

PREFACE

The chapters included do not cover the period in all its facets and dimensions, do not embody a complete and comprehensive solution to a complex of riddles and questions, nor even present the happenings on a continuous canvas. They deal with just seven topics, circumscribed but crucial, the fruit of studies previously published on separate occasions,¹ which have been re-examined, corrected and re-annotated. The problems treated form the links of a critical analytic chain designed to test the principles and methods of many a modern school, attack the faulty theories prevalent in the field, and contradict dubious conclusions still generally favored with only a few scholars expressing sporadic reservations or intermittent objections.

The sometimes sharp tone here adopted has no personal motivation but is designed purely to refute, dislodge and eliminate the mistaken notions that have obscured the Hasmonean period and dwarfed the image of the vigorous popular movement which led the nation faithful to its Law and covenant through a *via dolorosa* and martyrdom to courageous revolt. It was that movement that saved the Jewish people from the tyrannical coercive decrees which for the first time in its history endangered the survival of its Torah; it was that movement that preserved the stronghold of monotheism and restored to the Jewish people the independence lost when its Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians.

Rather bellicose and revolutionary though variegated at the outset, emerging from the villages and townlets, the Jewish Pietist movement developed in various directions evolving into the Pharisee fellowships and fathers of talmudic scholarship, the Zealots, the Essenes and even the architects of the Christian church.² The original movement is well reflected in primary testimonies. The visions of Daniel faithfully express the dreams and thoughts of the suffering Pietists-Hasids, and their willingness to die for their faith, praying for the collapse of heathen despotism and for national, universal, human and individual

¹ For nearly twenty five years, these studies, while developing and crystalizing, served as subjects of university lessons and lectures in various frameworks. The location of the earlier version is indicated in the first notes of each chapter below. A certain amount of unavoidable repetition is the result of the publication of these separate studies in one volume. Relevant bibliographical details are provided in the footnotes of each chapter. All names of authors, collective works, anthologies and commentaries are also listed in the Index.

² Space does not permit an in-depth survey of the development and ramifications of these streams.

salvation.³ The Hasmonean Revolt itself is reported in two Books of the Maccabees,⁴ from two points of view. *I Maccabees* is rooted in the Bible, in the same soil as its heroes, sharing the warriors' feelings, and accepting the Hasmoneans as the legitimate leadership, while *II Maccabees*, representing Jewish Hellenistic literary and historiographical art in approach and style, was originally composed in Greek, remote from the environment of zealous pietism and the Revolt.

For the post-Revolt period direct internal Jewish sources of information are unavailable, and the history of the independent Hasmonean state is related in secondary sources. Foremost among these is Josephus Flavius whose two parallel treatments constitute the chief sources. Written from the perspective of the Roman period, they are admittedly anti-revolutionary, drawing mainly from foreign sources mostly unsympathetic to Jews and Judaism, and include only fragmentary recollections and legends of a Jewish nature.

On the other hand the talmudic treasury has retained an inherent tradition, basically Pharisee in origin, so that despite its composite nature, protracted compilation in academic surroundings, distant viewpoint and geographic dispersal, its Eretz Israel foundation contains scattered blocks of recollections, reports and descriptions embodying a solid core from the days of the first Pharisees and their forefathers.

The concepts and current trends of European culture had their effect on scholarly approaches and the Hasids of Hasmonean times began to be considered sectarian, or like replicas of present day Jewish Orthodox groups. Thus also the modern notion of the separation of church and state⁵ led to the unfounded conviction that the Hasids supported the Hasmoneans only until religious coercion ceased, and thereafter opposed them strenuously. In the liberal spirit typical of the nineteenth century emancipation movement, the Pharisee successors to the Hasids were conceived as contemptuous of the political ends and military means adopted by the Hasmoneans, and content with a theocracy

³ The visions of Daniel were sealed (Chapter 4 below, Section A and n. 4) not merely before the rededication of the Temple, but even before the information reached the country and was confirmed (I Macc. III 37) regarding the departure of Antiochus Epiphanes (in 147 of the Seleucid era, that is 166/165 B.C.E.) to the countries of the East, and not as expected (Dan. 11:40 ff.) on another expedition to Egypt. It is not surprising therefore that the terror of the persecution still lurked, the atmosphere of martyrdom still obtained, and there was a slight echo of the armed conflict that was just beginning.

