

# ENCOUNTERING VIOLENCE IN THE BIBLE



The Bible in the Modern World, 55

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# ENCOUNTERING VIOLENCE IN THE BIBLE

Edited by  
Markus Zehnder and Hallvard Hagelia



SHEFFIELD PHOENIX PRESS

2013

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Published by Sheffield Phoenix Press  
Department of Biblical Studies, University of Sheffield  
Sheffield S3 7QB

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A CIP catalogue record for this book  
is available from the British Library

Typeset by CA Typesetting Ltd  
Printed on acid-free paper by Lightning Source

ISBN-13 978-1-909697-01-0  
ISSN 1747-9630

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# HASMONEAN STATE IDEOLOGY, WARS AND EXPANSIONISM

Torleif Elgvin

## *Abstract*

The Hasmoneans built their power and kingdom by military and violent means, which they used both against external enemies and internal opponents. Through remarkable military achievements the tiny province of Judaea expanded into an independent state that in size matched the united kingdom of David and Solomon. The new Judaeian entity was seen as fulfilment of scriptural prophecies, and the Hasmoneans were hailed as small ‘messiahs’ who brought messianic prophecies to a partial fulfilment. The Hasmoneans legitimized their reign and expansionist policy through an active use of the Scriptures. Hasmonean propaganda and ideology is most evident in 1 Maccabees, but can also be identified in one of Josephus’ sources.

Hasmonean policy and propaganda led to criticism in opposition circles, evident from the Dead Sea Scrolls and the *Psalms of Solomon*. These opposition circles used the Scriptures in their own way to delegitimize the new rulers. The double office of the Hasmoneans (as ruler/king *and* high priest), seen by pro-Hasmonean circles as a sign of eschatological fulfilment, was criticized by others.

In its last part, the article draws connecting lines from Hasmonean messianism and state-building to King Herod and later messianic movements in the Land of Israel.

## 1. *Hasmonean State-Building and Biblical Presuppositions*

The Maccabean project started as a guerrilla revolt for Torah, Temple, and Israelite purity. It developed into a state-building project with an organized army, territorial ambitions, and a military expansionist policy vis-à-vis the surrounding nations. In the process, Hasmonean rulers and their supporters enlisted the Torah, the Prophets, Davidic Psalms, and even Daniel as legitimation for their new state, a Judaea with messianic pretensions. Scriptures and divine election were used to legitimate a leadership that used a hard fist both against external and internal threats.

Expansion of territory was followed by forced conversion of the Itureans north of the Galilee and the Idumeans in the south around 100 BCE (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.257-258, cf. 13.397). This tough policy created anti-Jewish reactions among non-Jews in the ancient world. With the military conquests

of John Hyrcan (135–105) and Alexander Yannai (103–76), an Israelite state was established that matched the biblical accounts of the united kingdom—and, according to historians and archaeologists, by far superseded the size of the burgeoning state of David and Solomon. This remarkable achievement would necessarily lead to messianic fervour in some circles, and to critical reflection in others.

Some biblical texts would be attractive as hermeneutical keys to the upheavals of the second century. Early Davidic psalms and prophetic texts evidence the idea or ideal of a Davidic *Grossreich*, where the Davidic king will rule over a large territory with peoples paying homage to him; Ps. 2.8–11; Mic. 5.3–5; Ps. 89.26. In exilic and postexilic texts such an earthly Davidic kingdom is transformed to a *Weltreich*: אֶפְסַי אֶרֶץ (עַד), originally intended as ‘(to) the borders of the land’ (Ps. 2.8; Mic. 5.3),<sup>1</sup> could now be read ‘to the ends of the earth’ (Ps. 72.8–11; Zech. 9.10). כָּל הָאָרֶץ, originally read as ‘all the land’,<sup>2</sup> would in later tradition be read in terms of a messianic rule over ‘all the earth’.<sup>3</sup> ‘From the sea to the sea’ and ‘from the River to the sea’ originally read as ‘from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea / the Gulf of Aqaba’, ‘from Euphrat to the Mediterranean’ could now be interpreted as terms for a coming Davidic *Weltreich* (Amos 8.12; Ps. 72.8; Zech. 9.10; cf. Ps. 89.26).<sup>4</sup>

The exilic texts Isa. 11.6–10 and Amos 9.11–15 describe a restored Davidic kingdom with terminology that could suggest some kind of new creation, even if these passages originally were coined in symbolic language.

Against this scriptural background, a restorative eschatology that saw the Hasmoneans as fulfilling biblical promises of a Davidic *Grossreich* would be close at hand for their supporters. For voices critical to the new rulers, study of other biblical texts (such as Isa. 11; 24–27; Amos 9; Daniel 7–12) would support a more apocalyptic theology and a postponement of the messianic kingdom to the eschaton.

The high priests of the Hellenistic period paved the way for Hasmonean priests as rulers of the people. For generations the high priest was both civil and religious leader of the Judaeian province.<sup>5</sup> Therefore Ben Sira can

1. Micah 5.4–5 demonstrates that the Davidic king would guard and rule his own land. Most Christian Bible translations, however, render v. 3 ‘to the ends of the earth’.

2. In the royal Psalm 45, cf. v. 17 ‘princes in all the land’, and further on King Josiah’s actions in ‘all the land of Israel’ (2 Chron. 34.7). Unless otherwise indicated, the translations of biblical texts are my own.

3. Ps. 110.6 ‘He will strike rulers throughout the wide earth’. As God is king of ‘all the earth’ (Ps. 47.3, 8), so will his Davidic viceroy be. 4QMessianic Apocalypse asserts that ‘heaven and earth shall obey his messiah’ (4Q521.1.i.2).

4. Magne Sæbø, ‘Vom Grossreich zum Weltreich. Erwägungen zu Pss. lxxii 8, lxxxix 26; Sach. ix 10b’, *VT* 28 (1978), pp. 83–91.

