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Josephus, the Septuagint, and the use of Aramaic transliterations: on Josephus's vocabulary of the priestly garments

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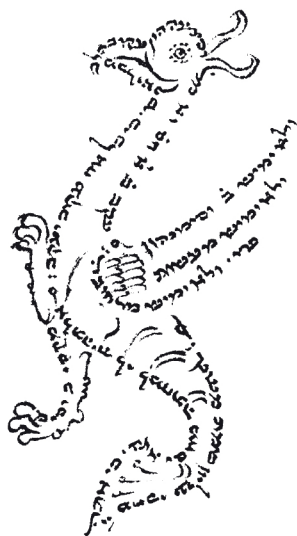
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JOSEPHUS, THE SEPTUAGINT, AND THE USE OF ARAMAIC TRANSLITERATIONS:
ON JOSEPHUS'S VOCABULARY OF THE PRIESTLY VESTMENTS*

1. *Introduction*

In a previous investigation¹ I have considered to what extent the terminology used in Josephus's description of the tabernacle – notably of the court and of the framework of the tabernacle (*Ant.* 3.108-150) – might evidence the author's agenda to 'revise' the Greek Bible.² I have pointed out that the coincidences between the vocabulary of Josephus and the Septuagint vocabulary are very limited in the section of the tabernacle, although the use of the terminology of the Greek Bible would have made Josephus's enterprise easier in such a complex technical section. In several cases, Josephus's technical vocabulary is more up to date and attested in technical sources of the Roman time, as is apparent in the description of the framework of the tabernacle. In the case of the court, Josephus's technical vocabulary highlights that the

tabernacle was a tent and not a temple, as the word for "shafts" (*Ant.* 3.109: κάμακες), as well as the references to the cords, and to the force of the winds (3.110) indicate. By stressing that the tabernacle was a tent and not a temple Josephus would make his description historically more accurate than that of the Greek Bible.

In addition, I observed, notably in the case of the capitals of the shafts (*Ant.* 3.109) and the framework of the tabernacle (*Ant.* 3.116-121), that Josephus's words provide a clearer interpretation of the Hebrew in those cases where the latter does not convey a straightforward meaning. These cases would suggest that, in Josephus's view, the Greek did not render the Hebrew in the most suitable way.

On the other hand, a number of terminological coincidences between Josephus and the Septuagint would indicate that in some cases Josephus does engage more closely in a dialogue

* This investigation has been carried out as part of the project Anchoring Innovation, the Gravitation Grant research agenda of the Dutch National Research School in Classical Studies, OIKOS. It is financially supported by the Dutch ministry of Education, Culture and Science (NWO project number 024.003.012). For more information about the research programme and its results, see the website www.anchoringinnovation.nl.

¹ S. CASTELLI, *Between Tradition and Innovation: Josephus's Description of the Tabernacle (Ant. 3.108-150) as an Improved Alternative to the Greek Bible*, «Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal» 19 (2020), pp. 1-17. On Josephus and the Septuagint, see M. MÜLLER, *Josephus und die Septuaginta*, in W. KRAUS, M. KARRER, M. MEISER (hrsgg.), *Die Septuaginta - Texte, Theologien, Einflüsse*, 1, WUNT 252, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2010, pp. 638-654. T. RAJAK, *Josephus's Greek and Hebrew Bible*, paper presented at the conference *Josephus Between the Bible and the Mishnah*, Neve Ilan, 10 April 2019. T.

RAJAK, *Josephus and the Septuagint*, in A.G. SALVESSEN and T.M. LAW (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Septuagint*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2021, pp. 421-434. M. AVIOZ, *The Septuagint in Josephus's Writings*, forthcoming in M. MEISER and F. WILK (eds.), *Handbuch zur Septuaginta. Handbook of the Septuagint, LXX. H: Wirkungsgeschichte*, vol. 6, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, Munich.

² I use the term 'revise' in a broader sense than the way it is defined by M. ZAHN, *Genres of Rewriting in Second Temple Judaism. Scribal Composition and Transmission*, CUP 2020, 37. Zahn intends 'revision' mostly as a reproduction: "a scribe sets out to produce a new copy of a given text, with varying degrees of change introduced"; on the other hand, she defines 'reuse' as a "new work of textual material drawn from an existing source, in a more or less modified form but such that the connection to a specific source text is recognizable." In Molly Zahn's terminology, Josephus's biblical account would fall under the category of 'reuse'.

with the Greek Bible. However, such coincidences are mainly at the macroscopic level, and although some of the objects may be named in the same way, their description differs considerably.

In the present article I am going to extend the investigation to Josephus's vocabulary of the priestly vestments (*Ant.* 3.151-170), a description which follows that of the tabernacle in Josephus's account. In *Antiquities*, the historian widely expands his own description of the high priest's garments found in *Bell.* 5.230-237, in what has been seen by Natalio Fernández Marcos as a case of "self-imitatio."³ In this investigation I will address the following questions: Which terminology does Josephus use for the priestly garments? Does Josephus use the vocabulary of the Greek Bible? Are there any differences in trend with the section of the tabernacle description? And how can the evidence of both descriptions be interpreted? First, I shall make some general observations on Josephus's account of the priestly garments (§ 2). Second, I shall investigate and provide a tentative explanation of Josephus's terminological choices and interpretation of the priestly garments, notably the undergarments (§ 3), the tunic and the belt (§ 4), and the cap of the priests (§ 5). Third, I shall consider some coincidences in the terminology of Josephus and the Greek Bible (§ 6). Finally, I shall focus on the transliteration of the Aramaic (§ 7), and draw the conclusions that the evidence overall allows (§ 8).

