταν]⁷⁴ signifies 'folly' [ἀφροσύνην])⁷⁵, while for herself she pleaded that she had not seen (θεάσασθαι, LXX εἶδον) David's messengers."

Having begun (6.302b) his rendition of Abigail's words in indirect discourse, Josephus now (6.303) reverts to the source's direct discourse.⁷⁶ His doing this coincides with his continued rearrangement of the components of Abigail's speech. Specifically, passing over for the

⁷⁰ Compare 25:23 "she made haste and alighted (B κατεπήδησεν) from her ass...".

⁷¹ Compare LXX ἔπεσεν... ἐπὶ πρόσωπον αὐτῆς.

⁷² Niese reads προσεκύνησε with the codices ROE here. Compare 25:23bβ-24αα "she bowed to the ground (LXX προσεκύνησεν). She fell (so MT, > LXX) at his feet...".

⁷³ Compare 25:25αα "Let my Lord not regard this ill-natured man [see 25:17b]...". Note, here again, Josephus' substitution of indirect for Biblical direct address.

⁷⁴ The above expression occurs (with minor variations) also in *Ant.* 1.34, 284, 305, 333; 3.291; 5.200, 201, 323; 6.22; 9.290.

⁷⁵ With his Gentile readers in view, Josephus formulates the above explanation of the name "Nabal" as an editorial aside, whereas in 25:25 it constitutes an integral part of Abigail's discourse: "Nabal is his name, and folly (LXX ἀφροσύνη) is with him."

⁷⁶ Also elsewhere in his renderings of Biblical speeches, Josephus oscillates between the direct discourse of the original and his own preferred indirect discourse, see Begg, *Josephus' Account*, 123-124, n. 772.

moment (but see below) the content of vv. 26-27, he cites, back-to-back, the heroine's negative (// 25:25) and positive appeals (// 25:28a), the latter reading: "wherefore pardon (συγγίνωσκε, LXX ἄρον... τὸ ἀνόμημα) me."⁷⁷ To this appeal for pardon by Abigail, Josephus next attaches a reworked version⁷⁸ of her words in 25:26, earlier passed over by him: "*and render thanks to God*⁷⁹ who has prevented thee (κωλύοντι σε, LXX ἐκώλυσέν σε) from soiling (μιασθῆναι) [thy hands] with human blood (ἀνθρωπίνῳ αἵματι).⁸⁰ *For if thou remainest clean (καθαρόν), He himself will avenge (ἐκδικήσει) thee on the wicked*⁸¹; and may the evil (κακά) that awaits Nabal fall likewise on the heads of thy foes (ἐχθρῶν)."⁸² Thereafter (6.304a), sticking with the sequence of the Biblical speech, he represents Abigail (// 25:27) as requesting David to receive what she has brought, and thereby evidence his goodwill towards her: "*But be gracious (εὐμενής) to me in*⁸³ *deigning to receive (δέξασθαι)*⁸⁴ *these (presents) (ταῦτα)*⁸⁵ *from me.*"⁸⁶

⁷⁷ In what immediately precedes (6.302) Abigail has spoken of her own not "seeing" David's messengers. Accordingly, it is appropriate that immediately thereafter (6.303) she should ask pardon for herself – as she does in fact do in Josephus' arrangement of her discourse.

⁷⁸ Josephus' version of the verse omits, e.g., Abigail's opening oath formula "... as the Lord lives, and as your soul lives"; compare his omission of the wording of David's "oath" (25:22) in his anticipation of this in 6.299.

⁷⁹ Abigail's exhorting David to "thanks" here has no parallel in the speech of her Biblical counterpart. The exhortation serves to underscore Abigail's confidence, already at this point, that the Lord will indeed keep David from bloodshed.

⁸⁰ This is Josephus' only use of the above phrase "defile with human blood," cf. *Ant.* 19.42. Compare 25:26 "... (seeing that the Lord has restrained you) from (coming into) bloodguilt (MT literally: bloods, בַּדָּמִים) and from taking vengeance with your own hand (literally: and saved your hand from you)."

⁸¹ The above conditional statement has no equivalent in 25:26 (or elsewhere in Abigail's discourse). It provides an additional motivation for David to do as Abigail asks.

⁸² Compare Abigail's concluding petition in 25:26 "now then let your enemies (LXX ἐχθροί) and those who seek to do evil (LXX κακά) to my lord be as Nabal." Josephus' Abigail, it will noted, expresses herself in more definite terms than does her Biblical counterpart about the fate awaiting Nabal (and the divine role therein).

⁸³ This appeal has no equivalent in the Biblical Abigail's speech as such. It serves to underscore the personal bond Abigail is attempting to establish with David which will lead him to act out of sympathy for her.

