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THE SURVIVAL OF THE JEWS  
DURING THE FIRST CENTURY C.E.

by

George J. Astrachan

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College -  
Jewish Institute of Religion  
Cincinnati, Ohio  
February, 1967

Referee:  
Professor Ellis Rivkin

## DIGEST

The first century of the common era saw the beginnings of a great religious revolution, which in a relatively short period of history--400 years--was to encompass the then civilized world. During these four hundred years the new religion known as Christianity grew from a handful of fanatical, yet dedicated followers, to become the official religion of the Holy Roman Empire.

The early followers of the Christian religion came mainly from the eastern extremities of the Holy Roman Empire--this area encompassing the country of Palestine, which was not only the homeland of the Jewish religion, but also the cradle of Christianity. Like a locomotive, picking up steam, this new religion began to grow. It spread out its tentacles both near and far, encompassing all who would listen and partake of its message. It preached of a One God, who had let his only son be sacrificed for the sins of man. It preached of a new covenant by which all of mankind could be saved. --And people listened!

To deny the fact that there were some Jews who also became interested in this new religious concept, would be an entirely false idea. For some did become interested, and many of these turned their backs on the religion of their forefathers, to partake of the Christian religion. Most of the followers of the Jewish religion, however, did not convert. They remained true to Judaism, and even turned

against those of their brethren who chose to convert.

This thesis concerns itself with those Jews who did not convert. It attempts to answer the questions "Why?" and "What?" --Why didn't all of the Jews convert to Christianity, when not only some of their brethren, but also most of the peoples living around them, were finding a new home in the teachings of Christianity? What was there about the religion called Judaism that made most of its followers remain faithful?

I believe that this paper answers these questions. With the aid of the historian, Josephus, a contemporary of this period, and several modern day scholars of history, I believe that I have been able to develop in this paper several significant ideas concerning these questions.

### DEDICATION

To my beloved wife, Rita, and my loving son, Bruce,  
whose devotion and love gave me the inspiration and  
the drive to attain my dream of the past thirteen  
years.

To Professor Ellis Rivkin whose dedication and interest  
guided me in working through this thesis.

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## CHAPTER I

### PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

#### A -- The Problem

Eight years ago, while I was attending Miami University, in Oxford, Ohio, I was given the opportunity to be a Sunday School teacher at the Reform Temple, in nearby Hamilton, Ohio. One of the subjects which I was asked to teach was "Comparative Religion", which I was to teach the Confirmation class. Throughout that year and the next two years as well, the subject of comparative religion was put into my hands to teach.

Each year, during the month of November, we would begin the section in the text which was entitled The Birth of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> The material with which I was to begin to instruct the class, dealt with the beginnings of Christianity --it's growth and development from a radical handful of individuals into the great religious institution that it has become today, with its millions of followers and its hundreds of sects.

It never seemed to fail that at some time during these early sessions on Christianity, that someone in the class would ask: "Mr. Astrachan--when so many people of the pagan religions were turning to the new Christian religion, why didn't the Jewish people also convert?" The first time this question was asked of me I was at a loss for an answer, and I vaguely remember saying, "that's a very good question,

but I'm not sure whether I can give you a proper answer." But I proceeded to expound what I thought to be a satisfactory reply, rather than be caught without any answer at all. The subject, however, was not left to rest, because, each time during the following two years that I taught this course, sometime during the early weeks of our discussion on Christianity, a similar question was raised by one of my students, and as in the first instance, I was unable to give a satisfactory answer.

It bothered me quite a bit that the answer that I had given them might have been wrong, or possibly misleading, for I was not at all satisfied with my response to them. I made up my mind, that if the opportunity ever presented itself, I would attempt to find an answer to what I consider to be an important question.

The opportunity finally presented itself during the winter of 1965, when I was asked to decide upon a subject for my Rabbinic thesis. After consulting with my advisor, I decided that at long last I would search out the answer to the question which had been bothering me for several years: "WHAT WAS THERE ABOUT THE RELIGION CALLED JUDAISM, DURING THE FIRST CENTURY OF THE COMMON ERA, WHICH ENABLED ITS FOLLOWERS TO SURVIVE AS A RELIGION, EVEN THOUGH MANY PEOPLE WERE TURNING TO THE NEW CHRISTIAN RELIGION?"

#### B: -- Why Josephus

After a thorough search and after several consultations



with my advisor, I decided that the best way to approach this problem was to go directly to the writings of someone who lived at this time and who was a witness to the events and to the people of the first century. I found what I was looking for in the writings of Flavius Josephus,<sup>2</sup> an historian who lived during the first century. Though several of our modern day historians<sup>3</sup> consider Josephus a "turncoat" from Judaism, I could find nothing in his writings to make me believe that such was the case. Although he was patronized by the Roman government, and although he was awarded the rights of Roman citizenship,<sup>4</sup> he remained loyal to the religion of his forefathers throughout his life.

During his earlier years he was a staunch supporter of the Pharisees, one of the three major schools of thought within Judaism of the first century. Josephus in describing these early years states:

At about the age of sixteen [53-54 AD] I determined to gain personal experience of the several sects into which our nation is divided. These...are three in number--the first that of the Pharisees, the second that of the Sadducees, and the third that of the Essenes. I thought that, after a thorough investigation, I should be in a position to select the best. So I submitted myself to hard training and laborious exercises and passed through the three courses. ...Being now in my nineteenth year [56-57 AD] I began to govern my life by the rules of the Pharisees, a sect having points of resemblance to that which the Greeks call the Stoic school<sup>5</sup>

When he had grown older, and was accused by his fellow Jews of being a traitor to Judaism, for his having received the praises of Rome, it was then that he set about to write his CONTRA APIONEM, which

...successfully rebuts the malignant and absurd fictions of the anti-Semites; and concludes with a glowing defense of the lawgiver and his code, his lofty conception of God being contrasted with the immoral ideas current among the Greeks.<sup>6</sup>

Would a man who had forsaken his religious heritage, and turned against his brethren have written such a defense of his religion? I think not. His loyalty, as I interpret his writings, is twofold. First of all, he is loyal to the religion of his forefathers--namely Judaism. Secondly, he is loyal to Rome--not to the people of Rome, nor to their religion or ideals, but rather to Roman power, for Josephus readily admitted to the power of Rome. It is this latter point, which has caused some contemporary historians to question the loyalty of Josephus. I would suggest, however that they have confused loyalty with awareness--Josephus's awareness of Roman power and its inevitable affect upon the Palestinian rebellion against the Roman occupation.

Josephus was born in the year 37-38 A.D. and was a son of a priest with royal blood in his veins on his mother's side.<sup>7</sup> Throughout his early years there is little reason to doubt his loyalty to Judaism and to his co-religionists in Palestine. Even when Vespasian, the great Roman general was advancing upon the city of Jotapata, Josephus stood with his brethren against the Roman seige.<sup>8</sup> When Jotapata fell, it was then that Josephus fell into Roman hands, and though the Jews hated him for his good fortune and for the fine treatment he received under the Roman Emperors, he nevertheless remained true to Judaism, as far as I can determine, for reasons that

I have depicted above. The date of his death is unknown<sup>9</sup> but he must have lived into the early second century because Josephus is found questioning the historian Justus, concerning his belated and erroneous history of the war, by asking him why he did not publish his history while King Agrippa and his family were yet alive. The date given for this inquiry is after 100 A.D.<sup>10</sup>

These then are the reasons I have chosen to depend upon the writings of Josephus as my primary source for this paper. Although I realize full well that every historian who writes about the events of his lifetime will record those events which he considers important and delete those happenings which he considers of less importance. And though he writes from a certain perspective, I find that I must depend upon Josephus to help answer the question which I have posed, for lack of any other authoritative work of this time. For though there were other historians of this period, their works have not come down to us.