⁴ The term "Hasmoneans" is rooted in Judaism (Chapter 1, n. 7) and preferable to "Maccabees" who were canonized in the Christian church.

⁵ While it is true that Judaism is characterized by a code combining law and religion, secular slogans calling for the separation of ritual from the state and for total freedom of conscience never developed even in the idol-worshipping Greek and Roman societies. See N.D. Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City* (New York 1956); G. Glotz, *La Cité Grecque* (Paris 1953); A.D. Nock, *Conversion* (Oxford 1933); V. Ehrenberg, *The Greek State* (London 1969); Plato, *Republic IV* (5) 427; idem, *Laws VI* 759; Aristotle, *Politics*, III 1285b; M.T. Cicero, *Laws II* 7, 18 ff.

under foreign rule so that they even welcomed Pompey, the enemy commander and Roman conqueror, at the gates of Jerusalem.⁶

These assumptions were accepted as almost axiomatic truths, although based on a distorted interpretation of the main early sources—Daniel, the Books of the Maccabees, Josephus and the talmudic recollections. Support was extracted for those misinterpretations from pseudepigraphic books (such as the *Psalms of Solomon*) which wrapped in a scriptural cloak a covert Christian viewpoint that was laboriously construed as Hasid-Pietist, Essene or Pharisee, although they involved a superhuman redeemer alongside God, judging the world and defeating the forces of darkness.⁷

This literature has now been supplemented by the Qumran Scrolls which disseminate the doctrines and ceremonies of the “New Covenant” (such as baptism combined with atonement for sins) and prophesy destruction for those who sinned against the savior-Messiah, who will redeem the faithful.⁸ Despite some superficial similarities, the fellowship of the Scrolls does not correspond to the Hasids or Essenes admired and pictured with enthusiasm by Philo and Josephus, who certainly had no intention of glorifying heretical sects hostile to genuine Judaism.⁹

Delusions of that sort caused the image of the Pietist and Zealot popular and real movement in the Hasmonean Revolt to fade, and be supplanted by a rootless apocalyptic one paving the way to Christianity. Sadducee tendencies

⁶ Julius Wellhausen (Chapter 1, n. 28) polished and formulated the extremist theory. Despite its contradictions and weaknesses, it has supporters to the present day among scholars such as A. Schalit, *König Herodes* (Berlin 1969), p. 541, or V. Burr, “Rom und Judäa,” *ANRW* I.1 (1972), p. 878. See Chapter 6, n. 51.

⁷ The Book of Daniel is entirely lacking in the typical principal qualities of the well known apocalyptic pictures: There is no cosmic catastrophe, no Christ-like messiah versus an Antichrist, no heavenly host against Satan and his cohorts in dualistic opposition, no elect community or children of light believing in an exalted savior against those despising him denounced as the children of darkness, nor is there total negation and sharp enmity to historical Judaism and its genuine sanctities. We shall disregard here Jewish messianic literature which was born in the Middle Ages and shows definite signs of external influences: Yehuda Even-Shmuel, *Midreshei Geula* (Jerusalem–Tel Aviv, 1954).

⁸ The Scrolls are dealt with here in a few notes and addenda to Chapter 2 (Nn. 71–78). The texts mentioned are in the *Manual of Discipline*, or Rule Scroll (ed. J. Licht, Jerusalem 1965). The concept of the “New Covenant” appears in the Scroll of the *Damascus Document* (VI 19, p. 80 in A.M. Habermann, *Megillot Midbar Yehuda* (Tel Aviv 1959) and according to the reconstructed text in the Scroll of the Habakkuk Commentary (II 3, *ibid*, p. 43).

