

ALEKSANDRA WOJTASIK  
(JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY, KRAKÓW)

## LITERARY ADAPTATIONS OF JEWISH SAGES IN THE WORKS OF JOSEPHUS FLAVIUS

**SUMMARY:** The paper focuses on the Judeo-Hellenic writers composing in times of Roman occupation, especially on works created by Josephus Flavius. On the basis of his re-written version of events described in the Bible, one can observe various methods used by Josephus and other authors to accommodate their history for the needs of Greco-Roman world. One such method is depicting notable characters from the Bible in a more understandable way, particularly different prophets from the Old Testament. Those Jewish sages are described surprisingly alike to Greek philosophers, orators and commanders – figures that were well-known to Greeks and admired by them. The article presents specific example for that kind of adaptations, presenting at the same time differences between prophets from the times of the Second Temple and those from before the Babylonian thralldom. Understanding these differences is essential for explaining how Jewish scholars could find a common ground with Greek philosophers.

**KEYWORDS:** Josephus Flavius, prophets, patriarchs, Judeo-Hellenic literature

*Σοφός*. It appears that this word, like no other, brings to our minds the world of ancient Greece. Therefore it comes as no surprise that it was the one aspect of life the Jews decided to use in order to coexist with Greek culture. This phenomenon has been revealed not only on a socio-political level,<sup>1</sup> but even more so in literary works.

---

<sup>1</sup> Semites were also considered “Hellenes”, as long as they spoke at least a little Greek and served the royal dynasty. Mixed marriages were also not unheard of,

To Jews, who had their sacred laws dictated by God, knowledge was something much more than a simple theoretical discussion or plain curiosity. In order to live well and worthily they had to learn their nation's literature from the very young age. Moreover, this learning had to be utilized every day in fulfilling the commandments. Because of that they could be seen by Theophrastus more as philosophers than religious followers (Goodman 2007: 216-217). Josephus Flavius praises helpfulness of even the most common among the folk (*Ap.* 2.175-178), whereas Philon considers synagogal teachings the origin of all virtues (*Mos.* 2.216). From this tradition, in which the figure of a prophet and a scholar plays such a major role, spring Judeo-Hellenic writers. While remaining loyal for their own culture, they open up for a possibility of education offered by the Greek side.

Relations with Greeks, beginning from the times of Alexander the Great, were something new in the life of the Jewish nation. As Meleze-Modrzejewski writes, it was an attraction at first sight, unrequited as many other such affections. The Jews have clung to Hellenism, which in this age was simply a culture (Meleze-Modrzejewski 2000: 70). Goodman describes Judaism of the 1<sup>st</sup> a. CE as "Hellenic Judaism" (Goodman 2007: 90), at the same time writing that both Jewish and Roman writings lack traces of serious fears that accepting Greek culture will result in the demise of the native tradition (Goodman 2007: 88). The necessity to throw away his own religion in exchange of being accepted as a citizen (which would be certain in the case of traditional city-states) was not a threat to the Jew in Hellenic period. He remained a Jew because of his religion, while being at the same time completely Greek because of his language, culture and social background (Meleze-Modrzejewski 2000: 110). Into a Jewish world enters also Hellenic education. Because of it those who had a favourable attitude towards Greek culture were given an opportunity to learn the Greek language and literature. The existence of schooling available for everyone, at least for practical reasons, like educating a group of officials speaking Greek, seems to be self-explanatory (Klęczar 2006: 28). At the crossings between two worlds, so deeply rooted in the idea of learning and

---

since Jewish mercenaries served in Lagids's army. See: Meleze-Modrzejewski 2000: 103-116.

the strength that comes from understanding, the Jewish authors found a way to convince pagans about the greatness of their nation in describing patriarchs and later prophets.

From the Hellenic times Jewish literature introduces the so-called “Books of Wisdom”. According to Collins, the reason for ascribing the aforementioned name to some books<sup>2</sup> is the frequency with which the reference to wisdom (Hebr. חכמה, *hokhmah*; Gr. σοφία) occurs in them (Collins 1997: 14). Without going into a detailed discussion of this observation one cannot contradict that those books represent the situation described above: multiple references to Jewish tradition and inspiration with Greek elements. On one side, wisdom is still heavily connected with the understanding of the Torah. Ecclesiastes would say: “He who keeps the law controls his impulses; he who is perfect in fear of Yahweh has wisdom” (Sir 21.11). At the same time the Books of Wisdom are strongly equating being wise with righteousness and being foolish (i.e. not being knowledgeable about the Law) with sinfulness. On the other hand, the authors of above books seem to depart from model of wisdom that is available only to prophets blessed with God’s help. Instead, every just man can achieve wisdom if only he strives towards it (Collins 1997: 223-224).

