



Second Groningen Qumran Institute Symposium, 21-22 October 2010
The Jewish War against Rome (66-70/74): Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Abstracts

Donald T. Ariel (Israel Antiquities Authority, Israel)

Identifying the Mints, Minters and Meanings of the First Jewish Revolt Coins

A consensus exists for separate silver and bronze mints of the first Jewish revolt coins. The priesthood-administered silver mint might have been located in the Royal Stoa on the Temple Mount. The bronze coins were minted elsewhere in the city—the Jaffa Gate area is proposed. This mint was first operated by the coalition of John of Giscala and the Zealots in the revolt's second and third years, and subsequently by Simon Bar Giora's faction in the fourth year.

Andrea Berlin (Boston University, USA)

Identity Politics in Early Roman Galilee

Late Hellenistic and early Roman material remains from Galilee reveal a region transformed. Throughout the second century B.C.E., marketers peddled a limited and consistent array of household goods—cooking vessels, table wares, oil and wine from coastal and Mediterranean suppliers—to mostly rural settlements from the Jezreel to the Hula Valley. There were a few small open-air sanctuaries of varying orientation (Mizpe Yammim [Phoenician], Dan [Israelite], Paneion [Greek]) but no evidence of organized religious activity. A visitor to Galilee in the year 100 B.C.E. would find little evidence of distinct or separate cultural spheres.

By the end of first century B.C.E., the region is quite different. Tracking the distribution of imported and locally produced household pottery reveals a hard division between two populations: Phoenicians and Jews. The construction of buildings for group religious practice further reflects the geography of that division. The pottery evidence might be explained as a result of increasing populations and the need for more or better located suppliers. However the concomitant appearance of religious structures specifically designed to serve each population group suggests that the pottery market division reflects a different phenomenon: the development and intensification of identity politics in early Roman Galilee. The archaeological remains allow us to date this development to the later first century B.C.E., two to three generations prior to the explosive events of the 60's C.E. This in turn compels us to again consider the revolt's prehistory.

I do not argue that the revolt was an inevitable consequence of the growing social and cultural divide. Like most scholars, I believe that an event of such complexity was a result of many factors. But I will argue that the revolt would not have happened without the hardened social, cultural, and religious divisions that had developed over the two to three generations previous. Those divisions created a dangerously unstable society. Such a society was a necessary, though not a sufficient, condition for the breakdown of

political and social order. That breakdown in turn provided the conditions for the revolt to occur.

Robert Deutsch (Tel Aviv University, Israel)

The Coinage of the First Jewish Revolt, 66–73 C.E.

The paper deals with the coins issued by the Jews during the first revolt against Rome. The main literary source describing the events is the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, who was also one of the leaders of the revolt. The coins were minted during the first five years, from the outbreak of the war in 66 C.E., till the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. The revolt continued till the capture of the last stronghold of Masada in 73 C.E., but no coins were found bearing a date later than the fifth year. This may indicate that the manufacturing place was in Jerusalem, and once the city was captured by the Romans, the minting had been terminated.

The coins were produced in silver and bronze. The silver coins were made of high quality metal and according to high minting standards. All silver coins are bearing the slogan: "Jerusalem the Holy," and indicate their weight unit: "Shekel of Israel," "Half of a shekel" or "Quarter of a shekel." All the silver coins, with a single exception, display the same cultic iconography: a chalice on the obverse and a staff with three buds of pomegranates on the reverse.

The bronze coins of the second and third years, which carry the slogan: "Freedom of Zion," are abundant and negligently manufactured. The bronze coins of the fourth year, which are of different denominations, are of a slightly higher quality and bear the legend: "To the redemption of Zion." The iconography on these bronze coins is connected with the Jewish cult and festivals.

The coins minted by the Jewish rebels during the revolt are very important, as they are first-hand evidence independent of literary sources.

The main subjects addressed in the present paper are:

1. The minting authority: in the beginning the minting authority question is addressed, since all the coins minted by the rebels during the revolt lack any name or institution responsible for the issue. A possible answer to the question is offered by examining the iconography and the slogans;
2. The minting technique: presented according to an experimental device for minting silver coins which was built for this purpose;
3. Metallurgical analysis of the silver coins;
4. Die-link study: the number of dies and their upper/lower combinations, observed on the 1220 silver coins recorded by the author will be presented;
5. Coins of the revolt found in archaeological excavations: All available data, from archaeological reports and Israel Antiquities Authority archives, have been brought together and examined according to regional distribution.

