

Chapter One

The Historical Background

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Introduction

The conquests of Alexander the Great ushered in a new era in the political and cultural history of the Near East.¹ In their wake, both the Jews of Judaea and their brethren in a rapidly expanding diaspora were subjected to radical forces of social and cultural change. These changes, effected by the introduction of Greek culture into the lands of the Near East that led to the emergence of the phenomenon commonly known as Hellenism,^{1a} greatly transcended the purely political vicissitudes that were destined to envelop this part of the inhabited world.² Moreover, the perception of Alexander's military success as a major crossroads in the history of the region is not merely the product of modern historiographical hindsight, but apparently was already felt by Jews and non-Jews who experienced firsthand the far-reaching impact of the Greek conquest of, and assimilation into the East. Thus, for example, when the late second century B.C.E. author of 1 Maccabees set out to record the events leading up to the Hasmonean uprising, as well as that family's emergence as the central Judaeian authority, he chose to introduce the events of 175-135 B.C.E. with a preamble describing – however erroneously – what came to pass 'after Alexander of Macedon, son of Philip . . . had completely defeated Darius, King of the Persians and the Medes'.³

The impact of Hellenism, and the reactions to that cultural phe-

¹ This article mainly covers Jewish history in Palestine. For the Diaspora see the first section of *Compendia*, especially chapters 3, 8, 9 and 13. For the use of Greek by Jewish authors see *ibid.*, chapter 22.

^{1a} The earliest modern use of the term Hellenism is commonly attributed to Johann Gustav Droysen (1808-1884). It is noteworthy, however, that the term *Hellenismos* used to describe this particular manifestation of Greek culture and religion, was first employed by the author of 2 Maccabees (e.g. 4:13); similarly, he is the first known author to use the term *Ioudaismos* as signifying the religion of the Jewish people (e.g. 2 Macc 2:21). Cf. also Amir, 'Ioudaismos.'

² For a succinct overview of the period see Tarn-Griffith, *Hellenistic Civilization*; a highly readable account of Hellenistic culture is provided by Hadas, *Hellenistic Culture*.

³ Such scene-setting preambles are common in biblical narrative, and the opening of 1 Maccabees is yet a further example of the author's conscious recourse to biblical style; cf. Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 190-1. For the unsubstantiated claim that Alexander divided his kingdom among his officers while still alive (1 Macc 1:6) cf. Goldstein, 197.

nomenon, is one of the factors that left their mark on much of the literary activity of the Jewish people, during the period of the Second Temple as well as in the immediate aftermath of its destruction (70 C.E.). Indeed, this activity, which serves as the focus of the present volume, must be seen in the perspective of the ongoing interaction between political events, religious tendencies, and influences resulting from contacts between Jews and a variety of non-Jewish ethnic and social groups.^{3a}

One of the striking features of Second Temple history is the fact that most Jews, not only in the Diaspora but in Palestine as well, never experienced complete Jewish sovereignty. The following chronological chart, listing the various rulers and regimes in Second Temple Palestine, clearly attests to this fact:

- 536-332 B.C.E. — The Persian Period
- 332-167 B.C.E. — The Hellenistic Period
- 167-141 B.C.E. — The Hasmonean Uprising
- 141- 63 B.C.E. — The Hasmonean State
- 63 B.C.E.-70 C.E. — Roman Rule (in varying stages and forms)

In a period of 600 years, only the approximately 80 years of Hasmonean statehood can be fairly categorized as a period of Jewish sovereignty, which even during this period was frequently of a very tenuous nature. This observation, however, reflects a modern value system, and one may ask whether the quest for national independence was uppermost in the minds of Jews throughout much of the Second Temple period. A closer look may reveal the dominant role religious interests played in this period.

Indeed, beginning with the edict of Cyrus itself (538 B.C.E.), the focus of Judaeian restoration was around the Temple; the disappearance from the sources of any Davidic heir after Zerubbabel probably also reflects the dashing of any hopes for immediate restoration of the monarchy. If one perceives a national consolidation under Ezra and Nehemiah, this nevertheless was largely in the nature of a religious revival, and the reforms instituted by both leaders — cessation of intermarriage, enforcement of tithes and enhanced sanctification of the Sabbath — all place a stress on this revitalization of the Jewish religious community.

While the Hasmonean revolt was the first of a series of Jewish uprisings all linked to the establishment of Jewish hegemony in Jerusalem and throughout Judaea, it is equally true that all these uprisings were linked to some infraction of Jewish religious practice. Whether these took the form of outright religious persecution, as was the case under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, or whether the ideology of the rebels equated political subju-

^{3a} In this article we do not touch on the question of languages used in Palestine. See for this matter *Compendia*, Section I, chapters 21 and 22.

gation with religious infidelity,⁴ it was a real or perceived interference with Jewish religion and ritual that – more than any other single factor – could induce large numbers of Jews to take up arms, or not to defend themselves and sacrifice their lives. Religious commitment, while not always commensurate with the degree of practice maintained by all Jews throughout the period under discussion, nevertheless seems to emerge as a constant factor in Jewish society, regardless of the nature of political rule at any given time or place. This circumstance not only helps to explain the ongoing tensions between Jews and non-Jews, in Palestine as well as much of the diaspora, but also accounts for the passion displayed by various segments of the Jewish population in their disputes with other Jews.

The phenomenon of sectarianism might well be considered another outstanding feature of this particular stage of Jewish development. Much of the spiritual ferment and of the ensuing literary activity of the Second Temple period owes its proliferation to these divisions within Jewish society. This fact becomes all the more pronounced in light of subsequent rabbinic attempts at resolving certain internal disputes. While one might take issue with the appellation of ‘normative’ even for post-Temple Judaism, the existence of various religious and political movements and sects remains one of the dominant factors of Second Temple Judaism.⁵ An appreciation of the origins and social significance of these groups, which are vital for the understanding of the literary documents treated in this volume, can best be served by establishing a chronological framework for the various periods of Second Temple history.

The Hellenistic Period

As defined by purely political criteria, the Hellenistic period in Palestine may be subdivided as follows: a) 332-301 B.C.E., the conquests of Alexander and wars of the *diadochi*; b) 301-200, Ptolemaic (Egyptian) rule over Palestine; c) 200-167, Seleucid (Syrian) rule over Palestine, up to the outbreak of the Hasmonean uprising.

Insofar as Jewish history is concerned, much of the Hellenistic period is marked by an extreme paucity of sources. One has only to glance through the relevant section of Josephus’ *Antiquities* (Books 11-12) to realize that the best that historian could do was to weave together various legends and sources of a novelistic nature in an attempt to fill in the lacuna that exists. Thus we advance from the popular accounts of Alexander’s encounter with the residents of Judaea and their high priest (*Ant.* 11:304-345), to the historian’s rendition of the Epistle of Aristeeas and the events surrounding

⁴ This was the essence of the ‘Fourth Philosophy’, which served as the religious grounds for armed opposition to Rome by the *sicarii*; cf. Stern, ‘Sicarii and Zealots’; *id.*, ‘Zealots’.

⁵ Cf. Simon, *Jewish Sects*, 1-16.

the appearance of the Septuagint (*Ant.* 12:11-118),⁶ and conclude — if scholars are correct in placing the event in the late third century B.C.E.⁷ — with the story of the Jewish tax collector Joseph son of Tobias (*Ant.* 12:158-222). To be sure, even these stories, however touched up or fictionalized they appear to be, nevertheless provide us with valuable insights into the atmosphere pervading Jewish-Greek relations in the early Hellenistic period. Thus the Alexander stories, whether in the version provided by Josephus or in the parallel rabbinic traditions,⁸ attest not only to the impact of Alexander's conquests on the residents of Palestine, but *en passant* seem to reflect on an early positive relationship between Jews and Greeks. This relationship is borne out by the earliest statements on Jews and Judaism in the writings of Hellenistic authors, which for the most part were favourable and even laudatory,⁹ frequently describing the Jewish people as 'philosophers by race',¹⁰ from whom much can be learned.¹¹ Yet another statement in the Alexander stories, whereby the young general accedes to the request of the high-priest that the Jews be granted permission 'to observe their country's laws and in the seventh year to be exempt from tribute' (*Ant.* 11:338) seems to reflect the recognized status of Judaism as a *religio licita* during much of the Greek and Roman period, thereby illuminating the sensitivity displayed when this basic right was encroached upon.

In similar fashion, the story of Joseph, son of Tobias seems to contribute to our comprehension of the inroads made by the hellenizing process among certain strata of Jewish society. The background to the story, which must be sketched first, is Ptolemaic rule in Palestine. Here, information is equally scant, but the following is clear.¹² In Egyptian eyes Judaea seems to have been part of a larger territory called 'Syria and Phoenicia', encompassing Palestine, the Trans-Jordan, the cities of Tyre and Sidon as well as portions of southern Syria. At the head of all this territory stood a *strategos*, while the area itself was divided into *hyparchiai*, probably defined along ethnic lines. Thus Palestine incorporated the hyparchies of Idumea, Trans-Jordan, Samaria, with Judaea probably the hyparchy with the

⁶ For Josephus' redaction of this work cf. Pelletier, *Flavius Josèphe*.

⁷ Josephus inserts the story into the Seleucid reign over Palestine, but the narrative clearly reflects Ptolemaic rule; cf. Mazar, 'The Tobiads', 235; Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 128; Stern, 'Notes on the Story of Joseph the Tobiad'.

⁸ *Megillat Taanit*, ed. Lichtenstein, 'Die Fastenrolle', 339; *Lev. Rabba* 13, 5 (p. 293); *B.T. Yoma* 69a; for a discussion of the numerous problems relating to the historicity of these traditions see Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 44ff. For literature on Alexander and the Jews cf. Marcus, 'Alexander the Great and the Jews'; Schürer, *History* 1, p. 138, n. 1.

⁹ Cf. Stern, 'The Jews in Greek and Latin Literature', 1103-11.

¹⁰ So Theophrastus (372-288/7 B.C.E.), cf. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors* 1, 11.

¹¹ Aristotle, quoted by Clearchus of Soli; cf. Stern, *ibid.*, 50.

¹² Cf. Tcherikover, 'Palestine under the Ptolemies'; *id.*, in *WIJJP* 6, 68-79. See also Hengel, *Hellenism* 1, 18-32.

highest concentration of Jews. Judaea closely resembles the Persian administrative unit of *Yehud*, and it appears that the borders of this area remained relatively fixed for centuries, until the changes introduced by the Hasmoneans. The northern boundary of Judaea was Bet-El (north of modern Ramallah), and the southern boundary, Bet Zur (just north of Hebron). To the east Judaea reached the Jordan river and Jericho, while the western border was situated approximately by the plain of Lydda. Certainly, Jews resided beyond these borders, such as in the Jewish enclave of Trans-Jordan known as the *Peraea*, as well as in the Galilee, albeit in smaller numbers.¹³ In the eyes of the Ptolemaic administration, however, Judaea was the area of the Jewish *ethnos*, and its residents – Judaeans. The Hellenistic period served as the catalyst for the creation of two major Greek concentrations in Palestine. One of these was the stretch of coastal *poleis* from Ptolemais (Acre) in the north to Gaza in the south, while the other was the series of Greek cities in the Trans-Jordan, such as Pella, Dion, Gerasa and Philadelphia (Amman).¹⁴ Here again, the demographic developments of the early Hellenistic period will have a lasting effect on the history of the land until the Destruction, in particular on the nature of relations with gentiles in Palestine throughout the Second Temple period. As more and more scholars have come to note, the social tensions encountered in the last century of Second Temple Palestine are not merely a reflection of animosity between conquered Jew and ruling Roman, but the result of a far more complex reality in which different ethnic and cultural societies lived in close proximity to each other, ruled over by yet a third party not always capable of maintaining a neutral position between the various groups.¹⁵ It would appear then, that while sources for the Hellenistic period in Judaea are few, it is crucial for a precise understanding of much of the subsequent historical development of the Jewish people in the Greco-Roman world.

