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Galilee and Judea

The Social World of Jesus

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The interest in Galilee in NT scholarship today is largely related to the renewal of the quest for the historical Jesus. Galilee was also the home of rabbinic Judaism in the period after the second Jewish revolt (132–35 C.E.), and it was there, in the schools of Sepphoris and Tiberias, that such classic texts of Judaism as the Mishnah and the Palestinian Talmud were produced between the years 200–450 C.E. This essay will concentrate on Galilean life of the first century C.E. Yet, as we will see, the issue of the Jewish character of the region is highly significant for that period also. In order to explore this aspect properly, we must give special attention to the ongoing relationship with Jerusalem.

Modern scholarship has portrayed Jesus in many different roles, everything from Zealot revolutionary to Cynic sage, and each of these accounts presumes a different picture of the Galilean social world that is deemed to have played a decisive role in determining the contours of his ministry. In order to obtain some objectivity, therefore, we must bracket concerns with Jesus in the first instance and attempt a description of the Galilean social world insofar as is feasible from writings other than the Gospels. In addition, a considerable body of archaeological evidence from the region relating to the Hellenistic and Roman periods has emerged over the past twenty-five years. Apart from the Synoptic Gospels, the writings of Josephus are of prime importance, but these are not unproblematic. In particular, his account of the first revolt (the *Jewish War*) and his self-defense against the defamation of one Justus of Tiberias (the *Life*),

both dealing with his own period in Galilee as commander on behalf of the Jewish revolutionary council in Jerusalem, are, to say the least, not unbiased accounts. In order to obtain some perspective, therefore, we will need a brief overview of the previous history of Galilee from the eighth century B.C.E.

Galilean History in Outline

The name *Galilee,* meaning "the circle," in all probability is derived from the experience of the early Israelites inhabiting the interior highlands and surrounded by Canaanite city-states. Judea, on the other hand, is a tribal name that came to particular prominence in the monarchic period because David was of Judean origin. The first Galilean tribes were Zebulun, Naphtali, and Asher, with the tribe of Dan migrating north later. The various accounts of the different tribes and their characteristics (Gen. 49; Deut. 33; Judg. 5), though dated to the period of the judges, may well reflect later situations where the issue of ethnic identity came under threat from various sources.[1] Certainly the north bore the brunt of the Assyrian onslaught of the eighth century B.C.E., with Tiglath-pileser III's invasion resulting in the destruction, and possibly the depopulation, of many centers in upper and lower Galilee (2 Kings 15:29; Isa. 9:1). However, unlike the case of Samaria some ten years later (2 Kings 17:24), there is no mention of a foreign, non-Israelite population being introduced to Galilee at that time. A century and a half later, Judah succumbed to the Babylonians, with the destruction of the temple and the deportation of the king and the leading members of the Judean aristocracy to Babylon in 582 B.C.E. Restoration occurred quickly under the Persians, with the edict of Cyrus in 515 B.C.E. allowing the successors of the deportees to return and rebuild the temple and reestablish the Persian province of Yehud (Judea). According to Josephus, it was from that time that the name *Ioudaioi* (Jews) was given to the inhabitants of the temple state (*Ant.* 11.173).

Galilee next appears in the historical record in the mid–second century B.C.E., when an independent Jewish state emerged under the successors of the Maccabees, the Hasmoneans. They initiated campaigns of expansion that eventually led to the establishment of a kingdom that territorially was as extensive as that of David and Solomon in the ninth century. For the first time in almost a millennium, therefore, Galilee and Judea were under the same native rulership, with Jerusalem again the political as well as the religious capital. At the same time, the name *Ioudaios* began to be used not just for the inhabitants of Judea, but for all who embraced the Jewish temple ideology

1. Sean Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian: A Study of Second Temple Judaism* (1980; reprint, Edinburgh: Clark, 2000), 3–21; Rafael Frankel, "Galilee: Prehellenistic," *ABD* 2:879–94.

by worshiping in Jerusalem.[2] By the mid–first century B.C.E., however, Rome was emerging as master of the eastern Mediterranean, and the Hasmoneans had been replaced by the Herodians, an Idumean dynasty entrusted by Rome to maintain its interests in the region as client kings. Galilee, with Sepphoris, close to Nazareth, as the administrative center for the region, was recognized as a Jewish territory, together with Judea proper and Perea beyond the Jordan. They were, however, soon incorporated into the kingdom of Herod the Great and were expected to make their contribution to the honoring of his Roman patron, Augustus.