⁸⁴ This verb seems to reflect the LXX plus, i.e. λάβε in Abigail's word to David

The second half of the Biblical Abigail's speech (vv. 28b-31) focusses on the future awaiting David and concludes with the plea (v. 31) that he remember her once the Lord has "dealt well with him." Josephus, as we have seen, does reproduce most of the content of the first half of Abigail's discourse (vv. 24-28a), even while rearranging its sequence. He takes a different tack with the speech's second half, however (largely, though see below), replacing this with a conclusion of his own which keeps attention centered on the issue at hand, i.e. Abigail's urgent appeal that David relent now. Specifically, he has her (6.304), at this juncture, reiterate, in more expansive terms, her earlier plea (see 6.303// 25:28a) for forgiveness. Josephus' version of Abigail's closing words reads: "... and, out of regard for me (εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν τιμὴν)⁸⁷, dismiss (ἀπες) thy indignation and wrath (θυμὸν καὶ... ὀργήν)⁸⁸ against my husband and against his house (τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ).⁸⁹ For it becomes thee to show mildness (ἡμέρω)⁹⁰ and humanity (φιλανθρώπων)⁹¹, especially as thou art (destined) to be king (βασιλεύειν)."⁹²

in 25:27a which has no equivalent in the nominal formulation of MT, i.e. "this blessing (see next note) which your handmaid brought to my lord...".

⁸⁵ In 1 Sam 25:27a Abigail speaks metaphorically of "the blessing" (MT הַבְּרָכָה, LXX τὴν εὐλογίαν) she has brought with her.

⁸⁶ In 1 Sam 25:27b Abigail requests that her "blessing" be distributed to David's followers. By omitting this element in his version of her speech, Josephus keeps attention focussed on the developing bond between Abigail and David – David is being asked to take *for himself* what Abigail offers him.

⁸⁷ Note Abigail's continuing emphasis here that it is out of consideration for her personally that David should act as requested, see n. 83.

⁸⁸ The above collocation recurs (both times in reverse order) in *Ant.* 7.186; 20.108. The former text is of particular interest in that in it the collocation appears as the object of the verb ἀφίημι, David likewise being the subject, just as here in 6.304. Cf. *BJ* 1.655 and *Ant.* 9.262 where ὀργή is also used as the object of the verb ἀφίημι.

⁸⁹ This phrase is the same used in 6.299 where David swears "to utterly destroy his (Nabal's) house." Abigail is thus now asking David to annul that earlier oath of his "out of regard for me" (see above).

⁹⁰ Subsequently, Josephus re-employs this term of David in *Ant.* 7.43 "the people rejoiced that he was of so kind and gentle (ἡμέρω) a nature...".

⁹¹ Cf. 6.299 where the cognate noun is used in Josephus' statement that David was incensed at Nabal's ingratitude to "those who had shown him such great kindness (φιλανθρωπίαι)." See also the Josephan eulogy for David (7.391) whom he calls "... just, humane (φιλόανθρωπος)...".

⁹² The Josephan Abigail's closing reference to David's future kingship above

1 Sam 25:32-35 (*// Ant.* 6.305) recounts David's response to Abigail's plea. Here again, Josephus has recourse to rearrangement. Specifically, whereas the Biblical David accepts Abigail's "presents" (25:35a) in an interlude between the two components of his address to her (25:32-34, 35b), Josephus places his version of 25:35a ("accepting [δέξομενος] the presents [δῶρα]...") at the opening of the whole segment, thereby keeping together David's words to Abigail in a continuous sequence (while also highlighting his non-verbal gesture in response to her appeal of 6.304, "receive [δέξασθαι] these things").

David's word to Abigail opens in 25:32b with his "blessing" the Lord who sent her to meet him. Retaining here the source's direct discourse, Josephus has David state: "In truth, lady, it was a gracious (εὐμενής)⁹³ God who led thee to me this day." Having blessed God in v. 32b, David proceeds in 25:33 to "bless" Abigail's "discretion" (MT רָגַעָה, LXX ὁ τρόπος σου) and Abigail herself for keeping him from bloodguilt and self-perpetrated vengeance. Josephus omits the latter benediction(s) – although see below – perhaps because he felt it inappropriate to use the same term in reference to both God and a mortal as does 25:32-33. In its place, he couples David's recognition of God's providential act (*//* 25:32b) with a reference to what would otherwise have occurred (*//* 25:34). At the same time, however, Josephus reformulates 25:34 so as to highlight the potential danger for Abigail herself: "else (οὐ γὰρ ἄν)⁹⁴ thou wouldst not have seen the coming day."⁹⁵ To this affirmation by David Josephus

evidences her psychological astuteness – the very last thing David hears from her lips is a "reminder" about his future rule that certainly would have been welcome to him. Josephus drew this element from 1 Sam 25:30 where Abigail alludes to the time when the Lord will have appointed David "prince" (MT לְנִיזָר, LXX εἰς ἡγουμένον). Josephus' specification that David is to "reign as king" has its counterpart in TJ's rendition of 25:30 "... and he will appoint you to be king (מלכה) over Israel".

⁹³ This is the same term which Abigail uses of David himself in her plea to him in 6.304 "be gracious (εὐμενής) to me...". On the term as an epithet for God in Josephus, see Schlatter, *Theologie*, 30, 115.

⁹⁴ This phrase replaces David's oath formula as cited at the opening of 25:34 "for as surely as the Lord... lives..."; see on 6.299, 300 above. In his version of 25:34 Josephus likewise leaves aside the following protasis of David's conditional oath, i.e. "unless you had made haste and come to meet me" which seems to duplicate the reference to God's sending Abigail to him in 25:32b. See next note.