Given the scarcity of sources,¹⁶ scholars are fortunate to have at their disposal a number of documents from the archive discovered in the Fayyum (Darb el Gerza) in 1915, and known as ‘the Zenon papyri’. Named after an official serving under Apollonius, the Ptolemaic finance minister of the mid-third century B.C.E., the papyri provide information bearing primarily on the economic and administrative situation in Palestine at the

¹³ The author takes issue with the commonly held view that only under Aristobulus I (104-103 B.C.E.) Galilee was ‘Judaized’, cf. e.g. Schürer, *History* 1, p. 217-8 n. 10. See below n. 70.

¹⁴ To these one must add two internal centers of hellenized population: Samaria to the north, one of the mainstays of Greek (and Roman) rule in Palestine, and Marissa in Idumaea, a prime example of the hellenization of eastern elements of the local population – in this case the Phoenicians. For a comprehensive survey of the Greek cities cf. Schürer; *History* 2, 85-183.

¹⁵ Cf. Rappaport, ‘The Relations between Jews and Non-Jews’; for a study of one particular example, cf. Levine, ‘The Jewish-Greek Conflict’.

¹⁶ One exception to the scarcity of sources may be portions of *1 Enoch*. Cf. Stone, *Scriptures*, 27-35.

time.¹⁷ One document stands out. It was written by (or for) Tobias, a prominent landowner in Trans-Jordan,¹⁸ and most probably the father of Joseph, the hero of our story. It is addressed to Apollonius; and while dealing with mundane issues itself, it opens with the following preamble: ‘Tobias to Apollonius greeting. If you and all your affairs are flourishing, and everything else is as you wish it, *many thanks to the Gods* (πολλὴ χάρις τοῖς θεοῖς).’¹⁹

Much has been argued to the effect that no intrinsic polytheistic overtones should be read into what was primarily a fixed and standard opening formula, possibly written by Tobias’ scribe rather than by the Jewish landowner himself.²⁰ All this notwithstanding, if one takes into account the fact that Tobias was apparently married to the sister of the high priest Onias II, it becomes clear that certain new elements of a particular cultural and political orientation had begun to infiltrate portions of the Judaeian establishment. Into this context the Joseph story, preserved by Josephus, finds its place. Approximately in the year 240 B.C.E. we encounter the highpriest refusing to fulfill his obligations as chief tax-collector on behalf of the Ptolemaic regime. A crisis looms, and in a major gathering on the Temple mount Joseph appears and saves the day, succeeding his uncle in the position of tax-farmer (*Ant.* 12:158ff.). His subsequent escapades in Alexandria, and in particular his passion for a local dancing-girl, point to a man who, while serving as representative of the Jewish people on the one hand, has nevertheless departed from traditional Jewish behaviour. Before us, in fact, emerges a typical example of the possibilities opened up by the Hellenistic world to certain ethnic leaders. This tension between fealty to ancient local traditions and the newly accessible and highly attractive cosmopolitan stage, serves as a major factor in the social ferment in Judaea, ultimately and inexorably leading to the clash between the two forces in the second century B.C.E. And so while novelistic in its present form, the Joseph story is nevertheless enlightening, particularly since the sons of this family were destined to serve as the vanguard of the hellenizing movement in Palestine. All but one of Joseph’s sons, Hyrcanus, would ultimately throw in their lot with the successors to the Ptolemies in Palestine, the Seleucid Empire.

Politically, Palestine during much of the Hellenistic period served as a bone of contention between the two great Hellenistic monarchies in the east, and the third century B.C.E. was witness to at least five battles between the two powers, frequently referred to as ‘the Syrian wars’ due to the

¹⁷ Cf. Tcherikover, ‘Palestine’; *id.*, *Corpus* 1, 115-30.

¹⁸ The geographical location of the Tobiad estate has been conclusively fixed at Arak el Emir in Trans-Jordan, approximately 17 km. west of Amman; cf. McCown, ‘The Araq el Emir and the Tobiads’.

¹⁹ Tcherikover, *Corpus* 1, 126.

²⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 127 n. 2; Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 71.

Ptolemaic orientation of our sources. While the Ptolemies succeeded in withstanding Syrian pressure during most of the third century, the ascent to the throne of Antiochus III 'the Great' in 223 B.C.E. marks the beginning of a shift in power. Invading in 218 B.C.E., Antiochus succeeded in conquering almost all of Palestine, only to be defeated the following year by Ptolemy IV at Raphia, in one of the great battles of ancient history.²¹ Syrian pressure, however, was maintained, and in 200 B.C.E., following the defeat of the Egyptian army at Paneas, Antiochus III became ruler in Palestine.

The effects of Seleucid rule in Palestine are at first glance enigmatic, for what appears in 200 B.C.E. to be a favourable relationship between the Jewish community and the new rulers of the land, deteriorated within three decades into turmoil and outright revolution, far exceeding anything of a similar nature under 100 years of Ptolemaic rule. Moreover, in the famous proclamation issued by Antiochus III upon his conquest of the land,²² not only was provision made for the physical restoration and economic well-being of Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple, but the king explicitly proclaimed that 'all members of the nation shall have a form of government in accordance with the laws of the fathers' (*κατὰ τοὺς πατριῶν νόμους*). All the more striking, then, is the fact that thirty-two years later the son of that same conqueror, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, inaugurated a systematic religious persecution in Judaea that was diametrically opposed to his father's decree. The change in Seleucid policy may be attributed at least in part to external events. Following the defeat of Antiochus III at the hands of Roman legions at Magnesia in 190 B.C.E., and the ensuing peace treaty of Apamea (188), the Seleucid Empire found itself in dire need of funds to pay the tributes forced upon it by Rome. Antiochus III himself was killed while attempting to sack a temple in Elymais (187), and under his successor Seleucus IV (187-175) the Jews of Palestine experienced a similar attempt to extract funds from the Temple of Jerusalem. The event, described in 2 Maccabees 3, reflects not only on the predicament of the Seleucids, but more importantly on the internal developments among the ruling class of Jerusalem. Apparently, elements within the priesthood and particularly the family of Bilga, had joined forces with the Tobiads in an attempt to usurp power from the high priest Onias. This new coalition seems to indicate not only a power struggle within the priestly oligarchy, but a cultural clash as well, for it is this element that ultimately carried out (if it did not instigate) the reforms initiated by Antiochus IV in Jerusalem, culminating with religious persecution.

Certainly, the exact part played by Jewish elements in the events leading up to the Hasmonean uprising is far from certain, and one must attribute at least part of the initiative to the king himself. The latter, who succeeded his

²¹ Galili, 'Raphia 217 B.C.E. Revisited'.

²² *Ant.* 12:138-44; cf. Bickermann, 'La charte séleucide'; *id.*, 'Une proclamation séleucide'.

brother in 175 B.C.E., was by all accounts a dynamic and original statesman, intent on reviving the glory of the Hellenistic East. To this end he devoted the first seven years of his reign to plans for the conquest of Ptolemaic Egypt. In this context one can understand the steps taken to ensure a loyal leadership in Judaea, which would necessarily serve as a staging area for the invasion of Egypt. Accordingly, a new highpriest – Jason, brother of Onias – was installed, and Jerusalem was effectively rendered a Greek *polis* (city-state) named Antioch.²³ This of course entailed the setting up of standard Greek civic institutions such as a gymnasium, and the author of 2 Maccabees (4:13-17) bemoans the sight of priests ‘no longer interested in the services of the altar, despising the sanctuary, neglecting the sacrifices’ and running to participate in Greek athletic games. The culmination of this reform was the appointment of yet another high priest, Menelaus (of the house of Bilga), a representative of the more extreme hellenizing forces.

The question of how far the hellenizing process had advanced within Jewish society by this time is still heatedly debated by historians. One school of thought, following in the steps of Schürer, contends that quite considerable progress had already been made, the Hellenists having the upper hand, and the only path open to the devout being ‘to become a sect’.²⁴ The arguments adduced for this position all point to an obvious adoption of Greek language and phraseology, accompanied by various manifestations of Hellenistic art forms, systems of administration and diplomacy, public institutions, as well as the incorporation of basic Greek ideas and concepts into the literature of the period.²⁵ Thus, claimed Schürer, if the hellenization of the Jewish people ultimately failed, it was due to the over-zealous steps taken too hastily by Antiochus to advance this process, which lead in the end to the Hasmonean reaction. Ironically then, according to this line of thought Antiochus emerges as the one person responsible for saving Judaism.²⁶

Countering this approach, one finds Tcherikover stressing two points: 1) much of the hellenizing process was confined to a particular class of Jews, namely the Jerusalem aristocracy and its peripheral elements; 2) the hellenization encountered and cited by scholars is frequently an external manifestation, serving political ends rather than reflecting deep-rooted cultural assimilation.²⁷

These arguments were employed by Tcherikover in his attempt at solving the riddle posed by the very institution of religious persecution under Antiochus IV. As an exponent of Hellenistic polytheism, one might have

²³ Following the interpretation of Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 161, and 404-9.

²⁴ Schürer, *History* 1, 145.

²⁵ id. 2, 52-80; see especially Hengel, *Hellenism*.

²⁶ Schürer, *History* 1, 145.

²⁷ Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 118ff., 202f.; compare Hengel, *Hellenism* 1, 299.

expected Antiochus to reflect the tolerance characteristic of Greco-Roman culture. Various theories have been proposed on this issue,²⁸ one of the most noted being Bickermann's placing of the blame squarely on the shoulders of the Jewish leadership, i.e. Menelaus and the Jerusalem hierarchy.²⁹ Common to all theories was the assumption that religious persecution served as the catalyst for the Jewish uprising. If, however, Tcherikover is correct in his reconstruction of the chronological sequence of events leading up to the Hasmonean uprising, it would appear that popular opposition to the hellenizing process had been seething for some time, and that with Antiochus' retreat from Egypt in 168 this opposition broke out into open rebellion. After cruelly crushing this uprising, Antiochus followed through with the installation of gentile cults in Jerusalem, together with the placing of the Jewish religion outside of the law, and it was this that led to the rebellion of Mattathias and the Hasmonean family.³⁰ Whether or not we accept this approach in its entirety, one result is beyond argument. The Hasmonean uprising set in motion a process that not only succeeded in destroying the hellenizing party in Jerusalem and effectively placing a halt to all further assimilation of the Jewish community into the surrounding Greek environment, but ultimately led to the creation of a national political entity, the Hasmonean state, that changed radically the course of Second Temple history.³¹

The Hasmonean Uprising

The goals of the Hasmonean uprising were either never definitively stated by its leaders, or — as is more likely — underwent constant revisions in response to Seleucid reaction, and in light of the opportunities that presented themselves at various stages of the Jewish-Greek confrontation. At its inception under Mattathias (d. 166/5 B.C.E.) the revolt was primarily aimed at achieving religious freedom and the restoration of traditional Jewish worship in Jerusalem. These aims are the central theme of statements attributed to Mattathias (1 Macc 2:19-27), and were the immediate objectives of his son Judah (Maccabee),³² at least until the re-dedication of

²⁸ Cf. Tcherikover's summary, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 175ff.

