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IN PURSUIT OF THE MILLENNIUM: JUDEANS AND THEIR LAND*

ABSTRACT

This article aims to indicate the importance of the concept “land” with regard to the nature of Judean ethnic identity. It shows from evidence in the Bible and contemporary literature how Yahweh, the people, and the land belonged together. In this article events from the Maccabean Revolt onwards are recounted to illustrate how much was based on the Judean claim and attitude to the land. The article also illustrates that the concept “land” had been the central focus of eschatological expectations as witnessed by the investigation of the relevant documents.

1. INTRODUCTION

There can be little doubt that Judeans of the first-century CE were in pursuit of the millennium.¹ The pursuit of the millennium involved many things, but a primary feature involved corporate Israel's right to the *land*; for indebted or landless Judean peasants even more so. The importance of the land to Judean ethnic identity can hardly be overemphasised. Brueggemann (2002:3) even contends that land “is a central, if not *the central theme* of biblical faith” (em-

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1 Baumgarten speaks specifically of millennial expectations, in that they “are a subgroup of eschatological ones. They set forth the belief in the *imminent* commencing of the eschatological era, leading to ultimate collective salvation” (Baumgarten 1997:154, emphasis original). Duling (1994:132) describes millennialism in a slightly different but complimentary manner:

Millennialism describes a social movement of people whose central belief is that the present oppressive world is in crisis and will soon end, usually by some cataclysmic event, and that this world will be replaced by a new, perfect, blissful, and trouble free world, often believed to be a restoration of some perfect time and place of old; so intense is this hope that those who accept it engage in preparing for the coming new age, or even try to bring it about, especially by some political activity.

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phasis original). Israel's history is a recurring cycle, moving from land to landlessness, from landedness to land. The land for which Israel yearns

is always a *place with Yahweh*, a place well filled with memories or life with him and promises from him and vows to him. It is land that provides the central assurance to Israel of its historicity, that it will be and always must be concerned with actual rootage in a place that is a repository for commitment and therefore identity ... It will no longer do to talk about Yahweh and his people but we must speak about Yahweh and his people *and his land* (Brueggemann 2002:5; emphasis original).

The myth of divine election is an important feature in legitimating a community's "title-deeds" or land charter (Smith 1994:712). From an Israelite or Judean perspective, this all began with God's promise to Abraham: God will give him the land and he will become a great nation (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:7-21; 17:1-8). According to Biblical tradition, this promise was fulfilled (in part) with the conquest, but the dream was shattered through the exile. Yet the exile or the situation of landlessness became the setting for hope and a reaffirmation of God's faithfulness to the covenant (Is. 43:18-21; Jer. 31:17-18; Ezek. 37:5-6), and there were the promises of restoration as well.² The returning exiles came to believe that the land could be kept through the rigorous obedience of God's commandments (Brueggemann 2002:12, 145-50). They confessed the sins of their royal forefathers (Neh. 9; Ezr. 9). Rigorous obedience to the Torah entailed the observance of the Sabbath (Neh. 13:15-22), the ending of mixed marriages in the cause of purity (Neh. 9:12; 13:23-27; Ezr. 10:10-11, 44), and the right of the peasantry to retain their land (Neh. 5:5-11). All of these obligations were sworn to by an oath (Neh. 10:29-31). Yet Israel persistently remained under the control of foreigners. The relationship to the land was highly frustrated.

Quite relevant to our purposes, Smith distinguishes between two processes in ethnic ideology when it comes to the land:

[O]n the one hand, towards an extension of the *ethnie* in space at the cost of any social depth, and on the other hand, a social "deepening" of ethnic culture at the cost of its tight circumscription in space. The former process leads to what may be termed "lateral" *ethnie*, the latter to "vertical" *ethnie*. These are pure types; in practice, ethnic communities often embody contradictory trends. Yet, at given stages in the history of particular *ethnie*, one or other of these processes may predominate, presenting a close approximation to either the "lateral" or the "vertical" type (Smith 1994:713).

² Jer. 30:18-19; 31:2-5; 33:6-11, 25-26; Ezek. 36:22-28, 33-36; 37:12, 14; Is. 49:8-13.

Now one can say that Judeanism essentially represented the more “vertical” type that puts emphasis on the deepening of ethnic culture. Yet, the “lateral” ideology also comes into play during the period of Hasmonean expansion that will be discussed below. Ezekiel 40-48 has a vision of an Israel with a much enlarged territory, which is echoed by the fragments of Eupolemus, Josephus (Ant. 1.134-42, 185; 2.194-95; 4.300), and the Genesis Apocryphon from Qumran (Freyne 2001:293-97). Strangely enough, Ezekiel and Eupolemus endorse the presence of foreigners within the enlarged territory, but the Maccabeans forcefully converted Gentiles to Judeanism in (re)conquered territories or forced them to leave. So any “lateral” ideology was still “vertical” at its core.³ That is, for the Hasmoneans, the deepening of ethnic culture in the (re)conquered territories was of primary importance, even though they spearheaded a “conquering empire” of sorts. Eventually this policy did not succeed in all its aims as Gentiles and Samaritans still lived as culturally distinct groups within the Israelite ancestral land — even more so when the Romans took control of Palestine. The emphasis shifted to the more “vertical” ideology. At the same time, the ideal boundaries of an enlarged Israel as espoused by Ezekiel were never acquired, although Judean territory was greatly increased. The Judean relationship to the ancestral land of course was radically altered after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, and also later, due to the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

Below we will trace these developments in further detail. The emphasis of this article is therefore to demonstrate how the historical processes at work from the Maccabean period onwards was amongst other things, centred on the Judean claim and attitude to the land, which was a crucial aspect of Judean ethnic identity. The land was supposed to be a perpetual inheritance. It was a place where a divinely elected people had to live a life of holiness under their God. It was a source of food and the locus of family life. It was the central focus of eschatological expectations. Yahweh, people, and the land were elements that, according to the ideal Judean symbolic universe, belonged together. Remove the land, and Judean identity was stripped of one of its main constitutive cultural features.

3 Cf. Freyne (2001:292-93), who has his own take of the “vertical” and “lateral” ideologies discussed here. He sees the above two ideologies as present in Ezekiel (Ezek. 40-48), but in a way where emphasis is placed on the importance of Jerusalem and the Temple, and the holiness and separateness it entails, even from the other tribal territories, while on the other hand emphasis is also placed on an enlarged territory based on tribal and boundary traditions. “In the fractured circumstances of the Hasmonean and Herodian periods both aspects of Ezekiel’s vision of restoration can be shown to have been operative within different circles” (Freyne 2001:293).