⁹⁵ Compare 25:34b "truly by morning *there would not have been left to Nabal so much as one male.*" The source verse did, it might be noted, provide Josephus with

then attaches a motivation which has, as such, no parallel in the context of his words as cited in 25:32-35, but which does echo David's previous oath as "quoted" in 6.299 (// 25:21-22). The appended item runs: "for I had sworn to destroy the house of Nabal this very night (ἀπολέσειν⁹⁶ τὸν οἶκον τὸν Ναβάλου διὰ τῆσδε τῆς νυκτός)⁹⁷ and to leave not one of you (ὕμῶν), belonging as you do to a man who has been so mean (πονηροῦ)⁹⁸ and ungrateful (ἀχαρίστου)⁹⁹ to me and my comrades."¹⁰⁰

Following the above "insertion," Josephus has David continue with a version of the latter's "benediction" of Abigail from 25:33 (see above): "But now thou hast forestalled me and mollified my wrath (καταμειλίξασθαι... θυμόν)¹⁰¹, since thou art in God's care (κηδομένου σου τοῦ θεοῦ)."¹⁰² The Biblical David concludes his response to Abigail by accepting her presents (25:35a), at the same time (25:35b) telling her to

inspiration for the above notice highlighting the danger facing Abigail herself with its phrase concluding David's oath formula (left aside by Josephus, see preceding note), i.e. "... (God) who has restrained me from hurting (LXX κοκοποιήσαι) you...".

⁹⁶ This is the emendation of Niese, followed by Marcus, for the ἀπολέσαι of the codices.

⁹⁷ Note the echo of 6.299 (David swore) ..ἐκείνη τῇ νυκτὶ τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ... ἀφανίσειν.

⁹⁸ This term echoes Josephus' initial qualification of Nabal as πονηρός in 6.296.

⁹⁹ See 6.299 where Josephus cites David's anger at Nabal's showing himself "ungrateful" (ἀχαρίστου).

¹⁰⁰ Once again, Josephus underscores here that David's anger is evoked not only by the injustice done himself personally, but also by Nabal's abuse of his men, compare 6.299 where David is said to be angry at Nabal for his ingratitude "to those who had shown him such great kindness" and his insulting of "those from whom he had received no injury." By means of this ("un-Biblical") emphasis, Josephus gives David's wrath a less self-centered and so less reprobate character.

¹⁰¹ Compare the (more obscure) wording of 25:33 which reads literally "... blessed are you (Abigail) who kept me this day from coming into bloods and my hand avenging myself." This is Josephus' only use of the above expression (and of the verb καταμειλίξομαι). The noun θυμός here does, however, echo Abigail's plea in 6.304 "dismiss thy indignation (θυμόν) and wrath...". This is thus one of a whole series of (verbal) contacts between Abigail's appeal and David's response in Josephus' version.

¹⁰² David's declaration here might be seen as Josephus' version of his statement as cited in 25:33, i.e. "blessed be you" which Josephus perhaps avoids given that the same term "blessed" has just been used of God himself in 25:32, see above in the text. In any case, the above construction with God as subject and a genitival phrase as object of the verb κηδω recurs in *BJ* 6.130; *Ant.* 1.209; 3.191; 4.2; 5.312; 6.9, 61; cf. 6.187.

go home in peace and stating that he has granted her petition (literally "lifted up her face"). Josephus devises his own conclusion to the exchange between David and Abigail. Already at the start of his account of David's response (see above) he reported David's acceptance of Abigail's gifts (// 25:35a). Reversing now the order of David's closing words as reported in 25:35b, he first has him affirm, in more explicit terms than in the Bible, that what Abigail had requested will happen, coupling this with an announcement of the reprobate Nabal's ultimate fate. This expanded version of 25:35b β reads: "But as for Nabal, though for thy sake to-day he be spared chastisement (*ἀφεθῆ... τῆς τιμωρίας*)¹⁰³, yet will he not escape retribution (*φεύξετα τὴν δίκην*)¹⁰⁴, but his conduct will find another occasion to prove his ruin (*τρόπος.. ἀπολεῖ*)." The additional, italicized words which Josephus attributes to David here are inspired by the source's account of Nabal's ignominious end (see 25:37-38). They likewise accentuate the stature of David by representing him implicitly as a "prophet", i.e. one who can make true predictions of coming events.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Josephus' two remaining uses of the above phrase are in *BJ* 1.594; *Ant.* 1.58 (note that the verb employed, i.e. ἀφίημι, is the same one utilized by Abigail in 6.304 where she urges David to "dismiss [*ἀφεξ*] thy indignation and wrath"). The wording of David's statement here in 6.305, which goes beyond that of 25:35b β in its explicit reference to Nabal's being spared for "thy (Abigail's) sake," is clearly intended to echo Abigail's plea as cited in 6.304 "... out of regard for me, dismiss thy indignation and wrath against my husband...". Thereby, the efficacy of Abigail's appeal and the extent of her influence on David is underscored.

