

REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS, JEWISH

Revolutionary movements were a Jewish response to the injustice of Israel's oppressors, particularly the Roman Empire. The first century was one of the most violent epochs of Jewish history, with the cauldron of unrest reaching its apex in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. This in turn was punctuated by the mass suicide of Jewish rebel forces at Masada in A.D. 74. Sixty years later the smoldering embers from this war were fanned into flame by the Jewish leader Simon ben Kosiba, who led the second revolt against the Romans in A.D. 132–135.

The causes of this unrest were many and varied, but the following factors contributed to a milieu ripe for revolution: foreign military occupation, class conflicts, misconduct of Jewish and Roman officials, Hellenization (*see* Hellenism), burdensome taxation (*see* Taxes) and the Samaritan situation. When the Roman army occupied a land, it was accompanied by thousands of civilians (wives, children, doctors, merchants, etc.). The army lived off the occupied country, pilfering its natural resources, enslaving members of its population, raping women and generally terrorizing the populace. The gentry of Palestine collaborated with the occupying forces and, in exchange for personal safety and affluence, aided Israel's oppressors. This collusion led to class conflict between the rich and the poor, the faithful and the unfaithful, the rulers and the people (see Horsley and Hanson).

With conditions so difficult for the average Palestinian Jew, it is not surprising that a good deal of revolutionary activity arose. This took a variety of forms.

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1. Social Bandits.

Generally speaking, social banditry arises in agrarian societies where peasants are exploited by the government or ruling class. Social bandits are the "Robin Hoods" of the land and usually increase during times of economic crisis, famine, high taxation and social disruption. The people of the land usually side with the bandits since they are

champions of justice for the common people. These brigands usually symbolize the country's fundamental sense of justice and its basic religious loyalties.

In 57 B.C. Gabinius, proconsul in Syria, gave increased power to the nobility, thereby putting extreme pressure on the peasantry. In response the peasantry rebelled and not until a decade later was Palestine able to effectively govern itself again. It is therefore not surprising to find social banditry on the rise during and after this period of civil war and economic hardship. In fact, Josephus reports that a certain Hezekiah led a band of social bandits who raided the Syrian border (Josephus *J.W.* 1.10.5–7 §§ 204–11 ; *Ant.* 14.9.2–4 §§ 159–74). Herod (*see* Herodian Dynasty), when he was governing Galilee , caught and killed Hezekiah and many of his cohorts. These deaths, however, did not mark the end of social banditry. Years later Herod was still trying to exterminate the brigands (Josephus *J.W.* 1.16.2 § 304). In 39–38 B.C. Herod assembled an army to track down these social bandits in order to consolidate his power as Rome's client king. Josephus notes that there was a “large force of brigands” (Josephus *J.W.* 1.16.1–2 §§ 303–4). Undoubtedly these social bandits were attacking the gentry, who were in league with Herod.

The brigands retreated to the caves near Arbela but were strong enough to continue to harass the gentry and challenge Herod's complete control of the land. Herod, not to be defied, formulated a strategy which Josephus narrates:

With ropes he lowered [over the cliffs] the toughest of his men in large baskets until they reached the mouths of the caves; they then slaughtered the brigands and their families, and threw firebrands at those who resisted. . . . Not a one of them voluntarily surrendered and of those brought out forcibly, many preferred death to captivity. (Josephus *J.W.* 1.16.4 § 311)

An old man who had been caught inside one of the caves with his wife and seven children . . . stood at the entrance and cut down each of his sons as they came to the mouth of the cave, and then his wife. After throwing their dead bodies down the steep slope, he threw himself down too, thus submitting to death rather than slavery. (Josephus *Ant.* 14.15.5 §§ 429–30)

Since sources from Herod's reign contain no references to social bandits, this attack may have extinguished them, but it is an argument from silence. Indeed, until the end of the reign of Agrippa I (A.D. 44), there is very little evidence for active resistance through social banditry. In Mark 15:27 , however, two “bandits” are mentioned. Josephus also mentions a certain Tholomaus as a bandit leader (Josephus *Ant.* 20.1.1 § 5). Tholomaus was likely not the only one because we read that Fadus (A.D. 44–46) set out to purge the “whole of Judea” of brigands (Josephus *Ant.* 20.1.1 § 5). It seems that around the middle of the first century, probably as a result of a severe famine, social banditry sharply increased. Eleazar was one of these brigands, and he enjoyed a twenty-year career (Josephus *J.W.* 2.13.2 § 253). Actions taken by the authorities seem to have only

proliferated Palestinian banditry. Cumanus (A.D. 48–52) took aggressive military action against the brigands, but they merely retreated into their strongholds and “from then on the whole of Judea was infested with brigands” (Josephus *Ant* . 20.6.1 § 124).

Just before the Jewish revolt the rich and the poor were sharply polarized, taxation was very high, Roman oppression was grievous, justice was perverted and poverty was widespread. Consequently, Jewish banditry swelled to epidemic proportions so that a sizable number of the population were outlaws. This situation obviously took its toll on the gentry and contributed to the spiraling social unrest. Without doubt, social banditry is a major factor to be considered in any study of the First Jewish Revolt.

As the revolt broke out the bandits played an important role in resisting the Roman army’s forays into Judea and Galilee, with brigand groups dominating the region of Galilee. The effectiveness of the brigands against Rome was due not only to their impressive military strength, but also to their favorable relationship with the peasants and their ability to build alliances with other rebel forces. The most important contribution made by these social bandits was their highly effective use of guerrilla warfare, which they demonstrated in routing the army of Cestius Gallus in A.D. 66. Ultimately, however, the brigands failed in their attempt to free Palestine from Roman rule.