²⁹ Bickermann, *Der Gott der Makkabäer*; for a detailed refutation of this theory see Heinemann, 'Wer veranlasste den Glaubenszwang'. Hengel concurs with much of Bickermann's approach, but see Millar, 'The Background'.

³⁰ Cf. Tcherikover 186ff.; if accepted, this reconstruction would revolutionize our approach to the nature of the persecution, which now emerges far more as a *political* means for solving a state of unrest, rather than a *cultural-religious* act taken by the champion of hellenization. Compare, however, Schürer, *History* 1, 151ff. and note 37.

³¹ Stern, 'The Hasmonean Revolt'.

³² Only Judah goes by this title in the sources; for the various suggestions on etymology cf. Schürer, *History* 1, 158 n. 49.

the Temple in *Kislev* (December) 164 B.C.E.³³ This having been achieved,³⁴ there emerges a second stage of revolution, begun by Judah and carried forward by two of his brothers, Jonathan (160-142 B.C.E.) and Simon (142-135 B.C.E.).

In the immediate aftermath of the re-dedication of the Temple, Jews not only in Judaea but throughout Palestine (in particular in Galilee, Gilead, the Trans-Jordan and Idumea) found themselves confronting hostile neighbours bent on seizing the opportunity to attack these somewhat isolated Jewish communities. It is now for the first time that the Hasmonean brothers asserted themselves as defenders of the Jewish people at large, and not merely as local Judaeans guerilla fighters. In a series of campaigns during the years 163-162, they clashed with various gentile populations outside of Judaea,³⁵ at times limiting themselves to inflicting military blows on their opponents (but with no intention of permanent conquest), and in certain cases warranted by the precarious state of the local Jewish population (such as in Western Galilee and the Gilead) accompanying military activity with the removal of Jewish communities to a safe haven in Judaea. The effect of this activity was to establish the Hasmonean brothers as national leaders over much of Jewish Palestine, a situation unacceptable to the Seleucids. Subsequent attempts by the monarchy to subdue Judah were either thwarted by unrest in the Syrian capital,³⁶ or met with defeat on the battlefield.³⁷ These defeats notwithstanding, it now became clear to Judah that the Seleucid Empire was not about to willingly relinquish its hold over Palestine, and thus the second stage of the Hasmonean revolution – the quest for national independence – was fully initiated. The first step in this direction was the mutual defense treaty established between the Jews and the Roman Republic during the last year of Judah's life (161 B.C.E.).³⁸ The treaty served the interests of both parties; Rome had never recognized the legitimacy of the new Seleucid monarch, Demetrius I, and in any case was

³³ Official Syrian recognition of Jewish control over the Temple, as well as the abrogation of religious persecution, was proclaimed only in a letter from the child-king Antiochus V to Lysias (2 Macc 11:22-26) but was in essence achieved by Judah with the conquest of Jerusalem in 164 B.C.E.

³⁴ Judah's early military victories (166-164 B.C.E.) all follow a similar pattern: Seleucid forces from outside of Judaea attempt to link up with the Greek garrison at Jerusalem, and Judah succeeds in surprising these forces at various sites along their marches towards the city. With the citizens of the surrounding Judaeans hills supportive of Judah's aims, there ensued a virtual Jewish siege of Jerusalem, ultimately enabling the Jewish leader to enter the city and reestablish traditional worship therein; cf. Avi-Yonah, 'The Hasmonean Revolt'.

³⁵ 1 Macc chap. 5; *Ant.* 12:327-53.

³⁶ 1 Macc 6:28-63; *Ant.* 12:367-81.

³⁷ 1 Macc 7:26-50; 2 Macc 15:1-39; *Ant.* 12:402-12; The defeat of Nikanor (13 *Adar* 161 B.C.E.) was established as a festival, with the event commemorated in *Megillat Taanit* as 'Nikanor's Day', Lichtenstein, 'Die Fastenrolle', 279-80, 346.

³⁸ 1 Macc 8:23-32; *Ant.* 12:417-19.

interested in weakening the Syrian hold on the Near East, as witnessed by the earlier ultimatum preventing the Seleucid conquest of Egypt.³⁹ As for Judah, the pact effectively served as the first official recognition of developing Jewish independence, and must have also served as a tremendous boost of morale for obviously battle-weary Jewish soldiers. In any case, the authenticity of the document has generally been accepted by modern scholars,⁴⁰ and Roman-Jewish friendship became a mainstay of Hasmonean policy almost until the conquest of the Hasmonean state itself by the Romans.⁴¹

The independence of Judaea was nevertheless far from established by the time of Judah's death in battle,⁴² only a few months following the pact with Rome. It was left to the last of the Hasmonean brothers, Jonathan and Simon, to complete the process, and this was achieved not so much on the basis of military power, but rather thanks to keen political acumen that took maximum advantage of the growing decay within the Seleucid Empire. Constant dissension within the royal family created a situation of perpetual contenders and pretenders to the throne, and the Hasmonean brothers found themselves in a unique situation of being courted by the various sides for their support, with concomitant promises of Syrian recognition and support in return for Hasmonean allegiance. Thus on the Feast of Tabernacles, 152 B.C.E., the first Hasmonean high priest, Jonathan, was installed by a pretender to the Syrian throne, Alexander Balas,⁴³ and it was this recognition that convinced the King himself, Demetrius I, to make similar overtures. Against this background, the Hasmonean brothers were free to establish control over portions of Palestine beyond the borders of Judaea: Jonathan captured Jaffa for the first time, fought near Ashdod and received the city of Ekron from Alexander Balas. Some years later (following Balas' defeat in 145) portions of southern Samaria were added to the growing Jewish territory.⁴⁴ While Jonathan was executed by yet another Seleucid contender (Tryphon; 142 B.C.E.), Simon, the last of the Hasmonean brothers officially annexed Jaffa to the Judaeian state,⁴⁵ and together with the conquest of Gezer,⁴⁶ a fortress controlling the road from Jerusalem to the newly established Jewish port, rendered the Jewish state a

³⁹ Polybius 29: 27, 1-8; cf. Schürer, *History* 1, 151-2.

⁴⁰ Schürer, *History* 1, 171-13 and n. 33; Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors* 1, 342; Timpe, 'Der römische Vertrag'.

⁴¹ Cf. Stern, 'The Relations between Judaea and Rome'.

⁴² 1 Macc 9.

⁴³ 1 Macc 10: 18-20; Balas claimed to be the real son of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

⁴⁴ Cf. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 235ff.; Schürer, *History* 1, 174-88 (Jonathan), 188-99 (Simon).

⁴⁵ 1 Macc 13: 11.

⁴⁶ 1 Macc 13:43ff.; the 'siege-engines' employed by Simon in this battle are evidence of the advances made by the Hasmonean army, slowly emerging as a major military force in the region.

viable economic as well as political entity. With the fall of the remaining Greek garrison (Hakra) in Jerusalem in 141 B.C.E.⁴⁷ as well as the foregoing that year of all Jewish taxation on behalf of the Seleucid Empire,⁴⁸ the Jewish state was an established reality. Diplomatic activity was enhanced,⁴⁹ and in 'a great assembly' on the Temple mount on the 18th of *Elul* 140 B.C.E., Simon and his sons were officially recognized by the Jewish people as high priests, political and military leaders 'until a faithful prophet should arise'.⁵⁰ This last clause, stressing the provisional appointment of the Hasmoneans, may allude to a certain opposition to Hasmonean rule or priesthood among some elements of Jewish society, and the appearance of certain political groups on the Judaeian scene at this time is possibly an outgrowth of such opposition.

Beginning with the outbreak of the revolt at Modiin (1 Macc 2:15-28) the Hasmonean family played a central role in Jewish history for over one hundred and twenty years. While the prior history of the family is unclear,⁵¹ the fact that it was descended from the priestly order of Joarib (1 Macc 2:1), listed first among the priestly families in 1 Chr 24:7,⁵² must have rendered it a prominent family even before the uprising. Nevertheless, the ultimate establishment of the Hasmoneans as high priests was a departure from earlier Second Temple tradition, which linked the high priesthood with the 'sons of Zadok'.⁵³ This is frequently cited as the catalyst for the establishment of a 'Sadducean' party, stressing its own legitimacy as priests. In similar fashion, the Dead Sea sect placed great stress on the fact that within their ranks reside 'the sons of Zadok, the priests'.⁵⁴

In general, the ferment caused both by the hellenizing movements of the early second century B.C.E., as well as by the Hasmonean uprising and subsequent concentration of power in that family's hands, seems to have supplied the major impetus for the formation of various groups and sects within the Jewish community. Already in Judah's day we encounter the *Hasidim*, a group willing to make do with the religious freedoms regained

⁴⁷ 1 Macc 13:49ff.; this day (23 Iyyar 141) was also established as a yearly festival, cf. Lichtenstein, 'Die Fastenrolle', 286-7, 319.

⁴⁸ 1 Macc 13:36-40.

⁴⁹ 1 Macc 14:20-23; 15:16-24.

⁵⁰ 1 Macc 14:27-49; for a detailed analysis of the proclamation recognizing the house of Simon, see Stern, *Documents*, 132-9; Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 488-509.

⁵¹ In *War* 1:36, Mattathias is described as a priest from Modiin, whereas *Ant.* 12:265 claims that he came from Jerusalem. 1 Macc 2:1 states that 'he moved away from Jerusalem and settled in Modiin'; cf. Schürer, *History* 1, p. 156 and n. 43.

⁵² The different lists of priestly divisions from the early Second Temple period contain varying numbers of families as well as different orders; cf. Schürer, *History* 2, 246-7.

⁵³ Cf. Ezek 40:46, 44:15; Sir 51:12; Schürer, *History* 2, 407; Stern, 'Aspects of Jewish Society', 567.

