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Prophecy in Roman Judaea: Did Josephus Report the Failure of an 'Exact Succession of the Prophets' (*Against Apion* 1.41)?

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Abstract

In *Ag. Ap.* 1.41, after stressing that the Jewish holy books are rightly trusted because only prophets wrote them, Josephus remarks that Judaeans do not trust later writings in the same way. The reason he gives is usually translated as “the failure of the exact succession of the prophets.” Whereas older scholarship played down this reason to insist on the absence of prophecy in post-biblical Judaism, the prevailing view today holds that Josephus meant only to qualify later prophecy, not to exclude it. This essay broaches the more basic question of what an ἀκριβὴς διαδοχή means. Arguing that an exact diachronic succession of prophets makes little sense, it offers two proposals that better suit Josephus' argument. It further contends that Josephus is talking about the ancient Judaeian past, the subject of this work, not about the work of later historians including himself. He distinguishes sharply between prophecy and historical inquiry.

Keywords

Flavius Josephus – prophecy – canon – Scripture – Jewish historiography – Greek historiography – Jewish-Greek relations – Jewish-Christian relations

How precise is your ancestral pedigree? Have you stood in an accurate queue? Does your family have a correct sequence? Such questions create koan-like puzzlement because the adjective does not match the noun. We posit accuracy of things that are measurable against known quantities: clocks, gauges, and instruments. To speak of an accurate pony, poem, or pedigree is a category mistake. Yet when it comes to a famous line in Josephus, which mentions the

absence of τὴν τῶν προφητῶν ἀκριβῆ διαδοχὴν after the Persian ruler Artaxerxes (*Ag. Ap.* 1.41), we render it something like “the accurate/precise succession of the prophets” without troubling much about what an accurate succession could mean or, whatever it means, how it helps Josephus’ argument. This is one of many passages that we have scraped off Josephus’ work to mix into a batter of ingredients from elsewhere, to bake a sweet theological cake that has little to do with his more pungent creations.

Given the importance of this passage for research in ancient Judaism, Josephus, prophecy, canon formation, and the background to the New Testament, I propose to take another look at *Ag. Ap.* 1.41. Does an “exact succession of prophets” make sense, by itself or in Josephus’ context? Does the context not predispose readers to expect something else, which we miss from preoccupation with “prophecy in Second Temple Judaism”? Might alternative translations yield a sense that would better suit Josephus’ argument? We shall explore some possibilities after a review of the standard interpretations, their problems, suggestive parallels, and the context in *Ag. Ap.* 1.

1 Interpretative Tendencies

Two broad tendencies have characterised the interpretation of *Ag. Ap.* 1.41. The more old-fashioned one downplays the adjective in τὴν ... ἀκριβῆ διαδοχὴν. In this view, Josephus’ point is about the *absence of prophets* in his time. There was a line of them until Artaxerxes. Then they stopped. Josephus does not explain the rocky road that led to their cessation or “failure,” but obviously something went wrong, the line became insecure, and anyway they belong to Judaea’s distant past. One merit of this as an interpretation of Josephus is that its simplicity fits the bold rhetoric of this polemical essay. Unlike his historical narratives, which are full of meanderings, ironic possibilities, and evocations, the *Against Apion* is an essay with a clear thesis, frequently recapitulated and redundantly supported.¹ If his broad gestures are clear, the odd puzzling phrase is perhaps not that important.

The no-more-prophecy reading might have claimed support, though it did not initially, from Josephus’ use of language elsewhere. For although he shows a strong interest in προφητ- words, using them some 386 times in the corpus, or 402 if we include “false prophet” (ψευδοπροφήτης), a distribution graph would make a singular impression. Few hits appear outside *Ant.* 1–11, which paraphrases the Bible and speaks often of biblical-era prophets or their fakes,

1 Gruen, “Greeks and Jews”; Barclay, *Against Apion*, xvii–xxii.

until the Persian period and King Artaxerxes—Josephus’ identification of the Ahasuerus of Esther (*Ant.* 11.300).² The 356 occurrences of προφητ- cognates in *Ant.* 1-11 (370 including ψευδοπροφήτης) overwhelm the 10 in *Ant.* 12-20, 12 in *War* (14 including ψευδοπροφήτης), 8 in the *Against Apion*, and 0 in Josephus’ *Life*. The few stray passages outside *Ant.* 1-11 confirm the biblical-era usage, for they also refer to ancient figures or, occasionally, to ridiculous would-be prophets of Josephus’ time. The sole exception, and all the more impressive for that, is the Hasmonean John Hyrcanus in the late second century BCE, in whom Josephus recognised the gift of prophecy and extraordinary favour with God (*War* 1.68-69; *Ant.* 13.299). Although Josephus speaks less often of oracles (λόγια, χρησμοί), all twelve occurrences of those terms also hail from the distant past. Judean χρησμοί come from the holy books and ancient prophets.³ It also seems telling that he consistently distinguishes prophets from seers (μάντις; cf. *Ant.* 6.327), in a way that non-Judean authors do not.⁴ For him, the latter are present among all peoples in all times.⁵ He is something of a μάντις himself, though no prophet (*War* 4.625). The only passage in which Josephus unites the two categories is where King Saul “expelled from the land the seers (μάντις), oracular ventriloquists, and all practitioners of such an art, not including the prophets (ἔξω τῶν προφητῶν)” (*Ant.* 6.327). Even without *Ag. Ap.* 1.41, therefore, audiences familiar with Josephus’ works might have assumed that his “prophets” were a special breed belonging exclusively to the Judeans’ ancient past.

The no-more-prophets interpretation of *Ag. Ap.* 1.41 commended itself to scholars, however, not from a concern with Josephus’ diction, which was rarely studied compositionally, but because this view intersected with statements scavenged from other corpora across a millennium. From around 100 BCE, 1 Maccabees assumes the long absence of prophets, with some openness to their future reappearance:

They took down the altar [polluted by Antiochus IV] and stored its stones in the hill of the house [i.e., temple], in an appropriate place, until a prophet should come to give an answer concerning them (μέχρι τοῦ παραγεννηθῆναι προφήτην τοῦ ἀποκριθῆναι περὶ αὐτῶν).

1 MACC 4:46

2 Cf. Blenkinsopp, “Prophecy and Priesthood”; Feldman, “Prophets and Prophecy.”

3 λόγια: *War* 6.311, 313; *Ant.* 3.163, 217; 8.93. χρησμοί: *War* 4.386; 6.109, 312; *Ant.* 2.241; 9.289; *Ag. Ap.* 1.307, 312.

4 Aeschylus, *Eum.* 18-19; Euripides, *Orest.* 363-364; Plato, *Charm.* 173C; *Tim.* 71E-72B (distinguishing μάντις, as one overcome by inspiration, visions, dreams, from προφήτης as expert interpreter—while conceding that many confuse the two names); Pollux, *Onom.* 1.19.

5 E.g., *War* 1.79-80, 212; *Ant.* 13.312-313; 17.121, 345; 18.217, 223.

After the death of Judas ... there was enormous distress in Israel, of a kind that had not been since the day when a prophet did not appear among them (καὶ ἐγένετο θλίψις μεγάλη ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ, ἥτις οὐκ ἐγένετο ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας οὐκ ὤφθη προφήτης αὐτοῖς).

1 MACC 9:27

The Judaeans and the priests resolved that Simon should be their leader and high priest in perpetuity—until a trustworthy prophet should arise (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς εὐδόκησαν τοῦ εἶναι αὐτῶν Σιμωνα ἡγούμενον καὶ ἀρχιερέα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἕως τοῦ ἀναστῆναι προφήτην πιστόν).

1 MACC 14:41

About two centuries later, after the second temple's destruction in 70 CE, though notionally after the first destruction from exile, the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch laments the loss of prophets along with the homeland:

Know that our fathers in former times and former generations had helpers: righteous prophets and holy men. But we were also in our country, and ... they intervened for us with him who has created us since they trusted in their works. And the Mighty One heard them and purged us from our sins. But now, the righteous have been assembled, and the prophets are sleeping. Also we have left our land, ... and we have nothing now apart from the Mighty One and his Law.

2 BAR. 85:1-3⁶

A century or two after that, m. Avot 1:1 places the prophets early in the line of transmission of the oral Torah from Sinai. They passed it on to the “men of the great synagogue” and the sages who followed in turn, the prophets apparently belonging to a time past. Likewise, the Tosefta has a baraita, “since the deaths of the last prophets (נביאים אחרונים), Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the Holy Spirit ceased in Israel (פסקה רוח הקודש מישראל), but nevertheless they were able to hear a *bat qol* [daughter / echo of divine voice]” (t. Soṭah 13:3),⁷ which the Babylonian Talmud recalls a few times (b. Yoma 9b; b. Soṭah 48b; b. Sanh. 11a).