2. Messianic Pretenders.

In Judaism prior to the first century there was no single messianic expectation held by Jews (*see* Messianism). Furthermore, messiah, as a title, does not appear frequently in pre-Christian literature. Only after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, when rabbinic theological reflection standardized and popularized the term, does *messiah* appear frequently with essentially the same meaning in each usage. The scarcity of the term, however, *does not* suggest that there were no expectations of an anointed royal Jewish leader. The ^{OT} had begun to shape an expectation with its promises of a “branch” that God would raise for David. This notion can be seen in Jeremiah 23:5–6 and Isaiah 11:2–9 , where the “shoot from the stump of Jesse” shall “judge the poor with righteousness.” Micah also contributed to the expectation by identifying Bethlehem as the home town of Messiah (Mic 5:2). But it is inappropriate to speak of a widespread OT expectation of a messiah.

During the period of Persian and Hellenistic domination, there is also little evidence of a messianic hope. The promises to David and the prophecies of a future Davidic king were known during these periods (*cf.* Sir 47:11 , 22 ; 1 Macc 2:57), but the fulfillment was postponed to the distant future. This is also probably the case during the persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes, although a few references may be interpreted otherwise (*cf.* 1 *Enoch* 90:9, 37–38; 1 Macc. 3:4 ; *see* Jewish History: Greek Period). During the Hasmonean period, however, the hope of an anointed royal figure who would deliver Israel became more prominent. At Qumran (*see* Dead Sea Scrolls) there were apparently two anointed figures: a high-priestly messiah and the Prince of the

OT Old Testament
cf. confer , compare

Congregation, a lay head of the eschatological community. And in other Jewish literature of the period an anointed royal figure begins to emerge (*Pss. Sol.* 17). But among extant writings, only those coming from the period following the death of Herod (4 B.C.) refer unambiguously to a promised anointed figure.

After the death of Herod in 4 B.C. the Jews pressed Herod's son and heir apparent, Archelaus, for a number of reforms. During the Passover, when the demands reached a feverish pitch, Archelaus sent his armies into Jerusalem and massacred thousands of worshipping pilgrims. This action catalyzed revolt in every major area of Herod's kingdom, and some of these revolts took the form of messianic movements. Josephus identifies several leaders of these movements: Judas, the son of Ezekias (Josephus *Ant.* 17.10.5 §§271–72; *J.W.* 2.4.1 § 56); Simon, servant of King Herod (Josephus *Ant.* 17.10.6 §§ 273–76); and Athronges (Josephus *Ant.* 17.7 §§ 278–85). Josephus clearly indicates that they aspired to be Israel's king (Josephus *J.W.* 2.4.1 § 55 ; *Ant.* 17.10.8 § 285). All of these messianic figures were of humble origins, and their followers were primarily peasants (see Barnett).

The principal goal of these revolutionaries was to overthrow Herodian and Roman domination of Palestine. In addition to fighting the Romans, these revolutionaries attacked the mansions of the aristocracy and the royal residences. This undoubtedly reveals the frustration of years of social inequality. In response, Varus, legate of Syria, dispatched two legions (6,000 troops each) and four regiments of cavalry (500 each). This was in addition to the troops already in Judea and the auxiliary troops provided by the city-states and client kings in the area. In spite of this military might these messianic movements were difficult to subdue.

Because of the lack of sources it is difficult to identify any messianic movements between the above-mentioned revolts and those surrounding the First Jewish Revolt (except, of course, the followers of Jesus). With regard to the First Jewish Revolt, Josephus notes two messianic movements that bear mentioning. The first is Menahem, son of Judas, the Galilean, who

took his followers and marched off to Masada. There he broke open king Herod's arsenal and armed other brigands, in addition to his own group. With these men as his bodyguards, he returned to Jerusalem as a king, and becoming a leader of the insurrection, he organized the siege of the palace. (Josephus *J.W.* 2.17.8 §§ 433–34 ; cf. 2.17.5 §§422–42)

The second messianic movement mentioned by Josephus was built around Simon bar Giora (i.e. , “Simon son of a proselyte”). In A.D. 66, at the outbreak of the war, Simon helped aid the Jews against Cestius by attacking the Roman rear guard. Simon's messianic movement was also motivated by the social oppression exerted by Israel's aristocracy. When Simon had gained control of the Judean and Idumean countryside, the citizens of Jerusalem invited him to lead the defense against Rome. After a power

Pss. Sol. Psalms of Solomon
i.e. *id est* , that is

struggle in which he forced the Zealots and John of Gischala aside, Simon took control of Jerusalem. Simon was a strict disciplinarian and did well in his struggle against the Romans, but the Roman army was overwhelmingly powerful. Adorned in a white tunic and a purple cape as the king of the Jews, Simon surrendered and was taken to Rome. There he was ritually executed. The messianic movement led by Simon was the largest of all the movements described by Josephus, lasting nearly two years. It may have been fueled by eschatological hopes. [W. J. Heard]

During the reign of Trajan, the Jewish inhabitants of Judea, Egypt, and Cyrene revolted (A.D. 114 or 115). According to Eusebius, they rallied to one Lukuas, “their king” (Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* 4.2.1–4). Dio Cassius mentions this revolt, but calls the Jewish leader Andreas (Dio Cassius *Hist.* 68.32; 69.12–13). Eusebius says that General Marcus Turbo “waged war vigorously against [the Jews] in many battles for a considerable time and killed many thousands” (Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* 4.2.4). Although Dio’s claim that hundreds of thousands perished is probably an exaggeration, the papyri and archaeological evidence confirm that the revolt was widespread and very destructive (see Schürer, 1:530–33). [C. A. Evans]

