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# Reading Josephus' "Prophetic" Inspiration in the Cave of Jotapata (*J.W.* 3.351–354) in a Roman Context

*J. E. (Eelco) Glas* | ORCID: 0000-0002-1499-0450  
University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands  
*j.e.glas@rug.nl / eelcoglas@hotmail.com*

## Abstract

This article offers a literary analysis of the famous episode in *Judean War* 3.351–354, in which Josephus suddenly recalls his “nightly dreams.” It takes up the question of how Josephus characterizes himself in this episode in consideration of an elite audience located in Rome steeped in Greco-Roman learning. In explaining this episode, scholars have put special emphasis on parallels with discourses of Judean prophecy and biblical prophets, such as Jeremiah and Daniel. The hypothesis that Josephus consciously presents himself as a prophet has found widespread acceptance and grown to become almost undisputable since the 1970s. In addition to challenging the view that Josephus explicitly and deliberately presents himself as a biblical prophet, the present contribution develops an interpretation that considers the historiographical outlook of the whole *War* as a military-political composition imbued with classicizing features.

## Keywords

Josephus – *Judean War* – prophecy – Greco-Roman historiography – self-characterization – rhetoric

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Josephus' autobiographical narrative in the *Judean War*<sup>2</sup> is arguably one of the most infamous examples of *succès de scandale* in antiquity.<sup>3</sup> His questionable apologetic framing of the narrative, explaining how he, as one of the leaders of the revolt, surrendered to the Romans after the siege of Jotapata in 67 CE, gained him a reputation as one of the most notorious traitors in Jewish history.<sup>4</sup>

Not surprisingly, scholars have devoted considerable attention to the pivotal point of this narrative: the story of Josephus' surrender at Jotapata (*J.W.* 3.340–392), and, in particular, to his dreams while staying in the cave of Jotapata (3.351–354). The story takes off immediately after the narrator has wrapped up the narrative on the siege of Jotapata, zooming in on the Romans' hot pursuit of the Judean general. The shrewd Josephus manages to escape by jumping into a deep pit. Accompanied by forty other Jews, he remains hidden for two days. However, on the third day, he is discovered by the Romans after a woman gives him away. Vespasian—already emperor when Josephus records his story—is delighted and sends various intermediaries to negotiate his surrender (3.340–350). Josephus initially hesitates, but suddenly he remembers certain nightly dreams in which God spoke to him in ambiguous terms about the disaster that would befall the Jews and the fate of the Roman emperors. According to his own reasoning, these dreams incited him to surrender “not as a traitor, but as [God's] agent” (3.351–354).<sup>5</sup>

1 This article is based on parts of my doctoral dissertation, *Flavius Josephus' Self-Characterization in First-Century Rome*, especially ch. 5. Earlier versions of my argument were presented at the U4 Winter School on Antiquity (Athens, 2018) and the Dirk Smilde Seminar (Groningen, 2018). I am grateful to my colleagues, in particular Steve Mason and Barry Hartog, for their feedback on previous drafts of my argument, to the editors and anonymous reviewer of *JSJ*, whose suggestions greatly improved this article, and to Drew Longacre for correcting my English. Translations of Josephus' works are my own. Except when stated otherwise, I have made use of the Loeb volumes (abbreviated as LCL) for translations of other ancient works, sometimes with adaptations.

2 I will use “Judean” instead of “Jewish” throughout the article, except when citing other scholars, because Greek Ἰουδαίος or Latin *Iudaeus* reflected primarily one's ἔθνος or *gens* in antiquity. See more elaborately Mason, “Jews, Judaeans.”

3 As is well-known among scholars, the *Life* offers a contrasting picture. For a synopsis of both autobiographical accounts, see Cohen, *Galilee and Rome*, 3–7; Mason, *Life of Josephus*, 213–22 (Appendix C).

4 With “questionable” I refer to modern perceptions of Josephus' narrative. For a survey of the reception of the *War*, including Josephus' personal story, see now Goodman, *Josephus's Jewish War*. For a recent examination of Josephus' social position in Rome, see Den Hollander, *Hostage to Historian*.

5 For an explanation of my translation of δῆλονος, see §1.4.

Scholars attempting to interpret this episode have placed special emphasis on its parallels with biblical prophecies of Israelite prophets, for example, Jeremiah and Daniel. The hypothesis that Josephus intentionally presented himself as a prophet has gained widespread acceptance since the 1970s,<sup>6</sup> acquiring almost undisputable status. Building on this proposition, some have argued that Josephus developed distinctively Jewish ideas in this episode in an attempt to present himself as a prophet. Most elaborately, Rebecca Gray claims that Josephus established an interpretative schema of sin and punishment, which she identifies as one of the fundamental demonstrations of Josephus' reasoning in the *War*; one that dates back to the Deuteronomistic historian and to the great classical prophets of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>7</sup> According to Gray, a close analysis of the passage reveals "a distinctively Jewish understanding of history and of the rise and fall of empires" that closely resembles Dan 2:31–45.<sup>8</sup> In a more recent contribution, Tessel Jonquière has attempted to uncover Josephus' method of self-justification in the Jotapata narrative. In her view, "it cannot be denied that in this episode Josephus portrays himself as a prophet."<sup>9</sup> Emphasizing the importance of Josephus' dreams in the context of this narrative, she argues that Josephus uses religious notions of priesthood, prayer, and prophecy to respond to accusations of treachery raised by Judeans: "Had he written for a Greco-Roman audience, he might have done otherwise."<sup>10</sup>

6 For example: van Unnik, *Flavius Josephus*, 41–54 (quote 42): "er wünschte sich als Prophet angesehen zu wissen"; Gnuse, *Dream Reports*, 24–26, 135–42 (quote 24, 26): "[scholars] all agree that Josephus attributes prophetic skills to himself and his contemporaries [and] ... the self-attribution of inspiration, scripture learning, and dream interpretation all imply that Josephus views himself as a prophet"; Tuval, *Jerusalem Priest*, 2, 21, 96 (quote 96): "it is very difficult to deny that in BJ [Josephus] presented himself as a faithful prophet of God." Cf., e.g., Blenkinsopp, "Prophecy and Priesthood," 239–42; Cohen, *Galilee and Rome*, 98, 232; Daube, "Typology in Josephus"; Cohen, "Josephus, Jeremiah, Polybius," 369–77; Bilde, *Jerusalem and Rome*, 52, 189–90; Mason, *Josephus on Pharisees*, 267–72; Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 35–79; Spilisbury, "Rise and Fall," 5–6 (slightly differently: Spilisbury, "Josephus and Bible," 126); Grabbe, "Prophet Josephus"; Price, "Josephus," esp. 230–32; Gussmann, *Priesterverständnis*, 241–45 (yet emphasizing the primacy of Josephus' priestly calling); Jonquière, "Josephus at Jotapata"; Crabbe, "Fighting against God," esp. 25–26, 37; Sharon, "Josephus as Jeremiah," 3–4 (downplaying the importance of the Jeremiah parallel, but underlining Josephus' self-characterization in prophetic terms).

7 Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 38. Cf. Cohen, "Josephus, Jeremiah, Polybius," 370–71; Rajak, *Historian and Society*, 94–98; Gnuse, *Dream Reports*, 26–27.

8 Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 37–41.

9 Jonquière, "Josephus at Jotapata," 219.

10 Jonquière, 224. See also 225: "We can, however, after this discussion, say more of Josephus' method of defending himself in *War*: he did it in such a way that he hoped would make his Jewish audience, who accused him of treason, understand."

This position has occasionally attracted criticism from scholars with varying perspectives and in different contexts. Louis Feldman and Steve Mason have expressed the most fundamental doubts.<sup>11</sup> They have called attention to Josephus' use of prophet-language (e.g., *προφήτης*, *προφητεία*, *προφητεύω*) throughout his corpus, observing that Josephus refrains from calling himself a prophet in his work. This observation is especially striking because he often uses prophet-language in the *Antiquities*, but rarely in the *War*.<sup>12</sup> It appears that Josephus deliberately avoids prophet-language in cases where such language may have been applicable, perhaps to avoid association with the pseudo-prophets that appear elsewhere in the narrative but mostly to celebrate the Jewish legacy of sacred books written by prophets in the distant past.<sup>13</sup> It is probably not coincidental that Josephus, using the voice of Vespasian, presents his activities as some kind of a *μάντις* (*J.W.* 4.625) and not as a *προφήτης*.<sup>14</sup> Concurring with Feldman and Mason, I argue that the best explanation of these two observations is that Josephus had no interest in spelling out his views about Judean prophecy in the *War* (unlike in the *Antiquities*), and he certainly had no reason to characterize himself as a prophet.

The lack of support for the position adopted by Feldman and Mason within the scholarly literature could be attributed to the absence of an alternative interpretation of the passage in question. If Josephus did not deliberately draw on Judean notions of biblical prophecy to characterize himself, how should his dreams, remembered in the cave of Jotapata, and accompanying predictions be explained? In addition to challenging the view that Josephus

11 Feldman, "Prophets and Prophecy," 404–6; Mason, "Review of Rebecca Gray," differing significantly from his earliest work in Mason, *Josephus on Pharisees*, 267–72 (on Josephus' self-presentation as a prophet, see 269–70). For a more recent and elaborate treatment of prophecy in Josephus' corpus, focusing on *Ag. Ap.* 1.41, see Mason, "Prophecy in Roman Judaea." See also Hartog, "Writing with Prophets."

12 On prophet-language in Josephus' corpus, see Feldman, "Prophets and Prophecy," 405–6; Mason, "Review of Rebecca Gray," 309. Josephus incidentally refers to biblical prophets (*J.W.* 1.18; 4.381–388, 460; 5.391; 6.109). A special case is John Hyrcanus, who possessed the gift of *προφητεία* (1.68–69). Josephus also mentions experts about biblical prophecy like the Essenes (2.159). Josephus himself claims similar expertise on account of his priestly background (3.352). In reference to his contemporaries the narrator refers only to pseudo-prophets (2.261; 6.285–286). Judas the Essene is called a seer (*μάντις*), not a prophet (1.78–80: *προφήτης*).

