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The First Revolt and Its Afterlife

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15 The First Revolt and its afterlife

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In this chapter, I intend to discuss the Revolt not as a distant historical event but as a searing human nightmare that has—despite time, social transformation, historical distance, and coldly dispassionate scholarship—simply refused to fade away. Its image of brute force triumphant, despite ancient apocalyptic hopes to the contrary, has served for two thousand years as a central theological–historical argument for Christian supercessionism and as a basic source of the sense of angst that lies at the heart of Jewish existence, even today. For the outcome of the Revolt was not a mere instance of unusually intense ancient brutality, genocide, imperialist warfare, or even just the callous, pagan destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem. The Romans themselves saw it as a metaphysical happening, validating their imperial destiny. Indeed, had the Revolt somehow turned out differently, perhaps with a political settlement, a unilateral declaration of victory, or a strategic withdrawal, it is hard to say how effectively the Empire would have been able to govern its other far-flung and occasionally rebellious provinces. And who knows what *that* might have meant for the subsequent course of Western history. But Rome *did* survive in its desperate determination, in a ruthlessly efficient war of pacification in Galilee and Judea that was, in its own way, a precursor of countless later campaigns of imperial housecleaning: the wars of the Hapsburgs in the Low Countries, the British suppression of revolts in India and Ireland, and the various struggles of more modern powers against fundamentalist–nativist insurgencies all over the world. The surprising thing is not that the ancient Judeans rose to roar against the mighty Roman Empire, but that the mighty Roman Empire invested so much to bring the Judeans' revolt to a completely decisive and violent end. I want to stress my belief that the Roman War in Judea was not merely the isolated suppression of a nationalist uprising; it was an essential building block of the world in which *we* live.

Imagine the sheer horror of the Roman campaign to restore peace in Judea during the reign of Nero. After almost seventy years of direct rule by imperial administrators, marked by famine, mass protest, growing gang warfare in the cities and social banditry in the countryside, an explosion of ethnic tension between Jews and Greeks in the seaside city of Caesarea led to

mass resistance by the Judeans against the Romans throughout the entire province. In Jerusalem, the Roman garrison was slaughtered by a haphazard coalition of Jewish rebels. Sacrifices for the emperor were discontinued, and roving mobs set the public records office and the residences of the wealthiest wealthy and powerful alight. And in the succeeding months, while a more moderate leadership temporarily gained control of the Jewish nation, the Roman Empire mobilized, strategized, and slowly deployed its massive armed forces in an unambiguous campaign both against Judea—and as an object lesson to would-be rebels anywhere else in the far-flung possessions of the Roman Imperium.

As historians, we tend to trace the progress of the Revolt in history books and historical atlases as so many neat and bold arrows flowing across a map, marking a seemingly inevitable flow of events. But can we grasp the numbing reality of the countless lives ended, disrupted, scarred, or sold off into slavery—the numbers of fields, houses, workshops, and farmsteads destroyed and futures shattered? Can we understand the simmering hatreds that sparked the riots between Jews and Greeks in Caesarea; the rage that led the Jerusalem mobs to set fire to the public records office and the houses of Jerusalem's rich and famous? What made the urban rabble of Beth Shean-Scythopolis roust the Jews of the city out of their homes and slaughter them in cold blood in an ominously modern act of ethnic cleansing? Yes, the tourists still come to Masada and listen to the set-piece story of the mass suicide recited by the tourist guides. In this volume there are also reports about the archaeological investigation of the Jewish resistance to the Romans at Yodefat and Gamla. But the tourists also now come to Caesarea and Beth Shean by the busload to admire the columns and marvel at the sturdy Roman stones with little notice of the horrors that took place there. Part of what I intend to argue is the extent to which the Revolt has been trivialized in the last few decades. For it represented far more than the loss of Jewish political independence or Judea's final incorporation into the Roman world. It was and is an enormous and still unresolved psychological trauma in which the search for rationalizations and for meaning fuels much current academic conversation, polemics, and debate.