¹⁰⁴ Josephus' only other use of this phrase is in *Ant.* 8.410. David's affirmation about God's dealing with Nabal echoes that attributed to Abigail in 6.303 "He Himself will avenge (*ἐκδικήσασα*) thee on the wicked." Once again, David makes his own Abigail's sentiments.

¹⁰⁵ This (implicit) portrayal of David as a "prophet" is in line with other passages in *Ant.* where, going beyond the Biblical *Vorlage*, Josephus uses the terms "prophesy" and "prophecy" in reference to David, see 6.166 and 8.108-109, and cf. L. H. Feldman, "Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus": *JTS* 41 NS (1990) 386-422, p. 390, n. 21. Compare *b. Meg.* 14a where the term "prophetess" is applied rather to Abigail. The Talmudic passage comes to its designation of Abigail as a prophetess on the basis of her word to David as cited in 25:31 "let *this* not be a stumbling block (MT למכשול) to thee" where "this" (i.e. David's potentially wrongful way of dealing with Nabal) is understood as an intended contrast with the matter which will indeed prove a "stumbling block" for him, i.e. his sin with Bathsheba which Abigail prophetically foresees as this moment.

V. SEQUELS

1 Sam 25:36-44 relates the sequels to Abigail's successful mission to David, first for Nabal (vv. 36-38) and then for Abigail herself (vv. 39-44). Josephus opens his parallel to this sequence (6.306-309) with a narrative transposition of David's word to Abigail cited in 25:35bα ("Go up in peace to your house") previously passed over by him: "having so spoken he dismissed the woman." Thereby, he provides a smooth transition to his following notice (// 25:36) that Abigail found her husband drunk on her return and so said nothing to him until the morning. In Josephus' presentation this notice, it will be recalled, has already been "anticipated" in 6.301 prior to his account of her departure. His resumption of the subject of Nabal's condition here in 6.306 now states "and she returning to her home (εἰς τὸν οἶκον)¹⁰⁶, found her husband carousing (εὐωχούμενον) with a large company¹⁰⁷, and already heavy with drink (κεκαρωμένον, L μεθύων σφόδρα)¹⁰⁸, and so, at the moment¹⁰⁹, she revealed nothing of what had passed."

1 Sam 25:37-38 recounts Abigail's subsequent announcement to her husband and the affects of this upon him. Josephus reproduces the content of these verses with various verbal modifications: "but on the morrow, when he was sober (νήφοντι)¹¹⁰ she told him all, causing him to collapse and his whole body to become dead (νεκρωθήναι)¹¹¹ through her

¹⁰⁶ Compare David's word Abigail in 25:35 "Go up in peace to your house (L εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου)."

¹⁰⁷ Compare 25:36 "and lo, he (Nabal) was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king".

¹⁰⁸ Josephus' other uses of the verb καρῶω are in *BJ* 1.594; 5.541; *Ant.* 6.189 (Goliath is "stunned" by David's stone). Here in 6.306 Josephus leaves aside the phrase with which 25:36 couples its reference to Nabal's "drunkenness," i.e. his "heart was good [i.e. merry, so RSV, see also TJ שפיר] within him" which, taken in its literal "ethical" sense, would hardly seem appropriate in the context.

¹⁰⁹ Compare the chronological indication at the end of 25:36 "(she told him nothing) until the morning light" which is then reiterated at the beginning of 25:37 "and in the morning...". Josephus' version avoids the source's duplicate mention of "the morning" as the moment when Abigail informs Nabal.

¹¹⁰ 1 Sam 25:37 is more vivid: "when the wine went forth from Nabal."

¹¹¹ The verb νεκρῶω is hapax in Josephus. Compare the description of 25:37 "his heart died (MT נהר, LXX ἐναπέθανεν) within him and he became like a stone." As often elsewhere, Josephus here transposes vivid Biblical imagery ("like a stone") into

words and the pain (λύπη) ¹¹² they produced. ¹¹³ Ten days and no more did Nabal remain alive and then departed this life (τόν βίον κατέστρεψεν ¹¹⁴). " ¹¹⁵

The Biblical David's first response to the news of Nabal's death is to "bless" the Lord (25:39a, cf. 25:32) for avenging him upon the reprobate Nabal even while preserving himself from wrongdoing. Josephus' expanded version of David's initial statement echoes wording previously utilized by him:

And when David heard of his death, he said that ¹¹⁶ he had been well avenged by God (ἐκδικηθήναι... ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, LXX ἔκρινεν τὴν κρίσιν) ¹¹⁷, for Nabal had died through his own wickedness (πονηρίας) ¹¹⁸ and had given him revenge (δοῦναι δίκην) ¹¹⁹, while he himself still had

a prosaic equivalent.

¹¹² This word echoes Josephus' notice (6.299) that David was angry at Nabal for having insulted "those from whom he had received no injury (ἀελυπημένος)." Earlier, Nabal had not been "grieved"; now he falls victim to "grief" in due recompense for his behavior.

¹¹³ With this inserted remark Josephus accentuates Abigail's stature as a supremely efficacious speaker: she has already won over the enraged David by her words; now, her speech precipitates the actual death of her husband.

¹¹⁴ Josephus uses this idiom some 25x in his writings.

