

JOSEPHUS AS JEREMIAH, OR JEREMIAH AS JOSEPHUS?*

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Introduction

It is often suggested in modern scholarship that Flavius Josephus depicted himself in ways reminiscent of various biblical heroes. In particular, the notion that Josephus identified with the prophet Jeremiah and depicted himself as a “latter day Jeremiah” has become a commonplace. Already Heinrich Graetz, in the very last line of the third volume of his massive work, *Geschichte der Juden* (first edition, 1856), compares these two historical figures.¹ That Josephus identified with Jeremiah has been asserted by numerous more recent Josephan scholars, most notably and comprehensively Shaye Cohen and David Daube.² Daube suggests several biblical heroes with whom Josephus identified, including Daniel and Joseph, but above all he points to Jeremiah. Daube, moreover, argues that Josephus’ identification with these biblical figures led him to read details of

* My interest in this topic started off years ago, in 2005, in a paper for Prof. Daniel R. Schwartz’s Master’s seminar about Josephus at the Hebrew University. In 2013, I returned to this subject and presented an early version of this paper at the AJS 45th Annual Conference in Boston. I am grateful to Prof. Schwartz, to the audience at the AJS session, and to the anonymous referee for *JSIJ* for their helpful remarks.

¹ I owe this reference to D. R. Schwartz, *Judeans and Jews: Four Faces of Dichotomy in Ancient Jewish History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), p. 66. For the English version of Graetz see H. Graetz, *History of the Jews, Vol. II: From the Reign of Hyrcanus (135 B.C.E.) to the Completion of the Babylonian Talmud (500 C.E.)* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1956), p. 320. In a recent presentation, Tessa Rajak mentioned the comparison of these two figures by the Yiddish orator, Zvi Hirsch Masliansky (1856–1943) (T. Rajak, ‘Josephus between Eastern Europe, the United States and ‘Erez Yisra’el: The Case of Zvi Hirsch Masliansky’, presented at the 46th Annual AJS Conference in Baltimore in December 2014). Masliansky compares them in order to showcase the crucial difference, in his eyes, between them to the detriment of Josephus; although they both wanted to quiet the respective revolts, ultimately Jeremiah stayed with the people to lament the destruction whereas Josephus settled in Rome under the emperors and wrote in peace and calm (Z. H. Masliansky, *Kitvei Masliansky*, vol. 1 [New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1929], p. 298 (Hebrew)). I thank Prof. Rajak for this reference.

² S. J. D. Cohen, ‘Josephus, Jeremiah, and Polybius’, *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History* 21 (1982), pp. 366-81; D. Daube, ‘Typology in Josephus’, *JJS* 31 (1980), pp. 18-36. For additional examples of scholarship asserting this notion, see R. Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence from Josephus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 72-4; C. T. Begg, ‘The “Classical Prophets” in Josephus’ *Antiquities*’, in R. P. Gordon (ed.), *“The Place is Too Small for Us”: The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1995), pp. 557-60; L. H. Feldman, *Josephus’ Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 59; idem, *Studies in Josephus’ Rewritten Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 376-7; and, recently, D. Kopeliovich, ‘A Prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house’ (Matt. 13:57): The Motif of Jeremiah’s Persecution by the People of Israel in the Biblical and Early Extra-Biblical Narrative, and its Function in the Shaping of the Narrative in the Gospels (PhD diss.; The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2012), pp. 90-6, 153-74.

his own life into his rewriting of their lives in the *Jewish Antiquities*, a process Daube calls “retrofiguration.”

In texts of the Second Temple period and shortly thereafter Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch figure prominently (2 Macc. 2, 15; Ep. Jer.; Bar.; 2, 3 and 4 Bar.). In fact, Jeremiah appears to be the most popular of the classical prophets. Some extra-biblical texts take up the figure of Jeremiah as prophet of redemption (e.g., 2 Macc.); others, including Josephus, stress his character as a prophet of catastrophe. These texts often tell a story of Jeremiah different than that found in the biblical account. For example, some of these texts describe Jeremiah going into exile to Babylon after the Destruction (e.g., 2 and 4 Bar.). In Josephus, however, we do not find anything of this sort. It is likewise important to note that scholars have suggested that Jeremiah was a model for narratives about other prominent figures of the end of the Second Temple period, primarily Jesus and Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai.³

Jeremiah is indeed a very important figure in Josephus’ rewriting of the Bible, as we will see below; however, in this paper I would like to reevaluate the assertion that Josephus saw himself, or depicted himself *throughout his career*, as a “latter day Jeremiah.” An examination of Josephus’ writings individually, rather than as one unified whole, results in a more complex picture. Namely, Josephus does not depict himself as Jeremiah in his early work, the *Jewish War*. Rather, only later in his career, when writing of Jeremiah in the *Jewish Antiquities* and writing again of himself in his autobiography, the *Vita* (appended to the *Antiquities*), does he intentionally link himself with Jeremiah.⁴

