

THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE OMENS IN JERUSALEM

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## Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between several descriptions of the same collection of portents, written by five different authors in the 1st century CE. According to Josephus and Tacitus, these omens prophesied the Fall of Jerusalem. According to biblical sources, these were events that occurred in Jesus' lifetime. These authors used these portents as tools to communicate their opinions on a wild variety of topics- monotheism, Judeophobia, Roman imperialism, messianism, and more. The question posed in this paper is why *these* portents specifically garnered so much attention to the point where they were recorded by this many authors, who represent such a variety of economic and cultural backgrounds. Through a method that considers their accounts from the lens of audience, intent and historical context, this paper aims to show that the theological and social issues surrounding Jerusalem around the time and after the Second Temple fell caused such confusion and lack of consensus that each author felt it necessary to support their own controversial opinions with the divine sanction of an omen. As a result of these conclusions, this paper proposes new methodological considerations in classical writing: to read portents as a literary tool for justification, and as an indicator of what opinions would be considered the most controversial to the author's audience.

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# 1 Introduction

In Jewish-Roman historian Flavius Josephus' work *The Jewish War* (around 75 CE), he bemoans that the Jews of Jerusalem were persuaded to oppose the Romans during the Judeo-Roman war by "false prophets" and ignored the omens that Jerusalem was going to fall, which eventually occurred in 70 AD. These "omens" were a "star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year." In a later year, the temple doors opened by themselves, sightings of chariots and trumpets in the sky, an earthquake and a mysterious voice saying, "Let us remove hence".<sup>1</sup> Similar to Josephus, in his work *The Histories* (100-110 CE) the roman historiographer Tacitus includes these portents, but describes them differently. He describes a host battling in the skies, the opening of the Temple doors and a mortal voice describing the Gods departing.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps most intriguing are the similarities these omens have with events in Jesus' life according to the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew (c. 80-90 CE), Mark (c. 66-70 CE), and Luke-Acts (c. 80-90 CE). The Star of Bethlehem, the rending of the Temple cloth, the ascension and Pentecost display certain resemblances to Josephus and Tacitus' descriptions.

The obvious question is- why? Why do these four portents appear in five such radically different sources? Classical authors are known to find omens important- because they are the only moments when the God(s) "speak", if the meanings just happen to coincide with the author's opinions, the author's argument is supported by the highest and most divine authority. But that this selection of portents was recorded by not only this *many* authors, but also from such varying social and economic backgrounds, is unprecedented. I aim to show that these portents ultimately acquired their inflated importance because of the highly theological and social issues at stake surrounding Jerusalem in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. Each of these authors uses these portents as divine sanction for their differing opinions on "the Jewish problem." This includes topics such as messianism, monotheism, Judaism, Judeophobia, the "gentile problem", and Roman imperialism. In order to support this thesis statement, these differing opinions will be unearthed by showing how each author depicts the portents based on the influence of historical context, audience, and intent (another essential aspect will be tracing the role of divine sanction.) In summary, I intend to show that even though they describe the same or similar events, each account is noticeably different as each author manipulates and is influenced by these three factors, in order to support and ultimately claim divine justification for their opinion on these "hot topics" surrounding Jerusalem.

The history of scholarship on these portents is surprisingly short. While Christian theologians have been linking Josephus and biblical events for centuries, academic researchers have been slow in drawing systematic links between them. SV MacCasland's 1932 article "Portents in Josephus and in the Gospels" compares some of the portents described in Josephus and the Gospels in order chart the time between the witnessing or collecting of these stories and their physical documentation. However, he did not consider these passages as describing the same event, merely comparable ones, making them a convenient basis from which to make observations about classical writing.<sup>3</sup> He concludes that Josephus appealed to his Roman audience by claiming that Vespasian was the fulfilment of omens that were (apparently) Messianic.<sup>4</sup> Christians used these portents to show that Jesus was the Messiah, as omens were symptoms of the "miraculous" nature of his time on earth.<sup>5</sup> MacCasland ultimately aims to engage in text criticism and does not explicitly address why each author was prompted to include these portents in their work. It seems that HW Montefiore was the first scholar to systematically lay the link between the accounts, in his 1960 article "Josephus and the New Testament". Unlike MacCasland, he also includes Tacitus, although this consists of small mentions.<sup>6</sup> However, just like MacCasland, any discussion on authorial intent is only to aid text criticism, showing how Josephus' accounts corroborated Biblical

<sup>1</sup>Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, trans., A.M. William Whiston (Auburn and Buffalo: John E. Beardsley, 1895), 6.5.3, Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D1%3Awhiston+chapter%3Dpr.%3Awhiston+section%3D1>.

<sup>2</sup>Cornelius Tacitus, *The History*, in *The Complete Works of Tacitus*, eds., Alfred John Church, William Jackson Brodrick (New York: Random House, Inc., 1942), 5.13, Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0080>.

<sup>3</sup>HW Montefiore, "Josephus and the New Testament," *Novum Testamentum*4, vol. 2 (Dec., 1960): 313

<sup>4</sup>SV McCasland, "Portents in Josephus and in the Gospels," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 51, no. 4 (Dec., 1932): 331.

<sup>5</sup>HW Montefiore, "Josephus and the New Testament (Continued)," *Novum Testamentum*4, vol. 4 (Dec., 1960): 313

<sup>6</sup>Montefiore, "Josephus", 139-160.

events. There is no attempt to explain why so many authors included these portents in their works. Erich S Gruen is the only academic to briefly address Tacitus' intents in his descriptions of the portents. In his 2008 book *The Construct of Identity in Hellenistic Judaism*, Gruen explains that the way Tacitus depicts the Judaeian portents was to justify his Judeophobia.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately any discussion on why these authors placed such emphasis on these portents and depicted them the way they did has been relegated to a brief mention. Moreover, none of these authors (exempting perhaps MacCasland's attention to allusions) notice the literary nature of these works. This paper adds to this discussion by using a more comprehensive method (outlined below), and by inspecting why these portents were so popular.

To properly analyze the sources discussed in this paper, it is necessary to summarize recent methodological developments. Until the 1980s, most scholarship in the field of "Josephian studies" was focused on reading what scholar Steve Mason calls "through Josephus" to get the "facts" of history. This approach focused on text criticism. Later scholars increasingly began to study Josephus as a narrative to understand his motives and intentions. Mason compares reading Josephus to watching *Gladiator*—"we know that the production was well researched and that it is *based on* much reliable information. But it is quite obviously an artistic construction, with every element calculated to contribute to the whole effect."<sup>8</sup> Josephus' works are valuable for *how* they are written (his language, assumptions and effect) instead of what they are written about.<sup>9</sup> Thus, one should study the allusions, themes, and use of language and similar techniques. This shift was spurred on by the Rengerstorff/Shalit *Concordance* (1968-1983), Heinz Schreckenberg's text-critical and bibliographical studies, Feldman's annotated bibliographies and a growing collection of digital tools which provided the means to perform a systematic study of these complex works.<sup>10</sup> Still, this shift had not yet reached its modern form because of structuralist methodology, which excluded historical context and audience, instead studying the 'text itself'. This occurred not just in Josephian but also in biblical studies. For example, Mary Ann Beavis explains that it was "not uncommon" to study Mark with a formalist methodology.<sup>11</sup> However, Beavis believes that reader response criticism – a method that remains aware that texts are a dialogue between reader, text and author- is superior.<sup>12</sup> "To be able to encode the meaning of a text, we must understand how the receiver would have decoded the text".<sup>13</sup> This perspective has also recently been proposed in Josephian studies, where Mason has argued to push "narrative" methodology in a direction that remains aware of an *intended audience*. Aspects such as the existing knowledge base of the intended recipient- from their values, interests and attitudes- should be kept in mind.<sup>14</sup> This should be integrated into the literary method in a "two-pronged approach" –both literary and audience oriented.<sup>15</sup>

This two-pronged method will be used for this thesis. This paper pays particular attention to *who* the intended audience of each author is, in order to illuminate what the intended effect was of each author's techniques. For example, Mark's Graeco-Roman rhetoric, or Josephus' constant allusions to famous Greek historians makes communicating *meaning* to their Graeco-Roman audiences more effective. It should be noted that the lack of sustained scholarship on Judaeian portents that actually employ this "two-pronged" methodology provides us with a good reason to revisit this topic from this perspective. However, the primary reason for using this method is because portents are themselves a literary device. They functioned in the same way symbols do- they are representative of a deeper meaning. The audience was familiar with how different omens represented different things, in the same way that we today understand that doves mean peace, or a heart means love. In this case, this two-pronged method is especially suitable and fosters analysis.