¹¹⁵ Compare 25:38 "And about ten days later the Lord smote Nabal; and he died." Josephus' above formulation "detheologizes" Nabal's death (although in the context he does explicitly attribute the reprobate's fate to divine vengeance, see 6.305 and 307). The historian's version likewise clarifies the biblical presentation where the Lord's "smiting" of Nabal some ten days after Abigail's announcement to him might appear superfluous in that as a result of that announcement his heart has already "died within him." In Josephus' rendition there is then only one "cause of death," i.e. Abigail's words which result in Nabal's falling into a coma-like state in which state he lingers on for ten days.

Rabbinic tradition (see, e.g., y. *Sanh.* 2.20b; *Midr. Sam.* 23.13) raises the question as to why it was only after ten days that the Lord smote Nabal so that he died. The Rabbis propose different answers to the question: the "delay" was so that the mourning for the unrighteous Nabal would not be confounded with that already underway for the righteous Samuel (see 25:1a) or, alternatively in order to give Nabal the chance to repent.

¹¹⁶ Once again here, Josephus recasts Biblical direct as indirect discourse.

¹¹⁷ Note the echo of Abigail's affirmation in 6.303 "He Himself [God] will avenge (ἐκδικήσει) thee on the wicked."

¹¹⁸ This noun echoes the adjective πονηρός used repeatedly in reference to Nabal in what precedes, see 6.296, 303, 305.

¹¹⁹ Compare David's affirmation in 6.305 "he (Nabal) will not escape retribution

clean hands (καθαρόν ἔχοντι τὴν δεξιάν).¹²⁰ At the same time he learned that the wicked (πονηρούς)¹²¹ are pursued (ἐλαυνόμενος)¹²² by God who overlooks (ὑπερορώντος)¹²³ no act of man, but repays the good in kind, while He inflicts (ἐπιφέρωντος) swift (ὀξεῖον)¹²⁴ punishment (ποινήν) on the wicked (πονηροῖς).¹²⁵

Following his theological declaration of 25:39a, David proceeds to more mundane matters, the wooing of Abigail, 25:39b. Josephus reports this initiative at the opening of 6.308 "David then sent to the woman, inviting her to live with (συνοικήσουσαν) him and become his wife."¹²⁶ Josephus passes over the report (25:40) on the actual delivery of David's message to Abigail as something that might readily be supplied by the reader in light of what precedes. Instead, he moves immediately to Abigail's response. From the source account of that response he eliminates mention of the woman's prostration before David's servants (25:41a), perhaps finding this excessive given Abigail's social status. In the same line he also modifies the Biblical Abigail's affirmation about her being "a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord." In Josephus this

(δίκτην). "The above "motivation" for God's punishment of Nabal represents a moralizing generalization of David's allusion in 25:39 to "the insult I received at the hand of Nabal."

¹²⁰ This phrase echoes Abigail's word to David in 6.303 "if thou remainest clean (καθαρόν)." Compare 25:39 (MT) where David states: "(the Lord) has restrained his servant from evil." Josephus' formulation with its allusion to David's "right hand" seems closer to LXX 25:39 which has David aver "(the Lord) has delivered his servant from the hand (χειρός) of evil men (κακῶν)."

¹²¹ See Abigail's statement in 6.303 "He Himself will avenge thee on the wicked (πονηρῶν)," cf. n. 118.

¹²² Elsewhere Josephus uses God as the subject of the verb ἐλαύνω in *BJ* 5.398 "(in the reign of Antigonus) God again smote (ἔλαυνε) the people..."

¹²³ Josephus' other uses of the verb ὑπερορώω are in *Ant.* 8.256; 9.193; 12.281, in the first and third of these texts with God as subject, as in 6.307.

¹²⁴ Thus the codices ROP; the other codices, Exc and Lat read ὀξεῖον.

¹²⁵ The second half of the Josephan David's declaration as cited above represents a generalization—in both positive and negative terms—of 25:39a "the Lord has returned the evil-doing of Nabal upon his own head" which reads like a repetition of his statement earlier in the verse, i.e. "(blessed be) the Lord who has avenged the insult I received at the hand of Nabal."

¹²⁶ Josephus' above formulation leaves Abigail with more of a choice in the matter of her marriage to David than does the Biblical parallel (25:39b) which reads literally "and David sent and he spoke to her to *take* her to be his wife."

becomes "(she replied to the messengers) that she was unworthy (ἀναξία)¹²⁷ so much as to *touch his feet*." Thus, in Josephus' presentation Abigail is not portrayed as abjecting herself to mere messengers, whether in action or in word; her "humility" is reserved for David alone.

1 Sam 25:42 relates the outcome of David's initiative: Abigail repairs to him and becomes his wife. Josephus compresses the somewhat circumstantial Biblical notice on the point: "... but came nevertheless with all her servants (πάσης τῆς θεραπείας).¹²⁸ And so she lived with (συνώκησε)¹²⁹ him." Conversely, however, he adds an "explanation" of the marriage of David and Abigail in terms of the latter's array of desirable qualities: "... having attained that honour (τιμήν)¹³⁰ because of her modest (σώφρονα) and upright (δίκαιον)¹³¹ character (τρόπον)¹³² and also because of her beauty (τὸ κάλλος)."¹³³

¹²⁷ Note the verbal contrast Josephus sets up between Abigail and Nabal: David mistakenly thought the latter "worthy" (ἀξίω) of his men's solicitude (6.296), whereas Abigail modestly (mis-) represents herself as "unworthy" (ἀναξία) to perform menial tasks on David's behalf (6.308). See n. 132.

