

Ancient Sources for Acts

Chapter 23

23:6–11

Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 2.8.14 §164–65

(164) But the Sadducees are those that compose the second order, and take away fate entirely, and suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil; (165) and they say, that to act what is good, or what is evil, is at men's own choice, and that the one or the other belongs so to everyone, that they may act as they please. They also take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.1.4 §16

But the doctrine of the Sadducees is this: That souls die with the bodies; nor do they regard the observation of anything besides what the law enjoins them; for they think it an instance of virtue to dispute with those teachers of philosophy whom they frequent.

m. Sanh. 10.1

A. All Israelites have a share in the world to come,

B. as it is said, *Your people shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.*

C. And these are the ones who have no portion in the world to come:

D. (1) He who says, the resurrection of the dead is a teaching that does not derive from the Torah, (2) and the Torah does not come from Heaven; (3) and the Epicurean.

E. R. Aqiba says, "Also: He how reads heretical books,

F. And he who whispers over a sounds and says, *I will put none of the diseases upon you which I have put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you.*

E. Abba Saul says, "Also: He who pronounces the divine Name as it is spelled out."

1 Enoch 45:4–5

⁴Then will I cause Mine Elect One to dwell among them.

And I will transform the heaven and make it an eternal blessing and light:

⁵And I will transform the earth and make it a blessing:

And I will cause Mine elect ones to dwell upon it:

But the sinners and evil-doers shall not set foot thereon.

2 Baruch 51.5

When therefore they see those, over whom they are now exalted, (but) who shall then be exalted and glorified more than they, they shall respectively be transformed, the latter into the splendor of angels, and the former shall yet more waste away in wonder at the visions and in the beholding of the forms.

2 Baruch 51.10–12

¹⁰ For in the heights of that world shall they dwell,
And they shall be made like unto the angels,
And be made equal to the stars,
And they shall be changed into every form they desire,
From beauty into loveliness,
And from light into the splendor of glory.

¹¹ For there shall be spread before them the extents of Paradise, and there shall be shown to them the beauty of the majesty of the living creatures which are beneath the throne, and all the armies of the angels, who [are now held fast by My word, lest they should appear, and] are held fast by a command, that they may stand in their places till their advent comes. ¹² Moreover, there shall then be excellency in the righteous surpassing that in the angels.

b. Sabb. 152b

A certain Sadducee said to R. Abbahu: You maintain that the souls of the righteous are hidden under the Throne of Glory, then how did the bone [practicing] necromancer bring up Samuel by means of his necromancy? There it was within twelve months [of death], he replied. For it was taught: for full [twelve months] the body is in existence and the soul ascends and descends.

23:12–22

m. Ned. 3.1–3

3:1 A. Four [types of] vows did sages declare not binding:

(1) Vows of incitement, (2) vows of exaggeration, (3) vows made in error, (4) vows [broken] under constraint.

(1) B. *Vows of Incitement*: How so?

C. [If] one was selling something and said, “*Qonam* if I chop the price down for you to under a *sela*,” and the other says, “*Qonam* if I pay you more than a shekel,”

D. [then] both of them agree at three denars.

E. R. Eliezer b. Jacob says, “Also: He who wants to force his fellow by a vow to eat with him says, “Any vow which I am going to vow is null,”—so long as he is mindful at the moment of his vow.”

3:2 (2) A. *Vows of Exaggeration:*

B. [If] he said, “*Qonam* if I did not see [walking] on this road as many as went out of Egypt,”

C. “... if I did not see a snake as big as a beam of an olive press.”

(3) D. *Vows made in error:*

E. “... if I eat,” or “... if I drink” and he forgot and ate and drank.

G. [If] he said, “*Qonam* by any benefit my wife gets from me, for she stole my purse,” “for she beat up my son,”

And he found out that she had not beaten up his son,

Or he found out that she had not stolen it.

H. [If] he saw people eating figs [belonging to him] and said, “Lo, they are *qorban* to you!” and they turned out to be his father and brothers, and there were others with them—

I. The House of Shammai say, “They are permitted, and those with them are prohibited.”

J. And the House of Hillel say, “These and those [men] are permitted [to eat the figs].”

3:3 (4) A. *Vows [broken] under constraint:*

B. [If] one’s fellow imposed a vow on him to eat with him, but he got sick, or his son got sick, or a river [overflowed and] stopped him—lo, these are vows [broken] under constraint.