⁵⁴ IQS^b 3:22. For the Qumran use of 'sons of Zadok' cf. Vermes, *Qumran in Perspective*, 110. For another view see below, p. 545 n. 292.

in the early stages of the revolt, to the extent of embracing a Syrian-appointed high priest (Alkimos) ultimately responsible for their massacre.⁵⁵ While these *Hasidim* may or may not be the 'plant root' which God caused 'to spring from Israel and Aaron to inherit his land' according to the Dead Sea sect,⁵⁶ it is generally accepted that Qumran was settled by the time of John Hyrcanus I (135-104 B.C.E.),⁵⁷ and thus the origins of the sect probably date to the early Hasmonean period, with either Jonathan or Simon serving as 'the wicked priest called by the name of truth when he first arose'.⁵⁸ Similarly, Josephus makes his earliest references to Pharisees and Sadducees, as well as Essenes, within the context of Jonathan's rule.⁵⁹

The Hasmonean State

From the days of Simon on, the ideological platform upon which the Hasmonean state was founded was clear. In reply to the demands of the last powerful Seleucid monarch, Antiochus VII Sidetes, to return conquered territories, Simon proclaims: 'We have neither taken other men's land, nor hold that which appertaineth to others, but the inheritance of our fathers which our enemies had wrongfully in possession a certain time. Wherefore we, having opportunity, hold the inheritance of our fathers' (1 Macc 15:33-34). To be sure, the conquests of Simon did not effect major ethnic changes in the settlement of Palestine, and the Hasmonean state still was comprised primarily of the historical district of Judaea (*Yehud*), with the addition of Jaffa and Gezer in the west, as well as portions of the Jewish Trans-Jordan (*Peraea*). Only following the death of Antiochus VII (129 B.C.E.), and during the reign of Simon's son John Hyrcanus I (135-104 B.C.E.) are we witness to the first stages of major territorial expansion. The brunt of Hyrcanus' attacks was felt by two ethnic groups in particular, the Samaritans and the Idumeans. The first community witnessed the destruction of its temple on Mount Gerizim,⁶⁰ together with the conquest of Shechem, whereas the Idumeans were permitted to remain in their land after agreeing to undergo conversion to Judaism.⁶¹ Interestingly, this conversion had longlasting results, and with the subsequent conquest of Palestine by Pompey and removal of non-Jewish territory from the

⁵⁵ The precise identity of the *Hasidim* remains enigmatic; cf. Schürer, *History* 1, 157 n. 46; Hengel, *Hellenism* 1, 175-81.

⁵⁶ CD 1:7.

⁵⁷ Cf. De Vaux, *Archaeology*, 5; Vermes, *Qumran in Perspective*, 33.

⁵⁸ 1QpHab 8:8-9. For various identifications of this priest cf. Vermes, *ibid.* 151; Schürer, *History* 2, 586-7 and notes 50-55.

⁵⁹ *Ant.* 13:171-3. For an earlier dating of the sect's origins see below, pp. 544-7.

⁶⁰ *Ant.* 13:256-7; cf. Cross, 'Aspects'.

⁶¹ *Ant.* 13:257-8.

remaining Jewish state,⁶² Eastern Idumaea nevertheless remained part of Judaea. Needless to say, the most noteworthy consequence of the Idumean conversion was the subsequent introduction of the house of Antipater into the mainstream of Jewish affairs, but one might also take note of another prominent Idumean influence on later history, with the appearance of Idumean fighters among the most fanatical participants of the Great War against Rome.⁶³ Inasmuch as the territory of the Hasmonean state under Hyrcanus was almost three times that of earlier Judaea, one can appreciate the demographic constraints that required such steps as mass conversion,⁶⁴ and one might also assume that certain elements of society were further alienated by such political realities. In addition, Hyrcanus appears to be the first Hasmonean ruler to have employed a gentile mercenary army,⁶⁵ and a slow process of hellenization seems to have been introduced by this time into the new leadership of Judaea. Hints of this are apparent already in the proclamation appointing Simon and his sons,⁶⁶ whereas Hyrcanus' son Aristobulus I saw nothing wrong in attaching the title 'Philhellene' to his name.⁶⁷ The social unrest that resulted may serve to explain why Hyrcanus' rule serves as the first major stage for divisions between Pharisees and Sadducees,⁶⁸ with the Hasmonean ruler abandoning his traditional ties with the former party and joining forces with the latter. The Sadducean party would henceforth remain a major force on the political scene, until the last days of Hasmonean independence and the Pharisaic resurgence under Queen Alexandra Salome (76-67 B.C.E.)⁶⁹

The fall of the cities of Scythopolis and Samaria in the last days of John Hyrcanus paved the way for the Hasmonean conquest of Galilee, which was achieved in the brief rule of Hyrcanus' son Aristobulus (104-103 B.C.E.).⁷⁰ With this conquest, all of the Jewish territories of Palestine were

⁶² Cf. *War* 1:155-6; *Ant.* 14:74-5; whereas the area around Marissa was restored to its Greek character and inhabitants by Pompey, the area of eastern Idumea, surrounding Adourraim, was considered Jewish by that time and remained a portion of the vassal Jewish state; cf. *Macmillan Bible Atlas*, p. 136; Schürer, *History* 1, 268 n. 5.

⁶³ *Ant.* 17:254; *War* 4:22ff.; Rhoads, *Israel in Revolution*, 137-40.

⁶⁴ Cf. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 247-9, who stresses that Judaization of certain gentile groups was a purely political act, with no religious missionary overtones.

⁶⁵ *Ant.* 13:249; Simon was praised for paying soldiers out of his own funds (1 Macc 14:32) but nowhere is it suggested that these soldiers were foreigners. Praise for personal contributions of rulers was common at the time, cf. Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 504; Hyrcanus, however, probably angered the population by paying his soldiers out of funds taken from the Tomb of David.

⁶⁶ E.g. 1 Macc 14:43-45; cf. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization* 250-1.

⁶⁷ *Ant.* 13:318.

⁶⁸ *Ant.* 13:288-96; The Talmudic parallel to this story, *B.T. Kiddushin* 66a, refers to the Hasmonean ruler involved as 'Yannai', and much has been written on this discrepancy; cf. Schürer *History* 1, 214 n. 30; Alon, *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World*, 26-28 and n. 22; Levine, 'On the Political Involvement', 14, n. 8.

⁶⁹ Levine, 'The Political Struggle'.

⁷⁰ *War* 1:76 (Schürer, *History* 1, 217-8); Aristobulus converted the Iturean tribe (*Ant.* 13:319)

incorporated into the Hasmonean state, and the massive territorial expansion under Hyrcanus' successor Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 B.C.E.)⁷¹ was primarily at the expense of the Greek population of the land. By the end of his rule, almost all of the Greek cities along the coast of Palestine (save Acre and Ashkelon), as well as most of the Hellenistic cities of the Trans-Jordan (with the exception of Philadelphia) were annexed to the Hasmonean kingdom. Jannaeus' successes were in no small part due not only to his military skills, but to the political constellation of the times, with a decaying Seleucid empire to the north,⁷² and a still powerful Ptolemaic ally to the south.⁷³ The growing Nabatean encroachment into southern Palestine was another determining factor in Jannaeus' military policy, and the Hasmonean conquest of Gaza after a particularly cruel siege may partly have been motivated by the wish to prevent the Nabateans from using the city as a major port.⁷⁴

If internal dissension existed in earlier Hasmonean times, it developed into outright rebellion during the days of Jannaeus. Josephus attributes numerous acts of cruelty to the Hasmonean monarch, including the execution of 50,000 Jews in a period of six years.⁷⁵ The 'furious young lion' reported in a Dead Sea scroll to have 'executed revenge on seekers of smooth things' and hung men alive,⁷⁶ may refer to Jannaeus and to that king's crucifixion of eight hundred Jews described by Josephus.⁷⁷ Opposition to the Hasmonean monarchy and priesthood is attested in various apocryphal works, where 'kings calling themselves priests of the

but there is no evidence to substantiate Schürer's claim that 'the population of Galilee was until this time more gentile than Jewish'. To the contrary: 1) as far back as the days of Judah the Maccabee, Jews fought the Seleucid army at Arbel (1 Macc 9:2); 2) Alexander Jannaeus was raised in Galilee, unthinkable if the population was primarily Greek and hostile to the Hasmonians (*Ant.* 13:322); 3) in the first year of Jannaeus' reign (103 B.C.E.) the city of Asochis (Shihin) fell to Ptolemy Lathirus, who surprised the defenders by attacking on Sabbath (*Ant.* 13:337). If we add to this the fact that no major polis appears in central Galilee during the Hellenistic period, it becomes clear that Josephus' statement about Aristobulus is just what it says: a partial conversion of the Itureans, and not the Galilee at large.

⁷¹ Sources are divided regarding the first Hasmonean king. Josephus (*Ant.* 13: 301; *War* 1:70) claims it was Aristobulus, while Strabo (*Geography* 16:2, 40) points to Alexander Jannaeus; cf. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors* 1, 301-2, and 307, line 40. A similar debate involves the first stages of Hasmonean coinage, on which much has been written recently; cf. Rappaport, 'The Emergence of Hasmonean Coinage'.

⁷² Cf. *Ant.* 13:365-71.

⁷³ Cleopatra's support of the Jewish kingdom was in part influenced by fear of her son and contender to the throne, Ptolemy Lathirus, as well as the pressure placed on her by her Jewish general Ananias, cf. *Ant.* 13: 349, 354-5; for the political background to Jannaeus' rule cf. Stern, 'Judaea and her Neighbours'.

⁷⁴ *Ant.* 13:360.

⁷⁵ *Ant.* 13:376.

⁷⁶ 1QpNah 1:6-8; cf. Schürer, *History* 1, 224-5, n. 22.

⁷⁷ *Ant.* 13:380; for the internal situation under Jannaeus see also: Rabin, 'Alexander Jannaeus'; Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 257-65.

most high God' are accused of 'working iniquity in the Holy of Holies',⁷⁸ and are guilty of 'laying waste the throne of David in tumultuous arrogance'.⁷⁹ To be sure, the negative picture of the late Hasmonean period is not a completely objective one. Almost all the literary sources for the period derive from the opposition to the Hasmonean family, and even Josephus, who prides himself on his Hasmonean lineage,⁸⁰ was forced by the paucity of sources to resort to a decidedly anti-Hasmonean historian, Nicolaus of Damascus,⁸¹ for a description of the last stages of Hasmonean rule.

Moreover, even Josephus seems to allude to a certain rapprochement between the nation and Jannaeus towards the latter's final days.⁸² To his wife Salome (76-67 B.C.E.) Jannaeus bequeathed a kingdom embracing almost all of the biblical Land of Israel, as well as imparting to her the good advice to restore Pharisaic influence to the royal court, as a means of re-establishing popular support for the monarchy.⁸³ Nothing, however, was capable of saving the Hasmonean state, whose days were numbered with the advance of Roman legions eastward. The civil war that erupted between Salome's two sons, Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II, merely provided a pretext for subsequent Roman intervention into the affairs of Judaea,⁸⁴ and in any case the ultimate fall of Jerusalem in 63 B.C.E. to the army of Pompey must be considered a foregone conclusion.

Nevertheless, the impact of Hasmonean rule in Palestine transcends the brief period of Jewish independence, and its social, cultural and religious consequences were of primary importance. Under the Hasmoneans the hellenization that had swept through much of the Near East encountered an opposing cultural phenomenon, and in the ensuing battle between the Greco-Syrian elements in Palestine and the Jewish nation, the latter emerged victorious to a large extent.⁸⁵ While territorial conquests were torn away from Judaea by the Romans, the dominant ethnic and cultural community of the land remained the Jewish people, and this was destined to be the case for at least two more centuries, and in many ways through much of the late Roman and Byzantine periods as well.

