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Magic in the Works of Flavius Josephus

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ABSTRACT

Title: Magic in the Works of Flavius Josephus
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The aim of this thesis is to analyse Josephus' approach and understanding of the category and terminology of magic. Through a detailed examination of every instance of his employments of the most distinctive magical terms (γόης, μάντις, μάγος, φαρμακός/φάρμακον) in his works, coupled with three detailed case studies of his biblical paraphrase in the *Jewish Antiquities*, and set against an analysis of these same terms in the literature of his first century CE Graeco-Roman context, I will explore his distinctive approach to magic. This is an area of Josephan scholarship which has been largely untouched; this thesis represents the first detailed analysis of Josephus' approach to magic, as well as the first comprehensive survey of his employment of magical terminology.

Chapter 1 introduces a number of fundamental aspects of this thesis, beginning with a consideration of the term 'magic', its relationship to religion, its uses and abuses in previous scholarly approaches, and the importance of terminology with respect to a rigorous and non-dichotomous approach in the exploration of the ancient texts. It will also consider Josephus as author; his context, sources, audience, and aims. Finally, it briefly outlines my approaches to primary (the biblical texts) and secondary (Philo, Pseudo-Philo, PGM, Graeco-Roman authors) sources.

Chapter 2 will examine the role of magic and its terminology in Josephus' world, considering both the Jewish and Roman aspects of his unique situation. Providing an exploration of the various meanings and evolutions of the four main magical terms in the Graeco-Roman world of the first century CE, this chapter will also explore the role of sanction in defining positive and negative magic, as well as summarizing each instance of these terms in Josephus' corpus.

Chapter 3, the first of the specific case studies, will analyse Josephus' use of magical terminology in his paraphrasing of the biblical story of Moses' magical battle at the court of Pharaoh. Following a detailed consideration of his biblical sources and their use of magical terminology, I consider Josephus' own appraisal, engaging in a detailed study of his own employments and considering this against our authors' own social context, his concerns for the representation of Judaism, and his understanding of Roman thinking on magic.

Chapter 4 considers a similar approach to the figure of Balaam, exploring the extent to which Josephus could create a positive image of the μάντις, whilst being aware of the problematic definition of this term which existed in his late first century CE Roman context.

Chapter 5, the last of the case studies, focuses on the witch of Endor. Here again I emphasize the care and attention which Josephus employs in his use of magical terminology, as well as observing a direct relationship with his positive appraisal of a potentially negative figure.

Chapter 6 concludes by depicting Josephus as an author conscious of both positive and negative traditions of magic, capable of relating the magical stories of his Jewish heritage to a Roman audience through the precise and considered use of magical terminology.

The appendix constitutes a table, with accompanying explanation, detailing the status of magic in Roman law of the first century CE.

Magic in the Works of Flavius Josephus

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, PHILIP JEWELL.....,

declare that the thesis entitled

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and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission.

Signed:

Date:.....02/02/07.....

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Without this long list of people my thesis could not have been completed; I thank them all greatly. Of course, any mistakes which remain are solely my own responsibility.

Abbreviations

ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ACF	<i>Annuaire du College de France</i>
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
Ant.	<i>Josephus, Jewish Antiquities</i>
Apion	<i>Josephus, Against Apion</i>
AnOr	<i>Analecta orientalia</i>
b.	<i>Babylonian Talmud</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BDB	<i>Brown, F., Driver, S., and Briggs, C., Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CPh	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
HALOT	<i>Koehler, L., and Baumgartner, W., The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
JANES	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JASM	<i>Journal for the Academic Study of Magic</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theology Society</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
JSP	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
Life	<i>Josephus, Vita</i>
LXX	<i>Septuagint</i>
MT	<i>Masoretic Text</i>
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NRSV	<i>New Revised Standard Version of the Bible</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
RhM	<i>Rheinisches museum für philologie</i>
RSR	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
SBLSP	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
SEA	<i>Svensk exegetisk årsbok</i>
StEv	<i>Studia Evangelica</i>
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
VC	<i>Vigiliae christianae</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
War	<i>Josephus, Jewish War</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

Abbreviations of titles of tractates in the Mishnah, Tosefta and Talmuds follow Danby, H., *The Mishnah*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1933, p.806.

Abbreviations of titles of books in the Hebrew Scriptures, New Testament and Apocrypha follow Browning, W.R.F., *Oxford Dictionary of the Bible*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, p.xi.

Chapter 1 – Introduction: Magic in the Works of Flavius Josephus

The word ‘magic’ conjures up a number of images, from the stage illusion of professional magicians like Derren Brown, to the fantastic magical talents of the fictitious Harry Potter. As such the term denotes a wide array of actions and events; it carries different meanings for different peoples, subtly alters meaning when crossing cultural and ideological borders. Indeed, by use of an oft quoted phrase, ‘your magic is my miracle, and vice versa’, we may summarize the extent to which personal opinions affect definitions.¹ In this thesis I will be examining the image of magic provided by Flavius Josephus, a highly complex and nuanced representation of ancient magic and magicians. Recent work in the field of Jewish and Christian culture in antiquity has made a quiet but impressive advance in our knowledge concerning magic. Each year sees the publication and translation of new magical texts, opening their secrets to a wider, and growing, audience. Likewise, critical thought has exposed the failings of previous theories of magic, thus facilitating the research of ancient forms of magic, free from the constricting models of modern theorists. However, despite this explosion of interest in the general field of magic in the ancient world, very little attention has been paid to Josephus’ own appraisals, theories, and representations. This is somewhat surprising when we consider Josephus’ importance with regard to Jewish history in the first century CE; perhaps, in this respect, the field of study suffers somewhat from Trachtenberg’s influential denial of the magical elements in Jewish culture.² This thesis will aim to fill this void by studying in detail

¹ . R.M.Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, N.Y., Columbia University Press, 1959, p.93.

² . In his foreword to J.Trachtenberg’s *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion*, (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, originally published by Behrman’s Jewish Book House, 1939) Moshe Idel remarks (p.ix) that the ‘title and subtitle of his book are more than an

Josephus' attitude towards magic. In many respects this will be an exploration of the unknown; by a careful analysis of Josephus' evidence I hope to show that the subject of magic can tell us much about Josephus as a political author, and, moreover, that it is a fruitful area of study too long neglected.

In reviewing Josephus' attitude towards magic in the Graeco-Roman world of the late first century CE I will be exploring a number of issues, not least of which is how Josephus' appraisal of magical episodes differs from his sources, the biblical texts, and from his contemporaries, such as Philo and Pseudo-Philo. In essence there will be a total of five primary aims:

- 1) to explore an area of Josephan studies not previously touched on;
- 2) to show how, in dealing with the subject of magic, as in other areas of his paraphrase, Josephus was a creative writer who did not merely replicate the text of the Bible in an unthinking manner, but in fact offered his own carefully considered appraisal;
- 3) to show that Josephus understood the nuances of Graeco-Roman magical terminology and the impact which it could have in representing both virtuous heroes and villainous rebels;
- 4) to show that Josephus recognised both positive/legal/sanctioned forms of magic as well as the more traditional negative/illegal/unsanctioned forms;
- 5) and finally to show that Josephus understood the influence which the social elites of Rome had in defining the legality and descriptive terminology of magic.

appropriate description of its contents', and that they 'contain much of the attitude of the author toward his topic.' In other words, Trachtenberg's work is a product of its age, an age in which magic was a purely negative term, and in which ancient Judaism was adjudged to have no need of, or affiliation with, magic.

These aims will be explored through four chapters; the first will provide a summary of magic in Josephus' era and will function as a basis for three further case studies concerning the 'magical' stories of Moses, Balaam, and the witch of Endor. The first of these chapters will deal with the history, development, and representation of magical terminology in Josephus' era. I will explore the nature of magic in the context in which Josephus wrote, namely imperial Rome, showing that our author was not only aware of the varieties of magical terms, but also that he was capable of a considered precision in employing them for a variety of purposes. This exploration will be threefold; I will begin with an analysis of the status of magic in the Roman world of the late first century CE, highlighting not only the fluctuating nature of definitions and attitudes, but also the influence which the social elites had in setting the definitions of legality and acceptability; the second phase will consist of an explanation of the histories and meanings of the four most common magical terms in Graeco-Roman literature, μαγός, γόης, φαρμακόν, and μάντις, as well as a thorough survey of each instance of these terms in Josephus' works; finally, I will review the employment of these four terms in three case studies, concerning Moses, Balaam, and the Witch of Endor, demonstrating the care and precision which Josephus takes in describing magical elements of Judaism to his Roman audience. It is hoped that, through a precise analysis of Josephus' terminology and approach to magic, each of the five aims may be illuminated to an extent which allows us to speak of Josephus as an author not only aware of, but also interested in, magic. Indeed, it is hoped that Josephus will emerge from this thesis as an extremely creative author who took great care to appeal to both Roman and Jewish sensibilities concerning magic.

What is Magic? A Brief History of Theories of Magic

At the heart of this thesis is the theme of magic, though what exactly this term connotes and how it should be defined has been a topic of debate for centuries. The popular image of magic, as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, runs as follows;³

- 1) The use of ritual activities or observances which are intended to influence the course of events or to manipulate the natural world, usually involving the use of an occult or secret body of knowledge;
- 2) An inexplicable and remarkable influence producing surprising results. Also, an enchanting quality; exceptional skill or talent;
- 3) The art of producing (by sleight of hand, optical illusion etc.) apparently inexplicable phenomena.

We might note the use of the term ‘apparently’, the reference to illusion and sleight of hand, and the general sense of mystery, all of which refer to the more negative appraisal of magic as nothing more than a ‘parlour trick’ or ‘deception of the senses’.⁴ However, the entry also refers to the more positive interpretation of magic, by which supernatural events are accomplished by unknown means. These two images of magic have been at odds for millennia, and the conflict has informed the methodological approaches to the subject adopted by modern scholarship, which searched for a theory of magic that went beyond the basic dictionary definition. A study of this scholarship

³ . Definition of ‘magic’ (*noun*) taken from the online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary* located at <http://dictionary.oed.com> last accessed on 30/05/06.

⁴ . Indeed, the most famous practising magician of the twentieth century, Aleister Crowley, insisted on employing the term ‘magic’ for such parlour tricks and deceptions, whilst using his own term ‘magick’ of his own work, defining it as ‘the art or science of causing change in conformity with will’; *Magick*, J.Symonds and K.Grant (eds.), London, 1979, p.133. See further, R.Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon, A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp.173-177.

shows several points which have great relevance and impact upon the approaches adopted towards magic in the ancient world. Primarily, magic has only recently become a serious and widespread object of study in scholarship, and, as a result, there are multiple theories of magic, often influenced by modern ideas and ideals. In addition, modern theorists have often attempted to provide all-embracing and universal theories of magic, especially with relation to identifying ritual and action; the evidence available from the Graeco-Roman world, however, suggests that such theories, especially those which separate magic and religion as discrete categories, are unsustainable. As a result, a detailed survey of previous methodologies is called for in order to contextualise my own approach.

The interest shown in the theory of magic by historians in the latter half of the twentieth century stems largely from the discipline of anthropology and its studies concerning modern magic from around the world. Many anthropologists have studied 'primitive' societies from the lofty vantage point of modern science, values, ethics and logic. The prime examples of this approach, of seeing their own societies' distant and barbarous past in the present societies of Australian islands or African bushlands, are to be found in the 'intellectualist' theories of Frazer⁵ and Tylor.⁶ These 'armchair' anthropologists were interested in tracing the lines of human progress from savagery, through barbarism, to civilisation. Both wrote voluminous works on the question of magic and religion in ancient and modern societies, with Frazer's *The Golden Bough* becoming a much read and respected book.⁷ Rooted in the philosophies of their age,

⁵ . J.G.Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, London, Macmillan, first published 1890, revised abridged edition, 1990.

⁶ . E.B.Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 2 vols., London, John Murray, 1929.

⁷ . On the influence of *The Golden Bough* for the subsequent investigations into the theory of magic see G.Cunningham, *Religion and Magic, Approaches and Theories*, N.Y., New York University Press, 1999.

especially the ideas of evolution and the gradual progression of civilisation towards a (Victorian) summit, they used science and logic, the hallmarks of Victorian modernism, to interpret magic.⁸ They saw that magic and religion were attempts, much akin to a lesser developed species of science, by which man explained the world around him. Magic ultimately failed in this respect for Frazer because it was a system based on erroneous scientific methodologies and constituted a warped idea of the laws of causality. In essence it was seen as a base survival from the periods of barbarity, created through intellectual error and characterized by the 'primitive' man of antiquity. Religion became the outgrowth of magic, a process which the Victorian anthropologists saw as resulting from man's deeper spiritual consideration of the world and of his place in it.⁹ Spirits were utilised in magic but religion, the next rung on the evolutionary ladder, was marked by the recognition of superhuman spirits and deities who were to be supplicated, begged and pleaded with for their intervention in the affairs of humanity rather than being constrained to do so by magical spells, incantation and rituals.¹⁰

A number of eminent authors have written in response to the theories of Tylor and Frazer, many, such as Malinowski, being profoundly influenced by *The Golden*

⁸ . As S.J.Tambiah (*Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.82) has observed, Frazer and Tylor's intellectualist distinctions between magic and religion were derived from the religious models created by Christianity, primarily from the Bible's artificial division of true religion (Judaism) and false religion (paganism/idolatry), and the sixteenth/seventeenth century Protestant view of magic as an attempt to coerce and constrain the divine.

⁹ . However, the Victorian ethnographer's failed to analyse their own biases, especially with regard to their definition of religion. As O.Pettersson ('Magic-Religion. Some Marginal Notes to an Old Problem,' *Ethnos* 3-4. 1957, pp.110-121, quote p.119) states: "the scientific debate over the relation between 'magic' and 'religion' is a *discussion of an artificial problem created by defining religion on the ideal pattern of Christianity*. The elements of man's beliefs and ceremonies... which did not coincide with the ideal type of religion was – and is – called 'magic'...'Magic' became – and still becomes – a refuse-heap for the elements which are not sufficiently 'valuable' to get a place within 'religion'."

¹⁰ . Frazer states (*The Golden Bough*, p.51) that magic treats the spiritual powers "exactly in the same fashion as it treats inanimate objects, that is, it constrains or coerces instead of conciliating or propitiating them as religion would do."

Bough.¹¹ Whilst the Victorian anthropologists and antiquarians relied upon the great number of witness reports which flooded into Britain from travellers who had first hand contact with the extremities of the British Empire, others were actively researching 'primitive' societies. In his fieldwork on the Melanesian fringes of Australia, Malinowski observed a sharp distinction between science and magic.¹² He quickly realised that magic was an everyday occurrence and was intrinsic to society in the Trobriand Islands. In negation of the standpoint of Frazer and Tylor, Malinowski sharply demarcated that which belonged to the 'profane' world such as science, and that which belonged to the 'sacred' world, such as magic and religion.¹³ He also rejected the Victorian idea of progression from magic to science, passing religion on the way; he saw that in the Trobriand Island society there existed both magic and science, as well as a nebulous concept of religion.¹⁴ Magic, though based on a false conception of cause and effect, served a sociological and psychological need of the islanders.¹⁵ When technology and science failed, magic took over and the islanders had complete faith in its efficacy. Malinowski believed that the magic he encountered was most effective in influencing people and changing their ideas and perceptions. Above all else magic was a social phenomenon which involved more than just the individual.

¹¹ . On Malinowski's regard for Frazer see *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1948, pp.93ff.

¹² . B.Malinowski, *The Trobriand Islands*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1915, *Coral Gardens and their Magic; a Study of the Methods of Tilling the Soil and of Agricultural Rites in the Trobriand Islands* (2 volumes), Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1935, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1948.

¹³ . Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, pp.79-87.

¹⁴ . Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, p.85: "There are no peoples however primitive without religion and magic. Nor are there, it must be added at once, any savage races lacking either in the scientific attitude or in science."

¹⁵ . In this sense, Malinowski could be seen to be following Frazerian categorisations. See further, F.H.Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment, A Socio-Historical Investigation*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1994, pp.68-70.

Among the most debated topics concerning magic is its relationship to religion. Many philosophers and sociologists, including Durkheim, Mauss, Levy-Bruhl and Evans-Pritchard, have written on this subject, generally rejecting the standpoint of Tylor and Frazer in which religion and magic are grouped together on a progressional ladder of human evolution.¹⁶ Thus Durkheim focused on the context of the rite, suggesting that the difference between magic and religion was to be found in social attitudes and settings. Magic was a purely individual pursuit for Durkheim, which he paints as taking place in secrecy and seclusion; with this he contrasts his view of religion, which is portrayed as a social phenomenon which takes place in public and which has no secrets.¹⁷ This view was taken up by his nephew, Mauss, who suggested that a magical rite is any rite which does not play a part in organised cults; it is private, secret, mysterious and approaches the limit of a prohibited rite.¹⁸ In *A General Theory of Magic*, Mauss argued that magical acts should be defined by their contexts and not by the structure of the rite.¹⁹ He observed that magical acts were repeatable though only enacted in the same social context each time, that the magician was a socially defined, often secretive, individual and that, at its basic level magic was simply the art of change and of changing. An important point concerning the Victorian and colonial theorists, however, is that their theories of magic were based upon the observation of a small number of 'primitive' cultures, from which they often

¹⁶ . E.Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Paris, 1912, trans. J.Swain, R.Nisbet (ed.), *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 2nd ed., London, George, Allen and Unwin, 1976, M.Mauss (written in collaboration with Henri Hubert), 'Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie', in *L'Année Sociologique*, 1902-1903, translation from *Sociologie et anthropologie*, 1950, reprinted as *A General Theory of Magic*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972, L.Lévy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think*, London, George, Allen and Unwin, 1926, E.E.Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1937.

¹⁷ . Whilst religion served to "unite into one single moral community" (1976, p.47), magic in contrast "does not result in binding together those who adhere to it, nor in uniting them into a group leading a common life" (1976, p.44).

¹⁸ . M.Mauss (written in collaboration with Henri Hubert), *A General Theory of Magic*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972, p.24.

¹⁹ .Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, pp.20-24.

extrapolated general laws of society. However, as Leach has observed, there are so many different approaches from a plethora of cultures that no single theory seems to account for all the data.²⁰ The dictionary quotation at the start of this section is, perhaps, as far as we can go in this respect.

The contribution of sociologists such as Malinowski, Durkheim and Mauss was to change the perception of the subject of magic from being an inferior subset of religion to a distinct and important element of society in its own right. In the old Victorian methodologies there had always been an ill-defined and somewhat hazy division between magic and religion. Research into ancient magic has received great benefit from these more recent sociologists and anthropologists, as their work constitutes a concerted effort to define magic and religion, and to identify where the two overlap and where they differ. In so doing, a number of authors, not least of them Levy-Bruhl, have highlighted the idea of mysticism and its role in both magic and religion.²¹ Much of Levy-Bruhl's early work was dedicated to the subject of what he referred to as primitive mentality as distinct from western logic. Opposed to the progressionist theories of Tylor and Frazer, he proposed that the mind of ancient man was fundamentally different from that of modern man.²² For him magic had been a greater part of society in the past, as can be witnessed from modern ethnographic research, and man's mind worked on different levels according to the context; in magical rituals the mystical mentality had the greatest role to play. Although Levy-Bruhl questioned the Frazerian divisions between magic and religion, he was still

²⁰ . Having observed a wide array of approaches and theories E. Leach (*Social Anthropology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1982, p.133) was forced to admit that "as for magic, which readers of Frazer's *The Golden Bough* might suppose to lie at the very centre of the anthropologist's interests, after a lifetime's career as a professional anthropologist, I have almost reached the conclusion that the word has no meaning whatsoever."

²¹ . Lévy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think*, pp.23-27.

²² . Lévy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think*, p.44: "primitives perceive nothing in the same way as we do."

influenced by the evolutionary framework; his work may serve as a prime example of the power and influence which the earliest models were able to hold on later theorists.²³ More recent theories have adopted a wide variety of interpretative frameworks, from Tambiah's suggestion that magic should be seen as a form of rhetorical art which communicates via symbolism,²⁴ Glucklich's attempt to define magic through the idea of the 'magical experience' and its corresponding mindset,²⁵ and even modern versions of the intellectualist categorisations from theorists like Goody, Jarvie, and Horton.²⁶ We might note, too, the work of Marrett who observed that any distinction between religion and magic is an artificial construct, created through the illusions of ethnocentric projection and historical distortion.²⁷

Of particular importance in this discussion of the modern theories of magic, however, is the extent to which modern approaches have been conditioned and influenced by the work of the earliest theorists, who were keen, for polemical and cultural reasons, to represent magic as an exclusively negative category of human behaviour. In this manner the term 'magic' has been stigmatised; in the dictionary quotation given at the beginning of this section we may observe that the popular notion of magic involves such ideas as trickery, illusion and deception. In the works of Frazer and Tylor, influenced by centuries of religious thinking on the subject, it was such negative facets of the term which were to be at the core of what they

²³ . Cunningham, *Religion and Magic*, pp.56-58.

²⁴ . S.J.Tambiah, *Culture, Thought and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1985, and *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990.

²⁵ . A.Glucklich, *The End of Magic*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997.

²⁶ . J.Goody, 'Religion and Ritual: a Definition Problem,' *British Journal of Sociology* 12, 1961, pp.142-164, I.C.Jarvie, *The Revolution in Anthropology*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964, R.Horton, 'African Traditional Thought and Western Science,' in B.R.Wilson (ed.), *Rationality*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1970, pp.50-71.

²⁷ . R.R.Marrett, *The Threshold of Religion*, London, Methuen, 1914. See further, M. and R.Wax, 'The Notion of Magic', *Current Anthropology* 4, 1963, pp.495-518, and D.Hammond, 'Magic: A Problem in Semantics', *American Anthropologist* 72, 1970, pp.1349-1356.

believed magic to be. Any positive appreciation was discarded, and an artificial polarised opposition was created between religion (positive) and magic (negative). The legacy of this dichotomy has affected not only research into modern forms of magic, but also the appreciation of ancient cultures who practised rituals which were automatically condemned as negatively defined magic. This thesis will endeavour to escape this judgemental dichotomy, and thus attempt a rehabilitation of the term magic in its application to the ancient world. In essence, then, 'magic' will be used in an advised and cautious manner, and care will be taken to resist modern theories of magic which only serve to distort the personal and nuanced representation of magic and magicians made by Josephus.

As can be seen from this discussion, there is a wide array of theories of magic. The early work in this field by Frazer and Tylor has been highly influential, and in many senses it is now difficult to avoid the dichotomy between magic and religion which they proposed. More recent work though, especially in the field of ancient magic, has shown that such distinctions are artificial orderings of the evidence at best, and at worst are heavily prejudiced approaches which occult the true approach to magic and religion adopted by the societies in question.²⁸ Although this thesis will not be adopting, for reasons which I will shortly be exploring, any of the theoretical approaches to magic explored in this section, this review has been essential to the consideration of how magic has been studied and defined. Not only have the most important approaches been analysed, it has also been made quite clear that any

²⁸ . So H.S.Versnel, ('Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion', *Numen* 38, 1991, pp.177-197), who advocates a broad approach to ancient magic which focuses primarily on Graeco-Roman terminology rather than the heuristic tools of modern thought. We might note, too, the advertising summary for the recent work edited by T.Klutz, *Magic in the Biblical World* (London, T&T Clark, 2003), which states that the "category 'magic', long used to signify an allegedly substantive type of activity distinguishable from 'religion', has nearly been dismantled by recent theoretical developments in religious studies."

division between religion and magic is arbitrary. Moreover, no one theory of magic can be said to be all-encompassing of human experience; as Evans-Pritchard suggests, it may be more useful to speak of 'religio-magical' phenomena, dismissing in the process the idea of 'religion' and 'magic' as mutually exclusive categories capable of clear distinction.²⁹ The most important consideration when reviewing the classical theories of magic is that they are structures which are imposed on the evidence, often in an attempt to provide a universal classification; in this manner such theories suffer from cultural relativism, and from the prejudices of the theorists own era. In contrast, the approach of this thesis will be based upon a close reading of Josephus' own magical terminology; his evidence will not be pigeon-holed in an artificial structure, as might be advocated by some of the above theorists, but rather we will allow him to speak for himself. This terminological approach will be dealt with below but, to conclude this section, we will note that the true definition of magic shifts from society to society, and age to age. There is no singular and all embracing definition of magic; as a result we will focus our attention on Josephus' own approach.

The Study of Magic in Antiquity – The Importance of Terminology

Despite the integral nature of magic in ancient societies and religions, it is a subject which has been relatively neglected by classical scholars, mainly because of modern ideologies which see magic as a figment of the imagination, a past time for

²⁹ . E.E.Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1965, pp.110-114.

the eccentric, and a diametric opposite of science and its worldview.³⁰ However, the publication of the second edition of Preisendenz's *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*, the pre-eminent collection of Greek magical texts, represents a watershed in the study of ancient magic.³¹ This work instigated a paradigm shift in attitudes towards magic amongst classical scholars, and instigated numerous publications of individual magical texts as well as several collections of translated primary sources. Such a growth in scholarship has, naturally enough, led to a number of debates concerning the theory of magic, some of which have proposed radical alterations to the traditional ideas concerning magic and religion. For instance, the volume *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* has been widely criticised for its attempts to drop the term magic from scholarly discourse, replacing it with the nebulous term 'ritual power'.³² Such controversies represent the fluid nature of the field of study, as well as the extent to which the shortcomings of the traditional ethnographic approaches have been exposed. Indeed, the very fact that the Greek magical papyri include not only spells but also prayers, has shown that the traditional

³⁰ . Indeed, even at the beginning of the twentieth century, a time when classical scholarship was in its heyday, magical texts needed to be carefully handled. For instance, when one of the founding fathers of the modern interest in ancient magic, Albrecht Dieterich (1866-1908), announced a seminar to discuss the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* he made no mention of 'magic', instead referring to 'Selected Pieces from the Greek Papyri'.

³¹ . K.Preisendenz (ed.), *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*, 2 vols., Leipzig/Berlin, Tuebner, 1929-1931, second ed. By A.Henrichs, Stuttgart, Tuebner, 1973-1974. A third volume was unfortunately destroyed by the bombing of Leipzig during the Second World War. The English translation with useful commentaries and additional Coptic texts is H.D.Betz (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation Including the Demotic Spells*, Chicago/London, 1986, second ed., 1992.

³² . For instance P.Schäfer in his essay 'Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism' in P.Schäfer and H.G.Kippenberg (eds.), *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, pp.19-43, notes that the title and subtitle of the volume by Meyer and Smith provide a 'marvellous example of the dilemma, or rather confusion, of the editors' (p.25, n.25) in their efforts to replace the term 'magic'. As Meyer and Smith note this field of study has long been handicapped by religious and scientific interpretations of magic; "Various theories – at times theologically biased, culturally one-sided, chronologically self-congratulatory – have been advanced to show that 'magic' is bad religion, bad science, bad medicine." They argue that these definitions and descriptions are ultimately rooted in Graeco-Roman polemic and Protestant anti-Roman Catholic statements. However, their suggestion of replacing the term magic with ritual power is somewhat akin to throwing out the baby with the bathwater, and only serves to obscure the matter. Magic should be defined, and scholars should be aware of the history of terminology and polemic concerning the language of magic, without the rejection of common terminology. Ritual power is such a nebulous term that its use only serves to obscure the issue.

dichotomy between religion and magic seen in Frazerian intellectualist theories cannot be supported in the period under question.³³ In contrast to modern intellectualist and functionalist theories of magic then, Pritchard's idea of the magico-religious ritual, allied to the importance of terminology as highlighted by scholars such as Graf, Gager and Dickie, creates a much more appropriate paradigm for studying Graeco-Roman magic.³⁴

As many of the recent volumes of articles on magic in the ancient world point out, these collections of scholarship are focal points in the renaissance of the study of ancient magic; they represent a new appreciation of magic and its ancient texts and practitioners.³⁵ In *Magic in the Ancient World*, one of the few modern monographs on the subject, Graf provides a brief review of this renaissance, discussing the various schools of thought and study in America and Europe.³⁶ He stresses that such groups represent the re-emergence of ancient magic as a scholarly field of study, being marked by an enthusiasm which earlier characterized the 'heroic era' of religious studies at the turn of the twentieth century.³⁷ This re-emergence may be seen in

³³ . See further H.D.Betz, 'Introduction to the Greek Magical Papyri', in *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells*, 2nd. ed., Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1992, pp.xli-liii and H.G.Kippenberg, 'Magic in Roman Civil Discourse: Why Rituals Could be Illegal', in P.Schäfer and H.G.Kippenberg (eds.), *Envisioning Magic*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1997, pp.137-163.

³⁴ . Here the observations of D.Frankfurter ('Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt and the Problem of the Category "Magician"', in P.Schäfer and H.G.Kippenberg (eds.), *Envisioning Magic*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1997, pp.115-135) are particularly apposite for he shows how the Egyptian priest functioned as a magician, and illustrates the role that the Christian dichotomy of religion and magic had in labelling this figure a 'magos'.

³⁵ . To give but one example, T.Klutz ('Reinterpreting "Magic" in the World of Jewish and Christian Scripture: An Introduction', in T.Klutz (ed.) *Magic in the Biblical World, From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon*, London, T&T Clark, 2003, pp.1-11) notes in his introduction that the last quarter of a century has seen a 'quiet but impressive' advance in the study of magico-religious phenomena in ancient Jewish and Christian culture, a situation due not only to the publication of increasing numbers of magical texts, but also to the re-evaluation of traditional theories of magic. His volume is testament to both facets of the growth in studies in ancient magic.

³⁶ . F.Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, London, Harvard University Press, 1997, pp.9-10.

³⁷ . Graf sees that the recent increase in the publication of ancient magical texts "provides hope, suggesting that our own era will probably see the slow growth of interest similar to that aroused by magic in the past, during what could be called the heroic era of religious studies at the turn of the century, the interest that it met with and continues to meet with in anthropological research, French,

several important articles concerning new approaches to magic in the ancient world, as well as a growing number of source books³⁸ and general introductions.³⁹ Of particular importance for mapping out these new approaches are the influential works of Versnel, Aune, and Segal, all of whom adopt a cautious methodology to the interpretation of ancient magic.⁴⁰ Each of these authors emphasize the problems which modern theories of magic can have in the exploration of Graeco-Roman magic, as well as suggesting that magic, in our period, was no more than an alternate, though often unsanctioned, form of religious experience. However, it must be noted that in the field of theory there is no consensus among scholars, and many works on magic in ancient contexts are prefaced by a short discussion of definitions, approaches and methodologies.

That this is the case should not be surprising, for the ancients themselves had a somewhat ambiguous attitude towards magic and rarely attempted a definitive theoretical and abstract summary of its nature. However, it can be seen that, at least in terminological terms, the Graeco-Roman era was highly significant in the history of theories of magic.⁴¹ As Graf shows, it is this terminology which is at the root of our modern discussions; moreover he identifies this period as the first step on the

German, and English. Diachronically, the renewed interest in magic in Christian culture must be added, whether in that of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, or the contemporary era." F.Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, p.10.

³⁸ . D.Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, G.Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, London, John Hopkins University Press, 1985.

³⁹ . N.Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World*, London, Routledge, 2001, B.Ankarloo and S.Clark (eds.), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe; Volume 1 Ancient Greece and Rome*, London, The Athlone Press, 1999.

⁴⁰ . Versnel, 'Some Reflections', D.E.Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity', *ANRW* 2:23:2, 1980, A.F.Segal, 'Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition', in R.van den Broek and M.J.Vermaseren (eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1981, pp.349-375.

⁴¹ . As Graf shows (*Magic in the Ancient World*, pp.30-35), the embryonic idea of a categorical difference between magic and religion can be observed, to a degree, in Plato; the development of the schism between the two, however, finds its greatest impetus in the Christian age.

theoretical hiving off of magic from religion, a process in which terminology became crucial.⁴² Yet, whilst Graf can identify the proto-type of modern distinctions between religion and magic in the works of Plato, such evidence is singular and its dichotomy is not supported by other Greek and Roman materials. Thus, Segal shows how ‘white’ magic is subsumed under the category of religion in the early imperial Roman period.⁴³ Indeed, as Nock famously observed of the Roman world before Christianity: “There is not, then, as with us, a sphere of magic in contrast to the sphere of religion.”⁴⁴ Although we can recognise elements of ritual and religion which we might term ‘magical’ by our own modern Western definitions, ancient authors and legislators were not as eager to apply magical terminology.

Whilst we see a marked negativity surrounding magic in modern appraisals, from Frazer’s idea of primitive thought and superstition to Durkheim’s anti-social behaviour, the situation in antiquity was much more fluid, as magical terminology did not automatically signal disapproval or relate to a negative viewpoint. Thus, we have the positive accounts of the Persian *magi* given by Herodotus, as well as the later echoes of this view in Cicero, Catallus, and Philo.⁴⁵ We must avoid, therefore, an automatic condemnation of magic as part of our approach to ancient magic. Such a point has been noted by several recent authors who suggest that magic is essentially a form of religious ritual.⁴⁶ Such an attitude runs contrary to the traditional relationships between magic, science and religion, formulated in the works of Tylor, Frazer, and

⁴² . Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, pp.41-44. See further Dickie’s discussion (*Magic and Magicians*, pp.20-21) of the importance of Graf’s work in this respect.

⁴³ . Segal, *Hellenistic Magic*, p.358.

⁴⁴ . A.D.Nock, ‘Paul and the Magus’, in *Essays on Religion in the Ancient World*, edited by Z.Stewart, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1972, pp.308-330, quote p.314.

⁴⁵ . Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.101, 107ff, 120, 128, 140, 7.19, 37, 43, Cicero, *De legibus*, 2.26, *De divinatione*, 1.46, 91, Catallus, *Carmina* 90, Philo, *Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit*, 74.

⁴⁶ . So for instance, Schäfer, ‘Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism’, pp.19-43, and D.Frankfurter, ‘Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt and the Problem of the Category “Magician”’, in *Envisioning Magic*, pp.115-136.

Malinowski, which see magic as a form of superstition, primitive or corrupt religion, or as early, yet deeply flawed, examples of science. Indeed, one critical commentator has suggested that these standard dichotomies resemble “nothing as much as the endless shuffling and re-dealing of a deck of but three cards.”⁴⁷

As the emic or ‘inside’ view as used by modern anthropologists in their fieldwork has largely been rejected as a methodological position by scholars of the ancient world, it has been necessary that such arguments over the positioning of science, religion, and magic have taken place.⁴⁸ In looking at the subject of magic, and in forming our own definitions of the term, it may be more fruitful if a primary distinction is made between magic and non-magic, and secondly between positive and negative forms of magic, rather than between constructs of a personal viewpoint such as religion and science. In order to do so it will become rapidly apparent that terminology is key to the study of ancient magic and an analysis of language will serve to constitute an approach which is not hampered by cultural prejudice or relativism. This survey of Josephus’ attitude towards magic will, then, be firmly based upon his particular use of magical language. Whilst these matters will be dealt with more fully in Chapter 2 it will be noted that Graeco-Roman magic is neither contained nor defined by actions, but in terminology. Hence, in this thesis I will be basing my approach on a close analysis and comparison of magical terminology, rather than on any artificial theory of Graeco-Roman magic.

⁴⁷ . C.R.Phillips III, ‘The Sociology of Religious Knowledge in the Roman Empire to A.D. 284’, *ANRW* 16:3, 1986, pp.2677-2773, quote p.2732.

⁴⁸ . Versnel, ‘Some reflections’, p.144.

Magic in Second Temple Judaism

Although magic in biblical literature, the primary source for Josephus' three case studies, will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter it is important to note the wider framework of debates and approaches which have been adopted towards Jewish magic. The biblical corpus itself overtly projects a very negative appraisal of magic, seeing it as a purely negative, illegal, and harmful species of religious practice; it is this appraisal which, as Thomas shows, was particularly influential in the theories of Frazer and Tylor.⁴⁹ It is not surprising, then, that the earliest reviews of Jewish magic, roughly contemporaneous with the work of these theorists, adopted a negative interpretation of magic. As might be expected the evolutionist theories of magic, derived in part from the false dichotomy proposed by the Bible between Israelite 'religion' and the 'magic' of the nations, were highly influential in the early appreciation of Jewish magic.⁵⁰ Such influences were powerful enough to convince Trachtenberg that distinctively Jewish forms of magic did not exist in the Second Temple Period, and that Deuteronomic law was the last word on the subject in the period. This view was supported, seemingly, by the fact that the syncretistic magical papyri in which distinctively Jewish elements are to be found only date to Talmudic times.⁵¹

⁴⁹ . K.V.Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1971, and 'An Anthropology of Religion and Magic II', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 6, 1975, pp.91-109.

⁵⁰ . The most important early summary of ancient Jewish magic, despite being heavily influenced by Frazerian notions, is L.Blau, *Das altjüdische Zauberwesen*, 2nd ed., Berlin, Louis Lamm, 1914.

⁵¹ . H.D.Betz, 'Introduction to the Greek Magical Papyri', in *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp.xli-liii.

However, as Hull has shown, there are strong reasons in support of the idea that these texts are late versions of a very lengthy tradition of Jewish magic, one which stretched far back into the Second Temple period.⁵² As a result we may see the laws of the Bible on magic not as provisions for a Platonic utopian society, but rather as measures to address and control some of the magical practices of the Israelites and Jews. If Hull is correct, it would appear that some Jews in the Second Temple Period were doing precisely what biblical law prohibited with regards to magic. Indeed, we might note in this respect the magical practices of the Dead Sea Scrolls sect.⁵³ In a similar manner, we have a number of Second Temple authors and works, such as Artapanus, Pseudo-Eupolemus, and Jubilees, which all make mention of the connections between Jewish heroes and magic.⁵⁴ However, such observations, which show magic to be a facet of every epoch of Jewish history, arrived too late for some scholars. Thus, evolutionistic interpretations of magic based on Frazer and Tylor, may also be seen in the works of Davies and Guillaume, who offer the earliest explorations of Jewish divination, and in that of Rogerson, who provides a summary of the Old Testament's worldview of magic and miracle. Davies imagines magic as a 'survival' from a more primitive, pre-religion, phase of society though he does observe that "it is hard to say when exactly the magician resigns, and the priest enters upon office" as

⁵² . J.M.Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition*, London, SCM Press, 1974, pp.20-27. See further, M.Smith, 'The Jewish Elements in the Magical Papyri', in S.J.D.Cohen (ed.) *Studies in the Cult of Yahweh*, N.Y., E.J.Brill, 1996, pp. 242-256.

⁵³ . A.Lange states ('The Essene Position on Magic and Divination', in M.Bernstein, F.García Martínez, and J.Kampen (eds.), *Legal Texts and Legal Issues: Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Cambridge 1995, Published in Honour of Joseph M. Baumgarten*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1997, pp.377-435, quote p.408) that "the non-Essene texts from Qumran demonstrate that magic and divination were not perceived in late Second Temple times as independent entities but were an integral part of Jewish belief and thought". Likewise, P.S.Alexander ("Wrestling Against Wickedness in High Places": Magic in the Worldview of the Qumran Community', in S.E.Porter and C.E.Evans (eds.), *The Scrolls and the Scriptures: Qumran Fifty Years After*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1997, pp. 318-337) observes the problematic place of the Essene magical practices within Jewish law at Qumran.

⁵⁴ . Artapanus, fr.3, 26-37, cf.fr.1, 1, Pseudo-Eupolemus, fr.1,1-9, *Jubilees*, 8.1-4, 10.1-14.

well as that “all magic is a sort of religion.”⁵⁵ Guillaume, following Frazer, was able to state that “the progress of religion ... is in proportion to its success in freeing itself from the legacy of the medicine man and magician until it attains to a living communion with the object of worship.”⁵⁶ Finally Rogerson, although referring to ‘magico-religious ceremonies’ nevertheless assigns magic to the practice of ‘the ordinary people’ who have turned away from Israel; again an evolutionistic view which denies any positive form of magic in the Bible or in Jewish society.⁵⁷ Even in more modern appraisals the early works of Blau and Trachtenberg remain highly influential. In this category we may place Barclay’s brief appraisal of magic as a form of cultural assimilation between Jews and non-Jews.⁵⁸ Although Barclay notes the difficulties in differentiating magic from religion, he nevertheless relies upon the definition of magic as a secret act, an essentially negative interpretation which is clearly based upon earlier evolutionary views.

Despite the influence of Frazerian approaches, the subject of Jewish magic in the Second Temple Period has received a good degree of positive modern comment. Indeed, as with its Graeco-Roman counterpart, this field is witnessing something of a modern revival in which the biases of the past are being set aside, and in which magic can be spoken of in connection to Judaism without the implicit sense of negativity which clouded earlier views. Symptomatic of this new scholarship is the work of Alexander, who suggests that to “fail to consider magic would be to neglect an area of immense importance in the study of early Judaism” and that “magic flourished among

⁵⁵ . T.W.Davies, *Magic, Divination, and Demonology Among the Hebrews and Their Neighbours*, London, 1898, p.3.

⁵⁶ . A.Guillaume, *Prophecy and Divination*, London, 1938, p.390

⁵⁷ . J.Rogerson, ‘The World-view of the Old Testament’, in *Beginning Old Testament Study*, London, SPCK, 1983, pp.64-66.

⁵⁸ .J.M.G.Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora, From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1998, pp.119-123.

the Jews despite strong and persistent condemnation by the religious authority.”⁵⁹ In respect of this more positive appreciation of magic, the work of Smith has proven to be something of a watershed; *Jesus the Magician* was a work which attempted to break down the rigid boundaries between magic and religion, showing not only that definitions arose from self-interest, but also that different interpretations and judgements can be made of the same magico-religious event or ritual.⁶⁰ Likewise, the recent works of Schäfer, Cryer, Gager and Römer, have re-assessed the place of magic in ancient Judaism, employing a wider ranging and less negative definition.⁶¹

Such scholarship has enabled us to speak of magic in the Bible, as well as in Second Temple Judaism, without focusing exclusively on the biblical laws; as a result, Cryer is able to conclude that “ancient Israel was a ‘magic society’, like those around her”.⁶² Although there is little archaeological or papyrological evidence of magic in the Second Temple Period (the Bible and parabiblical literature remaining the main storehouse and inspiration of Jewish magic in this period), the sources we do have speak of a society which accords well with Cryer’s comments. To take one example, the second book of Maccabees reports that the Jewish soldiers of Judah Maccabee were in the habit of wearing magical amulets for protection despite, as the

⁵⁹ . P.S.Alexander, ‘Incantations and Books of Magic’, in E.Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)*, English version revised and edited by G.Vermes, F.Millar, and M.Goodman, Vol. III, part 1, Edinburgh, 1986, pp.342-347. The fact that this article appears in such an influential work on Jewish studies in antiquity is a clear indicator of the new, more positive, appraisals of magic.

⁶⁰ . M.Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, N.Y., Harper & Row, 1978.

⁶¹ . Schäfer, ‘Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism’, pp.137-163, F.H.Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment; A Socio-Historical Investigation*, Sheffield, Sheffield University Press, 1994, J.Gager, ‘Moses the Magician: Hero of an Ancient Counter-Culture?’, *Helios* 21:2, 1994, pp.179-188, T.C.Römer, ‘Competing Magicians in Exodus 7-9: Interpreting Magic in the Priestly Theology’, in T.Klutznick (ed.), *Magic in the Biblical World, from the rod of Aaron to the ring of Solomon*, London, T&T Clark, 2003, pp.12-22.

⁶² . Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, p.324.

text reminds us, the provision against this made in biblical law.⁶³ In speaking of Josephus then, we will be conscious of this new wave of positive scholarship on the question of magic, not least in respect to the idea that positive forms of magic may be found in Judaism despite the provisions of the Bible. In addition, I will make extensive use of the sources which are available to us from the Second Temple period in my three case studies, from sources as diverse as Artapanus, Pseudo-Philo, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Previous Scholarship on Magic in Josephus

Until relatively recent times the subject of magic was a neglected facet of Josephus' worldview. Of course, this is not surprising when we consider the nature of studies in Graeco-Roman magic in general, allied to the dominant image of Josephus as, first and foremost, a resource for political history during the period of Roman domination over Judea.⁶⁴ One exception to this general rule might be seen in the work of MacRae, one of the first explorers of Josephus' attitude towards the supernatural and miraculous.⁶⁵ He emphasised the rational nature of Josephus' attitude towards these subjects, suggesting that Josephus was somewhat ahead of his times in discounting the reality of many miraculous events from the Bible. This is not to say,

⁶³ . 2 Macc. 12:39. See further, J.Goldin, 'The Magic of Magic and Superstition', in E.S.Fiorenza (ed.), *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity*, London, University of Notre Dame press, 1978, pp.115-148.

⁶⁴ . Commenting on the reluctance of scholarship to address the occult in Josephus, M.Smith ('The Occult in Josephus', in .L.H.Feldman and G.Hata (eds.), *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, pp.236-256, quote p.236) states that this feature "is not prominent in Josephus' work, where military and political history and court intrigue hold the centre of the stage, while religion, in the background, figures mainly as a cause and condition of actions and as a matter of legal observances and historical claims, anything but occult."

⁶⁵ . G.MacRae, 'Miracle in the *Antiquities* of Josephus', in C.F.D.Moule (ed.), *Miracles*, London, A.R.Mowbray and Co. Ltd., 1965, pp.128-147.

however, that Josephus did not believe in the miraculous; as MacRae rightly observes, Josephus also supports the ideas of prophecy and portentous prediction. In this manner, he observes a categorical difference in Josephus' thought between magic and religion, using the example of Moses' contest of magic with the Egyptian priests to show how the two differ, and of how miracles can be considered 'true' and magic 'false'. This dichotomy is also adopted by later authors such as Betz and Moehring, who discount any possibility that Josephus may have believed that magic was a supernatural possibility as much as he did regarding the miraculous.⁶⁶ However, it must be realised that these works define magic as a form of deception and as a condition of ignorance; for the authors there is a clear difference between religion (and its miracles) and magic (and its deceiving of perception). Magic hardly features in the works of these authors; nothing is said concerning Josephus' belief in it, nor is mention made of his repeated use of magical terminology. Even in more wide-ranging works on Josephus as historian, such as the influential work of Rajak, magic is only referred to fleetingly and is accorded no great significance. She states that "there are occasions where Josephus shows interest in some kinds of magical speculation and he appears to have faith in the capacities of genuine prophets."⁶⁷ As I will demonstrate, this is something of an understatement concerning the multiple forms and instances of magical terminology which Josephus includes in all his works.

⁶⁶ . O.Betz, 'Miracle in the Writings of Flavius Josephus', in L.H.Feldman and G.Hata (eds.), *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1987, pp.212-235, H.R.Moehring, 'Rationalization of Miracles in the Writings of Flavius Josephus', *StEv* 6, 1973, pp.376-383.

⁶⁷ . T.Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society*, 2nd ed., London, Duckworth and Co., 2002, p.xii. This is the only reference to magic, indeed to the supernatural, which Rajak makes in this introduction to Josephus.

A more positive approach to magic in the works of Josephus, however, may be seen in the works of Smith, Duling, Bloch and Gager.⁶⁸ These authors are more interested in exploring the area of magic in Josephus, refusing to discount the subject as some form of defective logic, instead addressing the subtlety and precision with which Josephus employs magical terminology. Smith's work serves to open a door into 'occulted' subjects in Josephus, amongst which we may count magic. His conclusion, that the occult is much more than simply a decorative element for Josephus, is an important observation which is at the core of this thesis. Likewise, Duling observes the neglect of the subject of magic in scholarly investigations of Josephus, and is forced to admit, following a discussion of Josephus' miracle stories, that our author has a number of similar accounts of magic. For Bloch, Josephus is a source of positive comment on the subject of magic, with his portrait of Moses seeking to not only avoid the more negative aspects of an association with magic, but also to echo the image of the great lawgiver of Judaism as a powerful magician who used his powers for the good of his people. Bloch observes that Josephus seeks to represent Jewish magic as something compatible with Roman society, and which would not pose a threat to the political establishment. Finally, Gager's work serves to explore the specifics of magic in Josephus' account of Moses' serpent confrontation at the court of Pharaoh, and views *Ant.* as a reactionary account of the founder of Judaism as a super-magician. These four authors have shown that magic in the works of Josephus is a subject worthy of discussion and analysis, and that Josephus relates a

⁶⁸ . M.Smith, 'The Occult in Josephus', in L.H.Feldman and G.Hata (eds.), *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1987, pp.236-256, D.C.Duling, 'The Eleazar Miracle and Solomon's Magical Wisdom in Flavius Josephus's *Antiquitates Judaicae* 8.42-49', *HTR* 78:1-2, 1985, pp.1-25, R.S.Bloch, 'Au-delà d'un Discours Apologétique: Flavius Josèphe et les Magiciens,' in N.Belayche et al., *Les Communautés Religieuses dans le Monde Gréco-Romain, Essais de Définition*, Paris, 2003, pp.243-258, and 'Mose und die Scharlatane, Zum Vorwurf γόης καὶ ἀπατεῶν in *Contra Apionem* 2:145-161,' in F.Siebert and J.U.Kalms (eds.), *Internationales Josephus-Kolloquium Bruxelles 1998*, Munster, 1999, pp.142-157, Gager, 'Moses the Magician: Hero of an Ancient Counter-Culture?', pp.179-188.

number of events which have been categorized as ‘magical’. It will be from their lead that this thesis will progress; however, my work will constitute the first truly in-depth analysis of magic in Josephus, one which not only analyses the subtlety of each instance of Josephus’ magical language, but which also assesses his specific employments across three detailed case studies. In so doing I hope not only to support the idea that Josephus held an interest in magic, in both positive and negative forms, as a fundamental aspect of his society and culture(s), but also to push back the boundaries of our knowledge concerning this aspect of his works.

Methodology

No dedicated study has been made concerning the nature of magic in the works of Josephus, though there has been a degree of discussion on the nature of the supernatural and the theory of miracle in his works. The present work aims to remedy this situation and to further the study of ancient magic. Whilst Josephus does not display any direct knowledge of the magical texts of his era, and is thus unable to provide us with an ‘inside’ view of the magician and his art in the same manner as the ancient magical papyri do, his views on the subject are very important for our understanding of several important areas. I will be exploring: the image of magic and its terminology in the first century CE in the minds of the cultural and literary elites of Rome, amongst whom, Josephus stands as an almost unique testament to the role and nature of magic in both the Jewish and Graeco-Roman worlds; the understanding by Josephus concerning the biblical passages on magic and his interpretation of them in his paraphrase of biblical literature; the understanding developed by Josephus of the

biblical association of magic with foreign peoples and cultures, and his views on Jews and non-Jews with regard to magic; and the views of Josephus himself as a Graeco-Roman author, a citizen of Rome, and a social commentator. Throughout, it will be observed that magic was a daily reality for Josephus, functioning as a part of his world view. The incident involving Eleazar and the practice of Solomon's style of magic at the court of Vespasian, witnessed by Josephus himself, is testament to this fact.⁶⁹ This approach to magic will not be prejudiced by 'elitist' views which see magic as a "crude stage in human development preceding, and only under certain unfavourable social conditions retarding, the development of science and religion proper";⁷⁰ on the contrary it has much to teach us concerning Josephus' view of his religious and political world.

The work is split into four main chapters, one which discusses Graeco-Roman magic and its distinctive terminology in the first century CE, and three that will analyse the characters in question from Josephus's *Ant.* Chapter 2 will lead this general discussion, exploring the ancient history of magic and its terminology, and attempting to explore the development of four main terms for magic and magicians (μαγός, γόης, φαρμακόν, and μάντις) which were common in the first century CE Graeco-Roman world, and which are to be repeatedly found in the works of Josephus. Following this, three chapters constitute case studies discussing Josephus' paraphrasing of biblical episodes involving magic. Chapter 3 focuses on the figure of Moses in *Ant.*, with particular reference to the famous contest with Pharaoh's court magicians. Further data from *Against Apion*, in which Josephus defends Moses against the charges of charlatanry, will be explored in connection with his reputation

⁶⁹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 8.42-49.

⁷⁰ . A.A.Barb, 'The Survival of Magic Arts,' in A.Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1963, pp. 100-125, quote p.100.

for being a master magician in the Graeco-Roman world. Chapter 4 will focus on the figure of Balaam, often thought to number among the prophets of ancient Judaism, but who, as a non-Israelite, was heavily associated with the world of magic. Chapter 5 appraises the characterisation of the witch of Endor by Josephus, and explores the associations made between magic and the role of sanction. The aim of this work will be to study the manner in which Josephus utilises the terminology of the first century CE Graeco-Roman world in order to create his own theory and approach to the subject of magic.

In particular I will explore the idea of sanction with regard to positive and negative forms of magic. Because terminology will be the key to Josephus' representation of magic we may detect any patterns or structures by which he employs key terms. Essentially, it will be proposed that Josephus makes use of more negative terminology when speaking of those who operate outside Roman law or the sanction of the state/emperor, whilst those who, often performing similar actions, are described by positive terminology are considered to be acceptable to the Roman order. In this manner, Josephus' use of magical terminology can be said to be very precise, and, moreover, is designed and accommodated to a Graeco-Roman audience who would recognise the differences between a *μάντις* and a *γόνις*. It will become clear that Josephus composed his works in order to appeal to a number of varied audiences; principal amongst which, however, is that of the ruling elites of Rome. For it was this group, as we shall see, which defined magic in Josephus' society, especially in relation to the legal standing of magic and its corresponding terminology. Hence, the idea of sanction, namely that which Rome found acceptable, will be of paramount importance in analysing Josephus' approach to the magical stories of the Bible

recounted in *Ant.* These issues will be further dealt with in following sections of this introduction, and in more detail in the first chapter.

Josephus- His Life and Works

The life of Flavius Josephus was certainly not short of incident. Born in Jerusalem in 37 CE to a priestly family which could trace their line back to the Hasmonean high priest Jonathan (161-143 CE),⁷¹ the young Josephus was inducted into all the major religious schools, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, as well as sitting at the feet of Bannus, a wilderness ascetic.⁷² However, as a member of the nobility, Josephus was installed as the general in command of Galilean forces at the commencement of the war with Rome in 66 CE. As the rest of Judea was shortly to find, little could stand in the way of Rome's legions; Josephus and his men were captured in the following year in the city of Jotapata. It was here, as his fellow Jews engaged in a suicide pact, that Josephus made a momentous decision, one which was to have great ramifications for the rest of his life.⁷³ Having been brought before the Roman general Vespasian, Josephus claimed that God had revealed, through several dreams, that his captor was destined to become the ruler of Rome.⁷⁴ Whether revelation or shrewd regard for the Roman political scene, Vespasian was intrigued enough to keep Josephus as a part of his entourage, rather than sending him to Nero in

⁷¹ . See further Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society*, pp.15-18.

⁷² . Josephus claimed to 'follow the party of the Pharisees' (*Life* 12). This statement has, however, received critical comment; see S.Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees: A Composition-Critical Study*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1991, pp.342-353.

⁷³ . Although Josephus did not relate his prophecies concerning Vespasian at this point, he claims (*War*, 3.399-408) that his survival in the aborted suicide pact was due to the fact that he had to act as God's messenger to announce to Vespasian his future elevation to imperial power.

⁷⁴ . *Jewish War*, 3.351-354.

chains. Indeed, Josephus was even employed as an envoy to his people, sent by the Romans to propose surrender.

In 69 CE, with the proclamation of Vespasian as emperor, Josephus became a part of Titus' entourage, eventually returning with the young general to Rome following the conclusion of the Jewish war. Here Josephus was transformed into a Roman citizen, living in the former family home of the Flavian dynasty, and was provided with the resources, including a generous pension, needed for a literary career. Through the patronage of the imperial family, and later the influential freedman Epaphroditus, Josephus was able to develop his skills in the Greek language to the point of composition in that language.⁷⁵ This switch from imperial patronage to that of a wealthy freedman was occasioned by the attitude of Domitian; although this emperor took care to protect Josephus from the slanders of his enemies, as well as exempting his Judean properties from tax, he was responsible for a number of anti-Jewish measures which prompted renewed persecution, and he took little interest in Josephus' works.⁷⁶

His first work, the *Jewish War*, appeared in the decade after the revolt against Rome and constituted a detailed history of the events which led to the destruction of Jerusalem. His largest work, in terms of both size and scope, the *Jewish Antiquities*, was next to be written, dating to 93 or 94 CE. It consisted of a complete history of the Jewish people from the creation to the Roman era, the first half of which is a rigorous

⁷⁵ . Although Josephus gives a number of references to Epaphroditus (*Ant.* 1.8, *Life*, 430, *Apion*, 1.1, 2.1, 2.296) the true identity of this important patron is not known, though it is clear that he was a freedman of some influence in Rome. See further S.Mason, 'Introduction to the Judean Antiquities', in S.Mason and L.H.Feldman (eds.), *Flavius Josephus. Translation and Commentary. Vol.3. Judean Antiquities 1-4.*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 2000, pp.xviii-xix.

⁷⁶ . *Life*, 429. Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society*, pp.223-224.

and creative paraphrase of the Hebrew Bible. In his final years in the late 90s CE, he published two further works: the *Life*, an apologetic autobiography focused on his time in Galilee, and *Against Apion*, an apologetic defence of Judaism.⁷⁷ All of these works were produced under the auspices of Roman patronage; although there is a degree of uncertainty, it is likely that they were also all written in Rome.⁷⁸ Josephus, then, although raised in the Jewish faith and spending his early life in Judea, was no stranger to Roman society and culture. Indeed, as Goodman remarks,⁷⁹ it is more than likely that Josephus found himself living in a home from home whilst in Rome, for not only did he live as a property-owning nobleman,⁸⁰ but he would also have been surrounded by other Jews and Diasporan communities.⁸¹

The Genre of the *Jewish Antiquities*

An important observation to be made with respect to the stated aims of this thesis is that *Ant.* belongs to the genre of the rewritten Bible. This term was developed in modern scholarship in order to describe those Jewish writings from the Second Temple period and late antiquity which sought to offer new interpretations of the

⁷⁷ . On the dating of Josephus' works see E.Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C. – A.D. 135)*, new English version rev. and ed. G.Vermes, F.Millar, and M.Goodman, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1973-1987, vol.1, pp.46-55.

⁷⁸ . S.J.D.Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and His Development as a Historian*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1979, pp.8-23.

⁷⁹ . M.Goodman, 'Josephus as Roman Citizen', in F.Parente (ed.), *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period, Essays in Memory of Morton Smith*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1994, pp.329-338.

⁸⁰ . Although Josephus lived in the Flavian estate he also reports (*Life* 425) that Vespasian granted him his own lands back in Judea.

⁸¹ . As Acts 28:17-29 shows, despite the periodic expulsions of Jews, Rome had a sizeable Jewish presence in the time of Nero.

biblical books through a re-writing of scripture.⁸² This form of literature has a long history within Judaism. The prime example may be seen in the biblical corpus itself with the books of Chronicles, which attempt to re-present the history of the events of Samuel-Kings so as to accord with the religious and political values of the early Second Temple period. This work set out the principles of the re-written Bible; omission of materials, supplementation of the main narrative by alternate sources, the use of oral sources, resolution of inconsistencies, and the explanation of passages which conflict with the re-writer's intentions. We find these concerns in a number of works, from the second century BCE *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira* and the *Book of Jubilees*, to the *Genesis Apocryphon* and the *Temple Scroll* from Qumran, on to the works of Josephus and Pseudo-Philo in the first century CE.

These works were often presented as if they were biblical books, with the authors implicitly claiming for their works an authority equal to, or at least approaching, scripture.⁸³ In analysing *Ant.*, then, we are looking at one example of a biblical re-writing or paraphrase, and must be conscious of the fact that it is a work built upon a venerable history of instances of a similar approach. Josephus' work may be compared directly with the work of another biblical re-writer, Pseudo-Philo, as well as with more abstract approaches to the Bible as we may see in Philo's work. However, it is clear that Josephus' work represents a "much more systematic and

⁸² . The phrase 'rewritten Bible' was coined by G.Vermes (*Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1978) and is most prominently used in respect to Josephus by L.H.Feldman (*Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1998). H.Attridge (*The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus*, Montana, Scholars Press, 1976) prefers the term 'paraphrase', but to all intents and purposes this is merely an alternate form of 'rewritten Bible'; both terms make it clear that Josephus is a creative and critical employer of the Bible in his *Jewish Antiquities*.

⁸³ . C.T.R.Hayward, 'Rewritten Bible' in R.J.Coggins and J.L.Houlden (eds.), *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, London, SCM Press, 1990, pp.595-598.

comprehensive” paraphrase in comparison with previous works in the genre.⁸⁴ This is a point repeatedly stressed by modern scholarship, most principally by Attridge, Sterling and Mason, who show *Ant.* to be an extremely creative and imaginative work in which our author has laboured in order to produce a fitting paraphrase of the Bible.⁸⁵ Josephus will be shown, in the ensuing discussion, to be a careful and creative author who marshalled his source materials concerning magic in order to present the Bible to a Roman audience.

The Aims of the *Jewish Antiquities*

The subject of Josephus’ aims in *Ant.* has only recently attracted detailed scholarly attention. Bilde, in his introduction to Josephus, laments that it is “almost impossible to refer to any literature concerning Josephus’ aim in *Ant.*”⁸⁶ Since then, however, a number of important observations have been made and scholarship has started to illuminate Josephus’ concerns and goals in his retelling of Jewish history. Although the idea that one of Josephus’ basic aims was to compare Jewish history favourably with that of the Romans, most principally as seen in Dionysius of Halicarnassus’ *Roman Antiquities*, has long been established it has been repeatedly amended and enlarged upon.⁸⁷ Here I will touch upon a few of the more influential

⁸⁴ . L.H.Feldman, *Josephus’s Interpretation of the Bible*, London, University of California Press, 1998, p.14.

⁸⁵ . Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History*, G.Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephus, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1992, S.Mason, ‘Should Any Wish to Enquire Further (ant. 1.25): The Aim and Audience of Josephus’s Judean Antiquities/Life’, in S.Mason, (ed.), *Understanding Josephus; Seven Perspectives*, Sheffield, Sheffield University Press, 1998, 64-103.

⁸⁶ . P.Bilde, *Flavius Josephus Between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, his Works and their Importance*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1988, p.102.

⁸⁷ . H.St.J.Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian*, N.Y., Jewish Institute of Religion, 1929.

studies. Schwartz suggests that *Ant.* served as a more outspoken and positive representation of Judaism as compared to the purely pro-Roman *War*, and that it was a work designed to act as propaganda for the growing Pharisaic movement at Yavneh.⁸⁸ Sterling sees the work as a form of apologetic historiography designed “to establish the identity of the group within the setting of the larger world”.⁸⁹ Attridge emphasized the nature of *Ant.* as a theological history, in which Josephus observes God’s watchful care (πρόνοια) over Jew and Roman alike.⁹⁰ Feldman has drawn attention to Josephus’ desire to Hellenize his narratives, especially as a mechanism for his primary goal of rebutting anti-Jewish slanders.⁹¹ Likewise, Rajak states that “to achieve a kind of Hellenization is central to his whole enterprise, and a reconciliation of the two nations is, as we know, his ultimate aim.”⁹² Finally, Mason shows *Ant.* to be a “massive effort at legitimation, seeking to demonstrate the great antiquity and nobility of Jewish traditions”, and that it was designed to “maintain a secure place for his people in the political-religious scene.”⁹³ Whilst Schwartz’ views on the Pharisaic connection are lacking in direct evidence from Josephus,⁹⁴ each of the other theories brings important insights into different facets of the aims of *Ant.* In the following discussion I will seek to explore Josephus’ own appraisal of his aims, as well as taking into consideration these recent scholarly conclusions.

⁸⁸ . S.Schwartz, *Josephus and Judean Politics*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1990. Schwartz’s views have not been particularly influential, as he accords too much significance to the differences between *War* and *Ant.*, as well as seeing passages on the Pharisees (whom Josephus does not have a particularly high opinion of) as coded references to the Yavneh movement; this is a somewhat problematic approach, as Mason (‘Introduction to the Judean Antiquities’, p.xv) suggests.

⁸⁹ . Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, p.17.

⁹⁰ . Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History*.

⁹¹ . Feldman, *Josephus’ Interpretation of the Bible*, and *Studies in Josephus’ Rewritten Bible*.

⁹² . T.Rajak, ‘Josephus and the Archaeology of the Jews’, in *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome, Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 2001, pp.241-256, quote p.254.

⁹³ . S.Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, Massachusetts, Hendrickson, 1992, p.71. See also ‘Should Any Wish to Enquire Further (Ant. 1.25): The Aim and Audience of Josephus’s Judean Antiquities/Life’, in: S.Mason (ed.), *Understanding Josephus Seven Perspectives*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, pp.64-103.

⁹⁴ . The thesis falls down as Josephus makes no obvious reference to Yavneh in any of his works, nor to the rabbinical/Pharisaic movement as a political entity. To read such ‘hidden’ aims into Josephus’ *Antiquities* is, first and foremost, a rejection of our authors own claims concerning his work.

Spanning a time frame from the creation of the world as seen in Genesis 1:1 to the events of his own era, *Ant.* constitutes the *magnum opus* of Josephus. Although frequently compared unfavourably with his earlier *War*,⁹⁵ *Ant.* is an unparalleled account of Jewish religion, politics and culture, and serves as a unique testament and representation of his nation's antiquities. Principally, it is a creative rewriting of the Bible, for which Josephus used a number of biblical texts as well as a wide range of Jewish and non-Jewish sources. Although he reports in *War* that he considered it superfluous (περιττόν) to relate the entire history of the Jews for such had been done before him with accuracy (μετ' ἀκριβείας), and importantly without veering away from the truth (οὐ πολὺ τῆς ἀληθείας),⁹⁶ the insistence of his patron, Epaphroditus, leads him to the creation of *Ant.*⁹⁷ For Josephus this work was to be a faithful record based primarily upon a faultless rendering of the Bible.⁹⁸ Or, at least, this is his claim. He states that this work is an ancient history, based upon the Hebrew records (ἐκ τῶν Ἑβραϊκῶν μεθρημηνευμένην γραμμάτων),⁹⁹ in which he will relate the precise details of scripture (τὰ μὲν οὖν ἀκριβῆ τῶν ἐν ταῖς ἀγραφαῖς) without adding or omitting anything (οὐδὲν προσθεὶς οὐδ' αὖ παραλιπών).¹⁰⁰ In his preface Josephus also acknowledges LXX as a predecessor, source and model for his own work. Having told his readers that 'some of the Greeks took considerable pains to know the

⁹⁵ . So, for instance, H.St.J.Thackeray notes in his introduction to the Loeb edition of the *Jewish Antiquities* (p.vii) that whilst the *Jewish War* was written in the 'prime of life' with 'surprising rapidity', the "*Archaeology* was the laboured work of middle life; compiled under the oppressive reign of Domitian, the enemy of all literature and of historical writing in particular, it was often apparently laid aside in weariness and only carried to completion through the instigation of others, and with large assistance towards the close".

⁹⁶ . *Jewish War*, 1.17.

⁹⁷ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.8.

⁹⁸ . Josephus attempts (*Jewish Antiquities*, 10.218) to explain and defend his use of the Hebrew Bible: "But let no one blame me for writing down everything of this nature, as I find it in our ancient books; for as to that matter, I have plainly assured those that think me defective in any such point, or complain of my management, and have told them in the beginning of this history, that I intended to do no more than translate the Hebrew books into the Greek language, and promised them to explain those facts, without adding anything to them of my own, or taking anything away from there."

⁹⁹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.5.

¹⁰⁰ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.17.

affairs of our nation', he goes on to speak in glowing terms of king Ptolemy II as the instigator of the creation of LXX.¹⁰¹ Despite this acknowledgement of the importance of this Greek translation, at no point does Josephus explicitly acknowledge his own dependence on it, at least in terms of it being a direct source.¹⁰² In any case, it appears that his own idea of translation was much more one of rendering the essential contents of the biblical narrative in his own style, rather than literally transposing it from one language to another.

Although it is subject to many interpretations,¹⁰³ it is clear that in the literal sense Josephus' attempt at this self-stated aim was something of a failure, as numerous biblical stories are embellished with Josephan touches whilst other potentially damaging details are left out of his apology on Judaism. Whilst we may conclude that *Ant.* is a highly detailed and extensive account of the biblical narrative, it must be seen, nevertheless, that it is not a translation as such, at least not in our modern sense of the term. Granted, we do not know the true form of his biblical texts, and it seems that he was working from a selection of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek sources,¹⁰⁴ but it is clearly evident, from accounts such as Moses' marriage to the Ethiopian princess (*Ant* 2.239-53) and his omission of the golden calf episode (Exodus 32), that Josephus' *Ant.* is a highly creative paraphrase, and not a direct

¹⁰¹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.9 and 1.10. He also expends considerable space on his account of the Letter of Aristeas, *Jewish Antiquities*, 12.11-118.

¹⁰² . Feldman (*Josephus' Interpretation of the Bible*, p.26) suggests that the stylistically inferior LXX would have been unsuitable for Josephus' attempt to reach a cultured Greek audience. However, the fact that both the LXX and the *Antiquities* were written in Greek, coupled to Josephus' glowing praise of the LXX, his acknowledgement of its importance (*Ant.* 12.114), and his style of writing and paraphrasing, suggest that it would have been a useful resource.

¹⁰³ . The sense of Josephus' avowed aims we adopt here is somewhat literal. However, as Feldman (1998, pp.39-46) has shown, there a wide array of interpretations of Josephus' words in this regard. Although this is an important issue, it will suffice for our study, which is essentially an analysis of the biblical paraphrase, to surmise that Josephus had a somewhat fluid attitude towards his stated aims. In this manner Josephus' promise not to add or detract may be seen as a formulaic phrase, used by a whole host of Graeco-Roman authors, in order to affirm their accuracy; so, Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History*, p.58f., and Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, pp.25-28.

¹⁰⁴ . See below for a full discussion of Josephus' biblical texts.

translation, of his biblical texts. In any case a direct translation would merely amount to a duplication of the already existing Greek version of the Hebrew Bible. Although LXX serves as a precedent for Josephus, there is nothing in his works which suggests that he found its translation of the Hebrew Scriptures to be wanting. His own work, then, is to be seen as a rigorous paraphrase of biblical literature. In this respect, for example, Josephus feels the need to explain amazing events which he has recounted from the biblical accounts, as he perhaps feels that they would be too unbelievable for Greeks and Romans ears. One such instance is the parting of the Red Sea by Moses, where Josephus is compelled to state; "As for myself, I have delivered every part of this history as I found it in the sacred books; nor let anyone wonder at the strangeness of the narration."¹⁰⁵ Here Josephus fully admits the bizarre nature of such events, echoing to a degree the rationalisation which may have marked the Greek speaking readers of his work, but nevertheless reminds them that such events are taken from the Hebrew Scriptures.

Josephus states that originally it had been his intention to discuss the origins of his people and the laws which they evolved, however, owing to the extensive nature of such an undertaking and the difficulty of translating it into a foreign language, he was forced to conceive of the two separate works.¹⁰⁶ Such an admission demonstrates the importance which he attached to accurately translating the history of the Jewish people. Of particular importance and prominence is his desire to correct the erroneous judgements which coloured Roman thought on the subject of the Jews, and it is with this purpose in mind that he translates scripture in his *Ant.* For instance, in the preface

¹⁰⁵ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.347. This formula is an oft-repeated method of presenting the more fantastic elements of the Bible; see further H.Moehring, 'Rationalization of Miracles in the Writings of Flavius Josephus', *TU* 112, 1973, pp.376-383.

¹⁰⁶ . *The Jewish War*, 1.6-7.

to *Ant.* he states that because of his direct experience of the war and its misreporting and representation by other commentators, he “was forced to give the history of it, because I saw that others perverted the truth of these actions in their writings.”¹⁰⁷ Indeed, he is keen to stress that Judaism has a venerable past, one worthy of Roman respect and attention. His bold vision sees a retelling of “all our antiquities, and the constitution of our government, as interpreted out of the Hebrew Scriptures.”¹⁰⁸ Such an undertaking is designed to present a favourable view of Judaism in an era of rising anti-Semitism, as Sterling, Rajak, and Mason suggest, and to explain to the Roman authorities that the Jewish people, especially of the Diaspora, are not instinctively rebellious, as suggested by Feldman.¹⁰⁹

This concern for Roman values may also be seen from the portrayal of characters such as Abraham, Joseph and Moses, who are seen in a Hellenistic light as great Graeco-Roman intellectuals, lawgivers, philosophers and generals.¹¹⁰ This is not surprising when we consider the history of our author, his desire to represent his people in a favourable light, and the Graeco-Roman environment in which he wrote. The twenty books of *Ant.* were intended as a positive representation of Judaism to a Roman audience at a time when Jews were not only reeling from the Jewish War, but

¹⁰⁷ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.4.

¹⁰⁸ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.5.

¹⁰⁹ . Previously in his *Jewish War* (1.2) Josephus had spoken of the ‘hatred of the Jews’ which had coloured the works of many Graeco-Roman historians. Here in the *Jewish Antiquities* (16.175) he states that his repeated mentioning of pro-Jewish documents is designed to “reconcile the other nations to us and remove the causes of hatred which have taken root in thoughtless persons among us as well as among them.”

¹¹⁰ . As J.M.G.Barclay (*Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora, From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE-117 CE)*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1996, p.357) states; “In recounting the biblical story Josephus consistently dresses his narrative in Hellenistic garb. Biblical figures are given characterization through speeches and analyses of their inner motivation, and a premium is placed on emotion, pathos and suspense.”

were also under threat of persecution all over the empire.¹¹¹ Josephus, writing during the troubled reign of Domitian, felt a great need to represent his people as both law-abiding and non-rebellious. Thus, in his preface he refers to the laws of Judaism and observes how rebellion against these divine laws results in utter disaster.¹¹² Whilst this appeal to the rule of law may be influenced by Deuteronomistic concepts of Jewish history, it was also a sentiment bound to appeal to the new rulers of Judea. Indeed, Josephus represents the Romans as benefactors of the whole world, rulers who, through judicious law-making, are able to create a tolerant pluralism in their empire. So, Josephus praises them, stating that ‘your single rule over all makes good-will effective and ill-will ineffective’.¹¹³ In addition, he catalogues a plethora of letters and decrees made in favour of the Jews by the Romans, thus showing that Judaism has long been recognised and protected by the rulers of other nations.¹¹⁴ Tellingly, as Attridge observes, Josephus also suggests that God’s providence (πρόνοια) has passed on to the Roman Empire.¹¹⁵

It has also been suggested that Josephus was influenced, to a degree, by Roman law; thus, in the case of the punishment of a thief he appears to adopt an attitude which is found not in biblical or Talmudic traditions, but in Roman law.¹¹⁶ In

¹¹¹ . The reign of Domitian, under which Josephus wrote and published the *Jewish Antiquities*, was one of hardship and repression for Diasporan Jews. Not only was there widespread persecution (if Eusebius, *Hist.Eccl.*3.12ff, is to be believed) but Domitian increased the levy of the *fiscus Iudaicus*. See further E.M.Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1976, pp.376-378.

¹¹² . *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.14.

¹¹³ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 16.46.

¹¹⁴ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 14.185-267 and 16.160-178. See further M.Pucci ben Zeev, *Jewish Rights in the Roman World. The Greek and Roman documents Quoted by Josephus Flavius*, Tübingen J.C.B.Mohr, 1998.

¹¹⁵ . The explicit statement occurs in *Jewish War*, 5.367, but similar sentiments may be found in the *Antiquities* in, for example, the visions of David which compares Roman power to the invincibility of iron (*Ant.*, 10.195-210). Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History*, pp.67-70.

¹¹⁶ . *Jewish Antiquities*., 4.272. See further B.Cohen, ‘Civil Bondage in Jewish and Roman Law’, in *Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, N.Y., 1945, pp.113-132. It might be noted, however, that there are a number of parallels between Roman law as expressed in the Twelve Tables and Jewish rabbinic law, though the question of direct influence is very much open to

considering Josephus' views on magic we must not forget that he was a Roman citizen, patronised by the highest echelons of Roman society, lived in Rome for many years, and sought to demonstrate the similarities and compatibility between Rome and Judea. He was especially keen to show the Jewish people to be law abiding, and also that law was at the heart of Jewish custom.¹¹⁷ These points will be especially important when we examine the idea of sanction and of how the ruling powers decide upon the definition and legality/criminality of magical actions. In essence, however, we may conclude that Josephus' aims were many and varied in writing *Ant.* Primarily it is a history of Judaism, as our author claims, one designed not only to appeal to Graeco-Roman values, but also to combat anti-Jewish slurs, myths, and misconceptions. Indeed, as Mason shows it is a representation of Judaism which will directly appeal to Roman ideas of antiquity and tradition.¹¹⁸ Likewise Barclay sees Josephus as attempting to infiltrate "Roman discourse with his own distinctively Jewish traditions."¹¹⁹ Clearly, then, Josephus is well aware of the context in which he writes, and Roman attitudes are too dominant to ignore. Yet Josephus remains a creative and flexible author, one not wholly subservient to Roman ideals, as Spilsbury states: "Josephus' work is certainly not left untouched by its location so close to the heart of the empire. There are times when he seems to speak with the accents of Roman propaganda. However, his own native voice is never so utterly overwhelmed that we cannot hear within his speech subaltern tones quite unlike the voice of

interpretation; see further, B.S.Jackson, 'On the Problem of Roman Influence on the Halakah and Normative Self-Definition in Judaism', in E.P.Sanders, A.I.Baumgarten, and A.Mendelson (eds.), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, vol.2 Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period*, London, SCM Press, 1981, pp157-203.

¹¹⁷ . So he states (*Jewish Antiquities*, 16.178): "Thus we properly expect the same attitude from them, for foreignness should not be defined by difference in customs but in relation to one's proper attitude to civilised behaviour; for this is common to all and it alone enables society to survive."

¹¹⁸ . Mason, 'Should Any Wish to Enquire Further', pp.72-74.

¹¹⁹ . J.M.G.Barclay, 'The Empire Writes Back: Josephan Rhetoric in Flavian Rome', in J.Edmondson, S.Mason, and J.Rives (eds.), *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, pp.315-332, quote p.321.

Rome.”¹²⁰ Josephus’ own descriptions of his aims then support the concept of him as a Jew who wished to present his religion, culture and people as a valuable and venerable component of the Roman empire.

The Nature of Biblical Literature in Josephus’ Era

In discussing the major source for Josephus’ paraphrase in *Ant.* it will be necessary to briefly explore the nature of biblical literature in his era. The first observation to be made is that by the first century CE a number of differing texts were held to be authoritative by different communities. Hence, the second century BCE *Letter of Aristeas* attempts to not only defend the act of translating the Hebrew Bible into Greek, but also seeks to give authority and veneration to the Greek translation such as was enjoyed by the Hebrew texts in Jerusalem.¹²¹ The same situation occurred with respect to the Hebrew Bible, a point highlighted by the various archaeological finds, mainly from Qumran, dating from the second century BCE to the first century CE. As a result, the question of the textual history of the Hebrew Bible is one which has greatly interested modern scholarship. Although the finds from the Judean desert have greatly enhanced our knowledge of the biblical text(s) in antiquity, providing a new *terminus a quo* for dating the books of the Bible, we still do not know exactly

¹²⁰ . P.Spilsbury, ‘Reading the Bible in Rome: Josephus and the Constraints of Empire’, in J.Sievers and G.Lembi (eds.), *Josephus and Jewish History in Flavian Rome and Beyond*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 2005, pp.209-227, quote p.227.

¹²¹ . P.Kahle suggested (*The Cairo Geniza*, 2nd ed., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1959) that the *Letter of Aristeas* called not simply for support for a Greek translation in itself, but for the Alexandrian translation as one among many such efforts. His view has widely been rejected however. See K.H.Jobs and M.Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, Grand Rapids, Baker Academic Press, 2000, pp.33-37. On the dating of the letter to the second century BCE see J.M.Dines, *The Septuagint*, London, T&T Clark, 2004, pp.28-33.

when the earliest texts were committed to writing, nor when a collection that approximated a canon first appeared.¹²²

Indeed, the growing evidence which exists in the form of the surviving texts themselves suggests that a large number of variant texts, and indeed textual traditions, existed in Josephus' era.¹²³ This statement applies not only to the Hebrew text, but also, as Origen's Hexapla demonstrates, to LXX too. This document, designed by Origen in order to harmonize the Greek and Hebrew texts of the Hebrew Bible of his era, made use of a number of variant Greek texts which had been produced by previous exegetes. As a result we have a witness to a number of variant manuscript traditions for the LXX extant to us today, with the Qumran finds also providing an important insight into the sheer diversity of the Greek text. In this manner we have the Dead Sea Scrolls 'Bible', the Samaritan Pentateuch, LXX, and MT. It must be remembered, of course, that true standardization of the Hebrew text did not occur until the work of the Masoretes; however, the product of their work, MT, clearly represents a tradition of some antiquity.¹²⁴ Indeed, it has been suggested that the work of the Masoretes, who added a system of notes, accents and vowel signs to the received text of the Hebrew Bible, can be dated at its earliest to pre-Maccabaeon times.¹²⁵ However, the number of agreements which the Hebrew texts from Qumran

¹²² . See further T.L.Thompson, 'The Bible and Hellenism: A Response', in L.L.Grabbe (ed.), *Did Moses Speak Attic?*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 2001, pp.274-286.