Nightmares and daydreams of survival

Why is the Revolt worth talking about today? What is the use of dissecting Josephus yet again—or digging up yet more ash-filled destruction layers from the late 60s or early 70s C.E.? The traditional approach to the Revolt by both Jewish and Christian scholars is, as I have mentioned, both resigned and fatalistic, seeing it as an event almost more biological than human, something like the extinction of the dinosaurs or the evolution of primates, a historical watershed in which both rabbinic Judaism and Christianity were positioned to replace the more primitive religious forms that preceded them. But underlying this evolutionary vision lies a brutal historical reality of

imperial regimentation and imposed subservience of a kind that had never so thoroughly, or so permanently, existed before. Of course the Judeans had felt the might of Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, and the Hellenistic kings. But the practical steps taken by the Roman conquerors of Judea after the Revolt to redistribute economic power, rearrange settlement patterns, and begin a process of demonizing the Jews throughout the Mediterranean has effects that can be perceived even today (for more on this aspect, see Overman in this volume, Chapter 13). One of the most overlooked of those effects was one I would have to call psycho-literary. The combination of the new sense of the *individual* in imperial society on the one hand and the lingering resentment toward conquest on the other led to the emergence of a new literary genre—that of righteous, heroic rabbis hiding out in the wilderness against a brutal Roman occupation force in the Land of Israel (for a representative collection, see Nadich 1998). Over the centuries, the historical facts of both the First and the Second Revolts became hopelessly blurred in these stories. But as I suggest below, they effectively served to bind a shattered community together and never allow its most tragic experiences to be forgotten, in the way that holocaust literature does in our own time.

Of course these stories of noble resistance to the Romans comprise just a tiny fraction of the literary activity inspired in Jewish circles by the outcome of the First Revolt. The great bulk of the surviving writings from the post-war period are the records of halachic discussions, meticulously recorded ritual instructions, and even minute architectural details of the Jerusalem Temple that are preserved in the Mishnah and Tosefta. Whatever their historical reliability and to whatever extent it may be possible to separate post-70 and post-135 literary strata, I would argue that *their* ideological purpose is quite distinct from the heroic tales of the rebels; it is to legally and formally *reconcile* Jewish tradition with the economic, political, and social demands of the Roman Empire (on rabbinic constructions, see Saldarini in this volume, Chapter 14). For by the time of Judah the Prince with his Gallic bodyguards and his friends in the highest imperial places, the Jewish elite in the Land of Israel—and presumably elsewhere—sought for themselves a piece of the imperial cake. Earlier Judeans and Israelites had pandered to their conquerors and, perhaps with a few exceptions, had been bitterly attacked in prophetic literature. But now the sin of Manasseh was allowed wide gradations of forbidden and permitted in the early rabbinic literature. More ephemeral and difficult to trace are the folk memories carried on in poems, stories, and popular performances for which our sources are almost completely lost. Leaving aside a few well-known texts like the Josippon Chronicle—that medieval Hebrew paraphrase of large parts of Josephus, concluding with the story of the mass suicide of the rebels at Masada (Flusser 1978)—and the sources from which it may have been drawn, there seems to have been a lingering folk memory preserved in the legends and ghost stories (quite separate from rabbinic learning) that kept the personalities and social background of the Revolt against the Romans very much alive.

It is no accident that such stories play so prominent a role in medieval Jewish mystical literature (Silberman 1998). Although most of the characters and events in the major kabbalistic works like the Sefer Bahir and the Zohar ostensibly take place in the Second Revolt and focus on the circle of Simon Bar-Yohai's followers, clear genealogical and even occasional historical references link these stories (and their mystical secrets) to the time of the First Revolt. To the extent that these wartime legends were preserved outside of the accepted corpus of rabbinic learning, they popped up every once in a while with the sudden popularity of texts like the historical preface to the eleventh-century Ahimaaz Chronicle (Salzman 1966); in the works of the circle of Isaac the Blind in twelth-century Provence; among the thirteenth-century Gerona mystics; and of course in the late thirteenth-century Zohar of Castille. The use of this historical backdrop of struggle against the Romans instead of a more "Biblical" one suggests that the message of the First Revolt—the existential confrontation of the Jews with the triumph of evil—remained a vivid problem in Jewish social and religious life.

