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JEWISH CHRISTIANS AND OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN
JUDAEA FROM THE GREAT REVOLT TO THE BAR-KOKHBA
WAR

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תודות:

בראש ובראשונה אני מבקש להודות מכל ליבי לפרופ' אהרן אופנהיימר שהנחה אותי בעבודתי ברוחב לב ובנכונות אין קץ לעזור ולסייע לי בכל צורך ובקשה. הוא היה לי לא רק מנחה מקצועי ומסור אלא גם ידיד של אמת.

ברצוני להודות למספר חוקרים אשר הועילו לייעץ לי ולחלוק עמי את ידיעותיהם ובמיוחד לפרופ' בנימין איזק אשר קרא חלק ממחקרי והעיר הערות חשובות עליו ולד"ר יובל שחר שהקדיש לי רבות מזמנו ושיתף אותי במידע על ממצאיו ומחקריו.

כן אני חב תודה לרבים וטובים אחרים ובהם לד"ר סוזן ויינגרטן על העריכה הלשונית, הערותיה המחכימות ועצותיה המקצועיות, לגב' נילי אופנהיימר על הפניות ביבליוגרפיות רבות וחשובות ולאשבל רצון, עמיתתי ללימודי דוקטורט וידידתי היקרה, שלא חסכה מזמנה כדי לתקן את שגיאותיי בעברית. תודתי נתונה גם לביה"ס למדעי היהדות ובפרט לשרה ורד על כל העזרה והסיוע שהיא העניקה לי.

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Abbreviations:

ACW	Ancient Christian writers
AGJU:	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentum
AJ	Josephus, Jewish Antiquities
AJSR:	Association for Jewish Studies Review
AJT:	American Journal of Theology
Annales HSS:	Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales
ANRW:	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt
BA:	Biblical Archaeologist
BAR	Biblical Archaeology Review
BASOR:	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BCE	Before the Common Era
BJ	Josephus, Jewish War
BJRL:	Bulletin of the John Rylands Library
BT	Babylonian Talmud
BW	Biblical World
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ:	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CCSL:	Corpus Christianorum Series Latinae
CE	Common Era
CGTC	Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary
CPJ	Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
DJD:	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
EJ:	Encyclopaedia Judaica
ETL	Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses
EU:	Encyclopaedia Universalis
FB:	Forschung zur Bibel
FRLANT:	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GCS	Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte
HE	Eusebius, <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
HSS:	Harvard Semitic series
HTR:	Harvard Theological Review
HUCA:	Hebrew Union College Annual
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IEJ:	Israel Exploration Journal
JA:	Journal Asiatique
JBL:	Journal of Biblical Literature
JBR:	Journal of Bible and Religion
JDS:	Jewish Desert Studies
JE:	Jewish Encyclopaedia
JEA:	Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
JECS:	Journal of Early Christian Studies
JEH:	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
JGRChJ:	Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism
JJS:	Journal of Jewish Studies

JQR:	Jewish Quarterly Review
JRS:	Journal of Roman Studies
JSIJ:	Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal
JSJ:	Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSNT:	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSOT	Journal for the study of the Old Testament
JSS:	Journal of Semitic Studies
JT	Jerusalem (Palestinian) Talmud
JTS:	Journal of Theological Studies
KJV	King James Version
M:	Mishnah
MB:	Mitteilungen und Beiträge
NASV:	New American Standard Version
NICNT:	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NRSV:	New Revised Standard Version
NT:	Novum Testamentum
NTOA	Novum testamentum et orbis antiquus
NTS:	New Testament Studies
PEQ:	Palestinian Exploration Quarterly
<i>PG:</i>	Migne, Patrologia, Series Graeca
<i>PL:</i>	Migne, Patrologia, Series Latina
PNTC:	Pillar New Testament Commentary
PThMS:	PittsburghTheological Monographs Series
RB:	Revue Biblique
Rec.:	Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions
REJ:	Revue des Études Juives
RevSR:	Revue des sciences religieuses
RH	Cassius Dio, Roman History
RSR:	Recherches de Science Religieuse
SBF:	Studium Biblicum Franciscanum
SBL:	Society of Biblical Literature
SecCent:	Second Century
SH	Scripta Hierosolymitana
SHR:	Studies in the History of Religions
SNTS MS.	Society of New Testament Study Monograph Series
SP:	Sacra Pagina
STJHC:	Studies and Texts in Jewish History and Culture
Tos.:	Tosefta
TU:	Text und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
TZ:	Theologische Zeitschrift
TZT:	Tübingen Zeitschrift für Theologie
VC:	Vigiliae Christianae
Vita	Josephus, Life
VT:	Vetus Testamentum
WThJ:	Westminster Theological Journal
WUNT:	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZDPV:	Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
ZNW:	Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZPE:	Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik

INTRODUCTION:

The significance of the period from the Great Revolt (66-73 CE) up to the end of the Bar-Kokhba war (132-135/136 CE) in the history of the Jewish people can hardly be overstated. The suppression of the first Jewish uprising deprived the Jews of their national institutions (the Sanhedrin, the Temple and the high priesthood) and threw them into an existential crisis. Facing these tragic events, the Jews sought to redefine their spiritual heritage in order to adapt it to the new reality, and Judaism underwent important changes and transformations during the years that followed the Great Revolt.

As is well-known, the movement of the rabbis assembled in Yavneh under the leadership of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, strove to recreate a centre for Jewish life. Apart from this group, other forms of Judaism, among them the Christian movement, continued to exist after the catastrophe of 70 CE and it is more than likely that, like the rabbis, they too endeavored to rethink and to redefine Second Temple Judaism.

There is general agreement among historians that this period ended with the Bar-Kokhba revolt whose harsh repression plunged the Jews of Judaea into crisis and despair. This uprising was the last great attempt of Jews to regain their independence until the twentieth century CE. The present study will focus on the Jewish Christians of Judaea during this crucial time-period.

The Study of Jewish Christianity and its problems

The phenomenon of Jewish Christianity and the concomitant question of its so-called "parting of the ways" with Judaism have been intensively discussed in modern scholarship, for it directly affects our views of the earliest origins of Christianity.

The formulation of the concept of Jewish Christianity is usually ascribed to F. C. Baur who, in an article published in 1831, contended that the early Christian movement was divided into two clear parties: the Jewish Christians gathered around Peter, and the gentile Christianity of Paul.¹ Baur's dichotomous reconstruction of the early Church has been widely criticized as an oversimplification; the fact remains though, that his contribution has paved the way for scholarship on Jewish Christianity. In his wake, a variety of scholars have devoted abundant discussions to the concept of Jewish Christianity itself, and at present this is an independent field of historical research.²

Jewish Christianity is understood by most modern scholars as a religious phenomenon which developed at the periphery of rabbinic Judaism and gentile Christianity during the first centuries of the Common Era. It covers a set of movements (described notably by the Church Fathers) that were involved to some degree with both Judaism and Christianity.

However, the study of this phenomenon has proved to be fraught with difficulties and has become the subject of considerable scholarly disagreement. Not only does the precise definition of Jewish Christianity remain a matter of controversy, but there is no agreement on issues regarding its terminology, its origins, its extent and its disappearance. Numerous scholars have sought to construct a comprehensive picture of Jewish Christianity by establishing diverse criteria for determining and delimitating this concept.

¹ F.C. Baur, "Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des petrinischen und paulinischen Christentums in der ältesten Kirche, der Apostel Paulus in Rom", *TZT* 5:4 (1831), 61-206.

² For a survey of the historiography of Jewish Christianity see: A.F.J. Klijn, "The Study of Jewish Christianity", *NTS* 20 (1974), 419-31; S. K. Riegel, "Jewish Christianity: Definitions and Terminology", *NTS* 24 (1978), 410-415; S. C. Mimouni, "Le Judéo-Christianisme Ancien dans l'Historiographie du XIXème et XXème Siècle", *REJ* 151 (1992), 419-428; F. Blanchetière, *Enquête sur les Racines Juives du Mouvement Chrétien (30-135)*, (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 2001), 65-83.

Some have understood it in an exclusively ethnic sense, and see a Jewish Christian as a born Jew who believed in Jesus.³ However, most authors have considered this purely ethnic definition to be inadequate and lacking in meaning, since Christians of Jewish stock represented the full spectrum of opinions in the early Church.⁴

A variety of scholars regard the observance of Jewish law to be the most decisive criterion for defining Jewish Christianity: according to this view, the label "Jewish Christian" designates a believer in Christ who adhered to the prescriptions of the Mosaic Law.⁵ However, this definition raises new difficulties: in the first place, it needs to be established what degree of Torah observance is necessary to identify a Jewish Christian.⁶ Beyond this, there is the question of whether any Christian who held fast to the Jewish practices, no matter what her/his ethnicity, is to be termed a Jewish Christian. In other words, are the gentile Judaizers to be counted as Jewish Christians?⁷

Similarly, certain scholars have tried to define Jewish Christianity in terms of doctrinal consistency. Thus H. J. Schoeps, who maintained that Jewish Christianity was limited solely to the Ebionites, has attempted to propose a characteristic and

³ In this respect, M. Simon ("Réflexions sur le Judéo-Christianisme", in J. Neusner [ed.], *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman Cults. Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty; Part Two, Early Christianity*, [Leiden: 1975], 53-76, esp. 72), has rightly noted that B. Bagatti defined Jewish Christianity as being "the Church of Jewish stock", (*The Church from the Circumcision: History and Archaeology of the Jewish Christians*, [Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1971], 1).

⁴ J. E. Taylor, "The Phenomenon of Early Jewish Christianity: Reality or Scholarly Invention", *VC* 44 (1990), 313-334, esp. 314; J. Carleton-Paget, "Jewish Christianity", in W. Horbury, W. D. Davies and J. Sturdy (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism; Vol. 3: The Early Roman Period*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 731-75, esp. 733-734.

⁵ In this respect, M. Simon has insisted that Jewish Christianity, like Judaism, was orthopraxy ("Réflexions sur le Judéo-Christianisme", 56). Further scholars have emphasized the prominence of observance in defining Jewish Christianity; see for instance: E. Nodet, "Les Nazoréens: Discussion", *RB* 105:2 (1998), 263-265, esp. 263; J. Carleton-Paget, "Jewish Christianity", 739-742.

⁶ M. Simon has proposed seeing any Christian whose religious practices went beyond the requirements of the so-called apostolic decree (Acts 15: 20), as a Jewish Christian ("Problèmes du judéo-christianisme", in *Aspects du judéo-christianisme, Colloque de Strasbourg, 23-25 avril 1965*, [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965], 1-17, esp. 7-8).

⁷ While M. Simon ("Réflexions sur le Judéo-Christianisme", 54) includes the Judaizers in the category of the Jewish Christians, scholars like J. E. Taylor ("The Phenomenon of Early Jewish Christianity", 320) and S. G. Wilson (*Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70-170 C.E.*, [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995], 143) distinguish between both categories.

coherent Jewish Christian theology.⁸ However, his view has been criticized for not taking into account the full spectrum of theological positions of the different Jewish Christian groups. In contrast, J. Daniélou's definition of Jewish Christianity has been challenged for being too broad. Indeed, he has described it as being "a form of Christian thought which did not imply any relationship with the Jewish community but which was expressed in thought forms borrowed from late Judaism."⁹ Such a definition would encompass the whole spectrum of Christianity until the middle of the second century CE. Other scholars, such as R. Longenecker have supported the existence of a distinctive Jewish Christian Christology in the early Church.¹⁰ Because of such discrepancies, scholars have argued more recently that defining Jewish Christianity by its theology may be misleading and inadequate.¹¹

Finally, it should be mentioned that some scholars have sought to establish a chronological criterion for defining Jewish Christianity.¹²

The variety of modes of definition illustrates the difficulties in reaching an adequate and coherent understanding of Jewish Christianity. S. C. Mimouni has attempted to give a more consensual definition of the Jewish Christian phenomenon. Thus he has proposed that "ancient Jewish Christianity is a recent wording that designates the Jews who did acknowledge Jesus' messiahship and who did or did not acknowledge

⁸ H. J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 1949).

⁹ J. Daniélou has identified three different types of Jewish Christianity. Apart from the above-mentioned category, he has proposed that the Jews who accepted that Jesus was the Messiah but not the Son of God (like the Ebionites) be labeled Jewish Christians. In his opinion, there is also a third type of Jewish Christians: the Christian community centered around James which, although living a Jewish lifestyle, maintained an "orthodox" theology (*Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, [Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1958], 17-21).

¹⁰ R. N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity*, (London: SCM Press LTD, 1970).

¹¹ See for instance: A.F.J. Klijn, "The Study of Jewish Christianity", *NTS* 20 (1974), 419-431, esp. 431; J. E. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish Christian Origins*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 22; J. Carleton-Paget, "Jewish Christianity", 739.

¹² See for instance: J. Daniélou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, 21.

the divinity of Christ, but who all continued to observe the Torah."¹³ This definition offers the advantage of taking into account the criteria of ethnicity and of Jewish praxis; furthermore, it reflects the theological diversity of the Jewish Christian phenomenon. Thus it appears to be consistent with what the ancient evidence discloses about Jewish Christian groups like the Nazoraeans and the Ebionites.

It may be asked though, whether any attempt to approach Jewish Christianity as a self-contained entity is meaningful and whether it actually refers to any historical reality. In spite of their common features, it is difficult to maintain that the different Jewish Christian sects constituted a unified movement. Ancient sources mention specific groups by name, such as the Ebionites, the Nazoraeans and the Elchesaites. These have been identified by modern scholarship as being Jewish Christians, but the ancient sources never refer to individuals who labeled themselves or were labeled Jewish Christians. Furthermore, Jewish Christianity proves to be a rather slippery category; for example, M. Simon has rightly noted that those Christians who followed the second century Marcion in purging their Christian beliefs of any Jewish elements, most likely considered the "Great Church"¹⁴ itself to be Jewish Christian.¹⁵

Some recent scholars have therefore emphasized the artificial character of the term "Jewish Christianity," viewing it as a heuristic invention whose use is problematic.¹⁶

¹³ S. C. Mimouni, "Pour une définition nouvelle du Judéo-Christianisme", *NTS* 38 (1992), 161-186, esp. 184.

¹⁴ This expression is found in Origen, *Against Celsus* V, 59, (PG 11, col. 1273-1276).

¹⁵ M. Simon and A. Benoît, *Le Judaïsme et le Christianisme antique, d'Antiochus Epiphane à Constantin*, (Paris: Presse Universitaire de France- Nouvelle Clio; 5th ed. 1998), 258-259.

¹⁶ See for instance: J. E. Taylor, "The Phenomenon of Early Jewish Christianity", 314-315; C. E. Fonrobert, "The Didascalia Apostolorum: A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus", *J ECS* 9 (2001), 483-509, esp. 484 n.4.

In the light of the difficulties in dealing with Jewish Christians in general, it has been argued that one should rather speak of Jewish Christianities.¹⁷

The model proposed by D. Boyarin for looking at Judaism and Christianity in the second and third centuries CE may be useful for delineating Jewish Christianity. Boyarin has pictured them as points on a continuum, from the Marcionites at one extremity to the "Jews for whom Jesus meant nothing" at the other.¹⁸ We propose that Jewish Christianity should be plotted on this spectrum somewhere between the "Great Church" (whose best representatives were the Church fathers who condemned Christians who sustained a Jewish lifestyle) and the Jews for whom Jesus was irrelevant.

However, although the diverse Jewish Christian groups shared some common features, it can hardly be maintained that they constituted a unified and coherent movement across time and place. Rather than a clear category, Jewish Christianity proves to be an ill-defined and a polymorphic religious phenomenon that in itself can be portrayed as a relatively broad spectrum. In the light of this, it would seem vain to seek for a clear or coherent picture of Jewish Christianity and it may be asked whether the Jewish Christian groups, in spite of their common denominators, should not rather be surveyed as specific entities.

As stated above, the second question that has dominated scholarly discussion on the rise of Christianity at the start of the Common Era concerns the "parting of the ways" from Judaism. This approach presumes that there was a definitive event in the history of relations between Christians and Jews which resulted in estrangement between the

¹⁷ B. L. Visotzky, "Prolegomenon to the study of Jewish Christianities in Rabbinic Literature", *AJSR* 14 (1989), 47-70, esp. 48.

¹⁸ D. Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 8.

two sister communities, and the emergence of two distinct religions.¹⁹ Hence a great deal has been written in an attempt to delineate the moment of separation between Judaism and Christianity and to identify the exact catalysts for this development.

This supposed decisive point in time has been variously located by modern scholars. A number of different dates have been proposed for the split between both communities. Many have seen the Jewish war and the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE as the crucial moment of separation between Christianity and Judaism,²⁰ but others have linked it to the Bar-Kokhba revolt.²¹ Another group of scholars have been more inclined to locate the "parting of the ways" at a much later date: there are those who have situated it at the time of the triumph of rabbinism in the third century,²² while a further group dates it to the fourth century CE.²³

At any rate, following this model, many have assumed that after the "parting of the ways" there was hardly any contact between Judaism and Christianity and that the constitution of the two normative religions doomed the Jewish Christian movements to marginalization and eventually to disappearance.²⁴

¹⁹ For a discussion on the model of the "parting of the ways" and on its historiography see: A. Y. Reed and A. H. Becker, "Introduction: Traditional Models and New Directions", in A. Becker and A. Y. Reed (ed.), *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 1-33.

²⁰ See for instance: P. E. Davies, "Early Christian Attitudes towards Judaism and the Jews", *JBR* 13 (1945), 72-82, esp. 73-75; W.H. C. Frend, *The Early Church*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), 44-45; M. R. Wilson, *Our father Abraham: Jewish roots of the Christian Faith*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 76-77.

²¹ See for instance: G. Alon, *The Jews in their land in the Talmudic age, 70-640 C.E.* Translated and edited by G. Levi, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989), 305-306; L. H. Schiffman, "At the Crossroads: Tannaitic Perspectives in the Jewish Christian Schism", in E. P. Sanders, A. I. Baumgarten and A. Mendelson (ed.), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition Vol. 2, Aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 115-156, esp. 156; J. D. G. Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, (London: SCM/ Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), 238-243.

²² S. Alexander, "The Parting of the Ways' from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism", in: J. D. G. Dunn (ed.), *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 1992), 1-25, esp. 19-24.

²³ S. Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer: New Perspectives on Jewish Liturgical History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993; Paperback edition, 1995), 124.

²⁴ M. Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study in the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire, AD 135-425*, translated by H. McKeating, (Oxford: Published for the Littman Library by Oxford University Press, 1986), 268-269.

Although the "Parting model" has remained influential in recent studies,²⁵ a growing number of historians of early Christianity have questioned the assumption of a mutual and final split between Christianity and Judaism which occurred in a single act of separation. These scholars have insisted on the fuzziness of the borders between both religious entities, and have called attention to the continuation of social contacts and interaction between Jews and Christians during the first few centuries CE: the model of Boyarin mentioned above, which pictures Judaism and Christianity in late antiquity as being part of a single circular system, is representative of this historiographical tendency.

Furthermore, these authors have argued that the self-understanding of the Christians developed unevenly, depending on time and place. Given these regional and cultural variations in the constitution of Christian identities, it would seem awkward to attempt to pinpoint the precise moment of Christianity's rift from Judaism. At the most, if we accept the paradigm of separation, it would seem more appropriate to seek for different "partings" at different times and in different locations.²⁶ Likewise, J. Lieu has sustained that the model of the "parting of the ways" is too universal a conception to take into account the complexity of the historical realities; consequently, she has stressed the need for "a more nuanced analysis of the local and specific before we seek to develop models which will set them within a more comprehensive overview."²⁷

²⁵ See for instance: J. D. G. Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways*.

²⁶ See for instance: R. A. Kraft, "The Weighing of the Parts: Pivots and Pitfalls in the Study of Early Judaism and their Early Christian Offspring", in *The Ways that Never Parted*, 87-94, esp. 94.

²⁷ J. Lieu, "The Parting of the Ways: Theological Construct or Historical Reality?", *JSNT* 56 (1994), 101-119, esp. 108.

Aims and methods of the present study

From what has been said above, it follows that certain common models in the study of early Christianity would need to be modified if not deconstructed. Thus, to discuss the issue of the Jewish Christian movement as well as the question of the formation of discrete Jewish and Christian identities, a new approach is required. It is our opinion that these interrelated questions need to be addressed specifically and contextually, rather than generally and abstractly. Such a method makes it very hard to build up any clear or coherent picture of the emergence of Jewish Christianity, Judaism and Christianity as self-contained entities but it has the advantage of taking into account the complexity and heterogeneity of these phenomena.

Accordingly, as noted above, the present investigation will be limited to the study of the Jewish Christians of Judaea from the Great Revolt to the Bar-Kokhba war. The main purpose of this research will be to define what was their outlook and self-understanding during this decisive time period. But in the process of our analysis, we also hope to highlight new aspects and characteristics of this community, and will attempt to establish the place occupied by the Jewish Christians in Jewish society in the post-70 Judaea. And finally, we shall ask whether this period did indeed mark a watershed between Jews and Jewish Christians, and what implications it had for subsequent Jewish Christianity.

As already noted, Jewish Christianity is an unstable category that covers a broad range of various religious phenomena, and a growing number of scholars are calling for a more considered and careful use of this label. In the present investigation, we will designate as "Jewish Christians" those ethnically Jewish believers in Christ who

continued to live in a Jewish social and cultural environment and who, in all likelihood, maintained a Jewish life-style.

The best documented community of Judaea that meets these criteria is incontestably the Church of Jerusalem. Whereas most information regarding the fate of the "Mother Church," from its establishment up to the early 60's CE, is to be found in the Book of Acts, several accounts concerning the Jerusalem community after the Jewish War are collected in Eusebius' works, and to a lesser extent in Epiphanius' writings. According to Eusebius' own words, his material derived from various ancient writings and traditions, and notably from the second-century writer Hegesippus. It is noteworthy that, throughout these accounts, the Jewish character of the Church of Jerusalem is strongly emphasized.²⁸ It also seems that the relatives of Jesus played a significant role in its leadership. Other Christian communities developed in Judaea during the period in question, but not all of them were of a Jewish Christian character.

This consideration prompts us to address briefly the question of the geographical distribution of the Christian communities in the province of Judaea. The existence of Christian congregations in Judaea *strict sensu*, in the course of the first century CE, is attested by different sources.²⁹ Given the ethnic composition of this region, there is thus sufficient reason to presume that the Christians who dwelt there were mostly Jews. It must be said, though, that there is no clear literary evidence for a Christian presence in this area after the Great Revolt. Both tannaitic and New Testament accounts confirm the presence of Christians in Galilee in the late first-to early second

²⁸ *HE* III, 35, (ed. E. Schwartz und T. Mommsen, GCS II 1, 274); IV, 5, (GCS II 1, 304-306); 6, 4, (GCS II 1, 308); V, 12, (GCS II 1, 454).

²⁹ Epistle to the Galatians 1: 22; Acts 1: 8; 8: 1; 9: 31; 11:1; 26: 20.

century CE.³⁰ The *opinio communis* considers that the Christian communities of this region were most likely multi-ethnic, since Galilee had had a large pagan population at the start dawn of the Common Era.³¹ Nevertheless, this view has been recently challenged by other scholars, who argue that the overwhelming majority of the population of Galilee was Jewish.³² Similarly, the existence of Christian groups in Peraea at this time is mentioned in the Patristic literature.³³ It is noteworthy that the accounts of both Eusebius and Epiphanius suggest that these communities were composed of Christians of Jewish descent.

Furthermore, it appears that the Gospel was propagated very early in predominantly non-Jewish areas of the province. With respect to Samaria, evidence for the early presence of Christians there is to be found in the New Testament writings,³⁴ and it seems safe to assume that the overwhelming majority of the converts were either Samaritans or Gentiles. In addition, the Book of Acts reports that communities were founded in the Shephela³⁵ and the cities of the coastal plain.³⁶ Although the origins of such communities might have been Jewish, it seems reasonable to assume that the Christians of gentile stock represented a substantial part of these groups.³⁷ In this

³⁰ Tos. Hullin ii, 22-24; JT Shabbat xiv, 4, 14d-15a, (col. 435; Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2001); Avodah Zara, ii, 2, 40d-41a, (col. 1385); BT Avodah Zara, 16b-17a; 27b; Qohelet Rabbah i, 8; Mark 16: 7; Acts 9: 31.

³¹ See for instance: B. L. Mack, *The Lost Gospel. The Book of Q and Christian Origins*, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), 159; 214.

³² M. A. Chancey, *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee*, (SNTS MS 118, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

³³ Eusebius, *HE* III, 5, 3, (GCS II 1, 196); Epiphanius, *Panarion* XXIX, 7, 7, (PG 41, col. 401-402); XXX, 2, 7, (PG 41, col. 407-408); *De Mensuris et Ponderibus* XV, (PG 43, col. 261-262).

³⁴ John 4: 4-42; Acts 8: 5-25; 9: 31; 15: 3.

³⁵ Acts 9: 32-35.

³⁶ Acts 8:26-40; 9:36

³⁷ Although such evidence is not compelling, the onomastic data conveyed by Acts tends to suggest that the Christian communities of those areas comprised a mixed population. We hear for instance, of a certain Aeneas, who was most likely gentile (9: 33) and of a woman bearing an Aramaic name, Tabitha (9: 36), who was probably a Jew.

context, it is not by chance that the Book of Acts situates the beginning of the Christian mission to the pagans in Caesarea, the provincial capital on the coast.³⁸

Thus our research will focus primarily on the Jewish Christian movement that revolved around the community of Jerusalem, led by Jesus' kinsmen. This church appears to have been a coherent entity, and a centre of authority that continued to exert some influence at least at the regional level. In this connection, it is noteworthy that the grandsons of Jude (Jesus' brother "according to the flesh ") are reported by Hegesippus to have ruled "Churches" in the days of Domitian and Trajan.³⁹

However, a word of caution is in order, for it can hardly be denied that there were theological, political, and social disparities within this group.⁴⁰ Besides, as J. E. Taylor has rightly noted, the Jewish Christian community cannot be reduced to the Jerusalem church alone.⁴¹

Here we must add a word about the method that will be used in our study. It is noticeable that the Jewish Christian groups have usually been studied through the lens of their relations to gentile Christianity and to rabbinic Judaism.⁴² They have thus been

³⁸ Acts 10: 44-48.

³⁹ *HE* III, 20, 5, (GCS II 1, 234). It must be stressed though, that Hegesippus' main concern was to establish the continuity of apostolic authority in his argument against "heretics".

⁴⁰ In this regard, Hegesippus mentions a certain Theboutsis, who contested the election of Symeon (a cousin of Jesus) as bishop of Jerusalem and who subsequently became an arch-heretic (*HE* IV, 22, 5, [GCS II 1, 370-372]). O. Irshai has suggested that this statement contains an echo of some opposition to the leadership of the relatives of Jesus within the Church, ("The Church of Jerusalem - From The Church of the Circumcision to The Church from the Gentiles", in Y. Tsafirir and S. Safrai [ed.], *The History of Jerusalem-The Roman and Byzantine Periods [70-638 CE]*, [Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 1999], 61-114, esp. 84).

⁴¹ J. E. Taylor, "The Phenomenon of Early Jewish Christianity", 316.

⁴² See for instance: L. H. Schiffman, "At the Crossroads: Tannaitic Perspectives in the Jewish Christian Schism"; S. T. Katz, "Issues in the Separation of Judaism and Christianity after 70 C.E.: A Reconsideration", *JBL* 103 (1984), 53-63; S. Alexander, "The 'Parting of the Ways' from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism".

identified and defined according to their degree of affinity with the "Great Church" on the one hand, and so-called normative Judaism on the other.⁴³

In contradistinction, we shall attempt to take a more contextual approach and to address the question of Jewish Christianity from various different perspectives. Rather than surveying the Jewish Christian movement only through the prism of its opposition to rabbinic Judaism and gentile Christianity, we shall try to examine the Judaeo Jewish Christian community in the light of the events and conditions that prevailed in post-destruction Judaea. To this end, our inquiry will consider the attitudes the latter took towards a number of crucial issues of political, religious and social order that all the Jews of Judaea were facing during the period in question.

This discussion will be based on literary and documentary evidence of different kinds. In the first place, we will examine both canonical (especially the Gospels and the Book of Acts) and apocryphal (e.g. the Apocalypse of Peter) Christian writings. In addition, we will turn to the patristic literature, and in particular to the works of Justin Martyr, Eusebius and Epiphanius.⁴⁴

Similarly, we will base our study on Jewish writings, above all the books of Josephus. But we will also take considerable interest in the rabbinic literature, since it is widely agreed that this conveys interesting data regarding the Jewish Christians.⁴⁵ Indeed, the

⁴³ This characteristic is probably due to the nature of the relevant sources that have come down to us, which emanate principally from the writings of the Church Fathers, and to a lesser extent from the rabbinic literature. This material was written with polemical intent and reflects the position of the opponents of the Jewish Christians. Unfortunately, the works identified as Jewish Christian are few and often fragmentary.

⁴⁴ The relevant patristic passages referring to early Jewish Christianity have been compiled by A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink in their common volume *Patristic Evidence for Jewish Christian Sects*, (Supplem. to Nov. Test. 36; Leiden: Brill 1973). In addition, A. F. J. Klijn has collected the fragments relating to the so-called Jewish Christian gospels in his work *Jewish Christian Gospel Tradition*, (Supp. to VC 17; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992).

⁴⁵ The references to Jesus and the (Jewish) Christians in the rabbinic sources have been surveyed by several scholars; see for instance H. Laible, *Jesus Christus in Thalmud*, (Berlin: Institutum Judaicum, 1891); R. T. Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, (London: Williams and Norgate, 1903); M.

tannaim who strove to contain the influence of the Christian movement among Jews are very likely to have referred to the Jewish Christians in their polemical texts. However, B. L. Visotzky has rightly cautioned against several pitfalls to avoid when dealing with this material. He has especially stressed the fact that the process of redaction and compilation of the rabbinic material lasted over a millennium and was conducted in different locations, so that, technical terminology proves to be fickle and elusive. In this respect the term *min* is particularly illustrative: while on some occasions it may refer to Jewish Christians, in other cases it clearly designates "sectarians" of various other denominations.⁴⁶

We will also examine the work of Roman writers like Suetonius, Tacitus and Cassius Dio, although to a lesser extent. To end this brief and non-exhaustive review, we should mention a number of archaeological finds, such as, for instance, the letters of Bar-Kokhba found in the Judaeian desert and the documents discovered at Edfu in Egypt, which are of direct concern to our study.

Review of the topics discussed in this study:

In the first place, we shall deal with what is probably the most decisive event of the period, *i.e.*, the First Jewish War; and more specifically with the fate of the Jewish Christian community of Jerusalem during this conflict. According to a tradition reported by Eusebius and Epiphanius, the members of the "Mother Church", miraculously warned of the impending destruction of Jerusalem, took refuge in the city of Pella, on the east bank of the Jordan River, opposite Scythopolis.

Goldstein, *Jesus in Jewish Tradition*, (New York: Macmillan, 1950); J. Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der Talmudischen Überlieferung*, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978) and P. Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007). For a comprehensive and general survey of the literary evidence for "Jewish Christianity" see: S.C. Mimouni, *Le Judéo-Christianisme Ancien: Essais Historiques* (Paris: Cerf, 1998) 91-316.

⁴⁶ B. L. Visotzky, "Prolegomenon to the study of Jewish Christianities in Rabbinic Literature", 63-66.

This episode, which is commonly known as the "flight to Pella," has been the subject of an intense debate in modern scholarship. The disagreements in this discussion concern both the trustworthiness of this tradition, and its significance for the historiography of Jewish Christianity in the post-apostolic period. Some scholars have contended that the exodus to Pella marked a watershed in the relations between Jews and Jewish Christians, whereby they came to understand themselves as exclusively different religions. In contradistinction, others have rejected this tradition outright, arguing that it contains historical inconsistencies or that the origins of its sources are obscure.

Contrary to this assumption, we do admit that the Christian community of Jerusalem (or at least a part of it) left the "Holy City" in the course of the Great Revolt. We believe though, that to be interpreted correctly, this event must be strictly situated within the political context of Jerusalem during the war. Thus we propose to re-examine all the available relevant data in an attempt to reconstruct the course of events of the Jewish Christians' move to Pella, and to assess the real implications this had on later Jewish Christianity.

In our second chapter, we shall address the question of the link that bound the Jewish Christians to Jerusalem and the destroyed Temple after the Jewish War. Firstly, we shall attempt to demonstrate that Jewish Christians did return to the city following the suppression of the revolt, in spite of the severe conditions which then prevailed. Their presence there appears to have been mainly related to their veneration of Jerusalem, which remained a common feature within the Jewish Christian streams.

After this, we shall tackle more specifically the question of the attitude of this community toward the destroyed Temple. To this end, we shall investigate an account

of Hegesippus, which relates how James, the leader the Jerusalem Church during the decades that preceded the Jewish War, was stoned to death in the Temple.⁴⁷ Interestingly enough, Hegesippus ends his narrative by mentioning the existence in his days (mid-second century CE) of the stele of James next to the Temple.

A primary focus of our inquiry will be to determine the precise origin of this tradition. Then we shall seek to assess the significance and implications of the existence of this monument next to the ruined shrine for the Church of Jerusalem. In this study, we hope to demonstrate that in the late first, and early second century CE, the local Jewish Christians continued to frequent the destroyed Temple and its surrounding area, for the Sanctuary still occupied a central place in the eyes of this group.

In the following part, we shall approach our discussion on the Jewish Christians from a different perspective. Thus we shall examine the attitude the Jewish Christians took toward the Jewish tax that Vespasian imposed on all Jews throughout the Empire following the Jewish war. This impost consisted of the redirection of the annual half-shekel offering which the Jews had formerly paid to the Temple of Jerusalem; from now on, this sum, paid to the *Fiscus Iudaicus* (the bureau which administered the tax in Rome), was devoted to the rebuilding of the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill.

It is noticeable that the question of liability to the Jewish tax was variously approached by the Flavian Emperors, and the categories of ratepayers required to pay this impost evolved to some extent up to the very end of the first century CE. Nerva, anxious to correct Domitian's policy of exacting the Jewish tax abusively, introduced significant changes in the administration of the *Fiscus Iudaicus*. Interestingly, it

⁴⁷ *HE* II, 23, 4-18, (GCS II 1,166-171).

appears that the Jewish tax became, through this process of evolution, a real marker of Jewish identity. In this survey we shall try to evaluate the implications these changes had for Jews in general and for Jewish Christians in particular. By imposing this levy, the Roman authorities indirectly posed the Jewish Christians a twofold question as to their identity and their relation to Judaism. Thus an analysis of the latter's position towards the Jewish tax should be very illuminating regarding their self-understanding. Furthermore, this study may contribute to determining to what extent the Roman authorities were aware of the specific nature of the Christian phenomenon in the early second century CE.

In our fourth chapter, we shall inquire into the relationship of the Jewish Christians with the Samaritans. Furthermore, we shall try to determine the way the former envisaged the "Samaritan otherness", and in evaluating these matters we hope to shed new light on the self-understanding of the Jewish Christians.

Many scholars have observed that, while in the first century CE Jewish-Samaritan relations were characterized by mutual aversion, a relative rapprochement occurred between these groups in the post-destruction period. Literary sources of different origins show that a number of different Jewish streams, including the movement of the rabbis, were involved in this development.

Beyond this evolution, it appears that the question of the status of the Samaritans in relation to that of the Jews was intensely debated in the Jewish circles of that time. The rabbinic literature clearly reveals that the rabbis of Yavneh had heated discussions on this matter, while several contemporaneous works stemming from other Jewish streams express a similar concern for the question. Similarly, a number of Christian primary sources (the New Testament writings, the *Pseudo-Clementine*

literature and a short statement of Hegesippus) attest to the fact that the "Samaritan issue" was addressed and debated within Jewish Christian circles.

We shall attempt to show that, in nascent Christianity, the "Samaritan otherness" was approached from an exclusively Jewish perspective. A further point should be stressed: given the scantiness of the relevant data, the range of contradictory opinions on this topic seems strikingly wide. Thus we shall attempt to draw a comprehensive picture of the spectrum of attitudes of the Jewish Christians towards the Samaritans.

By means of a "mirror game of identities", we hope that our survey will shed new light on the self-understanding of the Jewish Christians. Moreover, this study may contribute to showing that the Jewish Christian communities fully participated in discussions that interested the whole of Jewish society at the turn of the second century CE.

The last part of this study will focus on the fate of the Christians of Judaea during the Bar-Kokhba revolt, and on their attitude toward this event. This uprising, which broke out in 132 CE, was most likely triggered by Hadrian's decision to transform Jerusalem into a heathen city, and to erect a shrine dedicated to Zeus at the site of the destroyed Jewish Temple.⁴⁸ After initial successes in defeating the Roman garrisons stationed in Judaea, the Jewish rebels led by Bar-Kokhba established their own government and administrative structure. Their independent state lasted three years, after which the Romans succeeded in crushing the revolt. The Bar-Kokhba revolt represents a momentous event in Jewish history, as much in the extent of the initial success of the Jewish rebels, as in the enormity of the disaster its repression entailed.

⁴⁸ It is not clear from Cassius Dio's text (*HR* LXIX 12, 1-2) whether the temple of Zeus was actually erected on the Temple Mount. Certain scholars have derived from his account that it was built not "on the site" of the destroyed Jewish Temple but "instead of it" in some other location of Aelia Capitolina (See for instance: B. Isaac, "Jerusalem from the Great Revolt to the Reign of Constantine, 70-312 CE" 6-7).

In this chapter we shall address the specific question of the relationship of the Jewish Christians with the short-lived regime of Bar-Kokhba. According to two different traditions, Bar-Kokhba persecuted the Christians: Justin claims that Christians were chastised if they did not deny and blaspheme Jesus Christ, while Eusebius asserts that Bar Kokhva harassed them because they refused to join him against the Romans.

In the light of this apparent discrepancy, our first task will be to assess the trustworthiness of these accounts. We shall further examine other literary sources, like the Apocalypse of Peter, that may refer indirectly to the suffering of the Christians under the yoke of Bar Kokhba.

In the second place, we shall inquire into the motive(s) for such a persecution. To this end, we shall try to determine the stance the Jewish Christians took during the war, and clarify the reasons for their supposed refusal to identify with the revolutionary leadership. Thus it will be asked whether the harassment of the Christians was linked in some way to the messianic hopes that accompanied the Bar-Kokhba revolt. Furthermore, we shall try to define the place the Jewish Christians occupied in the global intentions of the Jewish leadership. The analysis of this issue should be very instructive regarding the national outlook and aspirations of the Jewish Christians, compared to those of the Jewish rebels.

There is a last question to settle. Is the persecution of the Christians by Bar-Kokhba to be considered as an unexpected, brutal outburst, or was this the final paroxysm of a long process of exclusion by the Jewish leadership at Yavneh that had been building up over many years? This discussion will go beyond the narrow framework of the relations between the first Christians and rabbinic Jews. It will seek to determine whether the attitude of the rabbis paved the way for the oppression of the Christians under the regime of Bar-Kokhba.

Lastly, this study will prompt us to envisage the consequences the Bar Kokhva revolt had on the Jewish Christians, and to decide whether or not this event constituted a watershed in the existence of the Jewish Christian community of Judaea.

I- THE JEWISH CHRISTIANS' MOVE FROM JERUSALEM AS A PRAGMATIC CHOICE

According to the Church Fathers Eusebius and Epiphanius, the members of the Church of Jerusalem were commanded by an oracle to leave the Holy City before its destruction in 70 CE, and to take refuge in the city of Pella on the east bank of the Jordan River. This episode, which is better known as the "Flight to Pella", is considered to be a central issue in the historiography of Jewish Christianity in the post-apostolic period. R. A. Pritz has written in this connection: "any attempt to treat the post-New Testament history of Jewish Christianity must first decide on the historicity of the reported flight of the Jerusalem Church to Pella."¹

The fate of the Jewish Christian community of Jerusalem during the First Jewish War has been a much debated question ever since 1951 when S.G.F. Brandon published his contentious work *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, where he opposed the dominant historiographic consensus about the historicity of the "flight to Pella". He maintained, indeed, that the Jewish Christian congregation remained in Jerusalem throughout the war and vanished (together with the Zealots) during the destruction of the city.² The objections lodged by Brandon appear to have had sufficient validity to force a reconsideration of the reliability of the Pella tradition and to enable a revision of the traditional view of Jewish Christianity. Moreover his work has provided a basis for further discussion of this issue. In the aftermath of this survey, other scholars have come to the conclusion that this tradition had to be

¹ R. A. Pritz, "On Brandon's Rejection of the Pella Tradition", *Immanuel* 13 (1981), 39-43, esp. 39.

² S.G.F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, (London: SPCK, 2nd ed. 1957), 167-184.

discounted as unhistorical.³ The refutation of the trustworthiness of the account of the "flight to Pella" is based either on the apparent historical inconsistencies it contains or the obscure origins of its sources. In response to this, several scholars have attempted to respond to the arguments raised against the authenticity of the tradition of the flight to Pella.⁴

The current discussion of this issue, however, has to avoid a twofold pitfall. The first of these is the tendency to accept the tradition as it has been handed down to us in order to preserve the traditional view of early Christianity, for such a stance usually derives from motives other than historical accuracy.⁵ In contradistinction, one must avoid the refutation of the "flight to Pella" outright simply on the grounds that it served the apologetic interests of subsequent Christian writers.⁶

However, in our opinion, the significance and the implications of this occurrence (whether one admits its authenticity or not) may need to be considered and qualified still further. Unlike Brandon and his followers, we do admit that the Christian Community of Jerusalem (or at least a part of it) left the Holy City in the course of the Great Revolt. However, in light of Josephus' accounts, we suggest that the so-called

³ G. Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudo-Klementinen*, (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2nd revised ed. 1981), 229-231; J. Munck, "Jewish Christianity in Post-Apostolic Times", *NTS* 6 (1959-60), 103-104; L. Gaston, *No stone on Another: Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill 1970), 142 n. 3; G. Lüdemann, "The Successors of pre-70 Jerusalem Christianity: A Critical Evaluation of the Pella-Tradition", in E. P. Sanders (ed.), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, vol. 1: The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1980), 161-173; J. Verheyden, "The Flight of the Christians to Pella", *ETL* 66 (1990), 368-384.

⁴ S. Sowers, "The Circumstances and Recollection of the Pella Flight", *TZ* 26 (1970), 305-320; M. Simon, "La Migration à Pella; Légende ou Réalité?", *RSR* 60 (1972), 37-54; B. C. Gray, "The Movements of the Jerusalem Church During the First Jewish War", *JEH* 24 (1973), 1-7; J. J. Gunther, "The Fate of the Jerusalem Church, The Flight to Pella", *TZ* 29 (1973), 81-94; R. A. Pritz, "On Brandon's Rejection", 39-43; C. Koester, "The Origin and Significance of the Flight to Pella Tradition", *CBQ* 51 (1989), 90-106; F. Blanchetière and R. A. Pritz, "La migration des 'Nazaréens' à Pella", in F. Blanchetière and M. D. Herr (ed.), *Aux origines juives du Christianisme*, (Cahiers du Centre de recherche français de Jérusalem vol. 2; Paris-Louvain: Peeters, 1993).

⁵ P.H.R. van Houwelingen, "Fleeing forward: the departure of Christians from Jerusalem to Pella", *WThJ* 65/2 (2003), 181-200.

⁶ J. Verheyden, "Flight".

"flight to Pella" was the consequence of the Jewish Christians' surrender to the Roman authorities, who subsequently settled this odd group in a pagan city far from the battlefield. Our thesis, which concurs with the proposition advanced by R. A. Pritz and F. Blanchetière,⁷ intends not only to reconstruct the course of events of the Jewish Christians' move to Pella, but also to set this event strictly within the political context of Jerusalem in the late spring of 68 CE. Furthermore, it aims at assessing the real implication this occurrence had on later Jewish Christianity.

A-THE SOURCES

The denial of the historicity of the 'flight to Pella' is broadly based on the study of the literary sources which refer to this story, since the explicit references to this tradition are both sparse and relatively late. The proponents of the historicity of the Pella tradition assume that earlier pieces of evidence attest the authenticity of the Christians' flight from Jerusalem. There has, however, been sharp disagreement about the reliability of these alleged implicit witnesses. We shall therefore begin by reviewing both the explicit statement and the implicit references used as evidence for the Pella tradition.

The earliest account directly related to the migration to Pella occurs in the third book of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which dates back to the first third of the fourth century (c.324 CE).⁸ The story of the flight to Pella appears in Eusebius' work after a statement related to the martyrdoms of several apostles (Stephen and the two James). Citing the Jewish persecutions of the first Jewish Christian community enables the author to create a cause-and-effect relationship between these events and the outbreak

⁷ F. Blanchetière and R. A. Pritz, "Migration".

⁸ *HE* III, 5, 2-3, (GCS II 1, 196); this account is to be found in the appendix of references to the "flight to Pella" at the end of the present chapter (n° 1).

of the Jewish War. According to Eusebius' understanding of history, he presents the ruin of the Jewish nation as the expression of Divine wrath against this wicked people. He adds, however, that the Church of Jerusalem was previously warned by an "oracle" to leave the Holy City "before the war" and to settle in the city of Pella. Thus, in his view, the flight of the Jewish Christians was a pre-condition for carrying out the Divine punishment; so that the war broke out only after "those who believed on Christ...had altogether deserted the royal capital of the Jews and the whole land of Judaea."⁹

Eusebius did not specify the source of this information, so that the issue of the origin of this account remains a moot question. It has been argued, therefore, that Hegesippus (c. 110- c. 180 CE) was his source, since Eusebius drew from the latter's work, the *Hypomnemata*, an extensive data-set related to the early Palestinian Church.¹⁰ However S. G. F. Brandon, G. Strecker and others have cast doubt on the likelihood of this suggestion. Strecker, for instance, claimed that this tradition was unknown to Hegesippus, for Eusebius, who usually cites Hegesippus by name when quoting his statements, does not mention him in his account of the migration to Pella. In Strecker's view, since Hegesippus lived in Palestine in the first half of the second century CE, it is most unlikely that he should not have known of such an event, if it really occurred. Strecker then adds that Eusebius relates this tradition only on one occasion, which highlights the thinness of this data.¹¹ M. Simon has already shown

⁹ All citations of *Ecclesiastical History* are from the Loeb edition, trans. K. Lake (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

¹⁰ H. J. Lawlor, *Eusebiana: Essays on the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea*, (Oxford: Oxford University, 1912), 30-31; R.W. Funk and H.N. Richardson, "The Sounding at Pella", *BA* 21 (1958), 82-98, esp. 86; B. C. Gray, "Movements", 2; J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, (London: SCM Press, 1976), 17.

¹¹ G. Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 230-231.

the inconsistency of this thesis, which is mainly grounded on arguments *ex silentio*.¹² Furthermore, O. Irshai has rightly remarked that, even if Hegesippus did know the Pella tradition, he would certainly have chosen to ignore it. Indeed, since he was involved in the struggle against the "emerging heresies", Hegesippus sought to prove the continuity of the "genuine" Christian doctrine in the apostolic churches; thus, a tale reporting a break in the history of the Church would undoubtedly have embarrassed him.¹³

It has also been proposed that Eusebius must have derived his information from the writings of Aristo of Pella (mid-second century CE).¹⁴ G. Lüdemann, for instance, argues that this tradition originated at Pella within a Jewish Christian community which claimed a relationship with the apostles, and thus considers Aristo to be the most likely source for Eusebius. This suggestion is based on the fact that Eusebius' report of the Bar-Kokhba revolt is based on Aristo's writings¹⁵; it was therefore assumed that the latter's work included an account of the First Jewish War. However, this suggestion appears to be based mainly on Aristo's presumed origin. In any case, these considerations are not decisive and are not enough to settle that Aristo was the source of Eusebius. Other scholars have proposed that Eusebius owed his information to Julius Africanus (early third century CE).¹⁶

An original proposition has been put forward by J. Verheyden, who suggested that Eusebius contrived the Pella tradition for the needs of his apologetic presentation of

¹² M. Simon, "Migration", 37-43.

¹³ O. Irshai, "From the Church of the Circumcised to the Church of the Gentiles: The History of the Jerusalem Church up until the Fourth Century", in Y. Tsafrir and S. Safrai (ed.), *The History of Jerusalem: The Roman and Byzantine Periods (70-638 CE)*, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1999), 61-114, esp. 74-77, (in Hebrew).

¹⁴ A. Schlatter, *Synagoge und Kirche bis zum Barkochba-Aufstand. Vier studien zur Geschichte des Rabbinats und der jüdischen Christenheit in den ersten zwei Jahrhunderten*, (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1966), 154; G. Lüdemann, "Successors", 166; C. Koester, "Origin and Significance", 92.

¹⁵ *HE*.IV, 6, 3, (GCS II 1, 306-308).

¹⁶ A. Harnack suggests that Eusebius derived this tradition either from Hegesippus or from Julius Africanus; *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Leipzig: Hinrich, 2nd ed. 1906) vol. 2, 78.

the Jewish War: he was thereby able to demonstrate that the faithful Christians were saved from God's punishment.¹⁷ This assertion is grounded on two facts: we do not know of any direct reference to a flight to Pella prior to Eusebius, and there are no indications that the latter was dependent upon a source. However, Verheyden is unable to provide any convincing motives for Eusebius' choice of Pella as a destination. Furthermore, even though Eusebius' writings are apologetic, this does not necessarily imply that he invented them.

The most that can be said in this connection is that it is difficult to determine the source whence Eusebius derived his account of the flight to Pella. This does not, however, mean that Eusebius' data are to be dismissed out-of-hand. In this context, B. Isaac considers that Eusebius' accounts are trustworthy, since he lived in Palestine and was therefore certainly acquainted with local traditions.¹⁸ This assertion is strengthened by the fact that Eusebius, according to his own testimony, patronized both the libraries of Aelia Capitolina and Caesarea.¹⁹ In the light of those considerations, we tend to uphold the reliability of Eusebius' statement, even though we suspect him to have altered the chronology of the Jewish Christians' flight for his own purposes; we shall discuss this point below.

Subsequent explicit mentions of a flight to Pella are to be found in Epiphanius' work. Epiphanius, who wrote in the second half of the fourth century CE, refers to the migration to Pella three times in all in his writings.²⁰ Both of the accounts which

¹⁷ J. Verheyden, "Flight"; this thesis was accepted by R.M. Grant in his review published in the *Journal of Theological Studies* 41/2 (1990), 664-665 and by W. Kinzig, "'Non-Separation': Closeness and Cooperation between Jews and Christians in the Fourth Century", *VC* 45/1 (1991), 27-53, esp. 50 n. 59.

¹⁸ B. Isaac, "Jerusalem from the Great Revolt to the Reign of Constantine, 70-312 CE in Y. Tsafir and S. Safrai (ed.), *The History of Jerusalem: The Roman and Byzantine Periods (70-638 CE)*, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1999), 1-13, esp. 4, (in Hebrew).]

¹⁹ *HE* VI, 20, 1, (ed. E. Schwartz und T. Mommsen, *GCS* II 2, 566); 32, 3, (*GCS* II 2, 586-588).

²⁰ See the appendix of references to the flight to Pella at the end of this chapter (n^{os} 2, 3 and 4).

appear in the *Panarion*²¹ are related to the appearance of heterodox Jewish Christian sects, the Nazoraeans and the Ebionites, in Peraea, following the relocation of the Church of Jerusalem to Pella. The third mention of the flight of the Jewish Christians appears in his treatise *On Weights and Measures*²², where Epiphanius reports Aquila's encounter with the "disciples of the disciples of the apostles" who had previously returned from Pella to Jerusalem. The main features of Eusebius' data are present in Epiphanius' writings: namely the miraculous warning (although Epiphanius attributes this both to "the Christ" and to an angel on different occasions), the escape from Jerusalem and the settlement in Pella. It has been argued, therefore, that Epiphanius' accounts are based on Eusebius.²³

However, although both authors certainly used the same sources, we are inclined to believe that Epiphanius does not depend on Eusebius, for there are at least two important differences between their respective statements. First, the use of this tradition does not have the same purpose in both reports. As mentioned above, Eusebius integrates this data into a global vision of history in which the Jews are chastised by God on account of their impiety, while the Christians are miraculously saved from the destruction. In contrast, Epiphanius' records of the flight to Pella are more neutral and of less importance, for they occur incidentally and constitute digressions within unconnected accounts. Secondly, it is noteworthy that Epiphanius, in each of his statements, dates the flight to Pella to shortly before the siege of Jerusalem, whereas Eusebius claims that it occurred "before the war".

In general, it is quite difficult to evaluate the reliability of Epiphanius' writings, for his work remains confused and imprecise in many respects. In spite of these

²¹ *Panarion* XXIX, 7, 7-8, (PG 41, col. 401-404); XXX, 2, 7, (PG 41, col. 407-408).

²² *De Mensuris et Ponderibus* XV (PG 43, col. 261-262).

²³ This opinion is shared by G. Strecker (*Judenchristentum*, 229), M. Simon, ("Migration", 38), G. Lüdemann, ("Successors", 164), F. Blanchetière and R. A. Pritz, ("Migration des Nazaréens", 97) and J. Verheyden, ("Flight", 376-379).

considerations, G. Alon concludes that Epiphanius' writings cannot be disregarded "for they are a vast storehouse of reports and traditions."²⁴ In fact, since Epiphanius lived for many years in Eleutheropolis in Judaea, we may conclude that he would have been familiar with local traditions. A further indication of his reliability lies in the fact that, as pointed out above, Epiphanius recounts the flight to Pella in passing; thus it would seem that he had no apologetic interest in relating this account and merely reported a tradition that he had previously received. There is sufficient reason in light of these considerations to regard the data conveyed by the bishop of Salamis as reliable.

We shall now survey the writings which may implicitly refer to the flight to Pella. In the first place we shall turn to the *Pseudo-Clementine* writings. Numerous scholars agree that these texts, which were composed in the fourth century CE, are partly grounded on much older material that goes back to the second or the third century CE and which may have originated in Syria. The *Pseudo-Clementine* literature consists of the *Clementine Homilies*, which has come down to us in its original Greek version and the *Clementine Recognitions*. Unfortunately, we only know the Latin translation of this work made by Rufinus (c. 345- 410 CE) and a partial Syriac rendition.

These writings relate the peregrination of Clement of Rome, who follows Barnabas to Judaea after he has heard his preaching about the miracles of "Jesus Christ". At Caesarea he meets with the apostle Peter and decides to accompany him on his way to Rome. In addition, the narrative describes how Clement reunites his scattered family in the course of his journeys.²⁵

²⁴ G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land in the Talmudic age, 70-640 CE*. Translated and edited by G. Levi, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989), 442.

²⁵ For a review of the research on the Pseudo-Clementine literature, see: F. S Jones, "The Pseudo-Clementines: A History of Research," *Second Century* 2 (1982), 1-33, 63-96 and F. Manns, "Les

H. J. Schoeps was the first to propose that two passages of I *Recognitions* allude to the escape of the Christians from Jerusalem, although they do not explicitly mention Pella.²⁶ Chapter 37 reports a sermon of Peter, in which the apostle predicts the outbreak of a war and the impending destruction of the Temple. Peter claims, however, that those who believe in Jesus as the true prophet and who have been baptized will be rescued; the Syriac version reads that the latter would be gathered to "a fortified place of the land".²⁷ Later, we read in both versions that the faithful believers will be saved from the war.²⁸

Although he denies the authenticity of the flight to Pella, Strecker does consider that these writings refer to this tradition. In his view, the Jewish Christians who lived in the area of Pella produced this document in order to claim that they were the genuine heirs of the "Mother Church"; thus, "a fortified place of the land" would have been understood by these communities as a reference to Pella.²⁹ Lüdemann, who upholds a similar view, considers that the geographical origin of the writings from which these passages stem strengthens the impression of a physical limitation of the Pella tradition to the areas east of the Jordan. C. Koester also maintains that these passages reveal clear similarities with the explicit references to the flight to Pella, for they retain the main elements of the tradition (*i.e.*, the escape of the righteous, their relocation and the destruction of Jerusalem). Moreover, Koester argues for the superiority of the

Pseudo-Clémentines (Homélies et Reconnaissances). Etat de la question", *Liber Annuus* LIII (2003), 157-184.

²⁶ H. J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 1949), 47-48, 267.

²⁷ I *Rec.* 37, 2. All quotations from the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* (Syr. & Lat.) are taken from the translation of F. S. Jones in *An ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity. Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions I. 27-71*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).

²⁸ I *Rec.* 39, 3. The full accounts are to be found in the appendix of references to the flight to Pella at the end of the present chapter (n^{os} 5, 6 and 7).

²⁹ G. Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 231; this view is also accepted by J. L. Martyn, "Clementine Recognitions 1, 33-71, Jewish Christianity and the Fourth Gospel," in *God's Christ and his People. Studies in Honor of Nils Alstrup Dahl*, (ed. J. Jervell & W.A. Meeks; Oslo: Universitetsforlaget 1977) 265-295.

Syriac version of the *Recognitions* over their Latin translation: in his view the Syriac rendering best conveys the genuine Jewish Christian character of these writings.³⁰ He agrees therefore with Strecker that these passages once circulated among the Christian communities east of the Jordan. However Koester rejects the view that the Pella tradition was used to legitimate the claim of the local Jewish Christians to apostolicity.

In spite of the wide consensus that the *Recognitions* refer to the Pella tradition, Verheyden considers this evidence to be unsatisfactory. He argues that the mention of "a fortified place of the land" is too opaque to be identified as Pella. Moreover, Verheyden emphasizes the fact that in the Latin translation the "place" has an immaterial meaning and refers to God's wisdom.³¹

In spite of these arguments, we are inclined to support the opposite position. It is clear that the statements recorded in the *Recognitions* present certain similarities with Eusebius' account, for they emphasize the opposition between the believers who are spared from the destruction, and the impious people who are chastised because of their sins. It is noteworthy, though, that the dichotomy present in the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* separates the Jews who believe from their brethren who do not believe (in the messianism of Jesus), whereas Eusebius' statement clearly opposes Jews and Christians. Likewise, it is remarkable that the translation made by Rufinus reads that the devastation of the war threatens the "unbelieving nation" (*i.e.*, the Jews), whereas the Syriac version merely mentions the impending destruction of

³⁰ C. Koester, "The Origin and Significance of the Flight to Pella Tradition", 97-103. F. S. Jones, however, considers that "the two [the Latin and the Syrian] versions [of the lost Greek *Recognitions*] are of approximately the same value, and neither deserves absolute priority", (*An Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 49).

³¹ J. Verheyden, "Flight", 371-375. Similarly F. S. Jones has rejected the identification of the "fortified place of the Land" with Pella precisely because Pella does not lie within "the Land" but in Peraea, (*An Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 158).

"those who have not believed."³² In this respect it should be recalled that Rufinus, according to his own testimony, emended some of the writings that he translated with the twofold aim of expounding the unclear passages and of making them fit the principles of the Latin Church.³³ It is reasonable to think that the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* represent an earlier stage of the tradition which links the flight to Pella to the chastisement of the unbelievers. This interpretation would have first circulated within the Jewish Christian groups, and was subsequently adapted and altered by Eusebius for the needs of his demonstration.

We shall now consider the question of whether it is possible that certain passages of the New Testament also refer to the Pella tradition. Several scholars who contest the historicity of the flight to Pella insist on the fact that the direct mentions of this tradition are relatively late. In this connection, both Strecker and Lüdemann claim that none of the writings of the New Testament actually refer to the Pella tradition, although some of them were written shortly after the fall of Jerusalem and the supposed move of the Jewish Christian community. Other scholars maintain that the Pella flight may be alluded to in certain New Testament passages. We shall therefore turn to those New Testament texts which may reflect knowledge of the fate of the Palestinian Christians during the First Jewish Revolt.

There is reason to think indeed that several sayings ascribed to Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels refer to the fate of Jerusalem in the course of the First Jewish War: we find in the first instance Matthew 24: 15-20 and Luke 21: 20-24, which both depend on Mark, 13: 14-18. This pericope belongs to Jesus' prophecy concerning the apparition

³² I *Rec.* 39, 3.

³³ C. Koester, "Origin and Significance", 103.

of the "desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be".³⁴ Since it is widely admitted that Mark's Gospel was composed prior to the destruction of the Second Temple, many scholars believe that Mark 13: 14 refers to an earlier event.³⁵ Composed in the late first century, Matthew's and Luke's accounts would then be a rewriting of Mark's data in light of the new circumstances: that is to say, the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple.

Although this specific issue has been extensively studied, we wish to make several comments here. Matthew's main addition to Mark's text concerns the place where the "desolating sacrilege" was to be seen, namely "ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ". This data, which is not fortuitous, must certainly refer to a specific event that occurred in the course of the war (we shall discuss this point later). It is, however, very conspicuous that the Gospel of Matthew, which was particularly popular among the Jewish Christian communities of Syria-Palestine, does not deal explicitly with the fate of the congregation of Jerusalem (whether the flight to Pella occurred or not). If we admit that the Jewish Christians left the Holy City in the course of the Great Revolt, it is possible to infer that the Jewish Christian communities, who carried on living in a Jewish environment following the War, did not wish to emphasize the flight of the "Mother Church" from Jerusalem, but this inference must be qualified, for many other

³⁴ All quotations from the Hebrew Bible and New Testament are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989).

³⁵ It has been argued that the eschatological discourse in Mark 13 is related to the "Caligula crisis", which was provoked by the Emperor's order to erect a statue of himself in the Jerusalem Temple (39-41 CE); see for instance: N. H. Taylor, "Palestinian Christianity and the Caligula Crisis. Part II. The Markan Eschatological", *JSNT* 62 (1996), 13-40 and G. Theissen, *The Gospels in context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic tradition*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 125-165. However, few scholars agree that Mark was written after the destruction of the Temple. In this connection, J. Marcus proposes that the warning in Mark 13: 14 to flee from Judaea to the hills when the "desolating sacrilege" appears, may possibly allude to the flight to Pella ("The Jewish War and the Sitz im Leben of Mark", *JBL* 111/3 [1992], 441-62, esp. 461 n. 97).

Jews escaped from Jerusalem during the Great Revolt.³⁶ In any event, although the Gospel of Matthew may look back to specific events from the Jewish War, it seems that analyzing it would add little to our knowledge of the flight to Pella.³⁷

It is noteworthy that the Gospel of Luke, which originates from a heathen milieu, provides the most extensive depiction about the fate of Jerusalem. Although it contains two passages which refer to the forthcoming destruction of the city; *viz.* 19: 42-44 and 21: 20-24, we shall pay more attention to the latter account which seems more relevant to our investigation.³⁸ We would like to stress several points with regard to Luke's additions to Mark, 13: 14-16. We first remark that, contrary to Matthew's and Mark's accounts, Luke's data clearly refers to the people "inside the city", *i.e.*, the congregation of Jerusalem; moreover Luke states that the latter had to leave the city. The text specifies that their flight was supposed to have occurred after the city was surrounded ("κυκλουμένη") with armies, but prior to its destruction.³⁹ Koester, who admits that this passage reveals several similarities to the Pella tradition, objects however that Luke's chronology is contradicted by Eusebius' account according to which the flight occurred before the war. It appears though, that Luke's data corresponds to the chronology given by Epiphanius which we prefer to Eusebius. We shall comment on this issue below.

³⁶ A. Tropper proposes here that the Pella tradition was portrayed some time after of the flight itself because of the disapproval it met ("Yohanan ben Zakkai, Amicus Caesaris: A Jewish Hero in Rabbinic Eyes", *JSIJ* 4 [2005], 133-149, esp. 140 n. 19).

³⁷ Several scholars suggest however, that the command "to flee into the mountains" in Matthew 24: 16 alludes to the flight of the Christians to Pella; see W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 1997), vol. 3, 347.

³⁸ See the appendix of references to the flight to Pella at the end of this chapter (n° 8).

³⁹ Luke 21: 24.

Finally, we suggest that the warning addressed to the people in the country not to take refuge in Jerusalem could echo the flow of refugees who poured into the capital as Vespasian subdued the surrounding areas.⁴⁰

Scholars who oppose the suggestion that Luke 21: 20-24 alludes to the Pella tradition note that these verses do not specify the destination of the flight of "those inside the city". Verheyden explains the many connections between this statement and the Pella tradition by the fact that Eusebius, who in his view contrived this tale, took inspiration from Luke's account.⁴¹ Although this issue is very difficult to assess, we agree with Koester that the least one can say is that the author of Luke 21: 20-24 did know of people who fled from Jerusalem during the First Jewish War. In this regard, Simon recognized that the New Testament writings strengthen the hypothesis of the historicity of the flight to Pella, rather than undermining it.⁴² Thus, if Luke's Gospel does indeed contain a genuine account of the fate of the Jewish Christian community of Jerusalem, his statement constitutes the most ancient record of their escape from the Holy City during the Great Revolt.

Two other writings possibly relevant to the question of the flight to Pella will now be considered. The twelfth chapter of the Book of Revelation is thought by some scholars to have preserved an allusion to the flight of the Jewish Christians from Jerusalem.⁴³ According to this view, the woman who flees pursued by the great red dragon, and seeks refuge in "the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God"⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *BJIV*, 106-107.

⁴¹ "Flight", 381.

⁴² "Migration", 40.

⁴³ J. D. G. Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, (London: SCM, 1991), 233; J. J. Gunther, "Fate", 87; S. Sowers, "Circumstances and Recollection", 315-316; F. Manns, *Essais sur le judeo-christianisme*, (Jerusalem: Franciscan Print Press, 1977), 68; C. R. Smith, "The Structure of the Book of Revelation in Light of Apocalyptic Literary Conventions", *NT 4* (1994), 373- 393, esp. 391.

⁴⁴ Revelation 12: 6.

would represent the Church fleeing to Pella. This theory was rejected, notably by Brandon, who emphasized the apocalyptic imagery of the account in order to deny it any historical value.⁴⁵

Although it is not our intention to deal with the exegesis of the Apocalypse, we wish to comment on this. If we take for granted that this account constitutes a genuine mention of the flight to Pella (which is far from certain), it should be noted that its presentation of facts differs from the other sources. In an earlier statement we stressed that both the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* and Eusebius emphasize that the aim of the flight was to spare the righteous believers from the chastisement of the wicked. In such a configuration, the Roman armies constitute an element of secondary importance, for they only represent the instrument by means of which the impious are punished. It is remarkable that in the Book of Revelation, the Roman Empire, which is depicted as a great red dragon, appears to be the Church's main enemy. Thus the flight of the woman (the Church of Jerusalem) is the direct consequence of the persecutions of the dragon (the Roman Empire). If we were to accept that Revelation 12: 6 alludes to the flight to Pella, we could infer that it conveys a parallel tradition related to the escape of the Jewish Christian community from Jerusalem, which was in circulation within different Christian streams.

Finally we should mention a verse taken from the *Ascension of Isaiah*, a pseudepigraphical text dating from the second century CE., which relates that the believers flee "from desert to desert, as they await his (Jesus Christ) coming."⁴⁶ This flight to desert places has been identified by few scholars with the Christians'

⁴⁵ *Fall of Jerusalem*, 176-177.

⁴⁶ *Ascension of Isaiah* 4: 13. See: M. A. Knibb, "Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah (Second Century B.C.-Fourth Century A.D.)- A New Translation and Introduction", in J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 2, (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 143-176.

migration to Pella.⁴⁷ However, this theory is not universally accepted, for the account is too obscure.

In the light of this survey, we are disposed to consider that two sources anterior to Eusebius can be used as evidence for the Jewish Christians' move from Jerusalem in the course of the Jewish War, viz. Luke 21: 20-24 and *Recognitions* I, 37, 2 (Syr); I, 39, 3 (Syr. & Lat.).

B-THE CHOICE OF PELLA

We shall consider at this point the actual details of the Pella tradition, for they raise several intricate questions. Brandon was the first to call attention to the historical difficulties of the flight to Pella. His arguments were subsequently taken up and developed by other scholars. The first element for consideration concerns the choice of Pella as asylum. Brandon has cast doubt on the likelihood of the Jewish Christians deciding to seek refuge in Pella. In his view, it seems very unlikely indeed that this community, which was scrupulous and inflexible about matters of law, should have chosen to settle in a city with strong pagan features.

We suggest that the theory of a Jewish Christian surrender to the Roman armies may explain this apparent anomaly. Josephus mentions on numerous occasions the desertions of Jerusalemite Jews, who then sought refuge with the Roman soldiers. This phenomenon seems to have increased once the Roman legions had completely surrounded Jerusalem. Indeed, the Romans themselves made many efforts to encourage the surrender of the Jews. After they had surrendered, some of the deserters

⁴⁷ J. J. Gunther, "Fate", 87; S. Sowers, "Circumstances and Recollection", 314- 315; B. Pixner, "Church of the Apostles found on Mt Zion", *BAR* 16 (May/ June 1990), 16-35, 60, esp. 25.

appear to have been settled in relatively distant cities by the Roman authorities. As Josephus writes:

"For when Titus moved from Gischala to Caesarea, Vespasian proceeded from Cesarea to Jamnia and Azotus, and, having reduced those towns and garrisoned them, returned with a large multitude who had surrendered under treaty."⁴⁸

It is reasonable to assert that this policy towards deserters was widely extended, and that it represented an important part of the Roman war strategy. It is noteworthy that not only Vespasian⁴⁹ acted in such a way, but also Titus⁵⁰ and the tribune Placidus⁵¹. Indeed, doing this would have enabled the Romans to keep Jewish deserters under guard away from the battlefield.⁵²

In addition, it should be stressed that the Romans only sent their prisoners to pagan or mixed cities. Thus, when Josephus relates the surrender of several important priests towards the end of the war, he writes that the latter were sent to Gophna, for Titus was aware that "they would find life distasteful amidst foreign customs".⁵³ This tendentious statement, which was aimed at underlining Titus' alleged magnanimity, points out that the important priests benefited from preferential treatment. Consequently, we may conclude that Jewish deserters were usually settled in a pagan milieu. In this context Alon has demonstrated that Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai

⁴⁸ *BJ*. IV, 130. All citations of *Jewish War* are from the Loeb edition, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).

⁴⁹ *BJ* IV, 444.

⁵⁰ *BJ* VI, 115.

⁵¹ *BJ* IV, 438.

⁵² This remark is particularly valid for the first stage of the war as Vespasian submitted the areas surrounding Jerusalem; J. Price, who considers that "the Romans' policy on deserters was above all practical", notes that Titus' treatments of fugitives during the siege of Jerusalem was less consistent, and oscillated between gestures of mercy and acts of cruelty (*Jerusalem Under Siege: The Collapse of the Jewish State, 66-70 CE*, [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992], 293-297).

⁵³ *BJ* VI, 115.

(hereafter RYbZ), after he had fled from Jerusalem and surrendered to the Roman authorities, was compelled to settle in Iamnia [Yavneh].⁵⁴

Josephus mentions twice that Azotus and Iamnia were used for settling the Jewish deserters⁵⁵; but it appears that other towns were devoted to this purpose as well. In this context, we must look with particular attention at Josephus's account of the conquest of Peraea. According to the latter, Placidius, toward the end of his military campaign:

"hastened to attack the small towns and villages in the neighbourhood, and taking Abila, Julias, Besimoth, and all as far as the Lake Asphaltitis, posted in each a garrison of such deserters as he thought fit...Thus the whole of Peraea as far as Machaerus either surrendered or was subdued."⁵⁶

Here the Romans, in accordance with their own policy, settled Jewish deserters in the cities, towns and villages of the subdued areas, in this case in Peraea. It is thus permissible to infer that at a later stage, after the Romans had completely surrounded Jerusalem, Jewish deserters from the metropolis were settled in Peraea, while others were sent to the cities of Paralia, like RYbZ.

⁵⁴ G. Alon, "Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai's removal to Jabneh", in *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World*, (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1977), 269-313. This specific point of Alon's thesis has been accepted by several scholars; S. Safrai, "New investigations into the question of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai's status and acts after the destruction", in *Essays in Jewish History and Philology in Memory of Gedaliahu Alon*, (Tel Aviv: Kibbutz Hameuchad, 1970), 203-226, esp. 204, (in Hebrew); A. J. Saldarini, "Johanan ben Zakkai's Escape from Jerusalem: Origin and Development of a Rabbinic Story", *JSJ* 6: 2 (1975), 189-204, esp. 204. It appears, though, that the rest of his proposal regarding both RYbZ's status and authority and the alleged-intent of the Romans to lead war against the Jewish people as a whole has been seriously challenged (S. Safrai, "Investigations"; J. Neusner, *A Life of Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai*, [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970], 124-125). We shall return to the question of RYbZ's egress from Jerusalem below

⁵⁵ *BJIV*, 130; *IV*, 444.

⁵⁶ *BJIV*, 438.

Finally, we wish to lay stress on the fact that Epiphanius' *Panarion*, a relatively late source it is true, may echo a peculiar aspect of the Romans' policy on deserters; we read thus in XXX, 2, 7: "ἐπειδὴ γὰρ πάντες οἱ εἰς Χριστὸν πεπιστευκότες τὴν Περαιάν κατ' ἐκεῖνο καιροῦ κατόκησαν τὸ πλεῖστον ἐν Πέλλῃ τινὶ πόλει καλουμένη τῆς Δεκαπόλεως τῆς ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ γεγραμμένης." This account, which suggests that not all the Jewish Christians were sent to Pella, corresponds well with Josephus' text stating that Placidius settled deserters all over Peraea.

Thus the difficulty in question could be overcome by considering that the Jewish Christians did not choose to take refuge at Pella but were settled there by the Roman authorities.

C-THE DATE OF THE MIGRATION TO PELLA

Brandon's strongest argument against the authenticity of the flight to Pella is grounded on the very obscure chronology of this story. He concludes therefore that the Jewish Christians' move from Jerusalem could not have taken place at any time during the course of the Jewish War.

According to Eusebius' data, the migration to Pella occurred "before the war", in other words before Cestius Gallus' campaign in 66 CE. Now Josephus states that Pella was destroyed by the Jewish rebels in retaliation for the slaughter of the Jews of Caesarea during the summer 66 CE.⁵⁷ Consequently Brandon asserts that if the Jewish Christian community of Jerusalem were already living there "it would seem unlikely that they, a party of renegades, would have survived the vengeance of their ferocious country men."⁵⁸ In his view, it is also improbable that the Jewish Christians moved to

⁵⁷ BJ II, 458.

⁵⁸ *Fall of Jerusalem*, 170.

Pella afterwards, for they would not have been welcomed by the heathen survivors. Finally, Brandon thinks that such a group would have scarcely survived Vespasian's campaign in Peraea (which took place in the spring of 68 CE), for the Roman troops would have slaughtered both Jews and Jewish Christians indiscriminately.

Unlike Eusebius, Epiphanius links the flight to Pella to the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem. Brandon also objects to the latter's accounts and rises three objections to such a chronology. First, it is very unlikely that such an important group could have succeeded in escaping the attention of the Zealots, who held harsh control over Jerusalem and prevented anyone from fleeing. Secondly, it is hard to conceive that they would have managed to travel with their goods through the Roman lines. Lastly, it is improbable that the Jewish Christians would have managed to settle and to live safely in a heathen city like Pella, among a hostile gentile population.

Brandon's arguments appear to be valid as far as the first stage of the Jewish War is concerned. The destruction of Pella by the Jewish rebels in the late summer of 66 CE and the stubborn hostility of the pagan inhabitants towards the Jews make it unlikely that the Jewish Christians settled in this city before 68 CE.

Scholars who uphold the authenticity of the flight to Pella have advanced several arguments in order to solve this difficulty. It has been proposed, therefore, that there was an established community of Gentile Christians at Pella, who may have taken in and defended the refugees from Jerusalem. In this connection Mark 5: 1-20 (which reports Jesus' healing of a demoniac in the "country of the Gerasenes ") would attest to the early presence of a Christian mission in this area.⁵⁹ Moreover, these scholars have emphasized the fact that the reactions of various pagan cities to the reprisal

⁵⁹ R. A. Pritz, "On Brandon's Rejection", 41-42.

expedition led by the Jews were quite different; thus, we read in *BJ*, II, 480 that the Gentiles at Gerasa not only left their Jewish fellow citizens in peace, but also aided them. According to this view, inasmuch as Josephus does not state that Jews were slaughtered at Pella, one can conjecture that there was no retaliation there.⁶⁰

However, it seems to us that Josephus singled out the case of the Jews of Gerasa because their fate was exceptional; it is thus reasonable to think that he would have reported the rescue of the Jews at Pella if the latter had been spared. In this respect, it needs to be recalled that, in the reign of Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE), Pella had been captured and destroyed because its inhabitants refused to convert to Judaism⁶¹; although these events had occurred a century and half earlier, they would certainly have left a bitter memory of the Jews in the minds of the gentile residents of Pella.

Consequently, the relocation of the Jewish Christians in Pella appears on *a priori* grounds very improbable as far as the two first years of the war are concerned.

However, in our opinion, the subjection of Galilee by Vespasian and the subsequent conquest of Peraea (in the course of spring 68 CE) would have modified these circumstances. Accordingly, all of Brandon's objections could be resolved if the Jewish Christian community of Jerusalem were to have left the city in the course of spring 68 CE, as the Roman forces completed the subjection of the areas surrounding Jerusalem.

We shall look first at the general circumstances which prevailed following the submission of Galilee, in order to demonstrate that the new situation could have precipitated the Christians' flight. Our investigation, which is mainly based on Josephus' works, will focus on the fate of the Jewish deserters who managed to

⁶⁰ S. Sowers, "Circumstances and Recollection", 309-310.

⁶¹ *AJ* XIII, 397.

escape from Jerusalem as the net was closing around the Holy City. Contrary to Brandon's assertion, it appears that the phenomenon of desertions from Jerusalem increased as Vespasian completed the surrounding of the city. Although Josephus emphasizes the difficulties of escaping from Jerusalem (certainly in order to present the Jewish revolutionaries in a bad light), we read on numerous occasions that large numbers of people fled from the city in order to seek refuge with the Romans. The first mention of such surrenders occurs in *BJ IV*, 377, when Vespasian is beginning to plan the conquest of Jerusalem, in late 67 CE. Subsequent statements⁶² point to an increase in this trend, at least until the summer of 68 CE.

This phenomenon most likely arose for a number of reasons. First, it is very probable that the subjection of Galilee by the Roman troops reduced the motivation to fight among the Jewish moderates who had joined the rebels after their first military success. Besides, as mentioned earlier, it seems that the Romans encouraged the Jews to surrender. There is reason to think that this policy was a major part of the Roman strategy aimed at leading to the submission of the area in general, and Jerusalem in particular. In this respect, Josephus mentions on many occasions that the Romans were ready to negotiate with the Jews and to give guarantees to deserters. In this way, following the pacification of Galilee, Vespasian (as pointed above) conquered Iamnia and Ascalon in order to settle there a great number of the people who had surrendered "under treaty"⁶³ We shall discuss the terms of such treaties below. Finally, it is obvious that internal political upheavals lead to the departure of many Jews from Jerusalem. Indeed, the submission of Galilee caused many Galileans to seek refuge in Jerusalem: Josephus writes that at the same time "the brigand chiefs of all these

⁶² *BJ IV*, 397; 410.

⁶³ *BJ IV*, 130.

scattered bands" got into the capital city.⁶⁴ This flood of people strengthened the position of the most radical revolutionaries and increased the intensity of the civil war. These considerations make it likely that many Jews wished to flee from Jerusalem at this precise moment. Besides, in light of these events, Vespasian decided to postpone the siege of the city in order to let the Jews tear each other to pieces. Josephus adds that

"...the soundness of the general's judgement was soon made evident by the numbers who daily deserted, eluding the Zealots."⁶⁵

It is clear, then, that in spite of the difficulties in fleeing, and contrary to Brandon's view, it was still possible to escape from Jerusalem at least until the summer 68 CE.⁶⁶

At this point, we shall attempt to establish the exact reasons which drove the Jewish Christians to escape from Jerusalem at this time, although inevitably such a demonstration can only be based on speculations. At the beginning of the fourth book of the *Jewish War*, Josephus gives an extensive account of the rebels' atrocities and impious behavior. He mentions in particular that the revolutionaries who occupied the Temple appointed a rustic man, Phannias son of Samuel, as high priest in violation of the religious law for he was "not descended from high priests".⁶⁷

We now turn to the Slavonic version of the *Jewish War*, for this rendering links this specific event to the apparition of an "abomination in the holy place"; a description which is very close to Matthew 24: 15. Although the origin of the Slavonic additions is very obscure, it is very likely that this passage constitutes a Christian interpolation and that it was included by a Christian copyist. Accordingly, we can say that there

⁶⁴ *BJIV*, 135.

⁶⁵ *BJIV*, 377.

⁶⁶ *BJIV*, 490.

⁶⁷ *BJIV*, 155.

was a Christian tradition (which is hard to date) which connected the Zealots' impieties and sacrilege to the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy about the "Desolating Sacrilege".⁶⁸

We must also note that some scholars think that Matthew 23: 35⁶⁹ refers to the slaughter of Zacchariah ben Baris mentioned by Josephus in *BJ* IV, 335.⁷⁰ If this supposition is correct, it would strengthen the impression that the synoptic Gospels preserve a bitter memory of some of the Zealots' misdeeds. It is therefore likely that the Jewish Christian community, following the example of many other Jews, suffered harshly at the revolutionaries' hands. As Josephus writes in this context "but there was no section of the people for whose destruction some pretext was not devised".⁷¹ Finally, we should stress the fact that at this time the Zealots' main opponent was the high priest Ananus ben Ananus. According to Josephus, in the year 62 CE, the latter orchestrated the murder of James, the leader of the Jewish Christian community.⁷² Although Ananus took the leadership of the revolt as early as 66 CE, it is reasonable to suppose that the Jewish Christians decided to leave the city when they were threatened from both sides.

Now that we have briefly described the general context of the spring of 68 CE, we shall attempt to specify more accurately when the Jewish Christians fled from Jerusalem. Therefore we shall first endeavor to define our *terminus post quem*. If we are right in believing that the Jerusalem Jewish Christians were established in Pella by

⁶⁸ For a survey of the scholarship on this issue, see the introduction of H. and K. Leeming, *Josephus' Jewish War and its Slavonic Version*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), 1-105.

⁶⁹ "So that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the Sanctuary and the altar."

⁷⁰ See for instance: J. Wellhausen, *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien*, (Berlin: G. Reimer, 2nd ed. 1911), 118-123; it must be said, though, that nowadays this hypothesis is viewed negatively by most scholars.

⁷¹ *BJ* IV, 363.

⁷² *AJ* XX, 200.

the Roman authorities subsequently to their surrender, it is reasonable to believe that their move there only happened after the absolute submission of Peraea. Here it is relevant to note that the settlement of Jewish deserters in the cities of Peraea occurred towards the end of Placidus' military campaign in the area.⁷³ Although no precise dating is given, it seems that the conquest of Peraea, which started with the capture of Gadara on March 21, 68 CE⁷⁴ was completed shortly before the taking of Jericho on June 21, 68.⁷⁵

We now need to define our *terminus ante quem*. To this end, we shall turn to the several sources which refer to the migration to Pella. We should stress that we consider Epiphanius' accounts more reliable here than those of Eusebius. As noted earlier, Eusebius' account of the flight to Pella is part of a global vision of history, in which the Jews are punished by God for their impiety and misdeeds. Thus, Eusebius states that this punishment occurred after "those that believed on Christ" had removed not only from Jerusalem, but also from "the whole land of Judaea ". The removal of the Jewish Christians who lived all over Judaea (and not only in Jerusalem) was therefore a precondition to the chastisement of the Jews. The logical corollary of this condition is that the flight to Pella cannot have taken place after the outbreak of the revolt which devastated the whole province, but only, as Eusebius writes "πρὸ τοῦ πολέμου". In light of this consideration, we suspect the chronology of this account to have been altered for the purposes of Eusebius' own theological demonstration.

In contradistinction, we regard Epiphanius' chronology as more reliable than that of Eusebius, for two reasons:

⁷³ BJ IV, 438.

⁷⁴ BJ IV, 414.

⁷⁵ BJ IV, 450.

First, because Epiphanius' accounts, unlike Eusebius', are devoid of any theological aim and appear to be quite incidental in his work. Secondly, because his three statements relating to the Jewish Christians' migration to Pella, in spite of their few differences, point out that the flight occurred when Jerusalem was about to be besieged. Although such an assertion cannot be a proof of the truthfulness of Epiphanius' data, it does strengthen the impression of reliability of these particular accounts. Moreover, it would seem that Epiphanius' chronology tallies with Luke 21: 20-21. Read literally, such a statement seems to describe the very last stage of Jerusalem's siege; but if we understand more widely, it could also refer to the submission of the areas around Jerusalem. In this context we note that Josephus writes that after the conquest of Jericho on June 21, 68 CE, and before Vespasian was informed of Nero's death (which occurred on June 9, 68 CE):

"The war having now embraced the whole region, both hill and plain, all egress from Jerusalem was cut off; for those who desired to desert were closely watched by the Zealots, while those who were not yet pro-Romans were confined by the army which hemmed in the city on every side."⁷⁶

Such a statement cannot be considered as an absolute *terminus ante quem*, for some Jews managed to flee from Jerusalem afterwards. However it is clear that escaping from the Holy City was made very difficult by the Zealots after they took over the city in the late spring of 68 CE.

Here we should turn to the semantic value of the verb: "ἐκ-χωρέω" which describes in Luke's account the escape of those "inside the city". ἐκ-χωρέω can be understood as "to remove from" in the sense of "fleeing from"; in such a case it has the same value as φεύγω which is related earlier to the fate of "those in Judaea " (this sentence occurs

⁷⁶ BJ IV, 490.

in the other synoptic Gospels). However, it can also mean "to go away, to depart from, to emigrate"; in such a case, it may well indicate that the community left Jerusalem at a time when such an enterprise was not too perilous, in other words, when Ananus' men were still in control of the walls and the gates.⁷⁷

Thus, in light of all these considerations, we conclude that the Jewish Christians must have left Jerusalem in the late spring of 68 CE, following the submission of Peraea and before the Zealots' takeover of Jerusalem, when Vespasian had succeeded in completely surrounding the city (June 68 CE).

D-THE MATERIAL DIFFICULTIES

Brandon also tries to demonstrate that numerous material difficulties would have prevented the Jewish Christians from escaping to Pella. He first maintains that the flight itself was improbable, for in his opinion, it is very unlikely that the Jewish Christian community (which certainly included children, women and old men) would have managed to travel safely through Peraea, which had been successively devastated by the Jewish rebels and the Roman troops.

