

JOSEPHUS' REASONS FOR THE JEWISH WAR

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Thesis

Presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts (Ancient Near Eastern Studies)

at the University of Stellenbosch

Supervisor: Prof. J. Cook

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

SUMMARY

In this thesis I will examine and discuss the reasons given for the Jewish War of AD 66 - 70. Reasons put forward by modern scholars specializing in the study of the works of Flavius Josephus are examined and discussed. However, the bulk of my study centres on the reasons that Flavius Josephus supplies for the war as found in his major work *Bellum Judaicum*. One is lead to the conclusion that he firmly believes that reasons on the human and transcendent planes contributed to the catastrophic events that lead to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

The worldview of this Jewish priest, general and accomplished historiographer was strongly influenced by the religious tenets of the Torah and the past history of the Jewish nation. He cannot countenance the wicked and evil deeds committed shamefacedly by his people against the clear standards that God had given to the nation, and believes that retribution by God will follow. He cannot forget occasions on the past when God intervened in the affairs of his nation by using a pagan world power to accomplish the purposes of God. He sees a similar recurrence of the events that lead to the destruction of the Jerusalem and the Temple in 587/6 BC being manifested in the Jewish War of AD 66 - 70.

OPSOMMING

In hierdie tesis word die redes wat vir die Joodse Oorlog van AD 66-70 aangebied word, ondersoek en bespreek. Veral die redes wat moderne geleerdes wat in die bestudering van Flavius Josephus se werk spesialiseer, word nagespeur en bespreek. Die grootste deel van die studie fokus egter op die redes wat Flavius Josephus self vir die gebeurtenis voorhou, soos wat hy dit in sy belangrike werk, *Bellum Judaicum*, uiteensit. 'n Mens kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat hy met groot oortuiging glo dat die redes wat tot die katastrofiese gebeure rondom die vernietiging van Jerusalem en die Tempel 'n bydrae gelewer het, op die vlak van sowel die menslike as bomenslike te vinde is.

Die wêreldbeskouing van hierdie bedrewe geskiedskrywer en Joodse priester is deur beide die Torah se godsdienstige voorskrifte en volksgeskiedenis sterk beïnvloed. Hy kan nie sy steun aan die blatante en bose dade van sy volksgenote teen die duidelike standarde wat God gegee het, toesê nie. Volgens hom moes God se vergelding volg. Hy kan ook nie vergeet hoe God in sy volk se verlede ingegryp het deur om goddelose wêreldmagte aan te wend om sy Goddelike doelwitte te bereik nie. Hy gewaar 'n soortgelyke herhaling van gebeurtenisse wat tot die vernietiging van Jerusalem en die tempel in 587/6 vC gelei het, in die aanloop tot die Joodse Oorlog van AD 66-70.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Professor Johann Cook, my supervisor, must be given credit for guiding and directing my work. His encouragement and valued suggestions were greatly appreciated.

Many thanks to the US 2000 Bursary Fund which made this thesis possible.

My wife also deserves praise for her patience, and confidence in my ability to tackle a Masters degree.

The US library staff were very helpful, especially Mrs Botha of the Theological library.

Finally, to my Heavenly Father who graciously has given me good health and a sound mind enabling me to complete this work.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Bel. Jud. The English translation of Flavius Josephus' work
Bellum Judaicum by William Whiston, published in 1737.

Ant. The English translation of Flavius Josephus' work
Antiquitates Judaicae by William Whiston, published
in 1737.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this work is to examine the reasons Josephus gives in his great *opus Bellum Judaicum* (abbr. Bel. Jud.) which led to the outbreak, the development, and the catastrophic ending of the war between the Romans and the Jews in the period AD 66 - 74.

I also wish to discover why Josephus makes the statements he does about the reasons that he puts forward for the Jewish War. I will concentrate mainly on Bel. Jud., but will refer when and where necessary to his other works. Scholars of our time have published reasons for the war in books, journals, dissertations, papers and reviews. The opinions of these scholars concerning the causes for the Jewish War vary appreciably and these will be considered and evaluated.

In order to do this it is essential to learn more about the author, his family and social position, his vocation, his education, his religion, his roles during and after the Jewish War, his accomplishment and output as an author. A brief sketch follows.

Josephus lived AD 37 to ca.100. He was a well-educated priest connected by marriage through his mother to Jewish Hasmonaean royalty. He possessed first class priestly credentials through his father. This aristocrat initially fought against the Romans in Galilee after the invasion by the Roman general Vespasian. After the fall of Jotapata, Josephus surrendered to the Romans, and eventually joined the entourage of Vespasian and Titus for the rest of the war. He was favoured by the Flavian Imperial house and finally ended up in Rome where he was to live in one of Vespasian's apartments on an adequate pension. Here he settled down to write 4 major works. His first work Bel. Jud. was finished before the death of Vespasian in AD 79. This was a Greek version of the war. However, in his preface Josephus refers to a Semitic version (in Hebrew or Aramaic) which he sent to the Jews living in the areas east of the Roman Empire, viz. Parthia, Babylonia, Arabia, Trans-Euphrates and Adiabene (Bel. Jud. 1.3,6). This version is extinct, although some scholars contend that the Slavonic

translation is based on this Semitic version (Schalit 1971:255). Modern scholars do not regard the Bel. Jud. that we possess as a mere translation of the Semitic because it is written in an original, highly literary style. It shows evidence of conventions common to Greek historiography, which would fit in well with the Greco-Roman literary context of his day.

Antiquitates Judaica (Antiquities of the Jews, abbr. Ant.) was completed about 20 years later (AD 93-94). It was written by Josephus to combat misinformation about the history of the Jewish nation in the Greek-speaking world. He presents Judaism positively as a national tradition of great antiquity (from creation), with highest ethical standards.

Vita (Life) followed within 2 or 3 years of the publication of *Antiquities*. In fact it is introduced at the end of *Antiquities* (Ant. 20.266). It is really not an autobiography, but deals mainly with a five-month period in his life spent as a general in Galilee during the great revolt. It is believed to be an answer to a work written by Justus about the Jewish War in which Josephus appears in a bad light.

His final extant work *Contra Apionem* (Against Apion) is an impassioned defence and advocacy of the traditions of his nation. It was probably written about AD 97-100 (Mason 1992:58, 59, 73, 77).

With regard to Josephus' reasons for the Jewish War, I will concentrate on Bel. Jud. but will refer when and where necessary to his other works. I will also look at Josephus against his historical background, and consider other influences that impinged upon his worldview, that shaped his thinking and caused him to write what he did about who or what was responsible for the war.

Unlike modern historians, Josephus does not systematically index or number off his reasons. Those he gives must be dug out of his great *opus* Bel. Jud., and occur scattered throughout his work. An attempt will be made to categorize these reasons, which broadly are either political or religious in nature.

Josephus will be scrutinized as historiographer writing about events which happened in his lifetime and therefore was in an excellent position to give his version and reasons for the war. In his time the historiographer was a writer whose craft was part of the general literature. From a literary aspect, there is complete identity between the author and his calamitous subject, and the reader readily accepts what he has to say regarding the reasons he supplies about events that preceded and transpired during the war.

1.1 THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The causes of the Jewish War of AD 66-70 (extended to AD 73/74 if the conquest of the fortress of Masada is to be included) given in the literature originating from authors and scholars writing in the last 150 years, or from historiographers living in the first 500 years of the Roman Empire, differ greatly. What one discovers is that approaches are often designed according to the field of expertise in which the modern scholar has specialized or the audience the ancient writer is attempting to convince or satisfy. For example, a modern socio-economist will search for socio-economic factors in Josephus' corpus and will tend to fit these into a template designed more for modern than ancient conditions. Moehring suggests that "religious and political prejudice have coloured the understanding of Josephus, above all the attempts on the part of many modern authors to classify Josephus in one way or another and then to complain that he does not fit into the category into which he has been assigned" (Moehring 1984:866).

In undertaking a search for the causes of the Jewish War, I have found that very little exists in the literature on this subject. One discovers that much has been written about sects, persons and other subjects mentioned in Josephus' works on that period, but few modern authors have come to grips with the causes of the War as recorded by Josephus in *Bel. Jud.* There is the problem of human observation of the past being selective and culture bound. In this thesis an attempt will be made to respect and accept the culture and world in which Josephus lived without being prejudiced or biased.

Per Bilde is an exception. He has ventured to examine all the reasons for the Jewish War as recorded in Josephus' writings. In his excellent article 'The Causes of the

Jewish War according to Josephus' he accepts that Josephus' historical data is to be trusted and therefore assumes that one should not lightly dismiss some of the reasons Josephus advances for the Jewish War (Bilde 1979:182-185).

Another contemporary scholar in a similar mould, Mason, points out that there is now a co-operation between scholars of various religious persuasions with no reason to satisfy their particularly insular constituencies or traditions, willing to discuss the history of Josephus' era openly with convincing proofs that are universally acceptable (Mason 1992:30).

Having mentioned the paucity of literature dealing with all the actual causes of the Jewish War and noting the recent growing, encouraging and positive attitude of scholars towards Josephus' works, there still remains a body of scholars who have put forward reasons other than those given by Josephus in *Bel. Jud.* Reference will be made to these later in this thesis.

It is important to note that Josephus interprets the arrival of the Romans, the fall of Jerusalem, the burning of the Temple and all the disasters of the war suffered by the Jewish people, as God's punishment for the sins of the people (*Bel. Jud.* 2.455; 519). Some of the scholars who agree with this religious basis write that Josephus had a special relationship with the Divine in the role that he played in the war (Cohen 1979:97). Villalba sees God involved in historical events, who becomes mixed in with human acts, i.e. He is the efficient cause, the instigator of human acts and the force responsible for numerous moments in human development (Villalba 1986:62-3).

Other scholars maintain that the Jewish War was an unfortunate result of the misdirected actions of a few individuals on both sides and/or caused by the Jewish people's religio-national aspirations for independence from Roman rule.

From the above one concludes that there appears to be both human and divine factors that have to be carefully considered when studying the reasons that Josephus gives for the Jewish War. Furthermore, there is apparently no unanimity within the scholarly ranks.

Scholars have noted that the religious element of Judaeen culture of the 1st Century AD dominated, controlled and drove the nation. One of them comments that unlike our experience of the separation of church and state in a secularised Western democracy, religion permeated human life in the ancient Mediterranean world in general and Palestine in particular (Meier 1992:235).

Josephus' worldview was shaped, moulded and coloured by his national religious background. In this thesis, the problem to be solved may be put in a nutshell: 'In Josephus' mind, what or who drives history?'

However strongly Josephus was conditioned by the religion of Palestinian Judaism one cannot dismiss the influences of Hellenistic culture on this intelligent, educated and well-connected priest. Concepts of Fortune, Fate, Chance, Divine Intervention and Providence occur throughout *Bel. Jud.* and indicate that he had a working knowledge of the current Stoic school of philosophy of the 1st Century AD.

1.2 HISTORICAL ORIENTATION (JOSEPHUS AGAINST HIS HISTORICAL CONTEXT)

In considering Josephus against his historical context it will be necessary to take cognisance of many important factors that shaped and motivated Josephus the man, priest, scholar, politician, general and historiographer. It will therefore be useful to follow a chronological sequence when describing the main events in his life, and then to give an overview of Roman political history that impinged on his life and career in the 1st century AD. It would be helpful to briefly sketch the Jewish culture into which he was born, lived and died, and thereafter to comment on the effects of pertinent aspects of Greco-Roman culture on his worldview and his attitudes towards both Jewish and non-Jewish cultures and Greco-Roman culture of the 1st century AD.

1.2.1 Josephus' personal history

Josephus' pedigree was a noble and auspicious one. It has already been noted (see Introduction) that he was connected by marriage through his mother to Jewish Hasmonaean royalty, and through his father had inherited impeccable priestly connections.

In his speech to the Jewish defenders at Jerusalem he appeals to the population to desert to the Romans rather than be dragged down into the coming conflagration and destruction. As members of his own family will be affected, he says: "I am sensible that this danger will extend to my mother, and wife, and to that family of mine who have been by no means ignoble, and indeed to one that has been very eminent in old time" (Bel. Jud. 5.419).

It appears that he was educated in Jerusalem and was an exceptionally bright student so much so that at the age of 14, high priests and important leaders would seek his counsel on religious matters (Vita 8 and 9). He also spent time with the Essenes, Sadducees and Pharisees studying their philosophies and religious teachings. He chose to follow the teachings of the last named religious group (Vita 12). This is a debateable point. Mason argues that the wording in Vita 12 indicates that Josephus became a disciple of Banus for 3 years and then returned to Jerusalem to enter public life 'following the Pharisaic group'. From his writings Josephus never saw eye to eye with the Pharisees. He despised them because the mindless mob were manipulated and incited by them. As far as Josephus was concerned the position of Pharisaism was similar to that of Stoicism in the Greco-Roman world, i.e. it was another 'philosophy'. How then does one interpret the above-mentioned statement 'following the Pharisaic group?' This can be interpreted to mean that Josephus followed the example (not the teachings) of the Pharisees and became involved in public affairs, as we know he did (Mason 1989:44).

The next important step in his life was a diplomatic journey he undertook to Rome at the age of 26. With connections at court through a Jewish actor favoured by Emperor Nero, Josephus succeeds in achieving the purpose of his mission (Vita 16). This occurred in AD 63-64.

Up to this stage of his career Josephus followed the Jewish equivalent of the *cursus honorum* pursued by any young Roman of a noble aristocratic family aspiring to a top political career.

On his return to Judaea he attempts to halt the already strong revolutionary movement. He realises that an endeavour to overthrow Roman domination in his country will be crushed by the impressive might of Roman arms and will lead to great catastrophe (Vita 17,18).

Insensitive and cruel actions taken by the Roman procurator Florus against the Jewish population only served to incite rebels to terrorist tactics at the same time making it difficult for pro-Roman supporters amongst the Jewish aristocracy, like Josephus, to calm tempers and to keep law and order. Finally in AD 66 Cestius Gallus the Roman legate of the province of Syria sought to suppress the rebels, but his army is routed by Jewish troops after inexplicably withdrawing from besieging Jerusalem (Bel. Jud. 2. 538-540).

As war with Rome was now inevitable, the high priests, Sanhedrin and the new insurgent leaders of the rebellion form an independent government. Officials and leaders are appointed to wage war against the expected Roman invasion of Judaea (Bel. Jud. 2.562-568) (Smallwood 1981:298). Josephus is selected to mobilise, train and organise the defence of cities in Galilee against the Roman invasion under Vespasian (Bel. Jud. 2.568). Josephus' policy in Galilee appears pro-Roman, but is in line with that of the patriotic upper-class leaders like Ananus in Jerusalem. However, Josephus is accused by the pro-war party as a traitor and attempts are made on his life (Bel. Jud. 2.594; 597ff.).

In the spring of AD 67 the Romans finally bottle up Josephus in the town of Jotapata. After a brief siege of 47 days he surrenders to the Romans, but is favourably treated by Vespasian and Titus who regard him as a prophet with extraordinary powers of perception of the future roles the Flavian family will play in world affairs.

After the proclamation of Vespasian as Emperor in AD 69, Josephus is formally released by Vespasian and Titus as a prisoner of war in the symbolic act of smashing the links of a chain to denote his freedom (Bel. Jud. 4.625-629).

Josephus is part of Titus' entourage at the final siege of Jerusalem in the spring of AD 70 to the fall of Jerusalem in September AD 70. He moves with Titus to Rome where he is given splendid apartments previously occupied by Vespasian as his own residence. He proceeds to write the history of the Jewish war and the history of the Jewish people. He moved in the highest Roman and Jewish circles, and makes no attempt to hide the fact that he was supported and honoured by the conquerors of the Jewish people. He was both despised and annoyed by some of his own countrymen and repeatedly accused by his detractors of high treason, of having surrendered and betrayed his paternal heritage, and of having sold himself to the enemy (Bilde 1988:60).

1.2.2 Roman political history

In the 1st Century AD Rome was the indisputable master of the Mediterranean world and the countries in the East and the West, which abutted on the Mediterranean countries. Some areas were regarded as politically more unstable and inflammable than others, so the Roman Emperors arranged that personal friends that could be trusted to keep law and order would govern such areas. To accomplish this end such provinces were well garrisoned by legions on constant *qui vive* for signs of unrest and outbreaks of political disturbances. The small province of Judaea was regarded as a potential threat to the *Pax Romana* established by Augustus, Julius Caesar's grandnephew and heir. In his Principate (31 BC-AD 14), he gave the world peace, put down pirates at sea, suppressed brigandage on land, instituted world order and good government and closed the gates of the temple of Janus, a symbolic act that signified the end of war (Salmon 1968:2,3).

Emperors who succeeded him, Tiberius (AD 14 - 37) and Claudius (AD 41 - 54), built on the foundations laid by Augustus. Administration of public affairs and the finances of the Empire were sound, efficient *equites* (knights) took over government departments traditionally occupied by Senators.

The last of the Julio-Claudian *Principes* was Nero (AD 54 - 68). This playboy ruler failed to heed the fact that Judaea was in revolt. Although a minor province of the Empire it had always been difficult to govern the fiercely independent Jews. Disturbances were frequent. These originated in AD 6 when the governor of Syria ordered a census to be conducted for taxation purposes (Bel. Jud. 2.118). Political confrontation occurred in AD 40 when the Emperor Caligula (AD 37 - 41) had attempted to introduce the ruler cult into the Temple in Jerusalem by instructing the legate Petronius to place a statue of himself in the Temple (Bel. Jud. 2.184-185). A series of insensitive, abrasive and sometimes incompetent rule and actions by Roman procurators of Judaea hurt religious and inflamed intense nationalistic feelings.

In the Eastern parts of the Empire it was Roman policy to allow local communities to retain their style of government and customs. The Hellenistic city-states retained their administrative frameworks based on the polis. The Jews were allowed to maintain autonomy in religious matters; they were exempt from the normal requirement of participating in the Imperial cult and from serving in the Legions. The Roman governors and officials in the provinces worked hard at befriending members of the old well-established aristocratic families. It was direct Roman military intervention under Vespasian, Nero's most experienced general, in AD 66 that dramatically changed the course of history of the Jewish state and which changed the life and destiny of Josephus (Bel. Jud. 3.1-8).

1.2.3 Jewish Political History

Josephus lived from AD 37 to ca. AD 100. Up to AD 70 he lived in Judaea, and thereafter, to the end of his life, in Rome. One will hardly understand Josephus unless one considers the history of the Jewish nation up to the time of the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in AD 70. What follows is a very brief but pertinent and apposite summary of the history of a small nation surrounded by super-powers in the Ancient Near East.