⁹ The calendar of holidays and specific sectarian rules, the cancelation of the ritual that unites dispersions and generations in Jewry, and the disqualification of Jerusalem and its Temple definitely contradict the Jewish Torah. There is no controversy here between movements and streams within the community, but rather a sign of an unbridgeable chasm between the nation and a separate hostile fellowship. Now the christological lines in the style of Christianity emerges, in the light of texts found and so far published (see Chapter 2, n. 63) from the caves in the Qumran area, such as: J.M. Allegro *DJD*, Vol. V; *Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford 1968), p. 9 ff.; J.T. Milik, “Milki-Sedeq,” *JJS* 23 (1972): 95ff.; *idem*, “4 Q Visions de Amram,” *RB* 79 (1972): 77 ff.

and secular inclinations were read into *I Maccabees*, despite transparent associations with the Daniel dramas and clearly Pharisee traditions,¹⁰ while purely Hasidic viewpoints and true Eretz Israel Phariseism were attributed to the characteristically Hellenistic-Jewish *II Maccabees*. Furthermore, there has not been proper examination of Josephus' two parallel treatments in order to ascertain the reasons for the disagreements on the cardinal questions that troubled the Hasmonean kingdom, and uncover the facts behind the censure that has distorted the epoch in non-Jewish historiography.¹¹

The Pietists-Hasids, defending and fighting for the Torah during rebellion and military struggle, were neither liberal reformist rabbis nor rigid medieval-type Orthodox ones. But because of the confusion in historiographic conceptions and research, methodological criteria for basic chronological distinctions were forgotten. As a result the Jerusalem Talmud was often dismissed in favor of the posterior Babylonian Talmud, despite its mixed nature, because the latter Talmud seemed to accord with Josephus' versions.¹² That is the reason for the disregard of a very early Eretz Israel talmudic document of great value, the Scroll of Fasting-Megillat Ta'anit. For even if no other support were available, that Scroll, which notes the dates of Hasmonean victories and the steps in the expansion of Jewish hegemony, is itself conclusive evidence of Pharisee identification with national aims.¹³

The criticism applied in this book removes the layers of distorted theories, erroneous assumptions, and illogical hypotheses, but suffices only to lay the cornerstone for further research that will complete the picture.

Chapters 1 and 2 focus on the main problems arising in connection with the Hasmonean Revolt. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the stories and visions of Daniel, in which he symbolizes the people who remained faithful to their ancestral heritage, guides the nation in time of stress, its destiny exemplified by the suffering Servant of God who will become "like a son of man" when Israel is truly redeemed and overcomes the heathen citadels.

Chapter 5, on the basis of a systematic examination of sources, investigates the internal relations within the Hasmonean kingdom, relying mainly on the talmudic tradition of Eretz Israel, which, contrary to the Babylonian Talmud and Josephus, posits that Jannaeus was not a despicable character and there was

¹⁰ The work is by no means neutral from the ideological religious point of view, so that "Hasmonean tendencies" do not suffice to characterize its nature and purposes.

¹¹ Criticism and analysis of the Josephus versions appear in Chapter 5, Section D.

¹² References and examples are cited below in Chapter 5, Section A.

¹³ Even those who have attacked the predominant methods have not stressed the uniqueness and importance of this document, which was already known and trusted by the sages of Yavneh. On the other hand confusion has arisen because of a lack of clear distinction between the body of the early document (Chapter 5, Section H, and the end of Chapter 1) and the error-laden scholia commentaries that pile up till the Middle Ages.

not an unbridgeable abyss between the Pharisees and the Hasmonean dynasty. Chapter 6 deals with the period of decline of the Hasmonean kingdom, refuting the absurd claims about Pharisee treason ostensibly supported by the pseudepigraphic *Psalms of Solomon*. Chapter 7 clarifies the problems of the Great Sanhedrin and thus goes beyond the Hasmonean period, comparing that institution as reflected in the Talmud and the New Testament. The latter reflection was evolved by Christian theology and corresponds only partially to the councils described in clear historical testimonies while the talmudic literature does not present a uniform picture.

