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Jeremiah 7 and Flavius Josephus on the First Jewish War

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Abstract

Study of Josephus' interpretation of the Bible has focused on the paraphrase in *Antiquities*, but Josephus continued to engage Scripture in his post-biblical history. This article contends that Josephus, like the authors of the synoptic gospels and later Jewish exegetes, saw the events of 66-70 C.E. through the lens of Jeremiah's temple sermon (7:1-34). The accounts of Jesus ben Ananias and Josephus' speech before the city walls, among other examples, show recourse to Jeremiah 7.

Keywords

biblical interpretation, destruction of Jerusalem, deuteronomistic theology, First Jewish War, intertextuality, Jeremiah 7, Josephus

Jeremiah's temple sermon (7:1-34), said to be delivered "in the gate of the Lord's house," was a warning of God's coming judgment on the temple and on Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C.E.¹ But the text's *Wirkungsgeschichte* reached well beyond the Babylonian swords that Jeremiah foresaw. In the centuries following, Jews and Christians would cite and allude to this sermon to warn of God's judgment and to register dissent against their religious opponents. In the synoptic gospels, Jesus of Nazareth overturned the tables of the moneychangers as he declared that the temple had become "a den of brigands" (Mark 11:17; Matt 21:13; Luke 19:46; cf. σπήλαιον ληστῶν in Jer 7:11). In Acts and in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*, Jer 7's

¹ Translations from Josephus, the Hebrew Bible, and Septuagint are my own unless otherwise indicated.

accusations of misdirected worship are leveled at non-Christian Jews (Acts 7:42; *Dialogue with Trypho* 136). In Revelation, the author draws on the “bride and the bridegroom” refrain at the end of the sermon (Jer 7:34) to announce judgment on Babylon (Rev 18:23). In 2 *Clement* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*, Jeremiah’s warnings of judgment are cited to abate impiety in churches (2 *Clem.* 14:1; *Ap. Const.* 4.1.6). In *Tg. Jer* 7:11, Jeremiah’s “den of brigands” (מַעֲרַת פְּרָצִים) is applied to a synagogal context: “as a house of an assembly of wicked men” (כְּבֵית כְּנִישַׁת רְשָׁעִים). And in the Talmud and midrashic literature, passages from Jer 7 are cited under the assumption that they point to the destruction of the temple (*b. Naz.* 32b; *Sipre Deut* 342:1; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 14:2; *Lam. Rab.* 31:2; 56:1; *Zohar* 1:55b). In sum, then, those who wished to speak of divine judgment, or to depict their opponents as enemies of God’s covenant, often found this famous sermon near to hand.

This article contends that Flavius Josephus also made recourse to Jer 7 when describing the horrors of the First Jewish War. This is an important contribution to Josephus studies because, although the study of Josephus’ portrait of Jeremiah and the way in which Josephus styled himself a “latter day Jeremiah” is a well beaten path,² the possibility that his narrative of events is itself in conversation with Israel’s prophetic corpus, and with Jer 7 in particular, has not been seriously considered.

Preliminary Observations

There are two reasons to think at the outset that Jer 7 would be of interest to Josephus, and even perhaps that he would take counsel from this sermon in his writing. The first concerns his practice of echoing the Bible, particularly the prophets, elsewhere in his history.³ Josephus believed that the

² Literature discussed below and in notes 19 and 20.

³ The question of which particular version of the Hebrew Bible that Josephus used has at least four answers: (1) the LXX(s): Norman Bentwich, *Josephus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1945), 138; A. Schalit, *Namenwörterbuch zu Flavius Josephus* (Leiden: Brill, 1968); (2) The MT or some Hebrew version: Étienne Nodet, “Josephus and the Pentateuch,” *JSJ* 28 (1997): 154-94; Gustav Tachauer, *Das Verhältniss von Flavius Josephus zur Bibel und Tradition* (Erlangen: Junge & Sohn, 1871), esp. 9-10; (3) An Aramaic Targum or paraphrase: Renee Bloch, “Methodological Note for the Study of Rabbinic Literature,” in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice* (ed. W. S. Green; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978), 51-75; Roger Le Déaut, *Introduction à la littérature targumique* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966); (4) Both Greek and Hebrew and possibly Aramaic: Harold Attridge, *The Interpretation*

prophetic writings were directly relevant for history as he insisted that they do not contradict one another⁴ and linked the writing of accurate history with prophetic inspiration (*Ag. Ap.* 1.37).⁵ It was Josephus, after all, who opposed the Epicurean view of history by claiming *prophecy* as proof of God's providence (*Ant.* 10.280).

Unfortunately the study of Josephus' interpretation of the Bible has largely ignored Josephus' use of the prophets as historical sources,⁶ focusing instead on his routine expansions and omissions of the biblical text(s) in the paraphrase.⁷ But, as the following examples make clear, Josephus often takes prophetic material in the Bible and recasts it as history:

- *Ant.* 10.16; 109; 180ff: Josephus describes battles between the Egyptians and the Moabites with material found in Jeremian prophecies

of *Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), 31; Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development as a Historian* (CSCT 8; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 35-36; Louis Feldman, "Josephus as Rewriter of the Bible," in *Josephus' Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 14-73 at 23 (calls this view the "overwhelming majority"); R. J. H. Shutt, "Biblical Names and Their Meanings in Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, Books I and II, 1-200," *JSJ* 2 (1971): 167-82; John Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian* (New York: Jewish Institute of Religion Press, 1929), 81-83. This article follows the fourth view, and does not beg the question against any one version.

