

MACCABEES, ZEALOTS AND JOSEPHUS:
THE IMPACT OF ZIONISM ON JOSEPH KLAUSNER'S
HISTORY OF THE SECOND TEMPLE

DAVID BERGER

It is hardly a secret that Zionist ideology had a profound impact on Joseph Klausner's historiographic enterprise. Even a superficial perusal of his works reveals a powerful Zionist commitment expressed in both rhetoric and analysis, so much so that his right to teach the period of the Second Temple in the Hebrew University was held up for years on the grounds that he was more of a publicist and ideologue—and of the Revisionist variety no less—than a historian.

Nonetheless, I believe that there is much to be said for a serious examination of the nationalist element in his multi-volume work on the Second Temple.¹ However we assess the political and scholarly arguments for and against his appointment, a man who had nothing of the historian in him would not have been appointed to Klausner's position in the world's flagship institution for Jewish Studies. With all his abundant methodological flaws, he was not a publicist pure and simple.

Since readers of this article, which will sharply underscore some of those flaws, may ultimately question this judgment, let me move immediately to a second, even more important point. The ideological use of selected episodes in a nation's history is an integral part of any nationalist movement or educational system. Zionism was no exception; indeed, its unusual, even unique, character generated a particularly acute need to establish a national history that would provide models for the struggling yishuv and the early state. The pedagogic utilization of the ancient paradigms of Jewish heroism had to draw upon academic, not merely popular, legitimation. From this perspective, the fact that Klausner stood with one foot in the world of academic research and the other in the public square, where he exercised considerable influence, lends special interest to an analysis

¹ *Historia shel ha-Bayit ha-Sheni*, 2nd ed., 5 vols. (Jerusalem, 1951), henceforth *Historia*.

of his scholarly-ideological approach to key developments in Second Temple history.² As Klausner confronted the dilemmas of military, political and religious policy in ancient Israel, his own dilemmas illuminate not only Zionist historiography but the political and moral challenges facing the nascent, beleaguered State.

It is self-evident that Klausner was sensitive to the charges leveled at him by his colleagues at the university, and so his inaugural lecture on the Second Temple, which is also the opening chapter of the book, was devoted to the question of historical objectivity. The argument in that lecture is so strange that only the extraordinary defensiveness generated by relentless criticism can serve to explain it.

The objective study of history, says Klausner, leads to 'necessary conclusions,' to 'absolute evaluations.'³ It is true that each generation sees the past through its own experience, but as long as the historian seeks truth to the best of his ability, his conclusions are absolute for that generation. This is an idiosyncratic use of the term 'absolute,' and when Klausner proposes a concrete example, the peculiarity of the argument is thrown into even bolder relief. A Jew and a Pole, he says, *must* evaluate Chmielnicki differently, but precisely because of the ineluctable nature of this difference, 'there is no subjectivity involved at all.' Chmielnicki persecuted the Jews but strove to improve the lot of his own people. Consequently, 'the honest scholar must see both sides of the accepted historical coin.'⁴ Thus, in virtually the same breath, Klausner speaks of the absolute necessity compelling a Jew to evaluate Chmielnicki in a one-sided fashion and proceeds to present him in all his multivalent complexity. This almost incoherent argument for untrammelled, unmodulated historical objectivity was surely generated by the subjective realities of Klausner's personal situation.

When we turn to the period of the Second Temple, we confront a series of personalities and events central to the self-image of both yishuv and State: the return from the Babylonian exile, the revolt of Mattathias and his sons, the achievement of independence and

² Klausner's profound impact on certain sectors of the yishuv, an impact grounded precisely in his combined personae of scholarly researcher, Zionist thinker, and public personality, is strikingly evident in the tone of the admiring intellectual biography written by two disciples during his lifetime. See Yaakov Becker and Hayim Toren, *Yosef Klausner, ha-Ish u-Po'olo* (Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, 1947).

³ *Historia* 1:10.