5. James C. VanderKam argues convincingly that the high priests from 320 (Onias

connect civil or royal prerogatives with the priestly line ruling at his time.<sup>6</sup> And Ben Sira's eschatological poem on Zion (chap. 36) does not mention a Davidic ruler at all, only the coming renewal of Jerusalem and the temple. The same is true for the concluding Zion hymn in the contemporary book of Tobit, Tob. 13.8-18.<sup>7</sup> Ruling priests who downplay the hope of a Davidic messiah are therefore no *novum* with the Hasmoneans. The memory of the Oniads ruling the province of Judaea made it easier for governing Hasmonean priests to implement harsh measures against dissidents.

## 2. Pro-Hasmonean Voices

Perhaps written in the beginning of Yannai's rule, 1 Maccabees is a consistent apology for the Hasmoneans as elect deliverers of the Judaeans nation (1 Macc. 5.62). First Maccabees 2.24-28 makes Phinehas' zeal for the purity of Israel a paradigmatic ideal. By repeating the deeds of 'Phinehas our father' (2.54), Matthathias and his sons earn God's favor: 'In his zeal for the Torah he acted as Phinehas did'.<sup>8</sup> Through their actions the Maccabees restored the righteousness and independence of Israel. The covenant of Phinehas, which gave legitimacy to the high priesthood of (the House of) Zadok, is superseded by the new covenant with the House of the Hasmoneans.<sup>9</sup>

I) to 200 BCE (Simon II) functioned as political leaders of the Judaeans: *From Joshua to Caiaphas. High Priests after the Exile* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 2004), pp. 122-57.

6. Sirach 50.1-4 portrays the high priest Simon acting as the leader of the people. Cf. William Horbury, *Messianism among Jews and Christians. Biblical and Historical Studies* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2003), pp. 43-50. Sirach 45.24-26 makes the covenant with Aaron greater than that with David. The Hebrew version of v. 25 limits the Davidic promise to Solomon, while the covenant with Aaron is lasting: 'And there is also a covenant with David, son of Isai, from the tribe of Judah; the inheritance of a man [i.e. David] is to his son alone, the inheritance of Aaron is also to his seed' (Ms.B, translation Horbury). The panegyric praise of Simon in chap. 50 hardly allows for a Davidic ruler at the side of the priest. However, the section on David and Solomon in Ben Sira's praise of the fathers could suggest a possible future fulfillment of Davidic promises: 'The Lord...exalted his [i.e. David's] horn for ever; he gave him a royal covenant and a glorious throne in Israel... But the Lord would not go back on his mercy, or undo any of his words, he would not obliterate the issue of his elect, nor destroy the stock of the man who loved him; and he granted a remnant to Jacob, and to David a root springing from him' (47.11, 22).

7. While Tobit likely has an Eastern Diaspora background, the added Zion hymn with its address *to Zion* represents a *novum* in Hebrew psalmody, originating in Judaea or Jerusalem; see Torleif Elgvin and Michaela Hallermayer, 'Schøyen ms. 5234: Ein neues Tobit-Fragment vom Toten Meer', *RevQ* 22 (2006), pp. 451-61 (460).

8. Translation of OT Apocrypha follows *The Jerusalem Bible* (1966).

9. John J. Collins, 'The Zeal of Phinehas, the Bible, and the Legitimation of Violence', *JBL* 122 (2003), pp. 3-22 (12-13); Horbury, *Messianism*, pp. 48-50.

The Hebrew version of Sirach 50 (a text likely known by the author of 1 Maccabees) concludes with an eulogy of the Zadokite high priest Simon:<sup>10</sup> ‘May His mercy be with Simon and uphold in him the covenant of Phinehas; so that it never will be cut off from him, and may his offspring be as the days of heaven’ (50.24 Ms. B, translation mine). First Maccabees 2.24-28, 54, as well as the eulogies of the Hasmoneans Judah and Simon, and the decree on Simon’s powers in 140 BCE (see below), all demonstrate that the Hasmoneans are seen as the new hereditary high-priestly line. Josephus’ statement that already Judah took hold of the high-priestly office might well be historically plausible (*Ant.* 12.414, 419, 434; *Ant.* 20.237-8, on the other hand, seems to contradict a high priesthood for Judah).<sup>11</sup> When the Greek version of Sirach came into being around 130 BCE, the eulogy of the earlier high priest Simon was omitted. This textual change reflects the Hasmonean line’s take-over of the high priesthood. The translation was made in Ptolemaic Egypt, but also there one needed to acquiesce to the new reality in Jerusalem. The temple in Heliopolis, established by the Zadokite Onias IV around 170 BCE (see Josephus, *Ant.* 13.72; *Wars* 7.426-432) was not mentioned.

From Jonathan onwards the Hasmonean rulers occupied the double office of civil leader (from 104: king) and high priest. Psalm 110 with its priestly Son of David would be a natural reference text for the supporters of the Hasmoneans. When the eulogy of Simon praises him for ‘crushing the power of the kings’ (1 Macc. 14.13), this could echo Ps. 110.5-6, ‘He [i.e. God] will strike kings on the day of his wrath ... he [i.e. the king] will strike leaders throughout the land’. And when Judah ‘brought bitterness to many a king’ (1 Macc. 3.7), the eulogy alludes to royal psalms such as Pss. 2.1-4, 10-12; 110.1-2, 5-7. Thus, messianic hopes, priestly and Davidic, would be connected to the Hasmoneans and their restoration of the Judaeian state.<sup>12</sup>

The Hasmoneans saw themselves as an integral part of biblical history, walking in the footsteps of Joshua, David, and Solomon. This is evidenced in two eulogies honouring Judah and Simon after their deaths, 1 Macc. 3.3-9; 14.4-15, which contain a number of echoes of biblical texts on the

10. Either Simon II ca. 200 BCE, or more probably Simon I, early 3rd century (thus VanderKam, *From Joshua*, pp. 137-54). This high priest was responsible for fortifying the city and improving its water sources, tasks of a civil leader (Sir. 50.3-4).