That ancient Judaeans agreed about the cessation of prophecy under Persian rule was therefore, in simpler times, the standard view among scholars. It appears in such classics as George F. Moore's *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* and Ephraim Urbach's *The Sages*, which include

6 Translation in Klijn, “2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch,” 651.

7 Text and Spanish translation in Ruiz Morell and Salvatierra Ossorio, *Nashim*, 365.

Josephus' *Ag. Ap.* 1.41 as crucial support.⁸ Notice Urbach's remark that in post-prophetic times,

There may be visionaries and seers, men who foretell future events and work miracles and wonders—and, in truth, we have seen that there were many such in the days of the Second Temple and also in the period of the Tannaim and Amoraim, even in their very own circles—but they *do not appear as prophets* and messengers of God.⁹

In those simpler times, before Jewish (or early Christian) studies were fully integrated into university programmes in religious studies or ancient history, researchers tended to be recognisable as either Jewish (secular, Conservative, Orthodox or Reform) or Christian (Catholic, Protestant, liberal, etc.), and the basic idea was shared by most. The theological character of a notion that prophecy had departed from Judaism, however, left it vulnerable to Christian co-optation—a skewing that Moore and Urbach were already trying to correct. Mainstream Christian theology had always been supersessionist, appropriating the biblical heritage on the premise that Jews had strayed from their calling.¹⁰ Julius Wellhausen's radical revision of Israel's history (ca. 1870s) seemed to furnish a scientific foundation for such appropriation. He argued that prophecy belonged to Israel's most ancient and vital past. Thereafter, Jewish life gradually degenerated into barren legalism, first with the post-exilic formulation of Moses' laws and eventually with the loss of all spiritual impulses among the Pharisees and their rabbinic successors, whom the theologians viewed as pedantic pettifoggers.¹¹ Influential scholars who found this "late" Judaism deprived of spirit, charisma, and prophecy included Ferdinand Weber,¹² Hermann Gunkel,¹³ Wilhelm Bousset,¹⁴ and Hermann L. Strack and

8 Moore, *Judaism*, 1:237–41, 3:9, 12; Urbach, *Sages*, 564–71.

9 Urbach, *Sages*, 566.

10 Already Paul in Gal 3–4; Rom 9–11; with Matthew, Luke–Acts, and Hebrews in various ways; Barnabas; Tertullian, *Apol.* 21.

11 See Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*. Wellhausen's article "Israel" makes pithy claims: Pharisees and rabbis widened the "domain of law" to snuff out individual conscience under an "iron system" of law, to "shape everything in accordance with hard and fast rules" with the "codification of juristic and ritual tradition."

12 Weber, *Altsynagogalen palästinischen Theologie*, already 1–5 on *Nomokratie*: the saving spirit of prophecy was alien to Judaism in this period (5).

13 Gunkel, *Holy Spirit*, 69: John the Baptist was "the first since the Persian era to appear in Judea as a prophet and therefore in possession of the Spirit."

14 Bousset, *Religion des Judentums*, 290: the post-Maccabean time saw a loss of energy and individualism, under the weight of a systemic law, as a future Prophet was awaited. For a fuller study and other examples, see Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 109–16.

Paul Billerbeck.¹⁵ A relatively recent influencer, towards the end of that succession, was Joachim Jeremias. He grounded his 1971 study of Jesus' proclamation in the claim that John the Baptist and Jesus represented the "return of the quenched spirit," which had been absent for long centuries. Citing Billerbeck for rabbinic references, Jeremias attributed to the "orthodox Judaism" of Jesus' time this view:

In the time of the patriarchs, all pious and upright men had the spirit of God. When Israel committed sin with the golden calf, God limited the spirit to chosen men, prophets, high priests and kings. With the death of the last writing prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, *the spirit was quenched because of the sin of Israel*. After that time, it was believed, God still spoke only through the "echo of his voice" (*bat qōl* = echo), a *poor substitute*.... The idea of the quenching of the spirit is an expression of the consciousness that the *present time is alienated from God*. Time without the spirit is time *under judgment*. *God is silent*.... There is abundant evidence of the degree to which *people longed for the coming of the spirit*.¹⁶

According to Jeremias, Jesus' break with Judaism is clear from his self-identification as a prophet, after the new opening with John the Baptist ("a prophet and more than a prophet," Matt 11:19). This also explains Jesus' familiar address to God (*abba*) and authoritative use of *amen* for his own statements. He inaugurates a new age of the Holy Spirit's return, which produces Christian prophets in abundance.¹⁷

I said that this view theologises, or more precisely de-historicises, the passages above concerning the end of prophecy. Any patient consideration of them in their contexts would show that they do not convey a sense of desertion or alienation. With the possible exception of 2 Baruch, which overtly expresses loss—because of the temple's recent destruction and the community's removal from the homeland—but which cannot be generalised for the Second Temple period, these passages furnish a two-sided *validation*: first of prophet-written Scripture, which is a complete revelation safe and secure; second, of its interpreters, whose task is not to create Scripture, as though they were prophets, but to use the tools that God has given them in God's abundant care for humanity. The two-sided validation is captured by the chronicle Seder Olam Rabbah, which describes God's dealings from creation to the Bar Kokhba

15 Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, e.g., 1:125-29.

16 Jeremias, *Proclamation of Jesus*, 80-82. Emphasis added except for "the spirit was quenched."

17 1 Cor 11:4; 12:10, 28; 14:1-39; Matt 7:22; 10:41; 13:57; 21:11, 26, 46; 23:34.

revolt. Interpreting the horn of Dan 8, it explains: “This is Alexander from Macedon, who ruled twelve years. *Until then there were the prophets, prophesying through the Holy Spirit* (עד כאן היו הנביאים מתנבאים ברוח הקודש) (ושמע דברי חכמים),’ as it is said (Prov 22:18-19)” (S. Olam Rab. 30).¹⁸ There used to be prophets, who guaranteed the divine origins of Scripture; now there are sages, whom God guides in interpretation. As Philo says, “interpretation and prophecy are different things” (*Moses* 2.191).

That the absence of prophets does not signal the remoteness of God, in ancient Judaeon conceptions generally, is clear in other rabbinic texts, in 1 Maccabees, and in Josephus. In 1909, Solomon Schechter declared it the most bizarre of the “many strange statements” that Jewish scholars would hear from Christian theologians, that the rabbis considered God remote.¹⁹ He was followed by Moore and Urbach in showing the sense of divine presence (e.g., in the *shekhinah*), guidance (e.g., in the *bat qol*), and providence that pervades rabbinic literature.²⁰ No reader of 1 Maccabees could miss the point that the sons of Mattathias appear there as the chosen instruments of a God deeply involved in the life of his people.²¹ The logical tension in the line about Simon’s appointment “in perpetuity—until a trustworthy prophet should arise” (14:41)—cannot be an expression of longing for the future (“we cannot wait for a real prophet!”) but has more of the opposite sense: to legitimate Simon as leader. Simon would defer to a prophet from God, of course, but none is on the horizon. Simon *is* God’s chosen. It is telling that Josephus drops the pious reservations in his otherwise close paraphrase of 1 Maccabees, presumably because a future prophet would be a puzzle for his audiences in Rome, two centuries after the Hasmoneans, and might complicate his assignment of prophets to the distant past (below). Certainly, no reader of Josephus’ *Against Apion* could imagine that he holds the absence of prophets to be a problem or “failure”—as Thackeray’s Loeb translation tendentiously renders τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι—or a cause of “nostalgia” (*Ag. Ap.* 1.41).²² Josephus had made God’s providential care for humanity the *Leitmotif* of his major work, which showed the outworking of

18 Text from Guggenheimer, *Seder Olam*, 259-60. The translation is mine.

19 Schechter, *Rabbinic Theology*, 21.

20 Moore, *Judaism*, 1:347-442; Urbach, *Sages*, 37-96.

21 1 Macc 2:1-41, 65-70; 3:1-9; 5:61-62 with, e.g., Goldstein, *1 Maccabees*, 4-13.

22 Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 8, 25, 34, 142, 167, 237: *Ag. Ap.* 1.41 is not about a rigid or absolute “dogma” about prophetic succession, but expresses “a vague nostalgia” for the prophetic past.

divine judgement in human history and programmatically rejected Epicurean notions of God's remoteness (*Ant.* 1.14, 20; 10.277-279).²³

Pining for Judaea's prophets would, more specifically, have undermined Josephus' point in *Ag. Ap.* 1.41, which is to *celebrate* the fact that prophets were active long before the Greek historians, and so Judaeans have uniquely perfect ancient records from these long-gone sources, while Greeks continue to concoct half-baked histories, and disagree about what happened long ago (below). The atmosphere is markedly different from that in Plutarch's *On the Obsolescence of Oracles* (411E-415D), where the reported demise of oracular sites in Hellas is deemed a drought, a strange silence, and desolation. Josephus' point is different.

The main problem with interpreting *Ag. Ap.* 1.41 such that it agrees with sayings from far and wide is that Josephus does not say there *were no more prophets* or prophetic writings after Artaxerxes. He mentions the absence of an ἀκριβὴς διαδοχή of the prophets, whatever that means. The second interpretative stream, which has more or less completely supplanted the first, more than makes up for its neglect of this clause. Informed by newer literary-historical contexts in research and changing methodological instincts, proponents of the newer view take a nearly opposite meaning from Josephus' words. It is not that *prophets* disappeared, but only their "exact succession." Prophets remained alive and well, and might even have been ubiquitous, in the first century.