⁴ *Historia* 1:11.

the pursuit of territorial expansion under the Hasmoneans, the great revolt, and the heroic stand at Masada.⁵ The longest lasting of these developments was the Hasmonean dynasty, rooted in the most successful and spectacular event of the entire period, a revolt emblematic of Jewish military might and remembered not only by historians but by every Jewish child who has ever seen a Hanukkah menorah.

That revolt and that dynasty were pivotal to Zionist self-consciousness. Pinsker lamented the servile state of a people that had produced the Maccabees; Herzl declared that the Maccabees would arise once again; and in one of the most wrenching passages in all of Jewish literature, Bialik portrayed with bitter sarcasm the cellars in which ‘the young lions of the prayer ‘Father of Mercy’ and the grandsons of the Maccabees’ lay hidden in their miserable cowardice.⁶ Jabotinsky sharply criticized the ghetto mentality that intentionally blotted out the memory of the Maccabees, and Gedaliah Alon’s refutation of the thesis that the rabbinic Sages had done something similar was formulated in particularly sharp fashion: ‘Did the Nation and Its Rabbis Cause the Hasmoneans to be Forgotten?’⁷ Who then were these Maccabees, and are they really worthy of this extraordinary veneration?⁸

Klausner examined the Hasmonean period—and not that period alone—in an analytical framework reflecting categories of thought more characteristic of a twentieth-century Zionist scholar than of Judean fighters in the second pre-Christian century. Granted, he says, Judah Maccabee fought for the religion of Israel, but he understood that his success was nourished by ‘another non-material and non-measurable force—the national will to live. When a nation has

⁵ In the last decade or so, several important works have, in whole or in part, analyzed the use of these and similar models in Zionist education, literature, and civic life. See Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Meaning of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago and London, 1995) and the literature noted there; Nachman Ben-Yehudah, *The Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel* (Madison, Wisconsin, c. 1995); Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Masada: Histoire et Symbole* (Paris, c. 1995); Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948* (New York, 1992). As early as 1937, Klausner himself had contributed to the popularization of the Masada story as a heroic, paradigmatic event. See *Land and Power*, p. 311.

⁶ See the references in *Land and Power*, pp. 14, 37.

⁷ *Mehqarim be-Toledot Yisrael I* (Tel Aviv, 1957), pp. 15–25.

⁸ For a useful survey of Jewish perceptions of the Hasmoneans from antiquity through the twentieth century, see Samuel Schaffer’s 1973 Jewish Theological Seminary dissertation, *The Hasmoneans in Jewish Historiography*. On Klausner, see pp. 164–67, 199–204.

no choice other than to achieve victory or pass away from the world, it is impossible for it not to be victorious. So it was then and so it has been in our time and before our eyes.⁹

And the essential element in this ‘understanding’—the knowing incorporation of a nationalist consciousness into a religious ideology—characterized Judah’s father as well. ‘[Mattathias] recognized clearly that it is appropriate to desecrate one Sabbath in order to observe many Sabbaths—in order to sustain the entire nation.’¹⁰ The undeclared shift from the Talmudic formula—that the Sabbath may in certain circumstances be desecrated so that many Sabbaths may be observed in the future—to the nationalist formula that Klausner created as if the two were self-evidently interchangeable is a striking example of ideological sleight of hand.

It emerges, moreover, that this integration of the religious and the national characterized not only the Maccabees but the bulk of the Jewish population. ‘Most of the nation’ overcame ‘all manner of torments’ to stand against the decrees of Antiochus.