However, if we assume that the Jewish Christians actually surrendered to the Romans, this difficulty is overcome. In this regard, we shall examine the statement quoted above,⁷⁸ which refers to the fate of deserters following the fall of Galilee. We understand from this passage that the Jewish refugees, after they had negotiated their surrender, were escorted by the Roman troops to their new places of residence. This precaution was aimed not only at watching those who had surrendered, but also protecting them from both the seditious Jews and the heathen inhabitants. We note,

⁷⁷ *BJIV*, 236; 275.

⁷⁸ *BJIV*, 130.

besides, that the Romans apparently encouraged the Jews to surrender in groups.⁷⁹ In light of both of these accounts, the Jewish Christian community's move to Pella does not seem physically improbable.

Brandon then states that it is unlikely that the Jewish Christians would have settled in Pella, because the city was destroyed by the rebels in reprisal for the slaughter of their brethren in Caesarea in summer 66 CE.⁸⁰ Several scholars tend to qualify Josephus' statement, and estimate that the extent of sacking at Pella was much smaller.⁸¹ In their excavation report dated to 1958, R.W. Funk and H.N Richardson concluded that Pella was destroyed either at a late Hellenistic date or early in the Roman period; they thus hesitated to attribute the devastation of the city to Alexander Jannaeus or to the Jewish insurrectionists in 66 CE.⁸² Since then, it has been established that the traces of demolition are to be ascribed to the Hasmonean king. Thus, so far as it seems, the archeological excavations in Pella have not revealed any evidence of destruction from the late first century CE.⁸³

Apart from this, it should be remembered that in the course of his military campaign Vespasian ordered the reconstruction of many cities that had been devastated.⁸⁴ And although Josephus does not mention any of the cities which were rebuilt by name, it is reasonable to suppose that the Romans would have restored Pella (if the city really had been destroyed) on account of its relative importance.

⁷⁹ *BJ* VI, 384.

⁸⁰ *BJ* II, 457.

⁸¹ M. Simon, "Migration", 45-46; R. A. Pritz, "On Brandon's Rejection", 41-42.

⁸² R. W. Funk and H. N. Richardson, "The Sounding at Pella", *BA* 31 (1958), 82-98, esp. 94-95 n. 33.

⁸³ R. H. Smith and L. P. Day, *Pella of the Decapolis, Volume 2: Final Report of the College of Wooster Excavations in Area IX, the Civic Complex, 1979-1985*, (Wooster, Ohio: College of Wooster 1989), 3-7; A.W. McNicollet et al., *Pella in Jordan 2: The Second Interim Report of the Joint University of Sydney and College of Wooster Excavations at Pella 1982-1985*, (Sydney: Meditarch 1992), 119-122.

⁸⁴ *BJ* IV, 440.

Finally, in Brandon's view it is very unlikely that the heathen survivors of the Jewish sacking would have let a Jewish group settle in Pella. Here Simon agrees with Brandon.⁸⁵ In our opinion, however, the strong presence of Roman troops would have enabled this sort of coexistence, in spite of the deep hostility that prevailed between Jews and pagans. Josephus refers on many occasions to the settling of Roman forces in numerous conquered towns. In this context, we should emphasize that in *BJ* IV, 130 the settlement of the Jewish deserters in Iamnia/Yavneh and Azotus was preceded by the installation of garrisons there. Moreover, we read in *BJ* VI, 113-116 that Jewish notables who surrendered to Titus during the siege of Jerusalem were subsequently sent to Gophna. It is likely that their settlement there was not fortuitous, for Vespasian had previously provided Gophna with Roman troops.⁸⁶ Thus, Josephus adds that these notables retired to that town in complete security.⁸⁷ The Roman authorities appear to have proceeded very methodically within the framework of their policy towards deserters. On at least three different occasions, Josephus mentions that Vespasian⁸⁸, Placidus⁸⁹ and Titus⁹⁰ supervised the installation of Jewish deserters in pacified and secured areas.

Thus in spite of Brandon's arguments, a Jewish Christian settlement in Pella during the course of the Great Revolt is physically possible, if we concede that it was under the supervision of the Roman authorities.

⁸⁵ M. Simon, "Migration", 42.

⁸⁶ *BJ* V, 50.

⁸⁷ *BJ* VI, 116.

⁸⁸ *BJ* IV, 130.

⁸⁹ *BJ* IV, 438.

⁹⁰ *BJ* VI, 113.

E-RECONSTRUCTION

In light of our demonstration above, we thus propose that the Jewish Christian community of Jerusalem did not flee prior to the war, but remained in the Holy City at least until the beginning of 68 CE. Then, as the Roman legions advanced in the vicinity of Jerusalem, the members of the community, or at least some of them, like many other Jews, escaped from the city and surrendered to the Roman authorities. It is likely that this flight occurred in the late spring of 68 CE, following the submission of Peraea and prior to the Zealots' absolute takeover of Jerusalem. Although this proposal can only be based on speculation, we shall now attempt to reconstruct the unfolding of the flight itself.

It is reasonable to suppose that the Jewish Christians, after fleeing from Jerusalem, would have encountered the Roman forces east of the Holy City, probably in Jericho where we know that Vespasian placed garrisons.⁹¹ This could explain why the Jewish Christians were subsequently sent to Peraea, unlike many other deserters who were settled in the coastal cities.

Although they were considered as defeated persons, we think it is likely that the Jewish deserters did negotiate the terms of their surrender with the Roman authorities. Thus, we shall examine with particular attention the account that tells of the desertion of Jewish notables during the siege of Jerusalem.⁹² According to this account, Titus, after he was informed that the "Daily Sacrifice" in the Temple had been interrupted, commanded Josephus to address the besieged rebels. Reporting Caesar's message, Josephus emphasized that surrender was still possible. Although the rebel leader John of Gischala and his soldiers remained inflexible, he writes that many "of the upper

⁹¹ *BJ* IV, 486.

⁹² *BJ* VI, 113-116.

class" were influenced by his words; some of them (including high priests and noblemen) even managed to flee, and sought refuge with Titus. Josephus adds here:

"Caesar both received them with all other courtesy, and, recognizing that they would find life distasteful amidst foreign customs, dispatched them to Gophna, advising them to remain there for the present, and promising to restore every man's property, so soon as he had leisure after the war. They accordingly retired, gladly and in perfect security, to the small town assigned."

The tendentiousness of Josephus' works is obvious and Titus' kindness toward the Jews is undoubtedly exaggerated; however, we wish to stress several points here.

First, it is noteworthy that Titus himself led the discussions with the deserters; such a configuration is not unlikely, for on other occasions Vespasian is said to have personally interfered in the issue of the Jewish deserters.⁹³

Secondly, Josephus seems to indicate that those Jewish notables benefited from preferential treatment (clearly on account of their nobility): in spite of the Roman practice of settling Jewish deserters in pagan cities, these were sent to a Jewish town. Moreover, Titus assured them that their stay in Gophna would only be temporary and that they would eventually recover their possessions.

Thus we conclude that this statement reflects the terms of a negotiation drawn up between these deserters and the Roman authorities. Titus' efforts to encourage the Jews to surrender make it likely that the Romans were disposed to accept some of deserters' requests.⁹⁴ It is reasonable to infer that this passage echoes the guarantees

⁹³ *BJ* IV, 130, 410.

⁹⁴ *BJ* VI, 117.

given by Vespasian to the "large multitude" whom he subsequently led to Jamnia and Azotus.⁹⁵

We shall now turn to look at to the rabbinic literature, and particularly the passages which refer to RYbZ's move to Yavneh.⁹⁶ Despite its legendary features and the relatively late date of its final literary form, the tale of RYbZ's surrender certainly contains some authentic material. In this connection, J. Neusner has remarked that "the comment of Rabbi Akiba on the alleged conversation between Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai and Vespasian" appears to demonstrate that the tradition was known very early.⁹⁷

So, in spite of the inconsistencies they contain, we wish to point out to a number of similarities between these accounts and the statement of Josephus quoted above. We remark first that RYbZ is said to have met Vespasian in person. Some scholars have rejected the story of this encounter outright as being completely lacking in historical foundation. It has been argued, for instance, that the authors of this tradition were influenced by the narrative of Josephus' surrender.⁹⁸ However, in spite of these considerations, there is reason to believe that these accounts convey a nucleus of genuine tradition. Although the historicity of the dialogue between RYbZ and Vespasian is highly challengeable, it is not unlikely, as we have shown above, that the former negotiated his surrender with some high Roman official.

⁹⁵ *BJ*. IV, 130.

⁹⁶ *Avot de R. Nathan*, version A, iv, (ed. Schechter, 22-24), version B, vi, (ed. Schechter, 19); *Lamentations Rabbah* i, 5, (ed. Buber, 65-69); *BT Gittin* 56a-b; *Midrash Proverbs* xv, (ed. Buber, 79-80).

⁹⁷ *BT Gittin* 56b. See: J. Neusner, "In quest of the historical Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai", *HTR* 59 (1966), 393.

⁹⁸ G. Alon, "Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai", 276; J. Price, *Jerusalem Under Siege*, 264-270; A. Tropper, "Yohanan ben Zakkai, Amicus Caesaris", 148. Other scholars are indecisive with regard to the historicity of the encounter between Vespasian and RYbZ; see: A. J. Saldarini, "Johanan ben Zakkai's Escape", 204.

Secondly, it is noteworthy that all the accounts agree in saying that Caesar granted him a favour, whether it was the gift of Yavneh itself or the permission to establish a study centre there. Finally, we note an odd correlation between the sentence "תן לי יבנה" attributed to RYbZ in BT Gittin 56b, and the use of the expression "εἰς τὸ δοθὲν πολίχνιον" in the account that refers to the Jewish deserters' removal to Gophna. It is unlikely that Yavneh/Iamnia and Gophna were actually given to the Jewish deserters, but this consideration could indicate that they benefited from some rights. Alon believes, however, that RYbZ, like other Jewish prisoners, was held in custody at Yavneh [Iamnia] under hard conditions. In his view, the treatment of the deserters by the Romans (which he believes to have been particularly harsh) was part of their general policy that aimed at "the suppression and annihilation of the (Jewish) people."⁹⁹

Although we agree that the Jewish deserters were settled either in pagan or in mixed cities by the Roman authorities, we tend to assume that their conditions were not as severe as Alon has proposed for two main reasons. First, since the Romans generally sought to encourage the Jews to surrender as part of their war strategy; they were therefore inclined to consent to some of the deserters' requests: as stated above, *BJ* VI 113-118 is very revealing in this regard. Secondly, the Roman generals most likely had in mind to preserve a reliable infrastructure for the post-war local leadership. Thus, although the historicity of the personal encounter between Vespasian and RYbZ remains a moot question, it is still reasonable to suppose that this tradition preserves the memory of the latter's surrender and of its negotiation with the Roman authorities.

⁹⁹"Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai", 291.

In light of these considerations, we propose that the Jewish Christians did negotiate the terms of their surrender. Thus, following the example of the Jewish high priests who surrendered to Titus, they might have received the assurance that their stay at Pella would be temporary and that they would eventually recover their possessions. The Jewish Christians would presumably have surrendered in a group, since they were all members of the same community. Such a conjecture is strengthened by the memory preserved by the Christian tradition, and it also corresponds to the Roman efforts to encourage group flight. Afterwards, in accordance with their agreement with the Imperial authorities, the Jewish Christians would have settled in Pella under the Romans' supervision and remained there in safety, for garrisons were established all over the conquered areas.

F SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE

The theory of a Jewish Christian surrender to the Roman forces during the spring of 68 CE allows us to draw several conclusions. First, it must be stated that the migration to Pella did not lead to the religious separation between the Jewish Christians and their Jewish brethren as several scholars have proposed.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, according to Josephus, many Jews surrendered to the Roman forces in the course of the war. Their desertion took place for different reasons, but it cannot be considered as an abandoning of their Jewish identity or of their religious beliefs. Apostasy on the part of the Jewish Christian fugitives would have implied their renunciation of the law of the fathers in the manner, for instance, of the prefect of Egypt Tiberius Alexander

¹⁰⁰ P. E. Davies, "Early Christian Attitudes Towards Judaism and the Jews", *JBR* 13 (1945), 72-82, esp. 73-75; W.H. C. Frend, *The Early Church*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), 44-45; M. R. Wilson, *Our father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1989), 76-77.

about whom Josephus writes that he "did not stand by the practices of his people".¹⁰¹

There is no reason to believe that the move of the Jewish Christians from Jerusalem entailed such a development; indeed, this event does not pose the question of their religious identity.

Furthermore, it should be remembered that RYbZ, in spite of his flight from Jerusalem during the siege, took over the leadership of Palestinian Judaism after the destruction of the Temple. Some scholars have advanced the hypothesis that the latter was widely reproached by his contemporaries for having escaped from Jerusalem.¹⁰²

Although the most extremist elements of the people undoubtedly condemned this Sage, it appears that many Jews adopted a moderate position towards the Romans; in this connection, J. Neusner writes that "Yohanan's act of surrender must have appeared neither unique nor treasonable to very large number of Jews."¹⁰³ Likewise, it would appear very improbable that the surrender of the Jewish Christians set them apart from the rest of the people.

We may also wonder about the significance of the Jewish Christians' presence within Jerusalem until 68 CE, which might possibly indicate that the Jewish Christians did not condemn the Jewish uprising at its start. Indeed, many of the Jews who were opposed to the revolt left Jerusalem as early as November 66 CE, right after Cestius' defeat.¹⁰⁴ Does this consideration allow us to state that the Jewish Christians did support the Jewish revolt to some extent? At any event, their commitment must have been quite restrained since, as we argue, they dissociated themselves in a later stage

¹⁰¹ *AJ* XX, 100. All citations of *Jewish Antiquities*, Books XVIII- XX are from the Loeb edition, trans. L. H. Feldman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

¹⁰² A. J. Saldarini, "Yohanan ben Zakkai's Escape", 203; A. Tropper, "Yohanan ben Zakkai, Amicus Caesaris", 140.

¹⁰³ *A Life*, 105

¹⁰⁴ *BJ* II, 556.

from the most extreme rebels and sought to escape from the Zealots' growing power. We note besides that desertion to the Roman side was not the only way to escape the Zealots' yoke: we read for instance in *BJ* IV, 574 that some Jerusalemite Jews found refuge with Simon Bar-Giora, another rebel leader, when he was still outside the city. It is possible to deduce from this data that surrender to the Romans was a considered step, rather than a desperate act. However, it cannot be inferred from their move from Jerusalem that the Jewish Christians did not share any of their brethren's national aspirations. Their decision to leave the city was a pragmatic one; it responded to the specific political developments which occurred in Jerusalem in the course of the year 68 CE.

Thus, it would appear that the implications of the removal of the Jerusalemite Jewish Christians to Pella were less far-reaching than is usually thought; in any event, this occurrence can by no means be considered as a watershed in the relations between Jews and Jewish Christians.¹⁰⁵

APPENDIX OF REFERENCES TO THE FLIGHT TO PELLA

1-Eusebius *Historia Ecclesiastica* III, 5, 3, (GCS II 1, 196)

"The people of the Church in Jerusalem were commanded by an oracle given by revelation before the war to those in the city who were worthy of it to depart and dwell in one of the cities of Perea which they called Pella. To it those who believed on Christ traveled from Jerusalem, so that when holy men had altogether deserted the royal capital of the Jews and the whole land of Judaea, the judgement of God might at

¹⁰⁵ Here we would agree with D. Boyarin and G. Hasan-Rokem that the escape of the Jerusalem church cannot be cited "as evidence for a break between 'Christianity' and the Jewish people." D. Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 136 n. 19.

last overtake them from for all their crimes against the Christ and his Apostles, and all that generation of the wicked be utterly blotted out from among men."

Translation by K. Lake in *Eusebius, The Ecclesiastical History*, (The Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), Vol. 1, 201.

2-Epiphanius Panarion XXIX, 7, 7, (PG 41, col. 401-402)

"Today this sect of the Nazoraeans is found in Beroea near Coelesyria, in the Decapolis near Pella, and in the Bashanitis at the place called-Kokhabe in Hebrew. For that was its place of origin, since all the disciples had settled in Pella after they left Jerusalem- Christ told them to abandon Jerusalem and withdraw from it because of its coming siege. And they settled in Peraea for this reason and, as I said, spent their lives there. That was where the Nazoraean sect began.

English translation by F. Williams in *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis Book I (Sects 1-46)*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), 118

3-Epiphanius Panarion XXX, 2, 7, (PG 41, col. 407-408)

"For since practically all who had come to faith in Christ had settled down about that time in Perea, the majority [of them] in a city called Pella of the Decapolis¹⁰⁶ the Gospel mentions, which is near Batanaea and Bashanitis- as they had moved there then and were living there..."

English translation by F. Williams in *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis Book I (Sects 1-46)*, 121.

¹⁰⁶ We have altered the translation of Williams, which reads: "all who had come to faith in Christ had settled in Peraea then, in Pella, a town in the Decapolis."

4-Epiphanius *De Mensuris et Ponderibus* XV, (PG 43, col. 261-262)

"So Aquila, while he was in Jerusalem, also saw the disciples of the disciples of the apostles flourishing in the faith and working great signs, healings, and other miracles. For they were such as had come back from the city of Pella to Jerusalem and were living there and teaching. For when the city was about to be taken and destroyed by the Romans, it was revealed in advance to all the disciples by an angel of God that they should remove from the city, as it was going to be completely destroyed. They sojourned as emigrants in Pella, the city above mentioned in Transjordan. And this city is said to be of the Decapolis. But after the destruction of Jerusalem, when they had returned to Jerusalem, as I have said, they wrought great signs, as I have already said."

Translation by J.E. Dean, *Epiphanius' Treatise on Weights and Measures. The Syriac Version*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935) 30-31.

5-Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions I, 37, 2 (Syriac)

"Those who believe in him [Jesus] will be led through the wisdom of God, to a fortified place of the land, as if to life, and preserved because of the battle that will afterwards come to destroy those who have not been persuaded because of their doubt."

Translation by F. S. Jones, in *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 66.

6-Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions I, 39, 3 (Syriac)

"Thus, everyone who has pleased God in his unspeakable wisdom will be delivered from the war that, on account of those who have not believed, is ready to come to destroy them."

Translation by F. S. Jones, in *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 69.

7-Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions I, 39, 3 (Latin)

"Indeed, a sign of this great mystery is established showing that everyone who believes in this prophet who was predicted by Moses and is baptized in his name will be preserved unharmed from the destruction of the war that is impending on the unbelieving nation and the place itself."

Translation by F. S. Jones, in *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 69.

8-Luke 21: 20-24

"When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then those in Judaea must flee to the mountains, and those inside the city must leave it, and those out in the country must not enter it; for these are days of vengeance, as a fulfillment of all that is written. Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress on the earth and wrath against this people; they will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captives among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of Gentiles are fulfilled."

II- THE JEWISH CHRISTIANS' RELATIONSHIP TO JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE FOLLOWING THE JEWISH WAR.

Christian tradition (as conveyed by the Church Fathers) mentions the presence of a Christian community in Jerusalem after the suppression of the Jewish War. This congregation was believed to be the remnant of the "Mother Church" whose members had fled to Pella during this War. According to this tradition, this group returned to the ruined city in spite of the very harsh circumstances, and remained there up to the Bar-Kokhba Revolt.

It is the purpose of this chapter to verify the existence of a Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem after the Jewish War. We shall also attempt to define the nature of the link between the Jewish Christians and the destroyed Temple.

A- WAS THERE A JEWISH CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN JERUSALEM AFTER 70 CE ?

In order to determine whether there was a Jewish Christian community living in Jerusalem in the late first century CE, we must first evaluate to what extent such a settlement is conceivable. This means that we need to look into the situation of the Holy City following the Jewish War. Since this question has been widely discussed by numerous scholars, we shall briefly sum up the most important of the different positions.

1-The likelihood of a Jewish civilian settlement in Jerusalem after 70 CE:

Josephus asserts that, after the submission of Jerusalem, Titus ordered:

"the whole city and the Temple to be razed to the ground, leaving only the loftiest of the towers, Phasaël, Hippicus, and Mariamme, and the portion of the wall enclosing the city on the west: the latter as an encampment for the garrison that was to remain...All the rest of the wall encompassing the city was so completely levelled to the ground as to leave future visitors no ground for believing that it had ever been inhabited."¹

Unfortunately the sources which deal with Jerusalem after its capture are very scanty, so that it is difficult to imagine what remained of the city prior to the foundation of Aelia Capitolina. The sole certainty, confirmed both by Josephus' writings and by archaeological evidence, is the presence of the Legion X Fretensis within the boundaries of the ruined metropolis; but even here the data are too fragmentary to determine the exact location of the legion's camp.² In spite of those difficulties we shall attempt to assess the likelihood of the presence in Jerusalem, of a (Jewish) civilian settlement beside the Roman camp.

Many scholars think that Jews (although probably in small number) did remain in Jerusalem until their expulsion by Hadrian. S. Safrai,³ for instance, considers that

¹ *BJ* VII, 1-4.

² See: H. Geva, "The Camp of the Tenth Legion in Jerusalem: An Archaeological Reconsideration", *IEJ* 34 (1984), 239-254; D. Bar, "Aelia Capitolina and the Location of the Camp of the Tenth Legion", *PEQ* 130 (1998), 8-19; E. Mazar, "The camp of the Tenth Roman Legion at the foot of the south-west Corner of the Temple mount enclosure wall in Jerusalem", *New Studies on Jerusalem* 4 (1999), 52-66, (in Hebrew); B. Isaac, "Jerusalem from the Great Revolt to the Reign of Constantine, 70-312 CE", in Y. Tsafir and S. Safrai (ed.), *The History of Jerusalem-The Roman and Byzantine Periods (70-638 CE)*, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1999), 1-13, esp. 4, (in Hebrew); Y. Tsafir, "The Topography and Archaeology of Aelia Capitolina", in *The History of Jerusalem-The Roman and Byzantine Periods (70-638 CE)*, 115-166, esp. 124-125, (in Hebrew).

³ S. Safrai, "The Jews of Jerusalem during the Roman Period", in *The History of Jerusalem-The Roman and Byzantine Periods (70-638 CE)*, 15-34, esp. 17, (in Hebrew).

Eleazar ben Yair's speech, as reported by Josephus,⁴ hints at the presence of civilians in Jerusalem a short time after the city's destruction. He further assumes that some Jews certainly collaborated with the Roman army by supplying the legionaries with goods and services; such a configuration would require the presence of civilians beside the Roman camp. A. Kloner and B. Zisso⁵, who analyzed the tombs from this period discovered in Jerusalem and its vicinity, estimate that about a quarter of the former Jewish population of Jerusalem remained in the city after 70 CE. Finally, we should mention the conclusions of H. M. Cotton and W. Eck, who infer from their analysis of papyrus Yadin 114 (114/115 CE) that Jews were present in the environs of Jerusalem in the few decades which preceded the Bar-Kokhba Revolt.⁶

Other scholars reject this position. In this respect Y. Shahar⁷ asserts that, up to the Bar-Kokhba Revolt, Jerusalem was merely a military site devoid of any civilian settlement. In his opinion, the presence of a legionary camp in the ruined city was part of the Roman policy which aimed at expelling Jews from the city. His theory is mainly grounded on the scantiness of archaeological finds from this period unearthed in Jerusalem and its vicinity. Furthermore, Shahar attempts to demonstrate the unreliability of those sources which refer to a civilian presence at this time in the devastated city.⁸

⁴ *BJ* VII, 8, 377.

⁵ A. Kloner and B. Zissu, *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi and The Israel Exploration Society, 2003), 68, (in Hebrew).

⁶ H.M.Cotton and W. Eck, "P.Muurabba'at 114 und die Anwesenheit römischer Truppen in den Höhen des Wadi Muurabba'at nach dem Bar Kochba Aufstand", *ZPE*, 138 (2002), 173-183. See also: H. M. Cotton, "The Bar Kokhba Revolt and the Documents from the Judaeen Desert: Nabataean Participation in the Revolt (*P. Yadin 52*)", in P. Schäfer (ed.), *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 2003), 133-152, esp. 137-140.

⁷ Y. Shahar, "Was There a Civilian Settlement in Jerusalem between the Two Jewish Revolts", *New Studies on Jerusalem* 12 (2007), 131-146, (in Hebrew).

⁸ We shall discuss this matter below.

However, we are inclined to believe that Jews did come back to Jerusalem after the Jewish War since they were not forbidden to live in the Holy City. Indeed, while the ban promulgated by Hadrian which prevented Jews from entering Jerusalem is well documented,⁹ there is no trace of such a prohibition prior to the Bar-Kokhba Revolt.¹⁰ Here we would note that according to the talmudic literature, a group of Jews did actually settle in Aelia Capitolina in the late second century CE in spite of Hadrian's edict. Both Talmuds mention on different occasions¹¹ the existence of a holy congregation (עדה קדושה) or a holy community that was in Jerusalem (קהילא קדושה) (דבירושלים) that was composed of R. Meir's pupils. Such a presence illustrates the immeasurable eagerness of the Jews in settling in Jerusalem even during particularly hard times. Indeed, although the first Severan Emperors were probably less particular than their predecessors, Hadrian's ban remained in force at least up to Jerome's time.¹² It is therefore more than likely that, after the first Jewish War and in spite of the very harsh conditions, Jews sought to settle in Jerusalem especially since they were not officially banned from the city.

Finally, one might wonder why there should have been a Hadrianic decree expelling Jews from Jerusalem if we claim that Jews were forbidden to remain in the Holy City as early as 70 CE.¹³

⁹ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* XVI, 2, (PG 6, col. 509-510); I *Apology* 37, (PG 6, col. 399-400); Tertullianus, *Adversus Iudaeos* XIII, 3-5, (PL 2 col. 633-634); Eusebius, *HE* IV, 6, 3, (GCS II 1, 306-308); Jerome, *Commentary on Zephaniah* 1: 15, (ed. M. Adriaen; CCSL LXXVIa, 673-674).

¹⁰ S. Safrai, "The Jews of Jerusalem during the Roman Period", 17; B. Isaac, "Judaea after A.D. 70", *JJS* 35 (1984), 44-50, esp. 50.

¹¹ BT Berakhot 9b; Besah 14b; 27a; Yoma 69a; Tamid 27b; Rosh Hashanah 19b; see: S. Safrai, "The Holy Congregation in Jerusalem", *SH* 23 (1972), 62-78.

¹² Jerome, *Commentary on Zephaniah*, 1: 15, (CCSL LXXVIa, 673-674).

¹³ In this respect Y. Shahar asserts that Hadrian's edict merely altered the situation in Jerusalem's vicinity, for it aimed at expelling the Jews from the surrounding toparchies, ("Was there a Civilian Settlement in Jerusalem between the Two Jewish Revolts", 141-142).

2-The return of the Jewish Christian Church to Jerusalem after the Jewish War.

a-The sources which refer to a Christian presence in Jerusalem after 70 CE

Although no definitive conclusion has been drawn with regard to the existence of a Jewish settlement in Jerusalem after the Jewish War, we shall now investigate the likelihood of a Jewish Christian presence at this time. In the first place, we shall consider the main sources that refer to the presence of a Jewish Christian Church in Jerusalem before the Bar-Kokhba Revolt, namely the Church fathers, Eusebius and Epiphanius.

The most wide-ranging collection of accounts related to this community is to be found in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. According to Eusebius' own words, his material derived from various ancient writings and traditions and notably from the works of the second century CE writer Hegesippus. Eusebius first hints at the presence in Jerusalem of a Jewish Christian congregation after the Jewish War by relating the election of Symeon of Clopas to the Episcopal throne. Thus, he writes that, after the destruction of Jerusalem, "those of the apostles and of the disciples of the Lord who were still alive ...[and] those who were, humanly speaking, of the family of the Lord" gathered "from every place" in an unspecified location, and choose Symeon, the son of Clopas to be James' heir.¹⁴ In subsequent statements it becomes clear that Symeon ruled the Church of Jerusalem.¹⁵ Then the narrative relates that after Symon's martyrdom, which occurred at the hand of the local governor Atticus under Trajan's reign, "a certain Jew named Justus... succeeded to the throne of the bishopric of Jerusalem." Eusebius adds that he " was one of the many thousands of the

¹⁴ *HE* III, 11, (GCS II 1, 226-228).

¹⁵ *HE* III, 22, (GCS II 1, 236).

circumcision who by that time" believed in Christ.¹⁶

Afterwards, in a somewhat controversial account, Eusebius lists the names of the fifteen bishops who, according to him, led the Jerusalem Church until the Bar-Kokhba Revolt. He specified that these were all: "Hebrews by origin...For their whole church at that time consisted of Hebrews."¹⁷ Eusebius himself was aware of the chronological difficulties posed by such a list, according to which thirteen bishops ruled over the Church within less than three decades.¹⁸ Following this, he relates the end of the Jewish Christian leadership of the Jerusalem Church¹⁹ and the takeover of Gentile-Christian bishops; it is noteworthy that Eusebius links this outcome both to the promulgation of Hadrian's ban and to the foundation of Aelia Capitolina.²⁰ Finally, we should mention two similar statements of Eusebius recorded in different works, which read that "there also was a very big church of Christ in Jerusalem, built by the Jews, until the time of the siege of Hadrian."²¹

We shall now look into Epiphanius' writings. The fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of his work *On Weights and Measures*²² contain an interesting reference to the existence of a Christian community in Jerusalem after the Jewish War. These passages recount

¹⁶ *HE* III, 35, (GCS II 1, 274).

¹⁷ *HE* IV, 5, 2, (GCS II 1, 304).

¹⁸ The controversies surrounding this document are notorious, and have been abundantly discussed; see for example: R. van den Broek, "Der Brief des Jakobus an Quadratus und das Problem der judenchristliche Bischöfe von Jerusalem, (Eusebius, Hist. Eccl IV, 5, 1-3)", in T. Baarda et al.(ed.), *Text and Testimony: Essays on New Testament and Apocryphal Literature in Honour of A. F. J. Klijn*, (Kampen: Kok, 1988), 56-65; R. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, (Edinburgh: Clark, 1990), 70-79; Y. Lederman, "Les évêques juifs de Jérusalem", *RB* 104 (1997), 211-222; S. C. Mimouni, "La tradition des évêques chrétiens d'origine juive de Jérusalem", *Studia Patristica* 40 (2006), 447-466.

¹⁹ *HE* IV, 5, 3, (GCS II 1, 304-306).

²⁰ *HE* IV, 6, 4, (GCS II 1, 308).

²¹ *Demonstratio Evangelica* III, 5, (ed. I. A. Heikel, GCS, 6, 131); English translation by A. F. J. Klijn and G. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish Christian Sects*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill 1973), 139. See also: *Theophania* V, 45 (Syriac version), (ed. Gressmann, GCS III, 250-251).

²² *PG* 43, col. 259-262.

that "forty-seven years after the destruction of Jerusalem" ²³, Hadrian undertook to rebuild the city apart from the Temple. Epiphanius specifies then, that Jerusalem was utterly destroyed except for a few houses, among which was the "Church of God" which had existed in the area of Mount Zion up to Hadrian's visit. The statement following this is also of direct concern to our study, for it relates the encounter in Jerusalem between Aquila (the "overseer of the work" appointed by Hadrian) and "the disciples of the disciples of the apostles." Epiphanius asserts that the latter came back from Pella after the War, and from then on lived and taught in Jerusalem.

Apart from this information, Epiphanius provides in his *Panarion*²⁴ a list of the bishops who ruled over the Jerusalem Church prior to the Bar-Kokhba Revolt. In the light of the several differences between their two lists, R. Bauckham considers that Epiphanius' account is independent from Eusebius' above-mentioned list, and originates from a local tradition.²⁵ Several later writers also refer to the existence of a Church in Jerusalem after the Jewish War but their data derives broadly from Epiphanius.²⁶

The presence in Jerusalem of a Jewish Christian congregation after the Jewish War remains thus a debated issue. Several scholars have tried to overcome the numerous discrepancies and to harmonize the different accounts but their conclusions are mainly grounded in speculation. M. Simon, for instance, supposes that the Jewish Christians gathered together after the war and tried to settle in Jerusalem. However, because of the very harsh conditions described by Josephus, they could scarcely remain in the

²³ Hadrian is most likely to have decided to found Aelia Capitolina during his visit to the East in 129-130 CE. See: A. Birley, *Hadrian: The Restless Emperor*, (London: Routledge, 1997), 231-234.

²⁴ Epiphanius, *Panarion* LXVI, 20, 1, (PG 42, col. 59-62).

²⁵ R. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, 72.

²⁶ Alexander the Monk, *De Inventione Sanctae Crucis*, (PG 87[3] col. 4042-4043); Eutychius, *Annales* 343-344, (PG 111, col. 985).

city's vicinity. Only after the foundation of Aelia Capitolina was a Gentile-Christian community allowed to found a congregation on Mount Zion.²⁷ Other scholars utterly reject the authenticity of those traditions, like S. G. F. Brandon²⁸, who believes that the Jerusalem Church vanished during the Jewish War or Y. Shahar²⁹ who asserts that there was no civilian settlement in Jerusalem between the two Revolts.

For the purposes of our analysis we shall attempt to assess the degree of reliability of our sources. Here too there are many different opinions. B. Isaac, for instance, thinks that Eusebius' accounts are trustworthy, since the latter lived in Palestine and was therefore certainly acquainted with local traditions.³⁰ Besides, Isaac considers the fact that Eusebius mentioned the presence of Jews in Jerusalem and did not refute the Jewish features of the Jerusalem Church in spite of his keen aversion to Jews, is proof of his authenticity. In contradistinction, O. Irshai³¹ doubts the reliability of Eusebius' statements since Hegesippus (Eusebius' main source) was driven by apologetic considerations and merely sought to emphasize the continuity of the Church and the genuineness of its tradition. Irshai assumes however, that some Jews and Christians certainly settled in Jerusalem. Shahar, in his attempt to prove that Jerusalem was merely a military camp after 70 CE, enumerates the discrepancies contained in the accounts which mention a Jewish Christian presence in the Holy City prior to the Bar-Kokhba Revolt; he therefore concludes that Eusebius' statements are unreliable.³²

²⁷ M. Simon, "La Migration à Pella; Légende ou Réalité?", *RSR* 60 (1972), 37-54, esp. 53.

²⁸ S.G.F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, (London: S. P. C. K., 2nd ed.1968), 167-184.

²⁹ Y. Shahar, "Was There a Civilian Settlement in Jerusalem between the Two Jewish Revolts", 140-144.

³⁰ B. Isaac, "Jerusalem from the Great Revolt to the Reign of Constantine, 70-312 CE", 5-6.

³¹ O. Irshai, "The Church of Jerusalem- From 'The Church of the Circumcision' to 'The Church from the Gentiles'", in Y. Tsafrir and S. Safrai (ed.), *The History of Jerusalem-The Roman and Byzantine Periods (70-638 CE)*, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1999), 61-114, esp. 82-83, (in Hebrew).

³² Y. Shahar stresses several apparent discrepancies: he notes for instance the fact that Eusebius, who refers to two successive destructions of Jerusalem under Titus and Hadrian, fails to mention any

The trustworthiness of Epiphanius' writings is quite difficult to evaluate. In fact, although he was certainly acquainted with local traditions (since he lived in Palestine), his work remains confused and imprecise in many respects. In spite of those considerations G. Alon, as already mentioned in our previous chapter, concludes that Epiphanius' writings cannot be disregarded on account of the numerous reports and traditions they contain.³³

It is thus very complex to determine whether the traditions related to the existence of a Jewish Christian Church in Jerusalem are genuine since our sources are both scanty and (sometimes) contradictory. We are nonetheless inclined to agree with Isaac as to the value of Eusebius' accounts. Furthermore, for similar reasons we would regard the data conveyed by the bishop of Salamis as reliable; it is in fact very likely that Epiphanius, who lived for many years in Eleutheropolis in Judaea, was familiar with local traditions. A further indication of his reliability lies in the fact that the latter recounts the presence of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem in passing, for the main interest of his account concerns Aquila and his translation of the Scriptures. Thus, it would seem that Epiphanius had no apologetic interest in relating this account and merely reported a tradition that he had previously received.

There is sufficient reason in the light of these considerations to assume that our sources convey a nucleus of genuine tradition and testify to the presence of a Jewish Christian church in Jerusalem after the Jewish War.

reconstruction between the two revolts, and he further highlights the well-known difficulties related to the list of bishops of Jerusalem (*HE* IV, 5, [GCS II 1, 304-306]). See: "Was there a Civilian Settlement in Jerusalem between the Two Jewish Revolts", 140-141.

³³ G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land in the Talmudic age, 70-640 CE*. Translated and edited by G. Levi, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989), 442.

b- The circumstances of the return of the Jewish Christians to Jerusalem

In this section we shall attempt to determine what circumstances enabled this community to return to Jerusalem and to live there.

In the previous chapter, we put forward the hypothesis that the members of the Jerusalem Church (or at least part of them) surrendered to the Roman authority in the course of the Jewish War and were subsequently compelled to settle in Pella. We have also assumed that, following the example of other Jewish deserters, the Jewish Christians did negotiate the terms of their surrender with the Roman Authority. In order to support our thesis, we analyzed an account of Josephus which relates the surrender of a group of high priests during the siege of Jerusalem and their encounter with Titus.³⁴ In our opinion, this statement draws up the terms of a negotiation between these deserters and the Roman authorities. Indeed, Titus' efforts to encourage the Jews to surrender suggest that the Romans were disposed to accept some of the deserters' requests;³⁵ in this respect, it is noteworthy that less prestigious Jewish prisoners are also reported to have surrendered under treaty.³⁶ We have therefore proposed that the Jewish Christians negotiated their surrender and their subsequent removal to Pella with the Roman authorities on similar terms.

Can we then suppose that the latter were assured of recovering their goods and their property after the War? Unfortunately Josephus does not specify whether the Roman authorities did respect their commitments and allow the Jewish deserters to settle in Jerusalem. The last descriptions of Jerusalem recorded in the *Jewish War* report the wide extent of the devastation of the city and the fact that only women and old men remained there.³⁷

³⁴ *BJ VI*, 113-116. The analysis of this account is to be found in the previous chapter.

³⁵ *BJ VI*, 117.

³⁶ *BJ IV*, 130.

³⁷ *BJ VII*, 375-379.

We shall turn now to a statement in the *Life*³⁸ of Josephus that should shed light on our inquiry; it reads:

"When Titus had quelled the disturbances in Judaea, conjecturing that the lands which I [Josephus] held at Jerusalem would be unprofitable to me, because a Roman garrison was to be quartered there, he gave me another parcel of ground in the plain."

Isaac³⁹ estimates that it would be wrong to deduce from this that the land in the vicinity of Jerusalem became legionary territory. He assumes instead that Josephus received lands in the plain as compensation since his former possessions had become unprofitable because of the presence of the garrison in town. This account would then refer to the specific situation of Josephus' lands after the Revolt, and would not depict the general state of affairs of the whole area. According to Isaac, Josephus in this statement merely meant to emphasize the fact that he had received presents from Titus.

There is still a further important question raised by this account: Was this step an exceptional measure aimed at compensating a particularly loyal and worthy ally or can it be seen as an illustration of the Roman policy towards deserters (or at least the most illustrious among them) after the war? The second configuration appears to correspond to the statement cited above, which describes the surrender of several high priests in the course of the siege of Jerusalem. In fact, according to Josephus, Titus promised them "to restore every man's property, so soon as he had leisure after the war."⁴⁰

³⁸ *Vita* 422; translation by H. St. J. Thackeray in the Loeb edition, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976).

³⁹ B. Isaac, "Judaea after A.D. 70", 47.

⁴⁰ *BJ* VI, 115.

Can we infer from this consideration that the members of the Jewish Christians community who had settled in Pella after their surrender were officially allowed to live in Jerusalem and to recover their goods and properties shortly after the war?

It is true that, unlike Josephus and the high priests who were highly prized deserters, the Jewish Christians were probably a group of ordinary people without any special connections with the Roman commander. However, this does not invalidate the possibility that the latter were allowed to return to Jerusalem after the war by virtue of an agreement with the Roman authorities.

In this context, we should note an interesting statement of the tenth century CE Patriarch of Alexandria, Eutychius who reports that the Christians came back to Jerusalem under the leadership of Symeon the son of Clopas in the fourth year of Vespasian (73-74 CE)⁴¹. In the light of Eutychius' account, it would not be unreasonable to assume that the Jewish Christians returned to Jerusalem and recovered their property as a community rather than as individuals. Here it should be remembered that according to the Book of Acts⁴² the principle of communal life was highly idealized within the Jerusalem Church; it is therefore not improbable that, prior to the Jewish War, its members possessed goods and properties in common. Besides, we have observed in our previous chapter that during the course of the war, the Roman authorities attempted to obtain collective desertions; we have consequently supposed that the members of the Jerusalem Church (or at least part of them) did surrender as a group. Although our demonstration is merely grounded in speculation, we believe that such a configuration is not unlikely.

⁴¹ Eutychius, *Annales* 343-344, (PG 111, col. 985).

⁴² Acts 2: 44-45.

Several scholars have attempted to identify the location of the Jewish Christian settlement in Jerusalem during the first centuries of the Common Era. Basing their assertions on Epiphanius' accounts, some believe that the first Christians founded their congregation on the Mount Zion; thus, they attribute the remains of a building lying beneath the compound of the so-called Tomb of David to the Jewish Christian synagogue later known as the Church of the Apostles (late first century).⁴³ B. Pixner asserts that this edifice was built there by the Jewish Christians who came back from Pella because they identified this spot with the Cenacle (the upper room where the disciples gathered after Jesus' ascension).⁴⁴ It would seem that certain of these scholars were driven by modern religious considerations and merely sought to demonstrate that Christian holy sites are related to ancient and genuine traditions. J. E. Taylor, who rejects this theory, considers unlikely that the first Christians, who were said to be very humble, settled on Mount Zion for this was a wealthy quarter in the late second Temple period.⁴⁵ Thus, it would appear that the quest for the physical remains of a Jewish Christian center in Jerusalem is not very conclusive and that we cannot rely on its conclusions for the needs of our study.

Nonetheless, this assertion should not interfere with the likelihood of a Jewish Christian presence in Jerusalem prior to the Bar-Kokhba revolt. There is sufficient reason to accept this stance. In the first place, we have pointed out the fact that there is no evidence or testimony of any ban that forbade Jews from dwelling in the Holy

⁴³ See for instance: B. Bagatti, *L'Eglise de la Circoncision*, (Jerusalem: Impr. des PP. Franciscains, 1965), 96-102; E. Puech, "La Synagogue 'judéo-chrétienne' du mont Sion", *Le Monde de la Bible* 57 (1989), 18-19; S. C. Mimouni, "La Synagogue 'judéo-chrétienne' de Jérusalem au Mont Sion. Textes et contexte", *Proche-Orient Ancien* 40 (1990), 215-234; R. Riesner, "Der christliche Zion: Vor oder nachkonstantinisch?", in F. Manns and E. Alliata (ed.), *Early Christianity in Context. Monuments and Documents*, (Collectio maior / SBF 38; Jerusalem: Franciscan Print. Press, 1993), 85-90.

⁴⁴ B. Pixner, "Church of the Apostles found on Mt Zion", *BAR* 16 (May/ June 1990), 16-35, 60.

⁴⁵ J. E. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places: the Myth of Jewish Christian Origins*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 208.

City prior to Hadrian's decree. It appears, therefore, that Jews were free to settle there in spite of the very harsh conditions. Furthermore, we think that the sources which refer to the existence of a Church in Jerusalem after the Jewish War should not be dismissed out-of-hand, for they certainly convey genuine traditions. Finally, we are inclined to believe that such a group, like their Jewish brethren, would have been eager to settle in the Holy City; in this respect it is noteworthy that the veneration of Jerusalem was a common trait within Jewish Christianity, even among the streams which rejected both the sacrifices and the Temple.⁴⁶

B- THE JEWISH CHRISTIANS' ATTACHMENT TO THE TEMPLE.

Numerous suppositions have been voiced in the attempt to cast light on the first Jewish Christians' relationship to the Holy City. Thus, it has been argued that the latter came back to Jerusalem because it was the location of Jesus' burial and resurrection.⁴⁷ Other scholars have emphasized the eschatological importance of Jerusalem, which in the eyes of some Christian streams was to be the location of the *Parousia*, the second coming of Jesus.⁴⁸ We consider that these assumptions are too partial, for they fail to consider a central aspect of the link which bound the Jewish Christians to the Holy City: the Temple. We assume, indeed, that even after the suppression of the Jewish War their outlook on Jerusalem and the destroyed shrine was similar to that of the non-Christian Jews.

⁴⁶ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*. I, 26, 2 (PG 7[1], col. 686-687); Epiphanius, *Panarion* XIX, 3, 6, (PG 41, col. 265-266); we shall discuss this issue more extensively in a later paragraph.

⁴⁷ As implied, for instance, in B. Pixner's article ("Church of the Apostles found on Mt Zion", 24).

⁴⁸ See for instance: M. Simon, "La Migration à Pella; Légende ou Réalité?", 52-53.

1-Jewish pilgrimages to the Temple Mount after 70 CE

Our demonstration requires us to look into the talmudic literature. Several passages recorded in the rabbinical literature recount the journey of Jewish Sages to Jerusalem after the destruction of the city. It seems that this phenomenon appeared very early after the suppression of the Jewish revolt;⁴⁹ thus, some accounts recount the visits of R. Yohanan Ben Zakkai and some of his contemporaries to the devastated city.⁵⁰ One of the most famous passages related to such pilgrimages reports the consoling words pronounced by R. Akiba after Rabban Gamaliel, R. Yehoshua and R. Eleazar Ben Azaria had seen a fox leaving the place of the Holy of Holies. This passage reads:

"Once again, they were going up to Jerusalem. When they got to Mount Scopus, they tore their garments. When they reached the Temple Mount, they saw a fox emerge from the house of the Holy of Holies."⁵¹

It appears from this statement that such pilgrimages were not rare (שוב פעם אחת). Besides, as Isaac observes, it is noteworthy that the Sages did penetrate the area of the Sanctuary without fear of infringing the rules of purity.⁵² Safrai specifies that these pilgrimages did not aim at fulfilling religious commandments but were merely an expression of mourning.⁵³

This phenomenon was not limited to the Sages and was obviously widespread within the Jewish people. In this regard, several passages report that Ben Zoma saw crowds while he was staying in Jerusalem. Whereas the Jerusalem Talmud simply reads

⁴⁹ The first allusion to such a phenomenon possibly occurs in *BJ* VII, 377: "Hapless old men sit beside the ashes of the shrine..."

⁵⁰ *Avot de-R. Nathan*, version A, iv, (ed. Schechter .21); *Avot de-R. Nathan*, version B, viii, (ed. Schechter .11); *BT Hagigah* 15a.

⁵¹ *BT Makkot* 24a (translation by J. Neusner, *The Talmud of Babylon. An Academic Commentary* XXIV, *Makkot*, [Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1994], 123); *Lamentations Rabbah* v, 18, (ed. Buber, 159-160); *Sifrei Deuteronomy* xliii, (ed. Finkelstein, 95).

⁵² B. Isaac, "Jerusalem from the Great Revolt to the Reign of Constantine, 70-312 CE", 11.

⁵³ S. Safrai, "Pilgrimages to Jerusalem after the Destruction of the Second Temple", in A. Oppenheimer, U. Rappaport and M. Stern (ed.), *Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period. Abraham Schalit Memorial volume*, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi & Ministry of Defense, 1980), 376-393, esp.383, (in Hebrew).

"When Ben Zoma saw a crowd in Jerusalem" ("בן זומא כשהיה רואה אוכלוסין בירושלים"), the Tosefta and the Babylonian Talmud respectively read "on the Temple Mount" ("בהר הבית") and "on one of the steps of the Temple Mount" ("על גב מעלה בהר הבית").⁵⁴ Safrai, who notes that Ben Zoma was not yet an illustrious Sage in the late second Temple period, links this account to a time subsequent to the destruction of the Temple. He presumes accordingly, that this passage depicts Jewish pilgrimages to Jerusalem after 70 CE.⁵⁵ This statement illustrates thus the wide extent of this phenomenon within the Jewish population in the late first century and at the dawn of the second century CE

2-The James' stele issue

In the following paragraph we shall attempt to establish that some Jewish Christians did frequent the Temple's ruins in the same way that the Jews did. Such a demonstration should throw new light on the Jewish Christians' outlook soon after the destruction of the Sanctuary. Our demonstration will be principally grounded on the narrative of the martyrdom of James the brother of Jesus recorded in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*.⁵⁶ Since Eusebius derived this account from the second century writer Hegesippus, we shall first devote our study to the latter in order to assess the degree of reliability of the traditions he conveyed.

a-Hegesippus

Hegesippus is almost only known thanks to Eusebius, who quotes several statements of his lost work the *Hypomnemata*.⁵⁷ These writings, composed of five books, aimed

⁵⁴ Tos. Berakhot vi, 2, (ed. Lieberman, 33); JT Berakhot. ix, 1, 13c, (col. 69); BT Berakhot 58a.

⁵⁵ S. Safrai, "Pilgrimages to Jerusalem after the Destruction of the Second Temple", 386.

⁵⁶ *HE* II, 23, 4-18, (GCS II 1,166-171).

⁵⁷ Jerome mentions Hegesippus in *De viris illustribus* II, 3-5, (*PL* 23, col. 609-612), but his account

at defending the "genuine tradition" as taught by the Apostles against the emergence of new "heresies". The *Hypomnemata* convey rich data about the first Christian communities of Judaea, and about the Church of Jerusalem.

Eusebius considered Hegesippus' work to be particularly reliable because of two considerations: first, because he believed that Hegesippus was a convert from Judaism and was consequently well acquainted with the "unwritten traditions of the Jews" and had a mastery of the Hebrew tongue.⁵⁸ W. Telfer⁵⁹ attempts to qualify this statement for he doubts that Hegesippus was a Palestinian Jew; he even considers that the latter was "less Hebraist" than Eusebius himself. His assertion is grounded particularly on the fact that Hegesippus made use of the Septuagint in his account of the martyrdom of James. B. Gustafsson, on the other hand, claims that Hegesippus was a faithful reporter of genuine Jewish Christian traditions transmitted by the "δεσπότες" (Jesus' kinsmen) themselves. Thus, he claims that the "mysteries" and the numerous discrepancies which characterized his accounts were not due to Hegesippus himself, but were already present in the original oral traditions.⁶⁰

Eusebius also held Hegesippus in high esteem for he thought that the latter belonged to the first post-apostolic generation.⁶¹ However, Eusebius' statements with regard to Hegesippus' chronology are very confusing. Indeed, in his first account, Eusebius hints that Hegesippus lived under the reign of Hadrian,⁶² but in a subsequent passage he writes that the former went to Rome in the time of bishop Anicetus (c. 155-166 CE) and stayed there at least up to the time of Eleuterus (175-189 CE).⁶³ Telfer⁶⁴

most probably derives from Eusebius.

⁵⁸ *HE*, IV, 22, 8, (GCS II 1, 372).

⁵⁹ W. Telfer, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?", *HTR* 53 (1960), 143-153, esp. 146-147.

⁶⁰ B. Gustafsson, "Hegesippus' sources and his reliability", *Studia Patristica* 3 (1961), 227-232.

⁶¹ *HE* II, 23, 3, (GCS II 1, 166).

⁶² *HE* IV, 8, 2, (GCS II 1, 314).

⁶³ *HE* IV, 22, 3, (GCS II 1, 370).

⁶⁴ W. Telfer, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?", 145.

infers from this that the *Hypomnemata* were completed c. 180 CE; he concludes besides that, although Hegesippus was acquainted with Jewish Christian documents, he was not himself a Palestinian Jew.

In spite of its apologetic features, we tend to believe that Hegesippus' work did convey genuine traditions which originated from Palestinian Jewish Christian material. We shall attempt to illustrate briefly our assertion by emphasizing several relevant points.

We consider first that Eusebius' opinion with regard to Hegesippus' knowledge cannot be dismissed out-of-hand. In fact, since the *Hypomnemata* are now lost, we have no choice but to take into consideration Eusebius' position. It is obvious that his emphasis on Hegesippus' so-called Jewish origins, on his acquaintance with "unwritten Jewish traditions" and on his mastery of the Hebrew language derives from his personal impression of Hegesippus' writings. Thus, Eusebius' remarks on Hegesippus should rather hint at the gist of the *Hypomnemata* which were undoubtedly characterized by the extensive data they contained about the Jews and the Jewish Christians of Judaea.

In this context, we would like to point out that six of the eight direct quotations of Hegesippus reported by Eusebius deal with the Palestinian Church.⁶⁵ Moreover, we have recorded in Eusebius' work between ten and thirteen accounts⁶⁶ which describe

⁶⁵ *HE* II, 23, 4-18, (GCS II 1,166-171); III, 20, 1-6, (GCS II 1, 232-234); III, 32, 3-4, (GCS II 1, 268); 6, (GCS II 1, 268-270); IV, 22, 4-6, (GCS II 1, 370-372); 7, (GCS II 1, 372). It is noteworthy that *HE* III, 32, 3-4 and *HE* III, 32, 6 which are both attributed to Hegesippus, recount two different versions of Symeon's martyrdom. The two other quotations ascribed to Hegesippus are *HE* IV, 8, 2, (GCS II 1, 316; which deals with Hadrian's lover Antinous) and *HE* IV, 22, 2-3 (GCS II 1, 368-370; which reveals some elements on Hegesippus' journey in Corinth and in Rome).

⁶⁶ Three accounts are questionable: the first deals with the so-called persecution of the descendants of David under Vespasian (*HE* III, 12, [GCS II 1,228]) which possibly affected the Jewish Christians. The second problematical statement is ascribed to Julius Africanus and concerns the so-called *δεσπόσνοι* (*HE* I, 7, 14, [GCS II 1, 60]); R. Bauckham (*Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 61) considers that this tradition goes back to the beginning of the Church while others ascribe it to

the fate of the Jewish Christian communities of Judaea from James' martyrdom up to the Bar-Kokhba uprising; it appears that five of them clearly derive from the *Hypomnemata*.⁶⁷ Whereas five of the remaining statements obviously depend on other sources⁶⁸, we tend to ascribe the four last accounts⁶⁹ to Hegesippus, since they seem to fit the latter's writings.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the use Eusebius made of Hegesippus' writings:

Firstly, it is obvious that Eusebius considered the *Hypomnemata* to be a primary source of information with regard to the early Palestinian church. The extensive use he made of this work appears to demonstrate that he was more inclined to turn to Hegesippus rather than to the other sources at his disposal that dealt with this specific issue (if there were any).

Secondly, it seems that Hegesippus' writings were mainly devoted to the fate of the Jewish Christian community of Judaea. We must however voice some cautions here, since the *Hypomnemata* was an apologetic work and was not aimed at recounting Church history. Besides, apart from Eusebius' quotations, we have no knowledge about the content of the rest of these writings; it would therefore be hazardous to draw any decisive conclusion in this respect.

Africanus' own time *i.e.* the early third century CE. Finally, we may wonder whether *HE* III, 27, (GCS II 1, 254-256), which deals with the Ebionites, is related to a period preceding the Bar Kokhba revolt; in this regard, it is notable that this statement occurs in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* before the first reference to Hadrian's reign (*HE* IV, 3, 1, [GCS II 1, 302]); however, we should recall that Irenaeus was the first writer to mention the Ebionites by the end of the second century (*Adversus Haereses* I, 26, 2, [PG 7[1], col. 686]).

⁶⁷ *HE* II, 23, 4-18, (GCS II 1,166-171); III, 20, 1-6, (GCS II 1, 232-234); III, 32, 3-4, (GCS II 1, 268); 6, (GCS II 1, 268-270); IV, 22, 4-6, (GCS II 1, 370-372).

⁶⁸ *HE* I, 7, 14, (GCS II 1, 60); II, 1, 5, (GCS II 1, 104); III, 5, 3, (GCS II 1, 196); 27, (GCS II 1,254-256); IV, 5, 1-4, (GCS II 1, 304-306).

⁶⁹ *HE* III, 11, (GCS II 1, 226-228); 22, (GCS II 1, 236); 35, (GCS II 1, 274). In regard with *HE* III, 5, 3, (GCS II 1, 196); 12, (GCS II 1,228), it is noteworthy that the persecution of the descendants of David by the Roman emperors is a recurrent theme in Hegesippus' writings, (*HE* III, 20, 1-2, [GCS II 1, 232-234]; 32, 4; 6, [GCS II 1, 268]).

At any rate, there is sufficient reason to presume that Hegesippus was the recipient of a genuine and extensive tradition related to the Palestinian Church of the early second century.

b- The *sitz im leben* of the tradition

The gist of the narrative

We shall now analyze Hegesippus' account of the martyrdom of James. In the first part of the narrative, James "the brother of the Lord" is depicted as a righteous man greatly renowned for his holiness; he is also said to have grown up as a Nazirite and to have led an ascetic life. Moreover, James is portrayed as a high priest since he alone was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. Finally, Hegesippus ascribes him an odd surname "*Oblias*, that is in Greek, 'Rampart of the people and righteousness'."

In the second part of the account, James is asked by members of the "seven sects" about the "gate of Jesus" and merely replies that Jesus was the "Saviour". It turns out that many of the people and even some among the rulers believe in Jesus on account of James. The Scribes and Pharisees, worried by such a development, ask James to deter the people from believing in Jesus. Thus, during the feast of the Passover, they place him upon the pinnacle of the Temple from which he could speak to "all the tribes...and the gentiles" who were gathered in the Sanctuary; but instead of denying his faith in Jesus, James claims that Jesus is "the Son of Man... (who) is sitting in heaven on the right hand of the great Power, and ...(who) will come on the clouds of heaven". His words are stated to have caused many more to believe in Jesus as messiah.

The Scribes and the Pharisees, who had resolved to kill James, then throw him down and stone him. Hegesippus specifies that a "priest of the sons of Rechab" attempted to interfere, but eventually a fuller stuck James on the head "and thus he suffered martyrdom".

The last statement of this narrative is fundamental to our demonstration, for it reads:

"And they buried him on the spot by the Temple, and his grave stone still remains by the Temple."⁷⁰

Even though the legendary features of this tale are obvious, we regard it as very instructive with regard to the post-70 CE Jewish Christian community. Indeed, although there is no clear evidence that Jewish Christians did visit the ruins of the Temple in the late first century CE, we consider that Hegesippus' data may possibly hint at such a phenomenon.

The Dating of the Tradition

In the first place, our analysis requires us to determine the *sitz im leben* of this tradition. It would seem safe to place its appearance between James' martyrdom (62 CE) and the completion of Hegesippus' *Hypomnemata* (c. 180 CE); however we would like to narrow our dating as much as possible.

In our opinion, it is improbable that such a tradition began prior to 70 CE. Several traits of Hegesippus' account tend to prove that this tale emerged after the destruction of the Temple. In fact, it is less than likely that a man was actually buried within the compound of the Sanctuary while the Temple still stood; such an act would have been regarded as unacceptable sacrilege. In this respect, we should remember that, at the

⁷⁰ "καὶ ἔθαψαν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τῷ τόπῳ παρὰ τῷ ναῷ, καὶ ἔτι αὐτοῦ ἡ στήλη μένει παρὰ τῷ ναῷ."

time of Coponius (6-9 CE), some Samaritans profaned the Sanctuary by throwing "human bones in the porticoes and throughout the Temple."⁷¹

Furthermore, it is remarkable that Hegesippus' account contrasts strongly with Josephus' writings. The latter lived in Jerusalem from 56 to 64 CE;⁷² his report of James' execution, which occurred in the Holy City in 62 CE, is consequently regarded as more reliable than Hegesippus' legendary narrative. It is reasonable to assume that, if James had been killed in the Sanctuary (as Hegesippus states), Josephus would have mentioned this event and reproved it as morally abhorrent; in this regard, we should recall that he vigorously condemns the murder of Zacharias ben Baruch which occurred "in the midst of the Temple" at the hands of the Zealots.⁷³

In light of the differences between both accounts, we consider that the tradition conveyed by Hegesippus did not take shape immediately after James' martyrdom. Although it is scarcely possible to measure the process of formation of a legend, we believe that this narrative could not have been molded by witnesses or contemporaries of James' execution. Nonetheless, we agree with Irshai⁷⁴ who assumes that this account, which presents strong Jewish Christian features⁷⁵, derives from a Palestinian local tradition.

In order to pursue our inquiry, we shall scrutinize the small amount of data provided by the *Historia Ecclesiastica* about Hegesippus' life. It appears that Hegesippus used to collect information about the various churches he had visited. Although Eusebius

⁷¹ *AJ* XVIII, 29-30.

⁷² *Vita* 12-13.

⁷³ *BJ* IV, 343.

⁷⁴ O. Irshai, "The Church of Jerusalem- From 'The Church of the Circumcision' to 'The Church from the Gentiles'", 74.

⁷⁵ We shall discuss this point later.

does not say it formally, it is very likely that Hegesippus journeyed in Palestine and gathered traditions related to the local Jewish Christian churches there.

According to his own statement,⁷⁶ he arrived at Rome under Pope Anicetus (154/157-165/168 CE) and remained there at least until Eleutherus (174/176-189/191 CE). Unfortunately the subsequent fate of Hegesippus is not recounted by the *Historia Ecclesiastica*; only the late *Chronicon Paschale* relates that he died in 180 CE.⁷⁷ It seems reasonable thus, to suppose that Hegesippus wrote his *Hypomnemata* in Rome from the data he had collected prior to his arrival in the capital city. We may thus infer that Hegesippus was acquainted with the tradition of James' martyrdom and with the existence of a stele related to it at the latest in the episcopate of Anicetus.

Finally, we wish to emphasize an additional point. The fact that this narrative linked the remembrance of James' martyrdom to an actual monument located in the area of the Sanctuary implies that the group within which this tradition emerged continued to frequent Jerusalem and the Temple ruins. Assuming that this community was Jewish Christian, we consider that the tradition and the stele related to it appeared at a time when Jews were free to visit the Holy City; this assertion requires us to set a date prior to Hadrian's decree of expulsion.

In the light of these considerations, we believe that the tradition of James' martyrdom reported by Hegesippus originated within a Jewish-Christian community which frequented Jerusalem and its ruined Temple at the dawn of the second century CE

The community within which the tradition originated

We shall now attempt to identify the group where this tradition appeared. To this end, we shall compare Hegesippus' account with other statements which recount James'

⁷⁶ *HE* IV, 5, 1-4, (GCS II 1, 304-306).

⁷⁷ *PG* 92, col. 641-642.

martyrdom, in order to highlight some of the main traits which characterized this community. It appears indeed that this theme was very popular within the early Christian Church, so that different groups adapted the story to their beliefs and developed their own version of James' death.

In the first place, we observe that the identity of James' enemies according to the different accounts proves to be very instructive. It is noteworthy that Josephus⁷⁸ (whose report is the most reliable) puts the blame for James' death on the Sadducee high priest Ananus. The latter, taking advantage of an interregnum, brought James and some others before the Sanhedrin and accused them of infringing the law. Nevertheless, the stoning of James aroused great indignation among "those of the inhabitants of the city who were considered the most fair-minded and who were strict in observance of the law were offended at this."⁷⁹ Consequently, the latter complained to King Agrippa and to the new procurator Albinus; it is very significant that many scholars⁸⁰ identify these persons with the Pharisees. It is finally stated that Ananus was deposed by Agrippa on account of his misdeed.

We shall now briefly mention Clement's report of James' martyrdom⁸¹ which reads

"Now there were two Jameses, one James the Just, who was thrown down from the pinnacle of the Temple and beaten to death with a fuller's club, and the other he who was beheaded."

⁷⁸ *AJ* XX, 199-203.

⁷⁹ *AJ* XX, 200.

⁸⁰ See for instance: A. I. Baumgarten, "The name of the Pharisees", *JBL* 102/3 (1983), 411-428, esp. 413 n. 9; S. Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 176-177; G. Lüdemann, *Heretics, the other side of early Christianity*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 50; P. A. Bernheim, *Jacques, Frère de Jésus*, (Paris: Albin Michel, 2003), 325.

⁸¹ *HE* II, 1, 5, (GCS II 1, 104).

This account seems to derive from the same tradition that Hegesippus knew, but it appears to be too scanty for the needs of our research.

We shall look now at the Pseudo-Clementine literature. As we have already stated in the previous chapter,⁸² substantial parts of these writings derive from material that dates back to the second or the third century CE and which was probably composed in Syria. It is thus widely accepted that chapters 27-71⁸³ of I *Recognitions* constitute an independent literary piece composed of an earlier Jewish Christian material. On account of the numerous parallels between this text and Epiphanius' statement about the Ebionites⁸⁴, H. J. Schoeps has proposed that the original version of this account must have originated within an Ebionite community during the first third of the second century CE.⁸⁵

Thus, chapters I, 66-70 of the *Recognitions* report a version of James' martyrdom peculiar to this document. This narrative recounts that, seven years after the birth of the Jerusalem Church, the high priest Caiaphas summoned the Apostles in order to question them about Jesus. After the Twelve had defended their faith before Caiaphas, James also is said to have attempted to demonstrate that Jesus was the Christ, and to

⁸² See above: 28-31.

⁸³ However, in the wake of G. Strecker (*Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudo-Klementinen*, [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2nd revised ed. 1981], 221), certain authors have contended that this material actually starts at chapter 33; see for instance J.L. Martyn, « Clementine Recognitions 1,33-71, Jewish Christianity and the Fourth Gospel », in J. Jervell -W.A. Meeks (ed.), *God's Christ and his People. Festschrift for N.A. Dahl*, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977), 265-295, esp. 269. For a review of the research on the Pseudo-Clementine literature, see: F. S. Jones, "The Pseudo-Clementines: A History of Research," *Second Century* 2 (1982), 1-33, 63-96 and F. Manns, "Les Pseudo-Clémentines (Homélies et Reconnaissances). Etat de la question", *Liber Annuus* LIII (2003), 157-184.

⁸⁴ For instance, both I *Rec* 39, 1 and *Panarion* XXX, 16, 5 (*PG* 41, col. 431-432) read that Jesus came to bring about the cessation of sacrifices.

⁸⁵ H. J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums*, (Tubingen : J. C. B. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 1949), 381-456, esp. 453. Further propositions have been advanced regarding the origin of this material; while Strecker has held that it was composed in the area of Pella in the second part of the second century CE (*Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudo-Klementinen*, 253-254), F. S. Jones has ascribed it to a Jewish Christian from Judaea or Jerusalem at the turn of the third century CE, (*An ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity. Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions I. 27-71*, [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995], 166-167).

have preached in the Temple for seven days. Following this, the mission to the Jews is reported to have been highly successful. However, just when the people and the high priest himself were about to be baptized, an "enemy" entered the Temple and stirred up a tumult among the mob. The text reads then that, in the midst of this confusion, "that hostile person had made his way to James, he pushed him from the highest flight of stairs. Since he believed him to be dead, he made no effort to mishandle him further."⁸⁶ Eventually, James' disciples managed to save their master and to flee to Jericho.

Lüdemann⁸⁷ believes that this account is independent from the rest of the text and derives from the source that Hegesippus knew. Nonetheless, in spite of the numerous similarities between both accounts, there are several noteworthy differences. For instance, according to the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions*, James does not die, whereas Hegesippus states that he did. It is also notable that, in the *Recognitions*, James is not thrown from the pinnacle of the Temple but from the "highest flight of stairs." We would like to stress another particular dissimilarity, which concerns James' opponent. Here the following passage from the *Recognitions* provides some precious details about the identity of the "enemy." It reads:

"... that hostile person had received a commission from Caiaphas the high priest to persecute all who believed in Jesus, and to go to Damascus with his letters so that even there, when he had gained the help of the nonbelievers, he might bring destruction on the believers; but he was

⁸⁶ I *Rec* 70, 8 (Syr.). The Syriac version reads: "Now the enemy threw James from the top of the stairs. Since he fell and was as if dead, he did not smite him a second time."

⁸⁷ G. Lüdemann, *Paulus der Heidenapostel. Band II: Antipaulinismus im frühen Christentum*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1983), 234-237.

hastening particularly to Damascus because he believed that Peter had fled there." ⁸⁸

The correlation with the Book of Acts⁸⁹ is obvious and there can be no doubt this depiction is aimed against Paul; he was the "enemy" since he was considered to be the main cause of failure of the mission to the Jews. Several scholars assume that this account comes from a Jewish Christian community which was faced with the rise of the Marcionite heresy in the course of the second century CE.⁹⁰ Indeed, Marcion was believed to be Paul's heir because of his rejection of the Old Testament.

Thus, it would seem that the authors of this narrative adapted the tradition about James' martyrdom to their own needs and their own beliefs by identifying James' foe with Paul. The analysis of this phenomenon is essential to our demonstration; indeed, it happens to be very instructive with regard to the environment of the groups which developed their own version of James' martyrdom.

At this point, we shall briefly look at the Nag Hammadi library where there is another version of James' death, which is recorded in the *Second Apocalypse of James* (hereafter *2ApocJas*). These Gnostic writings, which were composed in the course of the second century CE, originated in the area of Syria-Palestine.

According to chapters LXI, 15- LXIII, 32, James, after he had demonstrated his faith in Jesus, aroused the people's fury by announcing the coming destruction of the Temple. The text relates that consequently he was cast down from the height of the

⁸⁸ I *Rec.* 71, 3-4. The Syriac version reads: "...the enemy, before the priests, promised Caiaphas the high priest that he would massacre all those who believed in Jesus. He departed for Damascus to go as one carrying letters from them so that when he went there, the nonbelievers might help him and might destroy those who believe. He wanted to go there first because he thought that Peter had gone there."

⁸⁹ Acts 9: 1-2.

⁹⁰ See for instance: F. Manns, "Les Pseudo-Clémentines (Homélies et Reconnaissances). Etat de la question", 175; A. Y. Reed, "Jewish Christianity after the Parting of the Ways: Approaches to Historiography and Self-Definition in the Pseudo-Clementines", in A. Becker and A. Y. Reed (ed.), *The Ways that Never Parted: Ways that Never Parted Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 189-231, esp. 207.

Temple and stoned to death while he was praying. A. Veilleux has emphasized the fact that, apart from James' prayer, this account is not Gnostic in character; he argues therefore that it is a separate literary unit probably dependant on the tradition that Hegesippus knew.⁹¹

However, we should like to stress an interesting point here. It is clear that, in spite of the numerous similarities with Hegesippus' narrative, the identity of James' murderers in the present account is different. It is actually difficult to identify the latter since they are described in very opaque terms and it is not quite clear whether the mob or the priests are referred to.⁹² Nonetheless, A. Veilleux has pointed out the fact that, all through his work, the Gnostic author of *2ApocJas* (by means of James) attempts to convince the Jewish people to follow his way⁹³; it would therefore be wrong to see a rejection of the Jews as such in these writings. Accordingly, the latter are not held directly responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus but are regarded as the servants of the Demiurge who accomplish their master's will.⁹⁴ Similarly, it is more than likely that James' murderers were interpreted within the framework of the Gnostic thought by the final redactor(s) of *2ApocJas*. In this way, the priests seem to represent more specifically the worship based on Temple and sacrifices which this Gnostic group abhorred. The Temple, which was believed to be a creation of the Demiurge, was therefore doomed to destruction by James.

⁹¹ A. Veilleux, *La première Apocalypse de Jacques* (NH V, 3); *La Seconde Apocalypse de Jacques* (NH V, 4), (Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi; Québec, Canada: Les presses de l'Université Laval, 1986), 14, 179-180.

⁹² James' foes are described in varying terms: "The people and the crowd", "they", "the priests", "those who judge", "all of them".

⁹³ *La première Apocalypse de Jacques*, 13.

⁹⁴ *2ApocJas* LIX, 8-10. According to Gnostic beliefs, the Demiurge was the evil Creator of the material world, who kept men in the bonds of ignorance; he was assisted by his servants, the Archons, which presided over the material realm. For surveys of Gnosticism see: S. A. Hoeller, *Gnosticism - New Light on the Ancient Tradition of Inner Knowing*, (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, Theosophical Publishing House, 2002); K. L. King, *What is Gnosticism?*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); C. Marksches, *Gnosis: an introduction*, (London-New York: T & T Clark, 2003).

Study of the *first Apocalypse of James (1ApocJas)* is also very enlightening. Oddly, the range of dating of this text suggests that it was written at the earliest towards the end of the second century CE (*i.e.*, after the *2ApocJas*). These Gnostic writings are Valentinian in character and present numerous Jewish Christian features; scholars have thus presumed that both apocalypses of James, though written by different authors, arose within the same milieu.

1ApocJas also contains a very fragmentary reference to James' martyrdom. Although the account itself is too mutilated to be instructive, other statements in this text appear to be very edifying; we read, for instance:

"James said, 'Rabbi, you have said, 'they will seize me.' But I, what can I do?' He said to me: 'Fear not, James. You too will they seize. But leave Jerusalem. For it is she who always gives the cup of bitterness to the sons of light. She is a dwelling place of a great number of archons. But your redemption will be preserved from them. So that you may understand who they are [and] what kinds they are, you will [...]. And listen. They [are] not [...] but [archons. These twelve [...] down [...] archons [...] upon his own hebdomad.'"⁹⁵

A. Veilleux has argued that *1ApocJas* merely expresses a break with both the "Great Church" and the "normative" Judaism. However, like *2ApocaJas*, this text did not aim at rejecting the Jews and the Jewish Christians but intended to convince them to accept the Gnosis, the secret knowledge revealed by Jesus to James. According to *1ApocaJas*, the Jews were exonerated from responsibility for Jesus' death since they were merely a type (*en image*) of the archons.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ *1ApocJas* XXV, 12-27. For the translation see: W. R. Schoedel, "The (First) Apocalypse of Hammadi Studies", in Douglas M. Parrott (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Codices V, 2-5 and VI*, (Nag Hammadi Studies, 11: Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), 69-103.

⁹⁶ A. Veilleux, *Apocalypse de Jacques*, 10.

Thus, in both apocalypses, James' murderers (who are also Jesus' foes) belong to a Gnostic system of thought and imagery and are therefore depicted either as the Demiurge's servants or as archons. In this respect, it is noteworthy that in both texts James' opponents are never called "the Jews" but are designated by means of more imprecise terms as "the people", "the crowd", "they"...

We wish to analyze now various statements of some of the most eminent thinkers of the "Great Church" which deal with James' martyrdom. First, we shall quote a famous account recorded in Origen's works. Although this statement is very important with regard to the issue of the *Testimonium Flavianum*, we shall confine our analysis to the single question of the tradition of James' martyrdom. In this passage, Origen asserts that when Josephus sought the cause of the destruction of Jerusalem, he drew the conclusion that:

"...these things befell them [the Jews] by the anger of God, on account of what they had dared to do to James, the brother of Jesus, who was called *Christ*; and wonderful it is, that while he [Josephus] did not receive Jesus for Christ, he did nevertheless bear witness that James was so righteous a man. He says farther, that the people thought they had suffered these things for the sake of James."⁹⁷

The question of the authenticity of this passage raises many difficulties, since it does not occur in any of the manuscripts of Josephus' works at our disposal; nonetheless it is unlikely that it was Origen who composed this account, since he does not agree completely with its content. Consequently, several explanations have been advanced.

⁹⁷ *Commentary on Matthew* 10: 17, (PG 13, col. 877-878); translation by W. Whiston in *Josephus-Complete works*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1978), 639. Parallel statements are recorded in *Against Celsus* I, 47, (PG 11, col. 745-748); II, 13, (PG 11, col. 823-824).

First, it has been suggested that Origen has perhaps mistakenly attributed a statement of Hegesippus to Josephus. However, as P.A. Bernheim has remarked, it is quite unlikely that he made the same mistake in three different occasions.⁹⁸ Other scholars accept the genuineness of this account and suggest that it appeared in the original text of the *Jewish Antiquities*. It is, however, very improbable that Josephus wrote such a statement, for throughout his extensive work he puts the sole blame for the destruction of the Temple on the Zealots. Finally, some suggest that this passage was interpolated into the version of Josephus' writings which Origen read. Whatever the solution may be, it is clear that here, for the first time, the Jews as a whole were considered responsible for James' death. It is noteworthy that this statement contrasts strongly with the laconic account of Clement⁹⁹, Origen's predecessor as the head of the Catechetical School at Alexandria.

Eusebius, who reports several accounts of James' martyrdom, also asserts that Josephus claimed the destruction of the Temple was a consequence of James' murder.¹⁰⁰ However, his whole statement is quite confusing since Eusebius refers subsequently to *AJ* XX, 199-203 which attributes the responsibility for James' death solely to the high priest Ananus. Earlier in this chapter, however, Eusebius had already stated that: "the Jews...turned against James, the brother of the Lord" when he summarizes Hegesippus account of James' martyrdom.¹⁰¹

The same blaming of the Jews appears in Jerome's *Commentary on Zephaniah*. While he describes the Jewish crowds mourning over the ruins of the Temple, Jerome writes:

"They [the Jews] howl over the ashes of the Sanctuary, over the destroyed

⁹⁸ P. A. Bernheim, *Jacques*, 329.

⁹⁹ *HE* II, 1, 5, (GCS II 1, 104); 23, 3, (GCS II 1, 166).

¹⁰⁰ *HE* II, 23, 20, (GCS II 1,172).; "Of course Josephus did not shrink from giving written testimony to this, as follow: 'And these things happened to the Jews to avenge James the Just, who was the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ, for the Jews killed him in spite of his great righteousness'."

¹⁰¹ *HE* II, 23, 1, (GCS II 1, 164).

Altar, over the once-fenced city, over the Corner of the Temple whence once they cast down headlong James, the brother of the Lord."¹⁰²

Thus, these three Christian scholars, all members of the "Great Church", appear to have developed a tradition of James' martyrdom in which the Jews were held responsible for the murder.¹⁰³ We recognize here the phenomenon previously highlighted, whereby different Christian groups appropriated traditions related to James and adapted them to their own needs and beliefs; thus, in each of the above-mentioned accounts, James' foes are the "negative touchstone" of our different authors.

We may therefore be able to identify the community at the beginning of the tradition reported by Hegesippus more specifically, by determining who James' adversaries were according to this account.

It is obvious that in Hegesippus' account the blame for James' murder is put on the "γραμματεῖς καὶ φαρισαῖοι" who are mentioned on three different occasions.¹⁰⁴

Several scholars have noted this odd difference between Hegesippus' and Josephus' texts and have therefore attempted to explain this peculiarity. Gustaffson, for instance, proposed that Hegesippus' tradition originated within a group which claimed to be the rightful heir to the high-priesthood, since in this account the priests are cleared of all guilt. He emphasizes besides that James is depicted as the holder of priestly

¹⁰² Jerome's *Commentary on Zephaniah* 1: 15, (CCSL LXXVIa, 673-674); English translation by B. W. Henderson in *The Life and Principate of the Emperor Hadrian- A. D. 76-138*, (Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1968), 220.

¹⁰³ It is noteworthy, though, that Epiphanius, in an account derived from Hegesippus (*Panarion* LXXVIII, 14, 1-6, [PG 42, col. 721-724]), does not specify the identity of James' murderers.

¹⁰⁴ *HE* II, 23, 10; 12; 13, (GCS II 1,168-170); the members of the "Seven Sects", mentioned in *HE* II, 23, 8, (GCS II 1,168), cannot be held responsible for James' death since they are only said to have enquired of the latter about "the gate of Jesus."

privileges.¹⁰⁵ E. Schwarz and S. G. F. Brandon¹⁰⁶ believe that Hegesippus' original text, in agreement with Josephus' writings, held the Sadducees responsible for James' death, but that at a later period their name were replaced by anonymous scribes who put the blame on the "γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι", since the latter represented Jesus' traditional opponents in the writings of the New Testament.

In fact the "Scribes and Pharisees" are mentioned as such in several passages of the New Testament: Matthew's chapter 23, for instance, is wholly directed against them. It is striking though, that on numerous occasions in this passage "the Scribes and the Pharisees" are said to be "hypocrites," whereas this charge is completely absent from Hegesippus' text.

Leaving the New Testament aside, we would like to look into several traditions ascribed to the Nazoraeans which were recorded in Jerome's *Commentary on Isaiah*; indeed, we think these present noticeable similarities to Hegesippus' account. Jerome's *Commentary on Isaiah*, which was composed c. 403 CE, refers on five occasions to an interpretation which he attributes to the Nazoraeans.¹⁰⁷ Jerome tells us himself that he came into contact with the Nazoraeans of Beroea¹⁰⁸; it is usually thought that he encountered them during his stay in the desert of Chalcis (375-379 CE) and that it was then that he gathered his data concerning this group.

In first instance, it is remarkable that four of these five passages are aimed directly at the "Scribae et Pharisei" who are the main opponents of the Nazoraeans. Klijn¹⁰⁹ points out that, although they are considered to be deceivers of the people, the

¹⁰⁵ B. Gustafsson, "Hegesippus' sources and his reliability", 229.

¹⁰⁶ S.G.F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, 100.

¹⁰⁷ *Commentary on Isaiah*. 8: 14, (ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL LIII, 116); 19-22, (CCSL LIII, 121); 9: 1, (CCSL LIII, 123-124); 29: 17-21, (CCSL LIII, 379-380); 31: 6-9, (CCSL LIII, 404).

¹⁰⁸ *De viris illustribus* III, 2, (PL 23, col. 613-614).

¹⁰⁹ A.F.J. Klijn, "Jerome's quotations from a Nazoraean interpretation of Isaiah", *RSR* 60 (1972), 241-255, esp. 253-254.

"Scribes and Pharisees" are never said to be "hypocrites" as in Matthew's Gospel. This is particularly reminiscent of Hegesippus' statement with regard to the depiction of the "Scribes and Pharisees".

We shall now look into Jerome's account of the Nazoraean explanation of Isaiah 8: 14 which appears to be very instructive in this respect. It reads:

"The Nazoraean who accept Christ in such a way that they do not cease to observe the old Law, explain the two houses as two families, viz. of Shammai and Hillel, from whom originated the Scribes and the Pharisees. Akiba who took over their school is called the master of Aquila the proselyte and after him came Meir who has been succeeded by Joannes the son of Zakkai and after him Eliezer and further Telphon, and next Ioseph Galilaeus and Josua up to the capture of Jerusalem. Shammai then and Hillel were born not long before the Lord, they originated in Judea. The name of the first means scatterer and of the second unholy, because he scattered and defiled the precepts of the Law by his tradition and *δευτερώσεις*. And these are the two houses who did not accept the Saviour who has become to them destruction and shame."¹¹⁰

According to this statement, the "Scribes and the Pharisees" are to be identified with some of the Jewish Sages who lived after the destruction of the Temple. On account of the chronological disorder in the scholars' succession, Klijn thinks that this passage betrays a superficial acquaintance with the rabbis; he even suggests that this account did not belong to the original text of the Nazoraean commentary.¹¹¹ However, in spite of these chronological errors, all the people mentioned (except for Hillel and

¹¹⁰ All quotations from Jerome's *Commentary on Isaiah* are taken from the translation of A. F. J. Klijn and G. Reinink in, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish Christian Sects*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill 1973), 218-227.

¹¹¹ A.F.J. Klijn, "Jerome's quotations from a Nazoraean interpretation of Isaiah", 249.

Shammai) lived during the Yavneh period.¹¹² Indeed, it is striking that this tradition which was recorded by Jerome in the early fifth century CE does not refer to any later famous scholars (e.g. R. Judah HaNasi, the redactor of the Mishnah). Thus, we may take the mention of R. Meir as our *terminus ad quem*, and date the setting of this tradition to the middle of the second century CE.¹¹³ In the light of these considerations, we propose that both the Nazoraean interpretation of Isaiah and Hegesippus' account of James' martyrdom emerged in the same period and originated within the same milieu.

In order to stress other similarities between both writings, we shall base our demonstration on Klijn's analysis of Jerome's quotations from the Nazoraean commentary on Isaiah.

We have already noted that, according to Hegesippus' narrative, the Scribes and Pharisees attempted, by means of their crime, to prevent the people from believing in Jesus. Similarly, according to the Nazoraean commentaries on Isaiah, the "Scribae et Pharisaei" represented the real deceivers of the Jewish people, since they misled the latter with their traditions.¹¹⁴ Klijn further remarks that the Scribes and Pharisees are never held to be the representatives of the whole people; thus, whereas they are cursed by the Nazoraean, the other "sons of Israel" are urged to repent and to convert.¹¹⁵

It is striking that both traditions (Hegesippus' and the Nazoraean's) seem to refer to the same polemic, that brought into conflict two Jewish streams (the Rabbis and the

¹¹² R. Akiba, R. Meir, R. Yohanan ben Zakkai, R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, R. Tarfon, R. Yose the Galilean, R. Joshua ben Hanina. Before he became famous during the Usha period, R. Meir studied under R. Akiba and R. Ishmael and was ordained by the former; see: A. Oppenheimer, "Meir", in *EJ* XI (1971), 776-777.

¹¹³ One could infer hence, that the mention of the capture of Jerusalem refers to the Bar Kokhba uprising rather than to the First Jewish War.

¹¹⁴ H. J. Schoeps considers that δευτερώσεις stands for the Hebrew word משניות; it might also mean "tradition" (*Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums*, 217).

¹¹⁵ Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah* 31: 6-9. A.F.J. Klijn, "Jerome's quotations from a Nazoraean interpretation of Isaiah", 254.

Nazoraean) and that what was at stake was the support and conversion of the whole Jewish people. In this respect, Gustafsson¹¹⁶ recognizes in Hegesippus' statement several rabbinical concepts such as the "Door" mentioned in *HE* II, 23, 12 which he believes to belong to the imagery of the Rabbis. Hence he deduces that the authors of this tradition were familiar with rabbinical thought and assumes therefore that this account reflects the struggle between the early Church and the rising Rabbinism.

Within the framework of his investigations, Klijn notes that, according to the Nazoraean, the Gospel was brought to the 'Non-Jews' after it had been preached to the Jews.¹¹⁷ It seems relevant to recall here that in Hegesippus' account, James spoke not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles who were gathered in the Temple.¹¹⁸ However, in spite of their relative openness to the 'Non-Jews', both traditions express the precedence of the mission to the Jews.

We turn now to the quotation of Isaiah 3: 10 in the text of Hegesippus.¹¹⁹ Telfer has established that this citation derives from the Septuagint and concludes consequently that the group responsible for this tradition was Hellenized, and not learned in Semitic idioms.¹²⁰ Interestingly enough, Klijn has demonstrated that the Nazoraean interpretations of Isaiah derived both from a Hebrew (or an Aramaic) version of the text and from the Septuagint.¹²¹ Accordingly, the apparent contradiction in Hegesippus' narrative between the use of the Septuagint and the general Jewish Christian character of his account could be explained by the probable Nazoraean origin of this tradition.

¹¹⁶ B. Gustafsson, "Hegesippus' sources and his reliability", 228-229.

¹¹⁷ A. F. J. Klijn, "Jerome's quotations from a Nazoraean interpretation of Isaiah", 253.