³ For Jesus, see M. F. Whitters, ‘Jesus in the Footsteps of Jeremiah’, *CBQ* 68 (2006), pp. 229-47, and for Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, see, e.g., A. Tropper, ‘Yohanan ben Zakkai, *Amicus Caesaris*: A Jewish Hero in Rabbinic Eyes’, *JSIJ* 4 (2005), pp. 133-49, esp. 143-9. For the evolution of traditions about Jeremiah in extra-biblical literature, see recently R. Goldstein, ‘Jeremiah between Destruction and Exile: From Biblical to Post-Biblical Traditions’, *DSD* 20 (2013), pp. 433-51, who argues that that evolution is similar to processes that the Jeremiah traditions underwent within the book of Jeremiah itself. In this regard it is important to note that, while some general tendencies adduced by Goldstein for both the biblical book and the extra-biblical literature are found in Josephus’ rewriting of Jeremiah – i.e., “historicization” (ibid., 440-4) – specific notions that the extra-biblical texts “add” to the biblical narrative, such as Jeremiah’s hiding of the Temple vessels or his exile to Babylon, are not found in Josephus. For Jeremiah in post-Biblical literature see also C. Wolff, *Jeremia im Frühjudentum und Urchristentum* (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 118; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1976).

⁴ This paper does not deal with the larger question of whether prophecy persisted into the Second Temple period or with Josephus’ views on that issue. For those important issues see D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), pp. 103-52; M. H. Floyd and R. D. Haak (eds.), *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism* (LHB/OTS 427; London: T & T Clark International, 2006); A. P. Jassen, *Mediating the Divine: Prophecy and Revelation in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Second Temple Judaism* (STDJ 68; Leiden: Brill, 2007); J. Blenkinsopp, ‘Prophecy and Priesthood in Josephus’, *JJS* 25 (1974): 239-62; L. H. Feldman, ‘Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus’, in Floyd and Haak, *Prophets*, pp. 210-39 (previously published in *JTS* 41 [1990], pp. 386-422); L. L. Grabbe, ‘Thus Spake the Prophet Josephus...: The Jewish Historian on Prophets and Prophecy’, in Floyd and Haak, *Prophets*, pp. 240-47. As these studies illustrate, the notion that there still existed ways to predict the future was common in many strands of

To be sure, there are important biographical similarities between Josephus and Jeremiah. They were both priests and “prophets” – although Josephus does not use that term for himself; both lived during the destruction of the Temples (the first and second respectively); both called for surrender to a foreign empire; and both suffered from their countrymen who would not listen to their exhortations. These are, however, general similarities between actual biographical facts and do not attest to a conscious effort by Josephus to form a connection with Jeremiah. In fact, most of these similarities are also shared with the prophet Ezekiel who was also a priest and prophet, and lived in the generation of the Destruction and opposed Israel’s revolt against Babylon (e.g., Ezek.17:11-21). In order to conclude that Josephus styled himself as a “latter day Jeremiah,” we must, therefore, look for more specific parallels.

The Jewish War

I shall begin with an examination of Josephus’ first work, the *Jewish War*, which was composed in the 70s CE, not long after the Great Revolt and the Destruction of the Second Temple. That work is devoted to the history of the Great Revolt and as such recounts Josephus’ part in the Revolt. Certainly, the general similarities noted above all exist in this work. Like Jeremiah, Josephus is a priest (*BJ* 1.3; 3.352) who receives prophecies (3.351-4) and calls the people to surrender, but is harassed by them (e.g., 5.375).⁵ In addition, after Vespasian becomes emperor, Josephus received preferential treatment, just as Jeremiah had from the Babylonians (Jer. 39:11-14; 40:4-5).⁶

Yet the main evidence adduced from the *Jewish War* in favor of the view that Josephus depicted himself as a “second Jeremiah” comes from Josephus’ speech to the Jews besieged in Jerusalem in the fifth book, in which he tries to persuade them to surrender by reminding them of various episodes of Israel’s history.⁷ Recounting the destruction of the First Temple, he writes:

Thus, when the king of Babylon besieged this city, our King Zedekiah having, contrary to the prophetic warnings of Jeremiah, given him battle, was himself taken prisoner and saw the town and the temple leveled to the ground. Yet, how much more moderate was that monarch than your leaders, and his subjects than you! For, though Jeremiah loudly

Second Temple Judaism, even though it was likely differentiated from biblical prophecy, and the terms “prophet” and “prophecy” were usually avoided in relation to the phenomena of that period. Josephus too, apart from a couple of exceptions, avoids using those terms in relation to the post-biblical period, including when he relates to his own “predictions”. What concerns me here is rather the question when and to what extent, if at all, Josephus identified with Jeremiah; identifying with a biblical prophet does not necessarily imply that in Josephus’ view biblical prophecy continued as such until his own day or that his prophetic capabilities and the functions of his prophecies were the same as those of Jeremiah.

⁵ Daube, ‘Typology’ (as in n. 2), p. 26.

⁶ Cohen, ‘Josephus, Jeremiah’ (as in n. 2), p. 367.

