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THE ENEMY WITHIN

*A Lecture on Josephus' History of the Jewish War
(Preface & Chapters 17-23)*

This lecture was given in the Spring of 2000 as part of the freshman core course Humanities 110: Introduction to Western Humanities. During the second semester of the course (Roman Culture from the Republic to St. Augustine) when this lecture was given, we cover two subject areas: the city of Rome and her Peripheries. This lecture is from the periphery section of the course and addresses the relationship between the Roman center and her Jewish colonies.

Introduction

Probably every one of us can remember a time (or at least think of the possibility of one) when something so drastic happened to us, so important, that we thought to ourselves, "This is it. Forever after I shall be a different person. Never like the person I was before." For Jews this drastic moment, the moment of forever-being-changed occurred when the second temple in Jerusalem was utterly demolished by the Romans in 70 CE. As Steve Wasserstrom argued in his lecture "Hebrew Temple and Priesthood," the temple in Jerusalem was not only the sacred center of the Jewish people and the physical locus of God, but also it "embod[ied] the bodiless harmony of parts—the economy, psychology, agriculture, [and] calendar, which made up the functioning of Israelite society for over a millennium"(Wasserstrom 2). With its loss then, the Israelites lost all that was most central to them—what had always made them themselves. Who would the Jews be without this center? What would the religion look like now that it was gone? What were Jews to make of the Romans who had

destroyed the temple and now ruled their nation? Who exactly was to blame for a loss of this scale? Josephus' account of the so-called *Jewish Wars* answers these questions. Josephus writes as a Jewish insider—he is a former priest in the Temple, and later a military leader. As such he brings a religious as well as historical perspective. One of the primary jobs of this text is to (1) make sense of the loss and (2) posit a new identity for Jews and Romans alike.

I will argue that Josephus' *Jewish War* functions as a sort of elegy for the temple—that is a text which both honors the lost person (or in this case entity) and attempts to help readers recover from that loss. According to literary critic and poet Peter Sacks, elegies are "works" both "in the commonly accepted meaning of a product [e.g. when we say a 'a work of literature'] and in the more dynamic sense of the working though of an impulse or experience—the sense that underlies Freud's phrase 'the work of mourning'" (Sacks 1). This work of mourning, much like funerary rites and ceremonies, is to help the reader recover from his grief and to console him by substituting an appropriate replacement for the lost object. The function of Josephus' history, then, is to find a replacement for the temple in Jewish identity. Traditionally in elegies the words of the poet—words he believes can immortalize himself and the dead—substitute for the dead person. This substitution requires the reader to rethink his life as well. As Sacks puts it "the movement from loss to consolation ...requires a deflection of desire, with the creation of a trope both for the lost object and for the original character of the desire itself" (Sacks 7). That is, not only must our desires for what is lost be redirected toward the trope [metaphor/ word] but also the nature of our desire must be changed as well. As you think about Josephus' work (and the readings

for Friday on the Tractate Avot you may well ask yourself, what could possibly substitute for the house of God? What does Josephus think is the true new locus of desire? Indeed, is his task almost too great? How could this desire *ever* be rechanneled? In offering some possible answers to this question, I will first address (1) who the Jews were before this loss occurred; (2) how Josephus makes sense of the Jews' loss; and (3) what consolation he offers.

Who Were the Jews?

Who were the Jews before the temple was destroyed? In some sense, we have been answering this question in broad terms ever since we began reading the Hebrew Bible and the excerpt on the Jews from Tacitus' *Histories* (5.1-5.10). I think it would be useful to dwell quite specifically, however, on the question of what exactly separates the Jews from non-Jews during this period, as I know from my own conference at least this distinction is still somewhat fuzzy. I am in essence asking, what makes the Jews a distinct people or ethnic group? Like today, during this era Jews were not defined just as a religious category, but as an ethnic one—this is part of the reason why today people see themselves as Jews even if they are not religious or observant. This is a key thing to remember: the defining feature of Jews is not faith (I believe in one God, therefore I am a Jew) but something more nebulous—what, though, is that other nebulous thing? A definition of ethnic groups can help us get at what that "other thing" is. In general ethnic groups (or *ethnos*) are characterized by the following four features:

- (1) The sense of unique group origins,
- (2) the knowledge of a unique group history and belief in its destiny,
- (3) one or more dimensions of collective cultural

individuality, and (4) a sense of unique cultural solidarity (Cohen *The Beginnings* 6 quotes Anthony D. Smith).

