SCULPTING IDOLATRY IN FLAVIAN ROME: 
(AN)ICONIC RHETORIC IN THE WRITINGS OF FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Near Eastern Studies) in The University of Michigan 2009

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For my wife Becky
and our children Brooke, Kaitlyn, Mikayla, and Tyler,
with deepest affection
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Good scholarship does not emerge in a vacuum, and “original” ideas are never created ex nihilo. I am thus keenly aware of my debt, not only to the hundreds of scholars in print—including many not listed in the bibliography below—who have helped stimulate my thinking, but also to the numerous faculty members and fellow students at the University of Michigan whose collective efforts have enabled me to survive the rigors of graduate school and ultimately complete this dissertation.

I wish especially to thank my dissertation chair, Prof. Gabriele Boccaccini, who has in these past few years modeled rigorous scholarship and gracious hospitality, stimulating his students’ minds both within and outside the classroom. It was in my inaugural semester of graduate school, during a seminar on Methodology in the Study of Second Temple Judaism, that Prof. Boccaccini first whet my appetite for this fascinating realm of scholarly research. A second Boccaccini seminar, one focused on the central protagonist of the present study (Flavius Josephus), was even more formative, opening my eyes to numerous possible lines of inquiry that have ultimately blossomed into this project. The breadth and depth of his own scholarly interests have been a particularly useful resource, and his critical reading of the ensuing pages has certainly helped to broaden my thinking and sharpen my arguments. Outside of the classroom and dissertation, Prof. Boccaccini has also made available numerous possibilities for professional advancement—e.g., introducing me to the vast and impressive network of
scholars in the Enoch Seminar; offering several opportunities for editorial work and publication; etc.—for which I am extremely grateful.

This dissertation includes a healthy dose of comparative material that falls outside of the more comfortable boundaries of my specialization, so I cannot image embarking on this project without the helpful perspectives of my remaining committee members. Prof. Raymond Van Dam first exposed me to the labyrinth of Roman history, and his attention to detail both in the present project and in various seminar papers has played a vital role in my intellectual development. Prof. Brian Schmidt’s knowledge of the Hebrew Bible and the iconography of Israelite culture were particularly crucial for the present study, and his incisive questions and comments brought into clearer focus several important methodological issues. Prof. Gary Beckman graciously volunteered to join my committee at a very late date, and although his specialization in Hittite studies may seem a bit remote to my own research, I am especially grateful for his careful reading of this dissertation, and especially for rescuing me from several potentially embarrassing mistakes.

Although a medical leave of absence prevented his participation on the committee, Prof. Yaron Eliav deserves special thanks for his role in shaping the present study. Prof. Eliav first introduced me to the possibility of exploring material culture (statues) in literary texts, offering me for two consecutive summers a position as research assistant for the Interdisciplinary Statuary Project. My responsibility in this project was to begin collecting data for a sourcebook on statues in Greek literature, a task that happily exposed me to a broad range of comparative material relevant for the present study. Prof. Eliav also helped to guide me through the various phases of research, reading carefully
and commenting thoroughly on preliminary drafts of each chapter. Without question, the success of this project is deeply indebted to his critical eye.

An important disclaimer is perhaps in order. As Charles Darwin remarked in *The Expressions and Emotions in Man and Animals*, “it is always advisable to perceive clearly our ignorance” (p. 39). I would like to modify this expression slightly, noting that it is also always advisable to take *full responsibility* for our ignorance. It is thus in the spirit of Darwin that I exonerate those keen minds that have contributed to all that is positive in this dissertation by taking full responsibility for any mistakes, dubious argumentation or other shortcomings that may still remain in the ensuing pages.

Many organizations at the University of Michigan were a source of financial and administrative assistance. The Program for the Study of Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity (JCA), formerly Judaism and Christianity in the Graeco-Roman World, has offered a deep well of intellectual opportunities and resources for which I am especially grateful. The Department of Near Eastern Studies has been particularly generous in its fellowships and teaching posts, as well as those few sudden occasions when I found myself in a deep financial pinch. Several other institutions have also been quite generous with research funding, allowing me to pursue my studies both here in the states and abroad, especially the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, the Rackham Graduate School, the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, and the Michigan Center for Early Christian Studies.

I wish also to thank my fellow students in the Department of Near Eastern Studies, and especially my colleagues in JCA. Harold (Hal) Ellens was the first friendly face to greet me in Ann Arbor, and shortly thereafter both James Waddell and Ron Ruark
welcomed me into the program. Our little grad group soon began to expand, and it has been my privilege to develop friendships with several other students both in and outside the classroom, including Justin Winger, Anne Kreps, Stephanie Bolz, Isaac Oliver, and Jacob Feeley. Our many delightful conversations—usually stimulating, but occasionally juvenile—in the hallways of the Frieze Building (RIP) and the Thayer Academic Building, as well as our occasional journeys to various locations around the Mediterranean, were often a source of encouragement and happiness in the midst of anxiety and stress. Also deserving mention is the weekly brown-bagging HA cohort—the aforementioned Justin and Isaac, along with Craig Tyson—whose company helped keep me sane in these last few years.

I would not be celebrating the completion of a Ph.D. without a tremendously supportive family. My parents, James and Joyce von Ehrenkrook, brought me into a stable, nurturing home, and although money was never in abundance, they modeled the virtues of hard work and selfless love. While I suspect that my siblings—Cherie, Todd and Julie—could care less about my seemingly arcane interests, they nevertheless have encouraged and supported me along the way. My brother-in-law Doug Finkbeiner was a constant source of inspiration and intellectual stimulation, especially after we both began working simultaneously on Josephan dissertations (his conducted at the University of Pennsylvania). It is a happy coincidence to have a family member with similar research interests, especially during those rare moments when we could steal away from the chaos of a family gathering, find a quiet space (not an easy task with the 20+ children running around!) and engage in a stimulating conversation about Josephus.
Finally, my wife and children—to whom this dissertation is dedicated—deserve special recognition. As a graduate student and parent of four, I was a distinct minority in the university culture, signaled especially by the raised eyebrows and shocked expressions of those who happened to hear of my large brood. And yet, notwithstanding the additional responsibilities this entails—diapers, nightly bedtime rituals, afterschool homework, etc.—I cannot imagine surviving graduate school without them. They have brought a much needed sense of perspective, a constant reminder that what I think about Josephus matters very little in the grand scheme of things, and their laughter and affection have been a continuous source of joy and satisfaction. My wife Becky in particular has been enormously supportive and encouraging throughout this process, and it is deeply satisfying to now complete this journey, and embark on a new one, alongside my partner, lover and best friend.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Ancient Sources

Ab urb. Livy, *Ab urbe condita*
Abr. Philo, *De Abrahamo*
Abst. Porphyry, *De abstinentia*
Adv. nat. Arnobius, *Adversus nationes*
A.J. Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae*
Alex. Lucian, *Alexander*
Ann. Quintus Ennius, *Annales*
Ant. rom. Dionysius, *Antiquitates romanae*
Apol. Tertullian, *Apologeticus*
Avod. Zar. *Avodah Zarah*
Bibl. hist. Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliothea historica*
Bell. Cat. Sallust, *Bellum catalinae*
Bell. civ. Lucan, *Bellum civile*
B.J. Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum*
C. Ap. Josephus, *Contra Apionem*
Cat. Maj. Plutarch, *Cato Major*
Cels. Origen, *Contra Celsum*
Cher. Philo, *De cherubim*
Chron 1 or 2 Chronicles
Civ. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*
Contempl. Philo, *De vita contemplativa*
Cor. Plutarch, *Marcius Coriolanus*
De Anim. Galen, *De animi cuiuslibet peccatorum dignotione et curacione*
Decal. Philo, *De decalogo*
Deipn. Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*
Descr. Pausanias, *Graeciae descriptio*
Det. Philo, *Quod deterior potior insidari soleat*
Deus. Philo, *Quod Deus sit immutabilis*
Deut Deuteronomy
Dial. Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone*
Div. Cicero, *De divinatione*
Ebr. Philo, *De ebrietate*
En. *Enoch*
Ep Jer Epistle of Jeremiah
Evag. Isocrates, *Evagoras (Or. 9)*
Exod Exodus
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fort. Rom.</td>
<td>Plutarch, <em>De fortuna Romanorum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gall.</td>
<td>Lucian, <em>Gallus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gen</td>
<td>Genesis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geogr.</td>
<td>Strabo, <em>Geographica</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hist.</td>
<td><em>Historiae</em> (of Herodotus, Tacitus or Thucydides)</td>
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<td>Hist. rom.</td>
<td>Cassius Dio, <em>Historia romana</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hos</td>
<td>Hosea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Idol.</td>
<td>Tertullian, <em>De idolatria</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inst.</td>
<td>Gaius, <em>Institutiones</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is. Os.</td>
<td>Plutarch, <em>De Iside et Osiride</em></td>
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<td>Isa</td>
<td>Isaiah</td>
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<td>Jub.</td>
<td>Jubilees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jupp. trag.</td>
<td>Lucian, <em>Juppiter tragoedus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kgs</td>
<td>1 or 2 Kings</td>
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<tr>
<td>L.A.B.</td>
<td><em>Liber antiquitatum biblicarum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leg.</td>
<td>Cicero, <em>De legibus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Legat.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>Legatio ad Gaium</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lev</td>
<td>Leviticus</td>
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<td>Lev. Rab.</td>
<td>Leviticus Rabbah</td>
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<td>LXX</td>
<td>Septuagint</td>
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<td>Mar.</td>
<td>Plutarch, <em>Marius</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Men.</td>
<td>Lucian, <em>Menippus</em></td>
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<td>Mek. R. Yish.</td>
<td><em>Mekilta de R. Yishmael</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mos.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>De vita Mosis</em></td>
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<td>Nat.</td>
<td>Pliny the Elder, <em>Naturalis historia</em></td>
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<td>Noct. att.</td>
<td>Aulus Gellius, <em>Noctes atticae</em></td>
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<td>Opif.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>De opificio mundi</em></td>
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<td>Philops.</td>
<td>Lucian, <em>Philopseudes</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Praep. ev.</td>
<td>Eusebius, <em>Praeparatio evangelica</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Praescr.</td>
<td>Tertullian, <em>De praescriptione haereticorum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Princ. Iner.</td>
<td>Plutarch, <em>Ad principem ineruditum</em></td>
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<td>Protr.</td>
<td>Clement of Alexandria, <em>Protrepticus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prov.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>De providentia</em></td>
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<td>Ps.-Phoc.</td>
<td>Pseudo-Phocylides</td>
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<td>Rev</td>
<td>Revelation</td>
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<td>Rosh Hash.</td>
<td><em>Rosh HaShanah</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sacr.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>1 or 2 Samuel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat.</td>
<td><em>Satirae</em> (of Juvenal or Horace)</td>
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<td>Sib. Or.</td>
<td><em>Sibylline Oracles</em></td>
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<td>Spec.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>De specialibus legibus</em></td>
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<td>Strom.</td>
<td>Clement of Alexandria, <em>Stromata</em></td>
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<td>T. Reu.</td>
<td>Testament of Reuben</td>
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<td>Tanh.</td>
<td>Midrash Tanhumah</td>
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<td>Tg. Neof.</td>
<td>Targum Neofiti</td>
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<td>Tg. Ps.-J.</td>
<td>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</td>
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Vesp.  Suetonius, *Vespasian*
Virt.  Philo, *De virtutibus*
Vit. soph.  Philostratus, *Vitae sophistarum*
Wis  Wisdom of Solomon
Zech  Zechariah

**Modern Sources**

AJA  *American Journal of Archaeology*
AJP  *American Journal of Philology*
ANRW  *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
BJRL  *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*
CBQ  *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CIL  *Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum*
CQ  *Classical Quarterly*
GR  *Greece and Rome*
HSCP  *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*
HTR  *Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA  *Hebrew Union College Annual*
IEJ  *Israel Exploration Journal*
JANER  *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*
JAOS  *Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL  *Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCP  *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie*
JHS  *Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JJS  *Journal of Jewish Studies*
JQR  *Jewish Quarterly Review*
JR  *Journal of Religion*
JRS  *Journal of Roman Studies*
JSJ  *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods*
JSP  *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*
JTS  *Journal of Theological Studies*
LCL  *Loeb Classical Library*
NEA  *Near Eastern Archaeology*
NovT  *Novum Testamentum*
NRSV  *New Revised Standard Version*
NTS  *New Testament Studies*
PAAJR  *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research*
PEQ  *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
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<tr>
<td>PG</td>
<td>Patriologia graeca</td>
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<td>PP</td>
<td>Past and Present</td>
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<td>PSAS</td>
<td>Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies</td>
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<td>PT</td>
<td>Poetics Today</td>
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<td>RB</td>
<td>Revue biblique</td>
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<td>REG</td>
<td>Revue des études grecques</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCI</td>
<td>Scripta Classica Israelica</td>
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<tr>
<td>SJ</td>
<td>Studia Judaica</td>
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<td>SPhilo</td>
<td>The Studia Philonica Annual</td>
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<td>TA</td>
<td>Tel Aviv</td>
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<tr>
<td>TZ</td>
<td>Theologische Zeitschrift</td>
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<tr>
<td>YJC</td>
<td>Yale Journal of Criticism</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZNW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die neustamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</td>
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the discourse on images embedded in the writings of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, focusing especially on his numerous accounts of a contentious, and at times iconoclastic, relationship between Jews and images. Scholarship has tended to focus on the historical events behind Josephus’ literary corpus, reading these “anti-iconic” narratives as evidence that Judaism during the Second Temple period was a purely aniconic religion, uniformly and categorically opposed to all forms of figurative art, whether cultic or otherwise. By contrast, my study shifts attention to the literary context of Josephus’ “iconology,” the way in which this (an)iconic material functions in the development of broader rhetorical themes, and the extent to which these narratives bear the distinct cultural imprint of their compositional context, Flavian Rome. After considering a wider range of literary and archaeological material attesting to a complex relationship between Jews and images in Greco-Roman antiquity, I examine Josephus’ discourse on images in *Bellum Judaicum* and *Antiquitates Judaicae* respectively. In so doing, I argue that the portrait of strict aniconism that emerges in Josephus is in part a rhetorical construct, an effort to reframe Jewish iconoclastic behavior not as a resistance to Roman hegemony but as an expression of *Romanitas*, an aspect of Jewish behavior that would have resonated with the prevailing cultural winds of Rome during the Flavian period. Josephus thus articulates in this discourse on images a
notion of Jewish identity that functioned to mitigate an increasingly tense relationship between Romans and Jews in the wake of the Jewish revolt against Rome.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: READING IDOLATRY IN(TO) JOSEPHUS

The relationship between Jews in antiquity and sculpture was at best strained, and at worst, downright volatile.¹ Or at least this is the impression one gets from reading the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. A golden statue of an eagle that Herod the Great erected over the gate of the temple in Jerusalem fell victim to an axe in the hands of an angry mob.² The trophies Herod installed on the theater in Jerusalem met a similar fate, having been dismantled by the king in order to pacify a crowd of offended Jews.³ The figurative images adorning Herod the Tetrarch’s palace were spared destruction at the hands of an iconoclastic commission (one that included Josephus), but only because a band of restless Galileans had already set the palace aflame.⁴ Gaius Caligula’s short-lived attempt to erect a statue of himself in the Jerusalem temple likewise stirred the masses into a frenzy, almost resulting in the martyrdom—or suicide, depending upon one’s perspective—of thousands.⁵ Even the seemingly innocuous images of the emperor

⁴ Vita 65–66.
affixed to Pontius Pilate’s military standards incited the indignation of many in Jerusalem.  

In the light of such narratives in Josephus, it is no surprise that many scholars identify the period before 70 C.E. as an age of strict aniconism—or perhaps better, an anti-iconic age, a period in history when Jews would not tolerate any kind of figural representation, regardless of context or function. In the words of Cecil Roth: “There is overwhelming evidence that human images, whether in the flat or in the round, were not tolerated by the Jews in the period before the destruction of Jerusalem.” This period of strict and inflexible aniconism is, moreover, typically contrasted with the centuries following the destruction of the temple, when the obvious flourishing of figurative art in synagogues is viewed as evidence for Judaism’s softening stance toward such images.

But there is reason to suspect that the situation during the Second Temple period was more complicated than is typically allowed. In the first place, this near ubiquitous

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7 The term “aniconic” can encompass a broad semantic field ranging from an outright rejection of images, regardless of form or subject matter, to the use of non-figural cult objects, such as conical or pillared representations of a deity or symbols of “sacred emptiness,” whether empty divine thrones or chariots (eg. Arnobius, Adv. nat. 1.39); see especially the discussion of this term in the following studies: David Freedberg, The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 33-35; Trygve Mettinger, No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995), 19; Peter Stewart, Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 64-72; Milette Gaifman, "Beyond Mimesis in Greek Religious Art: Aniconism in the Archaic and Classical Periods" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2005). W. Barnes Tatum, followed by Steven Fine, employ the terms “anti-iconic” and “anti-idolic” to distinguish between the resistance to image in toto (anti-iconic) and the resistance to cult images (anti-idolic); W. Barnes Tatum, “The LXX Version of the Second Commandment (Ex 20:3-6 = Deut 5:7-10): A Polemic against Idols, Not Images,” JSJ 17 (1986): 177-95; Steven Fine, Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 70. For this study, my use of “aniconic” corresponds with Tatum’s “anti-iconic,” i.e., as a religiously derived opposition to all forms of theriomorphic (animal) and anthropomorphic (human) images, and not just representations of the divine and other such artistic objects of “pagan” worship.

claim that Jews during the early Roman period were strictly aniconic is partly the
remnant of a persistent idea in western intellectual history, often rooted in the faulty
assumption of a binary opposition between “Jews” and “Pagans”/“Judaism” and
evidence” of strict aniconism, to borrow Roth’s words, is derived primarily from two
sources—a scarcity of figurative remains in the archaeological record of Second Temple
Jerusalem read through the lens of Josephus, especially his so-called iconoclastic
narratives.\footnote{I am using “iconoclastic” loosely to refer to the Josephan narratives mentioned in the opening paragraph, i.e., the stories of Jews resisting Roman images. At least one of these episodes, the case of Herod’s eagle, does in fact fit a strict definition of iconoclasm.} Yet, as will be argued in chapter 2, it is notoriously difficult to move from
the archaeological record (or lack thereof) of one specific region to a sweeping
characterization of the beliefs of an entire people scattered throughout the Mediterranean
basin. Archaeology is thus quite limited for the topic at hand, at best suggestive but
hardly conclusive.

Moreover, and herein lies the primary focus of this study, very few have
considered the extent to which the portrait of aniconism that emerges from Josephus’
narratives is even a reliable indicator of the actual situation. Josephus’ reports of
iconoclastic activity are simply taken at face value, so much so that many even suppose
that the author, who likely composed much of his oeuvre surrounded by statues of Roman
gods in the comfort of Vespasian’s villa,\footnote{Josephus, \textit{Vita} 423.} embraces a more strict interpretation of the
biblical prohibition against images (i.e., the so-called second commandment) than even the rabbis of the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods.\footnote{12}{For example, Roth’s study of Josephus concludes that the author “shows himself more rigid than the Rabbis of the Talmudic period”; Roth, "Ordinance against Images," 176. Louis H. Feldman likewise contrasts Josephus’ overwhelmingly negative perspective with the more accommodating Rabbinic tradition; Louis H. Feldman, \textit{Josephus and Modern Scholarship (1937-1980)} (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1984), 512.}

This propensity to read the scarcity of figurative remains in the light of a straightforward interpretation of Josephus is particularly evident in Steven Fine’s recent analysis of the problem of Jews and art before the destruction of the temple. After a survey of the archaeological record and the relevant material in Josephus, which according to Fine is fairly uniform,\footnote{13}{On several occasions, Fine speaks of the “consistency of Josephus’s approach”; Fine, \textit{Art and Judaism}, 80. As will be argued below in chapters 3-5, Fine’s supposition of uniformity or consistency in the Josephan corpus does not withstand a close scrutiny of this material.} he draws the conclusion that there emerged in the late Second Temple period a growing “receptivity among Jews of a more radical anti-iconic tendency.”\footnote{14}{Ibid., 75.} This “visual conservatism,”\footnote{15}{Ibid., 78.} according to Fine, bespeaks an “increasingly strident” application of the second commandment.\footnote{16}{Ibid., 81. Edwyn Bevan likewise points to Josephus as evidence that Jews in the first century understood the scope of the second commandment to include all figurative images, i.e., images of living creatures; Edwyn Bevan, \textit{Holy Images: An Inquiry into Idolatry and Image-Worship in Ancient Paganism and in Christianity} (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1940), 48. See especially the discussion below in chapter 3.} From this perspective, the iconoclastic stories in Josephus represent a fairly precise barometer of how Jews, including Josephus, viewed images in antiquity. That is to say, Josephus’ literary portrait of a religiously derived strict aniconism is thought to represent accurately the situation on the ground.
One notable exception to this straightforward reading of Josephus is the art historian Joseph Gutmann. In an important article published in the *Hebrew Union College Annual* in 1961, Gutmann argued in part that Josephus’ supposedly strict interpretation of the second commandment should not be taken at face value but was instead indicative of the author’s apologetic concerns before his Roman audience. More specifically, according to Gutmann Josephus attempted to circumvent the implication that Jewish resistance to Roman images was the manifestation of a “Jewish hatred of Rome’s oppressive rule” by linking (inaccurately, in Gutmann’s estimation) this resistance to a strict observance of Jewish law. In other words, the image of strict aniconism rooted in religious concerns is a Josephan *rhetorical construct*, an attempt to mask the truth, namely that Jewish iconoclasm was in fact an act of political subversion, an expression of a deep-seated anti-Roman sentiment. For Gutmann, encapsulated in Josephus’ assertion in *Contra Apionem* (hereafter *C. Ap.*) that Moses forbade images “not as a prophecy that Roman authority ought not be honored” is a potentially revealing glimpse into the true motive of Jewish iconoclasm: a refusal to submit to Roman hegemony, and not a religious commitment to strict aniconism.

More recently, John Barclay has taken up the subject of images and idolatry in Josephus, focusing specifically on the development of this *topos* in *C. Ap.* and, like

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18 Ibid.: 170.
19 *C. Ap.* 2.75. Unless otherwise noted, translations of primary sources are my own.
Gutmann, drawing attention to the rhetorical dimension of this material.\textsuperscript{20} Barclay summarizes his argument as follows:

I hope here to trace how Josephus places Jewish aniconic peculiarity on the map of Greek and Roman culture, and in so doing will highlight his rhetorical subtlety, as he skilfully conveys his disdain of non-Jewish religious practices without offending his Roman (or Romanized) audience.\textsuperscript{21}

Commenting on \textit{C. Ap.} 2.73-78, which seemingly prohibits any kind of figurative image, religious or otherwise, Barclay identifies this passage as “a masterpiece of rhetorical deflection” and its author as a “spin-doctor” of the highest order.\textsuperscript{22} Specifically, in Barclay’s interpretation of this text, Josephus is careful to \textit{Romanize} the Jewish resistance to images, to frame his discussion of images in a way that would be entirely palatable to a Roman ear. This, however, is not to deny any subversive quality in Josephus’ discourse. Indeed, “[t]here is venom in that term \textit{despiciens} used in \textit{C. Ap.} 2.75 JVE], a cultural snarl: but so sweet is the smile on this Jewish face turned towards Rome that the sneer can pass almost unnoticed.”\textsuperscript{23}

My study builds on the provocative suggestions of both Gutmann and Barclay, with a particular (though not exclusive) focus on the iconoclastic narratives in \textit{Bellum Judaicum} and \textit{Antiquitates Judaicae} (hereafter \textit{B.J.} and \textit{A.J.} respectively). A closer examination of this material demonstrates that there is more here than initially meets the eye, that Josephus is not simply describing what happened, but is instead \textit{sculpting} events, as it were, shaping unique portraits of aniconism that contribute to larger

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 74.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 79.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 81.
\end{flushleft}
rhetorical themes within each of his main compositions. Moreover, the resulting images of aniconism and iconoclasm that emerge in Josephus’ corpus, which on the surface certainly seem to depict a fundamental antithesis between εἰκών and Ἰουδαίος, and by extension between “Hellenism” and “Judaism,” are actually patterned after certain modes of thought and perceptions that were prevalent throughout the Greco-Roman world. Thus, embedded in this discourse on cultural conflict is, ironically enough, evidence for confluence, further supporting the notion that Jews in antiquity were part and parcel of their Mediterranean milieu.²⁴

The data examined in the ensuing study, however, actually encompass a broader range of textual material, taking as its starting point the “iconic” lexicon employed throughout the Josephan corpus, most notably the author’s use of εἰκών, ἀνθρώπινς, and ἀγαλμα, as well as other key Greek terms that comprise Josephus’ discourse on images (see Appendix 1). This “iconic” material in Josephus still remains relatively unexplored to date, and I thus attempt to investigate Josephus’ “iconology,”²⁵ paying special attention to the rhetorical function of this discourse on images within each respective literary context. Additionally, I aim in the following chapters to situate Josephus’ “iconic” material within a wider comparative context, including in the purview of this study relevant data drawn from a broad selection of Jewish and Greco-Roman sources, both textual and archaeological.

²⁴ On this perspective, see for example, Erich Gruen, Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Lee I. Levine, Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence? (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999).

Chapter 2 functions mainly to locate my investigation of Josephus within the broader conversation on Jews and images in antiquity, considering both scholarly constructs of the ancient aniconic Jew and primary source material outside Josephus—both literary and archaeological—that may support such claims, i.e., that attest to a contentious relationship between Jews and sculpture (and more broadly figurative art), especially during the Second Temple period. I argue in this chapter, however, that this data is much more complex than is typically allowed. While the archaeological record for Second Temple Jerusalem and a broad range of literary sources describing Jerusalem may suggest an uneasy relationship with figurative images, this should not be taken as indicative of a monolithic viewpoint characteristic of all Jews throughout the Mediterranean basin. Rather, it is much more likely that there existed during the period in question a variety of ideological perspectives, as well as a diverse range of local or regional practices with regard to the use of figurative images. Moreover, even those Jewish texts most saturated with animosity toward images—Jewish idol polemics, using the Epistle of Jeremiah and the Wisdom of Solomon as test cases—restrict their focus to cult images and further betray a profound awareness of perceptions attested in a wide range of “pagan” sources. Thus, the typical polarization of “Jew” and “Image” does not in fact tell the whole story.

I continue to situate Josephus within his Jewish context in chapter 3, focusing here on a much more narrow body of comparative material, Jewish interpretations of the biblical prohibition of images (the so-called second commandment). Scholars have by and large argued, based primarily on evidence drawn from Josephus, that Jews during the Second Temple period took a more restrictive stance in their interpretation of this
proscription, expanding the scope of prohibited items to include *all forms of figurative art*, regardless of context or function. I argue instead that the vast majority (though not all) of Jewish sources from both before and after the destruction of the temple demonstrate precisely the opposite, namely that Jews by and large understood the biblical prohibition of images to encompass *only* images with some kind of cultic association. This is not to deny that *some* Jews during the period in question may have taken a more restrictive exegetical stance. However, the extant literary evidence demonstrates that the more restrictive approach to the second commandment was the exception rather than the rule. Moreover, with respect to Josephus’ interpretation of the second commandment, there emerges in his corpus an interesting tension between his formulation of the proscription within an exegetical context, wherein he explicitly restricts the scope to *cult* images, and within a narrative context, wherein Josephus seemingly broadens the scope to include images *in toto*. I argue that this tension is significant, suggesting that the portrayal of strict aniconism, which plays a prominent role in Josephus’ various iconoclastic narratives, has less to do with the author’s actual exegetical opinions and more to do with his rhetorical concerns, i.e., his interest in linking the Jewish resistance to images with broader narrative *topoi*.

The next two chapters then focus on the rhetorical function of Josephus’ discourse on images in *B.J.* and *A.J.* respectively. I argue in chapter 4 that Josephus in *B.J.* forges an explicit link between sculpture and sacred space, deploying the former as a boundary marker for the latter. While the notion that sculpture can function to demarcate the sacred appears in numerous Greco-Roman sources, Josephus exploits and inverts this perception in order to map Judea and Jerusalem as sacred territories *without sculpture*, setting up a
stark contrast with Greek landscapes. Furthermore, this rhetorical maneuver functions in the wider narrative context of *B.J.* to both negotiate Jewish identity and articulate the legitimate boundaries of imperial authority at a moment in history saturated with tyrannophobia, i.e., shortly after the demise of the Julio-Claudian regime and the accession of a new imperial family.

Chapter 5 continues to investigate the poetics of images and idolatry in Josephus, focusing on his 20 volume *magnum opus*. Specifically, I argue that Josephus in *A.J.* crafts a view of the mythic past that emphasizes the pious aniconic origins of the Jewish constitution. Moreover, this formulation of the Jewish πολιτεία and its vision of an imageless people, which functions to articulate an ideal exemplar of virtue (ἀρετή) and piety (εὐσεβεία), serving as a critical index for present behavior, is drawn from the well of Roman cultural discourse, especially the tendency in Roman sources to idealize the deep past and to envision a pristine age of *Roman* aniconism. In so doing, Josephus *Romanizes* Jewish iconoclastic behavior, framing the Jewish resistance to images in the present (i.e., first century) as an attempt to preserve an aniconic piety that the Romans had failed to maintain.

**Josephus Past and Present**

Given the focus of this study, it is necessary to consider briefly Josephus’ *curriculum vita* as well as his reception in modern scholarship. In particular, this select survey of research on Josephus situates the present study within a wider scholarly context, underscoring especially its contribution to the study of this Jewish author and his literary corpus.
Josephus’ *Vita*: From Joseph ben Matthias to T. Flavius Josephus

The central protagonist of this investigation affords a fascinating glimpse into the social and cultural complexities of the Greco-Roman Mediterranean.²⁶ Joseph ben Matthias was born into a priestly family from Jerusalem in 37/38 C.E., the first year of Gaius Caligula’s tenure as emperor in Rome (37–41 C.E.).²⁷ By this point in history, Rome’s presence in Judea had long been established: the initial “friendship and alliance” (φιλία καὶ συμμαχία) with Rome,²⁸ solicited during the Hasmonean-led revolt against the Seleucid monarch Antiochus Epiphanes IV (175–164 B.C.E.), soon gave way to Judean subjugation under Roman hegemony in the wake of Pompey’s invasion of Jerusalem (63 B.C.E.), first under the rule of the client king Herod the Great, and then, following the death of Herod in 4 B.C.E. and a decade of political instability, under the direct jurisdiction of Roman governors in 6 C.E. This latter arrangement continued, with a brief interlude during Agrippa I’s tenure as client king (41–44 C.E.), up to the Judean revolt in 66 C.E.


²⁷ In addition to the account in *B.J.* of his own role in the Judean revolt, Josephus recounts his personal biography in an appendix to *A.J. (Vita)*, with an obvious emphasis on his role as general in the defense in Galilee. It should be noted that the title *Vita* is not original to the composition and does not actually reflect the nature of this work; Josephus is not writing an autobiography as such, but instead a personal apology, an attempt to refute certain accusations against his own character and role in the revolt. Moreover, given the apologetic purpose of the work, we should approach the details of his biography with a healthy measure of skepticism, particularly in light of the obvious discrepancies between *B.J.* and *Vita*, on which see especially Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*. Besides his own works, fragments of data—mostly pertaining to his prediction of Vespasian’s accession to the imperial throne—can be found in a few classical sources (Suetonius, *Vesp. 5.6*; Appian, *Frag.* 17; Cassius Dio, *Hist. rom.* 66.1).

²⁸ 1 Mace 8:17.
Unfortunately, apart from the brief and somewhat tendentious opening to \textit{Vita}, very little is known of Josephus’ life prior to the revolt. Presumably, as a member of an aristocratic priestly family, Josephus was given a fitting education in Jerusalem, including, one would assume, at least some training in the Jewish scriptures, though we should perhaps be wary of Josephus’ own exaggerated claims of intellectual prowess. A few years prior to the revolutionary outbreak, Josephus traveled to Rome at the age of 26 as part of an official delegation sent to petition for the release of Judean priests who had been imprisoned by the procurator Marcus Antonius Felix (ca. 63/64 C.E.). It was during this trip that Josephus first gained exposure to Roman aristocratic circles, most notably Nero’s wife Poppaea Sabina. Shortly after returning to Judea, Josephus found himself embroiled in the early stages of the Jewish revolt, and was eventually appointed general of the Galilean forces in the fall of 66 C.E.

It is precisely Josephus’ first encounter with the rising Flavian star that reversed his fortunes and in the process irreparably tarnished his reputation for centuries to come. In the summer of 67 C.E., Vespasian laid siege to the Galilean city of Jotapata, wherein

\begin{footnotesize}
29 Josephus’ self-representation in \textit{Vita} 8-12 accords well with standard Greco-Roman ideals of \textit{paideia}, particularly his claim to have initiated at the age of sixteen a rigorous examination of the three main Judean philosophical sects. The pursuit of an eclectic exposure to various schools of philosophy was a common trope in Greco-Roman literature; e.g., the second century C.E. Galen, who claims to have studied under a Stoic, a Platonist, a Peripatetic, and an Epicurean before deciding against forging a philosophical allegiance (Galen, \textit{De Anim.} 5.102; see also Lucian, \textit{Men.} 4-5; Justin, \textit{Dial.} 2). For a less skeptical treatment of Josephus’ claims in \textit{Vita} 10-11, see Rajak, \textit{Josephus}, 34-38. On the three philosophical schools as a rhetorical device, see most recently Gunnar Haaland, "What Difference Does Philosophy Make? The Three Schools as a Rhetorical Device in Josephus," in \textit{Making History: Josephus and Historical Method} (ed. Zuleika Rodgers; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 262-88.

30 \textit{Vita} 16. Elsewhere Josephus identifies Poppaea as a devout, god-fearing woman (ἡσυχασμένη), perhaps suggesting she was at least sympathetic to Jewish customs (\textit{A.J.} 20.195).

31 Josephus gives two not entirely compatible accounts of his appointment in \textit{B.J.} 2.562-568 and \textit{Vita} 17.
\end{footnotesize}
Josephus and his troops were stationed. After 47 days, the city was captured and its inhabitants slaughtered, although Josephus and 40 others successfully avoided the massacre by hiding in a nearby cave. The Romans, however, soon discovered their hiding place, and when faced with the prospect of surrender, the majority of survivors argued, in opposition to Josephus, that suicide was the preferable choice. And so the group cast lots to determine the order of suicide, and when Josephus conveniently—or in his words εἶτε ὑπὸ τύχης εἶτε ὑπὸ θεοῦ προνοίας—found himself one of two remaining survivors, he successfully persuaded his companion to choose life in the hands of Rome. Josephus was then brought before Vespasian, where he delivered the famed prophecy of the general’s imperial destiny, a prophecy that ultimately launched this rebel general into a comfortable literary career in the heart of the empire, with the benefit of Roman citizenship, a stipend and residency in one of Vespasian’s villas.

Josephus spent his remaining days, some thirty or so years, living in Rome, where he composed at least three major literary works in Greek. His first, a seven volume account of the Jewish revolt against Rome (B.J.), was likely composed somewhere between 75 and 81 C.E., though some have argued that the flattery of Domitian in book

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32 Josephus recounts these events, with a stunningly herculean view of himself, in B.J. 3.141–408.
34 B.J. 3.391.
35 Vita 423.
36 For the terminus a quo, Josephus mentions in B.J. 7.158-161 the dedication of Vespasian’s Templum Pacis, which occurred in 75 C.E. (Cassius Dio, Hist. rom. 66.15.1). For the terminus ante quem, Josephus mentions in Vita 363 that Titus gave his official imperial signature to B.J., thus locating the completion of the work sometime before Titus’ death but during his reign.
7 indicates that this last volume was composed during the reign of the last Flavian emperor.\footnote{Cohen, \textit{Josephus in Galilee and Rome}, 84-90; Seth Schwartz, "The Composition and Publication of Josephus' 'Bellum Judaicum' Book 7," \textit{HTR} 79 (1986): 373-86.} His second major work, a 20 volume account of the antiquities of the Jewish people (\textit{A.J.}), was published in 93/94 C.E.,\footnote{Josephus explicitly dates \textit{A.J.} to the thirteenth year of Domitian’s reign, i.e., between September 93 and September 94 C.E.} perhaps with the one volume appendix (\textit{Vita}) following shortly thereafter.\footnote{D. A. Barish, "The 'Autobiography' of Josephus and the Hypothesis of a Second Edition of His 'Antiquities'," \textit{HTR} 71 (1978): 61-75; Cohen, \textit{Josephus in Galilee and Rome}, 170; Rajak, \textit{Josephus}, 237-38; Per Bilde, \textit{Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome} (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 104-06. Seth Schwartz argues instead that \textit{Vita} was appended to a second edition of \textit{A.J.} in 97/98 C.E.; Seth Schwartz, \textit{Josephus and Judaean Politics} (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 20.} The precise date for his final work, the two volume defense of the Jews in the response to hostile slanders (\textit{C. Ap.}), is more difficult to determine, except that it follows the publication of \textit{A.J./Vita}, given the references Josephus occasionally makes to this composition.\footnote{John M. G. Barclay, \textit{Against Apion} (vol. 10; Leiden: Brill, 2007), xxvi-xxviii. For references to \textit{A.J.}, see \textit{C. Ap.} 1.1-2, 54, 127; 2.136, 287.}  

\textbf{Josephus' \textit{Nachleben}: From Devious Quisling to Respected Roman Author}  

In the light of the Jotapata episode, it is not entirely surprising that scholarship on Josephus during the early twentieth century was largely concerned with Josephus’ character flaws and deficiencies as a historian.\footnote{My analysis of scholarly trends in the study of Josephus is indebted to the useful bibliographies compiled by Heinz Schreckenberg, and even more so Louis Feldman; see Heinz Schreckenberg, \textit{Bibliographie zu Flavius Josephus} (Leiden: Brill, 1968); Heinz Schreckenberg, \textit{Bibliographie zu Flavius Josephus: Supplementband mit Gesamtregister} (Leiden: Brill, 1979); Feldman, \textit{Josephus and Modern Scholarship}; Louis H. Feldman, \textit{Josephus: A Supplementary Bibliography} (New York: Garland Pub., 1986). In addition to these resources, Per Bilde’s synthesis of Josephan scholarship, although published over two decades ago, is still useful; Bilde, \textit{Flavius Josephus}, 123-71.} According to Feldman’s assessment of the earlier stages of modern research, “scholars were virtually unanimous in condemning
[Josephus].” This, however, was not always the case. In fact, Josephus’ works were well known and quite popular in Christian circles up through the Renaissance, particularly through the Latin translation of Hegesippus. The author’s popularity in Christianity is perhaps understandable, given the scattered references to important figures in the early Christian story, including Jesus, as well as the widespread belief that Josephus’ account of the destruction of the temple represented an important testimony of divine judgment against the Jews for their rejection of Jesus. But there is even indication that Josephus was known in Jewish circles. While the silence on Josephus in the rabbinic corpus may be significant, that his works were translated/adapted in the Hebrew Josippon suggests that at least some Jews found Josephus’ writings to be a valuable resource.

However, while Josephus’ works were considered important up to the modern era, Josephus the person received very little attention until the early twentieth century, at which time his supposed character flaws became the center of attention. Norman Bentwich, Jewish-British author and onetime president of the Jewish Historical Society, published in 1914 an influential study of Josephus that summarily dismissed the author as one who “hardly merits a place on his own account in a series of Jewish Worthies, since

43 Jesus: A.J. 18.63-64; John the Baptist: A.J. 18.116-119; Jesus’ brother James: A.J. 20.200-203. As Gabriele Boccaccini notes, because both of his main works end with the destruction of Jerusalem, “Josephus was turned by Christians into the witness par excellence of the theological ‘end’ of Judaism. The destruction of Jerusalem meant the punishment of a blind and even ‘deicidal’ people, whose existence and role as precursor had been rendered useless by the advent of the Messiah”; Gabriele Boccaccini, Portraits of Middle Judaism in Scholarship and Arts: A Multimedia Catalog from Flavius Josephus to 1991 (Torino: S. Zamorani, 1992), xi-xii.
44 On Josephus before the modern period, see especially Heinz Schreckenberg, Die Flavius-Josephus-Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter (Leiden: Brill, 1972). See also the brief discussion in Boccaccini, Portraits of Middle Judaism, x-xii.
neither as a man of action nor as a man of letters did he deserve particularly well of his nation.”

In part because of Josephus’ reputation as a Jewish “renegade and turn-coat,” Bentwich’s negative assessment dominated Jewish scholarship on Josephus in this early period, perhaps best exemplified in the Jewish historian Abraham Schalit, whose own biography was in many respects an inversion of the life of Josephus. Schalit was brought up in a Diaspora setting, rejected this “exile” by moving to Palestine in 1929 and supported the cause of Jewish sovereignty in Zion. Not surprisingly then, Schalit was, at least in his early work, less than friendly toward this Jew who moved to the Diaspora in support of foreign hegemony, referring to Josephus as “einem Lumpen und nichtswürdigen Individuum.” Jews, however, were not alone in damning Josephus to the fate of despicable traitor. Cambridge theological and church historian F. J. Foakes Jackson similarly judged Josephus “conspicuously deficient in patriotism.”

This obsession with Josephus’ character flaws was matched with equal fervor in many early scholarly assessments of Josephus qua historian. Source-critical approaches dominated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, fostering an image of

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48 Abraham Schalit, "Josephus und Justus: Studien zur Vita des Josephus," Klio 26 (1933): 95. Schwartz also cites a personal letter, written in Hebrew, that captures the extent of Schalit’s animus toward Josephus: “I believe that we may in complete tranquility admit Josephus’ baseness, without our having to be embarrassed. There are such base people throughout the world – among every people and tongue – and there is no necessity to declare this reptile pure”; Schwartz, "On Abraham Schalit," 22, f.n. 12. Schwartz, however, goes on to argue that later in his life Schalit softened his stance somewhat, even to the extent of moderately rehabilitating the image of this “reptile.” See also Solomon Zeitlin, "Josephus - Patriot or Traitor?," Jewish Chronicle 94 (1934): 26-30.
Josephus as a “stumpfer Abschreiber,” an “unimaginative pen-pusher who had merely plagiarized the works of others and pieced together the stolen goods without adding much thought to the matter.” Richard Laqueur’s Der jüdische Historiker Flavius Josephus marks an important attempt to move beyond the notion of a mindless or passive copyist, instead approaching the Josephan corpus as the product of a creative author. Laqueur’s proposal, however, which has become a widely influential theory of Josephus’ development as a person and then author, is still steeped in an assumption that Josephus was a deeply flawed character. The devout priest became a traitorous tyrant in Galilee, then a Flavian lackey whose B.J. was commissioned by the emperor as an official statement of imperial propaganda. After losing his imperial sponsorship, Josephus set out in his later works to repent for his earlier betrayals, with A.J. representing a nationalistic attempt at rapprochement with his Jewish heritage. Thus Laqueur rejects the claim that Josephus contributed nothing original to his works, but Josephus’ originality in Laqueur still reflects the motives of a devious quisling.

The main outline of Laqueur’s hypothesis reappears (with some modification) in a number of subsequent studies. Most notably, Shaye Cohen’s examination of the relationship between B.J. and Vita maintains Laqueur’s view that B.J. represents the work of Flavian propaganda: “If any historian was a Flavian lackey, it was Josephus.” With the accession of Domitian, Cohen argues that Josephus underwent a radical change,

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50 Laqueur, Der jüdische Historiker Flavius Josephus, viii. This remark does not reflect Laqueur’s view of Josephus, but his assessment of contemporary scholarship.
51 Bilde, Flavius Josephus, 126.
52 Laqueur, Der jüdische Historiker Flavius Josephus, 247-58.
53 Ibid., 258-61.
54 Cohen, Josephus in Galilee and Rome, 86.
becoming “more ‘nationalistic,’ more conscious of religious considerations, less concerned about flattering Rome. … With this religious outlook comes a pro-Pharisaic bias.”55 In other words, Josephus in his later years attempted to distance himself from his pro-Roman youth while aligning with the now emerging Pharisaic-Rabbinic movement. More recently, Seth Schwartz has continued this interpretive approach, seeing in the earlier Aramaic version of B.J. a Flavian commissioned “propagandistic tract” for the war against the Jews, 56 in the Greek edition of B.J. a piece of High Priestly propaganda, 57 and finally in A.J. a piece of “Pharisaic propaganda.”58

What is common in the Laqueur trajectory of scholarship is the notion of discontinuity and inconsistency across Josephus’ literary oeuvre, resulting in the hypothesis that Josephus experienced a radical change in his attitude between B.J. (pro-Roman) and A.J. (pro-Jewish). The image of Josephus is thus something of “an unscrupulous manipulator of his circumstances”: 59 when in the good graces of the emperor, Josephus dutifully fulfills his role as Flavian mouthpiece. However, when circumstances turn sour under Domitian, Josephus scrambles to reclaim his place amongst those he had formerly betrayed. One can thus easily see in this interpretive

55 Ibid., 236-37.
56 Schwartz, Josephus and Judaean Politics, 10. Cohen and Schwartz are prominent recent representatives of this approach, but Laqueur’s influence was felt almost immediately after the publication of his volume, as seen, for example, in Hans Rasp, "Flavius Josephus und die jüdischen Religionsparteien," ZNW 23 (1924): 27-47. One notable exception was Henry Thackeray, who rejected the idea that Josephus changed his attitude between B.J. and A.J.: “But this severance of Roman ties and adoption of another and more patriotic theme do not, to my mind, indicate any abrupt change of attitude”; Thackeray, Josephus, 52. Thackeray nevertheless maintained that B.J. was a piece of Roman political propaganda and A.J. was composed at a time when Josephus was released from such imperial constraints.
57 Schwartz, Josephus and Judaean Politics, 82-88.
58 Ibid., 170-208.
approach the dark shadow of the Jotapata episode, which has haunted Josephus’ legacy well into the twentieth century.

Nevertheless, several scholars have recently attempted a more positive assessment of Josephus’ career and literary motives. According to Horst Moehring, Josephus was “a Roman Jew. He was not a Jewish renegade, and he was not a man with split loyalties. In him, the Jew and the Roman had become one man.”60 In the same year Gabriele Boccaccini published an article in Italian, which was later reprinted in English in his volume Middle Judaism, claiming that “Josephus’s work is not that of a base quisling but that of an apologist who proclaims his faithfulness to the fathers and tries to give his culture and his people a consideration denied by many.”61 Per Bilde rejects both the notion of Josephus as a Flavian lackey and A.J. as an extended treatise of repentance, and has instead drawn attention to Josephus’ skill as a creative author and historian.62 Perhaps no scholar has devoted more attention to the rehabilitation of Josephus qua literary artist than Steve Mason, whose numerous publications have stressed the rhetorical dimensions of Josephus’ works.63 In particular, Mason’s work emphasizes what he calls the

“rhetorical-thematic study of Josephus,” the careful examination of literary *topoi* within each of Josephus’ main compositions.⁶⁴

One important facet in Mason’s scholarship, as indeed in other recent contributions to the study of Josephus, is the heightened emphasis on the author’s *compositional context*, i.e., Josephus’ place in the cultural and literary world of Flavian Rome.⁶⁵ This focus naturally includes a careful consideration of the question of intended audience. A consequence of Laqueur’s hypothesis was that Josephus’ shift in attitude was thought to reflect a similar shift in audience, that while *B.J.* was aimed at a Roman (imperial) audience *A.J.* was directed toward a Jewish audience.⁶⁶ Mason in particular has been a vocal critic of this interpretation, arguing instead for a broad continuity of readership for all of his works, namely that Josephus was writing consistently for a gentile, and more specifically, a *Roman* audience.⁶⁷

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⁶⁶ A variation of this approach is evident in Étienne Nodet’s recent discussion of *A.J.*, which argues that this text was written as a teaching manual for Jews living in the Roman empire; Étienne Nodet, "Josephus' Attempt to Reorganize Judaism from Rome," in *Making History: Josephus and Historical Method* (ed. Zuleika Rodgers; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 110-13. Tessa Rajak goes even further, claiming that “the content and approach [of all of Josephus’ writings JVE] suggest that the audience was always expected to consist as much of Jews who knew Greek, that is to say Jewish residents of the cities of the Roman empire”; Tessa Rajak, "The Against Apion and the Continuities in Josephus’ Political Thought," in *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction* (ed. Tessa Rajak; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 197.

His study of the audience for *B.J.* is particularly interesting in this regard. Building on the work of Raymond Starr, Mason argues that the publication of materials in antiquity, including that of *B.J.*, was primarily a local and social event. A work in progress was usually disseminated (via oral presentations) in stages through concentric circles of acquaintances, from an inner circle of close friends to a wider group of associates among the literary elite. According to Mason, Josephus’ circle of acquaintances, and hence the target audience in mind when he composed *B.J.*, was primarily members of the Roman intelligentsia. His discussion of the audience of *A.J./Vita* adds even more specificity, arguing that this work was addressed to Roman sympathizers—Mason suggests people like the ex-consuls T. Flavius Clemens and M. Acilius Glabrio—who were “keenly interested in Jewish matters.” This is apparent in particular in Josephus’ repeated attempts to explain basic details about Jewish culture, explanations that would have been unnecessary if composed primarily for Jewish readers.

Not everyone has been persuaded by Mason’s arguments. Hannah Cotton and Werner Eck argue that Josephus was likely a “lonely and extremely isolated” figure with very limited contacts among Roman elites. Jonathan Price offers perhaps the most pointed rebuttal of this notion of a Roman audience. Whereas Mason suggests an oral reading to a widening circle of Roman literary elites, Price considers it “likely that

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69 Mason, "Of Audience and Meaning," 71-100. Mason also rejects the idea that *B.J.* was written under imperial sponsorship (77).


Josephus refrained from public performance entirely.”72 Moreover, Price argues that all extant evidence suggests that “all or most of Josephus’ known readership was in or from the East,” calling into question Mason’s argument that Josephus targets gentile readers living in Rome.73 More to the point, Price concludes: “His most ardent and consistent interests remained not those which preoccupied and fascinated the writers in Rome, but those which continued to agitate in the East. His persistent persona and literary project were Jewish.”74

Price may or may not be correct when he claims that Josephus’ works only gained circulation in the east, and in any case, it is extremely difficult to demonstrate conclusively Mason’s hypothesis that Josephus’ disseminated his works (at least B.J.) orally to a gentile audience in Flavian Rome. The full extent of Josephus’ readership is in fact likely beyond our reach. Nevertheless, even granting our general ignorance of Josephus’ actual readers, this does not preclude the possibility that Josephus at the very least imagined that his work would be read by contemporary literary elites in Rome.

While Price correctly highlights aspects of Josephus’ narratives that reflect a non-Roman (“eastern”) perspective, he wrongly assumes an either/or scenario: i.e., that Josephus either wrote for Jews and emphasized Jewishness or he wrote for Romans and emphasized Romanitas.75 Such a binary opposition is not only unnecessary, but it defies logic. As a Roman citizen living in the capital city during the Flavian period, Josephus could not help but breath in this cultural air, so to speak. But as a Jew and priest from

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73 Ibid., 107.
74 Ibid., 118.
75 Ibid.
Judea, Josephus likewise could not help but maintain, and hence reflect, this ethnic and religious identity as well as the cultural heritage of his past, i.e., an “eastern” perspective. Both worlds were inextricably linked in the mind of Josephus, and they emerge at various points to greater or lesser degrees in his literary corpus. In this light, a focus on the extent to which Josephus’ writings reflect distinctly Roman concerns is entirely warranted.

In sum, two important methodological considerations emerge from this brief survey of scholarship. First, Josephus’ corpus should not simply be read for its referential value, i.e., as a reservoir of historical nuggets culled from his sources, but as the work of a creative author in his own right. Emerging from this first point is a second important methodological premise: Josephus’ compositional context matters, and we should therefore pay careful attention to his Roman context, and more specifically his setting in Flavian Rome. This observation thus requires a comparative approach to the material at hand, exploring Josephus’ literary corpus within the context of other roughly coeval Greek and Latin texts, particularly those closest in proximity to Josephus’ own social location (i.e., Flavian Rome).

76 On the tensions between Price and Mason, John Barclay seems to reflect the mediating position suggested above, based in part on post-colonial theories, and in particular, Mary Louise Pratt’s study of travel narratives. Specifically, he identifies “the efforts of Josephus and his oriental predecessors as exercises in ‘autohistory’—the attempt to tell their own histories in an idiom comprehensible to the majority culture(s), but with primary reference to their own traditions and on their own terms”; John M. G. Barclay, "Judean Historiography in Rome: Josephus and History in Contra Apionem Book 1," in Josephus and Jewish History in Flavian Rome and Beyond (ed. Joseph Sievers and Gaia Lembi; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 35. See also Barclay’s discussion in John M. G. Barclay, “The Empire Writes Back: Josephan Rhetoric in Flavian Rome,” in Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome (ed. Jonathan Edmondson, et al.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 315-32.

77 Boccaccini seems to reflect this methodological stance in his approach to the full spectrum of ancient Jewish sources, noting that “Documents are not only pieces of evidence that help us assess the validity of ideological structures offered by ancient historiography, but are also in themselves evidence of ideological structures”; Gabriele Boccaccini, Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways between Qumran and Enochic Judaism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 9.
Contributions of the Present Study

Before defining in positive terms the contribution of my investigation, it is perhaps worth detailing at the outset the limits of this analysis, i.e., precisely what this study does not set out to accomplish. Although in my effort to situate the material in Josephus within a broader context I consider a wider selection of Jewish sources that likewise deal with the issue of images, and in particular the second commandment (chapter 3), it is not my intention in the ensuing discussion to provide a comprehensive account of Jewish discourses on and responses to images in antiquity. While I do think such an investigation would be worth pursuing, it would require substantial interaction with a much broader range of literature than was possible in the present context, including such notable texts like Joseph and Aseneth and the Apocalypse of Abraham, among many others. Additionally, a fuller treatment of the issue of response would need to factor in the existence of distinct Jewish groups or movements during the period in question, considering the possibility that ideological diversity played a role in shaping Jewish responses to images.

In a similar vein, this study does not attempt to explain fully the causes of the increased iconoclastic activity in Judea during the first centuries B.C.E./C.E. Notwithstanding my emphasis on the rhetorical nature of Josephus’ iconoclastic narratives, the fact remains that some Jews during this period likely destroyed Herod’s statue of an eagle in the temple, complained about the trophies he erected in the theater, commissioned the destruction of the images in Herod the Tetrarch’s palace, resisted the intrusion of Pilate’s military standards, and vehemently objected to the proposed statue of Caligula. While Gutmann argues that this iconoclastic activity had little to do with a
religious opposition to images, but was instead indicative of a latent resistance to Roman hegemony.\textsuperscript{78} I suspect that the situation was likely more complex than \textit{either} a religious (i.e., strict exegetical stance on the second commandment) \textit{or} a political explanation. In the first place, each episode ought to be examined in its own right, without assuming that all were similarly motivated. Moreover, such distinctions between political or religious motives are somewhat anachronistic, particularly with the ever-increasing presence of the imperial cult in the east, which undoubtedly played a prominent role in this iconoclastic activity. But in any case, such questions, though interesting in their own right, are not within the purview of the present analysis.

With this in mind, the present investigation makes the following contributions to scholarship on Josephus, and more broadly, to the study of Jews in the ancient Mediterranean world. First, by examining the \textit{Nachleben} of the biblical prohibition against images (chapter 3), and by emphasizing the \textit{rhetorical} function of Josephus’ iconoclastic narratives (chapters 4–5), this study problematizes the widespread claim that Jews during the Second Temple period, including Josephus, were uniformly against figurative images \textit{in toto}, regardless of the question of cultic function. Rather, a closer reading of a broad range of Jewish sources from the period in question belies such a monolithic interpretation, demonstrating instead that Jews by and large (both before and after the destruction of the temple) restricted the scope of prohibited images to those with some kind of cultic association. Moreover, the fact that Josephus clearly \textit{crafts} distinct portraits of iconoclasm that function differently within their respective literary contexts ought to caution against reading this material in a straightforward fashion. That is to say,

\textsuperscript{78} Gutmann, "The 'Second Commandment'," 170.
rhetoric has very likely masked something of the underlying reality, rendering problematic any attempt to see in Josephus an exact account of events (and people’s motives) on the ground. This is not to suggest, of course, that Josephus’ rhetoric had nothing to do with reality, i.e., that Jews had absolutely no qualms about figurative art during the Second Temple period.\(^{79}\) Rather, my investigation of Josephus mainly establishes that, with regard to the question of Jews and images during the Second Temple period, this highly tendentious author cannot bear the interpretive weight typically placed upon him.

Second, by focusing on the discursive dimension of visual culture, i.e., the “semiotics” of images, the language used to describe and recount daily encounters with these artifacts, and the way in which this “iconology” preserves perceptions of images that were common throughout the Greco-Roman Mediterranean, this study provides an important glimpse into the social context of Greco-Roman art, and especially the extent to which Jews in antiquity were full participants in this ubiquitous facet of their visual landscape. W. J. T. Mitchell’s work in the field of art history provides an important stimulus here, in particular his shift in focus away from formal features of an artistic object—its style, aesthetics and the degree of naturalism in representation—to the visual experience surrounding an image, i.e., the interplay between object and viewer.\(^{80}\) An important consequence of Mitchell’s work is a more pronounced emphasis on the role of people’s perceptions, especially the extent to which viewers see into images a whole host of assumptions, beliefs, associations, and experiences, be they political, religious, or

\(^{79}\) As noted briefly above, and as will be developed much more extensively in chapter 2.

otherwise, which collectively comprise what may be identified as a world of iconic perceptions.\(^8\)

I argue below (especially in chapters 2, 4 and 5) that Jews, including Josephus, do not stand outside of but are instead fully embedded within this world of iconic perceptions. Although Josephus’ literary corpus displays a healthy measure of animosity toward images, as indeed does a broader range of ancient Jewish literature, a closer reading of this anti-iconic language *within a comparative context* demonstrates the extent to which Jews were participants in what may be described as an iconic *lingua franca* in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean, a common language used to describe, assess and recount daily encounters with these artifacts. This dynamic should thus caution against interpreting the anti-iconic language in Josephus and other ancient Jewish texts merely as evidence for the Jewish struggle *against* the forces of “paganism” or “Hellenism.”

Third, by focusing on the *compositional strategies* in the Josephan corpus, paying special attention to the development and function of key literary *topoi*, this study contributes to our understanding of Josephus’ literary creativity and his place as a provincial author writing in Greek from the capital city. In short, far from a “stumpfer Abschreiber” with little originality, Josephus’ corpus betrays the skills of a creative literary artist. In highlighting this dimension of Josephus, I thus add my voice to those scholars who advocate viewing Josephus’ writings as something more than a repository of “factual nuggets” to be mined for various historical reconstructions or background details for the study of the New Testament and Christian origins. Josephus ought to be

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81 See also Richard Leppert’s study of “visual culture,” which focuses in part on how people relate to images in a variety of ways corresponding to differing “cultures of perception”; Richard D. Leppert, *Art and the Committed Eye: The Cultural Functions of Imagery* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 11.
examined as an author in his own right, and his corpus is just as valuable for an understanding of the social and cultural dynamics of Flavian Rome as it is for Second Temple Judea.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, insofar as I underscore (especially in chapters 4–6) the extent to which Josephus engages in the cultural politics of Flavian Rome, this study sheds light on the processes by which some Jews in antiquity negotiated identity within a Greco-Roman milieu. As noted briefly above, and as will be developed more fully below, Josephus Romanizes the Jewish resistance to images, and in so doing, he articulates a notion of Jewish identity that reflects in part the values of Romanitas.  

But we should not interpret this Romanization of Jewishness as the compromise of an assimilating traitor who has abandoned his culture and people. Rather, Josephus is here exploiting the “complex Roman tradition in the interests of his own cultural tradition,” formulating a notion of Jewish identity that could enable Jews living in Rome, who had only recently witnessed the triumphal display of their own subjugation and felt the humiliating sting of the punitive fiscus Iudaicus, to perhaps thrive under otherwise difficult circumstances.

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83 Barclay, "The Empire Writes Back," 14 (emphasis mine).
CHAPTER 2

BETWEEN ROME AND JERUSALEM: JEWISH RESPONSES TO IMAGES IN CULTURAL CONTEXT

This investigation flows from an important premise: Josephus’ writings, and in particular his discourse on the Jewish resistance to images, bear the unmistakable imprint of his Roman context. In other words, although Josephus writes primarily about Judea and Jews, and although his corpus may provide an invaluable witness to Judean politics both before and after the destruction of the temple,\(^84\) Josephus was during the decades of his literary career breathing the socio-politico-cultural air of Flavian Rome, and this experience profoundly shaped his various narratives. As a result, the relationship between Josephus’ literary portrayals of Jewish aniconism/iconoclasm and the underlying events that actually took place is far from straightforward. Undoubtedly, rhetoric has in some sense masked reality.

Nevertheless, we must not suppose a vast and impassable chasm between rhetoric and reality, as if Josephus’ descriptions of strict aniconism *have nothing to do with* the reality that stands behind his prose. Josephus the Flavian author was (and remained) a provincial transplant in the capital city, and the modern historian should not so easily dismiss this home away from Rome. Josephus is at once a product of Jerusalem and

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\(^{84}\) For example, Seth Schwartz argues that we can recover in Josephus’ writings a significant amount of information on Judean politics during the 30 years *after* the destruction of the temple; Schwartz, *Josephus and Judean Politics*. 