2. THE HASMONEAN EXPANSION

Ben Sirach 36 wishes for the annihilation of Israel's enemies (Sir. 36:1-17), but this will happen in some unspecified time in the future. The situation changed radically during the forced Hellenization of Judeans which eventually prompted strong resistance and territorial expansion. As Hellenization was essentially an urban phenomenon, Jerusalem in particular would have been a likely candidate to succumb to its influence.

Obviously such a transformation called into question every claim and effort of Ezra to make Jerusalem the locus of covenant, and to define [Judean] sensitivities in terms of Torah and covenantal obedience (Brueggemann 2002:151).

The wealthy urban citizens would have benefited, while Hellenization had little sympathy for the rural peasantry, who clung to the Ezra-shaped notion of Judeanness, "committed to historical particularity and traditional rights of inheritance" (Brueggemann 2002:152).

Connected to this is the fact that a more "vertical" *ethnie*, that is more territorially bounded and compact, can be associated with the tendency of popular mobilisation against outsiders. "At these times", Smith explains,

We find a crusading and missionary quality not confined to aristocratic knights, but embracing the lower classes who may be engaged in battle and in ritual or cultural renewal of the community.

Such groups are ethnically unified from top to bottom, their "'verticality' often presenting problems for the 'lateral' *ethnie* that dominate polyethnic states or empires ..." (Smith 1994:714). This description fits the situation of Judea quite well. During the Maccabean revolt (and the Great Revolt of 66-70 CE), it was the peasantry (under religious-political style leadership) that fought for the land and cultural renewal (cf. Brueggemann 2002:153). In this regard 1 Maccabees 2:19-22, 27 sees the battle in terms of fidelity to the covenant, or one can say, of fidelity to Judean ethnic culture. The close connection between land, culture and covenant is evident in Jubilees 15:34, where to perform epispasm is to leave the covenant, making the guilty Judeans like Gentiles; they are "to be removed and uprooted from the land". The land theology of Ezra and Nehemia thus continues. 1 Maccabees further explains how Judas reminded the people how God had saved their ancestors at the Red Sea, and urged them to cry out for help and that God would remember his covenant with the forefathers and defeat the enemy (1 Mac. 4:8-11).

The Book of Daniel, written during the time of Antiochus' persecutions, looks forward to imminent redemption, which will occur with the defeat of Antiochus IV and eternal reward for the righteous (Dan. 11:40-12:3). The

Hasmoneans or Hasideans are described as “a little help” during the time of persecution (Dan. 11:33-34), but they will have no role to play when the Great Prince, Michael, will arise and deliver the faithful (Dan. 12:1). A more pro-Hasmonean stance is found in 1 Enoch 90, written around the same time as Daniel 7-12, that is, during the Maccabean revolt. It also looks forward to a glorious future, as the Temple will be rebuilt to its true and grand proportions (1 En. 90:28-29). Humans do play a part in bringing this about. The “great horned ram” (= Judas Maccabees) fights on behalf of the cause of good (the sheep) (1 En. 90:9-12), and a white cow is born later, as well as a great beast with black horns (1 En. 90:37-39). These passages are messianic in a sense, but these animals do nothing to redeem the world. Yet 1 Enoch 90 gives testimony that some saw the successes of the Hasmoneans as leading to the fulfilment of millenarian hopes (Baumgarten 1997:171).

It was when the Hasmoneans gained control of Judean society that the expansionist or more “lateral” ideology mentioned above came to the fore. At the time of the Maccabean revolt, Judea was no larger than a day’s walk in any direction from Jerusalem. From the time of Jonathan (161-143 BCE) onwards, Judean territory was greatly increased. Fragments of the historian Eupolemus clearly express expansionist ideals. In interpreting Judean history he portrays David as leading a conquering army against the Idumeans, Ammonites, Moabites, the Itureans and the Nabateans, and Phoenicia, whom he forces to pay tribute to the Judeans (in Eusebius, *PrEv* 9.30.3-5). According to Horsley (1995:37), a “principal motive of Hasmonean expansion may have been to establish Judean rule in the rest of Palestine as had the prototypical Judean king David.” Jonathan himself gained control of a part of the coastal plain and a large part of Samaria. Simon (143-134 BCE) seized the Acra in Jerusalem and also extended the borders of Judea in a number of campaigns. For example, access to the coast would be important for economic reasons. Simon set up a Judean garrison at Joppa (1 Mac. 12:33-4) and drove out its Gentile inhabitants (1 Mac. 13:11). He captured Gazara (Gezer) after a siege and also drove out its inhabitants, replacing them with people who observed the Torah (1 Mac. 13:43-8). The territorial expansion was also accompanied by ritual purifications, as were performed in the Temple, where idolatry was removed from the land. The expansion was therefore reinforced with rituals so that the land became an extension of the holiness and purity of the Temple in opposition to anything that was Gentile (cf. Schmidt 2001:127). But Simon declared that the land they had taken was not foreign property, “but only the inheritance of our fathers” that was taken away by Israel’s enemies (1 Mac. 15:33).

The territorial expansion must have been widely popular amongst Judeans, who recalled the ancient Exodus and conquest of the land (cf. *WisSol.* 12:3, 7; *Sir.* 46:8; 1 *Bar.* 1:20). Frequent mention is made in Judean literature of our

period to the land as an inheritance or as promised to the forefathers.⁴ It is the land of the fathers (1 Mac. 10:55, 67), the land that God gave to the descendants of Jacob (TLevi 7:1), or in short, the Promised Land (TMos. 1:8; 11:11; Ps-Philo 7:4). In Jubilees 8 it is said that the portion of Shem is in the “middle of the earth” to be a possession for “eternal generations”, and that Mount Zion is in the midst of “the navel of the earth”; indeed, the centre of the Judean symbolic universe. In fact, in Jubilees repeated attention is drawn to the covenant and God’s promise of the land to Abraham, where he will be established as a great and numerous people (Jub. 12:22-24; 13:3, 19-21; 14:18; 15:9-10; 22:27; 24:10; 25:17; 27:11, 22). God even says to Jacob, “I shall give to your seed all of the land under heaven and they will rule in all nations as they have desired” and eventually will inherit the earth forever (Jub. 32: 19). Israel will also be purified from all sin and defilement (Jub. 50:5; cf. 1 En. 5:7 [and 10:18-19] where it is stated that the elect will inherit the earth).