The final messianic movement in recorded Jewish antiquity (A.D. 132–35) was led by Simon ben Kosiba. Rabbi Aqiba proclaimed that Simon was indeed the Messiah, and a large portion of the Judean peasantry responded to the claim. Simon had three years of independence and even minted coins (inscribed “Year 1 of the liberation of Israel”). When Rome sent in a massive army, Simon resorted to guerrilla warfare and forced the Romans into a prolonged war of attrition. Nevertheless, the Romans finally did “annihilate, exterminate and eradicate” them from the land (Dio Cassius *Hist.* 59.13.3).

3. Revolutionary Prophets.

Despite the amount of prophetic activity prior to the first century, there is virtually no evidence for a Jewish expectation of the imminent return of the promised eschatological prophet. Nor were there vivid expectations for the appearance of the prophet like Moses mentioned in Deuteronomy 18:18 . There may have been some expectations for the return of Elijah, but a claimant to this identity never materialized. Thus the appearance of any popular prophet of reputed eschatological significance was more than just the fulfillment of a popular expectation.

R. A. Horsley has helpfully distinguished between “popular prophetic movements” and “oracular prophets.” The latter group were similar in character to the classical oracular prophets such as Hosea or Jeremiah; they prophesied either judgment or deliverance. Oracular prophets proclaiming deliverance appeared just prior to and during the First Jewish Revolt. Typically those oracular prophets who pronounced judgment were not well received, being perceived by the establishment as a threat and consequently silenced.

Hist. Eccl. *Historia Ecclesiastica*
Hist History of the Empire after Marcus
Hist. History of the Peloponnesian War

Jewish revolutionary movements and conflict with Rome

- c. 4 B.C. Archelaus massacres Passover pilgrims in Jerusalem.
- c. 36 A.D. The Samaritan leads followers to Mt. Gerizim.
- 40 Caligula attempts to set up his statue in the temple
- 44 Herod Agrippa, the last Jewish king, dies.
- 45 Theudas persuades followers to accompany him to Jordan.
- 50s The Egyptian leads followers to Mt. of Olives to experience fall of Jerusalem's walls.
- c. 60–62 Unnamed prophet leads people into wilderness to receive salvation.
- 66 Florus, procurator, antagonizes Jews by taking from temple treasury.
- 66–68 Simon bar Giora is popularly acclaimed king and later will play a leadership role in Jerusalem.
- 66 August Jewish insurgents capture Antonia; Cestius, Syrian legate, attacks Jerusalem and retreats.
- 67 spring-fall Roman army under Vespasian subdues Galilee.
- 67–68 winter Zealot party formed under Eleazar controls Jerusalem.
- 69 spring Turmoil divides Jerusalem with three parties vying for power.
- 70 spring-fall Titus conquers and destroys temple and Jerusalem.
- 74 Jewish rebels at Masada commit mass suicide.

c. circa, about (with dates); column
Caligula (The Twelve Caesars)
Vespasian (The Twelve Caesars)
Titus (The Twelve Caesars)

3.1. Popular Prophets. Popular prophetic movements, on the other hand, had leaders who led sizeable movements of peasants. The political authorities generally viewed this activity as an insurrection and therefore forced a military confrontation. These prophets and their followers generally arose in anticipation of the appearance of God's eschatological liberation. This liberation was perceived as imminent, and when it arrived the Jews would be freed from their political bondage and would again govern Palestine, the land God had given to them as their own possession. The leaders of these popular prophetic movements are described by Josephus in general terms:

Impostors and demagogues, under the guise of divine inspiration, provoked revolutionary actions and impelled the masses to act like madmen. They led them out into the wilderness so that there God would show them signs of imminent liberation. (Josephus *J.W.* 2.13.4 § 259 ; cf. *Ant.* 20.8.6 § 168)

These popular prophets, preying upon social conditions, apparently taught that God was about to transform their society—characterized by oppression and social injustice—into a society marked by peace, prosperity and righteousness. Responding to the call, large numbers of peasants left their homes, their work and their communities to follow these charismatic leaders into the desert. There in the wilderness they awaited God to manifest his presence through signs and wonders, purify his people and unveil the eschatological plan of redemption which he had previously revealed to his prophet. At this juncture God himself would act and defeat Israel's enemies.

3.1.1. The Samaritan. The first of these prophets appeared when Pontius Pilate was procurator. Interestingly, this first movement appeared among the Samaritans. The Samaritans, like the Jews, revered Moses as the prophet and cultivated hopes for a future Mosaic prophet who was discussed in terms of “the restorer” (*taheb*). The *Taheb* would appear and restore Solomon's temple on Mt. Gerizim. Josephus has described one such Samaritan prophetic movement:

Nor was the Samaritan nation free from disturbance. For a man who had no qualms about deceit, and freely used it to sway the crowd, commanded them to go up with him as a group to Mount Gerizim, which is for them the most sacred mountain. He promised to show them, when they got there, the holy vessels buried at the spot where Moses had put them. Those who thought his speech convincing came with arms and stationed themselves at a village called Tirathana. There they welcomed late-comers so that they might make the climb up the mountain in a great throng. But Pilate was quick to prevent their ascent with a contingent of cavalry and armed infantry. They attacked those who had assembled beforehand in the village, killed some, routed others, and took many into captivity. From this group Pilate executed the ringleaders as well as the most able among the fugitives. (Josephus *Ant.* 18.4.1 §§ 85–87)