¹²⁸ Compare the more expansive Biblical report of Abigail's move: "and Abigail made haste and rose and mounted on an ass, and her five maidens (LXX κοράσια) attended her; she went after the messengers of David...". Josephus' "generalization" of the source reference to the "five maidens" accompanying Abigail responds to the question of what became of the rest of her late husband's extensive household as Abigail goes to join David: "all" accompanied her.

¹²⁹ This verb echoes the wording of David's earlier invitation, i.e. that Abigail "live with him" (συνουκήσουσιν).

¹³⁰ This term echoes Abigail's plea (6.304) that David spare her household "out of regard (τιμήν) for me." In now marrying Abigail David does indeed display that "regard" for her she had asked of him.

¹³¹ Compare 6.296 where the adjectival combination applied by Josephus to Abigail in his introduction of her is ἀγαθῆς καὶ σώφρονος. He employs the same collocation "modest and upright" used of Abigail in 6.308 (with the term 'valiant' supervening) in 6.346 of the man who, like Saul, ventures forth to certain death in battle. He further applies the adjective σώφρων with which he twice (6.296, 308) characterizes Abigail to the "wise woman" whose intervention preserves her city from destruction, 7.289 (// 2 Sam 20:16).

¹³² Note the terminological contrast between Abigail and her husband developed by Josephus: Nabal's (bad) "conduct" (τρόπος) with regard to David will "ruin" (6.305) him, whereas (6.308) the "modest character" (τρόπον) Abigail displays in her dealings with David leads him to make her his wife so that she comes to share in his future good fortune. Compare n. 127.

¹³³ Compare 6.296 where Josephus introduces Abigail as a woman who was "good

1 Sam 25:43-44 rounds off the "marital sequel" of the Nabal story by mentioning two other wives of David. Of these, the first is "Ahinoam of Jezreel" (so MT 25:43) whom, the verse seems to indicate, David married at the same time as he did Abigail ("David also took Ahinoam... and the two of them became his wives"). Josephus' version of the Biblical notice (6.309a) speaks rather of a marriage that had occurred prior to that with Abigail, thereby accentuating Abigail's stature – at this moment she is David's only "love interest" rather than having to share the limelight with another woman. His parallel to 25:43 likewise leaves aside – for the moment – the name of the other wife¹³⁴: "David already had a wife, whom he had taken from the city of Abisar (Ἀβισάρου)...".¹³⁵

The second of David's "other wives" makes her appearance in 25:44, i.e. Saul's daughter Michal whom the king is there said to have handed over to Palti son of Laish of Gallim. Josephus renders this last notice as follows: "as for Melcha (Μελχά,ν, LXX Μελχόλ) the daughter of Saul and once the wife of David¹³⁶, her father had given her in marriage to Pheltias (Φελτίω, Β Φαλτεί, L Φαλτί) son of Lisos (Λίσου)¹³⁷ of the city of Gethla (Γεθλάς)." ¹³⁸

to look upon."

¹³⁴ Subsequently, however, he will supply her name, see 6.320 (// 1 Sam 27:3) where he calls her "Achima." See following note.

¹³⁵ In 1 Sam 25:43 (MT, L) the name of Ahinoam's hometown is "Jezreel" (B Ἰσραήλ). On Josephus' form of the city's name, see Schlatter, *Namen*, 61, s.v. לַיִזְרְעֵל and Schalit, *Namenwörterbuch*, 2, s.v. Ἀβισαρος. Both these authors regard the Josephan form as a textual corruption which likely arose through conflation of the place name in question with that of the woman herself (which would have been mentioned in the original text of Josephus but has fallen out in the extant MSS).

¹³⁶ Following 1 Sam. 18:27, Josephus relates Saul's earlier giving of "Michal" to David in marriage in 6.204.

¹³⁷ Compare MT שִׁלְתָי, B Λίσος, L Ἰώας. Schalit, *Namenwörterbuch*, 79, s. v. Λίσος, states "Offenbar vokalisierte der griechische Bibeltext des Josephus שִׁלְתָי."

¹³⁸ Compare MT פִּלְתִּי, B Ρομμά, L Γολιάθ (this is the reading of the Lat of Josephus). Schlatter, *Namen*, 37, s.v. פִּלְתִּי comments "Γεθλάς scheint ein Zwitter aus Γελας und Γολας zu sein. Ein deutliches Bild ist nicht mehr zu gewinnen." Compare Schalit, *Namenwörterbuch*, 33, s.v. Γεθλά: "Form bei Josephus bis zur Unkenntlichkeit verderbt."