After the destruction of the first Temple built by King Solomon by Nebuchadnezzar in 587/586 BC, the Jews experienced exile in the Babylonian Empire; lived under post-exilic provincial government in the Persian Empire (ca. 600 - 330 BC); then became part of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid provincial organizations after the conquests of

Alexander the Great in the 4th Century BC; followed by Maccabaeen rule by Jewish King-Priests (142 - 37 BC); and saw the rise of growing world domination of Rome culminating in Pompey's conquest of Palestine in 63 BC. The Romans finally appointed King Herod, an Idumaeen, and his family as client kings and princes from 40 BC until AD 6.

In this period of nearly 600 years, existing for the greatest part subjugated to foreign world powers, one can begin to comprehend the longings and aspirations of the Jews. No longer an independent nation, what did the people look forward to? Under strong religious eschatological fervour fanned by the apocalyptic schools of thought, the prospect of a coming world leader, the Messiah, as prophesied, gave them hope.

The loss of independence after Hasmonaeen rule, the intrusion of Herodian Roman puppet kings, the annexation of Judaea to the Roman Imperial province of Syria in AD 6 and its being placed under procurators based near Jerusalem at Caesarea, were all factors that built up resentment and added fuel to the smouldering fires of incipient rebellion by Jewish extreme nationalistic movements. Terrorism against Roman administrators and troops, assassination of Jewish collaborators, finally forced the Roman governor Cestius in AD 66 to send down the 12th Legion to take Jerusalem. This Legion never achieved its objectives; instead it was ignominiously routed by Jewish troops. This unexpected catastrophe finally woke up Emperor Nero to the seriousness of the political situation in Judaea and forced him to order Vespasian, his ablest general, to quell the rebellion (Salmon 1968:194-197).

Josephus commences his history of the Jewish War with an account of the attack by the Seleucid Antiochus Epiphanes on Jerusalem, the desecration of the second Temple, and the subsequent revolt by the Maccabaeen Matthias at Modin. Later, another Maccabaeen, Judas, wishing to strengthen his position in the Near East, drew up a treaty with the Romans in 161 BC. Little did he anticipate that this Roman 'connection' would in time bring disaster and calamity upon his people (Bel. Jud. Preface 19-20).

1.2.4 The Jewish culture of the 1st Century AD

It is not the intention to dwell on this at length but it is of importance in that Josephus was a product of his culture. Or put another way, the Jewish culture was one of the 'forces', which moulded the life, character, and beliefs of Josephus whilst living in Judaea in the 1st century A. D.

In Jewish culture the Torah, the Law of Moses, covered multiple aspects of Jewish society. As the Torah had a strong religious foundation, it was unavoidable that the application of the rules and regulations of the Torah by the religious priestly class would permeate into all the components of Jewish culture. The Jewish state was run by high priests in conjunction with the Sanhedrin, an executive body consisting of high priests, teachers of the Law and elders of the old aristocratic families. Therefore a state run on the basis of the Torah would assuredly interpose itself in personal, social, civil, legal, religious and ritual affairs because of the very wide range of subjects embodied by the Law of Moses.

Jews living in Judaea did not live in an isolated, sealed system, as some writers would have it. These authors maintain that the highlands of Judaea were geographically relatively inaccessible to the traffic of trade and ideas moving between East and West, and reason that the religion and culture of the Jews was thus preserved (Eybers 1978:51). These scholars overlook an important fact - more Jews lived in the Diaspora than in Judaea. Furthermore, all male Jews were expected to attend at least 3 religious annual festivals, which centred in the Temple situated at Jerusalem (Deut.16: 1-17). Therefore interchange of ideas, the establishment and development of trading and business relationships, up-dating the Jerusalem ruling authorities on new political laws and decrees enacted through the Senate at Rome, would take place during these festivals.

Regarding their relationship with Greek populations, Jews living in Judaea and Galilee would be in daily contact with Greeks in a number of city-states within their borders. The Galileans rubbed shoulders more frequently with Greeks and other neighbouring people because of their close proximity to the trade routes that criss-

crossed their countryside, e.g. the city states of the Decapolis had predominantly Greek populations and ran their affairs on democratically elected people's assemblies.

It has been put forward by the scholar Martin Hengel, that Judaeen culture, especially in the period ca. 300-150 BC, was strongly influenced by Hellenism. In fact, he maintains that such a concept as Palestinian Judaism should rather be dropped and the term Hellenistic Judaism would be more appropriate (Hengel 1974:311-312). This hypothesis will be noted here and discussed in more detail under 1.2.5.

The prevailing traditionalism of the Jews in Judaea and the religious customs of Jewish life everywhere excluded close intercourse with the Greeks. No Jew could really worship the city gods. Therefore Anti-Semitism began to develop, partly because of economic rivalry but mainly mutual religious propaganda, and because the Jews, though active in all sorts of professions, were different from other people and kept apart. Only those Jews, who more or less gave up their religion, were truly Hellenised (Ehrenberg 1974:103).

By virtue of his position as a member of the Jewish aristocracy, Josephus would certainly be more exposed than the *hoi polloi* to Greco-Roman ideas. As the core of Jewish culture was a religious one, a priest like Josephus would conform consciously and unconsciously, voluntarily and involuntarily, to every component of his culture. Edersheim describes in detail how a young Jewish boy grew up in a religious household. Starting in the home, Josephus' whole cultural background would be deeply ingrained from childhood influencing his thoughts and actions, his norms and overall beliefs. (Edersheim 1876:103-138) But he was intelligent enough to realize that outside of Palestinian Judaism an attractive and exciting world of Greek ideas and a well organized stable world based on Roman pragmatism and administrative genius, existed. In particular his diplomatic mission to Rome impressed him indelibly (Vita 4).

1.2.5 Greco-Roman culture of the 1st Century AD

How did Greco-Roman culture shape the worldview of Josephus? This is the question one must answer.

It has already been put forward above that Josephus was well aware of the attractive and powerful world outside of Palestinian Judaism. In fact Hellenism had made an impact on Judaism from the 4th Century BC onwards. Hengel describes the meeting of these two ideologies in his masterpiece *Judaism and Hellenism*. He contends that starting as early as ca. 300-150 BC the nature and quality of Judaism was changed by certain components of Hellenism. He deals with the common language of the Hellenistic world, the *Koine*, which allowed access to Greek literature, philosophy and religion. In this period he maintains that the visible effects of military, civic and socio-economic changes profoundly shaped the ethos of the Jewish nation. Hellenism was the force expressing the power of the Greek spirit, which penetrated and transformed everything especially in the Eastern world (Hengel 1974:57).

No matter how deep the overlays of Hellenism clothed traditional Judaism, the core of Judaism still remained firmly religious, built on the fundamental elements of the Torah.

The questions that we would like to find answers for relating to Greco-Roman culture of the 1st Century AD are as follows: To what extent was the ethos of Jewish society changed by Hellenism? Was it a skin deep external conformation? Did it replace intrinsic religious convictions? Was it a cloak of convenience worn only as and when the occasion called for it? To what extent did it influence the worldview of an educated Jew like Josephus?

It is not the general objective of this work to answer all these questions. But we must take note and examine to what magnitude Greco-Roman literature and philosophies were known, used and reproduced by an intelligent, educated priest like Josephus in writing his history of the Jewish War. This will be dealt with in the next section.

It would not be out of place to touch on an important and influential school of philosophy in vogue in the 1st Century AD, viz. Stoicism. It can be said that this was THE philosophy of the Hellenistic age. The Stoics believed and taught that *λογος* was established as Providence or Nature, ruling the universe according to eternal laws; a dynamic force which provided an ultimate explanation of physical phenomena. Stoics taught the great idea of the brotherhood of man; there were no differences between

Greek and non-Greek, man and woman, free and slave. The rational power or *λογος* was divine, a non-anthropomorphic deity sometimes called Zeus, or Destiny, Nature or *Τυχη*. Stoic philosophy played an important part in public life as some Stoics advised kings and statesmen. The latter Stoics, represented under the Roman Empire by Seneca, Epictetus and the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, returned to what has been called ‘a religion of the educated’ (Ehrenberg 1974:100-102).

1.3 IMPORTANT HISTORIOGRAPHERS OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST AND ANCIENT VIEWS ON HISTORY

1.3.1 What is history?

There is an ambiguity about the meaning and the use of the word ‘history’. It can either mean the events of the past or the writing about them, i.e. historiography. The term ‘history’ was originally limited to the enquiry and statement of the past (*ιστορειν* in Greek means to enquire about something, to explore, to discover), but in the course of time the meaning of the word was extended to include the phenomena themselves that form the subject of history. The same word is applied to the study itself and to the object of the study.

The term ‘history’ was adopted by ancient writers to describe works that included monographs, contemporary histories and universal histories. The defining quality shared by all of them was their direct concern of *res gestae*, mankind’s actions in politics, diplomacy and war, in the far and near past (Fornana 1983:3).

1.3.2 Josephus as historiographer

In this thesis the focus will be centred on the works of a Jewish historiographer, Josephus, paying particular attention to the Jewish War, an event in which he participated. Not only does he record the events of this war between the Romans and the Jews, but he also supplies the reasons why events associated with this war should be recorded so that ‘those Greeks and Romans as were not engaged in the contest should not remain in ignorance of these matters’ and that they should not be misled by ‘flattering or fictitious narratives’ (Bel. Jud. Pref. 6).

His genre is contemporary history, 'Zeitgeschichte'. In Greek historiography this was considered to be the genre above all others in which the historian's original contribution lay, genuine research (Bel. Jud. Pref. 15). Unlike Polybius, Thucydides and Tacitus, Josephus does not write for posterity, in particular for the benefit and enlightenment of politicians and statesmen. Josephus writes for the benefit of his own time - he is an apologist for his own people (Bilde 1988:205).

In writing Bel. Jud., how does Josephus exhibit the conventions of Greek historiography? What does Josephus have in common with Classical Greek and Hellenistic historiographers? In what follows the works of Herodotus, Thucydides and Polybius are examined against Josephus' History of the Jewish War.

In order to compare Josephus' work as a historiographer, I will concentrate on similar works written by three other great historiographers of the Classical and Hellenistic eras.

Herodotus (ca. 484-420 BC) wrote The Histories (The Persian War and its antecedents) in 9 books.

Thucydides (ca. 460-400 BC) wrote The History of the war between Athens and Sparta in 8 books (unfinished).

Polybius (ca. 200-118 BC) wrote Histories, a universal history from the 1st Punic War down to 146 BC) in 40 books.

Josephus (ca. AD 37-102) wrote The Jewish War (a history of the Jews from ca. 170 BC to the capture of Jerusalem in AD 70) in 7 books.

These historiographers either treat an important war, or an important period in the development of a great power. Examining their works, one discovers that each work starts with a proem. In it the historiographer sets out the theme and the aim of the work, mentions what methods of research he will use, and inserts some eye catching phrases to entice a prospective purchaser!

In the proem the author usually introduces himself e.g.:

'These are the researches of Herodotus of Halicarnassus' (1.1).

Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war waged by the Peloponnesians and the Athenians against one another' (1.1).

Polybius writes 'I propose to begin my history in the 140th Olympiad (220-216 BC) (1.3). His name however, does not appear.

Josephus writes 'I, Joseph, son of Matthias, a Hebrew by race, a native of Jerusalem and priest' (Bel. Jud. Pref. 3).

Each author clearly sets out the theme and the aim of the work. So one notices that Herodotus plans to put on record the grounds of the feud between the Greeks and the barbarians (the Persians), to preserve the remembrance of what men have done, to acknowledge the outstanding performances of both Greeks and Barbarians (1.1).

Thucydides remarks that he started at the very outset of the war to write a history of a war 'great and noteworthy' above all previous wars, which extended to a large extent of mankind (1.1).

Polybius planned to write a universal, contemporary history dealing with 53 years in which Rome succeeded in subjecting nearly the whole inhabited world (1.1 and 1.3). He makes the point that the study of history is the soundest education and training for a life in active politics. His work is didactic in nature.

Josephus proceeds to write about the greatest of any war on record between either city-states or nations, and to faithfully recount the actions of both combatants, Jews and Romans (Bel. Jud. Pref. 1, 9)

One should note that a distinctive characteristic and convention of Greek historiography was to justify the subject and to present it as more important and greater than that of any predecessor.

Another function of the proem was to give the author an opportunity to let his reader know what methods he would employ in compiling his history.

Herodotus writes that he will deal with historical not mythical figures, as the deeds of the historical are verifiable. He will use personal interviews of participants and by personal observation (autopsy) and extensive travel make and publish his researches (1.1 and 2.44).

Thucydides warns his reader that he will use a critical method to investigate ancient traditions but prefers to deal with contemporary history as this can be verified (2.20-21).

Polybius states that he will proceed to write a history of actual events (*πραγματικός τοπος*) and a useful history to explain causes (9.2). He is also selective, as he only will concern himself with the doings of nations, cities and monarchs, i.e. a political history (9.2). By personal visits and enquiry to countries little known, he hopes to correct the errors of former writers (3.59).

Josephus declares that he will write about contemporary history, which can be verified. Sources he will consult are the *commentarii* of the Roman generals participating in the war and the archives and libraries of Rome. He expresses the hope that he will attempt to be impartial unlike some contemporaries who use hearsay and consult with poor sources (Bel. Jud. Pref. 2, 7, 13). He despises plagiarism as he will not simply remodel the scheme and arrangement of another historian's work, but will use fresh materials and make his own framework of the historical *opus* (Bel. Jud. Pref. 15).

The use of speeches in the works of these historiographers will be considered as speeches were often used to convey either the gist of what was said or a belief or an opinion of the author.

Herodotus reports all that was professed to be said. He then selects what he believes to be true and leaves the reader to decide if he agrees or not: 'For myself, my duty is to report all that is said; but I am not obliged to believe it all alike – a remark which may be understood to apply to my whole History' (Histories 7.152).

Thucydides writes a reasonable summary of what the speaker was reported to have said. However, what was said posed the problem of verification. 'I have adhered as closely as possible in the general sense of what was actually said' (1.22).

Polybius attempts to report what was actually said. He warns historiographers not to introduce them in order just to display their rhetorical skills. He deprecates the historian who practises speeches on his readers thus displaying his ability to them (36.1).

Josephus basically takes a similar line as Herodotus and Thucydides, i.e. he sometimes allows the reader to decide for himself. Ladouceur (1983:26) comments that the use of the 'non-committal' formula can be traced back to Herodotus and Thucydides. By the 2nd Century AD this non-committal attitude especially to the marvellous, the supernatural, had become a rule for historiographers. The inclusion of speeches in historical writing of the Classical and Hellenistic eras allowed the author to show off persuasive rhetorical skills. Josephus follows the rules and substance of a speech with acceptable rhetorical licence. Mason suggests that ancient writing was so completely given over to persuasion, and that no author up to that time should be taken at face value. Problems will occur if we are not aware that a store of conventions (τοποι) had been developed by then and used freely in literary work. To enter into Josephus' world of thought, means that we must take these conventions into consideration, otherwise we will come to faulty conclusions (Mason 1992:36).

It was also fashionable for historiographers to severely criticize their predecessors. Thucydides has a swipe at Herodotus accusing him 'of having composed with a view of pleasing the ear rather than of telling the truth since their stories cannot be tested' (1.21).

Polybius criticizes Timaeus 'who considered himself qualified to write history having had no experience of active service in war or any personal acquaintance with places' (12.25). He lambastes Timaeus because of his bookish pedantry as he spent most of his time in the libraries.

Josephus berates contemporary writers as producing flattering or fictitious narratives (Bel. Jud. Pref. 6).

The nature of some of the introductory remarks in the proem was designed to attract attention. Josephus claims that his work deals with one of the greatest wars of all time, 'the greatest not only of the wars of our own time, but, so far as accounts have reached us, well nigh of all that ever broke out between cities and nations' (Bel. Jud. Pref. 1). These remarks may appear to us to be boastful, but these were deliberately inserted as eye catching and appetite whetting, phrases inserted to persuade a

prospective reader to purchase the scroll (Mason 1992:59). Thucydides also makes a similar remark (in the third person singular): ‘He began a task at the very outset of the war in the belief that it would be great and noteworthy above all the wars that had gone before’ (History 1.1).

Josephus must have used sources relating to the subject matter of the Jewish War. Writing in Rome he had access to official Roman military reports kept in the archives. For example how did he know the dispositions of the Roman legions around the Empire as mentioned in King Agrippa’s speech? (Bel. Jud. 2.365-387) Again, a massive work of 144 books entitled ‘Universal History’ written by Nicolas of Damascus (born ca. 64 BC) would supply the bulk of the information on the Herodian dynasty incorporated in Bel. Jud.

As a rule ancient historiographers never refer to specific sources. Yet it stands to reason that they must have read published works available in libraries and archives. Jerome (AD 340-420) was most impressed with Josephus’ learning. He comments that Josephus must have read over all the Greek libraries (of his day) (Jerome Epist. 84 ad Magnum). Thackeray writes that it was common practice of historians to use sources without naming them and to name sources without using them. Josephus conceals a probable source of Roman origin, the *commentarii principales*, notes made by the Roman field commanders engaged in the War. Thackeray believes Josephus’ vanity precluded him mentioning his sources, as any reference made to them would detract from his personal fame! (Thackeray 1929:39).

To sum up. The evidence shows that Josephus writes contemporary history in the mould of the great Classical Greek and Hellenistic historiographers. However, his ardent Jewish nationalism (his Jewishness) is transparent *in passim*. This he cannot avoid as he writes in defence of his people who had been devastated by the destruction of their most precious heritage by the Romans in the Jewish War (Bilde 1988:72).

What emerges from Josephus’ great work Bel. Jud., is a historiographer who insists that his work is exact, correct, detailed, complete, real, faithful, scrupulous,

meticulous and impartial; that it presents the real state of affairs, in short, what he is saying is the truth (Villalba 1984:257).

Writing on the literary and historical value of *Bel. Jud.*, Schalit reluctantly admits that the excellence of Josephus' work in both literary and historiographical qualities, earns it an honourable place in Jewish and general literature (Schalit 1971:255).