⁷⁸ *Ass. Mos.* 6:1.

⁷⁹ *Pss. Sol.* 17:8. In both cases Herod, while himself cruel and 'alien to our race', nevertheless punishes his predecessors as they deserved.

⁸⁰ Josephus, *Life* 2.

⁸¹ Cf. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors* 1, 227ff. and in particular 230-1; *id.*, 'Nicolaus of Damascus'.

⁸² *Ant.* 13:393-4; 398f.

⁸³ *Ant.* 13:400.

⁸⁴ *Ant.* 14:30f.

⁸⁵ On the seeming contradiction between this process and the above-noted 'hellenization' of the Hasmoneans themselves, cf. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 264-5.

Roman Rule in Judaea

The fall of Jerusalem to the armies of Pompey in 63 B.C.E. signifies the end of the independent Jewish state, and the Roman conqueror was now required to choose a system of government for the newly acquired territory. Numerous options existed, from the outright annexation of the country to the province of Syria, to the setting up of a vassal state to be run by a member of the Hasmonean family. In fact, the former option was applied to the majority of Greek cities throughout Palestine,⁸⁶ but this system, it was felt, would be detrimental to the maintenance of peace within the Jewish portions of the land, given the unique nature of that population.⁸⁷ In general, Rome was not out to totally eradicate the Jewish nation, or even to abolish all existing Jewish political frameworks. The Jewish religion remained *religio licita* throughout almost all of Roman rule, and numerous attempts were made to grant the Jews of Palestine some semblance of self-rule. Certain principles of Roman rule in Palestine, however, begin to assert themselves almost immediately: a) whoever rules Judaea as a vassal king, prince or high priest – must bear total allegiance to Rome; b) any autonomous Jewish state will rule only over territory populated primarily by Jews (this principle was established by Pompey, but modified in later periods); c) the natural base of Roman rule throughout the East, and in Palestine as well, were to be the Greek cities, who were in Roman eyes the natural allies of Rome by virtue of their obvious cultural affinity. As noted above, this policy had far-reaching results in Judaea.

Based on the spirit of these principles, the arrangements under Pompey involved a total reorganization of the Jewish state.⁸⁸ Almost all of Jan-naeus' conquests were torn from Judaea (as well as those non-Jewish territories annexed under his predecessors), and in Josephus' words 'the nation was confined within its own boundaries'.⁸⁹ These boundaries included primarily Judaea, Galilee, Eastern Idumaea and the Jewish Trans-Jordan, and at their head Pompey reinstated Hyrcanus II as high priest, apparently adding to this the title of 'Ethnarch' (*Ant.* 20:244), but abolishing the monarchy. The early history of this vassal state, however, makes it clear that the legacy of the Hasmoneans was not easily forgotten. Having succeeded in creating a unified Jewish state in much of Palestine, the Jewish population reacted violently to the attempt by Gabinius, a successor to Pompey and governor of Syria in 57-55 B.C.E., to divide the Jews of the land into five geographical and administrative units.⁹⁰ The lesson was not lost on subsequent Roman rulers, and from the days of

⁸⁶ *War* 1:155-7; *Ant.* 14:75-76.

⁸⁷ Cf. Schalit, in *WHJP* 7, 36; Smallwood, *The Jews*, 30.

⁸⁸ Smallwood, *The Jews*, 27ff.

⁸⁹ *War* 1:155; *Ant.* 14:74.

⁹⁰ *War* 1:170; *Ant.* 14:91; cf. Schürer, *History* 1, 268 n. 5.

Julius Caesar⁹¹ (48-44 B.C.E.) down to the destruction and beyond, the question of Jewish unity in the various territories of Palestine was never raised again.

Another and more pressing legacy of the Hasmonean period, however, was the unwillingness of major segments of the Jewish population to relinquish the political independence enjoyed during approximately eighty years of Hasmonean statehood. In this respect Josephus is justified in having a victorious Titus attack the Jews who 'ever since Pompey reduced you by force never ceased from revolution'.⁹² Opposition to Rome, in fact, manifested itself in Judaea in one form or another from the earliest stages of Roman rule, and the various systems of government introduced by Rome into Palestine – from Pompey to the destruction of the Temple and the Bar-Kokhba war – all attest to the difficulties raised by the Roman-Jewish confrontation.

In general terms, Roman rule in late Second Temple Palestine may be divided into three major stages:⁹³ 1) vassal state under Hyrcanus II, 63-40 B.C.E.; 2) Herodian rule, 37 B.C.E. – 6 C.E.; 3) direct Roman rule, 6-66 C.E. (save for the brief reign of Agrippa I, 41-44 C.E.).

The first of these stages has been discussed briefly above, and what must be added here are two major phenomena. On the one hand, these years were constantly characterized by civil and political unrest, with the centre of dissent frequently focussing on the disenfranchised branch of the Hasmonean dynasty: Aristobulus II, the brother of Hyrcanus II; Aristobulus' son Alexander; and during the Parthian invasion of the Near East yet another of Aristobulus' sons, Antigonus. The latter was then briefly recognized by the Parthians – and enthusiastically by the Jews of Judaea – as the new Hasmonean monarch (40-38 B.C.E.).⁹⁴ It was this phenomenon that probably disqualified the Hasmonean family from serving as future Roman vassals in the land.

⁹¹ Caesar's benevolent attitude towards the Jews is attested in the decrees granting privileges to Jews both of Judaea and the diaspora, cf. *Ant.* 14:190-222; the well known statement of Suetonius, *Jul.* 84:5, regarding the extent of Jewish mourning over Caesar's death, is just one of numerous allusions to this favourable relationship, cf. Schürer, *History* 1, 270-5.

⁹² *War* 6:329.

⁹³ The following lines, far from being a detailed description of the period, are intended merely as an overview of certain central issues. For the vassal state in Judaea from Pompey to Herod cf. Schalit, in *WHJP* 7, 34-59; Schürer, *History* 1, 267-86; Smallwood, *The Jews*, 21-43. On the Herodian Period cf. Jones, *The Herods of Judaea*; Schalit, *König Herodes*; Schürer, *History* 1, 287-357; Smallwood, *The Jews*, 44-119; Stern, 'Herod'. For direct Roman rule, cf. Smallwood, *The Jews* 144-80, 256-92; Schürer, *History* 1, 357-98, 455-70; Stern, 'The Province of Judaea'.

⁹⁴ Beginning with this episode in Roman-Parthian affairs, and the short-lived Jewish independence reestablished by the Parthians, Jewish eyes in Palestine would henceforth turn eastwards, towards the Parthians in general and their brethren in that empire in particular, as a source for ultimate deliverance from Roman rule, cf. *War* 2:388-9, and compare *War* 6:343; cf. Ghirshman, *Iran*, 272; Debevoise, *A Political History of Parthia*, 93-95.

At the same time, the Idumean family of Antipater and his sons (Herod and Phasaël) displayed unswerving loyalty to the various Roman rulers who successively laid claim to the eastern provinces (Pompey, Julius Caesar, Cassius, Mark Anthony, Octavian). It is therefore not surprising that with the Parthian retreat from Palestine and the fall of Antigonos, Herod – with the full backing of Anthony and the Roman legions, became the new vassal King of Judaea.

Herod's rule (37-4 B.C.E.) in Jerusalem brought about one of the most pronounced social upheavals in all of Second Temple history.⁹⁵ The elimination of the Hasmoneans as the dominant priestly family necessitated the creation of a new social aristocracy, one with no ties to the previous elite and that would also not pose a threat to the Herodian dynasty itself. The problem was particularly acute regarding the high priesthood, and here Herod solved the issue by turning to the diaspora. The high priesthood was first given to one Hananel of Babylon,⁹⁶ and then to a succession of priestly families from the Egyptian diaspora.⁹⁷ The latter were by all means legitimate priests, but probably closely attuned to the Hellenistic tendencies of Herod himself. Beyond the introduction of new families, the innovation here was also in the idea that the high priesthood was no longer the sole possession of one family, transmitted from father to son, but rather an appointment to be decided by the monarch. What ensued from Herod's reign was the creation of a priestly oligarchy,⁹⁸ from whose ranks high priests might be chosen, and in general a decline in the prestige of the office, at least in the eyes of certain popular elements of Jewish society.⁹⁹ It would be a mistake, however, to underestimate the power still wielded by the priests in the last generations of Second Temple history.¹⁰⁰

In this context, Herod's cultivation of diaspora Jewry in general is noteworthy, and manifests itself both in the encouragement of immigration to Judaea¹⁰¹ as well as Herod's defense of the religious and civic rights of Jews in the Greek diaspora.¹⁰² That he was successful, for instance, in intervening on behalf of the Jews of Ionia, is primarily testimony to the

⁹⁵ Cf. Stern, 'Social and Political Realignment'.

⁹⁶ *Ant.* 15:22.

⁹⁷ Cf. Stern, 'Herod', 274; *id.* 'Aspects of Jewish Society', 570, 600ff.

⁹⁸ For a comprehensive discussion of the priestly nobility see: Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 147-221; Schürer, *History* 2, 227-91; Stern, 'Aspects of Jewish Society', 561-612; on the appointment of high priests in late Second Temple history, see also Alon, *Jews, Judaism*, 48ff.

⁹⁹ *T. Menahot* 13:21; *B.T. Pesahim* 57a.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Smallwood, 'High Priests'.

¹⁰¹ Two significant examples of this phenomenon are the invitation addressed to a Babylonian-Jewish military leader, Zamaris, to settle with his countrymen in the north-eastern territories of Palestine (cf. *Ant.* 17:22-31), and the appearance of Hillel the Babylonian in Jerusalem.

¹⁰² *Ant.* 16:27-65.

excellent relations maintained by Herod with the imperial court at Rome, whether Augustus himself or the commander of the Roman armies, Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa. This dual affinity of Herod's to the Greco-Roman world on the one hand, and nevertheless to Jewish interests – in Jerusalem as well as the diaspora – on the other hand, is certainly a major factor in the paradoxical behaviour of the Judaeen monarch. The greatest contributor to Greek cities in Palestine, with his two major projects being the foundation of Caesarea and Sebaste, was nevertheless commemorated in Talmudic literature for building 'the Temple of Herod'.¹⁰³ In sum, however, the tyrannical nature of Herod's rule was its ultimate legacy; the same Talmudic text that praises him also stresses that he destroyed the Hasmonean family as well as the community of Sages (*B.T. Baba Bathra* 3b-4a), and his selling of Jews into slavery abroad¹⁰⁴ must have alienated the vast majority of Jews, with no appeasement capable of winning their hearts. The author of the *Assumption of Moses* leaves no doubt as to popular sentiment towards Herod:

An insolent king will succeed them (the Hasmoneans), who will not be of the race of the priests, a man bold and shameless, and he will judge them as they shall deserve. And he will cut off their chief men with the sword, and will destroy them in secret places, so that no one may know where their bodies are. He will slay the young and the old, and he will not spare. The fear of him will be bitter unto them . . . during thirty and four years. (*Ass. Mos.* 6:2-6)

Herod's success, in the long run, was in his capability of maintaining law and order, and thereby fulfilling the *sine qua non* required for Roman support. Upon his death in 4 B.C.E. it became abundantly clear that his chosen successor as king of Judaea, Archelaus,¹⁰⁵ was incapable of maintaining this order. After ten years of disturbances and Jewish exhortations¹⁰⁶ Judaea became a Roman province under direct Roman rule. What should not be overlooked, however, was that during this period of turbulence definite signs of eschatological expectations appear on the Judaeen scene. Various popular uprisings seem to be led at this time by figures of a particular social stratum and physical bearing, i.e. men of low

¹⁰³ *B.T. Baba Bathra* 4a; for an analysis of Herodian building see: 'Herod's Building Projects: State Necessity or Personal Need? A Symposium', *Cathedra* 1 (1981), 48-80.