Philo, *On Creation* 105

Solon therefore thus computes the life of man by the aforesaid ten periods of seven years. But Hippocrates the physician says that there are Seven ages of man, infancy, childhood, boyhood, youth, manhood, middle age, old age; and that these too, are measured by periods of seven, though not in the same order. And he speaks thus; “In the nature of man there are seven seasons, which men call ages; infancy, childhood, boyhood, and the rest. He is an infant till he reaches his seventh year, the age of the shedding of his teeth. He is a child till he arrives at the age of puberty, which takes place in fourteen years. He is a boy till his beard begins to grow, and that time is the end of a third period of seven years. He is a youth till the completion of the growth of his whole body, which coincides with the fourth seven years. Then he is a man till he reaches his forty-ninth year, or seven times seven periods. He is a middle aged man till he is fifty-six, or eight times seven years old; and after that he is an old man.”

23:23–30

Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 2.12.8–14.1 §247–72

(247) After this, Caesar sent Felix, the brother of Pallas, to be procurator of Galilee, and Samaria, and Perea, and removed Agrippa from Chalcis unto a greater kingdom; for he gave him the tetrarchy which had belonged to Philip, which contained Batanea, Trachonitis, and Gaulonitis: he added to it the kingdom of Lysanias, and that province [Abilene] which Varus had governed. (248) But Claudius himself, when he had administered the government thirteen years, eight months, and twenty days, died, and left Nero to be his successor in the empire, whom he had adopted by his wife Agrippina's delusions, in order to be his successor, although he had a son of his own whose name was Britannicus, by Messalina his former wife, and a daughter whose name was Octavia, (249) whom he had married to Nero; he had also another daughter by Petina, whose name was Antonia.

CHAPTER 13

1. (250) Now as to the many things in which Nero acted like a madman, out of the extravagant degree of the felicity and riches which he enjoyed, and by that means used his good fortune to the injury of others; and after what manner he slew his brother, and wife, and mother; from whom his barbarity spread itself to others that were most nearly related to him: (251) and how, at last, he was so distracted that he became an actor in the scenes, and upon the theater,—I omit to say any more about them, because there are writers enough upon those subjects everywhere; but I shall turn myself to those actions of his time in which the Jews were concerned.
2. (252) Nero therefore bestowed the kingdom of the Lesser Armenia upon Aristobulus, Herod's son, and he added to Agrippa's kingdom four cities, with the toparchies to them belonging: I mean Abila, and that Julias which is in Perea, Tarichea also, and Tiberias of Galilee; but over the rest of Judea he made Felix procurator. (253) This Felix took Eleazar the arch robber, and many that were with him, alive, when they had ravaged the country for twenty years together, and sent them to Rome; but as to the number of robbers whom he caused to be crucified, and of whom who were caught among them, and those he brought to punishment, they were a multitude not to be enumerated.
3. (254) When the country was purged of these, there sprang up another sort of robbers in Jerusalem, which were called Sicarii, who slew men in the daytime, and in the midst of the city; (255) this they did chiefly at the festivals, when they mingled themselves among the multitude, and concealed daggers under their garments, with which they stabbed those that were their enemies; and when any fell down dead, the murderers became a part of those that had indignation against them; by which means they appeared persons of such reputation, that they could by no means be discovered. (256) The first man who was slain by them was Jonathan the high priest, after whose death many were slain every day, while the fear men were in of being so served, was more afflicting than the calamity itself; (257) and while everybody expected death every hour, as men do in war, so men were obliged to look before them, and to take notice of their enemies at a great distance; nor, if their friends were coming to them, durst they trust them any longer; but, in the midst of their suspicions and guarding of themselves, they were slain. Such was the celebrity of the plotters against them, and so cunning was their contrivance.

4. (258) There was also another body of wicked men gotten together, not so impure in their actions, but more wicked in their intentions, who laid waste the happy state of the city no less than did these murderers. (259) These were such men as deceived and deluded the people under pretense of divine inspiration, but were for procuring innovations and changes of the government, and these prevailed with the multitude to act like madmen, and went before them into the wilderness, as pretending that God would there show them the signals of liberty; (260) but Felix thought this procedure was to be the beginning of a revolt; so he sent some horsemen and footmen, both armed, who destroyed a great number of them.