These four features are emphasized repeatedly both in Tacitus' *Histories* and in the excerpts of the Hebrew Bible we have read so far: they are the primary ways that Jews defined themselves *and were defined by others*.

For example let us consider the first feature: a unique sense of group origins. The fact that ancients expected an *ethnos* to have a unique origin helps us understand why it is not coincidence that Tacitus, like the author of Genesis, begins his remarks on the Jews by trying to account for their beginnings: Tacitus tells us that some others historians have suggested that maybe the Jews are from Crete or Ethiopia, but by their own account (and general opinion) they escaped from Egypt through the desert under the direction of "Moyses" (*Histories* 5.1-.10). In retelling this story, Tacitus also points to the second way of characterizing an ethnic group: the Jews clearly possess a sense of a "unique group history and belief in its destiny" and this unique group history grows out of their travails in the desert. (You might ask yourself what the Exodus story reveals about the destiny of the Jews & is that destiny followed through on or contradicted in the *Jewish Wars*?)

What about any distinctive characteristics of the Jews, the third attribute of ethnic groups? Tacitus' answer is more succinct and pithy than the Bible's: the Jews are a fugitive tribe of barbarian wanders who possess a religion that is novel (i.e. different) from that of other peoples. Lest we imagine that Tacitus is a cultural relativist, he quickly lets us know that difference makes the Jews "at once perverse and disgusting, [but that they] owe their strength to their very badness" (*Histories* 5.1-10).

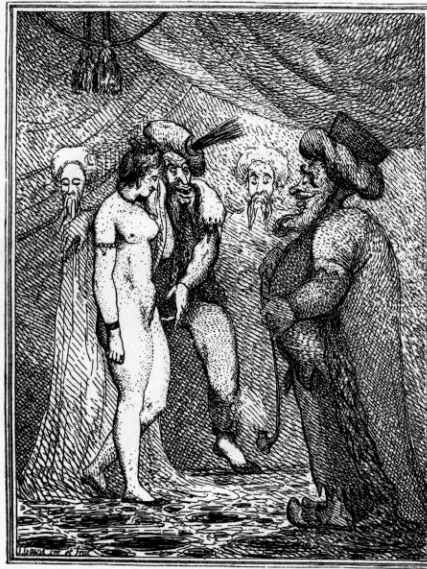
What is this perversion of the Jews? Tacitus lists the following attributes that make Jews uniquely perverse (i.e. that makes Jews "Jewish"): (1) they sacrifice different animals from other people—namely rams and bulls; (2) they have odd dietary restrictions (they don't eat pork); (3) they undergo frequent fasts; (4) they have a purely mental conception of Deity and don't believe in making "representations of God in human shape out of perishable materials. [because] They believe that Being to be supreme and eternal, neither capable of representation, nor of decay [this issue Steve Wasserstrom discussed at length in his lecture] (5) (and perhaps most annoyingly) they are highly nationalistic and separatist. That is, they "feel a sense of collective uniqueness and solidarity"—the fourth common sign of an *ethnos*. For example, Tacitus tell us that "among themselves they are inflexibly honest and ever ready to show compassion, though they regard the rest of mankind with all the hatred of enemies" (Histories 5.1-10). That is, Tacitus doesn't like the Jews because they treat people differently depending upon whether they are part of the in group or not. Tacitus is not alone in this observation— "According to an old joke, there are two kinds of people in the world: those who divide the world into two kinds of people, and those who do not. Jews [clearly] are in the former category." (Cohen *The Beginnings* 1). This division of the world into "us" and "them" is marked through the observance of ritual behavior—or as Jews might see it, through the following of Jewish law and the faithful adherence to the covenant or *b'rit*. Ever the ethnographic observer, Tacitus notes that

They sit apart at meals, they sleep apart, and though, as a nation, they are singularly prone to lust, they abstain from intercourse with foreign

women....Circumcision was adopted by them as a mark of difference from other men. Those who come over to their religion adopt the practice, and have this lesson first instilled into them, to despise all gods, to disown their country, and set at naught parents, children, and brethren. (Histories 5.1-10).

According to Tacitus, then, one is a Jew if he puts the Jewish people first and separates himself from all outsiders, including people who might have been part of one's biological family if one is a convert. To be a Jew is to be separate. You might ask yourself (or discuss in conference) whether the books of the Hebrew Bible that you have read support this observation. What according to *God*, for example, makes the Jews different?