The long reign of Herod as king of the Jews (40–4 B.C.E.) made a deep impact on every aspect of both Galilean and Judean society. When Herod died, Augustus refused to appoint any of his sons as his successor, assigning instead different regions to each: Galilee and Perea to Antipas; Judea to Archelaus; and to Philip, Batanaea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis in northern Transjordan, territories that Augustus had granted to Herod the Great as a reward for fidelity. Galilee was once again, therefore, administratively separate from Judea, something reflected in Matthew's Gospel in explaining how Jesus, though born in Judea, came to live there: Joseph, "hearing that Archelaus ruled in Judea in the place of Herod, his father," took Jesus and his mother to Galilee, and they came to live at Nazareth (Matt. 2:22–23). Josephus gives a broader background to this information. Archelaus had so outraged his subjects that he was deposed by Rome in 6 C.E., and thereafter Judea was ruled as a procuratorship, or Roman province of second rank, with the governor resident in Caesarea Maritima, and Jerusalem acting as the temple city controlled by the priestly aristocracy.

Antipas aspired to, but was never given, the title of king, but only that of tetrarch. He ruled in Galilee and Perea until 39 C.E., when he too was deposed and his territory was handed over to his nephew Agrippa I. Despite this lesser status, he continued with the style and policy of his father in ensuring that Roman concerns were taken care of in his territories. John the Baptist suffered at his hands, probably not for the reason given in the Gospels (Mark 6:13–29), but for that given by Josephus, namely, that John's popularity and espousal of justice for the poor gave cause for concern that an uprising might occur (*Ant.* 18.116–119). This would have been deemed a serious failure in imperial eyes, since client kings were tolerated only if they could be seen to ensure stability and loyalty to Rome and its values. Apart from the Jerusalem temple, Herod the Great had confined his major building projects to the periphery of the Jewish territories: Samaria was renamed Sebaste (Latin: Augustus), and a temple to Roma and Augustus was built there, as also at Caesarea Maritima on the coast, where a magnificent harbor was developed. In the north a temple to Augustus was built at Paneas, which his son, Philip, later renamed Caesarea (Philippi).

2. Sean Freyne, "Behind the Names: Galileans, Samaritans, *Ioudaioi*," in *Galilee through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures,* ed. Eric M. Meyers (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 39–55.

Antipas also continued this tradition of honoring the Roman overlords through monumental buildings in Galilee. Sepphoris was made "the ornament of all Galilee" and called *autokratoris,* probably alluding to Augustus as sole ruler (*Ant.* 18.27). In 19 C.E. he founded a new city, Tiberias, on the lakefront, honoring Augustus's successor as emperor.

This brief account of Galilean history is crucial for a correct understanding of the social world of Palestine in the first century C.E. Historical factors were largely determinative of shifting population and settlement patterns in the different regions, thereby explaining the religious and cultural loyalties also. Economic conditions were dependent on the political realities of the day, since all ancient economies were to a considerable extent politically controlled. It is to these topics that we now turn, focusing on Galilee and Judea separately, while also highlighting aspects of the relationship between them based on a shared religious tradition.

Who Were the Galileans? Religious and Cultural Affiliations

The inhabitants of Galilee are described in the sources as Galileans. But who were they? What was their provenance, what social and economic strata did they represent, and what were their religious and cultural affiliations? Definitive answers to questions such as these are hard to achieve, but the effort to address them adequately can offer some criteria for evaluating different proposals. Briefly, one can distinguish three broad lines of response in the contemporary discussions to the questions posed, with minor variations to each.

1. One proposal, by the German scholar Albrecht Alt, maintains that the Galileans of the later sources are direct descendants of the old Israelite population, who had remained undisturbed, it is claimed, in the first wave of Assyrian conquest of the north, and who had maintained their essential Yahwistic beliefs over the centuries. The inhabitants of Galilee freely and naturally joined the *ethnos tōn Ioudaiōn* when the opportunity arose after the Hasmonean expansion to the north, bypassing their historical, religious, and cultic center of Samaria within the old northern kingdom.[3] More recently, Richard Horsley also has espoused the notion of the old Israelite population remaining undisturbed in Galilee, but he sees the situation in the Hasmonean times quite differently. Over the centuries the Galileans had developed their own customs and practices that made them quite different from the Judeans, despite their sharing of the same Yahwistic beliefs based on the Pentateuch. Thus, according to Horsley, the Hasmonean expansion represented not a liberation but an imposition on the Galileans of the laws of the Judeans, laws that he regards as restrictive and designed to serve the material needs of the aristocracy of the Judean temple state.[4]
2. The opposite view is held by other scholars who accept the phrase "Galilee of the nations" (Isa. 9:1; 1 Macc. 5:15) as an accurate description of the population of the region and its cultural affiliations, especially from the Hellenistic period onward. This view reached its most extreme expression with the claim by Walter Grundmann in 1941 that Galilee was pagan, and therefore that Jesus in all probability was not a Jew.[5] Not everybody who accepts the notion of pagan influences in Galilee goes quite that far. Instead, Galileans are seen as having been more exposed to Hellenistic culture generally, so that they espoused a more open form of Judaism, influenced as they were, it is claimed, by the ethos of the surrounding cities.[6] Most recently this emphasis on Greco-Roman culture in Galilee has taken the form of the claim of Cynic influences on the population there. This was a countercultural movement within Greco-Roman society, similar, it is claimed, to that of Jesus and his followers.[7] Since the Cynics were an urban phenomenon, proponents of a Cynic presence there speak also of an urbanized Galilee, but with little support for such claims from the available evidence.
3. A third position, the one that in my opinion best corresponds to the archaeological evidence, speaks of the Judaization of Galilee from the south by the Hasmoneans, as they triumphantly marched north and east. Again, however, there are variations to this account. Some scholars have accepted uncritically Josephus's version, according to which the Hasmonean Aristobulus I had, in 104 B.C.E., forcibly circumcised the Itureans, a seminomadic Arab people who had infiltrated into upper Galilee (*Ant.* 13.319).[8] Such a