⁴ See *Ant.* 9.242 (on Nahum); 10.35 (on Isaiah); 10.106-107; 141 (on Jeremiah and Ezekiel's prophecy about Zedekiah); 10.269 (on Daniel). Still worth the read on this topic is Ernst Gerlach, *Die Weissagungen des Alten Testaments in den Schriften des Flavius Josephus und das angebliche Zeugnis von Christo* (Berlin: Hertz, 1863), 22, 25-26, 28. See also Peter Höffken, "Propheten und Hermeneutik des Prophetischen am Beispiel des Josephus: Überlegungen anhand der Antiquitates," in *Josephus Flavius und das prophetische Erbe Israels* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2006), 95-120 at 105, 110-11.

⁵ Peter Höffken, "Eine Reichsteilung bei Josephus Flavius: Beobachtungen zu seiner Auffassung von Daniel 5," *JSJ* 36 (2005): 197-205 at 205 observes: "Josephus kann angesichts kollidierender Aussagen entschlossen für die prophetische Ankündigung als das gewissere Geschichtsfaktum plädieren." *Apion* 1.37-43 provides the logic. Höffken aptly calls the Josephan prophet "der Historiker der Zukunft" in "Propheten und Hermeneutik des Prophetischen bei Josephus," 111.

⁶ The work of Höffken (e.g., *Josephus Flavius und das prophetische Erbe Israels*) is a refreshing exception.

⁷ See e.g. Louis Feldman, "Josephus' Commentary on Genesis," *JQR* 72 (1981-1982): 121-31. Also noteworthy is the unpublished dissertation of R. B. Sobel, "Josephus' Conception of History in Relationship to the Pentateuch as a Source of Historical Data" (PhD diss., Hebrew Union College, 1962), which catalogues divergences from the Bible.

- *Ant.* 10.112, 134ff: exaggerations in Josephus' description of the first siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians resemble utterances in Jeremiah⁸
- *Ant.* 10.180-182: Josephus' claim that Nebuchadnezzar made war with the Moabites and Ebionites in route to Egypt appears drawn from Jeremiah prophecies (chs. 44-49)
- *Ant.* 11.3-5: Cyrus the Persian realizes Isa 44:28: "the Most High God has appointed me king of the inhabited earth"
- *Ant.* 11.335: Alexander the Great goes to Jerusalem and discovers he is "one of the Greeks (who) would destroy the rule of the Persians," which reflects Dan 8:1-14
- *Ant.* 12.322: Josephus relates the persecution under Antiochus IV to Daniel: "Now the desolation of the temple came to pass in accordance with the prophecy of Daniel, which occurred four hundred and eight years beforehand"
- *Ant.* 13.63-64: Josephus describes Onias' temple in Egypt according to Isaiah's prophecy (19:19-21)⁹
- *War* 1.70: The date of the "monarchical" government after Hyrcanus' death "four hundred and seventy-one years and three months after the return of the people to their country" (from Babylon) is probably based on the prophecy of "seventy weeks" in Dan 9:2¹⁰

These examples are some of the practical consequences of Josephus' claim that "everything that happens to us for good or for ill happens in accordance with the prophecy of those (twelve prophets)" (*Ant.* 10.35). It should be expected, then, that Josephus would take counsel from *Nevi'im* such as Jeremiah when writing his history.¹¹

⁸ Cf. Christopher Begg and Paul Spilsbury, *Judean Antiquities Books 8-10* (vol. 5 of *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*; Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005), 243 n. 469.

⁹ So Christopher Begg, "Isaiah in Josephus," in *Josephus und das Neue Testament* (ed. Christfried Böttrich and Jens Herzer; Tübingen: Mohr, 2007), 233-44; Gerhard Delling, "Die biblische Prophetie bei Josephus," in *Josephus-Studien: Untersuchungen zu Josephus, dem antiken Judentum und dem Neuen Testament Otto Michel zum 70. Geburtstag gewidmet* (ed. Otto Betz et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 109-21, esp. 115.

¹⁰ F. F. Bruce, "Josephus and Daniel," *ASTI* 4 (1965): 148-62 lists this case and several others where *War* appears informed by Daniel. See also Steve Mason, "Josephus, Daniel, and the Flavian House," in *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period: Essays in Honor of Morton Smith* (ed. Fausto Parente and Joseph Sievers; StPB 41; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 161-94.

¹¹ The rabbis would later take the prophetic books as "Geschichtsquellen." See Paul Krüger, "Würdigung der Propheten im Spätjudentum," in *Neutestamentliche Studien: Georg Heinrici zu seinem 70. Geburtstag* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1914), 1-12 at 5.

Secondly, Jer 7 is closely related to Josephus' interest in deuteronomistic theology and Deuteronomic legislation.¹² Josephus believes that the deuteronomistic principle is active in his day (e.g., *Ant.* 18.9 ["innovation and reform in ancestral traditions . . . (leads) to the destruction of the congregation of the people"]; *War* 2.391);¹³ his Moses (*Ant.* 4.187-189; 4.312-313) and Solomon (*Ant.* 8.111-129) predict events that occur in 66-70 C.E.,¹⁴ and several events in the Jewish war appear to echo Deuteronomic transgressions (e.g. *Ant.* 18.9; παρανομία in *War* 4.134, 144, 155, 339, 351; 5.343, 393, 442; 6.122)¹⁵ and the corresponding "curses."¹⁶ This is relevant to Jer 7 because Jeremiah

¹² By deuteronomistic theology I refer to the sin-punishment scheme discussed by Betsy H. Amaru, "Land Theology in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*," *JQR* 71 (1980-82): 202-29 at 221; Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History*, 86. By Deuteronomic legislation I refer primarily to the legal material, as well as the blessings and curses of the covenant, which appear in the book of Deuteronomy.