¹⁰⁴ *Ant.* 16:1-5; cf. Stern, 'Herod', 275-7.

¹⁰⁵ Archelaus was designated by Herod to succeed as King of Judaea, Idumea and Samaria, while two of his brothers were appointed tetrarchs over the northern territories of Palestine: Herod Antipas (4 B.C.E.-39 C.E.) over Galilee and Peraea, Philip (4 B.C.E.-33/34 C.E.) over Golan, Trachon and Batanaea. For the latter two rules cf. Schürer, *History* 1, 336-53. On Herod Antipas, commonly referred to in New Testament literature as Herod, see especially Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*.

¹⁰⁶ *Ant.* 17:299f.; *War* 2:80. The Jewish uprisings were not organized at the time, and what emerges from Josephus is a state of anarchy, cf. *Ant.* 17:269ff.; for the uprising put down by Varus, cf. *Ant.* 17:286f., *War* 2:66-79, *Seder Olam Rabba* ch. 30 ('Polemos of Asverus').

rank graced with impressive physical strength, who — placing crowns on their head and proclaiming themselves kings — begin to attack Roman forces. Three such cases (Judah son of Ezekias, Simon, Athronges)¹⁰⁷ all suggest a definite messianic zeal, and this phenomenon is not without parallel in the *sicarii* movement and its leadership in the last years of the Second Temple period.

With the introduction of direct Roman rule Judaea became a Roman province ruled by governors from 6-66 C.E. with the exception of the short reign of Agrippa I (41-44). Two major concentrations of Jewish population, however, remained beyond direct Roman rule for some time: Galilee and the Jewish Trans-Jordan remained part of the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas until 39 C.E., passing then into the hands of Agrippa I, and only upon the latter's death in 44 were joined to the Judaeian province. In similar fashion the territories under Philip reverted upon his death in 34 to the Syrian province, in 37 to Agrippa, and finally to the province of Judaea.

In general, the status of Judaea in Roman eyes did not warrant its establishment as either a senatorial or imperial province, along the lines set up by Augustus.¹⁰⁸ Due to its proximity to Syria and the major concentration of forces there, no discernible need existed for the dispatch of a legion to Judaea. Frequently, in fact, the Syrian governor was considered responsible for Judaeian affairs, beginning with the census carried out under Quirinius with the setting up of the province,¹⁰⁹ and up until the attempt by Cestius Gallus to quash the great Jewish rebellion in its early stages.¹¹⁰ As a result of this policy, the governors of Judaea were not of the highest Roman rank, but rather of the *equites*; their official title at first was *praefectus*,¹¹¹ and from the rule of Claudius (41 C.E.) it became *procurator*, which indicates primarily an economic function.

The first stages of direct Roman rule in Judaea appear to have restored a measure of tranquillity to the land, and compared to Herodian times may have eased some tension. Before long, however, relations between the Jewish sector and the authorities deteriorated, beginning in the days of Pontius Pilate (26-36 C.E.) and getting progressively worse under the emperor Gaius Caligula (37-41 C.E.). The latter almost pushed the nation into outright rebellion with his demand that a statue be set up in the Jerusalem Temple,¹¹² the affair being resolved only by his assassination. By

¹⁰⁷ *Ant.* 17:271-85; *War* 2:56-65.

¹⁰⁸ Dio Cassius 53:12; cf. Stern, 'The Province of Judaea', 309-10.

¹⁰⁹ *Ant.* 17:355; 18:1-2; Luke 2:1-2; Acts 5:37; for the chronological problems regarding the census, cf. Schürer, *History* 1, 258-9, 399-427; Stern, 'The Province of Judaea', 372-4.

¹¹⁰ *War* 2:499ff.

¹¹¹ As indicated by the inscription found in the theater of Caesarea relating to the governorship of Pontius Pilate; cf. Schürer, *History* 1, 358 n. 22; Stern, 'The Province of Judaea', 316, n. 4.

¹¹² Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium*, 188, 203ff.; *Ant.* 18:261; *War* 2: 185-7; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5:9.

the time of the last Roman governors, total anarchy seems to have prevailed in Judaea, and even Josephus who ordinarily refrains from blaming the Roman regime for the Jewish rebellion, makes no attempt to conceal his contempt for the last governors, in particular Gessius Florus.¹¹³

Institutions and Parties in Second Temple Judaea

The Roman conquest notwithstanding, considerable autonomy in local affairs as well as non-intervention in the religious life of the Jewish people was characteristic of much of the period under discussion.¹¹⁴ Needless to say, much of this activity centered around the Temple and Jerusalem, which, beginning with the days of Persian rule over *Yehud*, remained a focal point of Jewish existence.¹¹⁵ By early Hellenistic times the Jews were commonly identified with Jerusalem, to the extent that Polybius could refer to them as those 'living about the Temple of Jerusalem'.¹¹⁶ As a result, the various components of Jewish leadership, and even those not of a strictly religious or ritualistic nature, nevertheless found themselves linked to Jerusalem. The most obvious of these elements was the high priesthood, which remained the central office within Jewish society throughout the Second Temple period. Not only was the high priest responsible for Temple ritual, but during much of the period he served as the political representative of the nation, and frequently as an economic functionary, responsible for the collection of taxes. Thus there emerged in the early Hellenistic period an impression of the Jewish people as a nation ruled by priests, spelled out in detail by Hecataeus of Abdera.¹¹⁷ As we have noted, major changes in Jewish leadership ensued in later Second Temple times, and yet all are linked in one measure or another with the priesthood: the Hasmoneans served as high priests themselves; the Herodians married into the priesthood (as did the Tobiads before them) and appointed the high priests, and even in the midst of the Great War against Rome the priesthood played a major role.

Alongside the priesthood there apparently existed at different stages of Second Temple history various bodies or institutions representing other

¹¹³ *War* 2:278; it is worth noting that during the reign of Claudius there was a marked change in the ethnic origin of officials in the Roman administration of Judaea. At least three of the last seven governors were of Greek or Eastern origin (as opposed to governors of Latin origin in the earlier period). This helps to explain the consistent support of Greek-Syrian elements displayed by the last governors, a phenomenon that contributed in no small measure to the strained relations between the authorities and the Jewish population.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Safrai, 'Jewish Self-Government'.

¹¹⁵ On the Temple and its place in Jewish life cf. Safrai, in *WHJP* 7, 284-337; see also Flusser, *WHJP* 8, 17-19; Schürer, *History* 2, 237-313.

¹¹⁶ *Ant.* 12:136; for the inference here cf. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors* 1, 114, note to line 136.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors* 1, 28.

segments of society, and fulfilling different functions. The nature of one such institution, the Great Synagogue (כנסת הגדולה) remains enigmatic.¹¹⁸ Certain scholars interpret this to refer to an early permanent institution in Jerusalem, a forerunner to the Sanhedrin, while others see it as a framework for the convening of representatives of the nation in times of crisis, or when fateful decisions had to be taken (e.g. the appointment of Simon, I Macc 14).¹¹⁹

By the Hellenistic period it is clear that alongside the priesthood there functioned a council of elders – *gerousia* – in Jerusalem. In fact, it was this body that seems to serve as the official representative institution of the Jewish people,¹²⁰ and until the Hasmonean uprising they commonly appear before the high priest in correspondence issued by the authorities.

By the late Second Temple period the existence of yet another institution is beyond doubt. An abundance of sources refer to the *Sanhedrin* from the first stages of Roman rule in Judaea,¹²¹ with the first clear allusion to a trial before that body being the case of Herod, then a young governor of Galilee under Hyrcanus II and accused of murder.¹²² Later trials appear in the New Testament, in relation to Jesus (Mark 14:53ff.), Peter (Acts 4) and Paul (Acts 22:30ff.).¹²³ Common to Josephus and the New Testament is the depiction of the *Sanhedrin* primarily as a tribunal and political body,¹²⁴ with the high priest serving in some major capacity. The rabbinic sources, on the other hand, frequently refer to the *Sanhedrin* (or ‘The Great Court’ and a variety of other names)¹²⁵ as a legislative body comprised of 70 or 71 elders, ‘from whence *halakhah* goes out to Israel’.¹²⁶ Beyond those scholars who simply reject the historicity of one set of sources or another,¹²⁷ various theories have been proposed to reconcile the different descriptions. Some

¹¹⁸ The ‘Men of the Great Synagogue’ appear in rabbinic sources as a link in the chain of Jewish tradition, spanning the period between the prophets and the sages (*M. Aboth* 1:1). Attributed to them in later rabbinic literature are the canonization of portions of the Scriptures, establishment of certain prayers and benedictions, as well as the division of the oral Law into various categories; cf. Mantel, ‘The Nature of the Great Synagogue’, 69ff.; *id.*, in *WHJP* 8, 44-52.

¹¹⁹ For further discussion see Kraus, ‘The Great Synod’; Englander, ‘The Men of the Great Synagogue’; Finkelstein, *The Men of the Great Synagogue*.

¹²⁰ E.g. *Ant.* 12:138; on the change in the status of the *gerousia* under the Hasmoneans cf. Stern, *Documents*, 34.

¹²¹ The most comprehensive compilation of the material is Mantel, *Studies in the History of the Sanhedrin*; see also Schürer, *History* 2, 199ff.

¹²² *Ant.* 14:168ff. The term appears first in Josephus in connection with the attempts by Gabinius to divide Judaea into five *synhedria*, cf. *Ant.* 14:91.

¹²³ For the trial of James see *Ant.* 20:200.

¹²⁴ See for example Josephus, *Life* 62, where the *Sanhedrin* serves as the governing body of Jews at the outset of the Great Revolt, instructing Josephus as commander of Galilee.

¹²⁵ Cf. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 187-8.

¹²⁶ *T. Hagigah* 2:9; *T. Sanhedrin* 7:1.