¹¹⁸ *HE* II, 23, 11, (GCS II 1,168)

¹¹⁹ *HE* II, 23, 15, (GCS II 1,170).

¹²⁰ W. Telfer, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?", 146.

¹²¹ A. F. J. Klijn, "Jerome's quotations from a Nazoraean interpretation of Isaiah", 248.

Can we infer, in the light of the quotation of Isaiah 3: 10, that the tradition conveyed by Hegesippus derived from a collection of Nazoraean commentaries on Isaiah possibly related to the material that Jerome knew? It is unfortunately very hard to ascertain.

Nevertheless, it would seem that Hegesippus' account of James' martyrdom probably derives from a Nazoraean tradition that emerged in the early second century CE.

c- The Nazoraeans and the Temple

Before we consider the particular issue of the so-called stele of James and its location, we would like to determine the nature of the Nazoraeans' attitude towards the Temple and the sacrificial cult. We shall begin with a brief account of their origins. Our source here is Epiphanius, in the 29th section of his *Panarion*. Epiphanius links the appearance of the Nazoraean sect to the removal of the first "disciples" from Jerusalem to Pella in the course of the Jewish War.¹²² Although he does not clearly establish the relationship between the Nazoraeans and the first Jerusalem community, it is widely assumed that the former were the genuine heirs of the Mother Church.¹²³

Thus, the study of the position of the first Church of Jerusalem on the Temple prior to its destruction should be very instructive with regard to our knowledge of the Nazoraeans. Our examination will be based on the writings of the New Testament.

¹²² *Panarion* XXIX, 7, 7-8, (PG 41, col. 401-404).

¹²³ A. F. J. Klijn And G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish Christian Sects*, 50; R. A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period until its Disappearance in the Fourth Century*, (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1988), 108-110; M.C. de Boer, "The Nazoreans: Living at the Boundary of Judaism and Christianity", in G. N. Stanton and G. G. Stroumsa (ed.), *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1998), 239-262, esp. 252; S. C. Mimouni, *Les Chrétiens d'Origine Juive dans l'Antiquité*, (coll. Présence du Judaïsme; Paris: Albin Michel, 2004), 131. The opposite position is defended by J. Munck who refutes any relationship between the first Church of Jerusalem and the fourth and fifth centuries Nazoreans ("Jewish Christianity in post-apostolic times", *NTS* 6 [1960], 103-116).

We should note first that, on several occasions, the Gospels depict Jesus himself as respectful of the Sanctuary and the cultic institutions.¹²⁴ In this regard, Y. Z. Eliav¹²⁵ assumes that Jesus' harsh prophecies¹²⁶ were not actually directed against the Temple itself, but against the surrounding Herodian compound. Although the Gospels are not very instructive with regard to the first community's life, the last verses of Luke's Gospel happen to be of direct concern to our study. We read thus in Luke 24: 52-53 that, following Jesus' ascension, the disciples "returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the Temple blessing God." Since the group of Jesus' disciples was the nucleus of the emerging Mother Church, this passage proves to be very enlightening with regard to the practices of the first Jewish Christian congregation in Jerusalem.

The most extensive statements concerning the Jerusalem Church are to be found in the Book of Acts. D.F. Falk,¹²⁷ who has scrutinized the different references to the Temple recorded in the Book of Acts, highlights the importance of the Sanctuary in the eyes of the Jerusalem's Jewish Christians.¹²⁸ The Temple was not only their place of prayer,¹²⁹ but also their venue for preaching.¹³⁰ Besides, Falk points out the fact that Peter and John are said to have gone up to the Temple at the hour of prayer;¹³¹ it appears that the time of prayer usually coincided with the sacrificial service in the

¹²⁴ Mark 1: 44; Matthew 8: 4; Luke 5: 14.

¹²⁵ Y. Z. Eliav, *God's Mountain: The Temple Mount in Time, Place and Memory*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 52-58.

¹²⁶ Mark 13: 1-2; Matthew 24: 1-2; Luke 21: 5-6.

¹²⁷ Daniel K. Falk, "Jewish Prayer Literature and the Jerusalem Church in Acts", in R. Bauckham (ed.), *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 267-301.

¹²⁸ This remark does not take into consideration the stance of Stephen and the so-called Hellenists towards the Temple (Acts 7).

¹²⁹ Acts 2: 46-7; 3: 1; 22: 17.

¹³⁰ Acts 5: 20-21; 42.

¹³¹ Acts 3: 1.

shrine. Hence, Falk deduces that Peter and John did participate in public prayers with other Jews.

Moreover, he considers James' attitude in Acts 21: 15-26 as a clear mark of devotion to the Sanctuary and its service, for according to this passage, James encouraged Paul to prove that he was law-abiding by going to the Temple together with four Nazarites who had finished the period of their vow, and by paying their expenses. It should be stressed here that the completion of a Nazirite vow implied blood sacrifices.¹³² Regarding this point, A. Veilleux¹³³ considers that Hegesippus' account, which depicts James as enjoying priestly privileges, derives from traditions related to James' attachment to the Temple and to its cult.

According to the Book of Acts, Paul's visit in the Temple stirred up a tumult, which led to his arrest at the hand of the Roman authorities. Paul's capture is said to have occurred two years before Porcius Festus became the procurator of Judaea in 58 CE. Unfortunately, the Book of Acts does not relate the subsequent fate of the Mother Church; one wonders, therefore, whether the Jewish Christian community continued to worshipping in the Temple afterwards, when confronted with James' death and with the outbreak of the Jewish War.

We shall now attempt to determine the attitude of the heirs of the Jerusalem Church towards the destroyed Temple. In the first place, we recall that the veneration of Jerusalem was a common trait within the various Jewish Christian streams. In this respect, Irenaeus asserts that the so-called Ebionites adored Jerusalem "as if it were the House of God,"¹³⁴ while Epiphanius states that the Elkesaites prayed in the

¹³² Numbers 6: 10-11

¹³³ A. Veilleux, *Apocalypse de Jacques*, 4.

¹³⁴ *Adversus Haereses*. I, 26, 1, (PG 7[1], col. 686).

direction of Jerusalem.¹³⁵ However, it is clear that both groups had utterly rejected the sacrifices and the cult of the Temple. In this connection, the *Pseudo-Clementine* writings (some of which probably originated in an Ebionite community) state that Moses had temporarily allowed his people to sacrifice to God in order to curb their "vice of sacrificing to idols"¹³⁶ so that he also "appointed a place in which alone it would be legal for them to sacrifice to God."¹³⁷ Nonetheless, the true Prophet, as foretold by Moses¹³⁸, would eventually at some later date institute baptism in place of the sacrifices.¹³⁹ In consequence, the Temple of Jerusalem would at last be destroyed.¹⁴⁰ Thus, according to the Ebionites, the destruction of the Sanctuary was a necessary step in order to accomplish God's will.

We shall now examine the position of the Nazoraeans towards the devastation of the Temple. Their opinion, which was not as clear-cut as the Ebionites', is difficult to define. As we have previously stated, we consider that the Nazoraeans mentioned by the fourth and fifth century Church Fathers were the heirs of the first Jerusalem Church. This means that we must now compare the statements about James' congregation with the accounts that depict the later Nazoraeans. As mentioned above, it is clear from Acts 21: 15-26 that the members of James' community not only frequented the Temple, but also offered sacrifices there.¹⁴¹ We now presume that traces of the Nazoraeans' deference for the Temple and its cult can be found in several accounts belonging to later periods.

¹³⁵ *Panarion* XIX, 3, 6, (PG 41, col. 265-266).

¹³⁶ *I Rec.* 36, 1. The Syriac version mentions: "...[their] desire of the love of idolatry."

¹³⁷ *I Rec.* 37, 1. The Syriac version reads: "...he [Moses] separated out for them a place where alone it would be lawful for them to perform sacrifices."

¹³⁸ Deuteronomy 18: 18

¹³⁹ *I Rec.* 39, 2.

¹⁴⁰ *I Rec.* 37, 2.

¹⁴¹ Numbers 6: 14: at the end of period of the vow, the Nazarite was to bring three sacrifices in the Temple.

In first instance we shall turn to the 29th section of the *Panarion*, which is devoted to the Nazoraeans. In the 8th paragraph, Epiphanius, who is attempting to demonstrate how little the Nazoraeans abide by Jewish law, writes:

"But they [the Nazoraeans] too are wrong to boast of circumcision, and persons like themselves are still 'under a curse', since they cannot fulfill the Law. For how can they fulfill the Law's provision, 'Thrice a year thou shalt appear before the Lord thy God, at the Feasts of Unleavened Bread, Tabernacles and Pentecost' [Exodus 23: 14-17] on the site of Jerusalem? As the site is closed off, and the Law's provisions cannot be fulfilled, anyone with sense can see that Christ came to be the Law's fulfiller- not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill the Law- and to lift the curse that had been put on transgression of the Law."¹⁴²

Although at first glance, this statement seems to be merely an anti-legalist argument, we consider it to be very instructive with regard to our study. The least that can be said is that, unlike the Elbionites and the Elkesaites, the Nazoraeans are never said to have rejected the Temple and the sacrifices. On the contrary, Epiphanius asserts that they "confess everything exactly as the Law proclaims it and in the Jewish fashion."¹⁴³ Here we may wonder whether Epiphanius' demonstration was fortuitous or whether it was aimed at denouncing a possible attachment of the Nazoraeans to the destroyed Temple.

We shall now examine Jerome's *Commentary on Jeremiah*. In his interpretation of Jeremiah 3: 14-16 Jerome writes:

¹⁴² *Panarion* XXIX, 8, 1-2, (PG 41, col. 403-404); English translation by F. Williams in *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis Book I (Sects 1-46)*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), 118. A similar argument occurs earlier in Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* XLVI, 2, (PG 42, col. 59-62).

¹⁴³ *Panarion* XXIX, 7, 2, (PG 41, col. 401-402).

"They shall not have confidence in the ark of the Lord which was the guardian of the Mosaic Law, for they themselves will be a temple of God and not according to the erring Nazoraeans serving the sacrifices which have been abolished, but aiming at a spiritual worship."¹⁴⁴

Before we draw any conclusion from this account, we would like to make several remarks with regard to Jerome's acquaintance with the Nazoraeans. Klijn thinks that Jerome acquired his knowledge of Jewish Christians gradually.¹⁴⁵ This could explain the discrepancies found throughout his works, particularly with regard to the Jewish Christian gospels. We may indeed wonder where Jerome got his information: there are several possibilities to be considered. It was already noted that Jerome may have come into contact with Nazoraeans while he lived in the desert of Chalcis (375-379 CE). However, several scholars doubt that he actually encountered a Nazoraean community and are reluctant to admit that he might have met some individual Nazoraeans.¹⁴⁶ A. Schmidtke, for his part, thinks that Jerome acquired his knowledge while studying under Apollinaris of Laodicea who had lived all his life in Laodicea (southwest of Antioch) and was thus certainly acquainted with the presence of Nazoraeans in Beroea.¹⁴⁷

We are more inclined to believe that Jerome got his data from reading written works attributed to the Nazoraeans. It may be possible to identify three such works. In the first instance, Jerome claims on several occasions that he rendered into Greek and Latin the Gospel "which is read by the Nazoraeans."¹⁴⁸ Nonetheless, the discrepancies

¹⁴⁴ *Commentary on Jeremiah* 3: 14-16, (ed. S. Reiter, CCSL LXXIV, 36); English translation by A. F. J. Klijn and G. Reinink in, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish Christian Sects*, 229.

¹⁴⁵ A.F.J. Klijn, *Jewish Christian Gospel Tradition*, (Supplem. to VC 17; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 16-19.

¹⁴⁶ See for instance: A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 47.

¹⁴⁷ *Epistle LXXXIV*, 3 (to Pammachus and Oceanus; ed. J. Labourt, *Budé* IV, 126); see: A. Schmidtke, "Neue Fragmente und Untersuchungen zu den judenchristlichen Evangelien", *TU* 37 (1911), 63-94.

¹⁴⁸ *Commentary on Matthew* XII, 13, (ed. D. Hurst and M. Adriaen, CCSL LXXVII, 90).

between his different accounts led scholars to infer that Jerome never translated the whole Gospel and merely knew part of it.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, as we saw previously, Jerome was acquainted with a Nazoraean interpretation of Isaiah. Lastly, we have to consider Jerome's own claim that he received an apocryphal book of Jeremiah from a "Hebrew person of the Nazoraeans"¹⁵⁰ although many scholars doubt both the reliability of this statement and the existence of such a book.¹⁵¹

The fact remains that Jerome wrote his *Commentary on Jeremiah* towards the end of his life (c.415/419 CE), when he was already acquainted with all the above-mentioned sources. In this regard, it is noteworthy that his knowledge of the Jewish Christian streams seems to become clearer throughout his life: for example, whereas he confuses the Ebionites and the Nazoraeans at least up to 404 CE¹⁵², he differentiates between the two groups in his *Commentary on Isaiah* (c. 409 CE). Thus there is sufficient reason to assume that Jerome did not confuse matters when he referred to the Nazoraeans in his interpretation of *Jeremiah* 3: 14-16.

What can we infer from Jerome's account? The statement that the Nazoraeans kept on sacrificing in spite of the destruction of the Temple seems very unlikely. Nonetheless, it may convey some precious data with regard to our study. In our opinion, both Epiphanius' and Jerome's writings may cast some light on the opaque meaning of this peculiar statement. It is indeed striking that both writers emphasize the law-abiding practices of the Nazoraeans, especially Epiphanius, who writes that they observed the commandments "in the Jewish fashion."¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ P. Vielhauer and G. Strecker, "Jewish Christian Gospels", in W. Schneemelcher (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha-Volume 1: Gospels and Related Writings*, (London: SCM Press, 1973-1975), 134-178, esp. 157; J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, (London: Duckworth, 1995), 65.

¹⁵⁰ *Commentary on Matthew* 27: 9-10, (CCSL LXXVII, 264-265).

¹⁵¹ See for example: R. A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 56-57.

¹⁵² *Epistle* CXII, 13 (to Augustine; ed. J. Labourt, *Budé* VI, 31-32).

¹⁵³ *Panarion* XXIX, 7, 2, (PG 41, col. 401-402); see also Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew* 8: 11-15, (CCSL LXXVII, 50-51); *Commentary on Ezekiel* 16: 16, (ed. F. Glorie, CCSL LXXV, 182).

Does this imply that the Nazoraeans, unlike the Ebionites, neither emended nor rejected the legal clauses relating to the Sanctuary and the sacrifices? Moreover, does it mean that, following the example of the Jews, they expressed both respect and reverence towards the destroyed Temple and its services? If our supposition is correct, we may conjecture that Jerome found in some Nazoraean writings a statement which illustrated such an attitude. However, it is unfortunately impossible either to identify Jerome's source or to date the tradition it conveyed.

We would now like to analyze two quotations recorded in Jerome's works which are of direct concern to our research. Jerome remarks on two different occasions¹⁵⁴ that the gospel "written in Hebrew letters" does not read that "the veil of the Temple was rent" but that the "upper threshold of the Temple" broke (following Jesus death). Klijn ascribes this excerpt to the gospel used by the Nazoraeans¹⁵⁵ and estimates consequently that the tradition of the "breaking of the upper threshold" appeared in the early second century CE, possibly prior to the "rending of the veil" account. He also believes that both traditions (although they both refer to the destruction of the Temple) have different meanings. Thus, whereas the "rending of the veil" means that God, the Holy Spirit or the angels left the Sanctuary, and the God of Israel became the God of the Gentiles, the "breaking of the upper threshold" merely signifies the coming destruction of the Temple.

Klijn thinks that this tradition certainly became widespread, even though it is only the Gospel of the Nazoraeans which mentions it. It is remarkable in this respect that not only the Synoptic Gospels¹⁵⁶ but also a corresponding passage of the *Pseudo-*

¹⁵⁴ *Commentary on Matthew 27*: 51, (CCSL LXXVII, 275); *Epistle CXX*, 8 (to Hedibia; ed. J. Labourt, *Budé VI*, 139).

¹⁵⁵ A. F. J. Klijn, "Jérôme, Isaïe 6 et l'Evangile des Nazoréens", *VC* 40 (1986), 245-250, esp. 248.

¹⁵⁶ Matthew 27: 51; Mark 15: 38; Luke 23: 45.

Clementine Recognitions ascribed to the Ebionites¹⁵⁷ read that the "veil of the Temple was rent" and do not refer to "the breaking of the upper threshold".

Whatever the exact meaning of this tradition may be, it is clear that the Nazoraeans developed an understanding of the fate of the Temple which was peculiar to themselves. We therefore believe that their attitude toward the destroyed Sanctuary should be differentiated from the outlook of the other Christian streams. Is it thus unlikely that this group, which was so respectful of the Jerusalem Sanctuary while it still stood, did not reject, at least soon after its destruction, the theoretical validity of the Temple and of its service? At the very least, we should assume that the Nazoraeans expressed a deep interest in the destroyed Sanctuary. This assertion should shed light on the significance of the so-called grave-stone of James, which according to Hegesippus, remained next to the Temple until his own day.

d- The location of the stele of James

Hegesippus linked the existence of a stele erected "παρὰ τῷ ναῷ" to the narrative of James' martyrdom. We believe that this monument had great significance in the eyes of the community within which the tradition of James' death originated, at least until the Bar-Kokhba revolt.

In the first place, rather than locating the "actual" spot of James' burial, we shall attempt to determine where the author of this account situated James' stele. Eliav has stressed that Hegesippus' statement, like many other narratives related to James, closely links the latter to the Temple;¹⁵⁸ thus, the Sanctuary appears to be the sole

¹⁵⁷ I *Rec.* 41, 3.

¹⁵⁸ Y. Z. Eliav, *God's Mountain*, 62.

stage throughout the whole account. The fact that James is depicted both as a High Priest and as a Nazirite strengthens this impression.

Furthermore, the narrative alludes twice to the pinnacle of the Temple from which James was hurled. Confusingly, however, Hegesippus calls this spot τὸ πτερύγιον τοῦ ἱεροῦ¹⁵⁹ and τὸ πτερύγιον τοῦ ναοῦ¹⁶⁰ on two different occasions. F. M. Abel, who noticed this confusion, thinks that ναός is to be understood in a wider sense, and refers to the whole compound of the Herodian Temple. Thus he concludes that James was thrown from the Royal Basilica down to the Ophel, so that his grave would have been in the Valley of Jehoshaphat *i.e.*, outside the Temple complex.¹⁶¹ However, Abel's conclusion contradicts the narrative itself, since James is said to have been stoned immediately after his fall by persons who obviously took part in the Passover service within the Temple.

Several other documents mention the pinnacle of the Temple: thus whereas the New Testament has "τὸ πτερύγιον τοῦ ἱεροῦ"¹⁶², the Testament of Solomon reads "τὸ πτερύγιον τοῦ ναοῦ."¹⁶³ Unfortunately these references do not shed light on its exact location.

There is a variant version of Theodotion's translation of Daniel's "Seventy Weeks" prophecy,¹⁶⁴ noted by A. Montgomery, which is directly relevant to our study. The Hebrew text of the Book of Daniel (9: 27) reads:

וְהִגְבִּיר בְּרִית לְרַבִּים, שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד; וְחָצִי הַשָּׁבוּעַ יִשְׁבֹּעַ יְשׁוּבֵי זֶבַח וּמִנְחָה, וְעַל כִּנְיָ שְׂקוּצִים מִשׁ מִם, וְעַד-כִּלְהָ וְנִחְרָצָה, תִּתֵּן עַל-שׁ מִם.

¹⁵⁹ *HE* II, 23, 11, (GCS II 1,168).

¹⁶⁰ *HE* II, 23, 12, (GCS II 1,168).

¹⁶¹ F. M. Abel, "La Sépulture de Saint Jacques le Mineur", *RB* 28 (1919), 480–499, esp. 483-484.

¹⁶² Matthew 4: 5-7; Luke 4: 9-12.

¹⁶³ *The Testament of Solomon* 118; see the translation by F. C. Conybeare, "The Testament of Solomon", *JQR* 11 (1898), 1-45, esp. 42.

¹⁶⁴ A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, (Edinburgh: T&T. Clark, 1927), 386-88; 402-404.

It is significant that the alternative version of Theodotion renders חֲנִיךְ by περὺγιον. Montgomery admits the antiquity of this version (second half of the second century CE) but he cannot state whether it is older than the other translations ascribed to Theodotion (which read τὸ ἱερόν for חֲנִיךְ). If we accept this version as genuine, we may conclude as follows: according to Irenaeus, Theodotion was a convert to Judaism¹⁶⁵; it would therefore seem unlikely that the mention of the περὺγιον in his translation depends on Matthew 4: 5 and Luke 4: 9. We are thus more inclined to believe that the various traditions related to the περὺγιον derive from a particular interpretation of the book of Daniel. In this respect, a comparison between the New Testament writings and Hegesippus' account is enlightening. Whereas the Gospels of Matthew and Luke state that the Devil took Jesus to Jerusalem and "placed him on the pinnacle of the Temple", Hegesippus' narrative reads that: "the Scribes and Pharisees...made James stand on the pinnacle of the Temple."¹⁶⁶ Since it is our contention that Hegesippus' account derives from a Nazoraean source, we now turn to a relevant statement of Jerome related to the Nazoraeans. In his *Commentary on Isaiah 29: 17-2*, Jerome writes:

"What we understood to have been written about the devil and his angels, the Nazoraeans believe to have been said against the Scribes and the Pharisees."¹⁶⁷

Jerome is not relating to the book of Daniel here, or to Hegesippus' commentary on Daniel, but the correspondence with our parallel sources is striking. It is therefore not

¹⁶⁵ Irenaeus, *Adversus. Haereses* III, 21, 1, (PG 7[1], col. 946).

¹⁶⁶ *HE* II, 23, 12, (GCS II 1,168). We have slightly altered the translation of K. Lake which translates περὺγιον as "battlement".

¹⁶⁷ *Commentary on Isaiah 29: 17-21*, (CCSL LIII, 379-380).

unlikely that this was a recurrent feature of Nazoraean writings, especially since many of their commentaries were aimed against "the Scribes and the Pharisees".

We therefore conclude that the mention of the *πτερύγιον* in Hegesippus' account does not depend on Matthew 4: 5 and Luke 4: 9 but derives from a particular reading of the Book of Daniel. Thus, the *πτερύγιον* does not designate an actual spot so that the search for its exact location is pointless.

It is clear, though, that the mention of the sacrifice and the offering in Daniel 9: 27 means that this verse is related to the Temple, and we note that the Septuagint translates *קָרְבָּן* by τὸ ἱερόν. It seems evident that the *πτερύγιον* was linked to a particular representation of the Temple.

Thus, we must presume that the mention of the "pinnacle of the Temple" in the James' martyrdom narrative, far from being fortuitous, had a number of implications. In fact, if, as we assume, this term derives from Daniel's prophecy, it should be related to the setting up of the "abomination of desolation", the cessation of the sacrifices and the burnt offerings, and the destruction of both city and Sanctuary. In this respect, it is striking that according to Hegesippus' account, James' fatality next to the "pinnacle of the Temple" was immediately followed by Vespasian's siege of Jerusalem. Thus, it would seem that the *πτερύγιον* was not merely a neutral literary element. From this point of view, it is possible that the authors of this narrative considered James' martyrdom to be the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy of the setting up of the "Abomination of Desolation", and that it was because of this that they held the Scribes and Pharisees responsible for the subsequent fate of the Temple.

We should also note that there is another case of the application of Daniel 9: 27 to the destruction of the Temple, this time in Josephus' work: the fourth book of the *Jewish*

War contains an evident allusion to Daniel's prophecy, in which Josephus links the devastation of the shrine to the atrocities committed by the Zealots.¹⁶⁸ Thus we conclude that the Nazoraeans accused the "Scribes and the Pharisees" to be responsible for the destruction of the Temple in a similar manner.

Although we have emphasized the symbolical value of the *πετεύγιον* so far, we consider that the existence of an actual monument related to the remembrance of James "*παρὰ τῶ ναῶ*", *i.e.*, next to the Sanctuary, is not unlikely. Several scholars have utterly rejected this possibility since it contradicts the Jewish legal prescriptions linked to the purity of the Temple; in this respect, Abel¹⁶⁹ recalls that Ezekiel¹⁷⁰ forbade the interment of the kings in the holy site. Nonetheless, Eliav has shown that the tradition related to the burial of James next to the Sanctuary is not unusual;¹⁷¹ he even asserts that the representation of the "Temple Mount as the locus of sacred tombs" was not unique in Jewish folklore, and he cites a tradition which locates Adam's tomb beneath the foundation stone of the Temple.

In our opinion, the physical existence of such a monument within the Temple compound must be distinguished from the beliefs attached to it. In other words, it is very unlikely that James was actually buried next to the Sanctuary, but it is not improbable that later on some Jewish Christian groups linked his remembrance to a physical spot in the vicinity of the destroyed Temple.

We shall now investigate what the exact nature of this monument might have been.

¹⁶⁸ Josephus emphasizes especially the murder of the high priest Ananus (*BJ IV*, 318) and the slaughter of Zacharias the son of Baruch "in the midst of the Temple" (*BJ IV*, 343).

¹⁶⁹ F. M. Abel, "La Sépulture de Saint Jacques le Mineur", 483.

¹⁷⁰ Ezekiel 43: 9.

¹⁷¹ Y. Z. Eliav, *God's Mountain*, 78-79.

In the first place, it is noteworthy that Hegesippus merely refers to a *στήλη*, and does not mention the existence of a tomb or a sepulchre (*τάφος*) attributed to James.

What could be the purpose of such a monument? R. Hachlili¹⁷² has concluded that a stele could be what was known as a *nefesh*. In her opinion, this type of funerary monument, which had been integrated into Jewish practice during the course of the Second Temple period, included not only colossal constructions but could also be a smaller object like a stone or a stele. She also establishes that the *nefesh*, which originated from Semitic funerary practices, had two major functions: it constituted a grave marker and it symbolized the residence of the spirit after death. Thus, we presume that the *raison d'être* of this stele was to provide a physical link between James' memorial and the Temple.

It is possible to attempt to seek the original possible location of such a monument. It might be suggested, for instance, that the stele marked the former venue of James and his community in the Temple. Several documents related to James suggest indeed that the Sanctuary was the main setting for his activities.¹⁷³ We could also conjecture that the location of the stele was linked to the judgment which preceded James' execution; in fact, according to Josephus, the high priest Ananus brought the latter before a Sanhedrin to judge him. The Mishnah reports that three tribunals were situated on the Temple Mount, including one in the Chamber of Hewn Stone (which stood within the compound of the Sanctuary itself).¹⁷⁴ In the light of this statement, one could suppose

¹⁷² R. Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary customs, practices and rites in the Second Temple period*, (Leiden; Boston: E. J. Brill, 2005), 339-353.

¹⁷³ I *Rec.* 55, 2; 2*Apoc.Jas* XLV, 20.

¹⁷⁴ M *Sanhedrin* xi, 2: "Three courts were there [in Jerusalem]: one used to sit at the gate of the Temple Mount, one used to sit at the gate of the Temple court, and one used to sit in the chamber of Hewn Stone." All quotations in English from the Mishnah are from the translation of H. Danby, *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief explanatory Notes*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1933).

that James' trial took place in one of these courts, and that his stele aimed at recalling this event. We are, however, more inclined to believe that the erection of such a monument in the vicinity of the destroyed Sanctuary arose out of the deep veneration of the Temple which characterized the group within which the tradition of James' martyrdom originated.

The later fate of the stele is also enlightening. Oddly, the tradition of a monument related to James near the Temple seems to have faded away subsequently to Hegesippus. It has been emphasized in this regard that the Pilgrim of Bordeaux, who visited the holy sites of Jerusalem in 333 CE, did not record the existence of such a stele.¹⁷⁵ In the later part of the fourth century CE, however, Christian tradition "rediscovered" the site of James' burial but unlike in Hegesippus' account, James' tomb was then located in the Valley of Jehoshaphat and its structure did not include any stele. Jerome, who was obviously acquainted with Hegesippus' narrative, noticed the discrepancies between both traditions of James' burial and wrote:

"[James] was buried near the Temple from which he had been cast down. His [tombstone with its] inscription was well known until the siege of Titus and the end of Hadrian's reign. Some of our writers think he was buried in Mount Olivet, but they are mistaken."¹⁷⁶

The mention of an inscription on James' tombstone probably derives from a free rendition of Hegesippus' account,¹⁷⁷ while the confused remark about the fame of the tombstone up to "the siege of Titus and the end of Hadrian's reign" was certainly

¹⁷⁵ *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, (ed. P. Geyer and O. Cuntz, CCSL CLXXV, 1-26)

¹⁷⁶ *De viris illustribus* II, 14, (PL 23, col. 613-614); translation by T. P. Halton in *Saint Jerome: On illustrious men*, (The Fathers of the Church: a new translation v.100; Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 8-9.

¹⁷⁷ In this connection, it is noteworthy that no inscribed Jewish gravestone from the Second Temple period has been uncovered so far (R. Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary customs*, 339).

Jerome' own inference. This comment indeed demonstrates that the tradition of James' stele had long since fallen into oblivion.

We shall now attempt to determine the reasons that led to the disappearance of James' stele. Abel considered that the construction of Aelia Capitolina in 135 CE sealed the monument's fate¹⁷⁸. Here we must quote a relevant excerpt from the *Chronicon Paschale*. The passage reads:

"[Hadrian] pulled down the Temple of the Jews at Jerusalem and built...the *Dodekapylon*...formerly known as the *Anabathmoi* [the steps]."179

It should be recalled here that the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature considers the steps of the Temple to be the site of James' actions.¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, the text reads that James was thrown headlong "from the highest flight of the stairs."¹⁸¹ May we therefore state that it was there that James' stele stood before it was destroyed by Hadrian? Although this hypothesis is seductive, it might be too far-fetched, *a fortiori* since the *Chronicon Paschale* was only written during the seventh century CE.

Even if Hadrian's achievements were decisive for the stele's fate, we do not believe that it was the physical transformation of Jerusalem provoked its disappearance. In this regard, Eliav has convincingly shown that the Temple Mount was not included within Aelia Capitolina's boundaries and remained consequently both untouched and desolate.¹⁸²

We are more inclined to attribute the disappearance of the stele to the internal changes which affected the local Christian community following the suppression of the Bar-

¹⁷⁸ F. M. Abel, "La Sépulture de saint Jacques le Mineur", 484.

¹⁷⁹ *PG* 112, col. 613-614. Translation found in B. Mazar, *The Mountain of the Lord*, (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1975), 236.

¹⁸⁰ *I Rec.* 55, 2; 66, 3.

¹⁸¹ *I Rec.* 70, 8. The Syriac version reads: "from the top of the steps."

¹⁸² Y. Z. Eliav, *God's Mountain*, 116-124.

Kokhba uprising. Eusebius clearly states that Hadrian's decree which forbade Jews to dwell in Jerusalem led to a deep transformation within the Church which was from then on composed of "Gentiles."¹⁸³ We assume that the stele of James and the beliefs related to it fell in oblivion since the members of the church of Aelia Capitolina ceased to frequent the Temple Mount. It would seem obvious, in fact, that the site of the Jewish Sanctuary had no significance in the eyes of Christians of Gentile extraction.¹⁸⁴ In other words, James' stele was doomed to oblivion because of its location on the Temple Mount. On the other hand, the fact that the local Jewish Christian community, following the example of their Jewish brethren, kept on visiting the site of the Sanctuary at least up to the Bar-Kokhba revolt, testifies that the Temple Mount occupied a central position in their eyes.

CONCLUSION

We have attempted to prove in the present chapter that Jews, together with Jewish Christians did return to Jerusalem following the Jewish War, in spite of the severe conditions which then prevailed. Our stance is based on two major elements, namely the absence of any trace, prior to Hadrian's decree, of a ban which prevented Jews from entering Jerusalem, and the Jews' eagerness to reside in the Holy City. Thus, veneration of Jerusalem was a common feature within the Jewish Christian

¹⁸³ *HE* IV, 6, 3-4, (GCS II 1, 306-308).

¹⁸⁴ In this respect, Justin's stance on the Temple (*Dialogue with Trypho* XXII, 11, [(*PG* 6, col. 525-526)]) is very enlightening: "Thus, your sacrifices are not acceptable to God, nor were you first commanded to offer them because of God's need of them, but because of your sins. The same can be said of the Temple, which you refer to as the Temple in Jerusalem. God called it His house or court, not as if He needed a house or a court, but because, by uniting yourselves to Him in that place, you might abstain from the worship of idols. This can be proved by the words of Isaia [Isaiah 66: 1]: 'What is this house you built for Me? saith the Lord. Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool.'" All quotations from Justin Martyr are cited from the translation of T. B. Falls, *St. Justin Martyr*, (The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation v.6; Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1948).

streams, so that we have inferred that Jewish Christians and most probably the heirs of the Mother Church also sought to settle in the Holy City.

In the second part of this chapter we have tried to highlight some features of this Jewish Christian community through the study of an account of Hegesippus which refers to the so-called stele of James that stood next to the Temple. We presume that this tradition is to be ascribed to the second century Nazoraeans whom we consider to be the genuine heirs of the first Jerusalem Church. The actual existence of such a monument undoubtedly testifies to the great veneration of the memory of James within Jewish Christian circles. We believe however, that the reality of this stele had deeper implications. Indeed, its very location next to the destroyed Sanctuary would appear to demonstrate that the Sanctuary still occupied a central place in the eyes of this group. Furthermore it implies that the Nazoraeans frequented the Temple and its surrounding area. Thus, we conclude that their visits were similar to those of the Jews and aimed at expressing both sorrow and nostalgia; it needs to be recalled in this respect that this community had participated in the worship while the Temple still stood.¹⁸⁵

Given this situation, we should not be surprised to read in later accounts¹⁸⁶ allusions to the Nazoraeans' profound respect to the Temple and to its service. It is also significant that some Christian writings contemporary with the tradition conveyed by Hegesippus, aim at deterring Christians from "Judaizing." In this respect, it is striking that the author of the Epistle of Barnabas (which was composed several decades after the destruction of the Temple), harshly condemns the Jewish Sanctuary¹⁸⁷ and the

¹⁸⁵ The Book of Acts (6: 7) reports that numerous priests had joined the Mother Church; it is likely that the destruction of the Temple had dramatic consequences on their lives.

¹⁸⁶ For instance: Jerome, *Commentary on Jeremiah* 3: 14-16, (ed. S. Reiter, CCSL LXXIV, 36).

¹⁸⁷ *Epistle of Barnabas* XVI.

sacrifices, and warns his "brothers...to keep the Evil One from hurling us away from our life after bringing error in through the backdoor." ¹⁸⁸ It is not unlikely that this verse was directed against the Nazoraeans.

It would seem that the Nazoraeans' attitude to the destruction of the Temple was identical to that of the Jews; only their understanding of this terrible event differed. The Nazoraeans believed that the devastation of the Sanctuary was an outcome of James' martyrdom at the hand of the "Scribes and the Pharisees", so that as a result the latter were held responsible for the subsequent fate of the Temple. It is significant that this interpretation comes within the framework of the conflict which broke out between Rabbinical Judaism and the Nazoraeans towards the end of the first century CE, when what was at stake was the support of the whole Jewish people.

We thus believe that, following the Jewish War, the Nazoraeans did not turned away either from Jerusalem, or from the Temple, but shared the sorrow and the pain of their Jewish brethrens. Later on, only because of external circumstances, the Nazoraeans were driven away from the Holy City when Hadrian forbade Jews to dwell in Jerusalem and its vicinity.

¹⁸⁸ *Epistle of Barnabas* II, 10. This citation is taken from the Loeb text in B. D. Ehrman (ed.), *The Apostolic Fathers: Epistle of Barnabas, Papias and Quadratus, Epistle to Diognetus, The Shepherd of Hermas*, (Cambridge, Mass., and Londin: Harvard Library Press, 2003), 17.

III- THE JEWISH CHRISTIANS AND THE JEWISH TAX

One of the first measures taken by Vespasian¹ after his victory over the Jewish rebels was the establishment of a head tax imposed on all the Jews throughout the Empire.² In fact, this impost consisted of a redirection of the annual half-shekel offering which the Jews had formerly paid for the upkeep of the Temple in Jerusalem. Aside from the financial burden it represented, this levy was particularly offending and humiliating since it was devoted to the rebuilding of the heathen temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill.³

Liability to this Jewish tax varied under successive Emperors up to the very end of the first century CE, and there was some degree of evolvement up to the reign of Nerva.

There is reason to presume that this cardinal issue had far reaching implications for Jews in general, and for the Jewish Christian streams in particular. By imposing this levy, the Roman authorities indirectly posed the Jewish Christians the twofold question of their identity and their relation to Judaism. Thus, analysis of the attitude of the Jewish Christian communities toward the Jewish tax should enlighten us as to their self-understanding. Moreover, such a survey should contribute to an assessment

¹ According to Josephus (*BJ* VII, 218), the edict concerning the Jewish tax was promulgated in the third year of Vespasian (from 1st July 71 to 1st of July 72 CE). Cassius Dio's report is slightly different (*RH* LXVI, 7, 2), and implies that the tax was levied immediately after the destruction of the Temple.

² This tax is referred to by different names in the relevant sources: Whereas Josephus (*BJ* VII, 218) and possibly Appian (*Syriacus Liber*. L, 252; see: M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism. Volume 2: From Tacitus to Simplicius*, [Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1980], 179) merely call it "ὁ φόρος" (tribute), Suetonius (*Life of Domitian* XII, 2) refers to the "*Fiscus Iudaicus*" (which actually points to the fiscal office in Rome into which the funds were paid, rather than to the tax itself). Cassius Dio (*RH* LXVI, 7, 2) and Origen (*Ad Africanum* XIV; *PG* 11, col. 81-82) call this tax τὸ δίδραχμον. Lastly, in Egyptian documents which relate to the collection of the Jewish tax, we find the wordings τιμή δηναρίων δύο Ἰουδαίων and Ἰουδαϊκὸν τέλεσμα. In light of these data, V. A. Tcherikover proposes that *Denarii duo Judaeorum* was the official name for the Jewish levy; see: V. A. Tcherikover and A. Fuks (ed.), *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, (3 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957-64) vol. 1, 80-82; vol. 2, 108-136; 204-208; vol. 3, 17-18.

³ The temple of Jupiter Capitolinus burnt down during the course of the civil war in 69 CE (Suetonius, *Life of Vitellius* XV, 5).

of the degree of awareness of the Roman authorities about the particular nature of the Christian phenomenon in the early second century CE.

A- THE JEWISH TAX UNDER THE REIGNS OF VESPASIAN AND TITUS

Josephus, who composed his *Jewish War* in the second half of the 70s CE, reports that, towards the very end of the Jewish revolt,

"On all Jews, whersoever resident, he [Vespasian] imposed a poll-tax of two drachms, to be paid annually into the Capitol as formerly contributed by them to the Temple at Jerusalem."⁴

This statement seems to indicate that the people liable for the new impost were the same as those paying for the Temple tax. However, if we examine the relevant sources, it appears that both groups of taxpayers did not entirely coincide, in other words, the Jewish tax was not completely identical with the former Temple levy.

According to religious prescriptions, the half-shekel tax was owed by every Jew of twenty years and up,⁵ but Josephus fixes the upper age limit for liability at fifty.⁶ Furthermore, according to the Mishnah, women, minors and slaves were exempt from payment of the tax.⁷ Although Vespasian did not enlarge the sum to be paid by the Jews⁸, he expanded the fiscal base of this new tax. A papyrus from Arsinoe⁹ and potsherds from Edfu¹⁰ in Egypt, that span a period from 71/72 to 116 CE, demonstrate that the tax was exacted from every Jew, male and female alike, and it was paid by

⁴ *BJ* VII, 218.

⁵ Exodus 30: 14.

⁶ *AJ* III, 196.

⁷ *M* Shekalim i, 6.

⁸ The sum of two *denarii* that was required for the payment of the Jewish tax, was equivalent to a Temple half-shekel (which itself was worth two Attic *drachmae*).

⁹ *CPJ* 421; this papyrus contains a list drawn up by a local official (an *amphodarches*) of the inhabitants of a quarter in Arsinoe who were liable to the Jewish tax.

¹⁰ *CPJ* 160-229. These ostraka were used as receipts for payments of the Jewish tax.

both free men (including Roman citizens¹¹) and slaves. Lastly, it appears that the lower limit for liability to the Jewish tax was lowered to the age of three, while the upper limit was raised to the age of sixty or sixty-two.¹² In the light of this data, it may be proposed that the change introduced by Vespasian consisted of expanding the fiscal base for the Jewish tax to include all the members (from the age of three to sixty or sixty-two) of the households of the Jews who had previously paid the Temple dues.

The fact remains that, up to the reign of Domitian, the liability to the tax was not determined according to criteria of "Jewishness"; as L. A. Thompson has noted, Vespasian's decree "was an opportunistic measure motivated by fiscal considerations."¹³ There is reason to think that, for practical reasons, the Roman authorities appealed to the Jewish communities who were previously in charge of collecting the Temple dues,¹⁴ in order to determine the list of persons liable to the new impost. As a result, the fiscal base for the Jewish tax was formed by the same households as had previously paid the half-shekel to the Temple in Jerusalem (as implied by *BJ* VII, 218).

Thus, in order to know whether the first Christians were required to pay the Jewish tax immediately after its establishment, we must ask whether they paid Temple dues prior to the Jewish war. It is indubitable that Christians of pagan origin were not liable to the payment of this tax. The Mishnah states clearly: "If a gentile or a Samaritan

¹¹ See for instance: *CPJ* 162; 174.

¹² Scholarly opinion is divided about the upper limit of the Jewish tax in the days of Vespasian; on this issue see: V. A. Tcherikover and A. Fuks (ed.), *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, vol. 2, 114; C. J. Hemer, "The Edfu *Ostraka* and the Jewish tax", *PEQ* 105 (1973), 6-12, esp. 7 n. 10; M. H. Williams, "Domitian, the Jews and the 'Judaizers' — a Simple Matter of Cupiditas and Maiestas?", *Historia* 39 (1990), 196-211, esp. 198 n. 10.

¹³ L. A. Thompson, "Domitian and the Jewish Tax", *Historia* 31 (1982), 329-342, esp. 333.

¹⁴ M. Shekalim ii, 1. See: L. A. Thompson, "Domitian and the Jewish Tax", 333; A. J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism; Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 145.

paid the shekel, it is not accepted of them."¹⁵ We shall therefore limit our inquiry to those Christian communities whose members were of Jewish origins.

It is not unreasonable to assume that some of those moved away from the Temple cult and thus ceased to pay the half-shekel tax; the Hellenists, whose leader Stephen had spoken against the Jerusalem Sanctuary,¹⁶ certainly refused to pay the Temple dues. It seems that it was not uncommon to contest the legitimacy of this levy in the Second Temple period. Indeed, according to several scholars, the annual half-shekel due had been established no earlier than the late Hasmonean period, probably at the instigation of the Pharisees.¹⁷ Thus, as a relatively recent institution, it was still disputed within Jewish circles in the first century CE. It should be noted in this regard, that a fragment of one of the Dead Sea scrolls reveals that the Dead Sea sect understood the half-shekel as being required only once in a lifetime, and not annually.¹⁸ Furthermore, a saying ascribed to R. Yohanan b. Zakkai would seem to demonstrate that not all Jews paid the tax even while the Temple stood.¹⁹

In opposition to the stance of Stephen's followers, the members of the Jerusalem church under the successive leadership of Peter and James carried on venerating the institution of the Temple. Indeed, there is abundant evidence in the Book of Acts for the great importance of the Temple in the eyes of this community, for the first Christians of Jerusalem considered the Temple to be not only their place of prayer,

¹⁵ M. Shekalim i, 5.

¹⁶ Acts 7: 47-50.

¹⁷ J. Liver, "The Half-Shekel Offering in Biblical and Post-Biblical Literature", *HTR* 56 (1963), 173-198; D. Flusser, "Mt. xvii 24-7 and the Dead Sea Sect", *Tarbiz* 31 (1961), 150-156, esp. 152-153, (in Hebrew); W. Horbury, "The Temple Tax", in C.F.D. Moule and E. Bammel (ed.), *Jesus and the Politics of his Day*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 265-286, esp. 277-282.

¹⁸ J. M. Allegro, "An unpublished fragment of Essene halakhah (4Q ordinances)", *JSS* 6 (1961), 71-73.

¹⁹ Mekhilta, *Ba-Hodesh* i, (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 203): "You were unwilling to pay 'Shekel' to Heaven (*i.e.* the half-shekel to the Temple), a *beka* per head, now you have to pay fifteen shekels in the kingdom of your enemies..."; translation by A. Carlebach, "Rabbinic References to Fiscus Judaicus", *JQR*. 66 (1975), 57-61, esp. 57.

but also their venue for preaching.²⁰ The tradition of James' special link to the Temple is also documented in various sources.²¹ Although the Book of Acts does not address the question of the Temple tax, it is more than likely that the members of the Jerusalem Church carried on paying the half-shekel due. In the light of this consideration, it would appear reasonable to assume that the heirs of this congregation became liable to the Jewish tax after the suppression of the Great Revolt. In general, we would then argue that every Jewish Christian community that had carried on paying the half-shekel to the Jerusalem Sanctuary until it was destroyed, was required to pay the impost to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus after the Roman victory.

In our opinion, the pericope of the Temple tax recorded in the First Gospel is instructive regarding the position Matthew took on this issue. Thus, Matthew 17: 24-27 reports that when Peter was questioned at Capernaum by collectors of the *didrachmas* as to whether Jesus paid this tax, the disciple answered affirmatively. As he came into the house, Jesus asked him "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their children or from others?" As expected, Peter replied "from others," so that Jesus inferred that the children were free from paying taxes. Nonetheless, the accounts ends with Jesus instructing him to go to the sea, and catch a fish which would have a *stater* in its mouth, so that afterwards Peter could give the coin for Jesus and himself so as not to " give offence to them (μὴ σκανδαλίσωμεν αὐτούς)." In the first place, it is noteworthy that the Temple tax story is unique to the First Gospel, and that Matthew seems to have had a special interest in

²⁰ Acts 3: 1; 5: 20-21; 42; 21: 15-26; see: K. Falk, "Jewish Prayer Literature and the Jerusalem Church in Acts", in R. Bauckham (ed.), *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 267-301.

²¹ See our previous chapter on the Jewish Christians' relationship to Jerusalem and the Temple after the Great Revolt, 82-89.

inserting this passage in his work. The exact provenance of this pericope remains a moot issue: while some assume that it corresponds to an actual occurrence in the life of Jesus,²² others argue that it merely addresses the question of the first Christians' liability to the Temple tax.²³ At any rate, the common scholarly view holds that it reflects the actual situation prior to the destruction of the Temple.²⁴ This view is based on the implied analogy between the "kings of the earth" and the Divine King of Israel²⁵, where the parallelism is understood to mean that since the children of the earthly kings are free from paying levies, God' s children should also be exempted from paying a tax levied in God' s name.²⁶ Thus, it is generally assumed that this story deals with the annual half shekel Temple tax that was seen as being paid to God.

The fact remains that the insertion of this pericope in the First Gospel raises a perplexing question. It is usually assumed that the Gospel of Matthew was composed within a Jewish Christian community toward the very end of the first century CE, *i.e.*, after the sack of the Temple, so that the relevance of the issue of the half-shekel at this time seems very questionable. In the light of this difficulty, several scholars have proposed that the evangelist was using this story to address a contemporary problem which faced his community at the end of the first century *i.e.*, the knotty question of the Jewish tax.²⁷

²² See for instance: J.D.M. Derrett, "Peter's Penny: Fresh Light on Matthew xvii 24-7", in *Law in the New Testament*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1970), 247-265.

²³ See for instance: D. Flusser, "Mt. xvii 24-7 and the Dead Sea Sect", 150.

²⁴ See for instance: H. Van Der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus*, (Supplem. NT 9; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), 680-681; U. Luz, *Matthew 8-20. A Commentary*, (A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 414-415; W. Horbury, "The Temple Tax", 271; D. Daube, "The Temple Tax", in *Appeasement or Resistance? And Other Essays on New Testament Judaism*, (Berkeley, CA.: University of California, 1987), 39-58, esp. 53-54; D. J. Versput, "Jesus' Pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Encounter in the Temple: A Geographical Motif in Matthew's Gospel", *NT 36* (1994), 105-121, esp. 109-114.

²⁵ Matthew 17: 25-26.

²⁶ Whereas some scholars hold that that the "sons" refer to all Israel (D. Flusser, "Mt. xvii 24-7 and the Dead Sea Sect", 151), other consider it should be understood as Jesus and his disciples (J.D.M. Derrett, "Peter's Penny", 253-255).

²⁷ See for instance: J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906), vol. 1, 323-323; A. J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 143-147; M.

In this respect, N. J. McEleney has proposed that this pericope, which contains a number of typical Matthean features, is most likely a composition of the evangelist himself.²⁸ However, as H. Montefiore has emphasized, it is difficult to explain why Matthew would have constructed a story regarding Jesus' voluntary payment of the half-shekel to the Jerusalem Temple in order to set a precedent about the Jewish Christians' payment of the Jewish tax.²⁹ We are therefore inclined to agree with him that this passage must have been based on an earlier tradition (possibly related to Jesus' position toward the Temple tax) that was later adapted to meet the needs of the Jewish Christian community. By inserting the Temple tax story, then, the author of Matthew sought to instruct the members of his community to pay the Jewish tax. If we accept that this levy fell on the same communities as had previously been paying the Temple dues, Matthew, by stating that Jesus paid the halfshekel, was implying that his community was required to pay the tax for Jupiter Capitolinus.

Furthermore, on closer scrutiny it seems that Matthew 17: 24-27 indirectly hints at internal dissensions over this issue. It would be reasonable to propose that there were some among Matthew's group who contested their liability to the Jewish tax. Such a claim can be understood in the context of the growing hostility between the Jewish leadership assembled in Yavneh and the various different Christian streams in the late first century CE.³⁰

Hengel and C. K. Barrett, *Conflicts and Challenges in Early Christianity*, (D. A. Hagner, ed.; Harrisburg, PA.: Trinity Press, 1999), 37; P. Foster, *Community, Law, and Mission in Matthew's Gospel*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 2004), 5; 254-255.

²⁸ N. J. McEleney, "Mt. 17.24-27— Who Paid the Temple Tax? A Lesson in Avoidance of Scandal", *CBQ* 38 (1976), 178-192, esp. 182-184.

²⁹ H. Montefiore, "Jesus and the Temple Tax", *NTS* 10 (1964-65), 60-71, esp. 65.

³⁰ For a survey of the process of expulsion of the "heterodox" Jewish streams initiated by the Jewish leadership assembled in Yavneh [Jamnia], see below, 294-316.

What considerations could explain Matthew's position?

In the first place, there is good reason to think that it was dictated by mere prudence: refusal to pay the Jewish tax would have been dangerous, for such a protest would certainly have awakened the suspicion of the Roman authorities.³¹ It has been emphasized that Matthew's stance here parallels Paul's call to comply with the Roman authorities.³²

Besides this consideration, we may assume that those Jewish Christians who lived in a Jewish environment would have had to face strong social pressure to pay the Jewish tax, and were therefore dissuaded from avoiding their Jewish brethren's fate. Denying their liability to this levy. Whereas on some occasions the rabbis tolerated evasion of taxes,³³ there is a reasonable case for supposing that the refusal to pay the annual impost to the *Fiscus Iudaicus* could be interpreted as disloyalty, if not as some sort of apostasy. In this context, we need to ask who the people are whom the Matthean Jesus says must not be scandalized.³⁴ It is very unlikely that the first evangelist had in mind the Roman authorities; W. D. Davies has rightly noted that "offending" would be "too weak a word for the refusal to pay an enforced Roman tax."³⁵ Thus, it would appear more reasonable to conclude that Matthew felt the necessity not to offend his Jewish brethren. It is noteworthy, though, that Matthew did not express the same desire to

³¹ This raises a further question: how far could someone contest his/her liability to the Jewish tax? As seen above, it is very likely that the leaders of the Jewish communities helped the Roman authorities to draw up their fiscal listings by providing them with the names of the worshippers who used to pay Temple dues. Accordingly, it may be assumed that "apostates" (from the vantage point of these communities) would have been erased from these registers and "would not have been touched by Vespasian's decree" (Thompson, "Domitian and the Jewish Tax", 333.). In this way, many people would have managed to evade paying the *didrachmon*. The fact remains, however, that the collection of the Jewish tax was very strictly carried out under Vespasian and Titus (as revealed by the document from Edfu), so that it was probably rather hazardous to evade paying the tax.

³² Epistle to the Romans 13: 1-7; see: D. Daube, "The Temple Tax", 58.

³³ BT *Bava Qama* 113a.

³⁴ Matthew 17: 27: "ἵνα δὲ μὴ σκανδαλίσωμεν αὐτούς".

³⁵ W. D. Davies, "The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount", (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 390.

avoid offence when reporting other conflicts with *halakhic* teachings which were certainly scandalous in the eyes of most Jews. Thus, in reply to the Pharisees' question as to why his disciples did not wash their hands before eating bread, Jesus answers: "it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles".³⁶ And here it should be noted that the disciples say to him immediately afterwards: "Do you know that the Pharisees took offence (ἐσκανδαλίσθησαν) when they heard what you said?"³⁷

Thus, it would seem that in Matthew's eyes, the refusal to pay the Jewish tax was liable to have much wider implications than purely *halakhic* controversies with the rabbinic movement. Whereas their particular *halakhot* set the Jewish Christians apart within the Jewish people, evasion of the Jewish tax would have set them outside the community of Israel in the eyes of their fellow Jews. Obviously, it was important to Matthew not to cross this line and to maintain to some extent the original relationship between his community and the rest of the Jewish people.

We are inclined to believe that Matthew 17 24-27 reflects a situation prior to Domitian's reign. As we shall see below, the question of the payment to the *Fiscus Iudaicus* would have been irrelevant, since under his rule the Matthean community was undoubtedly declared liable to the Jewish tax by the Roman authorities.

³⁶ Matthew 15: 11.

³⁷ Matthew 15: 12. Likewise, there is reason to think that Jesus' teaching related to the Sabbath (Matthew 12: 1-8) was highly controversial.

B- THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE *FISCUS IUDAICUS* UNDER DOMITIAN

It is usually agreed that some significant changes were introduced by Domitian both in the assessment of liability to the Jewish tax and in the way it was collected.³⁸ Our main source on this issue is Suetonius, who reports:

"Besides other taxes, that on the Jews was levied with the utmost rigour, and those were prosecuted who without publicly acknowledging that faith yet lived as Jews, as well as those who concealed their origin and did not pay the tribute levied upon their people. I recall being present in my youth when the person of a man ninety years old was examined before the procurator and a very crowded court, to see whether he was circumcised."³⁹

It appears then, that Domitian extended the requirement to pay the poll-tax to the *Fiscus Iudaicus*, but before we address the question of the categories of tax-payers concerned by this measure, we must ask what circumstances led to this development.

As noted above, in the days of Vespasian (and apparently under the reign of Titus), the fiscal base of the Jewish tax was grounded on the roughly same communities (and the same households) as had previously been paying the Temple dues to the Jerusalem Sanctuary. However, this method of assessment of liability (which did not rest on defined criteria of Jewishness) did not take into consideration the internal developments within Judaism. The Jewish world was in constant evolution, and

³⁸ In this respect, the documents from Edfu indicate that a change of terminology occurred during the reign of Domitian, so that somewhere between 89 and 92 CE the original name of the tax *τιμὴ δηναρίων δύο Ἰουδαίων* was replaced by *Ἰουδαϊκὸν τέλεσμα*. Tcherikover suggests that this modification may reflect a reform in the central administration of the *Fiscus Judaicus* (*Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, vol. 2, 112-113).

³⁹ *Life of Domitian* XII, 2; translation by J. C. Rolfe in *Suetonius*, (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), vol. 2, 365-367.

oscillated between an influx of proselytes on the one hand, and the "apostasy" of some Jews by birth on the other.⁴⁰

There must have been a point after the establishment of the *Fiscus Iudaicus* when liability to the Jewish tax as defined by Vespasian ceased to correspond to the internal developments within Judaism, all the more since, the trauma caused by the destruction of the Temple certainly led many Jews to apostasize. It seems reasonable to presume that the apostates from Judaism contested their liability to the Jewish tax. Similarly, many Gentiles who adhered to varying extents to the Jewish faith were certainly not registered as tax-payers for the *Fiscus Iudaicus*.

It is clear that, at some point, the Roman authorities became aware of this general evolution which they would naturally consider to be a large-scale fiscal evasion. It seems likely that Domitian's financial difficulties prompted him to investigate more closely the extent of the requirement to pay the tax to the *Fiscus Iudaicus*. Here it is significant that Suetonius links the rigorous exaction of the Jewish tax to the emperor's acute need of money.⁴¹ Domitian had increased military pay and was faced with heavy expenditures,⁴² while the building constructions he had undertaken were a further large financial burden. In this context, it has been argued with reason that the reconstruction of the Capitoline temple⁴³ had a definite impact on Domitian's administration of the *Fiscus Iudaicus*, which was certainly regarded as the "most

⁴⁰ In this connection, Josephus refers on several occasions to apostate Jews like Tiberius Iulius Alexander (*BJ* II, 487-498; *AJ* XX, 100) or Antiochus from Antioch (*BJ* VII, 46-62); see: J. M. G. Barclay, "Who was considered an apostate in the Jewish Diaspora", in G. N. Stanton and G. G. Stroumsa (ed.), *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 80-95, esp. 87-88. Likewise, Martial (*Epigrammata* VII, 82; see: M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism. Volume 1: From Herodotus to Plutarch*, [Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974], 524-525) alludes to the efforts of a certain Menophilus to hide his circumcision most likely in order to conceal his Jewish origins.

⁴¹ *Life of Domitian* XII, 1.

⁴² C. H. V. Sutherland suggests that this measure was taken in 83-84 CE, as a result of the Chattan War ("The State of the Imperial Treasury at the Death of Domitian", *JRS* 25 [1935], 150-162, esp. 159).

⁴³ The temple of Jupiter Capitolinus was destroyed again in a great fire in 80 CE (Suetonius, *Life of Titus* VIII, 7) and rebuilt by Domitian in 82 CE (Suetonius, *Life of Domitian* V, 1-2).

appropriate source of funds for the rebuilding of the temple."⁴⁴ Domitian's efforts to increase the revenues of the *Fiscus Iudaicus* therefore led him to redefine the criteria of liability to the Jewish tax in order to expand its fiscal base. Thus, Vespasian's decree was now interpreted in an extreme fashion: the tax fell not only the same communities as had previously been paying the Temple dues, but on every individual regarded as Jew (and as such liable for taxation) according to broader criteria of Jewishness.

As already mentioned, Suetonius reports that Domitian pursued, as part of his hunting down of tax evaders, the persons who *vel improfessi Iudaicam viverent vitam vel dissimulata origine imposita genti tributa non pependissent*.⁴⁵ The question of the identity of these individuals has been widely discussed by scholars and this statement is usually taken to refer to two different categories of people: The first category, which included those who, without publicly acknowledging it, lived a Jewish life, may refer to gentiles who had adopted the Jewish way of life to various degrees, *i.e.*, full-fledged converts and/or Judaizers.⁴⁶ The second category, which comprised those who concealed their Jewish origins, is taken by most scholars to refer to assimilated Jews by birth who had left Judaism and consequently had ceased to pay tax to the *Fiscus Iudaicus*. As Suetonius' own testimony suggests, circumcision was regarded as a hallmark of Jewishness and thus of liability to the tax.

⁴⁴ I. A. F. Bruce, "Nerva and the Fiscus Judaicus", *PEQ* 96 (1964), 34-45, esp. 39 n. 34. See also: L. A. Thompson, "Domitian and the Jewish Tax", 339; M. H. Williams, "Domitian, the Jews and the 'Judaizers'", 204 n. 53.

⁴⁵ *Life of Domitian* XII, 2: "those who without publicly acknowledging that faith yet lived as Jews, as well as those who concealed their origin and did not pay the tribute levied upon their people."

⁴⁶ These people were most probably identified as Jews because they observed specifically Jewish customs. Practices like circumcision, Sabbath observance, and abstention from pork constituted obviously Jewish distinguishing marks in the eyes of the Romans. See for instance: Juvenal, *Saturae* XIV, 96-106 (see: M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism. Volume 2*, 102-103).

Thompson has rejected this interpretation since he considers most unlikely that "*qui improfessi Iudaicam viverent vitam*" can refer to proselytes. His assertion is grounded on Cassius Dio's account of the execution of Flavius Clemens at the end of Domitian's reign, where the accusation brought against him was that of ἀθεότης, "a charge on which many others who drifted into Jewish ways were condemned."⁴⁷ Thompson has inferred hence that the Gentile converts were condemned on the charge of atheism and could not therefore also be judged for evasion of the Jewish tax. Furthermore, in his opinion, the exaction of the Jewish tax from proselytes and God-fearers would have involved "a virtual legalization of conversion to Judaism and that by an emperor who, as is well known, took very severe measures against conversion and Judaizing on the part of Roman citizens."⁴⁸ He concludes thus, that the persons intended by Suetonius were Jewish apostates and non-Jewish but circumcised peregrines.

His conclusion has been seriously challenged by P. Schäfer, who argues that, in the days of Domitian, the charge of atheism was not by itself a juridical crime, but was used by the emperor as a political expedient to get rid of potential rivals.⁴⁹ Likewise, M. H. Williams qualifies Thompson's assertion and presupposes that the charge of "*maiestas*" (under which the charge of atheism fell and which led to death penalty) only concerned people belonging to the "highest echelon of the Roman society," while the charge of fiscal evasion was relevant to more humble proselytes.⁵⁰ Besides, Thompson's interpretation of *qui improfessi Iudaicam viverent vitam* as referring to Jewish apostates who "had attracted the attention of informers... by behavior such as

⁴⁷ *HR* LXVII, 14, 2. All citations of Dio's *Roman History* are from the Loeb edition: Dio Cassius, *Roman History* vol. VIII, trans. E. Cary (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

⁴⁸ L. A. Thompson, "Domitian and the Jewish Tax", 335.

⁴⁹ P. Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 114.

⁵⁰ M. H. Williams, "Domitian, the Jews and the 'Judaizers'", 207-208.

abstention from pork, which could be construed as Jewish life"⁵¹ needs to be further questioned; it would appear on *a priori* grounds very improbable that Jewish apostates continued to observe the Mosaic dietary laws.

In our opinion, Domitian's severe administration of the *Fiscus Iudaicus* must have affected not only proselytes and sympathizers, but also Jewish apostates (and possibly non-Jews who happened to be circumcised). Furthermore, in an attempt to resolve the alleged contradiction raised by Thompson, it may be proposed that the statements of Suetonius and Cassius Dio refer to two different stages of Domitian's reign. In order to illustrate the harshness of the levy of the Jewish tax under Domitian, Suetonius reports that, in his youth (when he was an *adulescentulus*), he witnessed the examination of a ninety-year-old man before a procurator and a very crowded court, to see whether he was circumcised.⁵² J. Juster presumes that this testimony dates back to 85 CE.⁵³ However, the attack on people who, like Flavius Clemens, had adopted "Jewish customs"⁵⁴ occurred some ten years later, toward the very end of Domitian's reign (95 CE). In the light of this, it may be proposed that Domitian's policy evolved as his investigations progressed: his earlier pursuit of fiscal evaders became a systematic campaign against proselytes as he realized the extent of Jewish (and possibly Christian) influence on Roman society.

At any rate, we have every reason for believing that Domitian's administration of the *Fiscus Iudaicus* concerned all Christians of Jewish extraction whether they accepted or denied liability to the Jewish tax.

⁵¹ L. A. Thompson, "Domitian and the Jewish Tax", 335.

⁵² *Life of Domitian* XII, 2.

⁵³ J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'Empire Romain: leur condition juridique, économique et sociale*, (2 vols.; Paris: Geuthner, 1914), vol. 2, 284 n. 4. A roughly similar conclusion is reached by B. W. Jones (*The Emperor Domitian*, [London: Routledge, 1992], 118).

⁵⁴ *RH* LXVII, 14, 2.

Numerous authors have maintained that Domitian harassed the Christians towards the end of his reign. Evidence for this persecution has been sought in a number of sources that describe the unrest that beset Christian communities all over the Roman Empire. It has thus been argued that the *First Letter of Clemens to the Corinthians* (1: 1; 7: 1) alludes to the distress of the Christians of Rome. Similarly, the *Book of Revelation*⁵⁵ and Pliny's writings⁵⁶ would attest to the tribulations of the Christian communities of Asia and of Bithynia-Pontus. Lastly, the preface to the *Acts of St Ignatius*, which describes the distressing predicament of the Church of Antioch toward the end of the first century CE is often cited as evidence for the alleged persecution of Christians by Domitian.⁵⁷ However, scholars like B. Jones have stressed the paucity and the questionable reliability of these sources.⁵⁸ In fact, clear mention of widespread religious oppression under Domitian is only to be found in the later writings of the Church Fathers.⁵⁹

Nonetheless, even though there is no convincing evidence of a full-scale persecution in the days of Domitian, the distress expressed in the above-mentioned sources concurs with several Jewish writings reflecting disquiet among the Jews during this period.⁶⁰ Taken together, these accounts support the view that Jews and Christians felt

⁵⁵ It is widely held that numerous passages in the *Book of Revelation* hint at current persecution under Domitian; P. Keresztes quotes for instance *Revelation* 6: 9; 7: 14; 12: 11; 20: 4 ("The Jews, the Christians, and Emperor Domitian" *VC* 27 [1973], 1-28, esp. 23-24).

⁵⁶ Pliny's letter (X, 96, 6) reveals that in 112 CE there were individuals claiming that they had ceased to be Christians "some three, others many, and one twenty years earlier," hence it has been inferred that in the nineties of the first century CE pressure had been exerted on the Bithynian Christians to make them recant their faith. See for instance P. Keresztes, "The Jews, the Christians, and Emperor Domitian", 23.

⁵⁷ F. X. Funk (ed.), *Opera patrum apostolicorum*, vol. 2, (Tübingen: Laupp, 1881), 260; see for instance: S. Gsell, *Essai sur le Règne de L'Empereur Domitien*, (1894; *Studia Historica* 46- Rome: L'Herma di Bretschneider 1967), 306.

⁵⁸ B. Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 114-117.

⁵⁹ It may be added that Tertullian (*Apology* V, 4, [PL 1 col. 293-294]), Melito of Sardis (*HE* IV, 26, 9, [GCS II 1, 386]) and Eusebius (*HE* III, 17-18, [GCS II 1, 230-232]) considered Domitian to be the second persecutor of the Church (after Nero). See also: Paulus Orosius, *Historiae Adversum Paganos*, Libri VII, 10,. (Hildesheim: G. Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung 1882; Reprinted 1967) 463; Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicles* II, 31, (ed. C. Halm, *CSEL* I, 85).

⁶⁰ A passage from Midrash Deuteronomy Rabbah. (ii, 24) relates that, while R. Eliezer, R. Joshua and Rabban Gamaliel were in Rome, the Senate issued a decree according to which "there were to be no

very uneasy under the rule of Domitian. Although there were doubtless other contributing factors, it may be proposed that these disturbances were the consequence of the Roman authorities' inquiries as part of their campaign against fiscal evasion. There is a reasonable case for supposing that their investigations into different streams which developed around the fringes of Judaism increased the Romans' awareness of the complexity and the variety of all these different groups.

Moreover, it seems likely that the Christian communities of Judaea were also affected by these troubles. Interestingly, Eusebius links his account of the persecution under Domitian to a statement ascribed to Hegesippus, which describes the questioning of Jesus' relatives by the emperor himself.⁶¹ Thus, he reports that the grandsons of Jude (Jesus's brother) were summoned by Domitian after they had been denounced to him as descendants of David. The emperor is reported to have asked them if they were of David's line, and what possessions they owned; finally he questioned them about "Christ and his kingdom." When he finds that these individuals, in spite of their royal descent, were humble peasants and that their expectations were set exclusively on a heavenly kingdom, Domitian dismisses them.

Although the legendary features of this story are undeniable, it is not unlikely that the nucleus of this account is based on historical elements.⁶² We would suggest that it may have derived from earlier memories of the local Roman authorities' investigations into the Judaeian Christian community. It is noteworthy that Hegesippus

more Jews left in the world" within thirty days. A God-fearing senator informed the rabbis of the order and assured them that "the God of the Jews" would interfere to save them, and twenty-five days later he committed suicide in order to prevent the enforcement of the decree. BT Avodah Zarah 10b reports that a senator named Ketiah bar Shalom was put to death for having surpassed by his arguments "an emperor who hated the Jews," and who intended to wipe out the Jews. Before being executed, Ketiah bequeathed all his goods to "R. Akiva and his colleagues."

⁶¹ *HE* III, 19-20, (GCS II 1, 232-234).

⁶² For a brief survey of Hegesippus and the reliability of his work, see above 75-79.

first sets these inquiries into the Judaeen Church in the days of Domitian.⁶³ We are inclined to believe that these active steps were related to some extent to the strict administration of the *Fiscus Iudaicus*.

In his testimony, Hegesippus describes the unexpected liberation of Jesus' relatives by the Emperor himself. This tradition, which differs oddly from Domitian's reputation of cruelty, may perhaps be based on an authentic memory of the release of Christian leaders. Such a discharge would mean that the local Roman authorities considered these individuals innocent of any infringement of Roman law. In this respect, it is remarkable that Jude's grandson claimed as part of their plea that they both paid "the taxes (τοὺς φόρους)."⁶⁴ Would it be too far-fetched to suggest that they were referring here, among other things, to the payment of the Jewish tax?⁶⁵ At the least, it may be said that their attitude echoes Matthew 17: 24-27 in its compliance with the Roman authorities.

C- THE REFORM OF NERVA.

This turbulent period was terminated by Domitian's assassination on 18 September 96 CE.⁶⁶ One of the first decisions taken by his successor Nerva was to clear himself from the injustices which were attached to the abusive collection of the Jewish tax. This reform was publicized by the minting of coins bearing the inscription *Fisci Iudaici calumnia sublata S. C.*⁶⁷ Although the precise translation of this phrase

⁶³ A word of caution is in order here, since Hegesippus' writings have only come down to us in a fragmentary form: several statements of his lost book the *Hypomnemata* have been preserved in Eusebius' work.

⁶⁴ *HE* III, 20, 4, (GCS II 1, 234).

⁶⁵ "ὁ φόρος" may refer to the tribute paid by subjects to a ruling state but, as mentioned above, it was also used by Josephus denote the Jewish tax. Besides, the employment of the plural form (τοὺς φόρους) indicates that the author had in mind different sorts of levies.

⁶⁶ Suetonius, *Life of Domitian* XIV, 16.

⁶⁷ H. Mattingly, *Coins of the Roman Empire in British Museum*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), vol. 3, 15-19, nos. 88, 98, 105-6.

is uncertain, it should not in any way be taken to refer to the mere abolition of the tax;⁶⁸ such an interpretation is untenable, since the tax continued to be paid after Nerva's reign. Scholars generally interpret *calumnia* as referring to the false accusations brought by informers against alleged tax-evaders.⁶⁹ The very fact that Nerva's measure was so highly advertized, shows that the phenomenon of denouncement had become an endemic scourge toward the end of Domitian's reign.⁷⁰ Nerva's measure is further attested by Cassius Dio, who reports that the new emperor prohibited the bringing of accusations "of *maiestas* or of adopting the Jewish mode of life." Furthermore, Nerva is reported to have amnestied all those who were on trial for lèse-majesté (*maiestas*), recalled those who had been banished and put to death numerous informers.⁷¹ Cassius Dio's statement implies that not only false accusations, but all denunciations whether true or false were proscribed.

There is sufficient reason to presume that Nerva not only put an end to the abuses related to the exaction of the Jewish tax but also restricted the criteria for liability to it. At the end of his narrative of the Jewish War, Cassius Dio writes:

"From that time forth it was ordered that the Jews who continued to observe their ancestral customs should pay an annual tribute of two *denarii* to Jupiter Capitolinus."⁷²

⁶⁸ This interpretation, proposed by F. W. Madden (*History of the Jewish Coinage and of Money in the Old and New Testament*, [1864; Reed. New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1967], 198) is today dismissed by most authors. In this regard, J. C. Paget has conjectured that if Nerva's coinage celebrated the abolition of the tax, the legend would have read *Fiscus Judaicus sublatus*, (*The Epistle of Barnabas: Outlook and Background*, [WUNT 2.82; Tübingen: J. B. C. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 1994], 26).

⁶⁹ See for instance: E. M. Smallwood, "Domitian's Attitude toward the Jews and Judaism", *Classical Philology* 51 (1956), 1-13, esp. 4-5; M. Goodman, "Diaspora reactions to the destruction of the Temple", in J. D. G. Dunn (ed.), *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*, (Tübingen: J. B. C. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 1992), 27-38, esp. 33.

⁷⁰ The extensive use of denouncers in the days of Domitian is further indicated by Suetonius' use of the term *deferebantur* (*Life of Domitian* XII, 2).

⁷¹ *HR* LXVIII, 1, 2.

⁷² *HR* LXV, 7, 2.

We are inclined to agree with M. Goodman⁷³ that Cassius Dio has back-dated his definition of the Jewish tax to 70 CE. In fact, this testimony can hardly refer to a period anterior to Nerva's reign. As we have already seen, the liability to the Jewish tax under Vespasian and Titus was grounded on the earlier fiscal base of the Temple tax, and later on Domitian gave a much broader definition of the *Gens Iudaeorum*, which went beyond the framework of the population of observant Jews.

Accordingly, it is very likely that Dio's statement actually reflects Nerva's reform of the Jewish tax, and Goodman has noted that the implicit disapproval of Domitian's abuses expressed by Suetonius suggests that a change in the administration of the *Fiscus Iudaicus* had occurred at least by the time of the composition of *De Vita Caesarum* in the early 120s CE.⁷⁴ Thus, it appears that Nerva's abrogation of the *calumniam* consisted of, not only putting an end to the activity of the informers, but also releasing the victims of Domitian's abuses from payment.

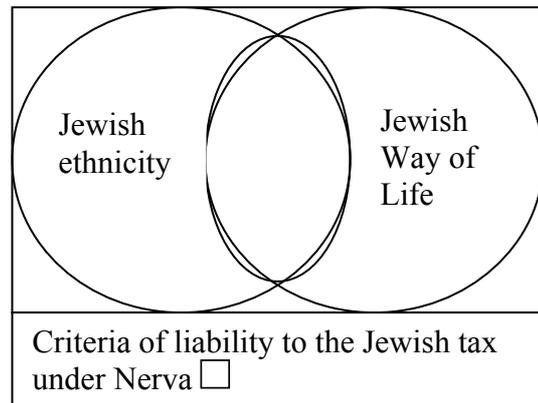
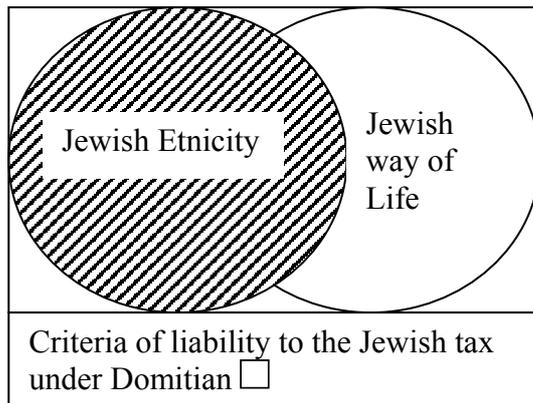
Some scholars think this reform mainly benefited Jewish apostates.⁷⁵ Although Thompson is right in saying that Cassius Dio is not quoting from a decree but explaining the situation in his own words,⁷⁶ it needs to be emphasized, however, that according to his statement, liability to the tax was based on two criteria: Jewish descent, and the observance of ancestral customs. Thus, it may be inferred that gentile sympathizers were also exempted from paying the tax.

⁷³ M. Goodman, "Nerva, the *Fiscus Iudaicus* and Jewish Identity", *JRS* 79 (1989), 40-44, esp. 41.

⁷⁴ "Nerva, the *Fiscus Iudaicus* and Jewish Identity", 41.

⁷⁵ See for example: L. A. Thompson, "Domitian and the Jewish Tax", 334; M. Goodman, "Nerva, the *Fiscus Iudaicus* and Jewish Identity", 41.

⁷⁶ L. A. Thompson, "Domitian and the Jewish Tax", 333.



Goodman assumes though, that this measure caused practical problems to the Roman authorities, since assessment of liability to the tax became harder to determine: because numerous gentiles had adopted Jewish customs without considering themselves Jews, it was difficult for the fiscal administration to distinguish observant Jews from mere Judaizers. He supposes accordingly that the Jews, in order to be taxed, were required to make an official statement of their Jewishness to the Roman administration.⁷⁷

Such a declaration, which meant registering as tax payers to the *Fiscus Judaicus*, would have been the only way to obtain freedom of worship. Thus, although the Jewish tax was made optional, it became a public license for the right of the Jews to live by their own rules. In this context, we may note that Tertullian writes that the public reading of the Prophets on the Sabbath was a "*vectigalis libertas*", a liberty granted to the Jews in return for taxation.⁷⁸ In the light of this, Goodman has proposed that Nerva's reform established a new definition of Jewish identity: "a Jew was anyone who volunteered to pay the *Fiscus Judaicus* to the Roman State."⁷⁹

⁷⁷ "Nerva, the *Fiscus Judaicus* and Jewish Identity", 41.

⁷⁸ *Apology* XVIII, 9, (PL 1 col. 381).

⁷⁹ M. Goodman, "Nerva, the *Fiscus Judaicus* and Jewish Identity" 42.

A further observation on Nerva's reform of Jewish tax should be made. It now appears that the change he introduced in the administration of the *Fiscus Iudaicus* was not merely a liberal gesture aiming at correcting Domitian's abuses, but also represented an attempt to confine Judaism to ethnic Jews. Indeed, the limitation of the liability to the Jewish tax to Jews by birth who practised Judaism openly resulted in denying gentiles (as well as Jewish apostates) the privileges which the payment to the *Fiscus Iudaicus* granted to Jews.

Similar measures taken by various emperors served the same purpose of halting the diffusion of Judaism in Roman society. Thus, Antoninus Pius' rescript⁸⁰ which allowed Jews to circumcise only their own sons followed the same policy: inasmuch as circumcision was seen as a formal act of conversion, this edict established that one could become a Jew only by birth.⁸¹ Although Nerva's reform was not a formal prohibition of conversion to Judaism, it guaranteed the Roman authorities an effective control over the spread of this religion. It seems sensible to presume that the payment of the Jewish tax was accepted only from those who took up the full commitment of the Jewish law and, as such, considered themselves and were considered Jews.⁸² As a result neither gentile sympathizers nor Jewish apostates were protected by the exclusive religious rights granted to the Jews.

This redefinition of the fiscal liability as resting only upon Jews who observed Jewish law had far-reaching implications for the various Christian streams. One of the more important privileges accorded to the Jews by the Roman authorities was the

⁸⁰ Modestinus, *Corpus Juris Civilis, Digesta* XLVIII, 8, 11.

⁸¹ For a discussion on this issue see: B. Isaac, "Roman Religious Policy and the Bar Kokhba War", in P. Schäfer (ed.), *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 2003), 37-54, esp. 50-51.

⁸² M. Goodman considers that the re-definition of liability to the *Fiscus Iudaicus* led to a new awareness of the notion of a proselyte on the part of the Roman authorities, ("Nerva, the *Fiscus Iudaicus* and Jewish Identity", 43-44).

exemption from participation in the imperial cult.⁸³ The acts of worship of the official cults were indubitably considered by the Jews to be idolatry and as such they were absolutely incompatible with monotheistic faith. Dispensation from these was all the more significant, since the imperial cult was used as an expedient for establishing the allegiance of the inhabitants of the empire to the emperor. While the Temple stood, the offering of daily sacrifices on behalf of the emperor represented the expression of the loyalty of the Jewish people to Rome.⁸⁴ The defeat of 70 CE did not affect this privilege, since the religious freedom of the Jews was maintained by the Roman authorities. It can be assumed, though, that following Nerva's reform, only those observant Jews who were subject to the *Fiscus Iudaicus* were exempted from participation in the official and imperial cults.

Thus, unless Christians declared themselves liable to the Jewish tax, they would be required to perform these acts of worship when officially called upon. It has been argued that Christians from the province of Asia were forced to conform to the practices of the imperial cult as early as the reign of Domitian, and that evidence for this is to be found in the Book of Revelation.⁸⁵ Even if we accept this assumption, it seems that the exemption from the imperial cult given to the Jews was not touched by Domitian. E. M. Smallwood has noted that neither classical nor Jewish sources indicate that Domitian enforced the imperial cult on the Jews.⁸⁶ Thus, there is a reasonable case for supposing that this persecution would have affected only Christians of Gentile origin who refused to worship the emperor, and were

⁸³ E.M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 137.

⁸⁴ Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium* 317; Josephus, *BJ* II, 197.

⁸⁵ See: D. McFayden, "The Occasion of the Domitianic Persecution", *AJT* 24 (1920), 46-66, esp. 64; P. Keresztes, "The Jews, the Christians, and Emperor Domitian", 24. This proposition has been largely rejected by recent scholars; see for instance: J. C. Wilson, "The Problem of the Domitianic date of Revelation", *NTS* 39 (1993), 587-605; S. J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 143.

⁸⁶ E. M. Smallwood, "Domitian's Attitude toward the Jews and Judaism", 6.

consequently condemned for "atheism". Furthermore, as stated above, these pursuits were not likely to be part of a planned persecution of Christians, but rather derived from the great importance Domitian attached to the practice of the imperial cult.⁸⁷

Thus, the question of the status of the Christians as such in the eyes of Roman law is first documented in Pliny the Younger's correspondence with Trajan in the year 112 CE.⁸⁸ Pliny, at that time governor of Bithynia-Pontus, asked the emperor for instructions about the legal investigation of Christians, since he himself had never attended such a trial.

In the first place, he questions Trajan as to whether someone who had repented could be pardoned, and whether the very profession of Christianity was criminal in itself, or only the misdeeds inherent in this belief. Following this, Pliny describes the way he had investigated the individuals suspected of Christianity. If the accused had admitted that they were Christians but refused to recant, he sentenced them to death, unless they were Roman citizens, in which case they were sent to Rome. The people who denied the charge or acknowledged that they had been Christians in the past but were no longer, were subjected to a test: they were required to invoke the gods and to make offerings of wine and incense before images of them and the emperor. They were further required to blaspheme Jesus Christ in order to prove that they were not Christians. Finally, Pliny mentions Christian practices reported to him by former Christians, which he considers to be simply an "absurd and extravagant superstition."

In his rescript, Trajan confirms Pliny's way of prosecuting the people accused of Christianity: while those who insisted that they were Christians were to be executed,

⁸⁷ Both Suetonius (*Life of Domitian* XIII, 4) and Cassius Dio (*HR* LXVII, 4, 7) reports that Domitian insisted on being called "Master" and "God".

⁸⁸ *Epistles* X 96; see: A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny: A historical and social commentary*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966, reprinted 1985), 691-710.

those who denied the accusation were to demonstrate their innocence by invoking the gods.⁸⁹ Thus, it appears that the profession of Christianity in itself was a crime in the eyes of the emperor.

It has rightly been maintained that the fact that this issue arose less than two decades after Nerva redefined the liability to the *Fiscus Iudaicus* is not coincidental.⁹⁰ There is reason to think that the limitation of the Jewish tax to professing Jews contributed to increase the awareness of the Roman authorities concerning the distinction between Jews and Christians. In this respect, it is noteworthy that the question of the sacrifices to the emperor was pivotal in Pliny's prosecutions of the Christians. In the eyes of the Roman authorities, only the Jews were exempted from imperial cult obligations, by virtue of their payment of the Jewish tax. The Christians, inasmuch as they did not pay the levy to the *Fiscus Iudaicus*, were obligated to participate in the worship of the emperor.

However, even though Nerva's reform led to a certain degree of acknowledgment by the Roman power of the legal difference between Judaism and the Christian movement, it seems unlikely that this evolution significantly affected the situation of the Christians of gentile origins. In fact, being neither Jewish by birth nor observing Jewish customs,⁹¹ the latter were probably never considered liable to the *Fiscus Iudaicus* (even under Domitian) and were never granted the religious liberty afforded to the Jews. While their refusal to worship the emperor laid gentile Christians open to

⁸⁹ *Epistles* X, 97; see A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny*, 710-712.

⁹⁰ S. W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, (New York and London: Columbia University Press), vol. 2, 106; M. Goodman, "Diaspora reactions to the destruction of the Temple", 33-34.

⁹¹ In this respect, it is noteworthy that the Christian practices depicted by Pliny are different from the customs that were considered typically Jewish by the Romans (like circumcision, Sabbath observance and abstention from pork). Thus, Pliny recounts that the Christians were accustomed to meet on a stated day (most likely Sunday) before dawn and to sing a hymn to "Christ" as if to a God, while they also bound themselves by oath not to commit specific crimes (like theft or adultery). When this was over, they separated and then reassembled to share a common meal (*Epistles* X, 96, 7).

accusation of "atheism" under Domitian, they were condemned on the charge of Christianity for a similar offence in the days of Trajan.

In contradistinction, it is very likely that the redefinition of the *Fiscus Iudaicus* had far-reaching implications for the Christians of Jewish origin. By making the Jewish tax optional, Nerva compelled the latter to determine their own position vis-à-vis Judaism. There is a reasonable case for supposing that those Christians, who wished to sever their links with the Jewish denomination, were reluctant to declare themselves as Jews to the fiscal authorities. The fact remains, though, that their refusal to be registered as taxpayers to the *Fiscus Iudaicus* deprived them of the religious rights granted to their fellow Jews, since in the eyes of the Roman government they had ceased to be Jews.⁹² On the other hand, the Jewish Christians who declared themselves liable to the Jewish tax continued to enjoy the privileges and exemptions that were given to the Jewish people; in fact, from the vantage point of the Roman authorities, they were Jews in all respects.

However, it would be misleading to think that those Christians who acknowledged their liability to the *Fiscus Iudaicus* merely sought to avail themselves of the right of observing their religious practices. It would seem more reasonable to assume that the latter continued to regard themselves as Jews and consequently made an official statement of their Jewishness to the Roman administration.

The case of the Jewish Christian Church of Jerusalem may be relevant to our study.