Rome, and his experiences in both geographical locales have left their marks on his narratives. Although his rhetoric may have masked reality, Josephus, as a product of and participant in the social, political and religious experiences of first century Judea, preserves in some measure the reality of this world.\(^{85}\)

This qualification is particularly important at the outset, given the inherent risk of unintentional misrepresentation or distortion in a study predominantly focused on the rhetorical dimension of Jewish aniconism in Josephus. To argue that Josephus’ portrayal of aniconism caters to a Roman audience in order to address Roman concerns, and to further suggest that this rhetorical agenda perhaps masks or distorts the underlying reality, can give the impression that Jews in actuality had no qualms about sculpture and figurative art during the Second Temple period. Indeed, Gutmann’s study of the second commandment in Greco-Roman antiquity underscores the potential for such misunderstanding.\(^{86}\) As noted above in chapter 1, Gutmann argues that the rhetorical interests of the available sources, mainly Philo and Josephus for the Second Temple period, creates an impression of strict aniconism that ultimately belies the fact that Jews throughout Greco-Roman antiquity shared a broad acceptance of figurative art. Gutmann is fundamentally correct to underscore the rhetorical dimension of this material, and indeed this analysis is an attempt to flesh out in more detail his provocative thesis.

Nevertheless, to suggest on this basis alone a broad and consistent continuity between the Jews living in first century Jerusalem and, for example, third century Dura Europos, whose synagogue remains attest to rich and vibrant artistic traditions, is questionable, not

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\(^{86}\) Gutmann, "The 'Second Commandment'," 161-74.
only because it places on the rhetorical contrivances of Philo and Josephus more interpretive weight than they can bear, but also because it ignores important data outside of these authors, most notably the archaeological record, but also other literary texts that may shed light on how different Jews viewed the prohibition against images.  

With this in mind, I will attempt in the present chapter to redress this potential imbalance, considering both the cultural and material context of first century Jerusalem/Judea as well as a wider selection of literary data—from both Judea and the Diaspora—attesting to a broad and complex range of Jewish responses to images. Josephus does indeed depict a city and people fiercely resistant to images, and especially sculpture, and while we should be wary of any straightforward reading of this narrative material, there is a fairly significant body of evidence outside Josephus, both literary and archaeological, that at the very least suggests an uneasy attitude toward sculptural representation for some Jews living in Jerusalem during this period. Nevertheless, a critical examination of this corroborating evidence does not fully support the *communis opinio* in scholarship that Second Temple Jews uniformly resisted sculpture in response to a religious ban on all forms of figurative art, enacted to protect the Jews from idolatry. The situation was likely much more complex, and even this tendency to resist Roman sculpture should not be viewed simply as a *struggle against* religio-cultural alterity, but as an *expression of* the wider Mediterranean milieu. This chapter will thus attempt to probe (though certainly not exhaust) the complex array of factors that shaped Jewish

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87 Lee Levine rightly criticizes Gutmann for overlooking the archaeological record in his analysis of the second commandment; see Lee I. Levine, "Figural Art in Ancient Judaism," *Ars Judaica* 1 (2005): 11, f.n. 10.
responses to statues, and more broadly figurative art, throughout the Roman Mediterranean.

Quid Roma et Hierosolymis? The Sculptural Void of Early Roman Jerusalem

Tertullian’s now famous quip—Quid Athenis et Hierosolymis?—is here reformulated to reflect the two main urban experiences of Flavius Josephus. The early Christian apologist originally proffered this rhetorical question to underscore a fundamental antithesis between what the two urban centers represented in his mind (and indeed, what he had hoped to shape in the mind of his readers), Athens for the Academy (and by extension Tertullian’s primary opponent, those irascible “heretics”) and Jerusalem for the Church. For Tertullian, Athens ought not have anything to do with Jerusalem, and vice versa.

Although Tertullian’s formulation has in its Nachleben conveniently encapsulated the notion of an interminable antithesis between Judaism/Hebraism and Hellenism, we should not so quickly assume such a radical polarization with respect to the topic at hand, the cultural and physical landscapes of Rome and Jerusalem. Jerusalem, as a provincial city on the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire, was in the first century C.E. a complex blend of “East” and “West.” In the wake of the monumental renovations initiated by Herod the Great, which to some extent mimicked, albeit on a much smaller scale,

88 Tertullian, Praescr. 7.9.
89 Lee Levine’s essay on Second Temple Jerusalem underscores the city’s cultural diversity, although Levine tends to mute the inherent complexity by speaking of the “Jewish component” and the “Hellenistic dimension” of Jerusalem, as if we could ferret out the cultural components of two hermetically sealed entities; see Lee I. Levine, "Second Temple Jerusalem: A Jewish City in the Greco-Roman Orbit," in Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (ed. Lee I. Levine; New York: Continuum, 1999), 56.
Augustus’ own coeval renovations of Rome,90 Jerusalem’s urban landscape was in many respects not unlike that of Rome, or for that matter any other major urban center throughout the Roman Mediterranean. Although Herod’s legacy, thanks in large part to Josephus and the Gospels, has been less than favorable,91 his urban expansion nevertheless brought about a tremendous boon to Jerusalem’s reputation, as well as its economic coffers, so much so that the elder Pliny, writing a few years after the destruction of Jerusalem, could claim that formerly the city was “by far the most famous city of the East” (*longe clarissima urbium Orientis*).92 The Jerusalem of Josephus’ day could thus boast most of the major architectonic structures found elsewhere in the Greco-Roman world: monumental tombs on the outskirts of the city patterned after Greek and Roman architectural trends,93 several elaborate palaces and elite residential homes,94 an


91 Indeed, he is remembered mainly as a brutal tyrant, bloody murderer of his own kin and ruthless oppressor of his Judean subjects, a reputation that even Augustus is said to have humorously acknowledged, at least according to the 5th-century C.E. Macrobius, who places in Augustus’ mouth the following remark: “I would rather be Herod’s pig (ιτως) than his son (υιος);” Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 2.4.11 cited in Menahem Stern, ed., *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974/1980), 2:665-66. This negative assessment of Herod is central to Emil Schürer’s analysis of the Judean king; see Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (trans. Geza Vermes and Fergus Millar; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973-1987), 1:287-329. Though Herod’s flaws are not masked in Abraham Schalit’s analysis, his portrayal of Herod is in many respects more palatable; see Abraham Schalit, *König Herodes: Der Mann und Sein Work* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001); Schwartz, "On Abraham Schalit,” 11.


93 For a general discussion of these tombs, see Gideon Foerster, "Art and Architecture in Palestine,” in *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious
agora,95 the enigmatic xystus, which perhaps should be identified as a gymnasium,96 a Bouleuterion,97 a large theater and amphitheater,98 a hippodrome,99 and of course most notably Herod’s massive temple devoted to the Jewish God, which in Josephus’ partisan judgment was a structure “more noteworthy (ἀξιωμαθήτησεν) than any under the sun.”100

Moreover, the centrality of the Herodian temple to the Judean cult, as well as the commercial vitality this magnificent structure and its operation created, invariably produced a centripetal force that brought into the city a massive influx of people spanning the entire Mediterranean basin and the western Mesopotamian region, both pilgrims and permanent residents who found employment in this newly stimulated economy.101 This


95 B.J. 5.137.

96 B.J. 5.144; 6.325, 377; Levine, Jerusalem, 324-25.

97 B.J. 5.144; 6.354.

98 A.J. 15.268. Though see Joseph Patrich’s recent discussion of the theater, which argues that it was only a temporary wooden structure that was dismantled after Herod’s reign, and thus would have been missing from the urban landscape during Josephus’ lifetime; Joseph Patrich, "Herod's Theatre in Jerusalem: A New Proposal," IEJ 52 (2002): 231-39.

99 B.J. 2.44; A.J. 17.255.

100 A.J. 15.391–419 (quote at 15.412).

101 On the population of Jerusalem in antiquity, see especially Magen Broshi, "Estimating the Population of Ancient Jerusalem," BAR 4.2 (1978): 10-15. It is difficult to determine with any certainty the number of residents in Jerusalem, and the sources are largely silent on the matter. Tacitus claims that at the time of the siege of Titus there were 600,000 residents, but this only after “streams of rabble” from surrounding villages took refuge within the city limits (Hist. 5.12.2; 5.13.3 [trans. Moore, LCL]). On pilgrimage to Jerusalem and its impact on the economy, see Martin Goodman, "The Pilgrimage Economy of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period," in Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (ed. Lee I. Levine; New York: Continuum, 1999), 69-76. Goodman argues that the mass pilgrimage spoken of in numerous sources began only during the reign of Herod the Great; furthermore, Goodman suggests
expanded population very likely transformed Jerusalem into a cosmopolitan melting pot of cultures,\textsuperscript{102} so much so that a visitor to this city “would undoubtedly have been struck by the many similarities between Jerusalem and other Greco-Roman urban centers.”\textsuperscript{103}

Thus, although often described as “a quintessentially Jewish city,”\textsuperscript{104} the portrait of Herodian and early Roman Jerusalem—the Jerusalem of Josephus’ upbringing—is hardly that of an isolated enclave of devotees to the Judean cult, a Jewish haven from the “corrupting” forces of “Hellenism.” Rather, not unlike Rome (though again on a much smaller scale), we have here a culturally diverse urban center, marked by many of the typical Roman urban accoutrements, and bustling with people from all parts of the Mediterranean basin and beyond, even extending far into Parthian territory. As Martin Goodman aptly states in his recent assessment of Augustan Rome and Herodian Jerusalem, “a casual visitor to Rome and Jerusalem in the last decades of the first century BCE might have been more struck by similarities, since it was during these years that both cities metamorphosed from ramshackle agglomerations into shining testimonies to massive state expenditure.”\textsuperscript{105}

Notwithstanding these similarities, however, Goodman’s hypothetical visitor to Rome and Jerusalem would have found equally striking at least one conspicuous

\textsuperscript{102} This multicultural dynamic is expressed in the Acts of the Apostles’ description of the population in Jerusalem during the feast of Pentecost (\textit{Shavuot}): “Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and those who live in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, those from Pontus, Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and those from parts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Judeans and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs” (Acts 2:9–11).

\textsuperscript{103} Levine, \textit{Jerusalem}, 62.

\textsuperscript{104} Levine, “Second Temple Jerusalem,” 53.

difference in their respective urban landscapes: the almost complete absence of the public display of sculpture in Jerusalem. As is well known, figurative art in a wide range of formats—e.g., three-dimensional freestanding statues, both life-sized and colossal, sculpture in relief, wall paintings, mosaics, etc.—and with a diverse array of subject matter—e.g., gods and other mythological figures, heroes from the distant past, kings and emperors, other local dignitaries, family portraits, etc.—were ubiquitous in Rome, as indeed throughout the Greco-Roman Mediterranean. Peter Stewart’s description of a typical journey up the Via Appia toward Rome, though based on evidence dating to the second century C.E., could equally apply to Josephus’ visual horizon as he first entered the city in the previous century: “Yet the road from this point [the Villa of the Quintilii JVE] entered a world of sculpture, in every part of which statues assailed the viewer.”

The emptiness of Jerusalem, however, was surely quite striking when compared with this world full of statues. To be sure, Roman Palestine during the second and third centuries C.E. was not entirely bereft of statues, and the same was undoubtedly true in the first century. For example, the portrait of Caesarea Maritima that emerges in Josephus

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106 Stewart, Statues in Roman Society, 2. Stewart notes elsewhere that many ancient sources show an awareness of a “population problem,” i.e., of a particular city becoming too congested with statues (pp. 128-36). Indeed, Pliny the Elder’s excursus on statuary in Rome in book 34 of his Naturalis historia certainly gives the impression of a vast sculptural population. Cassius Dio likewise poignantly captures the proliferation of statuary in Rome when he likens the statues to a crowded mob in the city: πολλὰν δὲ καὶ ὄχλουν τῇ πόλει (Hist. rom. 60.5.5). Dio’s account subsequently describes how Claudius addresses this population problem: “And since the city was being filled with many images (ἐπειδὴ τε ἔτη πολλὰς πολλῶν εἰκόνων ἐπιπληθοῦσα) … he [Claudius] placed most of them in another location” (Hist. rom. 60.25.2-3).

is replete with statuary, an impression confirmed by the archaeological evidence,\(^{108}\) and there is no reason to suppose that other major urban centers in first century Palestine—e.g., Ascalon, Scythopolis, Samaria-Sebaste, Caesarea Philippi—were any different. Jerusalem, however, was apparently a notable exception to this rule. The archaeological remains of Second Temple Jerusalem to date, in contrast with almost every other major urban center in the Mediterranean basin, have yielded no three-dimensional freestanding sculpture of any type, divine or otherwise.

The absence of statues from the archaeological record of first century Jerusalem does not necessarily mean that statues did not exist anywhere in the city; neither does it require the conclusion that all Jewish residents were antagonistic to this and other forms of figural art.\(^{109}\) Indeed, we know for a fact that at least one statue stood within the city’s walls, the large golden eagle that Herod erected over the “great gate” of the temple, likely a reference to the entry point into the main sanctuary building from the court of the Israelites.\(^{110}\) Moreover, that the iconoclasts—Judas and Matthias and their youthful band of pupils—who destroyed this image just prior to Herod’s death were deeply offended by the statue should not be taken to mean that all Jews, priests or otherwise, passing before the statue during worship were equally disturbed. Although we do not know precisely


\(^{109}\) See especially the scholarship discussed below, particularly the sweeping assertions of Rachel Hachlili, who sees in the lacuna of figurative remains a uniform Jewish resistance to figurative art.

when this statue was erected, Josephus’ reference to the eagle as an ἀνάθημα might suggest that it was set up at the completion and dedication of the temple building in 18 B.C.E.\footnote{Josephus, A.J. 17.151, 158. Michael Grant suggests 18 B.C.E. as the likely date for its erection; Michael Grant, Herod the Great (New York: American Heritage Press, 1971), 207. In contrast, A. H. M. Jones assumes that the eagle was instated toward the end of Herod’s life, and thus the iconoclastic response was immediate; A. H. M. Jones, The Herods of Judaea (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 147-48.} If this is the case, then the statue stood in a prominent position—clearly visible to the thousands of Jews who worshiped at the temple annually—for approximately fourteen years without controversy. It is thus not unreasonable to suppose that at least for some Jews the statue was seen as relatively harmless, not necessarily a violation of the second commandment,\footnote{Goodenough claims that the eagle was generally accepted as a legitimate Jewish symbol and that the iconoclastic reaction had more to do with a hatred of Herod than of the statue itself; Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period (13 vols.; New York: Pantheon Books, 1953-1968), 8:925. Similarly Jones suggests that only a small minority opposed the statue; Jones, The Herods, 148. So also Gideon Fuks, “Josephus on Herod’s Attitude towards Jewish Religion: The Darker Side,” JJS 53 (2002): 242. On the use of the eagle as a Jewish symbol in Late Antiquity, see Rachel Hachlili, Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 332-34.} but perhaps simply an ornament of Herod’s beneficent rule on behalf of the Jews or a symbol of loyalty to the Roman Empire.\footnote{On the eagle imagery as a symbol of benefactions, see Henten, "Ruler or God?", 275. For the view that Herod’s eagle erected in the temple was a tribute to Rome, see Schalit, König Herodes, 734. See also the discussion in Pawel Szkolut, "The Eagle as a Symbol of Divine Presence and Protection in Ancient Jewish Art," SJ 5 (2002): 1-11.} Although outside of Jerusalem and Judea proper, Josephus likewise mentions portrait statues of Agrippa I’s daughters erected in the monarch’s house in Tiberias.\footnote{According to Josephus, Herod the Great resented that his subjects did not honor him with portrait statues (A.J. 16.157–158). See the discussion of Herodian portraiture in Roller, Building Program, 270-77.} While we cannot be certain if Agrippa, or for that matter any of the other Herodian monarchs, similarly erected portrait statues in the various Herodian residential quarters scattered throughout Judea,\footnote{According to Josephus, A.J. 19.357.} such as
Jerusalem or Jericho, it is certainly possible that they did, even if archaeology has yet to yield concrete proof.\(^{116}\)

If we broaden our scope to include not just freestanding three-dimensional statues but other types of figurative representations, several other exceptions are extant in the archaeological record. Excavations in the residential district of the Upper City of Jerusalem (present day Jewish Quarter) have uncovered fragments of a fresco with images of birds, a bronze animal paw that functioned as a table leg fitting, a table top with a fish carved in relief, and a bone gaming disk embossed with a human hand.\(^{117}\)

Three Roman period gemstones with figurative engravings were also found in the vicinity: a banded agate gemstone depicting the god Hermes/Mercury; a glass paste gemstone depicting a goddess; and a brown carnelian gemstone depicting a scorpion.\(^{118}\)

These are comparable to several other figurative gemstones found elsewhere in Jerusalem.\(^{119}\) Another example of figurative art from a slightly earlier (Hasmonean)

\(^{116}\) A water basin with figurative sculpture was recently found in the lower bath complex of the Herodium, which may suggest that other sculpted items, perhaps even three-dimensional freestanding statues, might have been erected in similar locations.

\(^{117}\) Avigad, *The Herodian Quarter*, 45-46, 65; Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 77. In this vein, Mark Chancy also notes a few locations in Galilee that included figural representations, such as a mosaic from a house in Magdala depicting a boat and a fish; Mark A. Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 197.

\(^{118}\) Malka Hershkovitz, "Gemstones," in *Jewish Quarter Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem: The Finds from Areas A, W and X-2 Final Report* (ed. Hillel Geva; 3 vols.; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2003), 296-301. In Hershkovitz’s estimation, these stones, which likely came from individual rings of Jews living in the Upper City, suggest that some Jews were not properly observing the second commandment. More specifically, she claims that “at the end of the Second Temple period, the Jewish prohibition of graven images was maintained in the public sphere, while private individuals utilized seals with figurative imagery” (p. 300). Meir Ben-Dov similarly appeals to a public/private distinction to explain such exceptions: “The stringent observance of the [second] commandment …, so conspicuous in the monumental buildings on the Temple Mount, evidently did not extend to private homes; Jerusalemites permitted themselves the vice of adorning their dwellings with scenes from the animal kingdom”; Meir Ben-Dov, *In the Shadow of the Temple: The Discovery of Ancient Jerusalem* (trans. Ina Friedman; Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1985), 150.

\(^{119}\) For example, a translucent dark red glass gemstone with a Tyche bust and cornucopia set into an iron finger ring, was found in a first century C.E. tomb on Mt. Scopus; and another, found in a burial cave
period can be found in Jason’s tomb in western Jerusalem, which includes graffiti representations of a stag and multiple human figures aboard a ship. Similarly, the fresco on the plastered walls of the main chamber in the Goliath tomb in Jericho, although adorned mostly with floral motifs—vines, grapes, and leaves—also includes the representation of birds perched on branches. Several finds from the Cave of Letters in the Judean desert may likewise attest to the presence of figurative art in Second Temple Judea, especially the patera with a mythological scene (Thetis riding a sea centaur) in relief and a seal impression of Heracles killing a lion.

Numismatic evidence likewise attests to the existence of figurative representation in Jerusalem. Occasionally Herodian period coins included figurative images. For example, Herod the Great minted coins featuring an eagle on the reverse and a cornucopia and inscription (ΒΑΣΙΛ ΕΔΙΟΔΟΣ) on the obverse. Both Philip and Agrippa I used anthropomorphic and theriomorphic iconography on their coins, though Agrippa’s third series minted in Jerusalem in 41/42 C.E. is a noteworthy exception that may suggest a more cautious approach in the Judean capital. Nevertheless, the ubiquitous Tyrian shekel, which included the head of Heracles-Melqart on the obverse and an eagle on the reverse, demonstrates that figurative coins were not uncommon in Jerusalem during the

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121 Rachel Hachlili, Jewish Ornamented Ossuaries of the Late Second Temple Period (Haifa, Israel: The Reuben and Edith Hecht Museum, University of Haifa, 1988), 12-13.
122 Yigael Yadin, The Finds from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters (2 vols.; Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society, 1963), 1: pl. 17 (patera), fig. 44 (seal).
124 Ibid., 96-98.
first century. This coin, due to the annual half shekel tax that was required of all adult Jewish males,\textsuperscript{125} became the main currency for the temple’s banking operations. It was apparently minted in Tyre only up to 19/18 B.C.E., after which the shekels were struck in Jerusalem until the onset of the revolt against Rome in 66 C.E.\textsuperscript{126} Although the symbols on these later Jerusalemite shekels are noticeably more crude,\textsuperscript{127} it is nevertheless striking that there was no apparent attempt to purge the iconography of its figurative, and even pagan elements, at least until the Judean rebels began minting the “shekel of Israel” during the revolt.\textsuperscript{128}

We should be cautious, however, not to read too much into the exceptions detailed above, as if the few remaining fragments of figurative remains were the tip of a much larger iceberg, a glimpse of what might still lie beneath the sands of time. In the first place, the precise provenance—whether Jewish or non-Jewish—of many of these finds is ambiguous at best. For example, if Yigael Yadin is correct that the patera from the Cave of Letters bears traces of iconoclasm, specifically that the faces were intentionally rubbed out, then it is possible Jewish rebels stole these artifacts from a


\textsuperscript{126} Meshorer, \textit{Treasury of Jewish Coins}, 73-78.

\textsuperscript{127} There is no basis, however, for Meshorer’s claim that this “demonstrative crudity” from the Jerusalem mint was “an expression of contempt for the Tyrian designs”; Ibid., 77.

\textsuperscript{128} Paul Corby Finney’s study of the Tiberian silver denarius in Mark 12:15b, 16 includes the unwarranted claim that all Jews, based on a putative strict “halakic demand for aniconism,” would have found it offensive to even look at a coin with a figurative image: “the fact still stands that gazing at a Roman denarius would have raised certain problems for all Jews, but especially for those who lived on ancestral Palestinian lands that had been annexed by Gentile outsiders;” Paul Corby Finney, "The Rabbi and the Coin Portrait (Mark 12:15b, 16): Rigorism Manqué," \textit{JBL} 112 (1993): 634. According to Finney’s argument, the Marcan episode, which ignores the question of idolatrous images, indicates that aniconism was “a quintessentially Jewish subject” and not of particular concern for early Christianity (644). This interpretation, however, wrongly assumes a fundamental distinction between an aniconic Judaism on the one hand, and a more openly iconic Christianity on the other, a dubious assumption for any period in history, but particularly for the last half of the first century C.E., when the so-called parting of the ways was at best only in its infancy.
Roman military encampment and subsequently rendered them usable through defacement.\(^{129}\) Likewise, given the diverse ethnic population inhabiting first century Jerusalem, the few scattered gemstones found within the city limits could plausibly have belonged to non-Jews. Moreover, even granting a Jewish provenance for the exceptions detailed above, their scarcity is nevertheless a striking feature that may actually support the claim that Jews in Judea by and large avoided figurative art, and especially statues, during this period. At best, these exceptions can only modestly qualify some of the sweeping claims one finds in scholarship that Jews during this period uniformly rejected all forms of figurative art. As such, even taking into account the limited scope of excavations to date, the accidents of survival inherent in the archaeological record, and the few exceptions noted above, the lack of sculptural finds in Second Temple Jerusalem still stands in stark contrast with other urban landscapes in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean.

Moreover, this deficiency in material remains comports with the testimony from a broad range of literary sources. Josephus is of course important in this regard, and will be explored in more detail in subsequent chapters. Nevertheless we may briefly note here that statuary is conspicuously absent in his numerous descriptions of Jerusalem’s urban landscape, with the exception of the Herod’s golden eagle in the temple complex. Josephus also mentions Roman trophies in the Jerusalem theater that were wrongly thought to be statues, the temporary “invasion” of Pilate’s military standards, which included some kind of sculpted bust of the emperor, and the near erection of a statue of

\(^{129}\) This is indeed the interpretation of Yadin, who sees in the traces of iconoclasm an indication that Roman military cult objects were desecrated according to the halakhic guidelines later laid down in the Mishnah; Yadin, *The Finds from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters*, 44-45.
the emperor Gaius Caligula.130 As with the eagle episode, Josephus reports that each of
these incidents elicited a negative reaction on the part of some residents in the city. The
summary in B.J. of Petronius’ attempt to erect a statue of Caligula in Jerusalem, although
playing an integral role in Josephus’ use of sacred space as a literary strategy (see chapter
4 below), captures the uniqueness of Jerusalem (and Judea) vis-à-vis the rest of the
Roman world: apart from the Jews, “all the subjected nations (πάντων τῶν
ὑποτεταγμένων ἐθνῶν) had erected the images of Caesar in their cities along with the
other gods.” 131

Philo of Alexandria similarly underscores the uniqueness of Jerusalem as a city
without statues.132 Embedded in his account of the Caligula crisis is Agrippa’s letter to
the emperor, which attempts—apparently with some success—to dissuade Caligula from
erecting his statue in the temple. Agrippa’s description of the temple and city as
presented in Philo is worth quoting in full:

I [i.e., Agrippa] am, as you know, a Jew, and Jerusalem is my ancestral
city, in which the holy temple of the Most High God is situated. Now it
also happens that I have kings for my grandparents and ancestors, most of
whom were called high priests. They considered their kingship to be
second in importance to that of the priestly office, supposing that, just as
God is superior to men, so also the high priesthood is superior to kingship
…. Therefore, being joined with such a nation, homeland, and temple, I
implore you on behalf of all of them [i.e., the Jews] …. Oh Lord Gaius,
from the beginning this temple has never admitted any form (μορφή) made
by human hands (χειρόκτητος), because it is the dwelling place of the true
God. For the works of painters and sculptors (γραφέων πλαστῶν ἔργα) are

130 Theater trophies: A.J. 15.267–282; Pilate’s standards: B.J. 2.169–174; A.J. 15.55–59 (see also the
account of Vitellius’ and his two legions, who intentionally avoided Judea because of their standards; A.J.

131 B.J. 2.194.

132 As far as we know, Philo visited Jerusalem at least once in his lifetime, when he went to offer sacrifices
and pray in the temple (Philo, Prov. 2.64).
imitations (μιμήματα) of gods perceived by the senses; but to paint or sculpt the invisible was not considered pious by our ancestors.\(^{133}\)

Leaving aside questions related to the authenticity of the letter—overall Philo does seem to embellish Agrippa’s role as savior of the Jews—and the accuracy of the claim that no μορφή “made by human hands” has ever been erected in the temple complex,\(^{134}\) Philo’s testimony supports the general impression drawn from Josephus and archaeology, namely that statues were by and large not to be found in the urban landscape of first century Jerusalem.

A similar image of Jerusalem likewise emerges from non-Jewish sources. Speaking of the temple in Jerusalem, Livy remarks in the 102\(^{nd}\) book of his *Ab urbe condita*: “They do not state to which deity pertains the temple at Jerusalem, nor is any image found there, since they do not think the God partakes of any figure.”\(^{135}\) In even more explicit terms, Tacitus broadens the scope to include by implication the entire city of Jerusalem: “they set up no statues (*simulacra*) in their cities, still less in their temples; this flattery is not paid their kings, nor this honour given to the Caesars.”\(^{136}\) Admittedly we have no evidence that Tacitus ever visited Jerusalem, and in another context the author seemingly contradicts himself on the question of images in Jerusalem, claiming the Jews had erected a statue of an ass in the temple.\(^{137}\) Moreover, his propensity to cast

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\(^{134}\) Obviously Herod’s eagle belies this claim.

\(^{135}\) Preserved in the *Scholia in Lucanum* 2.593; trans. Stern, ed., *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1:330.

\(^{136}\) Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.4 (Moore, LCL).

\(^{137}\) Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.4.1–2. This occurs in his discussion of the origins of the Jews, wherein Tacitus laments their (from his perspective) despicable cultic practices, the *novos ritus* introduced by Moses which are said to be “opposed to those of all other religions” (Moore, LCL). As evidence, Tacitus marshals the well-known Greco-Roman caricature of the Jews as abominable ass-worshipers, asserting quite explicitly that they kept in their temple “a statue of that creature” (*effigiem animalis*). Tertullian uses this apparent
the “superstition” of the Jews in the worst possible light should give pause to any straightforward reading of his portrayal of the Jews and Judea.\footnote{Indeed, René Bloch has recently suggested that Tacitus’ reference to an empty temple in \textit{Hist.} 5.9.1 is a subtle insult insofar as it mirrors his earlier depiction of the Dead Sea as a “dead realm”: “Totenreich und jüdischer Kult entsprechen sich. Die ‘Geographie’ des Tempels wird also in denselben Farben geschildert wie diejenigen der dürren Gefilde in der Nähe des Toten Meeres”; see René S. Bloch, \textit{Antike Vorstellungen vom Judentum: Der Judenexkurs des Tacitus im Rahmen der griechisch-römischen Ethnographie} (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2002), 104-05.} Nevertheless, given the multiple sources that attest to this phenomenon, there is no reason to doubt Tacitus’ remarks in this instance. Similarly, although limiting his remarks to divine statuary, Cassius Dio comments that no statue of the Jewish God had ever been erected in Jerusalem.\footnote{Cassius Dio, \textit{Hist. rom.} 37.17.2.}

In sum, although our hypothetical visitor to Jerusalem might otherwise feel at home with his or her surroundings, the almost complete lack of public sculpture unequivocally marked this urban landscape as a peculiarity in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean. The Jerusalem that Josephus experienced prior to his relocation to Rome was by and large a statueless Jerusalem. Even if Josephus exaggerates Jewish animosity toward figurative images in his major compositions, this curious “silence” in the archaeological record, confirmed by a broad range of literary sources, cannot and should not be ignored. Why then the absence of sculpture in first century Jerusalem?

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contradiction to demonstrate that Tacitus the historian is nothing but a liar (\textit{Apol.} 16.1-4). In fairness to Tacitus, Menahem Stern does mention several factors that may lessen what might otherwise appear to be a careless contradiction. In the first place, Tacitus’ reference to the ass-statue may not reflect his own opinion but the opinion of the many authors \textit{(plurimi auctores)} who proposed a particular theory of Jewish origins (see Tacitus, \textit{Hist.} 5.3.1). Second, the ass-statue, designated in Latin as the \textit{effigies animalis}, could refer in Tacitus’ mind not to a formal cult statue but to a votive offering to the aniconic God; see Stern, ed., \textit{Greek and Latin Authors}, 2:37. On Tacitus’ use of sources, the basic work remains Edmund Groag, “Zur Kritik von Tacitus’ Quellen in den Historien,” \textit{JCP} Suppl. XXIII (1897): 709-99.

\footnote{\textit{Indeed, René Bloch has recently suggested that} Tacitus’ reference to an empty temple in \textit{Hist.} 5.9.1 \textit{is a subtle insult insofar as it mirrors his earlier depiction of the Dead Sea as a “dead realm”: “Totenreich und jüdischer Kult entsprechen sich. Die ‘Geographie’ des Tempels wird also in denselben Farben geschildert wie diejenigen der dürren Gefilde in der Nähe des Toten Meeres”; see René S. Bloch, \textit{Antike Vorstellungen vom Judentum: Der Judenexkurs des Tacitus im Rahmen der griechisch-römischen Ethnographie} (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2002), 104-05.}
Exegetical Stridency as Religio-Cultural Opposition

For the most part, scholars appeal to a rigid interpretive approach to the prohibition against images in the Jewish Bible, the so-called second commandment, to explain the absence of sculpture in Second Temple Jerusalem. More often than not, this strict enforcement of the biblical prohibition is viewed as a kind of cultural or religious fortification for Jerusalem, not unlike Nikos Kazantzakis’ evocative image of Jerusalem as a city “moated on every side by the commandments of Jehovah.” Rachel Hachlili’s summary of Jewish art during the Second Temple period is in this sense representative of a wide swath of scholarship:

Jewish art of the Second Temple period (second century BCE-first century CE) is aniconic and non-symbolic. Most of the motifs used are taken from the environment. They consist of plant and geometric motifs expressing growth and productivity and are similar to patterns used in Graeco-Roman pagan art. In the struggle against paganism, Judaism at that time offered staunch resistance, especially by insisting on obedience to the “no graven image” commandment and by guarding against its violators. Hence the strict adherence to a non-figurative art form.

According to Hachlili, the preponderance of non-figurative (floral and geometric) material remains, coupled with the almost complete lack of any figurative art in the archaeological record—not just statues, but wall paintings, coins, furniture, etc.—is directly linked to a particularly “strict” interpretation of the Mosaic prohibition against images, whereby the proscription is taken to encompass all forms of figurative art. Moreover, this stridency against figurative art is seen as part of a larger war against “paganism,” with the

140 Exod 20:2–6; Deut 5:6–10. See chapter 3 below for a discussion of this text and its interpretation during the Greco-Roman period.
142 Hachlili, Jewish Art in the Land of Israel, 1 (emphasis mine).
second commandment functioning as the primary weapon of “staunch resistance” on the battle front. This framework of antithesis/struggle is clearly articulated in Hachlili’s historical sketch of “indisputable” facts on the following page:

During the Second Temple period the Jews rejected the representation of figurative images in their art and used only aniconic, non-figurative motifs and patterns, which reflected their struggle against both paganism and Christianity. However, from the third century until the seventh century, Jews employed figurative art, images and symbols. They did so with rabbinical tolerance or even approval.\(^{143}\)

In other words, for Hachlili the absence of figural remains during the Second Temple period bespeaks an ongoing religious warfare between “Judaism” on the one side of the equation and “Christianity” and “paganism” on the other side. Presumably, though this is not stated explicitly, this religious conflict subsided in subsequent centuries, since Hachlili allows for a measure of “rabbinical tolerance” from the third though seventh centuries.

Nahman Avigad similarly views a strident application of the second commandment as evidence of Judaism’s struggle against an “other,” although in this instance the battle is both cultural and religious. According to Avigad:

The situation in the Hasmonean and Herodian periods was entirely different. Then, triumphant Hellenism began its assault on Judaism by attempting to force its culture and religion on the Jews. The Jews, in turn, felt the deepest obligation to defend themselves against Hellenism. Naturally, at a time when foreign rulers were bent on introducing statues of gods or themselves into the Temple and forcing Jews into idolatry, the use of any image whatsoever was stringently prohibited. Thus, during this period, the enforcement of the Torah injunctions was infinitely stricter than at any other time in Jewish history.\(^{144}\)

\(^{143}\) Ibid., 2 (emphasis mine).

Whereas the opponent in Hachlili’s interpretation is strictly religious, Avigad appeals to the category of “Hellenism”—here construed as a clearly defined religio-cultural force threatening “Judaism” during the Hellenistic and early Roman periods—against which Jews struggle armed with an “infinitely stricter” interpretation of the second commandment. This battle against “Hellenism,” which according to Avigad was rooted in an “uncompromising orthodoxy,” is exemplified in the iconoclastic destruction of Herod’s eagle in the temple and Herod the Tetrarch’s palace, which was adorned “with figures prohibited by the Torah.”

This framework of aniconism as religio-cultural opposition evident in both Hachlili and Avigad has deep roots in scholarship on Jewish art. Georg Hegel’s (1770–1831) claim that Jews despise (verachten) the image was based in part on the belief that Judaism throughout its history had seemingly “aus der Natur selbst trat,” i.e., that Jews embodied a fundamental antithesis to the spirit of the Greeks (and Jesus). If the Greek nation, as evidenced in its penchant for producing beautiful works of art, represented a colossal step forward in the development of the human spirit, an evolutionary process that would reach its apogee in German national art, then an artless Judaism must be in some sense “frozen in time,” in the words of Mark Lilla, “an

145 Ibid., 278.
146 Several recent discussions of scholarship on Jewish art are particularly helpful: see Bland, The Artless Jew; Olin, Nation without Art; Fine, Art and Judaism.
148 According to Olin, art historian Josef Strzygowski (1862-1941) followed Hegel by contrasting “two races”—the Greeks/Romans and the Semites—and identifying German nationalist art as the ultimate flowering of the race of the Greeks; see Olin, Nation without Art, 18-23.
anachronistic relic of the infancy of the human race.”\textsuperscript{149} In a similar vein, Solomon Formstecher (1808–1889), in his \textit{Die Religion des Geistes}, published only a decade after Hegel’s death, asserted that the longstanding conflict (Kampf) between “Judaism” and “Paganism,” which he viewed as “feindliche Pole,”\textsuperscript{150} required Judaism to consider “die plastische Kunst als seinen Gegner streng.”\textsuperscript{151} And again, a few pages later, Formstecher unequivocally remarks: “Das Judenthum ist ein Feind der plastischen Kunstschöpfung.”\textsuperscript{152}

If Jewish animosity toward visual representation was symptomatic of a much deeper Hebraic-Hellenic hostility, as is frequently thought,\textsuperscript{153} then it stands to reason that the presence or absence of figurative remains in antiquity serves in some sense as a barometer for this wider struggle against an external enemy (however defined). As this hostility ostensibly increased during the Second Temple period, particularly after the crisis of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167 B.C.E., Jews became more aggressively defensive, resulting in a border patrol that included a more rigorous interpretation of the second commandment. In other words, a heightened “pagan” threat demanded higher and stronger halakhic walls, so to speak, and to meet this demand, the second commandment was transformed from a prohibition against idol worship into a prohibition against any type of figurative art. Conversely, the flourishing of figurative remains after the


\textsuperscript{150} Solomon Formstecher, \textit{Die Religion des Geistes: eine wissenschaftliche Darstellung des Judenthums nach seinem Charakter, Entwicklungsgänge und Berufe in der Menschheit} (Frankfurt am Main: J. C. Hermann, 1841), 69.

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 68.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 71.

\textsuperscript{153} Bland’s discussion of scholarship on Jewish art underscores the role of this Hellenism-Hebraism dichotomy; see Bland, \textit{The Artless Jew}, 21-26.
destruction of the temple perhaps suggested a weakening of the “pagan” threat. Indeed, this is precisely what Ephraim Urbach argues in his discussion of the post-destruction era when he claims that within “Judaism” during the so-called rabbinic period “the idolatrous impulse was virtually dead, while even in the surrounding gentile world its influence had been greatly weakened.” Stated differently, the threat of the “other” was rapidly waning, the potential for its influence on Judaism weakening, and as a result there was a greater inclination on the part of the rabbis toward halakhic leniency with regard to the second commandment, which then explains the proliferation of figurative art in late antique synagogue remains.

In sum, in the interpretive approach of Hachlili, Avigad and Urbach, the archaeological record more or less mirrors Jewish exegetical practice as part of a larger cultural and religious struggle. On the one hand, the scarcity of figurative art prior to the destruction of the temple is directly linked to a rather strict interpretive stance—the second commandment prohibits figurative art in toto. On the other hand, the emergence of a rich and extensive body of figurative remains in the centuries that followed suggests a trend toward exegetical leniency, i.e., a less restrictive stance toward the Mosaic proscription. Moreover, with respect to this supposed strict aniconism of the Second

154 E. E. Urbach, "The Rabbinical Laws on Idolatry in the Second and Third Centuries in the Light of Archaeological and Historical Facts," *IEJ* 9 (1959): 236. The idea that the Jewish inclination toward idolatry was dead by this period was first expressed in 1888 by Solomon Schechter, when he claimed that this inclination had been "suppressed by the sufferings of the captivity in Babylon"; see Solomon Schechter, "The Dogmas of Judaism," *JQR* 1 (1888): 54.

155 Lee I. Levine has succinctly articulated a nuanced form of this diachronic model, identifying “three major shifts in Jewish attitudes toward figural art throughout antiquity: (1) the transition from the relative openness to such art in the biblical and post-biblical periods to the extreme and sharply restrictive policy under the Hasmoneans; (2) the return to figural images in the post-70 era that engendered a wide range of practices; and (3) a swing of the pendulum toward aniconism some time in the late sixth or during the seventh century C.E.”; see Levine, "Figural Art," 9.
Temple period, a rigid exegetical approach is thought to have characterized all Jews, or at least the vast majority of Jews. That is to say, the prohibition against all figurative art is construed to be in some sense an official dogma of “normative” or “mainstream Judaism” during the period in question. This is evident particularly in Hachlili’s sweeping assertions: “Judaism at the time offered staunch resistance …” and “During the Second Temple period the Jews rejected the representation of figurative images ….” Indeed, she continues this unqualified assessment in her study of Jewish art in the Diaspora, where “Judaism” both in the Diaspora and Palestine is viewed as a “purely aniconic” religion.

Complicating the Notion of a Purely Aniconic Religion

It is undeniable that the second commandment, or more broadly religious ideology, played a role in shaping Jewish responses to Greco-Roman images, and can even explain in part the absence of figural remains in Second Temple Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the image of a “purely aniconic” religion that emerges in the aforementioned studies, based on the predominantly unqualified link between extant

156 Hachlili, Jewish Art in the Land of Israel, 1-2 (emphasis mine).
157 Rachel Hachlili, Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Diaspora (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 237. Such an unqualified claim is not surprising, given Hachlili’s methodological assumptions spelled out in the opening chapter of this volume, specifically her notion that “Judaism” and “Hellenism” were antithetical and that there existed a strong halakhic link between Diaspora Judaism and Palestinian Judaism. She contends that although Jews living in the Diaspora were in some sense “part of Hellenistic society,” they nevertheless “remained loyal to the Torah and practiced Jewish law. No literary sources, inscriptions or archaeological data have ever indicated tendencies of assimilation or adoption of the Greek culture” (11). In other words, loyalty to Torah translates into the absence of Greek culture. According to Hachlili, Diaspora Jews were able to maintain this cultural and religious purity only because they maintained a strong connection with Judea, which functioned as a clear authoritative center for halakha. She notes that the apostoli (envoys sent by the nasi) were “a fixed institution” during the Second Temple period and functioned “to supervise the communities, to control administration, to inspect the implementation of the halacha, and to levy the taxes due to the Nasi office” (12).
material culture and exegetical/religious practice, is fundamentally flawed both in its tendency to overstate the role of exegetical stridency—a topic I will explore more fully in the next chapter—and, more importantly for the present discussion, in its underlying model of cultural interaction. Specifically, the idea of Jewish aniconism as an expression of hostility toward a cultural or religious Other—whether conceived as Hellenism, Paganism, or even Christianity—fails to account for the polychromatic palette of ancient Mediterranean cultures, what Goodman felicitously terms the “kaleidoscope of customs” within the Roman world,\textsuperscript{158} and overlooks the integral and participatory place of Jews within this milieu.

Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide

The polarization of “Judaism” and “Hellenism,” or “Hebraism” and “Hellenism,” has had a long and vibrant life in western thought.\textsuperscript{159} Indeed, the typical story of Jews in antiquity is one of dichotomies, of opposition and antagonism. This should not surprise us. Every good story needs conflict, a protagonist struggling against an irrepressible enemy, and it is certainly not difficult to find such moments of contention in the record of ancient Jews: the Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes attempting to annihilate the way of the Judeans, only to meet resistance at the hands of the heroic Hasmonean family, especially guided by the valiant leadership of Judas Maccabeus (the “Hammer”—if ever a nickname embodies conflict, this is it!); Pompey Magnus likewise striking at the heart

\textsuperscript{158} Goodman, \textit{Rome and Jerusalem}, 147.

\textsuperscript{159} The “Hebraism” / “Hellenism” dichotomy from antiquity to modernity is the central focus of a fascinating collection of essays in volume 19 (1998) of the journal \textit{Poetics Today}. In the introductory essay, David Stern succinctly remarks: “\textit{Hellenism} and \textit{Hebraism}—Athens and Jerusalem, the Greek and the Jew—are surely the most famous terms commonly invoked to summon up the distinct, often seemingly irreconcilable strands that make up the Western tradition”; David Stern, "Introduction," \textit{PT} 19 (1998): 1 (emphasis original).
of the Jews in 63 B.C.E. by desecrating their sacred center, the temple in Jerusalem; and of course, the apex of the Jewish struggle against the Other, the revolt against Rome and subsequent destruction of the temple, whose smoldering ashes coupled with the tragic mass suicide atop the fortress of Masada have become enduring symbols of the Jewish struggle for freedom from oppression. In fact, this narrative of struggle and opposition would become the very lifeblood of the Zionist movement that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so much so that a young Martin Buber had hoped to awaken within his generation “a Masada of the spirit” that would ultimately energize a people in its pursuit of land and independence.  

Recent scholarship, however, has called into question this model of conflict as well as the underlying notion of culture that feeds it. In the first place, the literary sources tend to exaggerate opposition in part because of its crucial role in narrative discourse; stories thrive on conflict and hostility, clearly delineated protagonists and

160 Gilga G. Schmidt, ed., The First Buber: Youthful Zionist Writings of Martin Buber (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 185. This notion of opposition, an us-against-the-world mentality, has even left its mark on Jewish comedy, as is evident in Mel Brooks’ humorous quip that for Jews, “humor is just another defense against the universe”; Sally Ann Berk, and Maria Carluccio, The Big Little Book of Jewish Wit and Wisdom (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal, 2000), 189.

161 Martin Hengel’s influential Judentum und Hellenismus, followed by several subsequent publications that collectively called into question the communis opinio of a distinction between “Palestinian Judaism” (unmarked by the influence of Hellenism) and “Hellenistic Judaism,” were pivotal in moving the discussion beyond the prevailing hermetically sealed polarities; Martin Hengel, Judentum und Hellenismus (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1969); Martin Hengel, Jews, Greeks and Barbarians (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); Martin Hengel, The ‘Hellenization’ of Judaea in the First Century after Christ (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1989). See also the recently published collection of essays building on Hengel’s provocative work, which includes an essay by Hengel revisiting the topic; John J. Collins, and Gregory E. Sterling, eds., Hellenism in the Land of Israel (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001). More recently, several have argued that even Hengel’s work, while correctly moving the discussion beyond the model of conflict rooted in a putative Jewish resistance to Hellenism, is nevertheless flawed in its insistence that “Judaism” and “Hellenism” are somehow definable as distinct entities, insofar as “Judaism” in Hengel’s model is viewed as a kind of receptacle for the influence of “Hellenism.” On the critique of the influence model, see especially the discussion and literature cited in Michael L. Satlow, "Beyond Influence: Explaining Similarity and Difference among Jews in Antiquity," in Jewish Literatures and Cultures: Context and Intertext (ed. Anita Norich and Yaron Z. Eliav; Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2008), 37-53.
antagonists, so a measure of skepticism is warranted when encountering the static polarities that invariably emerge from such literary portrayals. ¹⁶² Of course, this is not to deny the existence of cultural conflict in antiquity. A superficial reading of Menahem Stern’s *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* underscores the cultural friction that often arose over perceived Jewish peculiarities, i.e., practices that many Greeks and Romans considered odd or barbaric; and many Jews were likewise more than willing to dish out their share of cultural scorn, prominently displayed in the numerous idol polemics composed during the period in question.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, as will be argued below, even the distinctive practices and idol polemics of the Jews should not be viewed as indications of their cultural “Otherness,” characteristics that mark Jews as outsiders to Greco-Roman culture.

In this sense, Jews were no different than any other *ethnos* living in the Roman Mediterranean basin—Egyptians, Greeks, Celts, Idumeans, Nabateans, Syrians, and so on¹⁶⁴—insofar as they, like all Mediterranean *ethnoi*, embodied a rich and complex convergence of customs that were “not strictly bounded and differentiated from each other but instead shade one into the other.”¹⁶⁵ Lee Levine aptly describes the Greco-

¹⁶² Eliav, "Viewing the Sculptural Environment," 412.

¹⁶³ For example, such notable texts as the Epistle of Jeremiah, Wisdom of Solomon, additions to Daniel, portions of *Jubilees*, the *Sibyline Oracles*, and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, *inter alia*.


Roman milieu as a “veritable potpourri of cultural forces, a marketplace of ideas and fashions” from which one could choose. In this light, therefore, Hellenization is not merely the impact of Greek culture on a non-Greek world, but rather the interplay of a wide range of cultural forces on an oikumene.”

In a similar vein, though going a step further than Levine, Michael Satlow has recently called for an end to the language of “conflict” and “influence” or “borrowing” as a means of describing cultural interaction insofar as this terminology reifies “abstract, second-order” categories such as “Hellenism” and “Judaism.” “Hellenism” was not a clearly defined, tangible monolithic culture that “Judaism” could either accept or reject, as if “Judaism” were a “cultural vacuum” that could potentially be filled; rather, there were many “Hellenisms,” so to speak, numerous and variegated regional expressions of hybrid cultures. Similarly, the notion

 этничность и культура (чicago: the university of Chicago press, 2002); mclister, “ethnicity and Jewish identity”.

166 levine, Judaism and Hellenism, 19.


of “Judaism” as a bounded ideological movement obscures “the on-going messy negotiations that constitute culture.”  

Although the language of “Judaism” and “Hellenism” may still be useful as heuristic constructs in certain situations, this should not obscure the fact that Jews were part-and-parcel of their Mediterranean milieu, i.e., “that ‘Judaism’ is itself a species of Hellenism.”

Aesthetic Preference and Regional Variation

The inherent fluidity and complexity of ethnic identity and cultural interaction in the Mediterranean world has important methodological implications for the topic at hand. Specifically, the attempt to move beyond intangible abstractions such as “Judaism” and “Hellenism” requires an approach that focuses more on local or regional expressions of culture. From this perspective, the task is not so much to decipher “Judaism’s” stance toward images, or the stridency or leniency of “Judaism’s” interpretation of the second commandment, but how Jews in various geographical settings negotiated their sculptural and artistic milieu. Admittedly, such an approach may not necessarily yield radically different results, and in any case it is still not likely that we will find Jews in a particular locale erecting cult statues to YHWH. Nevertheless, a regional approach to the data—

170 Satlow, "Beyond Influence," 43. Several have recently argued that “Judaism” as an ideological system emerged only in response to the establishment of Christianity as a distinct religion, i.e., sometime in the fourth century C.E. For example, Daniel Boyarin remarks: “when Christianity separated religious belief and practice from Romanitas, cult from culture, Judaism as a religion came into the world as well”; Daniel Boyarin, "Semantic Differences; or, 'Judaism'/'Christianity,'" in The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 72. See also the discussion in Mason, "Problems of Categorization," 460-80.

171 See for example the recent discussion in Gabriele Boccaccini, "Hellenistic Judaism: Myth or Reality?," in Jewish Literatures and Cultures: Context and Intertext (ed. Anita Norich and Yaron Z. Eliav; Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2008), 55-76.

172 Boyarin, Border Lines, 247.

173 This is noted by Satlow, "Beyond Influence," 51-53.
both Jewish and non-Jewish *comparanda*—can potentially nuance our understanding of the complex relationship between Jews and Greco-Roman art.

For example, returning to the scant remains of figurative art in Second Temple Jerusalem, I noted above the prevailing tendency to see in this archaeological lacuna evidence for exegetical stridency, an indication that Jews embraced a more restrictive interpretation of the second commandment. Moreover, when juxtaposed with the preponderance of figurative art adorning the synagogue in Dura Europos from the third century C.E., scholars by and large appeal to an exegetical transmutation to explain this difference: after the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. “Judaism” became more lenient toward Greco-Roman figurative art. But this is not the only possibility. It could be that the figurative remains of third century Dura Europos are the result not of a diachronic exegetical change in “Judaism” but simply reflect a unique expression of local Jewish culture. Clearly the Jewish community of third century Dura did not consider figurative art to be prohibited by the second commandment. Why could this not be true of first century Jews living in Dura?

Admittedly we do not possess evidence for this particular Diaspora community from an earlier period to test this possibility, so it remains only a speculation. There is perhaps some indication, however, from other pre-destruction Diaspora settings that may suggest that the absence of figurative remains in Second Temple Jerusalem was a *Judean* phenomenon. The remains of an early synagogue (ca. second/first century B.C.E.) on the island of Delos, for example, include a number of lamps decorated with figurative motifs,
which according to Levine’s assessment, may “reflect a different cultural and artistic norm from that of late Second Temple Judaea.”

An honorary inscription on a stele of Parian marble from Berenice (Cyrene), dating either to the late first century B.C.E. or sometime in the first century C.E., is perhaps even more enticing. The inscription includes a resolution on behalf of the Jewish πολίτευμα to honor Decimus Valerius Dionysius for his benefactions, which included plastering the floor and painting the walls of the ἀμφιθέατρον:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
22 & Δέκμος Οὐαλέριος Γαίου Διονύσιος \\
23 & ξ[δ][ε][φ] [ος] ἐκοινώσας καί τὸ ἀμφι-
24 & θέατρον καί ἐζωγράφησαν τοῖς
25 & ἵδιοις δαπανήμασιν ἐπίδομα
26 & τῷ πολίτευματι
\end{array}
\]

The compound verb used for painting in line 24, ζωγράφε, as is apparent from its constituent parts, normally signifies the painted representation of living beings, such as are found in abundance on the walls of the Dura synagogue, though it can also denote painting in general, without regard to specific subject matter. Whether or not ἀμφιθέατρον refers to a general public building—a Roman amphitheater—used by all

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174 Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 103. There is debate over the identification of this building as a synagogue, some of it revolving around the presence of this imagery, which includes pagan motifs. For a more detailed discussion of the various arguments for and against the synagogue identification, see L. Michael White, "The Delos Synagogue Revisited: Recent Fieldwork in the Graeco-Roman Diaspora," *HTR* 80 (1987): 133-60.

175 The inscription includes damaged date letters that might specify 8–6 B.C.E., but G. Roux and J. Roux have proposed more broadly a date between 30 B.C.E. and 100 C.E.; G. Roux, and J. Roux, "Un décret des Juifs de Bérénike," *REG* 62 (1949): 289.


citizens of Berenice, or the communal building of the Jewish πολίτευμα has been much discussed.\textsuperscript{178} Given that this is a communal inscription honoring benefactions bestowed upon the πολίτευμα (line 26), and that a second inscription likewise associates this πολίτευμα with an ἀμφιθέατρον,\textsuperscript{179} it seems likely that the structure in question was a Jewish communal building, a synagogue. If indeed this was the case, then the Berenice inscription possibly indicates the use of figurative art within a Jewish context \textit{during the Second Temple period}, calling into question the supposition that “Judaism” transmuted from an aniconic to an iconic religion across the 70 C.E. divide. Rather, it is much more likely that the presence or absence of figurative art was locally or regionally (and not chronologically) determined.

While the inscription from Berenice attests to the possible presence of flat figurative representation in a Jewish context during the Second Temple period, is there any evidence for a more amicable relationship with three-dimensional free-standing sculpture in certain Diaspora locations? There is some material and literary evidence associating third century C.E. Diaspora Jewish communities with sculpture. A stele inscription from Aphrodisias commemorates donors to a memorial building erected for the relief of suffering within the community.\textsuperscript{180} The two faces of the stele include three categories of people: Jews, Proselytes and God-Fearers. The last group of names on face

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{178} See the discussion and secondary literature cited in Levine, \textit{The Ancient Synagogue}, 91-92. Levine favors the identification of “amphitheatre” as a Jewish communal building.

\textsuperscript{179} Lüderitz, \textit{Corpus jüdischer Zeugnisse}, no. 71. This inscription, likewise recorded on a stele of Parian marble, dates to 24/25 C.E., during the festival of Sukkot.

\end{footnotesize}
b, categorized under the heading καὶ ὁσιοθεοσεβής (“and as many as are God-fearers”), includes two interesting names listed with occupations: Ὀρτάσιος λατύ(πος?) and Παράμονος ἴκονο(γράφος?), or possibly ἴκονο(ποιος?). According to Reynolds and Tannenbaum, λατύ(πος) likely refers to someone who cuts stones, perhaps carving relief portraits into stone, and ἴκονογράφος or ἴκονοποιος would designate either a painter or sculptor, depending on which reading is preferred.\(^{181}\) The precise identity of the God-fearers, whether pious Jews or non-Jews associated with the synagogue, need not concern us here;\(^ {182}\) it is enough to note that several persons closely associated with the Jewish community in Aphrodisias were apparently involved in the commercial production of figurative sculpture and/or painting.\(^ {183}\) Even more explicitly, the Bavli mentions a third century C.E. synagogue in Nehardea that actually housed an anthropomorphic statue (םריקס, an Aramaic transliteration of the Greek term ἄνθρωπος).\(^ {184}\)

However, both the Aphrodisias inscription and the Bavli reference post-date the destruction of the temple and thus could be taken as evidence for the notion that 70 C.E. marked a “turning-point” toward leniency, inaugurating a period when the Jewish authorities officially loosened their grip on the interpretation of the second

\(^{181}\) Reynolds, and Tannenbaum, Jews and Godfearers, 120.

\(^{182}\) Reynolds and Tannenbaum prefer pious non-Jews precisely because involvement in the sculpture industry is assumed to be incompatible with Jewish identity; in their words, “something is not quite kosher about them”; Ibid., 55.

\(^{183}\) This is not surprising, given Aphrodisias’ fame as a center for the production of sculpture. On the question of Jewish artisans working with sculpture, see b. Avod. Zar. 51b–52a (cf. m. Avod. Zar. 4:4) and the discussion in Urbach, "Rabbinical Laws on Idolatry," 161-65.

commandment. Is there any evidence for the use of three-dimensional sculpture prior to the destruction of the temple? Two inscribed statue bases possibly connected to two Egyptian synagogues, one located in Alexandria and the other in Naukratis, may be of relevance here.

The inscription from Naukratis, which dates somewhere between 30 B.C.E.–14 C.E. and appears on what looks to be a base for a statuette, reads as follows: [ - -  ἀμωνίου συναγωγός | [ - - συμβαθική | [(ἐτος).  Καί ἥαρος, Φαμενώθ ζ’.

Apparently this statue, if indeed we have a statue base here, was erected to honor a son of Ammonius, a “synagogue” leader whose name is now missing, for his benefactions bestowed upon the Sambathic association. Admittedly, there are more questions than answers in this fragmentary inscription. In the first place, the titular use of συναγωγός is not unique to Greek-speaking Jews but could be used for a wide range of Greco-Roman associations. Neither does the reference to a Σαμβαθικός, a name possibly derived from the Hebrew for Sabbath, resolve the ambiguous identification of this σύνοδος. Victor Tcherikover discusses at length the twenty-nine Egyptian papyri that contain the name Sambathion and related variants, concluding that while in some cases the identification of the individuals in question may be Jewish, in other cases they are likely Egyptians who respect the Jewish Sabbath. The editors of the inscription in question think the

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185 Urbach, "Rabbinical Laws on Idolatry," 154-56.
187 Two holes in the upper and lower sides of the stone suggest this identification, though the editors of the inscription leave the question somewhat open; Ibid., 45.
association in Naukratis consists of non-Jewish members who observe the Sabbath, but Levine rightly cautions against excluding a priori a Jewish identification.\textsuperscript{189}

Similar ambiguities are present in the Alexandrian dedicatory inscription (ca. Ptolemaic to the early Roman period), which reads as follows: \texttt{'Αρτέμων | Νίκωνος πρ(οστάτης) | τὸ ῥα ᾕτος τῆ | σωμαχωγη | [.\ldots]ντηκη.\textsuperscript{190} This statue dedication offered to the \texttt{σωμαχωγη} again raises the notoriously slippery question of identity, and according to the editors, “it is hard to envisage the ‘synagogue’ here as Jewish” precisely because of the accompanying statue.\textsuperscript{191} But given the diversity of artistic remains evident in other Jewish sites throughout the Greco-Roman Mediterranean, it seems at the very least unwise to reject \textit{on this basis alone} a possible Jewish identification; it is plausible that some Jewish communities living in certain regions were not entirely adverse to the use of sculpture, and perhaps even participated in the widespread practice of erecting honorary statues on behalf of a benefactor.\textsuperscript{192}

My point in bringing this material into the discussion is not necessarily to demonstrate conclusively that some Jews during the Second Temple period did in fact make use of figurative painting or erect honorary statues in their synagogues. The remains from certifiably Jewish sites in Second Temple Diaspora are too sparse, and the

\textsuperscript{189} Horbury, and Noy, \textit{Jewish Inscriptions}, 45; Levine, \textit{The Ancient Synagogue}, 81.

\textsuperscript{190} Horbury, and Noy, \textit{Jewish Inscriptions}, no. 20.


\textsuperscript{192} Levine considers these inscriptions “evidence of communities whose conception of Judaism did not preclude such images”; Levine, \textit{The Ancient Synagogue}, 81-82.
few surviving bits of data too ambiguous to draw any firm conclusions. Rather I wish only to suggest that the very real potential for regional variation in Jewish society should temper any impulse to immediately discount this as a possibility. Moreover, especially in light of the inscription from Berenice, the different approaches toward figurative art seemingly evidenced in the archaeological record of Jerusalem and Dura Europos need not be based on diachronic exegetical changes, a shift from stridency to leniency, but is perhaps more plausibly explained by synchronic regional variation. In other words, that the archaeological record in one location—Judea—seems to indicate that Jews in this particular region generally avoided the various types of figurative art used throughout the Greco-Roman world does not necessarily preclude the possibility that coeval Jews in other locations were more receptive to such artistic forms, including perhaps even three-dimensional, free-standing sculpture.

A regional approach to the question of Jewish aniconism can also potentially shed more light on the absence of figurative finds in Second Temple Judea. Without discounting any possible role the second commandment may have played in this process, a glance at one of Judea’s immediate neighbors, the Nabateans, may allow for a fuller and more nuanced explanation for the apparent resistance to figurative art.193 Although many Nabatean sites include a significant array of figurative images (e.g., Petra), several exceptional locations exhibit a marked preference for non-figurative art, especially geometric and floral motifs.194 For example, the tombs of Mada‘in Saleh, dating between

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1 B.C.E. and 75 C.E., are mostly devoid of figurative art, and there are no statues, reliefs or portrait busts representing the deceased, in contrast with what can be seen in the tombs of Palmyra and elsewhere. Instead the residents at this particular site apparently used conical shaped memorial stones to commemorate the dead. Likewise, no architectural reliefs have been found in er-Ramm, and the temple in this village includes no figurative decoration on the extant wall frescoes. Nabatean painted pottery is “almost exclusively floral,” and the jewelry, oil lamps, and coin finds similarly show a preference for non-figurative images. And this phenomenon evident in material culture is more or less confirmed in the ethnography of Strabo, who, based on the testimony of a philosopher friend who lived for a time in Nabatean territory in the second half of the first century B.C.E., remarks: τὸ ρέμα γραφή πλάσμα ὀν κ ἐπιχώρια ("relief sculptures, painting, and molded images are not customary in the country").