In conclusion, if I were asked to give my opinion as to which of the great Classical and Hellenistic historiographers Josephus most resembles, then I would declare that Herodotus and Josephus exhibit similar scholarly and personal features in their literary works. Thucydides is a clinically correct and a brilliant analyst of contemporary events, but a cold fish, too cerebral. Not that this personal trait disqualifies him in any way as a great historiographer; on the contrary, all his great intellectual powers are brought to bear incisively on the great task he has set himself. Polybius attempts to emulate Thucydides and writes strongly against the historian who deliberately includes persuasive rhetoric in order to get his point across to the reader. This historiographer is unashamedly pro-Roman. The unity and comprehensiveness of his universal history reflects and pre-figures the coming Roman Empire (Polybius Book 39.8 Epilogue). Both Thucydides and Polybius write for posterity and hope that their works will be instructive for future leaders and politicians. Here one detects a note of smug pride. Who can blame them? Their historiographies are worthy of praise; both know that they have produced masterpieces. 'My history ... has been composed as a possession of all time' (Thucydides 1.22). "I have undertaken, I may say, a vaster task than any of my predecessors" (Polybius 5.31). Josephus and Herodotus love the anecdote, the excursus, and the passionate pleading speech. Both have a moral message; both recognize the role that Providence plays in the affairs of mankind. Both appear non-committal at times as they admit that they are not sure regarding the veracity of traditional tales doing the rounds. This very human characteristic appeals to the reader.

1.3.3 The Roman historians

The Roman historians were a breed apart from the Greek historiographers. The latter introduced the concept of research into the affairs of men and insisted that the writer be close to the events described.

In the Roman world the historian himself was usually the informed source, the statesman-historian, an individual whose claim to write history was based on his personal active involvement in political life of the community. The political offices held, the armies commanded, gave him *auctoritas* and requirements for writing history concerning the deeds of the Roman people. Furthermore a stream of written documents flowed into the libraries and archives in Rome giving a 1st century Roman historian easy access to sources, freeing him from painstaking personal research (Fornara 1983:53/8).

In considering these Roman historians, or put better, those who wrote histories of Rome, one must distinguish between those of Greek and Roman origin. To the former class belonged Diodorus Siculus who flourished under Julius Caesar and Augustus. He wrote a 'world history' up to Caesar's Gallic War. This work has value in that he copied earlier historians and admits the second hand nature of his material. He is regarded as superficial, a 'scissors and paste' historian. Plutarch (ca. AD 46 – 120) is remembered for his parallel lives of illustrious Greek and Roman statesmen who influenced the history of Greece and Rome. His value as a biographer is that he fills in lacunae of famous people in the Hellenistic period. He regarded biography as an aspect of history. Arrian was praetor and legate under the Emperor Hadrian. His criteria of criticism were autopsy, consensus of tradition and the influence of probability, the more credible. He selected what appeared to be interesting data in itself but which was not necessarily altogether trustworthy. To the latter class we should mention in passing Sallust (86 – 35 BC), a Praetor and senator, who wrote Roman history in his retirement. He had personal knowledge of men and events of his times and possessed sharp and merciless insight. Suetonius (AD 69 – 122 AD), a man of equestrian rank, was a writer of biographies of famous men and Emperors.

The Roman historian of great note is Tacitus, who lived AD 55-120. He was probably born in Narbonese Gaul, and was therefore a younger contemporary of Josephus. He was a *novus homo* (lit. 'a new boy of the Senate'), with no ancestral memories or

grudges, whose family had neither received benefits nor personal injuries in the past (unlike old Roman aristocratic families with a grudge), admits political advancement under the Flavians and is grateful for them. However, at heart he is a convinced Republican and hankered after the 'good old days'. Nevertheless as Senator he was prepared to work for the Principate, but realized that honour, dignity, high office, and great commands belonged to the Imperial house (Dudley 1968:23-29).

The Latin words '*sine ira et studio, quorum causas procul habeo*', translated 'Without prejudice or partisanship, having no motives for either' sum up his approach to writing history. He does not always stick to these guidelines especially his biased treatment of Tiberius.

Cassius Dio (AD 155-230) commented that under the dispensation of Senate and people (The Republic) matters were openly debated; under the reign of the Caesars, the principal decisions were taken in secret (Roman History Bk. 53.19). He could safely write in this vein being far removed from the Julio-Claudian Emperors. However, Tacitus had to be far more circumspect and careful in what he wrote.

In Tacitus' attitude to the Principate one clearly detects the classical view of history; the past was better than the present, which will eventually degenerate into something worse! His bitter republicanism pervades his historical works, especially the *Annales*, in which he lays the blame for the demise of the Republican spirit of freedom at the door of Tiberius.

1.3.4 Views on history held by historiographers of the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman eras

1.3.4.1 The Classical View

The orthodox view of history developed by the Greek philosophers and passed on to the Romans was the theory of world-cycles, i.e. the view that history repeats itself in a series of events that recur regularly and usually lead back to the starting point. Coupled to this theory the Classical view saw history as a process of degeneration in which material progress is accompanied by moral decline.

The Greek philosopher Plato (ca. 429-347 BC) was the first to postulate the theory of inevitable degradation and decay in his various studies of political communities. In his *magnum opus*, *The Republic*, Books 8 and 9 (545-580) he argues that gradual deterioration occurred from his utopian aristocracy, through stages of timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and despotism (tyranny).

Polybius held to this view and suggested as a law of nature a cyclical development of constitutional forms (πολιτειν ανακυκλωσις) as follows: Monarchy degenerates into tyranny; this is abolished and replaced by aristocracy, which in turn becomes oligarchy; and finally democracy, the next stage in the cycle, deteriorates into ochlocracy (mob rule). And then the cycle repeats itself (Universal History 6.9).

The basic thinking may be summed up that the present is inferior to the past and future prospects are even gloomier. This mind set became a stock theme in the literature of Roman writers especially Sallust (86-34 BC) and Tacitus (ca. AD 55-120).

Thucydides maintained that historical knowledge was useful because human nature being what it is, the events that happened in the past will, at some time or another and in much the same way, be repeated in the future (History 1.22 - 24). Polybius made a similar statement. 'History develops in such an orderly way that, if the past is known, the future may be inferred' (Universal History 6.3).

Herodotus adds a moral note by warning that as *hubris* had brought about the downfall of the Persians by meeting their nemesis, the Greeks, in the Great War between these two powers, so a similar fate would befall the Greeks if they followed the Persian pattern (Histories 7,10). He not only believed and tried to show that, within the larger design woven by fate, good fortune was unstable and intrinsically corrupting, whether for individuals or for city states and kingdoms (Fornara 1983:105).

1.3.4.2 The Linear (Judaean) View

While the Greeks held to a cyclical view of history, there existed a contemporaneous view, distinctly different. The Biblical Old Testament tradition perceived history as

linear. Divine Providence guided events towards the fulfilment of the final purpose, i.e. history was 'going places'. The Divine purpose concerned all of mankind, it was universal; the history and destiny of the Jewish nation was included in the unfolding of a directed, purposeful plan, a predetermined course.

Neusner puts it like this. 'The Scriptural record of Israel took as its premise a single fact. When God wished to lay down a judgment, God did so through the medium of events. History, composed of singular events, therefore spoke God's message. Prophets found vindication through their power to enunciate and even (in the case of Moses) to make and change history. Moreover, history as revealer of God's will, consisted of a line of one-time events, all of them heading in a single direction - a line that began at creation and that would end with redemption or salvation' (Neusner 1991:33).

This purposeful universal history developed into a teleological view of history, an ultimate goal, like the coming of the Messiah, which would mark the climax and the end of history.

It is appreciated that these approaches to history represent the two opposite ends of the spectrum of thought. But there is evidence that in Jewish apocalyptic literature these two views are sometimes combined and that Stoic philosophers at times reveal something similar to a Jewish approach to history. A conservative scholar makes an interesting remark: 'If indeed ... Josephus stresses the concept of Providence, we may suggest that he does so because this was such an important concept of Stoicism which, as we have noted, was the favourite philosophy of intellectuals in Rome at the time Josephus was living there' (Feldman 1987:44)

Reading through *Bel. Jud.*, one becomes aware of a general trend, a movement towards a cataclysmic climax, in which all that was precious and holy to the Jewish nation would be destroyed. The holy city, and the locus of the presence of God, the Temple, would become rubble at the end of the war. A similar theme runs through the Hebrew Bible which describes the dreadful day of the LORD bringing the present age to a catastrophic culmination before ushering in the new age.

Examining Bel. Jud. one realizes that Josephus holds to the view that God is working out His purposes in events that are occurring before his eyes in the Jewish War. He writes that God has gone over to the side of the Romans (Bel. Jud. 5.367); that God favours the Flavians as universal rulers (Bel. Jud. 3.400-402); and that a righteous kind of fate had brought the Empire under Vespasian's power (Bel. Jud. 4.622).

Shutt (1975:197) reviewing Lindner's book writes appositely: 'We find in Josephus a religious view of history in accordance with the religion of Judaism, so that for him "fortune" and the potent *fortuna Romana* are more than blind irreligious forces; they need understanding in the light of God's continuing care for his disobedient and defying people'. This leads one to pose a very thought-provoking question: Is history tied up then with the fate and destiny of the Jewish people? Will the consummation of the history of the nations tie in with God's ultimate teleological purposes for the Jewish people? Perhaps Josephus will give some insights in finding an answer to this question. Josephus is convinced that the fate of his people will change in God's own time if they but confess and repent (Bel. Jud. 5.415), but he does not have the details of God's grand plan for the Jews and the Gentile nations of the world.

A 20th century historian makes a profound statement pertinent to the place of God in history. 'Our quest for the meaning of history will remain totally irrelevant, unless we try to give some answers, however incomplete, to the question of what is, or at least what may be, the part of God in human history' (Ehrenberg 1974:146).

1.4 DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN LITERATURE ON THE THEME OF THE REASONS THAT JOSEPHUS GIVES FOR THE JEWISH WAR

The literature search will cover books, journal articles and papers, and book reviews that have been written dealing either directly or indirectly with the above-mentioned theme. Authors often mention the reasons *en passant* in writing about other aspects of the Jewish War. Some of the more important specialists on Josephus whose works have been published in English will be examined.

In 1928 Thackeray gave a series of 6 lectures to the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York on the subject 'Josephus, the man and the historian.' Commenting on the reasons for the Jewish War of AD 66-74, he starts in AD 6 when Judaea was annexed to the province of Syria and placed under Roman procurators. From this time dates the rise of the Zealots, the anti-Roman extremists, the 'fourth philosophy' as Josephus calls them, and responsible, in his judgment, for all the horrors of the final catastrophe. It was the coming of Quirinius in AD 6-7 to take a valuation (census) of the newly annexed districts, which led to the revolt of Judas of Galilee and his companions. 'They asserted' writes, Josephus, 'that the valuation meant nothing less than downright slavery, and exhorted the nation to rally in defence of their liberty' (Ant. 18.4; Bel. Jud. 2.117-118). It was the exhortation of this band of fanatical patriots, assisted by the excesses and extortionate rapacity of the last of the Roman procurators Florus, which 60 years later led to the outbreak of open war (Thackeray 1928:4-5).

The tyranny and rapacity of Florus who did his best to provoke trouble, set the flames alight in Caesarea and Jerusalem, where he raided the Temple treasury. This act caused a train of events ending in the siege of the Roman garrison, their subsequent agreed surrender and the treacherous massacre of the disarmed Roman soldiers by the Jewish mob. A parallel massacre of the Jewish inhabitants of Caesarea by their fellow Greek citizens occurred 'on the same day and at the same hour, as by the hand of Providence', so writes Josephus in Bel. Jud. 2.288 (Thackeray 1928:8-9). The last straw was the cessation of the daily sacrifice for Rome, an action which Josephus says 'laid the foundation of the war' (Bel. Jud. 2.409) (Thackeray 1928:47). This scholar points out that Laqueur, besides suggesting some fanciful theories about the life history of Josephus, questions the reasons Josephus gives for writing Bel. Jud. Laqueur argues that Josephus' work was, firstly, designed to be a propaganda tool with a decidedly pro-Roman and Flavian bias, and secondly, to be a cover-up to justify his moral insufficiencies displayed during the Jewish War.

Thackeray concedes the first supposition by observing that 'the glamour of Imperial Rome, and the adulation of his patrons have overcoloured the picture, detracting from the historian's impartiality and on occasion raising serious doubts as to his veracity' (Thackeray 1928:47). That Josephus shows pro-Roman bias is not disputed (but for a

different reason as put forward by Laqueur). Josephus well knows that the Jewish attempts to take on the might of Rome will eventually fail; thus his persistent call to the defenders of Jerusalem to give up the unequal struggle.

What is surprising is that although Thackeray strongly underlines Josephus' bias towards Rome, he nevertheless accepts Josephus' reasons as valid ones that led up to the outbreak of the Jewish War.

One can already perceive a change in attitude in scholarly research from the 'classical' view, a departure from the exercise of literary criticisms and the strongly moralising attitudes of the 19th century, towards an acceptance of Josephus' comments at face value set in the Greco-Roman literary conventions of his day.

The 'classical' Jewish conception of Josephus with its contempt for the 'traitor' and the 'apostate' has influenced the attitude not only towards the detested person, but also to his writings. Throughout these works, those who adopt this attitude detect self-righteousness, alibis, flattery, distortions and deceit. In so doing, the road to a rewarding use of Josephus' vast material has been effectively blocked. Hatred and condemnation are not true guides to knowledge (Bilde 1988:205).

In Shaye Cohen's book, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, he asserts that the war was an unfortunate result of the misdirected actions of a few individuals on both sides. On the Jewish side, the war was begun by small groups of mad fanatics whereas the aristocrats, King Agrippa the Second and the three philosophies (religious sects) opposed them. The fanatics (terrorists) intimidated the population and the leaders; so these terrorists must bear responsibility for the war and its catastrophic outcome. These fanatics had no connection with any of the 'official' representatives of Judaism, i.e. the high priests, King Agrippa and the three philosophies.

On the Roman side, a few corrupt and incompetent procurators began the war. The official Roman government had no desire to fight the Jews – even Titus, the commanding general offered the Jews opportunities to surrender, which were rejected. Titus decided not to burn the Temple, but an irresponsible soldier started the destructive fire, which Titus tried in vain to extinguish. In the Biblical manner, God

was using a foreign power to purify His Temple and to chastise His people, thus neither the Romans nor the Jews were responsible for this disastrous turn in Roman-Jewish relations (Cohen 1979:234-235).

Cohen takes the view that Josephus developed from being a pro-Roman apologist to a religious nationalist in the period AD 66-90. This change of heart and mind reminds Bilde of a similar thesis propounded by Laqueur which cannot be substantiated on the basis of Josephus' works. Cohen believes that in *Bel. Jud.*, Josephus attempts after the Jewish War to build a new relationship between the Jews and the Romans. Bilde is surprised that Cohen should take so little interest in Josephus' real political and theological points of view about which much has been written in recent years based on Josephus' clear statements. Nevertheless one must acknowledge Cohen's great contribution to recent research. Bilde questions however, if any progress has really been made (Bilde 1988:139).

Schalit wrote an article in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* in 1971 entitled 'Evaluation of Josephus'. What he has to say epitomizes the 'classical' view taken by many scholars up to and beyond the writings and the revised views of authors like Thackeray on Josephus. As a Jew, at worst, Josephus is a traitor and deserter from his people in dire distress to the Romans, and acting as an apologist of the Romans, deliberately distorting the facts. At best, he acted as a Pharisee in the highest interests of his people by submitting in sordid manner to the Romans.

Schalit praises Josephus' literary talent but holds that this proved his downfall as a historian as Josephus fails to meet the demands of historiography. He grudgingly admits that Josephus' work is the only extant source of the history of the Second Temple (Schalit 1971:262-236). Consequently, it must be clear that any reason, whether of political or religious nature, that Josephus may offer for the Jewish War is suspect as Josephus' impartiality and veracity are seriously questioned by scholars of a mindset similar to Schalit's.

According to Moehring, Schalit does not allow Josephus to be heard, because Schalit has already taken his stand, knows what is good and what is bad and is in possession of the complete historical picture (Moehring 1984:917-940). To be fair, Schalit who

started publishing in 1933 and ending with a research anthology in 1973, admits that ‘the final judgment on Josephus is by no means pronounced’.

Moehring has some scathing remarks to make after critically reviewing three test passages of Schalit’s work. ‘What we do learn, however is something about the thinking of a contemporary Israeli scholar about how the Jews should have reacted. His reconstruction of the events is a product of his imagination. We thus witness the strange process of seeing an extensive source rejected for the benefit of some exceedingly vague, late and tendentious materials. Schalit deprives himself of a very important source for the knowledge of how a prominent Jew of the 1st century AD, placed in a responsible position during the war of AD 66-70, understood the war, and through his understanding, the position of the Jewish people in the Roman world’ (Moehring 1984:943-944).

According to Louis Feldman (1987), Villalba’s book *The Historical Method of Josephus* does not come up to the expectations mentioned in the preface, viz. that it will be a study of the indebtedness to Classical and Hellenistic historians displayed in Josephus’ practice of historiography, especially where Josephus deals with Old Testament history and characters in his *opus Antiquities*. Feldman concedes that Villalba has however made a much-needed beginning towards an understanding of Josephus’ conception of historiography, but calls for an analytical study of Josephus against his predecessors.

Be that as it may, Villalba does make a valuable contribution regarding the concept of historical causes as conceived by Josephus. Villalba proceeds to examine firstly, the aetiological question on the human plane, and secondly, the aetiological issue on the transcendent plane.

He gives 2 reasons, from the point of view of human action and enterprise, for the fall of Jerusalem, viz. the worsening internal situation of the Roman Empire especially AD 69, the year of the 4 emperors, in which Vespasian withdrew from active campaigning against the Jews to await new instructions from the newly acclaimed Emperor. This political instability led to the impetuous optimism of the Jewish revolutionary parties who took advantage of the general political upheaval for

insurrection (Bel. Jud. Pref. 4-5). Another fundamental cause (Greek αιτια) was the rejection by the Jews of anything Roman (Villalba 1986:17).

On the transcendent level, Villalba points out that Josephus has a basic thesis that it was God Himself Who vowed the downfall of Jerusalem (Bel. Jud. 5.9,559; Bel. Jud. 6.371,441), that this same God had for a long time destined the city to the flames (Bel. Jud. 6.250), and that there was also a premonition of the city's demise which the Jews had not understood (Bel. Jud. 6.310-315).

One must admit that Villalba has completed a huge task analysing the meaning and use of Greek words related to the concept of historical cause (Rengstorff's most comprehensive concordance of Greek words occurring in Josephus' works proving to be an invaluable tool), and grouping the data into words associated with cause on the human and transcendent planes.

Having progressed so far in his dissection, one feels that he could have tied up all the loose ends by putting forward a hypothesis explaining some of the reasons that Josephus gives for the Jewish War. Admittedly this is not the prime aim (as stated in his introduction) but nevertheless a vast volume of data is now available for a Classical Greek scholar to put together a very useful paper on the subject of the causes of the Jewish War as perceived by Josephus.

Rajak wrote the book entitled *Josephus: The Historian and his Society* in 1983. She argues that Josephus was a product of his time - loyal to Judaism and also learned in elements of Greek culture. His educational, social and religious background shaped his world outlook. Yet he remains throughout his life, whether in Judaea or Rome, a Jew loyal to his faith and protagonist of his people.