Afterwards John Hyrcanus (134-104 BCE) invaded the Transjordan and conquered Medeba located on the Via Regis. Hyrcanus then destroyed the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim in 128 BCE, an event that caused strong resentment between Samaritans and Judeans. The idea was for one people to worship the one God in one Temple. The Samaritans were not impressed. John Hyrcanus attacked again in 108/7 BCE and devastated the city of Samaria and probably Shechem as well (Ant. 13.249, 254-56; War 1.61-63). The Samaritans had to wait until 64 BCE to be liberated from the Judeans when Pompey arrived on the scene. After John Hyrcanus’ initial campaign in Samaria he turned south and defeated the Idumeans and forced them to undergo circumcision and follow the Judean law (Ant. 13.255-8; War 1.63). From then on, Schürer (1979:3, 7) argues, the Idumeans were Judeans (“Jews”), and appeared as such even during the war in 67/68 CE (cf. War 4.270-84), but as Horsley (1995:59) points out, their conversion could hardly have been substantial. Along with Samaria, Hyrcanus conquered Scythopolis and the Great Plain (Ant 13.275-81; War 1.64-66); so his control reached to the frontier of Galilee. The secular nature of these wars of Hyrcanus are demonstrated by the fact that he used foreign mercenaries, and not a Judean army (Ant. 13.249). For many Judeans, however, the expansion of Judean territory would also have had religious and cultural significance. The Judean symbolic universe was taking shape on a territorial level.

Hyrcanus was succeeded by Aristobulus I (104-103 BCE). This supporter of Hellenism nevertheless forced the Itureans to be circumcised and to convert to Judeanism (Ant. 13.311, 318-19; Wars 1.78ff.). According to archaeological

4 Cf. 1 Mac. 2:56; 15:33; 2 Ezra 8:83, 85; Tob. 4:12; Sir. 44:21; 1 Bar. 2:34-35; Ps-Philo 12:4; 14:2; 15:4; 19:10; 20:5; 21:9; 23:1, 5; PsSol. 9:1; Sir. 46:1, 9.

evidence, the Itureans were not present in Upper Galilee (Reed 2000:38-39, 54) and overall it is not clear how the incorporation of Galilee by the Hasmoneans was related to the campaigns against the Itureans. The archaeological evidence we have, however, indicates that Galilee experienced an increase in population and settlements from the first century BCE onwards (Reed 2000:40-41).

Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE) continued the expansionist policy and undertook a campaign east of the Jordan and captured Gezer and other places. Here Hebrew and Greek boundary markers were erected around the city to identify the surrounding territory as Judean (Reed 2000:42). Alexander Jannaeus also captured Gaza and a temple of Apollo is mentioned when his destruction of the city is discussed (Ant. 13.364); this was followed by various Greek cities in the Transjordan, most of which were part of the Decapolis (War 1.103-5; Ant. 13.393-98). By the end of his rule, the entire region from Lake Merom to the Dead Sea and the whole coastal plain except for Ashkelon were under Judean rule. The inhabitants of the Greek cities went over to Judeanism except for the people of Pella. Alexander demanded that the local Gentiles accept Judean customs, but after they refused he destroyed the city (Ant. 13.395-7). After this campaign Alexander returned to Jerusalem where he was given a hero's welcome by many people because of his successes. The extent of the Hasmonean kingdom was now virtually the same as that of Solomon centuries earlier (Horsley 1995:38; cf. Jagersma 1986:84; Schmidt 2001:27). Certainly the Hasmonean expansion would have been informed by popular expectations.

One can see that although the Hasmonean rulers followed a "lateral" land ideology, their overall approach was "vertical", that is, they focused on the deepening of ethnic culture in the (re)conquered territories.

Millenarian hopes are also encountered at the end of the second letter that is attached to 2 Maccabees (2 Mac. 2:18). The exiles will be gathered in because God has purified Jerusalem/the Temple. The gathering of exiles is a strong motif for events during the final redemption (e.g. Is. 66:19-20; Sir. 36:11; Tob. 14:5). Based on the successes of the recent past, the author had reason to believe that salvation for the Judeans lay in the immediate future, although 4Q471a attacks its rivals — the Judean leadership — who think that salvation is under way (Baumgarten 1997:172). The idea of redemption might have been sponsored by the Hasmonean house itself. Based on a tradition in the Talmud (b.Kid 66a) and Josephus (Ant. 13.288-298), King Hyrcanus won a battle in the desert in Kohalit, where after a celebration was held. Sages were invited and they enjoyed mallows (a desert food, cf. Job 30:4) served on golden tablets. The exiles from Babylon who rebuilt the Temple also ate mallows. This time of salvation was surpassed, however, since Hyrcanus and the sages were eating mallows in a period of triumph — this salvation would be even greater (Baumgarten 1997:173).

In the Qumran community (4QMMT), it was believed that the end of days has arrived since some of the *blessings and curses* , spoken of in Deuteronomy 4:40 and 30:1 (C20-22), were believed to have come about (Baumgarten 1997: 174-175). However, this intense eschatological fervour subsided with time (cf. 1QpHab 7.5-14), since it was later believed that the end time has been delayed. Nevertheless, those who remained faithful to the community would be vindicated (Baumgarten 1997:178-179). Millenarian hopes may at times lead to anarchy, but at times also a tendency to live according to strict moral/religious principles. This is most evident at Qumran (4QMMT), where an expectation of imminent salvation required a scrupulous observance of the Law (C32-34). As a result, millenarian hopes also contributed towards the formation of Judean religious sects. Members also endeavoured to ensure others adopt their understanding of the Law, and “messianism and sectarianism marched inexorably hand in hand in the Second Temple period” (Baumgarten 1997:185). So the Judean sects who flourished during the Second Temple period “acquired their agendas, formed around these platforms and their leaders, and set out to change themselves and/or the world as a result of their millenarian convictions” (Baumgarten 1997:188).

3. MILLENARIAN HOPES UNDER ROMAN RULE

The character of Palestine changed dramatically under Roman rule. After a prolonged strife between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II the Romans finally decided to stake their claim on Palestine. Besides, it was made easier for them since some Judeans, tired of the civil war, asked the Romans to intervene. Both Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II also attempted to secure support from Pompey, but in the end he decided to take control of Jerusalem himself. Hyrcanus opened the city gates to the Romans whereas many — the supporters of Aristobulus — were massacred after a long siege of the Temple mount (War 1.124-51). Pompey even entered the Holy of Holies, a serious desecration as even the Judean High priest only entered it once a year (War 1.152). As Tacitus (Hist. 5.9) explained, Pompey found nothing in the Holy of Holies, testifying to the imageless worship of the Judeans. When Pompey took over Palestine for the Romans in 63 BCE (although it would take another twenty years to have full control of the area), he also delivered the Hellenistic cities from Judean domination. They were incorporated into the province of Syria. Josephus lists these cities as Hippos, Scythopolis, Pella, Samaria, Jamnia, Marisa, Azotus, Arethus, Gaza, Joppa, Dora, and Strato’s Tower (Ant. 13.74-76; War 1.155-57). The proconsul Gabinius set out to rebuild Hellenistic cities around 57-55 BCE, some of which were entirely destroyed by the Hasmoneans. These included Raphia, Gaza, Anthedon, Azotus, Jamnia, Apollonia, Dora,

Samaria and Scythopolis (Schürer *et al.* 1979:92). All that eventually remained of the Hasmonean kingdom were Judea, Galilee, Idumea and Perea.