Tacitus' observations give us a sense of what an *ethnos* was to a Roman: people are who they are because of what they ate or whom they slept with—in other words, what they *do*. But is Tacitus representative of his period and did Jews use the same criteria to define themselves? Let me answer the first question first. Tacitus does seem representative of Roman views during this period: in general Romans did not characterize Jews as a separate *ethnos* based on the criteria that people in the modern era have tended to use. I'll use this racist cartoon as an example.



**FIGURE #1: JEWS HAGGLING OVER A CHRISTIAN MAIDEN
AN 18TH-CENTURY CARICATURE (ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
JUDAICA VOL. 3, 127-28)**

First, let me apologize for the offensiveness of the drawing: I tried to find a less offensive one before coming to terms with the fact that the defining characteristic of a racist caricature is that is unappealing. In this eighteenth-century caricature of Jews haggling over a Christian maiden, we know that the men are Jews because of their Semitic clothing, their head coverings, their looks (e.g. noses), their occupation (trading), their cheapness (they are haggling), and their lust for Christian women. The last part seems important. Unlike Tacitus who is appalled that Jews don't desire gentiles, racists during the modern era emphasize outsidersness by the desire to get "inside" the body of the dominant groups' women.

In contrast to modern understandings of race, but like Tacitus, Romans did *not* believe that Jews were distinctive because of the way they looked (people do not tend to remark on their skin color, nose shape), because of distinguishing clothing (Jews dressed like others during the era); their speech is the same—they speak Greek like

other people (they don't go "barbarbar"); they have the same names, they hold the same occupations (unlike in later eras, Jews were not known as "the shopkeepers," or something of this sort), even circumcision did not make them completely distinctive (other groups practiced this rite during this era as well) (Cohen *The Beginnings* 27-45). In general people in the second temple period knew someone was a Jew because of (1) whom he associated with [whom he ate dinner with, had intercourse with], (2) observance of Jewish ritual [he didn't eat pork] and the making of sacrifices (Cohen *The Beginnings* 53-62). The destruction of the temple made both of these categories more difficult: First, the loss of the temple complicated associating with others because the temple had been an important pilgrimage site, particularly during festivals such as Passover and hence was the focal point for *where* one should associate with other Jews. Second, the loss of the temple complicated observing Jewish rituals because the temple was the *center* of Jewish ritual and the place where sacrifices were to be made. Indeed, with the destruction of the temple Jews stopped being a sacrifice-centered religion. What was to take its place?

For Jews, embedded within the issue of observance was a theology. I would like to outline this theology briefly, one because I think it will help you clarify the difference between Jews, Romans, and Christians, and two, because I think it will help you understand that the loss of the temple was not merely the loss of a building but the potential of the way that Jews understood themselves. That is, it will help me address the question of how Jews saw themselves. Historian E. P. Sanders makes the following observation about Jewish Theological Belief:

The history of Israel in general, and of our period [63 BCE-66 CE] in particular, shows that Jews believed that the one God of the universe had given them his law and that they were to obey it. This basic and fundamental doctrine also implies belief in the election: God chose Israel to do his will. Jews understood the election to lay on them the obligation of obedience, but also to involve promises on God's part: that he would save and protect them. One of the fundamental factors that contributed to their willingness to fight, and if need be die, was the conviction that God would save those who were loyal to him. (Sanders 241).

Observing the law of God, then, is what makes Jews, Jews as that is their function in the universe. Jews are not Jews because of what they believe (faith), but because of *do*. Or perhaps more clearly, belief in the one God is only important in so far as it presupposes/implies action. Moreover this action begets order: if the people fulfill their obligations to God, he will "save and protect them." Needless to say, people made mistakes and did not (perhaps could not) fulfill all of the laws. This is why sacrificing in the temple was a crucial part of fulfilling this obligation: sacrifices were the way in the Jewish religion to atone for sins, as well as the way Jews showed thanks to God and praised him (Sanders 252-53). In sum, sacrifices allowed for communion with God (Sanders 254). In this sense, Sacrifice also played an important role in fulfilling Jews' side of the covenant: it allowed them to constantly reinforce that they were keeping their part of the bargain (*b'rit*). This is the theological parallel to Nancy Jay's structural argument about the importance of sacrifice. As Nancy Jay points out in "The Logic of Sacrifice," "sacrifice joins people together in community, and conversely,

it separates them from ...foreigners, the defiled, and all those not entitled by descent or invitation to participate"—for example the Romans (Jay 17). But what if the people who need to be excluded were the Jews themselves? Within the community, sacrifice allowed Jews to distinguish themselves from those insiders who were messing up and not following the covenant. It is with this idea in mind that I would like to turn to Josephus' *History*. In the next section I would like to address the question of how Josephus makes sense of the Jews' loss before I turn to what consolation he offers.