How could such a radically different view gain traction? We might imagine some abstract causes. For example, the appalling role that traditional Christian views—not least that of barren legalism without moral vibrancy—played in abetting virulent forms of anti-Semitism, produced a gradual but eventually massive rethink of early Jewish-Christian relations in the decades after World War II. Instead of reflexively defining early Christianity *over against* Judaism, as Christian scholarship from 1850 to 1950 nearly always had, scholars began to minimise differences and locate Christian origins largely or wholly within an expansively diverse "Judaism." This much is clear.²⁴ It helps the blending process if one can imagine that Christians and (other) Jews all knew prophets. Second, one cannot deny the effects of post-modern thought, which rejects the notion of a stable centre or essential reality as an illusion created by those with the power to write narratives. Who is to say, after all, who *is* or is not a

23 E.g., Attridge, *Interpretation of Biblical History*, 67-108.

24 I mention as one small example the incorporation of even Paul—traditionally seen from both Jewish and Christian sides as the decisive break with Judaism—"within Judaism" by the "New Perspective" and still more radical currents of research: cf. the prominent scholars in Nanos and Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism*.

prophet? Why can't *anyone* claim a direct encounter with God—today or in antiquity? If people thought they were prophets, even if Josephus or the rabbis did not think so, then there were prophets. The new openness to small-scale constructed worlds and interest in peripheries and difference lead us all, whether or not we identify with post-modernism philosophically, to challenge the old assumed centres and orthodoxies.

Such an evolving outlook would have made slower progress, however, without new material to support it. The most significant development here was the discovery and gradual publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the post-war years. Already in 1953, when few of these texts were known, N. Wieder argued that passages in the Damascus Document—known since the 1920s in Cairo Genizah fragments—that refer to the “Law-interpreter” (דורש התורה) viewed him as the prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15) who was expected to precede the Messiah.²⁵ This was still a fairly conservative view—Wieder's Qumran prophet was solitary and eschatological, matching Christian language about the Baptist and Jesus—but the Scrolls would spawn a comprehensive re-evaluation of ancient prophecy and canon. On the one hand, they contain hundreds of references to spirit—human, evil, and divine—and frequently “holy spirit” as active in community life.²⁶ On the other hand, scholars have often inferred from the textual pluriformity, variety of textual structures (e.g., Ps 151), and attribution of authority to non-biblical texts such as 1 Enoch and Jubilees, evidenced in the Qumran finds, and all the more as the Qumran library is considered not sectarian but representative of significant Jewish thought, that ancient Judaeans on the whole did not consider the canon fixed. They saw their world as fully enlivened by the *spirit of prophecy*—even if the Scrolls tend to reserve explicit *prophet* (נביא) language for biblical or false prophets. In Qumran-related research we see increasingly sophisticated probing of the nexus between “interpretation” and creative construction, with a growing emphasis on the interpreter's role as, effectively, creator.²⁷

Study of the Scrolls had the knock-on effect, moreover, of suggesting new readings of familiar but formerly marginal pseudepigraphic texts. They are being brought in from the cold to help substantiate a vastly richer and more complex Judaism, or “Judaisms,” full of prophetic possibility.

25 Wieder, “Law-Interpreter,” 158–75.

26 This is especially noticeable in the Hymn Scroll (1QH^a IV, 38; VI, 24; VIII, 20, 25), but also in such lines as “You have poured out your holy spirit upon us” and “You have graciously granted us [your] h[oly] spirit” from 4Q504 frags. 1 and 4.

27 For a taste, see the articles by James Kugel (“Bible of Changed Meanings”) and Hindy Najman (“Reflections”) in Ben Zvi, *Rereading Oracles of God*.

For the question of post-exilic prophecy, these developments elicited two sharply different responses. When the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* reached the letter Π in the 1960s, the Scrolls were having a huge impact even though publication remained limited. Rudolf Meyer's article on "Prophet etc." gave them significant regard in calling for a broad view of ancient Jewish prophecy. Catalysing the general trend, Meyer included as prophecy Josephus' prediction about Vespasian and many similar phenomena. From such evidence he concluded: "There never was in Israel a prophetic age," but prophecy only changed its form through the Second Temple period and beyond.²⁸ Jeremias, by contrast, invested in the notion of the quenched spirit, stuck to his guns: "Qumran is no more than an exception. The dominant view of orthodox Judaism was the conviction that the spirit had been quenched."²⁹ Meyer's approach won the day. The tsunami would come with John Barton's *Oracles of God* (1986), which swept away entrenched notions of canon, emphasised post-exilic creativity in Scripture production, and considered texts that had been assigned to a post-prophetic period all part of the same prophetic endeavour.³⁰

The ground had been softening elsewhere. Joseph Blenkinsopp's 1974 article on prophecy in Josephus, for example, while duly noting his restricted use of the word-group for the ancient past, nevertheless spoke about Josephus' "prophetic" self-awareness and about his Pharisaic and Essene "prophets" in his works.³¹ Whereas Blenkinsopp implied that explicit prophet language was not necessary to identify prophets, David Aune (1982) argued that Josephus actually named two post-biblical prophets, aside from John Hyrcanus, and so even his explicit language did not restrict prophecy to ancient times.³² Aune's two cases—"prophets" at the time of Jerusalem's fall (*War* 6.286) and "the prophet Cleodemus" (*Ant.* 1.240)—deserve attention because of their importance for this claim. Josephus mentions the latter when quoting Alexander "Polyhistor" of Miletus, an avid excerptor who cites Cleodemus Malchus and labels him a prophet for some reason. We have no idea whether Alexander supplied this label or took it over, or whether Malchus was a Samaritan, Judaeian, Syrian, or other easterner.³³ This designation says nothing about

28 Meyer, "προφήτης κτλ." *TDNT* 6:812-28, quotation at 6:828. Further, 2 Baruch (with Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.41) "is in no sense ruling out the giving of oracles or the appearance of prophets under Vespasian" (my emphasis, 6:815).

29 Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 81.

30 Barton, *Oracles of God*.

31 Blenkinsopp, "Prophets and Prophecy," 249-50, 255-58.

32 Aune, "Use of ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ," 419-21.

33 Holladay, *Fragments*, 1:245-59.

Josephus' use of "prophet" language, which is otherwise remarkably consistent in *Ant.* 1-11.

No less problematic is Aune's use of the *War* passage to show that Josephus recognised contemporary prophets. In that paragraph, Josephus laments the "tyrants'" exploitation of the common people trapped in Jerusalem by the Roman siege of 70, by cynically promising them divine deliverance. He claims that 6,000 men, women, and children died at a stroke when a "certain false prophet" (ψευδοπροφήτης τις) persuaded them to gather on a portico roof for deliverance, and the Romans burned the portico from below (6.285). In the next sentence he elaborates that the tyrants had indeed "planted many prophets" among the populace (πολλοὶ δ' ἦσαν ἐγκάθετοι παρὰ τῶν τυράννων τότε πρὸς τὸν δῆμον προφήται, 6.286), to *keep them from deserting* with assurances of imminent divine aid, obviously referring to what he has just said. He concludes with the reflection that, in times of calamity, people believe tricksters who vividly portray a way out (ἀπαλλαγὴν ὁ ἐξαπατῶν ὑπογράφει, 6.287). Only by isolating the middle sentence can Aune say, given that Josephus did not call these men *false* prophets in 286, "On the basis of this passage alone it can no longer be claimed that Josephus restricts the term προφήτης to canonical prophets."³⁴ This is a strangely atomised reading. Why would Josephus repeat ψευδοπροφήτης from the preceding sentence? The frame shows that he is varying his language for precisely the same subject. Such (false) prophets and tricksters did not speak for God, but told barefaced lies. This example provides no evidence that Josephus recognised prophets among his contemporaries.

General studies reflecting the new scholarly interest in prophecy at Josephus' time include John R. Levison's *The Spirit in First-Century Judaism* (1997) and especially his *Filled with the Spirit* (2009), which still takes aim at the older view.³⁵ In this newer book, Levison assembles impressive examples from ancient Jewish literature of ecstatic, inspired speech and textual interpretation, which Philo, for example, brings tantalisingly close to "prophecy."³⁶ Among the studies that have brought the new atmosphere to bear on the interpretation of Josephus are Robert G. Hall's *Revealed Histories* (1991), Rebecca Gray's *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine* (1993), and John Barclay's commentary on the *Against Apion* (2006).³⁷ Hall proposes that divine inspiration grounded a distinctively Jewish conception of history—though the

34 Aune, "Use of ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ," 419.

35 Levison, *Spirit*; Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*. There were earlier impulses in this direction: Paret, "Pharisäismus"; van Unnik, *Flavius Josephus*, 4.

36 Philo, *Heir* 69-71; *Moses* 2.191-192; *Spec. Laws* 3.5-6; Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 109-221, esp. 189-96.

37 Hall, *Revealed Histories*; Gray, *Prophetic Figures*; Barclay, *Against Apion*, 31.

writers in question do not call their work history (a point Hall neglects)—and that Josephus (who does call his work history) may be considered alongside Jubilees because both were revealed histories: he wrote the *War* as part of a “prophetic mission” and “under inspiration.”³⁸

The catch here is that Josephus goes out of his way to stress the labours, expenses, and hardships that go into proper historical investigation, from life-hazarding experiences to intensive research and sources, which he has uniquely borne.³⁹ His historiographical proem is a model of the Greco-Roman type, with all the expected elements and then some.⁴⁰ He nowhere claims to have written under prophetic inspiration, which presumably would have made things easier.

Publishing a translation of Josephus’ *Against Apion* required Barclay to commit to a reading of *Ag. Ap.* 1.41, and no one should blame a translator for making such choices. He rendered διὰ τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι τὴν τῶν προφητῶν ἀκριβῆ διαδοχὴν “since the *exact line of succession* of the prophets *did not continue*.”⁴¹ This doubly supplements Josephus’ words—contrast Thackeray’s more elliptical Loeb rendering: “because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets”—to bring out the sense of diachronic succession. His commentary notes that the image creates logical problems, given that prophets do not need predecessors, if God speaks through them. He settles for the explanation that the phrase is an “artificial creation,” which anyway emphasises the reliability of the prophets. In Barclay’s view, the presence of quasi-prophetic phenomena such as prediction in Josephus’ works means that the statement “*need not suggest that Josephus thought that prophecy in general, or ‘the Spirit,’ had ceased in his day....*” He is simply denying that *the same degree of prophetic historiographical reliability was in operation after Artaxerxes*.”⁴² He refers approvingly to Gray’s study, the fullest attempt so far at a synthesis of Josephus’ prophet-conception in its historical-literary context.