So Israel was back to where it was before the Maccabean revolt in the sense that foreign rule was again a reality. The expansionist ideology of the Hasmoneans came to a halt as well. It was time again where the emphasis shifted to the “vertical” land ideology, or the deepening of ethnic culture. Separation between Judean and Gentile could no longer be territorial or political, and was transformed to become a ritual affair (Schmidt 2001:239). At the same time, Judean culture was often regarded with contempt as demonstrated by Pompey, and by the insensitivities of the Roman governors that followed. Yet there was hope for God’s deliverance. For example, the Psalms of Solomon were written after the Romans made their unwelcome claim on Judean territory, one of which exclaimed on behalf of Israel:

See, Lord, and raise up for them their king ... Undergird him with the strength to destroy unrighteous rulers, to purge Jerusalem from gentiles who trample her to destruction ... He will gather a holy people ... He will distribute them upon the land according to their tribes; the alien and the foreigner will no longer live near them ... And he will have gentile nations serving him under his yoke ... And he will purge Jerusalem ... (for) nations to come from the ends of the earth to see his glory, to bring as gifts her children who had been driven out (PsSol. 16:21-31).

Israel will be cleared of all Gentiles, especially Gentile rulers, the tribes will be restored and the nations who took the Judeans into exile will restore them to their homeland (cf. Is. 2:2-4). The messiah will rule and the Gentile nations will serve him. This was the hope. But in 40 BCE the Romans made Herod the Great of Idumean stock the client king over the Judeans. His whole policy was strongly orientated towards Rome and the emperor. Even here there were messianic hopes present, this time among Pharisaic circles. Josephus relates that the Pharisees gave outrageous guarantees to members of Herod’s court, in that the messianic king would grant them special favours (Ant. 17.41-44).

The concern for the land and ethnic culture can also be seen in the non-violent resistance of Judeans to Roman interference. Judeans objected to Pilate bringing Roman standards into Jerusalem and his plunder of the Temple treasury. Caligula attempted to have a statue of himself erected in the Temple. Only his assassination prevented Judea and surrounds to be plunged into war. Yet the first century saw other forms of unrest and protests as well. Banditry, royal pretenders, sign prophets and insurrectionary groups were characteristic traits of Judeanism leading up to and during the Great Revolt (66-70 CE). Before we have a look at these groups, however, we first need to understand the plight of the Judean peasant farmer.

3.1 The peasant farmer

In our period, Palestine was an agrarian society that mostly consisted of peasant farmers.⁵ The economy as a whole rested primarily on agriculture (Stegemann & Stegemann 1999:104). The peasant farmers themselves, however, worked their land for subsistence, not for profit, and they normally worked their land as a family unit. Thus three things were important for the peasant farmer: God, the family, and the land. In the Tanak there are various attitudes to the land (Habel 1995), but peasant farmers as part of the “Little Tradition” (the low or folk culture) would have existed by the belief that the land belonged to God (Lev. 25:23) and “was given in trust to Israel as inalienable family farm plots. Land is not capital to be exploited but the God-given means to subsist” (Fiensy 1991:3). So the land is Israel’s inheritance and the promised gift of Yahweh. Yahweh is the landlord and the Israelites his tenants. Possession of the land brought about responsibilities as well. Apart from the tithes, the poor (Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-21) and the passers by (Deut. 23:25-26) also had to benefit from the land. In honour of the Sabbath the land had to lie fallow every seventh year, debts had to be forgiven and all Israelite slaves had to be released (Lev. 25:2-7; Ex. 21:2-6; 23:10-11; Deut. 15:1-18). The law of Jubilee (Lev. 25:10-17, 28, 30, 40) required that all land be returned to its original owners every fifty years. Of course, the Jubilee legislation would have ensured that the farm plot remained in the hand of its original owners and that the land was evenly distributed. It is not clear to what extent the Sabbath and Jubilee laws were enacted in our period. We do find evidence, however, of the exploitation of the peasantry by the urban elite through loans and debts. The peasant’s claim on his land was also strained by the requirement of paying Roman tribute.

Tribute, tithes, taxes, rents, interest in debts — all involved certain claims on the produce of the land ... These claims were the major factor determining the lives of villagers in ancient Galilee or Judea (Horsley 1995:207).

Horsley (1987:232-56) has argued that the tithes and taxes imposed a serious economic burden on the people. The tithes and taxes when combined with the Roman tribute added up to over 40 per cent of production. This double taxation led to an increased cycle of indebtedness, tenant farming, loss of land, which led to increased poverty, unemployment, and finally, banditry.

5 In the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs the following instruction is given: “Bend your back in farming, perform the tasks of the soil in every kind of agriculture, offering gifts gratefully to the Lord” (Tlss. 5:3).

Sanders (1992:157-69) seriously questions such an understanding. He argues that the system in place under the Romans was nothing new, as the Judeans had supported the Temple staff and paid foreign tribute (or Has-monean taxes) for centuries. According to Sanders, the numbers of the unemployed are exaggerated by scholars, and Josephus' use of "brigand" and "bandit" is apologetic, demonstrating that only these Judeans were rebellious. In addition, the use of these two terms does not prove that the rebels were landless and unemployed. The situation for the farmers were no doubt difficult, but they evidently had enough to attend the festivals and were able to survive the sabbatical years. Sanders estimates that the average total tribute would have been less than 28 percent (cf. Fiensy 1991:103, who estimates the total tribute at 25 percent). For Sanders (1992:168-69)

The social and economic situation was not very remarkable ... What was *peculiar* to the situation was not taxation and a hard-pressed peasantry, but the [Judean] combination of theology and patriotism (emphasis original).

Sanders, however, is here guilty of oversimplification. Although we do not know exactly what the ratio between freeholders and tenant farmers was, and what the burden of taxation involved, there is enough evidence that at least *some* peasant farmers were indebted, or even had lost their land. For example, at the beginning of the Great Revolt, the debt records in Jerusalem were burned (War 2.427). The Gospels also take for granted the reality of debt and the existence of tenant farmers (e.g., Mk. 12:1-12; Mt. 18:23-35; cf. Fiensy 1991; Stegemann & Stegemann 1999:100, 110-25, 134; Horsley 1995:216). For the average Judean peasant farmer, indebtedness, poverty and loss of land were just as important as the desecration of Jerusalem or the Temple (if not more so?) and thus had everything to do with theology and patriotism as well.