3.1.2. *Theudas*. Perhaps ten years later, about A.D. 45, a second major prophetic movement began. A certain Theudas (probably not the Theudas mentioned in Acts 5:36) organized one of these prophetic movements during the reign of Fadus (A.D. 44–46). Josephus also describes this prophet's ministry:

When Fadus was governor of Judea, a charlatan named Theudas persuaded most of the common people to take their possessions and follow him to the Jordan River. He said he was a prophet, and that at his command the river would be divided and allow them an easy crossing. Through such words he deceived many. But Fadus hardly let them consummate such foolishness. He sent out a cavalry unit against them, which killed many in a surprise attack, though they also took many alive. Having captured Theudas himself, they cut off his head and carried it off to Jerusalem. (Josephus *Ant.* 20.5.1 §§ 97–98)

Obviously Theudas's movement attracted large numbers of Jews, so much so that Josephus hyperbolically states that Theudas deceived "most of the common people." Perhaps Theudas, in some sort of reverse exodus, saw himself as the new Moses leading the people out of bondage (like Egypt) and across the Jordan (like the Red Sea) into the wilderness to be divinely prepared for the new conquest. Fadus, not taking any chances, acted decisively, thus showing his fear of such movements. The movement's swift annihilation almost certainly indicates that, unlike the messianic movements, this prophetic band was unarmed. Theudas's posthumous public humiliation by the ceremonial parading of his severed head was intended to send a stern warning to any would-be leaders of similar prophetic movements.

3.1.3. *The Egyptian*. Another movement, about ten years later, involved a Jewish prophet who originated from Egypt (Josephus *Ant.* 20.8.6 §§ 169–71; *J.W.* 2.13.5 §§ 261–63; cf. Acts 21:38). Josephus records that this prophet had a following of thirty thousand who were to march from the wilderness to the Mount of Olives and then into Jerusalem. Felix sent Roman troops to slaughter all those involved in the movement. The Roman army easily defeated this prophetic band even though the Egyptian himself escaped.

It seems fairly clear that these prophetic movements viewed themselves as acting in some sort of continuity with Israel's past great historical deliverances. They also had an eschatological dimension in their claim that God was about to deliver Israel and grant their autonomy in the promised land. [W. J. Heard]

3.1.4. *Jonathan the Refugee*. Following the Roman victory over Israel, a certain Jonathan fled to Cyrene. According to Josephus, this man, by trade a weaver, was one of the *sicarii* (see 6 below). He persuaded many of the poorer Jews to follow him out into the desert, "promising to show them signs and apparitions" (Josephus *J.W.* 7.11.1 §§ 437–38; *Life* 76 §§ 424–25). Catallus, the Roman governor, dispatched troops who routed Jonathan's following and eventually captured the leader himself (Josephus *J.W.* 7.11.1 §§ 439–42). Although Josephus does not describe Jonathan as a (false) prophet, it

is likely that Jonathan viewed himself as a prophet, as the desert summons seems to imply. [C. A. Evans]

3.2. Oracular Prophets. The second category of prophets, the oracular prophets, pronounced imminent divine deliverance; these prophets were concentrated around the First Jewish Revolt. Josephus (*J.W.* 6.5.3 §§ 300–9) recalls with considerable detail a prophet named Jesus, son of Hananiah (*see* Jesus ben Ananias). This Jesus appeared four years before the First Revolt, during a time when Jerusalem “was enjoying great peace and prosperity,” and prophesied against Jerusalem for seven years and five months. In the end he was struck by a stone from one of the Roman “missile engines” and was killed. As the war began and the number of prophets increased, the Jews were urged to await help from God (Josephus *J.W.* 6.5.2 §§ 286–87). Even at the end of the war, when the temple had already been sacked and set on fire, a prophet pronounced to six thousand refugees that they would receive “tokens of their deliverance” and “help from God.” Every one of those six thousand perished (Josephus *J.W.* 6.5.2 §§ 283–84).

4. Apocalypticists.

The apocalypticists do not seem to have been a party per se, but many of the Jews in the period 200 B.C.–A.D. 100, including some of the oracular prophets, apparently became persuaded of apocalyptic eschatology (*see* Apocalypticism). For the apocalypticists, Israel’s situation looked funereal. It was a depressing period of unfulfilled hopes, shattered eschatological dreams, conflict with the ruling class, with no authorized prophetic spokesperson and, above all, buffeted by persecution of the righteous who remained faithful to the Torah . At the same time the Hellenized and severely compromised Jewish aristocracy was prospering. This situation, perceived as a crisis by some within Israel, forced a search for creative solutions. This gave rise to an apocalyptic eschatology that represented a new interpretation of human history and destiny with new emphases and insights. While maintaining continuity with the prophetic eschatology of the past, it developed in a direction that was at once dualistic, cosmic, universalistic, transcendental and individualistic.

Apocalyptic eschatology led to an emphasis on other-worldliness and a disinterest in temporal affairs. With its stress on cosmic dualism, the apocalypticists understood the real battle to be in the heavenlies between the spiritual powers. They were called upon therefore to participate with Michael and the heavenly host in the battle against evil (*see* Belial, Beliar, Devil, Satan). The primary weapon of this warfare was prayer, but it also included personal holiness and faithfulness to the Torah even if that meant severe trial. In this way the apocalypticists could defeat Israel’s oppressor and rightly be classified a “revolutionary movement.”