How do we explain this phenomenon? Did some Nabateans resist the wave of Greco-Roman figurative art due to a religious prohibition similar to that found in the Jewish Bible? Actually, this is not entirely implausible, and indeed the avoidance of figurative sculpture is particularly conspicuous in Nabatean cultic contexts, where the


195 Patrich, Nabatean Art, 119-23.
196 Ibid., 151-52.
197 Ibid., 127, Ill. 42. One exception was a painted bowl found on the ruins of Masada, on which a combination of floral motifs was used by the artist to create three human figures with an “Orans” gesture of prayer (128, Ill. 43).
198 Ibid., 132-38.
199 Strabo, Geogr. 16.4.26.
Nabateans prefer to represent their gods with non-anthropomorphic stones (*massebot*).\(^{200}\) Moreover, although technically outside of the geographical borders of Nabatea proper, several Arabic inscriptions from the south Arabian ancient Raybūn, dating between the second and first century B.C.E., may indicate that a similar prohibition existed outside of a Judean (and monotheistic) context. The inscriptions speak of votive offerings to a deity intended to absolve a sacrilege, and according to the reading proposed by Serguei Frantsouzoff, the sacrilege spoken of here is the production of anthropomorphic images of the god or goddess.\(^{201}\) Frantsouzoff thus concludes: “It follows from the three texts interpreted above that in ancient Raybūn the creation of images of deities was considered as a wrong, sinful action which required repentance.”\(^{202}\) If such a prohibition did exist in south Arabia, then it is certainly possible that a similar prohibition was in circulation in Nabatea.

Nevertheless, the absence of any Nabatean literary or epigraphical evidence addressing the issue makes it especially difficult to determine the precise reasons for this artistic preference, and Patrich rightly cautions against a purely “religious”

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\(^{202}\) Ibid.: 65. Frantsouzoff further supports his hypothesis with reference to “the complete lack of any statue or picture of a god or a goddess of the local pantheon among the numerous artifacts of the South Arabian civilization” (65). On the relationship between the inscriptions and the Jewish second commandment, he remarks: “To my mind, it would be reasonable to assume that some specific beliefs of a group of early Semitic tribes, a sort of taboo imposed on the creation of images of deities, was the origin of both a prescription of the South Arabian polytheistic religion and a statement of the Mosaic law” (66). On the idea of a early Semitic antecedent to the biblical command, see also Tallay Ornan, "Idols and Symbols: Divine Representation in First Millennium Mesopotamian Art and its Bearing on the Second Commandment," *TA* 31 (2004): 90-121.
explanation.\textsuperscript{203} Specifically, according to Patrich’s assessment, this tendency toward non-figurative art is not solely due to “religious obligation” but also “to the continuing validity of a unique aesthetic approach and the desire to maintain it, to a conservatism and national consciousness that did not permit the abrogation of the extant, the ancient, and the rooted, by the accidental and the fashionable.”\textsuperscript{204} In various contexts Patrich speaks of the non-figurative preference as a reflection of “the spirit of the Nabateans,”\textsuperscript{205} “the spirit of the descendants of the desert,”\textsuperscript{206} and “the spirit of the nation.”\textsuperscript{207} Whether or not one agrees with Patrich’s interpretation of this data—and I would suggest that it is a bit too Hegelian in “spirit”—this comparative material underscores the difficulty of moving from surviving stones to ancient religious beliefs. More importantly for purposes of this analysis, however, it suggests that the penchant for floral and geometric motifs over against figurative images in Judea may be in part due to regional aesthetic preferences, artistic tendencies specific to this particular geographic locale.\textsuperscript{208}

\textbf{Idol Polemics in the Sculptural Environment of the Ancient Mediterranean}

In addition to the possibility for regional variation and distinct artistic preferences and practices, the fact that Jews were integral members of and participants in this

\textsuperscript{203} Although ironically, Patrich’s subtitle—“The Prohibition of a Graven Image among the Nabateans”—betrays this reflexive tendency to interpret the lack of artistic remains strictly through the lens of religious categories.

\textsuperscript{204} Patrich, 	extit{Nabatean Art}, 152 (emphasis mine).

\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., 49.

\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., 114.

\textsuperscript{207} Ibid., 166.

\textsuperscript{208} Indeed, rather than seeing the preponderance of floral and geometric motifs in Herod the Great’s domestic space as an attempt to conform to Jewish religious strictures, as it is often presented in scholarship on Herodian architecture, regional aesthetic preference perhaps more plausibly explains his almost exclusive use of non-figurative art.
multicultural milieu suggests that the conventional model of Jewish responses to 
sculpture, which reduces the issue of response to either “acceptance” or “rejection,” fails 
to adequately account for the complex interplay between viewer and image in 
antiquity.\textsuperscript{209} This is especially apparent when considering the most prominent form of 
figurative representation in antiquity—statues. Beyond simply adorning the physical 
landscape, statues were inextricably woven into the fabric of daily life, serving a variety 
of social, religious and political functions. In other words, far from being \textit{objets d’art} 
eventually destined for a dusty shelf or museum, statues were “objects working in 
society.”\textsuperscript{210}

An awareness of this socio-cultural function of statues shifts the focus away from 
the formal features of the object itself—e.g., its style, degree of naturalism, and the 
aesthetic beauty of the work—to the \textit{visual experience} elicited by the image, 
underscoring the fundamental role of perception in the dynamic relationship between 
object and beholder.\textsuperscript{211} Viewers in antiquity did not simply \textit{see} statues as works of art, 
objects with a particular form or style, free-standing matter shaped into a variety of 
geometric configurations. Rather, they \textit{saw into} statues a host of assumptions, beliefs, 
associations, and experiences that collectively comprise what I identified in chapter 1 as a 

\textsuperscript{209} An important theoretical stimulus for the ensuing discussion is David Freedberg’s study of people’s 
responses to images, though in contrast with Freedberg, who purports to uncover responses that “precede 
context” and are in some sense universal or ahistorical, I would suggest that all response is in some sense 
historically and contextually bound; Freedberg, \textit{Power of Images}, quote at xx.

\textsuperscript{210} Stewart, \textit{Statues in Roman Society}, 10.

\textsuperscript{211} W. J. T. Mitchell has noted this shift from object to viewer, what he labels a new “pictorial turn,” in art 
historical studies; Mitchell, \textit{Picture Theory}. This shift in art history is likewise apparent in several studies 
of Roman art; see especially Cyril Mango, "Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder," \textit{DOP} 17 
(1963): 55-75; Jaś Elsner, \textit{Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to 
Christianity} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); John R. Clarke, \textit{Art in the Lives of Ordinary 
Romans: Visual Representation and Non-Elite Viewers in Italy}, 100 B.C. - A.D. 315 (Berkeley: University 
of California Press, 2003); Stewart, \textit{Statues in Roman Society}. 
world of iconic perceptions. Not surprisingly, then, responses to statues in Greco-Roman antiquity were complex and variegated: statues were admired, feared, manipulated, destroyed, animated, worshipped, invoked, and embraced; speaking statues were thought to convey oracles from the gods; weeping or sweating statues were viewed as portents of impending doom; naked statues aroused sexual yearnings. Statues in antiquity could thus be seen as in some sense living artifacts, both in terms of their capacity to elicit interpersonal encounters and their potential, at least from the perspective of many living in antiquity, to embody powerful forces and display manifestations of the divine realm.

A fundamental assumption of the argument in this chapter is that Jews in Greco-Roman antiquity did not stand outside of this “sculptural environment,” as the model of conflict would seem to suggest, but were instead insiders, integral participants in this complex cultural sphere, being both shaped by and simultaneously contributing to this world of iconic perceptions. Not surprisingly, given the ubiquity of statues in the Roman world, this physical reality left an indelible mark on Jewish sources from the Second Temple period.

For example, the Ladder of Jacob, a pseudepigraphical text that possibly originates in Palestine from the first century C.E., recasts the dream of the biblical

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212 Yaron Eliav coined this term to capture this colorful and multi-faceted process of interacting with statues in antiquity. To quote in full: “By characterizing this phenomenon as a ‘sculptural environment,’ I mean to embrace not only the outward appearance (subject matter and style) and physical reality (materials and display context) of statues, but also the political, religious, and social implications, interactions and tensions associated with them in the diversified milieu of the Roman East”; Eliav, “Viewing the Sculptural Environment,” 413. See also the introduction to the recently published collection of essays: Yaron Z. Eliav, Elise A. Friedland, and Sharon Herbert, eds., The Sculptural Environment of the Roman Near East: Reflections on Culture, Ideology, and Power (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 1-11.

213 Admittedly, given that only fragments of this text have survived in Slavonic manuscripts from a much later period, it is difficult to be precise on the date and provenance. See the discussion in H. G. Lunt, “Ladder of Jacob: A New Translation and Introduction,” in The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha (ed. James H. Charlesworth; 2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:404-05.
patriarch Jacob at Bethel (Gen 28:11–22) to include on the twelve steps of Jacob’s famed heavenly staircase twenty four portrait busts of kings, “including their chests.”\(^{214}\) This reference at the very least shows an intimate awareness of a particularly popular form of Roman statuary—as a perusal of any sculpture display in modern archaeological museums will confirm—and the widespread practice of displaying in private and public contexts such portrait busts to represent not only ancestors, local elites, and other dignitaries, but especially emperors.\(^{215}\)

In a similar vein, the pseudepigraphical Wisdom of Solomon (first century B.C.E. Egypt) includes a familiar aetiology of anthropomorphic portraiture and the custom of commissioning private familial statues, locating the origins of this practice in the distant past when a grieving father sculpted an image to memorialize the premature death of his child.\(^{216}\) This account is not unlike Pliny the Elder’s aetiology of portrait statues, only in Pliny’s version a father sculpted an image of his daughter’s absent lover, and so invents the practice of anthropomorphic sculpture.\(^{217}\) What both aetiologies share, however, is the widespread perception that portraiture functioned to forge a permanent connection between the grieving and the one grieved, whether a deceased child or departed lover.

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\(^{215}\) On portrait busts and their function in Roman society, see the discussion in Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society*, 79-117. The rabbis of the Mishah and Talmuds similarly betray a close familiarity with the customs of familial portraiture and other private or domestic sculpture displays; see Yaron Z. Eliav, "Roman Statues, Rabbis, and Greco-Roman Culture," in *Jewish Literatures and Cultures: Context and Intertext* (ed. Anita Norich and Yaron Z. Eliav; Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2008), 102.

\(^{216}\) Wis 14:15. For the author of this text, this seemingly innocuous practice functions as the catalyst for the impious (ἀοιδήμονες) worship of statues as gods (Wis 14:16). The *Mek. R. Yish.*, tractate *Pisha* 13, likewise mentions the practice of creating images of deceased ancestors (*imagines maiorum*) and children; see Eliav, "Roman Statues," 102.

\(^{217}\) *Pliny the Elder, Nat.* 35.151.
Anthropomorphic representation collapsed the distance between separated individuals, rendering present that which was otherwise absent.

Other Jewish texts from the Second Temple period similarly display an awareness of a whole range of details associated with Greek and Roman sculpture. For example, several Jewish authors bear witness to the fact that, in contrast with the impression given by the rather drab appearance of statues in modern museums, statues in antiquity were vibrant and polychromatic, having been painted “with various colors” (σπλωθεν χρωμαιν διηλλαγμενοις), and very often adorned (even excessively so) with colorful garments and jewelry. Similarly, several Jewish texts demonstrate a familiarity with the practice of sculptural maintenance, especially the various processes employed to wash and treat statues for protection.

Beyond an awareness of their physical surroundings, however, a careful reading of the literary sources, even those saturated with decidedly anti-iconic language, demonstrates the extent to which Jews were full participants in a rather lively discourse on statues. For purposes of this analysis, I will focus primarily on the Jewish idol polemic, a locus classicus of iconic antagonism. Given that the number of Greco-Roman Jewish texts from within this tradition is quite vast and well beyond the scope of the present study, I will restrict my analysis to two exemplary texts, the Epistle of Jeremiah

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218 Wis 15:4; see also Wis 13:14 and Sib. Or. 3.589 for other Jewish references to the practice of painting statues.

219 Ep Jer 6:8–16, discussed more fully below.

220 Ep Jer 6:13, 24. In a similar vein, a midrash to Leviticus includes the following remark attributed to R. Hillel, in response to a question about whether or not bathing in a bath house was a religious duty: “‘Yes,’ he replied, ‘if the statues of kings, which are erected in theatres and circuses, are scoured and washed by the man who is appointed to look after them, and who thereby obtains a salary —nay more, he is exalted in the company of the great of the kingdom—how much more I, who have been created in the image and likeness, as it is written: For in his own image God made mankind’” (Lev. Rab. 34.3); trans. Judah Jacob Slotki in H. Freedman, and Maurice Simon, eds., Midrash Rabbah (London: Soncino Press, 1939), 428.
and the Wisdom of Solomon. While it is true that these texts recycle the standard biblical-prophetic topos of the lifeless image, they nevertheless attest to what may be described as an iconic lingua franca in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean, a common language used to describe, assess and recount daily encounters with these artifacts.

Dissecting a Statue in the Epistle of Jeremiah

The overarching aim of the pseudepigraphical Epistle of Jeremiah, likely composed some time during the Hellenistic period, is to ridicule the idolatrous worship of the Other, to render absurd the practice of cultic devotion to sculpted representations of the gods. 221 In many respects then, this text represents a very explicit and seemingly mundane continuation of the standard biblical-prophetic idol polemic, an expansive “replay of the structure and motifs of the [biblical] genre.”222 According to Carey Moore’s assessment, “most of the material in the Epistle depends for its ideas, imagery, and phraseology upon a few classic descriptions of idolatry” in the biblical corpus, namely passages from Jeremiah, Deutero-Isaiah, and the Psalms.223 Indeed, even a cursory glance at the Epistle confirms this impression. The repeated reference to the

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221 The date, provenance and even original language of this text are uncertain. Most commentators argue for a Hebrew original that dates in the late fourth or early third centuries B.C.E., either in Babylonia or Palestine; see the discussion and bibliography in Carey A. Moore, Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: The Additions (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1977), 326-32. For purposes of this analysis, it is enough to note that the topoi included in the Greek Epistle of Jeremiah could plausibly fit anywhere in a Hellenistic or Roman Mediterranean context.


223 Moore, Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah, 319. Not surprisingly, the author is particularly fond of the idol parody in Jeremiah 10:1–6, and the very raison d’être of this pseudepigraphical composition is the reference to a letter written to the exiles in Babylon in Jeremiah 29:1.
lifeless nature of the statue, its inability to see, speak or hear, its material origins and craftsmanship, recall familiar topoi drawn deeply from the well of the biblical-prophetic corpus.

Nevertheless, as has long been noted, Jews did not hold a monopoly on the materiality critique of images,224 and the Epistle of Jeremiah should thus be seen as something more than a simple recycling of an “inherited genre.”225 This critical approach to cult statues, whether in the form of sophisticated philosophical critiques or satirical parodies, was quite common in intellectual circles in Greco-Roman antiquity,226 which may explain in part why such idol parodies gained widespread currency in Jewish literature during the Second Temple period.227 For example, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus (late sixth century B.C.E.) criticized people for praying to divine statues “that cannot hear” (οὐκ ἀκούωσιν), and several centuries later the Roman satirist Juvenal similarly mocks a statue of Jupiter for its inability to speak.228 Horace’s satire of an apotropaic Priapus in Rome, opening with language strikingly similar to that found in

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225 Roth, "For Life, He Appeals to Death," 41.
227 Johannes Tromp, "The Critique of Idolatry in the Context of Jewish Monotheism," in Aspects of Religious Contact and Conflict in the Ancient World (ed. Pieter Willem van der Horst; Utrecht: Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid, Universiteit Utrecht, 1995), 111-12. On the idol polemic in Jewish literature, see especially the following texts: Epistle of Jeremiah; Bel and the Dragon; Jubilees 12.2–5; 20.8–9; the Sibylline Oracles; and the Apocalypse of Abraham. I wish also to thank Daniel Harlow, who sent me a prepublication draft of his forthcoming study of the idol polemic in the Apocalypse of Abraham; Daniel C. Harlow, "Idolatry and Otherness: Israel and the Nations in the Apocalypse of Abraham," (forthcoming).
228 Heraclitus of Ephesus, frg. 128; Juvenal, Sat. 13.114–115. For other similar critiques, see also Heraclitus B frg. 5; Ps-Heraclitus, Epistula 4; Plutarch, Is. Os. 71; Fragmenta (Sandbach) 157.107 (where Plutarch describes a wooden statue as ἄψυχον); Epictetus 2.8.13–14.
Deutero-Isaiah and the Wisdom of Solomon,\textsuperscript{229} is perhaps most famous in this regard: “Once I was a fig-wood stem, a worthless log (\textit{inutile lignum}), when the carpenter, doubtful whether to make a stool or a Priapus, chose that I be a god.”\textsuperscript{230}

It is tempting to view the \textit{topos} of lifelessness inherent to this materiality critique as an attack on the naïve identification of the statue with the god. And in certain contexts this may in fact be the case, as for example when Plutarch seems to ridicule some Greeks for failing to make such a distinction explicit in their language: “there are some among the Greeks who have not learned nor habituated themselves to speak of the bronze, the painted, and the stone effigies as statues of the gods and dedications in their honour, but they call them gods.”\textsuperscript{231} But it is not altogether clear that many people in antiquity really fused so completely the god and image, or failed to see the many statues of \textit{Zeus et alia} for what they really were, material representations of heavenly realities. On the other hand, the repeated drumbeat of the impotent statue in a wide swath of Greco-Roman literary sources was not empty rhetoric, but very likely indicates that for many people statues were anything but impotent. More specifically, although cult statues of stone, wood or precious metals were not the gods themselves, they could potentially become conduits of the divine realm.

The notion of the cult statue as a divine receptacle is widely attested in Greek and Latin literature.\textsuperscript{232} Arnobius’ \textit{Adversus nationes} (late third century C.E.), although a

\textsuperscript{229} Especially Isa 44:9–17 and Wis 13:11–19.

\textsuperscript{230} Horace, \textit{Sat.} 1.8.1–3 (Fairclough, LCL). See the discussion of this and other similar Priapus traditions in Stewart, \textit{Statues in Roman Society}, 72-77.

\textsuperscript{231} Plutarch, \textit{Is. Os.} 379C8 (Babbitt, LCL).

vitriolic diatribe intended to refute paganism (and, not incidentally, prove genuine the
author’s own conversion to Christianity), very likely preserves how many people in
antiquity viewed the relationship between the deity and its image:

“But you err,” says he [Arnobius’ pagan interlocutor JVE], “and you are
mistaken, for we do not hold the conviction that bronzes or gold or silver,
or any other stuff out of which statues (signa) are made, are of themselves
gods and sacred deities, but in them we worship and reverence those
whom the act of sacred dedication introduces and causes to dwell in the
fabricated images (quos dedicatio infert sacra et fabrilibus efficit
inhabitare simulacris).”

The reference to dedicatio as an invitation to fill the statue with numinous powers
underscores the extent to which “cultural performances”—concrete acts of ritual
associated with cult statues—can encode beliefs about the cosmos, especially the place of
the divine within the human realm. In Greco-Roman antiquity there seems to have
been a range of acts associated with the formal consecration of a statue, for example the
bathing, anointing, dressing, and crowning of the god’s image. This formal process of
consecratio and the various rites associated with it were thought to imbue a statue with
the deity’s pneuma or numen, as is apparent in Tertullian’s claim that Romans “draw to

233 Arnobius, Adv. nat. 6.17; trans. George E. McCracken, Arnobius of Sicca: The Case against the Pagans
philosopher Plotinus (third century C.E.): “And I think that the wise men of old, who made temples and
statues in the wish that the gods should be present to them, looking to the nature of the All, had in mind that
the nature of the soul is everywhere easy to attract, but that if someone were to construct something
sympathetic to it and able to receive a part of it, it would of all things receive soul most easily” (Plotinus,
Enneads 4.3.11 [Armstrong, LCL]).

234 On ritual as a cultural performance, see especially the discussion in Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a
Cultural System," in The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays (ed. Clifford Geertz; London: Fontana
Press, 1993), 112-13. See also the application of Geertz’s theory to the study of images in Barasch, Icon,
33-34.

235 In general, see the discussion in B. Frischer, The Sculpted Word: Epicureanism and Philosophical
Recruitment in Ancient Greece (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 113-14; Freedberg, Power
of Images, 83; Barasch, Icon, 34-36; Steiner, Images in Mind, 109-13. Steiner views the bathing of a statue
as “an attempt to give renewed power to an image whose numinous quality has suffered depletion or
impairment” (110), and again, it is “a gesture aimed at the renewal and revivification of the power of the
image” (111).
themselves the demons and every impure spirit by means of the bond brought about by consecration (consecratio).“236

Beyond these formal rites, however, were the numerous daily life rituals—human encounters with cult statues, ranging from touching or kissing the deity’s image to adorning the statue with garlands, wreaths, and even coins affixed to the statue with wax—that similarly attest to the perception that various acts could potentially invite a deity, or even the genius of an emperor, to inhabit and empower its image. Lucian’s Philopseudes, for example, mentions the adornment of an Athenian statue (not a cult statue but an image of an Athenian general), including wreaths, crowns, and coins, that seem to be associated with the statue’s power of animation, its ability to move about, take baths, and perform healing miracles.237

That the god or goddess could inhabit a cult statue through consecratio and other ritual practices explains in part the widespread belief in the efficacy of images: if a god could be said to dwell in a statue, then it stands to reason that some statues could potentially possess powers that other statues might not possess. Plutarch mentions a statue of Fortune (ἡγαλμα τής Τυχῆς) that purportedly spoke immediately after it was

236 Tertullian, Idol. 15.5; trans. J. H. Waszink, and J. C. M. Van Winden, Tertullianus De Idolatria: Critical Text, Translation and Commentary (Leiden: Brill, 1987). Elsewhere Tertullian identifies the cult statue as a demonic body, daemonii corpora (Idol. 7.1). See also the second century C.E. apologist Minucius Felix, who likewise attests specifically to the link between rites of consecratio and a statue’s formal cultic status: “[a statue] is wrought, it is sculptured—it is not yet a god; Io, it is soldered, it is built together—it is set up, and even yet it is not a god; Io, it is adorned, it is consecrated, it is prayed to—then at length it is a god, when man has chosen it to be so, and for the purpose has dedicated it” (Oct. 23.13); trans. R. E. Wallis in Alexander Roberts, and James Donaldson, eds., Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325 (24 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1867-72). For Minucius, however, as for Tertullian, it is not actually the gods who accept the invitation to inhabit the statue but demons (Oct. 27.1). See the discussion in Steiner, Images in Mind, 114-16.

237 Lucian, Philop. 18–20. See also the discussion and literature cited in Stewart, Statues in Roman Society, 192, 263.
consecrated (καθεποίω), and similar types of phenomena—statues that could sweat and bleed, move about, perform healings, etc.—are widely reported in Greek and Latin texts. While it is tempting to pursue rational explanations for such phenomena, for example looking to climate conditions or the possibility of fraud, Nigel Spivey cautions against immediately dismissing anecdotes of animation with “scientific disdain.” Whatever the explanation, that such anecdotes abound in the ancient sources bespeaks the widespread perception that statues possessed powers of vivification.

And Jewish sources were no exception. The frequent link between demons and idols in Jewish literature may attest, as in the case of the early Christian apologists (cited above), to the belief that spirits—albeit “evil” ones—did indeed inhabit and animate statues. The author of Revelation attests, albeit couched in the highly symbolic


240 Accusations of fraud and other attempts at rationalizing the animated image are indeed found in numerous ancient texts as well. For example, Plutarch explains sweating, crying, bleeding and speaking statues as follows: "For that statues have appeared to sweat, and shed tears, and exude something like drops of blood, is not impossible; since wood and stone often contract a mould which is productive of moisture, and cover themselves with many colours, and receive tints from the atmosphere … It is possible also that statues may emit a noise like a moan or a groan, by reason of a fracture or a rupture, which is more violent if it takes place in the interior. But that articulate speech, and language so clear and abundant and precise, should proceed from a lifeless thing, is altogether impossible" (Plutarch, Cor. 38.1–2 [Perrin, LCL]). On the accusation of fraud, Lucian mentions a statue that was uniquely designed to speak oracles, with windpipes having been installed into the statue’s head (Lucian, Alex 26), not unlike the extant statue head, currently kept in Copenhagen, that has a channel cut through its head from the back of the neck to its mouth; see Stewart, Statues in Roman Society, 193.

241 Spivey, "Bionic Statues," 453.

242 See for example 1 En. 19:1; Jub. 1:11; L.A.B. 25:9; 1 Cor 10:19–20. Saul Lieberman, although focused on a slightly later period, argued that many Jews did in fact believe that demons resided in statues; Saul Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1950), 121. Ephraim Urbach, however, disputes this assertion; Urbach, "Rabbinical Laws on Idolatry," 154.
language characteristic of apocalyptic literature, to the possibility of vivifying imperial statues in language that evokes the process of *consecratio*: “And [the second beast] was enabled to give life (πνευμα) to the image of the [first] beast (εἰκὼν τοῦ θηρίου), in order that (ὢν) the image of the beast would speak and would cause to be killed those who do not worship the image of the beast.”243 The pseudepigraphical *Vita Adae et Evae* similarly deploys the language of *consecratio* in its retelling of the creation narrative: God infused Adam’s *similitudo* with the spirit of life (*spiritus vitae*), transforming him into an *imago dei* that was now worthy of worship (*adoro*).244

I submit that this broader context—the perception of statues as conduits for the divine realm; the rituals inviting the god to inhabit his or her statue; and the numerous stories attesting to the resulting animation of images—is at the center of the idol polemic in the Epistle of Jeremiah. What is relevant in this text for the present discussion is not its broad agreement with the critique of a statue’s material origins and craftsmanship, but the way this text exploits specific details associated with the animation of statues in order to subvert the notion that the statue was a vessel of divine agency. The author, with a healthy dose of derision, juxtaposes rituals of animation with assertions of impotence, lambasting those who crown and clothe cult statues that cannot speak,245 who clean

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245 Ep Jer 6:8–12.
statues that cannot see,\textsuperscript{246} and who polish statues that cannot feel, statues that have “no breath in them” (ἐν οἶκο ὠ̣κ ἐστὶν πνεύμα).\textsuperscript{247}

The assertion that cult statues are devoid of πνεύμα counters the widespread claim to the contrary, a line of attack that attempts to discredit the notion of vivified statues “by turning the idol inside out.”\textsuperscript{248} This explains the rather curious attempt to inspect the “heart” (καρδία) of the statue in order to expose that which does inhabit the sculpted object: “They [cult statues] are like a beam of wood from a house, but their hearts, so they say (φρέσκις), are licked up when creeping creatures (ἐρπέτα) from the earth devour them and their clothes.”\textsuperscript{249} As is apparent in the use of the verb φημί to introduce hearsay, the author is drawing in rather explicit terms on a well known topos in Greco-Roman antiquity: to dissect the inside of a statue is to discover a place literally teeming with vile creatures. This facet of a statue’s realia, moreover, becomes a popular detail to exploit for ridicule. For example, Lucian’s repeated attempts to ridicule the notion of animated images includes occasional recourse to creeping critters, especially mice and rats, inhabiting statues, perhaps most famously expressed in his colorful description of the insides of several renowned colossi:

[I]f you stoop down and look inside, you will see bars and props and nails driven clear through, and beams and wedges and pitch and clay and a quantity of such ugly stuff housing within, not to mention numbers of mice and rats that keep their court in them sometimes.\textsuperscript{250}

\textsuperscript{246} Ep Jer 6:13–19.
\textsuperscript{247} Ep Jer 6:24–25.
\textsuperscript{248} Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 120.
\textsuperscript{249} Ep Jer 6:20. On the καρδία of a statue, see also the fifth century B.C.E. Democritus, who refers to a statue as “conspicuous in their dress and adornment for viewing (theorien), but empty (kenea) of heart” (B195DK), as cited in Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 122-23.
\textsuperscript{250} Lucian, *Gall.* 24 (Harmon, LCL); see also *Jupp. trag.* 8. In a similar vein, though with less specificity, Plutarch likens imperial hypocrisy —rulers who appear dignified on the surface but are actually corrupt
This rhetoric of internal corruption was picked up with polemical fervor by the several early Christian apologists, most notably Arnobius, who seemingly revels in the gory details exposed in his dissection of a statue:

Oh, that you could enter into the hollow interior of some statue! Indeed, that you could lay open and take apart those Olympian and Capitoline Jupiters and look closely at the disassembled and individual parts of which the totality of their bodies is constituted! You would henceforth see that those gods to whom the artificial sheen of a smooth exterior lends majesty are but a framework of thin plates, the joinings of shapeless pieces; that they are kept from falling apart and from danger of dissolution by dovetails and clamps, by hooks and eyelets, and that in all the hollows and seams there runs a line of lead poured in and that this lends the stability which gives the statues permanence …. Really, do you not see that these statues, so lifelike that they seem to breathe, whose feet and knees you touch and stroke in prayer, sometimes crumble away under dripping of rain; that again they disintegrate through decay and rot; how vapors and smoke begrime and disolor them and they grow black; how neglect over a long period causes them to lose their appearance because of weathering, and they are eaten away by rust? Yes, indeed, I say, do you not see that newts, shrews, mice, and light-shunning cockroaches place in them their nests and live at the base of the hollow parts of these your images; that hither they gather all kinds of filth and other things suited to their needs, hard bits of half-gnawed bread, bones dragged in against the future, rages, wool, bits of paper to make their nests soft, to keep their helpless young warm? Do you not sometimes see spiders spinning cobwebs over the face of an image, and treacherous nets wherewith to entangle in their flight buzzing and impudent flies? Do you not see, finally, swallows full of filth flying around within the very domes of the temples, tossing themselves about and bedaubing now the very faces, now the mouths of the divinities, the beard, eyes, noses, and all other parts on which the outpouring of their emptied fundament falls?^251

In this light, when the author of the Epistle of Jeremiah speaks of critters devouring the καροδία of a cult statue, he is not simply asserting evidence for its essential

materiality, but is instead seeking to subvert the belief that gods could inhabit and animate the image by pointing to what really lies beneath: vile and disgusting corruption. The repeated refrain “do not fear them” (φοβηθείτε αὐτούς) is thus not an empty structural device but in fact presupposes a latent fear of the potential vitality of statues:252 the author seeks to deny the cult statue a divine power that apparently many people, including those for whom this text was primarily composed, perceived the statue to possess.253 In this sense, one should read the polemic against lifeless idols in the Epistle of Jeremiah not so much as an attempt to bolster the Jewish faith against the “superstitious” beliefs of outsiders, i.e., as an exercise in “elevating the Jewish religion intellectually above the pagan religions,”254 but as a rhetorical exorcism of sorts, a form of (literary) “apotropaic mutilation” that functions to vacate the idol of its numinous powers on behalf of a Jewish community that feared such powers.255 The larger point, for purposes of this discussion, is the extent to which this text betrays a profound awareness of prevailing perceptions of and rituals associated with cult statues. Far from a simple regurgitation of topoi from the biblical prophets, the Epistle of Jeremiah is fully immersed in the Greco-Roman sculptural environment.

255 The phrase “apotropaic mutilation” comes from David Frankfurter’s study of Christian responses to Egyptian statuary, in which the author argues that the traces of iconoclasm/mutilation in the archaeological record of late antique Egypt attest to a latent fear of the power residing in these images; Frankfurter, "The Vitality of Egyptian Images," 676.
Agalmatophilia and the Wisdom of Solomon

When Josephus recounts the fate of the statues of Agrippa’s daughters which were stolen from his palace in Tiberias after his death by a band of marauding soldiers, he reports details that would have been quite familiar to the ancient reader: people on occasion engaged in sexual acts with statues. In this instance, the soldiers apparently carried the statues to nearby brothels (τὰ πορνεῖα), set them up on the roof tops, and then “sowed their wild oats (ἀψυβρίζω) to the fullest extent on them, performing deeds too shameful to report (ἀσχημονέστερα διηγήσεως δρώντες).” Of course, in Josephus’ narrative this act is presented as something more than a sexual encounter with a statue, a deed intended primarily as a sign of disrespect (βλασφημία) toward the deceased king. Nevertheless, the ancient reader undoubtedly would have seen in this episode another example of the erotic power of statues.

It is precisely this perception of statuary—its capacity to charm sexually, to allure and beguile the viewer—that stands behind the Wisdom of Solomon’s assertion that the invention of idols is the “origin of porneia” (ἀρχὴ πορνείας). The connection between sculpture and erotic desire is made even more explicit in the author’s attempt to contrast the “virginity,” as it were, of the Jews with those who had fallen prey to this crafted temptress:

256 _A.J._ 19.357. Louis Feldman’s translation of the passage for the Loeb edition mutes to a certain extent the clear sexual overtones of the verb ἀψυβρίζω: “[they] offered them every possible sort of insult, doing things too indecent to be reported” (Feldman, LCL). Although the Greek text that accompanies his translation in the Loeb reads ἀψυβρίζω, it seems that Feldman here prefers the footnoted variant reading ἐψυβρίζω, “to insult.”

257 Wis 14:12; cf. Wis 14:27, where the worship of idols is more broadly identified as “the beginning, cause and end of every evil” (παρὸς ἀρχὴ κακοῦ καὶ ἀείτα καὶ πέρας ἐστίν). The pseudepigraphical Testament of Reuben likewise links idolatry with porneia, but here it is porneia that leads to idolatry, a formulation that is perhaps influenced by the biblical story of Solomon: “For porneia is the destruction of life, separating a person from God and leading to idols (προσεγγίζος τοὺς εἴδωλος)” (T. R. 4:6).
For neither has the deceitful intent of humans led us astray, nor the useless labor of painters, a form that was stained with many different colors, whose external appearance stirs up desire in fools, and they long for the lifeless form of a dead image. Lovers of evil things and even worthy of such objects of hope are the ones who perform such deeds, and who desire and worship [images].

The constellation of key terms used in this text to describe human interactions with statues, namely ἐρασταί, ποθέω and σέβομαι, underscores the capacity of a statue to arouse both cultic and sexual attention. This passage has thus been correctly linked with the various traditions in Greek and Latin sources that attest to the erotic power of statues.

For example, the famed legend of Pygmalion, as told in Ovid’s Metamorphoses, moves the reader from the frustration of unrequited love—a sculptor who falls in love with the impenetrable coldness of an “ivory damsel”—to the warmth, softness and receptivity of a Venus-induced vivified lover. And to this we may add the numerous anecdotes (embedded in both narrative and poetry) about actual sexual acts performed with statues, conventionally categorized under the term agalmatophilia.

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258 Wis 15:4–6.
261 For a discussion of this facet of human-statue encounters, see Freedberg, Power of Images, 317-44; Nigel J. Spivey, Understanding Greek Sculpture: Ancient Meanings, Modern Readings (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 173-86; Steiner, Images in Mind, 185-250; Stewart, Statues in Roman Society, 265-66.
Perhaps the most famous act of agalmatophilia involves Praxiteles’ legendary Aphrodite of Cnidus, whose beauty, as Pliny the Elder informs us, was so remarkable as to create a veritable pilgrimage industry.\(^{262}\) Although the sexual encounter that resulted in a semen-stained statue is preserved in a number of sources,\(^{263}\) the fullest (and hence most interesting) version appears in Pseudo-Lucian’s story of three friends whose quest to determine whether male or female love is superior brings them to the renowned sanctuary of Aphrodite at Cnidus. As the travelers approach the cult statue from her front, Charicles, the interlocutor partial to female love, is overwhelmed by her beauty and immediately runs to the statue “to kiss the goddess with importunate lips.”\(^{264}\) Although Callicratidas, because of his preference for boys, is not initially impressed from this vantage point, when they finally approach Aphrodite from the rear, he cannot help but exclaim with delight:

Heracles! What a well-proportioned back! What generous flanks she has! How satisfying an armful to embrace! How delicately moulded the flesh on the buttocks, neither too thin and close to the bone, nor yet revealing too great an expanse of fat! And as for those precious parts sealed in on either side by the hips, how inexpressibly sweetly they smile!\(^{265}\)

But upon careful inspection, the companions do notice that Aphrodite’s backside was not entirely flawless: there was a mark, a stain, on one of her thighs. A female attendant then proceeded to explain the origins of this mark. A young man, who fell madly in love with the goddess and spent every waking hour gazing at her beauty, finally decided to consummate his deepest desire:

\(^{262}\) *Nat.* 36.4.20.


\(^{264}\) Ps.-Lucian, *Erotes* 13 (Macleod, LCL).

\(^{265}\) *Erotes* 14 (Macleod, LCL).
In the end the violent tension of his desires (τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ πόθων) turned to desperation and he found in audacity a procurer for his lusts (ἐπιθυμία). For, when the sun was now sinking to its setting, quietly and unnoticed by those present, he slipped in behind the door and, standing invisible in the inmost part of the chamber, he kept still, hardly even breathing. When the attendants closed the door from the outside in the normal way, this new Anchises was locked in. … These marks of his amorous embraces were seen after day came and the goddess had that blemish to prove what she’d suffered. The youth concerned is said, according to the popular story told, to have hurled himself over a cliff or down into the waves of the sea and to have vanished utterly.  

Such stories, and the legend of the Cnidian Aphrodite is but one of many, which capture in part the frustration of unrequited love among the living, thrive on the harsh juxtaposition of form and substance, the tension between realism and lifelessness: a statue’s beautiful form (εἴδος), which arouses desire (πόθος), juxtaposed with its cold, hard, unresponsive, and impenetrable surface; a lover whose erotic charms tease to arousal only to shut down at the brink of consummation. The third century C.E. Flavius Philostratus, author of the *Vitae sophistarum*, quotes the opening line of a speech by the sophist Onomarchus of Andros—bearing the title “The one who loved a statue” (ἐπὶ τοῦ τής εἰκόνος ἐρωντος)—that captures this underlying frustration of love for the

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266 *Erotes* 16 (Macleod, LCL).

267 In addition to the Cnidian Aphrodite, Pliny the Elder also mentions the statue of Eros at Parium, upon which a man from Rhodes left traces of his passion (Nat. 36.4.22). In his *Deipnosophistae*, Athenaeus discusses the capacity of a statue to arouse sexual desire, and supports this claim with several anecdotes: a bull who was aroused by a bronze cow at Pirene; a youth from Samos who tried to consummate his love for a statue of Parian marble; and a man who had sex with a marble boy at Delphi (Deipn. 13.84). While most of the accounts of agalmatophilia in Greek and Latin sources focus on male arousal, a few sources perhaps raise the possibility of female arousal. In his misogynistic satire on Roman wives, Juvenal describes the women who frequent the temple of Pudicitia in the Forum Boarium as follows: “Here [at the temple] at night they set down their litters, here they piss on and fill up the image of the goddess with their long streams, and taking turns they ride (equito) her, and they romp about with only the moon as witness” (Sat. 6.309–311). When Pliny the Elder chastises the Emperor Augustus’ daughter Julia for crowning the statue of Marsyas during her “nocturnal debauchery” (*luxuria noctibus; Nat. 21.6*), he may likewise be implicitly referring to a “nocturnal romp” with the statue itself, as indeed Peter Stewart suggests; Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society*, 266.

268 Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 204-07.
lifeless statue: “O living beauty in a lifeless body (ἐν ἀψύχῳ σώματι).” This lament leads the speaker to then chastise the statue for unrequited love: “You unloving (ἀνέραστος) and malicious (βάσκανος) one, faithless to your faithful lover (ἐραστής)!”269 In this case, form approximates, but ultimately falls short of life.

It is precisely this tension between form and substance that the author of the Wisdom of Solomon exploits for polemical purposes, attempting to circumvent the beguiling charms of a statue by stressing the absurdity of the πόθος of lovers (ἐρασταί) who pursue a lifeless form (εἰδος ἀπνουν). For the author of this text, εἰδος is deceptively charming, and the more beautiful the εἰδος, i.e., the more it approaches a mimesis of life, the greater its capacity to deceive the viewer. Indeed, in the preceding paragraphs pseudo-Solomon explicitly draws on the Platonic notion of the deceptive nature of τέχνη to liken the realism of a statue’s form—an artisan who “with skill forces a likeness into that which is more beautiful” (ἐξεβιάσατο τῇ τέχνῃ τὴν ὁμοιότητα ἐπὶ τὸ κάλλιον)—to a hidden trap (ἐνέδρον) that ensnares the masses.270 While the stress on the lifeless and impotent essence of a statue—i.e., divine statues as inanimate matter, nothing more than stone, wood or metal in the hands of an artisan—in the Wisdom of Solomon 13–15 is undoubtedly inspired by the biblical-prophetic critique of idolatry, especially Deutero-Isaiah’s derisive parody of an artisan who fashions a block of wood into both a god and

269 Philostratus, Vit. soph. 598–599.
270 Wis 14:19–21. See also the similar use of the agalmatophilia traditions in Clement of Alexandria’s idol polemic (Protr. 4) and the discussion in Simon Goldhill, “The Erotic Eye: Visual Stimulation and Cultural Conflict,” in Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire (ed. Simon Goldhill; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 172-80.
kindling for a fire,\textsuperscript{271} the nexus between the statue and a lover’s πόθος, combined with juxtaposition of εἰδος with ἀπνοῦν to underscore a disjunction between sensual visuality and reality, demonstrates the extent to which the author of this text has absorbed the iconic language and perceptions of the Greco-Roman Mediterranean.

\textbf{Conclusion}

My intent in the present chapter was not to set out a full and comprehensive account of Jewish responses to images in Greco-Roman antiquity, though such an investigation would be potentially fruitful. Rather I wished only to stress the inherently complex process of negotiating the sculptural (and more broadly artistic) environment of the Greco-Roman Mediterranean, which in many respects mirrored the equally complex process of negotiating identity in the ancient world.

The image of the aniconic Jew that emerges in Josephus’ narratives is not altogether unwarranted insofar as it bears the unmistakable imprint of the author’s Judean upbringing. The scant archaeological remains attesting to figurative/sculpted art in Second Temple Judea, combined with the literary testimony from a broad range of sources—Jewish or otherwise—suggests at the very least an ambivalent, perhaps even uneasy attitude toward figurative art, especially three-dimensional freestanding statues, for many Judeans during the period in question. Nevertheless, the near ubiquitous claim

\textsuperscript{271} Isa 44:9–20. See also Jer 10:1–16; Hab 2:18–19; Hos 8:6; 13:2; Ps 115:3–8; Ps. 135:15–18, and the discussion in Roth, "For Life, He Appeals to Death," 21-47. The author of the Wisdom of Solomon is clearly drawing from the parody of Isa 44 when he derides the lifeless materiality of an idol: “But miserable, with their hopes set on dead things, are those who give the name ‘gods’ to the works of human hands (ἐργα χειρῶν ἀνθρώπων), gold and silver fashioned with skill, and likenesses of animals, or a useless stone, the work of an ancient hand,” a remark that introduces a satirical parody of a carpenter who uses parts of a tree for various utensils and fuel for the fire, while the remaining “cast-off piece” is then fashioned into a god (Wis 13:10–19).
in scholarship that Second Temple “Judaism” (Judean and Diaspora) adhered to a strict halakhic prohibition—based on an idiosyncratic reading of the second commandment—against all forms of figurative art does not adequately account for the multiple and variegated factors that invariably shaped Jewish responses to images.

Of course, this is not to suggest that the second commandment, or more precisely the interpretation of the second commandment, *did not play any role* in the process of negotiating images in antiquity; only that biblical exegesis was but one of many complex factors. Moreover, even granting that the biblical prohibition against images did in fact play a role in this process, perhaps even an important role, it is still necessary to define with more precision how this legal prohibition functioned during the Second Temple period. Is there any merit to the suggestion that Jews by and large interpreted the second commandment as a prohibition against all forms of figurative art, regardless of context or function? It is precisely this question that will occupy the focus in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT IN JOSEPHUS AND GRECO-ROMAN JEWISH LITERATURE

In the previous chapter I argued that Jewish responses to images in antiquity cannot simply be reduced to a question of legal exegesis. That is to say, this issue was vastly more complex than a particular interpretive approach to the biblical prohibition against images. Nevertheless, the Mosaic proscription of images, especially the formulation in the Decalogue (the so-called second commandment), remains a significant factor. Indeed, the long and storied history of this interdiction demonstrates the extent to which the second commandment has left an indelible (though variegated) imprint on all three Abrahamic traditions, those religious communities that identify themselves as the rightful heirs to, and infallible exegetes of, Mosaic revelation.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the Byzantine iconoclastic controversies following Leo III the Isaurian’s (emperor from 717–741 C.E.) destruction of the famed Christ of the Chalkitis, the iconic protector of Constantinople erected above the Golden Gate of the imperial palace.272 Both Iconodules and Iconoclasts claimed Mosaic legislation as support for their position. For the Iconoclast, the matter was fairly straightforward: Moses prohibited the production of divine images, and hence, of the

272 Besançon, The Forbidden Image, 114-15. Besançon subsequently likens this incident to Luther’s 95 theses posted on the door of the Wittenberg Church in that both were an explicit symbol of reformation (123).
second person of the Trinity. Thus, to install icons of Christ was tantamount to pagan idolatry.\textsuperscript{273} The Iconodules, by contrast, condemned this interpretive approach as a remnant of the excessive and obscuring literalism of Jewish exegetical practices, a reading of sacred scripture that misses entirely the “hidden, spiritual meaning,” the truest sense of Moses’ words.\textsuperscript{274} The prohibition originally given to Moses was predicated upon the heretofore unseen, and unseeable, nature of God.\textsuperscript{275} But Christ’s incarnation must of necessity alter the scope of this prohibition to allow the pictorial representation of the God who now could be seen. Consequently, to reject images of Christ was, according to Herbert Kessler’s assessment, “the equivalent of the Jewish rejection of Christ’s incarnation which made God visible to humans.”\textsuperscript{276} In the words of Besançon, the “prohibition of Horeb became invalid from the moment God manifested himself in the flesh, sensible not only to hearing but to sight. Thereafter, God had a visible ‘character,’ an ‘imprint carved’ in matter, in his flesh.”\textsuperscript{277} It is thus only a short step from here to Alexios Aristenos’ twelfth century gloss on Canon 82 from the Quinisext Council of 692 C.E., in which the original prohibition against images is radically transformed into a command to make an image of Christ.\textsuperscript{278}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{273}{Bevan, \textit{Holy Images}, 132.}
\footnote{275}{Cf. Deut. 4:15.}
\footnote{276}{Kessler, "The Mosaic Prohibition," 139. See also Bevan, \textit{Holy Images}, 134-35.}
\footnote{277}{Besançon, \textit{The Forbidden Image}, 126.}
\footnote{278}{The full text, which in Kessler’s view draws on the language of the second commandment, reads: “Thou shalt not paint a lamb as a type of Christ, but Christ himself”; see Kessler, "The Mosaic Prohibition," 128-30.}
\end{footnotes}
By linking the Iconoclasts with the supposedly defective hermeneutics of the Jews, the implication was clear: Iconoclasts were heirs to Jewish iconophobia, and to oppose the Christian use of icons was nothing less than to judaize Christianity.\(^{279}\) The nexus of iconoclasm and a judaizing impulse is explicitly articulated by the presbyter John of Jerusalem in his address to the Second Council of Nicea in 787 C.E. Specifically, John asserted that the “pseudo-bishop of Nacoleia and his followers,” representatives of the iconoclastic party, “imitated the lawless Jews” by following the teachings of a “wicked sorcerer” from Tiberias, who had already persuaded the Caliph Umar II “to obliterate and overthrow absolutely every painting and image in different colours whether on canvas, in mosaics, on walls, or on sacred vessels and altar coverings.”\(^{280}\)

The aniconic Jew in John of Jerusalem, i.e., the obsessive literalist whose approach to the second commandment precluded the possibility of art as such, is likely a fictitious construct, a literary foil that functions mainly to censure by association the author’s opponents, the Iconoclasts. Nevertheless, as documented in the previous chapter, John’s “wicked sorcerer” is not dissimilar to the scholarly reconstruction of the Second Temple aniconic Jew, excepting of course the former’s polemical vitriol. For the majority of scholars, the scarcity of figurative art prior to the destruction of the Second Temple, coupled with the literary sources from the period in question (although primarily the focus is on Josephus), is indicative of a rather strict interpretation of the second commandment. Conversely, the emergence of a rich and extensive body of figurative art

\(^{279}\) Ibid., 138-39.

after the destruction of the temple suggests for many scholars a trend toward leniency, i.e., that Jews were gradually accepting a less restrictive stance toward the Mosaic proscription.

The revised edition of Emil Schürer’s classic *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, which links the supposedly strict exegetical stance of the Second Temple period to the “extreme scrupulousness” of the Pharisees/Rabbis, has in some sense crystallized into a virtual orthodoxy the notion of a shift toward exegetical leniency across the 70 C.E. divide: “In order to avoid anything even seeming to approach idolatry, they [the Pharisees JVE] stressed above all in the first century A.D., the Mosaic prohibition of images,” which, according to Schürer, was taken to mean that Jews “should have nothing to do with any pictorial representations at all.”281 A parenthetical note addressing the “spread of Hellenism” reflects even more explicitly the chronological schematic summarized above (and discussed in detail in chapter 2):

[R]epresentational art was nevertheless extremely restricted up to the end of the first century A.D. There was however a substantial change in the second and third centuries. In this period there is significant evidence, not least from tombs and synagogues, of the acceptance of representational forms, including those of the human figure. With this went a more lenient attitude on the part of the rabbis, who, in effect, drew the line only at the actual worship of images, especially those of the emperor.282

Thus, according to the communis opinio in scholarship, before 70 C.E. Jews by and large thought that Moses had proscribed images in toto; only after the destruction of the temple did Jews begin to restrict the scope of second commandment to cultic images, or images intended for worship.

282 Ibid., 2:59 (emphasis mine).
I will attempt in the present chapter to test this scholarly paradigm by examining the Nachleben of the Jewish prohibition against images in Greco-Roman antiquity. After looking briefly at one of the primary source texts, Exod 20:2–6, I will consider Josephus’ interpretation of this prohibition and then place the Josephan material within a wider midrashic context, i.e., Jewish exegetical traditions between the second century B.C.E. and second century C.E. In so doing, I will argue two main theses. First, although scholars tend to see in Josephus a consistently rigid interpretation of Exod 20:2–6 (especially vv. 4–5), wherein the scope of the prohibition is thought to include all figurative art, a closer analysis of this material surfaces a much more complicated picture. Specifically, there emerges an apparent tension between Josephus’ reading of this commandment—those places where the author explicitly sets out to explain (i.e., to exegete) the prohibition against images—and how his Jewish characters seemingly practiced this legislation “on the ground,” i.e., his narrative portrayals of Jewish resistance to (or acceptance of) images. Whereas in the latter we may observe an apparent exegetical rigidity that seemingly precludes all figurative images regardless of context or function, the former reflects a more nuanced understanding of the second commandment, one in which the scope of proscribed images was limited to cultic objects, i.e., images—whether of pagan deities or of the Jewish God—intended for worship. Second, although we can detect a similar spectrum of exegetical possibilities—ranging from proscribing all

283 Along with Peter Enns, I am using the term “midrash” to refer to an “interpretive phenomenon” rather than a “literary phenomenon.” That is to say, although there emerged in the centuries that followed the destruction of the Second Temple a literary genre known as “midrash,” the term may also be used to describe any exegetical activity—specific attempts to interpret Jewish scripture—that occurs in a wide range of Jewish (and Christian) literary genres from antiquity; Peter Enns, Exodus Retold: Ancient Exegesis of the Departure from Egypt in Wis 10:15-21 and 19:1-9 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 16.

284 For example, Fine, Art and Judaism, 80.
images to cultic images—within our comparative context, the predominant tendency in Greco-Roman Jewish literature, both before and after the destruction of the Second Temple, was to define the scope of the second commandment according to this criterion of worship. This at the very least problematizes the assumption that prior to 70 C.E. the Mosaic legislation was uniformly understood as a proscription of all figurative art.

The Second Commandment in the Hebrew Bible

The prohibition against images in the Hebrew Bible is a complicated subject that encompasses a vast and diverse body of textual material—numerous legal proscriptions and prophetic pronouncements\(^{285}\)—as well as a host of literary and historical problems, ranging from questions surrounding the origins and extent of Israelite aniconism to the very definition of aniconism.\(^{286}\) Thus a full treatment of this topic and all of the relevant

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\(^{285}\) See, for example, the list of texts in Brian Schmidt, "The Aniconic Tradition: On Reading Images and Viewing Texts," in *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaism* (ed. Diana Vikander-Edelman; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 78. See also the detailed study by Cristoph Dohmen, *Das Bilderverbot: seine Entstehung und Entwicklung im Alten Testament* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1985). Specifically, Dohmen identifies five different types of texts in the Hebrew Bible that deal with the question of images: 1) narratives that mention cult images in passing; 2) Deuteronomic texts that address cult reform; 3) prophetic texts that ridicule cult images; 4) prophetic texts that mention foreign cult statues but whose larger concern is not the image per se but the religion/god that stands behind the image; and 5) legal texts prohibiting cult images, the so-called *Bilderverbot* (38). For Dohmen, the *Bilderverbot*, which itself develops out of an earlier *Fremdgötterverbot*, is the final phase of a complicated evolutionary process that only emerges during the exilic or post-exilic periods in the now familiar legal formulation of the Decalogue (175-77).

data is well beyond the scope of the present study. Nevertheless, given that during the
Greco-Roman period an important focal point was the prohibition expressed in the
Decalogue, i.e., the so-called second commandment appearing in Exodus 20:2–6 and
Deuteronomy 5:6–10,\textsuperscript{287} I will restrict my focus to this particular formulation, and more
specifically to the Exodus version.\textsuperscript{288}

As the following comparison of Exodus 20:2–6 demonstrates, the Septuagint
translation follows carefully the structure of the Hebrew text:

\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
 & \\
Exodus 20:2-6 MT & Exodus 20:2-6 LXX \\
\hline
2 & ἐγώ εἰμι κύριος ὁ θεός σου \\
& ὁστὶς ἐξήγαγόν σε ἐκ γῆς Ἀλγύπτου \\
& ἐξ οἴκου δουλείας \\
& οὐκ ἔσονται σοι θεοί έτεροι πλὴν ἐμού \\
& οὐ ποιήσεις σεαυτῷ ἐιδώλιον \\
& οὐδὲ παντὸς ὁμοίωμα ὅσα εἰν τῷ οὐρανῷ \\
& οὐκ καὶ οὐκ εἶν τῇ γῇ κάτω καὶ οὐκ εἶν \\
& τοῖς ὑδάσιν ὑποκάτω τῆς γῆς \\
& οὐ προσκυνήσεις αὐτοῖς \\
& οὐδὲ Μὴ λατρεύσῃς αὐτοῖς \\
& εἴρ γὰρ εἰμι κύριος ὁ θεός σου θέες \\
& ζηλωτὴς ἀποδίδοις ἀμαρτίας πατέρων ἐπὶ \\
& τέκνα ἐως τρίτης καὶ τετάρτης γενεὰς τοῖς \\
& μισοῦσιν με \\
& καὶ ποιῶν ἔλεος εἰς χιλιάδας τοῖς \\
& ἀγαπάσοιν με καὶ τοῖς φιλάσσοσιν τὰ \\
& προστάγματά μου \\
\hline
3 & ἔστω ὑμῖν ἡ ἀλήθεια ᾑδερί
\hline
6 & πνευματικός οὕτως
\hline
\end{tabular}

My translation of the Hebrew text is as follows:

\begin{itemize}
\item[2] I am YHWH your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of
the house of slavery. \textsuperscript{3} You shall not have any other gods besides me.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{287} Eliav, "Viewing the Sculptural Environment," 418; Carl S. Ehrlich, "Du sollst dir kein Gottesbildnis
machen: Das zweite Gebot im Judentum," in Bibel und Judentum: Beiträge aus dem christlich-jüdischen
Gespräch (Zürich: Pano, 2004), 71-86.

\textsuperscript{288} For purposes of this analysis, the differences between the Exodus and Deuteronomy versions are
minimal. Nevertheless, one difference that some interpreters consider significant is the absence of the
conjunction \textasciitilde \textasciitilde \textasciitilde ως in Deuteronomy 5:8. For a discussion of this (and related) grammatical issue, see
Dohmen, Das Bilderverbot, 213-77; Schmidt, "The Aniconic Tradition," 79-80; Cornelis Houtman, Exodus
4 You shall not make for yourself a statue (偶像) of that which is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters beneath the earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them, nor worship them, because I am YHWH your God, a jealous God, bringing the sins of the parents on the children, on the third and on the fourth generations of those who hate me, 6 but demonstrating kindness to thousands, to those who love me and keep my commandments.

There is much debate within both the Jewish and Christian traditions over the proper enumeration of this portion of the Decalogue, specifically whether the prohibition against making and worshiping images (20:4-6) is distinct from or integral to the prohibition against other gods (20:3).²⁸⁹ Although later Jewish tradition, with the notable exception of Philo and Josephus (see below), will identify 20:2 as the “first commandment” and 20:3–6 as the “second commandment,”²⁹⁰ the grammar of the Hebrew text indicates that this “second commandment” actually consists of four specific prohibitions—expressed with four volitional clauses ( shalt not + the

²⁸⁹ On the general problem of enumerating the Decalogue, see Houtman, *Exodus*, 3:3-5; Tatum, "The LXX Version," 179-80. This question is important in both Jewish and Christian circles, in part because it bears directly on how these prohibitions should be interpreted. In Christianity, the Catholic and Lutheran traditions identify all of Exod 20:2–6 as a single commandment (the first), following Augustine; hence, the prohibition against images is subsumed under the prohibition against other gods. In contrast the Reformed tradition, exemplified in John Calvin, identifies 20:3 as the first and 20:4–6 as the second (following the tradition of Philo and Josephus outlined below), a distinction that was important for their rejection of the ecclesiastical use of images. The traditional Jewish division, illustrated in Rabbi Benno Jacob’s commentary on Exodus, identifies the first commandment as Exod. 20:2 and the second as Exod. 20:3–6; see Benno Jacob, "The First and Second Commandments," *Judaism* 13 (1964): 3-18. Indeed, Jacob elsewhere refers to this as the “only correct division .... Anything else never existed among genuine Jews,” an assertion that unwittingly (or not?) banishes Philo and Josephus from the realm of Judaism; see Benno Jacob, "The Decalogue," *JQR* 14 (1923): 148. Nisan Ararat innovatively suggests that 20:2–4 (the prohibition against other gods and their images) should be the first commandment, and 20:5–6 (the prohibition against bowing down to these gods) should be the second commandment, an interpretive maneuver that further illustrates the importance of “properly” dividing the Decalogue in these various faith traditions; see Nisan Ararat, "The Second Commandment: 'Thou Shalt Not Bow Down unto Them, nor Serve Them, for I the Lord Thy God Am a Jealous God,'" *Shofar* 13 (1995): 44-57.

²⁹⁰ For example, in Tg. Neof. Exod. 20:2–5, the “first saying” (הַזְּכָרָה) is the acclamation of YHWH’s unique relationship with his people, and the “second saying” (הַסְּכָרָה) combines the prohibition against other gods and images (likewise in Tg. Ps.-J. Exod. 20:2–5).
imperfect verb)—flowing directly from the opening affirmation “I am YHWH your God.” This can be represented in the following structural layout:

The first clause prohibits all other gods besides YHWH; the second prohibits making sculpted images and other representations; the third prohibits bowing down “to them”; and the fourth prohibits worshiping “them.” Although grammatically there are four volitional clauses, the last two are conceptually parallel and joined with a conjunction, and thus should probably be classified as a single prohibition against certain kinds of cultic devotion. Concerning the second volitional clause, we may further observe that the type of image forbidden in 20:4—סָפָל (εἰδωλολοῦν) or בָּמֵית (ὀμοίωμα)—is qualified with three subordinate clauses (רָאָי) that serve to clarify the scope of the prohibited object. On the surface this qualification seems rather comprehensive, with the “triadic cosmological schema”291—the heavens, the earth, and the waters—seemingly encompassing images of all observable phenomena, or at least of all “faunal forms inhabiting the sky, earth, and sea.”292 In sum, then, encapsulated in this text are three interrelated prohibitions addressing the problems of foreign deities, images and certain types of cultic activity.

291 See the discussion in Schmidt, "The Aniconic Tradition," 81-83.
292 Ibid., 81.
Several important questions or exegetical problems surface in this text that will shape subsequent interpretive traditions. First, what is the relationship between the various prohibitions? I touched on this briefly from a grammatical point of view, but this issue emerges as a hermeneutical puzzle in many interpretations of the Decalogue. Is the prohibition against making and worshiping images (20:4–6) integral to or distinct from the prohibition against other gods (20:3)? Furthermore, this question is inextricably linked with the issue of referent; i.e., what do the forbidden images represent? Are images of foreign gods in view here, the of 20:3? Or, if the prohibition against images is viewed as in some sense independent of 20:3, is the prohibition restricted to only images of YHWH, or images in toto? Even more pertinent to the subject at hand, is the prohibition against making images distinct from the volitional clauses focused on cultic activities, whether the latter has in view the worship of images ( and 

293 Several scholars have highlighted the role that perceived textual problems played in giving rise to various exegetical solutions. For example, Géza Vermès notes: “Before any other consideration, homiletical or doctrinal, the task of the [ancient] interpreter was to solve problems raised by the Bible itself”; see Géza Vermès, Scripture and Tradition in Judaism (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 83. See also Enns, Exodus Retold, 13-15.