The structure of this paper will be organized to study each portent in depth. First, each author's description of the Bethlehem star will be inspected, then in a similar fashion the descriptions of the torn

<sup>7</sup>Erich S Gruen, *The Construct of Identity in Hellenistic Judaism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 265.

<sup>8</sup>Steve Mason, *Josephus, Judea and Christian Origins* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 25.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, 42-43.

<sup>10</sup>Mason, *Josephus*, 103.

<sup>11</sup>Mary Ann Beavis, *Mark's Audience, The Literary and Social Setting of Mark 4.11-12*. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 9-10.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, 10.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, 13.

<sup>14</sup>Mason, *Josephus*, 47.

<sup>15</sup>Beavis, *Mark's Audience*, 10.

veil, the ascension and Pentecost will be inspected. This will keep the investigation focused and on a smaller “case study” scale, allowing for closer inspection of each author’s use of narrative techniques. Finally, considering each meaning the authors attempted to communicate, I will show how this fixation on these portents points towards a particular fascination at the time with the social and theological issues surrounding Jerusalem.

## 2 The Star of Bethlehem

The famous Star of Bethlehem recorded in Matthew has an equivalent in Josephus’ *War*. However it is important to first establish that they are talking about the same event. In order to maintain the position that these portents have more cultural leverage than regular portents because they appear in several sources, it is necessary to establish that they are, indeed, the same. If they are all different portents that resemble each other but ultimately are not the same, they do not have more importance than any other randomly recorded portents. For this omen, however, the comparison is more precarious than any of the other portents to be analyzed. Among the synoptic evangelists, the only one to write about the star was Matthew:

After [the magi] had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child [...] and they bowed down and worshiped him.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, Josephus describes how the people of Jerusalem, led astray by false prophets “like men infatuated, without either eyes to see or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them. Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year.”<sup>17</sup> This is the only one of his portents that occurs at a random time- the rest all occur within the same year. There remains evidence to suggest Josephus’ star is the same as Matthew’s. Both Josephus and Matthew describe the star “standing over” a place (albeit over Jerusalem or Bethlehem, which were a few miles apart). Both think the star was sent by God and has symbolic relevance.<sup>18</sup> Having established a link between these accounts, I now turn to the literary analysis of Matthew’s star.

To accomplish this, I must outline who Matthew’s audience was. Matthew probably wrote his gospel in Antioch, the capital of Roman Syria, for his community of Jewish-Christians. It is clear his audience is Jewish because Mathew traces Jesus’ descent from Abraham,<sup>19</sup> uses Jewish terminology, does not explain Jewish customs and he emphasizes Jesus’ role as “Son of David”.<sup>20</sup> Most importantly, Matthew’s gospel focuses on Jesus’ fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. He quotes and alludes to the Old Testament most of the New Testament authors. Therefore, much of Matthew’s narrative focuses on proving to the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah by showing he is a fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament.

Matthew’s emphasis on the fulfillment of Jesus as the Messiah prophesized in the Old Testament is clear in his star description. The star is framed as a fulfillment of one of the Messianic prophecies from Numbers. Matthew first draws parallels between Jesus’ birth story and the story of Balak and Balaam in Numbers 22-24. There is a wicked king (Balak), a pagan wise man (Balaam) and God intervening to foil the king’s evil plan, climaxing with Balaam’s messianic prophecy: “I see him, but not now, I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. [...] A ruler will come out of Jacob”.<sup>21</sup> Not only the indication “he” will come in the future (“not now”, “not near”),

<sup>16</sup>Matthew 2:9-11, (NIV).

<sup>17</sup>J. BJ 6.5.3.

<sup>18</sup>Montefiore, “Josephus,” 146.

<sup>19</sup>Matthew 1:1-17, (NIV).

<sup>20</sup>Matthew 1:1, 9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30-31, 21:9, 22:41-45, (NIV).

<sup>21</sup>Numbers 24:17-19, (NIV).

but that he will come from Jacob are staples of messianic prophecies. For example, the scepter also appears in a messianic prophecy from Genesis.<sup>22</sup> This allusion requires heavy knowledge of the Bible, and therefore caters to Matthew's Jewish audience. Even so, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that Matthew's audience would have read Matthew's allusion to Numbers from a Messianic perspective. The Star Prophecy appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the War Scroll found at Qumran. Simon bar Kokhba, the messianic leader of the Second Jewish Revolt in 132 CE, was considered a fulfillment of this prophecy as his name means "Son of a Star" in Aramaic.<sup>23</sup> Therefore Matthew's Jewish followers would interpret this passage as a fulfillment of a well-known messianic prophecy. Matthew uses this moment that God "speaks" to vindicate his main purpose in writing his Gospel- proving to his Jewish audience that their Messiah has come by Jesus' fulfillment of prophecies from the Old Testament. It is not surprising that Matthew uses the portent to stress messianism in this and other parts of his book- Suetonius, Tacitus and Josephus claim there was a widespread belief in 70 CE that a world ruler would appear in the East. Further instances like the upcoming Second Jewish rebellion testify to the fact that the Jews were expectantly awaiting a Messiah to arrive.<sup>24</sup> This issue of the Messiah is one of those "pressing topics" that will appear in many author's works, as will become apparent soon. However, Matthew has more than one theme which he communicates to his Jewish audience.

In the resolution of Matthew's gospel Jesus breaks the ban on the mission to the gentiles and announces he is not just a Messiah to the Jews but also to the gentiles. Matthew foreshadows this message throughout his work, including in the Star story. Within Matthew's narrative, the so-called "plot function" of the star is to bring the magi to Jesus. They were gentiles, and to Jews particularly challenging because of their reliance on astrology- magi were astronomers who believed that the stars defined fate- which opposed the notion that God was in control. Therefore, sensitive to his audience, Matthew proceeds delicately. When the magi come to Jesus, they "bowed down and worshipped him".<sup>25</sup> So, while Jesus does come for the Gentiles, this is also framed as a challenge to the Roman empire. Jesus has come to be the savior of the entire world over which the Roman empire claimed sovereignty, and this sovereignty is legitimized by every rank bowing to him- from Jewish shepherds to Babylonian magi. This challenge to Rome was important to Matthew- after the fall of Jerusalem, Titus paraded Jewish prisoners through Antioch and destroyed a Jewish synagogue to turn it into a theatre decorated with depictions of his father. Throughout Antioch other monuments were erected aimed at reinforcing the power of Rome and the humiliation of the Jews, and Matthew's community shared in this humiliation.<sup>26</sup> Many scholars have argued that Matthew seeks to undermine Roman imperialism by showing the world belongs to God and his Son. This rejection of Roman imperialism and Messianic concerns will resurface in Josephus.

Josephus uses the star to support his main aim- undermine the Roman narrative of victory and show the reason for the Jerusalem's destruction was because of a couple of "bad apples". His stress on this subject has much to do with who his audience was and what they believed. Given the accessibility and dissemination of books in the early imperial Roman period, Josephus' audience would have been limited to a small group of upper class bilingual Roman citizens. Josephus struggled with the presumption of his Roman audience about the Judaeans people. Tacitus' presentation as the origin of the war being the sharp variance between the rites and customs of the Judaeans and the Romans reflected popular feeling: "The irrefragable defeat of the Judaeans and their protective deity was due to the virtue of the Roman generals, their military superiority, and the favor of Roman deities."<sup>27</sup> For the Jewish and patriotic Josephus, these highly rhetorical accounts missed the point- they simply tried to blacken the Jews, even though they were not in possession of all the facts.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore Josephus focuses on challenging the Roman imperial narrative. In Josephus' depiction of

<sup>22</sup> Genesis 49:10, (NIV).

<sup>23</sup> Robert Eisenman, *James the Brother of Jesus: The Key to Unlocking the Secrets of Early Christianity and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York City: Viking Press, 1997), 23.

<sup>24</sup> Montefiore, "Josephus," 143.

<sup>25</sup> Matthew 2:11, (NIV).

<sup>26</sup> John K. Riches and David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2005), 129.

<sup>27</sup> Mason, *Josephus*, 78.

