Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities* is often treated not as a unified work but rather as a combination of two distinct parts: the first part is a retelling of the biblical narrative, while the second surveys the history of the Jews from Alexander the Great to the outbreak of the First Jewish Revolt.¹ Such a view is perhaps understandable in light of the reverence of scholars of many faiths towards the Bible; a reverence which seems to extend even to Josephus’ reworking of it. A contributing factor is the tendency of scholars to focus on subjects of their choice. This seems to place the biblical scholar and the intertestamental one on opposite sides of a fault line.

Josephus however did not share these attitudes, for in his preface to the *Jewish Antiquities* he tells us that his aim was to write a work which would encompass the entire archaeology of the Jews as well as their constitution translated from the Hebrew (*Ant.* 1.5). A bit later he tells us that “countless are the things revealed through the Sacred Scriptures, since, indeed, the history of 5,000 years is embraced in them…” (*Ant.* 1.13, Feldman; cf. *C. Ap.* 1.1). In both statements Josephus makes no distinction between the history of the biblical period and the intertestamental one. The two eras are part and parcel of the entire archaeology of the Jews, and for the description of both, the historian has recourse to the sacred scriptures, written in Hebrew. Josephus’ statements constitute a difficulty for Jewish and Christian scholars alike, for these pronouncements assume a process in which Hebrew texts were continuously added to the body of the sacred scriptures until the endpoint chosen by the Jewish historian for his *Jewish Antiquities*, and perhaps even later.² Thus, he could make use of

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¹ For such a view see Schalit 1944, xv–xvii; Bilde 1988, 89. Both scholars make the point that books 1–10 of the *Antiquities* form a history of the First Temple period, while books 11–20 constitute the history of the Second Temple period. In my view this actually highlights the unity of the *Jewish Antiquities*.

² Feldman (2000a, 5 note 5) “corrects” Josephus, stating that the sacred writings cover only part of the entire history.
these sources to delineate 5,000 years of Jewish archaeology, which in themselves seem to be a close approximation of the number of years that have passed, according to Josephus’ calculations, from the birth of Adam until the destruction of the Second Temple. To Josephus then, the benevolence of Antiochus III (Ant. 12.138–146), and the cruelty of Florus (Ant. 20.252–257), were part of the “countless . . . things” that were to be found in the “sacred scriptures” as much as the Flood was (Ant. 1.89–95). But our need to treat the Jewish Antiquities as a single unit in and of itself with its own structure and characteristics, and not as two distinct halves, stems from the language of Josephus who speaks of his purpose to “set forth the precise details of what is in the Scriptures according to its proper order” (Ant. 1.17, Feldman—κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν τάξιν). This would seem to indicate that in Josephus’ eyes, his work was organized according to some guiding principle. Feldman thinks that Josephus refers here to the organization of his own work, superior to that of the Bible. Furthermore, throughout his work, Josephus makes anticipatory remarks, promising to elaborate on this or that subject “in the proper place (κατὰ χώραν),” or on a more suitable (εὐκαιρότερον) occasion. Are we not justified in regarding these allusions as further assurances by the historian that he had indeed thought out in advance the entire scheme for his work and that in its execution he had lived up to his original plans? Shaye Cohen argued that “Josephus normally follows the order of the Bible, except when he strives to produce a coherent, thematic narrative”. Should we then understand Josephus’ guiding principle to be thematic? While Cohen’s conclusion is surely correct, I do not think, and Cohen does not claim, that this modus operandi of Josephus could be identified as the guiding principle in the Jewish Antiquities. In what follows, the argument will be made that for Josephus it was of paramount importance to arrange both biblical and postbiblical events in their chronological sequence.

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3 Josephus’ data add up to 4,893 years and 10 days. See Ant. 1.81–82; 8.61, 99; 10.147; 20.233, 234, 237–246, 250. Admittedly, other calculations, based on Josephus’ conflicting chronological notes can be made. However, even if one accepts Josephus’ statement that the First Temple was destroyed 4,513 years after Adam’s birth (Ant. 10.148), the remaining 487 years would exceed the end of the biblical history by a few hundred years.

4 Feldman (2000a, 7 note 21) refers to Josephus’ remarks that Moses had left his writings scattered in the way that he has received them from God (Ant. 4.197).

5 Ant. 1.70; 7.89, 103; 8.229; 10.80; 12.237; 13.275; 14.78, 176.

6 Ant. 3.218; 7.69; 8.211; 9.291; 10.107; 12.388. See too, Ant. 3.74; 14.323.

7 Cohen 1979, 40–42. The quotation may be found on p. 40.