Gray tackles *Ag. Ap.* 1.41 almost immediately as a way into Josephus’ view of prophecy. She agrees that it seems to say that prophecy had ceased, but still goes on to present Josephus, his Essenes, the sign prophets, and assorted others as examples of *ongoing prophecy* in Josephus’ own works. How is that possible? She proposes:

38 Hall, *Revealed Histories*, 29–31.

39 *War* 1.1–16; *Life* 358–367; *Ag. Ap.* 1.47–56.

40 The index to John Marincola’s watershed study, *Authority and Tradition*, cites Josephus about as often as any ancient historian for examples of common strategies of legitimation and authority.

41 Barclay, *Against Apion*, 31. My emphasis.

42 Barclay, 31 n. 169. My emphasis.

In spite of the fact that Josephus *seems* to have believed that prophecy belonged, *in some sense*, to the past, it can be *demonstrated* that *he thought* that there were still, in his own day, individuals *who said and did very much the same sorts of things* as the ancient prophets had said and done.⁴³

This accords with Gray's formulation of her research question: "[D]id the view that prophecy had ceased entail the belief that *there was no longer anything at all like prophecy and no one at all like the prophets?*"⁴⁴ Here we meet a perplexing phenomenon. Scholars such as Urbach (above) acknowledged that all kinds of spiritual manifestations continued through the Second Temple period and beyond, which resembled prophetic activity in some ways. They insisted, however, that ancient Judaeans did not consider this "prophecy" because that was a special, reserved category. The evidence of Josephus has not changed, but Gray can "demonstrate" the opposite view and even attribute it to Josephus ("he thought") because she does not think that his terminology matters that much. There could have been an abundance of prophets in the first century, in spite of "the view that prophecy had ceased," if people were doing such prophet-like things as receiving inspiration from God or predicting the future.

This fusion of explicit language—which admittedly I tend to consider the best guide to ancient authors' conceptions—and similar activity without the name underlies Gray's investigation. It explains her impression that *Ag. Ap.* 1.41 refers to the cessation of "only one very limited type of prophecy, namely, the one that resulted in the composition of historical narrative."⁴⁵ Here she not only limits the "prophets" mentioned there in a way that Josephus does not, but also has them writing "history," a term that Josephus loudly avoids for prophets (below).

As for Josephus' phrase ἀκριβὴς διαδοχή, Gray innovatively proposes that he had no prior idea of it, but simply inferred a succession ad hoc from his preceding description in 1.38-40. There was a succession of prophets, because he has just spoken of their coverage from creation to Artaxerxes. When he mentions the absence of their continuous succession, he must be referring only to the end of the authoritative texts they wrote, without meaning to say that no "prophet" existed later.⁴⁶ Gray also provides an illuminating discussion of the connection between the oracular shining stones, which ceased two centuries

43 Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 8. My emphasis.

44 Gray, 8.

45 Gray, 9.

46 Gray, 12-13.

before Josephus (*Ant.* 3.215–218), and John Hyrcanus' prophetic reign at the same time (*Ant.* 13.299–300), to give possible nuance to the exactitude of the prophetic line: it continued after Artaxerxes, but patchily. She also reprises Aune's doubtful interpretation of *War* 6.286 as crucial evidence of Josephus' awareness of contemporary prophets.⁴⁷ The Hyrcanus-oracle connection is intriguing indeed. The problems with relating it to *Ag. Ap.* 1 are that it still does not explain the puzzling logic of tying prophetic accuracy to succession, and that Josephus implies that the breastplate miracle *continued until* 200 years ago, whereas in *Ag. Ap.* 1 Artaxerxes marks the definitive break—from which perspective Hyrcanus and the oracular stones would be outliers rather than the end of a line.

2 Problems with a Diachronic Succession of Prophets

I cannot do Gray's monograph justice here, but cite it to give some idea of how *Ag. Ap.* 1.41 has been integrated into the new perspective on canonical openness and prophetic plenty. We must keep our focus on *Ag. Ap.* 1.41. In that regard, I would ask two related questions. First, could Josephus' Roman audiences have understood this passage to make distinctions among prophets? Second, would they have assumed, as we do, that an ἀκριβὴς διαδοχή meant an *unbroken line of succession among the prophets*? I ask about Josephus' ancient audiences because my assumption is that, since he wrote to communicate, what his audiences might have gathered from his cues is a basic question in interpretation. It is not the only one, for none of us communicates perfectly or even keeps our eye on the ball of communication. Other ways of thinking about what he might have had in mind (his sources, influences, and environment, including what the audience must supply, and phrases used for effect more than rational content) are all valuable. But asking what he wished to convey remains a basic question in the interpretation of propositional texts. I have anticipated a negative answer to the first question, to which we shall return. Now let us consider some overlooked problems with answering the second question positively.

- a. Josephus' fondness for ἀκριβεία language is well known, as is the importance of this virtue in the repertoire of ancient historiography.⁴⁸ But as

⁴⁷ Gray, 16–23.

⁴⁸ Josephus has about 135 occurrences of the word-group, distributed through every volume except *Ant.* 16, and notably concentrated in proems and conclusions, making clear that this virtue characterises his work. See further Mason, *Flavius Josephus*, 75–81. His main rivals in frequency of use are not historians, who may have the term some dozens of times,

we noted in the introduction, historians favoured ἀκριβεία because it signified precision or accuracy *in relation to* the truth, or what actually happened. In ancient historiography, faithfully describing what happened meant fairly presenting *motives* and moral factors, more than precisely correct times, dates, or numbers—often rounded or grossly exaggerated.⁴⁹ Josephus uses the word-group most often in this way, but secondarily in reference to those who interpret the laws precisely, or fail to do so.⁵⁰ One can compare an interpretation of the laws with the laws themselves, to determine their accuracy. One cannot meaningfully speak about the accuracy of things organic: tree growth, a family pedigree, or a succession, and no such collocation occurs elsewhere in Josephus.

- b. Our assumption that διαδοχή means a linear succession of the prophets requires us to fiddle with the usual meaning of the adjective ἀκριβής, shifting first from “accurate, precise” to a vaguer “exact,” and then smuggling in “continuous, uninterrupted, unbroken” for “exact.”⁵¹ But it is not clear that ἀκριβής διαδοχή would signal to ancient audiences an *unbroken* line of diachronic succession. Greek had better adjectives for that sort of thing: ἐπ’ἀλλήλους (with διαδοχή in Philo, *Heir* 37; Herodian, *Ab exc. Marc.* 1.1.4), ἀδιάστατος, ἐνδελεχής, διηνεκής, συνεχής (Aristotle, *Phys.* 228A; cf. Diodorus Siculus, *Bibl. hist.* 17.22.1, 24.4; 20.97.7), διατελής, ἀδιάλειπτος (with διαδοχή in fourteenth-century Christian texts of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*).
- c. If ἀκριβής could mean “unbroken” or “continuous,” which might be possible in certain contexts, what would that mean for a diachronic succession of prophets? With kings and high priests, the meaning of unbroken succession is clear. As with presidents and prime ministers today, there could only be one at a time. These were offices with rituals of inauguration. An *unbroken* succession means that one person leaves office as another succeeds. But in the case of prophets, who could live as contemporaries and did not hold an office liable to succession, what could their

but Plato (especially *Laws* and *Republic*), the Hippocratic school, Demosthenes (re: laws, justice, and much else), and Aristotle.

49 Cf. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography*; Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*; Cape, “Persuasive History”; Pitcher, *Writing Ancient History*.

50 Historiographically, e.g.: *War* 1.2, 6, 9, 17, 22, 26, 406; 4.440, 496; 5.3, 247; 7.454; *Ant.* 9.208; 12.127, 245; 13.173, 298; 18.129, 310; 20.258, 260, 262; *Life* 27, 358, 360, 365, 412. In relation to the ancestral laws, e.g.: *War* 1.108, 110, 648; 2.162; *Ant.* 1.14, 17; 5.132; *Life* 9, 191.

51 Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 12–13: “continuous succession”; Barclay, *Against Apion*, 31: “the exact line of succession ... did not continue.”

- unbroken succession mean? How could one know whether a prophetic “succession” was continuous, or a bit patchy?
- d. Most problematic of all: Barclay rightly noted the oddity of a claim that a break in succession would render the writings of later prophets untrustworthy. Prophets do not receive their knowledge from a chain of transmission, but from God. Moses had no predecessor, and the last prophet no successor, yet they were obviously trustworthy. If there had been a break of fifty or hundred years from Artaxerxes’ time to another prophet, why would that prophet not be trusted? What should an audience impressed by the claim of prophetic compositions make of the surprising implication that prophets’ trustworthiness depended upon an unbroken succession?
 - e. This reading is all the more problematic because *accuracy* and resulting *trustworthiness* are central to the argument of *Against Apion*, concerning the Judaeans’ debated antiquity. After rejecting Greek historians as paragons of ἀκριβεία (*Ag. Ap.* 1.15, 18, 53, 67), Josephus ascribes this virtue only to orientals and Judaeans (1.29, 32, 36). Greeks who rely on Greek accounts (1.14) should rethink this because Judaeans’ texts are far older, more accurate (by prophets), and hence more trustworthy (1.38, 161). Josephus has given examples of such accuracy in *Aniquities*, as when he has Moses pinpoint the date of the flood on 27 Nisan, year 2262 from creation: “this date is recorded in the holy books, where the births and dates of eminent men are indicated with complete accuracy” (*Ant.* 1.82). Given this thematic clarity, why would Josephus break away to talk about a line of prophetic succession and *its* accuracy? If we can see a way to connect this accuracy to the main issue, that would be preferable.