<sup>28</sup> J. BJ 1. pr.1.

the star, he does model it to resemble omens in the works of other Graeco-Roman writers, which makes the communication of the portent's meaning much easier. We can conclude this because Josephus' portents of the destruction of Jerusalem have no parallels in any preceding Hebrew works. Jewish apocalyptic writers record omens in terms of the coming Day of God or the messianic age- never to ordinary historical events like a birth or war. There is rabbinic literature which record omens of the destruction of the Temple, but it cannot be earlier than or even contemporary with Josephus.<sup>29</sup> Acknowledging that Josephus refers to Graeco-Roman tradition to cater to his audience is important for analysis of all his portents. In the case of the star, we see parallels in Suetonius, who relates that when Julius Caesar died a comet was visible for seven nights in honor.<sup>30</sup> Dio says on the day Claudius adopted Nero the sky seemed on fire, that the death of Claudius was foretold by a comet seen for a long time, a comet was seen during Vitellius' reign, and another one foretold the death of Vespasian.<sup>31</sup> Finally, Pliny said it was not unusual for the sky to glow, or for clouds to be seized by fire.<sup>32</sup> Josephus deliberately paralleled these portents, certain his Roman audience would understand the star prophesized the victory of Vespasian. Josephus later makes his meaning explicit:

what did the most elevate them in undertaking this war, was an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how, "about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth." The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular, and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination. Now this oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea.<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, Josephus not only shows God sanctioning Vespasian by way of a star, but also compliments Vespasian by claiming he is the fulfillment of a Jewish messianic prophecy.<sup>34</sup> However this compliment is Janus-faced: Josephus glorifies him, in order to be able to "get away" with saying that Vespasian was under divine control- for it was God's machinations which allowed Vespasian to take control of Jerusalem; the prediction of the star proves it. That the war's outcome is predetermined by God subverts Flavian rhetoric.<sup>35</sup> Finally, this depiction is also important to Josephus himself. Branded as a traitor by his fellow countrymen, Josephus proves he was following God's plan by siding with Vespasian.<sup>36</sup> Scholar Jan Willem Van Henten argues that Josephus would want to justify himself because some of his readers were Jews, including members of the Herodian family Josephus sent copies of *War* to.<sup>37</sup> MacCasland argues that Josephus merely aimed to ingratiate himself with the Romans.<sup>38</sup> Either way, Josephus the narrator uses this portent to divinely sanction the actions of Josephus the general.

Matthew and Josephus both have two concerns- challenging roman imperialism and explaining messianism- two topics deeply relevant to the Jerusalem problem. Matthew shows that his star portent is the fulfillment of the Numbers prophecy, divinely designating Jesus as the messiah. In this he relies on his Jewish audience understanding his allusions to the Old Testament. Moreover, the star acts as a plot device for the magi to find Jesus, which communicates to the audience two other key themes-

<sup>29</sup> McCasland, "Portents," 327.

<sup>30</sup> C. Suetonius Tranquillus, *Divus Julius*, ed., Alexander Thomson (Philadelphia: Gebbie & Co, 1889), 88, Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0132%3A1ife%3Djul.%3Achapter%3D1>.

<sup>31</sup> Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, trans., Earnest Cary, (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1978), LX. 33.2; LX. 35.1; LXV. 8.1; LXVI. 17.2, Penelope Digital Library. [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cassius\\_Dio/home.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cassius_Dio/home.html).

<sup>32</sup> Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, esq., John Bostock, M.D., F.R.S., and H.T. Riley (London: Taylor and Francis, 1855), 2.61, Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0137%3Abook%3D1%3Achapter%3Ddedication>.

<sup>33</sup> J. BJ 6.5.4.

<sup>34</sup> McCasland, "Portents," 332.

<sup>35</sup> Riches and Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 131.

<sup>36</sup> Jan Willem van Henten, "Josephus as Narrator," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 51, no. 4 (Dec 1932): 123.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> McCasland, "Portents," 331.

that Jesus is also the messiah for the Gentiles, and therefore claims sovereignty over the world in spite of the Roman Empire. Like Matthew, Josephus relies on his Roman audience's knowledge base to communicate meaning, relying on Roman tradition to show the star was a sign that Vespasian will come to rule. This subtly undermines the Roman narrative of valor and strength, because it implies Vespasian was controlled by the will of God. Moreover it implies Josephus' abandonment of the Judean war effort was in accordance with God's will. Already the complicated relationship between intention, audience and historical context is perceptible in both classical author's works, as both seek divine sanction for their opinion on issues such as messianism and Roman imperialism.

### 3 The Rending of the Temple Cloth

The rending of the temple cloth is another event that occurs in both the gospel and non-Christian sources, although they noticeably differ. As before, it is important to establish the similarities of this event. Mark writes: "With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, 'Surely this man was the Son of God!'"<sup>39</sup> Matthew adds several apocryphal elements by writing that after the veil was torn "the earth shook, the rocks split, and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life."<sup>40</sup> He also adds that Jesus' death was witnessed by several guards, who all confirmed his divinity. Luke reorganizes the story, first recording that the temple curtain tore, then "Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.'" [...] The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man."<sup>41</sup>

These Christian sources have non-Christian equivalents in Tacitus, Josephus and even the Talmud, but these claim the temple doors opened, instead of the veil tearing. Yet even between the non-Christian sources there are vast differences. The Talmud records: "Forty years before the fall of the Temple, the doors of the Temple opened of their own accord, until Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai rebuked them"<sup>42</sup> Josephus is more thorough- he writes:

Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner temple, [...] was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night. Now those that kept watch in the temple came hereupon running to the captain of the temple, and told him of it; who then came up thither, and not without great difficulty was able to shut the gate again. This also appeared to the vulgar to be a very happy prodigy, as if God did thereby open them the gate of happiness. But the men of learning understood it, that the security of their holy house was dissolved of its own accord, and that the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies. So these publicly declared that the signal foreshowed the desolation that was coming upon them.<sup>43</sup>

Tacitus records the moment briefly: "The doors of the inner shrine were suddenly thrown open, and a voice of more than mortal tone was heard to cry that the Gods were departing. At the same time there was a mighty stir as of departure."<sup>44</sup> Differences between all 3 versions abound. Note that Tacitus combines two omens Josephus records occurring separately, and whereas in the Talmud the Rabbi rebukes the doors, in Josephus' version a captain was called shut the gates. However, there are signs that all 6 sources describe the same event. Given that in the Talmud account the "40 years" was probably a rounded figure and the Temple fell in CE 70, the dating seems to fall within the bracket of time of Jesus' death, CE 27-33. According to Josephus, this event took place "in the month Xanthicus", or Nisan, the

<sup>39</sup>Mark 15:37-39, (NIV).

<sup>40</sup>Matthew 27:52, (NIV).

<sup>41</sup>Luke 23:45-47, (NIV).

<sup>42</sup>Jerusalem Talmud Yoma vi, 4.

<sup>43</sup>J. BJ 6.5.3.

<sup>44</sup>Tac. Hist. 5.13.

month in which Jesus died.<sup>45</sup> However, Jesus' death occurred at 3 PM, whereas Josephus records the event as having happened at 6 AM. Given these differences, Montefiore assumes that the account the evangelists record emerged out of the "original" Josephan or Talmudic account, and was changed for theological necessity.<sup>46</sup>

However, this approach automatically assumes the veil the evangelists referred to was the *inner* veil, and that its tearing symbolizes Jesus opening the way to God (which had been physically obstructed by the inner veil), even though no evangelist proposes this interpretation. Instead, evidence suggests it was the *outer veil* that tore. This curtain separated the Holy Place from the outer court, unlike the inner veil which separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. This prevented gentiles from entering the Temple. The "Visibility Argument" proposes that all three evangelists place the centurion's confession *after* the rending of the veil, intending his declaration (Jesus as Son of God/a righteous man) to read as being in reaction to *seeing* the veil tear.<sup>47</sup> However, this gentile centurion would only have been permitted to see the outer veil. Moreover, in order to be seen from the place of Jesus' crucifixion Golgotha, the veil needed to be extraordinarily tall. Josephus describes the veil as 80 ft.<sup>48</sup> This veil would be visible from the Golgotha, and also would have obscured the inner veil from view.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, the visibility argument concludes, it could only have been the outer veil that was torn. Moreover, this interpretation is a more reasonable interpretation as the outer veil was positioned closer to the gates which coincides better with Josephus and Tacitus' accounts. This version more clearly overlaps with the non-Christian narratives, till it does seem possible that each source referred to the same event. As we shall see, each author utilizes this divine sign from the temple in a way that validates the running themes of their works.

Mark seeks to confirm to his gentile audience the inauguration of the "gentile mission", a topic so tricky for Matthew to discuss. Mark contains details that suggest it was indeed written for a gentile Christian audience, such as the use of Aramaic quotes, Latin expressions and explanations of the Old Testament and Jewish customs. Therefore, the meaning of "Mark's veil" is based on an internal, theological reading, devoid of Old Testament references. Using this technique, it was Daniel M. Gurtner who observed that the "incident picks up and forms an inclusion with the account of Jesus' baptism in 1.9-11".<sup>50</sup> There is a cluster of motifs which occur at both events. 1. there is a revelatory naming of Jesus as the Son of God (at his baptism it is the voice of God, at his death it is the gentile centurion). 2. something descends (the spirit dove or the tear in the temple veil, described as moving downwards). 3. Elijah is symbolically present (as John the Baptist, or in the observations of the onlookers) 4. The spirit Jesus receives at his baptism is evoked at his death by Mark's repeated use of "*ekpneo*" (to expire), which is a cognate of *pneuma* (soul, spirit).<sup>51</sup> David Ulansey builds on this argument by pointing out that Mark used the tearing of the veil as a parallel to the splitting of the heavens from the baptism passage.<sup>52</sup> This theory becomes especially viable once we remember Josephus records that "embroidered upon [the inner veil] all that was mystical in the heavens."<sup>53</sup> This rending of the heavens is interesting, for it is a "motif ... found almost solely in apocalypses."<sup>54</sup> Therefore it marks the dawning of a new, Messianic age, inaugurated by Jesus' death.<sup>55</sup> By evoking imagery from the very start of Jesus' journey, Mark shows the fulfillment of his messianic mission, culminating in a post-messianic new age.