With regard to the Jewish War, Rajak contends that Josephus is a reliable and honest historian. He is not a propagandist for the Romans or the Flavian house but takes a balanced and unbiased view of the war. His work Bel. Jud. is written in the historiographical style of his day following the accepted conventions. With this in mind Josephus represents the war as a 'revolution' within a rebellion, an internal social and political struggle that took place within the framework of an uprising

against a foreign power. Στασις (civil dissension) between the rebel war parties, between the established internal order and the revolutionaries, is repeatedly emphasized by Josephus as an important reason that led to the eventual destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem by the Romans (Alexander 1985:116-117; Rajak 1983:91-94; Bel. Jud. Pref. 10).

Rajak has been criticized that she has applied the theories of modern concepts of the anatomy of revolution into the Jewish War. She has also attempted to force-fit modern economic theories into ancient socio-economic conditions. (Rajak 1983:119-126). Moehring warned against this approach. It had perhaps been better if she had explored socio-economic conditions in 1st century AD Judaea in the context of kinship and client relationships, in which social and economic elements were embedded in the ancient world.

In Lester Grabbe's book *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (Vol. 2), six causes for the Jewish War are listed, some of which are often mentioned in the literature. These are

- 1) The desire for independence under a royal Jewish dynasty.
- 2) Misrule by incompetent Roman procurators insensitive to the affairs and ethos of the Jewish nation and people.
- 3) Religious ideology and traditions of the Jews motivated and drove the rebel leaders of the Jewish people to desperate fanatical acts of heroism and sacrifice in the expectation of deliverance by God of His chosen people from the subjugation and bondage to the Romans.
- 4) Bad relations between Greeks and Jews in the Hellenised city-states within and without the borders of Judaea led to internecine bloodshed.
- 5) The poor moral and political leadership given to the nation by the wealthy priestly elite who acted as puppets of the Romans and put their own interests above that of the nation.
- 6) Socio-economic reasons caused by an oppressive tax burden and rapacity of the wealthy upper class and priests.

Grabbe lays great emphasis on the last-named reason spelling out how taxes were levied across sales, imported goods, poll tax, property, possessions, and agricultural produce. Incoming revenue in the form of Temple tax on all the Jews in Judaea and in

the Diaspora built up enormous reserves kept in the Temple treasury. From here bond loans would be issued to those already staggering under an excessive tax load, with the resultant pressure to repay interest and arrears. No wonder the mob burnt down the building in Jerusalem housing the debt records (Bel. Jud. 2.427).

A good case is made out by Grabbe, reminding one of Rajak's postulation concerning socio-economic causes being a contributory reason for the revolt against Rome and her puppet appointees, the high priests. He correctly points out that it is very difficult to assess the actual economic conditions of Judaea in the 1st Century AD and that it is tempting to build an attractive hypothesis on assumptions (Grabbe 1992:412-418).

The last author I will look at is Bilde who wrote an article entitled 'The Causes of the Jewish War according to Josephus' in 1979. This thorough, meticulous and perspicacious scholar has listed a number of reasons for the war given by Josephus in his Bel. Jud. Bilde proceeds to analyse them in an attempt to discover to which reason(s) Josephus attaches the greatest importance. Throughout Josephus' works it is clear that these causes are a matter of great importance to him as he returns to this issue repeatedly.

Bilde lists reasons which triggered off the revolt viz.,

- a) The disturbances at Caesarea (Bel. Jud. 2.284, and Ant. 20.184).
- b) Florus' appropriation of 17 talents of Temple money (Bel. Jud. 2.293 and 331).
- c) The interruption of the daily sacrifice for the Emperor in Jerusalem (Bel. Jud. 2.409-410).

And those which accelerated the rebellion, viz.,

- d) The butchering of the Roman garrison in Herod's palace (Bel. Jud. 2.454-456).
- e) Retaliatory mutual massacres of Jews and non-Jews in Hellenistic cities in Palestine (Bel. Jud. 2.457).
- f) The retreat and defeat of Cestius Gallus as a fateful cause for future hostilities (Bel. Jud. 2.531-532).

He then tries to discover if there were any 'fundamental' causes which lay behind the outburst of open war in AD 66.

- g) Were the Jewish rebels of the Fourth Philosophy and its various factions responsible?
- h) Could the blame be laid at the door of the Roman administration in Judaea?
- i) Was the cause an ethnic one - the struggle of the Jews against Roman auxiliaries drawn from the Jews' traditional enemies from the countries that surrounded them?

All of these complex reasons are mentioned by Josephus, which he and many subsequent historians have wrestled over. Bilde points out that Josephus reports tangible events (people and dates) but finds it difficult to give a reason that led to the explosive situation of May/June AD 66. Josephus does not look for socio-economic reasons as modern historians do, but turns to theological reflection. In the tradition of the Old Testament this priest looked for the final reason for the war in the general attitude of the Jewish people and its leaders, e.g. the disunity of the Jewish people by transgressions of the Torah as exemplified in the acts of the Fourth Philosophy and other 'innovations' (Bilde 1979:197-198).

It is significant to note that in *Antiquities* (4.312-314) Josephus regularly underlines the connection between the destiny of the Jewish people and their observance of the Law, a warning spelled out in the Torah particularly Deuteronomy. *Bel. Jud.* is worked out, maintains Bilde, along a similar line. Other scholars like Lindner (1972:43-44 and 134-135) attempt to understand Josephus' interpretation of the Jewish War on a background of Biblical historiography. Blenkinsopp (1974:241ff) adopts a similar view.

To sum up. Scholars of the school which holds to the 'classical' view, i.e. that Josephus is a traitor to his people, that he is an altogether pro-Roman sycophant feathering his own nest, that neither he nor his work can be trusted, underrate the value of a work such as *Bel. Jud.* and sadly reject Josephus' work as an important source of knowledge about the Jewish War. Therefore any reason whether political or religious that Josephus offers for the causes of the war are dismissed. Schalit exemplifies this attitude towards Josephus.

Other scholars although a little tainted by the ‘classical’ view, have shown a readiness to accept Josephus’ reasons for the war. Thackeray typifies this new emergent development. It has been pointed out that he accepts verifiable historical reasons involving the actions reported in Bel. Jud. of groups of Jewish extremists intent on overthrowing the domination of Rome. A scholar like Cohen goes a step further and believes that the blame for the war comes from both Jewish and Roman sides. But he also sees the hand of God using the Romans as an instrument in His hand to punish and to purify the Jews because they have departed from His laws.

Villalba advances still further. He adds to the list of historical reasons for the war given by preceding scholars, and treats at length on the concept of historical causes. There are both human and transcendent elements to be considered, which is how Josephus believes historical events occur.

Grabbe extracts from the current literature dealing with Josephus and the Jewish War and lists verifiable historical reasons for the Jewish War. He adds another, one which Rajak puts forward, viz. a socio-economic one. To interpolate modern 20th century concepts of economics into the world of the 1st century is fraught with dangers and pitfalls. Despite much available economic data about the Ancient Near East we should always bear in mind that we are dealing with an agrarian society which functioned quite differently to ours. Certainly Josephus does not allude to ‘socio-economic’ reasons, but is well aware of the disparity between the rich and the poor, the crippling tax burdens, and the constant struggle to repay debts.

Finally, a careful consideration of the reasons for the Jewish War given by modern scholars specialising in the study of Josephus leads one to conclude that modern scholarship tends to take Josephus at face value and to accept him as a reliable and truthful historian. Josephus faithfully reports the reasons for the war attributed to the acts of men. Villalba sums it up well: ‘Josephus points out that his historical *opus* is exact, correct, detailed, real, faithful, scrupulous, meticulous; that it presents the real state of affairs, in short, what he is saying is the truth’ (Villalba 1984:257).

Some of the reasons given by Josephus have a supernatural connotation. He writes in Antiquities as follows ‘In general, one may learn from this history (of the Jewish

people) that those that follow the will of God, and do not venture to transgress well-established laws, prosper far beyond the bounds of belief, and happiness is accorded them on the part of God as reward' (Ant. Pref. 14). Naturally those who transgress these laws of God come to a sorry end. If the Jews broke the laws of God, then they must take the consequences. And this rule applied to them also during the Jewish War. Josephus makes this very clear in Bel. Jud.

Authors and experts on Josephus give a number of reasons for the war, which are in character political, social or economic. One gets the impression that some of these authors studiously avoid considering the possibility that there may well exist what one may call 'religious' reasons. One of the exceptions is Bilde who devotes ten pages in his book *Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome* published in 1988 to a consideration on the theology of Josephus. Scholars like Cohen and Villalba pay attention to supernatural, transcendent causes for the war. In his account of the war, Josephus regularly refers to the intervention of Providence in the affairs of mankind (there are over 30 references in Bel. Jud. alone); the Greek historiographers use similar terms of Fortune and Fate. It should not be surprising to find such religious reasons in the works of Josephus as he is after all a priest, well versed in the history, customs, laws and religion of the Jews. Of all the nations of the East, the Jews were most influenced and governed by religious laws covering every aspect of their culture.

1.5 APPROACH

One will never fully understand Josephus the man, his family, his vocation, his literary works, the reasons he gives for the Jewish War, unless he is viewed in the framework of Palestinian Judaism of the 1st century AD. Although a short description of Jewish culture has already been given under 1.2.4, it would be profitable therefore to reconsider what Jewish culture was like in the 1st century AD.

As in any Ancient Near East culture, and the Jewish one was no exception, the various elements that made up a culture were inter-related and reacted with one another. A few examples will illustrate this statement. When a society enjoyed economic prosperity through well thought out policies by its rulers, then other elements such as art, literature, technology and social services all benefited. When this occurs the religious component is often neglected. If political leaders embark on a course of

military campaigns that end in disaster, then loss of life and reduction in manpower affect the economics of an agrarian society and bring hardship to many families dependent on agricultural activity to keep body and soul together.

Economics and religion were embedded in kinship and client relationships in Ancient Near Eastern cultures. There was no such thing as separation of secular and religious affairs, as the modern world knows it. Religion played a very important role in the cultures of the Ancient Near East, but particularly so in Palestinian Judaism of the 1st century AD. Josephus' worldview was mainly based on and formed by the Torah, the main pillar of Judaism. The Torah covered every aspect of life; its laws regulated nearly every element of culture. Personal, family, legal, civil, economics, social and religious matters of worship, ritual and ceremony were all affected. Also the modern concept of a separate 'personal' religion was meaningless to the Jew. The Jew identified with the broad context of his familial relationship, his kinship, his ethnicity, his history and his religion.

In order to analyse and discuss in depth the complex reasons for the Jewish War as given by Josephus and to point out how the main reasons, whether religious or political in nature, are inter-related, what effect the one has on the other, one has to evaluate these not only against the cultural framework of his time but discover some criteria on which Josephus based these reasons.

It would perhaps be useful to bear in mind that Josephus was a priest, steeped in the history, traditions and learning of the Torah, prophets and writings of the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible). This collection of religious writings would make a major contribution towards the formation of his worldview. Therefore the reasons he gives that led to the Jewish War would be strongly 'flavoured' by the collective writings of his nation. For example, he would believe in Divine Intervention as these had occurred regularly in the past history of his people. In his great work *Bel. Jud.*, there are indeed more than 30 references to Divine Intervention in the course of the war.

What criteria should form the basis of evaluating the reasons Josephus gives for the Jewish War? I propose that one should carefully examine pertinent fundamental Jewish writings available to Josephus in order to discover how the teachings of these

writings shaped his thinking, and formed the basis on which he gave reasons for the Jewish War.

In *Bel. Jud.*, one has a record of historical events and political reasons placed in a strong religious milieu. One has to understand (if possible) the mind set of Josephus brought up from infancy in a society governed by rules and regulations based on the Torah; a mind soaked in the history, traditions and religion of the Jewish people but not totally closed to other outside influences, especially Greek culture and philosophy. Bearing all this in mind, I will proceed to consider how Josephus interprets the events that occurred in the Jewish War against the background of past historical events that happened in the life of the Jewish nation. I will also suggest what religious reasons Josephus offers to explain why certain political events took place that had profound effects on the Jewish nation. I therefore propose to take a religio-historical approach. As the thesis unfolds it should become clear how the writer employs this methodology.

Finally, there is another task that must be completed. It is important to view the reasons for the war given by Josephus against the backdrop of the Jewish concept of history. (This concept has already been dealt with under 1.3.4.2) One has to consider how Josephus sees these multi-dimensional reasons as a part of the process of the unfolding of history.

CHAPTER 2

THE REASONS ACCORDING TO JOSEPHUS. ANALYSIS OF SPECIFIC STATEMENTS FROM THE JEWISH WAR

2.1 JOSEPHUS THE PRIEST

His ancestry and lineage have already been mentioned in the Introduction and in 1.2.1.

The office and functions of a priest were hereditary. Such a qualification did not necessarily permit any Jewish male to enter a career as a priest. Any physical defects disqualified a young male from entering the priesthood at the age of thirty (Leviticus 21:16-23). A priest belonged to one of twenty-four courses. A course could be described as a familial grouping whose ancestry could be traced back to Aaron and his sons.

Josephus belonged to the first course, 'of the chief family of this course'. Members of a course would perform priestly duties in the Temple located at Jerusalem. A roster would be drawn up involving all the priests belonging to the twenty-four courses (Vita.2).

Josephus states that as he was a priest by birth he translated his work *Antiquities of the Jews* out of their sacred books, with which he was very familiar. He also studied the philosophy (teachings) contained in these sacred writings, that is the Law, the Prophets and the Writings (c. Apion 1.38-40; 54).

2.1.1 His attitude to the Hebrew sacred writings

In c.Apion 1.42, he spells out his attitude very clearly. No one since the canonisation of the holy books has had the effrontery to add to, subtract from, or change the sacred text. The priests and people held the Hebrew Bible in great esteem and with awesome

respect. It was not to be tampered with; it was an unchangeable immutable GIVEN; it contained the rules given to the prophets who wrote down the original and earliest account of things as they learned them of God Himself by inspiration(c. Apion 1.37) Every Jew from birth accepted that the Hebrew Bible, the sacred books, incorporated Divine doctrines. Every Jew was also to observe and practise these teachings and if necessary, to be prepared to die for them.

In section 1.2.4, it was pointed out that the culture of 1st Century AD Judaism had a strong religious foundation based on the rules and regulations of the Torah, which affected every component of Jewish culture. Josephus would evaluate the actions and behaviour of members of the population consciously and unconsciously by the norms and standards of the teaching of the Hebrew Bible. For example, these sacred writings were the criteria, the measure, whereby he would judge and assess the actions of the rebel leaders and their followers during the Jewish War.

Unless one grasps this it becomes difficult to understand why he makes the statements he does concerning the causes and reasons for the Jewish War. He is steeped in the teachings of the Hebrew Bible; these constitute the benchmark that he uses throughout *Bel. Jud.*

2.1.2 Other Hebrew writings

Josephus does not accept all Jewish literature available to him in the 1st Century AD, i.e. apocryphal and pseudepigraphic books. He makes a very clear distinction between historical writings written by Jewish scholars since the time of Artaxerxes, the Persian monarch who reigned 404-358 BC, and the sacred writings. These historical writings he maintains ‘were not given the same authority by our forefathers’. He accepts the decisions made by his predecessors, and does not dare to question their rulings. The reasons the sages of old give are interesting. ‘There has not been an exact succession of prophets since that time (Artaxerxes)’ (c. Apion1: 41).

The role of the prophets, those men who wrote by inspiration of God, is highly regarded. More than that, their writings in the Hebrew Bible are authoritative and normative. Any other pseudo-prophetic writing is considered as non-inspired, and sidelined.

2.1.3 His learning and scholarship

Describing Josephus' personal history in section 1.2.1, reference was made to his education. One may be somewhat put off by Josephus' boastful assertion that at the age of 14, eminent high priests and leaders, sought his counsel on religious matters. One assumes that he was a child prodigy with a great understanding and comprehension of the Law and gifted with a remarkable memory (Vita 8-9). Such teenage prodigies do arise from time to time. If what Josephus states is a true reflection of his mental capacities, is it fair to criticize him as being boastful? His subsequent literary output certainly stamps him as a man of above normal intelligence.

He subsequently finished his studies of the Hebrew Bible and other disciplines by spending a few years getting to know the teachings of the main Jewish sects viz., the Essenes, Sadducees and Pharisees. In Bel. Jud. 2.119-166 Josephus writes about the teachings and practices of these three sects. Measured by the space he gives them, the Essenes impress him more than the other two sects.

Josephus holds up the Essenes as exemplary Jews. They lead a simple life by following a strict disciplined regimen (Mason 1992:134). Those who have tasted of their divine doctrines and philosophy find this sect very attractive (Bel. Jud. 2.158). In his long treatment of the Essenes Josephus reveals his familiarity with Greek teaching and beliefs on the destiny of the body and the soul (Bel. Jud. 2.154-157).

Having finished his studies of the above sects, Josephus informs his readers that he spent a considerable time with a religious recluse Banus who appears to have had the greatest influence over Josephus (Vita 11). However, he does not tell the readers exactly what he learnt.

2.1.4 Josephus' approach to the Holy Scriptures compared to that of the Pharisees

One detects in his writing that Josephus does not favourably regard the Pharisees. He has an axe to grind with them especially in the affair of pressure brought to bear on him by a deputation from Jerusalem consisting of three or four Pharisees sent from the

High Priests to depose him of his Galilean command (Bel. Jud. 2.626-631). One has already considered Josephus' attitude to the Hebrew sacred writings. What goes through one's mind is this - was his approach different to that of the scribes, the interpreters of the Torah, and the Pharisees?

From what one can gather, the Pharisees most likely relied heavily on the scribes (the legal experts) in building up a great portfolio of impressive learning on religious matters. Their aims were not exclusively political but religious, i.e. the rigorous fulfilment and defence of the Torah, both written and oral. They sought to influence the governing classes (high priests and elders) to bring them into line with those religious matters laid out in the written and handed down through the oral law. They sought a communal commitment to a strict, pure Jewish way of life, stressing holiness and observing laws of purity to be obeyed by every Jew (Saldarini 1988:277-297).

Neusner makes a thought-provoking comment: 'The Pharisees were a small group within Palestinian Judaism. They claimed the right to rule over all the Jews by virtue of their possessing the oral Law of Moses. They referred to a list of masters extending back to Moses. In their own setting however, the Pharisees were much like any other Hellenistic philosophical school or sect' (Neusner 1973:11).

The possession of the oral law built up by eminent rabbis over many years distinguished the Pharisees from other religious groups. To them the oral law was of greater importance than the written law. This impressive corpus of religious knowledge set them apart.