## CHAPTER II

### THE JEWISH PEOPLE

#### A -- Who are the Jewish People of the First Century C.E.?

Before we can cope with the question as to why the followers of the religion called Judaism were not on the whole tempted by the new Christian religion, I feel that we must first understand and know the People who followed the Jewish religion. We must know who they were and what they believed and why they believed as they did. This chapter will concern itself with the people--those who swore by, and who were willing to lay down their lives for their religious heritage.

There were three major religious schools of thought within the Jewish religion and all three were distinct entities within the whole of Judaism. Each claimed that theirs was the correct way to observe the Jewish religion, yet each was more than just a religious sect within a religious whole. Rather, each represented a religious philosophy to which it was bound. These three schools of philosophy were known as the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. Josephus, as I have already mentioned above,<sup>11</sup> chose to align himself with the latter school of thought.

Josephus is one of only three authorities on the Essenes.<sup>12</sup> They are described by him as having had a reputation for cultivating peculiar sanctity.

They shun pleasures as a vice and regard temperance and the control of the passions as a special virtue. Marriage they disdain, but they adopt other men's children, while yet pliable and docile, and regard them as their kin and mould them in accordance with their own principles.<sup>13</sup>

The Essenes rejected the idea of private property and therefore,

...they have a law that new members on admission to the sect shall confiscate their property to the order, with the result that you will nowhere see either abject poverty or inordinate wealth; the individual's possessions join the common stock, and all, like brothers, enjoy a single patrimony.<sup>14</sup>

The Essenes did not live in any one particular city, but rather chose to live in large numbers in nearly every town. When a member of the sect was on a journey, he could stop in any community and expect to be welcomed with open arms by other members of the sect. In each of these communities one member was appointed, with his sole purpose being to attend to strangers and to provide them with the necessities of life.

The Essene never changed his garments or his shoes until they were torn to shreds or worn threadbare with age. He would never buy or sell to another Essene, but when another Essene was in need of anything he would give him of his own in exchange for something useful to himself. But, if he needed something and had nothing to give in return, he could accept the needed article without feeling any obligation to give in return.<sup>15</sup>

"After God they hold most in awe the name of their lawgiver,<sup>16</sup> any blasphemer of whom is punished with death."<sup>17</sup>

According to Josephus they were stricter than any other sect of the Jews as regards abstaining from work on the seventh day, for not only did they prepare their food on the day before, to avoid kindling a fire on the Sabbath, but they didn't even "...venture to remove any vessel or even to go to stool."<sup>18</sup>

Not everyone was permitted to join the sect. He who was anxious to join had to prove himself worthy, by successfully passing a series of tests. For one year he served a probationary period, during which time he was under close scrutiny. If he passed this test, he was then tested for two more years, and only then if he was found worthy, was he enrolled in the society.

As regards their attitude toward death and that which lies beyond, they believed that death, if it came with honor, was better than immortality. They believed that the body was corruptible and its constituent matter impermanent, but that the soul is immortal and imperishable. Josephus states that they shared the belief of the sons of Greece, who maintain that:

...for the virtuous souls there is reserved an abode beyond the ocean, a place which is not oppressed by rain or snow or heat, but is refreshed by the ever gentle breath of the west wind coming in from the ocean; while they relegate base souls to a murky and tempestuous dungeon, big with never-ending punishments.<sup>19</sup>

Concerning Fate, they declared "...that Fate is mistress of all things, and that nothing befalls men unless it be in accordance with her decree."<sup>20</sup>

The Sadducees, the second of the three orders, did away with Fate altogether. They held that there was no such thing and

...that human actions are not achieved in accordance with her decree, but that all things lie within our own power, so that we ourselves are responsible for our well being, while we suffer misfortune through our own thoughtlessness.<sup>21</sup>

The Sadducees, according to Josephus were a very argumentative group, even to the extent of arguing among themselves. They observed only the laws,<sup>22</sup> and considered it a virtue to dispute with the teachers of the wisdom that they pursued.<sup>23</sup>

Josephus, obviously did not think very much of the Sadducees, because in all his writings, he devotes very little space to them, and when he does speak of them it's not in very complimentary terms. In one passage he says of them:

"they accomplish practically nothing....for whenever they assume some office, though they submit unwillingly and perforce, yet submit they do to the formulas of the Pharisees, since otherwise the masses would not tolerate them."<sup>24</sup>

The Pharisees, the third of these religious philosophical groups, were held in great esteem by Josephus--so much so, that he himself joined the movement. What little he wrote about the Sadducees, he makes up for, by fully spelling out for us the make up and the beliefs of the Pharisees.

The Pharisees made up the power group among the Jews, and this power came into their hands because of two happenings. First of all, they had the complete confidence of the masses, so that whatever they said and against whomever they spoke,

their words gained immediate credence.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, in 76 B.C.E., Alexandra, the Queen of Syria and the daughter-in-law of Hyrcanus, gave much of her power to the Pharisees.

...she permitted the Pharisees to do as they liked in all matters, and also commanded the people to obey them; and whatever regulations, introduced by the Pharisees in accordance with the tradition of their fathers, had been abolished by her father-in-law Hyrcanus, these she again restored. And so, while she had the title of sovereign, the Pharisees had the power.<sup>25</sup>

Because of this power, the Pharisees

"...determined what the laws were to be and how the Aaronides were to carry out their duties. They created novel institutions for legislating new laws, protecting old laws, and carrying out all laws."<sup>26</sup>

The Pharisees had a simple standard of living and made no concession to luxury. They followed the guidance of that which their doctrine had selected and transmitted as good, and they observed those commandments which their doctrine had seen fit to dictate to them. Though they postulated that everything is brought about by fate, they still did not deprive the human will of the pursuit of what is in man's power, since they believed that it was God's pleasure that there should be a fusion and that the will of man, with his virtues and his vice, should be admitted to the council-chambers of fate.

They believed, also, that the souls had the power to survive death, and that there were rewards and punishments for those who had led lives of virtue or vice. Eternal imprisonment was the lot for the evil souls while the souls that had been good received an easy passage to a new life.<sup>27</sup>



It was because of these views that they gained such a popularity among the townsfolk.

#### The Pharisees

...made personal, individual salvation the central doctrine of Judaism, and the Halakah system the means for its achievement. It internalized the laws and built them into the conscience. The individual could know where he stood with God only by looking into his individual self and by scrutinizing his individual deeds....<sup>28</sup>

In other words, the Pharisees made the individual and his personal salvation through the laws the ultimate concern of Judaism. I will return to this subject at a later time.<sup>29</sup>

There was, besides these three major philosophical schools, a fourth school of thought, which was established by Judas the Galilaeen. According to Josephus,

This school agrees in all other respects with the opinions of the Pharisees, except that they have a passion for liberty that is almost unconquerable, since they are convinced that God alone is their leader and master. They think little of submitting to death in unusual forms and permitting vengeance to fall on kinsmen and friends if only they may avoid calling any man master.<sup>30</sup>

These then were the people who called themselves Jews, and who lived in the land of Palestine during the First Century. Yet, even though they all practiced the religion called Judaism, each in their own way, they nevertheless found it difficult to live in harmony with one another. This next section will deal with their conflicts and problems, not only among themselves, but also with outside forces.