The upshot of these reflections is that, if Josephus had written instead that “the accuracy of the prophets” or “of the prophets’ X” was no longer present after Artaxerxes, his meaning would have been clear: “Our ancient records were written by prophets and are therefore perfectly accurate. With later writings—contemporary with Greek histories—the prophets (or the *accuracy* of the prophets) are (is) no longer present. We trust only the prophets’ writings.” This is roughly what Josephus’ audience would expect from the logic of *Ag. Ap.* 1.41, I submit. Asking whether another translation of διαδοχή might better support this main idea shifts our attention from this word—let it be X, or “the accurate prophets’ thing”—to the more thematically charged ἀκριβής. At least as a thought experiment we should ask: Is there a plausible way of understanding διαδοχή other than as a “line of succession [of the prophets]”?

3 Varieties of Διαδοχαί, Accurate or Not

Let us stipulate that *if* transmission from one generation to the next were an issue for prophets, one could find support for the idea of a prophetic succession, though “accurate” would remain a puzzle. Succession chains are central to Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, as each new philosopher in a chain receives, transmits, and modifies what he received. Diogenes posits two fountainheads of philosophy (1.13) and uses a number of lost *Successions* by other authors.⁵² Particularly interesting is his opening observation that some locate the beginnings of philosophy among the barbarians, where it was practised by priests and *prophets* (1.1), a position he flatly rejects. Philosophy is Greek! From the ancient Judaeian world, the most famous succession of this kind is the chain of pairs (*zugot* in Mishnah Avot), which scholars have compared to philosophical successions.⁵³ Each pair received (קיבל) what they passed along (מסר) to the next generation.

Moreover, an audience familiar with Josephus’ corpus could not have missed his thematisation of high priestly and royal successions in *Aniquities*.⁵⁴ It might seem a small and tantalising step to the prophet-priest-king triad, which has both biblical support and a nice ring to it. Why not a prophetic succession to complete the set? Josephus comes close to suggesting such a triad—albeit without literal kingship or prophetic succession—when he credits John Hyrcanus uniquely with “three of the top things: the rule of the *ethnos*, the high-priesthood, and prophecy” (*War* 1.68; cf. *Ant.* 13.299). He also uses “succession” language for Joshua’s continuation of Moses’ work (*Ant.* 4.165) and for Elisha’s replacement of Elijah (*War* 4.460). But those are special cases: Joshua succeeding Moses as commander of the army and leader of the government, as well as recipient of prophecy, Elisha inheriting the double portion of power from his mentor. Their situations are not generalisable for all prophets, who come and go and coexist. Indeed, when we consider Josephus’ persistent concern with the royal and high priestly successions, it is all the more striking that he does *not* mention such a thing for prophets—presumably because it would be an unsuitable category for them.

Could, then, another understanding of διαδοχή work better? A stimulus to look for other meanings is provided by παράδοσις in the same passage.

52 Diodorus Siculus, *Lives* 1.1, 2, 20, 40, 107; 2.12, 19, 74; 6.80, 87, 168 etc.

53 Turner, “Succession Language”; Bickerman, “Tradition pharisienne.”

54 These themes are clear in the work’s concluding section, which summarises both lines (*Ant.* 20.261) after frequently using cognates of διαδοχή (117 occurrences) throughout the work, and having provided a mid-way summary of the royal and high priestly lines at 10.151–153.

At *Ag. Ap.* 1.39 Josephus remarks that Moses' books include "both the laws and the παράδοσις" from creation. Students of ancient Judaism and the gospels are most familiar with the meaning "tradition" for παράδοσις, especially because of its use for the Pharisees' tradition, which relies on a "succession of fathers" (ἐκ πατέρων διαδοχῆς, τὰ δ' ἐκ παραδόσεως τῶν πατέρων; *Ant.* 13.297; cf. 13.408; Mark 7:3-13). But Josephus more often uses παράδοσις in the very different sense of "yielding," "giving over," or "surrendering" a city or fortress (so nearly always in *War*), also for the "transmission" of field signals (*War* 2.579) or a historian's "dissemination" of information (*Life* 361, 364; *Ag. Ap.* 1.50, 53). When he speaks of Moses' παράδοσις of events from creation to his own time, "tradition" does not work, since Moses received his information from God. Josephus must be referring to something like Moses' *transmission* or *dissemination* of what God told him. Are there similar possibilities for διαδοχή?

Purely in order to help us break out of our accustomed translation, we may recall a range of common senses for διαδοχή that do not involve chronological succession. These include: a relay or recurring series of persons, things, or emotions (Aeschylus, *Ag.* 312-313; Philo, *Joseph* 246; *Moses* 1.38, 191; *Rewards* 151; *Eternity* 74); a continuous movement without break (ἐκ διαδοχῆς, *Spec. Laws* 2.196); repeated waves of attacks (Euripides, *Iph. taur.* 79); and in military contexts, the rotation or relief of units (Demosthenes, *Philip.* 1.21; 21.164; Xenophon, *Cyr.* 1.4.17). Likewise, διάδοχος does not necessarily mean successor or heir, but can refer to a ruler's viceroy or lieutenant (Philo, *Joseph* 119, 166; *Good Person* 20). None of these is applicable to *Ag. Ap.* 1.41, but they remind us not to ascribe essential meanings to words. We must make the most of context.⁵⁵ Four other uses of διαδοχή deserve attention because one could qualify them with "accurate," and two of them might even help us with *Ag. Ap.* 1.41.

First, literary accounts of successions can also be called successions by association, and therefore deemed accurate or not—in relation to their subject matter. So Eusebius (*Praep. ev.* 2.1.56): "That Cadmus lived *after* Moses the *accurate successions* of the chronological writings bring forward, as we shall show in due course (τὸν δὲ Κάδμον μετὰ Μωσέα γενέσθαι αἱ ἀκριβεῖς τῶν χρονογραφίων παριστῶσι διαδοχαί, ὥς κατὰ καιρὸν ἐπιδείξομεν)." This could not work for *Ag. Ap.* 1.41, but it illustrates how noun and adjective might fit.

Second, though equally unsuitable for our passage, διαδοχαί can mean "regular alternations," which can be predictable—hence exact or not. Eusebius (*Coet. sanct.* 7) exults in the God-given regularity of nature: "Also marvellous

55 I expect the objection that I am assigning a fixed meaning to "prophet" words. On the contrary, I am observing that Josephus' usage is *surprisingly consistent*, given its 30-volume size and potential for variety in different contexts.

and remarkable is the course of rivers, perpetual and unceasing night and day in turn, and an emblem of ever-flowing and unremitting life, and just as impressive the nightly succession (νυκτερινή διαδοχή).” John Chrysostom takes over the same idea and speaks of “the accurate [i.e., precisely regular] succession of night and day” (νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας διαδοχὴν ἀκριβή, *Diab.* 1.6). In such contexts we can understand the attribution of precision. It would be troubling if day and night did not occur on schedule.

Third, and possibly more relevant for our passage, in Diogenes Laertius and other texts, διαδοχή effectively means “school” or group, with no emphasis on succession but simply indicating those who now share the *legacy* of a given philosopher. In Sextus Empiricus’ *Against the Mathematicians*, the author uses διαδοχή as a virtual synonym of αἵρεσις and στάσις, all meaning a school or group.⁵⁶ This is suggestive because one *can* meaningfully speak of an “accurate/precise” school, for there is something to compare them with. Josephus describes the Pharisees as those reputed to interpret the laws with great ἀκρίβεια (*War* 2.162; *Life* 191), and the Book of Acts compresses this to call the Pharisees “the most accurate/precise school” (κατὰ τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην αἵρεσιν, Acts 26:5). Then again, Plato had spoken of prophets as a class, tribe, or breed (τὸ τῶν προφητῶν γένος).⁵⁷ A γένος can approximate a succession in some contexts, both terms referring to the now-existing group or class or kind, not the diachronic chain that produces them. Philo has a version of the same phrase (τῷ προφητικῷ γένει, *Heir* 265). It seems plausible that Josephus, having described the series of prophets from Moses to Artaxerxes, settled on διαδοχή as a class-type for their group or kind, and thus means to say that this exact, precise kind, group, or breed (after Moses, the first of them) was no longer present after Artaxerxes.

Fourth, a διαδοχή can be *what follows or emerges from* a primary group: not them, but *their* successors. Eusebius writes two centuries after Josephus, but he knows the Judaeian historian’s work and quotes it extensively, including *Ag. Ap.* 1.38-42 (*Hist. eccl.* 3.10.1). Since he quotes that passage without commentary, his quotation does not help us figure out how he understood *Ag. Ap.* 1.41. But his *Ecclesiastical History* provides other clues. In fact, Eusebius uses variations of the phrase ἡ τῶν ἀποστόλων διαδοχή to open and close the body of the book, also sprinkling them throughout. Apostolic succession is a primary theme. But it does not mean the succession of *the apostles* themselves.