⁷ Daube, ‘Typology’ (as in n. 2), p. 20; Cohen, ‘Josephus, Jeremiah’ (as in n. 2), p. 368; Gray, *Prophetic Figures* (as in n. 2), p. 72.

proclaimed that they were hateful of God for their transgressions against Him, and would be taken captive unless they surrendered the city, neither the king nor the people put him to death. But you...assail with abuse and missiles me who exhort you to save yourselves.... (BJ 5.391-393)⁸

Here, Josephus indeed explicitly compares himself with Jeremiah. However, the comparison is made only in one specific parallel situation where Josephus exhorts the besieged Jews as Jeremiah had before him, and in making the comparison Josephus actually stresses a difference between them – Jeremiah was not put to death, whereas the people are trying to kill Josephus. Moreover, this is the only place in this work that Jeremiah is explicitly referred to, and yet Josephus does not mention here that Jeremiah was also a priest.

It is noteworthy that in a later speech to John of Gishala Josephus implores John to surrender, just as the biblical King Jeconiah had surrendered to the Babylonians in order to save the city and the Temple (BJ 6.103-107). Josephus might have mentioned Jeremiah in this context, but does not, choosing rather to bring that biblical king and his surrender to the enemy as a positive exemplar. Jeconiah not only serves as a positive example which the besieged rebels are asked to imitate, but also serves implicitly as a positive precedent for Josephus' own conduct – both of them surrendered in order to save the city and the Temple.⁹ So here Josephus may be comparing himself to Jeconiah, as in the earlier section he had to Jeremiah, but these comparisons are contextually specific and narrow, and do not prove a more general identification with either of the two.

Indeed, an examination of the entire narrative of the Great Revolt, including Josephus' role in it, reveals no additional significant parallels between the biographies of Josephus and Jeremiah. True, Shaye Cohen asserts that the crimes of the Jews enumerated by Josephus in the *Jewish War* resemble those listed in Jeremiah 7.¹⁰ And, more recently, Tucker Ferda has argued in favor of “verbal, syntactical, and thematic parallels with Jeremiah 7,” concluding that it is “likely that Jer 7 influenced Josephus' account of the war.”¹¹ While some of these parallels are indeed compelling, an influence of the Book of Jeremiah on an account, or reflections, of the Great Revolt is natural due to the similarities between the two catastrophes, which were indeed also realized and utilized by the Rabbis and by other ancient authors (e.g. 4 Ezra; 2-3 Baruch).

Moreover, an examination of the sins listed by Josephus, when placed side by side with those listed by Jeremiah, reveals significant differences as well. I shall elaborate upon two instances in which Josephus enumerates the sins of the rebels – in both he mentions ancient prophecies about the destruction of the city.

⁸ All translations of Josephus are from H. St. J. Thackeray et al., *Josephus. With an English Translation* (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926-1969).

⁹ Cf. Feldman, *Studies* (as in n. 2), pp. 442-4.

¹⁰ Cohen, 'Josephus, Jeremiah' (as in n. 2), p. 371.

¹¹ T. S. Ferda, 'Jeremiah 7 and Flavius Josephus on the First Jewish War', *JSJ* 44 (2013), pp. 158-73.

The first is from Josephus' description of Jerusalem under siege, and the second is from the previously mentioned exhortation of Josephus to the besieged:

But flight was difficult, because guards were posted at all the outlets and anyone caught there, on whatever business, was slain, on the assumption that he was going off to the Romans. If, however, he paid the price, he was allowed to go, and only he who offered nothing was a traitor; the result being that the wealthy purchased their escape and the poor alone were slaughtered. Along all the highways the dead were piled in heaps; and many starting to desert changed their minds and chose to die within the walls, since the hope of burial made death in their native city appear more tolerable. The Zealots, however, carried barbarity so far as to grant interment to none, whether slain within the city or on the roads; but, as though they had covenanted to annul the laws of nature along with those of their country, and to their outrages upon humanity to add pollution of Heaven itself, they left the dead putrefying in the sun. For burying a relative, as for desertion, the penalty was death, and one who granted this boon to another instantly stood in need of it himself. In short, none of the nobler emotions was so utterly lost amid the miseries of those days, as pity: what should have roused their compassion, only exasperated these miscreants, whose fury shifted alternately from the living to the slain and from the dead to the living. Such terror prevailed that the survivors deemed blessed the lot of the earlier victims, now at rest, while the tortured wretches in the prisons pronounced even the unburied happy in comparison with themselves. Every human ordinance was trampled under foot, every dictate of religion ridiculed by these men, who scoffed at the oracles of the prophets as impostors' fables. Yet those predictions of theirs contained much concerning virtue and vice, by the transgression of which the Zealots brought upon their country the fulfillment of the prophecies directed against it. For there was an ancient saying of inspired men that the city would be taken and the sanctuary burnt to the ground by right of war, whensoever it should be visited by sedition (στάσις) and native hands should be the first to defile God's sacred precincts. This saying the Zealots did not disbelieve; yet they lent themselves as instruments of its accomplishment. (*BJ* 4.378-88)