Werner Eck (Universität zu Köln, Germany)

Die römischen Repräsentanten in Judaea: Provokateure oder Vertreter der römischen Macht?

In dem Thema ‚Die römischen Repräsentanten in Judaea: Provokateure oder Vertreter der römischen Macht?‘ wird es darum gehen, ob diese wirklich, wie man aus Josephus entnehmen kann und teilweise entnommen hat, wesentlich zum Ausbruch des Aufstandes beigetragen haben oder ob nicht Josephus besondere Interessen hatte, dies so darzustellen. Dabei kommt hinzu, dass er wie viele Juden seiner Zeit, viele jüdische Vorstellungen absolut setzte, auch wenn diese mit römischen Vorstellungen keineswegs zur Deckung zu bringen waren. Wenn Rom seine Interessen klar vertrat, ist dies nicht selten von Josephus oder anderen Juden als Provokation verstanden worden, auch wenn das nicht so gemeint und gewollt war. Doch das Zugeständnis, dass Rom als herrschende Macht natürlich auch das „Recht hatte“ seine Vorstellungen durchzusetzen, das wird von Josephus nicht zugestanden.

Jan Willem van Henten (University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands)

Rebellion under Herod the Great and Archelaus: Analogies, Tropes and Josephus' Reliability

The important question how Josephus' description of the Jewish Revolt of 66–70 C.E. and his explanation of the causes of the revolt relates to “what really happened” may find a partial answer in research into other descriptions of rebellions by Josephus. Analogies can help us to determine, for example, to what extent Josephus' narratorial voice interprets the events. This contribution will analyze Josephus' descriptions of several attempts to revolt during the reign of Herod the Great and Archelaus. This period allows us to compare the descriptions in the *War* and the *Antiquities*, which helps to articulate Josephus' own voice. I will contrast Josephus' presentation with my own tentative reconstruction of the events.

Pieter van der Horst (University of Utrecht, the Netherlands)

Philosophia epeisaktos: Some Notes on Josephus, A.J. 18.9

When introducing the “fourth philosophy” of the Jews, only in this case Josephus qualifies it as a *philosophia epeisaktos*. This paper explores the semantic range of *epeisaktos* and concludes that in this well-chosen adjective Josephus encapsulates the problems he has with this movement.

George H. van Kooten (University of Groningen, the Netherlands)

The Earliest Literary Witnesses to the Jewish War: Mark, 2 Thessalonians and the Revelation of John

In this paper the earliest literary witnesses to the Jewish War will be discussed: Mark, 2 Thessalonians and the Revelation of John which can all be dated early, before the temple's destruction in 70 C.E., when read against the background of ancient history. These witnesses are "Christian" rather than "Jewish", and they appear to have been written from an awareness that the suppression of the Jewish War was part of the Year of the Four Emperors (68/69 C.E.). Methodological reflections will focus on the Judaism/Christianity divide, and on the integration of a "Christian" perspective in the contemporary developments of the Roman world.

Jodi Magness (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA)

A Reconsideration of Josephus' Testimony about Masada

Flavius Josephus ends his account of the Jewish War with the fall of Masada, which culminates with his account of the controversial mass-suicide of the Jewish rebels. The recent publication of the final reports on Yigael Yadin's 1963-65 excavations, and the remains uncovered in the 1995 excavations in the Roman siege works (which I co-directed), have provided valuable archaeological evidence about Herod's palaces at Masada and the history of the site after Herod's death. In this paper, I consider Josephus' description of Masada in light of the archaeological evidence, focusing especially on the Roman siege. As we shall see, in some cases the archaeological evidence supports or corresponds with Josephus' testimony, whereas in other cases the evidence is ambiguous or contradicts his testimony.