13 On this distinction, see Aune, "ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ," 419.

14 On Josephus' distinction between *μάντις* and *προφήτης*, see esp. Feldman, "Prophets and Prophecy," 416: "Josephus ... seems to maintain the classical difference between *μάντις* and *προφήτης*, namely that the former has illumination of the future ..., whereas the task of the *προφήτης* is to be the voice of God and to declare the knowledge of God to those who come for advice." Cf. Mason, "Prophecy in Roman Judaea," 526.

explicitly and deliberately presents himself as a biblical prophet, this article aims to develop an alternative interpretation. Building on the scholarship of Mason and others, I propose to read the *War* as a work of military-political history written in Rome and adhering to classical historiographical conventions. Presumably, Josephus expected his primary audience, situated in Rome, to appreciate and understand his effort. Thus, I will attempt to formulate my interpretation of *J.W.* 3:351–354 in accordance with the classicizing historiographical orientation of the entire composition.<sup>15</sup>

To realize this aim, I propose to investigate three different but overlapping aspects of Josephus' self-presentation in the *War*. First, I will examine to what extent Josephus' use of language in *J.W.* 3:351–354 has exclusively prophetic connotations in the context of the work as a whole. Second, I will compare *J.W.* 3:351–354 with a similar episode in *Life* 208–210. For reasons that are unclear to me, this episode has received much less attention in the discussion on Josephus' alleged self-presentation as a prophet. Third, I will develop an alternative interpretation by examining the possibility of reading *J.W.* 3:351–354 in a Roman context, and specifically by exploring dream motifs in the kind of literature that drew the educated elite in that city. Overall, this analysis seeks to deepen understanding of Josephus' communicative intentions in a Roman context, attending to his specific language use, rhetoric, and choices of motifs and themes as determining arbiters.<sup>16</sup>

## 1 The (Lack of) Prophetic Connotations in Josephus' Use of Language

The validity of the hypothesis that Josephus attempted to present himself as a Judean prophet, particularly as argued by Rebecca Gray and Tessel Jonquière, largely depends on whether his use of language and themes relating to his divine dreams can be characterized as *distinctively* prophetic and Judean.<sup>17</sup>

15 For a discussion of Josephus' Roman audience and its implications for reading the *War*, see Mason, "Audience and Meaning"; Brighton, *Sicarii*, 41–47. See recently also van Henten, "Josephus as Narrator," which discusses how Josephus adopts a classical profile as a narrator throughout his corpus to address "non-Jewish and Jewish *literati* in Rome" (143). For a survey of various specifically Roman currents, see Mason, "Roman Historian"; Hartog, "Writing with Prophets."

16 Because this contribution focuses on exploring the Greco-Roman backgrounds of Josephus' self-characterization, it will focus exclusively on discussing possibly relevant Greco-Roman parallels. Potentially relevant biblical parallels are discussed extensively in the authors cited in the footnotes and do not require further elaboration for my purposes.

17 Note the infrequent use of prophet-language in Greek literature before the LXX.

The question that arises is what language Josephus uses in *J. W.* 3.351–354, and does it necessarily convey a claim to prophet status? The relevant passage is presented in its entirety below in Greek as well as translated into English:

ὡς δ' ὁ τε Νικάνωρ προσέκειτο λιπαρῶν καὶ τὰς ἀπειλὰς τοῦ πολεμίου πλήθους ὁ Ἰώσηπος ἔμαθεν, ἀνάμνησις αὐτὸν τῶν διὰ νυκτὸς ὀνείρων εἰσέρχεται, δι' ὧν ὁ θεὸς τὰς τε μελλούσας αὐτῷ συμφορὰς προεσήμανεν Ἰουδαίων καὶ τὰ περὶ τοὺς Ῥωμαίων βασιλεῖς ἐσόμενα. ἦν δὲ καὶ περὶ κρίσεις ὀνείρων ἰκανὸς συμβαλεῖν τὰ ἀμφιβόλως ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ λεγόμενα· τῶν γε μὴν ἱερῶν βιβλίων οὐκ ἠγγόει τὰς προφητείας ὡς ἂν αὐτὸς τε ὦν ἱερεὺς καὶ ἱερέων ἕγγονος. ὦν ἐπὶ τῆς τότε ὥρας ἔνθους γενόμενος καὶ τὰ φρικώδη τῶν προσφάτων ὀνείρων σπάσας φαντάσματα προσφέρει τῷ θεῷ λεληθυῖαν εὐχήν, καὶ “ἐπειδὴ τὸ Ἰουδαίων,” ἔφη, “φύλον κλάσαι δοκεῖ σοι τῷ κτίσαντι, μετέβη δὲ πρὸς Ῥωμαίους ἡ τύχη πάσα, καὶ τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχὴν ἐπελέξω τὰ μέλλοντα εἰπεῖν, δίδωμι μὲν Ῥωμαίοις τὰς χεῖρας ἐκῶν καὶ ζῶ, μαρτύρομαι δὲ ὡς οὐ προδότης, ἀλλὰ σὸς ἄπειμι διάκονος.

However, as Nicanor urgently pressed on, and Josephus learned of the threats from the hostile multitude, a memory of nightly dreams suddenly came to him by means of which God had pre-signified to him the impending disasters of the Judeans and the fate of the Roman emperors. Now, he was able to understand the interpretations of dreams as ambiguously spoken by God, and was by no means ignorant of the prophecies in the sacred books, as he was himself a priest and came from a family of priests. By means of these, he was inspired at just that hour, and drawing back from the horrible apparition of his recent dreams, he offered up an unnoticed prayer to God: “Because it seems to be your will,” it said, “to bring to its knees the Judean people whom you created, and because fortune has turned completely to [favour] the Romans, and you have chosen my soul to speak about what is to come, I give myself to the Romans voluntarily so as to live. But I bear witness that I shall go not as a traitor but as your agent.

JOSEPHUS, *J. W.* 3.351–354

This passage, I would argue, is crucial for interpreting Josephus' self-presentation as a character in the *War*.<sup>18</sup> The entire story of his surrender (3.340–391) marks a transition from Josephus as a Judean general mandated to fight the Romans (2.568; 3.137)—a task that he implies he has performed with

18 For an overview of the structure of Josephus' autobiographical narrative in the *War*, see Glas, *Self-Characterization*, 95–101.

the utmost vigour (especially in 3.141–339)—to his position as a Roman captive (3.392–408). Moreover, after his release (4.622–629), he becomes a spokesman of the Romans, authorized to negotiate terms with the Judeans (5.114, 261, 325–326, 361–423, 541–547; 6.94–113, 118, 365).<sup>19</sup>

In the context of the story of his surrender, *J.W.* 3.351–354 foregrounds the divine support behind Josephus' decision. Until he remembers his nightly dreams, Josephus is hesitant to give up his position and surrender to the Romans. Vespasian initially sends two tribunes to offer Josephus safe passage and to convince him to come out of the cave (3.344). When they fail to achieve his directive, Vespasian sends a third intermediary, the tribune Nicanor, who is an old friend and acquaintance of Josephus (3.346). Nicanor's attempt creates a moment of indecision for the usually determined and resourceful Josephus (3.350). It is only now that Josephus remembers the dreams in which "God had pre-signified to him the impending disasters of the Judeans and the fate of the Roman emperors." Josephus' interpretation of these dreams, disclosed in the form of a prayer (3.353–354), clears his hesitance and induces him to surrender. Ultimately, this moment of divine inspiration marks the decision as one made by God and not by Josephus.<sup>20</sup>

The prayer is crucial for grasping how Josephus expects his readers to understand the story of his surrender.<sup>21</sup> First, it gives the character Josephus the opportunity to offer his interpretation of his dreams, which, as he implies, are ambiguous. The dreams dispel Josephus' hesitance to surrender to the Romans for the following reasons. First, God has decided to bring the Judean people to their knees. Second, fortune has turned completely in favour of the Romans. Third, God has singled out Josephus "to speak about what is to come." This interpretation enables Josephus to anticipate the accusations of treachery raised by his compatriots in the narrative that follows (3.358–359, 384; cf. 2.598–599; 3.438–442). Accordingly, he will give himself up to the Romans not as a traitor but as an agent of God. This episode thus marks Josephus'

19 Cf., e.g., van Henten, "Josephus as Narrator," 141–43, who discusses how the Jotapata episode serves to underline Josephus' role as a mediator and historian between Judeans and Romans.

20 The motif of divine support features prominently in the surrender story. Immediately after the end of the siege of Jotapata (*J.W.* 3.339), we find a growing presence of vocabulary related to fortune and the divine (3.341, 361, 387, 391). Cf. Glas, *Self-Characterization*, 249–52.

21 The prayer is investigated most elaborately by Jonquière, *Prayer in Josephus*, 207–13. Cf. Jonquière, "Josephus at Jotapata," 222–24.

realization that continued resistance is pointless, as it would mean not only fighting the Romans but also God himself (cf. 2.582; 5.376–378).<sup>22</sup>

Josephus clarifies that the prayer escapes the notice of the other Judeans present in the cave. It is addressed directly to God but in such a way that Josephus seems to be addressing his readers directly. The rhetorical effect is that the readers get to know something that Josephus' compatriots in the cave do not and cannot know. The audience is now party to the superior knowledge of the narrator.<sup>23</sup> In a way, the readers "overhear" Josephus' internal dialogue with God and get a rare glimpse of his innermost feelings and beliefs.<sup>24</sup> The emphasis on divine authorization is intended to foster a sense of unquestionable trust in the character of Josephus and to convince readers of his sincerity. Josephus is put on trial by his compatriots immediately afterwards (3.355–391), but the reader now knows that the accusations of treachery and cowardice that are about to be raised by Josephus' compatriots are ill-informed and unfounded.

Where and how does prophecy come into play in the midst of this turbulence? Josephus merely states that he remembers nightly dreams and that at that time, he was inspired by the biblical prophecies about which he has knowledge because of his priestly background.<sup>25</sup> This experience makes him an agent of God with a mandate to surrender himself to the Romans and deliver his message to Vespasian. If Josephus claims the status of a Judean prophet in this passage, it is a very implicit and veiled claim. To determine whether he is making such a claim, in the following section, I present an analysis of Josephus' lexical choices and their connotations in the literary context of the *War*.

