

Joshua as Hebrew Hero of Late Antique Christian Historiography: *Iesu Naue* in Pseudo-Hegesippus (*De Excidio Hierosolymitano*)

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Summary

Zev Farber's recent book, *Images of Joshua in Bible and Their Reception*, shows that the usual way late ancient Christians apprehended Joshua was as a type of Christ, an allegorical foreshadowing, or if not at least as a model informing specifically Christian behavior and church order. This paper examines a different kind of Joshua from late antiquity, a more classical model where Joshua is portrayed as an ancient military general and divinely sanctioned national leader. Through an analysis of Joshua in the late fourth century Latin text called *On the Destruction of Jerusalem (De Excidio Hierosolymitano)*, attributed to an anonymous "Pseudo-Hegesippus", we come to appreciate a new facet of the late antique Christian historiographical imagination and at the same time gain a distinctive perspective on Joshua as biblical personality resembling classical *exemplum*. (All translation are mine)



Figure 1: Funerary Stele of Licinia Amias, 3rd century CE, marble. Museo Nazionale Romano, Epigraphy Collection 67646. Public Domain (photo by Maria-Lan Nguyen). = ICUR II, 4246 / ILCV 1611B. Inscription: D() M() / ΙΧΘΥC ΖΩΝΤΩΝ / LICINIAE AMIATI BE/NEMERENTI VIXIT /----- ("D ... M ... / Fish of the Living [possibly 'living fish'] / [for] Licinia Amias, well-deserving [person], [who] lived ..."). This is often cited as an early exemplar of the Christian fish symbol.

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[1]

Est etiam iuxta Hiericho urbem fons abundans atque idem uberior ad potum, pinguior ad inrigandum, quem Iesus Naue natione Hebraeus manu ualidus primum genti eripuit Chananaeorum.

For there is an abundant spring near the city of Jericho which is quite profitable for drinking and is rich for irrigation—this city which Joshua Naue, a Hebrew by birth, first seized with a strong hand from the race of the Canaanites.

De Excidio 4.17.1 (ed. Ussani 1932, 267)

[2]

Suscitare et tu, Iesu Naue, qui muros inexpugnabiles Hiericho sacerdotibus tuba canentibus conplanasti, et uide populum, cui exteros subiecisti, nunc eundem subiectum opprimi.

“You too rise up, Joshua Naue, who levelled the impenetrable walls at Jericho by means of priests playing the trumpet, and behold the people to whom you subjugated foreigners, now itself subjected to oppression.”

De Excidio 5.2.1 (ed. Ussani 1932, 295–96)

[3]

Non talibus uincere armis solebatis. Quando enim in hasta et gladio fuit Hebraeorum uictoria? Recordamini unde orti et a quibus sitis profecti, quomodo patres uestri hostes suos uicerint.

“You have not been in the habit of prevailing with such weapons. For when was the victory of the Hebrews found in shield and sword? Remind me whence you sprang forth and out of what circumstances you emerged, and how your forefathers conquered their enemies.”

De Excidio 5.16.1 (ed. Ussani 1932, 323)

[4]

Didicit haec arma, quae sunt non carnalia sed fortia deo, Moysi discipulus atque successor idem Iesus Naue, qui imitator et subpar magistri Iordanis aquas conuertit retrorsum idemque cum inexpugnabiles Hiericho urbis muros uideret, sacerdotes tuba canere iussit iubilare populum. Quo facto repente cecidere muri atque exusta ciuitas est et omnes necati, nisi quos Raab bonae meretricis fides a memoratae urbis excidio defendit.

Joshua Naue, the same as the disciple and successor of Moses, learned of these arms, which are not of the flesh but are mighty in God; he, as an imitator and colleague of his master, turned back the waters of the Jordan, and the same man, when he beheld the impenetrable walls of the city of Jericho, commanded the priests to play their trumpets and the people to rejoice. When this was done, the walls fell immediately and the city’s population was destroyed and all [who were in it] were killed, except those whom the faith of Rahab, the worthy prostitute, preserved from the destruction of that famous city.

De Excidio 5.16.1 (ed. Ussani 1932, 325)

[5]

Liquet igitur plurimos patrum duces cum minime proliarentur uictoriam adeptos, alios quoque bello superiores fuisse, quibus consulentibus bellandi ius oraculo permissum foret. Denique uictus Amalech sed cum Moyses manus leuaret, uicit Iesus Naue cum solem statueret, uicit et Gedeon cum in aqua dimicatueros probasset, Samson etiam cum adhuc intaminatum crinem seruaret, uicit et Samuel, sed cum adiutorem lapidem figere proposuisset.

“Therefore this makes clear that many leaders of the fathers achieved victory when they hardly engaged in battle, and that others were superior in war, those to whom, while they were deliberating, the right to wage war was permitted by an oracle. Indeed, Amalek was conquered when Moses but raised his hands, Joshua Naue conquered when the sun stood still, and Gideon conquered after he had tested his combatants with water, and even Samson [conquered] when he preserved his hair untouched, and Samuel conquered, but only when he had thought to establish a stone [for his] Helper.”

De Excidio 5.16.1 (ed. Ussani 1932, 327)



Figure 2: Scene from the Book of Joshua, 432-440 CE, mosaic (anonymous, commissioned by Pope Sixtus III). Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome. Photo from Web Gallery of Art (wga.hu), Emil Krén and Daniel Marx, 29 November 2020.