#### B. The Struggle For Power -- the Struggle For Freedom

There were three major problems with which the Jews

of Palestine had to cope, during the First Century. The first of these, and perhaps the most grievous, was between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the two major Jewish philosophical schools of the first century.

The conflict that arose between these two groups was caused, for the most part by each group vying with the other for power. Each tried to preach its philosophy to the masses, and to have the masses accept their doctrines as the doctrines that they must live by.

Josephus makes it clear that the Sadducees were made up and supported by the wealthier elements of the Judean society, while the Pharisees had the support of the masses. He emphasizes this fact in his description of how the Pharisees handed down the regulations of the former generations to their followers.

"For the present I wish merely to explain that the Pharisees had passed on to the people certain regulations handed down by former generations and not recorded in the Laws of Moses, for which reason they are rejected by the Sadducaean group, who hold that only those regulations should be considered valid which were written down in Scripture, and that those which had not been handed down by former generations need not be observed. And concerning these matters the two parties came to have controversies and serious differences, the Sadducees having the confidence of the wealthy alone but no following among the populace, while the Pharisees have the support of the masses.<sup>31</sup>

The love by the masses came about because the Pharisees instituted into Judaism many new reforms, which the Sadducees were very much against. The Pharisees instituted a new legal concept of the Law, by preaching a two-fold Law. They

believed that God gave a two-fold Law on Mount Sinai--both the Written Law and the Oral Law. "They did not see themselves as the creators of the Oral Law, but as its transmitters."<sup>32</sup> The Sadducees, prior to this new innovation had preached only the Written Law, and not the Oral Law.

The Sadducees were the followers of the Aaronide system of authority, while the Pharisees felt that their authority was from Moses, Joshua, the Elders, and the Prophets. The Sadducees were governed by the Priestly class who believed that they were descended from Zaddok, the high priest, who had lived at the time of Solomon.

Another bone of contention between these two groups was in the courts of law. There were two courts of law during the first century--the Bet Din which was made up only of the Pharisees, and the Sanhedrin, which was made up by the High Priest and the Sadducees. Those who make up the Sanhedrin were called Judges.<sup>33</sup>

The Pharisees were much more lenient in their interpretation of the Laws, while the Sadducees were much more strict. This is one of the major reasons why the masses turned in their allegiance to the Pharisees.. One example of Pharisaic leniency concerned itself with walking on the Sabbath. The Sadducees preached that the Sabbatical boundary should be 2000 cubits, which is ordained in the Written Law, while the Pharisees permitted walking on the Sabbath anywhere in the city.

Because of these open contradictions in their inter-

pretation of the laws, and because of their differing systems of authority, the conflict which existed between these two philosophical schools of thought, in their striving to gain ultimate power over the masses, produced a very serious problem for Jewish prestige during the first century.

A second problem that developed during the first century was a conflict which came about due to the Roman occupation of Palestine. Though nearly all of the inhabitants of Palestine, both Pharisees and Sadducees, were against the Roman occupation, the conflict which arose was due to the fact that there were two prevailing attitudes.

On the one hand were the revolutionaries, who wanted to force the Romans out of Palestine by means of force. On the other hand, and equally determined, were the conservatives, who realized that Rome was so powerful and her legions so mighty, that any rebellion would be disastrous for Palestinian Jewry. The conservatives were looked upon as cowards by those who advocated open rebellion, and the revolutionists were looked upon as fools by those who felt that an all out rebellion would be lost before it began.

Josephus was himself a conservative. Although he was very much for getting rid of the Romans, and freeing his country from the Roman persecution, he nevertheless realized that an open rebellion against the powerful Roman legions would be a foolhearty venture, and that those who advocated rebellion could not succeed. His firm belief in Roman invincibility came about, when as a young man of 26 or 27,

he visited Rome.<sup>34</sup> When he returned to Palestine he found his countrymen heading for revolt, and tried in vain to pacify those who were advocating the rebellion.

Thus began the third problem with which the Palestine Jews of the first century had to cope: the rebellion against Rome, and the consequences thereof. In his seven books on The Wars, Josephus attempts to show the development of the Palestinian rebellion and how eventually, as he had predicted, the armies of the rebellion were overthrown and their leaders imprisoned or killed.

The rebellion, for all intent and purpose ended in the year 70, when a large Roman army led by Titus besieged Jerusalem, and through continuous attacks destroyed the heart of the resistance movement. Jerusalem fell, but not before its defenders and the inhabitants of the city suffered horrible sufferings. Because of the siege, a great famine had enveloped the city, and the people within its walls had turned to acting like beasts and wild animals in their attempt to find a morsel of food to sustain them. Josephus described these horrors very vividly, one account appearing as follows:

Meanwhile, the victims perishing of famine throughout the city were dropping in countless numbers and enduring sufferings indescribable. In every house, the appearance anywhere of but a shadow of food was a signal for war, and the dearest of relatives fell to blows, snatching from each other the pitiful supports of life...The very dying were not credited as in want; nay, even those expiring were searched by the brigands, lest any should be concealing food beneath a fold of his garment and feigning death. Gaping with hunger, like mad dogs, these ruffians went staggering and reeling along, battering upon the doors in the manner of drunken

men, and in their perplexity bursting into the same house twice or thrice within a single hour. Necessity drove the victims to gnaw anything, and objects which even the filthiest of brute beasts would reject they condescended to collect and eat; thus in the end they abstained not from belts and shoes and stripped off and chewed the very leather of their buckles.<sup>35</sup>

These then were the people who lived in Palestine during the first century. Though divided into three religio-philosophical schools of thought, and though in open conflict with each other for the support of the masses to its way of interpreting the Jewish heritage of their forefathers, they nevertheless had one common goal in mind. They all wanted to see Palestine free from Roman persecution, which was very harsh at this time. Yet, just as they were in open conflict regarding the validity of their three religious sects, so they were in conflict over how to end the Roman persecution. The revolutionaries won the conflict but lost out in their hope of gaining freedom by overt rebellion. The Roman garrisons of well disciplined soldiers were too much for the untrained but gutty revolutionaries. And so their cause was lost. Judaism, however, continued to survive, and its laws prevailed. As to what these laws were, and why they were able to hold the Jews together, will be discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ROLE AND CONCEPT OF LAW

#### A --- Jewish Law Vs. Pagan Law

The Laws of Moses, according to the Pharisees, had been handed down from Moses to Joshua, from Joshua to the Elders, and from the Elders to the Prophets. In addition to this the Pharisees believed that along with the Written Laws, the Oral Laws were revealed at Sinai. This, as I have already mentioned was in contradiction to the beliefs of the Sadducees who believed that only the Written Laws were divinely revealed.<sup>36</sup> Speaking of Moses as being the great lawgiver, Josephus states in the Contra Apionem:

"He appointed the Law to be the most excellent and necessary form of instruction, ordaining, not that it should be heard once for all or twice or on several occasions, but that every week men should desert their other occupations and assemble to listen to the Law and to obtain a thorough and accurate knowledge of it....<sup>37</sup>

For the Jews who lived during the first century, the Revealed Law had a special place in their lives. Though over a thousand years had passed since Sinai, the Scriptures were still very dear to the people of Palestine.