### 1.1 *Predictive Dreams in the Judean War*

In addition to the dream episode, there are various passages in the *War* that have prompted some scholars to conclude that Josephus presents himself as a prophet. Josephus refers to himself as a messenger (3.400, 402: ἄγγελος).<sup>26</sup>

22 Cf. Glas, *Self-Characterization*, 235–49.

23 This point is emphasized in, for example, Hirschberger, "Historiograph im Zwiespalt," 160–61; Wiater, "Narrative Technique," 156–57.

24 This closely resembles the function of Caesar's internal dialogue in *Bell. civ.* 1.72.2, discussed in these terms by Batstone and Damon, *Caesar's Civil War*, 121, or Xenophon's internal dialogue in *Anab.* 3.1.13–14, discussed in more detail below (3.1.2).

25 On the centrality of Josephus' priestly authority in this passage, see Gussmann, *Priesterverständnis*, 241–45.

26 Chapman, *Spectacle and Theater*, 16–18 offers a different reading of this passage, explaining it as the case exemplifies the necessity of taking into consideration both Greco-Roman and Judean backgrounds for understanding Josephus' text. She refers to Greek tragedy, in which "the messenger tells the characters and audience in detail what has already



Moreover, Vespasian recalls Josephus' words (φωναί) among other signs (σημεῖα) that point to the possibility of divine providence (4.622–623; δαίμονιου προνοίας). Vespasian explains to his officers that Josephus predicted his emperors (4.625; μαντεῖαι). In *J.W.* 5, Josephus compares his own situation with that of the biblical prophet, Jeremiah, who made prophecies (τὰς Ἱερεμίου προφητείας) to Zedekiah and the Judean people, warning them about the imminent destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 BC (5.391–393).<sup>27</sup> The claim that Josephus fashions himself as a prophet in an appeal addressed to a Judean audience hinges on an interpretation of his ability to receive and interpret divine dreams and to predict the future, specifically as a prophet and distinctively as a Judean.<sup>28</sup>

There are strong arguments against this hypothesis. First, in notable contrast to the *Antiquities*, which represents the ancient biblical period, in the *War*, characters receiving a dream are never referred to as prophets. At any rate, dreams are a rare occurrence in this work. In the case of Josephus, the dream pre-signifies (προσημαίνω) impending disaster (συμφορά) for the Judeans. Outside of the Jotapata episode, Josephus uses this combination of vocabulary only once in the *War*:<sup>29</sup> In this singular episode, Herod the Great receives various dreams (ὄνειροι) that pre-signify (προσημαίνω) the death of his brother Joseph (1.328). When Herod wakes up, he is visited by messengers (ἄγγελοι) who deliver news about these disasters (συμφοραί). However,

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happened off stage." Simultaneously she acknowledges that through "his ability to predict the future through the application of knowledge gained through his previous dreams (*B.J.* 3.351–353), he is playing a latter-day Joseph and Daniel." Jonathan Davies takes an approach to Josephus' text that closely resembles that of Chapman, see, e.g., his recent article "Covenant and Pax."

27 On Josephus as a Jeremiah-like prophet, see, e.g., Wolff, *Jeremia*, 10–15; Daube, "Typology in Josephus"; Cohen, "Josephus, Jeremiah, Polybius"; Bilde, *Jerusalem and Rome*, 55–56; Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 72–74; Gnuse, *Dream Reports*, 27–29; Gussmann, *Priesterverständnis*, 295–96. In this case, however, the emphasis is not put on Josephus and Jeremiah, but those listening to them who should repent from their crimes. *They* (note the emphatic use of ὑμεῖς) should take the past destruction of the temple as an example. The Jeremiah-Josephus parallel has been questioned in Lindner, *Geschichtsauffassung*, 73 n. 2; Rajak, *Historian and Society*, 170–71; Tuval, *Jerusalem Priest*, 124. Although subscribing to the general hypothesis that Josephus fashioned himself as a biblical prophet, the Jeremiah parallel has also been questioned by Sharon, "Josephus as Jeremiah."

28 Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 37 identifies distinctively Judean and prophetic language in this passage. Gray points to Josephus' use of terms like how he claims to be a messenger (ἄγγελος) sent (προπεμπόμενος) by God in *J.W.* 3.400, and God's "servant" (3.354: διάκονος). Ladouceur, "Masada," convincingly argues that such vocabulary is often used in military contexts.

29 Cf. the dream of Archelaus in *J.W.* 2.112–113 and Glaphyra in 2.114–116. Archelaus, however, needs the Essene Simon to explain the dream.

there are important differences between this episode and Josephus' dreams. Josephus does not describe Herod's dream experience in great detail. Herod's dreams are clear (σαφείς), whereas the dreams of Josephus are ambiguously conveyed (ἀμφιβόλως) and require interpretation (κρίσις). Nonetheless, 1.328 is the only passage in the *War* that is to some degree comparable with Josephus' dreams. However, scholars have never ascribed a prophetic status to Herod. The question, then, is why is Josephus' case different?

### 1.2 *The "Prophetic" Connotations of Josephus' Dreams*

A second argument is that the insight revealed by Josephus' dream revelation is not specifically prophetic. In *J.W.* 6, the narrator elaborates on the oracles and omens predicting the imminent doom of the Judeans (6.288–315).<sup>30</sup> He laments that some cheats and pretenders are misguiding the people of Jerusalem, who are consequently "not paying attention to nor believing manifest pre-significations and portents of the destined desolations" (6.288: οἷς δ' ἐναργέσι καὶ προσημαίνουσι τὴν μέλλουσαν ἐρημίαν τέρασιν οὔτε προσεῖχον οὔτ' ἐπίστευον). There is nothing specifically prophetic about what God intends to convey to his people regarding the imminent doom of the city. It is manifest, but not everyone pays attention to these pre-significations.

Josephus elaborates on a similar point (6.310–315), claiming that the Judeans collectively ignore such signs. Anyone who can understand Josephus' presentation of events would realize that God cares for his people and sends "all kinds of pre-significations" (παντοίως προσημαίνοντα) intended to save them. The Judeans have examples "written in their books." He also mentions "an ambiguous oracle found in their holy writings" (χρησμὸς ἀμφίβολουσ ὁμοίως ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς εὐρημένους γράμμασιν).<sup>31</sup> This material is available to Judean wise men, but the point of concern is its interpretation (πολλοὶ τῶν σοφῶν ἐπλανήθησαν περὶ τὴν κρίσιν).<sup>32</sup> The interpretation of ambiguous oracles is conducted by *wise men*,

30 For a recent in-depth treatment of this passage, in particular *J.W.* 6.293–299, see Davies, "Covenant and Pax." Davies argues that Josephus expresses his narrative in such a fashion that it contains different messages at the same time, evoking both Judean and Roman knowledge registers on account of his training in more than one literary tradition. See my conclusions for a response to this position.

31 This oracle is probably the same one as the pre-signification received by Josephus in his dream (*J.W.* 3.351–354) and proclaimed to Vespasian immediately after his capture (3.399–402). However, Josephus does not explicitly suggest that this specific oracle is the basis of his predictions. Cf. Rajak, *Historian and Society*, 191; Den Hollander, *Hostage to Historian*, 95 n. 128.

32 Josephus uses the adjective σοφός only twice in the *War*. The other case occurs in 3.376, where Josephus refers in his speech against suicide to "the wisest among lawgivers" (τῷ σοφωτάτῳ ... νομοθέτῃ). Scholarly debate on this passage revolves around the issue of the

presumably those who are learned in the holy writings of the Judeans, although they can be (and have been) wrong. Prophets can be wise and learned,<sup>33</sup> but being learned is not a faculty that is exclusive to prophets.

Similarly, Josephus ascribes his ability to understand the interpretations of ambiguous dreams to his knowledge of the sacred books, which he attributes to his priestly background (3.352; cf. 1.3; *Life* 1).<sup>34</sup> Josephus' knowledge of the future is ultimately based on his priestly qualifications and accompanying exegetical competence, and not on privileged access to secret prophetic knowledge that is only revealed to him and inaccessible to other Judeans. Josephus shows more resemblance to the learned men in *J.W.* 6.313 than to the biblical prophets, except that they are wrong whereas he is right.

### 1.3 *Josephus' Inspiration*

A third counterargument is that Josephus informs the reader that when he was in the cave, he was inspired (ἐνθους) by the sacred books of the prophets, enabling him to interpret the dreams he received at an unspecified point in time (3.353). Some scholars have placed considerable emphasis on this term in connection with Josephus' alleged self-fashioning as a biblical prophet.<sup>35</sup> However, in the *War*, the term is also used to refer to Vespasian's "divine fury of mind" (4.33–34; δαιμόνιον τὸ παράστημα τῆς ψυχῆς), which causes his enemies to flee. Similarly, Josephus also uses the word in relation to Titus' inability "to contain the anger of his frenzied soldiers" (τὰς ὀρμάς ἐνθουσιώντων τῶν στρατιωτῶν κατασχεῖν) when they pillage the temple of Jerusalem (6.260).<sup>36</sup>

Specifically, Josephus states that he was inspired by the sacred books of the prophets. The prospect of achieving a state of inspiration by reading literature

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exact origin of this oracle in the Hebrew Bible. For further discussion and references Tuval, *Jerusalem Priest*, 126. Cf. Suetonius, *Vesp.* 4-5; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.13.

33 See, e.g., Josephus' characterization of Daniel in *Ant.* 10.197–198. Daniel is referred to as belonging to the wise men in danger of execution. Elsewhere Josephus calls Daniel a prophet on account of his skill to interpret dreams (10.194, 200, 203–209, 263–280). Cf. Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 32–33.

34 Cf. Gussmann, *Priesterverständnis*, 241–45. Gussmann is the most comprehensive study of priestly subjects throughout Josephus' corpus. On this claim, see also, e.g., Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 53–58; Tuval, *Jerusalem Priest*, 116, 260.

35 Gray, 51–52, 69–70. She explains this term in reference to *Ag. Ap.* 1.37–41, which in her view "concerns only the type of prophecy that resulted in the composition of historical narrative" (44), a passage which she discusses in detail at 7–34. Mason, "Prophecy in Roman Judaea," 535–37 discusses Gray's position in some detail in consideration of his own hypothesis of Josephus' Roman audience for the *Against Apion*.