As already suggested, we do not know how many peasants had lost their land, but to a degree more and more land became concentrated in the hands of a rich few. Large estates were owned by the Herodians, their officials and the Judean aristocracy, including some priestly families. Josephus himself owned land near Jerusalem (Life 422). The lands of Judean aristocracy were sometimes enlarged by stealing the plots of small freeholders (Fiensy 1991:21-60; Stegemann & Stegemann 1999:110-11). Sometimes the land was gained by the aristocracy in Jerusalem and Galilee by foreclosure on a farm when a debt could not be repaid, or alternatively, threats and violence could be used to force the small farmer to sell or abandon his land (Fiensy 1991:78-79). At least some Judean peasant farmers were affected (cf. Horsley 1987; Fiensy 1991:4-15; Oakman 1986; Stegemann & Stegemann 1999:110-25). A problem was also the shortage of agriculturally usable land per capita of the population. This means that more and more people worked

for subsistence from less and less land (Stegemann & Stegemann 1999:112). Not helping were the severe famines and drought in Palestine, in 29 BCE and one during the reign of Claudius (41-54 CE). The farmer also had to contend with locusts, other pests, destructive winds, earthquakes, the plunder of troops and bandits, all of which had economic impact (Fiensy 1991:98).

Josephus also informs us that during the 50s and the 60s, the ruling priests engaged in theft, violence and bribery, amongst others, taking the tithes from the threshing floors intended for the ordinary priests (Ant. 20.180-81, 206-7). The high priestly families had a notorious reputation (b.Pes. 57a). Certainly from the perspective of the indebted or landless peasant Judean farmer, his right to the land was undermined by corrupt high priests and their elite associates who co-operated with Roman rule.

3.2 Banditry, rebellion and royal pretenders

When we look at the above, the socio-economic situation was such that at least some Judeans peasants got involved in banditry and/or insurrectionary activities, whether these be motivated by the Jubilee legislation or not. There were uprisings after Herod's death in 4 BCE. Pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost rebelled (Ant. 17.254-55; War 2.42-44). Similarly a Judas, son of Hezekiah the bandit, led a revolt in Galilee. He led a mob to Sepphoris where they attacked the royal arsenal and armed themselves. Order was restored in Palestine after the intervention of Varus, the Roman legate in Syria (War 2.39-79; Ant. 17.271-98; 17.369f.) who in the process burned many villages and crucified thousands of rebels. East of the Jordan a Simon, a former slave of Herod the Great, revolted in Perea. He plundered the royal palace in Jericho and the country villas of the rich, also burning them down. There was also Athronges the shepherd, who attacked Roman troops. What these three figures have in common is that all three were social bandits, and all three had royal pretensions. Simon and Athronges were even addressed by some as "king" (Stegemann & Stegemann 1999:177-78).

Archelaus, the son of Herod, was appointed as "ethnarch" over Judea, Samaria and Idumea after his father's death. He was not that effective as his father and was eventually deposed and exiled. Augustus sent Coponius, the first Roman prefect, to govern Judea directly. In 6 CE, Quirinius, the legate of Syria, initiated a census of the Palestinian population that meant only one thing — a better stronghold on the exaction of taxes. The census was to help assess the population for land and head tax (*tributum soli* and *tributum capitis*). All male members of a household fourteen and older and all female members twelve years old and above had to pay tribute, which probably involved the payment of one denarius per head annually (Stegemann & Stege-

mann 1999:117). In response, Judas of Galilee and Zaddok the Pharisee spear-headed a rebellion (War 2.117f.; Ant. 18.1-10), as they and their followers resisted this further encroachment of Roman rule. The slogan was “no Master but God”, which was also adopted by the later Sicarii. But who enjoys paying taxes, even more so to a foreign oppressor?

Banditry itself continued to be a problem, and at times ordinary Judeans were punished as their accomplices or sympathisers (cf. Stegemann & Stegemann 1999:175-77). The bandits, however, not only stole from the rich, but also from the poor (War 2.253; 2.581-2; 4.135; Ant. 14.159; 17.285; 20.185).

3.3 The Sicarii

In the 40s/50s, a new type of rebel appeared, the Sicarii (“dagger men”), who in particular mixed with the crowds in Jerusalem and stabbed to death those who collaborated with Roman rule. According to Josephus, they were descendants of the “fourth philosophy”, founded by Judas the Galilean and Zaddok the Pharisee (Ant. 18.3-10; War 2.117f.). There was a family connection in that Menachem and Eleazar ben Jair, the leaders of the Sicarii, were related to Judas. Menachem commanded his forces, recruited from rural social bandits (War 2.434), in Jerusalem at the beginning of the revolt (see below).

3.4 The Sign Prophets

The first century also saw the appearance of various would-be prophets that led protest movements in opposition to the oppression of Israel. Under the procurator Cuspius Fadius (44-46 CE), a certain Theudas led a crowd to the Jordan (400 according to Acts 5:36), claiming that the water will part through his command. Roman troops were sent out killing many while capturing others — the head of the would-be prophet himself was brought to Jerusalem (Ant. 20.97-9). Other “exodus-type” prophets also appeared during the procuratorship of Felix (52-59 CE). Prophets led many into the desert, promising that God would give them signs of deliverance. Again many died at the hands of Roman troops (War 2.258-260; Ant. 20.167-68). In the same period, another prophet pretender, the so-called “the Egyptian”, led many (Josephus, 30 000; Acts, 4 000) in an attack on Jerusalem. He marched them up from the wilderness to the Mount of Olives, hoping to force his way into Jerusalem. He also claimed that the walls of Jerusalem would come down at his command. The Roman troops were again pressed into service, killing and capturing many, but the Egyptian escaped (War 2.261-3; Ant. 20.169-172; Acts 21:38). Other prophets also appeared during the Great Revolt, but these will be discussed below. Not to be forgotten is John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth that

appeared around the 30s CE. They were prophets of a different kind, however, as they had no overt religio-political agenda as the prophets discussed here.