Tens of thousands of spiritual heroes arose in Judaea who could not be coerced to betray the Torah of their God by any torment in the world or by any threat of bizarre death. . . . There was an intuitive feeling here that by betraying their God they would also be betraying their people, and if the Torah of Israel would be destroyed so too would the People of Israel.¹¹

Finally, Klausner takes a remarkable further step by elevating land over spirit, and doing so through an original piece of speculative biblical exegesis so bereft of any evidentiary support that it is mildly unusual even by the anarchic standards of the Bible critics of his day. It is likely, he says, that the Psalm asserting that ‘the heavens belong to the Lord but the earth He gave over to man’ (Ps 115:16) was written during the great victory of Judah Maccabee. The warriors,

suffused by a sense of the sanctity of the Homeland (*kedushat ha-moledet*) and the joy flowing from fulfilling the divine command, felt no need for the world to come. Through their conquest, they had acquired earthly life for themselves and for their nation and were prepared to leave the heavens to the Lord their God, provided that he would give

⁹ *Historia* 3:19.

¹⁰ *Historia* 3:17.

¹¹ *Historia* 2:199.

them the land as an inheritance—the land of their fathers and their children.¹²

Though the verse appears to speak of a contrast between the heavens and an earth given to humanity as a whole, the true, deeper meaning refers to the land of Israel granted to its chosen people.

Although Klausner asserts that even the pietists—the ‘hasidim’ of the sources—were nationalists, he underscores the contrast between their primarily spiritual interests and the political orientation of the Hasmoneans. In itself, such a perspective is eminently defensible.¹³ Klausner, however, goes further by ascribing to his heroes from the very beginning of their appearance on the historical stage a fully formed, unambiguous ideology that is not expressed in the sources but accords perfectly with that of the historian.

‘From the outset,’ Judah and his brothers sought ‘absolute freedom.’ They understood that ‘inner—religious and national-social—freedom’ is impossible without ‘absolute political sovereignty (*qomemiyut*).’¹⁴ Thus, the distinctive categories of religious freedom, national-social freedom, and political sovereignty did not merely animate Judah’s policies on a subconscious level; they were a key element of his conscious ideology from the first moment of the revolt. Nor was this ideology created *ex nihilo* in the Hasmonean period. The spiritual creativity that Klausner ascribes to the four centuries between the Babylonian exile and the revolt would have been impossible in his view in the absence of ‘a profound yearning for political freedom.’¹⁵ Once again—an argument resting not on a documented source but on a psychohistorical generalization rooted in this instance in a sense of what the author’s ideologically honed instincts have declared impossible.

When Klausner moves to the very different contrast between early Hasmoneans and Hellenizers, he describes the former, not surprisingly, as ‘the national party.’ In this instance, however, the interplay of ideological factors was potentially more complex. While the Zionist movement was in one sense a reaction against the classical Haskalah,

¹² *Historia* 3:29.

¹³ See *Historia* 2:182–83, and cf. 3:38. For a discussion of the role of land and politics in this context, see Doron Mendels, *The Land of Israel as a Political Concept in Hasmonean Literature* (Tuebingen, 1987).

¹⁴ *Historia* 3:41.

¹⁵ *Historia* 2:273.

to a very important degree it was its offspring. Klausner, whose other, less controversial field of expertise was modern Hebrew literature, surely identified with the movement to broaden the intellectual and cultural horizons of Eastern European Jewry, and he could not dismiss the value of Greek culture even for the Jews of antiquity. Indeed, in another work, he described his central credo as follows: 'To absorb the culture of the other to the point of digesting it and transforming it into our own national-human flesh and blood—this is the ideal for which I fought during the prime of my life, and I will not stray from it till my last breath.'¹⁶ Might it not be possible, then, even necessary, to say something positive about the Jewish arch-enemies of the Maccabees?