36 So also Hartog, "Writing with Prophets." *J.W.* 4.388 refers to "some ancient saying by inspired men" (τις παλαιὸς λόγος ἀνδρῶν ἐνθέων), although the reading is uncertain.

would have been familiar to Greek and Roman readers. Here, Longinus' discussion of the sublime, which he defines as excellence and distinction of language, in a treatise addressed to a certain Postumius Terentianus, a deeply educated man (1.3) and a lover of learning (44.1), should be noted. Longinus places strong emphasis on the importance of inspiration and ecstasy (e.g., ἔνθους, ἐνθουσιάζω, ἐνθουσιαστικῶς and similar terms) as being definitive of the experience of sublimity on the part of both the author and the audience (e.g., 3.2; 8.4, 7–8; 15.6; 18.1). More generally, he describes the essential effect of the sublime as "not to persuade the audience but rather to transport them out of themselves" (1.4).<sup>37</sup> Correspondingly, reaching a state of inspiration induced by reading elevated literature cannot be linked exclusively to Josephus' views of prophecy. On the contrary, it entails a state of being steeped in the Greek tradition of literary criticism of his time.

#### 1.4 *Josephus' Unnoticed Prayer*

At this point, it is necessary to pause to examine the phrase προσφέρει τῷ θεῷ λεληθυῖαν εὐχὴν, which I have interpreted to mean that Josephus is offering up a prayer—or perhaps a vow<sup>38</sup>—to God that has escaped public notice. Some scholars explain this prayer and its content as central aspects of Josephus' self-fashioning as a Judean prophet.<sup>39</sup> As Tessel Jonquière observes, Josephus mentions various prayers in the *War*, but this is the only one that receives this amount of attention. She further claims that it is also the only prayer used to justify the actions of the person saying the prayer.<sup>40</sup> The particularity of this instance makes it difficult to identify a specifically prophetic connotation in the phrase. Evidently, when looking at Josephus' corpus as a whole, by far the majority of prayers are offered by Judeans, both prophets and non-prophets. However, as is also the case with the theme of prophecy, prayer is much less central in the *War* than it is in the *Antiquities*. Jonquière counts 12 prayers in the *War*, as opposed to 122 in the *Antiquities*. The most striking aspect of the prayers in the *War*, however, is that most of the prayers are offered by Romans, namely Titus (5.519), Roman soldiers (6.123), Roman crowds (7.73), and

37 In this, he may have been influenced by the literary theories of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, as has been argued in de Jonge, "Dionysius and Longinus."

38 In the context of the *War*, Josephus uses the Greek word εὐχή to indicate prayer and vows. See, e.g., Berenice trying to fulfil the vow she had made before God in *J.W.* 2.313. Translating Josephus' use of εὐχή in 3.353 as a "vow" would be supported by his use of μαρτύρομαι in the direct speech that follows, which does not resemble a prayer but an oath formula. Cf. Hirschberger, "Historiograph im Zwiespalt," 160.

39 E.g., Jonquière, "Josephus at Jotapata," 222–24.

40 Jonquière, *Prayer in Josephus*, 225–26.

Vespasian and Titus in Rome (7.128, 155). They are also offered by Judean statesmen and their wives, Antigonus, son of John Hyrcanus I (1.73), Pheroras' wife (1.595), Archelaus and the Judean people (2.88), and Agrippa I (2.179).<sup>41</sup> The only case where Josephus associates prayer with prophecy in the *War* is in his digression on Elisha at the spring of Jericho (4.459–464).<sup>42</sup> However, Elisha's prayer has no clear link with Josephus' prayer in 3.353. In other words, the act of praying does not have a specifically prophetic or even Judean connotation in the context of the *War*.

When analysing the content of the prayer, scholars often interpret the phrase “you have chosen my soul to speak about what is to come” (τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχὴν ἐπέλεξω τὰ μέλλοντα εἰπεῖν) and Josephus' role as a “minister” (διάκονος), which is Thackeray's translation of the Greek term, as further indicators of Josephus' prophetic calling.<sup>43</sup> There are no clear arguments that warrant this interpretation. Josephus never uses the combination of ψυχὴ and ἐπιλέγω to describe a prophetic calling; nor does he frequently refer to prophets as διάκονοι. In the *War*, Josephus uses the word διάκονος on two other occasions. Both usages are relevant for the interpretation of the cave episode. In the first case, Vespasian confirms Josephus' status and recognizes him as “an agent [Thackeray's “minister”] of God's voice” (4.626: διάκονον τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ φωνῆς). In a second passage, the Zealots allow themselves to be the *agents* (διάκονοι; Thackeray: “instruments”) of the workings of “some ancient saying” (τις παλαιὸς λόγος) that the city would be captured and the holy of holies burnt to the ground if a civil war ensued, even though they were familiar with the saying (4.388). Considering similar connotations, it would be appropriate to translate the term διάκονος in the same way in each of these passages. Because the Zealots are clearly not ministers, it is reasonable to propose that the role of Josephus and the Zealots is captured better in English by using “agents,” or perhaps “instruments,” following Thackeray's translation of *J.W.* 4.388. In other words, in 3.351–354, Josephus recognizes and accepts this role in a conflict entailing a cosmic dimension and acts upon this knowledge. The Zealots demonstrate a similar awareness—they are acquainted with the ancient sayings—but they persist thoughtlessly in waging civil war and thus become the agents of a prediction that they do not want to manifest and which they could have prevented.<sup>44</sup>

41 Cf. Jonquière, 286 (Appendix one).

42 On this passage, see recently Mason, “Elisha at Jericho.”

43 E.g., Lindner, *Geschichtsauffassung*, 59–61; van Unnik, *historischer Schriftsteller*, 41–54 (esp. 44–45); Collins, *Diakonia*, 111–15; Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 37; Hartog, “Writing with Prophets.”

44 Josephus uses the term only fourteen times in his whole corpus.

The contrast Josephus draws between himself and the Zealots closely parallels the presentation of greater and lesser souls of the Stoic philosopher Seneca, an older contemporary of Josephus: "Here is your great soul (*Hic est magnus animus*)—the man who has given himself over to Fate; on the other hand, that man is a weakling and a degenerate who struggles and maligns the order of the universe and would rather reform the gods than reform himself" (Seneca, *Ep.* 107.12). This parallel foregrounds Josephus' use of the term ψυχή. Immediately after the prayer, the concept of the soul plays a central role in the discussion between Josephus and his compatriots. In this discussion, Josephus presents the ψυχή in strongly Stoic terms, introducing the idea that the separation of the body and soul through the act of suicide contravenes the law of nature and the will of God (3.361–382).<sup>45</sup> The scene as a whole, in which the strength of Josephus' character is put to the test, is infused with a Stoic-like emphasis on the importance of remaining true to character under changing circumstances.<sup>46</sup> This impression is confirmed when Josephus, upon entering the Roman camp, gains the admiration of Titus, who recognizes "Josephus' toughness in his misfortunes" (3.396: τό τε καρτερικὸν ἐν ταῖς συμφοραῖς ... τοῦ Ἰωσήπου) and is prompted to reflect on the great role of fortune in times of war and on the general instability of human affairs.

In sum, Josephus' lexical choices relating to his personal prayer, in which he demonstrates his recognition of the cosmic dimension of the Judean–Roman conflict, are thoroughly embedded in the cave episode as a whole. This recognition combined with Josephus' readiness to accept his fate as an agent of God testifies to the greatness of his "Stoic" ψυχή.<sup>47</sup>

45 Cf. Niehoff, "Religious Authors," 100.

46 See, e.g., Seneca, *Ep.* 107.9–10: "It is to this law that our souls must adjust themselves, this they should follow, this they should obey (*Ad hanc legem animus noster aptandus est; hanc sequatur, huic pareat*). Whatever happens, assume that it was bound to happen, and do not be willing to rail at Nature. That which you cannot reform, it is best to endure, and to attend uncomplainingly upon the God under whose guidance everything progresses; for it is a bad soldier who grumbles when following his commander. For this reason we should welcome our orders with energy and vigour, nor should we cease to follow the natural course of this most beautiful universe, into which all our future sufferings are woven."

47 Jonquière, *Prayer in Josephus*, 212 (following Lindner, *Geschichtsauffassung*, 54, n. 3.) claims that Josephus may have chosen the word ψυχή "because it sounded biblical." This interpretation ignores its centrality as a philosophical concept in, for example, Stoic philosophy.

### 1.5 *Preliminary Conclusions*

The foregoing analysis focused on the extent to which the immediate compositional context of the *War* warrants the hypothesis that Josephus characterizes himself as a biblical prophet. As Feldman and Mason have argued, a survey of Josephus' use of prophetic language indicates that this is not the case. Josephus does not display any systematic concern about expounding on his views on Judean prophecy in the *War*, let alone characterizing himself as a prophet. My own observations on the language that Josephus employs in *J.W.* 3.351–354 and related passages corroborate this view. First, the statesman Herod receives dreams similar to those of Josephus. Second, Josephus also writes that pre-significations (though not in the form of dreams) are there for every learned man to see, although pretenders deliberately misinterpret such signs. The interpretation of such ambiguous signs does not require prophetic abilities; rather, exegetical skills and learning are required. Josephus possesses such qualities on account of his priestly background. Third, Josephus' state of inspiration acquired through his reading of the holy books of the Judeans cannot be viewed exclusively in terms of Judean prophecy. In the *War*, he uses similar language to describe the state of mind of Vespasian and those of Roman soldiers. Additionally, Greek and Roman readers would have been well acquainted with the principle of reaching a state of inspiration by reading elevated literature. Lastly, the prayer and its content single out Josephus' realization of his fate as an agent of God in a conflict that has cosmic dimensions. Whereas Josephus' lexical choices do not have specifically prophetic connotations, they reflect Stoic ideas that were popular in and around Rome in the first century.

## 2 *Josephus' Dreams: J.W. 3.351–354 and Life 208–209*

It could nonetheless be argued that Josephus' claims may have activated knowledge about biblical prophecy among Judean audiences, even if this was not the message Josephus originally intended to convey in his narrative. While this scenario is certainly possible, it hardly warrants the hypothesis that Josephus *specifically designed* the Jotapata dream episode to address an audience comprising Judeans familiar with ideas of prophecy, such as those outlined in the Hebrew Bible. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that Josephus wrote the *War* in Rome. He states that he wrote the *War* with a sophisticated Roman audience in mind (*J.W.* 1.3, 22; *Life* 361–362; *Ag. Ap.* 1.50–51), including some Judeans living in Rome (Agrippa II and his circle and perhaps others).