"We have given practical proof of our reverence for our own Scriptures. For, although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured either to add, or to remove, or to alter a syllable; and it is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth, to regard them as the decrees of God, to abide by them, and if need be, cheerfully to die for them.<sup>38</sup>

These Revealed Laws must have had a special appeal for

these people, for why else would they have held them in such reverence? Certainly they did not expect to receive a reward of silver or gold for the observance of these laws, for in all the generations which had preceeded them, such a reward was never forthcoming. The reward for observance was never a tangible reward, but rather it was one of an intangible nature. The individual who observed these laws was firmly persuaded "...that to those who observe the laws...God has granted a renewed existence and in the revolution of the ages the gift of a better life."<sup>39</sup>

The Laws as a whole satisfied the religious needs of the people, so that they didn't have to search elsewhere to be satisfied. Josephus, in his summarizing the content of the Laws, states:

A glance at them showed that they teach not impiety, that they invite men not to hate their fellows, but to share their possessions; that they are the foes of injustice and scrupulous for justice, banish sloth and extravagance and teach men to be self-dependent and to work with a will; that they deter them from will for the sake of conquest, but render them valiant defenders of the laws themselves; inexorable in punishment, not to be duped by studied words, always supported by actions....I would therefore boldly maintain that we have introduced to the rest of the world a very large number of very beautiful ideas. What greater beauty than inviolable piety? What higher justice than obedience to the laws?....and to be convinced that everything in the whole universe is under the eye and direction of God?<sup>40</sup>

The Law provided the people with a sense of security--- that God cared enough about them to make his revealed word known to them and to them alone. Each individual came to feel that God had revealed His Laws to him alone and that



God cared about his very existence, and never would leave him to venture out into the world alone. The Pharisees had a lot to do with having the people feel this way. They "...made the individual and his personal salvation through the laws the ultimate concern of Judaism."<sup>41</sup>

But the Pharisees made of God something more. Prior to the Pharisees, the Deity was primarily a national God. Due to their teachings, He was now envisioned as a cosmic God who ruled the entire world. Yet, even though God's power was now extended to all peoples everywhere, He was still committed to a single people and a single land, and the Jewish people felt secure in this knowledge. Because of this, they paid their allegiance to this cosmic God by obeying His Laws.

This idea of a cosmic God spread outside the boundaries of Palestine, and others began to see the value of the Jewish concept of religion. Whole peoples turned from the pagan religion of their forefathers to take upon themselves the yoke of Judaism. The impact of these conversions during the first century must have been quite profound. Judaism had lifted the standard bearer of its religious heritage for all to see, and many who saw it turned to follow after it.

Josephus was obviously impressed with this fact, and it appears to me to be quite obvious that he throws up this point whenever he can in his writings. Not wanting to make it too obvious, he incorporates his elation into his historical recountings of this period. One example of this is given

in the speech of King Agrippa. In his trying to dissuade the Jews from rebelling against Rome, he delivered a long dissertation to the Jews who were advocating war.

What allies then do you expect for this war?  
Will you recruit them from the uninhabited wilds?  
For in the habitable world all are Romans--unless,  
maybe, the hopes of some of you soar beyond the  
Euphrates and you count on obtaining aid from your  
kinsmen in Adiabene.<sup>42</sup>

In a footnote to this quotation, the word "proselytes" is proposed as a more correct term than "kinsmen".

The dynasty of Adiabene, a region east of the Tigris on the Parthian frontier, had under Claudius been converted to Judaism [and] some members of the royal family fought on the side of the Jews.<sup>43</sup>

Josephus in his Contra Apionem brings to our attention many other instances to show how widespread and accepted the religion of the Jews had become.

From the Greeks we are severed more by our Geographical position than by our institutions, with the result that we neither hate nor envy them. On the contrary, many of them have agreed to adopt our laws; of whom some have remained faithful, while others, lacking the necessary endurance, have again seceded.<sup>44</sup>

Later on in the same volume he speaks of the great success of the Jews winning over proselytes.

The masses have long since shown a keen desire to adopt our religious observances; and there is not one city, Greek or barbarian, nor a single nation, to which our custom of abstaining from work on the seventh day has not spread and where the fasts and the lighting of lamps and many of our prohibitions in the matter of food are not observed. Moreover, they attempt to immitate our unanimity, our liberal charities, our devoted labour in the crafts, our endurance under persecution on behalf of our laws. The greatest miracle

of all is that our Law holds out no seductive bait of sensual pleasure, but has exercised this influence through its own inherent merits; and, as God permeates the universe, so the Law has found its way among all mankind.<sup>45</sup>

Again, I feel that there must have been something about the Laws of the Jews that appealed to these people. Why else would they have incorporated many of the observances of the Jews into their own mode of living?

The Jewish religion offered one other incentive to the non-Jew of the first century which up until now I have only alluded to; and that is the system of "Internal Law", a term that Dr. Ellis Rivkin uses in his article entitled The Internal City, which I have previously footnoted. Paganism did not have a concept of "Internal Law" to offer its adherents. Paganism had only "External Law".

As long as the pagan lived in a particular city the laws of that city governed his every action. He was considered a citizen of that city, and because of this, he was entitled to all of the powers and protection which these laws provided for its citizenry. Once he left the domains of this city, however, either on his own accord or by force, he no longer could expect the laws to be binding or protective, for such a system of law was no longer operative for him.

The Pharisees had a solution for this problem which encompassed the individual in a rather unique way. They devised a system of law which involved the principle of Halachah. "...Instead of surrounding the individual with the laws of a single city or country, they had the individual

surround the laws."<sup>46</sup> This system of law provided the individual with an "Internal Law"--a law that he carried within him, rather than a law which was external to him. He could now carry this system of law with him wherever he went, regardless of how far he would journey from the city of his citizenry. With this system of law he could go anywhere and still be faithful to it.

The giver of this law was God. He was always with the individual wherever he was, whether he was in Jerusalem or Rome or even on the open highway.

He was always watching with discerning eye the individual's fidelity to the laws, keeping an exhaustive record of his every thought and deed, and calculating the ultimate distribution of reward and punishment. God's justice was the application of measurement to man's mode of life, the establishment of a set of standards; God's mercy, the tempering of the quantitative principle with the qualitative.<sup>47</sup>

All who accepted the concept of "Internal Law" were linked together in a bond of brotherhood and fellowship. The center for affirming this steadfast loyalty was the Synagogue, an institution created by the Pharisees. The institution of the synagogue, once created, spread rapidly throughout Palestine, even to cities in the diaspora. In contrast to the Temple, which was located in Jerusalem until its fall in the year 70, it was neither limited to a specific city nor was it dedicated to a sacrificial cult. The synagogue was rather a decentralized gathering where each individual could go and communicate with God in private. In the synagogue he could renew his allegiance to the

"Internal Law", along with all of his co-religionists and fellow citizens.

The synagogue, in underwriting an unmediated relationship between the single soul and the single God, became the PATRIA, the concrete symbol of one's commitment to an internatized constitution transcending spatial boundaries. God, and not a fixed temple, had become the MAKOM, the Place, the All Present.<sup>48</sup>

Josephus affirms the strength of these internalized laws when he speaks of the loyalty which these laws evoked among the people.