2. Josephus's Account of the Priestly Garments: Meaning, Order, Specificity

While in his description of the tabernacle Josephus does not seem to deliberately call attention to parallels with the Temple and the Temple worship of his personal acquaintance, or at

least not as a main trend,⁴ the opposite is true for the priestly garments. Josephus-the-Jerusalem-priest provides copious details of the sacred robes: 28 paragraphs are devoted to their description (*Ant.* 3.151-178), culminating in their allegorical interpretation (*Ant.* 3.179-187). And, hinting at a more personal focus, it is notable that unlike the biblical text, Josephus does not say that the garments are made for Aaron and his children.⁵ Robertson⁶ suggests that such an omission may be more easily explained by a change of Josephus's perspective. The focus of the historian shifts from the historical context of the desert narrative, which is central up to the description of the tent, to the priestly function *per se*, pivotal in Josephus's mind even when the Temple is destroyed, and strictly connected to the priestly vestments. In fact, in Josephus the priestly vestments – notably the high-priest's vestments – bear not only a cultic, but also a political meaning. The historian reports that when the Romans took over the government of Judea after the reign of Archelaus, they also assumed control of the high priest's vestments (*Ant.* 18.93). In 36-37 CE the Roman governor of Syria Vitellius allowed the Judean priests to resume custody of these garments (*Ant.* 18.90), yet in 44 CE, on the death of Agrippa I, the newly appointed procurator Fadus asked the chief priests and leaders of the people of Jerusalem to return the vestments into Roman custody. The Judeans thus requested to bring the issue before the Emperor Claudius, who eventually granted them permission to keep the vestments (*Ant.* 20.6-14).⁷

In *Ant.* 3, the vestments are described from the undergarments to the outer garments, according to the order in which the priest puts them on. This order has rightly been interpreted

³ N. FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS, *Rewritten Bible or Imitatio? The Vestments of the High-Priest*, in P.W. FLINT, E. TOV, J. VANDERKAM (eds.), *Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Qumran and the Septuagint presented to Eugene Ulrich*, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2006, pp. 360-376 (333).

⁴ S. ROBERTSON, *The Account of the Ancient Israelite Tabernacle and First Priesthood in the Jewish Antiquities of Flavius Josephus*, Ph.D Diss. An-

nenberg Research Institute Philadelphia, 1991, p. 3.

⁵ The point is remarked by ROBERTSON, *Account*, cit., pp. 178-180, and L.H. FELDMAN, *Josephus's Portrait of Aaron*, in R. KATZOFF (ed.), *Classical Studies in Honour of David Sohlberg*, Bar-Ilan University Press, Ramat Gan 1996, p. 181.

⁶ ROBERTSON, *Account*, cit., pp. 182-183.

⁷ On the political meaning of the priestly garments, see in particular O. GUSSMAN, *Das Priesterverständ-*

as resulting from Josephus's own experience. But while the order itself is not compelling in the argument, since it is found in other written sources,⁸ several details undoubtedly reveal a marked interest in the practical datum, as well as familiarity with the garments. For example, unlike Philo, who explains that the priestly tunic is short in order for the priests to move quickly and easily in carrying out their ministry (*Spec.* 1.83), Josephus interprets the tunic as long,⁹ yet he emphasizes that the belt is thrown over the left shoulder so as not to interfere with the sacred service (*Ant.* 3.155). Likewise, the cap of the ordinary priest "is fitted precisely so as not to flow around while he is exerting himself with the sacred service" (*Ant.* 3.158). Moreover, in Josephus the tunic of the common priests fits tightly on the body and has sleeves, that are likewise tight (*Ant.* 3.153), and the same tunic is "girded on at the breast, drawing around the belt a little above the arm-pit" (*Ant.* 3.153). All these details are unparalleled in the rest of the tradition and indicate that Josephus is closely acquainted with these garments, and evidently interested in showing his audience such familiarity.

Secondly, compared to Exodus, Josephus's description is more specific, especially with regard to the clothing of the common priests: while Exodus lists the garments of the common priests and describes them only with an adjective related to the material, Josephus engages in a meticulous description. As a proud Jerusalem priest, from a priestly family, Josephus intentionally expands the description of the vestments of the common

priests, only summarized in the biblical text.¹⁰ Moreover, Josephus displays greater similarities between the garments of the common priests and those of the high priest than the biblical text does: the description of the tunic of the common priests (*Ant.* 3.156) comes close to that of both the robe of the high priest and the ephod (*Ant.* 3.162); the belt (*Ant.* 3.154) of the linen tunic in Josephus is richly woven, like the belt of the ephod of Exod. 28:5, and Josephus calls the cap of the common priests *πίλον* (*Ant.* 3.157), employing the same word that he uses for the lower cap of the high priest (*Ant.* 3.172).

3. The Undergarments (*Ant.* 3.152)

(152) Whenever the priest goes to the sacred rites after purifying himself with the rite of purification that the law prescribes, first of all he puts on the so-called *machanasēs* (τὸν μαχανασήν). This has as its meaning a pair of drawers (συνακτήρ). It is a loin-cloth (διάζωμα) covering the genitals, artfully fashioned, sewn from finely spun linen, with the feet fitting into it just as into trousers (ἀναξυρίδες). It ends above the waist and terminates at the flank, around which it is drawn tight.¹¹

As later attested in the Talmud (b.Yoma 23b), according to Josephus the first garment to be put on (πρῶτον μὲν) by the priest are the drawers. In Exod. 28:42 they are called מכנסי-בד in the MT, περισκελῆ λινῶ or simply περισκελῆ in the Greek Bible.¹² Josephus first transliterates the Semitic מכנסיים – the same both in Hebrew

nis des Flavius Josephus, TSAJ 124, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2008, pp. 395-409, and more recently A. WEISSENRIEDER, *A roadmap to heaven: High-priestly vestments and the Jerusalem Temple in Flavius Josephus*, in R.L. GORDON, G. PETRIDOU, J. RÜPKE (eds.), *Beyond Priesthood. Religious Entrepreneurs and Innovators in the Roman Empire*, Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 66, De Gruyter, Berlin 2017, pp. 157-183. More generally, on Josephus's attitude towards priesthood, see M. TUAL, *From Jerusalem Priest to Roman Jew. On Josephus and the Paradigms of Ancient Judaism*, WUNT 2, Reihe 357, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2013. M. FRIIS, 'Aaron ... the most deserving of us': *Josephus on the priestly and high-priestly offices in the Jewish Antiquities books 3-4*, «Jewish Studies» 50 (2015), pp. 51-66; J.S. MCLAREN, *Josephus and*

Priesthood, in H.H. CHAPMAN and Z. RODGERS (eds.), *A Companion to Josephus*, Wiley Blackwell, London 2016, pp. 273-281.

⁸ Sir. 45,8 (LXX) e b. Yoma 23b, 25a.

⁹ On the interpretation of the tunic as "long," see below, § 4.

¹⁰ S. SCHWARTZ, *Josephus and Judean Politics*, CSCT 18, Brill, Leiden 1990, p. 95; ROBERTSON, *Account*, cit., p. 181.

¹¹ This translation and the following, unless otherwise stated, are by L.H. FELDMAN, *Judean Antiquities 1-4. Translation and Commentary by L.H. Feldman*, Flavius Josephus Translation and Commentary, edited by S. MASON, Volume 3, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2000, p. 272.