Given the local and social conditions of dissemination of ancient books, which included oral recitations performed in front of live audiences, it is unlikely that Josephus occasionally said things that made sense *only* to Judeans.<sup>48</sup>

Consideration of the above points raises the following question. If Josephus was not concerned with discussing his views about prophecy or portraying himself as a biblical prophet, what was his concern when he was formulating his decision to surrender framed in terms of divinely inspired dreams? I will argue that Josephus' use of this motif is consistent with the general historiographical outlook (Greco-Roman and military-political) of the *War*.

That dreams are a leitmotif in Josephus' self-fashioning becomes evident from his autobiographical account in the *Life*, where a dream episode appears at the midpoint of the narrative (208–209). Prior to having this dream, Josephus struggles against various adversaries who obstruct his efforts to fulfil his mandate in Galilee satisfactorily. He is "distressed and troubled" by the attacks on his authority launched from the Jerusalem embassy. Yet a "marvellous sort of a dream" (θαυμάσιον οἶον ὄνειρον) received at night during this moment of personal crisis motivates Josephus to raise himself up (διανίστημι) and retain his command in Galilee (210–211).<sup>49</sup> After this divine revelation, he takes up his responsibilities with renewed energy, overcoming his enemies one by one.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, Josephus presents his most crucial decisions in the *War* and the *Life* as being motivated by divine dreams. The dream recounted in the *Life* explains why Josephus retains his command in Galilee, while the one described in the *War* explains why he abandoned his command. The dreams are simultaneously literary devices and explanatory tools, serving as pivotal points and marking the climax of Josephus' autobiographical narratives.

Strikingly, the autobiographical dream recounted in the *Life* has received far less scholarly scrutiny. It has not been associated with claims of prophecy on Josephus' part. The *Life* is an autobiographical work dedicated to Epaphroditus (430). We know very little about this man, but Josephus characterizes him as someone with a unique love of learning, especially that pertaining to experiences conveyed in history (*Ant.* 1.8–9). The fact that Epaphroditus was a common Greek name at the time, along with Josephus' subsequent comparison of Epaphroditus with King Ptolemy II and the translation of the Septuagint support the view that the entire *Antiquities-Life* project was primarily composed

48 Cf. Mason, "Audience and Meaning," 84.

49 As observed in Mason, *Life of Josephus*, 104 n. 927. On the entire episode as a ring composition in relation to the preceding, see 105 n. 933.

50 Cf. Mason, 104 n. 927.



for a non-Judean audience deeply interested in constitutional matters and philosophical questions (1.10–13).<sup>51</sup> This point raises a fundamental question: if dreams such as those described here would not have appealed to Greeks and Greek speakers, why would he have positioned them in the climax of a work emphatically dedicated to a Greek?

Similar reasoning can be applied to the *War*. Although this work does not contain a personal dedication, Josephus explicitly presents it as a work in Greek directed at Greek and Roman audiences (*J.W.* 1.3, 16). Why then would Josephus give his dreams such a prominent place in a history that explicitly targets such an audience if it would hardly have appealed to them?<sup>52</sup> The importance of this question is further underscored when considering that the *War* was composed much more carefully than the *Life*. The *War* is, according to Thackeray, “an excellent specimen of the Atticistic Greek of the first century” with a “choice of vocabulary, well-knit sentences and paragraphs, niceties in the use of particles and order of words” and “a uniformly classical style without slavish imitation of classical models.”<sup>53</sup> By contrast, the *Life* has been described as being “rattled off in great haste” with “disturbing carelessness.”<sup>54</sup> To make the same compositional blunder not once but twice—that is, to position his recalled nightly dreams as the pivotal point of the narrative in a work that primarily targets Greek and Roman audiences, as opposed to Judeans, and to whom this motif would not have had any appeal—resists any logic.

### 3 The Function of Josephus’ Dreams in the Context of the *Judean War*

At this point, we can move beyond Josephus’ corpus to examine how the motifs he employs in his texts would have resonated with his audience. If the dream episode is found to be a common topos within the Greco-Roman autobiographical and/or historiographical literature that Josephus could

51 See esp. Mason, “Introduction,” xvii–xx; “*Life* of Josephus,” xix–xxi.

52 Paraphrasing Ladouceur, “Masada,” 249, in reference to the suicide motif in the *War*. He also discusses the cave episode and Josephus’ speech on suicide. Ladouceur writes in response to Lindner’s observations that Josephus employs Septuagint language in the cave episode (*Geschichtsauffassung*, 59–61), he contends that “[i]t is at any rate questionable methodology to explicate only through the Septuagint words and phrases isolated from their context in the midst of an Atticizing text directed to a Greco-Roman audience, all the more when that context is preparatory to a central theme of late Stoicism, suicide.”

53 Thackeray, *Man and Historian*, 104.

54 Mason, *Life of Josephus*, xiii.

reasonably assume would be familiar to his audience in Rome, then positing a hidden agenda implicitly targeting Judean critics would be unnecessary. It will become apparent that dream reports and signs revealing the future more generally occupy an important place in Greco-Roman literature and serve a variety of didactic and rhetorical purposes. The language of pre-signification, signs, and seers—*προσημαίνω, σημεῖον, μάντις, μαντεία, μάντευμα*—would evidently have been familiar to those steeped in Greek literature and historiography.<sup>55</sup> More importantly, generals and statesmen actively seeking—or sometimes being overwhelmed by—divine guidance are frequently encountered, not least through oneirocritical media.<sup>56</sup> Situating Josephus' practice in this comparative context would help to explain his underlying aims and motivations.<sup>57</sup>

### 3.1 *Josephus and Xenophon*

Xenophon's work, which was highly influential in Roman times, and often cited as a model for rhetorical and stylistic considerations,<sup>58</sup> offers fascinating material for a comparative analysis. The *Cyropaedia* and the *Anabasis* are of particular value for such an analysis.<sup>59</sup>

55 The seer (*μάντις; haruspex* in Latin) was an important figure, trained to read signs (*σημεῖα*) about the future. On the Greek context see, especially Flower, *Seer in Greece*. On the Roman context, see, e.g., Wildfang and Isager, *Divination and Potents*; Santangelo, *Roman Republic*, 84–114 (on the *haruspex*).

56 Dreams are not always perceived as reliable, see, e.g., Cicero, *Div.* 2.119–147. For further analysis of ancient views on the truthfulness of dreams, see Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 123–228 (for *De divinatione*, see 180–84). Harris tends to emphasize scepticism of dreams among ancients. Niehoff, "Philo's Exposition," 20 draws attention to *De divinatione* as a response to the centrality of predictive dreams in Roman culture, especially in Stoic thinking. As is often the case, however, the specifically rhetorical outlook of the treatise makes it difficult to determine Cicero's actual viewpoints on dreams. For the view that Cicero's *De divinatione* is not an outright rejection of divination but offers various philosophical perspectives on the subject, see Schofield, "Cicero."

57 For a similar point on a different corpus, see Niehoff, "Philo's Exposition," 19–21; Niehoff, *Intellectual Biography*, 121–25. She explains the prominence of divine providence and predictive dreams in Philo's *Life of Joseph* in reference to the prominence of Stoic thinking in Imperial Rome. My argument is different in that it tries to foreground the importance of motifs of dreams and the divine in Greco-Roman autobiographical discourse.

58 See, e.g., Pernet, "réception antique"; Chiron, "L'abeille attique"; Bowie, "Xenophon's Influence"; Huitink and Rood, *Anabasis Book III*, 23–24, 33.

59 Xenophon and Josephus are rarely read alongside each other. Consequently, in addition to the specific purpose of this article, the following section draws attention to the possibility of reading Xenophon as a potentially important historiographical model for Josephus.

### 3.1.1 Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*

The *Cyropaedia* is a treatise praised by Cicero on various occasions for presenting an excellent paradigm of the just ruler (*Quint. frat.* 1.1.23; *Fam.* 9.25.1) and is considered more popular than Roman memoirs such as that produced by Marcus Aemilius Scaurus (*Brut.* 29.110–30.116; 35.132). In this work, Xenophon provides a highly philosophical and idealized picture of Cyrus the Great, portrayed as a paradigmatic leader, and his quest to achieve ultimate happiness and prosperity (εὐδαιμονία).<sup>60</sup> In *Cyr.* 1.6, Xenophon provides an extensive dialogue between Cyrus and his father Cambyses that concludes with Cambyses offering his son crucial advice (1.6.44–46). The major lesson Cyrus should draw from the past is that the gods should be heeded and that he should never discount any of their omens and auspices (1.6.44). Ignoring the gods could result in the destruction of a statesman or even a nation. For this reason, people should always seek out what the gods pre-signify (προσημαίνουσιν) because they know what is fated and what is not (1.6.46: ἃ τε χρῆ ποιεῖν καὶ ἃ οὐ χρῆ).<sup>61</sup>

Cyrus proves to be a good student. He frequently seeks counsel from the gods and performs sacrifices. Presumably as a result of his dedication, the gods bestow their favour upon Cyrus.<sup>62</sup> At the end of the work, Xenophon subtly invokes the dialogue between Cambyses and Cyrus. Correctly interpreting a dream (ὄναρ) that predicts his forthcoming death (8.7.2),<sup>63</sup> Cyrus thanks the gods for having signified to him (ἔσημαίνετε μοι) what he “should and should not have done” (8.7.3: ἃ τ’ ἐχρήν ποιεῖν καὶ ἃ οὐκ ἐχρήν). In his prayer, he asks them to grant his children the same prosperity (εὐδαιμονία) that they have given him. Thus, in Xenophon’s presentation of ideal leadership, piety is arguably the most important ingredient of a statesman’s success.<sup>64</sup>

60 The search for ideal leadership is something that permeates Xenophon’s entire corpus. Many of the qualities displayed by Cyrus the Great are also found in Xenophon’s descriptions of other leaders in the *Hellenica* and the *Anabasis*, not in the least Xenophon himself. See Flower, *Xenophon’s Anabasis*, 30. For an investigation of the *Cyropaedia* as a literary composition, especially emphasizing its Socratic background, see Gera, *Xenophon’s Cyropaedia*. For a recent overview of the portrayal of ideal leadership in the *Cyropaedia*, including further references, see Tamiolaki, “Tentative Answers.”