¹³ Note the "main lesson" of *Antiquities*: "people who follow after the will of God, and do not dare to transgress laws that have been laid down so well, prosper in all things beyond belief . . . whereas, in proportion as they depart from the strict observance of these laws, things otherwise doable become undoable, and whatever imaginary good thing they strive to do ends in irretrievable disasters" (1.14-15).

¹⁴ Cf. Amaru, "Land Theology," 222: "Josephus applies the Biblical prophecies to particular happenings and events in Jewish history. Moreover, when the Biblical prophecy is not a perfect match, Josephus makes the necessary adjustments in it." See also Louis Feldman, "Josephus' Biblical Paraphrase as a Commentary on Contemporary Issues," in *The Interpretation of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity: Studies in Language and Tradition* (ed. Craig A. Evans; JSPSS 33; SSEJC 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 124-201, esp. 159-61.

¹⁵ Cf. Höffken, "Propheten und Hermeneutik," 115; idem, "Josephus: Wie man mit Niederlagen umgehen kann: Zu Lebensgeschichte und Auslegung alttestamentlicher Überlieferungen im Bellum Judaicum," in *Kontexte: Biografische und forschungsgeschichtliche Schnittpunkte der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft. Festschrift für Hans Jochen Boecker zum 80* (ed. T. Wagner et al.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2008), 23-38 at 24; Helgo Lindner, *Die Geschichtsauffassung des Flavius Josephus im Bellum Judaicum* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 28; Clemens Thoma, "Die Weltanschauung des Josephus Flavius: Dargestellt anhand seiner Schilderung des jüdischen Aufstandes gegen Rom (66-73 n. Chr.)," *Kairos* 11 (1969): 39-52 at 46 (discusses breaking the Sabbath, electing new priests, and other "Verbrechen gegen Kult und Gesetz"). For more subtle cases where it appears that Josephus' interpretation of the law informs his narrative, compare: *Ant.* 18.23 and 20.172 with *Ant.* 4.187 (on the Zealots); *War* 4.562 and *Ant.* 4.301 (on men acting like women).

¹⁶ Josephus compares "this generation" (during the Jewish war) with the worst in history and draws biblical parallels (in *War* 5.566, cf. Num 16:32 [earth swallowing]; Gen 6:1ff [flood]; Gen 19:24-25 [Sodom]). Compare also the story of the woman eating her child (*War* 6.201-213) with Deut 28:53 (cf. Tessa Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 96), and Josephus' repeated famine notices with Deut 32:24

is the prophet of deuteronomistic theology *par excellence*. It is not surprising that Josephus wrote more about Jeremiah than any other biblical prophet, and stressed in particular his warnings of judgment before the Babylonian incursion.¹⁷

Josephus and Jeremiah 7

Scholars have yet to explore the possible connection between Josephus' treatment of Jeremiah and the two issues discussed above.¹⁸ Instead, the focus has been in two areas: (1) the way in which Josephus styled himself "a second Jeremiah,"¹⁹ and (2) whether Josephus believed he was a "prophet"

("wasting famine [צָרָה; LXX: λιμός] consumption, bitter pestilence"). For famine as punishment or consequence of sin see *Ant.* 18.8; *War* 1.27; 5.343, 424; 6.40 (a "demonstration of God's anger"), 339 (linked to the "power of God"). Famine is foreshadowed in Solomon's prayer (*Ant.* 8.115), prophesied by Jeremiah (*Ant.* 10.112, 118), and called down as a curse by Niger of Perea (*War* 4.361). Note the similar descriptions during the destruction of Solomon's temple (λοιμός + λιμός, *Ant.* 10.116, 132) and Herod's temple (λοιμός + λιμός, *War* 6.421).

¹⁷ A case in point is that many see the hand of a Deuteronomic redactor in Jeremiah, see e.g. Else K. Holt, "Jeremiah's Temple Sermon Revisited: Jeremiah 7 and 26 and the Quest for a Deuteronomic Redactor of the Book of Jeremiah," in *Houses Full of All Good Things* (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 316-36; John A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (NICOT 24; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 273. Note also Nicole Kelley's view in "The Cosmopolitan Expression of Josephus's Prophetic Perspective in the Jewish War," *HTR* 97 (2004): 257-74 at 260 that the idea of divine punishment/retribution in Josephus came from Jeremiah, as well as the assessment of Michael P. Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel: The Rejected Prophet Motif in Matthean Redaction* (JSNTSup 68; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 247 that Jeremiah "was already seen within Second Temple Judaism as a prominent exemplar of Deuteronomistic themes."

¹⁸ Though Höffken, "Propheten und Hermeneutik," 117 notes that Josephus relates later prophets to a "foundational mosaic structure," which allows him to have these prophets make similar pronouncements. Höffken's insight strengthens the thematic connection between Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. Also relevant here is the discussion by Dale C. Allison Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 61-62 on "the construction of a Moses-like Jeremiah," which "was a rhetorically effective means of condemning Jeremiah's contemporaries." See the connections between Jeremiah and Deut 18 and later *Haggadah* in Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (6 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1928), 6:385-86.