3. Albrecht Alt, "Galiläische Probleme 1937–40," in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israels,* 3 vols. (Munich: Beck, 1953–64), 2:363–435.

4. Richard Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1995), 34–62.

5. Walter Grundmann, *Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1941).

6. Walter Bauer, "Jesus der Galiläer," in *Festgabe für Adolf Jülicher* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1927), 16–34; W. Bertram, "Der Hellenismus in der Urheimat des Evangeliums," *AR* 32 (1935): 265–81.

7. Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 53–97; idem, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 51–68; John D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); Leif Vaage, *Galilean Upstarts: Jesus' First Followers according to Q* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1994); F. G. Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1994), 115–68. For a detailed criticism of the hypothesis, see Hans D. Betz, "Jesus and the Cynics: Survey and Analysis of a Hypothesis," *JR* 74 (1994): 453–75.

8. Emil Schürer, *History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ,* rev. ed., 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1973–87), 2:7–10. Cf. W. Schottroff, "Die Ituräer," *ZDPV* 98 (1982): 125–47; M. Hartel, *Northern Golan Heights: The Archaeological Survey as Source for Local History* (Qatsrin: Israel Department for Antiquities and Museums); Shimon Dar, *Settlements and Cult Sites on Mount Hermon, Israel: Iturean Culture in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods,* BAR International Series 589 (Oxford: Tempus Reparatum, 1993).

background, if correct, would have made the Galilean Jews, as recent converts, suspect in the eyes of their southern coreligionists, thus explaining some later disparaging remarks by the rabbis about the Galilean lack of piety.[9] Other scholars, on the basis of the material culture, believe that Galilee was settled from the south in the wake of the Hasmonean conquests.[10] This would explain their loyalty to Jerusalem and its worship documented in the literary sources, since they would have been of Judean stock originally and were sent to Galilee because of their support for the Hasmoneans.[11] A further variation on the Galilean Jews is the view that suggests a Babylonian influence in view of indications from the later literary sources of contacts between Galilean and Babylonian rabbis.[12]

In principle there is nothing to preclude the Galilean population from including Israelite, Iturean, Judean, and even Babylonian strands in the ethnic mix by the first century C.E., and it would be somewhat unrealistic to exclude such elements entirely. However, certain claims can be ruled out as unlikely or overstated on the basis of our present knowledge of the situation. The case for a pagan Galilee is poorly supported by the literary evidence and receives no support whatsoever from the archaeological explorations. Nor is there any evidence of a lasting Iturean presence in the region, even though they may have infiltrated upper Galilee for a time. There are also several problems with the idea of Galilean Israelites, not least of which is the likelihood of a largely peasant population maintaining a separate Yahwistic identity over the centuries in the absence of a communal cultic center.[13] Thus, the theory of the Judaization of Galilee from the south appears to be the most likely hypothesis in our present state of knowledge. Surveys have shown a marked increase of new foundations from the Hasmonean period onward, and at the same time the destruction of older sites, such as Har Mispe Yamim, which had a pagan cult center.[14] Excavations at sites such as Sepphoris, Jotapata, Gamala, and Meiron, as well as lesser sites, have uncovered artifacts of the distinctive Jewish way of life such as ritual baths, stone jars, and natively produced ceramic household

9. Adolf Büchler, *Der Galiläische 'Am ha-'aretz des Zweiten Jahrhunderts* (1906; reprint, Hildesheim: Olmsz, 1968).

10. Mordechai Aviam, "Galilee: the Hellenistic and Byzantine Period," in *The New Encylopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, ed. E. Stern, 4 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 2:455–58; Jonathan L. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 2000), 23–61.