VI. CONCLUSION

In this conclusion I wish to return briefly to the questions with which this essay began in order to note the answers to those questions suggested by the foregoing detailed reading of *Ant.* 6.295-309. First of all, on the question of Josephus' Biblical text(s), we did not find definite indications of his use of (proto-) MT in this segment. On the other hand, we noted indications of his dependence on a LXX-like text, see in particular the marked verbal parallelism between his characterization of Nabal (6.296) and LXX 25:3b, see also nn. 84,120.¹³⁹ We likewise uncovered several points of contact between Josephus' version and distinctive readings of TJ, see e.g., their shared specification that the 200 left behind by David were to "guard" the baggage (6.299// 25:13) and their joint avoidance of the vulgar phrase "anyone pissing against the wall" of MT/LXX 25:22,24. Thus, Josephus may well have had the Biblical Abigail story available to him in several textual forms.

Among the various rewriting techniques applied by Josephus to the source account in 6.295-309, the most noteworthy is his recurrent *anticipation* of items which in 1 Samuel 25 itself come only at a later point in the sequence of events, see, e.g., David's charge to his men about the right treatment of Nabal's flocks (6.295// 25:7), his swearing to annihilate Nabal's household (6.299// 25:21-22) and the notice on the reprobate's drunkenness (6.301// 25:36). The frequency of such Josephan rearrangements throughout his version bespeaks both his intimate familiarity with the content of the source and the freedom he allowed himself in reproducing it.

Josephus also introduces *amplifications* of and actual *additions* to the Biblical Abigail account. Examples of the former feature include his expanded version of David's charge to his men about safeguarding Nabal's flocks (6.295, compare 25:7,15) or the elaboration of David's oath to annihilate Nabal's household (6.299// 25:21-22). Among Josephus' "free" additions to the source data, we noted, e.g., his explanation of the reason for David's initial display of consideration for Nabal (6.296), the mention of his "anger" at Nabal's response (6.299), as well as the for-

¹³⁹ Definite evidence seems lacking, on the other hand, as to whether Josephus drew specifically on a B or L-like text of LXX 1 Samuel 25 in composing our segment. Compare n. 6 above.

mer's "prediction" about what awaits the latter (6.305, *fine*) and the editorial notice on the lesson learned by David from Nabal's punishment (6.307b).

Conversely, Josephus *condenses* or even *omits* entirely a range of source elements. Under the heading of condensations, one notes especially his abridged version both of Abigail's preparations for departure (6.301// 25:18-19) and above all of her lengthy, repetitious address to David (6.302-304// 25:24-31). Throughout, Josephus likewise simply passes over various points reported in the Biblical narrative. His doing so may be motivated simply by the "superfluous" character of a given item (e.g., the report of 25:40 that David's messengers did, in fact, convey his invitation to Abigail). More often, however, the motivation for the omission seems to be that the datum in question appears contextually problematic in some respect, e.g., Nabal's business being "in Carmel" (25:3) and his rhetorical question about not knowing where David's men have "come from" (25.11), or does not accord with image of a given character he is trying to convey, e.g., the reference to the young men who precede Abigail as she goes to meet David (25:19a) or her later prostrating herself before David's messengers (25:41a).

Besides re-arranging, expanding and compressing the material of 1 Samuel 25, Josephus also *modifies* that material in various ways. On the stylistic/terminological level, he, e.g., consistently substitutes hypotaxis for parataxis, repeatedly replaces direct with indirect discourse, introduces a number of historic present forms, and invariably omits the wording of the oath formulas cited by the source. As for contextual modifications, Josephus, e.g., makes Nabal a "Ziphite" rather than a "man of Maon" (6.295// 25:2), just as he represents Abigail as proclaiming herself "unworthy to touch David's feet" rather than her readiness to "wash" those of his servants (6.308// 25:41b). Again, whereas Nabal's double question as cited in 25:10 would seem to suggest that he already knew who David was and so had no need to ask the question in the first place, Josephus (6.298) turns Nabal's second question ("and who is the son of Jesse?") into the answer given him by the messengers in response to his (first and only) query, i.e. "who this David was," thereby obviating the difficulty.

In sum, *Ant.* 6.295-309 exemplifies the wide range of re-writing techniques Josephus brings to bear in developing his version of the Bible's history. The passage likewise attests to the historian's sustained and

deliberate attempt to "improve" on the original in a whole series of respects.

A further point about which something should be said in this conclusion concerns the Josephan figures of Nabal, David and Abigail vis-à-vis their Biblical prototypes. In fact, as a result of his application of the above rewriting techniques, each of these personages takes on certain distinctive characteristics in Josephus' version of the episode. Thus, he accentuates Nabal's all-round boorishness, e.g., qualifying his response to David's messengers as "very uncivil and harsh" (6.298), and expatiating on its insulting character when recounting David's reaction (6.299) and the servant's report to Abigail (6.300). Similarly, Nabal is already "insensible from drink" at the moment Abigail sets out to meet David (6.301; compare 25:36 where Nabal's drunkenness is mentioned only after her return). In this connection it is likewise of interest to note that Josephus leaves aside the ambiguous notice of 25:36 about Nabal's heart being "good" (i.e. merry) with its potential suggestion of a redeeming trait.