¹⁹ So Per Bilde, "Josephus and Jewish Apocalypticism," in *Understanding Josephus: Seven Perspectives* (ed. Steve Mason; JSPSS 32; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 35-61 at 47. Cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Prophecy and Priesthood in Josephus," *JJS* 25 (1974): 239-62 at 244; Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, 98 ("latter day Jeremiah"), 232 ("a Jeremiah *redivivus*"); idem, "Josephus, Jeremiah, and Polybius," *History and Theory* 31 (1982): 366-81 at 368;

in the same sense or not.²⁰ The first issue is the more important of the two for this article because the adoption of a Jeremian persona is an example of using Scripture to inform post-biblical history. In this case, Josephus uses the Jeremian typology to condemn his contemporaries of transgressing God's law—as Jeremiah had condemned his own—and to align himself with Israel's biblical witness.²¹ As with the Deuteronomic laws and deuteronomistic ideas, then, Josephus saw a tight connection between Jeremiah and later history, and it allowed the reading of the former into the later.

One expects that Josephus read Jeremian material into later history given his Jeremiah explicitly prophecies the First Jewish War: "(Jeremiah) announced beforehand (προεκήρυξεν) the terrible things about to come upon the city (τὰ μέλλοντα τῇ πόλει δεινά), and left behind writings concerning the recent capture of our city, as well as the capture of Babylon"

David Daube, "Typology in Josephus," *JJS* 31 (1980): 18-36 at 26; Marinus de Jonge, "Josephus und die Zukunftserwartungen seines Volkes," in Betz et al., *Josephus-Studien*, 205-19 at 207 ("Josephus sich . . . implizit mit Jeremia vergleicht"); Louis Feldman, "Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus," *JTS* 41 (1990): 386-422 at 388, 421-22; Rebecca Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence from Josephus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 71; Robert G. Hall, *Revealed Histories: Techniques for Ancient Jewish and Christian Historiography* (JSPSS 6; Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 27-28; Höffken, "Josephus: Wie man mit Niederlagen umgehen kann," in *Kontexte*, 34 ("ganz ähnlich" and even "eigentlich identisch"); Lindner, *Die Geschichtsauffassung*, 26, 32; Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephus, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 237; Willem C. van Unnik, "Die Prophetie bei Josephus," in *Flavius Josephus als historischer Schriftsteller* (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1978), 41-54 at 53 (Josephus found "seinen Prototyp").

²⁰ For the view that Josephus does *not* claim to be a prophet, see, e.g., John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* (HSM 16; Missoula: Scholars, 1977), 69; de Jonge, "Josephus und die Zukunftserwartungen," 205; Feldman, "Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus," 406; Gerlach, *Die Weissagungen des Alten Testaments*, 36; David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 30. For the view that Josephus did see himself a "prophet" in or near the sense of the biblical prophets, see David Aune, "The Use of προφήτης in Josephus," *JBL* 101 (1982): 419-21 at 421; Blenkinsopp, "Prophecy and Priesthood in Josephus," 241, 256; Lester L. Grabbe, "Thus Spake the Prophet Josephus . . . : The Jewish Historian on Prophets and Prophecy," in *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism* (ed. Michael H. Floyd and Robert D. Haak; New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 240-47 at 247 ("For Josephus, prophecy definitely had not ceased, for he was himself a prophet!"); Gary L. Johnson, "Josephus: Heir Apparent to the Prophetic Tradition?" in *Society of Biblical Literature 1983 Seminar Papers* (ed. Kent H. Richards; Chico: Scholars Press, 1983), 337-46 at 338; Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 238.

²¹ Josephus even reads autobiographical details of his own life into Jeremiah's, a process Daube, "Typology in Josephus," 32, calls "retrofigurement." For examples see the literature cited in n. 19.

(*Ant.* 10.79-80).²² The exact "writings" or prophecies that Josephus believed referred to 66-70 C.E. are unspecified. But Josephus' paraphrase as a whole at least shows that chapter 7 would have been available to him. He relies on Jer 26:6-19 (*Ant.* 10.89-93); Jer 36:4-26 (*Ant.* 10.93-95); Jer 37:6-16 (*Ant.* 10.112-114); Jer 38:2-27 (*Ant.* 10.117-130); Jer 40:4-6 (*Ant.* 10.156-158); Jer 42:1-43 (*Ant.* 10.176-181).²³ He also knows that Jeremiah was a priest (*Ant.* 10.80; Jer 1:1-3),²⁴ and the date Josephus provides for the fall of the temple is modeled on Jer 52:12 (*War* 6.250). These explicit references to Jeremiah indicate that he was familiar with the beginning, middle chapters, and end of the book, and it is unlikely he knew nothing of what stood in-between.