In the talmudic tradition of Eretz Israel the Great Sanhedrin is a vital element of an ideal code which was never realized in full. It was conceived as independent of the political regime whose members had popular pietist qualities ("wise, humble, sensible, discerning, modest and self-effacing, of good heart, of good instincts, of good parts"¹⁴), not dignitaries of high priestly nobility, plutocrats or aristocrats, but godly sages and educators from townlets and villages, farmers and craftsmen who combine manual work and Torah.¹⁵ They were not academic Utopians but cast in the mold of the well known leaders such as Yose ben Yoezer and Yose b. Yoḥanan, Simeon b. Shataḥ and Judah b. Tabai, Shemaiah and Avtalion, who were concerned with the education of the people, and with preserving Law and justice in the spirit of the Torah, aspired to reform their world and stubbornly confronted oligarchical tendencies, social-moral decline and looming despotism during the period of the Hasmonean kingdom.¹⁶

Originally written in Hebrew, the studies of this volume were published in 1980 by Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishers of Tel Aviv. This revised and

¹⁴ ySanhedrin I 19c. The Jerusalem (y)Talmud is here marked (chapter, page, column) according to the early printed editions (Venice, Cracow, Krotoschin), and the Babylonian (b) Talmud (page and column) like the Mishnah (m) and Tosefta (t), according to the standard printed editions; e.g. the Babylonian Talmud, ed. Romm Vilna (repr. Jerusalem 1963); the Jerusalem Talmud, ed. Krotoschin (repr. Jerusalem 1960); the Mishnah, Ch. Albeck ed. (Jerusalem 1952 etc.); the Tosefta, S. Lieberman ed. (New York 1955 etc.) and M.S. Zuckerman ed. (repr. Jerusalem 1963).

¹⁵ Existential, social and religious questions produced the rifts and quarrels, but there are no grounds for the speculative beliefs that the Hasmoneans were blamed for usurping the crown of David (Chapter 2, nn. 55, 49) or the priesthood from the descendants of Zadok. The heads of the Onias family in Egypt (the offspring of Joshua b. Jehozadak, a descendant of Zadok's) expressed loyalty and extended support (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* XIII, 354; XIV 131 ff.; XIV 99) to the Hasmoneans. Even in Herod's time and in the Roman period, when the high priestly family was replaced, no demand to reinstate the Onias family (ibid., XV 22 ff.; XX 247 ff.; *Jewish War* IV 153 ff.) as high priests in Jerusalem was voiced.

¹⁶ This early Pharisaic Hasidic ideology in the social and religious domain continued to attract adherents and inspired the Shammai school during the period of Roman rule up to the destruction of the Second Temple, as shown by Israel Ben Shalom, *The Shammai School and Its Place in the Political and Social History of Eretz Israel in the First Century* (Hebrew), Ph.D. Dissertation (Tel Aviv University 1980).

updated English translation was made possible by the considerable support provided by the heads of Tel Aviv University's Chaim Rosenberg School of Jewish Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Diaspora Research Institute: Professors Moshe Gil, Daniel Carpi, Moshe Braver and Shlomo Simonsohn. I extend my thanks to them, as well as to the translator, Miss Naomi Handelman, for her devoted and untiring efforts in accomplishing the task, to Mr Dov Barboutz for compiling the bibliography and the index, to Mr Gideon Spiegel and to Mrs Shuli Ron for their valuable assistance.

Tel Aviv University, August 1983

JOSHUA EFRON