294 See for example, J. J. Stamm, The Ten Commandments in Recent Research (trans. M. E. Andrew; Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1967), 84; Schmidt, "The Aniconic Tradition," 80-81; John Barton, "The Work of Human Hands' (Psalm 115:4): Idolatry in the Old Testament," in The Ten Commandments: The Reciprocity of Faithfulness (ed. William P. Brown; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 196. Both Stamm and Barton see the second commandment as a requirement for the aniconic worship of YHWH. Schmidt, however, considering a wider swath of textual and archaeological material, argues that only certain types of YHWH images are prohibited, specifically theriomorphic or anthropomorphic images. However, since inanimate, floral and composite (part human, part animal) representations were not prohibited, then it raises the possibility of a legitimate representation of YHWH from one of these three categories (96). For Schmidt, one possible example of an acceptable YHWH image is the drawing on pithos A from Kuntillet 'Ajrud, which perhaps depicts a composite representation of YHWH (96-103); see also Brian Schmidt, "The Iron Age Pithoi Drawings from Horvat Teman or Kuntillet 'Ajrud: Some New Proposals," JANER 2 (2002): 91-125. In contrast, Martin Prudký argues that the only legitimate representation of YHWH was textual, not visible; see Prudký, "You Shall Not Make Yourself an Image," 49.

295 As noted above, the independence of the proscription against images is central to the Calvinist argument against Catholic iconolatry.
or foreign gods (אלהים ארים) or both? If yes, then one could easily read this text as an interdiction against any kind of artistic representation, regardless of content or function. Moreover, there are questions regarding the forbidden object itself. The Hebrew term כָּסַל is typically used for sculpted or carved images, i.e., images hewn from wood or stone. Is the prohibition thus restricted to sculpted images, or does the ensuing term כָּסַל broaden the scope to include other forms of artistic representation? More importantly, does the cosmological triad encompass all observable phenomena or only certain kinds of phenomena, such as animals and humans?

It is not my intention to answer these questions in this chapter. Rather, I only wish to underscore the inherent ambiguity in the legal formulation of this proscription, an ambiguity that later exegeses will in part attempt to clarify. With this in mind, I will now

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296 Walther Zimmerli argues that the antecedent of the plural "them" (20:5) is not the singular כָּסַל or כָּסַל (20:4) but rather the plural כָּסַל אֲרוֹר (20:3). On this basis, he concludes that the prohibition against making an image was inserted later into legislation that originally dealt only with having and worshipping other gods; see Walther Zimmerli, "Das Zweite Gebot," in Festschrift für Alfred Bertholet zum 80 (ed. Walter Baumgartner et al.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr 1950), 550-63. Henning Reventlow counters Zimmerli by arguing that that the third person plural suffix refers not to כָּסַל אֲרוֹר but to both כָּסַל and כָּסַל; see Henning Reventlow, Gebot und Predigt im Dekalog (Gütersloh: G. Mohn, 1962), 31. As Holter observes, following F.-L. Hossfeld, Zimmerli’s interpretation only works in Deuteronomy’s version of the commandment, since the absence of the conjunction ב between כָּסַל and כָּסַל creates a grammatically singular object, whereas in Exodus כָּסַל כָּסַל כָּסַל satisfies the grammatical requirements of the plural suffixes in 20:5; see Holter, Deuteronomy 4, 72-77. See also the discussion in Tatum, "The LXX Version," 180-81; Schmidt, "The Aniconic Tradition," 79-81.

297 Indeed, A. J. Wensinck argues that it was the “lawgiver’s intention” that each prohibition stand alone. Thus, the prohibition against making images is not tied to idol worship per se, but is rooted in the idea that such an act imitates the creative capacity of God and thus represents a “usurpation of the divine creative function”; see A. J. Wensinck, "The Second Commandment," Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen 59 (1925): 159-65 (quotes on pp. 6-7).

298 Two exceptions are Isa 40:19 and 44:10, where כָּסַל is used of molten images.

299 Here the added conjunction in the Exodus version plays a significant role in the discussion. For example, according to Tatum the Exodus version prohibits any kind of image, sculpted or otherwise, but the Deuteronomy version, because it lacks the conjunction between כָּסַל and כָּסַל, prohibits only sculpted images, since from this perspective כָּסַל כָּסַל כָּסַל is subsumed under the broader category of כָּסַל; Tatum, "The LXX Version," 180.

300 Bevan similarly remarks on the ambiguity in the Decalogue’s formulation of the second commandment; Bevan, Holy Images, 46.
consider a broad range of exegetical traditions surrounding the second commandment, focusing first on the writings of Josephus and then situating his material within a wider comparative context.

**Reading the Second Commandment in Josephus**

Josephus refers to the second commandment at least nineteen times throughout his corpus of writings (see Appendix 2). He explicitly explains the legislation of Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 on two occasions—*A.J*. 3.91; *C. Ap*. 2.190–192—and in numerous other instances makes reference to the commandment, either in accounts of fallen biblical heroes such as the legendary King Solomon,\(^{301}\) or in the context of iconoclastic stories, that is, narratives detailing Jewish opposition to a variety of statues or other forms of figurative art.\(^{302}\) *A.J*. 3.91 and *C. Ap*. 2.190–192 are clearly exegetical or midrashic in nature, since in both texts Josephus explicitly sets out to explain the Mosaic legislation, in *A.J*. the δέκα λόγοι\(^{303}\) and in *C. Ap*. οἱ προφήται καὶ ἀπαγορεύσεις.\(^{304}\) The iconoclastic narratives, however, though often (but not always)

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\(^{301}\) *A.J*. 8.195.

\(^{302}\) E.g., *B.J.* 1.650; *A.J*. 17.151; 18.55; 18.263–64.


including a brief summary of the prohibition, serve mainly to censure perceived violations and to explain the behavior of certain “iconoclasts” by appealing to ὁ πάτριος νόμος (or alternatively νόμος / νόμιμος [τῶν Ἰουδαϊκῶν], τὸ πάτριον ἔθος, among other such legal designations). What is particularly relevant for the present discussion is the apparent tension between *exegesis* and *praxis*, i.e., between Josephus’ reading of the second commandment within an exegetical context and how this proscription is seemingly applied in various narrative contexts. Specifically, the retrospective glances at ὁ πάτριος νόμος in his historical narratives seem to conflict with Josephus’ own reading of the second commandment in *A.J.* 3.91 and *C. Ap.* 2.190–192.

**Appearances in Exegetical Context**

In his introduction to the Decalogue in *A.J.* 3.90, Josephus remarks that he is not permitted to recount the λόγοι “verbatim.” However this ambiguous phrase should be interpreted, Josephus clarifies that he is nevertheless permitted to reveal “their power” (τὰς δυνάμεις αὐτῶν), i.e., the force or meaning of the λόγοι. In other words, Josephus offers the reader a paraphrase of the Decalogue that functions to elucidate its essential meaning if not its actual words. With this in mind, his concise restatement of the first two precepts in *A.J.* 3.91, the relevant portion for this analysis, is as follows:

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305 On legal terminology in Josephus (esp. in *C. Ap.*), see Rajak, "The Against Apion," 206-08.

306 The Greek phrase is as follows: οὐς οὐ θεμιτῶν ἐστιν ἡμῖν λέγειν φακρῶς πρὸς λέγειν, which Feldman translates “It is not permitted for us to speak them openly verbatim”; see Feldman, *Judean Antiquities I-4*, 252-53.

307 See the various proposals listed in Ibid., 253, n. 190. It is worth noting that Josephus expresses a similar sentiment with regard to the sacred name of God revealed to Moses, even using the same Greek term (θεμιτῶν). On the latter connection, see F. E. Vokes, "The Ten Commandments in the New Testament and in First Century Judaism," in *Studia Evangelica 5* (ed. F. L. Cross; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1968), 149-50.
Διδάσκει μὲν οὖν ἡμᾶς ὁ πρῶτος λόγος, ὅτι θεὸς ἐστὶν εἷς καὶ τούτῳ
dei σέβεσθαι μόνον· ὁ δὲ δεύτερος κελεύει μηδενὸς εἰκόνα ζῴου
ποιήσαντας προσκυνεῖν·

So then, the first saying teaches us that God is one and he alone should be
worshiped. The second commands to make no image of any living being
for the purpose of worship.

Several features in this text have been used by interpreters as evidence that
Josephus broadens the scope of this commandment to proscribe images in toto. First,
Josephus omits completely the opening affirmation of Exodus 20:2 (“I am YHWH your
God”) and further collapses the three prohibitions of 20:3–6 (see the above discussion)
into two distinct λόγοι: the first (ὁ πρῶτος λόγος) focuses on the exclusive worship of the
Jewish God, summarized within a monotheistic framework (θεὸς ἐστὶν εἷς) that recalls
the language of the Shema;308 the second (ὁ δεύτερος) addresses the problem of εἰκόνες.
As noted above, this enumeration differs from what would eventually become dominant
in Jewish tradition, although Philo of Alexandria similarly divides the Decalogue.309
According to Tatum, the effect of Josephus’ enumeration of the Decalogue is that, insofar
as it distinguishes the prohibition of other gods (ὁ πρῶτος) from the prohibition of images
(ὁ δεύτερος), it “possibly opens the way for a more anti-iconic statement.”310 In other
words, by separating the issue of εἰκόνες from the issue of cultic allegiance, Josephus
reconfigures (in Tatum’s estimation) the source text to address two seemingly distinct
concerns: idolatry on the one hand and images on the other.

308 See Deut. 6:4, which in the LXX reads κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστὶν.
309 Philo, Decal. 51.
310 Tatum, "The LXX Version," 188.
Second, with respect to the images prohibited, Tatum draws attention to the fact that Josephus here avoids the language of the LXX, using εἰκόν instead of εἰδωλόν to translate the Hebrew בְּצָא,\(^{311}\) even though in other contexts he displays his familiarity with the LXX.\(^{312}\) On the surface, this lexical choice seems to broaden the scope of this prohibition beyond the category of “idols” in the LXX—assuming εἰδωλόν is a term of derision against images of foreign deities\(^{313}\)—to include images in general. And in fact, the Greek term εἰκόν in Josephus does seem to operate broadly as a catch-all for various types of figural representations. For example, εἰκόν functions as a synonym for sculpture types that are both non-cultic—ἀνδριάς and προτομή—and those that are more properly associated with a religious context, such as ἀγάλμα.\(^{314}\) In contrast, εἰδωλόν as a term for statuary appears merely seven times in Josephus, only in the biblical-prophetic portions of A.J., and seems to be a literary remnant from the LXX’s prophetic idol polemic.\(^{315}\) Therefore, by avoiding a term that functions to ridicule the worship of foreign gods,

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\(^{313}\) Tatum, "The LXX Version," 184-86. Barclay similarly suggests that εἰδωλόν “conveys a sneer, a claim to superior piety or truth”; see Barclay, "Snarling Sweetly," 73. But see also Kennedy, who argues that the pejorative use of εἰδωλόν as a term denoting a false god does not appear until Tertullian transliterated this term into the Latin idolum, at which point εἰδωλόν no longer denoted the more generic meaning “image”; Kennedy, "The Semantic Field," 204.

\(^{314}\) For example, ἀνδριάς: B.J. 2.192-194; προτομή: A.J. 18.55; ἀγάλμα: A.J. 15.279.

\(^{315}\) A.J. 9.99, 205, 243, 273; 10.50, 65, 69. On two occasions, Josephus uses εἰδωλόν according to the more common usage in Greek literature, namely to denote a phantom like appearance (B.J. 5.513; 7.452).
Josephus has seemingly removed, or at the very least minimized, the cultic connotation of the LXX’s formulation of Exodus 20:4.

Moreover, the three subordinate clauses of Exodus 20:4 that originally qualified ἐπὶ / ἐἰδωλοῖν and παρὰ / ὀμοίωμα—the cosmological triad mentioned above—are here collapsed into the term ζῷον, defining the forbidden image as a representation of a living being, be it anthropomorphic or theriomorphic. Thus, by avoiding the term ἐἰδωλοῖν and even ἀγαλμα, the typical Greek term for the statues of gods and goddesses, and instead identifying the prohibited object with the phrase εἰκόνα ζῷον, Josephus seemingly transforms a prohibition against “pagan” idols into an interdiction against figurative art. Tatum concludes: “Josephus summarizes the Second Commandment not simply in anti-idolic but in anti-iconic terms. The Second Commandment prohibits the making and/or adoration of ‘an image of any living thing.’”

However, there is more to this text than is typically noted. Indeed, the previous remark by Tatum, and in particular his use of the conjunctions “and/or,” is revealing not only for its emphasis on the broad and comprehensive scope of the prohibited object but also in its attempt to downplay an important feature in Josephus’ summary of the second commandment. Tatum wants to read the second commandment in A.J. 3.91 as a prohibition against both the act of making and worshiping images, implying two distinct issues. Tatum remarks that in Josephus’ view, the second commandment actually consists of two distinct prohibitions, “one against making ‘a sculptured image’ … and the other against worshipping ‘them’.” But this interpretation overlooks the grammatical

317 Ibid.: 188.
function of the infinitive προσκυνεῖν in Josephus. Whereas the Hebrew and Greek of Exodus 20:4–5 does include two grammatical prohibitions—one addressing the making of images (לא יִקְרָב לָא תָּשׁוּב) and the other worship (לא תִּבְדָּל לָא תַּהֲדֹשב)—Josephus conflates the two into one, with the infinitive προσκυνεῖν functioning as an adverbial qualifier of the participle πολύνῃσαντας. In other words, προσκυνεῖν in A.J. 3.91 is not grammatically independent, as Tatum’s interpretation suggests, but is inseparable from the participle, expressing the purpose of πολύνῃσαντας.

The effect of Josephus’ reformulation is not without significance. The proscription in A.J. 3.91 addresses not simply craftsmanship, i.e., the process of sculpting or making an image of a living being, but craftsmanship for the purpose of worship. The second commandment in Josephus’ summary of the Decalogue in A.J. proscribes not figurative images in general, but cultic images, notwithstanding the features in the text that seem to indicate otherwise. Taken in isolation, Josephus’ interpretation of the second commandment here would thus seem to allow for a possible distinction between εἰκόνες intended for worship and εἰκόνες not intended for worship, with the former being unacceptable and the latter permissible. As will be demonstrated below, this cultic qualification is likewise evident in Josephus’ other explicitly exegetical text, C. Ap. 2.190–192.

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318 Lee Levine seems to read this distinction in A.J. 3.91 when he likens Josephus’ summary of the second commandment to Rabban Gamaliel’s prohibition against only those images with cultic significance; see Levine, The Ancient Synagogue, 454, n. 58.
Josephus’ *C. Ap.*, the last of his three major compositions, includes in book two an extended *apologia* for the Mosaic law or πολιτεία (2.145–286), designated by John Barclay as a “sparkling encomium of the Judean constitution.” This material is an integral part of a larger attempt to refute the slanders of several notorious interlocutors, most notably the Egyptian Apion in 2.1–144, but also in the immediate context Apollonius Molon (among other literary antagonists). Within this larger block of material devoted to the political system of Moses—identified with the neologism θεοκρατία—Josephus asserts the superiority of the Mosaic constitution and summarizes its central or foundational teachings. Although there is an obvious continuity between *A.J.* and *C. Ap.* in their respective depictions of Jewish law, different emphases are apparent, especially that in *C. Ap.* Josephus conveys his description of Jewish law primarily in philosophical rather than political terms.

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321 *C. Ap.* 2.145. For a structural analysis of *C. Ap.*, see Bilde, *Flavius Josephus*, 113-18; Barclay, *Against Apion*, xvii-xxii. In discussing the genre of *C. Ap.*, Barclay notes that although from a literary perspective the material is somewhat varied, “it is presented within a unifying structure as a response to slanders against the Judean people” (xxxiii). Thus, even Josephus’ summary of the law serves this larger apologetic purpose.


325 This is apparent in the very term that Josephus invents—Θεοκρατία—which obviously subsumes the political under the umbrella of the philosophical; see Barclay, *Against Apion*, xxiii-xxvi.
Josephus’ opening question in C. Ap. 2.190—τίνες ὤν εἴσιν αἱ προρήσεις καὶ ἀπαγορεύσεις; (“What then are the warnings and prohibitions?”)—frames this pericope, which extends through 2.219, as a summary of Jewish law. Although the explicit enumeration of the δέκα λόγοι in A.J. 3.91–92 is missing here, it is clear from his reference to πρώτη that the Decalogue at the very least stands in the backdrop of the opening lines of his explanation of αἱ προρήσεις καὶ ἀπαγορεύσεις.326 And indeed the content of this material, which begins by addressing both the worship of the Jewish God and the question of images, confirms that the Decalogue comprises at least part of his explanation of Jewish law.327 The relevant portion of this text is as follows:

πρώτη δ’ ἦγεται ἡ περὶ θεοῦ λέγουσα ὁ θεὸς ἔχει τὰ σύμπαντα, παντελῆς καὶ μακάριος, αὐτὸς αὐτῷ καὶ πᾶσιν αὐτάρκης, ἀρχὴ καὶ μέσα καὶ τέλος οὗτος τῶν πάντων, ἔργοις μὲν καὶ χάρισιν ἐναργής καὶ παντὸς οὕτως φανερώτερος, μορφὴν δὲ καὶ μέγεθος ἡμῖν ἀφανέστατος. πᾶσα μὲν ὑπὴ πρὸς εἰκόνα τὴν τοῦτον κἂν ἡ πολυτελὴς ἄτιμος, πᾶσα δὲ τέχνη πρὸς μιμήσεως ἐπίνοιαν ἀτεχνος. οὐδὲν ὄμοιον οὔτ’ εἶδομεν οὔτ’ ἐπινοοῦμεν οὔτ’ εἰκάζειν ἐστίν ὅσιον. ἔργα βλέπομεν αὐτοῦ φῶς οὐρανὸν γῆν ἡμῖν ὑδάτα ζωὴν γενέσεις καρπῶν ἄναξίσεις. ταῦτα θεὸς ἐποίησεν οὐ χεραίν οὐ πάνως οὐ τυποῦν συνεργασμένων ἐπιδιδοθείς, ἀλλ’ αὐτοῦ θελόμαντος καλὸς ἢν εὐθὺς γεγονότα. τούτων θεραπευτέων ἄσκοιντας ἀρετὴν τρόπος γὰρ θεοῦ θεραπείας οὗτος ὀσιώτατος.

The first, concerning God, leads the way, affirming that God possesses all things, [being] perfect and blessed, self-sufficient and sufficient for all, he is the beginning and middle and end of all things; he is visible in works and favors, even more manifest than anything else, but concerning his form and greatness he is most invisible to us. Thus every material, however expensive it might be, is inadequate for an image of this [deity], and every work of art is incapable to imagine his likeness. We have neither seen nor imagined anything similar to him, nor is it pious to make an image of him. We can see his works: light, heaven, earth, sun, water,

326 Several other scholars likewise sees an implicit reference to the Decalogue in C. Ap. 190–192; see for example Vermès, "Summary of the Law," 293-94; Barclay, Against Apion, 276, n. 751; Barclay, "Snarling Sweetly," 82.

327 However it is clear that the Decalogue forms only part of the picture here, since Josephus’ summary extends through C. Ap. 2.219 and includes a broad range of precepts not found in the Decalogue.
the birth of living creatures, the production of crops. These things God made, not with hands, not with hard labor, not needing any assistants, but when he so desired, they were immediately made in beauty. This one must be worshiped by practicing virtue; for this manner of worshiping God is the most pious.\textsuperscript{328}

The Greek text under discussion includes a philological problem (underlined above) that, although seemingly minor and inconsequential, impacts considerably how the proscription of images is presented in this passage.\textsuperscript{329} Niese’s \textit{Editio maior}, followed by Thackeray’s Loeb edition and John Barclay’s recent translation and commentary on \textit{C. Ap.}, reads ἄφατος instead of ἄφανέστατος, a reading that is overwhelmingly supported by the Greek manuscript tradition.\textsuperscript{330} By contrast, the reading accepted in this analysis, ἄφανέστατος, is preserved only in Eusebius’ \textit{Praeparatio evangelica} 8.8.25.1. Moreover, the earliest Latin translation of \textit{C. Ap.} uses inenarrabilis to render the Greek in question, a term that clearly approximates ἄφατος rather than ἄφανέστατος. And ἄφατος does not necessarily render incomprehensible the meaning of the text. Accepting Niese’s \textit{Editio maior}, and thus the reading ἄφατος, Thackeray translates the text as follows: “By His works and bounties He is plainly seen, indeed more manifest than ought else; but His form and magnitude surpass our powers of description.”\textsuperscript{331} The function of ἄφατος in this

\textsuperscript{328} \textit{C. Ap.} 2.190–192.

\textsuperscript{329} Heinz Schreckenberg has recently discussed some of the problems in the textual history of \textit{C. Ap.}, as well as the need for a more reliable critical edition; see Heinz Schreckenberg, "Text, Überlieferung und Textkritik von \textit{Contra Apionem}," in Josephus' \textit{Contra Apionem: Studies in its Character and Context with a Latin Concordance to the Portion Missing in Greek} (ed. Louis H. Feldman and John R. Levison; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 49-82.

\textsuperscript{330} Niese, ed., \textit{Flavii Josephii Opera}, ad loc; Barclay, \textit{Against Apion}, 277.

\textsuperscript{331} \textit{C. Ap.} 2.190 (Thackeray, LCL). Barclay similarly translates: “he is evident through his works and acts of grace, and more apparent than anything else, but in form and greatness beyond our description”; Barclay, \textit{Against Apion}, 277.
context is thus clear enough: Josephus contrasts the visibility of the deity’s works with the ineffability of his form.

Nevertheless there are several reasons to prefer ἀφανέστατος. In the first place, although the manuscript evidence is nearly unanimous in reading ἀφατος, the nature of the textual witnesses—namely that they are, according to Barclay’s assessment, “manifestly deficient”—lessens the significance of this “majority” reading. Eusebius is the earliest substantial textual witness, and he preserves approximately 1/6 of C. Ap. Cassiodorus’ sixth century Latin translation follows, and the first almost complete Greek manuscript (L)—and the first unambiguous witness to the Greek ἀφατος—dates to the eleventh century. Moreover, according to Niese’s assessment all subsequent Greek manuscripts are dependent on L, which if correct, would reduce the number of independent textual witnesses primarily to three: Eusebius, Cassiodorus’ Latin translation, and the manuscript tradition originating in L. As such, the minority reading favored in the present analysis constitutes 1/3 of the independent textual traditions, a minority to be sure, but certainly not insignificant enough to preclude as a possibility. Thus, given the woeful state of manuscript evidence, the material preserved in Eusebius, though by no means perfect, is nevertheless of utmost importance.

Furthermore,

332 Ibid., lxi.
333 A convenient list of Eusebius’ citations can be found in Schreckenberg, Flavius-Josephus-Tradition, 82-84.
335 Barclay, following the recently published German critical edition, suggests that manuscripts E (Eliensis; fifteenth century) and S (Schleusingensis; fifteenth-sixteenth century) do preserve some independent value; see Barclay, Against Apion, lxxii; Folker Siegert, Heinz Schreckenberg, and Manuel Vogel, eds., Flavius Josephus: Über das Alter des Judentums (Contra Apionem) (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 54-56.
336 According to Niese, Eusebius is the most valuable witness to the original text of C. Ap.; Niese, ed., Flavii Josephi Opera, 5:xvi-xxi. See also the discussion and notes in Barclay, Against Apion, lxxii.
comparing the two words in question, there is an obvious potential for haplography which would then explain the replacement of ἀφανέστατος with ἀφατος in the manuscript tradition. More specifically, one can easily see how a scribe could copy the beginning (ἀφα-) and ending (-τος) of ἀφανέστατος, inadvertently omitting the middle portion of the word and thus resulting in the reading ἀφατος.

Beyond these external considerations, however, several intrinsic factors strongly favor ἀφανέστατος as the original, most notably that this reading fits better the highly sophisticated literary features of the passage. The μὲν … δὲ construction in which the word in question appears sets up a contrast between two parallel clauses, visibly evident in the following structural layout:

A ἔργας μὲν καὶ χάρισιν ἐναργής καὶ παντὸς οὕτως φανερότερος

B μορφὴν δὲ καὶ μέγεθος ἤμιν ἀφανέστατος

The deity’s ἔργα and χάριτες, which are unambiguously presented as his visible manifestation in clause A, are parallel to and contrasted with this God’s μορφή and μέγεθος in clause B, and ἀφανέστατος clearly fits the contrast better than ἀφατος on both semantic and grammatical grounds. Beyond the obvious antithesis between visibility and invisibility expressed in the lexical morpheme ἀ/φαν-, the shift from the comparative φανερότερος to the superlative ἀφανέστατος establishes a heightened symmetry between clause A and clause B: although the deity is more visible than anything else in his works and favors, he is most invisible in his form and greatness.

Moreover, with ἀφανέστατος as the original reading, C. Ap. 2.190-192 as a whole forms an extended chiasm:
The contents of this chiasm can thus be summarized as follows:

A  The Jewish deity is supreme
B  The Jewish deity is manifest in his works and favors
C  The Jewish deity is not manifest in his form
C¹ The Jewish deity cannot be imaged
B¹ The Jewish deity is seen in his creation
A¹ Worship the Jewish deity

If the identification of a chiasm is correct here, the text progresses inwardly from God’s supremacy (A/A¹) to his visibility (B/B¹) to his invisibility (C/C¹), a stylistic feature that ultimately breaks down with the reading ἄφαντος. Therefore, in the light of these intrinsic and extrinsic considerations, especially the congruence of the minority reading with the overall structure of the passage, I argue that ἄφαντος is the preferable reading.337

The impact of this text-critical decision on a proper understanding of Josephus’ formulation in C. Ap. 2.190–191 is significant. Indeed, the aforementioned structural

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337 Beyond the considerations detailed above, it should also be noted that the adjective ἄφαντος is employed frequently throughout the Josephan corpus, whereas ἄφαντος, if accepted, is a hapax legomenon occurring only in the passage in question. Of course, lexical distribution is itself ultimately indecisive, and there are indications that Josephus’ unique concerns in C. Ap. may have led to a higher concentration of distinct vocabulary; see Pieter Willem van der Horst, "The Distinctive Vocabulary of Josephus’ Contra Apionem," in Josephus' Contra Apionem: Studies in its Character and Context with a Latin Concordance to the Portion Missing in Greek (ed. Louis H. Feldman and John R. Levison; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 83-93.
arrangement that hinges on ἀφανέστατος demonstrates that “second commandment” is something of a misnomer in the present context, insofar as the chiastic arrangement inextricably links the proscription of images with the legislation addressing the nature and proper worship of the Jewish God. The pivot of this structure, its point of inversion at C/C₁, underscores the central idea of the passage, namely that the Mosaic rejection of images (C₁) is rooted in the very essence of the divine nature (C). Clauses A and A₁ are concerned with the exalted status of the Jewish God, both in his supremacy and self-sufficiency and in the moral obligation to worship him though virtue and piety. Clauses B and B₁ focus on his visibility and both are paralleled quite explicitly in locating the manifestation of this deity primarily in his ἔργα. In contrast, clauses C and C₁ are associated by the deity’s invisibility, both ontologically (C) and iconographically (C₁): the God’s μορφή is not manifest and thus he cannot and must not be imaged in any way.

This structural feature thus frames the “second” commandment as a philosophical critique of images in which the inappropriateness of εἰκόνες flows directly from the nature of the deity. In other words, Josephus’ affirmation of aniconic worship—the

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338 That the so-called first and second commandments are interrelated in C. Ap. is further confirmed by Josephus’ enumeration, or lack thereof. Although the opening words of this pericope, and in particular the reference to a “first” (πρώτη) precept addressing cultic allegiance to the one true God, would seem to anticipate a “second” (δεύτερος) focused on the question of images, as with the enumeration of the δέκα λόγου in A.J. 3.91, Josephus in C. Ap. does not actually follow through with this numerical sequence. Instead the issue of image worship is entirely subsumed under the πρώτη.

339 On the whole Josephus’ presentation of the Decalogue in C. Ap. is much more philosophical than in A.J. The concise “God is one” mantra in A.J. 3.91 is here expanded into an extended discourse on the nature of the deity: God is perfect (παντελῆς), entirely self-sufficient (αὐτόρης), the all-encompassing one who is visible only in his works and the benefits he bestows on humanity. Moreover, this account of the divine nature, which of course is not unique to Josephus, recalls the language of C. Ap. 2.167, wherein Josephus asserts the superiority of the Mosaic θεοκρατία on the basis of God’s perfect nature. The definition of the deity in the 2.167 establishes a contrast between the knowable and unknowable aspects of the divine: δυνάμει μὲν ἤμιν γνώριμον ὀποῖος ὑπὲρ ὁμοίων ἐστὶν ἀγωνιστόν. In 2.190, however, the stress is on the (in)visibility of the divine nature, an emphasis that dovetails nicely with the question of images that is raised in 2.191. See the discussion in Barclay, “Snarling Sweetly,” 81-83. For similar philosophical
proscription is here formulated more as an affirmation than a restriction—is a logical outcome of God’s character. Stated differently, “orthopraxy” (aniconic worship) is for Josephus inextricably linked with “orthodoxy” (a proper conception of the deity). The εἰκών, which by its very nature requires a measure of similarity or semblance to the object it represents, is inadequate (ἀτιμος) precisely because the essence of the divine nature fundamentally eludes proper representation. Hence, any attempt to image (εἰκάζειν) the divine is impious to the core. As Barclay notes, the rationale here departs considerably from the typical Jewish polemic against those who substitute images for God; the problem here is not substitution but the impossibility of semblance. Considering again the central question of this chapter—What is the scope of Moses’ prohibition against images?—the answer in this context is clear: the second commandment does not proscribe images in general, but divine images, and more specifically, iconographical representations of the God of the Jews.

**Appearances in Narrative Context**

A survey of Josephus’ numerous references to the second commandment within a narrative context gives a strikingly different impression than what emerges in *A.J.* 3.91 and *C. Ap.* 2.190–192. Specifically, select passages from Josephus’ narratives suggest conceptions of the deity in Greek and Latin literature, see the list of texts in Barclay, *Against Apion*, 276, nn. 752-53.

340 As is the requirement for a centralized temple, which in *C. Ap.* 2.193 similarly flows from the nature of the Jewish God.

341 On the meaning of ἀτιμος in this context, see Barclay, *Against Apion*, 277, n. 757.

that the author understood the prohibition of images to include any figurative representation, regardless of context, format or function.

To take one notable example, according to Josephus the downfall of King Solomon began not with his 700 wives and 300 concubines, as the biblical narrative suggests,343 but with the installation of theriomorphic images, specifically bronze oxen that were placed in the temple and the sculpted lions that adorned his throne, items that Josephus explicitly identifies as works of impiety and a violation of the Jewish νόμιμα.344 As is commonly observed, the biblical narrative, although describing in detail the images in question, does not censure Solomon for them.345 Moreover, the items in question are clearly not objects of cultic devotion, but decorative elements adorning temple and royal furniture. Yet in Josephus, these innocuous decorative images, simply because they are images of living creatures (ζώα), become quintessential marks of Solomon’s “apostasy,” the initial catalyst for the king’s ultimate rejection of the εἰσίβελα and ὀσφία that characterized the first years of his reign.

In a similar vein, the military trophies that were affixed to the theatre in Jerusalem during the reign of Herod the Great were thought to violate the second commandment because they were perceived to be εἰκόνες ἀρμόδια.346 The tension in this narrative revolves not so much around the cultic status of the trophies—indeed, they are not even statues but merely an ornamental display of military accoutrements (e.g., armor, weapons, etc.)—but their apparent iconography, the fact that they resembled

343 See 1 Kgs 11.
345 1 Kgs 7:23–26 (oxen on the “molten sea”); 1 Kgs 10:18–20 (throne with sculpted lions).
anthropomorphic (i.e., figurative) statues. Not surprisingly, Gaius Caligula’s attempt to erect his own statue (ἀνθρωπομορφικός) in the temple receives censure, but so does the seemingly harmless eagle on the Herodian temple in Jerusalem, identified in A.J. as an εἰκών / ζῷον and in B.J. as a ζῷον ἐργον. The reference to the second commandment in A.J.’s account of the temple eagle episode is instructive both in its silence on cultic matters (i.e., whether the image in question was worshiped, or even that the image was located in a cultic context) and its focus on iconography:

κωλύει δὲ ὁ νόμος εἰκώνων τε ἀναστάσεις ἐπινοεῖν καὶ τινῶν ζῴων ἀναθέσεις ἐπιτηδεύεσθαι τοῖς βιοῦν κατὰ αὐτῶν προηρημένοις.

But the law forbids those who are determined to live by it to think of setting up statues and to make dedications of [statues of] any living creatures.

Likewise, the figurative images in Herod the Tetrarch’s palace fall under the prohibition of the second commandment, thus resulting in a commission from Jerusalem authorities (involving Josephus) to destroy the images. Here again, the reference to the proscription places the emphasis on craftsmanship of figurative images: the mandate for the iconoclastic destruction of the palace art is located in the Jewish laws which prohibit the crafting (κατασκευάζων) of ζῷων μορφαί. The apparently all-encompassing nature of this proscription is perhaps expressed most poignantly in Josephus’ account of Pilate’s military standards, in which the images (εἰκόνες; προσωπαί) affixed to the standards constitute evidence that Pilate was intent “on abolishing the customs of the Jews” (ἐπὶ

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349 Α.J. 17.151.
350 Vita 65.
καταλύσει τῶν νομίμων τῶν Ἰουδαϊκῶν, since “our law forbids the making of images” (εἰκόνων ποίησιν ἀπαγορεύοντος ἡμῖν τοῦ νόμου).\textsuperscript{351} Josephus here excludes the qualification of προσκυνεῖν in his restatement of the second commandment, rendering the injunction as a prohibition of iconic craftsmanship.

The consistent thread in each of the above examples is the emphasis on a disputed image’s iconography: the image whose subject matter is either ἄνθρωπος or ζῷον clearly falls within the scope of the Mosaic prohibition. Conversely, concern over the cultic status of an image barely (if at all) registers in the development of the story. It is thus not surprising that the vast majority of scholars conclude that Josephus followed a markedly \textit{strict} interpretive approach to the injunction in question, one that forbids not simply images of foreign gods or the Jewish God but \textit{figurative art}, i.e., any representation of living beings, whether theriomorphic or anthropomorphic. Indeed, as noted earlier, based on this reading of Josephus some have even supposed that all Jews during the Second Temple period, ostensibly held sway by the authority of the pre-destruction rabbis, interpreted the second commandment to preclude all forms of artistic representation excepting geometric and floral designs.\textsuperscript{352}

However, a closer analysis of this narrative material suggests a more complicated situation. In the first place, the aforementioned narrative summaries of the second

\textsuperscript{351} \textit{A.J.} 18.55.

\textsuperscript{352} Even Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, whose massive collection of Jewish iconography from the Greco-Roman period was pivotal in upending the long-held assumption of Jewish aniconism, argued that the rabbis held a relatively “clear and consistent” position with regard to images: “Jews were forbidden to make images of human faces for any purpose whatever, and the strictest rabbis would have destroyed all objects, even of pagan origin.” In short, the rabbis “did not like images.” Moreover, although Goodenough argues for the marginalization of the rabbis after the destruction of the temple, he nevertheless maintains that they wielded tremendous influence during the Second Temple period; Goodenough, \textit{Jewish Symbols}, 4:19-20. See also the discussion in Konikoff, \textit{The Second Commandment}, 51-64.
commandment differ significantly from the two occasions where Josephus offers a
detailed explanation of this legislation in \textit{A.J.} 3.91 and \textit{C. Ap.} 2.190–192, wherein
Josephus explicitly qualifies and restricts the prohibition to cultic images. Secondly, even
the appearance of the second commandment in narrative context is not entirely uniform.
For example, observe the differences between the summaries in \textit{B.J.} and \textit{A.J.} with regard
to the aforementioned Pilate incident:

\begin{quote}
\textit{οὐδὲν γὰρ ἁξιοῦσιν ἐν τῇ πόλει}
\textit{δείκτων τίθεσθαι} \\
… for it is not lawful to set up an
image in the city.\textsuperscript{353}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{εἰκόνων ποιήσαιν ἀπαγορεύοντος}
\textit{ἡμῖν τοῦ νόμου}
\textit{… for our law forbids the making of}
images.\textsuperscript{354}
\end{quote}

The difference between the two summaries in the Pilate episode, evident also in
the synoptic accounts of the incident of Herod’s eagle and Caligula’s statue, raises the
possibility that Josephus is reformulating the proscription according to larger rhetorical
themes within each of his main compositions, a possibility that I will explore more fully
in chapters 4–5 below. For now, it is enough to note the apparent conflict between
interpretation (\textit{A.J.} 3.91 and \textit{C. Ap.} 2.190–192) and praxis in the Josephan corpus.

\textbf{Reading the Second Commandment in Greco-Roman Jewish Literature}

Given the preponderance of Jewish (and Christian) texts polemicizing idols
during the Greco-Roman period, it is somewhat surprising that very few reflect
specifically on the meaning and application of the second commandment.\textsuperscript{355} Rather, the

\textsuperscript{353} \textit{B.J.} 2.169–170.
\textsuperscript{354} \textit{A.J.} 18.55.
\textsuperscript{355} Cristina Termini notes a general silence on the Decalogue as a whole in a significant number of texts
from Greco-Roman antiquity; see Cristina Termini, "Taxonomy of Biblical Laws and φιλοτεχνία in Philo
classic idol polemic—expressed especially in texts such as the Epistle of Jeremiah, Bel and the Dragon, and the Wisdom of Solomon, to name a few—favors the technique of ridicule, patterned in part after biblical-prophetic texts like Isaiah and Psalms, as a means of denouncing idolatry and images.\footnote{But note also the discussion above in chapter 2, in which I argue that the idol polemic in Jewish-Hellenistic literature is more than simply a recycling of biblical traditions.} Nevertheless, the few texts that do explicitly interact with the Decalogue articulate an interesting range of exegetical possibilities vis-à-vis the second commandment, from the complete avoidance of the proscription where one would otherwise expect it through the prohibition of cultic images to a seemingly absolute prohibition of all forms of figurative art, cultic or otherwise.

**Omitting the Prohibition of Images: Pseudo-Phocylides**

This first text, the poem of Pseudo-Phocylides, is noteworthy not so much for what it says but for what it fails (or refuses?) to say, a silence that is potentially pregnant with significance. The poem is a collection of *sententiae* (σχόλα), tentatively dated to the first century B.C.E. or first century C.E.,\footnote{Pieter Willem van der Horst, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 81-83; Walter T. Wilson, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 7.} written in an archaic Ionic dialect with traces of Hellenistic forms that betray its pseudepigraphic character.\footnote{Van der Horst, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*, 55-58.} It is generally regarded as a *Jewish* pseudepigraph from Alexandria,\footnote{Ibid., 82; John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 168-69. Barclay has recently questioned the Alexandrian provenance of Ps.-Phoc.; Barclay, *Mediterranean Diaspora*, 337.} given the author’s familiarity...
with the LXX and the evidence for a distinctly Jewish view of the resurrection of the body.\textsuperscript{360}

Following the prologue in lines 1–2, the author mentions or alludes to a cluster of prohibitions and commandments that are found in Exod 20 and Deut 5 (lines 3–8), thus earning the ascription “Summary of the Decalogue” for the material in question.\textsuperscript{361} As many as eight precepts seem to correspond to the list of commands found in the Decalogue: the prohibitions against adultery (3), murder (4), theft (6), covetousness (6), and lying (7), and the positive commands to honor God and parents (8). Moreover, although the sequence departs considerably from that of the biblical text, the placement of murder after adultery does reflect the order of commands in the LXX, suggesting a more explicit connection with the Greek translation of the biblical text.\textsuperscript{362} Nevertheless, there are two additions to the Decalogue laws—prohibitions of “homosexuality” (3) and illicit gains (5)—as well as several striking omissions, most notably the command to keep the Sabbath and, of particular interest here, the prohibition of idolatry/images. The obvious question is: Why would a Jew seemingly “conceal his Jewishness” by omitting reference to that which is distinctively Jewish?\textsuperscript{363} More to the point, why avoid the Mosaic proscription of images, and even more broadly, the subject of idolatry?


\textsuperscript{361} Van der Horst, The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides, 110; Wilson, The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides, 73.

\textsuperscript{362} Van der Horst, The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides, 112; Wilson, The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides, 74.

\textsuperscript{363} Van der Horst, The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides, 70.
This issue is of course connected to the larger question of the nature and function of the work as a whole. Overall there are at least three proposed solutions to the problem at hand.\textsuperscript{364} First, the author was not a Jew at all, and should not be expected to incorporate distinctively Jewish practices into his ethical treatise. This was the position of Arthur Ludwich, and he accounts for the clear allusion to the Decalogue by positing a non-Jewish author who was nevertheless familiar with the LXX.\textsuperscript{365} Second, the author was Jewish, but was in some sense trying to suppress Jewish peculiarities to make his ethical teachings more palatable for a broader gentile audience. For example, Jacob Bernays proposed that the omission of idolatry reflects the rhetorical strategy of Jewish propaganda directed to a non-Jewish audience, an attempt to present a non-offensive “Moral des Privatlebens” that excludes “alles was mit dem Sonderwesen der jüdischen Nationalität zusammenhängt.”\textsuperscript{366} In a similar vein, Gottlieb Klein identifies Ps.-Phoc. as “Den ältesten Katechismus für die Heiden” and thus supposes that the prohibition was avoided as part of a larger missionary strategy that intentionally downplayed nationalistic \textit{halakha}, a strategy not necessarily focused on gaining proselytes per se but on taming “pagans,” so to speak, with a form of ethical monotheism.\textsuperscript{367} Third, the author was Jewish and writing for a \textit{Jewish} audience in order to “universalize the particular,”\textsuperscript{368} to provide

\textsuperscript{364} For a detailed history of research on Ps.-Phoc. up to 1978, see \textit{Ibid.}, 3-54.

\textsuperscript{365} Arthur Ludwich, "Quaestionum pseudophocylidearum pars altera," in \textit{Programm Königsberg} (Königsberg: Universität Königsberg, 1904), 29-32.

\textsuperscript{366} Jacob Bernays, \textit{Gesammelte Abhandlungen} (2 vols.; Berlin: Wilhelm Hertz, 1885), 1:227. Bernays ultimately reproaches the author for failing to address such an important issue as pagan idolatry (1:254).

\textsuperscript{367} Gottlieb Klein, \textit{Der älteste christliche Katechismus und die jüdische Propagandaliteratur} (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1909), 143.

for his community a broad collection of ethical teachings that underscored the shared moral values of Jews and non-Jews alike. Although van der Horst expressed ambivalence on the question in his 1978 commentary, he clearly favors this third possibility in a subsequent article published a decade later:

[T]he characteristics of our poem, such as its pseudonimity, the omission of anything exclusively Jewish ..., can all be explained on the assumption that the author wrote a kind of compendium of *misvot* for daily life which could help Jews in a thoroughly Hellenistic environment to live as Jews without having to abandon their interest in Greek culture.\(^{369}\)

It must be admitted that the precise audience intended in this work, and hence the possible motive for omitting Jewish particulars, is difficult to pin down. It may be, as was recently suggested by John Collins, that the author intended his work to circulate indiscriminately with the hope that his ethical teachings would “attract students regardless of whether they were Jewish or not.”\(^{370}\) Whether the intended audience was Jewish, non-Jewish, or both, it is nevertheless remarkable that a Jewish author could summarize the core of Mosaic legislation without reference to the prohibition against images. This of course could very well be part of a strategy to universalize the Jewish ethos, but it should be noted that neither Philo nor Josephus, who likewise attempt to emphasize universal aspects of Jewish teachings, shy away from the second commandment.

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\(^{369}\) Pieter Willem van der Horst, "Pseudo-Phocylides Revisited," *JSP* 3 (1988): 16. On this same question Barclay concludes: “what [the author] provides for his fellow Jews is not circumscribed by the special characteristics of the Jewish community”; Barclay, *Mediterranean Diaspora*, 345-46. Wilson likewise suggest that the universalizing impulse was intended in part to bolster the Jewish community, to reinforce “for Jewish readers a sense of their own history and place in the Greek world,” though he also leaves open the possibility that this poem could have circulated in non-Jewish circles; Wilson, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*, 7-8.

In the end, it is difficult to know what to make of this omission, and we should be cautious about reading too much into the silence. Did the author intentionally suppress the second commandment, whether to make his teachings palatable for a non-Jewish audience or to assist his fellow Jews in their attempts to live “in a thoroughly Hellenistic environment”? Or did the author simply omit the obvious, thinking it unnecessary to address that which was universally (within the Jewish community) recognized? Unfortunately at this point any attempt to answer such questions enters the realm of speculation.

A Prohibition of Cult Images

The group of texts included in this section, though unique in their various emphases, agree in restricting the scope of proscribed images to divine images, or images that are clearly in some sense associated with a cultic context or cultic activities. In this sense, they more or less comport with Josephus’ exegesis in A.J. 3.91 and C. Ap. 2.190–192. That the majority of texts surveyed in this chapter fall under this category suggests further that Jews in antiquity predominantly read the second commandment as a rejection of idols (i.e., cultic images) and not images in general.

The Book of Jubilees

The Book of Jubilees, a text originally composed in Hebrew in the middle of the second century B.C.E., purports to disclose a fuller account of God’s revelation given to Moses on Mount Sinai (mediated through the Angel of Presence), a version of divine

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revelation, culled from the “heavenly tablets,” that complements though exceeds that which is found in the Pentateuch.\textsuperscript{372} From a literary point of view, \textit{Jubilees} forms “an extensive elaboration of Genesis 1–Exodus 12” and can thus be categorized along with other so-called rewritten Bibles,\textsuperscript{373} such as (\textit{inter alia}) Ps.-Philo’s \textit{Liber antiquitatum biblicarum} (see below), the Genesis Apocryphon found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and of course, parts of Josephus’ \textit{A.J.} The author is expressly concerned with various matters of what came to be known as Jewish \textit{halakha}, particularly those legal formulations that served to distinguish the Jews from non-Jews. The patriarchal narratives are thus recast and reshaped in \textit{Jubilees} in order to sharply criticize any attempt to imitate a “gentile” way of life.\textsuperscript{374}

Although there are repeated warnings against idolatry throughout this text,\textsuperscript{375} the second commandment itself appears only once, in \textit{Jubilees} 20:7–8. This version of the prohibition, embedded in a speech by Abraham given to his children just prior to his death, reads as follows:

\begin{quote}
I exhort you, my sons, love the God of heaven, and be joined to all of his commands. And do not go after their idols and after their defilement. And do not make gods of molten or carved images for yourselves, because it is vain and they have no spirit. Because they are the work of hands, and all those who trust in them trust in nothing. Do not worship them and do not bow down to them.\textsuperscript{376}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{372} On the relationship between \textit{Jubilees} and the Mosaic Torah, see Boccaccini, \textit{Beyond the Essene Hypothesis}, 88-90. See also the recent publication of the proceedings from the Fourth Enoch Seminar held at Camaldoli (July 8–12, 2007): Gabriele Boccaccini, and Giovanni Ibba, eds., \textit{Enoch and the Mosaic Torah: The Evidence of Jubilees} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

\textsuperscript{373} George W. E. Nickelsburg, \textit{Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah} (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 69.

\textsuperscript{374} See for example the repeated censure of intermarriage (20:4; 22:20; 25:1; 27:10; 30:1–15), nudity (3:31), and attempts to conceal circumcision (15:33–34).


\textsuperscript{376} Trans. Wintemute, \textit{OTP} 2:94.
\end{footnotes}
The discussion of images in this text clearly recalls the language of the second commandment in Exodus 20, particularly in the sequence of the verbs “to make” and “to worship.” As noted above, in the Decalogue a prohibition against foreign deities immediately precedes the prohibition against crafting images, leaving ambiguous the precise relationship between the forbidden images and forbidden gods. In *Jubilees*, however, the author clarifies this relationship by conflating the first two prohibitions into one: the interdictions against false gods and sculpted images become a single proscription of “gods of molten or carved images.” Furthermore, as noted earlier, in Exodus 20 the relationship between craftsmanship and cultic activity is ambiguous, given the grammatical incongruity between the singular object of the verb for making (לְאָהָם תְּחֵנָה לְאִם תְּחֵנָה) and the plural object of the verbs for worship (לְאָהָם תְּחֵנָה לְאִם תְּחֵנָה). *Jubilees* resolves this ambiguity, however, by rendering the forbidden objects in the plural, resulting in a stronger connection between crafting and worshiping images. The grammatical alterations in this text thus suggest a more limited scope of the prohibition of images, namely images of foreign deities intended for worship.

**The Temple Scroll**

The publication of the *Temple Scroll* by Yigael Yadin in 1977 underscored the centrality of *halakha* in the life of the Qumran sectarian community. Although it is difficult to determine a precise date of composition—scholars have proposed dates

377 For the revised English version of the *editio princeps*, which was originally published in Hebrew, see Yigael Yadin, *The Temple Scroll* (4 vols.; Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society, 1983).
ranging from the fifth or fourth century B.C.E. \(^{378}\) to the first century C.E. \(^{379}\)—sometime during the second or first century B.C.E. is perhaps the most reasonable suggestion.\(^{380}\) This text, which is preserved mainly in two manuscripts from Cave 11 (11Q19 and 11Q20), presents itself as a supplement to the Mosaic Pentateuch, or in the words of Hartmut Stegemann, a “sixth book of the Torah.”\(^{381}\) Nevertheless, this “new” Torah is more properly identified as a recycling of various laws from the Pentateuch that primarily concern not only the temple and its sacrifices, but also the proper observance of festivals and the regulation of purity and impurity. Moreover, the final section of the scroll, columns 51-66, amounts to a rewriting of Deuteronomy 12-23, underscoring the essentially midrashic nature of this text.\(^{382}\)

Although idolatry is a prominent concern in this scroll,\(^{383}\) the text does not explicitly treat the second commandment proper, i.e., the prohibition of images from the Decalogue (whether the version in Exodus or Deuteronomy). Nevertheless, the Temple Scroll does engage another Deuteronomic passage, Deut 16:21-22, that can be viewed as an extension of the second commandment. This passage in Deuteronomy proscribes two items, the שֵׁרֶץ (more broadly designated as מִימָן) and the שֵׁם, both of which are said to

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\(^{381}\) Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran*, 96.


\(^{383}\) Schiffman, "Laws Concerning Idolatry," 159-75.
be the object of YHWH’s hatred (אשֶׁר נִשְׁאוּ יְהוָ֣ה אָלְמָרַ֣ם). The former likely referred to some kind of cultic object, perhaps a sacred pole, tree or image associated with the Canaanite goddess Asherah, portrayed as the consort of El in Ugaritic literature. This goddess was apparently associated with the cult of YHWH for much of Israelite history, and a sculpted image of the goddess ( QName ) was at some point erected in the temple of Jerusalem. The second object, the <nnn>, designated a sacred stone or pillar that was typically aniconic. Although the latter term is not always condemned in the Hebrew Bible, particularly in the patriarchal narratives where it functions positively as a memorial stone to YHWH, in certain prophetic and legal contexts the is associated with idolatry and thus censured.

The Temple Scroll, however, reformulates and expands on the prohibitions of Deut 16:21–22. Although the relevant material is somewhat fragmentary, enough of the text has been preserved to provide a clear indication of how the author of this text reshapes the passage in Deuteronomy in order to define more explicitly the scope of the original proscription:

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384 The two prohibitions read as follows: (16:21); (16:22).
385 The proper identification of and its relationship to the cult of YHWH is a rather complicated subject that has occupied a significant body of secondary literature. Much of the discussion has centered on the inscriptions from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, which include a reference to YHWH and “his asherah.” For a helpful overview of the issues and range of interpretations, see Othmar Keel, and Christoph Uehlinger, Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel (trans. Thomas H. Trapp; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 229-48.
386 2 Kgs 21:7.
387 Mettinger, No Graven Image. But for an example of a partially iconic , see Keel, and Uehlinger, Gods, Goddesses, and Images, 36, fig. 26b.
388 For example, Gen 28:18; 31:45; 35:14.
389 Besides Deut 16:22, see for example Exod 23:24; Deut 7:5; 12:3; 2 Kgs 17:10; 18:4; 23:14; Hos 10:1.
This passage is broadly concerned to distinguish between insider (Jewish) and outsider ( الأولى) worship and divides into two main sections: the first a description of the cultic practices characteristic of non-Jews (51.19–21) and the second an expanded restatement of Deut 16:21–22 that serves to define (albeit negatively) the Jewish cult as the inverse of the practice of the “nations” (52.1–3). This contrast between the two groups is also delineated spatially: the territory of the non-Jews, the “every place” (בכל מקום) that is full of forbidden cultic objects, and the territory of the Jews (בכל הארץ), which ought to be empty of such objects.\(^{391}\)

That the material in column 52 is not simply a restatement of Deut 16:21–22 is clear enough. In the first place, the Temple Scroll changes the source text to include a “sculpted stone” (אבן מבית) in addition to the forbidden אשתה and מבית. According to Schiffman, the author here expands the original prohibition by conflating Deut 16:21–22

\(^{390}\) 11Q19 51.19–52.3; I am following the reconstructed text in Elisha Qimron, ed., The Temple Scroll: A Critical Edition with Extensive Reconstructions (Jerusalem: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press and Israel Exploration Society, 1996), 75-76.

\(^{391}\) For a similar delineation of space, see the discussion of B.J. below in chapter 4.
with Lev 26:1, which likewise includes among other forbidden objects. Additionally, again following the Leviticus passage, the prohibition against sculpted stones is qualified with an infinitive of purpose (לודשיהות עלייה), further delimiting the nature of the forbidden items to include only those objects with a cultic function. The effect of these changes is not unlike what we observed in Josephus’ reformulation of the second commandment in *A.J.* 3.91, where the Greek infinitive προσκυνεῖν likewise qualifies the proscription against images. The author of the *Temple Scroll* thus seems to view the biblical prohibition against images to include only those images that functioned within a cultic context.

**Philo of Alexandria**

Philo addresses the topic of idolatry, and more specifically the question of figurative art, on numerous occasions, and as Karl-Gustav Sandelin observes, his attitude toward statuary, and images in general, is rather complicated. On the one hand, Philo makes use of the conventional Jewish polemic against idols, as for example when he ridicules those who pray to lifeless gods, images that cannot see, hear, smell, taste, and so on. But on the other hand, he speaks favorably of the art (πίνακη) of the famed sculptor Phidias, and even describes the human body, that beautiful form (σώματος εύμορφον)

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392 Schiffman, "Laws Concerning Idolatry," 162-63. The relevant portion of Lev 26:1 reads as follows: לאר ispם לֹשְׁנָה לֹאַלְאַלְוּ אָבֶלְזִנוֹת לֹא יִהְיֶתְו סְפִּיַּכְו הָאָבֶלְוּ מְפַל הָכְלַּחְלַחְיָם לֹא לֹא חַלְלַחְיָם לֹא יִהְיֶשָּם לֹא אַלְבַּלְחַה לֹא לֹא חַלְלַחְיָם לֹא יִהְיֶשָּם לֹא אַלְבַּלְחַה לֹא לֹא חַלְלַחְיָם לֹא יִהְיֶשָּם L


394 E.g., *Decal.* 72–74, though it should be noted that in *Legat.* 290 Philo does seem to recognize a distinction between the gods and their iconographical representation. On this latter point, see Sandelin, "Philo's Ambivalence," 133.

395 *Ebr.* 89.
sculpted by God out of the purest clay, as a sacred shrine (ἡ νεώς ιερὰς) of the most god-like of images (ἀγαλμάτων τὸ θεοειδέστατον). A detailed analysis of this material is well beyond the scope of the present discussion, so the following focuses on Philo’s explanation of the prohibition of images in his De decalogo and De specialibus legibus.

As noted above, Philo and Josephus both divide the Decalogue along the same lines, with the “no other gods” of Exod 20:3 identified as the “first” and the prohibition against images as the “second.” Philo treats the second commandment in two brief summaries (Decal. 51 and 156) and two extended discussions (Decal. 66–81 and Spec. 1.21–31). In each Philo avoids the LXX’s εἴδωλον in favor of three common terms for Greek statuary: ξώανον, ἀγαλμα and ἀφίδρυμα. For instance, the scope of the proscription in Decal. 51 reads as follows: περὶ ξώανων καὶ ἀγαλμάτων καὶ συνόλως ἀφίδρυμάτων χειροκμήτων. On the surface, this list of items seems fairly comprehensive, encompassing at the very least all sculpted objects. Elsewhere Philo identifies ξώανον and

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398 Philo’s legal taxonomy is nevertheless much more elaborate than Josephus’, particularly in Philo’s identification of the Decalogue as the κεφάλαιον of other laws; on this, see especially Termini, “Taxonomy of Biblical Laws,” 1-29, esp. 5-10.

399 Decal. 65. According to Philo, the “first” is the most sacred of all the commandments (πρῶτον μὲν οὖν παράγγελμα καὶ παραγγελμάτων ιερώτατον στηλίτεσαμεν ἐν καυσίς).

400 See Decal. 82, where the interdiction is designated τῆς δευτέρας παρεινέσσεως.

401 One exception is the discussion in Spec. 1.25–26, where Philo quotes the injunction against εἴδωλα in Lev 19:4 and then explains that such idols—in this context understood figuratively for wealth and subsequently applied to those wily myth-makers (Spec. 1.28)—are like “shadows (σκιαῖ) and phantoms (φάσαμα), with nothing firm or strong to which they can cling” (Colson, LCL).
اخرما as statues carved of wood and stone respectively,\textsuperscript{402} and indeed, Philo even places
اخرم and خانا (along with صورة) within the broad category of pictorial and
plastic art of the Greeks and Barbarians.\textsuperscript{403} And the phrase سواليوس افتريمون
خزريمتو, which recurs (albeit in a slightly different form) in his summary in Decal.
156, would seem to include any man-made statue, regardless of the material used.

However, as noted by both Tatum and Sandelin, Philo frequently employs these
three terms together to denote not statues in general but divine statuary.\textsuperscript{404} For example,
Philo derides the human attempt to “make gods” (ثناءستهين) by filling the world with
اخرمون و خانا و الله مورين افتريمون.\textsuperscript{405} Likewise in his discussion of
the biblical injunction against those who curse god,\textsuperscript{406} Philo notes that Moses was not
speaking of the supreme creator God (و اوت و جنستو تون ولود) but of those
falsely named (ئودنموم) gods whose iconographical presence populates the inhabited
world: خانا نغر و اخرممون و تواننافروپون افتريمون و ايكومينيكإو
مسته جهةوين.\textsuperscript{407} This triad appears also in Philo’s description of the polytheism
(پلوتهو) of Tamar’s native city. In this context, the language is almost identical to his
summary of the second commandment in Decal. 51: نله ... خانا ... و اخرممون و کاي
اخرممون و سواليوس افتريمون.\textsuperscript{408} Moreover, in De specialibus legibus, Philo

\textsuperscript{402} Contempl. 7. Donohue, however, argues against a perfect typological correspondence between the
statues and materials listed, i.e., that خانا corresponds with علا and اخرمفا corresponds with لبوي; Alice A. Donohue, Xoana and the Origins of Greek Sculpture (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 101.

\textsuperscript{403} Abr. 267.

\textsuperscript{404} Tatum, "The LXX Version," 189; Sandelin, "Philo’s Ambivalence," 127.

\textsuperscript{405} Ebr. 109. See also Mos. 1.298; 2.205; Decal. 7, 156;

\textsuperscript{406} Quoting the LXX Lev 24:15: اق ان تشاافتاي ثمون.

\textsuperscript{407} Mos. 2.203–205.

\textsuperscript{408} Virt. 221.
explicitly defines the second commandment not in terms of the production of images but the production of divine images, or the fashioning of gods (θεοπλαστεῖν). ⁴⁰⁹

When Philo explains the underlying rationale of the Mosaic prohibition, he repeatedly emphasizes that sculpture falls short of an “appropriate conception of the everlasting God.”⁴¹⁰ It is absurd to deify perishable material insofar as it is inherently inferior; indeed, it would be better to deify (ἐκτεθεωκέναι) sculptors and painters rather than their lifeless creations.⁴¹¹ The fundamental problem addressed by these assertions is not the image itself—its iconography and material—but that the ensouled is worshiping the soulless (μηδεὶς οὖν τῶν ἐχόντων ψυχὴν ἀψύχῳ τυλί προσκυνεῖ·τω).⁴¹² From within this conceptual framework, the second commandment is thus not even limited to sculpture per se, or any kind of artistic representation of the divine realm, but can be equally applied to the Egyptian practice of deifying animals and the deification of wealth.⁴¹³

Moreover, Philo’s synthesis of the prohibition against images demonstrates that, notwithstanding the numerical distinction between the so-called first and second commandments, the two are inextricably linked:

So then He gave no place in His sacred code of laws to all such setting up of other gods (τοιαύτῃν ἐκθέωσιν), and called upon men to honour Him that truly is, not because He needed that honour should be paid to Him, for He that is all-sufficient to Himself needs nothing else, but because He wished to lead the human race, wandering in pathless wilds, to the road from which none can stray, so that following nature they might win the

⁴⁰⁹ Spec. 1.21.
⁴¹⁰ Decal. 67.
⁴¹¹ Decal. 69-70.
⁴¹² Decal. 76.
⁴¹³ On the Egyptians: Decal. 76–80; on wealth, Spec. 1.25–27.
best of goals, knowledge of Him that truly is, Who is the primal and most perfect good, from Whom as from a fountain is showered the water of each particular good upon the world and them that dwell therein.\textsuperscript{414}

In sum, although Philo largely avoids the term $\epsilon\iota\delta\omega\lambda\omicron\upsilon$ in his treatment of the prohibition against images, he nevertheless clearly interprets this proscription “in a polemically anti-idolic and not in an anti-iconic” manner.\textsuperscript{415} cult images, and not images in general, fall under the purview of the Mosaic prohibition.