The Pharisees had a great reputation for learning and piety. Josephus makes it clear that the Pharisees sometimes used their standing for religious scrupulosity to effect their own political goals. And the means used were often questionable (*Vita* 290-291).

To sum up. Josephus' attitude to the sacred Jewish writings could be described as a conservative one; he took them at face value as binding on every Jew in matters of faith and behaviour; they were normative and authoritative. The Pharisees on the other hand paid lip service to the sacred writings but created an oral tradition based on their

interpretation of the written Law, which every Jew they taught, whether of low or high estate, should observe.

2.1.5 Josephus' prophetic gift

Josephus makes it quite clear that there has been no succession of prophets of the standing and calibre of those who wrote the 13 books of prophecy in the Hebrew Bible. The last of these occurred in the reign of Artaxerxes (404-358 BC) (*c. Apion*. 1.40-41).

He also informs us that he spent some time in his teenage years with the Essenes and it is therefore quite possible that he learnt the principles of Biblical interpretation from them (*Vita* 9-12). Furthermore, the Essenes were able to predict the future (*Bel. Jud.* 2.159), and particularly mentions two Essene prophets Manahem (*Ant.* 15.373-379) and Judas (*Bel. Jud.* 1.78-80).

In chapter 8 of Book 3 of *Bel. Jud.*, he describes his voluntary surrender to the tribune Nicanor, a friend of his, after the fall of Jotapata, his escape from his Jewish compatriots, who take their lives rather than surrender to the Romans, and some remarkable 'prophecies' concerning the fate of his nation and the elevation of the Flavian family as rulers of the Roman empire.

What one is lead to understand in this account is that Josephus was able to interpret the dreams he had at night about the destiny of his people and the future role of the Flavians, because he came from a hereditary family of priests acquainted with the prophecies in the sacred books, especially those found in the books written by Daniel. The unstable political times in which he lived, his intelligent assessment of the outcome of his nation taking on a super-power like Rome, his familiarity with the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible concerning coming world events revealed by God to the prophets, enabled him to make a 'shrewd conjecture about the interpretation of such dreams' (*Bel. Jud.* 3.350-354).

Nevertheless, like a prophet of old, he comes as a messenger of God to Vespasian and Titus regarding their future role as emperors. Josephus is so certain of their role as

rulers over land and sea and all mankind that he is prepared to be kept under strict custody (Bel. Jud. 3.400-402).

Josephus reminds one very much of the prophet Jeremiah (Bel. Jud. 5.392) who kept on urging the Jewish leaders to surrender to the Babylonians during the siege of Jerusalem in 587/6 BC as he believed that they would treat them (the losing side) well. The Hebrew Bible tells us that this was Jeremiah's experience when Neburazadan released him (Jeremiah 40:1-4).

Josephus would never regard himself in the same prophetic class but he fulfilled a similar role during the siege of Jerusalem in AD 70 pleading with the defenders to give up the unequal battle with the Romans.

In the next section I will analyse each reason that Josephus gives for the Jewish War in its historical context as well as in the context of Josephus' Judaistic religious beliefs and upbringing. Not only has one to do with historical events but also one must consider these and political reasons placed in a strong religious milieu. Here is a priest brought up from childhood in a society governed by rules and regulations based on the Torah; a brilliant mind soaked in the history, traditions and religion of the Jewish people. He cannot but help applying the teaching and norms of the Hebrew Bible, remembering the dramatic interventions of God in the past affairs of his people, as criteria in writing about and giving reasons for the Jewish War.

2.2 THE REASONS GIVEN BY JOSEPHUS FOR THE JEWISH WAR

The search for the reasons has been in the main confined to Bel. Jud. Many factors both covert and overt contributed to the gradually worsening position that finally erupted in open war between the Jews and the Romans. These underlying causes and reasons given by Josephus will be listed *seriatim*:

- i) The cause of the riots after King Herod's death and the mishandling thereof by Archelaus, his successor (Bel. Jud. 2.5-7).

- ii) The census conducted by Quirinius after the dismissal of Archelaus in AD 6 (Bel. Jud. 2.118; also Ant. 18.1-10; 23-25). The reaction of Judas the Galilean and Sadduc, founders of the Fourth Philosophy, to this census, 'laid the foundation of our future miseries' (Ant. 18.9).
- iii) Roman insensitiveness to the Jewish religious practices and standards. For example, Pilate had ensigns sent into Jerusalem (Bel. Jud. 2.169-174); Caligula's attempt to place his statue in the Temple in Jerusalem (Bel. Jud. 2.195-198); Florus raids the Temple treasury (Bel. Jud. 2.277-332).
- iv) King Agrippa's speech to the Jewish leaders and rebels in Jerusalem in AD 66 (Bel. Jud. 2.350-394). Josephus uses this speech to introduce religious reasons, e.g., the Jews had recourse to divine assistance, but this is unlikely to happen as God was already on the side of the Romans; the Jews have transgressed God's laws by fighting on the Sabbath.
- v) The rejection of the daily sacrifices to the Roman princes 'was the true beginning of our war with the Romans'. The Romans would be 'irritated' thereby (Bel. Jud. 2.409-410; 404).
- vi) The treacherous slaughter of the disarmed Roman soldiers (the garrison at Jerusalem) on the Sabbath by Eleazar, the governor of the Temple. 'The city was polluted all over with abominations' (Bel. Jud. 2.454-456).
- vii) The simultaneous outbreak of anti-Semitism in Caesarea followed by riots in Syria and Alexandria after the Jews ran amuck in Galilee. Josephus sees the simultaneous riot in Caesarea as the hand of providence (Bel. Jud.2.457).
- viii) The slaughter of the Roman garrison at Masada by the Sicarii under Eleazar the son of Judas the Galilean (Bel. Jud.2.408).
- ix) The retreat and defeat of Cestius' troops as a fateful cause for future hostilities. A report to Nero about the disgraced 12th Legion at the hand of

Jewish guerrillas, made the emperor appoint Vespasian, his most experienced general, to teach the Jews a lesson (Bel. Jud. 2.531-532).

- x) Subversion and incitement to riot brought upon the destruction of a nation. ‘Sedition destroyed the city, and the Romans the sedition, which it was a much harder thing to do than destroy the walls; so that we may justly ascribe our misfortunes to our own people and the just vengeance taken on them to the Romans’ (Bel. Jud. 5.257).
- xi) From their sacred writings, the Jews believed that ‘one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth’. These Messianic aspirations encouraged the Jews to undertake and become involved in the war (Bel. Jud. 6.310-315).

Josephus uses Eleazar, the leader of the Sicarii at Masada, as his mouthpiece to put forward a number of religious reasons (Reasons xii) to xiv)).

- xii) The same (Jewish) God, who had of old taken the Jewish nation into his favour, had now condemned them to destruction (Bel. Jud. 7.327).
- xiii) ‘God was angry against us for our manifold sins, which we have been guilty of in a most insolent and extravagant manner with regard to our own countrymen’ (Bel. Jud. 7.332).
- xiv) A more powerful cause had intervened to give the Romans victory and made them appear to be conquerors over us (Bel. Jud. 7.359-360).

2.2.1 The analysis of each reason in its historical and religious context

Reason i): The cause of the riots after King Herod’s death and the mishandling thereof by Archelaus, his successor (Bel. Jud. 2.5-7)

Here one can detect the seeds of conflict between Jewish protesters and the authorities brought to a head. The pot has been simmering; it now boils over!

At the end of his life King Herod puts down a religious protest launched by two learned rabbis who exhorted their followers to cut down the Roman eagles mounted above the temple gates. Herod burns the two rabbis and the young men caught in the act, to death. The other followers are sentenced to death (Bel. Jud. 1.654-655).

The reason for the protest is basically religious in nature and contrary to the laws of Judaea. The Torah clearly taught that images were not to be tolerated as per the second commandment (Exodus 2:4). However, it draws the attention of a terminally ill despot, who reads into this protest an attack on his authority as king (Bel. Jud. 1.649-650).

Herod accuses the culprits as temple robbers, who pleaded the religious law for some ulterior purpose, and demanded their execution for sacrilege. One is aware that Herod acted abnormally towards the end of his life, was extremely wary of his family as he suspected plots being hatched to murder him, so his reaction to the protest is in keeping with his unstable and suspicious nature. This Romanised half Jewish monarch would not tolerate any affront to symbols of Roman authority. After all the Roman Caesar had placed him in authority over Judaea; so one can understand why he reacted so barbarically against the religious protest: the Jews were using religion to start trouble and sedition.

Josephus reports the events in Jerusalem after the mourning period for king Herod and the inevitable funeral feast provided by Archelaus, the nominated successor to Herod, are over. Archelaus proceeds to the Temple to offer sacrifices, is acclaimed by the crowd, and promises to show himself kinder to them than did his father. Thereupon the crowd tested his sincerity by making large demands, which included tax relief, abolition of purchase tax and release of prisoners.

On the same day a group of revolutionary men bewailed those who had lost their lives in the golden eagle affair, and demanded that Herod's favourites should be brought to book and punished, and that the high priest who he had appointed, be removed. A large crowd gathers at the temple (it was the eve of the feast of unleavened bread) and Archelaus, fearing that the sedition would spread, sends military men and troops to

dissuade them to stop the demonstration. These approaches do not succeed. He finally decides to use force to disperse the vast crowd (the troops kill 3000 people) and commands the people to disperse to their homes. What starts as a religious protest, leads to a riot, which troops break up with great loss of life. *En passant*, a pattern repeated throughout history up to our day and age!

To Josephus, what is a legitimate religious reason for protest ends in the tragic loss of life caused by the ruling authorities. King Herod's brutal treatment of the religious demonstrators and the subsequent handling of a similar situation by Archelaus follow a similar pattern. These two events demonstrate that a very unhappy situation existed in Judaea between sovereign and subjects, which would eventually blow up into open rebellion.

I have often wondered why Josephus devoted almost a fifth of Bel. Jud. recording the deeds and misdeeds of the family of Herod. The close ties of the ruling house of Herod as client kings and princelings of Rome, estranged the religious zealots and bigots from the moderate, wealthy Jewish aristocracy prepared to cooperate with the Herodians.

In the two incidents discussed above one believes that the riots were an eruption against the tyranny of the ruling Herodian family. This dynasty never captured the hearts and minds of the Jews, who longed for the days when the Hasmonaeans were prepared to take on the world powers intent on eliminating their religion. They were heroes of the Jewish nation who fought for the preservation of their religious heritage. How different the Herods, who did everything in their power to preserve their own skins! The seeds of discontent were sown in the reign of the Herods.

Reason ii): The census of Quirinius in AD 6

The historical background is briefly as follows. After the dismissal of Archelaus requested by an official Jewish delegation to Rome protesting against his misadministration, the Romans turn his ethnarchy into a Roman province. The first procurator Coponius is appointed. Quirinius, a Roman Senator and ex-consul, is authorized to conduct a census of the newly acquired land. This exercise evokes great

dissatisfaction and reaction from two Jewish religious leaders, Judas the Galilean and Sadduc, a Pharisee (Bel. Jud. 2.118 and Ant. 18.1-10). But most Jews complied with the census (co-operated in supplying the information required by Quirinius) on the advice of the High Priest. Josephus comments: 'These men - founders of the Fourth Philosophy - laid the foundation for our future miseries' (Ant. 18.9). There was a religious side to this sect: 'They say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord; that they have an inviolable attachment to liberty; they will call no man Lord. They will die for their beliefs' (Ant. 18.23).

Judas' direct descendant, Eleazar, the defender of Masada, states clearly what the religious motives are of their group (Sicarii). 'Since we long ago...resolved never to be servants of the Romans, nor to any other than to God himself, who alone is the true and just Lord of mankind' (Bel. Jud. 7.323).

A reaction to a political, governmental matter of administration, a census, a property evaluation for purposes of taxation, is based on certain religious concepts taught by Judas and Sadduc. How did they come by these teachings? Were these principles found in the Hebrew Bible? What did the Hebrew Bible teach regarding the attitude of the Jew to those in authority? We know what advice a converted Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, gave to a Christian congregation in Rome. 'Every one must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves' (Romans 13:1-2). Did the Hebrew Bible teach similarly? What was Josephus' position as a Jew to those in authority, especially living under pagan (Roman) government?

With longer time to reflect on the causes of the Jewish War, Josephus writes 20 years later: 'These men (founders of the Fourth Philosophy) laid the foundations of our future miseries' (Ant. 18.9). This observation must be contrasted with another statement made in Bel. Jud. 2.409-410 that the rejection of the daily sacrifice for the Roman rulers 'was the true beginning of our war with the Romans'. The underlying root cause started way back in AD 6, which ultimately erupted into open conflict in

AD 66-70. Therefore it is important to examine why a small sect of Jewish extremists reacted so violently to the Roman census.

To answer the questions posed in the above paragraph one must go back into the history of the Jewish nation as recorded in the Hebrew Bible. Josephus would be well acquainted with events in the past and he would therefore understand the legitimacy of the religious objections given by Judas the Galilean and Sadduc the Pharisee.

Josephus would recall how a heathen king of Egypt commanded that the midwives should kill every male Jewish baby at birth. These women refused to murder the newborn children, so the life of the great Moses was spared. Years later three young nobles refused to bow to a tall image of a heathen king of Babylon and they were miraculously delivered from certain death. A little later, a senior state official, Daniel, refuses to change his praying habits in the face of a decree that everyone should only do obeisance to a pagan Persian despot. He too escapes death.

It is conceivable that Josephus would sanction civil disobedience to a royal command that ran contrary to the Law, the Torah, but at the same time he would not support any group, religious or not, opposing normal administrative matters, e.g. a census or taxation, which were functions of any government, Roman or not.

Josephus sees no religious ground for the rebellion of Judas and Sadduc. The reasons given are cover-ups, smokescreens, which he does not buy. But he recognizes that these rebellious bigots attracted those who were only too willing to indulge in nefarious activities for the sake of a pseudo-religious cause.

If these rebels really meant that God was their only ruler and Lord, to be servants to no other than God Himself, then their wicked actions against their fellow men and the appointed authorities, Roman and Jewish, was a sham.

Their attitude to authority was contrary to what was taught in the Hebrew Bible, which could be summed up in the words of the Protestant pastors contained in a solemn document of loyalty to Louis XV of France informing him that their

injunction to their flocks always would be 'Fear God and honour the King' (Moule 1902:353).

Moore has this to say: 'If rulers command their subjects to do what is forbidden by their religion or forbid them to do what it requires, they are not to be obeyed - God is to be obeyed rather than men - and may be resisted.' (Moore 1950:114-116). Josephus would assent to this principle.

Reason iii): Roman insensitiveness to Jewish religious practices and standards

Three incidents will be discussed.

Pilate and the ensigns he sent into Jerusalem (Bel. Jud. 2.169-174).

Emperor Caligula's attempt to place his statue in the Temple (Bel. Jud. 2.195-198).

The raid of Florus on the Temple treasury (Bel. Jud. 2.277-332).

Pilate, procurator from AD 26 to 36, appointed by Emperor Tiberius (AD 14-37), goes down in history as the governor of Judaea who sentenced Jesus of Nazareth to death. Some of his actions show a callous disregard for the religious practices of the Jews. It seems that he deliberately irritated the Jews in order to display Roman power in putting down the inevitable riots and demonstrations that followed. One incident reported by Josephus is the introduction by night of Roman army ensigns into the city of Jerusalem. On discovery the next morning the Jews demonstrate because 'their laws were trodden underfoot for these laws do not permit any sort of image to be brought into the city.'

One asks – why such a reaction from the Jews? One must realize that the ensigns of Roman legions displayed an effigy of the emperor. An effigy or image of anything in the heavens or on earth was taboo to the Jews. This was clearly stated in the words of the second commandment in the Decalogue.

An attempt is made by the Emperor Caligula, who imagines that he is a god, to place his statue in the Temple in Jerusalem. He orders Petronius, the legate in Syria, to execute his instruction. The Jews demonstrate and explain to Petronius that this imperial command was against their laws (a violation of the second commandment).

If Petronius proceeded, then they were prepared to die for this principle rather than admit an image of any god or man into their Temple or any area in Judaea. Petronius is astonished at the Jews' sense of religion and their courage to die *en masse* for their beliefs. The legate employs delaying tactics with the Emperor, who is very annoyed with Petronius and orders him to obey his instructions or else. Fortunately for Petronius the Emperor is assassinated, and the whole crisis is defused.

Josephus remarks that God concerned Himself with Caligula's commands. Petronius cannot understand the resistance of the Jews to Caligula's commands, because all subject nations of the Romans had placed images of the Emperor amongst their gods. To oppose the Emperor's wish was tantamount to revolution against the authority of the Emperor. Why this exception?

As this story unfolds there is evidence of divine intervention in the eventual solution of the problem. Surely Josephus would be reminded of statements concerning God's sovereignty from the Hebrew Bible e.g. in Moses' song of deliverance where he states: 'Who among the gods is like You, O LORD? Who is like You — majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?' (Exodus15: 11). Another passage reads, ' In the greatness of Your majesty, You threw down those who opposed You' (Exodus15: 7). This great God will not tolerate another god (for Caligula believed he was one) placed in His holy place in the Temple (Bel. Jud. 2.184).

This incident also underlines that the Jews are prepared to die for their religious beliefs. This quality (no fear of death) occurs consistently in Bel. Jud. There is a fanatical tendency to sacrifice their lives for an ingrafted religious truth.

In conclusion, a deluded half mad Roman Emperor shows up badly against Petronius the legate. The latter is a reasonable man prepared to listen to the Jews and even endangers his own life to run the risk 'with divine assistance' to persuade Caligula to change his mind (Bel. Jud. 2.200-201).

Of all the procurators Gessius Florus (AD 64-66) is the one Roman determined to provoke the Jews to rebel against Rome. He wants a war to occur. He hates the Jews.

He is greedy for money, invades the Temple and helps himself to 17 talents from the Temple coffers. He refuses to preserve law and order between the Greek and Jewish inhabitants in Caesarea so that the Jews come off second best.

Certain young Jewish noblemen mock him publicly by passing around a collection basket (because of Florus's love of money). He is furious and orders the high priest to bring these young men to book. However, the high priests refuse to betray the persons responsible for the prank. Florus retaliates by ordering his soldiers to run amuck, kill and plunder the houses in Jerusalem. More than 3000 people perish. Florus finally whips and crucifies a young Jew of the equestrian Roman order, something, Josephus reports, which has never happened before. One believes that Josephus is disgusted with the behaviour of this member of the Roman equestrian order. He can only express horror and disbelief that Florus should treat a fellow *equus* so brutally; but then the young man was a Jew. Anti-Semitism was a far stronger factor in Florus' book than association with a member of his order. The conventions of Josephus' time observed meaningful and important relationships between social equals. Peer solidarity and friendships (*philia*) kept relationships well oiled. Florus ignored all this (Avidov 1998:264-279).