How Josephus Makes Sense of the Loss

If Josephus is to make sense of the loss of the temple, he must somehow explain who is to blame for its destruction. As you will remember from the theological summary I just gave you, a central tenet of Jewish theology is that of providence: as J.P. Sanders points out Jews believed (and believe) that "all of life was governed by God's will. God created and rules over the entire world. The doctrine of creation—that this world was made by God, is good, and is to be cared for as his—is perhaps Judaism's most important single contribution to civilization" (Sanders 247). Given this logic, the destruction of the temple must be an act of divine retribution. But who is being punished? Who has "messed up"? That is, who is to blame? There are at least three possible answers to this question: Josephus himself, the Romans, and the Zealots. Josephus eventually pins the blame on the Zealots, but his reasons for excluding the others are important, so I'd like to explicate them briefly.

First, it's worth noting that a fair number of people felt Josephus himself was at least partially to blame for the destruction of the temple and the fall of Jerusalem—indeed Josephus wrote this book to clear his name against this very sort of

slander. He gives us a hint of this on p. 344 when he tells us that the "chief gangster" [probably John] "poured abuse and curses on the head of Josephus" (344). Indeed, if one steps outside of the book for a moment, Josephus does look more than a bit like a Roman lackey. Although an insider by any standards (he served as a priest in the temple and was born into an important priestly family), Josephus was part of faction of Jews who were known basically (and to put it bluntly) for sucking up to the Romans. By his own account, Josephus is clearly one of the followers of Herod's family, a monarchy that was brought to power—and maintained its power—through the support of the Roman military and its ties to the imperial center. Perhaps we should not be surprised then that early on in the dispute in Jerusalem, Josephus tried to prevent the war with Rome; indeed as Mary Smallwood, the editor of your edition recounts, in 66 CE Josephus made himself so unpopular with his fellow Jews by arguing against the war, he "had to take refuge in the inner court of the Temple to avoid being arrested and executed on suspicion of collusion with the Romans" (Josephus 10). Josephus seemed to make up for this "lack of courage" (or foresight depending on your opinion), as the war progressed. He became one of the Jews' greatest military leaders. This, however, was not to last, for in 67 CE he was captured by the Romans. Here he managed to save his own skin by prophesying to Vespasian, then a Roman commander, that Vespasian would become the next Emperor (this wasn't obvious at the time) (Josephus 11). When Josephus' prediction proved miraculously correct, he was rewarded with his freedom and with the realization that he must now spend the rest of the war with the Romans as the favors he had incurred made him an object of "the gravest suspicion to his own people" (Josephus 11). By the

time we begin reading the book, Josephus has been happily ensconced in the Roman camp for a couple of years and emerges only to plead from afar with his not-so-surprisingly suspicious countrymen. The fact that Josephus was handsomely rewarded by the Romans with villas and tax-exempt status *after* the war could not have helped his credibility with his countrymen much. You would do well to ask yourself (or discuss in conference) what rhetorical strategies Josephus uses to clear his name. How do we know that he is not to blame for the destruction of the temple? How does he prove his loyalty as a Jew?

A second potential target of blame are the Romans. After all, they *are* the ones who burnt the temple to the ground. But Josephus makes it clear in the preface that this is *not* the story that he is going to tell. He tells us (p. 28)

[I]t is not my intention to counter the champions of the Romans by exaggerating the heroism of my own countrymen: I shall state the facts accurately and impartially. At the same time the language in which I record the events will reflect my own feelings and emotions; for I must permit myself to bewail my country's tragedy. She was destroyed by internal dissensions, and the Romans who so *unwillingly* [my emphasis] set fire to the Temple were brought in by the Jews' self-appointed rulers, as Titus Caesar, the Temple's destroyer, has testified. For throughout the war he pitied the common people who were helpless against the partisans; and over and over again he delayed the capture of the city and prolonged the siege in the hope that the ringleaders would submit. If anyone criticizes me for the accusations I bring against the party chiefs and their gangs of bandits, or for my laments over the misfortunes of my own

country, he must pardon my weakness, regardless of the rules of historical writing. For it so happened that of all the cities under Roman rule our own reached the highest summit of prosperity, and in turn fell into the depths of misery; the misfortunes of all other races since the beginning of history, compared with those of the Jews, seem small; and for our misfortunes we have only ourselves to blame. How then could I master my feelings? (Josephus 28).