\textbf{Pseudo-Philo}

Ps.-Philo’s \textit{Liber antiquitatum biblicarum} (hereafter \textit{L.A.B.}), composed at some point during the first century C.E., perhaps shortly before the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E.,\textsuperscript{416} is an expansive retelling of the biblical narrative, encompassing the history of the Israelites from Adam to David. Although \textit{L.A.B.} only survives in Latin translation, it was likely composed in Hebrew and then translated into Greek, on which the Latin translation is based.\textsuperscript{417} There are numerous similarities between \textit{L.A.B.} and Josephus’ \textit{A.J.}, on both a literary and exegetical level, making this text particularly relevant for the present discussion.\textsuperscript{418}

\textsuperscript{414} \textit{Decal.} 81 (Colson, LCL).

\textsuperscript{415} Tatum, "The LXX Version," 189. So also Sandelin, who interprets Philo’s reading of the second commandment as “a prohibition of idolatry”; see Sandelin, "Philo's Ambivalence," 129.


\textsuperscript{417} This view was originally proposed in 1898 by Leopold Cohn and has since become generally accepted in scholarship on \textit{L.A.B.}; see Leopold Cohn, "An Apocryphal Work Ascribed to Philo of Alexandria," \textit{JQR} 10 (1898): 277-332; Daniel J. Harrington, "The Original Language of Pseudo-Philo's \textit{Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum}," \textit{HTR} 63 (1970): 503-14.

Recent discussion has highlighted the centrality of idolatry in the overarching narrative development, and Ps.-Philo explicitly refers to the second commandment on two separate occasions: *L.A.B.* 11:6 and 44:6–7. The first occurs within his retelling of the Sinai episode and includes an extensive citation of the Sinai legislation interspersed with the author’s own elaborations. As is evident in the following comparison, excepting word order the Latin of *L.A.B.* follows closely the Greek and Hebrew of Exodus 20:4, with one notable addition, the word *deos*:

| MT | לא תעשנה ולך אל | LXX | οὐ ποιήσεις σεαυτῷ έλθόλον | L.A.B. | deos sculptiles non facies tibi |

The absence of Exod. 20:3—“You shall not have any other gods besides me”—is noteworthy here, although I am not convinced that the author has “pointedly chosen to leave this out.” Rather, as with *Jubilees* the issue of foreign deities is conflated with the issue of images, resulting in a single proscription against sculpted deities (*deos sculptiles*). By conflating the first two commandments, the author has thus emphasized the *cultic* nature of the proscribed images.

The second reference to the prohibition of images occurs in Ps.-Philo’s retelling of the Judges narrative, specifically the episode involving the idols that Micah crafted at the behest of his mother. According to Ps.-Philo, Micah’s wicked and impious actions, [422](#)
emblematic of a wider problem of Israelite apostasy, elicits a strong response from the God of Israel, who announces his impending judgment.\textsuperscript{423} Embedded within the divine indictment against “the sons of Israel” is a list of nine of the ten commandments given at Sinai, recounted in order to demonstrate, in Frederick Murphy’s words, that “[i]dolatry is the root of all evil,”\textsuperscript{424} that in violating the prohibition against idols the Israelites had ultimately violated all of God’s commandments. The prohibition of images is rephrased twice within this divine speech:\textsuperscript{425}

\begin{quote}
\textit{et dixi ut non facerent idola, et consenserunt ut non sculperent effigies deorum.}
\end{quote}

I said that they should not make idols, and they agreed not to carve images of gods (44:6).

\begin{quote}
<lacuna> \textit{ut non facerent idola, nec opera deorum eorum qui nati sunt de corruptela in appellatione sculptilis et eorum per que facta sunt corrupta omnia.}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
<lacuna> not to make idols nor to perform the service of those gods that have been born from corruption under the name of graven image and of those through which all things have become corrupt (44:7).
\end{quote}

As in the case of \textit{L.A.B.} 11:6, Exodus 20:3 is again collapsed into the prohibition against images. Hence the scope of the proscription here is not images per se, but \textit{effigies deorum}, images of the gods. Likewise, in the second instance the act of making an idol is juxtaposed with the act of serving the gods, explicitly forging a clear link between craftsmanship and cultic activity.\textsuperscript{426}

\textsuperscript{423} \textit{L.A.B.} 44:6–10.

\textsuperscript{424} Murphy, "Idolatry in Pseudo-Philo,” 279.


\textsuperscript{426} Jacobson suggests that the plural \textit{opera} translates the Hebrew term \textit{מָאתָם}, with the implication that the second commandment constitutes a prohibition against making idols for worship; see Ibid., 2:1011.
A Prohibition of Images in toto: The Mekilta de R. Yishmael

The Mekilta de R. Yishmael (hereafter Mek. R. Yish.) is an extended exegetical commentary, consisting of nine tractates (massekhtot) devoted primarily (though not exclusively) to the legal material in Exodus, hence its classification among the halakhic midrashim.\(^{427}\) The date of this material is notoriously slippery, both in its various parts and as a fully redacted composition. Although the halakhic midrashim are generally considered Tannaitic, i.e., dating to the so-called period of the tannaim extending from 70 C.E. through the codification of the Mishnah in the early third century C.E., proposed dates for the final redaction of Mek. R. Yish. range from the latter half of the third century C.E.\(^{428}\) to the eighth century C.E.\(^{429}\) For the present discussion, it is enough to note that this text in its final form is indisputably a post-destruction composition, though it is certainly possible that various exegetical traditions contained therein predate 70 C.E. The relevant portion of Mek. R. Yish. for this analysis occurs in the sixth tractate (Bahodesh), which covers Exodus 19-20 and includes a lengthy block of material devoted to an explanation of the clause לא תעשוイメージ in Exodus 20:4. I include below a structural translation of the full text:\(^{430}\)

1. “YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FOR YOURSELF A CARVED IMAGE.” [Exod 20:4]
2. One should not make for himself one that is engraved (נצלים), but
3. perhaps one can make for himself one that is solid (אשופים)?
   Scripture says: “NOR ANY LIKENESS.” [Exod 20:4]

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\(^{427}\) The sections of Exodus covered in the text are Exod 12:1-23:19; 31:12-17; 35:1-3, or approximately 30% of the total book. For an introduction to the various issues surrounding this text, see H. L. Strack, and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (trans. Markus Bockmuehl; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 251-57.

\(^{428}\) Ibid., 255.

\(^{429}\) Ben-Zion Wacholder, "The Date of the Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael," *HUCA* 39 (1968): 117-44.

\(^{430}\) *Mek. R. Yish.*, *Bahodesh* 6. The enumeration of lines and translation are my own.
One should not make for himself a solid, but perhaps one can plant for himself a plant?

Scripture says: “YOU SHALL NOT PLANT FOR YOURSELF AN ASHERAH.” [Deut 16:21]

One should not plant for himself a plant, but perhaps one can make for himself [an image] from a tree?

Scripture says: “ANY TREE.” [Deut 16:21]

One should not make for himself [an image] from a tree, but perhaps one can make for himself [an image] of stone?

Scripture says: “NOR A SCULPTED (מעשיה) STONE.” [Lev 26:1]

One should not make for himself [an image] of stone, but perhaps one can make for himself [an image] of silver?

Scripture says: “GODS OF SILVER.” [Exod 20:20]

One should not make for himself [an image] of silver, but perhaps one can make for himself [an image] of gold?

Scripture says: “GODS OF GOLD.” [Exod 20:20]

One should not make for himself [an image] of gold, but perhaps one can make for himself [an image] of copper, tin or lead?

Scripture says: “AND GODS OF MOLTEN METAL (משיח) YOU SHALL NOT MAKE.” [Lev 19:4]

One should not make for himself a likeness of any of these [aforementioned items], but perhaps one can make for himself a likeness of any figure (_ascii)?

Scripture says: “LEST YOU ACT CORRUPTLY AND MAKE FOR YOURSELVES A CARVED IMAGE (חפר), A LIKENESS OF ANY FIGURE.” [Deut 4:16]

One should not make for himself a likeness of any figure, but perhaps one can make for himself a likeness of cattle or a bird?

Scripture says: “THE FORM OF ANY CATTLE (חפר של הבימה) ON THE EARTH OR THE FORM OF ANY WINGED BIRD (ענני של רוח השמים).” [Deut 4:17]

One should not make for himself a likeness of any of these, but perhaps one can make for himself a likeness of fish, locusts, unclean animals, or reptiles?

Scripture says: “THE FORM OF ANY THING THAT CREEPS ON THE GROUND, THE FORM OF ANY FISH IN THE WATER.” [Deut 4:18]

One should not make for himself a likeness of any of these, but perhaps one can make for himself a likeness of the sun or the moon, the stars or the planets?

Scripture says: “LEST YOU LIFT UP YOUR EYES TO THE HEAVENS, ETC.” [Deut 4:19]

One should not make for himself a likeness of any of these, but perhaps one can make for himself a likeness of angels, Cherubim, Ophannim, or [other] heavenly beings?

Scripture says: “THAT WHICH IS IN THE HEAVENS.” [Exod 20:4]

If that which is in the heavens [is prohibited], then perhaps [this only...
includes] a likeness of the sun or the moon or the stars or the planets?

Scripture says: “ABOVE” [Exod 20:4], [which means] neither the likeness of angels, nor the likeness of Cherubim, nor the likeness of Ophannim.

One should not make for himself a likeness of any of these, but perhaps one can make for himself a likeness the abyss or the darkness or deep darkness?

Scripture says: “AND THAT WHICH IS BENEATH THE EARTH, OR THAT WHICH IS IN THE WATERS BENEATH THE EARTH” [Exod 20:4].

[This] encompasses a reflected image (הָאוֹדָה), according to the words of R. Aqiva.

But there are others [who say, this] encompasses water snakes (הָאֵשׁ הָאָדָם).

Scripture so pursued the evil inclination so as not to give it a place to find for itself a pretext for permitting [idolatry].

This text proceeds through a string of scriptural citations structured around a series of questions and answers whose cumulative effect is to probe the meaning of the initial clause from Exod 20:4—לَا תַּתָּשָׁמֵךְ לְךָ פֶּすֶל. Each subsequent scriptural citation functions both to answer an antecedent question while eliciting another question, which in turn is answered with another scriptural citation, and so on. The rhetorical import of this process of interrogating the biblical text is to establish an all-encompassing definition of the Hebrew term פֶּסֶל. According to this text, the biblical prohibition against making a thus includes not just an engraved image (נָלַעְשָׁה; line 2) but also a solid (אָמַסָּה; line 3) image, an image sculpted from wood, stone, silver, gold, or any type of metal (lines 9-24); even a “likeness of any figure” (רֶםֶשׁ פֶּסֶל; line 27) is verboten, including theriomorphic, astral and angelic representations (lines 25-52). That the Mek. R. Yish. includes in the ban such items as the cherubim, prominent in the numerous literary descriptions of the iconography of the biblical tabernacle/temple, underscores the

431 For a discussion of this text in the context of the rabbinic polemic against angel veneration, see Peter Schäfer, Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen: Untersuchungen zur Rabbinischen Engelvorstellung (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975), 67-68.
unequivocally comprehensive stance of this text: the second commandment forbids all forms of figurative representation.\textsuperscript{432} Moreover, there is no hint in this text that the author(s) intended only images with cultic associations.\textsuperscript{433}

Why this seemingly “conservative” approach to the second commandment? The final sentence imaginatively depicts scripture as an aggressor in persistent pursuit of the האָּרֶץ הַמֶּשֶׁשׁ ("evil inclination"), which if left to its own devices will inevitably find a way to permit האָּרוּם הַמֶּשֶׁשׁ (idolatry). This image points to the underlying motivation of this text, namely that the frequent repetition of scriptural citations, which collectively expand the scope of the second commandment to all forms of figurative representation, functions as a kind of halakhic border patrol, a protective wall erected to prevent even the potential for committing idolatry.

Although Levine suggests that the \textit{Mek. R. Yish.} is “perhaps more reflective of rabbinic views,”\textsuperscript{434} numerous recent studies have drawn attention to a rather lively halakhic debate throughout the rabbinic corpus over the question of images and the second commandment, demonstrating a broad range of legal and exegetical positions—from the so-called stringent to the more lenient—and rendering suspect the notion of a single or even predominant “rabbinic” viewpoint.\textsuperscript{435} One fascinating and oft cited

\textsuperscript{432} Numerous scholars have interpreted this passage as an absolute ban on figurative art; see e.g., Goodenough, \textit{Jewish Symbols}, 4:3-24; Boaz Cohen, "Art in Jewish Law," \textit{Judaism} 3 (1954): 168; Urbach, "Rabbinical Laws on Idolatry," 235; Levine, \textit{The Ancient Synagogue}, 451-53.


\textsuperscript{434} Levine, \textit{The Ancient Synagogue}, 451. It should be noted that Levine does discuss other what he calls more lenient stances, particularly the legend of Rabban Gamaliel in the bathhouse (see Ibid., 212-213)

example of an “alternative” voice is the story of Rabban Gamaliel bathing in front of a statue of Aphrodite in a Roman bathhouse.\textsuperscript{436} Rabban Gamaliel justifies his proximity to the goddess by implicitly appealing to a legal distinction between “permitted” and “forbidden” images. In this particular case, how people treat the goddess on a daily basis in part determines her status as a permitted image:

Furthermore, [even] if you are given a large sum of money, [would] you enter into your idolatry naked, [or] polluted from semen, [or would you] urinate in front of her?! And she [Aphrodite] is standing by the drainage and all the people are urinating in front of her. It is said only “their gods,” [i.e.,] that which \textit{he treats as a god} is prohibited, but that which \textit{he does not treat as a god} is permitted.\textsuperscript{437}

This anecdote involving Rabban Gamaliel suggests that at least for some of the sages represented in the Mishnah iconography alone was insufficient to determine the status of an image. In this example the iconography would on the surface seem especially damning. Surely a three dimensional anthropomorphic sculpture unambiguously representing the goddess Aphrodite falls within the scope of the בְּאֶ מֶד in Exod 20:4! Yet for Rabban Gamaliel, that the image in question \textit{looks like} the goddess is immaterial. The central question is: does she \textit{act like} a goddess, or better, is she \textit{treated like} a goddess? From this perspective, function—whether or not an image has some kind of cultic


\textsuperscript{437} Trans. Eliav, "Viewing the Sculptural Environment," 424 (emphasis mine).
association or ritual status, be it a formally consecrated image or an image treated as such—is critical in determining the status of an image.438

This cultic criterion is likewise evident in the wider context of the Gamaliel legend, particularly the opening statement of Mishnah tractate Avodah Zarah chapter 3:

“All statues (של כל הגללים) are forbidden, since they are worshiped (לוהן אלו) once a year,” so the words of R. Meir. But the sages say, “It [a statue] is not forbidden, except any that have in its hand a rod, or a bird, or a sphere.” Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel says, “Any [statue] that has anything in its hand.”439

The halakhic dispute preserved in this text concerns the scope of forbidden images, and although there is an obvious disagreement over what statues are and are not forbidden—R. Meir on one end of the spectrum, and the sages on the other end, with Rabban Simeon taking a mediating position—all parties in the dispute seem to agree that the criterion of worship determines the status of the image. Although R. Meir takes a more comprehensive stance by proscribing all statues, he does so on the assumption, however unlikely, that all statues are worshiped. The sages who then disagree with R. Meir base their argument on the supposition that all statues are not worshiped, but only those that bear the iconographic marks of cultic statues: either grasping a staff, bird or sphere, or in the case of Rabban Simeon, grasping anything.440

438 Blidstein similarly remarks: “function—and not shape—determines sanctity, and it is sanctity that determines whether an object is or is not idolatrous”; Blidstein, "Nullification of Idolatry," 8. Eliav likewise points to the centrality of the criterion of worship in such halakhic disputes: “the sages differentiated between statues on the basis of those that were the objects of pagan worship and those that were not”; Eliav, "Viewing the Sculptural Environment," 421.

439 m. Avod. Zar. 3:1 (emphasis mine).

440 Eliav calls this a “plastic language” that was used to determine deified statues; Eliav, "Viewing the Sculptural Environment," 423.
The traditions preserved in the Mishnah tractate *Avodah Zarah*, which all agree, at least theoretically, on the categories of “permitted” and “forbidden” images, contrast markedly with halakhic reading of Exodus 20:4 in the *Mek. R. Yish*. insofar as the latter seems to preclude even the possibility of “permitted” images. Perhaps the closest parallel to the exegetical stance of the *Mek. R. Yish.* comes from Tertullian in his treatise *De idolatria*:

God forbids the making as much as the worship of an idol. If it is forbidden to worship a thing, then, to the extent that making it precedes worshipping it, does the prohibition to make it have priority over the prohibition to worship it. It is for this reason, namely to root out the material occasion for idolatry, that Divine Law proclaims: *you shall make no idol*; and by adding, *nor a likeness of the things which are in the heaven and which are on the earth and which are in the sea*, it has denied the whole world to the servants of God for the practice of these arts. 441

By divorcing the prohibition of making an image from worshiping an image, Tertullian is able to read Exod 20:4 as an interdiction against the artistic representation of all observable phenomena, the whole world (*toto mundo*). Indeed, Tertullian eschews any attempt to restrict the forbidden image to that “which has been consecrated in human shape” (*quod humana effigie sit consecratum*). 442

**Summary**

At least three exegetical approaches to the Mosaic prohibition against images are evident in the above survey of texts. The first possibility is to simply avoid the interdiction. Unfortunately, while the omission of the second commandment in Ps.-Phoc. is tantalizing, it is difficult to know precisely how to interpret this silence. The second

possibility, what is clearly the predominant viewpoint evident in a wide range of texts from the pre- and post-destruction periods, is to restrict the prohibition to cultic images. From this perspective, the prohibitions in Exodus 20:4–5 against making (שֶׁפֶר) and worshiping (לֹא שֶׁפֶר) images are inextricably linked. By contrast, the third approach, evident most clearly in the post-destruction Mek. R. Yish., but also occasionally in Josephus’ narrative summaries, divorces the issue of making images from worshiping them, effectively transforming the second commandment into a prohibition of both figural representation and idolatrous worship. This perspective thus precludes even the possibility of “permitted” images.

Conclusion

In the prevailing scholarly narrative, based largely on the archaeological record read through the lens of Josephus and the rabbis, the “protagonist” of this chapter—the biblical prohibition of images—plays a clearly defined role. Before 70 C.E., the second commandment is construed as an inflexible proscription of all figurative images, i.e., artistic representations of living beings, whether in the flat or round. It matters not what the image happens to represent, how it happens to function, or even where it happens to be located. From this perspective, the only possible exceptions, and the only permissible images, are those consisting of floral or geometric motifs (i.e., anything non-figurative). But after the destruction of the temple, so the story goes, the situation changes drastically, and Jews began to soften their stance toward images, as even a cursory glance at the synagogue remains demonstrates. Most of the rabbis, the legal scholars responsible for the vast collection of halakhic and aggadic material in the Mishnah, Talmuds, and various midrashic compilations, are evidently persuaded by (or in some reconstructions,
responsible for) this more flexible position, and even establish the criterion of worship to
determine whether an image is “permitted” or “forbidden.” Thus, in the post-destruction
era, proper interpretation of the second commandment does not primarily revolve around
*iconography*, whether an image is figurative or non-figurative, but *iconolatry*, whether an
image is in some sense cultic or non-cultic.

Yet a careful reading of a broader range of literary sources complicates this
narrative. Indeed, the selection of sources included in this chapter tells a rather different
story, one that resists the conventional chronological paradigm outlined above. Although
a range of exegetical possibilities does emerge from the texts, the predominant tendency,
both before and after 70 C.E., was to restrict the scope of the second commandment to
images that had some kind of cultic association, whether formally consecrated or
otherwise deemed an object of worship. Indeed, the only Jewish text that unambiguously
asserts otherwise, the *Mek. R. Yish.* (a reading likewise evident in Tertullian’s *De
idolatria*), dates to the period after the destruction of the temple (i.e., during the so-called
flexible period), rendering problematic the supposition that Second Temple Jews widely
interpreted the second commandment as a proscription against figurative art in general,
regardless of context or function.

This is not to say that there were no Jews during the Second Temple period who
interpreted Exodus 20:4–5 along the lines of the *Mek. R. Yish.*, but only that such an
exegetical stance is not unambiguously borne out by the available literary sources from
the period in question, with the possible exception of select passages from Josephus. And
even Josephus’ testimony, as argued above, is not entirely straightforward. While in
certain contexts, particularly in narrative retrospective glances at the second
commandment, Josephus give voice to a seemingly strict interpretation of the
interdiction, in the two explicitly exegetical contexts (A.J. 3.91 and C. Ap. 2.190–192) he
displays a more nuanced reading of the Decalogue that draws attention to the cultic
nature of the proscribed images. The question is: Why this apparent tension between
narrative and exegesis? At the very least, this raises the possibility that there is more to
Josephus’ narrative summaries than meets the eye, that perhaps his reformulation of the
second commandment in his various accounts of Jewish “iconoclasm” tells us more about
Josephus’ rhetorical interests than his exegetical stance, a possibility that will occupy the
focus of the next two chapters.
People are by nature cartographers; whether we are speaking of the need to organize newly discovered territories or the impulse to chart beforehand a long journey, mapping space is a fundamental means of understanding one’s own place in an otherwise chaotic world. Moreover, the concept of mapping, and more generally the tendency to organize space through conceptual representations (i.e., “mental maps”), is undoubtedly much older than the actual production of maps. As J. Brian Harley notes: “There has probably always been a mapping impulse in human consciousness, and the mapping experience—involving the cognitive mapping of space—undoubtedly existed long before the physical artifacts we now call maps.”

This notion of mental mapping, or “cognitive cartography,” is particularly relevant for the issues raised in this chapter, mainly because it draws attention not just to the reality of space itself—e.g., the precise dimensions of a particular geographical territory, the exact locations of its borders, etc.—but rather to the interplay between person and place, to the way in which people perceive and experience a particular spatial

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reality. Of course, an individual’s mental map is not drawn from thin air, as it were, but in some sense corresponds, however imperfectly, to the reality it describes. The conceptual and corporeal are inextricably entwined, and people’s perceptions cannot be completely isolated from their physical context. Nevertheless, cognitive cartography concerns not only the organization of space but also the creation of space, and mental constructions of space often offer a glimpse into “imagined worlds,” the territories of the ideal, and the place of the cartographer within such worlds. In other words, such cognitive maps are invaluable not simply to understand space itself but the people who both inhabit and imagine space, who mediate through cognitive maps a particular understanding of themselves and their place in the world. In short, mapping space becomes a means of mapping culture and identity.

This is particularly true when it comes to the issue of sacred space, a subject that has recently garnered quite a bit of attention in the study of religion. Of course, that many religions (perhaps even most), Judaism included, have distinguished between


445 Indeed, an important assumption of this dissertation is that in antiquity, and throughout history, “material reality and human consciousness have been entangled in an endless reciprocal dance”; Yaron Z. Eliav, God's Mountain: The Temple Mount in Time, Place, and Memory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), xxviii.


447 See, for example, the collection of essays in Jamie Scott, and Paul Simpson-Housley, eds., Sacred Places and Profane Spaces: Essays in the Geographics of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991). More recently, the publication of the proceedings from a conference held at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem encompasses an even broader geographical (and religious) range, including Israel, Japan, Mexico, and India inter alia; see Benjamin Z. Kedar, and R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, eds., Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land (New York: New York University Press, 1998).
sacred and profane space is well-known and need hardly be mentioned. However, it is not sufficient simply to identify what is or is not sacred in a particular religious tradition; rather the fundamental question revolves around the nature of space itself and the people who inhabit such space. Why is a particular location sacred? What makes it sacred, and what does this tell us about those for whom it is sacred?

For Mircea Eliade, space becomes sacred through a hierophanic interruption that detaches “a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and [makes] it qualitatively different.” Eliade calls this phenomenon a “mysterious act,” a manifestation of the ganz andere (the wholly other), a metaphysical reality that invades the mundane of this world. Although Eliade acknowledges the place of ritual in the creation of holy sites, he nevertheless downplays the humanness of such activities: “we must not suppose that human work is in question here, that it is through his own efforts that man can consecrate a space. In reality the ritual by which he constructs a sacred space is efficacious in the measure in which it reproduces the work of the gods.”

Recent research has called into question Eliade’s theoretical framework, shifting the focus instead to the human activity of locating the sacred, especially the

449 Ibid., 11-12.
450 Ibid., 29 (emphasis original).
ritual/liturgical processes involved in transforming space.\textsuperscript{452} For example, Jonathan Z. Smith identifies the human as a “world-creating being,” one who attempts “to manipulate and negotiate ones [sic] ‘situation’ so as to have ‘space’ in which to meaningfully dwell.”\textsuperscript{453} From this perspective, it is not a question of whether a particular place is sacred or profane, since in actuality “there is nothing that is inherently or essentially clean or unclean, sacred or profane. There are situational or relational categories, mobile boundaries which shift according to the map being employed.”\textsuperscript{454} Therefore, the historian’s task is to study the “variety of attempts to map, construct and inhabit … positions of power,” that is, “power to relate ones [sic] domain to the plurality of environmental and social spheres.”\textsuperscript{455}

Smith’s formulation points to two important assumptions that have shaped the discussion in this chapter. First, delineations of space inherently require boundary markers or border lines, but these are fluid, easily manipulated, and ultimately vary from one “cartographer” to another. Second, sacred maps are more about locating self than the sacred, about negotiating identity within a particular place and time, and in the face of a complex range of socio-politico-cultural forces. With this in mind, I wish to propose in this chapter that embedded in the iconoclastic narratives of B.J. is the perception that statuary, and even more broadly all forms of sculptural representation, functions in part


\textsuperscript{453} Jonathan Z. Smith, \textit{Map is not Territory} (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 290-91.

\textsuperscript{454} Ibid., 291. Smith specifically proposes in this volume that the shifting boundaries with Judaism are manifest in a transformation from a locative to utopian concept of sacred space, that is, from a view that restricts sacrality to the center to a view that moves sacrality to the periphery. For an attempt to examine in more detail the precise nature of this transformation, see Baruch M. Bokser, "Approaching Sacred Space," \textit{HTR} 78 (1985): 279-99.

\textsuperscript{455} Smith, \textit{Map is not Territory}, 291. See also Smith, \textit{To Take Place}, 104-05.
as a mapping device, a kind of visual boundary marker of sacred space, tangibly delineating where the divine does and does not reside. Moreover, although this perception is widely attested in Greek and Latin literature, Josephus in this text manipulates such boundaries of Greco-Roman sacrality in a kind of “reversal of norms,” whereby statues become quintessential elements of *profane space*, and conversely, the absence of statues signals the presence of sanctity. This inversion of Greco-Roman conceptions in turn functions in the wider narrative context of *B.J.* as a means of defining identity and charting the boundaries and limits of imperial power within the context of Roman domination.

**Sculpture and the Mapping of Space in Greco-Roman Antiquity**

In the following section I will explore the relationship between εἰκόνες (and related terminology) and space in *B.J.*, first considering Josephus’ articulation of Judea and Jerusalem as a sacred territory in his narrative excurses, followed by an examination of the role of sculpture as a boundary marker in his so-called iconoclastic narratives. I will then place this narrative material within a wider comparative context, i.e., a broad and diverse selection of Greek and Latin sources, considering Josephus’ mapping strategy in the light of a widespread tendency in Greco-Roman sources to link sculpture and sacred space.

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456 Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society*, 276. Although Stewart uses this phrase to explain the practice of *damnatio memoriae*, seeing it as a “negation of the symbolism” of imperial authority (see the discussion below in chapter 6), I believe it aptly applies to Josephus’ own inversion of a pervasive norm.
Temple–Jerusalem–Judea: Josephus’ Concentric Circles of Holiness

The basic spatial layout of Judea is set out in a fairly straightforward manner in B.J. 3.51–58: the northern border is marked by the village called Anuathu Borcaeus, and the southern by the Arabian village Iardan; on the eastern border runs the Jordan River and the western limit is marked by the town of Joppa; precisely at the center (μεσαίτατη) lies the city of Jerusalem, the “navel of the country” (ὁμφαλὸν τοῦ ἄστυ τῆς χώρας ἐκάλεσαν). In this context, Josephus’ description of Judea is brief, functioning as the final segment of a narrative excursus on the “stage” of the war against Rome—Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. Nevertheless, by locating Jerusalem at the exact center of Judea, a spatial layout that hardly reflects the actual geography of Roman Judea, and by linking the city to the Hellenistic notion of ὁμφαλός, which, as exemplified in the famed temple of Apollo at Delphi, represents both the center of the universe and the focal point of sacred activity, this text reflects in skeletal form a sacred cosmography consisting of concentric circles of sanctity whose very center represents the axis mundi, the point at which heaven and earth are joined.

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458 B.J. 3.52.
460 Using the reference points set out in Josephus’ narrative, Jerusalem is approximately 22 miles from Anuath Borcaeus, 34 miles from Iardan (if the latter is correctly identified as the modern Tell Arad), 19 miles from the Jordan River, and 35 miles from Joppa.
This concentric cosmography is made even more explicit in Josephus’ descriptions of the Herodian temple in *B.J.* 5.184–237 (as well as *A.J.* 15.391–425).\textsuperscript{463} The narrative structure in both descriptions moves from periphery to center, marking out at least four distinct sectors corresponding with an increasing degree of holiness: \textsuperscript{464}

1. There is the outer court, the so-called court of the Gentiles, which Josephus designates in *A.J.* as the “first court” (ὀ πρώτος περίβολος).\textsuperscript{465}

This space was open to both Jews and Gentiles, and consisted of a vast courtyard enclosed by a circuit of porticoes, foremost of which was the Royal Stoa at the south end of the complex.\textsuperscript{466} In another context,

Jerusalem is a familiar representation of sacred space in Jewish tradition. For example, *Jubilees* identifies Mount Zion as the “navel of the earth,” one of three holy places created by God (*Jub.* 8:19). The Mishnah tractate *Kelim* (early third century C.E.) identifies ten degrees of space corresponding to increasing degrees of holiness: the land of Israel, Israel’s walled cities, the city of Jerusalem, the Temple Mount, the courts enclosed by the *soreg* (balustrade beyond which gentiles were forbidden), the court of women, the court of Israelites, the court of Priests, the area surrounding the altar, the sanctuary, and the holy of Holies within the sanctuary (*m. Kelim* 1:6-9). Perhaps the most explicit example of this concentric scheme is found in the *Midrash Tanhuma*: “Just as the navel is found at the center of a human being, so the land of Israel is found at the center of the world … and it is the foundation of the world. Jerusalem is at the center of the land of Israel, the Temple is at the center of Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies is at the center of the Temple, the Ark is at the center of the Holy of Holies and the Foundation Stone is in front of the Ark, which spot is the foundation of the world” (*Tanh. Qedoshim* 10, cited in Smith, “Gods and Earth,” 111).


\textsuperscript{465} *A.J.* 15.417.

Josephus describes this entire area, inclusive of the temple, with the designation the τέμενος (sacred precinct) of God.\textsuperscript{467}

2. Proceeding inward, there is a second sacred enclosure (τὸ δεύτερον ἱερὸν), which was marked with warnings in Latin and Greek prohibiting foreigners from entering this holy space (μηδένα ἄλλοφυλον ἐντὸς τοῦ ἁγίου παρθένα).\textsuperscript{468} Josephus describes in this area a special section for Jewish women to worship, though this should not be taken to indicate that Jewish men were prohibited within this area.\textsuperscript{469} Rather, as is indicated explicitly in \textit{A.J.}, this section represented the point beyond which women could not pass.\textsuperscript{470} In both \textit{B.J.} and \textit{A.J.}, the so-called court of women is considered part of the δεύτερον ἱερὸν.

3. Continuing toward the center from the second court is a third court restricted only to priests.\textsuperscript{471} Within this space stood the main temple structure, designated in both \textit{B.J.} and \textit{A.J.} with the Greek terms ναός and ἱεropolis, or just ἱερόν.\textsuperscript{472}

4. Finally, there resides within the ναός the sacred center, which was restricted to the High Priest, and that only once a year on the Day of

\textsuperscript{467} \textit{B.J.} 4.388. On the significance of this designation, see Eliav, \textit{God's Mountain}, 39-44.

\textsuperscript{468} \textit{B.J.} 5.193–194. Two extant copies of this inscription have been discovered, one (nearly) complete and the other partial. The complete version reads: ΜΗΘΕΝΑ ΑΛΛΟΓΈΝΗ ΕΙΣΠΟΡΕΥΕΘΑΙ ΕΝΤΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΠΕΡΙ ΤΟ ΙΕΡΟΝ ΤΡΨΦΑΚΤΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΠΕΡΙΒΟΛΟΥ ΟΣ Δ ΑΝ ΔΗΦΘΕ ΕΑΥΤΩΙ ΑΙΤΙΟΣ ΕΣΤΑΙ ΔΙΑ ΤΟ ΕΧΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΕΙΝ ΘΑΝΑΤΟΝ (\textit{CIJ} 2.1400).

\textsuperscript{469} \textit{B.J.} 198–200.

\textsuperscript{470} \textit{A.J.} 15.419; Safrai, "The Temple," 867. See also the discussion and bibliography in Busink, \textit{Der Tempel von Jerusalem}, 2:1073-79.

\textsuperscript{471} \textit{A.J.} 15.419–420.

\textsuperscript{472} \textit{B.J.} 5.207; \textit{A.J.} 15.421.
Atonement.\textsuperscript{473} Josephus describes this space as “inaccessible, undefiled, and invisible to all, and it was called the holy of holy” (ἀβατον δὲ καὶ ἀχραντον καὶ ἀθέατον ἦν πᾶσιν ἁγίον δὲ ἁγίον ἑκάλειτο).\textsuperscript{474}

Actually, the four sectors outlined above might better be divided into five, since Josephus regulates the degree of sanctity for a given sector according to the type of people permitted within a given area, moving from the lowest degree of sanctity (ἄλλοφυλοι) to the highest degree (ἄρχιερεύς). Thus, what Josephus identifies as the second court actually consists of two degrees of holiness, the lower corresponding to the border open to Jewish women and the higher corresponding to the border open to Jewish men. In any case, it is important to note again that Josephus views the entire complex, inclusive of the court of the Gentiles, as a sacred enclosure, a τέμενος of God, with varying degrees of sanctity therein.\textsuperscript{475}

With this spatial configuration in mind, the synoptic descriptions of the porticoes in the outer (first) court, and in particular the language of sculpture included (or excluded), is especially instructive for the present discussion. Both \textit{B.J.} and \textit{A.J.} include an unbridled admiration for Herodian architecture, with emphasis on the magnificent columns of the porticoes, especially the Royal Stoa on the southern end of the temple

\textsuperscript{473} \textit{B.J.} 5.236–237.
\textsuperscript{474} \textit{B.J.} 5.219.
\textsuperscript{475} Contra Meir Ben-Dov, who suggests that the southern end of the complex, the location of the Royal Stoa, was not considered a holy place; see Ben-Dov, \textit{In the Shadow}, 132. This claim completely ignores the fact that Josephus uses the Greek term τέμενος to describe the entire complex, inclusive of the Royal Stoa, and not just the immediate precinct of the temple itself. Moreover, that Josephus calls the area within the sōreg a δεύτερον ἱερόν implies that what preceded it in his description was the first sacred area.
Speaking of the entire circuit of porticoes surrounding the τζεμενος, Josephus in B.J. calls them a “noteworthy spectacle” (θεωριαν ἄξιολογον), reminiscent of the periegetic language of Pausanias’ Periēgēsis Hellados. Similarly, in A.J. Josephus says of the Royal Stoa: “it was a work more noteworthy than any under the sun” (ἔργον δ’ ἦν ἄξιαφηγητότατον τῶν υφ’ ἠλίω). Notwithstanding such superficial similarities between the two accounts, however, Josephus’ lavish description in A.J. departs markedly from B.J. in one important respect, the vivid portrayal of carvings (γλυφαί) adorning the Royal Stoa. Specifically, Josephus notes in A.J. that the capitals were carved in a Corinthian style (ἐκατὸν κλωνοκράων αὐτοῖς κατὰ τὸν Κορίνθιον τρόπον ἐπεξεργασμένων γλυφαῖς), and further, that the ceilings within the porticoes “were adorned with wood carvings in all kinds of shapes” (αἱ δ’ ὀροφαὶ ξύλως ἐξήκοητο γλυφαίς πολυτρόποις σχημάτων ἰδέαις).

While the Corinthian γλυφαί on pillar capitals are a fairly straightforward and well-attested category of sculpture, the γλυφαί adorning the portico ceilings are more ambiguous, and there is no indication of the precise nature of their schēma in Josephus’

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476 Steven Fine recently suggested that Josephus’ admiration of the Herodian temple, and more generally, of monumental Roman architecture, “was typical of attitudes held by Jews in latter Second Temple Palestine”; see Fine, Art and Judaism, 69. While Josephus certainly expressed adulation for the monumentalization of Roman Palestine, it seems methodologically suspect to draw from this meager evidence the sweeping claim that such admiration was typical of Jews living in Palestine during the first century. At most, we may suppose that this attitude was typical in Jewish aristocratic circles, and in any case, it seems more likely that the attitudes expressed in Josephus’ writings are more indicative of his Roman context and audience; see my discussion of this in Jason von Ehrenkrook, “Review of Steven Fine, Art and Judaism,” Henoch 28 (2006): 167.

477 B.J. 5.191. On Pausanias, see especially the discussion and literature cited later in this chapter.

478 A.J. 15.412.


480 The remains of a capital found near the Western Wall of the temple complex contain Corinthian and Ionic features, which would generally accord with the description of the capitals in A.J.; see Fine, Art and Judaism, 78.
description, apart from the vague reference to πολυτρόποις σχημάτων ἰδέαις. The scant archaeological remains from the temple complex may illuminate the discussion a bit. The discovery of several rock fragments from the vaulted ceilings of a tunnel that ascended from the one of the Hulda Gates (located at the southern end of the Herodian temple complex) to the esplanade include carvings of geometric and floral motifs.\textsuperscript{481} It is thus not unreasonable to suppose that similar geometric and floral γλυφαὶ likewise adorned the ceilings of the Royal Stoa. If so, then it is probably safe to assume that the description in \textit{A.J.} is the more reliable of the two, and that the porticoes of the Herodian temple (as well as other structures perhaps) did include some kind of embossed ornamentation, even if only floral or geometric.\textsuperscript{482}

Nevertheless, a completely different impression would emerge if we only had the description in \textit{B.J.} to go by.\textsuperscript{483} In fact, Josephus seemingly goes out of his way to emphasize that the porticoes were a “noteworthy spectacle” in part because of the absence of γλυφαὶ:

\[ \text{διπλαὶ μὲν γὰρ αἱ στοιὰ πᾶσαι, κίονες δὲ αὐταὶ εἰκοσιπέντε πηχῶν τὸ ὑπὸς ἑφεστήκεσαν, μονάλθου λευκοτάτης μαρμάρου, κεδρίνως δὲ φασικόμασιν ὑφόφωντο. τούτων ἡ μὲν φυσικὴ πολυτέλεια καὶ τὸ εὐεξεῖον καὶ τὸ ἀρμόνιον παρεῖ χωρίαν ἁξιόλογον, οὐδεις δὲ ἐξωθεὶν οὔτε ζωγραφίας οὔτε γλυφίδος ἑργὴν προςηγιάστο.} \]

All the porticoes were in double rows, and the pillars supporting them were twenty five cubits high, each made from one stone of pure white marble, \textit{having been covered with a roof of paneled cedar. The natural magnificence} of these, and their fine polish and harmonious fit, offered a

\textsuperscript{481} Ben-Dov, \textit{In the Shadow}, 136-39; Fine, \textit{Art and Judaism}, 78, fig. 23.

\textsuperscript{482} Meir Ben-Dov’s reconstruction the Royal Stoa favors the description in \textit{A.J.} and assumes a combination of floral and geometric carvings on the ceilings and walls of the structure; see Ben-Dov, \textit{In the Shadow}, 126-27.

\textsuperscript{483} Although Levine does not mention Josephus’ description of the porticoes, he does discuss several other discrepancies between the descriptions of the temple in \textit{B.J.} and \textit{A.J.;} see Levine, “Josephus' Description,” 234-35.
noteworthy spectacle, and it had not been adorned externally either with the work of painting or sculpture.\footnote{B.J. 5.190–191 (emphasis mine).}

The disparity between the two accounts should be obvious. The wood ceilings in \textit{A.J.} are elaborately adorned with carvings of a variety of shapes; by contrast, the wood ceilings in \textit{B.J.} are described with the Greek term \(\phi\alpha\tau\nu\omega\kappa\alpha\), which would indicate simply recessed panels.\footnote{Whiston translates this term “elaborately engraven,” but it seems likely that he is harmonizing \textit{B.J.} with \textit{A.J.} in this instance. Thackery’s translation in the LCL is more accurate: “ceiled with panels of cedar.”} Josephus instead emphasizes the \textit{natural} beauty of the pillars (\(φοσική \tauολυς\λέια\)), seemingly implying that their magnificence was not due to the skill of craftsmen, and he explicitly denies that there were any kind of artistic representations within the porticoes, whether painted (\(ζωγραφία\)) or sculpted (\(γλυφίζ\)).

It seems rather odd that Josephus, a Jew from a priestly family who undoubtedly walked the halls of the Royal Stoa on numerous occasions, would seem confused on this point. To state the matter succinctly: why the discrepancy in Josephus’ descriptions if he had first-hand knowledge of the appearance of this structure? This is the crux of the matter, and I submit that Josephus is not confused in this instance, but that the description in \textit{B.J.}, however unreliable it may be to the reality it purports to describe, is quite intentional in its removal of sculptural ornamentation from the Herodian complex. Indeed, the discrepancies between the two accounts underscore an important leitmotif in \textit{B.J.}: Judea, Jerusalem, and especially the temple complex, represent a place—a sacred territory—\textit{without} sculpture of any type, even seemingly innocuous geometric and floral carvings. Josephus in effect offers the reader of \textit{B.J.} an imagined world, a sculpture-less haven in a world full of \(γλυφαῖ\).
Judea and Jerusalem as a Sculptureless Haven in B.J.

The above interpretation of Josephus’ synoptic descriptions of the temple complex is confirmed by a closer reading of the three iconoclastic narratives in B.J. For example, the episode of the notorious Pontius Pilate and his troublesome military standards underscores the extent to which sculpture and space are thematically interwoven in B.J. At some point during his tenure as praefectus of Judea (26-36 C.E.), Pilate transferred from Caesarea Maritima to Jerusalem a garrison of troops for the winter. Neither B.J. nor A.J. states precisely where the troops were stationed, but the fortress Antonia at the northwest corner of the temple complex is a plausible suggestion. What is clear in both accounts is that this action, because it involved not only the presence of troops in Jerusalem but also military standards, created a bit of a stir

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487 Kraeling argues that this event occurred in the fall of 26 C.E., during the first year of Pilate’s tenure; Kraeling, "Episode of the Golden Standards," 283. Schwartz, however, rightly notes that there is nothing in Josephus’ accounts that requires a date at the beginning of Pilate’s term; Schwartz, "Josephus and Philo on Pontius Pilate," 32-33.

488 E. Mary Smallwood suggests that this was an act of “conscious provocation” intended to violate Jewish law, a fairly straightforward reading of Josephus’ own assessment of Pilate’s motives; E. Mary Smallwood, The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 161. In contrast, Kraeling suggests that although Pilate may be accused of ignorance, it is likely that his actions were in line with the normal responsibilities of a Roman governor; Kraeling, "Episode of the Golden Standards," 265-74.

489 Kraeling, "Episode of the Golden Standards," 279-80; Michael Grant, The Jews in the Roman World (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), 100; Smallwood, Jews under Roman Rule, 161; John R. Bartlett, Jews in the Hellenistic World: Josephus, Aristeas, the Sibylline Oracles, Eupolemus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 112. Schwartz argues that Philo’s account of the idolatrous shields introduced by Pilate in Herod’s palace (Legat. 299-305) is an alternative and apologetic version of the incident involving the standards in Josephus. Nevertheless, Schwartz suggests that Philo’s account, although more biased and thus less reliable, accurately specifies that the incident occurred in Herod’s palace; Schwartz, "Josephus and Philo on Pontius Pilate," 33.
amongst certain members of the Jewish populace, who proceeded to petition before Pilate in Caesarea that the standards be removed. Initially Pilate refused, but after much persistence he eventually gave in to their demands, and the standards (but not the troops) were removed and apparently returned to Caesarea.

What type of standards did the troops bring into Jerusalem, and why did this action elicit such a strong opposition? In both accounts, Josephus uses the Greek term σημεία, a variant spelling of σημεία, to designate the offending object.⁴⁹⁰ This word is typical in Greek for Roman military standards of all types, corresponding in a general sense with the Latin signum.⁴⁹¹ There were at least four main types of Roman standards:

1) the aquila, a golden eagle mounted on a pole, which according to Pliny the Elder, was the special sign for Roman legions;⁴⁹²
2) the imago, which could include either representations of animals (other than eagle) or of the emperor (imperatorum imagines) mounted on the top of a pole;⁴⁹³
3) the signum, which consisted of a spear-head (or

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⁴⁹⁰ According to Niese’s critical apparatus, the epitome that stands behind the twelfth century Chronicon of Zonaras, dating probably to the tenth or eleventh century, reads τοῖς σημείοις instead of ταῖς σημαίαις in A.J. 15.55; see Niese, ed., Flavii Josephi Opera, 4:150.

⁴⁹¹ Kraeling identifies two uses of signum with reference to military standards: the first as a generic term applying to any or all types of Roman standards; the second as a specific type of standard; see Kraeling, "Episode of the Golden Standards," 269-70.

⁴⁹² Pliny the Elder, Nat. 10.5. Pliny lists the aquila along with four other theriomorphic standards—wolves, minotaurs, horses, and boars—each corresponding with different ranks within a legion. On the aquila, see Kraeling, "Episode of the Golden Standards," 269-70; Michael P. Speidel, "Eagle-Bearer and Trumpeter: The Eagle-Standard and Trumpets of the Roman Legions Illustrated by Three Tombstones Recently Found at Byzantium," BJ 176 (1976): 123-63; Graham Webster, The Roman Imperial Army of the First and Second Centuries A.D. (London: A & C Black, 1985), 135, pl. 7b, and pl. 10; Adrian Goldsworthy, The Complete Roman Army (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 134. In Josephus’ account of Vespasian’s march into Galilee, he describes the aquila standards that followed the cavalry units of the legions in the following terms: “Next the ensigns surrounding the eagle (αἱ σημαίαι περίορισσον τῶν ἄγων), which in the Roman army precedes every legion, because it is the king and the bravest of all the birds: it is regarded by them as the symbol of empire, and, whoever may be their adversaries, an omen of victory” (B.J. 3.123 [Thackeray, LCL]). He subsequently identifies these as sacred objects, τὰ ἱερὰ (B.J. 3.124).

sometimes crowned with a human hand) and pole adorned with *phalerae*, round discs that could be either iconic (embossed with an image of the emperor or a deity) or aniconic, among other accoutrements;\(^{494}\) and 4) the *vexillum*, a pole with a square cloth flag affixed to a cross-bar.\(^{495}\)

In both accounts Josephus identifies the *σημαίαι* as *εἰκόνες*. In *B.J.* 2.169 the standards are identified ambiguously as images of Caesar: τὰς Καίσαρος εἰκόνας αἱ *σημαίαι καλούνται* ("the images of Caesar, which are called standards"). In *A.J.* 18.55 the nature of the object is seemingly clarified, so that the images of Caesar were not the standards themselves but busts that were attached to the standards (τροχοὺς Καίσαρος αἱ ταῖς σημαίαις προσήπαν). This description would perhaps seem to fit best with the *imperatorum imagines*,\(^{496}\) although the widely used iconic *signa* could also be in view here.\(^{497}\) In any case, the critical issue for this discussion is that the standards were iconic, containing anthropomorphomorphic sculptural representations, whether embossed on *phalerae* or three-dimensional imperial busts, and it is the iconic nature of the standards that stands at the center of the dispute in both narratives.

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\(^{494}\) Kraeling, "Episode of the Golden Standards," 270. A funerary relief from Mainz shows a *signifer* (a standard-bearer) holding a *signum* with six aniconic *phalerae*; see Yann le Bohec, *The Imperial Roman Army* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1994), pl. 5.8. A scene from Trajan’s column depicts both *signa* with aniconic *phalerae* and crowned with a human hand and *signa* with iconic *phalerae*; see Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army*, pl. 9a.


\(^{496}\) Roth, "Ordinance against Images," 170. Thackerey likewise identifies these as *imperatorum imagines* in the notes of his Loeb translation (Thackerey, LCL, 389).

\(^{497}\) Kraeling, "Episode of the Golden Standards," 273. Kraeling considers it unlikely that a single infantry or cavalry unit would have more than one *imaginifer* (the soldier who carried the *imperatorum imagines*), and Josephus clearly speaks of standards in the plural. He thus argues that iconic *signa* are more likely in view here, given the smaller size of the unit and the fact that this type of standard was much more diffuse throughout the various units of the Roman army.
Beyond this superficial agreement, however, the two narratives depart considerably on the purported reasons that the iconic standards were a violation of Jewish law.\textsuperscript{498} This becomes clear when the two distinct legal explanations for the prohibition of iconic standards are placed side by side:

\begin{quote}
Πεμφθείς δὲ εἰς Ἰουδαίαν ἐπίτροπος ὑπὸ Τιβερίου Πιλάτος νῦκτωρ κεκαλυμμένας εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα εἰσκομίζει τὰς Καίσαρος εἰκόνας, αἱ σημαίαι καλοῦνται. τούτο μεθ’ ἡμέραν μεγίστην ταραχὴν ἤγειρεν Ἱουδαῖος; οὐ τῇ γὰρ ἐγγὺς πρὸς τὴν δῆμον ἐξεπλάγησαν ὡς πεπατημένων αὐτοῖς τῶν νόμων, οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀξιοῦσιν ἐν τῇ πόλει δεύκηλον τίθεσθαι.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Πιλάτος δὲ ὁ τῆς Ἰουδαίας ἡγεμών στρατιῶν ἐκ Καισαρείας ἀγγέλων καὶ μεθιδρύσας χειμαδιότετος ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ἐπὶ καταλύει τῶν νομίμων τῶν Ἰουδαϊκῶν ἐφρόνησεν, προτομὰς Καίσαρος, αἱ ταῖς σημαίαις προσήσαν, εἰσαγόμενος εἰς τὴν πόλιν, εἰκόνων ποίησιν ἀπαγορεύοντος ἡμῖν τοῦ νόμου.
\end{quote}

Now Pilate, who was sent by Tiberius into Judea to be procurator, carried into Jerusalem secretly by night the images of Caesar, which are called standards. This act stirred up a great disturbance among the Jews on the following day. For those nearby were panic-struck at the sight, since their laws had been trampled upon; \textit{for it is not lawful to set up an image in the city.}\textsuperscript{499}

When juxtaposed in this manner, the differences between Josephus’ two explanations become fairly obvious. Whereas in \textit{B.J.} Josephus summarizes the second commandment as a prohibition against images \textit{within} a certain spatial delimitation, in this instance, the city of Jerusalem, in \textit{A.J.} the law is more directly a prohibition against the image itself, or

\textsuperscript{498} For more on the differences between these two accounts, see Krieger, ”A Synoptic Approach,” 91-93.
\textsuperscript{499} \textit{B.J.} 2.169–170 (emphasis mine).
\textsuperscript{500} \textit{A.J.} 18.55 (emphasis mine).
rather, the making (ποίησις) of images. Stated differently, in the former account the 
problematic nature of the image is directly tied to its location; in the latter, the problem is 
that an image was made, regardless of its location.

What are we to make of this discrepancy? On the surface, this detail may seem 
inconsequential, perhaps even pedantic, and one approach is to simply gloss over or 
harmonize the difference. After all, the two legal explanations are not necessarily 
incompatible. Obviously, if the image itself is prohibited, as seems to be the case in A.J., 
then its intrusion into Judean space would be especially troublesome. Nevertheless, the 
structural and linguistic links between the standard pericope and the subsequent story of 
Pilate’s construction of the aqueduct with funds from the sacred treasury suggests an 
alternative explanation, namely that the link between sculpture and space in B.J. is 
intentional, functioning as part of a larger rhetorical strategy.

In the episode of the standards, the offended party petitions before Pilate that the 
standards be removed from Jerusalem, a confrontation that takes place in Caesarea. The Jews appear before the tribunal of Pilate in the stadium, where he orders his soldiers 
“to surround the Jews” (κυκλώσασθαι τοὺς Ἰουδαίους), forming a ring of troops three

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501 Gutmann’s discussion of this episode assumes wrongly that the summary of the law in A.J. 18.55—a prohibition against making images—is likewise found in B.J. 2.170; Gutmann, “The ‘Second Commandment’,” 171. Rajak, in her discussion of the Pilate incident, observes this distinction between the 
two narratives, though for her the discrepancy merely “suggests a lack of conviction on the author’s part.” Although she does not explain precisely what is meant by this, I presume it has something to do with Josephus’ own views on the second commandment, specifically that he equivocates on the meaning of this 
and thus betrays an uncertainty as to how it should be interpreted; Rajak, Josephus, 67.

502 This is not to imply that the version in A.J. is somehow less rhetorical and more historically reliable. Indeed, sculpture plays an equally rhetorical role in A.J., as will become evident in the discussion of chapter 5.

deep (περιστάσης δὲ τριστεχεῖ τὴς φαλαγγοῦ). The response to Pilate’s use of the sacred treasury for the construction of the aqueduct is similar, except in this instance the confrontation with Pilate takes place in Jerusalem. Whereas in the account of this event in A.J. it is said only that the Jews assembled (συνέρχομαι) before Pilate in protest, in B.J. Josephus carries forward the language from the previous pericope, i.e., the episode of the standards, only in this case it is the Jews who form a ring around Pilate (περιστάντες τὸ βῆμα). The language here, and in particular, the image of a power shift according to location—the Jews encircled in Caesarea; Pilate encircled in Jerusalem—illustrates the politics of space that stands at the core of this chapter. Caesarea in this narrative represents the territory of the other, in this case Pilate, and Jerusalem the opposite. In other words, there is in the juxtaposition of these two Pilate episodes a subtle mapping of space, a delineation of two realms that corresponds in part with the presence or absence of sculpture.

Two other iconoclastic episodes confirm the hypothesis that sculpture and space are linked in B.J., and further, that Josephus in this text consistently plays up the issue of space in his treatment of the second commandment. In B.J. 1.648–655, Josephus recounts an uprising against Herod the Great over an ἐικών within the temple precinct in Jerusalem. At some point during his reign as client king over Judea (37–4 B.C.E.), Herod had erected a statue of a golden eagle on the main gate leading into the sanctuary,

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505 B.J. 2.175–177.
506 A.J. 18.60.
507 For a recent study of this episode, see Henten, "Ruler or God?," 257–86. For an examination of Josephus’ Herod narratives within their compositional contexts, see Landau, Out-Heroding Herod.
called the great gate (τὴν μεγάλην πύλην) by Josephus.\(^{508}\) Although the precise date of the statue’s installation is unknown,\(^{509}\) Josephus reports that near the end of Herod’s life, two Jewish teachers (σοφισταί), Judas and Matthias, used the eagle to incite an uprising amongst a group of zealous youths (νέοι). Identifying the eagle as a violation of their ancestral laws (παρὰ τοὺς πατρίους νόμους), the teachers urged the mob to take action. What follows can only be described as a classic instance of iconoclasm. This army of brash youths entered the temple precinct in the middle of the day, while the daily activities of the cult were well underway, climbed to the top of the temple gate, and proceeded to pull down the eagle and cut it into pieces before a large crowd of worshipers. When word of this uprising reached Herod, he arrested the guilty parties, and accusing them of impious sacrilege, had them burned alive.

In the narrative context of \textit{B.J.}, the episode of the golden eagle is one of a series of misfortunes that plagued Herod in the latter days of his life.\(^{510}\) What is pertinent for the present analysis is Josephus’ description of Herod’s offense, i.e., the precise reason his actions ostensibly violated Jewish law:

\begin{quote}
oἱ τότε τῶν βασιλέα πυθανόμενοι ταῖς ἀθυμίαις ὑπορρέοντα καὶ τῇ νόσῳ λόγῳ καθέσαν εἰς τοὺς γυνώμοις, ὡς ἄρα καίρος ἐπιτάθετος εἶνagh t[iη t]η ὑπὸ t[εθ]εό τα κατασκευασθέντα παρὰ τοὺς πατρίους νόμους ἔργα κατασπάν. ἀθεμίτον γὰρ εἶναι κατὰ τὸν ναὸν ἢ εἰκόνας ἢ
\end{quote}

\(^{508}\) \textit{B.J.} 1.650.

\(^{509}\) It is often assumed that Herod installed the eagle toward the end of his life, and thus the reaction of the zealous iconoclasts was immediate; see e.g., Jones, \textit{The Herods}, 147-48. However, Josephus’ narratives do not specify when the eagle was erected, only that the uprising occurred near the end of Herod’s life. Michael Grant suggests that the most likely date for the erection of the statue is at the completion of the temple structure in 18 B.C.E.; see Grant, \textit{Herod the Great}, 207. If this is the case, then the statue stood in the temple precinct for approximately 14 years without controversy, at least as far as our sources indicate.

\(^{510}\) This is reflected in the first line of the pericope (\textit{B.J.} 1.648): Γίνεται δ’ ἐν ταῖς συμφοραῖς αὐτῶ καὶ ἀημονική τις ἐπικάπωτος (‘Now there occurred among the misfortunes a certain uprising of the populace against him’).
When these men [the sophists] learned that the king was slipping away with despondency and disease, they sent word to their friends, that now would be a suitable time to avenge God, and to pull down that which was erected contrary to the laws of their country; for it was unlawful that there should be in the temple either images, or busts, or any similar work of a living being. Nevertheless, the king had erected a golden eagle over the great gate [of the temple].

As with the incident of Pilate’s standards, Josephus’ summary of the second commandment in B.J. stresses the role of space in assessing the legitimacy of an εἰκών. Specifically, that which violates ancestral law is the presence of an εἰκών within the area of the temple. This emphasis in B.J. is underscored when compared with Josephus’ treatment of this incident in A.J., where Herod’s actions are deemed παρὰ νόμον τοῦ πατρίου because the law forbids the very making and erecting of such images, regardless of location. Once again, whereas in B.J. an εἰκών within a particular location is problematic, in A.J. the εἰκών itself violates Jewish law, shifting the stress from the place to the ποίησις of the offending object.

Josephus’ treatment of the infamous incident involving the emperor Gaius Caligula, who in the year 39/40 C.E. threatened to erect a statue of himself in the temple of Jerusalem, adds an additional layer to this discourse, one that highlights how statuary in B.J. functions as a kind of mapping device, a boundary marker delineating the sacred from the profane. Although in both B.J. and A.J. Josephus views Caligula’s actions as a

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511 B.J. 1.649–650 (emphasis mine).
512 A.J. 17.150–151. van Henten observes the emphasis on space in B.J. but ultimately harmonizes the two accounts, placing this episode among the many indications that some Jews, including Josephus, interpreted the second commandment in its strictest possible sense, i.e., as a prohibition against all images of living creatures; see van Henten, "Ruler or God?，“ 276-78.
potential desecration of sacred territory, only in *B.J.* is there a more pronounced emphasis on the relationship between statuary and Judean space, in particular, the way in which the former defines the latter. This is especially clear in the confrontation between the Jews and Publius Petronius, the governor of Syria who was ordered to carry out Caligula’s demands. Josephus summarizes both Petronius’ attempt to convince the Jews to relent to the emperor’s edict and the Jewish rebuttal as follows:

*He* [Petronius] catalogued the power of the Romans and the threats of the emperor, and, additionally, he demonstrated that their demand was senseless, for while all the subjected nations had erected the images of Caesar along with the other gods in their cities, for they [the Jews] alone to resist this was not unlike those who revolt, and [it was] injurious. But when they put forward as an objection their law and ancestral custom, how *not only* is it not permitted to place either a representation of God or of man in the temple but even within any random place of the countryside, Petronius replied, “I too must observe the law of my master.”

Embedded in this exchange between Petronius and the Jews is a configuration of space into two distinct realms governed by two distinct laws—the territory of the Jews, wherein statues of gods and men are forbidden not only within the temple but even “within any random place in the countryside” (ἐν εἰκαίῳ τινὶ τόπῳ τῆς χώρας), and the rest of the Roman world, wherein “all the subjected nations had erected the images of Caesar along with the other gods in their cities.”

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Josephus thus presents in *B.J.* a distinct vision of Jerusalem and Judea as a sculpture-less haven in a sculpture-filled world. Indeed, the very sanctity of the temple, city, and even its *chora* is marked by its emptiness, by its lack of sculpted or figurative art. Within this conceptual framework, the second commandment becomes not so much a prohibition against images of other gods, or even the Jewish God, but a prohibition against any kind of sculptural representation *within* Judean territory.

**Sculpture and Sacred Space in the Ancient Mediterranean World**

Josephus’ articulation of the relationship between sculpture and space is on the one hand *sui generis*, a rhetorical maneuver that underscores the uniqueness of Jerusalem vis-à-vis the wider urban context of the Mediterranean basin. Nevertheless, Josephus’ sacred map is in another sense fully immersed in the Greco-Roman sculptural environment, insofar as it subverts prevailing perceptions that sculpture functions as tangible reminders of the *presence* of the sacred and visible markers delimiting holy terrain. This perception is attested in a broad and diverse range of Greek and Latin sources, from philosophical treatises through historiographies and ethnographies to legal documents. For purposes of this analysis, I will discuss a selection of disparate sources reflecting on two major urban centers in the ancient world—Athens and Rome.