5. The Fourth Philosophy and the Martyr Tradition.

Josephus mentions, in addition to the Pharisees , Sadducees and Essenes , a “Fourth Philosophy.” Although many have linked this Fourth Philosophy with the Zealots and the *sicarii*, recently Horsley has persuasively argued that this identification is not correct.

Horsley notes that, on the one hand, Judas the Galilean was a teacher with his own party (Josephus *J.W.* 2.3.3 § 118), but on the other, Judas, as part of the Fourth Philosophy, “agreed with the views of the Pharisees in everything except their unconquerable passion for freedom since they take God as their only leader and master” (Josephus *Ant.* 18.1.6 § 23). At least *prima facie* this Fourth Philosophy was a branch of Pharisaism in which certain teachers (e.g. , Judas, Saddok, etc.) advocated a strongly proactive stance against Roman rule. Horsley suggests that the advocacy of resistance against Rome was rooted in four interrelated concepts.

The first concept was related to taxation : to pay tax was equivalent to slavery. Moreover, it was argued that Scripture prohibited it (2 Sam 24). Taxes therefore should not be paid to Rome. Second, Israel was a theocracy and to be ruled solely by God. To submit to foreign rule was no less than idolatry and a violation of the first commandment: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Third, God would work synergistically through his faithful people if they would stand firm and actively resist their oppressors. Fourth, if Israel would demonstrate their resistance, God would work through them to establish his kingdom on earth. If the worst case occurred, and they ended in ruin, they would “at least have honor and glory for their high ideals” (Josephus *Ant.* 18.1.1 §§ 5–7).

This resistance, Horsley notes, is never stated by Josephus as armed rebellion. In fact they seem instead to be willing sufferers: “They shrug off submitting to unusual forms of death and stand firm in the face of torture of relatives and friends, all for refusing to call any man master” (Josephus *Ant.* 18.1.6 § 23). The assumption that the Fourth Philosophy called people to armed rebellion has led to the mistaken identification of this Fourth Philosophy with the Zealots, with Judas as the founder of the movement. Instead of armed resistance, proponents of the Fourth Philosophy felt that if they remained firm and resisted Rome through obedience to the Torah, “God would eagerly join in promoting the success of their plans, especially if they did not shrink from the slaughter that might come upon them” (Josephus *Ant.* 18.1.1 § 5). If this understanding of the Fourth Philosophy is correct, this group traced its lineage to the martyrs under Antiochus IV Epiphanes .

The martyrological tradition, though it had antecedents, largely developed in the second century B.C. when Israel was experiencing severe persecution. The aristocracy had compromised its faith and was cooperating with the oppressing nation while those faithful to Torah were experiencing severe persecution. The suffering of the righteous, however, was interpreted as “warfare.” Part of the worldview of these pious Jews was the belief that their innocent suffering would be so heinous that it would almost—in a reflex action—force God to act. This notion is most obvious in the *Testament of Moses* :

If we . . . die, our blood will be avenged before the Lord and then his kingdom shall appear throughout all his creation . . . he shall . . . avenge them of their enemies . . . he will go forth from his holy habitation with indignation and wrath on account of his sons. (*T. Mos.* 9:7–10:3)

e.g. *exempli gratia* , for example

Underlying Taxo's speech to his sons is the belief that God is the kinsman redeemer of the righteous. This doctrine of divine vengeance taught that God protects and avenges the innocent and the vulnerable when they are victimized by social injustice (Ps 9:20 ; Is 5:4-5 ; 16:1-6 ; Jer 11:20 ; 15:15) or the spilling of blood (Gen 4:9 ; Deut 32:43 ; 2 Kings 9:7-10 ; Ps 9:11-12 ; Ezek 24:7-11 ; Joel 3:19-20). God is portrayed as not responding to the crime itself but to the prayers of the oppressed and the cry emanating from the slain victim's blood: "You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you afflict him at all, and if he does cry out to me, I will surely hear his cry . . . and I will kill you with the sword" (Ex 22:22-23). It is clear, therefore, that the martyrdom of the innocent Taxo and his sons was portrayed by the author of the *Testament of Moses* to provoke God to action because of the cry of innocent blood. God's response would be no less than the complete annihilation of Israel's enemies and the appearance of the eschatological kingdom. This perspective also appears in literature from this period, especially 4 Maccabees (see 3 & 4 Maccabees).

4 Maccabees was written sometime just before the First Jewish Revolt as an encomium to the martyrs under Antiochus IV. The purpose of the book was not only to apotheosize the martyrs, but also to encourage those who were facing similar trials to stand firm and fight against the opposition with the weapons of obedience and suffering. In 4 Maccabees 9 the eldest brother, after enduring a series of appalling acts of cruelty, encourages his compatriots: "Fight the sacred and noble battle for religion. Thereby the just Providence of our ancestors may become merciful to our nation and take vengeance on the accursed tyrant" (4 Macc 9:24 NRSV).

In this verse the brother is exhorting the others not to compromise nor fight with illicit means. Rather, they are to hold fast and endure righteous suffering. In so doing they will defeat the king, because God will take vengeance upon the despot. This is equally as clear in the fourth brother's response to his torture and torments:

Even if you remove my organ of speech, God hears also those who are mute. See, here is my tongue; cut it off, for in spite of this you will not make our reason speechless. Gladly, for the sake of God, we let our bodily members be mutilated. God will visit you swiftly, for you are cutting out a tongue that has been melodious with divine hymns. (4 Macc 10:18-21 NRSV ; cf. 9:9)

Again, it is the innocent suffering which elicits God's response, and therefore his judgment is precipitated upon Israel's persecutors.