"...Who knows not the records of the ancient prophets and that oracle which threatens this poor city and is even now coming true? For they foretold that it would then be taken whensoever one should begin to slaughter his own countrymen. And is not the city, aye and the whole temple, filled with your corpses? God it is then, God Himself, who with the Romans is bringing the fire to purge His temple and exterminating a city so laden with pollutions." (*BJ* 6.109-10)

The identity of the prophet or prophets which Josephus had in mind remains uncertain.¹² Nevertheless these exhortations, along with numerous other places in the *Jewish War* (e.g., 4.305-88, 556-65; 5.1-46), indicate what was important to Josephus. Josephus mainly emphasizes acts of murder and sedition (στάσις),¹³ and the “pollution” of the Temple. Indeed, the Temple was extremely important to Josephus. One illustration of the Temple’s importance in his eyes is its frequent mention in this work; for example, in the fourth book of the *War* alone Josephus mentions the Temple more than forty times.

While Josephus’ account shows some similarity with chapter 7 (as well as other places) in Jeremiah, an examination of the entire biblical book shows the prophet preaching primarily against two kinds of sins: against immoral deeds in general – which includes acts of murder, but that category is not specifically emphasized (e.g., 5:1-9, 26-28) – and against idolatry. In contrast, it is well known that the Temple is scarcely mentioned at all in Jeremiah or in Lamentations; Jeremiah even downplays the centrality of the Temple (e.g. Jer. 7:1-4, 10-15).

Josephus’ views are, in actuality, more reminiscent of the prophet Ezekiel, who often speaks of the sin of murder (e.g. 9:9, 22:27, and esp. 11:5-6) and even calls Jerusalem “the city of blood(shed)” (עיר הדמים; 22:2, 24:6-9). An illustrative example is Ezekiel 22:1-16, where the prophet mentions various sins, but clearly emphasizes bloodshed, with blood mentioned seven times in just sixteen verses. And, of course, the Temple was particularly significant for Ezekiel, who often speaks of the contamination of the Temple (e.g., 5:11, 23:38-39). This is not to suggest that Josephus here specifically thought of any particular prophecy of Ezekiel, but rather, that his exhortations match the general biblical prophetic tradition, with some similarities to Jeremiah, but no less to other prophets, particularly Ezekiel. Other features which are noted as linking Josephus with Jeremiah, such as the view that the Romans served as God’s agents to punish His people (*BJ* 6.110 [copied above]; e.g., Jer. 25:8-11, 27:6),¹⁴ are likewise not specifically Jeremian (see e.g., Isa. 10:5), and point rather to a more general biblical, or prophetic, source of inspiration.¹⁵

¹² See Thackeray’s n. a on 4.388 in the Loeb edition.

¹³ For Josephus στάσις was a significant reason for the downfall of Jerusalem; see P. Bilde, ‘The Causes of the Jewish War According to Josephus’, *JSJ* 10 (1979), pp. 190-91, 198; cf. J. J. Price, ‘Josephus’ Reading of Thucydides: A Test Case in the *Bellum Iudaicum*’, in G. Rechenauer and V. Pothou (eds.), *Thucydides — A Violent Teacher? History and its Representations* (Göttingen: V&R, 2011), pp. 79-98; S. Mason, *Flavius Josephus: Judean War 2* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 319-20 n. 2627.

¹⁴ Cohen, ‘Josephus, Jeremiah’ (as in n. 2), p. 371.

¹⁵ Josephus’ story of a mother who, during the siege, cooked and ate her child (*BJ* 6.201-13) is reminiscent of Jeremiah’s prophecy in 19:9, and of two verses in Lamentations (2:20; 4:10), but this motif is found also in Ezekiel (5:10), 2 Kings (6:28-29), and already in Leviticus (26:29) and Deuteronomy (28:53-57), as well as in other ancient Near Eastern Literature (see I. Eph’al, *The City Besieged: Siege and Its Manifestations in the Ancient Near East* [Leiden: Brill, 2009], pp. 61-2). Josephus also laments the city and the Temple (*BJ* 5.19-20; cf. 1.9-12; cf. Kopeliovich, ‘A Prophet’ [as in n. 2], p. 164), but, again, lamentation is not a unique feature of Jeremiah. Isaiah (1:21-23) and Ezekiel (19) both lament.

To be sure, several times in his narrative Josephus draws parallels between his time and the time of the destruction of the First Temple (e.g., 5.409-11) – including the emphasis that the two temples were burnt on the same date (6.250, 268). However, this does not amount to proof that Josephus identified specifically with Jeremiah, certainly no more than he did with Ezekiel. And, moreover, as already mentioned, the equation of the two catastrophes was, and is, natural.