**Athens: A “Forest of Idols”**

Two very different “pilgrims” to Athens—“Saint Paul” and “Pagan Pausanias”—offer a surprisingly similar assessment of the urban landscape of this Greek city.514 Paul

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514 There is much scholarly discussion on whether or not Pausanias should be identified as a devout religious pilgrim, with Jaś Elsner as the most vocal proponent of the pilgrim identity (in contrast with the view of Pausanias as a pedantic antiquarian); see most notably, Jaś Elsner, "Pausanias: A Greek Pilgrim in
and Pausanias may seem like an odd pairing at first glance, the former a first century C.E. Jew devoted to the nascent movement of Jesus followers, and the latter a second century C.E. devotee to Greek religiosity, most notably as an initiate into the Eleusinian mysteries, \(^{515}\) and author of the *Periēgēsis Hellados*, a detailed and colorful description of mainland Greece. Nevertheless, both traveled extensively throughout the Roman Mediterranean, and more importantly for the present discussion, both offer a deeply religious *periēgēsis* of their respective “tours” of Athens, \(^{516}\) which includes their perceptions of the place of sculpture in the urban landscape of this “museum of classical culture for the Hellenistic world.” \(^{517}\) I recognize, of course, that in the case of Paul, what we actually possess is a narrative *about* Paul and not necessarily Paul’s own perception of Athens. Nevertheless, whether or not Luke’s account corresponds, at least in its broader contours, to the events that took place or is “purely a literary creation” matters little to the

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\(^{515}\) Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.38.7.


topic at hand. In either case, we have in this text not only a description of the urban landscape of Athens but also a record of how this landscape was perceived by some—whether Paul or Luke (or both)—who traversed (or read about) this space.

Assuming that Paul came to Athens by sea, docking at the Piraeus, Athen’s main port, his “tour” of Athens likely began at the Dipylon, the Double Gate on the north-west side of the city. Entering through the gates and continuing into the agora, Paul is immediately confronted with what is described as a “forest of idols” (κατειδωλος). Richard E. Wycherley attempts to clarify more precisely the nature of this κατειδωλος, linking the term with a specific type of Athenian sculpture—the Herms, i.e., square pillars, often with an erect phallus at their midpoint, surmounted with the head of Hermes. In a description of fifth century B.C.E. Athens, Thucydides notes that a vast

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519 Acts 17:14 seems to imply that Paul traveled by sea, and if so, his approach to Athens would have mirrored that of Pausanias, who walked from the Piraeus and entered the city from the north-west (Pausanias, Descr. 1.2.1–4).

520 Acts 17:16. This translation of the hapax legomenon κατειδωλος was first proposed by Richard E. Wycherley, who, though acknowledging that “full of idols” is perhaps grammatically “more correct,” nevertheless contends that the forest metaphor “gives the full flavour of the word, just a little heightened”; Richard E. Wycherley, "St. Paul at Athens," JTS 19 (1968): 619. See also Spivey, Understanding Greek Sculpture, 13. The advantage of Wycherley’s “forest of idols” is that it captures the ubiquitous, and for some at least, foreboding presence of statues within the Greco-Roman urban landscape. Diodorus Siculus uses a similar construction, καταεδώρας, to describe a thickly wooded path, which may lend support to Wycherley’s metaphorical rendering of this term (Diodorus Siculus, Bibl. hist. 17.68.5); see also Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles, 376.

521 Wycherley, "St. Paul at Athens," 620. Pausanias identifies this sculpture type as a uniquely Athenian invention (Pausanias, Descr. 1.24.3). For a discussion of these Herms and pictures of several examples ranging from the fifth century B.C.E. to the second century C.E., see John M. Camp, The Athenian Agora: Excavations in the Heart of Classical Athens (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 74-76, figs. 48-50. For other examples from various locations throughout the Greco-Roman Mediterranean, see LIMC 5.2: 199-205, esp. nos. 9, 12, 21, 27 (Athens), and 58, 75, 78, 81, 84, 87 (Delos).
number of these statues stood in the doorways of private homes and sanctuaries.\textsuperscript{522} Wycherley remarks that such Herms “were ubiquitous at Athens,” and points to a particular concentration of them between the Stoa Poikile (Painted Stoa) and the Stoa Basileios (Royal Stoa), Paul’s likely point of entry from the Piraeus.\textsuperscript{523} According to Wycherley, this “stoa of the Herms”\textsuperscript{524} would have dominated Paul’s visual horizon, making “him feel that at Athens idols were like trees in a wood.”\textsuperscript{525}

It is probably unwise to restrict the meaning of κατείδωλος to this particular sculpture type, though certainly such objects were part of what “invaded” Paul’s eyesight. Instead, we should perhaps try to envision a more comprehensive view of the city of Athens from within the agora, the narrative location of Paul’s dispute with the Athenian philosophers.\textsuperscript{526} What would a first century C.E. visitor strolling the streets of Athens see?\textsuperscript{527}

\textsuperscript{522} Thucydides, Hist. 6.27.1.

\textsuperscript{523} Wycherley, "St. Paul at Athens," 620. Because Herms were used in Athens to mark entrances, it is not surprising that a concentration of Herms stood at the entrance to the Athenian agora; see Camp, The Athenian Agora, 74. In his Lexicon in decem oratores Atticos (first to second century C.E.), Harpocrat indicates that this area around the Poikile and Basileios was known simply as “the Herms” (οἱ Ἐρμαί), due to the number of such statues erected there (Harpocrat, Lex. s.v. Ἐρμαί [ed. Dindorf, 135]).


\textsuperscript{525} Wycherley, "St. Paul at Athens," 620.

\textsuperscript{526} Based on modern archaeological excavations and ancient literary testimony, we can to some extent reconstruct Athens’ visual landscape at the time of Paul. On the archaeology of the Roman Athenian agora, see the survey by Camp, The Athenian Agora, 181-214. See also Wycherley, The Stones of Athens, 77-90. On the literary evidence, see in general Al. N. Oikonomides, The Two Agoras in Ancient Athens: A New Commentary on their History and Development, Topography and Monuments (Chicago: Argonaut, 1964).

\textsuperscript{527} Yaron Eliav imaginatively likens Paul to “a small-town visitor walking into Times Square, stunned by its enormous images and neon signs”; see Eliav, "Roman Statues," 100. I am not entirely convinced by this analogy, however, since Paul grew up in Tarsus, renowned as an important center for Greek culture and philosophy rivaling that of Athens and Alexandria (cf. Strabo, Geogr. 14.5.13), and according to the narrative in Acts had already frequented several important Mediterranean cities also rich in Greco-Roman sculpture, such as Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, Philippi, and Thessalonica, to name a few.
As already noted above, the so-called Stoa of the Herms marks the point of entrance into the agora. Passing between the Stoa Poikile and Stoa Basileios on the Street of the Panathenaia, the observer would have been bombarded with a conglomeration of statues, shrines, altars, and other similarly “religious” structures that dominated the cityscape. Just beyond an altar devoted to the twelve (Olympian) gods stood the Temple of Ares, which, in addition to housing the cult statue of Ares, included in its immediate vicinity statues of Aphrodite, Athena, Enyo, Heracles, Theseus, and Apollo. To the west of this temple stood a line of sacred structures: the Stoa of Zeus, in which stood, among other statues, a Zeus Soter (savior) or Eleutheros (freedom); the Temple of Apollo Patroos (paternal), with two statues of Apollo in the *pronaos* (front porch of the temple) on either side of the entrance; and the Metroon (sanctuary devoted to the mother of the gods), with her requisite cult statue. Behind the Metroon and the Apollo Patroos stood the impressive Hephaisteion, where Hephaistos, the divine craftsman, and Athena, goddess of the city likewise associated with the arts and crafts, were worshiped together. The external sculptures on and around this structure were extensive and varied, a fitting tribute to its gods, and were especially pronounced on its eastern side, making it readily visible from within the agora.

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528 Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.8.4.
529 Isocrates, *Evag.* 57: Δίως ἁγάλμα τοῦ σωτήρος; Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.3.2: Ζεύς ὄνομαζόμενος Ἐλευθέριος.
530 Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.3.4; Wycherley, *The Stones of Athens*, 67. A large marble statue of a draped Apollo was discovered just south of the temple; Camp, *The Athenian Agora*, 160-61, fig. 33.
531 Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 36.17; Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.3.5.
532 Camp, *The Athenian Agora*, 82-87, esp. figs. 59-61.
533 Camp remarks that this temple “carries more sculptural decoration than any other Doric temple; Ibid., 84. Pausanias mentions a blue-eyed Athena standing by the temple (*Descr.* 1.14.6).
Walking from the Hephaisteion east toward the center of the agora leads the viewer past the monument of the Eponymous Heroes (dating from the fourth century B.C.E. but still standing in Paul’s time), a long statue base upon which stood ten bronze heroes bracketed by a tripod at each end, and an altar of Zeus Agoraios. Just south of this altar stood a newer structure (in Paul’s day), a small early Roman period temple likely devoted to the imperial cult, and beyond this temple the Odeon of Agrippa (a small enclosed theatre built during Augustus’ reign) which included, among other sculptural pieces, an oversized (but not quite colossal) group of heroes in the front. Finally, continuing southeast on the Panathenaia, passing by the Stoa of Attalos, the viewer observes on the horizon the imposing acropolis, replete with statues and altars devoted to various deities and home of the Temple of Athena Nike, the Erechtheion, the temple of Roma and Augustus, and the famed Parthenon, renowned for its colossal statue of Athena Parthenos.

This brief and limited depiction of first century Athens only partially captures the polychromatic contours of a city literally teeming with statues and other such objects (e.g., altars, temples, etc.) of worship. As the reader of Pausanias well knows, at every

534 Pausanias, Descr. 1.5.2-5; Ibid., 97-100, figs. 72-74.
535 For the epigraphic and literary testimony for Zeus Agoraios, the local epithet for Zeus Melichios, see Oikonomides, The Two Agoras in Ancient Athens, 71-72.
537 Wycherley, The Stones of Athens, 74. For a reconstructed drawing of the Odeon with sculpture pieces, see Camp, The Athenian Agora, 185, fig. 54. The entrance to the Odeon originally included six statues of Tritons and Giants. This structure was destroyed by fire in 267 C.E., four of the six statues were later used for the so-called Palace of the Giants, the gymnasium complex constructed over the ruins of the Odeon.
538 Wycherley, The Stones of Athens, 105-41(Parthenon); 43-54 (Erechtheion). For a discussion of the Athena Parthenos, with examples of modern and ancient duplicates, see Spivey, Understanding Greek Sculpture, 165-69.
turn the viewer encountered statues of gods, heroes, emperors, and other notable elites—lining the streets, standing between civic and religious buildings, adorning public and private gardens, guarding entrances to homes, and so on—as well as the innumerable votive statuettes crowding in and around the sanctuaries and altars. Of course, in the activities of daily life, not all of these objects had a strictly religious function, at least in the modern sense of the word. For example, the monument of the Eponymous Heroes, beyond representing visually the ten Athenian tribes, seems to have functioned as a kind of public bulletin board, where tribal notices or other general announcements would be affixed beneath the various tribal heroes. Nevertheless, as is evident in the account of Paul’s visit to Athens discussed below, the cumulative force of this sculptural milieu (κατείδωλος) was to underscore the piety of this city and its inhabitants.

According to the narrator of Acts, this visual experience (θεωρέω / ἔνοχεωρέω) elicited a strong emotional response: Paul was “deeply disturbed,” or more literally, “his spirit within himself was provoked” (παρωξύνετο τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ) by what he saw in Athens. Presumably, Luke’s reader would interpret these words negatively, understanding Paul’s response to Athens’ κατείδωλος as one of anger. And indeed, as is evident in Paul’s discourse before the Areopagus, the so-called Areopagus speech,

References:

539 Spivey, Understanding Greek Sculpture, 78-95, esp. fig. 47.
541 Acts 17:16.
542 The term Areopagus, literally referring to the “hill of Ares” (Ἄρειος πάγος) located north-west of the Acropolis, came to be associated with the ancient Athenian council that met on its summit; see for example Cicero, Fam. 13.1.5. For a recent treatment of this subject, see Robert W. Wallace, The Areopagos Council, to 307 B.C. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).
Paul does in fact suggest that such man-made symbols of piety are an expression of ignorance, and he subsequently censures the Athenians’ attempt to capture the divine nature through the use of art and human imagination (χαράγματι τέχνης καὶ ἐνθυμήσεως ἄνθρωπου). This speech ultimately expounds on the monotheistic creator who can neither be housed in a man-made temple nor sculpted into an image, but who calls humanity to repentance before the impending judgment to be executed by the resurrected Jesus. Thus, it is not surprising that for many, this text is another classic example of the “Jewish-Christian rejection of ‘idols’.”

However, this focus on a latent antagonism against pagan idolatry can obscure the way in which this text preserves perceptions of the physical context of such “idolatry” that were common throughout the Greco-Roman Mediterranean. This is particularly evident in the opening lines of Paul’s speech, the captatio benevolentiae:

Σταθείς δὲ ὁ Παῦλος ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ Ἀρείου πάγου ἔφη, Ὁ Ανδρέας Ἀθηναίοι, κατὰ πάντα ὡς δεισιδαιμονεστέρους ὑμᾶς θεωρῶ. Διερχόμενος

543 It is unnecessary in this chapter to address the provenance of the Areopagus speech—be it Paul’s, Luke’s, or a combination of the two. Numerous studies have focused on the conventions of Hellenistic rhetoric used in the composition of this oration; see e.g., Zweck, "The Exordium," 94-103. Specifically, Zweck identifies three major sections to the speech (97): the exordium (vv. 22-23), the probatio (vv. 24-29) and the peroratio (vv. 30-31). We should also keep in mind the remarks of the Greek historian Thucydides: “As to the speeches that were made by different men, … it has been difficult to recall with strict accuracy the words actually spoken …. Therefore the speeches are given in the language in which, as it seemed to me, the several speakers would express, on the subjects under consideration, the sentiments most befitting the occasion” (Thucydides, Hist. 1.22.1-2 [Smith, LCL]). This should caution against the naïve assumption that the Pauline speeches in Acts are to be regarded as the ipsissima verba Pauli, or even the proxima verba Pauli; on this issue, see the discussion in Martin Dibelius, Studies in the Acts of the Apostles (trans. Mary Ling; London: SCM Press, 1956), 138-85.

544 Acts 17:23: ὃς ἐγνοοῦντες εὑσπεκίτε, τούτο ἐγὼ καταγέλλω ὑμῖν (“What then you are worshipping ignorantly, this I proclaim to you”).

545 Acts 17:29.

Then Paul, standing before the Areopagus, said, “Athenian men, I see how in all respects you are quite religious. For, as I went throughout [your city] and carefully observed your objects of worship, I found also an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god’.”

The various forms of the Greek verb for seeing (θορέω) that appear in the opening lines of the speech is striking, immediately recalling Luke’s initial description of Paul’s first visual encounter with the city of Athens (θεωρουντος κατείδωλον).

More significantly, there is an implicit connection in this discourse between seeing and perceiving. Careful observation of the physical context of Athens leads to an assessment of the Athenian people. Paul sees an urban landscape full of τὰ σεβάσματα, a Greek term that certainly encompasses the many statues, temples, and altars described above (i.e., Luke’s κατείδωλος), and Paul perceives in this landscape an expression of the Athenians’ super-deisidaimôn, i.e., as an expression of devout piety.

It is true that the Greek term δεισιδαιμόν (and the related δεισιδαιμονία) is itself ambiguous and can either denote in a positive (or neutral) sense piety and religious devotion or the more pejorative superstition. Both uses are attested in Jewish-Hellenistic and early Christian sources. For example, Josephus frequently uses the term positively to describe those who carefully observe Jewish law: the Israelite King Manasseh, after repenting of idolatry, pursues δεισιδαιμονία by cleansing Jerusalem and

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547 On the literary and epigraphical evidence for such altars devoted to ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ, see Horst, "The Altar of the 'Unknown God'," 168-85.
549 Acts 17:16.
the temple.\textsuperscript{551} Likewise, \textit{δεισιδαιμονία} is associated with the practice of keeping the Sabbath;\textsuperscript{552} those who resisted Pilate’s standards are characterized by their \textit{δεισιδαιμονία};\textsuperscript{553} and those who demanded justice for the desecration of sacred law were motivated by their \textit{δεισιδαιμονία}.\textsuperscript{554} On the other hand, Philo consistently uses the term pejoratively: the \textit{δεισιδαίμονες} are those uninitiated into the sacred mysteries, in contrast with those characterized by true \textit{εὑσέβεια} (piety);\textsuperscript{555} likewise, \textit{δεισιδαίμων} is elsewhere characterized as the antithesis of \textit{εὐσέβεια},\textsuperscript{556} and \textit{δεισιδαιμονία} is likened to \textit{ἀσέβεια} (impiety).\textsuperscript{557} Luke uses the term on one other occasion in Acts 25:19, where the procurator Festus describes the dispute between Paul and certain Jewish leaders as an in-house squabble concerning their own \textit{δεισιδαιμονία}. In the context of Paul’s Areopagus speech, it seems best to see \textit{δεισιδαίμων} as a positive assessment of Athenian piety, akin to the usage in Josephus, especially since the term appears in the \textit{captatio benevolentiae}, which functioned in Greek rhetoric as a device to win an audience’s favor.\textsuperscript{558}

The significance of this assessment should not be overlooked. Although certainly Paul (and/or Luke) rejected the Greek gods of Athens and their various iconographical or monumental symbols, he nevertheless expresses what was a wide-spread perception in the Greco-Roman world: statues (\textit{inter alia}) were integral components of a sacred

\textsuperscript{551} \textit{A.J.} 10.42.
\textsuperscript{552} \textit{A.J.} 12.259.
\textsuperscript{553} \textit{B.J.} 2.174.
\textsuperscript{554} \textit{B.J.} 2.230.
\textsuperscript{555} \textit{Cher.} 1.42.
\textsuperscript{556} \textit{Det.} 1.18, 24.
\textsuperscript{557} \textit{Sacr.} 1.15; see also \textit{Deus.} 1.103, 163–164.
\textsuperscript{558} See esp. Zweck, “The Exordium,” 100.
landscape, marking out visually the dwelling place of the gods (whether believed to be “true” or “false” gods). The sanctity of a polis and the piety of its inhabitants were inextricably linked with the presence of the gods, or more precisely, the presence of the gods’ statues. That is to say, it is the physical manifestation of the divine realm that defines a particular territory and people as holy.

For the most part, Pausanias, whose descriptions of Athens are found in book one of his Periēgēsis,\(^{559}\) would agree with Paul’s assessment, although for him these monuments of Athenian piety are not some misguided attempt to grope after the divine but are in fact the highest form of devotion to the gods. Although Pausanias’ own stated purpose was to “set out in detail πάντα τὰ Ἑλληνικά,”\(^{560}\) a closer reading of this work makes it clear that the scope of πάντα is actually quite limited.\(^{561}\) Pausanias frequently omits prominent civic structures in the urban landscape, often of Roman origin, in favor of monuments that he deems most important, guiding his reader toward specifically “religious landmarks.”\(^{562}\) Indeed, the wider literary context of his reference to πάντα τὰ Ἑλληνικά is suggestive. This cursory remark is sandwiched between two descriptions of statues: on the one hand a bronze statue of Olympiodorus and a nearby bronze image (ἄγαλμα) of Artemis, and on the other hand, an ἄγαλμα of Athena by the Athenian


\(^{560}\) Pausanias, Descr. 1.26.4.

\(^{561}\) Elsner, Art and the Roman Viewer, 141.

sculptor Endoeus.\textsuperscript{563} It is true that for Pausanias statues provide an important “springboard” for numerous historical and mythological digressions, so that in one sense, statues are themselves a component of Pausanias’ many excurses.\textsuperscript{564} But it is equally true that statues comprise an integral feature of Pausanias’ \textit{Perieγésis Attica}, so that to describe \textit{πάντα τὰ Ελληνικά} is to describe the many statues that in his day still marked the landscape of Greece. In other words, statues are in some sense the task at hand, inextricably woven into Pausanias’ vision of the Greek landscape.

That Pausanias has a selective eye for statues is confirmed by his use of the phrase \textit{θέας ἀξίως}, which repeatedly draws the reader’s attention towards those locations and monuments deemed most important. This selectivity, moreover, has little to do with \textit{aesthetic} or \textit{artistic} admiration.\textsuperscript{565} Indeed, that Pausanias includes among the \textit{θέας ἀξίως} a decidedly \textit{unaesthetic} “wall of unwrought stones” (\textit{τεῖχος ἀργων λίθων}) in front of a temple of Aphrodite suggests that aesthetics is not a primary criterion of evaluation.\textsuperscript{566} Rather, a survey of \textit{θέας ἀξίως} in \textit{Perieγésis Attica} reveals a remarkable interest in—some might even call it an obsession with—\textit{sacred landmarks}, and especially consecrated statues.\textsuperscript{568} For example, the statue of Dionysus housed in the Odeum is \textit{θέας ἀξίως}; likewise the stone Hermae located in the gymnasium, the Aphrodite in the public

\textsuperscript{565} \textit{Contra} Ibid., 2:172.
\textsuperscript{566} Pausanias, \textit{Descr.} 1.37.7.
\textsuperscript{567} Elsner, \textit{Art and the Roman Viewer}, 130.
\textsuperscript{568} Of the 19 appearances of \textit{θέας ἀξίως} in \textit{Attica}, 12 specifically refer to statues. The remaining occurrences, with the possible exception of two, draw the reader’s attention to noteworthy temples, sacred groves or caves, and other similarly cultic locations or structures.
gardens, and the statues and paintings of Asclepius within his sanctuary.\textsuperscript{569} This literary feature thus underscores the extent to which the Athens in \textit{Periēgēsis Attica} is not Athens as it was seen in Pausanias’ day, but Athens as Pausanias \textit{wanted it to be seen}, the Athens in Pausanias’ religious ideology.\textsuperscript{570} And sculpture, especially divine statuary,\textsuperscript{571} plays a prominent role in the articulation of this “visual theology.”\textsuperscript{572}

The centrality of statues in Pausanias’ literary world, and in particular the perception of statues as visual “signs of orientation,”\textsuperscript{573} boundary markers delineating between sacred and profane space, is encapsulated in his description of the famed sanctuary of the Olympian Zeus:

πρὶν δὲ ἐς τὸ ἱερὸν ἱέναι τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ Ὅλυμπίου – Ἀδριανὸς ὁ Ῥωμαίων βασιλεὺς τὸν τε ναὸν ἀνέθηκε καὶ τὸ ἄγαλμα θέας ἄξιον, οὗ μεγέθει μὲν, ὦτι μὴ Ὀδυσσίας καὶ Ῥωμαίος ἐστὶν οἱ κολοσσοί, τὰ λοιπὰ ἄγαλματα ὅμοιος ἀπολείπεται, πεποίηται δὲ ἐκ τε ἐλέφαντος καὶ χρυσοῦ καὶ ἔχει τέχνης εἴ τις τὸ μέγεθος ὀρώσῃ – ἐνταῦθα εἰκόνες Ἀδριανοῦ δύο μὲν εἰσὶ Θεᾶσι λίθοι, δύο δὲ Αἰγυπτίους χαλκοὶ δὲ ἐστάσαι πρὸ τῶν κλώνων ὡς Ἀθηναίοι καλοῦσιν ἀποίκους πόλεις, ὁ μὲν δὴ πᾶς περίβολος σταδίων μέλλει τεσσάρων ἑστίν, ἀνδριάντων δὲ πλήρης ἀπὸ γὰρ πόλεως ἕκάστης εἰκών Ἀδριανοῦ βασιλέως ἀνάκειται, καὶ σφᾶς ὑπερβάλλοντο Ἀθηναίοι τὸν κολοσσὸν ἀναθέντες ὀπίσθε τοῦ ναοῦ θέας ἄξιον.

Before the entrance to the sanctuary of Olympian Zeus – Hadrian the Roman emperor dedicated the temple and the statue, \textit{one worth seeing}, which in size exceeds all other statues save the colossi at Rhodes and Rome, and is made of ivory and gold with an artistic skill which is remarkable when the size is taken into account – before the entrance, I say, stand statues of Hadrian, two of Thasian stone, two of Egyptian. Before the pillars stand bronze statues which the Athenians call “colonies.” The \textit{whole circumference} of the precinct is about four stades,


\textsuperscript{570} Elsner, \textit{Art and the Roman Viewer}, 132.

\textsuperscript{571} On Pausanias’ tendency to neglect non-divine statuary, see Eliav, "Roman Statues," 111.

\textsuperscript{572} Spivey, \textit{Understanding Greek Sculpture}, 14.

\textsuperscript{573} Eliav, "The Desolating Sacrilege," 625.
and they are full of statues; for every city has dedicated a likeness of the emperor Hadrian, and the Athenians have surpassed them in dedicating, behind the temple, the remarkable colossus.\textsuperscript{574}

This text is interesting not only for its colorful description of what must have been an impressive population of imperial and divine statuary, but also for the strategic placement of this statuary at the entrance to and within a sacred precinct. In so doing, Pausanias provides the reader a map of this particular site that includes both the precise measurements (four stades) and visual boundary markers of the space; the presence of statuary signals to the reader (and viewer) the presence of sanctity.

Moreover, while this is certainly true for the many temple precincts (like that of the Olympian Zeus described above) in the city, it is also true on a much larger scale: the imposing presence of divine statuary, in addition to the innumerable altars to the various gods, situated in nearly every nook and cranny of the Athenian landscape, bespeaks the sanctity of the entire city, as well as the piety of its inhabitants.\textsuperscript{575} Pausanias remarks that the citizens of Athens are more pious than others (\(\theta\varepsilon\varnothing\varsigma\ \varepsilon\iota\sigma\varepsilon\beta\vartheta\omicron\sigma\iota\nu\nu\ \tilde{\alpha}l\lambda\omega\nu\ \pi\lambda\epsilon\eta\nu\)) due to the altars placed throughout the \textit{agora}.\textsuperscript{576} Likewise, at the end of a long catalogue of divine statuary, Pausanias again reminds his reader of their exemplary devotion towards the gods, thus forging a clear link between the presence of statues and the piety of the Athenians.\textsuperscript{577} The monuments of Athens, foremost of which are statues of the gods, thus serve to delimit sanctity by their very presence, to mark out the city of Athens as a \textit{locus consecratus} and the Athenian citizens as a \textit{populus piissimus}. When these acclamations

\textsuperscript{574} Pausanias, \textit{Descr.} 1.18.6 (Jones, LCL, emphasis mine).

\textsuperscript{575} Not unlike the impression derived from the narrative about Paul in Acts 17.

\textsuperscript{576} Pausanias, \textit{Descr.} 1.17.1.

\textsuperscript{577} Pausanias, \textit{Descr.} 1.24.3.
are read against the backdrop of πάντα τὰ Ἑλληνικά—the interpretive framework for the entire Pausanian project—then it becomes clear that Athenian piety and Ἑλληνικά are in some sense interrelated, that the εὐσέβεια manifest in Athens’ sculptural environment is in an integral part of Greek identity.

Rome: A City “Full of Gods”

The notion that statues delineate between sacred and profane space is not limited to Paul or Pausanias, or to the city of Athens. Indeed, we can find similar perceptions in the very heart of the Roman Mediterranean, the city of Rome. It should be noted at the outset that both Roman mythology—especially the narratives of the founding of Rome by Romulus—and Roman law define the city of Rome as a sacred place with a sacred boundary, the pomerium. The pomerium, typically marked out physically with large blocks of stone, approximately 1 meter square and 2 meters tall, represented the officially sanctioned borders of the city, thus in a sense serving to define Rome itself, though ultimately it was not able contain the city’s urban sprawl, since the pomerium would shift from time to time and emperor to emperor. That the pomerium was deemed to be a sacred border is clear enough from the literary sources. Livy defines the area within the pomerium as a space consecrated through augury (inaugurato consecrabant). Similarly, Lucan’s poetic account of the civil wars at the end of the Republic, written sometime in the middle of the first century C.E., mentions a particular ritual, intended to reinforce the pomerium, that underscores the religious conceptions associated with this

578 On the pomerium as a sacred boundary, see Beard, North, and Price, Religions of Rome, 177-81.
579 Ibid., 177.
580 Livy, Ab urb. 1.44.4.
border: “the scared citizens march right round the city; and the pontiffs, who have license to perform the ceremony, purify the walls with solemn lustration (purgantes moenia lustro) and move round the outer limit of the long pomerium.” 581 The pomerium thus served in one sense as an official delineation between sacred and profane space.

However, although the pomerium represented an official map of Roman urban (and sacred) space, it is also clear that statues, among other res sacra, served as unofficial markers of sanctity. An obscure remark by Varro, preserved in Aulus Gellius’ Noctes atticae (mid-second century C.E.), underscores the link between statues and the sacrality of space. In discussing the meaning of favisae Capitolinae, Varro recalls that after the Capitoline temple was destroyed by fire in 83 B.C.E., Quintus Catulus, proconsul and leader of the optimates (lit. “the best men”; some of the men in Rome elected to high office), was unable to lower the area before and around the temple because of the favisae, subterranean chambers used to store ancient statues and other sacred objects. 582 It seems that the very presence of consecrated objects, including statues, “sacralised the land,” 583 rendering it untouchable and circumventing Catulus’ ambitious renovation plans.

This reference in the Noctes atticae suggests that in the Roman world there were at least two ways a particular location was deemed sacred: first, through the formal rite of consecratio, which served to legally transform space into a sacrum locum; 584 second, and of particular relevance to this discussion, through the presence of res sacra, which by proxy infused a particular place with holiness. This two-fold concept of sacrilizing space

581 Lucan, Bell. civ. 1.592–595 (Duff, LCL).
582 Aulus Gellius, Noct. att. 2.10.2–4.
584 See for example the discussion of consecratio in Gaius, Inst. 2.4–5.
is reflected in Roman legal traditions that distinguish between a *sacrum locum*, a public place officially consecrated, and a *sacrarium*, a repository of sacred objects:

_Sacra loca ea sunt, quae publice sunt dedicate, siue in ciuitate sint siue in agro. Scirendum est locum publicum tunc sacrum fieri posse, cum princeps eum dedicavit vel dedicandi dedit potestatem. Illud notandum est aliud esse sacram locum, aliud sacrarium. Sacer locus est locus consecratus, sacrarium est locus, in quo sacra reponuntur, quod etiam in aedificio priuato esse potest, et solent, qui liberare eum locum religione volunt, sacra inde euocare._

Sacred places are those that have been publicly dedicated, whether in the city or in the country. It must be understood that a public place can only become sacred if the emperor has dedicated it or has granted the power of dedicating it. It should also be observed that a sacred place is one thing, a *sacrarium* another. A sacred place is a place that has been consecrated, but a *sacrarium* is a place in which *sacra* have been deposited. This could even be in a private building, and it is customary for those who wish to free such a place from its religious scruple to call forth the _sacra._

Although the *sacrarium* and the *sacrum locum* are clearly differentiated in this text, the former is nevertheless still considered a *locus religiosus* by virtue of the presence of *sacra*.

With this in mind, a reference to Rome’s sacred status in Livy is particularly instructive. Livy’s remark, placed in the mouth of the Roman general Camillus, emphasizes both the _rituals_ involved in the sanctification of Rome and the _visual evidence_ of the city’s sanctity. Camillus, following the sack of Rome by the Gauls in 390 B.C.E., counters a proposal that the Romans should relocate instead of rebuild Rome:

_Urbem auspicio inauguratoque conditam habemus; nullus locus in ea non religionum deorumque est plenus; sacrificiis sollemnibus non dies magis stati quam loca sunt in quibus fiunt._

We inhabit a city founded after auspices were taken and rites of inauguration were performed; _no place in it is not full of religious_

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associations and of gods; as many days are fixed for solemn rites as there are places in which they are performed.\textsuperscript{586}

Camillus’ rebuttal depicts Rome as a sacred location from its foundation, comporting with the myth of the \textit{pomerium} in the Romulus narratives. And yet the visual evidence of Rome’s sanctity is not the stone blocks of the \textit{pomerium} but the ubiquitous presence of the gods and their cults within the \textit{pomerium}: Rome was a city \textit{religionum deorumque plenus}, full of religious objects and gods. \textit{Religionum} here must refer to the various physical manifestations of Rome’s cultic activities, such as temples, altars, and other such \textit{res sacra}, and similarly, \textit{deorum} likely refers not simply to the gods and goddesses of Rome but to the iconographical presence of the divine realm. Livy thus identifies statues \textit{inter alia} as tangible markers of Rome’s sanctity, suggesting that \textit{any} iconographical representation of the divine realm, whether formally consecrated or not, could at least \textit{be perceived} as sacred. Thus the legal distinctions between consecrated and profane space are blurred, opening the possibility that \textit{any} space could be considered sacred, depending on what, or who, was inhabiting its terrain.\textsuperscript{587}

In sum, two important observations emerge from the above discussion. First, statues were perceived throughout the Roman world as visual markers of a sacred landscape. That we can detect this perception in a variety of diverse contexts, ranging from Roman legal traditions to Judeo-Christian historiography, suggests that the link

\textsuperscript{586} Livy, \textit{Ab urb.} 5.52.2 (emphasis mine); trans. Ibid., 335.

\textsuperscript{587} One possibly extreme example of this appears in a Pompeian lavatory, which contained a fresco of the goddess Fortuna standing next to a squatting man, who is apparently defecating over an altar to the goddess. Above the man is the following graffiti: \textit{cacator cave malum} (“shitter, beware of evil”). Whether or not this is meant to elicit laughter, fear, or perhaps both, it nevertheless indicates that in the Roman world, the gods (and the sacred) permeated all of reality, extending even to the rankest locations (\textit{CIL IV} 7716, III. V. 1). For a colorful, albeit unusual, discussion of this fresco, see Keith Hopkins, \textit{A World Full of Gods: The Strange Triumph of Christianity} (New York: Plume, 1999), 20, pl. 1. See also Eliav, “Roman Statues,” 105.
between statues—or more broadly any iconographical representations of the divine realm—and sacred space was so diffuse as to be almost unremarkable. This is manifested both formally, in the case of consecrated statues whose very presence imbues a particular location with sanctity, and informally, for example in the conglomeration of Athenian statues and altars that bespeaks the sanctity of the city. Second, implicit in the narrative about Paul and explicit in the writings of Pausanias is the inextricable link between statues, space and cultural/religious identity. As will become evident in the following section, this delimitation of sacred space plays an integral role in the mapping of culture, power and identity.

**Sculpture and the Politics of Identity in Greco-Roman Antiquity**

Returning to *B.J.*, in the previous section I argued that Josephus conceptualizes Judea/Jerusalem as a sacred space devoid of statuary; indeed, in a remarkable reversal of conceptual norms, it is precisely this very absence of sculpture that defines its sanctity, that marks this particular territory as a *locus consecratus*, so much so that even landscape not formally consecrated within the domain of Judea (i.e., the *chora*) is nevertheless deemed sacred, as evidenced by its lack of statuary. Simply put, Josephus imagines a statue-less haven surrounded by a statue-filled world.

Moving from the center to periphery, from Jerusalem to Caesarea Maritima, there emerges an additional layer to this discourse, one that introduces the perception of statuary as a marker of identity. In the Pilate narratives discussed above, Caesarea Maritima and Jerusalem form two distinct realms of power, not of course in any real sense—although the center of Pilate’s authority was in fact Caesarea, Jerusalem was obviously within his jurisdiction as governor of Judea—but as ideal realms, the territory
of the Ἰουδαίοι, and the territory of the other, in this case Pontius Pilate. In this particular mapping of space we begin to see an inextricable link between statues, space and identity, a link that is crystallized in Josephus’ treatment of the social unrest in Caesarea just prior to the outbreak of the revolt against Rome (ca. 59–60 C.E.).

**Statues, Space and Identity**

According to Josephus, a conflict erupted in Caesarea between the Jewish and Syrian/Greek inhabitants of the city, setting in motion, at least in Josephus’ narrative progression, a series of events that would lead to the Jewish revolt and ultimately the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.\(^{588}\) Verbal sparring became riotous, and according to the account in *A.J.*, this civic conflict eventually took on “the shape of war” (ἐν πολέμῳ τρόπῳ γενομένην).\(^{589}\) Initially, the Jewish contingent appeared to emerge from the fray victorious, although Felix, the procurator of Judea during this time, turned the tide by authorizing his troops to attack and plunder the Jewish residents of Caesarea. The conflict continued until Felix referred the matter to Nero, at which time the Syrian/Greek contingent was awarded preeminence in 66 C.E., immediately prior to the commencement of the revolt against Rome. Josephus then reports that the entire Jewish community in Caesarea—some 20,000 members strong—was destroyed during the revolt.\(^{590}\)

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\(^{589}\) *A.J.* 20.177.

\(^{590}\) *B.J.* 2.457; 7.362.
Two unique features in *B.J.*’s version of this episode are relevant to the topic at hand. First, after initially identifying the opponents as “Syrians” (Σύροι), Josephus subsequently refers to this group as “Greeks” (Ελλήνες). This contrasts markedly with the consistent use of Σύροι in *A.J.* Second, the dispute in *B.J.* concerns not the juridical status of the Jews vis-à-vis their non-Jewish antagonists, the *isopoliteia* question at the center of the dispute in *A.J.*, but rather the very identity of the city itself—whether Jewish or Greek—and ultimately to whom the city belongs. This is apparent in both the claim of the disputing parties and the evidence adduced to support each claim:

οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἡμῖν σφατέραν εἶναι τὴν πόλιν Ἰουδαίον γεγονέναι τὸν κτήσαντι αὐτῆς λέγοντες: ἵνα δὲ Ἡρώδης ὁ βασιλεὺς· οἱ δὲ ἔτεροι τὸν οἰκιστήν μὲν προσωμόλογον Ἰουδαίον, αὐτὴν μὲντοι γε τὴν πόλιν Ἔλληνων ἔφασαν· οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἀνδριάντας καὶ οὐκ οἶκοις ἐγκαθιδρύσατι Ἰουδαίοις αὐτὴν ἀνατιθέντα.

For [the Jews] considered the city to be their own, claiming that the city’s founder, Herod the king, had been a Jew. Now their opponents admitted that the founder was Jewish, but claimed that the city itself belonged to the Greeks. *For whoever would set up statues and temples in it would not then present the city to the Jews.*

As noted above, what is at stake in this text is not status within the *polis* but the identity of the *polis*, and the presence or absence of statuary emerges as the primary criterion for defining this identity. I am admittedly skeptical that the account in *B.J.* bears any substantial similarity to the events that took place, as if the Jews of Caesarea were really trying, in the words of Lee Levine, “to turn Caesarea into a ‘Jewish’ city.”

Rather, this incident filtered through Josephan rhetoric *creates* an opposition between two

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591 *A.J.* 20.173: Γίνεται δὲ καὶ τῶν Κασάρεων οἰκούντων Ἰουδαίων στάσεις πρὸς τοῖς ἐν αὐτῇ Σύροις περὶ ἱσοπολιτείας (“Now a dispute concerning *isopoliteia* arose among the Jews living in Caesarea against the Syrians in the city”).

592 *B.J.* 2.266 (emphasis mine).

593 Levine, "Jewish-Greek Conflict," 396.
realms and identities—the territory of the Ἐλλήνες and the Ἰουδαῖοι—and in the process transforms what was likely an incident of social unrest between rival Semitic groups into a veritable clash of civilizations, the Jews struggling against the irrepressible Greeks.\footnote{On the use of ethnic terminology in Josephus, see Tessa Rajak, "Greeks and Barbarians in Josephus," in \textit{Hellenism in the Land of Israel} (ed. John J. Collins and Gregory E. Sterling; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 244-62. For a broader analysis of ethnicity in Josephus, see McClister, "Ethnicity and Jewish Identity".}

That the narrative identifies statuary as the quintessence of Caesarea’s “Greekness” further implies the inverse: a “Jewish” Caesarea must be a statue-less Caesarea.

The use of statuary to map identity is widely attested in Greek literature. As early as Herodotus, statues (along with temples and altars) served to distinguish between the Greeks and the Persians, whose sacred territory was remarkable, at least according to Herodotus’ assessment, for its absence of statuary.\footnote{Herodotus, \textit{Hist.} 1.131–132; see also Hall, \textit{Hellenicity}, 192.} The link between statuary and Greek identity is especially noticeable in Pausanias’ \textit{Periēgēsis Hellados}. As noted above, statues are inextricably woven into Pausanias’ vision of πάντα τὰ Ἑλληνικά, so much so that statuary emerges as the quintessential marker of τὰ Ἑλληνικά. Moreover, according to Jaś Elsner the selectivity in Pausanias’ description of πάντα τὰ Ἑλληνικά suggests that embedded in his use of Ἑλληνικά is not simply a geographical referent—mainland Greece—but a distinct notion of Greekness, so that by looking at πάντα τὰ
'Ελληνικά Pausanias was in fact “self-consciously exploring Greek identity.” Simply put, for Pausanias, statues are an important marker of Greekness.

I submit that it is precisely this perception of statuary that has shaped Josephus’ own vision of space and identity: the primary indicia of Greek space and identity in the Caesarea pericope are statues; conversely, Jewish space and identity are marked by emptiness, by the absence of statues. Whereas Pausanias’ notion of Greekness is defined by the numerous statues populating Greece’s landscape, Josephus inverts this paradigm in order to map a world and identity without sculpture.

Space, Power and Cultural Politics in Flavian Rome

I have argued above that sculpture in B.J., and in particular narratives about Jewish resistance to sculpture, play an important role in defining Judean (sacred) territory and shaping Jewish identity as distinct from Greek space and identity. It is thus appropriate at this point to consider how this literary topos functions within its wider

596 Elsner, Art and the Roman Viewer, 128. Elsner’s interpretation is thus reflected in his translation of the phrase πάντα τά Ελληνικά—“all things Greek.” By contrast, Jones translates more literally in the LCL: “But my narrative must not loiter, as my task is a general description of all Greece.” Similarly, Christian Habicht remarks on this passage: “Pausanias clearly intended to describe Greece in its entirety”; see Christian Habicht, Pausanias’ Guide to Ancient Greece (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 6. See also Arafat, Pausanias’ Greece, 8-9.

597 Pausanias likely hailed from western Asia Minor, probably Magnesia ad Sipylum in Lydia, and was thus, strictly speaking, not Greek, but was instead, in the words of Christian Jacob, “un xénos” traveling in and writing about a foreign land; Christian Jacob, "Paysages hantés et jardins merveilleux: la Grèce imaginaire de Pausanias," L’Ethnographie (1980-1981): 44. Nevertheless, on a literary level Pausanias speaks not as an outsider to πάντα τά Ελληνικά but as an intimate insider, as one who has not only traveled but has experienced Greece, and by extension, Greekness. This insider’s stance both enables Pausanias to guide his reader to the most important sights worth seeing, and conversely, to conceal sights that are prohibited to the uninitiated, such as the Eleusinian sanctuary that Pausanias was forbidden in a dream to describe (Pausanias, Descr. 1.38.7). On Pausanias’ origins in Asia Minor, see the discussion in Frazer, Pausanias's Description, 1:xix; Arafat, Pausanias’ Greece, 8.

598 I am not suggesting, of course, that there is some kind of literary relationship between Josephus and Pausanias. Rather, the evidence suggests a common “culture of perception”—they are breathing the same cultural air, so to speak; Leppert, Art and the Committed Eye, 11.
narrative context, i.e., the role of Josephus’ “sacred map” in the development of larger rhetorical themes in *B.J*. Moreover, given the importance of Josephus’ compositional context—Rome at the height of the reign of Titus—I will consider how his configuration of space and identity is both shaped by and contributes to a discourse on culture and power in Flavian Rome. Specifically, I wish to suggest that Josephus’ narratives of iconoclasm in *B.J.*, beyond describing events that may have occurred *in Judea* before and during the Jewish revolt against Rome, function to navigate the complicated cultural and political terrain *in Rome* following the turbulent rise of a new imperial family. A decade after the devastating destruction of the temple, Josephus invites his Roman reader to consider though his “sacred map” the limits of monarchy, to define and distinguish between tyrannical rule and legitimate expressions of power. In short, the territorial boundaries that emerge in *B.J.* become a kind of measuring stick for imperial (il)legitimacy.

Pausanias again offers an interesting point of comparison. According to Elsner, Pausanias’ vision of Ἑλληνικά, his notion of Greekness tangibly evident in the monuments that mark out its sanctity, functions in part “as a resistance to the realities of Roman rule.”\(^{599}\) Embedded in Pausanias’ visual map of Greece is thus an attempt to chart the proper boundaries of power and authority in a context where such boundaries have seemingly been violated. This is exemplified in his discussion of the bronze Eros erected in Thespiae, wherein Pausanias displays his own ambivalence toward Roman hegemony. Gaius Caligula initially stole this unfortunate statue, which Claudius eventually returned to its happy home, only for it to meet a devastating end at the hands of Nero, who brought

\(^{599}\) Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 127.
the statue back to Rome where it perished by fire. This brief account of the travails of Eros conveys an implicit assessment of imperial power, which is measured according to its treatment of sacred (and Greek) space. Power rightly displayed respects the sacred boundaries; conversely, the quintessential mark of abusive and tyrannical power is the violation of such boundaries and the desecration of the sacred. Both Caligula and Nero, by removing the statue from its rightful home, desecrated the territory of the Thespians and thus “sinned against the god” (τῶν ὅσεβησάντων ἐς τῶν θεῶν). Only Claudius displays a proper use of power by respecting the sacred boundaries of the Greeks.

It is interesting to note that Josephus too charts the proper boundaries of power and authority according to his sacred map, and even places Gaius Caligula on this map, only in this case it is not the removal but intrusion of a statue that points to an abuse of power. Herod, Pilate, and especially Caligula exemplify the dangers of tyranny in their attempts to remap Judea, as it were, to reconfigure Judean space according to the indicia of Greek space. We should note, however, that by highlighting the desecrating potential of Greek culture and its links with tyranny, Josephus is not simply expressing a distinctly Jewish concern to preserve cultural “orthodoxy” from the corrupting forces of “Hellenism.” Rather, Josephus here is tapping into a growing “hellenophobia” within certain segments of the Roman elite, expressed most poignantly in Juvenal’s lament over a “Greekified Rome” (Graecam Urbem).

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600 Pausanias, Descri. 9.27.3–4.
601 Pausanias, Descri. 9.27.4.
602 The full citation is as follows: “The race that’s now most popular with wealthy Romans—the people I want especially to get away from—I’ll name them right away, without any embarrassment. My fellow-citizens, I cannot stand a Greekified Rome” (Juvenal, Sat. 3.60-61 [Braund, LCL]). On this topic, see especially Nicholas Petrochilos, Roman Attitudes to the Greeks (Athens: National and Capodistrian University of Athens, 1974). See also the discussion of this issue below in chapter 6.
Plutarch conveys this Roman ambivalence toward Greek culture when he places in the mouth of Marcus Cato the sentiment that “Rome would lose her empire when she had become infected with Greek letters.”\(^{603}\) Though recounting the words of an austere defender of the Roman Republic from bygone years, Plutarch may very well testify to a simmering angst within his own day.\(^{604}\) For many in Rome during and even after the Flavian dynasty, the memory of Nero’s philhellenism still lingered; after all, this “tyrant,” widely considered to have been enslaved to his Greek passions, was to a large degree—at least according to later historians and biographers whose task it was to condemn the erstwhile emperor—responsible for the demise of the Julio-Claudians and the subsequent civil wars that plagued Rome.\(^{605}\) From this perspective, Greekness becomes a kind of measuring stick for imperial illegitimacy: the more an emperor displays his proximity to the more excessive elements of Greek culture—e.g., sexual license, *luxuria*, and the general inability to govern desires—the more that emperor demonstrates an abusive and tyrannical reign. In short, Greekness run amok leads to power run amok.

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\(^{603}\) Plutarch, *Cat. Maj.* 23.2–3 (Perrin, LCL). It should be noted that Plutarch is quick to refute this assertion by commenting that Rome at its zenith “made every form of Greek learning and culture her own.” For Plutarch, Greekness and Romanness were perfectly compatible, and his own literary project in some sense functioned as a “bridge between Greece and Rome”; S. C. R. Swain, “Hellenic Culture and the Roman Heroes of Plutarch,” *JHS* 110 (1990): 127.

\(^{604}\) In contrast, Albert Henrichs argues that after the second century B.C.E., the perceived threat of Greek culture had all but dissipated in Rome; see Albert Henrichs, “*Graecia Capta*: Roman Views of Greek Culture,” *HSCP* 97 (1995): 243–61.

\(^{605}\) According to Holly Haynes, Tacitus’ treatment of Nero reflects the perspective that Nero was a fountainhead of innumerable political crises; see Holly Haynes, *The History of Make-Believe: Tacitus on Imperial Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 34. On the question of Nero’s philhellenism, Tim Whitmarsh remarks: “according to the conventional picture, Nero’s celebrated philhellenism inclines more to the seedier side of the Greek heritage, or at least what Roman Hellenophobes represented as such”; see Tim Whitmarsh, “Greek and Roman in Dialogue: The Pseudo-Lucianic Nero,” *JHS* 119 (1999): 145. See also the image of Nero in Suetonius, who repeatedly highlights the emperor’s depraved (at least from the perspective of the author) obsession with all things Greek (Suetonius, *Vit. Nero* 12.3; 20.1–3; 28.2); Tamsyn Barton, “The *inventio* of Nero: Suetonius,” in *Reflections of Nero: Culture, History & Representation* (ed. Jas Elsner and Jamie Masters; London: Duckworth, 1994), 48–63.
Yet for Josephus, as also for other historians in the late first and early second century C.E., Roman rule need not violate the limits of space and power. Indeed, Vespasian and Titus are presented as the antidotes to such excesses, exemplars of moderation and Roman virtue. In the narrative of B.J., Titus especially fulfills the role of ideal imperator (and, by extension, princeps) in his concern to respect and protect Judean space. His actions contrast markedly with the desecrating impulse of tyranny, which, ironically enough, in B.J. finds its fullest expression not in a foreign despot but in the radical Jewish rebels who are ultimately responsible for the “abomination of desolations,” the destruction of the temple. This theme is introduced in the opening pages of the narrative, where the tyranny of the Jewish rebels (οἱ Ἰουδαίων τύραννοι) is juxtaposed with the clemency of Titus, whose compassion for the people of Jerusalem (τὸν δῆμον ἔλεησε) led him to delay the destruction of the city. Even more explicitly, Titus is presented as one who desires “to save the temple and city” (Τίτος σώσει τὴν πόλιν καὶ τὸν ναὸν ἐπιθυμῶν); the temple was burnt against the will of Caesar (ὁ ναὸς

606 For example, Suetonius speaks of Vespasian’s attempt to restrain an increase in libido atque luxuria (Vesp. 11; cf. Cassius Dio, Hist. rom. 65.10-11), clearly recalling the Neronic era. This tendency in historiography to style the first two Flavians as ideal figures of Roman virtue very likely goes back to the political propaganda of the emperors themselves. A. J. Boyle notes that such posturing is reflected in the semiotics of Flavian portrait busts. Vespasian appears in a “rugged, man-of-the-people style,” complete with a “balding head, furrowed brow, lined neck, closely set eyes with crow’s feet, hooked nose, creased cheeks and jutting chin,” and the “curly-haired, square headed” portraiture of Titus exudes a “kindly beneficence.” This portraiture provides a striking contrast with the last of the Flavians, whose “high forehead, protruding upper lip, soft, full cheeks, aquiline nose and stylized hair” is more suggestive of Nero than his Flavian predecessors; see A. J. Boyle, "Introduction: Reading Flavian Rome," in Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text (ed. A. J. Boyle and William J. Dominik; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 34.


608 B.J. 1.10.
who heroically rescues the sacred objects (τῶν ἱερῶν) from the flames of destruction.609

The depiction of Romans who protect Judean space contrasted with Jews who desecrate space continues throughout the narrative. In B.J. 4.181–182 Roman donations to the temple are contrasted with the spoils taken by Jewish rebels. This topos receives greater specificity in John of Gischala and his band of zealots, who emerge in Bellum as a locus of desecrating tyranny:

But when the plunder from the people dried up, John turned to sacrilege (ἱεροσυλίαν)—he melted down many of the temple’s votive offerings and numerous vessels required for proper worship, such as the bowls and plates and tables. Nor did he abstain from the vessels for pure wine sent by Augustus and his wife. For indeed Roman emperors continually honored and adorned the temple, in contrast with this Jew, who pulled down even these donations from foreigners.610

The image of unbridled greed, of an unrestrained pursuit of wealth even at the expense of one’s compatriots and God, underscores the leitmotif outlined above: tyranny knows no bounds or limits, only excessive lust manifest in abusive displays of power. That the apex of tyranny resides not in some foreign invader but within the Ἰουδαίοι is for Josephus a lamentable paradox.611


610 B.J. 5.562–563.

611 Josephus laments τῆς παραδόξου μεταβολῆς τὴν πόλιν, when foreigners (ἄλλοφιλοι) and enemies (πολέμιοι) must reverse the impiety of Jews (B.J. 6.102).
One of the more revealing instances of this paradox of impiety—and one that encapsulates the intersection of sacrilege, tyranny and Greekness—is found in a rather colorful, if unlikely, depiction of the aforementioned John (identified in the immediate context as a τῷραννος) and his rebel followers:

Now their lust for plunder was insatiable, and they ransacked the homes of the rich; they amused themselves in the murder of men and the abuse of women; they drank down their spoils along with blood, and in their insolence they behaved like women (ἐνθηλυπαθῶς) with reckless abandon, adorning their hair and putting on feminine clothing, bathing themselves in perfume and painting their eyelids for beauty. Moreover, not only did they beautify themselves [like women], but they even imitated the [sexual] passions of women (πάθη γυναικῶν ἐμμοῦν), and through their excessive debauchery they contrived illicit sexual pleasures (δι᾽ ὑπερβολὴν ἀφαλάγειας ἀθημίτους ἐπενόησαν ἔρωτας); and immersing themselves [in sexual decadence] as if in a brothel in the city, they defiled the entire city with their impure deeds.612

If nothing else, this image of a blood-drenched sexual rampage indicates in no uncertain terms who the villain is in B.J. We should not, of course, naively suppose that Josephus’ description bears any resemblance to the historical figures portrayed in this pericope. Rather, the language here echoes Roman stereotypes of Greek decadence, which in turn serve as a point of contrast with Roman ideals of manliness.613

That Roman moralists associated excessive displays of libido with Greek influence is well documented,614 and certainly the above text comports with the image of

612 B.J. 4.560–562 (emphasis mine).
Greek licentiousness that we find in authors such as Cicero and Tacitus.\textsuperscript{615} But even more explicitly, Josephus’ caricature of effeminacy and sexual passivity recalls a longstanding unease with Roman men who behave like women.\textsuperscript{616} The second century B.C.E. Scipio negatively describes P. Sulpicius Gallus as “one who daily perfumes himself and dresses before a mirror, whose eyebrows are trimmed, who walks abroad with beard plucked out and thighs made smooth.”\textsuperscript{617} Tacitus similarly depicts among the vices of Otho his penchant for cross-dressing: “Was it by his bearing and gait or by his womanish dress (\textit{muliebri ornatu}) that he deserved the throne?”\textsuperscript{618} Likewise, Roman distaste for male receptivity in the sexual act, expressed in the hierarchical distinction between the penetrator, the embodiment of Roman manliness, and the penetrated (i.e., young boys, slaves and women) is well known, exemplified in Martial’s repeated censure of male passivity.\textsuperscript{619} Such effeminate practices were considered part and parcel of the more general problem of sexual decadence imported from Greece into the capital.\textsuperscript{620}

\textsuperscript{615} For example, Cicero, \textit{Tusc.} 4.70; 5.58; Tacitus, \textit{Ann.} 14.20. Tacitus explicitly refers to an “imported licentiousness” whose source is clearly Greece in the broader context (Jackson, LCL).


\textsuperscript{617} Preserved in Aulus Gellius’ second century C.E. \textit{Noct. att.} 6.12.2; trans. MacMullen, "Roman Attitudes to Greek Love," 484.

\textsuperscript{618} Tacitus, \textit{Hist.} 1.30 (Moore, LCL). We could also point to the writings of the poet Phaedrus and satirist Juvenal, who, according to Judith Hallett, “provide negative and feminizing representations of mature men”; Judith P. Hallett, "Female Homoeroticism and the Denial of Roman Reality in Latin Literature," \textit{YJC} 3 (1989): 223.

\textsuperscript{619} See the numerous references cited in J. P. Sullivan, "Martial’s Sexual Attitudes," \textit{Philologus} 123 (1979): 294, n. 10. Sullivan argues that, notwithstanding Martial’s own preference for young boys, his occasional rendezvous with prostitutes, and the frank and uninhibited tone of his epigrams, Martial is on the whole “fairly conventional, if not prudish, in his sexual values” (302). In this light, we should note that it is not male-to-male intercourse per se that is considered immoral, so long as the participants fulfill their proper
I propose that the Josephan rhetoric outlined in the above analysis, and in particular the attempt to mediate the nexus of tyranny, sacrilege and Greek culture through the configuration of sacred space, should be read in the light of this lively discourse on culture and politics in Rome. Josephus here gives voice to certain elite Roman attitudes toward virtue, power and Roman identity that served both to elicit a sympathetic hearing and to warn against the dangers of imbibing too deeply from the well of Greekness, a danger that had become even more pronounced in the latter decades of the first century C.E. Of course, Josephus is writing in Greek to a literate audience fluent in Greek, so it is not Greek culture per se that is problematic, only an excessive infatuation with Greekness. On this point, I submit, such sentiments would certainly have rung true to a moralizing impulse among at least a few members of the literary elite in Flavian Rome.

**Conclusion**

I have argued that Josephus in *B.J.* deploys sculpture as a mapping device, a boundary marker delineating between sacred and profane space. The resulting “sacred map,” however, beyond simply demarcating the limits of sacrality and defining identity, actually functions to chart the proper boundaries of power and authority: power rightly displayed respects the sacred boundaries; conversely, the quintessential mark of abusive and tyrannical power is the violation of such boundaries and the desecration of the roles. Moreover, that some Roman moralists decry male receptivity should not be taken to mean that all Romans rejected homosexual love between two adult males, as if we could even speak of the Roman view of sex. For an attempt to uncover other voices in Roman sexuality, see John R. Clarke, *Roman Sex, 100 B.C. - A.D. 250* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003). For an alternative view on the question of Greek influence in sexuality, see Williams, "Greek Love at Rome," 517-39.

sacred. It is important to note that Josephus’ negation of Greco-Roman notions of sacredness vis-à-vis an imagined world without statues does not express a subversive propaganda for Jewish independence from the “Hellenizing” corruption of Roman power, a clarion call to preserve purity by the resisting external profanation. For Josephus, Roman rule need not violate the limits of power, and in fact can serve to reinforce the boundaries of authority that ultimately empower Jews under Rome—exemplified in Augustus, and even more so, in Vespasian and Titus. So in one sense, the figures of Herod, Pilate and Caligula, insofar as their actions violated Judean space, prefigure not the invasion of Vespasian’s army into Judea nor the destruction of the temple under the command of Titus, but the unrestrained tyranny of radical Judean rebels whose lust for power forced the hand of Rome.

Nevertheless, the stark polarization between Judean and Greek landscapes, and by extension Jewish and Greek identities, when read against this backdrop points to a nexus between Greekness and desecrating tyranny, underscored especially in the caricature of an excessively depraved John of Gischala. It is a mistake, however, to draw from this rhetorical antithesis the conclusion that “Judaism” and “Hellenism” were fundamentally and irreconcilably opposed in antiquity, an interpretation that fails to appreciate both the complexity of Greco-Roman culture and the subtlety of Josephus’ rhetoric. In fact, the polarization that emerges in B.J. is actually not a Jewish opposition to Greekness but a Roman, or perhaps better, Romano-Jewish resistance to elements of Greek culture. Josephus thus reconfigures the uneasy relationship between Jews and sculpture for a distinctly Roman audience, conveying through the aniconic rhetoric of B.J. not simply a radically strict interpretation of the second commandment but the strategy of a
cartographer whose “sacred map” serves to navigate the complex cultural and political terrain of Flavian Rome.
CHAPTER 5

IDEALIZING AN ANICONIC PAST IN ANTIQUITATES JUDAICAE

Figurative art and religious devotion are seemingly inseparable. From the cache of divine sculpture found at the Sumerian Tel Asmar (the temple of the god Abu, ca. 2700-2600 B.C.E.) through the proliferation of icons and images in Christianity to the iconic representation of the Hindu gods Visnu, Siva and the Goddess and images of the Buddha, there is an abundance of material and literary evidence attesting to the near ubiquitous human impulse to image the gods, to mediate cultic devotion through artistic representation. Nevertheless, the fact that, in Volkhard Krech’s words, “art has constantly inspired popular piety” ought not overshadow an opposing conceptual tendency to link aniconism, the absence of figurative cult images, and spirituality. As David Freedberg observes, this notion—the idea that aniconism is “an index of the degree of ‘spirituality’ of a culture”—sporadically surfaces in a variety of contexts across the wide spectrum of

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human history.\textsuperscript{623} That is to say, for some in antiquity, as also in the present, a culture or religion whose thought is “more spiritualized” will “tend more or less rigorously to aniconism.”\textsuperscript{624}

Judaism, insofar as it is typically, if inaccurately, identified as an aural, non-visual “book” religion, is often put forward as exemplary of this aniconic spirituality.\textsuperscript{625} For example, a quick perusal of Helen Gardner’s widely used and repeatedly revised historical survey of art is quite telling: although the volume covers a broad range of cultures (including, in addition to the well-known “Western” cultures, Islamic, Chinese, Japanese, Native American and South Pacific art, \textit{inter alia}) and time periods (paleolithic to the present), Judaism, or Jewish religious art, at least as a separate category of discussion, is conspicuously absent, except a brief notation that the sacred \textit{book} of Judaism, the “legacy of Israel … contributed so much to the formation of the Western spirit.”\textsuperscript{626} As Freedberg and many others have correctly noted, however, this image of Judaism is more myth than reality, the product of a persistent ethnic stereotype that masks an abundance of material evidence attesting to a vibrant production of Jewish

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\textsuperscript{623} Freedberg, \textit{Power of Images}, 54. According to Freedberg, although this notion of a spiritual aniconism is expressed in both antiquity and the present, it is fundamentally a myth that belies a near universal impulse to create images.