The triumphant legacy of Rome

I also want to expand beyond purely Jewish perceptions to trace the emergence of the Revolt as an *idea*, a perception of what the First Revolt meant to other people throughout the Roman world. In a long speech attributed to Agrippa II by Josephus (*War* 2.345–404), the Roman-educated and costumed Jewish monarch argued that the God of Israel would not only stand by silently if the Jews were so unwise as to revolt against the Romans, but would actually mandate the Romans' victory. The same theme was celebrated at Vespasian and Titus's victory celebrations in Rome. And within just a few decades, this odd imperial theology would also come to serve Christianity. For the so-called Markan Apocalypse (Mark 13) that contains Jesus' ominous prophecy of the Temple left in ruins serves to make the Romans invisible agents of divine destiny. Isaiah, Habbakuk, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the other, later classical prophets had done as much for the Assyrians and the Babylonians, but somehow the Roman elaboration of the theme—in texts, stories, and even the very landscape of Jerusalem—had never before been so systematic. Jerusalem, brutally destroyed, would soon be reconstructed as a modern provincial outpost, with legionary camp, impressive temples, and a rigidly planned *cardo* and *decumanus* as its main, colonnaded thoroughfares. Yet in the midst of the modern city lay, in Roman eyes, an instructive remnant of the despised, chaotic past. The Temple Mount seems to have been largely left in ruins until the construction of the Dome of the Rock by the Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik in 693 C.E. Indeed, in the Byzantine period, after the establishment of Christianity, the desolate, ruined state of the Temple was intended to pose a jarring visual contrast to the "new" temple—namely the massive Church of the Holy Sepulchre,

memorializing the site of Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection just opposite on the western ridge (Wilken 1992).

I do not have the expertise to discuss the various ecclesiastical agendas furthered over the centuries by the transmission of the works of Josephus in their numerous Greek, Latin, Ethiopic, and Slavonic manuscripts, except to say that Josephus was taken up early and enthusiastically by church authorities throughout Christendom (Hardwick 1989). By the sixth century both *War* and *Antiquities* had been repeatedly translated into Latin, with varying degrees of accuracy. But the larger historical lessons for Christians were so clear that they came through despite even the most incompetent translation: namely, the belief that the destruction of Jerusalem was God's way of announcing that the Age of Christianity had arrived. And the inclusion of the controversial, much re-written paragraph about the ministry, spiritual gifts, and resurrection of Jesus—the so-called "Testimonium Flavianum" (*Ant.* 18.63–4)—was meant to show that Jesus was known and at least grudgingly admired by the Jews of his time.

The medieval Christian reading of Josephus continued the same theological message but also added powerful visual images for European religious art and passion play settings, with their scheming Judean priests, evil pharisees, and bloodthirsty, Barabbas-choosing Jewish rabble. A famous twelfth-century illuminated manuscript of Josephus from Paris depicts the author obsequiously offering a copy of his work to the Emperor Vespasian, who is dressed in the regal garb of a noble Christian king (Schreckenberg and Schubert 1992). Josephus and his huddled Jewish entourage are all depicted as pallid and stoop-shouldered, and looking utterly ridiculous wearing the distinctive, pointed Jews' hats that by the twelfth century Parisians had come to know and loathe.

In the Renaissance, the works of Josephus and the story of the Revolt became a fertile source of motifs for heroic paintings and sculpture that celebrated the human spirit by depicting the triumph of Roman will over the irrationality of the Jews (for examples see Deutsch 1978). In time, Josephus began even to be read as a political source book. The rise and fall of ambitious men and women was a source of endless public fascination in post-Elizabethan England, a time of intensifying political conflict between the Puritans and the Crown. Josephus offered rich source material for many seventeenth-century English dramatists whose works are now mostly forgotten save for the occasional monographs of modern literary historians. They include *The True Tragedie of Herod and Antipater* by Gervase Markham (1622) and William Sampson; *The Tragedie of Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry*, written in 1613 by Elizabeth Cary, one of the rare seventeenth-century British women playwrights (Weller and Ferguson 1994); and *Herod and Mariamne* by Samuel Pordage, which premiered in London at the Duke's Theater in 1674. And plays were not the only literary genre to utilize Josephus. In 1644, the Puritan pamphleteer Henry Hammond published a work entitled *Of resisting the lawfull magistrate under colour of religion*, in which the connection between

Judean past and Puritan present was made explicit: Hammond brought forth the first century Zealots as a particular example of permissible, even laudable, religious revolt.