While Mark's literary device is interesting, the ripping of the veil also has a revelatory function. Because this veil was so big and thick, it could not have been torn by anyone but God. This is clearly a sign from God identifying Jesus as his son (as the dove did at his baptism). This is the climax and resolution of one of Mark's key themes, his infamous 'Messianic secret'. Throughout Mark's narrative,

<sup>45</sup>Montefiore, "Portents," 159.

<sup>46</sup>Daniel M. Gurtner, *The Torn Veil: Matthew's Exposition of the Death of Jesus*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 7.

<sup>47</sup>Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47 (NIV).

<sup>48</sup>J. BJ 5.207.

<sup>49</sup>Gurtner, *The Torn Veil*, 6.

<sup>50</sup>Gurtner, *The Torn Veil*, 173.

<sup>51</sup>David Ulansey, "The Heavenly Veil Torn: Mark's Cosmic "Inclusio"," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110, no. 1(Spring 1991): 123.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, 124.

<sup>53</sup>J. BJ 5.207.

<sup>54</sup>Ulansey, "The Heavenly Veil Torn," 124.

<sup>55</sup>Gurtner, *The Torn Veil*, 163.

he places special stress on the fact that Jesus did not want to be identified as the Christ. Even in his trial when he identifies himself as the messiah, it is only at his death that the gentile onlooker believes it. Hence, once the centurion sees the veil tear, he proclaims, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”<sup>56</sup> Mark coincides the moment when Jesus dies (for his gentile audience) with the moment he is performatively named as their Messiah. Mark uses this portent to communicate his opinions on messianism, which we have already noted to be a popular theme.

There is a certain continuity between Mark and Matthew, as we notice that Matthew also uses this omen to again discuss messianism, and possibly even the gentile mission. Throughout Matthew, it is a consistent theme that Jesus as Son of God and the destruction of the temple are linked. In 26:61, false witnesses at Jesus’ trial attest that he said “I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.”<sup>57</sup> 27:39-40 depicts people jeering at the crucified Jesus: “You who are going to *destroy the temple* and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the *Son of God!*”<sup>58</sup> Moreover, this alludes back to a prophecy from 2 Samuel 7:11-14, where God tells David, “I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, [...] *He is the one who will build a house for my Name*, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and *he will be my son*.”<sup>59</sup> Therefore, Matthew communicates that upon his death “Jesus himself supplants the temple as the “place where God mediates salvation to people”.”<sup>60</sup> Matthew makes it clear that Jesus, indeed, does this by dying for the sins of the people in Matthew 26:28: “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins”.<sup>61</sup> However, a problem arises. This comparison between Jesus’ death and 2 Samuel 7:11-14 necessitates that the torn veil was the *inner veil* which is the veil that separates God from His creation. Only if the inner veil is torn is the function of the temple negated, replaced by Jesus the Son of God.

In support of the theory that it was the *outer veil* that tore, many scholars hold 27:54 foreshadows the inclusion of the gentiles (like in Mark), as Jesus’ divinity upon the cross is declared by a gentile. “Ironically, those who (falsely) accuse Jesus of claiming to be able to destroy the temple, as son of God, now profess that very thing at the rending of its veil.”<sup>62</sup> By negating the function of the veil that separated the gentiles from the Jews, Jesus has allowed a path to God for all people. However, this interpretation ignores Matthew’s main aim- to declare to his Jewish readers *their* Messiah has come, has died for them and thus has replaced the Temple. Because it is unclear which veil Matthew is referring to, either of these interpretations could be true. Some speculate that this is on purpose- Matthew makes which veil tore unclear so both interpretations are viable. Whichever it is, Matthew uses a divine sign from God to justify his major themes- whether foreshadowing the gentile mission, or reminding his Jewish audience Jesus is their messiah.

Where Matthew added information and carried over a significant number of themes from Mark, (albeit modified), Luke departs from the very structure of the narrative (outlined above), thereby producing a narrative different in substance. However to understand these changes, we must understand Luke’s context. Luke’s audience *is* Christian. He quotes the Old Testament often and regards it as self-evident proof. He does not explain key terms like the “Son of Man” or “Kingdom of God”. He includes parables addressed to disciples and the Lord’s prayer.<sup>63</sup>

Instead of Matthew’s referential look to the past, Luke parallels Jesus’ death to a martyr in *the*

<sup>56</sup>Ibid, 174.

<sup>57</sup>Matthew 26:61 (NIV). (Italics mine).

<sup>58</sup>Matthew 27:40 (NIV); Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke-Acts in its Mediterranean Milieu* (Leiden: Brill, 2003): 105. (Italics mine).

<sup>59</sup>2 Samuel 7:11-14 (NIV).

<sup>60</sup>Gurtner, *The Torn Veil*, 13.

<sup>61</sup>Matthew 26:28, (NIV).

<sup>62</sup>Ibid, 179.

<sup>63</sup>Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts: Studies of the New Testament and Its World*(Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T & T Clark): 15.

It should be briefly mentioned here that Luke says he is writing to “my dear Theophilus” in order to give him “some account of all that Jesus began to do and teach until the time of his ascension.” While it is unclear who Theophilus is (some have speculated that he was a Roman official, or a Jewish friend- others consider it merely to be the honorary title of the Christian community given that it means “friend/beloved of God”), most scholars agree that Luke writes beyond him as well, to a wider community of Christians.

*future*, making Jesus' death about martyrdom, and an answer to a very contemporary problem for Christians. Jesus' death is juxtaposed to that of "the first martyr", Stephen, whose death is recorded in Acts. Both ask for forgiveness of their murderers, which is not seen in the Marcan, Matthean or Johannine Jesus.<sup>64</sup> Both commit their spirits before death which is not found in any other gospels.<sup>65</sup> Both utter an articulate cry before dying whereas in Mark and Matthew these are inarticulate.<sup>66</sup> Luke describes Joseph of Arimathea, the man who prepared Jesus for burial as a "good and righteous man."<sup>67</sup> Similarly, the men who bury Stephen are described as "devout men".<sup>68</sup> By comparing Jesus' sacrifice to the martyrdom of Stephen, he gives courage to a church under attack, reminding them that this suffering is Christ-like. Often to encourage others, Luke relies on 'divine intervention' as one of the credentials of the Christian movement.<sup>69</sup> This is where the veil becomes relevant- while God does not perform a deus ex-machina to save either Stephen nor Jesus, he still shows His divine power by tearing the veil (or opening the heavens). Their martyrdom is sanctioned by God.

However, other probable interpretations of this event have been proposed. Scholar Dennis D Sylva argues there is one more parallel between Jesus and Stephen- in Acts 7:55-56, Stephen commits himself to God based on seeing Jesus through an opening in the heavens. Therefore, Jesus' commitment of his spirit in his final cry must have been to the God of the temple, who was revealed to him by the tearing of the veil.<sup>70</sup> This is why Jesus' cry became articulate- it was a prayer to God. This theory becomes especially viable since the ninth hour was the hour of prayer in the temple. Therefore the function of the veil was to show the last moment of Jesus' life as being in service and commitment to God.<sup>71</sup> By extension, *martyrdom* is framed as a commitment to God. Both Jesus and Stephen's death encourage his fellow Christians despite persecution.