However, it is in a different model of Jewish literature that the most expressive and fascinating sages appear before us. In those creations we see most blatantly the desire to unite two cultures with the help of a scholar figure. Characters known from Jewish works, patriarchs and prophets, are created anew for the pagan reader’s needs – firstly by Hellenic authors and then again by one of the greatest apologists of Judaism – Flavius Josephus.<sup>3</sup>

Characters in which Josephus saw a chance to impress the Greco-Roman public can be divided into several categories. One such group constitutes characters from the Pentateuch: Abraham, Joseph and Moses. We can find similar modification of the aforementioned figures already in the works of Josephus’s predecessors. Arapanus of Alexandria depicts Abraham as a sage who influenced Egypt’s development (Eus.

<sup>2</sup> Those are books of Proverbs, Job, Koheleth, Wisdom and Syrach’s (Ecclesiastes).

<sup>3</sup> This paper is interested mostly in illustrious individuals, not the Jewish people’s wisdom in general. The latter is shown most vividly in a work entitled *Contra Apionem*.

*Praep.* 9.18.1) and Joseph as a beloved advisor to the pharaoh and his subordinates (*Eus. Praep.* 9.23.2). Moses is lawgiver and inventor, a teacher to Orpheus, known to Greeks under the name of Musaeus (*Eus. Praep.* 9.27.3-4). In Eupolemos he brings the alphabet to Phoenicians and thereby to Greeks (*Clem. Stromat.* 1.23.153.4). Contrary to other patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, Abraham and Joseph have in their biographies periods of activity in Egypt. Contact with a different culture gives an opportunity to demonstrate the superiority of the Jewish nation. Moses becomes a lawgiver equal to Lycurgus, Solon and Numa.

Among many virtues of Abraham, wisdom appears to be the one that Flavius give the most attention to. He places him in a long tradition of Hellenic scholars visiting foreign countries in pursuit of knowledge (Feldman 1998: 231). Abraham however already has the knowledge and is ready to share it with the Egyptians, who will later pass it to Greeks (*Ant.* 1.165-168). The patriarch is a role model of a philosopher, who found the principle of the universe and gained virtue: “He was a person of great sagacity, both for understanding all things and persuading his hearers, and not mistaken in his opinions; for which reason he began to have higher notions of virtue than others had. [...] for he was the first that ventured to publish this notion that there was but one God, the Creator of the universe; [...] This opinion of his was derived from the irregular phenomena that were visible both at land and sea, as well as those that happen to the sun, and moon, and all the heavenly bodies” (*Ant.* 1.154-155). Abraham not only has wisdom, but also the gift for convincing others, which is a very important characteristic for a philosopher (Feldman 1998: 228).

Joseph is distinguished by his wisdom even in his youth, which gains him the love of his father (*Ant.* 2.9), as well as the pharaoh’s respect and a happy life in Egypt (*Ant.* 2.87; 91) similarly as his ancestor’s Abraham. “Having been a man of admirable virtue, and conducting all his affairs by the rules of reason; and used his authority with moderation, which was the cause of his so great felicity among the Egyptians, even when he came from another country, and that in such ill circumstances also, as we have already described” (*Ant.* 2.198). Flavius clearly stresses the fact that although God, as Joseph’s benefactor,

is mentioned constantly throughout the narrative, it is wisdom, gained without God's help, which contributed to Joseph's success.