The crowd demonstrate against this barbarity. The High Priests intervene and disperse the crowd, but a group of agitators ('the seditious') react against Florus and prevent him access to the Temple treasures by breaking down the cloisters adjoining the tower of Antonia. Florus then leaves for Caesarea. Florus reports to Cestius that the Jews are in revolt. The Jews plead for a change of procurator to be made as soon as possible.

Josephus portrays this Roman procurator as a barbaric anti-Semite, the very worst of the Romans doing his best to provoke the Jews to revolt. The High Priests and eminent men do their utmost to defuse the situation in Jerusalem and almost succeed except for opposition from a few hot heads who insist that Florus be replaced immediately.

Josephus neither supplies nor infers any religious reasons for Florus' barbaric behaviour. The actions of this Roman procurator were to trigger off a chain reaction, which finally blew up into open war in AD 66.

There is another factor that must be mentioned. The inhabitants of Judaea, as part of the Roman Empire were subject to certain social conventions that operated in the Greco-Roman society of the 1st century Mediterranean world. The Jews were aware that in Greco-Roman society honour was of greater importance for example than money, or professional position. It could not be bought by money or position. Two main characteristics dominated this system viz., the group was more important than the individual whose image in society was determined by what group he belonged to. To refuse to recognize another individual who laid claim to honour was to denigrate and to challenge that person. Secondly, there were also voluntary patron-client relationships that usually existed between two persons of unequal status whereby certain mutual interchanges of goods and services were enjoyed. The principle of reciprocity also functioned whereby gifts were exchanged. If there were no response on receipt of a gift this would lead to dishonour or shame.

In his treatment of the young Jewish *eques*, Florus brought shame upon himself according to the norms of the society of his day. One senses that Josephus, and the readers, would be outraged at Florus' behaviour.

Reason iv): The speech of king Agrippa II in Jerusalem

It was an accepted convention of ancient historiographers to use speeches as a vehicle to express their thoughts and opinions on subject(s) raised on important occasions. In his speech recorded in Bel. Jud. 2.350-394, a number of reasons are put forward by the King, which could embody Josephus' ideas clothed in words put into the mouth of the King, or contain the gist of what the King actually was reported to have spoken.

This king is Herod the Great's great-grandson. One would describe him as a moderate urging the Jews not to rebel against the Romans. We pick up in Acts 26:2-3 that this king is paid a compliment by the converted Pharisee Saul of Tarsus, who expressed his pleasure in presenting his case before the king 'because he is well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies'.

In his long speech addressed to those rebelling against Rome, he argues that the Jews must submit to Roman authority and that they should stop judging the Romans by the

behaviour of one barbaric procurator; that it is absurd to make war against the might of Rome - besides what nation would join forces with the Jews in this one - sided struggle?

He then gives a religious slant to his plea. Normally the Jews would have recourse to divine assistance, but this is already on the side of the Romans. Why? 'For it is impossible that so vast an empire should be settled without God's providence'.

He then mentions the observance of the Sabbath, a distinctive attribute of the Jewish people enshrined as the fourth commandment in the Decalogue. He reasons that if they conduct war operations on the Sabbath, then God will not assist them. Furthermore by strictly observing the Sabbath in times of war the enemy would attack them just as Pompey did in 64/63 BC. Either way, they cannot win! So the obvious thing to do is to avoid rebelling against the Romans. For military and religious reasons the Jews will be the losers!

One concludes that the idea that God had gone over to the Romans must have shattered the proud Jews! Furthermore, to fight the enemy who has no scruples attacking the Jews on the Sabbath will only cause God to distance Himself further from the Jews!

Reason v): The rejection of the daily sacrifices for the Roman princes 'was the true beginning of our war with the Romans'. The Romans would be 'irritated' thereby (Bel. Jud. 2.409-410; 404)

This action was instigated by the son of Ananias, Eleazar, a strong willed hothead who occupied the post of governor of the Temple. Those who opposed this drastic move maintained that the Romans would be annoyed, angry and displeased. A sacrifice for foreign rulers was an immemorial custom, and was doubtless accompanied by prayers for their welfare. The cessation of the daily offerings for the Emperor in AD 66 was, as Josephus observes, equivalent to a declaration of war by the Jews.

Josephus would recall an injunction by the prophet Jeremiah concerning the role of prayer for foreign, pagan rulers. To those Jews living in exile on Babylonian soil after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587/586 BC he writes: ‘Seek the welfare of the city whither I (God) have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the LORD for it, for in its welfare shall you have welfare’ (Jeremiah. 29:9). This attitude of the Jews to foreign rulers was surely known to the religious leaders of Jerusalem in AD 66! How then could they tolerate such a short-sighted act and not expect the Romans to retaliate?

However, the mood of the ‘innovators’, the seditious, the rebels, as well as those who ministered around the Temple, was anti-foreign. Xenophobia made them illogical, irrational and irreligious. Preparations for war were uppermost in their minds. No persuasion by experts on the customary receipt of sacrifices from foreign nations would move the rebels grouped around Eleazar in the Temple and the lower city, to alter their minds (Bel. Jud. 2.417).

Reason vi): The treacherous slaughter of the disarmed Roman soldiers (the garrison in Jerusalem) on the Sabbath by Eleazar, the governor of the Temple. (Bel. Jud. 2.454-456)

Another example of xenophobia occurs when a cohort of Roman soldiers is trapped in the tower of Antonia by a huge mob of rebels. The Roman garrison negotiates with Eleazar for safe conduct. He agrees provided the soldiers lay down their arms and armour. The Jews break this agreement by treacherously slaughtering every one of the disarmed soldiers. Josephus comments that this ghastly butchering occurred on the Sabbath, and hints that it was reasonable to expect some vengeance other than retaliations by the Romans. A hint that God would be displeased for such an atrocious act occurring on the Sabbath and would show His displeasure in one way or another (Bel. Jud. 2.454-456).

That the above incident was motivated by xenophobia is confirmed by permission given to King Agrippa’s horsemen to leave the city unmolested by the mob. These horsemen were auxiliaries recruited from areas surrounding Judaea. They had been sent in response to a cry for assistance from the High Priests to get the revolutionary

situation in the city under control, but had been driven off by aggressive armed mobs (Bel. Jud. 2.437).

In such a manner was the city polluted by such treacherous and heinous deeds that Josephus says that it was no wonder God fled out of His sanctuary (Bel. Jud. 5.412-413).

Reason vii): An outbreak of anti-Semitism at Caesarea. (Bel. Jud. 2.457)

At the same time as the Jewish rebels treacherously murdered a cohort of Roman soldiers in Jerusalem, so the people of Caesarea kill a vast number of Jews. Typically Florus the procurator does not lift a finger to stop the slaughter. It must have been a vicious one because the city was emptied of its Jewish population. Those who managed to flee were rounded up by Florus' troops and sent in chains to the galleys.

Josephus adds a significant statement. This awful loss of life made one believe that it happened by 'direction of Providence'. It was impossible for news of the event in Jerusalem to get through to Caesarea in time for the population of the latter town to indulge in such violent anti-Semitism. Was this coincidence? Josephus does not think so. He sees the retributory hand of God in the retaliatory action. The interconnected events in the two cities convince Josephus that God had intervened, and shown His great displeasure against the treacherous deed done to the disarmed Roman soldiers by the Jews on the Sabbath. Did not the Hebrew Scriptures contain the divine principle of 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'? (Exodus 21:24). The process of retribution still applied.

Reason viii): The slaughter of the Roman garrison at Masada

It is not at all clear from the text of Bel. Jud. who was responsible for the slaughter of the Roman garrison at Masada. Josephus mentions that it was those 'who were most anxious for war', i.e., the warmongers, who incited the people to go to war and who assaulted the fortress at Masada (Bel. Jud. 2.408).

Two eminent scholars, Smallwood (1981:294-295) and Schuerer (1979:598-606), put the pieces together and suggest that the following happened. Manahem and his freedom fighters took Masada by treachery at the beginning of the revolt in AD 66

(Bel. Jud. 2.433-434). They trace the origin of this group of rebels back to Judas the Galilean whose followers were the first to revolt against the Romans and who resolved never to be servants of the Romans, but only of God (Bel. Jud. 7.323). Now Josephus informs us that it was the Sicarii under Eleazar, a descendant of Judas the Galilean, who seized the fortress Masada (Bel. Jud. 7.252-262).

Whether Manahem or Eleazar, uncle and nephew, originally seized the fortress, obtained entrance by treachery, slaughtered the garrison, and then helped themselves to arms from the armoury, is really immaterial. What one regards as significant is the connection between the descendants of Judas the Galilean and the role that the Sicarii played in the period AD 6 (the year of the census conducted under the supervision of Quirinius) and the defence and fall of Masada in AD 74.

One would describe the Sicarii as a terrorist group using extreme violence to achieve political objectives. From the start they mounted a campaign of political assassinations against collaborators and kidnapped high officials in exchange for political prisoners.

All this was done under a cloak of religious piety. Josephus describes the extremes to which the Sicarii went. They combined against the Jews prepared to submit to Rome in every way treating them as enemies. Barbarous means were used against their kinsmen; in reality an excuse to cloak their barbarity and avarice (Bel. Jud. 7.256-260).

To call no man Lord, least of all the Romans and Jewish leaders prepared to work with the Roman authorities, and to employ godless tactics in the name of God (their only Lord) does not appeal to Josephus. The militant nationalists interpreted the demands and meaning of the Law in their own particular way. Josephus calls Judas the Galilean a sophist, able to justify the actions of his followers by an appeal to the Torah, which he would twist to fit in with his own 'philosophy' (Bel. Jud. 2.433).

To manipulate the Law to back up political aims and aspirations, to justify murders, robberies and destruction of property, was not on (Bel. Jud. 7.260). 'Impiety towards God, unjust actions towards their neighbours' would only lead to God's displeasure.

Would Jeremiah's lamentations in the Hebrew Bible concerning the downfall of Jerusalem in 587/6 BC not come to Josephus' mind? 'The LORD decreed the calamities to Jerusalem, The people are being punished for their sins' (Lamentations 3:37-39).

I will examine later in this chapter what reasons Eleazar gives that lead to the downfall of the Jewish nation in the war.

Reason ix): Retreat and defeat of the 12th Legion under Cestius as a 'fateful cause for future hostilities' (Bel. Jud. 2.531-532)

A report to Emperor Nero about the disgraced 12th Legion at the hand of Jewish guerrillas, made the Emperor appoint Vespasian, his most senior and experienced general, to teach the Jews a lesson (Bel. Jud. 3.1-8). The appointment of Vespasian to lead the campaign was due, writes Josephus, 'perhaps to some interposition of Providence, which was paving the way for Vespasian being himself emperor afterwards' (Bel. Jud. 3.6).

Roman pride would seek strong, retaliatory military action after the debacle of the 12th Legion retreating from Jerusalem. Vespasian was sure to introduce a full-scale war against the Jews. He proceeded to subdue Galilee and the adjacent areas and finally surrounded Jerusalem with 5 Legions of Roman troops (Bel. Jud. 6.237-238) plus the necessary assault weaponry to break down the city's protective, defensive walls.

Vespasian's campaign would bring Josephus and the Flavians into contact - first as opponents, and after Josephus' surrender at Jotapata, working closely together to expedite the progress of the war.

Titus, Vespasian's son, would be the general who finally directed his soldiers in the eventual destruction of the city and the Temple. The loss of the latter insists Josephus was not Titus' intention, but things got out of hand at grass roots level when a legionnaire contrary to orders threw a blazing torch into the Temple area.

Josephus also sees the role of this family as providential. He turns from the military aspects to another plane, which one could describe as the transcendent plane. A few examples will suffice.

Vespasian's commanders urge him to attack Jerusalem immediately while the three war parties behind the walls of Jerusalem are attacking each other. But the old general rejects this suggestion and replies, 'that God acts as a general of the Romans better than he can do' and is giving the Jews up to him. He advises the army to sit and wait until the Jews destroy each other in the internecine strife! (Bel. Jud. 4.366-371).

Josephus at the walls of Jerusalem, pleading with Jewish defendants to give up the unequal fight, makes an amazing statement. 'From every side Fortune had passed over to them (the Romans), and God, who handed dominion over from nation to nation around the world, abode now in Italy' (Bel. Jud. 5.367). On another later occasion, Josephus believes that God is using the Romans to purge the city and the Temple of its pollutions by fire (Bel. Jud. 6.110).

In retrospect, the retreat from Jerusalem by the 12th Legion under Cestius in AD 66 was part of an overall Divine plan to use a much greater and effective Roman force to clean up and destroy a city where the rebels had committed abominable crimes that cried out for Divine action. One would recall that the crime of the blood of men in the Temple environs of those using the Temple as a fortress cried out for action from God (Bel. Jud. 6.110). The city and the entire Temple were now full of dead bodies. 'Why do you pollute this holy house with the blood both of foreigners and Jews themselves?' (Bel. Jud. 6.126).

The matter of contact with dead bodies and defilement caused by blood shed in violence were very serious contraventions of the Law requiring atonement. Numbers 35:33-34 reads: 'Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it. Do not defile the land where you live and where I dwell, for I the LORD dwell among the Israelites'. 'I suppose,' writes Josephus, 'that owing to the aversion God had already for the city and the sanctuary, that he (Cestius) was hindered from putting an end to the war that very day' (Bel. Jud. 2.539).

Reason x): Subversion and incitement to riot brought about the destruction of the nation (Bel. Jud. 5.257)

Romans and Jews from the principate of Octavian (31 BC-14 AD) onwards were not normally unfriendly. They lived peaceably with one another; the Jews were given gracious concessions by the Emperors to avoid religious offence.

Josephus recognizes the positive role that Rome played in restoring and maintaining harmony between the nations of the vast empire, including that between Rome and the Jews. ‘The happiness that the whole human race now enjoys we measure by the fact that it is possible for people in every country to live and prosper while respecting their own traditions.... Is there any people or city or national community for which the protection of your empire and the power of the Romans have not come to the greatest of blessings?’ So spoke Nicolaus of Damascus before Marcus Agrippa (Ant. 16.36-39).

A few hot-headed leaders in Judaea on both sides made such waves that the whole nation of the Jews were dragged into the vortex of war, e.g., Florus not only hated the Jews and looked for every opportunity to provoke open war between the Jews and the Romans, but even supported the activities of Jewish groups of brigands (‘robbers’ as Josephus calls them). In Bel. Jud., Josephus repeatedly demonstrates the innocence of the vast majority of the Jews who were dragged into the war by the ‘seditious’ (Bel. ‘Jud. 2.264-265). The corrupt Roman officials and the criminal gangs among the Jews, e.g. the Sicarii, finally succeeded in driving the people of Judaea to such despair that they took to arms to drive out the Romans.

The role of the Sicarii has already been dealt with. Another group the Zealots, like them, also operated under the cloak of religion and committed the most awful misdeeds during the defence of Jerusalem. They made their headquarters in the Temple area, it being in an elevated position, easy to defend.

Josephus remarks that in the defence of Jerusalem the suffering and martyrdom of the Zealots were regarded as sacrifices for the Torah. Their zeal would surely hasten the end of the age and usher in the new age where God alone would rule. This eschatological outlook drove them to acts of lawlessness that reached unbelievable proportions, as if such acts would hasten the day of the LORD (Bel. Jud. 2.564; 4.160-161; 7.268-270).

Smallwood suggests that one of the tasks of the Zealots was to purge the city of Jerusalem of Gentile troops, which made them possibly responsible for the treacherous murder of disarmed Roman troops stationed there in AD 66 (Smallwood 1981:299). However one wonders if they would commit such a heinous crime on the Sabbath at this stage of the war. Such a deed would really tarnish their image as defenders of one of the basic tenets of the sacred laws of Moses.

Reason xi): Messianic aspirations encouraged the Jews to become involved in the war
Ever since the return of the Jews from exile in the 6th Century BC, the nation had looked forward to a coming king who would elevate the Jewish nation to a position of power and prosperity, and bring peace into the world.

The prophet Jeremiah foretold this before the first destruction of Jerusalem in 587/6 BC. He wrote these words: 'The days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a king who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land' (Jeremiah. 23:5). Also, 'in that day, declares the Lord Almighty, I will break the yoke off their necks and will tear off their bonds; No longer will foreigners enslave them. Instead, they will serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them' (Jeremiah. 30:8-9).

As a priest, Josephus would be familiar with these and many other similar prophecies regarding the coming Messiah, the Anointed One of God. He would, one believes, measure and evaluate events that occurred and the leaders who emerged during the period of rebellion against Rome, against the sacred writings and make his own conclusions whether rebel leaders Manahem and Simon b. Giora fulfilled these age-old prophecies. What does Josephus tell us about these men?

Manahem, a descendant of Judas the Galilean who incited rebellion against the Roman in the census in AD 6, had visions of grandeur in AD 66 when he and his followers returned from Masada over the leadership of the rebellion in Jerusalem. Josephus writes that he formed a bodyguard and returned in the state of a king to the city (Bel. Jud. 2.434). His party started a reign of barbaric cruelty including the murder of the high Priest Ananus. Manahem's arrogant attitude aroused opposition from another group who attack Manahem and his armed followers 'in the Temple area to which Manahem had advanced to worship in pompous manner and clothed in royal garments' (Bel. Jud. 2:444). This rebel leader is killed in the fights that ensued. One doubts whether Josephus would accept such a man as Messiah.

Another one is Simon b. Giora, who took control over an area south of Jerusalem, gathered a large trained armed group of dissidents around himself, entered Jerusalem and finally emerged as the leader of the rebels in the defence of Jerusalem. Unlike Manahem, he displays no dramatic posturing or pretension; nevertheless he rules supreme in the city during the siege. He is present at the end of the siege negotiating with Titus (Bel. Jud. 6.326), who calls on the Jews to throw down their arms and to surrender to the Romans (Bel. Jud. 6.350). Simon turns down the offer, and goes into hiding.

After the Temple was burnt down and levelled to its foundations, Simon lived in underground tunnels until their food supply ran out. He emerged dressed in a white robe covered in a purple cloak. Did he imagine himself a king? (Bel. Jud. 7.28-29). On orders from Titus he was kept for the coming triumph in Rome when he was executed as the Jewish leader of the war. On his fate, Josephus comments that Simon's wicked actions did not escape Divine anger, nor is justice too weak to punish offenders (Bel. Jud. 7.34). So God brought this man to be punished for the bitter and savage tyranny he exercised against his fellow Jews.