Steve Mason (York University, Toronto, Canada)

History as Narrative or Argument? Using Josephus for the History of Roman Judaea

The natural-seeming question 'How reliable is Josephus?', or even the more sophisticated alternative, 'Are there techniques we can use for locating facts (or trustworthy information) in Josephus?', are not as common-sensical as they seem to sound, to judge from the frequency with which they appear. In this paper I argue that the ways in which we use Josephus depend upon our model of historical research. Beginning with questions about Josephus only makes sense if we are trying somehow to convert his narrative into a more reliable version. But is that a workable conception of the historian's task or craft? If we pursue history as free inquiry (cf. R. G. Collingwood, M. Oakshott, L. Goldstein), the possible uses of Josephus for the investigator obviate the question of either his general reliability or even his particular accuracy. After some reflections on the nature of history, I discuss these problems with reference to concrete

issues concerning Pilate's term in office, Cestius Gallus' campaign in Judaea, and Titus' destruction of the temple. I propose that in the context of historical inquiry, preoccupation with Josephus' reliability is a red herring.

James McLaren (Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, Australia)

Going to War against Rome: The Motivation of the Jewish Rebels

The decision of some Jews to start a war against the Romans in 66 C.E. is a remarkable one. To the outside observer the Jews faced overwhelming odds that made any notion of achieving a victory seem highly implausible. Indeed, Josephus places on the lips of Agrippa II a long speech outlining the apparent foolishness of making such a choice (*B.J.* 2.345–401). While he is then eager to provide some insight regarding the thinking of those opposed to the war Josephus passes over the opportunity to provide his readers with any such direct insight into what those who decided to fight were thinking. Yet, it is important to recognise that the war was not started by the Romans, nor was it a case of the Jews needing to take up arms because of an imminent invasion. Whatever the specific triggers and/or causes in terms of the interaction between the Romans and the Jews, there was a deliberate choice made to go to war. This paper will explore the issue of motivation among the rebels: their hopes and their expectations. In this context, it will explore whether or not fervour, possibly linked to apocalyptic hopes, played a role and if there is any grounds for depicting the rebels as believing they could actually win the war. The paper will also consider why the fight was continued as the Romans gradually reasserted their control in the territory. The case for reconstructing the motives of the rebels, in part by reading Josephus against his own reconstruction, will be approached from three perspectives: drawing insights from comparative studies on why people go to war; a review of the evidence regarding the spread of the war and the identity of the participants; and, an assessment of the evidence regarding the war external to Josephus, such as Jewish and Roman coinage.

Jonathan Price (Tel Aviv University, Israel)

The Jewish Population of Jerusalem from the First Century B.C.E. to the Early Second Century C.E.

With abundant detail, Josephus depicts his native Jerusalem as a thriving, cosmopolitan Temple-centered city up to the time of its destruction in 70 C.E.; other literary and archaeological evidence provide further details missing from Josephus' picture. After the traumatic destruction, hints and passing comments in Josephus' writings describe a devastated place, a scarcely populated ruin. The epigraphic record confirms this impression of sudden change: dedicatory and other inscriptions from around the Temple Mount, and above all the hundreds of epitaphs from the Jewish necropolis of the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E., give witness to a thriving and varied Jewish population, reflecting remarkably the wide socio-economic range of the population and its cosmopolitan nature (many foreign Jews were buried there). These inscriptions, naturally, fall off abruptly after 70, and end almost entirely by 135; dating of

inscriptions and the use of burial caves can often be determined with fair precision, using techniques which will be described. Literary sources hint at a small Jewish presence in the southwestern corner of the city between the revolts, and archaeological and epigraphic evidence attests to a new Jewish settlement near the walls of Jerusalem in the late first century B.C.E., after the destruction, but this, too, was apparently abandoned after the Bar Kokhba revolt.

Uriel Rappaport (Haifa University, Israel)

Who Were the Sicarii :Terrorists? Urban Terrorists? A Suicidal Sect (Group)? Religiously Motivated? Dynastic? Messianic? Territorial?

The “Fourth philosophy” that was later called “Sicarii” is the best known among the various anti-Roman movements in Judea. Their history can be followed along several generations, whereas the other anti-Roman groups are known and were active only for a short time. Such is the case of Bar-Giora’s and John of Gishchala’s parties; of the Zealots; of Elazar son of Dinaeus/Dinai (*B.J.* 2.235 [and Alexander]; *A.J.* 20.121, 161), though he was active longer; of the rebels’ leaders after Herod’s death (anonymous in Idumea [*B.J.* 2.55]; Simon in the Peraea [*B.J.* 2.57–59]; Athronges and his brothers [*B.J.* 2.60–65]) and some ephemeral “messianic” figures (Theudas; the Egyptian prophet; an anonymous impostor [*A.J.* 20.188]).