According to Josephus, Moses stands out from others thanks to his cleverness and good judgment: "Now Moses's understanding became superior to his age, nay, far beyond that standard; and when he was taught, he discovered greater quickness of apprehension than was usual at his age, and his actions at that time promised greater, when he should come to the age of a man" (*Ant.* 2.230). In the biblical narrative Moses is simply a tool in God's hands. Josephus does not erase from his history of the Jews God appearing in a burning bush, the one liberator and creator of Commandments. However, his Moses is given a full awareness and responsibility for creating laws. Although Moses ascertains that he only passes over God's will (*Ant.* 3.73), he is the one who appears to the reader as a talented leader and lawgiver. We see there a scholar in action, utilizing wisdom to achieve victories and gain prosperity for the people he leads. Flavius grants Moses many speeches to soldiers and common folk, who are loyal and obedient to him. Describing his death Josephus writes, as if intending to explain a godly role in Moses's lawgiving: "He was also such a general of an army as is seldom seen, as well as such a prophet as was never known, and this to such a degree that whatsoever he pronounced, you would think you heard the voice of God himself" (*Ant.* 4.329). Moses possesses characteristics of a good commander, such as being able to overcome his emotions and speak before his subjects: "He was one that exceeded all men that ever were in understanding, and made the best use of what that understanding suggested to him. He had a very graceful way of speaking and addressing himself to the multitude; and as to his other qualifications, he had such a full command of his passions, as if he hardly had any such in his soul, and only knew them by their names, as rather perceiving them in other men than in himself" (*Ant.* 4.328). Even those sparse fragments reveal that Flavius's aspiration to describe illustrious characters anew for the purposes of Greco-Roman reader, who could recognize a perfect commander and lawgiver as a familiar figure. Similarly, Moses's "successors" are also given in Josephus' narrative such qualities as heavenly wisdom and perfect judgment – although they are, contrary to the first lawgiver, burdened with some vices. For

instance, Solomon's wisdom "was so great that he exceeded the Ancients; insomuch that he was no way inferior to the Egyptians, who are said to have been beyond all men in understanding; nay, indeed, it is evident that their sagacity was very much inferior to that of the king's" (*Ant.* 8.42). We should also observe that in this passage wisdom of the Egyptians is commended, the very same one that was passed on to them by Hebrews, as described in the first books of the work. The kings in the narrative of *Antiquitates* possess, however, next to natural wisdom some flaws as well, while others are presented in negative, albeit adequately alleviated, way – similarly to the content of the Bible. It seems that contrary to the first lawgiver, Flavius does not need to avoid signaling flaws in the characteristics of rulers in times of monarchy so strictly.

Characters presented in the *Antiquitates* are created as national heroes based on a typically Hellenic model, i.e. they are distinguished philosophers, scholars and commanders at the same time (Feldman 1998: 223). Just as we will see in the example of Daniel, God helps them for the sake of the wisdom they gained beforehand – wisdom that is the cause, not the effect, of God's intervention.

The next group worth analyzing includes the prophets. First of all, we should consider the prophet as a certain literary or historical creation, setting aside any theological aspirations.

Biblical prophetism is a much more complicated concept than it might seem from our traditional, Christian mode of interpreting some fragments of the Bible. Stanisław Gądecki in his work *Introduction to the prophetic books of the Old Testament* presents three ways for defining this phenomenon (Gądecki 1993: 28-31). The first one is the identification of the prophet with a politician responsible for, e.g. foreign affairs, just as Isaiah was responsible for contacts with Assyria or Jeremiah with Babylonia. The second way is to portray the prophets as revolutionary and social activists who are not connected with any particular social class, but rather with Decalogue's justice. Amos, one of the oldest prophets, who cries about selling a poor man for a pair of sandals, could be an example here (Am 2.6). The last way of understanding prophets' activity is explaining it with an ecstatic madness. This type of men of God can be also found in the Bible, particularly in

the early phase of country's creation, when it is hard to discern between the cult of One God and pagan traditions that the Hebrews met on the conquered lands (e.g. 1Sm 10,11-12). Gądecki considers all three definitions to be incorrect, referring to fragment of the Book of Deuteronomy (Dt 18.15-22) where he reads that simple folk, who are unable to contact God personally because of His majesty, needs some kind of intermediary. Someone, who is not necessarily a prominent person at first sight, but is certainly chosen by God as worthy of communicating with Him.

