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Moses Flavius Vespasianus:
**Investigating Mosaic Themes in the *Bellum Iudaicum* of Josephus in the Context of the
Emperor Vespasian**

by
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HIS 490 History Honors Thesis

Department of History and Classics
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Fall 2019

And Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the Prophets: let them hearken to them.' But he answered, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hearken to Moses and the Prophets, they will not believe even if someone rises from the dead.'

Luke 16:29-31

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“In the designs of Providence there are no mere coincidences.” Thus did Pope St. John Paul II remark at Fatima on May 13, 1982, exactly one year after taking an assassin’s bullet. It was our Lady of Fatima, the saint swore, who kept the bullet from reaching his heart that day. Thus have the two Ladies—Providence and the Virgin of Fatima—similarly protected me and guided me on right paths in four amazing years spent at Providence College. Thanks must first be given to Her for these past years’ blessings.

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INTRODUCTION

I do not think it would be a cliché to say that a study of the works of Josephus, in any capacity or depth, is one of the most interesting a classicist could undertake. Having done so in a modest way, I can attest to both the truth of this statement as well as its paradox. Indeed, historians, classicists, and Near East scholars alike should be only grateful for the scope of material that survives of Titus Flavius Josephus. And yet, for being nearly the only extant works that tell of first century Palestine, the great war between the Romans and the Jews, and the intersection of the Roman and Jewish worlds, so difficult are Josephus' works to make something of in a coherent way. Nonetheless, scholarship within the past two hundred years has made tremendous strides in the field of investigating the life and writings of the Pharisee historian, and this small endeavor is only possible because of all that great and robust work.

According to the autobiographical work that he wrote (that, for all intents and purposes, we can accept without skepticism), Titus Flavius Josephus, born Yosef ben Matityahu, was born in the year 37, the same year Caligula ascended to the imperial throne in Rome.¹ He was born in the Roman province of Judaea to a priestly, aristocratic family and raised in Jerusalem in the privilege and wealth associated with such a family. He attests that his mother was a Hasmonaean, a member of the dynastic, and extensive, family of the Maccabees who had been the last rulers of an independent Judaea. As a young man, he aligned himself with the party of the Pharisees after a thorough study of the various religious sects present in mid first century Jerusalem. Josephus came to prominence when he was given charge of all Jewish rebel troops in

¹ Everything in this biographical paragraph is backed up by the *Life* of Josephus, here through Henry St. John Thackeray, *Josephus: Vol. 1: The Life*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

the Galilee after the outbreak of the war between the Romans and the Jews in 66. After his capture by the Romans at the siege of Jotapata, he became a prisoner of the future emperor, Vespasian, later winning his favor by prophesying his rise to power. Working with the Romans for the rest of the war, he eventually moved to Rome and enjoyed the patronage of Vespasian and his imperial successors, namely Vespasian's sons, Titus and Domitian. From Rome, Josephus penned his history of the war in seven volumes, known as the *Bellum Iudaicum*, or the *War of the Jews* (*BJ*). He spent the rest of his life in comfort in Rome, eventually producing three more works: the *Antiquitates Iudaicae*, the *Jewish Antiquities* (*AJ*), the *Vita*, his *Life* (*Vit.*), and the *Contra Apionem*, *Against Apion* (*Ap.*).

The main source scrutinized in this thesis is the *Bellum Iudaicum*, or *Jewish War*. Josephus' account of the war that ravaged Judaea for about eight years, from the outbreak of the rebellion in 66 until the Roman capture of Masada in 73, is crucial to history, for few surviving sources speak of it. The publication date of the Greek *BJ* is usually set anytime between 73 and 75, though it is safe to assume 75 as good as any guess.² The only other contemporary evidence we have comes from Tacitus, select Roman coinage and architecture, and allusions in the Talmud.³ Through this history, Josephus gives the most valuable insight into a multitude of aspects concerning Jewish thought, culture, history, and religion in the first century. Josephus' style of writing history affects how we read the *BJ* in a number of ways. In essence, the *BJ* is interesting history not because it gets every fact and number and date right, but because it reveals

² G.A. Williamson, *The World of Josephus* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1964), 264.

³ Mladen Popović, "The Jewish Revolt Against Rome: History, Sources and Perspectives," in *The Jewish Revolt against Rome: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Mladen Popović (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 12.

the inner workings of the history writer's mind. By extension it reveals a number of things concerning topics such as audience, bias, and intended reception.

There is not a single figure in the annals of the Jewish people more symbolic of the nation, a better lightning rod for patriotism, and a more exemplary icon of law, governance, military might, and leadership, than Moses. I will investigate how Josephus utilizes Moses and how he intended his audience to receive him. Scholarship on Moses in Josephus has received much attention, but only with respect to how our Pharisee treats Moses in the *Antiquitates* and in the *Vita*. Much, in particular, has been written about Moses as general in the Egyptians' campaign against the Ethiopians. Also of frequent interest is the question of whether Josephus likened himself to Moses, particularly in writing of his daring and noble campaign in the Galilee in the early years of the insurrection. These popular interests will play a part in our understanding of Josephus' thoughts on Moses. Ultimately, however, though the topic is treated often, and especially in the past fifty years, there is not yet a wide consensus concerning Josephus' specific motives in using Mosaic themes, how these uses reflect on those characters he likens him to, and to what extent his audiences would have made the connections. Therefore, my approach in this paper will be to liberally investigate in what ways Josephus might have accomplished these objectives.

To do this, I will, as mentioned, be focusing primarily on the *Bellum Iudaicum*,⁴ a task more complex since Moses himself is treated explicitly *only* in the *AJ*. Nonetheless, almost any study of our writer must necessarily include reference to his entire corpus of work, so the other three works must play into a full understanding of the *BJ*. Authors contemporary to Josephus will

⁴ The Greek text for Josephus, that is, for all of his works, in this paper will be taken from Benedikt Niese, *Flavii Iosephi Opera*, 6 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1888-1895), Perseus Digital Library, <http://data.perseus.org/texts/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0526.tlg004.perseus-grc1> (accessed June 29, 2019).

appear to reinforce arguments and check facts. I will also rely heavily upon the scholarship of two pioneers in the area of Josephus studies, namely Steve Mason and Louis Feldman. Several of the remaining authors I lean on are disciples of these two giants. Though this paper is not a study in theology, the ancient, sacred texts of the Jewish people must also be considered, along with the traditions surrounding, and texts produced by, Jews in Josephus' era. To disregard Josephus' esteem for the religious consciousness of Rome, not to mention of his own people, would be to study the Pharisee through a much distorted, modern lens.

Whenever assessing the motives of an historian, especially an ancient historian, in composing his work, it is not a bad idea to look for what the historian says directly to his audience at the beginning. Thucydides' introduction to his history of the Peloponnesian War is the classic example; the assertion the Athenian makes in the first few lines, that it "would be a major war, and more momentous than any previous conflict" (Thuc. *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.1.1), serves as the necessary guide for what the reader will spend thousands of subsequent lines deciding for himself.⁵ So, too, can we draw much needed information about Josephus' intentions and message to his audience concerning Moses by looking at those passages in which he discloses his own thoughts about writing and reveals to us his methodology. Knowing these particulars establishes the right conditions to be able to argue for Josephus' subtle uses of Mosaic imagery.

At the beginning of the *Jewish War*, Josephus tells his audience his intention in writing is "to publish to the inhabitants of the Roman Empire a Greek translation of the factual account

⁵ Martin Hammond, trans., *The Peloponnesian War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

which [he] had earlier written in [his] native language” (Joseph. *BJ* 1.3).⁶ Josephus had originally written his history in his native tongue, Aramaic, but must have realized the uselessness of a history if it was not intelligible in the *lingua franca* of the Mediterranean world: Greek. The Aramaic version is lost to time, leaving only the Greek, along with a Slavonic version produced in the Middle Ages.⁷ With the Greek version, Josephus’ potential audience expanded from the Jewish inhabitants of Judaea and other people of the Levant to, virtually, the entire literate Mediterranean population and, possibly, any land under the rule of Rome. More considerations of audience will be covered, but, for now, it suffices to mention that the *Bellum*’s being translated into Greek is so important it signaled in the first dozen lines—the wide audience Josephus wants would necessitate equally wide (and popular) motifs and characters (sc. Moses).

The very fact of the *BJ* having first been written in Aramaic is in no way unimportant, however. Yes, Josephus “composed” in his “vernacular tongue” (γλώσση μεταβαλῶν, 1.3) because that is what was easiest for him to write in, but he clearly understood the implications in doing so. He writes, “The Jews hoped that the whole body of their compatriots beyond the Euphrates would join them in revolt, while the Romans faced rebellion close at hand in Gaul and unrest among the Celts” (*BJ* 1.5). Judeans had long been hoping that those countrymen (ὁμόφυλος) of theirs who remained behind in Babylon after the Exile would read accounts of the war in Aramaic, which they understood, and come to the aid of their fellow Jews. Josephus, by addressing his people in distant nations, intended to prevent a last-ditched attempt by Jews to extend the war against the Romans. Some scholars even see this as the sole reason Josephus

⁶ The translations of the *War* for this paper will be drawn from Martin Hammond, trans., *The Jewish War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁷ Williamson, *The World of Josephus*, 265.

composed the *Bellum* in the first place—to warn “Parthians, Babylonians...and [his] compatriots in Mesopotamia and Adiabene” (*BJ* 1.6) of the futility of a war against Rome.⁸ With the wider Jewish world in mind as an audience, it becomes easier, from even this early on, to see how Josephus would have necessarily needed to draw on basic, arguably simplistic, Jewish motifs (sc. Moses) in getting his message across to his own people.