¹²³ . Although the oldest extant texts of the MT version of the Hebrew Bible, the Aleppo Codex (oldest text) and the Leningrad Codex (oldest complete text), date only to the early medieval period, we are fortunate to have better witnesses for the LXX (Codex Alexandrinus, Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus), dating to the fourth and fifth centuries CE.

¹²⁴ . L.L.Grabbe, 'Jewish Historiography and Scripture in the Hellenistic Period', in L.L.Grabbe (ed.), *Did Moses Speak Attic?*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 2001, pp.129-155.

¹²⁵ . M.J.Mulder, 'The Transmission of the Biblical Text', in M.J.Mulder and H.Sysling (eds.), *Mikra, Text, Translation, reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, Assen, Van Gorcum, 1988, pp.87-136, p.89.

show with LXX, as against our MT, suggests that there was at least one other Hebrew textual tradition which existed before standardization.

This fact leaves us with great problems in identifying the precise nature of the biblical text in the first century CE. The sparse and varied evidence attests to a fluid situation, one which was only reformed through the act of canonization. Yet, the dating of this canonization is unclear; Josephus seems somewhat unsure as to how ‘scripture’ should be qualified, and his list of ‘authorized’ works differs from those adopted by other exegetes of his era.¹²⁶ It must therefore be admitted that, given the evidence available to us, the goal of recovering an ‘original’ form of even a single book is beyond us.¹²⁷ Indeed, the evidence available to us speaks of a wide variety of texts and traditions. Even within the confines of the Qumran community we may see two distinct forms of the book of Jeremiah; as Mulder observes, these textual traditions must have existed side by side for about two centuries, even though they were essentially different.¹²⁸ Thus, we are presented with a situation in which multiple versions of a given text were seen to be authoritative within different communities. Prior to canonization, then, the situation is fluid at least as far as the Prophets and the Writings are concerned.

¹²⁶ . Although he does not use the word ‘canon’ Josephus seems to be describing just such in *Against Apion* 1.38–41. However, his list of twenty-two books conflicts not only with that of the Babylonian Talmud (Baba Batra 14b-15a), but also with 4 Ezra and with the patristic lists of canonical books, a point which again demonstrates the fluidity of the ‘Bible’ in Josephus’ period.

¹²⁷ . As R.P.Carroll (‘Jewgreek Greekjew: The Hebrew Bible is All Greek to Me. Reflections on the Problematics of Dating the Origins of the Bible in Relation to Contemporary Discussions of Biblical Historiography’, in L.L.Grabbe (ed.), *Did Moses Speak Attic?*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 2001, pp.91-107) remarks (p.97); “Perhaps the notions of a definitive text or even an original text are largely the product of post-Gutenberg-generated expectations and thinking when printing introduced the notion of ‘same’ or uniform productions of texts.”

¹²⁸ . M.J.Mulder, ‘The Transmission of the Biblical Text’, in M.J.Mulder and H.Sysling (eds.), *Mikra, Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, Assen, Van Gorcum, 1988, pp.87-136, p.102.

The Torah is something of a special case in this respect, for the evidence of the Samaritan Pentateuch suggests that from an early time these five books were seen as canonical.¹²⁹ In considering Josephus as a paraphraser of biblical literature we will need to consider this level of variation which existed in his source material. Clearly, in addition to the existence of texts in three different languages (Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic), there is a question as to the precise nature of these texts and their relationship to the LXX and MT which we possess. In looking at Josephus' own approach to the biblical texts these points will be of particular importance. I will proceed by analysing Josephus' own attitude towards the Bible, making note of his own explicit comments on this subject and taking into account the critical comments made by modern scholarship. In addition I will provide a brief exploration of Josephus' sources for the three biblical figures to be investigated: Moses (Exodus), Balaam (Numbers), and the Witch of Endor (1 Samuel); these texts will, however, be dealt with more fully in the context of the three case studies, so as to provide a more detailed appraisal of Josephus' own readings as well as those of Philo and Pseudo-Philo.

Josephus as Biblical Interpreter

Having explored the general questions concerning the nature of the biblical literature in Josephus' era we will turn our attention to his own appreciation of, and approach to, the main source for the first half of *Ant.* It seems clear that in rewriting biblical literature in *Ant.*, Josephus would have had access to a number of texts and

¹²⁹ . S.Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1989, pp.182-184.

oral traditions,¹³⁰ primarily those composed in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic. However, it is more difficult to offer a precise summary of Josephus' use of the variant texts, as in the first half of *Ant.* his paraphrase of biblical literature appears to have oscillated at will between these three sources. Josephus himself does not offer any explanation or notice as to where and why his biblical sources change. The problem is compounded by the fact that very little in-depth research has been done in this area, with Shutt's work being a detailed exception.¹³¹ As Feldman notes, it is an area deserving of study and one which would help in our understanding of Josephus's views on Jewish religion and history.¹³² Cohen emphasizes this lack of progress, in addition to castigating several rash conclusions, and states that research in this field of enquiry has often been 'sloppy'.¹³³ Whilst Feldman notes that there has not been a systematic study of Josephus's biblical *Vorlage*, except the study of Joshua, Judges and Samuel by Mez, and that of 1 Kings 12-22 and 2 Chronicles 10-18 by Begg, he does list a number of assertions as to biblical sources from scholars of the last two centuries.¹³⁴ Late in the nineteenth century the original solution to this problem was total dependency on a Hebrew text, as suggested by Tachauer, a hypothesis which

¹³⁰ . Although the *Jewish Antiquities* is described as a biblical paraphrase it must also be considered that some of Josephus' sources could be oral rather than literary. As L.H.Feldman observes (L.H.Feldman, 'Mikra in the Writings of Josephus', in M.J.Mulder and H.Sysling (eds.), *Mikra, Text, Translation, and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, Assen, Van Gorcum, 1988, pp.455-518, see pp.472-473) the numerous midrashic details which Josephus shares with Pseudo-Philo may point to an oral tradition. Regardless of nature, however, it is clear that Josephus made use of many diverse sources for his biblical paraphrase.

¹³¹ . R. Shutt, 'Biblical Names and Their Meanings in Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, Books I and II.1-200', *JSJ* 2, 1971, pp.167-182. Although Shutt shows that Josephus appears to follow the Hebrew and Greek texts of Genesis in rendering biblical names, as well as numerous instances of independence from both, his work does not consider the multifarious form of the LXX text in Josephus' era, nor the fact that the difference between LXX and MT may not have been as great as it is in our own manuscripts.

¹³² . Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible*, p.23.

¹³³ . Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, p.35.

¹³⁴ . A.Mez, *Die Bibel des Josephus untersucht fur Buch V-VII der Archaologie*, Basel, 1895. C.T.Begg, *Josephus' Account of the Early Divided Monarchy (AJ 8, 212-420): Rewriting the Bible*, Leuven, Belgium, 1993, 'Filling in the Blanks: Josephus' Version of the Campaign of the Three Kings, 2 Kings 3', *HUCA* 64, 1993, pp.89-109, and 'Josephus' Version of Jehu's Putsch (2 Kings 8, 25-10, 36)', *Antomnium* 68, 1993, pp.450-484.

was to see its diametrical opposite in the work of Schalit who imagined complete dependency on a Greek text.¹³⁵ Needless to say these two extreme positions have been often challenged, with modern commentators generally agreeing with the view that Josephus utilized both Hebrew and Greek texts, and perhaps an Aramaic targum, in his rewriting of the bible.¹³⁶ In addition it may be suggested that Josephus was reliant on biblical texts which have not survived to us, but which may have served as corrections to the Septuagint, or even variant Hebrew texts which served as the forerunner to our MT.

A cursory sketch of Josephus, who claimed to be a priest, schooled in the Hebrew biblical texts and skilled in their interpretation, spoke Aramaic, and wrote in Greek for, primarily, a Greek and Roman audience, shows that he was adept in a number of languages, all of which had their respective biblical texts. In his own words, he makes reference to both Hebrew and Greek versions as, at the very least, inspirations. Josephus claims that in writing *Ant.* he has 'translated from the Hebrew records (ἐκ τῶν Ἑβραϊκῶν μεθηρμηνευμένην γραμμάτων)', whilst his personal history of being born and brought up in Jerusalem and of being without equal in Jewish learning suggests that he was very familiar with the Hebrew bible.¹³⁷ Indeed, he states that he excels his compatriots in Jewish learning, a learning which

¹³⁵ . G.Tachauer, 'Das Verhältniss von Flavius Josephus zur Bibel und Tradition', Ph.D. diss., Erlangen, 1871; A.Schalit, Namenwörterbuch zu Flavius Josephus, in K.H.Rengstorf (ed.), *A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus*, Leiden, 1968.

¹³⁶ . Feldman states that the 'overwhelming majority of scholars' have adopted this intermediate position, giving the examples of H.Bloch, *Die Quellen des Josephus in seiner Archaologie*, Leipzig, 1879, E.Schurer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C. – A.D. 135)*, (rev. and ed.) G.Vermes, F.Millar and M.Goodman, Edinburgh, 1973-1987, A.Rahlf's, *Septuaginta-Studien, 3: Lucians Rezension der Königsbücher*, Göttingen, 1911, and H.St.J.Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian*, New York, 1929. L.Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible*, London, 1998, p.24.

¹³⁷ . On his claim to have translated from the Hebrew scriptures see *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.5; for his life in Jerusalem and his pre-eminence in Jewish learning see *Life* 7-8 and 8.

presumably revolved around the Hebrew Torah.¹³⁸ Indeed, he received a Torah scroll, of Jerusalem origin, as a gift from Titus.¹³⁹ The LXX, too, appears to have held some importance for Josephus, especially when we consider his claims concerning the use of this source,¹⁴⁰ and also the space which he devotes to the recounting of the story of LXX's origins as seen in the Letter of Aristeas.¹⁴¹

Yet the very fact that Josephus is writing a biblical paraphrase in Greek in *Ant.* suggests that he may have found the LXX version wanting, and felt that he needed to write his own, more accurate, version of biblical history in the Greek language. Whilst LXX could hardly be ignored by Josephus, it may not have been sufficient in his eyes to serve as his only biblical text. Living as a Jew in the first century CE we may imagine that Josephus's first language was that spoken by the majority in Palestine, Aramaic, and that he was familiar with literature written in this language. Such Aramaic traditions would have proved useful to Josephus as such works were, much like *Ant.*, paraphrases and reinterpretations rather than strict translations. However, nowhere does Josephus specifically acknowledge the direct use of a targum; its use has been inferred by a number of scholars on the basis of internal evidence. Thus, Cohen suggests that the reason for Josephus' much more liberal style of vocabulary, order, and content in the first five books of *Ant.*, in comparison with books 6-11, is the availability of targumim for these earlier books.¹⁴² Likewise, Bloch has suggested that an Aramaic targum was a major source for Josephus' paraphrase.¹⁴³ However, from

¹³⁸ . *Life*, 8, cf. *Ant.*, 20.263.

¹³⁹ . *Life*, 418.

¹⁴⁰ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 1:10-12.

¹⁴¹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 12:11-15.

¹⁴² . N.G.Cohen, 'Josephus and Scripture: Is Josephus' Treatment of the Scriptural Narrative similar throughout the Antiquities I-XI?', *JQR* 54, 1963-1964, pp.311-332.

¹⁴³ . R.Bloch, 'Note méthodologique pour l'étude de la littérature rabbinique', *RSR* 43, 1955, pp.194-227.

his own statements it would appear that Josephus felt that his own work found its basis in Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible. Whilst the possibility of an Aramaic targum remains, the points in support are not numerous, and, as Feldman states, may simply reflect a Greek version which is now lost to us.¹⁴⁴

Whilst scholarship acknowledges that Josephus is much freer in his paraphrase of the Pentateuch than for the later books of the Bible, there is little agreement on the major source for the first four books of *Ant.* Indeed, in the case of Exodus, Rajak's thorough survey of terminology does not lead to any straightforward conclusion concerning a Greek or Hebrew *Vorlage*; her evidence suggests that Josephus was willing to use both sources in his paraphrase.¹⁴⁵ Likewise, Feldman's work on Josephus' description of the order of the stones in the breastplate of the high priest yields inconclusive results.¹⁴⁶ It may be that the differences which Josephus describes in relation to MT and LXX in this case are the result of his use of an independent text; equally, however, it may be due to the fact that he himself knew of a distinct priestly tradition, that he was paraphrasing freely, or that he had some kind of non-biblical source for this data. As might be expected, these inconclusive reviews are equally applicable to Josephus' sources for Numbers. In the case of 1 Samuel, Ulrich has proposed a number of details which demonstrate that Josephus employed, predominantly, a Greek text as his source.¹⁴⁷ However, there are clearly details of his paraphrase of this book which speak of a Hebrew source. As Thackeray and Rajak have shown the reference to the city of Dor, rather than Endor, may be resolved by

¹⁴⁴ . Feldman, 'Mikra in the Writings of Josephus', p.460.

¹⁴⁵ . T.Rajak, *Flavius Josephus: Jewish History and the Greek World*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1974, p.238 and Appendix V.

¹⁴⁶ . Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible*, p.31

¹⁴⁷ . E.C.Ulrich, *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus*, Missoula, Montana, 1978.

imagining a Hebrew source.¹⁴⁸ In what follows, I will seek to explore *Ant.* as a biblical paraphrase through comparison to both MT and LXX.

The Audience of the *Jewish Antiquities*

The precise nature of Josephus' audience for *Ant.*, in both intention and actuality, has been an often discussed subject in which a number of theories have been advanced.¹⁴⁹ That Josephus was a man of his age, however, has not been questioned; indeed this is a point which has been emphasized most recently by Mason, who feels that Josephus deserves more credit for being an inventive and imaginative author, writing on many levels, for many diverse intended audiences.¹⁵⁰ Even a cursory reading of *Ant.* reveals that Josephus was a literary bridge between the Jewish and Graeco-Roman worlds. His exhaustive history of Jewish culture is replete with details which resonate with Hellenic values, from Moses appearing as a conquering general in the image of Alexander the Great, to his repeated stressing of the physical attractiveness, wealth, antiquity, and piety of his heroes, points well received by both

¹⁴⁸ . Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian*, p.82, Rajak, *Flavius Josephus: Jewish History and the Greek World*, pp.248-251.

¹⁴⁹ . Among the numerous theories we may mention several influential studies: the examinations by S.Cohen (*Josephus in Galilee and Rome, His Vita and Development as a Historian*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1979) and M.Smith ('Palestinian Judaism in the First Century,' in M.Cavis (ed.), *Israel: Its Role in Civilisation*, N.Y., J TSA, 1956, pp.67-81) imagined a Jewish audience (in particular the early rabbinical movement at Yavneh), Sterling (*Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephus, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography*) differs in highlighting Josephus' desire to explain Jewish culture and history to those ignorant of the fact (i.e. the Greeks/Romans), whilst S.Mason ('The Life of Josephus' in L.H.Feldman and S.Mason (eds.), *Flavius Josephus, Translation and Commentary, vol.3, Judean Antiquities 1-4*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 2000, pp.xii-xix) suggests a very focused and small audience of Judaeophilic Graeco-Romans who sought to learn more of Judaism. It would seem, however, that Josephus' intention was to write for a number of audiences, and with a number of intentions.

¹⁵⁰ . Mason, 'Should Any Wish to Enquire Further', pp.64-103.

Greeks and Romans.¹⁵¹ Moreover, one of his central themes in *Ant.* is that the Romans are powerful and victorious because the God of the Jews has backed them.¹⁵² This view first finds its expression in *War*, but it is clear to see in *Ant.*, too, that Josephus has a high regard for Judea's new overlords. Thus, in Josephus' version of Balaam's messianic prophecies, all mention of Judea as a 'blood-thirsty' lion or of the promise of a messianic leader have been removed, leaving us with an image of Judea as a friendly neighbour, a prosperous nation, and a non-violent people. In this manner the Jews, whom Josephus wishes to both represent and protect, do not appear as a threat to Roman rule. As Goodman observes, Josephus' writings, particularly *Ant.*, were "aimed at convincing both Jews and Romans that the practice of Judaism was not incompatible with living in a Roman society, and it would have been entirely logical for him to present himself as a 'Roman of the Jewish faith'."¹⁵³

Josephus' work was intended, to a degree, to be read by two distinct audiences. On the one hand, *Ant.* was written to inform the gentile Roman world of Jewish culture, history and values; in this respect he appeals to the translation of the Torah into Greek for King Ptolemy Philadelphus as his precedent.¹⁵⁴ The fact that Josephus writes in Greek, planned his work as a systematic attempt to re-write the Bible, and states that the Greeks have been keen to learn of Jewish history, further supports this case. He also states that his work is intended to satisfy the Greek desire

¹⁵¹ . Josephus states (*Ant.* 2.230) that Moses' mental growth (σύνεσις) far outstripped his physical growth, a point made especially of Alexander by Plutarch (*Alexander*, 4.8). Physical attractiveness; *Ant.* 2.231, wealth; *Ant.* 1.243, piety; *Ant.* 1.6, antiquity; *Con.Ap.*, 2.154. See further L.H.Feldman, *Josephus' Interpretation of the Bible*, pp.74-131.

¹⁵² . For instance in *War*, 5.404ff. Josephus imagines the Romans as God's agents through whom the deity will punish his errant people. As has been noted, this attitude is extended to the *Jewish Antiquities*. See further, Rajak, *Josephus*, 2nd ed., 78-103.

¹⁵³ . M.Goodman, 'Josephus as Roman Citizen', in L.H.Feldman and G.Hata (eds.), *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1987, pp.329-338, quote p.334.

¹⁵⁴ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.10.

to learn of Jewish history,¹⁵⁵ that the whole of the Greek world would find *Ant.* worthy of perusal,¹⁵⁶ and that “this account of our history is chiefly meant to reach the Greeks in order to show them that in former times we were treated with all respect”.¹⁵⁷ At the end of his work, he boasts that no one else would have been capable of relating so accurately Jewish history to the Greeks.¹⁵⁸ On the other hand it seems that Josephus also intended to reach out to a Jewish audience, for not only does he embellish the stories which concern Jewish-gentile assimilation,¹⁵⁹ he also apologises for rearranging the order of the laws in the Torah, stating that he does so “lest perchance any of my countrymen who chance upon this work should reproach me at all for having gone astray”.¹⁶⁰

Indeed, Rajak has suggested that Josephus’ primary audience was one of Greek-speaking Diaspora Jews, and that, as a Diaspora Jew himself, Josephus functioned as part of the strong tradition in Judaism of communication between the centre and the periphery.¹⁶¹ Such a view, however, accords too little significance to the fact that Josephus has willingly assimilated into some aspects of Roman culture; he has a name that honours his Roman masters, he is employed by Roman patrons, he lives in Rome, and he depicts Roman power in highly flattering terms. Such considerations make it difficult to imagine that his primary audience was anything other than Roman, especially when we consider that Josephus’ stay in Rome may have been a lonely one in terms of contact with his co-religionists.¹⁶² It seems clear,

¹⁵⁵ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.9.

¹⁵⁶ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.5.

¹⁵⁷ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 16.174.

¹⁵⁸ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 10.262.

¹⁵⁹ . So, for example, the story of Samson (Judges, 14:1-16:31) given in *Jewish Antiquities*, 5.286-317.

¹⁶⁰ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.197.

¹⁶¹ . Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society*, p.178.

¹⁶² . As G.Hata (‘Imagining Some Dark Periods in Josephus’ Life’, in F.Parente (ed.), *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period, Essays in Memory of Morton Smith*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1994,

particularly from the repeated appeals to education for the Greeks concerning Jewish history,¹⁶³ that *Ant.* is predominantly addressed to the Graeco-Roman world and not the Jewish, but it would also appear that Josephus felt that his work would be valued by Diaspora Judaism. However, it would be an error to think in terms of clear and distinct differences between the categories of ‘Roman’ and ‘Jewish’, especially when we consider Rome’s extensive Jewish Diasporan community.¹⁶⁴ The primary audience of *Ant.*, however, was ‘Roman’ in the sense that Josephus deliberately writes for, and models his work on, Roman values and attitudes.

This observation of a dipartite audience will be of great importance in our study of magic in the works of Josephus, for both the Jewish and Roman cultures held their own distinctive viewpoints on the subject of magic. Josephus, standing as a bridge between the two, composed *Ant.* as a compromise document, a retelling of Jewish history in Roman dress. In this way, the subject of magic is a contact point between the two cultures. As well as observing that magic was a universal feature of ancient societies, we may also see that there was a good degree of contact on the subject between Jewish and Greek sources aside from Josephus. For instance, whilst biblical literature speaks of Moses as a great wonder worker and potential magician, Graeco-Roman authors such as Pliny the Elder also know of his reputation as a master magician.¹⁶⁵ In this respect, LXX, in addition to sources such as the works of Philo

pp.309-328) suggests, Josephus’ reputation as a defector may have damaged his relations with Diasporan Jews in Rome.

¹⁶³ . So we have the appeals to the Greeks, and the role of the *Jewish Antiquities* in ‘education’ of this audience, in *Ant.* 1.5, 14.187, and 16.174-178.

¹⁶⁴ . Josephus speaks of a large community (more than 8,000 Jews); *Jewish Antiquities*, 17.300. See further the numerous documents on Jews in Rome in M.H.Williams, *Jews among the Greeks & Romans; A Diasporan Sourcebook*, London, John Hopkins University Press, 1998.

¹⁶⁵ . Exodus 7, Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 30.11.

and Artapanus,¹⁶⁶ may have served to disseminate Jewish culture and religion to a wider Greek-speaking audience, and hence the details of the Moses story may have long been in circulation in Greek and Roman educated circles before the time of Pliny the Elder. In essence, then, Josephus' *Ant.* is a work designed for a variety of audiences; however, it would be an error to exaggerate the differences between these audiences, for the subject of magic features as a universal concern and interest.

However, it must be noted that Josephus, as befitted an author of his era interested in history and the positive representation of his people, wrote primarily for an audience composed of the elite members of society, both Roman and Jewish. Given the nature of ancient 'publishing' it is more than likely that Josephus' works had a small audience, composed especially of the wealthy and the educated.¹⁶⁷ This section of his audience will be an important consideration in this thesis for we will be exploring the extent to which Josephus modelled his appreciation of magic upon the conventions of his day; conventions passed down into society from the top of the social pyramid, the Roman emperor himself. As Mason shows with respect to *War*, Josephus' elite Roman audience is of central importance with respect to his representation of Judaism; it is their values which Josephus seeks to echo.¹⁶⁸ Although Cotton and Eck question the extent of Josephus' contacts among the Roman elites, the

¹⁶⁶ . Although Artapanus' work only survives in the quotations of the Church Fathers Clement (*Stromata*, 1.23, 154.) and Eusebius (*Præparatio Evangelica*, 9.18, 23), it seems that it was designed as a Diasporan response to pagan polemics about Jews; see further, C.R.Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors, Volume 1: Historians*, Chico, California, Scholars Press, 1983, pp.189-193. Likewise, Philo's account of Moses, as will be seen in the third chapter, is also highly apologetic, though there is no evidence that Pliny had access to either source. However, both of these Jewish sources show that Jews felt that the Moses story would be of interest to Greek-speaking audiences.

¹⁶⁷ . As R.M.Ogilivie (*Roman Literature and Society*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1980) has shown, publishing in the first century CE was something of a hit and miss affair, and in no sense could it be said to be an industry. Rather, books were made for a select portion of society since only a small percentage could appreciate them.

¹⁶⁸ . S.Mason, 'Of Audience and Meaning: Reading Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum* in the Context of a Flavian Audience', in J.Sievers and G.Lembi (eds.), *Josephus and Jewish Historiography in Flavian Rome and Beyond*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 2005, pp.71-100.

fact that Epaphroditus was willing to sponsor his writings after the removal of Flavian patronage certainly suggests that he had wealthy and cultured friends.¹⁶⁹ The very fact that he does not elaborate upon his re-tellings of Roman history (especially when drawing parallels to Jewish history), whilst at the same time giving detailed accounts of Jewish history, suggests that he believed his audience would have a comprehensive knowledge of the former and a degree of ignorance concerning the latter. It appears, too, that he employed a number of Greek speaking assistants,¹⁷⁰ and he laboured hard to produce a work which met the standards of classical Greek literature.¹⁷¹ Such details suggest, to quote Mason, that he “wrote his finest work with a sophisticated Roman audience in view, one that was fully at home in elite discourse about politics and constitutions, and that had a taste for fine writing.”¹⁷² Thus, whilst we may conclude, with Bilde,¹⁷³ that Josephus wrote for a general Graeco-Roman audience in order to defend and promote Judaism, it must also be observed, as Cohen does,¹⁷⁴ that Josephus principally addressed his works to the highest level of Roman society. Josephus, then, is a highly complex and intelligent author whose intentions in writing *Ant.* were many and varied, but who was keenly aware of his social situation in Rome.

¹⁶⁹ . H.M.Cotton and W.Eck, ‘Josephus’ Roman Audience: Josephus and the Roman Elites’, in J.Edmondson, S.Mason, and J.Rives (eds.), *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, pp.37-52.

¹⁷⁰ . Josephus mentions his literary assistants in *Against Apion*, 1.50, and their mark may most clearly be seen in *Jewish Antiquities* 15-19. However, H.St.J.Thackeray’s hypothesis (*Josephus, the Man and the Historian*, pp.100-108) concerning the ‘Sophoclean’ (15-16) and ‘Thucydidean’ (17-19) appears to overstate the case, as R.J.H.Shutt (*Studies in Josephus*, London, 1961, pp.30-35) and Rajak (*Josephus, The Historian and His Society*, pp.62-63, 233-236) have shown.

¹⁷¹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.7-8 and 20.263.

¹⁷² . Mason, ‘Of Audience and Meaning: Reading Josephus’ *Bellum Judaicum* in the Context of a Flavian Audience’, pp.71-100, quote p.99

¹⁷³ . Bilde, *Flavius Josephus Between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, His Works, and their Importance*, pp.102-103.

¹⁷⁴ . Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, pp.237-238.

Other Source Materials

The Biblical Texts

The most important of our sources, with respect to *Ant.*, the biblical texts serve as the basis for the three case studies. In addressing these examples we will analyse both the Hebrew Bible, in the form of the Masoretic Text (MT), and the Greek translation (LXX). As we have seen, *Ant.*, at least in its first half, is a paraphrase of the biblical books in which our author made extensive use of various texts and translations. Although we do not know exactly which text types Josephus had available for him for either the Hebrew or Greek versions, I will employ the standard editions of these versions in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* and the Göttingen edition of LXX, supplemented by a number of critical commentaries to allow for a more comprehensive analysis of terminology. In this manner we may probe our biblical sources in order to approach the possible sources the biblical text(s) which Josephus himself employed in his rewriting, and to explore as fully as possible the various potential precedents for his use of magical terminology in his paraphrase.

The Documentary Hypothesis – Competing Theories of Magic

In analysing the biblical traditions which stand behind Josephus, I will explore those traditions which have been weaved together concerning Moses, Balaam and the witch of Endor, in order to account for how the final forms of these stories relate to other biblical references concerning magic. In order to accomplish this I will draw on

the Documentary Hypothesis, a long-established source-critical approach to the Bible which aims to explain the history of the creation of the final form of the Torah, as well as several works to be found in the Prophets. A reading of the Torah reveals a number of features which betray a composite origin, from repeated accounts of the same story and contradictory statements, to variations in vocabulary and style. The Documentary Hypothesis, originally proposed in the late nineteenth century by a number of German scholars,¹⁷⁵ sought to explain these features through envisaging four main source documents, labelled Yahwist (J), Elohist (E), Priestly (P), and Deuteronomistic (D), from which the Torah was constructed. Each of these sources employed a different set of terminology (in the case of J and E the name of God is a prime distinction), differing attitudes towards Israelite religion and its heroes (for example P holds Aaron in high esteem), or alternating stylistic concerns (for instance D is effectively a legal corpus rather than a narrative). The principal features are shown in the table below:¹⁷⁶

J Yahwist	E Elohist	P Priestly	D Deuteronomistic
Emphasis on Judah	Emphasis on Israel	Emphasis on Judah	Emphasis on central shrine
Emphasis on leaders	Emphasis on the prophetic	Emphasis on the cultic	Emphasis on fidelity to Jerusalem
Anthropomorphic speech about God	Refined speech about God	Majestic speech about God	Speech recalling God's work
God has human behaviour	God speaks in dreams	Cultic approach to God	Moralistic approach
God is YHWH	God is Elohim (until Ex 3)	God is Elohim (until Ex 3)	God is YHWH
Extremely eloquent	Moderately Eloquent	Has genealogies and lists	Has long sermons

¹⁷⁵ . Aside from Wellhausen, the most prominent of the German scholars associated with the Documentary Hypothesis, the names of Graf, Hupfeld and Kuenan are often forgotten, despite the fact that they were instrumental in its creation. See further G.I.Davies, ‘Introduction to the Pentateuch’, in J.Barton and J.Muddiman (eds.), *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp.12-15.

¹⁷⁶ . Primarily based upon R.E.Friedman, ‘Torah (Pentateuch)’, *ABD* 6, pp.605-622.

However, one need only review the ‘doubling’ of stories such as that of the creation¹⁷⁷ or of the journeys of Sarah¹⁷⁸ to see the justification for the idea of multiple sources. Likewise, the narrative of the entry into the Promised Land or the list of Edomite kings, shows that multiple authors, and not just Moses, were responsible for sections of the Torah. Indeed, this aspect of the Torah has been recognised, despite the prevailing cultural and religious view of Mosaic authorship, for over six hundred years.¹⁷⁹ As scholarship probed the question of Mosaic authorship, a process which truly took off in the late nineteenth century, it was discovered that the various doublets in the Torah, far from being different accounts of the same event written by Moses for didactic purposes, could be firmly differentiated through their distinctive use of language, principally in the term used for the divine name.¹⁸⁰ Although it had long been realised that there were a number of different voices within the Torah, with, for instance, the narration of Moses’ own death in Deut 34 clearly invalidating the idea that the five books were received and inscribed by Moses himself, it was not until the work of Wellhausen that the Documentary Hypothesis reached a widespread scholarly audience.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ . Gen. 1 and Gen. 2.

¹⁷⁸ . Gen. 12:10-20 and Gen. 20:1-6.

¹⁷⁹ . This debate can be traced at least as far back as the eleventh century, where Isaac ibn Yashush became the first, in print, to question the reliability of the kings list in Genesis 36. A critical attitude towards the Torah was also prominent in the works of the seventeenth century philosophers Thomas Hobbes (*Leviathan*) and Benedict Spinoza (*Tractatus theologico-politicus*). It was only in more recent times, however, that such approaches to the text could be aired freely, without threat of condemnation and excommunication from religious authorities.

¹⁸⁰ . At first this differentiation was only observed in the books of Genesis and Exodus (first observed by J.Astruc in the mid-eighteenth century), but in time the two sources were identified through other criteria (images of God, political interests i.e. J supports Judah and the Aaronid priesthood whilst E supports the interests of the Shiloh priesthood, complexity of style etc.), and were found to extend into the book of Numbers as well.

¹⁸¹ . As E.Nicholson (*The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century, The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998) suggests, Wellhausen represents the point of departure for all subsequent study.

Wellhausen, however, did much more than simply popularise the Documentary Hypothesis. He argued that from the style and point of view of each source, one could draw inferences about the times in which they were written. Likewise he suggested that the progression evident in the four sources, from a relatively informal and decentralized relationship between the people and God in the J account, to the relatively formal and centralized practices of the P account, demonstrated the development of institutionalized Israelite religion. Through an adoption of this source-critical approach a rough consensus has been achieved in the modern appraisal of the Documentary Hypothesis, which assigns the sources to different factions, eras and locations. Thus, it is suggested that the E source came from the northern kingdom of Israel and the J source from Judah, and that they were only combined (to form the composite JE) after the fall of Israel to the Assyrians in 722 BCE.¹⁸² The fact that both appear to have employed an early form of Hebrew, in addition to details which link P to the reign of King Hezekiah, and D to the reign of King Josiah, further suggests that J and E were the earliest documents to be composed.¹⁸³ Although Wellhausen's dating of P as the final source has been largely overturned by modern scholarship, a consensus of opinion supports the order JEPD.¹⁸⁴ These texts were combined over a lengthy period of time, with some scholars even suggesting that major redactional work was not completed until the late Hellenistic period.¹⁸⁵ As Davies states, the Torah, whilst organised into a unity by the various

¹⁸² . J.Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch, An Introduction to The First Five Books of the Bible*, N.Y., Doubleday, 1992. See further A.de Pury, 'Yahwist ("J") Source', *ABD* 6, pp.1013-1020.

¹⁸³ . G.Rendsburg, 'Late Biblical Hebrew and the Date of P', *Journal of the Ancient Near East Society* 12, 1980, pp.65-80. See further Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch*, pp.232-242.

¹⁸⁴ . Wellhausen's view on the order of composition of texts was handicapped by his desire to see the New Testament as the logical progression of P. The work of Y.Kaufman (*The Religion of Israel, from Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, N.Y., Schocken Books, 1972), who proposed the order JEPD, has become the more widely followed paradigm.

¹⁸⁵ . So for instance N.P.Lemche, 'The Old Testament – A Hellenistic Book?', in L.L.Grabbe (ed.), *Did Moses Speak Attic? Jewish Historiography and Scripture in the Hellenistic Period*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 2001, pp.287-319.

redactors, ultimately “derives from various periods in the history of Israel within which certain individuals or schools have contributed an especially creative shaping and rethinking of the traditions which they inherited.”¹⁸⁶ In such a manner the Documentary Hypothesis attempts to account for this individualism and conflicting creativity of the sources not only in the Torah, but also, as Noth observed, in parts of the Deuteronomic History (Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings).¹⁸⁷

Although there was much debate concerning the relative dating and precise contents of these four different sources, the basic idea behind the Documentary Hypothesis, that there are a number of sources behind the Torah and that these sources can be differentiated (at least to a degree), is a fundamental aspect of modern scholarship.¹⁸⁸ Though scholars may disagree with respect to the dating of the respective sources, there is little opposition, aside from a minority of fundamentalist religious scholars,¹⁸⁹ to the idea that the Torah is a composite document which reflects a number of distinct viewpoints. There have, however, been a number of criticisms of the specifics advanced by the Wellhausen School. Gunkel, the father of ‘form criticism’, objected to the over-reliance on literary compositions, instead suggesting that oral compositions, passed down by word of mouth by a largely illiterate people, could be considered.¹⁹⁰ Engnell echoed this appraisal, though he went much further in imagining that, like the works of Homer, the Torah was predominantly an oral

¹⁸⁶ . Davies, ‘Introduction to the Pentateuch’, p.38.

¹⁸⁷ . M.Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, English ed., Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1981.

¹⁸⁸ . The Vatican estimates that 90% of academics in the field of biblical studies support the Documentary Hypothesis; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Documentary_hypothesis, accessed 23rd March, 2006.

¹⁸⁹ . So for instance R.N.Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch, A Methodological Study*, Sheffield, Sheffield University Press, 1987, U.Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch*, Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1961.

¹⁹⁰ . H.Gunkel, *The Folktale in the Old Testament*, English ed., Sheffield, Sheffield University Press, 1991, originally published as *Das Märchen im Alten Testament*, Tübingen, 1913.

creation which was only committed to writing well after the exile.¹⁹¹ Rendtorff questioned the extent to which J and E could be differentiated and suggested that there were many passages, originally attributed to J and E in the classical conception, which may constitute independent sources.¹⁹² Likewise, Schmid and Van Seters have called into question the extent to which J and E can be thought of as distinct literary documents; the former abolishes all ideas of a distinct J, whilst the latter prefers to emphasize the role of the redactor(s) in creating the seeming differences between the two sources.¹⁹³ Such criticisms have, however, been more on the level of the particular than the general. Indeed, whilst Rendtorff suggested that the Documentary Hypothesis is now dead and buried, he nevertheless observes that no other theory has risen to take its place.¹⁹⁴ Clearly, the debate is still alive as regards the usefulness of the Documentary Hypothesis for exploring the sources of the Torah. However, for this thesis, it will be the major interpretative framework as it constitutes a rigorous, comprehensive and flexible approach to the biblical texts.

In the ensuing case studies I hope to show new evidence, centred around a focus on biblical magic and its terminology, which supports the traditional Documentary Hypothesis. Hence, especially in the cases of Balaam and Moses, there are several versions of the same narrative which provide different and distinct portrayals of people and events. Again, the Documentary Hypothesis will be constructive in the appreciation of the story of the witch of Endor, as 1 Samuel is a text which draws on Deuteronomistic magical terminology in order to describe the

¹⁹¹ . I.Engnell, 'The Pentateuch', in *Critical Essays on the Old Testament*, London, 1970, pp.50-67.

¹⁹² . R.Rendtorff, 'The Paradigm is Changing – Hopes and Fears', *Biblical Interpretation* 1.1, 1993, pp.34-53.

¹⁹³ . H.H.Schmid, 'In Search of New Approaches in Pentateuchal Research', *JSOT* 3, 1977, pp.33-42, J.Van Seters, *The Life of Moses: The Yahwist as Historian in Exodus-Numbers*, Kampen, 1994.

¹⁹⁴ . Rendtorff, 'The Paradigm is Changing', p.52.

practice of necromancy. The extent of the differences between the four sources has been rigorously debated by scholarship for the past fifty years. However, one area which has, unsurprisingly, been neglected in this regard is the extent to which these sources differentiate themselves through their understandings and portrayals of magic. I hope to illustrate that not only is this a fruitful area of research, one neglected for too long, but also that the subject of magic and its distinctive terminology was one in which the four sources took strikingly contrasting. It will readily be observed that the four sources differ greatly in their adoption of certain terms dealing with magic; indeed, this is a very distinctive element which serves to further differentiate the sources.

Philo and his Works

Philo, born around 20 BCE in the Egyptian metropolis of Alexandria, represents one of the most striking fusions of Jewish and Hellenic thought. His works constitute a subtle blending of both traditions, the product of which is an innovative outlook on Judaism which approaches the Torah as a source of profound philosophy. Although much of his work survives to us, very little is known of his life. We know, however, that he was a member of a highly influential and wealthy Alexandrian Jewish family, and was something of a leader in his community.¹⁹⁵ Although his first love was philosophy, he found it regrettably necessary to become involved in politics,¹⁹⁶ not least in response to the pogrom of 38 CE initiated by the prefect

¹⁹⁵ . *Leg.* 1. See further J.M.G.Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, pp.158-163.

¹⁹⁶ . *Spec. Leg.*, 3.1-6.

Flaccus. Such was Philo's standing that he was sent, in 39-40 CE, to the emperor in Rome as part of a Jewish delegation. However, Philo was reluctant, unlike his successful family, to take an active role in civil life.¹⁹⁷ For his key concern was the separation of the spiritual life, understood as intellectual contemplation, from the more earthly concerns of politics, wealth and hedonism. Indeed, Philo often appears to have little regard for the material and physical worlds, terming the body 'an evil and dead thing' which stood in the path of the illumination of the soul.¹⁹⁸ He believed that man's final goal was to be found in the "knowledge of the true and living God",¹⁹⁹ and for him "such knowledge is the boundary of happiness and blessedness".²⁰⁰ Such views found their origins in Greek philosophy, the principal figure of which Philo termed "the most holy Plato".²⁰¹ However, Philo was much more than simply a Platonist for he sought to blend the wisdom of Greece with that of Moses; indeed, he referred to the Jewish lawgiver as the "summit of philosophy",²⁰² and considered him the teacher of a whole legion of Greek philosophers including Pythagoras and Heraclitus.

Hailing from the cosmopolitan melting pot of cultures which was Alexandria, Philo is a key figure in our understanding of Hellenistic Judaism and of the Diaspora. Indeed, Philo was at home in both the Jewish and Graeco-Roman worlds.²⁰³ Writing

¹⁹⁷ . Josephus states that Philo was 'highly honoured' and was the brother of Alexander the Alabarch (*Ant.* 18.259) who was fabulously wealthy (*Ant.* 18.159-160).

¹⁹⁸ . *Gig.* 15.

¹⁹⁹ . *Decal.* 81, *Abr.* 58, *Praem.* 14.

²⁰⁰ . *Det.* 86.

²⁰¹ . *Prob.* 13.

²⁰² . *Op.* 8.

²⁰³ . For instance Philo speaks of his typical Greek education in the gymnasium (*Spec. Leg.*, 2.230, *Prov.*, 2.44-46, *Cong.*, 74-76), praises the LXX translators for their Greek educations (*Vit. Mos.*, 2.32), and attends Greek-style sporting events such as wrestling and chariot races (*Probus*, 26, *Prov.*, 2.58). However, he also speaks of his indoctrination in the religion of the Jews (*Spec. Leg.*, 1.314), avows his knowledge of scripture to the 'elders of the nation' (*Vit. Mos.*, 1.4), and states that he has been trained in the Jewish customs from the cradle (*Spec. Leg.*, 2.88).

in Greek, his works may be split into three broad categories: expositions of the laws of Moses, exegetical commentaries, and philosophical writings and historical-apologetic tracts. In the former of these Philo is particularly keen to address, and add his own opinions upon, the laws laid down by Moses in the Torah. His *De Vita Mosis*, which Goodenough has shown to be a companion to other expositions such as *On Abraham* and *On the Special Laws*,²⁰⁴ is a prime example of his interpretation of the Torah; indeed, it is often compared with the approaches adopted by *Jubilees*, the *Genesis Apocryphon*, the *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo, and *Ant.*²⁰⁵ Alexander has suggested that all of these works can be defined as ‘rewritten Bibles’,²⁰⁶ a supposition which has recently received support in the case of Philo, albeit with a little modification, from Borgen.²⁰⁷ In contrast to Josephus, however, Philo is much more heavily influenced by Greek philosophical categories and traditions, most principally Platonism.²⁰⁸ It is also clear that his biblical text is LXX, or is very close to it. For Philo LXX is an exact and inspired translation of the Hebrew original, being crucial for the revelation of God’s laws to the Greek-speaking world.²⁰⁹ This does not mean, however, that the text does not need explanation, nor does he rule out the value

²⁰⁴ . E.Goodenough, ‘Philo’s Exposition of the Law and his *De Vita Mosis*’, *HTR* 26, 1933, pp.109-125.

²⁰⁵ . P.Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria, An Exegete for His Time*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1997, pp.78-79.

²⁰⁶ . P.S.Alexander, ‘Retelling the Old Testament’, in D.A.Carson and H.G.M.Williamson (eds.), *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture*, Cambridge, Lindars, 1988, pp.99-121, P.Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria, An Exegete for His Time*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1997. See also the critical comments of Y.Amir, ‘Authority and Interpretation of Scripture in the Writings of Philo’, in M.J.Mulder and H.Sysling (eds.), *Mikra. Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judasim and Early Christianity*, Augsburg, Fortress Press, 1988, pp.421-451.

²⁰⁷ . Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria*, pp.79-82.

²⁰⁸ . As J.Dillon states (*The Middle Platonists, A Study of Platonism 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, London, Duckworth, 1977, p.182) Philo was “essentially adapting contemporary Alexandrian Platonism, which was itself heavily influenced by Stoicism and Pythagoreanism, to his own exegetical purposes”. This love of Greek wisdom and culture is evident throughout his works, and is perhaps a prime reason for his decision to use the LXX as his source for his re-writing of the Bible. However, recent work has shown that Philo is far from systematic in his Platonism; see D.T.Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1986.

²⁰⁹ . *De Vit.Mos.*, 2.28.

of the wisdom of the elders of his nation.²¹⁰ Indeed, Philo seeks the hidden meaning within the Pentateuch, a meaning which he explores through the apparatus of Greek philosophy. His aim is “to investigate each separate one of them [Moses’ laws], and to endeavour to reveal and to explain to those who wish to understand them, things concerning them which are not known to the multitude.”²¹¹ Adherence to Platonic philosophy, especially to the view which sees a conceptual world of perfect ‘ideas’ (of which our own world is merely an inferior copy), leads Philo to search for the hidden and inner truths which Moses has left in the Torah.²¹² In this investigation allegory becomes an important didactic tool,²¹³ and Philo is much more inclined to adopt more spiritual and mystical readings of the biblical texts in comparison to Josephus. Indeed, Goodenough saw him primarily as a mystic,²¹⁴ and other scholars have even explored his connections to Gnosticism.²¹⁵

Many scholars have tried to bring focus to the definition of Philo’s religious outlook. Wolfson saw him as a great scholar of the Pharisaic tradition.²¹⁶ Goodenough advanced the case for Philo’s Judaism as a form of mystery cult.²¹⁷ Sandmel, reacting against this view, saw the great contrasts between Philo’s individualistic philosophy

²¹⁰ . Philo states (*De Vit.Mos.*, 1.4) that he will “tell the story of Moses as I have learned it, both from the sacred books... and from some of the elders of the nation; for I always interwove what I was told with what I read.”

²¹¹ . Philo, *Spec. Leg.*, 3.6.

²¹² . *Vit. Cont.*, 78.

²¹³ . Philo believes that almost everything in the Torah is intended to be read allegorically (*Jos*, 28). For him, the ordinary literary account is for the masses, whilst the enlightened few, like himself, may seek the hidden meanings and discover the concealed wisdom relating to the soul (*Abr.*, 147). The allegorical method was particularly helpful for Philo in his attempts to explain ‘difficulties’ in the text of the Torah, such as talking donkeys, angels impregnating women, or the parting of the Red Sea; as Barclay states (*Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, p.168), Philo “consistently gives allegorical explanations of such unworthy features of his sacred text, while typically ignoring the efforts of Greeks to allegorize their own myths and legends.”

²¹⁴ . E.R.Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus*, 2nd ed., Oxford, Blackwell, 1962.

²¹⁵ . B.A.Pearson, ‘Philo and Gnosticism’, *ANRW* 2.21.1, 1984, pp.295-342, R.McL.Wilson, Philo of Alexandria and Gnosticism’, *Kairos* 14, 1972, pp.213-219.

²¹⁶ . H.A.Wolfson, *Philo*, 2 vols, Cambridge, MA, 1947.

²¹⁷ . E.R.Goodenough, *By Light, Light*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1935.

and Rabbinic halakhic legalism.²¹⁸ Borgen seeks to show that Philo was equally adept at 'Judaizing' Greek notions as he is at Hellenizing the Law of Moses.²¹⁹ Birnbaum suggests that "Philo's presentation of Judaism as a kind of philosophy may well deserve to be called the 'crowning achievement' of Hellenistic Jewish efforts."²²⁰ Each of these views seeks to explain the relationship between Judaism and Hellenism in Philo's thought. In essence, Philo represents Judaism in Graeco-Roman dress, revealing Moses to have been none other than the noblest of kings, the most pious of high priests, the wisest of prophets, and the greatest of all law-givers.²²¹ All of these classifications are designed to resonate with a Graeco-Roman audience, though Philo is keen to place himself firmly in the philosophical 'school of Moses' (οἱ κατὰ Μωυσῆν φιλοσοφοῦντες).²²² Thus, whilst he may see great value in Greek forms of wisdom, and especially in the figure of Plato, all such knowledge is ultimately an echo of the revelations of Moses. Indeed, Philo takes a stand against those Jewish exegetes who use allegory to the detriment of the literal meanings of the law.²²³ While the allegorical approach may reveal the inner secrets of the text he is adamant that it should never invalidate the literal. As Borgen states: "Philo combines literal and allegorical methods of exegesis, stressing allegorical exposition against literalists and the literal sense against over-spiritualization."²²⁴ Such an approach ensures that Philo's works are distinctive, and cannot be easily attributed to a particular school or tradition; Philo's philosophy of Judaism and his corresponding interpretation of the Torah will, then, provide a certain degree of contrast with the works of Josephus.

²¹⁸ . S.Sandmel, *Philo's Place in Judaism*, N.Y., Ktav, 1971.

²¹⁹ . P.Borgen, 'Philo of Alexandria', in M.E.Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings in the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, sec.2, vol.2, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1984, pp.233-282.

²²⁰ . E.Birnbaum, *The Place of Judaism in Philo's Thought, Israel, Jews, and Proselytes*, Atlanta, Georgia, Scholars Press, 1996, p.229.

²²¹ . *De Vita Mosis*, 2.1-7.

²²² . *Mut.*, 223.

²²³ . *Migr.*, 89-93.

²²⁴ . Borgen, 'Philo of Alexandria', p.338.

As we might expect from an author who wrote over a long period of time, and who was deeply interested in religion and religious phenomena, Philo adopts a number of approaches and attitudes towards the subject of magic. Although little work has been done concerning Philo's views on magic, we may detect a number of essential details. Primarily, his observation of the biblical prohibitions leads him to adopt, on the whole, a fairly negative portrayal of magic and magicians; they are sinners who lead Israel astray from God. Philo also follows Plato in not only defining magic as, ultimately, a form of deception (ἀπάτη),²²⁵ but also as the quintessential practice of the seductive sophist.²²⁶ Thus we see the skills of the Egyptians being described as artful tricks (τέχναι) and deceptions (ἀπάται) in Moses' encounter with Pharaoh,²²⁷ as well as Philo's repetition and explanation of the biblical law which called for the execution of magic-users.²²⁸ In the case of the latter, Philo uses language which calls for no qualification of his stance, referring to sorcerers (γοήτες) as men of great wickedness, polluted in hands and mind, who devote their time to the harm of others.²²⁹ However, Philo is also able to speak of the Persian *magi* who, through their investigation of the laws of nature, are able to initiate themselves and others in the divine virtues.²³⁰ Moreover, he speaks of 'the true magical art' immediately after his relation of Moses' laws on magic, attempting to show that there are two forms of magic, one positive and one negative. The former is practised not merely by private individuals but even by kings, Philo observing that the Persians

²²⁵ . *Det.*, 38. See further B.M.Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists, Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, Eerdmans, 2002, pp.88-90.

²²⁶ . *De Vit.Mos.*, 1.277. See further J.de Romilly, *Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece*, London, Harvard University Press, 1975, who, although observing the Platonic characterisation of sophistry as a type of magical deception, does not consider the multifaceted approach towards magic which allows both Plato and Philo to speak of positive forms of magic. Hence, we have their positive appraisals (*First Alcibiades*, 122A, *Spec. Leg.*, 3.93) of the wisdom of the *magi*. Winter (*Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*, p.90) also fails to observe this positive attitude in his appraisal of magic.

²²⁷ . *De Vita Mosis*, 1.92.

²²⁸ . *Spec. Leg.*, 3.94.

²²⁹ . *Spec. Leg.*, 3.93.

²³⁰ . *Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit*, 74.

demand initiation into the mysteries of the *magi* from all their monarchs.²³¹ We will be returning to these examples during the three case studies, but for the time being it will suffice to note that Philo, although repeating the biblical laws on magic, has, like every other Graeco-Roman exegete, scholar and philosopher who wrote on magic, a dichotomous view in which we may see both positive and negative representations. We might also observe that Philo is keen to associate positive forms of magic with the figure of the king, suggesting that he was well aware that, ultimately, definitions of acceptable magic were imposed from the top of society.

Pseudo-Philo and the *Biblical Antiquities*

Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*, surviving in eighteen complete Latin manuscripts dating from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, has been dated to around the middle of the first century CE, and is generally understood to be the work of an unknown Palestinian scholar who composed his work in Hebrew.²³² It has been attributed to Pseudo-Philo simply because the work was transmitted alongside the Latin translations of Philo; it is clear, however, that there are great differences in style, aims, and attitudes towards the biblical texts which exist between Philo and the *Biblical Antiquities*. More rigorous debate has taken place concerning the genre which Pseudo-Philo's work belongs to. Essentially the work is a retelling of the biblical narrative in which traditional elements have been woven, resulting in what has been

²³¹ . *Spec. Leg.*, 3.100-102.

²³² . J.H.Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudapigrapha*, vol.2, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1985, pp.299-300.

termed an ‘actualisation of sacred stories’,²³³ a form of midrash which updates the biblical narrative.²³⁴ In more recent work, the *Biblical Antiquities* has been seen, much like Josephus’ *Ant.*, as belonging to the category of ‘rewritten Bible’.²³⁵ This is the approach which will be adopted here, for, in studying the representations of various biblical figures in both Pseudo-Philo and Josephus, it is crucial to realise that they share (to a degree) the same source material. In reviewing the data afforded by Pseudo-Philo, then, we may see how biblical stories were interpreted in Palestinian circles in the mid first century CE, thus providing a useful parallel with Josephus.

Much like Josephus too, Pseudo-Philo was not unforthcoming on the subjects of the supernatural and miraculous. Not only does he feature those miracles which we might expect to see, such as Moses’ actions at the Red Sea or the great flood, he also adds a wide variety of embellishments concerning angels, the holy spirit, and the practice of magic to his narrative which have no precedent in the biblical texts. So, he relates that the spirit of God came to Miriam and foretold to her the birth of Moses, a detail later adopted by the rabbinic texts.²³⁶ He states that the sun and moon aid Joshua in battle, and the stars aid Deborah and the Israelites against Sisera, details which suggest an understanding of the mechanisms, and popularity, of astrology.²³⁷ He includes many different kinds of angelic episodes, including the jealousy they show to Abraham and the angelic assistants who are raised along with Samuel by the

²³³ . F.J.Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo Rewriting the Bible*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, p.5.

²³⁴ . G.Porton, ‘Defining Midrash’, in J.Neusner (ed.), *The Study of Ancient Judaism I*, N.Y., Ktav, 1981, pp.55-92.

²³⁵ . Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies*, p.95 and D.J.Harrington, ‘Palestinian Adaptations of Biblical Narratives and Prophecies. I. The Bible Rewritten’, in R.AKraft and G.W.E.Nickelsburg (eds.), *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, Philadelphia, Fortress, 1986, pp.239-258.

²³⁶ . *LAB*, 9:10.

²³⁷ . Joshua; *LAB*, 32:10, Deborah; *LAB*, 32:11.

witch of Endor.²³⁸ Indeed, there are evil spirits in Pseudo-Philo's theology, as well as fallen angels who assist men in the practice of sorcery.²³⁹ Thus, he refers to the story of Aod the magician, a narrative which exists only in the *Biblical Antiquities*, who worships and sacrifices to the angels of magic (*magicia*) in order to gain their power.²⁴⁰ Such narratives demonstrate Pseudo-Philo's negative interpretation of magic as sinful and harmful,²⁴¹ but also illustrate the fact that he felt comfortable in adding stories of a magical nature to his biblical re-writing. Clearly then, magic was a common feature of his society, especially when we consider that the story of Aod may have been in circulation amongst Jewish literary circles prior to Pseudo-Philo's exposition.²⁴²

The Greek Magical Papyri (PGM) and Associated Texts from Antiquity

The corpus of documents known as the Greek Magical Papyri (PGM) represent one of the few records of the insider's view of magic in antiquity. This somewhat deceptive title has been given to a body of Egyptian papyri, dating mainly from the second century BCE to the fifth century CE, which were purchased in the

²³⁸ . Abraham; *LAB*, 32:1f., witch of Endor; *LAB*, 64:6. Moreover, Pseudo-Philo seeks to explain that the angels are guardians of the righteous who, however, are powerless to aid if the people of Israel sin (*LAB*, 11:12, 15:5.), even mentioning four angels by name, Ingethel (27:10), Zereul (27:10), Nathaniel (38:3), and Fadahel (42:10)

²³⁹ . *LAB*, 34:3.

²⁴⁰ . *LAB*, 34.

²⁴¹ . As L.H.Feldman ('Prolegomenon', in M.R.James, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo*, N.Y. Ktav, pp.vii-clxix) observes this episode is clearly an attack on the practice of magic rather than on sun-worship. This suggests further still that Pseudo-Philo was gravely concerned by the ability of magic to deceive the Israelites and turn them away from worshipping God.

²⁴² . We may see a similar theme of angelic revelation of magic to humanity in 1 Enoch 7-8. L.Ginzberg (*The Legends of the Jews*, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1938, vol.6, p.199n.93) suggests a parallel to *Sipre Deuteronomy* 84 in which Israel is tested by a false prophet who stops the sun and moon in their tracks.

nineteenth century by Jean d'Anastasi and Francois Mimaut, two diplomats stationed in Egypt. Although the locations of the primary finds are long lost, it has been suggested that the homogenous nature of the papyri, in which we find a wide array of magical books and texts, is suggestive of the storehouse of a bibliophile magician from antiquity who took great pains to preserve his knowledge.²⁴³ Their importance for the study of ancient magic cannot be understated, for they provide a glimpse into the worlds of the magicians themselves. They are also testament to the cosmopolitan and syncretistic nature of Egypt during the period of composition, for they display an eclectic blend of Jewish, Greek, and Egyptian religious and cultural beliefs. Not least among these elements, and importantly for our study, are the legends of Moses the magician, who appears in the PGM as something of a hero for the aspiring neophyte who wishes to learn the art of magic. Although it is highly unlikely that Josephus would have had any form of familiarity with magical texts as found in the PGM, it is important to realise that these texts constitute a previously undervalued section of the literary landscape during his period. Whilst the books of the PGM may well have been carefully hidden during their working lifetimes, with the fear of book burning growing under the Roman Empire,²⁴⁴ they nevertheless demonstrate a current of society which offered differing views to that espoused by the religious mainstream. Thus, they offer us an example of different approaches and attitudes to subjects upon which Josephus writes, a situation which can only aid our understanding.

²⁴³ . Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, p.xlii.

²⁴⁴ . Suetonius, *Augustus*, 31.1 reports that Augustus ordered the burning of 2,000 magical texts in the year 13 BCE. This was not an uncommon occurrence in imperial Rome; as Betz (*The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, p.xli) states, "the first centuries of the Christian era saw many burnings of books, often of magical books, and not a few burnings that included the magicians themselves."

To analyse the understanding which Josephus displays on the subject of magic, especially in the case of Moses as magician, it will be necessary to consider the context of dominant traditions in Graeco-Roman motifs on magic which had become something of a dichotomy in literary circles; on the one-hand tales of the miraculous, magical, and the supernatural were fast becoming popular subjects for an ever-increasingly literate Roman audience, but on the other hand magic was also stigmatised by progressively negative and harsh legislation, which led to its more negative aspects becoming taboo subjects. It must not be forgotten, too, that several authors were developing what might be termed a ‘rationalistic’ attitude towards magic, albeit in an elementary and rudimentary form, seeing it as a byword for charlatanism and fraud.²⁴⁵ In this category we might place the elder Pliny, who castigates magicians and their bogus remedies; however, his rationalism had not quite reached modern standards for he still accepted some forms of magic as efficacious.²⁴⁶ This doubt over the exact nature of magic is a hallmark of both ancient and modern approaches to the subject, though in the ancient texts we are able to draw some general ideas regarding magic and magicians in antiquity through the distinctive employment of terminology. In this manner, the literary texts concerning magic form Josephus’ era are unified by virtue of employing the same sets of terminology. None

²⁴⁵ . M.Beard, J.North, and S.Price, *Religions of Rome Volume 1: A History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp.218-221.

²⁴⁶ . Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 30.1-18. Pliny’s approach to magic is far from consistent and, as N.Janowitz (*Magic in the Roman World: Pagans, Jews and Christians*, p.13) states, it is also “highly rhetorical, permitting him to both include and exclude practices at will.” Thus, whilst he condemns the *magi* as being fraudsters and confidence tricksters, he also advocates some of their practices as being efficacious (*Natural History*, 30.20). His approach to magic then could not be said to be truly ‘rationalistic’; rather, magic has become a personally assigned category into which Pliny may place anything which he disapproves of in the religious/ritual sphere.

of the authors which we shall be considering would consider, for instance, a γόνις to be a valuable member of society. In reviewing Josephus' accounts of magic then we will be able to set them in a form of context, for not only is our author heavily influenced by the Bible and his Jewish religion, the same can also be said for his acceptance of Roman values and attitudes. The sources which will be used to contextualise the accounts of magic given in *Ant.* will be drawn from a wide range of dates and viewpoints, though the emphasis will rest heavily upon those nearest in time to Josephus. This will ensure that Josephus' own work is considered against a background of Graeco-Roman literature.

Summary

It is hoped, then, that this thesis will provide the first concerted investigation of Josephus' employment of magical terminology. Whilst some work has been done in this field, in the form of a small number of brief articles, it is evident that a full survey is required. Not only will this examination of magic serve to illuminate Josephus' approach to his biblical materials, it will also highlight his position in the Graeco-Roman world as an author keen to appeal to both Jewish and Roman audiences. Through a precise analysis of his magical terminology it is hoped that Josephus' approach to magic may be described, most principally through the three case studies concerning major Jewish biblical figures. I hope to show, too, that Josephus was a very creative author, something which he is not often given credit for. Indeed, he was forced to be creative in his appraisal of magical terminology for such language had the potential to destroy his positive representation of Judaism if

incorrectly used. The next chapter will provide a survey of magic in Josephus' world, as well as outlining just how dangerous some forms of magical terminology could be. It will also introduce more fully the idea of sanction, and of how Josephus tailored his magical episodes in order to suit the prevailing sensibilities and laws of the imperial era of late first century CE Rome.

Introduction

As a number of recent scholars have come to observe, ancient magic is not so much a definitive category, identifiable by its practices, but rather a shifting field of semantics and individual approaches and definitions, in which terminology is key.¹ In an influential article however, Smith has argued that, whilst terminology is important, it does not ‘explain’ magic. He states: “Giving primacy to native terminology yields, at best, lexical definitions which, historically and statistically, tell how a word is used. But, lexical definitions are almost always useless for scholarly work. To remain content with how ‘they’ understand ‘magic’ may yield a proper description, but little explanatory power.”² However, what Smith attempts to provide is an all-embracing and all-purpose explanation of how magic ‘worked’ in ancient societies. In contrast, I hope to provide an analysis of Josephus’ approach to magic which, though based in his Graeco-Roman context, is primarily contained within our author’s terminology; I will not be looking at why certain rituals, practices or people were considered magical in order to derive some general theory of magic, but rather explore Josephus’ use of distinct magical terminology in order to “tell how a word is used” in Josephus. I will seek to explore Josephus’ rationale and motivations for using magical terminology, and explain how our author adapted stories of Jewish and biblical magic to his Roman

¹ . R.Gordon, ‘Imagining Greek and Roman Magic’, in B.Ankarloo and S.Clark (eds.), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome*, London, The Athlone Press, 1999, pp.159-269, M.W.Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, London, Routledge, 2001, pp.12-17.

² . J.Z.Smith, ‘Trading Places’, in M.Meyer and P.Mirecki (eds.), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1995, pp.13-28, quote p.20.

audience. It is with this paradigm that we will approach Josephus' appreciation of magic in the Graeco-Roman world of the late first century CE.

There existed a distinct set of terminology which, mostly negative in orientation and employment, was used to describe those who undertook unsanctioned religious activity in antiquity. This terminology has proved to be long-lived and influential, providing us with, among others, the modern English term 'magic'.³ This is not to say, however, that positive and acceptable forms of magic are not to be found. On the contrary, I would briefly like to explore magic in Josephus' era by observing that there are magical acts, located by our most basic understandings and definitions, in both biblical and Graeco-Roman literature, which receive sanction. Whilst such acts may not be described by the more negative terminologies it is clear that they are often identical to actions which were shunned and rejected; the only difference is that they were sanctioned by the elites of society. Thus, I will begin this chapter by briefly discussing the nature of magic in the 1st Century Graeco-Roman world, with particular attention paid to the idea that there is no definitive categorization of magic.

Following this more general discussion I will focus on the four major Graeco-Roman magical terms, γόης, μάγος, μάντις, and φαρμακός, tracing them from their Greek origins through to their status in the imperial Roman world. These terms appear repeatedly in the writings of social elites in our period in describing magic and magicians, as well as featuring in the laws created by Rome dealing with magic. Finally I will consider the evidence afforded by Josephus, analysing each of his

³ . A.Cheak, 'Magic Through the Linguistic Lenses of Greek μάγος, Indo-European *mag(h)-, Sanskrit *maya* and Pharaonic Egyptian *Heka*', *JASM* 2, 2004, pp.260-286.

employments of the four terms, and observing his approach to the idea of sanction. This survey will show that Josephus was a conscious employer of magical terminology and that he used its armoury of forms in a careful and calculated manner. The terms in question are by far the most prevalent, in both Josephus and ancient literature in general, used in speaking of magic and magicians and would have been instantly recognisable as such to an educated Greek-speaking audience. Indeed, all of these terms are employed in LXX, a fact which exemplifies the widespread currency and power of meaning that they enjoyed. Although Josephus does not discuss Roman laws on magic, nor even those of biblical literature, I will show that he is well aware of the power of sanction in determining the acceptability of magical practices. Indeed, Josephus' lack of comment on these laws may in part be due to the fact that his representation of Judaism is replete with magicians, and that he does not wish to inhibit the positive portrayal of figures such as Moses, Balaam, and the witch of Endor by linking their activities to those expressly condemned by biblical literature or the Empire.

The Status of Magic in Imperial Rome

The period under investigation was instrumental in the creation of an association between magical acts and a sense of illegality.⁴ Unlike the Greeks, the Romans were keen, in both the Republic and the Empire, to legislate against various religious practices, describing many through the distinct language of magic. The

⁴ . H.G.Kippenberg, 'Magic in Roman Civil Discourse: Why Rituals Could Be Illegal', in P. Schäfer and H.G.Kippenberg (eds.), *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1997, pp.137-163, F.Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, London, Harvard University Press, 1997, pp.56-60.

earliest instance of such legislation occurs in the form of the *Twelve Tables*, an important code of Roman law which, though composed in the mid fifth century BCE, was still referred to in the first century CE.⁵ Both Seneca and Pliny the Elder quote these laws, referring to spells and incantations which magicians use in order to destroy their neighbours' harvests.⁶ It would appear that the original document was designed to preserve the integrity of Roman citizens and to protect their reputation and property; it did not make the incantations themselves punishable, but rather the results of such magical acts. However, by the early second century CE the situation was much changed, with both Pliny the Elder and Apuleius demonstrating the universal power which magical incantations were supposed to have, as well as the dim view which Roman law took of such unsanctioned practices.⁷

Indeed, it is in the trial of Apuleius that we see the clear association between the provisions of the *Twelve Tables* and the figure of the magician (in this case Apuleius as a *magos*).⁸ In a similar manner the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis*, issued by the dictator Sulla in 82/81 BCE in order to combat terrorism and restore public order, was transformed, by the first century CE, into a law dealing expressly with magic and magicians. Thus, in the case of the death of Germanicus, the accused Piso is not only charged with *veneficia* but also, according to Tacitus, with sorcery (*malefica*).⁹ Hence, in the period under scrutiny we have a number of equations between important Roman laws on criminal behaviour and magic. Although, as

⁵ . For a full discussion of the importance of the *Twelve Tables* see C.Pharr, 'The Interdiction of Magic in Roman Law', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 63, 1932, pp.269-295, Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, pp.41-43, and Gordon, 'Imagining Greek and Roman Magic', pp.253-260.

⁶ . Seneca, *Natural Questions*, IV.7.2, Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 28.17.

⁷ . For Pliny there was a certain power in ritual incantations (*carmina*, *Natural History*, 28.12) and, as a result, he even refuses to publish the text of a spell which can cure sprained limbs (*Natural History*, 17.267). He also refers to the *Twelve Tables* as specifically dealing with magic; *Natural History*, 30.10-12. Apuleius, *Apology*, 47.3

⁸ . Apuleius, *Apology*, 9.2, 67.2, 69.4, 90.1.

⁹ . Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.69.

Dickie shows, the process which saw magic becoming strictly illegal in the Roman world was not completed until the Christian era,¹⁰ we may nevertheless agree with Graf who suggests that it was as a direct result of the actions of Roman lawyers that magic became a category of legal exclusion, comparable to capital crimes as outlined by the dictates of Sulla.¹¹

The imperial Roman authorities during the first century CE made repeated use of the category of magic in their attempts to protect their power from the political and social threats posed by unsanctioned religious activity. At times such activities as astrology could operate under the remit of the state, as a sanctioned form of religious activity which was even of interest to emperors; on other occasions the category was used to marginalize those in Roman society who posed a threat to order and control, and was thus seen as unsanctioned religious activity.¹² Frequently the edicts which were issued to expel the astrologers from Rome referred also to magicians. The first century CE was replete with examples of expulsion orders, which often employed distinct and explicit magical terminology, though we know of only those that were recorded in the works of contemporary and later authors such as Tacitus, Suetonius, Cassius Dio and Ulpian.¹³ Despite the recent work of Phillips on this subject, who sees these periodical decrees as infrequent rather than as numerous as is the traditional view, it must be seen that the eight imperial edicts outlawing astrologers, magicians and philosophers in the first century CE were all consistently issued in times of

¹⁰ . Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, pp.251-272.

¹¹ . Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, pp.46-52.

¹² . Although modern definitions may separate astrology and magic, ancient approaches were less nuanced as we may see from the Magi of Matt. 2.1ff. As F.H.Cryer shows (*Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment, A Socio-Historical Investigation*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1994, pp.42-43), magic was a wide-ranging category for ancient societies, and astrology was regarded as one of the fundamental skills of many forms of the magician.

¹³ . See Appendix.

political stress.¹⁴ That emperors such as Claudius, Nero and Vespasian felt the need to issue edicts to remove all of these undesirable elements from Rome and Italy demonstrates that individuals could be the focus for widespread agitation and revolt.¹⁵ These decrees were issued especially in times of political and social unrest in Rome and Italy.¹⁶ In his table of the various edicts between 139 BCE and 175 CE, Cramer notes that, whilst some were focused on the actions of various individuals involved in plots against the emperor, the majority were designed to combat general unrest and widespread political opposition.¹⁷ Clearly, the Roman authorities felt that unrest caused by magicians and astrologers could develop into a revolt or a major political challenge to the emperor. Although Dickie suggests that there are no literary accounts of expulsions of astrologers and magicians from Rome,¹⁸ our sources suggest that the period under scrutiny was one in which the Roman authorities produced repeated legislation in order to protect society from the threat of the magician.

¹⁴ .C.R.Phillips III, 'Nullem Crimen sine Lege: Socioreligious Sanctions on Magic, in C.A.Faraone and D.Obbink (ed.), *Magika Hiera, Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, pp.260-276. Phillips states: "Historians have noted the ten expulsions of the astrologers from Rome between 33 B.C. and 93 A.D. Most remark on the frequency; I would rather emphasize, on the contrary, the relative infrequency." The historians he has here in mind are F.H.Cramer ('Expulsion of Astrologers from Ancient Rome', *Classica et Mediaevalia* 12, 1951, pp.9-50) and R.MacMullen (*Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1966). The former actually notes twelve, not ten, expulsions in the time span (p.12), an average of one every ten years. Given the fragmentary nature of Tacitus' *Histories*, the prime source for these edicts, we may assume that there were even more examples to be added, especially as we have lost sections of Tacitus' descriptions of the stormy reigns of Tiberius, Claudius, Nero and Caligula. Whilst Phillips acknowledges this gap in our sources he does not accord it sufficient weight. Moreover he focuses on astrologers with respect to his above statement, trying to show that astrology had an ambiguous reputation in Rome, failing to note that, in essence, these expulsions are attempts to reinforce the vague *Lex Cornelia de Sicariis et Veneficis* which constituted one of the few rulings on magic in the period. See further Kippenberg, 'Magic in Roman Civil Discourse: Why Rituals Could Be Illegal', pp.137-163.

¹⁵ . See Appendix.

¹⁶ . Cramer, 'Expulsion of Astrologers from Ancient Rome', p.11.

¹⁷ . Cramer, 'Expulsion of Astrologers from Ancient Rome', pp.12-15.

¹⁸ . Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, p.156. Dickie criticizes our sources for the first century CE suggesting that there are no references to expulsions after 68 CE; however, he has failed to take account of several sources (discussed below), including Suetonius, Ulpian and Jerome, who describe the edicts of Vespasian, Domitian and Marcus Aurelius.

Indeed, we see several edicts being issued during the period which Josephus was believed to have spent in Rome; if indeed he was in Rome following the accession of Vespasian, as seems likely, then he would undoubtedly have had first hand experience of the unrest caused by magic, and would have been on hand to witness the measures taken against such opponents of imperial order.¹⁹ These expulsions were issued despite Vespasian's own personal passion for astrology.²⁰ Like Augustus, who issued his horoscope yet banned others from issuing their own,²¹ Vespasian was not attempting to make this art illegal in itself; rather he saw that certain astrologers could pose political threats to his power. This nebulous approach led Tacitus to declare that magical experts would "always be banned and always retained" at Rome.²² What Josephus made of these various expulsions and edicts we may only guess at, for he makes no mention of the Roman legal history of magic. From his Jewish environment he was well aware of the problems which could be posed when religion and politics mixed; indeed, there was seemingly little difference between these two constructs in the Judaism of his day. Furthermore, he recognised that there were individuals in Judea who paralleled those accused of illegal religious activities in Rome. These individuals, as I will show, ranged from false prophets and demagogues to magicians and sorcerers, and were responsible for both political and social strife in the period prior to the war with Rome. Josephus, conscious of his

¹⁹ . Under Flavian rule expulsions of magicians from Rome and Italy took place in, 70 (Cassius Dio, 65.9.2), 71 (Suetonius, *Vespasian*, 13, 15, Cassius Dio, 65.13.1f, 65.12.2-3), 89 (Suetonius, *Domitian*, 10.3, Jerome, *Chronica*, 89-90 A.D., Cassius Dio, 67.13.2-3, Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 8.3, Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 3.11) and 93 (Suetonius, *Domitian*, 23, Jerome, *Chronica*, 93-94 A.D.) CE.

²⁰ . Cassius Dio, 65.9.2 criticizes Vespasian for his double standards; on the one hand he expels astrologers, but on the other he is famous for consulting them, stating that he was "in the habit of consulting all the best of them himself". He even names Babillus, son of Thrasyllus, and the renowned Seleucus, who had been chief astrologer for Otho, as his court seers; cf. Tacitus, *Histories*, 1.22, Plutarch, *Galba*, 23.4 and Suetonius, *Otho*, 4 and 6.

²¹ . Cassius Dio, 56.23.1. Dio specifically describes the object of the decree as preventing μαντεῖς from divining on the question of death.

²² . Tacitus, *Histories*, 1.22.

context, makes every effort to portray these figures in the same light as the Roman authorities viewed magicians and demagogues who caused strife in Rome and Italy.

Positive and Negative: Magic and The Idea of Sanction

The status of magic in the first century CE was a function of imperial power, one based upon the attitudes of each individual emperor. This ambiguous attitude towards magic has long been observed by scholarship. In discussing Tacitus' appraisal of the expulsions of astrologers and magicians from Rome, Cramer suggests that the legislation "was merely an official announcement that for the time being such activities were considered undesirable and therefore forbidden".²³ However, as he has observed, these practices were not forbidden to those who had issued the bans, with, in effect, a two-tier system in operation. This separated those in power from the rest; a ritual or practice could only be understood in the context of law and sanction, with negatively defined magic, described by its distinctive terminology, becoming the category of the 'other'.²⁴ Indeed, there was little concern for differentiation between magic and astrology in some minds, especially those which composed imperial legislation; this may be seen by the frequent linking of explicit forms of the magician (i.e. γόης) with the *astologoi* in the expulsion orders. The only concern was sanction. Emperors could consult magicians, have them on their staff, or partake in their rituals whilst at the same time condemning those who were not protected by their sanction. In the following discussion of magic this idea of sanction will be paramount, as I will

²³ . Cramer, 'Expulsion of Astrologers from Ancient Rome', p.11.

²⁴ . Gordon, 'Imagining Greek and Roman Magic', pp.191-194. This sense of the magician as being sidelined as the 'other' is seen most principally in the Bible; S.D.Ricks, 'The Magician as Outsider', in M.Meyer and P.Mirecki (eds), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1995, pp.131-144.

attempt to demonstrate that magic, known through its distinctive terminology, was a shadowy category of Graeco-Roman thought which could be employed in a variety of functions.

Magic in the Bible

As we might expect from a document which was created over a great period of time and through many different authors and editors, the Hebrew Bible exhibits a number of views of ancient magic. Primarily, of course, we have the laws directly dealing with magic and magicians; from these passages we are left in no doubt that magic is to be seen as an abominable and illegal practice, harmful to society and an insult to God.²⁵ Indeed, these laws represent magic as purely the practice of the ‘nations’ who dwell outside Israel’s borders.²⁶ In Exodus the Israelites are told not to “save the lives of sorcerers.”²⁷ Leviticus elaborates on this social rejection of the magician; “And as for a man or woman whosoever of them shall have in them a divining spirit, or be an enchanter, let them both die the death; ye shall stone them to death with stones, they are guilty.”²⁸ Again in Deuteronomy we find further negative commandments: “There shall not be found in thee one who purges his son or his

²⁵ . Deut. 18:10-14, Ex. 22:18.

²⁶ . Jewish elements in the PGM are abundant and suggest a distinct and venerable tradition of magical practice in the religion, suggesting that the picture painted by biblical literature is an idealised version of Israelite history. H.D.Betz, ‘Jewish Magic in the Greek Magical Papyri (PGM VII. 260-271)’, in P. Schäfer, and H.G.Kippenberg (eds.) *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium* Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1997, pp. 45-63, P.Alexander, ‘Jewish Elements in Gnosticism and Magic c. CE 70’, in W.Horbury, W.D.Davies, and J.Sturdy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism III*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 1052-1078.

²⁷ . Ex 22:18. For a full discussion of the biblical laws on magic see especially A.Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1996, and J.K.Kuemmerlin-Mclean, *Divination and Magic in the Religion of Ancient Israel: A Study in Perspectives and Methodology*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1986.

²⁸ . Lev 20:27 see also Lev 19:26, 19:31 and 20:6.

daughter with fire, one who uses divination, who deals with omens, and augury, a sorcerer employing incantation, one who has in him a divining spirit, an observer of signs, questioning the dead.”²⁹ In these three passages we see that a number of forms of magic are characterized as negative and are explicitly legislated against. In Exodus we see that the magician, although interacting with Israelite societies and communities, is nevertheless a fringe figure, one to be avoided and, if found within the community, to be executed by Torah-observant Israelites.³⁰ The passage from Leviticus elaborates on the nature of the magician; they can be men or women, are suspected of being possessed, can beguile an audience through arcane and secret skills, and have no place amongst the people of the Lord.³¹ Here we may perhaps see a religious concern in the practice of magic, namely that such persons are in communication with spirits other than Yahweh. The most lengthy and informative of the three commandments is that given in Deuteronomy where a long list of practices, illegal for Israelites, are described by distinctive terminology; it is this terminology which demarcates the negatively-defined magician in the Hebrew Bible.³² Perhaps to

²⁹ . Deut. 18:10-11.

³⁰ .This idea of magician as social outcast is developed in Ricks, ‘The Magician as Outsider’, pp.131-144. On Exodus see; J.A.Wagenaar, ‘ “A Woman Who Practices Sorcery, Shall not Sustain her Soul”: A Note on the Text and Interpretation of Exodus 22:17’, *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 6, 2000, pp.186-189 who highlights the extreme nature of the Biblical response to the magician.

³¹ . As J.A.van Rooy (‘Witches and Wizards in the Light of Scripture’, *Missionalia* 1, 1973, pp.136-138) shows, such provisions are of dire consequence for magicians in ‘Bible-believing’ societies. We might note, too, the extent to which the ancient terminology and its translation can lead to unfortunate misunderstandings at the hands of those who would see modern witchcraft as a parallel to ancient varieties of magic; R.B.Zuck, ‘The Practices of Witchcraft in the Scriptures’, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 128, 1971, pp.352-356.