Robbed though we be of wealth, of cities, of all good things, our Law at least remains immortal; and there is not a Jew, so distant from his country, so much in awe of a cruel despot, but has more fear of the Law than of him.<sup>49</sup>

This then was the appeal of the Jewish Law. It's Jewish adherents, as well as many outside of the Jewish faith, came to love and revere these laws because of their appeal to the individual. So great was this appeal, in fact, that most Jews were willing to lay down their lives for these laws and for the God who gave these laws, rather than see their heritage consumed by paganism.

#### B -- Jewish Law and the Jewish God

In the year 26, Pontius Pilate, having been sent by Tiberius to be the procurator for Judaea, introduced into the city of Jerusalem the effigies of Caesar which were attached to standards. This proceeding aroused immense excitement among the Jews; because they felt that their laws were being made a mockery of, since those laws

prohibited the erection of images in the city. When the Jews came before Pilate to complain, he had his armed soldiers surround them. Then he proclaimed to the surrounded Jews that if they refused to accept these images of Caesar into their midst he would have them cut down. "Thereupon the Jews, as by concerted action, flung themselves in a body on the ground, extended their necks, and exclaimed that they were ready rather to die than to transgress the law."<sup>50</sup> Touched by their intense religious zeal, Pilate gave orders for the immediate removal of the standards from Jerusalem.

In his Contra Apionem, Josephus speaks of the reverence which the Jews have for their scriptures.

...It is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth, to regard them as the decrees of God, to abide by them, and, if need be, cheerfully to die for them. Time and again ere now the sight has been witnessed of prisoners enduring tortures and death in every form in the theatres, rather than utter a single word against the Laws and the allied documents.<sup>51</sup>

In contrast to this reverence of the Jews, Josephus proceeds to tell his readers about the Greeks, who apparently are mentioned to represent all other peoples. What Greek would endure as much for the same cause? Even to save the entire collection of his nation's writings from destruction, a Greek would not face the smallest possibility of sustaining personal injury.<sup>52</sup>

It is obvious from the above quotations that the reverence which the Jews of the first century had for their laws was so great and so sincere, that rather than give up their

religious heritage they would rather give up their lives. This is quite a sacrifice when we consider the fact that other nations were not so dedicated; for they would not even face the smallest of personal injuries for the sake of their religion. If I were to conjecture the reason for this Jewish piety, I would say that it was probably greatly influenced by their concept of God.

Josephus describes the God of the Jews from a philosophical standpoint, when he states:

The universe is in Gods' hands; perfect and blessed, self-sufficing and sufficing for all. He is the beginning, the middle, and the end of all things. By His works and bounties He is plainly seen, indeed more manifest than ought else; but His form and magnitude surpass our powers of description. No materials, however costly, are fit to make an image of His; no art has skill to conceive and represent it. The Like of Him we have never seen, we do not imagine, and it is impious to conjecture. We behold His works: The light, the heaven, the earth, the sun, the waters, the reproductive creatures, the sprouting crops. These God created, not with hands, not with toil, not with assistants of Whom He had no need; He willed it so, and forthwith they were made in all their beauty. Him must we worship by the practice of virtue; for that is the most saintly manner of worshipping God.<sup>53</sup>

With such a God concept--the one and all-powerful God--it is not very difficult to see how devoted a people could be. For when a people have many gods, a true allegiance cannot be expected of them. The Greeks, for instance

...represent their gods to be as numerous as they choose, born of one another and engendered in all manner of ways. They assign them different localities and habits, like animal species, some living underground, others in the sea, the oldest of all being chained in Tartarus. Those to whom they have allotted heaven have set over them one who is nominally Father, but in reality a tyrant

and despot; with the result that his wife and brother and the daughter, whom he begot from his own head, conspire against him, to arrest and imprison him, just as he himself had treated his own father.<sup>54</sup>

With this type of God concept, it is not hard to understand why the Greeks could have so little respect for their laws. But let us not think that the Greeks were the only ones who had such a God concept, for all of the pagan peoples who lived during the first century looked upon the diety as being composed of many gods.

So it was, that the Jews of the first century were dedicated to the observance of their laws---at any cost to their personal being. Their love of God and the appeal of the Pharisaic concept of "Internal Law" did more to foster this allegiance than any other single occurrence.

Now that we have compared the Law of the Jews and that of the pagans, as to their effect upon their followers, it would be well to examine the effect which these laws had upon the everyday life of its adherents. This I will cover in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE PARTICULARS OF JEWISH LAW DURING THE FIRST CENTURY

#### A -- The Daily Life of the Jews

Though constantly under the watchful eye of the Roman procurator, and the Roman legions, the Jews who lived in Palestine during the first century were able to practice their Judaism with very little interference from the Roman government. Whatever other problems the people had with the Roman occupation, they very rarely had problems which involved their daily lives as Jews. They were permitted to observe their festivals, their practice of abstaining from work on the Sabbath was respected, they continued to offer sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem until its destruction in the year 70, and they were permitted to offer prayers to their God in the tradition of their forefathers.

#### 1. -- Observance of the Festivals

Josephus, either because certain festivals played no major role in the events he chose to write about, or, because certain festivals played no major role in the life of the Jews who lived during the first century, neglects to mention certain festivals which we would consider to be important today. In fact, Josephus only records for us the observance of five festivals: Passover, Pentecost, the Feast of

Tabernacles, Chanukah, and Purim. Aside from these, I could find no mention.

Passover appears to have had the same significance for the Jews of the first century as it has for us today. It was celebrated on the fourteenth of the month of Xanthicus,<sup>55</sup> at which time it was the custom to serve unleavened bread.<sup>56</sup> On this occasion, people from the countryside would journey from the small towns and villages to Jerusalem, for this was one of the festivals<sup>57</sup> at which time sacrifices were offered at the Temple.<sup>58</sup>

The festival of Pentacost, according to Josephus, "...occurs seven weeks after [Passover], and takes its name from the number of intervening days."<sup>59</sup> Although nothing more is noted by Josephus concerning this festival, it is apparent that the dating of this festival was done in the same manner as we ourselves date it; that is, seven weeks from Passover. We do know, however, that the festival of Pentacost was also an occasion for offering up sacrifices in the Temple, and that all those who were able, gathered in Jerusalem at this time, just as they did for the festival of Passover.<sup>60</sup>

The Feast of Tabernacles was the third of the "Pilgrim Festivals". Josephus describes to us the advance of the Roman general Cestius with his entire army from the city of Antipatris to Lydda, in 66 A.D. "From Antipatris, Cestius advanced to Lydda and found the city deserted, for the whole population had gone up to Jerusalem for the Feast of

Tabernacles."<sup>61</sup> Besides offering sacrifices to God, during this festival, Josephus relates to us, that it was also the custom for the Jews to build tabernacles to God.<sup>62</sup>

The two remaining festivals are spoken of quite briefly, by Josephus. In describing the festival of Chanukah, Josephus merely denotes its existence.

