

Reading Questions

Josephus, *JW* book 2 (selections); Philo, *Embassy*; Tobit

Week 3, Sept. 29th

Here are some questions to keep in mind as you do your reading this week. You don't need to hand in answers to these, but you should come to class with some specific thoughts on as many of them as possible. Remember to keep an eye open for specific passages that relate to the questions and jot those down so that you can draw our attention to them in the seminar discussion.

- How does Josephus depict the leaders of the various revolt movements? How might this be coloured by his sympathy with Rome? How would these leaders have understood their own roles and missions?
- What do you notice about the timing of the various revolts described by Josephus in *JW* book 2? How would we explain this pattern? How might it influence our reading of the Gospels and Acts?
- What are the issues that repeatedly sparked revolt or resistance movements?
- Describe the key features of the Pharisees and Sadducees according to Josephus' description. Where do you suspect his account might be distorted by his desire to communicate to a Roman audience?
- How would you describe the position of Jewish communities in cities outside Judea (e.g., Alexandria or Ptolemais or Mesopotamia)? What seems to be their relationship with the surrounding gentile populace and with gentile leaders?
- In Tobit, how does the author define covenant faithfulness (e.g., in the portrayal of the heroes Tobit and Sarah)? How does this compare with the chief concerns of most Jews in *JW* 2 and Philo's *Embassy*?
- How does the book of Tobit suggest Diaspora Jewish communities ought to handle oppression? How does the book answer the problem of unjust suffering? How does this perspective compare to that of 1 Macc, 2 Macc, or Philo's *Embassy*?
- What do these documents suggest about the future (or eschatological) goal toward which the authors are looking?
- In Josephus' depiction, what seem to be the causes of the Jewish war against Rome (AD 66-72)? Why did it fail? How does he interpret the war theologically? How do you think his depiction is likely distorted?