Atrocities against the innocent accumulate, and the cries for vengeance rise to heaven. Thus, as each martyr dies, he knows that the testimony against the tyrant is strengthened, and judgment upon the king has been brought nearer. We also see this clearly in 4 Maccabees 11:3 , the fifth brother's speech: "I have come of my own accord, so that by murdering me you will incur punishment from the heavenly justice for even more crimes" (NRSV). This martyr believed that by his righteous suffering the perpetrator of the grave evil, Antiochus, would increase his guilt, which would soon reach the level whereupon the divine Judge would necessarily act on behalf of justice. We can see this

same theological construct operating in the sixth brother's poignant speech: "I also, equipped with nobility, will die with my brothers, and I myself will bring a great avenger upon you, you inventor of tortures and enemy of those who are truly devout" (4 Macc 11:22–23 NRSV ; cf. 9:32).

The strength of this avenger is found in his armor, namely, his virtue. The *innocent* death of the martyrs promptly precipitates the avenging wrath of God; the righteous victims need not wait indefinitely—judgment is at hand. This fact obviously had motivated the fourth brother as he endured the agony: "Gladly, for the sake of God, we let our bodily members be mutilated. God will visit you swiftly" (4 Macc 10:20–21 NRSV ; cf. 12:19). Vengeance has even been personified as one in pursuit of the arch-villain. The author intimates that it does not take long for vengeance to stalk its prey and administer justice, "The tyrant Antiochus was both punished on earth and is being chastised after his death" (4 Macc 18:5 NRSV). And again in the same chapter we read, "For these crimes divine justice pursued and will pursue the accursed tyrant" (4 Macc 18:22 NRSV).

The author clearly perceives the martyrs' struggle as nothing less than *war* . It is a conflict of good against evil, God against Satan. This is again made clear from his comment after recounting the martyrs' eulogy:

Indeed it would be proper to inscribe on their tomb these words as a reminder to the people of our nation: "Here lie buried an aged priest and an aged woman and seven sons, because of the violence of the tyrant who wished to destroy the way of life of the Hebrews. They vindicated their nation, looking to God and enduring torture even to death. Truly the contest in which they were engaged was divine." (4 Macc 17:8–11 NRSV)

The mother of the seven sons has earned the complete respect of the author as an assailant in the battle against Antiochus. He gives her the title "warrior" and remarks in amazement at her spirited combat. The writer goes so far as to credit her with the victory in the national struggle against the despot:

O mother, soldier of God in the cause of religion, elder and woman! By steadfastness you have conquered even a tyrant . . . you stood and watched Eleazar being tortured, and said to your sons in the Hebrew language, "My sons, noble is the contest to which you are called to bear witness for the nation. Fight zealously for our ancestral law." (4 Macc 16:14–16 NRSV)

In the battle against Antiochus the martyrs' role is to endure suffering and die; they are not to compromise nor take up arms. The martyrs are merely to acquiesce to the tyrant's torture and sword. In performing this function they provide the key element in the battle which will defeat the enemies' forces and deliver the nation from their oppressors. This is a consistent theme throughout the book. Note these representative texts:

[the martyrs are] the cause of the downfall of tyranny over their nation, they conquered the tyrant. (4 Macc 1:11 NRSV)

O mother, who with your seven sons nullified the violence of the tyrant, frustrated his evil designs. (4 Macc 17:2 NRSV ; cf. 9:30)

In most of the passages commenting on the effect of the martyrs' deaths, the martyrs themselves are the agents of victory. Thus the contribution of the martyrs is the cardinal contribution in the war effort. It justifies the amount of time devoted in 4 Maccabees to the martyrs' heroics. Without them victory would have been impossible. In the author's opinion the martyrs single-handedly defeat Antiochus and his evil forces. They accomplish his downfall by clinging to their law, not compromising and giving clear testimony to their faith. Righteousness is the lethal weapon in their struggle. They fight by persevering in their righteousness and patiently enduring torture and martyrdom; these are the martyrs' only weapons. Their foe is Antiochus, to be sure, but only insofar as he is in league with evil. The martyrs' real enemy is Satan, and their souls are at stake in the war. The heavenly host aids their effort, and by dying the martyrs are assured of victory. The picture is nearly identical to that contained in the martyrological literature written earlier.

This evidence suggests that the martyrs, by their innocent suffering, participated in the war against Antiochus and were the principle agents of victory. Their suffering was the decisive factor in the war effort. If Horsley is indeed correct in his identification of the Fourth Philosophy, these martyrs with their theology of martyrdom are likely to have been its antecedents and the Fourth Philosophy held many, if not all, of the above-mentioned theological constructs. Although this was principally a theology of suffering, the outcome was victory over Israel's enemies and therefore no less a revolutionary movement than any other.

6. *Sicarii*.

The name *sicarii* was derived from the weapon that they employed, a curved dagger like the Roman *sicae* (Josephus *Ant.* 20.8.10 § 186). Josephus describes them thus:

A different type of bandit sprang up in Jerusalem known as *sicarii*. This group murdered people in broad daylight right in the middle of the city. Mixing with the crowds, especially during the festivals, they would conceal small daggers beneath their garments and stealthily stab their opponents. Then, when their victims fell, the murderers simply melted into the outraged crowds, undetected because of the naturalness of their presence. The first to have his throat cut was Jonathan the high priest, and after him many were murdered daily. (Josephus *J.W.* 2.13.3 §§ 254–56)

Some have identified these *sicarii* with the Zealots, others with social bandits, but as Horsley points out, these *sicarii* are a "different type" of bandit. As noted earlier, ordinary banditry is a rural activity in which the bandits pillage the wealthy. Because of their notoriety they normally congregate in hideouts and are always on the move. The

sicarii, however, were urban assassins, or terrorists (not rural bandits), who, because of their secrecy, could live apparently normal lives (without fleeing to a hideout).