¹² Exod. 39:28 MT repeats מכנסי-הבד, while Exod 36:35 LXX has only περισκελῆ. *La Bible d'Alex-*

and Aramaic – with a word in the singular. The word is probably *μαχανασήν*, according to Edward Bernard's (1638-1697) conjecture, adopted by modern editors:¹³ the reading *μαναχάσην* accepted by Niese, which represents the reading of manuscripts ROM, appears corrupt, and is likely due to metathesis. After transliterating the Semitic equivalent, Josephus explains what the garment is by using three synonyms: the literal meaning, *συνακτήρ*, "which draws together, binder"; the more common *διάζωμα*, "girdle;" and, finally, *ἀναξυρίδες*, "trousers." I shall leave the first until last.

διάζωμα is the same word provided by our author in *Bell.* 5.231,¹⁴ while sketching the priestly robes in the context of the description of the Second Temple. In writing on the same topic later on in *Antiquities*, Josephus, complying with the rules of (self)-*imitatio*,¹⁵ does, in comparison with his own previous literary piece, make a number of variations, but nevertheless employs the common word *διάζωμα* as the first element in his explanation.

andrie. 2. L'Exode. Traduction du texte grec de la Septante, Introduction et Notes par Alain De Boulleuc et Pierre Sandevor, Cerf, Paris 1989, p. 357. On the nature of this piece of clothing in the Hebrew Bible, see C. BENDER, *Die Sprache des Textilen. Untersuchungen zu Kleidung und Textilien im Alten Testaments*, BWANT 177, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 2008, pp. 207-211, and conclusions at p. 258: Bender interprets the undergarments not as a loincloth, but rather as a triangular piece of cloth placed around the abdomen like a diaper and fastened with ribbons. GUSSMAN, *Das Priesterverständnis des Flavii Josephus*, cit., p. 370, n. 22, rightly stresses that Bender's conclusion does not correspond to Josephus's description, who clearly describes a sort of trousers.

¹³ H.St.J. THACKERAY, *Josephus Jewish Antiquities Books I-IV. With an English Translation by H.St.J. Thackeray*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge - London 1995, pp. 386-387 accepts *μαχανασήν* both in the text and in the translation. É. NODÉ, *Les Antiquités Juives. Livres I à III. Texte, traduction et notes par Étienne Nodé avec la collaboration de Gilles Berceville et Élisabeth Warschawski*, Cerf, Paris 2000, pp. 173/173*, keeps in the text *μαναχάσην*, but translates according to Bernard's conjecture. FELDMAN, *Judean Antiquities I-4*, cit., p. 272, likewise translates according to Bernard's conjecture.

The third word is *ἀναξυρίδες*, a *hapax legomenon* in our author, yet a widely attested term in Greek literature since Herodotus for describing the trousers of Persians and Scythians.¹⁶ This word is used by Josephus within a *simile*: the feet are placed into this specific priestly undergarment as into (*ὥσπερ εἰς*) trousers. In so doing, Josephus endeavours to make his peculiar referent more familiar to his Greco-Roman audience (Judean and non-Judean alike) by using a *simile*, according to a "horizontal anchoring" strategy.¹⁷

The most interesting word, however, is *συνακτήρ*, which is a *hapax legomenon* not only in Josephus but in the whole corpus of Greek literature. This is a neologism of Josephus, derived from the verb *συνάγω*, "to collect", which also means (in terms of things), "to draw together." The choice of this Greek verb seems to be due to its closeness to the Semitic root *סנח* "gather, collect."¹⁸

The fact that none of the three synonyms used by Josephus (*συνακτήρ*, *διάζωμα*, and *ἀναξυρίδες*) is attested in the Septuagint, and that

¹⁴ Actually, in *Bell.* 5.231 Josephus uses the word in the slightly different spelling *διάζωσμα*. In that context, he simply says that the priest ministered with his thighs covered up to his genitals by a girdle.

¹⁵ FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS, *Rewritten Bible or Imitatio?*, cit., p. 333. The rhetorician Quintilian, a contemporary of Josephus, writes extensively on the concepts and practices of *imitatio* and *aemulatio* (*Inst. Orat.* 10.2).

¹⁶ HERODOTUS, *Hist.* 1.71; 5.49; 7.61. 64; XENOPH., *Anab.*, 1.5.8; *Cyrop.* 8.3.13; STRABO, *Geogr.* 11.13.9; POLYBIUS, *Hist.* 2.28.7; ARRIANUS, *Anab.* 6.29.6. The term is also found in the Jewish Hellenistic novel of Joseph and Aseneth 3.6, and is attested by late lexicographers: POLLUX, *Onomast.* 10.168; PHOTIUS, *Lexic.* A, 1578; *Suda* A, 1993. See G. LOSEFELD, *Essai sur le costume grec*, Boccard, Paris 1991, p. 305.

¹⁷ On the concept of "horizontal anchoring," see I. SLUITER, *Oud is het nieuwe nieuw. Een inleiding op Anchoring Innovation*, «Lampas» 51/4 (2018), pp. 289-295. On *similes* as tools for "horizontal anchoring" in Josephus, see also S. CASTELLI, "Bronze bases similar to spikes of lances": textual criticism and 'anchoring' in Josephus' *AJ* 3.109 (//*Ex.* 27.10-11), forthcoming in *Athenaeum* 2022.

¹⁸ A comparable mechanism is highlighted by E. TOV, *Bilateral Exegesis of Hebrew Roots in the Sep-*

Philo likewise uses a different word (περίζωμα) in *Vita Mosis*¹⁹ indicate that Josephus, instead of relying on the most common Jewish-Greek tradition, points to a Semitic background. To that end he coins a Greek word in order to keep his interpretation as close as possible to its Semitic equivalent. In other words, where the extant Greek vocabulary is wanting, or not accurate enough to describe the garments with which he is directly acquainted, the priest Josephus is ready to implement his terminology with a neologism.

4. *The Tunic and the Belt* (Ant. 3.153-156)

(153) Upon this he wears a linen garment of a double texture of fine linen. It is called a *chethomenē* (χέθομηνῃ), and this signifies “of linen.” For we call linen *chethon* (χέθον). This garment is a tunic reaching to the feet, encircling the body and with tight-fitting sleeves around the arms. (154) They gird it on at the breast, drawing around a little above the arm-pit the belt (155) ... when it is necessary to attend seriously to the sacrifices and to conduct the service, in order that he may not be hindered in his work by its movement, he throws it over his left shoulder and carries it. (156) Now Moyses called it *abanēth* (ἄβανῆθ), but we call it *emian* (ἐμίαν), having learned it from the Babylonians ... This tunic is nowhere folded, but it has a wide opening at the neck and by means of strings hanging from the border (ἐκ τῆς ὥας) both at the breast and the back is tied fast above each shoulder. It is called *massabazanēs* (μασσαβαζάνης).