¹²⁷ Cf. Schürer, *History* 2, 210f.

have suggested concomitant bodies functioning alongside each other in Jerusalem;¹²⁸ while others have postulated a change in the nature and composition of the institution reflecting the political vicissitudes of the different periods.¹²⁹

This last theory in particular takes into account the ongoing tension between the various sects and parties in Second Temple Judaea, a phenomenon discussed briefly above. As for the institutions in Jerusalem, the prolonged struggle between Pharisees and Sadducees could not help but make itself felt in almost all areas of religious and political activity. While the Pharisees never encouraged a total removal from Temple worship, their opposition to the Sadducean control of that Temple notwithstanding, it is a fair guess to assume that the growing stress on the reading and preaching of the Torah in synagogues served as a major vehicle for enhancing the independent status of the Sages.¹³⁰ In the Temple itself numerous disputes erupted between proponents of the two groups, or more precisely between the priestly oligarchy given to Sadducean influence and the gathered masses supporting Pharisaic tradition. These disputes, needless to say, might have been rooted in the major distinction between the two groups, with the Pharisees 'passing on to the people certain regulations handed down by former generations and not recorded in the Laws of Moses' (i.e. Oral Tradition) while the Sadducees considered valid only those regulations written down.¹³¹ Certain disputes, nevertheless, must have also reflected social and political tensions between the groups.¹³²

Opposition to Rome and the Great Revolt

Pharisees and Sadducees chose to remain, and frequently clash, within the mainstream of Jewish life. At the same time, certain segments of society appear to have opted for a preparation towards the future, and a distinct

¹²⁸ In particular Büchler, *Das Synedrion*; Mantel, *Studies*, 61-101.

¹²⁹ Cf. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 185-205.

¹³⁰ For the Synagogue and its place in Second Temple history see Safrai, in *WHJP* 8, 65-98; *id.* 'Temple', 908-44.

¹³¹ *Ant.* 13:297-8; one famous clash between representatives of the two groups in the *Sanhedrin* obviously reflects varying religious beliefs and traditions, cf. Acts 23:6-8.

¹³² Cf. Marcus, 'The Pharisees'. However, this does not warrant the relegation of the Pharisees as a whole to the social class of 'urban Plebeians'; see Finkelstein, *The Pharisees*, 13. The literature on Pharisees and Sadducees is enormous, and to a degree reflects the source problem cited above regarding the Sanhedrin. In this case Josephus stresses the 'philosophical' differences between the groups (*War* 2: 162-6; *Ant.* 13:171-3; 297-8; 18:11-18); the New Testament is interested primarily in the groups as background for presenting the early Christian message (cf. Neusner, *From Politics to Piety*, 67-80); whereas the Rabbis were obviously interested in legal traditions over which differences existed, although it would be mistaken to overlook the numerous rabbinic references to disputes of a theological nature. For a bibliography on Pharisees and Sadducees cf. Schürer, *History* 2, 381-2.

apocalyptic fervour emerges towards the latter part of the Second Temple period.¹³³ This eschatological expectation of cataclysmic events and the 'end of days' need not, in and of itself, have required one to sever all ties with society. Most certainly such phenomena as the anticipation of a messianic deliverance had been widely accepted by a broad spectrum of Jews.¹³⁴ In this context, the Qumran community seems to have taken a more radical approach, believing that only those who prepare themselves totally for this event will ultimately share in its fruits; hence the well-known break of this group from the rest of society, their total separation 'from all perverse men who walk in the ways of wickedness' and their removal into the wilderness.¹³⁵ While the numerous components of apocalyptic and oracular literature, as well as the particular theology of the Qumran sect, will be dealt with in subsequent chapters of this volume, the political aspect of these eschatological hopes must be stressed here, because it had an immediate impact on Jewish history in the last days of the Second Temple. As noted above, the Roman conquest in general, and in particular the turbulent days in Judaea following Herod's death, were an ideal setting for the propagation of beliefs regarding an imminent deliverance from the yoke of foreign conquest. Indeed, that messianic overtones are discernible within the anti-Roman movement appears beyond doubt. Josephus, who commonly refrained from alluding to messianic expectations, states openly that what aroused the rebels to take up arms 'was an ambiguous oracle, likewise found in their sacred scriptures, to the effect that at that time one from this country would become ruler of the world'.¹³⁶ These hopes hardly remained secret. Even Tacitus reports that in the priestly writings of the Jews there was a prophecy 'that this was the very time when the East would grow strong and that men starting from Judaea would possess the world'.¹³⁷

In stressing this undercurrent of Jewish sentiment, however, one point must not be overlooked. Jewish opposition to Rome was far from united under one common banner or ideology. One of the striking aspects of the movement is the bitter fratricide that ensues almost until the fall of the Temple itself.¹³⁸ In describing the various groups, Josephus appears to

¹³³ The phenomenon itself, of course, is apparent throughout Second Temple history; cf. Charles, *Eschatology*; Russell, *The Message*.

¹³⁴ Cf. Schürer, *History* 2, 505-13; even one as moderate as Philo was party to such hopes, see Wolfson, *Philo* 2, 395-426.

¹³⁵ 1QS 8:13; 9:19-20.

¹³⁶ *War* 6:312.

¹³⁷ *Histories* 5:13,2. See also Suetonius, *Vespasian* 4:5, 'there had spread all over the orient an old and established belief that it was fated at that time for men coming from Judaea to rule the world.' On these prophecies cf. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors* 2, 61-2.

¹³⁸ For various theories on the nature and identity of the different movements see: Farmer, *Maccabees*; Hengel, *Die Zeloten*; Smith, 'Zealots and Sicarii'; Appelbaum, 'The Zealots'; Stern, 'Zealots'; *id.*, in *WHJP* 8, 263-301, 374-7; Rhoads, *Israel in Revolution*.

distinguish between a Galilean element the roots of which go back to the early days of Roman rule, and the later rebels who appear on the Jerusalem scene with the outbreak of hostilities in 66 C.E., and are commonly referred to by Josephus as ‘Zealots’.

The former group, Josephus claims, established a clearcut ideology of rebellion, as a reaction to the census of Quirinius: ‘They said that the assessment carried with it a status amounting to downright slavery, and appealed to the nation to make a bid for independence’.¹³⁹ The implication of ‘slavery’ here has a decidedly religious overtone, and in this respect the ideology of the revolt assumed a religious motivation: ‘They have a passion for liberty that is almost unconquerable since they are convinced that God alone is their leader and master’.¹⁴⁰ The proponents of this theology, which in effect raised the idea of political independence to a religious plane, are frequently designated as *sicarii* by Josephus. Rooted in Galilee, they were associated with a family of rebels, beginning with Ezekias in the days of young Herod’s rule as governor of Galilee, through the leadership of Judah the Galilean (possibly the son of Ezekias), and down to the third and fourth generations of that family during the Great War. This attachment to a dynasty of sorts manifests itself with the appearance of yet another member of the family, Menahem, who appears in Jerusalem at the outset of the Great War as a sort of king,¹⁴¹ and it is a reasonable assumption that messianic hopes were attached to his person. This party seems to have raised a radical social banner as well, and in the course of the early fighting in Jerusalem they set fire to the municipal archives ‘eager to destroy the money-lender’s bonds and to prevent the recovery of debts, in order to win over a host of grateful debtors, and to cause a rising of the poor against the rich’.¹⁴² To be sure, the *sicarii* appear in Jerusalem at the very beginning of the war in 66, but were turned away by the local Zealot movement, with many of its members, among them Menahem, killed. Remnants of the group retreated to Masada, where they were destined to live out the war until 74, when, having conquered the rest of the land, Roman forces finally confronted them, precipitating – if Josephus’ account is to be trusted – one of the epic and tragic episodes of ancient Jewish history.¹⁴³

In contrast to the *sicarii*, the Zealots appear in Josephus’ account primarily as the Jerusalemite rebels, headed by several members of the priesthood, and with their major stronghold the Temple itself. During the war, however, these groups were joined by a variety of anti-Roman elements, initially the Idumeans, and after the fall of Galilee in autumn of 67,

¹³⁹ *Ant.* 18:4.

¹⁴⁰ *Ant.* 18:23.

¹⁴¹ *War* 2:433-4.

¹⁴² *War* 2:427.

¹⁴³ For two recent re-evaluations Josephus’ account of the Masada suicide, cf. Cohen, ‘Masada’; Stern, ‘The Suicide of Eleazar ben Yair’.

by the most outstanding military figure of the war – John of Gischala.¹⁴⁴ Yet another leader – Simon bar Giora – joined these ranks somewhat later, with a religious and social platform not far from that of the *sicarii*. He too appears as a charismatic general with regal presence, and Josephus claims that each soldier under his command ‘was quite prepared to take his very own life had he given the order’.¹⁴⁵ Given the variety of personal leaders, as well as the geographical, social and religious backgrounds of the various freedom-fighters, one can understand the tensions that existed within the Jewish camp, effectively precluding any real unified opposition to Rome.

The major part of the Great War itself lasted for four years, from the spring of 66 to the summer of 70. Josephus sees two events as responsible for igniting the conflagration: the clash between Jews and Greeks in Caesarea (*War* 2:284ff.) and the sacking of the Temple by Florus (*War* 2:293ff.). But obviously these were only the last overt expressions of an intolerable hostility that had taken hold of the country. Appointed by Nero to suppress the revolt was Titus Flavius Vespasian, one of Rome’s leading generals;¹⁴⁶ the legions and various auxiliary forces placed at his disposal numbered some sixty thousand men. Vespasian cautiously proceeded in subduing the country bit by bit, conquering Galilee in 67 and most of Judaea in 68; from the Roman base in Jericho, at this stage, a contingent appears to have proceeded to Qumran and destroyed the Essene center there.¹⁴⁷ Nero’s death on 9 June 68 brought a limited cessation to the hostilities, and after the abortive attempts at installing a new emperor, the legions of Egypt, Syria and Palestine proposed their own commander as candidate. One year later Vespasian was declared emperor, and the final phase of the war, culminating in the siege of Jerusalem, was left to his son Titus. The Temple itself went up in flames on the ninth and tenth of *Av*, 70 C.E. Josephus’ attempts to exonerate Titus of all guilt for this event¹⁴⁸ have been convincingly set aside by modern historians.¹⁴⁹

Between the Wars: From Jerusalem to Yavneh

The destruction of the Second Temple was most certainly a major turning point in Jewish history, but attempts at a precise definition of the ensuing processes have engendered lively debate among scholars. Naturally, the lack of one religious focal point, i.e. the Temple, facilitated an enhanced

¹⁴⁴ For recent studies on John of Gischala see Rappaport, ‘John of Gischala’; *id.*, ‘John of Gischala in Galilee.’

¹⁴⁵ *War* 4:510; 5:309; cf. Loftus, ‘The Anti-Roman Revolts’.

¹⁴⁶ *War* 3:4f.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *War* 2:152-3.

¹⁴⁸ *War* 6:238-41.