Josephus presents another disclaimer in his opening lines: “It is certainly not my intention to counter this Roman bias with an equally tendentious account in favor of my compatriots. I shall record the actions of both sides with strict impartiality” (*BJ* 1.9). With this warning, Josephus indicates his history will not be inflammatory so as to paint the ὁμόφυλον in a positive light, assures his audience of objectivity, and goes on to assign definitive blame for the war on “Jewish warlords” (Ἰουδαίων τύραννοι, 1.10). What is encapsulated here is an instance of why Josephus’ disclaimers in his introduction are so rich. He would not have expected his sophisticated audience to take these words at immediate face value.⁹ To expect them to have done so would mean ignoring the complexities of classical rhetorical training.¹⁰ In conclusion, it is clear he is going to present an opinion on the war eventually, as his passions reveal he must (1.10, 1.11, 1.16, 1.22), but what would a good historian be if the god of objectivity were not first orthopractically, if not orthodoxly, revered?

⁸ Steve Mason, “Of Audience and Meaning: Reading Josephus’ *Bellum Judaicum* in the Context of a Flavian Audience,” in *Josephus and Jewish History in Flavian Rome and Beyond*, ed. Gaia Lembi and Joseph Sievers (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 72-73, begins forthwith by addressing the general confusion in the field concerning Josephus’ motives and audience. As is common with J., the question of motives only becomes confusing in the context of the question of audience, which, of course, must be addressed.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

The next important disclaimer Josephus provides is where he sees the *Bellum* in his expanded corpus of work. In antiquity, the ability to devote one's time to writing was reserved for those with the capability and the status to do so; status afforded the leisure time necessary for writing large works. Furthermore, a writer, especially an historian, needed something interesting to write about. In first century Rome, the privilege and luxury to be an author was enjoyed by patricians, senators, *equites*, client kings, and high-ranking military men—all of whom had tales to tell of epic battles, stories to regale of distant lands, and reputations to affirm. Josephus, being a man of respectable foreign birth, having taken part in “one of the greatest collisions between states or nations” (1.1) in the history of Rome, and enjoying the patronage of the Flavians, was certainly cut out to join the authorial profession—he even explicitly mentions in his later polemic, *Against Apion*, that valuable “leisure” (σχολή) Rome afforded him in beginning his career (Joseph. *Ap.* 1.50). The idea to compose important writing must not have come as a surprise to one who knew he had the credentials.

So, where was Josephus to begin?

Ἀρχαιολογεῖν μὲν δὴ τὰ Ἰουδαίων, τίνες τε ὄντες καὶ ὅπως ἀπανέστησαν
Αἰγυπτίων, χώραν τε ὅσῃ ἐπῆλθον ἀλώμενοι καὶ πόσα ἐξῆς κατέλαβον καὶ ὅπως
μετανέστησαν, νῦν τε ἄκαιρον ᾠήθην εἶναι καὶ ἄλλως περιττόν... ὅπου δ' οἱ τε
τούτων συγγραφεῖς ἐπαύσαντο καὶ οἱ ἡμέτεροι προφηταί, τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐκεῖθεν
ποιήσομαι τῆς συντάξεως.

In this present work I judged it inappropriate to go into the early history of the Jews—their racial identity, the exodus from Egypt, the range of their wanderings, the succession of territories occupied and the subsequent deportations... So I shall take for the start of my work the point at which these previous histories and our own prophets conclude theirs. (*BJ* 1.17-18)

His words in this section hint at the possibility that by the time he produced this Greek translation of his Aramaic version, he already knew the topic of, or had already begun, his next work—one that *did* go into the early history of the Jews. With the nature of publication in the

ancient world—as Mason explains, “there was no clear line between writing and publication” and an “author normally composed a work gradually and by constant revision, presenting it in stages to ever-widening concentric circles”¹¹—the exact date of the *Jewish War*’s completion in the form we have it is quite uncertain (though, as mentioned above, 75 is a fine guess). It is even possible that Josephus had already written about in the first chapters of the *Antiquities* these items he disclaims in the introduction to the Greek *War* to avoid—Jewish identity, the Exodus, their wanderings, and other events and movements. If this is the case, there are two possibilities to imagine: 1) the writing of the *AJ* and considerations of Moses necessarily were on the mind of the Pharisee, and informed him, as he finished up the *BJ*; or 2) if a lowly copyist were in fact assigned to finish the Greek translation (excluding the very personal introduction), Josephus still would have had both of his works on his mind, just the other way around, with thoughts of the great Vespasian informing him when penning chapters two through four of the *AJ*.

Thus, the conditions exist to be able to examine how Josephus intended the successor of Augustus, Titus Flavius Vespasianus, to be seen as the great patriarch who descended from Mount Horeb with the Decalogue and how he intended the great leader from the Tribe of Levi, Moses, to be seen as the Caesar of the world. This paper seeks to examine how Josephus wrote for his audience in Flavian Rome and beyond, with a specific eye to the thematic elements used by Josephus in writing of how the Romans triumphed over the Jews; even more specifically, this paper investigates how Josephus made use of the figure of Moses to praise the emperor Vespasian in the *Bellum Iudaicum*.

¹¹ Ibid., 80.

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORIOGRAPHY AND SURROUNDING MATERIALS

Josephus' own intentions have largely been covered in the introduction. However, a host of other considerations are valuable when assessing, and proving, the connections and allusions made between Moses and Vespasian in Josephus' work. Not including his own extended corpus, especially the *Antiquitates*, there remain Roman, Jewish, and other ancient authors of different backgrounds whose writings will be helpful to examine. Throughout, it is important to consider differences in Jewish and Roman styles of writing, which would have contributed to Josephus' styles, as well as to the reception of his audience(s). Alongside these thoughts will be textual evidence from the *Bellum* that will help in proving Josephus' intentions on this one matter of Mosaic insinuation.

In his preface to the *Antiquities*, Josephus mentions Moses as the focal point of his work: "I exhort all those that peruse these books to apply their minds to God; and to examine the mind of our legislator" (Joseph. *AJ* 1.15).¹² The "legislator" (νομοθέτης) is of course the great Moses, whom Josephus will assume as a matter of course throughout his works to be the sole author of the Scriptures and sole mediator of the Law. He is so central, in fact, that, after Ῥωμαῖος, Ἰουδαῖος, and mentions of David, Caesar, and Herod, Moses (Μωσῆς) is the most recurring proper name in the *Antiquities*. Moses is necessarily the most important figure of Josephus' history of the Jews because, as Steve Mason concludes, his history is ultimately a passionate

¹² The English of the *Antiquities* will fall to the wisdom of William Whiston, though his numbering of J.'s passages will not be used. William Whiston, trans., *The Works of Josephus: New Updated Edition: The Antiquities of the Jews* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, 1987).

defense of the “constitution” (πολιτεία) of the Jewish people: the Law.¹³ Josephus’ goal of extolling the constitution of his people is in the line of Polybius, the second century B.C. Greek historian who defended the greatness of the Roman constitution—it can even be affirmed that the criterion for inclusion in the *AJ* is whether a story or a tradition defends and upholds the Law of Moses.¹⁴ Josephus continues: “The reader is therefore to know, that Moses deemed it exceeding necessary, that he who would conduct his own life well, and give laws to others, in the first place should consider the divine nature...but, as for our legislator, when he had once demonstrated that God was possessed of perfect virtue, he supposed that man also ought to strive after the participation of it” (*AJ* 1.19-23). This seemingly tangential philosophical entreaty is in fact a deep concern of Josephus, and reinforces that his aim, through this history, is proving the power and righteousness of the laws passed down by the great Moses.

Clearly, our historian took the Law seriously, as any Jew of his day would have. In *Against Apion*, which Josephus wrote after the *AJ*, he gives an impassioned defense of Moses against those who slander him, especially the Greeks (*Joseph. Ap.* 2.145-146). Not only does he defend the person of Moses, but, like in the *AJ*, Josephus ties his defense of the lawgiver “Moses and his code [νόμος], [maligned]...as a charlatan and imposter,” with another defense of the “constitution” of the Jews and all its merits:

οἶμαι γὰρ ἔσεσθαι φανερόν, ὅτι καὶ πρὸς εὐσέβειαν καὶ πρὸς κοινωνίαν τὴν μετ’ ἀλλήλων καὶ πρὸς τὴν καθόλου φιλανθρωπίαν ἔτι δὲ πρὸς δικαιοσύνην καὶ τὴν ἐν τοῖς νόμοις καρτερίαν καὶ θανάτου περιφρόνησιν ἄριστα κειμένους ἔχομεν τοὺς νόμους. παρακαλῶ δὲ τοὺς ἐντευξομένους τῇ γραφῇ μὴ μετὰ φθόνου ποιεῖσθαι

¹³ Steve Mason, “Flavius Josephus in Flavian Rome: Reading On and Between the Lines,” in *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, ed. A.J. Boyle and W.J. Dominik (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 574.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 573-575.