Eusebius recounts that, following the suppression of the Bar-Kokhba revolt, the emperor Hadrian promulgated a decree which forbade Jews to dwell in Jerusalem and its vicinity, so that, the city was emptied of its Jewish population and colonized by

⁹² As stated above, Jews by birth who denied their liability to the Jewish tax were most likely considered to be apostates by their (former) fellow Jews.

heathens. Interestingly enough, Eusebius suggests that this edict entailed a deep transformation within the Church of Jerusalem, which lost its Jewish character and was from then on composed of "Gentiles."⁹³ It is obvious that the Roman authorities bracketed the Jewish Christian minority with the Jewish majority, and expelled them from Jerusalem. On the other hand, it is remarkable that the Christians of gentile origins were allowed to dwell in the city. The difference in treatment between the Jewish Christians and the gentile Christians makes it clear that the local Roman government did not identify the Christians as a distinct group.

By reversing the Roman criterion of Jewish identity as formulated by Goodman (from 96 CE onward a Jew was anyone who volunteered to pay the Jewish tax),⁹⁴ it may be proposed that one of the factors that led the Roman authorities to the conclusion that the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem were Jews, derived from the fact that they had remained liable to the *Fiscus Judaicus*.⁹⁵ If our supposition is correct, then it follows

⁹³ *HE* IV, 6, 3-4, (GCS II 1, 306-308).

⁹⁴ M. Goodman, "Nerva, the *Fiscus Judaicus* and Jewish Identity", 42.

⁹⁵ Here we must comment briefly about the tradition of the martyrdom of Symeon the son of Clopas (James' successor at the head of the Jerusalem church: *HE* III, 11, 1-2, [GCS II 1, 226-228]) in Trajan's reign. Eusebius reports two slightly different accounts of Symeon's execution, both ascribed to Hegesippus. According to the first statement, certain heretics brought a charge against Symeon before the governor Atticus, on the ground that Symeon was "descended from David and a Christian" (*HE*, III, 32, 3, [GCS II 1, 268]). This latter accusation would appear to demonstrate that the Roman authorities identified Symeon (and consequently his whole community) as a Christian. However, the mention of this particular in Hegesippus's original text is found on closer scrutiny to be subject to serious objections.

In the first place, it is noteworthy that, in his second account of Symeon's martyrdom (*HE*, III, 32, 6, [GCS II 1, 268-270]), Hegesippus does not refer to the accusation of Christianity, but merely states that the charge brought against Symeon was the same as that brought against Jude's grandsons *i.e.* that he was a descendant of David. Secondly, Hegesippus reports that Symeon's accusers were also arrested as belonging to David's lineage when a search was made for the descendants of the king. This may imply that, according to Hegesippus, the main reason for this harassment was the pursuit of the descendants of David. It should be noted that the Roman persecution of the persons of Davidic lineage is a recurrent theme in the extant fragments of Hegesippus' work. Thus, he reports that similar pursuits occurred during the reigns of Vespasian (*HE*, III, 12, [GCS II 1, 228]), Domitian (*HE*, III, 20, 1-2, [GCS II 1, 232-234]) and Trajan (*HE*, III, 32, 3-4; 6, [GCS II 1, 268-270]). It is obvious that Hegesippus' main concern was to emphasize that the leaders of the Jerusalem church were of Davidic origin and that they were persecuted for this very reason. Lastly, it should be noted that, apart from *HE* III, 32, 3, (GCS II 1, 268), the word "Christian" never occurs in the writings ascribed to Hegesippus, but the Jerusalem congregation is usually referred to as the "church" (*HE* II, 23, 3, [GCS II 1, 166]; III, 32, 6, [GCS II 1, 268-270]). Although this latter argument is not decisive on account of the fragmentary state of the material of Hegesippus known to us, it strengthens our impression that the accusation of Christianity brought against Symeon in *HE*, III, 32, 3, (GCS II 1, 268), is a later insertion, probably to be ascribed

that the members of this community regarded themselves as Jews and as such had made an official statement of their Jewishness to the Roman administration.

At any rate, it appears that the Jewish tax became, through its own evolution, a real touchstone of Jewish identity. Thus, it may be proposed that, following Nerva's reform of the *Fiscus Iudaicus*, a Jewish Christian was a Christian who paid the Jewish tax.

to Eusebius himself. Indeed, it is significant that the account of Symeon's martyrdom has been cited by Eusebius in order to illustrate Trajan's persecution of Christians (*HE* III, 32, 1-2, [GCS II 1, 266-268]). Thus, there is reason to think that he has slightly re-arranged Hegesippus' narrative (by inserting the accusation of Christianity) in order to make it more relevant to his own text. Inasmuch as this tradition can be regarded as historically accurate, it seems reasonable to infer that Symeon was executed as a local leader on a charge of political subversion. As already stated, the Jewish Christian church of Jerusalem was most probably considered to be a Jewish community in all respects by the Roman authorities, until its disappearance after the suppression of the Bar Kokhba revolt.

IV- JEWS, JEWISH CHRISTIANS AND SAMARITANS; PERCEPTIONS OF THE OTHER AND THE SELF.

Most of the works that describe the relations between Jews and Samaritans during the first century CE give an account of mutual aversion and hostility. Surprisingly enough, those texts contrast profoundly with a number of accounts that depict the situation after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. Indeed, the tannaitic literature demonstrates that some of the most eminent rabbis of that time actually advocated a Samaritan-friendly position and initiated a sort of rapprochement with the Samaritans. In this respect, the Yavneh period seems to have been an exception in the history of the relations between Jews and Samaritans.

Apart from this historical development, it would appear that determining the status of the Samaritans vis à vis the Jews became a pressing issue at that time; the talmudic sources attest to the fact that the rabbis of Yavneh discussed this matter in depth. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that other contemporaneous texts which do not derive from the rabbinic corpus show a similar concern for this issue.

We propose, therefore, to examine both the nature and extent of this twofold phenomenon (*i.e.*, the relative rapprochement toward the Samaritans and the intense discussions of their status) in order to determine to what extent the Jewish Christian movements were involved in this development characteristic of the post-destruction period. In fact, there is reason to presume that just as the question of the Gentile mission represented a great challenge for the Jewish Christians, the Samaritan issue (although less well documented,) was no less pressing matter for these communities. In our opinion, analysis of the Jewish Christians' understanding of the Samaritan

otherness may enable us to see a mirror image of themselves, which in turn will shed light on their self-representation.

A-JEWS AND JEWISH CHRISTIANS: A RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE SAMARITANS IN THE POST-DESTRUCTION PERIOD?

1 Samaritanism at the start of the Common Era: a brief overview

The twofold question of the origins of Samaritanism and the exact nature of this religious phenomenon remains an unsolved problem that still divides modern scholarship. Nowadays, the so-called "Samaritan interpretation" of II Kings 17: 24-41 is dismissed by modern scholarship. According to this view, the Samaritans were descendants of the foreign settlers established in the former kingdom of Israel by the Assyrian King towards the end of the eighth century BCE; in the course of time, this population is presumed to have come to combine the Israelite faith with the cult of their own deities.¹

Whereas some scholars maintain that Samaritanism derives from the religious inheritance of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (as the Samaritans themselves claim), it is generally agreed that this religious phenomenon can be assumed to have originated in some sort of schism with "normative Judaism"; in other words, the Samaritans would have dissociated themselves from the rest of Israel in order to establish a distinct cultic religious tradition centered around Mount Gerizim.

¹ In this respect, F. Dexinger notes: "The report in II Kings 17 is not a description of historical facts but a post-exilic polemic with the purpose of justifying the rejection of the Gentile worshippers of the God of Israel, who were living in the former northern kingdom...II Kings 17 originally had nothing to do with the origins of the Samaritans, but only referred to the syncretistic population of the north...", ("Limits of Tolerance in Judaism: The Samaritan Example", in E. P. Sanders, A. L. Baumgarten and A. Mendelson [ed.], *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition Vol. 2, Aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period*, [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981], 88-114, esp 91). See also R. J. Coggins, *Samaritans and Jews: The Origins reconsidered*, (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975) 13-24.

It has been argued that this split was the consequence of dissensions within the Jerusalem priestly class related to the contentious issue of the mixed marriages; eventually, this controversy was to lead to the expulsion from Jerusalem of priests married to foreign women. While some scholars ascribe this event to the Persian period, relying on Nehemiah 13: 28,² others attribute it to the early Hellenistic era, following Josephus.³ Unlike the biblical account, Josephus states that the expelled priests attached themselves to Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, who established them as priests in the temple he had erected on Mount Gerizim as a reward (c. 332 BCE). This sanctuary, which challenged the centrality of the Jerusalem Temple, was not to last for long. Josephus reports that the Hasmonean ruler John Hyrcanus destroyed the Samaritan temple⁴ and the adjoining city of Shechem⁵ in the course of his military campaigns in the late second century BCE. It is widely admitted that these events (*i.e.*, the construction of the temple on Mount Gerizim and its subsequent destruction) are the origin of the schism between Jews and Samaritans.

However, it seems extremely hazardous to attempt to determine in which circumstances Samaritanism arose. In this respect, R. J. Coggins has rightly noted that "many of the received views of Samaritan origins are based on religious polemic rather than historical evidence."⁶ We are rather inclined to favor F. Dexinger's view that a conjunction of diverse factors in both the religious and the political spheres led to the separation of Judaism and Samaritanism following a long process of alienation.

² H. G. Kippenberg, *Garizim und Synagoge. Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur samaritanischen Religion der aramäischen Periode*, (New York, Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1971), 47-59; M. Böhm, "Die Samaritaner in neutestamentlicher Zeit", *MB* 15 (1999), 22-50, esp.27; E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism*, (WUNT 36; Tübingen: J. B. C. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 1985), 34.

³ *AJ* XI, 302-325; see: M. Mor, "Samaritan History: The Persian, Hellenistic and Hasmonaean Period", in A. D. Crown (ed.), *The Samaritans*, (Tübingen: J. B. C. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 1989), 1-18, esp.4-5.

⁴ *AJ* XIII, 255-256.

⁵ *AJ* XIII, 275-281; *BJI*, 63.

⁶ R. J. Coggins, "Issues in Samaritanism", in J. Neusner and A. J. Avery-Peck (ed.), *Judaism in Late Antiquity. Part III: Where We Stand: Issues and Debates in Ancient Judaism*, (Leiden-Boston-Köln: E. J. Brill, 1999), 63-77, esp. 65-66.

In his opinion, the theological controversy between both communities, which was originally secondary, completed the break.⁷

In any event, whatever the circumstances in which Samaritanism emerged, it is clear that the erection of the Samaritan temple and its subsequent destruction by the Jews undoubtedly had a deep and lasting impact on the relations between both communities. Moreover, it is most likely that these two events made vital contributions to the self-affirmation of the Samaritan identity. In this regard, S. Freyne thinks that the foundation of a centre of worship on Mount Gerizim gave the Samaritans "a separate social, economic and religious identity that continued beyond the destruction of their temple."⁸

J. D. Purvis, however, assumes that it was only towards the end of the second century BCE that the community gathered around the Gerizim temple defined its self-understanding. In his opinion, the keystone of this process of self-definition was the production of a distinct biblical text which the Samaritans promulgated at this time in reaction to the destruction of their temple.⁹ It is noteworthy indeed, that some of the places where the Samaritan Pentateuch differs from the Masoretic text strongly emphasize the importance of Mount Gerizim as the holy place chosen by God.¹⁰

⁷ "Limits of Tolerance in Judaism: The Samaritan Example", 113-114. Dexinger upholds that the following factors were operative in the separation between Jews and Samaritans: "The changed self-awareness of the returning exiles; the problem of mixed marriages combined with the ethnic factor; problems concerning the cult centralization in Jerusalem; questions about the legitimacy of the priesthoods...political and economic rivalry between Samaria and Jerusalem, the fact of a Gentile ruling class in Samaria, the blending of political and religious interests in the building ...[and] in the destruction of the Temple of Mount Gerizim..."

⁸ S. Freyne, "Behind the Names: Galileans, Samaritans, *Ioudaioi*", in E. M. Meyers (ed.), *Galilee through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures*, (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 39-55, esp. 52.

⁹ J. D. Purvis, "The Samaritan Problem: A Case Study in Jewish Sectarianism in the Roman Era", in B. Halpern and J. D. Levenson (ed.), *Tradition in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith*, (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns 1981), 322-350, esp. 333.

¹⁰ It may be recalled in this context that the Samaritan version of the Ten Commandments includes an additional order enjoining the building of an altar on Mt. Gerizim, and stating that all future sacrifices

As early as the beginning of the second century BCE, the literary evidence clearly refers to the Samaritans as a distinct community centred on Shechem and Mount Gerizim. Thus, the *Book of Ben Sira* (50, 25) betraying an obvious Jerusalemite anti-Samaritan bias reads:

"With two nations (ἔθνεσιν) my soul is vexed, and *the third is no nation* (ἔθνος): Those who live on Mount Seir, and the Philistines, and *the foolish people* (λαὸς) *that dwell in Shechem.*"¹¹

Thus, it appears that Samaritanism at the turn of the Common Era may be seen as a distinct expression of Israelite religion whose main characteristics were:

- The worship of the God of Israel.
- The reverence of Mount Gerizim as the only ordained place to worship the God of Israel.
- The acceptance of the Pentateuch (in its Samaritan version) as the only holy text.
- The claim to be the true Israel.

Apart from these, the Samaritans defined themselves as descendants of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh and considered themselves to be the only branch of the Israelite community which had remained loyal to the Mosaic traditions. Furthermore, they maintained that their priests were descended from the legitimate priestly lineages (in contradistinction to the priests in Jerusalem).

were to be offered there. Furthermore, unlike the Masoretic text, the Samaritan version of Exodus 11: 30 specifies that the oak of Moreh is situated "*near Shechem*".

¹¹ Further contemporaneous allusions to the Samaritans are to be found in the *Testament of Levi* 7: 1-4. In addition, it may be relevant to mention the discovery in Delos of two inscriptions dated respectively to the third-second century BCE and to the second-first century BCE which refer to the "the Israelites in Delos who sent to sacred Ἀργαριζεῖν" an offering; see: P. Brunneau, "Les Israélites de Délos et la Juiverie délienne", *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 106 (1982), 465-504; A. T. Kraabel, "New Evidence of the Samaritan Diaspora has been Found on Delos", *BA* 47 (1984), 44-46. Lastly, there is the account of the second century BCE (allegedly Samaritan) writer Pseudo-Eupolemos recorded in Eusebius's work (*Preparatio Evangelica* IX, 17, [GCS 43 1, 503]) which refers to "the temple of the city called Argarizin, which being interpreted is "Mount of the Most High."

Although the origins of Samaritanism are particularly opaque, it is important not to understand this religious phenomenon as a heterodox Jewish stream but rather as a particular form of Mosaic religion centered around a holy place that was not Jerusalem. In this respect, J. D. Purvis has rightly noted that "their [the Samaritans'] autonomy from the Jewish community was not the result of a schism from Judaism (as their Jewish enemies insisted), but was rather derived from their self-definition as the true Israel and their claim that the Jerusalem Temple was not a legitimate Sanctuary."¹² Moreover, Coggins warns against the danger of supposing the existence at that time of an allegedly "normative" Judaism able to impose religious standards; he contends rather that religious issues such as the status of Jerusalem or the question of rival sanctuaries were objects of controversy within Judaism.¹³ Likewise, Freyne notes that temples dedicated to the God of Israel other than the Jerusalem one existed during the Second Commonwealth; thus he concludes that the erection of the Samaritan sanctuary on Mount Gerizim cannot be considered schismatic.¹⁴

Samaritanism thus, appears to have been an integral part of Israelite religiosity throughout the Second Temple period. Many scholars have remarked, for example, that the Samaritan Pentateuch, in spite of its particular variants, was a text-type which was in circulation in Palestine in the late Hasmonean period. J. E. Sanderson assumes in this respect that the Samaritans developed their holy writings "in concert with the religion and sacred writings of other Israelites".¹⁵ Besides, Y. Magen has emphasized that Jewish ritual baths (*miqva'ot*) have been uncovered in ancient Samaritan

¹² J. D. Purvis, "The Samaritan Problem", 337.

¹³ R. J. Coggins, "Issues in Samaritanism", 72.

¹⁴ S. Freyne, "Behind the Names", 46. The most famous example of a Jewish Temple other than the Jerusalem one that was standing during the second Temple period is the sanctuary of Leontopolis: qv *AJ* XIII, 62-73; *BJ* VII, 420-433.

¹⁵ J. E. Sanderson, *An Exodus Scroll from Qumran. 4QpaleoExodm and the Samaritan Tradition*, (HSS 30; Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1986), 32.

settlements of the Roman period. In his opinion, these discoveries point to a clear religious interaction between the various Israelite streams of that time.¹⁶

The fact remains, however, that there were two exceptional features which set the Samaritans apart from the other Jewish sects of the Second Temple period: they were the only Israelite group in Palestine to deny the sanctity of Jerusalem, and to contend the rival and exclusive sacredness of another site.

In light of this brief overview, Samaritanism seems to resist classification within the broad spectrum of Judaism of the Second Temple period Judaism. However, it can on no account be dissociated from it.

2- The embittered state of relations between Jews and Samaritans in the first century CE

a- Evidence for deep and mutual hostility

Very little is known about the Samaritans in general and the state of their relations with the Jews in particular in the period between the reign of John Hyrcanus (135/4-104 BCE) and the deposition of Archelaus (6 CE). Unfortunately, Josephus provides only very scanty information about this issue, leaving it to modern scholars to consider this specific question. Thus, divergent views have been expressed, for example, about Herod's attitude toward the Samaritans: while some scholars have

¹⁶ Y. Magen, "The Samaritans during the Roman and Byzantine periods", in E. Stern and H. Eshel (ed.), *The Samaritans*, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Tzvi, 2002), 213- 244, esp. 227-236, (in Hebrew).

argued that his rule was favourable to them,¹⁷ others have assumed that he treated both Jews and Samaritans very harshly.¹⁸

On the other hand, it is unquestionable that Herod's successor Archelaus was detested by both communities. Josephus reports in this connection that the principal men among the Jews and the Samaritans complained to Augustus of his oppressive treatment; consequently, Archelaus was deposed and banished to Vienna in Gaul (6 CE).¹⁹ Although Josephus does not specify whether they acted in concert, A. Kasher assumes that the Jews and Samaritans joined forces against Archelaus' regime. In his opinion, both populations wished to be relieved of the yoke of the Herodian dynasty, and wanted to "attain religious-nationalist and political autonomy on a regional basis, under the protection of the Syrian province."²⁰ If one is to accept Kasher's view, it must be noted that this inferred brief and isolated collaboration between Jews and Samaritans is a striking exception to what is known of the state of their relationship during the first century CE.

Following the deposition of Archelaus, Judaea, Samaria and Idumaea all came under direct Roman administration. Interestingly enough, Josephus reports that, in the days of Coponius, the first Roman procurator of Judaea (6-9 CE *i.e.*, a very short time after the deposition of Archelaus), some Samaritans secretly entered the Jerusalem Sanctuary on the eve of Passover and scattered human bones in the porticoes of the

¹⁷ J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period*, (London; SCM Press 1969), 353; A. Kasher, "Josephus on Jewish-Samaritan Relations under Roman Rule (BCE 63-CE 70)", in A. D. Crown and L. Davey (ed.), *New Testament Studies of the Société d'Etudes Samaritaines (Vol. 3 & 4), Essays in Honour of G. D. Sixdenier*, (Studies in Judaica No. 5; University of Sidney: Mandelbaum Publishing, 1995), 217-236, esp. 220-223.

¹⁸ B. Hall, "From John Hyrcanus to Baba Rabbah", in A. D. Crown (ed.), *The Samaritans*, 32-54, esp. 35-36; R. T. Anderson and T. Giles, *The Keepers: An Introduction to the History and Culture of the Samaritans*, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 37.

¹⁹ *AJ* XVII, 342-344; *BJ* II, 111.

²⁰ A. Kasher, "Josephus on Jewish-Samaritan Relations under Roman Rule", 223-224.

Temple.²¹ Josephus adds that because of this act of defilement the Jews prohibited Samaritan entry into the Temple of Jerusalem. This act of profanation is usually held to illustrate the Samaritans' deep hatred for the Jewish shrine, and it seems to mark the beginning of a new period of tensions and conflicts between Jews and Samaritans that was to last up to the destruction of Jerusalem. S. Safrai has contended, however, that this very event demonstrates that the Samaritans did patronize the Jerusalem Sanctuary, at least up to the days of Coponius.²² In light of this remark, it could be inferred that the Samaritan profaners of the Jewish Temple sought to condemn and to put an end to such a phenomenon.

A further eruption of violence occurred in the days of the procurator Ventidius Cumanus (48-52 CE), following the killing by Samaritans of some Galilean pilgrims who were heading to Jerusalem. In spite of the complaints of the heads of the Galilean Jews, Cumanus paid little attention to this affair. Consequently, crowds of Jews from Galilee and Jerusalem resolved to take the law into their own hands and attacked a number of Samaritan settlements. Facing a grave state of unrest, Cumanus decided to interfere, and leading his troops against the Jews, he killed many of them and took others prisoners. Meanwhile, both parties appealed to Quadratus, the legate of Syria, each pleading his own cause. The Samaritans protested against the Jewish attacks on their villages, while the Jews blamed the Samaritans for having provoked the disturbance. Having ordered the execution of the Jewish prisoners, Quadratus then sent Cumanus together with several Jewish and Samaritan leaders to plead their cases before the Emperor Claudius. Claudius favoured the Jews, and ordered the Samaritan leaders to be put to death and Cumanus to be sent into exile. Josephus relates this

²¹ *AJ* XVIII, 29-30.

²² S. Safrai, *Pilgrimage at the End of the Second Temple Period*, (Jerusalem: Akadamon, 2nd ed.1985), 100, (in Hebrew).

episode in both his *Jewish War* and in the *Jewish Antiquities*, but it is noteworthy that the two versions present many discrepancies.²³

This incident is also related by Tacitus. Although he does not provide additional information (and even raises a further difficulty), it may be relevant to quote his narrative inasmuch as it illustrates the embittered relationships between Jews and Samaritans; it reads thus:

"The districts [*i.e.*, Judaea and Samaria] had long been at variance, and their animosities were now under the less restraint, as they could despise their regents. Accordingly, they harried each other, unleashed their troops of bandits, fought an occasional field and carried their trophies and their thefts to the procurators."²⁴

The fact that this disturbance broke out in the context of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem is very significant for it concurs in this very respect with *AJ* XVIII, 29-30. It is very clear that the focus of the feud was above all related to the question of the true sanctuary. Furthermore, the readiness of both populations to rally against each other needs to be underlined for it shows how deeply rooted was the mutual feeling of hostility.

Further evidence for the tense relationship between Jews and Samaritans during the first century CE is to be found in the writings of the New Testament. Here the Gospel of Luke reports that the Samaritans refused to receive Jesus for the very reason that he was heading to Jerusalem.²⁵ This account, which will be broadly discussed below, betrays the same type of hostility, rooted in the question of the proper place of

²³ *BJ* II, 232-246; *AJ* XX, 118-136. The discrepancies between these accounts will be discussed below.

²⁴ *The Annals* XII, 54; English translation by J. Jackson in *Tacitus*, (The Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), Vol. 3, 395.

²⁵ Luke 9: 51-56.

worship. Furthermore, in order to illustrate the ongoing bitterness between Jews and Samaritans, a number of scholars usually quote John 4: 9 which reads: "Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans." Similarly, it has also been emphasized that according to John 8: 48, Jews considered the term "Samaritan" to be a grave insult.²⁶

Further literary evidence for Jewish antagonism to Samaritans that was common in this period may be provided by the *Martyrdom of Isaiah*. This apocryphal work is generally held to have been composed in the course of the first century CE in Judaea; some scholars believe that it was originally written in Hebrew. The *Martyrdom of Isaiah* was later integrated into a composite work known as the *Ascension of Isaiah* where it forms the basis of chapters I, 1-III, 12 and V, 1-16.²⁷

The narrative of this work begins with the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah in the last days of the king Hezekiah. Isaiah predicts that Manasseh (Hezekiah's heir) will worship Belial and that he would eventually put him (Isaiah) to death. Following Hezekiah's death and because of Manasseh's persecutions, Isaiah and other prophets take refuge in the desert. He remains there until a false prophet, the Samaritan *Belkira*, who was inspired by the demon Beliar, hands him over to Manasseh. In addition, *Belkira* brings false allegations against Isaiah, accusing him of having

²⁶ It may be relevant to quote here the suggestion of A. Kasher who proposes that Luke 13: 1 ("At that very time there were some present who told him [Jesus] about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.") might be a further indirect allusion to Jewish-Samaritan tensions. In his opinion, this incident probably involved Galilean pilgrims who were travelling through Samaria on their way to Jerusalem ("Josephus on Jewish-Samaritan Relations under Roman Rule", 225). Although such a configuration would concur with the bloody incident mentioned above which occurred in the days of Cumanus, the data provided by Luke 13: 1 is too scanty to enable us to be decisive on this issue.

²⁷ See: M. A. Knibb, "Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah (Second Century B.C.-Fourth Century A.D.) - A New Translation and Introduction", in J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1985), vol. 2, 143-176. This early dating is also supported by R. H. Charles, *The Ascension of Isaiah, Translated from the Ethiopic Version, Which, Together with the New Greek Fragment, the Latin Versions and the Latin Translation of the Slavonic is Here Published in Full, Edited with Introduction, Notes, and Indices*, (London: Black, 1900), xlv and by J. Flemming and H. Duensing, "The Ascension of Isaiah", in E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha*, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), vol. 2. 643.

prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; of having made himself greater than Moses; and of having called Jerusalem "Sodom", and the princes of Judah "the people of Gomorrah". Manasseh therefore condemns the prophet to death: having rejected *Belkira's* advice to recant, Isaiah is sawn in two by a wooden saw.

The anti-Samaritan bias of this text, that focuses on the negative portrait of *Belkira*, is clear, and indeed it is noteworthy that the author of this narrative has devoted a non-negligible part of his work to the description of *Belkira* as a evil-doer coming from Samaria.²⁸ The picture given of *Belkira* echoes and expands I Kings 22 and II Kings 17. Thus, he is said to belong to the family of the false prophet Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah, who was active in the days of King Ahab. Following the invasion of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser, *Belikra* fled from Samaria and came to Jerusalem. There, the servants of Hezekiah accused him of preaching "words of iniquity", and compelled him to flee to Bethlehem and to remain there until Manasseh ascended the throne. It is remarkable that *Belkira's* evil-doings are all related to Jerusalem. As stated above, he is said to have spoken "words of iniquity in Jerusalem", and his false allegations against Isaiah are mostly in connection with Jerusalem. In the light of what has been said earlier, it is clear that this aspect of the portrait of *Belkira* is not fortuitous, and that this text should to be considered as part of the general polemic between Jews and Samaritans about the true holy place.

Likewise, the insistence on *Belkira's* special relation to the demon *Beliar* is remarkable; in this respect, his very name may be seen as related to evil (בזיר-רע) *i.e.*, the Elect of the Devil).²⁹ It may be argued that this element is consistent with the

²⁸ The passages related to *Belkira* are to be found in *Ascension of Isaiah* II, 12-III, 12; V, 1-16. This issue will be further discussed below.

²⁹ See: G. H. Box, "Introduction", in R. H. Charles (ed.), *The Ascension of Isaiah*, (London: SPCK, 1919), xvii.

accusation of the Jews in John 8: 48: "The Jews answered him, [Jesus]: 'Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?' " Thus, it would seem likely that the Jewish allegation that the Samaritans were inspired by demons was common in this period.³⁰

Although one must be cautious when it comes to determine the exact origin of the *Ascension of Isaiah*, it may be relevant to mention here D. Flusser's suggestion that this text is related to the Dead Sea sect.³¹ If this proposition is accepted, the *Martyrdom of Isaiah* would then provide interesting data about the sect's understanding of the Samaritans. Moreover, it would demonstrate still further the deep and general hostility toward the Samaritans that prevailed in the Judaism of the late Second Temple period.

Similarly, the early talmudic literature attests to the mutual hatred between Samaritan and Jews at the beginning of the Common Era. Several scholars assume in this connection that the Mishnaic tractate *Rosh ha-Shana* alludes to some Samaritan malpractices that aimed at disturbing the Jewish religious observance before 70 CE.³² It is reported that the sending out of messengers to the Diaspora (in order to indicate the day of the new moon to Jewish communities outside Israel) was introduced in place of the former system (which consisted in the lighting of torches), because of certain sabotage activities of the Samaritans. Thus, scholars have inferred from this Mishnah that the Samaritans lit beacons at the wrong times in order cause confusion about the date of the new moon.³³

³⁰ In relation to this, we should mention the *Third Book of the Sibylline Oracles* (76) which says that Beliar came from Sebaste/Samaria.

³¹ D. Flusser, "The Apocryphal Book of *Ascensio Isaiae* and the Dead Sea Sect", *IEJ* 3 (1953), 30-47.

³² M. *Rosh ha-Shana* ii, 2: "בראשונה, היו משיאין משואות; משקילקלו הכותים, התקינו שיהו שלוחים יוצאים"

³³ See for instance: B. Hall, "From John Hyrcanus to Baba Rabbah", 36-37; D. Hamm, "What the Samaritan Leper Sees: The Narrative Christology of Luke 17, 11-19", *CBQ* 56 (1994), 273-287, esp.

J. Jeremias considers that the climax of the process of estrangement of the Samaritans was reached on the eve of the Great Revolt.³⁴ Indeed, he ascribes to this period a determinant rule, according to which Samaritan women were considered to be "as menstruants from the cradle"; this enactment amounted to stating that Samaritan women (and in consequence those who cohabit with them: cf. Leviticus 15: 24) remained in a permanent state of impurity.³⁵ The practical consequences of this enactment will be discussed below, but we should note here that this rule placed an extreme limitation on the possibility of physical contacts with the Samaritans.

Jeremias lays stress on the fact that, according to Rav Nahman, this rule was part of the so-called "Eighteen Enactments".³⁶ The Mishna reports that these eighteen rulings were fixed during a discussion held in the upper room of Hananiah b. Hezekiah b. Garon, between the disciples of both Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai. Since Beit Shammai outnumbered Beit Hillel, the "Eighteen Enactments" were decreed according to the *halakha* of Beit Shammai.³⁷ Certainly these rulings were clearly designed to restrict intercourse with non-Jews as much as possible. Whereas Jeremias dates the promulgation of these enactments to the mid-first century CE, M. Hengel ascribes them to the beginning of the First Revolt.³⁸

An interesting parallel has been drawn by Jeremias between the serious implications of the rule for Samaritan women, with whom all contact was prohibited, and the situation that prevailed up to the days of Coponius. As mentioned above, it may be inferred from Josephus' account that in his time and up to the first decade of the first

280. In contradistinction, L. H. Schiffman ascribes this change to the tannaitic period ("Samaritans in Tannaitic Halakhah", *JQR* 75 [1985], 325-350, esp. 345-346 n.90).

³⁴ J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 357.

³⁵ M. Niddah iv, 1; Tos. Niddah v, 1.

³⁶ BT Shabbat 16b-17a. For a discussion of the eighteen enactments see: I. Ben-Shalom, "Eighteen Decrees on a Single Day", in *The School of Shammai and the Zealots' Struggle against Rome*, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1993), 252-272, (in Hebrew).

³⁷ M. Shabbat i, 4.

³⁸ M. Hengel, *The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A.D.*, (Trans. David Smith; Edinburgh: Clark, 1961; reprint, 1989), 203.

century CE, the Samaritans had access, on some occasions, to the inner courts of the Jerusalem Temple. This evolution may fairly be regarded as a radicalization of Jewish attitudes towards the Samaritans (and gentiles too) on the eve of the First Revolt.

In this respect, we may add that a *baraita* recorded in the Babylonian Talmud ascribes to Hananiah b. Hezechiah b. Garon and his followers the authorship of *Megillat Ta'anit*.³⁹ This work enumerates the days on which the Jewish people accomplished glorious deeds: public mourning was forbidden on some of these days, while public fasting was prohibited on all of them.⁴⁰ Although some of these memorial days celebrated events that occurred from the Persian up to the Roman periods, it is now apparent that most of the festivals mentioned in *Megillat Ta'anit* refer to the victories of the Hasmonaean leaders.⁴¹ This calendar, indeed, was aimed at fostering hopes of deliverance for the Jewish people during this period of foreign domination, while the memory of past Jewish victories over heathen powers sharpened the national consciousness.

In light of this, it is noteworthy that the 21st of Kislev was celebrated as the "Day of Gerizim," on which not only public fasting was forbidden, but also public mourning. This feast day most likely recalled the destruction of the Samaritan temple at the

³⁹ BT Shabbat 13b. The later commentary (*Scholium*) on *Megillat Ta'anit*, ascribes the authorship of this work to "R. Eleazar b. Hananiah of the family of Garon" and to his followers; see: V. Noam, *Megillat Ta'anit: Version, Interpretations, History*, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 2003), 132, (in Hebrew). This Eleazar is usually identified with Eleazar the son of Ananias who, as Captain of the Temple, persuaded the officiating priests not to receive sacrifices from any foreigner including Caesar (BJ II, 409-410). Eleazar and his party took a substantial part in the war effort at the beginning of the uprising against the Romans. If we are to accept this tradition, it would appear that *Megillat Ta'anit* was composed early during the Great Revolt. According to another tradition recorded in *Halakhot Gedolot, Hilkot Soferim*, (ed. Venice, 684), the eldest pupils of Shammai and Hillel composed *Megillat Ta'anit* when they went to visit R. Hananiah b. Hezechiah b. Garon.

⁴⁰ See: JT Ta'anit ii, 8, 66a, (col. 717).

⁴¹ A last group of festivals refers more particularly to Pharisees' victories over the Sadducees. It is probable that the list of festivals recorded in the *Megillat Ta'anit* was extended in the course of the second century CE. Thus, for example, the 12th of Adar was celebrated as "Trajan's Day" ("יום טיריון").

hands of John Hyrcanus.⁴² Furthermore, the 25th of Marheshvan was commemorated as the day when "the wall of Samaria was captured", so that this festival also should be related to the military campaign of John Hyrcanus against the Samaritans. Notwithstanding the fact that these festivals were certainly known and celebrated by the people long before the composition of the *Megillat Ta'anit*, it is significant that the authors of this work wished to celebrate the destruction of the Samaritan sanctuary, along with the victories over their enemies.

b- Some nuances and exceptions

Nonetheless, before we draw any decisive conclusion regarding Jewish-Samaritan relations in the course of the first century CE, a word of caution is in order.

In the first place, a general remark must be made concerning the literary sources at our disposal. The Samaritan literature unfortunately can give very little help for the present investigation. This is mainly because the earliest Samaritan liturgical texts (except for the Pentateuch and the Targum) date only to the fourth century CE, while the earliest Samaritan Chronicle was composed around the tenth century CE.⁴³ Given their lateness, these can hardly be used as evidence for the position of the first-century Samaritans towards the Jews. Thus, only the Jewish perspective on this issue is known to us, but we must approach this with great caution, for most our sources turn out to be profoundly tendentious.

In this connection, G. Alon has argued that the general rejection of the Samaritans expressed in the post-biblical literature must be qualified: in his opinion, both

⁴² See for instance: A. D. Crown, "Redating the Schism between the Judeans and the Samaritans", *JQR* 82 (1991), 17-50, esp. 37 n. 73; V. Noam, *Megillat Ta'anit*, 262-265.

⁴³ See J. Macdonald, *The Theology of the Samaritans*, (London: SCM Press LTD, 1964), 40-49; P. Stenhouse, "Samaritan Chronicles", in A. D. Crown (ed.), *The Samaritans*, 218-265.

communities maintained cordial relationships in a number of different areas.⁴⁴ As already noted, Safrai went even further by contending that Samaritans made pilgrimages to the Jerusalem Temple, and that offerings were brought from the land of the Samaritans to the Jewish Sanctuary.⁴⁵

It has similarly been inferred from a ruling recorded in the Mishnah that the Samaritans brought offerings to the Temple. According to this ruling, Samaritans (along with gentiles) were allowed to bring voluntary offerings only to the Jerusalem Temple.⁴⁶ L. H. Schiffman has noted though, that the parallel passage in the Tosefta, which reports a discussion between R. Akiba and R. Yose the Galilean about accepting donations of sacrifices from gentiles, does not refer to the Samaritans. He has therefore inferred that the mention of the Samaritans in the Mishnah was a later addition, which aimed to reduce them to a status similar to that of the pagans.⁴⁷

As already noted, Magen has also presented a more nuanced vision of Jewish-Samaritan relations at the turn of the Common Era. In his view, the discovery of Jewish ritual baths (*miqva'ot*) in ancient Samaritan settlements points to "a strong halakhic link between Jews and Samaritans" from the first century CE onward.⁴⁸

The existence of contacts between Jews and Samaritans in these days may be further documented by the writings of the New Testament. In this connection, Luke is the only one of the synoptic Gospels to report that Jesus came into contact with

⁴⁴ G. Alon, *The Jews in their land in the Talmudic age, 70-640 CE*. Translated and edited by G. Levi, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989), 562.

⁴⁵ S. Safrai, *Pilgrimage at the End of the Second Temple Period*, 45; 99-100.

⁴⁶ M. Shekalim i, 5.

⁴⁷ Tos. Shekalim i, 7, (ed. Lieberman, 202); see: L. H. Schiffman, "Samaritans in Tannaitic Halakhah", 334-337.

⁴⁸ Y. Magen, "Qedumim- A Samaritan Site of the Roman-Byzantine Period", in F. Mann and E. Alliata (ed.), *Early Christianity in Context: Monuments and Documents*, (Collectio Maior 38; Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, 1993), 177.

Samaritans while he was journeying to Jerusalem.⁴⁹ It has been widely concluded from this that Jesus adopted a friendly attitude toward the Samaritans. However, as we shall see below, these accounts are most likely later Lucan compositions, and their allegedly pro-Samaritan bias must be further considered.⁵⁰ Similarly, the Gospel of John recounts that Jesus went to the city of Sychar in Samaria, where he encountered a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.⁵¹ There is reason to think that this passage reflects the situation which prevailed at the time of the writing of the Gospel in the early second century CE.

Lastly, it may be argued that the Book of Acts, which relates the mission of Philip in Samaria, attests to the fact that Jews not only maintained relations with Samaritans, but also visited the territory of Samaria. The eighth chapter of the Book of Acts reports that, following the martyrdom of Stephen, and because of the persecutions against the Jerusalem Church, all the members of the Christian community (apart from the Apostles) scattered throughout Judaea and Samaria.⁵² Thus, Philip, who belonged to Stephen's group, went "to the city of Samaria"⁵³ and preached the Christian faith there with great success.⁵⁴ Accordingly, many were baptized in the name of the "Lord Jesus" including Simon, a wonder-maker who claimed to be "the power of God that is called Great".⁵⁵

Later on, the Church of Jerusalem having heard of Philip's mission to the Samaritans sent Peter and John to Samaria.⁵⁶ Although the account does not specify the exact

⁴⁹ Luke 9: 51-56; 17: 11-19.

⁵⁰ This issue will be discussed later.

⁵¹ John 4: 4-42.

⁵² Acts 8: 1.

⁵³ Acts 8: 5: "εἰς [τὴν] πόλιν τῆς Σαμαρείας".

⁵⁴ Acts 8: 6-8.

⁵⁵ Acts 8: 9-13.

⁵⁶ Acts 8: 14.

reason why they came, the apostles are reported to have laid their hands on the new Samaritan converts and to have prayed that the latter may receive the "Holy Spirit".⁵⁷ The narrative then reports that Peter rebuked a certain Simon for attempting to purchase the "God's gift " with money, and called him to repent.⁵⁸ Lastly, after "Peter and John had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news to many villages of the Samaritans."⁵⁹

The perplexing questions raised by this passage are notorious and there has been sharp disagreement about its value and reliability. Indeed, it is very clear that Acts 8: 5-25 is a composite account. Thus, it has been widely admitted that the author of Acts has assembled together disparate traditions and harmonized them. It has therefore been proposed that different stories, such as Philip's missionary activity in Samaria, Peter's confrontation with Simon Magus, and Peter and John's mission in Samaria were merged together with the author own constructions. However, there is no consensus as to the exact number or the precise nature of these layers of traditions.⁶⁰

Although the question of Luke's understanding of the Samaritans will be examined in the second part of the present investigation, it can be said here that the story of Philip's mission to the Samaritans clearly served the evangelist's apologetic purpose. Indeed, it would seem that, from his point of view, the mission to Samaria was a major breakthrough in the evangelizing activity of the early Church. In the light of this, the validity of the tradition of Philip's activity in Samaria would need to be further questioned.

⁵⁷ Acts 8: 15-17.

⁵⁸ Acts 8: 18-24.

⁵⁹ Acts 8: 25: " πολλὰς τε κώμας τῶν Σαμαριτῶν "

⁶⁰ For recent surveys on this issue see: P. Dickerson, "The Sources of the Account of the Mission to Samaria in Acts 8, 5-25", *NT* 39 (1997), 210-234; V. J. Samkuty, *The Samaritan Mission in Acts*, (London/ New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 18-29.

Several scholars, however, have defended the authenticity of this material. In this connection, G. Lüdemann has pointed out that Luke was in possession of specific material which may be seen as a cycle story about Philip: it is noteworthy that the latter is mentioned on several occasions in the Book of Acts. It has thus been proposed that Luke derived his material on Philip either from Philip himself, or from his daughters when he was in Caesarea.⁶¹ Further arguments in favor of the authenticity of this material have been advanced: R. Scroggs, for instance, has argued that if he had not had a strong tradition to rely on, Luke would have most likely have ascribed the mission to Samaria to a more prominent figure of the early church than Philip.⁶² Thus there is a good case for believing that Luke derived his data about Philip's mission in Samaria from an early and reliable tradition.

As previously noted, Philip was one of seven men appointed by the members of the Church to care for the widows of the Hellenists.⁶³ Although the Book of Acts does not establish a clear link between both groups, the Seven are usually identified with the Hellenists mentioned in Acts 6: 1. It has been commonly admitted that the Hellenists, unlike the Hebrews, represented an anti-legalist trend within the early Church. In this respect, Stephen's speech⁶⁴ is usually held to illustrate the anti-clerical sentiments of this stream. It was precisely on account of his harsh criticism of the Temple that the members of the Sanhedrin stoned Stephen to death⁶⁵ and launched a persecution against the Church of Jerusalem.⁶⁶ Many scholars have argued that this wave of

⁶¹ See for instance: B. Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1998), 280-281; V. J. Samkutty, *The Samaritan Mission in Acts*, 27.

⁶² R. Scroggs, "The Earliest Hellenistic Christianity", in J. Neusner (ed.), *Religion in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdall Goodenough*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 176-206, esp. 198.

⁶³ Acts 6: 5.

⁶⁴ Acts 7: 2-53.

⁶⁵ Acts 7: 57-60.

⁶⁶ Acts 8: 1.

oppression, which quite surprisingly spared the Apostles, was actually merely aimed at the Hellenists.⁶⁷ At any event, it is very significant that Philip's mission to Samaria was provoked by the persecution against the Hellenists, at least, if not against the whole church.

Notwithstanding the indication given in Acts 18 of the outline Luke intends to follow ("you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."), it seems, on *a priori* grounds, that the Church of Jerusalem had not intended to lead a missionary activity in Samaria: Philip appears to have found his way to Samaria because of the persecution. Interestingly enough, this account concurs strikingly with Josephus' statement, according to which:

"And, whenever anyone was accused by the people of Jerusalem of eating unclean food or violating the Sabbath or committing any other such sin, he would flee to the Schechemites, saying that he had been unjustly expelled."⁶⁸

It would thus appear that Philip went to Samaria as a fugitive renegade without being mandated by the Church of Jerusalem.

The location for the activity of Philip remains a moot question and there has been sharp disagreement about the exact meaning of Luke's reference to "a/the city of Samaria".⁶⁹ As Hengel has proposed, this opacity may be ascribed to Luke's lack of

⁶⁷ See for instance: O. Culmann, *The Early Church*, (London: SCM Press, 1956), 190; F.F. Bruce, "The Church of Jerusalem", *Christian Brethren Research Fellowship Journal* 4 (April 1964), 5-14, esp. 9; S. Légasse, "Paul's Pre-Christian Career according to Acts", in R. Bauckham (ed.), *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting; Vol. 4: The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, (Grand Rapids, Mich: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1995), 365-390, esp. 387.

⁶⁸ *AJ* XI, 346. All citations of *Jewish Antiquities*, Books IX-XI are from the Loeb edition, trans. R. Marcus, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

⁶⁹ Acts 8: 5. Several locations have been proposed, among others Sebaste, Shechem, Gitta and Sychar. For a discussion of this issue see: V. J. Samkutty, *The Samaritan Mission in Acts*, 86-97.

exact knowledge of the geography of Samaria.⁷⁰ Because of this indistinctness, Lüdemann has even questioned the identity of the recipients of Philip's preaching: in his opinion, it is not completely clear whether they were Samaritans or gentile inhabitants of Samaria. It may be noted though, that according to the Book of Acts, the mission to the nations started with the conversion of Cornelius in chapter X. It is thus clear that from the vantage point of Luke, the preceding missionary activity were not aimed at pagans. Thus, it is possible to think that Philip's audience in Samaria was not gentile but Samaritan.

In this connection, it has been argued that the positions of the Hellenists on such matters as the rejection of the Temple may have found their echo among the Samaritans.⁷¹ There is, however, a considerable difference between the Hellenists' criticism of the Temple as an institution made with human hands, and the Samaritans' rejection of the Jewish Sanctuary as part of the controversy about the true holy place. At any event, it would seem reasonable to assume that Philip did actually come into contact with Samaritans.

In our opinion, the coming of the apostles to Samaria is more dubious. There is a reasonable *a priori* case for supposing that it was in Luke's interest to associate the Jerusalem Church with the Samaritan mission. In fact, as we shall see later, the Christian movements were not unanimous about the attitude they should adopt towards the Samaritans, so that Luke may have wished to affirm both the validity and the apostolicity of Samaritan Christianity. Accordingly, he probably sought to ascribe the conversion of the Samaritans to the combined actions of the Hellenists and the

⁷⁰ M. Hengel, "The Geography of Palestine in Acts", in R. Bauckham (ed.), *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, 27-78, esp. 76.

⁷¹ O. Cullmann, "L'opposition contre le temple de Jérusalem, motif commun de la théologie johannique et du monde ambiant", *NTS* 5 (1958/1959), 157-173, esp 168.

Apostles. Thus, while Philip had baptized the Samaritans in "the name of the Lord Jesus"⁷², Peter and John prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit, and laid their hands on them. Only then was the Holy Spirit granted to the Samaritans.⁷³ In Luke's opinion, the legitimacy of the Samaritan Church had to be sanctioned by the Jerusalem community.

In any case, if we are to accept that the mission of John and Peter to the Samaritans rests on a genuine tradition, it must be emphasized that their sending to Samaria occurred only after the Church in Jerusalem had heard of Philip's missionary activity. Thus, it would seem that the apostles in Jerusalem had neither planned nor initiated this mission to the Samaritans. Samkutty considers the verb ἀπέστειλαν to imply that Peter and John were sent on an official mission.⁷⁴ It may be proposed, therefore, that the apostles were given with the assignment of inspecting the Christian mission in Samaria.⁷⁵ Likewise, James, as leader of the Church of Jerusalem, sent emissaries to Antioch, most probably in order to investigate the local mixed Jewish-Gentile community.⁷⁶

In this context, J. Jervell has maintained that the conversion of Samaritans did not require the specific justification that was necessary for pagans.⁷⁷ However, this assertion must be further qualified, for the integration of Samaritans in Jewish communities was not self-evident. Although they shared the basic commandments of Mosaic Law with the Jews, there is reason to think that Samaritans were asked to accept some beliefs specific to the Jewish faith. It is necessary to ask what

⁷² Acts 8: 12; 16.

⁷³ Acts 8: 15-17.

⁷⁴ V. J. Samkutty, *The Samaritan Mission in Acts*, 162.

⁷⁵ This view has been expressed by C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), vol. 1, 410.

⁷⁶ Epistle to the Galatians 2: 12.

⁷⁷ J. Jervell, "The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel: The Understanding of the Samaritans in Luke-Acts", in *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 113-132, esp. 124.

requirements were imposed on the new Samaritan converts by the Jerusalem Church. Unfortunately, Luke does not provide any account of the Samaritans equivalent to Acts 15: 20, which tells in detail which obligations fell upon the new pagan converts. It may be conjectured, however, that Peter and John as emissaries of the apostles required from the new Samaritan converts (apart from the belief in resurrection) allegiance to Jerusalem as the seat of the Mother Church. As we shall see later, the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature may bear testimony to the position of the Jerusalem Church towards the Samaritans.

At any event, the missionary activity of Philip in Samaria raises several questions relevant to our investigation: Is this mission to be considered as an isolated event in the general context of reciprocal hostility? Or did it pave the way to the relative rapprochement that occurred between Jews and Samaritans during the Yavneh period? The fact remains that the group to which Philip belonged is most likely to have been a marginal stream within the broad spectrum of Judaism. It would thus seem that these considerations do not suffice to negate the general impression, which arises from the survey of all the available evidence, that a mutual and growing hatred animated Jews and Samaritans in the course of the first century CE.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ A further perplexing case, possibly relevant to our discussion, has been raised by Josephus himself; indeed, the latter reports in his *Life* (269) that he had "friends in Samaria". However, the Samaritans were not the only people living in Samaria, so it impossible to say anything about the precise identity of Josephus' friends given the lack of specific references. S.J. D. Cohen has suggested, though, that these persons were nobles of Samaria: *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development as a Historian*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), 149.

3- The improvement in Jewish-Samaritan relations after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple

Interestingly enough, most of the sources that describe relations between Jews and Samaritans in the decades that followed the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (70 CE) display some kind of appeasement of past tensions, and even seem to depict a rapprochement between the two groups. Although it might be too far-fetched to argue that Jews unanimously advocated a Samaritan-friendly position, there is reason to think that such an attitude was widespread in the early second century CE. In this connection, it must be emphasized that the rapprochement toward the Samaritans is documented by sources originating from various different Jewish circles.

a- Heterogeneous evidence for a Jewish-Samaritan rapprochement:

The early Tannaim and the Samaritans

Numerous scholars have laid stress on the fact that in the early tannaitic period there was a development in the attitude of the rabbis towards the Samaritans.⁷⁹ Indeed, many of the regulations enacted by the rabbis of Yavneh presupposed that the Samaritans were considered to be part of the Jewish people.

Rabban Gamaliel's rulings are particularly favourable to the Samaritans. The talmudic literature records two cases where he expressed such bias. The first passage for

⁷⁹ See for instance: J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 353-354; G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 565; A. Oppenheimer, "L'élaboration de la *halakha* après la destruction du Second Temple", *Annales HSS* 5 (1996), 1027-1055, esp. 1053 = *id.*, *Between Rome and Babylon: Studies in Jewish Leadership and Society*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 2005), 115-144; M. Mor, "The Samaritans and the Bar-Kokhbah Revolt", in A. D. Crown (ed.), *The Samaritans*, 19-31, esp. 22. In opposition to this view, Y. Hershkovitz has argued that in the Second Temple period and soon after the destruction of the Jewish Sanctuary, the rabbis considered the Samaritans to be Jews and trustworthy. In his opinion, a watershed occurred in the days of Rabban Gamaliel, when the rabbis began to see the Samaritans as equivalent to Gentiles ("The Samaritans in Tannaitic Literature", *Yavneh* 2 [1940], 61-105, esp. 63, [Hebrew]). A further position on this issue is provided by Schiffman, who maintains that "the history of Jewish-Samaritan relations from the conquest of Judea by Rome in 63 BCE until the end of the second century CE is one of progressive deterioration."; see: "Samaritans in Tannaitic Halakhah", 349.

consideration recounts that at Kefar Otnai, Rabban Gamaliel pronounced a divorce certificate to be valid, notwithstanding the fact that the two witnesses were Samaritans.⁸⁰ The implications of this decision were far-reaching, for it amounted to an acknowledgment that the Samaritans were like Jews. A. Oppenheimer has noted that, at the same time, the testimony of an *am ha'aretz* (a Jew who does not observe Jewish law properly) was regarded as invalid.⁸¹

The second relevant passage is recorded in the Tosefta. As in the previous account, Rabban Gamaliel recognizes the trustworthiness of the Samaritans in halakhic matters. The statement, which is ascribed to R. Shimon bar Yohai, reads:

"R. Shimon says: '[There are] three enactments with respect to *dema'i* [*i.e.*, doubtful produce which is suspected to be untithed]. Once it happened that our rabbis entered Samaritan towns along the road. They [the Samaritans] brought vegetables before them. R. Akiba hastened to tithe them as certainly untithed produce. Said to him Rabban Gamaliel, 'How are you so bold as to transgress the words of your colleagues?, 'or who gave you permission to tithe?' He [R. Akiba] said to him, 'And have I [thus] established a law in Israel [*i.e.*, set a precedent]?' He [Akiba] said to him, 'I have [merely] tithed my own vegetables.' He [Rabban Gamaliel] said to him, 'Know that you have established a law in Israel by tithing your own vegetables.' And when Rabban Gamaliel came among them [the Samaritans], he declared their grain and their pulse to be *dema'i*, and the

⁸⁰ M. Gittin i, 5; Tos. Gittin i, 4, (ed. Lieberman, 246-247); JT Gittin i, 5, 43c, (col. 1056-1057); BT Gittin 10b. Kefar Otnai, which has been located on the site of the present Megiddo prison, lay on the border of Galilee and Samaria. There is every likelihood that, in the early second century CE, it had a mixed Jewish and Samaritan population. Given this, it is questionable whether Rabban Gamaliel would have enacted such a ruling in a predominantly Jewish area.

⁸¹ A. Oppenheimer, "L'élaboration de la *halakha*", 1053. Oppenheimer adds, however, that witnesses in cases of divorce were usually accepted more easily than witnesses in other matters: cf. *id.*, "Rabban Gamaliel of Yavneh and his circuits of Eretz Israel", in *Between Rome and Babylon*, 145-156, esp. 150.

rest of their produce to be certainly untithed. And when R. Shimon b. Gamaliel came back among them, he saw that they had become corrupted, so he decreed all their produce definitely untithed."⁸²

This narrative echoes a controversy regarding the trustworthiness of the Samaritans in matters of tithing. In parallel, it describes the evolution of the opinion of the Sages regarding the status of Samaritan produce in the course of the second century CE.

Unlike R. Akiba who declared that the produce of the Samaritans definitely required tithing, Rabban Gamaliel seems to have advocated a more lenient position on this issue.

Alon has concluded from Rabban Gamaliel's rebuke of R. Akiba that the latter regarded the Samaritans to be equivalent to Jewish *ammei ha'aretz* (at least in this matter).⁸³ Likewise, Oppenheimer has maintained that by decreeing that the produce of the Samaritans, or at least their grain and their pulse, were not to be tithed as *vadai* (*i.e.*, certainly untithed produce), Rabban Gamaliel equated the Samaritans with the *ammei ha'aretz*.⁸⁴ Similarly, Schiffman believes that, in the days of Rabban Gamaliel, the Samaritans were held to be trustworthy at the least with regard to the food which they themselves consumed.⁸⁵

Notwithstanding Rabban Gamaliel's positive attitude, this historical sequence ends with R. Shimon b. Gamaliel (in the period of Usha) declaring that all the produce of the Samaritans definitely required tithing.

⁸² Tos. Demai v, 24, (ed. Lieberman, 93). Editio princeps reads Rabban Gamaliel in place of R. Shimon b. Gamaliel. We have slightly altered the translation of R. S. Sarason in J. Neusner (ed.), *The Tosefta translated from the Hebrew. First Division: Zeraim*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House INC, 1986), 109-110.

⁸³ G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 564.

⁸⁴ A. Oppenheimer, *The 'Am Ha-aretz: A Study in the Social History of the Jewish People in the Hellenistic-Roman Period*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 231-232; *id.*, "Rabban Gamaliel of Yavneh and his circuits of Eretz Israel", 150.

⁸⁵ L. H. Schiffman, "Samaritans in Tannaitic Halakhah", 344.

However, this passage raises some difficulties. Here Y. Shahar has drawn our attention to the discordance between the attitude ascribed to Rabban Gamaliel, R. Akiba and R. Shimon b. Gamaliel in this passage, and the positions attributed to these three Sages in other talmudic sources. Indeed, elsewhere in the talmudic literature, R. Akiba is reported to have held a favourable opinion about Samaritans, while R. Shimon b. Gamaliel, far from disqualifying the Samaritans, appears to have been a fervent defender of their trustworthiness throughout the talmudic literature.⁸⁶ Shahar contends that the Tosefta betrays an anti-Samaritan bias, as compared with the Mishnah. This bias is clear from the *halakhic* innovations that were added to the original material towards the end of the third century CE. He argues therefore that the redactor of the account in question wished to stress the unfitness of the Samaritan produce and sought to ascribe this ruling to the early tannaitic age.⁸⁷

In light of this proposal, the position of Rabban Gamaliel as reported in our passage needs to be further questioned. In fact, the change of attitude ascribed to the latter appears to be, on closer scrutiny, rather perplexing. Whereas in the first part of the account Rabban Gamaliel seems to consider the Samaritan produce to be *demai*, in the second part, he is said to have stated that apart from their grains and their pulses all the produce of the Samaritans definitely required tithing.

Interestingly enough a similar enactment is reported by R. Judah (in the Ushah period) in the same tractate. This reads:

"Now our rabbis have declared [concerning] all the Samaritan cities which are along the road that [items] like their grain and pulse are *dema'i*

⁸⁶ See for instance: Tos. Terumot iv, 12, (ed. Lieberman, 126): "R. Shimon b. Gamaliel says: 'A Samaritan is like a Jew.'"

⁸⁷ The information cited here is drawn from an unpublished paper of Y. Shahar "The Samaritans in the Mishnah and in the Tosefta: from '*am ha-aretz* to non-Jew", presented at the Sixth Conference of the Société d'Etudes Samaritaines: The Samaritans: Current State of Research, Haifa University, 5-8 July 2004. I am grateful to Dr Y. Shahar for having provided me with a written copy of his article.

produce, since it is presumed to come from the royal hill-country, since they make use of Judea [*i.e.*, Judean produce of this kind], and the rest of their produce is certainly untithed."⁸⁸

The explanation for such a ruling was that the grains and the pulses of the Samaritans were actually purchased from Jews (who were reliable in tithing matters). There is thus a reasonable *a priori* case for supposing that the change ascribed to Rabban Gamaliel actually occurred following the Bar-Kokhba revolt, when the relations between the rabbis and the Samaritans were deteriorating.

If Shahaar's proposition that the redactors of the Tosefta manipulated the material in order to reflect their own anti-Samaritan inclination is to be accepted, it is possible to infer that the composer of Tos. Demai v, 24 felt embarrassed by the first tradition he cited, for it emphasized Rabban Gamaliel's positive attitude toward the Samaritans. Therefore, he probably sought to "correct" this picture by ascribing a further law less favourable to the Samaritans to Rabban Gamaliel. The very fact that this first tradition was mentioned, notwithstanding the embarrassment it caused the author of this account, may strengthen its essential validity.

As previously noted, another eminent rabbi of the period, R. Akiba, is said elsewhere in the talmudic literature, to have adopted a rather positive position toward the Samaritans. Thus, both Talmuds relate a dispute between R. Ishmael and R. Akiba regarding the status of the Samaritans. Whereas the former held that the Samaritans were lion converts (גרי אריות *i.e.*, converted out of fear), the latter sustained that they

⁸⁸ Tos. Demai i, 11, (ed. Lieberman, 64); translation by R. S. Sarason in J. Neusner (ed.), *The Tosefta translated from the Hebrew. First Division: Zeraim*, 78.

were true converts (גרי צדק/גרי אמת). However, the value and reliability of this account has been seriously questioned by modern scholars.⁸⁹

A less controversial tradition recorded in the Mishnah recounts that R. Akiba silenced the pupils of R. Eliezer who declared that their master had prohibited the consumption of Samaritan bread. The attitude ascribed to R. Akiba implies that he permitted the bread of the Samaritans. This very passage demonstrates, however, that the rabbis were not unanimous about what attitude to adopt toward the Samaritans: R. Eliezer here seems to have defended a sharply anti-Samaritan position.⁹⁰ In this context, Schiffman has rightly warned that any attempt to determine the development of tannaitic opinion about the Samaritans must not negate the possibility that a variety of simultaneous trends of thought were expressed by the Sages.⁹¹

At any event, the fact that Rabban Gamaliel has advocated a positive position towards the Samaritans is very significant, especially since he was the head of the first *Beit haVa'ad* recognized by the majority of the Jews as well as by the Roman authorities. In light of this, there is reason to think that R. Eliezer's standpoint was a minority view among the rabbis of Yavneh.

The survey of both the synchronic and diachronic evidence points to a clear evolution in the outlook of the rabbis on the Samaritans. In this respect, the deep contrast between the enactment establishing the Samaritan women's permanent state of impurity which was decreed by the rabbis on the eve of the Great Revolt, and the positive attitude toward the Samaritans ascribed to Rabban Gamaliel is conspicuous.

⁸⁹ JT Gittin i, 5, 43c, (col. 1057); BT Kiddushin 75b. See: L. H. Schiffman, "Samaritans in Tannaitic Halakhah", 327.

⁹⁰ M. Shevi'it viii, 10: "R. Eliezer used to say: 'He that eats the bread of the Samaritans is like to one that eats the flesh of swine.'"; see also: Tos. Pesahim ii, 3, (ed. Lieberman, 145).

⁹¹ L. H. Schiffman, "Samaritans in Tannaitic Halakhah", 326.

The very fact that Rabban Gamaliel entered Samaritan territory⁹² and came into contact with Samaritans, in spite of the strong suspicions about their state of ritual purity, has far reaching implications. It is useful to remember here that in the course of the first century CE only outcast Jews, like Philip, are reported to have had intercourse with Samaritans.⁹³ In contradistinction to this situation, in the early second century CE, the head of a central institution in Jewish society met and interacted with Samaritans.

The "*Paraleipomena Jeremiou*"

A further piece of evidence for consideration, that attests to some sort of rapprochement toward the Samaritans in the early second century CE, is the *Paraleipomena Jeremiou* (i.e., 'The Things Omitted from Jeremiah,' also known as the *Fourth Book of Baruch*= *ParJer*). This apocryphal work used the narrative of the fall of the First Jerusalem Temple and the subsequent Babylonian captivity in order to describe the catastrophe of 70 CE. Accordingly, J. Licht and J. Riaud have dated *ParJer* to the late first century CE, or to the beginning of the second century CE. They ascribe this work to the generation that, believing that the second exile would not last longer than the first, expected the prompt rebuilding of the Temple.⁹⁴ Riaud further points out that the author was intimately acquainted with the topography of Jerusalem, inferring from this that he was probably a Jewish inhabitant of the metropolis.⁹⁵

⁹² According to Josephus (*BJ* III, 48) Samaritan territory stretched from *Ginea* (Ganim, current Jenin) in the north to the Acrabbene toparchy in the south (south of Shechem). The Samaritan settlements which lay along the road that ran through the coastal plain (Tos.Demai v, 24, [ed. Lieberman 93]) were located on the western fringe of the district of Samaria proper.

⁹³ See: *AJ* XI, 346.

⁹⁴ J. Riaud, "Les Samaritains dans *Paralipomena Jeremiae*", in *La littérature Intertestamentaire, Colloque de Strasbourg (17-19 octobre 1983)*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1985), 133-152, esp. 151-152.

⁹⁵ J. Riaud, "Paraleipomena Jeremiou", in M. de Jonge (ed.), *Outside the Old Testament (Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200, Vol. 4)*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 213-230, esp. 215.

Similarly, J. Herzer holds that *ParJer* reflects the situation that prevailed in Judaea on the eve of the Bar-Kokhba Revolt.⁹⁶

On account of their close textual resemblance, it has been argued that *ParJer* was literarily dependent on the *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch* (*2 Baruch*).⁹⁷ This work, which was probably composed towards the end of the first century CE, was principally concerned by the destruction of the Temple and the subsequent exile of the Jews. In spite of its literary dependence on *2 Baruch*, *ParJer* contains some original material, such as a narrative describing the return of the exiled to Jerusalem. On this account, A. M. Denis has defined *ParJer* as belonging to the genre of the historical apocalypses whose main aim was to foretell the coming deliverance.⁹⁸ Eventually, at a later point in time, the original Jewish work of *ParJer*⁹⁹ was revised by Christian hands.¹⁰⁰

The text begins with God's telling Jeremiah of the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the subsequent exile of its people. The prophet is then ordered to accompany his brethren into the Babylonian captivity, after having buried the sacred vessels and cast away the keys of the Temple. Before the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah sends Abimelech, (a eunuch who had rescued him from a cistern) to the orchard of Agrippa, in order to preserve him from the sight of the desolation. There, the eunuch falls asleep and

⁹⁶ J. Herzer, *4Baruch (Paraleipomena Jeremiou)*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2005), xxx-xxxvi.

⁹⁷ See: J. Charlesworth, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research*, (Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series 7; Missoula Montana: Scholars Press for the SBL, 1976), 88-89; J. Herzer, *Die Paralipomena Jeremiae: Studien zu Tradition und Redaktion einer Haggada des frühen Judentums*, (Tübingen: J. B. C. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 1994), 33-77. Riaud is more inclined to assume that both *ParJer* and *Baruch 2* derive from a common source: "*Paraleipomena Jeremiou*", 215.

⁹⁸ A. M. Denis, "Les Genres Littéraires dans les Pseudépigraphes d'Ancien Testament", *JSJ* 13 (1982), 1-5, esp. 3.

⁹⁹ *ParJer* I, 1- IX, 8.

¹⁰⁰ The Christian character of *ParJer*'s ending is unquestionable. Thus, the last verses of this text (IX, 9-32) recount that Jeremiah faints while offering sacrifices in the Temple. After three days, however, he comes back to life again and praises God for the redemption granted through Jesus Christ. Because of this the Jewish populace stones him to death.

awakes sixty-six years later. Meanwhile, Jeremiah receives a letter from Baruch, who had remained in Jerusalem. The letter reports a divine order, according to which the Jews in exile were to return to Jerusalem after they had expelled all foreigners from the people; the disobedient Jews were to become strangers to both Jerusalem and Babylon.¹⁰¹ This injunction is repeated on several occasions throughout the narrative.¹⁰² Chapter VIII, which describes the return of the exiles after the pattern of the Exodus from Egypt, is particularly relevant to our present issue.

The day comes when Jeremiah takes the whole people out of Babylon and leads it to the river Jordan. There, Jeremiah repeats God's command to his people to repudiate their non-Jewish wives, but half of the Jews in mixed marriages refuse to do so, and insist on returning to their city ("τὴν πόλιν ἡμῶν").¹⁰³ Despite this disobedience, Jeremiah makes all the exiles cross the river Jordan and leads them to Jerusalem. But there, Jeremiah, together with Baruch and Abimelech, forbids the disobedient Jews to enter the city.¹⁰⁴ The latter thus decide to return to Babylon which they call "our place" ("τὸν τόπον ἡμῶν"). However they are now turned away by the Babylonians, who deny them access to their city.¹⁰⁵

The text then reads:

"And upon learning this, they [the disobedient Jews] turned back and came to a deserted place far from Jerusalem, and they built a city for themselves and called its name Samaria. But Jeremiah sent to them,

¹⁰¹ *ParJer* VI, 16-17.

¹⁰² *ParJer* VI, 24; VII, 37; VIII, 2-3.

¹⁰³ *ParJer* VIII, 4-5.

¹⁰⁴ *ParJer* VIII, 6-7.

¹⁰⁵ *ParJer* VIII, 8-10.

saying, 'Repent, because the angel of righteousness is coming, and he will lead you to your exalted place.'¹⁰⁶

Although this group of disobedient Jews is not given a name, the naming of their city as "Samaria" allows us to identify them with the Samaritans. The portrayal of the Samaritans in this text, which is grounded on diverse biblical traditions, echoes some anti-Samaritan themes, such as disobeying God's command. Furthermore, as in Josephus' works, *ParJer* links the problem of mixed marriages as raised in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, to the founding of Samaria.¹⁰⁷

However, on closer scrutiny it would seem that this free combination of different accounts has allowed the author of *ParJer* to develop his own understanding of the Samaritans. Thus, whereas the traditions derived from II Kings 17: 24 presented the Samaritans as being a heathen population, *ParJer* has depicted them as a mixed Jewish-Gentile group of people. In the view of several scholars, this account demonstrates a positive angle on the Samaritans.¹⁰⁸ In this context, Herzer presumes that it was important for the author of this text to preserve the original relationship between Jews and Samaritans.¹⁰⁹

The Samaritans' kinship with the people of Israel is further implied by Jeremiah's call for repentance. The verb "μετανοεῖν" states the condition for the Samaritans' return: if they listen to God's command, the disobedient dwellers of Samaria will to be brought to their "exalted place" ("τὸν τόπον ὑμῶν ὑψηλόν") by the "angel of righteousness".

The ambiguity of the wording "exalted place" has been underlined by Herzer, who

¹⁰⁶ *ParJer* VIII, 8-9. For the translation see: J. Herzer, *4 Baruch (Paraleipomena Jeremiou)*, 1-39, esp. 33.

¹⁰⁷ *AJ* XI, 306.

¹⁰⁸ See: J. Riaud, "Les Samaritains dans *Paralipomena Jeremiae*"; J. Herzer, *Die Paralipomena Jeremiae*, 129-143; *id.*, *4Baruch (Paraleipomena Jeremiou)*, 139.

¹⁰⁹ *4Baruch (Paraleipomena Jeremiou)*, 137.

assumes that this expression refers both to the earthly and to the heavenly Jerusalem.¹¹⁰ Thus, from the vantage point of the author of *ParJer*, the Samaritans, if they repent, can not only be reintegrated into the people of God, but will also participate in the impending salvation. In Riaud's opinion, the author of *ParJer*, who was living in the certainty that the exiled Jews would speedily return to Zion, thought that the Samaritans should also return if they fulfilled the conditions. Riaud further assumes that "repentance," as envisaged in *ParJer*, meant principally the renouncement of Mount Gerizim and the acceptance of Jerusalem as the only place of worship.¹¹¹

At any event, the positive attitude of this work toward the Samaritans is clear, and it is in line with the contemporary attitude of Rabban Gamaliel on this issue.

Contacts between the first Christians and the Samaritans

The Jewish-Samaritan rapprochement in the period between the two revolts against the Romans is further documented by the New Testament writings. In fact, we have every reason for believing that the Gospel of John attests to the existence at the time of its redaction of a mixed Jewish-Samaritan church.

It has been often pointed out that the Samaritans are a subject of special interest to John. Therefore, notwithstanding the patristic evidence which links the origins of the Fourth Gospel to the Gentile Community of Ephesus,¹¹² numerous studies have defended the view that some of the Johannine traditions were developed at an early time in Christian communities in Galilee and Samaria.¹¹³ It has even been contended that the Gospel of John in its entirety was the product of the Samaritan Christian

¹¹⁰ *4Baruch (Paraleipomena Jeremiou)*, 133.

¹¹¹ J. Riaud, "Les Samaritains dans *Paralipomena Jeremiae*", 150.

¹¹² Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* III, 1, 1, (PG 7[1], col. 845).

¹¹³ See for instance: W. A. Meeks, *The Prophet King*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), 314-316.

church.¹¹⁴ Other scholars have argued that this work was aimed at attracting Samaritans to Christianity;¹¹⁵ J. Bowman has further conjectured that it was designated to appeal to the members of the Dosithean Samaritan sect.¹¹⁶

It seems to us, however, that the arguments in favour of Samaritan influence on the Fourth Gospel need further consideration. In this context, B. Hall has stressed that John 4: 4-42 is the only account in the whole of this gospel which is set in Samaria.¹¹⁷ Accordingly, within the framework of the present investigation, we will avoid drawing general conclusions about the alleged Samaritan character of the Fourth Gospel, and will concentrate on John 4: 4-42 only. J. P. Meier indeed, considers this account to be "the most explicit and well-informed passage about Samaritans in the New Testament."¹¹⁸

The passage relates Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob next to the city of Sychar.¹¹⁹ In the course of their conversation, Jesus succeeds in overcoming the obstacle of the controversies between Jews and Samaritans by expounding the faith he brings. Thus, by the end of their dialogue, the Samaritan

¹¹⁴ G. W. Buchanan, "The Samaritan Origin of the Gospel of John", in J. Neusner (ed.), *Religion in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdall Goodenough*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 149-175.

¹¹⁵ See for instance: E. D. Freed, "Did John Write His Gospel Partly to Win Samaritan Converts?", *NT* 12 (1970), 241-256.

¹¹⁶ J. Bowman, "The Identity and Date of the Unnamed Feast of John 5: 1", in H. Goedicke (ed.), *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), 43-56, esp. 45-47.

¹¹⁷ B. Hall, "Some Thoughts about Samaritanism and the Johannine Community", in *New Testament Studies of the Société d'Etudes Samaritaines (Vol. 3 & 4)*, 208-215, esp.210. Likewise, M. Pamment has called into question the significance of Samaritan influence on the Fourth Gospel by arguing that many of the similarities between its Johannine thought and Samaritanism can be explained by the use of common scriptures ("Is there Convincing Evidence of Samaritan Influence on the Fourth Gospel ?", *ZNW* 73 [1982], 221-230).

¹¹⁸ J.P. Meier, "The Historical Jesus and the Historical Samaritans: What Can Be Said?", *Biblica* 81 (2000), 202-232, esp. 229.

¹¹⁹ According to the overwhelming view, Sychar was located in the close vicinity of Shechem; see for instance: Y. Aharoni and M. Avi-Yonah, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*, (New-York: The Macmillan Company, 3rd revised ed. 1993.), map 236; Y. Tsafir et al. (ed.), *Tabula imperii Romani: Iudaea Palaestina: Eretz Israel in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods : maps and Gazetter*, (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994), 238 and maps; A. Curtis (ed.), *The Oxford Bible Atlas*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 4th ed. 2007), 151.

woman expresses her belief in Jesus and alerts her fellow Samaritans that the Messiah has come. Afterwards, Jesus remains among the Samaritans for two days and many of them come to believe in him.

The scholarly controversies over the competing narratives in John 4: 4-42 and Acts 8: 5-25 are notorious: while the Book of Acts account ascribes the first Christian mission in Samaria to Philip, John recounts that it was Jesus himself who won over his first Samaritan followers.¹²⁰ Facing this difficulty, many scholars have assumed that John 4: 4-42 actually reflects the later historical context of the Johannine community.¹²¹ The origin and significance of this passage have sparked off an intense debate among scholars.

An interesting suggestion regarding John 4: 4-42 has been proposed by J. Zangenberg. Although he favours a Palestinian origin for this tradition, Zangenberg has seriously questioned its supposed Samaritan provenance. In his view, it would be misleading to infer from this account that the Johannine community was identical with the Christian group at Sychar. He is more inclined to believe that Sychar was the seat of a Christian congregation that came in contact with Johannine Christians. The dealings with the Sycharite community would have provoked dissensions within the Johannine group which were most likely related to the dubious state of ritual cleanness of the Samaritans. Zangenberg thinks that John 4: 4-42 was designed to overcome these internal difficulties by presenting the people of Sychar as true Christians, which

¹²⁰ As we shall see later John 4: 4-42 stands in even stronger contradiction to Matthew 10: 5.

¹²¹ See for instance: O. Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle*, (London: SCM, 1976), 48; R. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 36; J. Zangenberg, "Open Your Eyes and Look at the Fields': Contacts between Christians and Samaria according to the Gospel of John", in V. Morabito, A. D. Crown and L. Davey (ed.), *Samaritan Researches Volume 5. Proceedings of the Congress of the SES (Milan July 8-12 1996) and of the Special Section of the ICANAS Congress (Budapest July 7-11 1997)*, (Studies in Judaica 10; Sydney: Mandelbaum Publishing 2000), 3.84-3.94, esp. 3. 89.

would imply that this work was only intended for internal use. Zangenberg's thesis is attractive, but it fails to take into account the aspects of this passage which appeal especially to Samaritans.

In opposition to his claim, several studies have related the inclusion of John 4: 4-42 in the Fourth Gospel to the probable presence of Samaritan converts within the Johannine community.¹²² We also conclude that the community within which John 4: 4-42 was composed would have comprised both Jewish and Samaritan members. In our opinion, the implications of this account were far-reaching. Indeed, it may have aimed at defining a *modus vivendi* between the two elements of this mixed Jewish-Samaritan congregation.

In this context, it is significant that this account includes traditions shared by both Jews and Samaritans, together with controversial issues that divided them. In the first place, the Samaritan woman's reference to Jacob as "our father (τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν)"¹²³ needs to be underlined. Indeed, if we are to take "ἡμῶν" as referring to both Jesus and the woman, this formulation puts a powerful emphasis on the common origin shared by Jews and Samaritans. In the light of this, it may be inferred that the author of these lines rejected the widespread belief that the Samaritans were descended from heathen settlers.

A close look at the passage in question reveals that a number of topics which were the subject of contention between Jews and Samaritans are brought up here, either explicitly or implicitly. However, Jesus, by his declarations and conduct, eventually succeeds in transcending these divisions and finding a common base for both Jews

¹²² See: W. A. Meeks, *The Prophet King*, 318-319; R. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 25-47; B. Hall, "Some Thoughts about Samaritanism and the Johannine Community", 211 n. 7.

¹²³ John 4: 12.

and Samaritans to be part of a common congregation. It is noteworthy that certain elements of this account would appeal especially to a Jewish audience, while others are addressed to Samaritan converts.

We have every reason for believing that the behaviour of Jesus and his disciples in John 4: 4-42 would have had a very specific resonance for Christians of Jewish origins. Indeed, in the first and second centuries CE, Jews felt particularly concerned by the questions of ritual purity raised by dealings with Samaritans. In this respect, D. Daube has shown that, according to strict Pharisaic regulations, Jesus had incurred defilement by his very encounter with the Samaritan woman.¹²⁴ In fact, in accordance with the above-mentioned decision of the assembly between *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shammai*, the "daughters of the Samaritans" were considered menstruously unclean from birth.¹²⁵ Such an enactment had far reaching implications, for it implied that not only were Samaritan women thought to be in a permanent state of impurity, but also their relatives and possessions. Thus we read in Leviticus, chapter fifteen (19-24):

"When a woman has a discharge of blood that is her regular discharge from her body, she shall be in her impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. Everything upon which she lies during her impurity shall be unclean; everything also upon which she sits shall be unclean. Whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. Whoever touches anything upon which she sits shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening; whether it is the bed or anything upon

¹²⁴ D. Daube, "Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: The Meaning of συγγράομαι", *JBL* 69 (1950), 137-147. See also: W. Munro, "The Pharisee and the Samaritan in John: Polar or parallel?", *CBQ* 57 (1995), 710-728, esp. 714.

¹²⁵ M. Niddah iv, 1; Tos. Niddah v, 1.

which she sits, when he touches it he shall be unclean until the evening. If any man lies with her, and her impurity falls on him, he shall be unclean for seven days; and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean."

Jesus's behavior appears all the more significant in light of these legal prescriptions: by asking the Samaritan woman for a drink he showed himself ready to be defiled by a polluted vessel.¹²⁶ The woman's response is very revealing on this issue: "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?"¹²⁷ Daube has further argued that the following parenthetical phrase "οὐ γὰρ συγγρῶνται Ἰουδαῖοι Σαμαρίταις" which is often translated as "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans", is more likely to express the idea that Jews do not use utensils in common with Samaritans because of considerations of purity.¹²⁸ On closer perusal, it is clear that the vessels of the Samaritan woman were not the only vehicle of impurity. The passage clearly states that Jesus sat by the well from which the woman used to draw water. Thus, in accordance with the above-mentioned regulations from Leviticus, Jesus would have become unclean from this physical contact. Moreover, merely by speaking with a Samaritan woman, he would have incurred the risk of becoming defiled by her spittle, which was considered to be highly contaminating.¹²⁹

Similarly, Jesus' subsequent encounter with Samaritan men¹³⁰ was problematic with respect to the purity laws. In fact, the above-mentioned regulation implied that, since Samaritan women were considered to be perpetually menstruants, their husbands were

¹²⁶ The evidence that the vessel hold by "one with a discharge" was considered to be a vector of impurity is found in Leviticus 15: 12 ("Any earthen vessel that the one with the discharge touches shall be broken; and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water").

¹²⁷ John 4: 9.

¹²⁸ Daube upholds that in John 4: 9 the verb συγγράομαι is not to be rendered as "to associate with" or "to have dealings with" but signifies "to use something together with another person" ("Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: The Meaning of συγγράομαι ", 143).

¹²⁹ M. Tohorot v, 8. See also: Tos. Niddah v, 3 (BT Niddah 33b) which refers to the case of clothing defiled by the spittle of a menstruant.

¹³⁰ John 4: 40.

therefore under suspicion of having been defiled by them. Consequently, any contact with a Samaritan (either male or female) incurred defilement, while any place where a Samaritan had lain or sat was levitically impure. The corollary of this was that just being present the land of the Samaritans rendered a Jew unclean.

There is also a further consideration. It is remarkable indeed that, according to the narrative, Jesus and his disciples showed themselves ready to eat Samaritan food. Thus, the disciples are reported to have "gone to the city to buy food";¹³¹ later on, when they came back, they "were urging him [Jesus], Rabbi, eat something."¹³² It may be added that the very fact that Jesus stayed for two days with the Samaritans¹³³ implies that he shared their food. As already noted, the status of Samaritan food was a much debated question in those days, and Jesus' position on this issue may be compared to that of Rabban Gamaliel who, in similar circumstances, showed himself ready to eat the vegetables offered by Samaritans.

In the light of these considerations, we are inclined to believe that the author of this account sought to break through the prejudices and suspicions which prevented Jews from dealing with Samaritans. Thus, Jesus' openness toward the woman and her brethren was to demonstrate that the Samaritans were ritually clean. The narrative itself implies that the lenient attitude ascribed to Jesus with regard to the restrictive purity regulations caused surprise within Jewish circles. Thus, we read that the disciples "were astonished that he [Jesus] was speaking with a woman."¹³⁴ Similarly, the woman's amazement when Jesus spoke to her may reflect the unusualness of such a situation.

¹³¹ John 4: 8.

¹³² John 4: 31.

¹³³ John 4: 40.

¹³⁴ John 4: 27.

If then we are to accept that this text was designed for a mixed Jewish-Samaritan congregation, there is a further consideration to be taken into account. It is noteworthy that this account has drawn on the recurrent biblical motif of an encounter at a well, and most specifically from Genesis 24: 10-21, which tells of the meeting of Abraham's servant with Rebecca, when he was sent to look for a wife for Isaac. M. E. Boismard, who has underlined this parallelism, has noted that throughout the Hebrew Bible wells and springs are places where intimate relationships begin.¹³⁵ Would it be too far-fetched to propose that, by using this pattern, the author of John 4: 4-42 sought to defend the legitimacy of marital unions between Jews and Samaritans?

The elements of this narrative which seem to be specifically addressed to a Samaritan audience are dealt with more explicitly. In the first place, the setting of the account in Samaria and the few topographical details it contains¹³⁶ presumably had strong resonances for Samaritans. Similarly, the emphasis put on the links between these locales and the patriarchs must have had significance for them.¹³⁷

The dialogue with the Samaritan woman, also, gives the evangelist the opportunity to appeal more directly to the Samaritans and to express his own theological position through the mouth of Jesus. This peculiar exchange, which may be sub-divided in four parts, opens with the exposition of "living water"¹³⁸, a concept which derives from Johannine theology but is not directly relevant to our research. The following allusion to the five husbands of the Samaritan woman is more enigmatic.¹³⁹ Here, in

¹³⁵ M. E. Boismard, "Aenon, près de Salem (Jean, III, 23)", *RB* 80 (1973), 218-229, esp. 223. Other similar parallelisms are to be found in Genesis 29: 2-12, which relates Jacob's encounter with Rachel at the well in Haran and Exodus 2: 15-17, which narrates Moses' meeting with the daughters of Jethro at a well in the land of Midian.

¹³⁶ John 4: 5- 6.

¹³⁷ John 4: 5- 6; 12.

¹³⁸ John 4: 7-15.

¹³⁹ John 4: 16-19.

the course of their conversation, Jesus shows his miraculous knowledge of the fact that the Samaritan woman has had five husbands and that her current partner is not her husband. It has been proposed that these "five spouses" refers to the people coming from the five different districts which were established in Samaria after the Assyrian conquest.¹⁴⁰ In this view, the very use of the word "husband" betrays a Hebrew pun on the word *ba'al* (בעל) used to mean both husband and the pagan deities. Thus, this play on words would hint at the foreign gods the new settlers brought with them.¹⁴¹ It has further been suggested that the current partner of the woman who is not her husband¹⁴² is an allegorical figure of the incorrect worship of the God of Israel allegedly practised by the Samaritans.¹⁴³ Thus, the evangelist would appear to be urging the Samaritans to abandon their supposed unlawful cult.

This explanation is problematic, since it contradicts John's emphasis on the common descent of Jews and Samaritans.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, this sort of allegorical identification would have undermined the evangelist's efforts to convince his Jewish audience that the Samaritans were ritually clean.¹⁴⁵ Other interpretations have also been advanced, proposing that this account refers to the historical past of the Samaritans.¹⁴⁶ However, we prefer to adopt a more cautious attitude to this passage, whose meaning may defy complete explanation. It may simply be considered as a literary device used by the

¹⁴⁰ II Kings 17: 24. This proposal has been favored, among others, by O. Cullmann, *The Early Church*, (London: SCM Press, 1956), 187-188; M. E. Boismard, "Aenon, près de Salem (Jean, III, 23)", 225-226.

¹⁴¹ *AJIX*, 288.

¹⁴² John 4: 18.

¹⁴³ See for instance: R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John I-XII*, (Anchor Bible 29; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966), 171.

¹⁴⁴ Cf John 4: 12: "our father Jacob".

¹⁴⁵ Likewise, R. Bultman has seriously questioned the identification of the five husbands with the gods of the foreign settlers of Samaria, by arguing that the biblical account listed seven divinities (and not five) some of which bear a feminine name (*The Gospel of John: A commentary*, [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971], 188 n. 3).

¹⁴⁶ W. Munro, for instance, has conjectured that the husbands may symbolize the different empires which successively dominated Samaria in the course of history and their gods; accordingly the sixth husband would be a figure of Roman rule and the imperial cult: "The Pharisee and the Samaritan in John: Polar or parallel?", 720-721.

evangelist to expose Jesus' power of knowing, on the strength of which the woman identifies him as a prophet.