More importantly, there are a number of striking differences between Josephus and Jeremiah:

1. Cohen points to the fact that, while for both Josephus and Jeremiah the foreign power is God's agent, Josephus portrays the Romans as generally pious and virtuous – e.g., they revere the Temple – whereas Jeremiah has no such regard for the Babylonians; they are merely God's agents to punish His people.¹⁶

2. As Cohen also points out, in Jeremiah, the war is represented primarily as a punishment for previous crimes committed by the Judeans, whereas in Josephus' *Jewish War* the Jews are punished because of the crimes they committed during the war, "not least of which is the rebellion itself" (*BJ* 5.390, 399-400).¹⁷

3. As already mentioned, there is a fundamental difference in their respective views of the Temple and its importance.¹⁸

4. After the war, Josephus settled in Rome, the enemy capital, whereas Jeremiah – despite appeals from the Babylonians to come to Babylon (*Jer.* 40:4) – chose to stay in Judea, and eventually moved to Egypt.¹⁹

5. But most significantly, until his surrender at Yotapata (Yodfat), Josephus supported the Revolt and was one of its leaders. He fortified Galilee and continued to fight the Romans even when almost all hope was lost. That is, his call to the people to surrender to Rome began only after he himself was in Roman hands. Jeremiah, in stark contrast, opposed the war from the outset. Concerning the two latter points, Ezekiel would have been a closer role model, for he called the people to submit when he was already in Babylon (though, of course, we don't know anything about Ezekiel before his exile).

To conclude the discussion of the *Jewish War*, apart from one episode, there is no evidence that Josephus intentionally depicted himself as a latter-day Jeremiah. Certainly, his initial support of the Revolt and his reiterated emphasis on the Temple do not make him a good match with Jeremiah. Thus, in the *Jewish War*, Josephus appears to depict himself as one in a string of prophets preaching to Israel, without any specific prophet in mind.

¹⁶ Cohen, 'Josephus, Jeremiah' (as in n. 2), p. 371.

¹⁷ Cohen, 'Josephus, Jeremiah' (as in n. 2), pp. 371-2. Cohen asserts that these first two differences reflect the influence of Polybius upon Josephus (*ibid.* pp. 378-9).

¹⁸ Again, Cohen explains this as reflecting the influence of Polybius upon Josephus (*ibid.* pp. 377-8). However, Josephus' "obsession" with the Temple may simply be a result of his own education and interests as a priest (Gray, *Prophetic Figures* [as in n. 2], p. 178 n. 4).

¹⁹ Daube, 'Typology' (as in n. 2), p. 26.

The Jewish Antiquities

I now turn to Josephus' later work, the *Jewish Antiquities*, and its appendix, Josephus' autobiography (the *Vita*), completed in 93/4 CE (*AJ* 20.266-7; *Vit.* 430).²⁰ The first half of the 20-volume *Antiquities* is, of course, a retelling of biblical history, and thus also retells the historical story of Jeremiah. That is, Josephus does not rewrite or paraphrase the entire book of Jeremiah, but, as a historian, he, for the most part, focuses on the historical details recounted in the prophetic book, as well as the details of Jeremiah's life.

At the outset, it is important to note two general facts about Josephus' retelling of Jeremiah. First, Josephus' narrative of Jeremiah's days is quite lengthy, more than 100 paragraphs (10.78-179), whereas the other classical prophets get only a cursory treatment at best. And while Jeremiah is mentioned by name 24 times, Ezekiel is mentioned only 6 times, and Isaiah only 10 times. Thus, Jeremiah receives the most extensive treatment of the classical prophets – or, more bluntly, is the only classical prophet to receive any serious presentation,²¹ clearly attesting to Jeremiah's importance for Josephus.²² Moreover, upon his introduction of Jeremiah, Josephus stresses the fact that he was a priest (*AJ* 10.80).

Second, Josephus' narrative about Jeremiah follows the biblical story for the most part, and he undoubtedly used the book of Jeremiah itself directly, as indicated by his inclusion of details found only in the Jeremian account of events. This is apparent from several instances where there are significant divergences between different biblical narratives, with Josephus' narrative clearly following that of Jeremiah.²³ I note three examples: (a) concerning the death of King Jehoiakim, 2 Kings 24:6 simply states that he "laid with his fathers"; 2 Chronicles 36:6 says he was exiled to Babylon; and Jeremiah twice says (22:18-19, 36:30) that his corpse shall lay exposed in the street. It is the latter which is taken up by Josephus (*AJ* 10.97). (b) Josephus reports that during the reign of Zedekiah the Babylonians lifted the early siege against Jerusalem when the Egyptians came to Judea's aid (*AJ* 10.110-11). This historical detail is not found in Kings or Chronicles, but only in Jer. 37:5. (c) After the Destruction, Josephus enumerates the names of the Babylonian commanders (*AJ* 10.135), the source of which is certainly Jer. 39:3.

It is clear therefore that the story of Jeremiah was very important for Josephus in *Antiquities* and that his narrative account followed the biblical book

²⁰ For the *Vita*'s composition see further below n. 33.

²¹ Begg, 'Classical Prophets' (as in n. 2), p. 549. Aside from Josephus' apparent attraction to the figure of Jeremiah, one obvious reason for this difference is the abundance of historical and biographical information in and about Jeremiah, as opposed to other prophets.