11. M.O. Wise reconstructs ‘Judah’ before ‘[Jon]athan, Simon’ in the list of high priests of 4QpsDan<sup>c</sup>, written around 100 BCE, and argues that Judah *de facto* acted as high priest when he dedicated the temple and reorganized priestly service; see Michael O. Wise, ‘4Q245 (psDan<sup>c</sup> ar) and the High Priesthood of Judas Maccabaeus’, *DSD* 12 (2005), pp. 313-62.

12. Cf. Jonathan A. Goldstein, ‘How the Authors of 1 and 2 Maccabees Treated the “Messianic” Promises’, in *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (ed. J. Neusner *et al.*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 97-109.

future Davidic kingdom. Here these priestly rulers were hailed as small messiahs, bringing to some kind of fulfillment Davidic prophecies from the Bible.<sup>13</sup> Key words recur from Gen. 49.9; 1 Sam. 17.5, 38 (cf. the description of Judah's armour, 1 Macc. 3.3, with that of Goliath, Saul, and David); 1 Kgs 5.3-5; 8.13; Isa. 11.4; Mic. 4.4; 5.3-5; Zech. 9.10; Pss. 2.10; 45.18; 72.4, 17-19; 110.5-6. On Judah we hear, 'he was like a lion', 'his memory is blessed for ever and ever', 'his name resounded to the ends of the earth'. Judah the Maccabee is thus the 'Lion of Judah' (Gen. 49.9-10) of his time. And about Simon it is said, 'he gained access to the islands of the sea', 'they farmed their land in peace', 'each man sat under his own vine and fig tree', 'his fame resounded to the ends of the earth', 'he established peace in the land', 'no enemy was left in the land to fight them, the kings in those days were crushed', 'he gave strength to all the humble', and 'gave new splendour to the temple'.

Such a realized eschatology does not exclude a more comprehensive future fulfillment of the prophecies, cf. the conditional clause about Simon (and implicitly his descendants) as high priest and civil leader perpetually 'until a true prophet arises', 1 Macc. 14.41. The Hasmoneans and their reign were probably seen as a nucleus of an awaited messianic kingdom, comparable to the self-understanding of orthodox Jewish settlers in the West Bank today (see below). First Maccabees was written around 100 BCE, but these two laudatory poems probably existed before their present prosaic literary context. The poem on Judah could have been phrased as early as the time of Jonathan (160–142). These poems teach us that Hasmonean reign was connected to Davidic texts also before Aristobul I and Jannaeus took the title of king from 104 BCE.

First Maccabees repeatedly uses the term 'Judah and his brothers' (1 Macc. 3.25, 42; 4.36, 59; 5.10, 61, 63, 65; 7.6, 10, 27; cf. 1 Macc. 8.20; 2 Macc. 2.19 'Judah the Maccabee and his brothers'). This phrase consciously recalls the same term in Genesis (Gen. 37.26; 38.1; 44.14, cf. 1 Chron. 5.2) and alludes to the patriarch Judah (David's ancestor) as leader of 'Israel'. This is another indication that the Hasmoneans incorporate Davidic prerogatives.

13. These two poems are not discussed by Gerbern S. Oegema, who states that '[f]rom the Maccabeans no messianic expectations have been handed down to us'; see G.S. Oegema, *The Anointed and his People. Messianic Expectations from the Maccabees to Bar Kochba* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), p. 73. Cf. Jonathan A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), pp. 244, 490-91; he holds that 'the abundant echoes of prophecies in the poem here are intended to suggest to the Jewish reader that the age of fulfillment of the prophesies of Israel's glory had begun in the years of Simon's rule' (p. 490); and Horbury's remark, 'The rulers thus have some of the glamour of what could be called in a broad sense a fulfilled messianism' (*Messianism*, p. 49).

The territorial expansion of the Judaeen state under Hyrcan and Yannai would necessarily be seen by many Judaeans as signs of the messianic age. The inclusion of the Idumeans and Itureans into the Jewish commonwealth would bring into mind texts such as Isa. 2.1-4 and Zeph. 3.9. Hyrcan's razing to the ground of the Samaritans' city Shechem and the temple on mount Garizim (some time between 130 and 108 BCE; see Josephus, *Ant.* 13.254-256; *Wars* 1.62-63) would easily be connected to texts referring to the Son of David's victory over the enemies of God's people (Pss. 2; 110; Mic. 5.1-5).

The Prayer for King Jonathan, strangely enough preserved in a Qumran document (4Q448), testifies to messianic connotations connected to the Hasmonean kingdom.

Awake, O Holy One, for king Jonathan and all the congregation of Your people Israel, who is dispersed to the four winds of heaven. Let peace be on all of them and on Your kingdom! May Your name be blessed!

For you love Is[rael]<sup>14</sup> from morning until evening [ ] Come near [ ] and visit them for a blessing [ ] calling upon Your name [ ] kingdom to be blessed [ ] to complete his wars [ ] Jonathan and all Your people [ ] to come near[

The theme of 'God with us and the king' that penetrates this prayer echoes royal psalms in the Psalter. The term מַלְכוּת־יְהוָה is used both for God's kingdom in the first stanza and for the kingdom of Jonathan (= Alexander Yannai) in the second. Yannai's wars and territorial expansion were seen as a fulfillment of biblical promises.