τὴν ἀνάγνωσιν...ἀλλὰ πολλὰ καὶ ψευδῆ κατηγορουμένοις ἡμῖν ταύτην ἀπολογία
δικαιοτάτην εἶναι νομίζω τὴν ἀπὸ τῶν νόμων, καθ' οὓς ζῶντες διατελοῦμεν.

From this, I think, it will be apparent that we possess a code excellently designed to promote piety, friendly relations with each other, and humanity towards the world at large, besides justice, hardihood, and contempt of death. And I beg any into whose hands these pages may fall to read them without bias...[I]n reply to the numerous false accusations which are brought against us, the fairest defense which we can offer is to be found in the laws which govern our daily life. (*Ap.* 2.146-14)¹⁵

Here, Josephus uses the word νόμος (“code,” “laws,” or “ordinance”) instead of πολιτεία, making it seem something specifically unique to the person of Moses, instead of a high, lofty, detached constitution of a people—translation: there is no separating the Law from Moses. Thus, in two of Josephus’ works completed later in life, we have found evidence of his *highest* regard for the Law and the person of Moses; not only that, we have seen Josephus presenting his criteria for an august legislator and praising the nobility of good laws.

To return to his other famous preface, that of the *War*, Josephus focuses on another character, in this instance when running through the list of his history’s contents: Vespasian. As highlighted in the above introduction, after including that he would not be discussing the history of the Jewish people—it is very interesting here how the one specific event he *does* cite as an example is the exodus from Egypt (*BJ* 1.17), particularly since Moses is the main figure of that event—he also adds that his work will begin where the Jewish prophets leave off. Josephus, then, sees himself as picking up where the prophets of Israel leave off, placing himself as a prophetic successor. Keeping in mind that Josephus would soon devote twenty whole volumes, and nearly twenty years, to defending his nation’s πολιτεία in the *AJ*, it becomes clearer that Josephus’ identity as an historian must be tempered with the fact of his devotion to upholding the Law and

¹⁵ The English for *Against Apion* will come from the Loeb translation by Thackeray. Henry St. John Thackeray, trans., *Josephus: Vol. 1: Against Apion*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

the Legislator. As R.J.H. Shutt perfectly realized, “In the Law, [Josephus] found an ‘everlasting possession,’” and would perhaps have wished to be remembered by the title of “Jewish apologist” before that of “historian.”¹⁶ Therefore, his portrayal of Vespasian, one of the most mentioned and important of figures in the *War*, must subsequently be weighed with this in mind.

To turn to how Moses is weighed in the judgment of other historians, we will look to other authors from before, during, and after the time of Josephus. It is important to be aware of these other authors, for one’s awareness of them establishes what prior knowledge of Moses and the Law Josephus’ audiences would have had, as well as any dominant opinions there might have been; written knowledge of Vespasian is somewhat less important in this case since, as emperor, those in the Empire, no matter where, would have known certain basic things about him, nothing more so than his greatness. First to be considered is the first century B.C. Greek historian Strabo. In the line of Polybius, who detailed the Republic’s rise to power in the ancient Mediterranean, Strabo’s writings investigate the legal and historical traditions of other peoples of the Empire, especially in the East, and compare those traditions to those of Rome; Josephus undoubtedly had access to a copy of it and knew his work was respected in Rome.¹⁷ Strabo identifies Moses as “one of the Aegyptian priests,” who “persuaded not a few thoughtful men and led them away to this place where the settlement of Jerusalem now is” (Strabo *Geography* 16.2.35-36).¹⁸ He continues in his description by saying that Moses, “instead of using arms, put forward as defense his sacrifices and his Divine Being;” he “enjoyed fair repute with these people [the Jews], and organized no ordinary kind of government, since the peoples all round, one and all, came over to

¹⁶ R.J.H. Shutt, *Studies in Josephus* (London: S.P.C.K., 1961), 46.

¹⁷ Williamson, *The World of Josephus*, 269.

¹⁸ The English of Strabo comes from Horace Leonard Jones, trans., *The Geography in Eight Volumes*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

him, because of his dealings with them and of the prospects he held out to them” (16.2.36). So, in Strabo’s estimation, Moses was an epic ruler, respected and consulted by peoples who were not even Jewish for his brilliance in government and for his justice.

How did Strabo’s readers know about Moses, one might ask? Similarly, excluding very learned Roman scholars who might have had access to Jewish Scriptures, and even fewer who would have known how to read them with insight, one might presume any mention of “Moses” would have fallen on deaf ears to Josephus’ audience in the capital. On the contrary, we find a comforting fact looking further back in historiography’s past. Louis Feldman points out that a wealth of writers from the fifth to third centuries B.C., including Hellanicus, Philochorus, and Hecataeus, wrote of Moses and praised him as a great figure.¹⁹ Hecataeus even identifies Moses as a leader “possessing great prudence and valiant” (φρονήσει τε καὶ ἀνδρεία πολὺ διαφέρων, Hecataeus fr. = Diod. Sic. 40.3.3).²⁰ Feldman further points to Pseudo-Longinus and Quintilian, later authors and contemporaries of Josephus, to signal that naming Moses whenever writing about Jewish history was not even necessary—he is simply referred to as θεσμοθέτης (“lawgiver”).²¹ Thus is evident here a recognizable base of knowledge concerning Moses that must have been common to learned persons and especially readers of history in first century Rome.

The next ancient authors to assess are Tacitus and Juvenal, two men who were both younger than, though still contemporary to, Josephus and were publishing in the years

¹⁹ Louis H. Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrait of Moses,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 82, no. 3-4 (Jan.-Apr., 1992): 287, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1454861> (accessed December 13, 2019). This contribution by Feldman is particularly insightful for a longer study of Moses in himself, as Josephus wrote of him.

²⁰ The English translation of Diodorus is my own.

²¹ Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrait of Moses,” 288.

immediately following his death. Thus, while their works obviously cannot be used to gauge prior knowledge of Moses and the Jews in Roman literary circles, their writings still can be considered important to understanding Roman sentiment of Jewish history and culture, and therefore Moses, in the latter part of the first century. Unlike Strabo and the other authors of the last centuries B.C. that have been touched upon (mostly ethnic Greeks writing as Roman subjects), these full-blooded Romans are not as kind to ancient Easterners like Moses.

First, examining Tacitus, we see that the Roman opinion on Jews in the late first century was not unanimous, and the fifth chapter of his *Histories* is quite critical of Jews and their history. Tacitus begins by describing that in the Exodus from Egypt, “only one of the exiles, named Moses, warned them not to look for aid from gods or men, for they were deserted by both, but to trust to themselves” (Tac. *Hist.* 5.3).²² In this telling, Moses is portrayed as irreverent of things sacred and utterly faithless, as seen in his belief to be *utris deserti*, or “deserted by both” aid divine and aid human. Tacitus goes on: “To secure his influence over this people [the Jews] for posterity, Moses introduced new rites, quite opposed to those of all other religions. This people [the Jews] regard as profane all that we hold sacred; on the other hand, they permit all that is impure to us” (5.4). So, not only does Tacitus slander Moses, but, by doing so, renders the beliefs of the Jews, from the days of Moses down to the present, as backward and abhorrent. If such opinions on the Law and the reputation of Moses were dominant in Rome in Josephus’ time, overshadowing the earlier positive accounts of Moses of centuries’ prior (e.g. Diodorus), any positive allusion to Moses Josephus would have attempted using Vespasian would have been challenging.

²² Translations of Tacitus are my own.

Next we look at Juvenal, who included in the fourteenth part of his *Satires* an example whereby he personifies the vice of sloth as the pious Jew—a strange paradox, as authors use person more often than not to personify virtues or vices, and not the other way round:

quidam sortiti metuentem sabbata patrem
 nil praeter nubes et caeli numen adorant,
 nec distare putant humana carne suillam,
 qua pater abstinuit, mox et praepudia ponunt;
 Romanas autem soliti contemnere leges
 Iudaicum ediscunt et seruant ac metuunt ius,
 tradidit arcano quodcumque uolumine Moyses:
 non monstrare uias eadem nisi sacra colenti,
 quaesitum ad fontem solos deducere uerpos.
 sed pater in causa, cui septima quaeque fuit lux
 ignaua et partem uitae non attigit ullam.

Sprung from a father who the sabbath fears,
 There is, who naught but clouds and skies reveres;
 And shuns the taste, by old tradition led,
 Of human flesh, and swine's, with equal dread:—
 This first: the prepuce next he lays aside,
 And, taught the Roman ritual to deride,
 Clings to the Jewish, and observes with awe
 All Moses bade in his mysterious law:
 And, therefore, to the circumcised alone
 Will point the road, or make the fountain known;
 Warned by his bigot sire, who whiled away,
 Sacred to sloth, each seventh revolving day. (Juv. 14.96-106)²³

In this poem, Juvenal uses the Jew's obedience to and reverence for Moses as the evidence whereby he proves that the Jew is slothful. That is its essence. There are some key details to note, however. Juvenal is really giving the Jew of his day a break by transferring blame for his sloth onto the ancestral person of Moses. The poetic line, "Warned by his bigot sire, who wiled away, / Sacred to sloth, each seventh revolving day," is really just a way of assigning culpability

²³ The English of Juvenal is taken from Project Gutenberg. Lewis Evans and William Gifford, trans., *The Satires of Juvenal, Persius, Sulpicia, and Lucilius* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1881; Project Gutenberg, 2015), Project Gutenberg, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/50657/50657-0.txt> (accessed January 14, 2020).

to Moses—the Jew is “lazy” and rests on the seventh day of the week because Moses dictated so. As will be key later, laziness on the seventh day is something Vespasian, as Pompey before him, cannot be accused of.