Manahem and Simon b. Giora would fall far short of the qualities of Messiah as revealed in the sacred writings. Did these 'kings' reign wisely and do what was just and right in the land? Did they uphold justice and righteousness as Isaiah predicted? (Isaiah 9:7). These two rebel leaders would not qualify as Messiahs, even pretender Messiahs, as they both failed the test on one important aspect—neither claim to be of

king David's family. Nowhere does Josephus mention this or attempt to trace their lineage and ancestry back to the royal house of David.

The opinions of well-respected scholars are also worth noting. Schalit recognizes Josephus as a loyal religious Jew who had a genuine faith in the Messiah (Schalit 1975: 268). De Jonge comments on a passage in *Bel. Jud.* 5.367, which he maintains, shows that according to Josephus, God had not given supremacy to Rome for eternity, but only for 'now'. At some time future time, supremacy would again be taken from Rome and given to Israel instead. (De Jonge 1974: 212) Also see *Ant.* 10.210,276.

Before I leave this subject, one must not forget that there existed a large corpus of Jewish writings, the Apocrypha, which taught a different concept of Messiah as that found in the Hebrew Bible. The Messianic aspirations of the Jews of the 1st Century AD would one believes be very strongly influenced by these. A short summary will reveal how different these ideas were from those found in the sacred writings.

Before Messiah came there would be a time of terrible tribulation, the birth pangs of a new age. Every conceivable terror would burst upon the world and into this chaos would come the prophet Elijah, the forerunner and herald of the Messiah. When Messiah came the nations of the world would unite and oppose Messiah, who would then totally destroy these world powers. After this victory, Jerusalem would be renovated and the Jews living in the Diaspora would return to the New Jerusalem, which would become the centre of the world. A new age of peace and goodness would be ushered in which would last forever¹.

Josephus would realize that the Messianic expectations of his people during the Jewish war were still afar off in time. Yes, the horrors and privations of civil war and military confrontation against the Romans were real enough—but why did Elijah delay his advent? One gets the impression that the rebel leaders and their evil followers deliberately tried to hasten the coming of Messiah by committing the most atrocious crimes against their fellow countrymen, and by desecrating what was held to be holy and reserved for the worship of God. Such wickedness, says Josephus, did not

1 Barclay 1975:193-199 quotes extracts from the following writings: 2 Baruch, 4 Ezra, Enoch, Sibylline Oracles, Psalms of Solomon, and the Assumption of Moses.

escape Divine anger (Bel. Jud. 7.34-6), and resulted in punishment, death and exile for the Jews.

An oracle existed which predicted, 'one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth'. An oracle was not necessarily written down but would be remembered and passed down from one generation to another. Josephus remarks that this oracle gave the Jews Messianic aspirations, but Josephus believes that this referred to the acclamation of Vespasian on Jewish soil (Caesarea) by his legions in AD 69 (Bel. Jud. 6.310-315). The rebel leaders interpreted this prediction to suit their own agenda.

Before I discuss the reasons for the war as laid out in reasons xii to xiv, I would like to insert a pertinent preface.

As the end of the lives of the Jewish defenders of Masada draws near, Eleazar the leader of the Sicarii holding the fortress against the Romans, puts forward a number of reasons why the war occurred. He makes two speeches, one a short (Bel. Jud. 7.323-336), and the other a long one (Bel. Jud. 7.341-388). In the former, he suggests it were better to die as freemen (not under Roman subjugation); in the latter, he encourages the waverers, unprepared to take their lives (and those of their wives and children) to consider the benefits the soul enjoys leaving the confines of the body placed in a wicked world, for glorious transfer into the presence of the immortals beyond the grave. His rhetoric is effective. He persuades them to indulge in mass murder and suicide.

The reasons he gives could be described as being religious in nature. Scholars query whether Eleazar actually spoke these words (they argue that there were no survivors as all the men ended their lives by mass suicide). Others maintain that Josephus is merely using Eleazar as his mouthpiece (a common device used by ancient historiographers). In the account of the events at Masada, Josephus reports that a group of women and five children survived being killed by hiding away in an underground cavern, and therefore were able to report the gist of the speeches. One woman according to Josephus seems to have been an intelligent and educated person (Bel. Jud. 7.399; 404).

Reason xii): The same God (of the Jews), who had of old taken the Jewish nation into His favour, now condemned them to destruction (Bel. Jud. 7:327)

At the end of Eleazar's life during the last days of the Sicarii at Masada, he realized that God, who had associated with and favoured the Jews, no longer did so.

This is precisely how Josephus felt. How could God look kindly upon a nation, shut His eyes to the gross misdeeds of the nation, which committed murder, violence and atrocities against their own flesh and blood? Why did He allow His most holy city Jerusalem (including the Temple) to be burnt to the ground by the enemy?

And how and when did this all start? Eleazar boasts that the Sicarii were the first that revolted from the Romans, and now were the last to fight against them (Bel. Jud. 7.324). They would retain their freedom at all costs, even the cost of their lives! And by freedom he meant, 'to serve neither the Romans nor anyone else, but only God'.

Eleazar admits that 'when we were bent on claiming our freedom but suffered much constant misery at each other's hands and worse at the enemy's, we ought perhaps to have read the mind of God and realize that his once beloved Jewish race had been sentenced to extinction' (Bel. Jud. 7.327). An apt name for the nation would be Ichabod !

Eleazar argues that they, the Sicarii, who had committed sins against God and participated in criminal activities (and who taught other rebel groups to do the same), would survive the war with their freedom intact. Throughout Bel. Jud., Josephus constantly laments, despises and condemns the atrocities committed by evil men banded together to drive the Romans out of their country, who wear a convenient cloak of religion, denied by their deeds, to attract God-fearing citizens into their lines.

Their God of old would react and condemn the nation to destruction. To commit atrocities in the name of religion was not on; to befoul and pollute the Temple area with human blood, to desecrate the Sabbath repeatedly, cried out for God to take action.

Josephus would recall what the prophet Jeremiah had written during a similar situation way back in 587/6 BC. ‘If you do not obey Me to keep the Sabbath day holy — then I will kindle an unquenchable fire in the gates of Jerusalem that will consume her fortress’ (Jeremiah. 17:27).

‘I will forsake My house (the Temple), abandon My inheritance; I will give the one I love into the hands of her enemies’ (Jeremiah. 12:7).

‘In the day of the LORD’S anger no one escaped or survived; those I cared for and reared, my enemy has destroyed’ (Lamentations. 2:22).

Josephus would agree with Eleazar (but for completely different reasons!) that God, who of old favoured the nation, now condemned them to destruction.

Reason xiii): ‘God was angry against us for our manifold sins which we have been guilty of in a most insolent and extravagant manner with regard to our countrymen’ (Bel. Jud. 7.332)

Eleazar makes this confession on the occasion when the Romans set a defensive wall the Sicarii have built, on fire. To start with, a north wind blows the flames downwards towards the Roman battering rams; however, the wind changes suddenly to the south ‘as if it were done by Divine Providence’ (Bel. Jud. 7.318). God Himself, says Eleazar, without a doubt has taken away all hope of survival. The fire did not turn back on its own accord — God intervened. These things that happened are God’s vengeance for the many wrongs that in our madness we dared to do to our own countrymen. Josephus would know the principle clearly stated in the Hebrew Bible that ‘Vengeance is mine: I will repay’.

The Sicarii started the precedence of cruel assassinations against fellow Jews who collaborated with the Romans; they introduced pillage, rapine and destruction of houses of their own people. Other terrorist groups followed suit. And Eleazar now realizes what awful consequences had resulted by their godless actions done on behalf of religion and in the name of the God of the Jews.

The final curtain had dropped on the scene of anarchy; murder and criminal acts condemned by the teaching of the Hebrew Bible. The act of God in destroying the defensive barrier erected by the Sicarii would be in keeping with one of His attributes mentioned in Deuteronomy 4:24, ‘The LORD your God is a consuming fire’.

Reason xiv): ‘A more powerful cause had intervened to give the Romans victory and made them appear to be conquerors over us’ (Bel. Jud. 7.359-360)

Eleazar supplies two basic reasons concerning the victory of the Romans over the Jews. Firstly, Divine Intervention — a mightier Hand, a more powerful cause than the Romans, has intervened. Secondly, the Romans are agents in the Hand of God to accomplish His purposes.

This rebel leader refers to the incident at Caesarea at the beginning of the war when the Greek population turned on the Jews at the same time as the Jewish rebels slaughtered the disarmed Roman soldiers promised safe conduct. This was no coincidence! This was the intervention of God in retribution of the breach of promise and atrocious slaughter of the Roman troops on the Sabbath.

He also refers to the total destruction of the two most holy places in Judaea viz. the city of Jerusalem and the Temple situated therein. How can one explain these two events; the city and the Temple demolished, the city flattened and the Temple foundations dug up? Which introduces the second reason mentioned by Eleazar. God uses heathen, pagan Romans to effect and execute His will and purpose. Had this not happened before? Yes. Josephus would recall how a pagan king Cyrus destroyed the Babylonian Empire and then published an edict that the Jews in exile should return home.

Josephus makes mention in Bel. Jud. that God had gone over to the side of the Romans, that He had fled His sanctuary and now lives in Italy, emphasising that God’s favour rested with the Romans not the Jews, and that He would use the Romans as an instrument of His vengeance and anger against His rebellious and wicked

people. In Ant. 20.166, Josephus writes ‘God has rejected the city of Jerusalem and the Temple, the latter not being sufficiently pure for Him to inhabit it. He brought upon us, our wives and children, slavery, in order to make us wiser through our calamities’.

As we know, the Sicarii chose suicide to avoid slavery under the hated enemy the Romans. Eleazar admits that the Romans acted as the instrument of God to execute God’s displeasure with His people the Jews. ‘The Romans threw fire upon the city to purge it’ (Ant. 20.166).

Finally, to wrap up this section. Throughout the 7 books of Bel. Jud., Josephus has scattered many reasons for the war. They are sprinkled almost indiscriminately and unsystematically as and when certain situations arose in the course of the war. An attempt has been made to discuss each one where applicable against a historico-religious background.

It would seem that in book 7 of Bel. Jud. and especially in the two speeches put into the mouth of Eleazar, the leader of the Sicarii, Josephus condenses these reasons into three important statements.

Reflecting why Josephus should do this, one recognizes that a modern writer does not reveal or give away the main thrust or solution at the beginning of his work, but tends to entice the reader along to the last chapter of the book. Here the mystery is finally solved, and the various apparently unconnected pieces are brought together. And Josephus, in my opinion uses the same device. He keeps the reader in suspense until the end.

Josephus sees the Hand of God at work in using a pagan nation to punish the Jews for their wickedness against their own people, and a blatant disregard for the moral and ethical standards of the Torah. The pollution of the city of Zion by murders, rapine and violence, the spilling of blood in the Temple precincts, cry out for drastic action from God. And He does this, mentions Josephus, by using the Romans as His avengers, His appointed agents.

An eminent scholar writes: 'In the Biblical manner, God was using a foreign host to purify His Temple, and to chastise His people, thus neither the Romans nor the Jews are responsible for this disastrous turn in Roman-Jewish relations' (Cohen 1979:235).

An examination of the reasons listed for the war reveals two distinctly differently groups put forward by Josephus. These groups are well summed up by the modern scholar Villalba, namely,

- (i) Those reasons which impact on the human plane (1986:12).
- (ii) Those reasons which have implications on the transcendent plane (1986:39).

In the former group one would include actual, visible and observable events; in the latter the invisible, abstract and those notional in nature. On the human plane reasons given are at ground and confrontational level involving political decisions leading to racial tensions and armed attacks, personally known to and observed by Josephus. On the transcendent plane, Josephus supplies religious reasons why the God of the Jews caused disaster to descend upon His people. We also learn of Roman insensitiveness to Jewish religious practices and standards, yet the same foreign rulers are used to accomplish the purposes of a sovereign God, as happened in the past history of the Jews.

It has been pointed out in section 1.4 that very little has been written on the subject of this thesis. Very few scholars admit that there may well be religious reasons that led to the Jewish War. Political, economic and social reasons are presented. The writer does not dispute that these existed, but the role of the realm of the transcendent is either avoided or overlooked. The writer cannot close his eyes to the latter aspect that Josephus emphasizes throughout his work. Neither is it the writer's intention to rate the transcendent above human causes, or vice versa. The writer has attempted to convey how Josephus himself interpreted the tragic events that brought about the final collapse of religion and government of his nation in AD 70.

It must be mentioned that not all scholars accept the reasons given by Josephus. The Israeli scholar Schalit is no admirer of Josephus. He calls him a 'lackey of the lord of the Roman Empire,' who for selfish reasons played down atrocities committed by the Romans and elevated the noble role of Vespasian and Titus in their conduct of the

war. The same scholar points out that Josephus puts the blame for the war on the nefarious acts of a small group of terrorists, the Sicarii, who started the rebellion and other groups of freedom fighters like the Zealots, who emerged later to conduct open war against the Romans. However, Schalit states that an entirely different picture emerges in the writings of Tacitus, who declared that the whole people, both men and women, participated in the war. (Schalit 1971:255)

There is also internal evidence in *Bel. Jud.* that the Jews for a long time had been the sworn enemies of Rome. In a speech given by the Roman general Titus to the remaining Jewish defendants in Book 6.328-350, he says: ‘You have been the men who have never left off rebelling since Pompey first conquered you, and have, since that time made open war with the Romans.’ (*Bel. Jud.* 6.329) The picture that emerges here is that of a growing general insurrection against Rome somewhat exaggerated by Tacitus and Titus, but which would go down well with both historians’ audiences.

2.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE THAT DIVINE INTERVENTION PLAYED IN BELLUM JUDAICUM

2.3.1 Josephus’ use of the term

In section 1.4 mention is made that there are over 30 references to Divine Intervention in Josephus’ great work *Bel. Jud.* Josephus believed that this had regularly occurred in the past history of his people. God had intervened, had changed situations, had steered the destiny of the Jews into directions over which the nation had no control whatsoever. It is therefore to be expected that terms associated with the character and attributes of God are used extensively throughout the pages of *Bel. Jud.* One would look for the employment of such terms from a Jewish priest such as Josephus. He was steeped in the religion, culture and history of his people. He greatly respected the Law of Moses that set standards in every element of culture. He understood that God expected His people to live according to these standards and was aware that, whenever in the past the nation had ignored or flouted these rules and regulations, God had intervened in a drastic manner.

It is therefore not surprising that terms such as Divine Providence and associated objective activities as the direction and interposition of Providence are to be found, as well as references to Divine Intervention and Divine Assistance. Such Godly characteristics as Divine courage, impulse and justice are surprisingly found, not in the actions of the Jews, but of the Romans. There are also instances where God has the ability to order and to control storms (natural phenomena) and enforce justice (social relationships).

Broadly speaking, Josephus believed that the affairs of the Jewish and other nations were all under the direction of Divine Providence. The designs, plans and actions of mankind do not determine the course of history. They are used willy-nilly by Providence to effect and direct the affairs of the nations.

The Roman procurators and other officials, the Flavian dynasty, are part of God's overall design to determine the ultimate destiny of the Jews. Josephus attributes the turn of events and the change of direction during the Jewish War to Divine Intervention. Furthermore, he is certain that God's influence extended to every sphere of life involving people and the natural elements (storms at sea and on the land). God intervened in such a way that the actions of leaders on both sides of the war drove them to accomplish results in accordance with His plans. These actors were usually unaware that they were instruments in God's hands.

Divine Intervention was an integral part of the religion of Judaism. By this one alludes to the many occasions recorded in the Hebrew Bible where God had intervened to fulfil His purposes. A good example of how Josephus refers to such occasions is found in the speech he makes to the defenders during the final stages of the siege of Jerusalem. In *Bel. Jud.* 5.376-419, he argues that whenever in the past the Jews had resorted to war, inevitably failure resulted. He points to King Zedekiah who refused to listen to Jeremiah to surrender to the Babylonians, and then saw the city and the Temple demolished (*Bel. Jud.* 5.391). And what about the time when Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the Temple and plundered the city 'because our forefathers met him in arms' (*Bel. Jud.* 5.94). He concludes that when the nation took to arms, the enemy prevailed, and the city was taken. (*Bel. Jud.* 5.399).

But there were times of crisis when the Jews relied upon God to intervene and deliver them. He names five events when the Jews never went to war, but God delivered them, viz., when the Pharaoh of Egypt seized Abraham's wife, Abraham prayed towards Jerusalem for assistance from God, which occurred (Bel. Jud. 5.381); when God conducted His servants safely out of Egypt during the exodus (Bel. Jud. 5.383); when the Philistines seized the ark but the Israelites committed this calamity to God to decide the issue (Bel. Jud. 5.386); when Sennacherib threatened Jerusalem, God delivered the Jews because 'hands were uplifted in prayer' (Bel. Jud. 5.388); when God used His instrument Cyrus the Mede to deliver the Jews from exile (Bel. Jud. 5.389). 'In short, on no occasion did our fathers succeed by force of arms, or fail without them committing their cause to God' (Bel. Jud. 5.390). Josephus is desperately imploring the defenders to give up the struggle; resorting to arms against the Romans is futile and doomed to failure. He exhorts the defenders 'who dwell on holy ground to commit all things to the judgment of God, and to scorn the aid of human hands whenever they can reach the ear of the heavenly Judge' (Bel. Jud. 5.400).

It is also interesting to note that the actions of Providence are impartial, i.e. they are not confined to the Jewish nation only. In Bel. Jud., Divine intervention, deliverance, providence and assistance favoured the Romans more than the Jews. One asks the question – why should this be so? Josephus repeatedly makes the point that the Jews blatantly ignored and disobeyed the distinct teachings of the Torah. Retribution and punishment were sure to follow. So God uses the pagan Romans as His instrument to execute His purposes.

Josephus uses the Greek word *πρνοια* (translated providence) in Bel. Jud. for the benefit of his non-Jewish readers, so that his work would be more intelligible to them. Feldman makes a very apposite remark. 'If indeed...Josephus stresses the concept of Providence, we may suggest that he does so because this was such an important concept of Stoicism which, as we have noted, was the favourite philosophy of intellectuals in Rome at the time Josephus was living there' (Feldman 1987:44).

2.3.2 What the term meant to the Jews

To the Jew, Providence was a function of Divine Sovereignty. God is King over all, doing just what he wills. Josephus would know and believe this. Did not the prophet Daniel write: ‘All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back His hand or say to Him: What have You done?’ (Daniel 4:35). This conviction pervades the whole Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, God told the nation in no uncertain words that He would prosper them while they were faithful, but bring disaster on them if they sinned (Deuteronomy 28:15 ff).