First Maccabees demonstrates that Hasmonean state ideology developed in a dialectic process, where pro-Hasmonean voices responded to others who were critical to or stood at a distance from the new establishment. 1 Macc. 2.59-64 enlists Daniel and his three friends as types and ideals for the Hasmonean cause, certainly in response to critical voices that used the book of Daniel.<sup>15</sup> The ultimate powers given to Simon by a Judaeen assembly in 140 BCE must have been triggered by active opposition. First Macc. 14.41-44 gives the following account:

Simon should be their perpetual leader and high priest until a trustworthy prophet should arise...<sup>16</sup> [H]e was to administer the country, to take charge of the sanctuary, and everyone had to obey him; all official documents in the country were to be drawn up in his name ... No member of the public

14. The translation 'Is[rael]' is not self-evident, as the text uses *samek*, not *sin*. Translation of this text mine.

15. Yonder Moynihan Gillihan, 'Apocalyptic Elements in Hasmonean Propaganda: Civic Ideology and the Struggle for Political Legitimation', forthcoming in *The Seleucid and Hasmonean Periods and the Apocalyptic Worldview* (ed. L. Grabbe).

16. Translation of 1 Macc. 14.41 mine.

or the priesthood was to be allowed to set aside any one of these articles or contest his decisions, or convene a meeting anywhere in the country without his leave... Anyone contravening or rejecting any of these articles was to be liable at law... And Simon accepted and consented to assume the high-priestly office and to act as military commissioner and ethnarch of the Jews and their priests, and to preside over all.

First Maccabees may have been written before the violent divisions within the people under Yannai in the 90s, and had probably not seen Yannai's slaying of tens of thousands of his opponents (see Josephus, *Ant.* 13.372-376, 379-383). But also this book repeatedly refers to opponents of the Hasmoneans, 'ungodly and treacherous Israelites', who allied themselves with external enemies (1 Macc. 7.23-4; 9.23-26, 73; 10.14, 21, 61). Tough measures against dissenters are thus qualified as sanctified violence, i.e. 'violence performed by human agents that is believed to be sanctioned and/or required by God'.<sup>17</sup>

### 3. *Anti-Hasmonean Voices*

To the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Hasmonean messianism belongs the contrasting messianism of the *Yahad*, an opposition group that sociologically defined itself as a 'small community' in contrast to the 'center', constituted by the present temple and the ruling circles.<sup>18</sup> Also this community saw themselves as an integral part of biblical history.

No specific Qumran text directly castigates the Hasmonean leaders for occupying the double office of king/leader and high priest (but see below on 4QTest). The *Yahad*'s critique against the 'Wicked Priest' (an acronym either for Jonathan, Simon, or a sequence of Hasmonean rulers) refers to misuse of wealth, a wicked, divisive and violent leadership, and disobedience to halakhic rules of purity.

A talmudic text with parallel in Josephus refers to Pharisaic critique against Jannaeus (Talmud) or Hyrcan (Josephus), asking the ruler to quit one of the two offices (*b. Qid.* 66a; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.288-292). Vered Noam recently argued that the talmudic text has roots in the first century BCE and renders a Pharisaic response to the divisions in the Hasmonean period and specifically to the *Yahad*. According to Noam, this text distinguishes the

17. Alex P. Jassen, 'The Dead Sea Scrolls and Violence: Sectarian Formation and Eschatological Imagination', *BibInt* 17 (2009), pp. 12-44 (p. 15 n. 7).

18. Robert Redfield, *The Little Community, and Peasant Society and Culture* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 42, 114; Alison Schofield, *From Qumran to the Yahad. A New Paradigm of Textual Development for The Community Rule* (STDJ, 77; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2009), pp. 47-51, 274-75. Oegema states: 'There might be an analogy between the Hasmonean priest-kings and the [Qumran] eschatological "Messiahs from Aaron and Israel"' (*The Anointed*, p. 100).

Pharisees from those who criticized the king, and mirrors specific *Yahad* terminology in its polemic.<sup>19</sup>

4QpsDaniel<sup>c</sup> (4Q245), a probably non-sectarian text written around 100 BCE, contains two separate lists of kings and high priests, presupposing a separation of these offices.<sup>20</sup>

Two Qumran texts, 4Q175 (4QTest) and 4Q378/379 (*Apocryphon of Joshua*) describe two evil brothers, who rebuild ‘the city’ and fall under Joshua’s curse over Jericho, Josh. 6.26 (4Q175 21-30; 4Q379 22). Their father is ‘an evil man of Belial’, and the sons brutally shed blood in Jerusalem. Most scholars connect these texts with Hyrcan’s sons Aristobul I, Antigonus, and/or Jannaeus, and ‘the city’ with Hasmonean Jericho. Milik’s suggestion that the brothers are Jonathan and Simon who fortified and rebuilt Jerusalem (see 1 Macc. 10.10-11; 12.36; 13.52) remains a valid option.<sup>21</sup> Whatever the right interpretation of these two Qumran texts, in biblical perspective rebuilding Jerusalem is more important than Jericho.<sup>22</sup> A rebuilding of the city by a ruler in Jerusalem could be interpreted as a sign of the messianic age (cf. 1 Macc. 3.3; 4.60; 12.36-7; 14.7, 15; *Ant.* 13.181-3), and again lead to the polemic in 4Q175 and the *Apocryphon of Joshua*, sectarian counter-texts to Hasmonean claims of ‘messianic’ rebuilding of the Israelite state.

The future hope of 4Q175 includes the separate offices of *prophet*, *Davidic ruler*, and *priest*—again in critical response to the double office of Hasmonean rulers. 4Q175 may be seen as a mirror of the edict of 140 BCE that made Simon and his descendants both high *priest* and *ethnarch* of the Judaeans ‘until a true *prophet* arises’ (1 Macc. 14.41, cf. 4.46). Thus, also 1 Macc. 14.41 recognizes the three offices of prophet, priest, and civil ruler. Two of them are already functioning, while the office of prophet is postponed to the future. The collection of Scriptures in 4Q175 represents

19. ‘A Pharisaic Reply to Sectarian Polemic’, lecture SBL Annual Meeting, 18.11.2012. Some *Yahad* terms recur in the talmudic text, such as אִישׁ לֵץ רַע וּבִלְיָעַל ‘a man of naught, frivolous and evil’, cf. CD 1.14 אִישׁ הַלְצוֹן, 4QTest 23-24 אִישׁ אֶרֶר אֶחָד וּבִלְיָעַל ‘the sages of Israel separated themselves in anger’, cf. 1QS 5.1 לְהַבְדִּיל מֵעֵדֶת אֲנָשֵׁי הַיְעָל.