Aside from general familiarity with Jeremiah and belief that his prophecies had traction in the First Jewish War, it is clear that Jeremiah influenced Josephus' accounts (aside from Jer 7) in at least three ways. (1) The date of the fall of Jerusalem on the 10th of Av is especially important, for this uniquely Jeremian date (cf. 2 Kgs 25:8; *m.Ta'an.* 4:6-7) demonstrates that Josephus made the war cohere with Jeremiah's writings. (2) Jeremiah was a prophet of lamentation, as the book of Jeremiah and its reception shows (cf. *Ant.* 10.78 [Jeremiah composed an ἐπικήδειον]; Jer 4:19; 9:1-10; 48:36; 3 Macc. 4:12; 4 Ezra 7:65; 1QH^a 14:16 [old numbering 2:14]; 13:24-25 [old 5:22-23]).²⁵ Given other biographical parallels Josephus draws with the

²² For discussion see Christian Wolff, *Jeremia im Frühjudentum und Urchristentum* (TU 118; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1976), 11-12, 189. Important here is the assumption that Josephus' view on the Bible changed little between the writing of *War* and *Antiquities*. Seth Schwartz, *Josephus and Judean Politics* (CSCT 18; Leiden: Brill, 1990), 23-57, argued it did: *War* shows little acquaintance with the Bible, and *Antiquities* is the fruit of much scriptural study in Rome. His argument essentially rests on two claims: (1) Josephus does not refer to the Bible much in *War*; (2) when he does, the allusions diverge so radically that one can only postulate unfamiliarity as an explanation. But (1) is an argument from silence (granting the questionable assumption that allusions to the Bible in *War* are so thin), and (2) not only pays insufficient attention to Josephus' paraphrastic style, it is much too subjective to be a reliable criterion. In addition, his argument is counter-intuitive: why should we think a period of scriptural study and illumination would come after Josephus moved away from Jerusalem and settled in Rome? Is it not much more likely that he was already well acquainted with the Scriptures before he began *War*, as he claims himself in *Life* 8-12?

²³ Cf. Delling, "Die biblische Prophetie bei Josephus," 116; Wolff, *Jeremia im Frühjudentum und Urchristentum*, 15.

²⁴ Begg and Spilsbury (*Judean Antiquities Books 8-10*, 232 n. 344) claim the chronology of Jeremiah's life comes from Jer 1:3.

²⁵ Cf. A. Siedlecki, "Jeremiah, Book of, Interpretation Through the Nineteenth Century," in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation A-J* (ed. J. H. Hayes; 2 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 1:564-69; Wolff, *Jeremia im Frühjudentum und Urchristentum*.

prophet in *Antiquities* it is significant that Josephus begins *War* by warning his reader to expect “lamentation” (*War* 1.9-12), elsewhere apologizes for lamenting the misfortunes of the Jews (5.20), and that, after another speech before the revolutionaries, describes himself breaking into tears (6.111).²⁶ (3) Josephus routinely calls those who foment opposition to the Romans and promise God’s imminent deliverance “false prophets” (ψευδοπροφήται). Not only does the message of these prophets resemble the prophetic opponents of Jeremiah (cf. Jer 26-29), but the term ψευδοπροφήτης itself could betray Jeremian influence (LXX: 6:12; 33:7, 8, 11, 16; 34:9; 35:1; 36:1, 8; cf. “prophet(s) of falsehood” [נְבִי שִׁקְרָא] in *Tg. Jer* 2:26; 4:9, 10, 12; 5:13; 7:3, 8; 23:9, 21; etc.).²⁷ In sum, these three details suggest that Jeremiah was important for Josephus’ presentation of the temple’s fall, the depiction of his own demeanor, and the character of several of his opponents.

Given this influence of Jeremiah elsewhere, use of the temple sermon would be consistent. In fact, we see a very similar use of Jeremiah in the words of Jesus ben Ananias, who may in fact quote directly from Jer 7. Josephus lists Jesus as the last of several “signs” forecasting the impending doom of Jerusalem.²⁸ Jesus would cry out around the city:

A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds;
a voice against Jerusalem and the sanctuary, a voice against the bridegroom
and the bride (φωνή ἐπὶ νυμφίους καὶ νύμφας), a voice against all the people.
(*War* 6.301)

Even when Josephus’ biblical subtext is known there are often few if any verbatim agreements: his retelling of the Ten Commandments is a good

²⁶ Cf. Bentwich, *Josephus*, 71; Lindner, *Die Geschichtsauffassung*, 132-41; Steve Mason, “Josephus, Daniel, and the Flavian House,” 178.

²⁷ Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 74, also ties the false prophet language in Josephus to Jeremiah. On the term “false prophets” in other Jewish texts, see Jannes Reiling, “The Use of ψευδοπροφήτης in the Septuaginta, Philo and Josephus,” *NovT* 13 (1971): 147-56. Note also the fragmentary 4Q339 (*List of False Prophets*) at Qumran (I am grateful to Eibert Tigchelaar for bringing this text to my attention).

²⁸ Blenkinsopp (“Prophecy and Priesthood in Josephus,” 247) supposes the voice “we are departing hence” (*War* 6.300) was influenced by Jer 16:9, 25:10. This is possible, as *Tg. Jer* highlights the idea that the sins of the people cause the Shekinah to quit the temple (e.g., 12:7; 33:5). But the motif of departure is perhaps even more prominent in Ezekiel (10:1-22; 11:22-25; cf. 43:1-2), and thus cannot be tied exclusively to Jeremiah. For discussion of theological tendencies in the Targum see Robert Hayward, *The Targum of Jeremiah* (The Aramaic Bible 12; Wilmington: Glazier, 1987), 22-30.

example.²⁹ Josephus often shows a “paraphrastic freedom” that follows the rhetorical principle of not retelling a story in the same way.³⁰ Thus, near direct quotations are particularly noteworthy, and this is one such case. Φωνὴ ἐπὶ νυμφίους καὶ νύμφας is Jeremian, occurring thrice in the book as a warning of judgment:

I will make to cease (יִשְׁכַּח; LXX: καταλύσω) from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of rejoicing and the voice of joy, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride (קוֹל חַתָּן וקוֹל כְּלָה; LXX: φωνὴν νυμφίου καὶ φωνὴν νύμφης) for the land shall become a desolation. (Jer 7:34; cf. 16:9; 25:10)

Josephus likely adopts here an intertextual strategy similar to that of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and the rabbis. For the Evangelists, σπήλαιον ληστῶν on the lips of Jesus was a metaleptic bridge to Jeremiah’s prediction of temple destruction.³¹ The import of this two word phrase—namely, that the

²⁹ Compare *Ant.* 3.91-92 and Exod 20:2-17, which have only four words in common. I am grateful to Dale Allison for this point. Andre Pelletier, *Flavius Josèphe adaptateur de la Lettre d'Aristée: une réaction atticisme contre la koiné* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1962), shows that in Josephus’ paraphrase of *Aristeas* there is, in the whole work, only one sequence of twelve words and another sequence of ten identical in both. For reasons such as this, Tessa Rajak, *Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible of the Ancient Jewish Diaspora* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 252-53, explains that Josephus is not brought into text-critical discussions of the LXX because “(his) particular genre of paraphrase is helpful only very intermittently when pressed into service as a witness to the underlying text-type. His rewriting . . . makes it for long stretches impossible to chase up individual words of phrases, or to make any inferences about the structure of his source or about the ordering of material there.” Similarly Victoria Spottorno, “The Books of Chronicles in Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities*,” in *IX Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies* (ed. Bernard A. Taylor; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 381-90 at 382: “Josephus’ paraphrastic style and deliberate lexical differentiations, his not always well controlled use of the data, and the complexity of his narrative constitute a handicap for drawing accurate textual remarks.”

³⁰ Also noted by Steve Mason, “Josephus and the New Testament, the New Testament and Josephus: an Overview,” in *Josephus und das Neue Testament*, 15-48 at 43. See also Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, 37.

³¹ The synoptic gospels in fact provide a fitting milieu for the overall argument here about Josephus, since George W. Buchanan, “Mark 11:15-19: Brigands in the Temple,” *HUCA* 30 (1959): 169-77 and Joel Marcus, “The Jewish War and the *Sitz im Leben* of Mark,” *JBL* 111 (1992): 441-62 suggest the synoptic σπήλαιον ληστῶν probably betrays knowledge of the First Jewish War, and hence evidence that the events of the war, independent of Josephus, brought Jer 7 to mind. For discussion on the way in which “a den of brigands” and the withering of the fig tree (Matt 21:12-19; Mark 11:12-21) are influenced by Jeremiah’s temple

temple will be destroyed—was provided by the surrounding context of the temple sermon itself. Similarly, in the Talmud, R. Joseph believed that the refrain “the temple of the Lord” (3×) “points to [the destruction of] the first and second temples.”³² Of course, “temple of the Lord” does not connote destruction apart from knowledge of the original context from which the phrase was lifted.

The literary context and details of the story in Josephus show that Jesus ben Ananias also uttered this Jeremian phrase, drawn from the conclusion of the temple sermon, to declare that the temple will be destroyed. Jeremian motifs permeate the entire scene: his mournful character; his opposition to the religious leaders; his being dismissed a “madman” (μανίαν, *War* 6.305) as Josephus’ Jeremiah was dismissed “as a madman” (ὡς μεμηνότα, *Ant.* 10.119). In particular, the conspicuous detail that Jesus first spoke these words when *in the temple* for the feast of Tabernacles (*War* 6.300) evokes Jer 7 and God’s command that Jeremiah “stand in the gate of the Lord’s house” (Jer 7:2). The voice of the bridegroom refrain twice appears in later sections of Jeremiah, but Jer 7 is clearly in view here. The situation is similar to Isa 40’s “way of the Lord”: similar phrases appear elsewhere in Second and Third Isaiah, but each occurrence recalls that famous oracle that gave birth to the phrase and continually supplies it with meaning.³³

The voice of the bridegroom refrain is part of a larger thematic concatenation in Josephus that is unique to Jer 7. Perhaps the next most likely case of intertextuality occurs during Josephus’ temple speech. The context is fitting, as Josephus here mentions Jeremiah as a typological parallel (*War* 5.391-392), and his position before the walls of the temple resembles Jeremiah who gave his sermon “in the gate of the Lord’s house” (7:2). So too, the form of Josephus’ speech befits Jer 7, as Josephus recounts Israel’s history and highlights that the revolutionaries had rejected him as their forefathers had rejected Jeremiah (*War* 5.392-393); for Jeremiah’s temple sermon features both a historical lesson and stresses the rejection of the

sermon and point to destruction, see William R. Telford, *The Barren Temple and the Withered Tree: A Redaction-Critical Analysis of the Cursing of the Fig-Tree in Mark’s Gospel and its Relation to the Cleansing of the Temple Tradition* (JSOTSup, 1; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), 238-39.

³² *b. Naz.* 32b in *The Babylonian Talmud: Seder Nashim* (trans. I. Epstein; London: Socino Press, 1936), 118.