61 Elsewhere Xenophon relates that the gods frequently use dreams to communicate with men (e.g., *Eq. mag.* 9.9; *Symp.* 4.33).

62 E.g., Xenophon, *Cyr.* 1.5.14, 6.1; 2.4.18; 3.2.3, 3.21, 34; 6.2.40, 3.1.

63 Perhaps subverting Herodotus’ presentation of the same event (*Hist.* 1.209).

64 On Cyrus’ piety see esp. Gera, *Xenophon’s Cyropaedia*, 57–59. Xenophon himself shows the very same attitude as a character in the *Anabasis*. He is spurred to action on account of divinely inspired dreams (ὄναρ) twice (*Anab.* 3.1.11–13; 4.3.8–9, 13), receives various other signs from the gods (e.g., 3.2.9; 5.6.29), and makes sure to always consult the gods before he makes an important decision (e.g., 6.1.22–24). On the importance of the divine and gods in the *Anabasis* see Flower, *Xenophon’s Anabasis*, 203–16.

Josephus' claim that ignoring divine signs would inevitably lead to the destruction of statesmen and nations is grounded in a very similar reasoning to that deployed by Xenophon. The Judeans are waging war not just with the Romans but also with God (*J.W.* 2.539; 3.354; 4.104, 288–289, 323, 370, 573; 5.19, 343, 378). God punishes them for deliberately ignoring numerous signs forecasting the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans (1.28; 2.650; 4.386–388, 623–626; 5.409–411; 6.109–110, 288–315). Evidently, as Gray and others have pointed out, Josephus' views are in alignment with the biblical and Judean schema of sin and divine punishment. Such ideas may have been at the back of Josephus' mind when he wrote the *War*.<sup>65</sup> Yet, it is important to recognize how Josephus may have repurposed his Judean formation in accordance with the *topoi* encountered within the Greco-Roman political literature in a work targeting a Roman audience.

According to Josephus' presentation, virtuous leaders are always pious. He highlights the loyalty and affection of the high priests Ananus and Jesus towards Jerusalem, the temple, and worship (4.323–324). Especially illustrative of this presentation is Josephus' characterization of Herod the Great. In the *Antiquities*, Herod is portrayed as impious and a frequent violator of Judean customs (and hence of God's constitution). However, in the thematically arranged narrative of Herod's public career in the *War*, Josephus portrays the king as the embodiment of ideal leadership. He notes that Herod keeps his troops from plundering the temple in Jerusalem (*J.W.* 1.354). Herod offers a sacrifice to God before entering the battle (1.380). He attains the height of his prosperity (εὐδαιμονία), elevates his mind to its fullest extent, and directs his magnanimity towards works of piety (1.400: εὐσέβεια).<sup>66</sup> This correlation between prosperity and piety is a clearly recognizable pattern for Greeks and Romans, as illustrated in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*.

65 As is the common interpretation for this scheme in the *War*, see, e.g., Farmer, *Maccabees, Zealots, Josephus*, 20–21; Attridge, "Josephus and Works," 196–200; Bilde, *Jerusalem and Rome*, 75; Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 38; Rajak, *Historian and Society*, 92, 94–103; Davies, "Covenant and Pax," 86–88.

66 This changes in the second part of the narrative (*J.W.* 1.431–673), where Herod's mind turns into a pathological state as the result of his love for Mariamme. In the second part, he still shows signs of piety in a long speech to the people of Jerusalem and his sons (1.457–466), but the pathological state of his mind clouds his judgment and makes his use of rhetoric counterproductive. Herod's aim is to increase harmony (ὁμόνοια), but strife (στάσις) departs with the brothers (1.467). On the contrasting characterizations of Herod in the *War* and the *Antiquities*, see, e.g., Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod*; van Henten "Herod the Great." I discuss Herod's characterization in the *War* more elaborately in Glas, *Self-Characterization*, 12, 70–71, 72–73, 81, etc.

Not unexpectedly, similar patterns can be traced in Josephus' self-characterization.<sup>67</sup> His dreams, in which God *pre-signifies* (προσημαίνω) the impending disaster of the Judeans and the fate of the Roman emperors is just one notable example of how he searches for divine signs to inform his decision-making. At the onset of his autobiographical narrative, Josephus recognizes the importance of having a good conscience towards the divine and emphasizes that those who are “paltry on the inside” (τοὺς ... οἴκοθεν φάλλους) will not only face worldly enemies but will also face the wrath of God (*J.W.* 2.582). Moreover, Josephus reveals an understanding of God's intentions for the Judean people on various occasions. When his compatriots push him to commit suicide, Josephus is determined to escape because he “considered it a betrayal of God's commands if he would die before delivering his message” (3.361: προδοσίαν ἡγούμενος εἶναι τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ προσταγμάτων, εἰ προαποθάνοι τῆς διαγγελίας).<sup>68</sup> In the speech that follows, Josephus makes the *impiety* (3.369: ἀσέβεια) of suicide a central topic. In his grand speeches before the walls of Jerusalem, a key topic is the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the temple as the result of impiety and pollution (esp. 5.362–363, 399–402; 6.99–102, 108–109). He argues that the Judeans are not only waging war against the Romans but they are also waging war against God himself (5.376–378; cf. 2.582). In all of the references that he lists to prove his point, Josephus returns to the central issue of the sacredness of the temple, its geographical place, and cultic worship in the temple (5.380, 383, 385, 387, 389, 391–393, 394, 395–398, 403–406; 6.103–107). Reverence towards God is one of the key traits of Josephus' character that drive his words and actions.<sup>69</sup>

Moreover, Josephus even claims to be aided by the divine. In his speech delivered in front of the wall of Jerusalem, he states: “so it is madness to think that God appears to the just in the same way as to the unjust” (5.407: μανία δὴ τὸν θεὸν προσδοκᾶν ἐπὶ δικαίοις οἷος ἐπ' ἀδίκους ἐφάνη). As becomes especially apparent in the closing scenes of the Jotapata narrative, Josephus' own story

67 Shaye Cohen (*Galilee and Rome*, 96–97) examines some of Josephus' most important character traits in the *War* in view of Greco-Roman discourses of leadership. Reading Josephus' narrative alongside the works of Cicero and Onasander, he recognizes how the surrender story emphasizes Josephus' *felicitas* (*J.W.* 3.340–91).

68 Rather than τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ νόμων. The noun πρόσταγμα has a clear military and political connotation, in contrast to νόμος referring to concrete instructions or commands. Josephus usually uses the word to denote the commands of kings, governors, and generals; see, e.g., *J.W.* 1.234–235, 361, 474, 551. Cf. Ladouceur, “Masada,” 248–49.

69 In addition to acknowledging the importance of personal apology, Kelley, “Cosmopolitan Expression,” argues that Josephus sets up this prophetic perspective in the *War* in such a manner that it challenges the Roman narrative of the triumph of *Fortuna Romana* and the Roman gods over the Judean God.

in the *War* exemplifies the claim he makes in the aforementioned speech.<sup>70</sup> He eludes the Romans "with the help of some divine being" (3.341: δαίμονίῳ τινὶ συνεργίᾳ).<sup>71</sup> After his failed attempt to persuade his compatriots through his recourse to philosophy (3.361–382), Josephus eventually comes up with a risky plan to determine the order of the suicides, "trusting in God as his protector" (3.387: πιστεύων τῷ κηδεμόνι θεῷ). His plan eventually works, and the narrator adds that there may be two reasons for its success: "should one say by fortune or by God's providence" (3.391: εἴτε ὑπὸ τύχης χρηὴ λέγειν, εἴτε ὑπὸ θεοῦ προνοίας). In other words, Josephus' dreams (3.351–354) are among many examples that showcase his privileged treatment by the divine, presumably as a reward for his own reverence towards God.

### 3.1.2 Xenophon's *Anabasis*

The lesson that statesmen should always seek signs from the gods looms large in Xenophon's self-portrayal in the *Anabasis*. Xenophon is the only character in this work who is said to have undergone such experiences. This portrayal is particularly apparent in the passage that describes how Xenophon took up command of the Athenian section of the Greek army. He has a dream immediately before taking up this command.<sup>72</sup> The scene occurs at a moment of severe crisis for the Greeks, shortly after the murder of most of their generals by the Persian Tissaphernes.

The passage in question is presented below:

Now when despair had set in, he was distressed as well as everybody else and was unable to sleep; but, at length, getting a little sleep, he saw a dream (Ἐπεὶ δὲ ἀπορία ἦν, ἐλυπεῖτο μὲν σὺν τοῖς ἄλλοις καὶ οὐκ ἐδύνατο καθεῦδεν· μικρὸν δ' ὕπνου λαχὼν εἶδεν ὄναρ). It seemed to him that there was a clap of thunder and a bolt fell on his father's house, setting the whole house ablaze. He awoke at once in [a state of] great fear, and interpreted the dream in one way as an auspicious one (καὶ τὸ ὄναρ τῇ μὲν ἔκρινεν ἀγαθόν) because in the midst of hardships and perils, he seemed to behold a great light from Zeus. But looking at it another way, he was fearful as the dream came, as he thought, from Zeus the King, and the fire appeared to blaze all about, lest he might not be able to escape out of the King's country, but might be shut in on all sides by various difficulties. Now what it really means to have such a dream may be learnt from the

<sup>70</sup> With Cohen, *Galilee and Rome*, 96–97.

<sup>71</sup> Compare *J.W.* 3.144, where Vespasian hopes to prevent such a thing from happening.

<sup>72</sup> A similar episode occurs in Xenophon, *Anab.* 4.3.8.

events that followed the dream. ... Firstly, at the moment of his awaking, the thought occurred to him: “Why do I lie here? The night is wearing on, and at daybreak it is likely that the enemy will be upon us. And if we fall into the King’s hands, what is there to prevent our living to behold all the most grievous sights and to experience all the most dreadful sufferings, and then be put to death with insults? As for defending ourselves, however, no one is preparing or thinking of that, but we lie here just as if it were possible for us to enjoy our ease. What about myself, then? From what state am I expecting the general who is to perform these duties to come? And what age must I myself wait to attain? For surely, I shall never be any older, if this day I give myself up to the enemy.” After this, he got up and first of all summoned the captains of Proxenus (Ἐκ τούτου ἀνίσταται καὶ συγκαλεῖ τοὺς Προξένου πρῶτον λοχαγούς).