In the meantime, a major step was taken forward in the study of the primary source material, though in what might seem today to be a very curious way. The mathematician William Whiston, student of Sir Isaac Newton and man of the New Science, was a militant proponent of Human Reason who would go to any lengths to prove that religion should not be based on blind faith in church traditions but on empirically based scientific fact. Whiston was convinced that *all* of the miracles recorded in both the Old and New Testaments—the Flood, the Parting of the Red Sea, Jesus' multiplication of the loaves and the fishes, his walking on water, and even his resurrection—could be explained by natural causes alone. Eventually fired from his Cambridge faculty post (in punishment for his stubborn refusal to accept the doctrine of the Trinity), Whiston became convinced that only a close, scientific study of the history and geography of the lands of the Bible would offer possible explanations for biblical miracles and thus finally topple High Church authority. To this end he undertook, in the 1730s, the first modern English translation of Josephus—one that is still commonly seen and quoted today (Whiston 1777). But because Whiston was a mathematician, not a social historian or historical novelist, the dialogue he puts in the mouths of Herod, Mariamne, Agrippa, and Eliezer Ben-Yair are uncannily similar to the dialogue of the period-piece dramas once so popular on the London stage. It is ironic that in the 1960s, Yigael Yadin specifically chose to use the Whiston translation of Josephus in his book about Masada, when more modern translations were readily available. Yadin noted that "its somewhat archaic style seems to me to be appropriate" (Yadin 1966). Yet how many readers realized that these were the archaisms of English historical melodrama, not ancient Israel?

So what was the basic message that the first seventeen centuries of European paintings, sculpture, plays, and pamphlets about the Revolt expressed? With a few exceptions, it was the timeless story of doomed, fanatic opposition to human progress; the tragic demise of a fallen race. The savages may have been noble, but the Romans won the day. Indeed, in 1825, the British historian and composer Henry Hart Milman expressed that doleful vision in his long, epic poem, *The Fall of Jerusalem*.

It may be enlightening at this point to shift from literature to archaeological exploration and to examine the pioneering European and American exploration of Masada—a site that has become so intimately associated with modern commemoration of the Revolt. As is well known, Josephus described this remote mountain fortress as the last holdout of the Jewish rebels at the end of the Revolt. According to Josephus, when the Roman besiegers were about to break through the last line of fortifications, Masada's Jewish defenders took their own lives rather than submit to Roman slavery. The modern discoverer of the site, the Connecticut-born Congregationalist

minister Edward Robinson, was in the midst of an epoch-making journey through the Holy Land when he traveled south from his camp at En Geddi on the morning of May 11, 1838 to note a "pyramidal cliff" that the Arabs called es-Sebbeh. On the basis of its location, shape, abundant ruins, and correspondence to the descriptions of Josephus, Robinson correctly concluded that this was indeed the famous fortress of Masada, whose location—if not story—had been lost for almost 2000 years (Robinson 1841: II, 240).

Yet as in literature, so in scholarship. The interest of the early explorers of Masada was focused more clearly on the Roman triumph than on the Jewish defeat. Just five years after Robinson's discovery, for example, in 1843, his fellow American missionary explorer Samuel Wolcott described the ruins at Masada as "a stupendous illustration of Roman perseverance that subdued the world, which could sit down so deliberately, in such a desert, and commence a siege with such a work" (Wolcott 1843). The subsequent nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European and American explorers of Masada saw the same imaginative vision of Roman technology's power. And who could blame them? The image of highly disciplined legionnaires using modern engineering and military skills to subdue restless and fanatic natives came easily to mind in an age of modern imperial expeditions to Australia, Africa, Asia, and the American West.

The birth of a new story

Compared to the paintings, plays, scholarship, and bombastic rhetoric of the Europeans, the modern Jewish appreciation of the meaning of the Revolt continued much as before. In Tisha be-Av fasts and the mournful reading of *Lamentations* in the looming shadow of the Western Wall of the Herodian Temple platform, the fall of Jerusalem was memorialized for hundreds of years as a bitter chastisement by God. Yet the reluctance to abandon the Revolt's ideals of resistance to empire also survived. I have already mentioned the use of characters and scenes from the revolts against Rome in medieval Jewish mystical messianism. In the modern period, by the early nineteenth century at the time of the Haskalah or Jewish Enlightenment, those same themes were secularized and put into service in the cause of a new kind of millennial restoration: the rebirth of the Jews as a modern religious, cultural, and ultimately political community. The pioneering works of Isaac Marcus Jost (1820–9) and Heinrich Graetz (1853) began a period in which Jewish scholars began to examine the sweep of Jewish history from a standpoint other than the traditional messianic–redemptionist one. The history, achievements, and shortcomings of *Jüdische Wissenschaft* have been extensively studied, up to and including the emergence of the first modern Hebrew translation of Josephus's works by Simhoni in 1923. But I would rather turn from Jewish scholarship to another source that proved to be even more influential: the first modern Yiddish and Hebrew historical novels that began to appear around the turn of the last century.