5. (261) But there was an Egyptian false prophet that did the Jews more mischief than the former; for he was a cheat, and pretended to be a prophet also, and got together thirty thousand men that were deluded by him; (262) these he led round about from the wilderness to the mount which was called the Mount of Olives, and was ready to break into Jerusalem by force from that place; and if he could but once conquer the Roman garrison and the people, he intended to domineer over them by the assistance of those guards of his that were to break into the city with him, (263) but Felix prevented his attempt, and met him with his Roman soldiers, while all the people assisted him in his attack upon them, insomuch that, when it came to a battle, the Egyptian ran away, with a few others, while the greatest part of those that were with him were either destroyed or taken alive; but the rest of the multitude were dispersed everyone to their own homes and there concealed themselves.

6. (264) Now, when these were quieted, it happened, as it does in a diseased body, that another part was subject to an inflammation; for a company of deceivers and robbers got together, and persuaded the Jews to revolt, and exhorted them to assert their liberty, inflicting death on those that continued in obedience to the Roman government, and saying, that such as willingly chose slavery ought to be forced from such their desired inclinations; (265) for they parted themselves into different bodies, and lay in wait up and down the country, and plundered the houses of the great men, and slew the men themselves, and set the villages on fire; and this till all Judea was filled with the effects of their madness. And thus the flame was every day more and more blown up, till it came to a direct war.

7. (266) There was also another disturbance at Caesarea:—those Jews who were mixed with the Syrians that lived there, raising a tumult against them. The Jews pretended that the city was theirs, and said that he who built it was a Jew; meaning King Herod. The Syrians confessed also that its builder was a Jew; but they still said, however, that the city was a Grecian city; for that he who set up statues and temples in it could not design it for Jews. (267) On which account both parties had a contest with one another; and this contest increased so much, that it came at last to arms, and the bolder sort of them marched out to fight; for the elders of the Jews were not able to put a stop to their own people that were disposed to be tumultuous, and the Greeks thought it a shame for them to be overcome by the Jews. (268) Now these Jews exceeded the others in riches and strength of body; but the Grecian part had the advantages of assistance from the soldiery; for the greatest part of the Roman garrison was raised out of Syria; and being thus related to the Syrian part, they were ready to assist it. (269) However, the governors of the city were concerned to keep all quiet, and whenever they caught those that were most for fighting on either side, they punished them with stripes and bonds. Yet did not the sufferings of those that were caught affright the remainder, or make them desist; but they were still more and more exasperated, and deeper engaged in the sedition. (270) And as Felix came once into the marketplace, and commanded the Jews, when they had beaten the Syrians, to go their ways, and threatened them if they would not, and they would not obey him, he sent his soldiers out upon them and slew they great many of them, upon which it fell

out that what they had was plundered. And as the sedition still continued, he chose out the most eminent men on both sides as ambassadors to Nero, to argue about their several privileges.

CHAPTER 14

1. (271) Now it was that Festus succeeded Felix as procurator, and made it his business to correct those that made disturbances in the country. So he caught the greatest part of the robbers, and destroyed a great many of them. (272) But then Albinus, who succeeded Festus, did not execute his office as the other had done; nor was there any sort of wickedness that could be named but he had a hand in it.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.7.1–3 §137–147

(137) So Claudius sent Felix, the brother of Pallans, to take care of the affairs of Judea; (138) and, when he had already completed the twelfth year of his reign, he bestowed upon Agrippa the tetrarchy of Philip, and Batanea, and added thereto Trachonitis, with Abila; which last had been the tetrarchy of Lysanius; but he took from him Chalcis, when he had been governor thereof four years. (139) And when Agrippa had received these countries as the gift of Caesar, he gave his sister Drusilla in marriage to Azizus, king of Emesa, upon his consent to be circumcised; for Epiphanes, the son of king Antiochus, had refused to marry her, because after he had promised her father formerly to come over to the Jewish religion, he would not now perform that promise. (140) He also gave Mariamne in marriage to Archelaus, the son of Helcias, to whom she had formerly been betrothed by Agrippa her father; from which marriage was derived a daughter, whose name was Bernice.