The Hebrew Bible taught that God exercises providential control over the universe at large, the physical world (see above), the animal creation (Jeremiah 25:7), the affairs of the nations (Job 12:23), the lot of man (Psalm 139:16), and even the things seemingly accidental or insignificant (Berkhof 1958:165-178). This great and sovereign God had intervened and would continue to do so in the history and affairs of the Jewish nation. Of this Josephus was convinced. The situation in AD 66-70 was similar to that which appertained to Jerusalem in 587/6 BC. Josephus would recall what the Prophet Jeremiah warned would happen. ‘This is what the LORD says: If you do not listen to Me and follow My law, which I have set before you, and if you do not listen to the words of My servants the prophets, whom I have sent to you again and again (though you have not listened), then I will make this house (the Temple) like Shiloh and this city (Jerusalem) an object of cursing among all the nations of the earth’ (Jeremiah 26:4-6). Josephus had prescience that this calamity of old was busy repeating itself before his very eyes.

2.3.3 What the term meant to the Romans

As has been already pointed out the terms Divine intervention, assistance and providence seemed to favour the Romans rather than the Jews. It appears that the term Providence (*πρνοια*) was known to writers in the era before Christ. The idea was not confined to Jewish writers. Providence could be described as the ‘beneficial care of God’ (Oxford English Dictionary). The question one asks is this: Would the Romans understand this notion of God?

One supposes that they in general were not familiar with teachings on this subject in the Hebrew Bible. However, readers of *Bel. Jud.* would be acquainted with the current

tenets of Stoic philosophy. The Stoic view was that the world is governed by Providence or Nature ruling the universe according to eternal laws. This λογος was claimed to be a material all-pervading spirit, a dynamic force that provided an ultimate explanation of physical phenomena. This rational power or λογος was divine, a non-anthropological deity, addressed either as Zeus, heimarmene (Destiny) or Nature. (Ehrenberger 1974:100-102)

Josephus makes reference to 'righteous kind of fate' that brought the Empire under Vespasian's power (Bel. Jud. 4.622-625). This is quite different to a 'capricious Fate' making a sport of men's lives as generally regarded in Hellenistic times (Polybius Histories 1.4).

In reading Bel. Jud. with its frequent references to Providence or Divine intervention, the educated Roman would mentally agree that a dynamic force ruled the world by eternal laws. He would find no difficulty in accepting the use by Josephus of these indeterminate terms; he would merely have a different frame of reference than the Jew. Josephus would thus keep his readers happy and undisturbed mentally.

2.3.4 Josephus' use of the terms Fortune and Fate associated with Greco-Roman culture

It is not my intention to treat the above and other terms relating to the cause of events in detail. Villalba has admirably done this exercise in his book entitled *The Historical Method of Flavius Josephus* published in 1986. I will however very briefly consider the concepts of Fortune and Fate as existed in the lifetime of Josephus.

Villalba goes to great lengths discussing Josephus' use of the word Fortune (Τυχη). (Villalba 1986:51-58) This concept may be described as a capricious and mobile influence, which presents itself in the lives of men as a bearer of misfortunes or successes without being ruled by a logical or moral law. When dealing with Josephus' use of this notion, Villalba writes that Josephus places Fortune alongside the idea of God, but this does not mean that God replaces the idea of Fortune; rather that this idea is a part of God. The Roman reader would be happy with such a definition of Fortune, but one wonders if a Jew would accept it. But then Josephus clearly informs the reader that the history of the Jewish War is dedicated 'as a memorial of great actions

both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians' (Bel. Jud. Pref. 16). The historiographer Polybius adopts an interesting stance towards Fortune. He writes: 'For though Fortune is ever producing something new and ever playing a part in the lives of men, she has not in a single instance ever accomplished such a work, ever achieved such a triumph, as in our own times'. What he is referring to is how the Romans in less than 53 years succeeded in subjecting nearly the whole inhabited world to their government (Histories 1.1 and 1.4). In Bel. Jud., Josephus mentions that all Fortune has passed over to the Roman side (Bel. Jud. 3.354). Fortune has the power to turn the affairs of war and of men (Bel. Jud. 3.396). Any non-Jewish reader would accept that Fortune could promote and favour whom she liked.

Fate also played a great role in the affairs of men and the nations. Everything according to Greek 'theology' was subject to fate. All men and gods were part of universal fate assigned to them. Josephus also uses common Greek words that cover the concepts of destiny, predestination (doomed and decreed by unbending fate), and chance, something that occurs by itself without any logical prediction.

Shutt sums up Josephus' use of the above and other Greek 'theological' terms very aptly: 'Josephus was closely involved personally in two cultures, Jewish and Greco-Roman. His involvement included familiarity with the customs and ways of life of both of them. As a result of his contact with Gentile cultures, and partly also because he sought to express his Judaism in terms of that Greek culture, he used expressions and language which are neither Jewish nor Scriptural, in order to convey his meaning. Expressions like Fate or Fortune were Stoic expressions and language about God: the Greek understood Fate; the Roman, Fortune' (Shutt 1980:184-186).

2.4 THE JEWISH VIEW OF HISTORY

This subject has been dealt with in 1.4.4.2

2.4.1 How the reasons Josephus gives for the war fit into the process of the unfolding of history

Nowhere in Bel. Jud. does Josephus specifically mention or allude to a 'Jewish View' of history. In the same manner as the reasons for the war are scattered

indiscriminately and almost at random throughout *Bel. Jud.*, so one has to search through his work to extract the few statements that he makes to support the so-called Jewish or linear view of history. One is reminded that a concept such as Systematic Theology is not mentioned as such in the Hebrew Bible, yet such a system has been constructed from the many attributes of God sown haphazardly, as it were, throughout the ancient Scriptures.

I propose to examine the reasons given under 2.2.2 in an endeavour to find confirmation that the linear view of history does peep out of some of the reasons for the war given by Josephus.

In King Agrippa's speech (*Bel. Jud.* 2.350-394) he states that the vast, extensive Roman Empire could not have been settled without God's providence (*Bel. Jud.* 2.390). What does Josephus mean by settled? Williamson (1959) translates this sentence as follows: 'God too is ranged on the Roman side, for without His help so vast an Empire could never have been built up'. Here is a hint that God purposed and assisted the creation and development of the great Roman Empire, whose chief instrument, architect and builder was Augustus, Octavian, the great nephew of Julius Caesar.

In the course of discussing the retreat and defeat of the 12th Legion under Cestius, it was pointed out that Josephus understood the retreat from Jerusalem by this legion in AD 66 was part of the Divine plan to eventually use a more potent and effective army under Vespasian and Titus to clean up and destroy a polluted city where the rebels had committed such abominable crimes that cried out for Divine intervention. During the siege Josephus pleads with the defenders to give up the unequal fight. He argues "from every side Fortune had passed down to them (the Romans), and God who handed dominion over from one nation to nation, now lived in Italy" (*Bel. Jud.* 5.367). From this statement one gathers that Josephus believed that God controlled the destiny of nations. He sets up one and puts down another. He determines the course of history. Josephus would know this divine principle as this doctrine is clearly stated throughout the Hebrew Bible, with particular reference to the prophet Daniel (4:35).

Messianic aspirations of the Jews were another contribution towards the religious fanaticism of the rebels. As an educated man of his age Josephus had knowledge of a

corpus of apocalyptic writings circulating amongst the Jews. These so-called revelatory writings were characterized by an eschatological emphasis and a deep disenchantment of present meaningless history. When would God intervene, and take cosmic and dynamic action, was the question uppermost in the minds of these writers. The advent of Messiah prior to the great day of the LORD would introduce a new age of peace emerging from terrestrial and celestial chaos (Charlesworth 1987:53-54). The Jews longed for Messiah to come to restore to them, what was they believed, their rightful position among the nations of the world.

All of history was heading in a direction guided by Providence. From one generation to another the Jews longed for Messiah to come and restore the fortunes of the Jewish nation. Would the consummation of the history of the nations tie in with God's ultimate teleological purposes for the Jewish people? The Hebrew Bible seems to hint at this connection.

In Bel. Jud. 7.327, Josephus writes that God had sentenced His 'once beloved Jewish race to extinction'. This is an admission by Eleazar who realized that their fight for 'liberty' had come to an end at Masada. This conclusion is couched in harsh and strong language. God had sentenced His people to extinction. God had so decreed that the nation as a state would cease to exist; it would be wiped off the face of the earth; its holy places destroyed.

Such a calamity clearly showed God's displeasure with His people. Their abominable criminal acts, their impiety, their disobedience and disregard of the Law of Moses, had brought this about. The final curtain had dropped on a scene of anarchy, murder and impiety condemned by the explicit teaching of the Torah. God had arranged this to happen in accordance with His sovereign will, and used the Romans as His instruments to execute punishment upon His people.

Eleazar is convinced that a mightier Hand, a more powerful cause than the Romans, had intervened, and for a good reason (Bel. Jud. 7.360). He recalls the shocking incident in Jerusalem when disarmed Roman soldiers having being promised safe conduct, were murdered by the rebels. Simultaneously the Greek citizens of Caesarea turned on the Jews and slaughtered great numbers of them. He maintains that this was certainly an act of retribution by God. By the standards of the Hebrew Scriptures such

evil conduct would invite the intervention of God acting in severe retribution on the perpetrators. God would not allow the offenders to get away with it.

In the Jewish linear view of history a favoured nation like the Jews would lose its position and privileges in the world, and another would arise to replace it.

In Josephus' mind God was sovereign in all matters in heaven and earth, including the control of history and the destiny of nations. He would recollect the message that God gave to Jeremiah before the fall of Jerusalem in 587/6 BC: 'Tell this to your masters: With my great power and outstretched arm I made the earth and its people and the animals that are on it, and I give it to anyone I please. Now I will hand over all your countries to my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; I will make even the wild animals subject to him. All nations will serve him and his grandson until the time for his land comes; then many nations and great kings will subjugate him' (Jeremiah 27:5-7).

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS

Examining the reasons given by Josephus for the Jewish War one is struck by his excellent grasp of the historical position in Judaea in the 1st Century AD. As a good historiographer he faithfully records events that led up to the formation of the ultra nationalistic groups like the Sicarii reacting against local puppet governors or the presence of the Roman procurators. The foul deeds of the Jewish terrorist gangs, the reaction by the Roman troops to widespread disturbances, the growing xenophobia shown by the Jews, and the anti-Semitic riots in the Judaeian city-states, are reported. There is an ever-growing smouldering spread of anarchy and widespread sedition, which finally forces the hand of the Roman governor of Syria to intervene in an attempt to restore law and order. He fails dismally and Nero, the Emperor, dispatches Vespasian, his veteran general of many campaigns, to bring the Jews into line with the policies of the Empire.

Josephus is not only an excellent historiographer, he is also a priest, and a member of one of the elite Jewish families. He becomes deeply involved in the war as an appointed general in the Galilean sphere of operations against Vespasian. After his surrender to the Romans, he joins the staff of Titus, the son of Vespasian, given the task of wiping out Jewish resistance centred in Jerusalem. On the spot Josephus observes and writes down the horrors of the siege, what suffering and privations his friends and relatives endure; what shameless deeds are committed on holy ground by the Jews; what pollution of spilt blood and dead bodies causes his God to flee the sanctuary. As a Jew, he completely identifies with the subject of his great *opus* Bel. Jud.; as a priest he is a heart-broken patriot watching all that is precious to him and the Jewish culture being destroyed before his eyes. He cannot but help indulging in lamentations upon the miseries undergone by his own country. Such passionate outbursts he confesses should not smudge the pages of a historical account of the war, but how should he but otherwise react when his beloved city Jerusalem and its glorious Temple have been levelled to the ground (Bel. Jud. Pref. 9-11).

Josephus supplies what we may term political as well as religious reasons for the war. A modern scholar describes the causes that led to the war as being enacted on the human and transcendent plane (Villalba 1986:12; 39). One could also refer to the reasons as being overt and covert in nature. A good number of modern scholars of repute like Thackeray concentrate on the overt reasons; they write about the tangible, the seen, the reported events and the effects they had on the outcome of the war (Thackeray 1929:4). These scholars cover events that started back in AD 6, developed and came to fruition in the final destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70. These are admirable historic overviews, but perhaps studiously avoid what Josephus and other scholars see as the root cause of the war. Villalba puts it very succinctly: 'God is involved in historical events. He becomes mixed in with human acts, i.e. He is the efficient cause, the instigator of human acts, and as the force responsible for numerous moments in human development' (Villalba 1986:62).

Reading *Bel. Jud.* one realizes that there were basic, underlying hidden reasons why the war should have occurred. These reasons one should bear in mind are written from the point of view of a Jewish priest saturated from childhood with the teachings, tradition, culture and history of his nation. Yet he is wise enough to appreciate that the actions of local leaders, whether Roman or Jewish, taking advantage of the unstable, volatile situation, were part of an overall design directed by God. Behind the outbursts of rebellion, of disturbances, of violence by fanatical quasi-religious groups, there are covert underlying religious reasons. There seems to have been a disease that had spread throughout the nation that erupted in offensive, unwholesome and malodorous sores. And what was this disease? How was the cure effected?

Josephus sets the wicked and evil acts committed by his people against the standards that God had given to the nation, which are explicitly contained in the Decalogue and in the clear teachings of the Torah, the Law of Moses. Because of these sinful deeds, Josephus is convinced that intervention and retribution by God is inevitable. Bilde makes the point very clearly (Bilde 1988:75).

There is a close parallel situation in AD 66-70 to that which pertained in 722 BC and 587/6 BC. Where the nation had turned its back on God and His norms, and turned to worship foreign gods of the surrounding nations, God used pagan world powers to remove the Jews from their beloved homeland, and put them into exile. The Assyrians

removed the people of the Northern kingdom in 722/3 BC, and the Babylonians the inhabitants of the Southern kingdom finally in 587/6 BC.

In the 1st Century AD, certain rebel groups in Judaea refused to live under the authority of the Herodian and Roman rulers, claiming that submission to the latter would mean slavery and loss of liberty. Playing on the Jews' inordinate love of independence and hatred of foreign domination, they commenced a reign of terror by committing atrocious acts of violence, murder and rapine against fellow countrymen who they regarded as Quislings, and against the occupying powers. One group, the Sicarii, justified these acts in the name of God, and right up to their ultimate wipe out at Masada, boasted that they had retained their freedom to the bitter end. They bragged that they would neither serve the Romans nor anyone else, but only God. At the end of the war the Romans flattened the city of Jerusalem and the Temple to the 'round, and the remaining Jews were sold into slavery and dispersed throughout the Empire. Josephus disagrees with the attitude to authority demonstrated by the Sicarii and in principle recognizes that the Jews should 'fear God and honour the king', even 'if the king were of Herodian or Roman origin.

The arrival of the Roman army, the fall of Jerusalem, the burning of the Temple, and all the sufferings of the war brought upon his countrymen, are regarded by Josephus as God's punishment for the sinful deeds perpetrated by the people. Rome is seen as the tool in the hand of God by which He chastises His disobedient people, precisely in the same manner as He did through the Assyrians and the Babylonians. Bilde suggests that 'only by a religious interpretation was Josephus able to accept what had taken place in the Jewish war' (Bilde 1988:75).

One cannot deny that Josephus wrote accurately as a participant and observer about events that occurred in the war. Yet this deeply religious man cannot but conclude that God had intervened to bring great disaster upon a thoroughly wicked group of rebels and a section of the public who grossly offended the standards that God required of His people. His laws were flouted and ignored. This disease had to be drastically treated. Hence the introduction of the Roman legions to break down the walls of the holy city, the place where God dwelt. God had no intention of stopping this process of punishment. What was most precious to the Jews would be destroyed, burnt and buried under the rubble, wiped out of sight.

In my opinion Josephus brings the main reasons together in Eleazar's 2 speeches found in book 7 of *Bel. Jud.* He states that the nation once favoured by God had committed gross misdeeds in violation of the law of God. How could God look kindly on people who committed murder, violence and atrocities against their own flesh and blood? The Sicarii and other rebel groups wore a convenient cloak of religion that deceived the ignorant, ingenuous, God fearing citizens of Judaea into joining a religious 'Jihad' against the hated Romans. Their God of old would certainly react and condemn the nation to destruction. He would not tolerate such wickedness. He would intervene and take vengeance. Eleazar openly confesses that the rebels had been guilty of the most heinous crimes strongly condemned by the teaching of the Hebrew Bible. God had good reasons to settle a score with his people!

In the study of *Bel. Jud.* it has become clear that as a true historiographer Josephus has left behind an accurate and reliable record of events that occurred during the war because he was so close and completely involved in the war. In the interpretation of these events however, Josephus gives religious reasons why such events happened. As a priest serving a nation governed and a culture directed by the Torah, he is aware that God expects His people to obey these ordinances and regulations designed for the welfare of the nation and its people. To offend in these religious matters would lead to God taking action. According to the Hebrew Bible, He had done so before centuries back. Josephus knowing this clearly sees the hand of God using a pagan nation again as of old as an instrument showing and executing His great displeasure against the misdeeds of the Jews. Josephus is convinced that God intervenes in history, that He controls the affairs of the nations, that He does as He pleases; no man, no world power will stop Him executing His plans.

Is there a possible principle emerging from this thesis that could be relevant to our day and age? The author is indeed tempted to find interesting parallels. However, before we discuss this theme, certain assumptions will be noted. Firstly, Josephus' God has not changed, i.e. His attributes and character have not altered. Secondly, Josephus' God is in control of history; in particular mentioning that the teleological prospects for the Jewish nation are tied in with the culmination of the history and purposes of the non-Jewish nations.

In general terms, one concludes that a nation or government that pays lip service to the standards of morality and ethics set by the God of the Hebrew Bible, and whose acts are denounced by the same norms, may discover that God allows calamities to hit that nation or government. God would probably use, as of old, evil godless organizations or movements to bring about such changes, and transfer power from the one to the other. The displaced ones, like the Jews after the AD 70 debacle, would be absorbed or marginalized with no power base whatsoever.

There appears to be an uncanny parallel in political and religious events that have occurred in the last decade in South Africa with those described by Josephus that lead to the downfall of the Jewish nation in AD 70. As God's standards and sovereignty have not altered, one should expect retribution of some kind or another. Is the succession of changes in political power or governments through the past centuries not perhaps an indication that nations and governments have ignored or deviated from God's standards, and have preferred to rule according to their own delusive insights or ideologies? Josephus believed that 'He (Josephus' God) changes times and seasons; He sets up kings and deposes them; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning' (Daniel 2:21).

From the Hebrew Bible it appears that the bottom-line on the scroll of history, whether mankind likes it or not, will always be that written by the LORD God Almighty, Josephus' sovereign God. And in some mysterious way the destiny of the nations is tied up with God's teleological purposes for the Jews.

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