In order to avoid this undesirable consequence, Klausner mobilizes another presumably ineluctable law of history to help him conclude that the Hellenizers' objective was not the incorporation of Greek values into Jewish culture but the annihilation of the latter in favor of the former. Some scholars, he says, maintain that the Hellenizers were correct in their desire to open provincial Jewish society to the wide-ranging culture of the Hellenistic world. This, however, misperceives the Hellenizers' intentions. 'If they had possessed a liberating, essentially correct ideology, it would eventually have prevailed and been realized in life, even if little by little. The truth bursts forth and makes its way, sometimes immediately, sometimes after the passage of time.'¹⁷

Here Klausner's questionable rhetoric about the inevitable success of 'truth' conceals an even more extreme and implausible position upon which his argument really rests. In light of the progressive Hellenistic influence on the Hasmonean dynasty, what he sees as the essentially correct ideology of integrating Greek ideas and Judaism was indeed realized after the passage of time. So far so good. But how does Klausner know that this correct objective, which arguably did prevail, was not the goal of the Hellenizers? The answer cannot be the circular argument that their ideology did not prevail; rather, despite the plain meaning of his language, it must be that the group failed as a political entity, a failure that proves that it could not have had a correct worldview. In other words, his argument—if it is to be granted any coherence at all—amounts to the assertion that not

¹⁶ *Bereshit Hayah ha-Ra'ayon*, p. 172, cited in Becker and Toren, p. 13.

¹⁷ *Historia* 3:155.

only proper ideas but the political group that originates them must survive and ultimately triumph. Since this was not true of the Hellenizers, it follows that their goal was not integration but Jewish cultural suicide.¹⁸

The Hasmoneans ultimately attained genuine political freedom; this alone, however, did not satisfy them, and here Klausner mobilizes religion to explain and justify even more far-reaching national ambitions. Because the new rulers regularly read the Torah and the Prophets, ‘it was impossible for them not to sense how unnatural their situation was—that of all the Land of Israel promised to Abraham and ruled by David and Solomon, Israel remained with only the little state of Judaea.’¹⁹ Once again Klausner declares something impossible, and once again the assessment leads to a conclusion identical to the ideology of the historian, this time in its Revisionist form.

This orientation appears even more clearly in Klausner’s lament over the civil war in the days of Alexander Jannaeus. If not for this internal war, he suggests, the king may have taken advantage of the opportunity afforded by the weakness of the Seleucid Empire to conquer the coastal cities of the Land of Israel—and even Tyre and Sidon. And this too is not the end of it. ‘There are grounds to believe that Jannaeus, like his ancestors, dreamed the great dream of returning the Kingdom of David and Solomon to its original grandeur, and even more than this—of inheriting the Seleucid Empire itself.’²⁰ It cannot be ruled out that Jannaeus dreamed such dreams, but it is difficult to avoid the impression that the historian’s vision has merged with the ambition of the Hasmonean king to the point where the two can no longer be distinguished.

Dreams, however, collide with realities, and these collisions can spawn not only practical difficulties but serious moral dilemmas. In describing the Hasmonean wars in general and the expansion of the boundaries of Israel in particular, Klausner must confront the leveling of pagan temples, expulsions, the destruction of cities, and forced conversions. The ethical problems posed by such behavior disturb him, and he is occasionally prepared to express disapproval. Thus, it is as if Judah Maccabee forgot what he himself suffered from religious persecution and ignored ‘the slightly later dictum, “Do

¹⁸ Cf. also *Historia* 2:145.

¹⁹ *Historia* 3:31.

²⁰ *Historia* 3:151.

not do to your fellow that which is hateful to you.”²¹ Similarly, the destruction of the Samaritan temple ‘can only be explained but not justified.’²² Nonetheless, Klausner’s basic inclination is to provide mitigation for such acts and sometimes even to justify them.

The most striking example of such justification appears in his reaction to Simon’s expulsion of pagans as part of the policy of judaizing sections of the land of Israel. It is true that these actions involved considerable cruelty, he says, but had the Hasmoneans behaved differently, the tiny Judaeon state would have ceased to exist under the pressure of its neighbors, ‘and the end would have come for the People of Israel as a whole.’ Under such circumstances, ‘the moral criterion *cannot help* but retreat, and in its place there comes another criterion: *the possibility of survival*. . . . For our “puny intellect,” this appears to constitute the very antithesis of justice; for the “larger intellect,” *this is the way to justice*, the footstool of absolute justice’ (emphasis in the original).²³