³² . J.K.Kummerlin-McLean (‘Magic (ANE)’, *ABD*, vol.4, pp.469-471) describes this section of Deut. as the most basic and inclusive list of magical terminology in the Hebrew Bible. The fact that later texts draw upon this repository of magical terminology in order to describe their own magical episodes, suggests that this passage was an important ‘guide’; see further, B.B.Schmidt, ‘The “Witch” of En-dor, 1 Samuel 28, and Ancient Near Eastern Necromancy’, in M.Meyer and P.Mirecki (eds.), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 2001, pp.111-130.

reinforce the point, the biblical authors even turn to the most influential of Jewish religious figures, the prophets, for a condemnation of magic.³³

In spite of these condemnations there remain a variety of traces from popular Israelite religion which serve to demonstrate the integral place of magic.³⁴ Not least of which are the syncretistic magical papyri of the Graeco-Roman world, in which Jewish elements abound.³⁵ And the discovery of the magical handbook *Sefer ha-Razim*, extant in medieval copies but attributed to the Talmudic era, concretely proves that there were Jewish magicians with their own traditions of magic in antiquity.³⁶ As shall be seen there are numerous examples of magical practice which are sanctioned in the Hebrew Bible, many of which may be seen as preserving ancient elements of religion whose original meaning has been radically altered. This is most notable in the transformation of magical acts in which the prime focus changes from the act or actors themselves to being effects of God's will.³⁷ Thus we have the miracles of the prophets which, much more than the 'magic' of Moses, are portrayed as the operations of God. Hence, we may see that acts which may have been purely magical have been incorporated, but have been changed into religious miracles activated by God's will. However, there are several instances where popular sentiment seems to have been carried over without great alteration of the magical aspects; for instance the

³³ . Is 47:9-15, Jer 27:9, Ez. 13:17-19, Na 3-4, Mal 3:5, Mi 5:11-12.

³⁴ . Clearly, we cannot agree with scholars such as J.Trachtenberg (*Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion*, N.Y., 1939, p.11), who would suggest that there was no distinctive form of Jewish magic until the post-Talmudic period; such views have long been out of favour and are no longer tenable in the face of discoveries such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and Jewish pieces from the PGM; see, for instance, the rebuttal of Trachtenberg's position in D.E.Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity', *ANRW* 2.23.2, 1980, pp.1507-1557.

³⁵ . See for instance; H.D.Betz, 'Jewish Magic in the Greek Magical Papyri (PGM VII.260-71)', P.Schäfer and H.Kippenberg (eds), *Envisioning Magic*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1997, pp.45-63.

³⁶ . See further P.S.Alexander, 'Sefer ha-Razim and the Problem of Black Magic in Early Judaism', in T.Klutz (ed.), *Magic in the Biblical World, From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon*, London, T&T Clark, 2003, pp.170-190.

³⁷ . See further Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment, A Socio-Historical Investigation*, who suggests that Israel was a magical society in which its deity acted as an impetus to magical ritual (i.e. divination, Urim and Thumim, ephod etc).

magical wands of Moses and Elijah.³⁸ As S.D.Ricks states: “In the case of the Bible, the major factor dividing acts that might be termed ‘magical’ from those that might be termed ‘religious’ is the perceived power by which the action is performed.”³⁹ This ‘perceived power’ could range from human trickery, wisdom and knowledge, such as with Pharaoh’s magicians in their contest with Moses, to human vessels of the divine force which effects through them the miraculous, such as with Elijah or Moses.

In giving their subjective judgments on apparently magical events, the biblical authors were perhaps attempting to substitute well-known and popular magical events and legends with theological narratives. Traces of magic however survive, as Schäfer demonstrates with three main examples.⁴⁰ Although Schäfer uses a basic modern definition in order to speak of magic, essentially assuming that a concept of magic existed in the Bible, he makes it quite clear that his investigation of the Bible provides evidence for the idea that any clear cut distinction between magic and religion is impossible in the period, as well as suggesting that magic existed as a part of religion, in both positive and negative forms. Despite Schafer’s assumption of magic, and Dickie’s criticism on this point,⁴¹ it is quite clear that the instances he discusses contain practises which would be thought of, and described by the appropriate terminology, as ‘magical’ in the first century CE. The first of Schäfer’s examples is the ten plagues of Egypt and the contest between Moses, Aaron and Pharaoh’s court magicians.⁴² Schäfer sees this episode not as a question of biblical religion pitted

³⁸ . Ex 4:20, 17:8-13, 2Kgs 4:29, 4:31.

³⁹ . Ricks, ‘The Magician as Outsider’, p.143.

⁴⁰ . Schäfer, ‘Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism’, pp. 27-33.

⁴¹ . Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, p.22. See further, N.Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World, Pagans, Jews and Christians*, London, Routledge, 2001, pp.9-13

⁴² . Ex 7-12.

against Egyptian magic, but rather as biblical magic versus Egyptian magic.⁴³ He states: “the story shows that despite the clear prohibition, magic could easily be made presentable, if only it was subordinated to the will and power of God.”⁴⁴ In this sense the magician of this episode, in the eyes of the biblical authors, could be seen to be God himself.⁴⁵ Schäfer’s second example is that of the brazen serpent. In response to a prayer for aid concerning a plague of serpents, the deity tells Moses to make “a serpent, and put it on a signal staff; and it shall come to pass that whenever a serpent shall bite a man, everyone so bitten that looks upon it shall live.”⁴⁶ From a Frazerian viewpoint these instructions would seem to detail a rite of sympathetic magic, in which the magician is again God.⁴⁷ Old dichotomies of magic and religion, which saw magic as manipulative and religion as supplicative, would identify the outcome of this event as ‘religious’ as the Israelites implore Moses to pray to God in order to cure the plague, and only after this does God act. However, such approaches to the problem of magic’s relation to religion have been overhauled, with the evidence of the Greek Magical Papyri demonstrating that avowed magicians could use prayer in order to affect their art. Thus, Mauss emphasized the confusion which exists over the nature and relationship of magical incantation and religious prayer, not only in our modern theories of magic, but also in the texts of ancient magicians themselves.⁴⁸ Likewise,

⁴³ . Schäfer, ‘Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism’, p.29.

⁴⁴ . Schäfer, ‘Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism’, p.29.

⁴⁵ . P.Hayman, ‘Was God a Magician? *Sefer Yesira* and Jewish Magic’, *JJS* 40, 1989, pp.225-237.

⁴⁶ . Num 21:8. Jeffers (*Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria*, p.234) suggests that this episode may be seen in almost Frazerian terms as a “case of correspondence magic”.

⁴⁷ . Frazer (*The Golden Bough*, pp.11-48) conceived of two forms of magic, contagious and sympathetic. Although his evolutionary system of classification has been largely rejected by scholars of magic, many still utilise these definitions (an example of a Frazerian approach to, and hence a negative definition of, ancient magic may be seen in A.A.Barb, ‘The Survival of Magic Arts’, in A.Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century A.D.*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1963, pp.100-114).

⁴⁸ . M.Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, Routledge, London, 2001, p.88.

Graf⁴⁹ and Betz⁵⁰ suggest that the PGM are guilty of borrowing ritual and prayer from ‘religious’ sources, though Betz’ argument that we find “real differences between magic and religion even within this body of highly syncretistic material”⁵¹ is hard to accept for he sees the defining point of the magician to be that he lacked the inner knowledge of the cultic materials he borrowed. This seems an unduly negative appraisal of the magician, especially when we consider that the source that Betz highlights, the *Mithras Liturgy*, was essentially a secret codex. With these points concerning our sources in mind, we may agree with Schäfer’s summary of this second example; “This is biblical theology pure and simple, and it is more than obvious that the one (magic) had to be combined with the other (theology) in order to enable magic to be integrated into the religious values of the Bible.”⁵²

Schäfer’s final example concerns an attempt by an Israelite priest to ascertain the guilt of a supposed adulteress.⁵³ The priest prepares an elaborate ritual, including the use of sanctified water and earth, as well as written curses. Schäfer lists a series of details from this ritual which illustrate its magical nature, many of which are paralleled ancient magical texts.⁵⁴ Perhaps the most striking detail is that of the dissolving of written curses in the holy philtre and using this as a trigger for the activation of the priest’s magic; as Schäfer notes this is a very common form of

⁴⁹ . F.Graf, ‘Prayer in Magical and Religious Ritual’, in C.A.Faraone and D.Obbink (eds.), *Magika Hiera*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, pp.188-213.

⁵⁰ . Betz ‘Magic and Mystery in the Greek Magical Papyri’, in *Magika Hiera*, pp.244-259.

⁵¹ . Betz, ‘Magic and Mystery in the Greek Magical Papyri’, in *Magika Hiera*, p.254.

⁵² . Schäfer, ‘Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism’, p.30.

⁵³ . Num 5:11-31.

⁵⁴ . Of the first seven elements which Schafer describes in this magical ritual he states that most of these ‘are well-known from later magical rituals.’ Schäfer, ‘Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism’, p.31. A glimpse at any corpus of ancient magical texts, such as J.Naveh and S.Shaked (eds), *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, Leiden, 1985, will serve to prove this point.

magic, frequently met in corpuses of magical texts.⁵⁵ Yet the Bible still presents this episode as a facet of theology through the use of ingredients from the Temple, using the holy religious milieu to transform the magical into the theological. Again, it might be suggested that this is an example of God as magician; if avowedly magical practices are undertaken within the holy space then they are deemed acceptable to religion.⁵⁶ As in the other examples, if magic is seen to be performed it is only at the behest of God, reminding us that the deity is the source of magic and the supernatural.⁵⁷ It may be seen, as Schäfer states, that the authors of the Bible see magic as a part of religion, but importantly it is not termed as such in reference to their own religion; instead magic is buried and hidden in theology.⁵⁸ Magical elements, both popular and forbidden, could be incorporated into the value system of Israelite religion and the biblical authors could neatly avoid accusations of supporting something which they explicitly condemn. Again, though, we may see the importance which terminology plays in demarcating acceptable forms of magic, for none of Schäfer's examples employ magical terms as found in the biblical sanctions (i.e. Deut 18:10-14). Schäfer does not make this point, preferring to employ a basic definition of magic; however, the observation is important for it shows that the Bible authors have formulated a set of terms by which they may mitigate against unacceptable forms of magic. As Ricks shows, this language is reserved for those magicians who would be

⁵⁵ . Schäfer, 'Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism', p.31; see for instance *PGM VII.222-249* and *PGM XII.365-375* in H.D.Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells*, 2nd ed., Chicago, 1992, and J.Naveh, S.Shaked (eds), *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, 1985.

⁵⁶ . Here again we may see the blurring of definitions concerning magic and religion, as location effects the nature of the operation performed. This example may serve to demonstrate that in many ways the definitions of what constitutes magic and what religion are imposed by the historian; as Graf suggests, the best approach is not to impose definition but to accept and explore ancient categorisations. Graf, *Magic in The Ancient World*, pp.18-19. See also J.M.Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition*, London, SCM Press, 1974, pp.45-48, though Hull's ideas concerning the separation of magic and miracle are both confused and blurred, relying on Frazerian ideas of sympathy and cause; cf. Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity', pp.1521-1522.

⁵⁷ . As Hull suggests in his *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (p.45), such events are seen by the Bible to be facets of a world-view in which "everything is pregnant with magical-miracle."

⁵⁸ . Schäfer, 'Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism', p.33.

deemed as the 'other', or in different terms, those who act without the sanction of the biblical authors.⁵⁹

Magic in the First Century: The Roman Empire

In summary then, we may see that Josephus would have had two very similar models of magic on which to base his own accounts of magicians. Roman law on the subject, often expressed through magical terminology in the works of its reporters, saw the figure of the magician as a potential threat to order and a focal point for rebellion. However, this was not to say that various forms of magic could not find imperial sanction, nor that all magic was inherently bad, evil, or harmful. As we have seen, even emperors could make use of magicians, despite the fact that a general ban might be in force on precisely those figures that were employed. Likewise, the Hebrew Bible shows a wide array of magical practices, both Israelite and 'of the nations'; the former may be sanctioned by God, as in the case of Moses, whilst the latter, though identical in form, is either outlawed or denigrated.⁶⁰ Both spheres of influence, Roman law and Jewish history/religion as expressed in biblical texts, show that what we might term 'magical' acts and figures may be deemed acceptable if they receive sanction from those in power (the emperor and the authors of the Bible/God). It is with these ideas in mind that I will now assess the meanings and employments of our four magical terms.

⁵⁹ . Ricks, 'The Magician as Outsider', pp.135-137.

⁶⁰ .In the case of Pharaoh's magicians in Ex. 7 we see sanctioned practitioners who are, nevertheless, denigrated as inferior foreign experts of magic.

γόνς

By the time of Josephus the term γόνς and its cognates held an important place in the armoury of those who wished to speak ill of magicians and their art. Whilst the derivation of the term, its linguistic development, and its relationship to shamanism has been often debated,⁶¹ its negative connotations in the period under question have not been so questioned. Whilst the identification of the original form of the γόνς with the idea of the shaman is open to debate, it is more certain that the term derives from the verb γοᾶν, ‘to utter a cry of lamentation over the dead’.⁶² That this particular form of the figure of the magician (γόνς) should be derived from the cries and lamentations over the dead is not surprising when the former was frequently identified and defined by the incantations which they employed.⁶³ Aeschylus, one of the earliest to refer to such figures, describes the γόνς as a religious specialist, on the fringes of society but still under its sanction, who was responsible for summoning the dead from their graves.⁶⁴ Plato refers to the γόνς as claiming to control the spirits of the dead, in addition to misleading men through “tricks and spells and

⁶¹ . The work of W.Burkert (‘ΓΟΗΣ Zum griechischen “Shamanismus”’, *RhM* 150, 1962, pp.136-155) remains the single most complete analysis of the term, though a number of important works, of more recent date, serve to place the γόνς in its social setting; D.Ogden, *Greek and Roman Necromancy*, Princeton University Press, 2001, pp.110-112, J.Rabinowitz, *The Rotting Goddess*, N.Y., Autonomedia, 1998, pp.137-147, and Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, pp.13-15.

⁶² . Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, p.28, Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, p.13. Especially relevant to the discussion of the term γόνς in respect to funerary cults and the origin of the term is S.I.Johnston, *Restless Dead: Encounters between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999, who takes issue with the shamanic connection.

⁶³ . Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, p.13.

⁶⁴ . Aeschylus, *Persae*, 687. Further support for this derivation of the term is seen in the Byzantine *Suda* (Ogden, *Greek and Roman Necromancy*, p.48) of the late tenth century CE which, in speaking of the varieties of magic extant in its own time, notes that sorcery and its practitioners (the γόνς) “is applied to the raising of the dead by invocation, and the term is derived from the wailing (*gooi*) and the laments that are performed at tombs.”

enchantments”.⁶⁵ Diodorus claims that the γόης acted “just like the mages (μάγοι) do”, able to shapeshift and create adverse weather conditions such as hailstorms and snows through their own will.⁶⁶ This sense of the γόης as an exponent of magical and miraculous actions is seen too in Herodotus, where they are said to have the ability to turn themselves into wolves.⁶⁷

Another idea involved in the evolution of the term through the classical age was that of deception, which, by Josephus’s day, had come to be something of a core definition of the term. Plato, in both his *Laws* and *Republic* equates the arts of the γόης with deception, whilst Xenophon uses the term in a manner which suggests the forcing of people to believe that which is patently untrue.⁶⁸ Indeed, by the time of the early Christian church the term had an essential meaning of ‘deceiver’. Thus, as Smith shows, Origen is forced to not only refute the image portrayed by Celsus of Jesus as a magician, but also to defend him from being seen as the secondary aspect of the γόης, ‘a trickster trying to discredit in advance his rival claimants and rival beggars.’⁶⁹ In a similar fashion, Apollonius, in his debate with the Egyptian gymnophisist Thespesion, declares that the art of the γόης is simply that of causing the ignorant to believe in the non-existent and of hiding the truth.⁷⁰ The only spell which Apollonius believes is cast by the γόης is that over the eyes and ears of those who constitute their audience.⁷¹ Likewise, Artemidorus gives his opinion of those who qualify as diviners and those who are mere charlatans and confidence tricksters.⁷² In this latter category

⁶⁵ . Plato, *Laws* 932ff.

⁶⁶ . Diodorus, 5.55.

⁶⁷ . Herodotus, *Histories*, 4.104-105. Herodotus (*Histories*, 4.105) also states; “I myself do not believe what they say, but they say it nonetheless, indeed swear it”.

⁶⁸ . Plato, *Laws*, 10, 908d2-4, *Republic*, 413c4, 412e7, 413b1. Xenophon, *Anab.* 5.7.9.

⁶⁹ . M.Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, N.Y., Harper & Row, 1978, p.109.

⁷⁰ . Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, 8.7.

⁷¹ . Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, 8.7.

⁷² . Artemidorus, *On Dreams*, 2.69.

we have those who divine by means of the palm, knuckle-bones, sieves and even cheese! In describing these charlatans he uses the word γόης because he wishes to stress that those who follow such practices only do so because they wish to trick their customers into believing that they are possessed of true divinatory skills.⁷³ Increasingly the term was used as a tool for literary elites to describe those beyond the limited boundaries of a given society who either admitted to practising, or were perceived as practising, a variety of shadowy practices which the law-abiding citizen would not be involved in.⁷⁴

A good example of this fear and uncertainty surrounding the γόης is seen in a passage from Strabo. Describing the life of the legendary Orpheus who is said to have lived at the foot of Mount Olympus, Strabo states that he was a γόης who had spent time as a beggar-priest (ἀγύρτης), performing the roles of diviner and initiator into the secret rites of the mysteries.⁷⁵ However, Orpheus seems to have agitated the local populace, who, perhaps fearing him because of his growing band of disciples, proceeded to beat him to death. Here we see a collection of offices, magician, diviner, priest, and mystagogue coupled with a sense of fear on behalf of society; that Strabo calls Orpheus a γόης rather than the less negative ἀγύρτης, suggests that it was for his reputation as a γόης that he was put to death. The extent to which the γόης had become a negative application for magicians who wished to do harm is shown in the works of Apuleius and Philostratus. The former employs the term, in his trial on

⁷³ . Artemidorus, *On Dreams*, 2.69. See further the discussion of Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, p.239, who, whilst observing the difference between diviner and charlatan contained in Artemidorus' work concerning dream divination, does not mention that the division was not absolute but rather fluctuated according to the approaches adopted by those in the ancient world who described magic and magicians. Dickie prefers to marginalise the connection between divination and magic; but as shall be seen such an approach was not adopted with regularity in our sources.

⁷⁴ . At least this would appear to be the case if we are to judge the situation from the legalistic viewpoint, one frequently adopted and echoed in the works of the literary elites. See further, Kippenberg, 'Magic in Roman Civil Discourse: Why Rituals Could be Illegal', pp.137-163.

⁷⁵ . Strabo, *Geography*, C333 F18.

charges of practising harmful magic, in order to draw a contrast with the more religiously minded, and hence socially and state minded, μάγος.⁷⁶ His pleas in this manner to the judge were successful, and he manages to avoid the death penalty which applied to those who practised the art of the γόης.⁷⁷ Likewise Philostratus draws the negative connotations of the γόης in his description of Apollonius of Tyana's meeting with the emperor Vespasian, in which the hero stresses that his conversation with the emperor concerning the forecast of his future glory took place publicly in a temple, a place which is inimical to γοήτες who prefer the cover of night for their nefarious activities.⁷⁸

By the time of the early Roman Empire, the figure of the γόης was increasingly being denigrated by law, and was repeatedly linked to the actions of social and political revolutionaries. The extent to which the γόης was associated with civil disturbance, revolution and illegal activities is seen in an excerpt from the works of Dio Cassius who discusses the measures which Augustus and Agrippa took to secure Rome.⁷⁹ Acknowledging the need for sanctioned soothsayers and augurs, Agrippa advises that Rome should not be a home for the atheist or the γόης, for the latter "often incite many to revolution, either by telling the truth, or, as more often, by

⁷⁶ . Apuleius, *Apology*, 25-43.

⁷⁷ . Apuleius, *Apology*, 29-32. The charges brought against Apuleius, including his mysterious dissection of fish (for poisons or for research?) his possession of *instrumenta magicae*, his catatonic effect on a young boy and woman, his strange cult statue kept hidden from prying eyes, and his enactment of *nocturnal sacra*, certainly seem to give grounds to his accusers arguments. In invoking the more positive aspects of the Persian magi however he is able to show that he is not a γόης but rather a form of the natural scientist or philosopher. See further G.Luck, 'Witches and Sorcerers in Classical Literature', in B.Ankarloo and S.Clark (eds.), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Vol.2 Ancient Greece and Rome*, London, The Athlone Press, 1999, pp.91-158 and F.Graf, 'Theories of Magic in Antiquity' in P.Mirecki and M.Meyer (eds.), *Magic and Religion in the Ancient World*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 2002, pp.92-104.

⁷⁸ . Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, 8.7.2.

⁷⁹ . Cassius Dio, 49.43.5.

telling lies.”⁸⁰ Whilst this passage hails from more than a century after Josephus, it is written in retrospect concerning the measures which Augustus took to secure a post-civil war Rome, particularly the expulsion, on numerous occasions, of magicians and astrologers.⁸¹ Furthermore, Augustus is noted for his burning of thousands of Greek and Latin magical works in 31 BCE.⁸² Likewise, Tiberius executed those who were astrologers or magicians (γόνς) and not Roman citizens, exiling those who were.⁸³ The extent to which the Roman authorities feared unsanctioned religious activities can be seen with the second century BCE *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus*.⁸⁴ Seeking to lay down a standard for private cults and gatherings, with those unsanctioned being seen as illegal in the eyes of the law, it stated; “No one is to aspire to perform rites either in secret, or in public, or in private, or outside the city, unless he has approached the city praetor, and he has given permission on the basis of a senatorial decree, provided that not less than a hundred senators are present when the matter is debated.”⁸⁵ Livy reports that shortly after this decree thousands of people were put to death for having practised a form of magic;⁸⁶ though specifically covering the rites of the Bacchanalia, this decree was also used to combat the actions of figures such as the γόνς, who were often portrayed as foreign religious specialists.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ . Cassius Dio, 52.36.2.

⁸¹ . Repeated legislation was issued during the first century CE in order to deal with the problem of magicians in Rome and Italy, especially on the advent of a new emperor. See further, MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, pp.95-127 and Gordon, ‘Imagining Greek and Roman Magic’, pp.159-275.

⁸² . Suetonius, *Augustus*, 31.

⁸³ . Cassius Dio, 57.15.8-9, cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.32.

⁸⁴ . Clearly, the idea of unsanctioned religious activity being troubling for the Roman mind is one not limited to imperial times. Indeed, pre-imperial Rome created some detailed legislation concerning magic, such as the *Twelve Tables* and the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis*, though these were perhaps aimed more at crimes involving murder by magical means than with magical ritual and practice. See further, Phillips, ‘Nullem Crimen sine Lege: Socioreligious Sanctions on Magic’, pp.260-276.

⁸⁵ . Livy, 39.8-11. See further J-M.Pailler, *Bacchanalia: La répression de 186 av. J.C. à Rome et en Italie: vestiges, images, tradition*, Rome, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d’Athènes et de Rome, 1988.

⁸⁶ . Livy, 39.41 and 40.43.

⁸⁷ . Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, p.155.

Of particular importance for our survey of magic in the world of Josephus is the term μάντις, which our author employs not only of Balaam and the witch of Endor, but also of the Essene mystics of his own day and even his own predictions. His usage is similar to that of LXX; both use μάντις terminology in respect to Balaam and the witch of Endor, and in a number of other parallel instances.⁸⁸ It has recently been suggested that Josephus viewed the μάντις as a form of technical diviner,⁸⁹ using it as a substitute for προφήται, reserving this term for figures from the past. The evidence from all four of his works appears to support this case; Josephus did believe that true prophetism had died out in the long distant past.⁹⁰ However, when we consider the nature of the term μάντις in the wider Graeco-Roman world we see a slightly different appraisal and definition; one which enhances the connection to the world of magic. Its appearance in various sources and contexts, and across several centuries in the Graeco-Roman world, demonstrates the extent to which the office of the seer overlapped with that of the magician. As Dickie comments on the ancient Greek appraisal of this phenomena: “That there is no strict differentiation in role

⁸⁸ . These instances will be covered more fully in the relevant chapters concerning these figures. On the subject of the terminology of the LXX the work of R.Rendtorff (‘Προφήτης: *Navi* in the Old Testament’, in G.Kittel and G.Friedrich (eds.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, trans. into English by G.W.Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1968, pp.794-827) is unmatched.

⁸⁹ . So R.Gray (*Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence From Josephus*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993) states (p.111) that Josephus’ “use of μάντις-terminology in connection with the Essene prophets emphasizes the element of technical expertise in their activity.” Likewise, L.H.Feldman (‘Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus’, *JTS* 41, 1990, pp.386-422) suggests that the term is used by Josephus to describe those figures who merely predict the future but who do not act as a spokesman for the divine. However, neither author refers to the links which this term has to the world of magic; as shall be seen, this is an important omission with respect to Josephus’ employment.

⁹⁰ . F.E.Greenspahn, ‘Why Prophecy Ceased’, *JBL* 108, 1989, pp.37-49; cf. Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, pp.7-34. See also R.Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine*, pp.8-34.

between seers and magicians and between other forms of holy men and magicians is hardly an Athenian peculiarity, but is a phenomenon that is to be observed until the end of pagan antiquity and continues to be a problem in an increasingly Christianized Roman Empire.”⁹¹ This point is at the heart of the consideration of magic and magical terminology in this thesis.

Modern surveys of the term frequently describe the μάντις as a form of diviner, attempting to limit its association with the world of magic.⁹² However, even from the earliest references to the figure of the μάντις the link to more overt forms of magic are evident. So Sophocles links the μάντις to the ἀγύρτης and the μάγος in his description of Teiresias.⁹³ Whilst the term ἀγύρτης has been classified as a ‘beggar-priest’ with only secondary links to the world of magic,⁹⁴ the term μάγος is a clear reference to magic, especially when we consider that Sophocles’ appraisal of this figure is wholly negative, seeing Teiresias as an unscrupulous and underhand seer. Plato, in his *Republic*, follows Sophocles in associating the μάντις with the ἀγύρτης, but further suggests that this figure practised sacrifices and incantations (ἐπαιδή), conjured up ghosts to harm his enemies, and employed binding spells (κατάδεσμοι).⁹⁵ Likewise, in his *Laws* the μάντις appears at the head of a list of talented but devious and treacherous figures who engage in magic (μαγγάνευμα) and

⁹¹ . Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, p.61.

⁹² . So, for instance, L.H.Feldman (‘Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus’, p.416) turns to H.J.Rose (‘Divination (Greek)’ in J.Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol.4, N.Y., Scribner’s, 1914, p.796) in order to sight the μάντις not as an inspired prophet but a craftsmen (δημιουργός), who is coupled with leeches and carpenters in Homer (*Odyssey*, 17.384). The use of such an old source gives us very little insight into how the term μάντις was defined in the era of Josephus; Feldman would argue that the term is at home in the religious sphere of Greek culture, but this appraisal does not explain the meaning of the term in Josephus’ Graeco-Roman world, nor why the term could be used in negative employments in speaking of magicians.

⁹³ . Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, 385-396

⁹⁴ . Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, p.61, defines the ἀγύρτης as a ‘mendicant holy man’ who, often associated with the μάντις in early Greek texts, is frequently seen to be operating at both the fringes of society and outside of religious and state law.

⁹⁵ . Plato, *Republic*, 364b5-c5.

who conceal their atheism from the world at large.⁹⁶ Unsurprisingly, Plato suggests that such figures often become tyrants, demagogues and generals, offices which run counter to the idea of his idealised state. In a later passage, he refers to the μάντις in his discussion of the penalties to be exacted on those who practice φαρμακεία, suggesting that the μάντις is a class of expert who, just as doctors know about drugs, know about binding spells, the summoning of ghosts and other such forms of harmful magic.⁹⁷

Our Roman data suggests a similar appraisal of the μάντις, who, existing on the fringes of society almost as a kind of vagabond, is connected to the arts of divination and magic. Thus, Dio Cassius reports that in 11 CE Augustus forbade μαντεῖς to deliver prophetic utterances in private, nor in reference to death even when given publicly.⁹⁸ After the death of Augustus the senate reissued his rulings in 16 and 17 CE, actions which led to the execution of forty-five sorcerers and eighty-five sorceresses under the reign of Tiberius.⁹⁹ Certainly, by the second century CE the μάντις was being associated, according to Artemidorus, with all manner of figures connected to the world of magic, including the γόης.¹⁰⁰ There appears to be little distinction in the Roman mind between the μάντις and the γόης; both represent the fear which the Roman authorities, both senatorial and imperial, held concerning figures who conducted practices, such as night-time meetings and rituals, which were

⁹⁶ . Plato, *Laws*, 908d1-7.

⁹⁷ . Plato, *Laws*, 932e1-33e4.

⁹⁸ . Dio Cassius, 56.25.5. Such legislation was aimed at ridding Rome and Italy of figures who might be a threat to the emperor and the senate. Whilst Dickie (*Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, p.154) suggests that Augustus was not worried by such figures as a threat to his rule,⁹⁸ such a scenario does not take account of the repeated bans on magicians, nor the emperor's own employment of such practitioners. Here we might note not only Augustus' horoscope (Dio Cassius, 56.23), but also Suetonius' (*Augustus* 31) description of his immolation of the books of Rome's magicians and prophets in 31 BCE.

⁹⁹ . *Chron. Ann. cccliv* MGH IX p.145: *hoc. Imp. (sc. Tiberio Claudio) primum venenarii et malefici comprehensi sunt; homines XLV, mulieres LXXXV ad supplicium ducti sunt.*

¹⁰⁰ . Artemidorus, *On Dreams*, 2.69.

a possible threat to the ruling order. As we see with the expulsion from Rome of astrologers and magicians by Marcus Agrippa in 33 CE, Roman authorities were not particularly interested in such distinctions. In this respect the idea of the distinction between divination and magic is a modern appraisal, based upon our Frazerian separation of religion and magic. In contrast, ancient Rome lacked such distinctions; the boundaries between religion, magic, and divination were extremely fluid, their definitions being supplied, as Cryer shows with regard to biblical literature, through the sanction of the elites of society.¹⁰¹

μάγος

Perhaps the most prominent and frequent term dealing with the concept of magic in the Graeco-Roman world, *μάγος* /*mageia* provides us with the root for our own modern terminology.¹⁰² It is also a term which exemplifies the confusion over the nature of magic in the ancient Graeco-Roman world, as well as blurring the distinction between magic and religion (at least in modern constructs). Beginning as a simple loanword borrowed from Persian, it became, by the first century CE, an umbrella term for “any and all suspect uses of supernatural powers.”¹⁰³ The term is attested in Greek from the classical era, with Herodotus using it in an ethnographic

¹⁰¹ . Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment, A Socio-Historical Investigation*, pp.324-332.

¹⁰² . In this respect we may observe that the Roman world adopted its magical terminology from the Greeks, observing the Persian roots of the term, but investing the idea of the magician with a greater sense of threat to the established order. See further Cheak, ‘Magic Through the Linguistic Lenses of Greek *μάγος*, Indo-European **mag(h)*-, Sanskrit *maya* and Pharaonic Egyptian *Heka*’, pp.260-286.

¹⁰³ . Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World, Pagans, Jews and Christians*, p.9, and J.N.Bremmer, ‘The Birth of the Term “magic”’, in J.N.Bremmer and J.R.Veenstra (eds), *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*, Paris, Peeters, 2002, pp.1-12.

description of a caste of Persian priests.¹⁰⁴ They are seen to be a secretive tribe or society, responsible for carrying out the rites connected with the royal house (sacrifice, funerals, anointing), and for divination and dream interpretation.¹⁰⁵ Thus, Xenophon describes them as experts “in everything concerning the gods”.¹⁰⁶ However, not all Greek authors were as charitable to such foreign traditions, as the Persians were not only foreigners but military enemies. Whilst Herodotus makes minimal reference to the Magi’s flair for the miraculous, it was a theme of their identity which did not take long to flourish. So Euripides suggests that Helen was lured away from her husband by the mysterious actions of a μάγος,¹⁰⁷ whilst Gorgias links their practices to γοητεία, thereby suggesting that such ritual acts are to be seen as malevolent in intent.¹⁰⁸ Heraclitus,¹⁰⁹ Sophocles,¹¹⁰ and Plato,¹¹¹ also employed the term in reference to this more negative aspect, suspecting the μάγος of dabbling in night-time rituals, offering fraudulent and itinerant divination and generally abusing society through illicit rituals.

The extent to which the μάγος was conjoined with the idea of negatively-defined magic may be seen from very early on in our Greek sources, and not simply in the works of the literary elite. For example the Derveni papyrus, found in a fourth century BCE grave near Thessalonika, links the μάγος not only with incantations (ἐπαιδοι), but also with the ability to “placate demons who could bring disorder”

¹⁰⁴ . Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.101

¹⁰⁵ . Herodotus, *Histories*, 7.43, 113f, 191 (sacrifices), 1.170f, 120, 128, 7.19, 37 (dream interpretation and miracles), 1.140 (funeral rites).

¹⁰⁶ . Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 8.3, 11.

¹⁰⁷ . Euripides, *Orestes*, 1497.

¹⁰⁸ . Gorgias, DK 82 B 11.10.

¹⁰⁹ . Heraclitus, DK 12 B 14.

¹¹⁰ . Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, 387f.

¹¹¹ . Plato, *Republic*, 364 B, *Symposium* 202 E, *Menon*, 80 B, *Laws* 10, 909 B. See further M.Gellrich, ‘Socratic Magic: Enchantment, Irony and Persuasion in Plato’s Dialogues’, *Classical World* 87, 1994, pp.275-307.

through ritual sacrifice.¹¹² We see a similar set of associations in the Graeco-Egyptian magical papyri.¹¹³ However, it was in the hands of authors such as Plato that the term μάγος came to be definitively associated with negatively defined magic. Not only does he imagine the μάγος to be a wandering charlatan, peddling magical cures, divination and ritual healing, and operating on the fringes of society, often under cover of darkness, he also associates them with the γόης.¹¹⁴ Such figures constitute a danger to the perfect society, for the magician threatens the natural relationship which normally unites humanity with the gods. Clearly, much of the negativity which surrounds the figure of the μάγος in the world of Plato is derived from the antipathy felt by Greece towards the Persian invaders of the sixth century. This eastern origin of the term, by which the fire-priests of the orthodox religion of Persia were described, survived into Josephus' era. However, the negative definitions and associations which were provided by Plato, Heraclitus and Euripides, which served to link the μάγος with illegal religious practices, occult rituals, and a threat to society, were to quickly overshadow the original definition.

Much like the situation in the Greek world, the most prominent terms concerning magic in the Roman world, *magus* and *magia*, clearly borrowed from the Greek, only occur at a relatively late date and at a stage when magic had become a definite category in Roman culture. The earliest attestations come from Catullus and Cicero in the middle of the first century BCE. Much like the first instances of the term in Greek literature these references are positive descriptions of Persian fire-priests, in the form of ethnographic depictions of strange customs. Thus Cicero writes of the

¹¹² . A provisional edition of the Derveni Papyrus is given in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 4, 1982, p.300f. See further, M.L.West, *The Orphic Poems*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1983, pp.75-111.

¹¹³ . *PGM* XII, 322.

¹¹⁴ . Plato, *Symposium*, 202 E.

magi who accompanied Xerxes, advising their king to set the sanctuaries of the Greeks alight.¹¹⁵ He also suggests that they are responsible for dream divination, initiating each successive king into their art, labelling them a group of “wise men and scholars among the Persians”.¹¹⁶ Likewise Catullus mentions the rituals of the Persian *magi*, again linking them with divination.¹¹⁷ We see that the core values of the Persian μάγος are intact; rituals, divination and a link to religious observances. However, this situation changed rapidly as the term *magi*, and its Latin adjective *magicus*, came to denote magical rites. Thus Virgil links the art of the *magi* with incantations designed to win a lover through occult means, a practice similar to those outlawed in the Twelve Tables.¹¹⁸ In Apuleius, too, we may still detect the Persian antecedents of the term, though in *Apology on a Charge of Magic* it is quite clear that he also understands that the term *magia* can refer to a wide range of negatively-defined practices.¹¹⁹ Thus, whilst the Persian origins of the Greek term were well observed in Roman circles right up to the end of the second century CE, the connection with negatively-defined magic was implicit.

The extent to which the negative implications and associations of the Greek term μάγος informed the Roman idea of magic, and its own *magia* terminology, is evident in the work of Pliny the Elder. He employs the concept of magic, denoted by the term *magia*, in a polemical fashion, describing its numerous vices to his readers

¹¹⁵ . Cicero, *De Legibus*, 2.26.

¹¹⁶ . Cicero, *De Divinatione*, 1.46, 91.

¹¹⁷ . Catullus, *Carmina* 90

¹¹⁸ . Virgil, *Eclogue*, 8.66-69. Similar observances of the law are found in Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 28.17, and Seneca, *Natural Questions*, 4.7.2.

¹¹⁹ . Although Apuleius was accused of both *magica malefica* (*Apology*, 1.15) and *crimen magicae* (*Apology*, 25.14), he nevertheless suggests to his accusers that the term *magos* is an innocent one, stating (*Apology*, 25.26); “For if, as I read in many authors, a magician means in the language of the Persians, the same thing that the word ‘priest’ does, I put, what is the crime, pray, in being a magician? What is the crime in properly knowing, and understanding, and being versed in the laws of ceremonials, the solemn order of sacred rites, and religious ordinances?”

and leaving them in little doubt as to its fraudulent nature. For him it is a question of ‘the vain beliefs of magic’ (*magicae vanitates*) which constitute ‘the most deceitful of arts’ (*fraudentissima artium*).¹²⁰ Suggesting that magic is a combination of medicine, religion and astrology, he undermines any positive aspects of the art by stating that it constitutes a form of *superstitio*; it is a quasi-religious practice which is at odds with accepted Roman religious values.¹²¹ Whilst he sites its origin in the Persia of Zoroaster, echoing Herodotus’ original account, he provides the art of magic with a lengthy history, predating Plato by six thousand years, and states that it is a common feature of all ancient societies.¹²² However, Pliny is keen to stress that magic is a foreign import to Rome and is of Persian origin.¹²³ He does mention the initiation of Nero into the mysteries of the *magi*, but such a detail merely serves to add to Pliny’s portrayal of the emperor’s madness.¹²⁴ However, perhaps the most important observation to be made from the work of Pliny is that he provides one of the earliest Roman images of the magician as being a foreigner. Granted, whilst he may provide some positive comment on the *ars* of medicinal magic, his overall representation of the magician, described by *magia* terminology, is negative and is based largely upon the stance which the Roman Empire was coming to adopt. As Graf shows, Pliny supports the image of the magician who was “deported from Italy every time that a private individual made use of their art for the purpose of meddling in the affairs of state”.¹²⁵ By the time of the early Empire, then, the figure of the μάγος, and its Latin equivalent, aroused deep suspicion from the Roman authorities.

¹²⁰ . Pliny, *Natural History*, 30.5, 30.14.

¹²¹ . Pliny, *Natural History*, 30.2. On Pliny’s categorization of some magical arts as *superstitio* see D.Grodzynski, ‘Superstitio,’ *Revue des Études Anciennes*, Vol. 76, 1974, pp. 36-60.

¹²² . Pliny, *Natural History*, 30.13.

¹²³ . Pliny, *Natural History*, 30.12.

¹²⁴ . Pliny, *Natural History*, 30.14. Tacitus *Annals*, 12.22, Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, 6.34. Pliny’s reference to Nero is rounded off by a description of the typology of magic developed by Osthane, who made magic a category of divination, not least of which was the art of necromancy.

¹²⁵ . Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, p.55.

In summary then, the term μάγος and its cognates had a chequered history in ancient employments, beginning as an ethnographic description of Persian experts in ritual religion, and ending up as an umbrella term used to describe magic and its exponents, with an emphasis on the more negative aspects of its practice. Thus, whilst we might observe something of the original meaning of the term in the late first century CE Gospel of Matthew,¹²⁶ where it seemingly denotes a form of eastern astrologer, we must also be aware that this reference proved problematic for later Christians exegetes who sought to fend off associations between Jesus and the world of magic.¹²⁷ In essence, this is the dichotomous nature of the term; it could be misconstrued by those who wished to draw associations with harmful magic, whilst at the same time it could be intentionally employed in the most negative of contexts. In Josephus' era then, the μάγος had a negative currency in both Greek and Latin incarnations. However, and this is perhaps the most important point, when one wished to use the term in its original, more positive, ethnographic sense, the author had to provide an explanation of this employment. Thus Apuleius has to remind his accusers of the origins of the term and how it can have a positive aspect.

¹²⁶ . Matt, 2:1. For a full discussion of the magi in Matthew see R.E.Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah, A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, London, Doubleday, 1993, pp.165-201 who, though noting the parallels with the story of Balaam, does not give enough attention to the impact of the explicit terminology of magic in either case.

¹²⁷ . This problem was acute for Augustine, who created the idea that the Magi who visited Jesus were indeed magicians in the negative sense but they were acceptable to Christianity because they had been converted by grace, *Sermons*, 20.3-4. See further C.S.Mann, 'Epiphany – Wise Men or Charlatans?', *Theology* 61, 1958, pp.495-500.

The early links between science, medicine and magic are highlighted by the term φαρμακός/φάρμακον and its cognates, Greek terms used to denote the use of drugs and sorcery in order to harm one's enemies. As with the case of the μάγος the Romans observed the term in Greek literature and borrowed the concept, using the more overtly negative term *veneficum* to describe both medicine and magic. As a descriptive term the Greek version makes its debut as early as the work of Homer. Thus, Helen is said to have used an Egyptian φαρμακός in order to chase away the sadness of Menelaus and Telemachus;¹²⁸ Circe transforms Odysseus' crew into swine by the use of a φάρμακον;¹²⁹ Odysseus dips his arrows in a poisoned φάρμακον;¹³⁰ whilst the suitors fear that Telemachus has summoned a φάρμακον which he will use to secretly kill them.¹³¹ In all of these references the employment of the term appears to refer to the use of some form of drug, especially as a poison, or to figures who administer them. Whilst the Byzantine *Suda* attempts, somewhat unconvincingly, to maintain a distinction between poisoning through drugs and the practice of witchcraft in its employment of φάρμακον terminology, a review of the ancient literature reveals that the term was inextricably linked to negative and harmful forms of magic.¹³² Indeed, the term provides us with an illuminating insight into the negative nature of legal thinking on the subject of magic, for it links the figure of the magician with the art of poisoning.

¹²⁸ . Homer, *Odyssey*, 4.221.

¹²⁹ . Homer, *Odyssey*, 10.290, 317.

¹³⁰ . Homer, *Odyssey*, 1.261.

¹³¹ . Homer, *Odyssey*, 2.329.

¹³² . D.Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds, A Sourcebook*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, pp.48-49.

Even before imperial times there was a great fear of the magician who used drugs and poisons, the art of *veneficum*. Such figures appear to have been the direct equivalent of the Greek φαρμακός, though by the first century CE there was a much more rigorous condemnation of their actions as a result of the Roman legalistic approach to magic. Having said this, however, we might consider the evidence afforded by a fifth century BCE Greek inscription from Teos which expressly mitigates against the actions of those who make harmful spells/potions (φαρμακα δὲ λῆτῆρια).¹³³ This inscription covers not only the use of drugs and poisons but also the use of such in magical assaults against the state; the understanding of magic is thus implicit to the term.¹³⁴ Further Greek evidence in the form of amulets and fragments of inscriptions shows that the fear of the φαρμακός and his magical powers was very real.¹³⁵ Such fear, at least in elite literary circles, was stoked by the stories of Horace in the Roman world, who used the template of the φαρμακός in order to build his portrayal of the ultimate sorceresses Canidia and Erictho, both of whom are experts in *veneficum*. These figures are guilty of a number of sickening crimes according to Horace, ranging from murder to cannibalism, in their hunger for practising magic. Whilst Horace's story may not accurately represent historical figures, a sense of the real nature of *veneficum* may be seen in the case of Germanicus, adopted son of the emperor Tiberius, who, Tacitus suggests, was not only put under a spell (*veneni*) by his enemy Piso but was also the subject of a magical assault in which human remains, spells and binding curses (*devotiones*) were

¹³³ . R.Meiggs and D.Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1969, no.30.

¹³⁴ . Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, p.276.

¹³⁵ . Amulet: R.Kotansky, *The Greek Magical Amulets. The Inscribed Gold, Silver, Copper, and Bronze Lamellae, Part 1: Published Texts of Known Provenance*, Papyrologica Coloniensia Vol.22.1, Opladen, 1994, no.36. Inscription: F.Graf, 'An Oracle Against Pestilence from a Western Anatolian Town', *ZPE* 92, 1992, pp.267-279.

discovered under the floor and in the walls of his home.¹³⁶ Tacitus further shows that the emperors took a dim view of anyone practising *veneficum*, stating that whilst Chaldaeans and diviners were banished from Rome *venenarii* and *malefici* were executed, one hundred and thirty, eighty-five of whom were women, being killed under the reign of Tiberius. Such executions were ordained in the *Lex Cornelia de Sicariis et Veneficis* issued under Sulla in the early first century BCE. Again, in the case of Claudia Pulchra, we see a link between *veneficum* and magic, in this case binding curses (*devotiones*); she was executed by Tiberius in 25 CE.¹³⁷ Thus, whilst there was a historic link with the use of drugs and potions for positive use, the figure of the *φαρμακός* rapidly fell foul of the state's suspicion, in both Greece and Rome, and was transformed into a variety of the negatively-defined magician who specialised in all varieties of the art of magic.

Magic in the Works of Josephus

In order to understand Josephus' awareness of the world of magic and the extent to which he could employ its distinctive terminology, it will be necessary to review the particular instances and examples contained in his works. Contrary to traditional scholarship on this subject, magical terminology is far from rare in all four of Josephus' works.¹³⁸ The terms which will be analysed here represent the most

¹³⁶ . Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.69, 74, 3.7.

¹³⁷ . Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.52.

¹³⁸ . Interest in magic in the works of Josephus has often been subsumed under the category of miracle, being reduced to a form of literary motif, or being regarded as a faithful transposition of the biblical ideas concerning magic in which Josephus merely parrots the Torahic laws. In this respect Josephus is frequently seen as a supreme rationalist, in whose works magic is a purely literary construct. As H.R.Moehring ('Rationalization of Miracles in the Writings of Flavius Josephus', *StEv* 6, 1973, p.381) states, "whenever possible, Josephus tries to find a rational explanation for events", going on to claim that Josephus keeps "direct interventions by God to a minimum" and "takes a restrained position which

distinct and common forms of magical terminology; indeed, we might note that terms like μάγος and γόης represent the roots of our own modern terms for magic.¹³⁹ In using these terms, Josephus, as shall be seen, is well aware of the connotations and implications of his use of magical terms. Magical terminology could be both explicit and subtle. This survey will demonstrate that Josephus, much like his employment of the terminology of the προφήτης,¹⁴⁰ is consistent in his employment of magical terminology, using each term to refer to a different facet of the complex world of ancient magic. The very variety and scope of Josephus' magical terminology suggests that he was well aware of the world of magic, at least in its literary incarnation; his main source for the first half of *Ant.*, the Hebrew Bible, is replete with instances of magic and its terminology. Importantly, however, *Ant.* represents a unique paraphrase of the Bible, into which he weaves his own ideas and understanding; as we will see this is most notable in his vision of magic. In addition, an important element of Josephus' approach to the world of magic is his understanding of the idea of sanction, through which, as has been seen, the Graeco-Roman world defined positive and negative forms of magic. In reviewing the particular instances of magical terminology in the works of Josephus we will attempt to explore these issues, as well as revealing

would reflect his desire to gain the respect of his educated gentile readers for the sacred traditions of his people." Clearly, with such an approach we would expect to see very little magic in the works of Josephus; however, *Ant.* is littered with magical events, as Josephus relates the actions of magicians seen in his own day, records the existence of magical plants, and uses magical terminology with precision and frequency.

¹³⁹ . Cheak, 'Magic through the Linguistic Lenses of Greek μάγος, Indo-European *mag(h)-, Sanskrit *māyā* and Pharoanic Egyptian *Heka*', pp.260-286.

¹⁴⁰ . D.E.Aune ('The Use of ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ in Josephus', *JBL* 101, 1982, pp.419-421) outlines this precise employment of the προφήτης terminology, arguing that it was used by Josephus to describe an era in the distant past in which there existed true prophets of God, capable of a whole host of wonders including divination. This view is supported by J.Barton (*Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile*, London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1986) who suggests that whilst the belief that true prophecy had ceased in the distant past was common in Josephus' day, it was not an absolute barrier to prophetic behaviour in the first century, nor to the employment of prophetic terminology regarding this behaviour. At the very least, however, we can adjudge from Josephus' employment of prophetic terminology the fact that our author can be very precise and deliberate in using distinctive, and important, terms. The terminology of magic is an excellent example of Josephus' writing skills in this respect.

the understanding which Josephus holds concerning magic in the Graeco-Roman world.

Magical Terminology in Josephus – γόνς

In his *A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus*, Rengstorf catalogues ten instances of the term γόνς, and three of the related γοητεία.¹⁴¹ The majority of these usages refer to those who have been termed ‘false prophets’ or ‘sign prophets’ by recent scholars; however, it could equally be seen that Josephus had in mind the Graeco-Roman meaning of a negatively defined magician when he wrote of these figures.¹⁴² This understanding is reinforced by Josephus’s other employments of the term and its cognates, most notably in the contest of magicians between Moses and the Egyptians of Exodus 7. Indeed, Josephus recognised the negative associations of the γόνς, and its connections with the world of magic, to the extent that he answers such charges laid against Moses by pagan critics in his *Against Apion* (2.145 and 2.161).

¹⁴¹ . K.H.Rengstorf, *A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus*, 4 vols., Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1973-1983, vol.1, p.390.

¹⁴² . P.W.Barnett (‘The Jewish Sign Prophets – A.D. 40-70: Their Intentions and Origins’, *NTS* 27, 1980-1981, pp.679-697) was the first to coin the phrase ‘sign prophet’ in relation to a group of diverse figures from Josephus’ account of the revolt against Rome, most of whom promised some form of miracle to their followers. R.A.Horsley (‘Popular Prophetic Movements at the Time of Jesus’, *CBQ* 46, 1984, pp.471-495), however, objects to this definition and uses the label to describe the figures without the promise of signs being a distinctive and defining element. Gray (*Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence From Josephus*, p.112) gives a list of six figures (Theudas, the unnamed figures under Felix, the Egyptian, an unnamed figure under Festus, an unnamed figure in 70 CE, and Jonathan the Sicarius) she sees as sign prophets; all but one of these figures, the Sicarius Jonathan, are described as a γόνς by Josephus, a point which has not been noticed by any previous author. This concentration of the term in Josephus’ narrative at the point where conflict with Rome is escalating shows us that not only were these ‘sign prophets’ deemed to be operating without sanction, but they were also worthy of being labelled as magicians by Josephus. Previous scholars have underestimated the power of the term γόνς; as we have seen the term was a very powerful form of denigration for it was quite clearly a reference to illicit and illegal forms of magic in the Graeco-Roman world. That Josephus uses it with such frequency suggests that he knew very well that the figures would be seen as magicians, and would be uniformly condemned by his audience.

Theudas - *Jewish Antiquities* 20.97-99

The case of Theudas will be dealt with in detail in the third Chapter concerning Moses.

The Impostors - *Jewish Antiquities* 20.160

Discussing the plight of pre-revolt Judea, Josephus lays some of the blame on those ‘robbers’ (λησθηρίων) and ‘impostors’ (γοήτων ἀνθρώπων) who were responsible for deluding the multitude. These figures are a blight on society and were dealt with in the normal Roman manner, with Felix putting to death many of the leaders and their followers.¹⁴³ However, in the parallel account given in the *Jewish War*, the impostors are not mentioned.¹⁴⁴ In both accounts, though, there is no sense that these groups have performed, or promised to perform, wonders or miracles. In the *Ant.* account it would appear that the term γόης is employed in the sense of deception, with Josephus declaring that both groups were responsible for deluding the multitude.

The Deceivers and the Egyptian - *Jewish Antiquities* 20.168ff, *Jewish War* 2.261-263

In describing Nero’s reign Josephus turns his attention to the troubles which beset Judea, ranging from bands of robbers (λησθηρίων) to the organised terrorism of

¹⁴³ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.160-161. Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence From Josephus*, p.140, notes that the conflux of the ‘sign prophet’ with the ‘brigand’ is a false picture of reality, caused by Josephus’ method of abbreviating several accounts into an editorial summary.

¹⁴⁴ . *Jewish War*, 2.253.

the Sicarii and the machinations of false prophets (ψευδοπροφήται) and magicians (γόητες).¹⁴⁵ In every case Josephus states that the response of the Roman authorities was the same; the robbers were rounded up and crucified, whilst the false prophets and those who pretended to be divinely inspired were crushed by the troops of procurator Felix. In *War*, the Sicarii are seen as a new class of bandit who committed murders in broad daylight in the heart of Jerusalem, and are compared to the impostors (γόητες) and deceivers (ἀπατεῶνες) who, not as impure in their methods, were nevertheless more wicked in their intentions.¹⁴⁶ Perhaps in an attempt to demonstrate the beneficent rule of the Romans, he accuses both groups of being villains (πονηρῶν) who brought only ruin and bloodshed to Jerusalem. In addition, they were responsible for deceiving and deluding the populace, acting ‘under the pretence of divine inspiration’ (προσχήματι θειασμοῦ), and intending to bring about ‘change’ (νεωτερισμός) and ‘innovation’ (μεταβολή) in society.¹⁴⁷ However, he does not apply the term γόης to these people, but he does point out that the procurator regarded their actions as precluding insurrection (ἀπόστασις).¹⁴⁸ Again Josephus adopts a disdainful attitude towards these men, labelling them madmen who attempted to lure the people into the wilderness where they would demonstrate divine signals of liberty (ἐκεῖ τοῦ θεοῦ δείξοντος αὐτοῖς σημεῖα ἐλευθερίας).¹⁴⁹ However, in *Ant.* the parallel account uses the term γόητες,¹⁵⁰ stating that they persuaded the multitude to follow them into the wilderness where the providence of God would bring forth

¹⁴⁵ . *Jewish War*, 2.250. For a discussion of this ‘madness’ amongst the populace see R.A.Horsley, “‘Like One of the Prophets of Old’: Two Types of Popular Prophets at the Time of Jesus”, *CBQ* 47, 1985, pp.435–463.

¹⁴⁶ . *Jewish War*, 2.258. One of the Sicarii, Jonathan, is described as a ‘most villainous man’ (πονηρότατος ἄνθρωπος), *Jewish War*, 7.438.

¹⁴⁷ . *Jewish War*, 2.259.

¹⁴⁸ . *Jewish War*, 2.260.

¹⁴⁹ . *Jewish War*, 2.259.

¹⁵⁰ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.167.

signs and wonders (σεμεία καὶ τέρατα).¹⁵¹ For the Romans, as Josephus emphasizes, such gatherings were dangerous to civil order and Roman power; hence, Felix sent his forces to destroy them.¹⁵²

Furthermore, Josephus continues his catalogue of woe which befell the people under Felix with his description of an infamous figure, known only as ‘the Egyptian’, as a false prophet (ψευδοπροφήτης) and a magician (γόης).¹⁵³ He states that this individual was the cause for more mischief than the aforementioned groups, and that, claiming to be a prophet, he led thirty thousand to the Mount of Olives.¹⁵⁴ In *Ant.* this figure is said to have ‘claimed to be a prophet’ (προφήτης εἶναι λέγων), whilst in the account of this figure in *War* it is reported that he had ‘gained for himself the reputation of a prophet’ (προφήτου πίστιν ἐπιθεὶς ἑαυτῷ), and is labelled both a false prophet (ψευδοπροφήτης) and a γόης.¹⁵⁵ There are several differences between the two accounts, such as the location of the start of his journey with his following and the extent of the death toll, but such discrepancies are minor to the overall consideration of the Egyptian as a γόης. His desire was to take Jerusalem by force, but, again, Felix was on hand to thwart his efforts, killing large numbers of the crowd but failing to capture the Egyptian magician.¹⁵⁶ Here again then we have the prophetic pretensions of a magician, claiming to be able to work wonders, who deceives large numbers of the populace, and whose designs are interpreted as dangerous and possibly revolutionary by the Roman authorities and thus end in bloodshed.

¹⁵¹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.168.

¹⁵² . *Jewish War*, 2.260.

¹⁵³ . *Jewish War*, 2.261.

¹⁵⁴ . *Jewish War* 2.261, cf. *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.169 which mentions that the Egyptian led ‘the masses of the common people’ (τό δημοτικόν πλῆθος).

¹⁵⁵ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.169, *Jewish War*, 2.261.

¹⁵⁶ . *Jewish War*, 2.263.

The Call to Arms - *Jewish War* 2.264

Following on from his description of the Egyptian γόης Josephus describes the actions of the γόητες and the robbers (λησστηρίων). These two groups are again associated, as they were in *Ant.*20.160-161, and are said to have incited the Jews to revolt “exhorting them to assert their independence, and threatening to kill any who submitted to Roman domination and forcibly to suppress those who voluntarily accepted servitude.”¹⁵⁷ Although Josephus states that the ensuing killing spree was not checked by Roman military action, he does emphasize that these actions were helping to fan the flames of revolt which was to lead to the Jewish War.¹⁵⁸ However, unlike other instances of the γόης terminology, there is no relation here with promised miracles or magic; rather, Josephus wishes perhaps to show that such figures as the γόητες and the robber bands were a part of the dangerous and unstable mix which lead to the outbreak of the war.

The Call to the Wilderness - *Jewish Antiquities* 20.188

Under Festus the problems posed by the Sicarii and the robber bands were mounting, and the Roman response was typically efficient and heavy-handed. In particular the troops of the procurator targeted a certain γόης who had deluded the people again with promises of ‘salvation’ (σωτηρία) and a ‘rest from troubles’ (παῦλα κακῶν). Josephus also describes this figure as a ‘deceiver’ (ἀπατήσας), a point which emphasizes the iconoclastic nature of the γόης terminology. Again,

¹⁵⁷ . *Jewish War*, 2.264.

¹⁵⁸ . *Jewish War*, 2.265.

following the pattern of these demagogue-magicians, his desire was to lead the people into the wilderness (ἐρημία), though in this particular case there is no mention of the reason why such a journey was to be made. There was no military aspect as with the Egyptians' plan for Jerusalem, nor is there any mention of wilderness signs and portents. Like the other examples of the γόης who had fallen foul of the Roman authorities, Josephus demonstrates that this particular one was no different; he and his deluded followers were utterly destroyed.

John of Gischala - *Jewish War* 4.85

In the case John of Gischala, Josephus equates those who may be termed γόης with the robber bands who were a contributing factor to the unrest prior to the Jewish revolt. In this instance the term is used of John of Gischala, who is said by Josephus to have been responsible for luring the humble farmers and peasants into armed rebellion.¹⁵⁹ It was for the skill of deception and of being a 'cunning knave' which John was labelled a γόης by Josephus, though there is no mention of any form of claim on his behalf with relation to the supernatural. Perhaps John's major claim to fame was having tricked the Roman general Titus into delaying his siege of the town, thus allowing him to escape justice.¹⁶⁰ However, such actions caused the death of six thousand women and children who had attempted to flee with him; unlike the other instances of the magician-demagogue's described through the use of the term γόης, John does not seem to have lead these people through any hope of the miraculous.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ . *Jewish War*, 4.84-85.

¹⁶⁰ . *Jewish War*, 4.116.

¹⁶¹ . *Jewish War*, 4.115.

Again, much like John of Gischala, Castor is termed a γόης by Josephus but is not related to any form of supernatural event, action or promise. He is, however, related to another plot against the general Titus, a crafty attempt to deceive him by taking advantage of the innocence of his heart.¹⁶² Pretending to beg for compassion, Castor stalled for time in order to make good his escape, caring nothing for those Jews who wished to resist the Romans even when they injured him through a dart to the face.¹⁶³ Again, like John, Castor managed to escape the grasp of Titus, leaping with his companions through the burning remains of a siege engine into a hidden vault.¹⁶⁴ The term γόης would here appear to refer to a figure who would best be described as a ‘confidence-trickster’ or ‘deceiver’.

Justus of Tiberias - *Vita* 35-40

Although not termed a γόης, Justus of Tiberias appears in our list because he constitutes one of the three examples in all of the works of Josephus of the usage of the cognate γοητεία. Justus was seen by Josephus to belong to the third of three political groups extant in Tiberias who, prevaricating over their fates with regard to Rome, secretly planned on a change of government in order to bring themselves into power. Importantly the second group, intent on war with Rome, were composed of the ‘most insignificant persons’.¹⁶⁵ Accusing him of exerting a malign influence on his

¹⁶² . *Jewish War*, 5.319.

¹⁶³ . *Jewish War*, 5.325.

¹⁶⁴ . *Jewish War*, 5.330.

¹⁶⁵ . *Vita*, 35.

father Pistus, Josephus reports that Justus agitated the people of the town to revolt against Rome in league with the Galileans.¹⁶⁶ It is in this sense which Josephus uses the term γοητεία, for he makes it clear that Justus was a clever demagogue who was “by a charlatans tricks of oratory more than a match for opponents with saner counsels.”¹⁶⁷ Only those who are singled out in such a manner as Justus, and are described as thoroughly reprehensible characters who attempt to deceive their fellow Jews with insane strategies, are seen to be enemies of Rome. Those described in greater numbers who oppose Rome, such as the second political grouping in Tiberias, are unnamed and unidentified; they disappear into the background because Josephus does not wish to draw attention to the fact that such opposition might be both widespread and organised.

In summary then, Josephus employs the terms γόης and γοητεία in connection with either the idea of deception, as with the impostors or Justus, or with negatively-defined magic, as with the Theudas and the Egyptian. The majority of the instances of the term occur in reference to the events of the various procuratorships which ruled Judea and Galilee in the first century CE. Whilst Josephus has a wide range of terminology for describing the various forms of criminal which plagued the land during this time, his use of γόης and γοητεία suggests that he considered magicians to be a part of this criminal class. Given the fact that Josephus uses the term ψευδοπροφήτης in connection with the γόης, we might also suggest that Josephus recognised that the term γόης referred to unsanctioned forms of magical activity. As we see in wider Graeco-Roman usage, γόης could be used to refer either directly to the performance of negatively-defined magic, or to the deception of true

¹⁶⁶ . *Vita*, 39.

¹⁶⁷ . *Vita*, 40.

judgement; to an extent the two ideas are consonant. Josephus realised that the term γόης was a very negative form of condemnation; he employs it in a manner which, as befitted his Roman context, consistently saw these figures as threats to the social order. The fact, too, that each of these γόητες, or at least their followers, meets with a violent end merely enhances their negative portrayal. There can be no doubt either that Josephus understood the term as a primary reference to illicit and illegal forms of magic. This can be seen in the fact that his most frequent employments of the terminology occur during the era prior to the revolt, when Judea was beset with social problems often caused, according to Josephus, to those who promised miracles, wonders and salvation. Whilst such figures have commonly been termed ‘sign prophets’, the explicit use of the terminology of the γόης suggests that Josephus viewed them as magicians, using such a negative term in order not only to condemn their actions but also to show that such actions were illegal and unacceptable to the state.

Magical Terminology in Josephus – μάγος

Unlike Philo, who uses the term in a variety of scenarios in order to refer to the negatively-defined magician,¹⁶⁸ Josephus makes more subtle use of the terminology of the μάγος. The vast majority of these may be seen in his paraphrase of the biblical story of Daniel, where he uses the term primarily to refer to the magicians

¹⁶⁸ . Philo uses the term μάγος in speaking of the magicians at Pharaoh’s court in the serpent confrontation of Ex. 7:11 (*Vit.Mos.*, 1.92), of the magician Balaam who seeks to curse the Israelites (*Vit.Mos.*, 1.276), in his paraphrase of the biblical laws against magic in which the μάγος appears as a criminal bent on the contrivance of calamity for his neighbour (*Spec.Leg.*, 3.93), and, in something of a contrast, speaking of the wise Persian mystics who investigate the truth of nature (*Prob.*, 74). He also uses the term μαγικός in describing the magic of Balaam, providing a direct contrast with the spirit of true prophecy which cannot abide in the same body (*Vit.Mos.*, 1.277).

at the court of Nebuchadnezzar. Further examples may be seen in his ethnographic descriptions of Persian priests, the story of procurator Felix's envoy and, most importantly, his version of the Exodus serpent confrontation. Here I wish to discuss all references except that involving Moses and the Egyptian priests; this will be dealt with in Chapter 3. The term μάγος and its cognate μαγεία was little used by Josephus, with Rengstorf cataloguing only fourteen instances,¹⁶⁹ though the examples which we have provide a wealth of data concerning Josephus' understanding of the term. Of prime importance we might observe that Josephus only uses the term in his later *Ant.*, mainly as part of his biblical paraphrase in which he describes court magicians. There are no instances of the term in *War*, in which magicians are depicted in a negative light through the term γόης. As shall be seen, the term μάγος was not as clear cut in its implications as the more definite γόης.

Daniel – Jewish Antiquities 10.195 – 10.236

In association with the terms μάντις and Χαλδαιοι, Josephus uses the noun μάγος in describing the figures responsible for dream interpretation at the court of Nebuchadnezzar. As with other descriptions of foreign court figures, the biblical narratives adopt a relatively focused group of terms in order to refer to those employed in the use of magic. The book of Daniel, in both MT and LXX versions, is perhaps one of the most concentrated examples of the use of magical terms, seen in the biblical provisions against magic, to describe court figures. Thus we have multiple references in this story to the תַּרְטָם, the אֲשָׁף, and the כַּשְׂרִים, Hebrew terms which are

¹⁶⁹ . μάγος; *Jewish Antiquities*, 10.195, 198 (x2), 199 (x2), 203, 216, 234, 235, 236, 11.31, 20.142; μαγεία; *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.284, 286.

consistently and respectively translated by the Greek terms ἐπαῖδοι, μάγος and Χαλδαῖοι.¹⁷⁰ In addition we may note that these figures are grouped in LXX under the heading of ‘the wisemen’ (οἱ σοφοί), and in their function at court they are referred to as being ‘skilled’ (ἐπιστήμων).¹⁷¹ Hence we see an equation between the action of ritual magic, as per the office of the court diviner, and the application of wisdom terminology to describe the learning of such practitioners. As shall be seen in the case of Moses, Josephus was more than happy to represent the magicians of foreign nations as wisemen, experienced in an art form, who practised a special technique. Josephus builds his portrait of the magicians at the court of Nebuchadnezzar directly from the biblical narrative; knowing the potential for negative associations and definitions however, Josephus sought to present a somewhat more positive appraisal of these figures than the LXX account. Daniel is clearly linked in the biblical texts to the court magicians, functioning as the best diviner from this group. That Josephus only describes this group through the more positive terms for magic current in his Graeco-Roman atmosphere, neglecting to call them ἐπαῖδοι (a negative term which connotes enchanting), demonstrates not only his diligence in following the biblical text, but also his knowledge of the power of magical terminology. In this approach the employment of the term μάγος to describe the court

¹⁷⁰ . Dan. 1:20, 2:2, 2:27. H.C.Kee (‘Magic and Messiah’, in J.Neusner, E.S.Frerichs, and P.V.McC.Flesher, *Religion, Science and Magic: In Concert and in Conflict*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989, pp.121-141) suggests (pp.132-133) that there is a categorical difference between the magicians and Daniel, stating: “Daniel’s ability to interpret dreams is solely the gift of God (2:17-23 and it is God alone who interprets them (2:27-28). It is not the result of Daniel’s performing a ritual or reciting a formula demanding insight.” Whilst these observations ignore the fact that both Daniel’s and the magicians’ skills are described as a form of learning and understanding, and that the magicians make no use of rituals or formulas, it is interesting to note that Josephus negates this hypothesis by showing that Daniel is a wise man just like the magicians, and who is an expert in esoteric forms of wisdom. As Gray (*Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence From Josephus*, pp.67-68) states, “when the professional wise men of the Babylonian court were unable to interpret the vision seen by Belshazzar, the king was urged to summon Daniel, who is described as ‘a wise man and skilful in discovering things beyond human power and known only to God’ (10.237).” In essence then Josephus views Daniel as simply a more skilled and wise version of the court diviners; granted he may have been ‘divinely inspired’ (ἐνθους γινόμενος, *Jewish War*, 3.353) but he was much more than a simple conduit for God’s voice.

¹⁷¹ . ‘The wisemen’, Dan. 2:18, 2:24, 2:27, 2:48, ‘skilled’, Dan. 1:4.

magicians exemplifies these two concerns. The Daniel episode in *Ant.* shows that Josephus recognised that the biblical texts were speaking of foreign magicians and that he was comfortable with such a representation. By using μάγος terminology as his notification of magic in this episode, coupled with a clear indication that these magicians are court figures called upon to use their occult talents by their monarch, he shows that the μάγος can be an acceptable form of the magician.

Moses – Jewish Antiquities 2.284, 2.286

Two further employments of the term occur in the account of Moses' battle with the magicians of Pharaoh as per the events of Exodus 7:11 ff. These occurrences will be dealt with fully in the first of the case studies.

The Slaughter of the Persian Magi – Jewish Antiquities 11.31

In discussing the history of the Persian Empire the term μάγοι is used by Josephus as a descriptive noun for the priests who had achieved power at the death of Cambyses. This reference would seem to be a version of the common ethnographic employment of the term, used by multiple ancient authors to refer to the office of Persian priests.¹⁷² The earliest account of the slaughter of the *magi*, and their part in the attempted takeover of power, is given in Herodotus' *Histories*.¹⁷³ The fact that the

¹⁷² . We may see a late survival of this ethnographic-central employment of the term in Matt., 2:1 which describes the astrologers of eastern extraction who attended the birth of Jesus.

¹⁷³ . Herodotus, *Histories*, 3.61-79.

magi are linked in both sources to an attempted coup at the death of Cambyses suggests that Josephus was either aware of Herodotus' account, or that the story was common in the Graeco-Roman world. This one employment thus suggests that Josephus was aware, at the very least, that the word μάγος could be used to refer to a religious specialist from Persian history. Though we see no connection to magic in Josephus' brief reference we may believe that his reference is driven largely by tradition. Indeed, this employment seems to fit the pattern of his other instances of μάγος terminology, as we see a connection to authority.

Simon – Jewish Antiquities 20.142

The only reference to a μάγος during what might be termed Josephus' era comes in the form of Simon, a Cypriot Jew who is called upon by procurator Felix to enchant the fair Drusilla, wife of Azizus. That it should be Felix whom Josephus' accuses of employing the underhand machinations of a μάγος should not be a surprise. From the brief passages in *Ant.* Felix emerges as perhaps one of the worst of Rome's procurators, who, though beset by robbers and impostors who 'persuaded the multitude to act as if mad' (δαιμονᾶν τὸ πλῆθος ἔπειθον),¹⁷⁴ uses dishonest tactics in order to apprehend Eleazar, leader of a company of robbers,¹⁷⁵ and even to remove the high priest Jonathan from office.¹⁷⁶ Josephus is clearly not impressed by Felix's

¹⁷⁴ . *Jewish War*, 2.259. Josephus also reports that these figures acted 'under the pretence of divine inspiration' (προσχήματι θειασμοῦ).

¹⁷⁵ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.161. Felix double-crosses Eleazar, promising him no harm if he would appear before him; as soon as Eleazar did so he was shipped off to Rome for execution. According to *Jewish War*, 2.253 Eleazar had ravaged the country for twenty years.

¹⁷⁶ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.162. Josephus states that Felix "bore a grudge against Jonathan the high priest because of his frequent admonition to improve the administration of the affairs of Judaea." True to form, Felix employs the somewhat underhand tactic of paying a band of Sicarii to assassinate the

methods, remarking that the procurator bore an 'ill-will' to the high priest, and that his plan to have Jonathan eliminated was born from jealousy. Indeed, Josephus suggests that Felix made use of the very robbers whom he had been hunting in order to murder Jonathan. Such is the extent of this crime that Josephus states: "And this seems to me to have been the reason why God, out of his hatred of these men's wickedness, rejected our city, and as for the temple, he no longer esteemed it sufficiently pure for him to inhabit therein, but brought the Romans upon us, and threw fire upon the city to purge it; and brought upon us, our wives, and children, slavery, as desirous to make us wiser by our calamities."¹⁷⁷ That Felix should make use of a μάγος is not surprising then. Though Josephus tells us little of Simon's abilities, the suggestion seems to be that he was sent by Felix in order to enchant Drusilla, who is described as exceeding all other women in beauty.¹⁷⁸ That Felix sends no mere messenger to Drusilla, but rather one who 'pretended to be a magician (μάγος)', suggests that Josephus wishes to communicate his own negative appraisal of Felix to his audience through associating him with a μάγος. Clearly, though, Felix is still a Roman procurator; he does not make use of an outlawed γόης in his efforts to enchant Drusilla, but rather employs a figure who, whilst existing under the aegis of permissible religious behaviour (albeit only just), could easily be read as a negatively-defined magician. In employing the terminology of the μάγος then Josephus here demonstrates his understanding of the implications of magical terminology, in addition to the subtleties of the shifting definitions and their power to cast shadows of uncertainty over those they describe. To be associated with a μάγος then was not illegal; but it was certainly not desirable.

high priest, an event which Josephus sees as the start of increased action by this group in the city of Jerusalem.

¹⁷⁷ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.166.

¹⁷⁸ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.142.

By far the most prevalent term used by Josephus which may be linked to the world of magic is that used to speak of a diviner, μάντις. Rengstorf defines this figure as a ‘seer with magical powers’, cataloguing nineteen instances of μάντις, one of μαντικός (seer), two of μαντεύομαι (to consult an oracle), two of μάντευμα (a prediction), one of μαντεῖον (an oracle), and ten of μαντεία (divination, prophecy, prediction).¹⁷⁹ This term is of particular importance for it is used not only in Josephus’ paraphrases of both Balaam and the witch of Endor, but of his own prophetic experiences. Traditionally the term has been seen as a substitute in Josephus’ description of figures from his own era who, though competent predictors of the future, cannot be said to be true προφήτης.¹⁸⁰ In particular it could be said to describe those diviners who achieved their results through technical skill. It might also be noted that Josephus does not hesitate to apply the term to both Jews and non-Jews;¹⁸¹ there is seemingly no difference, for instance, between the skills of the Essenes and the Egyptian seer Amenophis. However, very little comment is made in scholarship of the extent to which the term μάντις refers to the magician in the wider Graeco-Roman world.¹⁸² Josephus’ own employments of the terms may well be based upon the usage

¹⁷⁹ . K.H.Rengstorf, *The Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus*, vol.3, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1979, p.55.

¹⁸⁰ . Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence From Josephus*, p.109.

¹⁸¹ . It has been suggested (J.Blenkinsopp, ‘Prophecy and Priesthood in Josephus’, *JSJ* 10, 1979, pp.239-262) that Josephus uses this term to refer to Jewish prophets only; however, as shall be seen, the evidence available does not support such a case, as Josephus makes very little distinction in this respect between Jew and non-Jew. The important point is that these figures were capable of predicting the future, regardless of race or religion

¹⁸² . In this respect we might like to note the comments of L.H.Feldman in his article on Balaam (‘Josephus’ Portrait of Balaam’, *The Studia Philonica Annual* 5, 1993, p.54) in which he cites H.J.Rose (‘Divination (Greek)’, in J.Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol.4, N.Y., 1914, p.796) to suggest that the μάντις is “not an inspired prophet but a craftsman (δημιουργός), associated

seen in LXX, as one might reasonably expect; however, Josephus wrote for an audience who held somewhat more negative images of what constituted a μάντις. As has been seen, this figure was often conflated with other forms of the magician, most principally those which existed on the fringes of society and outside the remit of state religious practices. In using this terminology then, Josephus had to take precautions lest his audience misinterpret the modern Jewish prophet as a form of the negatively defined magician. Josephus only ever makes positive employment of the term μάντις; it is almost an honorific title, and one which Josephus uses, albeit with caution, concerning himself. In the following survey of instances it will also be seen that the term refers to a form of sanctioned technical divination, which finds its home, more often than not, in the courts of monarchs and rulers.

The Egyptian Seers - *Jewish Antiquities* 2.241, *Against Apion* 1.236, 256, 257, 258 (x2), 267,

Of particular importance for Josephus' employment of the term and its cognates are his appraisals of foreign diviners; clearly such figures would not qualify as προφήτης in Josephus' evaluation of the biblical term,¹⁸³ and instead we see, as in LXX, such official representatives of foreign powers being described through the language of the μάντις. However, Josephus only calls upon this terminology if there is a precedent in LXX, or if the actions of the individual accord with his ideas of

with leeches and carpenters in Homer (*Od.* 17.384)." The earlier survey of magical terminology has shown that the idea of the μάντις was multifaceted; Feldman and Rose have chosen a very early model (Homeric) which tells us nothing of how the figure of the mantis would have been viewed in Josephus' time.

¹⁸³ . Aune, 'The Use of ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ in Josephus', pp.419-421.

technical divination. We may see a prime example of this in the *Against Apion*, in which Josephus, speaking of Manetho's scurrilous assaults on Judaism, uses μάντις terminology to describe the actions and designation of the Egyptian seer Amenophis. This figure bears all the hallmarks of a foreign diviner; he is said to be a servant of Pharaoh "whose wisdom and knowledge of the future were regarded as marks of divinity" and who is responsible for guiding the actions of Pharaoh through his predictions. Moreover, in his rejection of Manetho's fictitious story, an account of Jewish origins which he labels Egyptian gossip (Αἰγύπτιοι φέρουσι)¹⁸⁴ and states that 'at the outset, the very hypothesis of his fictitious story is ridiculous' (πρώτην δὴ τὴν αἰτίαν τοῦ πλάσματος ὑποτίθεται καταγέλαστον).¹⁸⁵ Josephus refers to Amenophis as a sage (σοφὸς),¹⁸⁶ and displays his faith in the efficacy of technical divination by pulling apart the ludicrous (εὐηθέστατον) details concerning him. Josephus equates this μάντις with the distinctive terminology of wisdom, clearly a positive comment designed to show that Amenophis belonged to the category of the 'wiseman'. This appraisal of Manetho's representation of the μάντις, especially in his rejection of the idea that Amenophis had not divined his own death from the first, suggests that Josephus felt that it was possible for such figures to derive information from their gods.¹⁸⁷ Here Josephus reveals his understanding of foreign court divination, as seen in various biblical episodes and designated by μάντις terminology, without making any reference to the deity of the Jews; his interest is not to describe the operation of such divination, but to deal with Manetho's story in its own terms. As

¹⁸⁴ . *Against Apion*, 1.251.

¹⁸⁵ . *Against Apion*, 1.254.

¹⁸⁶ . *Against Apion*, 1.256.

¹⁸⁷ . Josephus does not state here that foreign diviners derive their knowledge from the Jewish God; he merely states that Manetho's story is fictitious because the presumption is that the seer would, if he could see the future as Manetho suggests, divine his own fate.

such, the μάντις appears as a form of diviner who is quite capable of making accurate predictions, especially when operating under the sanction of a monarch.

The Seer in Alexander The Great's Army - *Against Apion* 1.201-204

In his defense of Judaism in *Against Apion*, Josephus uses various works from a collection of Graeco-Roman authors in order to demonstrate parallels with his own theories on Jewish loyalty, religion and culture. In one such commentary, on the works of Hecataeus of Abdera, Josephus re-narrates the story of one Mosollamus, a Jewish archer in the army of Alexander the Great. This figure appears as an 'intelligent' and 'robust' man who criticizes the actions of a μάντις, who is holding up the advance of the army through his observation of the portentous flights of a bird. Mosollamus then provokes the μάντις and his colleagues by shooting the bird from the sky, addressing them as 'wretches' (κακοδαίμονες) after they began to heap curses (καταρωμένων) upon him. In this instance the μάντις appears in a somewhat negative light, being shown to pronounce curses upon the hero of the hour, Mosollamus. However, it must also be seen that the term has been used here by Josephus to refer to the technical art of divination, and that these diviners are operating under the sanction of a monarch, none other than Alexander the Great. As such this reference supports Josephus' basic understanding of the term as referring to a form of technical diviner, underlined by the detail concerning the observation of the flight of the bird, a clear reference to Graeco-Roman forms of popular divination.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ . M.Beard, J.North and S.Price (eds.), *Religions of Rome, Vol.1: A History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp.21-23.