Our account also raises the cardinal question of the true holy site.¹⁴⁷

In reply to the woman's query about the proper place of worship¹⁴⁸, Jesus rejects the validity of both Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim: the worship in "spirit and truth" which he introduces is aimed at overcoming the old controversy between Jews and Samaritans. Indeed, John 4: 21 seems to equate the destruction of both the Jewish and the Samaritan temples. This analogy must signify that both events, far from being coincidental, were part of a divine plan leading to the institution of the new cult by Jesus. Although this contentious point concerned the Samaritans as much as the Jews, it is noteworthy that the question of the true place of worship is introduced by John from a glaringly Jewish perspective. Jesus is explicitly identified as a Jew¹⁴⁹ and it is as such that he is questioned by the Samaritan woman.¹⁵⁰ Thus, this account was designed for a Samaritan audience, but it was aimed at urging Samaritans to abandon the worship at Gerizim. This proviso is also to be found elsewhere in the rabbinical and Jewish Christian literature.¹⁵¹ John's position, however, presents a major difference from these, for it does not require the Samaritans to venerate Jerusalem. X

A further perplexing question is raised by Jesus' declaration that "salvation is from the Jews".¹⁵² This phrase implies that, from John's vantage point, the Samaritans should accept certain religious elements that were peculiar to the Jews. The context of this

¹⁴⁷ John 4: 20- 24.

¹⁴⁸ John 4: 20.

¹⁴⁹ John 4: 9.

¹⁵⁰ John 4: 20 "but you [ὁμοίως] say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem"

¹⁵¹ This point will be dealt with subsequently.

¹⁵² John 4: 22.

declaration may suggest that Jesus was alluding to the Jewish cult as opposed to the Samaritan one. However, on closer perusal, it would seem very improbable that Jesus was actually praising the worship of the Jerusalem Temple.

It may be possible that he was referring to the Jewish scriptures here, and especially to the Books of the Prophets that were rejected by the Samaritans. These writings, on the basis of which the early Christians elaborated and expounded their Christology, were fundamental for the Christian faith. Furthermore, most of the evidence for the belief in the resurrection, which was denied at this time by mainstream Samaritanism, was to be found in the Prophetic literature. It was therefore essential for the Christian missionaries in Samaria to get the Samaritans to accept at least part of the Jewish Scriptures. Zangenberg, for his part, holds that this phrase was a reminder of the special eschatological role ascribed to the tribe of Judah according to one interpretation of Genesis 49: 10.¹⁵³ Lastly, it may be proposed that Jesus, by claiming that salvation was from the Jews, was referring to his own Jewish origins. It is indeed quite likely that Christians of Samaritan origin felt uneasy with the fact that their redeemer had Jewish origins, so that it was necessary to justify Jesus' Jewish roots to them.

The next important issue that is dealt with in the dialogue is that of the person of the Messiah.¹⁵⁴ This topic has actually been brought up progressively throughout the whole conversation. Meier, indeed, has pointed out that the understanding of the woman evolves in the course of her encounter with Jesus: she refers to him successively as "a Jew"¹⁵⁵, "Lord"¹⁵⁶, "a prophet"¹⁵⁷ and "the Messiah"¹⁵⁸. The climax

¹⁵³ J. Zangenberg, "Open Your Eyes and Look at the Fields", 92-93.

¹⁵⁴ John 4: 25-26.

¹⁵⁵ John 4: 9.

¹⁵⁶ John 4: 11.

of this progression is reached when the Samaritans recognize in Jesus the "Saviour of the world".¹⁵⁹ Interestingly enough, this account reveals some elements of Samaritan teleology or at least shows the Samaritans had eschatological expectations that Jesus, according to John, came to fulfill. Thus, the Samaritan woman said to Jesus: "I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us"¹⁶⁰; the same belief is further expressed when she tells her brethren: "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?"¹⁶¹

Because of the paucity of the literary evidence, it is very difficult to outline the Samaritan eschatology of the first and second century CE. However, there is a further account which may attest to the existence of eschatological expectations among the Samaritans at the time. Josephus recounts that, in the days of Pontius Pilatus, a man promised a number of Samaritans that he would show them the sacred vessels that Moses had buried on Mount Gerizim. However, in the event, Roman forces crushed the Samaritans who had gathered there before they even climbed the mountain.¹⁶²

In Hall's view, we cannot infer from this passage that there were messianic expectations at this time among the Samaritans.¹⁶³ However, this gathering is strikingly similar to a number of other uprisings that took place around that time in Judaea, whose messianic character is obvious.¹⁶⁴ It is not unreasonable to assume that

¹⁵⁷ John 4: 19.

¹⁵⁸ John 4: 29.

¹⁵⁹ John 4: 42; see: J.P. Meier, "The Historical Jesus and the Historical Samaritans", 228.

¹⁶⁰ John 4: 25.

¹⁶¹ John 4: 29.

¹⁶² *AJ* XVIII, 85-89.

¹⁶³ B. Hall, "From John Hyrcanus to Baba Rabbah", 39.

¹⁶⁴ See for instance: *AJ* XX, 169-172: "At this time there came to Jerusalem from Egypt a man who declared that he was a prophet and advised the masses of the common people to go out with him to the mountain called the Mount of Olives... For he asserted that he wished to demonstrate from there that at his command Jerusalem's wall would fall down, through which he promised to provide them an entrance into the city. When Felix heard of this... he fell upon the Egyptian and his followers..... " For a complete survey of this issue see: F. Dexinger, "Josephus Ant. 18, 85-87 und der Samaritanische

the Samaritans, following their Jewish neighbours, occasionally succumbed to an eschatological fever.

It has been claimed that, as early as the first century CE, the Samaritans awaited the coming of an eschatological figure, the *Taheb* (often translated as the "restorer" or the "returning one"). Unfortunately, most of what is known on this issue is derived from later writings like the *Memar Marqah* and other medieval works.¹⁶⁵ It may be cautiously assumed, though, that first and second century Samaritans grounded their eschatological beliefs on the Pentateuch alone. In this regard, Deuteronomy 18: 18, which promises the coming of a prophet like Moses, must have been extremely important to the Samaritans; this verse, indeed, has been added to the Samaritan Decalogue after Exodus 20: 19.¹⁶⁶

Although very little is known of Samaritan eschatology at the dawn of the Common Era, it may be safely assumed that the Samaritans (unlike the Jews) did not expect the coming of a royal Davidic figure. In light of this consideration, M. Pamment considers it very unlikely that the Samaritan woman would have expressed her expectance of a *Messiah*, thus, she infers that John was not acquainted with Samaritan beliefs.¹⁶⁷ However, it is remarkable that "Messiah" is not the only eschatological title ascribed to Jesus in this account. In fact, as already noted, he is also recognized as "a prophet" and the "Saviour of the world". We are inclined to believe that the author, in referring to these various titles, sought to state the Christian faith in a form acceptable to both the Jewish and the Samaritan elements of his community. It was necessary for

Taheb", in A. Tal and M. Florentin (ed.), *Proceedings of the First International Congress of the Société d'Etudes Samaritaines*, (Tel Aviv: Chaim Rosenberg School for Jewish Studies, University of Tel Aviv, 1991), 49-60.

¹⁶⁵ For a survey of the Samaritan eschatology, see: F. Dexinger, "Samaritan Eschatology", in A. D. Crown (ed.), *The Samaritans*, 266-292, esp. 272-276.

¹⁶⁶ The significance of this verse is further illustrated by Meeks, who has maintained that certain Samaritan (and Jewish) circles developed a theology (and eschatological concepts) based on the representation of Moses as the prototypical King and Prophet of Israel (*The Prophet King*, 286).

¹⁶⁷ M. Pamment, "Is there Convincing Evidence of Samaritan Influence on the Fourth Gospel?", 223.

him to make his teaching intelligible to the Samaritans without jeopardizing the basic tenets of Christianity: the messianic status of Jesus was not to contradict his identification with the prophet like Moses awaited by the Samaritans.

We must also examine the particular qualities attributed to Jesus in John 4: 4-42. The emphasis put on Jesus' power of knowing¹⁶⁸ is particularly intriguing and we note that it corresponds to what the woman knows of the coming Messiah: "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us."¹⁶⁹ If we are to accept that John sought to portray Jesus in terms corresponding with the Samaritan beliefs and expectations, it would be reasonable to assume that the eschatological figure awaited by the Samaritans was to reveal heavenly mysteries. Although caution is needed when using later Samaritan sources, it should be noted that the *Memar Marka* counts the revelation of divine secrets as one of the characteristics of Moses' prophetic function.¹⁷⁰

The portrayal of Jesus as instituting worship "in spirit and truth" also needs to be further considered.¹⁷¹ In this connection, it may be relevant to quote Meeks' conclusion on the above-mentioned story of a Samaritan uprising in the days of Pilate. In his opinion, the man who promised to recover the buried sacred vessels wished to restore the worship on Mount Gerizim; Meeks has inferred from this that there was at the time a Samaritan expectancy that their proper cult would soon be re-established.¹⁷² In light of this, it may be argued that Jesus fulfilled (but in a radically different way) the hopes of the Samaritans by establishing a new way of worshipping the Father.

In sum, we are inclined to believe that John 4: 4-42 represents an attempt to delineate the outline of a mixed Jewish-Samaritan community. Thus, this account had a twofold

¹⁶⁸ John 4: 18-19, 29, 39.

¹⁶⁹ John 4: 25.

¹⁷⁰ W. A. Meeks, *The Prophet King*, 223-226.

¹⁷¹ John 4: 21-24.

¹⁷² *The Prophet King*, 247-250.

aim: In the first place, it was designed to overcome the Jews' reluctance to deal with Samaritans, by depicting Jesus disregarding the prejudices about their alleged ritual impurity. Secondly, it was intended to make the Christian faith accessible and relevant to the Samaritans without betraying its fundamental principles.

b -The basis for this historical evolution

The survey of the synchronic and diachronic evidence points to an evolution in the relationships between Jews and Samaritans in the course of the first two centuries of the Common Era. Thus, a sort of rapprochement between the two groups in the period between the Great Revolt and the Bar-Kokhba revolt can be documented in Jewish sources of varying religious provenances. It seems reasonable to seek the causes of this development in the Great Revolt and its wider consequences.

In relation to this, Alon has laid stress on a new phenomenon which arose after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, *i.e.*, the appearance of settlements with a mixed Jewish and Samaritan population.¹⁷³ Kefar Otnai, where Rabban Gamaliel went, was most probably one of these places where Jews and Samaritans lived together.¹⁷⁴ A further example of such co-existence, though more unusual, may have been the community in which John 4: 4-42 was composed. Alon, followed by I. Gafni and Y. Magen, has estimated that from this period onwards, the Samaritans began to settle outside their traditional territory, which stretched no farther than En-Ganim.¹⁷⁵ This development may explain the existence of mixed settlements in the areas bordering on Samaria.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 563.

¹⁷⁴ M. Gittin i, 5; Tos. Gittin i, 4, (ed. Lieberman 246-247); JT Gittin i, 5, 43c, (col. 1056-1057); BT Gittin 10b.

¹⁷⁵ Modern Jenin; BJ III, 48.

¹⁷⁶ G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 563; I. Gafni, *Relations between the Jews and the Samaritans in the Mishna and Talmudic Periods*, (MA Thesis, Hebrew University, 1969), 5; 8, (in Hebrew); Y.

development may explain the existence of mixed settlements in the areas bordering on Samaria.¹⁷⁶

It has been also suggested that the improvement in Jewish-Samaritan relations may be attributed to the putative participation of the Samaritans in the Great Revolt.¹⁷⁷

Josephus relates that, in the course of the uprising, some Samaritans assembled on Mount Gerizim in a spirit of rebellion. Warned of this, Vespasian sent his general Cerealis to suppress what he considered to be sedition.¹⁷⁸ However, it seems impossible to infer from this account that the insurrectionary activities of the Samaritans were co-ordinated with the Jewish uprising.¹⁷⁹ At the most, it may be proposed that their common loathing for the Roman power contributed to bridge the gap between Jews and Samaritans. In this context, it is possible that the founding of the city of Flavia Neapolis in the immediate vicinity of Shechem¹⁸⁰ made the Roman yoke more unbearable for the Samaritans.¹⁸¹

Similarly, there is a strong case for assuming that the destruction of the Jewish Sanctuary profoundly altered the relations between Jews and Samaritans. It would be misleading to consider that this capital event only affected the Jews. In fact, it is more

¹⁷⁶ G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 563; I. Gafni, *Relations between the Jews and the Samaritans in the Mishna and Talmudic Periods*, (MA Thesis, Hebrew University, 1969), 5; 8, (in Hebrew); Y. Magen, "The Areas of Samaritan Settlement in the Roman-Byzantine period", in E. Stern and H. Eshel (ed.), *The Samaritans*, 245-271, esp. 251, (in Hebrew). However, it seems that the diffusion of the Samaritans, which may have initially contributed to their rapprochement with the Jews, gradually increased after the Bar Kokhba revolt (JT Yevamot, viii, 3, 9d, [col. 871]; Kiddushin iv, 1, 65c, [col. 1181]). Perceived as a threat by the Jews, this evolution embittered their relations with the Samaritans from the second half of the second century CE onward. In opposition to this view, Oppenheimer maintains that the diffusion of the Samaritans started at the earliest in the aftermath of the Bar Kokhba revolt ("L'élaboration de la *halakha*", 1053-1054).

¹⁷⁷ G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 565; M. Böhm, "Die Samaritaner in neutestamentlicher Zeit", 34.

¹⁷⁸ *BJ* III, 307-315.

¹⁷⁹ This view has been rejected by, among others, A. Kasher ("Josephus on Jewish-Samaritan Relations under Roman Rule", 235) and M. Mor (*From Samaria to Shechem: The Samaritan Community in Antiquity*, [Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center, 2003], 162, [in Hebrew]).

¹⁸⁰ *BJ* IV, 449.

¹⁸¹ The contingent question of possible Samaritan participation in the Bar Kokhba Revolt is outside the scope of the present study. On this issue see: A. Büchler, "The participation of the Samaritans in the Insurrection of Bar-Kohba" *Magyar Zsidó' Semle*, 14 (1897), 36-47 (in Hungarian). For a translation into Hebrew see: A. Oppenheimer (ed.), *The Bar Kokhba Revolt*, (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center 1980), 114-221. See also: G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 603-607; M. Mor, "The Samaritans and the Bar-Kokhba Revolt", in A. D. Crown (ed.) *The Samaritans*, 19-31.

than likely that the fall of the Jerusalem Temple had a strong influence on the outlook of the Samaritans. Indeed, it should be recalled that Samaritan hostility toward the Jews focused on their deep rejection of the Jewish shrine and its cult. It is thus possible that its destruction abolished the main point of dissent between Samaritans and Jews. Although the controversy about the proper place of worship did not cease with the destruction of the Jewish Temple, it is permissible to think that this event led to a decline in tensions between both communities. In this connection, we may cautiously note that, whereas the Samaritans refused to receive Jesus' messengers since they were heading to Jerusalem in the first half of the first century CE¹⁸², Rabban Gamaliel and R. Akiba were offered food in a Samaritan village less than a century later.¹⁸³

Finally, we may add that the Samaritan community was neither monolithic nor hermetically sealed off from foreign influences. In fact, both the early Christian writings and the Samaritan Chronicles attest to the existence of a variety of religious opinions within the Samaritan group during the Roman period. On this subject, several scholars have shown that Samaritan society was divided into a number of different religious, political and social components. Their investigations are mostly based on the analysis of the Dosithean movement and its enigmatic leader Dositheus, later considered to be an arch-heretic by the church fathers. Although the history of this religious phenomenon is obscure, Dositheus is usually held to have claimed to be the "prophet like Moses"¹⁸⁴ in the early first century CE. In the light of this evidence, H. G. Kippenberg has argued that the Samaritan priests, linked to Mount Gerizim, were opposed to a movement of laymen connected to the cult of the synagogue, out of

¹⁸² Luke 9: 52-53.

¹⁸³ Tos. Demai v, 24, (ed. Lieberman 93).

¹⁸⁴ Deuteronomy 18: 18.

which the Dositheans arose.¹⁸⁵ Similarly, S. J. Isser has suggested that the proto-Dosithean sect (which was to recognize Dositheus as the prophet like Moses) represented a Samaritan Pharisee-like party opposed to a priestly movement similar in many respects to the Jewish Sadducean sect.¹⁸⁶ If this view is to be accepted, it would seem that, at the beginning of the Common Era, Samaritan society was torn between a conservative wing centered around the priesthood and the cult at Mount Gerizim, and a stream which was more liberal in nature, which advocated the acceptance of novel religious concepts.¹⁸⁷ In light of this, it would not be unreasonable to assume that the liberal Samaritan circles were more inclined to associate with certain Jewish streams.

At any rate, whatever the exact causes of this evolution, it appears that Jews and Samaritans drew somewhat closer during the few decades which followed the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. For the purposes of our analysis, it must be emphasized that certain Jewish Christian movements took an active part in this rapprochement. Furthermore, would it be too far-fetched to propose that the origins of this phenomenon may also be found in the mission of Philip to Samaria, which undoubtedly set a precedent in the history of Jewish-Samaritan relations?

¹⁸⁵ H.G.Kippenberg, *Garizim und Synagoge*, 94-171 (on the Dositheans see: 128-137; 314-323).

¹⁸⁶ S. J.Isser, *The Dositheans, a Samaritan Sect in Late Antiquity*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 108-109; 159-164.

¹⁸⁷ In this respect, Isser has demonstrated that the first century CE Dositheans were "pro-resurrectionists" in opposition to the Samaritan majority, which denied the belief in resurrection (*The Dositheans*, 143-146).

B SAMARITAN OTHERNESS IN THE INTERNAL JEWISH DEBATE

1 The Status of the Samaritans: A most pressing issue in second century Jewish circles.

As noted above, several reasons directly linked to the post-war situation have been proposed for the global improvement of relations between Jews and Samaritans following the Great Revolt. Apart from these considerations, it appears that this historical process had both deeper and more diffuse roots. Indeed, there is reason to think that the Jewish-Samaritan rapprochement derived from intensive discussion of the status of the Samaritans and their degree of kinship with the Jews. As will be seen, this debate, which was part of a more global reflection on the nature of the people of Israel, was conducted in all Jewish circles.

The period after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple was a time of distress, with Judaism going through a deep crisis of identity: the Sanctuary as a unifying principle for the Jewish people was no more, and consequently a Jew could no longer be identified as being a worshiper at the Jerusalem Temple. On account of this confusion, the different Jewish streams sought to redefine to some extent the criteria of belonging to the people of Israel. In this troubled context, it appears that some people turned towards the Samaritans, considering that their case required further reflection.¹⁸⁸ Thus, it has been widely emphasized that the question of the status of the

¹⁸⁸ In this context, it may be relevant to note that the same Rabban Gamaliel who agreed that a Samaritan could be a witness in a case of divorce (M. Gittin i, 5), called for the integration of *Birkat haMinim* (which aimed to excommunicate the non-Pharisaic Jews from the synagogues) into the Eighteen Benedictions (BT Berakhot 28b-29a). In this respect, Oppenheimer has argued that the Jewish Christians, since they lived among the Jewish population, represented in the eyes of the rabbis a greater threat than the Samaritans who mostly remained confined to their own districts ("L'élaboration de la *halakha*", 1053-1054). But would it be too far-fetched to propose that this particular attitude which consisted in drawing closer to the Samaritans on the one hand, and anathematizing certain of his fellow Jews on the other, derived from Rabban Gamaliel's concept of what the people of Israel ought to be in accordance with his own criteria?

Samaritans occasioned considerable debate among the early *tannaim*.¹⁸⁹ Other Jewish circles apart from the rabbis also appear to have been involved in this debate.

The case of Josephus is very enlightening in this respect, and several scholars have laid stress on an apparent shift in his attitude towards the Samaritans. Whereas the *Jewish War*, which was composed in the late 70s CE, is devoid of hostility toward the Samaritans, the *Jewish Antiquities*, written about twenty years later, demonstrates a clear anti-Samaritan bias.¹⁹⁰ This evolution is clearly reflected by the comparison of *BJ* II, 232-246 and *AJ* XX, 118-136, which both recount the Jewish-Samaritan disturbance in the days of Cumanus. It is noteworthy indeed that this latter version in *AJ* attributes the responsibility for the entire tumult to the Samaritans, as opposed to *BJ*, which gives a more neutral report of this event.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, it is clear that *AJ* shows a much greater interest in the Samaritans than *BJ*.¹⁹² This difference is not only to be explained by the greater extent of *AJ* or by the specific periods and topics this work deals with, but also by the fact that, at the time of its composition, the Samaritans were a matter of considerable debate within the Jewish circles. Thus, the references to Samaritan scattered throughout his writings would reflect Josephus' own

¹⁸⁹ See for instance: J. A. Montgomery, *The Samaritans, The Earliest Jewish Sect: Their History, Theology and Literature*, (Philadelphia: J. C. Winston Co., 1907), 167; G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 563; R. T. Anderson and T. Giles, *The Keepers: An Introduction to the History and Culture of the Samaritans*, (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 42-49.

¹⁹⁰ See: S. Cohen *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, 149-150. The anti-Samaritan bias of Josephus' writings has been seriously challenged by R. Egger, but her view remains a minority position among scholars: "Josephus Flavius and the Samaritans," in *Proceedings of the First International Congress of the Société d'Etude Samaritaines*, 109-114.

¹⁹¹ See: R. J. Coggins, "The Samaritans in Josephus", in L. H. Feldman and G. Hata (ed.), *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 257-273, esp. 268-269; A. Kasher, "Josephus on Jewish-Samaritan Relations under Roman Rule", 226-234.

¹⁹² In *AJ*, there are nineteen clear references to the Samaritans (IX, 288-291; X, 184; XI, 19-30; 84-88; 97; 114-119; 174-175; 302-303; 306-312; 340-346; XII, 7-10; 257-264; XIII, 74-49; 255-256; 275-281; XVII, 342-344; XVIII, 29-30; 85-89; XX, 118-136) and a further four possible allusions to them (XI, 61; XII, 156; XVII, 20; XVIII, 167). *BJ* has only four mentions of the Samaritans (I, 63; II, 111; 232-246; III, 307-315). Besides, it is worth noting that neither the account of the defilement of the Temple by the Samaritans in the days of Coponius (*AJ* XVIII, 29-30) nor the narrative of the Samaritan unrest under Pilate (*AJ* XVIII, 85-89) appears in *BJ*. This twofold absence is all the more intriguing since *BJ* covers precisely the period of the Roman procurators.

opinion on a topical issue of the late first century CE. In this context, it is noteworthy that Josephus' repeated emphasis on the labile nature of the Samaritans sounds like a warning addressed to his fellow Jews not to associate with them.¹⁹³ Furthermore, as we shall see below, the frequent allusions to the dubious origins of the Samaritans was designed to challenge their claim to belong to the people of Israel. In this connection, Coggins has rightly laid stress on Josephus' great concern for the themes of "self-definition" and Jewish identity.¹⁹⁴

As noted above, *ParJer* also expresses a particular interest in the "Samaritan question." Here Herzer has concluded that the account of the founding of Samaria¹⁹⁵, apparently irrelevant to the course of the narrative, makes it clear that the author of this work was especially preoccupied with the Samaritan issue.¹⁹⁶ As will be shown below, the Jewish Christian circles, also, discussed and debated the case of the Samaritans in a similar way.

It would appear that the discussion on the Samaritans was centered around several issues: In the first place, the question of their origins seems to have generated considerable debate among Jews. The exclusive use of the term *Cuthean* (כּוּתִי) to designate the Samaritans throughout the *tannaitic* literature¹⁹⁷ shows that the rabbis considered them to be descendants of the Mesopotamian colonists referred to in II

¹⁹³ *AJ* IX, 291: "But they [the Samaritans] alter their attitude according to circumstance and, when they see the Jews prospering, call them their kinsmen, on the ground that they are descended from Joseph and are related to them through their origin from him, but, when they see the Jews in trouble, they say that they have nothing whatever in common with them nor do these have any claim of friendship or race, and they declare themselves to be aliens of another race." See also: *AJ* XI, 341 and XII, 257.

¹⁹⁴ R. J. Coggins, "The Samaritans in Josephus", 270.

¹⁹⁵ *ParJer* VIII.

¹⁹⁶ J. Herzer, *4Baruch (Paraleipomena Jeremiou)*, xxviii.

¹⁹⁷ In this context, an important methodological consideration has been highlighted by Schiffman, who has noted that: "In the printed editions of Rabbinic texts, this word [כּוּתִי] was in many occurrences substituted by the Christian censors for various terms for non-Jews" ("The Samaritans in Tannaitic Halakhah", 325).

Kings 17: 24-41.¹⁹⁸ Thus, the rabbis did not regard the Samaritans as being of Israelite origin, but saw them as mere converts. The question of the quality and the sincerity of the Samaritans' conversion occasioned intense debate within *tannaitic* circles,¹⁹⁹ which had far-reaching implications in social interactions. Indeed, because of the dubious origins of the Samaritans, the rabbis listed them in the category of the individuals who, because of their questionable birth, were forbidden to marry full-fledged Jews.²⁰⁰

Similarly, the term "Cutheans" is particularly frequent in Josephus' writings.²⁰¹ Josephus, indeed, clearly links the above-mentioned biblical account of the settlements of foreign peoples in Samaria to the origins of the Samaritans.²⁰² In later passages, however, Josephus tells us that the Samaritan community also included renegade priests and outcast Israelites who had left Jerusalem because of their marriage with foreigners, and other impieties.²⁰³ Thus, Shechem is depicted as a city "inhabited by apostates from the Jewish nation."²⁰⁴ This twofold portrayal of the Samaritans as descendants of the Cutheans on the one hand, and Jewish apostates on the other, may illustrate the perplexity raised by the ambiguous origins and status of the Samaritans.

¹⁹⁸ Apart from the tradition of their "Cuthean descent", G. Alon has identified two further views of the Samaritans' origins in the rabbinic literature. In his opinion, while certain talmudic passages considered them to be the offspring of a mixed Israelite-Cuthean population, others held them to be the descendants of the Canaanite peoples ("The Origins of the Samaritans in Halakhic tradition", in *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World*, [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1977], 354-373).

¹⁹⁹ However, the dispute between R. Akiba and R. Ishmael about the nature of the Samaritans' conversion (גרי אריות *i.e.* converted out of fear or גרי צדק/גרי אמת *i.e.* true converts) is most likely a later amoraic literary construction; see: L. H. Schiffman, "Samaritans in Tannaitic Halakhah", 327.

²⁰⁰ According to M Kiddushin iv, 3, the persons disqualified because of their questionable birth were someone who does not know his father's identity, someone who does not know the identity of both his parents and a Samaritan (a parallel account is to be found in Tos. Kiddushin v, 1, [ed. Lieberman, 293]).

²⁰¹ *AJ* IX, 288; 290; X, 184; XI, 19; 20; 88; 302; XIII, 255; *BJ* I, 63. Apart from "Cutheans", other designations are used by Josephus. While the term "Samaritans" is the more common expression in his work, the Samaritans are also called "Shechemites" (*AJ* XI, 342; 346); furthermore they are said to have labelled themselves the "Sidonians in Shechem" (*AJ* XI, 344; XII, 258; 260; 262).

²⁰² *AJ* IX, 288-291.

²⁰³ *AJ* XI, 312; 346.

²⁰⁴ *AJ* XI, 340.

As already noted, *ParJer* provides a further view of the Samaritans' origins: according to this text, they were the descendants of disobedient Jews who refused to repudiate their Mesopotamian spouses after the return from the Exile. It is noteworthy that the author of *ParJer* has freely combined different biblical accounts in order to present his own opinion on this issue.²⁰⁵ Interestingly enough, notwithstanding the fact that the Samaritans are seen as a mixed Jewish-gentile population, their kinship with the Jews is established and maintained.

The wide range of views expressed on the Samaritans' origins attests to the fact that this issue represented a fundamental element in the Jewish understanding of the Samaritans.

A further cardinal consideration in the Jewish perception of the Samaritans was the controversial question of the proper place of worship. From the vantage point of most Jews, the veneration of Mount Gerizim and the rejection of Jerusalem were undoubtedly the most important constitutive element of the Samaritan community. As has already been shown, this factor changed the relations between Jews and Samaritans during the Second Temple period considerably. The question continued to preoccupy Jews even after the destruction of the Jewish Sanctuary.

Several tannaitic rulings display the rabbis' considerable concern over this issue. Thus for instance, while a Samaritan is allowed to recite the *Birkat haMazon* (ברכת המזון, *i.e.*, blessing over food), Jews are not to say *Amen* until the completion of his recitation, for fear that he might include the mention of Mount Gerizim in his blessing.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ II Kings 17: 24-41; Ezra: 9-10; Nehemiah: 13: 27-30.

²⁰⁶ M. Berakhot viii, 8; Tos. Berakhot v, 21, (ed. Lieberman, 28); on this issue see: Y. Hershkovitz, "The Samaritans in Tannaitic Literature", 90-91. Similarly, R. Judah said that a Samaritan may not circumcise a Jew, since he performs the circumcision for the sake of Mount Gerizim (BT Avodah

A similar concern is expressed in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*, even though it was composed in the 90s CE (*i.e.*, over twenty years after the destruction of the Jewish Sanctuary). Coggins has highlighted the emphasis placed on the proper place of worship in *AJ* XIII, 74-79. In his opinion, the importance attached to this issue was considerable, although it was purely symbolic in the absence of the Jerusalem Temple.²⁰⁷ Likewise, Freyne has argued that by means of this account, Josephus sought to advocate the exclusive worship of the Jerusalem Temple, against the multiplicity of places of cult (and especially the cult of Mount Gerizim), which were seen as a threat to national unity.²⁰⁸

We propose that *ParJer* similarly echoes the Jerusalem-Gerizim controversy. Interestingly, it is precisely under the wall of Jerusalem that the birth of the Samaritan people occurs, when the disobedient Jews are turned away by Jeremiah: while they referred hitherto to Jerusalem as "our city" ("τὴν πόλιν ἡμῶν")²⁰⁹; they now call Babylon "our place" ("τὸν τόπον ἡμῶν")²¹⁰. Furthermore, there is Jeremiah's message to the Samaritans²¹¹: should they repent, the Samaritans are to be led to their "exalted place" ("τὸν τόπον ὑμῶν ὑψηλόν") by the "angel of righteousness". In other words, they are to be brought from Samaria, their city, to Jerusalem, their "exalted place".

The Samaritans' degree of observance of religious regulations was also a crucial issue in the eyes of the Jews, and liable to have affected their outlook.

Zarah 26b-27a; *Massekhet Kutim* i, 12, in M. Higger [ed.], *The Seven Minor Treatises*, [New York: Bloch Publishing, 1930]), 63.

²⁰⁷ R. J. Coggins, "The Samaritans in Josephus", 264.

²⁰⁸ S. Freyne, "Behind the Names: Galileans, Samaritans, *Ioudaiot*", 50.

²⁰⁹ *ParJer* VIII, 5.

²¹⁰ *ParJer* VIII, 8.

²¹¹ *ParJer* VIII, 12.

It was most of all a concern of the *tannaim* who sought to determine to what extent the Samaritans were reliable in religious matters. This question was all the more relevant since it had bearing on the daily dealings between Jews and Samaritans. The discussions of the rabbis were centered on a number of issues which touched on many aspects of religious practices: did the Samaritans observe the agricultural laws (especially the tithing of their produce and the Sabbatical year) properly?²¹² Was it permitted to buy their wine²¹³ and to eat their bread?²¹⁴ Did they keep the festival laws correctly?²¹⁵ As already noted, the ritual purity (or impurity) of the Samaritans was also a topic frequently dealt with in tannaitic circles.²¹⁶ As Y. Hershkovitz has shown, in the early tannaitic period the Samaritans were basically considered to be trustworthy in regard to the commandments they kept.²¹⁷

In contradistinction, Josephus casts doubt on the reliability of the Samaritans in religious matters. In this respect, the letter the Samaritans supposedly wrote to Antiochus IV Epiphanus is very enlightening with regard to Josephus' position on this issue. It reads:

"To king Antiochus Theos Epiphanes, a memorial from the Sidonians in Shechem. Our forefathers because of certain droughts in their country, and following a certain ancient superstition, made it a custom to observe the day which is called the Sabbath by the Jews, and they erected a temple without a name on the mountain called Garizein, and there offered the appropriate sacrifices...we are distinct from them both in race and in

²¹² See for instance: M. Demai iii, 4; v, 9; Tos. Demai iv, 24-27, (ed. Lieberman 82-83); v, 21-24, (ed. Lieberman 92-93).

²¹³ M. Demai vii, 4.

²¹⁴ M. Shevi'it viii, 10; Tos. Hullin ii, 20.

²¹⁵ Tos. Pesahim ii, 1-3, (ed. Lieberman, 144-145).

²¹⁶ M. Niddah iv, 1

²¹⁷ Y. Hershkovitz, "The Samaritans in Tannaitic Literature", 72-73.

customs, and we ask that the temple without a name be known as that of Zeus Hellenios."²¹⁸

The letter appears to demonstrate that the Samaritans, on their own testimony, derived their religious practices from mere superstition. Moreover, the whole episode enables Josephus to emphasise the superficial attachment of the Samaritans to the commandments they observe.

This point is further verified by the answer of Antiochus:

"The Sidonians in Shechem... have represented to us sitting in council with our friends that they are in no way concerned in the complaints brought against the Jews, but choose to live in accordance with Greek customs, we acquit them of these charges, and permit their temple to be known as that of Zeus Hellenios, as they have petitioned."²¹⁹

Certain scholars accept these documents as genuine, but claim that the petition addressed to Antiochus IV was written not by Samaritans, but by Sidonians who lived in Shechem.²²⁰ For the purposes of our study, we should merely emphasize the fact that Josephus ascribes this letter to the Samaritans, as the reference to Mount Gerizim in *AJ* XII, 257 makes it clear. From the use he made of this material, it appears that Josephus held the Samaritans' religious beliefs and practices in great contempt, and in a similar spirit, he writes that the Jews who were accused of impiety sought refuge with the "Shechemites."²²¹

²¹⁸ *AJ* XII, 258-262. All citations of *Jewish Antiquities*, Books XII-XIV are from the Loeb edition, trans. R. Marcus, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).

²¹⁹ *AJ* XII, 262-264.

²²⁰ See: A. Alt, *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes*, (Israel Munchen: Beck, 1953), Vol. 2, 398 n. 2; M. Delcor, "Vom Sichem der hellenistischen Epoche zum Sychar des Neuen Testaments", *ZDPV* 78 (1962), 34-48, esp. 35-37.; H. G. Kippenberg, *Garizim und Synagoge*, 79; 85; B. Isaac, "A Seleucid inscription from Jamnia-on-the-sea: Antiochus V Eupator and the Sidonians", *IEJ* 41 (1991), 132-144, esp. 143 n. 45, republished with further comments in *The Near East under Roman rule: selected papers*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998), 3-20, esp. 16 n. 45.

²²¹ *AJ* XI, 346.

ParJer has also called into question the Samaritans' religious observance. Indeed, the very fact that the Samaritans arose as a distinct group because of their disobedience to the word of God implies that the author of this work considered their understanding of the law to be incorrect or incomplete.

Finally, it is clear that the beliefs of the Samaritans were also discussed in Jewish circles, in particular contentious concept of the resurrection of the dead.²²² It should be noted, however, that denial of this belief was not peculiar to the Samaritans but was also shared by other Jewish streams, such as the Sadducees, so that the controversy on this issue should really be considered as an internal Jewish issue.²²³

2 The Jewish Christian controversies over the Samaritans as part of the general Jewish debate

Preliminary remarks

We shall now attempt to demonstrate that the Jewish Christian circles, following the example of other Jewish streams, took an active part in the controversy on the status of the Samaritans. Evidence for this is to be found principally in the New Testament, but also in some early material preserved in the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature and in Hegesippus.

Interestingly enough, it appears that Christian authors of gentile origins did not consider the Samaritans specifically. In this respect, Hall has noted that the writings of the so-called Apostolic Fathers, composed between the second half of the first century CE and the first half of the second century CE, do not make the slightest

²²² *Massekhet Kutim* ii, 28, (ed. M. Higger, 67).

²²³ M. Sanhedrin x, 1; Mark 12: 18-27; Matthew 22: 23-32; Luke 20: 27-38.

allusion to the Samaritans.²²⁴ The first Christian writer of gentile origin to have mentioned the Samaritans is Justin Martyr, who may well have come into contact with Samaritans when he was living in nearby Neapolis. However, only one of the three accounts in Justin's work in which the term "Samaritan" occurs, I Apology 53, 3-5, clearly refers to the Samaritan-Israelite community (as opposed to the gentile natives of Samaria).²²⁵ This passage reads:

"...indeed, perceiving ourselves amongst them, and realizing that the Christians from the ranks of the Gentiles are more numerous and more faithful than those from amongst the Jews and Samaritans? All other nations the Prophetic Spirit calls Gentiles, whereas the Jewish and the Samaritan people are called Israel and the House of Jacob. And we can present the prophecy in which it was foretold that the Gentile converts should be more numerous than the Jewish and Samaritan converts...All the Gentiles were desolate of the true God, worshipping the works of their own making, but the Jews and Samaritans, having been given the word of God by the Prophets, and having always awaited the coming of Christ, did not recognize Him when He did come, except a few, who were to be saved..."

Justin's observation about Christians of Jewish and Samaritan descent attests to the fact that he was aware of the distinction between both groups. However, by mentioning their common part in "Israel, and House of Jacob", as opposed to the Christians of Gentile origins, he seems to have put Jewish and Samaritan converts

²²⁴ B. C. Hall, "The Samaritans in the Writings of Justin Martyr and Tertullian", *Proceedings of the First International Congress of the Société d'Etudes Samaritaines*, 115-122, esp. 115.

²²⁵ PG 6, col. 405-408. The two other accounts are I Apology 26, (PG 6, col. 367-370) and the *Dialogue with Trypho* CXX, 6, (PG 6, col. 755-756). See: R. Pummer, *Early Christian Authors on Samaritans and Samaritanism: texts, Translations and Commentary*, (Tübingen: J. B. C. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 2002), 2-3; 14; 27 n. 104.

together within the same category of Christians. This dichotomy strikingly recalls the well-known differentiation between the Church of the Circumcision and the Church from the Gentiles.²²⁶ Hall has rightly noted that the remark on the Samaritans receiving from the prophets the "word of God" poses some difficulty,²²⁷ so that the extent of Justin's knowledge of the Samaritans should be called into question.²²⁸

At any event, it needs to be stated that the "Samaritan otherness" was only perceived from a Jewish perspective: it was hardly ever seen by Christians of Gentile origins, who probably regarded the Samaritans as belonging to the "Circumcision". Therefore, it would appear that (at least up to the time of Justin) an expression of concern for the Samaritans in early Christian material betrays a Jewish Christian provenance. In this respect, it is very significant that the Gospel of Mark, unlike the other Synoptics, does not contain the slightest reference to the Samaritans. Indeed, although the place of its composition is still debated, it is usually agreed that Mark was designed for a predominantly Gentile audience.²²⁹ It may therefore be proposed that the Samaritan exception, which was so perplexing from the exclusivist Jewish perspective, was

²²⁶ Epistle to the Galatians 2: 7.

²²⁷ As previously said, the Samaritans do not accept the Prophets' writings: B. C. Hall, "The Samaritans in the Writings of Justin Martyr and Tertullian", 117.

²²⁸ It seems, to us, however, that this statement presents some similarities with John 4: 4-42. In this respect, the apparent joining together of the Jewish and Samaritan converts would need to be further stressed. Besides, their common claim to be the "tribe of Israel" and the "House of Jacob" may reflect the frequent references to Jacob in John 4: 5, 6, 12; more generally, it may echo the emphasis placed in this chapter on the common descent of Jews and Samaritans. Lastly, the statement that Jews and Samaritans received the "Word of God" from the prophets may be explained by the fact the Samaritan proselytes were certainly required to adhere to certain concepts and ideas peculiar to Judaism. Now, as recalled earlier, the writings of the prophets were used very early as an important source of warrants for the Christian message; it may be presumed that the Samaritan Christians were expected to accept them. In the light of this, it may be cautiously proposed that Justin, a native of Samaria, received his data on the Samaritan converts from some members of the Jewish-Samaritan mixed Church.

²²⁹ See for instance: C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, (CGTC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974; orig. 1959), 8-9; W. L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 24-25; J. Marcus, "The Jewish War and the *Sitz im Leben* of Mark", *JBL* 111 (1992), 441-462, esp. 451. C. Bryan, *A Preface to Mark: Notes on the Gospel in Its Literary and Cultural Settings*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 58-59 n.3; W. Telford, *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 152; B. Whitherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 31; J. R. Donahue and D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, *Sacra Pagina*, vol. 2, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 41-45; J. R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 10; 18.

encompassed in Mark's universalism²³⁰ and thus became either irrelevant or invisible to his gentile-Christian audience.

The New Testament is the principal source of information on the early Christians' understanding of the Samaritans.²³¹ Apart from the explicit mentions recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Luke and John and in the Book of Acts, it has been suggested that implicit allusions to the Samaritans may be found elsewhere (like for instance in Acts 7 and in the Epistle to the Hebrews).²³² However, since these are questionable, only the unequivocal references to the Samaritans will be examined within the framework of this study.

Considering the scantiness of the data on the Samaritans it contains, the New Testament provides a surprisingly wide range of opinions on this issue. This impression is further strengthened by the relevant material found in the *Pseudo-*

²³⁰ Mark 13: 10.

²³¹ Both G. S. Sloyan ("The Samaritans in the New Testament", *Horizons* 10/1 [1983], 7-21, esp. 16) and J. P. Meier ("The Historical Jesus and the Historical Samaritans", 218) have noted that the Samaritans are neither mentioned in Mark nor in Q (a postulated lost textual source for Gospels of Matthew and Luke). Meier has deduced hence that Jesus' dealings with Samaritans were very limited (if indeed they existed).

²³² In the past decades, several scholars have suggested that Stephen's speech and martyrdom (Acts 7: 2-60) show Samaritan influence. To support the hypothesis that Luke was dependent upon a Samaritan tradition, it has been argued that the biblical quotations in Acts 7 were more likely to have been drawn from the Samaritan Pentateuch rather than from any other version of the biblical text. Further evidence for a Samaritan origin for this passage has cited the use of alleged characteristic Samaritan terms; the reference to Shechem as the burial place of the patriarchs (Acts 7: 7); or the emphasis on figures like Abraham, Moses, and Joshua who have particular significance in the Samaritan tradition. See for instance: A. Spiro, "Stephen's Samaritan Background", in J. Munck (ed.), *The Acts of the Apostles*, (Anchor Bible 31; revised by WF Albright and CS Mann; New York: Doubleday, 1967), 285-300; J. Bowman, *Samaritan Problem*, 57-58; R. Scroggs, "The Earliest Hellenistic Christianity", 176-206; C. H. H. Scobie, "The Origins and Development of Samaritan Christianity", *NTS* 19 (1972-73), 390-414, esp. 391-400; *id.*, "The Use of Source Material in the Speeches of Acts II and VII", *NTS* 25 (1978-79), 399-421; J. D. Purvis, "Fourth Gospel", 174-177; A. M. Johnson, "Philip the Evangelist and the Gospel of John", *Abr-Nahrain* XVI (1975-76), 49-72, esp. 53-54. However, numerous scholars have challenged the thesis of Samaritan influence in Acts 7; see on this: R. Pummer, "The Samaritan Pentateuch and the New Testament", *NTS* XXII (1975-76), 441-443; *id.*, "The Present State of Samaritan Studies: I", *JSS* 21 (1976), 39-61, esp. 43; *id.*, "The Present State of Samaritan Studies: II", *JSS* 22 (1977), 27-47, esp. 41-44; E. Richard, "Acts 7: An Investigation of the Samaritan Evidence", *CBQ* 39 (1977), 190-208; W. H. Mare, "Acts 7: Jewish or Samaritan in Character?", *WThJ* 34.1 (Nov. 1971), 1-21. For a survey of scholarship on this issue see: R. T. Anderson, "Samaritan Studies and Early Christianity", in *New Testament Studies of the Société d'Etudes Samaritaines (Vol. 3 & 4)*, 121-131.

Clementine literature. The multiplicity of views expressed by the Jewish Christians not only reflects the parallel Jewish discussions, but must be considered as part of the internal Jewish debate on the status of the Samaritans.

a-Matthew

The term "Samaritans" occurs only once in the Gospel of Matthew, where it is mentioned in the first instruction Jesus gives to his disciples in his missionary discourse:

"Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."²³³

While this verse is consistent with further statements found in the gospel,²³⁴ it stands in opposition to the universalism advocated elsewhere by Matthew.²³⁵ Is this perplexing contradiction to be explained by the accretion of different layers of traditions in Matthew's gospel, with the universalistic interpretation of the divine purpose succeeding a particularist view of the Christian message? Or do these discrepancies point to inner controversies within the Matthean community?

There is reason to think that the mission to non-Jews was an issue of current discussion within the evangelist's group. S. Brown has rightly argued here that the contradictory instructions ascribed to Jesus may attest to the fact that he himself expressed no view on the missionary issue one way or another.²³⁶ It is likely then, that the proponents of the universal Christian mission, like the defenders of the

²³³ Matthew 10: 5b-6.

²³⁴ Matthew 15: 24: "He [Jesus] answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'" See also: Matthew 6: 6; 10: 23; 15: 26; 19: 28.

²³⁵ Matthew 28: 19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." See also: Matthew 8: 11; 10: 18; 12: 17-21; 41-42; 21: 43; 24: 14; 25: 32; 26: 13.

²³⁶ S. Brown, "The Matthean Community and the Gentile Mission", *NT* 22 (1980), 193-221, esp. 194.

principle of national exclusivism, simply attributed their own historical outlook to Jesus.

In this respect, numerous scholars consider Matthew 10: 5b-6 to be a composition of Matthew's which was inserted by the evangelist into the traditional missionary discourse. Indeed, the Matthean section in which Jesus gives direction for the conduct of the mission²³⁷, is usually regarded as a compilation of sayings derived both from the Gospel of Mark²³⁸ and from Q. However, the prohibition of a mission to Samaritans and Gentiles does not appear to belong to this first stratum of synoptic material; it is only to be found in the first Gospel. Similarly, Matthew has reformulated Mark's account of the Canaanite woman²³⁹ to serve a similar apologetic interest. Thus, Jesus' saying that he was not sent except to the lost sheep of the House of Israel²⁴⁰ is peculiar to the Gospel of Matthew.²⁴¹

In a like manner, one must call into question the trustworthiness of the passages representing Jesus as favouring the mission to non-Jews. In this respect, it is remarkable that the principal statement of Jesus which includes the Gentiles in his outlook comes from the post-resurrection period.²⁴²

As previously noted, it has been widely assumed that the question of the evangelization of the gentiles was a highly controversial subject in the Matthean community by the time the Gospel was composed. Similarly, the question of the Samaritan mission was a much discussed issue within the evangelist's group, as the

²³⁷ Matthew 10: 5-42.

²³⁸ Mark 6: 7-13.

²³⁹ Mark 7: 24-30.

²⁴⁰ Matthew 15: 24.

²⁴¹ See for instance: S. J. Case, "The Missionary Idea in Early Christianity", *BW* 36 (1910), 113-125, esp. 119-120; F. W. Beare, "The Mission of the Disciples and the Mission Charge: Matthew 10 and Parallels", *JBL* 89 (1970), 1-13, esp. 8-9; J.P. Meier, "The Historical Jesus and the Historical Samaritans", 218-221.

²⁴² Matthew 28: 19-20.

inclusion of the prohibition of entering a Samaritan town in Matthew's gospel implies.

This leads us to inquire into the implications of Matthew 10: 5b-6.

In the first place, it must be emphasized that according to this saying, the Samaritans do not belong to the "House of Israel" but, they are also distinguished from the Gentiles. The evangelist has perfectly reflected the ambiguity of the status of the Samaritans in the eyes of his fellow Jews, while the verse indirectly raises the question of the Samaritans' dubious origins. Thus, Matthew's implicit portrayal of the Samaritans shows some similarities with the tradition retained both in Josephus and in the *tannaitic* literature, according to which Samaritans are neither Israel nor heathens, but the descendants of half-converted pagans. Would it be too far-fetched to propose that Matthew's use of the Greek word "Σαμαρείτης" renders the Hebrew term "כּוּתִי"? Indeed, notwithstanding the fact that the Greek form of "Cuthean" does exist (Χουθαῖος), Josephus writes that the Samaritans "are called Chuthaioi (Cutheans) in the Hebrew tongue, and Samareitai (Samaritans) by the Greeks."²⁴³

Even though the rejection of the Samaritan mission in Matthew derived from an exclusivist conception of the mission mandate, further grounds may have motivated this particularist view. Thus, it may be argued that the old controversy regarding the true holy place has affected Matthew's position towards the Samaritans. As noted above, this contentious question still divided Jews and Samaritans after the destruction of the Temple. Here Matthew clearly displays a particular veneration for Jerusalem, which he calls twice "the Holy City"²⁴⁴ and elsewhere "the city of the great King".²⁴⁵

²⁴³ *AJIX*, 290.

²⁴⁴ Matthew 4: 5; 27: 53.

²⁴⁵ Matthew 5: 35. It may be relevant here to compare the Matthean and the Lucan narrative of the temptation of Jesus. While Luke reads "Then the devil took him (Jesus) to *Jerusalem*" (Luke 4: 9), Matthew writes "Then the devil took him to *the Holy City*" (Matthew 4: 5).

Apart from Matthew 10: 5-6, the itinerary followed by Jesus on his way to Jerusalem in the First Gospel may implicitly show a similar anti-Samaritan bias. Thus, Matthew 19: 1 reports that Jesus "left Galilee and went to the region of Judaea beyond the Jordan." The parallel verse recorded in Mark is slightly different; it reads "He [Jesus] left that place and went to the region of Judaea [and] beyond the Jordan".²⁴⁶

It is noteworthy that while both Gospels report that Jesus was previously in Capernaum²⁴⁷, only Matthew has found it necessary to recall that Galilee was the starting point of his journey. In our opinion, the insertion of this additional data was not fortuitous: it enabled Matthew to hone the Markan material, and to establish unambiguously that Jesus did not travel through Samaria, but took the longer eastern route that led to Jerusalem through Perea.²⁴⁸ In comparison, Luke's description of the itinerary Jesus took seems much more confused. Thus, Luke 17: 11 reads "On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between (διὰ μέσον) Samaria and

²⁴⁶ Mark 10: 1. This puzzling geographical note ("εἰς τὰ ὄρια τῆς Ἰουδαίας καὶ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου") may betray Mark's deficient knowledge of Palestinian geography. Apart from this reading, which has been adopted by most of the critical editions (NRSV, NASV), two further versions of this verse are found in different manuscripts. One variant tradition reports that Jesus came to the "territories of Judaea beyond Jordan" ("εἰς τὰ ὄρια τῆς Ἰουδαίας πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου"). This reading, which is also difficult to understand, may be a contamination from Matthew 19: 1. A further formulation of Jesus' itinerary reads that "he came into the region of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan." ("εἰς τὰ ὄρια τῆς Ἰουδαίας διὰ τοῦ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου.") This version (which has been adopted by the KJV) may be a later attempt to remove the discrepancies of this passage. At any rate, in spite of the inaccuracy of Mark 10: 1, the general intent of this verse is to indicate that Jesus went through Perea en route to Jerusalem. For a survey of the textual difficulties raised by Mark 10: 1 and Matthew 19: 1, and of the variant readings of these verses see: C. C. McCown, "The Geography of Jesus' Last Journey to Jerusalem", *JBL* 51 (1932), 107-129, esp. 110-111; W. L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark. New International Commentary on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 351 n. 1; D. J. Versput, "Jesus' Pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Encounter in the Temple: A Geographical Motif in Matthew's Gospel", *NT* 36 (1994), 105-121, esp. 114-115; J. P. Meier, "The Historical Jesus and the Historical Samaritans: What can be said?", *Biblica* 81 (2000), 202-232, esp. 225; A. E. Harvey, *A Companion to the New Testament: the New Revised Standard Version*, (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed. 2004), 154-155.

²⁴⁷ Mark 9: 33; Matthew 17: 24.

²⁴⁸ On this issue see: S. Safrai, *Pilgrimage at the End of the Second Temple Period*, 114-119; S. Mason, *The Life of Josephus-Translation and Commentary, Vol. 9*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001), 119 n.1131; 120 n. 1133.

Galilee."²⁴⁹ At any event, it is clear from Matthew 19: 1 that Jesus did not infringe the prohibition on entering a Samaritan town formulated in Matthew 10: 5-6.

It would appear reasonable to ascribe the anti-Samaritan bias reflected in the First Gospel to conservative Jewish Christian circles. The representatives of this tendency would have advocated an exclusivist conception of the Christian message that was, in their opinion, only designed for Israel, *i.e.*, the Jewish people. They therefore looked on the mission to Samaritans and pagans with abhorrence. The origins of this stream of thought may be found in the refusal of observant Jewish Christians of the first generation of the Church to widen the proclamation of the gospel to non-Jews.²⁵⁰ Although it is not stated explicitly, there is reason to believe that, in contradistinction, the proponents of universalism among the Matthean community held a favorable attitude toward Samaritans.

However, two points must be made clear here. In the first place, it should be noted that the question of the Samaritan mission was not contingent on that of the Gentile mission, which was a separate issue with its own determinants and implications.

Secondly, the anti-Samaritan polemic expressed in Matthew should be understood not only as a strictly internal Christian controversy but also as part of the discussion on the status of the Samaritans held within Jewish circles after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. In this respect, Matthew 10: 5b-6 may be comparable to some extent to the position of R. Eliezer: this prominent rabbi of the Yavneh period stringently excluded the Samaritans from the community of Israel.²⁵¹ Similarly,

²⁴⁹ This issue will be discussed below.

²⁵⁰ See for instance: Acts 15: 1; 5; Epistle to the Galatians 2: 4.

²⁵¹ M. Shevi'it viii, 10; Tos. Pesahim ii, 3, (ed. Lieberman 145). Furthermore, not unlike Matthew 10: 5-6, R. Eliezer claimed that pagans would have no part in the world to come (Tos. Sanhedrin xiii, 2).

Josephus adopted a hostile standpoint towards the Samaritans and strongly condemned Jews who had dealings with them.²⁵²

b-Luke

From the many references to Samaria and the Samaritans throughout his work, it is clear that Luke had a particular interest in this group. In fact, the Gospel of Luke contains three passages related to the Samaritans²⁵³ and the Book of Acts, in addition to the narrative of Philip's mission to Samaritans²⁵⁴, mentions the word "Samaria" four times.²⁵⁵ The insertion of the Samaritan incidents into the Third Gospel is all the more significant, since these accounts are only known in the form of *Sondergut*: they do not appear to belong to the common Synoptic tradition, but derive from Luke's special material.

Several scholars have maintained that Luke has developed a coherent portrayal of the Samaritans throughout his two books. In their opinion, the Samaritan accounts in Luke's Gospel were intended to indicate Jesus' anticipation of the Samaritan ministry related in the Book of Acts.²⁵⁶ However, the question of the literary and theological unity of Luke's writings remains a moot point, and scholarly opinion is divided as to whether the theology of mission in the Book of Acts is the continuation of that depicted in the third Gospel.

It is also questionable whether the Samaritan accounts in both books are similar in genre and purpose, for while the pro-Samaritan bias of the Book of Acts is incontestable, the portrayal of the Samaritans in Luke's Gospel needs to be further

²⁵² *AJ* XI, 346.

²⁵³ Luke 9: 51-56; 10: 30-37; 17: 11-19.

²⁵⁴ Acts 8: 4-25.

²⁵⁵ Acts 1: 8; 8: 1; 9: 31; 15: 3.

²⁵⁶ See for instance: J. D. Purvis, "The Fourth Gospel and the Samaritans", *NT* 17 (1975), 161-198, esp. 173; M. S. Enslin, "The Samaritan Ministry and Mission", *HUCA* 51 (1980), 29-38; V. J. Samkutty, *The Samaritan Mission in Acts*, 99-121.

considered. At any rate, Luke's work is of fundamental importance for our study, since it provides an alternative understanding of the Samaritan otherness.

Luke 9: 51-56

Luke 9: 51 marks off the beginning of a central section which describes Jesus' journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. It is usually assumed that the evangelist has inserted a lengthy collection of parables and sayings drawn from various sources into the Markan framework.

Interestingly enough, this expanded section opens with Jesus' messengers entering a village of the Samaritans in order to prepare for the coming of their master.²⁵⁷

However, the Samaritan inhabitants refused to receive them, on the grounds that they were traveling to Jerusalem.²⁵⁸ Luke then reports that James and John proposed to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans²⁵⁹; some manuscripts contain the gloss "as Elijah did". In reply, Jesus rebukes them, saying, according to certain manuscripts, that: "The Son of Man has not come to destroy the lives of human beings but to save them".²⁶⁰ The pericope ends with Jesus and his disciples leaving for another village.²⁶¹

This account is regarded as a Lucan composition by numerous scholars.²⁶² In this context, the clear allusion to II Kings 1: 2-16 in Luke 9: 54 is very significant, for on other occasions Luke has already shown a special interest in the prophet Elijah.²⁶³

The correlation between both passages is all the more striking since in the Elijah

²⁵⁷ Luke 9: 52.

²⁵⁸ Luke 9: 53.

²⁵⁹ Luke 9: 54.

²⁶⁰ For a short discussion on these variants see: J. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*, (Anchor Bible 28; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1981), 830 n. 54

²⁶¹ Luke 9: 56.

²⁶² See for instance: M. S. Enslin, "Luke and the Samaritans", *HTR* 36 (1943), 278-297, esp. 282.

²⁶³ See for example Luke 4: 27. For discussion on this issue see: T. L. Brodie, *Luke the Literary Interpreter: Luke-Acts as a Systematic Rewriting and Updating of the Elijah-Elisha Narrative*, (diss., Rome: Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, 1981); C. A. Evans, "Luke's Use of the Elijah/Elisha Narratives and the Ethic of Election", *JBL* 106 (1987), 75-83.

story, the heavenly fire consumed the men of the king Ahaziah who came from Samaria. But the analogy stops at this point, for Jesus refuses to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans. In the light of this, it has been argued that this passage illustrates Jesus' favourable attitude towards the Samaritans.²⁶⁴ Nonetheless, this passage calls for further discussion.

In the first place, it is noticeable that the inherent reason for the Samaritans' refusal to receive Jesus is rather laconically stated: Luke merely states that it was because Jesus and his disciples were heading to Jerusalem. Thus, this account was most probably designed for listeners or readers aware of the Jewish-Samaritan controversy about the true place of worship, which is why the evangelist did not think it necessary to examine the reasons for the Samaritans' inhospitable behaviour any further. We have every reason for believing that Luke 9: 51-56 was addressed mainly to a Jewish audience.

Beside this, we are inclined to think that the real purpose of this passage should be further questioned. Did Luke actually wish to portray Jesus as favourably inclined towards the Samaritans? In fact, in spite of his apparent attitude of clemency in Luke 9: 55, Jesus is reported to have claimed on two different occasions that those who would not receive his messengers were to come under judgment.²⁶⁵ Interestingly, the evangelist has inserted the account of the Samaritans' inhospitable behaviour between these two warnings.

It has also been argued that sending messengers to a Samaritan village was a deliberate infringement of the prohibition formulated in Matthew 10: 5-6.²⁶⁶ However,

²⁶⁴ V. J. Samkutty, *The Samaritan Mission in Acts*, 102-107.

²⁶⁵ Luke 9: 5; 10: 10. This admonition appears in Mark (6: 11) and Matthew (10: 14-15) but only in Luke is it mentioned twice.

²⁶⁶ M. S. Enslin, "Luke and the Samaritans"; V. J. Samkutty, *The Samaritan Mission in Acts*.

it should be emphasized that Jesus is not said to have entered the Samaritan town. In this respect, Luke remains rather ambiguous throughout his gospel and never clearly states that Jesus actually entered Samaritan territory.

In addition, if we are to accept the analogy to II Kings 1: 2-16 strictly, the Samaritans appear to represent the impious party of King Ahaziah, who was punished for having sought counsel of the oracle of Baal- Zebub in Ekron. This implicit portrayal of the Samaritans partly recalls the *Martyrdom of Isaiah* and especially the depiction of the Samaritan evil-doer *Belkira*, whose father, the false prophet Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah, was active in the days of King Ahab (Ahaziah's father).²⁶⁷ Moreover, it should be noted that Belkira's evil deeds were all related to Jerusalem: in a not dissimilar way, the Samaritans' impious rejection of Jesus in Luke 9: 53 was linked to their abhorrence of Jerusalem. This consideration may shed some light on Luke's understanding of the Samaritans' origins, although, as we shall see below, his position on this issue is very equivocal.

Finally, it is questionable whether Luke really wished to place emphasis on the Samaritans in this passage, or whether by mentioning them he merely sought to elaborate a further allusion to Elijah. Luke 9: 51-56 illustrates the ambiguity with which Luke deals with the Samaritan issue in his gospel.

Luke 10: 25-37

The second passage for consideration here is what is commonly called the "parable of the Good Samaritan". It is clear that Luke has used and expanded Markan material²⁶⁸ to compose this account. Thus, Mark reports that a scribe came up to Jesus and asked him what the first commandment was. Jesus replies by quoting Deuteronomy 6: 4-5.

²⁶⁷ See above: 152-154.

²⁶⁸ Mark 12: 28-34.

He further adds that the second command is "You shall love your neighbour as yourself".²⁶⁹ In addition to this material, Luke recounts that a lawyer (not a scribe), asked Jesus "Who is my neighbour?", in an attempt to test him.²⁷⁰ Jesus replies by telling a parable²⁷¹: As a man was traveling down the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, he was attacked, robbed, beaten, and left to die. A priest and a Levite who came to this place passed by on the other side of the road. Lastly, a Samaritan "moved with pity", stopped to help the wounded man; he further took him to an inn and paid for his care. Jesus then asks the lawyer, "Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" As expected, the lawyer answers "The one who showed him mercy." The account finishes with Jesus admonishing him to do likewise.²⁷²

In the majority view, this parable defines the neighbour referred to in Leviticus 19: 18, as the one who shows compassion to the needy regardless of his religious or ethnic origins. Furthermore, some scholars have come to the conclusion that this account was a Lucan creation designed to highlight Jesus' sympathy toward Samaritans. V. J. Samkutty, for instance, has maintained that the portrayal of the compassionate Samaritan in Luke's work contributes to the legitimization of the subsequent mission in Samaria.²⁷³

The question of Luke's actual intent in Luke 10: 30-35 leads us to re-examine the function of the Samaritan in this parable. The compassionate Samaritan should be seen not as the main focus of this tale, but as a literary device used by the evangelist

²⁶⁹ Leviticus 19: 18.

²⁷⁰ Luke 10: 25-29. The parallel pericope in Matthew (22: 34-40) also reads "a lawyer, asked him a question to test him"; but apart from this variant, this account does not significantly differ from Mark's material.

²⁷¹ Luke 10: 30-35.

²⁷² Luke 10: 36-37.

²⁷³ V. J. Samkutty, *The Samaritan Mission in Acts*, 111.

to expound his teaching more clearly. On other occasions, Luke resorts to a similar rhetorical strategy which consists in the reversal of the expectations of his audience. Thus, the parable carefully features antithetical models who, while facing a certain situation, act in different ways, and against all expectation, the character least likely to act properly performs the right action.²⁷⁴ Given this pattern, the choice of the Samaritan as the surprise figure is particularly significant.

In the late nineteenth century CE, J. Halévy²⁷⁵ suggested that the original triad of the parable was most likely a priest, a Levite and an Israelite, in accordance with the biblical division of "God's People".²⁷⁶ In his opinion, early Christians of pagan origins would have been unlikely to be able to understand the reference to "Israel" as the community of laymen as opposed to the priests and the Levites, so that Luke chose to introduce the Samaritan in order to render the contrast between the three characters and their respective behavior more comprehensible. However, it would appear on *a priori* grounds very improbable that Christians of Gentile origins would have been to understand the reference to the Good Samaritan either. The surprise value of the character of the Samaritan presupposes that Luke's audience was perfectly acquainted with the complexity of the relationships between Jews and Samaritans.

On closer scrutiny, however, it appears that the parable of the Good Samaritan does not feature a triad but a sequence of four characters: The priest, the Levite, the wounded Israelite and the Samaritan. This sort of division was not totally unknown to Jewish circles. Thus the Tosefta reports that the third generation *tanna*, R. Judah ben Ila'ai said:

²⁷⁴ See the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18: 10-14.

²⁷⁵ J. Halévy, "Sens et Origine de la Parabole Évangélique dite du Bon Samaritain", *REJ* 4 (1882), 249-255.

²⁷⁶ Ezra 10: 5; Nehemiah 11: 3; 20.

"There are four congregations: the congregation of priests, the congregation of Levites, the congregation of Israelites, and the congregation of converts ("קהל גרים")."²⁷⁷

Although R. Judah's view was rejected by the majority of the Sages, it presents similarities with Luke 10, 30-37, all the more so since Samaritans were often regarded as converts.

The insertion of the character of the Samaritan into this sequence of characters was neither unnatural nor awkward. Luke deliberately chose to mention him because Samaritans fell into the lowest class of Israelites, at the opposite extreme to the priests and the Levites; the surprise effect would have been less efficient with an ordinary lay Israelite. Luke could not have featured a Gentile character, because he would have represented an antithetical model not merely to priest and Levite, but to Israel as a whole. Thus, from the vantage point of the author of this parable, Samaritan, Israelite, Levite and priest belong to the same whole, unlike the Gentiles.

There is no reason to think that the portrayal of the compassionate Samaritan as the one who exemplifies the correct interpretation of Leviticus 19: 18 demonstrates a pro-Samaritan tendency. The character of the Samaritan has simply provided Luke with a very convenient tool to use in his usual rhetorical model of reversing the expectations of his readers and/or hearers. At most, it may be inferred from this account that its author regarded the Samaritans as a sub-class of Israelites, and here, the parable of the Good Samaritan is consistent with the portrayal of the Samaritans in Luke 9: 51-56.

However, extreme caution is needed in trying to identify a single unambiguous standpoint with regard to Samaritans in the Gospel of Luke.

²⁷⁷ Tos. Kiddushin v, 1, (ed. Lieberman 293); translation by J. Neusner in, *The Tosefta translated from the Hebrew. Third Division: Nashim*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House INC, 1979), 257.

Luke 17: 11-19

The pericope of the "Grateful Samaritan" (also known as the "cleansing/healing of the Ten Lepers")²⁷⁸ also adds to the puzzle of the portrayal of the Samaritans in Luke.

Thus, while he was travelling "between Samaria and Galilee" ("διὰ μέσον Σαμαρείας καὶ Γαλιλαίας."), Jesus entered a certain village. Ten lepers there asked him to heal them. Here Jesus does not touch the sufferers as in Luke 5: 12-14, but simply enjoins them to go show themselves to the priests as the law prescribed.²⁷⁹ They leave as he tells them and are miraculously cured. At this point, one of the lepers, finding he had been healed turns back, gives praise to God for his cure, and thanks Jesus by prostrating himself before him. It is only now that the narrative specifies the identity of the leper "and he was a Samaritan".²⁸⁰ Jesus' reaction is expressed by a threefold question:

"Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner (ὁ ἀλλογενὴς οὗτος)?"²⁸¹

The account ends with Jesus declaring to the Samaritan that his faith has saved him.

Numerous scholars consider this account as an expanded version of an earlier story incorporated by Luke in his work.²⁸² Its general significance has been interpreted differently by different commentators, but in our analysis, we wish to stress the role played by the Samaritan. The pericope appears to synthesize the characteristics of the

²⁷⁸ Luke 17 11-19.

²⁷⁹ Leviticus 13-14.

²⁸⁰ Luke 17: 16.

²⁸¹ Luke 17: 17-18.

²⁸² See H. D. Betz, "The Cleansing of the Ten Lepers (Luke 17, 11-19)", *JBL* 90 (1971), 314-328.

previously analyzed accounts, so that the mention of the Samaritan leper has a dual function:

In the first place, as in Luke 9: 51-56, it has enabled Luke to create an analogy between Jesus' act and that of an illustrious prophet of the Old Testament. As has often been pointed out, the allusion to the lepers recalls the healing of Naaman the Syrian by Elisha, "the prophet who is in Samaria"²⁸³ and it is no coincidence that this episode is referred to by Jesus himself in Luke 4: 27. In this context, W. Bruners has contended that the mimetic comparison implicitly made in "the cleansing of the ten lepers" was designed to show the superiority of Jesus over Elisha.²⁸⁴

Secondly, the rhetorical strategy adopted by Luke in this pericope is similar to that used in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Here too, the grateful Samaritan functions as a literary device which makes clearer the impiety of the other lepers, now seen specifically as Jews. Again, the character who is the least likely exemplar of pious behavior is the one who acts in the proper manner.

Thus, this account is not simply a miracle story like the healing of the leper in a certain Galilean town²⁸⁵, but it also serves as a moral exemplar for Luke's audience.

However, the implied portrayal of the Samaritans in this pericope differs from the earlier Lucan models. First, his identification with Naaman the Syrian sites the Samaritan leper outside the community of Israel. This impression is strengthened by Jesus' earlier saying: "There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian".²⁸⁶ This

²⁸³ II Kings 5: 1-27.

²⁸⁴ W. Bruners, *Die Reinigung der Zehn Aussätzigen und die Heilung des Samariters Lk 17, 11-19. Ein Beitrag zur lukanischen Interpretation des Reinigung von Aussätzigen*, (FB 23; Stuttgart: Katolisches Bibelwerk, 1977), 297-306.

²⁸⁵ Luke 5: 12-14.

²⁸⁶ Luke 4: 27.

consideration tends to contradict C. Böttrich's proposition that the story of the ten lepers prefigured in Luke's mind the gathering of Israel and the restoration of the ten northern tribes.²⁸⁷

The term "ἄλλογενής" placed on Jesus' lips is even more explicit. Although most critical editions of the Bible translate this word as "foreigner" (NRSB, NAB) its literal meaning is "of another race". In this respect, only is the representation of the Samaritan in Luke 17: 11-19 similar to that in Matthew 10: 5b-6 which categorically casts him out of Israel. It has been noted that "ἄλλογενής" was the word used in the inscription forbidding Gentiles entry into the sacred precinct of the Jerusalem Temple that was accessible only to the Jews. Thus, several scholars have argued that its use in Luke is to be understood in the context of worship in the Jewish Sanctuary.²⁸⁸

However, it is impossible to reduce "ἄλλογενής" to this one dimension; its many occurrences in the Septuagint (LXX) reveal that this term covers a variety of meanings. It usually renders the Hebrew word "זר"²⁸⁹, but it is also used to translate "בן-נכר"²⁹⁰, "ממזר"²⁹¹ and "זד".²⁹² While it sometimes refers specifically to a Jew outside the tribe of Aaron who is not allowed to approach the holy things restricted to the priests,²⁹³ "ἄλλογενής" usually points to the foreigner to Israel in general. Even though the books of Ezekiel and Joel insist on the fact that the "ἄλλογενής" is

²⁸⁷ C. Böttrich, "Die Sammlung Israels und die Samaritaner bei Lukas: Beobachtungen zu Lk 17,11-19", *MB* 15/16. (1999), 51-65.

²⁸⁸ D. Hamm, "What the Samaritan Leper Sees: the Narrative Christology of Luke 17: 11-19", *CBQ* 56 (1994), 273-287, esp. 284-285.

²⁸⁹ Exodus 29: 33; 30: 33; Leviticus 22: 10; 12; 13; Numbers 1: 51; 3: 10; 38; 17: 5; 18: 4; 7; Job 15: 19; Isaiah 61: 5; Jeremiah 28: 51; Joel 4: 17; Obadiah 1: 11.

²⁹⁰ Genesis 17: 27; Exodus 12: 43; Leviticus 22: 25; Job 19: 15; Isaiah 56: 3; 6; 60: 10; Ezra 46: 7; 9.

²⁹¹ Zechariah 9: 6.

²⁹² Malachi 3: 19.

²⁹³ Exodus 29: 33; 30: 33; Lev 22: 10; 12; 13; Numbers 1: 51; 3: 10; 38; 17: 5; 18: 4; 7.

forbidden to enter the Jerusalem Temple,²⁹⁴ the latter is also concerned with further prohibitions such as the consumption of unleavened bread during Passover²⁹⁵ and the provision of animals for sacrifices.²⁹⁶ On several occasions, this term designates the enemies of Israel who have spread desolation over Jerusalem and its Temple.²⁹⁷ Interestingly enough, the book of Judith uses the word "ἀλλογενῆς" to refer to the inhabitants of Shechem who were slaughtered by Simeon and Levi in retaliation for rape of Dinah.²⁹⁸ It turns out that further intertestamental writings which display an anti-Samaritan bias associate the Samaritans with the *Shechemites* of Genesis 34.²⁹⁹ In contradistinction, a relatively positive stance towards the "ἀλλογενῆς" is to be found in Isaiah 56: 3-7. Indeed, this saying may shed light on the use of this word in Luke 17: 18; it reads:

"Do not let the foreigner joined to the Lord say, 'The Lord will surely separate me from his people.'...And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant— these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

²⁹⁴ Ezra 44: 7; 9; Joel 4: 17.

²⁹⁵ Exodus 12: 43.

²⁹⁶ Leviticus 22: 25.

²⁹⁷ Jeremiah 28: 51; Obadiah 1: 11.

²⁹⁸ Judith 9: 2.

²⁹⁹ J. J. Collins has argued that the retelling of the Dinah episode in Theodotus (7-8), the Testament of Levi (6-7), Jubilees (30: 2-6), Judith (9: 2-4) and Josephus (*AJ* I, 337-341) is related to anti-Samaritan polemic ("The Epic of Theodotus and the Hellenism of the Hasmoneans", *HTR* 73 [1980], 91-104). This view has been challenged by R. Pummer, "Genesis 34 in Jewish Writings of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods", *HTR* 75 (1982), 177-188.

At any rate, the constitutive element of the Samaritan's distinctness in Luke 17: 11-19 is not only his rejection of the Jerusalem Temple but mostly his ethnic otherness, as implied by both the reference to Naaman the Syrian and the use of the term "ἄλλογενής." In this respect, this passage differs from Luke 9: 51-56 and Luke 10: 30-37 which situate the Samaritan within the boundaries of the community of Israel.

This ambiguity toward the Samaritans is reflected in the itinerary followed by Jesus in the third Gospel. Many commentators have observed that the journey to Jerusalem depicted by Luke is problematic. Thus, immediately after their rejection by the Samaritan villagers, Jesus and the disciples are merely reported to have gone "to another village".³⁰⁰ Subsequent geographical details are both scanty and particularly vague,³⁰¹ until Jesus and his disciples travel "between Samaria and Galilee".³⁰² The impression is that they have made no progress southward, or even that they have retraced their steps back to Galilee. Perplexingly enough, the next geographical location to be mentioned is Jericho³⁰³ which raises well-known difficulties regarding the itinerary of Jesus' journey.³⁰⁴ If Luke's intention was to imply that Jesus took the eastern route beyond the Jordan River, then it is strange that (unlike Matthew) he has not quoted Mark 10: 1, which clearly states that Jesus went through Peraea. On the other hand, the direct route from Galilee to Jerusalem via Samaria would not lead through Jericho. Numerous scholars have ascribed these discrepancies to Luke's lack

³⁰⁰ Luke 9: 56.

³⁰¹ Luke 10: 38: "Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home."; Luke 11: 1 "He [Jesus] was praying in a certain place"; Luke 13: 22 "Jesus went through one town and village after another, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem."

³⁰² Luke 17: 11.

³⁰³ Luke 18: 35.

³⁰⁴ For a discussion on this issue see: C. C. McCown, "The Geography of Jesus' Last Journey to Jerusalem", 113-116; *id.*, "The Geography of Luke's Central Section", *JBL* 57 (1938), 51-66, esp. 59-64.

of knowledge of Palestinian geography.³⁰⁵ It may also be possible that he is simply making Jesus' itinerary deliberately unclear.

At any rate, it is not clear from Luke whether Jesus did or did not enter Samaritan territory, either from Luke 10: 51-56 which has his messengers only entering the Samaritan villages, or from the episode of the grateful Samaritan, which is set in the border area between Samaria and Galilee.

The treatment of the Samaritans in the Third Gospel is particularly puzzling in the light of the three above-mentioned accounts. No unequivocal portrayal of the Samaritans is to be found in Luke. The evangelist has depicted them as lying on the extreme fringe of the community of Israel, alternately on one side and the other of the borderline which separates Jews from pagans. This raises the question of whether these passages are purely Lucan compositions or whether they are to be attributed to earlier redactors. Furthermore, it needs to be questioned whether the Third Gospel does actually show missionary intentions toward the Samaritans, as has often been maintained.³⁰⁶ In any event, the implied discussion of the status of the Samaritans in Luke makes sense only if it is understood from an exclusively Jewish perspective. Even though the evangelist has adopted an equivocal position on this issue, his "Samaritan accounts" should to be regarded as part of the contemporaneous internal Jewish discussion of the Samaritans.

The Book of Acts

³⁰⁵ See for instance: C. C. McCown, "The Geography of Jesus' Last Journey to Jerusalem", 115; M. S. Enslin, "Luke and the Samaritans", 281; H. D. Betz, "The Cleansing of the Ten Lepers (Luke 17:11-19)", 314.

³⁰⁶ V. J. Samkuttu, *The Samaritan Mission in Acts*, 121.

The analysis of the treatment of the Samaritans in the Book of Acts may shed further light on Luke's outlook. Since the purely historical aspects of Acts 8: 5-25 (which recounts Philip's mission in Samaria) have been addressed above, we will not discuss them again here, but will attempt to highlight Luke's overall understanding of the Samaritans in this passage, and in the other relevant accounts. Even at superficial glance, the Book of Acts appears to include a pro-Samaritan bias, so that the advocacy of the mission in Samaria is very significant. However, in spite of this, the question of the status of the Samaritans in this work needs to be examined independently. We also need to ask whether Luke's two works are unanimous on this issue.

As has often been pointed out, Acts 1: 8 can be seen as an outline of Luke's intended programme in his writing. Thus, the resurrected Jesus orders his disciples to be his witnesses "in Jerusalem, in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." In accordance with this scheme, the missionary activity of the early church in Jerusalem is recounted in the first seven chapters of the Book of Acts. Then, following the martyrdom of Stephen, the Christian faith is carried to the areas bordering Jerusalem. It is noteworthy that while the evangelizing activity in Judaea is alluded to laconically in a few verses³⁰⁷, the conversion of Samaria is recounted in rather a long account.³⁰⁸ It is unquestionable that the evangelization of the Samaritans in the Book of Acts is intended to represent a major stage in the expansion of Christianity. Furthermore, as already noted, Philip's missionary activity in Samaria is mentioned before Peter's conversion of Cornelius, which marks the beginning of the mission to the gentiles in this book. It is thus clear that from the evangelist's point of view, the preceding missionary activity of the early church was not aimed at the gentiles.

³⁰⁷ Acts 8: 1; 9: 31.

³⁰⁸ Acts 8: 5-25.

It is interesting to note that immediately before recounting Peter's journey in Lydda and the Sharon which ends with Cornelius's conversion, Luke writes: "Meanwhile the church throughout Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up."³⁰⁹ This remark indicates the completion of a first step in the spreading of the Christian faith and signals the impending beginning of a new one. In the light of this, certain scholars have maintained that the evangelization of the Samaritans was part of the missionary activity aimed at the Jews.³¹⁰ On closer scrutiny, however, such assertion would seem too simplistic, if not inaccurate.

In this context, the beginning of the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Acts is of great interest to our study, for it relates that a dissension about the circumcision of Gentile converts erupted in Antioch between believers from Judaea on the one hand, and Paul and Barnabas on the other. Consequently, the latter were appointed to go to Jerusalem to discuss this controversial issue with the apostles. Luke reports that on their way, as

"...they [Paul and Barnabas] passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers".³¹¹

It is remarkable that Luke has listed Samaria here together with Phoenicia whose pagan character is unquestionable, which seems to contradict Acts 9: 31, which enumerates Judaea, Galilee and Samaria together. Furthermore, it is quite surprising that the believers in Samaria were gladdened by the conversion of the Gentiles.

Purvis has inferred hence that the Samaritan church supported the position of the congregation of Antioch in its controversy with certain Jewish Christians.³¹² It is not

³⁰⁹ Acts 9: 31.

³¹⁰ J. Jervell, *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke- Acts*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 117-123.

³¹¹ Acts 15: 3.

self-evident however, that just because they were not Jews in the strict sense, the Samaritan converts, supported the evangelization of the gentiles and the "liberation from the Law" advocated by Paul. It might be useful to recall here that the Samaritans kept the commandments of the Mosaic Law and, like the Jews, practised circumcision. Thus, Acts 15: 3 seems to reflect an exclusively Jewish-centered view, whereby all converts of non-Jewish origins constituted a homogeneous group. The reversed mirror image is to be found in Justin, who groups together Jewish and Samaritan converts, in opposition to Christians of Gentile stock.³¹³

It may be maintained that there is some continuity in the treatment of the Samaritans' status between the Third Gospel and the Book of Acts, insofar as Luke has cultivated ambiguity on this issue in both works. Because of this equivocal attitude, no consensus has emerged among scholars: while some have come to the conclusion that Luke understood the Samaritans to be Israelites,³¹⁴ others have argued that he considered them to be Gentiles.³¹⁵ We are more inclined to agree with Coggins that in Luke's writings Samaritans can be regarded neither as "Gentiles *to court*" nor as "Jews *tout court*."³¹⁶ Rather confusingly, the evangelist thus gives two different pictures of the Samaritans: they appear as the internal element of the Jewish spectrum which is most distant from the normative centre or, alternatively, as the external group which is closest to the community of Israel. At any rate, no matter how complex Luke's understanding of the Samaritans' status was, his conception of the centrifugal

³¹² J. D. Purvis, "The Fourth Gospel and the Samaritans", 173.

³¹³ See above 202-205.

³¹⁴ M. Böhm, *Samarien und die Samaritai bei Lukas: eine Studie zum religionshistorischen und traditions-geschicht-lichen Hintergrund der lukanischen Samarientexte und zu deren topographischer Verhaftung*, (WUNT 111, Tübingen: J. B. C. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 1999), 310.

³¹⁵ J. Bowman, *The Samaritan Problem: Studies in the Relationships of Samaritanism, Judaism, and Early Christianity*, (PThMS 4; Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1975), 69-70.

³¹⁶ R. J. Coggins, "The Samaritans and Acts", *NTS* 28 (1982), 423-434, esp.431.

expansion of the Christian mission ("to the ends of the earth") encompassed the Samaritans anyway. Their conversion represented a necessary intermediate stage before the evangelization of the Gentiles.

It may be added that Luke's advocacy of the legitimacy of Samaritan Christianity may betray internal Jewish Christian controversies on this issue. Indeed, it has already been noted that the coming of the apostles to Samaria³¹⁷ must be investigated further. There is a strong case for supposing that Luke was interested in involving the Jerusalem Church in the evangelization of the Samaritans. It seems reasonable to assume that Luke was engaged in a polemic against the conservative Jewish Christian circles whose hostile position toward the Samaritans was expressed in Matthew 10: 5-6. In the light of this consideration, the depiction of Peter (together with John) as "proclaiming the good news to many villages of the Samaritans"³¹⁸ is to be explained by the predominance of the figure of Peter in the Matthean community.³¹⁹ By depicting Peter evangelizing in Samaria, Luke sought to cancel the prohibition on entering Samaritan towns.

In sum, in spite of the favourable attitude towards the Samaritans disclosed in the Book of Acts, Luke's comprehensive understanding of the Samaritans' status is far from being obvious. Quite paradoxically, it may even be compared to Josephus' position, where throughout his extensive work, the Samaritans are alternately depicted as Jewish outcasts and as descendants of heathens. In any event, Luke's treatment of the Samaritans is also to be understood from an exclusivist Jewish perspective, based on traditional conceptions of the Jewish-Samaritan relationship.

³¹⁷ Acts 8: 14-25.

³¹⁸ Acts 8: 25.

³¹⁹ Matthew 16: 18.

c- John 4: 4-42

The next source to be considered is John 4: 4-42. Since this account has already been examined in order to verify the existence of a mixed Jewish-Samaritan church, we shall merely recap the main points of our study in order to determine John's understanding of the Samaritans and his perspective on Jewish-Samaritan relations. On closer perusal, it is clear that, in its treatment of the Samaritan issue, this passage participates in the same discussions that occupied the attention of various Jewish circles in this period, and deals with the traditional issues raised by this controversial case.

As already noted, the primary focus of reflection was the thorny question of the origins of the Samaritans. Here it is unquestionable that John regarded the Samaritans as full-fledged Israelites on the same level as Jews: the reference to Jacob as "our father"³²⁰; attributed to the Samaritan woman is evidence enough that he thought that Jews and Samaritans share common ancestry. Even the statement "salvation is from the Jews"³²¹ was not degrading, and did not cast doubt on the Samaritans' genuine Israelite lineage. As far as we know, John's perspective was unprecedented within Jewish circles. At most, the Samaritans were regarded by Jews as the descendants of impious Israelites,³²² but they were more generally supposed to be a "mixed race" of Jews and Gentiles³²³ or simply the offspring of heathens.³²⁴ Albeit radical, John's

³²⁰ John 4: 12: "τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἰακώβ".

³²¹ John 4: 22.

³²² This view is implied in the *Ascension of Isaiah* II, 12-III-12; V, 1-16 (see above: 152-154) and possibly in Luke 9: 51-56 (see above: 212-214).

³²³ See our discussion on the *Paraleipomena Jeremiou* (see above: 172-176). Certain accounts in Josephus' work disclose a similar view (see above: 197).

³²⁴ As already stated, this standpoint is attested by the use of the term כּוּרִי to designate the Samaritans throughout talmudic literature as well as in Josephus' writings.

understanding of the Samaritans was nevertheless formulated from an exclusively Jewish point of view.

Secondly, a further point often raised in the internal Jewish discussions about the Samaritans is treated in John 4: 20-24, *i.e.*, the contentious issue of the true holy place, generally regarded as the main obstacle between Jews and Samaritans. Thus, by instituting the concept of worshipping in "spirit and truth" in place of the Temple building and its cult, John not only transcended, but also solved this important point of controversy. Although the views expressed in this account were certainly blasphemous in the eyes of most Jews, the question of the dispute over holy places was treated from an obviously Jewish perspective. The repudiation of the special privilege of Jerusalem represented an extremely marginal position among Jews, but this must not eclipse the fact that, according to John 4: 21, Jesus also rejected the worship on Mount Gerizim. We have already noted that the requirement for Samaritans to renounce Mount Gerizim if they wished to integrate into the community of Israel was formulated in other Jewish texts.