3.5 The Great Revolt

According to Sanders (1992:40), the “events that actually led to the revolt were not connected with prophets and crowds of followers, were unforeseen, and took everyone by surprise”. Yet the revolt was the result of a culmination of events. In Caesarea, Greeks built next to a synagogue, the result of which was that the synagogue was partly blocked off. Tensions between Judeans and Greeks increased and exploded in 66 when Judeans arrived at the synagogue on the Sabbath only to discover that a prankster was sacrificing birds outside the synagogue entrance. Street fighting broke out in the city. At the same time in Jerusalem the procurator, Florus, took seventeen talents from the Temple treasury. This led to protest and Florus was insulted in public. Florus responded by killing many, followed by scourging and crucifixions and so the first revolt got underway (War 2.284-308). These events were a catalyst, however, that brought into relief other social tensions that existed within Palestine. The rural peasantry, no doubt some of which were landless or indebted, combined with bandit leaders and they along with other insurrectionary groups, made their way to Jerusalem to vent their anger at the Judean aristocracy. The revolt was a culmination of both religio-political and socio-revolutionary forces comprising both the urban population and the rural peasantry. While some directed their wrath against the Romans for disrespecting the Temple, other Judeans, while wanting to fight the Romans, also had an axe to grind with the Judean aristocracy in Jerusalem. The revolt became in part a class war (Fiensy 1991:14).⁶

Present were the Sicarii. Their leader, Menachem, apparently entered Jerusalem like a king (War 2.434), and so like Judas, Simon and Athronges had royal pretensions. In 66 CE the Sicarii burned the public archives where the debt records were kept (War 2.427) — no doubt some Judean peasant farmers would have been delighted. Galileans at the outbreak of the war also tried to burn down Sepphoris, where their debt records would have been kept at the time (Life 38, 375). The Sicarii murdered the high priest Ananias (War

6 Cf. Horsley (1995:73):

It is increasingly clear that the hostilities that erupted in the summer of 66 C.E. were primarily between groups of ordinary Judeans and their high-priestly and Herodian rulers and creditors, with the Roman troops called in to suppress the insurrections.

But why then, did the “ordinary Judeans” stay on in Jerusalem to fight the Romans?

2.423ff.), burned the palace of Agrippa II and that of the High Priest, and chased after other wealthy Judeans in the city sewers of Jerusalem (War 2.426-28). Menachem was eventually killed and his followers were expelled from Jerusalem by other Judeans. Under the leadership of Eleazar, a relative of Menachem, they escaped to Masada (War 2.433-48) which they defended up to the point of committing suicide (War 7.323; cf. Netzer 1991). According to Cohen (1987:166), the Sicarii were motivated by religious goals, to hasten or bring about the messianic age, to fight for God, the Torah and the holy land and to rid Israel of foreigners. Yes, but these were not “religious” goals only, as they, along with other Judeans, participated in what can be described as *ethnicism*,

a collective movement, whose activities and efforts are aimed at resisting perceived threats from outside and corrosion within, at renewing a community's forms and traditions, and at reintegrating a community's members and strata which have become dangerously divided by conflicting pressures ... [E]thnicism has manifested three broad aims in antiquity ... territorial restoration, genealogical restoration and cultural renewal (Smith 1986:50-51).

Smith (1986:55-56) explains that ethnicism is fundamentally defensive, provoked by military threat, socio-economic challenges, and cultural contact. All these things in various ways accurately describe the situation of the major revolts, from the Maccabean period down to the time of Bar Kokhba — although many Judean revolutionaries during 66-70 CE ended up fighting one another as much as they did their enemies.

During the revolt, the Zealots emerged, who like the Sicarii set their sights on attacking and killing the Judean aristocracy and the chief priests. In 67-68 they selected a high priest by lot, a country priest named Phineas who was of a high priestly tribe (War 4.147ff.). The Zealots ended up fighting other Judean revolutionary groups, but also chose to defend Jerusalem to their deaths (War 2.651; 4.160-6.148; 7.268). According to Cohen (1987:165), the Zealots consisted mostly of peasants who fled to Jerusalem as Romans came through the country from Galilee. Horsley (1995:66) identifies them as a coalition of villagers from northwest Judea.⁷ Josephus (War 5.443) speaks of them in derogatory language (they are “slaves”, “rabble”, “bastards”), perhaps suggesting (at least from Josephus' point of view) that they were of the lower rural classes (Fiensy 1991:169). Stegemann & Stegemann (1999:180-81) suggest, however, that they were a group of radical priests. The appointment of Phineas

⁷ Horsley (1995:213) suggests that the Herodians, Saul and Costobar, were attacked by the Zealots because they owned land in northwest Judea. They did manage to flee from Jerusalem (War 2.418; Ant. 20.214).

does illustrate that the Zealots were interested in Temple purity and this “also places the Zealots in the tradition of the anti-Hellenist battle over the purity of the temple at the time of the Maccabees” (Stegemann & Stegemann 1999:182).

Bandit leaders also made their way to Jerusalem. John ben Levi from Galilean Gischala (Gush Halav) was a Levite, although according to Josephus, he did not keep the food and purity laws (War 7.264). Probably he became a bandit as a result of the socio-economic decline and he recruited his followers from the peasantry of upper Galilee and refugees from the region of Tyre (War 2.587-89; Life 372). John made his way to Jerusalem after the Romans took control of Galilee by the end of 67. On arrival he initially got the support of the Zealots and took over the leadership of the rebellion. There was also a Simon bar Giora, however, the son of a proselyte. He came from Gerasa in the Decapolis and in the Judean border region attacked the houses of the wealthy large landowners and had an intense dislike of the rich (War 2.652; 5.309). He came to Jerusalem in 69 when he and his followers were driven out of Idumea. He attempted (successfully) to gain control of the rebellion and like others, was a royal pretender (War 4.510, 575). He held on to his royal claim until the end but was eventually executed in Rome.

Lastly, prophets also had their part to play during the Great Revolt. Towards the end, there were still those who had hoped that God would intervene on their behalf, as did the others who were led by the self-styled prophets into the wilderness to enact the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan (Sanders 1992:286). Roman troops set fire to the last of the Temple porticoes, burning many ordinary people alive, as they followed a prophet who claimed that God commanded them to go to the Temple, also to receive signs of deliverance. Others, according to Josephus, also encouraged the people to wait for God's help (War 6.283-7).

Fighting also raged in the rest of the country, particularly in cities of mixed Judean and Gentile population (Jagersma 1986:140), but the Roman military machine led by Vespasian, and eventually his son Titus, slowly but surely regained control of Palestine — the last city to fall was Jerusalem. But as we can see from the above, the revolt that eventually focused on the holy city was from a Judean perspective incoherent and undermined by factionalism. Participants mostly came from the lower social strata of Judean society (cf. Stegemann & Stegemann 1999:184-86).