In speaking of the Emperor Tiberius Josephus remarks that he believed ‘that everything connected with divination (μαντεῖων) was trustworthy’, and that he was, due to his implicit faith in this art, the most reliant of all the emperors on divination in handling his affairs. Moreover, Tiberius is said to have had great faith in horoscopes, just as Augustus had done, and even made his own predictions, Josephus relating the case of the prophecy of the rise of Glaba to become ruler of the Romans. Narrating his final days, Josephus again employs μάντις terminology in connection with Tiberius, stating that he had divined (μαντεΐαις) that his eponymously named protégé would meet a cruel and violent death after his own.

Daniel – *Jewish Antiquities* 10.187-210

Whilst Josephus does not use μάντις to describe the office or function of Daniel, the term, in addition to the descriptive phrases ‘the Chaldaeans’ (οἱ Χαλδαῖοι) ‘the *magi*’ (οἱ μάγοι) and ‘the wise’ (οἱ σοφοί), is used to describe the court diviners of the Babylonian king.¹⁸⁹ The Chaldaeans are seen again in Josephus’ description of the court of Archelaus, and act as trained specialists in the art of dream and omen interpretation.¹⁹⁰ Their inclusion here in connection to the *magi* suggest that, as well as being terms denoting magicians as per wider Graeco-Roman usage, Josephus was aware of their association to eastern religion.¹⁹¹ We might also note that the Greek

¹⁸⁹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 10.195.

¹⁹⁰ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 10.195, 197, 198, 203, 234.

¹⁹¹ . Although the Chaldaean had been a familiar figure in Rome for several centuries before Josephus (Cicero, *De Div.*, 1.132, Livy, *Per. Oxy.*, 54.192 Horace, *Sat.*, 1.6.113-114), and had become

texts of Daniel make repeated use of these terms, often in a manner which suggests that they may be interchangeable. The employment of μάντις terminology in *Ant.* is connected to the ‘wonderful dream’ of King Nebuchadnezzar, these specialists being called upon to give the correct interpretation. However, it is only after the failure of the ‘prophets’ (μάντεις) that Daniel is called upon to pronounce the correct interpretation, Josephus being careful to separate his hero Daniel from the failed group of court magicians. Gray suggests that Josephus conceives of Daniel as being a part of this group which serves the king through their divinatory arts.¹⁹² Granted, Josephus would have been comfortable with the idea that Daniel was to be seen as one of the wise (οἱ σοφοί), but, given the wider Graeco-Roman understandings of οἱ Χαλδαῖοι and οἱ μάγοι, it seems unlikely that he would have been happy to have a Jewish prophet associated with those expressly designated as magicians.

Indeed, this seems more likely when we consider that Josephus never describes Daniel by any of the terms which he uses for the court officials. Moreover Josephus demonstrates that there is a great difference between these figures and Daniel through his description of the nature of their art and the source of Daniel’s own particular inspiration. Thus, whilst he states that the court diviners were originally Jews whom Nebuchadnezzar had captured and instructed in the wisdom of the Chaldeans, and that Daniel was a part of this exiled community, the very fact that Daniel is called upon to save the condemned officials (who have failed to interpret the king’s dream) suggests that there is a difference here for Josephus. Indeed, Josephus

something of an imprecise catch-all term for wandering magicians who pretended to possess the wisdom of the east (MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, pp.128f.), the instances which Josephus gives of the term are firmly linked to eastern forms of wisdom, not least in the case of Daniel and the court of Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁹² . Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence From Josephus*, p.109.

makes this difference clear by stating that whereas the wise officials fail despite their learning, Daniel succeeds because he prays to God in order to perform his divination. Therefore the sources of inspiration are quite different; human learning in the case of the court diviners and divine communication in the case of Daniel. This, however, does not disprove the central thesis, namely that the operation of magic and its representation depends on sanction. For Josephus these are court magicians who perform their arts at the direct behest of their monarch, Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel, on the other hand, is a grade above such technically orientated diviners for not only does he give the correct interpretation through God's guidance, but Josephus also labels him 'one of the greatest prophets (προφητῶν)'.¹⁹³

The Essenes - Simon *Jewish War* 2.112-113, *Jewish Antiquities* 17.345-348 and Judas *Jewish War* 1.79, *Jewish Antiquities* 13.312, 313

Of particular interest for this survey of the employment of μάντις terminology are the descriptions of several Essenes whom Josephus depicts as skilful technical diviners. For Josephus the Essenes are a somewhat secretive group who practice a wide-range of quasi-magical rituals and observances. For instance, he informs his readers that the Essenes not only observe the 'sayings of the prophets' (προφητῶν ἀποφθέγματα),¹⁹⁴ and conduct themselves in 'various purifications' (διαφόροις ἀγνείαις),¹⁹⁵ but also study the writings of the ancients and investigate the healing properties of stones.¹⁹⁶ Through such doctrines the Essenes are renowned for being experts in the prediction of the future, with Josephus commenting: "there are some

¹⁹³ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 10.266.

¹⁹⁴ . *Jewish War*, 2.159.

¹⁹⁵ . *Jewish War*, 2.159.

¹⁹⁶ . *Jewish War*, 2.136.

among them who profess to foreknow the future, being educated in sacred books and various purifications and sayings of the prophets; and seldom, if ever, do they err in their predictions.”¹⁹⁷ In two accounts, one in *War* (2.112-113) and one in *Ant.* (17.345-348), he relates the case of the dream interpretation performed by the Essene Simon for the ethnarch of Judea, Archelaus. Again, the court of a ruler is said by Josephus to be staffed by the professional diviners, ‘the mantics and some of the Chaldaeans’ (τοὺς μάντεις καὶ τῶν Χαλδαίων τινάς), who are more specifically described in the later *Ant.* account as ‘those mantics who were concerned with dreams’ (τοὺς μάντεις οἷς περὶ ὀνείρατα ἦσαν αἱ ἀναστροφαί). Josephus’ employment of μάντις terminology here suggests that he has in mind some form of technical skill, especially as he again links the μάντις to the Χαλδαιοί, to dream interpretation, and to a professional class who act as part of the ruler’s court. A further example of Josephus’ understanding of the term and its association to the Essenes may be seen in the actions of Judas, an Essene who issues a prediction (μάντευμα) concerning the fate of Antigonus, brother of king Aristobulus I. As with Simon, Josephus deems the prophecy of Judas to be of sufficient importance to include two accounts in his works, one in *War* 1.78-80 and the other in *Ant.* 13.311-313. Likewise, this prediction concerns the fate of a member of the ruling class, thus, like that of Simon’s made to Archelaus, receiving sanction.

The Prediction of Jotham - *Jewish Antiquities*, 5.253

Josephus also employs the word μαντεία of the prediction made by Jotham the son of Gideon concerning the downfall of Abimelech and the Shechemites, though

¹⁹⁷ . *Jewish War*, 2.159.

here there is little which is significant and we may regard this instance as an example of Josephus' understanding of μαντεία as a form of technical divination. Interestingly, Josephus changes the curse of Jotham, seen in Judges 9:16-20, into a prediction, perhaps as a method of softening the sense of revenge which the Israelites feel against the Shechemites.

The Oracles of Amun - *Against Apion*, 1.306 and Delphi - *Against Apion*, 2.162

The extent to which Josephus understood the μαντεία to be, in its most basic form, a useful and easily understandable term meaning 'prediction' or 'oracle', may be seen from his descriptions of the famous oracles of Amun and Delphi. In both cases Josephus refers to them through variations of μάντις terminology. Whilst there is some doubt as to the text in the case of the oracle of Delphi, Niese's reconstruction seems sound,¹⁹⁸ especially when we consider that in the same work Josephus has already described the oracle of Amun, like that of Delphi one of the most famous of oracles in the ancient world, by employing μάντις terminology.

Josephus as μάντις - *Jewish War*, 3.405, 4.625

Perhaps the most important and revealing instance of the μάντις terminology occurs in Josephus' descriptions of his own abilities. This is an employment which follows the general pattern already laid out, with Josephus envisaging himself as a prophet (but unable to employ its distinctive terminology), and issuing a prediction

¹⁹⁸ . *Against Apion*, 2.162, p.356n.8.

before a monarch/ruler. This instance of μάντις terminology in relation to Josephus shows that, although not a προφήτης, he believed himself to undoubtedly be a skilled diviner. He claims that he was ‘sent’ (προπεμπόμενος)¹⁹⁹ and ‘chosen’ (ἐπιλέγομαι)²⁰⁰ to act as God’s ‘messenger’ (ἄγγελος)²⁰¹ and ‘minister’ (διάκονος),²⁰² and even has Vespasian himself claim that Josephus is undoubtedly a ‘minister of the voice of God’ (διάκονος τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ φωνῆς).²⁰³ Such is the diviner Josephus, who not only refers to his prediction of the fall of Jotopata using the verb προμαντεύομαι,²⁰⁴ but also describes his prediction of Vespasian’s rise as a μαντεία.²⁰⁵ Much like Daniel, Josephus never directly labels himself a μάντις. The reason for this is unclear, for he speaks positively of almost every instance of the μάντις, and employs the term with the meaning of a sanctioned and skilled diviner. Indeed, it is even used of the Essenes, a sect for which Josephus seemingly had a high regard.²⁰⁶ A possible explanation may lie in Josephus’ own opinion of himself; like his hero Daniel, he may have felt that the description of himself as a μάντις did not tell the whole truth. Perhaps he felt that he was a true προφήτης but was unable to justify the usage of this terminology in relation to himself, especially when we consider his belief that true prophecy had ended in the distant past.²⁰⁷ Whilst such speculations cannot be explored fully here they nevertheless show that Josephus had a high opinion of himself as a prophet; for him to use μάντις terminology of himself and

¹⁹⁹ . *Jewish War*, 3.400.

²⁰⁰ . *Jewish War*, 3.354.

²⁰¹ . *Jewish War*, 3.400.

²⁰² . *Jewish War*, 3.354.

²⁰³ . *Jewish War*, 4.626.

²⁰⁴ . *Jewish War*, 3.405.

²⁰⁵ . *Jewish War*, 4.625.

²⁰⁶ . Josephus represents the Essenes as a virtuous and noble sect of Judaism, who practice in-depth study of the holy writings (*War*, 2.142), have strict purity regulations (*War*, 2.123), practised celibacy and opposed slavery (*Ant.*, 18.21) and study the sayings of the prophets (*War* 2.159). Josephus even claims that at sixteen he joined their organisation for a period (*Life*, 9-10)

²⁰⁷ . R.Meyer, ‘Prophecy and Prophets in the Judaism of the Hellenistic-Roman Period’, in ‘προφήτης κτλ.,’ *TDNT*, vol.6, pp.812-819.

his predictions then demonstrates the positive interpretation which he employs across his works of this term. However, he is seemingly aware of the negative connotations of this term in the wider Graeco-Roman world for he ensures that every example of this terminology is associated with the idea of sanction. He himself receives the ultimate sanction for his predictions, with Vespasian condoning his view of the future.

Magical Terminology in Josephus – φαρμακός

Though perhaps a term more associated in modern minds with the technical art of poisoning, Josephus, like any other Graeco-Roman author, understands the associations which the term φαρμακός and its cognates has with the world of magic. Granted, he can use the term in association with the act of poisoning but throughout his works we see a frequent association between the φαρμακός and other magical terms or with figures who, through their actions, may appear to fit the model of the magician. Josephus is thus not only following the current conventions and attitudes of his own day, but also that of LXX, which explicitly employs the term in a number of magical contexts. For instance we have in Exodus both the description of Pharaoh's magicians and the laws concerning 'sorcerers',²⁰⁸ in Malachi we see this form of the magician roundly condemned and associated with adulterers and those who speak falsely,²⁰⁹ whilst in Daniel, in both its forms, we again see the term used in descriptions of court magicians.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ . Ex. 7:11, 22:17.

²⁰⁹ . Mal. 3:5.

²¹⁰ . Dan. 2:2, 5:7, DanTh. 2:2.

In his description of the plagues of Egypt, and the responses made by the Egyptians, Josephus makes an interesting use of *φάρμακός* terminology. Describing how God visited the plague of lice upon the Egyptians following Pharaoh's retention of the Hebrew people,²¹¹ Josephus states that neither the use of a lotion (*φάρμακον*) nor of an unguent (*χρίσει*), was able to cure the 'miserable wretches' who 'miserably perished' as a result. Here the term *φάρμακον* is used to describe the remedy attempted by the Egyptians; whilst there is nothing which would suggest that these remedies are overtly magical in nature, the fact that Josephus has previously described the magical abilities of the Egyptians suggests that his employment of *φάρμακον* terminology here is designed to evoke an association between Egypt and magic. Josephus makes use of a wide range of magical terminology in his paraphrase of Moses' battle of magic at the court of Pharaoh, including the dedicated magical terms *μαγεία* and *γοητεία*. The fact that Moses' magic is superior to the magic of the Egyptians is a point which Josephus clearly has in mind in his discussion of the plague of lice. The *μαγεία* and *γοητεία* of the Egyptians was inferior to the power of God; likewise the remedies offered by the Egyptians in response to the plague are also inferior. Thus, whilst the instance of *φάρμακον* here may support the normative meaning of 'poison' or 'lotion', we may also suggest that its instance in this story is intentional for his readers would expect the Egyptians to use the familiar methods of prevention available to them; in this case they have previously used magic to fight the onslaught of the plagues, thus they may be presumed to use magic in order to combat its effects. Although Josephus leaves out of his account the notice that this plague was

²¹¹ . Ex. 8:16.

one which the Egyptian magicians attempted to replicate, φάρμακον terminology here serves as a substitute, and as a continuation, of the magical theme of the Egyptian's efforts.

Laws on Magic: Exodus 22:18 – Jewish Antiquities 4.279

As part of his biblical paraphrase Josephus refers to the injunctions against magic made in Ex 22:18; whilst his version is somewhat different it seems clear that *Ant.* 4.279 is indeed a re-writing of Ex 22:18, as it features in a section discussing several other laws from Exodus 21-22. The Loeb edition affirms this equation in a footnote.²¹² The likelihood of this being a re-writing of Ex 22:18 is increased when we consider that Josephus uses the same term as LXX to refer to sorcery (φάρμακον), and repeats the proscribed punishment as being that of death ('thou shall not suffer a sorceress to live'). However, the sense we have in Josephus' version is somewhat different from that supplied by MT and LXX Ex 22:18. Both of these sources supply a direct link through terminology with the world of magic; both the Hebrew and Greek terms used to refer to the magician here (קַדְמָן and φαρμακός) are repeated in Deut 18:10-14 where multiple forms of magic are legislated against. Josephus does not develop this terminological connection as he does not repeat the laws of Deut 18:10-14; therefore, he lacks the precedent whereby φαρμακός/φάρμακον terminology has been linked to the various forms of negatively-defined magic. Again, both of these sources refer to a female individual through their terminology. However, Josephus, possibly influenced by LXX in this respect, employs the same term as LXX but in a more broad and non-magical manner. In *Ant.* 4.279 the emphasis of the term

²¹² . *Jewish Antiquities*, Books IV-VI, p.136n.c.

φάρμακον is upon the use of drugs as poisons; there is no sense that the operation of such poisoning is magical, but, equally, we may not rule out the possibility that Josephus understood φάρμακον terminology to be multi-faceted. Unlike Philo, who links φαρμακεία to the actions of the magician and gives no mention of poison in his paraphrase of Ex 22:18,²¹³ Josephus gives no indication of such a link; *Ant.* 4.279, despite its relationship to Ex 22:18, makes no concrete reference to magic.

Magic in the Life of Josephus – *Vita* 150

In recounting the events surrounding the plot against his life at Tarichaeae, Josephus makes use of the term φαρμακός. Hounded by the ‘brigands and the promoters of the disturbance’,²¹⁴ Josephus remarks that the “feelings of the masses were once again aroused against me by certain persons who asserted that the noble vassals of the king, who had come to me, ought not to live if they refused to conform to the customs of those with whom they had sought refuge; they also falsely accused them of being sorcerers (φαρμακέας) who made it impossible to defeat the Romans.”²¹⁵ The noble vassals here are presumably those mentioned in *Vita* 113 as being sent by Agrippa II, who, on their arrival, cause dissension amongst the Jews due to the fact that they have not been circumcised. Josephus’ response to the charge of sorcery (φαρμάκων) against these figures mirrors his response in *Vita* 113; he argues that refugees should be free from persecution and that these envoys should not be attacked simply because they do not conform with the expectations of the masses. The reason for the accusation of sorcery is unclear, with Josephus giving no indication as

²¹³ .Philo, *Spec. Leg.*, 3.104.

²¹⁴ . *Vita*, 146.

²¹⁵ . *Vita*, 149-150.

to why these envoys should be considered magicians, or, indeed, why the Jews have made this particular accusation. However, he supplies a rationalization by stating that he “ridiculed the absurdity of the charge of sorcery by remarking that the Romans would not maintain so vast an army if they could defeat their enemies by enchantments (φαρμακέων).”²¹⁶ Josephus here employs φαρμακέων to refer to the fears of the Jews, though he suggests that his rationalisation of their fears has a placating effect. Evidently, Josephus employs φάρμακον to refer to the world of magic, repeating the fears of the ‘masses’ who fear ‘enchantments’. Whilst he uses φάρμακον and its cognates to refer to drugs and love potions, there is no sense here that the ‘sorcery’ in question employed any form of drug or potion. Hence, the three employments of φάρμακον in *Vita* 150 provide us with evidence for Josephus’ correlation between magic and φάρμακον terminology.

Summary

These surveys of Josephus’ magical terminology have demonstrated that our author was neither ignorant of the magical world, nor illiterate in the employment of its subtle and shifting terminology. Josephus follows the conventions of the Graeco-Roman world in his use of this distinct set of terminology, recognising especially that magic was becoming a category not only of exclusion, but of illegality and criminality. Most importantly in this aspect, Josephus understands the idea of sanction, and of how religious actions may shift in terms of legality and acceptability according to the decisions of the higher powers. His employments of the more negative terms for magic suggest that he was aware of the repeated laws which had

²¹⁶ . *Vita*, 150.

been passed concerning magic in the imperial age, but he was also able to resist a carte-blanche condemnation of all forms of magic. He is able to salvage the idea of positive forms of magic, most principally in his understanding of magic as an art-form, as an aspect of wisdom, and as a product of learning. Thus, Josephus appears as a creative thinker who, utilising both a knowledge of biblical provisions and attitudes, coupled to an understanding of Roman ideas of religious sanction, is able to provide his readers with multiple forms, definitions, and images of magic. The fact that Josephus could use magical terminology with precision and subtlety should not be lost on us; indeed, it will hopefully become very evident that Josephus understood the power and resonance of magical terminology through our consideration of the three biblical case studies which now follow.

Introduction

The figure of Moses was intimately connected to the world of magic in the first century CE, with the events of Exodus 7 generating a widespread image of Moses as magician in pagan sources. Despite being thought of as a biblical exegete who had no interest in magic, Josephus gave a great deal of space and detail over to his descriptions of the ‘serpent confrontation’. This episode is essentially a battle of magical skill and power between Moses and Aaron on one side, and the Egyptian wisemen and magicians on the other. Indeed, it serves as one of the very few examples of active magic in biblical literature, and is the origin of the legends and traditions which see Moses as a magician. By the first century CE this reputation was widespread in both Judaism and the Graeco-Roman world, with both positive and negative applications. As we shall see, these more negative applications were often employed by anti-Semitic authors who sought to portray Moses as a γόης. Josephus responded to such derogatory claims in his *Against Apion*, which sought to set the record straight concerning the nature and meaning of Judaism in the late first century CE. However, Josephus also used *Ant.* as an opportunity to combat these anti-Semitic onslaughts on Judaism. His representation of Moses, particularly in the serpent confrontation, seeks to address these negative views. Josephus’ response, however, cannot avoid the identification of Moses as a magician; rather, his concern is to show that Moses performed his magic with sanction, given from God, and that this magic was both efficacious and powerful. His method for achieving such a representation

involves a number of alterations to the biblical texts: he removes the potentially problematic rod of Aaron from the narrative; he relegates Aaron almost completely, enhancing the heroic attributes of Moses as a sanctioned operative; he refuses to overtly denigrate the Egyptian magicians; he views magic as a learned art which requires skill and experience to perform; and he contrasts his magical Moses with pretenders to the art. Furthermore, we shall survey the evidence from the *Against Apion*, which serves to demonstrate the strength of Moses' connection with magic in popular Graeco-Roman thought, and also the case of Theudas, a γόης who operates as an 'anti-Moses'. In sum, I will show that not only does Josephus grapple with the idea of Moses as a magician, protecting him from slander, but he also creates his own image of his hero as a sanctioned performer of magical acts under the guidance of God.

Moses and Magic in the Ancient Sources

The Biblical Accounts: MT Exodus 7

Moses and Aaron's visit to the Egyptian Pharaoh's court recounted in Exodus 7 constitutes one of the very few instances in biblical literature in which we see the actions of those designated expressly as magicians. Indeed, in many respects this episode represents a battle of magic between the servants of Pharaoh and those of Yahweh; as shall be seen this was a scenario with positive and negative interpretations. Several studies have shown that the Exodus account of the Israelites in Egypt deliberately parallels a number of details of Egyptian culture in order to exalt

the Hebrew equivalent.¹ Thus, we have the ironic use of the term ‘thus saith’ by which Pharaoh and Yahweh give their commands in Exodus 5, this being a common form of divine statement in Egyptian texts.² In the accounts of the parting of the Red Sea³ and the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart⁴ we have biblical versions of Egyptian myths in which Yahweh is the superior force. On this matter Hoffmeier states: “What better way for the Exodus traditions to describe God’s victory over Pharaoh, and as a result his superiority, than to use Hebrew derivations or counterparts to Egyptian expressions that symbolised Egyptian royal power.”⁵ This theme of mimicry extends to the competition of magicians that is our prime focus here. Indeed, it has been suggested that many features of Exodus 7 are a direct result of P’s admiration of Egyptian culture, in which figured most principally the art of magic.⁶ In analysing this passage then I will aim to demonstrate that the Deuteronomistic condemnation of magic, as given in Deut 18:10-14, has had a debilitating effect on other magical episodes in biblical literature. Whilst the D source, and its hand in the redaction of MT, has cast a shadow over the magical practices of the Israelites, primarily attempting to turn them into the characteristic sins of the Canaanites, an analysis of other sources demonstrates the integral nature of magic in Israelite culture.⁷ This

¹ . So T.O.Lambdin, ‘Egyptian Loan Words in the Old Testament’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 73.3 (Jul-Sep), 1953, pp.145-155, J.D.Currid, ‘The Egyptian Setting of the Serpent Confrontation in Exodus 7:8-13’, *BZ* 39.2, 1995, pp.203-224, and J.K.Hoffmeier, ‘The Arm of God Versus the Arm of Pharaoh in the Exodus Narratives’, *Biblica* 67, 1986, pp.378-387.

² . Ex 5:10. Numerous Egyptian parallels may be found in the Book of the Dead, but see principally *The Primeval Establishment of Order*, ANET, 9-10.

³ . The Westcar Papyrus, 21, in W.K.Simpson (ed.), *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, New Haven, 1973, pp.15-30.

⁴ . *The Book of the Dead*, 30B, in E.A.W. Budge, *The Book of the Dead Papyrus of Ani*, vol.3, New York, 1913. See further J.D.Currid, ‘Stalking Pharaoh’s Heart: The Egyptian Background to the Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart in the Book of Exodus’, *BR* 9.6, 1993, pp.46-51.

⁵ . As Hoffmeier, ‘The Arm of God Versus the Arm of Pharaoh in the Exodus Narratives’, p.387.

⁶ . T.C.Römer, ‘Competing Magicians in Exodus 7-9: Interpreting Magic in the Priestly Theology’, in T.Klutznick (ed.), *Magic in the Biblical World: From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon*, London, T&T Clark International, 2003, pp.12-22.

⁷ . B.B.Schmidt (‘Canaanite Magic vs. Israelite Religion: Deuteronomy 18 and the Taxonomy of Taboo’, in P.Mirecki and M.Meyer (eds.), *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 2002, pp.242-259) states (p.259): “By ‘Canaanizing’ rival ritual complexes from the indigenous

interest in magic in the non-D sources comes to a peak in the contest of magicians seen in Exodus 7, in which P weaves a glowing portrait of Moses and Aaron as magicians, taking on the Egyptian priests at their own game. Such a representation, of course, would be anathema to the Deuteronomistic authors.

In the approach of the documentary hypothesis Exodus 7 is generally assigned to either P alone,⁸ or to a combination of P and J.⁹ There is no evidence of either E or D,¹⁰ an exclusion which should not surprise us when we consider the nature of the events of Exodus 7-11, a battle of magic, in connection to the condemnation of magic which is made in Deut. 18:10-14. As we shall see in the case of the witch of Endor, the Deuteronomistic school favoured the breaking off and banning of certain religious traditional practices which, as a result of this relegation, have come to be classified as 'magical'. In contrast P, perhaps more aware of the formative nature of foreign influence on Israelite religious customs, chose to transform and integrate that which conflicted with Israelite monotheism, transforming Moses and Aaron into super-magicians. Indeed, it has been suggested that various strands of the MT narrative, most principally the P material, are not adverse to the idea of Moses as a magician, provoking a degree of tension with the traditions adopted by the Deuteronomistic

culture, by projecting them back into hoary antiquity, and by having Moses, the prophet par excellence, condemn them as foreign abominations, the biblical rhetoric of self-identity marginalized competing ideologies."

⁸ . M.Noth, *Exodus*, London, SCM Press, 1962, pp.70-72.

⁹ . J.Van Seters ('A Contest of Magicians? The Plague Stories in P', in D.P.Wright, D.N.Freedman and A.Hurvitz (eds.), *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, Winona Lake, IN, Eisenbrauns, 1995, pp.569-580) argues a strong case for the relegation of the P document to the status of a redaction of J. As he concludes (p.580): "I do not believe that it is possible to reconstruct even a minimal P document that can be viewed as independent from J." However, he fails to take note of the strong Egyptian elements which, when considered against the Torah as a whole, seem to suggest some form of narrative which originated from the Egyptian Diaspora. J could clearly not be labelled as such a document, given its strong ties to Judah. See further on this matter W.Johnstone, *Exodus*, Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1990.

¹⁰ . Although there are no hints of D in the serpent confrontation in Ex.7 there are a number of elements in the subsequent plague narratives which suggest the hand of D. See further, S.R.Driver, *Book of Exodus*, Cambridge, CBSC, 1918, pp.xvii-xviii.

authors, who would see magic in this episode as another example of the iconoclastic sins of the nations.¹¹ This tension may be seen in the description and function of Aaron, with the P tradition describing him as a *קֹהֵן* and yet employing him in an active role in a contest of magic;¹² such an idea is anathema to the Deuteronomistic laws on magic and prophecy seen in Deut 18:10-22. I would like, briefly, to question the extent to which the P tradition rejects magic in this episode, and suggest that the serpent confrontation should be seen as a battle of magic, taking issue with traditional appraisals which tend to separate religion and magic by associating Moses and Aaron with the former and the Egyptian priests with the latter.¹³ Support for this re-reading comes in the form of several recent works which address the views of P on the subject of magic.¹⁴ Moreover, I will suggest that for the earlier pre-Deuteronomistic sources there was little difference between magic and miracle, and that Deut. 18:10-14 functions as a form of anachronistic re-classification of magic.

The contest of magic itself comes as a climax to a narrative in which Moses and Aaron are to be the servants of God, for whom the famous 'signs and wonders', intrinsic to the Exodus story, are a calling-card. Previous scholarship has argued that the serpent confrontation seen in Ex 7:8-13 should be viewed in isolation from the subsequent plagues issued by Moses on Egypt;¹⁵ however, when we consider the

¹¹ .Römer, 'Competing Magicians in Exodus 7-9: Interpreting Magic in the Priestly Theology', pp.13-17.

¹² . Ex. 7:1.

¹³ . We might mention in this respect both commentaries on Exodus, such as U.Cassuto, *Commentary on Exodus*, Jerusalem, 1983, p.94ff, and Noth, *Exodus*, pp.71-72, in addition to critical studies such as J.Milgrom, 'Magic, Monotheism, and the Sin of Moses', in H.B.Huffman, F.A.Spina and A.R.W.Green (eds.), *The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall*, Winona Lake, IN, 1983, pp.251-265.

¹⁴ . Most principally the work of Van Seters, 'A Contest of Magicians? The Plague Stories in P', pp.569-580. See also Römer, 'Competing Magicians in Exodus 7-9: Interpreting Magic in the Priestly Theology', pp.14-18.

¹⁵ . So for example Cassuto, *Commentary on Exodus*, p.92ff, who argues, according to the traditional method (he cites Rashbam in declaring his approach), that the plagues can be divided up into three

attempts made by the Egyptian magicians to replicate the first few plagues performed by Moses, coupled with the idea that there is no substantial difference between magic and miracle, any literary division between serpent confrontation and plague is artificial. The serpent confrontation is a pre-cursor of the following plagues, a theory demonstrated by the repetition of the motif of Aaron's rod,¹⁶ and the use of the term 'swallow' (בָּלַע) in both the confrontation¹⁷ and the death of the Egyptian army.¹⁸ This approach therefore suggests that there is no essential difference between magic and miracle in the eyes of P and J; the actions of Moses and Aaron are copied by those expressly designated as magicians, even to the extent that the Egyptian priests keep pace with the first few 'miraculous' plagues. The priests fail to replicate further miracles merely because Moses and Aaron are more powerful magicians. That J and P are evident in the plague-cycle, as Johnstone suggests,¹⁹ agrees with what one might imagine when attempting to identify the sources for this magical story. For J and P are the most overtly magical of the four main sources for the Torah, providing us with such details as Moses' magical copper serpent,²⁰ the ritual used by the priests in the 'ordeal of jealousy',²¹ and the staff of Aaron.²² P's description of its hero Aaron as a prophet (נָבִיא) who engages in a battle of magic, was clearly of concern for E and D, sources much more interested in the idea of Israelite/Yahweh-inspired prophecy;

interconnected cycles and are independent of the serpent confrontation, an approach also adopted by B.S.Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, Philadelphia, 1974, pp.151-153, and D.J.McCarthy, 'Moses' Dealings with Pharaoh', *CBQ* 27, 1965, pp.336-347.

¹⁶ . Employed in the magical confrontation in Ex. 7:12 and in the parting of the Red Sea in Ex. 14:16 and 14:26.

¹⁷ . Ex. 7:12.

¹⁸ . Ex. 15:12.

¹⁹ . Johnstone, *Exodus*, pp.37-40.

²⁰ . J tradition, Num 21:8f describes the request of the Israelites to Moses to create for them a magical standard which would cure snakebites. However, according to 2 Kings 18:4, the reforming king Hezekiah, perhaps in an attempt to uphold the newly formulated provisions in Deuteronomy and destroy the power of the northern traditions E and P, destroys the standard as 'until that time the Israelites had been offering sacrifices to it.'

²¹ . P tradition, Num 5:11-31. See further P.Schäfer, 'Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism', in P.Schäfer and H.G.Kippenberg (eds.), *Envisioning Magic, A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1997, pp.31-32.

²² . Ex 7:12, 14:16 and 14:26.

hence we see in a clear message in Deut 18:10-22, in which laws against magic are immediately followed by a lengthy description of the office, function and recognition of a true prophet. Obviously, P saw no dichotomy in having Aaron the *גביר* performing works of magic which parallel traditional Egyptian forms of the art.

The most important aspect of the serpent confrontation, however, is that it constitutes one of the few passages in the Torah in which the various textual traditions demonstrate their in-depth knowledge of magic. Thus, the events of Ex 7 represent the Hebrew version of various Egyptian myths and legends dealing with magic. For instance, the magical ability to manipulate various venomous animals is attested to in literary evidence from Egypt, even, as Budge illustrates, with the use of magical rods; “like the sage Aba-aner and King Nectanebus, and all other magicians of the Egypt from time immemorial, he [Moses] and Aaron possessed a wonderful rod by means of which they worked wonders.”²³ Again, the biblical idea of transformation from inanimate object to living animal finds a precedent in the actions of the lector priest Webaoner who created a living crocodile by throwing a wax-work simulacrum into a lake.²⁴ Indeed, such is the familiarity with Egyptian magic in Exodus that the authors borrow from the Egyptian language the term *hry-tp* (‘lector priest’) to describe the Egyptian magicians (*חֲרָטָמִים*).²⁵ Here again we may observe the tension between P and D with regard to magic; whilst D wishes to make it abundantly clear that those designated magicians by its distinctive terminology in Deut 18:10-14 are not only

²³ . E.A.Budge, *Egyptian Magic*, New Hyde Park, N.Y., 1958, p.5.

²⁴ . *The Westcar Papyrus*, Berlin Papyrus 3033, translation in W.E.A.Budge, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, London, 1914.

²⁵ . J.Quaegebeur, ‘On the Egyptian Equivalent of Biblical Hartummim’, in S.Israelit-Groll (ed.), *Pharaonic Egypt*, Jerusalem, 1985, pp.162-172 and D.B.Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1970, pp.203-204. Though we might note the objections voiced by T.O.Lambdin, ‘Egyptian Loan Words in the Old Testament’, pp.150-151, who sounds a note of caution in the equation; his view, however, has not generally been adopted by scholarship.

practising Canaanite rituals but are also deserving of execution, P utilises a similar set of terms in order to describe its contest of magic, devoid, as it is, of the harsh condemnations and denigrations of magic as seen in D. In addition, we detect no sense of fraud on the part of Exodus in its description of the magical actions of the Egyptian priests; as we will see this attribution of true magical power to the enemies of Israel was somewhat troubling for later exegetes.

Greek Exodus 7

The LXX version of the magical battle between Moses and the Egyptian magicians reveals important insights into the manner in which the Greek translation employed its own set of magical terms in order to reference the actions of Moses, Aaron and the Egyptian priests. As shall be seen in the section on LXX magical terminology, there is a clear sense behind the translation of a desire to denigrate the Egyptian priests. This is perhaps one of the most characteristic details in LXX Exodus 7, which otherwise closely parallels the extant version of the passage in MT. The translators were reluctant to accept the story as they found it in their Hebrew text, which, if similar to our MT version, clearly envisage the contest in Exodus 7 as one of magical skill and power. Thus, in providing extra details which serve to malign the characters of the Egyptian priests, LXX attempts to separate Moses from magic. The denigration of the Egyptian priests would thus appear to be an attempt to exemplify the sin of magic, and to show that those who use magic are acting against God's will. LXX is also keen to show that Aaron is a hero too, especially in a contrasting relationship to the Egyptian magicians. Thus, in v.20 instead of Moses striking the

waters with his rod in order to perform the first miracle, LXX states that it is Aaron who does so. In his extensive commentary, Wevers provides no explanation of why such a change should be made.²⁶ We might presume, however, that LXX sought to follow the tradition which saw the magical rod as belonging to Aaron; in every reference up to the serpent confrontation LXX clearly links the rod to Aaron. This is a very minor difference in relation to MT, but LXX's insistence that the rod is Aaron's does perhaps serve to show that its authors were aware of a tradition which saw Moses as a magician. By clearly associating Aaron, and the rod provided by God, with the exposition of the miracles, LXX limits the possibilities of Moses being tarred with the brush of being akin to the Egyptian magicians. Thus, the fact that the LXX translators chose more negative magical terminology in their account suggests that magic had become a much more maligned subject by the time of their translation. In general however, LXX Exodus 7 follows MT very closely; there are few additions or subtractions, and there is no overt attempt at explanation or rationalization of the magical events.²⁷

Magical Terminology in the MT Serpent Confrontation

Unlike the provisions laid out in Deut 18:10-14 by which the magician is recognised by a label, Exodus 7 introduces us to the direct correlation between

²⁶ . J.W.Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus*, Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1990, pp.96-99.

²⁷ . We might like to note, however, S.Noegal's ('Moses and Magic: Notes on the Book of Exodus', *JANES* 24, 1996, pp.45-59, p.48) ideas on the case of the two terms for 'serpent' (ὄφις Ex. 4:3, and δράκων in Ex. 7:9) used in the book of Exodus and its LXX translation as an allusion to the Egyptian god Apophis. This point will be considered more fully in the appraisal of magical terminology which follows.

magical terminology and the actions of magic. Such a correlation proved problematic, as we shall see, for later exegetes who attempted to separate the practice of magic from magical terminology, thus advancing the religion/magic and miracle/magic dichotomies. In essence, the serpent confrontation may be divided into two distinct but connected sections. The first deals with the 'signs and wonders' which are promised to Moses by God in Exodus 4:1-9, and which are referred to at the beginning of the section dealing with the visit to Pharaoh's court given in Exodus 7:1-13. The reference to the turning of a staff into a snake in 4:1-9 clearly links the serpent confrontation to the rest of the narrative; as Noth observes there is much evidence of redactional activity in this passage, suggesting perhaps that later authors sought to provide an explanation of the magical theme of the rod of Moses.²⁸ In this instance we may suggest that Exodus 4:1-9, assigned to the J source,²⁹ is in alignment with the magical tradition recorded by P; redactional elements in 4:5 might thus be read as a reaction against P's representation of Moses as a magician.³⁰ The second section dealing with magical terminology involves the actions of Moses and the Egyptian priests during the serpent confrontation itself, the descriptions of the latter using distinctive magical terms.

The episode is foreshadowed by a description of the signs and wonders which God demonstrates to Moses, included in which is the transformation of Moses' staff

²⁸ . Noth, *Exodus*, pp.47-48.

²⁹ . Noth, *Exodus*, p.47, G.W.Coats, *Exodus 1-18*, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1999, pp.47-51. Here Noth's view that a messenger of God needs access to 'miraculous' powers in order to show divine commission accords well with the J sources' interest in magic, especially given the fact that the serpent confrontation, which is overtly magical, is divided between P and J by the same author (*Exodus*, pp.71-74).

³⁰ . Ex. 4:5 runs: "so that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you." This is appended, somewhat sloppily, to the exposition of the serpent-staff 'wonder' as a reminder perhaps that God is the active agent in the 'magic'. Noth states on this verse (*Exodus*, p.46) that it "is not only superfluous, but is inserted so carelessly, without any new introductory formula for the divine speech, that it can only be regarded as an addition."

into a serpent. The fact that Moses is shown three distinct signs, the serpent staff,³¹ the leprous hand,³² and the blood filled Nile,³³ is explained by Exodus 4:8 which suggests that the Egyptians will perhaps not be greatly impressed by the transformation of a staff into a snake.³⁴ When we consider the tales from Egyptian sources concerning magicians we are not surprised by this admission, for the first of the signs presented to Moses is something of a basic ritual for the Egyptians. Indeed, the magical aspects of the signs are reinforced by the conclusion to the demonstration in Exodus 4:17, by which Moses is told to perform the signs through employment of his staff, thus elevating the implement to magical importance. All of these marvels are described by the terms מופת³⁵ and אות,³⁶ a fact which some commentators have taken as evidence of a contrast between the miracles of God and the secret arts (לְהַטִּיף) of magic of the Egyptians.³⁷ However, when we consider the nature of these signs, a technique based upon the ritual use of Moses' staff and a form of knowledge passed from God to Moses, we must realise that there is little difference in comparison to the actions of the Egyptian priests; they have their secret art, a form of occult knowledge much like God's revelation of the signs to Moses, rituals, and their own magical staffs. The scenario appears much more of a battle between magic and magic, rather than

³¹ . Ex. 4: 2-5.

³² . Ex. 4:6-7.

³³ . Ex. 4:9.

³⁴ . Ex. 4:8 runs: "If they will not believe you or heed the first sign, they may believe the second sign."

³⁵ . Translated as 'wonder' in the NRSV it appears in Ex. 4:21, 7:9. See further *BDB*, p.68.

³⁶ . Translated as 'sign' in the NRSV it appears in Ex. 4:8, 4:9, 4:17, 7:3. See further *BDB*, p.16.

³⁷ . So Noth, *Exodus*, pp.45-46. Noth adheres to the Deuteronomistic illusion of a division between magic and miracle and ignores all parallels in stating (pp.71-72): "Here then is granted the reality of supernatural miracle-working among the 'heathen' which can be achieved through 'secret arts' i.e. 'magic', and which on occasion can be just the same as the effects produced by the wonderful power of the God of Israel." A similar biblically-based view may be seen in N.Sarna, *Exodus, Jewish Publication Society Commentary*, Philadelphia, 1991, p.37. J.Milgrom ('Magic, Monotheism, and the Sin of Moses' pp.251-265) also comments (p.260) on the extreme "measures taken by pentateuchal narrators to distinguish Moses from his Egyptian counterpart". However, as J.G.Gager ('Moses the Magician: Hero of an Ancient Counter-culture?', *Helios*, 21.2, 1994, pp.179-188) observes (p.179) any differentiation is on the level of terminology only: "Both the Hebrew original and its Greek translation in the Septuagint make it quite plain that at some level Moses and Aaron could be understood as belonging to the same category as the Egyptian magicians or wizards, though, of course, the labels are applied only to the Egyptians."

between magic and miracle; Aaron and Moses are clearly the active parties in the serpent confrontation, analogous to the Egyptian priests, and the events proceed according to their words and actions.

Of central importance in this episode are the descriptions of the opponents of Moses and Aaron. An analysis of Exodus 7:11 reveals a wealth of data concerning the appreciation which the biblical authors have developed on the subject of magic. This passage has several terms which describe both the magicians and their art; they are said to be wisemen (חֲכָמִים), and sorcerers (מְכַשְּׁפִים), grouped together under the category of the magician (חֲרָטָם), who replicate the feats of Aaron and Moses by the exposition of their 'secret arts' (לְהַטִּיָּהֶם). Whilst several of these distinctive terms are relatively rare in MT, they nevertheless reveal a great deal concerning magic in the eyes of the biblical authors. Only one of these terms, 'sorcerer' (מְכַשֵּׁף), is to be found in the laws dealing with magic in the Torah; however, in Ex 22:18 it is expressly the female version of this form of magician who is to be put to death. This is the only term which can be related, in a negative manner, to the Deuteronomic view of magic. In neither 'wisemen' (חֲכָמִים) nor 'magicians' (חֲרָטָם) are we to find polemical statements against the Egyptians; on the contrary, aside from the מְכַשְּׁפִים the overall effect of the terminology is a positive appraisal of the magical learning and wisdom of Egypt. The Egyptians are wisemen (חֲכָמִים) who practice a secret art (לְהַטִּיָּהֶם),³⁸ magic,

³⁸ . Although the only examples in the whole of the Hebrew Bible of the plural form לְהַטִּיָּהֶם ('secret arts') occur in the battle between the Egyptian priests and Aaron and Moses (Ex. 7:11, 7:22, 8:3, 8:14), the parallel term describing the 'wisemen', חֲכָמִים, is repeatedly used in a number of differing scenarios, of both Israelites and foreigners. Thus we have the descriptions of the Egyptian, Babylonian and Persian wisemen in Is. 19:11, 19:12; Is. 44:25, Je. 50:35, 51:57; and Est. 1:13, 6:13 respectively. The verb 'be wise' חָכַם and the noun 'wise' חָכָם occur throughout the Hebrew Bible in reference to a multiplicity of forms of wisdom, from shrewdness (Je 9:22), skill in technical work (Is 3:3, Ez. 27:8, Ex. 28:3), and skill in war (Is. 10:13), to the judgements of Solomon (1 K 2:6, 11:41, 2 Ch 1:10, 1:11, 1:12). See further *BDB*, pp.314-315 (which includes the idea of 'cunning' in its definition), *HALOT*. Vol.1, pp.314-315 (which merely speaks of shrewdness, skill, and wisdom), and the discussion of

a form of religious practice associated with the priest and the temple. Magic is thus an institutionalized practice, one which is controlled by Pharaoh. This fact is born out by an analysis of the term חֲרָטִים, which almost certainly derives from the Egyptian term *hry-tp* meaning ‘lector priest’. This word occurs repeatedly in the account of the wider contests between Aaron, Moses and the Egyptian priests,³⁹ and is only seen in the wider biblical literature in the Diaspora novels concerning Joseph⁴⁰ and Daniel,⁴¹ where it is used in an identical manner to Exodus 7:11. As with Genesis 41 and Daniel 1-2, the idea behind the inclusion of the term in Exodus 7:11 is a comparison of magical skills between Israelite and foreigner.⁴²

Magical Terminology in the LXX Serpent Confrontation

The LXX version of the serpent confrontation includes a number of details which reveal not only the attitude towards magic adopted by its authors, but also the extent to which this understanding of magic has served to demonize and denigrate the Egyptian magicians. LXX Exodus 7 allows itself a good degree of freedom in which to represent the events through the medium of the Greek language; importantly, this freedom is employed in ensuring that there can be no misunderstanding concerning the practices of the Egyptians, which constitute some of the most negative forms of

A.Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1996, pp.41-49 which supports the link between magic and learning which I draw here.

³⁹ . Ex. 7:22, 8:3, 14-15. 9:11.

⁴⁰ . Gen., 41:8, 41:24.

⁴¹ . Dan., 1:20, 2:2.

⁴² . As Römer observes (‘Competing Magicians in Exodus 7-9’, p.22), in the further examples of the term “the reader discovers there that the magical skill of the Jews is superior to that of the specialists in the great cultures (for Joseph and Daniel, it is mainly a matter of oneiromancy).”

magic current in the LXX's Hellenistic world. Indeed, it can be seen that the translators deliberately employed more negative forms of magical terminology in their descriptions of the Egyptian priests. We may suggest that this was due to the desire to heighten the contrast between Moses and Aaron and their magical opponents. By the time of the emergence of LXX, the figure of Moses was heavily associated with the theme of magic, in both Jewish and non-Jewish minds. As Gager shows, the figure of Moses was intimately linked with magic by the first century CE;⁴³ indeed, in a provocative work he argues that later exegetes such as Philo and Josephus had to react against a basic understanding of Moses as magician in their own portrayals, simply because the image was so widespread.⁴⁴ This idea is particularly important for our investigation of Josephus, but it also applies to earlier versions of biblical literature. Thus, in respect to LXX, Wevers observes that two manuscripts of Exodus 7 include the names of the magicians who opposed Moses, Jannes and Jambres.⁴⁵ These figures were famous in ancient literature as adepts of magic; for instance they are named as opponents of Moses in 2 Tim 3:8, are seen as servants of Belial at Qumran,⁴⁶ whilst Pliny the Elder mentions them in his tradition of magic.⁴⁷ Even the staunch opponent of all things magical, Origen, reveals that he has heard rumour of a secret magical book of Jannes and Jambres.⁴⁸

Whilst LXX mimics the use of the MT term sorcerer (קַדְשִׁי) through its employment of φάρμακος, its authors felt that the further designations in MT concerning the Egyptians were too neutral and lacked an explicit edge of

⁴³ . J.G.Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism*, N.Y., 1972, pp.134-161.

⁴⁴ . Gager, 'Moses the Magician: Hero of an Ancient Counter-Culture?', pp.179-188.

⁴⁵ . Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus*, p.97.

⁴⁶ . CD 5:18.

⁴⁷ . Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 30.2.11.

⁴⁸ . Origen, *Comm.In Matt* 27:9. See below, pp.136-137, for a full discussion of the *Book of Jannes and Jambres* and its influence.

condemnation. Hence, we have an ambiguous term, σοφιστὰς, being used in the place of the Hebrew's more positive descriptions of the wisemen.⁴⁹ This term is not the customary translation of חֲכָמִים,⁵⁰ suggesting that a negative appraisal of the Egyptians as cunning rhetors, full of boasts and empty promises, was a conscious decision for the LXX translators. LXX also employs two distinctly negative terms, ἐπαιδοί and φάρμακος, concerning the Egyptians. They are no longer to be seen as wisemen expert in a secret form of practical knowledge, but are rather described under the categories of the 'enchanter' (ἐπαιδοί) and the 'sorcerer' (φάρμακος). In the latter term there is a link to condemned forms of biblical magic which is absent from the second half of the description of the Egyptians given in MT Exodus 7:11.⁵¹ Indeed, it would appear that the LXX authors were uncertain regarding the nature of the חֲכָמִים and adopted a translation policy which served to fit the contexts of each example of the term, rather than employing a standard substitute. Hence, in Genesis 41:8, where Joseph is displaying his talent for dream divination, חֲכָמִים is translated as 'interpreter' (ἐξηγητής), again being linked to the 'wisemen' (σοφισταί). However, in the two examples from Daniel, 1:20 and 2:2, חֲכָמִים is translated by the term 'enchanter' (ἐπαιδοί) which is much more suggestive of negative forms of magic. From these brief examples it would seem that the LXX translators were capable of employing diverse forms of magical terminology in order to suit their needs in a given

⁴⁹ . As J.Lust, E.Eynikel and K.Hauspie note (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, part 2, Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1996, p.433) this term is used in a pejorative sense in the LXX (Ex 7:11, Dan. 1:20, 2:14, 18, 24). Wevers, *The Greek Text of Exodus*, pp.97-98, who notes that two manuscripts record that the 'wisemen' were none other than Jannes and Jambres; clearly a further effort at denigrating the reputations of the Egyptian magicians. Josephus himself uses the term to speak of 'sophists'; e.g. *War* 2.10, 2.433, *Against Apion*, 2.236. See further B.W.Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*, Michigan, Eerdmans, 2002, pp.88-91.

⁵⁰ . The term is principally translated by the Greek σοφῶν. So Ex. 28:3, Deut 1.13-15, 16.19, Ps 107:43, Ez. 27:8. This rule applies even when speaking of other foreign wise men; from Egypt, Gen. 41:8, Isaiah, 19:12, Babylon, Jr. 50:35, 51:57 and Edom Jr. 10:7, Ob. 8.

⁵¹ . Not only is the term included in the LXX version of the provisions against magicians in Deut 18:10-14, but it is also used in the LXX version of the law against sorceresses in Ex. 20:18, though the gender distinction is dropped.

context. In Exodus 7 LXX chose more negative terminology, perhaps in order to extenuate any possible contrasts which may emerge from the narrative.

Moses and Magic in Philo

For Philo the figure of Moses was of paramount importance to his representation of Judaism. In the *De Vita Mosis*, he finds it necessary to write an extensive biography because, though Moses' laws were internationally famous, his deeds and history were largely ignored by those outside Judaism.⁵² Philo wishes to address this neglected aspect, and to describe Moses as king, high priest, legislator and prophet.⁵³ Whilst this work has been termed a biblical paraphrase, along the lines of Josephus' treatment of Moses in *Ant.*,⁵⁴ the *De Vita Mosis* is much more of a biography than the latter's work, employing LXX in a re-telling of the fundamental elements of the life of Moses for an audience, both Graeco-Roman and Hellenistic

⁵² . Philo writes (*V.Mos.*, 1.2); "and those who do really know and truly understand him are not many, perhaps partly out of envy ... since the historians who have flourished among the Greeks have not chosen to think him worthy of mention".

⁵³ . For Philo, Moses combines the most important roles in society, being the perfect example of king (βασιλεύς), *V.Mos.*, 1.32, 48, 60, 198, high priest (ἱερεὺς), *V.Mos.*, 2.166, *Sac.*, 130, legislator (νομοθέτης), *V.Mos.*, 1.1, and prophet (προφήτης), *Mut.*, 103, 125, *Som.*, 2.189, *V.Mos.*, 2.188, *Leg. all.*, 3.43.

⁵⁴ . Early scholarship focused on the relationship between *The Exposition* and the *De Vita Mosis*, with the latter being traditionally grouped as part of the miscellaneous writings addressed to the gentiles (so Massebieau, 'Le Classement des Oeuvres de Philon', in *Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences Religieuses*, Paris, I, 1889, pp.1-91.) In this manner, the *De Vita Mosis* was conceived of as a form of biblical paraphrase and biography designed to inform a gentile audience of the figure of Moses (so E.R.Goodenough, 'Philo's exposition of the Law and his *De Vita Mosis*', *HTR* 26, 1933, pp.109-125). S.Sandmel (*Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1979) has advanced the theory that Philo's work is intended to address those Jews who might be wavering in their faith or who had little knowledge of the man who was Moses other than his legislation. The work of B.C.McGing ('Philo's Adaptation of the Bible in his *Life of Moses*', unpublished article, pp.1-21) represents something of a compromise between Goodenough and Sandmel, suggesting that Philo wished to address all those who needed to understand the story of Moses' life, Jew and pagan alike, as 'few people know him as he really was' (αὐτὸν δὲ ὅστις ἦν ἐπ' ἀληθείας ἴσασι οὐ πολλοί *De Vita Mosis*, 1.2).

Jewish, who perhaps knew more of his laws than his life and achievements.⁵⁵ In doing so, Philo deliberately avoids unsavoury details and stories, such as changing God's anger at Moses' reluctance to act in Ex 3:7-4:17 to admiration for his modesty,⁵⁶ whilst elaborating on the positive elements of the biblical story. Likewise, Philo is reluctant to employ Hebrew terminology and nomenclature, suggesting that his primary goal in describing Moses is to present the details of his life to an audience which was unaware of them.⁵⁷ As McGing suggests there is a concerted effort to present a Hellenized Moses.⁵⁸ Yet, as we will see, Philo was well aware of the extent to which Moses was famous in the Graeco-Roman world for his magical exploits. We will explore this aspect in relation to Balaam in the next chapter, but as a brief comment on the need to protect Moses from associations with magic I turn to Remus: "Philo's detailed portrait of Balaam as a counterfeit prophet offers a foil to Moses, the true prophet, and thus would serve to distance Moses from Balaam-like figures in Philo's own time and place to whom his readers, Jewish or pagan, might be attracted."⁵⁹ In speaking of the events of Exodus 7, then, Philo was deeply concerned to draw a contrast between foreign experts in magic, figures familiar to his readers, and Moses as Israelite hero, a characterization not so familiar to his readers.

De Vita Mosis wishes to portray Moses 'as he really was' (ἐπ' ἀληθείας), setting him apart especially from magicians and magic.⁶⁰ Philo lived in an age when

⁵⁵ . So H.Remus, 'Moses and the Thaumaturges : Philo's 'De Vita Mosis' as a Rescue Operation', *Laval Théologique et Philosophique*, 52.3, 1996, pp.665-680 (see especially p.671).

⁵⁶ . *De Vita Mosis*, 1.71-84.

⁵⁷ . B.C.McGing, 'Philo's adaptation of the Bible in his *Life of Moses*', unpublished article, pp.14-16.

⁵⁸ . McGing, 'Philo's Adaptation of the Bible in his *Life of Moses*', p.16, states that the Philo's story of Moses is 'an extraordinary fusing of Greek and Jewish elements' in which details, such as Moses as king and high priest, are added to the standard narrative in order to create a Hellenic image of a hero and divine man.

⁵⁹ . Remus, 'Moses and the Thaumaturges: Philo's *De Vita Mosis* as a Rescue Operation', p.666.

⁶⁰ . Philo, *De Vita Mosis*, 1.2 It seems clear that Philo too was well aware of the connections between Moses and magic being made during his own era, and his *De Vita Mosis* has been suggested as a

the figure of Moses was practically under siege from associations with the world of magic.⁶¹ These associations were a direct antithesis of his own representation of Moses as ‘divine man’ (θεῖος ἀνὴρ).⁶² Philo makes a number of references to Exodus 7, each designed, in relation to its context, to refute the idea that Moses was engaged in a battle of magic with the Egyptians. In the *De Vita Mosis* Philo downplays the supernatural elements of the Exodus story, briefly surveying the various wonders performed by Moses, affording an abbreviated account of the defeat of the Egyptian magicians, and appending his account with the statement that the events should “not be seen as works of human cunning but as brought about by some higher power.”⁶³ This dilution of the magical aspects is also seen in Philo’s account in *Migr.* 168-9, in which he transforms the event into a philosophical debate, whilst in *Leg.* 2.88 he uses the serpents and the staffs as allegories of the need to control one’s passions. In each instance, Philo wishes to rectify the ignorant and desultory comments of Graeco-Roman attitudes, giving a true account of the ‘greatest and most consummate man’.⁶⁴ Here we can draw a parallel with Philostratus’ third century CE life of Apollonius of Tyana, in which the author portrays his hero as a philosopher and holy man in order to refute the widely-held image of him as a magician.⁶⁵

‘rescue operation’ designed to save Moses from such associations; Remus, ‘Moses and the Thaumaturges: Philo’s *De Vita Mosis* as a Rescue Operation’, pp.667-670.

⁶¹ . Remus, ‘Moses and the Thaumaturges: Philo’s *De Vita Mosis* as a Rescue Operation’, p.668.

⁶² . As W.Meeks (*The Prophet King, Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1967, pp.103-107) shows, the image of Moses as ‘divine man’ is of particular importance to Philo, since he is keen to demonstrate the close links between Moses and God. On a number of occasions, for instance, Moses is called the ‘friend of God’; φίλος θεοῦ *V.Mos.*, 1.80, 2.158, *Sac.*, 130, *Ebr.*, 94, *Mig.*, 45, θεόφιλος and θεοφιλής *Leg. All.*, 1.76, 2.79, 88, 90, 3.130, *Cher.*, 49, *Spec. leg.*, 1.41, 4.175, *V.Mos.*, 2.67, 163.

⁶³ . *De Vita Mosis*, 1.95.

⁶⁴ . *V.Mos.*, 1.1

⁶⁵ . Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 1.6. See further for Apollonius’ connections with magic, E.L. Bowie, ‘Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality’, *ANRW* 2.16.2, 1987, pp.1652-99.

For Philo the events recounted in Exodus, in which Moses engages in a magical battle with the Egyptian magicians, are a clear example of divine miracle versus human magic. According to Eusebius' collected fragments of Philo's otherwise lost *Hypothetica*, Philo lamented that many denigrated Moses as a sorcerer and garrulous scoundrel (γόητα καὶ κέρκωπα λόγων).⁶⁶ Such terminology is reserved for the Egyptians, whilst Moses is represented as a religious individual, a θεῖος ἀνὴρ, who acts according to the will of God.⁶⁷ As Gager observes, Philo's aim is to play down and allegorize away any element of the serpent confrontation which might serve to associate Moses with magic.⁶⁸ Philo could conceivably have defended his Moses as a positively defined magician, either in the manner of Apuleius' defense on charges of magic, in which the praise of magic operates as a rhetorical ploy,⁶⁹ or after the fashion of Origen, who points to the effective use of the names of Israelite heroes such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in spells and magic (τῶν ἐπωδῶν καὶ μαγειῶν).⁷⁰ However, Philo chooses neither of these options, for he paints magic in a very negative light throughout his works. In his version of Exodus 22:17 he speaks of the μάγοι and the φαρμακούς as evildoers of the very worst kind,⁷¹ whilst he has Moses exclude the 'sorcerer' (ἐπάδοντας), amongst others, from the Israelite *politeia*.⁷² In this manner Moses cannot be compared to the Egyptian magicians; his wonders are achieved through the power of God not through 'ensnaring, enchanting, and

⁶⁶ . *Hypothetica*, 8.6.2.

⁶⁷ . Indeed, Philo goes a step further in calling Moses the 'god and king' (θεὸς καὶ βασιλεύς) of the Israelite nation; *V.Mos.* 1.158. In addition Philo interprets Moses' death on Sinai as an emigration to heaven in which Moses is made 'immortal' (ἀπαθανατίζεσθαι); *V.Mos.* 2.288.

⁶⁸ . Gager, 'Moses the Magician: Hero of an Ancient Counter-Culture?', p.181.

⁶⁹ . Lucius Apuleius, *Apologia*, 25-26.

⁷⁰ . Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 4.33-34.

⁷¹ . *De spec. leg.*, 3.93.

⁷² . *De spec. leg.*, 1.60.

soothsaying' (παλεῦσαι καὶ κατεπᾶσαι καὶ γοητεῦσαι) or 'seductive arts' (τὰς ἐπιβούλους τέχνας).⁷³

Moses and Magic in Pseudo-Philo

Unlike Josephus and Philo, Pseudo-Philo makes minimal reference to the events of Exodus prior to the escape of the Israelites from Egypt. In chapter 10 of his *Biblical Antiquities* he condenses the events of Exodus 1-13, in which we find the serpent confrontation, to merely several sentences. There is no mention of Moses' several visits to Pharaoh's court, nor of his meeting with the burning bush, and there is but a brief mention of the multiple miracles which Moses performs. Instead, Pseudo-Philo merely states that God "sent Moses and freed them from the land of the Egyptians."⁷⁴ Pseudo-Philo's Moses is much more sublimated to the power of God; it is the deity who is in command and control throughout the events of the Exodus, a representation which diminishes Moses' heroic status. Indeed, Pseudo-Philo occasionally changes the biblical versions of the narrative of Moses' life in order to heighten the power of God; for instance, instead of having Moses confidently reassuring the disquieted people of God's help as occurs in Exodus 14:13, Pseudo-Philo has Moses cry out to God for aid.⁷⁵ In addition to the brief nature of his Exodus narrative, Pseudo-Philo avoids any mention of the tradition which sees Moses as a magician. Indeed, given Pseudo-Philo's stance on magic, it is unsurprising that he

⁷³ . *De som.*, 1.220. As Gager states ('Moses the Magician: Hero of an Ancient Counter-Culture?', p.187n.7): "Philo makes it clear to his readers that the basic error of the Egyptians lay in their mistaken perception that their tricks and Moses' miracles belonged to the same order of power."

⁷⁴ . *Biblical Antiquities*, 10.1.

⁷⁵ . *Biblical Antiquities*, 10.4.

makes no mention of the serpent confrontation in his *Biblical Antiquities*. For him, magic is to be associated exclusively with enemies of Israel. The prime example of such an enemy is Aod the magician, who will be dealt with more fully in the chapter concerning Balaam. Here, though, it will be sufficient to note that Pseudo-Philo has developed a very negative image of all forms of magic. As such, we must not be surprised to see that he avoids any mention of the biblical details which gave rise to the tradition of Moses the magician.

Moses and Magic in the *Judaica* of Artapanus

The *Judaica* of Artapanus, preserved in fragmentary form in the works of Eusebius and Clement, represents a detailed re-telling of the Moses story, in which the magical aspects of the narrative are of particular interest for our study. This work is often seen as a form of the 'rewritten Bible', though, due to the predominance of the figure of Moses, it has also been labelled a 'national romantic history' which seeks to represent Judaism through the glory of its primary lawgiver.⁷⁶ In this manner, the miracles performed by Moses at the court of Pharaoh are of particular importance for an author who, in the view of Schürer, "methodically embellished" and remodelled his work through "fantastic and tasteless additions."⁷⁷ Although somewhat harsh these remarks address the extent to which Artapanus, a Jew from Egypt,⁷⁸

⁷⁶ . C.R.Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors Volume 1: Historians*, Chico., California, 1983, pp.190-191.

⁷⁷ . E.Schürer, *The Literature of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus*, N.Y., Schoken Books, 1972, p.206.

⁷⁸ . See further Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors Volume 1: Historians*, pp.189-191.

created a Hellenized account of Moses through a contemporizing of the biblical stories. As Koskenniemi observes, Artapanus' Moses appears as a miracle worker *par excellence*, with the author not afraid of glorifying his hero to an extent which other commentators felt uncomfortable with.⁷⁹ Thus, Artapanus has Moses at the centre of the action; it is he who wields the rod, not Aaron, and it is he who performs the miracles at Pharaoh's court. However, it must be remembered that Artapanus, at least to an extent, presumes that his audience is familiar with the biblical stories he is re-writing.⁸⁰ The narrative presumes that, though distant from the action, God's power is absolute and operates through the figure of Moses.

However, Artapanus also makes a number of significant changes in respect to the actual events of the miracles at Pharaoh's court, as well as in his description of the opponents of Moses. Thus, Pharaoh calls in his priests (ἱερεῖς) in order to combat the wonders of Moses; they perform similar deeds through the use of 'charms and incantations' (μαγγάνων καὶ ἐπαιδῶν).⁸¹ Likewise, Artapanus radically departs from Exodus by having Moses cure the plagues which have affected the Nile. It seems likely, though, that Artapanus has little idea of the true nature of the opponents of Moses, for he also terms them 'physicians' (ἰατροί) and is, perhaps, more interested in reviling the Egyptian religion than he is in accuracy.⁸² He also adds a number of 'magical' elements to the wider narrative. Thus, we have the death of the king into whose ear the name of God is whispered,⁸³ the painful death of a priest who showed

⁷⁹ . E.Koskenniemi, *The Old Testament Miracle Workers in Early Judaism*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2005, p.99.

⁸⁰ . E.Eve, *The Jewish Context of Jesus' Miracles*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 2002, p.240.

⁸¹ . Artapanus, 3.30.

⁸² . Artapanus, 3.29. See further E.Koskenniemi, 'Greeks, Egyptians and Jews in the Fragments of Artapanus', *JSP* 13, 2002, pp.17-31.

⁸³ . Artapanus, 3.25.

contempt to the tablets of the law,⁸⁴ as well as the repeated use (much more frequent than in the biblical accounts) of the rod of Aaron/Moses.⁸⁵ Aside from the mention of the charms and incantations, Artapanus does not distinguish the arts of the priests from Moses' skills. Despite Koskenniemi's claims that this is a case of Artapanus adopting the idea of 'my miracles and your magic',⁸⁶ it would seem, given Eve's comments concerning the impossibility of clearly defining a theology of miracles in Artapanus,⁸⁷ that our author may have imagined Moses as a positively defined magician. We may say with certainty, however, that Artapanus held a negative view of the skills of the Egyptian priests; one of his aims is to denigrate Egyptian religion, and the representation of magic as a form of 'performance' akin to trickery is a natural aspect of his approach.

Moses and Magic in the Works of Graeco-Roman Authors

In the non-Jewish world Moses was well recognised, at least by literary elites, for a number of distinctions ranging from primary law-giver to philosopher and high priest. His most famous characteristic, however, was his association with the world of magic, which may be observed in sources as diverse as the *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder and the Greek Magical Papyri. Indeed, Moses became something of a syncretistic byword for magic in the ancient world, his name being found in Egyptian charms and amulets, Jewish manuals of magical lore and Roman lists of the great

⁸⁴ . Artapanus, 3.26.

⁸⁵ . Artapanus, 3.27ff.

⁸⁶ . Koskenniemi, *The Old Testament Miracle Workers in Early Judaism*, p.103.

⁸⁷ . Eve, *The Jewish Context of Jesus' Miracles*, p.240.

magi. It is in the latter that Moses gains the reputation for having taught the Jews all they know on the subject of magic. These associations and reputations were often used in negative form by Graeco-Roman critics of Judaism. On the whole, however, Moses the magician features in Graeco-Roman works as a great teacher from the distant past. Despite a confused view of Jewish history, Pompeius Trogus readily declares that Joseph was a master magician and his son, Moses, had inherited his father's skills.⁸⁸ Evidently, many of Josephus' near contemporaries in the Roman literary scene were well aware of the associations between Moses and magic. Indeed, as shall be seen, some authors took it for granted that their audience, too, were aware of this association. These views are testament to a long tradition which crossed cultural, religious, linguistic and social barriers. As with the Graeco-Roman appraisal of the Persian fire-priests, eastern religions were often seen as forms of magic, being lumped together under the banner of *superstitio*.⁸⁹ Likewise, Moses became a byword for the magical, and not just in the pseudepigraphal creations of ancient magicians.

By the first and second centuries CE, the idea of Moses the magician had reached a wide audience of literary elites. Pliny the Elder lists a succession of individuals who feature in the history of the development of magic. In describing a certain sect of the Jews, he states: "There is another magical group, derived from Moses, Jannes, Lotapes and the Jews, but many thousands of years after Zoroaster".⁹⁰ Gager suggests that, instead of describing an actual Jewish magical sect in his own time, Pliny has simply confused several elements of the Moses story, and linked these

⁸⁸ . Quoted in Justin, *Historiae Philippicae* 36, Epitoma 2.7.

⁸⁹ . D.B.Martin, *Inventing Superstition, From the Hippocratics to the Christians*, London, Harvard University Press, 2004, 124-135.

⁹⁰ . Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 30.2.11. The identity of the third magician, Lotapes, has remained a mystery; see C.C.Torrey, 'The Magic of Lotapes', *JBL* 68, 1949, pp.325-327.

with the use of the name of Moses in specific magical texts or groups.⁹¹ Strabo also mentions Moses in his own summary of traditions of magic in the Roman world.⁹² The connection in Graeco-Roman minds of Moses and magic is further demonstrated in the works of Apuleius and Numenius. Apuleius includes the name of Moses in a list of magicians, probably based upon the work of Pliny, and in a manner which suggests that his audience would have been well aware of the associations between Moses and magic.⁹³ Numenius mentions Moses in his own list of ancient magicians, though his aim in recounting the Exodus story was to de-emphasise the original pro-Jewish attitude of the story. In *On the Good*, he states: "Next are Jannes and Jambres, Egyptian sacred scribes, men judged to be inferior to none in magic, when the Jews were expelled from Egypt. They were chosen by the people of Egypt to stand up to Mousaios, the leader of the Jews, and a man most powerful in prayer to God; and of the disasters which Mousaios brought upon Egypt they appeared able to turn away even the most violent."⁹⁴ Here magic is linked to religion, and all of the magic of Moses, unlike in the biblical account, is matched by the Egyptians. Jannes and Jambres are sacred scribes who are adept at magic, whilst the magic of Moses is perhaps achieved through his powerful prayers to God. Numenius provides a Graeco-Roman version of the biblical account in which no apology is made for the practice of magic, and in which theology does not act as a cover for the activities of Moses.

⁹¹ . Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism*, p.138.

⁹² . Strabo, C762.

⁹³ . Lucius Apuleius, *Apologia*, 90: "If you find one trivial reason that might have led me to woo Pudentilla for the sake of some personal advantage, if you can prove that I have made the very slightest profit out of it, I am ready to be Carmendas, Damigeron, that Moses whom you know, Johannes, Apollobex, Dardanus himself or any other magician of note since the time of Zoroaster and Ostanos."

⁹⁴ . Taken from Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 9.8.1-2 (411d). Origen in *Contra Celsum* 4.51 states also that Numenius "narrates the story of Moses, Jannes and Jambres."

Perhaps the most notable instance of this interest may be seen in the *Book of Jannes and Jambres*, which may have acted as a source for the magical Moses in Numenius, Pliny the Elder, and Apuleius.⁹⁵ It survives in fragmentary form, with the earliest attestation coming from the late third century CE.⁹⁶ Arguments have been advanced for both Jewish and Christian provenance, though it would appear that the book, or at least its tradition, had a long pre-Christian history, especially when one considers the references of the Qumran scrolls to Jannes and Jambres.⁹⁷ The book itself attests to the idea that the magicians who opposed Moses at the court of the Egyptian pharaoh were indeed powerful figures; Jannes (and, we assume, but are not told, Jambres) is able to duplicate whatever 'Moses and his brother' have done. However, Jannes is struck down by 'a painful ulcer', a sign which leads him to explain to the king that the 'active power of God' was operative in Moses. The work ends with a warning from the dead Jannes, raised by Jambres through necromancy, to his brother which advises him to abandon the life of idol worship and magic which displeases God. Moses' magical battle in Egypt was of interest to Jews, Christians and pagans; although we do not know which community authored this Greek work, we may suggest that the tradition of Jannes and Jambres was current in all three religions in the period immediately after the time of Josephus.

⁹⁵ . E.Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, 175 B.C. – A.D. 135*, rev. and ed. G.Vermes, F.Millar, M.Goodman, London, T&T Clark, 1987, vol.3, p.149.

⁹⁶ . A.Pietersma and R.T.Lutz (trans and intro.), 'Jannes and Jambres', in J.H.Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol.2, N.Y., Doubleday, 1985, pp.427-436.

⁹⁷ . J.Bidez and F.Cumont, *Les Mages hellénisés*, Paris, 1938, vol.2, p.22 argue for a pre-Christian date and Jewish authorship, whilst Pietersma and Lutz, 'Jannes and Jambres', p.433, argue for a Christian authorship.

Moses and Magic in the Qumran Traditions

The extent to which the serpent confrontation featured in various cultures and religions can be seen with the mention in the Damascus Document, in both its Qumran and Cairo Genizah versions, of the name 'Jannes'. The Qumran text marks the earliest extant instance of this name, though it becomes quite common, in Christian and Graeco-Roman literature, as a traditional part of the Moses as magician story. That it features in the literature of the separatist Qumran sect suggests that the tradition had widespread fame and appeal within Judaism. Although we do not have accounts of the story from more secular Jewish sources, we must presume that such existed for it is highly unlikely that pagan authors would have received the tradition from Qumran. In the Damascus Document, Jannes and his brother, the magicians who oppose Moses in Ex 7:11-13, are depicted as tools of Belial in his battle against Moses and Aaron.⁹⁸ Unlike later Graeco-Roman authors, the implication behind the Damascus Documents' reference was a negative appraisal of Jannes as magician in contrast to Moses as holy man; there is no sense, as seen for example in Pliny the Elder, that Moses was to be seen as a magician himself. Moreover, the Damascus Document notes that Jannes was accompanied by his brother; although no name is given, we may presume that this figure is intended to be Jambres/Mambres. Though we have no secure date for the Damascus Document, the fact that it has been found in the Diaspora in addition to the examples from Qumran suggests that the Jannes tradition had permeated Jewish culture, or at least that of a single sect, both inside and outside of Israel by at least the first century CE. The close parallels provided by Pliny

⁹⁸ . CD 5.18.

the Elder also suggest that the tradition was a popular one, though of course we cannot be sure of Pliny's sources.

Moses and Magic in the PGM

The main repository of data on the status of Moses as a magician comes not from the works of mainstream literary elites, often opposed to the unsavoury image of Moses the *magus*, but from the works of magicians themselves collected under the banner of the Greek Magical Papyri and the various amulets, charms and spells which survive from the Graeco-Roman world. These latter sources, syncretistic in nature and appealing to a wide variety of divine and magical powers from various cultures and religions of the Graeco-Roman world, depict Moses as a legendary magician, author of numerous magical, alchemical and astrological texts, and as a powerful magical force, in his own right, to be called upon by magicians. A review of the Moses elements in the PGM highlights the extensive association between the Jewish hero and magic. PGM XIII, entitled the *Eighth Book of Moses concerning the Sacred Name*, comprises a third or fourth century CE work in which a magician appropriates the guise of Moses in order to articulate various methods for summoning a god. The magician responsible for this text also alludes to various other works, composed by himself, in which he cites the figure of Moses the magician.⁹⁹ The repeated appeals to Jewish motifs, such as the names of various angels and the employment of the syncretistic name of God, IAO, naturally lead to the inclusion of Moses as the primary

⁹⁹ . PGM XIII, lines 731f.

teacher of Jewish magic.¹⁰⁰ Moreover the goal of the ritual, the revelation of the sacred name and thus control of divine powers, was a fundamental aspect of Moses the magician. In Exodus 3:1-6 and 19:3-8 Moses receives, respectively, the divine name on Mount Horeb and the divine law on Mount Sinai. For Jews of the first century the divine name was a secret of the utmost sanctity, with both Josephus and Philo refusing to commit it, if indeed they truly knew it, to writing.¹⁰¹ Artapanus, through Eusebius, recounted that Moses caused the death of Pharaoh by whispering the divine name in his ear, whilst an Egyptian priest who mocked the name of God written on the tablets of the law dropped dead.¹⁰²

For a number of texts in the corpus of the PGM Moses represents a magical power to be called upon and a representative of the mysteries of Yahweh. In PGM V Moses presents himself as the prophet of the ‘mysteries celebrated by Israel’ before revealing the divine name ‘committed to the prophets of Israel’.¹⁰³ This theme is continued in PGM II, III and XII, though without the naming of Moses as the possessor of the divine name; however, it seems clear, as Gager suggests, that Moses is being referred to by inference and connections to PGM V.¹⁰⁴ The relationship between Moses’ possession of the divine name and the performance of magic is cemented by the third century CE Egyptian text *The Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden*, in which the speaker implores the deity to “reveal thyself to me

¹⁰⁰ . Gager, *Moses in Graeco-Roman Paganism*, p.136 refers to PGM XIII as a ‘syncretistic’ document which is neither Jewish, Greek, nor Egyptian, but which clearly testifies to the fame which Moses had received as a master magician. The identity of the author also troubles E.R.Goodenough (*Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman World*, 13 vols., N.Y., Pantheon, 1953-1968, 2:206n.229), who states: “Jewish elements are so mingled with pagan ones that I have no idea who could have written it.”

¹⁰¹ . Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.276, Philo, *De Vita Mosis*, 2.114. For a discussion of ancient Jewish attitudes towards the divine name see J.Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 1961, pp.78-103.

¹⁰² . Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 9.27.25.

¹⁰³ . PGM V, lines 108-118.

¹⁰⁴ . J.G.Gager, *Moses in Graeco-Roman Paganism*, p.144. See further the more extensive discussion of K.Preisendanz, ‘Laminetta Magica Siciliana’, *Acme* 1, 1948, pp.65-81, especially p.77n.2.

here today in the fashion of thy revelation to Moses which thou didst make upon the mountain, before whom thou didst create darkness and light.”¹⁰⁵ Moses’ name is also used in this text in order to effect a love charm, suggesting that he was an ideal model for magicians to emulate, his magical powers deriving from his possession of the divine name. Though perhaps based upon Egyptian precedents, the idea of magical power through possession of the divine name can be seen, perhaps surprisingly, in the works of Josephus. As shall be seen he supposes that Moses asks the deity to reveal his true name, using it thereafter to perform his wonders.¹⁰⁶ Elsewhere in the PGM we see a number of texts attributed to Moses the magician, ranging from love charms,¹⁰⁷ prayers for protection,¹⁰⁸ and spells to control angels,¹⁰⁹ to alchemical treatises¹¹⁰ and advice on the preparation of ritual magic components.¹¹¹ In addition, Moses was employed by artisans in their creation of several amulets and phylacteries, possibly owned by Jews but certainly testifying to the magical associations which Moses accrued in the early centuries of the Common Era.¹¹²

¹⁰⁵ . F.L.Griffith and H.Thompson (eds.), *The Leyden Papyrus, An Egyptian Magical Book*, N.Y., Dover Publications, 1974, col.V, lines 13f. We might note on the subject of the revelation of the divine name that Josephus, in similarity to the magical text, links the name of God and its revelation to the miracles which Moses performs. So *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.275 states: “Moses, unable to doubt the promises of the deity, after having seen and heard such confirmation of them, prayed and entreated that he might be vouchsafed this power in Egypt; he also besought him not to deny him the knowledge of his name, but to tell him how he should be addressed, so that when sacrificing he might invoke him by name to be present at the sacred rites. Moreover, Moses found those miracles at his service not on that occasion only but at all times whensoever he was in need of them”.

¹⁰⁶ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.275f.

¹⁰⁷ . *The Diadem of Moses*, PGM VII, 620-628.

¹⁰⁸ . *The Key of Moses*, PGM XIII, A 22, 31, 36, 60, B 383, 431, 737.

¹⁰⁹ . *The Archangelical Book of Moses*, PGM XIII, 971f.

¹¹⁰ . M.Berthelot and C.-E.Ruelle (eds.), *Collection des anciens alchimistes grecs*, 3 vols., Paris, 1887-1888, 2:38 (*The Diplosis of Moses*), 2:300-315 (*The Chemistry of Moses*).

¹¹¹ . M.Berthelot and C.-E.Ruelle (eds.), *Collection des anciens alchimistes grecs*, 3 vols., Paris, 1887-1888, 2:182 (*The Maza of Moses*).

¹¹² . C.Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets*, University of Michigan Press, 1950, p.171 and p.255.

Moses and Magic in Post-Josephus Literature

These magical traditions concerning Moses became even more prominent and widespread in the late first and early second centuries CE, his name being used in magical amulets, spells and incantations, as well as featuring prominently in discussions and references to magic in the literature of the elites of the Graeco-Roman world. Of particular interest for the mapping of these post-Josephan traditions are the works of early Christian authors, who not only gave their own interpretations of Jewish history and culture, but also made use of Moses' fame for the furtherment of their own particular theologies. Thus, in his defence before the high priest, having performed 'signs and wonders' and accused of blasphemy, Stephen states that Moses was "instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in his words and deeds."¹¹³ The latter part of this passage refers, albeit without employing the terminology of magic, to the battle of magicians seen in Ex 7:9-25. It also suggests that Moses learnt his magical skills directly from the Egyptians. Likewise, a passage in 2 Timothy suggests that the author was aware of the Moses tradition which pits the hero against Jannes and Jambres, who, though not termed magicians, are used as examples of people "of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith" who "oppose the truth".¹¹⁴ Such people are not to be feared however, for, as with Jannes and Jambres, "their folly will become plain to everyone." The serpent confrontation was also a source of polemic in the post-Josephan discussions, with Origen reporting that Egyptians accepted Moses' miracles but allege that they were achieved through the practice of

¹¹³ . Acts 7:22.