Elsewhere, he returns to the ‘biblical view of the Land of Israel,’²⁴ arguing that in light of this tradition, the newly formed Judaeon state ‘had [was *mukhrahat*] to expand eastward—toward Transjordan, northward—toward Shechem, and southward—toward Idumaea.’²⁵ The conquest of Idumaea, complete with the forcible conversion of its inhabitants, was unavoidable. Stolen land was being recovered; a Jewish majority was a necessity for the nation; Judaea could not have been left surrounded by enemies forever. What follows is very difficult to read today: If we are concerned with ‘the admixture of blood, almost all the neighboring peoples were Semites, and so the race remained unaffected even after the conversion of the Idumaeans.’²⁶ The major themes repeat themselves in Klausner’s evaluation of the policies of Alexander Jannaeus: ‘Out of historical compulsion—deeply regrettable in itself—Jannaeus was forced to destroy cities . . . whose inhabitants did not agree to accept Judaism. . . . Is it plausible that in territories called by the name “Land of Israel” that were part of Israel in the days of David, Solomon, Ahab, Jeroboam II and Josiah, aliens and enemies should reside forever?’²⁷

²¹ *Historia* 3:33, 35.

²² *Historia* 3:86.

²³ *Historia* 3:65–66.

²⁴ *Historia* 3:78.

²⁵ *Historia* 3:85.

²⁶ *Historia* 3:88.

²⁷ *Historia* 3:160.

Klausner makes a point of emphasizing that the Jewish people as a whole supported the Hasmonean rulers no less than he. First, his idyllic characterization of this people is noteworthy in and of itself. ‘The true Jewish democracy [consisted of] farmers owning small homesteads, day laborers, craftsmen, and workers in fields and homes.’ This was ‘a large nation, assiduous and wise, religious-moral, laboring and satisfied with limited wealth.’ The typical Jewish farmer was ‘a religious conservative and a nationalist patriot.’ And this nation ‘defended the Hasmonean family and its aspirations as one man.’²⁸

Klausner provides four arguments for rejecting the historicity of the story asserting that Jannaeus crucified eight hundred of his opponents in a single day. Two of these strikingly underscore his attitude to the Hasmoneans themselves as well as his emphasis on their popular support. First, a king and high priest of the Hasmonean dynasty could not have been capable of such behavior.²⁹ Second, if this had really happened, ‘the nation would not have been devoted to the Hasmoneans with all its heart and soul and would not have spilled its blood like water for anyone in whose veins there coursed even one drop of Hasmonean blood.’³⁰ Elsewhere, Klausner is a bit more cautious, speaking of support from ‘the decisive majority of the activist nation,’³¹ but the fundamental emphasis remains unchanged. Finally, we hear of the special qualities of Hasmonean blood on more than one further occasion. Aristobulus II, for example, refused to accept one of Pompey’s demands because ‘the blood of the Maccabees coursing in his veins did not allow him to debase his honor excessively.’³² One wonders what sort of blood coursed in the veins of Aristobulus’s brother Hyrcanus II.

When we turn from war and politics to cultural life, the spectrum of Klausner’s views becomes wider, richer, more varied, more nuanced, and more interesting. In some respects, the single-minded nationalist perspective persists. Thus, in the aftermath of political liberation following centuries of submission to foreign rule, ‘it was impossible’ that spiritual life would remain unchanged. ‘This will become clear in the course of time in the young State of Israel as well even though

²⁸ *Historia* 3:12; 5:132; 3:43, 82.

²⁹ This point was noted by Schaffer, p. 201.

³⁰ *Historia* 3:155.

³¹ *Historia* 3:235–36.