For the second garment the relationship with the Septuagint is more complex and somewhat more dynamic. The second garment considered by Josephus is the tunic (Hebrew כְּתָנִית),²⁰ which is completed by the belt.²¹ In the case of the tunic, Josephus has the same word χιτῶν as used

by Exod. 28:40 LXX for the common priests. After emphasizing that the garment is made of a linen cloth, and after providing its etymology – according to the trend I have observed for the undergarments – Josephus does not simply call the garment a tunic, but a ποδήρης χιτών, that is, “a tunic reaching the feet.”

Both Hebrew and Greek do not specify this detail for the ordinary priests, and actually a long tunic is contrary to the interpretation of Philo as to the tunic of the common priest, which he clearly interprets as a short one (*Spec.* 1.83). However, in Exod. 28:4 LXX τὸν ποδῆρη, that is, a “tunic reaching the feet,” is the name given to the “robe” of the high priest, and the same garment is called ὑποδύτην ποδῆρη in Exod. 28:32. The length of the robe is indeed a subject of debate in biblical scholarship. In his commentary on Exodus, Propp highlights that “since leggings must be worn for modesty’s sake ... [it] may be more like a coat (according to Rashi’s interpretation) or a short skirt. More likely, however, it is a full-length robe.”²² Propp bases his interpretation on Josephus’s *Ant.* 3.153. In this case, Josephus extends the tunic of the high priest to the common priests, according to a general trend that I have considered above (§ 2), and interprets the tunic as “long,” as in the Septuagint’s interpretation of the robe of the high priest.²³

Another controversial point in biblical scholarship concerns the neck of the high priest's tunic, as described in Exod. 28:32. According to Exodus, the robe of the ephod, מעיל האפוד (Exod. 28:31), "shall have an opening for the head in the middle of it, with a woven binding (שפה) around the opening, like an opening in a coat of mail, so that it may not be torn" (NRSV)²⁴. Propp points out the difficulty of the passage, especially the meaning of תחרא.²⁵ The Septuagint translates the verse as follows: "And its collar shall be in

tuagint, in R. REZETKO, T. LIM, W.B. AUCKER (eds.), *Reflection and Refraction. Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld*, Supplements of Vetus Testamentum 113, Brill, Leiden 2007, pp. 459-482.

¹⁹ Philo uses περίζωμα in *Mos.* 1.83.

²⁰ Exod. 28:40-41; 39:27-29 MT; 36:34-36 LXX Rahlfs, 36:35-37 LXX Wevers. The tunic was the first garment put on (cf. Lev. 8:7.13; 16:4) and the last removed (Cant. 5:3).

²¹ Exod. 28:40; but also Exod. 28:4.39-40, about the high priest.

²² W.H.C PROPP, *The Anchor Bible. Exodus 19-40. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Doubleday, New York 2006, p. 433.

²³ The tunic of the high priest is undoubtedly long also in *Ant.* 20.6.

²⁴ Exod. 28:32 MT וְהָיָה כִּי־רָאִשׁוֹ בְּתוֹכָם שָׂפָה יְהִיָּה לָכֵי
סָבִיב מֵעֵשֶׂה אֲרָג כִּפִּי תַחְרָא יִהְיֶה־לּוֹ לֹא יִקְרַע.

²⁵ PROPP, *Exodus 19-40*, cit., p. 444; the dif-

the middle, having a border around the collar, work of a weaver, with the binding interwoven with it. Lest it be torn.”²⁶ Once again applying to the ordinary priest a detail that the biblical text reserves for the high priest alone, Josephus says that the tunic “is nowhere folded, but it has a wide opening at the neck and by means of strings hanging from the border both at the breast and the back is tied fast above each shoulder” (*Ant.* 3.156). Feldman remarks that Josephus seems to be consciously rephrasing the Septuagint, inasmuch as he employs the word ὥα (“border, fringe”), which is used only in this place by Josephus and is found only three times in the Septuagint (Exod. 28:28, 36:31, Ps. 132:2), always with reference to Aaron’s garment.²⁷

In this case, Josephus echoes the word used by the Septuagint ὥα to indicate the border at the opening of the neck, but as a priest he is once again more interested in the practical aspect of how the tunic is tied. Likewise, regarding the high priest’s tunic Josephus points out that “its border tassels were sewn on, in colour imitating the manner of pomegranates” (*Ant.* 3.160). Like Exod. 28:29(33) LXX, Josephus stresses that the tassels were *like* (ὡσεὶ) pomegranates, not real pomegranates, as the Hebrew of Exod.

28:33 would imply.²⁸ Feldman surmises²⁹ that Josephus follows the Septuagint instead of the Hebrew in this case. However, this example is less significant in terms of Josephus’s use of the Septuagint than the passage on the neck of the tunic, where Josephus displays the uncommon word ὥα (“border”). In the case of the pomegranates, Josephus could have come independently to the same interpretation for exegetical purposes: probably Josephus intended to stress that the pomegranates were not real, as logic requires.

Just as in the description of the undergarments (§ 3), Josephus likewise closes the paragraph on the tunic (*Ant.* 3.156) with the Greek transliteration of a Semitic word. He uses μασσαβαζάνης;³⁰ the term corresponds to the Hebrew משבצת, a word of not clear-cut interpretation, which is usually translated as “plait-rings, settings, checker-work.”³¹ While the root שבץ is the same, Exod. 28:4 and 28:39 MT call the priestly tunic כתנת תשבץ, a “checkered-coat”, and not משבצת. The latter term is used rather by Exodus for the *ephod* of the high priest (Exod. 28:11.13.25; 39:6.13.16.18). Once again, Josephus thus applies to the regular priest some details that, according to the biblical tradition, pertain to the high priest alone. However, as No-

ficulty is apparent in Propp’s translation, *ibid.*, pp. 314-315: “and its *head mouth* [of the Ephod’s robe] shall be in its midst; a *lip* will be for its *mouth* around, weaver’s work, like an anus mouth will be for it; it will not be torn”. On the unclear interpretation of תחרא see also C. HOUTMAN, *Exodus. Vol. 3* (*Exodus* 20-40), Kampen, Kok 1996, p. 495.