And from that time to the present we observe this festival, which we call the festival of Lights, giving name to it, I think, from the fact that the right to worship appeared to us at a time when we hardly dared hope for it.<sup>63</sup>

The same is true also of the festival of Purim. In fact, in his description of the events which brought about the festival, Josephus chooses to call the festival by its Greek name, Phruraioi,<sup>64</sup> which is a transliteration; just as we say Purim in English. Aside from this, Josephus mentions nothing more concerning this festival.

These then were the festivals which apparently had some significance for the Jews who lived in Palestine during the first century. It is obvious, however, that only the three "Pilgrim Festivals", mentioned above, were of any real significance, for it was at these times that the people were brought together to Jerusalem to celebrate the festivals. Also, I could find no evidence in Josephus that these festivals were in any way disrupted because of the Roman occupation.

## 2 -- The Sabbath Day

The Sabbath was obviously the most important day of the week for the Palestinian Jews who lived during the first century. It was clearly a day of rest, during which

time no manner of work was done. In his Contra Apionem, Josephus describes to us the ridicule with which the historian Agatharcides described the Sabbath day. Even so, the description of the Sabbath worship by Agatharcides is very enlightening, for it allows us to observe the manner in which the Jews of this period preserved the Sabbath day--to keep it holy.

The people known as Jews...have a custom of abstaining from work every seventh day; on those occasions they neither bear arms nor take any agricultural operations in hand, nor engage in any other form of public service, but pray with outstretched hands in the temples until evening.<sup>65</sup>

Agatharcides apparently failed to qualify one point, however, and that is the matter of bearing arms. In his Antiquities, Josephus states that "...the Law permits us to defend ourselves against those who begin a battle and strike us, but it does not allow us to fight against an enemy that does anything else".<sup>66</sup>

In general, the Sabbath day was respected by the Roman legions. When John of Gischala imposed upon the Roman general, Titus, in 67 AD, to postpone his attack upon Gischala until after the Sabbath day, Titus agreed and removed himself from the area surrounding the city.<sup>67</sup> However, the Jews themselves were very often not quite so honorable. For example, in 66 AD, the Jews of Jerusalem massacred a Roman garrison, seemingly ignoring the fact that it was the Sabbath day.<sup>68</sup>

It is very possible that even at this early date the Torah was read on the Sabbath day, though Josephus never says so in so many words. What he does say, however, is

that "...every week men should desert their other occupations and assemble to listen to the Law...."69 I would assume from this, since reference is made to deserting other occupations, that Josephus is referring to the Sabbath day.

The Sabbath day was also a day of assembling at the synagogue,<sup>70</sup> though the exact form of worship is not described by Josephus.

Thus it can be seen that the Sabbath was very much revered by the Jews of the first century. It played a very prominent role in their very existence as Jews, and perhaps it was this outlet--of practicing their religion as they so chose, that enabled them to put up with the Roman occupation, as long as they did.

### 3. --- Sacrifices and Prayers

The Jews who lived in Palestine during the first century were very much preoccupied with the practice of their religion. Three times a year--at Passover, Pentacost, and the Feast of Tab ernacles--these Jews would make the journey to Jerusalem in order to present their sacrifices to God, at the Temple. It was because of their extreme piety and their strict observance of the Laws that bound the people together in their common worship of God.

The concept of sacrificing animals was not new to these people. Centuries before, while leading a predominantly agricultural existence, there came into being the many Biblical laws which dealt with sacrificing, not only

concerning when such sacrifices should be offered, but also how they should be offered, and the people adhered to these laws, as best they could.

In his Antiquities, Josephus describes a seige of Jerusalem which had taken place in the year 65 BC. In the account he makes a special note of telling us just how important the idea of sacrificing animals was, and how dedicated the people were to see that the Biblical ordinances were carried out.

And one may get an idea of the extreme piety which we show toward God and of our strict observance of the laws from the fact that during the seige the priests were not hindered from performing any of the sacred ceremonies through fear, but twice a day, in the morning and at the ninth hour [3 p.m.], they performed the sacred ceremonies at the altar, and did not omit any of the sacrifices even when some difficulty arose because of the attacks.<sup>71</sup>

The priests, as I have mentioned above, were in charge of performing the daily sacrifices. They would enter the sanctuary every morning when the Temple was opened, and twice during the day, in the morning and again at mid-day, they would offer their sacrifices; and so the ceremony was continued, until the Temple was closed at the end of each day.

The offering of sacrifices was an occasion for prayer. When the animals were sacrificed, the priests would offer up prayers to God for the welfare of the community. These prayers for the community took precedence over prayers for the welfare of the individual, for the people felt that the community as a whole was more important than any one individual.<sup>72</sup>

This, then, was the daily life in which the Jews of the first century lived. Though they found their homeland occupied by pagan soldiers, and though the Roman government could always be found keeping a watchful eye over the citizenry, the people lived in relative harmony with their religious heritage. Yet, this would not have all been possible, if, when the Romans had conquered the land, they had destroyed the Institutions, for the Institutions played a great role in keeping the Jewish religion alive and vibrant during the first century.

## B -- Jewish Institutions

### 1 -- The Priesthood

One of the major Jewish Institutions during this period of Jewish history was the organized priesthood. According to Josephus, there were four priestly tribes, each comprising upwards of five thousand members, who officiated by rotation for a fixed period of days. When the term of one party ended, others came to offer the sacrifices in their place.<sup>73</sup> From this notation by Josephus, we learn that one of the roles of the priesthood was the offering up of sacrifices to God upon the altar in the Temple.

The Priesthood was made up of individuals who were set apart from the rest of the people. They were looked upon with reverence, and because of their particular standing in the Jewish community, certain things were expected of them, and they had to live by strict rules and regulations. The lineage of the priests had to be pure, and to insure this

purity, a member of the priesthood, in order to marry, had to marry a woman of his own race. He had to investigate her pedigree, obtain her family's geneology from the archives, and produce a number of witnesses to this affect.<sup>74</sup> Whoever violated any of these rules was forbidden to minister at the altar or to take any part in the divine worship.

The priest had to be in perfect physical health, because

The very slightest mutilation of the person was a disqualification for the priesthood, and a priest who in the course of his ministry met with such an accident was deprived of his office.<sup>75</sup>

As with any other group of individuals, the priests, too, had one of their number as their leader. This was the high priest, whose function it was to supervise and direct the other members of the priesthood. Josephus seems to infer, however, in his Contra Apionem, that the office of high priest was not a permanent office.<sup>76</sup>

With his colleagues, he will sacrifice to God, safeguard the laws, adjudicate in cases of dispute, [and] punish...those convicted of [a] crime. Any who disobey him will pay the penalty as for impiety towards God Himself.<sup>77</sup>

But all was not peace and harmony among the members of the priesthood. According to Josephus, there must have been several high priests and there were occasions for open quarreling between these high priests and the ordinary priests, who had gained the support of the leaders of the populous. When, in 59 AD, King Agrippa conferred the high priesthood upon a man named Ishmael, there was "...enkindled mutual enmity and class warfare between the high priests, on the one hand, and the priests and leaders of the populous of



Jerusalem, on the other."78 The violence which followed was a shameful event in the history of the Jewish priesthood. In any case, it was through the priesthood, that the Jews of the first century were able to carry on the religious heritage of their forefathers, as regards their observance of the sacrificial laws.