Unlike Luke, Matthew and Mark, Josephus' account does not have theological concerns- he is again occupied with opposing the popular interpretation of how the war went and the Judeophobic opinion that the Jews deserved their fate. He emphasizes that God did not abandon his people and that they were led astray. Firstly, Josephus places emphasis on the gate's size and scope using a list, ("brass, and vastly heavy, had been with difficulty shut by twenty men, and upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one entire stone") to make explicit that it could only be God that opened it, and therefore it is clearly a divine sign.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, he invokes a standard omen amongst Romans that foreshadows something disastrous, by recording doors opening miraculously. For example, Suetonius writes that the night before Caesar was murdered, the door to his room was opened by itself.<sup>73</sup> Dio writes that before Claudius died the temple of Jupiter Victor opened by itself, and before Nero died his bedroom door and the mausoleum of Augustus opened. Moreover in the reign of Vitellius the temple of Jupiter opened "with a great noise".<sup>74</sup> Finally, before Vespasian died the mausoleum of Augustus opened.<sup>75</sup> To any Roman reader, it would be clear that this was an omen signaling imminent death. Therefore, his audience shares Josephus' frustration when he reports that the sign was misinterpreted as an opening of a "gate of happiness". However Josephus critiques only *a certain* group of Jews- the "vulgar". Josephus holds that the correct interpretation of omens could be found only by "the learned and the sacred scribes".<sup>76</sup> It was the responsibility of the Temple priests to be able to interpret omens and warn the people.<sup>77</sup> However, as aforementioned, Josephus framed his portents in

<sup>64</sup> Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60 (NIV).

<sup>65</sup> Luke 23:46, Acts 7:59 (NIV).

<sup>66</sup> Luke 23:46, Acts 7:60 (NIV).

<sup>67</sup> Luke 23:50 (NIV).

<sup>68</sup> Acts 8:2 (NIV); Dennis D. Sylva, "The Temple Curtain and Jesus' Death in the Gospel of Luke," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105, no. 2 (Jun. 1986): 244

<sup>69</sup> Maddox, *The Purpose*, 1.

<sup>70</sup> Sylva, "The Temple Curtain," 244; Acts 7:59, (NIV).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 243, 245-6.

<sup>72</sup> J. BJ 6.5.3

<sup>73</sup> Suet. Jul. 81.

<sup>74</sup> Dio, *Hist. Rom.* LX. 35.1; LXIII. 26.5.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, LXVI. 17.2; MacCasland, *Portents*, 328.

<sup>76</sup> Rebecca Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 87-88.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*.

the context of the death of 6000 because they were misled by “false prophets”. It was a very specific group of people (the false prophets, or the vulgar) that caused people to be foolhardy enough to ignore God’s signs and oppose the Romans- not knowledgeable Jewish priests such as himself. By invoking an omen tradition that his audience has prior knowledge of, Josephus makes it clear that the downfall of the Jews was due to “bad apples”- as a whole they do not deserve the Judeophobic reputation Roman historians give them.

Unlike Josephus, Tacitus uses the same divine sign to justify his Judeophobia and belief the Jews were deserving of their destruction due to their own folly. However, to understand Tacitus clearly, it is necessary to first explain his context. As scholar Erich S. Gruen notes, pagan attitudes towards outsiders were relatively consistent- they normally welcomed or tolerated other cultures and their strange customs. The Jews were, however, an exception. Horrific events were enacted against Jews, the most notorious being the “pogrom” of 38 BCE in Alexandria.<sup>78</sup> This “Judeophobic” attitude is reflected in the works of Roman authors contemporary to Tacitus. Seneca, Apion, Livy, and Cassius Dio described stories about strange and often entirely made up Jewish customs.<sup>79</sup> However, Gruen explains that there is “neither admiration of the Jews nor hostility toward them. Instead, a considerable number of authors leave the impression of a remarkable ignorance.”<sup>80</sup> While Tacitus comes from a Judeophobic background, his *Histories* stands out from his contemporary source material.<sup>81</sup> Tacitus depicts Jews as a race inclined to lust, the most despised of subject peoples, with practices that are base and wicked.<sup>82</sup> He devotes thirteen chapters to the Jews in Book V of *Histories*, which is such a digression from his primary narrative it has left many historians scratching their heads. This aggressive Judeophobia has never been compellingly explained. Some claim he sought to justify Rome’s destruction of the Temple and therefore blackened Jews as aggressively as possible. Others theorize Tacitus resented the stream of converts to Judaism, or he felt threatened by the local thriving Roman Jewish population, who he feared would rebel and threaten Rome. Whichever it is (most likely it is a combination of these and personal reasons), it is present in his portentous descriptions.

Tacitus’ uses the door opening portent to justify his Judeophobia. Tacitus describes simply that “The doors of the inner shrine were suddenly thrown open”.<sup>83</sup> Here Tacitus uses the same literary technique as Josephus by alluding to a well-known sign of coming destruction. However, as mentioned before, Tacitus combined two portents that Josephus described as separate events. It is here combined with the well-known portent of Gods abandoning a shrine before its destruction. This omen will be elaborated on later, but what is crucial to note is that Tacitus doubles the intensity of the omens. To any Roman audience, the Jews look foolhardy for having missed not one, but *two* heavenly signs. Tacitus paints a picture of a people inclined to superstitio and hostile to religio, and therefore they rejected any proper expiation of omens by way of sacrifice or vows.<sup>84</sup> He writes, “Prodigies had occurred, which this nation, prone to superstition, but hating all religious rites, did not deem it lawful to expiate by offering and sacrifice.”<sup>85</sup> By depicting the Jews as a people who had been sufficiently warned, yet too foolish and attached to their monotheistic practices to be able to understand something that, to his audience, was sufficiently clear, Tacitus assures his audience not only that it was divinely ordained that they should destroy Jerusalem, but that the Jews “had it coming”.

In summary, each author uses their audience’s knowledge as a tool to manipulate this event to suit their message. Mark uses the veil to signify the completion of Jesus’ messianic mission and the start of a messianic age. Moreover, it reveals Jesus as the son of God, who is identified by a gentile guard, therefore directly relevant to Mark’s audience. Matthew alludes to the Old Testament to again show Jesus is the fulfillment of messianic prophecy. More importantly to his Jewish audience, the negation of the function of the Temple signifies Jesus’ supplanting of it and his death provides a new access to God. However, it

<sup>78</sup>Erich S Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2010), 313.

<sup>79</sup>Rivkah Fishman-Duker, “Jerusalem: Capital of the Jews”: The Jewish Identity of Jerusalem in Greek and Roman Sources,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 20 no.3-4 (Fall 2008): 127.

<sup>80</sup>Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*, 317.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid, 266.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid, 265.

<sup>83</sup>Tac. Hist. 5.13.

<sup>84</sup>Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*, 194.

<sup>85</sup>Tac. Hist. 5.13.

could also be foreshadowing the gentile mission. Josephus uses the knowledge base of his Graeco-Roman audience to signify that the opening of the temple doors was an evil omen, but that it was not the Jews at fault, only its corrupt leaders. Finally, Tacitus uses the same style of argument to make the opposite point- the Jews were warned and too set in their monotheistic ways to see the signs, and therefore had it coming. Common to all is that the divine sanction is what gives each author's message strength and validity. The Gospel writers use the portents as a tool to voice opinions about messianism and the gentile outsider, whereas the Roman authors are concerned with issues of Judeophobia and Roman imperialism.

## 4 The Ascension

The biblical ascension story found in Luke-Acts is another event found in both *Histories* and *War*. As usual, it is necessary to verify this is the same event. This is especially tricky to establish as Luke offers two accounts of the events of Jesus' ascension, in Luke *and* Acts. Acts is more detailed:

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. [...] suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."<sup>86</sup>

According to Acts, the ascension occurred forty days after Jesus' resurrection. The argument follows that if Jesus died sometime in Nisan, his ascension would have occurred in Jyar. Josephus' records that his portent occurred on the 21<sup>st</sup> of *Artemisius* [Jyar].<sup>87</sup> That the month is the same means nothing if it was not in the same year- yet Josephus situates this event in the same year as all the other portents that till now have coincided with events in the last year of Jesus' life. Hence it appears that this event occurs in the same year and the same month as Jesus' ascension.

Other similarities are less strong. Josephus describes how:

... on the one and twentieth day of the month *Artemisius*, a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared: I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities.<sup>88</sup>

Tacitus is less thorough, recording simply that: "There had been seen hosts joining battle in the skies, the fiery gleams of arms, the temple illuminated by a sudden radiance from the clouds."<sup>89</sup> In typical Tacitean fashion, he combines two *different* Josephan portents. Nevertheless, there are points of similarity between the versions. Acts depicts a figure disappearing into the clouds outside a city, whereas the Josephan/Tacitean versions record figures in the clouds around the cities of Judaea. To draw further connections, Montefiore holds that Elijah's accession- which might have influenced the Christian tradition of Jesus' ascension- was connected to chariots and warfare.<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, the overlapping of dates is the most convincing piece of evidence that this is indeed the same event.

Once we turn to analysis of the ascension according to Luke, we find that Luke is again occupied with Christians- he focuses on blessing the church. Yet his account is unique because Luke offers two

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<sup>86</sup>Acts 1:8-19, (NIV).

<sup>87</sup>J. BJ 6.5.3.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Tac. Hist. 5.13.