²² It is, in fact, quite surprising that in his numerous insightful studies of Josephus' depictions of biblical heroes, Louis Feldman has not published a study of Josephus' depiction of Jeremiah.

²³ This is in contrast to other classical prophets, where – in cases of contradiction – Josephus apparently preferred the accounts of the historical books. For example, the statement in *AJ* 10.27 that King Hezekiah would be cured within three days is based on 2 Kings 20:5; it is missing from the parallel in Isa. 38:5; Feldman, 'Prophets' (as in n. 4), p. 212.

of Jeremiah quite closely.²⁴ This makes the details which Josephus deletes, adds, or changes in that story all the more telling. These changes have no provenance in known non-biblical traditions, nor do they seem to result from concerns and tendencies that apparently lay behind changes in Josephus' narratives of other biblical figures (such as presenting those figures more favorably; providing apologetics for the Jewish people; and hellenizing tendencies).²⁵

I now turn to the changes that Josephus made in Jeremiah's biography. The first two significant points arise already when Josephus introduces Jeremiah:

This prophet [i.e. Jeremiah] also announced the misfortunes that were to come upon the city, and *left behind writings concerning the recent capture of our city, as well as the capture of Babylon*. And not only this prophet predicted these things to the multitude, but also the prophet Ezekiel... These two men were both priests by birth, *but Jeremiah lived in Jerusalem* from the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign until the city *and the temple* were demolished. (AJ 10.79-80)

1. By asserting that Jeremiah predicted not only the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians but also its recent capture by the Romans, Josephus establishes a link between Jeremiah and himself – just as Josephus wrote about both Destructions so too had Jeremiah.²⁶

2. In introducing Jeremiah, Josephus follows Jer. 1:2-3 that states that Jeremiah was active from the thirteenth year of Josiah until the Destruction. Unlike his source, however, Josephus does not mention Jeremiah's hometown of Anathoth, adding instead that during the time of his prophetic activity Jeremiah "lived in Jerusalem." Thus, Josephus makes Jeremiah a Jerusalemite priest, like himself. In addition, Josephus here downplays the figure of Ezekiel – both prophets were priests but only Jeremiah was a Jerusalemite – as he does elsewhere (§98 – Ezekiel was exiled while still a child). Ezekiel is mentioned here only in order to strengthen the veracity of Jeremiah's prophecy – because their prophecies were in agreement.²⁷ In downplaying Ezekiel, Josephus also makes him a foil to enhance the figure of Jeremiah, and by emphasizing this

²⁴ Étienne Nodet convincingly shows that Josephus did not use the Septuagint version of Jeremiah, but rather used a version very close to the Masoretic text, and that that version was in Hebrew, not a Greek or Aramaic translation of the MT; É. Nodet, 'Jérémié: le témoignage de Flavius Josèphe', *Revue Biblique* 118 (2011), pp. 225-40.

²⁵ These tendencies and concerns, as well as others, are best illustrated by Louis Feldman in his books, *Josephus' Interpretation; Studies* (both above, n. 2), as well as in many of his other Josephus studies.

²⁶ This kind of contemporizing interpretation of biblical prophecies – that is, interpreting ancient biblical prophecies as relating to contemporary events – is reminiscent of the idea of Qumran *Peshar* interpretations (for which see, e.g., J.H. Charlesworth, *The Pesharim and Qumran History: Chaos or Consensus?* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002]).

²⁷ Begg, 'Classical Prophets' (as in n. 2), p. 561. Cf. D. R. Schwartz, 'Priesthood and Priestly Descent: Josephus, *Antiquities* 10.80', *JTS* 32 (1981), pp. 129-35.

central difference between them – that Jeremiah was a Jerusalemite priest, but Ezekiel was a priest only “by birth” – he further underscores the similarity between Jeremiah and himself.

3. Whereas Jer. 36:4-10 says that Baruch wrote a scroll of Jeremiah’s prophecy and then read it aloud in the Temple, Josephus writes (*AJ* 10.93) that Jeremiah himself wrote all his prophecies and that it was he who read it in the Temple. Again, this forms a parallel with Josephus – they both authored books and both preached directly to the people, not through mediators.

4. Josephus writes that Jeremiah asked Nebuzaradan to release Baruch (*AJ* 10.158). While this detail is not found in the Bible, it parallels Josephus’ request from Titus to release his friends and relatives, mentioned in his autobiography (*Vit.* 418-21), but not in the *Jewish War*.²⁸

5. Perhaps more significantly, whereas – as asserted above – for Josephus in *War*, the Temple was extremely important, in stark contrast to Jeremiah who rarely mentions it and downplays its importance, in the rewriting of Jeremiah in *Antiquities*, Josephus adds to the biblical text numerous references to the Temple, making them part of Jeremiah’s prophecies and exhortations. For just one example, compare Jer. 29:10, 14 with *AJ* 10.113:

For thus said the LORD: When Babylon’s seventy years are over, I will take note of you, and I will fulfill to you My promise of favor—to bring you back to this place.