In several biblical books we can find however (and we have done it above) some examples that validate all those definitions. What is both interesting and problematical is the fact that in the Hebrew Bible we observe three different terms<sup>4</sup> for denoting those individuals, whom the Septuagint describes with one word: *προφήτης*. Let us try to divide this broad idea of prophetism into two types: the "ecstatic" prophetism, which is strongly associated with some pagan ways of inducing a trance and the "courtly" prophetism, where supernatural elements are only a sort of a literary concept.<sup>5</sup>

Particularly interesting from the point of view of classical philology is the idea of comparing traditional prophets with Greek political orators (Kelle 2006: 56-82). It is not a common topic in academic discussions, but usually one can observe a rather strong notion towards rationalizing the prophet's role and drifting away from the literary way of reading visions described in prophetic books.

Schniedewind describes prophecy as backing up one's views with God's inspiration (Schniedewind 1995: 32). If we accept this reasoning, it becomes rather easy and fully understandable to define prophets – quite against Gądecki's opinion – as witty politicians or royal advisors. A different way of interpreting this problem is to combine the idea of an advisor and a man of God. The prophets are, in a way, censors of

<sup>4</sup> Those terms are: *nabi'*, *hozeh i ro'eh*. The closest one to *προφήτης* and at the same time most general seems to be "nabi". All three terms are analysed further in such works as: Schniedewind 1995: 31-79; Gądecki 1993: 15-17.

<sup>5</sup> Of course, this is a rather large simplification. In order to truly understand the vast and fascinating idea of prophetism, one should read the works of Schniedewind and Gądecki, as well as: McKey, Clines 1993; Polk 1984. As for the theory concerning visions as a literary concept see: Horsley, Hanson 1985: 142.

king's actions – the example of which we see in a fragment where Nathan scolds David after he kills Uriah (2 Sm 12.1-15). Later prophets, such as Isiah or Jeremiah, will also try to affect the politics run by rulers. As we can see, the function was closely tied to monarchy and there most probably lies the greatest difference between prophetism before and after the exile. Albright stresses that classical prophetism begins and ends with a monarchy. It might have been connected with country's decline, as Hanson states: "After 587 the picture changes. Israel's political identity as a nation comes to an end. The office of kingship ends. The prophets no longer have the events of a nation's history into which they can translate the terms of Yahweh's cosmic will" (Schniedewind 1995: 18). Petersen likewise notices a connection between classical prophets' activity and the durability of monarchy (Petersen 1977: 2). Everything that prophets have done was directed towards the whole nation, so after the downfall of its political independence, their role diminished (Schniedewind 1995: 19). Later, people of the Second Temple period will be aware of the natural boundary in understanding the idea of prophetism that was thralldom of Babylon. Does it mean, however, that God's inspiration has left completely the Chosen People? In rabbinic literature we can read that the Spirit of God left Israel, and both Urim and Thummim have gone silent. Nevertheless, there some inspired individuals among the people, such as the famous scholar Hillel (Schniedewind 1995: 15). Josephus Flavius also mentions the end of prophetism in the time of the Persian dominion (*Ap.* 1.41). Already Malachi is called only a messenger and not a prophet (*Malachi* means "my messenger"). Prophets have been replaced by interpreters and sages. This contradistinction explains the possibility of the continuance of prophetism in the Second Temple's period, which is not, however, a classical phenomenon.

A rather compelling issue related to classical prophets is their activity as royal historians. The prophet's role was to be integrally connected with their role of the king's annalist. It did not refer to priests, Levites or even people described as men of God – only to prophets. We can find examples of such a definition in the Chronicles Books. Both refer quite often to information contained in histories described by prophet Isiah (e.g. 2 Chr 26.22; 32.32). Another fact worth mentioning is that



in fragments concerning the above instances the Septuagint, explaining it as *ἐπὶ βιβλίῳ τοῦ προφήτου*, does not translate fully with *βιβλίον* the Hebrew word *midrash*, which contains in itself such meanings as “interpretation” or “explanation”. This could mean that prophets were not only writing down history passively, but were also explaining various occurrences according to their judgment. The Books of Jeremiah and Amos begin with the notion “Words of Jeremiah/Amos” (Schniedewind 1995: 209-231). It seems to be crucial information for understanding how Flavius viewed not only prophets, but himself as well – a historian and prophet in a new meaning of the word.