I have already mentioned the use of stories from Josephus for dramatic productions in seventeenth-century England. These productions had a postscript, for the English tradition of mining Josephus for dramatic characters and plot lines once again flourished in the middle nineteenth century in the heyday of the Romantic historical novel, a genre that will always be associated with the name of Sir Walter Scott. Although the fact is no longer widely appreciated, the "popular literature" shelves of old, established universities are filled with yellowed, crumbling nineteenth-century novels of star-crossed lovers or heroes who lived at the time of Jesus or who took part in the tragic events of the Roman occupation of Judea during the First and Second Revolt. The American general Lew Wallace's *Ben-Hur* (1880) is by far the best known of this genre but there are hundreds, if not thousands more. Very much in the tradition of Sir Walter Scott and his protégé Edward Bullwer-Lytton, author of *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) these otherwise forgotten and largely forgettable novels represent a particularistic Victorian rebellion against universal enlightenment ideals. Placing the thrust of history squarely in the realm of national will and national destiny (embodied in heroic individuals), these novels gave voice to the bubbling national rivalries and suspicions that would, in the fullness of time, explode into World War I.

And once again, melodrama went hand in hand with written works. In this connection, it is interesting to note that in 1876, the British playwright John Hoskins wrote and produced an enormously popular five-act play entitled *The Chieftain of Masada*, in which the Jewish rebel leader Eleazar Ben-Yair—not the Romans—became the hero of the story. It is important to stress that this new version of the story drew its power, not from within contemporary Jewish tradition, but from the ideology of modern nationalism, as it was conceived and diffused in countries as far flung as Denmark, South Africa, and Argentina to legitimate and justify the rise of the modern nation-state.

As the Israeli literary historian Ruth Shenfeld has shown so powerfully in her history of the modern Hebrew historical novel (1986), the effect of this literature, so heavily influenced by Scott, Bullwer-Lytton, and Alexander Dumas, was perhaps more profound and long-lasting on the modern Jewish—and certainly Israeli—psyche than many scholars of the Revolt may realize. In my own research for a biography of Yigael Yadin, I discovered how deeply these early Yiddish and Hebrew historical novels had influenced the career of Yadin's father, Eleazar L. Sukenik, arguably the first modern Jewish archaeologist. Against the painful and sometimes violent atmosphere of Jewish life in Poland and Tsarist Russia, these novels offered a literary dreamland of wish-fulfillment. In them,

> confident Jewish warriors bravely defended their land and their freedom. Hebrew judges battled Canaanites and Philistines; Maccabean freedom fighters defeated huge Greek armies; and even the desperate doomed

> struggle of the defenders of the ancient desert fortress of Masada, and the followers of the great rebel leader Bar Kokhba served as timeless models of strength, determination, and fearlessness.
>
> (Silberman 1993: 11)

And indeed as the first archaeological explorations in Palestine got underway under the auspices of the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society in the 1920s, the monuments and archaeological remains of the First Revolt were interpreted and commemorated with these pre-existing emotional associations. In a sense, the archaeologists produced detailed visual illustrations for a story that was already written by somebody else.

Masada is, of course, the clearest case (for thorough analysis and bibliography, see Ben-Yehuda 1995 and Zerubavel 1995). Though the site was remote and difficult of access, by the late 1920s, it began to be visited by Zionist youth groups whose physically demanding hikes through the desert and ascent to Masada's summit were seen as a symbolic reversal of the ancient defeat. Then came Yitzhak Lamdan's 1927 poem *Massada* (again art, not science, was the medium through which the site really became famous). At the climax of Lamdan's poem, a young Jewish refugee from Eastern Europe makes his way to the summit of Masada to be greeted by the sight of a new generation of strong, independent Jews dancing by torchlight and proclaiming that "Masada Shall Not Fall Again." And the story was soon transformed into established civil ritual with a military tinge. With the establishment in 1941 of the Haganah's "striking companies," the *plugot machatz* or Palmach, the ascent to the summit of Masada became the culmination of a military initiation ritual and a far more focused political metaphor. The members of the Palmach, in their increasing resistance to the imperial–colonial rule of the British in Palestine, directly identified themselves with the beleaguered defenders of Masada—as a non-conventional guerilla force holding out against a mighty empire. Thus the Revolt became a symbol of everything that the modern Jew had *not* been for centuries: proud, strong, combative, fighting for God and Country. And it emerged precisely at a time when other ethnic groups all over the world were celebrating the material remains of their own golden ages—all in the name of the modern nation state.