I will be at hand for you—declares the LORD—and I will restore your fortunes [(שבותכם) שבותכם]—more precisely: “I will return your captives/captivity”. And I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places to which I have banished you—declares the LORD—and I will bring you back to the place from which I have exiled you. (Jer. 29:10, 14; trans. JPS 1985)

At that time, by overthrowing the Babylonians, the Persians and Medes will free us from servitude to them, and, when we have been sent back by them to this land, we shall once more *build the temple* and restore Jerusalem (*AJ* 10.113).²⁹

This phenomenon is particularly significant not only because it is persistent in his narrative of Jeremiah, but more so because it is actually contrary to a more general tendency of the *Antiquities*. As Michael Tuval has recently shown, in comparison to the *Jewish War*, in the *Antiquities* Josephus’ interest in the Temple is greatly diminished. In many instances in his parallel narratives where he had mentioned the Temple in his earlier work, he now speaks of the Torah and its commandments. The same is true of his biblical rewriting – in numerous instances where the biblical sources mention the Temple it is absent from

²⁸ Daube, ‘Typology’ (as in n. 2), p. 27.

²⁹ For other examples compare the following parallel passages: *AJ* 10.80//Jer. 1:3; *AJ* 10.93//Jer. 36:2; *AJ* 10.126//Jer. 38:17-18; *AJ* 10.128//Jer. 38:20-23; Cf. Gray, *Prophetic Figures* (as in n. 2), pp. 73-4.

Josephus' rewriting.³⁰ It is extremely telling, therefore, that in the case of Jeremiah, Josephus actually makes it a point to introduce the Temple into the narrative so often. In doing so, he makes Jeremiah all the more similar to his own self-depiction in the *Jewish War*.

Thus, through making minor changes in details Josephus makes Jeremiah more similar to himself. This is enhanced in Josephus' treatment of the Great Revolt in the *Antiquities*, and especially in his appended autobiography. As mentioned above, in the *Vita*, Josephus writes that he requested and obtained the release of his friends and relatives, a detail that is omitted in the *Jewish War* version of his biography. Yet that very detail parallels a non-biblical detail which he added to his story of Jeremiah. Additionally, Josephus describes various benefits and gifts he received from the Flavians, including a portion of land, lodging in Vespasian's former house, and a pension (*Vit.* 422-423). These gifts are not mentioned in the *Jewish War*,³¹ but parallel the biblical report of the Babylonians giving gifts to Jeremiah (Jer. 40:5), repeated by Josephus in the *Antiquities* (10.157).

In addition, in the last book of the *Antiquities* Josephus explicitly says that the war and the Destruction were punishment for sins committed prior to the war. After describing the murders committed in Jerusalem by certain "brigands" during the procuratorship of Felix (52-60 CE), Josephus writes:

This is the reason why, in my opinion, even God Himself, for loathing of their impiety, turned away from our city and, because He deemed the temple to be no longer a clean dwelling place for Him, brought the Romans upon us and purification by fire upon the city, while He inflicted slavery upon us together with our wives and children; for He wished to chasten us by these calamities. (*AJ* 20.166)

Thus the difference mentioned above between Josephus' *Jewish War* and Jeremiah concerning the perception of the war as crime or punishment disappears, and, like the book of Jeremiah, the war is seen as punishment for sins committed before it began.³²

Lastly, and most importantly, contrary to his self-description in the *Jewish War*, in his autobiography, Josephus presents himself as opposed to the Revolt even before it erupted (*Vit.* 17-23, 28-9), thus eliminating perhaps the greatest difference between his self-depiction in the *War* and Jeremiah.³³

³⁰ M. Tuval, *From Jerusalem Priest to Roman Jew: On Josephus and the Paradigms of Ancient Judaism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013). Tuval writes: "[T]he appearance of quite a few Judaic Diaspora paradigms is evident throughout *AJ*. Apart from the centrality of the Law which is the most important of them, these are Josephus' loss of interest in the Temple and its cult..." (p. 258; see also pp. 192-3, 281, and *passim*).

³¹ Though *War* 3.408 does mention some gifts which Vespasian gave Josephus while he was still a prisoner.

³² Cf. Cohen, 'Josephus, Jeremiah' (as in n. 2), p. 372.

³³ True, in various places throughout the *Vita* Josephus is depicted as entirely supportive of the revolt and indeed leading it; see esp. his "prophecy" at 208-9, in which he is told in a dream that he must continue to do battle with the Romans. However, it has been demonstrated by various scholars that the core of the *Vita* is Josephus' rewriting of a report of his tenure in

Conclusion

Given the evidence, I assert that in his early work, apart from one specific episode, Josephus did not attempt to depict himself as a latter-day Jeremiah,³⁴ but perhaps attempted to liken himself to the biblical prophets more generally. In contrast, in his later work he intentionally rewrote Jeremiah in light of his own self-portrayal in his earlier *Jewish War*. He further reinforced this similarity between Jeremiah and himself in his autobiography, which often differs from his earlier self-portrayal in the *War*.