\textsuperscript{625} Note especially Heinrich Graetz’s famous essay “The Structure of Jewish History,” in which he contrasts the “Pagan” belief that a deity is revealed visually to the Jewish notion that “God reveals Himself … through the medium of the ear …. Paganism sees its god, Judaism hears Him, … so is it alien to Judaism to represent visually the divine ‘which has no form’”; Heinrich Graetz, \textit{The Structure of Jewish History and Other Essays} (trans. Ismar Schorsch; New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1975), 68.

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Moreover, the tendency to restrict aniconism to the so-called monotheistic book religions often mutes aniconic voices from cultures otherwise saturated with the iconic. This is evident particularly in the study of Greco-Roman antiquity, where the notion of the ancient Jew as the aniconic “other” tends to obscure the fact that Greeks and Romans could also, notwithstanding the ubiquitous diffusion of figurative sculpture and painting throughout their respective landscapes, affirm the piety of aniconic religion, albeit locating such cultic practices in the distant past, a long-lost primitive age of pious religiosity. Indeed, as will be discussed below, some Greek and Roman authors identify the rise of iconic worship as symptomatic of the gradual corruption of the piety and virtue of ancestral customs.

The central hypothesis of this chapter is that Josephus’ discussion of εἰκῶν in A.J. fits within this broader Greco-Roman discourse on aniconism. Specifically, I will argue the following theses in this chapter. First, Josephus constructs an image of an aniconic ideal, originating in the deep past and rooted in the legislation of a lawgiver whose πολιτεία represents the perfect repository of virtue (ἀρετή; virtus) and piety (εὐσέβεια; pietas). Moreover, this image of a primitive age of pious aniconism, rather than functioning to distinguish Jews from their iconic Roman counterparts, actually represents a facet of religio-cultural sameness, serving as a cohesive element that links Jews with Romans, at least with the ancient (from a first century perspective) Romans who functioned as exempla of true “Romanness.” By constructing an image of a pristine aniconic age, Josephus thus taps into a trajectory of Roman cultural discourse that

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similarly idealized an aniconic past, albeit one that had long since dissipated. Finally, the supposition of a pious aniconic πολιτεία also functions in A.J. to explain Jewish resistance to images in the present. In other words, Josephus counters the belief that the sporadic moments of iconoclastic activity during the Herodian and early Roman periods were fundamentally anti-Roman by positing the opposite: Jews resisted images precisely because they shared with Romans a love for and loyalty to the ancient laws and customs, the mos maiorum, stemming from the deep past. Jewish iconoclasm is thus framed as an attempt to preserve that which the Romans had long since lost.

'Aρχαιολογία and a Golden Age of Primitive Piety

The preface in A.J. sets out in explicit terms Josephus’ main literary agenda: to convey for a Greek-speaking audience the complete Αρχαιολογία and the διάταξις τού πολιτεύματος of the Jews.628 Josephus’ use of the term Αρχαιολογία situates his work within a stream of “antiquarian rhetorical historiography.”629 Indeed many have suggested that Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the Greek historian (during the reign of Augustus) whose literary oeuvre included the 20 volume Antiquitates Romanae, or at least the historiographical tradition that he represented, served as an explicit model for

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628 A.J. 1.5.
629 Gregory E. Sterling, Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 285. But see the objections raised in Tessa Rajak, "Josephus and the 'Archaeology' of the Jews," in The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction (ed. Tessa Rajak; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 241-55. Specifically, Rajak argues that despite a few superficial similarities, Josephus’ treatment of the primitive past is substantially different from other ancient historiographical texts, indicating that A.J. really has “no parallel … in the Graeco-Roman world” (254). Rajak may be correct that the differences far outweigh the similarities, but this does not mitigate the possibility that Josephus has at least superficially located his work within this historiographical tradition, i.e., that although Josephus may differ with Dionysius of Halicarnassus and other Greek historians on a number of substantive details, particularly in the method of using sources, he has nevertheless attempted to situate his work within this broad stream of antiquarian historiography. At the very least, Rajak overstates the differences when she places Josephus “in a class apart from the Greek and Roman antiquarians” (253).
Josephus’ *magnum opus*, due mainly to a number of striking similarities between the two in structure and content. Whether Dionysius was actually a blueprint for *A.J.*, or both texts independently employ similar rhetorical strategies and forms, by identifying his project as an ἄρχαιολογία, Josephus imbues this work with the spirit of Greco-Roman antiquarianism, aiming his “archaeology” of the Jews to an audience and culture that “placed an almost absolute value on antiquity.”

While in modern usage antiquarianism typically denotes an interest in *preserving* the past through the collection of old, rare artifacts, in Roman antiquarianism past and present are inseparably wedded, with the former serving the cultural and political needs of the latter. In other words, Roman antiquarianism, not unlike what Jonathan Z. Smith identifies as the “complex and deceptive” nature of memory, only “appears to be preeminently a matter of the past, yet it is as much an affair of the present.” In this sense, antiquarian historiography should not be read, strictly speaking, as a record of


631 Most notably, both works consist of twenty books and both include nearly identical titles: Πρωμαϊκὴ Ἀρχαιολογία and Ἰουδαϊκὴ Ἀρχαιολογία respectively.


633 Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism*, 245. Boccaccini stresses the role of memory of the past in Josephus as a means of asserting the “national and religious identity of the Jewish people” (243). He subsequently remarks that Josephus’ main task is “to place side by side, if not opposite one another, the memory of the Greek and Roman peoples and the memory of the Jewish people—Jewish antiquities against Greek and Roman antiquities” (248).

634 For example, the American Antiquarian Society was established in 1812 to, in the words of its founder Isaiah Thomas, “encourage the collection and preservation of the Antiquities of our country”; cited in “A Brief History of the American Antiquarian Society,” n.p. [accessed 19 August 2008]. Online: http://www.americanantiquarian.org/briefhistory.htm.

635 Smith, *To Take Place*, 25.
events and human exploits from bygone eras, though indeed such “brute facts” may be preserved in these narratives. Rather, “past” in these texts becomes a conduit for “present” values and ideals: the way it was may or may not actually be the way it was, but from the vantage point of the Roman antiquarian, the way it “was” is certainly the way it should be.\footnote{This ideological function of Roman antiquarianism has long been noted in scholarship. According to Arnaldo Momigliano, “Emperors like Augustus and Claudius were quick to grasp the advantages inherent in a well-exploited antiquarianism.”\footnote{Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price similarly note that the marked attempt to revive “native” practices and “old, half-forgotten rituals” functioned even in Republican Rome, but especially during the imperial period, as a means of explaining Rome’s present power and potential expansion; i.e., as an integral component in the ideology of imperialism.\footnote{One important facet of this antiquarian interest was a “cultural nostalgia” that forged an explicit link between the deep past and Roman \textit{virtus} and \textit{pietas}. Stories about ancestral laws, deeds and \textit{mores}, collectively embodied in the politically and culturally charged concept of the \textit{mos maiorum}, fostered an image of a glorious era of pristine piety and morality, when men were men, social hierarchies were properly aligned, and the

worship of the gods was at its purest. Early imperial philosophical trends, particularly among the Stoics and middle Platonists, similarly constructed a vision of the primitive past as a repository of pristine wisdom. Likewise, as is demonstrated in Paul Zanker’s study of Augustan period art and architecture, Augustus’ penchant for archaizing and classicizing fits into this antiquarian context, functioning as a vehicle for the emperor’s “new mythology”; i.e., Augustus’ attempt to initiate a “program of religious revival” by injecting a measure of ancestral pietas into the physical landscape of Rome.

This idealized Roman past, moreover, functioned as a critical index for the present health of the Roman state. On the one hand, as in the case of the Emperor Augustus’ program of cultural renewal discussed in Zanker, the golden era of the distant past could function as the prototype for the present, a pattern for the dawning of a new age of virtue and piety. On the other hand, the pietas and virtus of “Old Rome,” particularly in narratives of decline, served as a point of contrast to perceived departures in the present, as in the case of Juvenal’s eleventh satire, which includes “an extended contrast between the virtuous simplicity of countrified old Rome and modern, urbanized luxury.” According to Steve Mason, this obsession with a “long-lost golden age” was an important tenet within certain conservative circles amongst Rome’s literary elite, who had encountered what they perceived to be “a rise in corruption, social dislocation, violence, and political upheaval.”

641 Zanker, Power of Images, 239-63.
642 Juvenal, Sat. 11.77–129 (cf. Sat. 3.314); quote from Donohue, Xoana, 136.
643 Mason, "Introduction to the Judean Antiquities," xxiii.
This notion of moral decline, reaching a fever pitch in the late Republican period, is succinctly captured in Sallust’s *Bellum Catilinae* (ca. 42/41 B.C.E.), which laments that through avarice the *virtus* upon which Rome was founded devolved into *malus*:

> Since the occasion has arisen to speak of the morals of our country (*moribus civitatis*), the nature of my theme seems to suggest that I go farther back and give a brief account of the institutions of our forefathers in peace and in war, how they governed the commonwealth, how great it was when they bequeathed it to us, and how by gradual changes it has ceased to be the noblest and best, and has become the worst and most vicious.\(^{644}\)

Following this summary statement, Sallust then spells out in greater detail Rome’s putative decline, honing in especially on the vice of avarice.\(^{645}\)

In a similar vein, and again highlighting the role of *avaritia luxuriaque* in the decay of Roman *mores*, the Roman historian Livy, whose literary career spanned the Principate of Augustus, sets out in the preface of his *Ab urbe condita* his main purpose in telling the story of Rome:

> Here are the questions to which I would have every reader give his close attention—what life and morals were like (*quae vita qui mores fuerint*); through what men and by what policies, in peace and in war, empire (*imperium*) was established and enlarged; then let him note how, with the gradual relaxation of discipline (*paulatim disciplina velut desidentis*), morals first gave way (*primo mores sequatur animo*), as it were, then sank lower and lower (*deinde ut magis magisque lapsi sint*), and finally began the downward plunge (*praecipito*) which has brought us to the present time, when we can endure neither our vices nor their cure.\(^{646}\)

Livy’s point, vividly captured with the language of the gradual sinking of morality ultimately giving way to a dangerous freefall toward destruction, is unmistakably clear: present corruption contrasts sharply with past glory. He thus envisions his narrative of

\(^{644}\) Sallust, *Bell. Cat.* 5.9 (Rolfe, LCL).


\(^{646}\) Livy, *Ab urb.* 1.praef.9 (Foster, LCL).
Rome’s past as a beacon that shines into the darkness of the present, preserving an *exemplum*, a *monumentum* for all to see and follow.⁶⁴⁷ As Rebecca Langlands puts it, the idealization of Rome’s past vis-à-vis perceived corruption in the present was not simply “an expression of regret at the loss of innocence” but instead functioned as “a powerful weapon in the armoury of Roman ethical teaching.”⁶⁴⁸ At the core of this ideology is the remark by the Roman poet Quintus Ennius (239-169 B.C.E.) in his *Annales: Moribus antiquis res stat Romana viresque* (“the Roman state and its strength depend upon its ancient customs”).⁶⁴⁹

Although the narrative arc of *A.J.* does not necessarily follow a scheme of decline, I submit that Josephus’ treatment of ἀρχαιολογία / antiquitates must be read against the backdrop of a culture that idealized the deep past as a golden age, that perceived in bygone eras a moral compass for the present. Returning to *A.J.* 1.5, it becomes immediately clear when read in the context of the entire prologue that Josephus’ story of the ἀρχαιολογία τῶν Ἰουδαίων pivots around the antiquity and consequent superiority of the Jewish “constitution,” here denoted with the Greek term πολιτεία.⁶⁵⁰ In justifying the need to present for a Greek-speaking audience an account of the διαταξις τῆς

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⁶⁴⁷ Ab urb. 1.praef.10. Cicero similarly justifies the composition of his *De divinatione* as an educational tool, appealing to “the fact that our young men have gone so far astray because of the present moral laxity” (*Div. 2.2.4* [Falconer, LCL]).

⁶⁴⁸ Langlands, *Sexual Morality*, 78. See also her discussion of *exempla* in Valerius Maximus’ *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia* (123-91).


⁶⁵⁰ Josephus in fact identifies in *C. Ap.* 2.287 that his main purpose in writing *A.J.* was to provide “an accurate account of our laws (νόμοι) and constitution (πολιτεία).” Steve Mason is thus correct in noting that *A.J./Vita* is “from start to finish about the Judean constitution”; Mason, "Aim and Audience," 81. Elizabeth Asmis notes that Cicero’s *De republica* is similarly an extended treatise on the superiority of the Roman constitution; Elisabeth Asmis, "A New Kind of Model: Cicero's Roman Constitution in 'De republica'," *AJP* 126 (2005): 377-416.
Josephus underscores the superiority of the Jewish ἀρχόντες by appealing specifically to the lawgiver’s (νομοθέτης) antiquity and his worthy conception of the deity’s nature, noting that Moses “was born two thousand years ago, of such a span of time their poets did not even dare ascribe the origins of the gods, let alone the deeds or the laws of men.” By juxtaposing here the antiquity of Moses vis-à-vis the Greek poets with Moses’ ability to keep his discourse pure of mythology (καθαρὸς … ἀσχήμονος μυθολογίας), Josephus implicitly sets up a contrast between the lawgiver and the ἀρχόντες of the Jews—a repository of pure religiosity—and that of the Greeks, with the latter having accrued corruptions not found in the former. Indeed, this antithesis becomes even more explicit just a few sentences later:

Other legislators, in fact, following fables (τοίς μύθοις ἔξακολοθήσαντες), have in their writings imputed to the gods the disgraceful errors of men and thus furnished the wicked with a powerful excuse; our legislator, on the contrary, having shown that God possesses the very perfection of virtue (ἄκρατηφη τὴν ἀρετὴν ἔχοντα), thought that men should strive to participate in it, and inexorably punished those who did not hold with or believe in these doctrines.

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651 A.J. 1.10; ἀρχόντες is here juxtaposed with the ἡμέτερος νόμος, establishing an explicit link between political order of a state and divine legislation. Note also Cicero’s discussion of law in his De legibus, which argues in part for the nexus of divine laws and the laws that govern human affairs (Leg. 2.4-9). On the use of ἀρχόντες in Greco-Roman Jewish sources, see Lucio Troiani, "The πολιτεία of Israel in the Graeco-Roman Age," in Josephus and the History of the Graeco-Roman Period: Essays in Memory of Morton Smith (ed. Fausto Parente and Joseph Sievers; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 11-22.


653 A.J. 1.22–23 (Thackeray, LCL). This point is developed even more explicitly in C. Ap., where Moses is said to be the “most ancient of legislators” (νομοθέτων ἀρχαίστης), compared to which Greek legislators such as Lycurgus, Solon and Zaleucus “appear to have been born but yesterday” (C. Ap. 2.154).
The image of Moses as a very ancient νομοθέτης thus underscores the excellence of the Mosaic law code. He, and by extension the πολιτεία he founded, was a fountain through which the Jews “were instructed in piety (εὐσέβεια) and the practice of virtue (ἀσκησις ἀρετῆς”). Given that the primary audience for A.J. was Greek-speaking Romans, the use of νομοθέτης undoubtedly would recall, in addition to legendary Greeks such as the Spartan Lycurgus and the Athenian Solon, the famed Roman lawgiver Numa Pompilius, whose law code was widely considered to have embodied virtue and piety. Indeed, Plutarch’s biography of Numa, written perhaps only a decade or so after A.J., highlights the centrality of εὐσέβεια and ἀρετή in the image of the ideal lawgiver. Numa is said to have possessed a renowned virtue (γνώριμον … ἀρετήν) and to be naturally “inclined to the practice of every virtue” (φύσει δὲ πρὸς πᾶσαν ἀρετήν εὖ κεκραμένος τὸ ἡθος). That Numa kept himself “free from the taint of every vice, and pure” established the Roman lawgiver as a “conspicuous and shining example of virtue”

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654 Cicero likewise connects the purity and authority of the ideal law code with its antiquity (Leg. 2.7).
655 A.J. 1.6; cf. also A.J. 1.14, where Josephus identifies the primary value of his narrative as its capacity to morally instruct its readers. On the link between Moses and ἀρετή, Feldman remarks: “Josephus’ treatment of Moses is a veritable aretalogy, such as would be appreciated especially by a Roman society which admired the portrait of the ideal Stoic sage”; Feldman, "Portrait of Moses,” 292.
656 See especially the discussion in Mason, "Aim and Audience," 64-103. As noted in the Introduction, the idea of a Roman audience for A.J. is contested by some scholars, who instead suppose that Josephus wrote A.J. in part as an attempt to regain favor with his Jewish compatriots.
659 Plutarch, Numa 3.3, 5 (Perrin, LCL).
Likewise, Numa was believed to have excelled in εὐσέβεια, being renowned as the “most pious (εὐσεβέστατος) of men and most blessed of the gods.” These two attributes intersect in Plutarch’s narrative when the Romans plead with Numa to accept the nomination as king:

“Even though,” they said, “thou neither desirest wealth for thyself, because thou hast enough, nor covetest the fame which comes from authority and power, because thou hast the greater fame which comes from virtue (ἀρετή), yet consider that the work of a true king is a service rendered to God, who now rouses up and refuses to leave dormant and inactive the great righteousness which is within thee. Do not, therefore, avoid nor flee from this office, which a wise man will regard as a field for great and noble actions, where the gods are honoured with magnificent worship, and the hearts of men are easily and quickly softened and inclined towards piety (εὐσέβεια), through the moulding influence of their ruler.”

While there is no indication that Josephus was acquainted either with Plutarch or his writings, particularly since most of the latter postdate A.J., it is certainly reasonable to suppose that the Numa traditions standing behind Plutarch’s biography were well known in literary circles of Flavian Rome and had even left traces on Josephus’ image of Moses as νομοθέτης. As will be discussed in the following section, this possibility becomes even stronger in light of the fact that both lawgivers are associated with legislation prohibiting images.

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660 Plutarch, Numa 20.6, 8 (Perrin, LCL).
661 Plutarch, Numa 7.3 (Perrin, LCL).
662 Plutarch, Numa 6.2 (Perrin, LCL).
663 Given that Plutarch spent considerable time in the capital city during the Flavian period, it is tempting to wonder whether their paths ever crossed, though of course no concrete evidence exists to establish (or preclude) a direct relationship between the two Greek authors. For a discussion of this possibility in the context of similarities between Plutarch’s Lycurgus and Josephus’ Moses, see Feldman, "Parallel Lives," 234-37. In the end, Feldman considers it more likely that a common source explains the similarities between the two (237-41).
Idealizing an Aniconic Past in Greco-Roman Antiquity

Insofar as A.J. functions in part to explain the Judean πολιτεία, Josephus incorporates an account of the origins of the Mosaic law code and an extended, though not exhaustive, summary of its contents.\textsuperscript{664} Included in his summary is legislation dealing with the question of cult images:

\begin{quote}
\begin{greek}
δὲ δὲ εἰκόνα κελεύει μηδενός κελεύει μηδενός εἰκόνα ζώου ποιήσαντας προσκυνεῖν
\end{greek}
\end{quote}

The second commands to make no image of any living being for the purpose of worship.\textsuperscript{665}

As discussed at length in chapter 3, although Josephus’ restatement of the second commandment restricts its scope to cult images, more often than not this qualification disappears in the numerous narrative retrospective glances at the prohibition, creating the distinct impression of a more expansive aniconism, i.e., that the Mosaic πολιτεία prohibited figurative (anthropomorphic or theriomorphic) images in toto. As will be argued below, Josephus’ portrayal of the distant past, the so-called rewritten Bible of A.J. 1–11, comports with this tendency, particularly in his repeated effort to purge or suppress details that might otherwise undermine the image of primitive aniconism. Insofar as this account of Judean ἀρχαιολογία conflicts with both the biblical narrative and archaeological remains from the Bronze and Iron age Levant,\textsuperscript{666} Josephus’ treatment of ancestral aniconism can be rightly classified as “historiographic myth.”\textsuperscript{667} Nevertheless,

\textsuperscript{664} Josephus repeatedly announces his intention to produce a more exhaustive treatment of the subject, though apparently this text was never completed (or even begun?) before his death (A.J. 1.25, 29, 192, 214; 3.94, 143, 205, 230, 257, 259, 264; 4.198; 20.268).

\textsuperscript{665} A.J. 3.91.

\textsuperscript{666} See for example Keel, and Uehlinger, \textit{Gods, Goddesses, and Images}.

\textsuperscript{667} Freedberg, \textit{Power of Images}, 54.
as will be evident in the ensuing discussion, this mythic past bespeaks the religio-cultural concerns of the present, tapping into a broader impulse in Greco-Roman antiquity to imagine, and even idealize, a primitive age of aniconic worship.

Suppressing an Iconic Past: Aniconizing the Biblical Narrative in *A.J.* 1–11

Notwithstanding Josephus’ claim in the preface of *A.J.* to have followed the biblical narrative with great care and accuracy (ἀκριβῆς), setting forth the details of the narrative according to its correct order (κατὰ τὴν οἰκείων τάξιν) without adding to or subtracting from the record (οὐδὲν προσθεῖς οὐδ’ αὕτη παραλιπόντων), even a superficial reading of *A.J.* 1–11 belies this declaration. The is noticeably evident in his treatment of εἰκών and related terminology, where there is a marked tendency to proffer an image of strict aniconism either by omitting or altering certain details in the biblical text.

There have been numerous attempts to explain the obvious dissonance between the ideals of accuracy set out in the preface of *A.J.* and the realities of the narrative itself, ranging from the carelessness of Josephus as a “translator” of scripture to the formulaic and somewhat meaningless nature of claims to accuracy in ancient Greek historiography. It is true that departures from the biblical text need not indicate

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668 *A.J.* 1.17; see the discussion in Louis H. Feldman, *Studies in Josephus’ Rewritten Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 539-43; Feldman, *Judean Antiquities 1-4*, 7-8. Josephus similarly remarks in *C. Ap.* 1.42 that no one would have the temerity to add to, subtract from, or change in any fashion these writings (οὕτε προσθείναι τίς οὐδὲν ὁδὲ ἄφελεῖν αὐτῷ οὔτε μεταθείναι). In *A.J.* 4.196–197, Josephus again reiterates his commitment not to add to (προστίθημι) the Mosaic record, yet here he does confess the need to rearrange material into a more orderly fashion (πάσσοι), since the laws of Moses were transmitted in a scattered manner (σποράδην).

669 On Josephus’ claim that *A.J.* 1–11 is a translation (μεθερμηνεύω) of the Hebrew scriptures, see *A.J.* 1.5 and *C. Ap.* 1.54 and the discussion in Sterling, *Historiography*, 252-56.

rhetorical significance. The massive scope of diverse material Josephus attempts to recount surely required judicious selectivity, i.e., expedient omissions. Moreover, the “Bible” itself had by the first century C.E. accrued a host of interpretive traditions, so much so that retelling the biblical narrative often involved the unconscious inclusion of additional material, popular interpretations that had become inseparable from the biblical text itself. While the modern critical scholar through careful comparison may deem this or that detail an addition or omission, it is not always clear that ancient authors were equally aware that they were adding to or altering the source text.

That being said, given the central role accorded to the Mosaic legislation on images as an integral, even essential component of the Jewish πολλεῖα in Josephus’ account of “post-biblical” events (see the discussion below), it is much more likely that Josephus’ treatment of the biblical narrative would comport with this leitmotif, i.e., that the omission or extra-biblical censure of potentially incriminating episodes involving sculpted images is quite intentional. In other words, in the departures from the biblical narrative detailed below, I argue that Josephus consciously suppresses an iconic past, constructing an image of a pristine era when the Jewish state was devoid of figurative images.

The first indication of this aniconic tendency is evident in Josephus’ summary of the creation narrative. Whereas the biblical narrative reports that the first human was created on the sixth day in the image of God (תuum כֹּל בָּשָׂע; LXX κατ’ εἰκόνα θεοῦ)

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Now on this day he also formed humanity.” This is a curious departure from the biblical text, and as Jacob Jervell observes, reference to the εἰκών θεοῦ is consistently omitted throughout A.J. 1–11:


Such remarkable consistency suggests intentionality, i.e., that for whatever reason Josephus systematically suppresses (unterdrückt, to borrow Jervell’s terminology) εἰκών θεοῦ and related concepts from his narrative. According to Jervell’s analysis, this omission must be understood within the context of Josephus’ understanding of the nature of God and the second commandment in C. Ap. 2.167, 190ff.: “Für Josephus gibt es keine Imago Dei, weil Gott selbst, sein Wesen, seine Gestalt nicht beschreibbar sind .... Er kombiniert also die Schöpfungsgeschichte mit dem ersten und dem zweiten Gebot (Bilderverbot). Das macht den Gedanken der Gottebenbildlichkeit für ihn unmöglich.”

While it is perhaps an overstatement to suggest that Josephus is plagued with an acute

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672 Gen 1:27.
673 A.J. 1.32.
675 Ibid., 202-03. See also Jervell’s discussion of other scholarly proposals on pp. 199-200.
case of iconophobia, possessing what Jervell describes as an “allergic” (allergisch) reaction to images, he is nevertheless correct in linking the omission of εἰκόνα θεοῦ with Josephus’ broader treatment of the topic of images and the second commandment.

In a provocative essay on cult statues devoted to YHWH during the first temple period, Herbert Niehr raises the possibility that וֹאָלֶכ and וֹאָלֶכ in Genesis 1:26–27 are used synonymously for “statue” and further suggests that humans in this text are “thus created to be the living statues of the deity.” Whether or not Niehr’s analysis of the original text is correct, there are indications that later Jews (and Christians) interpreted the imago dei of Genesis 1 in this sense; i.e., that וֹאָלֶכ / εἰκόνα θεοῦ was in some fashion viewed through the lens of the numerous statues that populated the Mediterranean landscape. For example, the pseudepigraphical Vita Adae et Evae repeatedly invokes the language of cult images in its description of Adam, and even claims that God required all the angels to bow down and worship (adora) this imago dei. Likewise, Philo of Alexandria, commenting on Genesis 2:7, describes the human body as the most god-like of images (ἀγαλμάτων τὸ θεοειδέστατον), an interpretation that is perpetuated in both Origin and Clement of Alexandria, who juxtapose ἀγαλμα, the conventional term for a

676 Ibid., 204.
679 Vita Adae et Evae 13.3; 14.1–2; 15.2.
680 Philo, Opif. 136–137.
cult statue, along with εἰκόνα in their interaction with the imago dei of Genesis 1.681 Justin Martyr also seems to share this perspective when he claims that the Greeks learned to fashion images of the gods from Moses’ words “let us make man in our image.”682

Moreover, the link between humanity and cult statues is not unique to Jews and Christians but can be found in other Greek and Latin texts from antiquity. For example, on two occasions Plutarch uses ἀγάλμα for humans, once by noting that humans through virtue become an ἀγάλμα,683 and in another context, identifying a human father as an ἀγάλμα of Zeus that deserves respect.684 Josephus’ omission of εἰκόνα θεοῦ should thus be understood within this broader context. In other words, given the potentially cultic implications associated with this phrase, Josephus alters his narrative accordingly, removing anything that might possibly stand in tension with his image of a primitive aniconic past.

Several other conspicuous omissions in A.J. 1-11 confirm the present hypothesis, most notably the famed golden statue of a calf, fashioned by none other than Aaron, Moses’ brother and priest of YHWH.685 The absence of the golden calf episode—the story of Moses’ prolonged encounter with YHWH on Mount Sinai; the subsequent cultic festival to YHWH (לְיהוָה אֶל), which included sacrifices and worship offered to a golden statue of a calf (בְּנֵל מְפָסֵס); and finally the indelible image of Moses casting down and shattering the covenant tablets, which included the “writing of God engraved upon

681 Origen, Cels. 8.17–18; Clement of Alexandria, Protr. 10.98.3; 12.121.1.
682 Exhortation to the Greeks 34.
683 Plutarch, Princ. Iner. 780F1.
684 Plutarch, Frag. 46.17–19. For a general discussion of humans as statues, see Stewart, Statues in Roman Society, 112-16.
685 Exod 32.
[them]”—is particularly striking, given its importance in both the biblical narrative and other Second Temple retellings of the Israelite story, such as Philo and Ps.-Philo. Why avoid this episode?

According to Feldman, the image of an angry Moses breaking the tablets of God and destroying the calf would have conflicted with Josephus’ otherwise self-controlled, Stoic Moses, the ideal lawgiver. Additionally, the episode obviously reflects poorly on Moses’ brother Aaron, the progenitor of a priestly lineage from which Josephus proudly hails, which may have supplied further motivation to avoid the story. While Feldman’s interpretation may be correct, it seems likely that, given Josephus’ overarching interests discussed in the present chapter, this episode also proved too damaging both to his portrait of a pristine aniconic past as well as the superior legal constitution on which it was based. In his account of Moses’ leadership over the Israelites, Josephus points to the “fact” that the Hebrews had always observed the precepts of this constitution to the fullest extent, not having transgressed any of its laws, as evidence for the superiority of the Mosaic πολιτεία (“excellent beyond the standard of human wisdom”). Although Josephus does acknowledge that a few in the distant past did violate the law against images, most notably the Israelite King Solomon (see below), it seems that the proximity of Aaron’s egregious violation to the very origins of the law would have been especially troublesome.

686 Philo, Mos. 2.31.161–162; Ebr. 24.95–96; Ps.-Philo, L.A.B. 12.2.
687 Feldman, Judean Antiquities 1-4, 256.
688 Ibid., 255.
689 A.J. 3.223 (Thackeray, LCL).
In a similar vein, Josephus’ omission of Moses’ bronze statue of a serpent on a staff should be understood as an attempt to sanitize, so to speak, the biblical narrative, to remove any element that may undermine his portrait of an aniconic πολττεία. According to Numbers 21, God commanded Moses to make a bronze serpent and to set it onto a pole:

Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” So Moses made a serpent of bronze (πᾶπα κηλζ; LXX ὅμις θαλακοῖς), and put it upon a pole (ῳ; LXX σημείον); and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.690

Several features in this text could have been potentially problematic for Josephus. In the first place, a theriomorphic sculpture placed upon a standard (σημείον) recalls the Roman iconic imago that was usually crowned either with theriomorphic or anthropomorphic sculptures (see the discussion and literature cited in chapter 4). Obviously the image of Moses carrying an iconic standard would have stood in some tension with the Jews later in the narrative who resisted Pilate’s iconic standards in defense of the Mosaic legislation against εἰκῶν ζωίου. That the very same νομοθέτης responsible for this aniconic legislation would, in response to a divine directive, craft (πᾶσα / ποιέω) this figurative object adds an additional layer of difficulty to the episode. Moreover, this particular sculpted image could plausibly be thought to have cultic associations, insofar as it

690 Num 21:6-9 (RSV).
contained healing properties and clearly mediated in some fashion the divine realm,\textsuperscript{691} not unlike many of the Greco-Roman statues whose medicinal capacity could be awakened through sacrifices, rituals of consecration or \textit{formulae magicae}.\textsuperscript{692} Indeed, given the popularity of the cult of Asclepius in the Greek and Roman periods,\textsuperscript{693} a Roman reader would have undoubtedly associated the iconography of Moses’ healing rod with the staff of the medicinal god Asclepius, which included a serpent entwined around a rod.\textsuperscript{694} It is thus not at all surprising that Josephus would want to avoid the tale of Moses’ bronze healing serpent.

In addition to the omissions detailed above, Josephus likewise felt free to alter certain apparently uncomfortable details in the biblical narrative in order to comport with his image of pristine aniconism. For example, the biblical account of Jacob’s covert departure from his father-in-law Laban’s house in Genesis includes a seemingly offhand remark that as they departed his wife Rachel “stole the figurines (יָסְרֵץ; LXX έιδωλα) of her father.”\textsuperscript{695} The biblical text never censures this act, and in any case it is not clear that the הָרֶסֶת originally held any explicitly cultic association; nor does the narrator explain

\textsuperscript{691} Indeed, cultic activity—incense offerings—is explicitly associated with the bronze serpent in the first temple (2 Kgs 18:4).


\textsuperscript{694} A survey of extant representations of Asclepius (e.g., statues, relief portraits, coins, etc.) demonstrates the extent to which the image of a healing serpent staff was diffused throughout the Greco-Roman Mediterranean; see \textit{LIMC} II.2, s.v. “Asklepios.”

\textsuperscript{695} Gen 31:19.
precisely why she stole the images. In the course of the narrative, Laban tries
unsuccessfully to retrieve the images, after which the theophany no longer play a role in the
story.

Several features in Josephus’ treatment of this episode, however, suggest a slight
discomfort with the narrative as it stands.696 In the first place, whereas the biblical text
offers no motive for the theft, Josephus fills in this vacancy in a manner that exonерates
Rachel from any potential charge of idolatry:697

Now Rachel was carrying the images of the gods. Although Jacob taught
her to despise this form of honoring the gods, [she took them] in order
that, should they be pursued and overtaken by her father, she could find
refuge in them to secure pardon.698

As Feldman notes in his commentary on this passage, Josephus is not the only ancient
Jewish interpreter to supply the missing motive.699 Several later Jewish texts suggest that
Rachel stole the theophany precisely because she considered them efficacious; more
specifically, that because the theophanies were thought to possess powers of speaking,700 Rachel
was trying to keep them from disclosing to Laban their precise whereabouts.701

According to Josephus, however, the theophany (τύποι τῶν θεῶν) were stolen not to harness

696 See in general the discussion in Feldman, *Judean Antiquities 1-4*, 117.
698 *A.J.* 1.311.
700 The theophanies of Zech 10:2 are said to speak: תומרי דררוישא.
701 For example, *Tg. Ps.-J.* Gen 31:19.
their divine powers nor even for Rachel’s personal cultic use, but as bargaining chips that, should the need arise, could be used to appease Laban’s anger.\(^{702}\)

Moreover, by noting that Jacob *had already* taught Rachel to despise idol worship, Josephus further mitigates the potential that Rachel was motivated by cultic allegiance. Josephus in this instance conflates Genesis 31:19 with 35:2, which does indeed present Jacob teaching his household (ברית) to “put away the foreign gods among you” (ברית אתהلاء והปวด את אלהים המיתמים). However, in the biblical narrative, this instruction occurs *well after* the incident involving Laban’s רעים. Josephus shifts the chronology of Jacob’s instruction to *precede* Rachel’s actions and thus intimates that the theft had no connection to cultic activity: at the time of the theft, Rachel knew quite well Jacob’s warning against idolatry. Finally, that Josephus sees fit in the wider context to highlight that Rachel alone was not honored with a distinguished burial at Hebron, an issue that is not accorded dishonor in the biblical narrative, may reflect a subtle criticism of the incident; i.e., that regardless of her motives, Rachel suffered the just consequences of her actions.\(^{703}\)

Josephus’ treatment of the רעים in the story of David may show a similar aniconizing tendency. As the tension between David, anointed to be the next king of Israel, and Saul, his monarch father-in-law stricken with a fit of jealous rage, escalates, David enlists his wife Michal to cover for him while he flees the palace for safety. According to the account in 1 Samuel, Michal places רעים under a garment on David’s bed, with a quilt of goat’s hair to resemble David’s head, crafting a “mannequin” that


\(^{703}\) *A.J.* 1.343; cf. Gen 35:19–20. This point was raised by both Spilsbury and Feldman; Spilsbury, *Image of the Jew*, 80; Feldman, *Judean Antiquities 1-4*, 124.
would hopefully leave the impression that her husband was merely sick in bed. But notice how Josephus, in his retelling of this episode, explicitly removes the reference to the ḫerēṣet:

Then she made up the bed as though for a sick person and placed a liver of a goat (ἡπατρ αἰγός) beneath the covers. When it was day, her father sent to her regarding David. She told those who came that he had passed a restless night, and showed them the bed that had been covered up. By agitating the covering with a jerking motion of the liver, she convinced them that the one lying sick was the ill David.

The textual tradition for the original passage in 1 Samuel is actually somewhat garbled, so there is some question as to whether or not Josephus here intentionally removes the reference to the ḫerēṣet. The Latin Vulgate translates ḫerēṣet with both statua and simulacrum, and the Targum Jonathan and the Peshitta similarly translate the object in question with איי נמלכ and רכנס respectively. By contrast, the LXX substitutes κενσαβία (“sarcophagi”) for ḫerēṣet, and further translates כין (“goat’s hair”) with ḫπαρ τῶν αἴγων (“liver of goats”). If Josephus was working from or was familiar with the LXX (or a related) version of this text, which is certainly plausible given the shared reference to a goat’s liver, then the omission of ḫerēṣet may simply reflect a particular textual tradition and not a rhetorical maneuver. Nevertheless, in light of Josephus’ obvious penchant elsewhere to omit or change the narrative to fit his overall aniconic scheme, we should not rule out the possibility of another aniconizing alteration in this instance.

704 1 Sam 19:13–14.
706 Although in Josephus the liver has, quite literally, a much more animated role in the narrative.
Finally, Josephus’ account of Solomon’s “apostasy” perhaps best captures this tendency to sanitize, or in this case inject censure of any potentially incriminating εἰκόνες in the biblical text. That Josephus devotes significantly more space to Solomon than the biblical text itself indicates the importance of this character in A.J.707 The narrative is on the whole positive, portraying Solomon as a paragon of virtue (ἀρετή), one who is characterized by courage, moderation, justice, and especially wisdom (σοφία) and piety (εὐσέβεια).708 In particular, Solomon’s exemplary εὐσέβεια is on display in his magnificent temple, which he constructed “for the honor of God (εἰς τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ τιμὴν),”709 a deed that ultimately established Solomon, at least in Josephus’ estimation, as “the most glorious among all the kings (ἀντὶ ων βασιλέων ἐνδοξότατος), and the most loved by God (θεοφιλέστατος).”710 Nevertheless, when Josephus finally turns to the unavoidable topic of Solomon’s downfall, his “departure from the observation of ancestral customs” (καταλαμπών τὴν τῶν πατρίων ἑθισμῶν φυλακήν), it is this very testament of the king’s εὐσέβεια—i.e., his architectural achievements—that contains the


708 Feldman, "Portrait of Solomon," 165. According to Feldman, Josephus’ portrayal of Solomon is rich with “Hellenizations,” i.e., material drawn from Greek authors, such as Homer and Thucydides inter alia.; Feldman, "Portrait of Solomon," 157-62.

709 A.J. 8.95.

710 A.J. 190. Josephus uses the Greek term θεοφιλής earlier when he summarizes his purpose in relating the story of Solomon: “that all might know the magnificence of his nature, and that he was loved by God (τὸ θεοφιλές), and that the extraordinary quality of the king in every kind of virtue (πᾶν εἶδος ἀρετῆς) might not escape the notice of any under the sun” (A.J. 8.49).
first elements of his ἁσέβεια: theriomorphic images housed in the temple of God, as well as in the palace of the king.\(^711\)

The biblical narrative likewise follows a similar narrative trajectory, moving from Solomon’s glorious beginning to his ultimate demise, although the emphasis here is on Solomon’s insatiable desire for foreign women (עֹלֶלַח ָאָבְכִּי נָמַר נִגְרוֹא רְבֹתָה)—(in)famously taking 700 wives and 300 concubines from among the Egyptians, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—as a catalyst for his pursuit of foreign worship: “his women turned away his heart toward other gods (אֶלְהֵי יָהֵרָם).”\(^712\) Josephus similarly mentions Solomon’s trouble with women and the concomitant idolatry, and even “heightens the erotic element,”\(^713\) portraying Solomon as “insane” (ἐκμαίνω) for women, possessing an inability to control his passion for sexual pleasure (ἀφροδισίως), and succumbing to the worship of other gods (θρησκεύειν θεοῦ) because of his consuming desire (ἐφως) for foreign women.\(^714\) Nevertheless, in contrast with the biblical narrative, which unambiguously deploys the foreign women as the fountain of apostasy, Josephus identifies an earlier episode that marked the beginning of the end for the king’s ἁσέβεια:

But even before these [problems associated with foreign women JVE], it so happened that he sinned and stumbled in the observance of the laws, when he made the representations of the bronze oxen beneath the ‘sea’, as


\(^{712}\) 1 Kgs 11:1–4.


\(^{714}\) *A.J.* 8.191–192.
a votive offering, and the representations of lions which surrounded his own throne; for by making these things he produced that which was unholy.\textsuperscript{715}

The forbidden objects in Josephus are described in detail in the biblical narrative, although rather than censuring the images, the narrator describes them, along with other features adorning the Solomonic temple and palace, with language that approaches fawning admiration. The molten sea (צְלֵי אַלֹanelוֹ), a large water basin supported by twelve oxen, are among a litany of temple vessels and architectural features devoted to and unambiguously accepted by YHWH, who consecrated (קדש) Solomon’s temple (and by implication everything contained therein) and established his name there forever.\textsuperscript{716}

Nevertheless, in Josephus’ version of the Solomonic story, these very items—the theriomorphic images on the water basin, as well as those adorning the king’s throne—function as the initial catalyst for Solomon’s departure from the εὐσέβεια and σοφία of his youth.

In sum, Josephus’ treatment of the biblical narrative in \textit{A.J.} 1–11 betrays an interest in fostering an image of pristine aniconism, of an era in the primitive history of the Jews marked by the almost complete absence of figurative images. In other words, in the narrative world that Josephus constructs, the pious aniconic cult first instituted by Moses the lawgiver remains relatively intact, with only a few exceptional (and duly censured) moments of divergence from this ideal (most notably Solomon). As will be evident in the following, this idealization of primitive aniconism is not unique to

\textsuperscript{715} \textit{A.J.} 8.195 (emphasis mine). Josephus mentions both of these sculpted items earlier without censure: bronze calves (μοσχοί instead of βοεῖς) in \textit{A.J.} 8.80 and lions in \textit{A.J.} 8.140.

\textsuperscript{716} 1 Kgs 7:23–26; 9:3.
Josephus, but is in fact well attested in a wide range of non-Jewish Greek and Latin sources.

**Aniconic Alterity and the “Evolution” of Mimesis**

There is abundant archaeological evidence for the widespread use of aniconic cult objects—unworked stones, pillars, empty thrones and other non-figurative artifacts—in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean east. Ethnographic literature, or ethnography embedded in other literary genres, would seem to confirm this general picture, frequently identifying aniconism, either the absence of cult images altogether or the use of non-figurative cult objects, as a peculiar trait of alterity, a cultural symbol that in some sense functions as an *indicium* of ethnic, and from a Greek or Roman perspective, foreign (usually eastern) identity. Strabo, composing his *Geographica* either in the late first century B.C.E. or early first century C.E., is exemplary in this regard, noting with very little commentary that the Persians were distinct in their refusal to erect cult statues (*ἀγάλματα*) and altars (*βομοί*), that the Nabateans similarly tended to avoid sculpted images, and that the Judeans were conspicuous for refusing the practice of image-carving (*ἐξωποιέω*), the shaping of gods in human form (*ἄνθρωπομόρφους τυπώντες*), instead insisting on an empty sanctuary, a cult without an image (*ἐδοὺς χωρίς*). Strabo likewise describes Egyptian temples that had no cult statue (*ἐξων*) in human form.

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718 Strabo, *Geogr.* 15.3.13.


720 Strabo, *Geogr.* 16.2.35.
though they did contain theriomorphic images.721 Robert Parker’s observation on the inextricable link in Greek society between ethnicity and deity—“between who you are and who you worship”—is thus in some sense equally true with respect to the perception of cult objects: you are what you worship, with the implication that the aniconic worship of eastern ethnoi marks these cultures as “others,” as the antithesis of the Greeks and Romans.722

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the frequent link between aniconism and ethnic alterity, numerous sources from antiquity additionally characterize primitive Greek and Roman worship as aniconic, underscoring a chronological dimension of aniconic alterity. For example, the Diegesis to Aetia, a summary (ca. 100 C.E.) of a Greek poem by Callimachus (a third century B.C.E. Greek poet from Cyrene), mentions that in the distant past (πάλαι) the ξύλανον of Hera was “unworked, seeing that the art of carving algamata was not yet advanced.”723 Likewise, the second century C.E. Pausanias, in commenting on the square stones (τετράγωνοι λίθοι) worshiped by the people of Pharae, remarks: “Even among all the Greeks, in a more remote age (παλαιότερα), unworked stones (ἀργυροί λίθοι) received divine honors instead of cult statues (ἀγάλματα).”724 Although Pausanias’ occasional reference to similar unworked aniconic objects in Greece presumes their presence in his day,725 when juxtaposed with his descriptions of a Greek

721 Strabo, Geogr. 17.1.28.
723 Diegesis to Callimachus, Aetia IV fr. 100; trans. Donohue, Xoana, 265.
724 Pausanias, Descr. 7.22.4 (emphasis mine). On Greek aniconism, see especially Marinus Willem de Visser, Die nicht menschengestaltigen Götter der Griechen (Leiden: Brill, 1903); Dieter Metzler, "Anikonische Darstellungen," Visible Religion 5 (1986): 96-113; Gaifman, "Beyond Mimesis".
725 Stewart, Statues in Roman Society, 68.
landscape saturated with innumerable anthropomorphic statues, the reader is left with the unmistakable impression that such aniconic artifacts are merely fossilized remnants of a distant past.\textsuperscript{726}

As a literary trope, the nexus of aniconism and archaic alterity can be traced back as far as Herodotus (fifth century B.C.E.), and it is here that we can first observe both the ethnic and chronological dimensions of aniconic identity that will become a staple of literary portrayals of aniconism in subsequent centuries. On at least two occasions Herodotus forges an explicit link between aniconism and foreign cults, although in both cases, the emphasis in the broader context is not on the cult objects per se, but on the ritual activities, especially sacrificial practices, associated with a particular ethnic group.\textsuperscript{727} In his description of the Persians, the historian remarks:

> As to the usages (ποταοι) of the Persians, I know them to be these. It is not their custom to make and set up statues (\(\alpha \varepsilon \gamma \alpha \lambda \mu \alpha \tau \varepsilon\)) and temples (\(\nu \nu \alpha \iota \iota \)) and altars (\(\beta \omega \mu \alpha \iota \iota\)), but those who make such they deem foolish (\(\mu \omega \rho \rho \iota \iota\)), as I suppose, because they never believed the gods, as do the Greeks, to be in the likeness of men (\(\alpha \nu \theta \rho \omega \pi \omega \phi \pi \eta \iota \iota\)).\textsuperscript{728}

This passage, by excluding from the domain of Persia what François Hartog has identified as the quintessential “signs of Greekness” (i.e., the triad of statues, temples and altars), portrays the Persians as the antithesis of the Greeks.\textsuperscript{729} Herodotus proffers a theological explanation for this practice, whereby the presence or absence of figurative cult images is directly linked to conflicting perceptions of the divine; i.e., whether or not

\textsuperscript{726} Gaifman, "Beyond Mimesis", 14.
\textsuperscript{727} Ibid., 105-13.
\textsuperscript{728} Herodotus, Hist. 1.131 (Godley, LCL).
the gods are perceived to embody a human likeness (ἀνθρωποφυής). His description of the Scythians likewise employs the absence of this same cultic triad—statues, temples and altars—as a defining feature of this ethnos, noting only the exception of the cult of Ares, whose ἅγαλμα among the Scythians is nevertheless non-anthropomorphic, an ancient iron scimitar (ἀκνάκης ἄρχαιος).730 Leaving aside the accuracy of Herodotus’ claims or whether the author is sympathetic toward such aniconic practices,731 that Herodotus elsewhere identifies this cultic triad as an invention of the Egyptians, which was then passed on to the Greeks,732 suggests that the absence of the triad bespeaks the persistence of a primitive cult, that the Persians and Scythians are still “living in a bygone age.”733 This interpretation is further confirmed by Herodotus’ reference to the antiquity (ἄρχαιος) of the Scythian non-anthropomorphic ἅγαλμα. Moreover, that primitive Greeks acquired the cultic triad at some point in history implies that they too were once marked by the aniconism of the Persians and Scythians, at least until coming under the influence of the Egyptians. In other words, Greek figurative cult objects were the result of a diachronic development.

In the light of evidence, both archaeological and literary, attesting to an archaic Greek aniconism, art historians have tended to view the use of aniconic cult objects as merely a early phase in the evolution of mimesis, a primitive era of crude artistic skill that gradually progresses through semi-iconic artifacts (such as the herm, a pillar typically

730 Herodotus, Hist. 4.59–62. On the Scythian worship of the scimitar, see also Clement of Alexandria, Protr. 4.40.
731 But see the discussion and literature cited in Gaifman, "Beyond Mimesis", 111-12.
732 Herodotus, Hist. 2.4.
733 Hartog, Mirror of Herodotus, 176.
adorned with a phallus and crowned with a fully figural bust) until it blossoms into the anthropomorphic sophistication of classical Greek sculpture.\textsuperscript{734} Whereas later Greeks and Romans thus represent the apex of artistic sophistication (\textit{mimesis}), masters of the art of naturalism, eastern cultures and “prehistoric” Greeks represent the antithesis of “good art,” a crude, rustic, unrefined, inferior mode of representation. Recent scholarship has rightly called into question this evolutionary model, as well as many of the assumptions on which it is based, particularly that aniconism was \textit{merely} a primitive phase of artistic expression and that aniconism and iconism were mutually exclusive modes of representation.\textsuperscript{735} Nevertheless, as Alice Donohue notes, it is precisely because numerous ancient sources preserve the notion of aniconism as a vestige of primitive alterity that modern scholars “have seized upon this testimony” to posit the idea of evolutionary \textit{mimesis}.\textsuperscript{736} While this literary testimony may in fact distort the situation “on the ground,” it nevertheless attests to a pervasive \textit{perception} that aniconic worship bespeaks “otherness,” not only the alterity of ethnicities, but also of bygone eras.

\textbf{The Piety of Primitive Aniconism}

In a historical context that valued the distant past, that found in the characters, deeds and customs of remote ages \textit{exempla} for the present, it is not surprising that the link between aniconism and archaism discussed above would engender a notion of aniconic piety, that the ancestral aniconic worship, because of its antiquity and simplicity,
was somehow thought to be purer than the present manifestation and multiplication of anthropomorphic gods.\textsuperscript{737} For example, Porphyry, the third century C.E. pupil of the famed Neo-Platonic philosopher Plotinus, remarks:

On account of this they use vessels of clay and wood and wicker, and especially for public sacrifices, believing that divinity takes pleasure in such things. For this reason, too, the oldest enthroned gods (τὰ παλαιότατα θεεῖα) that are of clay and wood are considered to be more divine (τὰ μᾶλλον θεεῖα) on account of both the material and the simplicity of their craft (τὴν ἀφέλειαν τῆς τέχνης). It is said too that Aeschylus, when the Delphians had asked him to write a paeon in honor of Apollo, said that the best had been done by Tynnichus; if his own work were compared with that man’s, the same thing would happen as when new statues (τοῖς ἀγάλμασι τοῖς καινοῖς) are compared with old ones (τὰ ἄρχαια); for these, although made simply, are considered divine (θεεῖα), while the new ones that are elaborately worked (τὰ καινὰ περιφέργως εἰργασμένα), although they are marveled at, have an inferior notion of god.\textsuperscript{738}

Porphyry’s comment points to the iconographic and materialistic simplicity of ancient statues as an indication of a heightened divine presence, contrasting the more divine though rustic ἄρχαια with the newer but spiritually inferior ἀγάλματα. While Porphyry’s ἄρχαια are not explicitly identified as non-figurative per se, that elaborate craftsmanship functions as an index of an “inferior notion of god” implies the inverse: the less intricate the craftsmanship, and unworked aniconic objects would certainly represent the pinnacle of simplicity, the higher the notion of god. Moreover, by locating the simplicity of craftsmanship within the distant past, the historiographic implication is clear: figuring images, or mimesis, was an indication of a decline in cultic piety.\textsuperscript{739} Peter Stewart’s

\textsuperscript{737} Dieter Metzler observes that at least with some Greeks and Romans, aniconism was perceived as especially sublime (sublim) and unspoiled (unverdorben); Metzler, "Anikonische Darstellungen," 100.

\textsuperscript{738} Porphyry, Abst. 2.18; trans. adapted from Donohue, Xoana, 430.

\textsuperscript{739} In addition to archaic simplicity discussed in this chapter, another explanation for the heightened spirituality attached to aniconic objects, particularly the various meteoric rocks that were worshiped in antiquity, was the belief that these heaven-sent objects, precisely because of their origins in the heavenly
recent comments on this perception of archaic images are worth noting in this regard: “In
general, archaism in Greco-Roman art can be seen as a means to endow particular iconic
cult images with a certain sort of aura: it is the stylistic antidote to iconography, the
antidote to anthropomorphism and naturalism.”

The historiographical schema that posits a correlation between the rise of mimesis
and decline of piety is particularly evident in traditions of Rome’s mythical aniconic
past. That some Roman traditionalists longed for the artistic and architectural
simplicity of Old Rome is apparent in Cato’s lament, cited in Livy, that foreign signa
(from Syracuse) and ornamenta (Corinthian and Athenian) had become “tokens of
danger” (infesta) in the Rome of his day. In speaking to an ancestral (and archaic)
Lares, which consisted of a rustic “old log,” the Roman poet Albius Tibullus (ca. 55–19
B.C.E.) recalls with nostalgia a day long ago when Romans “kept better faith” (melius
tenue re fidem). It seems that in certain segments of the Roman elite, the notion of
Romana simplicitas became a powerful tool for decrying perceived present day
corruptions.

realms, were somehow imbued with divine powers. For example, Philo of Byblos remarks in his
Phoenician history that “the God Ouranos invented baetyli, devising animated stones (λίθοι ἐξ ψυχομον)”
(apud Eusebius, Praep. ev. 1.10.4). Likewise, Pliny describes baetulos as sacra with special powers (Pliny,
Nat. 37.46). As Freedberg correctly observes, “[i]t is … not surprising that black meteoric stones falling
from the sky should have come to be worshiped. Their divine origins were self-evident; they seemed to be
sent by specific gods and to be animated by the gods of whom they were a token”; Freedberg, Power of
Images, 66.

740 Stewart, "Baetys as Statues," 302.
741 See in general Lily Ross Taylor, "Aniconic Worship Among the Early Romans," in Classical Studies in
Honor of John C. Rolfe (ed. George Depue Hadzsits; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press,
1931), 305-14.
742 Livy, Ab urb. 34.4.4 (Sage, LCL).
743 Text and translation from Stewart, Statues in Roman Society, 73.
The idea that Rome once worshiped the gods without images needs to be understood within the context of this moralizing impulse and nostalgia for the pious simplicity of bygone years. The most explicit representative of this perspective is the Roman antiquarian Varro (first century B.C.E.), whose various comments on Rome’s aniconic origins in his now lost Antiquitates rerum divinarum, fragments of which are preserved in Augustine’s De civitate Dei, encapsulate this perception of primitive pietas eventually giving way to inferior forms of iconic worship. Augustine first summarizes Varro’s view of images as follows:

Varro believes that [Jupiter] is worshipped even by those who worship one God only, without an image (sine simulacro), though he is called by another name. If this is true, why was he so badly treated in Rome, and also by other peoples, that an image was made for him? This fact displeased even Varro so much that, although bound by the perverse custom of his great city, he still never scrupled to say and write that those who had set up images for their peoples (populis instituerunt simulacra) had both subtracted reverence (metum dempserunt) and added error (errorem addiderunt).

This excerpt underscores the link between aniconism and pious worship, with the presence of simulacra in Rome functioning for Varro, at least according to Augustine’s assessment, as a critical index for Rome’s departure from “reverent” worship. There is


746 Augustine, Civ. 4.9 (Green, LCL).
thus an explicit correlation between *simulacra* and *error*, with the former bearing responsibility for introducing the latter.

This framework of diachronic decline is given a more precise historical context in a second excerpt, which preserves several explicit citations of Varro:

He also says that for more than one hundred and seventy years the ancient Romans worshipped the gods without an image (*sine simulacro*). “If this usage had continued to our own day,” he says, “our worship of the gods would be more devout (*castius dìi observarentur*).” And in support of his opinion he adduces, among other things, the testimony of the Jewish race. And he ends with the forthright statement that those who first set up images of the gods for the people diminished reverence (*metum dempísisse*) in their cities as they added to error (*errorem addidisse*), for he wisely judged that gods in the shape of senseless images might easily inspire contempt. And when he says, not “handed down (*tradiderunt*) error,” but “added to (*addiderunt*) error,” he certainly wants it understood that there had been error even without the images. Hence when he says that only those who believe God to be the soul which governs the world have discovered that he really is, and when he thinks that worship is more devout without images, who can fail to see how near he comes to the truth? If only he had had the strength to resist so ancient an error, assuredly he would have held that one God should be worshipped without an image.\(^{747}\)

Obviously Augustine here is exploiting Varro’s remarks for his own polemical purposes, as evidenced in his attempt to seize on the verb *addo* to claim the presence of *error* even among Rome’s aniconic ancestors.\(^{748}\) Nevertheless, the explicit citations embedded within Augustine’s polemics, and in particular Varro’s use of the comparative adjective *castius*, are sufficient to establish that for Varro, the aniconic worship of Rome’s ancestors was in some sense *better or more pure* than present forms of iconic worship, and hence, “the development from an aniconic to an iconic religion is seen as a decline of

\(^{747}\) Augustine, *Civ*. 4.31 (Green, LCL).

\(^{748}\) Tertullian similarly assesses Roman religion, noting that even during the “time, long ago, when there existed no idol … idolatry was practiced” (Tertullian, *Idol*. 3.1; trans. Waszink and van Winden, *Tertullianus De Idololatria*, 27).
Rome’s religious golden age.” Moreover, according to Augustine Varro supported his claim of aniconic superiority by pointing favorably to the example of the Jews. Although the reference to the gens Iudaeus is Augustine’s, that several other non-Jewish authors mention Jewish aniconism positively strengthens the likelihood that Augustine is accurately relaying the views of Varro.

Nowhere do the surviving fragments of Antiquitates rerum divinarum identify the precise origins of Roman aniconism, though presumably, given the framework of decline from a pristine golden age, Varro’s putative aniconic era began with the foundation of Rome in 753 B.C.E. If so, then iconic worship was introduced, according to the implicit calculation in Varro’s reference to 170 years, in 583 B.C.E., during the reign of Rome’s fifth king, Tarquinius Priscus (616–579 B.C.E.). Lily Ross Taylor posits a legislative proscription of images very early in Rome’s history, issued in an ultimately unsuccessful “effort to keep the native religion free from foreign ideas.” I would argue that Taylor is too optimistic on the historical value of the collection of traditions attesting to this aniconic era, all of which postdate the founding of Rome by at least seven centuries; Roman aniconic legislation is probably best understood as an “historiographic myth.”

749 Kooten, "Pagan and Jewish Monotheism," 638. van Kooten thus rightly places Varro’s comments within the context of what he terms the “historiography of decline,” the notion that a golden age of pristine piety has gradually devolved into religious error.

750 In addition to Varro, the following non-Jewish sources refer, either substantively or in passing, to Jewish aniconism: Hecataeus of Abdera, Aegyptiaca (apud Diodorus Siculus, Bibli. hist. 40.3.3–4); Strabo of Amaseia, Geogr. 16.2.35; Livy, Ab urb. (apud Scholia in Lucanum 2.593 [see Stern, Greek and Latin Authors, 1:130]); Tacitus, Hist. 5.5.4; 5.9.1; Cassius Dio, Hist. rom. 37.17.2. With the possible exception of Tacitus, whose disdain for the Iudaeus is fairly transparent throughout his narrative, these authors describe Jewish aniconism in positive, or at the very least, neutral terms. For example, Cassius Dio remarks that Jews, insofar as they have no statue of their deity and instead believe the deity to be invisible (ἀειδή), “worship in a most remarkable fashion among men” (περιποιοῦσαι ἄνθρωπων θρησκεύοντα).


752 Freedberg, Power of Images, 54.
Nevertheless, although Taylor’s historical interpretation is dubious, and although Varro does not mention any specific *lex contra simulacra*, several surviving traditions on Numa Pompilius, Rome’s legendary second king and famed lawgiver, attest that at least by the first century C.E., the memory of an ancient Roman legal proscription against images was in circulation.

The most explicit and detailed discussion of Numa’s aniconic legislation is preserved in Plutarch’s biography of the king. Plutarch, like Varro, mentions an aniconic era consisting of 170 years, though he adds (or at least preserves what may now be lost from Varro) an explicit link between this era and Rome’s famed lawgiver Numa, and further frames Numa’s legislation against images within a philosophical context, specifically the teachings of Pythagorus:

Furthermore, [Numa’s] ordinances concerning images (τὰ περὶ τῶν ἀφιδρυμάτων νομοθετήματα) are altogether in harmony with the doctrines of Pythagoras. For that philosopher maintained that the first principle of being was beyond sense or feeling, was invisible and uncreated, and discernible only by the mind. And in like manner Numa forbade the Romans to revere an image of God which had the form of man or beast (ὅπως τε διεκώλύουν ἀνθρωποειδῆ καὶ ζωόμορφον εἰκόνα θεοῦ Ρωμαίους νομίζειν). Nor was there among them in this earlier time any painted or graven likeness of Deity (γραπτὸν οὐτὲ πλαστὸν εἴδος θεοῦ), but while for the first hundred and seventy years they were continually building temples and establishing sacred shrines, they made no statues in bodily form for them (ἀγάλμα δὲ οὐδὲν ἐμμορφοῦν ποιούμενοι διετέλουν), convinced that it was impious (οὕτε ὀσίου) to liken higher things to lower, and that it was impossible to apprehend Deity except by the intellect.