Thus a new Jewish statist perspective, whose scenario was written by turn-of-the-century playwrights and historical fiction writers, gradually overwhelmed the centuries-long Jewish prophetic hope for divine redemption and the Christian vision of the Divine Punishment of the Jews. The 1963–5 Yadin expedition to Masada has often been credited with "rediscovering" the site and heightening its ideological importance in modern Israel, but I would suggest rather that it staged and retold the familiar story on an unprecedentedly grandiose scale. With Yadin's fortean talent for communicating with the public and the resources of his massive expedition, the authenticity of uncovered architecture and artifacts gave authority to a retelling of the Masada story in which the ancient defenders were made symbolic

forefathers of modern Israel, even at the expense of a somewhat awkward equation of the Roman empire with the hostile nations of the Arab world.

A conflict of visions

I do not believe that the new Israeli image of Masada totally dominated all images of the First Revolt in the second half of the twentieth century. In the aftermath of the 1967 war, dissident voices began to be heard even about Masada itself. The American columnist Stewart Alsop's famous pieces in *Newsweek* (1971) added a derisive new term—the Masada Complex—to the political lexicon of the modern Middle East. In more recent times there has been a lively debate among historians and archaeologists about whether the famous suicide actually happened—and among Israeli intellectuals, sociologists, and social critics about the appropriateness of mass suicide itself as a national historical theme. And long before the celebration and, ultimately, criticism of Masada, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls had already been a source of sometimes jarring symbolic clashes over the significance of the period of ancient Jewish history that culminated in the Revolt. In late 1947, not long after the discovery of the first of the unique 2,000–year-old Hebrew and Aramaic documents, Professor Eleazar Sukenik of the Hebrew University articulated a vision of the scrolls as symbols of Jewish cultural and political resurrection, noting the poetic juxtaposition in time of his purchase of three Cave 1 scrolls with the United Nations vote to authorize the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine. And in 1954, when Sukenik's son, Professor Yigael Yadin (still in his pre-Masada period) obtained the rest of the Cave 1 scrolls for the State of Israel, he expanded the vision to encompass the Jewish Diaspora. With the support of the American philanthropist D. Samuel Gottesman, the Dead Sea Scrolls now came to their shrine in Jerusalem symbolizing the rebirth of the Jewish people in the modern world (Yadin 1957).

But that is not to say everyone was agreed that modern Jewish fulfillment was the scrolls' main theological significance. The American scholars who produced the initial editions of the other Cave 1 scrolls initially in the possession of the Syrian Orthodox Archbishop Samuel connected them, as Sukenik had done, with the ancient Jewish sect of the Essenes. But if Sukenik and his son Yadin were Zionists, Professor Millar Burrows of Yale—the senior American scroll scholar—was outspoken in his opposition to the creation of the State of Israel (Burrows 1949). And instead of seeing the Essenes as the forefathers of the modern Israeli nation, Burrows suggested that the Essenes, with their practices of celibacy, baptism, and imminent expectation of the Messiah, were the historical missing link between Judaism and Christianity. To him, and to the young American scholars most closely connected with the discovery, the scrolls, and indeed the entire Judean first century, were significant primarily for their connection with the rise of Christianity. Evidence found later of the destruction of the nearby site of Khirbet Qumran (presumably the settlement connected with the scrolls)

during the Revolt was seen as the result of the chance arrival of Roman forces in the region—a rude and suddenly fatal political awakening of the otherwise apolitical and otherworldly monks of Qumran. Thus by the late 1950s, the scrolls and their writers were seen as largely unconcerned and unconnected with the Judean national struggle. Illustrations of Essene monks and their scrolls became almost as common in Sunday School books about "the world of Jesus" as pictures of John the Baptist at the Jordan or of the disciples fishing in the Sea of Galilee (see, for example, Tushingham 1958).