This is a complex passage. I'd like to break my discussion of it into two sections.

First, I'd like to point out that how he exonerates the Romans, particularly Titus.

Second, I'd like to suggest how this passage lays the groundwork for how we should read the book as an elegy and how this is related to issue of blame. Let me turn to the issue of Titus and the Romans first.

Josephus makes it clear that Titus is not the primary agent here. He tells us Titus "*unwillingly* set fire to the Temple" (a fact he supports later on p. 359). Indeed, according to Josephus, Titus didn't even *want* to capture the city, but had "over and over gain...delayed the capture ...and prolonged the siege in the hope that the ringleaders would submit" (28). Who then, is the agent here? It is apparently the Jews, themselves. Josephus tells us, "for our misfortunes we have only ourselves to blame." But whom does Josephus really mean by this "us"? It would seem he primarily means the Zealots, the "self-appointed rulers" of the Jews who had forced Titus to invade. But does he? Although Josephus spends much of the book describing the atrocities of the Zealots, he often slips back into talking about "the Jews" in general. (A nice example of this occurs on p. 310 when he talks about the "*the* Jews" and "*the* Romans" Josephus doesn't appear to belong really identify with either category.) It is worth noting what

this slippage does in the book. One thing that I think it does is call attention to the very oddness of the categories of Jew and Roman, categories which I will argue in the next section of my lecture are challenged by the destruction of the temple. A second thing that I think this slippage does is that it keeps the reader from placing all the blame on the zealots. In doing so it also insists that the solution lies not merely in the elimination or the destruction of the zealots, but in the radical alteration of the behavior of all Jews. This for me is related to the history's elegiac function.

I had said earlier that the purpose of an elegy is to help us go through the mourning process. In order to do this, however, we need to begin to *feel* the weight of what has been lost. Josephus points out repeatedly that the zealots lack compassion for their countrymen, for the temple, for God, for anything—all they feel is a lust for devastation. Our first introduction to the Zealots John, for example, is that he has an "appetite for blood ...still unsatisfied" (287). Even when the Romans are "deeply moved" by the horrors the Zealots have committed, John, Simon, and their followers "did not turn a hair or shed a tear" (325). Feeling is being set up here as a virtue: you might want to ask yourself (or discuss in conference) if there are any earlier models for compassion as a virtue either in the biblical or Roman readings we've studied so far that might have served as a model for Josephus' vision of virtue. In order for the Jews to recover from the destruction of the temple they must feel sorrow for what has happened and as a consequence reform their ways.

The preface, then, sets up the idea that proper emotions will be a theme in the history and that sorrow *is* an appropriate emotion, albeit one in conflict with the usual mode of history writing. If you look back at the passage (handout #1), I'd like you to

notice how much language there is here about emotions and loss. The passage begins rather predictably, "I shall state the facts accurately and impartially." We have seen this before in other histories (perhaps every other history we've read??). Then Josephus says something odd. He tells us, "At the same time the language in which I record the events will reflect *my own feelings and emotions*; for I must permit myself to bewail my country's tragedy" (28). If one were to be cynical, we might say this is Josephus trying to look like he isn't really just a Roman lackey—he *cares* about his people and the temple. I think that the explanation that his emotional language is merely a rhetorical ploy is somewhat wanting, though; rather I'd argue this language of emotion has deeper structural and religious roots. In order to atone for the loss of the temple, Jews must (1) lament, (2) make amends for the loss. If so how? In the final section of my talk I will argue that the way that the Jews atone for the loss of temple, is to read it as sacrifice: it is its own purification. This I will argue is the consolation Josephus offers.

What Consolation He Offers

I would like to propose that the way that Josephus makes sense of the loss of the temple is to see it as a sacrificial offering. In this case the Zealots are not the only ones to blame, but stand in for the transgressions of others. Who are the Zealots and what transgression do they embody?