¹¹⁴ . 2 Tim 3:8-9.

γοντεία.¹¹⁵ The fact that Christian authors, such as Tertullian,¹¹⁶ Origen,¹¹⁷ Justin,¹¹⁸ and Eusebius,¹¹⁹ felt the need to discuss the magical reputation of Moses and defend him from accusations of practising negatively-defined magic, demonstrates the strength of these traditions.

Summary

The forgoing discussion has served to set not only the biblical precedents for Josephus' own version of the serpent confrontation, with particular attention being paid to the magical terminology used by MT and LXX, but has also given a brief resume of other exegetical surveys which precede Josephus' own work in *Ant.* We have seen that the biblical accounts offer a variety of images of magic, in addition to a rich vocabulary of magic; we have both the positive (or at the very least neutral) version of MT, in which the Egyptian magicians appear as skilled and experienced practitioners, compared with the more negative appraisal of LXX, in which they are definitively linked to the condemned forms of magic in Deut. 18:10-14. We have also seen that the serpent confrontation was a particularly problematic scenario for later commentators such as Philo, Pseudo-Philo, and Artapanus, who all shield Moses from association with negatively-defined magic. The PGM and our Graeco-Roman sources, however, show that the tradition of Moses as a powerful magician was one of some antiquity, power, and renown. In examining Josephus' own appraisal I will be

¹¹⁵ . Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 3.5.

¹¹⁶ . Tertullian, *De Anima*, 56-7.

¹¹⁷ . Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 5.42.

¹¹⁸ . Justin, *Historiae Philippicae*, 36, *Epitoma* 2.7.

¹¹⁹ . Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 9.8.1-2.

drawing upon these discussions, especially in relation to magical terminology, but also with respect to the image of Moses as magician.

Moses and Magic in the *Jewish Antiquities*

Introduction to Critical Scholarship

The serpent confrontation in *Ant.* has long been regarded as an example of Josephus' attempts not only to shield Moses from charges of magic, but also to provide a qualitative differentiation between his actions and those of the Egyptian priests. This appraisal has had a number of incarnations, but, in more recent works, has received a good deal of criticism. The scholarly appraisal of Josephus' version of the story mirrors the theoretical work carried out concerning the nature and function of magic in the ancient world; thus, when scholarship was keen on dividing sharply between religion and magic MacRae was able to state: "The encounter between Moses and the Egyptian magician-priests differs from the biblical account in that it is even more patently a struggle between human trickery and divine δύναμις, and it is not Aaron's rod that performs the feat, but rather Moses himself, as a personal authentication of the prophet's supernatural provenience."¹²⁰ Such an approach is seen in a number of works,¹²¹ in addition to the commentary on *Ant.* by Feldman,¹²² and

¹²⁰ . G.MacRae, 'Miracle in the *Antiquities* of Josephus', in C.F.D.Moule (ed.), *Miracles: Cambridge Studies in their Philosophy and History*, Cambridge, 1965, pp.129-147 (quote p.135).

¹²¹ . For instance, O.Betz, 'Miracles in the Writings of Flavius Josephus', in L.H.Feldman and G.Hata (eds.), *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1987, pp.212-235, and D.L.Tiede, *The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker*, Missoula, Mont., Scholars Press, 1972.

might be seen as a part of the conservative approach to magic in Josephus by which scholarship adjudges that our author thinks little on the subject and is keen to minimize its impact on his representation of Judaism. However, a number of recent studies have brought this position under scrutiny and found it wanting. For example, Duling¹²³ shows that Josephus is well aware of positive forms of magic, whilst Gager,¹²⁴ Smith,¹²⁵ and Bloch¹²⁶ suggest that Josephus specifically combats the image of Moses as a γόης, rather than simply an association between Moses and magic. Recent scholarship has shown that Josephus is able to include positive forms of magic, under the correct conditions, in his works; this is an idea which I would like to explore in this chapter and beyond. Indeed, of particular interest will be the idea that magic is acceptable to society when it is sanctioned by those in power. As Bloch states: “Josèphe essaie prudemment de représenter la magie exercée par les Juifs comme une pratique compatible avec la culture romaine. Cette forme de magie ne risqué pas d’être comprise comme une stratégie dangereuse. C’est de la magie <à la romaine>, por ainsi dire.”¹²⁷

¹²² . L.H.Feldman in his commentary, S.Mason (ed.), *Flavius Josephus, Translation and Commentary, Volume 3, Judean Antiquities 1-4*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, pp.215-218.

¹²³ . D.C.Duling, ‘The Eleazar Miracle and Solomon’s Magical Wisdom in Flavius Josephus’s *Antiquitates Judaicae* 8.42-49’, *HTR* 78, 1985, pp.1-25.

¹²⁴ . Gager, ‘Moses the Magician: Hero of an Ancient Counter-Culture?’, pp.179-188.

¹²⁵ . M.Smith, ‘The Occult in Josephus’, in L.H.Feldman and G.Hata (eds.), *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1987, pp.236-256.

¹²⁶ . R.Bloch, ‘Au-delà d’un Discourse Apologétique: Flavius Josèphe et les Magiciens’, in N.Belayche (ed.), *Les Communautés Religieuses dans le monde Gréco-Romain: Essais de Définition*, Paris, Brepols, 2003, pp.243-258.

¹²⁷ . Bloch, ‘Au-delà d’un Discourse Apologétique’, pp.256-257.

The Presentation of Moses in the *Jewish Antiquities*

Before engaging with the passage under scrutiny in *Ant.* a brief exploration of the characterization of Josephus' Moses is called for. As a founding figure of Jewish religion and a paragon of human behaviour, he combines the roles of prophet of God,¹²⁸ general of the Israelite armies,¹²⁹ and leader of the people during the Exodus.¹³⁰ Indeed, Josephus suggests 'imitating so far as possible that best of all models'.¹³¹ Even from his birth, which was foretold by an Egyptian temple scribe (ἱερογραμματεὺς), Moses was destined to 'surpass all men in virtue and win everlasting renown'.¹³² Josephus also repeats Hellenistic expectations of a heroic character by eulogising over the appearance, strength, generalship, wisdom, honesty and courage of Moses.¹³³ In a departure from the biblical texts, Josephus emphasizes the unique nature of Moses by having God, speaking from the burning bush on Mount Sinai, express to Moses that he is the only person with the requisite 'understanding' (σύνεσις) who could lead the Israelites.¹³⁴ Likewise, when God shows him the three divine signs (σημεῖα) Josephus informs us, in another addition to the biblical accounts, that Moses 'found those miracles at his service not on that occasion only but at all times whensoever there was need of them'.¹³⁵ This is a clear indication that Moses not only operates as God's chosen leader of the Israelites, but that the 'signs'

¹²⁸ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.327, 4.169, 329.

¹²⁹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.268, 4.281.

¹³⁰ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.322.

¹³¹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.19.

¹³² . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.205.

¹³³ . Appearance; *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.232, strength; *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.256, generalship; *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.254, wisdom; *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.230-231, honesty; *Jewish Antiquities*, 3.73-74, courage; *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.269.

¹³⁴ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.269.

¹³⁵ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.276.

which he will exercise are divinely sanctioned. Indeed, Moses' miracles are "to convince all men 'that thou art sent by me and doest all at my command.'"¹³⁶

The purpose of Josephus' aggrandizement of Moses is not simply the portrayal of the Jewish hero *par excellence* in Hellenistic terms, but also to show that Moses operates with God's sanction. However, it must also be observed that one of the main concerns in Josephus' representation was a desire to combat the slurs and slanders made by pagan commentators on the character of Moses.¹³⁷ In this respect, and importantly for our understanding of Josephus' version of the serpent confrontation, Josephus is concerned to show that Moses acts as God's appointed on earth in both deeds and words. This point, however, must not be considered in isolation from Josephus' desire to combat anti-Jewish commentary, which not only suggested that Judaism was a form of atheism,¹³⁸ but also that its founding figure was a negatively-defined magician.¹³⁹ The latter accusation was of particular and obvious concern for Josephus in his *Against Apion*; here Josephus alleges that Apollonius Molon, Lysimachus, and others pagan opponents of Judaism, specifically labelled Moses as a γόης. However, if we accept that the aims of *Ant.* included a rebuttal of pagan slurs on Judaism, then we must recognise that the spectre of Moses as negatively-defined magician loomed large in Josephus' thinking concerning his version of the serpent confrontation.¹⁴⁰ For this event clearly marked the starting point of the image of

¹³⁶ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.274.

¹³⁷ . As G.Hata ('The Story of Moses Interpreted within the Context of Anti-Semitism', in L.H.Feldman and G.Hata (eds.), *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1987, pp.180-197, quote p.181) states: "It is incontestable that Josephus had these slanderers, especially the anti-Semites, on his mind when he was conceiving the outlines of *Jewish Antiquities*."

¹³⁸ . See the entries for Manetho, Lysimachus, Apion, Posidonius, and Apollonius Molon, in M.Stern (ed.), *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols., Jerusalem, Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974-1984.

¹³⁹ . *Against Apion*, 2.145, 2.161.

¹⁴⁰ . Hata, 'The Story of Moses Interpreted within the Context of Anti-Semitism', pp.180-197.

Moses as magician in pagan eyes;¹⁴¹ in handling his version of events Josephus, as we shall see, was very careful and precise in his employment of magical terminology, as well as striving to provide Moses with a framework of divine sanction for his miraculous acts.

Magic and the Sin of Moses

One of the most puzzling of details concerning the life of the biblical Moses is the reason for his omission from the promised land and his premature death in Num 20:1-13. This mystery, the unidentified 'sin' of Moses, revolves around the episode of the striking of the rock with the rod in order to bring forth water, yet there is no explanation as to why Moses is not permitted to achieve his divine goal.¹⁴² Milgrom describes a number of explanations given by rabbinical literature,¹⁴³ which range from character faults like a blazing temper and cowardice, to actions and words which show him as disobeying God.¹⁴⁴ None are particularly satisfactory however, for biblical literature is completely silent on the matter.¹⁴⁵ One theory, advocated by Milgrom in his survey and which I will briefly address here, suggests however that the sin of which Moses was guilty was the practice of magic.¹⁴⁶ Such a theory has

¹⁴¹ . Gager, *Moses in Graeco-Roman Paganism*, pp.137-140.

¹⁴² . W.H.Propp, 'The Rod of Aaron and the Sin of Moses', *JBL* 107, 1988, p.19-26.

¹⁴³ . Milgrom, 'Magic, Monotheism and the Sin of Moses', pp.251-265.

¹⁴⁴ .. See the summary of arguments in M.Emmerich, 'The Case Against Moses Reopened', *JETS* 46.1, 2003, pp.53-62.

¹⁴⁵ . Num. 20:12 merely states: "But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not trust in me, to show my holiness before the eyes of the Israelites, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.'"

¹⁴⁶ . Milgrom ('Magic, Monotheism and the Sin of Moses', pp.259-260) emphasizes the similarities between the actions of Moses in Num. 20 and the descriptions of the magicians in Ex 7. Whilst agreeing with the theory concerning the sin as an act of magic, I can find little to support his

interesting implications for Josephus' portrayal of Moses and his version of Numbers 20:1-13. The sin episode involves not only the magical rod used by Moses and Aaron, but also a seemingly miraculous event, bringing forth water from the rock, in which Moses, to all intents and purposes, performs as a magician. Although Numbers 20:8 states that God merely commanded Moses to speak to the rock in order to bring forth the water, Numbers 20:11 clearly shows that Moses used the rod in order to strike the rock in a direct parallel of just such an event in Exodus 17. In the latter there is no condemnation of Moses for he is commanded to strike, God thus sanctioning the use of the magical powers of the rod.

However, such is not the case in the account in Numbers, where Moses is seen to ask the Israelites whether they wish he and Aaron to bring forth water from the rock (not in God's name), and then proceeds to strike the rock twice in order to perform the wonder.¹⁴⁷ As with the wonders performed before Pharaoh, the rod of Moses and Aaron is of central importance.¹⁴⁸ Milgrom advances the theory that Moses is here performing magic because of the functional elements of the narrative, speech during wonders, a willingness to perform, and the 'commonplace' gesture with the rod, which mirror characteristic values of the magician in the wider Hebrew Bible.¹⁴⁹ A more plausible explanation may lie in the fact that Moses disobeys God, using the magical powers of the rod in spite of the fact that God has not requested

supposition, based upon functionalist theories, which sees magic as reliant on the use of words, and which he uses here to define the sin of Moses through reference to Num 20:10.

¹⁴⁷ . Num. 20:11.

¹⁴⁸ . Budge (*Egyptian Magic*, pp.4-7) emphasizes the magical aspects of the rod of Moses by a comparison with Egyptian culture, stating (p.5): "The turning of the serpent into what is apparently an inanimate, wooden stick....was by no means the only proof which Moses gives that he was versed in the magic of the Egyptians, for, like the sage Aba-aner and king Nectanebus, and all the other magicians of Egypt from time immemorial, he and Aaron possessed a wonderful rod by means of which they worked their wonders." As has been seen, the biblical text is replete with details of Egyptian culture, the rod of Aaron seemingly being one in particular which clearly evokes the world of magic in the narrative.

¹⁴⁹ . Milgrom, 'Magic, Monotheism and the Sin of Moses', p.261.

them to use it. Moses' sin then, whilst clearly connected to magic, is centred on his abuse of divine sanction. As we may expect from such a conclusion, Josephus makes no mention of the sin of Moses, nor of the reasons why Moses has been barred from entry into the promised land; the latter is an especially embarrassing feature of Moses' God-given quest to lead the Israelites to the promised land. In paraphrasing Numbers 20, Josephus makes no mention of the wonder performed by Moses, nor does he make any criticism of Moses which might be compared to the episode of the 'sin' of Moses.¹⁵⁰

As the episode of the water from the rock appears in all our extant sources for the biblical text we must presume that Josephus purposefully omitted it from his account. He does, however, refer to the magical rod belonging to Aaron and Moses, which appears, as it does in the serpent confrontation, as part of an 'extraordinary spectacle' (παράλογος).¹⁵¹ This event, however, is based upon the biblical text and is stressed as being a testament to 'God's sentence concerning them' (ἡπξαντο τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ περὶ αὐτῶν).¹⁵² This omission of the magical employment of the rod removes the stigma of magic from the figure of Moses; however, it also forces Josephus to employ his own explanation of why Moses did not enter the promised land. Thus, Josephus adds the explanation that Moses died before entering the promised land because this was 'the day that God had appointed' for his departure to the ancestors.¹⁵³ He explains the oddity of Moses writing of his own death by stating that he did so in order that he would not be perceived as anything other than human.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.40-65.

¹⁵¹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.65.

¹⁵² . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.66.

¹⁵³ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.315.

¹⁵⁴ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.326. Josephus did not adhere to more mystical strains of thought which imagined a divine Moses at his passing, though he is clearly aware of the traditions concerning Moses'

Josephus also omits the reference to Moses' ability to perform signs and wonders given in his encomium in Deut 34:11, instead choosing to emphasize his identification as a prophet, in whose speech 'one seemed to hear the speech of God himself.'¹⁵⁵ Such details, allied to the omission of the episode characterised as the magical 'sin' of Moses, suggests that Josephus was well aware of Moses' reputation as a negatively-defined magician and that he was willing to alter or omit biblical details which could prove troublesome for his representation of Moses as God's sanctioned operative.

The Relegation of Aaron and the Representation of Moses

In our biblical sources for the serpent confrontation the figure of Aaron is an integral part of events; indeed, it is he who is the acting participant in the magical battle, not Moses. Whilst God informs both Aaron and Moses of the procedure to be followed concerning Pharaoh's request for a wonder, it is only Aaron who carries out these instructions.¹⁵⁶ A similar scenario may be found in the first three plagues, the bloody Nile,¹⁵⁷ the frogs,¹⁵⁸ and the gnats,¹⁵⁹ all of which are primarily dictated to Moses by God and then performed by Aaron and his rod. Exodus 6:26 also states that both Aaron and Moses were charged by God to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt. Here Aaron has an almost equal role to Moses in the eyes of the deity, though

ascension, for he rationalises his account by stating that Moses departed when "a cloud suddenly stood over him and he appeared down some ravine."

¹⁵⁵ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.329.

¹⁵⁶ . Thus God speaks to both Aaron and Moses on several occasions i.e. Ex. 7:1-5, 7:8-9, but in the event of the serpent confrontation it is Aaron, at the command of Moses, who instigates the magical events, Ex.7:19.

¹⁵⁷ . Ex. 7:19-24.

¹⁵⁸ . Ex. 8:5-7.

¹⁵⁹ . Ex. 8:16-19.

Exodus 7:1 suggests that he is to act as ‘prophet’ to Moses as ‘god’, leaving no doubt as to who is the senior of the two. However, Aaron is an integral part of the biblical narratives and an active agent in the magical serpent confrontation. Josephus’ account provides a marked contrast to this scenario. Here the active party in every instance of the plague cycle is Moses, with Aaron being completely absent. Moses is the only miracle-worker in the *Ant.* narrative; it is he, not Aaron, who becomes the instigator of the events at Pharaoh’s court.

As the primary lawgiver of his religion,¹⁶⁰ Josephus attaches great importance to Moses, picturing him as a Platonic philosopher-king, who combined the roles of divine man,¹⁶¹ prophet,¹⁶² general,¹⁶³ and leader.¹⁶⁴ We shall see, in the section dealing with Josephus’ *Against Apion*, the extent to which our author was forced to grapple with the subject of magic in his attempt to present a positive image of Moses, but for the moment we will simply observe the fact that Moses is central to Josephus’ representation of Judaism. As Feldman states: “Because Moses was the one figure in the Jewish tradition who was well known to the pagan world and also because he had been reviled by several anti-Jewish writers, Josephus may be assumed to have felt a special need to paint a favourable picture of him.”¹⁶⁵ Of particular importance was Moses’ role as a prophet, something which Josephus clearly links to his role as leader

¹⁶⁰ . The most common title by which Josephus, like most Hellenistic Jewish authors, refers to Moses is ‘legislator’ (ὁ νομοθέτης), *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.6, 18, 20, 23, 24, 3.180, 4.13, 150, 156.

¹⁶¹ . In rejecting the charge that the Jews are possessed of a hatred for the gods, Josephus uses the term θεῖος ἀνὴρ in describing Moses, *Jewish Antiquities*, 3.180. This representation may be seen in a number of passages; *Ant.* 3.21, 3.88, 3.99, 4.326.

¹⁶² . Josephus uses the term προφήτης in a number of instances concerning Moses; *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.327, 4.165, 320, 329.

¹⁶³ . The role of the στρατηγός appears to be of prime importance for Josephus’ Moses; *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.268, 3.2, 67, 102, 4.165, 194, 281, 329. In this respect we might note that Josephus adds details to the biblical narratives which show Moses to be a fearless and courageous military leader; *Ant.* 2.268.

¹⁶⁴ . Though Josephus is, however, keen to stress that Moses was not a king, having the hero denounce such forms of government in favour of theocracy; *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.223.

¹⁶⁵ . L.H.Feldman, *Josephus’s Interpretation of the Bible*, London, University of California Press, 1998, p.441.

of Israel.¹⁶⁶ Such a link is important for it provides Moses with both heavenly and earthly sanction. In every sense Moses is the paragon of the Hellenistic hero for Josephus, and our author is not reticent in omitting or changing biblical details of his life story in order to boost this image. Thus, when we review Josephus' serpent confrontation, in addition to preliminary passages which set the scene, it becomes abundantly clear that Josephus has purposefully eliminated Aaron from his narrative in order to lionize Moses. In preparation for the meeting with Pharaoh, Josephus states that Moses recounted the nature of the miracles shown to him by God to the assembled Hebrews, and, when they did not believe his story, demonstrated them himself.¹⁶⁷ In complete contrast the biblical narrative reports that it was Aaron who recounted the miracles to the Hebrews, and states that Aaron was the one who performed them for a doubting audience.¹⁶⁸ Right from the outset, Aaron is relegated to being a passive figure in Josephus' account.

Indeed, on occasion Aaron is completely overlooked by Josephus, most notably in the serpent confrontation where only Moses makes the journey to Pharaoh's court.¹⁶⁹ It is Moses who performs in the magical contest and it is his rod, not Aaron's, which is transformed into a snake. Indeed, Josephus took great pains in both his description and employment of the rod, for he realised that this tool had a long running association with the figure of Aaron, serving as a form of divine sanction for its possessor. He was also aware that it could be interpreted as a tool of

¹⁶⁶ . As Meeks, *The Prophet-King, Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, states (p.146): "Moses does have a double 'office' in Josephus, for his mission as prophet is closely connected with his sovereign command of Israel."

¹⁶⁷ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.280.

¹⁶⁸ . Ex. 4:29-30.

¹⁶⁹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.281; Ex. 5:1.

magic.¹⁷⁰ In the biblical narrative there is some confusion as to who owns the divine rod; in the plague cycle and in connection to the ark of the covenant it is clearly associated with Aaron,¹⁷¹ but in the water from the rock episode and the destruction of Pharaoh's army it belongs to Moses.¹⁷² The rod then appears as a symbol of God's authority and power, and is perhaps an extension of the 'high hand' and the 'stretched out arm' by which God leads Israel out of Egypt.¹⁷³ However, Josephus is quite clear on this point; the rod belongs to Moses and is used solely by him.¹⁷⁴ He viewed the role of Aaron as one which hindered his desired representation of Moses; his Moses had no need of a helper who would perform the wonders for him. Instead, Josephus concentrates the ability to perform these wonders in the person of Moses, a decision perhaps based upon his reputation as a magician and one which, as we shall see, could be misconstrued by those who would denigrate Moses as a negatively defined magician.

¹⁷⁰ . Although Tiede (*The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker*) notes (pp.221-222) that Josephus omits mention of Moses, Aaron or the rod in his description of the first three plagues (*Ant.* 2.294, 296, 300) and suggests that the reason for so doing was in order not to make Moses appear to be a mere magician, he does not explain why Josephus found it necessary to relate the serpent confrontation, complete with magical rod. Clearly this episode was of importance to Josephus, not least perhaps because it was a famous facet of the legend of Moses' power.

¹⁷¹ . The plague cycle, Ex. 7:14-11:10, connection to the ark of the covenant, Num 17:11.

¹⁷² . Water from the rock, Ex. 17:-6, the destruction of Pharaoh's army, Ex. 14:21

¹⁷³ . Emmerich, 'The Case Against Moses Reopened', pp.53-62. The confusion over the ownership of the rod has not been conclusively settled but on the subject see Propp, 'The Rod of Aaron and the Sin of Moses', pp.13-25.

¹⁷⁴ . Josephus makes little mention of the rod in future references, though he demonstrates that it was accepted as a symbol of power in his description of the events of Num 17:1-13 (*Ant.* 4.63-68) in which the tribes bring their rods to Moses in order that God may find for them a high priest. In this case too we may see the downgrading of Aaron, for Josephus changes the biblical narrative so that the divinely chosen rod has the word 'Levite' on it rather than Aaron's name as per Num 17:17-18. Interestingly, Josephus makes no mention of Moses' famous bronze serpent-staff (Num 21:6-9) which operates as a magical cure for snakebite; as this passage appears in the biblical narrative just before the story of Balaam, it may be suggested that he did not want to raise the issue of magic prior to his version of this diviner.

In his version of the serpent confrontation, Josephus uses an array of vocabulary which has little precedent in LXX, but which, to a degree, mirrors the Hebrew text of Exodus 7. Despite his claims of direct replication and faithful rendition of biblical texts, it amounts to an innovative and informative appraisal of magic, in which multiple elements of the biblical accounts are altered in order to meet his criteria. Not least of which is the defense of Moses on charges of magic; as we will see from his *Against Apion*, such charges were made by a number of pagan detractors and opponents of Judaism. The key, however, to Josephus' understanding of the serpent confrontation lies in his employment of magical terminology. Of particular importance is the language used to describe the opponents of Moses. The biblical accounts use a variety of terms in their descriptions, with a more negative spin being seen in LXX. Here we have a collection of wise-men/tricksters (σοφισταί), sorcerers (φάρμακος), and charmers (ἐπασιδοί), whom Pharaoh calls upon to replicate the transformation of Aaron's rod into a serpent.¹⁷⁵ These terms are an attempt to render the Hebrew words used for Pharaoh's magicians; in MT we are introduced to the magicians (חֲרָטְמִים), the wise men, (חֲכָמִים), and the sorcerers, (מְכַשְׁפִּים). Hence, in both texts we see a threefold designation of the magicians of Egypt, with an agreement that sees them collected as 'wisemen'. This designation is perhaps more overt in MT which provides a favourable view of the Egyptian art and learning of magic, terming them 'wise men' (חֲכָמִים), who practice an arcane, esoteric

¹⁷⁵ . Ex 7.11.

art (לְהַטְיָהֶם).¹⁷⁶ Such a positive image is somewhat diminished in LXX, which imagines this secret art to be a form of sorcery (φαρμακεία).

For Josephus, the link between the magicians and their identification as wisemen is a central theme; as with other descriptions of biblical magicians,¹⁷⁷ Josephus here appreciates magic as a learned art form, requiring skill and experience, and yielding tangible results. Thus, he uses LXX terminology in his description of the Egyptian magicians, referring to them as skilled (σοφός) in an art (ἐπιστήμη) with which they engage in a contest of prowess with Moses. We might also note that, despite his scornful comments in the *Against Apion*, there is no covert condemnation of Egyptian religion here.¹⁷⁸ Clearly, this scenario presents a fine opportunity, especially in light of the LXX account; that Josephus presents the Egyptians in a positive light is instructive of his overall approach to magic in this episode. As we see from the *Jewish War*, Josephus was quite capable of applying γόης terminology to those figures seen as negatively defined magicians.¹⁷⁹ That he does not do so here is due in part not only to his close reading of the biblical texts, in which he displays a desire to represent the Egyptians as wisemen of a learned art form, but also because the biblical traditions clearly show them operating under the sanction of their monarch. Not only does Josephus echo Exodus 7:11 in having Pharaoh summon the magicians,¹⁸⁰ he goes a stage further by calling them ‘priests’ (ἱερεῖς), a term which

¹⁷⁶ . Ex 7:8-13. See further Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria*, pp.41-44.

¹⁷⁷ . There is a remarkable degree of similarity in Josephus’ descriptions of the court magicians of the Joseph, Moses and Daniel episodes, all of whom are treated as experts in a sanctioned art form. Indeed, Josephus applies the term σοφία and its cognates to all of these forms of the magician; Joseph, *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.75, 2.87, Daniel, *Jewish Antiquities*, 10.187.

¹⁷⁸ . See for instance his comments against Manetho in *Against Apion*, 1.254-259. See further, J.M.G.Barclay, ‘The Politics of Contempt: Judaeans and Egyptians in Josephus’ *Against Apion*’, paper delivered to the SBL Josephus seminar, Nov. 19, 2000, in Nashville, Tennessee, available at <http://josephus.yorku.ca/pdf/barclay2000.pdf>, last accessed 21st July, 2006.

¹⁷⁹ . See Chapter 2, pp.74-79.

¹⁸⁰ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.285.

links them to an organisation (the priesthood of Egypt, a sanctioned religious body) and to ritual observances (sanctioned magico-religious rites).¹⁸¹ This terminology is not applied to these figures in the biblical texts, where they are expressly referred to by the terminology of magic, and thus constitutes an inventive addition by our author. Indeed, Josephus' description of the magicians as priests perhaps serves to display his knowledge of Egyptian magic.¹⁸² In addition, we might note that Josephus, in the first four books of *Ant.*, makes use of the term priests (ἱερεῖς) in reference to positive figures;¹⁸³ we may presume that this pattern is maintained in the episode of the magical contest.

In his use of σοφός and ἐπιστήμη as descriptions of the actions of the Egyptian priests, which mirror exactly those of Moses, Josephus suggests that magic is a form of learning and wisdom, a profession which requires skill and understanding. Indeed, Josephus provides a definite link between this construct of magic and the term μαγεία, by suggesting that Pharaoh accused Moses of trying to

¹⁸¹ . In this aspect Josephus has not followed the biblical texts, perhaps aware that priests in the Roman world were responsible for a wide variety of religious activities, amongst which must be included divination and similar 'magical' undertakings. In the biblical texts, the figures summoned by Moses are expressly designated as magicians. We may point to the similar appraisal of the magicians in Artapanus, 3.30, but we must note that not only is his terminology in this respect somewhat confused, but also that his clear intent is the denigration of Egyptian religion. See Koskeniemi, *The Old testament Miracle-Workers in Early Judaism*, p.101ff.

¹⁸² . We can observe no categorical difference between Egyptian religion and magic from our available sources; so R.K.Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, Chicago, University of Chicago, 1993, pp.67-72. See further the work of D.Frankfurter ('Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt and the Problem of the Category "Magician"', in P.Schäfer and H.G.Kippenberg (eds.), *Envisioning Magic, A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1997, pp.115-135), who not only describes the nature of the Egyptian priest as magician, but also analyses the fourth century CE work of Rufinus who states that an Egyptian priestly scriptorium is a 'virtual public school of magic (μαγεία)' (*Historia Ecclesiastica*, 11.26).

¹⁸³ . So we have the accounts of Abraham and the Egyptian priests (*Ant.*, 1.161, 164), Melchizedek (*Ant.*, 1.180), the privileges of the Egyptian priests (*Ant.*, 2.190), and, perhaps most importantly, the numerous descriptions of Israel's early religious experts (*Ant.*, 3.158, 172, 180, 226, 232, 4.72, 74, 164). In all, Rengstorf (*A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus*, pp.369-370) catalogues 73 instances of this term in the first four books of the *Antiquities*, none of which have a negative slant; indeed, each example is linked to either the sanctioned religious officials of either Egypt and Pharaoh, or of Israel and God.

impose on him by using magic (μαγεία) and wonder-working (τερατουργία).¹⁸⁴ Indeed, Pharaoh states that Moses could not pose as the only ‘expert’ (ἐμπειρος) in this matter.¹⁸⁵ Josephus’ use of non-magical terms such as σοφός, ἐπιστήμη, and ἐμπειρος, in speaking of the ‘spectacle’ (ὄψιν) of the serpent confrontation underlines the extent to which Josephus gave magic, at least in this case, a positive appraisal.¹⁸⁶ Of particular importance is the term σοφία, which covers a wide range of meanings within Josephus’s works, though primarily referring to the wisdom of God, and especially the wisdom contained in the Torah.¹⁸⁷ In general usage it can be used by Josephus to refer to prudence, discernment, understanding, intelligence and wisdom. In the instance of the serpent confrontation Josephus employs the adjective σοφός in relation to the priests, denoting one who is skilled, wise, intelligent, or one who has expertise. Both σοφία and σοφός represent positive terms for Josephus; the former is used most frequently in describing the wisdom of Solomon, Joseph, and Daniel,¹⁸⁸ whilst the latter is used more sparingly, though, again, the most frequent applications are seen in the story of Daniel.¹⁸⁹ All of these figures were famed for their wisdom, and were held in high regard by our author.

However, all of these figures were also associated with magic; Solomon was famed as a great magician whose exorcisms were still functioning in Josephus’ day, Joseph functioned as an ancillary part of the group of court magicians of Pharaoh,¹⁹⁰ whilst Daniel appears as part of a group of Chaldean magicians at the court of

¹⁸⁴ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.284.

¹⁸⁵ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.285.

¹⁸⁶ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.285.

¹⁸⁷ . Much like the rabbi’s viewpoint, wisdom is for Josephus the content of the Torah; *Jewish Antiquities*, 18.59, 18.82, 20.264, *Jewish War*, 2.118. See further the entry on ‘σοφία’ in *TDNT*, pp.502-503.

¹⁸⁸ . Solomon; *Ant.*, 8.42, 43, 49, 165, 166, 168, 171, 173, Joseph, *Ant.*, 2.87, Daniel, *Ant.*, 10.18, 189, 194, 200, 204, 239, 240.

¹⁸⁹ . *Ant.*, 10.91, 197, 198, 203, 237, 241.

¹⁹⁰ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.75-76.

Nebuchadnezzar.¹⁹¹ In the case of Solomon Josephus makes repeated use of the term σοφία,¹⁹² especially in speaking of the skill of exorcism, ‘a technique (τέχνη) useful and sanative to men.’¹⁹³ Following this link Josephus describes the modern day actions of Eleazar, who uses Solomon’s knowledge in order to expel a demon, and who appears as a magician sanctioned by Vespasian himself.¹⁹⁴ Likewise in the story of Daniel, Josephus speaks of the Chaldean magicians in glowing terms, referring to their learning as a form of ‘wisdom’ (σοφία) in which Daniel was particularly ‘skilful’ (ἐπιστήμων).¹⁹⁵ Thus, in speaking of sanctioned forms of magic, Josephus feels more than comfortable in applying terminology which primarily refers to the wisdom of God. In considering the term ἐπιστήμη too we have a similar scenario. Whilst Josephus can use this term in a normative manner, in speaking of skills such as those of Joshua’s geometricians,¹⁹⁶ or of Hiram the legendary builder,¹⁹⁷ he also employs it in speaking of magic. With the witch of Endor the term is used in order to describe her profession and livelihood, a ‘skill’ (ἐπιστήμη) deployed under the

¹⁹¹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 10.187-188.

¹⁹² . Josephus continually stresses throughout his narration of the life of Solomon that the king’s qualities, such as piety, justice and bravery, are functions of his wisdom (σοφία), understanding (φρόνησις) and virtue (ἀρετή); *Jewish Antiquities*, 7.341, 357, 369, 374, 384, 8.22, 109-110. Josephus preface’s his account of Solomon’s magical skills by stating that (*Jewish Antiquities*, 8.42); “Now so great was the prudence and wisdom (φρόνησις καὶ σοφία) which God granted Solomon that he surpassed the ancients, and even the Egyptians, who are said to be superior to all in understanding, and to be not only, when compared to him, slightly inferior, but exposed as falling far short of the king’s acumen (φρόνησις).” Clearly then, a comparison between the magical skills of Solomon (and hence Moses) and the Egyptians is of importance to Josephus.

¹⁹³ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 8.45. Josephus also mentions that Solomon was the author of a large number of books, amongst which were tomes on incantations (ἐπωδάς). Duling (‘The Eleazar Miracles and Solomon’s Magical Wisdom in Flavius Josephus’s *Antiquitates Judaicae* 8.42-49’, p.22) speculates that Eleazar was familiar with magical works such as *Sepher Ha-Razim* and the *Testament of Solomon*; from his description of Solomon it would seem that Josephus too may have been familiar with such magical books and their links to Solomon.

¹⁹⁴ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 8.42-49. Josephus shows no reticence in linking his modern sanctioned magician, Eleazar, with the great magician of Jewish history, Solomon.

¹⁹⁵ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 10.194. In the LXX these Chaldeans are referred to as primarily being ἐπαιδοί and μάγοι (Dan 1.20, 2.2, 2.10, 2.27, 4.4, 4.6), and are less frequently described as soothsayers (γαζαρηνῶν, Dan 2.27, 4.4) and wisemen (σοφοί, Dan 2.2, 2.27, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 4.15). In addition the term sorcerers (φαρμακοὺς) is employed once in Dan 2.2, adding a somewhat negative spin to the identification of the Chaldeans. In contrast, Josephus creates a more positive image by describing them as μάγοι and μάντις (*Jewish Antiquities*, 10.195, 10.198, 10.199, 10.203) who are skilled and wise (σοφός).

¹⁹⁶ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 5.76.

¹⁹⁷ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 8.76.

sanction of Saul in order to contact the dead.¹⁹⁸ In biblical literature such skills are condemned, but in Josephus' account she is praised and celebrated for her expertise. We see a similar employment, and link to magic, in Josephus' description of the prophet Elisha, whose ritual performance at Jericho is in the mould of what might be termed sympathetic magic, featuring prayers and intricate operations of his hands which are enough to bring a barren fountain to life.¹⁹⁹ Though Josephus does not supply any magical terminology he does state that the actions of Elisha were carried out in a 'skilful' (ἐπιστήμων) manner, thus paralleling the magic of the skilled magicians at the court of Pharaoh and the witch of Endor.

Moses' Response to Pharaoh – Josephus, Apologetics, and Moses as μάγος

Having recounted the actions of both Moses and the Egyptian priests in the serpent confrontation, in which both parties appear to be skilled practitioners of the secret art of magic, Josephus seeks to clarify the situation by explaining these similarities. The demonstration of the signs revealed by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, prior to the serpent confrontation, do little to impress Pharaoh; he calls Moses a criminal (πονηρός) who used fraud (ἀπάτη) and magic (μαγεία) in order to impress him.²⁰⁰ Josephus' Pharaoh sees no difference between the skills of Moses and the abilities of his own court priests. That Josephus adds the description of Pharaoh's

¹⁹⁸ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.340.

¹⁹⁹ . *Jewish War*, 4.464.

²⁰⁰ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.284. It could be seen that 'fraud' (ἀπάτη) is not the deception of judgement through magical tricks but rather the claim that Moses acts in the name of God. Josephus does not doubt that magic exists – but he shows that Pharaoh doubts Moses by stating that Pharaoh ordered a similar performance in order that Moses was not the only expert and that he should not pretend that he owed his marvellous gifts to God (i.e. a higher power than Egyptian magic).

anger at the signs, when compared to the biblical accounts, suggests that he was familiar with the tradition of Moses as magician.²⁰¹ Likewise, in both the biblical and *Ant.* accounts there is no hesitancy in showing that Moses and the Egyptian magicians stood on an equal footing, with equal powers and skills. Indeed, Josephus merely reports that, following the order from Pharaoh, the “priests thereupon dropped their staves, which became pythons”.²⁰² There is no hint of rationalism here; like the biblical accounts, Josephus believed that the secret arts and expertise of the Egyptian priests were capable of such feats. However, he did feel the need to show that there was a difference in the source and magnitude of the magical powers of Moses. Unlike the biblical versions of the story, which give no elaboration on the nature of the serpent confrontation,²⁰³ or that of Philo, which features lengthy dramatic descriptions of the events coupled to a clear categorization of the undertakings of the Egyptians as ‘deception’ (ἀπάτη),²⁰⁴ Josephus provides his readers with a quote from Moses himself by way of explanation of these miraculous events.

Moses’ speech to the Egyptian priests is perhaps the most striking addition which Josephus has made when compared with the biblical antecedents. Josephus prefaces Moses’ response by stating that he was not ‘daunted’ (καταπλαγείς) by the performance of the Egyptian magicians, suggesting that such magical skills were fully

²⁰¹ . Josephus not only has Pharaoh become angered after the performance of the signs of Sinai (*Jewish Antiquities*, 2.284), but also has him act indignantly following the serpent confrontation (*Jewish Antiquities*, 2.288). Clearly, Pharaoh was no more impressed by Moses’ magic even after his victory in the contest and his appeal to divine sanction. Though, of course, this may just be Josephus’ method of displaying Pharaoh’s ‘hardened heart’. See further, L.H.Feldman, *Flavius Josephus, Translation and Commentary*, vol.3, *Judean Antiquities 1-4*, ed. S.Mason, E.J.Brill, Leiden, 2000. p.215n.760.

²⁰² . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.285.

²⁰³ . Both the MT and the LXX offer no explanation of events in their versions of Exodus 7; it is taken for granted that the audience will understand the relative constructs of magic, and its specific terminology, and will thus have no need for elaborative detail. As we see from Josephus and Philo, this was hardly the case in the first century CE, where the figure of Moses was under direct attack from anti-Jewish authors who directly linked him to negative forms of magic. See further, L.H.Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1993, pp.285-287.

²⁰⁴ . *De Vita Mosis*, 1.95.

expected at the court of Pharaoh. Moreover, Moses pays tribute to these skills by refusing to disdain the σοφίας of the Egyptian priests. This term is translated as ‘cunning’ in the Loeb edition of *Ant.*, but this constitutes something of a disservice to the reputation of the Egyptians in the eyes of Josephus. Up until this point we have seen the magic of the Egyptians being categorized by Josephus as an art (ἐπιστήμη), in which they are skilled (σοφός), and in which Moses presents himself as an ‘expert’ (ἐμπειρος). Given the previous translation of σοφία terminology, in addition to this representation of magic, it seems somewhat unfair to malign the Egyptian priests as being ‘cunning’. Indeed, Josephus could easily have employed forms of σοφία terminology which expressly relate to cunning and deception; that he did not do so suggests that he intended the term to complement the other terms used in speaking of Egyptian magic.²⁰⁵ In this manner a more fitting translation would be ‘wisdom’ or ‘understanding’, thus removing the negative connotations of the idea of ‘cunning’.

Josephus provides an explanation of Moses’ familiarity with their magic by having his hero declare that “I assert that the deeds wrought by me so far surpass their magic and their art as things divine are remote from what is human.” There is no defense here of Moses on charges of practising magic; indeed, this passage shows, as Gager has noted, that Josephus’ envisages Moses as the stronger contestant in a battle

²⁰⁵ . A review of Rengstorff’s *Concordance* for the works of Josephus reveals (vol.4 p.28) that our author had a number of terms based upon the root of σοφία, but which he used with a different, and more negative, interpretation. For instance, he uses σοφίζω to refer to a cunning ruse or a deception (*Jewish War*, 3.222, 4.103, 5.452), whilst σόφισμα is used in speaking of a subtle trick (*Jewish Antiquities*, 6.218, 8.143, 8.167, 8.391, *Vita*, 130, 380). Likewise the term σοφιστής (‘learned man’, ‘scribe’, ‘sophist’), which is essentially an descriptive extension of σοφία for a class of individuals in society, is only ever used in a negative sense in speaking of those who claimed to be wise, Lysimachus and Apollonius Molon, but who were deceiving their audiences with lies concerning Moses; *Against Apion*, 2.136. Thus, it seems quite clear that Josephus had terminology available to him which could have described deception and trickery, and which was based upon the root of σοφία. It must also be observed that in no instance does σοφία terminology create negative connotations; this is the preserve of the terms σοφίζω and σόφισμα, which denote trickery and deception.

of magical skill.²⁰⁶ However, Josephus does not directly attribute these same magical skills to Moses, instead shielding his hero from clear association with the term μαγεία and describing his ‘magic’ as ‘deeds’ (κρείττονα). The only other hint as to the actions of Moses is contained in the description of these deeds as ‘miracles’ (φαινόμενα), again a nebulous term designed to shield Moses from direct association with magical terminology.²⁰⁷ In this manner he creates a dichotomous Moses; a figure who adheres to the famous reputation of being a master of magic, but who is not directly labelled as such. In his commentary on this passage, Feldman states: “It is not Aaron’s rod but Moses’ that effects the feats of magic; and the contest, in fact, becomes one between human trickery and divine power.”²⁰⁸ Such an appraisal misses a number of important points. In no sense does Josephus link the actions of Moses or the Egyptians with magical rods; indeed, the transformation is performed by the skill and expertise of Moses and the Egyptians in the field of magic. Here Feldman carries over the biblical story of the rod of Aaron and overlooks its place in the *Jewish Antiquities*. By neglecting the magical powers of the rod, Josephus removes an impediment to the idea that Moses performs magic under divine sanction; he has no need of magical apparatus, incantations or gestures. Likewise, the performance of the Egyptians is not one of human trickery but rather of skill in a specific art form, namely magic; in this performance there is no sense of deception, and the events are narrated without rationalisation.

Having demonstrated the similarities between Moses and the Egyptian priests, Josephus proceeds to a defense of Moses against the specific charge of negative

²⁰⁶ . Gager, ‘Moses the Magician: Hero of an Ancient Counter-Culture?’, p.186.

²⁰⁷ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.286.

²⁰⁸ . L.H.Feldman, in S.Mason (ed.), *Flavius Josephus, Translation and Commentary*, vol.3 *Judean Antiquities 1-4*, E.J.Brill, Leiden, 2000, p.215n.756.

magic (γοητεία). He has Moses state: “And I will show that it is from no witchcraft (γοητεία) or deception of true judgement (πλάνην τῆς ἀληθοῦς δόξης), but from God’s providence and power that my miracles proceed.”²⁰⁹ The term here concerning magic, γοητεία, is a particularly damning one which was of special interest for the magical representation of Moses in the works of anti-Jewish authors such as Lysimachus and Apion. Its inclusion here may well have been motivated by such representations, especially since Josephus has Moses himself deny that he uses ‘witchcraft’ (γοητεία) or ‘deception of true judgement’ (πλάνην τῆς ἀληθοῦς δόξης). Moreover, Josephus reinforces this image of Moses by stating that it is from God’s providence (πρόνοια) and power (δύναμις) that he performs the ‘miracles’ (φαινόμενα).²¹⁰ In this manner the form of magic that Josephus wishes to avoid in connection with Moses is γοητεία; he does not take any protective steps to disassociate Moses from the Egyptian priests, who practice μαγεία, perhaps because he recognises that he cannot ignore the traditions which see Moses as a μάγος.²¹¹ Indeed, Josephus is keen to stress the representation of Moses as a powerful magician for he states that Moses drops his staff and ‘ordered’ (κελεύσας) it to become a serpent, thus indicating that he is the initiator of the magical event.²¹² Whilst God has provided Moses with the power to perform his miraculous signs, amongst which is the serpent transformation, it is Moses himself who controls their performance; in this

²⁰⁹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.286.

²¹⁰ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.286. Again, with the term φαινόμενα we have a somewhat biased translation of ‘miracles’; in actuality, Josephus employs the term in a number of forms throughout his works in the simple meaning of ‘a manifestation’. In the present context it could be said to refer to ‘a demonstration’.

²¹¹ . As Meeks states (*The Prophet-King*, p.139) on *Jewish Antiquities* 2.286; “This passage illuminates also the reserve which Josephus displays towards Moses’ miracles, which could have been expanded, as in Artapanus, to depict Moses as a virtual μάγος.” Although Meeks appeals to Josephus’ employment of rationalism as an explanation of his reluctance to follow Artapanus (p.139), it must still be observed that his *Jewish Antiquities* account constitutes a much more detailed and extensive version of the story when compared to his biblical sources. There is also no appeal to rationalism, familiar from the more fantastic elements of biblical literature which he recounts; this suggests that Josephus knew that one of the images which his audience would already be familiar with was Moses as μάγος.

²¹² . *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.287.

manner he becomes, especially to Josephus' Graeco-Roman audience, an example of the sanctioned magician. Likewise, Josephus goes far beyond the biblical texts in speaking of the Egyptians as 'priests' (ἱερεῖς) who practice an art (τέχνη) which is at home in the court of Pharaoh, representing μαγεία as a contrasting form of magic to γοητεία, and which is fully capable of replicating the 'miracles' (φαινόμενα) of Moses. Instead of providing a contrast between magic and miracle, Josephus seeks to contrast sanctioned magic (μαγεία), performed by Moses under the providence (πρόνοια) of God and by the Egyptian priests under the authority of Pharaoh, with unsanctioned and negatively defined magic (γοητεία).

Phantom Pythons? An Apparent Rationalisation of Magic

An important detail which has often been used to show that Josephus had doubts over the efficacy of magic and that he was, at heart, a rationalist, is the description of the Egyptians' staves as merely 'looking' like pythons. So Currid takes it as read that Josephus "supported the idea of trickery as the method of transmogrification."²¹³ Feldman in his commentary on *Ant.* appeals to Philo in order to suggest that the Egyptians were guilty of fraud and deception, and are in no sense comparable to the 'divine' undertakings of Moses.²¹⁴ MacRae remarks that Josephus brings a sense of doubt to the events by 'carefully noting' that the efforts of the

²¹³ . Currid, 'The Egyptian Setting of the Serpent Confrontation in Exodus 7:8-13', p.215n.57.

²¹⁴ . Feldman (commentary), in S.Mason (ed.), *Flavius Josephus, Translation and Commentary, Volume 3, Judean Antiquities 1-4*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, pp.215n.758; he refers to Philo, *Vit.Mos.* 1.16.94, who sees the spectators of the confrontation as adopting a sceptical attitude towards the magic of the Egyptians.

Egyptians “only ‘looked like’ serpents”.²¹⁵ The implication is that Josephus did not believe that the Egyptian magicians were capable of anything other than fraud and deception. However, such a position does not accord with Josephus’ prior positive descriptions of the Egyptian priests as highly skilled in an art; an art, moreover, which is termed *μαγεία*, not *γοητεία*. Up until this point he has revealed nothing which would suggest doubt over the abilities of the Egyptians to compete with Moses in a contest of magic. Why then does Josephus mention the detail that Moses’ staff ate up those of the Egyptians which ‘looked like pythons’? At first glance such a phrase would seem to support the ideas of Currid, Feldman and MacRae.

If we turn to the Greek terminology used by Josephus here we see, however, that the idea of deception is unsustainable. Josephus uses the term *ἐδόκουν*, a form of the intransitive verb *δοκέω*, which has been translated as ‘looked like’ by the aforementioned scholars. Rengstorf catalogues a legion of instances of this term in the works of Josephus, and in the vast majority of cases it has a positive definition of ‘to appear, to show oneself as, to indicate clearly’.²¹⁶ In one instance, however, the description of king Archelaus, Josephus employs the term in the sense of ‘supposed’. However, this account concerns the Maccabean war in which the Jews under Judas disputed the rulership over Judaea of the Seleucid king Antiochus; in this sense Josephus subtly uses the term to show that, whilst Antiochus is, in actuality, a king, he has no rights over Judaea and will soon be defeated by the Jews. The essential meaning then of the term would appear to be a demonstrative form of illustration, a pointing out of reality. It would be unwise to interpret this term in a negative sense, without any further hints from the text, simply because a translation suggesting

²¹⁵ . MacRae, ‘Miracle in the *Antiquities* of Josephus’, p.135.

²¹⁶ . K.Rengstorf, *A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus*, 4 vols., Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1973, pp.511-517.

deception agrees with preconceived ideas concerning Josephus' theory of magic. As there are no other hints or details concerning the snakes or staves, we are forced to look for the solution in the magical terminology of the passage. What we find is that Josephus, following his pattern of imagining sanctioned magicians at the courts of kings and rulers, makes extensive use of μάγος terminology. If he had wished to clearly show that deception was the order of the day, he would surely have described the Egyptian priests as γόης; that is, as charlatans or deceivers who pretend to magical abilities. Instead they are priests (ἱερεῖς) who practice true μαγεία. Moses himself may be shown to be practising a form of μαγεία, though one which is derived from a higher power than the gods of the Egyptians.²¹⁷

Moses and Charges of Practising Magic: The Evidence from *Against Apion*, 2.145-

150

Further to the account of his life in *Ant.*, Josephus is moved to defend the character of Moses from pagan slanders in *Against Apion*. Here Josephus seeks to defend Judaism against the slanders of Apollonius Molon, Lysimachus and others who, through ignorance and ill will, have portrayed Moses as a charlatan and impostor.²¹⁸ The term used by these pagan opponents of Judaism in reference to

²¹⁷ . As Schäfer ('Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism', p.29) observes this is the case in the biblical texts too: "the biblical author...tells us not that Moses' and Aaron's performative acts are legitimate and the magicians' spells are illegitimate (this is, if at all, not his main concern), but that Moses' and Aaron's performances are *more powerful* than the efforts of the magicians, because God is the real originator."

²¹⁸ . Josephus's method of refuting these slurs and accusations is to give a brief account of the Jewish constitution, which is designed to "promote piety, friendly relations with each other, and humanity towards the world at large, besides justice, hardihood, and contempt of death." *Against Apion*, 2.145-146. See further J.M.G.Barclay, 'Judaism in Roman Dress: Josephus' Tactics in the *Contra Apionem*',

Moses is, according to Josephus, γόης.²¹⁹ In addition to the definition of ‘charlatan’, which is used by the editors of the Loeb edition of *Against Apion*, γόης has strong connotations concerning the world of magic.²²⁰ Central to this term at the time of Josephus was the idea of deception and wilful deceit; it was a negative term which, in the eyes of Josephus, would clearly constitute a form of slander when associated with the figure of Moses. Yet the word also hints at some form of supernatural or magical ability, for, when Josephus uses the term himself of charlatans in his own times, he does so in a manner that suggests there was something of note behind their bluster.²²¹ Such is Josephus’ reaction to his pagan critics that he desires to give an account of Moses which resonates with his Graeco-Roman audience, describing him as a general, law-giver and servant of his god, and to give a “brief account of our constitution as a whole and of its details”.²²² By the late first century CE the legacy of Moses as a potent magician in the mould of such figures as Apollonius of Tyana, Simon Magus, or King Solomon, was far advanced in both Jewish and pagan circles. From Josephus’ descriptions in *Against Apion* we can be confident that the pagan slanderers were well aware of the magical aspect of the character of Moses. Furthermore, though their own works do not survive to us, Josephus shows that they knew exactly which terminology to use in order to cast damaging slanders on Moses.

in F.Siegert and J.U.Kalms (eds.), *Internationales Josephus-Kolloquium Aarhus 1999*, Munster, 2000, pp.231-245.

²¹⁹ . *Against Apion*, 2.145 and 2.161.

²²⁰ . *Against Apion*, p.351; on the negative connotations of the term γόης in the first century CE, see G.Delling, ‘γόης,’ *TDNT*, vol.1, pp.737-738.

²²¹ . Rengstorff, *A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus*, catalogues ten instances of γόης; *Jewish War*, 2.261, 2.264, 4.85, 5.317, *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.97, 20.160, 20.167, 20.188, *Against Apion*, 2.145, 2.161, and three of γοητεία; *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.286, 2.320, *Life*, 40. Elsewhere Josephus uses the term γόης to refer to false prophets and itinerant wonder-workers; see Smith, ‘The Occult in Josephus,’ pp.250-251 who lists a number of such examples from both the *Jewish Antiquities* and the *Jewish War*, and draws attention to the fact that Josephus used the term in a manner that suggests the miraculous. As Smith (‘The Occult in Josephus’) states: “All these men promised miracles; the use of goes to differentiate from the rest of the revolutionists suggests that they were thought to do miracles.” (p.251)

²²² . *Against Apion*, 2.145.

Unlike the account given in *Ant.* the portrayal of Moses in *Against Apion* is not a re-writing of biblical history; rather it is a purely Josephan composition designed to answer the accusations of pagan critics of Judaism. Josephus's concern is to portray him as the ultimate legislator and as a pious and religious man who faithfully carries out the pronouncements of his deity. Moses is thus the model for the religion of Josephus, hence his desire to answer the critics who saw in him nothing but a magician (γόνης) and a fraud (ἀπατεῶν).²²³ Here it is important to note that Josephus writes in response to the allegation made by Apollonius Molon, Lysimachus and others that Moses is to be identified as a γόνης; in using this particular term, which could have various meanings from 'sorcerer' to 'trickster', Josephus is acknowledging that the accusations against Moses focus in part on his reputation as a magician. As has been seen, the term γόνης had evolved beyond the origins of the ritual lament and had come to function as something of a banner under which could be gathered the more negative aspects of magic, especially the sense of trickery and deception.²²⁴ That this term is used by pagan critics of Moses is not surprising, and we must assume that they knew both the magical tradition and legacy of Moses, and indeed the nature of the vocabulary which they employed in their assaults on his character. In contrast, Josephus does not wish to dwell on the allegations which see Moses as a γόνης; rather his response is to concentrate on aspects of the life of Moses which lend themselves to an easy translation into the values of the Graeco-Roman world. For example, Josephus asks his readers to 'consider his first magnificent achievement' namely the Exodus episode in which Moses commands the Jewish people in their flight from Egypt, leading them through 'formidable difficulties' and to victories against their

²²³ . *Against Apion*, 2.145 and 2.161. Indeed, Josephus is keen to limit the fantastic elements of Moses' life in his *Against Apion* account. See further H.W.Attridge, 'Josephus and His Works,' in M.E.Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1984, pp.227-231.

²²⁴ . On the evolution of the term γόνης in this respect see Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, pp.24-46.

enemies.²²⁵ In so doing Josephus creates an image of him as “the best of generals (στρατηγὸς ἄριστος), the sagest of councillors (σύμβουλος συνετώτατος), and the most conscientious of guardians (πάντων κηδεμῶν ἀληθέστατος).”²²⁶ Notably, however, he makes no comment on the magical traditions which were widespread concerning Moses; the need to avoid any connection with the γόης in the *Against Apion* was great indeed.

Theudas as Anti-Moses, *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.97-99

In addition to his defense of Moses on charges of γοητεία in the *Against Apion*, Josephus also protects his hero through his characterization of Theudas, a γόης of the author’s era who mimics the actions and role of Moses. This figure combined the role of revolutionary leader with that of prophet, inspiring a large group of followers in expectation of miraculous events.²²⁷ Rising during the turbulent era of the procurator Fadus, Theudas the γόης is said to have ‘stated that he was a prophet’ (προφήτης...ἔλεγεν εἶναι), persuading his followers to accompany him to the Jordan River where he intended to replicate Moses’ miraculous parting of the waves.²²⁸ Such a large group of wandering people, inspired perhaps by revolutionary

²²⁵ . *Against Apion*, 2.157.

²²⁶ . *Against Apion*, 2.157.

²²⁷ . Josephus states (*Ant.* 20.97) that Theudas claimed to be a prophet (προφήτης), not that he was one. In Acts 5:36 we see Theudas in a speech attributed to Gamaliel I which states that he ‘claimed to be somebody’ (λέγων εἶναι τινα ἑαυτόν); Josephus’ account would seem to suggest that this ‘claim’ may refer to Moses.

²²⁸ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.97. The model for Theudas’ miraculous actions appears to be either Moses and the Red Sea (Ex. 12:29-14:30) or Joshua at the Jordan River (Josh. 3-4). However, as the latter is clearly based upon the former it would seem that Moses served as the primary model, especially since Joshua 3:7, 4:14, 4:23, all make a connection to the actions of Moses. Indeed, R.Gray (*Prophetic Figures in Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence From Josephus*, Oxford, Oxford University

ideals, was a potent threat to Roman order as Josephus makes clear; Theudas and his followers were rounded up before they could reach the river by a Roman cavalry detachment, some were killed, some imprisoned, and their leader was executed on the spot.²²⁹ Although Theudas' intentions are debated,²³⁰ especially in relation to his promised parting of the river, the fact that Josephus employs the term γόης in speaking of a figure who clearly evokes images of Moses is instructive. This terminology, combined with the idea that Theudas claimed to be a prophet, suggests that Theudas intended to demonstrate miraculous powers to his followers but would be doing so without sanction. Thus, whereas Moses performs the parting of the Red Sea under sanction from God, Theudas, as a false prophet, has no such backing. Josephus is quite clear concerning the punishment for magicians of his own era who attempt to replicate prophetic signs without sanction; they are hunted down and executed by the Roman authorities.

A similar scenario may be seen in Josephus' account of the Egyptian γόης who also attempted to replicate a biblical sign to his followers and who is termed a 'false prophet' (ψευδοπροφήτης) by Josephus.²³¹ Such figures belong to a wider group of magicians and false-prophets who plagued Judea according to Josephus in the Roman era, leading the masses astray with their false promises.²³² Through detailing their violent suppression by the Roman authorities Josephus shows that they

Press, 1993, p.115) argues that the two events had become fused in popular memory and expectation in the first century CE.

²²⁹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.98.

²³⁰ . M.Hengel (*The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I Until 70 A.D.*, trans. D.Smith, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1989, p.230n.5) has suggested a further parallel between the biblical account of the Exodus under Moses and the actions of Theudas, in that both groups were armed. Whilst it is tempting to see such a parallel it must be observed that Josephus does not explicitly state that Theudas' band was armed, and that in his own version of the Exodus the Israelites (*Ant.* 2.321-349) are only armed *after* they have made the crossing.

²³¹ . *Jewish War*, 2.261-263, *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.169-172

²³² . See Chapter 2.

acted without sanction, and provides a direct contrast with the actions of Moses. Moses might well be a magician, performing wonderful deeds like the parting of the Red Sea, but in no sense is he a γόης. Furthermore, the wider language which Josephus uses in his description of Theudas leaves us in no doubt that this figure was not only a magician, but also a lying demagogue who led the people astray. Thus, Theudas claimed that 'at his command the river would be parted and would provide them an easy passage' (καὶ προστάγματι τὸν ποταμὸν σχίσας δίοδον ἔχειν ἔφη παρέξειν αὐτοῖς ῥαδίαν), a clear reference to magic in as much that, combined with a pretension to prophetic status, it shows him to be acting without sanction.²³³ Josephus is also careful to note that 'many were deluded by his words' (καὶ ταῦτα λέγων πολλοὺς ἠπάτησεν) and that Fadus 'did not permit them to reap the fruit of their folly' (οὐ μὲν ἔιασεν αὐτοὺς τῆς ἀφροσύνης ὄνασθαι).²³⁴ Evidently, miraculous and magical signs of Israelite freedom, as performed by Moses in the ancient past, have no place in Josephus' Roman Judea; even if they did, one such as Theudas would not be performing them. This is the message contained in the description of Theudas, a figure who constituted a possible focal point for a rebellion against Roman power. Indeed, by showing that the parting of the waves was never performed by Theudas, Josephus also shows that the achievement of Moses is unique; it could never be replicated by a γόης, someone who operates outside law, order, and sanction.

²³³ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.98.

²³⁴ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.99.

Conclusion

For Josephus then, Moses represents the ideal form of a society's legislator (νομοθέτης), prophet (προφήτης), general (στρατηγός) and ultimately a θεῖος ἄνθρωπος. All of these functions are based upon biblical antecedents, though exaggerated in *Ant.* to god-like proportions, and may be found in similar appraisals of the greatest hero of Judaism by authors such as Philo and Pseudo-Philo. However, in Graeco-Roman literature Moses is heavily associated with the world of magic; indeed, for Pliny the Elder he constitutes one of the ancient masters of the art who handed down his skills to the magicians of his own day. As *Against Apion* shows, Josephus is not unaware of these associations, and is forced to move against those who would slander Moses as a γόης. Nor could he ignore this tradition in the earlier *Ant.*; given that the biblical texts envisage a contest of magic between Moses (and Aaron) and the Egyptian magicians, coupled with the widespread fame of Moses as magician, Josephus could hardly be ignorant of the issues at stake in his representation of the 'magical' Moses. His account in *Ant.* is clearly designed to refute the idea of Moses as a γόης, though in no sense is the tradition of Moses as magician completely rejected. Instead, he represents his hero as a sanctioned magician, one who receives power and authority from God, and who engages in a contest of power (as the book of Acts envisaged) with the Egyptian magicians. The contest ends in a victory not only for Moses but also for Moses' God over the gods of the Egyptians. Moreover, magic is presented in both positive and negative forms. Whilst we have the ideas of witchcraft and deception of judgement, which Josephus has Moses specifically renounce, we also have a positive and acceptable form which features as a learned art, in which the

Egyptian magicians are skilled and Moses appears as an expert. One is acceptable to the sanctioned authority, Pharaoh, who surrounds himself with priest-magicians, whilst the other is inimical to both Moses and Pharaoh. Josephus is able to adhere to the biblical tradition, echoed in both the magical and political texts of his own day, which sees Moses as a master of magic whilst simultaneously denying that he is a γόης. Here, sanction is key; whilst Moses acts on his own, he is ultimately doing so under the guidance of God.

Chapter 4: Balaam – Magic and Divination in the *Jewish Antiquities*

Introduction

The second case study concerns Balaam, a biblical seer famed for his magical skills of divination. Drawing upon the various biblical accounts of this figure, Josephus creates a narrative of much greater length and detail in which we sense respect for a kindred ‘prophet’. The most striking element of this portrayal, when compared to biblical literature, Philo, and Pseudo-Philo, is the positive light in which an enemy of Israel is seen. I will argue that this representation is due, in no small part, to Josephus’ attempts to distance Balaam from magic. The reasons for this disassociation will become apparent when we consider the importance of the oracles issued by Balaam which deal with the destiny of the Israelites, as well as the importance of μάντις terminology for Josephus. Josephus stands apart from other ancient witnesses to the Balaam tradition, primarily because he neglects to label the seer a negatively-defined magician, or to associate him with various details which readily lend themselves to a magical interpretation. Balaam appears from all other sources, including the biblical narratives, to be a form of magician; yet in *Ant.* we see the reverse policy, with Josephus attempting to shield Balaam from overt associations with magic.

Magic was an important category of thought for Josephus in his paraphrasing of the Balaam tradition. As Barclay observes, the oracles of Balaam (Numbers 23:7-10, 23:18-24, 24:3-9, 24:15-19, and 24:20-25) were open to a wide range of interpretations in antiquity, with the character and representation of Balaam being key

to the overall representation of the events of Numbers 22-24.¹ The message, in many respects, is only as powerful and persuasive as its messenger. Given the centrality of magic in the biblical narratives, with the terminology of magic being employed in connection to Balaam in both MT and LXX, we should not be surprised to see exegetes creating a magical Balaam in their works. What is surprising, however, is that Josephus does not do so. Previous scholarship has neglected the impact of magic on the Balaam of *Ant.*, primarily because he has been repeatedly interpreted as a form of seer rather than as a magician. Yet, the duplication of Deuteronomical magical terminology in Numbers 22-24 suggests that Balaam is heavily linked, by biblical authors, translators and exegetes, with magic. The Balaam episode is also significant for it illuminates Josephus' understanding of the term μάντις. An important factor in his employment of this term is its association with divination and the world of magic; Balaam provides a focus for his thinking on these links. Here I will argue that Josephus is well aware of the Graeco-Roman views on magic current in the 1st Century CE, to the extent that he can employ μάντις terminology in a positive description of Balaam the diviner.

Balaam in the Ancient Sources

Balaam in The Biblical Accounts: MT

In both the Hebrew and Greek versions of the Bible, Balaam's portrayal is twofold, as a tool of God and as a character in his own right, combining true

¹ . J.M.G.Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora, From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)*, T&T Clark Ltd., Edinburgh, 1996, pp.1-4.

divinatory and prophetic powers with evil intent against the Israelites. The main reference to him occurs in the book of Numbers as part of the narrative of the war between the Israelites and Balak, king of Moab.² Further references occur in the Books of Deuteronomy and Joshua.³ It has been suggested that these secondary references are largely the work of Priestly redactors who were responsible for the completion of the Torah, and who enhanced the negative portrayal of Balaam.⁴ So P adds at the end of the Numbers episode that the seer was responsible for the apostasy of the Israelites, being killed by them in a battle against Midian.⁵ Furthermore, this negative appraisal of Balaam in the P redaction may be seen in Joshua 13:22, which not only refers to Balaam's ignominious death with the Midianite leaders but also to the tradition which sees him as a magician, employing the distinctive, and rare, terminology of *קסם* / *קסם* seen in Num 22:7. This terminology, most prominent in the prohibitions against magic users in Deut 18:10-14, strongly links Balaam to the world of magic. In contrast to traditional scholarship, however, I will argue that there are many details in scripture which link him to the world of magic, and that redactional efforts by P and the editors of the Torah are designed to solidify the image of him as a magician. Balaam's principal role in Numbers is that of cursing the Israelites at the command of king Balak, though God forbids him to do so; whilst the prophets have the power to curse Israel's enemies, Balaam is neither an Israelite nor a true prophet.

² . Num 22:5-24:20 and 31:8.

³ . Deut 23:5-6; Josh 24:9-10.

⁴ . On this matter, G.Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1961, pp.175-176, states: "Thus the pejorative interpretation of the Balaam story is consequently not a product of rabbinic exegesis, but a contribution of the priestly redactors of the Torah." As shall be seen, the successive redactors and commentators on this section of Numbers who wished to create a negative portrayal of Balaam, heightened his associations with negatively defined magic at the expense of his repute as a prophet. See further J.Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, N.Y., 1957 pp.136-138 and M.Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1981, p.201. Somewhat surprisingly though G.von Rad devoted little attention to the text of the Balaam episode, speaking of its limited importance only twice in his *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, Edinburgh, Oliver & Body Ltd., 1966.

⁵ . Num 31:8,16

Whilst the Priestly traditions are only thought to figure briefly in the Balaam story in Numbers, the J and E traditions are both in evidence.⁶ Although the extent to which J and E can be separated has been questioned by more recent studies,⁷ I will argue that in our extant biblical accounts of the story of Balaam we possess at least two differing and identifiable traditions concerning his character and actions. Traditional scholarly consensus assigns the two sections 22:41-23:26 and 23:28-14:19 to E and J respectively, whilst the story of the ass (22:21-35) is assigned to J only (or is sometimes believed to have been an independent addition).⁸ However, and significantly for our study of the magical aspect of Balaam, it can be observed that J and E adopt differing views on the divinatory skills of Balaam; the table below illustrates these differences and the corresponding passages from Numbers 22-24.

J Tradition – Balaam as Magician (Active)	E Tradition – Balaam as Yahweh-Prophet (Passive)
22:7 - The fees for divination קָסָם	22:8 – The Lord speaks to Balaam
22:12b – The curse of Balaam	22:18 – The command of God is binding on Balaam
23:7 – The ‘utterances’ of Balaam’s oracle	22:20 – God comes to Balaam at night
24:1 – Balaam looks for omens נִחַן	22:38 – ‘The word God puts in my mouth, that is what I must say.’
24:4 and 16 – Balaam evokes/sees a vision of God	23:26 – ‘Whatever the Lord says, that is what I must do’.

⁶ . On the division of Numbers between the two traditions see; R.R.Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1980, who further splits the sources into north and south Israelite traditions. Likewise, M.Noth, *Numbers*, London, SCM Press, 1966 gives a succinct analysis of the Balaam episode with respect to this division, in which J is associated with Balaam as magician and E with Balaam as prophet. The article concerning Balaam in the *ABD* (J.A.Hackett, ‘Balaam,’ *ABD*, vol.1, pp.569-572) gives a detailed analysis of the division between J and E traditions in the Balaam episode, emphasizing the extent to which they adopt differing portrayals of Balaam and his divinatory skills, but no direct mention is made of magic in this analysis.

⁷ . In his summary of Numbers T.E.Fretheim (‘Numbers’, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, J.Barton and J.Muddiman (eds.), Oxford University Press, 2001, pp.110-134) suggests that source-critical attempts to divide this story into J and E have not been successful, preferring instead to see the characteristic use of divine names and coherence difficulties as reflections of a long history of transmission. This view, however, takes no account of the dipartite representation dependent on the world of magic which I argue for here.

⁸ . So, for instance, as summarized in J.Milgrom, ‘Numbers, Book of,’ *ABD*, vol.4, pp.1146-1155.

These details demonstrate the relationships between Balaam and God; in J Balaam is seen as a magical diviner, skilled in cursing his enemies, casting oracles, and evoking visions of the divine, whilst in E he is seen as a tool of God, reacting to God's will and unable to speak other than God commands. We might note, though, that in neither source is there a classification of Balaam's office; nowhere in Numbers 22-24 is he termed a *נביא*, hence his definition is open to question. J sees Balaam as a magical diviner, a representation which, through the redactional efforts of P, serves as the basic image in MT, LXX and Second Temple exegesis. That the two images of Balaam could be combined to form the narrative of Num 22-24, suggests that the divide between J's magical diviner and E's prophet was not as great as modern commentators would have us believe.⁹ In essence, then, we have a collection of various traditions which have been woven together, from which the priestly redactors develop their negatively-defined magician; hence, we may observe that P agrees much more strongly with J than E, though P does find elements of the E traditions helpful for its magical portrayal of Balaam.

Throughout the J and E sections of the Balaam narrative his portrayal is fairly positive; he is either a skilled diviner of high repute as in J, or he is the mouthpiece of Yahweh. It is only when the P tradition takes over in Numbers 31:16 that Balaam's reputation for the love of gain is emphasized, as is the supposition that he is

⁹ . We might note the recent work of L.L.Grabbe on this matter who illustrates the extent to which the activities of diviners and prophets were similar (*Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages, A Socio-Historical Study of Religious Specialists in Ancient Israel*, Trinity Press International, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, 1995). However, Grabbe suggests that the default image of Balaam is that of a prophet, and he does not make any mention of the negative connotations of *נביא* / *נבואה* terminology, its relationship to magic, the inclusion of technical terms for non-prophetic divination, or the negative nature of the Priestly redaction material (most notably Joshua 13:22).

responsible for leading Israel into sin.¹⁰ In Num 22:7 there is no criticism of Balaam for receiving the fees for divination (קֶסָמִים), and it is emphasized that he is unwilling to accept a ‘house full of silver and gold’ if it means he has to cross God. It is only in P that these details are linked to a negative aspect. We might note especially the use of the term קֶסָמִים in Num 22:7, meaning the ‘fees for divination’, in speaking of Balaam for it is directly related to the outlawed augur (קֶסֶם קֶסָמִים) of Deut 18:10.¹¹ Moreover, Deut 18:14 reminds the faithful that those “nations that you are about to dispossess do indeed resort to soothsayers (מְעוֹנִין) and augurs (קֶסֶם קֶסָמִים); to you, however, the Lord your God has not assigned the like”.¹² I will address this terminology in greater detail in a future section, but for the present it will suffice to note that the Balaam story in Numbers contains terminology which is directly linked to the provisions on magic given in Deut. 18:10-14.

This dichotomous nature of Balaam, as passive prophet and active magician, runs throughout Numbers 22-24. Balaam speaks as the deity dictates, even when ordered by Balak to curse the Israelites; yet his blessings of Israel are seen to be just as efficacious as his curses are presumed to be (at least by Balak). It must not be

¹⁰ . As Noth (*Numbers*, p.173) states: “The situation is quite different in Num. 31 (from which Josh. 13.22 is derived), where Balaam was a Midianite and was killed by the Israelites in the course of a campaign against the Midianites (v.8) for the reason that he had led Israel astray in the apostasy described in Num. 25.1ff. This latter version, to which reference is made in the New Testament in Rev. 2.14, is, from the literary point of view, attested only in very late passages and presumably does not rest on an old tradition.”

¹¹ . We might note too other examples of the term ‘augur’ (קֶסֶם) in the Hebrew Bible; in Isaiah 3:2 he is mentioned in connection with the warrior, priest and king whilst in Micah 3:6-11 the link is made with the prophet. However, as Ricks points out these references occur in the negative sense of having prophecies of doom pronounced against them: S.D.Ricks, ‘The Magician as Outsider in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament,’ in M.Meyer and P.Mirecki, *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1995, pp.131-144, see especially p.138.

¹² . See further; P.Schäfer, ‘Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism,’ in P.Schäfer and H.G.Kippenberg (eds.), *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, Leiden E.J.Brill, 1997, pp.27-28. F.H.Cryer, however, points out that the condemnation of the practices in Deut 18:10-14 is aimed not at the practices themselves, but rather at those forms which are not under the control of the religious authorities and which do not support the sanctioned theology. See F.H.Cryer, ‘Magic in Ancient Syria-Palestine – and in the Old Testament,’ in M-L.Thomsen and F.H.Cryer, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, vol.1 Biblical and Pagan Societies*, London, Athlone Press, 2001, pp.97-146, see p.122.

forgotten, too, that Balaam is sought out by Balak because he has a certain power or skill which could be termed ‘magical’ and which will be used to curse the Israelites. The problem remains that Balaam is an ambiguous character who is not clearly defined; in MT he can be seen as both Yahweh-prophet and magician. This fact was clearly alarming to the translators of LXX, who systematically avoid recognising Yahweh as the source of Balaam’s prophecies.¹³ For J, Balaam is principally a diviner in a ‘magical’ sense; he has the requisite skills needed to interpret the signs provided by God, most especially those needed in using oracles for divining the future. It is from this tradition that the problem over the nature of Balaam’s fees for divination is said to have arisen.¹⁴ In E, however, we see Balaam being defined as a typical prophet of God, who, as per the definition of Deut 18:18, can only speak the words which God places in his mouth.¹⁵

In other biblical references Balaam fares less well. In Deuteronomy, he is seen to be motivated by gain in his attempts at cursing Israel,¹⁶ whilst in Joshua the role of God is heightened as Balaam, rather than Balak, is said to have wished to curse the Israelites.¹⁷ A further reference in Micah 6:5 is somewhat ambiguous; as Hackett observes, it may be interpreted either positively, against the background of Numbers

¹³ . Instead of translating the divine name as κύριος, as was more common, the LXX authors prefer in the Balaam episode to almost exclusively use ὁ θεός. J.W.Wevers, *The Greek Text of Numbers*, Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1998, p.xxix, suggests that this is a concerted effort to disassociate Balaam from divine sanction and true prophecy. The next step, as later commentators were well aware (for example Origen, *Selecta on Numbers*, PG 12, 682A-683C, *b. Gittin* 56b-57a, *Numbers Rabbah*, 22:5), was to associate Balaam with the world of magic.

¹⁴ . See Hackett, ‘Balaam,’ pp.569-570, and Noth, *Numbers*, pp.175-181.

¹⁵ . Deut 18:18; “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything I command.” This definition would seem to fit well with certain of the events which colour the Balaam story, though later commentators would suggest that Balaam merely acted as the vessel for God’s voice rather than as a true prophet speaking words inspired by God.

¹⁶ . Deut 23:5-6.

¹⁷ . Josh 24:9-10.

22-24, or negatively, against the tradition in Deut 23 and Joshua 24.¹⁸ It has been suggested that these alterations in the attitude towards Balaam are a result of the authors wishing to see Balaam as a negatively defined magician rather than as a prophet.¹⁹ Hence, we have in the secondary references a heightened role for God, who is said to have authored the blessings that Balaam pronounces, and to have delivered Israel from Balaam's wicked intentions. Furthermore, Balaam is associated with idolatry and immorality, and his execution at the hands of the Israelites is justified. On the whole we may detect, then, two distinct yet intimately related portrayals of Balaam. The first is of the non-Israelite diviner with whom God spoke, informing him of his plans, and who was favoured with knowledge of the future. This portrayal is not negative in any overt sense, as Balaam acts as both an expert in divination and as God's mouthpiece. The second portrayal, however, sees Balaam as a negatively defined magician who sought Israel's downfall and who is associated with wickedness, greed, and idolatry.

Greek Numbers 22-24

The LXX version of the Balaam narrative differs markedly when compared to MT, revealing the extent to which the translators found the figure of Balaam problematic for their theology, conception of prophecy, and representation of Judaism. As Wevers remarks: "The translator demonstrates an obvious prejudice

¹⁸ . Hackett, 'Balaam', p.569.

¹⁹ . For instance, A.Rofe has suggested that the secondary references to Balaam in the MT (Deuteronomy and Joshua) represent a magical view, due to the influence of Deuteronomistic views on prophecy. See; A.Rofe, 'The Book of Balaam', in *A Study in Methods of Criticism and the History of Biblical Literature and Religion*, Jerusalem, Hebrew University Press, 1979, pp.45-49.

against Balaam”.²⁰ In studying the LXX Balaam we must remember that for the translators he was a composite figure; he appeared to them not through various sources like J and E, with their differing portrayals, but as part of a coherent narrative. In this manner the P traditions would serve to overwhelm any positive comments encapsulated in J and E. The problem for the LXX translators was how they should represent Balaam in order that the oracles could be deemed truly prophetic; this problem is at the core of the LXX version of Balaam. The most immediate difference, however, between Hebrew and Greek versions of Numbers 22-24 is the comparative length of the latter, which is over a third longer than the text preserved in MT.²¹ Whilst the change in language is a contributing factor, it seems clear that the creators of Greek Numbers were moved to elaborate on certain elements. In this manner, LXX offers a variety of additional details, often elaborating in order to make better sense of the Hebrew.

The principal importance for ancient exegetes of the Balaam episode lies in the nature and meaning of the four oracles. As has been noted by Lust, the translators of LXX attempted to create a messianic version of Balaam’s third and fourth oracles; clearly, these oracles were of great and immediate significance for the LXX translators.²² However, throughout its version of Numbers 22-24 LXX attempts to limit the association of Balaam, a wicked non-Israelite attempting to curse the Israelites, with the source of true prophecy, Yahweh. Of particular interest is LXX’s avoidance, where possible, of utilising the normal term for Yahweh, ‘Lord’ (κύριος),

²⁰ . J.Wevers, *The Greek Text of Numbers*, p.xxix.

²¹ . The MT covers 164 lines and the LXX 261 lines.