3.6 Israel without a Temple and its land

We have little information about the events between the first and second revolts (Soggin 1993:359). We will focus on some texts and also look at the archaeological evidence, however. The Romans obviously knew what great importance the city of Jerusalem had for Judeans. On the so-called “Shekel of Israel”, minted by the revolutionary authorities during the revolt, was engraved “Jerusalem the Holy” (Brenner 2003:50). Even in far away Gamla, located in the Golan Heights, coins were minted during the revolt with inscriptions that read: “For the redemption of Jerusalem the H(oly)” (Syon 1992). Needless to say, the consequences of the war were devastating (cf. 4 Ezra 10:21-23). So it is ironic that archaeological evidence illustrates that Jerusalem, along with the Temple, was practically destroyed. The Romans evidently wanted any future nationalist aspirations of a restored Jerusalem focused on the Temple suppressed. Many Judeans were crucified outside Jerusalem. In addition, Titus held gladiatorial contests and animal-baiting in the amphitheatre of Caesarea to celebrate his victory wherein hundreds of Judean prisoners were killed (Bull 1990:110). Josephus claims that about 97 000 Judeans were taken as prisoners during the war (War 6.420). Those over the age of seventeen were sent to work in Egypt, while those under seventeen were sold as slaves (War 6.418).

Judea became a Roman imperial province, and a detachment of the Tenth Roman Legion (Legio X Fretensis) was stationed in Jerusalem. Judeans were generally forbidden to enter the city (Geva 1997). Much land was given to Romans or favourites of the emperor. For example, Emmaus became a fortress with 800 war veterans (Jagersma 1986:147). The land, however, still belonged to Yahweh (4 Ezra 9:7-8). Hopes for the rebuilding of the Temple and Jerusalem prevailed, even though the symbolic universe of Judeanism was in tatters. For 2 Baruch, the destruction of the Temple meant that the

order of human, social and cosmic relations appear to be definitively disturbed by this sacrilegious defilement ... the function of the Temple is to maintain the order of creation, as the Divinity set it up in the first week of the world (Schmidt 2001:88).

Judeans were again without the land, their mother city, and their Temple; no more sacrifices and offerings; no more pilgrimages. The symbolic centre and heartbeat of Judeanism was no more. The sense of perplexity and frustration that must have existed is captured by various texts in 4 Ezra. 4 Ezra laments to God:

[You] have destroyed your people, and have preserved your enemies ... Are the deeds of Babylon [i.e. Rome] better than those of Zion?

Or has another nation known you besides Israel? Or what tribes have so believed your covenants as these tribes of Jacob?

Ezra is perplexed, for the nations “are unmindful of your commandments” (4 Ezra 3:30-33). Later Ezra asks

why Israel has been given over to the gentiles as a reproach; why the people whom you loved has been given to godless tribes, and the Law of our fathers has been made of no effect and the written covenants no longer exist (4 Ezra 4:23-24).

God has chosen Israel as his special people; from all the peoples of the world he loved them and gave them his Law (4 Ezra 5:23-27). Why be destroyed by the Gentiles? “If you really hate your people,” Ezra tells God, “they should be punished at your own hands” (4 Ezra 5:30). The other nations are nothing before God, but

We, your people, who you have called your first-born, only begotten, zealous for you, and most dear, have been given into their hands. If the world has indeed been created for us [something confirmed in 7:11], why do we not possess our world as an inheritance? (4 Ezra 6:56-59).

It was also asked: “How can we sing to you, being in a foreign land?” (4 Bar. 7:35; cf. Ps. 137:3-4). Besides the above, the typical tenacity of the Judean spirit prevailed as it was informed by its rich ethno-symbolism. Zion remains “the mother of us all” (4 Ezra 10:7). The Messiah will come (4 Ezra 7:28-29; 12:32; 13:32-52; 14:9); so there is hope:

Take courage, O Israel; and do not be sorrowful, O house of Jacob; for the Most High has you in remembrance, and the Mighty One has not forgotten you in the struggle (4 Ezra 12:46-47).

Similarly the Testament of Moses 3:9 (cf. 4:4:5-6) makes the following plea:

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, remember your covenant which you made with them, and the oath which you swore to them by yourself, that their seed would never fail from the land which you have given them.

1 Baruch 2:35, on the other hand, has God promising:

And I will make an everlasting covenant with them to be their God, and they shall be my people: and I will no more drive my people of Israel out of the land that I have given them.

This land theology, similar to Ezra and Nehemiah, is also encountered in 4 Ezra 14:28-32 (cf. 4 Bar. 4:7), where it was Israel’s sinfulness that was

the reason for Israel's fate. Even in the Diaspora there was still hope for a restored and glorious Jerusalem in that

the divine and heavenly race of blessed [Judeans], who live around the city of God in the middle of the earth, are raised up even to the dark clouds, having built a great wall round about, as far as Joppa ... No longer will the unclean foot of Greeks revel around your land but they will have a mind in their breasts that conforms to your laws (SibOr. 5:249-66).

God's love for Judea is mentioned in the Sibylline Oracles 5:328-32 and that Jerusalem will be restored with the aid of a heavenly saviour figure (SibOr. 5:414-27).

The second revolt against Rome (132-135 CE) proved to be inevitable⁸ and commenced under the leadership of a Simon who was known as Bar-Kokhba ("son of the star"). According to Rabbinic sources, he was even hailed as the "star of David" (cf. Num. 24:17) and "king Messiah" by Akiba (Jagersma 1986:157). The Bar-Kokhba revolt was probably inspired by Hadrian's plans to establish a Roman colony, named Aelia Capitolina, where Jerusalem once stood. This is supported by numismatic evidence. A coin was discovered in a cave in the Judean desert that illustrates the ceremony of the founding of Jerusalem as a Roman colony. The Emperor Hadrian is depicted as ploughing the boundary of the city with an ox and cow. The coin was found in the cave with other coins from Gaza, which commemorated Hadrian's visit in 133/4 CE, which suggests that Aelia Capitolina must have been founded at least by 133/4 CE, a year or so before the end of the revolt (Eshel 1997).

During this revolt, silver *didrachma*, *sela* and *tetradrachma* coins and bronze coins, variously bearing the facade of the Temple and clusters of grapes and leaves were minted, no doubt recalling the decorations and glory of Herod's temple while looking forward to its restoration. It was the institution that symbolised Judean unity and perpetuity. Coins were the best or the only means of propaganda in antiquity (Schmidt 2001:38). One inscription around the grapes read: "First Year of the redemption of Israel" (Patrich 1990:67, 72; Brenner 2003:51). Over 80 per cent of the Bar-Kokhba coins mention Jerusalem, while they also depict other ceremonial objects related to the Temple, such as amphorae, jugs, lyres, trumpets and harps (Meshorer 1978).