²⁶ Exod. 28:32 καὶ ἔσται τὸ περιστόμιον ἐξ αὐτοῦ μέσον, ὥαν ἔχον κύκλω τοῦ περιστομίου, ἔργον ὑφάντου, τὴν συμβολὴν συνυφασμένην ἐξ αὐτοῦ, ἵνα μὴ ῥαγῇ. The translation above is by A. PIETERSMA and B.G. WRIGHT (eds.), *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, Oxford University Press, Oxford - New York 2007, p. 71 (hereafter, NETS). J.W. WEVERS, *Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus*, Septuagint and Cognate Studies 30, Scholars Press, Atlanta 1990, p. 459, translates: “And there shall be the mouth of its head [i.e. an opening] in its middle, having a hem around the collar ... with the binding interwoven with it.” Wevers notes that the unusual ἔχον “having” of the participial clause of the LXX occurs only here in Exod. WEVERS, *Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus*, cit., p. 459, n. 37.

²⁷ FELDMAN, *Judean Antiquities* 1-4, cit., p. 273, n. 403.

²⁸ Exod. 28:29 (33) is translated as follows by NETS, p. 71: “And you shall make on the hem of the undergarment below little pomegranates, as a flowering pomegranates tree, from blue and purple and spun scarlet and twisted linen, upon the hem of the undergarment around, and the same form, little gold pomegranates and bells between them round about.” Cf. *La Bible d’Alexandrie*. 2. *L’Exode*, cit., p. 290.

²⁹ FELDMAN, *Judean Antiquities* 1-4, cit., p. 274, n. 416.

³⁰ That is the readings of manuscripts MSPL, confirmed by the Latin version (Lat *abaneth*). See NODET, *Les Antiquités Juives*, cit., p. 174*.

³¹ “Plait-rings” is the meaning preferred by PROPP, *Exodus* 19-40, cit., p. 437, who, however, points to the difficult interpretation of the word; FELDMAN, *Judean Antiquities* 1-4, cit., p. 273, n. 404, interprets משבצת as “checkerwork,” following THACKERAY, *Josephus Jewish Antiquities Books I-IV*, cit., p. 390. “Settings” is the translation of the NRSV

det has remarked,³² the historian is not the only one to regard the tunic of the common priests and that of the high priest as the same: according to the Babylonian Talmud (b. Yoma 12b), while the belt changes for the two priestly categories, the tunic remains the same.

Finally, in his definition of the belt, Josephus points once again to a Semitic background: he first provides the transliteration of its Hebrew name (ἀβανήθ), corresponding to אֲבָנֶת of Exod. 28:4.39, which is usually translated as “sash, girdle;” but he also features the transliteration (ἐμίαν) of the Aramaic equivalent, which is attested in the Targum.³³

In conclusion, while for the undergarments Josephus seems to purposely distance himself from the terminology of the Septuagint of Exodus, in the case of the tunic the relationship with the Greek Bible looks more constructive, at least on the points of difficult interpretation of the Hebrew. However, for the tunic and the belt as in the description of the undergarments Josephus points to a Semitic background.

5. *The Cap of the Common Priests (Ant. 3.157-158) and the Lower Cap of the High Priest (Ant. 3.172)*

(157) Upon his head he wears a cap without a cone-shaped top, not covering the whole of it, but extending a little beyond the middle. It is called *masnaephthes* and is such in its shape that it resembles a head-band of linen web made thick. For it is folded and stitched often. [...] (172) His [the

high priest's] cap at first was made quite similar to those of all the priests.

In line with his tendency to apply to the regular priest some details which, according to the biblical tradition, would pertain to the high priest only, Josephus transliterates the name of the cap of the common priest with the word *μασναεφθῆς*. That corresponds to the Hebrew *מצנפת* (Exod. 28:4), which Exodus refers only to the cap of the high priest. In Exod. 28:40, on the other hand, the common priests would have turbans with a peak, which Exodus calls *מגבעות*. However, several traditions seem to point to the fact that the cap of the common priests and the lower cap of the high priest were the same, as Josephus emphasizes in *Ant.* 3.172. The Mishnah (Yom. 7:5) does not distinguish between the cap of the high priest and that of the common priest, and as early as the third century BCE, in the Septuagint translation of Exodus, the term *κίδαρις* indicates at Exod. 28:4 the cap of the high priest, while at Exod. 28:40 that of the common priests; moreover, at Exod. 36:35-36 LXX (= 39: 28-29 TM), *κιδάρεις*, “caps,” are foreseen “for Aaron and his children.”³⁵ In Greek, *κίδαρις* indicates a Persian headdress probably similar to a tiara (*τιάρα*). It mostly features a peak, although the typology without a peak is not unknown.³⁶ In *Bell.* 5.235 Josephus names this linen cap of the high priest *τιάρα*, and, to make things more complex, at Exod. 28:37, 29:6, 36:38 and Lev. 8:9 the Septuagint uses the term *μίτρα*, “headband,” instead of *κίδαρις*, for the Hebrew *מצנפת*.³⁷

at Exod. 28:11.13.25.

³² NODET, *Les Antiquités Juives*, cit., pp. 174-175, n. 7.

³³ Targum *Onqelos*, *pseudo-Jonathan* and *Neofiti* on Exod. 28:39; 39:29. The term is also found in the Mishnah (m. ‘Erub. 10:15 and m. Sukkah 5:3); see FELDMAN, *Judean Antiquities 1-4*, cit., p. 273, n. 401; GUSSMAN, *Das Priesterverständnis*, cit., p. 371, n. 28. On the Aramaic transliterations, see below, § 7.

³⁴ The passage continues as follows: “(158) Then linen envelops him from above, hanging down up to the forehead and concealing both the seam of the headband and the unsightliness stemming from it and becoming a level surface for the whole skull. It

is fitted precisely as not to flow around while he is exerting himself with the sacred service. We have now revealed of what sort is the clothing of the ordinary priest.” This detailed description is non-biblical.

³⁵ Sir. 45:12 likewise calls the cap *κίδαρις*.

³⁶ See LSJ, s.v. *κίδαρις*, with references. Jerome, *Ep.* 64.13, attests the tiara with no cone-shaped top. On Jerome's letter 64, see A. CANELLIS, *La lettre 64 de Saint Jérôme et le symbolisme des couleurs: les vêtements sacerdotaux d'Exode*, «Vigiliae Christianae» 72.3 (2018), pp. 235-254.

³⁷ On these passages, and the use of *μίτρας* instead of *κιδάρεις* by Aquila and Symmachus, see WEVERS, *Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus*, cit., p.