²² . J.Lust, ‘The Greek Version of Balaam’s Third and Fourth Oracles. The ἄνθρωπος in Num 24:7 and 17. Messianism and Lexicography’, in L.Greenspoon and O.Munnich (eds.), *LXX, VIIIth Congress of the International Organisation for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Paris, 1992*, Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1995, pp. 233-257.

in relation to Balaam. Instead we have the more normative ‘God’ (ὁ θεός), a term used by LXX as a substitute for κύριος, but which lacks the direct implications of the divine name. Thus, in the first reference to the deity in Num 22:13 LXX substitutes ὁ θεός for Yahweh, a policy which is even adopted in speaking of the angel which stops Balaam on the road to Balak in Num 22:23.²³ As Wevers suggests concerning the translator, the “notion that Balaam, a non-Israelite, could be a prophet of Yahweh, disturbed him greatly”.²⁴ Instead, Balaam appears as a diviner who attempted to use the power of his own non-Israelite god to curse the Israelites, but who is overwhelmed by the prophetic spirit of Yahweh in order to utter the divine oracles. We see a similar policy in respect to the details of Balaam’s craft. The distancing of Balaam from Israelite forms of religion, worship and ritual, can be seen in the employment of the term βώμιος in describing the altars built for sacrifice; more commonly the Hebrew מזבח is rendered by θυσιαστήριον.²⁵ Thus, the altar used by Balaam appears in the LXX as a non-Israelite and avowedly pagan form of ritual apparatus “and therefore illegitimate by definition”.²⁶ By using a term associated with pagan forms of sacrifice and ritual, the LXX authors are attempting to limit the sanctions placed upon Balaam’s actions in MT.

²³ . Throughout the Balaam episode the instances of יהוה become ὁ θεός with several important exceptions. In 22:18 Balaam speaks of יהוה אלהי which is unavoidably rendered by the LXX as κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ, whilst in the episode of the speaking ass Balaam’s confession of sin (Num 22:34) is addressed, more appropriately, to an angel of the Lord (κυρίου). Likewise LXX is forced to use κύριος in Num 23:8 as part of a couplet which features ὁ θεός as the translations for אל and יהוה, whilst Balak’s request in Num 23:17 imagines Balaam to be prophet of Yahweh (κύριος).

²⁴ . Wevers, *The Greek Text of Numbers*, p.xxix.

²⁵ . The verb זָבַח is used mainly to refer to the killing of animals for sacrifice. It can be used in both a positive sense, as with the rituals of Solomon (1 Kings 8:5, 2 Chron. 5:6) and Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30:22), and negatively, as with the idolatrous sacrifices which take place on the high places (Hos. 11:2, 2 Kings, 12:3). Pagan worship sometimes involved sacrifice to demons (Lev 17:7; Deut 32:17), including the offering of their children to the idols of Canaan (Psa 106:37-38). Such horrible rituals are cited by Ezekiel as one of the major reasons for God’s judgment on the nation (Ezek 16:20-21). See further G.Dorival, ‘Remarques sur L’Originalite du Livre Grec des Nombres’, in L.Greenspoon and O.Munnich (eds.), *LXX, VIIIth Congress of the International Organisation for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Paris, 1992*, Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1995, pp.89-107.

²⁶ . Wevers, *The Greek Text of Numbers*, p.384.

The attitude of the LXX translators, by which Balaam is further removed from the idea of true Israelite prophecy, may be seen in their appraisal of Balaam's 'encounters' with God and the nature of his oracles. The primary method of communication is the visitation of the divine spirit (πνεῦμα θεοῦ) on Balaam. Whilst LXX does add a further reference in Num 23:6 to the divine spirit (πνεῦμα θεοῦ), this employment adds little to the oracles, merely reminding the reader that they are authentic and are a result of divine action rather than the omens (τοῖς οἰώοις) detected by Balaam. However, when speaking of "the words put into the mouth of Balaam" in Num 23:5 and 23:16, LXX uses the verb ἐμβάλλω 'cast, throw in', the implication being either that Balaam was unwilling to act as Yahweh's mouthpiece, or that he was unsuitable for such a duty being, as he was, a non-Israelite.²⁷ The LXX translators clearly felt that a more forceful term was applicable in this scenario, casting further doubt on Balaam's prophetic suitability, but at the same time demonstrating that God's power is absolute.

With respect to the oracles themselves the LXX translators reveal several interesting details which illuminate our understanding of their appraisal of Balaam. Of primary importance in this respect is the addition, in the third and fourth oracles, of the information that Balaam has a vision of God in sleep (ἐν ὕπνῳ). In both Num 24:4 and 24:16 LXX adds this detail to the narrative, the implication being that, whereas true prophets of Yahweh can meet God face to face in a waking state,

²⁷ . Wevers, *The Greek Text of Numbers*, p.396, merely notes the change of terminology and does not link the idea with magic. As an interesting parallel to LXX we may consider the work of A.Jeffers (*Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1996, pp.127-128), who, drawing upon modern anthropological work on shamanism, suggests that Balaam may be seen as a form of mantic who experiences an altered form of consciousness. She (p.127) quotes F.D.Goodman ('Vision', *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol.15, 1986, pp.282-288, p.282) who states that a vision is "the recognised psychological condition, an emotional excitement in which the person is no longer master of his own thoughts or will". Although an interesting parallel, we must note, as Jeffers does, that the connections between the Bible and modern anthropology should not be overdrawn.

Balaam is a typical non-Israelite diviner who receives his divine communications by night and through dreams. LXX then links this idea to the notice that Balaam's eyes were opened by God, the implication being that Balaam beheld God not through his physical eyes but through some form of inner vision. As Wevers suggests: "In the translator's view, the divine revelation comes ἐν ὕπνῳ but differs from the ordinary dream state in that the eyes remain open, which might be thought of as an ancient description of the visionary state."²⁸ If Wevers' suggestion is upheld then we may reinforce the idea that the LXX translators wished to limit the image of Balaam as true prophet of Yahweh.

It is important to note that neither MT nor LXX give any direct indication of the office or status of Balaam. As a result, commentators who used these texts were able, as will be seen, to take their own line, vacillating between the extremes of negatively defined magician to a prophet of Yahweh. This nebulous identification was something of a concern for the translators of the LXX who, as has been seen, attempted to limit the extent to which Balaam might be seen as a true prophet of the Israelite god. If he is not explicitly a prophet then his actions, including rituals designed to curse his opponents, can easily be linked to magic; such an association has an adverse effect on the power of Balaam's oracles.²⁹ However, there are certain biblical passages which provide the later commentators with references for their respective constructions of Balaam. Thus, we may see in LXX the employment of the μαντεῖον terminology in Num 22:7 in an attempt to translate the nebulous Hebrew קסמים ('magic', 'divination', 'divining instruments' but also 'remuneration'). Again, we must not forget that μάντις terminology occurs in the LXX laws on magic in Deut

²⁸ . Wevers, *The Greek Text of Numbers*, p.403.

²⁹ . On the importance of 'prophetic' status for the reception of divine oracles see R.R.Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1980.

18:10-14. The LXX translators clearly did not feel that Balaam warranted the description of a prophet (προφήτης);³⁰ indeed, they go out of their way to associate him with non-Israelite religion, to distance him from Yahweh the source of true prophecy, and employ terminology which enhances his reputation as a non-Israelite magician.³¹ This employment is in line with the LXX policy of observing a categorical difference between the classical prophets, who are described through the term προφήτης, and heathen soothsayers, diviners, and magicians who are grouped under the term μάντις. We should not be surprised then, given the above observations concerning the limitations of Balaam's prophetic experiences and status in LXX, that the terminology of the μάντις is employed in speaking of him, albeit not in a direct description of his skills.

Magic in Numbers 22-24: The Terminology of מַדְבִּי / מַדְבִּי: Numbers 22:7 and 23:23, and שִׁנְיָ: Numbers 23:23 and 24:1

Of particular importance for this study of the magical aspects and associations of the biblical Balaam story, is the employment, in two instances, of the term מַדְבִּי / מַדְבִּי. The parallel term שִׁנְיָ, meaning 'to practice divination, divine, observe signs',

³⁰ . On the employment of προφήτης terminology by the LXX translators and its relationship to Josephus see J.Reiling, 'The Use of ΨΕΥΔΟΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ in the Septuagint, Philo and Josephus', *NovT* 13, 1971, pp.147-156 and D.E.Aune, 'The Use of ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ in Josephus', *JBL* 101, 1982, pp.419-421.

³¹ . So Wevers (*The Greek Text of Numbers*, p.363) draws our attention to a subtle form of this representation in Num 22:6: "The ὅτι construction of v.b is a piece of Oriental flattery, attributing magical powers to Balaam: 'because I know whomever you might bless σύ, he is blessed, and whomever you might curse σύ, he has been cursed.'"

and which again appears twice, is elsewhere linked to $\text{מִקְדָּשׁ}/\text{מִקְדָּשׁ}$.³² I hope to demonstrate that the primary understanding of these terms, and one which Josephus would have been aware of, was that of a reference to negatively defined magic. When viewed in both the contexts of the Balaam narrative and the provisions against magicians in the Torah, the instances of $\text{מִקְדָּשׁ}/\text{מִקְדָּשׁ}$ in Numbers strongly suggest an association with magic. Secondary employments from various biblical texts, in verbal and noun form, support the data provided by the instances in the Torah. We see the term used to describe both the office of the diviner, either in the sense of a magician hailing from the nations or as a false prophet of Israel, and their actions, in which case the verb is most often translated as ‘to practise divination’.³³ A solitary example of the noun form מִקְדָּשׁ in Num 22:7 also suggests that the term could be used to refer to the actual equipment employed by the professional diviner. However, as with many of the instances of $\text{מִקְדָּשׁ}/\text{מִקְדָּשׁ}$ terminology, the precise meaning of its employment in this passage is far from certain. What seems clear however, especially given the instances of both verb and noun form in the Torah, is that the term refers primarily to a form of non-sanctioned divination, something which the MT authors and the LXX translators both wished to associate with magic. Moreover, discussions on the meaning of the term in ancient literature,³⁴ primarily in the case of its inclusion in Num 22:7,

³² . *BDB*, p.638. *HALOT*, vol.2, p.690 suggests a definition of ‘magical curse’, and specifically references in this sense Numbers 23:23.

³³ . So the verb מִקְדָּשׁ is translated in *BDB*, p.890.

³⁴ . *Numbers Rabbah* 20:8 and *Tanhuma Balak* 4, suggest that what was brought by the ambassadors were the instruments, sent by Balak the magician, needed by Balaam for the purposes of his divinations and curses, whilst the Aramaic Targums make reference to the actual fees paid by Balak as do 2 Peter 2:15 and Jude 11. The Vulgate and the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan, favour the idea that the term מִקְדָּשׁ here refers to a form of payment for divination, finding support in the employment of the term in 1 Samuel 9:7-8, where Saul brings payment to Samuel for the employment of his prophetic skills, and in Micah 3:11, which abuses those prophets who divine in exchange for silver.

frequently refer to its magical aspects and associations. This understanding serves to underline the image of Balaam as a magician.³⁵

The two instances of magical terminology in Numbers constitute differing employments of the noun form of קֶסֶם. The first of these, seen in Num 22:7, has been the cause of a great deal of debate as its meaning is far from clear. Usually translated as either 'fees for divination' or 'tools of divination' in modern English translations,³⁶ the elders of Moab and Midian bring קֶסֶם בְּיָדָם, which in LXX is rendered as καὶ τὰ μαντεῖα ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτῶν, to Balaam prior to his attempts to curse the Israelites.³⁷ The understanding of LXX, given this recognition of קֶסֶם and its rendering as μαντεῖα, suggests that Balaam was given some form of divinatory equipment by which he was to perform his magical ritual. This definition finds a number of other ancient advocates, though equally attested in such exegesis is the idea that the items Balaam received were his payment for his magical performance.³⁸ However, when we consider the second employment of קֶסֶם terminology in Numbers 23:23, the magical associations become much clearer. Here the term is used in a negative sense to refer to the magic of the nations which will find no efficaciousness against the Israelites.³⁹ It

³⁵ . On this matter G.J.Wenham (*Numbers*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1981, p.167) states : "Balaam is offered 'fees for divination' (22:7) and resorts to 'omens' (24:1), abominable practices that were not permitted in Israel (23:23; Dt. 18:10; 1 Sam. 15:23, 2 Kings 17:17). Whilst observing that these practices are indeed 'abominations', Wenham fails to connect the practices of Balaam, through explicit terminology, to the injunctions against the practice of magic given in Deut 18:10-14; thus these practices are categorised as *magical* abominations.

³⁶ . The NRSV adopts the former, the NJV the latter.

³⁷ . Wevers, (*The Greek Text of Numbers*, p.364), notes that the Greek translation of the LXX does little to clear the confusion as to the items carried in the hands of the elders; however, it could be said that the translation of קֶסֶם by μάντις was the most obvious choice, given that both essentially refer to magic and divination, and that both are largely nebulous in meaning.

³⁸ . See above n.1. The fact that ancient authorities were divided in their understanding son this term should not distract us from their agreement here; the elders bring Balaam some form of item which will enable him to carry out his magical operations, be they divination or curse.

³⁹ . The use of the preposition כַּ 'in' with regard to the 'enchantment' and 'divination', though usually translated as being 'against' Israel, suggests that Num 23:23 may well be observing the idea enshrined in the laws against magic of Deut 18:9-14 by which magicians shall not be found in the promised land.

is seen in this passage in conjunction with the term שִׁנְיָה, a noun meaning ‘divination’ or ‘enchantment’, and is translated in LXX by οἰωνισμὸς, a term relating to divination through the observance of the flight of birds.⁴⁰

The LXX translation of these two terms is again instructive for our understanding of the term קִסָּף. In Balaam’s second oracle MT states that שִׁנְיָה is ineffective against Jacob, whilst קִסָּף will not prevail against Israel, the idea being that these forms of divination can have no magical effect against Israelites when employed by the nations. These two terms are usually translated as ‘divination’ and ‘enchantment’ respectively.⁴¹ In addition, the term שִׁנְיָה occurs in Numbers 24:1 in speaking of Balaam’s search for omens in order to ascertain the will of God. In this manner, Balaam is associated with both of the forms of ineffectual magical divination, both terms appearing in the list of outlawed magical practices in Deut 18:10-14. However, קִסָּף is again rendered by the employment of μάντις terminology; this is a policy adopted by the authors of LXX throughout, suggesting that in their minds the קִסָּף קִסָּמִים is an equivalent to the μάντις. The link between קִסָּף and magic then in the minds of the LXX translators in this instance was clear; in Num 22:7 they believed that it referred to the instruments of magical divination employed by Balaam, whilst Num 23:23 was a reference to the inefficacious nature of the magic employed against Israel by the nations.

⁴⁰ . The essential meaning of שִׁנְיָה in the MT appears to be the idea of divination through omens (so *BDB*, p.638, cf. Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria*, p.78). *HALOT*, p.690 suggests the idea of a ‘magic curse’ or ‘omen’. It is never seen, like קִסָּף/ קִסָּף, in a positive context, and indeed occurs in the list of magical practitioners given in Deut 18:10-14. It is most commonly seen as an omen-seeking practice of the nations (Gen 30:27, 44:5 44:15 and 1 Kings 20:33), though it is also linked to witchcraft (Lev 19:26), and to the abhorrent magical practices of Deut 18:10-14 (2 Kings 17:17 and 2 Chr 33:6 in which King Hezekiah is accused of multiple forms of sin including magic). See further, A.Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria*, pp.74-78.

⁴¹ . So the NRSV. See further the entries in *BDB*, p.638, and p.890, *HALOT*, vol.2, p.690

Much like the instances of the term מַדְבָּר / מִדְבָּר in the Torah, references from later biblical books take up this negative view of magical divination. Jeremiah 14.14 states: “And the lord said to me; The prophets are prophesying lies in my name; I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination (מַדְבָּר), and the deceit of their own minds.” Likewise 2 Kings 17:17, echoing the provisions of Deuteronomy 18:9-14; “They made their sons and their daughters pass through fire; they used divination (מַדְבָּר) and augury; and they sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the lord, provoking him to anger.” Employment of the term מַדְבָּר with the meaning of ‘ritual divination’ can also be seen in Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah.⁴² And as will be seen, it features as a form of reference to outlawed necromantic practices of the Canaanites in the story of the witch of Endor.⁴³ The majority of the instances of מַדְבָּר / מִדְבָּר in MT refer to the practice of divination, either in describing an actual magical ritual and its practitioners, or referring more generally to the idea of divination by methods not sanctioned by the Torah. We might also note that one tradition concerning Balaam, seen in Josh 13:22, gives a definitive image of him as a foreign קַדְמֹן מִדְבָּר , a magician in the form outlined in Deut 18:14. Again, the term used to render Balaam’s designation in LXX is $\mu\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota\varsigma$. In a recent survey, Hurowitz has outlined his own understanding of the

⁴² . Is 2:6, 3:2, Ez 13:6, 13:9, 13:23, 21:26, 21:28, 21:34, 22:28, Je 14.14. The idea of divination, by various methods, is central to this term, but, being employed in a number of nebulous and imprecise contexts, the meaning varies, in a number of subtle forms, from employment to employment within the Biblical texts. Yet, as Ricks observes (Ricks, ‘The Magician as Outsider in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament,’ p.138), there is not one instance of a positive employment in the whole Biblical corpus of any of the terms used in speaking of magic; even the employments of מַדְבָּר in Isa 3:2 and Micah 3:6, 7, 11 to refer to ‘diviners’, apparently in a non-committal manner, are used in speaking of prophecies of doom against the figures concerned. Seemingly against this thesis however we might advance the evidence of Proverbs 16:10, which uses מַדְבָּר in the sense of a judicial wisdom possessed by the king. However, it is a term never employed of a king who has the ear of God, such as Solomon or David, suggesting that the reality behind such judicial wisdom is merely the default meaning of מַדְבָּר / מִדְבָּר i.e. divination through ritual. This explanation is reinforced by Ez 21:21ff which speaks of forms of divinatory rituals amongst which is מַדְבָּר . On Prv 16:10 see E.W.Davies, ‘The Meaning of *gesem* in Proverbs 16:10’, *Biblica* 61, 1980, pp.554-556.

⁴³ . 1 Sam, 15:23, 28:8.

terminology of מִקְדָּשׁ in Num 22:7 in relation to the divinatory practices outlined in the Mari letters.⁴⁴ Whilst he does not emphasize the point, such a correlation reinforces the image of Balaam as a magician, one outlawed by the Torah and associated with the practices of the nations.

In comparison LXX, as we see in the instance of Num 22:7, chooses, when attempting to tackle certain verses of MT in which מִקְדָּשׁ / מִקְדָּשׁ occurs, to employ the terminology of the $\mu\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota\varsigma$ and his art in the majority of cases. Granted, we may not know precisely which terms the LXX translators had in their Hebrew *Vorlage*, but the consistency of the מִקְדָּשׁ / מִקְדָּשׁ / $\mu\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota\varsigma$ equation in our MT and LXX is quite striking. However, a review of these cases, whilst revealing the general rule that the LXX authors understood מִקְדָּשׁ / מִקְדָּשׁ to refer to a form of ritual divination for which the Greek term $\mu\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota\varsigma$ and its cognates made the most approximate and appropriate translation, also reveals a degree of uncertainty on the part of the LXX translators when confronted with the term מִקְדָּשׁ / מִקְדָּשׁ . We may also note that for the LXX translators the term $\mu\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota\varsigma$ seems to have been quite wide ranging in its meaning and associations; in this sense it is an excellent replacement for the Hebrew מִקְדָּשׁ / מִקְדָּשׁ . So, for instance, we may see it being used in the laws against magic users in Deut 18:10-14 as a translation of MT's outlawed diviner (קִסְמִים קְסָמִים), and again, in a negative sense dealing with magic, in 2 Kings 17:17 where the practices of the $\mu\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota\varsigma$ are linked to those who “made their sons and daughters pass through the fire”.

In 1 Sam 6:2 this negative association is continued as LXX uses $\mu\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota\varsigma$ to refer to the diviners of the Philistines, linking them to both priests (ἱερείς) and

⁴⁴ . V.Hurowitz, ‘The Expression *uqsamim beyadam* (Numbers 22:7) in Light of Divinatory Practices From Mari’, *Hebrew Studies* 33, 1992, pp.5-15.

magicians (ἐπαοιδός). Again in Is 44:25 𐤓𐤕𐤔 is translated by the Greek μάντις, but is linked, in a negative context, to the necromancer (ἐγγαστριμύθος). In other texts too LXX employs μάντις, in place of 𐤓𐤕𐤔, to refer to those deceived by false visions,⁴⁵ whilst in Joshua 13:22 Balaam appears as the archetypal μάντις. However, we also see something of the multifaceted meaning of the term 𐤓𐤕𐤔 in LXX Micah 3:11. Here we see the term translated as ‘fees for divination’, whilst in Micah 3:8 the term was seen by LXX to be referring to the wisdom of God’s judgement on the Israelites. In neither case is 𐤓𐤕𐤔 translated by a single term as we see with the cases of μάντις, suggesting that, as with MT, LXX observed a number of definitions and approaches to the term 𐤓𐤕𐤔/ 𐤓𐤕. The default meaning of 𐤓𐤕𐤔/ 𐤓𐤕 for LXX, as seen from the frequency of translation by the term μάντις, is one involving ritual practices for magical divination as per the role of the μάντις in wider Graeco-Roman literature of the era. The fact that LXX uses the term μάντις in its translation of anti-magical literature such as Deut 18:10-14 and 2 Kings 17:17, linking it to fundamental Greek terms for magician such as Φαρμακός and ἐγγαστρίμυθος, demonstrates that 𐤓𐤕𐤔/ 𐤓𐤕 and μάντις were terms dealing with the world of magic for the LXX authors.

Balaam in the Works of Philo

The works of Philo include an important insight into the representation of Balaam as a magician, and of the relationship between magic and prophecy.

⁴⁵. So Ze. 10:2 speaks of those diviners who see false visions, whilst Ez. 13:23 speaks of the sins of the Israelites in this respect.

Certainly, Philo was well aware of the tradition of a magical Balaam and also of the terminology which he needed to use in order to represent this to his Hellenized audience. Philo's main account of the events of Numbers 22-24 is given at a disproportionate length when compared to the biblical accounts, indicating that the narrative was of particular importance to him.⁴⁶ His Balaam is made up of a variety of negative images, being based upon the figure of the negatively-defined magician, and as a result, as noted by Baskin, Philo's account is perhaps the most negative concerning Balaam in all of the ancient literature.⁴⁷ Indeed, when considered in the context of the other ancient witnesses to the Balaam tradition, Philo gives the strongest indication that Balaam's true designation is not prophet or diviner, but negatively-defined magician.⁴⁸ The two are clearly linked, for Philo plays upon the negative image that characterises the magician in the Graeco-Roman world of the early first century CE in order to marginalize the idea of Balaam as a true prophet of Yahweh.⁴⁹ This act of minimilization is a concomitant of Philo's portrayal of Moses, the true prophet of Yahweh and diametric opposite of Balaam, the negatively-defined magician.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ . In his Loeb translation of Philo, F.H.Colson (*Philo*, Loeb Classical Library, 1935, vol.6, p.xv) remarks on this particular oddity suggesting that in itself it has little to do with Moses, the main thrust of the *De Vita Mosis* being focused of course on the eponymous hero. Remus ('Moses and the Thaumaturges: Philo's *De Vita Mosis* as a Rescue Operation,' *Laval theologique et philosophique*, 52, 3, 1996, pp.665-690) suggests, however, that Philo was interested in Balaam as he wished to make use of the magical aspects of his story in order to contrast them with the prophet, lawgiver, priest and king, Moses.

⁴⁷ . J.R.Baskin, *Pharaoh's Counsellors: Job, Jethro, and Balaam in Rabbinic and Patristic Tradition*, Chico, California, 1983, pp.93-98

⁴⁸ . Philo especially employs this magical image of Balaam as a point of contrast to the prophet Moses. See further, R.M.Berchman, 'Arcana Mundi between Balaam and Hecate: Prophecy, Divination and Magic in Later Platonism', *SBLSP* 28, 1989, pp.107-185.

⁴⁹ . For Philo there is a clear distinction between true prophets of Yahweh and those who practise magic and divination; indeed he accuses Balaam of inventing his conversations with God because he identifies him as a magician. See further J.R.Levison, 'Two Types of Ecstatic Prophecy according to Philo,' *The Studia Philonica Annual* 6, 1994, pp.83-89.

⁵⁰ . As H.Remus states in his resume to 'Moses and the Thaumaturges: Philo's *De Vita Mosis* as a Rescue Operation,' *Laval theologique et philosophique*, 52, 3, 1996, p.665; "Dans le *De Vita Mosis* de Philo, le portrait de Balaam fait contraste avec celui de Moïse. Ce dernier est présenté comme le vrai prophète, qui est en même temps prêtre, thaumaturge et mystagogue. L'ouvrage entend donc prévenir toute fausse conception qui réduirait Moïse au statut de simple magicien. Le grand prophète doit être

The main reference to Balaam in Philo comes in the *De Vita Mosis*, as a paraphrase of Numbers 22-24. In many respects, Philo's Balaam is designed as the complimentary opposite of Moses, constituting an insult to the idea of true prophecy, and to the figure of Moses himself, the greatest of all prophets and 'friend of God' (φίλος θεου).⁵¹ Thus, Philo questions whether Balaam could indeed have served as a spokesman for God; clearly he was concerned that the biblical account suggested that a non-Jew could perform like a prophet of Yahweh. In order to enhance the differences between Moses and Balaam, Philo provides his audience with direct descriptive terminology concerning Balaam, magical in nature, coupled with a comprehensive list of his skills. Indeed, Philo's description of these skills is a unique catalogue of positive remarks, as he goes to much greater lengths than other commentators to explain both Balaam's designation as a diviner and the reasons for his fame. So, Balaam is said to have predicted that heavy rain would come to one nation at the height of summer, to another a drought, and to others the inundation of rivers, the end of pestilential diseases, and years of abundance or dearth.⁵² Furthermore, Balaam is said to be the practitioner of an art (τέχνη) which deals in seeking favourable omens and predictions.⁵³ However, above all else, Philo's view of Balaam is that of a practising magician in the Graeco-Roman sense. Philo calls Balaam both a μάγος and a μάντις; like Josephus, Philo never applies the term

soigneusement distingué des thaumaturges et magiciens semblables à Balaam, qui pullulent en Égypte au temps de Philon."

⁵¹ . Moses is called φίλος θεου; *Sac.* 130, *Ebr.* 94, *Mig.* 45, *Quis Her.* 21, *Som.* 1.193f, as well as 'chief prophet' (ἀρχιπροφήτης) *Mut.*, 103, 125, *Som.*, 2, 189, *QG*, 4.8, and 'primary prophet' (προτοπροφήτης) *QG*, 1.86. Indeed, it could even be argued that Philo thought of Moses as something more than human, calling him (*QE* 2.54) "the divine and holy Moses." On Philo's appreciation of Balaam in relation to Moses see; Remus, 'Moses and the Thaumaturges: Philo's *De Vita Mosis* as a Rescue Operation', pp.665-690, and Baskin, *Pharaoh's Counsellors: Job, Jethro, and Balaam in Rabbinic and Patristic Tradition*, , pp.92-93.

⁵² . *V.Mos.*, 1.264-265. Whilst these details may not be a part of the wider Balaam tradition, being attested only in Philo, they nevertheless show that Philo thinks highly of Balaam as a magical diviner, and that he wished his audience to believe that Balaam was capable of predicting the future.

⁵³ . His art deals with 'chance utterances and birds' (κληδόας καὶ οἰωνούς *V.Mos.*, 1.287) and 'birds and auspicious pronouncements' (οἰωνούς καὶ φήμας αἰσίους, *V.Mos.*, 1.282).

προφήτης to Balaam.⁵⁴ It is made clear from the instance of the first term, μάγος, that Balaam is a magician and, as Remus suggests, the model for Philo's Balaam may well have been the wandering street magician of his native Alexandria.⁵⁵ For Philo, magic is a two-fold phenomenon, both positive and negative. Thus, he can speak in glowing terms of the Persian *magi* and their magical art, a science of discernment in which the books of nature are studied, and into which all kings of the Persian dynasties are initiated.⁵⁶ However, magic can also be the art of the confidence trickster and charlatan, practised as a perversion of the true magic in order to swindle, destroy and inflict pain.⁵⁷ In this latter category we see such μάγοι as the wicked Balaam and the defeated practitioners who rival Moses in Pharaoh's court.⁵⁸

The dichotomy between magic and true prophecy reaches its climax in Philo's introduction of the divine spirit. Here, he leaves no room for doubt; the spirit of God drives out Balaam's magical skills for "magical sophistry (μαγικὴν σοφιστείαν) may not abide in the same soul with the most sacred kind of inspiration (ἱερωτάτη κατοκωχή)".⁵⁹ Although little has been written on Philo's appreciation of magic, a number of recent studies have mentioned the subject in relation to his appreciation and understanding of the phenomena of prophecy and the nature of the divine spirit. Levison suggests that Philo conceived of two distinct forms of prophecy; one by which the rational functions of the individual were enhanced by the presence of the

⁵⁴ . μάγος; *V.Mos.*, 1.276, μάντις; *V.Mos.*, 1.276, 283, 285. Philo does actually use the terminology of the προφήτης in his account of Balaam, but only in providing a negative comparison, with Balaam acting as if he were 'one of the celebrated prophets'; *V.Mos.*, 1.266.

⁵⁵ . Remus, 'Moses and the Thaumaturges: Philo's *De Vita Mosis* as a Rescue Operation', p.674.

⁵⁶ . *Spec. Leg.*, 3.100. See further his glowing reference to the Persian Magi in *Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit*, 74.

⁵⁷ . *Spec. Leg.*, 3.101.

⁵⁸ . Balaam; *V.Mos.*, 1.276, the Egyptian magicians; *V.Mos.*, 92-95.

⁵⁹ . *V.Mos.*, 1.277. Note especially in this passage a return to the dedicated magical terminology of the μάγος rather than the soothsayer (μάντις); Philo wishes there to be no doubt that Balaam is a magician, and that magic is inferior to divine power and prophecy.

divine spirit, and one by which the irrational mind was forcibly overcome by the prophetic powers of the same spirit.⁶⁰ Berchman notes that in “prophecy according to Philo there is a union of the rational soul with the divine intellect”, a function performed by the heroes of the Pentateuch who stand as προφήτης superior to the μάγος, γοής, and μάντις.⁶¹ Both Levison and Berchman link the irrational form of prophecy to those figures who, in Philo’s day, might be called magicians; indeed, of Balaam Levison states: “He represented the very best of what Cicero called ‘artificial divination’, that is, the ability rationally to predict the future by the discernment of such signs as astrological and meteorological omens. In contrast, in this tale Balaam predicted the future correctly, not because he employed his mind and senses rationally to observe the movements of birds, but because the angelic spirit, as it had predicted, rendered his mental capacities inoperative.”⁶² Whilst Levison does not categorise Balaam expressly as a form of magician, somewhat glossing over the important fact that for Philo he is a μάγος, Remus reminds us that Philo’s concept of prophecy is at the heart of his goal in describing Balaam in the *De Vita Mosis*.⁶³ There can be no possibility that Philo’s audience will see a similarity between Moses and Balaam.

⁶⁰ . J.R.Levison, ‘Two Types of Ecstatic Prophecy According to Philo’, pp.83-89. E.Decharneux (‘Mantique et Oracles Dans L’Oeuvre de Philon D’Alexandrie’, in A.Motte (ed.), *Oracles et Mantique en Grece Ancienne Actes Du Colloque De Liege (Mars 1989)*, Liege, 1990, pp.123-133) likewise considers Philo’s attitude towards prophecy and, whilst supporting Levison’s appraisal, suggests that Philo considered Balaam to be practising a form of what he calls the ‘*mantikè technè*’ who is comparable to the oracle-interpreting and mantically trained Chaldean. Decharneux, however, does not make the link between these figures and the world of magic.

⁶¹ . R.Berchman, ‘Arcana Mundi: Prophecy and Divination in the *Vita Mosis* of Philo of Alexandria’, *SBLSP* 1988, 27, pp.385-423, quote p.405. Berchman elaborates on this facet of Platonic thought and its implications for the representation of Balaam in post-Philo literature in his ‘Arcana Mundi between Balaam and Hecate: Prophecy, Divination, and Magic in Later Platonism’, pp.107-185. The fact that the prophets were superior to magicians in terms of the operation and function of the prophetic spirit is readily evident from Philo’s treatment of Balaam. As J.R.Baskin, (‘Origen on Balaam: The Dilemma of the Unworthy Prophet,’ *Vigiliae Christianae* 37.1, 1983, pp.22-35) notes (p.24); “For Philo, prophecy is a mark of moral distinction; it marks another way station on the path to divine comprehension. Although prophetic possession is an act of grace, it must be prepared for by diligent study and the acquisition of wisdom.” There is no question of Philo’s Balaam having ‘moral distinction’.

⁶² . J.R.Levison, ‘The Prophetic Spirit as an Angel According to Philo’, *HTR* 88.2, 1995, pp.189-207, quote pp.191-192.

⁶³ . Remus, ‘Moses and the Thaumaturges: Philo’s *De Vita Mosis* as a Rescue Operation’, pp.682-685.

Primarily they are differentiated by Philo's theory of the dual nature of prophecy, but an important element of this is the terminology by which Philo describes them. Moses is the 'chief prophet' (ἀρχιπροφήτης) and the 'primary prophet' (προτοπροφήτης). Balaam is referred to as a μάγος. For Philo's Hellenized audience there can be no greater disparity.

This portrayal of Balaam as a magician is coupled with further negative commentary in the *De Vita Mosis*, as Philo seeks to distance the non-Jewish diviner from the realm of true, God-inspired, prophecy. So, Philo suggests that the events of Num 22:9-22, in which Balaam is seen to consult directly with God, were merely the invention of the cunning magician in order that he could lend weight to his employability by Balak and thus secure the riches promised to him.⁶⁴ Greed, then, is a motivating factor for Philo's Balaam, as is his hatred of Israel, which Philo suggests is an even more powerful desire for the magician than it is for his king, Balak. Balaam is said to be "even more wicked than the king" and, "being oppressed by a heavy feeling of evil", he was still keen to curse the Israelites even when it was quite clear that he was incapable of doing so.⁶⁵ These details are at the heart of the negative appraisal of Balaam adopted by the P source in Numbers. Indeed, Philo goes somewhat further by suggesting that Balaam did not adopt a noble disposition towards the messengers of Balak, instead pretending that he was "one of the most celebrated prophets".⁶⁶ Philo also takes every opportunity to humiliate Balaam. Thus, in recounting the vision of the angel of God on the road to Balak, Philo posits that the ass on which Balaam rode

⁶⁴ . *V.Mos.*, 1.268. We might note that these negative details are those which were added mainly by the P source to the Balaam story, and that greed, hatred of Israel and idolatry were of particular use for later exegetes, such as the rabbis and the authors of the New Testament, who uniformly interpreted Balaam as a negative figure. For a review of Balaam in post-Josephus literature see Baskin, *Pharaoh's Counsellors: Job, Jethro, and Balaam in Rabbinic and Patristic Tradition*, pp.45-63.

⁶⁵ . *V.Mos.*, 1.286.

⁶⁶ . *V.Mos.*, 1.266.

was superior in terms of divinatory ability for “the unreasoning animal showed a superior power of sight to him who claimed to see not only the world but the world’s Maker”.⁶⁷

Furthermore, Philo demonstrates that, despite his status as a famous diviner and magician, Balaam is at the complete mercy of God. Though skilled in divination and thus a suitable vessel for divine communication, Balaam was nevertheless ‘invaded’ by the spirit of God.⁶⁸ This possession drives out his natural functions of magic according to Philo; only then is he allowed to repeat the words put into his mouth by God. The major difference between Balaam and the true prophets, however, is that the former does not understand what is taking place and is an unwilling vessel for the divine spirit. As Philo states before the second sacrifice, Balaam “was suddenly divinely possessed (θεοφοπέϊται), and, understanding nothing (μηδὲν συνιείς), as though his faculty of reason were wandering, spoke in prophecy these words which another supplied to him (ὥσπερ μετάισταμένου τοῦ λογισμοῦ τὰ ὑποβαλλόμενα ἐξελάλει προφητεύων τάδε)”.⁶⁹ Philo, then, views Balaam as a wicked magician who is utilised by God for the purposes of prophecy.

In other works, too, Philo presents Balaam in a similar manner, emphasizing the negative aspects, often relating to the world of magic, at the expense of seeing Balaam as a prophet. For instance, Philo supplies the information that Balaam’s name

⁶⁷ . *V.Mos.*, 1.272.

⁶⁸ . *V.Mos.*, 1.277. Baskin (‘Origen on Balaam: The Dilemma of the Unworthy Prophet’, p.24) notes; “According to Philo, therefore, someone like Balaam, whom Scripture shows to have evil intentions and base desires, cannot be considered a prophet, and is no more than a particularly able soothsayer. When he did happen to deliver God’s word, it was only in a moment of total possession when ‘he spake these oracles as one repeating words which another had put into his mouth.’ He was neither a participant in, nor a beneficiary of an act of divine grace.”

⁶⁹ . *V.Mos.*, 1.283.

signifies 'empty', whilst utilising the diviner in a list of polar opposites including sober wisdom and non-divinely inspired prophecy.⁷⁰ Other references enhance the negative image of Balaam, referring to his wickedness, greed, and vanity.⁷¹ Moreover, Philo again refers to the idea that Balaam's own magical skills of divination are inferior to true prophecy. Using Balaam as a case in point for those men who hear the divine doctrines but do not act on them, Philo states that the prophet was overthrown by his own 'insane wickedness' and that he perished because he had 'stamped beforehand the divinely inspired prophecies with the sophistry of the soothsayers.'⁷² Essentially, though, Balaam is denigrated by Philo because he placed more faith in his 'mantic sophistry' (σοφιστεία μαντική),⁷³ what might be termed the magical art of predicting the future, than he did in the revealed prophecies of God.

For Philo, Balaam is a counterfeit prophet and an unwilling mouthpiece of God. Aside from his reputation as an expert diviner, Philo has little positive to say and the additions he makes to the biblical accounts are aimed at denigrating Balaam. The representation of him as a magician is a method for achieving this negative portrayal; readers of the *De Vita Mosis* in the first century CE would have little doubt concerning the negative connotations and associations of the term μάγος. This representation is further supported by the other references to Balaam from Philo's corpus. In Philo's employment of the term μάγος with regard to Balaam there is a direct reference to his Hellenized audience concerning the world of magic. More than likely, this audience would have been aware of the dipartite nature of the term, it being both a reference to the long-lost but highly regarded Persian priests of

⁷⁰ . Balaam means 'empty' (μάταιος *De Conf. Ling.*, 159), 'the empty one' (ὁ μάταιος, *De migr. Abr.*, 113). The list of opposites; *De Confusione Linguarum*, 159.

⁷¹ . *De Migr. Abr.*, 113-114, *De Mut. Nom.*, 202, *De Cher.*, 1.32.

⁷² . *Mut.* 203.

⁷³ . *Mut.* 203.

Zoroaster, but also to those figures of their own days who were grouped under the banner of negatively defined magic. Again, this audience could not fail to observe that a contrast is being drawn between the true prophet Moses and the magician Balaam.

Balaam in the *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo

In the *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo we have an account of Balaam which stands in something of a contrast to Philo's own portrayals, and which, at first glance, suggests that positive comment on Balaam existed in sources and traditions other than Josephus. Though the precise details of the intended audience of this work cannot be definitely ascertained, the text was clearly destined for a Jewish audience of some form or other, and an audience knowledgeable in the Hebrew Bible.⁷⁴ Pseudo-Philo's version of the Balaam story was aimed at an audience familiar with the biblical narrative; as shall be seen, however, Pseudo-Philo provides his own distinctive version of Balaam, complete with embellishments and alterations from his source. Moreover, he presents a much more positive depiction of Balaam than Philo does, often shifting blame and divine punishment onto Balak.⁷⁵ Thus, Pseudo-Philo

⁷⁴ . For a recent and detailed discussion of the intended audience and genre of Pseudo-Philo's LAB see F.J.Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo, Rewriting the Bible*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993 and G.W.E.Nickelsburg, 'The Book of Biblical Antiquities', in M.Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1984. On Pseudo-Philo's acquaintance with Palestinian themes see D.J.Harrington, 'Biblical Geography in Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*', *BASOR* 220, 1975, pp.67-71 and 'Pseudo-Philo' in J.H.Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1988, pp.297-377.

⁷⁵ . Vermes (*Scripture and Tradition in Judaism*, p.174) notes that Pseudo-Philo's appraisal of Balaam is much more positive than the biblical version, but Feldman ('Prolegomenon' in M.R.James (ed.), *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo*, New York: Ktav, 1971) suggests that the biblical passages utilised are already amongst the most positive and are combined in the *Biblical Antiquities* with other positive

has Balaam state that Balak's desire to curse the Israelites is against the wishes of God, whilst at the same time humbly acknowledging that his divinatory skills are his for only as long as God wills it.⁷⁶ He also states that Balak has been assigned a miserable end, a reversal of the rabbinic tradition which saw Balaam alone being punished, and that the king was guilty of attempting to bribe the Israelite god, perhaps an attempt at interpreting the nebulous *קסמים* terminology of Num 22:7.⁷⁷ By transferring God's wrath from Balaam to Balak, Pseudo-Philo creates a much more positive account of the seer. However, this is tempered by the ending of the episode, in which Balaam meets his doom, Pseudo-Philo choosing to concentrate not on the oracles of Israel's future glory, but rather on Balaam's misfortune. Unlike Philo, who suggested that the oracles uttered by Balaam concerning Israel were produced by the divine spirit, Pseudo-Philo states that, on the contrary, "the spirit of God abode not in him".⁷⁸ This is the central point of Pseudo-Philo's account; the spirit of God is removed from Balaam once he decides to enter Moab and aid Balak. In essence he is a classical tragic hero, with the events of the biblical account moulded to fit this portrayal.

Although Baskin suggests that Pseudo-Philo's account of Balaam is perhaps the most favourable of ancient literature, we must note that, whilst shielding the seer

details of Balaam seen in Jewish tradition. Murphy (*Pseudo-Philo, Rewriting the Bible*, pp.84-89) however qualifies these views by reminding us that Pseudo-Philo's Balaam is both positive and negative, with his portrayal steadily deteriorating through the Biblical Antiquities account.

⁷⁶ . *LAB*, 18:3. Interestingly however, Pseudo-Philo adds the detail, seen in the rabbinic tradition (Num.R., 19.30, 20.7), that Balaam was the son of a famous diviner (*LAB*, 18:2): "Ecce ego scio quoniam in regno patris mei cum expugnarent eum Amorrei maledixisti eos et traditi sunt in conspectus eius."

⁷⁷ . *LAB*, 18:14. Pseudo-Philo foreshadows this end by having Balaam remark on his fate in *LAB* 18:8-9. In *LAB* 18:7 Balaam is shown to be the pawn of Balak in his attempt to bribe the deity. However, Pseudo-Philo makes no mention of the payment/divination equipment which Balak gives to Balaam. Instead of emphasizing Balaam's greed, as other exegetes did when referring to the arrival of Balak's emissaries, Pseudo-Philo describes Balaam as fully conscious of his fate (*LAB* 18:8): "Ecce insipiens est filius Sephor, et nescit quoniam inhabitat in gyro mortuorum."

⁷⁸ . *LAB*, 18:10. For a discussion of Balaam and the divine spirit in Pseudo-Philo see Baskin, *Pharaoh's Counsellors: Job, Jethro, and Balaam in Rabbinic and Patristic Tradition*, pp.98-100.

from early blame, his downfall is related in greater detail compared with Philo and Josephus.⁷⁹ Furthermore, Pseudo-Philo introduces something of the tragic ethos in having Balaam recognise his mistake in attempting to aid Balak, but nevertheless pressing ahead in attempting to curse and injure the Israelites. Thus, we see Balaam lamenting his fate, whilst resolving to lead the Israelites into sin through tempting them with the Moabite women.⁸⁰ Yet, we do not see any of the common motifs of Balaam's corruption, such as his greed for gain or his hatred of Israel, in Pseudo-Philo's account. Indeed, in the first instance his desire is to do the will of God, ostensibly wishing to offer sacrifice to the king out of a sense of pity. However, once Balaam realises that Balak's intentions are against the will of God he is unable to relent and becomes resigned to his fate.

For Vermes, Pseudo-Philo's Balaam is a classical example of the tragic and fallen hero: "Finally, realising that there would be no return to his former familiarity with the Lord, he decided, in his despair, to commit spiritual suicide by giving evil advice to the king".⁸¹ In this manner, Pseudo-Philo's account is something of a mixture of positive and negative. Unlike Philo, he limits the associations between Balaam and magic by preferring the term *interpretem somniorum* to *magos*. The idea that Balaam could be seen as a Joseph-like interpreter of dreams is common to a number of early rabbinical texts, suggesting, perhaps, that there were traditions which saw Balaam as a diviner and dream-interpreter, devoid of more overt and negative

⁷⁹ . In *LAB*, 18:8 Balaam admits that he is doomed. Likewise, with the withdrawal of the holy spirit, Balaam realises the imminence of his impending fall; *LAB*, 18:10-12. As shall be seen, Josephus fairly glosses over the doom of Balaam. Neither he nor Philo make any mention of Balaam's death. Pseudo-Philo includes it as it appears to be a constituent part of his construction of the tragic hero. See further Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism*, p.175.

⁸⁰ . *LAB* 18:11: "For I know that, because I have been persuaded by Balak, I have lessened the time of my life." *LAB* 18:13-14 recounts the advice given by Balaam to Balak concerning the seduction and corruption of the Israelites by the Moabite women.

⁸¹ . Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism*, p.175.

magical connections and connotations, extant in the first century CE.⁸² Moreover, Pseudo-Philo alters the main evidence for Balaam's magical representation, the curses, instead suggesting that Balak merely wishes the diviner to intercede with God.⁸³ Whilst this is a part of the tragic portrayal of Balaam, it can also be seen that it fits well with Pseudo-Philo's relegation of the magical aspects of the narrative. Pseudo-Philo prefers to concentrate on the abandonment of the divine spirit from Balaam.

The employment of *interpretem somniorum* as a description of Balaam by Pseudo-Philo marks something of a contrast with Philo's description of him as a *magos*. We may imagine that, though written originally in Hebrew, the Latin translation of the *Biblical Antiquities* could easily have employed *magos* terminology if the original term had merited it. This suggests that, whoever effected the translation of Pseudo-Philo's work, the original Hebrew term(s) used to describe Balaam were more at home in the sphere of the diviner (i.e. figures who use natural or God-given talents to interpret dreams or read omens, such as Joseph) than that of the negatively-defined magician (i.e. those figures expressly defined and outlawed in the biblical laws dealing with magic). However, we may note that these two spheres are never completely separate in either the Bible or in the Graeco-Roman world of the 1st Century CE. For instance, Pharaoh's priests, described by the language of magic in both the Hebrew and Greek versions of Exodus, are responsible for interpreting their masters' dreams.

⁸² . A common detail in the works of Pseudo-Philo and the rabbinical texts is the association of Balaam with the interpretation of dreams. The place named Pethor (*Num* 22:5), is explained (*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*) as an allusion to his profession, פֶּתוֹר meaning 'to interpret dreams', whilst *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* (on *Num* 22:5) and *Num. Rab.* 20.7 further state that the name is "Pethor because he interpreted dreams." Interestingly, Josephus makes no mention of Balaam's locale, perhaps, as shall be seen, as part of his limitation of Balaam's association with magic.

⁸³ . *LAB*, 18:7.

Whilst we might suggest then that Pseudo-Philo's account is devoid of the explicitly magical representation of Balaam, it is important to note that, in the traditions of the Bible, foreign dream interpreters were frequently associated with negatively defined magic.⁸⁴ For an audience familiar with the Hebrew Bible, as has been suggested for Pseudo-Philo's intended readership, Balaam could still appear, by implication, as a magician even if his designated status was that of dream interpreter. However, we have only the Latin version of the *Biblical Antiquities*, for which the translator chose the term *interpretem somniorum* to describe Balaam. Whilst Pseudo-Philo does not give any indication of following this magical tradition, it is interesting to note that he gave Balaam a designation, especially when we consider that his work is not a close and direct paraphrase or translation of the Bible, but is, rather, a form of "clarification and actualization of the biblical story."⁸⁵ Though this designation is not explicitly magical, the works of the later rabbis demonstrate just how easily such a diviner could be linked to magic, whilst in the Graeco-Roman world of the 1st Century CE figures seen as 'dream interpreters', especially freelance versions like Balaam, were rapidly being equated with the *magos*. As Dickie shows, the actions of various religious specialists, such as dream interpreters, were being subsumed under the category of the magician by the Roman Imperial authorities in the first century CE.⁸⁶ In this manner, figures on the edge of society, previously feared but often respected for their peculiar skills, were mitigated against.

⁸⁴ . In this respect Ricks ('The Magician as Outsider: The Evidence of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament', in M.Meyer and P.Mirecki (eds.), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1995, pp.138-139) makes two important observations; the categories of divination, astrology and magic are not explicit in the Bible, and the terminology used in creating the negatively-defined magician often hails from foreign origins. In this manner the Bible is able to condemn non-Israelite religious practices as magical.

⁸⁵ . D.J.Harrington, 'Palestinian Adaptations of Biblical Narratives and Prophecies. I. The Bible Rewritten', in R.A.Kraft and G.W.E.Nickelsburg (eds.), *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1986, pp.239-258 (quote p.239).

⁸⁶ . Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, pp.142-161.

Balaam in Post-Josephus Literature

Interest in the figure of Balaam and his prophecies reached something of a peak in the period immediately after Josephus, as both rabbinical Judaism and Christianity provided their own exegesis on the events of Numbers 22-24. The most striking characteristic of Balaam in this period, despite the importance of his messianic prophecies which were seen as a source of future hope for Judaism and a reference to Jesus for Christianity, was his representation as a magician.⁸⁷ In both the Mishnah and the two Talmuds he is repeatedly described by the epithet 'wicked' and is seen as a negatively defined magician who attempted to curse the Israelites.⁸⁸ The references in the Christian tradition take two forms, the primary remarks in the New Testament and the later commentaries made by the Church fathers.⁸⁹ Whilst the former focus primarily on the negative attributes such as Balaam's greed, idolatry and hatred of the Israelites, the latter echo the views of rabbinic Judaism in portraying him as an evil magician.⁹⁰ Granted, there were attempts, most notably by Origen, to

⁸⁷ . We must note that there is a great degree of overlapping in the shared Balaam tradition in the rabbinic and Christian spheres. As J.Braverman, 'Balaam in Rabbinic and Early Christian Tradition,' in S.B.Hoenig and L.D.Stitskin (ed.), *Joshua Finkel Festschrift*, N.Y., 1974, pp.1-50, observes (p.50); "The parallel traditions in rabbinic and patristic literature concerning the character, personality and identification of Balaam are indeed striking."

⁸⁸ . *b.Sanh.* 105a (immoral behaviour and bestiality) and 105b ('the Wicked'). Other texts which speak of Balaam and his connection to negatively defined magic; *b.Gittin* 56b-57a, *Numbers Rabbah*, 22:5, *Sipre Deut.* 357, *Tanhuma Balak* 4.134, 'Abot 5.19.

⁸⁹ . Balaam is linked to the sins of idolatry and debauchery, just as the rabbinical authors were keen to do, in *Revelations* 2:14 as the church at Pergamum is called upon to repent for its false teachings. The link between Balaam and a love of riches which leads ultimately to ruin is seen in *Jude* 1:11, in the context of those who slavishly follow their negative instincts like 'irrational animals', and also in *2 Peter* 2:15-16 where, in a general discussion of false prophets and their punishments, Balaam is referred to as loving gain from wrongdoing and also to have been restrained from his acts of madness by his ass. It may be noted that both *2 Peter* and *Jude* display a great awareness and respect for Jewish traditions, suggesting that the story of Balaam, at least in its original form with its negative aspects, was valued by both communities. See B.Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter and Jude*, N.Y., 1964, and N.Perrin, *The New Testament: An Introduction*, N.Y., 1974.

⁹⁰ . Justin, *Apology* 1.32.12-13, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 126.1, Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 6.18.168.3, Jerome, *Apology*, 1, 36.1, *In Ezekiel* 6.18.3, Irenaeus, *Ex Catena in Numeros*, fragment 23, Ambrose, *Epistle* 50:8, Origen, *Homily on Numbers*, 13.7, 15.1.

salvage something of the more positive aspects of Balaam by imagining him as a divinely appointed gentile prophet.⁹¹ Such associations with true prophecy were very hard to argue and sustain; the default image of Balaam as an evil magician was somewhat overwhelming in this respect. Indeed, when we review the post-Josephus traditions with the magical portrayals of Philo and Pseudo-Philo, it becomes evident that the latter marked only the tip of the iceberg; indeed, it is possible that some of the rabbinical and patristic representations of Balaam made use of the negative imagery and associations formulated by Philo and Pseudo-Philo.⁹²

Summary

Balaam, then, appears principally as a magician; this is how we see him in the biblical texts, with his name and office being linked to distinctive forms of magical terminology, as well as in the works of later commentators, who, like Philo and Pseudo-Philo, adopted a negative image of Balaam, frequently describing him through the negative magical terminology of their day. We have seen that the biblical texts employ distinctive forms of magical terminology in relation to Balaam; whilst the

⁹¹ . Although representing him as the founder of the Order of the Magi (*Homily on Numbers*, 13.7), Origen also paints Balaam as a form of prophet, though only after much soul-searching (see further, Baskin, 'Origen on Balaam: the Dilemma of the Unworthy Prophet', pp.22-35). How much Origen knew of the world of magic is open to question, but he states on Balaam (*Selecta on Numbers*, PG 12, 682A-683C) that he "was accustomed by these sacrifices to invoke demons. Indeed, in this way sacrifices are offered in the demon world." Moreover, Origen (*Homily*, 15.1) suggests that the altars erected for the sacrifices in the Numbers account were magical in nature; "He is culpable when he builds altars, and sets out sacrifices to demons, demanding divine counsel by means of magic."

⁹² . Indeed, the patristic authors were keen to employ elements of other authors' works on the subject of Balaam. So Baskin states (p.101); "An unusually large number of borrowings from Philo and rabbinic tradition in patristic commentary on Balaam also bear witness to the difficulties many Church fathers encountered in their attempts to understand and elucidate the significance of this contradictory gentile seer."

original meanings of these terms may not have been negative, the Deuteronomistic reclassification of magic, along with the efforts of the LXX translators, has served to create a negatively-defined magician of Balaam. Certainly, this is how Philo chose to read his own biblical texts. However, this image was problematic for Balaam, at least in his dealings with Balak in Num 22-24, appears almost as a prophet of God (though, of course, he is non-Israelite). In this manner, Balaam becomes a dichotomous character, for the prophecies concerning Israel's future glory are of great importance to later exegetes who sought to provide a positive message for Judaism (and later Christianity) in uncertain times. In looking at Josephus' own appraisal, then, we will be conscious not only of the fact that Balaam appears as a form of magician in the biblical texts, but also that magic was at the core of Balaam's figure in the works of later exegetes such as Philo and Pseudo-Philo.

Balaam in the *Jewish Antiquities*

The Introduction of Balaam in the *Jewish Antiquities*

A survey of Josephus' paraphrase of the Balaam story in *Ant.* reveals a great number of alterations made in comparison with both the Hebrew and Greek versions of Numbers. The most obvious of these is the greater length of his composition, a clear indication that this narrative is of importance to Josephus.⁹³ In addition, we can

⁹³ . Feldman notes that whilst the Hebrew account of Balaam runs to 164 lines and the Septuagint to 261 lines, Josephus's version has 363 lines. As Feldman shows this is not surprising given the ratios of

point to numerous details which are included in order to create a much more positive account of Balaam than we see in the biblical texts. For instance, Josephus presupposes a cordial relationship between Balak and Balaam,⁹⁴ and omits the divine statement to Balaam that he is to do only what God instructs.⁹⁵ He also declines to name Beor as Balaam's father.⁹⁶ As Feldman has shown, these alterations, which create a much more positive image of Balaam in comparison to the biblical sources and to authors such as Philo and Pseudo-Philo, are made by Josephus in order to address a number of exegetical concerns, ranging from the refutation that Jews do not hate non-Jews to the insistence that the Jewish people are law-abiding and respectful of Roman rule.⁹⁷ As I will show, Josephus is able to integrate magical terminology into this positive portrayal of a non-Jewish diviner. In this sense, then, many of these alterations will be significant for our survey of Josephus' attitude towards magic and its relationship to Balaam. However, despite his desire to create a positive picture of Balaam, Josephus does not shirk his self-appointed maxim of recounting scripture, even when some of its details can be problematic for his own views on Jewish history or Graeco-Roman thought and custom. Thus, Josephus makes mention of the talking ass in his story of Balaam, taking the biblical versions at face value unlike some other biblical interpreters of his day who doubtless saw this event as unbelievable.⁹⁸

other Josephan accounts of biblical figures, though it is perhaps something of an oddity for Balaam was not a Hebrew hero; 'Josephus' Portrait of Balaam,' *The Studia Philonica Annual* 5, 1993, pp.48-49.

⁹⁴ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.104; Num 22:5-6 makes no mention of the relationship which existed before Balak's embassy to Balaam.

⁹⁵ . Num 22:20.

⁹⁶ . Num 22:5. Feldman (S.Mason (ed.), *Flavius Josephus – Translation and Commentary*: L.H.Feldman, *Volume 3, Judean Antiquities 1-4: Translation and Commentary*, p.367) suggests that this omission is due to the fact that the name could mean 'foolishness'.

⁹⁷ . Feldman, 'Josephus' Portrait of Balaam', pp.50-51, notes that Josephus 'gives a relatively unbiased portrayal', shifting the emphasis from Balaam's personality to the historical, military, and political confrontation between Israel and her enemies. However, this appraisal takes no account of the magical aspects of the story, nor of the importance of Josephus employment of μάντις terminology.

⁹⁸ . So for instance Pseudo-Philo, *Bib. Ant.* 18.9 in referring to the donkey makes no mention of its abilities of speech. Rogerson also notes that the Medieval Jewish scholar Maimonides (*Guide for the Perplexed*, 2.42) believed that the phenomena of the talking ass took place in a dream; see J.Rogerson, *The Supernatural in the Old Testament*, Guildford, Lutterworth, 1976, p.2.

Josephus is well aware of the Graeco-Roman sensibilities which affected other Jewish authors of his era and, to reinforce the historical realities behind his expanded story of Balaam, states that on “this narrative readers are free to think what they please”.⁹⁹ This phrase is emblematic of Josephus’s occasional rationalization of the miraculous; its use in the Balaam narrative indicates that Josephus has adopted a critical attitude towards the biblical accounts.¹⁰⁰

Josephus’ Balaam narrative is of interest for our study of magic in several respects. Firstly, Josephus sees Balaam as possessing prophetic gifts and able to speak with the Jewish deity. The terminology which he employs to refer to these gifts is grouped under the term *μάντις*, which is seen in both LXX and in wider Graeco-Roman literature to refer to a magician.¹⁰¹ Secondly, Josephus does not hesitate to recount the fantastic elements of the biblical Balaam story, especially the phenomena of the spirit of God and the divinatory oracles; such details are important because they add to the non-magical portrayal of Balaam. Thirdly, Josephus leaves out a number of details which directly represent Balaam as a magician. As Feldman notes, there are a number of issues which Josephus wishes to tackle in his retelling of the Balaam story, ranging from the charge that Jews hate non-Jews to the Stoic nature of Balaam and

⁹⁹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.158; clearly the case of Balaam is one which Josephus feels involves a number of unbelievable and unlikely details.

¹⁰⁰ . Josephus employs his frequently repeated refrain in a number of situations both miraculous and historically dubious; the ages of the patriarchs (*Ant.* 1.108), Moses on Mount Sinai (*Ant.* 3.81), the dream of Glaphyra (*Ant.* 17.354) and also historical events such as the sack of Jerusalem by Shishak (*Ant.* 8.262), and the circumstances leading up to Caligula’s death (*Ant.* 19.108). Rather than being a sign of Josephus’ own lack of faith in the miraculous, as G.MacRae (‘Miracle in the *Antiquities* of Josephus’, in C.F.D.Moule (ed.), *Miracles: Cambridge Studies in Their Philosophy and History*, London, Mowbray, 1965, pp.129-147) observes the phrase is a gesture of courtesy to the Graeco-Roman readership who might not be able to accept the interpretation of the author.

¹⁰¹ . See Chapter 2, pp.79-82.

Balak's oracles.¹⁰² However, as with other scholarly interpretations of Balaam in *Ant.*, the relative absence of magic has not been studied in any great depth.

Introduction to Critical Scholarship

The approach I adopt in this study of Balaam in *Ant.* will focus on an 'occulted' area of Josephan study, namely his understanding of magic. Of the work already extant on Josephus' Balaam, no scholar has approached the data with this idea in mind despite the fact that, as we have seen, the default image of Balaam in other ancient sources was that of a negatively defined magician. Instead, scholars have tended to view Balaam in *Ant.* in relation to the main themes of Josephan research. Feldman reviews Balaam as part of his series of biblical 'portraits', emphasizing the extent to which Josephus uses the seer as part of his apologetic for Judaism, demonstrating features of the Jewish race which make them attractive to a Roman audience.¹⁰³ Levison observes that the episode represents an interesting employment of the terminology of the 'spirit of God' in Josephus, concluding that his rendering shows him to be "a creative thinker who lived at a critical point of encounter between Jewish tradition and Greco-Roman culture."¹⁰⁴ Baskin summarizes the account of Balaam in Josephus as part of her survey of advisor figures in ancient literature, emphasizing the positive nature of his account.¹⁰⁵ Vermes explores Josephus' Balaam as part of his examination of methods of scriptural interpretation in various minds and

¹⁰² . Feldman, 'Josephus' Portrait of Balaam', pp.48-83.

¹⁰³ . Feldman, 'Josephus' Portrait of Balaam', pp.48-83.

¹⁰⁴ . Levison, 'The debut of the Divine Spirit in Josephus's *Antiquities*', pp.123-138.

¹⁰⁵ . Baskin, *Pharaoh's Counsellors: Job, Jethro, and Balaam in Rabbinic and Patristic Tradition*.

societies of the ancient world, again demonstrating the comparative positive aspects of Josephus' account.¹⁰⁶ And Greene, in an otherwise exhaustive survey, fails to mention Josephus' Balaam in his selected Hellenistic documents.¹⁰⁷ However, none of these authors analyse in detail the extent to which Josephus' account of Balaam is guided by his concerns and understanding of the subject of magic. The need for reference to magic is largely absent in these works because the authors choose to view Balaam as a prophetic seer. For instance, Feldman notes that Josephus constitutes one of the few designations of the office of Balaam, as he terms him a μάντις, but he fails to observe that authors of the same era did likewise, though preferring to employ more negative forms of the terminology of magic.¹⁰⁸ I will show that there are multiple elements of the biblical Balaam narratives which associate him with magic; these are not as insignificant as scholars of Josephus' Balaam would like to believe. Clearly, the magical representation of Balaam was important to other ancient authors. Josephus' response to this image of Balaam shows him to have been a dedicated and independent thinker who remodelled the biblical stories to his own concerns and specifications.

The Technical Designation of Balaam as μάντις in the *Jewish Antiquities*

Of paramount importance for Josephus' representation of Balaam is the language with which he describes the diviner. As we see with Philo, it was a simple

¹⁰⁶ . Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism*, pp.189-194.

¹⁰⁷ . J.T.Greene, 'Balaam: Prophet, Diviner, and Priest In Selected Ancient Israelite and Hellenistic Jewish Sources', *SBL 1989 Seminar Papers*, pp.57-106.

¹⁰⁸ . Feldman, 'Josephus' Portrait of Balaam', pp.52-55.

process by which Balaam could be transformed into a negatively-defined magician, utilising the most damaging magical terminology in order to communicate with a Graeco-Roman audience which had a great fear of the itinerant μάγος or γόης. In the Graeco-Roman world magic was becoming a dangerous category of exclusion, one defined not by the actions or philosophy of the accused but by the terminology of the accuser.¹⁰⁹ It is against such a background that we must consider Josephus' own employments of μάντις terminology, for, in the wider Graeco-Roman world of the first century CE this term was frequently applied to the figure of the magician.¹¹⁰ In total, Josephus uses μάντις terminology in connection with Balaam four times. These examples constitute not only a description of Balaam but also the definition of his predictions concerning the future of Israel and its people. For his audience the description of Balaam as a μάντις is of great importance; whilst it has connotations with the world of magic it lacks the explicit negativity of the μάγος or γόης.

Moreover, we must recognise that Josephus was faced with something of a dilemma when describing the office of Balaam, for his biblical sources lacked any direct designation. Hence, we may imagine that Josephus, in creating a positive portrayal of Balaam, felt the need to describe him through the most appropriate term which fitted the information which he wished to present. The most apposite terminology in this case was that of the μάντις, as Josephus' Balaam, famed for his predictions, fits neatly into his list of such figures. As Gray observes the term μάντις refers, for Josephus, to a form of technical divination and operates as a kind of

¹⁰⁹ . M.Smith (*Jesus the Magician, Charlatan or Son of God?*, Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1978) gives a concise summation of the extent to which magical terminology could be used to damage an opponents reputation in his analysis of remarks on Jesus. Likewise Apuleius' *Golden Ass* provides us with the stark realities and consequences of accusations of magic, and the ease with which magical terminology could be employed, in the 1st century CE.

¹¹⁰ . See earlier Chapter 2, pp.79-82.

replacement for the hallowed terminology of the προφήτης.¹¹¹ However, Gray does not observe that Josephus is careful to separate the μάντις from the world of magic, a point which suggests that he was well aware of how the term was being applied in the wider Graeco-Roman world. Such a concern is evident each of his instances of μάντις terminology.

Jewish Antiquities 4.104: Balaam as Expert Diviner

The nature of Josephus' respect for Balaam and his predictions, as well as an indication that Josephus wishes to limit his association with magic, is apparent from the very first reference to the seer. Here Josephus calls him "the best diviner of his day" (μάντις ἄριστος τῶν τότε).¹¹² In neither MT nor LXX is Balaam thus termed. Short of calling him a προφήτης, a term which Josephus largely reserves for Jewish biblical prophets,¹¹³ describing him as the best μάντις of his day demonstrates that Josephus held Balaam in high regard with respect to his prophetic abilities. However, on this epithet Feldman notes: "Indeed, in this respect Josephus diminishes the stature

¹¹¹ . R.Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine, The Evidence From Josephus*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, pp.107-110.

¹¹² . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.104.

¹¹³ . As with other instances of select terminology, Josephus, whilst strongly linking προφήτης terminology to the prophets of God from the far distant past (even resisting the temptation to term himself a προφήτης), has a number of employments which do not fit the rule. For example, we may see the term in reference to Theudas (*Ant.* 20.97), and the 'Egyptian' (*Ant.* 20.169); however, in both cases Josephus merely states that these figures *claimed* to be a προφήτης. D.E.Aune ('The Use of ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ in Josephus', *JBL* 101, 1982, pp.419-421) also observes that the term is used in speaking of a group of false prophets operating at the time of the fall of Jerusalem (*War*, 6.286), though this curious incidence, possibly a scribal error, does not refute the general rule by which Josephus uses the language of the προφήτης in speaking of figures prior to Artaxerxes. Given the view that Josephus believed that true prophecy had ceased at some point in the past, most likely around the time of Artaxerxes (*CA*, 1.41), and that he religiously restricts the terminology of true prophets to Hebrew figures of the distant past, it becomes evident that Josephus could not term Balaam a προφήτης. On this issue see further the discussion in R.Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Judaism the Evidence from Josephus*, pp.23-34

of Balaam not merely by declining to call him a προφήτης but also by stating that he was the best μάντις of his day (τῶν τότε), the implication being that he was not the best diviner of all time".¹¹⁴ Yet, we must note that the biblical texts do not give any form of designation for Balaam; indeed, to all intents and purposes he appears there as a magician. The fact that Josephus has chosen to term Balaam a μάντις, a term which, though connected to the world of magic, lacks the more negative connotations of other terms and refers principally to the divination of the future, must surely be a positive sign for it removes the doubt of the Graeco-Roman audience. There is no need for them to wonder what manner of figure Balaam constitutes, and hence no danger that he would be seen by them as a negatively-defined magician. Moreover, it seems clear that Josephus could not have termed Balaam a προφήτης, a term reserved by him for great Jewish prophets and heroes of the distant past, as he was a non-Israelite and thus could not qualify for such exalted description.¹¹⁵

In connection with this description of Balaam as the best diviner of his day, Josephus pronounces on the nature of his predictions (πρόρρησις) by stating that God himself had enabled Balaam to speak the truth. The term used here to refer to the oracles of Balaam, πρόρρησις, whilst linked linguistically to the office of the προφήτης, is employed by Josephus in a number of instances with the meaning of 'prediction'. Thus Feldman suggests that, because this term is used of figures such as the seer of Pharaoh or of events such as the dreams of Joseph, there is no reason to believe that Josephus here applies the term to Balaam in order to underline his

¹¹⁴ . Feldman, 'Josephus' Portrayal of Balaam', pp.48-83, quote p.55.

¹¹⁵ . Josephus simply states that the seer lived on the Euphrates and that he was a friend to the Madianites (*Ant.* 4.105).

similarities to the Hebrew prophets.¹¹⁶ However, Feldman fails to take account of the fact that in practically every incidence of the term πρόρρησις the predictions referred to are either made by God himself, are related to true Hebrew prophets, or are linked to the sanction of kinship. Some figures will suffice to show that, by using the term πρόρρησις in relation to Balaam, Josephus clearly intended to elevate his predictions to a divinely inspired level on a par with the Hebrew prophets. Of the nineteen instances of the term πρόρρησις six occur in relation to God's own predictions to various figures, six are linked to the office of the προφήτης, four refer to divinely inspired dreams, two address predictions made to, or concerning, kings, and one describes the oracles of Balaam.¹¹⁷ The vast majority of instances therefore support the opposite view to that held by Feldman, as it is quite clear that Josephus reserved the term πρόρρησις to refer to predictions which had divine origin or which were made by God's appointed prophets. However, it would seem that Josephus was not entirely consistent in his employment of πρόρρησις, given the two instances related to kingship. Yet, there is throughout Josephus' works a link made between those who are able to make accurate predictions of the future, frequently described by μάντις terminology, with the idea of kingship as a sanctioning factor. It would seem, then, that Josephus is according Balaam high praise indeed by suggesting that his predictions are to be classified by the same term which he uses, in the vast majority of cases, for the actions of God or the Hebrew προφήτης.

¹¹⁶ . L.H.Feldman, *Flavius Josephus Translation and Commentary, Vol.3, Judean Antiquities 1-4*, (ed. S.Mason), Leiden, E.J.Brill, 2000, p.368n.318.

¹¹⁷ . God's predictions, *Ant.* 1.225, 1.258, 1.284, 1.314, 2.229, *CA*, 2.190, the prophets, *War* 7.432, *Ant.* 4.303, 6.43, 6.334, 9.120, 10.268, dreams, *Ant.* 2.15, 2.65, 2.72, 2.217, kings, *Ant.* 17.45, *CA*, 1.258.

Given the primary reason for Balaam's summoning by king Balak in the biblical narratives, the cursing of the Israelites, it is not surprising, despite Josephus' willingness to separate his Balaam from the world of magic, that *Ant.* also makes reference to this action. The second instance of μάντις terminology in 4.104 is thus linked to the effort to curse the Israelites, with Josephus having the envoys of Balak put the proposal to Balaam. Clearly there is no contradiction here for Josephus; a μάντις, it would appear, is not strictly limited to predicting the future but, at least in Balaam's case, is able to wield magical powers. In no other instance, however, do we see a link between the practice of magic and μάντις terminology. Whilst Josephus follows the spirit of the biblical narratives in this regard, he adds a number of details which suggest that he wished to emphasize that the fame of Balaam as a μάντις was due to his prophetic abilities, not his magic. Thus, Balaam is said to have made plain his 'readiness' and 'zeal' to comply with the request of the envoys, though he is driven more by a desire to do the will of his monarch Balak than he is by a hatred of the Israelites.¹¹⁸ For Feldman this desire to do the bidding of his monarch, rather than to curse the Israelites through a personal sense of enmity, is one of the glosses which Josephus adds to his story of Balaam in order to refute the claim that the Jews are, and were, universally hated.¹¹⁹ This is made clear when Josephus, in an extra-biblical addition, has Balaam explain to the envoys that they should return home disappointed because God had made it clear to the seer that the Israelites were a favoured people.¹²⁰ Josephus even has Balaam attempt to dissuade the envoys of their hatred for the

¹¹⁸ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.105.

¹¹⁹ . Feldman, 'Josephus' Portrayal of Balaam', pp.48-83.

¹²⁰ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.106.

Israelites; hardly the action of an evil magician bent on cursing them. Whilst acknowledging Balaam's enthusiasm to do his king's wishes, Josephus reminds his readers that Balaam is famous because God "had brought him to high renown for truth's sake and for the prediction thereof".¹²¹

Jewish Antiquities 4.112: Balaam as Augur

Balaam is again labelled a μάντις in 4.112 where he is escorted to the top of a mountain in order to overlook the disposition of the Hebrews' camp. This reference is to be found between two important details which serve to enhance the representation of Balaam as a diviner who spoke only as God directed, even when he was not under the influence of the divine spirit. These details also serve to marginalise the magical aspects of the story, as does Josephus' omission of the reason for their journey to the mountain top and the purpose of the sacrifices which are made there; in the biblical narratives the journey is made to the height in order that the magician can see the target of his curse, and the sacrifices are a means by which Balaam and Balak can carry out this magical action. However, Josephus prefaces his first prediction of Balaam by stating that the seer approached Balak because he knew that it was the will of God. Thus, instead of a burning hatred of the Israelites or even a sense of duty towards a monarch, Balaam is compelled to go to Balak by the commands of God. The second detail addresses the function of Balaam the μάντις. Whilst the biblical accounts suppose that the sacrifices carried out upon the heights, presumably at an

¹²¹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.105.

altar of Baal, are linked directly to the attempt to curse the Israelites, Josephus instead links them to the prophetic abilities of Balaam. Thus, immediately after the burning of the slaughtered victims, Josephus states that Balaam saw ‘the indications of inflexible Fate (ἄτροπον)’ and issued his first oracle of Israel’s future glory.¹²² The absence of a reference to the attempt to curse the Israelites here also limits the association between Balaam as μάντις and the world of magic. Likewise, the inclusion here of the idea of inflexible Fate (ἄτροπον) suggests that Balaam has little choice in his actions; his divinations reveal, in much the same manner as state sanctioned Roman augurs, the will of God.

Jewish Antiquities 4:157: Balaam and the Praise of Moses

The fourth instance of μάντις terminology in connection to Balaam occurs in the eulogy given by Josephus for the seer, in which he states that “this was the man to whom Moses did the high honour of recording his prophecies (μαντείας)”. Here again the function of Balaam is brought to the attention of the reader. Whilst Josephus also relates that Balaam had been summoned by the Midianites in order to curse the Israelites, again referring to Balaam in a passive sense as someone who was thought by the Midianites to be able to wield magical powers, he nevertheless refers to Balaam’s prophecies as products of a μάντις. Moreover, Josephus also suggests that Moses, the greatest of prophets, could have claimed these prophecies for himself as

¹²² . This particular form of the word ‘Fate’ (ἄτροπον) occurs only in this instance in the whole of Josephus’ works, though, as Thackeray notes (*Josephus, Jewish Antiquities Books IV-VI*, Loeb Classical Library, London, Harvard University Press, 1998, p.57) the term is linked to Atropos, the divinity of inflexible fate.

‘there was no witness to convict him’ of such fraud. Instead Josephus says that Moses has “given Balaam this testimony and deigned to perpetuate his memory.” Clearly, the idea which Josephus wishes to leave his audience with concerning Balaam is that he was an expert μάντις, who spoke the truth and who was highly regarded by Moses, but who was merely a passive participant in the plan to curse the Israelites. Yet Josephus also adds that Balaam was prevented from cursing the Israelites by divine providence. This suggests that Balaam was indeed capable of cursing his enemies but that he was prevented by God; as we see throughout the *Ant.* account however, Balaam is obedient to the will of God and is responsible for delivering the divine oracles. The praise of Moses, then, serves to underline Balaam’s designation as a μάντις who could accurately foretell the future, and whose prophecies were worthy not only of being recorded, but of being included in the sacred books of the Jews.

Balaam and Balak

Josephus’ description of Balaam as a μάντις, coupled with his close relationship to king Balak, are details which reveal Josephus’ understanding not only of the negative impact which some forms of magical terminology could have, but also of the importance of the role of sanction in definition. Throughout his account of Balaam Josephus emphasizes the close relationship which existed between the seer and the king of Moab. Whilst the biblical texts record a form of employer/employee relationship, particularly apparent when we consider that one of the translations of נֶחֱדַן in 22:7 involved the idea of payment for magical services, Josephus adds a

number of details to his account which suggest that a close relationship existed between Balaam and Balak. In his first reference to Balaam as the best μάντις of his day, Josephus also states that he was on friendly terms with the Midianites.¹²³ Those sent as part of the embassy to Balaam are said to be ‘notables’ (ἀξιολόγων) as well as ambassadors (πρέσβειων), whilst Balaam is described as having “received them with cordial hospitality”(δέχεται ξενίᾳ φιλοφρόνως).¹²⁴ Balaam also appears to be a willing partner in the attempt to curse the Israelites, Josephus stating that he made “plain to them his own readiness and zeal to comply with their request”, whilst, with the second embassy, Balaam risks the wrath of God in order to give ‘gratification’ (χαρίζεσθαι) to the insistent Midianites.¹²⁵ In the biblical version of the story Balaam is less willing to subvert the will of God, stating that he would not go with the envoys even if Balak was to pay him with a house full of silver and gold.¹²⁶

Again, as with the ‘fees for divination’ of Num 22:7, Josephus leaves out any mention of payment for Balaam’s services thus neatly circumventing Balaam’s reputation for greed. On Balaam’s arrival at the camp of Balak we see the full extent of Josephus’ aggrandizement of the relationship between the two, and the honour in which, Josephus would have us believe, Balaam was held. Thus we are told that Balak welcomed Balaam with a ‘magnificent’ (ἐκπρεπῶς) reception, and that, when Balaam was ready to inspect the camp of the Israelites, “Balak thereupon went himself, escorting the seer with all the honours of a royal retinue to a mountain lying

¹²³ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.104.

¹²⁴ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.105. Whilst the biblical narratives state that the messengers sent to Balaam in the second instance (Num 22:15) were more numerous and distinguished than those of the first (Num 22:7), Josephus has no such change in status, suggesting that his Balaam was highly honoured from the start.

¹²⁵ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.107.

¹²⁶ . Num 22:18.

over their heads”.¹²⁷ Moreover, Balak is said to have ‘promptly ministered to his wishes’, suggesting that the king was anxious for Balaam to achieve his goals.¹²⁸ Further details, such as Balaam’s statement that he prays to do nothing except the will of Balak (*Ant.* 4.121), his ‘earnest desire’ to gratify Balak and the Midianites (*Ant.* 4.107), and his parting advice concerning the Hebrew youths and their seduction by the Midianites women (*Ant.* 4.126-130), serve to underline the desire on Balaam’s behalf to carry out the instructions of his monarch.

We may see the extent to which Josephus envisaged a formal working relationship through his statement that, following Balaam’s first refusal to curse the Israelites, “Balak fumed and accused him of transgressing the covenant whereunder, in exchange for liberal gifts, he had obtained his services from his allies”. In this statement a number of important ideas, unique to Josephus’ account, are encapsulated. Josephus describes the relationship between the king and the seer as a συνθήκη, a term meaning ‘contract’.¹²⁹ This agreement between the two was achieved by Balak paying his allies with ‘liberal gifts’ (λάβοι δωρεῶν) for the services of Balaam.¹³⁰ This passage also suggests that Josephus was aware that such services could indeed be bought and sold, and could operate, legitimately, under the sanction of those in power. However, Josephus is keen, unlike Philo, to limit Balaam’s appearance as a

¹²⁷ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.112. Whilst we might note that Philo, too, has a description of a great banquet being held for the arrival of Balaam (*De Vita Mosis*, 1.275), he immediately follows this by stating, much like the biblical narratives, that Balak criticized Balaam for his delay in arriving. Josephus does not relate this criticism. We might note too that the rabbis remarked that Balaam’s reception was far from a grand affair (2’*Abot R.Nat.*23, *Tanhuma Balak* 11).

¹²⁸ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.113.

¹²⁹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.118. Liddell and Scott’s *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.776, provides the definition of ‘covenant’ as well as ‘contract’ and ‘treaty’.