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753 That we know of, although given the fragmentary state of this text and the possibility that Plutarch’s reference to Numa’s legislation is dependent upon Varro, it is reasonable to suppose that Varro did in fact discuss a specific prohibition against images.

754 The shared 170 year timeframe raises the likelihood that Plutarch is dependent upon Varro; Kooten, “Pagan and Jewish Monotheism,” 645.

Earlier in this chapter I discussed Numa’s reputation in Plutarch as a pious νομοθέτης, and the reference to this particular legislation should be viewed within that context. Numa functions as a hero of true piety, a legislator whose laws and constitution, including this particular proscription against images, reflect the purest expression of religiosity. Although Varro’s chronological framework of decline is missing here, Plutarch nevertheless implies, by linking this legislation to sophisticated Pythagorean theology, its inherent superiority to the more iconic forms of cultic devotion.

Moreover, and herein lies the central relevance of this material for present discussion, Plutarch’s description of Numa’s aniconic legislation is strikingly reminiscent of Josephus’ portrayal of the second commandment in *A.J.* As noted above, *A.J.* repeatedly places the stress on the craftsmanship (ποίησις) and iconography (ἐικών ζῷου/ἄνθρωπου) of the proscribed objects, in contrast with *B.J.*, which instead highlights the placement or location of an ἐικών. Plutarch likewise defines the scope of Numa’s legislation with similar language, mentioning the same two iconographic categories—ἀνθρωποειδὴ καὶ ζωόμορφον εἰκόνα—and stressing that the law prohibited making (ποιέω) statues in bodily form (ἐμμορφος). Additionally, the philosophical framework undergirding Plutarch’s summary of Numa’s legislation, although less conspicuous in *A.J.*, does recall Josephus’ summary of the second commandment in another treatise composed shortly after *A.J.*—*C. Ap.* 2.190-192. In both Plutarch and Josephus the act of making bodily statues is considered impious (οὔτε ὁσιον); both likewise stress the
impossibility of a μορφή to capture that which can only be apprehended through νόησις.\textsuperscript{756}

To be clear, I am not suggesting that Josephus’ portrayal of the Mosaic legislation against images is dependent upon Plutarch’s Numa, or vice versa. Rather, Plutarch’s testimony attests to the fact that some Romans (and also Greeks) admired aniconic forms of cultic devotion and recalled a primitive age in Rome’s history when a pious lawgiver, Numa, proscribed images in an effort to preserve the purity of Roman religiosity. In other words, Plutarch’s legend of Numa attests to a sentimental nostalgia, likely circulating while Josephus was living in Rome and composing\textit{A.J.}, for a time when “Old Rome was pure, manly, and aniconic [before] it was corrupted by the introduction of foreign art and foreign practices.”\textsuperscript{757} That Josephus’ portrayal of Moses the νομοθέτης and his aniconic legislation recalls the language of Numa and Rome’s aniconic golden age suggests not literary dependence but participation in a common cultural discourse: Josephus is sculpting Jewish aniconism into the image of Roman aniconism.

In sum, Josephus constructs in\textit{A.J.} an image of Jewish ἀρχαιολογία centered on a lawgiver and his πολιτεία, the perfect embodiment of the moral ingredients—ἀρετή and εὐσέβεια—needed for a society to survive and even thrive. Integral to his portrayal of the primitive past is legislation establishing aniconic worship as an essential component of this ideal state and constitution; i.e., the absence of figural images bespeaks the health and piety of society. Moreover, Josephus’ depiction of an aniconic ideal rooted in the legislation of a pious lawgiver is steeped in a Roman antiquarian tradition that idealized

\textsuperscript{756} For a fuller treatment of\textit{C. Ap}. 2.190–192, see chapter 3 above and Barclay, "Snarling Sweetly," 73-87.

\textsuperscript{757} Freedberg, \textit{Power of Images}, 63.
Rome’s golden age, including the period of aniconic devotion, when her lawgivers exuded *virtus* and *pietas*, nurturing the state in peace and stability.

But as in the case of Rome’s *antiquitates*, Josephus was well aware of the potential threat to this stability when the constitution and its laws were ignored. For example, Korah’s resistance to Moses’ leadership and legislation, though not involving a violation of the proscription of images, stirred up a rebellion (*στάσις*) that threatened to destroy the order of their constitution (*ὅ κόσμος τῆς καταστάσεως*).\(^{758}\) Indeed, the Korah pericope encapsulates a pervasive theme in *A.J.*, namely “the degree to which *στάσις* is the mortal enemy of political states.”\(^{759}\) And as the *exemplum* of Solomon demonstrates, the installation of figurative *εἰκόνες*, insofar as it represents a breach of the Jewish *πολιτεία*, signals a decline from the ἀρετή and εύσεβεία first envisioned by Moses. But even more significantly, as the tumultuous civil wars in Solomon’s wake illustrate, departure from this aniconic ideal underscores the threat an *εἰκών* poses to the stability of the state. As I will argue in the following section, it is precisely this danger of *στάσις*—the anxiety over the potential destruction (*ἀφανισμός*) or dissolution (*κατάλυσις*) of the Mosaic *πολιτεία*, and hence the stability and order of the entire Jewish state—that stands at the core of Josephus’ treatment of the iconoclastic activity during the Herodian and early Roman periods.

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\(^{758}\)*A.J.* 4.36. The use of *κατάστασις* here is synonymous with *πολιτεία*. The two terms are found together in *A.J.* 6.35, where Samuel’s sons, unlike their father, pursue opulence and luxury (τροφή) instead of justice, and in the process wreak havoc “on their former ordinance and constitution” (ἐξάφροις[...] ο Nulla τὰν προσέφυραν κατάστασιν καὶ πολιτέιαν). This usage continues in *C. Ap.*, where Josephus argues that the Judean *κατάστασις* is very ancient (1.58), and then sets out to summarize the “whole constitution” of the Judean *politeuma* (ἡ ὅλης ἡμῶν καταστάσεως τοῦ πολιτεύματος; 2.145, and similar language in 2.184).

Iconoclasm and Crises of Πολιτεία

As noted above, the Korah rebellion introduces a major *topos* in *A.J.*: the Jewish state has repeatedly faced down threats to constitutional stability imposed by civic strife. Actually, Josephus stresses that στάσις is a perennial danger shared by both Romans and Jews. His account of Gnaeus Sentius Saturninus’ speech before the senate, in response to the soldiers’ attempt to elect Claudius emperor upon the death of Gaius Caligula, includes a rehearsal of Roman history that underscores the threat of στάσις to the Roman πολιτεία, focusing especially on the στάσις induced by Julius Caesar, who was disposed to “destroy the democracy” (ἐπὶ καταλύσει τῆς δημοκρατίας) when “he disrupted the constitution by wreaking havoc on the order of [Roman] laws” (διαβιασάμενος τὸν κόσμον τῶν νόμων τῆν πολιτείαν συνετάραξεν). And following this pattern, Saturninus notes that Julius Caesar’s successors likewise set out to “abolish the way of the ancestors” (ἐπ’ ἀφανισμῷ τοῦ πατρίου), leaving Rome and its constitution in a fragile state.

The constellation of key terms that emerges in Saturninus’ speech—στάσις; κατάλυσις; πολιτεία; νόμος; πάτριος—reappears with regular frequency in Josephus’ treatment of *εἰκών* (and related terminology) in *A.J.*, suggesting that the major concern in *A.J.* is not simply a statue’s violation of sacred space, as is the case in *B.J.*, but the capacity of an *εἰκών* to devastate the order and stability of Jewish civilization. This is not to suggest that the issue of sacred space disappears altogether in *A.J.*, although in a few episodes of iconoclasm space does not enter the discussion, but that the constitutional threat consistently takes center stage, underscoring the danger an *εἰκών* poses for the

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survival of the Jewish πολιτεία. Indeed, the very preservation of the latter depends in part on the persistent refusal of the former.

For example, Josephus recounts an episode (absent from B.J.) involving a group of unidentified “young men” (νεανίσκοι) who attempt to erect a statue of Caesar (Καίσαρος ἄνδρας) in the synagogue of Dora, a Phoenician coastal city just a few miles to the north of Caesarea Maritima.762 The letter of Publius Petronius (the governor of Syria at the time) in response to the crisis does indeed identify the location of the statue as a problem, since by placing the statue “in it” (ἐν αὐτῇ; i.e., the synagogue) the perpetrators prevented the Jews from gathering together (συναγωγήν Ἰουδαίων κωλύοντας). Presumably (though not explicitly) this was because the Jews considered the statue a desecration, although from Petronius’ perspective the act violated an imperial decree granting the Jews power over their own space (τῶν ἱδίων τόπων κυριεύειν).763 What is clear, however, is that Josephus frames this act not simply as a potential desecration of sacred space but as an act of sedition or rebellion (στάσις; ταραχή).764 The perpetrators in the narrative are portrayed as an irrational and impious mob, on the cusp of unleashing civic chaos. They prized rash audacity (τόλμα) and “were recklessly arrogant by nature” (πεφυκότες εἶναι παραβόλως θρᾳσεῖς), acting “by the impulse of a

762 A.J. 19.300–311. The precise identification of the νεανίσκοι is unclear. Josephus relates that Publius Petronius, the governor of Syria, responded to the crisis by sending a letter to the ἀποστάσι τῶν Δωρίτών (19.302), perhaps implying that the perpetrators were in some sense Ἰουδαῖοι who had defected from the ways of their ancestors. However, the actual letter included in the narrative is addressed to the city magistrates (Δωρίῶν ταῖς πρώτοις in 19.303; ταῖς πρώτοις ἄρχουσι in 19.308). It may be that while the official correspondence was indeed addressed to city officials, Josephus mistakenly narrates that the letter was addressed to the perpetrators. If this is the case, then it still perhaps suggests that at least in Josephus’ view the νεανίσκοι were ἀποστάντες.

763 A.J. 19.305.

764 A.J. 19.311.
Their attempt to erect the statue of Caesar was thus tantamount to an attempt to “dissolve his [i.e., Agrippa’s] ancestral laws” (κατάλυσεν γὰρ τῶν πατρίων αὐτοῦ νόμων ἔδωκεν). Petronius’ response likewise focuses on the right of the Jews “to observe their ancestral ways” (φυλάσσειν τὰ πάτρια) and “to act according to their own customs” (τοῖς ἰδίοις ἔθεσι χρῆσθαι). Indeed, it is precisely the preservation of these ancestral customs that will ensure civic order in Dora, enabling both the Jews and the Greeks to coexist as fellow citizens (συμπολιτεύεσθαι).

The elements of civic strife detailed in the Dora pericope—portrayals of reckless youths and demagogues stirring up discord amongst the rabble, undermining ancestral ways and in the process wreaking havoc on the ancient constitution—recur with regular frequency in Roman literature as well, especially in the late Republican and early Imperial periods. Plutarch’s account of the turbulent years under Gaius Marius’ multiple consulships is rife with such language, particularly in treating Marius’ alliance with the tribune Lucius Saturninus, who along with Glaucia “had rash men and an unruly and tumultuous crowd at their disposal” (ἀνθρώπους θρασυνάτους καὶ πλήθος ἀπορον καὶ θορυβοσκολὴν ὑφ’ αὐτοῖς ἔχοντας). According to Plutarch, Saturninus’ τόλμα led to “tyranny and the overthrow of the constitution” (τυραννίς καὶ πολιτείας ἀνατροπή). The στάσις in the wake of Saturninus’ demagoguery never fully subsided, and again

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766 A.J. 19.301.
768 See for example the useful material collected in Paul J. J. Vanderbroeck, Popular Leadership and Collective Behavior in the Late Roman Republic (ca. 80-50 B.C.) (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1987).
769 Plutarch, Mar. 28.7.
770 Mar. 30.1.
reached a boiling point in the conflict between Sulla and Marius, which inflicted on the city of Rome a “disease” (νοσέω) and incited Marius to pursue another “tool for the destruction of the state” (ὀργανον πρὸς τὸν κοινὸν ὀλεθρων) in the rash (θράσος) Sulpicius.\footnote{Mar. 32.5; 35.1.} This conflict then climaxed with a Marius-Cinna alliance in an effort to continue this “war against the established constitution” (πολεμοῦντα τῇ καθεστώσῃ πολιτείᾳ).\footnote{Mar. 41.5.}

Whatever the truth that lies behind Plutarch’s obvious bias in relating these events, it is abundantly clear in this and other similar texts that the preservation of ancestral ways to ensure the stability of political constitutions was very much a live issue in first century C.E. Roman society, particularly in the wake of the political crises and civil wars following the death of Nero. In depicting the tension over the Καίσαρος ἀνδριάζ in Dora, Josephus thus echoes this larger civic discourse, framing the Jews’ resistance to statues as an effort to preserve the stability and order of the commonwealth.\footnote{Mason discusses briefly the need to read Josephus treatment of constitutional themes in the context of Roman political discourse; Mason, "Aim and Audience," 80-87.}

A closer look at the other accounts of first century Jewish iconoclasm in \textit{A.J.} confirms the centrality of the theme of constitutional stability through the preservation of ancestral ways. The account of Caligula’s statue, which in \textit{B.J.}’s much shorter version restricts the focus to the impiety (ἀσεβής) of an emperor who would dare desecrate the temple in Jerusalem,\footnote{B.J. 2.184–203.} opens in \textit{A.J.} not with the potential desecration of Jerusalem but
with a στάσις that had erupted in Alexandria between the Ἰουδαίοι and the Ἑλληνες.\(^{775}\) Delegates from the various factions, which included Philo and Apion, were sent to Rome to appear before the emperor Gaius, with Apion blaming the στάσις in part on the Jews’ refusal to honor the emperor with statues (ἀνδριάντες). The irony as the narrative progresses, however, is that only by insisting on the statues, insofar as Gaius’ demand necessitated a departure from the code of the νομοθέτης and προπατόρες by transgressing ancestral law (παραβάσει τοῦ πατρίου νόμου),\(^{776}\) would the threat of στάσις be exacerbated, resulting in war, the chaos of banditry and the slaughter of thousands, among other potential calamities.\(^{777}\) Petronius’ response to the Jews’ refusal thus focuses on their legitimate right to insist on fidelity “to the virtue of the law” (τῇ ἀρετῇ τοῦ νόμου), contrasting adherence to τὰ πάτρια with the “hubris of imperial authority” (ὑβρίς … τῆς τῶν ἡγεμονευόντων ἔξουσιας).\(^{778}\) Likewise, Agrippa I’s intervention before Gaius on behalf of the Ἰουδαίοι, details of which are not recounted in B.J., stresses the tranquility of the commonwealth (τοῦ κοινοῦ ἡ ἐυθυμία) by paying special honor in part to Jewish νόμοι.\(^{779}\)

The episode involving Pilate’s military standards similarly underscores this leitmotif. As noted above in chapter 4, whereas Josephus in B.J. concentrates on the placement of the iconic standards as the locus of conflict,\(^{780}\) in A.J. the standards violate a


\(^{776}\) A.J. 18.263–264.

\(^{777}\) A.J. 18.274–278.

\(^{778}\) A.J. 18.280.

\(^{779}\) A.J. 18.300.

\(^{780}\) B.J. 2.170, where the law forbids placing an image in the city (ἐν τῇ πόλει δείκτηλον τίθεσθαι).
law that forbids the making of images (εἰκόνων ποίησις). An additional difference between the two, however, resides in the characterization of Pilate and the purported effect of his actions. While in both what is at stake is a violation of Jewish law, only in *A.J.* are the military standards introduced as an act of intentional provocation, contributing to a more insidious and malevolent caricature of Pilate:

Πιλάτος δὲ ὁ τῆς Ἰουδαίας ἡγεμών στρατιὰν ἐκ Καίσαρείας ἀγαγὼν καὶ μεθιδρύσας χειμαδιούσαν ἐν Ἰεροσολύμωις ἐπὶ κατάλυσε τῶν νομίμων τῶν Ἰουδαίκων ἑφρόνησε

Now when Pilate, the procurator of Judea, led the army from Caesarea and transferred it to Jerusalem for winter quarters, he was intent on the subversion of Jewish laws.

The version of this episode in *B.J.* includes no such ascription of motive, but in *A.J.* Pilate’s attempt to introduce “busts of Caesar affixed to standards” (προτομὰς Καίσαρος αἱ ταῖς σημαίαις προσῆκαν) is quite explicitly an act of political subversion, an audacious attempt to transgress the ancestral ways of the Jews. Josephus in *A.J.* further underscores this flaw in Pilate’s character by contrasting Pilate with the previous procurators who used “standards with no such adornments” (ταῖς μὴ μετὰ τοιῶνι κόσμων σημαίαις). Pilate in *A.J.* is also implicitly contrasted in this regard with Vitellius, the governor of Syria, who upheld the πάτριον of the Jews both by not bringing military standards into Judea and by partaking in the celebration a Jewish ancestral festival (εὐρτῆ πατρίου). Whereas in the episode of the εἰκών in Dora it is a youthful

781 Contra Seth Schwartz, who suggests that the two portrayals of Pilate “scarcely differ”; Schwartz, *Josephus and Judean Politics*, 197.
782 *A.J.* 18.55.
783 *A.J.* 18.56.
784 *A.J.* 18.120–122.
mob that threatens to wreak havoc on the health of the commonwealth through their
blatant disregard of ancestral customs, in the pericope involving Pilate, as also that of
Gaius Caligula, the emphasis shifts to a careless authority figure who similarly
destabilizes civic tranquility by subverting τὰ πάτρια. This feature, as we will now see, is
likewise apparent in A.J.’s treatment of iconoclasm under Herod the Great’s rule.

It has long been noted that the character of Herod becomes significantly darker in
A.J. vis-à-vis B.J. 785 Some have explained the seemingly contradictory portraits of Herod
as an indication of Josephus’ careless and indiscriminate use of disparate sources.786
Others have suggested a change in Josephus’ own religious attitude, seeing in A.J. a more
pronounced nationalism and “religious-Pharisaic bias” that leads to a more hostile
treatment of Herod.787 But the evidence for a “Pharisaic bias” or advocacy of an
emerging rabbinc movement in A.J. is dubious,788 and it seems more likely that the
different portrayals of Herod should be attributed to rhetorical or compositional
strategies. Specifically, while both texts feature the problem of στάσις as a threat to civic
order, in A.J. Josephus highlights in a more pronounced fashion the culpability of rogue
authority figures, whereas B.J. is more interested in placing responsibility on Jewish
revolutionary groups, particularly as an explanation for the revolt against Rome in 66
C.E.

785 See for example, Laqueur, Der jüdische Historiker Flavius Josephus, 127-34; Cohen, Josephus in
Galilee and Rome, 56-57, 148; Fuks, "Josephus on Herod's Attitude," 234-45; Tessa Rajak, "The Herodian
of the Herods and the Nabataeans Held at the British Museum, 17-19 April 2001 (ed. Nikos Kokkinos;
Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007), 23-34.

786 See for example Solomon Zeitlin, "Herod a Malevolent Maniac," JQR 54 (1963): 1-27; Moses

787 Cohen, Josephus in Galilee and Rome, 148-49.

788 See especially Mason, Josephus on the Pharisees.
The problem of the εἰκών during Herod the Great’s rule is likewise more enhanced in *A.J.* than in *B.J.* While both narratives describe the incident involving the eagle erected over the temple gate, Josephus adds in *A.J.* a second episode—the trophies adorning the theater in Jerusalem—that heightens the threat posed by an εἰκών and underscores the role of a reckless tyrant in precipitating a constitutional crisis through the blatant disregard of ancestral customs.\(^{789}\)

The literary structure of the pericope involving the trophy crisis, which spans *A.J.* 15.267-291, is framed by two central concerns: an endangered constitution on the one end (15.267) and the threat of open rebellion (ἀπόστασιν) on the other end (15.291).\(^{790}\)

The opening sentence explicitly underscores the first of these two interrelated problems:

διὰ τούτο καὶ μᾶλλον ἐξέβαινεν τῶν πατρίων ἔθων ἥσιν ἑνικοῖς ἐπιτρεπθέμαισιν ὑποδέφθειρεν τὴν πάλαι κατάστασιν.

For this reason also [Herod] utterly departed from the ancestral customs, and he corrupted with foreign practices the ancient constitution.\(^{791}\)

The immediate antecedent of διὰ τούτο is a depiction of Herod’s unbridled lust for power. After successfully besieging and overtaking a Jerusalem under the control of the Hasmonean Antigonus, Herod orders the brutal execution of the family of Hyrcanus, effectively consolidating the Judean kingdom under his own power and removing any potential “obstacle to block his lawless behavior” (παρανομέω).\(^{792}\) In this light, διὰ τούτο then initiates a catalogue of impious deeds, including the erection of τρόπαια in the

\(^{789}\) *A.J.* 15.267–291.


\(^{791}\) *A.J.* 15.267.

\(^{792}\) *A.J.* 15.266.
theater of Jerusalem, that serve to demonstrate the various ways the Judean king displays tyranny by wreaking havoc on τὰ πάτρια ἔθη and ἦ πάλαι κατάστασις.

On the surface the crisis of this narrative revolves around Herod’s theater in Jerusalem, both as the primary stage (literally and literally) on which the events transpire and as the focal point of the controversy. Indeed, the very first (πρώτος) charge leveled against Herod was that “he instituted the quinquennial athletic contests in honor of Caesar and erected a theater in Jerusalem, and following this a very large amphitheater in the plain.”\textsuperscript{793} Josephus notes that these remarkably extravagant (περίσσες τῇ πολυτέλειᾳ) structures were “foreign to Jewish custom” (κατὰ τοὺς Ἰουδαίους ἔθους ἀλλότρια) insofar as they housed “spectacles” (θεαμάτα) unknown to Jewish tradition.\textsuperscript{794} Josephus further underscores the problem of “the spectacle of dangers” (ἡ θεα κινδύνων), contrasting the reactions of the ἔνθωλη, who are both amazed and entertained, and the ἐπιχρόριοι, who viewed the spectacle as a “blatant disregard for the customs which were esteemed by them” (φανερὰ κατάλυσις τῶν τιμωμένων παρ᾽ αὐτοῖς ἔδωκα).\textsuperscript{795} Yet as the narrative continues to unfold, the reader soon discovers, perhaps with an element of surprise, that while “throwing men to beasts to thrill spectators was impious” (ἀσεβῆς), as was “exchanging [Jewish] customs with foreign practices,” what exceeded all of these


\textsuperscript{795} \textit{A.J.} 15.274.
immoral deeds (πάντων δὲ μᾶλλον), and what constituted the greatest danger to the πάλαι κατάστασις, were the τρόπαια τῶν ἑθῶν adorning the theater. The use of μᾶλλον here thus heightens the extent of the impiety introduced by Herod, locating the apex of ἀσεβής and κατάλυσις ἑθῶν not primarily in the bloody spectacles transpiring in the theater but in the τρόπαια adorning the structure.

Why such vexation over these seemingly innocuous objects? The ensuing γάρ clause explains: the problem was actually not the trophies themselves, but what the Jewish protagonists perceived (δοκέω) the trophies to be—ἐικόνες “encased within the weaponry.” Josephus again heightens the impious nature of the τρόπαια (qua ἐικόνες) vis-à-vis the institution of the games, making the rather striking claim that if given a choice, the Jews would much prefer the bloody spectacles to the ἐικόνες:

οὐ μὴν ἔπειθεν ἄλλ’ ὑπὸ δυσχερείας ὃν ἔδόκουν ἐκείνον πλημμελεῖν ὠμοθυμαδὸν ἐξεβόλων ἐκεῖ πάντα δοκοῖς οὐστά μὴ φέρειν ἐικόνας ἀνθρώπων ἐν τῇ πόλει τὰ τρόπαια λέγοντες οὐ γὰρ εἶναι πάτριον αὐτοῖς

However, he did not persuade them, but, because of their disgust at that deed of which they supposed he had erred, they cried out together that although everything else could be endured, they could not tolerate the images of men – by which they meant the trophies – in the city, since this was not consistent with ancestral law.

The phrase ἀνθρώπων ἐικόνες, recalling the language ἐικών ζώου in A.J. 3.91, further clarifies the nature of the problem: the trophies, insofar as they were perceived to be anthropomorphic statues and objects of cultic devotion, were viewed as a blatant

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797 A.J. 15.277 (emphasis mine).
798 Josephus explicitly links the trophies with the perception of cultic activity, describing them as “ornaments for cult statues” (αἱ κατασκευαὶ τῶν ἀγαλμάτων; A.J. 15.276) and noting that it was prohibited “to worship such things” (τὰ τοιεύτα σέβειν; 15.276). On the cultic function of τρόπαια, see Gilbert Charles Picard, Les trophées romains: contribution à l’histoire de la religion et de l’art triomphal de Rome
violation of ancestral law (πάτριον). Only after Herod dismantles the trophies to reveal the true nature of the τρόπαιον—“naked wood” (γυμνὰ τὰ ξύλα) beneath the military armor—is the crowd finally pacified.\textsuperscript{799}

Although Roman military trophies are never described with the language of anthropomorphic statuary (apart from the pericope under discussion),\textsuperscript{800} the extant “iconography”—mainly literary descriptions and representations in sculptural relief and on coins and seals—does illustrate the potential for such mistaken identity, confirming the plausibility of the scenario envisioned in Josephus’ narrative.\textsuperscript{801} As Valerie Hope notes, following Gilbert Charles Picard’s analysis, the earliest type of trophy consisted of “a lopped tree adorned with captured weapons and to which prisoners were chained.”\textsuperscript{802}

This is illustrated, for example, in the triumphal frieze from the Temple of Apollo Sosianus in Rome, which portrays Roman slaves preparing to lift a platform holding two prisoners chained beneath an armored trophy, clearly a wooden pole adorned with military accoutrements (fig. 1).\textsuperscript{803} Yet the image conveyed in this scene is not simply the

\textsuperscript{799} A.J. 15. 278–279. With the exception of ten conspirators, who were plotting Herod’s assassination (A.J. 15.280–291).

\textsuperscript{800} There is some evidence, however, that marble trophies could be used as a supporting structure for a freestanding statue, as in the case of the marble trophy from late Hellenistic Marathon discussed in Eugene Vanderpool, "The Marble Trophy from Marathon in the British Museum," Hesperia 36 (1967): 109.

\textsuperscript{801} See especially the following detailed studies of trophies in antiquity, both published in the same year: Picard, Les trophées romains; Andreas Jozef Janssen, Het antieke Tropaion (Brussel: Paleis der Academiën, 1957).

\textsuperscript{802} Hope, "Trophies and Tombstones," 80. See especially Picard’s discussion of early Greek trophies; Picard, Les trophées romains, 16-64. Archaeological remains from the Roman Republic indicate that in later periods more permanent military trophies were also erected, consisting either of stone or bronze; see, for example, John M. Camp et al., "A Trophy from the Battle of Chaironeia of 86 B.C.,” AJA 96 (1992): 448-49, esp. fig. 6.

\textsuperscript{803} For a similar, and even more detailed example, see also Mary Beard, The Roman Triumph (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 146, fig. 26. A relief from Spalato, the
display of captured war booty, but of an armored conqueror—the τρόπαιον—holding captive vanquished soldiers. Likewise, while a close inspection of the military trophy from the Dacian war represented on Trajan’s column clearly indicates the true nature of this object, a wooden pole adorned with armor, shields, weapons, and crowned with a helmet, the trophy nevertheless could certainly conjure, at least from a distance, the specter of an εἰκών ἄνθρωπος (fig. 2).

In one sense, then, the present disturbance can be boiled down to a case of mistaken identity; the reaction of the inhabitants of Jerusalem is the result of trompe l’œil, so to speak, the capacity of τρόπαια to deceive the viewer. Nevertheless, in the narrative world Josephus constructs, this episode underscores again, even if Herod is ultimately exonerated (in this instance), the potentially calamitous effect the despotic imposition of an εἰκών can have on civic order and stability. Insofar as the τρόπαια were thought to be εἰκόνες ἄνθρωπων, an intentional subversion of Jewish πάτριος, Jerusalem was in danger of ἀπόστασις. Only when the aniconic nature of the trophies is established does this threat of rebellion subside.

As the narrative on Herod’s reign unfolds, however, the trophy incident merely presages the controversy surrounding the erection of an unambiguous εἰκών ζῴου, the statue of an eagle in the temple precincts. Here again, as in the trophy pericope, Herod’s despotic demeanor is emphasized from the start, with the king and the population of Jerusalem trapped in a vicious cycle of erratic behavior and violent rebellion respectively: as the monarch becomes increasingly “wild, treating everyone with

commercial port of Dalmatia, likewise portrays two prisoners sitting beneath a trophy; see Picard, Les trophées romains, pl. XII.

excessive anger (ἀκράτω τῇ ὀργῇ) and bitterness,” albeit in part due to a mysterious illness, “popular figures” (δημοσικωτέρων ἀνθρώπων) emerge from the woodwork fomenting uprisings (ἐπανίστημι).  

Josephus thus locates the outbreak over the eagle within these tense and unstable circumstances:

οἳ τε πυθαίναμενοι τοῦ βασιλέως τὴν νόσον θεραπεύειν ἀπορον οὐκαν ἔζηραν τὸ νεώτερον ὥστε ὅποσα παρὰ νόμον τοῦ πατρίου κατεσκεύαστο ἔργα ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ταῦτα καθελόντες εὐπορεῖας ἀγωνίσματα παρὰ τῶν νόμων φέρεσθαι καὶ γὰρ δὴ διὰ τὴν τόλμαν αὐτῶν παρ’ ὥμιγορενον ὁ νόμος τῆς ποιήσεως τά τε ἄλλα αὐτῷ συντυχεῖν .... ἴνα γὰρ τῷ Ἰσραήλ τινὰ πραγματευθέντα παρὰ τὸν νόμον ᾧ δὴ ἐπεκάλουν οἱ περὶ τὸν Ἰούδαν καὶ Ματθίαν κατασκεύασκε δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς ὑπὲρ τοῦ μεγάλου πυλῶν τοῦ ναοῦ ἀνάθημα καὶ λίαν πολυτελές ἀτομός χρύσων μέγαν κολύει δὲ ὁ νόμος εἰκώνων τὸ ἀναστάσεις ἐπινοεῖν καὶ τῶν ζῴων ἀναθέσεις ἐπιτηδεύεσθαι τοῖς βιοῦν κατ’ αὐτὸν προηρημένοις

And when they learned that the king’s disease was incurable, they stirred up the youth so that they might tear down all of the works that the king had set up contrary to ancestral law, and in so doing, to gain the prizes of piety from the law. For it was indeed because of his reckless abandon in making that which was contrary to what the law declares that these things came upon him .... For certain tasks undertaken by Herod were contrary to the law, which things indeed Judas, Matthias and their colleagues brought an accusation against him. For the king had erected over the great gate of the temple an exceedingly costly votive offering, a great golden eagle. But the law forbids those who are determined to live by it to think of setting up statues and to make dedications of [statues of] any living creatures.  

Here again, both B.J. and A.J. frame Herod’s actions, the erection of an εἰκών, as a violation of ancestral law, although only in B.J. is the specific legislation defined according to spatial limitations (κατὰ τῶν ναῶν). By contrast, the emphasis shifts in A.J. to Herod’s “savage temper” (ὀμότης) and the resulting civic chaos. Indeed,
Josephus’ account of the eagle episode in *A.J.* consolidates in one place many of the key terms and elements of civic unrest evident in Plutarch’s account of Gaius Marius, most notably a recklessly arrogant (τόλμα) autocrat hell-bent on destroying ancestral law and the consequent outbreak of rebellion (στάσις) at the hands of an angry mob (ὁχλος) of “young men” (νέοι) portrayed in a state of chaotic disorder (ἀσώντακτος). In so doing, Josephus recalls for his Roman readers a very familiar *topos*—a constitutional crisis at the hands of despotism run amok—with one significant difference. In Plutarch, the mob represents the antithesis of Roman virtue (i.e., Romanness), a destabilizing force under the spell of the autocrat, complicit in Gaius Marius’ devious plot (from Plutarch’s perspective at least) to undermine the *mos maiorum* and ultimately undo the order and stability of Rome itself. For Josephus, however, the iconoclastic mob, by attempting to preserve the νόμος τοῦ πατρίου, embodies the very ideals of Roman virtue, described in strikingly Roman language: their actions are portrayed as “a virtue most becoming of men” (μετ’ ἀρετῆς ἄνδρας πρεπεῖ λάτρειαν), clearly tapping into Roman notions of manly virtue as a quintessential element of Romanness. Indeed, this portrayal of the iconoclastic mob underscores the major thesis of this chapter, namely that although Jewish iconoclasm may seem like a fundamentally anti-Roman act, Josephus attempts in *A.J.* to portray it as an expression of Roman virtue.

To summarize, a comparison of the three episodes of iconoclasm recounted in both *B.J.* and *A.J.* demonstrates distinct emphases within each composition. Whereas in

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809 *A.J.* 17.155-156.
B.J. Josephus stresses the location of an εἰκών, highlighting its capacity to desecrate sacred space, in A.J. emphasis shifts to the devastating effect of an εἰκών on civic tranquility, its role in fomenting chaos and rebellion. The two episodes of iconoclasm unique to A.J., the imperial statue brought into the synagogue of Dora and the trophies adorning the theater in Jerusalem, likewise contribute to this theme of εἰκών as an agent of στάσις. This is not to suggest that στάσις and other similar civic problems are absent in B.J.; indeed, στάσις plays a central role in Josephus’ account of the Judean revolt. Nevertheless, only in A.J. is the problem of στάσις consistently linked to the episodes of iconoclasm.

**Conclusion**

I have argued above that the Josephan discourse on εἰκών in A.J. is steeped in Roman antiquarian traditions that idealized primitive aniconic piety. Josephus’ portrayal of the Jewish ἀρχαιολογία thus echoes extant traditions of Rome’s aniconic golden age, in particular Varro’s correlation between the decline of pietas and the rise of iconic forms of cultic activity and Plutarch’s link between Rome’s aniconic era and the exemplary legislation of one of her heroes of virtue and piety, the legendary νομοθέτης Numa, a Roman par excellence. As with Numa, Moses’ legislation against images in A.J. is embedded within a superior πολιτεία originating in the distant past, a legal repository of ancestral laws, customs and deeds—corresponding with the Roman notion of mos maiorum and embodying the Roman qualities of εἰσόδεικν and ἀρετή—which collectively

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811 See for example the discussion of similar “polis themes” in Mason, "The Greeks and the Distant Past," 93-130. See also the discussion of στάσις in Rajak, *Josephus*, 91-96.
serve to maintain societal order, stability and harmony. Moreover, by “sanitizing” the biblical narrative in *A.J.* 1-11, Josephus too imagines a golden age of aniconic piety, an era in primitive history that was mostly devoid of figurative images. Indeed, it is precisely this idealized golden age and ancient legislation that become a critical reference point for his treatment of the period of Herodian-Roman rule, framing recent Jewish iconoclastic activity as a noble attempt to both preserve civic stability and stem the tide of moral decline by faithful adherence to ancestral custom.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: THE POETICS OF IDOLATRY AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

A rather stark polarity between εἰκών and Ἰουδαῖος does indeed emerge in the writings of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, particularly noticeable in his portrayal of an increasingly volatile iconoclastic behavior—i.e., Jews resisting, and in at least one instance even destroying, statues—during the decades leading up to the Jewish revolt and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. This narrative material, combined with a striking absence of figurative remains (especially statues) in the archaeological record of Second Temple Jerusalem, has understandably contributed to the near ubiquitous assumption in modern scholarship of a monolithic antagonism toward all forms of figurative art during the Second Temple period. In particular, many scholars have characterized the relationship between Jews and images in antiquity according to a model of diachronic exegetical transmutation: in the wake of the Hasmonean war against the Seleucids, Jewish authorities imposed a prohibition of images in toto—rooted in an expansion of the scope of the biblical νομος and תורת to include not just cult images but all theriomorphic and anthropomorphic representation—in order to stem the threat of pagan idolatry; following the destruction of the temple, Jewish authorities (typically identified as the rabbis of the Mishnah and Talmudim) began to soften their exegetical stance in
response to idolatry’s (perceived) waning threat, resulting in the flourishing of figurative art in the synagogue remains of late antiquity.

I have tried in the present investigation to complicate this interpretive model. In the first place, while a selection of Jewish sources and archaeological remains from the Second Temple period may attest to an uneasy, perhaps even antagonistic attitude towards figurative art in general (and not just cult images) on the part of some Jews, there is no warrant for the supposition of uniformity either before or after the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. Rather, scattered hints in the archaeological record viewed through more nuanced models of cultural interaction in the ancient Mediterranean world, combined with the overwhelming tendency in the literary sources to restrict the scope of the second commandment to cultic images, suggest the possibility that synchronic regional variation offers a better explanatory model than diachronic exegetical transmutation. In other words, the restrictive approach to figurative art seemingly attested in a variety of sources may be indicative of a Second Temple Judean phenomenon and not a Second Temple Jewish phenomenon.

Moreover, a close examination of the evidence from Josephus—the primary focus of the present study—likewise exposes more complexity than is typically allowed. Rather than a straightforward account of events on the ground, Josephus is crafting or sculpting distinct portraits of aniconism that contribute to larger rhetorical interests. In the case of B.J., Josephus deploys sculpture, and more specifically the Jewish resistance to sculpture, as a mapping device, articulating a conception of Judea, and especially Jerusalem, as sacred territories without sculpture. Moreover, this cartographic strategy, which includes a rather stark polarization between Jewish and Greek landscapes, contributes to a broader
discourse on the nature of imperial power and the dangerous link between tyranny and excessive displays of Greekness. When viewed from within this framework, Jewish resistance to sculpture represents an effort to stem the tide of philhellenic tyrants, a concern likewise attested in coeval Roman sources. In A.J., by contrast, Josephus shifts focus away from the issue of sacred space to the aniconic origins in the distant past of the Jewish πολιτεία, tapping into the moralizing memory of a pristine age of Roman aniconism. In so doing, Josephus presents the Jewish resistance to images as the preservation of an ancestral system of values, the mos maiorum, thus framing iconoclastic behavior not as an expression of cultural otherness, a peculiarity of strange foreigners from the east, but as an expression of cultural sameness, an element that binds Jewish and Roman identities.

The importance of Josephus’ compositional context in the above analysis should be fairly evident. Josephus’ historiographical enterprise surfaces within the turbulent cultural and political currents of Flavian Rome, and the author’s attempt to Romanize Jewish aniconism, to tap into the values of Romanitas as a means of accounting for Jewish behavior and articulating an image of Jewish identity, sheds light on the difficult circumstances surrounding Jewish life in Rome following the destruction of Jerusalem, as well as the strategies by which some Jews attempted to navigate this difficult terrain. At this point in the discussion it is perhaps worth reflecting a bit more on these complex dynamics, stepping back from the minutia of the present argument in order to better synthesize and contextualize Josephus’ rhetoric and further underscore the broader significance of this study.
The occasional disturbance over images, often imperial statues, in the first centuries B.C.E./C.E. was likely viewed by many in antiquity, particularly in Rome, as an act of political subversion, a manifestation of a “Jewish hatred of Rome’s oppressive rule.” For the present discussion, it matters not whether this was actually the case; it is enough to note that this was a likely perception of Jewish anti-iconic behavior. The practice of iconoclasm, especially as a form of damnatio memoriae, was quite familiar in the Roman world, whether we are speaking of the official, state-sponsored destruction of the statues of “bad” emperors, or “those occasions on which angry crowds, acting spontaneously, and not according to any official decree, inflicted violence upon the emperor’s images,” whether a “good” or “bad” emperor. Moreover, if the (re)production and dissemination of an emperor’s images functioned as an integral component of imperial propaganda, as Zanker has convincingly demonstrated, then the official enactment of damnatio on a particular emperor’s statues functioned as a propagandistic response to a shift of power, signaling a “reversal of fortunes” that simultaneously delegitimized one locus of authority while reinforcing a new locus of authority. This official “language” of iconoclasm, however, suggests a corollary: the spontaneous and unofficial destruction of imperial statues, particularly of still living, still

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812 Gutmann, "The 'Second Commandment','" 170.
813 Stewart, Statues in Roman Society, 269.
814 Zanker, Power of Images.
815 Stewart, Statues in Roman Society, 277.
legitimate emperors, likely denoted for many an anticipation of, or desire for, a shift of power, a signal of a coup d’État in the making.\footnote{816}

Jewish resistance to images, especially statues with an explicit or implicit association with the Roman state (e.g., Herod’s eagle, Pilate’s standards, and most obviously, Caligula’s statue), were likely viewed by Romans within this light, particularly after the revolt of 66-73 C.E. That is to say, in the wake of the war against Rome, accounts of Jewish iconoclastic activity were probably interpreted from a Roman perspective as politically subversive acts against the state, attempts at a kind of damnatio memoriae directed not at a particular emperor but the empire at large. Such behavior thus could be thought to ultimately portend the Jews’ brazen and catastrophic attempt to reverse their own fortunes, to replace Roman hegemony with an independent Jewish state. Tacitus hints at this perception when he seemingly casts aspersions on the Jews for refusing to honor emperors with statues.\footnote{817} John Pollini’s remarks about an incident in Jamnia when a group of Jews destroyed an altar of Caligula—an episode recounted in Philo—is equally applicable to the present discussion of images:\footnote{818} “To the Romans, the Jews’ destruction of the altar was regarded as not only sacrilegious but also seditious, since an attack on an altar to the divinity of the princeps of Rome was tantamount to an attack on the Roman state itself.”\footnote{819}

\footnote{816}{For example, according to Cassius Dio soldiers destroyed Nero’s statues to signal their desire that Nero’s general receive the title Caesar and Augustus, an acclamation that the general immediately refused (Rom. hist. 63.25.1–2); see the discussion in Stewart, Statues in Roman Society, 271-72.}

\footnote{817}{Tacitus, Hist. 5.5.4.}

\footnote{818}{See Philo, Legat. 202.}

There is some indication that Josephus was sensitive to problems arising from the potentially subversive implications of distinct Jewish beliefs and customs, i.e., behavior that seemed out of step with, and at times antagonistic toward, Roman customs. For example, Josephus unequivocally asserts in *C. Ap.* that while Jews were required to observe their own πάτριον, they were also expressly forbidden to criticize (κατηγορέω) the πάτριον of foreigners. To support this assertion, Josephus appeals to Exodus 22:27, which in the LXX translation forbids ridiculing the gods of foreigners (θεοὺς οὐ κακολογήσεις), claiming that “our lawgiver openly denounced the mocking (χλειψάς ἦς) or blaspheming (βλασφημεῖς) of the gods esteemed by others.”

And again in *A.J.*: “Let no one blaspheme the gods esteemed in other cities, nor steal from foreign temples, nor seize a treasure devoted to any god.” Presumably, this could be thought to include the gods’ (and emperors’) images as well. Even more relevant to the present discussion, Josephus in *C. Ap.* attributes to Moses a preemptive qualification to the prohibition of images, claiming that the lawgiver proscribed images “not as a prophecy that Roman authority ought not be honored.” This protest, I would argue, is pregnant with significance, speaking to a very real perception in Josephus’ own context.

There is little doubt that anti-Jewish resentment in Rome was significantly exacerbated in the aftermath of the revolt, and stories of Jewish iconoclasm would certainly have added more fuel to the fire. For Jews living in the capital city, and indeed throughout the Roman Mediterranean, the final decades of the first century C.E., the

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820 *C. Ap.* 2.237.
821 *A.J.* 4.207. Philo similarly follows the LXX’s interpretation of Exod 22.27 in *Mos.* 2.205 and *Spec.* 1.53.
822 *C. Ap.* 2.75 (emphasis mine).
period of Flavian hegemony, must have been especially challenging. If the decisive defeat of the Judean rebels and the destruction of Jerusalem were not enough, the punitive *fiscus Judaicus*, a two *denarii* tax imposed on all Jews throughout the Roman empire in order to fund the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus in Rome, bore public witness to an ever deepening fissure between Jews and Romans.\(^823\) This rift was perhaps most palpably felt by Jews residing in Rome, who were surrounded by a world literally saturated with lavish displays of their own subjugation: first the parade of Titus the *triumphator* down the *Via Sacra*, accompanied by the exhibition of Judean spoils and captives;\(^824\) the massive construction of Vespasian’s *Templum Pacis*, funded with Judean war booty and housing an impressive display of art and artifacts from around the world, including objects from the Jerusalem temple;\(^825\) the completion of the Colosseum in 80 C.E., financed in part with spoils from the Judean war,\(^826\) and a year later the Arch of Titus with its now familiar display of captured spoils from the Jewish temple;\(^827\) and finally the circulation of *Iudea capta* coins trumpeting Rome’s masculine

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825 On the *Templum Pacis* as a museum of artifacts, see Pliny, *Hist.* 34.84; Josephus, *B.J.* 7.158–162; Pausanias, *Descr.* 2.9.3.

826 The link between the Colosseum and Judean spoils was first uncovered in 1995, when Géza Alföldy deciphered a dedicatory inscription identifying Vespasian as the one to initiate the construction with funds “from the spoils of war” (*ex manubi[i]s*); see *CIL* 6.40454a. See also the discussions in Barbara Levick, *Vespasian* (London: Routledge, 1999), 127-28; Boyle, "Reading Flavian Rome," 61; Millar, "Last Year in Jerusalem," 117-19.

dominance of an effeminized Judea.\footnote{As Davina Lopez notes, much of the visual language of Rome’s dominance is thoroughly gendered, with Rome’s masculinity visibly and quite explicitly (and occasionally with phallic symbolism) juxtaposed with the femininity of the conquered \textit{ethnoi}; Davina C. Lopez, "Before Your Very Eyes: Roman Imperial Ideology, Gender Constructs and Paul’s Inter-Nationalism," in \textit{Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses} (ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele; Leiden: Brill, 2007), esp. 117-23.} In short, following the revolt “[t]he centre of Rome was remodeled under the Flavians to reflect the glory of the war … [and] victory in Judea became part of the historical consciousness of ordinary Romans.”\footnote{Goodman, \textit{Rome and Jerusalem}, 554.} As Goodman aptly notes, although prior to the war Jews were likely quite comfortable with their dual identity as Jewish Romans (or Roman Jews), “the change in their status in Rome after the failure of the Jewish Revolt must have come as an awful shock.”\footnote{Goodman, "Josephus as Roman Citizen," 331.}

I submit that Josephus’ iconology, and in particular his effort to Romanize Jewish iconoclastic behavior, must be viewed against this post-war backdrop. By placing “Jewish aniconic peculiarity on the map of Greek and Roman culture,”\footnote{Barclay, "Snarling Sweetly," 74.} Josephus attempts to bridge the ever widening gulf between Roman and Jew by portraying Jewish iconoclasm not as a \textit{resistance to} but an \textit{expression of] Romanness}, a shining \textit{exemplum} of the values of \textit{Romanitas}. This Romanization of Jewish particularity, however, does not reflect a betrayal of Jewishness in favor of Romanness, the abandonment of a cultural heritage by a quisling looking to manipulate circumstances for his own advantage.\footnote{As noted in the introduction, one unfortunate consequence of the Laqueur interpretive trajectory is the tendency to bifurcate “Roman” and “Jewish” elements in the Josephan corpus and to view of the presence of the former as an index of a deficiency in the latter. Thus Josephus’ lavish praise of Titus and Vespasian in \textit{B.J.} bespeaks the sentiments of a Flavian lackey who had betrayed his Jewish identity; conversely, his detailed treatment of Jewish \textit{\dot{a}r\dot{a}t\dot{h}o\dot{a}l\sigma\upsilon\upsilon\alpha} in \textit{A.J.} reflects a “chastened” traitor attempting to regain an identity he formerly betrayed.} For Josephus, Jewishness and Romanness are not mutually exclusive, and his entire literary enterprise—including both \textit{B.J.} and \textit{A.J.}—represents a sustained attempt to articulate in
the aforementioned contentious circumstances an image of Jewish identity that could potentially enable his compatriots to navigate this difficult terrain.

It is thus not at all surprising that Josephus gravitates towards those elements in Roman cultural discourse that were particularly central to a resurgent moralizing impulse in the wake of Nero’s demise and the subsequent civil wars and imperial regime change. From the start the Flavian propaganda machine was especially diligent in fostering the impression of a revival of traditional Romanitas. Moral values typically associated with the Roman republic—e.g., *moderatio*, *integritas*, *virtus*, *abstinentia*, *prudentia*, etc.—were quickly attached to the new imperial family, while an equally potent constellation of vices—e.g., *luxuria*, *mollitia*, *libido*, *avaritia*, *tyrannis*, etc.—were inextricably linked with that notorious “villain” of the Julio-Claudians, Nero.\(^833\) Whether Nero actually deserved this reputation,\(^834\) he soon became the emblem of all that could undermine and potentially destroy Roman culture and the stability of the empire. This framework through which to view Nero was particularly evident in his historiographical legacy: Holly Haynes notes, for example, that for Tacitus Nero represents “the floodgate for all the problems of empire that the shadow of Augustus previously kept in check”;\(^835\) and according to Joan-Pau Rubiés’ assessment, Nero’s portrait becomes increasingly depraved in successive accounts, from Tacitus to Suetonius to Dio Cassius.\(^836\)

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\(^833\) On the politically charged nature of this discourse, see Catharine Edwards, *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).


\(^835\) Haynes, *The History of Make-Believe*, 34.

As noted earlier in chapter 4, one prominent facet of Nero’s image that became a favorite target of invective was his putative philhellenism, which was conventionally framed as a heightened inclination “to the seedier side of the Greek heritage.”\textsuperscript{837} Given that an increasing number of Roman traditionalists viewed the Greeks as “excessively self-indulgent and inordinately fond of a life of luxury,”\textsuperscript{838} it is not entirely surprising that Vespasian would seek to distance himself from this perceived infatuation with all things Greek, revoking Nero’s grant of freedom to Greece and reducing Achaea to provincial status,\textsuperscript{839} advertising Flavian architecture as an example of “public munificence” and not “private luxury,”\textsuperscript{840} disseminating official portraiture that departed from “Hellenic ideals” in favor of a return to “traditional republican realism,”\textsuperscript{841} and in general fostering an image of a “neo-veristic, rugged, man-of-the-people” emperor,\textsuperscript{842} striving to restrain a rampant \textit{libido atque luxuria}.\textsuperscript{843} As Miriam Griffin notes in her study of early Flavian posturing, Vespasian’s carefully crafted image was intended to recall “the glory and patriotism of the Roman heroes.”\textsuperscript{844}

Josephus’ voice emerges in the midst of, and is directly shaped by, this lively discourse on \textit{Romanitas}. The polarization of Greek and Judean landscapes, and by


\textsuperscript{838} Williams, \textit{Roman Homosexuality}, 68.

\textsuperscript{839} Suetonius, \textit{Vesp.} 8.


\textsuperscript{842} Boyle, "Reading Flavian Rome," 34.

\textsuperscript{843} Suetonius, \textit{Vesp.} 11.

\textsuperscript{844} Griffin, "The Flavians," 25.
extension Greek and Jewish identities, in B.J. should thus not be viewed as a manifestation of the struggle between Judaism and Hellenism as such, with Hellenism representative of anything foreign, whether Greek or Roman. Rather, Josephus taps into a distinctly Roman angst over Greek influences, constructing an antithesis that would have resonated with the prevailing cultural winds of Flavian Rome in the decades of Vespasian’s and Titus’ reigns. Likewise the emphasis in A.J. on the antiquity and consequent superiority of the Jewish πολιτεία vis-à-vis Greek constitutions, in which Josephus’ aniconic rhetoric plays a central role, serves to narrow the breach between Romans and Jews at the expense of Greeks in language quite familiar to that employed by those in Rome who were inclined to protect the mos maiorum that was ostensibly jeopardized by the philhellenic Nero.845

Josephus, however, exploits Roman cultural discourse not as a Roman lackey groveling for attention and acceptance at the feet of his Flavian superiors but as a faithful Jew hoping to gain “maximal advantage for himself and for his people, within the constraints of his social and political environment.”846 Josephus’ rhetorical strategies should thus be viewed not simply through the lens of cultural assimilation, wherein the colonized quietly absorbs the culture of the hegemonic group, but through what Barclay identifies as a model of “resistant adaptation,” wherein the colonized “can employ the

845 As Goodman notes, “the qualities in Judaism which [Josephus] picked out to make his point were strikingly similar to those aspects of Roman mos that Latin authors trumpeted when they too wanted to compare themselves favourably to the Greeks”; Goodman, "Josephus as Roman Citizen," 334-35. Goodman similarly likens Josephus’ C. Ap. to the Collatio Legum Mosaicarum et Romanarum (fourth or fifth century C.E.), which stresses that “Roman mores, as enshrined in Roman law, were not only compatible with Judaism but actually derived from the Law of Moses”; Goodman, "Roman Identity," 96-97.

846 Barclay, "The Empire Writes Back," 315 (emphasis mine).
dominant culture for their own ends.” Furthermore, implicit in this concept of “resistant adaptation” is an element of subversion, akin to Homi Bhabha’s notion of mimicry, i.e., the discursive strategy of approaching the limits of cultural resemblance or sameness in order to expose differences that can potentially (if subtly) undermine the authority of the dominant culture. The subversive dimension of mimicry is particularly noticeable in the treatment of aniconism in *A.J.* Although Josephus skillfully portrays the Jewish resistance to images in language that is steeped in Roman antiquarian traditions, likening Jewish aniconism to Rome’s pious aniconic past, this appropriation of sameness simultaneously conveys an implicit critique: the Jews were able to accomplish what the Romans quite obviously failed to do—preserve the pious worship of the *mos maiorum.* While Rome’s golden age had long since passed, at least according to the historiographical tradition represented by Varro, the Jews had successfully persisted in the aniconic ways of their ancestors. The relationship between Roman and Jewish cultures in Josephus is thus much more complex than binary models of assimilation/antagonism or acceptance/resistance allow, pointing instead to the distinct possibility “that in a melody apparently composed of complicity and cultural subservience, there can sound soft notes of self-assertion and resistance, at least for some ears.”

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847 Ibid., 318 (emphasis mine).
848 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 85-92. Bhabha refers to this as the “ambivalence of mimicry,” the almost-but-not-quite appropriation of culture that functions as a menacing disturbance to the colonizer.
849 Barclay, "The Empire Writes Back," 332. Mason argues for a similar subversive dimension in Josephus’ representation of the Flavian emperors, especially Titus, reading this rhetoric as a form of “safe criticism,” an ironic ploy or kind of double-speak whose surface praise masks a subtle critique of the emperors; Mason, "Figured Speech," 262-67.
Was Josephus’ rhetorical enterprise successful? While a definitive answer to this question is in the end elusive, there are some hints in the surviving data that suggest his efforts on behalf of his compatriots were ultimately in vain, at least in the short term. If Cotton and Eck are correct that Josephus throughout his literary career remained a lonely and isolated figure, marginalized from the elite social and political circles in Rome, the very people from whom Josephus had hoped to gain a hearing, then the reach of Josephus’ *apologia* on behalf of his compatriots was likely quite limited. Moreover, that anti-Jewish vitriol increases dramatically in the Latin sources of this period suggests that for many of these preachers of *Romanitas* the *Ἰουδαῖοι* remained among the litany of foreign pollutants that, at least according to Juvenal’s assessment, were infecting the Tiber. Indeed, that Juvenal can treat with bitter disdain even the most pro-Roman of Jews, Agrippa II and his sister Berenice, as well as Philo’s nephew Tiberius Julius Alexander, equestrian governor of Judea (46–48 C.E.) and Egypt (68–69 C.E.), underscores the extent to which the Jews living in Rome after the Judean war had an uphill battle, carrying the stigma of a humiliated *ethnos* on the margins of society.

In the end, however, that Josephus’ literary project may not have ultimately achieved its desired effect ought not detract from his efforts to navigate a clear path through the thick and tangled forest of Jewish life in Rome after the war. While it remains a distinct possibility that the flurry of iconoclastic activity during the decades preceding the revolt did indeed emerge from a deep-seated hatred of Roman hegemony on the part of some Jews in Judea, Josephus skillfully reshapes this seemingly anti-

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Roman behavior in language that would surely have resonated with even the most ardent advocate of *Romanitas*. Josephus’ attempt to mitigate the increasingly tense relationship between Roman and Jew thus marks him as one who remained deeply loyal to his people throughout his literary career in Rome. Perhaps, then, the dark shadow of Jotapata did not reach very far after all.
FIGURES

Figure 1: Trophy Relief, Temple of Apollo Sosianus
Figure 2: Trophy Relief, Trajan's Column
APPENDIX 1
STATUARY LEXICON IN THE JOSEPHAN CORPUS

εγαλμα

ἀνδριάς

ἀφίδρωμα
A.J. 18.344

γλυφή / γλυφίς
B.J. 5.191 (γλυφίς); A.J. 8.136, 416; 19.7, 185

δείκηλον
B.J. 2.170, 195

εἴδωλον

εἰκών

ἱέρωμα
A.J. 1.119, 322

κολοσσός
B.J. 1.413, 414

μορφή
B.J. 2.101, 104; A.J. 2.61, 84, 98, 102, 232; 3.113, 126, 137; 5.125, 213; 6.45, 162, 333; 7.190; 15.51; 16.7; 17.324, 329; C. Ap. 2.128, 190, 248, 252
ξόανον
B.J. 5.384; C. Ap. 1.244, 249

πρωτομή
B.J. 1.650; 3.214; A.J. 8.140; 18.1, 55

ςμαία
B.J. 2.169, 171, 174; 3.123; 5.48 (2x); 6.225, 226, 316, 403; 7.14; A.J. 18.55, 56, 121

τρόπαιον
A.J. 13.251; 15.272, 276, 277, 278; 18.287
## APPENDIX 2

### CHARTING THE SECOND COMMANDMENT IN JOSEPHUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source:</th>
<th>Prohibited Objects:</th>
<th>Legal Nomenclature:</th>
<th>Summary of Prohibition:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.J. 1.649-650</td>
<td>εἰκών; προτομή; ζύγου έργον;</td>
<td>πάτριος νόμος</td>
<td>Statues, busts or works of living beings not permitted in the temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.J. 2.170</td>
<td>δείκηλον; εἰκών (169)</td>
<td>νόμος; τὰ πάτρια (171)</td>
<td>Representation/image (on standard) not permitted in the city of Jerusalem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.J. 2.195</td>
<td>θεοῦ δείκηλον; ἀνθρώπος (δείκηλον); εἰκών (194); ἀνδριάς (185);</td>
<td>νόμος; τὸ πάτριον έθος</td>
<td>Representations of God or man not permitted in temple or even Judea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.J. 3.91</td>
<td>εἰκών ζύγου</td>
<td>ὁ δεύτερος λόγος</td>
<td>Images of living beings for worship not permitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.J. 8.195</td>
<td>χαλκῶν βοῶν; ὄμοιώμα; τῶν λέοντων (ὁμοιόμα)</td>
<td>νόμιμος</td>
<td>Images of cattle and lions not permitted; Solomon’s erection of said images not pious (δόσις).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.J. 9.205</td>
<td>εἰδωλία</td>
<td>νόμος (παράνομος)</td>
<td>Jeroboam violates ancestral laws by worshipping idols (σέβειν).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.J. 9.243</td>
<td>εἰδωλία</td>
<td>πάτριος νόμος</td>
<td>Jotham violates ancestral laws by offering sacrifices to idols (θύειν).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.J. 15.276-79</td>
<td>ἄγαλμα; εἰκών; εἰκόνες ἄνθρωπων</td>
<td>πάτριος</td>
<td>Not permitted to worship (σέβειν) images or erect images of men in Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source:</td>
<td>Prohibited Objects:</td>
<td>Legal Nomenclature:</td>
<td>Summary of Prohibition:</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><em>A.J.</em> 15.328-29</td>
<td>ἀγαλμα; τύπος μεμορφωμένους τιμάν</td>
<td>ἐθος; νόμιμος</td>
<td>Not permitted to honor cult statues and other types of images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A.J.</em> 16.158</td>
<td>εἰκών</td>
<td>νόμος</td>
<td>Jewish law does not permit honorary statues for kings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A.J.</em> 17.150-51</td>
<td>εἰκών; ζώον</td>
<td>νόμος τοῦ πατρίου; νόμος</td>
<td>Images and representations of living beings not permitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A.J.</em> 18.55</td>
<td>εἰκών; προτομή</td>
<td>νόμιμος τῶν Ἰουδαϊκῶν; νόμος</td>
<td>Making (ποίησις) images is not permitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A.J.</em> 18.121</td>
<td>εἰκών</td>
<td>πάτριος</td>
<td>Images on standards not permitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A.J.</em> 18.261-68</td>
<td>ἀνδρίας</td>
<td>πάτριος νόμος; ἀξίωμα νομοθέτου καὶ προπατόρων; νόμος; πάτριος</td>
<td>Ancestral law does not permit the erection of a statue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Vita</em> 65</td>
<td>ζώου μορφῆ</td>
<td>νόμος</td>
<td>Making (κατασκευάζειν) images of living beings not permitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>C.Av.</em> 2.190-2</td>
<td>εἰκών; μορφῆ</td>
<td>αἱ προρρῆσεις καὶ ἀπαγορεύσεις</td>
<td>God’s invisible nature precludes iconic representation of the deity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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