Alas, the revolt failed. Judeans were forbidden to enter the city on pain of death. The Romans apparently built two temples in Jerusalem. Dio Cassius

8 There was also the so-called Quietus War (115-117 CE) wherein Judeans of the Diaspora participated. It started in Cyrene and from there spread to Cyprus, Egypt and Mesopotamia.

relates that a temple for Jupiter was built on the site of the destroyed Judean temple, although this cannot be corroborated. Judean religious practices were also forbidden, according to rabbinic sources, but all we know for certain is that circumcision was prohibited, as this prohibition was stopped under Antoninus Pius (138-161 CE) (Jagersma 1986:160).

4. SUMMARY: THE HOPE FOR THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

Sanders (1992:289-90) states that the

chief hopes were for the re-establishment of the twelve tribes; for the subjugation or conversion of the Gentiles; for a new, purified temple, or renewed and glorious temple; and for purity and righteousness in both worship and morals.

Sanders (1992:291-94) presents an overview of Judean literature based on these main themes which he identified for the future of Israel. These are summarised in the table below.⁹

What is not that explicit in Sanders' approach and what has been emphasized here throughout is the Judean hope to fully reclaim the *land*, the *sine qua non* of restoration. Sanders (1992:41) also explains the Judean religio-political sentiment as follows:

With regard to foreign rule: many bitterly resented it. The Hasmonean revolt was widely supported, and so was the revolt against Rome ... The general desire for "freedom" cannot be doubted. On the other hand, foreign rule was not judged bad by everyone all the time ... It is probable that many would have been willing to remain obedient had the Romans always respected [Judean] sensibilities and institutions.

The latter part of Sander's statement, however, is difficult to accept. The Judeans

felt that the rule of aliens in the land of Israel constituted a glaring contrast between ideal and reality. The land was the property of the chosen people. Only Israelites could own territory there (Schürer *et al.* 1979:84).

9 More texts can be added to what Sanders lists (see next page): 1) For the restoration of the 12 tribes: TBenj. 9:2 (who along with all the nations will gather around the latter Temple); 2 Mac. 2:18; 4 Ezra 13:39-48; 2) The Gentiles will be destroyed: 4 Ezra 13:37-38; will receive God's vengeance: TMos. 10:7-8; 3) The temple will be made glorious: TBenj. 9:2; Jerusalem will be made new: TDan. 5:12.

	1. <i>The twelve tribes of Israel will be assembled</i>	2. <i>The Gentiles will be converted, destroyed, or subjugated</i>	3. <i>Jerusalem will be made glorious; the Temple rebuilt, made more glorious or purified</i>	4. <i>Worship will be pure and the people will be righteous</i>
a) Pre-Roman era literature	Sir. 36:11; 48:10; 1 Bar. 4:37; 5:5; 2 Mac. 1:27f.; Jub. 1:15; cf. 2:18	The Gentiles will be destroyed: Sir. 36:1-9; Jub. 24:29f.; 1 En. 90:19	Tob. 13:16-18; 14:5; 1 En. 90:28f.; 91:13; Jub. 1:17; cf. 1:27; 1:29; 25:21	Jub. 33:11, 20
b) Palestinian literature from the Roman era	PsSol. 11:2f.; 17:28-31; cf. 17:50; 8:34; 1QM 2:2f.; cf. 2:7f.; 3:13; 5:1; 11Q Temple 8:14-16; 57:5f.	They will be destroyed: PsSol. 17:24, but not all according to Ps Sol. 17:31; 1QM, although CD 14:6 allows for proselytes. They will be punished: TMos. 10:7	11Q Temple 29:8-10; PsSol. 8:12; 17:30	Cf. War 2:7; 1QSa 2:3-10; 1QM 7:5f.; 11Q Temple 45:11-17; PsSol. 17:26f.
c) Diaspora literature	Philo, Rewards 164f.	They will be destroyed: SibOr. 3:670-2. They will be converted: SibOr. 3:616f.; 3:710-20 (after some are destroyed according to 3:709); 3:772f.	SibOr. 3:657-709; SibOr. 5:420-5	SibOr. 3:756-81 (incl. the Gentiles)

This was even more acute for those Judean peasant farmers gripped by indebtedness, or tenant farmers who lost all claims on their traditional heritage. But overall, the reality of the day was in conflict with what Judeans thought was theirs by right by virtue of the covenant. Indeed, ownership of the land was one of the primary reasons for the existence of the covenant in the first place. It was therefore part and parcel of Judean ethnic identity. It should not come as a surprise that millennial hope

was to remain an active force, sometimes perhaps even a driving one in the lives of [Judeans] from the Maccabean era down to the Bar Kochba revolt ... Imminent expectations of redemption did not really begin to wane until after the failure of the Bar Kochba revolt (Baumgarten 1997:181-182).

Above we traced the historical processes that were influenced by the Judean claim and attitude to the *land*. After the Maccabean Revolt, the vision of a greater Israel influenced the “lateral” ideology of the Hasmonean expansion, yet the “vertical” element or the deepening of ethnic culture always predominated. The idea was that Gentiles in the (re)conquered territories would convert to Judeanism or leave the land altogether. The ideal Judean symbolic universe was also taking shape on a territorial level; so naturally this gave rise to millennial expectations, although not all supported the Hasmoneans and had millenarian convictions of their own. The pursuit of the millennium continued into the Roman era. The presence of the foreigner and foreign rule was yet again firmly established within the ancestral land. The emphasis shifted more to a deepening of ethnic culture and the expansionist ideology came to a halt. Roman insensitivities and the exploitation of the peasant farmer by the urban elite was characteristic of this period. So was banditry, rebellion, and the emergence of sign prophets and an intense longing for divine deliverance. All these factors contributed towards the outbreak of the Great Revolt. The results were devastating, as the focal point of the Judean symbolic universe, Jerusalem and the Temple, was destroyed, and the Judean claim on the land regarded with disdain. The covenant appeared to be in tatters; “How can we sing to you [God], being in a foreign land?” (4 Bar. 7:35). But even here millennial hopes remained and came to a head during the Bar Kokhba revolt as Hadrian planned to re-establish Jerusalem as a Roman colony.

Yahweh, the people, and the land were religious-cultural elements that to the Judean mind were inseparable. Millennial expectations were not driven by purely “religious” motivations alone, but primarily by the need for Judeans to re-establish the perfect contours of their ethnic identity. It was an identity that ideally could only become realised by living free on the ancestral land. They were God’s people that needed to live on God’s land.

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