20. Wise (‘4Q245 [psDan<sup>c</sup> ar] and the High Priesthood’, p. 339) sees these lists that deliberately separate priest from prince as a silent critique of the Hasmoneans. Two or three of the Hasmoneans are mentioned as priests, not rulers, see n. 11.

21. Hanan Eshel, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hasmonean State* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 63-89; Józef Tadeusz Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea* (London: SCM Press, 1959), pp. 61-64.

22. Architectural features of the Hasmonean temple were preserved in Herod’s temple. The eastern balustrade, the colonnade of Solomon, belongs to this stratum: J. Ådna, *Jerusalem Tempel und Tempelmarkt im 1. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), pp. 4-31.

a silent protest: The present ‘anointed leadership’ is illegitimate, the *Yahad* still waits for the right prophet together with the anointed ones of Aaron and Israel—‘until the prophet and the messiahs of Aaron and Israel will arise’ (1QS 9.11).<sup>23</sup>

The pesharim of the *Yahad* are outspoken in their treatment of the Hasmonean leadership. The *Habakkuk Peshar* criticizes the Wicked Priest for violently persecuting the Righteous Teacher (the priestly founder of the *Yahad*) on his day of fast, i.e. on Yom Kippur as celebrated according to the calendar of the *Yahad* (1QpHab 11.2-8). He is further castigated for pride, a life in luxury, and halakhic impurity (probably connected to temple service and marital relations). 1QpHab 8.7-13 notes:

This refers to the Wicked Priest who had a reputation for reliability at the beginning of his term of service; but when he became ruler over Israel, he became proud and forsook God and betrayed the commandments for the sake of riches. He amassed by force the riches of the lawless who had rebelled against God, seizing the riches of the peoples, thus adding to the guilt of his crimes, and he committed abhorrent deeds in every defiling impurity.

The *Nahum Peshar* (4Q169) calls Alexander Yannai ‘the Lion of Wrath’, and castigates him for hanging the Pharisees (the ‘seekers of smooth things’) alive on the tree, alluding to Yannai’s persecution of Pharisaic political opponents in the 90s BCE (4QpNah 3-4.i.4-8; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.372-383). The ‘Lion of Judah’ (cf. Gen. 49.9-10) is thus perverted into a destructive ruler who does not represent the will of God. For members of the *Yahad*, obedience to the Hasmoneans (cf. 1 Macc. 14.41-44) is exchanged for ‘faithfulness to the Righteous Teacher’ (1QpHab 8.2-3).

Second Maccabees ceases its condensed chronicle in 161 BCE. The book reflects a diaspora background, perhaps related to the Jews of Alexandria. The dating of the narrative of 2 Maccabees is difficult, ‘almost anywhere in the last 150 years BC’.<sup>24</sup> Second Maccabees praises Judah the Maccabee as leader of the revolt, but gives no hint of the continuing Hasmonean dynasty. The ultimate honour is given to God, who intervenes and gives Judah and the Israelites victory over the enemies. Judah is portrayed as a warrior, not as the civil leader of Judaea. Thus we perceive a distance to the Hasmoneans who succeeded Judah as civil leaders.

23. Translations of Qumran texts usually follow Accordance.

Josephus also enters this debate, as he saw Hyrcan ‘accounted by God worthy of three of the greatest privileges; the rule of the nation, the office of high priest, and the gift of prophecy’ (*Ant.* 13.299-300, translation *Loeb* edition). Elsewhere Josephus reports a prophetic revelation given to Hyrcan in the temple during his priestly service (*Ant.* 13.282-283), a tradition positively affirmed in the *Tosefta* (*t. Sof.* 13.5).

24. Robert Doran, *2 Maccabees. A Critical Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), pp. 14-17 (14).

Some of the *Psalms of Solomon* were phrased shortly after the Roman conquest in 63 BCE, by authors close to the Pharisees. The royal-Davidic hymn in 17.21-44 is weary of Hasmonean rulers who levy taxes on the people to finance their luxury and wars. The ideal is a future son of David who inaugurates a time of peace. *Psalms of Solomon* 17.33-35 states:

He will not rely on horse and rider and bow,  
Nor will he collect gold and silver for war.  
Nor will he build up hope in a multitude for a day of war.  
He shall be compassionate to all the nations  
who reverently stand before him.<sup>25</sup>

*Psalms of Solomon* 2, 4, and 8 see the Roman conquest as a just punishment for the sins of the preceding generations and their leaders:

Because the sons of Jerusalem defiled the sanctuary of the Lord,  
they were profaning the offerings of God with lawless acts...  
And the daughters of Jerusalem were available to all  
... because they defiled themselves with improper intercourse.  
... For you have rewarded the sinners according to their actions,  
and according to their extremely wicked sins (2.3, 13).

Let crows peck out the eyes of the hypocrites,  
for they disgracefully emptied many people's houses  
and greedily scattered them (4.20).

God exposed their sins in the full light of day  
... Everyone committed adultery with his neighbours wife...  
... They stole from the sanctuary of God  
as if there were no redeeming heir.  
They walked on the place of sacrifice of the Lord  
in all kinds of uncleanness;  
and with menstrual blood on them they defiled the sacrifices  
as if they were common meat.  
There was no sin they left undone in which they did not surpass the gentiles  
(8.8, 10-13).