XENOPHON, *Anab.* 3.11–15

The dream signifies Xenophon’s crucial decision to take command of the Athenian army. It is presented as a pivotal point in the *Anabasis* and marks a turning point in Xenophon’s personal fate and that of the “Ten Thousand.” The entire army is in great despair (ἀπορία), and Xenophon himself is distressed (ἐλυπεῖτο). The dream spurs Xenophon into action. He believes that no one is making plans to defend the Greeks against the Persians. Evidently, this is a literary invention in the *Anabasis* to highlight the importance of the episode for the plot’s development, as not all of the Greek generals were killed by Tissaphernes. Sophanetus and Ceirisophus were still alive, so evidently some individuals must have been making plans.<sup>73</sup> However, by emphasizing this aspect, Xenophon creates the impression that he represents the only hope of the entire Greek army: *he rises up* (ἀνίσταται) when the Greek army needs him most.<sup>74</sup>

That Xenophon’s dream, and the *Anabasis* more generally, became paradigmatic is evident from the dream’s reception. Recent studies have shown that Xenophon’s work was often read during Roman times—perhaps not as often as that of Herodotus and Thucydides but considerably more often than the work of Polybius—for philosophical, stylistic, and historical purposes.<sup>75</sup> For example, in his discussion of illustrious historians worthy of emulation, Quintilian, who is Josephus’ contemporary, does not explicitly discuss

73 As noted in Flower, *Xenophon’s Anabasis*, 128.

74 Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 156–57 suggests sensibly that the primary function of this dream was to impress Xenophon’s readers.

75 Matijašić, *Shaping Canons*; Schippers, *Dionysius and Quintilian*.

Xenophon. However, he immediately adds that while he has not forgotten him, he will discuss Xenophon as a philosophical model (*Inst.* 10.1.75), thereby clearly implying that he *should* be included in any discussion of Greek historians.<sup>76</sup> In an essay on the composition of public speeches (*Dic. exercit.* 18.13–17), Dio Chrysostom explains that “Xenophon, and he alone of the ancients, can satisfy all the requirements of a man in public life”. He praises the *Anabasis* especially for its stylistic clarity and rhetorical virtuosity, which he explains are “most convincingly true to nature” (18.17) as a result of Xenophon’s ability to translate his personal experience into narrative speeches.<sup>77</sup> Clearly, Xenophon’s *Anabasis* was widely read in and around Imperial Rome.

In *De divinatione*, Cicero’s brother vigorously defends the reliability of Xenophon’s dream (1.25), although Cicero himself does not concur with his brother’s views. Similarly, Lucian refers to Xenophon’s dream to support his narrative describing own personal experience. He clearly assumes that the details of the dream account (“when he spoke on one occasion about how he dreamed that a bolt of lightning, striking his father’s house, set it afire, and all the rest of it”) would be common knowledge among his audience: “certainly you know it.” He claims that in Xenophon’s case, such an account presumably would have had a certain degree of usefulness, especially as he relates it at a time of war when a desperate state of affairs prevailed (*Somn.* 17).<sup>78</sup>

Given Xenophon’s influence and the place of the *Anabasis* in the historiographical canon during the Roman times, perhaps it is unsurprising that significant parallels exist between Xenophon’s dream in the *Anabasis* and Josephus’ dreams in the *War*.<sup>79</sup> Their narrative contexts and functions are remarkably similar. Both Xenophon and Josephus feature as important characters in their own histories, describing their situation “at a time of war and during a desperate state of affairs, with the enemy on every side,” to cite Lucian

76 On Xenophon’s place in Quintilian’s canon, see Matijašić, 143; Schippers, 144 esp. n. 85. Both emphasize Quintilian’s characterization of Xenophon as a philosopher. I read Quintilian’s explicit anticipation to his discussion of Xenophon as a philosopher as implying his indispensability as a historian. He simply did not want to repeat himself, but also wanted to avoid criticism by not mentioning Xenophon in the section dealing with historians. Both “professions” seem to be intrinsically connected, cf. Cicero, *De orat.* 2.58.

77 Cf. Huitink and Rood, *Anabasis Book III*, 21.

78 So also Huitink and Rood, 79–80.

79 The parallel is mentioned by Hirschberger, “Historiograph im Zwiespalt,” 159 n. 47. Compare also *Life* 208–209 with *Anab.* 3.1.11, 15: “he was distressed” (ἐλυπέϊτο) but after the dream “he rose up” (ἀνίσταται). Also, Josephus *seems* (ἔδοξε) to have seen someone speaking to him, whereas *it seemed* to Xenophon (ἔδοξεν αὐτῷ) that the house of his father was set on fire by a clap of thunder and a lightning bolt.



(*Somn.* 17). Both Xenophon and Josephus are immersed in deep personal crises entailing “a desperate state of affairs” when they receive/remember their dreams. The content of their dreams is ambiguous and requires interpretation. In both episodes, the reader gains direct access to the protagonists’ thoughts (in Josephus’ case, this comes in the form of a prayer), thereby sharing in the narrator’s superior knowledge. In both cases, the protagonists’ dreams motivate them to make controversial decisions that are ultimately not their own; rather, they are inspired by divine revelations. Thus, Xenophon, an Athenian, takes command of the Athenian section of the Greek army in an expedition that was initiated by Cyrus the Younger, a friend to Sparta and an enemy to Athens. Conversely, Josephus abandons his position as a general commissioned to fight the Romans and surrenders to the enemy. It is also noteworthy that Xenophon is not a professional diviner (on some occasions he even needs one); rather, he is a soldier and a general.<sup>80</sup> However, on this occasion, he showcases his ability to interpret (ἔκρινεν) the twofold meaning of his ambiguous dream.<sup>81</sup>

In light of the above thematic parallels, the similar narrative functions within autobiographical discourse, and the reception of Xenophon’s work in Roman times, it may very well be the case that Xenophon’s *Anabasis* was one of the works of literature that inspired Josephus to frame his surrender to the Romans as having been motivated by divinely inspired dreams. To corroborate this claim, it would be necessary to offer more extensive reflections on the parallels between both passages and the general reception of Xenophon’s work in the *War*. However, this scholarship is yet to be undertaken, and such reflections extend beyond the scope of this article. My argument here is more modest. From a rhetorical perspective, I would suggest that a comparative analysis of these two passages reveals that the use of dream motifs would have been a perfectly sensible choice for Josephus when writing a classicizing piece on military-political history emulating the works of notable Greek predecessors for a Roman audience.

### 3.2 *Perceptions of Dreams in Early Imperial Rome*

Xenophon’s dream is a famous but by no means exclusive example of the use of dreams in Greco-Roman autobiographical discourse. Romans exploited similar explanatory strategies when asserting and justifying political and

80 Cf. again Lucian, *Somn.* 17: “Surely he doesn’t take us for interpreters of dreams? No, my friend ... no, the story had a certain usefulness” (μη̄ ὄνειρων τινὰς ὑποκριτὰς ἡμᾶς ὑπείληφεν; οὐκ, ὦγαθέ ... ἀλλὰ τι καὶ χρήσιμον εἶχεν ἢ διήγησις).

81 See, e.g., Flower, *Xenophon’s Anabasis*, 204–5.

military authority in autobiographical writing.<sup>82</sup> There are various accounts of Roman statesmen and generals ignoring divine warnings that usually end in great disasters. The biographical tradition surrounding the life of Caesar, whose rare references to the gods in his memoirs are perhaps not coincidental, is a point in case. Suetonius notes that Caesar was utterly indifferent to the signs of the gods and even manipulated them willingly (*Jul.* 59). Omens and dreams augured Julius Caesar's death on the Ides of March. His decision to ignore them led to his death.<sup>83</sup> It was commonly agreed among most ancient writers that Caesar was the agent of his own destruction, paying dearly for his impiety.

Seven of the twenty-three surviving fragments of Sulla's work relate to the divine.<sup>84</sup> Plutarch states that Sulla highlighted aspects of fortune and divine intervention to such an extent when fashioning his public persona that his reputation based on his own virtues was eclipsed (*Sull.* 6.5).<sup>85</sup> He notes how Sulla's memoirs open with a statement that the most reliable advice for any statesman is "that which the divine orders him at night" (6.6).<sup>86</sup> The literary tradition relating to Sulla—most likely based on Sulla's memoirs—is pervaded by miraculous dreams through which Sulla foresees his imminent future and receives divine guidance.<sup>87</sup>

82 See, e.g., Misch, *Autobiography*, 244–48, 269–71; Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 231–40; Potter, *Prophets and Emperors*, 146–82. More recently Santangelo, *Roman Republic*, 233–66 (specifically focusing on the rise of the monarchy). For further references, see Ripat, "Roman Omens," 167 n. 1 and 2). Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 186–202 offers an extensive discussion of responses to dreams in different classes of society in early Imperial Rome. In relation to Josephus, see Cohen, *Galilee and Rome*, 109; Gnuse, *Dream Reports*, 130; Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 210–11.

83 See, e.g., Cicero, *Div.* 1.119; Velleius Paterculus, *Hist. Rom.* 2.57.2; Valerius Maximus, *Fact.* 1.7.2; Plutarch, *Caes.* 63; Suetonius, *Jul.* 77.4, 81.4–7; Appian, *Bell. civ.* 2.116; Cassius Dio, *Hist. Rom.* 44.17–18. For further analysis of divine signs in the Caesar tradition, including references to the texts mentioned above, see Santangelo, *Roman Republic*, 236–40. On the literary traditions related to portents predicting Caesar's death, see especially Ripat, "Roman Omens," 167–73.