56 *Math.* 7.190 (= Loeb, *Against the Logicians* 1.190): “[I shall] take up the Cyrenaic στάσις, for the αἵρεσις of these men seems to have formed from the διατριβή of Socrates, from which the διαδοχή of those who follow Plato also formed.”

57 Plato, *Tim.* 72A.

The work's very opening words (*Hist. eccl.* 1.1.1) are τὰς τῶν ἱερῶν ἀποστόλων διαδοχάς. Eusebius declares his intention to offer an account of “the successions of the holy apostles” along with the times “from the saviour’s to our own.”⁵⁸ His main subject will thus be “the successors of (= to) the apostles”—mainly in Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome. His main but not exclusive interest is in the sequence of bishops, who taught the “divine word” faithfully, but he will also mention those who through love of innovation (νεωτεροποιίας ἰμέρῳ) introduced errors. Since no other such history exists, and Eusebius has diligently done a historian’s research, in order to preserve for posterity “the successions of the apostles of our saviour” (τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν ἀποστόλων τὰς διαδοχάς), he offers this work to those who are fond of history (1.1.4). Accuracy is a crucial part of this picture, as when he notes that Hegesippus, among the “first succession of the apostles,” gave a very accurate account of James’ death (Ἀκριβέστατά ... τὰ κατ’ αὐτὸν ὁ Ἡγήσιππος ἐπὶ τῆς πρώτης τῶν ἀποστόλων γενόμενος διαδοχῆς, 2.23.3).

Already in the proem Eusebius cautions that he can only get to his main subject after describing the times of “the saviour” (1.1.2). Still in Book 3 he is teasing that he will come to the succession of the apostles (τὰ τῆς κατὰ χρόνους τῶν ἀποστόλων διαδοχῆς, 3.4.11) in due course. He finally reaches “the succession of the apostles,” which begins roughly with the fall of Jerusalem, in 3.11.1. The category “first succession of the apostles” is rather ill-defined, however. At 3.25.6 he uses the succession of the apostles as a criterion for accepting or rejecting the authority of various Christian texts. At 3.37.1 he says that many achieved first rank in the succession of the apostles at the time of Trajan (τὴν πρώτην τάξιν τῆς τῶν ἀποστόλων ἐπέχοντες διαδοχῆς), a full generation after Jerusalem’s fall, and at 3.37.4 that it is impossible to list all those involved in “the first succession of the apostles” (τὴν πρώτην τῶν ἀποστόλων διαδοχὴν) for lack of information. There are other occurrences of the phrase, as when he names Hyginus ninth bishop in Rome “in the succession of the apostles” (4.11.2), but these will suffice for us to see that the phrase and concept are fundamental to the *Church History*.⁵⁹ Eusebius begins Book 8 by declaring that, having fulfilled this promise and fully narrated “the succession of the apostles” (τὴν τῶν ἀποστόλων διαδοχὴν, 8.1.pr.), he will now devote the last three volumes

58 See Grant, *Eusebius*, 45–59 on this “first theme” of the *Ecclesiastical History*. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 129–33 emphasises the work’s lack of clear structure or thematic coherence. Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument*, 225–26, subsumes the succession theme under Eusebius’ larger effort to establish an origin story for the *ethnos* of Christians.

59 Cf. *Hist. eccl.* 5.11.1 (ἀποστολικῆς διαδοχῆς), 12.2, 20.1, 25.1; 6.13.8.

to significant events of his own time. Needless to say, Eusebius' work helped to establish "apostolic succession" as a teaching of the Catholic Church.

Since Eusebius knew Josephus' work so intimately, it is tempting to think, though it cannot be proven, that he partly modelled his programmatic "apostle + succession" scheme, pursuing truth and error in those who followed the apostles, on Josephus' "prophet + succession" structure. Some Christian authors apparently viewed apostles as counterparts to the ancient prophets (2 Pet 3:2; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.17.2), though the issue is complicated because of their readiness to speak of contemporary Christian prophets. Irenaeus' more expansive characterisation of Hyginus as ἔνατον κλῆρον τῆς ἐπισκοπικῆς διαδοχῆς ἀπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων ἔχοντος ("having ninth place in the *episcopal* succession *from* the apostles," *Haer.* 24.1), using ἀπό to make his meaning clear, is not nearly as close to Eusebius' routine formulation as Josephus' language is.⁶⁰ Nor are the successions of the philosophers. Whether Eusebius imitated Josephus or not, the linguistic parallel remains helpful, for Eusebius' "succession of the apostles" is plainly not the internal, diachronic succession of the apostles, who were all contemporaries. It refers to those who followed the apostles, and preserved or damaged the apostles' pristine legacy of truth.

Eusebius' thematic Josephus-like language raises the possibility that he also understood *Ag. Ap.* 1.41 to refer to what *came after the prophets*, rather than contemplating the inexactitude of a line of succession among the prophets themselves. He understood Josephus to mean, I am suggesting, that there was no equally accurate follow-on, legacy, or succession *after the prophets, who ceased at the time of Artaxerxes*. With these possibilities in view, let us return to Josephus' passage in its context.

4 *Against Apion* 1.41 in Context

Josephus opens this two-volume essay on the antiquity of the Judaeans with a complaint directed at a sympathetic, though apparently non-Judaean audience. In spite of his exhaustive *Aniquities*, he says, some people persist in considering the Judaeans a late-arriving *ethnos* or at least one "unworthy" of notice by the best-known Greek authors (1.1-5). After challenging the premise that Greek evidence should be considered the sole fount of truth, given that eastern and particularly Judaean records are far older and more accurate (1.6-59), and highlighting ignored evidence for Judaean antiquity also in Greek authors

60 Grant, *Eusebius*, 45-47, considers Irenaeus and philosophical successions Eusebius' main inspirations.

(1.60-218), Josephus devotes the middle half of the essay to rebutting a series of anti-Judaean authors (1.219-2.144)—the eponymous Apion appearing only half-way through (2.2). He concludes with a stirring and protracted peroration on the peerless Judaean constitution (2.145-196).

The passage that interests us (1.41) falls early in the opening framework section, where Josephus mockingly contrasts the late, divergent, and scattered accounts by Greek historians with oriental records, especially the Judaean accounts, which have been scrupulously preserved by the pure priestly caste to which he belongs.

How did the Judaean volumes come to be so accurate? Josephus opens and closes the passage in which our sentence falls by making a sharp distinction between the individual initiative of Greek historians and the compositions of the Judaeans' ancient forebears, who did *not* write on their own authority or chronicle investigative efforts. In the Judaean case, only prophets were eligible to write the records, receiving their information from God:

37 Fittingly, then, or rather necessarily—seeing that recording was not open to everyone on their own authority (τὸ ὑπογράφειν αὐτεξουσίῳ πᾶσιν), there is no discrepancy in what has been written, but only with the prophets learning the highest and oldest matters from the inspiration of God, on the one hand, and then clearly writing up events of their times just as they occurred, on the other (ἀλλὰ μόνον τῶν προφητῶν τὰ μὲν ἀνωτάτω καὶ παλαιότατα κατὰ τὴν ἐπίπνοιαν τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μαθόντων, τὰ δὲ καθ' αὐτοὺς ὡς ἐγένετο σαφῶς συγγραφόντων)—38 the result is that among us there are not myriads of discordant and competing volumes, but only twenty-two volumes containing the record of all time, which have been rightly trusted (τὰ δικαίως πεπιστευμένα).

39 Of these, five are those of Moses, which comprise both the laws and the transmission [of information] from the birth of humanity even to his own passing (ἃ τοὺς τε νόμους περιέχει καὶ τὴν ἀπ' ἀνθρωπογονίας παράδοσιν μέχρι τῆς αὐτοῦ τελευτῆς). This period falls little short of 3,000 years! 40 From Moses' passing until the Artaxerxes who was king of the Persians after Xerxes, the prophets after Moses wrote up what happened in their times [or, as they saw things] in thirteen volumes. The remaining four [volumes] comprise hymns toward God and advice for living among humanity.

41 From Artaxerxes until our own time, all kinds of particulars have indeed been written, but these [writings] have not been deemed worthy of the same trust as those that came before them [i.e., the prophets' work], διὰ τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι τὴν τῶν προφητῶν ἀκριβῆ διαδοχὴν [untranslated for now].

42 It is clear in action how much we invest in our writings. For although such a long time has now passed [since Artaxerxes], no one has dared to add, to take away, or to alter anything. It is innate in every Judaeon right from birth to regard them as decrees of God, to remain faithful to them and, if necessary, gladly to die on their behalf.... 44 What Greek would endure this for such a cause? He would not risk even the chance of injury if the whole lot of *their histories* were to vanish, 45 *because they regard them as mere words composed in the moment, according to the intention of those who wrote them*. And they are quite right in holding this view of the ancients [historians], given that they see some people now writing “historically” of events at which they were not present, and without having troubled to learn from those who do know.