Now, it is obvious these sundry authors of the ancient world must be taken with a grain of salt. Clearly they do not get everything right: the Jews of the first century would have reckoned the Sabbath as something holy even prior to the time of Sinai, as evidenced in the first book of the Torah,²⁴ and not an invention of Moses, as Juvenal assumes; Tacitus is quick to pull a Herodotian line when ascribing to the Jews a lifestyle perfectly backward to everyone else, just as Herodotus did in describing the Egyptians in the second book of his *Histories*; Strabo, fairer to Moses, is contrary to Scriptural tradition, too, by identifying Moses as a priest of Egypt.

Finally, we look to how Philo of Alexandria, a Jew himself and a predecessor of Josephus, regards the person of Moses. First off, in his biographical work, *De Vita Mosis*, the Alexandrian Jew identifies Moses as a Chaldean (Philo *De Vita Mosis* 1.5), the “interpreter of the holy laws” (ἐρμηνέως νόμων ἱερῶν, 1.1), and, even as a child, far superior in wisdom and knowledge than those sent for in Greece to teach him (1.18-22).²⁵ These are all early indicators of Philo’s style of writing—allegory. These things all sound odd, do they not? Moses was sort of a Chaldean, but it is anyway better than saying he was Jewish,²⁶ calling him an “interpreter” of the law makes him sound like a priest of the oracle; and trying to imagine that Greek would believe a Hebrew child could surpass Greek tutors in philosophical wisdom is nearly

²⁴ See Genesis 2:2-3 (Douay-Rheims Bible).

²⁵ Translations of Philo from F.H. Colson, trans., *Philo: Vol. 6: Moses I and II*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935).

²⁶ *Per* Genesis 15:7, he of course is a Chaldean, being a descendent of Abraham (“out of Ur of the Chaldees”), but to describe a figure best known as a patriarch of the Hebrews as such is reminiscent of that Hellenistic allusiveness so popular in Golden and Silver Age Latin poetry.

inconceivable. Allegorism in the context of first century Alexandria was in some ways a weapon used acutely by Jewish writers. Indeed, as Josephus would have known well in writing in a post-Roman-victory Rome, the Hebrew Bible was really an easy target for critics and triumphalists—remember that Josephus would later pen *Against Apion* for this very reason. Juvenal’s tease of the Sabbath as a day of laziness was not an isolated attack. Feldman puts it well by saying that, in the ancient world, “the Bible seems to offer detractors considerable indications that Moses was really not so great a figure”—just some of the examples include his lack of a throne, his identity as little more than a mouthpiece, his early murder and subsequent asylum, and his failure to lead his people out of the Wilderness.²⁷

Philo’s allegorism essentially adopted a common Greek tactic. As Louis Ginzberg explains, “if the [Hellenes] made Homer speak the language of Pythagoras, Plato, Anaxagoras, and Zeno, the Jews transformed the Bible into a manual of philosophy which also was made to contain the teachings of these philosophers.”²⁸ Thus in Philo’s biography of Moses, in the context of a Roman Alexandria, the patriarch is made to resemble the very best of his people’s values, with, as pointed out, a particular bent on that favorite Greek (remember Alexandria) pastime: philosophy.²⁹ Philo uses his biographical descriptions of Moses to a purpose, that purpose being convincing his audience that Moses was like a good Alexandrian—philosophical,

²⁷ Louis H. Feldman, *Philo’s Portrayal of Moses in the Context of Ancient Judaism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 2.

²⁸ Louis Ginzberg, *On Jewish Law and Lore* (New York: World Publishing Company, 1962), 128.

²⁹ James M. Petitfils, “A Tale of Two Moseses: Philo’s *On the Life of Moses* and Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities* 2-4 in Light of the Roman Discourse of Exemplarity,” in *Reading and Teaching Ancient Fiction: Jewish, Christian, and Greco-Roman Narratives*, ed. Rubén R. Dupertuis, Sara R. Johnson, and Christine Shea (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), 162-163.

wise, the perfect Greco-Roman man, without actually sacrificing any of his character that makes him the greatest of all Jews. In opposition to Louis Ginzberg's belief that Josephus would not have read Philo or garnered anything from his writing,³⁰ I maintain that Josephus would have read Philo, who had travelled to Rome³¹ and would very likely have appeared in Jewish circles in his time there; Josephus' arrival some twenty years later, combined with his focus on the same person of Moses, would certainly have meant that the memory of and knowledge attributed to Philo would have been a valuable source. Josephus will do the same thing to Vespasian as Philo did to Moses—change him.

Having examined the nature of writing in the times preceding and contemporary to Josephus, one can see the different nuances of what writing about the Jews would have entailed. The various authors, Roman and Greek, Jewish and pagan, who wrote about the history of the Jews, whether accurate about Moses or largely false concerning anything Jewish, shaped how the Pharisee penned his history. Thus, we must now definitively turn to how Josephus treats his literary subjects in the *War*, operating in the context of his high regard for the Law, considering the popular perceptions of Moses in the first century, and taking into account particular styles of writing and strongly charged themes.

³⁰ Ginzberg, *On Jewish Law and Lore*, 130.

³¹ Petitfils, "A Tale of Two Moseses," 164.

CHAPTER TWO: A MOSAIC CAESAR

“In the mind of Josephus, God had moved to Italy. Without a doubt.” Thus did a leading Josephus scholar, who has devoted his entire career to studying the Pharisee, comment to me when beginning this research.³² If God had in fact “moved to Italy,” how would a devout Jew such as Josephus have conceived this? What would this message look like? We look to evidence in the *Bellum* and beyond for the answers to these questions. For this section, we will investigate instances in the *Jewish War*, especially book 3, in which Josephus incorporates allusions to Moses in the character of the general, and later emperor, Vespasian, especially in order to glorify the cause of the Romans and the personal grandeur of the emperor.

Focusing first on his high regard for the Law, one must understand how Josephus conceived of what the great Lawgiver and a Roman military man such as Vespasian had in common: God’s pleasure. There is no better place to begin than right before Vespasian comes onto the scene, near the end of the second book. This place is set during a speech given by Agrippa to the people of Jerusalem, immediately following the plea of the people to send a delegation to Nero to denounce Florus, the procurator of Judaea (*BJ* 2.342-344). Discouraging the people from aggravating Rome any further, Agrippa addresses his subjects:

λοιπὸν οὖν ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ συμμαχίαν καταφευκτέον. ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦτο παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις τέτακται: δίχα γὰρ θεοῦ συστῆναι τηλικαύτην ἡγεμονίαν ἀδύνατον. σκέψασθε δ’ ὡς ὑμῖν τὸ τῆς θρησκείας ἄκρατον, εἰ καὶ πρὸς εὐχειρώτους πολεμοίητε, δυσδιοίκητον, καὶ δι’ ἃ μᾶλλον τὸν θεὸν ἐλπίζετε σύμμαχον, ταῦτ’ ἀναγκαζόμενοι παραβαίνειν ἀποστρέψετε.

So your only remaining recourse is to put your trust in divine assistance. But this too is already ranged on the Romans’ side, as it would have been impossible to

³² Fr. Etienne Nodet, O.P. of the École Biblique was the originator of this comment, in a short conversation I had with him. His main source for such a claim is of course primary (*BJ* 5.367).

build up such a vast empire without God's aid. Think too of the difficulty of preserving your religious principles intact in any war, whatever the strength or weakness of your opponents: think how, if you are forced to transgress the very laws whose observance is your main hope of keeping God on your side, you will instead turn him away from you. (*BJ* 2.390-391)

The logic of Agrippa is confusing. What would a listener in the crowd assembled have made of this? It is tough to say—Josephus writes that the crowd did disband and, for a short while, recanted of their aggressions (2.402-404). However, what would a Jewish reader have thought of this admonishment? Would he not have been offended by such an affront to his Law and his people's faith in God? Did not Moses defeat the mighty Amalekites with God's help?³³ Why should Agrippa, or any of the various rebel leaders to appear later, not show the same faith in God's help and power? Perhaps, as Josephus has mentioned, the Jews had in mind the terrible fate they suffered when Pompey the Great breached the city in 63 B.C. (virtually unchallenged since it was the Sabbath) and entered the Temple in the days of Hyrcanus and Aristobulus (1.142-153). Indeed, Josephus reports that “In all the national disasters of this time nothing touched such a sensitive nerve as the exposure by aliens of the Holy of Holies, never yet open to view” (Οὐδὲν δὲ οὕτως ἐν ταῖς τότε συμφοραῖς καθήψατο τοῦ ἔθνους ὡς τὸ τέως ἀόρατον ἅγιον ἐκκαλυφθὲν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀλλοφύλων, 1.152). The strict adherence to the Law of Moses had been the reason for Pompey's defilement. Agrippa's warning that Jews could not keep their religious precepts and also expect to overthrow the Romans therefore presents a conundrum of faith to the reader. Can Josephus reconcile it? In short, this is exactly what Josephus *intends* to set up: a conundrum, which will later be “answered” in a way by Vespasian.

At the beginning of book 3 of the *Jewish War*, Josephus begins to reveal this “answer” to the conundrum presented by Agrippa in book 2—how can, but more importantly *should*, the

³³ Exodus 17:8-13.