2. (141) But for the marriage of Drusilla with Azizus, it was in no long time afterward dissolved, upon the following occasion:—(142) While Felix was procurator of Judea, he saw this Drusilla, and fell in love with her; for she did indeed exceed all other women in beauty, and he sent to her a person whose name was Simon, a one of his friends; a Jew he was, and by birth a Cypriot, and one who pretended to be a magician; and endeavored to persuade her to forsake her present husband, and marry him; and promised, that if she would not refuse him, he would make her a happy woman. (143) Accordingly she acted ill, and because she was desirous to avoid her sister Bernice's envy, for she was very ill treated by her on account of her beauty, was prevailed upon to transgress the laws of her forefathers, and to marry Felix; and when he had had a son by her, he named him Agrippa. (144) But after what manner that young man, with his wife, perished at the conflagration of the mountain Vesuvius, in the days of Titus Caesar, shall be related hereafter.

3. (145) But as for Bernice, she lived a widow a long while after the death of Herod [king of Chalcis], who was both her husband and her uncle. But, when the report went that she had criminal conversation with her brother [Agrippa, junior], she persuaded Polemo, who was king of Cilicia, to be circumcised, and to marry her, as supposing, that by this means she should prove those calumnies upon her to be false; (146) and Polemo was prevailed upon, and that chiefly on account of her riches. Yet did not this matrimony endure long; but Bernice left Polemo, and, as was said, with impure intentions. So he forsook at once this matrimony, and the Jewish religion: (147) and, at the same time, Mariamne put away Archelaus, and was married to Demetrius, the principal man among the Alexandrian Jews both for his family and his wealth; and indeed he was then their alabarch. So she named her son whom she had by him Agrippinus. But of all these particulars we shall hereafter treat more exactly.

Tacitus, *Annals* 12.54

Not equally moderate was his brother, surnamed Felix, who had for some time been governor of Judæa, and thought that he could do any evil act with impunity, backed up as he was by such power. It is true that the Jews had shown symptoms of commotion in a seditious outbreak, and when they had heard of the assassination of Caius, there was no hearty submission, as a fear still lingered that any of the emperors might impose the same orders. Felix meanwhile, by ill-timed remedies, stimulated disloyal acts; while he had, as a rival in the worst wickedness, Ventidius Cumanus, who held a part of the province, which was so divided that Galilea was governed by Cumanus, Samaria by Felix. The two peoples had long been at feud, and now less than ever restrained their enmity, from contempt of their rulers. And accordingly they plundered each other, letting loose bands of robbers, forming ambuscades, and occasionally fighting battles, and carrying the spoil and booty to the two procurators, who at first rejoiced at all this, but, as the mischief grew, they interposed with an armed force, which was cut to pieces. The flame of war would have spread through the province, but it was saved by Quadratus, governor of Syria. In dealing with the Jews, who had been daring enough to slay our soldiers, there was little hesitation about their being capitally punished. Some delay indeed was occasioned by Cumanus and Felix; for Claudius on hearing the causes of the rebellion had given authority for deciding also the case of these procurators. Quadratus, however, exhibited Felix as one of the judges, admitting him to the bench with the view of cowing the ardour of the prosecutors. And so Cumanus was condemned for the crimes which the two had committed, and tranquility was restored to the province.

Tacitus, *History* 5.9

Cneius Pompeius was the first of our countrymen to subdue the Jews. Availing himself of the right of conquest, he entered the temple. Thus it became commonly known that the place stood empty with no similitude of gods within, and that the shrine had nothing to reveal. The walls of Jerusalem were destroyed, the temple was left standing. After these provinces had fallen, in the course of our civil wars, into the hands of Marcus Antonius, Pacorus, king of the Parthians, seized Judæa. He was slain by Publius Ventidius, and the Parthians were driven back over the Euphrates. Caius Sosius reduced the Jews to subjection. The royal power, which had been bestowed by Antony on Herod, was augmented by the victorious Augustus. On Herod's death, one Simon, without waiting for the approbation of the Emperor, usurped the title of king. He was punished by Quintilius Varus then governor of Syria, and the nation, with its liberties curtailed, was divided into three provinces under the sons of Herod. Under Tiberius all was quiet. But when the Jews were ordered by Caligula to set up his statue in the temple, they preferred the alternative of war. The death of the Emperor put an end to the disturbance. The kings were either dead, or reduced to insignificance, when Claudius entrusted the province of Judæa to the Roman Knights or to his own freedmen, one of whom, Antonius Felix, indulging in every kind of barbarity and lust, exercised the power of a king in the spirit of a slave. He had married Drusilla, the granddaughter of Antony and Cleopatra, and so was the grandson-in-law, as Claudius was the grandson, of Antony.