Not only did they have the longest history among these groups but their activity spread outside of Eretz Israel. Though their roots were in Galilee they continued their activity in Jerusalem and its vicinity and then moved to Masada. After its fall they incited revolts in Egypt and Cyrene. Their history stretches then over 120 years (45 B.C.E.–75 C.E.) and their activity was felt also in the eastern part of North Africa (had it any impact on the revolt under Trajan?).

Yet the almost only source about them is Flavius Josephus’ writings and as always with his writings, though they are of the outmost importance they are equally suspicious. Undoubtedly he opposed the Sicarii ideologically, yet personally there is only the late attempt of Jonathan of Cyrene to incriminate him in anti-Roman activity (*B.J.* 7.448; *Vita* 424–425). To proceed with any scrutiny of the data included in Josephus’ *Bellum* and *Antiquitates* we have to sift it and to consider it in detail.

Generally speaking Josephus’ attitude towards the Sicarii might have been less personal than with the other rebels. He does not mention any personal collision with their leaders when he was active in Judea as he had with John of Gishchala and they were not directly involved with the siege of Jerusalem or the destruction of the temple and they played a lesser part in the revolt of 66–70/3 except at the very beginning and at the end of it. Personally then he was better placed to judge them without exceptionally extreme personal animosity.

The paper will survey mainly the information in Josephus’ writings trying to answer the questions proposed above.

Brian Schultz (Fresno Pacific University, USA)

Not Greeks but Romans: Changing Expectations for the Eschatological War in the War Texts from Qumran

Like other texts composed during the Hellenistic Period (especially Daniel and 1 Maccabees), the *War Scroll* originally anticipated that an ultimate victory over the foreign Greek rulers in the Land of Israel would result in the onset of the Messianic Age. Pompey's conquest of Judea in 63 B.C.E. was, from the perspective of biblical (Jewish) prophecy, an unforeseen, if not unimaginable development that nullified such an understanding. The *War Texts* at Qumran are witnesses to an early effort at adapting these former beliefs to the new political reality. While on the one hand the sectarians found scriptural support for the new situation at hand, they also correctly perceived that victory against the mightier Romans would require an even more miraculous divine intervention. Ultimately, none of the new scenarios they imagined came to pass, but understanding the *War Texts* may help cast light on what other Jewish groups may have had in mind while rising up against the might of Rome.

Daniel Schwartz (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel)

Josephus on Albinus: The Eve of Catastrophe in Changing Retrospect

One of the more striking differences between Josephus' parallel narratives is the dramatic improvement, from the *War* to the *Antiquities*, of the image of Luceius Albinus—the Roman governor of Judaea whose tenure (62–64 C.E.) preceded that of Gessius Florus, under whom the rebellion began. If in Josephus' work of the 70s Albinus was wicked and corrupt through and through, by the 90s he had become, in the *Antiquities*, a conscientious ruler who attempted to maintain law and order in difficult circumstances. That latter picture was achieved, first of all, by changes in what is said directly about Albinus. But it is also achieved indirectly, by the introduction, into this chapter of *Antiquities*, of much material that focused on the sinful behavior of various Jews—material that is mostly without parallel in the *War* and to some extent also contradicts that earlier work. This paper will first demonstrate that change, whereby the older Josephus brought his account of the catastrophe of 70 C.E. somewhat into line with standard biblical and Jewish theodicy according to which it is our own sinfulness that causes our calamities, and then subject it to source-critical and composition-critical analysis.

Julia Wilker (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

Josephus, the Herodians and the Jewish War

The paper focuses on the role of the Herodians, particularly Agrippa II and Berenice, during the Jewish War and their depiction in Josephus' work. Based on their presentation especially in the *Bellum Iudaicum* as well as other sources, the actions and significance of the Herodians in the history of the revolt will be reconstructed. It will be demonstrated that the Herodians played a far more decisive role in the outbreak and development of the war than attributed to them. Therefore, it has to be explained why Josephus deliberately suppressed certain facts and relations while the other ancient authors showed only minor interest in them.