The *Testament of Levi* in ch. 14, finally edited in the second century CE, may reflect an earlier Jewish source critical to the Hasmoneans. In 14.4-7 Levi prophesies to his offspring:

You will bring down a curse on our nation, because you want to destroy the light of the Torah...teaching commandments opposed to God's just ordinances. You plunder the Lord's offerings; from his share you steal choice parts, contemptuously eating them with whores. You teach the Lord's commands out of greed for gain; married women you profane; you have

25. Translation of the *Psalms of Solomon* and the *Testament of Levi* follows James Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (New York: Doubleday, 1983/1985).

intercourse with whores and adulteresses. You take gentile women for your wives and your sexual relations will become like Sodom and Gomorrah. You will be inflated with pride over your priesthood.

#### 4. Conclusions

First Maccabees demonstrates that restorative messianism was a prominent feature in Hasmonean ideology. Hasmonean messianism represents an eschatology different from the more apocalyptic eschatology shared by other circles in second century Judaea, such as the *Yahad* and the authors of the Enochic books. Gabriele Boccacini has noted that the more a contemporary text supports the Hasmonean dynasty, the less apocalyptic it is.<sup>26</sup> Both the *maskilim* of Daniel and the *Yahad* are peaceful opposition groups who defer the fight against the evil to the eschaton.<sup>27</sup>

In contrast, the Hasmoneans advocate a restorative eschatology, not an apocalyptic one. Their restorative messianism is used to legitimate a tough policy against internal dissenters and an expansionist policy to defend and enlarge the new kingdom. Others were not 'of the same mould as those to whom the deliverance of Israel had been entrusted' (1 Macc. 5.62).<sup>28</sup> The developing Judaeian state is seen as fulfillment of biblical prophecies and the Hasmoneans as part of biblical history. Texts from the Torah on Phinehas and Judah were enlisted as legitimation for the Hasmonean leaders who combined priestly and royal prerogatives. Royal psalms and prophetic texts referring to the coming son of David would offer themselves as attractive proof texts.

Both pro-Hasmonean theology and the deeds of the new rulers led to critical reflection and voices who criticized the new dynasty. These voices found expression in *Yahad* texts, the *Psalms of Solomon*, and the *Testament of Levi*. They may be silently sensed in 2 Maccabees as well, and is reflected in a story preserved both by Josephus and the Talmud as mentioned above. It should be noted, however, that apart from *Ps. Sol.* 17.33-35 it is difficult to find in these sources a critique against the expansionist policy of the new rulers. The double office, halakhic impurity, a luxurious lifestyle, and tough Hasmonean policy against dissenters is condemned, but not the establishment of a new Judaeian state as an heir of the united kingdom.

26. Gabriele Boccacini, 'Non-Apocalyptic Responses to Apocalyptic Events. Notes on the Sociology of Apocalypticism', forthcoming in Lester L. Grabbe, *The Seleucid and Hasmonean Periods*.

27. 'Confidence in God's ultimate vengeance frequently becomes rationale for passivity, non-retaliation, and even merciful behavior in the face of persecution' (Shelly Matthews, 'Clemency as Cruelty: Forgiveness and Force in the Dying Prayers of Jesus and Stephen', in *Violence, Scripture, and Textual Practice in Early Judaism and Christianity* [ed. R.S. Boustany; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010], pp. 117-44 [134]).

28. An echo of 2 Sam. 2.18, where deliverance is entrusted to David: Goldstein, 'How the Authors of 1 and 2 Maccabees Treated the "Messianic" Promises', p. 80.

### 5. Perspectives: Later Messianism and State-Building in Judaea

The Hasmonean state-building project can be compared with that of Herod the Great. Herod inherited the kingdom of the Hasmoneans, by then well integrated in the Roman commonwealth. Herod continued to build the kingdom; he developed its infrastructure and got the economy to flourish (at least for the benefit of the upper classes). Herod's state-building was probably not supported by messianic aspirations. As a third-generation Jew with Idumaeon ancestry he could hardly claim Davidic or Aaronite prerogatives. However, Josephus describes Herod the temple builder with terminology showing God's favour to him, a divinely blessed king of the Judaeans (see *War* 1.400, 462; *Ant.* 15.383-387; 16.132-133).<sup>29</sup>

Hasmonean messianism can also be compared with the New Testament, where the kingdom of Jesus is 'not of this world' (Jn 18.36). John 10 portrays Jesus in the temple courts during the festival of Hanukka, the festival inaugurated by the Maccabees and celebrated in their memory. Solomon's Porch (the eastern balustrade) was part of the Hasmonean renovation of the temple. On this spot and at this festival time Jesus is asked about which *deeds* he can show that can support his claims. The three-fold expectation of 4Q175 and 1 Macc. 14.41 can be traced also in the New Testament. Different texts can portray Jesus as anointed prophet (Lk. 4.17-21; Mt. 21.11; Jn 6.14), son of David (Mt. 21.1-9), and anointed high priest (Hebrews, cf. Rev. 1.5; 5.9). John the Baptist is asked whether he is the prophet or the (priestly) messiah (Jn 1.19-21).

Messianic and eschatological fervour was part and parcel of the Zealot's uprising in the first Jewish revolt.<sup>30</sup> The Romans' brutal crushing of this revolt led both to literary and liturgical responses. *Second Baruch* and *4 Ezra* struggle with the painful loss of Jerusalem and the temple.<sup>31</sup> Another voice is represented in the book of Revelation. The militant Jewish Christian hope of John, the author of the book, was likely formatted by his experience of the Roman campaign in Galilee and Judaea in 68 CE.<sup>32</sup> Rome and its Caesar became images of the Antichrist. The subsequent generation, that of the early second century, saw an addition to the daily Jewish prayer, *birkat*

29. Cf. Horbury, *Messianism*, pp. 83-122 (90-91); Abraham Schalit, *König Herodes. Der Mann und sein Werk* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1969), pp. 475-76.

30. Doron Mendels, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 355-71. See, e.g., Josephus, *War* 2.433-448; 6.310-315.