<sup>90</sup>Montefiore, "Josephus", 310.

different versions of the same story- in Luke and in Acts. Between the two, only the Acts variant is depicting a miraculous assumption story. The Luke version describes Jesus' departure bluntly as: "he left them and was taken up into heaven".<sup>91</sup> Acts depicts this event as a clear ascension: "he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight".<sup>92</sup> Crucially, the imagery of the clouds and then the angels who interpreted the events to the disciples, so common to assumption stories, only occurs in Acts. These differences occur because where Jesus' departure in Luke brings closure to several of his running themes, Acts introduces many forthcoming themes. For example, scholar Mikael C. Parsons writes: "The scene at the end of Luke is a silent one. The significance of this silence is that it creates distance between the reader and the characters and effects closure."<sup>93</sup> He explains that the Acts account is half dialogue because the speeches anticipate the structure of the rest of Acts. Jesus promises the coming of the Holy Spirit, he commissions the disciples to discipleship, and the angels reassure them of the Second Coming.<sup>94</sup> With the same reasoning, why Jesus has a "departure" in Luke but a proper "ascension" in Acts can be explained. In Luke this scene closes Jesus' journey, therefore apocalyptic imagery signaling the Second Coming or emphasizing Jesus' divinity is no longer necessary. The dawn of an age of "discipleship" (heralded by the angels telling the disciples to stop looking after Jesus and instead await his coming) is thematically suited only to Acts. This difference in theme is emphasized by the final passage- in Luke the disciples are seen going joyfully to the temple and "praising God".<sup>95</sup> Such an event concludes Jesus' narrative triumphantly and ultimate victory on behalf of mankind. In contrast, Acts has the disciples enter a room and pray to select a new disciple.<sup>96</sup> This is where the use of several "assumption" apocalyptic elements becomes crucial. It has been noted that the ascension uses several images often used in Graeco-Roman assumption stories: clouds, angels, and mountains.<sup>97</sup> Mountains are seen in Lucian, Apollodorus, Minucius Felix, Diodorus Siculus and Aurelius Victor.<sup>98</sup> The clouds are seen in Apollodorus, Dionysius and Plutarch and the subsequent worship of the cult can be seen in Diodorus, Philostratus, Apollodorus and Plutarch.<sup>99</sup> These features are also seen in Jewish assumption stories- clouds (*T.Abr.* 8.3; 10.2; 12.1.9; 4 *Ezra* 5.7), angels (*2 Enoch* 36.2; 55.1; 67.2), and subsequent worship (*2 Enoch* 67.3; 68.5; *Tob.12.22*).<sup>100</sup> As is characteristic of Luke, he employs both Hellenistic stylistic properties as well as recognizable Jewish stylistic features. Acts, which has just one scene to communicate to its audience that Jesus is the Messiah before it turns to the story of the disciples, wastes no time by using as many recognizable assumption story images as possible. Therefore, the ascension is an "invocation, providing a divine blessing on the church [...] and on the outward expression of its mission to the world."<sup>101</sup> Where Luke provides triumphant closure to Jesus' story, Acts seeks to re-establish Jesus' divinity, and bless and inaugurate the mission of the disciples.

Like Luke, Josephus places extra emphasis on this omen above others, but to pursue a topic that falls outside any of the themes thus far, one completely unrelated to Jerusalem- reliability. He sets this omen apart from the rest by building up tension and acknowledging this portent seems unbelievable. As is typical of Josephus, he relies on his Roman audience's familiarity with tradition, however this one is particularly rare. Pliny writes that during the Cimbrian wars the clashing of arms and the sounds of trumpets in the sky were often heard, and celestial armies were seen during the consulate of Marius.<sup>102</sup> Chariots in the sky can be seen in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and in Horace's *Carmina*.<sup>103</sup> Based on the fact that Josephus stresses the omen appears unbelievable and the relatively little occurrence of the event in other literature, it seems that this omen was rare, or generally unfamiliar. His insistence on the reality of this event, however, is primarily because the Roman intellectual elite often voice skepticism regarding

<sup>91</sup>Luke 24:51, (NIV).

<sup>92</sup>Acts 1:9, (NIV).

<sup>93</sup>Mikael C. Parsons, *The Departure of Jesus in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 197.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Luke 24:53, (NIV).

<sup>96</sup>Acts 1:12-23, (NIV).

<sup>97</sup>Parsons, *The Departure*, 140.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid, 140.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid, 140.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid, 138-140.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid, 150.

<sup>102</sup>McCasland, "Portents", 328.

<sup>103</sup>Parsons, *The Departure*, 140.

soothsayers and portents. For example, Cicero wrote a whole book (*De Divinatione*) against auguries, dreams, lots, omens and signs.”<sup>104</sup> This skepticism Josephus perceives in his audience is difficult for him as he is an author obsessed with reliability. In the introduction here assures his reader of his expert knowledge as he “one who at first fought against the Romans myself, and was forced to be present at what was done afterwards”.<sup>105</sup> By identifying himself as a priest, Josephus claims expert (religious) knowledge, capable of understanding omens and as an eyewitness he claims accuracy. In this section then, Josephus’ chief concern is his audience’s perception of his reliability which he set up in the introduction. By linking his reliability with the divine, reciprocally Josephus’ reliability reinforces the truth factor of the omen, and the omen sanctions what Josephus has been arguing up to this point. Note that this is one of the few moments where the argument the author is trying to make is unrelated to Jerusalem and its many issues.

Like Josephus, Tacitus relies on a combination of Graeco-Roman conventions, but in order to communicate to his audience his mock incredulity that, despite multiple signs, the Jews still did not understand that the temple would fall, and to mock the Jews’ messianic hopes. By combining Josephus’ separate omens (the host in the skies and the illumination of the temple), and placing the occurrence of this omen on seemingly the same day as the Pentecost event (which will be examined later) Tacitus overdramatizes the foolish nature of the Jews. To any Roman reader, the occurrence of so many recognizable omens on the same day would spell certain doom. Tacitus writes that “There had been seen hosts joining battle in the skies, the fiery gleam of arms, the temple illuminated by a sudden radiance from the clouds.”<sup>106</sup> Above is explained the various allusions to battle and clouds as code for a future apocalyptic event in Roman. However, Tacitus also holds that this omen signified Vespasian’s (and Titus’) destiny for greatness by saying:

Some few put a fearful meaning on these events, but in most there was a firm persuasion, that in the ancient records of their priests was contained a prediction of how at this very time the East was to grow powerful, and rulers, coming from Judaea, were to acquire universal empire. These mysterious prophecies had pointed to Vespasian and Titus, but the common people, with the usual blindness of ambition, had interpreted these mighty destinies of themselves, and could not be brought even by disasters to believe the truth.<sup>107</sup>

Not only does Tacitus mock the foolish way the Jews misinterpreted these omens (as mentioned before, Tacitus particularly resented that the Jews did not practice divination), but he also attacks one of their core beliefs- the coming of the messiah. He writes that the prophecy was “mysterious”- the implication being that, with their lack of verifiable techniques of explanation the Jews would obviously misinterpret the prophecy. He also belittles the Jews, by mocking that they would suppose “mighty destinies” could possibly be referring to a deliverer amongst their own ranks, rather than to greater races such as the Romans. Instead, the Gods were prophesizing Vespasian and Titus’ victory and therefore justified Rome’s destruction of Jerusalem.

Each author in this chapter exhibit a tight control over their audience’s reactions by how they employ literary techniques to describe their portents. Luke is aware of the guidance his audience needs and closes Luke and starts Acts carefully. The Luke account focuses on the triumph of Jesus, and Acts blesses the mission of the disciples. Josephus takes this opportunity to tackle a different problem- the question of his reliability. He reminds his skeptical Roman readers to trust his account. Tacitus, as always, attacks Jewish practices, but also attacks messianism. Each author manages to discuss different themes- the church, reliability, or messianism- using the same portent.

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<sup>104</sup>Cicero, *De Divinatione*, ed.C. F. W. Müller, (Leipzig: Teubner, 1915), Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2007.01.0034>.

<sup>105</sup>J. BJ 1.pr.1.

<sup>106</sup>Tac. Hist. 5.13.

<sup>107</sup>Tac. Hist. 5.13.