11. Freyne, "Behind the Names," 39–56.

12. Etienne Nodet, "Galilee from the Exile to Jesus," in Etienne Nodet and Justin Taylor, *The Origins of Christianity: An Exploration* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1997), 127–64.

13. Freyne, "Behind the Names," 41–44; Philippe Bruneau, "Les Israelites de Delos et la Juivre Delienne," *BCH* 106 (1982): 465–504; A. Thomas Kraabel, "New Evidence of the Samaritan Diaspora Has Been Found on Delos," *BA* (1984): 44–46.

14. Rafael Frankel, "Har Mispe Yamim—1988/89," *ESI* 9:100–102; Rafael Frankel and Rafael Ventura, "The Mispe Yamim Bronzes," *BASOR* 311 (1998): 39–55.

wares—all indicators of a concern with ritual purity emanating from Jerusalem and its temple and an avoidance of the cultural ethos of the encircling pagan cities and their lifestyles.[15]

Social Stratification: A Pyramid of Power

Most recent social historians of Roman Palestine adopt Gerhard Lenski's model of agrarian empires as their working hypothesis. This envisages a pyramidal view of society in which most of the power, prestige, and privilege resides at the top among the narrow band of ruling elite and native aristocracy, if and when these are to be distinguished. Beneath these are the retainer classes, which help to maintain the status quo on behalf of the elites, thereby gaining for themselves some measure of relative prestige. On a further rung down the ladder, as the base broadens, are the peasants, the free landowners who are the mainstay of the society but who cannot aspire to a higher place on the social scale. Instead, they are in constant danger of being demoted to the landless poor and destitute due to increased taxation, a bad harvest, or aggrandizement of property by the ruling elites for their own purposes. Such a model certainly fits well in general terms with what we know of Roman Galilee, once certain adjustments are made to this ideal picture to account for local circumstances.

Though Antipas never was given the title of king but simply that of tetrarch, there is no doubt that within Galilee itself he and his court represented the ruling elite. In one sense they could be said to be retainers on behalf of the emperor, but once Antipas was prepared to accept the role that Roman imperial policies in the East had dictated for him, his role was assured.[16] Josephus informs us that he "loved his tranquillity" (*Ant.* 18.245)—a characterization that fits well with the Gospel portraits, despite his attempts to upstage at Rome the governor of Syria on one occasion (*Ant.* 18.101–104). Augustus had decreed that he could have a personal income of two hundred talents from the territories of Galilee and Perea, and presumably he could also introduce special levies for building and other projects, especially when these were intended to honor the imperial household (*Ant.* 17.318). Not merely did Antipas and his

15. Jonathan Reed ("Galileans, 'Israelite Village Communities' and the Sayings Gospel Q," in Meyers, *Galilee through the Centuries*, 87–108), gives the most detailed and up-to-date report of the evidence. Cf. Eric Meyers, James Strange, and Denis Groh, "The Meiron Excavation Project: Archaeological Survey in Galilee and Golan, 1976," *BASOR* 233 (1978): 1–24; Eric Meyers, Ehud Netzer, and Carol Meyers, *Sepphoris* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992); David Adan-Bayewitz and Mordechai Aviam, "Iotapata, Josephus and the Siege of 67: Preliminary Report of the 1992–94 Seasons," *JRA* 10 (1997): 131–65; Shmaryahu Gutman, "Gamala," in *NEAEHL* 2:459–63.

16. The most detailed study of Antipas is that of Harold W. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas: A Contemporary of Jesus Christ*, SNTSMS 17 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

immediate family benefit from these concessions, but also a new class seems to have emerged around him, called in the Gospels the Herodians, presumably as a replacement for the older, native Hasmonean aristocracy, which had disappeared after Herod the Great's takeover.[17]

One passage that opens up an interesting perspective is the account of Herod's birthday where the list of guests is described as "the courtiers, the military officers, and the leading men of Galilee" (Mark 6:21). The *chiliarchoi* clearly are military personnel of some kind, suggesting that the tetrarch had a permanent army, however small, distinct from the militia, which he might call up for a particular engagement (*Ant.* 18.251–252). There is nothing unusual about such a force, nor does it necessarily imply a huge burden on the natives, as would be the case when soldiers were billeted in a region. The *chiliarchoi* attending the king's banquet were in all probability in charge of local policing and border posts and responsible for the personal protection of Antipas himself and his household. They thus belong to the retainer level rather than the aristocratic level on Lenski's model.