84 Plutarch, *Mar.* 26.3; *Sull.* 6.4–7, 17.1–2, 19.5, 27.3–6; Plutarch, *An seni* 786E; Cicero, *Div.* 1.72.

85 In reference to this, elsewhere in his corpus Plutarch recommends the use of references to fortune and the divine to alleviate self-praise more explicitly (*De laude* 542E; *Praec. ger. rei publ.* 816D–E). Quintilian makes a similar point in his *Institutio oratoria* (11.22–24). Thus, in addition to having an important characterizing function, Josephus' use of a divinely inspired dream may serve an important rhetorical function. For Josephus' attempt to rhetorically moderate his self-praise in the *War*, see Glas, *Self-Characterization*, chs. 4–5.

86 Cornell, *Roman Historians*, F13. See for further discussion Santangelo, *Roman Republic*, 70–71.

87 Sulla made a special case of being *Felix*. For an extensive discussion of the Sulla tradition, see Noble, *Sulla and Gods*.

In early Imperial Rome, the upper classes were generally attentive to dreams and stories about dreams, even if they rarely acted on them.<sup>88</sup> Pliny the Elder notes divided opinions on the reliability of dreams:

Here an important topic invites us and one fully supplied with arguments on both sides—whether there are certain cases of foreknowledge present in the mind during repose, and what causes them, or whether it is a matter of chance like most things. If the question be argued by instances, these would doubtless be found to be equal on both sides. It is practically agreed that dreams occurring directly after drinking wine and eating food, and those that come in dozing off to sleep a second time, are false; but sleep is really nothing but the retirement of the mind into its innermost self.

PLINY THE ELDER, *Nat.* 10.211

Pliny does not express his personal opinion on the subject, but he allows for the possibility of gaining foreknowledge through nightly dreams. This position is also reflected in the works of contemporary Greek intellectuals. For instance, in a speech probably composed and delivered to an audience in Alexandria, Josephus' contemporary, Dio Chrysostom, claims that his choice to speak in the fashion that he does is informed "by the will of some deity." He adds that this choice should not be questioned by the people of Alexandria because the god Serapis is displaying his power to them "through almost daily oracles and dreams" (*Alex.* 32.12).<sup>89</sup> In addition to his frequent use of dream stories in the *Lives*, in *De defectu oraculorum*, Plutarch lets his brother Lamprias, the main speaker in the dialogue, explain that although they tend to be unclear, truth-telling dreams are the highest and most reliable form of divination, (*Def. orac.* 431E–33A, 437F).<sup>90</sup> Clearly, dreams are not always believed to be true and are sometimes openly regarded with suspicion. For example, there is reason to regard highly rhetorical speeches of the kind written by Dio Chrysostom with suspicion, and it is perfectly plausible that Plutarch's personal opinion was not

88 This subject has been investigated extensively in Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 186–202 (on upper class attitudes, see 190–95). Harris separates the period until c. 100 CE from the second century and later to establish his hypothesis that practices and beliefs related to dreams underwent a detectable change in the second century.

89 Harris, 186. The dating of this speech (Flavian era, in the 70s) is discussed in Jones, *Dio Chrysostom*, 134. See differently, Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 206, 428–29, who favors a date in the Trajanic period.

90 Plutarch's position in relation to dreams is complex and often discussed, see, e.g., Harris, 193–94; Brenk, "Dreams of Plutarch's *Lives*"; Roig Lanzilotta, *Brenk*, 103–9.

identical to that ascribed to Lamprias in *De defectu oraculorum*. However, they evidently had a certain appeal as a topos within the literature produced in and around Rome in the first century.

Hence, it should come as no surprise that Roman emperors often used dreams (real or imagined) for propagandistic purposes.<sup>91</sup> For example, Augustus appears to have created a public persona similar to that of Sulla.<sup>92</sup> According to the literary tradition, the advent of the second triumvirate occurred hand in hand with a series of divine prodigies and omens that signified the end of the Republic and Octavian's rise to power (e.g., Dio, *Hist. Rom.* 45.17; 53.20.1).<sup>93</sup> Suetonius notes Augustus' high level of sensitivity to his own dreams (*somnia*) and those of others. In the subsequent passage he narrates a story, entailing a dream received from Jupiter Capitolinus that is presumably derived from Augustus' memoirs (*Div. Aug.* 91.1–2; cf. Dio, *Hist. Rom.* 54.4.4). Thus, dreams probably constituted a significant component of Augustus' self-fashioning in his autobiographical writings.<sup>94</sup>

Various emperors followed in Augustus' wake.<sup>95</sup> For my purpose, the traditions about Vespasian's rise to imperial power are most illustrative.<sup>96</sup> It appears that Vespasian created a public notion of his rule being the result of a divine consensus. This strategy would have served him well as propaganda legitimizing his newly established rule.<sup>97</sup> Suetonius refers to no less than eleven divine portents (*Vesp.* 5.1–7), among which is a dream (*somnium*) received by Vespasian himself that forecasts his success (5.5). Remarkably, Suetonius and Cassius Dio also mention that the highborn prisoner Josephus predicted both Vespasian's rule and his own release (Suetonius, *Vesp.* 5.6; Cassius Dio, *Hist. Rom.* 65.1.4).<sup>98</sup>

91 Harris, 188–90.

92 On dreams and the supernatural in Augustus memoirs, see further Weber, *Kaiser*, 147–60, 322–27, 372–79; Wiseman, "Supernatural."

93 See for further discussion Santangelo, *Roman Republic*, 240–46.

94 Wiseman, "Supernatural"; cf. Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 188–89, emphasizing the propagandistic purposes of Augustus' references to dreams.

95 See also Potter, *Prophets and Emperors*, 146. In relation to Josephus: Den Hollander, *Hostage to Historian*, 96–97.

96 For an overview and discussion see Lattimore, "Portents and Prophecies"; Morgan, "Vespasian and Omens"; Levick, *Vespasian*, 67–69.

97 See, e.g., Scott, *Imperial Cult*, 1–20; Nicol, *Vespasian*, 96; Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 190. More recently Den Hollander, *Hostage to Historian*, 97–98; Davies, *Representing Dynasty*, 79–85.

98 For Josephus' reception among Romans see also Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.101; 5.1–2, 10–13. For a brief discussion, see, e.g., Mason, "Roman Historian," 90.

Josephus himself demonstrates awareness that his prediction about Vespasian is one of many and that his fate is closely intertwined with the rise of the Flavian house.<sup>99</sup> His sudden moment of inspiration after recalling his nightly dreams is only the first indication of his foreknowledge about “the fate of the Roman monarchs” (*J.W.* 3.351). He elaborates on this motif in detail in the remainder of the narrative. Immediately after his capture, Josephus declares to Vespasian that he will be emperor, followed by his son (3.402). The narrator informs the audience that Vespasian slowly begins to trust Josephus’ prediction, when “other signs foreshadowed imperial powers” (3.404: τὰ σκήπτρα δι’ ἑτέρων σημείων προδεικνύντος). In *J.W.* 4, Vespasian realizes that his fortune and favourable circumstances must be guided by “divine providence” (δαίμονιου προνοίας) and that “some righteous destiny” (δικαία τις εἰμαρμένη) has given him power over the world. He recalls “numerous signs from everywhere that had foreshadowed his rule, especially the voice of Josephus” (4.623). Thus, Josephus emphasizes that his prediction is part of a broader current of divine portents revolving around Vespasian’s rise to the Principate, although he singles out his own as the most important one.<sup>100</sup>

#### 4 Implications and Conclusions

In light of the previous discussion, it is difficult to see how the language and motifs employed by Josephus to fashion his own surrender to the Romans and make predictions about the Flavians characterize him as a biblical prophet or as exclusively designed to counter Judean accusations of cowardice and treachery. I do not dispute the view that Judeans unfamiliar with Greek traditions—or Judeans familiar with Judean and Greek traditions—might have understood parts of Josephus’ narrative in terms of biblical prophecy. However, examining what Josephus intended to communicate, that is, how he characterizes himself in view of his audience and in the context of a military-political history imbued with classicizing features leads to a different interpretation.

The following arguments support this interpretation. First, Josephus makes no systematic attempt to outline his views about Judean prophecy in the *War*. The closest parallel in the *War* is the episode describing Herod’s predictive dreams about the death of his brother Joseph. To suggest that Josephus’ main concern in *J.W.* 3.351–354 was to present himself as a prophet is therefore

99 As Josephus himself attempts to explain as well. See for further discussion Den Hollander, *Hostage to Historian*, 91–105; Davies, *Representing Dynasty*, 153–64.

100 See also Den Hollander, 96–97; Hartog, “Writing with Prophecs.”

implausible. Second, Josephus' inclusion of accounts of his dreams in the *War* and the *Life* can hardly be coincidental in view of his identified audience for both compositions. These accounts of his dreams are evidently deliberate, given that Josephus presents them both as compositional turning points, marking the most important decisions of his career. Third, a comparison with Xenophon's works and a cursory survey of dream episodes in the Roman memoir tradition also renders the hypothesis that Josephus specifically designed the passage to address a Judean audience untenable. My analysis of the available evidence provides solid arguments that suggest otherwise. The general message that to be successful, statesmen and generals should be sensitive to divine portents would have been a familiar one to Greeks and Romans. Those steeped in Greco-Roman political-moralizing literature would have frequently encountered similar dream episodes.

Moreover, Josephus connects his own fate with the rise of the Flavian dynasty through his dreams. He presents his own prediction to Vespasian as one among many portents. His prediction is what preserves his memory among Romans like Suetonius and Greeks like Cassius Dio, implying an intrinsic interest in the origin of the prediction, as explicitly stated by Josephus in *J.W.* 3.351–354.

In view of these arguments, I propose an interpretation that fits with the broader literary context. Briefly, as a virtuous statesman and general, Josephus would not have had the option of deliberately ignoring a clearly divine sign such as dreams. He had already realized that it would be impossible to defeat the Romans in battle prior to remembering his nightly dreams in the cave. The dreams signified the insight that he was not just waging war against the Romans but also against God. Ignoring this insight would inevitably have caused not only personal misfortune but also collective disaster for his people. As a general and statesman, Josephus had the responsibility of making decisions that would ultimately serve the Judean people. Waging war not only against the Romans but also against God (as the Judean tyrants had done) would have served neither Josephus, personally, nor the Judeans. God's messages to his people did have the potential to prevent the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, if only Judeans—like Josephus and other prominent Judeans—recognized and interpreted them for what they were.

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