In order to understand who the Zealots were it is useful for a brief moment to step back and remember the political and religious climate in Judea. As Mike Foat and the readings for Monday (Chapter 7 of Josephus' *History*) noted we learned that there were three main religious factions in Judea at the time the war broke out: the

Pharisees, the Essenes, and the Sadducees. In part these factions grew out of different ideas about how best to serve God: The Essenes, Josephus tells us, practiced with the most severe discipline and were communistic (Josephus 133). The Pharisees (the largest sect), on the other hand, was known as the “most authoritative exponents of the Law” and ascribed everything to Fate or to God (Josephus 137). The Sadducees in contrast “den[ied] Fate altogether and h[e]ld that God [wa]s incapable of either committing sin or seeing it; they sa[id] that men are free to choose between good and evil, and each individual must decide which he will follow” (Josephus 137). Although Josephus doesn’t dwell on it, these *religious* differences also corresponded to certain political leanings and disputes.

These political disputes were mainly over the issue of Hellenization, that is the extent to which assimilating to Greek—or Roman—culture was a positive thing. Even after the Maccabean revolt in 166 BCE (see timeline on back of handout—most of you probably know about this best from the story of Chanukah) in which the Independence Party overthrew the foreign leaders and established a Jewish monarchy descending from the family of the rebels (e.g. Judas Maccabeus) entitled the “Hasmoneans.” Yet people still disagreed over the extent to which Jewish culture should be “rid” of foreign ways.

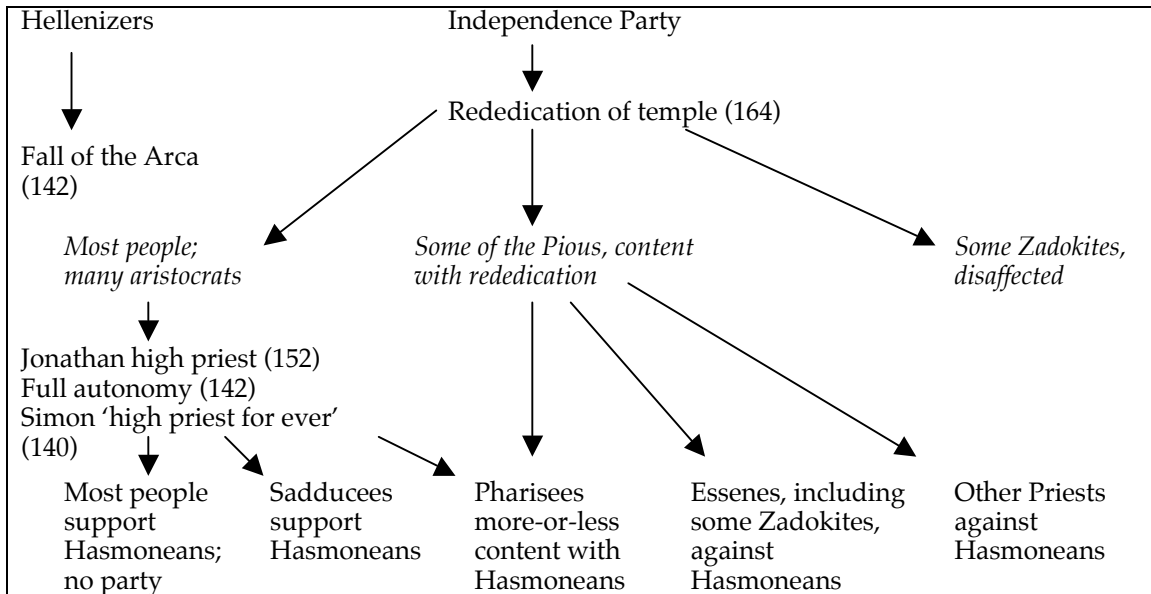


FIGURE #2: POLITICAL ORIGINS OF THE JEWISH SECTS (SANDERS 28)

The Essenes (religious extremists as shown by Josephus description) not surprisingly didn't think the new monarchy was going far enough and were largely against the new regime—hence they move out to the desert to form a new purer, less materialistic (more ascetic) society. The Pharisees were more or less content with the Hasmonean dynasty (28), and the Sadducees tended to fully support the Hasmonean rulers. The Zealots did not belong to any of these groups.