The *prōtoi tēs Galilaias* are also known to us from Josephus's writings. Two particular incidents involving their role are significant (*Ant.* 18.122, 261–309). In both incidents, the *prōtoi* clearly are influential Jews concerned about religious values, ostensibly at least, but they were also interested in the maintenance of law and order and the payment of the tribute to Rome. Josephus uses the term seventy-five times in his writings, and in the vast majority of uses it refers to "men who held official positions of authority among the Jews."[18] As such, they are to be distinguished from two other groups mentioned frequently, the *dynatoi* and the *hoi en telei,* the former referring to an aristocracy of power, as distinct from one of birth, and the latter to those holding some official office.

The third group mentioned by Mark are the *megistanes,* meaning "great ones" or "grandees." Thus, one might be tempted to identify them as courtiers as in Dan. 5:23 LXX. Josephus uses the term to refer to noblemen who at the outbreak of the revolt fled from the territory of Agrippa II, bringing their horses, their arms, and their possessions (*Life* 112). This seems to indicate local lords on whom the ruler normally could rely for active support at times of crisis, rather than court officials or administrative officers. It is not certain whether they could be identified with the Herodians who appear elsewhere in the Gospels (Mark 3:6; 12:13). The Latin ending to their name, *-ianoi,* suggests adherents or supporters of a person, and presumably, therefore, includes a wider circle than the immediate household. Indeed, at the time of the first revolt there are two people bearing the name of Herod, numbered among the ruling class of Tiberias, who recommended loyalty to Rome and who owned property across the Jordan. On that understanding, therefore,

17. Ibid., 331–43.

18. William Buehler, *The Pre-Herodian Civil War and Social Debate* (Basel: Rheinhardt, 1974), 20–53.

the Herodians in Galilee and elsewhere in the country could be described as wealthy landowners who presumably depended on benefactions from Herod the Great and his sons for their opulence. Inevitably, they would be stoutly loyal to the Herodian house and its policies, and could, arguably, be seen as the new Galilean aristocracy.

I have already suggested that the *chiliarchoi* of Mark's list belonged to the retainer class rather than to the ruling elite. Other functionaries who would fit into this same category also appear in the literature. Mention of the *archeia* in Sepphoris immediately suggests keepers of official records and scribes of various kinds, such as the *kōmogrammateis* "from every village of Galilee" to whom Luke refers (Luke 5:17). Justus of Tiberias, Josephus's rival in Galilee, had a good Greek education and was in the service of Agrippa II, presumably as a high administrative officer within his realm. Likewise, John of Gischala, Josephus's implacable enemy in 66 C.E., seems to have had some official role in the Roman administration of upper Galilee (*Life* 73). We can also assume a whole network of lesser officials within the highly bureaucratic structures that had been put in place from the early Hellenistic period by the Ptolemies, and that simply would have been inherited by successive regimes thereafter.[19] These officials would have included market managers (*agoranomoi*), tax collectors (*telōnai*), estate mangers (*oikonomoi*), judges (*kritai*), prison officers (*hypēretai, praktōres*), all of whom (or their equivalents) are alluded to in the Gospels. The tax collectors appear to be ubiquitous—an indication perhaps of the demands that were being made on people, not just to meet the tribute due to Antipas himself, but also various other levies and tolls that were imposed.[20] The payment at least of the *tributum soli,* or land tax, was in kind, as indicated by the mention of imperial granaries in upper Galilee at the outbreak of the first revolt. Presumably there were others throughout the region also (*Life* 71.119). In addition, there was the *tributum capitis,* or personal tax, which was a regular feature of the Roman tax system, and the collection of this would have imposed another layer of bureaucratic retainers within the Galilean social structure.

Beneath the retainers comes the peasantry, according to Lenski's model. These may include owners of small, family-sized holdings (ten to fifteen hectares), or tenants who engaged in subsistence farming while paying a rent, usually in kind to an absentee landowner. Ideally, all Jews were intended to participate in the use of the land, and the whole structure of tithing and agricultural offerings for the temple was built on that assumption. However, imperial domination had seen the emergence of large estates in Palestine, as elsewhere, and this inevitably put pressure on the traditional landowning system, as can

19. George McLean Harper, *Village Administration in the Roman Province of Syria,* Yale Classical Studies 1 (Princeton: n.p., 1928), 107–68; Victor Tcherikover, *Palestine under the Ptolemies: A Contribution to the Study of the Zenon Papyri,* vols. 1–4 of *Mizraim* (New York: Steichert, 1937).

20. Fritz Herrenbrück, *Jesus und die Zöllner,* WUNT 41 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1990).

be seen by the land reform of Nehemiah, already in the Persian period (Neh. 5:1–12). Though the Hasmoneans subscribed to the Israelite ideal of "each man under his own vine" (1 Macc. 14:12), there is plenty of evidence that they too continued the policy of large estates in the conquered territories, as did the Herodians also.[21] This pressure on the system meant that more and more people were driven off the land and reduced to penury.