Obviously these violent tactics are not those of the Fourth Philosophy. Josephus, however, seems to suggest a connection in the leadership: “Menahem, leader of the *sicarii* at the outbreak of the revolt, was Judas’ of Galilee grandson or perhaps son” (Josephus *J.W.* 7.8.1 §§ 253–54). If this conclusion is correct, it means that there must be some degree of correspondence between the religio-political orientation of these two groups. The assassination strategy is, however, a new development.

The tactics of assassinations first appeared during the reign of Felix in the 50s (cf. Josephus *J.W.* 2.13.3 §§ 254–57 ; 2.13.6 §§264–65; *Ant.* 20.8.5 §§ 163–65 ; 20.8.10 §§187–88). Unlike the social bandits who preyed on Roman petty officials and supply trains, the *sicarii* apparently attacked the Jewish aristocracy. These attacks took one of three forms. First, there were the selective assassinations of the ruling elite. The assassination of the high priest Jonathan is an example. Second, the *sicarii* slaughtered selected pro-Roman members of the Jewish aristocracy who lived in the countryside. These attacks also included plundering and burning selected aristocratic estates (Josephus *J.W.* 2.13.6 §§ 264–66 ; *Ant.* 20.8.6 § 172). Third, the *sicarii* practiced terrorist hostage taking.

These attacks of the *sicarii* helped precipitate a revolutionary situation. They led to distrust among the ruling elite, fear among the aristocracy and catalyzed the fragmentation of the social order. That which normally provided the upper class with security began to erode, and vague feelings of anxiety and insecurity came in their place. Anyone could be next. The fragmentation of the ruling class was inevitable; individual personal safety became society’s most important value. Thus, instead of cooperative efforts to protect their interests, the ecclesiastical aristocracy and ruling class began hiring personal armies to protect their interests (Josephus *Ant.* 20.9.2 §§ 206–7). By responding with force and violence, the ruling class further contributed to the breakdown of the social fiber and helped set the stage for the First Jewish Revolt.

The *sicarii* ’s role in the revolt itself seems quite limited. Apparently, at first they were not in the midst of the fray, but before long they entered the action. They helped in the siege of the upper city and its aristocratic inhabitants (Josephus *J.W.* 2.17.6 § 425); they also helped raze the royal palaces and the residence of the high priest Ananias. Shortly thereafter conflict broke out between the *sicarii* and the rest of the revolutionary forces. Within weeks the main body of the *sicarii* either had been executed, had retreated to Masada or had fled into hiding. The *sicarii* who occupied Masada sat out the rest of the war and preyed upon the surrounding countryside for their food supplies. In A.D. 73 the Romans attacked Masada, one of the last holdouts, only to discover that all of its occupants had committed suicide (Josephus *J.W.* 7.8.6 —9.1 §§320–401).

7. Zealots.

Although Luke mentions a certain Simon “the zealot” (Lk 6:15 ; Acts 1:13) this is probably a characterizing name (namely, Simon was zealous), rather than a technical term identifying his affiliation with a revolutionary party. The Zealot party per se was not formed until the winter of A.D. 67–68. The party’s origins can be traced back to the clash between the Roman procurator Florus (A.D. 64–66) and the Jerusalem citizenry. During his term Florus had pilfered the temple treasury, allowed his army to loot the city and attempted to capture and control the temple. With such abuses left without redress and the city in a rebellious mood, the lower priests began to agitate for war. The temple captain, Eleazar, son of Ananias, provided leadership and, together with the lower priests and the revolutionary leaders of the populace, decided to terminate the sacrifices offered twice each day on behalf of Rome and the Roman emperor (Josephus *J.W.* 2.17.2 §§ 409–10). Previously, the offering of this sacrifice had been negotiated as a satisfactory substitute for emperor worship and therefore was a tangible sign of Jewish loyalty to Rome (*see* Ruler Cult). Thus the refusal to offer sacrifices was tantamount to a declaration of war; it broke the peace treaty and Israel was now regarded outside the Roman Empire (Josephus *J.W.* 2.17.3 § 415). The temple was subsequently cleansed, and Israel was again showing her absolute fidelity to the Torah. God was about to shower the nation with blessing.

The chief priests and leading Pharisees, however, resisted the changes, and civil war soon broke out. Eleazar was joined by the *sicarii* (Josephus *J.W.* 2.17.5 § 423), and together they defeated their rivals. But a power struggle ensued, with the *sicarii* battling Eleazar and his faithful; the *sicarii* were defeated and took refuge in Ma-sada. Eleazar was now in control in Jerusalem. In August of A.D. 66, however, Cestius, the governor of Syria, bolstered with Roman forces, attacked Jerusalem. Through an unexpected turn of events Cestius abandoned the siege of Jerusalem and, in the process of retreat, lost a good number of troops. Buoyed by their success, most of Jerusalem and Judea rallied around the revolutionary cause. Now basically unified, the nation named Ananus, the high priest, as its head. The traditional high priests resumed their positions and Eleazar joined them as general to Idumea (Josephus *J.W.* 2.20.4 § 566).