The Josephan David also takes on new (positive) features. In particular, he emerges as a moral "teacher" of his men whose instruction inculcates a positive image of Jewish respect for property rights that Josephus would have been anxious to convey to his Gentile readers, 6.295. David the teacher himself "learns" a theological lesson about God's dealings with both the good and the bad from the fate of Nabal, 6.307b. Josephus' David, however, is still more than a philosopher; in his "un-Biblical" prediction of divine retribution for Nabal (6.305 *fine*) he appears (implicitly) as a prophet. Josephus likewise endeavors to put the best possible face on the delicate matter of David's murderous reaction to Nabal's rebuff by, e.g., highlighting the enormity of Nabal's offense and emphasizing David's concern with the insult given, not himself alone, but also his companions (see 6.299, 305).¹⁴⁰

The Biblical portrait of Abigail undergoes notable (positive) retouchings at Josephus' hands as well. Her possession of a whole array of good qualities is noted by him not just once (so the source, 25:3), but twice (6.296, 308), the second time as an explanation of why David asked her to become his wife. Josephus' presentation likewise accentuates Abigail's courage; she (apparently) goes alone to meet David rather than being preceded by a group of "young men" (see 6.301, compare 25:19a

¹⁴⁰ On the figure of David in *Ant.* overall, see Feldman, "David" (cf. n. 17 above).

mitted by Josephus). The historian further takes care to uphold Abigail's status vis-à-vis both her own and David's servants: Nabal's shepherd does not presume to tell her what she ought to do (6.300, compare 25:17), just as she does not prostrate herself before David's messengers or declare herself ready to wash their feet (6.308, compare 25:41). Most of all, however, the Josephan Abigail emerges as a figure masterful in her use of words: she, e.g., ends her plea to David with an ingratiating reference to his future kingship (6.303, compare 25:30-31) and specifically "predicts" that "evil awaits Nabal" (6.303) — another point certain to appeal to David. Abigail's efficaciousness as a speaker is further accentuated by the fact that David, as noted above, in his reply to her (6.305) picks up on many elements of her preceding address. That same efficaciousness of Abigail's word finds even more dramatic confirmation in Josephus' (Biblically unparalleled) statement that Nabal's collapse resulted from "her words and the pain they produced" (6.306, compare 25:37-38). Through her words Abigail thus dissuades one man from his murderous plan, while bringing death to another. The fact that Josephus thus both reproduces and accentuates the Bible's completely positive portrayal of Abigail as the central character of 1 Samuel 25 is all the more remarkable given his general tendency to denigrate and downplay women's roles in his retelling of Jewish history.¹⁴¹

His unqualifiedly positive depiction of Abigail likewise stands in noteworthy contrast to the more ambiguous Rabbinic treatment of her exchange with David, on which see, e.g., *y. Sanh.* 2,20; *Midr. Sam.* 20; *b. Meg.* 14a.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ On this tendency, see L. H. Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of Deborah," in A. Caquot et al. (eds.), *Hellenica et Judaica: Hommage à Valentin Nikiprowetsky* (Paris-Leuven, Peeters, 1986) 116-128; C. A. Brown, *No Longer Be Silent: First Century Jewish Portraits of Biblical Women* (Louisville, Westminster-John Knox, 1992), *passim*. Neither of these authors deal specifically with Josephus' portrayal of Abigail.

¹⁴² In the above Rabbinic texts, the exchange between Abigail and David appears as more of a test of wits with a series of rapid-fire verbal moves and counter-moves than it does in either the Bible or Josephus. In addition, the Rabbis invest the exchange with a certain lurid, erotically-charged character which goes beyond anything found in 1 Samuel 25 (or Josephus): Abigail unveils her thigh to David and his men, thereby arousing them to follow her a considerable distance and shows drops of her menstrual blood to David. The Rabbinic sources likewise interpret Abigail's final word in 25:31b ("when the Lord has dealt well with my Lord, then remember your handmaid") as a coquettish advertisement of her own availability to David which is, as such, quite

There remains one final question which suggests itself at the end of this essay: why does Josephus allot the Abigail story – which after all is one without any decisive significance for the subsequent course of events in which Abigail effectively disappears – the quite extensive place he does within *Ant.*? He did so, I suggest, because this story of "evil" Nabal punished and "good" Abigail rewarded with marriage to Israel's future king provides a striking confirmation of that moral – of equal relevance for both his Gentile and Jewish readers – which Josephus sets out at the very start of his entire work (*Ant.* 1.14): "the main lesson to be learnt from this history... is that men who conform to the will of God, and do not venture to transgress laws that have been excellently laid down, prosper in all things beyond belief, and for their reward are offered by God felicity; whereas in proportion as they depart from the strict observance of these laws... whatever imaginary good thing they strive to do ends in irretrievable disasters."¹⁴³

inappropriate coming from a married woman. Significantly, Josephus has no parallel to the Biblical phrase which lent itself to such a negative interpretation by the Rabbis.

¹⁴³ Note the echo of this affirmation in Josephus' editorial comment in 6.307 "At the same time he (David) learnt that the wicked are pursued by God who overlooks no act of man, but repays the good in kind, while He inflicts swift punishment upon the wicked."