Thirdly, it has been shown that John deals indirectly with the burning question of the Samaritans' state of ritual purity. As already indicated, the ritual cleanness (or uncleanness) of the Samaritans occasioned many debates within Jewish circles, and the reluctance of certain Jews to deal with them was founded on these considerations, among other factors. In contradistinction, John holds the view that the Samaritans were legally pure. Thus, his portrayal of Jesus' attitude to the Samaritan woman functions as a device to show that Jewish Christians should not be disinclined to have contact with Samaritans. Moreover, this passage raises and discusses typical practical *halakhic* questions such as entry into Samaritan territory; Samaritan women's state of

purity (and by extension that of Samaritan men); the consumption of Samaritan produce and, possibly, marital unions between Jews and Samaritans.

Lastly, John, like other Jews of his time, has considered the twofold question of the Samaritans' range of beliefs and their differences with commonly held Jewish religious doctrines. However, this aspect of the present study is extremely complex, inasmuch as neither Judaism nor Samaritanism had a common creed: both communities were divided into numerous streams which each developed its own religious tenets. Nonetheless, the fact remains that this issue has also been considered in other Jewish circles, notably by certain *tannaim*.³²⁵ Thus, we have proposed that Jesus' statement that "salvation is from the Jews"³²⁶ meant that the Samaritans were to espouse to certain Jewish religious concepts and beliefs. This requirement probably implied acceptance of the Jewish Scriptures, as well as adherence to eschatological ideas like the resurrection of the dead or the coming of the Messiah.

In the light of this brief survey of John's understanding of the Samaritans, two remarks must be made:

In the first place, John 4: 4-42 appears to reflect an exclusively Jewish-centered view based on deep-rooted Jewish principles. Indeed, it may be said that John's position on the Samaritans falls within the wide range of opinions expressed within the other contemporary Jewish circles.

However, and this is our second point, John's understanding of the Samaritans is unparalleled and may even seem rather radical in comparison to the traditional conceptions of the Samaritans' otherness.

³²⁵ *Massekhet Kutim* ii, 28, (ed. M. Higger, 67).

³²⁶ John 4: 22.

d- Some further relevant material: Hegesippus and the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions*

Apart from the New Testament writings, other early Christian texts contain material that may be relevant to our discussion. Thus, both Hegesippus' fragmentary work and the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature provide enlightening data about the Jewish Christians' understanding of the Samaritans.

In the first place, there is a brief notice recorded by Eusebius: we read in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* IV, 22, 7:

"[Hegesippus] also described the sects which once existed among the Jews as follows: 'Now there were various opinions among the circumcision, among the Children of Israel, against the tribe of Judah and the Messiah, as follow: Essenes, Galileans, Hemerobaptists, Masbothei, Samaritans, Sadducees and Pharisees'."³²⁷

It is remarkable that the Samaritans are included among the "Children of Israel," as well as the other Jewish factions. Furthermore, it may be noted that this tradition expresses an obviously Jewish perspective, as demonstrated by the implied reference to the Church as being of "the tribe of Judah." Thus, this account cannot be compared with Justin's above-mentioned statement which associates Jews and Samaritans in opposition to the Gentiles.³²⁸ The present statement suggests that the Christians and the Jewish sects (including the Samaritans), in spite of their opposition, belong to the same whole. In a previous chapter, we showed that Hegesippus was in possession of rich data about the Church of Jerusalem, and that he was most probably the recipient of a genuine and extensive tradition related to the Palestinian Church of the early

³²⁷ GCS II 1, 372.

³²⁸ See above: 202-205.

second century CE³²⁹ Therefore, it is permissible to think that *HE IV*, 22, 7 reflects the position of certain Palestinian Jewish Christian circles related to the original Mother Church of Jerusalem.

In relation to this statement, Isser has rightly noted that similar lists of the Jewish sects that existed in the days of the primitive Church appear elsewhere in early Christian writings and notably in Justin's roughly contemporaneous work.³³⁰ However, Justin's account is slightly different from Hegesippus, for although he also enumerates seven Jewish parties, Justin does not include the Samaritans in his list.³³¹

Interestingly, the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* agrees on this point with Hegesippus; in fact, the list of the Jewish parties in *I Rec* 54, 2-7 includes the Samaritans together with the Sadduceans, the Scribes and Pharisees, and some of the disciples of John. Albeit this list is shorter, but it is noteworthy that the four Jewish sects mentioned in the *Recognitions* are present in Hegesippus' writing.³³²

Although the question of the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature has been discussed elsewhere³³³, it should be recalled that in the opinion of numerous scholars, these texts, which were composed in the fourth century CE, are partly based on much older material that may go back to the second century CE. Thus, *I Rec* I, 27-71 is widely held to be an independent literary piece composed of earlier Jewish Christian material. In the light of this, it is not unreasonable to assume that both the author of

³²⁹ See our chapter entitled "The Jewish Christians' relationship to Jerusalem and the Temple following the Jewish War", esp. 75-79.

³³⁰ *Dialogue with Trypho*. LXXX, 4, (PG 6, col. 665-666).

³³¹ S. J. Isser, *The Dositheans, a Samaritan Sect in Late Antiquity*, 12-14, n. 18. Justin's list of the seven Jewish sects includes the Sadducees, the Genistae, the Meristae, the Galileans, the Hellenians, the Pharisees and the Baptists.

³³² Hegesippus and the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* have in common the Samaritans, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that John the Baptist, who is mentioned in *I Rec*. 54, 7; 60, is called a Hemerobaptist in *II Homilies* 23, like the third Jewish sect listed by Hegesippus in *HE IV*, 22, 7, (GCS II 1, 372).

³³³ See above: 28-31; 84-86.

this early layer of the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature and Hegesippus drew independently on a common pool of traditions. In this regard, Lüdemann has emphasized the parallelism between Hegesippus' narrative of James' martyrdom³³⁴ and I *Rec.* 66-70, and has concluded that both accounts depend upon the same source.³³⁵

I *Rec.* 53-65 is of particular interest for our research, for it recounts how, seven years after the birth of the Jerusalem Church, the high priest Caiaphas summoned the Apostles in order to question them about Jesus. Thus, gathered in the Temple in the presence of all the people, the Twelve conducted a public discussion in the course of which they succeeded in refuting the arguments of the high priest³³⁶ and the representatives of the different Jewish sects.³³⁷ The sub-parts of this disputation are all built on the same pattern: following an exposition of the main characteristics and beliefs of each sect, a particular apostle demonstrates the foolishness of the sect in question and the superiority of the Christian faith. The discussion ends with Peter urging the people to be reconciled "to God by accepting his Son" before the Gospel is preached to the Gentiles.³³⁸ In addition, Peter announces the impending destruction of the Temple, for the time for sacrifices has passed.³³⁹ His speech provokes a tumult among the priests which Gamaliel, "the head of the people", eventually stills.³⁴⁰

This story depicts a situation in which the Jewish Christian heirs of the Jerusalem Church were engaged in a controversy with other religious streams and notably with

³³⁴ *HE*, II, 23, 4-18, (GCS II 1,166-171).

³³⁵ G. Lüdemann, *Paulus der Heidenapostel. Band II: Antipaulinismus im frühen Christentum*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1983), 234-237.

³³⁶ I *Rec.* 55; 61-62.

³³⁷ I *Rec.* 56-60.

³³⁸ I *Rec.* 63, 2. The Syriac version reads: "...they should reconcile their people to God by receiving Jesus."

³³⁹ I *Rec.* 64-1-2.

³⁴⁰ I *Rec.* 65, 2. The Syriac version reads: "the head of the nation."

the representatives of the rising rabbinic movement. As we have shown in a previous chapter, this context may point to an internal Jewish polemic that brought various Jewish parties into conflict with each other (especially the Pharisees and the Nazoraeans) in the early second century CE, where the support and conversion of the whole Jewish people was at stake.³⁴¹

For the purposes of our study, we shall quote the statements found in this section that are specifically related to the Samaritans: thus, I *Rec.* 54, 4-5 provides the first presentation of the Samaritan sect:

"Another is the schism of the Samaritans. Now while they, too, deny the resurrection of the dead, they assert that God should be worshipped not in Jerusalem but at Mount Gerizim. Though they do, however, properly await the one true prophet on the basis of Moses' predictions, they have been hindered by the wickedness of Dositheus from believing that the one they awaited is Jesus."³⁴²

However, the proper refutation of the Samaritans is to be found in a later passage, immediately after the rebuttal of the Sadducees³⁴³:

"But a certain Samaritan, saying things detrimental to the people and God and asserting that neither will the dead rise and nor should the cult of God in Jerusalem be maintained but rather that Mount Gerizim should be venerated, added against us even [the claim] that our Jesus is not the one

³⁴¹ On this point see our chapter entitled "The Jewish Christians' relationship to Jerusalem and the Temple following the Jewish War", esp. 91-96.

³⁴² The Syriac version reads: "Others again are called Samaritans. They also renounce the resurrection of the dead and adore Mount Gerizim instead of the holy city Jerusalem. Now they do correctly await the one prophet who is to come to erect and establish unknown things just as Moses predicted. These fell into schisms through the cunning of Dositheus, and they were thus brought to nought so that they should not be restored by Jesus."

³⁴³ I *Rec.* 56.

whom Moses predicted to be the coming prophet. The sons of Zebedee, James and John, vigorously resisted him and another person who pursued with him the same points. Even though they were under a command not to enter their cities nor to convey to them the word of proclamation, nevertheless lest their speech injure the faith of others if it was not refuted they responded so wisely and energetically that they put them to silence forever. For James argued with the favor of the entire people concerning the resurrection of the dead, and John showed that if they would give up the error of Mount Gerizim they would consequently acknowledge that Jesus is the one who was expected to come according to Moses' prophecy, because as Moses performed signs and prodigies so did Jesus, and there is no doubt that the similarity of the signs testifies that he is the one of whom he [Moses] said that he would come like himself. When they had bore witness to these matters and many others similar to them, they were silent."³⁴⁴

A last reference to the Samaritans occurs in the words that Peter pronounces by way of conclusion of the dispute:

³⁴⁴ I *Rec.* 57. The Syriac version reads: "But a Samaritan, who was devising and plotting what is opposed to the people and to God, said, 'The dead do not rise, and instead of the holy place that is in Jerusalem, Mount Gerizim is the house of worship.' As an adversary of Jesus, he said that he (Jesus) was not the prophet to come who was previously proclaimed by Moses. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, spoke wisely against this one and one who assisted him. Now because they had received a command that they should not enter into their city, they devised a way by which they would neither speak with these with whom they refused to speak nor be silent, appear to have been conquered, and [thus] damage the good faith of the many. Wisely then they spoke with them by means of silence. For since it was dear to them to believe that the dead will rise and for the holy place, Jerusalem, to be honored, James found fault with those who were thinking wickedly, those who did not believe that the dead will rise. His brother declared that they were being offensive in a matter that was too grievous for him. 'For they praise Mount Gerizim and dishonor the holy place, Jerusalem.' He alleged immediately after this that if they had recognized Jesus, they would also, on the basis of his teaching, have consequently believed in the resurrection of the dead and would have honored the place, Jerusalem. Because of this, he said, 'It is pressing above all things for one to know if this one who performed signs and wonders as did Moses is the one who was foretold by Moses as the prophet to come.' Now they spoke these things, witnessed to related matters, and then were silent."

"And we thus pursued these and other matters in this strain, we the ignorant and the fishers appropriately taught and bore witness to the priests concerning the one sole God of heaven; the Sadducees concerning the resurrection of the dead; the Samaritans concerning the sanctity of Jerusalem, though we did not enter their city but rather disputed publicly; the scribes and the Pharisees regarding the kingdom of heaven; the disciples of John, lest they stumble over John; and the whole people that Jesus is the eternal Christ."³⁴⁵

The analysis of this material calls for some comments:

In the first place, it is noticeable that the *Recognitions* dates the beginning of Jewish sectarianism (and therefore of the Samaritan sect) to the days of John the Baptist.³⁴⁶

As previously seen, the other Jewish traditions ascribe the Samaritan beginnings to a much earlier period: between the fall of Samaria in the eighth century BCE and the end of the Persian Period in the late fourth century BCE.

Apart from this, it is clear that the references to Dositheus in I *Rec.* 54 are rather dubious. It seems curious that the same Dositheus is depicted as a proto-Sadducee in I *Rec.* 54, 3 and as a messianic claimant in relation to the Samaritan schism in I *Rec.* 54, 5. Isser has convincingly argued that the notes on Dositheus in I *Rec.* 54 derived from later, contradictory traditions (the Origenian and the Pseudo-Tertullianic) and were probably added by Rufinus or by some other writer before him.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ I *Rec.* 63, 1. The Syriac version reads: "Thus we the ignorant and fishers testified against the priests concerning God who alone is in heavens; against the Sadducees concerning the resurrection of the dead; in truth against the Samaritans concerning Jerusalem, though we did not enter into their city but rather spoke publicly outside; against the scribes and the Pharisees concerning the kingdom of heavens; against the disciples of John in order that they not be tripped up by him. Against all we said that Jesus is the eternal Christ."

³⁴⁶ I *Rec.* 53, 5; 54, 2.

³⁴⁷ S. J. Isser, *The Dositheans, a Samaritan Sect in Late Antiquity*, 56-57.

At any rate, it is clear that, from the viewpoint of the author of this account, the Samaritans were ethnically part of the Jewish people, and only their distinctive beliefs set them apart from other Jews.

The Samaritan doctrine is repeated on several occasions,³⁴⁸ centered around two main points:

- The denial of the resurrection of the dead
- The repudiation of Jerusalem and the reverence of Mount Gerizim.

In addition, the Samaritans are reported to have rejected Jesus, even though they expected the coming of the Prophet like Moses announced in Deuteronomy 18: 15; 18.

R. Pummer has suggested that John's urging of the Samaritans to renounce "the error of Mount Gerizim" so that they can acknowledge that Jesus was the true Prophet, was based on the narrative of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman.³⁴⁹ However, on closer analysis, it is clear that there is a major difference between I *Rec.* 57, 4 and John 4: 20-24: whereas the Johannine Jesus advocates abandoning the worship of both Gerizim and Jerusalem, this section of the Recognitions expresses a clear reverence for the Jewish Holy City. In this respect, Peter's statement that the Samaritans have been taught about "the sanctity of Jerusalem" is very telling.

A further point may be emphasized: in I *Rec.* 57, 1 the Samaritan is reported to have said words "detrimental to the people and God." Since the Sadducees of I *Rec.* 56, who also denied the belief in the resurrection, are not said to have spoken either

³⁴⁸I *Rec.* 54, 4; 57, 1; 63, 1. These points of doctrine are also ascribed to Simon Magus in II *Homilies* 22, 5. It has been stressed, however, that Simon's rejection of Jerusalem is not attested in any other source, so that there is every reason to consider this account to be an extended version of II *Rec.* 7 (which provides a brief biography of Simon) that combines elements found in I *Rec.* 54, 2-5, 57, 1. See on this: R. Pummer, *Early Christian Authors on Samaritans and Samaritanism*, 104 n. 8.

³⁴⁹R. Pummer, *Early Christian Authors on Samaritans and Samaritanism*, 104.

against the people or against God, this must refer to the Samaritans' repudiation of the cult at Jerusalem in favour of Mount Gerizim. The veneration of Jerusalem was common within Jewish Christian circles, and did not contradict the rejection of the Temple and of its cult. Thus, the Ebionites³⁵⁰, like the Elkesaites³⁵¹ held Jerusalem in high esteem in spite of their abhorrence of the sacrificial cult.

Whereas the Samaritans' denial of Jerusalem is documented in both Luke 9: 53 and John 4: 20, their rejection of the resurrection of the dead is not referred to in any of the above mentioned-sources. The talmudic literature provides an interesting parallel to the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions*: an anonymous statement recorded in *Massekhet Kutim* ii, 28 (מסכת כותים, *i.e.*, the Tractate on the Samaritans) reads:

"When shall we take them [the Samaritans] back? When they renounce Mount Gerizim, and confess Jerusalem and the resurrection of the dead. From this time forth he that robs a Samaritan shall be as he who robs an Israelite."³⁵²

Unfortunately, this saying is difficult to date; nevertheless, the fact remains that the twofold requirement for the acceptance of the Samaritans within the community of Israel is strikingly consistent with the words ascribed to the sons of Zebedee in *I Rec.* 57, 4. The analogy is all the more remarkable since, as in *Massekhet Kutim*, John has made the acknowledgement of Jesus as the true Prophet, and hence belonging to the true Israel conditional on the abandonment of Mount Gerizim. Besides, it may be noted that the expectation of the coming of the Prophet like Moses ascribed to the Samaritans corresponds to what is known of the early Samaritan eschatology.

³⁵⁰ Irenaeus, *Adversus.Haereses.* I, 26, 2, (PG 7[1], col. 686-687); Epiphanius, *Panarion* XXX, 16, 5, (PG 41, col. 431-432).

³⁵¹ Epiphanius, *Panarion* XIX, 3, 6, (PG 41, col. 265-266).

³⁵² Translation by J. A. Montgomery in, *The Samaritans, The Earliest Jewish Sect*, 203.

In light of this brief review, the portrayal of the Samaritans in the *Recognitions* appears to be rather ambiguous. Although they are considered to be full-fledged Jews, the Samaritans stand apart from the rest of the nation. The statement cited above, that the Samaritan said things "detrimental to the people" is very significant in this respect. It contrasts singularly with the Sadducees crying out "from the midst of the people"³⁵³ and the Scribes who shouted out "from the middle of the people".³⁵⁴ Thus, this passage reveals a clear anti-Samaritan bias; not only is the prohibition to enter to their cities recalled twice³⁵⁵ it is also expanded with the order not "convey to them [the Samaritans] the word of proclamation". In spite of this, James and John (not without similarity with Luke IX. 51-56) talk to the Samaritan speaker in order to refute his arguments, and urge him to acknowledge that Jesus was "the one who was expected to come according to Moses' prophecy."

Notwithstanding the fact that the Matthean prohibition is formulated on two occasions, the understanding of the Samaritans in the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature differs from that implied in Matthew 10: 5-6. In the first place, it regards the Samaritans as Jews (and therefore part of Israel), and secondly, it accepts (albeit with some reluctance) their evangelization under certain conditions. Lastly, it may be added that the community within which this tradition was embedded advocated the mission to the pagans (although the ministry to the Jews still took precedence over it).

If, as this account itself implies, we are to assume that this tradition reflects the positions of the Mother Church of Jerusalem and of its heirs,³⁵⁶ then acceptance of

³⁵³ I *Rec.* 56, 1.

³⁵⁴ I *Rec.* 58, 1.

³⁵⁵ I *Rec.* 57, 3; 63, 1.

³⁵⁶ In this context, A. Stötzel has proposed that I *Rec.* 27-71 was composed between 70 and 135 CE within a Jewish Christian community related to the Mother Church that longed for a return to Jerusalem ("Die Darstellung der ältesten Kirchengeschichte nach den Pseudo-Clementinen ", *VC* 36

the Samaritans into this community was dependent on several requirements. Whereas Gentile converts had to observe the Noachide commandments³⁵⁷, Samaritan Christians were required to accept the resurrection of the Dead and to abandon Mount Gerizim in favour of Jerusalem, seat of the Mother Church. In light of this consideration, it is clear that the Samaritan mission raised unique challenges of its own which were not contingent on that of the Gentile mission. However, there is every likelihood that certain people within the Jerusalem Church stood in the way of the Samaritan mission, just as they were opposed to the evangelization of the Pagans.³⁵⁸ It is likely that Matthew 10: 5-6 derived from these conservative circles.

CONCLUSION

In the light of the present study, we may conclude that some sort of rapprochement characterized Jewish-Samaritan relations in the post-destruction period. Albeit this evolution was not unanimously supported by the Jews, heterogeneous evidence show that diverse Jewish circles, among them the most eminent representatives of the rabbinic movement, were involved in this development. Likewise, certain Jewish Christian groups took part in this process; in this respect, the community within which John 4: 4-42 was composed, initiated radical moves toward the Samaritans.

[1982], 24-37, esp. 32). Although F. S. Jones rightly considers this early dating to be unlikely, he has stressed the fact that the author of this material regarded himself "as a member of the legitimate heirs of the earliest Christianity in Jerusalem" (*An ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity. Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions I. 27-71*, [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995], 160). Besides, we saw that I *Rec.* 27-71 and Hegesippus drew from a common pool of traditions, and now we have argued in a previous chapter that the traditions the latter reported were to be ascribed to the second-century Nazoraeans, whom we consider to be the genuine heirs of the first Jerusalem Church (see above: 84-86).

³⁵⁷ Acts 15: 20.

³⁵⁸ Acts 15: 5.

Beyond this historical development (and to some extent at its origin), intense discussion on the status of the Samaritans in comparison to that of the Jews took place within many different streams of the Jewish community, and this question was an urgent and topical issue at the turn of the second century CE

Thus, it is noteworthy that the Jewish Christians expressed a similar concern in this matter. The sources at our disposal (in the New Testament writings, the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature and a short statement of Hegesippus) attest to the fact that this issue was widely debated within the various Jewish Christian circles. Besides, it is quite remarkable that the Jewish Christians' understanding of the "Samaritan otherness" revealed in this material was expressed from an exclusively Jewish perspective, based on traditional representations of the relations between Jews and Samaritans. Indeed, on close examination it is clear that the accounts in question raised, either explicitly or implicitly, issues that were cardinal in the eyes of the Jews, such as the origins of the Samaritans; their denial of Jerusalem; and their dubious state of ritual cleanness. Given the scantiness of the relevant data, the range of contradictory opinions on this topic seems strikingly wide.

Thus, whereas the author of Matthew 10: 5b-6 utterly rejected the Samaritan mission because he thought the Samaritans did not belong to the "House of Israel", the community reflected in John 4: 4-42 regarded them as full-fledged Israelites worthy of receiving the Gospel. Luke's portrayal of the Samaritans is rather ambiguous, and it is never absolutely clear whether he held them to be Israel or Gentiles, but in spite of this equivocation, he included them in his programmatic universal mission that was to reach "the ends of the earth." The rather different view expressed in the *Clementine Recognitions* (which may possibly reflect the position of a group related to the Mother Church of Jerusalem) illustrates still further the complexity and the controversial

character of the Samaritan issue. Thus, although they were reckoned to be Jews, the incorporation of the Samaritans into the "True Israel" was dependent upon specific requirements: if they accepted the resurrection of the dead and "abandon[ed] the error of Mount Gerizim", the Samaritans would "consequently acknowledge that Jesus was indeed He who, according to the prophecy of Moses, was expected to come."

It would be misleading however, to regard this polemic as a strictly internal Christian matter; these controversies did not simply parallel contemporary Jewish discussions on the Samaritans' status, they were part of it. Thus, the Jewish Christians' understanding of the Samaritan otherness functions as a reversed mirror image, which reflects how deeply these groups were anchored in their Jewish identity. Moreover, it sets them further within the political, social and religious context of Jewish society at the turn of the second century CE.

By way of conclusion, it should be said that the evangelization of the Samaritans seems to have been rather limited. Although this phenomenon is difficult to assess, the account of Justin cited above suggests that, around the mid-second century CE, only a minority of Samaritans had converted to Christianity.

V- THE JEWISH CHRISTIANS IN THE STORM OF THE BAR-KOKHBA REVOLT.

The Bar-Kokhba revolt, which broke out in 132 CE, put an end to the Yavneh period. It is usually assumed that this uprising was provoked by Hadrian's twofold decision to transform Jerusalem into a heathen city and to build a shrine dedicated to Jupiter there.¹ However, Jewish armed resistance against Rome soon seems to have become a war of national liberation. Thus, following the initial military successes of the insurgents, an independent Jewish state emerged in Judaea headed by the rebel leader Bar Kokhba.²

According to two different traditions, this new regime persecuted the Christians: Justin claims that Christians were chastised if they did not deny and blaspheme Jesus Christ, while Eusebius asserts that Bar-Kokhba harassed them because they refused to join him against the Romans. This apparent discrepancy, far from clarifying this issue, complicates our understanding, leading to questions about the degree of reliability of our sources. Even if we do accept the trustworthiness of these accounts, we still need to inquire into the motive(s) for such a persecution, and, more generally, we must ask what sort of place the Jewish Christians occupied in the global intentions of the Jewish leadership. A further question here is whether the harassment of the first Christians by Bar-Kokhba was simply an unexpected, brutal outburst or whether it

¹ Cassius Dio, *HR* LXIX, 12. The question of the causes of the revolt is still debated. Thus, certain scholars have inferred from the *Historia Augusta* (*Vita Hadriani* XIV, 2) that the Jews went to war since they had been forbidden to circumcise by Hadrian. However, we are inclined to agree with A. Oppenheimer that there are no grounds for the claim that the ban on circumcision was issued prior to the revolt ("The Ban on Circumcision as a Cause of the Revolt: A Reconsideration", in P. Schäfer [ed.], *The Bar Kokhva War Reconsidered. New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome*, [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 2003], 55-69).

² Bar Kokhba's real name, as it appears in the documents dated to the revolt that were discovered in the Judaeian desert caves, was "Shim'on bar/ben Kosiba".

was the culmination of a long process that had been building up over many years which was linked to the Jewish leadership at Yavneh.

In our opinion, analysis of this issue will be very instructive in several respects.

In the first place, since the Bar-Kokhba uprising cannot be separated from the period that preceded it, this examination should give us some information about the place of the Jewish Christians in Judaeen society in the late Yavneh period: were they still considered as brethren or were they already seen as aliens by their fellow Jews? Furthermore, analyzing the stance the Jewish Christians took during the war, and in particular the question of their refusal to identify with the revolutionary leadership, should shed light on their national outlook and aspirations compared to the Jewish rebels. Lastly, this study should lead us to consider the consequences of the Bar-Kokhba revolt on the Jewish Christian presence in Judaea. This discussion, which will go beyond the narrow framework of the relations between the first Christians and rabbinic Jews, aims at posing the question of the survival of the Judaeen Christian movement after the war. In other words: was the Bar-Kokhba uprising a watershed in the existence of the Judaeen Jewish Christians? And did its outcome doom the Jewish Christian community of Judaea to eventual extinction?

A THE SOURCES:

1 Justin

The first direct mention of the persecution of Christians by Bar-Kokhba is to be found in the *First Apology* of Justin. This work, which dates from about 155 CE, was addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius and his adopted sons, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. As its name suggests, the *Apology* was aimed at defending Christianity against the attacks of its opponents. In chapter 31, Justin argues that the Jews, since they do not rightly interpret the Holy Scriptures which foretold the coming of Jesus Christ, consider the Christians their enemies, and kill them whenever they have the power to do so. In order to illustrate his allegation, he writes:

"In the recent Jewish war, Bar Kocheba, the leader of the Jewish uprising, ordered that only the Christians should be subjected to dreadfull torments, unless they renounced and blasphemed Jesus Christ."³

Two main considerations plead for the reliability of this account: Firstly, the temporal proximity between the composition of this text and the event it describes strengthens the value of this report. Secondly, it may be argued that Justin, as a native of Neapolis in Samaria, must have been well aware of local developments in Judaea.

Nonetheless, we should like to consider the following points.

In the first place, it must be emphasized that the *Apology* was not a neutral work, since it was aimed, among others things, at expounding both the Christians' loyalty to

³ I *Apology* 31, 6, (PG 6, col. 375-378): "καὶ γὰρ ἐν τῷ νῦν γεγεμένῳ Ἰουδαϊκῷ πολέμῳ, Βαρχροχέβας ὁ τῆς Ἰουδαίων ἀποστάσεως ἀρχηγέτης, Χριστιανούς μόνους εἰς τιμωρίας δεινὰς, εἰ μὴ ἀρνοῖντο Ἰησοῦν τὸν Χριστὸν καὶ βλασφημοῖεν, ἐκέλευεν ἀπαγεσθαι."

the Empire and the political innocuousness of the faith in Jesus.⁴ In this respect, stating that Christians were persecuted by the arch-rebel against the Roman order, Bar Kokhba, would have constituted a powerful illustration of Justin's claim. In the light of this consideration, this account appears to be somewhat suspicious; we shall discuss this specific point below.

Secondly, we tend to agree with D. Flusser that Justin's depiction of Bar Kokhba's persecution was most likely to have been influenced by the Romans' method of investigation and prosecution of Christians.⁵ In this connection, it is noteworthy that the most famous missive Pliny the Younger wrote to the Emperor Trajan presents a striking parallel with Justin's description.⁶ As mentioned in a previous chapter, Pliny, who was then governor of Bithynia-Pontus, describes the way he investigated the individuals suspected of Christianity⁷; he reports there, that in some cases, the suspects were required to blaspheme Jesus Christ in order to prove that they were not Christians.

Lastly, it is remarkable that Justin does not allude to the Bar-Kokhba persecution in his *Dialogue with Trypho* in which he refers to many maltreatments the Jews inflicted on the Christians.⁸ This is all the more odd since Justin set the time of his *Dialogue* (which was actually written c. 160 *i.e.*, after the *Apologies*) in the days of the Second Jewish revolt.⁹ Given this context, one would have expected Justin to mention the persecution of Christians at the hand of Bar Kokhba.

Nonetheless, these considerations do not allow us to dismiss outright the value and the

⁴ In this connection, see: I *Apology*, 15, (PG 6, col. 349-352); 17, ((PG 6, col. 353-356).

⁵ D. Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), 636-637.

⁶ *Epistles* X 96, 5: "quoque omnes et imaginem tuam deorumque simulacra uenerati sunt et Christo male dixerunt."

⁷ See above: 137-138.

⁸ See for instance: *Dialogue with Trypho* XCV, 4, (PG 6, col. 701-702): "But if you [the Jews] curse Him [Jesus] and those who believe in Him, and, whenever it is in your power, put them to death..."

⁹ *Dialogue with Trypho* I, 3, (PG 6, col. 473-474).

reliability of I *Apology* 31, 6.

2 Eusebius

The second account which refers directly to the harassment of Christians in the days of the Bar-Kokhba revolt is recorded in the *Chronicle* of Eusebius; unfortunately, the original Greek text, written in about 325 CE, is today lost. This work was divided into two books: The *Chronographies*, which was composed of extracts from earlier writers and the *Chronological Canons*, which consisted of a serie of chronological tables with short historical notes. This latter book, which relates the torments inflicted by Bar-Kokhba upon the Christians, has been entirely preserved both in the Latin *Chronicle* of Jerome (c. 380) and in an Armenian version which dates from the seventh century CE. Although this issue is still debated, Jerome's rendering is usually held to be more trustworthy than the Armenian translation.¹⁰

Thus the Latin version reports that during the seventeenth year of the Emperor Hadrian:

"Cochebas, duke of the Jewish sect, killed the Christians with all kinds of persecutions, (when) they refused to help him against the Roman troops"¹¹.

Although this account seems to confirm Justin's above-mentioned statement, the incentive for the persecution is here conspicuously different, for it deals merely with

¹⁰ See: A. A. Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and Greek Chronographic Tradition*, (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1979), 67-79.

¹¹ "Cochebas dux Iudaicae factionis nolentes sibi Christianos aduersum Romanum militem ferre subsidium omnimodis cruciatibus necat", (A. Schoene [ed.], *Eusebi Chronicum Canonum*, [Berlin: Weidmann, 1866], Vol. II, 169); the English translation is from Y. Yadin, *Bar Kokhba: The Rediscovery of the Legendary Hero of the Last Jewish Revolt against Imperial Rome*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), 258. It should be added that the Armenian version is slightly different: "Qui dux rebellionis Iudaeorum erat Cochebas, multose Christianis diuersis suppliciis affecit, quia nolebant procedere cum illo ad pugnam contra Romanos", (A. Schoene [ed.], *Eusebi Chronicum Canonum*, Vol. II, 168).

military matters. The considerations in favor of the reliability of this data are twofold: In the first place, it is reasonable to assume that Eusebius, since he lived in Palestine, was acquainted with local traditions, all the more so since he patronized the libraries of both Aelia Capitolina and Caesarea.¹² Secondly, the fact this account, unlike Justin's text, is free from apologetic intent, tends to strengthen its value. Moreover, the situation it describes seems to correspond to what is known of the unfolding of the revolt, and I shall deal with this specific point in more detail below.

However, several considerations lead us to question the trustworthiness of this statement.

It is difficult to explain, why Eusebius did not include this account in his later work, the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, whereas he does quote Justin's report of Bar Kokhba's persecution there.¹³ Moreover, it is noteworthy that in his relatively long relation of the Second Jewish Revolt, which contains a bitter depiction of Bar Kokhba, Eusebius does not recall the sufferings of the Christians.¹⁴ According to his own words, Eusebius took this data from Aristo of Pella, whose work, the *Disputation of Papiscus and Jason*, was probably written soon after the Bar-Kokhba revolt. Although Aristo's writings are today lost, it seems unlikely that Eusebius would have emended them.

In this connection, it should be noted that the fifth century Armenian historian, Moses of Chorene, gives a basically similar account in his *History of Armenia*, which he also ascribes to Aristo of Pella. However, since there are several differences from Eusebius's text, it is unlikely that Moses of Chorene derived his statement directly from the *Historia Ecclesiastica* but rather from another source - perhaps even from

¹² *HE* VI, 20, 1, (GCS II 2, 566); 32, 3, (GCS II 2, 586-588).

¹³ *HE* IV, 8, 4, (GCS II 1, 316).

¹⁴ *HE* IV, 6, (GCS II 1, 306-308).

Aristo's work itself.¹⁵ In any event, it is remarkable that Moses of Chorene's statement also fails to allude to the persecution of Christians. It therefore seems safe to assume that Aristo of Pella, who was a contemporary of the Second Jewish Revolt and who, from the evidence of his name, presumably lived in the vicinity of the short-lived Jewish state, made no mention of such persecution.

However, this deduction is based on an argument *ex silentio*; as such, it cannot be considered as a totally compelling argument for dismissing Eusebius' statement out of hand.

3 The *Apocalypse of Peter*

The *Apocalypse of Peter* (hereafter *ApocaP*) is considered by some scholars to provide a third source of literary evidence for the persecutions of Christians in the days of the Bar-Kokhba revolt. Unfortunately, the texts of *ApocaP* which have come down to us are both incomplete and adulterated. The longest version known to us was found in an Ethiopic *Book of Clemens*, which may go back to the seventh or eighth century CE. It is believed to be a translation from an Arabic edition of *ApocaP* which itself was a rendering of the Greek original. *ApocaP* is also known from numerous quotations made by Christian writers of the first four centuries CE, as well as from few fragmentary Greek texts. An extensive fragment of *ApocaP* was also discovered at Akhmim in Upper Egypt at the end of the nineteenth century; however, this version, which diverges frequently from the Ethiopic translation, is generally considered to be a later development of the original work.

¹⁵ See: A. and J.-P. Mahé, *Histoire de l'Arménie par Moïse de Khorène*, (Paris: Gallimard, Coll. "L'Aube des Peuples", 1993), 211-212.

Since *ApocaP* was known to Clemens of Alexandria, it has been assumed that this work dated to the second century CE and originated in Egypt.¹⁶ Furthermore, because of its apparent acquaintance with the Gospel of Matthew (chapter 24), it is reasonable to infer that it was not composed before the end of the first century CE.

H. Weinel was the first scholar to suggest that the *ApocaP* was written in the days of the Bar-Kokhba revolt;¹⁷ from then on, this view has been widely accepted by scholars. This assertion is mainly grounded on the analysis of the second chapter of the Ethiopic translation, which has no parallel in the other versions of the text. This account, following and expanding Matthew 24, reports Jesus' discourse on the Mount of Olives; however, unlike Matthew's text, *ApocaP* says that this event took place after the resurrection. Thus, at the request of the disciples, Jesus gives an apocalyptic revelation of his *Parousia*. He then reveals the signs which will warn of the end of the world by expounding the parable of the fig tree. It would seem that the author of *ApocaP* added the parable of the barren fig tree from the Gospel of Luke to the material derived from Matthew 24, probably because of their common imagery.

The account reads:

"(And our Lord answered us saying,) ...'And you learn a parable from the fig-tree: as soon as its shoots have come forth and the twigs grown, the end of the world shall come.' And I, Peter, answered... 'What then does the parable of the fig-tree mean? We do not know.' And the Master answered and said to me, 'Do you not understand that the fig-tree is the house of Israel? It is like a man who planted a fig-tree in his garden and it brought forth no fruit. And he sought the fruit many years, and when he

¹⁶ *HE* VI, 14, 1, (GCS II 1, 548-550).

¹⁷ For a survey of the scholarship on this issue, see: R. Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter: An Account of Research", in W. Haase (ed.), *ANRW* II, 25/5, (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1988), 3713-3752.

did not find it he said to the keeper of his garden, ‘Uproot this fig-tree so that it does not make our ground unfruitful.’ And the gardener said to his master, ‘Let us rid it of weeds and dig the ground round about it and water it. If then it does not bear fruit, we will straightway uproot it from the garden and plant another in place of it.’ Have you not understood that the fig-tree is the house of Israel? Verily I say to you, when its twigs have sprouted forth in the last days, then shall false Christs come and awake expectation, saying, ‘I am the Christ who has now come into the world.’ And when they perceive the wickedness of their deeds they shall turn away and deny him who our fathers praised, the first Christ whom they crucified and therein sinned a great sin. *But this deceiver is not the Christ.* And when they reject him, he shall slay them with the sword, and there shall be many martyrs. Then shall the twigs of the fig-tree, that is, the house of Israel, shoot forth: many shall become martyrs at his hand. Enoch and Elijah shall be sent to teach them that *this is the deceiver* who must come into the world and do signs and wonders in order to deceive. And therefore those who die by his hand shall be martyrs, and shall be reckoned among the good and righteous martyrs who have pleased God in their life! ”¹⁸

In this account, Jesus compares the house of Israel to a fig tree, whose shooting twigs will herald the end of the world. Later on, he expounds this parable and, as in Matthew 24: 24, warns against the coming of false Messiahs in those days. The text then deviates from Matthew’s account, and the prophecy focuses on a single claimant

¹⁸ All quotations from the Ethiopic version of *ApocaP* are taken from the translation of J. K. Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993), 600-612.

"the deceiver" who "is not the Christ:" this pretender is to slay many martyrs from the House of Israel, which will reject him. At some point, Enoch and Elijah will be sent to confound him but this will cause many more to suffer at his hands; their martyrdoms will represent the shoots of the twigs. Lastly, Jesus asserts that the victims of the persecution are to be reckoned among the righteous. In the light of Justin and Eusebius' above-mentioned accounts, Bar-Kokhba has been identified as the "deceiver" of *ApocaP*.

R. Bauckham considers that further references to the Second Jewish Revolt are to be found in this work. Thus, in his opinion, certain categories of sinners doomed to eternal punishment in chapter IX, 1-4 fit into a context of persecution. He puts particular emphasis on three different sorts of offenders: "the persecutors and betrayers of my righteous ones", "they who slander and doubt my righteousness" and "those who put the martyr to death with a lie."¹⁹ Bauckham thinks that this passage is to be understood in relation to the depiction of the false Messiah who is to slay the righteous in *ApocaP* II. Hence he deduces that this statement attests to the persecution of Christians by Bar Kokhba; in his view, the sinners referred to in chapter IX represent the slayers of the martyrs, the apostates who acted out of fear of persecution and the informers who betrayed the martyrs.

In addition, Bauckham cites the account of the appearance of Moses and Elijah on the "holy mountain" before the disciples.²⁰ This account follows Matthew's narrative of the transfiguration to a certain extent;²¹ thus, Peter offers to make three tents (tabernacles) for Moses, Elijah and Jesus. However, unlike in Matthew's narrative,

¹⁹ R. Bauckham, "Jews and Jewish Christians in the Land of Israel at the time of the Bar Kochba war, with special reference to the Apocalypse of Peter", in G. N. Stanton and G. G. Stroumsa (ed.), *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 228-238, esp. 230-231.

²⁰ *ApocaP* XV-XVII. See: R. Bauckham, "Jews and Jewish Christians in the Land of Israel at the time of the Bar Kochba war", 190-194.

²¹ Matthew 17: 1-9. It is noteworthy, though, that *ApocaP* does not mention the transfiguration itself.

Jesus vehemently reprimands him for this proposition and informs Peter that he is to be granted the vision of a tent (tabernacle) made by his "Heavenly Father" and not with men's hands.²² Bauckham assumes that Jesus' violent rebuke illustrates the rejection of the construction of a material shrine on the "holy mountain". In his view, this harsh opposition is to be related to the Bar-Kokhba revolt, whose main objective was the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem; this question will be discussed below. In light of these considerations, Bauckham concludes that *ApocaP* emerged from the Jewish Christian circles of Palestine in the very days of the Bar-Kokhba revolt; this assertion would be supported by the fact that nothing is said in this text about the ultimate fate of the "deceiver". Thus, it would appear that *ApocaP* was written while the Jewish Christian Church was still facing the consequences of its refusal to recognize Bar Kokhba's legitimacy and support his struggle.

Furthermore, if we are to accept Bauckham's view, it could be proposed that this writing stemmed from the Jewish Christian leadership of Judaea. In this respect, we read in the first chapter of the Ethiopic translation:

"...his disciples...saying to him [Jesus], 'Declare to us what are the signs of your coming and of the end of the world, that we may perceive and mark the time of your coming and instruct those who come after us, to whom we preach the word of your gospel, and whom we install in your Church, that they, when they hear it, may heed to themselves and mark the time of your coming.'²³

According to this account, the ultimate recipients of this revelation were to be those whom the apostles will "install in the church" *i.e.*, the future leaders of the

²² *ApocaP* XVI, 8-9.

²³ *ApocaP* I, 2-3.

community. It is reasonable to assume that in claiming their apostolicity, the heads of the Church wished to strengthen both their own status and the value of their teaching. If this inference is correct, it may be proposed that the aim of the leadership of the Judaeian Church was twofold: to comfort the faithful Christians who were suffering, and to prevent the others from being led astray by the false Messiah. We shall return to this point in a later section.

However, we should like to express some reservations about Bauckham's arguments. In the first place, it appears that the Ethiopic translation of *ApocaP* is a composite work, which brings together divergent traditions. Bauckham admits that this text as a whole is problematic but he maintains that the first two chapters may reflect the original content of *ApocaP*. Thus, he argues that the cultural context of these sections is clearly Jewish, underlining the hope expressed in the account that the Jewish people will eventually recognize Jesus as Messiah.

As noted above, this passage follows and expands Matthew 24. However, it must be pointed out that *ApocaP* I, 4 adds two further recommendations to Jesus' warning in Matthew 24: 4²⁴: "and that you be not doubters and serve other gods." This latter caution can scarcely fit a Jewish environment; it would seem more likely that this warning was directed either at Christians of gentile origin who were tempted to return to idolatry or to the victims of the Roman persecutions who were required to worship pagan deities in order to escape punishment. In this respect, it is remarkable that the categories of sinners recorded in *ApocaP* IX present an interesting analogy with Pliny the Younger's depiction of the Roman persecution of Christians. Strikingly, the three sorts of above-mentioned offenders can be identified in Pliny's letter X, 96: "The

²⁴ "Jesus answered them [the disciples], 'Beware that no one leads you astray' ..."

persecutors and betrayers of my righteous ones" would refer to the judicial authorities which order the execution of Christians who refused to recant; "the blasphemers and betrayers of my righteousness" would be those who "even reviled the name of Christ" in order to escape punishments; and lastly "those who put the martyr to death with a lie" would allude to the informers who made charges (sometimes anonymously) against the Christians. In addition, Pliny specifies that, in some cases, the defendants worshipped Trajan's statue and the images of the gods in order to be cleared of the charge of Christianity; such a statement could be related to the third warning of Jesus in *ApocaP* I, 3.

Lastly, we wish to make an observation regarding the dating of the text: If we are to agree with Bauckham that *ApocaP* was composed during the Bar-Kokhba revolt, it needs to be emphasized that nothing in this text suggests a context of war. This omission is all the more strange since Matthew 24: 6-7 foretells the outbreak of war at the end of the days.²⁵ Thus, we must ask why the author of *ApocaP* did not retain these verses in his work, for this depiction of the conflagration that is to happen before the *Parousia* would have strengthened the setting of Jesus' prophecy in the days of the Second revolt. Furthermore, it would have made it clear that Bar-Kokhba was the false Messiah.

Thus, although those considerations are not decisive, they impel us to be very cautious as to the reliability of the *ApocaP*.

4- Further accounts:

Aside from the above-mentioned sources, no other substantial account of the persecution of Christians in the days of Bar-Kokhba is known to us. It has been

²⁵ "And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places."

proposed, however, that indirect evidence for these events is to be found in further literary sources.

S. Abramsky believes that Jerome's *Commentary on Zephaniah* 1 alludes to the harassment of Christians by Bar Kokhba. However, this attribution cannot be certain, for Jerome's statement does not refer to a specific martyrdom, and in any event, this account is too scanty to provide additional information on this matter.²⁶

All the later Christian accounts of the persecution in the time of Bar-Kokhba turn out to derive from the *Chronicle* of Eusebius. Thus, the fifth century Christian historian Paulus Orosius writes:

"And he [Hadrian] avenged the Christians, whom they [the Jews], under the leadership of Cocheba, were tormenting because they did not join with him against the Romans."²⁷

Similar statements are to be found in both Gregorius Syncellus' (late seventh-early eighth century CE)²⁸ and Michael Syrus' *Chronicles* (twelfth century CE).²⁹

Turning to the Jewish sources, no direct mention of Christians in relation to the Revolt of Bar-Kokhba is to be found in the rabbinic literature. In the late nineteenth century, H. Laible, supported by R. T. Herford, suggested that a passage recorded in the Babylonian Talmud may preserve the memory of the slaying of Christians during

²⁶ *Commentary on Zephaniah* 1: 15, (CCSL LXXVIa, 673): "sed usque ad praesentem diem, perfidi coloni post interfectionem seruorum, et ad extremum Filii Dei, excepto planctu, prohibentur ingredi Hierusalem." See: S. Abramsky, *Bar Kokhva Nasi Israel*, (Tel Aviv: Massada, 1961), 74-75, (in Hebrew).

²⁷ Paulus Orosius, *Historiae Adversum Paganos*, Libri VII, 13, (Hildesheim: G. O. Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1882 Reprint 1967), 467-499; the English translation is quoted from L. H. Canfield, *The Early Persecutions of the Christians*, (London: P. S. King & Son, 1913), 209.

²⁸ Syncellus, *Chronographia*, in W. Dindorf (ed.), *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* XX, (Bonn: Weber 1829), 660.

²⁹ J.-B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche (1166-1199)*. Éditée pour la première fois et traduite en français I-V, (1901, Bruxelles: Culture et Civilisation 1963), Vol. 1, 176.

the Second Jewish Revolt.³⁰ This account relates the trial before Jewish judges of five disciples of "Yeshu" condemned to death. In an attempt to plead for their life, each of the defendants quotes a scriptural verse related to his own name, but they are immediately answered with other texts that annihilate their defence. In order to set the context of this passage in the days of the Bar-Kokhba revolt, Laible constructed a quite sophisticated argument. First he linked this account to a later statement which reports that a certain Ben Stada, who Laible holds to be Jesus, was hanged in Lod.³¹ He states next that this city was known to be the dwelling of R. Akiba. Since R. Akiba is said to have been a particularly zealous opponent of the Christians and is also said to have been a contemporary of Jesus in other places in the Talmud, Laible concludes that this tradition preserves a confused memory of the slaying of Christians in Lod in close relation with R. Akiba. By extension, Laible deduced that the execution of Jesus' disciples took place in Lod in the course of the Bar-Kokhba Revolt so eagerly advocated by R. Akiba. Lastly, he asserts that the existence of a Jewish tribunal, as depicted in this account, was highly possible during a period of national independence like in the days of the Bar-Kokhba revolt.

In our opinion, such a supposition is both groundless and too far-fetched, for nothing in this statement refers to the Jewish revolt. It is more reasonable to assume that this account, which derived from a vague knowledge of the Gospel tradition, intended to use Christian material in order to ridicule Christians. Accordingly, it sought to emphasize both the inconsistency of the Christians in exegetical matters and the mastery of the Rabbis. At most, this account might be considered as illustrating the

³⁰ BT Sanhedrin 43a; See: G. Dalman, *Jesus Christ in the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar, and the Liturgy of the Synagogue*, (New York: Arno Press, 1893 reprint.1973), 71-79; R. T. Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, (1903; Augmented Edition; Jersey City: Ktav Publishing House Inc., 2007), 83-85.

³¹BT Sanhedrin 67a. For a discussion on this issue, see: D. Rokeah, "Ben Stera-Ben Pantera Hu, Inquiry on a Philological and Historical Issue", *Tarbiz* 39 (1970), 9-18, (in Hebrew).

exegetical discussions about the Scriptures between Jews and Christians: the execution of Jesus' disciples by the rabbis is as improbable as the execution of Bar-Kokhba at their hands, as related in a subsequent statement.³²

We shall conclude this survey by mentioning a well-known letter found in Wadi Murabba'at, addressed by "Simon ben Kosebah to Yeshu'a ben Galgola".³³ The meaning of this missive is not evident and it has been suggested that the Simon ordered Yeshu'a either to "mobilize"³⁴ or to "part from"³⁵ a group of individuals, the "Galileans" (הגלליאים). Several scholars have also proposed that Bar-Kokhba forbade the mistreatment of these persons.³⁶ Interpretation of the meaning of the whole letter depends mainly on the identification of these "Galileans". J. T. Milik was the first to suggest in 1953 that this wording might possibly refer to the Jewish Christians Bar-Kokhba persecuted.³⁷ Such identification would confirm both Justin's and Eusebius' statements; moreover, it would demonstrate that Bar-Kokhba considered the Christians to constitute a distinct group and that he took steps to constrain them. However, these conclusions are too speculative and it is actually quite unlikely that הגלליאים referred to in this letter were Jewish Christians. Indeed the first irrefutable attestation of such a use of the wording "Galileans" dates to the late fourth Century CE. Milik himself reconsidered his proposal few years later, and proposed seeing

³² BT Sanhedrin, 93b. For a discussion on this passage see: A. Oppenheimer, "Bar Kokhva' s Messianism", in Z. Baras (ed.), *Messianism and Eschatology*, (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1983), 153-165, (in Hebrew).

³³ J. T. Milik, "Une Lettre de Siméon Bar Kokheba", *RB* 60 (1953), 276-294.

³⁴ Y. Yadin, *The Message of the Scrolls*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 71-72.

³⁵ J. T. Milik, "Une Lettre de Simeon Bar Kokheba", 285.

³⁶ H. L. Ginsberg, "Notes on the two published letters to Jeshua ben Galgolah", *BASOR* 131 (1953), 25-27, esp. 25.

³⁷ "Une Lettre de Simeon Bar Kokheba", 287-292.

הגלליאם as civilian refugees who fled to Judaea from Galilee.³⁸ These considerations lead us to set aside this document.³⁹

Following this review, the sources remaining are both few and scanty. However, despite of the reservations expressed regarding each of these works, we are inclined to retain three accounts as relevant to our study: *ApocaP*, Justin and Eusebius.

If we are to assume that the reliability of a source is merely a function of both its spatial and its temporal proximity to the events it recounts, then *ApocaP* and Justin's statement should be regarded as trustworthy. As for Eusebius, although he wrote some two centuries after the revolt, his very presence in Palestine suggests that he would have been acquainted with local traditions; this inference is likely all the more since, as previously stated, he patronized the local Christian libraries.

It is true that this sort of evaluation is both incomplete and quite artificial; other criteria must be considered. Indeed, none of our accounts is irrefutable in itself, yet, when they are brought together they do shed some light on a specific aspect of the Bar-Kokhba war. Nonetheless, it must be kept in mind that these three statements stem from Christian circles. At most, they may reflect the perceptions and the understanding that Christians of Judaea had of the Second Jewish revolt.

B- THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS: A BRUTAL AND UNEXPECTED OUTBURST...

1- Preliminary consideration: who were the Christians affected by Bar Kokhba's rule?

³⁸ P. Benoit, J. T. Milik and R de Vaux, *Les grottes de Murabb'ât*, (DJD II; Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), 159.

³⁹ A. Oppenheimer considers that this letter merely reflects the local tensions existing between the Judaeans and the Galileans who took part in the revolt ("The Jewish community in Galilee during the period of Yavneh and the Bar-Kokhba revolt", *Katedra* 4 [1977], 64-65, [in Hebrew]).

Before we address the question of the persecution itself, a preliminary query must be answered: Who were the Christians affected by the revolt of Bar Kokhba? This issue is fundamental, for as Christianity was then composed of a number of different streams, our conclusions may differ considerably depending on whether we consider one group or another.

Although there were very many elements distinguishing between these different streams, in our view, the criterion of ethnic origin is central in the present case; indeed, Bar Kokhba's policy must be interpreted differently if it was aimed at Jewish believers in Jesus or at Christians of pagan stock. Thus, this initial question must be studied through two different approaches: whereas the first will consider the geographical distribution of the Christians in relation to the territories Bar-Kokhba conquered, the second aims at gleaning data from internal literary analysis.

Our first problematic approach is based on a twofold assumption: In the first place, it is reasonable to think that the very location of the various Christian communities of the province may be revealing with regard to the ethnic background of their members. Secondly, it is clear that the Christian populations who were affected by Bar Kokhba's rule were those who lived under his yoke. Eventually, it seems reasonable to hope that combining these different conclusions may shed light on the identity of the Christians Bar-Kokhba persecuted.

The question of the geographical scope of the revolt, however, is still debateable; while some scholars hold that the revolt spread to the whole province (Galilee and Samaria included)⁴⁰, others consider that the fighting were confined to Judaea proper

⁴⁰ See for example: W. Eck, "The Bar Kokhva Revolt: The Roman Point of View", *JRS* 89 (1999), 76-89.

(viz. the Judean mountains).⁴¹ Since this issue is only indirectly related to our study, this survey will be brief and non-exhaustive.

Thus, if we are to accept the maximalist view, we could safely infer that Bar-Kokhba came into contact with Christians in Galilee; in this connection, both tannaitic and New Testament accounts attest to the presence there of Jewish Christians in the late first early second century. The Tosefta for instance, mentions a certain Jacob of Kfar Sakhnin (Sama) who cured sufferers in the name of Yeshua ben Pantera;⁴² later, R. Eliezer reports that once, as he was walking in the streets of Sepphoris, he listened to the words of *minut* that Jacob of Kefar Sakhnin pronounced in the name of Yeshua ben Pantera.⁴³ In addition, it should be recalled that the New Testament refers clearly to the existence of churches in Galilee in this time.⁴⁴ The *opinio communis* considers that the Christian communities of Galilee were most likely multi-ethnic, since this region had a large pagan population at the dawn of the Common Era.⁴⁵ However, this view has been recently challenged by other scholars who argue that the overwhelming majority of Galilee's population was Jewish.⁴⁶

With respect to Samaria, evidence for the early presence of Christians there is to be found in the Book of Acts. Thus we read in chapter 8 that after the stoning of Stephen, Philip went to the city of Samaria and preached the Gospel there with much success.⁴⁷

The text reads then "Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had

⁴¹ See for instance: A. Büchler, "Die Schauplätze des bar Kochbakrieges und die auf diesen bezogenen jüdischen Nachrichten", *JQR* 16 (1903), 143-205; M. Mor, "The Geographical Scope of the Bar Kokhva Revolt", in *The Bar Kokhva War Reconsidered*, 55-69.

⁴² Tos. Hullin ii, 22-23; JT Shabbat xiv, 4, 14d-15a, (col. 435); Avodah Zara, ii, 2, 40d-41a, (col. 1385); BT Avodah Zarah 27b; Ecclesiastes Rabbah i, 8. These passages will be discussed below.

⁴³ Tos. Hullin ii, 24; BT Avodah Zarah 16b-17a; Ecclesiastes Rabbah i, 8. It is more than likely that Jacob from Kfar Sama and Jacob of Kefar Sakhnin are the same person.

⁴⁴ Acts 9: 31.

⁴⁵ See for instance: B. L. Mack, *The Lost Gospel. The Book of Q and Christian Origins*, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), 159; 214.

⁴⁶ M. A. Chancey, *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee*, (SNTS MS 118, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁴⁷ Acts 8: 5-25.

accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them⁴⁸... [after they] had testified and spoken the word of Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news to many villages of the Samaritans.⁴⁹ Further confirmation for the early existence of a Christian Church in Samaria can be found in Acts 9, 31; 15, 3 and in John 4: 4-42.⁵⁰ It seems safe to assume that the majority of the converts were Samaritan; however, it is also possible that local gentiles, like Justin Martyr, adopted the Christian faith.⁵¹

Furthermore, it appears that the Gospel was propagated very early to the inhabitants of the Shephela⁵² and the cities of the coastal plain.⁵³ Although such evidence is not compelling, the onomastic data conveyed by the Book of Acts tends to suggest that the Christian communities of those areas comprised a mixed population.⁵⁴ It would be speculative to attempt to quantify the proportion of each of the ethnic elements that composed them; however, it seems reasonable to assume that the Christians of gentile stock represented a substantial part of these groups. In this connection, it is not fortuitous that the Book of Acts situates the beginning of the Christian mission to the pagans in Caesarea.⁵⁵

Thus, accepting the view that the Jewish revolt spread to the areas surrounding Judaea proper would imply that Bar Kokhba's regime impacted on diverse Christian communities composed of mixed populations.

⁴⁸ Acts 8:14.

⁴⁹ Acts 8:25.

⁵⁰ See our previous chapter devoted to the Jewish Christians' attitude toward the Samaritans.

⁵¹ According to his own testimony, Justin was a native of Flavia Neapolis in Samaria (I *Apology* 1, [PG 6, col. 329-330]). Although he calls himself a Samaritan, the names of his father (Priscos) and of his grandfather (Baccheios) and the fact that he was not circumcised (*Dialogue with Trypho* XXVIII, 2, [PG 6, col. 535-536]) rather suggest a pagan origin.

⁵² Acts 9: 32-35.

⁵³ Acts 8: 26-40; 9: 36.

⁵⁴ We hear for instance, of a certain Aeneas who was most likely gentile (Acts 9: 33) and of a woman bearing an Aramaic name, Tabitha, who was probably a Jew (Acts 9: 36).

⁵⁵ Acts 10: 44-48.

In contradistinction, if we are to retain the minimalist view, viz. that Bar-Kokhba conquered a smaller territory; it is to be assumed that only the Christians communities that dwelt in Judaea *strict sensu* were subjected to his rule. Existence of such congregations is attested by different sources. Paul, for instance, mentions the "Churches of Judaea" in his Epistle to the Galatians.⁵⁶ However, the use of the term "Judaea" is ambiguous here, for it can be understood in both a narrow and a wide sense. On the other hand, on several occasions the author of the Book of Acts clearly refers to the spreading of the Gospel in Judaea proper and to the presence there of Christians.⁵⁷

But the largest amount of data at our disposal concerning the Christian presence in Judaea relates to the community of Jerusalem. Whereas most information regarding the fate of the "Mother Church" from its establishment up to the early 60s CE is to be found in the Book of Acts, several accounts concerning the Jerusalem community after the Jewish War are collected in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. According to Eusebius' own words, his material derived from various ancient writings and traditions, and notably from the works of the second-century writer Hegesippus. It is noteworthy that, throughout these accounts, the Jewish character of the Church of Jerusalem is strongly emphasized; thus it is stated, in *HE* IV, 5 that the bishops of the congregation were then "of the circumcision." Furthermore, Eusebius adds that "their whole church consisted at that time of Hebrews..."⁵⁸

The probably existence of a Christian Church in Jerusalem after the destruction of the Temple leads us to pose the question of whether the city was captured by Bar

⁵⁶ Epistle to the Galatians 1: 22.

⁵⁷ Acts 1: 8; 8: 1; 9: 31; 11: 1; 26: 20.

⁵⁸ Other accounts refers to the Jewish character of the Church of Jerusalem: *HE* III, 35, (GCS II 1, 274); IV, 6, 4, (GCS II 1, 308); V, 12, (GCS II 1, 454). On this issue see our previous chapter on the Jewish Christians' relationship to Jerusalem and the Temple following the Jewish War.

Kokhba; however no consensus has been reached among scholars on this matter.⁵⁹ Indeed, while literary sources tend to demonstrate that the Jews did indeed conquer Jerusalem,⁶⁰ archeological evidence remains conspicuously mute on this issue. It appears though, that the data conveyed by Eusebius may be very instructive in this regard. In fact, the latter relates that the bishops from the circumcision led the Church of Jerusalem until the siege of the city under Hadrian⁶¹ after which Christians of pagan stock succeeded them.⁶² If we are to accept the authenticity of these accounts, we must assume that the rebels succeeded in taking Jerusalem; otherwise we could not understand why Hadrian besieged the city. Thus, it appears that the Christian leaders "from the circumcision" who remained in Jerusalem until the city fell in the hands of the Romans, must have lived under the yoke of Bar Kokhba. Unfortunately, nothing is known about their condition in the course of the revolt; Eusebius states merely that, following the suppression of the uprising, the Church of Jerusalem became composed of gentiles. Consequently, no compelling conclusion can be reached regarding the fate of the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem: Did they survive the war (and at the same time Bar Kokhba's rule) and were subsequently expelled from the city by Hadrian like all the other Jews? Or did they perish during the uprising? And if so, who put them to death – the Jewish rebels or the Romans? In any event, in light of this development, it would appear that the Christians who dwelt in Judaea before the Jewish uprising were mostly ethnic Jews.

⁵⁹ For a survey of the scholarship on this issue, see: B. Isaac and A. Oppenheimer, "The Revolt of Bar Kokhba: Ideology and Modern Scholarship", *JJS* 36 (1985), 33-60, esp. 54-55.

⁶⁰ Appianus, *Syriacus Liber*, L, 252, (M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism. Volume 2: From Tacitus to Simplicius*, [Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1980], 179); Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica* VI, 18, 10, (*PG* 22, col. 453-454); *HE* IV 5, 2, (GCS II 1, 304); Deuteronomy Rabbah, iii, 13, (ed. Lieberman, 89); Tanhuma, *Pekude* iv, (ed. Buber, 64b); Exodus Rabbah, li, 5, (Mirkin, 208).

⁶¹ *HE* IV, 5, 2-3, (GCS II 1, 304-306).

⁶² *HE* IV, 6, 4, (GCS II 1, 308); V, 12, (GCS II 1, 454).

Considering all the available evidence, then, it looks most likely that the Bar-Kokhba revolt affected mainly (if not only) Judaea proper.

However, before we draw any decisive conclusions, we shall attempt to seek further information in the literary sources at our disposal. Justin states merely that "only the Christians" were persecuted by Bar Kokhba. Unfortunately, he provides no further data regarding the identity of these individuals. It appears, moreover, that Justin regarded as Christians both pagans converted to Christianity (as he was himself) as well as the Jewish Christians (unless they compelled others to live according to the Mosaic Law⁶³). We cannot know who he had in mind when he wrote the above-mentioned statement.

Likewise, Eusebius reports merely that "Christians" were killed at the hands of Bar Kokhba. However, as noted previously, when it comes to the Church of Judaea, Eusebius is mainly referring to the congregation of Jerusalem; moreover, he emphasizes the Jewish character of this congregation in several occasions. Consequently, it would appear on *a priori* grounds very probable that by "Christians" he meant the members of this community. This inference must be qualified though, for other Christian Churches were probably established in Judaea; in this connection J. E. Taylor has rightly noted that: "the Jewish Christian Church however, cannot be equated with the Jerusalem community alone. Moreover, it is by no means sure that the Jerusalem Church should in its entirety, be classified as Jewish Christian."⁶⁴

ApocaP matches the data conveyed by Eusebius to some extent. We should recall indeed, that parts of this text, which is believed to have been written during the Bar-Kokhba revolt, suggest a Jewish context. In this connection, the references to the "House of Israel" may demonstrate that the author was a Christian of Jewish origin

⁶³ *Dialogue with Trypho* XLVII, (PG 6, col. 577-578).

⁶⁴ J. E. Taylor, "The Phenomenon of early Jewish Christianity: reality or scholarly invention?", *VC* 44 (1990), 313-334, esp. 316.

who intended to describe developments internal to the Jewish people. Moreover, as stated above, a cautious perusal of this text may lead us to conjecture that *ApocaP* derived from the local Christian leadership; the claim to apostolicity formulated in chapter I may hint at such a possibility.

Although such a conclusion is not absolute, it would appear, in light of our discussion, that the Christians affected by the rule of Bar-Kokhba were predominantly the ethnically Jewish Christians dwelling in Judaea proper.

2 The Christians and Bar-Kokhba as Messiah

The confrontation of Justin's statement above with *ApocaP* has led several scholars to the conclusion that the main motive for the persecution of Christians was the supposed messianic claim of Bar Kokhba. This assertion derives from deductive reasoning, as follows:

Christians, as Justin claims, were compelled to "renounce and blaspheme Jesus Christ" by Bar Kokhba, since the latter, who is portrayed as the "deceiver" in *ApocaP*, considered himself to be the Messiah. In other words, Bar-Kokhba persecuted the Christians because they could not recognize him as Messiah on account of their faith in Jesus as the true Messiah. Further Christian writings that depict Bar-Kokhba as both a miracle worker and an impostor are seen as backing-up this assertion.⁶⁵ Thus Abramsky argues that those who did not acknowledge Bar-Kokhba as messiah were seen as deserters.⁶⁶ Likewise, C. A. Evans infers that Christians were "the object of intense pressure" because they refused to accept Bar Kokhba's messianic status.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ See: Eusebius, *HE*, IV, 6, 2, (GCS II 1, 306); Jerome, *Against Rufinus* III, 31, (ed. P. Lardet, CCSL LXXIX, 102).

⁶⁶ S. Abramsky, *Bar Kokhva Nasi Israel*, 76.

⁶⁷ C. A. Evans, "Messianic hopes and messianic figures in Late Antiquity", *JGRChJ* 3 (2006), 9-40, esp. 32.

These considerations impel us to discuss the issue of Bar-Kokhba as messiah and to determine the place this belief occupied in the structure of the Jewish regime.

According to the *opinio communis*, Bar-Kokhba was identified by his followers as Israel's Messiah; this stance is grounded on data provided by both Jewish and Christian accounts.

The main piece of evidence for this assertion is to be found in the Jerusalem Talmud where R. Akiba, the main spiritual authority of this period, is said to have exclaimed "that is the King Messiah" ("דין הוא מלכא משיחא") when he beheld Bar Kokhba.⁶⁸ Moreover, R. Akiba is reported to have applied Balaam's prophecy to the rebel leader, so that Bar Kokhba's name (בר כוכבא) is seen as a word-play on the biblical promise of Numbers 24: 17.⁶⁹ Furthermore, as stated above, the Church Fathers' depiction of Bar-Kokhba as a worker of magic is considered to confirm this view.

However, this opinion has been challenged by several scholars who argue that the people simply saw in Bar-Kokhba the supreme commandant of the revolt. L. Mildenberg, for instance, considers it very unlikely that Bar Kokhba's partisans truly believed that their chief was the Messiah. He writes: "the creative pun on the leader's name in Aramaic, [would] simply have given the Jews a popular rallying cry for their cause."⁷⁰ As Evans has rightly shown, such a rejection of Bar Kokhba's messianic identification derives from a definition of Jewish messianism in terms of Christian

⁶⁸ JT Ta'anit, iv, 6, 68d, (col. 733); Lamentations Rabbah ii, 4.

⁶⁹ "...a star (כוכב) shall come out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel." The messianic interpretation of this verse was not uncommon in the Second Temple period; see for instance the Dead Sea Scrolls and especially the Damascus Document (cf. 4Q269 5, 2-3 [= CD VII, 17-20] in J. M. Baumgarten, *Qumran Cave 4XIII: The Damascus Document (4Q266-273)*, [DJD XVIII; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996], 128).

⁷⁰ L. Mildenberg, *The Coinage of the Bar Kokhba War*, (Frankfurt am Main: Sauerlander, 1984), 76.

Christology:⁷¹ it seems, indeed, most implausible that his contemporaries saw in Bar-Kokhba a superhuman or an eschatological figure. Consequently, several scholars have attempted to re-phrase the terms of the issue regarding Bar-Kokhba as messiah in a different way: the question is not whether Bar-Kokhba was believed to be Israel's messiah or not but rather what the nature of his supposed status as messiah was. Such an approach stresses the multiplicity of messianic ideas in second-century Judaism.

In this context, A. Oppenheimer defends the view that Bar-Kokhba was seen as an earthly messiah, since he had achieved the very earth-bound dream of national liberation from the gentile yoke.⁷² His demonstration, which is mainly grounded on analysis of R. Akiba's national and religious expectations, impels us to formulate further questions. If we are to accept that Bar-Kokhba was seen by some in a messianic rôle, the origin of such a belief still needs to be determined: in other words, did Bar-Kokhba himself claim to be Israel's messiah, and was this supposed messianic status central to the structure of the rising state?

Scrutinizing the remains of the Jewish rebel state should be particularly revealing with regard to the official status of Bar Kokhba, and his self perception. Here coins constitute the most powerful means of propaganda of the new regime. The large quantity of coinage and the wide variety of coin-types issued during the revolt, imply that the revolutionary administration was well aware of the immense impact that coins had on those who used them. According to G. Alon and L. Mildenberg, Bar Kokhba's coinage excludes an identification of the latter as the Messiah. They both reject outright the hypothesis that the alleged star that appears above the representation of

⁷¹ C.A. Evans, "Messianic hopes and messianic figures in late antiquity", 32 n. 45.

⁷² A. Oppenheimer, "Leadership and Messianism in the time of the Mishnah", in *Eschatology in the Bible and in Jewish and Christian tradition*, (JSOTS- supplement series 243; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Pr., 1997), 152-168. This opinion is shared by other scholars; see for instance: D. Jaffe "La figure messianique de Bar-Kokhba: Nouvelles Perspectives", *Hénoch* 28 (2006), 103-123.

the Temple-portal on several coins echoes Bar Kokhba's messianic claim; in their view, this ornament would be a common rosette devoid of symbolic value.⁷³ Likewise, they consider that the letters from Bar-Kokhba found at Wadi Murabba'at and at Nahal Hever do not hint at any messianic self-awareness on the part of the rebel chief.⁷⁴ Indeed, most of these missives merely contain Bar Kokhba's instructions to several of his subalterns and do not seem to indicate that the latter proclaimed that he was the King Messiah.

However, the exact significance of Bar Kokhba's official title, "Nasi over/of Israel" (as it appears both on coins and letters), remains a moot question. Alon, who emphasizes that Bar-Kokhba is never called Messiah (משיח) in any official document, thinks that the title "Nasi of Israel" implies that his authority was limited;⁷⁵ Moreover, he adds, Rabban Gamaliel had already borne this title before the revolt.

In contrast, several scholars believe that the expression "Nasi of Israel" was understood by Bar Kokhba's contemporaries as meaning Messiah. D. Goodblatt, for instance thinks that the concept of "Nasi" belongs to the field of eschatological belief and is thereby loaded with messianic expectations.⁷⁶ In his view, there is no compelling evidence that Rabban Gamaliel ever bore this title, and it would seem more likely that Bar-Kokhba renewed its use. In addition, Goodblatt points out that

⁷³ G. Alon, *The Jews in their land in the Talmudic age, 70-640 CE*. Translated and edited by G. Levi, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989), 622; L. Mildenberg, "Bar Kokhva: Coins and Documents", in *Vestigia Leonis. Studien zur antiken Numismatik Israels, Palästinas un der östlichen Mittemeerwelt*, (NTAO 36; Freiburg- Göttingen: Universitätsverlag, 1998), 217-233, esp. 220.

⁷⁴ The Bar Kokhba letters are to be found in P. Benoit, J. T. Milik and R. de-Vaux, *Les Grottes de Murabba'at*, 155-163; Y. Yadin et al., *The Documents from the Bar Kokhva Period in the Cave of Letters, Vol. II: Hebrew, Aramaic and Nabatean Documents*, (JDS; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1963/2002), 164-182. For a useful tool for translation of the Bar Kokhba letters see: M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Judean Aramaic*, (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press 2003).

⁷⁵ *The Jews in their Land*, 622.

⁷⁶ D. Goodblatt, "The Title *Nasi* and the ideological background of the Second Revolt", in A. Oppenheimer and U. Rappaport (ed.), *The Bar Kokhva Revolt: A New Approach*, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1984), 113-132, (in Hebrew).

the Dead Sea Scrolls attest to the use of "Nasi" in reference to messianic figures. In order to strengthen this analogy, he underlines another striking feature which he believes to be common to both Bar-Kokhba and the Qumran sectarians viz. diarchic messianism. It appears that in the Qumran literature the Davidic Messiah is to cooperate with a priestly Messiah. Goodblatt suggests that Bar Kokhba's coinage reflects such a diarchism: in his view the legend "Eleazar the Priest" that appears on the reverse of several coins of Bar-Kokhba hints at such a phenomenon. He thus deduces from this that both Bar-Kokhba and the Qumran sectarians drew their messianic conception of the "Nasi" from a common pool of traditions stemming from Ezekiel's prophecies.⁷⁷

The corollary of Goodblatt's thesis is that the minting authorities, *i.e.*, the new regime itself, developed the image of Bar-Kokhba as a messianic figure. Moreover, if the concept of Nasi is to be understood in Qumranic terms, it must be supposed that Bar-Kokhba considered himself to be an eschatological being. Can it then be inferred that a Christology of Bar-Kokhba developed?

It seems to us very unlikely that Bar-Kokhba was seen as a supernatural being by his contemporaries. Undoubtedly, at some points in the war, he was recognized as a messianic deliverer but it would be misleading to consider that his supposed messianism derived from a reflection on his very nature in the manner of Jesus-Christ. We should recall here that the process of formulation of the Christology of Jesus was only completed several centuries after his death. The conclusion of Oppenheimer, that the belief in Bar-Kokhba as messiah was merely the consequence of his military achievements and was therefore expressed in down-to-earth terms, seems more likely. In this respect, it needs to be emphasized that the revolt broke out some two years

⁷⁷ Ezekiel 34: 23-24; 37: 24-25.

after Hadrian's decision to erect Aelia Capitolina; clearly obviously, its outbreak was not the consequence of a sudden apocalyptic surge but was carefully considered by the Jewish rebels.⁷⁸

We should like to make a further comment here.

It is usually believed that the key to the issue of Bar Kokhba's messianic status is contingent upon the analysis of R. Akiba's messianic expectations. It is indeed reasonable to believe that R. Akiba did see in Bar-Kokhba the Messiah of Israel; as Evans has rightly remarked, it is unlikely that the rabbinic tradition invented such an embarrassing account.⁷⁹ However, in our view the significance and the implications of R. Akiba's opinion may need to be considered and qualified still further. The belief in Bar-Kokhba as messiah was certainly shared by many, but it does not seem to have been a key element in the propaganda of the revolutionary state.

We are inclined to agree with Mildenberg that the documents emanating from Bar-Kokhba do not hint at any messianic self-awareness on the part of the Jewish leader.⁸⁰

Moreover, we support the view held by several scholars that Bar-Kokhba modeled his title of "Nasi" after the Hasmonean kings; it is, in fact, most likely that the Greek title ἡγούμενος, adopted by both Simon and Jonathan, renders the Hebrew *Nasi*.⁸¹ In any event, even if one admits that "Nasi" is to be understood in a messianic sense, it is noteworthy that the distribution of Bar Kokhba's full name and title "Shim'on (bar Kosiba) Nasi (prince of/over) Israel," although extensive in legal documents, is far

⁷⁸ Cassius Dio's account of the preparation of the revolt by the Jewish rebels is very instructive in this regard (*HR*, LXIX, 11-15).

⁷⁹ C. A. Evans, *Jesus and his contemporaries: Comparative Studies*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 203.

⁸⁰ L. Mildenberg, "Bar Kokhva: Coins and Documents", 220.

⁸¹ G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 622; Y. Yadin, *The Documents from the Bar Kokhva Period*, 369-372. See also: A. Oppenheimer, *Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi*, (The Zalman Shazar Center, Jerusalem 2007), 33, (in Hebrew).

from systematic on his coinage and in his letters.⁸² The predominance of the legend "Shimon" on all the coin issues (sometimes abbreviated "Shma") is surely intended to establish Bar Kokhba's authority very soon after the outbreak of the war; it appears, though, that the authorities of the Jewish state did not attempt to put a special emphasis on the leader's title. It can thus be inferred that Bar Kokhba's legitimacy did not derive from his supposed messianic status but merely from his military strength. Thus, the idea of his messianic status which probably emerged from the ranks of his followers is to be considered as a spontaneous reaction to his victories over the Romans, rather than as an instrument of propaganda emanating from the rebel government itself.

In light of this consideration, it would appear very improbable that belief in Bar-Kokhba as messiah was considered to be a mark of allegiance to the new regime in the manner of the Roman Imperial cult. Here we must recall that, according to rabbinic tradition, R. Yohanan ben Torta expressed total disagreement with R. Akiba's words regarding Bar-Kokhba as messiah. Although little is known about R. Yohanan ben Torta, it is nowhere stated that he was harassed on account of his denial of Bar Kokhba's messianic status. Similarly, it seems unlikely that the Christians were persecuted only because they refused to acknowledge Bar Kokhba's messianic status. In this respect, we showed above that Justin's account (according to which Bar-Kokhba compelled Christians to utter blasphemy and to deny Jesus Christ) is very

⁸² In this connection, Yadin notes that, of the fifteen letters found in the cave of letters, only the letter on wood (Papyrus Yadin 54) gives the full title of Bar Kokhba; "Expedition D," *IEJ* 11 (1961), 41. See: Y. Yadin, "The Letters of Bar Kokhba", *IEJ* 11 (1961), 150, (in Hebrew); *Id.*, *The Documents from the Bar Kokhva Period in the Cave of Letters*, 20-21, 122, 124; Y. Meshorer, *Jewish Coins of the Second Temple Period*, Translated from the Hebrew by I. H. Levine, (Tel Aviv: Am Hassefer, 1967), 92-101; A. Kindler, "The Coinage of the Bar Kokhba-War", in *The Dating and Meaning of Ancient Jewish Coins and Symbols. Six Essays in Jewish Numismatic*, (Israel Numismatic Society, Tel Aviv/ Jerusalem 1958), 62-80.

tendentious, and probably derives from observation of Roman methods of investigation of individuals suspected of Christianity.

However, a question remains. How are we to explain that, according to *ApocaP*, many martyrs were to be slain because of their rejection of the "deceiver", who is identified by most scholars as Bar Kokhba?

We tend to believe that this issue is more intricate than it seems: we cannot simply say that Bar-Kokhba persecuted those who rejected him as a false Messiah. Indeed, if we are to consider the account of *ApocaP* to be reliable, a distinction must be made between the Bar Kokhba's motives for persecuting some of his subjects and the way the author(s) of *ApocaP* understood these events. Thus, we would like to suggest that the spreading belief in Bar-Kokhba as messiah, following his military achievements, put the Christians in an embarrassing position. This growing phenomenon, which contradicted in their eyes the faith in Jesus as messiah, would have led them to dissociate themselves from Bar Kokhba's followers. In reaction, the new regime must certainly have responded with an iron hand to the Jewish Christians' refusal to support their struggle. Only in this respect is the belief in Jesus as messiah related to the persecution of Christians at the hands of Bar Kokhba.

But even this inference must be qualified, for there is reason to think that some Jewish Christians shared the common enthusiasm for both Bar-Kokhba and his revolt. As stated above, we suggest that the author(s) of *ApocaP*, who probably belonged to the Palestinian Jewish Christian leadership, were inspired by a twofold motive: First of all, they attempted to comfort those facing the consequences of their lack of commitment to the revolt and at the same time, they sought to prevent those inclined to support Bar-Kokhba from being led astray by the "deceiver." In this respect, the

emphasis in this text on the unmistakable nature of Jesus' second coming is very instructive. The way this theme is developed suggests that the *Parousia* was an object of intense discussion. While some people certainly grew weary of waiting for the return of Jesus, others ardently expected its coming at any moment; the warning neither to be "doubters" nor to be deceived by false Messiahs is to be understood in this context. There is, therefore, a reasonable *a priori* case for supposing that some of the eagerest minds within the Christian community surrendered to the euphoria that accompanied Bar Kokhba's victories. Because of this, the author(s) of *ApocaP* thought it necessary both to demonstrate that the rebel leader was a deceiver, and to make sure that Jesus' coming would be unmistakable.

In light of this development, it seems safe to assume that some Christians refused to commit themselves to the revolt since they considered that such involvement would be equivalent to the acceptance of the spreading concept of Bar-Kokhba as messiah.

The implications of their refusal still need to be assessed. Moreover, we need to determine how the authorities of the new state perceived and understood such behavior.

3 The Christians and the objectives of the revolt

It is still questionable whether the rejection of the supposed messianic status of Bar-Kokhba had further implications, and entailed a total boycott of the uprising on the part of the Jewish Christians. More generally, we must assess how far the latter shared in the fundamental aims of the revolt; in this respect, a special emphasis must be put on the hope of rebuilding the Temple of Jerusalem.

It can hardly be denied that the desire to restore the Jewish shrine and the sacrificial cult occupied a central place in the mind of the revolutionary government. Whether

the rebels succeeded in achieving their goal is not within the scope of this book; we must just make it clear that the official propaganda of the Jewish state presented the rebuilding of the Temple as a matter of the highest priority. In this regard, the coinage of Bar-Kokhba turns out to be very instructive. It is noteworthy, indeed, that most of the images represented on the coins are related to the Temple and its service: especially notable are the representations of the Temple façade, the sacred vessels (such as the amphora and the oil pitcher) and several musical instruments used by the priests (various harps and lyres).

Bauckham has suggested that the last revelation of Jesus that closes the Ethiopic version of *ApocaP*, may echo the hope of rebuilding the Temple in the days of the Second Revolt.⁸³ Thus, Chapter 15 opens with Jesus enjoining his disciples to go to the "holy mountain." There the disciples are granted a vision of Moses and Elijah as heavenly beings. Bauckham has rightly noted that this account, although based on the Matthean narrative of the transfiguration⁸⁴, presents some original features. Indeed, Peter's proposal to build three tents (tabernacles) for Moses, Elijah and Jesus⁸⁵ is vehemently rejected by the latter in *ApocaP*. Thus, Jesus is reported to exclaim in wrath:

"Satan makes war against you [Peter], and has veiled your understanding; and the good things of this world prevail against you. Your eyes therefore must be opened and your ears unstopped that you may see a tabernacle (tent), not made with men's hands, which my heavenly Father has made for me and for the elect."⁸⁶

⁸³ See above: 252-253.

⁸⁴ Matthew 17: 1-9.

⁸⁵ Matthew 17: 4.

⁸⁶ *ApocaP* 16: 7-8.

The text reads then, that a voice came from heaven saying "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."⁸⁷

The scrutiny of this account has led Bauckham to draw certain conclusions:

In the first place, he argues that the word "tent" which very likely renders the Greek term σκηνή, was used as equivalent to the Hebrew word מִשְׁכָּן and is to be understood as meaning "tabernacle" or "temple": this equivalence is not uncommon in the New Testament.⁸⁸ In addition, Bauckham considers that the very location of the revelation tends to strengthen his proposition; it is most likely, indeed, that the term "holy mountain," refers to Mount Zion, *i.e.*, the location of the Jewish Sanctuary. Thus, in his view, this account is to be understood as a revelation of the heavenly Temple which is not made with human hands, but which God has already created for his Messiah and his People. In addition, Bauckham assumes that the subsequent identification of Jesus as God's Messiah by the heavenly voice, far from being fortuitous, is closely related to the theme of the true Temple. Furthermore, he considers that this passage is to be connected with the concern of *ApocaP* 2. Thus, Bauckham infers from this that the twofold revelation of *ApocaP* 16 (about the true Messiah and the eschatological Temple) is aimed at responding to the claims of the messianic pretender (referred to in *ApocaP* 2) who, it seems, intends to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.

If we are to accept this assumption, it seems reasonable to agree with Bauckham that the Jewish Christians' rejection of the uprising against the Roman Empire focused not only on Bar Kokhba's supposed status as messiah but also on the central aim of the revolt *i.e.*, the rebuilding of the Temple. It could be argued, though, that the very

⁸⁷ *ApocaP* 17: 1.

⁸⁸ See: Epistle to the Hebrew 9: 11.

existence of this work, which established that the attempt to restore the material shrine was inspired by Satan and contradicted the divine will of a heavenly temple, indicates that some of the Christian community of Judaea were inclined to share some of the rebels' objectives.

In our view, it would be misleading to suggest that, following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the Jewish Christian streams ceased to share all the national and religious aspirations of their brethren. In this regard, we have attempted to demonstrate in a previous chapter that the veneration of Jerusalem was common within the Jewish Christian streams, so that the return to the city and the establishment of a Christian congregation there after the Jewish War is to be understood as a mark of reverence for the Holy City. Moreover, we have inferred from a reading of Hegesippus' account of the so-called stele of James that stood next to the Temple, that Jewish Christians frequented the area of the destroyed Sanctuary which still seems to have occupied a central place in their eyes.⁸⁹ In light of this consideration, it seems very reasonable to assume that there were still some among these groups who had not abandoned the hope of rebuilding the Temple and re-instituting the sacrificial cult.

The persistence of such aspirations is reflected in several contemporary Christian works which condemned what they considered to be "Judaizing" trends. The *Epistle of Barnabas* (hereafter *EpBar*), is particularly revealing in this respect. The composition of this text has been dated to the decades that followed the destruction of the Temple. It is difficult to provide a more accurate date, although several scholars

⁸⁹ See our previous chapter on the Jewish Christians' relationship to Jerusalem and the Temple following the Jewish War.

have dated its appearance either to the reign of Nerva⁹⁰ or the time of Hadrian.⁹¹ Two possible places of origin for this text have been proposed: Egypt or Syro-Palestine. Unfortunately, it is also difficult to establish the identity of its author with any certainty although several scholars have argued that he was a Christian of gentile stock and that *EpBar* was meant for community of pagan Christians.