## 2 -- The Temple and the Synagogue

As I have already mentioned above, the place of offering up sacrifices to God was in the Temple at Jerusalem. The Temple, until its destruction in the year 70 AD, was the center of the religious worship of the Jews, for it served, not only as the place where sacrifices could be offered up to give thanks to God for his many blessings, but also as the place, when the Jews had turned in rebellion against Rome, where the Jews could assemble to discuss their war strategy.79

### The Temple

...had four surrounding courts, each with its special statutory restrictions. The outer court was open to all, foreigners included; women during their impurity were alone refused admission. To the second court all Jews were admitted and when uncontaminated by any defilement, their wives; to the third male Jews, if clean and purified; the fourth, the priests robed in their priestly vestments. The sanctuary was entered only by the high-priests, clad in the raiment peculiar to themselves.80

Nothing of the nature of food or drink is brought within the Temple; objects of this kind may not even be offered on the altar, save those which are prepared for the sacrifices.81

But the Temple in Jerusalem was not the only place where the people could go in order to worship God. Even

though most of the people made the three yearly pilgrimages to Jerusalem,<sup>82</sup> there were some, who for one reason or another, could not make the journey. Besides, the three pilgrimages comprised only a few days out of the year, and the people needed a means by which to worship God throughout the rest of the year. For these reasons, there were also established throughout the country synagogues or prayer-houses. These were often built outside of the towns and villages, that were near rivers or the seacoast for purification purposes.<sup>83</sup>

Josephus is quite clear concerning the purpose of the synagogue and what use was made of the synagogue building during the first century. For instance, the synagogue must have been used on the Sabbath, for Josephus states:

The Jews in Caesarea [66 AD] had a synagogue adjoining a plot of ground....They wanted the plot of ground which the owner refused to sell to them. On the following day, which was a Sabbath, when the Jews assembled at the synagogue....<sup>84</sup>

The synagogue must have been a very large edifice, able to accomodate a large crowd, for Josephus describes such an assemblage of persons in his Vita: "The next day there was a general assembly in the Prayer-house, a huge building capable of accommodating a large crowd".<sup>85</sup>

Even so, the synagogue was not a substitute for the Temple in Jerusalem. Whereas the Temple was the place of offering up sacrifices to God, the synagogue was primarily a place of meeting. Although the synagogue must have

served as a place of worship, since it was also called a prayer-house, and it was used on the Sabbath day, I could find no evidence, from the writings of Josephus, that there existed in the synagogue of the first century, a "D'vir", or "Holy of Holies". Therefore, I must conclude that the synagogue was not a substitute for the Temple worship that took place in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, it does seem to have provided an outlet for the religiously minded, when occasions arose that prohibited a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

### 3 -- The Sanhedrin

Although the priests had jurisdiction over the Laws, there was, in addition, a supreme court in Palestine during the first century, which was called the Sanhedrin.<sup>86</sup> It was the supreme legislative and judicial body of the Jewish state, and its judicial sessions were held in Jerusalem. Those who made up the Sanhedrin were called Judges,<sup>87</sup> and its members numbered seventy-one.

The Sanhedrin must have wielded a great amount of power and prestige, during this period of Jewish history, for Josephus states:

...no matter who it was that came before this Synhedrion for trial, he has shown himself humble and has assumed the manner of one who is fearful and seeks mercy from [them] by letting his hair grow long and wearing a black garment.<sup>88</sup>

The Sanhedrin disappeared from the Jewish scene about the same time as the destruction of the Temple, in the year 70 AD, never to be convened again. Yet, it's existence

during the first century provided the Jews of Palestine with a supreme court which could legislate and interpret the laws by which the people were to be bound.

### C --- Concepts of Immortality<sup>89</sup>

For the Jews who lived in Palestine during the first century, the idea of death and dying was an important part of life itself. Although life and living were important to these people, they did not seem to have the fear of death that most of us do today. They looked upon death in a philosophical vane, fully believing that those who led a righteous life here on earth, and who were willing to die, rather than to forsake the laws of their forefathers, would attain immortality for their souls.<sup>90</sup> It was this concept of an afterlife which enabled the people to adhere to their laws, without fear of Roman reprisals. Josephus relates that when certain Jews were caught cutting down the golden eagle, which Herod had erected to honor Rome, they were brought before Herod, and the following conversation took place between Herod and the captives: "Who ordered you to do so?" "The law of our fathers." "And why [are you] so exaltant, when you will shortly be put to death?" "Because after our death, we shall enjoy greater felicity."<sup>91</sup>

It was one thing to die for the law, but it was another thing to commit suicide for that same purpose. When Josephus, in 67 AD was asked to surrender to the Roman general Vespasian, those Jews who were around Josephus told him that it would be better to commit suicide than to give himself up, Josephus

turned to his compatriots with scorn and said: "No; suicide is alike repugnant to that nature which all creatures share, and an act of impiety towards God who created us."<sup>92</sup> In the same vane, Josephus shares with his readers the view that life is a gift of God.

And God--think you not that He is indignant when man treats His gift with scorn? For it is from Him that we have received our being, and it is to Him that we should leave the decision to take it away.<sup>93</sup>

When a Jew passed away certain rites were carried out by those who were left behind, much like the rites which are carried on today. Josephus describes several such rites. When Herod died in 4 BC, his son Archelaus kept seven days of mourning for him.<sup>94</sup> When the city of Joppa had fallen to the Romans in 67 AD, most everyone thought that Josephus was among the fallen, and the whole populous of the city of Jerusalem mourned for him. "Thus for thirty days the lamentations never ceased in the city, and many of the mourners hired flute players to accompany their funeral dirges."<sup>95</sup>

The actual funeral ceremony was carried out by the nearest of kin, but all could share in the mourning.

The pious rites which [the law] provides for the dead do not consist of costly obsequies or the erection of conspicuous monuments. The funeral ceremony is to be undertaken by the nearest relatives, and all who pass while a burial is proceeding must join the procession and share the mourning of the family. After the funeral the house and its inmates must be purified [in order that anyone guilty of murder may be very far from thinking himself pure].<sup>95</sup>

The life of the Jews who lived in Palestine during the

first century was a good life, considering the fact that their country was an occupied country. They were a people whose existence revolved around their religious heritage. They lived and died trying to observe these Laws as best they could, and regardless of the adversities which entered into their lives, they were not usually dissuaded from their loyalty to God.

## CHAPTER V

### SOME CONCLUSIONS

I have entitled this last chapter "Some Conclusions" because I do not feel that any one conclusion can be reached concerning the question which I raised in the first chapter of this thesis; that question being: "WHAT WAS THERE ABOUT THE RELIGION CALLED JUDAISM, DURING THE FIRST CENTURY OF THE COMMON ERA, WHICH ENABLED ITS FOLLOWERS TO SURVIVE AS A RELIGION, EVEN THOUGH MANY PEOPLE WERE TURNING TO THE NEW CHRISTIAN RELIGION?"

One conclusion which I have reached, is that during the first century, Jewish Law was such that it was capable of energizing its followers to loyalty. It provided the people with a reason for existence, and when occasions arose, which made it appear to the people that this was indeed Judaism's darkest hour, the Law helped to enable the people to survive, so that they were able to come through the calamity with the smallest of scars.

The Law was all encompassing. It was the word of God given to Moses on Mount Sinai and transmitted to the generations which followed by the great and learned men who lived in each generation. The people believed that he who observed the Law was destined to receive the gift of a renewed existence from God. The Law provided the people with a sense of security --that God cared enough about them to make His revealed word

known to them, and to them alone. And this thought leads me to another conclusion, perhaps even more significant than the first.