¹⁴⁹ Alon, *Jews, Judaism, and the Classical World*, 252-68. Cf. below, pp. 200-3.

role for the synagogue, and in similar fashion leadership passed to a great extent from priests to Sages.¹⁵⁰ These new elements of religious expression and authority, synagogue and Sages, ultimately served as geographically decentralizing factors within the Jewish community. The leadership framework set up at Yavneh following the destruction,¹⁵¹ while taking care to stress continuity with Jerusalem, nevertheless served as a model for subsequent institutions, whether in other parts of Israel, particularly Galilee, or throughout the diaspora in a later stage. The argument for viewing the destruction as the beginning of Jewish *galut* (exile)¹⁵² commonly stresses the mobility of these new institutions, which assured a slow but definite centrifugal process leading away from one recognized centre, be it the Land of Israel in general, or Jerusalem in particular.¹⁵³ Certainly, Jews living in the first centuries after the destruction tended to distinguish between two eras in Jewish history: ‘the time of the Temple — and that of no Temple’,¹⁵⁴ with the latter being referred to as ‘this era’ (הַזְמַן הַזֶּה). Nevertheless, the very fact that no major mass exodus of Jews followed the destruction, coupled with an awareness that the major components of Jewish authority, the Patriarchate and the body of rabbis that functioned alongside that office, continued to be based in the Land of Israel for generations after the events of 70 C.E. — all this suggests that a distinction must be drawn between the creation of a potentially decentralized Judaism, and the outright commencement of *galut* itself.¹⁵⁵

While the number of Jews who died during the Great War was by all accounts exceedingly high,¹⁵⁶ the spiritual devastation felt by the survivors was no less acute, and this emerges from a wide variety of sources. Among the last apocalyptic books written by Jews and included in the corpus of apocryphal and pseudepigraphal literature are works such as *2 Baruch* and *4 Ezra*, both written in the immediate aftermath of the destruction. The lamentation expressed in these works is accompanied by serious questions regarding the meaning of Jewish existence without a temple (e.g. *2 Baruch*

¹⁵⁰ See Neusner, ‘*A Life*’, pp. 196-199 for a summary of the advantages of Pharisaic leadership created by the destruction. On the nature of the transformation within rabbinic leadership following the destruction see Urbach, ‘Class-Status’.

¹⁵¹ For a description of Jewish autonomy and leadership after the destruction cf. Safrai, ‘Jewish Self-Government’, pp. 404-412.

¹⁵² For an excellent exposition of this Hebrew term and its implications in Jewish history, see Ben-Sasson, ‘*Galut*’.

¹⁵³ See Urbach, ‘The Jews in their Land’.

¹⁵⁴ E.g. *M. Hullin* 5:1.

¹⁵⁵ The main proponent of this approach is G. Alon, see his recently translated *The Jews in Their Land*, pp. 3-17.

¹⁵⁶ For a brief summary of the various figures in ancient historiography cf. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule*, p. 327 n. 152. For the political status and Roman administration of Provincia Judaea following the Great War cf. Schürer, *History* 1, pp. 514-520, and most recently Stern, ‘The Roman Administration’.

chapter 10), and in certain respects is echoed by rabbinic descriptions of ascetics who abstained from aspects of normal life and undertook perpetual mourning.¹⁵⁷ These phenomena were met head-on by the leaders of the Yavneh generation, with the emerging philosophy attributed primarily to Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai.¹⁵⁸ In response to his disciple's expressed fear that the lack of a temple precludes atonement for sin, Rabban Yohanan replies: 'We have another atonement as effective as this, and what is it? — Acts of loving kindness, as it is written: "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Hos. 6:6)'.¹⁵⁹ The thrust of a number of regulations attributed to Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai at Yavneh is the removal to Jewish communities at large of various customs once performed only in Jerusalem.¹⁶⁰ While these steps were justified as a means of 'remembering the Sanctuary', their ultimate effect was to induce large numbers of Jews into accepting the loss — albeit temporary — of the Temple, while at the same time maintaining part of the ancient ritual alongside the newly revised system of prayers.¹⁶¹

Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai was followed at Yavneh by Rabban Gamaliel II.¹⁶² Under Gamaliel, Yavnean institutions take on a measure of permanence. The patriarchate, with its particular blend of spiritual and political authority, begins only now to take shape,¹⁶³ and under Gamaliel II Palestinian hegemony over diaspora Jewry also reasserts itself. Great stress is placed on the functions of the new centre in all matters regarding the calendar, and contacts with various diaspora communities become more apparent.¹⁶⁴ One major consequence of this development (although possibly carried out after Gamaliel's death) may have been the decision to

¹⁵⁷ *T. Sotah* 15:11-15, ed. Lieberman p. 242-243; *B.T. Baba Bathra* 60b.

¹⁵⁸ For literature on Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai cf. Schürer, *History* 2, p. 369 n. 55; see also Safrai, 'Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai'.

¹⁵⁹ *Abot de R. Nathan*, A ch. 4, p. 21 (transl. Goldin p. 34); cf. Neusner, *A Life*, pp. 188-192; Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, pp. 46-55.

¹⁶⁰ *M. Rosh ha-Shana* 4:1-4; *B.T. Rosh ha-Shana* 31b.

¹⁶¹ No concrete evidence points to any serious resumption of sacrificial worship following the destruction (cf. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule*, p. 347 n. 62-63), although rabbinic law would seem to sanction such a development. Hence Safrai's contention that it was an active part of Rabban Yohanan's policy that prevented the renewal of sacrifices, cf. Safrai, 'Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai', p. 211.

¹⁶² The precise date of this succession, as well as the events surrounding Ben Zakkai's removal to Beror Hayil are unclear. Alon maintains that Gamaliel assumed leadership some 10-15 years after the destruction (cf. *The Jews in Their Land*, p. 119), and links Yohanan's retirement to opposition towards that sage among certain elements of the rabbinic movement; cf. Alon, pp. 337-343. Safrai maintains that it is untenable that a scion of a major Jewish family would have been allowed to acquire power and prestige under the Flavian dynasty; hence Gamaliel's appearance at Yavneh probably came upon the death of Diocletian in 96 C.E.; cf. Safrai, 'Restoration of the Jewish Community,' p. 30-31.

¹⁶³ For the degree of Roman involvement in this process see: Goodblatt, 'Roman Recognition'.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Alon, *The Jews in Their Land*, pp. 232-252.

commission a new translation of the Bible into Greek, namely that of Aquila.¹⁶⁵ Clearly, those rabbis of Palestine who are mentioned in connection with this project — R. Eliezer b. Hyrcanus, R. Joshua b. Hananiah and R. Akiva — must have had the needs of Jews in the Hellenistic-Roman diaspora in mind. But this endeavour, which succeeded to a certain degree in replacing the Septuagint as the commonly accepted text among Greek-speaking Jews,¹⁶⁶ also reflects on another issue which Yavnean leadership seems to have taken up. If the Septuagint had fallen into disfavour in rabbinic eyes, one major reason was the fact that it had evolved into the widely accepted version of the growing Christian community.¹⁶⁷

One of the major tasks taken up by the leadership of the Yavneh generation appears to be a redefinition of the boundaries of the Jewish community, slowly leading up to a negation of the very legitimacy of sectarian Judaism.¹⁶⁸ In this context one might view the period between the two great revolts in terms of Jewish-Christian relations as transitory.¹⁶⁹ In Palestine the issue was not yet one of confrontation between two distinct communities, but rather one of formulating a policy towards Jewish-Christians. While not all *minim* (heretics) in rabbinic literature are Judaeo-Christians, it is a fair assumption that the formulation of the *birkat ha-minim* and its insertion into the main prayer at the initiative of Gamaliel II, is part of a process of isolating and declaring against the legitimacy of Jewish-Christianity.¹⁷⁰

While the term ‘normativization’ may be a bit extreme in defining the process of consolidation that Judaism underwent following the destruction,¹⁷¹ there is an undeniable feeling that concerted efforts were being made to minimize further fragmentation of the Jewish community. This tendency is particularly manifest in the realm of rabbinic literature and the history of *halakhah*. The opening statement of *Tosefta Eduyot* (1:1) is frequently cited in this context: ‘When the Sages entered the vineyard of Yavneh, they said: A time shall come when man shall seek a word of Torah and not find it, a word of the scribes and not find it . . . for one precept of the Torah shall not be like another. They declared: Let us begin with Hillel

¹⁶⁵ *P.T. Megillah* 1:2,71c; Jellicoe, *The Septuagint*, pp. 76-83.

¹⁶⁶ This is attested to by Church fathers such as Origen and Jerome, and as late as the 6th century there is evidence of Aquila being read in Jewish synagogues, in a *novella* of Justinian (Nr. 146; Feb. 13, 553).

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *Tanhumah*, *Tissa* 34 (127a): ‘The Holy One Blessed be He foresaw that the nations of the world will translate the Torah and read it in Greek, and they say: We are Israel . . .’

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Baron, *History* 2, pp. 129ff.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine*, pp. 137-145.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, pp. 288-307. For the precise target and aims of this benediction see Kimelman, ‘Birkat Ha-Minim’.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Moore, *Judaism* 1, p. 3.

and Shammai'. Certain scholars consider this statement as alluding to the first stages of the redaction of the Mishnah, with tractate *Eduyot* being the first such collection.¹⁷² Others, however, stress that what is reflected here is typical of the growing tendency at Yavneh, i.e. the need to arrive at decisions regarding those *halakhot* under dispute.¹⁷³ This development coincides with a whole series of traditions from Yavneh, all stressing the demand – voiced for the first time – that minority opinions acquiesce to the will of the majority,¹⁷⁴ and similarly that various Sages accept the ruling of the Patriarch.¹⁷⁵ Not insignificant in this context is the gathering consensus at Yavneh that the *halakhah* is to follow the teachings of the School of Hillel, one of the most central developments in the ultimate acceptance of the Mishnah as universally binding.¹⁷⁶

It is, of course, difficult to appraise how successful all these efforts were at immediately effecting a more cohesive Jewish community. Two great Jewish revolts were to follow the destruction of the Second Temple by no more than one and a half generations: the Jewish uprising under Trajan (114-117 C.E.) which engulfed major segments of the Jewish community in Egypt, North Africa (Cyrene), Cyprus, Mesopotamia and possibly (albeit to a lesser degree) Judaea,¹⁷⁷ and the Bar-Kokhba uprising in Judaea itself (132-135). Whether the initial successes of these wars, particularly of the Bar-Kokhba uprising, attest to the degree of Jewish consolidation achieved by the sages of Yavneh is still a matter for scholarly debate.¹⁷⁸ What cannot be denied is the crucial role of the first generation of Sages following the destruction in overcoming the initial trauma, as well as redefining and passing on to subsequent generations much of what ultimately came to be recognized as historic post-Temple Judaism.

¹⁷² Albeck, *Introduction to the Mishnah*, p. 82. Compare Epstein, *Introduction to Tannaic Literature*, p. 428, who limits the statement to an organization of the disputes between Hillel and Shammai, claiming that in fact earlier compilations of rabbinic law already existed.

¹⁷³ Cf. Urbach, *Sages*, p. 598.

¹⁷⁴ *M. Eduyot* 5:6; *B.T. Baba Metzia* 54 a-b.

¹⁷⁵ *M. Rosh ha-Shana* 2:8-9; *B.T. Bekhorot* 36a; *B.T. Berakhot* 27b-28a.

¹⁷⁶ See Safrai, 'The Decision According to the School of Hillel'.

¹⁷⁷ For a collection of articles on this war cf. D. Rokeah ed., *Jewish Rebellions in the Time of Trajan 115-117 C.E.*, Jerusalem 1978.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Oppenheimer, 'The Bar Kokhba Revolt', p. 40, who sees a direct link between national unity under Bar Kokhba and the achievement at Yavneh. For a debate on the nature of support for Bar Kokhba see: 'Bar Kokhba's Position as a Leader of the Nation', in *Cathedra* 29 (1983) 4-28 (a discussion, in Hebrew).