The main concern of *EpBar* is the defence of the Christian spiritual understanding of the Law against the supposed literal reading of the Jews. In this connection, M. B. Shukster and P. Richardson have pointed out the special emphasis put on polemic against the material Temple throughout the text.⁹² The climax of this criticism comes in chapter 16, which is wholly devoted to this issue. Thus, the discussion of the Temple is introduced by a very explicit passage:

"I will also speak to you about the Temple, since those wretches [the Jews] were misguided in hoping in the building rather than in their God who made them, as if the Temple were actually the house of God. For they consecrated him in the Temple almost like the Gentiles do."⁹³

Scholarship on *EpBar* has focused particularly on 16: 4 which reads

"For because of their [the Jews] war, it [the shrine] was destroyed by their enemies. And now the servant of the enemies will themselves rebuild it"⁹⁴

This enigmatic sentence has been thought by some scholars to refer to the ardent Jewish hopes for rebuilding the Temple early in the reign of Hadrian.⁹⁵ However no

⁹⁰ See for example: W. Horbury, "Jewish Christian Relations in Barnabas and Justin Martyr", in J. D. G. Dunn (ed.), *Jews and Christians: the Parting of the Ways: A. D. 70 to 135*, (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 315-345, esp. 319-321.

⁹¹ See for instance: D. Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 2003), 147-153.

⁹² M. B. Shukster and P. Richardson, "Temple and *Bet Midrash* in the Epistles of Barnabas", in S. G. Wilson (ed.), *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity*, vol. 2: *Separation and Polemic*, (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1986), 17-31.

⁹³ All citations of *Epistle of Barnabas* are from the Loeb edition, trans. B. D. Ehrman, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 13-83.

⁹⁴ It is worth noting here that the most ancient manuscript (*Sinaiticus*) shows a slight difference and reads "they [the Jews] *and* the servants of the enemies."

consensus has been reached regarding the exact meaning of this passage. Within the scope of the present investigation, we can only note that throughout the period in question, these aspirations, which were very strong among Jews, were also shared by some Christians. In this connection, W. Horbury suggests that the author of *EpBar* felt it necessary to "counter excitement at the prospect of a rebuilt Temple."⁹⁶ Furthermore, he considers that this writing testifies to the powerful influence the "patriotic Jewish outlook" exercised on Christian communities.⁹⁷

In our opinion, the range of this phenomenon should not be underrated. It is obvious, indeed, that Christian attraction to Judaism represented an immediate threat in the eyes of the author of *EpBar*: in this respect, the warning he addressed to his audience in chapter 2 (10) is very instructive:

"And so, brothers, we ought to learn clearly about our salvation, to keep the Evil One from hurling us away from our life after bringing error in through the backdoor."

It is remarkable, as Horbury has rightly noted, that this writing represents merely one part of early second-century Christianity, whose stance was clearly defensive.⁹⁸

This consideration leads us to qualify further the hostile view expressed in *ApocaP* with regard to the rebuilding of the Temple. Indeed, it would be very hazardous to infer that this work expresses the position held by Judaeans Christians as a whole. We are more inclined to assume that the local Christian community was divided on this issue, which became increasingly pressing after the outbreak of the revolt. In any

⁹⁵ See: A. Schlatter, *Die Tage Trajans und Hadrians*, (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1897), 61-67; L. W. Barnard, "The Date of the Epistle of Barnabas, A Document of Early Egyptian Christianity", *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 44 (1958), 101-107; M. Simon, "L'Épître de Barnabé et le Temple," in *Les Juifs au Regard de l'Histoire: Mélanges en l'honneur de Bernhard Blumentkrantz*, (Paris: A. and J. Picard 1985), 31-36.

⁹⁶ W. Horbury, "Jewish Christian Relations in Barnabas and Justin Martyr", 336.

⁹⁷ "Jewish Christian Relations in Barnabas and Justin Martyr", 333.

⁹⁸ "Jewish Christian Relations in Barnabas and Justin Martyr", 334.

event, it is clear that some Christians refused to support the rebels' cardinal aspiration and held themselves aloof from the attempt to restore the Temple. Their reasons went beyond the opposition to Bar Kokhba's leadership, deriving from a specific understanding of the role ascribed to the institution of the Temple in the new religious order. It must be recalled here that the idea of a heavenly Temple was shared by other Jewish streams after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE.⁹⁹

It is difficult to know whether the Christians opposed the other aspirations of the rebels, nor can we determine how they reacted to the various different aspects of the revolt. It has been argued, though, that the Christians refused to take part in the uprising on account of their supposed pacifism.¹⁰⁰ In this connection M. Bockmuehl considers that "Christians at least in the first two centuries also took a strong public stance in favour of pacifism, non-retaliation and refusal of military service, sometimes at considerable cost to themselves...Christian resistance in the early centuries was consistently non-violent."¹⁰¹ According to such a view, the Christian tradition of non-violence derived from teachings ascribed to Jesus himself. In this regard, the Gospel of Matthew is of great interest to this study for, as noted above, this work (or at least part of it) was clearly known to the author of *ApocaP*. Some of the statements attributed to Jesus in Matthew would seem to corroborate this proposition; we read for instance in Matthew 5: 43-44:

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love you neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you'."

⁹⁹ See for instance: the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch 4: 2-7; 32: 2-4; J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagery*, (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 172.

¹⁰⁰ S. Abramski, *Bar Kokhba, Nasi Israel*, 76.

¹⁰¹ M. Bockmuehl, "Jewish and Christian public ethics in the early Roman Empire", in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, 351.

However, the portrayal of Jesus as the "Pacific Christ" has been challenged, notably by the controversial studies of S. G. F. Brandon.¹⁰² A full analysis of Jesus' feelings toward the use of force and violence is beyond the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, we should point out that other passages in Matthew's gospel compel us to qualify this alleged pacifism. Thus, in Matthew 10: 34, Jesus is reported to have said:

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."

Besides, whereas the issues of the true Messiah and of the true Temple occupy a central place in *APocaP*, the question of the attitude to be adopted in case of war is completely absent from the text; moreover, nothing in this work evokes a context of warfare. It would thus seem to be very difficult to assess what influence the principle of non-violence might have had on the behavior of the Judaeen Christians during the Bar-Kokhba Revolt. In any event, it would be far too simplistic to infer from Eusebius' account that the Christians refused to fight merely because of their supposed pacifism.

4 The rebel authorities facing internal opposition:

In light of our discussion, it seems safe to assume that the Judaeen Christians who shared the views expressed in *ApocaP*, considered the growing belief in Bar-Kokhba as messiah to be a threat to their faith; thus, they felt necessary to explicitly oppose it by refusing to commit themselves to the revolt. In addition, it seems that they did not identify with some of the fundamental aims of the uprising like the rebuilding of the Temple. According to our sources the revolutionary authority attacked the Christians at some point. As stated above, it seems very unlikely that it was merely rejection of

¹⁰² See: S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots. A study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity*, (Manchester: University Press, 1967).

the belief in Bar Kokhba's messianic status which led to such a clash between the Jewish rebels and the Christians. This consideration leads us to formulate two further questions: How exactly did the Christians' refusal manifest itself? At what point did the rebel government become aware of this phenomenon and consider it intolerable?

The vestiges of Bar Kokhba's rule and especially the letters found in the Judean desert are very instructive regarding the character of the rebel regime; in fact, these finds shed light on what appears to have been a well-organized entity. This short-lived state, whose government was headed by Bar Kokhba, issued its own coinage, established a system of administration, leased parcels of land (in the name of its leader), levied taxes and contributions, and reckoned the years according to its own era. It is reasonable to assume that the legitimacy of the revolutionary rule was contingent on its relatively strong power of coercion.

Indeed, the letters of Bar-Kokhba attest to the fact that the new authorities had recourse to threats and even used force to impose their will. In several missives, Bar-Kokhba warns his subalterns that they would be punished if they do not execute his orders.¹⁰³ Mur. 43 demonstrates that, in some cases, such threats were carried out; thus, Bar Kokhba threatens Yeshua ben Galgula (the head of a camp) that he will put fetters on his feet if he disobeys his command, as he did to a certain Ben Aphlul. In other cases, Bar-Kokhba orders his subordinates to arrest certain individuals and to dispatch them to him. Since the letters are not rich in details, it is difficult to know on which grounds these people were punished and we can merely formulate cautious suggestions. We may infer, for instance, that Yeshua son of the Palmyrene was to be arrested for insubordination, for Bar-Kokhba specifies to Yehonathan and Mesabalah,

¹⁰³ See for instance: Mur. 43 and P. Yadin 55.

the commandants of Ein Gedi, that they should "not fail to seize the sword that is on him [Yehoshua]." ¹⁰⁴

It is clear that Bar-Kokhba also took steps against groups of persons. Here the case of the people of Tekoa, who are mentioned in at least four letters, is very interesting. ¹⁰⁵ However, it is difficult to determine whether all four letters deal with the same issue. Strikingly, P. Yadin 61 is the only one that is directly addressed by Bar-Kokhba to "[the people of Te]koa". Although this letter is highly fragmentary, it seems that the Jewish leader demanded payment of some obligation.

We are inclined to assume that P. Yadin 54 and P. Yadin 55 which were both addressed to Yehonathan and Masabalah, deal with a different issue. In both letters, Bar-Kokhba instructs the commanders of Ein Gedi to take harsh measures against the people from Tekoa who are to be found at their places; thus, whereas in P. Yadin 54 Bar-Kokhba commands them to burn their houses, in P. Yadin 55 he orders his subordinates to dispatch "any person from Tekoa" to him. Unfortunately, we can only conjecture about the reasons that led such people to take up residence in Ein Gedi. However, it would seem very unlikely that, by doing so, they were trying to escape payment to Bar Kokhba; it would appear more probable that they fled from the combat zone as the Romans approached and sought refuge in a safer place. It appears indeed that, at some point during the war, as the Romans were gaining the upper hand over the Jewish rebels, the situation in Ein Gedi was not as bad as in the rest of the country. In this connection, P. Yadin 49 turns out to be very enlightening: Here Bar

¹⁰⁴ P. Yadin 54; the English translation is from Y. Yadin et al., *The Documents from the Bar Kokhva Period in the Cave of Letters, Vol. II*, 308.

¹⁰⁵ Mur 47; P. Yadin 54; 55; 61. Unfortunately, Mur. 47 is too fragmentary to lead to a reliable conclusion.

Kokhba, adopting a strong tone of reprimand, writes to the commandants of Ein Gedi, Masabala and Yehonatan,

"You are dwell[ing]; eating and drinking of the property of the House of Israel, but showing no concern for your brothers in any manner."¹⁰⁶

Relatively spared by the war, Ein Gedi became temporarily a natural shelter for many Jews who feared the advance of the Roman troops. In this regard, it is noteworthy that according to P. Yadin 55, not only the people from Tekoa were to be dispatched to Bar Kokhba, but also people "from any other place" who were found in Ein Gedi. It is reasonable to conclude that Bar-Kokhba was reproaching these people for having abandoned the front line at the approach of the enemy. In his eyes, their flight was equivalent to desertion and consequently they were to be punished. It is interesting to note here that in P. Yadin 54, Bar-Kokhba refers more particularly to "any Teko'an *male*" ("וכל גבר תקועי").

Y. Yadin was the first to suggest that "some of the Tekoans were disregarding the mobilization orders of Bar Kokhba."¹⁰⁷ Alon went a step further, and proposed that the rebel government enforced compulsory military service and issued a decree of universal conscription in order to organize the army.¹⁰⁸ This hypothesis is mainly grounded on Michael Syrus' account, according to which Bar-Kokhba compelled everyone to march with him against the Romans.¹⁰⁹ The advantage of this hypothesis is that it concurs with Eusebius' account. If we accept it, we may infer that the Jewish Christians were persecuted because they refused to contribute to the war efforts and ignored Bar Kokhba's mobilization order.

¹⁰⁶ Translation from Y. Yadin et al., *The Documents from the Bar Kokhva Period in the Cave of Letters, Vol. II*, 282.

¹⁰⁷ Y. Yadin, *Bar-Kokhba: The Rediscovery of the Legendary Hero*, 125.

¹⁰⁸ G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 628-630.

¹⁰⁹ J.-B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, vol. 1, 176.

In this connection, it has been pointed out that, according to the rabbinic literature, some of the most eminent rabbis of this period debated the cases of exemption from military duty.¹¹⁰ S. Lieberman, G. Alon and others have suggested that this discussion was most probably related to the Bar-Kokhba revolt.¹¹¹ The argument reported between R. Akiba, R. Yose the Galilean and R. Judah was centered on the commentary on Deuteronomy 20: 1-8, which addresses the question of who shall be discharged from military obligations. In fact, the Mosaic Law acknowledges different types of exemptions which are basically related to men who have commitments (such as a new house, vineyard or wife) and to those whose lack of courage could harm the morale of the army.

However, according to Mishnah Sotah viii, 7 these exemptions apply only under specific circumstances:

"What has been said applies to a war waged of free choice (מלחמת הרשות); but in a war which fulfills a commandment (מלחמת מצוה) all go forth, even the bridegroom out of his chamber and the bride out of her bridechamber. R. Judah said: What has been said applies to a war which fulfills a commandment, but in a war waged in duty bound (מלחמת חובה) all go forth, even the bridegroom from his chamber and the bride from her bridechamber (Joel 2: 16)."¹¹²

This passage thus defines three types of war, each governed by specific rules of mobilization and exemption. According to the Babylonian Talmud, the optional (or authorized) wars (מלחמת הרשות) were the wars of territorial expansion like the military

¹¹⁰ M Sotah viii, 7 and parallels: Tos. Sotah vii, 24, (ed. Lieberman, 200-202); JT Sotah viii, 7, 23a, (col. 942-943); BT Sotah, 44b.

¹¹¹ G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 629-630; S. Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Peshutah*, vol. VIII, (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1972), 693-694, (in Hebrew).

¹¹² We have altered the translation of H. Danby (*The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief explanatory Notes*, [London: Oxford University Press, 1933], 303).

campaigns of the house of David. Regarding the wars of duty (מלחמת חובה), Raba, a fourth century Babylonian rabbi said "the wars of conquest fought by Joshua, in the opinion of all parties, constitute obligatory wars."¹¹³ It can be inferred from this that the uniqueness of this type of war is that it derived from a specific biblical commandment: accordingly, the rabbis stated that, in this kind of conflict, all were to fight. Lastly, Alon argues that the idea of the *milhemet mitzvah* (מלחמת מצוה), the war which fulfills a commandment was first formulated by the disciples of R. Akiba, that is to say in the generation immediately following the Bar-Kokhba revolt.¹¹⁴ Accordingly, there is a reasonable *a priori* case for supposing that the appearance of this concept was closely related to the Second Jewish Revolt. In this context, it should be noted that, throughout the talmudic literature, numerous accounts related to the Bar-Kokhba revolt are ascribed to R. Judah.

According to the above-mentioned Mishnah, the rules of exemptions apply only in the case of optional wars. Only R. Judah maintains that they are also valid for a *milhemet mitzvah*. Thus, the concept of *milhemet mitzvah* could potentially justify the establishment of a system of universal conscription, without affecting the unique nature of the war of duty. In Alon's view, a *milhemet mitzvah* would apply to wars of defence.¹¹⁵ If so, it would correspond to the last stages of the Bar-Kokhba revolt, when the situation proved disadvantageous to the Jews. It is reasonable to conclude that in these stages a pressing need arose for increasing the number of fighters.

In any event, regardless of the exact meaning of this category of war, it is noteworthy that rabbis contemporary with the revolt discussed the rules governing military conscription. As stated above, there is good reason to believe that this debate was connected with the mobilization orders issued by Bar Kokva during the revolt.

¹¹³ BT Sotah 44b.

¹¹⁴ *The Jews in their Land*, 630.

¹¹⁵ *The Jews in their Land*, 630.

In light of this, it can be inferred that Bar-Kokhba punished Christians who refused to obey his enlistment orders and march with him against the Romans, just as he punished the men of Teko'a who had sought refuge in Ein Gedi. Thus, it seems that the revolutionary government did not attack the Christians as Christians; in its eyes, these punitive measures were aimed against all deserters. We should note here that the concerns expressed in the letters of Bar-Kokhba are about very down-to-earth issues related to the immediate needs of a leadership at war (such as the organization of the food supply or demands for payments).

However, the Christians who disregarded the mobilization order since they rejected the widespread belief in Bar-Kokhba as messiah, interpreted these sanctions to be a persecution led against them by a messianic pretender. Thus the Christians' understanding of these events (as expressed for instance in *ApocaP*) is to be distinguished from the genuine intent of the rebel leadership.

Does this conclusion enable us to state that the sufferings Christians endured at the hands of Bar-Kokhba were merely the consequences of their refusal to take part in the war efforts? Did these punitive measures only respond to the urgency of the war situation? Or did they derive from deeper considerations?

C-...OR THE CULMINATION OF A LONG PROCESS ?

In Part I above, we attempted to show that the persecution of Christians by Bar-Kokhba may be understood within the context of the revolt itself. Thus, it was the harsh situation they had to face which probably led the Jewish authorities to take severe measures against those most reluctant to support them. In addition, we have come to the conclusion that the issue of Bar Kokhba's supposed messianic status is only indirectly related to these happenings. However, in spite of these considerations,

it is still unclear whether this persecution resulted simply only from the specific circumstances of the war or whether it derived from earlier developments. Moreover, leaving aside the question of his supposed messianic claim, we must also ask whether Bar Kokhba's policy toward the Christians was completely devoid of religious motivation.

The study of these two related issues leads us to wonder about a possible correlation between Bar Kokhba's activities and the attitude of the spiritual leadership of the rabbis toward the Christians before the revolt. To answer these questions the scope of our investigation must now be broadened, in order to include an examination of developments which occurred during the decades preceding the revolt.

1- Bar-Kokhba and the rabbis:

Before we address this specific question, we must ask whether the rabbis did support (if not inspire) the Bar-Kokhba revolt and if so, whether they were in position to impose their view on the people. The range of scholarly opinions here is very wide, thus, since the issue is not of direct concern to our study, we shall merely provide a brief survey of the principal views.

The common opinion states that the rabbis took an active part in the revolt. This view was expressed notably by G. Alon who wrote in this respect: "It is well known that R. Akiba was one of the chief national leaders in this struggle (the Bar-Kokhba revolt) and although...there were Pharisees who opposed the war, there is hardly room for doubt that the majority of them agreed with R. Akiba and Bar Kokhba. Had this not been so, this war which lasted three years and half, and in which many tens of

thousands of Jews participated, could not have begun at all, and at that time Pharisees alone were represented in the community."¹¹⁶

Other scholars like S. Yeivin¹¹⁷, A. Oppenheimer¹¹⁸ and I. Ben Shalom¹¹⁹ have embraced this opinion and maintain that the overwhelming majority of the rabbis did support the uprising. B. Isaac and A. Oppenheimer, for instance, insist on the continuity between the activities of the rabbis during the period of Yavneh and the attitude of Bar-Kokhba and his followers.¹²⁰ B. Z. Rosenfeld has attempted to assess the importance of the rabbis within Judaeen society in the early second century from analysis of the Tannaitic sources.¹²¹ He estimates that their group, which comprised at least fifty scholars, was very influential in Judaea and its vicinity during the years preceding the uprising. Hence Rosenfeld concludes that the rebellion could not have taken place without the active support of this leading element of the population.

This prevailing view has been challenged by several scholars for various reasons. G. S. Aleksandrov has emphasized what he considers to be the pro-Roman orientation of the rabbis in order to reject the possibility that Bar-Kokhba got their backing.¹²² P. Schäfer has also cast doubts on the likelihood that the rabbis inspired the revolt, and questions especially the hypothesis that R. Akiba was the ideologist of the rebellion.

¹¹⁶ G. Alon, "The Attitude of the Pharisees to the Roman Government and the House of Herod", *SH* 7 (1961), 53-78, esp.76.

¹¹⁷ S. Yeivin, *The War of Bar Kokhba*, (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1952), 78-79.

¹¹⁸ A. Oppenheimer, "The Bar Kokhva Revolt- Its Uniqueness and Its Study", in *The Bar-Kochba Revolt*, (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1980), 9-21, (in Hebrew); *id.*, "Bar Kokhva and the Observance of Mitzot" in *Between Rome and Babylon: Studies in Jewish Leadership and Society*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 2005), 283-291; *id.*, "Sabbatheilung im Bar-Kochba-Aufstand" in *Ibid.*, 292-302.

¹¹⁹ I. Ben Shalom, "The status of Bar Kokhva as leader of the nation and the support of the Sages for the revolt", *Katedra* 29 (1983), 13-28, (in Hebrew).

¹²⁰ B. Isaac and A. Oppenheimer, "The Revolt of Bar Kokhba: Ideology and Modern Scholarship", 49.

¹²¹ B. Z. Rosenfeld, "The Sages of the generation of Bar Kokhba and their relation to the revolt according to the Tannaitic literature", in D. Gera and M. Ben-Zeev (ed.), *The Path of Peace: Studies in Honor of Israel Friedman Ben-Shalom*, (Beer Sheva: Beer Sheva University Press, 2005), 319-359, (in Hebrew).

¹²² G.S. Aleksandrov, "The Role of 'Aqiba in the Bar-Kokhba Rebellion", *REJ* 132 (1973), 65-77.

In his view, the importance of the rabbinic movement during this period needs further study. Schäfer is thus more inclined to connect the ideological roots of the Bar-Kokhba revolt with much earlier traditions.¹²³ D. Goodblatt, who has expressed a similar opinion, assumes that it was the priestly circles, rather than the rabbis who were more likely to have supported Bar-Kokhba and his uprising.¹²⁴ Similarly, D. ben Haim Trifon upholds that it was in the priests' best interest to back the rebellion, whose cardinal aim was to rebuild the Temple and to restore the sacrifices.¹²⁵ Moreover, she considers it very unlikely that the rabbis enjoyed a wide base of support among the people. She argues, indeed, that Jewish society in Judaea then was mainly composed of peasants, merchants and grocers, who were despised by the rabbis on account of their alleged thoughtlessness in religious matters.

In spite of these considerations, we think it is more reasonable to assume that the rabbis in their great majority did support the revolt. Although it is not possible to obtain a clear picture of the situation that prevailed then, re-stating some well-known facts may lead us to such a conclusion:

1-Following the destruction of the Temple, Pharisaism appears to have become the main (but not the only) Jewish spiritual stream in Judaea. Its representatives, the rabbis, constituted a major element within the Jewish society that could not be ignored.¹²⁶

¹²³ P. Schäfer, "Rabbi Aqiva and Bar Kokhba", in W.S. Green (ed.), *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Volume II*, (Michigan: Scholar Press, 1980), 113-130; *id.*, "Bar Kokhva and the Rabbis," in *The Bar Kokhva War Reconsidered*, 1-22.

¹²⁴ D. Goodblatt, "Support of the Tannaim or Influence of the Priests?", *Katedra* 29 (1983), 6-12, (in Hebrew); *id.*, "The Title *Nasi* and the Ideological Background of the Second Revolt," in A. Oppenheimer and U. Rappaport (ed.), *The Bar-Kochba Revolt: New Studies*, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1984), 113-132, (in Hebrew).

¹²⁵ D. Ben Haim Trifon, "Some aspects of internal politics connected with the Bar-Kokhba Revolt", in *The Bar-Kochba Revolt: New Studies*, 13-26, (in Hebrew).

¹²⁶ This conclusion does not only derive from the talmudic literature but is also inferred from certain passages of the New Testament (Matthew 23) and from Josephus' writings; see: M. Smith, "Palestinian

2-Both the strength and the duration of the Second Jewish revolt imply that Bar-Kokhba and his cause were widely backed by substantial numbers of the Jewish population of Judaea.

3- The main reasons for the uprising (whether one accepts the foundation of Aelia Capitolina, the ban on circumcision, or even both) are religious in essence and imply that religious issues were of deep concern for the rebels and their supporters.

4- On numerous occasions the talmudic literature alludes to the connection of some of the most eminent rabbis of the period with the rebels.¹²⁷

However, one question remains: Can we infer from the participation of the rabbis in the revolt that Bar-Kokhba shared their outlook and observed their *halakha*?

Oppenheimer has concluded from his analysis of the Bar-Kokhba documents found in the Judaeian desert, that the rebels were obviously very concerned about the observance of the fundamental commandments like the Sabbath, the Sabbatical year,

Judaism in the First Century", in M. Davis (ed.), *Israel: Its Role in Civilization*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), 74-78; J. Neusner, "Josephus' Pharisees", in J. Bergman, K. Drynjev and H. Ringgren (ed.), *Ex Orbe. Religionum. Studia Geo. Widengren vol. 1*, (SHR 21; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 224-244.

¹²⁷We would like to make an observation at this point regarding the reliability of the accounts related to the Bar Kokhba revolt in the talmudic literature. In order to establish their authenticity, we believe that one may appeal to a principle used in New Testament exegesis. This would consider as genuine the data that most likely embarrassed the first Christian communities (for instance, Jesus' baptism by John). This method is grounded on the assumption that such traditions were too-well established to be dismissed outright by the redactors of the Gospels. Likewise, it is permissible to think that the participation of some of the most renowned Sages in the Bar Kokhba uprising would have embarrassed the later authors of certain traditions. In this regard, Lamentations Rabbah ii, 4 may be enlightening. It reads: "R. Johanan said: "Rabbi used to expound 'There shall step forth a star out of Jacob (Numbers 24: 17)' in this way: Do not read star (כוכב), rather read liar (כזב). When R. Akiba saw Bar Kosiba, he said, 'This is the king Messiah'". This passage undoubtedly aims to correct (if not to condemn) the words ascribed to R. Akiba which claimed a messianic status for Bar Kokhba. (JT Ta'anit, iv, 6, 68d, [col. 733]). It is noteworthy that only a man of such a high status as Rabbi (whether he was the genuine author of these words or not) was in position to contradict the interpretation attributed to R. Akiba; in this connection we read in BT Qiddushin, 72b: "When R. Akiba died, Rabbi was born". This strengthens the assumption that this tradition, which had become embarrassing in the eyes of the rabbis at some point after the revolt, was too well-established to be merely erased. Similarly, it seems reasonable to infer that the account which relates the tragic fate of R. El'azar HaModa'i who was killed by Bar-Kokhba himself in the besieged city of Betar (JT Ta'anit iv, 6, 68d-69a, [col. 734]) derived from such considerations; it was intended to explain in an acceptable way for the later rabbis both El'azar's presence in Betar at Bar Kokhba's side and the reason for the fall of the city in spite of his presence there.

tithing and the taking of the Four Species.¹²⁸ In spite of this, it remains difficult to state with certainty that Bar Kokhba's rigorous practice of the Mosaic Law derived from the *halakha* of the rabbis. In this connection, Oppenheimer has pointed out that some of the commandments the men of Bar-Kokhba observed, such as like for instance the wearing of ritual fringes or the setting aside of tithes, for example, had received special significance during the Yavneh period.

The taking of the Four Species by Bar-Kokhba is of particular interest, for it may possibly derive from an enactment of R. Yohanan b. Zakkai (hereafter RYbZ). Following the destruction of the Temple, RYbZ had decreed that the waving of the Four Species be performed everywhere on every day of *Sukkot* (except on the Sabbath), as a memorial of the Sanctuary.¹²⁹ Now we learn from a letter found in Nahal Hever that Bar-Kokhba himself ordered that preparations be made obviously with the view to celebrate *Sukkot* in his camp.¹³⁰ Schäfer, however, argues that it cannot be deduced from this that Bar-Kokhba did observe the rulings of the rabbis. In his opinion, it is more likely that the rebel leader wished to emphasize both the eschatological and the national characteristics of the festival.¹³¹ Schäfer may be right in stressing that *Sukkot* was loaded with a message of redemption that was well suited to the propaganda of the rebels, but the fact remains that Bar-Kokhba did celebrate the festival in the form prescribed by the rabbis.

In light of his discoveries, Yadin proposed that we should see a correlation between the religious practices of Bar Kokhba's followers and the *halakha* of the rabbis. He drew this conclusion from the observation of the metal vessels unearthed in the "Cave

¹²⁸ A. Oppenheimer, "Bar Kokhva and the Observance of Mitzvot", 283-291.

¹²⁹ M Sukkah iii, 10.

¹³⁰ P. Yadin 57.

¹³¹ P. Schäfer, "Bar Kokhva and the Rabbis", 10.

of Letters", which were presumably brought there by the Jewish rebels who sought refuge there. Yadin has inferred from the representations on some of the pieces, that these vessels were originally pagan. He further noted, however, that the images of deities had been effaced, probably in order to make these objects usable by observant Jews. This practice, which aimed to preserve the Mosaic principle of aniconism, was in accordance with Mishnaic rulings.¹³² Nonetheless, Schäfer who casts doubts on this assumption has ascribed this "damage" on the vessels to wear and tear.¹³³

Ben Haim Trifon, who shares Schäfer's stance, has endeavored to bring forth further evidence for the non-influence of the rabbis on the Bar-Kokhba revolt.¹³⁴ She first claims that the legends on Bar Kokhba's coinage, which were written in ancient Hebrew script, stood in contradiction to the rabbis' rulings since the *halakha* condemns the use of this lettering. It would appear, however, that such evidence is not compelling, for the Mishnah on which this assertion is grounded merely states that certain biblical texts are to be written in *Assyrian* characters (the Hebrew square letters) in order to be suitable for sacred purposes. In any case, this Mishnah is evidence for the secular use of the ancient Hebrew characters.¹³⁵

Ben Haim Trifon also reports the discovery in south-western Judaea (the area of Hebron, Bet Govrin and Gaza) of decorated Jewish lamps bearing the symbol of the *menorah* (seven-branched candelabrum). These clay lamps belong to the late Herodian type, which appeared after to the destruction of the Temple and lasted down to the time of the Bar-Kokhba revolt. Ben Haim Tryphon considers these finds prove that neither the people nor Bar-Kokhba observed the *halakha* of the rabbis, since several passages in the talmudic literature prohibit the representation of the *menorah*

¹³² Y. Yadin, *Bar-Kokhba: The Rediscovery of the Legendary Hero*, 102.

¹³³ P. Schäfer, "Bar Kokhva and the Rabbis", 14.

¹³⁴ D. Ben Haim Trifon, "Some aspects of internal politics connected with the Bar-Kokhba Revolt", 23.

¹³⁵ M Megillah i, 8; ii, 1-2; Yadayim iv, 5.

symbol. However, V. Sussmann has pointed out that the images which appear on these lamps differ from the usual representation of the *menorah*. She thus infers that the manufacturers endeavored not to portray the *menorah* in the way they remembered it from the Temple period (as described in Exodus 25: 31- 40). Thus for instance, the candelabra were represented with a different number of branches.¹³⁶ This sort of practice is in fact in accordance with *halakha*, for it says in BT Avodah Zarah, 43a:

"A person may not make...a candelabrum in the model of the Temple candelabrum. But he may make one that has five, six or eight branches, but he may not make one with seven, even though it is of metals other than the one used in the Temple."¹³⁷

Thus this consideration strengthens rather than contradicts the view that the rulings of the rabbis were widespread among Bar Kokhba's followers, all the more since lamps like these were also discovered in the Judaeen desert caves, where the Jewish refugees sought shelter in the last stage of the revolt.

2-The policy of the rabbis towards the Jewish Christians before the revolt

Although this question remains debated, we tend to assume that the rabbis' influence was prevalent in Judaea within the people in general, and among Bar Kokhba's followers in particular. Are we to infer from this that Bar-Kokhba embraced and implemented the rabbis' policy towards the Jewish Christians?

¹³⁶ V. Sussman, *Ornamented Jewish Oil Lamps: From the destruction of the Second Temple through the Bar-Kokhba Revolt*, (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik 1972), 35, 38-39, (in Hebrew).

¹³⁷ Translation by J. Neusner, *The Talmud of Babylon. An Academic Commentary XXV, Abodah Zara*, [Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1995], 168.

a- Limitations on social contact:

It is widely admitted that, following the destruction of the Temple, the rabbinic movement strove to impose its rulings on the people. This endeavor required the rabbis to prune away the other Jewish streams that expounded their own interpretation of the Scriptures and their own *halakha*. Thus, the rabbis issued numerous warnings and restrictions against those whom they regarded as dissidents.

Rabbinic terminology refers to these "heretics" as *Minim* (מינים); although the exact meaning of this term has evolved in the course of the centuries, several *tannaitic* accounts mentioning the *Minim* clearly refer to the Jewish Christians. Although these passages have been intensively studied by numerous scholars, we cannot avoid examining them again, for they may be revealing regarding the relation between the rabbis and the Christians in the decades preceding the Revolt of Bar Kokhba.

In the first place we shall quote the account of the trial of R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus trial before a Roman judge as recorded in the Tosefta:

"R. Eliezer was arrested on account of *minut*. They brought him to court for judgment. That *hegemon* said to him, 'Should an elder of your standing get involved in such things?' He said to him, 'The Judge is reliable in my view'. That *hegemon* supposed that he referred only to him, but he referred only to his Father in heaven. He [the *hegemon*] said to him, 'Since you have deemed me reliable for yourself, so thus I have ruled: Is it possible that these grey hairs should err in such matters? [You are] *Dismuss* [pardoned]. Lo you are free of liability." And when he left court, he was distressed to have been arrested on account of *minut*. His disciples came to comfort him, but he did not accept their words of comfort. R.

Akiba came and said to him: ‘Rabbi, May I say something to you so that you will not be distressed?’ He said to him, ‘Go ahead.’ He said to him, ‘Perhaps some one of the *minim* told you something of *minut* which pleased you.’ He said to him, ‘By Heaven! You remind me! Once I was walking along the main street of Sepphoris. I bumped into Jacob of Kefar Sikhnin, and he told me a teaching of *minut* in the name of Yeshua ben Pantiri (ישוע בן פנטירי), and it pleased me. So I was arrested on account of matters of *minut*, for I transgressed the teaching of Torah: Keep your way from her, and do not go near the door of her house (Proverbs 5:8).’¹³⁸

According to this statement, R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus appeared before a Roman court on the charge of *minut*; Alon has deduced from this that this episode occurred during the persecution of Christians under Trajan’s reign.¹³⁹ In spite of his discharge, R. Eliezer remained inconsolable until R. Akiba helped him to remember that he had sinned by having been pleased "once" (פעם אחת) by the words of a *min*, Jacob of Kfar Sikhnin. It can hardly be doubted that Jacob, who taught in the name of "Yeshua ben Pantiri", was a Christian; in fact, this peculiar name (sometimes written with slight variations) turns out to designate Jesus of Nazareth in other occasions throughout talmudic literature.¹⁴⁰

As Oppenheimer has emphasized, this account points out to a clear evolution in the relations between the rabbis and the Christians throughout the period of Yavneh: Whereas once R. Eliezer could freely converse with a *min*, by the time of his trial such encounters were prohibited. It has been argued that since R. Eliezer could hardly remember this episode, his conversation with Jacob must have occurred many years

¹³⁸ Tos. Hullin ii, 24; BT Avodah Zarah 16b-17a; Ecclesiastes Rabbah, i, 8. We have slightly altered the translation of J. Neusner in *The Tosefta translated from the Hebrew. Fifth Division: Qodoshim*, (New York: Ktav Publishing House INC, 1979), 74-75.

¹³⁹ G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land in the Talmudic Age*, 292 n. 24.

¹⁴⁰ See: R. T. Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, 37-40.

earlier, probably at the very beginning of the period in question.¹⁴¹

In addition, the analysis of the verse quoted by R. Eliezer turns out to be of great interest; this sentence belongs to Proverbs 5: 1-3, in which Solomon exhorts his son to follow his wisdom and to turn away from "the lips of a strange woman (שפתי זרה)."¹⁴² Thus the son is told to "keep [his] way far from her [the strange woman], and [not to] go near the door of her house."¹⁴³ In stating that he had violated this specific scriptural verse, R. Eliezer was equating Jacob of Kfar Sikhnin with the "lips of the strange woman". The very choice of this verse may shed light on the process of estrangement initiated at Yavneh: Jacob of Sikhnin, who once was regarded as a peer by R. Eliezer, was now seen as a stranger.

Thus it would appear that social contacts with the *minim* were not only forbidden, but were also considered as a violation of the Law. Such restrictions are referred to by Justin in his *Dialogue*, in which Trypho is reported to have said:

"It would be better for us..., to have obeyed our teachers who warned us not to listen to you Christians, nor to converse with you on these subjects."¹⁴⁴

Furthermore, it would seem that the prohibition of dealing with heretics was not limited solely to discussions of religious matters. In this connection, a tradition recorded in the same tractate of the Tosefta reports that R. Ishmael forbade R. Eleazar ben Dama, who had been bitten by a snake, to be healed by Jacob of Kfar Sama. The obvious reason for this refusal was that Jacob intended to cure R. Eleazar in the name

¹⁴¹ A. Oppenheimer, "L'élaboration de la halakha après la destruction du Second Temple", *Annales HSS* 5 (1996), 1027-1055, 1045-1046, esp. n 5.

¹⁴² Proverbs 5: 3.

¹⁴³ Proverbs 5: 8.

¹⁴⁴ *Dialogue with Trypho* XXXVIII, 1, (PG 6, col. 555-558).

of "Yeshua ben Pantera (ישוע בן פנטרא)". As a result, R. Eleazar died, and R. Ishmael is reported to have said:

"Happy are you, Ben Dama. For you have expired in peace, but you did not break down the hedge erected by the sages..."¹⁴⁵

As stated above, the use of the name "Yeshua ben Pantera" as some sort of incantation for healing leaves no doubt that Jacob belonged to the Jewish Christian stream. R. Ishmael, then, considered it better to die than to be healed by a Christian in the name of Jesus. His decision is all the more significant that he is elsewhere said to have approved the violation of the most essential commandments (the prohibition of idolatry, incest and murder) in order to save a life.¹⁴⁶

The text which immediately precedes the story of R. Eleazar ben Dama in the Tosefta is also of direct concern to our study. It forbids eating the meat of the *minim* and indeed eating with them in general, also prohibits any kind of commercial dealings with them.¹⁴⁷ Although this account does not specify more accurately who were the *minim* concerned in these rulings, its very placing within the tractate in question tends to indicate that it was the Jewish Christians who were envisaged in these restrictions.

b-The Books of the *Minim*

In order to contain the influence of the "heretics" on Jewish society, the Sages issued restrictions against the reading of what are called "Books of the Minim (ספרי המינים)" and "*Gilyonim* (גליונים)". The precise meaning of these expressions has been fiercely

¹⁴⁵ Tos. Hullin ii, 22-23; English translation of J. Neusner, *The Tosefta translated from the Hebrew. Fifth Division: Qodoshim*, 74.

¹⁴⁶ BT Sanhedrin 74a; See: G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land in the Talmudic Age*, 292 n 22; A. Oppenheimer, "L'élaboration de la *halakha* après la destruction du Second Temple", 1047.

¹⁴⁷ Tos. Hullin ii, 20-21.

debated among scholars, the main point of controversy being whether they included the writings of the first Christians.

K. G. Kuhn believes that the phrase "Books of the Minim" referred at first to the scrolls of the Law used by groups the Pharisees regarded as heretics, like the Sadducees and the Essenes. In his opinion, the acceptance of this expression followed the evolution of the meaning of the term *minim*: at a later stage, this was assigned, among others, to the writings of the Christians.¹⁴⁸ P. S. Alexander conjectures that these terms designated either the Christian writings (apart from the Gospels) that were held to be holy by the Christians or Christian copies of the Scriptures.¹⁴⁹ S. T. Katz is more prone to assume that this expression had a wider acceptation and that, accordingly, the Jewish Christian writings were merely one type of "heretical" books.¹⁵⁰

The issue of the *Gilyonim* is closely related to that of the "Books of the Minim." Literally, this word designates the margins, viz. the unwritten portions of parchment scrolls, but numerous scholars are convinced that it may designate the Gospels, at least on several occasions.¹⁵¹ The opposite view has been defended, notably by E. Urbach, who has utterly rejected the possibility that "*Gilyonim*" may be understood as

¹⁴⁸ K. G. Kuhn, "Giljonim und sifre minim", in W. Eltester (ed.), *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche. Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias*, (BZNW 26; Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1960), 24-61.

¹⁴⁹ P.S. Alexander, "'The Parting of the Ways' from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism", in: J. D. G. Dunn (ed.), *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 1992), 1-25, esp. 9.

¹⁵⁰ S.T. Katz, "Issues in the Separation of Judaism and Christianity after 70 CE: A Reconsideration", *JBL* 103 (1984), 53-63, esp. 56.

¹⁵¹ L.Ginzberg, "Some observations on the attitude of the Synagogue toward Apocalyptic writings", *JBL* 41 (1922), 115-126; S. Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Peshutah*, vol. III, (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), 206-207, (in Hebrew); S.T. Katz, "Issues in the Separation of Judaism and Christianity After 70 CE: A Reconsideration", 59; P.S. Alexander, "'The Parting of the Ways' from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism", 153-155.

referring to the Gospels.¹⁵² His assertion rests on two main arguments. Urbach argues, in the first place, that further uses of the word *gilyonim* throughout the rabbinic literature clearly stand for margins. Secondly, he considers very unlikely that the plural form *gilyonim* may designate the Gospels as a corpus of writings in the Tosefta, since such a meaning only appears for the first time in the work of Irenaeus.¹⁵³ This second argument is less convincing for Irenaeus lived during the second century (c. 130- 202) *i.e.*, prior to the compilation of the Tosefta (probably at the beginning of the third century).

In any event, whether *Gilyonim* are to be understood as meaning Gospels or not, it seems hardly contestable that the prohibitions against the books of the *minim* covered the Christian writings. In addition, it turns out that the rabbis sought to impugn the holiness of these texts in order to invalidate them. Thus we read in the Tosefta "The *Gilyonim* and the Books of the *Minim* do not defile the hands."¹⁵⁴ According to the rabbis only a holy text could defile the hands (מטמא את הידים), so that this *baraita* declared the *Gilyonim* and the Books of the *Minim* unfit for liturgical purposes.

L. H. Schiffman links these rulings to the appearance and the spread of both the Gospels and the Epistles at the end of the first century CE, hence he infers that in reaction the rabbis strove to deny the sanctity of these writings.¹⁵⁵ L. Ginzberg has rightly remarked that the real concern of the rabbis was not to pronounce on the intrinsic sanctity of these writings but rather on the status of the citations from

¹⁵² E. Urbach, "Self-Isolation or Self-Affirmation in the First Three Centuries: theory and Practice", in E. P. Sanders, A. I. Baumgarten and A. Mendelson (ed.), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition Vol. 2, Aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 269-298, esp. 291.

¹⁵³ *Adversus. Haereses* III, 11, 8, (PG 7[1], col. 835).

¹⁵⁴ Tos. Yadayim ii, 13.

¹⁵⁵ L. H. Schiffman, "At the Crossroads: Tannaitic Perspectives in the Jewish Christian Schism", in E. P. Sanders, A. I. Baumgarten and A. Mendelson (ed.), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition Vol. 2, Aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 115-156, esp. 153.

scriptures they contained.¹⁵⁶ Eventually, even these quotations were denied any sanctity.

In this connection, a discussion recorded in the Tosefta addresses the question of whether the *Gilyonim* and the Books of the *Minim* should be saved from fire on the Sabbath because of the mentions of the Divine name they contained.¹⁵⁷ This account happens to be of direct concern to our study for it reports the opinions of three eminent Rabbis who all lived during the period of Yavneh. While they all agreed that neither the *Gilyonim* and the Books of the *Minim*, nor the *Tetragrammata* they contained were to be saved on the Sabbath, no consensus was reached regarding the position to adopt on week days. R. Yose the Galilean considered that, on weekdays, one should remove the mentions of the Divine name and burn the rest of the writings. In contradistinction, R. Tarfon not only allowed these texts be consumed together with their Divine names, but he also encouraged such destruction. Later in this account, he is reported to have said that the *minim* were worse than idolaters. Lastly, R. Ishmael, who shared R. Tarfon's stance, established that no part of the Gospels and the Books of *Minim* was to be saved, since these works "bring enmity between Israel and their Father."

It is noteworthy that both R. Tarfon and R. Ishmael took a very tough stance against the *minim* and their writings. We must therefore consider whether they were expressing a minority opinion or whether their view illustrates a consistent and general hardening of the position of the rabbis with regard to the Christians. The very fact that the three major rabbis of the generation are reported to have debated the

¹⁵⁶ L.Ginzberg, "Some observations on the attitude of the Synagogue toward Apocalyptic writings", 122-123.

¹⁵⁷ Tos. Shabbat xiii, 5, (ed. Lieberman, 58-59) and parallels: JT Shabbat xvi, 1, 15c, (col. 438) and BT Shabbat 116a.

question of the Book of *Minim* clearly demonstrates that this issue was of great concern to the rabbis in the late Yavneh period. Furthermore, R. Tarfon's extreme stance serves to strengthen the impression that this matter was very pressing.

In addition, the rabbis adopted other measures against the Christians at Yavneh, of which the most significant was unquestionably the composition of *Birkat haMinim*, which will be broadly discussed below.

c-The motives for this policy:

The question of the motives for the rabbis' severe policy towards the Jewish Christians has particularly interested modern scholars, who have thus attempted to single out specific reasons for this development.

It has been argued that the Christians' move from Jerusalem during the Jewish War contributed to set them apart from the rest of the people, and prepared the way for their future "excommunication".¹⁵⁸ However, as we have seen in a previous chapter, it would be misleading to infer from the tradition of the "Flight to Pella" tradition that the Jewish Christians ceased to share Jewish national aspirations. In this connection, it should be recalled that RYbZ himself surrendered to the Romans, but this did not prevent him from taking over the leadership of Palestinian Judaism after the destruction of the Temple.¹⁵⁹

It has also been proposed that the growing number of Gentile converts to Christianity who were not bound to the Mosaic Law led to confrontational relations with the Jewish authorities. However, it would appear that this occurred less in Judaea where the great majority of Christians seem to have been of Jewish stock.

¹⁵⁸ See for example: E. Davies, "Early Christian Attitudes towards Judaism and the Jews", *JBR* 13 (1945), 72-82, esp. 73-75; W.H. C. Frend, *The Early Church*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), 44-45; M. R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1989), 76-77.

¹⁵⁹ See above: 52-53.

D. Flusser has put forward an interesting hypothesis regarding the origins of the anti-Christian measures issued at Yavneh. He suggests that, paradoxically, it was the meager success of the Christian mission towards the Jews which induced a reaction of hostility on the part of the Jewish Christians, to which the rabbis responded.¹⁶⁰

In addition, the first Christians may well have presented doctrinal challenges to the Jewish spiritual authorities. There is reason to think that the subjects of controversy between the rabbis and the Jewish Christians were mainly about specific interpretations of the Scriptures. In fact, as Flusser has emphasized, the Christology of the Jewish Christian streams seems to have been relatively poor.¹⁶¹ In his view, their system of thought turned out to be much less problematic in the eyes of the rabbis, than that of the Gentile Church, which seemed to impugn the monotheistic principle. Accordingly, the early rabbinic literature did not directly attack the faith in Jesus before the end of the second century CE.

We tend to think that the real stake in these doctrinal controversies concerned the claim to having the authority to interpret scriptures and to issue *halakhot*. Evidence for this is to be found in the New Testament writings: thus we read in Matthew 7: 28-29

"Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowd were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority (ἐξουσίαν), and not as their scribes."¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ D. Flusser, *Judaism and the origins of Christianity*, 626.

¹⁶¹ *Judaism and the origins of Christianity*, 623.

¹⁶² See also: Mark 1: 21-22: "They went to Capernaum; and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority (ἐξουσίαν), and not as the scribes."

A further illustration of this struggle appears in Jerome's *Commentary on Isaiah*, in which he refers on several occasions to an interpretation ascribed to the Nazoraeans. In a previous chapter, we have attempted to establish the antiquity of these accounts which probably emerged from the early Jewish Christian communities.

Thus, the Nazoraean explanation of Isaiah 8: 14 proves to be very revealing regarding the issue under discussion.¹⁶³ This statement first reports the succession of diverse "Scribes" and "Pharisees" from the schools of Shammai and Hillel up to "Ioseph Galilaeus and Josua". Interestingly enough, despite the chronological disorder of this list, all the rabbis who are mentioned lived during the period of Yavneh. It is noteworthy, moreover, that this account shows a striking correlation with *Pirkei Avot*; indeed, this tractate opens with the order of transmission of the tradition, through various generations, from Moses to the rabbis.¹⁶⁴ Jerome gives a short account of Hillel and states that the latter "scattered and defiled the precept of the Law by his tradition and "δευτέρωσις". It seems very likely that it is the Oral Law of the rabbis which is alluded to here. Indeed, A. F. J. Klijn notes that the word δευτέρωσις renders the Hebrew משנה.¹⁶⁵

Given these considerations, it may be inferred that one of the foci of the hatred between the rabbinic movement and the Jewish Christian church was the authority to interpret the precepts of the Torah: whereas the rabbis claimed that they held their traditions (and consequently their *halakhot*) from Moses, the first Christians maintained that Jesus' teaching derived from God himself.

¹⁶³ This account is reproduced in our previous chapter on the Jewish Christians' relationship to Jerusalem and the Temple following the Jewish War, 304.

¹⁶⁴ M Avot, i.

¹⁶⁵ A. F. J. Klijn, "Jerome's quotations from a Nazoraean interpretation of Isaiah", *RSR* 60 (1972), 241-255, esp. 250-251.

In light of this brief survey, it seems that it is difficult to single out a specific reason for this historical development, especially as the religious, political, and social issues were extremely closely intertwined in Judaeen Jewish society of the first and second centuries CE. However, we are inclined to approve the commonly accepted view that the main ground for the anti-Christian measures derived from the rabbis' efforts to impose their leadership over the people after the destruction of the Temple. There is a reasonable *a priori* case, indeed, for supposing that one of the cardinal aims of the rabbis' activities was to achieve the unity of the people. Therefore, denial of their authority to issue *halakhot* constituted a major threat in their eyes, since it imperilled their endeavors to gather the Jews together under their rules. In this respect, it is remarkable that the rabbis took a more hostile stance towards the *minim* than they did towards the "apostates (משומדים)". It seems that the latter, who violated the commandments, did not contest the spiritual authority of the rabbis, since they did not feel concerned by such issues.

We must now ask what the general intention of the rabbis was towards the Jewish Christians; the traditional view has been that the rabbis issued a decree of excommunication against them at Yavneh.¹⁶⁶ However, this opinion has been challenged by numerous scholars. Alexander, for instance, argues that the rabbis were not in position to promulgate a formal ban against the Jewish Christians; he assumes, however, that the rulings they issued which forbade any sort of intercourse with the heretical streams (especially in Tos. Hullin ii, 20-21) basically amounted to ostracizing them.¹⁶⁷

Other scholars went a step further and contended that, in spite of the many restrictions

¹⁶⁶ See for example: W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*, (Cambridge: University Press 1963; reprinted 1966), 276-277.

¹⁶⁷ P.S. Alexander, "The Parting of the Ways' from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism", 15-16.

the rabbis enacted against them, they did not intend to ban the first Christians. Schiffman, indeed, maintains that in the eyes of rabbinic *halakha*, the Jewish Christians remained genuine Jews. He thus infers that the rabbis did not mean to read them out of the Jewish people owing to their dissident rulings.¹⁶⁸

Likewise, Katz rejects the opinion that an official ban against the Jewish Christians was promulgated at Yavneh. He argues that the rabbinic sources refer only to two types of bans: the *herem* (חרם), which was a permanent exclusion from the community but which only came into use at the beginning of the third century CE; and the *niddui* (נידוי) which was a disciplinary step against recalcitrant rabbis. This measure aimed at bringing disobedient rabbis back to the voice of the majority, and in no case was it intended to exclude the offender from the house of Israel. Katz adds that the *niddui* was leveled against individuals only, so that he thinks it very unlikely that this step could have been directed against the Jewish Christian community.¹⁶⁹ In addition, he suggests the significance and the implications of the rulings recorded in Tos. *Hullin*, ii, 20-21 should be considered and qualified still further. In his opinion, these were mere recommendations to avoid social contacts with the *Minim*.

It appears, then, that the exact intention of the rabbis with regard to the Jewish Christians can scarcely be defined, since their stance is most likely to have evolved throughout the period discussed. Moreover, it is reasonable to assume that not all the rabbis held the same view on this issue. In any event, there are grounds for thinking that the purpose of the hostile policy of the rabbis towards the first Christians derived from their eagerness to unite the Jewish people under their banner.

¹⁶⁸ L. H. Schiffman, "At the Crossroads: Tannaitic Perspectives on the Jewish Christian Schism", 147-156.

¹⁶⁹ S.T. Katz, "Issues in the Separation of Judaism and Christianity after 70 CE: A Reconsideration", 48-53.

At this point of our investigation, we must face the question of whether Bar-Kokhba did embrace the position of the rabbis with regard to the Jewish Christians. It is possible that examination of *Birkat haMinim* will be particularly revealing in this respect.

3-The influence of the rabbis on the persecution of the Christians, with special emphasis on *Birkat haMinim*:

a-The *Eighteen Benedictions*

The construction of *Birkat haMinim* is commonly considered to be the most significant measure the rabbis adopted at Yavneh against the Jewish Christians. Within the scope of this study, we shall attempt to highlight what we hold to be a striking correlation between this prayer and the action of Bar Kokhba.

Although prayer already existed in late Second Temple Judaism, the period of Yavneh represented the definitive step in its elaboration and institutionalisation as both a collective and a personal duty. The talmudic literature ascribes the arrangement of the *Shemoneh Esreh* (שמונה עשרה), the central prayer of the daily services, to Rabban Gamaliel.¹⁷⁰ Thus, we read in BT Berakhot 28b, that Shimon haPaquli set the Eighteen blessings in order in the presence of the latter.¹⁷¹ Rabban Gamaliel is further said to have imposed the requirement to recite the *Shemoneh Esreh* daily in its entirety.¹⁷² In addition, it was decided that the prayer was to be said three times a day¹⁷³. This measure appears to have stirred up a controversy among the rabbis, who

¹⁷⁰ "The Eighteen Blessings"; this prayer is also designated as the *Amidah* (עמידה) *i.e.*, "Standing Prayer") or simply as *Tefillah* (תפילה) *i.e.*, "Prayer").

¹⁷¹ It is noteworthy, though, that BT Megillah 17b attributes the composition of the *Shemoneh Esreh* to the members of the Great Assembly (sixth-fifth BCE).

¹⁷² M Berakhot iv, 3-4.

¹⁷³ JT Berakhot iv, 1, 7c-d, (col. 35); BT Berakhot 27b-28a.

feared that not everyone would be able to remember the whole prayer. In addition, R. Eliezer believed that such a step would affect the sincerity of the recitation.¹⁷⁴ In spite of these oppositions, the ordering of the *Shemoneh Esreh* came within the framework of the rabbis' efforts to fill the vacuum created by the loss of the Temple in order to enable the people to observe the commandments.

There is a reasonable *a priori* case for supposing that the rabbis' prayers were widespread among the people. In this connection, it may be relevant to quote Josephus' account of the Pharisees as recorded in the *Jewish Antiquities*.¹⁷⁵ After he describes their main beliefs, Josephus adds:

"Because of these views they [the Pharisees] are, as a matter of fact, extremely influential among the townsfolk; and all prayers and sacred rites of divine worship are performed according to their exposition. This is the great tribute that the inhabitants of the cities, by practising the highest ideals both in their way of living and in their discourse, have paid to the excellence of the Pharisees."

At first sight, this statement seems to fall out of the scope of our research, for it mentions the sacrifices. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to infer from it that, already in the late second Temple period, the prayers of the Pharisees were widespread among the people. Furthermore, J. Neusner believes that Josephus' portrayal of the Pharisees was greatly influenced by the rise of the rabbinic movement following the Jewish War, so that his account is likely to reflect the situation that prevailed at the very end of the first Century.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ JT Berakhot iv, 1, 7c-d, (col. 35).

¹⁷⁵ *AJ* XVIII, 15.

¹⁷⁶ J. Neusner, "Josephus's Pharisees", 224-244.

As previously noted, the *Eighteen Blessings* constituted the central element of the daily service. Unfortunately, the talmudic literature has not recorded the original form of this prayer in its entirety. The earliest complete version of the prayer known to us comes from the fragments discovered in the Cairo *Genizah* in the late nineteenth century CE. However, these manuscripts, which are not earlier than the eighth century CE, were written hundred years after the fixing of the *Eighteen Blessings*. This consideration should prompt us to be very cautious in the interpretation of these texts. Close scrutiny of these fragments has led current scholarship to single out two distinct traditions, viz. a Babylonian, and a Palestinian which is usually regarded as closer to the original formulation of the *Eighteen Blessings*.¹⁷⁷

Attentive perusal of this prayer may lead one to the conclusion that, in addition to the common functions of prayer (petition, thanksgiving and worship), this set of blessings conveys the general outlook of the rabbis. In this respect, it is noteworthy that several of the intermediate sections it contains express specific national aspirations. It would seem safe to assume, therefore, that prayers in general, and the *Shemoneh Esreh* in particular provided the Rabbis a very efficient vehicle for spreading their thought among the people; it must be recalled here that Rabban Gamaliel decreed that the *Eighteen Blessings* was to be pronounced three times a day in its entirety. Furthermore, if we accept that Josephus' above-mentioned account depicts the situation that prevailed in the late first century CE, it may be argued that many among the people did pray according to the instructions of the rabbis.

¹⁷⁷ G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 289-290; S.C. Mimouni, *Le judéo-christianisme ancien. Essais historiques*, (Paris: Éd du Cerf, 1998), 170. The main difference between these two traditions concerns the number of benedictions; whereas the Palestinian version contains eighteen blessings, the Babylonian comprises nineteen.

b- *Birkat haMinim*

Birkat haMinim and the Christians

At this point of our investigation, we must address the issue of the most studied among the *Eighteen Blessing: Birkat haMinim* (ברכת המינים) or the Twelfth Blessing.

According to a tradition recorded in the Babylonian Talmud, *Birkat haMinim* was composed by Shemuel haQatan at the request of Rabban Gamaliel and was subsequently appended to the *Amidah*.¹⁷⁸ This blessing, which is worded more like a curse, is composed of imprecations against different groups. As previously noted, the original version of the prayer is unknown to us. The various forms of *Birkat haMinim* that have come down to us differ on the objects of the curse.

A fragment of the Twelfth Blessing found in the Cairo Genizah and later published by S. Schechter, has especially drawn the interest of scholars.¹⁷⁹ This version reads:

למשומדים אל תהי תקוה ומלכות זדון מהרה תעקר בימינו והנוצרים והמינים כרגע יאבדו
ימחו מספר החיים ועם צדיקים אל יכתבו ברוך אתה ה' מכניע זדים.

"For the apostates let there be no hope and the arrogant kingdom uproot speedily in our days and may the *Notsrim* and the *minim* perish in an instant, may they be blotted out of the book of the living, and may they not be written with the righteous. Blessed are You O Lord, Who subdues the arrogant."¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ BT Berakhot 28b-29a.

¹⁷⁹ S. Schechter, "Genizah Specimens", *JQR* 10 (1898), 654-659. Another slightly different version of the Twelfth Benediction was discovered by Schechter, in which the curse on the apostates has been completed with the wording "*unless they return to your Torah*"; the sentence "*may they be erased from the Book of Life*" has also been omitted. See also: J. Mann, "Genizah Fragments of the Palestinian Order of Service", *HUCA* 2 (1925), 306-308; the version published by Mann reads: "May the apostates have no hope unless they return to Thy Torah, and may the *Notsrim* and the *Minim* disappear in a moment. May they be erased from the book of life, and not be inscribed with the righteous." It is noteworthy that, unlike in the texts published by Schechter, this version does not comprise any imprecation against the "Arrogant Kingdom."

¹⁸⁰ The translation of R. Kimelman has been slightly adapted, ("*Birkat Ha-Minim* and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity", in E. P. Sanders, A. I. Baumgarten

Scholarship remains divided on the likelihood of whether this fragment may reproduce the original form of the *Birkat haMinim*; the major point of controversy centers on the wording "the *Notsrim* and the *minim*". Alon has contended that this version may be very close to the original formulation of the Twelfth Blessing. In his opinion, the *Genizah* specimens are to be regarded as very reliable.¹⁸¹ Further arguments have been advanced in support of the authenticity of the *Genizah* textual version. W. D. Davies, for instance, has argued that the structure of the prayer would be unbalanced if *haNotsrim* were removed.¹⁸² Moreover, Schiffman has pointed out that all the *Genizah* fragments of the Palestinian liturgy contain the phrase "the *Notsrim* and the *minim*."¹⁸³

The contrary opinion is mainly based on the considerable period of time (at least seven hundred years) that separates the fixing of *Birkat haMinim* and the composition of the *Genizah* specimens. In light of this consideration, several scholars have questioned the genuineness of the *Genizah* textual version.¹⁸⁴ In addition, Y. Tepler has assumed that, given the scarcity of the term *Notsrim* in the talmudic literature, it would appear very improbable that the *Genizah* textual version reflects the original formulation of *Birkat haMinim*.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, it has been argued that the combination of the terms *Notsrim* and *minim* would have been repetitive and

and A. Mendelson [ed.], *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition Vol. 2, Aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period*, [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981], 226-244, esp. 226).

¹⁸¹ G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 290.

¹⁸² W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*, 276.

¹⁸³ L. H. Schiffman, "At the Crossroads: Tannaitic Perspectives on the Jewish Christian Schism", 151.

¹⁸⁴ E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ. (175 B.C.-A.D. 135)*. A new English version revised and edited by G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. Black, Vol. II, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986-1987), 462-463.

¹⁸⁵ Y. Tepler, *Birkat haMinim Jews and Christians in Conflict in the Ancient World*, translated by Susan Weingarten, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 2007), 48-62.

superfluous since, at the time of the construction of the prayer, the *Notsrim* were regarded as a kind of *minim*.¹⁸⁶

This last consideration leads us to address the question of the identity of the groups these terms covered; more exactly, it needs to be asked whether *Birkat haMinim* was originally directed against the Christians. As already stated, the term *min*, which means literally "species", designates sectarians, heretics or schismatics in early talmudic literature, in other words, all Jews whose practices and beliefs deviate from those of the "normative" stream. Since the meaning of this word has evolved throughout history, its precise import at every occurrence is difficult to determine. However, the more widely accepted view assumes that, in the late first century, *Birkat haMinim* was principally aimed against the Jewish Christians, since the latter represented the strongest threat to the rising rabbinic movement.¹⁸⁷

Evidence for this view would be provided by both Jewish and Christian literary sources: In the first place, it is hardly contestable, as previously seen, that several *tannaitic* texts clearly equate the term *minim* with the believers in Jesus. In addition, it has been suggested that both the New Testament and the early Church Fathers' writings may contain further references to a Jewish curse against the Christians. In this respect, it has been emphasized that the Gospel of John mentions the expulsion of Christians from the synagogues on three different occasions.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, Justin

¹⁸⁶ S.T. Katz, "Issues in the Separation of Judaism and Christianity after 70 CE: A Reconsideration", 65.

¹⁸⁷ G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 290; I. M. Elbogen, *The Historical Development of Jewish Prayer*, (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1972), 27; 40; 390-391 n. 17, (in Hebrew); S. C. Mimouni, *Le Judéo-Christianisme Ancien*, (Paris: Éd. du Cerf, 1998), 186. It is worth recalling here that, according to several scholars, the *Birkat haMinim* was not directed solely against the Jewish Christians but rather against Christians in general; see for example: M. Simon, *Verus Israel*, (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1964), 238 and W. Horbury, "The Benediction of the Minim and Early Jewish Christian Controversy", *JTS* 33 (1982), 19-61, esp. 28.

¹⁸⁸ John 9: 22; 12: 42; 16: 2. See for instance: K. L. Carroll, "The Fourth Gospel and the Exclusion of Christians from the Synagogues", *BJRL* 40 (1957-1958), 19-32; F. Manns, "L'Évangile de Jean,

Martyr reports, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, that the Christians were cursed in the synagogues.¹⁸⁹ The later Church Fathers Epiphanius and Jerome also refer to a curse of this kind.¹⁹⁰

Nonetheless, this opinion has been contested on several grounds; Schäfer, for instance, has contended that *Birkat haMinim* was intended against the Gentile government as much as against heretics; in his view, it is not certain that the Christians were included among heretics during the Yavneh period.¹⁹¹ Katz considers that the concern of the rabbis of Yavneh over Christianity needs to be qualified further; accordingly, he argues that the Jewish curse was directed against all Jews the rabbinic movement regarded as dissident, not only against Jewish Christians.¹⁹² Similarly, G. Stemberger has doubted that the Christians were included in the Twelfth Blessing, on the grounds that evidence for the Christian presence in Palestine

réponse chrétienne aux décisions de Jabné", *Liber Annus* 30 (1980), 467-492 and "L'Evangile de Jean, réponse chrétienne aux décisions de Jabné. Note complémentaire", *Liber Annus* 32 (1982), 467-492.

¹⁸⁹ Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* XVI, 4, (PG 6, col. 510-511); XLVII, 5, (PG 6, col. 577-578); XCVI, 2, (PG 6, col. 703-704); CXXXVII, 2, (PG 6, col. 791-792). Further evidence for this phenomenon may be found elsewhere in this work; see: XCIII, 4, (PG 6, col. 699-700); XCV, 4, (PG 6, col. 701-702); CXVII, 3, (PG 6, col. 747-748); CXXIII, 6, (PG 6, col. 755-756). For a discussion on this issue, see: P. Bobichon, "Persécutions, calomnies, *Birkat ha-minim* et emissaires juif de propagande anti-chrétienne dans le *Dialogue avec Tryphon* de Justin Martyr", *REJ* 162 (2003), 403-419.

¹⁹⁰ In his *Panarion* (XXIX, 9, 2, [PG 41, col. 403-404]) Epiphanius says of the Nazoraeans: "Yet these are very much the Jews' enemies. Not only do Jewish people have a hatred of them; they even stand up at dawn, at midday, and toward evening, three times a day when they recite their prayers in the synagogues, and curse and anathematize them. Three times a day they say, God curse the Nazoraeans." English translation by F. Williams in *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis Book I (Sects 1-46)*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), 119. In addition, Jerome writes in a letter to Augustine: "Until now a heresy is to be found in all parts of the East where Jews have their synagogues; it is called 'of the *Minaeans*' and cursed by the Pharisees up to now. Usually they are names *Nazoraeans*...but since they want to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither Jews nor Christians." (*Epistle* CXII, 13, [ed. J. Labourt, *Budé* VI, 31-32]; English translation by A. F. J. Klijn and G. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish Christian Sects*, [Leiden: E. J. Brill 1973], 201). Jerome further alludes to this curse in other writings: *Commentary on Amos* 1: 11-12, (ed. M. Adriaen; CCSL LXXVI, 227); *Commentary on Isaiah* 5: 18-19, (CCSL LIII, 76); 49: 7, (CCSL LXXVI, 459); 52: 4-6, (CCSL LXXVIa, 538). In spite of the fact that both Epiphanius' and Jerome' writings clearly refer to the *Birkat haMinim*, these accounts are to be regarded as of less value to our research than John and Justin' s texts owing to their relative lateness (late fourth-early fifth century CE).

¹⁹¹ P. Schäfer, "Die sogenannte Synode von Jabne", in *Studien Zur Geschichte und Theologie des rabbinischen Judentums*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 45-55.

¹⁹² S.T. Katz, "Issues in the Separation of Judaism and Christianity after 70 CE: A Reconsideration", 74.

following the destruction of the Temple is very scarce.¹⁹³ Lastly, it is worth mentioning the study of R. Kimelman, which has questioned the value of the evidence that Christians were cursed by Jews during their statutory prayers.¹⁹⁴

Analysis of the *modus operandi* of the Twelfth Blessing may shed light on the identity of the individuals this curse was aimed at. It may be inferred from the perusal of certain talmudic statements that *Birkat HaMinim* was employed as a means of detection of the *minim*. Thus, its ultimate aim was to prevent *minim* from serving as prayer leaders in synagogues. In this connection, the Babylonian Talmud reads

"For Rav Judah has said in the name of Rav: If a reader makes a mistake in any of the other benedictions, they do not remove him, but if in *Birkat haMinim*, he is removed, because we suspect him of being a *min*."¹⁹⁵

Thus it was assumed that no-one would be willing to curse himself and that this prayer would therefore lead to the exclusion of the *minim* from the synagogue.

We must make one observation, however, about the mechanism of this prayer: As previously stated, the word *min*, which derived from rabbinic terminology, did not refer to any specific group, but was characterized by its very pejorative connotation. Given this consideration, it seems most unlikely that anyone would have considered himself to be a *min*. Thus, perhaps no-one would have felt concerned by a curse on the *minim* as such. Hence it is reasonable to think that, in order to be efficient, this curse needed to be completed with the name by which the heretic defined himself. Only in this way would the heretic understand that the prayer was directed against him. In light of this, there is a reasonable *a priori* case for considering favorably the

¹⁹³ G. Stemberger, "Die sogenannte 'Synode von Jabne' und das fruehe Christentum", *Kairos* 19 (1977), 14-21.

¹⁹⁴ R. Kimelman, "*Birkat Ha-Minim*", 244.

¹⁹⁵ BT Berakhot 29a; English translation by S. Weingarten in: Y. Tepler, *Birkat haMinim*, 73.

linking of the terms *Notsrim* and *minim*.

It is true that Kimelman has discounted an early dating for this wording on the ground that the word *Notsri* does not occur in *tannaitic* literature.¹⁹⁶ However, even if we propose that the term *Notsri* appears in *Birkat haMinim* only to ensure that the Jewish Christians would understand that they were the objects of the curse, there is still no need to assume that this term was commonly used by the rabbis. In contradistinction, it may be recalled that the term *Notsri* was employed within Christian circles toward the end of the first century CE.¹⁹⁷

Teppler has rightly noted that there is no tautology between *Notsrim* and *minim* in the Genizah formulation.¹⁹⁸ It may be emphasized, though, that, according to this latter version of *Birkat haMinim*, both groups were doomed to the same punishments. We tend to assume that this similarity of punishment, far from being fortuitous, may cast light on a basic analogy to be drawn between *Notsrim* and *minim*; such a correlation seems all the more likely, since that, according to the Twelfth Blessing, every category of enemy was to be punished in a specific way, presumably in relation to its sins. Furthermore, as M. Simon has shown, the terms *Minaei* and *Nazaraei* are equivalent and refer to the same sect in Jerome's letter to Augustine.¹⁹⁹ Although this work falls out of the scope of our study, it should be recalled that it was written several centuries before the Genizah texts. Thus, insofar as Jerome is a reliable source, we may cautiously conjecture that the Genizah texts may represent a later, altered version of *Birkat haMinim* which does not reproduce the original tautology of the terms *Notsrim* and *minim*.

In any event, whether the term *Notsrim* was included in the original formulation of

¹⁹⁶ R. Kimelman, *Birkat Ha-Minim*, 233.

¹⁹⁷ Acts 24: 5.

¹⁹⁸ Y. Teppler, *Birkat haMinim*, 58.

¹⁹⁹ M. Simon, *Verus Israel*, 217-218. Jerome's letter is reproduced supra: 313 n. 190.

Birkat haMinim or not, it is our opinion that, at the time of its framing, the curse was mostly directed against the Christians. Moreover, owing to its *modus operandi*, it can safely be argued that the curse covered only merely the Jewish Christians: Christians of Gentile origin were most unlikely to have served as prayer leaders in synagogues.

Bar Kokhba's actions in the light of *Birkat haMinim*

We shall now look into the Twelfth Blessing in its entirety. If we are to accept the Genizah text published by Schechter as close to the original version of *Birkat haMinim*, it may be inferred that this curse was directed against three distinct groups during the Yavneh period: the apostates (*meshumadim*), the Kingdom of arrogance (*Malkhut Zaton*) and the heretics (*minim* and possibly *Notsrim*). The most obvious common denominator of these categories is that they were held to be enemies by the author(s) of the prayer.²⁰⁰

If this assertion is correct, it seems reasonable to assume that the Twelfth Blessing reflects the social and political outlook of the rabbis of Yavneh. Thus, at this point in our research, we shall attempt to highlight what we consider to be a clear correlation between the stances of the rabbis as expressed in the *Birkat haMinim*, and what is known of Bar Kokhba's activity.

The "Kingdom of Arrogance"

In the first place, we shall examine the idiom מלכות זדון ("Kingdom of Arrogance") which, according to the commonly accepted explanation, stands for the Roman

²⁰⁰ The version of *Birkat haMinim* found in the *Mahzor Vitry*, the prayer book attributed to Rabbi Simhah ben Shemuel (eleventh century CE) may shed some light on this issue: "[...] let there be no hope and [may] all [...] perish in an instant and *enemies* of your people the house of Israel be speedily cut off [...] speedily uproot (אויבי עמך בית ישראל מהרה יכרתו) and crush and destroy and humble all your *enemies* (מהרה תעקר ותשבר ותמגר ותכניע כל אויבינו), Blessed are you, Lord [...];(Reggio MS). See Y. Tepler, *Birkat HaMinim*, 16.

Empire.²⁰¹ Y. Teppler, however, has questioned the likelihood of this view. In fact, he considers it highly doubtful that such subversive wording should have been appended to *Birkat haMinim* in the time of Rabban Gamaliel. In his view, the Roman authorities are unlikely to have permitted this dissident prayer to be pronounced three times a day in synagogues all over the Empire. In addition, Teppler points out to the fact that Rabban Gamaliel derived his authority from the goodwill of the Rome. He thus assumes that the gentile authorities would not have ratified his status if they had suspected him to be disloyal.²⁰²

It must be recalled, however, that the *Amidah* comprises other sections that were no less subversive than the curse on the "Kingdom of Arrogance". In this connection, we wish to highlight several points in the Palestinian version of the *Eighteen Blessings* published by Schechter.²⁰³ The first relevant blessing, the seventh, is a request to God, the *Redeemer of Israel* (גואל ישראל), to deliver his people. Later, the tenth blessing, implores Him to bring freedom (להחיותנו) and to allow the ingathering of the Jewish exiles. We read in the following benediction (the eleventh) an appeal to God to restore righteous judges as in the days of old and to reign Himself over Israel

However, the most subversive blessing is unquestionably the fourteenth, which pleads for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and for the restoration of the "Kingdom of the House of David, the Messiah of Justice" (מלכות בית דוד משיח צדקה); this section ends with the phrase "Blessed Are You God, the God of David, builder of Jerusalem" (ברוך אתה יי (אלהי דוד בונה ירושלים)). Lastly, the sixteenth blessing begs God to re-instate the Temple service and to dwell in Zion.

²⁰¹ See in particular: P. Schäfer, "Die sogenannte Synode von Jabne", 45-55.

²⁰² See: Y. Teppler, *Birkat HaMinim*, 135-148.

²⁰³ S. Schechter, "Genizah Specimens", 656-657.

Since the Tosefta refers both to the "blessing of David" and to "the blessing of Jerusalem" as being part of the *Eighteen Blessings*, it may be concluded that those sections appeared in the earliest version of the prayer.²⁰⁴ Accordingly, it would seem reasonable to assume that the original wording of the *Amidah* conveyed subversive political messages that contested the Roman yoke. These national aspirations were not only shared by the rabbis but, most likely, by the overwhelming majority of the people. It is noteworthy, though, that some of the wording of the *Eighteen Blessings* appear on the coinage of Bar Kokhba. Thus, the coins of the first year of the revolt bear the legend: "Year One of the Redemption of Israel" (לגאלת ישראל); while, we read on coins of the second year: "Year Two of the Freedom of Israel" (שבלחר [שנה ב לחרות] (ישראל). The emphasis on Jerusalem and on the Temple is also remarkable: The legends "For the Freedom of Jerusalem" (לחרות ירושלים) or simply Jerusalem (ירושלים) are frequent. In addition, the representations of the façade of the Temple and several of the ceremonial vessels (the trumpets, the lyre) are highly evocative in this respect.

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The least one can say is that the aspirations of Bar-Kokhba and his later achievements were in line with the outlook of the rabbis as expressed in the *Amidah*. After all, he was the one who fought against the מלכות זדון, the "Kingdom of Arrogance."

The Meshumadim

The opening curse of the Twelfth Blessing is directed against the משומדים which is usually rendered in English as "apostate". According to Lieberman, the word *meshumad*, which literally means "one who has been destroyed", initially referred to Jews who were coerced to worship foreign gods and to take part in pagan cults at a

²⁰⁴ Tos. Berakhot iii, 25, (ed. Lieberman 17-18).

²⁰⁵ See: Y. Meshorer, *Jewish Coins of the Second Temple Period*, 92-101; L. Mildenberg, *Vestigia Leonis*. 183-240.

time of persecution, and was derived from the word שמד ("persecution"). Later on, it came to designate the willful wrongdoer.²⁰⁶ It has therefore been proposed that this term would have appeared during the persecutions of Antiochus IV, when the Jews were compelled to violate both the positive (מצוות עשה) and the negative commandments (מצוות לא תעשה).²⁰⁷ It seems that the pejorative connotation of this word was already widespread by the end of the Second Temple period. The Tosefta mentions *meshumadim* in a list of various offenders doomed to remain everlastingly in Gehenna.²⁰⁸

There is a reasonable *a priori* case for supposing that the curse against the *meshumadim* appeared in the original composition of the Twelfth Blessing. The grounds for this assertion are related to the very structure of the *Eighteen Blessings*, where it is remarkable that the following blessing (the thirteenth) pleads with God to have mercy upon the proselytes (גירי הצדק). We recall here that antagonism between proselytes and *meshumadim* is emphasized on a number of other occasions throughout the talmudic literature.²⁰⁹ Similarly, it is probable that the ordering of the *Amidah* was aimed to stress the opposition between both groups.

Schiffman, in an attempt to reach a more accurate definition of the term *meshumadim*, presents a *baraita* which depicts them as people who violate dietary prohibitions,

²⁰⁶ S. Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Peshutah*, vol. III, 402 n. 45.

²⁰⁷ I Macc 2: 15. In this respect, many scholars believe that the term "משמדיא" (*Meshummedaya*) in Megillat Ta'anit xvi refers to the Jews who became apostates during the Syrian persecutions; See *Megillat Ta'anit with introductions and notes by B. Z. Lurie*, (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2nd ed. 1996), 144-145.

²⁰⁸ Tos. Sanhedrin xiii, 5 and parallel: BT Rosh haShanah 17a.

²⁰⁹ See for example: Sifra ii, 3, (ed. I. H. Weiss, 40); "Any: To include the proselytes. Of you: To exclude the *Meshumadim*...the proselytes are those who have accepted the covenant (מקבלי ברית). But the *Meshumadim* are excluded since they do not accept the covenant (שאינם מקבלי ברית)"; English translation found in L. H. Schiffman, "At the Crossroads: Tannaitic Perspectives on the Jewish Christian Schism", 146.

drink pagan libations and wear *sha'atnez* (שעטנז), prohibited garments made of interwoven wool and linen.²¹⁰ Thus, unlike the *minim* (heretics) who were reproached for their erroneous interpretations of the Law and for their deviant practices and beliefs, the *meshumadim* were condemned because they completely disregarded all religious prescriptions. It is reasonable to think, however, that because of their lack of interest in religious matters, the *meshumadim* did not represent a direct threat to the spiritual status of the rabbis. Shiffman has come to the conclusion that in spite of the deep aversion expressed by the rabbis against them, *halakha* continued to consider the *meshumadim* as Jews.

The parallel version of the above-mentioned *baraita* recorded in the Tosefta adds further characteristics to the portrayal of the *meshumadim*, reading:

"He who eats abominations is accounted a *meshumad*, as is one who eats carrion or crawling things or swine's flesh or drinks the wine of libation to idols, or desecrates the Sabbath or is a *mashukh* (משוך)." ²¹¹

This latter category of *meshukhim* is of great interest to our study. The term refers to individuals who, by means of an operation called epispasm, stretched (משך) their foreskin in order to conceal the sign of circumcision. This phenomenon already existed among the Hellenized Jews in the days of the Hasmonean uprising.²¹²

However, both the identity and the motives of the *meshukhim* in the days that preceded the Bar-Kokhba revolt remain moot issues. The answer to this question is greatly contingent upon the interpretation one gives to the following passage from the Tosefta:

²¹⁰ BT Horayot, 11a. See: L. H. Schiffman, "At the Crossroads: Tannaitic Perspectives on the Jewish Christian Schism", 145-146.

²¹¹ Tos. Horayot i, 5; English translation by G. Levi in G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 587.

²¹² I Macc 1, 16.

"A man who has had his foreskin stretched must be re-circumcised. Rabbi Judah says: He does not need to be re-circumcised, because it is dangerous. They said to him: Many people in the days of Bar Kozeba were re-circumcised and they had children, and did not die, as it is said: 'And you shall surely circumcise [Genesis 17: 13]'. [This mean] *even* a hundred times, as it is said 'he has broken my covenant,' [Genesis 17: 14] including a *mashukh*."²¹³

This statement reports a discussion about the *meshukhim* held during the Ushah period, between R. Judah bar Ila'i and anonymous rabbis. Unlike R. Judah, who claimed that the *meshukh* was not to be re-circumcised owing to the danger this operation entailed, the majority of the rabbis stated that re-circumcision was necessary. They justified their decision by the fact that, in the days of Bar Kokhba, many *meshukhim* were re-circumcised and nevertheless succeeded in fathering children.

H. Graetz has proposed that the *meshukhim* were Jews who wished to evade paying the Jewish tax in the time of Domitian consequently disguised the mark of circumcision so they would no longer be liable for this tax.²¹⁴ J. Derenbourg²¹⁵, E. M. Smallwood²¹⁶ and L. H. Schiffman²¹⁷ think that Jews underwent epispasm in order to escape religious persecution *i.e.*, in the days of the alleged ban on circumcision

²¹³ Tos. Shabbat xv, 9, (ed. Lieberman, 71); JT Shabbat xix, 2, 17a, (col. 445- 446); JT Yevamot viii, 1, 9a, (col. 866); BT Yevamot 72a; Genesis Rabbah xlvi, 13, (ed. Theodore Albeck, 70); Yalqut Shimoni on Genesis lxxxii, (ed. Hylman Shiloni, 341); English translation found in A. Oppenheimer, "The Ban on Circumcision as a Cause of the Revolt", 62.

²¹⁴ H. Graetz, *Geschichte des Juden*, Vol. 4, (Leipzig: Leiner, 1866), 79-80 n.1.

²¹⁵ J. Derenbourg, *Essai sur l'histoire et la géographie de la Palestine*, (Paris: L'Imprimerie Impériale, 1867), 409.

²¹⁶ E. M. Smallwood, "The Legislation of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius against Circumcision. Addendum", *Latomus* 20 (1961), 93-96.

²¹⁷ L. H. Schiffman, "At the Crossroads: Tannaitic Perspectives on the Jewish Christian Schism", 126.

ascribed to Hadrian. Alon and Schäfer have discounted this view as illogical.²¹⁸ The latter argues that such a ban would not have affected people who were already circumcised, but only individuals who intended (or were intended) to be circumcised *i.e.*, proselytes and Jewish newborns. Schäfer is more inclined to see in the *meshukhim* Jews who sought to assimilate to Hellenistic culture in the manner of the Hellenized Jews in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. He further contends that they constituted an important political party in Judaea, which actively supported Hadrian's philhellenic policy. Although Schäfer may be right to consider that the *meshukhim* were "assimilationist" Jews, his last assumption may be too far-fetched.

In any event, the most one can say on this issue is that the phenomenon of *meshukhim* existed in the days of Bar Kokhba, and that it was harshly condemned by the rabbis. Thus, *meshukhim* were regarded as a type of *meshumadim*, since they had abandoned the Law and broken the covenant.²¹⁹ In light of this, it can be safely assumed that the Twelfth Blessing was directed against them, among others.

A further question needs to be asked: Why were "many *meshukhim*" re-circumcised in the days of Bar-Kokhba ("הרבה מלו בימי בן כוזיבא"²²⁰)?

Smallwood²²¹ and Schiffman²²² presume that the *meshukhim* who had reversed their circumcisions out of fear of punishment were re-circumcised when this was allowed, *i.e.*, either in the days of Bar Kokhba, or after Antonius Pius allegedly removed the

²¹⁸ G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, 587; P. Schäfer, *Der Bar Kokhva Aufstand. Studien zum zweiten jüdischen Krieg gegen Rom*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 1981), 45-47. See also: A. Oppenheimer, "The Ban on Circumcision as a Cause of the Revolt", 62-66.

²¹⁹ In this respect Sifra ii, 3, (ed. I. H. Weiss, 40) reads "...But the *meshumadim* are excluded since they do not accept the covenant (יצאו משומשדים שאינם מקבלים ברית)." It is noteworthy that on numerous occasions, the idiom "breaker of the covenant" refers to the *meshukhim*; see for instance: JT Pe'ah i, 1, 16b, (col. 85) and JT Sanhedrin x, 1, 27c, (col. 1314); "המיפר ברית זה שהוא מושך לו ערלה."

²²⁰ Tos. Shabbat xv, 9, (ed. Lieberman, 71).

²²¹ E. M. Smallwood, "The Legislation of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius against Circumcision. Addendum", 94.

²²² L. H. Schiffman, "At the Crossroads: Tannaitic Perspectives on the Jewish Christian Schism", 126.

ban on circumcision.

Schäfer, who considers that the *meshukhim* had acted out of a desire to assimilate, wonders whether they were re-circumcised willingly (perhaps on account of the enthusiasm provoked by Bar Kokhba's initial successes) or because they were forced to by the Jewish rebels. He prefers this latter proposal on the grounds that it would be a better match for the portrayal of Bar-Kokhba found notably in Christian sources.

It may be relevant here to quote the parallel versions of the above-mentioned *baraita* as recorded in the Jerusalem Talmud.²²³ Interestingly enough, these accounts say that **all** the *meshukhim* were re-circumcised ("וכולן מלן") in the days of Ben Kozeba. Furthermore, unlike in the Tosefta, the name of R. Judah bar Ilai's interlocutor is here mentioned: R. Yose ben Halafta. This is quite likely as R Yose appears in debate with R. Judah in other talmudic passages. Given these slight differences, it would appear that these accounts derive from a tradition independent of the Tosefta, while the mention of R. Yose ben Halafta strengthens the reliability of these statements rather than undermining it.

In any event, if we were to answer Schäfer's question in light of these accounts, it could be said that the re-circumcision of all the *meshukhim* is more likely to have derived from a coercive policy than from a general wave of enthusiasm. It may be suggested, then, that Bar-Kokhba may have enacted a decree of compulsory circumcision. However, if we are to accept this hypothesis, both the character and the scope of this measure still need to be defined.

There is reason to believe that this policy would not have affected non-Jews in the manner, for instance, of John Hyrcanus' coercing the Idumeans to circumcise.²²⁴

²²³ JT Shabbat xix, 2, 17a, (col. 445- 446); JT Yevamot viii, 1, 9a, (col. 866).

²²⁴ AJ XIII, 254.