The Zealots were not an organized ideological religious sect, but an entourage of bandits, who arose in the events of 67 CE and consisted mainly of “peasants who [had] fled to Jerusalem as the Romans swept southward from Galilee. The Zealots removed the aristocratic high priest and attacked, with equal intensity, other religious groups, the aristocracy, and the Romans” (Cohen *Maccabees to Mishnah* 165). This was not a controversy for the sake of God, but rather one due to social

dislocation and economic stress: “Most of the Jewish brigands [or Zealots] were anti-Roman, because they hated the tax collectors and landlords supported by Rome, but most were *not* ideologically motivated. Their goal was to make money, and they did not care much whether the travelers and villagers whom they robbed were Jews or Romans, the supporters of peace or the fomenters of war” (Cohen *Maccabees to Mishnah* 165). Josephus, who tries hard to convince us that his motives *are* ideologically and religious and *not* about economic gain, expresses a fair amount of dismay at the Zealots’ “immoral” and unprincipled behavior. The Zealots are a plague because they defy the boundaries that were so carefully delineated by sacrifice and Jewish ritual behavior. The Zealots not only did not differentiate between “us” and “them”; but also they threatened to undo the “us” altogether: the acts of the Zealots constitute not merely “fratricide” (a term he uses on p. 307) but “suicide” (p. 292) .

The self-destructive nature of the Zealots is perhaps most interestingly revealed by Josephus’ use of metaphoric language concerning the pollution and corruption of the body politic. Through this metaphoric language, Josephus makes sense of the presence of the Zealots and allows for a “cure.” The first allusion to the Zealots occurs on p. 147 on which he remarks “When this fever [about a fraudulent Egyptian seer] too had died down, another festering sore appeared in the body politic” (Josephus 147). Here Josephus imagines the Jews, despite their factionalism, as a body, one ravaged by illness “fevers” and now by a pustulent sore. Josephus continues this language on p. 289 in which the City and her people are “being torn to bits like a great carcass” (289). Here our concern is peaked, for it seems like the city is already dead, murdered by the

infecting agents. Envisioning the Zealots as a disease upon the body politic is powerful on any number of levels.

Perhaps most importantly, the metaphor both implies that the Zealots are part of the body and not part of it. They are “in” the body but something which can and should be separated from it. This has important theological and practical implications. First, the theological: I believe that “me/not me” description of the Zealots is remarkably similar to the Jewish understanding of evil during this period. As part of a largely Christian (or Christian influenced) culture, most of us are used to the idea that evil is its “own thing.” Even if we do not believe in Satan per se, we imagine that God (if there is one or one worth believing in) is good and that evil is something separate to be conquered by him (and perhaps us). This understanding of evil, however, does not work in monotheism as it suggests that there is a sort of dualism in the universe that is untenable to monotheists such as Jews (Jews would see this as part of the Manichean heresy that St. Augustine will discuss in the final book we are reading this semester—the *Confessions*). Instead, Jews made sense of the presence of evil with the concept of *Yezer ha-ra*: The Evil Inclination (on handout under terms). According to the rabbis, man was created with two opposing inclinations or tendencies, one impelling him toward the good (*yezer ha-tov*) and one toward evil (*yezer ha-ra*). However, even the so-called *yezer ha-ra*, which corresponds roughly to man’s untamed natural (and especially sexual) appetites or passions, is not intrinsically evil, and therefore, not to be completely suppressed (*Encyclopædia Judaica* VIII.1318). We see this in the Mishnah Rabbah: “Nachman said in R. Samuel’s name: BEHOLD IT WAS VERY GOOD refers to the Good Inclination; AND BEHOLD IT WAS VERY GOOD,

refers to the Evil Inclination. Can then the Evil Inclination be very good? That would be extraordinary! [indeed] But for the Evil Inclination, however, no man would build a house, take a wife and beget children" (Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 9.7). That is, we *need* the evil inclination to survive. It is part of the goal of the universe and God's plan. It just needs to be channeled in the correct ways, largely through ordering, guiding, and discipling principles provided in the laws of the Torah. Evil then is merely "untamed urges" (such as the materialism of the Zealots) led astray. The evil inclination, too, is like a disease that can take over the body if left unchecked. The rabbis tell us,

Unless it is checked and controlled, the *yezer ha-ra* will grow like habit. It first resembles the thread of a spider's web but at the end it is like the stout rope of a wagon (Suk. 52a). Another parable describing the *yezer ha-ra* is that of a wayfarer who starts out being taken in as a guest and ends by making himself the master of the house (*ibid.* 52b). (*Encyclopaedia Judaica* VIII.1318-19).

Here the Evil Inclination directly parallels the Zealots—they too are wayfaring refugees taken in by the residents of Jerusalem, and they soon take over body politic and make themselves "masters of the house." Part of the blurring of the line between Zealots and "the Jews" by Josephus is perhaps due to the fact that the Zealots are both a part of and separate from the body politic. Their sin is that of the evil inclination, and as such, they represent what is wrong with all people, and how all Jews have strayed from God: the Evil Inclination manifests itself in such traits as "vindictiveness, avarice, anger, and vanity"—traits we see in the Zealots in spades, but also failings to which even great men are not immune (*Encyclopedia Judaica* VIII.1319). In that sense,

the Zealots are a physical manifestation of the evil inclination in us all. The cure both for the Zealots and the evil inclination (*yezer ha-ra*) is to “kick them out” of the house/body politic.