The most telling matter concerning prophets in Flavius’s narrative is their limited representation. The author chooses only those prophets who were present at the side of a ruler. This might be explained at least in two ways. Firstly, the author seems to pass his text for true historian’s work. Secondly, we find only a description of those prophets who were clearly talented advisors and in whose biographies God’s intervention could be reduced in favour of apparent wisdom of the prophets themselves. Out of almost twenty prophets who are portrayed in the Bible, Flavius presents only a few. Jeremiah is the most elaborate figure. There, however, we can see some personal motifs because of the resemblance between Jeremiah’s and Flavius’s himself experiences.<sup>6</sup> In the case of others, Flavius’s motivation for his choice could be a desire to present other sage figures that could find favour with pagan readers. We can observe examples of such royal advisors in Isaiah (*Ant.* 9.276; 10.12-16; 27-29) and Jeremiah (*Ant.* 10.89-92; 104-105; 120-123). A tendency towards limiting God’s influence is most evident in Jeremiah’s biography. He advised the king according to his own thoughts and reflections and not, as in case of Isaiah, under the influence of God’s instructions and orders. Another type of prophets that Josephus describes in his work is those whose prophecies he could back up with real occurrences. We have here prophecies of Elias (*Ant.* 8.319-323; 361-361; 407; 417; 99-103; 119-120; 124; 129), Elisha (*Ant.* 9.33-37; 71-74; 106-107; 178-181; 185), Ezekiel (*Ant.* 10.79; 106-107; 141). It seems that Jonah is mentioned only because of his accurate prophecies (*Ant.* 9.208-214) and Nahum as their confirmation (*Ant.* 9.239-242)

<sup>6</sup> See: Daube 1980; Hadas-Label 1997: 132-135; Cohen 1982: 377.

(Feldman 1992: 5-8, 18). Micah also deserved a short reference thanks to his prophecies (*Ant.* 10.92).<sup>7</sup> What Flavius emphasizes most are prophets' scriptures. They are shown as scholars writing their books in order to admonish future generations, using for this prophecies backed up with real life (Bilde 1988: 191). In Josephus' work they become typical historians like Thucydides and his learning through history. The prophets' role as historiographers is stressed most clearly in *Against Apion*: "our forefathers, that they took no less care about writing such records, (for I will not say they took greater care than the others I spoke of,) and that they committed that matter to their high priests and to their prophets" (*Ap.* 1.28).

Daniel is another prophet who, along with Jeremiah, enjoys greatest preoccupation on the part of Flavius. As a learned young man possessing all qualities that were considered already by Plato as necessary for a good hero (*Prot.* 348B), he fits perfectly as an ideal champion of the Jews. It is hard to omit God's intervention in the Book of Daniel, but nevertheless Flavius tries to emphasise wisdom of the young Jew and his companions, leaving God's power in the background: "These young men, amply gifted by nature, by dint of diligence in learning and their own wisdom were developing so well that the king respected them greatly and did not desist from loving them" (*Ant.* 10.189). God supports Daniel by granting him wisdom, but only so because he admires wisdom which Daniel already possesses (*Ant.* 10.200). With proper diet and restraint in eating "their souls were unhampered and fresh for study because they weren't hindered and languid with variety of foods, and their bodies became more hardened since they didn't spoil them with sumptuousness. Therefore, they easily explored all knowledge that was stored among Hebrews and Chaldeans" (*Ant.* 10.194).<sup>8</sup> Hence, Daniel is another prophet whose authority springs from his vast knowledge of past events (*Ant.* 10.281).

<sup>7</sup> It is worth noticing that in this case Micah's prophecies are used to advocate Jeremiah's statement, who is presented as the author's predecessor. Flavius does not avoid inconsistency here: he denies Micah's imprisonment, about which he wrote earlier (*Ant.* 8.403-410; 412).

<sup>8</sup> Besides, Flavius similarly – i.e. with proper diet – explains the longevity of patriarchs (*Ant.* 1.107).

Even on the basis of those few examples we can notice Josephus' efforts to marginalise role of God and supernatural abilities of prophets in favour of portraying – in a sort of “secular” way – their wisdom and advisory roles.

Further occasions for expressing his praise for Jewish nation are provided to Flavius by times contemporary to him. The author invokes several times in his works a division among followers of Judaism into Sadducees, Pharisees and Essenes<sup>9</sup> (*Bell. Jud.* 2.119-166; *Ant.* 13.171-173; 18.11-22; *Vita* 10). He presents them in a way that is (at least for him) most understandable and worthy of recognition in the eyes of pagan reader – he compares them to Greek philosophic doctrines. At the same time Josephus has an opportunity to describe himself as a man studying from his earliest years and someone still searching his own path. Although he identifies himself in the end as one of the Pharisees, he also finds words of praise for other two groups.