In spite of interpreting the cap as being the same for both the regular priests and the high priest, as does the Septuagint, Josephus does not use the terms κίδαρις and μίτρα of the Greek Bible, but prefers πῖλος, which in Greek indicates a “close-fitting cap” and is very common also in numismatic representations.³⁸ Moreover, Josephus specifies that the cap is “without a peak” (ἄκονος). The lack of a peak would make possible the use of the same cap by the high priest, who, according to Josephus, wears an elaborated headdress over it, meticulously described by the historian. In this case, probably Josephus preferred a different term in order to be more specific about the type of cap, which he knew from personal experience. He wanted a word indicating “a close-fitting cap”: the word κίδαρις would be thus less appropriate than πῖλος, since κίδαρις mostly features a peak. Moreover, the word κίδαρις, just like the term τιάρα, carried an exotic connotation, being strictly related to a Persian headdress.³⁹ On the other hand, πῖλος would have a more plain and common reference. Indeed, Josephus could have used μίτρα, “head-band”, which is more neutral than κίδαρις in its connotation: in fact, the description of the cap which is found in *Ant.* 3.157 would be appropriate for a μίτρα.⁴⁰ However, Herodotus (*Hist.* 1.195 and 7.90) uses μίτρα likewise to indicate an oriental head-dress.⁴¹ Poss-

ibly for this reason, while comparing the cap to a “band” of woven linen, Josephus does not use the term μίτρα either, but rather the more general ταυνία, “band, fillet.”

On top of the cap the high priest would have a second headdress, alluded to in *Exod.* 28:36.⁴² Josephus indicates it in *Bell.* 5.235 as a crown (στέφανος),⁴³ while in *Ant.* 3.172-178, with a unique description that requires a separate investigation, he portrays it as a complex floral crown with an inscribed plate at the front. For the cap of the common priests Josephus seems to consciously vary the lexicon of the Greek Bible.

6. Coincidences Between Josephus's Terminology and the Septuagint

As I have pointed out with respect to the tabernacle account,⁴⁴ there are also in terms of the priestly garments some terminological coincidences between Josephus and the Septuagint. However, they are rather limited. The tunic is designated by Josephus χιτών as in the Septuagint, and is interpreted as a long tunic, ποδήρης, as in the Greek Bible. Specifically, Josephus employs for the border of the tunic the unusual term ὦα, which is used by the Septuagint only for the priestly garments. The belt is called by

463, n. 47. See also T. MURAOKA, *A Greek-Hebrew/Aramaic Two-Way Index to the Septuagint*, Peeters, Leuven, Paris, Walpole 2010, p. 262, s.v. מצנפת.

³⁸ LSJ, s.v. πῖλος. A. SAVIO, *Il berretto della libertà nella documentazione numismatica romana e la sua trasformazione durante la Rivoluzione Francese*, «Rivista italiana di Numismatica e Scienze Affini» 105 (2004), pp. 25-63.

³⁹ Τιάρα indicates a Persian headdress, e.g., in HERODOTUS, *Hist.* 1.132; 3.12; 7.61; 8.120. XENOPHON, *An.* 2.5.23; *Cyr.* 8.3.13.

⁴⁰ In that respect, I prefer the translation of Thackeray “[the cap] is so fashioned as to resemble a coronet (ὡς στεφάνη), consisting of a band (ταυνία) of woven linen thickly compressed” (THACKERAY, *Josephus Jewish Antiquities Books I-IV*, cit., p. 391) to that of Feldman “it resembles a head-band of linen web made thick” (FELDMAN, *Judean Antiquities 1-4*, cit., p. 273). Feldman's translation, in fact, misses the comparison with the crown.

⁴¹ On Josephus and Herodotus, E. ALMAGOR,

“This is What Herodotus Relates”: the Presence of Herodotus' Histories in Josephus' Writings, in V. ZALI and J. PRIESTLEY (eds.), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Herodotus*, Brill, Leiden 2016, pp. 83-100.

⁴² “You shall make a rosette of pure gold, and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet, ‘Holy to the Lord’” (MT; NRSV, *Exod.* 28:36); “And you shall make a pure gold thin plate and shall put in relief in it the relief of the seal “‘Holiness of the Lord’” (LXX *Exod.* 28:32(36); NETS, p. 71). On the unclear definition of γϚ in this context, see PROPP, *Exodus 19-40*, cit., pp. 446-447. Propp translates γϚ as “blossom” (*ibid.*, p. 315). The LXX *Exod.* 28:32(36) has πέταλον “plate” for γϚ. On the correspondence of γϚ, see MURAOKA, *Index*, cit., p. 325.

⁴³ Sir. 45:12 and PHILO, *Mos.* 2.114, also speak of “crown.”

⁴⁴ CASTELLI, *Josephus's Description of the Tabernacle*, cit.

both ζώνη (*Ant.* 3.154; Exod. 28:4), and the bells hanging on the robe of the high priest κώδωνες (*Ant.* 3.160; Exod. 28:33-34). Finally, Josephus names the *ephod* ἐπωμὶς in *Ant.* 3.162, just as in Exod. 28.4ff. LXX, and in *Ant.* 3.163 he translates the meaning of the high priest's breastplate (cf. Exod. 28:4 יִשָּׁן) with λόγιον, "oracle," a word repeatedly used in Exod. 28:15-26 LXX.⁴⁵

But the coincidences seem to be limited to these few examples. While Josephus first calls the *ephod* ἐπωμὶς (*Ant.* 3.162) like the Septuagint,⁴⁶ he names it later on ἐφαπτίς (*Ant.* 3.184-185), with a term not found in the Septuagint.⁴⁷ Moreover, while both Josephus and the Septuagint have the term λόγιον for the breastplate, Josephus first emphasizes that it is called ἐσσήν, once more with a transliteration of its Semitic equivalent.⁴⁸ Finally, the crown of the high priest is called πέταλον "flower" by Exod. 28:36, while Josephus prefers the word στέφανος "crown" (*Ant.* 3.172).