³³ See Tucker S. Ferda, “John the Baptist, Isaiah 40, and the Ingathering of the Exiles,” *JSHJ* 10 (2012): 154-88, esp. 178.

prophets (7:21-26).³⁴ Comparison of details in Josephus' speech with Jeremiah's sermon reveals several notable parallels:

	Jer 7:5-11		War 5.381-414
A	"if you do not shed innocent blood . . . I will dwell with you" (vv. 6-7)	A	brigands "shed blood in the murder of their own countrymen" (382)
B	"you steal (גנב; LXX: κλέπτετε) murder (הרג; LXX: φονεύετε) and commit adultery . . ." (האג; LXX: μοιχάσθε) (v. 9) ³⁵	B	"you thought not to avoid even secret sins (τὰ κρυπτὰ τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων)—I mean thefts (κλοπὰς) and ambushes (ἐνέδρας) and adulteries (μοιχεύσεις)" (402)
C	"then you come and stand before me in this house which is called by my name and say 'We are safe?'" (v. 10)		
D	temple "a den of robbers" (v. 11)	D	temple "a receptacle of all" (403)
		C	"after all this do you expect him you have so impiously abused, to be your supporter?" (403)
E	"You know, I too am watching, says the Lord" (v. 11)	E	"God sees every secret thing and hears what is buried in silence" (413-414)

³⁴ For this motif in post-biblical literature, see Bar 1:21; 2:1, 7-8; 1 En. 89:51-56; Jub. 1:12-13; T. Levi 16:2; 4 Ezra 7:129-30; Mark 12:1-11; Matt 5:12; 23:37 and par.; Luke 13:33; b. Yoma 9a; Exod. Rab. 31:16 ("the citizens of Jerusalem were . . . smitten because they despised the prophets"); Ps. Rab. 26 (on Jer 1:5). Cf. Hans J. Schoeps, "Die jüdischen Prophetenmorde," in *Aus frühchristlicher Zeit: Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (ed. Hans J. Schoeps; Tübingen: Mohr, 1950), 126-43.

³⁵ The order here reflects the MT; the LXX has "murder and steal and commit adultery" undoubtedly to reflect the order of the Ten Commandments.

The accusation of murder in the temple and sin list occur in the same order (A B, A B), and Josephus elsewhere specifies the murder of innocent people (*War* 4.312-316; 5.15-20; 103 [πολλοὺς τῶν ἡσυχίων]). The mention of “adulteries” is conspicuous since he uses that term nowhere else in descriptions of revolutionary activity (cf. *War* 4.560 [γυναικῶν ὕβρεις]). Beyond Josephus’ sin trio (κλοπὰς, ἐνέδρας, μοιχείας), he elsewhere alludes to other sins narrated in Jer 7: acting unjustly (Jer 7:5; *War* 4.334 [(brigands) εἰρωνεύοντο δικαστήρια καὶ κρίσεις]) and swearing falsely (Jer 7:9; *War* 4.213-14).³⁶ Further, the Josephan descriptor “secret sins” is a suitable interpretation of Jer 7, where it is claimed that, despite efforts to the contrary, God “sees” what is going on in the temple (E; v. 11). Josephus will mention at the conclusion of his speech that God “sees every secret thing” (E; 5.413). Lastly, the rhetorical question about safety in the temple (C) and the “den of brigands” (D) would be found in inverted order in Josephus (D C), but they are adjacent. Josephus’ syntax here resembles Jeremiah:

Jer 7:11: σπήλαιον ληστῶν ὁ οἶκός μου // המערת פרצים היה הבית הזה
War 5.403: ἐκδοχεῖον πάντων τὸ ἱερόν γεγονεν

When this syntactical resemblance stands alongside a sudden rhetorical inquiry about God overlooking sins (C), paraphrase of Jer 7:10-11 seems likely.

Josephus’ speech is not the only place Jer 7 appears influential. Four additional connections can be found elsewhere. The first is the identity and personality of the revolutionaries. Josephus routinely calls his opponents λησται, which, as Martin Hengel rightly notes, picks up the conventional Roman lingo for criminals.³⁷ But Josephus’ emphasis on the violent actions of these λησται in the temple could be influenced by Jer 7, which memorably describes the transformation of the temple into a σπήλαιον ληστῶν: e.g. “(the revolutionaries) transfer their brigandage (μετενεγκεῖν τὴν ληστειαν) from the city into the temple (ἐπὶ τὸ ἱερόν), indeed this is for them a secret military base (ὄρμητήριον) and refuge (καταφυγή)” (*War* 4.262). Also, the “Temple of the Lord” ideology Jeremiah opposed (7:4) appears in the words of the revolutionaries on three occasions: *War* 5.459 (“the temple will be saved by the one who resides therein”); 564 (those who fight for the temple

³⁶ Cohen, “Josephus, Jeremiah, and Polybius,” 380, Lindner, *Die Geschichtsauffassung*, 32-33) and Mason, “Josephus, Daniel, and the Flavian House,” 178, mention Jer 7 when discussing the sins of the revolutionaries.

³⁷ Martin Hengel, *The Zealots* (trans. David W. Smith; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 24-26.

fight for God and thus without fear); 6.98-100 (the city cannot be taken because it belongs to God).

The second and third examples are found in four summary statements that share certain thematic parallels with Jer 7. Such summary statements (either in Josephus' own words or through speeches of others) were opportunities for Josephus to advance his own perspective on the events.³⁸ The four passages (*Ant.* 20.164-67; *War* 4.258-262; 4.312-324; 5.381-414) contain biblical themes conjoined and sequenced in Jer 7:

λησται → murder/kill/slaughter → "in the temple" → defilement → God forsakes/turns away³⁹ → destruction

The notions of defilement and destruction are conventional of course,⁴⁰ but the collective here is unique to Jer 7.⁴¹

³⁸) On "speeches" in Greco-Roman historiography, see Gohei Hata, "Is the Greek Version of Josephus' Jewish War a Translation or a Rewriting of the First Version?" *JQR* 66 (1975-76): 89-108 at 103; Lindner, *Die Geschichtsauffassung*, 142; Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society*, 80.