Jews defeat the Romans? In the first few sections he presents: 1) the problem to be solved, 2) who will solve it, and 3) an insinuation that God is on the side of whoever solves it. First, because of “lax generalship” (στρατηγῶν μὲν ῥαστώνῃ, 3.2) “in the now unsettled East,” Josephus identifies that a general must be appointed “whose task would be to punish the Jewish revolt and at the same time to prevent any further outbreak of the infection they were already spreading to other nations on their borders” (3.3). Josephus frames the situation in such a way that a more competent leader can be introduced into the narrative, someone who will accomplish the tasks mentioned. It is also significant that the chosen leader’s responsibility will be to “punish” the Jews. That leader is introduced in the very next line: “the only man...matching the requirements and capable of undertaking the burden of such a large-scale war was Vespasian” (3.4). Finally, the divine invocation and assurance of heavenly guidance seems to be conferred when Josephus says next, “Perhaps also God was already laying his plans for the world order” (τάχα τι καὶ περὶ τῶν ὅλων ἤδη τοῦ θεοῦ προοικονομουμένου, 3.6). Such a statement has implications on any subsequent accounts; Josephus’ identifications—and we will see more of them—of Vespasian as one whom God favors for His designs, even his “world order,” surely affect any conclusions one draws about Vespasian’s actions in the course of the war. Indeed, without the assurance of “I will be with thee”³⁴ from the burning bush, would the Jews (or even modern readers for that matter) have seen Moses as having the authority to lead anything, let alone God’s Chosen People?

In the *Antiquities*, Josephus goes to great lengths in stretching the biblical narrative to present his characters the ways he wants. In the case of Moses, he portrays him as, above

³⁴ Exodus 3:12.

everything else, the most courageous and most pious military leader of all.³⁵ He uses the term στρατηγός, or “general,” fifteen times; “general” is a descriptive never used in the Septuagint to describe Moses.³⁶ Josephus also inserts a crucial subplot concerning Moses: while still in favor with the king of Egypt, Moses leads the Egyptians in a hard military campaign against the Ethiopians (*AJ* 2.238-253). It is surely interesting that in his portrait sketches of two great leaders, Josephus makes leaps: in one—that of Vespasian—our author goes to lengths to accentuate and stretch the character’s legislative ability and piety, especially his recognition of God’s providence at work; and in the other—that of Moses—he goes to lengths to accentuate and stretch the character’s military capability and bravery.

As already suggested, central to Josephus’ casting of Vespasian as Mosaic is his ability to frame him as the chosen vessel of God’s will. Did the Lord not assure Moses He would send an angel to cast out before him “the Chanaanite, and the Amorrhite, and the Hethite, and the Pherezite, and the Hevite, and the Jebusite?”³⁷ Did each judge of Israel not receive the same special confidence and power of God to lead the people against enemies on the field of battle?³⁸ Thus, while not completely indicative of God’s favor, military success in the face of foes *is* a gauge of discerning God’s approval of Israel at any given point in time. The man for whom “God was already laying his plans for the world order” (*BJ* 3.6), likewise, is portrayed by Josephus as

³⁵ James M. Petitfils, “Martial Moses in Flavian Rome: Josephus’s *Antiquities* 2-4 and Exemplary Roman Leadership,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 10 (2014): 202.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Exodus 33:2.

³⁸ Judges 2:18 reads, “And when the LORD raised them up judges, in their days, he was moved to mercy, and heard the groanings of the afflicted, and delivered them from the slaughter of the oppressors.”

having God’s will on his side in victory. This is never truer than in book 3, consumed with Vespasian’s siege of Jotapata. It is also, incidentally, the most pivotal time of Josephus’ life—his failure at Jotapata and the subsequent mercy granted at the hands of the Flavians mark his downfall, his turning point, and his genesis all in one. It is no wonder Josephus chose, in writing, the time to establish his new allegiance with the Flavians as to coincide with Vespasian’s ordination by God as a chosen victor.

Now, we look more to how Josephus identifies the providence of God resting on Vespasian in the third book. Many times is “providence” (πρόνοια) used by Josephus, never more so than in reflecting on the course of events at Jotapata. The author makes an ironical jab at the Jews in his first hint at πρόνοια—we could even perhaps call it a “false providence”—when he tells of a much-praised, Jewish general, Niger, surviving a Roman attack (3.28); Niger ends up being of little consequence in the Jewish campaign. In contrast, when Vespasian learns of Josephus’ arrival in Jotapata, he “thought that some divine providence must have caused the man considered his ablest opponent to walk of his own will straight” into his hands (3.144). His assessment is foretelling of future events. When nearly all resistance from the rest of Galilee outside Jotapata is crushed with a Roman victory at Japha, Josephus writes,

θεὸς δ’ ἦν ἄρα ὁ Ῥωμαίοις τὰ Γαλιλαίων πάθη χαριζόμενος, ὃς καὶ τότε τὸν τῆς πόλεως λαὸν αὐτανδρὸν χερσὶν οἰκείαις ἐκκλεισθέντα πρὸς ἀπώλειαν ἔκδοτον φονῶσιν ἐχθροῖς παρέστησεν.

It must have been God giving the Romans the present of a Galilaeian tragedy, God who at this critical time had these townspeople shut out by their own friends and delivered up abandoned to a murderous enemy, with not a man surviving the wholesale destruction. (3.293)

Several other times in book 3, at the final downfalls of Japha and Jotapata especially (3.293-297; 336-339), Vespasian inflicts on the Jewish people destruction on an epic level. And it all seems to be the will of God—the same God who had delivered the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt

and led them into a land of plenty—in a “critical time” at that. The Romans are not visited with any plague or anything showing God’s wrath. It is quite the opposite. Perhaps Agrippa’s unanswered conundrum was truthful.

In the *AJ*, in the same passage introducing the campaign against the Ethiopians, Josephus identifies that Moses “showed that *he was born for* bringing [the Egyptians] down, and raising the Israelites” (my emphasis) (*AJ* 2.238). In a commentary to this passage, Louis Feldman points out “it was not to him as teacher or legislator that the voice from the burning bush bade Moses to act, but rather as general and leader.”³⁹ To return to Philo’s *On the Life of Moses*, the exact opposite is done—Philo uses Moses as an instrument, creates Moses as a “Philosopher Moses,” accentuating characteristically Greek traits and skillsets, linking the Jewish tradition with the Hellenistic Greek tradition. Josephus, like Philo, uses him as an instrument; but, in Josephus, he is used as a representative of God on the battlefield, spelling out the divine will with the sword. What other end could this be ordered to than creating a “Martial Moses,” more skilled in war than any Roman ever wished he could be?

As an aside, it is interesting to observe how Josephus treats an instance during the siege of Jotapata in which great Vespasian’s military stratagem is flawed. After miscalculating that the Jews had plenty of water to hold out, when in fact they did not, Vespasian changes course:

ὥστε καὶ τὸν στρατηγὸν ἀπογόνοντα τὴν δι’ ἐνδείας ἄλωσιν τρέπεσθαι πάλιν πρὸς ὄπλα καὶ βίαν. ὁ δὲ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις δι’ ἐπιθυμίας ἦν: ἀπεγνωκότες γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς καὶ τὴν πόλιν πρὸ λιμοῦ καὶ δίψης τὸν ἐν πολέμῳ θάνατον ἠροῦντο.

A further result was that the commander-in-chief now abandoned thoughts of capture by attrition, and reverted to force of arms. This was exactly what the Jews wanted: they had no hope of saving themselves or their city, but they preferred death in battle to death by famine and thirst. (*BJ* 3.188-189)

³⁹ Louis H. Feldman, “Moses’s Campaign against the Ethiopians,” in *Outside the Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture*, ed. Louis H. Feldman, James L. Kugel, and Lawrence H. Schiffman (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2013), 2:1176.

What is interesting here is not that Vespasian is referred to as the στρατηγὸν (“commander-in-chief” as Hammond reckons it), *per se*. What is interesting is that Josephus does not name Vespasian. It is clear that this “commander-in-chief” is Vespasian—he is the one conducting the siege, after all, as the reader knows from following the entire book thus far. It is respectful that, in Vespasian’s miscalculation on the field of battle, Josephus rather refers to the originator of the mistake as an almost anonymous-sounding στρατηγός.

Now, we come to Josephus’ definitive endorsement of the Flavian dynasty and a Roman victory when he is finally delivered into Roman hands at Jotapata. He surrenders to the Romans after a lengthy ordeal of self-assessment and bartering with his fellow Jews in hiding below Jotapata. At one point, he records that “he found himself reliving those dreams...in which God had forewarned him of the disasters in store for the Jews and foretold the future of the Roman principate” (3.351). Many scholars have chosen to focus on the similarities between Josephus and Moses throughout the whole campaign in the Galilee,⁴⁰ but this seems to be the point at which those similarities come to meaninglessness. The triumph of the Roman state and the downfall of the Jewish state must coincide with a switch of roles; that is, God *moving* to Italy, as mentioned earlier; and that switching should match Moses with a victorious figure, something a soon-to-be disgraced Josephus cannot by nature be. This critical moment, this turning point, Josephus had shown to him by God Himself. The Pharisee goes on to pray:

κάπειδὴ τὸ Ἰουδαίων, ἔφη, φύλον ὀκλάσαι δοκεῖ σοι τῷ κτίσαντι, μετέβη δὲ πρὸς Ῥωμαίους ἢ τύχη πᾶσα, καὶ τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχὴν ἐπελέξω τὰ μέλλοντα εἰπεῖν, δίδωμι μὲν Ῥωμαίοις τὰς χεῖρας ἐκὼν καὶ ζῶ, μαρτύρομαι δὲ ὡς οὐ προδότης, ἀλλὰ σὸς εἶμι διάκονος.