³² *Historia* 3:222.

in the early years this is not yet very evident.³³ One of the prime characteristics of the Hasmonean period was the revival of the Hebrew language. Political independence led to ‘an exaltation of the soul’ that ‘greatly reinforced national consciousness and prepared the ground for any powerful national-religious aspiration. And what national-religious possession could have been more precious and sacred to the nation than the language of the Torah and prophets that had been nearly suppressed by Greek on the one hand and Aramaic-Syriac on the other?’³⁴ Thus, as Klausner sees it, ‘the national government’ along with the Council of the Jews nurtured this development and helped determine its form almost along the lines of the twentieth-century Academy for the Hebrew Language.

At the same time, conflicting ideological commitments led Klausner to less predictable evaluations as he examined larger cultural developments. In his view, a central group among the Pharisees concentrated on religious and moral concerns at the expense of the political dimension, and we might have expected him to evaluate such a group pejoratively. He understood, however, that this group laid the foundations of Jewish culture for generations to come, and his own nationalist orientation was light years removed from that of the so-called ‘Canaanites’ in the early years of the State. For all of Zionism’s ‘negation of exile,’ the stream with which Klausner identified saw itself as an organic continuation of authentic Jewish culture freed to develop in new and healthy ways in the ancient homeland. Thus, a man like Hillel could not be seen through a dark lens, and we suddenly find very different rhetoric from that to which we have become accustomed.

Hillel, we are told, had to refrain from taking a political stand during the terror regime of Herod. This was the only way that he could achieve his sublime objectives.³⁵ As to the Pharisees in general, their emphasis on religion over state ‘afforded the nation eternal life’ even though “it stole away its political power. The Pharisees achieved the *survival* of the nation at the expense of its *liberty*’ (emphasis in the original).³⁶ In virtually every other context, Klausner, as we have seen, perceives the liberty of the nation as a condition of its sur-

³³ *Historia* 3:9.

³⁴ *Historia* 3:105.

³⁵ *Historia* 4:125, 129–30.

³⁶ *Historia* 3:228.

vival. Here, looking back at the founders of rabbinic Judaism through the prism of a millennial exile, he speaks with a very different voice.

We have already encountered Klausner's reaction to the Hellenizers' efforts to open Judaea to Greek culture. In other contexts as well, he mobilizes the imperative of national survival for an even more surprising defense of cultural perspectives narrower than his own. Philo, he tells us, was a proud Jew, but in the final analysis the great Alexandrian thinker maintained that Moses and Plato had said the same things. 'The nation's instinct, its feeling of self-preservation, whispered to it . . . that it may not admit this compromising ideology into its home.'³⁷ This instinct, he adds, also explains the attitude of the anti-philosophical party during the Maimonidean controversies many generations later. This understanding, almost supportive analysis of the anti-Maimonist position adumbrates Yitzhak Baer's critical approach to Jewish openness to general culture in the Middle Ages, an approach that impelled Charles Touati to formulate a particularly sharp critique.

According to Baer, the Jewish religion belongs to the category of myth, a term never defined but clearly understood favorably. Judaism is placed in danger by philosophical culture. For Baer, all philosophers are suspect throughout Jewish history; their adversaries . . . always enjoy a favorable presumption. The position of the eminent historian, the product of a German university who was reared in rigorous scientific disciplines, seems odd (*cocasse*) to us. Is Judaism, then, to be devoted always, in its entirety, by its very essence, to lack of culture (*l'inculture*)?³⁸

Klausner does not go as far as Baer, though he was motivated by similar instincts, and it is fascinating to see his willingness to empathize with Jews who banned and even burned the works of the heroes of generations of maskilim who were in large measure role models for Klausner himself.

Klausner's cultural instincts lead to a particularly interesting deviation from the anticipated line with respect to an even more pivotal figure than Philo, a figure whom historians of the Second Temple period confront every hour of every day. Klausner is acutely aware

³⁷ *Historia* 5:85.