It should be recalled that according to Cassius Dio's account, some non-Jews marched with the Jewish rebels against the Romans.²²⁵ In addition, a Greek scroll found in the Judean desert may provide further evidence for this phenomenon. The letter was written by a certain Soumaios, who asked Jonathan son of Baianos to provide the "camp of the Jews" with palm branches and citrons.²²⁶ Soumaios appears to have been a member of the command structure of the rebel administration. Because of his Greek name and the fact that he seems to distinguish himself from the "camp of the Jews", it has been argued that Soumaios was a Gentile.²²⁷ If this assumption is right, we can assume that the non-Jews who fought with the Jewish rebels were asked neither to convert nor to be circumcised. Hence, we may infer that the re-circumcision of numbers of individuals in the days of Bar-Kokhba derived from a coercive measure directed only against the Jews who had reversed their own circumcision.

Here we would like to underline an interesting correlation between Bar Kokhba's policy and the position of the rabbis with regard to the *meshukhim*. It is hardly contestable that the rabbis expressed a deep hatred towards the *meshukhim* who they considered to be a sort of *meshumadim*: the breaking the "covenant of Abraham" was one of the gravest offenses in their eyes. In this respect, it is noteworthy that one of the clearest illustrations of this hostility is ascribed to R. Eleazar haModai who, as previously seen, was possibly involved in the Bar-Kokhba uprising.²²⁸ Moreover, the position expressed by the majority of the rabbis in the above-mentioned passages implies that they approved the re-circumcision of *meshukhim* in the days of Bar

²²⁵ *HR* LXIX, 13, 2.

²²⁶ P. Yadin 3; See: H. Lapin, "Palm fronds and citrons: Notes on two letters from Bar Kosiba's Administration", *HUCA* 64 (1993), 111-135, esp. 114.

²²⁷ See: D. Obbink, "Bilingual literacy and Syrian Greek", *BASP* 28 (1991), 51-57, esp. 57.

²²⁸ M. Avot iii, 11: "R. Eleazar haModai said: If a man...makes void the covenant of Abraham our father,...he has no share in the world to come"; the parallel version is recorded in BT Sanhedrin 99a.

Kokhba. Here it may be relevant to examine the wording of a variant version of the Palestinian Twelfth Blessing found in the Cairo *Genizah*. This reads: "May the *meshumadim* have no hope *unless they return to Thy Torah*."²²⁹ Thus, the rabbis considered that there was a possibility for an apostate to repent and, as it seems, they even encouraged such a step. It is clear that the "return to the Torah" would have required a *meshukh* to undergo a new circumcision. That is precisely the meaning of the opinion ascribed to the rabbis in Tosefta Shabbat xv, 9: The return of the *meshukh* to the Torah, and his reintegration within the community were contingent upon his re-circumcision.

Is this correlation which we have observed between the re-circumcision of the *meshukhim* during the Second Jewish revolt and the opinion of the Rabbis on this matter a mere coincidence? Or may one assume that Bar Kokhba's policy was inspired by the outlook of the rabbis? And if so, are we to regard the measure he supposedly enacted against the *meshukhim* as a radical application of the position of the rabbis? Or should we consider that Bar Kokhba, owing to his power and his authority, was simply the only one in a position to enforce the decisions of the first *tannaim*?

The Minim and the Notsrim

This reflection leads us to formulate a cardinal question with regard to our study: Did Bar-Kokhba take up the position of the rabbis with regard to the Jewish Christians? In other words, is there a connection between the measures enacted at Yavneh against the *minim*, and the persecution of the Jewish Christians in the days of the Bar-Kokhba revolt?

²²⁹ S. Schechter, "Genizah Specimens", 659; J. Mann, "Genizah Fragments of the Palestinian Order of Service", 306.

At this point, we must make a brief digression.

D. Goodblatt has contended that the priestly circles, which he portrays as the main support of Bar Kokhba, inspired the persecution of Christians at his hands. In his view, the priestly milieu fostered anti-Christian feelings throughout the first and early second centuries CE. Goodblatt emphasizes the role the priests played in the executions of Jesus, Stephen and James. Moreover, he points out the support Paul received from the high priest when he was persecuting the Church. In contradistinction, Goodblatt claims that New Testament writings never blame the Pharisees for the murders of Jesus' disciples. In his opinion, the deep hostility of the priests towards the Christian movement endured after the destruction of the Temple, so that when they held the power during the Bar-Kokhba Revolt, (as Goodblatt proposes) they instigated the persecution of Christians.²³⁰

In our opinion, however, this proposition presents some difficulties. In the first place, it seems that the priestly class was greatly divided during the first century,²³¹ so that it would be unlikely for all the priests to have shared a common stance toward the Christian community. Moreover, we read in the Book of Acts that "a great many of the priests became obedient to the [Christian] faith."²³² As for the supposed leniency of the Pharisees towards the early Christians, it should be recalled that according to the Book of Acts, the same Paul who had harassed the disciples of Jesus was a Pharisee.²³³

Similarly, it can hardly be maintained that all the members of this stream tolerated the Church. We are more inclined to assume that it was the chief priests as members of the Jewish leadership who took steps against Christians, rather than the priests as a

²³⁰D. Goodblatt, "Support of the Tannaim or Influence of the Priests?", 11; *id.*, "The Title *Nasi* and the Ideological Background of the Second Revolt", 129-131.

²³¹ See on this: Josephus *AJ.* XX, 179-181; 206-207; 213.

²³² Acts 6: 7.

²³³ Acts 22: 3; 23: 6; 24: 5.

whole. The priestly leaders, indeed, regarded messianic agitation with a high degree of suspicion and endeavored to reduce the political unrest by all means. By doing so, they aimed at preserving the current order and, at the same time, their own interests. These trends prevailed up to the outbreak of the Great Revolt.²³⁴ After the destruction of the Temple and the disappearance of the office of the high priest, political power eluded the priestly leadership; the order the priests had strained to preserve collapsed and their privileges vanished. We might wonder if, in such a situation, the priestly leaders would have any real reason to continue to demonstrate wariness and resentment toward the Christian community. As previously stated, both Jewish and Christian literary evidence rather suggests that it was the rabbis who mostly exhibited abhorrence of Christian streams during the decades that preceded the Bar-Kokhba revolt.

We may now return to the particular issue of the link between the rulings the rabbis issued against the *minim*, and the persecution of Christians by Bar Kokhba. In this regard, it is striking that the Palestinian version of the Twelfth Blessing reads:

"והנוצרים והמינים כרגע יאבדו ימחו מספר החיים ועם צדיקים אל יכתבו."

"May the *Notsrim* and the *minim* perish in an instant; may they be blotted out of the book of the living, and may they not be written with the righteous."

It would be misleading and too far-fetched to infer that Bar-Kokhba applied to the letter the views expressed in the *Amidah* and more especially in *Birkat haMinim*. However, it is clear that in many respects, he pursued the policy initiated by the rabbis at Yavneh. It is remarkable, indeed, that, according to the terminology of the rabbis,

²³⁴ See for example: *BJ* II, 321-325.

Bar-Kokhba fought against "the Kingdom of Arrogance," coerced *meshumadim* (apostates) to return to the Torah (by forcing *meshukhim* to re-circumcise) and harassed the *Notsrim/minim* (by persecuting Christians, as reported by Justin and Eusebius).

The precise nature of the relationship between the first *tannaim* and Bar-Kokhba is difficult to determine. However, if we are to assume that Bar-Kokhba adopted and pursued the policy initiated at Yavneh, we must also stress that, throughout this whole period, the rabbis strove above all to achieve the unity of the people under their spiritual authority. Thus, as stated above, they sought to expel the Jewish Christians whenever they could, since they felt very concerned by their influence within Jewish society. Bar-Kokhba is very likely to have benefited from the considerable achievements of the rabbis in this matter; indeed, it is generally accepted that it was the relative unity of Jewish people which enabled the initial success of the Second Jewish Revolt. Nonetheless, the accomplishments of the rabbis were not totally successful, for they did not manage to overcome all the groups of people who were dissident in their eyes. There is reason to think, therefore, that Bar-Kokhba undertook to complete the union of the nation. Thus, whereas the rabbis attempted to alienate the heterodox streams by forbidding most social contacts with them, Bar-Kokhba had recourse to coercive measures to unite the people. In this respect, the re-circumcision of the *meshukhim* during the revolt (which we hold to have been enforced) may be a strong illustration of this approach. Indeed, if we are right in assuming that they reversed their circumcisions out of a desire to assimilate to Hellenistic culture, there is every reason to believe that they were opposed to both the outlook of the rabbis and the aims of the revolt.

Similarly, we are inclined to assume that the persecution of Christians by Bar-Kokhba derived from the continuous striving for unity inherited from the rabbis. If we are right to think that the rabbis (or are least the great majority of them) actively supported the revolt, there is every reason to believe that they inspired the harassment of the Jewish Christians. As noted, the rabbis had advocated a policy hostile to the first Christians, since the latter contested their claim to leadership and frustrated their desire to unite the people. The measures taken at Yavneh fostered mistrust and hatred of the Jewish Christians among the people, and undoubtedly prepared the ground for their subsequent harassment and persecution. Thus, it is more than likely that the relations between the rabbis and the Christian community of Judaea were very strained even before the war broke out. It may also be argued that, in addition to the reasons mentioned above, the Jewish Christians challenged the authority of Bar Kokhba, given that he was supported by the party of the rabbis.

In any event, since the Jewish Christians hindered his attempt to unite all the people under his banner, Bar-Kokhba had no choice but to take the position of the rabbis towards them and, apparently, to harden it. Thus in this respect, the harassment of the Christians may be considered as the culmination of the long process the Jewish leadership had instituted at Yavneh.

CONCLUSION

In the light of our investigation, there does not seem to be any single specific ground for the persecution of the Christians in the days of Bar Kokhba. This complex intricate historical development seems rather to have derived from various causes.

However, there is good reason to think that it was their refusal to commit themselves further in the revolt which constituted the triggering factor for the repression of the

Jewish Christians. As noted above, they presumably felt uneasy with the spreading belief in Bar Kokhba's messianic status, which stood in contradiction to their faith in Jesus as messiah. Moreover, it may be assumed that they had reservations about (if not clearly opposition to) the deepest aspirations of the rebels, such as the reconstruction of the Temple. In reaction, the revolutionary authorities judged the Jewish Christians who refused to obey the enlistment orders and to support the struggle against the Romans with the utmost severity, just as, the men of Teko'a who had sought refuge in Ein Gedi were pursued for similar motives.

The Christian victims of Bar Kokhba's regime interpreted these sanctions to be a persecution led against them by a messianic pretender. Only in this respect is the belief in Jesus' messianic status related to the harassment and persecution of the Christians by the Jewish rebels; indeed, it would seem on *a priori* grounds very improbable that Bar-Kokhba imposed the belief in his own messianic status as a sign of allegiance to his rule.

However, it would be misleading to assume that the Jewish Christians were harassed as mere draft dodgers. The question of their persecution is not to be reduced simply to the context of the war, but rather needs to be studied in a broader perspective, including the period that preceded the Second Jewish revolt. There is reason to think that the policies the rabbis advocated at Yavneh prepared the ground for the subsequent repression of the Christians in the days of Bar Kokhba. In fact, it is hardly contestable that the measures they took against the Jewish Christians contributed to singling them out and fostering hostility towards them. Moreover, it must be recalled that Bar Kokhba, who was almost certainly supported by the rabbis, took on their outlook to some degree. Thus, the physical pursuit of Christians would represent to

some extent the climax of the process initiated years earlier by the Jewish leadership at Yavneh.

Nonetheless, we must be careful not to draw too hasty conclusions. Although the roots of the repression of the Jewish Christians can be traced to the early Yavneh period, it is not certain that the rabbis considered physical assaults on the *minim* to be the logical achievement of the policy they had initiated. It seems more reasonable to assume that this radical turn of events was precipitated by the harsh circumstances of the war.

Moreover, it appears that the significance and the implications of these events need to be considered further. In this context, it must be emphasized that the sufferings of the Christians in the days of the revolt are referred to only twice in all the extant works of the Church Fathers so that it seems that the Bar-Kokhba revolt had repercussions only on the local Christian communities. Besides, it would appear that not all the Christians were opposed to Bar Kokhba; some of them probably shared the aims of the revolt.

Lastly, it may be relevant to note here that the author(s) of *ApocaP*, regarded these developments as internal to the "House of Israel", *i.e.*, the Jewish People: in fact, this text does not consider the opposition to Bar-Kokhba as a confrontation between Jews and Christians. Thus, it cannot be inferred that the harassment of the Christians at Bar Kokhba's hands constituted a watershed in the relations between Judaism and rising Christianity.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

The purpose of our research has been to analyze the outlook and self-understanding of the Jewish Christians of Judaea from the Great Revolt (66-73 CE) to the end of the Bar-Kokhba war (132-135/136 CE). It was not the intention of this study to develop a comprehensive picture of early Judaeen Jewish Christianity; its aim was rather to address this subject from different perspectives in order to shed new light on the phenomenon.

As stated in the introduction, we have taken a more contextual approach in seeking to examine the Jewish Christian community in the light of the events and conditions that prevailed in Judaea during the period in question. We have therefore explored the attitudes the Jewish Christians took towards various crucial issues of political, religious and social order which concerned all the Jews of Judaea at the time.

In concluding our research, we must first make a synthesis of the results obtained throughout this investigation in order to give a clear overview of our argument.

At the beginning of the study, we addressed the controversial question of the so-called "flight to Pella" of the Jerusalem church during the Great Revolt. In opposition to those scholars who have rejected this patristic tradition outright because of its apparent discrepancies, we argued that the Jewish Christian community (or at least a part of it) left the Holy City in the course of the war. However, we contended that in order to interpret this episode correctly, it must be closely analysed within the political context of Jerusalem in the late 60s CE. In our attempt to reconstruct the course of the Jewish Christians' move to Pella, we put forward the hypothesis that the members of the Christian community of Jerusalem surrendered to the Roman authorities, and were subsequently compelled to settle in Pella. In our opinion, they

moved in the late spring of 68 CE, as the legions of Vespasian advanced in the vicinity of Jerusalem and when numerous Jews, seeking to elude the Zealots' growing power, fled from the city to surrender to the Roman troops. We further proposed that, following the example of other Jewish deserters, the Jewish Christians probably negotiated the terms of their surrender with the Roman authorities.

If our proposition is correct, it would seem clear that Jewish Christians' decision to leave the city was a pragmatic one that responded to the specific political developments which occurred in Jerusalem in the course of the year 68 CE. Insofar as many other Jews took a similar stance, it would seem that the implications of this episode for later Jewish Christianity were less far-reaching than is usually thought.

In the light of this, we have utterly rejected the position of certain scholars according to whom the exodus to Pella marked a watershed in the relations between Jews and Jewish Christians, from which they came to understand themselves as entirely different religions.

In our second chapter, we attempted to verify the Christian tradition that refers to the existence of a Jewish Christian Church in Jerusalem after the Jewish War. Although this question remains a moot one, it is our position that Jewish Christians did return to the Holy City following the suppression of the Revolt in spite of the difficult conditions which prevailed there at the time. Their presence there must be linked to the deep veneration of Jerusalem which remained a common feature within the various Jewish Christian streams.

Following this, we addressed the attitude of this community toward the destroyed Temple more specifically. To this end, we investigated an account of Hegesippus which tells of the martyrdom of James "the brother of the Lord" in the Temple

compound.¹ Interestingly enough, Hegesippus ends his narrative by mentioning the existence in his days (mid-second century CE) of a 'stele of James' next to the Temple. We argued that this tradition is to be ascribed to the second-century Nazoraeans, whom we consider to be the genuine heirs of the first Jerusalem Church. We then tried to assess the significance and implications of the existence of this monument for the Church of Jerusalem. In our opinion, the very location of the stele demonstrates that the Temple still occupied a central place in the eyes of this group; furthermore, it implies that in the late first and early second century CE, the local Jewish Christians continued to frequent the destroyed Temple and its vicinity. However, even though the Nazoraeans' attitude to the ruined Temple was identical to that of their fellow Jews, their understanding of the causes that led to its destruction differed. In their view, this terrible event was the direct consequence of James' martyrdom at the hands of the "Scribes and the Pharisees". We believe that this interpretation needs to be placed within the context of the conflicts of the late first-early second century CE, when the rabbis and the Nazoraeans struggled to win the support of the whole Jewish people. At any event, it seems clear that, following the Jewish War, the Nazoraeans remained committed to Jerusalem and its ruined Temple and that they shared the pain and sorrow of their fellow Jews. They left the Holy City only when they were forced to by the decree of Hadrian, which forbade Jews to dwell in Jerusalem or its vicinity.

¹ *HE*, II, 23, 4-18, (GCS II 1,166-171).

In the following section, we looked at Jewish Christianity from a different perspective, examining the attitude of the Jewish Christians towards the Jewish tax that Vespasian imposed on all Jews throughout the Empire after the Jewish War.²

It has been observed that the question of liability to this levy was variously approached by the Flavian Emperors up to Nerva, who was anxious to correct Domitian's abusive policy and thus introduced significant changes in the administration of the *Fiscus Judaicus*. There is good reason to assume that he restricted the criteria for liability to the tax to a twofold criterion: Jewish descent and observance of the ancestral customs. Besides this, it is likely that from this time on, the Roman administration, for practical reasons, required the Jews to make an official statement of their Jewishness. In the wake of this reform, the Jewish tax became not only a public license to worship, but also a real marker of Jewish identity; as M. Goodman has stated, payment of the impost to the *Fiscus Judaicus* tax became then the main criterion of the Roman definition of a Jew.³

Consequently, by imposing this levy, the Roman authorities indirectly posed the Jewish Christians the twofold question of their self-understanding, and of their relation to Judaism. In the light of this consideration, we examined the case of the Jewish Christian Church of Jerusalem. In order to do so, we analysed an account of Eusebius which implies that Hadrian's edict of expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem entailed a deep transformation within the local Christian community; it would appear that the Jerusalem Church lost its Jewish character and was from then on composed of "Gentiles".⁴ Hence we inferred that the Roman authorities bracketed the Jewish Christian minority with the Jewish majority and expelled them from the Holy City. In

² *BJ* VII, 218; Cassius Dio, *RH* LXVI, 7, 2.

³ M. Goodman, "Nerva, the *Fiscus Judaicus* and Jewish Identity", *JRS* 79 (1989), 40-44, esp. 44.

⁴ *HE*, IV, 6, 3-4, (GCS II 1, 306-308).

contrast, we noted that the Christians of gentile origins were allowed to live in the city.

In our opinion, one of the reasons that led the Roman authorities to the conclusion that the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem were Jews, derived from the fact that these very Jewish Christians had remained liable to the *Fiscus Iudaicus*. This conjecture, if confirmed, would be very illuminating regarding the self-understanding of this community; it would imply that its members continued to consider themselves as fully-fledged Jews, and consequently had made an official statement of their Jewishness to the Roman administration.

Our fourth chapter was devoted to the analysis of the relationships between the Jewish Christians and the Samaritans. In the first place, we maintained that, like the movement of the rabbis, certain Jewish Christian groups were involved in the relative rapprochement between Jews and Samaritans observed in the period after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.

We then argued that, beyond this historical development (and to some extent at its origin), the question of the status of the Samaritans in comparison to that of the Jews was an urgent and topical issue at the turn of the second century CE, that caused intense internal discussion within the different Jewish streams. It emerges from our study that the "Samaritan otherness" was also discussed and debated within Christian circles. However, we noted that in nascent Christianity this question was approached from an exclusively Jewish perspective. In this context, it is noteworthy that the relevant primary Christian sources that deal with the Samaritans raise issues that were cardinal in the eyes of the Jews, such as the origins of the Samaritans, their denial of Jerusalem and their dubious state of ritual cleanness. Here it is remarkable that

contemporary gentile-Christian authors totally ignored the specific nature of the Samaritans. In addition, we stressed that the range of contradictory opinions on this topic seems strikingly wide, given the paucity of the relevant data. Thus we highlighted the differences of opinion on the Samaritans between the Matthean community, the congregation reflected in John 4: 4-42, the third evangelist Luke and the *Clementine Recognitions*, which probably reflects the position of a group related to the early Church of Jerusalem.

In our opinion, these controversies do not merely reflect a strictly internal Christian polemic, but were an integral part of contemporaneous Jewish debate on the Samaritans' status. Moreover, the discussions conducted by the Jewish Christians on this issue illustrate how deeply they were anchored in their Jewish identity, and further demonstrate that the Jewish Christians participated fully in debates that were of concern to the whole of Jewish society at the turn of the second century CE.

Lastly, in the fifth chapter of our study, we inquired into the fate of the Christians of Judaea during the Bar-Kokhba revolt, and their relationship with the short-lived regime of the Jewish rebels.

Our analysis of the Apocalypse of Peter and of Justin's and Eusebius' accounts of the persecution of the Christians by Bar-Kokhba has led us to the conclusion that the grounds for this wave of harassment were numerous and complex. In the first place, there is every likelihood that the Jewish Christians felt uneasy with the wide-spread belief in Bar Kokhba's messianic status, which stood in contradiction to their faith in Jesus as messiah (although we do not believe that Bar-Kokhba himself imposed this belief as a sign of allegiance to his rule). Thus we have proposed that it was their consequent refusal to commit themselves further in the revolt which constituted the

triggering factor for the repression of the Jewish Christians; indeed, the revolutionary authorities judged those who refused to support the struggle against the Romans with the utmost severity. The Christian victims of Bar Kokhba's regime most probably interpreted these sanctions to be a persecution against them by a messianic pretender. Only in this respect was the belief in Jesus' messianic status related to the harassment of the Christians by the Jewish rebels.

Beyond these considerations strictly related to the context of the war, we have proposed that the persecution of the Christians was linked to the policies the rabbis advocated at Yavneh. Indeed, we believe that the anti-Christian measures taken by rabbis to some extent prepared the ground for the subsequent repression of the Jewish Christians at the time of the Bar-Kokhba revolt. This hypothesis is all the more likely given that we think that Bar-Kokhba received the support of the rabbis and took on their outlook to a certain extent.

However, we think that the implications these events had on the subsequent relations between Jews and Christians deserve further consideration; indeed, both the scantiness of the relevant sources and the limited scope of the revolt suggest that the harassment of the Christians by Bar-Kokhba hands would only have affected the local Churches of Judaea. Furthermore, if we are right to ascribe the authorship of the Apocalypse of Peter to Christian victims of Bar Kokhba's rule, it appears that the latter regarded their conflict with Bar-Kokhba as an internal problem of the "House of Israel", *i.e.*, the Jewish people. It is even quite likely that not all the Christians were opposed to Bar Kokhba, and that some of them may well have shared the aims of the uprising.

Looking at these results overall leads us to draw several conclusions:

In the first place, it appears that the distinctiveness of the Jewish Christian community of Judaea centered on the leadership of the Jerusalem Church can hardly be downplayed. Indeed, there is good reason to assume that this group constituted a coherent entity that was clearly distinguishable from the other Jewish movements.⁵

In addition to the cardinal belief in Jesus as messiah, the Jewish Christians had a number of distinct and important characteristics:

Thus we proposed that the latter claimed the authority to interpret scripture, and therefore issued *halakhot* of their own. Those rulings which differed from those of the rabbis would have presented serious doctrinal challenges to the rabbinic movement.

Furthermore, the Jewish Christians appear to have traditions developed peculiar to themselves. Here we argued that they shaped their own understanding of the destruction of the Temple in relation to the internal history of their movement. It is noteworthy that this tradition was linked to a physical spot on the Temple Mount identified as the stele of James; in this respect, we agree with Y. Z. Eliav, that this monument functioned as a "place of memory" that was peculiar to the Jewish Christian community.⁶

The coherence of this group may be further illustrated by the relatively consistent policy line they followed throughout the period in question. Indeed, from our analysis of the "flight to Pella", the *Fiscus Judaicus* and the Bar-Kokhba revolt, it appears that the Jewish Christians as a whole took a rather moderate position toward the Roman Empire.

⁵ It should be recalled, however, that there were other Jewish Christian groups in Judaea which were not influenced by the Jerusalem congregation such as, (as we have proposed) the community which composed John 4:4-42. Nonetheless, there is sufficient reason to presume that the Jerusalem Church remained the leading authority over the local Jewish Christian movement.

⁶ Y. Z. Eliav, *God's Mountain: The Temple Mount in Time, Place and Memory*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 46-47.

However, despite the fact that the Jewish Christians formed a distinct community, it can by no means be argued that they lived on the margins of the Jewish people, let alone outside it. Notwithstanding the fact that the influence of the rabbinic movement was growing among the Jews, Jewish society of the post-destruction period was multi-faceted. Thus, although both Jewish and Christian sources indicate that tensions were rife between the rabbis and the Jewish Christians during this period, we believe that this conflict was played out within the Jewish people.

In this context, it is noteworthy that both groups continued to see each other as Jews. Indeed, L. H. Schiffman has demonstrated that in the eyes of the tannaim, a Jew who espoused the Christian faith did not cease to be Jew,⁷ while it is clear from various accounts that probably derive from the second-century Jewish Christians of Judaea⁸ that the latter regarded both themselves and non-Christian Jews as part of the House of Israel.

Furthermore, many scholars have contended recently that, in spite of their mutual hostility, the rabbis and the Jewish Christians maintained social interactions during the first centuries of the Common Era.⁹ Indeed, it may be argued that rabbinic prohibitions on socializing with Jewish Christians in fact attest to the persistence of such contacts: as L. Blau has stated, "The halachic negation is a historical affirmation".¹⁰

⁷ L. H. Schiffman, "At the Crossroads: Tannaitic Perspectives in the Jewish Christian Schism", in E. P. Sanders, A. I. Baumgarten and A. Mendelson (ed.), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition Vol. 2, Aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 115-156.

⁸ We have proposed in this study that Hegesippus' accounts regarding the Judaeian Church, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, Jerome's quotations from a Nazoraean commentary on Isaiah and certain passages of the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* originated directly or indirectly from the second-century Jewish Christian Church of Judaea.

⁹ See in particular the collection edited by A. Becker and A. Y. Reed, *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007).

¹⁰ L. Blau, "Early Christian archaeology from the Jewish point of view", *HUCA* 3 (1926), 157-214, esp. 185.

Most studies hitherto have investigated the degree of social involvement of the Jewish Christians in their Jewish environment only by evaluating the extent of their relationships with the rabbis, who are often presented as the only leaders of the Jewish people. The main contribution of the present investigation has been to show how deeply anchored the Jewish Christians were in their Jewish identity, and, by analyzing their own outlook and self understanding, to demonstrate that they were full participants in Jewish society of the post-70 period.

In the first place, it is clear that they remained bound to the institutional and spiritual foundations of Judaism; this has been demonstrated not only by their continuing observance of the Law but also by their attachment to Jerusalem and the destroyed Temple.

Furthermore, we have argued that the Jewish Christians approached their social environment from an exclusively Jewish perspective. Thus we have seen that their representations of the Samaritans were mainly rooted in a traditionally Jewish understanding of this group.

Similarly, it is clear that the Jewish Christian community shared the main concerns of their fellow Jews: thus they participated in contemporaneous Jewish discussions, such as the debate around the reasons for the destruction of the Temple, and the status of the Samaritans in comparison to that of the Jews.

Finally, it would be misleading to consider that the Jewish Christians were rejected by the rest of the Jewish people because of their political positions. The moderate attitude they took toward the Roman authorities was not uncommon among the Jews, and in

no case can it be inferred from this that they did not share any of the national aspirations of their fellow Jews.¹¹

In the light of these considerations, it is clear that there was no marked separation between Jewish Christians and non-Christian Jews at this time. In spite of its distinctive features, the Jewish Christian community did not become sociologically separated from the rest of the Jewish people, so that to be a Christian did not mean not being a Jew.

We prefer to believe that a decisive watershed in the existence of the Jewish Christian community of Judaea occurred in the aftermath of the Bar Kokhva revolt. Indeed, we have every reason for believing that this group was harshly affected by the suppression of the uprising in the same way as the other Jews. Cassius Dio reports (in a certainly exaggerated description):

"Fifty of their [the Jews] most important outposts and nine hundred and eighty-five of their most famous villages were razed to the ground. Five hundred and eighty thousand men were slain...Thus nearly the whole of Judaea was made desolate."¹²

It is likely that the Romans did not distinguish between non-Christian Jews and Jewish Christians here. Moreover, there is a reasonable case for supposing that the latter were also involved in the decrees of religious persecution ascribed to Hadrian.¹³

¹¹ Similarly, certain rabbis like R. Joshua ben Hanina seem to have adopted a pacific stance toward Rome; see: *Genesis Rabbah* lxiv, 29, (ed. Theodore Albeck, 710-712).

¹² *HR* LXIX, 13-14.

¹³ The talmudic literature refers on many occasions to a set of religious prohibitions enacted by the Roman authorities following the Bar Kokhba revolt. These measures, known as שַׁמַּר, forbade the observance of central commandments like the Sabbath and circumcision, or the public reading of the Torah. See for example: *M Eruvin*, x 1; *Megillah* iv, 8; *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael*, Ba-Hodesh vi (H. S. Horowitz & I. A. Rabin, 227). This period of religious unrest is known in rabbinic terminology as שַׁמַּר שַׁמַּר or simply סַכְנָה.

Evidence for this is to be found in a passage of Eusebius already quoted in this work, which suggests that the Christians "of the circumcision" were prohibited from living in Jerusalem (duly renamed Aelia Capitolina).¹⁴ If we are to accept that the Jewish Christians were prevented from entering the new founded *colonia* since they were regarded as Jews by the Roman authorities, it can be argued that they were similarly affected by the other measures of persecution. In the light of these considerations, it would appear that it was the outcomes of the revolt, more than any other event, that dealt a decisive blow to the Jewish Christian community of Judaea.

Given the paucity of the relevant sources at our disposal, it is particularly difficult to investigate the subsequent fate of this group. However, since Hadrian's decree of expulsion concerned not only Jerusalem but also its surrounding territory, it seems very likely that Jewish Christians would not have been found in Judaea proper after the war.¹⁵ Thus it may be inferred that the ethnic composition of the whole local Christian community changed dramatically, as happened in Jerusalem, where the Church was henceforth composed of Gentiles, and led by uncircumcised Christians.¹⁶

It would seem reasonable to infer that the Jewish Christians who survived the Bar-Kokhba revolt moved to neighbouring regions, in the same way as the rabbis

¹⁴ *HE* IV 6, 4, (GCS II 1, 308).

¹⁵ Eusebius, quoting Aristo of Pella, reports that the Jews were absolutely forbidden to enter Jerusalem and its surrounding district, so that they were not even allowed to see their ancestral home from afar (*HE* IV, 6, 3, [GCS II 1, 306-308]). Likewise Tertullian's discussion on the misfortunes of the Jewish people implies that Jews were forbidden to dwell in large parts of Judaea. He writes: "However, now we notice that no one of the clan of Israel has remained in the city of Bethlehem since the time when it was forbidden for any of the Jews to linger in the boundaries of that region of yours [the Jews]...'and your eyes shall see the land from a distance' [Isaiah 33: 17]. As you are prohibited from entering your land after the destruction of Jerusalem on account of your faults, it is permitted to see it only with your eyes from a distance...How therefore, will a leader be born from Judah, and to what extent will he proceed from Bethlehem [Micah 5: 2] - just as the divine volumes of the prophets announce- when even now no one at all from Israel has been left behind there from whose stock he can be born? ", (*Adversus Iudaeos* XIII, 3-5, [*PL* 2, col. 633-634]; translation by G. D. Dunn, *Tertullian*, [London and New York: Routledge, 2004], 97). It is noteworthy though that David Rokeah has seriously questioned the trustworthiness of this tradition since it only appears in Christian writings ("Deceptive comments", *Tarbiz* 31 [1966], 122-131, esp. 122-125, [in Hebrew]).

¹⁶ *HE* IV, 6, 4, (GCS II 1, 308).

assembled at Ushah in Galilee after the revolt. Although it is very hazardous to trace later Jewish Christian groups back to the first Christian community, we have proposed in this study that the fourth-century Nazoraeans were related to the second-century Jewish Christians of Judaea. If this supposition is correct, it can be cautiously assumed that their migration led the members of this community to Peraea, to Basanitis and even further northward to Syria: indeed, according to Epiphanius¹⁷, in the fourth century the Nazoraeans were to be found in the region of Pella, in the village of Kokabe¹⁸ and in Beroea (modern Aleppo). This latter information is verified by Jerome, who refers to the existence of a Nazoraean community in this city in his day.¹⁹

It is widely assumed that by the time of Epiphanius and Jerome, Judaism and Christianity had parted, and that henceforth both entities regarded themselves as separate religious communities. Although this approach should be qualified, the fact remains that the triumph of rabbinism on the one hand, and the Christianization of the Roman Empire under the auspices of the gentile Church on the other, had far reaching implications on subsequent Jewish Christianity. Indeed, the exclusive claims of the rabbis to be the true representatives of Judaism, and of the "Great Church" to be the only source of orthodoxy, entailed the alienation and the marginalization of the Jewish Christian groups. Indeed, both the Jewish and the Christian mainstreams considered that to be a Jew implied not being a Christian and vice versa: this view is

¹⁷ Epiphanius, *Panarion* XXIX, 7, 7, (PG 41, col. 401-402).

¹⁸ According to Epiphanius (*Panarion* XXX, 2, 8, [(PG 41, col. 407-408)]), Kokabe was situated in the vicinity of Karnaim and Asteroth in Gaulanitis (the most western part of Basanitis). C. Dauphin has argued that the discovery of inscriptions combining Jewish and Christian symbols at Farj and at Er-Ramthaniyye in the Golan Heights, attests to a Jewish Christian presence in this region during the first centuries CE and therefore confirms the testimony of Epiphanius ("De l'église de la circoncision à l'église de la gentilité: sur une nouvelle voie hors de l'impasse", *Liber Annuus* 43 [1993], 223-242, esp. 227-236).

¹⁹ Jerome, *De viris illustribus* III, 3, (PL 23, col. 613-614).

clearly reflected by Jerome who wrote of the Nazoraeans that "since they want to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither Jews nor Christians."²⁰

It would be misleading to think that the fourth-century Nazoraeans were identical in every respect with the second-century Jewish Christians; it is very likely, for instance, that the beliefs (and in particular the Christology) of the former were more sophisticated than those of the latter. Nonetheless, it is remarkable that these two related groups shared a common self understanding: they claimed to be both genuine believers in Christ and the faithful remnant of the Jewish people, and that each of these was contingent on the other.

²⁰ *Epistle CXII*, 13 (to Augustine; ed. J. Labourt, *Budé VI*, 31-32).

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ABSTRACT

The significance of the period from the Great Revolt (66-73 CE) up to the end of the Bar-Kokhba war (132-135/136 CE) in the history of the Jewish people can hardly be overstated. The suppression of the first Jewish uprising deprived the Jews of their national institutions (the Sanhedrin, the Temple and the high priesthood) and threw them into an existential crisis. Facing these tragic events, they sought to redefine their spiritual heritage in order to adapt it to the new reality, and Judaism underwent important changes and transformations during the years that followed the Great Revolt.

As is well-known, the movement of the rabbis assembled in Yavneh under the leadership of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai strove to recreate a centre for Jewish life. Apart from this group, other forms of Judaism, among them the Christian movement, continued to exist after the catastrophe of 70 CE and it is more than likely that, like the rabbis, they too endeavored to rethink and to redefine Second Temple Judaism.

There is general agreement among historians that this period ended with the Bar-Kokhba revolt, whose harsh repression plunged the Jews of Judaea into crisis and despair.

The main purpose of our research has been to define the outlook and self-understanding of the Jewish Christians of Judaea during this decisive time period. Similarly, we have attempted to highlight new aspects and characteristics of this community, and to determine to what extent the Jewish Christians participated in Jewish society in post-70 Judaea. More generally, we have attempted to establish

whether this period did mark a watershed between Jews and Jewish Christians, and what implications it had for subsequent Jewish Christianity.

Jewish Christianity and the question of its so-called "parting of the ways" with Judaism have been intensively discussed in modern scholarship. The fact remains, however, that this religious phenomenon has usually been treated as a type of Christianity rather than a type of Judaism. Besides, it is noticeable that the Jewish Christian groups have generally been studied through the lens of their relations to "Great Church" on the one hand, and to the rabbis on the other. Within the framework of our investigation, we have attempted to take a more contextual approach and to address the question of Jewish Christianity from various different perspectives. Thus, rather than surveying it only through the prism of its twofold opposition to rabbinic Judaism and gentile Christianity, we have tried to examine the Judaeen Jewish Christian community in the light of the events and conditions that prevailed in post-destruction Judaea. Thus our inquiry has considered the attitudes the Jewish Christians took towards different crucial issues of political, religious and social order that all the Jews of Judaea were facing during the period in question.

I- The Jewish Christians' move from Jerusalem as a pragmatic choice (68 CE)

In the first place, we dealt with what was probably the most decisive event of the period, *i.e.*, the Great Revolt, and more specifically with the fate of the Jewish Christian community of Jerusalem during this conflict.

According to a tradition reported by Eusebius¹ and Epiphanius², the members of the "Mother Church", miraculously warned of the impending destruction of Jerusalem,

¹ *HE* III, 5, 3, (GCS II 1, 196).

² *Panarion* XXIX, 7, 7, (PG 41, col. 401-402); XXX, 2, 7, (PG 41, col. 407-408); *De Mensuris et Ponderibus* XV, (PG 43, col. 261-262).

took refuge in the city of Pella on the east bank of the Jordan River. This episode, which is commonly known as the "flight to Pella," has been the subject of an intense debate in modern scholarship. The disagreement in this discussion concerns both the trustworthiness of this tradition, and its significance for the historiography of Jewish Christianity in the post-apostolic period. Some have contended that the exodus to Pella marked a watershed in the relations between Jews and Jewish Christians, from which they came to understand themselves as exclusively different religions.³ In contradistinction, others have rejected this tradition outright, arguing that it contains historical inconsistencies or that the origins of its sources are obscure.⁴

We consider that, to be interpreted correctly, this tradition must be situated in the specific political context of Jerusalem during the revolt against Rome. We put forward the hypothesis that the Christian Community of Jerusalem (or at least a part of it) surrendered to the Roman authorities, and was subsequently compelled to settle in Pella. Indeed, Josephus reports that numerous Jews succeeded in fleeing from the besieged city and surrendered afterward to the Roman army. Now it seems that the Roman policy on Jewish deserters was to settle them relatively far from the battlefield, in pagan cities that had previously been garrisoned.

³ See for instance: E. Davies, "Early Christian Attitudes Towards Judaism and the Jews", *JBR* 13 (1945), 72-82 esp. 73-75; W.H. C. Frend, *The Early Church*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), 44-45; M. R. Wilson, *Our father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1989), 76-77.

⁴ See *inter alia*: S.G.F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, (London: SPCK, 2nd ed. 1957), 167-184; G. Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudo-Klementinen*, (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2nd revised ed. 1981), 229-231; J. Munck, "Jewish Christianity in Post-Apostolic Times", *NTS* 6 (1959-60), 103-104; L. Gaston, *No stone on Another: Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill 1970), 142 n. 3; G. Lüdemann, "The Successors of pre-70 Jerusalem Christianity: A Critical Evaluation of the Pella-Tradition", in E. P. Sanders (ed.), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, vol. 1: The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1980), 161-173; J. Verheyden, "The Flight of the Christians to Pella", *ETL* 66 (1990), 368-384.

It is likely that the Jewish Christians' removal occurred in the late spring of 68 CE, as the legions of Vespasian advanced on Jerusalem, and when numerous Jews who sought to elude the Zealots' growing power fled from the city and surrendered to the Roman authorities.

We also assumed that, following the example of other Jewish deserters, the Jewish Christians did negotiate the terms of their surrender with the Roman authorities.

In order to support our thesis, we analyzed a statement by Josephus which relates the surrender of a group of high priests during the siege of Jerusalem.⁵ Here we noted several points: in the first place, it would appear that Titus himself led the discussions with these deserters, which would illustrate the Romans eagerness to convince Jews to surrender. We then observed that, in spite of the Roman practice of settling Jewish deserters in pagan cities, these high priests received preferential treatment and were sent to the Jewish town of Gophna. Finally we noted that Titus assured the priests that their move to Gophna would be temporary and that they would eventually recover their goods.

In our opinion, this statement draws up the terms of a negotiation between these deserters and the Roman authorities. Indeed, Titus' efforts to encourage the Jews to surrender suggest that the Romans were disposed to accept some of the deserters' requests, and it is noteworthy that other less prestigious Jewish prisoners are also reported to have surrendered under treaty.⁶ We have therefore proposed that the Jewish Christians negotiated their surrender and their subsequent removal to Pella with the Roman authorities on similar terms.

⁵ *BJ* VI, 113-116.

⁶ *BJ* IV, 130.

By way of conclusion, we argue that the Jewish Christians' decision to leave the city was a pragmatic one; it responded to the specific political developments which occurred in Jerusalem in the course of the year 68 CE. Thus it would appear that the implications of the removal of the Jerusalemite Jewish Christians to Pella were less far-reaching than is usually thought. At any event, this episode can by no means be considered as a watershed in the relations between Jews and Jewish Christians.

II- The Jewish Christians' relationship to Jerusalem and the Temple following the Jewish War:

In our second chapter, we addressed the question of the link that bound the Jewish Christians to Jerusalem and the destroyed Temple after the Jewish War.

First, we attempt to demonstrate that Jewish Christians did return to the Holy City following the suppression of the revolt, in spite of the severe conditions which then prevailed. It is more than likely that their presence there was mainly correlated with their veneration of Jerusalem, which remained a common feature within the different Jewish Christian streams.

Following this, we investigate more specifically the question of the attitude of this community toward the destroyed Temple. To this end, we analyzed an account by Hegesippus, which relates how James, the leader of the Jerusalem Church during the decades that preceded the Jewish War, was stoned to death in the Temple.⁷ Interestingly enough, Hegesippus ends his narrative by mentioning the existence in his days (mid-second century CE) of a "stele of James" next to the Temple.

⁷ *HE* II, 23, 4-18, (GCS II 1,166-171).

We presume that this tradition is to be ascribed to the second-century Nazoraeans, whom we consider to be the genuine heirs of the first Jerusalem Church. Even though the legendary features of this tale are obvious, we regard the basic data concerning the "stele of James" to be reliable (although it is very unlikely that he was actually buried next to the Sanctuary). Thus we have attempted to assess the significance and implications of the existence of this monument for the Church of Jerusalem. In our opinion, the very location of the stele demonstrates that the Sanctuary still occupied a central place in the eyes of this group. Furthermore, it implies that in the late first and early second century CE, the local Jewish Christians, like many of their fellow Jews,⁸ continued to frequent the destroyed Temple and its surrounding area.

However, even though the Nazoraeans' attitude to the ruined Sanctuary was identical to that of their fellow Jews, their understanding of the causes that led to its destruction differed. In their view, this terrible event was the direct consequence of James' martyrdom at the hands of the "Scribes and the Pharisees". We believe that this interpretation needs to be placed within the conflicting context of the late first-early second century CE, when the rabbis and the Nazoraeans struggled to win the support of the whole Jewish people.

At any event, it is clear that the Nazoraeans remained committed to Jerusalem and its ruined Temple following the Jewish War, and that they shared the sorrow and the pain of their fellow Jews. They left the Holy City only when they were forced to by Hadrian's decree which forbade Jews to dwell in Jerusalem and its vicinity.

⁸ See: S. Safrai, "Pilgrimages to Jerusalem after the Destruction of the Second Temple", in: A. Oppenheimer, U. Rappaport and M. Stern (ed.), *Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period. Abraham Schalit Memorial volume*, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi & Ministry of Defense, 1980), 376-393, (in Hebrew).

III The Jewish Christians and the Jewish Tax

In the following part of our work, we approach our discussion on the Jewish Christians from a different perspective. Thus, we scrutinize the attitude they took towards the Jewish tax that Vespasian imposed on all the Jews throughout the Empire following the Jewish war.⁹ This impost consisted of the re-direction of the annual half-shekel offering which the Jews had formerly paid to the Temple of Jerusalem: from now on, this sum, paid to the *Fiscus Iudaicus* (the office which administered the tax in Rome), was devoted to the rebuilding of the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill.

The question of liability to the Jewish tax was variously approached by the Flavian Emperors. It appears indeed, that the categories of ratepayers required to pay this impost evolved to some extent until Nerva, anxious to correct Domitian's policy of exacting the Jewish tax abusively, introduced significant changes in the administration of the *Fiscus Iudaicus*. There is good reason to assume that he restricted the conditions for liability to the impost to a twofold criterion: Jewish descent and the observance of ancestral Jewish customs.

M. Goodman has assumed, however, that this measure would have caused practical problems for the Roman authorities, as the assessment of liability to the tax became harder to determine. Since numerous gentiles had adopted Jewish customs without considering themselves Jews, it was difficult for the fiscal administration to distinguish observant Jews from mere Judaizers. He therefore infers that the Jews, in order to be taxed, were required to make an official statement of their Jewishness to

⁹ *BJ* VII, 218; Cassius Dio, *RH* LXVI, 7, 2.

the Roman administration.¹⁰ Such a declaration, which meant registering as tax payers to the *Fiscus Iudaicus*, would have been the only way to obtain freedom of worship. Consequently, although the Jewish tax was made optional, it became a public license for the right of Jews to live by their own rules. Thus, in the wake of Nerva's reform, this impost became not only a public license to worship but also a real marker of Jewish identity. Goodman adds that henceforth the Romans recognized as Jews those individuals who had made public declaration of their Jewishness and who consequently paid the Jewish tax.

In this context, it is clear that in imposing this levy the Roman authorities indirectly faced the Jewish Christians with the twofold question of their self-understanding and their relation to Judaism.

In the light of this consideration, we have investigated the case of the Jewish Christian Church of Jerusalem. In order to do so, we have examined the account of Eusebius which implies that Hadrian's edict of expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem entailed a deep transformation within the local Christian community; as it seems, the Jerusalem Church lost its Jewish character and was from then on composed of Gentiles.¹¹ Hence we have inferred that the Roman authorities must have included the Jewish Christian minority with the Jewish majority and expelled them from the Holy City. In contrast, we noted that Christians of gentile origins were allowed to live in Jerusalem.

In our opinion, one of the reasons that led the Roman authorities to the conclusion that the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem were Jews derived from the fact that they had remained liable to the *Fiscus Iudaicus*. This conjecture, if confirmed, is very illuminating regarding the self-understanding of this community; it would imply that

¹⁰ M. Goodman, "Nerva, the *Fiscus Iudaicus* and Jewish Identity" *JRS*, Vol. 79 (1989), 40-44, esp. 41.

¹¹ *HE*, IV, 6, 3-4, (GCS II 1, 306-308).

the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem continued to consider themselves as fully-fledged Jews, and had consequently made an official statement of their Jewishness to the Roman administration.

IV Jews, Jewish Christians and Samaritans: perceptions of the other and of the self

In our fourth chapter, we inquired into the relationship of the Jewish Christians with the Samaritans in the late first-early second century CE, and tried to determine the way they envisaged the "Samaritan otherness".

Many scholars have observed that while in the first century CE the Jewish-Samaritan relations were characterized by mutual aversion,¹² a relative rapprochement occurred between these groups in the post-destruction period.¹³ Literary sources of different origins show that various different Jewish streams were involved in this development, including certain Christian communities.

Apart from this development, it seems that the question of the status of the Samaritans in relation to that of the Jews was intensely debated in Jewish circles of that time. The rabbinic literature clearly reveals that the rabbis of Yavneh had heated discussions on this matter, while several contemporaneous works stemming from other Jewish streams express a similar concern for the question.

In this respect, it is noteworthy that certain Christian sources (the New Testament writings, the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature and a short statement of Hegesippus) attest to the fact that the "Samaritan issue" was addressed and debated within Jewish Christian circles. We note that in nascent Christianity the "Samaritan otherness" was

¹² See for instance: Josephus, *BJ* II, 232-246; *AJ* XVIII, 29-30; XX, 118-136; Luke 9: 51-56.

¹³ See for instance: M. Gittin i, 5; Tos. Demai v, 24, (ed. Lieberman, 93); John 4: 4-42; *Paraleipomena Jeremiou*, VIII.

addressed from an exclusively Jewish perspective. Thus the above-mentioned accounts address questions that were cardinal in the eyes of the Jews, such as the origins of the Samaritans, their denial of Jerusalem and their dubious state of ritual cleanness. It is further remarkable that contemporary gentile-Christian authors completely ignore the specific nature of the Samaritans.

A further point needs to be stressed: given the scantiness of the relevant data, the range of contradictory opinions on this topic seems strikingly wide. Thus whereas the author of Matthew X: 5b-6 utterly rejected the Samaritan mission since he considered the Samaritans did not belong to the "House of Israel", the community reflected in John 4: 4-42 regarded them as fully-fledged Israelites, worthy of receiving the Gospel. Luke's portrayal of the Samaritans is rather ambiguous and it is never absolutely clear whether he held them to be Jews or gentiles;¹⁴ but in spite of this equivocity, he includes them in his programmatic universal mission that was to reach "the ends of the earth."¹⁵

The rather different view expressed in the *Clementine Recognitions* (which most likely reflects the position of a group related to the Mother Church of Jerusalem) illustrates still further the intricacy and the controversial character of the Samaritan issue.¹⁶ Thus, even though they were reckoned to be Jews, the incorporation of the Samaritans into the "True Israel" was dependent upon specific requirements. If they accepted the resurrection of the dead and "abandon[ed] the error of Mount Gerizim",

¹⁴ The Lucan passages related to the Samaritans are to be found in Luke 9: 51-56; 10: 30-37; 17: 11-19 and in the Book of Acts 8: 4-25.

¹⁵ Acts 1: 8.

¹⁶ I *Rec.* 54, 4-5; 57, 1-5; 63, 1.

the Samaritans would "acknowledge that Jesus [was] the one who was expected to come according to Moses' prophecy."¹⁷

It would be misleading however, to regard this polemic as a strictly internal Christian matter, for these controversies did not merely parallel contemporaneous Jewish discussions on the Samaritan's status: they were part of them. Thus, the Jewish Christians' understanding of the Samaritan otherness functions as a reversed mirror which reflects how deeply these groups were anchored in their Jewish identity. Moreover, it sets them further within the political, social and religious context of Jewish society at the turn of the second century CE.

V- The Jewish Christians in the storm of the Bar-Kokhba revolt.

The last chapter of our study addresses the specific question of the relationship of the Jewish Christians with the short-lived regime of Bar-Kokhba.

According to two different traditions, Bar-Kokhba persecuted the Christians: Justin¹⁸ claims that Christians were punished if they did not deny and blaspheme Jesus Christ, while Eusebius¹⁹ asserts that Bar-Kokhba harassed them because they refused to join him against the Romans. In spite of these apparent discrepancies, we argue for the trustworthiness of these accounts. Furthermore, we contend that certain passages in the Apocalypse of Peter derive from a Jewish Christian community of Judaea who suffered at the hands of Bar Kokhba.

¹⁷ I *Rec.* 57, 5 (Latin version).

¹⁸ I *Apology* 31, 6, (PG 6, col. 375-378).

¹⁹ *Chronicle*, seventeenth year of the Emperor Hadrian, (A. Schoene, *Eusebi Chronicum Canonum*; Berlin 1866, Vol. II 168-169).

Our analysis of these materials has led us to the conclusion that the grounds for the persecution of the Christians at the hand of Bar-Kokhba were numerous and complex. However, there is good reason to think that it was their refusal to commit themselves further in the revolt which constituted the triggering factor for his repression of the Jewish Christians. Indeed, it is difficult to deny that Christians would have felt uneasy with the spreading belief in Bar Kokhba's messianic status, which stood in contradiction to their faith in Jesus as messiah (although we do not believe that Bar-Kokhba claimed himself to be the messiah). In reaction, the revolutionary authorities judged the Jewish Christians who refused to obey the enlistment orders and support the struggle against the Romans with the utmost severity, just as they did to the men of Teqo'a who sought refuge in Ein Gedi.²⁰

The Christian victims of Bar Kokhba's regime interpreted these sanctions to be a persecution against them by a messianic pretender. Only in this respect is the belief in Jesus' messianic status related to the harassment and persecution of the Christians by the Jewish rebels; indeed, it would seem on *a priori* grounds very improbable that Bar-Kokhba imposed a belief in his own messianic status as a sign of allegiance to his rule.

Beyond these considerations strictly related to the context of the war, we have proposed that the persecutions of the Christians should be linked to the policies the rabbis advocated at Yavneh. Indeed, we believe that the anti-Christian measures they took there prepared the ground for the subsequent repression of the Jewish Christians in the days of revolt. Such a hypothesis is all the more likely since Bar-Kokhba is

²⁰ See: P. Yadin 54; 55, (Y. Yadin et al., *The Documents from the Bar Kokhva Period in the Cave of Letters, Vol. II: Hebrew, Aramaic and Nabatean Documents*, [JDS; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1963/2002], 305-316).

very likely to have received the support of the rabbis;²¹ in addition, we have attempted to show that he accepted their outlook to some degree. Thus, the physical pursuit of Christians would represent to some extent the climax of the process initiated years earlier by the Jewish leadership at Yavneh.

Nonetheless, we think that the implications of these events on subsequent relations between Jews and Christians need to be further considered. Indeed, both the scantiness of the relevant sources and the limited scope of the revolt suggest that the harassment of the Christians at Bar Kokhba's hands would have had repercussions only on the local Churches of Judaea. Besides, it would seem that not all Christians were opposed to Bar Kokhba; some of them probably shared the aims of the revolt.

Lastly, it may be relevant to note here that the author(s) of Apocalypse of Peter regarded these developments as internal to the "House of Israel," *i.e.*, the Jewish people: indeed, this text does not consider opposition to Bar-Kokhba as a confrontation between Jews and Christians. Thus it cannot be inferred that the harassment of the Christians by Bar-Kokhba constituted a watershed in the relations between Judaism and rising Christianity.

Conclusion

The overall consideration of our results has led us to the conclusion that the Jewish Christians of Judaea were deeply anchored in their Jewish identity and that they fully participated in Jewish society in the post-70 period. Notwithstanding the fact that the

²¹ This opinion is shared by numerous scholars; see *inter alia*: S. Yeivin, *The War of Bar Kokhba*, (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1952), 78-79; A. Oppenheimer, "The Bar Kokhva Revolt- Its Uniqueness and Its Study", in *The Bar-Kochba Revolt*, (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1980), 9-21, (in Hebrew); "Bar Kokhva and the Observance of Mitzot" in *Between Rome and Babylon: Studies in Jewish Leadership and Society*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 2005), 283-291; "Sabbatheilung im Bar-Kochba-Aufstand" in *Ibid.*, 292-302; I. Ben Shalom, "The status of Bar Kokhva as leader of the nation and the support of the Sages for the revolt", *Katedra* 29 (1983), 13-28, (in Hebrew); B. Z. Rosenfeld, "The Sages of the generation of Bar Kokhba and their relation to the revolt according to the Tannaitic literature", in D. Gera and M. Ben-Zeev (ed.), *The Path of Peace: Studies in Honor of Israel Friedman Ben-Shalom*, (Beer Sheva: Beer Sheva University Press, 2005), 319-359, (in Hebrew).

influence of the rabbinic movement was growing among Jews, the Jewish world of the post-destruction period was still multifaceted. Thus, in spite of its distinctive features, the Jewish Christian community did not become sociologically separated from the rest of the Jewish people, so that to be a Christian did not mean not being a Jew.

In the light of these considerations, it is clear that this period does not mark the separation between Jewish Christians and non-Christian Jews. We are rather inclined to believe that it was the suppression of the Bar Kokhva revolt and its severe outcome, more than any other factor, which dealt a decisive blow to the Jewish Christian community of Judaea.

אוניברסיטת תל אביב
הפקולטה למדעי-הרוח ע"ש לסטר וסאלי אנטין
בית הספר למדעי היהדות ע"ש חיים רוזנברג

היהודים-הנוצרים והקבוצות הדתיות השונות בפרובינקיה

יודיאה

מהמרד הגדול ועד למרד בר-כוכבא

חיבור לשם קבלת תואר דוקטור לפילוסופיה
מאת: יונתן בורגל
מנחה: פרופסור אהרן אופנהיימר

הוגש לסנאט של אוניברסיטת תל אביב
סיון תשס"ט

היהודים-הנוצרים והקבוצות הדתיות השונות בפרובינקיה יודיאה

מהמרד הגדול ועד למרד בר-כוכבא תקציר:

קשה להגזים בחשיבות התקופה שנמשכה מהמרד הגדול (66-73 לספירה) עד למרד בר-כוכבא (132-135/6 לספירה) לתולדות העם היהודי. דיכוייה של ההתקוממות היהודית וחורבן בית המקדש (70 לספירה) הוליכו את העם היהודי למשבר עמוק ואף היו לאיום על היהדות בארץ ישראל. על רקע זה, ביקשו היהודים להגדיר מחדש את מורשתם הרוחנית על מנת להתאימה למציאות החדשה. עקב כך, לאורך שנים אלה, עברה היהדות התפתחויות ושינויים מרחיקי לכת. כידוע היטב, החכמים אשר התכנסו ביבנה בראשות רבן יוחנן בן זכאי, חתרו להקים מחדש מרכז לחיים יהודיים. מלבד קבוצה זו, גם זרמים יהודיים אחרים, וביניהם הנוצרים, שרדו את האסון של 70 לספירה וסביר להניח כי, בדומה לחכמים, הם השתדלו להגדיר מחדש את יהדות בית שני.

נהוג לחשוב כי תקופה זו הסתיימה במרד בר-כוכבא אשר דיכוי הקשה גרר את יהודי ארץ ישראל למשבר נוסף ולאיוש עמוק.

המטרה העיקרית של מחקר זה הייתה לנתח את תפיסתם והבנתם העצמית של היהודים-הנוצרים הארצישראלים במהלך תקופה מכרעת זו. כמו כן, השתדלנו להבליט אספקטים ומאפיינים חדשים של קהילתם ולבחון באיזו מידה הם נטלו חלק בחברה היהודית שלאחר חורבן הבית. באופן כללי, ניסינו לקבוע אם תקופה זו היוותה נקודת תפנית בתולדות היחסים בין היהודים הלא נוצרים ליהודים-הנוצרים ומה היו השלכותיה על הנצרות היהודית המאוחרת יותר.

הנצרות היהודית ושאלת פרידתה מן היהדות נידונו רבות במחקר המודרני. עם זאת, ראוי לציין כי רוב החוקרים התייחסו לתופעה זו כסוג של נצרות ולא כסוג של יהדות. זאת ועוד, מסתבר כי הקבוצות היהודיות-הנוצריות נחקרו בעיקר דרך הפריזמה של יחסיהן עם כנסיית הגויים מחד גיסא, ועם החכמים מאידך גיסא.

במסגרת מחקרנו, שאפנו להתייחס לשאלת הנצרות היהודית מפרספקטיבות שונות. ביקשנו לנקוט גישה קונטקסטואלית ולבחון את הקהילה היהודית-הנוצרית הארצישראלית לאור התנאים וההתפתחויות אשר אירעו בארץ ישראל שלאחר חורבן הבית. כך, מחקרנו ניתח את עמדתם של היהודים-הנוצרים כלפי שאלות מרכזיות בעניינים פוליטיים, דתיים וחברתיים אשר העסיקו את כלל יהודי ארץ ישראל בתקופה הנ"ל.

1- המרד הגדול ו"בריחת" הנוצרים לפחל

ראשית, התייחסנו לאירוע המשמעותי ביותר של תקופה זו, דהינו למרד הגדול, או ליתר דיוק, לגורלה של הקהילה היהודית-הנוצרית בירושלים במהלך מערכה זו. לפי מסורת המוזכרת בכתבי אוסביוס¹ ואפיפניוס², אנשי הכנסייה הוזהרו בנס על חורבן ירושלים הממשמש ובא. עקב כך, הם עזבו את העיר ומצאו מפלט בפחל הנמצאת בגדה המזרחית של נהר הירדן (מול סקיתופוליס, היא בית-שאן). מעשה זה,

¹ ההיסטוריה הכנסייתית, ג, 5, 3, 196 (GCS II 1).

² על משקלות ומידות, טו, (PG 43, col. 261-262); הפנריון, כט, 7, 7, (PG 41, col. 401-402); ל, 2, (PG 41, col. 407-408), 7.

הידוע בתור "הבריחה לפחל", עורר מחלוקת רבה בקהילה המדעית. חילוקי הדעות מתמקדים בעיקר בשאלת אמינותה של מסורת זו ובמשמעותה לתולדות הנצרות היהודית. מספר חוקרים טענו כי בריחת הנוצרים לפחל ציינה נקודת תפנית ביחסים בין היהודים-הנוצרים לבין היהודים הלא נוצרים אשר ממנה שתי הקבוצות התנכרו זו לזו והגדירו את עצמן כדתות שונות.³ בניגוד אליהם, חוקרים אחרים דחו הגדול. כעולה מכתבי פלאוויוס יוספוס, מתברר כי מספר גדול של תושבים הצליחו להימלט מן העיר בעת המצור, ונכנעו לאחר מכן לרומאים. כמו כן, נדמה כי מדיניותם של אספסיאנוס וטיטוס הייתה להושיב את היהודים שנכנעו בערים הפגאניות, המרוחקות יחסית משדה הקרב, בהן הוצב חיל מצב. כך הוכיח ג' אלון, כי רבן יוחנן בן זכאי לאחר שנכנע לרומאים, נשלח כעין עציר ליבנה.⁴ ברוח דומה, שיערנו כי הקהילה הנוצרית בירושלים (או לפחות חלק ממנה) נכנעה לכוחות הרומאיים ולאחר מכן נאלצה להתיישב בפחל. סביר להניח כי

³ ראו למשל: E. Davies, "Early Christian Attitudes Towards Judaism and the Jews", *JBR* 13 (1945), 72-82 esp. 73-75; W.H. C. Frend, *The Early Church*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), 44-45; M. R. Wilson, *Our father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1989), 76-77.

⁴ G. Alon, "Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai's removal to Jabneh", in *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World*, (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1977), 269-313.

אירוע זה התרחש לקראת סוף האביב של שנת 68 לספירה בשעה שהלגיונות של אספסיאנוס התקדמו לעבר ירושלים וכאשר מספר רב של יהודים המבקשים להתחמק מן הכוח הגובר של הקנאים בעיר, נכנעו לצבא הרומאי.

כמו כן, הנחנו כי, בדומה לפליטים יהודים אחרים, היהודים-הנוצרים ניהלו משא ומתן עם הרומאים על תנאי הסגרתם. על מנת לבסס השערה זאת, ניתחנו קטע ממלחמת היהודים של פלאוויוס יוספוס המתאר את כניעתה של קבוצת כוהנים בעת המצור על ירושלים.⁵ בניתוח הקטע ציינו מספר נקודות הרלוונטיות לעניינינו: ראשית, מסתבר כי טיטוס עצמו שוחח עם גורמים אלו. התנהגותו ממחישה את המאמצים הרבים אשר השקיעו הרומאים על מנת לשכנע את היהודים להיכנע. שנית, הדגשנו כי, בניגוד לנהגם של הרומאים ליישב את הפליטים היהודים בערים פגאניות, הכוהנים זכו ביחס מועדף ונשלחו לעיר יהודית. לבסוף, ציינו כי טיטוס הבטיח לאחרונים כי שהייתם בגופנה תהיה זמנית וכי הם יקבלו בחזרה את רכושם בתום

⁵ מלחמת ו, 113-116.

המלחמה. אנו סבורים כי קטע זה משקף בעקיפין את תנאיי הסגרתם של הכוהנים האלה. ראוי לציין כי גם אסירים יהודים ממעמד נמוך יותר נכנעו במסגרת הסכם עם הכוחות הרומאים.⁶ לאור זה, יתכן כי באופן דומה, היהודים-הנוצרים ערכו משא ומתן על הסגרתם והעברתם לפחל עם הרומאים.

אם השערתנו נכונה, ניתן יהיה להסיק, כי החלטתם של חברי הכנסייה בירושלים לצאת מן העיר המכותרת ולהסגיר את עצמם לרומאים נבעה בעיקר משיקולים פרגמטיים הקשורים להתפתחויות פוליטיות פנימיות (ובראשם "הפיכת הקנאים") אשר התרחשו במהלך השנה 68 לספירה. כך מתברר כי משמעותה של העברת הנוצרים לפחל פחות מרחיקת לכת ממה שסבר. בשום אופן לא ניתן להקיש כי אירוע זה הווה נקודת תפנית (על אחת כמה וכמה פרידה) ביחסים בין היהודים-הנוצרים ליהודים הלא נוצרים.

⁶ ראו למשל: מלחמת ד, 130.

2- זיקתם של היהודים-הנוצרים לירושלים ולמקדש החרב לאחר

המרד הגדול

בפרק השני של מחקרנו, התייחסנו לשאלת הזיקה של היהודים-הנוצרים לירושלים ולמקדש החרב אחרי המרד הגדול. ראשית, ביקשנו לאמת את המקורות השונים המזכירים את קיומה של כנסייה יהודית-נוצרית בירושלים לאחר חורבן הבית (70 לספירה).⁷ לאחר עיון בהם, הגענו למסקנה כי יהודים-נוצרים חזרו לעיר החרבה למרות התנאים הקשים שנוצרו מדיכוייה של ההתקוממות היהודית. קרוב לודאי כי שיבתם נבעה בעיקר מיראת-כבוד עמוקה לירושלים אשר נותרה מאפיין משותף לזרמים יהודיים-נוצריים שונים.

לאחר מכן, דנו בשאלת עמדתם של היהודים-הנוצרים כלפי המקדש החרב. לשם כך, בחנו קטע מהגסיפוס (מהמאה השנייה) המתאר את הוצאתו להורג בבית המקדש של יעקב "אחי ישו" אשר כיהן כראש

⁷ אוסביוס, *ההיסטוריה הכנסייתית*, ג, 11, (GCS II 1, 226-228), 22; (GCS II 1, 236), 33; (GCS II 1, 270-272), 35; (GCS II 1, 274), ד, 5, (GCS II 1, 304-306), 6, 4; (GCS II 1, 308), *דמונסטרטיו*, אוונג'ליקה, ג, 5, (GCS, 6, 131); *פרי תאופנייס* ה, 45 (בנוסח הסורי), (GCS III, 250-251); אפיפניוס, *על משקלות ומידות*, יד-טו, (PG 43, col. 261-262); *הפגיון*, סו, (PG 42, col. 59-62). ראו עוד: אלכסנדר הנזיר, (PG, 87[3], col. 4044-4045) ואוטיכיוס, (PL, 111, col. 85).

כנסיית ירושלים לפני פרוץ המלחמה.⁸ בתום נרטיב זה, הגסיפוס ציין

כי קברו את יעקב על יד המקדש וכי מצבתו עדיין קיימת בימיו.

יצאנו מנקודת ההנחה כי יש לייחס מסורת זו לצאצאים של כנסיית

יעקב אשר ישבו בירושלים ובסביבתה בתחילת המאה השנייה. אמנם

קטע זה המורכב מחומר אגדי אינו יכול לשמש כמקור היסטורי, אך אנו

מעריכים כי המידע הנוגע ל"גלעד" המיוחס ליעקב סביר (אף שברור כי

הוא לא נקבר בהר הבית). עצם קיומה של מצבה זו בקרבת חורבות

המקדש רומז כי יהודים-נוצרים הוסיפו לבקר בהר הבית בעשורים

הראשונים של המאה השנייה (קרוב לוודאי עד פרוץ מרד בר-כוכבא).

בנוגע לתופעה זו, הספרות התלמודית מזכירה כי לא רק החכמים נהגו

לעלות להר הבית לאחר חורבן המקדש אלא גם המונים יהודים.⁹

אף על פי שהתנהגותם של היהודים-הנוצרים כלפי המקדש ההרוס

הייתה זהה לזו של שאר העם, מתברר כי הבנתם את הסיבות אשר

הובילו לחורבן הבית הייתה שונה. לדעתם, האסון האיום הזה היה

⁸ ההיסטוריה הכנסייתית, ב, 23, 4-18.

⁹ ראו: ש. ספראי, "העלייה-לרגל לירושלים לאחר חורבן בית שני", בתוך: א. אופנהיימר, א. רפפורט ומ. שטרן (עורכים), פרקים בתולדות ירושלים בימי בית שני. ספר הזיכרון לאברהם שליט, (ירושלים: יד יצחק בן-צבי, 1980), 376-393.

ההשלכה הישירה של הריגתו של יעקב "אחי ישו" על ידי "הסופרים והפרושים". אנו סבורים כי פירוש זה ממחיש את המאבק בין החכמים ליהודים-הנוצרים אשר אפיין את החברה היהודית בסוף המאה הראשונה-תחילת מאה השנייה.

בכל מקרה, עולה ממחקרנו כי חברי הקהילה הנוצרית בירושלים אשר השתתפו בפולחן המקדש טרם חורבנו המשיכו (בדומה לשאר היהודים) להוקיר את הר הבית לאחר דיכוי של המרד הגדול. הם עזבו את העיר אך ורק לאחר מרד בר-כוכבא כאשר נאסר על היהודים להיכנס לירושלים במסגרתן של גזירות השמד.

3- היהודים-הנוצרים והמס היהודי

בפרקו השלישי של מחקרנו, התייחסנו לדיון על היהודים-הנוצרים מפרספקטיבה שונה. כך בחנו את היחס שלהם למס המיוחד אשר אותו הטיל אספסיאנוס על כול היהודים ברחבי האימפריה הרומית לאחר דיכוי של המרד הגדול.¹⁰ למעשה, המס היהודי החליף את

¹⁰ יוספוס פלאוויוס, *מלחמת ז', 218*; קאסיוס דיו, *תולדות הרומאים*, סו, 7, 2.

"מחצית השקל" אשר היהודים תרמו מדי שנה לבית המקדש בעת קיומו. מעתה ואילך שתי הדרכמות (השוות לערך למחצית השקל) שולמו למשרד ה-*Fiscus Iudaicus* ברומא והוקדשו לבנייתו מחדש של המקדש ליופיטר שניצב בראש גבעת הקפיטוליום.

ראוי להעיר כי היקפה של גביית המס השתנה במהלך תקופת שלטונם של הקיסרים הפלאווים. מסתבר כי הקטגוריה של משלמי המס היהודי הורחבה במידה מסוימת עד עלייתו לשלטון של הקיסר נרווה (96-98 לספירה), אשר ביקש לתקן את מדיניותו האכזרית של קודמו. אכן, דומיטיאנוס גבה את המס לא רק מהיהודים הנאמנים לדת, אלא גם מכל מי שקיבל על עצמו חלק ממנהגי יהודים ומהיהודים הכופרים.¹¹ אם כן סביר להניח כי נרווה הכניס שינויים מהותיים ל-*Fiscus Iudaicus* וכי הוא הגדיר את קטגוריית משלמי המס היהודי לפי שני קריטריונים: מוצא יהודי ושמירת מנהגי אבות.

מ' גודמן¹² סבור כי צד זה עלול היה לגרום שיבושים טכניים לרשויות הרומאיות. היות שנוכרים רבים אימצו מנהגים יהודים, קשה היה

¹¹ סוטוניוס, *חיי דומיטיאנוס*, יב, 2.

¹² M. Goodman, "Nerva, the *Fiscus Iudaicus* and Jewish Identity" *JRS*, Vol. 79 (1989), 40-44, esp. 41.

להבחין ביניהם לבין היהודים שומרי המצוות. עקב כך, הוא שיער כי האחרונים התבקשו להצהיר רשמית על היותם יהודים. יתכן כי המצהירים הצהרה זו קיבלו על עצמם לא רק את החובה לשלם את המס ל-*Fiscus Iudaicus* אלא גם את הזכות לממש את דתם. בעקבות הרפורמה אשר הונהגה על ידי נרווה, המס היהודי הפך לרישיון רשמי עבור היהודים לשמור על תורת אבותיהם ובכך הוא הווה סימן מובהק להשתייכות לעם היהודי. גודמן מוסיף כי מעתה ואילך הרומאים הכירו כיהודי רק במי שהצהיר פומבית על כך וכתוצאה מכך שילם את המס היהודי.

סביר להניח כי התפתחות זו העמידה את היהודים-הנוצרים מול דילמה קשה הואיל והם נדרשו בעקיפין להבהיר את תפיסתם העצמית ואת יחסם ליהדות.

לאור זה, ביקשנו לבחון את עמדתה של הכנסייה היהודית-הנוצרית בירושלים כלפי המס היהודי. לצורך זה, ניתחנו קטע מאוסביוס אשר רומז כי גירוש היהודים מירושלים אשר אותו הורה הדריאנוס לאחר דיכוי מרד בר-כוכבא, הוביל לשינויים עמוקים בהרכב הקהילה

הנוצרית המקומית.¹³ כפי שמוזכר שם, כנסיית ירושלים איבדה את אפיה היהודי ומעתה ואילך הורכבה מנוכרים. הסקנו מכך כי הרומאים כללו את היהודים-הנוצרים בתוך הרוב היהודי ובהתאם לכך גירשו אותם מן העיר. בניגוד אליהם, ציינו כי הנוצרים ממוצא נוכרי הורשו להתיישב בקולוניה החדשה איליה קפיטולינה. לדעתנו, אחת הסיבות אשר הביאו את הרומאים למסקנה שהיהודים-הנוצרים בירושלים היו יהודים לכל דבר נבעה מן העובדה כי, הללו נשארו כפופים ל-*Fiscus Iudaicus* והמשיכו לשלם את המס היהודי (לפחות עד פרוץ המרד). אם השערה זו הינה נכונה, מתברר כי היהודים-הנוצרים בירושלים הוסיפו להגדיר את עצמם כיהודים ולכן, הם הצהירו על כך לרשויות הרומאיות.

4- יחסיהם של היהודים-הנוצרים לשומרונים ותפיסותיהם באשר

לשונות השומרונים במאות הראשונה והשנייה לספירה

¹³ ההיסטוריה הכנסייתית, ד, 6, 4-3, (GCS II 1, 306-308).

הקדשנו את הפרק הרביעי של עבודתנו ליחסיהם של יהודים-הנוצרים לשומרונים במאות הראשונה והשנייה לספירה. זאת ועוד, ביקשנו לנתח את תפיסותיהם של הנוצרים דאז באשר לשונות השומרונים. רוב המקורות הנוגעים ליחסים בין היהודים לבין השומרונים במהלך המאה הראשונה, מעידים על האיבה אשר הפרידה בין שתי הקבוצות.¹⁴ באופן מפתיע, מספר עדויות המתארות את יחסים אלה לאחר חורבן בית המקדש, מדווחות על מעין התקרבות בין יהודים לבין שומרונים.¹⁵ עולה ממחקרנו כי קבוצות יהודיות שונות, בהן הנוצרים, נטלו חלק בתהליך הזה.

מעבר להתפתחות זו, מסתבר כי בתקופה הנ"ל שאלת המעמד של השומרונים ביחס ליהודים העסיקה רבות את הזרמים היהודים השונים. הספרות התלמודית מעידה על כך שחכמי יבנה דנו באופן נרחב בנושא זה. יתרה מזו, מקורות אחרים הנובעים מקבוצות יהודיות שונות משקפים עניין דומה בסוגיה זו. כך מתברר כי מספר מקורות

¹⁴ ראו למשל: יוספוס, *מלחמת* ב, 246-232; *קדמוניות* יח, 29-30; כ, 118-136; לוקס ט: נא-נו.

¹⁵ ראו למשל: משנה, גיטין א ה; תוספתא, דמאי ה כד, (מהדורת ליברמן, עמ' 93); יוחנן ד: ד-מב; 'יתר דברי ירמיהו', ח.

נוצריים (בהם כמה פסוקים מהברית החדשה, מספר קטעים מהחיבור הפסודו-קלמנטיני וקטע אחד מיוחס להגסיפוס) מאשרים כי סוגיית השומרונים נדונה גם בקרב היהודים-הנוצרים.

מסתבר כי, בנצרות המוקדמת, התייחסו לנושא זה אך ורק מנקודת מבט יהודי. בהקשר זה, ראוי לציין כי המקורות הנוצרים המוזכרים לעיל מעלים סוגיות אשר היו חיוניות ליהודים כגון מקורם של השומרונים, דחייתם את קדושת ירושלים והקפדתם המפוקפקת על טהרה. כמו כן, נראה כי הנוצרים הפגאנים לא זיהו או לא התעניינו בייחודה של הקהילה השומרונית ביחס ליהודים.

זאת ועוד, מן ההכרח לציין נקודה נוספת: נוכח המספר המועט של המקורות הנוצרים הנוגעים לשומרונים, נראה הטווח של הדעות השונות המובעות באשר לסוגיה זו רחב למדי. בעוד שהמחבר של מתי י:ה-ו דחה על הסף את "המיסיון לשומרונים" בשל אי-שייכותם לבית ישראל, הקהילה העומדת מאחורי יוחנן פרק ד: ד-מב התייחסה אליהם כבני ישראל לכל דבר והגדירה אותם ראויים לקבל את

הבשורה. תפיסתו של לוקס באשר לשומרונים מעורפלת למדי ולא ברור לחלוטין אם הוא ראה בהם בני ישראל או נוכרים.¹⁶ אך בכל מקרה שאלה זו לא הייתה מכריעת בעיניו של לוקס מפני שלדעתו, בשורתו של ישו המשיח בעלת אופי אוניברסאלי, הייתה עתידה להיות מופצת "עד-קצה הארץ".¹⁷

הסיפורת הפסודו-קלמנטינית (אשר כמה מחלקיה נובעים במידה מסוימת מקהילה המיוחסת לכנסיית האם בירושלים) מבטאת נקודת השקפה שונה ובכך ממחישה את מורכבותה של סוגית השומרונים.¹⁸ אף על פי שהשומרונים מוצגים כיהודים, קליטתם "בישראל האמיתי" הייתה כרוכה במספר תנאים מקדימים. הם נדרשו להכיר בקדושתה של ירושלים ובתחיית המתים. רק בתנאים אלה, הם יכלו להכיר בישו הנוצרי כנביא אשר עליו ניבא משה.¹⁹

¹⁶ לקטעים המתייחסים לשומרונים בחיבורם של לוקס ראו: לוקס ט: נא-נו; י: ל-לז; יז: יא-יט ומעשי השליחים ח: ד-כה.

¹⁷ מעשי השליחים, א, ח.

¹⁸ לקטעים המתייחסים לשומרונים בחיבור זה ראו: א *רקוגניטיו* נד, ד-ה; נז, א-ה; סג, א

¹⁹ דברים יח: יח

חשוב לציין כי חילוקי דעות אלו לא היו פנים יהודיים-נוצריים אלא חלק בלתי נפרד מן הדיון על השומרונים אשר דנו בו קבוצות יהודיות שונות בתקופת הנ"ל. אנו סבורים כי הבנתם ותפיסתם של היהודים-הנוצרים באשר לשומרונים ממחישות עד כמה אלה היו מעוגנים בזהותם היהודית ומשקפות את עומק התערבותם בחברה היהודית הארצישראלית במפנה המאה השנייה.

5- עמדתם של היהודים-הנוצרים כלפי המרד השני ויחסיהם לבר-

כוכבא.

פרקו האחרון של מחקרנו מתמקד בעמדתם של היהודים-הנוצרים כלפי המרד השני וביחסיהם למנהיג ההתקוממות דהינו שמעון בר-כוסבא. על פי שתי מסורות שונות, בר-כוכבא רדף את הנוצרים: בעוד שיוסטינוס טוען כי האחרונים הוענשו אם הם לא התכחשו לישו וחללו אותו²⁰, אוסביוס מזכיר כי בר-כוכבא יסר אותם נוכח סירובם להלחם לצידו נגד הרומאים.²¹ למרות הסתירות לכאורה בין עדויות

²⁰האפולוגיה הראשונה לא, 6, (PG 6, col. 375-378).

²¹כרוניקה, שנה יז של הקיסר הדריאנוס, [Berlin: (A. Schoene [ed.], *Eusebi Chronicum Canonum*, [Berlin: Weidmann, 1866], Vol. II 168-169).

אלה, אנו נוטים לקבלן כאוטנטיות. זאת ועוד, שיערנו כי גם מקורו של חזון פטרוס, אשר כמה מפסוקיו מיוחסים לקהילה של יהודים-נוצרים ארצישראלים מחלקה הראשון של המאה השנייה, מעיד על מצוקתם של הנוצרים תחת עולו של בר-כוכבא.

ניתוח מקורות אלה הולך אותנו למסקנה כי מניעי רדיפת הנוצרים במהלך המרד השני היו רבים ומורכבים. עם זאת, סביר מאוד להניח כי הגורם המרכזי להתפתחות זו היה סירובם של היהודים-הנוצרים לשתף פעולה עם שלטונו של בר-כוכבא. עקב הניצחונות הצבאיים של היהודים בראשית המרד, התפשטה האמונה במשיחיותו של בר-כוכבא בקרב העם היהודי (אמנם נדמה כי בר-כוכבא עצמו לא הכריז על משיחיותו). מתקבל על הדעת כי ההתפתחות הזאת העמידה את היהודים-הנוצרים מול דילמה קשה: בעיניהם, ההכרה במשיחיותו של בר-כוכבא נגדה את אמונתם במשיחיותו של ישו. כתוצאה מכך, יתכן כי הם סירבו להתייצב לצידם של המורדים ולהילחם כנגד הרומאים (כפי שמספר אבסביוס). קרוב לודאי כי המשטר המהפכני פירש את עמדתם של היהודים-הנוצרים כעריקה בולטת וכבגידה בלתי נסבלת.

בהקשר זה אנו לומדים מאגרות בר-כוכבא, שנתגלו במדבר יהודה, כי אנשי תקוע אשר ביקשו מפלט בעין גדי, נענשו בגין סיבות זהות.²² יש להניח כי הקורבנות הנוצרים של בר-כוכבא פירשו את הפגיעות האלה כמסע רדיפה אשר ניהל נגדם משיח כזב. רק בהקשר זה הייתה האמונה במשיחיותו של ישו קשורה לדיכוי הנוצרים. בלתי סביר בעליל כי בר-כוכבא דרש מהיהודים שהם יאמינו במשיחיות שלו עצמו כסמל לנאמנות לשלטונו.

על אף זאת, לא ניתן להסיק כי רדיפת הנוצרים נגרמה אך ורק מהאילוצים הצבאים המידיים של בר-כוכבא; אנו נוטים לחשוב כי שורשיו של מאורע זה גם נמצאים בתקופה אשר קדמה לפרוץ המרד. ידוע כי חכמי יבנה אשר טרחו ללכד את העם סביב הנהגתם, ביקשו להחרים את הזרמים היהודים הסוטים מהלכתם ובמיוחד הקבוצות היהודיות-הנוצריות. לדעתנו, גזרותיהם של החכמים המכוונות להרחקתם של היהודים-הנוצרים מן החיים החברתיים והדתיים סללו

²² ראו פפירוס ידן מס' 54 ו-55 (Y. Yadin et al., *The Documents from the Bar Kokhva Period in the Cave of Letters*, Vol. II: *Hebrew, Aramaic and Nabatean Documents*, [JDS; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1963/2002], 305-316).

את הדרך לרדיפתם בזמן המרד. בהקשר זה ראוי להזכיר כי לדעתם של חוקרים רבים, רוב החכמים תמכו בהתקוממות היהודית והתייצבו לצידו של בר-כוכבא.²³ יתרה מזו, עוד עולה ממחקרנו כי בר-כוכבא אימץ במידה מסוימת את תפיסתם של חכמי יבנה. לפיכך, ניתן לומר כי מדיניותו הנוקשה של בר-כוכבא כלפי הקהילה היהודית-הנוצרית היוותה במובן מסוים שיאו של התהליך אשר יזמו חכמי יבנה בשנים שקדמו לכך.

אף על פי כן, אין להעריך את השלכות דיכויים של הנוצרים תחת שלטונו של בר-כוכבא יתר על המידה. בעניין זה, יש להדגיש כי היקפו הטריטוריאלי של המרד היה מוגבל למדי כך שניתן לשער כי מספר הקהילות היהודיות-הנוצריות שסבלו מידי המורדים, היה ללא ספק מועט. כמו כן, חשוב להזכיר כי מאורע זה מוזכר במקורות בודדים בלבד. לבסוף, ראוי לציין כי חזון פטרוס, אשר משקף את עמדתם של

²³ כך, למשל: ש. ייבין, *מלחמת בר-כוכבא*, (ירושלים: מוסד ביאליק, 1952), 78-79; א. אופנהיימר, "מרד בר-כוכבא-ייחודו ומחקרו", בתוך: א. אופנהיימר (עורך), *מרד בר-כוכבא*, (ירושלים: מרכז זלמן שזר, 1980), 9-21; י. בן-שלום, "מעמדו של בר-כוכבא כראש האומה ותמיכת החכמים במרד", *קתדרה* כט (1984), 13-28. ב. צ. רוזנפלד, "החכמים בדורו של בר-כוכבא ויחסם למרד על-פי ספרות התנאים", בתוך ד. גרא ומ. בן זאב (עורכים), *אוהב שלום: מחקרים לכבודו של ישראל פרידמן בן-שלום*, (הוצאת הספרים של אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב, באר-שבע 2005), 319-359.

יהודים-נוצרים שדוכאו במהלך המרד, מייצג את סכסוכם עם בר-
כוכבא כפנימי לבית ישראל (ולא כבין היהודים לבין הנוצרים). אף
יתכן כי לא כל היהודים-הנוצרים התנגדו למטרותיה של
ההתקוממות.

לאור כל האמור, הגענו למסקנה כי אין לראות ברדיפת הנוצרים על-
ידי בר-כוכבא התפתחות מכריעה ומרחיקת לכת בתולדות היחסים
בין היהודים לבין הנוצרים אלא רק פרשה פנים-יהודית.

סיכום כללי

לאור מכלול התובנות שהובאו במחקרנו, עולה כי היהודים-הנוצרים
הארצישראלים היו מעוגנים עמוקות בזהותם היהודית וכי הם היו
חלק בלתי נפרד מהחברה היהודית שלאחר חורבן הבית. אף על פי
שהשפעתם של החכמים הלכה והתחזקה בקרב היהודים, העולם
היהודי דאז נותר ססגוני ומורכב מקבוצות שונות. חרף מאפייניה
הייחודיים, הקהילה היהודית-הנוצרית לא התבדלה משאר העם
היהודי, כך שפירושו של להיות נוצרי לא היה לא להיות יהודי ולהיפך.

לאור האמור לעיל, ברור כי התקופה הנ"ל לא ציינה את ההפרדה בין היהודים-הנוצרים ליהודים הלא נוצרים. אנו נוטים לחשוב כי, יותר מכל גורם אחר, דיכוי של מרד בר-כוכבא על ידי הרומאים והשלכותיו הקשות, הן שהנחיתו מכה מכרעת על הקהילה היהודית-הנוצרית הארצישראלית.