The results of this sketch, patchy though it is, suggest that there was a mixed pattern of landownership in Galilee in the first century. Undoubtedly, the trend was toward larger estates, and thus a move away from mere subsistence farming of the traditional Jewish peasant class. The foundation of Tiberias is a good example of how pressure could come on small landowners as the ruling aristocracy's needs had to be met. In a preindustrial situation, land was the primary source of wealth, but this was in short supply in a Galilee that was thickly populated by the standards of the time (*J. W.* 3.41–43). Increased taxation to meet the demands of that lifestyle meant that many were reduced to penury, thus reaching the lowest level on Lenski's pyramid, that occupied by the landless poor and the urban destitute classes (*Life* 66–67). The slide from peasant owner to tenant to day laborer was inexorable for many, thus giving rise to social resentment, debt, banditry, and in the case of women, prostitution. All these social types can be documented from the Gospels either as typical characters in the parables of Jesus or as real-life figures for whom his movement offered a radical alternative to the harsh realities of daily life in Herodian Galilee.

Economic Systems

The problem of landownership in Galilee raises immediately the question of the economic situation there, since in preindustrial societies land was the primary resource. Relatively speaking, Galilee was well-endowed with natural resources. The melting winter snows from Hermon and seasonal rains ensured good growth and the production of a variety of crops. Josephus waxes lyrical about the climatic conditions of the plain of Genessar in the region of Capernaum, with its luxuriant range of fruits (*J. W.* 3.506–521). But the valleys of lower Galilee also yielded a variety of grain crops as well as flax, according to both Josephus and the rabbinic sources (*J. W.* 3.42–43).[22] The slopes of upper Galilee were suitable for the cultivation of grapes and olives, supporting the production of wine and oil, so graphically illustrated in the entrepreneurial activity of John of Gischala, as reported by Josephus (*Life* 74–75; *J. W.* 2.259–260).[23] In addition to the agricultural activity, the lake was a natural resource

21. See David A. Fiensy, *The Social History of Palestine in the Herodian Period: The Land Is Mine* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1991).

22. See Ze'ev Safrai, *The Economy of Roman Palestine* (London: Routledge, 1994).

23. Rafael Frankel, "Some Oil Presses from Western Galilee," *BASOR* 286 (1992): 39–71.

that supported a robust fishing industry, giving rise to the need for specialized services such as ceramic making for export of liquid products, as well as boat builders and net makers for the fish industry.[24]

The pertinent question that most concerns students of the Galilean economy is the extent to which the benefits of these products accrued to the peasants themselves, or whether they were creamed off by the ruling elite in taxes and other exactions.[25] Was the Galilean economy a politically controlled one to the extent that the peasants were mere serfs? In whose interest were the primary resources utilized? If, as I suggested, the Galilean landownership pattern represented a combination of large estates and family-run holdings, then it seems that some degree of commercial independence should be granted to the Galilean peasants. However, the refurbishment of Sepphoris and the building of Tiberias must have marked a turning point in terms of the Galilean economy. This was a watershed that coincided with Jesus' public ministry and provides the most immediate backdrop to his particular emphasis on the blessedness of the destitute and the call for trust in God's provident care for all.[26] The new Herodian class had to be accommodated with adequate allotments in order to maintain a luxurious lifestyle (cf. Matt. 11:8), and inevitably this meant pressure on the peasants. Debt was followed by appropriation of property, with slavery or brigandage as the only alternative ways of life.[27]

Yet this picture has to be balanced by the evidence from admittedly later sources that shows that a Jewish peasant class did survive the crisis of the two revolts. We find the rabbinic sources replete with references to markets, village traders, and laws to do with buying and selling.[28] This cannot be dismissed as mere idealization of later generations, but is rather a continuation of patterns that we can already discern in first-century sources such as the Gospels and Josephus's writings. However, the dividing line between subsistence and penury was a thin one, as the threatened strike by the Galilean peasants that occurred in the reign of the emperor Gaius Caligula (39 C.E.) demonstrates. In protest at the proposed erection of the emperor's statue in the Jerusalem temple, they decided not to till the land, and significantly, some members of the Herodian family were dismayed, fearing a consequence of insufficient resources to pay the annual tribute, thus leading to social anarchy (*Ant.* 18.273–274). Julius Caesar had recognized the problem for Jewish peasants by his restoration in 47 B.C.E. of their rights to support their temple, and consequently he reduced

24. K. C. Hanson, "The Galilean Fishing Economy and the Jesus Tradition," *BTB* 27 (1997): 99–111.

25. Horsley, *Galilee*, 202–22.

26. Sean Freyne, "The Geography, Politics, and Economics of Galilee and the Quest for the Historical Jesus," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluation of the Current State of Research*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig Evans, NTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 75–124.