¹³⁰ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.118. It is unclear whether these ‘liberal gifts’ are paid by Balak to Balaam for his services as a form of reward, or whether they are payment to Balak’s allies in order to obtain Balaam. The fact that an angry Balak dismisses Balaam without reward (4.126) may suggest the former, though we might note that there is little which would link the reference to payment in 4.118 to the nebulous terminology of ‘fees for divination’ in Num 22:7.

negatively-defined magician who hawks his skills to the highest bidder.¹³¹ Of prime importance for this limitation are the repeated references to Balaam's desire to carry out the wishes of his monarch. Granted, Balak is also his employer, with whom he has a contract, but it is his status as a king which mitigates against the identification of Balaam as a negatively-defined magician. Crucial, too, is the role of God, with Josephus making it abundantly clear that, whilst Balaam is an experienced μάντις, his actions are at the mercy of God; hardly the representation of a powerful and independent magician.

Josephus and Vespasian

An instructive example of Josephus' link between μάντις terminology and the sanctioning role of an authority figure may be seen in Josephus' account of his own prophetic abilities. Josephus uses μάντις terminology in connection with himself on two occasions; in *War* 3.405 the verb προμαντεύομαι is used of his prediction of the fall of Jotopata, whilst in *War* 4.625 the term μαντεία is used of his prediction that Vespasian would become emperor. Whilst Josephus does not apply the label of μάντις to himself directly, these two instances seem to suggest that his prophetic abilities were of the order of those that would be performed by just such a figure.¹³² The most instructive of these two examples, with regards to the idea of

¹³¹ . Philo, *De Vita Mosis*, 1.267-268. Balaam's love of riches is seen too in later tradition, in both the New Testament (2 Pet 2:15, Jude 11) and rabbinic literature (*m. 'Abot* 5.19, *l'Abot R.Nat.* 29, 2 *'Abot R.Nat.* 49).

¹³² . T.Rajak (*Josephus*, 2nd ed., London, Duckworth, 2002) notes a number of objections to Josephus' claims to true prophecy, especially the idea that he retro-dated his predictions after he became a part of Vespasian's entourage (pp.186-188), though she herself draws a link between Josephus' background as

sanction, is the latter for it makes a direct link to a figure of authority, Vespasian. In analysing this latter reference, not only do we see a number of similarities to other employments of μάντις terminology which suggest some form of technical divination, but we must also be struck by the similarities to the Balaam episode. The most striking similarities occur with regards to the prophetic activities of the two diviners. Not only are the two figures described, directly and indirectly, through μάντις terminology, but it is made clear that the products of their art and expertise are sanctioned by powerful figures of authority. Indeed, in the case of Balaam we have two instances of sanction; one from Balak's 'contract', and one from God whereby Balaam is used as the vessel for divine predictions.

Of particular importance when drawing a comparison between Balaam and Balak and Josephus and Vespasian, is the nature of the relationship between diviner and king. Not only is Balak bound to Balaam by some form of covenant or contract (συνθήκη), but his attitude towards him is friendly and respectful, with the diviner being accorded honours normally reserved for kings. In the case of Josephus we see something of a reverse scenario, as it is not until the validity of his predictions is acknowledged that Josephus is accorded some form of recognition, status and respect. Having realised that Josephus' predictions (μαντείας) were divine (θείας), Vespasian is said to be shocked that Josephus was still a prisoner, stating that it was disgraceful "that one who foretold my elevation to power and was a minister of the voice of God should still rank as a captive and endure a prisoner's fate".¹³³ For Josephus the actions of Titus, who calls for the slate to be wiped clean with regard to Josephus' previous opposition to Rome, are a reward for his divination and a proof

a priest and his status as prophet (pp.18-19). However, she makes no reference to the connotations of μάντις terminology in her appraisal.

¹³³ . *Jewish War*, 4.626.

that his power of insight into the future was legitimate.¹³⁴ Clearly, Josephus had held himself to be a capable and reliable diviner but it is only with the sanction of Vespasian that his prediction is seen to be ‘divine’, his chains are released, and his status is restored.¹³⁵ Moreover, Josephus has Vespasian describe him as a ‘minister of the voice of God’ (διάκονος τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ φωνῆς), a phrase of high praise which is designed to elevate Josephus to a select level and rank in terms of prophetic ability.¹³⁶ Validation of the prophecies of a μάντις can only come from a figure of authority, a point which is seen not only in Josephus’ recounting of his own experiences, but also in the eulogy which is afforded to Balaam by Moses. Josephus remarks that “this was the man to whom Moses did the high honour of recording his prophecies; and though it was open to him to appropriate and take the credit for himself, as there would have been no witness to convict him, he has given Balaam this testimony and deigned to perpetuate his memory”.¹³⁷ Whilst Balaam is also said to have been prevented from cursing the Israelites by divine providence (θεία προνοία), it is made clear that the prophecies which he uttered are to be linked to him and not to God.¹³⁸ Thus, whilst he is accorded the sanction to attempt the cursing of the Israelites by king Balak, Balaam is also sanctioned as a μάντις by the greatest figure in the Jewish religion, in a passage of *Ant.* which has no biblical antecedent.

¹³⁴ . *Jewish War*, 4.629.

¹³⁵ . How far we take Josephus’ words at face value concerning his prophetic abilities is a matter of debate, though, as Gray (*Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine*, p.79) has suggested, it is “virtually certain, for one thing, that he actually did predict to Vespasian that he would become emperor.” See further for a review of Josephus’ claims and a similar conclusion to Gray, H.B.Moehring, ‘Joseph ben Matthias and Flavius Josephus: The Jewish Prophet and Roman Historian’, *ANRW* 2.21.2, 1984, pp.864-944.

¹³⁶ . The idea that Josephus believed that he was divinely inspired is readily apparent from his narration of the predictions made to Vespasian. For instance, he states that God had “made choice of my spirit to announce the things that are to come” (*Jewish War*, 3.354), refers to himself as a ‘minister’ (διάκονος, *Jewish War*, 3.354) and messenger (ἄγγελος, *Jewish War*, 3.400) of God, and states that he was ‘chosen’ (ἐπιλέγομαι, *Jewish War*, 3.354) and ‘sent’ (προπεμπόμενος, *Jewish War*, 3.400).

¹³⁷ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.158.

¹³⁸ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.157.

The extent to which the actions of a diviner, as of the pattern seen in Josephus' understanding of the μάντις, could be misinterpreted as those of a negatively-defined magician may be seen in the discussion of Philostratus concerning Apollonius' prediction of Vespasian's rise to power. As it addresses the very concerns which we may imagine troubled Josephus in his self-representation as a μάντις it is worth quoting in full:

These predictions he made from divine impulse, and those that think him a magician (γόνης) are wrong in their opinion. That emerges from what I have already said, and from the following. Magicians (γόητες), who are in my opinion the greatest scoundrels on earth, resort to questioning ghosts or to barbaric sacrifices, or to forms of incantation or unction, and thus profess to alter fate. Many of them have been induced by accusations to admit their skill (σοφοὶ) in such matters. Apollonius, however, followed the warnings of the Fates, and foretold the way they had to be fulfilled, and his clairvoyance was due not to magic (γοητεύων) but to divine revelation.¹³⁹

Philostratus was aware that the foreknowledge of Apollonius could be construed as deriving from a knowledge of magic (γοητεύων), and that such a connection could prove damaging for his reputation and representation. We see instead a representation which is very reminiscent of Josephus' own self description. Apollonius is said to be desirous for destiny to take its course, and his knowledge of it is said to have been

¹³⁹ . Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 5.12.

due to ‘divine revelation’. Josephus claims of Vespasian that “Fortune (τύχη) was everywhere furthering his wishes and that circumstances had for the most part conspired in his favour”, that he was “led to think that divine providence (δαιμονίου προνοίας) had assisted him to grasp the empire”, that “some destiny had placed the sovereignty of the world in his hands”, and that his own predictions were thus proved to be ‘divine’ (θείας).¹⁴⁰ Josephus wishes to emphasize the same criteria of authentication for his predictions as Philostratus wishes to do for Apollonius, the major difference being that the latter makes it clear that, without such remarks, his hero is open to allegations of being a magician. Given Josephus’ other uses of μάντις terminology and its link to figures of authority who are able to sanction the predictions of such figures, it seems that Josephus too was aware that such actions could easily be interpreted as being those of a magician. Again, like Philostratus, Josephus claims to be able to simply divine what God has in store for Vespasian; there is no suggestion that he is using his miraculous powers to *alter* that destiny, as one might expect of a magician. Hence Josephus’ description of his prediction is replete with references to God and to τύχη; he can but relay, as Apollonius does, the plans which God reveals to him.

¹⁴⁰ . *Jewish War*, 4.622. Josephus also makes reference to other omens which had foreshadowed Vespasian’s rise to power, using the term σημεῖα thus suggesting that these other omens were divinely inspired just like his own predictions. In placing his own efforts in this class Josephus is attempting not only to bolster his claims to prophetic ability, but to situate his abilities as part of a on-going process whereby τύχη has revealed, to those able to discern, the future of Rome. Thus, both Suetonius (*Vesp.* 5) and Dio Cassius (lxvi.1) make reference to Josephus’ prediction as part of the various *omina imperii* which divine the glory of Vespasian.

The figure of Onias, as briefly summarized by Josephus in *Ant.* 14.22-24, presents an interesting parallel to the figure of Balaam. Principally this is due to the similarities of their role, as both were believed to have supernatural powers and both were called upon to use these powers in cursing the enemies of their patrons. Josephus agrees with the earliest rabbinical traditions in assigning to Onias the miracle of rainmaking, stating that he “had once in a rainless period prayed to God to end the drought, and God had heard his prayer and sent rain”.¹⁴¹ Unfortunately this is as forthcoming as Josephus wishes to be with regards to Onias’ abilities, though he clearly links the miraculous arrival of the drought-ending rain with the prayers of Onias; again, as with the prophecies of Balaam, God is the active function behind the supernatural event. Despite the brevity of Josephus’ account, which does not appear in the parallel section of *War*, Josephus clearly held Onias in high regard calling him “a righteous man and beloved of God” (δίκαιος ἀνὴρ καὶ θεοφιλής). The use of the term “beloved of God” (θεοφιλής) is high praise indeed, with Josephus using it to describe some of the greatest of Israelite miracles workers. Solomon’s abilities with regard to his exorcisms and incantations, symbols of his power and wisdom, are cause for the love of God;¹⁴² Daniel, one of the prophetic examples for Josephus, is said to have been delivered from the lions’ den because he was “loved by God” (θεοφιλής);¹⁴³ and Elisha, a prophetic-powered doer of marvellous deeds, is not only

¹⁴¹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 14.22. The earliest rabbinical texts which mention Honi are Ta’anith 3.8 and b.Ta’anith 23a.

¹⁴² . *Jewish Antiquities*, 8.49.

¹⁴³ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 10.264. Likewise, Daniel’s initial deliverance from the fiery furnace (*Jewish Antiquities*, 10.215) was persuasion enough for king Nebuchadnezzar to know that Daniel and his companions were “righteous and loved by God” (δικαίους καὶ θεοφιλεῖς).

said to be held in honour by God (φανερῶς σπουδασθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ) but is also “loved by God” (θεοφιλήs).¹⁴⁴ Clearly, the ‘love of God’ in Onias’ case enabled him to address prayers to the deity, asking for miraculous events to be made manifest. Thus, the expectation of Hyrcanus II and his supporters is that Onias, just as he had prayed to God for rain in the drought, would be able to pray in order to curse Aristobulus.

Whilst this episode is primarily evidence for Josephus’ understanding of God’s involvement with history and the sacred nature of the ‘righteous’ (δίκαιος), it also reveals that Josephus believed that God was a source of power for those who would perform miracles in his name. Indeed, Josephus notes that God took revenge after the ‘villains among the Jews’ (πονηροὶ τῶν Ἰουδαίων) had stoned Onias, sending a violent wind to destroy the crops of the entire country.¹⁴⁵ Green suggests that the use of δίκαιος terminology conforms to Josephus’ tendency “to depict the miraculous as ‘part of the normal process by which God governs the world’, and thereby make his picture of Judaism palatable to the Roman audience for which he wrote”.¹⁴⁶ The implication is that the miraculous is part of God’s plan, and that those who perform miracles are under the direct command of God. However, the story of Onias, whilst confirming that Josephus was aware that God worked miracles in the world and that such a view was ‘palatable’ to his Graeco-Roman audience, suggests too that Josephus understood that such ‘miracles’ could be interpreted as ‘magic’. For Onias is acclaimed as having the power to curse his enemies, just like Balaam; it is unclear whether the Jews who called upon him to curse Aristobulus believed that he

¹⁴⁴ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 9.182.

¹⁴⁵ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 14.25-28.

¹⁴⁶ . W.S.Green, ‘Palestinian Holy Men: Charismatic Leadership and Rabbinic Tradition’, *ANRW* II.19.2, 1979, pp.619-647 (quote p.640).

could channel God's power, or whether Onias had such powers as a personal ability (again like Balaam). Though, to mitigate against the identification of Onias as a negatively defined magician, Josephus suggests that the supporters of Hyrcanus asked him to curse Aristobulus "just as he had, by his prayers, put an end to the rainless period."¹⁴⁷ The fact, too, that Josephus does not apply any label to Onias is instructive. His abilities did not involve prediction of the future, so μάντις terminology would have been inappropriate. Thus, in order to avoid associations with the world of magic, Josephus employs a descriptive framework which depicts Onias as a kind of saint, doing the bidding of God. Hence, before Josephus has even described his miracles he states that Onias was "a righteous man and dear to God" (δίκαιος ἀνὴρ καὶ θεοφιλής). Whilst he constitutes an undefined miracle worker it is made clear that the sanction for his miraculous actions is divine, and that he had the authority of a ruler in order to attempt the cursing of Aristobulus.

The Spirit of God

An important facet of the Balaam story, especially in the case of *Ant.*, is the relationship which exists between God and Balaam, and the manner in which this relationship produces the oracles which speak of Israel's future glory. For a gentile magician with a burning hatred of Israel to act as a prophet of God was an unacceptable state of affairs. In response to this problem, Josephus not only develops a consistent non-magical portrayal of Balaam but also, through the spirit of God (τοῦ

¹⁴⁷ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 14.22.

θεοῦ πνεῦμα or τὸ θεῖον πνεῦμα), suggests a classical and acceptable method by which the divine oracles were communicated. Indeed, a review of the data reveals that Josephus imagined Balaam as some form of prophet, on a par with some of the patriarchs. Hence, he imagines that Balaam is able, contrary to the biblical narratives and without any form of magical ritual, to contact God at will.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, Balaam is seen to be obedient to the will of God.¹⁴⁹ These details serve to remove Josephus' Balaam from the magical portrayal of Balaam; we can detect no parallels with Philo's μάγος. Although he is no προφήτης he is a μάντις whom God has chosen to deliver the divine message. An important part of this idea is Josephus' use of the terminology of the spirit of God, a phrase which not only makes its debut in *Ant.* in reference to Balaam, but which is characteristic of his understanding of prophetic inspiration. Indeed, Josephus went to great lengths to ensure that its inclusion here was the first in *Ant.*, as he rewrites all previous biblical instances occurring in the Torah.¹⁵⁰

The importance of this fact cannot be overstated. Indeed, Balaam is the only instance of a non-Jew being associated so closely with the 'spirit of God' in Josephus. In total Josephus makes three references to the divine spirit in his paraphrase, with the biblical texts providing just one.¹⁵¹ Whilst the reference to the spirit of God in *Ant.* 4.118 seems to be based upon LXX Numbers 23:6, the two other references in *Ant.*

¹⁴⁸ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.107. Both MT and LXX Num 22:20 report that God visited Balaam by night and ordered him to travel by donkey to Balak.

¹⁴⁹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.105.

¹⁵⁰ . So Josephus either rewrites biblical references to the spirit of God in his paraphrase, as with the story of the tabernacle builders Bezalel and Oholiab (Ex 31:3, *Ant.* 3.105) and the description of Joseph (Gen 41:38, *Ant.* 2.87), or he simply leaves out sections in which it occurs, as with his omission of the story of the seventy elders in Num 11. See further J.R. Levison, 'The Debut of the Divine Spirit in Josephus's *Antiquities*', *HTR* 87.2, 1994, p.123-138

¹⁵¹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.108, 4.118, 4.119. Num 24:2. The LXX however does add another reference in its version of Num 23:7.

4.108 and 4.119 have no parallel in our ancient sources for scripture.¹⁵² They may possibly be based upon the single biblical reference, but the mere fact that he felt comfortable with three instances suggests that this episode is indeed “a focal point for Josephus’s understanding of inspiration”.¹⁵³ Moreover, it is indicative of his desire to involve the power of God, rather than the magical skills of Balaam, in producing the oracles. For instance, in *Ant.* 4.118 Josephus suggests that Balaam was overruled by the power of the divine spirit and ‘was not his own master’, whilst in 4.119 he has Balaam warn Balak that the “spirit gives utterance to such language and words as it will, whereof we are all unconscious.” Again, in the former reference Josephus states that Balaam was ‘inspired’ (ἐπιθειάζειν), using a Greek term which, though not found in LXX, was a common description of divine inspiration in Graeco-Roman literature.¹⁵⁴ When Josephus has Balaam deliver the famous prophecy concerning Israel in *Ant.* 4.125 he has made it clear to his readers that this is an oracle given freely by God in the manner of inspiration already outlined, rather than as some form of magical divination. God, not Balaam, is in control not only of events but of the very words to be spoken. This is perhaps the reason for his mimicking of the Hebrew text of the Numbers account in which Balaam is said to have ‘fallen upon his face’, as

¹⁵² . *Jewish Antiquities* 1.118; “Such was the inspired utterance of one who was no longer his own master but was overruled by the divine spirit to deliver it.” LXX Num. 23:6; “ And he returned to him, and moreover he stood over his whole burnt offerings, and all the princes of Moab with him; and the Spirit of God came upon him.” There is another reference in both the MT and LXX (24:2) to the Spirit of God but there is no clear parallel in Josephus.

¹⁵³ . Levison, ‘The Debut of the Divine Spirit in Josephus’s *Antiquities*’, p.124.

¹⁵⁴ . Levison, ‘The Debut of the Divine Spirit in Josephus’s *Antiquities*’, p.131, notes especially that Plutarch, as an exemplar of Graeco-Roman style, employs the term in a strikingly similar manner to Josephus. Our author employs the term most principally in speaking of those figures who communicate with God; so Moses (*Ant.*, 2.338) and Solomon (*Ant.*, 8.109). The term may also mean ‘an appeal’, as in *Ant.*, 19.141. The evidence from Philo is not particularly helpful with respect to illuminating Josephus’ own employment, for the former makes repeated use of the term, in various forms, for all manner of inspiration, from biblical prophets (*Deus imm.* 139, *Som.* 2.172), to Hellenistic philosophical ideas (*Spec. leg.* 3.1) and even transformation by the divine spirit (*Virt.* 217). We may conclude, then, that Josephus’ own employments ‘reveal the influence of Greco-Roman views of inspiration’ (Levison, p.133). Such a conclusion reinforces the idea that Josephus is well aware of the nature of Graeco-Roman divination; as I show, this awareness also included a good knowledge and understanding of magical terminology.

if he were in a trance.¹⁵⁵ Josephus, it would seem, was keen for God to deliver this message rather than Balaam as magician.¹⁵⁶

Balaam and the Instruments of Divination: Numbers 22:7

The magical representation of Balaam in the biblical narratives relies heavily upon a reference in Num 22:7 to what are generally termed the ‘instruments of divination’, a nebulous translation of MT’s *קְדָשׁ*/*קִדְשָׁא* terminology. As has been seen in the previous discussion of this terminology, not only is it intimately linked to the world of magic and the prescriptions against magic users in Deut 18:10-14, but the authors of the LXX, perhaps as confused as later exegetes as to the true meaning of MT, employ *μάντις* terminology in their translation. Significantly, Josephus makes no mention of the items which were delivered by Balak’s ambassadors. Granted, he was attempting to compose a loose paraphrase of biblical literature which adhered not only to the texts before him but also, and more so, to the goals which he had in mind regarding his representation of Judaism, but the omission of this detail strongly suggests that he understood its connection to the world of magic. To have suggested that Balaam required technical equipment to perform his rituals, or that he was paid

¹⁵⁵ . The LXX account states (Num 24:4 and 24:16) that Balaam saw this oracle in his sleep (*εἶδεν ἐν ὕπνῳ*). This would seem to go against Josephus’ ideas of Balaam’s inspiration.

¹⁵⁶ . This idea seems to be supported by the data included in Josephus’ version of the oracle, which omits the tale of a star rising out of Jacob and a sceptre out of Israel conquering Edom and Seir (Num 24:17-18). Others had interpreted this oracle as being of an eschatological or messianic nature; so for instance the reference to Bar Kochba by Rabbi Aqiva (*Midrash Lev. Rabbah*, 2.54), whilst the LXX supposes a male messiah coming from Israel (Num 24:7). Josephus keeps his version cryptic, short and relatively devoid of eschatology, in order that the doom of the nations seen by Balaam will not be linked to Rome by his audience. See further; S.Mason (ed.), *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary – Volume 3 Judean Antiquities 1-4, Translation and Commentary by L.H.Feldman*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 2000, p.375n.379.

for his services, would have clearly indicated that Balaam was to be regarded as a freelance magician; this is the image which the magical terminology paints for us in the biblical narratives. Likewise, Josephus avoids any mention of the reward promised or given to Balaam for his services at this stage of the narrative, merely paraphrasing Num 22:5-7 by stating that Balak sent some of his most distinguished men as envoys with the request to curse the Israelites.¹⁵⁷ In so doing he avoids the connotations of the biblical accounts which could be seen to link Balaam with the art of magic through their nebulous descriptions. In its place, Josephus decides to add a note on the relationship between Balaam and the Israelite deity, thus establishing from the outset the idea that God has a commanding presence on the events of the Balaam episode.¹⁵⁸

Balaam and The Prediction of Israel's Future Glory

The over-riding value of Balaam to Judaism is to be found in the oracles he pronounces on the future fate of Israel. Indeed, Josephus has Moses himself praise Balaam for his prophecies.¹⁵⁹ Josephus suggests that whilst Balaam is responsible for issuing the famous prophecies of Israel's future glory, he is constrained to do so by the power of 'inflexible Fate' (τροπον).¹⁶⁰ Moreover, Josephus avoids blaming Balaam for his desire to curse the Israelites by suggesting, in an addition to Num 23:4,

¹⁵⁷ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.104. Later references make mention of the gifts given by Balak to Balaam for his services (*Ant.* 4.118), and his dismissal without any reward as a result of his failure (*Ant.* 4.126).

¹⁵⁸ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.105: "he explained that God gainsaid his purpose, even that God who had brought him to his high renown for truth's sake and for the prediction thereof." Here we may see the ending of the episode, the prediction of the glory of Israel, prefigured by Josephus.

¹⁵⁹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.157.

¹⁶⁰ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.113.

that the seer realised that all he said was governed by this inflexible Fate.¹⁶¹ Clearly this prophecy is of great importance to Josephus, for, like Pseudo-Philo, he combines the biblical versions three separate discourses into one composite narrative.¹⁶² For Josephus the events of the Balaam story, especially the prophecies, are part of 'inflexible Fate'. However, the validity and strength of these prophecies are dependent on their spokesperson. Josephus understands that the vehicle for these prophecies is just as important as their substance; hence he needs to make use of Balaam, but only a Balaam seen in a positive light, whose words will be efficacious for his audience. The Balaams of the biblical literature, Philo, Pseudo-Philo, the rabbis and the Christian traditions, all of whom are primarily magicians, are not suitable for Josephus' goals in this respect. For an audience who often associated magic with trickery and deception,¹⁶³ the magical Balaam would make a poor vessel for Josephus' attempts to show that Jews are good citizens of the Empire. Loyalty seems to be something of a theme in Josephus' rendering of the Balaam story, as he is keen to emphasize that Jews do not rebel against their overlords.¹⁶⁴ Hence, we see that Balaam is set to curse the Israelites not because of hatred but because of his loyalty to king Balak, whilst in his rendering of Num 23:24 Josephus omits all mention of the Israelites being like bloodthirsty lions bent on conquest.

Whilst the biblical versions of the prophecies of Balaam are replete with provocative imprecations in which Israel is informed that it will 'crush the

¹⁶¹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.113.

¹⁶² . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.114. Pseudo-Philo, *Bib.Ant.* 18.10-12. See further H.W.Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus*, Missoula; Scholars Press, 1976, pp.71-107.

¹⁶³ . On this point see especially the discussions of B.W.Winter (*Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans, 2002, pp.88-91) and J.de Romilly (*Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece*, London, Harvard University Press, 1975, pp.29-33).

¹⁶⁴ . So Feldman, 'Josephus' Portrait of Balaam', pp.61-63.

borderlands of Moab, and the territory of all the Sethites',¹⁶⁵ Josephus realises that his Roman audience will not be best pleased by ideas which suggest that Israel is destined to rise up against the Empire. He scrupulously avoids any terminology which is suggestive of an independent Israel, preferring to emphasize that God is their ally and leader for eternity, as a result of which the Israelites will become "happier than all others under the sun".¹⁶⁶ Moreover, Josephus has Balaam prophesy that the Israelites will 'hold fast the land to which He Himself sent you', suggesting that it is enough for Jews to live in Israel rather than to rule Israel, and that 'there will be enough of you for the world to supply every land with inhabitants from your race', which suggests that the Diaspora is of benefit to the Roman Empire as it supplies members of the blessed race to all peoples and communities. Instead of the bloodthirsty prophecy seen in Num 24:8, which concerns the violence to be visited on Israel's enemies, Josephus replaces it with a mild statement on the blessings of peace granted by God.¹⁶⁷ However, Josephus is quick to refute claims of cowardice on the part of the Israelites, a common accusation encapsulated in Apollonius Molon's attack in *Against Apion*, by having the gentile seer remark upon the extreme valour (ανδρείας) that God bestows on the Israelites.¹⁶⁸ When we compare Josephus' single prophecy with their biblical antecedents, it becomes apparent that our author has made various changes in line with his policy of producing a work acceptable to his Graeco-Roman audience. The Balaam story is also an opportunity for Josephus to demonstrate various positive qualities of the Jews, especially important when coming from the mouth of a non-

¹⁶⁵ . Num 24:17. We see a similar spin in his cryptic version of the prophecy of Daniel (*Ant.* 10.210).

¹⁶⁶ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.114. We see here a complete contrast to the slanders made by Balaam in Num 23:9, in which he states that the Israelites shall dwell alone and will not be reckoned among the nations. As Feldman shows in his 'Josephus' Portrait of Balaam', pp.48-83, Josephus' retelling of the Balaam episode is designed to address a number of charges made by non-Jews against his people, not least of which is that of misanthropy.

¹⁶⁷ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.116.

¹⁶⁸ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.117. Josephus references the criticisms of Apollonius Molon in *Against Apion*, 2.148.

Jewish diviner. If, however, Josephus had chosen to follow the traditions which associate Balaam with negatively defined magic, it would have compromised his aims of using the prophecies to present Jews of his own age as loyal citizens of the Roman Empire. Thus, for Josephus' prophecies to be effective he needs to create a positive Balaam who will merit the respect of the Roman reader. Moreover, we may note that Josephus remarks at the conclusion of the prophecy that Balaam "was overruled by the divine spirit (θείῳ πνεύματι) to deliver it".¹⁶⁹ This sentiment would be familiar to his Graeco-Roman audience who, we may expect, would recognise that Balaam is being said to act as the prophetic vessel of God.¹⁷⁰ As a result, especially in alliance with the idea of providence, Josephus would be seen to be suggesting that the prophecy of Israel's happiness is divine rather than human; it is not uttered by a magician but by God. But, to avoid any doubt, Josephus also limits the magical associations of Balaam.

The finale of the Balaam episode also reveals a series of interesting additions and alterations which Josephus has made when compared to the biblical accounts. Josephus conflates the multiple biblical accounts of Balaam, notably the negative view of P in the account of the Moabite women,¹⁷¹ into a final dialogue between Balak and Balaam, in which the latter not only reaffirms the divinely-sanctioned nature of Israel, but also suggests a method of revenge for Balak.¹⁷² Here I would simply like to note that Josephus, contrary to Philo, suggests that it was Balaam who was responsible for the planning of the episode concerning the Israelite youths and the

¹⁶⁹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.118.

¹⁷⁰ . On the suitability of this model for a Graeco-Roman audience see Levison, 'The Debut of the Divine Spirit in Josephus's *Antiquities*', pp.123-138 and E.R.Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley, University of California, 1961, pp.31-36.

¹⁷¹ . Num 25:1-5 and the connection to Balaam contained in the P material in Num 31:16.

¹⁷² . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.126-130.

Moabite women.¹⁷³ In one breath Josephus praises Balaam as the vessel of God who has blessed the Israelites, and who furthermore reminds Balak that the Israelites cannot be overcome in battle as “God is watching over them to preserve them from all ill and to suffer no such calamity to come upon them as would destroy them all”, whilst in the next he issues a condemnation of the seer through having him suggest the method of revenge for Balak.¹⁷⁴ This dichotomous characterisation is echoed in *Ant.* 156-158, where Josephus suggests that Moses himself, the recorder of biblical history, has offered a eulogy to Balaam in the Numbers account. Here again the reader is reminded that Balaam was wicked, attempting to curse the Israelites and suggesting a method of revenge. However, “this was the man to whom Moses did the high honour of recording his prophecies; and though it was open to him to appropriate and take the credit for them himself, as there would have been no witness to convict him, he has given Balaam this testimony and deigned to perpetuate his memory”. Clearly then, Balaam’s oracles were of importance to Josephus; there is no real need, other than to bolster the reputation of Balaam as a seer of repute and ensure that his prophecies carry weight and authority, for Josephus to have Moses give this eulogy. Yet even here Josephus feels compelled to offer up his usual refrain of allowing the reader to believe as they will, suggesting that the events of the Balaam cycle are miraculous, most notably perhaps the speaking ass, but also possibly as a defence of Balaam’s prophecies.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ . b.Sanh. 106a, Philo, *Virt.* 34-35.

¹⁷⁴ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.128.

¹⁷⁵ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.158.

Conclusion

From the survey of Josephus's treatment of the Balaam pericope it is evident that the subject of magic was an important consideration in his attempt to create a more positive account of this infamous seer. Josephus, we may expect, was familiar with the numerous traditions which accused Balaam of being a negatively defined magician; that he chose not to adopt this popular image demonstrates both a continuing commitment to his own understanding of the biblical narrative, as well as his desire to communicate his own thoughts on the subjects of magic, divination and the role of God. Principally we detect a great degree of respect for Balaam in the eyes of Josephus, not least when we consider the employment of the terminology of the 'spirit of God' in the rest of his works. The extent to which this respect is a result of the parallels that Josephus observes in his own life to the story of Balaam is debatable, but it cannot be denied that Balaam is something of a model, at least in terms of his abilities and his relationship with God, for Josephus' idea of the diviner. The experiences related in *War* concerning Jotapata reveal a familiarity on the part of Josephus with the world of divination; indeed, it would seem that Josephus thought of himself as an expert diviner in a technical sense. However, his sense of respect for Balaam is also tempered by Josephus' willingness to address the P material which serves as a blot on Balaam's character. Perhaps he felt that he could not present such a positive case for Balaam, given the normative attitude and approaches which existed towards him in the late first century CE.

Josephus' Balaam stands out, especially in comparison to MT and LXX Numbers 22-24, as one of the most skilled of ancient diviners. Whilst it could be claimed that God was responsible for the issuing of his prophecies, Balaam was still regarded by Josephus as a suitable vessel for this communication not because, like Philo presumed, he was some form of diviner who became possessed when carrying out his mantic art, but because he is an expert in technical forms of divination. Likewise, we see Josephus portraying himself as a technical diviner in the cave of Jotapata and the lots of fate. It must be seen, therefore, that Josephus is careful to filter out many of the magical details of the original biblical Balaam narrative. Many miraculous elements remain in *Ant.*, yet they have become either acts of God, interventions by the divine spirit, or the actions of a technical diviner, skilled in revealing the future in a manner familiar to a Graeco-Roman audience, and sanctioned by both God and his king. The efforts at cursing the Israelites are more troublesome for Josephus as they may be clearly interpreted by his audience as the actions of a magician; however, Josephus neatly skirts this issue by his employment of μάντις terminology and his observance of the biblical texts in which God is seen to countermand the desires of Balak. In essence, then, from his portrayal of Balaam we see that Josephus is well aware of the connotations of magic in the late first century Roman world. He wishes to use Balaam to glorify both Judaism and his own personal divinatory skills, yet he cannot do so by adopting a negative magical viewpoint. However, Josephus reveals that the boundaries between holy man, seer, prophet and magician are fluid; they are often seen to produce similar miraculous results, sometimes with different methods. Hence, Josephus could be said to be misleading somewhat an audience who, we presume, would know nothing of the biblical Balaam, especially his relationship to magic. Thus, Josephus can introduce Balaam as doing

the things that magicians do but, because the boundaries are so fluid, can carefully employ terminology and detail to create Balaam the expert and sanctioned diviner.

Chapter 5: The Witch of Endor - Josephus and Necromancy

Introduction

The final case study concerns the unnamed female necromancer consulted by Saul at Endor, who is anachronistically termed a ‘witch’ in modern scholarship.¹ For convenience sake I will refer to her as a ‘witch’, though it must be observed that this is a modern description of her office and function, having little basis in the ancient terminology.² Her story, originally recounted in 1 Samuel 28:3-25, serves as one of the few biblical examples of the practice of magic, and of necromancy in particular. This biblical passage provides us with a wide variety of magical terminology which not only describes the function and actions of the witch, but also serves to locate and exemplify the sin of magic with regards to the laws of Deut. 18:10-14. Given the application of magical terminology which is employed in condemning non-Israelite religious practices elsewhere in biblical literature, we would be forgiven for thinking that the witch is the villain of the piece. However, when we consider her further representation we see only positive comments; she is loyal to the commands of her monarch, compassionate, and generous. She represents a dichotomous problem for exegetes; is she to be seen purely as a practitioner of an art for which the punishment

¹ . Although the witch of Endor, a necromancer, has little relation to modern ideas concerning witches and witchcraft, based as they are on both medieval tradition and ethnographic survey (see further E.E.Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1937), it is instructive to observe that she has been so termed in modern scholarship, for such a designation enhances her negative image and reputation. As we shall see, especially in the case of Josephus, such a term does not adequately describe the woman of Endor.

² . As F.H.Cryer (‘Magic in Ancient Syria-Palestine – and in the Old Testament’, in M-L. Thomsen and F.H.Cryer (eds.), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Volume 1 Biblical and Pagan Societies*, London, The Athlone Press, 2001, p.141) states: “In the Old Testament, the famous ‘witch’ of Endor, incidentally, is clearly depicted as one of the divinatory personnel of ancient Israel and Judah; she is nowhere brought into relation with the actual practice of harmful magic, which is to say that she is hardly a ‘witch’ in a socio-anthropological sense at all.”

is death, or do the positive aspects of her character and her care for Saul provoke sympathy and a milder appreciation? This was a question which faced Josephus in his own rendition of 1 Samuel 28. Indeed, not only does Josephus' account provide us with important data concerning his appraisal of the witch of Endor and necromancy, but we may also develop our understanding of his employment of the language of divination and magic, especially with respect to μάντις terminology.

The Witch in the Ancient Sources

The Witch in the Biblical Accounts: MT 1 Samuel 28

1 Samuel 28:3-25 is a unique account of the practice of necromancy, one which provides us with a wealth of data concerning not only Israelite forms of divination, both accepted and illegal, but also for the biblical categorization and description of magic. Despite the negative definitions and wide-ranging restrictions placed upon the practice of necromancy, studies of magic in the biblical world suggest that its practice was one of the many varieties of divination practised by the Israelites.³ Its introduction in 1 Samuel 28 is, however, associated with the witch of Endor, a non-Israelite woman who is utilised as an example of a non-sanctioned

³. As early as 1930, W.O.E.Oesterley (*Immortality and the Unseen World A Study in Old Testament Religion*, London, 1930, p.129) stated that in the actions of Manasseh (2 Kings 21:6, 2 Chron., 33:6) we may see "not so much the resuscitation of practices which had fallen into desuetude, but rather the official recognition of what had long been done by the people." His view has been adopted by several important modern works on magic and divination in the biblical world; A.Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1996, pp.167-181, and F.H.Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-Historical Investigation*, JSOTSup, 142, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994, pp.230-141.

magician. Moreover, the language used to describe the witch in MT is heavily influenced by the prohibitions on magicians in Deut 18:10-14. First and foremost she is termed a *בַּעַלְת־אֹיֵב*, an expert in the consultation of the dead.⁴ This term is seen in a surprisingly large number of references in MT, suggesting that, contrary to the conservative position of modern scholarship, necromancy was a fundamental part of ancient Israelite culture.⁵ In this regard, the evolutionistic view of Trachtenburg has been extensively questioned, as the Israelites are now being considered as one society among many, sharing numerous points of contact with cultures such as the Canaanites.⁶ One particular area of similarity may be seen in the case of necromantic practices and ancestor worship; traditionally labelled as the inferior practices of the Canaanites, but now being considered as part of a 'lost' Israelite heritage. In this sense, the claim of the Bible by which these practices are characteristically and exclusively those of the enemies of Israel, is shown to be erroneous. Indeed, recent examinations have demonstrated that the biblical authors gloss over many of the 'sins' of their ancestors. Archaeological evidence suggests that a form of the ancient Near-

⁴ . 1 Samuel 28:3, 28:7 and 28:9.

⁵ . The suggestion that such necromantic acts are the 'survivals' of Canaanite rituals, included in the Bible as warnings for the Israelites as practices of the nations, must be rejected. On the contrary the evidence suggests, as scholars are coming to realise, that necromancy was a common feature of all ancient religions of the Near East, and that it formed an important form of divination for the Israelites of the First Temple Period. See further B.B.Schmidt, 'The "Witch" of En-Dor, 1 Samuel 28, and Ancient Near Eastern Necromancy', in M.Meyer and P.Mirecki (eds.), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, E.J.Brill: Leiden, 2001, pp.111-130, and C.L.Nihan, '1 Samuel 28 and the Condemnation of Necromancy in Persian Yehud', in T.Klutz (ed.), *Magic in the Biblical World: From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon*, T&T Clark, London, 2003, pp.23-54.

⁶ . J.Trachtenburg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study of Folk Religion*, Behrman's Jewish Book House, N.Y., 1939, carries over the original biases against magic of the redactors of the Bible, seeing it as a symbol of 'inferior' Canaanite religion. This influential work served as the benchmark for studies of Jewish and Israelite magic until the recent revival of scholarship in the field of ancient magic. Today, whilst providing a wealth of data the evolutionistic and exclusivist theories of the author have been widely rejected, as the influences of Frazer and Tylor hang heavy in its appraisal of magic. As Moshe Idel states in his foreword to the 2004 edition (p.x); "One would hardly resort so often to the term 'superstition' in a book written today about magic and ... the attempt to relegate the subjects dealt with in Trachtenberg's rich book to a 'folk religion', namely to some sort of popular religion, has its problems."

Eastern mortuary cult was fully functioning in pre-exilic Israel,⁷ whilst Mesopotamian documents from the mid seventh century BCE offer striking parallels to the data of 1 Samuel 28.⁸ The emergent picture of 1 Samuel 28 therefore suggests that various methods of divination were common throughout the Ancient Near Eastern world. Israel, despite the gloss of the biblical redactors, was a ‘magical’ society just like her neighbours.⁹ Moreover, the necromancy described in this passage, although seemingly linked to Canaanite practice, must be seen to be a practice with which the Israelites were familiar with and which perhaps was based, to a degree, upon their own ancestor cult.¹⁰

It has long been observed that verses 3-25 of 1 Samuel 28, those dealing with Saul’s visit to the witch, appear out of place, with the logical continuation of the first two verses of ch.28 (dealing with Achish and David) being found in the subsequent chapter.¹¹ The necromantic episode thus appears as a curious addition to the biblical narrative. A number of explanations have been advanced, though, until recently, these

⁷ . T.J.Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1989. See further S.Ackerman, *Under Every Green Tree: Popular Religion in Sixth Century Judah*, Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1992, pp.148-153.

⁸ . For instance, a letter dated to the reign of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (c.670 BCE), discussing his son’s position as crown prince, provides a striking parallel to Saul’s consultation of the dead. Indeed, the epic of Gilgamesh (lines 238-243), like its Greek parallel the Odyssey, provides evidence of early necromancy. See further J.Pecirkova, ‘Divination and Politics in the Late Assyrian Empire’, *ArOr* 53, 1985, pp.155-168 and the study of Mesopotamian themes in 1 Samuel 28 in Schmidt, ‘The “Witch” of En-Dor, 1 Samuel 28, and Ancient Near Eastern Necromancy’, pp.112-120.

⁹ . F.H.Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-Historical Investigation*, JSOTSup, 142, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994, p.324.

¹⁰ . Schmidt ‘The “Witch” of En-Dor, 1 Samuel 28, and Ancient Near Eastern Necromancy’, pp.128-129 argues that “for the Deuteronomistic tradition, necromancy – more than any other rite – epitomized the abomination of the Canaanite in the history of Israelite kingship.” However, against this view, Nihan ‘1 Samuel 28 and the Condemnation of Necromancy in Persian Yehud’, pp.23-54, suggests that 1 Samuel 28 should be read as a post-Deuteronomistic polemic against the Israelite practice of contacting the dead, advancing a wealth of information on ancestor worship in the Ancient Near East which he claims Schmidt has overlooked (p.26n.10). Given the evidence of Isaiah 8:19-20 the view of Nihan, in which the redactors of the Bible were well aware of past Israelite ancestor cults and links to necromancy, seems more plausible.

¹¹ . See, for instance, J.Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, N.Y., World Publishing Company, 4th ed., 1965, pp.257-264 and H.P.Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 3rd ed., 1912, p.238.

focused on merely rearranging 1 Samuel in order to fit this episode into a realistic context. McCarter advanced the idea that the correct location of the episode was to be found between chs. 30 and 31, and that our current versions constitute a later stage of transmission in which 1 Samuel has effectively been ‘cut and pasted’.¹² However, such a view is very hard to support given our current knowledge of the redaction of the Hebrew Bible, and has very few modern supporters.¹³ In fact there are a number of details which serve to link the witch episode to the rest of the book of 1 Samuel, such as the description of Samuel,¹⁴ the withdrawal of Yahweh from Saul,¹⁵ and the announcement of the death of Saul and his sons.¹⁶ Given these details it is highly unlikely that 1 Sam 28:3-25 originally constituted an independent story which was woven into the wider narrative. Although a number of explanations for the positioning and meaning of the story have been suggested, most notably by Schmidt,¹⁷ Morisi,¹⁸ and Nihan,¹⁹ no theory is without its problems. However, whilst the more extensive and detailed questions concerning the nature of 1 Sam. 28:3-25 need not concern us here, it is important for our study of magic to observe that this episode is an integral part of the story of Saul, and that it relates in particular to the wider subject of magic, and more specifically the condemnation of magic, in biblical literature. Indeed, as we

¹² . P.K.McCarter, *1 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1980, pp.422-425.

¹³ . The idea does find support, however, in A.Caquot and P. de Robert, *Les Livres de Samuel*, Geneve, Labor et fides, 1994, though the authors admit that the earliest tradition is difficult to retrieve from the present narrative.

¹⁴ . In 1 Sam. 28:14 Samuel is identified by his mantle, a clear reference to 1 Sam. 2:19.

¹⁵ . 1 Sam 28:15-16 replicates the notice of God’s withdrawal from Saul in 1 Sam. 16:14.

¹⁶ . 1 Sam. 28:19 echoes the end of Saul in 1 Sam 31.

¹⁷ . Schmidt (‘The “Witch” of En-Dor, 1 Samuel 28, and Ancient Near Eastern Necromancy’) suggests that 1 Sam 28 represents an attempt to condemn necromancy as a foreign practice, in contrast to Israelite religion, and dates the text to the period of Persian Yehud.

¹⁸ . M.Morisi (‘Il culto siro-palestinese dei morti e il culto greco degli eroi: l’inquieta(nte) ricerca del sovrumano tra pietà private e ufficialità’, *Henoch* 20, 1998, pp.3-50) suggests that 1 Sam. 28 was intended to denounce the survival of necromancy in private religious rites, seeing the solitary journey of Saul to Endor as an example of this, as opposed to the public condemnation which Saul has already issued (and which stood from the laws of Deut.).

¹⁹ . Nihan (‘1 Samuel 28 and the Condemnation of Necromancy in Persian Yehud’) suggests that 1 Sam.28 was composed after the exile in Persian Yehud, and was designed to act as an affirmation of Yahwistic monotheism in addition to restricting non-sanctioned methods of divination.

shall now see, the episode of the witch of Endor is based primarily upon a knowledge of the laws against magic given in Deut. 18:10-14.

MT 1 Samuel 28:3-25 – The Witch Episode as a Post-Deuteronomistic Composition

The twenty-three verses of 1 Samuel 28 which refer to Saul's consultation of the soul of the prophet Samuel are amongst the very few biblical passages which refer directly to magical practices, and necromancy in particular. Of particular interest for our survey of this episode will be the extent to which magical terminology, as outlined in Deut 18:10-14, is prevalent in the description of the witch. In this respect, a particular interest for scholars has been the dating of 1 Samuel and its relationship to the Deuteronomistic History.²⁰ Traditional surveys suppose a pre-DH composition, suggesting an origin in some form of priestly circle which recorded the events of the early monarchies.²¹ Indeed, some scholars even suppose that an ancient oral tradition dating back to the time of Saul lies behind the work, their chief reason being that, like the episode of the talking ass in Numbers 22, the story of necromancy is unique in the Hebrew Bible and can thus be adjudged to some form of folk tale or tradition which had strong roots in the community which produced 1 Samuel.²² However, a number of details suggest that 28:3-25 was not an independent story which has been woven into the larger narrative, for it references other sections of 1 Samuel. Thus, 28:14 refers to

²⁰ . The scholarship on this subject has had a long history, well summarized in R.D.Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History*, Sheffield, Sheffield University Press, 1981, pp.13-28.

²¹ . So G.von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols., London, SCM Press, 1965, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, London, SCM Press, 1953, and M.Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1972.

²² . So McCarter, *1 Samuel*, pp.422-423.

Samuel's mantle, a clear parallel to the description seen previously in 2:19; in 28:18 and the note on Saul's war with the Amalekites we have a reference to ch.15; whilst the observation of 28:17, that God has torn the kingdom out of Saul's hands and given it to another, is a direct paraphrase of 15:28. These details suggest that 28:3-25 has a close and integral relationship to the wider narrative, and that it would be wrong to simply consider this necromantic episode as some form of folk tradition, oral narrative or literary intrusion which does not belong to 1 Samuel.²³

In addition, the strong and frequent dependence on Deuteronomistic language and theology suggests that there is no reason to suppose that 1 Samuel 28:3-25 is based upon a pre-Deuteronomistic document. For instance, we see in v.3 an instance of the phrase 'all Israel', whilst v.18 contains the command 'listen to the voice of Yahweh', and, of particular importance, v.19 twice employs the formula which sees Saul's defeat by which Yahweh will 'give' the king, his sons and the army of Israel 'into the hand' of the Philistines. All of these phrases are typically and characteristically Deuteronomistic.²⁴ Above all however, we have the magical terminology used in speaking of necromancy and the actions of the witch. Here the three terms are 'enquire' (דָּרַשׁ), 'divine' (קָסַם), and 'consult' (שָׁאַל), all of which occur in the provisions against necromancers in Deut 18:11. The idea that 1 Samuel preceded DH and thus influenced its magical terminology in Deut 18:10-14 has been

²³ . As Nihan ('1 Samuel 28 and the Condemnation of Necromancy in Persian Yehud', pp.32-35) observes, it is quite clear that 1 Sam. 28 is littered with elements and references which link it to the rest of the narrative structure of 1 Samuel.

²⁴ . For a full survey of Deuteronomistic elements in 1 Samuel see J.van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1983, pp.254-258, M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972, pp.333-341. A.Rofe ('Classes in the Prophetic Stories: Didactic Legend and Parable', *Studies on Prophecy*, SVT 26, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1974, pp.145-164) also demonstrates the extent to which the portrayal of Samuel as prophet in 1 Samuel is based upon the characteristics laid down in the Deuteronomistic History.

largely discounted by modern scholarship.²⁵ The suggestion, then, is that the redactors of 1 Samuel 28 consciously adopted the terminology of the Deuteronomistic authors in order to describe the act of necromancy. This is an important point when we consider the theme of this particular episode; Saul has been forced to look outside of the accepted Israelite forms of divination (dream interpretation, Urim and Thummim and the prophets) for guidance concerning the coming conflict with the Philistines, as God has turned away from the impious king. A direct contrast is implied in the notice in v.6 concerning these accepted methods of divination and the actions of the necromancer. The fact that Saul consults an outlawed magician for guidance is simply another sign that exemplifies his fall from divine grace, especially given the fact that Saul had previously expelled these figures.²⁶ In such a manner the authors of 1 Samuel employ the themes, language, and motifs of the Deuteronomistic History in order to create a scene in which the fallen king Saul consults a *bona-fide*, and outlawed, necromancer.

Greek 1 Samuel (1 Kings) 28

LXX 1 Kings/Samuel offers an interesting insight into the nature of ancient versions of the Bible, challenging, to an extent, the idea that MT is the superior text and our most accurate witness to the original Hebrew. MT constitutes a

²⁵ . One of the few arguments for this reversal of influence was made by H.Donner (*Die Verwerfung des Königs Saul*, Wiesbaden: F.Steiner, 1983). As Nihan argues ('1 Samuel 28 and the Condemnation of Necromancy in Persian Yehud', p.35n.50), Donner's work is unconvincing and has not been followed by modern appraisals.

²⁶ . 1 Samuel 28:3.

somewhat incomplete and difficult version of the book,²⁷ a situation which is enhanced by LXX for it reflects “many interesting Hebrew readings, very often superior to the MT”.²⁸ In addition, the finds of biblical manuscripts at Qumran have enabled scholars to explore the nature of our extant versions of 1 Samuel more fully, providing some interesting observations not least in connection with Josephus’ own biblical text for the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. Thanks to these discoveries we can now say with certainty that the antecedents of MT frequently diverged from the Hebrew text used by the translators of LXX.²⁹ It may even be the case that LXX represents a more faithful rendering of the ancient Hebrew *Vorlage* of 1 Samuel, an idea suggested by Wellhausen before the Qumran discoveries.³⁰ The translation style of the cycle Samuel-Kings is often considered to be the most literal in LXX,³¹ thus preserving perhaps an early version of the Hebrew text, at least in the Lucianic text type.³² Unlike many of the later commentators on the events connected to the witch of Endor, the translators of LXX do not appear to have doubted that those events were to be considered as ‘true’ events of Israelite history. In other words, they did not doubt that the spirit of Samuel had been raised by some form of necromantic magic worked by the witch of Endor. As shall be seen, this is an important point with respect to magical

²⁷ . H.M.Orlinsky, ‘The Textual Criticism of the Old Testament’, in G.E.Wright (ed.), *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1965, pp.140-169, see especially p.150.

²⁸ . E.Tov, ‘The State of the Question: Problems and Proposed Solutions’, *IOSCS and Pseudepigrapha: 1972 Proceedings*, ed. R.A.Kraft, Missoula, Scholars Press, 1972, pp.3-15, see p.3.

²⁹ . Principally this is the scroll 4QSam^a published by F.M.Cross, ‘A New Qumran Biblical Fragment Related to the Original Hebrew Underlying the Septuagint’, *BASOR* 132, 1953, pp.15-26, and 4QSam^b by the same author, ‘The Oldest Manuscripts from Qumran’, *JBL* 74, 1955, pp.147-172. See further the summary of A.Aejmelaeus, ‘The Septuagint of 1 Samuel’, in L.Greenspoon and O.Munnich (eds.), *LXX - VIIth Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Paris 1992*, Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1995, pp.109-129.

³⁰ . J.Welhausen, *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis*, Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1871.

³¹ . So the summary of the modern consensus in R.Sollamo, *Renderings of Hebrew Semiprepositions in the Septuagint*, Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1979 and A.Aejmelaeus, ‘The Septuagint of 1 Samuel’, p.110.

³² . It would appear that the Lucianic version of the LXX may represent a text type which did not suffer the full retrospective revision towards the proto-MT (the καί γε recension). See further N.Fernandez Marcos, ‘The Lucianic Text in the Books of Kingdoms: From Lagarde to the Textual Pluralism’, in A.Pietersma and C.Cox (eds.), *De Septuaginta: Studies in Honour of J.W.Wevers*, Mississauga, Ontario, Benben Publications, 1984, pp.161-174.

terminology. Indeed, on this point the LXX translators seem to have wanted to emphasize the reality of events, for in 1 Chron. 10:13 they insert the brief notice in a reappraisal of Saul's life that he enquired of a wizard (ἐγγαστρίμυθος) to seek counsel, "and Samuel the prophet answered him". The most important change, however, between LXX and MT is to be seen in the magical terminology used to describe both the witch and also those magicians whom Saul expelled shortly before his meeting with her.

The LXX version of the story of the witch of Endor reveals some interesting elements of the translators thoughts on the subject of necromancy. Principally in this respect we may recognise that LXX closely mirrors MT with regards to magical terminology, with a familiar concurrence of terms being observed in relation to the LXX version of Deut 18:9-14. This suggests that the LXX translators were well aware that 1 Sam 28 spoke of an outlawed form of magician, carefully managing their magical terminology in order to maintain the sense of illegality concerning Saul's consultation of the witch. Although the possibility exists that the LXX authors did not fully understand the Hebrew terms concerning the witch and her actions, for the term אֹב is used in a number of forms and contexts in multiple biblical books, the underlying understanding carried by its own magical terminology is that she was performing divination through necromancy. The extent to which the LXX translators had difficulty with their Hebrew texts, as well as the observation that there were several traditions of recension, may be seen through several brief examples. MT 1 Sam 28:8 reads "So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes". This reading is supported by LXX L, but in LXX B we are told that Saul covers himself completely. Likewise, LXX B lacks any form of oath in its version of 1 Sam 28:10; MT and LXX

L both state that Saul swears by God to protect the witch. Such differences in our extant manuscripts for LXX must serve to remind us that not only were there frequent diversions from MT, but also that MT represents a fairly late version of the Hebrew Bible.³³ These inferences do little to help us in our reconstruction of Josephus' biblical texts, but they do demonstrate that in considering Josephus' paraphrase of biblical events we must not be too quick to adjudge his differences as additions or subtractions from the biblical text before him.³⁴

Magical Terminology Concerning the Witch in the Biblical Narratives

In discussing the influences which shaped Josephus' own account of the witch of Endor it will be necessary to analyse the magical terminology which MT and LXX use in their versions of 1 Sam 28. These could be said to fall into two categories; firstly, those terms which refer to the art of necromancy and the raising of Samuel, and secondly, those methods of divination which are offered as a form of contrast with this art, and which are said to have been unavailable to King Saul. As well as simply being termed a 'woman', the witch is directly described as 'the mistress of a spirit' (בַּעַלְת־אֹחַב).³⁵ Here, one of the few instances of non-legislative magical terminology occurs in a direct reference to the art and practice of necromancy. Indeed,

³³ . B.Johnson, 'On the Masoretic Text at the Beginning of the First Book of Samuel', *SEA* 41-42, 1976-1977, pp.130-137.

³⁴ . So E.Ulrich ('Josephus' Biblical Text for the Books of Samuel', in L.H.Feldman and G.Hata (eds.), *Josephus, the Bible and History*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1989, pp.81-96) notes (p.93) that Josephus' text for 1 Samuel was "in a tradition not aberrant but apparently more widely influential in the Second Temple period than that of the MT."

³⁵ . 1 Sam. 28:7, 9. The term אֹחַב also occurs in 1 Sam. 28:3 and 8. Other references to necromancy in the Hebrew Bible have been suggested, most notably by K. van der Toorn ('Echoes of Judaeon Necromancy in Isaiah 28:7-22', *ZAW* 100, 1988, pp.199-217), though these findings owe more perhaps to the idea of the cult of the dead than to true necromancy.

1 Sam 28 constitutes the most concentrated incidence of the term אִיֹב, which modern translations describe variously as meaning a medium, necromancer or wizard, though the exact meaning and etymology are somewhat problematic.³⁶ However, when we consider the further employments of this term it becomes clear that it is a technical reference to the art of necromancy. Whilst Job 32:19 employs the term to refer to ‘skin-bottles’, perhaps in reference to the art of necromantic ventriloquism,³⁷ the other instances of the term represent much more overt connections to the world of magic. In Lev. 19:31, 20:6, 20:27 and Deut. 18:11 it appears as part of the laws against magic, describing those whom Israelites are not permitted to consult in order to communicate with the dead. 2 Kgs 21:6 and 23:24 are concerned with the sins of King Ahab and the reforming prohibitions of King Josiah; in both cases the necromancer is conjoined to other forms of magician, as seen in the condemnations of the Torah. 1 Chron. 10:13 constitutes a reference to the witch of Endor, in which Saul is said to have died because of his unfaithfulness, preferring to put his faith in a magician rather than in God. 2 Chron. 33:6 describes the sins of Manasseh, again, much in the same vein as the magical sins of Ahab, making it clear that the consultation of an אִיֹב provoked the anger of God. Finally, Isa. 8:19, 19:3, and 29:4, use the term to refer to a form of necromancer, or in relation to dealings with spirits and ghosts.

It would seem clear then that the term אִיֹב refers, in almost every biblical incidence, to the practice of necromancy. The theory of a post –Deuteronomy date for

³⁶ . So, McCarter (*1 Samuel*, p.420) remarks that the terms ‘wizard’ and ‘medium’ represent the best fit in his translation, a policy followed by the majority of modern translations of the Bible e.g. the NRSV, NJB and NIV. For a full discussion of the problems behind the identification of the term see H.A.Hoffner, ‘אִיֹב ’*ôbh*’, *TDOT*, I, pp.130-134.

³⁷ . In Job 32:19 the term אִיֹב, meaning ‘wineskin’ or ‘skin-bottles’, appears in connection with the idea that a spirit is bursting forth in order to speak from Elihu. The entry for אִיֹב in *HALOT*, vol.1, p.20, notes that the term may be linked to the Syriac word *zakkūrā*, meaning ‘a spirit of the dead raised by necromancy’, as well as the Arabic term *zokrat* meaning ‘small bag’.

the composition of 1 Samuel 28 is supported by these further references, for it is apparent that the laws on magic and magicians in Deut 18:10-14 served as a template for the authors of the witch of Endor episode. Indeed, this case is strengthened when we consider that the term אֹב frequently appears in connection with other magical terms which occur in the Deuteronomistic provisions against magic. Thus, in 1 Samuel 28 we have Saul stating that he will ‘enquire’ (דָּרַשׁ) of the witch, his request to ‘divine’ (קָסַם) through necromancy, and the witch’s question to Saul in which she states: “Why then do you ask (שָׁאַל) me, since the Lord has turned from you and become your enemy?”³⁸ These three terms correspond exactly to those used in Deut 18:10-14 to condemn divination in general (18:10), and necromancy in particular (18:11). So Foresti notes: “The most obvious conclusion to be drawn is that 1 Sam 28 is a composition of a Deuteronomistic author who, here, writes making an implicit reference to the prescriptions of Deut 18:10f.”³⁹ Indeed, the magical nature of the term אֹב is highlighted by the frequent link to the parallel term יִדְעָנִי, a noun meaning ‘familiar spirit’, ‘spirit of divination’ or simply ‘soothsayer’.⁴⁰ In 1 Samuel these two terms form a hendiadys, appearing on two occasions in order to refer to the particular form of magician which Saul has expelled from his lands, but which he now needs to employ in order to divine the future.⁴¹ This is a scenario which occurs in all other

³⁸ . 1 Sam. 28:9. As we have seen with Balaam, the term קָסַם is intimately and inextricably linked to unsanctioned magical practices. The fact that there are two further condemnations of this practice of divination in 1 Sam 6:2 and 15:23 provides us with more evidence that links 28:3-25 to the wider narrative of 1 Samuel. It also suggests that the authors of the witch of Endor episode have specifically employed magical terminology in order not only to describe the witch, but also to darken the image of Saul.

³⁹ . F.Foresti, *The Rejection of Saul in the Perspective of the Deuteronomistic School: A Study of 1 Samuel 15 and Related Texts*, Studia Theologica-Teresianum, 5; Rome: Teresianum, 1984, pp.133-134n.142.

⁴⁰ . BDB, p.396 has the definition of ‘familiar spirit’ whilst HALOT vol.2, p.393 suggests both ‘spirit of divination’ and ‘soothsayer’.

⁴¹ . 1 Sam. 28:3, 28:9.

instances of the term יִדְעָנִי, it being inseparable from the אֹיֵב.⁴² Unlike the latter however, the etymology of יִדְעָנִי seems quite clear, it being a derivative of the verb יָדַע 'to know'.⁴³ The יִדְעָנִי then might be said to be 'the one who knows', deriving their information from the familiar spirit (אֹיֵב).

Many theories have been advanced to explain the meaning of the term אֹיֵב. The most prominent explanations include a link to the Hittite term *api*, meaning a ritual pit used for sacrifices as suggested by Hoffner,⁴⁴ and a reference to ancestor worship as proposed by Lust.⁴⁵ Whilst these theories are based upon etymological relationships and connections they also seem to fit, to a degree, the extant examples of the term.⁴⁶ Other approaches have suggested a denotation of the necromancer themselves,⁴⁷ or the instruments used for bringing up the dead.⁴⁸ Such theories, however, do not take full account of the various instances of the term, being serviceable in only a few of the many instances.⁴⁹ When we consider this theory again in the light of the evidence of LXX it cannot stand up to scrutiny, for not only does it translate, as we have seen, another magical term (קְסָם) as 'divining instruments', but it also employs ἑγγαστρίμυθος as a translation of אֹיֵב, a term which implies that the second voice

⁴² . Lev 19:31, 20:6, 20:27, Deut 18:11, 1 Sam 28:3, 28:9, 2 Kgs 21:6, 23:24, Isa 8:19, 19:3, 2 Chron 33:6.

⁴³ . J.Lust, 'On Wizards and Prophets', in *Studies on Prophecy: a Collection of Twelve Papers*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1974, pp.133-142, see p.138.

⁴⁴ . H.A.Hoffner, 'Second Millennium antecedents to the Hebrew 'ob', *JBL* 86, 1967, pp.385-401. See further the more recent appraisal of the link to Hittite divination given in Schmidt 'The "Witch" of Endor, 1 Samuel 28, and Ancient Near Eastern Necromancy', pp.111-129.

⁴⁵ . Lust, 'On Wizards and Prophets', pp.137-139.

⁴⁶ . Nihan ('1 Samuel 28 and the Condemnation of Necromancy in Persian Yehud', p.30) suggests that the proposed etymologies are dubious, but nevertheless lends his support to the findings of Lust in this regard, suggesting (p.30) that the 'recurring association of יִדְעָנִי and אֹיֵב, in a syntagm which means literally '(the spirit of) the ancestor, the one who knows', indicates that they would be consulted for divinatory purposes – the expression in itself fits perfectly with what we know otherwise about the privileged knowledge usually attributed to dead ancestors in the ancient Near East."

⁴⁷ . So A.Caquot, 'L'histoire de David dans les livres de Samuel (II)', *ACF* 76, 1976, pp.451-60.

⁴⁸ . Originally suggested by LXX's translations of ἑγγαστρίμυθος 'ventiloquist'. In more recent times see a similar approach in McCarter, *1 Samuel*, p.420.

⁴⁹ . For instance, Lev 20:27 clearly imagines a woman and a man having an אֹיֵב inside them, rather than possessing some form of divining instrument.

comes from inside a person. The fact that the term is most frequently found in the plural would seem to disprove the case forwarded by Hoffner too, whilst the instances in the Torah would seem to indicate that the אִיב is that which is consulted, rather than being the questioning necromancer. In this sense there is much more support for Lust's position, especially since the idea of Israelite ancestor worship fits the pattern of ancient Near Eastern religious practices.⁵⁰ Whilst it is not my intention to resolve this particular debate, it is important to observe that the term אִיב refers to the act of necromancy; is current in both practical expositions (1 Sam 28) and in legal rulings (Deut 28:10-14); and denotes an action which, in the final editing of MT, relates to an outlawed and unsanctioned practitioner of magic.

LXX Magical Terminology

When we consider the evidence provided by LXX it becomes clear that the term אִיב was intimately concerned with necromancy, especially as the Greek translators uniformly use ἐγγαστρίμυθος as an equivalent.⁵¹ Moreover, LXX observes the link between the אִיב and the יִדְעֹנִי; throughout the Greek version of 1 Samuel 28 these coupled terms are faithfully rendered, with the noun γνώστης

⁵⁰ . See further Ackerman, *Under Every Green Tree: Popular Religion in Sixth Century Judah*, pp.123-128, and B.B.Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition*, Tübingen, J.C.B.Mohr, 1994.

⁵¹ . ἐγγαστρίμυθος is translated as 'ventriloquist' in Brenton's version of the LXX. This policy is followed by other scholars in their translations of Graeco-Roman works; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.330, Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 1015-1022, Plato, *Sophist*, 252c, Iamblichus, *Bibliotheca* 75b. There is only one instance where we encounter a change to this approach, with the LXX Isa 29:4 translating אִיב קִאֲרָצַב by οἱ φωνοῦντες ἐκ τῆς γῆς ('the ones calling out of the earth'). The weight of our data suggests, however, that the translators of the LXX understood אִיב as a reference to some form of divination performed by a daemon or spirit which would use its host in order to communicate.

(‘medium’, ‘familiar spirit’) translating the latter.⁵² Again, as with the Hebrew, this term suggests a link to the idea of knowledge (γνῶσις), though the LXX translators are careful to limit this term to being a direct translation of יִדְעָנִי, hence maximising its association with magic.⁵³ In respect to the Greek terms we are able to provide a certain degree of context, something not possible with the Hebrew. Indeed, we have a fairly wide selection of witnesses to the employment of the term ἐγγαστρίμυθος from as early as the fifth century BCE. From the earliest of references it appears to have been associated with the idea that a voice issued forth from the belly of a medium, hence the modern translation of ‘ventriloquist’.⁵⁴ Thus, Aristophanes speaks of Eurycles whom he calls a ventriloquist since he prophesized to the Athenians through the demon he had inside him.⁵⁵ Plato too mentions this Eurycles,⁵⁶ whilst Sophocles⁵⁷ and Philochorus⁵⁸ both employ the term to refer to ventriloquists supposedly possessed by prophetic demons.⁵⁹ By the first century CE this type of medium was a common sight across the length of the Roman Empire. For instance, Acts reports that Paul and Silas came across a slave-girl in the Roman colony of

⁵² . 1 Sam 28:3, 9. Although Liddell and Scott (*An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2002, p.167) merely provide the definition of ‘one that knows’, Redpath and Hatch (*Concordance to the Septuagint*, London, Baker Book House Company, 2nd ed., 1998, p.92), observing the term in the context of the LXX, suggest that it should be translated as ‘medium’ or ‘familiar spirit’. Clearly this is a nebulous term, though its instances in the LXX (2 Kgs 21:6, 2 Chr 35:19, SusTh 43) demonstrate a link with the distinctive Hebrew terminology of necromancy.

⁵³ . Liddell and Scott, (*An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, p.167) suggest that the term should be translated as ‘the one who knows’ whilst Redpath and Hatch, (*A Complete Concordance to the Septuagint*, p.92) specifically noting the instances in 1 Sam 28, translate it as ‘medium’ or ‘familiar spirit’. The connection with knowledge, γνῶσις, is implicit in both cases.

⁵⁴ . Although we might detect a degree of polemic in the modern employment of the term ‘ventriloquist’ as a translation, which adopts a seemingly negative attitude towards magic, such a term does match, to a degree, the ancient idea by which spirits communicate through another part of the channel’s body.

⁵⁵ . Aristophanes, *The Wasps*, 1015-1022.

⁵⁶ . Plato, *Sophist*, 252c.

⁵⁷ . Sophocles, *Aichmalotides*, F59 in B.Snell, R.Kannicht, and S.Radt, (eds.), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, 4+ vols., Gottingen, 1971-.

⁵⁸ . Philochorus, 328 F78 in F.Jacoby (ed.), *Die Fragmente der griechischer Historiker*, 15 vols., Berlin, 1923-1958.

⁵⁹ . See further E.R.Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, London, University of California Press, 1951, p.71.

Philippi in Macedonia who was using the technique of a ventriloquist (ἐγγαστρίμυθος) in order to utter prophecies for paying customers.⁶⁰

For Josephus, then, the term referring to the witch which was probably extant in his version of LXX 1 Samuel 28,⁶¹ ἐγγαστρίμυθος, served as a suitable description, and one which held currency and meaning in wider Graeco-Roman contexts. Given the fact that the term had been used in literature from as early as the fifth century BCE in reference to necromancy, and that it was in use in the late first century CE in a similar vein, we may presume that a Graeco-Roman audience would have viewed the LXX witch as a form of necromancer. Whilst there are fewer instances of the term γνώστης in ancient texts dealing with the subject of magic, its link with ἐγγαστρίμυθος, and hence necromancy, is explicit in LXX. Mirroring MT, LXX gives no instances of the term γνώστης which are divorced from its parallel term ἐγγαστρίμυθος. For the authors of LXX the episode dealing with the witch of Endor is undeniably magical; they recognised that the terms employed in MT referring to the witch had been condemned by law, and thus employed their own distinctive Greek terms which corresponded with their own version of Deut 18:10-14. Moreover, they chose to translate the term נִחֵם, used in Saul's request to the witch to raise the soul of Samuel, by the employment of μαντεύομαι. As we have seen with the case of Balaam, LXX uses this term as an appropriate translation of נִחֵם, even when dealing with the laws on magic. The implications of LXX's magical

⁶⁰ . Acts 16:16.

⁶¹ . For the books of Samuel it appears that Josephus used both the MT and LXX for his work; indeed, he may well have used of an early form of the Lucianic text of the LXX, often agreeing with its readings against the MT and/or LXX B. See further the discussion of E.C.Ulrich, *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus*, Missoula, Montana, Scholars Press, 1978, pp.22-37. For our purposes, however, it is enough to note that the term ἐγγαστρίμυθος is common to all the versions of the LXX.

terminology are clear then, as they followed MT in viewing the Saul's journey to Endor as an undeniably magical episode.

Israelite Divination - Prophets, Urim, and Thummim

Although the focus of 1 Samuel 28 lies in the summoning of Samuel's soul by the witch of Endor, the biblical texts also provide us with various details which serve to locate, functionally and legally, the particular skills of the witch. The purpose of Saul's visit to the witch is to provide him with knowledge which has been denied to him by the normal prophetic channels. 1 Samuel 28:6 informs us that God did not respond to Saul's plea for help through either dreams, the Urim, or by the actions of a prophet (נָבִיא /προφήτης). These three agencies are intended to designate the sanctioned forms of divination which an Israelite monarch could rely upon. Again, we are reminded in 28:15 that Saul is spiritually adrift, as he acknowledges again that God has not addressed him through either the prophets or through dreams. The purpose of these references is to draw a contrast with the efforts of the witch; Saul is forced to turn to her illegal divinatory skills because God has left him. In no sense then is the בַּעַלְתָּאֻב /ἐγγαστρίμυθος to be considered in the same category as the נָבִיא /προφήτης. Indeed, the injunctions of Deut 18:10-14 clearly reference the former as practitioners of magic who have no place in Israel. We might remember, too, that the laws against magicians in Deut. are followed immediately by a lengthy description

of the office of the prophet.⁶² The implication in both Deut. and 1 Samuel is one of contrast; in no way can a prophet of God be compared to a magician.

With respect to the Urim both LXX and modern scholarship are somewhat in the dark.⁶³ In rendering 1 Sam. 28:6 LXX, clearly at a loss as to how to translate the term Urim (אֲוִרִים), imagines that Saul could not receive divine guidance from the ‘manifestations’ (δήλοις). Whilst various theories have been advanced to explain the nature of the Urim, often in concert with an analysis of the equally mysterious Thummim, our only secure conclusion is that both dealt with some form of prophetic or divinatory activity. This is certainly the sense in which they appear in 1 Samuel 28. This conclusion is supported by 1 Sam 14, which not only provides further support for the theory of 1 Sam 28:3-25 as an integral part of 1 Sam, but also suggests that the Urim and Thummim are two types of oracular response.⁶⁴ Saul has already made use of the Urim and Thummim, as a valid form of divination, prior to the events of 1 Sam 28; indeed, not only does he receive an answer to his questions, but he makes it clear that in his consultation he is appealing to God for judgement. By including the Urim and Thummim in its list of acceptable forms of divination then, 1 Sam 28:6 makes a clear statement concerning Saul’s rejection by God. Indeed, not only are the active forms of divination unavailable to Saul, the prophets and the Urim and Thummim, but so too is the passive form of dream revelation. These various forms are mentioned not

⁶² . Deut 18:15-23.

⁶³ . The Urim and Thummim appear together in Ex 28:30, Lev 8:8, Num 27:21, Deut 33:8, 1 Sam 14:41, 28:6, Ezra 2:63, Neh 7:65. Despite the fact that the MT shows the Urim to be a distinct and specific form of divination, the LXX, perhaps having little idea of its true nature, provides us with the nebulous translation of ‘manifestations’ (δήλοις). For a summary of the modern problems of identification see Cryer, ‘Magic in Ancient Syria-Palestine and in the Old Testament’, pp.127-130, E.Robertson, ‘Urim and Thummim: What Were They?’ VT 14, 1964, pp.67-74 and C.Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim: A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel*, Eisen Braums, 1997.

⁶⁴ . So Cryer (*Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment*, p.276), who, though sounding a note of caution on this identification, suggests that the Urim and Thummim were used to deliver ‘simple binary answers.’

only to illustrate Saul's fall from divine grace, but also to provide a contrast with magic and the illegal events of 1 Sam 28:3-25.

The Witch in the *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo

In comparison with *Ant.*, the *Biblical Antiquities* present a much more negative account not only of the witch of Endor, but of King Saul too. Indeed, in contrast to Josephus' attempts to accentuate the heroic qualities of Saul, Pseudo-Philo adopts a contrary attitude, using the episode of the witch of Endor as the nadir of Saul's fall from divine favour. Indeed, Pseudo-Philo creates one of the most negative portrayals of Saul, emphasizing his cowardice, pride, and greed, and suggesting that he is merely a tool of God, used to punish the Jews for their transgressions of the law, before the advent of King David.⁶⁵ Paramount in this negative representation of Saul are the magical aspects and themes of the story, which Pseudo-Philo overplays and adds to in order to further denigrate Saul's reputation. The magical associations of the witch are over-emphasized by Pseudo-Philo in a negative manner in order to slander the reputation of Saul. He suggests that Saul has expelled the magicians from his lands in order that he will be famed after his death, rather than as an attempt to observe the laws of Deuteronomy.⁶⁶ This addition to the biblical narrative serves to link Saul with the builders of the Tower of Babel, the premier symbol of idolatry and

⁶⁵ . Saul as the tool of God, *Bib Ant.* 56:3. Saul's cowardice can be seen in his chastisement by Goliath, *Bib. Ant.* 61:2, and in his flight from the battlefield whilst Eli's sons Hophni and Phinehas defend the ark, *Bib. Ant.*, 61:2. In *Bib. Ant.* 58:2, Saul spares Agag, the Amalekite king, in order that he might learn the location of hidden treasure.

⁶⁶ . *Bib Ant* 64.1. Pseudo-Philo, in an addition to the biblical narrative, has God state: "Behold Saul has not driven the wizards out of the land for fear of me, but to make a name for himself. Behold he will go to those whom he has scattered, to obtain divination from them, because he has no prophets."

apostasy.⁶⁷ Unlike any other ancient witness to the tradition, Pseudo-Philo provides the witch with a moniker, 'Sedecla'. She is also definitively described by Pseudo-Philo as a gentile, thus removing any chance that she might be considered an Israelite magician, and is, moreover, adjudged to be the daughter of Aod whom Pseudo-Philo previously depicts as an evil magician and one of Israel's greatest enemies.⁶⁸ To complete the negative connotations and associations of his version of the witch, Pseudo-Philo employs the term *malefici* in describing those whom Saul had expelled.⁶⁹ This term is, without doubt, the most negative in the Latin language which Pseudo-Philo could have employed.⁷⁰ Not only does it suggest a link to negatively defined magic for the witch, but it also suggests that her character was inclined to evil and wickedness.

The episode concerning Aod the Midianite magician is the most overt condemnation of magical practices in the *Biblical Antiquities*; the link with the witch of Endor suggests that she belongs to the same foreign religious traditions as Aod.⁷¹ For Pseudo-Philo these practices are wholly negative. Indeed, Pseudo-Philo takes the opportunity presented by Judges 6.1 to add the story of Aod the magician, a narrative which is unique in Jewish literature.⁷² Pseudo-Philo suggests that the Israelites were led into idolatry and abandonment of God through Aod's magical manipulation of the sun which he caused to appear at night.⁷³ Aod achieves this through his powers of

⁶⁷ . *Bib. Ant.* 6.1-2.

⁶⁸ . *Bib. Ant.* 34.

⁶⁹ . *Bib. Ant.* 64.1.

⁷⁰ . On the negative aspect of this term in the first century CE see the appraisal of M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, N.Y., Harper & Row, 1978, p.33.

⁷¹ . Aod too is termed a *maleficos* by Pseudo-Philo, *Bib. Ant.* 34:1.

⁷² . Judges 6:1; "The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them into the hand of Midian seven years."

⁷³ . L.H. Feldman ('Prolegomenon', in M.R. James (ed.), *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo*, New York, Ktav, 1971, p.cxx) suggests that this reference to the sun at night, which previous scholars have linked to Pseudo-Philo's opposition to Mithraism, is in fact an attack on the practice of magic. He notes a

magic, derived from his worship of the Midianite gods to which he wishes to convert the Israelites. In reality, however, Pseudo-Philo suggests that the Israelites are being deceived, for Aod performs magic through the power granted by God's fallen angels.⁷⁴ Pseudo-Philo's message is that foreign religion, here equated with magic, can lead Israel astray. For him magic "is seductive to the Israelites, who see it as embodying a power greater than that found in the Torah. But that power is shown to be deceptive and Israel is punished by God."⁷⁵ The link with the witch is intended as a negative comment on her activities; she is a magician, and for Pseudo-Philo magic is a form of foreign religious practice which can deceive the Israelites into disavowing their God. The idea that Israel is led into idolatry through the adoption of foreign influence is a theme which runs throughout his narration of the events of the era stretching from Moses to the monarchy. The fact that he specifically chooses to describe Sedecla as a gentile suggests that he has intended the episode of Saul's consultation at Endor to tie into this long-running theme. In addition, we cannot help but remember, with biographical aid from Pseudo-Philo, that the adoption of foreign religions (i.e. magic) is a grave sin, for which Saul will be severely punished.

From the few words which he affords to a description of Sedecla, it is clear that Pseudo-Philo has attempted, through creative departure from the biblical texts, to blacken her reputation. This negative representation is emphasized when we note a further addition to the biblical account in which Sedecla states to Saul: "Behold forty

similarity with *Sipre Deuteronomy* 84, in which a false prophet causes the sun and moon to stand still in a test of Israel's piety and faith.

⁷⁴ . This detail suggests that Pseudo-Philo may well have been aware of the magical traditions espoused in 1 Enoch 7-8 employing this knowledge in order to further denigrate the practice of magic through association with fallen angels.

⁷⁵ . F.J.Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo, Re-Writing the Bible*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, p.154.

years have passed since I began raising up the dead for the Philistines”.⁷⁶ Clearly, Pseudo-Philo wishes his witch to be seen as an expert in necromancy, with a long history of undertaking such practices. Yet the summoning of the spirit of Samuel is an experience which is unique to her, as he states; “but such a sight as this has never been seen before nor will it be seen afterward”.⁷⁷ Whilst Murphy suggests that Sedecla’s words here imply that there is a difference between the Israelite and idolatrous foreigners’ afterlives, her surprise may also suggest that Pseudo-Philo wishes her to be seen as a deceiver, one who pretends to raise the dead but who actually dupes her clients with imaginings of the spirit world.⁷⁸ In his description of the raised Samuel too, Pseudo-Philo elaborates greatly on the biblical antecedent. His witch supports the troublesome biblical idea that she witnessed a ‘divine being’ by stating that Samuel’s appearance is not that of a man, that he wore a mantle and a white robe, and that he was accompanied by two angels.⁷⁹ However, Pseudo-Philo has Samuel inform Saul that this consultation is performed by the power of God, not that of the witch.⁸⁰ Indeed, Pseudo-Philo has Samuel condemn Saul for his consultation, linking the sin of divination with that of rebellion.⁸¹

Overall, Pseudo-Philo adopts a dim view of the witch of Endor; when he differs from the biblical versions of 1 Samuel 28 it is often to denigrate or criticise the witch. Moreover, Pseudo-Philo adds an element of doubt over the actual skills of the witch. In all the years she has raised the dead for the Philistines, the mortal enemies of

⁷⁶ . *Bib. Ant.*, 64:5.