7. On the use of Aramaic transliterations

One recurrent feature in Josephus's description of the priestly garments is the transliteration into Greek of some words of Semitic origin. On the belt, for example, he writes that "Moses calls it *abanēth* (ἀβανήθ),⁴⁹ but we (ἡμεῖς δέ) call it (καλοῦμεν) *emian* (ἐμίαν), having learned it from the Babylonians" (*Ant.* 3.156). In this case,

Josephus provides a double transliteration: he transliterates into Greek the Hebrew אֲבָנֶת of Exod. 28:4.39, as well as the Aramaic ܐܡܝܢ, which is found, for example, in Targum Onkelos.⁵⁰ Samuel Robertson has speculated that, by adding the Aramaic term, Josephus intended to emphasize to his non-Jewish readers the mysterious quality of Israelite worship, and to indicate to his Jewish readers that he knew the ancient terms.⁵¹ More recently, Annette Weissenrieder has argued that by transliterating the Aramaic terms "Josephus emphasizes the distinctiveness of Jewish religion," and that he seeks

to set up Aramaic as a priestly language, implying that its use dates back to the time of the tent of the tabernacle. In other words, he is deliberately shifting Aramaic out of the everyday world and representing it to outsiders as a priestly language in use ever since the days of the tent of the [sic; tabernacle] by representing it as a priestly language, establishing the era of the tent of the tabernacle as an ideal time.⁵²

However, while the Aramaic terms may indeed contribute to emphasizing the distinctiveness of Jewish religion and its priests to Josephus's audience,⁵³ I do not agree with the rest of Weissenrieder's interpretation. As I have remarked in § 2, unlike the biblical text, Josephus does not say that the garments are made for Aaron and his children in a remote past: he focuses rather on the priestly vestments and the priest-

⁴⁵ The correct reading is λόγιον, while λογεῖον seems to be an "itacistic spelling;" see WEVERS, *Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus*, cit., p. 451.

⁴⁶ This example is pointed out by RAJAK, *Josephus's Greek and Hebrew Bible*, and *Josephus and the Septuagint*, cit., p. 428.

⁴⁷ This term first indicates an upper garment of the knights (see LSJ, s.v. ἐφαπτίς). Strabo (7.2.3), however, attests a meaning approaching that of Josephus: ἐφαπτίς would be a garment of the priestesses of the Cimbri; even closer to Josephus's meaning is that attested by Pollux (4.116, l. 6), who makes of ἐφαπτίς a male suit, referred to the Atrides.

⁴⁸ Exod. 28:4 יִשָּׁן. The Aramaic form is / יִשָּׁן. The breastplate is also called περιστήθιον in Exod. 28:4 LXX.

⁴⁹ With the reading of MSPL; see NODET, *Les Antiquités Juives*, cit., p. 174*.

⁵⁰ A. VAN DER KOOIJ, *Josephus, Onkelos, and Jonathan: On the Agreement between Josephus's Work and Targumic Sources*, in J. KHAN and D. LIPTON (eds.), *Studies on the Text and Versions of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of Robert Gordon*, SupVT 149, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2012, pp. 253-267 (254).

⁵¹ ROBERTSON, *The Account*, cit., pp. 188-189; Robertson's hypothesis is reported – and therefore probably considered convincing – by FELDMAN, *Judean Antiquities 1-4*, cit., p. 272, n. 384.

⁵² WEISSENRIEDER, *A roadmap to heaven*, cit., p. 178 and 168 respectively.

⁵³ The distinctiveness of Jewish religion and its priests is stressed also by Friis, "Aaron", insofar that Aaron's qualifications for the priestly office, unlike that of the Roman priests, do not rest on his social leverage or his wealth, but on God's choice.

ly office which they represent in his own days. While the rest of the description of the tabernacle up to that point is set in the past tense, for the garments of the ordinary priests Josephus uses exclusively the present tense. I have mentioned the reference to the belt (*Ant.* 3.156), called *abanēth* (ἄβανήθ) by Moses,⁵⁴ while “we (ἡμεῖς δέ) call it (καλοῦμεν) *emian*.” Who is meant by “we”? Presumably his fellow-countrymen, not just the priests. That is more evident in *Ant.* 3.252, where “the Hebrews” (Ἑβραῖοι) are said to use the word *asārtha* (ἄσαρθά) – a transliteration of the Aramaic עֲסָרְתָּא – to indicate the fiftieth day after Passover. The term, which differs from the Hebrew עֲסָרְתָּא, is used in this way also in Targum Onkelos Num 28:26.⁵⁵ By using Ἑβραῖοι Josephus does not specifically indicate the priests, but more probably the people using the Hebrew and Aramaic languages as opposed to Greek only.⁵⁶

I disagree, therefore, with Weissenrieder’s view that in his description of the priestly vestments Josephus wants to set up Aramaic as a priestly language dating back to the tabernacle. Although according to recent scholarship Hebrew continued to be used in Palestine in the first century, at least in some circles,⁵⁷ the use of Aramaic remains undisputed. The Aramaic forms themselves would mark the distinctiveness of Jewish religion and its priests for Josephus’s non-Jewish audience, although for such

an audience Hebrew would have been exotic enough. Grintz has argued that Josephus uses the Aramaic forms as they are more adaptable to the transliteration he chose for his Greek readers, since both Greek and Aramaic make use of vowel-endings.⁵⁸ Yet, in the case of the belt, Josephus adopts a double layer of transliteration, both from Hebrew and Aramaic.

Given the sensitivity of the issue of the priestly vestments and their political relevance during the Roman age, I therefore consider it more probable that Josephus extensively used transliterations in his description of the garments to stress how such vestments were deeply rooted in Jewish tradition – in the written Torah as well as in the spoken language – and how he, as a priest, was a key interpreter of such tradition.

Conclusions

In this article I have shown that in some, yet limited cases of difficult or controversial interpretation of the Hebrew, Josephus echoes, or at least seems to be inspired by, the Septuagint of Exodus in his description of the priestly vestments. For example, he interprets the tunic as “long” (*Ant.* 3.153), as does the Greek Bible, and he uses the same uncommon word ὄα as the Septuagint to indicate the “border” of the neck of the tunic (*Ant.* 3.156).⁵⁹ Such coincidences may

⁵⁴ With the reading of MSPL, followed by NODET, *Les Antiquités Juives. Livres I à III*, cit., p. 174*.

⁵⁵ VAN DER KOOIJ, “Josephus, Onkelos, and Jonathan,” cit., p. 255. On the other hand, G. BALTES, *The Origins of the ‘Exclusive Aramaic Model’ in the Nineteenth Century: Methodological Fallacies and Subtle Motives*, in R. BUTH and S. NOTLEY (eds.), *The Language Environment of First Century Judaea. Jerusalem Studies in the Synoptic Gospels*, vol. 2, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2014, p. 16, n. 25, maintains that “the frequent use of final -a in Greek transliterations as evidence for an Aramaic *status emphaticus* is a *non sequitur*.”