⁴⁰ An exceptionally good study concerning this can be found in Finn Damgaard, “Brothers in Arms: Josephus’ Portrait of Moses in the *Jewish Antiquities* in the Light of His Own Self-Portraits in the *Jewish War* and the *Life*,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 59, no. 2 (Autumn 2008): 218-235.

‘Since it is your will,’ he prayed, ‘to bring to its knees the Jewish nation which you created, since all good fortune has now passed over to the Romans, and since you have singled out my spirit to foretell what is to come, I now choose to surrender myself to the Romans, and to live; but I call you to witness that I go, not as a traitor, but as your servant.’ (3.354)

This prayer sets up Josephus’ strategy going forward in dealing with Vespasian, both in reality and in his writing. This “fortune” that has passed to Rome is much stronger when we look at the Greek ἡ τύχη, which is more accurately defined as “the act of a god,” by Liddell and Scott. Fortune is, thus, more an active cause than a passive consequence. But who will be the agent of fortune?

Think back to Agrippa’s reprimand/warning delivered to the Jews: “if, on the other hand, this war causes you to break traditional custom, I cannot see what you will have left to fight for” (2.394). Now at Jotapata, Josephus presents himself to the emperor as “God’s chosen emissary” (ὕπο θεοῦ προπεμπόμενος, 3.400, in the former sentence identifying himself nominally as ἄγγελος), but not only that: “If I were not God’s chosen emissary, I would have followed the Jewish tradition—I know it well, and how a defeated general should meet his death” (3.400). Josephus makes it clear when he comes before the feet of Vespasian that he has broken the law of his ancestors (whether or not the specifications of the proper death of a general are actually based on real law is not important—Josephus clearly holds it as such),⁴¹ just as Agrippa foretold.

⁴¹ Williamson, *The World of Josephus*, 189 assumes the crime pointed out by Josephus is one specifically condemned by Moses. Mason’s PACE commentary of Josephus’ works, Steve Mason, ed., *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, 12 vols. (Leiden: Brill 2000-), makes this comment about this passage: “I do not know where to find the law of Moses here mentioned by Josephus, and afterwards by Eleazar, 13. VII. ch. 8. sect. 7, and almost implied in B. I. ch. 13. sect. 10, by Josephus’s commendation of Phasaelus for doing so; I mean, whereby Jewish generals and people were obliged to kill themselves, rather than go into slavery under heathens. I doubt this would have been no better than ‘self-murder;’ and I believe it was rather some vain doctrine, or interpretation, of the rigid Pharisees, or Essenes, or Herodians, than a just consequence from any law of God delivered by Moses.”

Not only that, but he has done so intentionally for the sake of communicating God’s designs to him for whom “God was laying his plans” (3.6). Josephus’ high regard for the Law and its inviolability comes to a turning point: Josephus has broken it, for a singularly great and profound purpose. The veil of the Temple is rent, so to speak.

Josephus addresses Vespasian in a private audience with him and Titus:

σὺ Καῖσαρ, Οὐεσπασιανέ, καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ, σὺ καὶ παῖς ὁ σὸς οὗτος, δέσμει δέ με νῦν ἀσφαλέστερον, καὶ τήρει σεαυτῶ: δεσπότης μὲν γὰρ οὐ μόνον ἐμοῦ σὺ Καῖσαρ, ἀλλὰ καὶ γῆς καὶ θαλάττης καὶ παντὸς ἀνθρώπων γένους, ἐγὼ δὲ ἐπὶ τιμωρίαν δέομαι φρουρᾶς μείζονος, εἰ κατασχεδιάζω καὶ θεοῦ.

You, Vespasian, will be Caesar and emperor, both you and your son here with us. So chain me tighter now and keep me for yourself, as you, Caesar, are master not only of me but of all land and sea and the whole human race. Punish me, please, with yet harsher confinement if I am taking the name of God in vain. (3.401-402)

Josephus has proclaimed the most important statement of his entire career. The care with which he reports it in the *Bellum* is clear, for he points to God as cementing his prophesy in the heart of Vespasian when he writes that “*God* was already prompting in [Vespasian] thoughts of empire and showing other signs predictive of the throne” (my emphasis) (τοῦ θεοῦ διεγείροντος αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν ἡγεμονίαν ἤδη καὶ τὰ σκῆπτρα δι’ ἐτέρων σημείων προδεικνύοντος, 3.404). Here and elsewhere in Josephus, scholars have pointed out that a main component of Josephus’ literary style is tied up in presenting Jewish history within a firmly Pharisaic framework—never is this more evident in the *Antiquities* than in Josephus’ portrayal of Moses’ backstory, especially his departure from Scripture in making Moses first flight from Egypt because of the envy of his fellow Egyptians, not because of murder (*AJ* 2.254); it all fits to make sure Moses, the greatest of the Jews, should not be seen as breaking the most basic violation of the Law.⁴² Is this “saving

⁴² Donna Runnalls, “Moses’ Ethiopian Campaign,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 14, no. 2 (December 1983): 147.

face,” if I may call it so, not similar to Josephus’ care in presenting the strategic mistake during Jotapata’s siege as coming from the “commander-in-chief,” rather than the emperor?

Finally, it is noteworthy to observe the similarity between this moment of Josephus’ prophesying Vespasian’s “chosenness” by God with an account from the *AJ*: “The Egyptians under this sad oppression, betook themselves to their oracles and prophecies, and...God had given them this counsel, to make use of Moses the Hebrew, and take his assistance...” (2.241). Moses here is chosen by God through oracles and prophecies for the exultation of another people, just as the one for whom “God was laying his plans,” a Roman, received the prophesying of another people through Josephus. What remains to be seen in the rest of the *Jewish War* beyond the events in book 3 is whether the Jews will accept Vespasian for their own exultation as the Egyptians of old did with Moses.

Finally, I would like to note some other factors in considering a Mosaic allusion in Vespasian concerned with Jewish numerology. Throughout book 3, a close reading reveals the recurrence of a few particular numbers. Now, Josephus’ reports that involve numbers (in any his writings really) must be taken as allegorical exaggerations. Most often the numbers will be fantastical, such as in his report of the height of Mt. Tabor being 17,000 feet high (*BJ* 4.55), or they will be strikingly similar, which one will notice when he considers, and excuse the sarcasm, how often *exactly* 3,000 soldiers perish in a given battle. In book 3 in particular though, the numbers that stand out are multiples of 4, 12, and 40.

In the beginning of the siege of Jotapata and throughout, the number 4 (in Hebrew ד) appears three times: the Roman camp, seemingly perfect in its planning and setup, has four entrances (3.81); the Romans completed the rampart to better reach Jotapata’s walls in four days (3.142); four are the days in which the initial siege operations took place, marked by the fiercest

fighting (3.157). Hence, four stands as the number on which Vespasian's military power, and Roman military hope, rests. In Judaism, four is the number of the Matriarchs (Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah), although this is hardly significant in this context. On the fourth day of the week of creation is when God created the specific lights (i.e. the sun, the moon, and the stars),⁴³ thus bringing to a higher completion His act on the first day (creating light in itself).⁴⁴ Is Josephus using this number to further indicate Vespasian's military efforts, and a Roman victory, would be in line with God's ordering of providence? Perhaps. Four is also the number of the letters in the Tetragrammaton (יהוה), something not insignificant. Finally, four is the number of objections Moses made to the Lord in the burning bush, only to have the Lord use him despite his lack of faith.⁴⁵

Next we look to the numbers 12 (יב) and 40 (מ). When Jotapata is finally captured (3.336-339), the Romans searched out the city, killing regardless of age, sparing only women and infants. Josephus reports, "Twelve hundred of these captives were rounded up: as for the dead, the total number killed in the final capture and the previous fighting was reckoned at 40,000" (καὶ τὰ μὲν αἰχμάλωτα χίλια πρὸς τοῖς διακοσίοις συνήχθη, νεκροὶ δὲ κατὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν καὶ τὰς πρότερον μάχας συνηριθμήθησαν τετρακισμύριοι, 3.337). In Jewish numerology, 12 is significant for several reasons. Twelve is the number of the sons of Jacob and the Tribes of Israel. Moses led *all* of Israel, and thus all 12 tribes, out of slavery in Egypt. Thus, 12 also denotes totality or wholeness, best mirrored in nature by a year comprising 12 months. Twelve hundred Jews being "rounded up" (αἰχμάλωτα...συνήχθη, alternately translated as "gathered and

⁴³ Genesis 1:14-16.