³⁸ Charles Touati, 'La controverse de 1303–1306 autour des études philosophiques et scientifiques,' *Revue des Etudes Juives* 127 (1968): 37, n. 3.

that his attitude to Josephus will surprise us, and in a passage demonstrating with painful clarity how insecure he felt in the face of criticism, he points to this explicitly as evidence that he is an objective historian.³⁹ He understands that we would expect him to disdain the historian-traitor; instead, he sees him as a man of initial good intentions who, even after his act of genuine treason, deserves regard as an exceptional historian. Perhaps this is indeed a sign of objectivity, but it is more likely the product of a collision of two subjective impulses. Of course Klausner was repelled by Josephus' treason, but his belief that the capacity to explain history is one of the quintessential qualities of the Jewish people⁴⁰ moved him toward an almost visceral appreciation of the talents of the major Jewish historian of antiquity.

The emotional tie that Klausner felt toward his illustrious predecessor emerges from a gripping, almost amazing passage. Josephus tells us that he chose to survive in Jodephat because had he died before transmitting the message (*diangelia*), he would have betrayed the divine charge. Klausner contends that this does not refer to the message that Vespasian would become Emperor. It refers, rather, to the destiny of Josephus himself, who somehow understood that he was fated to become the historian of the Jewish people. 'A supernal force impelled him to live in order to write books that would endure for thousands of years, to survive so that he could be revealed as one of the great Jewish historians of all generations.'⁴¹

The career of Josephus transports us to the final days of the Second Temple. Despite Klausner's qualified sympathy for the spiritually oriented Pharisees, his deeper identification is with the group that he calls 'activist Pharisees,' to wit, the Zealots, who enjoyed the support, as he sees it, of 'the nation in its masses.' Here too he must confront moral questions, which he resolves in part by recourse to a slightly altered version of a famous line in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*. 'Their intentions were desirable, but their actions were not always desirable.' Nonetheless, even if they sometimes engaged in robbery, they had no alternative. 'Since they were constantly guarding the national interest, it was impossible for them to pursue remunerative work.'⁴²

³⁹ *Historia* 3: introduction.

⁴⁰ *Historia* 2:270.

⁴¹ *Historia* 5:190-91.

⁴² *Historia* 5:29-30.

And so we arrive at the great revolt that these Zealots precipitated. In addition to the routine reasons that Klausner proposes to explain that revolt, he suggests that the Romans encouraged it through intentional, blatant provocations inspiring an uprising that they could then exploit to destroy the threat posed to them by the 'metropolis of world Jewry.'⁴³ Once again, warring tendencies in the historian's psyche produce a slightly unexpected result. Klausner is prepared to depict his heroic Jewish rebels as dupes of a successful Roman stratagem in order to magnify the importance, power, and centrality of world Jewry.

Finally, even the failure of the revolt does not demonstrate that it was mistaken. On the contrary, simple submission to Rome would have led to decline and, ultimately, to the disappearance of the nation. Instead,

a destruction following glorious, remarkable wars of the sort fought by the 'bandits' and 'ruffians' against the dominant Roman Empire, wars that remained in the memory of all generations, was not an absolute destruction. It was not the Torah alone that sustained us in our exile. The memories of a monumental struggle with the great world power preserved in Talmud and Midrash, in Josippon and other of our narratives also led to long life, indeed, to eternal life. [Such a] nation will never be destroyed.⁴⁴

It is difficult to agree that the actions of the 'bandits,' which were sharply criticized in most of the sources informing the consciousness of Jews in exile, played a central role in sustaining the spirit of persecuted Jews in medieval and early modern times. But in the Zionist period, refashioned in the works of Klausner and others, they surely did. Even one who reads Klausner's *History* for the purpose of analyzing its ideological *Tendenz* cannot help but feel the deep pathos that informs his work, and there can be no question that readers were inspired, educators energized, students instructed, and public opinion molded. In full awareness of Klausner's historiographic sins, some observers with Zionist sympathies may nonetheless set aside an academic lens and conclude that not only were his intentions desirable, but, under the pressing circumstances in which he wrote, even his actions may have achieved ends that partially atone for those sins.

⁴³ *Historia* 5:132, 140, 141.

⁴⁴ *Historia* 5:136–37.

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