³⁹) Jeremiah 7:3 could either be "I will dwell with you" or "I will let you dwell" depending on vocalization. For discussion see William L. Holladay, *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1-25* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 236-37; Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 276.

⁴⁰) Cf. Tob 13:5, 9; 14:4; *T. Dan* 5:7; 2 *Bar.* 1:2-5; 78:6; 79:1; *Lam. Rab.* (14 of 36 proems end with "since they sinned, they were exiled"); 4Q174 (4QFlor) 1-2 i 5. Cf. Otto Böcher, "Die heilige Stadt im Völkerkrieg," in Betz et al., *Josephus-Studien*, 55-76 at 67, 75 (though his suggestion that Josephus is indebted to Jewish apocalyptic here is unnecessary); Shaye J. D. Cohen, "The Destruction: From Scripture to Midrash," *Prooftexts* 2 (1982): 18-39, esp. 30-34, 43; Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society*, 94-95 ("the scheme of incorrigible sin, followed by the withdrawal of God's favour, and then punishment, is that of the prophets of the First Temple and post-First Temple period"); A. J. Saldarini, "Varieties of Rabbinic Response to the Destruction of the Temple," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1982 Seminar Papers* (ed. Kent H. Richards; Chico: Scholars Press, 1982), 437-58; Efraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975), 597-99.

⁴¹) The idea of pollution and purging of a temple would not be unfamiliar (Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983], 144-90, 227-28), though according to Jonathan J. Price, "Some Aspects of Josephus' Theological Interpretation of the Jewish War," in "*The Words of a Wise Man's Mouth are Gracious*" (*QOH* 10,12): *Festschrift for Günter Stemberger on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (ed. Mauro Perani; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 109-20 at 114, Josephus risks his credibility as a historian in claiming that God destroyed the temple because of the atrocities of extremist rebel factions. For the argument that political or constitutional issues were the key causes of war in Greco-Roman historiography, see Arnaldo Momigliano, "Some Observations on the

In addition, and related to Josephus' use of λησταί, the summaries highlight the importance Josephus places on murdering *in the temple*.⁴² Indeed, murder in the temple seems to be for Josephus a decisive factor in God's choice to abandon the city to its own defenses. Josephus makes similar claims beyond these summaries (cf. *War* 2.454-455: the murder of Metilius' garrison left "the city polluted by such a stain of guilt as could not but arouse a dread of some visitation from heaven"), and highlights murder in the temple elsewhere (cf. *War* 4.159: "bloodstained polluters"; 4.163: "(the) hallowed places (are) crowded with the feet of murderers"). Jeremiah of course berated the occupiers of the temple as violent murderers (cf. 7:6, 9, 11), and similarly assumed murder a decisive factor in God's turning away from the temple: "*if* you do not shed innocent blood in this place, and *if* you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, *then* I will dwell with you in this place" (7:6-7, italics mine).

Fourthly, Josephus routinely mentions unburied corpses: "(priests) were cast out naked, and seen as food for dogs and animals (βορὰ κυνῶν καὶ θηρίων)" (*War* 4.324). In Jeremiah's temple sermon, a prophecy about unburied corpses is connected to the "bride and the bridegroom" refrain which Jesus ben Ananias evoked:

The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of the air, and for the animals of the earth, and no one will frighten them away. And I will bring to an end the sound of mirth and gladness, the voice of the bride and bridegroom in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; for the land shall become a desolation. (Jer 7:33-34)⁴³

Causes of War in Ancient Historiography," in *Studies in Historiography* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), 112-26.

⁴²⁾ Cf. Per Bilde, "The Causes of the Jewish War According to Josephus," *JSJ* 10 (1979): 179-202; Lindner, *Die Geschichtsauffassung*, 142 ("So liegen auch Versündigung und Gericht primär auf der Ebene des Kultus"); Thoma, "Die Weltanschauung des Josephus Flavius," 47. The rabbis would later debate which particular sin was the cause of the destruction. See *b. Yoma* 9a; *b. Šabb.* 119b; *Mek. Exod* 19:1; *Lam. Rab.* 46b-47a.

⁴³⁾ Josephus repeats the mention of corpses *ad nauseam* throughout the siege account (*War* 5.313-514: "alleys [filled] with the corpses of the aged"; 5.513: "alleys [filled] with the corpses of the aged"; 6.126: survivors "trample corpses underfoot [in the temple]"; 6.253: "around the altar a pile of corpses was accumulating").

Conclusion

To sum up the argument: (1) Josephus at times uses the prophetic writings as historical sources and shows a sustained interest in a deuteronomistic sin/punishment scheme that he believed active in his own time; (2) Josephus has a keen interest in Jeremiah as a “type” for his own career and as a prophetic witness to the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E.; (3) The date of the destruction and other details in the account of the war evidence the reading of Jeremiah into Josephus’ narrative of the war; (4) We can note multiple verbal, syntactical, and thematic parallels with Jer 7. We conclude it likely that Jer 7 influenced Josephus’ account of the war.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Thanks to Dale Allison, Jason von Ehrenkrook, Chris Gehrz, and my wife, Liberty Ferda, for reading and commenting on an earlier version of this article.