JOSEPHUS, *Ag. Ap.* 1.37-45

The last lines close the circle that Josephus opened with his mention of self-directed historical writing in 1.37. This emphasises the qualitative difference between knowledge of the past through prophecy, that is by inspiration (ἐπίπνοια) from God, and all efforts of historians, better or worse. This is striking in part because we habitually call Josephus “the Jewish historian.” That is correct insofar as his two main works, *War* and *Aniquities*, present him as the finest practitioner of *historia*. Although *historia* is a Greek pursuit and he is a foreigner, he has learned the discipline so well that he beats the loser-ish Greeks at one of their singular contributions (*War* 1.6-16; *Ant.* 20.262-265). The closing line above bridges to a reassertion of the same point. His efforts as a historian, in *War* and *Aniquities*, tower above the shambolic efforts of his Greek contemporaries, from whom Greeks themselves properly infer the doubtfulness of all history-writing (1.46-57). Josephus’ central point, however (in the heart of the *inclusio*), is that when it comes to a nation’s most ancient texts, the Greeks are not even in the hunt. Their *historia* has its uses, and both the recent war against Rome and the Judaeans’ ancient past were subjects well suited to it. But the Judaeans’ ancient law and founding records are qualitatively different. They are not subjective compositions produced by initiative and inquiry. They came from divine instruction through inspired prophets—qualities long since gone.

Since every literate person knew that the Persian Xerxes’ conflict with Hellas was the occasion of history’s birth, with Herodotus, and Josephus goes out of his way to use Xerxes as a chronological marker for the less prominent Artaxerxes (at the end of biblical narrative), his point is as clear as it is contemptuous. Judaeon record-keeping was already *concluding* its 5,000-year run when Greeks first awoke to the need for reliable information about the past. And when they

finally recognised the need, they had nothing available but self-directed inquiry and reporting, an exercise that celebrated each author, his personal status, initiative, and the pains he took to uncover the truth.⁶¹ Such entrepreneurial efforts, no matter how successful, unavoidably produced errors, contradictions, and rivalry. Josephus gleefully provides examples, even for the great masters of the Greek art, Herodotus and Thucydides (1.16-18, 66, 73). The Judaeans' ancient records are not only millennia older than these Greek efforts. They provide knowledge that no historian could have discovered. Only prophecy could have given Moses his knowledge of matters spanning the 3,000 years from creation to even his own death (μέχρι τῆς αὐτοῦ τελευτῆς). Only inspiration could have given him and his successors authoritative insight into the real meaning of events in their own times, which no mere participant could see.

This is not the place for a commentary on the passage, but two questions are germane: what Josephus might have expected his audiences to understand by "prophets," from his cues and otherwise, and whether he gives any other information about those post-Artaxerxes writings, of their nature or subject matter. We need not delay on "prophets." The word so obviously meant "(divine) mouthpiece" that Socrates' companions could joke about his becoming their prophet (*Phileb.* 28B), and Adeimantus in the *Republic* (366B) calls poets and prophets alike children of the gods, meaning their spokesmen. The most famous prophetic activity occurred at the temple of Apollo in Delphi, "navel of the earth," where petitioners from far and wide heard pronouncements (albeit hardly clear revelations) of inspired prophetesses.⁶² In light of such common usage, Josephus' contrast between prophets (who rely on divine inspiration) and those who write from their own initiative (1.37) should have made good sense.

Philo draws on common usage when, describing Moses' excellences, he says that Moses forbade his followers to practise the kinds of divination (μαντική) pursued by people of other nations, when they wish to know the future, which lead to error (*Spec. Laws* 1.59-65). Rather, Moses directed them to prophets: to himself and one coming after him. The prophet, he elaborates:

says nothing at all of his own, for when he speaks he is unable to comprehend anything of what he presents, being indeed inspired. Whatever he utters passes through him, as though another were controlling him. For prophets are interpreters of God, who uses them as instruments for explaining whatever he might wish (λέγων μὲν οἰκεῖον οὐδὲν οὐδὲ γάρ, εἰ λέγει,

61 *Ag. Ap.* 1.20-24; cf. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*.

62 Euripides, *Ion* 413; Plato, *Phaedr.* 244A. Cf. Bowden, *Classical Athens*; Scott, *Delphi*, 18-30.

δύνανται καταλαβεῖν ὃ γε κατεχόμενος ὄντως καὶ ἐνθουσιῶν, ὅσα δ' ἐνηχεῖται, διελεύσεται καθάπερ ὑποβάλλοντος ἑτέρου· ἐρμηνεῖς γάρ εἰσιν οἱ προφῆται θεοῦ καταχρωμένου τοῖς ἐκείνων ὀργάνοις πρὸς δῆλωσιν ὧν ἂν ἐθελήσῃ).

PHILO, *Spec. Laws* 1.65

Still more vivid is a passage in *Who Is the Heir?* in which Philo discusses the possibility of transcending the physical senses. Speaking of Abraham, he repeats that “the prophet utters nothing of his own, but everything is strange, echoing another” (*Heir* 259), and adds that with the “prophetic breed,” the spirit temporarily displaces their mind before returning it to them (265). This description recalls Plato (*Tim.* 71E; *Ion* 534B),⁶³ except that the Athenian was speaking of divination (μαντική) as distinct from prophecy proper (which interprets divination), whereas Philo contrasts prophecy with divination on the basis that only holy persons could prophesy (*Heir* 78). In any case, we have every reason to conclude, from Josephus’ ample cues and the general understanding, that his audiences would have had no difficulty grasping that prophets were not like historians, but received their knowledge of the past, present, and future under inspiration from God.

What about those works, mentioned in *Ag. Ap.* 1.41, that followed the prophets’ perfect compositions and are not trusted? Barclay’s commentary rightly observes that here “Josephus says nothing about how, where and when these records were made.”⁶⁴ But we may have clues elsewhere, even if his audiences could not be expected to connect them. Two prominently situated passages in Josephus talk explicitly about post-biblical books on Judaeon antiquity and their trustworthiness. The first comes when Josephus muses on his choice of starting point for the *Judaeon War*. He reflects:

17 To explore the antiquity of the Judeans—who some of them were, how they up and fled from the Egyptians, what sort of country they encountered while they were wandering, how many places they seized in sequence, and how they found themselves displaced [i.e., the exile]—I considered to be untimely here and anyway superfluous, because many Judaeans before me have laid out the deeds of our ancestors with accuracy (Ἰουδαίων πολλοὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ τὰ τῶν προγόνων συνετάξαντο μετ’ ἀκριβείας), and some Greeks have recast those things into their native language *without veering much from the truth* (οὐ πολὺ τῆς ἀληθείας διήμαρτον). 18 So, just where both the historical writers of this type and

63 Cf. also Meyer, *TDNT* 6:821-23.

64 Barclay, *Against Apion*, 30 n. 167.

our own prophets finished (ὅπου δ' οἱ τε τούτων συγγραφεῖς ἐπαύσαντο καὶ οἱ ἡμέτεροι προφηταί), there I shall establish the beginning of my account.

JOSEPHUS, *War* 17-18

Given that the rhetorical contexts of *War* 1 and *Ag. Ap.* 1 are so different, the points of intersection are striking enough to suggest that the *Against Apion* passage is only stating more clearly something that Josephus had considered in the prologue to *War*, decades earlier. Most impressive is the distinction between historians and prophets (*War* 1.18), evidently in chiasmic, reverse order. Those who wrote up the most ancient Judaeian accounts with accuracy were their prophets. *After them* came investigative historians, including Greeks, who reused this material with commendable care. This is enough to get Josephus off the hook, in *War*, for the ancient history he will defer to *Aniquities* (cf. *Ant.* 1.6-7). He need not elaborate: he will begin here because, at least for present rhetorical purposes, earlier times have been done reasonably well, especially the most fundamental ancient period, by Judaeian prophets and then by others.

But there is more. The phrase οὐ πολὺ τῆς ἀληθείας διήμαρτον reappears exactly, and concerning the same subject, at *Ag. Ap.* 1.217-218, where Josephus is concluding the first section of the work of which *Ag. Ap.* 1.41 is a crucial part. Having alleged that a sufficient number of Greeks did mention Judaeians, even obscurely, whereas other Greeks refrained only out of animus or envy (not from ignorance of Judaeians), he gives examples of Greek authors who “made more than passing reference to us”—meaning to Judaeian antiquity, the subject of this volume (1.216). He continues:

Most of these men veered significantly from the truth *about our founding events* (τῶν ἐξ ἀρχῆς πραγμάτων), because they had not read our sacred books. But still they unanimously testify to *our antiquity*, concerning which I set out to speak here (περὶ τῆς ἀρχαιότητος ἅπαντες μεμαρτυρήκασιν, ὑπὲρ ἧς τὰ νῦν λέγειν προεθέμην).

JOSEPHUS, *Ag. Ap.* 1.217

Then, picking up the more positive emphasis of *War* 1.17, Josephus names the exceptional few Greeks who *did not veer much from the truth* about Judaeian origins—and who should not be blamed for the errors they did make, because “they were hardly in a position to follow our sacred writings with full accuracy” (οὐ γὰρ ἐνῆν αὐτοῖς μετὰ πάσης ἀκριβείας τοῖς ἡμετέροις γράμμασι παρακολουθεῖν, 1.218). This more respected group includes Demetrius Phalereus, Philo the Elder, and Eupolemus.