Significantly, this conclusion is in line with the conclusion reached by Finn Damgaard in a 2008 paper regarding Josephus' story of Moses. Damgaard argues "that Josephus framed his portrait of Moses in the *Antiquities* in light of his [own] self-portrait as already given in the *Jewish War*," and that that similarity is further reinforced in Josephus' new self-portrayal in his autobiography.³⁵

This current study has two important general implications for Josephan studies. First, it offers an additional factor that played into Josephus' rewriting of the Bible. It is possible that he rewrote other biblical, or post-biblical, heroes with his own experiences and his earlier self-portrayal in mind. Second, it demonstrates the importance of retaining the independence of Josephus' various works from one another. Such an examination can reveal evolutions in Josephus' thought. To conclude this paper, I will elaborate on this last point – the evolution in Josephus' thought.

Two obvious questions arise from the conclusion that in the *Jewish War* Josephus did not attempt to portray himself as a latter-day Jeremiah, but did intentionally link himself with the prophet in his later writings: Why did Josephus *not* portray himself as Jeremiah already in the *Jewish War*? And what changed when he came to write the *Antiquities* that caused him to then intentionally forge this link with Jeremiah?

As for the first question, we can, of course, only speculate. One answer can be that, as suggested in another context by Seth Schwartz, at that stage of his intellectual development Josephus was not especially familiar with the Bible.³⁶

Galilee which he wrote very soon after the war, even before he composed the *War* (*hypomnemata*). Onto this early report he appended the beginning and end along with the polemic against Justus. See S. J. D. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development as a Historian* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), pp. 67-83; D. R. Schwartz, *Flavius Josephus, Vita: Introduction, Hebrew Translation, and Commentary* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi, 2007), pp. 4-10 (Hebrew). The points in the *Vita* which form a link with Jeremiah are all found in those "additions".

³⁴ That kind of typology is convincingly suggested by Tal Ilan for the narrative of Herod supposedly composed by Nicolaus of Damascus and preserved by Josephus. She proposes that Nicolaus modeled his story of Herod's life on the biblical story of King David. See T. Ilan, 'King David, King Herod and Nicolaus of Damascus', *JSQ* 5 (1998), pp. 195-240.

³⁵ F. 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"', *JJS* 59 (2008) pp. 218-35; quote from p. 228.

³⁶ S. Schwartz, *Josephus and Judaeon Politics* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), pp. 24-35.

While that is possible, I am more inclined to think that Josephus was aware of the significant differences between him and Jeremiah and that at that stage he was content with assuming the general mantle of the biblical prophets.

However, the second question – what changed when he wrote the *Antiquities*? – is perhaps more important and answerable. While living in Rome, Josephus was repeatedly accused of promoting rebellion. Justus of Tiberias, in his book about the Great Revolt which was “published” sometime after the *Jewish War* (cf. *Vit.* 359-60), apparently accused Josephus of forcing Tiberias to rebel during that revolt (*Vit.* 336-56).³⁷ Others accused him of devising revolts even when he was already in Rome (*BJ* 7.437-53;³⁸ *Vit.* 424-5; cf. 428-9). This must have put him in peril in Rome, especially if he in fact lost favor with Domitian, the last Flavian emperor, as some evidence indicates.³⁹ This may have been a primary reason for composing his autobiography, in which, as mentioned before, he portrays himself as opposed to the revolt from the outset, in contrast to his own self-depiction in the earlier *Jewish War*. But Josephus found himself between the proverbial rock and hard place. For depicting himself now as having been opposed to the war from the outset would have certainly made him vulnerable, even more so than before, to Jewish accusations of disloyalty and betrayal. However, this also made him that much more similar to the figure of Jeremiah, and cognizant of this, I suggest that he cultivated these similarities, expanding upon them to justify himself in Jewish eyes. Thus, I propose that what we have here is a result of double self-justification on the part of Josephus – first to justify himself in Roman eyes, as one who was, and continues to be, opposed to rebellion, and then to justify himself in Jewish eyes, as one whose opposition to the revolt does not make him a traitor, no more than was his predecessor, Jeremiah.

³⁷ Cf. Schwartz, *Flavius Josephus, Vita* (as in n. 33), p. 7.

³⁸ In this context, it is important to note the suggestion that book 7 of the *Jewish War*, or significant parts thereof, was added to that composition by Josephus at a later time, in the time of Domitian; see e.g., Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome* (as in n. 33), pp. 87-90; and, especially for this episode, D. R. Schwartz, ‘Josephus, Catullus, Divine Providence and the Date of the *Judaeian War*’, in J. Pastor, P. Stern, and M. Mor (eds.), *Flavius Josephus: Interpretation and History* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 331-52.

³⁹ H. St. J. Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian* (New York: Jewish Institute of Religion Press, 1929), pp. 51-3; J. Edmondson, ‘Introduction: Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome’, in J. Edmondson, S. Mason, and J. Rives (eds.), *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 17-18. Cf. Cassius Dio 67.2.1-2.