Only in description included in *Jewish War* does Josephus refer more broadly to socio-religious practises on the example of Essenes. By contrast, in various passages of *Antiquitates* we can see references to matters purely theoretical. The above-mentioned groups are divided and characterised on the basis of their opinions towards the destiny and immortality of soul. All respect the law and science, striving for excellence, though each group does so according to its own judgment. Some personal beliefs of Josephus are showed there, since in describing Sadducees he briefly ascribes to them attachment to law, giving more details for Pharisees and Essenes.

Contrary to them Flavius presents a group of zealots, who are not governed by reason and wisdom, but instead by violence and sense of enmity towards other nations. They are not listed as any group of philosophers.

The last sage I would like to discuss is the author himself, Josephus. Let us look at fragments, where he refers to himself.

The author strives to present himself as a polymath. In the context of this work we should turn our attention to two roles he tries to embody. The first one is the role of a scholar. Flavius Josephus comes from a truly illustrious bloodline – he is a priest of Levy's house and

---

<sup>9</sup> On differences between these descriptions see: Haaland 2007.

is related to the royal line on his mother's side, what we know mainly from his *Autobiography* (*Vita* 1 ff.), although he mentions it in passing in other works (*Bell. Jud.* 1.3; 5.419; *Ant.* 16.187). Like any other boy in Jerusalem he had been learning the Torah by heart and enjoyed teachings passed down in oral tradition (Hadas-Lebel 1997: 18-22). At the age of 14 he already had enough knowledge to have discussions with the priests (*Vita* 9). In his later spiritual development he finally joins the Pharisees. If compared to Greek philosophy, they resemble mostly stoics in Flavius's opinion (*Vita* 12). These ideas will be revealed in his texts. Armed with the knowledge of Jewish religion and law, the young Flavius could devote himself to the study of the Greek language. When and how he came to know the Greek language he does not explain precisely. Nevertheless, he must have possessed these skills, since at the age of 26 he was sent in 64 CE to Rome, with a mission to liberate a certain group of priests. However, gentility, the position of a priest and knowledge were not enough, as it turned out (Hadas-Lebel 1997: 41-43). And although studying Greek never stood in a first place of Jewish education, Joseph strives to learn both Greek prose and poetry (*Ant.* 20.263-264). It is another example of a Jew who does not despise Greek education and is attached to Judaic tradition at the same time.

Another role Flavius impersonates is one of a prophet, albeit one of Second Temple's period, what was mentioned above. Such portrayal works great not only with a Jewish reader,<sup>10</sup> but also when there is necessity to gain approval in the eyes of Greco-Roman world. God's intervention and inspiration is non-existent there. Flavius is able to foretell Rome's future mostly due to his knowledge. Similarly to the prophets described in his works, Flavius is more of a scholar and strategist than a man of God. When he recounts his surrender to Romans he writes about his prophetic aspirations: "Being a priest himself and coming from a priest family, he knew prophecies of the holy books. Inspired, because of them, by God in this hour, he remembered his late, terrible night visions" (*Bell. Jud.* 3.352-353).

---

<sup>10</sup> We are facing here a necessity for legitimizing prophetic activity in the light of Second Temple's reality, when prophet is more of an interpreter of the holy books than a person acting on behalf of God and inspired by Him.

Describing himself in this way, Josephus not only justifies his historical aspirations and stresses his loyalty towards the Law and tradition, but also gives his pagan reader another example of Jewish savant. Fragments of *Jewish War* and *Autobiography* that refer to his leadership in Galilea make him also a talented (though unacknowledged) strategist. Knowing his literary output, in which he tries to improve the image of the Jews and Judaism, we can accept an interpretation that all these fragments have some deeper meaning than only promoting Flavius. Presenting himself primarily to Greco-Roman reader as a scholar and military leader, Josephus enters a long tradition of Judeo-Hellenic writers keen on gaining respect for the Jewish nation in the eyes of pagans.