## 5 Pentecost

The account of Pentecost, found in Acts, has equivalents in Tacitus and Josephus. First it is important to establish the connection between each account. According to Acts, at the arrival of the Holy Spirit there was the sound of a gale, the appearance of fire and men speaking in different tongues.<sup>108</sup> A similar event occurs in Josephus, who writes that at Pentecost the priests on entering the inner court of the temple felt a quaking, a great noise and a multitude of voices saying “Let us remove hence”.<sup>109</sup> Tacitus, typically, describes this event as occurring at the same time as the host in the skies. He writes: “The doors of the inner shrine were suddenly thrown open, and a voice of more than mortal tone was heard to cry that the Gods were departing. At the same instant there was a mighty stir as of departure.”<sup>110</sup> Because of the mention of Pentecost, and the implication that this event occurred in the same year as the other portents Josephus records did, it appears that both Luke and Josephus’ describe events that occurred on the same day of the same year. Moreover, both describe a noise (of rushing wind), the voices of multitudes, and if Act 4:31 is regarded as a doublet of Acts 2:1, both describe a quake.<sup>111</sup> Meanwhile, it is clear that Tacitus is describing the same event as Josephus: from the similarity in the locale, voices, and message of departure. There are, however, significant differences. Josephus holds this took place at night, whereas Acts claims it took place at 9 AM. Josephus records this happened in the Temple, whereas in Acts it occurs in the assembly of the disciples. This assembly may have been in the Temple itself, but they would not have been present in the inner temple.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless it remains plausible that each account records the same event. However, analysis will show how wildly these records differ in intent.

Throughout this analysis it becomes clear that Luke is- unlike the other authors writing about Jerusalem- concerned primarily on the behalf of the contemporary church. In Luke’s time the church was experiencing deep embarrassment, because the eschatological promise of the end times which was expected by the early church to arrive very soon (2 Cor. 7:29; Rom 13:11; 1 Thess. 4:15) had still not occurred.<sup>113</sup> This put Christianity at risk of no longer being a viable religion. Luke set out to address this problem, as he “locates Jesus’ message and his prophecies so that while the end to world history was still envisaged, it is now located in the indefinite future.”<sup>114</sup> According to Eugene M. Boring, “While many specific prophets are named in Acts, the Spirit which has been poured out on the entire church is largely a spirit of prophecy.”<sup>115</sup> In the account of the Pentecost, this is made clear by Peter quoting the prophecy of the Holy Spirit from Joel:

No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:  
‘In the last days, God says,  
I will pour out *My Spirit* on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will *prophesy*,  
your young men will see *visions*,  
[. . .] I will pour out My Spirit in those days,  
and they will *prophesy*.<sup>116</sup>

As Acts progresses, it is clear that a high proportion of predictions in Acts is attributed to the Holy Spirit. For example, in Acts 1:16 Peter tells the disciples “the Scripture had to be fulfilled in

<sup>108</sup> Acts 4:31, (NIV).

<sup>109</sup> J. BJ 6.5.3.

<sup>110</sup> Tac. Hist. 5.13.

<sup>111</sup> Montefiore, “Josephus,” 312.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 312.

<sup>113</sup> Maddox, “The Purpose,” 100.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Clarke K Rothschild, *Luke, Acts and the Rhetoric of History* (Tubingen: Mohr Seibek, 2004), 176.

<sup>116</sup> Acts 2:14-21, (NIV). Italics mine.

which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas.”<sup>117</sup> The Holy Spirit is said to speak in Acts 28:25 predicting Jewish rejection of Christianity.<sup>118</sup> Acts 4:31, then, becomes not only a fulfillment of prophecy but a promise of future prophecies given by believers.<sup>119</sup> If the disciples prophesize, by extension there would be events in the future that would fulfill these prophecies. The Holy Spirit’s coming therefore foreshadows a longer end times than the church originally thought.

However, Luke aims to achieve more with the arrival of the Holy Spirit- it also testifies to the divinity of Jesus. It is an immediate fulfillment of Acts 1:6-8: “[Jesus] said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.’”<sup>120</sup> Jesus promises that he would send another in his stead, and according to Luke he was right. With these fulfillments, Luke, like every gospel, demonstrates Jesus’ miraculous power. Luke enforces this by recording Peter saying, “Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.”<sup>121</sup> Therefore, he is still concerned with what every author in this investigation is concerned with- messianism.

Josephus has vastly different concerns to Luke, aiming again to challenge Roman Judeophobic rhetoric and accuse bad apples amongst the Jews for the war. First it is beneficial to attempt to answer the question “who are the ambiguous ‘us’ that announce they are departing?” Josephus was possibly referring to God and the Cherubim, who left the First Temple right before it was destroyed, as explained in Ezekiel.<sup>122</sup> However, there is no evidence to suggest that after God left Solomon’s temple, he returned to Herod’s. Secondly, in the First Temple Period God’s presence, the *Shekinah*, appeared as a cloud, and was connected to the Mercy Seat on the Ark.<sup>123</sup> The Ark was lost during the Babylonian Exile and as such not present in Herod’s temple, and there is no textual evidence to suggest God appeared as a cloud. Instead, it reads like a pagan story in which the Gods of a shrine depart before the destruction of their abode.<sup>124</sup> Rather than implying God/the Gods forsook Jerusalem, Josephus was probably framing this story to be reminiscent of other works of Graeco-Roman literature: Dio mentions an omen foretelling the Roman disaster in Britain: foreign jargon intermingled with laughter issued from the senate house at night, and from the theatre came outcries of lamentations, though no mortal made the sounds.<sup>125</sup> This story probably appealed to Roman sensibilities, who would quickly have understood that divine hosts abandoning a temple signified imminent doom.

However, Josephus’ main aim with this portent was to show another example of God’s grace in warning his people.<sup>126</sup> Josephus had a particular dislike for the Jewish leaders because they failed to protect the people, who were led astray by false prophets. The portent describing the Pentecost event in particular reflects his disdain for many priests, as God clearly warns *them*, the only people who had access to the inner temple. Josephus even explicitly laments that

what did the most elevate them in undertaking this war, was an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how, “about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth.” The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular, *and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination.*<sup>127</sup>

Josephus backpaddles from his stance that only the “learned” can interpret omens- instead he establishes this lack of proper interpretation on behalf of the priests as a problematic pattern. Why Josephus’

<sup>117</sup> Acts 1:16 (NIV).

<sup>118</sup> Rothschild, *Luke, Acts*, 177-178.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 178.

<sup>120</sup> Acts 1:6-8, (NIV).

<sup>121</sup> Acts 2:22, (NIV).

<sup>122</sup> Ezekiel 10: 18-19, (NIV).

<sup>123</sup> Exodus 25:10-22; 1 Kings 8:1-10 (NIV).

<sup>124</sup> Montefiore, “Josephus”, 313.

<sup>125</sup> McCasland “Portents”, 327.

<sup>126</sup> Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 33.

<sup>127</sup> J. BJ 6.5.4. (Italics mine).

account has this inconsistency is unclear. Nevertheless, he still engages in Jewish apologetics- the Jews were *led astray*- they were not inherently lesser to the Romans, nor were they abandoned by their God, who sent a clear message of warning. This again leads to an ironic undermining of the Flavian narrative championed by historians like Tacitus- it was not Roman superiority that won the battle, it was the lack of proper guidance from Jewish elders that sabotaged the Jews and turned them against God's warnings. Josephus again uses God's divine message to vindicate themes that are continuous throughout his works.

Tacitus, as ever, uses this portent to fly in the face of all Josephus' claims. The first thing to stand out is the paganization of the narrative. He writes that "the *Gods* were departing."<sup>128</sup> Unlike Josephus, Tacitus *was* directly alluding to the belief that Gods would leave their shrines before said shrine's desecration. This sort of portent- divine abandonment of a city or shrine which signaled its imminent demise- is a common convention to reassure the besiegers and justify their victory.<sup>129</sup> But "Gods" in the plural is interesting- the Jews only had one deity who could abandon them. Was Tacitus accidentally slipping into customary language or is this an *interpretatio Romana*? Likely this was a way for Tacitus to once again undermine Jewish monotheism. The Jews were abandoned by *polytheistic* Gods, and this only makes sense given their strange belief system. Tacitus aimed to further his Judeophobic narrative by painting the Jews as a monotheistic and therefore strange nation worthy of their destruction.

Luke caters to his audience's sensibilities by calming their fears about the end times and showing they have entered an age of prophesy via the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's coming is a fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy, which in turn proves Jesus' divinity. Josephus communicates to his Roman audience that the religious leaders of the Jews were to blame for the war, as even when they were directly warned they did not listen. Tacitus takes this opportunity to justify the war against the Jews, saying it was divinely justified considering they were abandoned by the Gods. Each author seeks divine sanction for their controversial opinions on messianism or Roman imperialism.

## 6 Comparisons & Conclusions

Analyzing the works of Tacitus, Josephus and the evangelists using methodology that focuses on the literary technique of each work and the impact of intention, background and audience I have shown in this paper that each author uses these portents as a tool to communicate their opinions on similar theological and social topics. These opinions are often already running themes throughout their works, so they use these portents to acquire divine sanction for them. These authors address messianism, monotheism and Judaism, Judeophobia, the "gentile problem", and Roman imperialism. These highly social and theological issues were pressing and relevant to the time period, which is why these specific portents were more popular than others. Through studying these portents then, I have been able to trace some of the primary theological and social concerns surrounding the Fall of Jerusalem and the Jewish people, which will be discussed in more detail below.