27. Richard Horsley and John Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985).

28. Safrai, *Economy of Roman Palestine*, 224–72.

the annual tribute due to Rome (*Ant.* 14.190–216). Now, however, Antipas was annually entitled to two hundred talents (the equivalent of six hundred thousand Tyrian silver shekels) from Galilee and Perea as a personal income. This compares favorably with his brother, Philip, in the neighboring territory, who was allowed only one hundred talents. But Archelaus, before his deposition in 6 C.E., had been granted six hundred talents from Judea, Samaria, and Idumea, together with the coastal towns of Strato's Tower (Caesarea Maritima) and Joppa (*Ant.* 17.318–320). Antipas's income was still a considerable demand on the Galilean populace, however, and a direct tribute to Rome was, presumably, still applicable, even though this is not mentioned explicitly.[29]

The use of money is essential for any developing economy, since as stored value it allows for a far wider and more complex network of trading than does the barter of goods, which can occur only at a local level. Josephus does mention that John of Gischala used Tyrian money in his transactions with his fellow Jews from Syria. This piece of information is in line with archaeological evidence from various sites where Tyrian coinage seems to dominate the numismatic finds at locations not just in upper Galilee, such as Meiron, Gischala, and Khirbet Shema, but even at Gamala and Jotapata as well, both of which were lower Galilean strongholds of Jewish nationalism in the first revolt.[30] This suggests trading links with the important Phoenician port, despite the cultural differences between the city and its Jewish hinterland, which often boiled over into open hostility (*J.W.* 4.105). Most surprising is the fact that the Tyrian half-shekel was deemed to be "the coin of the sanctuary," which all male Jews were obliged to pay for the upkeep of the Jerusalem temple. The usual reason given is that the Tyrian money had retained a constant value in terms of its silver content for over a century and a half (126 B.C.E.–56 C.E.), whereas other currencies in the region had been debased. It may also have been due to the fact that Tyrian money was in far greater supply than any other currency, native or foreign. The Tyrian mint was recognized by Rome as the most important one in the region, and the Herodians were not allowed to produce silver coins. Thus, we cannot infer from the quantity of coins alone that Galilean commercial relations were concentrated on that one Phoenician city. In antiquity, coins remained in circulation for a very long time after their date of issue, and they may have served transactions at several different locations along the way, not just at the places of production and final deposition.

The Galilean economy was motivated by values and attitudes that were directly opposed to those of the Jewish religious worldview that both the Galilean peasants and their Jerusalem religious leaders espoused, at least in

29. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, 298–301.

30. Richard Hanson, *Tyrian Influence in the Upper Galilee* (Cambridge, Mass.: ASOR, 1980); Joyce Raynor and Yakov Meshorer, *The Coins of Ancient Meiron* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1985); D. Barag, "Tyrian Coinage in Galilee," *INJ* 6–7 (1982–83): 7–13; D. Syon, "The Coins of Gamala: an Interim Report," *INJ* 12 (1992–93): 34–55.

theory. In order to maintain their elite lifestyle, the Herodians creamed off the wealth of the land for their own benefit without giving anything back in return. The Jewish ideal, on the other hand, espoused an inclusive community in which all shared in the blessings of the land and its fruits. It was during the long reign of Antipas that this conflict became apparent for the Galilean peasants in the changing ethos represented by Sepphoris and Tiberias.[31] These two centers and their upkeep drained the countryside of its resources, natural and human, thereby causing resentment and opposition. This opposition comes into clear light during the first revolt, when both were attacked by Galileans who sought to vent their resentment on the aristocratic inhabitants and their opulent lifestyles (*Life* 66.301, 373–380). However, this feeling of distance, even resentment, can be detected some forty years earlier during the ministry of Jesus to the villages of Galilee. Neither Herodian center is mentioned in the Gospels, and the lifestyle of those dwelling "in the houses of kings" is viewed critically when contrasted with the values that both Jesus himself and his mentor, John the Baptist, espoused (Matt. 11:8).[32]

Galilee and Jerusalem

If the Galilean peasants were opposed to the two Herodian cities and their values, Jerusalem, the holy city, represented in their expectations a very different reality. The temple in Jerusalem may have been a source of awe and wonder for Galilean peasants at first sight (Mark 13:1), but as the symbol of a shared universe that included shared stewardship of the land of Israel, it was meant to provide them with "long-lasting feelings of attachment and motivation" that were to express themselves in pilgrimage and offerings freely given.[33] The problem was that Jerusalem and its native aristocracy had suffered a fatal blow with the advent of Herodian rule. Even though Herod the Great had endowed the city with some magnificent buildings, in particular the greatly extended and refurbished temple complex itself, his espousal of other centers, notably Caesarea Maritima, indicates that there was a separation between the religious and political authority.[34] This considerably circumscribed the sphere of influence of Jerusalem—a situation that was further accentuated after the introduction of direct Roman rule in 6 C.E. with the deposition of Archelaus.