Thus evolved a situation of extreme disciplinary fragmentation in which there was no single lesson or historical analysis of the Revolt. Historically speaking, it had been chopped up between the selective perceptions of several different political and theological interest groups. There were the fierce, patriotic zealots on Masada. There were the contemplative Essenes in their Dead Sea retreat. There were the early Christians breaking bread together and setting off on missionary travels. And in the late 1960s, a new, more genteel group of characters was added to the already kaleidoscopic vision of the Revolt. This new perspective began in 1964 with the construction of an impressive miniature model of Jerusalem in the last days of the Second Temple period, built on the grounds of the Holyland Hotel in a new suburb of West Jerusalem (Rubinstein 1980: 46). Conceived by hotel owner Hans Kroch, in close consultation with prominent Israeli scholars, among them Professor Michael Avi-Yonah of the Hebrew University, this model was not meant to be a mere tourist attraction, although for years it certainly has been that. It was meant to highlight ancient Jerusalem's architectural grandeur. And not uncoincidentally, this rather establishmentarian theme of opulence and prosperity would be expressed in the agenda of the renewed archaeological digs.

Almost immediately after the conclusion of the 1967 War, large-scale excavations were initiated along the southern and western walls of the Temple Mount enclosure, directed by the doyen of Israeli archaeologists, Professor Benjamin Mazar (Mazar 1975). Mazar's team documented the massive Herodian construction of the Temple platform, its entrances and adjoining structures, and the violence of the Roman destruction in 70 C.E. A number of important inscriptions and artifacts relating to the Temple were uncovered and a massive entrance staircase along the southern wall was reconstructed and opened to the public as a tourist site. In the meantime, extensive excavations also got underway at various Herodian palaces, particularly at Jericho and Herodium (Netzer 1999). At these rich and impressive sites the interpretive stress was entirely laid on the elegance of the architectural design and its closeness to Roman prototypes. Indeed, the Herodian architectural extravagance was used as a generalized indication of the cosmopolitanism of Judean society as a whole, without addressing the question of how these expensive projects were paid for, what were their builders ideological intentions, or what wider economic effects this costly elite self-promotion ultimately had on Judean society.

But perhaps the most influential archaeological project and also the richest in impressive finds was directed by Professor Nachman Avigad of the Hebrew University in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem between 1969 and 1983 (Avigad 1983). Avigad's team uncovered several clusters of the residences of Jerusalem's priestly and secular aristocracy built of the western hill, all of them apparently torched and destroyed during the course of the Revolt. The sheer elegance of these Roman-style villas was obvious from the finds—including imported glassware and pottery, elaborate mosaic floors and frescoed walls. The most impressive of the villas were preserved for public viewing in the basement levels of several buildings subsequently erected in the Jewish Quarter. Indeed, these remains have become major tourist attractions, offering their own rather unnuanced reading of first-century Judean society. In the artifact cases and text panels of the so-called "Herodian Mansion," for example, the opulence of the furnishings and the elegant life of ancient Jerusalem's rich and famous are the primary elements emphasized. At another site, the so-called "Burnt House," the interpretation is distinctly nationalistic. With the charred destruction layer of the villa and its smashed and scattered furnishings preserved exactly as they were uncovered in the excavations, the site's audio-visual presentation depicts the inhabitants as heroic Jews who struggled against the Roman besiegers until the fall of Jerusalem and the loss of their national identity.

Thus once again we see a strikingly fragmented picture presented, with no larger understanding of how or why the Revolt came about. How can visitors to Israel make sense of this important historical period? At some sites, there are the fiercely nationalist rebels, fighting for the freedom of their homeland, with their various shades of fanaticism. At others, there are the early Christians and Essenes in their blissful contemplation of the hereafter. And in the Jewish Quarter and the Herodian palaces, there is the royalty and elegant aristocracy of Jerusalem living in their well-furnished apartments, until the Romans came and took their freedom away. Furthermore these roughly expressed public tourist presentations are not completely unconnected with present scholarly trends.