Figure 3: Scene from the Book of Joshua, 432-440 CE, mosaic (anonymous, commissioned by Pope Sixtus III). Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome. Photo from Web Gallery of Art (wga.hu), Emil Krén and Daniel Marx, 29 November 2020.



Figure 4: Scene from the Book of Joshua, 432-440 CE, mosaic (anonymous, commissioned by Pope Sixtus III). Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome. Photo from Web Gallery of Art (wga.hu), Emil Krén and Daniel Marx, 29 November 2020.

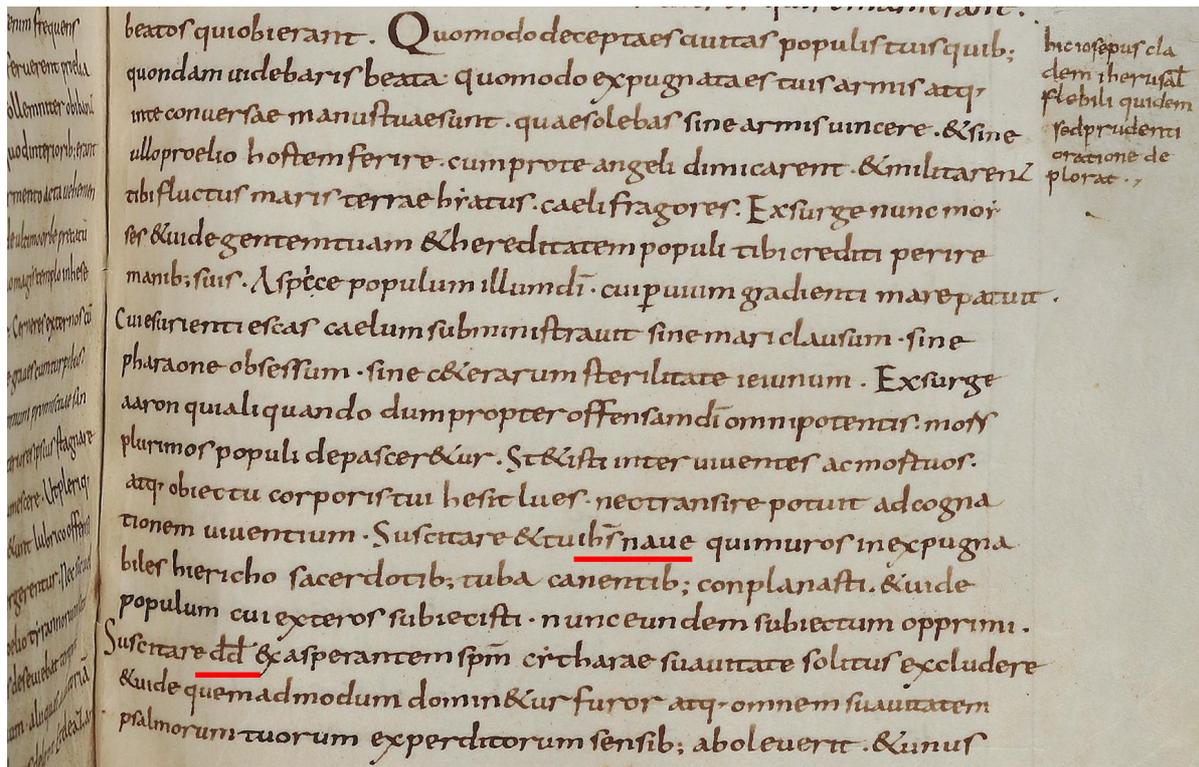


Figure 5: Codex Augensis 82 (9th century), fol. 99r. Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe, Germany. Parchment, 154 folia, 32.3 x 21.1 cm. Digitized 2016 (accessed 29 November 2020). Text: *Ioseppi (Hegesippi) de bello Iudaico libri V [i.e. De Excidio] 5.2.1.*

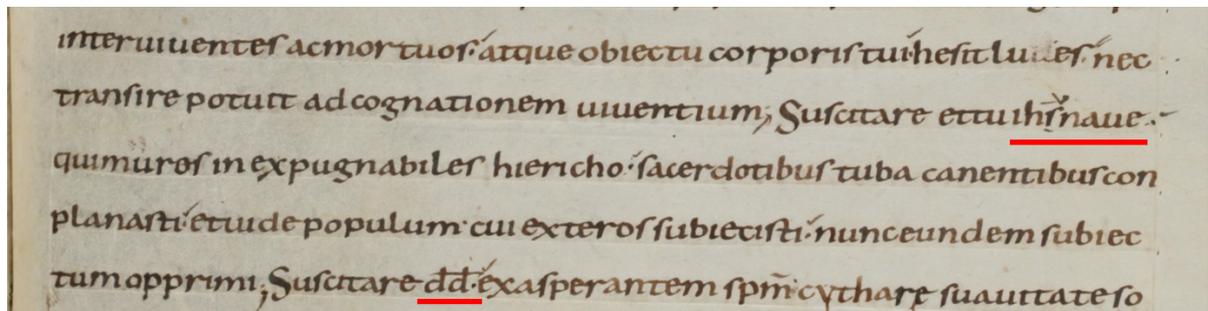


Figure 6: Codex Sangallensis 626 (9th century), ms p. 247. Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen, Switzerland. Parchment, 314 pages, 35 x 25 cm. Digitized 2005 (accessed 29 November 2020). Text: *Bellum Iudaicum libri V [i.e. De Excidio] 5.2.1.*