⁷⁷ . *Bib. Ant.*, 64:5.

⁷⁸ . Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo: Re-Writing the Bible*, p.217.

⁷⁹ . *Bib. Ant.*, 64:6. C.A.Brown, *No Longer Be Silent: First Century Jewish Portraits of Biblical Women*, Westminster/John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1992, p.188, draws our attention to the fact that Saul reacts badly to the vision of Samuel, pounding his hands on the ground; in the biblical texts (1 Sam 28:14) Saul is seen to be in awe.

⁸⁰ . *Bib. Ant.*, 64:7.

⁸¹ . *Bib. Ant.*, 64.7 recalls 1 Sam 15:23 which states: “For rebellion is no less a sin than divination.”

the Israelites, she has never witnessed a sight like the raising of Samuel. The implication being that because God is acting to raise Samuel, the witch's skills could perhaps be more akin to fraud and deception than to true magic. Indeed, this point is emphasized by Pseudo-Philo when he has Samuel state: "And so do not boast, king, nor you, woman; for you have not brought me forth, but that order that God spoke to me while I was still alive, that I should come and tell you that you have sinned now a second time in neglecting God."⁸² The ending of the narrative concerning the witch of Endor also reveals Pseudo-Philo's bias against her. He removes all mention of Saul's hunger, the witch's attempts to force him to eat, and her subsequent preparation of a meal for the king and his servants. In the biblical versions such details present the witch in a humane light and diminish her image of being a negatively-defined magician. However, they do not fit Pseudo-Philo's policy regarding the witch of Endor; for him she is to be seen as an arch-magician, experienced in necromancy through years of working for the Philistines, and a descendant of the infamous Aod.

The Absence of the Witch from Philo

Unlike Josephus, the rabbis and the early Church fathers, Philo makes no direct reference to the witch of Endor. Indeed, Philo makes very few references to 1 Samuel, the exceptions occurring in his descriptions of the prophet Samuel who represented the 'greatest of the kings and prophets'.⁸³ To compare the works of Philo, then, with the witch episode in *Ant.* is somewhat problematic. However, we can

⁸² . *Bib. Ant.*, 64:7.

⁸³ . *De Ebrietate*, 143.

adduce through Philo's omission of this episode, along with his descriptions of other biblical events involving magic, that he had good reason for not including it in his works. Given the reverence which Philo holds for Samuel, it is not surprising that he omits a tale which involves the prophet and necromancy.⁸⁴ Not only could such an episode provide a negative image of both an Israelite king and a revered prophet, but it would also suggest that the ancient Israelites dabbled in magic and the occult. These are details which Philo is keen to avoid in his depiction of the nation and people of Israel, such as we have already observed in his account of Moses and Aaron at the court of Pharaoh. Such an episode would not sit well with the repeated condemnations of magic and divination which Philo makes. For him, like the later rabbis, magic is the practice of the nations. Whilst he may speak well of the 'true magical art' as a 'science of discernment', practised however only by the nations (especially the Persians),⁸⁵ he has little positive to say of more common forms of harmful magic. Thus, he deplores those who deceive through incantations and purifications,⁸⁶ and shows that the actions of the Egyptians are merely tricks which deceive their wicked and impious masters.⁸⁷ Philo does, however, employ the Greek term for a necromancer, ἐγγαστρίμυθος, in speaking of the Egyptian adepts (σοφίσται) at Pharaoh's court in the time of Joseph.⁸⁸ In addition to the ventriloquist (ἐγγαστρίμυθος), he lists the omen-diviners (οἰωνομάντεις) and the marvel-diviners (τερατοσκόποι), stating that such figures are experienced at enchanting, subduing by charms, and sorcery (παλεῦσαι καὶ κατεπᾶσαι καὶ γοητεῦσαι), treacherous arts (τὰς ἐπιβούλους τέχνας) from which it is difficult to escape. Given

⁸⁴ . Philo hints that, whilst 'perhaps in reality a man' he was seen 'as a mind rejoicing only in the service and ministrations of God.' (*De Ebriate*, 144). See further the positive comments in *Deus*, 2.5.

⁸⁵ . *Spec Leg.*, 3.100.

⁸⁶ . *Spec Leg.*, 3.101-102.

⁸⁷ . *Vita Mosis*, 1.93.

⁸⁸ . *De Somniis*, 1.220.

his antipathy towards divination in his recounting of the laws of Moses,⁸⁹ we may imagine that Philo regarded the witch of Endor as a prime example of those magicians who plagued society, and who were unsuitable for his representation of Judaism.

The Witch of Endor in Post-Josephus Traditions and Literature

Much like the episode concerning Balaam and his prophecies, the consultation by Saul of the witch of Endor and the necromantic raising of the soul of Samuel was of great interest to post-Josephan exegetes. The principal question for the rabbis and early Christian commentators was the extent to which the Bible could be believed; was the soul of Samuel truly raised from the grave by the magic of the witch of Endor? Indeed, this question was quite complex for it also involved the employment of a condemned practice (magic/necromancy) by a reigning monarch of Israel. Whilst the rabbinical texts strongly emphasize that magical practices are forbidden by the Torah,⁹⁰ there is still a belief in the efficacy of the practice, most notably in the episode of the witch of Endor.⁹¹ Indeed, it can be argued that the rabbis themselves

⁸⁹ . *Spec Leg.*, 1.60.

⁹⁰ . M Sanhedrin 7.7, BT Sanhedrin, 67a. See further the brief discussion of P.Schäfer, 'Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism' in P.Schäfer and H.G.Kippenberg (eds.), *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1997, pp.19-44.

⁹¹ . Thus, in interpreting verse 12 of 1 Samuel 28 (*Lev. Rab.*, 26.7) the rabbis explain that the witch recognises that her mysterious visitor is Saul himself "by no other reason than that a dead man rises in front of a king not in the way he rises before an ordinary citizen. In front of an ordinary citizen he rises with the face downwards, but in front of a king with the face upwards." Moreover, the rabbis turned their attention to the lack of recognition which Saul shows to the raised spirit of Samuel in 1 Samuel 28:13 by stating that in necromancy "he who resuscitates, sees him, but does not hear his voice; he who needs him, hears his voice, but does not see him; and he who does not need him, does not hear or see him." This theory is used to explain the biblical narrative which suggests that whilst the witch can see the prophet, Saul can only speak with him. Despite the in-depth knowledge which the rabbis claim on the subject of necromancy (see also BT Sanhedrin 65a), it is still an activity considered to be outlawed and on a par with the wicked practices of other forms of the magician. Clearly, necromancy was a feature not only of the biblical world but of that of the rabbis as well. See further M.Bar-Ilan, 'Witches

practised a form of magic.⁹² For the rabbis the connection between women and magic, in which the episode of Endor is a shining example, became solidified.⁹³ In such estimations, the portrayal of the witch of Endor was uniformly negative; in no sense do we find the positive comments made by Josephus of her character and conduct in the rabbinical literature. The idea of necromancy in 1 Samuel 28 was just as unsettling for Christian commentators as it was for the rabbis, for the biblical passage suggests that magic is effective and that the necromancy utilised by the witch of Endor was an adequate substitute for the normal methods of divination (i.e. Urim, Thummim, and ephod) which had been closed off from Saul by God.⁹⁴ Various commentators invented theories to explain the events involving the witch of Endor in order to fit their respective theologies, bringing especially the idea of demonic possession to the fore.⁹⁵ The exegesis on this issue by such influential figures as Origen, Jerome and Tertullian, demonstrate the extent to which magic was a very real, and dangerous,

in the Bible and in the Talmud', at <http://faculty.biu.ac.il/~barlim/witches.html>, accessed last on 25/06/2006.

⁹² . From the further details of Sanhedrin 65b it is clear that the rabbis were well acquainted with the world of magic. Indeed, it is stated that R.Zera and R.Oshaia studied the *Sefer Yezirah* in order to magically create a 'third grown calf'. In the Jerusalem Talmud (Hagigah 2:2) we observe too the story of Rabbi Simeon ben Shetah, who was able to hunt down and destroy the witches of Ashkelon through an employment of his knowledge of their art. See further G.Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism: Merkavah, Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition*, N.Y., 1960, p.75ff.

⁹³ . So Abot 2:7, Erubin, 64b, JT Kiddushin 4, 66c. See further S.Fishbane, "Most Women Engage in Sorcery": An Analysis of Sorceresses in the Babylonian Talmud', *Jewish History*, 7.1, Spring 1993, pp.27-42.

⁹⁴ . On the Christian appreciation of 1 Samuel 28 see P.Cox, 'Origen and the Witch of Endor: Towards an Iconoclastic Typology', *ATR* 66, 1984, pp. 137-147, W.A.M.Beuken, '1 Samuel 28: The Prophet as "Hammer of Witches"', *JSOT* 6, 1978, pp.3-17, and K.A.D.Smelik, 'The Witch of Endor, 1 Samuel 28 in Rabbinic and Christian Exegesis Till 800 A.D.', *VC* 33, 1977, pp.167-169.

⁹⁵ . Early Christian commentators were guided in their interpretations of 1 Samuel 28 by several passages of the New Testament which address the notion of demonic inspiration and deception. Paul in 2 Cor 11.14-15 speaks of those who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ, stating; "Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his ministers also disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness." Likewise in Acts 8:9-24 we see the quintessential Christian battle of miracle and magic between the apostles as representatives of God and the forces of daemonic magic in the form of Simon Magus. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 105, Origen, *Comm. on John*, 20.42, Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*, 2.3, all believed that the prophet was truly raised by the witch, whilst John Chrysotom, *Comm. on Matt.*, 4.3 felt that that either a demon in Samuel's likeness or Samuel himself appeared not by the magic of the witch but by God's command. Finally Tertullian, *De Anima*, 57.8f., Gregory of Nyssa, *De Pythonissa* (KL.T.83), Jerome, *Comm. on Matt.* 6,31, *Comm. on Ez.*, 4.13.17 f. saw that a demon was summoned by the witch in order to give Saul a false prophecy.

factor in nascent Christianity. Moreover, their multiple explanations reveal the extent to which biblical exegetes, of a slightly later period than Josephus, were troubled by the nature of 1 Samuel's bold narrative and sought to explain the events according to their own understanding of magic.

Summary

The magical episode contained in 1 Samuel 28 is replete with distinctive forms of magical terminology, and constitutes one of the few direct references to the practice of necromancy in the Hebrew Bible. As we have seen, there is some confusion in modern appraisals of these magical terms as to their exact meanings; this sense of mystery about the events of Endor extends to our ancient sources too. However, the magical terminology is principally of negative aspect and association; certainly this is how the LXX translators would like the witch and her art to be seen, linking her description and undertakings to the outlawed magicians of Deut.18:10-14 (in a similar manner to Balaam). In this manner, the witch appears as a negatively-defined magician. Thus, Philo finds little worthy of comment in the story of the witch, and his image of necromancy is wholly negative. Likewise we have the negative appraisal of Pseudo-Philo, who not only cites the witch as an example of the *malefici* who were expelled by Saul, but also imagines that she is the daughter of Aod, the arch-magician and paragon of evil intent against the Israelites in the *Biblical Antiquities*. In post-Josephan literature we find a similar sense of negativity in viewing the witch. In considering the account given by Josephus, then, we will be

aware that ancient literature had very little positive to say on the matter of the witch, her art, or the character of Saul.

The Witch of Endor in the *Jewish Antiquities*

Previous Scholarship on the Witch of Endor Episode

As with many of the minor characters and episodes contained in *Ant.*, especially those which deal with magic, very little has been written concerning the witch of Endor in Josephus' appraisal of 1 Samuel 28. She is mentioned incidentally in a number of works as an example of a form of the ancient magician, but none goes into any detail concerning the precise terminology which Josephus uses in his recounting of the necromantic episode.⁹⁶ Brown gives the fullest account of Josephus' representation of the witch, but merely concludes that his interest in the magical aspects of the story is a literary device designed to placate a Graeco-Roman audience keenly interested in the supernatural.⁹⁷ Amaru briefly mentions the witch as an example of Josephus' model of the assertive and strong woman, based on his version of Rebecca; however, no mention is made of the magical aspects of the story.⁹⁸ Smelik skips over Josephus' account, stating that it differs little from the biblical antecedents.⁹⁹ Only Gray gives some hint of the importance of magical terminology in

⁹⁶ . So for example M.Smith, 'The Occult in Josephus' in L.H.Feldman and G.Hata (eds.), *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1987, pp.236-256, and L.H.Feldman, 'Josephus' Portrait of Saul', *HUCA* 53, 1982, pp.45-99.

⁹⁷ . Brown, *No Longer Be Silent: First Century Portraits of Biblical Women*, pp.204-205.

⁹⁸ . B.H.Amaru, 'Portraits of Biblical Women in Josephus' *Antiquities*', *JJS* 39, 1988, pp.143-170.

⁹⁹ . Smelik, 'The Witch of Endor: 1 Samuel 28 in Rabbinic and Christian Exegesis', pp.160-179.

Josephus' representation of the witch, but this is little more than a note.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, even in the most recent volume of the Brill commentary of *Ant.*, there is no discussion of the nature of his witch; whilst Begg does point out the instances of μάντις terminology, and compares Josephus' reading of the term אֹוֹב and his use of ἐγγαστρίμυθος with the biblical texts, most notably LXX, there is no comment on the magical nature of these terms or the episode as a whole.¹⁰¹ This is odd, for Begg covers the work of Pseudo-Philo in this regard and observes his use of negative magical terminology with the term *malefici*.¹⁰² There is no explanation though of why Josephus should wish to limit his own employment of negative magical terminology, nor of his repeated use of μάντις terminology. Clearly, these are important elements of his version of an episode which constitutes one of the few instances of active magic in the Bible. There is also little explanation of why Josephus describes the witch in glowing terms, or of why he appends his account with a lengthy eulogy which presents her as a prime example of the charitable and humble soul. My own work then will attempt to address these issues, and explore the ideas concerning magic which Josephus employs in his version of 1 Samuel 28.

The Role of the Witch in Connection with the Representation of Saul

In the biblical versions of the story of the witch of Endor the consultation of a necromancer by King Saul is shown to be the penultimate action of a monarch who,

¹⁰⁰ . R.Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence from Josephus*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, p.109.

¹⁰¹ . C.T.Begg, *Flavius Josephus Translation and Commentary*, vol. 4 *Judean Antiquities 5-7* (ed. Steve Mason), Leiden, E.J.Brill, 2005, pp.189-194.

¹⁰² . Begg, *Flavius Josephus Translation and Commentary*, p.189n.1186.

having sinned against God, is destined for an ignominious end at the hands of the Philistines. The representation of Saul is almost wholly negative; he is rash (1 Sam 14:24), he disobeys the commands of God and the prophet Samuel (1 Sam 13:8-14, 15:10-35), he is possessed by an evil spirit (1 Sam 16:14), he is jealous of David (1 Sam 18:17-30), and he orders the deaths of the priests of God (1 Sam 22:16-19). Throughout 1 Samuel Saul is overshadowed by both the prophet Samuel and the future monarch David. Indeed, Saul appears merely as a direct contrast to the rule of David in many respects, especially with regard to divine sanction.¹⁰³ Saul loses the support of God early on his reign through his failure to destroy the flocks of the Amalekites as per God's instructions; the consultation of the necromancer is shown to be the nadir of this fall from divine favour. In addition, David is shown to be highly favoured by God throughout Saul's reign; indeed, from the first reference of David in 1 Samuel we are told that God's spirit passed from Saul to David, despite the fact that the former was still king.¹⁰⁴ In contrast to the negative image of Saul provided by the Bible, one further downgraded by Pseudo-Philo,¹⁰⁵ Josephus presents his Saul as a Hellenistic style hero and devotes far more attention to the events of his reign in comparison with the biblical texts.¹⁰⁶ In *Ant.* Saul appears as the figure of paramount importance, no longer overshadowed by Samuel or David, and stands as a model of the ideal monarch.

¹⁰³ . As McCarter (*1 Samuel*, p.28) notes: "David's legitimation is worked out against a theological background in which David is envisaged as Yahweh's chosen king and Saul as the king abandoned by Yahweh."

¹⁰⁴ . 1 Samuel 16:13.

¹⁰⁵ . Indeed, Pseudo-Philo merely includes Saul in his account of biblical history as an instrument of prophecy of days to come (*Bib. Ant.* 56.3).

¹⁰⁶ . As Feldman ('Josephus's Biblical Portraits: Saul', p.509) observes, Josephus devotes 2.19 times as much space (*Ant.* 6.45 – 7.6 2,332 lines) to Saul as does the Hebrew text (1 Sam 9:1 – 2 Sam 1:27, 1,065 lines).

As part of this positive portrayal of Saul Josephus embellishes a number of aspects of his character, improvements which are designed to endow Saul with the classical qualities of a Hellenistic hero.¹⁰⁷ Thus, in the first references to Saul he is described as having a good birth and as being handsome; these details, though evident in the biblical texts, have been exaggerated by Josephus so that Saul becomes the son of a 'virtuous character' (ἀγαθὸς τὸ ἦθος), Kish, and is said to be 'tall of stature' (σῶμα μέγας), a description over and above the MT's 'young' (בְּחֹרֶר) and 'good' (טוֹב).¹⁰⁸ He also exhibits the attributes common to a Hellenistic hero, most principally courage, wisdom, justice, piety and modesty. So Josephus embellishes the account of Saul's triumph over King Nahash of the Ammonites;¹⁰⁹ he increases the number of guests at the banquet chamber to seventy, thus likening Saul to both Moses and the leader of the Sanhedrin;¹¹⁰ he changes the biblical narrative in having Saul adhere to the just words of his son Jonathan concerning David;¹¹¹ he emphasises Saul's love for his son in addition to his binding respect for an oath to God;¹¹² and he describes Saul as showing restraint and modesty at the news that he is to become king.¹¹³ In every case Josephus exceeds any praise which biblical literature lavishes on Saul. Indeed, Josephus creates his own positive comments, seeking to diminish some of the more negative aspects of Saul's character. In this respect we have Josephus' account of Saul's possession by the evil spirit which causes him to attack David; for Josephus

¹⁰⁷ . Although Josephus' motives in respect to his positive portrayal of Saul are not immediately apparent, with Feldman making no real statement on this matter ('Josephus's Biblical Portraits: Saul'), it would appear that the king represented an ideal opportunity for the author to employ the themes of a Hellenistic historian coupled with a rigorous defense and glowing representation of the values of Judaism. Indeed, through Saul, Josephus is able to demonstrate the similarity of Greek and Jewish values. See further H.W. Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus*, Missoula, Montana, Scholars Press, 1976, p.114.

¹⁰⁸ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.45, 1 Sam 9:1.

¹⁰⁹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.80.

¹¹⁰ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.52. The Hebrew reads 'about thirty' guests at the banquet 1 Sam 9:22.

¹¹¹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.212, 1 Sam 19:4.

¹¹² . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.126.

¹¹³ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.63.

this is not simply a case of possession brought about by God but rather a malady provoked by a medical disorder, in addition to the visitation of evil spirits.¹¹⁴ As I will now go on to show, this positive portrayal of Saul is complimented by Josephus' version of the witch of Endor.

Magic and the Witch in the *Jewish Antiquities*

The episode concerning the witch of Endor in *Ant.* contains a wide variety of terminology concerning the phenomena of divination, as Josephus attempts to retell the biblical narrative which is itself replete with magical data. Of particular interest is the terminology used to refer directly in the biblical texts to practitioners of unsanctioned and outlawed divination. Josephus gives an expansive description of the witch, fitting her into his understanding of magic and explaining to his Graeco-Roman audience, through Greek terminology, the nature of her divinatory skills. Indeed, there are a number of details which echo the case of Balaam, especially in Josephus' use of the distinctive μάντις terminology. We may divide the account of Saul's consultation of the witch of Endor into two sections; the measures taken by Saul and the initial realisation that his traditional forms of divination have been closed to him by God as seen in 1 Sam 28:3-7, and the visit by Saul to the witch of Endor in 1 Sam 28:8-25. Josephus addresses both of these sections in his *Ant.* account. In the former, Saul is seen to have taken action against magic-users in his kingdom, with 1 Sam 28:3 simply stating that he had "expelled the mediums and the wizards from the land". This is one

¹¹⁴ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.166, 1 Sam 16:14-15.

of the few instances in biblical literature where laws against magic-users are enacted. In the latter, Josephus explores the direct terminology which is used to describe the witch herself, terms which link directly to both the provisions laid out by Saul in 1 Samuel 28:3 and also the laws against magicians in Deut 18:9-14. As a result the episode of the witch of Endor in *Ant.* is laden with magical terminology.

Magical Terminology – Saul’s Banishment of the Magicians

In his own version of 1 Samuel 28:3 Josephus seems to have adopted the LXX reading for he repeats the term ἐγγαστρίμυθος, but in *Ant.* these figures are joined, not by the nebulous γνώστης, but by the much more common μάντις.¹¹⁵ Josephus is perhaps attempting to utilise more recognisable terminology in the form of the μάντις, a term which he has used throughout his works to refer to an expert diviner. It appears that Josephus made little distinction between the ἐγγαστρίμυθος and the μάντις, though the three instances of the former term in the discussion of the witch of Endor constitute Josephus’ only employment in the whole of his corpus.¹¹⁶ For him they are both examples of the technical diviner, one whose skills are learned, practised and developed. This opinion is reinforced by his description of this technique as an art (τέχνη),¹¹⁷ practiced by a particular class of diviner (τοῦτο τὸ γένος τῶν μάντεων),¹¹⁸ and as constituting a profession (ἐπιστήμη).¹¹⁹ We see

¹¹⁵ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.327.

¹¹⁶ . It can be seen that these three instances are clearly based upon LXX’s own employment of ἐγγαστρίμυθος.

¹¹⁷ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.327, cf. 6.340. We might note that the term τέχνη is used especially by Josephus in reference to Solomon’s method of exorcism, *Jewish Antiquities*, 8.45.

¹¹⁸ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.331.

similar associations in his story of Moses' battle with the Egyptian magicians.¹²⁰ In addition, the term μάντις, a change from LXX made by Josephus, suggests that the specific skills in question here are divinatory, especially when we consider that Josephus repeats the term ἐγγαστρίμυθος, the LXX term employed in speaking of the כּוּחִי. Yet, Josephus' own version of this passage amounts to much more than a simple change in terminology from LXX. For he adds the detail, perhaps motivated by the vague nature of LXX, that in addition to the diviners (μάντεις) and ventriloquists (ἐγγαστρίμυθους) Saul also expelled from the land "all practitioners of such arts, except the prophets" (πάσαν τὴν τοιαύτην τέχνην ἐκ τῆς χώρας ἐκβεβληκὼς ἔξω τῶν προφητῶν).¹²¹ This mention of the prophets constitutes an addition to scripture, but demonstrates that in Josephus' mind there is a parallel to be drawn between them and other experts in divination such as the ἐγγαστρίμυθος and the μάντις. Clearly, though, there is also a distinction being made by Josephus. For him the prophets constitute sanctioned forms of divination; his description of Saul's forcing out of the myriad diviners from Israel shows that he includes the witch of Endor amongst this group, whilst his observation of 1 Sam 28:6 suggests that the prophets were not available to Saul.

As a precursor to his visit to the witch of Endor, 1 Samuel 28 describes why Saul's need for divination was so acute. Verse 6 states: "When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, not by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets". Clearly, the king's predicament was severe for God had shut off his access to the traditional means of Hebrew divination. The implication, of course, is that the witch

¹¹⁹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.340.

¹²⁰ . So we see Josephus' description of the Egyptian priests who practiced the art (τέχνη) of magic, *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.286.

¹²¹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.327.

of Endor and her skills are to be seen as magical; they are not something which the Israelites should need recourse to, but Saul's needs are pressing. Here, LXX is much more clear in its terminology, though, like modern understandings, the Urim poses a definitional problem which is resolved by the use of the term 'manifestations' (δήλσις). Josephus perhaps recognises that his audience would have little knowledge of divinatory methods unique to Judaism such as the Urim, merely condensing 1 Samuel 28:6 to a notice that Saul asked through the prophets for an oracle from God.¹²² Only when Samuel has been raised does Josephus add that Saul also failed to receive divine communication through dreams.¹²³ In this manner Josephus builds the dramatic character of his Saul, with Josephus describing the king as "yet more afraid and his heart failed him, foreseeing inevitable disaster since the Deity was no longer at his side".¹²⁴ We see a number of added details to the account given in 1 Samuel 28, the purpose of which is to heighten the tragic aspects of Saul. Thus, Josephus tells us exactly where the army of the Philistines was camped, almost on Saul's doorstep, and adds the comment that Saul greatly feared his enemy because it was "very large and, as he surmised, superior to his own".¹²⁵ Then, of course, Josephus adds the detail that God had abandoned Saul, declining to speak to him through the prophets, or by means of divinatory dreams. As Brown states concerning Josephus' appraisal; "Saul is indeed a tragic figure – abandoned by God and mad with fear."¹²⁶ As shall be seen, this tragic aspect to Josephus' Saul is an important consideration in his portrayal of the witch.

¹²² . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.329.

¹²³ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.334.

¹²⁴ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.329.

¹²⁵ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.328.

¹²⁶ . Brown, *No Longer Be Silent; First Century Jewish Portraits of Biblical Women*, p.192.

Magical Terminology – The Witch and Necromancy

With respect to the second section in question, the meeting between Saul and the witch of Endor herself and the terminology of necromancy employed there, Josephus can again be seen to have developed his own ideas and understanding of the biblical texts of 1 Samuel 28. As we have seen, LXX utilises the common term for a necromancer, ἐγγαστρίμυθος, as a translation of the Hebrew כַּוֵּן, in its version of 1 Samuel 28:3. This term is again used in specific reference to the witch of Endor when Saul orders his servants to seek out a woman capable of divining the future.¹²⁷ However, in Josephus' version of this passage we see a more thorough explanation of the idea of the witch of Endor as a necromancer. Like LXX, Josephus again makes use of the term ἐγγαστρίμυθος to describe her, but he adds that she is to be sought not only among these 'ventriloquists' but also amongst those 'who call up the spirits of the dead' (τὰς τῶν τεθνηκότων ψυχὰς ἐκκαλουμένων).¹²⁸ Here, perhaps, Josephus is attempting to explain the relatively rare term ἐγγαστρίμυθος by the further explanation which directly describes the art of necromancy. This hypothesis is supported by the following note, appended by Josephus; "For this sort of ventriloquist raises up the spirits of the dead and through them foretells the future to those who enquire of them."¹²⁹ Here Josephus suggests that there are in fact several forms of necromancer; the witch is to be seen as one who summons spirits in order to predict the future. This description is a lengthy addition to scripture; at no point in MT or

¹²⁷ . 1 Samuel 28:7.

¹²⁸ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.329. Here, Smith (*The Occult in Josephus*, p.241) notes that Josephus employs the term *psychas*, not *daimonia* nor *pneumata*, suggesting therefore that he viewed the operation of the witch of Endor as the summoning of the spirit of Samuel, and not that of a daemon or a spirit which has never been incarnated (i.e. an angel).

¹²⁹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.329.

LXX 1 Samuel do we see an explanation such as this, for both texts have consistent magical terminology, such that readers confused by the אֹב or the ἐγγαστρίμυθος can refer back to such instances as the laws on magic in Lev. 19:31, 20:6 and 20:27, and Deut 18:11. Josephus, however, does not develop these laws in his paraphrase of the Bible.¹³⁰ Hence, he feels the need to describe the type of necromancer that he has in mind with the witch of Endor, realising that, during his era and cultural setting, descriptive terminology such as ἐγγαστρίμυθος and μάντις are nebulous and wide-ranging terms. This is especially so for those in his audience who do not have recourse to the biblical laws on magic in MT or LXX.

In his repeated use of the term μάντις and its cognates in this episode, Josephus, apart from attempting to describe the witch in positive magical terminology common and recognisable to his Graeco-Roman audience, brings her into his own select band of respected diviners. Whilst the term is open to interpretation amongst his audience, Josephus goes out of his way to carefully employ it in respect to a particular form of magician, namely those who use their skills of divination and prophecy for the good of mankind. In no sense are these figures the dark and mysterious wandering prophets and unsanctioned magicians seen in earlier Greek authors, who strike fear and loathing into society and who are often seen as confidence tricksters. Whilst they may still operate on the fringes of society, this is no longer a defining element of their station or location in Josephus.¹³¹ Nor are figures such as Balaam and the witch of

¹³⁰ . The closest that Josephus comes to a replication of biblical laws against magic is in his discussion of drugs and poisoners in *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.279, which appears to be a version of Exodus 22:18. There are no other examples of such biblical legislation, but, as D.C.Duling, ('The Eleazar Miracle and Solomon's Magical Wisdom in Flavius Josephus's *Antiquitates Judaicae* 8.42-49', *HTR* 78, 1985, p.15) observes, very little can be deduced from this as Josephus is not a consistent expounder of biblical law.

¹³¹ . Clearly Josephus' witch is still operating on the fringes of society but our author lessens the impact of this salient feature, which may easily link her to the practice of unsanctioned forms of magic in the minds of his Graeco-Roman audience, by omitting the comment in 1 Sam 28:8 which sees Saul visit her at night. In the Graeco-Roman view magical practices, if undertaken at night, were regarded as

Endor strictly unsanctioned, for both are employed, after much persuasion, by kings. Josephus' view of the μάντις is much more positive than its general employment in ancient literature.¹³² He has found a term which covers a wide range of magical exponents, but he employs it in much more precise forms and scenarios as a symbol of this select band of positively-defined diviners and magicians. Thus, Josephus can employ magic as a positive category; by avoiding the avowed negative terms such as γόης and even μάγος, he can create a dedicated picture of his acceptable magician, the μάντις. Granted, the fundamental definition of the μάντις remains that of a diviner for Josephus, but he is more than comfortable with employing the term in relation to apparently magical forms of divination, such as Balaam's sacrificial rituals and the necromancy of the witch of Endor.

Josephus understands that necromancy is an ambiguous activity; whilst he may not have included the biblical injunctions against its practice in *Ant.*, he does follow 1 Samuel in describing both Saul's expulsion of magicians from Israel, and the witch's reluctance to undertake the king's demand to raise Samuel. Both of these events are clearly linked, but Josephus develops the relationship between Saul and the witch in a much more transparent manner than the biblical versions of the story; she

harmful in intent. On this fear of the 'night-witch' and the link between illicit forms of magic and the night see A.A.Barb, 'The Survival of Magic Arts', in A.Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963, pp.100-125, G.Luck, *Arcana Mundi, Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 1985, pp.166-180, and R.Gordon, 'Imagining Greek and Roman Magic', in B.Ankarloo and S.Clark (eds.), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999, pp.159-276. We might also note the case of Lucan's 'superwitch' Erictho (*Pharsalia*, 6) who serves as the ultimate example in Roman thought of the combination of witch, necromancy, evil intent and night-time practices; see further, G.Luck, 'Witches and Sorcerers in Classical Literature', in B.Ankarloo and S.Clark (eds.), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999, pp.91-158.

¹³² . Although Josephus uses the term of a wide variety of figures, each of these examples is positive in terms of overall representation. In no sense do we see, as we do in Graeco-Roman literature of the first century CE, a wide variety of meanings, from evil magician to seer, most of which suggest a negative connotation.

cannot undertake the act of necromancy not only because her class of magician has been outlawed by Saul, but also because she is unwilling to disobey her king.¹³³ Hence, the illegality of her actions are, in Josephus, only seemingly temporal, for, without explaining the laws on magic, we must assume that her concern at being asked to enact an illegal magical rite is only due to the king's recent legislation. Josephus also declines to mention the fact that Saul visits the home of the witch by night.¹³⁴ In the biblical accounts the common terminology of magic and its practitioners ensures that the witch of Endor is interpreted as one of those expressly mitigated against in religious law. Josephus lacks this form of antecedent for his version of the witch, allowing him a degree of freedom in creating his positively-defined witch. A good example of his need to edit the biblical accounts in order to create this image can be seen in his omission of the nocturnal visit of Saul. It has long been suggested that a common detail amongst forms of the magician is secrecy and privacy, a view which finds accord in the fears of the Roman Empire of the first century CE which enacted specific laws to combat those magicians who met secretly by night in order to conduct their rituals. In this respect we might note the influential work of the ethnographic theorist Mauss who concluded that a distinctive aspect of magical rituals was secrecy of ritual, emphasizing that in many disparate cultures

¹³³ . Much like the case of Balaam, Josephus wishes to represent his witch not only as a μάντις, capable of true divination, but also as one who operates inside the law. In this respect she only utilises her art when she has gained sanction from Saul.

¹³⁴ . Josephus must have been well aware that, in Graeco-Roman thinking and especially in Roman law, illicit forms of magic, as well as outlawed religious practices, were frequently undertaken under cover of darkness. That he omits 1 Sam 28:8, in which Saul not only disguises himself but consults the witch by night, is instructive for it paints the act of necromancy in a less negative and illicit light. So in the *Sententiae Pauli*, (23 < Ad Legem Corneliam De Sicariis et Veneficis > 15), compiled in the late third century CE Iulius Paulus writes: "Persons who celebrate, or cause to be celebrated impious or nocturnal rites, so as to enchant, bewitch, or bind anyone, shall be crucified, or thrown to wild beasts." Proof that such ideas had a long history may be seen in the case of Apuleius (*Apologia pro se. De Magia*, 57.2) who was accused of *nocturna sacra*. See further, H.G.Kippenberg, 'Magic in Roman Civil Discourse', in P.Schäfer and H.G.Kippenberg (eds.), *Envisioning Magic*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1997, pp.137-164, and C.R.Phillips, 'Nullem Crimen sine Lege: Socioreligious sanctions on Magic', in C.A.Faraone and D.Obbink (eds.), *Magika Hiera, Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, pp.260-276.

magical actions frequently took place under cover of dark.¹³⁵ Whilst his views on magic have largely been discarded by modern scholars, this particular observation finds an interesting echo in the Graeco-Roman world and its fear of night-time rituals.¹³⁶ For Josephus' Roman audience, any mention of the events involving the witch of Endor taking place at night would have immediately suggested that they were to be seen as illegal, illicit and potentially harmful.

Saul's Request for Divination

Throughout his account Josephus portrays the witch of Endor in exemplary terms, emphasizing several aspects of her character which are designed to appeal to his audience. As well as expressing the Roman ideal of obeying one's monarch or ruler, Josephus portrays the witch as being treated unfairly by Saul, having her state that it was not "fair on his part, who had suffered no wrong from her, to lay this snare to catch her in forbidden acts and cause her to be punished".¹³⁷ Here he emphasizes that the witch is not to blame for the actions which she is about to undertake; in any case, there is no sense that these actions are universally illegal, simply that Saul, a single king, has seen fit to outlaw her profession shortly before he consults her. Whether this is due to the instructions of the prophet Samuel as seen in 1 Samuel 15:22-23 is unclear; certainly, in *Ant.* there is no mention of this equation of

¹³⁵ . Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, pp.58-62.

¹³⁶ . D.Ogden, *Greek and Roman Necromancy*, Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2001, pp.103-111.

¹³⁷ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.331.

divination to the sin of rebellion.¹³⁸ Given his great respect for divination and its practitioners, it is unlikely that Josephus would have viewed such practices as a sin on a par with rebellion, one of the major ‘sins’ which he attempts to deflect from Judaism.¹³⁹ We might note, too, that LXX employs the term οἰώνισμα in its version of 1 Samuel 15:23. Josephus would have been reluctant to employ this term in connection with sin, or in a negative aspect, for its basic meaning covers divination through observing the flight of birds, an occupation which was central to Roman ideas of sanctioned divination.¹⁴⁰ For Josephus to suggest that οἰώνισμα is a sin, then, would not be a wise step, and would overshadow the later events concerning the witch of Endor. Josephus wants no precedent for the witch’s actions; those seen in biblical literature are only negative, so Josephus leaves passages such as 1:Sam 15:23 and Deut 18:11 out of his paraphrase. Thus, the witch of Endor stands as a μάντις in her own right; there is no link to unsanctioned forms of magic as we see in biblical literature.

With respect to the idea of sanction and the actions of the witch there are a number of important details which Josephus adds to his account. In the first instance, Josephus makes it abundantly clear that the witch is reluctant to accede to Saul’s

¹³⁸ . In this respect 1 Samuel seems quite clear; Saul falls from power because he has rebelled against God in a number of matters. Indeed, there would appear to be a specific condemnation with respect to divination, for both the passage dealing with the equation of divination to the sin of rebellion and the witch episode, both make use of נִחֵן terminology. Again, this is another detail which serves to link 1 Sam 28 to the main text of 1 Sam, as well as suggesting that the text as a whole was a post-Deuteronomistic composition.

¹³⁹ . Josephus takes great pains to represent the Jewish people as a law abiding and peaceful people, one which would not rebel against its Roman masters. So he omits biblical details such as God’s blessing and promise to Jacob concerning the land which was given to Abraham (Gen 28:4), the bloodthirsty nature of the Israelite conquerors (Num 23:24), and the prophecy of Balaam concerning the population explosion of the Israelites (Num 23:10). Josephus, attempting perhaps to avoid criticism of Israel’s Roman rulers, also avoids mention of Abraham’s covenant with God concerning Israel; see further B.H.Amaru, ‘Land Theology in Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities*, *JQR* 71, 1980-81, pp.201-229.

¹⁴⁰ . For a survey of the importance to Roman religion of divination see M.Beard, J.North, S.Price, *Religions of Rome, Vol. 1: A History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp.211-226. See further, J.Linderski, ‘Watching the Birds: Cicero the Augur and the Augural Temples’, *CPh* 81, 1986, pp.330-340.

demands for divination, as we see in the biblical versions, but he adds the detail that she does not want to defy (καταφρονήσειν) her king.¹⁴¹ This addition is coupled with her reminder that such divination is illegal for the king has already expelled ‘her class of diviners’ (τὸ γένος τῶν μάντεων) from his lands. Here the witch expresses a very Roman ideal of obedience to a king, a view which concords with Josephus’ position of support for Roman rule, believing as he did that such authority had been ordained by God and that the Jewish people were better off under Roman rule and protection.¹⁴² Josephus even suggests that the witch has been unjustly treated by Saul’s request, thus establishing the reader’s sympathies with her character from the very start. In addition, he introduces the idea that Saul, as well as swearing an oath not to punish the witch as he does in the biblical texts, “would make nothing known nor tell anyone of her divination (μαντεία)”.¹⁴³ Thus, as well as protecting her from accusations of practising magic by keeping the consultation secret, Josephus’ Saul also agrees to keep private the contents of her occult revelations.¹⁴⁴ This is an interesting addition to the simple oath seen in 1 Sam 28:10, and is somewhat reminiscent of the actions of Augustus regarding his horoscope; in both cases the results of the divinations were for private, and monarchical use only.¹⁴⁵ As well as

¹⁴¹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.331. Pseudo-Philo merely suggests that the witch acts in this manner from fear of Saul, *Ant. Bib.*, 64.4.

¹⁴² . So, for instance, we have the prophecies concerning roman power made by Josephus himself (*Jewish War*, 3.137-138), the flight of God from the polluted temple and his support of the Romans (*Jewish War*, 5.412), and the notice that God is in control of all events and that he is merely using the Romans in order to purge his sanctuary (*Jewish War*, 6.110). H.R.Moehring (‘Joseph ben Matthia and Flavius Josephus: the Jewish Prophet and the Roman Historian’, *ANRW* 21:2, 1984, pp.764-917) notes (p.898) that for Josephus, “the Roman empire possesses cosmic character and constitutes part of God’s design for that particular period in history”.

¹⁴³ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.331, 1 Sam 28:9.

¹⁴⁴ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.331.

¹⁴⁵ . Whilst Augustus published his own horoscope he also banned all such publications for the future; Suetonius, *Augustus* 94. He also instituted a ban on private consultations by astrologers which could not be supported by witnesses; Dio Cassius, LVI.25.5. Whilst Josephus does not mention any of these edicts, nor does he mention anything of astrologers in Rome (of which Tacitus suggests a situation akin to 1 Samuel 28 in which they will ‘always be banned and always retained’ at Rome, *Histories*, 1.22), it seems highly likely that he would be aware of the dangers which private rituals could constitute, as well as the dubious nature in which unsanctioned divination was held.

testifying to the efficacious nature of necromantic practices in Josephus' eyes, such details also suggest that Saul was applying his sanction to the events (again, another instance of the sanctioned nature of the μάντις in Josephus) and that Josephus was well aware that such action was necessary for the results of the divination to be reliable and trustworthy.

Josephus and Necromancy in the Graeco-Roman Context of the First Century CE

By the time of Josephus' era, the practice of necromancy had been an important facet of the representation of magic in the literature of the Graeco-Roman elites. As we see with the magical terminology of LXX 1 Samuel 28 there was a long-standing interest and a structured terminology used in the Graeco-Roman world to refer to necromancy. Interestingly, Plato, a great influence on later authors concerned with the social and legal standing of magicians, links the μάντις not only to the specifics of the art of magic, including charms (ἐπαοιδαίς) and binding-spells (κατάδεσμοίς), but also to the practice of necromancy.¹⁴⁶ In this sense, as Ogden suggests, the μάντις refers to necromantic prophecy.¹⁴⁷ As early as the fifth century BCE then, necromancy was linked to magical practices which the ruling elites disapproved of and which they sought to marginalise and legislate against. Yet, even Rome's most prominent figures, the emperors, were implicated in necromantic rituals by biographers and chroniclers who held republican sympathies. Thus, Suetonius describes Nero's conjuration of the soul of his mother Agrippina using the skills of

¹⁴⁶ . Plato, *The Republic*, 364b-c, cf. *Laws* 909a-b.

¹⁴⁷ . Ogden, *Greek and Roman Necromancy*, 2001, p.106.

Persian mages.¹⁴⁸ Pliny provides an even more negative portrayal of Nero and his necromantic pursuits, suggesting that an Armenian magician named Tiridates was the emperor's chief instructor.¹⁴⁹ Other famous imperial necromancers include Otho¹⁵⁰ and Hadrian.¹⁵¹ Necromancy became a subject for legal constraint in the early empire, it being a potential source of revolutionary plots. As Ogden suggests, "as far as an emperor was concerned, the intent or aspirations behind inquiries into his death could only be malicious".¹⁵² The act of necromancy thus became an illegal undertaking in imperial Rome, being linked to revolutionary activities which the emperors were keen to stamp out. Thus, both Augustus and Tiberius outlawed the use of a prophet to divine the date of death of an emperor.¹⁵³ Likewise, following the Drusus affair, in which a magician was driven to suicide by Tiberius on suspicion of necromantic practices aimed to cause harm to the emperor and his family, the senate made a concerted effort to expel various forms of magician from Italy.¹⁵⁴ We might also mention the cases of Apollonius of Tyana and Furius Scribonianus who were both accused of necromancy by imperial authorities; the former managed to escape sentence whilst the latter was executed.¹⁵⁵

If, as seems likely, Josephus was writing *Ant.* whilst in Rome under imperial patronage, he cannot have been unaware of the repeated legislation which Rome made during the first century CE dealing with necromancy. The problem of illicit forms of

¹⁴⁸ . Suetonius, *Nero* 34, 46. See also on the appearance of the ghost of Agrippina, Tacitus, *Annals* 14.5, 9-10, and Dio Cassius 61.14.

¹⁴⁹ . Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 30.14-18.

¹⁵⁰ . Suetonius, *Otho* 7.

¹⁵¹ . Dio Cassius, 69.11.

¹⁵² . Ogden, *Greek and Roman Necromancy*, p.156.

¹⁵³ . Dio Cassius, 56.23, 25, Suetonius, *Tiberius* 63.1, Paulus, *Sententiae* 5.21.3f.

¹⁵⁴ . Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.27-32. See further, Barb, 'The Survival of Magic Arts', pp.100-125, and D.Potter, *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius*, Cambridge, Mass., 1994.

¹⁵⁵ . Apollonius: Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, 7.11, 8.7. Scribonianus: Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.52.

magic being practised in Rome and Italy was one which no emperor could ignore. However, we must observe that Josephus is aware that the definition and representation of magic, in addition to its illicit and illegal nature, is reliant upon the observer, be they literary or legislative elites. Thus, Josephus feels comfortable in relating the magical events which took place under Vespasian's rule involving the exorcist Eleazar.¹⁵⁶ Here again we meet with the idea of sanction; Josephus feels comfortable in relating the case of Eleazar as not only does it occur at the court of Vespasian, but he also stresses that the skills of the exorcist are derived from the wisdom and power of King Solomon.¹⁵⁷ In the case of the witch of Endor a similar employment of royal sanction is made in the form of King Saul.

Although this episode is the only example of necromancy in the works of Josephus, a number of details suggest that not only did he have little trouble in recounting the events of 1 Sam 28 (unlike Philo), being able to fit such magical events into his representation of Judaism for a Roman audience, but he also understood the events to be believable. Thus, Josephus does not shy away from speaking of ghosts,¹⁵⁸ suggests that the souls of good men fallen in battle are "good spirits (δαίμονες) and beneficent heroes" helpful to their people,¹⁵⁹ and reveals that the souls of the dead have "divine strength and wholly unlimited power, although they remain invisible to

¹⁵⁶ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 8.45-49.

¹⁵⁷ . We must remember that, like Moses, Solomon was a figure from Israelite history who was much revered, in both the Jewish and Graeco-Roman worlds of the first century CE, for his magical skills. The fact that he was believed to have written down his magical wisdom suggested to Josephus' contemporaries that there was a legitimate and ancient tradition to be followed, much as we see in Josephus' description of Eleazar.

¹⁵⁸ . So for example, the ghosts of the executed sons of Herod (*Jewish War* 1.599). Josephus also makes a number of further comments on ghosts and *daimones*; *Jewish War*, 3.372, 374, 6.346f., *Jewish Antiquities*, 13, 314, 317, 416. In the case of the sons of Herod, Smith ('The Occult in Josephus', p.241) notes that S.Schwartz remarks that the explicit demonology of this episode was not copied into the *Jewish Antiquities*, perhaps because Josephus came to disapprove of it. Such a case would seem unlikely, however, given Josephus' detailed re-telling of the events of 1 Sam 28.

¹⁵⁹ . *Jewish War*, 6.47. Here I follow the translation of Smith ('The Occult in Josephus', p.241) in preference to the Loeb, for the latter uses the term 'genii' as a translation of δαίμονες, which seems to have little relevance to Josephus' context.

human eyes as is the god himself”.¹⁶⁰ It would seem then that the events of 1 Sam 28 were appropriate not only for Josephus’ thoughts on life after death and the nature of ghosts and spirits, but also for his perceived Roman audience. Though in no sense do we see any rationalisation of the events for a pragmatic Graeco-Roman audience; Josephus clearly understood that necromancy was a facet of Roman and Jewish life and lore. To paraphrase Smith with respect to necromancy, for Josephus it “was more than a decorative element it was a constituent part of the Graeco-Roman world, a part made particularly important by the conflict between that world and his inherited Israelite monotheism.”¹⁶¹

The Raising of Samuel

Having secured her services and trust through the swearing of oaths, Josephus reports that Saul asks the witch to raise the soul (ψυχή) of Samuel.¹⁶² Here, Josephus expands on the biblical texts for he presumes that Samuel’s soul is to be raised, rather than simply ‘Samuel’, and he adds, by way of explanation, that this soul is brought up from Hades. Clearly these details are intended for a Graeco-Roman audience, for whom the natural abode for souls after death is Hades. Indeed, for a culture heavily indebted to the Homeric epics we may see the νεκουμαντεύειν of Odyssey Book 11 as a common form of Graeco-Roman necromancy.¹⁶³ Josephus’ account of the witch

¹⁶⁰ . *Jewish War*, 8.346.

¹⁶¹ . Smith, ‘The Occult in Josephus’, p.254.

¹⁶² . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.332. In 1 Sam 28:11b Saul simply requests for Samuel to be brought up, Josephus thus adding his own idea concerning the soul.

¹⁶³ . For a discussion of the Odyssey and its links to a tradition of necromancy see Ogden, *Greek and Roman Necromancy*, pp.xxxi-xxxii. S.I.Johnston notes in her review of Ogden (*Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 19/06/2002) that the Odyssey should not be taken as an accurate ancient account of

of Endor mirrors this classical case. Unlike the later rabbis and Church Fathers, Josephus was in no doubt that Samuel's soul has been raised by the necromantic art of the witch.¹⁶⁴ The very fact that Josephus uses the term ψυχή here suggests that for him the events of the biblical narrative can be read in a literal manner. Such an approach does not conflict with either his Graeco-Roman or Jewish understandings of life after death, nor with his approach to magic.¹⁶⁵ Josephus has no doubts concerning the efficacy of the witch's magical skills; indeed he praises them and suggests that they are responsible for her livelihood. Nor do we see his usual refrain on the supernatural and appeal to rational sensibilities here, no warning to the reader to believe as they will on this matter. This suggests that there is no need of such a warning; the events are as narrated, with no need for Josephus to explain them.

Through his use of Greek terminology he has established the location of the witch in the landscape of Graeco-Roman magic. These terms, as we have seen, suggest that Josephus understood the nature of necromancy in the Graeco-Roman world, and his nuanced usage of them demonstrates his understanding of the elastic nature of the category of magic; the witch, as a necromancer, is open to both negative and positive responses. For Josephus the witch is a positive figure. Moreover, Josephus repeats the biblical details which see Saul make the request for divination

necromantic ritual; nevertheless it does serve to demonstrate one of the ways in which ancient authors and cultures thought about life after death and the act of necromancy.

¹⁶⁴ . The idea of necromancy, especially in connection with a king of Israel, was troubling for later authors and traditions, most specifically the Church Fathers (and in particular Origen who seems to have developed numerous and divergent views on the subject; Cox, 'Origen and the Witch of Endor', pp.137-147). The rabbinical tradition seems to have accepted the events at face value; Lev R. 26.7, PT Sanh. 7.10, BT Sanh. 65b, Eruvin 53b.

¹⁶⁵ . Neither 1 Sam 28 nor Pseudo-Philo make any mention of the detail that Samuel was indeed 'called up' as Josephus does, *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.332. Coupled to his only usage of the term 'Hades' (ᾍδης) in the *Antiquities* (it appears four times in the *Jewish War*; 1.596, 2.156, 165, 3.375), such details suggest that Josephus had implicit faith in the necromantic raising of Samuel by the witch's magic, and that he wished to communicate this faith to his audience such that they were under no illusions.

and the witch hesitate due to the king's ban on such practices.¹⁶⁶ The oath sworn by Saul not to punish the witch, repeated by Josephus, represents a sanctioning of her activities. For a Graeco-Roman audience who saw magic as a form of unsanctioned religious/ritual activity, this oath from a king, who has tried other avenues of divination without success, dissolves many of the negative aspects which surround a necromancer. Indeed, this oath is coupled in *Ant.* with the excision of the detail that the events took place at night, something which would have screamed 'unsanctioned' to the Graeco-Roman audience. Josephus could therefore be said to be providing the witch with as much sanction as he can muster.

Graeco-Roman sensibilities are again observed in Josephus' description of the spirit of Samuel, details which are added by Josephus in order to explain several troubling sections of the biblical accounts. Thus, Samuel is portrayed as a venerable (γηραιός) and distinguished (ένδοξος) man. This latter appraisal addresses the biblical passage that describes Samuel as a god; not, perhaps, an idea which Josephus would wish to include in his defence and representation of monotheistic Judaism.¹⁶⁷ MT 1 Samuel 28:13 describes the apparitions of the witch's vision as אֱלֹהִים, the plural form for the divine. LXX follows this lead by using the plural θεοὺς. As has been seen, this description was troubling for a wide variety of biblical commentators, not least of whom was Josephus.¹⁶⁸ In his eyes, not even an illustrious prophet such as Samuel is deserving of this divine description. Instead, Josephus neatly sidesteps the issue by his

¹⁶⁶ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.331, 1 Sam 28:10a.

¹⁶⁷ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.333. Unlike the Targum, which introduces the angel of the Lord in place of the troublesome 'gods' of 1 Sam 28:13b, Josephus removes all mention of the divine by merely reporting that it was Samuel's ghost which appeared. Pseudo-Philo, likewise troubled by this passage which suggests polytheism, suggests that Samuel's appearance is not that of a normal man and that he was accompanied by two angels, *Bib. Ant.*, 64:5.

¹⁶⁸ . So troubling in fact that the later Christian traditions concerning 1 Samuel 28 sought multiple explanations for the inclusion of the idea, even going so far as to say that the 'gods' were actually 'demons' in disguise! (i.e. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Pythonissa*, K1.T.83) See further Smelik, 'The Witch of Endor, 1 Samuel 28 in Rabbinic and Christian Exegesis Till 800 A.D.', pp.167-169.

use of the term μορφή, thus suggesting that the witch's surprise is due to her seeing "someone arise in form like God (τῷ θεῷ τία τὴν μορφὴν ὅμοιον)." Josephus elaborates on the biblical idea by expanding the description of this vision with the witch describing not only the priestly mantle (ἱερατικὴν δὲ περικείμενον διπλοίδα) as in 1 Samuel 28:14, but also a figure of 'advanced age' (γηραιός) and 'distinguished aspect' (ένδοξος).¹⁶⁹ By these extra distinctions, Josephus states that Saul is able to recognise the prophet Samuel. Additionally, we see no evidence of his refrain to the reader, often included in his descriptions of supernatural events, that they may take or leave the story as they see fit.¹⁷⁰ For Josephus, necromancy is a possibility; it is a skill and an art which he is keen to demonstrate as one possessed by the Israelites. Indeed, it is only in *Ant.* that we have a description of her art as a technique (τέχνη), one which leads undeniably to the raising of the soul of Samuel.

The Eulogy of the Witch

The final section of Josephus' account concerning the witch of Endor is perhaps the most revealing for an assessment of his portrait of her, for *Ant.* 6.340-342 constitutes a lengthy addition to the biblical narrative. Both the Bible and its exegetes

¹⁶⁹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.333.

¹⁷⁰ . We have already seen this approach being used by Josephus in the case of Moses and Balaam, and it is something of an apologetic attitude in his attempted accommodation of the miracle stories of Judaism in a Graeco-Roman atmosphere. See further, O.Betz, 'Miracles in the Writings of Flavius Josephus', in L.H.Feldman and G.Hata (eds.), *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1987, pp.212-235. Evidently, Josephus did not share the view of later commentators who viewed the actions of the witch as those of sophistry, deception and what we might term 'stage magic'.

in the ancient world saw fit to praise the witch for her spirit of ξενία,¹⁷¹ but Josephus sets new heights for such laudatory appraisals. In addition to giving no condemnation of her profession, Josephus makes a number of remarks designed to highlight her compassion, generosity, loyalty, and lack of vindictiveness. As Brown has observed, these qualities are precisely those which Josephus and his audience would hope to find in “a practitioner of true religion”.¹⁷² Yet, at the same time, Josephus reminds his readers that this woman was a practitioner of an art (τέχνη) and profession (ἐπιστήμη) which Saul had outlawed.¹⁷³ Through her loyalty to her king’s rulings the witch had been prevented from practising this art, despite the fact that it constitutes her livelihood. Indeed, the passage in question is so striking as to be worthy of quoting here in full;

“Here it is but right to commend the generosity of this woman who, though she had been prevented by the king from practising an art which would have made it easier and more comfortable at home, and though she had never seen Saul before, yet bore him no resentment for having condemned her profession nor turned him away as a stranger and as one with whom she had never been acquainted; but instead she gave him sympathy and consolation, exhorted him to do that which he regarded with great

¹⁷¹ . So 1 Sam 28:21-23 in which she persuades Saul to eat and 28:24-25 in which she prepares a meal for him and his servants, killing her only calf in order to do so. Of the ancient exegetes only Pseudo-Philo makes no mention of her compassion in this respect, preferring instead to limit her humane aspects and create a purely negative magician. On the subject of ξενία, whilst Josephus does not use this term directly of the witch, as he had done with Balaam, we may still see a similar theme by which a diviner establishes good relations with a monarch, in the description of Saul as a stranger (ξένος) whom the witch had not turned away, *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.340.

¹⁷² . Brown, *No Longer Be Silent*, p.200.

¹⁷³ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.340.

unwillingness and offered him with open friendliness the one thing which in her poverty she possessed.”¹⁷⁴

Even when Saul is revealed as the king who has banned her art (τέχνη) and livelihood, the witch does not deviate from the twin ideals of ξενία and *clementia*, bywords for honour and respect in the ancient world. The witch’s reception of a stranger is also a method by which Josephus can add a rebuttal to the widespread idea that Jews are enemies of the laws of hospitality; here the witch is the perfect host.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, she has to go to great lengths and make extensive sacrifices to become so, giving up not just one of her livestock as biblical literature suggests, but, as Josephus states; “Though she owned but one calf, which she had brought up and had taken trouble to care for and feed beneath her roof, for she was a labouring woman and had to be content with this her sole possession, she slaughtered it, prepared the meat and set it before his servants and himself.”¹⁷⁶

As Saul falls to the floor in shock, at either her necromantic performance or through exhaustion, the witch, without the help of Saul’s servants as per the biblical narrative, “constrained him to partake of food, asking this favour of him in return for the that hazardous act of divination (μαντεία), which though not lawful for her to perform through fear of him so long as she had not recognised him, she had nevertheless undertaken to carry out”.¹⁷⁷ Here the witch acts alone from loyalty to her king, asking not for payment for her services but rather for Saul merely to eat that

¹⁷⁴ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.340-341.

¹⁷⁵ . The issue of whether or not the witch is actually an Israelite is not touched on by Josephus; nothing indicates that she is not (if we imagine that Saul’s condemnation of magicians was aimed at both Israelites and non-Israelites within his realm), but there is not enough evidence to be able to provide a firm conclusion.

¹⁷⁶ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.339.

¹⁷⁷ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.338.

which she provides. Josephus adds that it is only through her insistence does the king finally agree.¹⁷⁸ These actions are, Josephus stresses, not motivated by greed or by any promise of future favours from the king for she knows that he is about to die. Indeed, the witch becomes a shining example for Josephus with regard to proper modes of social conduct, and of rules which demonstrate a respect for God. He states in conclusion; “It is well, then, to take this woman for an example and show kindness to all who are in need, and to regard nothing as nobler than this or more befitting the human race or more likely to make God gracious and ready to bestow upon us his blessings. Concerning this woman, then, let these words suffice.”¹⁷⁹

Certainly Pseudo-Philo did not read 1 Samuel 28 in the same positive manner, nor did he feel it necessary or appropriate to emphasize these qualities in a biblical magic-user. When viewed in the context of Josephus’ other appraisals of biblical women, this eulogy makes iconoclastic reading, especially in relation to his treatment of figures such as Deborah and Huldah, who are linked in the biblical texts to the world of the miraculous/magical/supernatural. It has been noted that Josephus’ praise of the witch of Endor mirrors the dictates of the Stoic school of Roman thought, which emphasized a tolerant and considerate attitude towards mankind.¹⁸⁰ However, the fact that Josephus appended a lengthy eulogy suggests that his plan for the witch of Endor involved much more than an observation of Stoic values. Given the nature of Roman thought on magicians, and their place in Roman law at the time of Josephus’ composition of *Ant.*, this eulogy sits uncomfortably with the idea that Josephus was

¹⁷⁸ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.338. In 1 Sam 28:23 we see mention of Saul’s servants who join the pleas from the witch for the king to eat; only when they join in does he do so. We do not see such actions from the servants in Josephus. Moreover, this passage is replete with terms of exhortation such as ‘entreat’ (παρεῖπον), ‘insist’ (ἐβιάσατο) and ‘persuade’ (συνέπεισεν).

¹⁷⁹ . *Jewish Antiquities*, 6.342.

¹⁸⁰ . Brown, *No Longer Be Silent*, pp.200-203.

not a critical interrogator and creative thinker with regard to the biblical texts.¹⁸¹ It would have been very easy for him to paint a bleak and negative picture of the witch, indeed even to have left her out altogether, but what we find is the complete opposite. This suggests that Josephus and his audience recognised that positive forms of magic existed, and that such practitioners could be praised. Moreover, it suggests that magicians are not by default immoral.

Conclusion

In reviewing Josephus' version of the witch of Endor, we have revealed a number of important details concerning our author's approach to the subjects of divination, necromancy, and magic. Perhaps the first point we should note is that Josephus accepts necromancy as a viable technique of divination, and that the events outlined in 1 Samuel 28 were a plausible account of such practices. Moreover, Josephus seems to have been well aware that such practices were not well thought of in his Roman world of the late first century CE, for in speaking of the witch he avoids the more overt and negative forms of magical terminology, preferring instead to label her a μάγισσα and to use King Saul as the sanction for her actions. Indeed, Josephus seems to have known much of the situation of magic and its legality in his literary milieu, for he omits the important detail of Saul's night-time visit to the witch. By

¹⁸¹ . In his article on the divine spirit in Josephus, J.R. Levison ('The Debut of the Divine Spirit in Josephus' *Antiquities* [Num 22-24]', *HTR* 87.2, 1994, pp.123-138) remarks that the earliest work on the subject by F. Buchsel (*Der Geist Gottes im Neuen Testament*, Gutersloh, Bertlesmann, 1926) imagined Josephus as a historian rather than a thinker, one who was incapable of original conceptions. In a similar manner, the case of the witch of Endor in the *Jewish Antiquities* also demonstrates the creative nature of Josephus' work with regard to his re-writing of the original source(s).

linking the form of divination which the witch represents to the prophets, and with the description of her practices as an art (τέχνη) and a profession (ἐπιστήμη), Josephus suggests that her skills are to be seen as a technical form of divination, one which may reveal divine knowledge which is on a par with anything the prophets can perform. Here then the gap between the μάντις and the προφήτης is very slight, especially when we consider Josephus' glowing tributes to the witch, over and above anything seen in the biblical texts or in the works of other exegetes and traditions. For Josephus, a negative representation of the witch would be a form of condemnation of his hero Saul. In the biblical texts it is made clear, through repeated use of magical terminology derived from the list of outlaws given in Deut 18:9-14, that Saul is plunging the depths of impiety with his consultation of the witch; it is the final iniquity for a king who has turned his back on God. Josephus, however, did not adopt this view. Far from it; his Saul is a Hellenic style hero full of virtue and piety, who has to seek guidance from God through alternate means as the death of Samuel denies him the use of God's appointed prophet. The result is the meeting with the witch of Endor, an outlawed diviner perhaps, but one who represents the summit of the arts of the μάντις. Given Josephus' careful usage of μάντις terminology it is not surprising that the witch is described in such glowing terms; not only is she an example of the perfect female host, but she also represents the face of acceptable Jewish forms of the art of divination to a Graeco-Roman audience.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

Previous scholarship on Josephus has failed to take account of the importance which magical terminology has in his representation of Judaism. Even those studies which focus on the three figures of Moses, Balaam and the witch of Endor, have little comment to make concerning the employment of magic in these episodes; indeed, magic is often downplayed as merely a popular Graeco-Roman motif which Josephus has copied, or as a subject which satisfies Josephus' adherence to the letter of the Bible. On the contrary, I have shown that Josephus realised the power and importance which magical terminology held for his portrayal of both Jewish heroes and Jewish, Roman, Egyptian villains. It was much more than something which he added in order to satisfy Roman whims for the supernatural, and certainly, as I have shown, his employments are often at odds with his biblical sources in *Ant.* Magic, then, was an important category of thought for Josephus. He was well aware of the attitudes which were being adopted towards magic in the Roman world of his era. He recognised that magic was becoming a category of exclusion, and that, although positive examples could still exist, the need for sanction was paramount. In this manner, I have focused my thesis on the peculiarities and associations of distinct magical terms which existed both in Josephus' works and in his wider Graeco-Roman world. In itself, this observation, that each of the terms under discussion is unique and speaks of different attitudes, approaches, and imaginings of ancient magic, is an important consideration for the study of Josephus. Previous scholarship has shown that Josephus can be very precise in his use of certain sets of language; for instance, with respect to slavery or prophecy. I have shown that Josephus used a great deal of precision and thought in his employment of magical terminology.

The discussions concerning Josephus' paraphrases of the biblical figures of Moses, Balaam, and the witch of Endor have shown that our author was keenly aware of the power of magical terminology, both in the context of biblical descriptions and provisions in both Hebrew and Greek, and in *Ant.* where the Greek terminology is carefully suited to accommodate Graeco-Roman views on magic. In this manner, Josephus is able to describe both sanctioned (positive) and unsanctioned (negative) forms of magic. His μάντις, in which category we count not only Balaam but also, possibly, himself, is a figure who, though possessing 'supernatural' abilities and skills, is clearly seen to be a sanctioned operative; these figures only ever perform their 'magic' through the sanction of their rulers (Balaam and Balak, Josephus and Vespasian, the Jewish seer and Alexander etc). Likewise, the γόης is a figure who operates without sanction; these magicians are frequently seen by Josephus as operating outside the strictures of society, leading revolts, promising false miracles, agitating the masses against Rome, and deceiving the credulous. Whilst some have seen these figures as 'sign prophets' it would be better, in the light not only of Josephus' context in writing *Ant.*, but also from the manner in which this term is used in wider Roman literature and legislation of the era, to see them as negatively-defined magicians. Such figures as Theudas may have promised 'miracles' such as those performed by Moses, but through the employment of γόης terminology a link to illegal magic is implicit in the works of Josephus.

The case of Moses, as seen in the biblical texts and in the works of later exegetes, presents an interesting mix of attitudes towards magic. On the one hand we have elements of the P tradition which appear to imagine Moses as a master magician, a view which was later echoed by magicians themselves, as well as being a traditional

association in the minds of Graeco-Roman authors. In this manner, however, Moses appears as a positive form of the magician; he is sanctioned by God, and is described by positive magical terms (if used at all in speaking of him). The attitudes adopted towards his opponents, however, stand as something of a contrast for they are often presented in later exegesis as representatives of negative forms of magic; they are illusionists, deceivers, or are stressed as being practitioners of an outlawed art. This representation, seen principally in Philo, is itself something of a contrast to the biblical account given in MT, for here we merely have sanctioned magicians, who practice an art and who, though described by outlawed magical terminology found in Deut 18:10-14, are not seen to have negative character traits in Exodus 7.

Despite the negative interpretation of the narrative provided by LXX, Philo, and Pseudo-Philo, Josephus is able to create a positive image of magic through careful employments of magical terminology. Indeed, this positivity extends not only to Moses, who appears as a master magician sanctioned by God, but also to the Egyptians who are seen as priests (thus sanctioned operatives of Pharaoh and Egyptian religion) who practice an art with great skill. This art is identical to that employed by Moses. Josephus' reasons for this positive portrayal are not immediately obvious, though we may suggest that, writing as he was in a Roman world, the strength of the magical Moses tradition was too much for him to ignore. The *Ant.* version of Exodus 7 also demonstrates that Josephus has a natural interest in matters magical; not only does he give a full account of the serpent confrontation, but he employs distinct terminology in its description which clearly shows that he is knowledgeable concerning several models and representations of magic. In this manner, his handling of the terminology is designed to accommodate not only a

magical Moses but also a skilled and sanctioned Egyptian priesthood. This representation of Moses thus fits the model of Josephus' wider approach to the founding figure of Judaism; through Hellenizing Moses, Josephus is led to adopt the Graeco-Roman appreciation of him, found in Pliny, as a great magician.

In the second chapter of this thesis I provided a brief discussion of Josephus' employment of μάντις terminology, both in respect to himself and to other figures from his works. It was found that Josephus' image of the μάντις was much more positive than some of those which were circulating in the Graeco-Roman world of his era, and that his employments were carefully managed so as to present the μάντις as a sanctioned form of diviner. It was against this background that I explored the paraphrase made by Josephus of Balaam and his prophecies. For Josephus, these prophecies are of no little significance for his representation of Judaism, and he takes care to ameliorate them to a Roman audience. One approach to this goal is his positive portrayal of the originator of the prophecies, Balaam. Clearly, Josephus is aware of the negative reputation that Balaam has accrued; his image as a greedy and self-serving magician is readily seen in the Bible, Philo and Pseudo-Philo. Yet Josephus adopts a much more mild approach to Balaam, limiting his associations with magic through a careful use of μάντις terminology. This representation is aided by his omission of 'magical' details such as the fees for divination, his emphasis on the role of God and the spirit of prophecy, and the stress placed on Balaam's Roman values (i.e. hospitality, obeying one's monarch, honouring contractual obligations, and his dignified character). In this manner, Josephus is able to create a figure who appears as an acceptable form of the μάντις to his audience. This approach is important for it shows that Josephus, perhaps mindful of his own portrayal as a diviner, was keen to

stress that there were positive forms of magical activity which, though described by terminology which had previously been used of outlawed magicians in the Roman Empire, could receive state sanction.

The final figure analysed in this thesis, the witch of Endor, presents a fascinating and potential problematic magical episode for Josephus. From the biblical texts it would appear that this woman, described through explicit Deuteronomic magical terminology, and who conducts night-time rituals in order to raise the dead, is a classic example of the outlawed magician. Pseudo-Philo was in no doubt that she should be seen as a necromancer, a magical practitioner who, according to the laws of the Torah, should be executed or exiled from the Jewish community. In this manner his description of her is very negative; we are left in no doubt in the *Biblical Antiquities* that she constitutes an outlawed, unsanctioned, and negatively defined magician. Again, Philo adopted a similar view of her. Although he makes no mention of the witch of Endor episode, it is clear, from his widespread remarks on magic, that he would not have held her in high esteem. That Philo ignored the entire episode is instructive; this was a blot on Israelite history which would be unpalatable to his sophisticated and Hellenized audience. Against such negative interpretations, Josephus' own appraisal of the witch of Endor is a remarkably positive account of a sanctioned magician.

There is a clear approach by Josephus in his retelling of 1 Samuel by which he attempts to make this story acceptable for his Graeco-Roman audience. Thus, he avoids details of the story which suggest that Saul was happy to take part in an illegal ritual; he enhances the reputation of the witch for hospitality, kindness, and loyalty;

he minimises the impact of magical terminology through a careful handling of μάντις terminology; and he completes his account with a lengthy and glowing eulogy concerning the witch. We imagine his reasons for this positive account are several. Primarily he is drawn to relate the story as it is an integral part of the last days of Saul; a story which is not hindered by previous (or indeed later) Josephan references to biblical laws on magic. Furthermore, he is confident enough in his understanding of Graeco-Roman magic to be able to present the witch and Saul as positive figures; their characters are not denigrated through association with magic. And, of course, Josephus may have felt a certain degree of respect for those who could speak, as he could, of future events through the use of personal 'magical' abilities. This point seems especially pertinent when we consider his employment of μάντις terminology in this episode; terminology which he uses of himself and his own prophecies.

Throughout the three case studies attention has been drawn to the previous scholarship which has been undertaken not only on the image and understanding of magic in Josephus, but also to the nature of Josephus as a creative and imaginative author. It has been shown that such scholarship does not adequately describe the extent to which Josephus explores the themes of magic, nor the extent to which he not only adopts but embellishes the biblical stories of magic in his paraphrase. In this manner, scholars such as Feldman, MacRae, and Moehring, who were influenced to a degree by the dichotomous approach to magic espoused by Frazer, have underestimated both the intentions and the abilities of Josephus as an author. For, as I have shown, he was more than comfortable in representing Moses as a master of magic, an image which was at the heart of this Jewish heroes' representation in the

late first century CE. Likewise, his portrayals of Balaam and the witch of Endor as respected and sanctioned magicians, described by the term μάγισ, demonstrate his ability to employ positive forms of magic in his exposition of Judaism. Furthermore, such traditional scholarship has underestimated the extent to which magic could act as a positive category of human action for Josephus; in this sense we have the court magicians of Pharaoh and king Nebuchadnezzar, the Eleazar 'miracle', and the general representation of the true magical art as a result of learning, experience and skill.

In his understanding and employment of the themes and terminology of magic, then, Josephus deserves much more credit than previous scholarship has allowed him. He was a creative and highly imaginative author who undertook a detailed paraphrase of biblical literature for his Roman audience; in so doing, he relates episodes which provide a positive image of Jewish magic. The extent to which Josephus attempts to mirror Roman thinking on magic is testament to his care and attention with which he addresses Ant. to his specific audience. Rarely has this aspect of Josephus' work been touched upon in modern scholarship. Moreover, when the figures of Moses, Balaam and the witch of Endor are discussed as part of Josephus' paraphrase of biblical literature, traditional scholarship has neglected to observe the great lengths which our author goes to in order to 'translate' biblical magic for his audience. Through such neglect the category of magic has been passed off as incidental or trivial. On the contrary, this thesis shows that it was an important category of thought for Josephus in his biblical paraphrase, not only for the dangers which unsanctioned magic could cause for his representation of Judaism, but also the value which he found in positive forms and descriptions of magic.

In conclusion, then, we have seen that Josephus is keenly aware of his social situation and of the impact which magical terminology can have on his representation of Judaism. In each of the three case studies we have seen a different set of magical terms being employed in Josephus' biblical paraphrase. Each of these has given fresh insight into not only his appreciation of the figures themselves, but also into his ability to manipulate his language and style in order to present positive accounts of sanctioned magic to his Roman audience. He realised that some forms of magic in the Roman world constituted an outlawed practice, but also that such practices were often deemed intrinsically to be a threat to Roman power. We cannot be sure how much he knew about individual pieces of legislation, but it seems clear that he realised that the Romans looked on negatively-defined magic as a threat to the state. In this sense, he was writing for, at least as part of a wider audience, a Roman elite. Yet this is not to say that Josephus was unable to conceive of positive forms of magic. On the contrary his version of Moses appears, among other things, as a master of the magical art, whilst Balaam and the witch of Endor are sanctioned magicians who support Roman ideals. In no sense can we see a strict dichotomy between religion and magic, as portrayed by some modern theorists, in Josephus' representations; however, we may detect a clear differentiation between his ideas on positive, sanctioned magic and negative, unsanctioned magic. This insight shows Josephus to be an extremely creative and flexible author as well as a man of his age. Whilst he was influenced by both Jewish biblical concerns and Roman political needs, his use of magical terminology demonstrates the skill with which he navigated between these two worlds.

Appendix – Magic in Roman Imperial Law

Date	Law	Issued By	Aimed Against	Recorded By
33 BCE	Aedile ordinance	Augustus	Astrologers, Sorcerers (γόητες/ <i>malefici</i>)	Cassius Dio (49.43.4), Suetonius (<i>Augustus</i> , 35)
11 CE	Aedile ordinance	Augustus	Diviners (μάντεις)	Cassius Dio (56.25.5)
16 CE	Senatus consultum	Tiberius	Astrologers (<i>mathematici/Chaldaei</i>), Sorcerers (γόητες) Magicians (<i>magi</i>)	Tacitus (<i>Annals</i> , 2.32), Suetonius (<i>Tiberius</i> , 36), Cassius Dio (57.5.8-9), Ulpian (<i>De officio proconsulis</i> , 7)
52 CE	Senatus consultum	Claudius	Astologers (<i>mathematici</i>)	Tacitus (<i>Annals</i> , 12.52), Cassius Dio (61.33.3)
66 CE	Imperial edict	Nero	Sorcerers (<i>malefici</i>), Astrologers (<i>mathematici</i>)	Codex Paris. Suppl. Gr. 607 A, Philostratus (<i>Apollonius of Tyana</i> , 4.47)
69 CE	Imperial edict	Vitellius	Astrologers (<i>mathematici/astrologoi</i>)	Suetonius (<i>Vitellius</i> , 14), Tacitus (<i>Histories</i> , 2.62), Cassius Dio (64.1.4)
69 CE	Imperial edict	Vitellius	Sorcerers (γόητες)	Zonaras, 11.16
70 CE	Imperial edict	Vespasian	Astrologers (<i>mathematici/astrologoi</i>)	Suetonius (<i>Vespasian</i> , 13 and 15), Cassius Dio (60.9.2)
71 CE	Imperial edict	Vespasian	Astrologers (<i>mathematici/astrologoi</i>)	Suetonius (<i>Vespasian</i> , 15), Cassius Dio (60.13.1f.)
89 CE	Imperial edict	Domitian	Astrologers (<i>mathematici/astrologoi</i>), Philosophers	Jerome (<i>Chronica</i> , 89-90 A.D.), Cassius Dio (67.13.2-3)
93 CE	Imperial edict	Domitian	Astrologers (<i>mathematici/astrologoi</i>)	Jerome (<i>Chronica</i> , 93-94 A.D.), Suetonius (<i>Domitian</i> , 10.3), Pliny the Younger (<i>Letters</i> , 3.11), Philostratus (<i>Apollonius of Tyana</i> , 7.3)

The extent to which imperial Rome in the first century CE legislated against magic, as well as its choice of distinctive terminology, may be seen in the table above. Beginning with Augustus we may see that magic was a problem for almost every emperor in the first century CE. These laws against magic and magicians served, at

the very least, as a convenient method by which an emperor could be seen to be protecting Roman religions from those practices which the state deemed to be foreign, illicit, illegal and potentially harmful to law and order. In assessing the problems posed by magic to the Roman hierarchy we must also be mindful of our sources; these are relatively few in number, and in no sense constitute the chronological histories of later ages. Likewise, they selectively refer to various edicts, using their own terminology in reference to magic; whether these terms occurred in the original edicts is impossible to determine, but the distinctive terms would seem to indicate that they were fairly precise in targeting the sections of society whose activities needed to be curtailed.

In this manner the legislation which is mentioned in the works of Tacitus, Cassius Dio and Pliny the Elder was, in some respects, the tip of the iceberg. How many magicians and their books were burned in the period between Augustus' famous conflagration of 13 BCE, and the era of Christian domination of Roman government in which accusations of magic became a powerful method of religious persecution? We will never know of course; but, it would seem, given the extent to which almost all of our sources from the first century CE speak of Roman laws against magic, or at the least refer to the unlawful actions of the magicians, that repeated legislation against magic was commonplace. Even emperors who were in power for only a short space of time, such as Vitellius, found it necessary to legislate against magic. Clearly magic was seen as a great source of danger in times of civil strife and instability in the higher echelons of society. Indeed, magic posed a serious threat to an emperor, as we see from Augustus' publishing of his own horoscope, the provisions made on private religious rituals, the case of Germanicus, and the numerous executions and expulsions

of magicians from Rome and Italy. In many respects, as we see from Judea, magicians could form the focus of civil revolt, a situation of concern to governors and emperors alike.

The further purpose of this table is to clearly demonstrate the nature of the magic, and the forms of magicians, which were to be banned. Key to an understanding of magic, as we have seen, is its terminology. The references to magic have been drawn from a number of sources, most principally authors of the late first century CE who lived under imperial rule and who were very familiar with the functioning of Roman law and government. Although there was a wide variety of terminology available in the first century Graeco-Roman world for the description of magic, the available data shows that several terms are recurrent. Whether these terms were expressly employed in the actual laws themselves, or were the interpretations of our commentators, is difficult to assess for we have no textual evidence for these laws aside from their descriptions by later authors. However, the data does allow us to show the common forms of magic which were perceived as being a threat to Roman order by these authors; in turn, this shows us something of the climate regarding magic at the end of the first century CE, the period in which Josephus was writing his own histories.

Although there are only a few direct references to magicians through the terminology of the edicts, it can be seen that these figures were frequently associated with the astrologer (as in the laws of 33 BCE, 16 CE and 66 CE). Of course, we are unfortunate in that we have to review these laws through secondary sources, namely the commentaries of interested authors of the same or later periods. As such we may

imagine that our available evidence does not paint the total picture; the possibility remains that there were other edicts issued which were missed by these authors, perhaps referring more explicitly to the actions of magicians. Whilst such an idea is merely supposition, it would seem quite clear from the data which does survive to us that magic was a particular concern for Roman emperors. From the very beginning of the empire magic was seen as a potential source of rebellion against the state, and as a focal point for those who wished to challenge or overthrow an emperor. Thus, Augustus set the precedent for dealing with these potential dangers, outlawing horoscopes which were not personally sanctioned by himself, and it is a theme of Roman law which was continued by those who followed him.

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