T&T Clark Encyclopedia of Second Temple Judaism

Volume 2

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that the community began as a lay-led movement, and only later accepted the leadership of priests-in-exile; that the community adopted priestly monikers for its lay leaders as a means of claiming for themselves the authority of the Jerusalem priesthood; or that the broader Essene movement accepted co-existing lay and priestly models of leadership (M. Collins 2009; Kugler 1999; Schofield 2009).

One final complication only deepens the mystery. As in the Hebrew Bible, Aaronites, בני אהרון, *bny ʾhrwn* are also designated as leaders of the community, and this even within the version of the Rule of the Community where the בני צדוק, *bny ṣdwq* also fulfill that role (see, e.g., 1QS v 7–9, where the Aaronites are assigned sole authority over the law, finances, and polity of the community, an apparent contradiction of authority assigned to the Zadokites in v 2–5). This probably indicates that the titles were viewed as interchangeable, though such a solution is open to debate, like so much of the other Qumran evidence for the Zadokites (but see now Hempel 2013: 221–27).

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Related entries: Ezekiel, Book of; Genealogy; Priesthood; Sacrifices and Offerings; Samuel, Books of.

Zealots

In the Second Temple period the term "zealot" (Ζηλωτής, *Zēlōtēs*) typically referred to Jews who exhibited a passionate devotion for God's Law (Torah) characterized by the active punishment of those who failed to properly observe it (Horsley 1986: 159). The pretext for such religious "zeal" (ζῆλος, *zēlos*; קנאה, *qnʾh*) in this period is found in various examples throughout the Torah—both divine and human. God is described as "zealous" (Exod 20:3; 34:14; Deut 5:9) and even a "zealot" in the Septuagint (Exod 20:5; 34:14; Deut 4:2; 5:9; 6:15). Phinehas was so "zealous for his God" that he executed transgressors of the Law (Num 25:1–13; Hengel 1989: 159–60); his violent actions were subsequently lauded in various Second Temple texts (Sir 45:23; 1 Macc 2:26, 54; 4 Macc 18:12; Josephus, *Ant*. 4.152–55; Philo, *Leg*. 3.242, *Post*. 182; see also LXX Ps 105:30). This ethos of zealotry is encapsulated in Philo's statement that there were thousands of "zealots" (Ζηλωταί, *Zēlōtai*) for the Law who were quick to punish offenders (*Spec*. 2.253).

This kind of zealotry is also manifest in the New Testament. When Paul presents his motives for persecuting the early followers of Jesus, he repeatedly cites "zeal" for the Law

(Gal 1:14; Phil 3:6; cf. Hengel 1989: 180). Along these same lines, "zeal" led certain Jews to plot against Paul after his conversion (Acts 21:20–22). Zeal was likewise given as the primary reason for Jesus' forceful expulsion of those who were selling at the Jerusalem Temple (John 2:17), and one of Jesus' own disciples, Simon, was termed a "zealot" (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:3; cf. Matt 10:4).

Josephus also employs the epithet "zealot(s)," but he utilizes it in various ways (Gabba 1999: 148–56). As in the instances above, at times he applies it generically for a person zealous for the Law (*Ant*. 12.271; 20.47); at other times, he employs it for a "devotee" or an "adherent" (*Life* 11; *Ag. Ap.* 1.162), a common Hellenistic usage (Hengel 1989: 335–38). In addition, he uses the word in a very specific context to refer to a faction of rebels and revolutionaries who played a prominent part in the First Jewish Revolt of 66–70 ce. Here, however, his use of this term is often driven by apologetic motives, namely to differentiate legitimate groups of Jews from illegitimate. While some have concluded that these "zealots" constituted a long-standing revolutionary movement whose origin could be traced back to the beginnings of Roman rule and the revolt of Judas the Galilean in 6 ce (*Ant*. 18.9–10, 23; 20.102; Donaldson 1990: 21), such a conclusion belies the evidence. There is no direct connection in Josephus between zealots and Judas the Galilean—as there may have been with the *sicarii*—and the evidence suggests that zealots only emerged as a faction after the revolt was already underway (Horsley 1986: 160–61).

Josephus' first reference to the "zealots" as an organized group appears in a reference to events dated 66/67 ce (*J.W.* 4.160). Here he details how the high priests in Jerusalem incited the people against "the zealots" (*J.W.* 4.158–61) because of their assaults on certain Herodian families (*J.W.* 4.138–146); shortly thereafter, the zealots were further attacked because of their selection of new high priests from plebeian families (*J.W.* 4.147–57). Since all other references in Josephus to "zealots" occur after the revolt had begun, aside from a few stray instances, it is evident that this group was a consequence, rather than a cause, of the revolt (Cohen 1989: 165).

It appears that the zealots emerged after numerous bands of brigands and refugees entered Jerusalem and formed a coalition during the early stages of the revolt (*J.W.* 4.135–38). The numerous heinous acts ascribed to them by Josephus, such as murders and lootings (*J.W.* 4.139–41, 162, 314–18, 386–88; 7.269–70), may have occurred, but they were not the result of a well-defined nationalistic agenda or theology. Rather, such actions can be seen primarily as a result of the revolt, in which different Jewish factions were vying for power and competing for resources. Thus, the Jewish Revolt of 66–70 ce was not the work of an organized and long-standing Jewish resistance known as the zealots, as some have previously supposed.

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Related entries: Jesus of Nazareth; Josephus, Writings of; Masada, History of; Palestine; Resistance Movements; Revolt, Maccabean; Sicarii; Violence.