31. Mendels, *Jewish Nationalism*, pp. 371-75.

32. David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5* (WBC, 52; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1997), pp. xlix-lxx, cxx-cxxxii; Torleif Elgvin, 'Priests on Earth as in Heaven. Jewish Light on the Book of Revelation', in *Echoes From the Caves. Qumran and the New Testament* (ed. F. Garcia Martinez; STDJ, 85; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2009), pp. 257-78 (271-77).

*haminim*. This ‘benediction’ curses the sectarians as well as the ‘arrogant kingdom’, a cipher for the Roman Empire, which so brutally had brought an end to the temple and Jewish life in freedom. The text reads as follows:

For the apostates and the arrogant kingdom let there be no hope,  
May they be speedily uprooted, crushed and humbled in our days,  
And may the *notzrim* and the *minim* perish in a moment.<sup>33</sup>

Three hundred years after the Maccabean uprising, another Jewish revolt with messianic aspirations broke forth, that of Bar Kokhba (132–136 CE). According to the Palestinian Talmud, the prominent rabbi Akiva proclaimed Bar Kosiba to be ‘Bar Kokhba’, the son of the star who fulfilled the messianic promise of Num. 24.17:<sup>34</sup>

Rav Shimon ben Yochai taught: My teacher Akiva would expound the verse ‘A star (*kokhav*) will come from Jacob’ as ‘Kosiba will come from Jacob’. When rabbi Akiva saw bar Koziba he would say, ‘There is the king Messiah!’ (y. *Ta’an.* 4.5 68d, par. *Lam. R.* 2.2)

Shimon bar Kosiba was neither priest nor from the tribe of Judah. His deeds nevertheless proved him to be a royal messiah in the eyes of his supporters. However, the Talmud continues with a protest from rabbi Yohanan ben Torta, ‘Akiva, grass will grow on your cheeks (i.e. on your grave), and the messiah will still not have come’.<sup>35</sup>

33. Geniza version B. Translation adapted from Yaakov Y. Teppler, *Birkat haMinim* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), p. 23.

34. Translation mine. I am not convinced by Schäfer or Novenson, who argue that the encounter between Akiva and Bar Kokhba is a later talmudic invention without historic roots; see Peter Schäfer, ‘R. Aqiva und Bar Kokhba’, in *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des Rabbinischen Judentums* (ed. P. Schäfer; AGJU, 15; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), pp. 65-121; ‘Bar Kokhba and the Rabbis’, in *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt Against Rome* (ed. P. Schäfer; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), pp. 1-22; Matthew V. Novenson, ‘Why Does R. Akiba Acclaim Bar Kokhba as Messiah?’, *JSJ* 40 (2009), pp. 551-72. Anyway, the evidence of Justin and the *Apocalypse of Peter* clearly shows Bar Kosiba’s own messianic self-understanding.

35. Akiva’s longings are reflected in his prayer for the rebuilding of the temple, included in the Passover liturgy: ‘Therefore, O Lord our God and the God of our fathers, bring us in peace to the other set feasts and festivals which are coming to meet us, while we rejoice in the building-up of Your city and worship You in joy; and may we eat there of the sacrifices and of the Passover-offerings whose blood has reached with acceptance the wall of Your altar, and let us praise You for our redemption and for the ransoming of our soul. Blessed are You, O Lord, who redeem Israel’ (*m. Pes.* 10.6, translation adapted from Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933]). Ben Torta’s remark mirrors later rabbinic reflection, and should be seen as an addition to the original saying.

Both letters from this revolt, unearthed in the Judaean Desert,<sup>36</sup> Justin Martyr, and the *Apocalypse of Peter*, authored in Egypt in the aftermath of the revolt, testify to Bar Kokhba's tough policy against fellow Jews who did not support his cause. The *Apocalypse of Peter* shows that Jewish Christians ('sprouting boughs of the fig tree') refrained from joining this revolt, probably thinking, 'This is not our messiah, this is not our war'; it proved to be a stance leading to martyrdom at the hands of Bar Kokhba.<sup>37</sup> Chapter 2 of the *Apocalypse of Peter* reads as follows:

Have you not grasped that the fig tree is the house of Israel? Verily, I say to you, when the boughs have sprouted at the end, then shall deceiving messiahs come and awaken hope with the words, 'I am the messiah, who am come into the world'... But this deceiver is not the messiah. And when they reject him, he will kill with the sword and there shall be many martyrs: Then shall the boughs of the fig tree, i.e. the house of Israel, sprout, and there shall be many martyrs by his hands: they shall be killed and become martyrs.<sup>38</sup>

Justin's account points the same way (*First Apology* 31.6):

For even in the recent Jewish war, bar Kokhba, the leader of the rebellion of the Jews, ordered only Christians to be led away to fearsome torments, if they would not deny Jesus as the Christ and blaspheme him.<sup>39</sup>

A painful response to the bloodshed of 132–136 is contained in *Gen. R.* 22.9 where Shimon bar Yochai, a survivor of the war, accuses his God of allowing the murder of perhaps half the Jewish population of Judaea.

Commenting on the verse, *The voice of your brother's blood cries unto me from the ground* (Gen. 4.10), rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said, 'I find what I have to say very difficult, but I have to say it. This matter can be compared to the case of two gladiators fighting to death in the arena. Finally, one gladiator gets the upper hand, and is about to run his sword through his victim. Before doing so, he looks up to the emperor who is watching the bloody contest from the royal seat. If the emperor shows the 'thumb down' signal, the victor has royal assent to kill his victim. But if the emperor shows 'thumb up', the victim is spared. As the gladiators look up to the emperor, the Roman ruler who has the fate of the loser in his hands shows

36. Cf. Muraba'at at letter 24: 'From Shimon Ben Kosiba to Yeshua Ben Galgula and to the fortress men, peace! I call heaven as a witness against me that unless you destroy every Galilean who are among you, every man, I will place shackles on your feet, as I did with Ben Aflul'. Some have speculated if the 'Galileans' could refer to Jewish Christians.

37. Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple. Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), p. 201.

38. Edgar Hennecke *et al.*, *New Testament Apocrypha II* (London: SCM Press, 1974), p. 669.

39. Denis Minns and Paul Parvis, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies* (Oxford Eearly Christian Texts; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 167.

the sign of condemnation. Then before he is slain the victim calls out to the emperor, "You should have wished you had spared me: now my blood will cry out accusing you of my murder!"<sup>40</sup>

From the mid-second century the rabbis reflected on the Hasmonean experience and that of the Bar Kokhba revolt. Bar Kosiba (as his name is spelled in the letters from the Judean Desert) appears in rabbinical writings as Bar Koziba, 'the Son of Lie'. In hindsight he was named a false messiah. In the choice between the sword and the book, the rabbis decided for the Book of Torah and accommodation to the empires of this world. Judaism consciously stayed with this policy through the centuries until the Zionists armed themselves to establish the new state of Israel. The rabbis downplayed the military achievements of the Maccabees when they reformulated the tradition of Hanukkah. A new miracle from God was 'invented' to move the attention from an armed revolt to God's intervention. This can be seen in the Babylonian Talmud, *b. Šab. 21b*:

Why Hanukkah? For our Rabbis taught: On the twenty-fifth of Kislew [commence] the days of Hanukkah... For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils therein, and when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed and defeated them, they made search and found only one cruse of oil which lay with the seal of the High Priest, but which contained sufficient for one day's lighting only; yet a miracle was wrought therein and they lit [the menorah] therewith for eight days. The following year these [days] were appointed a festival with Hallel and thanksgiving.<sup>41</sup>

Moving to our own days, West Bank settlers who follow the lead of rabbi Abraham Kook and his son Zvi Yehuda Kook see themselves as the nucleus of the coming messianic kingdom.<sup>42</sup> Ehud Sprinzak states:

Israel's victory in the Six-Day War transformed the status of Kooks's theology. Suddenly it became clear to his students that they were indeed living in the messianic age. Ordinary reality assumed a sacred aspect; every event possessed theological meaning and was part of the meta-historical process of redemption ... Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook ... defined the State of Israel as the Halakhic Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Israel as the kingdom of heaven on earth. Every Jew living in Israel was holy; all phenomena, even the secular, were imbued with holiness... The single most important conclusion on the new theology had to do with Eretz Israel, the land of

40. Translation adapted from Chaim Pearl, *Theology in Rabbinic Stories* (Jerusalem: Carta, 1997), p. 64.

41. Adapted from the Soncino edition.

42. Hanne Eggen Røislien, *Bosettere på hellig grunn. En reise blant jødiske nybyggere* (Oslo: Pax, 2006), pp. 84-120; Ehud Sprinzak, *Gush Emunim. The Politics of Zionist Fundamentalism in Israel* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1986). Abraham Kook, Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel in the early 20th century, interpreted the secular Zionists as precursors of the messiah.

Israel. The land—every grain of its soil—was declared holy in a fundamental sense. The conquered territories of Judea and Samaria had become inalienable and nonnegotiable, not as a result of political and/or security concern, but because God had promised them to Abraham four thousand years earlier, and because the identity of the nation was shaped by his promise. Redemption could take place only in the context of greater Eretz Israel, and territorial withdrawal meant forfeiting redemption. The ideologists of Gush Emunim ruled that the Gush had to become a settlement movement because settling Judea and Samaria was the most meaningful act of participation in the process of redemption.<sup>43</sup>

There are many reports of violence perpetrated by Jewish settlers against Palestinian civilians.<sup>44</sup> The Gaza war in 2008/2009 was by an Israeli rabbi declared a war against ‘Amalek’, the biblical archetype for Israel’s ungodly enemy.<sup>45</sup>

Christian Zionists and Messianic Jews residing in Israel may easily associate the state of Israel and its army with God’s side, and Palestinians with God’s enemies. Such a political theology is based on an eschatological and apocalyptic messianism, expecting Jesus to return at the Mount of Olives to inaugurate the messianic millennium.<sup>46</sup>

At the same time one needs to remember that opponents of the state of Israel such as Hamas also understand their fight in religious terms: It is Allah who has commanded them to keep all the land of Palestine as part of ‘the House of Islam’, so that the holy city, *al-Quds*, again can be in Muslim hands.

All kinds of millennialists can learn from the Hasmonean experience that the ‘golden age’ or the eschaton may not be so close at hand as first believed. And Hasmonean state theology should function as an antidote against too close ties between nationalism and state-supported religion in the modern world.

43. Ehud Sprinzak, *Brother Against brother. Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to the Rabin Assassination* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), pp. 153-54.

44. A report by EU heads of mission in Jerusalem lists 411 attacks by settlers in 2011 resulting in Palestinian casualties and damage to property, against 132 such incidents in 2009: [www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/mar/21/israel-settlers-violence-palestinians-europe](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/mar/21/israel-settlers-violence-palestinians-europe). Cf. Røislien, *Bosettene*, pp. 116-20, 129-37.

45. The chief rabbi of Safed, Shmuel Eliyahu, on 15 January 2009 declared the war against Hamas ‘a war of the people of Israel against Amalek’. Cf. the following characterization of ‘religious violence’: ‘Instigators of religious violence believe that they are carrying out God’s directive as articulated in the Bible’: R.S. Boustan, A.P. Jassen and C.J. Roetzel, ‘Introduction: Violence, Scripture, and Textual Practice in Early Judaism and Christianity’, Boustan, *Violence, Scripture, and Textual Practice*, pp. 1-12 (4).

46. S. Sizer, *Christian Zionism—Road-map to Armageddon* (London: Intervarsity Press, 2004). See further various contributions in *Mishkan. A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People*, 2/2008. I have encountered this double identification many times in Israeli messianic congregations and their newsletters.