Obviously, examples I chose do not exhaust subject as extensive as works of Josephus. They do, however, signal very important question of Jewish writers rooted both in Hellenic and Judaic culture, who began adapting works of their ancestors for the needs of Greeks and Romans. Scientists studying the works of Flavius in the context of postcolonial theories suggest interpreting him not only against a background of his personal experiences, but also as a representative of a nation submitted to pressures from the invaders – in this case, from Romans. We can observe here how a member of a subjugated group, being aware of his situation, presents his group's tradition and culture (Spilsbury 2005). We should remember however, that in the case of portraying Jewish sages Flavius continues the work of the authors, who were composing in a much different, more independent political situation. At the same time they were describing national heroes in a similar way. It seems then that in this case Flavius displays for Greco-Roman culture the attitude I was writing about at the beginning. Not only does he want to communicate with Roman elites, among which he composes (Spilsbury 2005: 210), in the most effective way possible, but also (perhaps above all else) he desires to present exceptional individuals of the Jewish nation and their similarities to the Greco-Roman culture.<sup>11</sup> It is hard to look for any sense of being dominated here – we should remember that

---

<sup>11</sup> We should carefully consider just to what extent we can talk about so-called “cultural hybridity” here, and to what degree it is a completely different phenomenon, which eludes definition in this context. Flavius not so much adopts elements of “The

Flavius is aware of his own illustrious ancestry. Despite his affiliation with the conquered nation he is still a member of the elite, who wants to bring his own history closer to others in a more understandable way. He becomes another Jewish author, who having studied the literary output of Greeks and Romans, composes under influence of this “unreciprocated affection”.

## REFERENCES

- Bilde P., 1988, *Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome: His life, his work and their importance*, Sheffield.
- Cohen S. J. D., 1982, ‘Josephus, Jeremiah, and Polybius’, *History and Theory* 21, pp. 336-381.
- Collins J. J., 1997, *Jewish wisdom in the Hellenistic age*, Louisville.
- Daube D., 1980, ‘Typology in Josephus’, *Journal of Jewish Studies* 31/1, pp. 18-31.
- Feldman L. H., 1998, *Josephus’s interpretation of the Bible*, Berkeley.
- Gądecki S., 1993, *Wstęp do ksiąg prorockich Starego Testamentu*, Gniezno.
- Goodman M., 2007, *Rzym i Jerozolima. Zderzenie antycznych cywilizacji*, Warszawa.
- Hadas-Lebel M., 1997, *Józef Flawiusz. Żyd rzymski*, Warszawa.
- Haaland G., 2007, ‘What difference does philosophy make? The three schools as a rhetorical device in Josephus’, [in:] Z. Rodgers (ed.), *Making history: Josephus and historical method*, Leiden–Boston, pp. 262-288.
- Horsley R. A., Hanson J. S., 1985, *Bandits, prophets and messiahs: Popular movements in the time of Jesus*, Minneapolis–Chicago–New York.
- Kelle B. E., 2006, ‘Ancient Israelite prophets and Greek political orators: Analogies for the prophets and their implication for historical reconstruction’, [in:] B. E. Kelle, M. B. Moore (eds.), *Israel’s prophets and Israel’s past*, New York–London, pp. 57-82.
- Kłęczar A., 2006, *Ezechiel Tragik i jego dramat Exagoge „Wyprowadzenie z Egiptu”*, Kraków.
- McKey H., Clines D., 1993, *Of prophets’ vision and wisdom of sages*, Sheffield.
- Meleze-Modrzejewski J., 2000, *Żydzi nad Nilem. Od Ramzesa II do Hadriana*, Kraków.
- Petersen D. L., 1977, *Late Israelite prophecy: Studies in Deutero-Prophetic literature and in chronicles*, Missoula-Montana.

---

Other’s” culture, but inspired by this instead, he strives to present his own tradition as equally great and beautiful.

Polk T., 1984, *The prophetic persona*, Sheffield.

Schniedewind W. M., 1995, *The word of God in transition: From prophet to exegete in the Second Temple period*, Sheffield.

Spilsbury P., 2005, 'Reading the Bible in Rome: Josephus and the constraints of Empire', [in:] G. Lembi, J. Sievers (eds.), *Josephus and Jewish history in Flavian Rome and beyond*, Leiden–Boston, pp. 209-227.