⁴⁴ I garnered this insight from the TANAKH translation in *The Jewish Study Bible: Jewish Publication Society Tanakh Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴⁵ Exodus 3:11, 13; 4:1, 10

taken prisoner”) thus has a connotation of all of Israel being subjected back into slavery—now, instead of Moses leading them out of captivity, it is Vespasian leading Israel *into* captivity by God’s will. Forty is the number of days Joshua’s spies were in Canaan, days and nights of the Flood, years of the reigns of the most righteous of Israel’s judges and kings, and, more pertinently, years Israel spent in the Wilderness. The fact of 40 being *de facto* a generation makes drawing comparisons to the Romans’ slaughter of 40,000 even more tantalizing—is the entire generation of the Jews to be destroyed? The number of men Josephus found in the cave below Jotapata in hiding also were 40 in number (3.341-342)—all of who killed themselves before Josephus surrendered to Vespasian. Josephus’ exegetical prowess in the *Antiquitates* is something strange to a modern Biblical exegete. Therefore, these numerical observations in the *Bellum*, while they might be a stretch, nevertheless would reinforce the pattern of exegesis Josephus is famous for: twisting, omitting, stretching, and making things fit in poetically ironical ways to his own delight.⁴⁶

With an analysis of the third book’s events at Jotapata over, having considered the major themes that concern the person of Vespasian and Mosaic connections, and having looked at the significance of Jewish numerology, we turn to one last consideration: that of Josephus’ “audience,” why that word is quoted, and whether that quoted word ought to be plural.

⁴⁶ An excellent investigation of Josephus’s exegetical efforts is found in H.W. Basser’s article, in this instance taken from H.W. Basser, “Josephus as Exegete,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107, no. 1 (Jan.-Mar., 1987): 27.

CHAPTER THREE: JOSEPHUS' AUDIENCE AND RECEPTION

A writer does not write for no one. Even if he does not publish his work, he writes for himself, to fulfill whatever need eats at his brain to transmit thoughts to paper. However, for writers of antiquity, writing was even more a solemn undertaking than we could imagine, and publication and distribution was, thus, a given. For our Pharisee, his writing concerning his people's history, wars, and culture was his later life's devotion. An accurate study of why Josephus might have seen Moses in the Roman Emperor cannot be complete without assessing clearly how Josephus understood himself as an author and who he had in mind when writing. This ultimate chapter will consider Josephus' writing process, audiences in Judaea, Rome, and beyond, and his tactics in addressing them.

Like much of the information in the introduction to this paper, we turn to what we know of Josephus' intentions that he himself explicitly alludes to in the *War*. It is not for himself that he intends to write, and he plainly says that he “saw, then, a paradox which demanded [his] attention”:

Πάρθους μὲν καὶ Βαβυλωνίους Ἀράβων τε τοὺς πορρωτάτω καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ
Εὐφράτην ὁμόφυλον ἡμῖν Ἀδιαβηνοὺς τε γινῶναι διὰ τῆς ἐμῆς ἐπιμελείας
ἀκριβῶς, ὅθεν τε ἤρξατο καὶ δι' ὅσων ἐχώρησεν παθῶν ὁ πόλεμος καὶ ὅπως
κατέστρεψεν, ἀγνοεῖν δὲ Ἕλληνας ταῦτα καὶ Ῥωμαίων τοὺς μὴ
ἐπιστρατευσαμένους, ἐντυγχάνοντας ἢ κολακείαις ἢ πλάσμασι.

When Parthians, Babylonians, deepest Arabia, and my compatriots in Mesopotamia and Adiabene had, thanks to my own efforts, accurate information about the origin of the war, its painful progress, and its conclusion, it seemed intolerable that Greeks and those Romans not involved in the campaign should remain ignorant of the facts and treated to nothing more than partisan flattery or pure fiction. (*BJ* 1.6)

So, Josephus clearly recognizes a need for his writing. In a sense, it is not any different from modern history writing or journalism—a lack of a definitive history or good biography is evident

and an opportunity to fill that hole presents itself; sometimes the need is urgent depending on circumstances. Here, Josephus identifies that a false history of ἡ κολακείαις ἢ πλάσμασι, “flattery and fiction,” will surely become standard in the Greco-Roman world should the facts not be laid down for them from a Jewish perspective. Thus we have the Greek *Bellum*, as touched upon in the introduction. Throughout the course of the *War*, he is also keen to remind his readers “in Rome, in Palestine, and throughout the Diaspora that his part [in the actual events of the war] had been innocent and commendable.”⁴⁷ His credentials tentative but decent enough, and the patronage of the Flavians apparent, Josephus hence publishes the *War of the Jews* for two distinct audiences: one Roman, one Jewish.

Before discussing his audiences, though, it is helpful to know just how his writing would have been read, that is, logistically, in the first century. The author in the time of the early Empire composed his work gradually, usually over many years. Steve Mason, who we have relied on throughout, perfectly summarizes the process of writing and publishing in Josephus’ time by labeling it a “social and local enterprise;” he presented his progress and emendations to “ever-widening concentric circles.”⁴⁸ In Josephus’ case, these circles could have included friends, those at court, city officials, senators, other prominent Judeans living in the city of Rome, and also, perhaps, scribes and librarians in the city libraries.⁴⁹ As writing neared

⁴⁷ Williamson, *The World of Josephus*, 285.

⁴⁸ Mason, “Of Audience and Meaning,” 79-80.

⁴⁹ T. Keith Dix, “‘Public Libraries’ in Ancient Rome: Ideology and Reality,” *Libraries & Culture* 29, no. 3 (Summer 1994): 286-288, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25542662> (accessed March 26, 2020). It is noteworthy to remember the great libraries of Rome had not yet been constructed in Josephus’ time (e.g. the Ulpian Library of Trajan and the Baths of Caracalla and Diocletian), rendering the Palatine Library as, perhaps, the most renowned at the time. Dix wisely points out the frequent nature of libraries’ close associations with the personal households of the Julio-Claudians, and, by extension, probably the Flavians as well.

completion, though involved in all stages really, the work was most definitely read aloud—and meant to be. It is important to keep in mind that before subvocalization (i.e. reading under one’s breath or in one’s head), speaking, whether it was in a soft tone or to an audience, was *intrinsically* understood to accompany the reading of a text. Once he was comfortable with a draft, the author would disseminate his work to the growing circles and make revisions as necessary. Organically, the feedback received from those the author trusted with his work necessarily effected these revisions and emendations. Mason thus drives home the point that ancient authors like Josephus “*met their intended audiences while preparing their works.*”⁵⁰ Finally, as we see clearly in Josephus’ correspondence with Agrippa, which will be expanded upon later, a text drew to somewhat of a formal, final publication when it was gifted to friends, patrons, and libraries.

For Josephus’ Roman audience in the capital, reading of events occurring in far off Judaea must have been of great interest. Especially for the elite, to know what the imperial family had done in their military campaigns, aside from what could be garnered by the proclamations and pageantry of the triumph held in Rome (7.121-157), must have had some currency to it. To know the particulars of how the emperor and his son conducted their military affairs would have allowed those at court to better congratulate the emperor and must have provided a “topic of conversation,” as it were. In considering another aspect of Josephus’ Roman audience, we can assume that the Pharisee did not truly expect wide criticism in his Greek translation, for he is confident enough to declare, “I shall not conceal any of my personal misfortunes, as my audience will be familiar with the facts” (οὐδὲ γὰρ τῶν ἐμαυτοῦ τι συμφορῶν ἀποκρύψομαι μέλλον γε πρὸς εἰδότας ἔρεῖν, 1.22). From such a statement, we can deduce the

⁵⁰ Mason, “Of Audience and Meaning,” 83.

audience would have been intimate to Josephus, confirming the supposition that his stages of publication were indeed both “social and local.”

For a Roman audience, Josephus must certainly have been keenly aware of the literary tastes of the people of the capital. Conveying thoughts to his readers in a language not his native tongue would have been trouble enough—presenting any nuance or literary artistry would have been doubly hard. Nonetheless, Josephus seems to have excelled at his task. Evidence exists in the form of the Flavians’ commendation of Josephus’ work, and, in particular, Titus’ insistence that his history should be the sole authority of the events of the war: “Indeed, so anxious was the emperor Titus that my volumes should be the sole authority from which the world should learn the facts, that he affixed his own signature to them and gave orders for their publication” (ὁ μὲν γὰρ αὐτοκράτωρ Τίτος ἐκ μόνων αὐτῶν ἐβουλήθη τὴν γνῶσιν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις παραδοῦναι τῶν πράξεων, ὥστε χαράξας τῇ ἑαυτοῦ χειρὶ τὰ βιβλία δημοσιῶσαι προσέταξεν, *Vit.* 363). Of course, he had his critics, chief among them Justus, whom Josephus would spend most of the *Vita* responding to. Others he would respond to in the *Contra Apionem*. Concerning Vespasian, it is also of note to mention that Josephus’ writing would have rung with a certain Virgilian toll in late first century Rome. Barely a hundred years old were Virgil’s famous lines of his fourth Eclogue, prophesying the birth of a glorious king; in particular, one should not forget that Virgil speaks of eastern riches opening up welcomingly to this king: At tibi prima, puer, nullo manuscula cultu / errantis hederas passim cum baccare tellus / mixtaque ridenti colocasia fundet acantho... Assyrium volgo nascetur amomum (“And for you first, oh boy, shall the earth, with no tilling, pour forth small gifts, the ivy flying about at random with the fragrant root, and the Egyptian bean mixed, and the laughing acanthus...[and] Assyrian spices will spring widely,”

Verg. *Ecl.* 4.18-25).⁵¹ It is common knowledge that the Roman mind was fascinated with the East, and Virgil's choice of imagery, while on the façade simply aggrandizing Augustus, carried a lot more weight than just simple flattery. Josephus' prophecy to Vespasian of his ascent to the throne in book 3 could be cited as just the first of a long line of prophecies of a "Savior from the East" (with all the pomp of Augustan prophesying the previous century held) in Roman literature, whether it be Suetonius' doing or, eventually, Roman Christian writers seeking an existing motif to work with. All things considered, it seems Josephus reached his Roman audience well. No doubt the fact Josephus' entire corpus survives, and the fact the *War* remains the definitive narrative of the Jewish War, proves its respect in the literary minds and hearts of the pagan Greco-Roman world.