⁵⁶ The term Ἑβραῖοι and its declined forms are mostly used by Josephus for the biblical history (*Ant.* 1-10), specifically while explaining linguistic issues (e.g., *Ant.* 1.117, 146, 204, 258; 2.3, 200; 3.32, 137, 144). On the language, it mainly refers to Hebrew, but occasionally, as in 3.252, to Aramaic as well.

⁵⁷ BALTES, *The Origins of the ‘Exclusive Aramaic Model’*, cit., p. 16; and *The Use of Hebrew and Aramaic in Epigraphic Sources of the New Testament Era*, *ibid.*, pp. 35-65. On the use of Hebrew as a spoken language, see also J.M. GRINTZ, *Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple*, «JBL» 79 (1960), pp. 32-47.

⁵⁸ GRINTZ, *Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language*, cit., p. 44.

⁵⁹ In his article on the Old Greek of Isaiah and the Isaiah Targum, Arie van de Kooij regards “the scholar-translators of Tg. Prophets as people like Josephus”; see A. VAN DER KOOIJ, *The Old Greek of Isaiah and the Isaiah Targum*, in D. SHEPHERD, J. JOOSTEN, M. VAN DER MEER (eds.), *Septuagint, Targum, and Beyond. Comparing Aramaic and Greek versions from Jewish Antiquities*, JSJSup 193, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2020, pp. 141-156 (p. 154, n. 34). In the same volume, pp. 157-173, Jan Joosten, *Tar-*

also reflect the use of a biblical glossary, based on the Septuagint,⁶⁰ although there is scanty evidence for Greek *onomastica* for the time of Josephus.

However, just as I have pointed out with respect to Josephus's description of the tabernacle, as a general tendency Josephus shows more terminological divergences from, than coincidences with, the Septuagint of Exodus. Moreover, in his description of the priestly garments the historian elaborates even more extensively than in his description of the tabernacle, featuring more creativity. He widely draws from his own experience, enriching the biblical account with several details, and thus several terms, not found in the Greek Bible. He transliterates the Semitic equivalent of some vestments, either Hebrew, Aramaic, or both. And he even coins a new word, a *hapax legomenon* in the entire Greek literature: συνακτήρ, "which draws together, binder," to indicate the undergarments (*Ant.* 3.152).

'Revising' the Septuagint was not Josephus's primary goal in writing the history of his nation from the origin of the world to 66 CE: I

agree with Tessa Rajak that the historian rather aimed at a "new and unprecedented venture."⁶¹ However, the analysis of the descriptions of the tabernacle and the priestly garments suggests that Josephus's biblical account was meant to surpass the model of the Greek Bible not only in being more comprehensive in content, as the historian declares in *Ant.* 1.12, but also in improving its style, and updating its vocabulary. Moreover, and even more importantly, the investigation of Josephus's vocabulary of tabernacle and priestly vestments suggests that Josephus strives to bring his account closer to the interpretation of the Scriptures' Semitic languages (both Hebrew and Aramaic) and context. Notably, Hebrew for the description of the tabernacle, and authoritative Jewish sources such as himself, his own priestly experience, and his own Semitic background in the case of the priestly vestments.⁶²

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gum Jonathan and its Relation to the Septuagint in the Book of Hosea, suggests that the Septuagint may have been consulted by some Targumists.

⁶⁰ In these terms writes RAJAK, *Josephus and the Septuagint*, cit., p. 428.

⁶¹ RAJAK, *Josephus and the Septuagint*, cit., p. 431. The fact that Josephus was writing a work of historiography played a significant role in his "new venture." On Josephus's genre consciousness, see S. ADAMS, *Greek Genres and Jewish Authors: Negotiating Literary Culture in the Greco-Roman Era*, Baylor University Press, Waco 2020, pp. 229-249. More generally, on 'Jewish revisions' of the Septuagint, D. BARTHÉLEMY, *Les devanciers d'Aquila. Première publication intégrale du texte des fragments du Dodécaprophète trouvés dans le désert de Juda, précédée d'une étude sur les traductions et recensions grecques de la Bible réalisés au premier siècle de notre ère sous l'influence du rabbinat palestinien* (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 10), Brill, Leiden 1963. Barthélemy's work was followed by E. TOV, *The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Nahal Hever (8HevXIIgr)* (The Seiyâl Collection I). With the Collaboration of R.A. Kraft and a Contribution by P.J. Parsons (Discoveries in the Judean Desert 8), Clarendon Press, Oxford 1990.

⁶² N. FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS, *Non placet Septuaginta: Revisions and New Greek Versions of the Bible in Byzantium*, in N. DE LANGE, J.G. KRIVORUCHKO, C. BOYD-TAYLOR (eds.), *Jewish Reception of Greek Bible Versions*, Texts and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism 23, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2009, pp. 39-50 (41) points out that Symmachus, at the end of the second century CE, revised the Old Greek aspiring to a "dignified position among the Greek literary authors of his time." On Symmachus, A.G. SALVESEN, *Symmachus in the Pentateuch*, Journal of Semitic Studies Monograph 15, University of Manchester 1991, pp. 195-264, concludes that Symmachus aimed to produce a translation in clear Greek which accurately reflected the sense of the Hebrew. On Symmachus's version as mainly interacting with, and contributing a revision of Aquila, see M. VAN DER MEER, *Symmachus's Version of Joshua*, in J. W. BARKER, A. LE DONNE, J.N. LOHR (eds.), *Found in Translation: Essays on Jewish Biblical Translation in Honor of Leonard J. Green-spoon*, Purdue University Press, West Lafayette 2018, pp. 53-93; M. VAN DER MEER, *Symmachus*, in A.G. SALVESEN and T.M. LAW (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Septuagint*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2021, pp. 469-480.

SUMMARY

Josephus's description of the priestly vestments shows more terminological divergences from, than similarity with, the Septuagint version of Exodus. This article argues that by creatively drawing from his own experience and enriching the biblical account with several details – and thus, several terms – not found in the Greek Bible, Josephus strives to bring his description closer to the interpretation of the Scriptures' Semitic languages and context. While that was Hebrew in the case of the description of the tabernacle (*Ant.* 3.108-150), in the case of the priestly vestments, Josephus enlarges his spectrum, including Aramaic and his own experience. Given the sensitivity of the issue of the priestly vestments and their political relevance during the Roman age, Josephus extensively used transliterations in his description to stress how such vestments were deeply rooted in the Jewish tradition – in the written Law as well as in the spoken language – and how he, as a priest, was a key interpreter of such tradition.

KEYWORDS: Josephus; Priestly vestments; Greek and Hebrew Bible; Aramaic; Vocabulary.



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