As it happens, at least one and possibly all three of these were Judaeans, though Josephus did not know it. Eupolemus, a member of Jerusalem's priestly elite during the Hasmonean revolt and Judah Maccabee's ambassador to Rome (1 Macc 8:17-20; 2 Macc 4:11), wrote a history of Israel's kings, which was used by Alexander Polyhistor (ca. 105-135 BCE), and which survives only in fragments.⁶⁵ Also known to Polyhistor and extant in fragments from Eusebius was the epic poet Philo, who wrote *On Jerusalem*, the surviving lines of which feature Abraham and Joseph.⁶⁶ Finally, Josephus identifies Demetrius of Phaleron—the librarian of King Ptolemy II, credited with arranging the translation of the Septuagint (Let. Aris. 9-11; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.12-16, 103-118; *Ag. Ap.* 2.46)—as a Greek who represented the Judean traditions fairly. Although this makes sense in terms of Demetrius' involvement with the Septuagint, it would be thin praise for the Greek Bible.⁶⁷ Josephus might well have confused this famous Demetrius with a Judaeon of the same name, a chronographer-historian, because half a dozen fragments of that Judaeon (-Alexandrian?) author are preserved in Eusebius and Clement, and the trio Demetrius, Philo, and Eupolemus appears again in Clement (*Strom.* 1.21.141.1-4).⁶⁸

However one identifies the three admirable "Greeks," if *Ag. Ap.* 1.41 provides another glimpse of the same view of prophetic versus non-prophetic books as *War* 1.17-18 and *Ag. Ap.* 2.116-118, as seems likely given the extensive overlaps in vocabulary and subject matter, two important consequences follow. First, when *Ag. Ap.* 1.41 mentions the many books after Artaxerxes that cover all sorts of details, it is still referring to the central subject of the *Against Apion* and this passage: *Judaean antiquity*. That is what the authors mentioned in *War* 1.17-18 and *Ag. Ap.* 1.218 wrote about. Josephus is saying that the ancient prophets got this exactly right, whereas later historians who reworked the prophets' material for their own literary efforts lacked the same accuracy. He is not saying that books after Artaxerxes dealt with later times. Histories of his own times come up only in 1.45. Second, in Josephus' mind (if not in reality) these later writers on Judaeon antiquity who were not as reliable as the ancient prophets included many non-Judaean Greeks. However sympathetic and well-intentioned they were, they certainly lacked the prophets' accuracy because they could not fully understand what the prophets were talking about. Judaeans have no reason to prefer such authors for knowledge of their ancient past and founding laws.

65 Holladay, *Fragments*, 1:93-156; Wacholder, *Eupolemus*.

66 Holladay, *Fragments*, 2:205-99.

67 Contrast *Ant.* 1.10-12; 12.11-118, especially 108-110.

68 Holladay, *Fragments*, 1:51-91.

5 Conclusions

These lines of inquiry converge to suggest a new way of understanding Josephus' remark in *Ag. Ap.* 1.41 about τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι τὴν τῶν προφητῶν ἀκριβῆ διαδοχὴν after Artaxerxes. Before continuing, I must recall the question we are trying to answer, to avoid confusion. Fortunately, we do not need to decide who really was a prophet in God's eyes, to construct a general ancient Judean view of prophecy, or to judge individual claims to prophecy or other ecstatic experiences. We are exploring conceptual worlds and taxonomies, the language with which authors communicated, and here the subset used by Josephus to communicate with his audiences. Specifically, we are asking what he most plausibly meant in *Ag. Ap.* 1.41. The clause above has all but universally been taken to indicate a diachronic succession of the prophets, which was "exact"—continuous or unbroken—until Artaxerxes' reign, but which then lost its precise contiguity. For some reason, this meant that writings about *later events* were not deemed as trustworthy by Judeans, even if by prophets perhaps, because of the dodgy succession. Whereas older scholarship saw this glass as half empty, as effectively signalling the absence of prophets, the prevailing view today finds the glass half full and Josephus entirely open to prophecy in his time. My effort to rethink the meaning of the clause begins from the premise that the usual reading of the succession, which underlies both views, does not make sense. If there is a more plausible way of understanding the perplexing phrase, ἀκριβῆς διαδοχή, we should prefer it.

A methodological caveat first. In proposing alternatives, we need not insist that Josephus made himself perfectly clear. Anyone who has given lectures, had to explain their words to a partner or to academic colleagues after being misunderstood, or had a book reviewed understands that we all speak and write in ways our audiences hear as insufficiently clear at best. Audiences, as decoders of the signs produced by an author, make different decisions about intended meanings and relations of words. That is why all translations of sentences more complex than "See Spot Run" will differ. In asking about Josephus' intended meaning, I am not assuming that he said one thing clearly and we can demonstrate what he meant. That is obviously not the case. I am suggesting that the alternative readings of *Ag. Ap.* 1.41 we have canvassed better suit his context than the accepted one, about the unbroken diachronic succession of the prophets.

For the key phrase ἀκριβῆς διαδοχή, I have floated two main alternatives.

1. The "succession of the prophets" means not their internal diachronic succession but their legacy, what came after them, by analogy with Eusebius' "succession(s) of the apostles," which the Christian

historian may have calqued from Josephus at *Ag. Ap.* 1.41. Just as Eusebius credits the apostles' successors with devoted preservation of what the apostles deposited, after the time of the apostles was over, so Josephus would be saying that writers who came after the prophets—their “succession” meaning the succession *to* them—no matter how diligent in some cases, were qualitatively different from the prophets. That succession (or these successors: Eusebius uses the abstract noun for the collective), was not accurate. There was no accurate succession of (= to) the prophets.

2. The “succession of the prophets” means not their diachronic succession but the prophets as a group or school, in the vein of Plato's and Philo's prophetic γένος and the use of διαδοχή as a synonym for “school” or “party.” Josephus chose “succession” as the *mot juste* at this moment of composition because he has just said that the prophets lived over many centuries (thus far, Rebecca Gray). He is not concerned, however, with the “accuracy” of *their succession*, a pointless question. By analogy with Acts' description of Pharisees as “the most accurate/precise school,” we could understand them rather, collectively, as “the accurate / precise line / group / class / body” of authors, in what they produced, *because they were prophets*. After their group—their “succession”—ceased at the time of Artaxerxes, there was no group of equivalent accuracy. The accurate succession of the prophets, the charter group characterised by accurate knowledge, ceased. Later historians did something qualitatively different, when they ventured to speak of Judaeans' origins. Judaeans would not commit their lives to such writings, would not trust them in the same way, when they have the accurate compositions of prophets.

I cannot choose decisively between these options because both intersect with Josephus' larger conceptions, find external parallels, and would make sense in the immediate context. I favour the first because it links up well, in mentioning what came after the prophets, with *War* 1.17-18 and *Ag. Ap.* 1.218. These other two passages would help us to see (a generally missed possibility) that Josephus' consistent focus is on the reliability of records about the Judaeans' *most ancient past*, not about more recent histories, a subject he transitions to only at *Ag. Ap.* 1.45. Again, I am not suggesting that Josephus was as clear as he might have been. Few writers are. He may not even have known precisely what he wished to say, possibly somewhere between these two options.

Putting all of this together, I propose interpreting *Ag. Ap.* 1.37-45 as follows:

1. The central issue in *Ag. Ap.* 1 is the remotest antiquity of the Judaeans, which some Greeks have denied to them. Josephus both demonstrates his people's antiquity and ridicules any reliance on Greek texts for knowledge of remote times. In our passage, he continues this contrast between Greeks and Judaeans, having turned on the offensive.
2. Our Judaeans records, he insists, are far older than anything Greeks have written about their past, and they have been scrupulously transmitted by a priestly succession. That much is shared by other oriental cultures (notably Egypt and Babylon), although Judaeans are much more careful in maintaining priestly purity, hence ensuring the correct interpretation.
3. Judaeans texts are uniquely reliable and harmonious because they were *written by prophets*, who received and transmitted information from God. They were not written by historians, investigating the past on their own initiative, gathering evidence, and using their best judgement. Only prophets, who received their information from God, going back to creation, wrote our ancient records.
4. The prophets ceased at the time of Artaxerxes (with the sacred books of Esther's time, *Ant.* 11), half a millennium before Josephus' time of writing.
5. Since then—in the succession of (= to, from) the prophets—others have written a great deal *about our ancient past*, including the Septuagint, but these writers derived their material from the prophets. They often conveyed this tolerably well in Greek. But Judaeans do not credit them for their ancient past, obviously, as they do the prophets' writings. The successors do not have the same accuracy, which is to say that there was no accurate succession of/to the prophets, no sequel to the accurate body/succession of the prophets. Or perhaps, that accurate breed/class of prophets was no longer present.
6. This is why Judaeans hold their sacred writings in such high regard. The *Against Apion* opens with the claim of Greek scholars that Judaeans were non-entities. By 1.37, Josephus has turned the tables with open ridicule. No Greek would die for something written by Herodotus or Thucydides, even by Homer, and quite sensibly, because they understand the nature of historical writing from watching their present contemporaries engaged in this pursuit. Cue Josephus' renewed attack on historians of the Judaeans War as

woeful incompetents. He is a much better historian of events that can be researched—but no prophet.

7. Josephus makes no distinction among different kinds of prophecy. The impression that he does rests on a shifting use of modern language. Suppose that a university has a class of people called full professors, that a department of sixty faculty members includes twenty-five full professors, that it has two important standing committees (hiring and promotion and curriculum), and that the rules require at least two full professors to serve on each. One would easily discover that some professors had served on the two committees and others had not. This would not mean that there were “two kinds of professors.” Likewise, some of Josephus’ (and the Bible’s) prophets wrote books, and others (e.g., Elijah and Elisha) did not. This does not mean that Josephus conceives of *two* (or more) *kinds* of prophet. Prophets were such because of their unique access to God, who spoke directly through them. The saying in S. Olam Rab. 21, that prophecies important for future generations were written down, whereas those relating to the prophet’s time alone were not, is consistent with Josephus’ view, though he does not articulate it. For him, the prophets’ work finished long ago: even recognising John Hyrcanus as an outlier, two centuries before Josephus.

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