The First Revolt at the beginning of the twenty-first century

So where do we stand today—in a philosophical sense? By the first decade of the twenty-first century, the disciplinary boundaries between the different visions of ancient Judea have grown rigid and the scholarly tools used to produce each of them have become distinct. Thus, the Historical Jesus scholars rely on the techniques of literary criticism, comparative sociology, and an occasional piece of archaeological evidence, if it suits their needs. The archaeologists of the Second Temple period in Jerusalem and elsewhere arm themselves with Vitruvius as well as Josephus and show precious little interest in tracing larger first-century processes or analyzing how the "other half"—or perhaps the other 99 percent of Judeans—lived. Finally, there are

the scrolls specialists, that close fraternity sometimes (half-jokingly) called Qumranologists who pore over the texts and declare that what we have here is nothing that has any resemblance to anything else. And of course there is Masada—still Masada—that during the high tourist season, with the endless repetition of the story by the tour guides falls hundreds of times every day. Each site or speciality plays out a different metaphorical story with a narrowly focused subtext: the rise of Christianity, the national feeling of Jews in antiquity, the cosmopolitanism of Herodian Jerusalem—but none reaches to the larger problem, of which all these are only symptoms. Is there any more complex explanation that weaves all the threads together and allows us to understand what the Revolt means to all of us today?

I believe that there are already some indications. In recent years, some important archaeological and historical studies throughout the Mediterranean have begun to frame the Revolt in the context of wider imperial processes. Susan Alcock, in her book *Graecia Capta* (1993), traces the economic and political impact of the Roman imperial annexation of Greece in the breakdown of traditional patterns of farming, the explosive growth of imperial cities, and the increasing rift between rich and poor. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (1989, 1991) has written powerfully about the same phenomenon in Italy; Stephen Mitchell has recognized it in Asia Minor (1993); and our colleague Martin Goodman has suggested that also in Judea the priestly and secular aristocracy was intensifying economic activity in the province to the detriment of traditional land ownership patterns—and to the great benefit of themselves (1987; see Horsley in this volume, Chapter 6, as well). In fact, among the initial acts of the Revolt as recorded by Josephus was the rampage of an impoverished mob from the lower city setting fire to the public records office (where debt records were kept) and storming and burning those wealthy residences on the city's western hill (*War* 2.426–8). Maybe it wasn't the Romans. And we may even have a first archaeological hint of the causes for these tensions: the sudden appearance of large-scale "manor houses" throughout Judea (Hirschfeld 1998) may represent a new kind of concentrated plantation agriculture of a type that has been identified and studied by archaeologists all over the world.

So the glue that might hold the fragments together proves actually quite unpleasant: exploitation, agricultural dispossession, mounting debt by the landless, and the recognition that many of the Judean elite were not patriots or even much concerned with the fate of the vast majority of the Judean population, but rather well-fed collaborators with Rome. Why else would the courtly Agrippa be run out of town at the outbreak of the fighting—or an impoverished mob trash the elegant villas so beloved of tourists today?

What of the possibilities of seeing tensions between different strata of society in Judea—the gradual radicalization of a critical mass of the population—as prime factors that led to the Revolt? Although it has become a popular scholarly pastime in recent years to ridicule and trash the work of Robert Eisenman (1996, 1997), when one looks beyond his stubbornly

specific historical identifications and examines the general socio-political milieu he is describing, it is possible to recognize the rise of a widespread, radical fundamentalist movement within Judea that is striking in its correspondence to modern sociological models of the rise of apocalyptic movements and fundamentalist groups. It is a process that the political scientist Ehud Sprinzak calls "delegitimation" in which elements of a population become progressively disenfranchised and disenchanted with the initial allure of an aggressively modernizing world empire and seek to revive their traditional, but recently destroyed ways of life (1991). It is a process that begins in the streets and on the farms and moves only gradually toward separation and violence. In this light, it is absurdly incongruous to have the Israel National Parks Authority (and for that matter, scholars) celebrate the ostentatious Romanism of Beth Shean, Caesarea, and other pagan cities and proudly highlight the elaborate constructions of the Herodians without noting or perhaps even acknowledging the physical cost and the inner economic tensions that played so large a role in the disintegration of first-century Judean society.

We still struggle with the enormity of the killing, the slavery, the destruction, and the fall of Jerusalem every day. The yearly wish of the Jewish people to return to Jerusalem, expressed in handwritten notes reverently tucked between the gigantic stones of Herod's Temple enclosure, show how central the effect of the Revolt still is. And the fact that we are still so fascinated by this epoch—and gather at respectable academic conferences about it—suggests that the pain and the uncertainty remain. Perhaps that is the final thing that can be said about the Revolt and its afterlife over all these centuries. The Roman determination to obliterate any people who refused to worship the emperor or prize imperial allegiance over every other value paved the way for the birth over many centuries—for good and for bad, for righteousness and continuing evil—of the interconnected world and imperial civilization in which we *all* live today.

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