Judaism was a religion with which the individual could identify, for God's word was revealed not merely to the masses as a whole, but to each individual, and the observance of God's Law was the responsibility of each individual. Every Jew came to feel that God had revealed His Law to him alone, and that God cared about his very existence, and never would leave him to venture out into the world alone. Because of this, the people felt secure. They paid their allegiance to God by obeying His Law.

The Jewish Law offered something else to its adherents --a concept, which no other religion, prior to the first century, could offer its people--the concept of an "Internal Law". Instead of a law which surrounded the people, this was a law that was surrounded by the people. The Jew of the first century carried the Law with him, wherever he went, regardless of how far he would journey from the city of his citizenry. With this system of law he could go anywhere and still be faithful to it. It was perhaps this idea, more than any other single idea, which enabled the Jews, living outside of the land of Palestine, to remain faithful to the religion of their forefathers.

Paganism did not offer to its followers an "Internal Law"; but rather, an "External Law". Once the pagans left their country, these external laws were no longer binding.



The Roman gods were the gods of Rome, and though they were given powers beyond that of mortal men, they did not govern the ways of man. Roman laws were binding upon Roman citizens, but they were not the laws of the gods; rather, they were the laws of man. Once the Roman citizen left his native land he was no longer bound by these laws, and was therefore a free-agent.

Many people have expressed the thought, that the reason Christianity was able to gain such a stronghold within the Roman empire was because "the world was ripe for a new religion". Whatever the reason, the first century witnessed the beginnings of what is today the religion of millions of people throughout both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres. I am of the opinion that the reason that Christianity was able to flourish as it did during the first century was because Christianity was offering to the pagan peoples of the then civilized world, a new concept of religion, which paganism was not able to offer.

The Jews who lived in Palestine during the first century did not flock to the new Christian religion as the pagans did. They had no need to! For Judaism was already providing its adherents with all that was necessary as far as their religious needs were concerned; those needs having been provided since Sinai. This, then, is why, the religion called Judaism was able to survive, though many of the pagan peoples were turning to the new Christian religion. This, then, is why, the Jews who lived during the first century,

did not rush en masse to join this new religion. For why replace what is known and self-satisfying with that which could offer the people no more than what they already had.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Miller, Milton G., Our Religion and Our Neighbors, p. 70.
2. See: "The Loeb Classical Library", Volumes I-IX, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page, and W. H. D. Rouse. In Hebrew Union College Library as XC.
3. See: Graetz, Heinrich, The History of the Jews, Volume 2, p. 268, 276, 281, 283.  
See: Thackery, H. St. John, Josephus, The Man and the Historian, p. 12.
4. Introduction to "The Loeb Classical Library", Volume I, p. X.
5. Josephus. The Life. 10-12.
6. Introduction to "The Loeb Classical Library", Volume I, p. XVI.
7. Ibid., p. VII.
8. Ibid., p. IX.
9. Ibid., p. X.
10. Josephus. The Life. 358-359.
11. See p. 3, Footnote 5.
12. Josephus. Jewish War. II, p. 369, Note C.
13. Ibid., II: 120.
14. Ibid., 122.
15. Ibid., 124-127.
16. Ibid., p. 379, Note A.
17. Ibid., 145.
18. Ibid., 147.

19. Ibid., 155.
20. Josephus. Antiquities. XIII: 172.
21. Ibid., 173.
22. "The Sadducees accepted the Written but not the Oral Law, whereas the Pharisees accepted both." Antiquities. XVIII: p. 14, Note A.
23. "What Josephus means when he says that the Sadducees are very argumentative is that they are, even among themselves, rather boorish in their behavior, and in their intercourse with their peers are as rude as to aliens." Antiquities. XVIII: p. 14, Note B.
24. Josephus. Antiquities. XIII: 288 and 401.
25. Ibid., 408.
26. Rivkin, Ellis, The Internal City, p. 230.
27. Josephus. Antiquities. XVIII: 13-15.
28. Rivkin, Ellis, The Internal City, p. 233.
29. This is discussed in fuller detail beginning on page 21.
30. Josephus. Antiquities. XVIII: 39.
31. Ibid., XIII: 297-298.
32. Rivkin, Ellis, The Internal City, p. 230.
33. Josephus. Antiquities. XX: 200.
34. Introduction to "The Loeb Classical Library", Volume I, p. VIII.
35. Josephus. The Jewish War. VI: 193-197.
36. See page 12.
37. Josephus. Against Apion. II: 175.
38. Ibid., I: 42.

- 39.. Ibid., II: 218.
40. Ibid., 291-294.
41. Rivkin, Ellis, The Internal City. p. 233.
42. Josephus. The Jewish War. II: 388.
43. Ibid., p. 475, Footnote F.
44. Josephus. Against Apion. II:123.
45. Ibid., 282-284.
46. Rivkin, Ellis, The Internal City. p. 235.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., p. 236.
49. Josephus. Against Apion. II: 277.
50. Josephus. The Jewish War. II: 174.
51. Josephus. Against Apion. I: 42-43.
52. Ibid., 44.
53. Ibid., II: 190-192.
54. Ibid., 239-241.
55. Josephus. The Jewish War, V: 99 plus Footnote B.
56. Josephus. Antiquities. XX: 106.
57. They also came to Jerusalem for the purpose of offering sacrifices during the holidays of Pentacost and The Feast of Tabernacles. Josephus. Antiquities. XVIII: page 26, Footnote B.
58. Josephus. The Jewish War. II: 10 and 224.
59. Ibid., 42.
60. See Footnote 56.
61. Josephus. The Jewish War. II: 515.
62. Ibid., VI: 300.

63. Josephus. Antiquities. XII: 325.
64. Ibid., XI: 295.
65. Josephus. Against Apion. I: 209-211.
66. Josephus. Antiquities. XIV: 63.
67. Josephus. The Jewish War. IV: 97-104.
68. Ibid., II: 456.
69. Josephus. Against Apion. II: 175.
70. Josephus. The Jewish War. II: 289.
71. Josephus. Antiquities. XIV: 65.
72. Josephus. Against Apion. II: 196-197.
73. Ibid., 108.
74. Ibid., I: 30-31.
75. Ibid., 284. Based on Leviticus 21: 17-23.
76. Ibid., 193.
77. Ibid., 194.
78. Josephus. Antiquities. XX: 180.
79. Josephus. The Jewish War. II: 562.
80. Josephus. Against Apion. II: 103-104.
81. Ibid., 108.
82. Passover, Pentacost, and The Feast of Tabernacles, which I  
have already mentioned on page 31.
83. Josephus. The Jewish War. IV: page 119, Note D.
84. Ibid., II: 289.
85. Josephus. The Life. 277.
86. Called Synhedrion, the Greek word for this judicial and  
legislative body.
87. Josephus. Antiquities. XX: 200.

88. Ibid., XIV: 172.
89. For more specific views of the Sadducees, Essenes, and Pharisees on this subject, see Ch. 2, Section A.
90. Josephus. The Jewish War. I: 650.
91. Ibid., 653.
92. Ibid., III: 369.
93. Ibid., 371.
94. Ibid., II: 1.
95. Ibid., III: 437.
96. Josephus. Against Apion. II: 205.

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