For a Jewish audience, there are several considerations to take into account that affect our conclusion. Like our assessment of Josephus' Roman audience, we must first look to the basic evidence of Josephus' Jewish audiences, whether in the capital or in Judaea. Just as his in-depth explanations of Jewish history, customs, religious practices, and geography were intended for a Roman audience ignorant of Judaism, so does Josephus also present information in a way assuming his readership's ignorance of the Roman world; for example, in book 3, Josephus gives a detailed description of Roman military organization, demeanor, and customs (*BJ* 3.70-107), topics a Roman citizen would hardly have needed a Judean to inform him about. From this we can safely deduce a fairly wide Jewish audience would have been reading. Additionally, just as Josephus had a notable Roman patronage in Titus, so also did he have a friend in Agrippa, as he attests that "King Agrippa wrote sixty-two letters testifying to the truth of the record [of the war *per* his work]" (ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς Ἀγρίππας ἐξηκονταδύο γέγραφεν ἐπιστολάς τῇ τῆς ἀληθείας

⁵¹ Translations of Virgil are my own.

παραδόσει μαρτυρῶν, *Vit.* 364). Agrippa, still resident king in Judaea while Josephus was living in Rome, strongly supported Josephus in his writing and publication, as evidenced by one of said sixty-two letters, reproduced in the *Life*:

“βασιλεὺς Ἀγρίππας Ἰωσήφῳ τῷ φιλάτῳ χαίρειν. ἤδιστα διήλθον τὴν βύβλον, καὶ μοι πολὺ ἐπιμελέστερον ἔδοξας τῶν ταῦτα συγγραψάντων ἠκριβοκέναι.πέμπε δέ μοι καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς. ἔρρωσο.”

“King Agrippa to dearest Josephus, greeting. I have perused the book with the greatest pleasure. You seem to me to have written with much greater care and accuracy than any who have dealt with the subject. Send me the remaining volumes. Farewell.” (365)

So, one can see from the Agrippa letter that at least *one* Jew in Judaea was intently reading the *Bellum* not long after the war itself ended. It can be assumed Josephus’ work spread further in Judaea, mainly among what remained of the upper class—Josephus did, after all, assume the everlasting and unfortunate moniker of “the traitor” in the Jewish world, and it is not as if his work went without critique until the Masorettes. Conversely, the Jewish community in Rome—the same which I maintained in chapter 1 Philo would have come into contact with—probably read the Pharisee’s work in the writing process as well. What they thought of it is a guess, though a safe try would be to say they had a mix of reactions.

Just as Romans reading the *War* would have read Josephus’ accounts of Vespasian with a set mentality on the East and perhaps been reminded of Virgilian literature in the Augustan age, so would Jews reading about Vespasian have been forced to see overlap with their own prophetic literature, sacred and profane. Josephus recounts,

τὸ δ’ ἐπᾶραν αὐτοὺς μάλιστα πρὸς τὸν πόλεμον ἦν χρησιμὸς ἀμφίβολος ὁμοίως ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς εὐρημένος γράμμασιν, ὡς κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν ἐκεῖνον ἀπὸ τῆς χώρας αὐτῶν τις ἄρξει τῆς οἰκουμένης. τοῦθ’ οἱ μὲν ὡς οἰκεῖον ἐξέλαβον καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν σοφῶν ἐπλανήθησαν περὶ τὴν κρίσιν, ἐδήλου δ’ ἄρα τὴν Οὐεσπασιανοῦ τὸ λόγιον ἠγεμονίαν ἀποδειχθέντος ἐπὶ Ἰουδαίας αὐτοκράτορος.

But what more than anything else incited them to go to war was an ambiguous oracle also found in their holy scriptures, which revealed that at that time someone from their country would become ruler of the world. They took this to mean someone of their own race, and many of their scholars followed this wrong path of interpretation. In fact the oracle was pointing to the principate of Vespasian, who was in Judaea when he was proclaimed emperor. (*BJ* 6.312-313)

In the end, very few Jews of Josephus' time would have been convinced of this prophecy being fulfilled by the Roman emperor. Nonetheless, it is important that Josephus alerts his readers to this oracle. It is plain that Josephus' oracle does not explicitly refer to "the East," but for a Roman mind, Judaea was just as much of an eastern locale as India. Thus, Josephus uses ἀπὸ τῆς χώρας αὐτῶν τις to signal the ruler would be from the Jews' own land, a "fixed east," as opposed to a relative one—Rome was, after all, the center of the world.⁵² However, does it not seem too convenient that Josephus would speak of such prophecies and oracles and support their correct interpretations *after* he, himself, had already made such a prophecy in book 3 to the emperor-to-be? Josephus' chronology of presentation can be critiqued, but his intentions in writing are separate considerations.

So, Josephus was writing for two wide audiences, and, in the style of historians like Thucydides and Herodotus, wrote not only for them, but also for the ages. Concerning his writing of Vespasian, he utilized the expectations of his audiences and their cultural beliefs to shape his narrative, especially concerning his own prophecy, which was, in a funny sort of way, the very reason he ended up an historian in Rome in the 70s in the first place. From his own later works, we know of those who praised his work, and we know of those who criticized it. His

⁵² Jan Willem van Henten, "The World Leader from the Land of the Jews: Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.300-315; Tacitus, *Histories* 5.13; and Suetonius, *Vespasian* 4.5," in *The Star of Bethlehem and the Magi: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Experts on the Ancient Near East, the Greco-Roman World, and Modern Astronomy*, ed. Peter Barthel and George van Kooten (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 372. Van Henten also takes note in this article of Tacitus' and Suetonius' thoughts on this supposed oracle.

audiences might have had a wider mix of reactions that only readers of the Pharisee today can guess at. Whatever they might have been, I doubt they would have involved a suspicion of whether the research and thought Josephus dedicated to his work were methodical enough.

CONCLUSION

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain.⁵³

So chain me tighter now and keep me for yourself, as you, Caesar, are master not only of me but of all land and sea and the whole human race. Punish me, please, with yet harsher confinement if I am taking the name of God in vain. (*BJ* 3.402)

In taking a final assessment of Josephus and his possible intentions in portraying Vespasian as a second νομοθέτης (“lawgiver”) in the mold of Moses, one can see that the observation made in the first sentence of this paper rings true to the end: that a study of the works of Josephus, in any capacity or depth, is one of the most interesting a classicist could undertake. Josephus is not Sallust. Josephus is not Pliny. Josephus is not Statius. He is something all his own, grounded in his religion and in his people, shaped by his experiences of devastation and regeneration, and made public to the world as forever in retrospect. Ultimately, in studying Josephus one reaches a point where he must consider taking the man at his word.

We have examined how Josephus conceived of his writing in the wider context of the field of history in his day. We have looked into probable sources he would have known of and the research he would have done to gauge the preconceptions of his audiences. We have taken a case study of one book of his *Jewish War* and investigated how he put into action his strongly held convictions concerning his Flavian master and the world that was changing all around him. To return to one passage from the paper taken from R.J.H. Shutt, “In the Law, he found an ‘everlasting possession.’” When one finds the one thing that guides his life, nothing can change it. Josephus was a man of the Law, a man of the Torah, a man of the Temple, a man of the Covenant. While Josephus might have come to be convinced that “God had moved to Italy,”

⁵³ Exodus 20:7.

nothing could ever have convinced him that Baal had moved to Italy. Nothing could ever have convinced him that Hermes was conducting retribution on the nation of Israel. And nothing could ever have convinced him that the terrible war that ravished his country, struck down his people, and raised the House of the Almighty to the ground, never to be seen by human eyes again, was not what the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob desired. An historian skilled in his craft and devoted to objectivity, yet convinced of such cosmological significances, should be forgiven, nay, lauded, for seeing in everything around him the awesome Providence of the Almighty. He should also be lauded for attempting his very best to see in Caesar, the most powerful man on earth, the Lawgiver which he was raised to revere as second only to God Himself. In addressing Caesar as master of all in book 3 and swearing to it, as cited at the beginning of this conclusion, Josephus, in a sense, is posing to all those concerned with his caliber of writing history this challenge: “Take me at my word. As I dared Caesar to punish me, so, too, do I dare you to punish my work if I have spoken flippantly.”

Whether the evidence presented in this paper convinces one of Josephus’ possible stylistic renderings of Vespasian as a Mosaic figure or not, it remains that the Pharisee’s intentions will forever be exciting debate, positing clues, and revealing new nuances about the First Jewish War. This historian is convinced that he will never look upon a biography of Vespasian quite the same ever again, now that he has considered through the lens of Josephus all that occurred in that ancient fatal war in the East, that place whence saviors and gods and heroes come, some with a two-edged sword in their hand, some only with a staff.

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