The Romans then began their reconquest. During the summer and fall of A.D. 67 they had subdued Galilee and were marching through Judea. The brigands and revolutionary forces in these areas were retreating. As these fugitives, as well as those from Idumea and Perea, took refuge in the city, their own views seemed to resonate with those lower priests who had started the revolt with the cessation of the sacrifices on behalf of Rome. This new coalition is the group Josephus calls “Zealots.” The Zealots agitated against the ecclesiastical aristocracy and soon decided to assert themselves. First, they attacked some Herodian nobles against whom they still had some “ancient quarrel” and who also were accused of treason (Josephus *J.W.* 4.3.4–5 §§ 140–46). These “ancient quarrels” almost certainly were focused on those members of the nobility who were wealthy landowners with a large number of peasants indebted to them. The Zealots, regardless of the Roman threat, were also fighting a class war against the Jewish aristocracy.

Obviously, this activity against the Herodian nobility would give rise to anxiety throughout the rest of Israel’s upper class. If this discriminate violence were not enough,

the Zealots elected by lot their own people to priestly offices—even installing an uneducated layperson in the office of high priest. Without doubt the Zealots were conspiring for political control. Given the inflammatory nature of this Zealot activity, it is no surprise that the Jewish aristocracy immediately turned on the Zealots and viciously attacked them (Josephus *J.W.* 4.3.6–8 §§ 147–57). Incited by Ananus and Jesus son of Gamala, both high priests, the people of Jerusalem forced the zealots into the inner court (Josephus *J.W.* 4.3.12 §§ 197–204). Trapped in the temple, the Zealots contacted sympathizers outside of Jerusalem to free them (Josephus *J.W.* 4.4.1 §§ 224–32). The Idumeans responded, freed the Zealots and slaughtered Ananus and Jesus son of Gamala. While they were at it, they also assassinated a number of other nobles (Josephus *J.W.* 4.4.2–3 §§ 233–53). There was yet another purge of Jerusalem’s nobility, and this one also included many who were formerly in power, as well as the wealthy.

Within the Zealot ranks, however, all was not well. Many of the Zealots were not responsive to the dictatorial ways of John of Gischala. Since John could not gain absolute authority among the Zealots, he broke away to form his own revolutionary faction (Josephus *J.W.* 4.7.1 §§ 389–96). John’s independence, however, was short lived. The messianic movement by Simon bar Giora was a threat to the Zealot regime in Jerusalem, and a good part of John’s army deserted so that John and the Zealots again formed an alliance. This alliance, however, did not prevent Simon bar Giora from attempting to liberate the city from the Zealots and John of Gischala (Josephus *J.W.* 4.9.11 §§ 571–76). Simon was able to force the Zealots back into the temple (Josephus *J.W.* 4.9.12 §§ 577–84). The faction-prone Zealots split over the leadership of John. Josephus records that for a time there was even a three-way battle raging. Simon bar Giora, in control of Jerusalem, pressing in upon John of Gischala, who was fighting to control the temple courtyard and was caught between Simon and the rest of the Zealot party who were in the inner court above the temple (Josephus *J.W.* 5.1.1–3 §§ 1–12). Shortly thereafter, John was able to reconcile himself to the rest of the Zealot party, although he was only able to accomplish it by way of trickery. John of Gischala was now the Zealot leader again (Josephus *J.W.* 5.2.3—3.2 §§ 67–106).

By this time the Romans were at Jerusalem’s gates. This threat galvanized the rival factions to form a united front. The Jews, however, were no match for the Romans. During the siege the Zealots were the smallest of the rival groups and therefore had the least significant role to play (2,400 Zealots, 6,000 under John of Gischala, 15,000 under Simon bar Giora). Nevertheless, the Zealots, in spite of their less significant role, did fight courageously to the end in cooperation with their Jewish rivals against the overwhelming military strength of the Romans (Josephus *J.W.* 5.6.1—9.3 §§ 248–374).

The Zealots should be remembered primarily for their thwarting of the nobility’s plan to negotiate a settlement with the Romans. Moreover, the Zealots were not the Fourth Philosophy mentioned by Josephus; indeed, they were not a sect or philosophy at all. Furthermore, the Zealots were not in the vanguard among those who were agitating for rebellion, but once the revolt was underway and the only choice was to fight or to flee, they stayed and fought to the death.

The centuries leading up to the First and Second Jewish Revolts were very painful for the Jewish nation. The political subjugation by foreign nations was extremely difficult as well as the erosion of religious, cultural and socioeconomic structures. Israel's general response to the unrest was revolt, but not always via armed rebellion. The social bandits, Zealots, *sicarii* and messianic pretenders generally advocated armed rebellion and agitated for a military solution. These groups, however, often fought among themselves, significantly weakening their impact. The other response, generally advocated by the apocalypticists, prophets and martyrs, believed in waiting upon God, who, they believed, was about to intervene and personally defeat the enemy. The Fourth Philosophy, generally identifiable as having a genealogical link with the Maccabean martyrs, advocated suffering and martyrdom in order to move God to deliver Israel. None of these responses, however, was adequate to deal with the Roman threat. After the Second Jewish Revolt (A.D. 132–135) Israel lost its political identity for almost two millennia. [W. J. Heard]

See also APOCALYPTICISM ; DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM ; ECONOMICS OF PALESTINE ; JEWISH WARS WITH ROME ; JUDAISM AND THE NEW TESTAMENT ; ROMAN ADMINISTRATION ; ROMAN EAST ; ROMAN GOVERNORS OF PALESTINE ; ROMAN LAW AND LEGAL SYSTEM ; SIMON BEN KOSIBA.

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