The metaphor of the Zealots as a blight on the body politic also provides a practical solution for how to expunge them (“kick them out of the body/house”): sacrifice. The exclusion of the diseased and impure from the city was important if the temple—and city—were to function as the intermediary point between God and the Jews. On p. 305 Josephus reminds us that “sufferers from venereal disease or leprosy were barred from entering the City at all; from the Temple women were excluded during their monthly periods, and even when ceremonially clean they could not go beyond the barrier already described” (Josephus 305). Once the city was infected, however, radical measures were necessary: On page 350 Josephus says “the Jews were suffering so severely in every engagement, as the war slowly but surely approached its culmination and crept nearer to the Sanctuary, that, as if dealing with a diseased body, they cut off the affected limbs to prevent the spread of infection.” Perhaps most crucially, the means of cutting was “to set fire” to the section of the wall. For Josephus, this fire, like that of the ritual sacrifice has a purifying result: thus he tells us that the Romans entered the city gates “to purge with fire the filthiness within” the city. This fire is life giving: in a direct address to the city Josephus adds: “you were no longer the place of God; you could not continue, now that you were the burial-place of your own sons and had turned the Sanctuary into a common grave for those who had slain each other. Even now [through the fire] you might be restored to life, if only you would make your atonement to God who destroyed you!” (Josephus 289).

In some ways then the burning of the city solves the problems of the book (the impurity), but it raises a host of other issues, some of which I think are worth discussing in conference. On the one hand, Josephus' metaphoric language makes the devastation of the temple seem appropriate, albeit no less horrifying. Sacrifices not only appeased God with their aroma, but also expiated the sins of the transgressor. A Sacrifice, whether an animal, a meal offering, or a temple, like a scapegoat, took on the sins or defilement which with the burning of the carcass were in some sense eliminated. What bull or sheep could possibly cleanse the defilement of the temple, though? Surely only the temple itself could do this work. (You might think back to other failed sacrifices and think about why they aren't good enough—a particularly juicy example of this occurs on p. 353 when a woman sacrifices her child in a perverse retelling of the Abraham-Isaac scene and then eats him; another example is on p. 344 when the people lack lambs to complete the daily sacrifices. Perhaps the most important question is why the death [sacrifice] of the Zealots themselves wasn't enough.)

On the other hand, the sacrifice of the temple raises a host of problems. If Nancy Jay is correct, that sacrifice not only separates out the defiled and foreign (here the Zealots or evil inclination), but also marks the insiders based on who completes the sacrifice, we should wonder that city and temple are burnt through Roman hands. Who resides in the new "moral community" created through this sacrifice? What are the tenets of the moral system they abide by? What does it mean that worshippers of other gods are now potential "insiders"? If Josephus is correct on the final page of his book that the death of the enemies is "proof, if ever there was one, of the providence if

God, who executes judgement on the wicked” what kind of providence is this? How in essence, to use the words of the Rabbis in the Mishnah, is this evil good?

Conclusion

By way of a conclusion, I’d like to circle back to my original question about elegies and consolation. Josephus tells us in the prologue, "how could I master my feelings? If anyone is disposed to pass judgment on my emotion, he must remember that the facts belong to the story and that only the grief is the writer's" (28). In some ways, Josephus doesn’t ever master his emotions—in fact they are part of the appeal for sympathy made by the text. This was not just a textual strategy: according to historian JP Sanders, it was typical within Jewish society and Jerusalem that priests and other high-ranking men would undergo public acts of mourning in order to sway a court or crowd (Sanders 543 n. 80). In other ways, though, telling the loss of the temple as a sacrifice is a form of consolation and does help Josephus “master his feeling” through the knowledge that divine providence is still at work, and although God’s house is lost, God is not. As Josephus remarks on page 362 (in a passage that might be seen as the thesis of his text): “Anyone who ponders these things will find that God cares for mankind and in all possible ways foreshows to His people the means of salvation, and that it is through folly and evils of their own choosing that they come to destruction” (Josephus 362). I will leave it up to you to discuss in conference whether you find this consolation persuasive.

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