31. Sean Freyne, "Herodian Economics in Galilee: Searching for a Suitable Model," in *Galilee and Gospel: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 86–113.

32. Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Gospels* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1992), 25–42; Sean Freyne, "Jesus and the Urban Culture of Galilee," in *Galilee and Gospel*, 183–207.

33. Sean Freyne, "The Geography of Restoration: Galilee-Jerusalem Relations in Early Jewish and Christian Experience," *NTS* 47 (2001): 289–311.

34. Doron Mendels, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 277–332.

Herod had also sought control of the religious institutions, especially the office of the high priest, by introducing his own appointees from the Diaspora, and thereby eroding the effectiveness of the office for inner-Jewish life. None of the usual status criteria of Greco-Roman society, such as wealth or claims to noble lineage, could indefinitely cloak the historical realities.[35] The life of luxury lived by the Jerusalem aristocracy, as evidenced by the recent excavations of their residences in the Jewish quarter, meant that even violence could be used in order to extract the dues from an increasingly disaffected peasantry (*Ant.* 20.180–181, 206–207).

It is not surprising, therefore, that the first century saw an increase in social turmoil of various kinds in the Judean countryside: banditry, prophetic movements of protest, and various religious ideologies that can be directly related to the prevailing social conditions.[36] Thus, the Essenes' practice of the common life in the Judean desert away from the city, and the Pharisees' espousal of a modest lifestyle (*Ant.* 18.12, 18), represent the classic countercultural response to the prevailing aristocratic ethos by treating poverty as an ideal rather than as shameful. However, as in Galilee, so in Judea, it is with the various revolutionary groups and their strategies, which come into full view at the outbreak of the revolt in 66 C.E., that one can best judge the resentment of the aristocracy and its elitist behavior. The refusal to pay the tribute, the cessation of "the loyal sacrifice" on behalf of Rome, and the burning of the debt records (*J. W.* 2.404, 409, 427) were acts prompted by hatred of the Roman governor, Florus, yet they had a strong social and class component also.[37] Josephus says that the chief priests, by a display of public piety, which was as contrived as it was personally motivated, sought in vain to persuade the people to accept the Roman troops (*J. W.* 2.321–324). The real reasons for their trying to placate Florus were later revealed to Agrippa: "being men of position and owners of property, they were desirous of peace" (*J. W.* 2.338). In fact, a political revolt had become a social revolution in which the chief targets were not the Romans, but the high priests and their immediate followers. Thus, in 67 C.E., as Vespasian advanced on Jerusalem, supported by "brigands" from the countryside, the Zealots occupied the temple and elected by lot a country villager with no legitimate credentials as replacement for the high priest Ananus, whom Josephus describes as "a most wise man, who might possibly have saved the city, had he escaped the conspirators' hand" (*J. W.* 4.151).

Since Judea, like Galilee, was a rapidly changing society in the first century C.E., it seems clear that the systemic causes of the breakdown of Judean society, so graphically illustrated during the revolt, were already operative in the early provincial period. To some extent these were the legacy of Herod the Great's

35. Martin Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt against Rome, A.D. 66–70* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), esp. 29–75.
36. Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, Messiahs.*
37. Goodman, *Ruling Class of Judaea,* 152–95.

domination of the religious institutions of Judaism for his own political ends. By his strong-arm tactics he was able to contain any show of dissent, to the point that no protest was possible. The reaction among the Jewish people upon his death, and the failure of Archelaus to maintain order, are clear indications that Judean society was already in turmoil in a way that Galilee was not. This was the world in which Jesus grew up and that shaped his distinctive understanding of Israel's destiny and his own role in it. In Galilee he sought to address the social needs of the village culture, whose lifestyle and values were being eroded by the new level of Herodian influence there as a result of Antipas's presence. However, as a *Jewish* prophet, he also had to address the center of his own religious tradition in Jerusalem. Like other country prophets before and after him, he had the unenviable task of having to declare judgment on the temple and the city that he loved (Luke 13:34–35).[38]

38. Gerd Theissen, "Die Tempelweissagung Jesu: Prophetie im Spannungsfeld zwischen Tempel und Land," *TZ* 32 (1976): 144–58; Sean Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988), 224–39.