One of the most interesting revelations from the perspective of theological concerns was that the one topic everyone at some point discussed was messianism. This is to be expected of the evangelists. Matthew wrote for a Jewish audience, who were particularly concerned with the coming of the Messiah. Therefore, *proving* that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament was of primary concern to Matthew. Mark is less concerned with proof considering he writes for a gentile audience otherwise unbothered with the long Jewish tradition of awaiting a Messiah- instead focusing on that Jesus' death completed his messianic mission, inaugurating a post-messianic age which includes gentiles. Luke differs from Matthew as well, as he uses messianism to make Jesus appear as the ultimate example of martyrdom for persecuted Christians. What *is* fascinating is that both Josephus and Tacitus discuss messianism. Josephus claims the oracle's messianic prophecy was actually prophesying Vespasian's arrival. Instead of actually addressing messianism (like the evangelists do), he instead uses it as a tool to claim God had command of the war and by extension defends Jewish beliefs. Tacitus likewise uses messianism as a tool, but to achieve the opposite effect- to mock Jewish religious beliefs. In fact, a recurring theme throughout this essay was

<sup>128</sup>Tac. Hist. 5.13. (*Italics mine*).

<sup>129</sup>Gruen, *Rethinking the Other*, 265.

that Tacitus would use the same strategy as Josephus to say the opposite thing- perpetrating Judeophobic opinions where Josephus aimed to stop them. Their choice of each discussing messianism can be explained by acknowledging each author using it as a tool to communicate their different intentions, but also that the topic of messianism possibly stretched beyond the religious Jews and Christians, to concern even Roman politicians. As we shall see, this is because religious differences were a devastating battlefield.

One topic that each author treats without sarcasm or irony is the sovereignty of God, or the Gods. In each account there is an interesting dialectic between the self-evident nature of God's power, and the constant need to affirm it. Josephus clearly communicates that he never doubts God's power, but constantly has to insist upon it. Tacitus, through instances such as when he changed the ambiguous "let us remove hence" to "the Gods were departing", seems desperate to challenge everything monotheistic, no matter how petty his attacks may be. The Evangelists, through instances like the tearing of the veil, emphasize God's incredible power alongside Jesus' divinity. This insistence is indicative of the religious warfare going on at the time. As mentioned before, a prevailing theory is that Tacitus resented the Jews because of the number of converts to Judaism. Seneca raised the alarm bell about this, and Tacitus reports, "Those who come over to their [Jewish] religion [...] have this lesson first instilled into them, to despise all Gods, to disown their country, and set at nought parents, children, and brethren."<sup>130</sup> Josephus, typically, stands opposite Tacitus being a monotheistic Jew in a predominantly polytheistic society. As mentioned before, Jewish people faced heavy persecution under the Roman Empire. The aforementioned pogrom of Alexandria was not a sole event- similar pogroms occurred in Seleucia on the Tigris in 40 CE, where 50,000 Jews were killed, and at Caesarea around 59 CE, where 20,000 Jews were slaughtered (according to Josephus.)<sup>131</sup> Both Tacitus and Josephus feel like threatened parties. Luke feels similarly, being a Christian in a time of excellerating persecution. This fear motivates each author to loudly proclaim the legitimacy of their own God(s). It is clear they *believe* their God(s) are sovereign, but the uncertain theological situation are reflected in their desperate insistence.

The role that the audience plays becomes most prominent when our classical authors discuss "The Other". As is made clear from studying Josephus and Tacitus, Judeophobia was a problem closely attached to theological issues. Tacitus' primary objection to them is monotheism. What is interesting is that Josephus does not defend monotheism or any Jewish religious practices (unlike in *Against Apion*) instead redirecting his Roman audience's Judeophobia at a couple of "bad apples". The dialogue on Judeophobia revolves around their Roman audience- Josephus acknowledges that monotheism was, amongst Romans, universally considered as strange and instead of challenging and alienating them, decides to focus this energy on scapegoats- false prophets. Likewise, Matthew in particular has to tiptoe around the "gentile" problem. Authors like Mark, who have a gentile audience, communicate the concept of the gentile mission freely. But Matthew, aware of his Jewish audience's dislike of gentiles, disguises the issue as a triumph over Roman imperialism. Internalized prejudice or "racism" in classical times grow out of religious concerns, and Josephus and Matthew seem to recognize that these prejudices cannot be challenged head on.

Roman imperialism and oppressionis , of course, one of the more consistent social issues occurring in these works- this especially is where historical background becomes most prominent. Matthew, Tacitus, Josephus and Luke all allude to this issue throughout their works. Matthew, as discussed above, speaks from a Jewish perspective post the Fall of Jerusalem and accordingly rejoices in Jesus' ultimate triumph over the empire. Tacitus, on the other hand, justifies the war on the Jews based on his Roman background and belief in Judeophobic stereotypes. Josephus writes in a grey area, as is expected from his complicated political position as a defected Judaeian living in Rome under the emperor's favor. He wishes to support both the empire and God, and thus frames Roman imperialism as being in accordance with God's will. The only writer who stands truly alone in his concerns is Luke. His occupation with Christian persecution is not present in the descriptions of other authors, though certainly Tacitus would comment on Christian persecution in other works.<sup>132</sup> Writing for a church under Roman (and Jewish) persecution,

<sup>130</sup>Tac. Hist. 5.5.2

<sup>131</sup>Gruen, *Constructs of Identity*, 314.

<sup>132</sup>Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals*, eds., Alfred John Church, William Jackson Brodribb, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1942), 15.44, Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999>.

Luke surprisingly makes little use of this opportunity to divinely vindicate the Romans, and instead uses this *deus ex machina* to encourage martyrdom. He therefore breaks the pattern by having little opinion on Roman imperialism- whether it be good or bad. Unsurprisingly, everyone's opinion on Roman imperialism is a product of their background and current station, but Luke is an outlier to this rule.

To return to the research question- why these portents? What role do intent, audience and historical background play in each author's description of these portents? What role does divine sanction play? The religious and social issues that surrounded Jerusalem were of particular interest to our authors because of their historical background. In turn, these portents became an excellent *opportunity*- due to their ambiguity, they became remarkably versatile tools to support any opinion a classical author might have. From a historical point of view, we were able to see what some of the most pressing issues were surrounding the "Jewish problem" at the time- messianism, monotheism and Judaism, Judeophobia, the "gentile problem", and Roman imperialism. It is clear that each of these topics was divisive, and in the analysis of some of the most recurring themes (above), we saw that no matter the topic, each author had a different opinion- including opinions which completely broke with any pre-existing pattern, such as Luke's views on persecution. The issue of Jerusalem and its destruction was one that caused profound confusion and frustration, and this lack of consensus shows that the post-Second Temple world struggled to come to grips with Jerusalem's destruction and everything that this fall meant. It is interesting to see how there is no straightforward "victor's narrative"- from the victorious Roman politician to the Jewish fisherman John- that so many obscure voices have come to us today testify to the enormity of this event and its social and theological repercussions. That the fall of Jerusalem and the issues associated with it had such a far reach is not fully appreciated.

However, we can also draw some conclusions that are of interest to classical scholarship as a whole. These authors were particularly careful to use literary techniques that their audiences were familiar with in order to manipulate how they read the portent description. What is consistent amongst all these various descriptions is that the authors seek divine sanction for their most controversial and unpopular opinions. Whether it be that the Messiah has come and died, the War of the Jews was not the Jews' fault, or martyrdom is a good thing- each author uses the most divine authority to back the opinions that are, for their audiences, the hardest to swallow. This stretches to even the most obscure of the themes discussed- Josephus' detour on his reliability, for example, was done because Romans were famously skeptical regarding accounts of omens. Generally, from this investigation we see that omens were used as a literary technique for reliability. Scholarship, championed by the likes of Mason and Beavis, that defend literary, audience-focused readings of classical works, would do well to study any moment describing an omen or a moment of "divine sanction" to identify opinions that were controversial with the writer's audience.

However, writers like Luke, who completely break away from the mold, show that these conclusions are not foolproof. This investigation has many limitations. In particular, John and the Talmud were not inspected, even though both discuss one or more of the portents described here. John, a Jewish fisherman and therefore the author with the lowest economic standing, could potentially offer a unique perspective on this topic. Likewise, the Talmud, written by Jews who were not defected Judaeans nor Christians, could enrich the social and cultural diversity of the voices in this study. Future research into this topic should most certainly expand the arguments presented here to include both of these authors. Moreover, future research should take some of the conclusions proposed here and apply them to other instances of portent description, and verify if the methodological considerations proposed above are indeed consistent.

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